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BRAE LOCHABER
GAELIC ORAL TRADITION
AND THE REPERTOIRE
OF JOHN MACDONALD,
HIGHBRIDGE

Andrew Esslemont MacIntosh Wiseman

A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for
the degree of
Master of Philosophy

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Tha mi fada 'nan comain uile.

Introduction

The aim of this study is to give as broad a prospectus as possible of the Gaelic oral tradition of Brae Lochaber. No one exemplifies the Gaelic tradition of the Braes better than John MacDonald who belonged to Highbridge. Our purpose here, then, is not simply to delineate John MacDonald as a story-teller but rather to analyse the representative content of his repertoire. By far the greater part of this corpus consists of historical traditions and supernatural tales. For that reason this study has attempted to give these aspects greater prominence and has included examples from other local tradition bearers and accounts from the literature, and thus John MacDonald is not exclusively foregrounded in the chapters dealing with historical legends and supernatural tales. Also, in order to reflect the content of John MacDonald's repertoire these particular tales are the ones studied in greatest depth. John MacDonald can be described as the last Lochaber seanchaidh as he was the last person of a long line who not only composed over a hundred songs but had a vast knowledge of Lochaber traditions, passed on from his father, James MacDonald. Somewhat unusually John only learnt these traditional tales later in life, shortly before his father died.

Considering that John Carswell, Bishop of the Isles, wrote in the first Gaelic book, the following diatribe against traditional story-telling in 1567, it is remarkable that it should have survived in such a vigorous form into this century:

Agas is mor an doille an dorchadas peacaidh agas aineolas agas indtleachta do lucht deactaidh agus sgrìobhatha agas chumhdaigh na Gaoidhleige gurab mó is mian léo agas gurab mó ghnathuidheas siad eachtradha dimhaoineachda buaidheartha bregacha saoghalta, do cumadh ar Thuathaibh Dé Dhanond, agas ar Macaibh Mileadh, agas ar na curadhaibh, agas [ar] Fhind mhac Cumhaill gona Fhianaibh, agas ar mhóran eile nach airbhim agas sligte d'fhaghail doibh féin, iná

briathra disle Dé agas slighe foirfe, na firinde do sgrìobhadh agas do dheachtadh agas do chumdachd. Oir is andsa leis an t-saoghal an breg go mór iná fhirinde.¹

It is fortunate that not all Ministers of the Gospel took this view. Many of the nineteenth century clergymen were instrumental in folklore collection during its infancy especially in the Highlands. Concerning the traditions of the Lochaber, notable among such ministers were Rev. Alasdair Stewart [Nether Lochaber] (1829-1901), Revd. Dr. Archibald Clerk (1813-87) and Rev. James MacDougall (1833-1906).²

The area of Brae Lochaber has long been associated with the MacDonells, *Dòmhnallaich na Ceapaich*. The scion of this branch of Clan Donald was Alasdair Carrach, the third youngest son of John, first to be styled the Lord of the Isles. They are still there, though much depleted in numbers, despite emigration, clearances and general social movement. The geographic area of Brae Lochaber is roughly the same size as the old clan territory of the MacDonells. It is bounded to the south by Nether Lochaber, reaching as far west as Lochybridge, towards Fort William, bounded in the east by Badenoch, and reaching as far north as Glen Gloy where it merges with Glengarry. Maps have been provided in Appendix 1 for the benefit of anyone who is not familiar with the territory. As can be seen the main townships of the Braes are Spean Bridge and Roy Bridge, although during the time of the clans the heart of Brae Lochaber was Keppoch.

It should also be emphasised that this study is not attempting a simply parochial perspective, although it is recognised that the historical traditions discussed intrinsically belong to the Braes. Any area of the Highlands and Islands would repay such a study as this providing that enough material is available. As can be seen some of the tales in John MacDonald's repertoire have international relevance. A review of Brae Lochaber oral tradition, gleaned mainly from the Celtic journals of last century, is given (Chapter 1) in order to provide a contextual background to the John MacDonald's repertoire. A brief

biography of John is also given, explaining how he learned his stories and describing the traditional céilidh setting. Also a vignette of the social history of Brae Lochaber is given which reflects the predominantly Gaelic society of John MacDonald's youth.

The main sources for the study of John MacDonald's repertoire, as well as the other tradition bearers, is to be found in the manuscript collection transcribed by Calum MacLean, during 1951-2, which he appropriately named "Tales from Spean Bridge". Most of these recordings were, unfortunately, subsequently erased after transcription. A full list of the titles of the various tales collected in this manuscript is given in Appendix 3 (i). In addition to this, the other fruitful source for material was the Sound Archive of the School of Studies, housed in the University of Edinburgh. A full list of all the Sound Archives pertaining to Lochaber is given in Appendix 3 (ii).

Notes to Introduction

¹ Thomson, R.L. *Foirm na h-Urnuidheadh. John Carswell's Gaelic Translations of the Book of Common Order*. Edinburgh: Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1970: 11; Lines 321-333.

Translation appears in McLauchlan, Thomas (ed.). *The Book of Common Prayer: Commonly Called John Knox's Liturgy*. Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1873: 19:

Great is the blindness and darkness of sin and ignorance and of understanding among composers and writers and supporters of Gaelic in that they prefer and practice the framing of vain, hurtful, lying, earthly stories about the Tuatha Dé Danaan and about the sons of Milesius and about the heroes and Fionn MacCumhail and his giants and about many others whom I shall not number or tell of here in detail, in order to maintain and advance these, with a view to obtaining themselves passing worldly gain rather than to write and to compose and to support the faithful words of God, and the perfect way of truth.

² Davis, Deborah. 'Contents of Ambivalence: The Folklore Activities of Nineteenth-Century Scottish Highland Ministers.' In *Folklore* Vol. 103 (1992ii): 207-221.

Oral Tradition of Brae Lochaber in the Literature

The oral tradition of Lochaber has been somewhat neglected in the compass of Gaelic literature. There has been, of course, two modern scholarly editions of Iain Lom's and Silis na Ceapaich's works largely taken from manuscript sources. However, the publications of the popular Celtic journals in the nineteenth century, such as the *Celtic Monthly* (1892-1917), *Celtic Magazine* (1876-1888), *An Teachdaire Gaelach* (1829-31) *et al*, saw an interest in Folklore engendered by the monumental work of John Francis Campbell's (Iain Òg Ìle) *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (1860-62) and latterly Alexander Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica* (1900 *et seq.*).

The first reference concerning Lochaber's oral tradition in the Celtic journals is to be found in *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, the Gaelic periodical under the editorship of Tormod MacLeòid, *Caraid nan Gàidheal*. In this article entitled *Sgeul air Alasdair Stiùbhart, Iarla Mòr*¹ by Iain Dileas MacShomhairle, presumably of Glen Nevis, judging by the surname, an account is given of the escape of Alasdair Stiùbhart, the Earl of Mar, from the first Battle of Inverlochy in 1431. The Earl managed to escape to Glen Roy where on the point of starvation and exhaustion he pleaded for food from an old woman. She gave him some oatmeal which he then mixed in water from a burn² and ate from his shoe, and proclaimed an extempore verse which has since become proverbial:

'S maith an còcaire n t-acras,
 'S maìrg 'ni an tarcuis air a' bhiadh;
 Fuarag eòrn á sàil mo bhròige,
 Biadh a b' fheàrr a fhuair mi riamh.³

After this little sustenance the Earl of Mar made his way, doubtless under the cover of darkness, to the Briagach, a town-ship, halfway up Glen Roy, where he begged food and shelter from a man called Ó Bioran Cameron. The none too

wealthy Cameron is said to have killed his last cow, which he and the Earl fed themselves on. He then gave the cow's hide to the Earl for clothing. The next day, the Earl of Mar revealed his identity to Cameron and promised him that if he was ever in any hardship his castle would always be welcome to him. When the pursuing MacDonald host heard that Cameron had sheltered the Earl he and his family had to remove themselves to the Braes of Mar. When the wretched Ó Bioran and his family reached the Earl's Castle they received a warm welcome with the following words:

'S ionmhuinn am firean a-muigh,
 Obirinn as a' Bhreugaich,
 Bha mi oidhche 'na thigh
 Air mhóran bidh, ach beag eudaich.⁴

It is said that the progeny of Ó Bioran Cameron are still left in this area of Highland Aberdeenshire, which lends credence to the folk tradition. According to Somerled MacMillan, Mar granted him the land of Brucks. An Alasdair Cam Forbes of Drimonvir and of Brucks married O' Bryne's only child, and their descendants retained the property down to the latter part of last century.⁵

Such is the tale of Earl of Mar and the first Battle of Inverlochy. Indeed, this is the oldest piece of oral tradition that we have, as far as I am aware, that is based on a dateable historic event. It also enters into the repertoire of John *the Bard* MacDonald and that of Archibald MacInnes. Given the length of time between the historic event and the re-telling of that very event, some 500 years, this statistic I think allows us to take stock of the amazing capacity and indeed tenacity of folk memory exemplified, in the case of Lochaber, by John MacDonald. This tale shall be given in its entirety in the chapter dealing with historical legends.

It may also be mentioned that these two quatrains are also present in the McLagan MS 165 (6). The manuscript has been dated to c.1750—1805, the years in which the collection was gathered. Derick Thomson in an article⁶ on the McLagan MS reproduces these as they appear there:

Le Moirear Mar, as deis a chuir air theiceadh le Donull Ballach
 an iar d'Ionbhar-lochaidh, far 'n do mharbhadh an t Iarla
 Gallach. Ta chann toabh Neamhais.

Bha mi oidche ann ad theach
 Air mhor beithe 'air bheag eaduich;
 'S ionmhuinn am firein ata 'muigh,
 O Birein as a Bhreugaich.

Is maith an Cocair an t Acras
 'S mairg a dheanadh tailceas air a bhiagh,
 Fuarag eorn' a sail mo bhroige
 Biagh a b'fhearr a fhuair mi riamh.

He further gives an interpretation of the last verse where 'a slight editing of the second stanza can bring out the rhyme and strophic rhythm more clearly, and perhaps suggests some of Mar's dialect usages:'

Is maith an cocaire an t-ocras
 'S mairg dhèanadh toilceas air biadh,
 Fuarag eòrn' á sàil mo bhròige
 Biadh a b'fheòrr a fhuair mi riamh.⁷

At that time the Braes of Mar and the Braes of Lochaber were as Gaelic speaking as one another. It also shows the mutual intelligibility of the two dialects, given the alleged truth of the tale.

About the same time as the collection of the McLagan MSS was ongoing, the Rev. Donald MacIntosh, a native of Orchilmore, Perthshire, with whom McLagan corresponded, collected much of the material to appear in his book on Gaelic proverbs, from his name-sake John MacIntosh in 1784. In the introduction of this book he devotes a paragraph of thanks "to John MacIntosh, from Lochaber, formerly tenant under MacDonald of Keppoch, a worthy, honest

man, well versed in old Gaelic sayings.”⁸ Another piece collected from him, *Ceàrdaich Mhic Luin*, an Ossianic Ballad, appears in Gillies’ *Sean Dàin*, a rare Gaelic publication.⁹ It is a pity that Donald MacIntosh’s interest did not extend to *sgeulachdan* as well, as no doubt, John MacIntosh would have been full of them, given his wide knowledge of proverbs, which often appear in such stories. Nevertheless, one cannot underestimate the work that he did in preserving from extinction very many of these proverbs, which were said to be have been frequently used by the Highlanders of old in their daily conversation.

Moving to the nineteenth century there can be seen, as noted earlier, a clear expansion of Gaelic publishing, centred mainly in Glasgow and Edinburgh, through the medium of cheap periodicals. These, which may be compared with chap-books in some respects, not only influenced but provided some of the material of oral tradition, and encouraged the writing of Gaelic prose. Much of the material relating to Lochaber appeared in *An Gàidheal* from Abrach. The latter was the pen-name of Donald C. MacPherson, a sub-librarian of the Advocates’ library in Edinburgh. He belonged to Bohuntin, Glen Roy and considered the priesthood before turning his attention to Gaelic scholarship. In his short life (1838-1880) he produced a very useful collection of verse, *An Duanaire* (1868) collected in and around Brae Lochaber, the seventh edition of MacMhaighstir Alasdair’s poems (1874), as well as a posthumous grammar book entitled *Practical Lessons in Gaelic* (1891).¹⁰ He also acted as a researcher for J.F. Campbell’s *Leabhar na Féinne* (1872). It was during this period that D.C. MacPherson sent him a Fenian tale called *Fionn ann an Tigh a’ Bhlàir Bhuidhe gun Chomas Suidhe no Éirigh*, which appeared in the first issue of the learned French periodical *Revue Celtique*,¹¹ along with a translation supplied by J.F. Campbell. Incidentally, the tale was collected from his own grandmother. Briefly the story relates how the Fenians were resting after a hard day’s hunt when a hare appeared in their midst. As they pursued the hare a magic mist suddenly appeared and while they wandered aimlessly they became lost, but after a while they accidentally found the house of Blàr Buidhe. As they entered the house, Blàr Buidhe, the giant, petrified each of Fionn’s six companions in turn, with the cast of a magic wand. However the magic

enchantment had not worked on Fionn, so the giant instead tried to kill Fionn by using a golden apple. This attempt failed also and so after a bout of grappling the giant finally managed to skewer Fionn through the hips with a stake. Fionn was thus immobilised, and greatly feared for his life, therefore he resorted to a last ditched attempt to save himself, and blew *Còrn na Féinne*. Diarmaid, Fionn's companion, heard the call and responded quickly to it. He found Fionn crippled and near to death. After he had heard of the day's events Diarmaid vowed vengeance and set out for the giant's house. The giant treated Diarmaid with the same contempt as he had shown to Fionn's companions but Diarmaid proved too worthy an opponent for Blàr Buidhe. The golden apple provided Diarmaid with a weapon to likewise kill all of Blàr Buidhe's companions. Diarmaid and the giant then grappled in a terrible rage whereupon the giant received his just desert when Diarmaid similarly skewered him through the hips with a stake. The giant pleaded for his life by offering a cup of healing balm to Diarmaid which he then used to wash Fionn's wounds, which were healed after they had been washed three times. This is a version of *A' Bhruidhean Chaorthuinn* (The Rowan Hostel) where the Fenians are enticed into an enchanted *bruidhean* and are stuck to their seats until they are rescued by Diarmaid and his companions. The earliest manuscript of this tale is Scottish c. 1600.¹² A tale such as this was part of the prestigious Gaelic tradition of heroic tales. They originally entered the oral tradition through manuscript collections. The late Alan Bruford in his *Gaelic Folk Tales and Medieval Romance* traces the complex relation that exists between literature and oral tradition.¹³ It behoves one to ask why D.C. MacPherson was not utilised further by J.F. Campbell in the area of folklore collection considering the quality of material available. No doubt J.F. Campbell's attention had been turned to matters concerning the ancient Gaelic Ballads and Lays, spurred on, perhaps, by the unresolved century old Ossianic Controversy. Besides he had already collected and published his great collection of Gaelic tales. This story of the Feinn was later to be reprinted in *An Gàidheal*¹⁴ and issued as a separate pamphlet in 1949.¹⁵ The only other tale of this type and length that D.C. MacPherson collected and published, so far as I am aware, was a version of *An Tuairisgeul*,¹⁶ from Angus MacKay,

Glamasdale, Eigg.

Nevertheless, D.C. MacPherson contributed to *An Gàidheal* and the *Celtic Magazine* on a regular basis. He had contemplated an edition of Iain Lom's works, but due to his untimely death, this plan was never implemented. Needless to say, it would have contained much of the oral tradition then current in Lochaber concerning Iain Lom, though even then it may have been rather scanty.

A contemporary of D.C. MacPherson, the Rev. James MacDougall, a minister of Ballachulish and Duror, edited a book in the *Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition* in the *Argyllshire Series*, full of Fenian lore. His remarkable informant, Alexander Cameron, originally from Ardnamurchan, was a local road worker between Duror and Ballachulish. Professor Kenneth Jackson writes about one of these stories in the following terms: "...but to quote one at random I should like to refer to the Scottish Gaelic tale *An Crochaire Lom-Rusgach* in Macdougall's *Folk and Hero Tales*; a story of over 12, 000 words told by an Argyllshire roadmender, and one of the best folktales for plot, construction, and style that I have ever met—the performance of a fine artist."¹⁷ The notes in this publication provide us with the information that the tale *How Finn kept his Children for the Big Young Hero, and How Bran was Found* was known to Archibald MacArthur, a Braes man living in Fort Augustus, more of whom later.¹⁸ And that, further, another tale *The Son of the Strong Man of the Wood, who was Twenty-one Years at his Mother's Breast* was known by William MacPhie, a crofter in Lochaber, who was still living at the time (1891).¹⁹ It is doubtful that MacDougall would go to the trouble of mentioning these tradition bearers if they themselves were not renowned upholders of the oral culture. I point this out because *de facto* these tales must have been known to them, as was well as many others of this type in Lochaber. To make a general point, much of the material published at the latter end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of this century must have been known in the area, although much of the lore was collected elsewhere. And of course, the obverse remains true of material collected in Lochaber, having relevance to other areas further afield.

This point may be brought to bear in considering the collection made by Lady Evelyn Stewart-Murray (1868-1940) in 1891. This collection of some 240 items comprises Gaelic tales, legends and songs made in many parts of West Perthshire. The manuscript is now housed in the Scottish School of Studies, Edinburgh. A variant of the famous international tale Snow-White (AT 709) entitled *Lasair Gheug: Nighean Rìgh Éirinn*²⁰ was collected from a Mrs. MacMillan, Strathtay, one of her best informants. It is however a Lochaber redaction of this tale, as Lady Evelyn notes at the end of this story: "Mrs. MacMillan herself is a Badenoch woman, her father was a MacDonald, Badenoch, & her mother a Fraser from Lochaber. She learnt all her stories from her mother, or at least mostly from her mother's mother, also Lochabar [sic]—so these are Lochabar tales."²¹ Indeed, all her stories in this collection are of the full-length international tale variety: the others are variations of AT 313, AT 425, and the Gaelic ecotypes of AT 315 and AT 2030.²² There is only one other instance of a complete version of this type which was collected in Eigg.²³ This reflects the relative scarcity of this tale.

At around the same time as this Fr. Allan MacDonald of Eriskay, of Bohuntin extraction, was compiling a vast amount of folklore material in South Uist. What was Brae Lochaber's loss was definitely South Uist's gain. Much of this material still remains to be published. This seems to be the fate of most folklore collections! I doubt whether any other single geographical area, given the size of South Uist, has been scoured for so much Gaelic tradition successfully. And since Fr. Allan's time each new generation of collectors has come to this island and freely taken of its seemingly replenishing stock of tales, songs and so forth. Margaret Fay Shaw's *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist* is testimony to this vast store. It seems only in our own day that this last and best repository of folklore material is running dry. Although such statements as these are usually premature.

Returning to the Braes, it seems that very little of the tradition was recorded, at least not in Lochaber itself. The late J.L. Campbell, *Fear Chanaidh*, recorded much material from *Aonghas a' Mhaim*, better known as Angus Ridge MacDonald, of Upper South River, Antigonish County, Nova

Scotia, in 1937. His grandfather, Allan the Ridge from *Achadh nan Cothaichean* in Glen Spean, had emigrated more than a century earlier to Pictou County in 1816.²⁴ Angus recorded 14 songs for J.L. Campbell during this visit, all of them belonging to the Lochaber tradition. Interesting to relate that Allan the Ridge belonged to the *Sliochd an Taighe* branch of the Keppoch MacDonells, and thus Angus was related in some way or another to Fr. Allan of Eriskay, who was also related to D.C. MacPherson.²⁵

Unfortunately, the equipment used, ediphone wax cylinders, during this period of collection were impractical for story telling of any great length, save for historical introductions to the various songs. Nevertheless, some *sgeulachdan* were later recorded from Angus the Ridge by MacEdward Leach, when he was 73, and living in Lake Katrine, Cape Breton, making the year roughly 1939.²⁶ The published version, which is fairly short, is given in translation only:

A man had only son. As the boy grew in years, he also grew in body. Finally one day he said to his father, "I'll go out in the world to seek my fortune." He told his father to go to the forge and get a stick made of the best wood the blacksmith had. The father did as requested, and the boy set out with the stick. After walking a long time, he came to a house. The woman there said, "You must be hungry. Come in and eat. We have plenty; my husband just killed a deer." After eating, the boy went on his way toward the king's palace. Presently he met a terrified bull, made crazy by the people who were going to kill it. Making it crazy, they thought, would make the meat tender. Watt killed the bull with one blow. Then he asked the gamekeeper to allow him to see the king. The king met him and greeted him with the words, "You are the strongest man I've ever seen." Watt asked for a job as a shepherd. The king replied, "Many have gone out as herdsman, but they have lost many cattle; however, I'll give you a try." Watt took the cattle to pasture, and there climbed a tall tree to watch. As he was eating his lunch there in the tree, he saw a giant coming. When the giant saw him, he shouted, "Come down and I'll kill you." Watt replied, "Wait till I have my dinner." When he had finished his lunch, he came down from the tree and killed the giant. That evening he came back to the castle

with all the cattle. The king was very pleased. The next day Watt took the cattle again to pasture, and he was eating lunch, the giant's mate appeared. When she asked him to come down from the tree, he told her to wait until he had finished lunch. When he had finished, he came down and fought with the giantess and finally overcame her. He asked her where she lived. She answered, "Where I live is a house of gold, and inside is a mare, a cloak, and a white sword of light which will cut ninety-nine forward and ninety-nine backward." Watt then cut off the giantess' head, and he found the house and the things therein as she had told him. That night he took the cows home, and the king was very pleased. The next day the king was to fight the Danes. Watt went out to pasture with the cows as usual, but when he got there, he took the horse, the sword and the cloak and went to the battle. With his magic sword he cut down ninety-nine forward and ninety-nine backward, and soon he put the battle to one side. The king and the queen and the princesses saw these deeds. When the battle was over, Watt took the king to the pasture and showed him the dead giants and the house of the giants. Then he told him to get a new cowherd. Then he took the king's daughter as his wife.²⁷

This is a very good, if brief, example of a *Märchen* type of tale The Dragon Slayer (AT 300). A slightly different version of this tale was recorded as recently as 1979 in Cape Breton.²⁸ It would be of interest, as an adjunct to this type of study, to compare the survival of oral narrative in Nova Scotia, especially Cape Breton, where so many of the emigrant Gaels went, with Lochaber. This of course would be practically true of most of the Highlands and Islands. J.L. Campbell shared the same sentiment when he wrote of his 1937 visit: "that Gaelic oral tradition was very much alive in Cape Breton, and that anyone with suitable training and adequate time could then make a very large collection of songs and stories from the reciters then living, including descendants of emigrants from districts in the Highlands and Islands now depopulated, which would have been of much interest for dialect and lexicographical studies, as well as for folklore."²⁹

Other international tales of these types were collected by Professor Kenneth Jackson during a visit to Port Hood, Cape Breton, in August 1946. The vast majority of Port Hood were descendants of emigrants from Lochaber, as evinced by MacDonald being the commonest surname in the area.³⁰ This indicates that they were of Keppoch extraction, and like all the other emigrants they brought with them their language, music and tradition. Two stories of interest collected were *The Grateful Dead* (AT 507A)³¹ recited by Charley Robert MacDonald, aged eighty-one, West Mabou Harbour, who heard it from the old folk of the neighbourhood.³² Another version of *The Dragon Slayer*³³ which we have met before, was told by Ronald Beaton, aged eighty-three, who heard it as a young boy from a story-teller in Mabou.³⁴ This is quite a different version of *The Dragon Slayer* from the latter one given as this contains the motive of the Faithless Sister (AT 315). I know of no collection of this particular tale within the Lochaber tradition of the 'Old Country'. These two represent the best material Kenneth Jackson collected during this visit. Interestingly enough, Jackson published all the tales in phonetic script. The nearest to a scientific study of Brae Lochaber Gaelic is Deickhoff's dictionary,³⁵ which closely represents the Glengarry dialect. An interesting, if brief, description of the phonology and morphology of the Port Hood dialect is given by Jackson. The informants recorded were John MacDonald, whose father came from South Uist, and Jessie MacDonald (presumably a close relation, if not his spouse), whose ancestors came from Eigg. He adds that the dialect which they spoke was the same as the rest of the township and Jackson compared his notes with other speakers of the dialect in order to maintain consistency.

Lack of linguistic knowledge prevents me from making any evaluative comment on whether this dialect study compares favourably with the dialect of John MacDonald. Doubtlessly small differences would appear, nevertheless one would expect there to be more similarities than inconsistencies which, I think, would make a comparative study worthwhile.

Robert Rankin, former Professor of Mathematics at Glasgow University, published a definitive study of Dòmhnall MacFhionnlaigh nan Dàn's *Òran na*

Comhachaig, where he recorded 66 verses of this *bàrdachd* recited from John's younger brother, Duncan MacDonald, in July 1947.³⁶ Although some prompting, probably due to lack of recitation, had to be applied, nevertheless to give him his due, each time he was prompted, his response was immediate. One may venture to ask whether Duncan was an even better tradition bearer than John himself, who only knew half a dozen verses of this composition. Such questions are perhaps disingenuous, as it may have been an instance of specialisation in that, I suppose, both of them latched onto different aspects of the traditions their father was so well versed in. J.F. Campbell remarks upon such specialisation in his introduction to *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*:

...Each branch of popular lore has its own votaries, as branches of literature have amongst the learned; that one man is the peasant historian and tells the battles of the clans; another a walking peerage, who knows the descent of most of the families in Scotland, and all about its neighbours and their origin; and other are romancers, and tell about the giants; other are moralists, and prefer the sagacious prose tales, which have a meaning, and might have a moral; a few know the history of the Feni, and are antiquarians.³⁷

This may in fact be a familiar trait of tradition bearing families, though it would most likely appear to have wider context as different individuals who contribute to a community's identity as suggested by J.F. Campbell, where there would have been tradition bearers who lent themselves to different aspects of the oral culture.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the articles which have appeared in *The Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* over the years, which have been used in this study. Notable among them are Mary Mackellar's *Legends and Traditions of Lochaber*; Alexander Campbell's *Traditions of Lochaber* and Colin Livingstone's *Lochaber: Place Names*. And of course, many of the books published from the last century onwards which have had recourse to stories from oral sources, such as Somerled MacMillan's *Bygone Lochaber: Historical and Traditional* (1971), W. Drummond-Norie's *Loyal*

Lochaber (1898), W.T. Kilgour's *Lochaber in War and Peace* (1908), Donald B. MacCulloch's *Romantic Lochaber* (1972) and most recently Stuart MacDonald's *Back to Lochaber* (1994).

With the foundation of the School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh, in 1951 the systematic collection of Gaelic and Scots folklore began in earnest. John MacDonald provided most of the material Calum MacLean collected on his first field trip for this new institution in January of that year.

Notes

- ¹ MacSomhairle, Iain Dileas. 'Legend of Stewart; Sgeul air Alasdair Stiùbhart Iarla Màr'. *Cuairtear nan Gleann* No. 3 (May 1840): 65-67. Later reprinted and abridged in Watson, W.J. (ed.). *Rosg Gàidhlig: Specimens of Gaelic Prose*. Glasgow: An Comunn Gàidhealach, 2nd ed., 1929. 'Iarla Mhàrr agus Fear na Briagach': 99-102.
- ² This burn is said to have been Allt-na-beithich. Nicolson, Alexander (ed.). *A Collection of Gaelic Proverbs and Familiar Phrases: Based on MacIntosh's Collection*. Glasgow: Caledonian Press, 1951: 272.
- ³ ref. 1 *Legend of Stewart*: 66.
- ⁴ *ibid.*: 67.
- ⁵ MacMillan, Somerled. *Bygone Lochaber: Historical and Traditional*. Glasgow: K. & R. Davidson, Ltd., 1971: 112.
- ⁶ Thomson, Derick. 'The McLagan MSS in Glasgow University: A Survey'. *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* LVIII (58) (1992-94): 417-18.
- ⁷ *ibid.*: 418.
- ⁸ ref. 2 *A Collection of Gaelic Proverbs*: 417.
- ⁹ Gillies, Eoin. *Sean Dàin agus Orain Ghaidhealach*. Perth, 1786: 229.
- ¹⁰ Thomson, Derick (ed.). *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*. Glasgow: Gairm Publications 110, 1994: 188.
- ¹¹ Campbell, J.F. 'Fionn's Enchantment'. *Revue Celtique* Vol. 1 (1870-72): 193-202.
- ¹² Bruford, Allan. *Gaelic Folk-Tales and Medieval Romances*. Dublin: The Folklore of Ireland Society, 1969: 251.
- ¹³ ref. 10 *Companion to Gaelic Scotland*: 280.
- ¹⁴ Abrach [D.C. MacPherson]. 'Fionn an Tigh a' Bhlàir Bhuidhe gun chomas éirigh no suidhe'. *An Gàidheal* Vol. 4, No. 46 (January 1875): 10-13.
- ¹⁵ MacPherson, Donald C. *Fionn ann an Tigh a' Bhlàir Bhuidhe gun Chomas suidhe no Éirigh* [Fingal in the House of the Blar Buidhe: A Weird Highland Tale with Gaelic and English on Opposite Pages]. Translated and edited by James MacLaren. Alex MacLaren and Sons, 1949
- ¹⁶ Abrach [D.C. MacPherson]. 'An Tuairisgeul'. *An Gàidheal* Vol. 4, No. 45 (October 1875): 303-310.
- ¹⁷ Jackson, Kenneth. *The International Popular Tale and Early Welsh Tradition*. Cardiff, 1962: 6-7.
- ¹⁸ MacDougall, Rev. James. *Folk and Hero Tales. Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition*. Argyllshire Series No. III. London: David Nutt, 1891: 259.
- ¹⁹ *ibid.*: 291.
- ²⁰ Bruford, Alan. 'A Scottish Version of "Snow-White"'. *Scottish Studies* Vol. 9 (1965): 153-172. A translation appears in Bruford, Allan & MacDonald, D.A. (eds.). *Scottish Traditional Tales*. Edinburgh: Polygon, 1994: 98-106.
- ²¹ ref. 10 *Companion to Gaelic Scotland*: 153.
- ²² *ibid.* AT 313 The Girl as Helper in the Hero's Flight; AT 425 The Search for the Lost Husband; AT 315 The Faithless Sister; AT 2030 The Old Woman and the Pig.
- ²³ MacLeod, Kenneth. 'Craobh-Oir agus Craobh-Airgid'. *The Celtic Magazine* 13, No. 149 (March 1888): 212-218.
- ²⁴ Campbell, J.L. *Songs Remembered in Exile*. Aberdeen University Press, 1990: 223.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*: 25.
- ²⁶ The date of Allan Ridge's birth is 27th February 1866. *ibid.*: 223.
- ²⁷ Leach, MacEdward. 'Celtic Tales from Cape Breton'. In *Studies in Folklore*. W. Edson Richmond (ed.). Indiana University Press, 1987: 49-51.
- ²⁸ MacNeil, Joe Neil. 'Gille Mór an Tuathanaich'. *Sgeul gu Latha/Tales Until Dawn*. John Shaw (ed.). Edinburgh: University Press 1987: 342-357.
- ²⁹ Ref. 24 *Songs Remembered in Exile*: 16.
- ³⁰ Jackson, Kenneth. 'Notes on the Gaelic of Port Hood, Nova Scotia'. *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 6 (1947-49): 90.
- ³¹ *ibid.*: 98-109.

³² *ibid.*: 108-109

³³ Jackson, Kenneth. 'More Tales from Port Hood, Nova Scotia'. *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 6 (1947-49): 176-79.

³⁴ *ibid.*: 184-185.

³⁵ Deickoff, H.C. *Pronouncing Dictionary of Scottish Gaelic, based on the Glengarry dialect*. Glasgow: Gairm Reprint, 1992.

³⁶ Rankin, Robert A. 'Òran na Comhachaig: Text and Tradition'. *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Glasgow* Vol. V (1958): 126-127.

³⁷ Campbell, J.F. *Popular Tales of the West Highlands Vol. 1*. Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd., 1994: 34.

John MacDonald—The Teller of Tales

John MacGillvantic MacDonald, Highbridge, Lochaber was born at Aonachan on the 15th of October 1876 and died there in 1964. He was one of a large family of ten, and was survived by his sister Helen who was also recorded in 1969. He was better known as 'Iain Beag' or more often simply 'The Bard'. He was sometime crofter, sometime roadman as well as a songmaker. From the age of thirteen he had worked as a railwayman until his semi-retirement at the age of sixty-five. Thereafter he was employed as a road-mender by Inverness-shire County Council. Although he only attended school for two to three years he was a learned man especially concerning the history of the area. Calum MacLean describes their first meeting in Chapter 1 of *The Highlands*.¹ It is worth quoting in full as we get Calum's impressions on John the Bard, the last Lochaber *seanchaidh*:

It was on a cold Sunday morning in January 1951 that I first met little John MacDonald of Highbridge or John the Bard, as he is called. He had just come from Mass in the church at Roy Bridge. That morning he had cycled over eight miles to church through showers of sleet and hail. That was not bad for a man of seventy-five years of age. He wore no overcoat. John MacDonald is a sturdy man somewhat under medium height, but very alert and active. His little grey eyes seemed to pierce right through me as I approached him. I greeted him in Gaelic. On hearing his own language, he immediately shed his reserve and smiled. He was John the Bard. He could not remember how many songs he had composed, perhaps a hundred or two. He had just composed a song in praise of the young Scots who removed the Stone of Destiny from Westminster Abbey. The Stone was then at large. We crouched down behind a wall and he sang the song. It was full of vigour and fire. The historic Scottish nation still lived. The Stone of Destiny really belonged to Scotland. John the Bard didn't give a damn if the police never set eyes on it again. Of course, he would tell me stories. His father knew everything that ever happened in Lochaber. He would meet me

every afternoon. He sprang up, mounted his cycle with the agility of a youth of seventeen and was gone. I knew I had met a real character.²

John's composition *Òran na Cloiche* is a good example as any of the hundred or so songs contained in his repertoire. It shows many of the qualities typical of *bàrdachd bhaile*: sharp wit, caricature, language technique and commentary on contemporary issues:

Rinn mi òran mu dhéidhinn a' chlach a chaidh a thoirt air falbh—'s e sin Clach Lia Fàil, mar a their iad 's a' Bheurla The Stone of Destiny. Agus tha beul-airthis ag ràdhtainn gun robh i fada ann an Ì—ann an Iona, agus gun robh i 'n Dail an Eas agus gun robh i aig Dùn Ollaidh, teann air an Òban agus gun deach i às a sin a-staigh do Pheairt, ann a Sgon. Agus 's e Rìgh Eidreid, 's è ghoid i agus a thug air falbh i anns an dà cheud deug agus a sia deug thar a' cheithir fichead, agus tha i ann a' Sasuinn agus bha daoine glé thapaidh a thug air falbh i á Sasuinn, agus tha mi glé dhuilich gun do leig 'ad air ais i.

Agus 's ann mar seo a labhair mi na briathran:

Siud na daoine' bha aoigheil, aighearach
 'S iad na laoch bha aighearach, aoigheil
 Siud na daoine' thug Lia Fàil dhachaidh dhuinn
 A-nall á Sasuinn gu caisteil Dhùn Éideann.

Dh'iarr mhinistear Lunnainn gun robh 'ad 'ga cumail
 Fritheidean fuireach aig oisein na còmhla
 Gillean bha sgairteil, rinn iad a glachadh
 Dh'fhàg siud Sasunnaich urrach brònach.

Có anns an tìr seo, 'na chuisle fuil sinnsreach
air [mhi-ciod mu'n] sgeul th' ann an-dràsda
 An ulaidh bu mhath leinn 'tighinn a-nall thar an aiseadh
 Chaoidh go fanachd an Tìr nam Beann àrd.

Mo shoraidh a-nunn go Wendy Wood
 'S i thogadh mo shunnd bhi tamull na còmhradh
 'G éisdeachd na h-eachdraidh 's e 's còir dhuinn a chleachadh
 'Cumail 'nar beachd bho thùs ar n-òige.

Mearlich thug bhuiainn i cha sheasadh 'ad cruadal
 Ghabhadh 'ad ruaig le cruas bhuillean lann
 'Na' sineadh air tulaich gun cheann ann an currachd.
 An criomachd gun chumadh gun 'ad murrach air càinnt.

Ma thig 'ad am bliadhna a-null 'ga h-iarraidh
 Chan eil ann ach saoir dhìomhain, 's ann ac' bhios an call
 Rìgh Dheòrsa fo mhulad nach fhaic e tuillidh
 Cha bhuin i dha chuideachd ged chum 'ad i thall.

Bidh sean agus òg a' gluasad le sòlas
 Bidh ceòl air dòigh le ceòl agus danrsa
 Bidh sgeula ri aithris fad ar maireann
 Air gaisge nan gallan a dh'aisig i 'nall.

Siud na daoine' bha aoigheil, aighearach
 'S iad na laoch bha aighearach, aoigheil
 Siud na daoine' thug Lia Fàil dhachaidh dhuinn
 A-nall á Sasuinn gu caisteil Dhùn Éideann.³

No doubt, if he were still alive today, he would have composed another song about the Stone of Destiny's return to Scotland, making quick work of the Tories' rather lame gesture in an attempt to gain political kudos. Clearly then Calum was greatly impressed with his first ever meeting with John. He goes on to describe a typical recording session:

That afternoon John MacDonald did come to see me. It was the first of many afternoons and evenings together. We continued to meet once weekly for a whole five months. Day after day he came and poured out the unwritten history of Lochaber. Everything that ever took place there seems to have left some imprint on his memory. Figures like St. Columba, Robert Bruce, the Red Comyn, Donald Ballach son of the Lord of the Isles, the Earl of Mar vanquished at the first battle of Inverlochy, Montrose and Alasdair, the son of Colla Ciotach, Charles Edward Stuart — no pretender but the rightful heir to the throne — and the patriot Dr. Archibald Cameron, brother of Locheil, flitted across the stage with which John the Bard was so familiar.⁴

This was no idle boast of Calum's as these historical characters appear in many of John's stories. As MacLean stated earlier John received most of his stories, if not all, from his father Seumas Ruadh Dòmhnallach. However, we may let John continue the narrative to give us some informative background on his genealogy as he related it to Calum in his native tongue:

Bha mo shinn-seanair ann an Lèanachan aig Clann 'ic Uraig agus airson a' sgalag a bha e sin. Agus 's ann an sin a rugadh mo sheanair agus bha e bliadhnaichean is bliadhnaichean ann gus an d'thàinig iad a-nall do'n àite anns am bheil sinn an-diugh. Bha mo sheanar 'na ghille òg agus phòs e té a bhuineadh do dh'Inbhir Mhoireasdain — Anna Dhùghallach — agus chan eil mi cinnteach nach e bràthair a h-athar, Iain Dùghallach, rinn an t-òran ris an abradh iad Bràighe Rùsgaidh. 'S tha mi 'n dùil gur h-e Granndach a bh'innte a thaobh màthair agus thog iad teaghlach ann an sin agus bha ochdnar ann de theaghlach. Agus chaochail mo sheanair anns a' Mhàirt anns a ochd ceud deug agus ochd deug thar an trì fichead. Agus chaochail mo sheamhair anns a h-ochd ceud deug agus trì fichead 's a h-ochd....deich bliadhna a bha eatarro. Agus mo seanair a thaobh an rathad eile mo shinn-sheanair thàinig e a-null às an Eilean Sgitheanach, Mac a' Phearsain, Niall Mac a' Phearsain...àite 's a bha e 's an Eilean Sgitheanach — Sléibhte 's thòisich e air obair Amar nan Long dar a bha iad ris. Thòisich iad air anns na h-ochd ceud deug agus a dhà. Agus phòs e

ban-Stiùbhartach agus mar sin tha mi càirdeach do na Stiùbhartaich. Bha rithist mo sheanair, a mhac, Dunnachadh phòs e ban-Chamshronach agus bhuineadh i do dhuine a bha gu h-àrd ann an Gleann Ruaidh ris an abradh iad Dòmhnall Mór Òg — Mór Chamshron. Chaochail Dunnachadh Mac a' Phearsain, mo sheanair, anns na h-ochd ceud deug agus ceithir fichead 's a cheithir agus chaochail mo sheamhair, Mór Chamshron, anns na naoi ceud deug. Agus 's ann mar sin agus tha an sliochd againn anns an àite seo bho chionn iomadh linn. Agus 's e Seamus Dòmhnallach a theireadh iad ri m'athair. Agus 's e Màiri Nic a' Phearsain muinntir an Eilein Sgitheanaich mar a thàinig a seanair a-null... 's e a theireadh ri mo mhàthair.⁵

John, later in the interview describes his grandfather's occupation and how his father picked up the stories. Indeed, the household was the taigh-céilidh of this part of Lochaber, where the old men of the district came to deliver or collect weaving, and as was the custom of the time, swapped tales, songs and anecdotes. Thus John's father became a receptacle of the local lore, and combined with a retentive and prodigious memory, made his father one of the best seanchaidhs of the district. One may ask what kind of people were these senachaidhs, and how they related to the rest of their community. Kenneth Jackson provides an answer: "That they represent the intelligentsia of the old rural Gaelic tradition; men of high intelligence, with keen minds and memories sharpened by practice, devoted to stories and legends, the enthusiastic guardians of their inherited oral Gaelic literature, and true artists of their craft. They are men widely educated in their oral learning of the people, through generally illiterate in their own language... They play, or used to play, a highly important part in the life and community because they were the focus of its intellectual position of unpaid professional men, which gave them a standing in the neighbourhood."⁶ These words are re-echoed when John set the scene where his father heard the stories which he was later to relate to his son:

....Mo sheanair 'na [dhuine] fhigheadair agus có bhiodh e freasdal dhà, agus 's e a b'òige de'n teaglach, ach m'athair ag obair air na h-iteachan agus

rudan seo a dhèanadh airson na beairt. Agus ag obair air sin. Agus a' cumail an t-soluist dha. Cha robh ach 'nuair 'ud, 'eil thu faicinn, pios mór de ghiùthsaidh 'na teine 'na chrùiseag agus m'athair a bha cumail seo air dòigh dha gus am faigheadh 's a' fhiodh. Bha na bodaich a' tighinn a-staigh a' coimhead air mo sheanair agus iad cho eòlach air bruidhinn agus air a h-uile àite bha 's an dùthaich riamh...seòrsa mo sheanair. Agus ann a seo bha m'athair ag éisdeachd ris na naidheachdan a bha e a' cluinntinn. Agus bha cuimhne aige nach robh aig duine 's an dùthaich. Dh'innseadh e, rachadh e a-staigh do'n chladh thall ann a-sin ann am Blàr Odhar, agus dh'innseadh e a h-uile duine riamh bha 'nan laighe is rachadh e cho dìreach thun uaigh 's rachamaid thun a t-seathair a tha sin...a h-uile duine a bh' ann. Có nì an-diugh e a' chuimhe a bh' aige...⁷

John then explains to Calum how he managed to pick up some of his father's stories:

Dar a bha mise beag agus òg feadh siud, bhiodh feadhainn a' tighinn a-nall a dh'fhaodainn na naidheachdan seo bho m'athair leis gun robh fhios aca gun robh e aig an Fhigheadair. Agus bha pàirt de na naidheachdan a bhiodh a' Fhigheadair ag innse agus tha math air taighean a thogail agus ag obair aig bonn ann a sin. 'S e sin na naidheachdan a bhiodh aige. Agus tha e bruidhinn air naidheachdan agus naidheachdan bochd is brònach a thachair anns an dùthaich agus sgeulachdan mar sin. Bhiodh iad a' gal...bha e cho math sin air naidheachdan. Bha m'athair ag éisdeachd ri seo agus bha iad aige agus aig feadhainn a dh'foighneachd dha m'athair mu dhéidhinn na naidheachdan a bhiodh ann agus bhiodh e 'gan innse agus bhitheamaid 'nuair sin mu'n teine ruith air ais 's air adhart ann a siud agus 's ann smàd iad a-mach sinn agus theireadh iad, “falbh agus cluith sibh-fhéin mach air an deigh.” Bha sin a' falbh 'nuair sin ri sleamhainneachadh air an deigh agus gun aon ghuth againn air na naidheachdan math a bha a' dol seachad. Agus 's ann a' dol an àird ann na bliadhnaichean...beagan bhliadhnaichean mu'n do chaochail m'athair 's ann a phiochd mi beagan a fhuair mi 's chan eil sin ach glé bheag.⁸

John was later to relate the following to Calum about his father:

....'S có aige bha mi 'cluinntinn na naidheachdan a tha seo — agus bha e fada na b' fhiosraiche na mise. Chan e gum bheil fiosrachadh mór agam, ach b' fheàrr leam gos an latha 'n-diugh gum bitheadh a' chuimhn' agam agus na beachdan a bh' aige. Cha robh móran sgoil aige, ach mur robh bha cuimhne agus meomhair aige bha sònraichte, agus 's ann aige bha mi 'cluinntinn na naidheachdan agus tha mi ro-dhuilich nach d'fhuair mi 'n có dhiubh agus iad cho furasda dhomh fhaodainn.⁹

Elsewhere John relates the following:

Bha e 'na chleachadh aige naidheachdan a bhith 'gan innseadh agus bha móran a' tighinn a-staigh do'n taigh. B'e sin a' chéilidh agus chan e a' chéilidh a tha ann an-diugh. Is chumaidh e air innseadh naidheachdan gum am bitheadh e dà air dheug a dh'oidhche. Cha robh mise a' gabhail móran suim dhe seo—an òige is a' ghòraiche a' strith rium...Agus bha de naidheachdan anns an taigh nam bitheadh a h-uile gin dhiubh air an cur an ceann a chéile, gur h-e a bhitheadh ann naidheachd mhór.¹⁰

This is not a case of affectation on behalf of John who clearly did have an excellent memory, more a case of genuine modesty, as John, I think, would always compare himself with his father and his repertoire. Clearly, John regrets not having paid more attention when his father was telling his tales. Despite this self-effacing modesty, Calum MacLean managed to collect from him a bulk of material which he diligently transcribed during 1951-52. Therefore, the main source for John MacDonald's repertoire is to be found in this manuscript collection, housed in the School of Scottish Studies. One has to admire the sheer amount of work that Calum undertook in his all too short a life-time. Even with the onset of cancer which was to finish him, he continued to work and remain cheerful under such adverse circumstances which reflects the strength of character that belied his small stature.

Regarding the style, in which John MacDonald tells his tales, it tends to be both laconic and terse, which lends itself to crisp delivery especially well developed in his historical tales. It will be noticed, also, that John has a propensity for dates suggesting that his repertoire may have been fortified by reading. Invariably John ends many of his stories by making comments such as ‘cha robh e dona’, or, ‘nach robh i glan’, suggesting that he was both conscious of the content and form of the story. And clearly he was also aware of the artistic delivery, a common characteristic of any story teller worth his salt. D.A. MacDonald makes an illuminating point when commenting upon modern storytelling which has relevance to John MacDonald’s repertoire: “Most of the stories one hears now are of the shorter, more anecdotal and legend types. Telling tends to be restricted to interested individuals who swap yarns or to the family circle.”¹¹ Needless, perhaps, to say John’s style and repertoire contrast completely with, for example, Angus *Barrach* MacMillan (1874-1954), a near contemporary, who could tell a story ‘Alasdair Mac a’ Cheird’, the longest story ever recorded in Europe, lasting nine hours!

The rough total of items from John MacDonald in this collection is 524. Although the stories are for the most part quite short, for instance, the longest tale runs only to ten manuscript pages, they are made up by their sheer bulk. A wide range of areas are dealt with that spans many subjects well known to story tellers in the Highlands and elsewhere: stories of second sight, both from local accounts and memorates, i.e. from the narrators own experience; historical legends; clan feuds and traditions; famous local figures i.e. Iain Lom, Dòmhnall Mór Òg, Iain Odhar, Eóghainn Dubh Camshron etc.; international tales; place-names and so forth. I have enumerated these tales into rough classes according to subject matter: supernatural and related items (105); international tales (23); anecdotes, local characters, jokes and religious topics (257); historical legends and traditions (121); songs (3); place-name origins (10); biographical material (3); riddles and proverbs (5).

In addition to this, there exist around 125 items in the Sound Archive (SA) in the School of Scottish Studies. Using the same rough classification I have broken them down as follows: supernatural and related items (27); songs

(mostly of his own composition) (43); international tales (7); historical legends and local traditions (33); biographical material (5); jokes, anecdotes and religious topics (29); place-name origins (8). Some of these items have been replicated, however, all together the total of 679 items can be given. A healthy and respectable number, I think, for someone who said he had only a little!

Of these latter SA items many were recorded by Calum MacLean in 1952-53 and when he returned to Brae Lochaber in 1958. Much of the songs and the place-name information were recorded by John MacInnes, formerly of the School of Scottish Studies, in 1961.

It will be of interest to give the particulars of other tradition bearers recorded by Calum MacLean at this period: Allan MacDonell, Bunroy, latterly living in the village of Inverlochy (41); Archibald MacInnes, Achluachrach, Brae Lochaber (69); John MacLeod, Glenfinnan (10); Ewen MacIntosh, Brae Lochaber (4) and Angus Stewart, Clunes, Loch Arkaig (2). Further material was collected during fieldwork in 1969 by John MacInnes comprising the following: Charles Cameron, Bohuntin, Brae Lochaber, latterly living in Onich, Nether Lochaber (60); Lexie Campbell, Keppoch, Brae Lochaber (60) and Rebecca Stewart, Achnacarry (20).

It will be recognised that this is a fairly large corpus of material. Some of which I have used in this study in order to clarify and elucidate the traditions found in John MacDonald's repertoire.

Other tradition bearers which John MacLeod mentioned to Calum MacLean were the following: *Dòmhnall Bàn MacMhairis*, *Dòmhnall Phàraig* [Donald MacLeod] and *Dòmhnall Bàn Gàrnlaire* [Donald Cameron].¹² John MacLeod relates the following: "...agus bha na seann-sgeulachdan Gàidhlig a bh' ann a chumail beò. Bu mhór am beud nach deach a seo a dhèanadh bho chionn deich bliadhna fichead air ais. Ri mo chuimhne-fhìn bha trì dhaoine an Loch Abar aig an robh seann-naidheachdan agus seann-sgeulachdan a chaidh air chall...Bha seann-naidheachdan aca a bheireadh a' falt dhe do cheann is a bheireadh smaointinn air duine tuigseil sam bith."¹³

Also, Allan MacDonell tells how Archibald MacArthur, noted earlier, from whom he heard many of his tales, regularly visited his father after Mass.

Although Archibald stayed in Fort Augustus, he travelled widely, as his occupation was a mole-catcher. Both his parents belonged to Brae Lochaber and he was related to Allan on his mother's side. Like John MacDonald, despite a poor schooling, Archibald gained a reputation as an extremely able storyteller. Allan MacDonell said, of the molecatcher as a story-teller, at that time, there was no man his equal in Lochaber.¹⁴

Some quarter of a century before John's birth "Brae Lochaber was distinct from most Highland districts, inasmuch as it still retained many of the descendants of the families which had lived in the area from the fifteenth century, such as Lochaber Campbells, MacArthurs, MacGillvantics, MacMartin-Camerons, and MacDonalds."¹⁵ The MacGillvantics (Clann Mhic Ghille Mhanntaich) were said to have come from Barra¹⁶ and settled in the Braes before the arrival of Clan Donald, but were soon assimilated into this stronger clan. However, by the time John had reached his teens the break-up of this 'clan society' was well advanced.

As can be seen from the biographical sketches that John recounted the main source of his material was from his father. His mother also was a keen upholder of the local traditions, although precedence of order must be given to his father, James. Stuart MacDonald tells us the following about John's tradition-bearing father: "The bard's father, alias 'Seumas Ruadh', and Alexander my grandfather, spent their youth together at Highbridge. At the time James was an apprentice mason, and his journeys taught him the Gaelic names and stories of every feature of the Lochaber landscape...James passed his knowledge of local history and Gaelic fairy tales to his son."¹⁷ It was also in this capacity John's father had been consulted by the Ordnance Survey at the time it was ongoing.¹⁸ It was only in his later years that John took a real interest in these traditional tales and made a conscious (and successful) effort to memorise them. The fact that he was young (and foolish by his own admission) debarred him from taking an earlier interest, although the attitude of the adults may not have helped matters. As he had related the children were told to go out and play while the céilidh was ongoing, which tells us that the stories, for the most part, were for adults, and thus deemed unfit for children. This notion, of

course, goes against the commonly held mistaken belief that ‘fairy’ tales were specifically for children. John, in this regard, was a passive tradition bearer, although he actively sought to maintain them through the good works of Calum MacLean, which ensured that they have been saved for posterity. Indeed, John, during his fairly long life, must have been consciously aware of the steady and inevitable decline of the Gaelic language and culture in the Braes. To someone of John’s sensitivity it must have been a rather heart-breaking experience to have seen a light that once shone so brightly fade into eventual nothingness. The loss of Gaelic can happen in a little as two generations from bilingual parents whose offspring become English-speaking monoglots. John’s perception of this did not deter his eagerness to at least recover some of it, no doubt motivated by the same type of sentiment as Calum MacLean so well expresses: “The object of my visit was to garner some of the traditions that had survived the ravages of time and were passing into the realms of the unknown....Before it became too late, I had to recover something that would give our contemporaries and the generations of the future some picture of the past.”¹⁹ Many are the reasons for the decline of oral transmission, however, the most patent of the causes being among the following: the rapid inroads of English, at the expense of native Gaelic, new communication networks i.e. the West Highland Railway Line (which John had worked on), the lack of schooling in Gaelic (it was not even so much as mentioned in the 1872 Education Act) and the relative uninterest of the youth in such matters (although they are not entirely to be blamed for such apathy given the lack of educational opportunity in their native tongue). With the coming of the railway, facilitating access to the whole of the West Highlands, there also came an increase in nearby Fort William’s population. From a head-count of 1,212 in 1871 the population increased to 1, 594 in 1881 and to 1,856 in 1891. The new Gaelic question inserted into the 1891 census saw that 65.5% of Fort William’s residents were Gaelic speakers (including 48 monoglots).²⁰ In the Braes this percentage would have been slightly higher, possibly as high as 90% given that it was a rural area compared with the more cosmopolitan Fort William which always had an enclave of English speakers. The number of Gaelic speakers in Fort William

has been on the decline ever since and the West Highland Line had no small part to play. As Calum MacLean puts it, somewhat forcibly: “Yet English was a completely foreign language in Lochaber until the advent of the West Highland Railway in the final decade of the last century.”²¹ Despite the slight exaggeration the point remains true.

Further Calum MacLean trenchantly notes: “A new culture had penetrated the Rough Bounds (Garbh-chriochan) of the Gael and was sweeping before it all tales, all memories of the past...The culture of Hollywood had certainly influenced youth in Lochaber today.”²² A remarkably perceptive statement in that cinema and television have superseded the traditional songs and tales. The world in which we live is one in which visual information takes precedence over aural information. The Disney cartoon classic of Snow-White and the Seven Dwarves familiar to us from childhood has displaced the traditional céilidh version. Although the story remains familiar in both cases. The story-teller could not adapt to such fierce competition and with this technological advancement his days were always numbered. No longer would Alexander MacPhee take a stroll of an evening to Seumas MacDonald’s croft to await a captivated audience, eager in anticipation of an historic tale about Iain Lom, not unless Take The High Road happened to be on that particular night. Yet, despite the clear differences, where the céilidh was a social gathering encouraging interaction, whereas home entertainment such as television tend to alienate the individual, they have common ground: that of entertainment, pure and simple. This is, perhaps, a fact, oftentimes glossed over when waxing lyrical about the traditional céilidh. The céilidh was the cinema, the newspaper, the gossip column, the coffee morning, etc. of its day. A gathering where tales were told, songs recited, jokes retold to the same laughter and most importantly, where people were amused in their sole source of collective entertainment. Of course, where there are any gatherings of people today, whether in a pub or a dentist’s waiting room, tales, jokes or urban myths are swapped. And so the process goes on—it’s part of human nature.

Notes

- ¹ Bruford, Alan and MacDonald, Donald A. *Scottish Traditional Tales*. Edinburgh: Polygon, 1984: 484. John recorded hundreds of local historical and supernatural legends and other traditions and songs for Calum, mostly unfortunately erased after transcription.
- ² MacLean, Calum I. *The Highlands*. Club Leabhar-Inbhirnis, 1975: 20.
- ³ John MacDonald. *Òran na Cloiche*. SA 1952/126/1a & b. Recorded 10/8/1952 by Calum MacLean. Transcribed by Donald Archie MacDonald.
- ⁴ *ibid*: 20-21.
- ⁵ SA 53.255.B6a. *Sinn-seanairean Iain Dòmhnallach*. Recorded by Calum MacLean. Transcribed with the assistance of Professor Donald MacAulay.
- ⁶ Jackson, Kenneth. *The International Tale and Early Welsh Tradition*. Cardiff, 1962: 51-52.
- ⁷ SA 53.255.B6b. *Sinn-seanairean Iain Dòmhnallach*. Recorded by Calum MacLean. Transcribed with the assistance of Professor Donald MacAulay.
- ⁸ *ibid*.
- ⁹ SA 1952/124/5. Recorded by Calum MacLean. Transcribed by Donald Archie MacDonald.
- ¹⁰ John MacDonald. *M'athair*. CIM I.I.1, TSB 1: 47-48. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 17/1/1951.
- ¹¹ Thomson, Derick (ed.). *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*. Glasgow: Gairm Publications 110, 1994: 281.
- ¹² John MacLeod. *Seann-seanchaidhean*. CIM I.I.8, TSB 8: 774-777. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 15/5/1951.
- ¹³ *ibid*.
- ¹⁴ Allan MacDonell. *Gilleasbuig MacArtair—an sgeulaiche*. CIM I.I.5, TSB 5: 387-388. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 22/2/1951. Summarised by me.
- ¹⁵ MacDonald, Stuart. *Back to Lochaber*. The Pentland Press, 1994: 4.
- ¹⁶ MacDonald, Rev. Angus J., & Archibald. *The Clan Donald. Vol. 2*. Inverness, 1900: 613.
- ¹⁷ *ibid. Back to Lochaber*: 248.
- ¹⁸ Rankin, Robert A. 'Òran na Comhachaig: Text and Tradition'. *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Glasgow* Vol. V (1958): 127.
- ¹⁹ ref. 2 *The Highlands*: 18.
- ²⁰ Cameron, Walter. *The Burgh of Fort William 1875-1975*. The Town Council of Fort William, 1975.
- ²¹ ref. 2 *The Highlands*: 19.
- ²² *ibid.*: 18.

Tales of the Supernatural

Of superstitious tales in Lochaber many concern the celebrated witch *Gormshùil Mhór na Maighe* (The Great Blue-eyed Witch of Moy). Mary Mackellar, the Clan Cameron bardess, relates that Gormshùil was a common name among the Scotch and Irish Celts. It was the name of the wicked wife of Brian Boruimhe, who brought the Jarl Sigurd and Brodir, the Viking, to fight against her husband at Clontarff, where he was slain. It was a common name among the Camerons until it fell into disrepute through this famous witch, and no child in Lochaber ever got the name again. The Camerons of Moy were said to be a branch of the Camerons of Callart, and are known as 'Teaghlach na Maighe'. A young widow of the house of Callart had fled for protection to Lochiel at Tor Castle, with her boys, Charles and Archibald. This Charles was the progenitor of the family of Moy, and the name of Charles had been common among them through the ages. These Camerons had Wester Moy, whilst a family of the name of Mackinnon had some from Skye, with a lady who married into the Lochiel family; and when he married he got a place near Ardnois in the Giùthsach, or great fir forest of Loch-Arceag. Afterwards the family got Easter Moy; but to this day they are known as Sliochd Iain Maigh na Giùthais. These Mackinnons, who probably came from the Strath area of Skye frequently intermarried with the Camerons of Wester Moy.¹ These families of Mackinnons were descended from a bodyguard who had accompanied the Mackinnon lady, probably as part of a tocher. One of these Mackinnons married Gormshùil at some point early in the sixteenth century. Although no precise dates can be given when Gormshùil is said to have lived the story concerning the dispute over the march of the Cameron lands in the eastern part of Lochaber and the Earl of Atholl's lands of Rannoch can be dated to around this time. Atholl claimed the valuable hill grazings of Beinn a' Bhric. This event is said to have occurred in the life-time of Ewen MacAllan Cameron (c. 1480 — 1546), 13th Chief of Clan Cameron, and the first to be designated Locheil.² John MacDonald tells this popular tale as follows:

Bha deasbud glé mhór eadar Loch Iall agus Diùc Athall ma dhéidhinn Bheinne Bhric. Tha Beinne Bric gu h-àrd aig Ceann Loch Tréig. Agus bha litrichean eatarra agus iad a' tighinn gu còrdadh uamhasach càirdeil. Agus smaointich Loch Iall gun robh a' fear a bha a' cur nan litrichean cho càirdeil caomh ris-fhéin. Agus dh'fhalbh e a thachairt air airson an cumhnant a bhith aca ma dhéidhinn Beinne Bhric. Cò thachair air air an rathad ach Gormhshùil Mhór na Maighe, mar a theireadh iad rithe, bana-bhuidseach cho làidir is am bheil forfhais againn:

“C'à bheil thu a' dol, Eóghainn,” thubhairt i.

“Tha mi a' dol an àirde a thachairt air Diùc Athall agus sinn a' dol a chòrdadh mu dhéidhinn Beinne Bhric.”

“C'àite 'eil do chuid dhaoine?”

“O! cha ruig mi leas daoine ann. 'S e rud glé chàirdeil a tha sinn ris an-dràsda, agus cha ruig mi a leas na daoine a thoirt leis. Coimheadaidh e glé shuarach dhomh-sa na daoine a thoirt leis mur a bidh daoine aig duine eile. Bidh sin,” thubhairt e, “a' cur an céill nach eil mi a' creidsinn nam briathran a tha e a' cur 'gam ionnsaigh ann a litrichean.”

“Cluichidh iad cho math riut-fhéin, Eóghainn, agus thoir leat iad. Mur bidh feum agad orra, is urrainn daibh tighinn dachaidh.”

Thill e agus thug e leis a' chuid dhaoine. Smaointich e dar a bha e a' teannadh air lochan a tha seo ris an abair iad Lochan a' Chlaidheimh gun cuireadh e na daoine aige a falach air cùl cnoc a bha goirid bhuidh.

“Agus ma bhios deasbud ann agus coltas connsachadh sam bith agus buillean, tionndaidhidh mi an taobh dearg dhe'n a' chòta agam a-mach, dath na fala. Tuigidh sibh an uair sin agus chì sibh gum bheil an t-ongaid air a bonn.”

Chum Loch Iall air is chan fhaca e duine ach an Diùc. Thachair iad. Bha an Diùc gu math làidir an uair seo agus na daoine aige air an cur a falach air a cùlaibh le cnoc. Agus bha e a' dol a bhith gu math garg air Loch Iall. Chunnaic e na daoine a' tighinn, Loch Iall:

“Dé na daoine a tha seo?”

“Tha,” thubhairt Diùc Athall, “muilt Athall a' tighinn a dh'ithe feurachd Beinne Bric.” An uair seo thionndain es' an còta agus thàinig na daoine aig Loch Iall.

“Dé na daoine a tha seo, Eóghainn?” thubhairt e.

“Tha,” thubhairt e, “na coin Abrach a dol a dh'ithe na muilt Athallach airson a bhith ag ithe feur Beinne Bhric.”

“Caisg do choin, Eóghainn,” thubhairt e, “bidh an t-sìth air a dhèanamh.”

Thog Eóghainn a làmh ris na daoine agus thàinig iad gu math ciùin 'un a chéile.

“Agus 's e na cumhnantan a bhios ann, an claidheamh a th' agam ann a seo 's an truaill, tilgidh sinn anns an lochan e. Agus cho fad is a bhios an claidheamh 's an loch 's ann leat a tha Beinne Bhric.”

Agus 's ann mar sin a thug iad Lochan a' Chlaidheimh air. Bliadhnaichean an déidh sin bha ciobair a' coimhead as deaghaidh spréidh agus dé chunnaic e a' tighinn am follais anns an loch ach ceann a' chlaidheimh, far an robh tart mór anns a' bhliadhna sin. Chaidh e a-nunn agus thug an claidheamh ás an loch. Chuala a' ministear Ross a bha gu h-iseal ann an Aonachan gun deach an claidheamh a thoirt ás an loch. Is bha fhios aige air an cumhnantan. Nan tigeadh an claidheamh ás an loch, gun cailleadh Beinne Bhric a h-ainm bho Loch Iall. Agus an uair seo chuir e gràinne dhaoine an àirde leis a' chlaidheamh. Is thilg e 's an lochan e. Agus tha e ann gus an là an-diugh. Tha gràinne mhath bhliadhnaichean bhuaithe sin. Chaochail a' ministear Ross ann an 1822. Agus tha e air a thiodhlachadh ann an Cladh Bhlàr Odhair.³

This local tradition must have been very popular as it enters into the repertoire of Allan MacDonell as well as that of Archibald MacInnes.⁴ Both their versions are slightly shorter than the one given by John. However they both tell the main events of the story. John Stewart in his history of the Clan Cameron tells us that the words attributed to Gormshùil when warning Locheil were the following:

“Faire faire Loch-iall

Cian do thriall gun do ghasgaich,

'Sa liutha fear mór mu Lòchaidh agad,
'Us dà thaobh Loch Arcaig?'⁵

Although she must have been of a forbidding personality her appearance is said to have been one of extreme beauty — blue alluring eyes matched with raven-black hair, quite in discord with the image of a one eyed, ugly carlin so often associated with witches in oral tradition. Mary Mackellar described her in the following terms: “She was a strong, brave young woman, full of the sagest wisdom, and very high-spirited, and she had no objection to be considered *uncanny*, as it gave her power over her fellow men. People shook their heads and said, “Tha tuille 's a paidir aig Gormhsuil,” hinting that she knew more than her Paternoster; but she heeded them not. The fisherman going forth to the river, or the hunter going to the hill, came for her blessing, and gave her of their spoils.”⁶ Gormshuil flits in and out of the events that concern Clan Cameron. More often than not to warn the Chief of some future calamity that can be avoided if her advice is heeded, as can be seen in the preceding tale.

Another story where Gormshuil makes her appearance is in the rather sinister episode of the *Taghairm*, or “giving his supper to the devil.” J.G. Campbell writes: “It consisted in roasting cats alive on spits till the arch-fiend himself appeared in bodily shape. He was then compelled to grant whatever wish the persons who had the courage to perform the ceremony preferred, or, if that was the object of the magic rite, to explain and answer whatever question was put to him.”⁷ There can be little doubt of the antiquity of this particular rite as Martin Martin in *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland* gives three descriptions of the *Taghairm*. A man would be frog marched to a boundary burn between two villages. There the man would be tossed hip-wise against the bank of the river until such time as the little creatures of the sea came to provide the answers to such questions that they were seeking.⁸

Martin adds, somewhat credulously: “I had an account from the most intelligent and judicious men in the isle of Skye that about sixty-two years ago the oracle was thus consulted only once, and that was in the parish of Kilmartin, on the east side, by a wicked and mischievous race of people, who are now

extinguished, both root and branch.”⁹ J.G. Campbell adds that the referred to ‘race of people’ who performed the rite were the McQuithens (*Clann 'ic Cuithein*), a minor Skye sept, in *an Eaglais Bhréige*, which he translates as the “Make-believe Cave”, on the east side of Skye.¹⁰ Contrary to Martin’s report they were more than likely to have been absorbed into the MacDonalds than totally extirpated. The second way in which Martin describes the rite is whereby a man is wrapped in a cow-hide with the exception of his head. He is then left in a solitary place for a night and by the next morning his invisible friends would have imparted the knowledge that he was seeking.¹¹

Lewis Spence writes in his book *The Magic Arts of Celtic Britain* in evidence of the ancient rite in Welsh tradition: “...that this description of the taghairm was practised in Wales is clear from the statement in the tale known as “The Vision of Rhonabwy”, in which Rhonabwy a warrior of Powys, beheld a vision of the court of King Arthur while sleeping on the skin of a yellow heifer, as we read in the Mabigionian.”¹²

Martin then briefly describes the third way of consulting the oracle: “The same company who put the man into the hide took a live cat and put him on a spit; one of the number was employed to turn the spit, and one of his consorts inquired of him, What are you doing? He answered, I roast this cat until his friends answer the question, which must be the same that was proposed by the man shut up in the hide. And afterwards a very big cat comes, attended by a number of lesser cats, desiring to relieve the cat turned on the spit, and then answers the question.”¹³

Such were the dire consequences of such a rite that, according to J.G. Campbell, there are only three mentions of its actual performance in Highland tradition. Apart from the above mentioned, the two others who are said to have performed the *Taghairm* were Allan Cameron, 12th Chief of the Clan Cameron, better known as *Ailean nan Creach* (Allan of the Forays), at *Dail a' Chait*, near Tor Castle; and by Dun Lachlan (*Lachlann Odhar*) in the big barn of Pennygowan (*Sabhal Mór Peighinn a' Ghobhainn*) in Mull. J.G. Campbell notes that because the details of the tradition are so similar that they might be two versions of an older legend.¹⁴

Although the Lochaber version of this tale is generally attributed to *Ailean nan Creach*, it would seem, however, to be more appropriate to attribute it rather to his son, Ewen MacAllan (*Eóghainn MacAilein*), mentioned earlier, as this would be more in keeping with the dates in which Gormshuil is said to have lived. The reason for the tale's attribution to *Ailean nan Creach* was due to the latter's notorious fame as a cattle reiver. He is said to have lifted a creach "for every year of his life, and one for every quarter he was in his mother's womb."¹⁵ After which he is said to have regretted the misdeeds of his past and endured the rite of the *Taghairm* in the hope of gaining salvation. However, his untimely death at the age of thirty-two would have scarcely given him enough time to have lifted every creach attributed to him far less than to have regretted them. His son, Ewen, according to tradition gained an even greater notoriety for cattle reiving and the event which led him to the *Taghairm* was said to have been through the death of his son Donald. John Drummond of Balhadie, writing in the orthography of the late eighteenth century, describes the circumstances of how this affected Ewen: "Hitherto Locheill had success in all his attempts. The vigour of his genius and courage bore him through all his dufficultys. He had a flourishing family and opulent fortune, but the death of his eldest sone Donald, which happened about this time, plunged him into so deep a melancholey, that he, on a sudden, resolved to give up on the world, and apply himself to the works of religion and peace. To expiat for former crims, he sett out on a pilgrame to Rome; but arriveing in Holland, he found himself unable to bear up against the fatigue of so long a journey, and therefore, sent one M'Phaill, a priest, who was his chaplain and confessor, to doe that job with him from the Pope. One part of the penance enjoyned him by his Holiness was to build six chappells as to many saints, which he performed. Some of them are still extant, and the ruins are yet to be seen in Lochaber and bordering countreys."¹⁶

A fragmentary version of this tale is given by both John MacDonald and Charles Cameron. The latter mentions the pilgrimage to Rome: "Bha e smaoineach' gum faigheadh e mathanas airson a h-uile cron a rinn e riamh. A-réir a sgeul a fhuair mise, chaidh e a-mach do'n Ròimh 's bha e a' coimhead air a' Phàp'. Agus thubhairt am Pàpa ris gun feumadh e eaglais a thogail mura 'm

faigheadh e mathanas airson a' chuid pheacain an togadh e...seachd...dhiubh theagamh gum faigheadh e mathanas bho 'ur Slainghear airson na dorch-bheart a rinn e."¹⁷ Nevertheless, it has to be said that it is remarkable that such an unusual tale, as given in the literature, is not preserved in fuller version, so far as I am aware, in the local tradition of the area, especially taking into account the catholic repertoire of John MacDonald. The attribution to *Ailean nan Creach* and the latter's penance to built the seven churches follows the local tradition closely:

Thog e na seachd creachan agus ghabh e fìor-aithreachas às. Agus bha e 'na charaide do Loch Iall, gu math càirdeach dhà. Feumaidh gur h-e Ailean Camshron a bh' air. Agus thog e na seachd creachdan agus na seachd eaglaisean. Tha té dhiubh ann an Eilean Fhìonain air Loch Seile. Tha té dhiubh an Cille Bhadaoin aig a' Chorrán an Earra-Ghàidheal. Tha té dhiubh an Cille Choirill am Bràigh Loch Abar. Tha té dhiubh an Sròn an Dùin am Bàideanach. Chan eil forfhais agam air an dithist eile, ach thog e na seachd. Agus bha e a' smaoinichdainn an uair sin, 'n uair a thog e na seachd, gun d'rinn e a dhleasan a thaobh a' mheirle a chruinnich e agus a thrus e. Agus chaidh an togail anns a' bhliadhna ceithir cheud deug agus cheithir fichead is a cheithir.¹⁸

It seems unlikely that John MacDonald is merely giving an outline of a fuller version (although this might well be the case) judging by the extent of his other tales.

A rather more incredible version of the tale relates that after Ewen had fallen ill in Holland, taking this as a portent he returned home to consult Gormshùil to be told that he must perform the *Taghairm* in order to relinquish the burden of his past misdeeds. Ewen then proceeded to a place since then named *Dail a' Chait* and built a wattle hut. On the strict instruction of Gormshùil he was attended only by his gillie and a captured cat. He then ran a spit through the non-vital parts of the cat over a fire within the hut, while Ewen stood guard outside with his claymore.

The excruciating wild screams of the roasted cat attracted all the cats in Lochaber who were supposed to have been a legion of demons in feline form. If Ewen's nerve failed, or any false move was made, then he would have been shredded to death. However, Ewen's resolution stood well in the face of imminent disaster. "According to one version of the story, he shouted to his gillie, 'Cìod air bith a chì, no chual thu, cuir mu'n cuairt an cat.'"¹⁹ The cats were strangely endowed with the power of human speech and, as Somerled MacMillan relates, they each in turn cried out, "This is ill-usage for a cat," to which Ewen retorted, "It will be better presently."²⁰ On the point of being torn limb from limb, Ewen said that he would only release the cat on the condition that the King of the Cats came himself. He duly appeared as a gigantic one-eyed black cat called *Cam Dubh*.²¹ Silencing the other cats he asked Ewen: "Why are you torturing my brother?"; "Cìod dochann a tha thu a' dèanamh air mo bhràthair?" or some such words to that effect. Ewen replied that he would only stop if he could inform him of the best way to make atonement for his past misdeeds. "You must build seven churches—one for each of the seven forays." Ewen duly assented to this and released the scorched cat who then rushed from the hut, with the other host of cats in close pursuit, who then flung themselves unceremoniously into the River Lochy in a place still known today as *Poll a' Chait*. After swimming down part of the river to the first bend where they climbed out and doubtless returned to their respective homes. This part of the river is known as *Buinne a' Chait*.

A more prosaic explanation of these names, however, maybe due to the long association of these places with Clan Chattan, whose totemic symbol is incidentally the cat.

It would seem that the origins of the *Taghairm* are ancient. Black cats have long been associated as witches' familiars, among other creatures such as hares, toads, etc. Many of the writers fall into the etymological trap of explaining the *Taghairm* from *taigh* and *gairm* thus giving the 'House of Invocation'. J.G. Campbell says that the actual meaning is rather 'spirit-call' coming from the root *ta* which is closely associated with words such as *taibhse* or *taidhbhse*, *tannasg* or *tamhasg* and so forth.²² These etymologies are both

erroneous. The Old Irish form is in fact *togairm* (sometimes *tagairm*) the verb noun of *do-gair*. It has a range of senses including ‘invoking’ and ‘petitioning’. An example taken from Keating is especially relevant in this context: “do thoghairm na ndeamhan” ‘to conjure up demons’.²³

It also appears as a rather absurd request of the Devil himself to suggest the building of seven churches. Obviously he still retains not only a sense of ironic humour but one of the absurd, at least in this instance.

Authorities partially disagree on the actual sites of the aforesaid churches which Ewen is said to have build in fulfilment of his diabolic compact with *Cam Dubh*.²⁴ They all agree upon *Cill Choirill*, Brae Lochaber and *Cill Mhàilidh*, Corpach. Other strong candidates are *Cill Mael Rubha*, Arisaig; *Cille Choinnich* (Kilkellan), Loch Laggan, Badenoch; *Kildonan*, Eigg?, *Cill Chòmhghain*, Knoydart; and one in Morvern. Others which have been suggested are St. Munda’s on Loch Leven and St. Finan’s on Loch Sheil. None of the authorities mention the two others named by John: *Cille Mhaodain*, Corran, Ardgour and *Sròn an Dùin*, Badenoch. In deference to the age of such religious sites, many of which reach back as far as the seventh century, to the time of *Calum Cille*, perhaps it is more precise to say that Ewen restored rather than actually built them.

A further tale where both Ewen and Gormshùil make their appearance occurs both in John MacDonald’s repertoire and in the literature (strictly speaking this should be oral literature). Although the witch is given the general name of *a' Chailleach*, she is usually identified as Gormshùil. However, in this instance she is rather malevolent towards Ewen. One can speculate that this may have been the result of unrequited love. Nevertheless, it probably reflects the ambivalent nature of the witch, a mainstay characteristic of the fairy people, so well attested to in oral tradition:

Bha Loch Iall air a thuras air adhart Loch Airceig agus e a' gabhail rathad goirid thar a' mhonaidh. Chunnaic e cailleach luirceach, bacach air thoiseach air agus gun i a' dèanamh móran astair. Cha robh e fad 'us an d'thàinig e suas ris a' chaillich. Ach cha do chòrd coltas na caillich ro-mhath ri Loch Iall. Ach 'n uair

a bha e suas ri taobh na caillich cha robh i nì na bu chrùbaiche na e-fhéi' agus bu luaineach a ceum. Ach bha Loch Iall gu math sgairteil air coiseachd agus bha e a' fàgail na caillich. Agus thubhairt a' chailleach:

“Ceum thar do cheum, Eóghainn.”

“Ceum thar do cheum, a chailleach, agus ceum a bharrachd.”

Chum iad orra:

“Dùrachd mo chridhe dhuit, Eóghainn,” thubhairt i an ceann treis.

“Dùrachd do chridhe do'n chlach ghlas 'ud thall.” Agus sùil gun d'thug iad sgoilt a' chlach 'na dà leth.

“Is math gun do sheachdain do dhùrachd mi,” thubhairt Eóghainn.

Agus dh'fhàg e i a sin:

“Agus imich as mo dhéidh. Cha bhi mi 'na do chuideachda na's fhaide.”

Agus dh'fhàg e i. Agus 'n uair a sheall e dheaghaidh, an deaghaidh a dhol mu'n cuairt rudha chan fhaca e an còrr sealladh do'n chaillich is cha do chuir i an còrr dragh air.²⁵

Abrach (D.C. MacPherson) adds an interesting detail that when Ewen is supposed to have performed the *Taghairm* he received a pair of silver shoes which not only protected him from steel and lead (i.e. swords and musket shot) but also from enchantment. Apart from this the essentials of the plot remain the same, although Abrach mistakenly attributes the story to Sir Eóghainn Dubh Cameron, whom the historian MacAulay referred to as the *Ulysses of the Highlands*, the famous 17th Chief of Clan Cameron. It is little wonder that such confusion should arise given that Ewen was an extremely popular name among the Cameron Chiefs. And bearing in mind that oral repetition can confound the issue, therefore the two Ewens have subsequently become confused with one another. Abrach's account is given as follows to contrast the literary style of the his elegant prose compared to the fine, free-flowing colloquial version supplied by John:

Bha Sir Eobhan turus air ghnòthuch cabhaig an Ionairnis, agus a' tilleadh dhachaidh, mar a bha e a' togail a mach as a' bhaile, ciod a' cham-chòdhail a rinn

suas ris ach luiriste de bhoirionnach iargalta, fad-chasach—ban-bhuidseach. Cha do chuir iad fàilte air a chéile ann; ach bha ise cumail an aon chéum air an co-imeachd ris. Bu cho math le Eobhan ban-chompanach eile rithe, 's gun fhios aige co b' i; ach cha robh a choltas oirre-se gun robh a chuideachas a' droch-chòrdadh rithe. Ach, 's na gàmagan a bh' ann, thugar i truisleachd oirre fhein 's thuirt i:

“Ceum ann, Eodhain!”

Nise, an luib na bròig-airgid a fhuair Sir Eobhain 's an taghairm, fhuair e buaidh air cruaidh, air luaidhe, 's air buidseachd, 's cha robh sin gun fhios da, agus thuirt e ris a' chaillich 's e toirt tàrr-leum as:

“Ceum air do cheum, a chailleach,

'S an ceum barrachd aig Eobhan!”

Cha robh an còrr bruidhne eatarra 's an àm; ach chum iad na h-aon sinteagan air gus an d' ràinig iad caolas Mhic-Phadruic—'s cha b'iongantach iad a bhi sgith. Dh'éibh Eobhan an t-aiseag 's thàinig am bàta; cha leigeadh na gillean a stigh a' chailleach. An uair a thuig i nach fhaigheadh i an t-aiseag, thuirt i, 's i gabhail a cead de dh-Eobhan:

“Dùrachd mo chridhe dhut, a ghaoil Eobhain.”

Bha Eobhain air fhaicill, 's fhreagair e, “Dùrachd do chridhe do'n chloich ghlais ud thall,” agus, a mhic chridhe, bha deagh-thuiteamas seachais air—sgoilt a' chlach 'na dà bhloigh!²⁶

It seems natural that such an unusual geographic feature such as this split rock should have other traditions connected to it. The name of the rock in Gaelic is *Clach Phàdraig*. The story behind the name relates that a Viking trying to save his son hung onto this rock on the south side of the narrows. Despite this brave act all his attempts were in vain.²⁷ And to commemorate this episode also, the Gaelic for the Ballachullish Narrows remains *Caolas 'ic Phàdraig*. A rather more ancient tale, collected by John Dewar, tells us that Earragan, the King of Lochlann, sailed up Loch Linnhe with a fleet of forty ships, in pursuit of Ailde, one of the Fionn, who had eloped with Earragan's estranged wife. The narrative continues: “They sailed round the north of Alban and south through the isles,

passed through the straight which is called Loch Linnhe and then sailed into Loch Leven. When they were sailing through the strait which is now called Caolas Mhic Phàruig, the current was very rapid, and one of the ships called the *Iùbhrach* was commanded by a skipper whose name was Pàruig, and on account of being unacquainted with the strait, Pàruig let the *Iùbhrach* strike the rock at the side of the strait, the rock being called thereafter Clach Phàruig (Pàiraig's Stone) and ever after that, the strait was called Caolas Mhic Phàraig."²⁸ Whether there is a similar looking stone on Loch Arkaig-side I do not know, however, no doubt, John placed the story here in an attempt to localise it even further. Nevertheless, the internal logic of the story of the split rock and the presence of the ferry demands that it be firmly placed at the Ballachulish Narrows. The idea behind this, as popularised by Robert Burns in *Tam O' Shanter*, is that witches cannot traverse water where both the dead and living pass. This is true of Ballachulish Narrows given the close vicinity of Eilean Mhunnda (St. Munde's Isle). It will be remembered that this was allegedly built (or rather restored) by Ewen himself, or by his father. This Isle is also the traditional burial ground for the MacIain's of Glencoe, the Camerons of Callart, Nether Lochaber, the Stewarts of Appin and the MacKenzies of Onich and North Ballachulish.²⁹

The last tradition which I wish to deal with concerns Gormshùil's death, for she was a mortal witch. Somewhat unusually this was by drowning, given her aversion to crossing the Ballachulish Narrows in the preceding tale. John gives us a succinct account of it:

Có nach cuala mu Ghormshùil Mhór na Maighe agus Donnshùil a bha 'as an Fhearsaid. Ach 's e Gormshùil Mhór na Maighe an té bu chumachdaiche de na bana-bhuidsichean air am bheil forfhais againn. Agus bha i daonnan a' siùbhal air ais 's air adhart nam bruachan, agus cha bu toigh le neach sam bith a chitheadh i i a bhith a' tighinn an rathad. Cha robh bó a chailleadh bainne na maighdeann a chailleadh a leannan, na bó a rachadh le creag na rud sam bith a bha a' tachairt, 's e Gormshùil Mhór na Maighe a rinn siud. Ach bha i-fhéin agus bana-chompach a bh' aice a' dol a-nunn rathad Achadh an Cara agus:

“O! bradan,” thubhairt i.

Is ruith i sìos thar an robh struthan crìon anns an allt. Agus chaidh greim a dhèanamh oirre ann a-sin ach cha bhàthadh e piseag, an lod anns an deach a bàthadh. Is chan fhaca a bana-chompach bradan na rud eile 's an allt. Agus bha an drochaid ann a-sin gu bhith aig Achadh na Cara. Agus their iad Drochaid Ghormshùil rithe gus an latha an-diugh. Agus 's ann a sin a chaidh Gormshùil a bhàthadh agus b'e sin an deireadh. Agus bha iad a' dèanadh dheth gur h-e an t-aistear a bha 's a' bhradan a chum 's ann allt i leis cha bhàthadh e piseag. Agus 's aithne dhomh-sa an t-allt a bh' ann. Agus a' chiad trip a chunna mi an t-allt sin, 's anns na h-ochd ceud deug agus ceithir deug thar a cheithir fichead, a chunna mi an toiseach e. Agus tha mi eòlach gu leòr air. Is chan eil aon duine a tha a' dol a-nunn a dh'Achadh na Cara nach eil fios aca air Drochaid Ghormshùil.³⁰

The older name of this burn is *Allt Choille Ròs* but known since this incident as *Allt Ghormshùil* or *Allt a' Bhradain*.³¹ As an appendage to this, a rather more tragic consequence of Gormshùil's drowning unfolds. For it was on her way to remind Locheil of the promise he had made after her council had saved him at Lochan a' Chlaidheimh. Gormshùil on that day, with her knowledge of the future, said to Locheil after he had thanked her: “Yet,” she added, “in spite all your promises of kindness to me you will one day hang my son.” “Never,” said Locheil, “you have only to come to me, and remind me of this day, and even if your son deserving hanging, he will be saved for your sake.”³² Recalling the promise granted by Locheil, some years later Gormshùil magnanimously had her own son, who was quite innocent, blamed for the murder of another. And while on her way to petition for the life of her son she was drowned trying to catch the salmon. Thus her words were fulfilled and Locheil unknowingly had her son strung up. Gormshùil herself was buried in the old Mackinnon graveyard, probably next to her son, near the present Moy Farm, Kilmonavaig.

Perhaps her most famous escapade is her alleged involvement with the sinking of the *Florenzia*, a survivor of the storm-blasted Spanish Armada, in Tobermory Bay, Mull, in 1588. Thus the dates in which Gormshùil is said to have lived can be tentatively given as c.1500-c.1588. However, as it had been

attempted to show, names are perhaps the most fluid element of oral narrative tradition, and cannot, therefore, be heavily relied upon.

As a kind of reprise, Mary Mackellar leaves us with an *òran-luaidh* between a witch from Glengarry and Gormshùil herself. Surprisingly the name of the Glengarry witch is not mentioned explicitly. It appears as a type of duel, based upon the individual power of the two as they tossed between them the “cliath-luadhaidh,” or “waulking wattle.”³³ The same song, with minor variations, entitled *Luadhadh nam Banabhuidseach: Gormshuil agus a' Bhana-Gharanach*, is given in D.C. MacPherson's *An Duanaire*. Unfortunately no reference to either of the informants are mentioned. One can presumably be sure that the song was known to Mary Mackellar considering her proclivity for Gaelic poetry. And one can speculate that the version given by D.C. MacPherson³⁴ was collected in Brae Lochaber or within its vicinity. Mary Mackellar's version follows as it is slightly fuller:

Gormshuil

Hi hiù o! sid gun cluinneam,
 Hi hiù o! gar am faiceann,
 Hi hiù o! gar am bithinn,
 Hi hiù o! beò ach seachdainn;
 Hi hiù o! creach an t-Sithein,
 Hi hiù o! creach an Lagain,
 Hi hiù o! gu Coille-ròs,
 Hi hiù o! bho Baile-Mac-Gladair.
 Hiro, haro, horo eile,
 Hiro, hara, fuaim na cleithe.

Hi hiù o! mhollachd bo dhubh,
 Hi hiù o! no bo ghuaillionn,
 Hi hiù o! eadar Ladaidh,
 Hi hiù o! 's Garaidh-ghuallach;
 Hi hiù o! nach toir Ailean

Hi hiù o! donn air ruaigh leis,
 Hi hiù o! co chuireadh tu,
 Hi hiù o! gan toirt uaithe
 Hiro, haro, horo eile,
 Hiro, hara, fuaim na cleithe.

A' Bhana-gharranach

Hi hiù o! cha ruigte leis,
 Hi hiù o! an tilleadh dhachaidh,
 Hi hiù o! mhollachd bo dhubh,
 Hi hiù o! no bo chais-fhionn;
 Hi hiù o! a leigeadh na fir,
 Hi hiù o! mhora thaiceil,
 Hi hiù o! le bodaich bheaga
 Hi hiù o! Dhoch-an-fhasaidh.
 Hi hiù o! saighead an suil,
 Hi hiù o! nam fear lachdunn,
 Hi hiù o! 's mnathan tuiridh,
 Hi hiù o! bualadh bhasan,
 Hiro, haro, horo eile,
 Hiro, hara, fuaim na cleithe.

Hi hiù o! gheibhte sud,
 Hi hiù o! mu bhun Airceig,
 Hi hiù o! bodaich bheaga,
 Hi hiù o! chroma chairtidh,
 Hi hiù o! cuarain laoicinn,
 Hi hiù o! stocaidh chraicinn,
 Hi hiù o! breacain liath-ghlas,
 Hi hiù o! dronnag bhradach.
 Hiro, haro, horo eile,
 Hiro, hara, fuaim na cleithe.

Gormshuil

Hi hiù o! c'uime an dubhairt,

Hi hiù o! 'chaile bhradach,

Hi hiù o! gun robh Ailean,

Hi hiù o! donn gun chaiseart,

Hi hiù o! cha ruig i leas e,

Hi hiù o! bha iad aige;

Hi hiù o! brogan min-dubh,

Hi hiù o! ciaraidh cairtidh,

Hi hiù o! stocaidh de'n t-srol,

Hi hiù o! nam fear lachdunn,

Hi hiù o! dhearg mu 'chasan.

Hi hiù o! bualadh bhasan,

Hiro, haro, horo eile,

Hiro, hara, fuaim na cleithe.

Hi hiù o! ruaig a' chaorain,

Hi hiù o! leis an abhainn,

Hi hiù o! 's a ghràn eorna,

Hi hiù o! am bial na brathann,

Hi hiù o! air na tha beo,

Hi hiù o! eadar clann og,

Hi hiù o! a chinne d' athar,

Hi hiù o! 's mhnathan tighe,

Hi hiù o! 's Eilean Droighneachain,

Hi hiù o! 'bhi na lasair,

Hi hiù o! 's mar creid thu sud,

Hi hiù o! seall a mach air.

Hiro, haro, horo eile,

Hiro, hara, fuaim na cleithe.³⁵

And when the Glengarry witch turned to look, as requested, she saw that her homestead was on fire. And as D.C. MacPherson's version puts it : "Bha sid 'na bhuidealaich; agus sgàin a' Bhana-Gharannach air a' chléith leis an fheirg."³⁶ Thus the power of Gormshùil prevailed as did her reputation after her death. During the building of the Caledonian Canal in 1804, Thomas Telford planned to cut through the very mound in which Gormshùil was interred. However, the Highland and Irish navvies refused to do this in fear of any malign retribution, and so the canal was forced to be re-routed as the sharp bend here still indicates to this day.

The above *òran-luaidh* is, of course, reminiscent of bardic flyting. In this instance the duel can be seen as a magical contest, with the two protagonists, not only trying to out do one another with witty reposts but also with counter-spells.

This type of *òran-luaidh* is not an uncommon feature of some of the songs that have survived into the twentieth century. For example, there is an amusing contest of wit between a Barra and a Uist woman, entitled *An Spaidearachd Bharrach*, in *Gàir nan Clàrsach*, a recently published anthology of seventeenth century Gaelic poetry edited by Colm Ó Baoill.³⁷

However, in a ground-breaking article by J.G. MacKay entitled *Comh-Abartachd Eadar Cas-Shiubhal-an-t-Sléibhe agus a' Chailleach Bheurr* the import of this type of duel can be seen. Nevertheless, a more thorough investigation of the Cailleach Bheurr in Scottish Gaelic Tradition remains an obvious *desideratum*. Elsewhere, J.G. MacKay has referred to the Cailleach Bheurr as 'the most tremendous figure in Gaelic myth today.'³⁸

One of Cailleach Bheurr's many manifestations occurs as Cailleach Beinne Bric/Cailleach na Beinne Brice in Lochaber tradition. As to be expected, she also occurs in other localities of the Scottish Highlands: Cailleach a' Bheinn Mhóir, the witch of Jura, and Cailleach Chli-Bhric, in Sutherland and as far east in the Highlands as Braemar. The Sutherland tradition is briefly mentioned in *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*,³⁹ as indeed is Cailleach Beinne Bric.

J.G. MacKay suggests that survivals of tales relating to a duel, which are nonetheless fragmentary, are ‘the merest skeleton of a one-time masterpiece.’⁴⁰ And indeed a fragmentary version of this duel appears in John MacDonald’s repertoire as *Uilleam bi'd Shuidhe*:

Bha cailleach mhór dhoicheallach a' fuireach anns an dùthaich agus cha do dh'iarr i air duine riamh suidhe na tighinn a-staigh. Ach smaointich gille tapaidh gun dèanadh e an gnothach oirre:

“Agus mur dèan mise, cha bhi comas air,” thubhairt e, “ach nì mi mo dhicheall.”

Dh'fhalbh Uilleam agus poca mór de dh'fheur aige air a mhuin is a dhà cheann 's an talamh, agus chaidh e dìreach a-staigh do thaigh na cailliche gun sireadh gun iarraidh. Thubhairt i:

“C' ainm a th' ort is tu cho mìomhail.”

“Tha,” thubhairt e, “Uilleam bi' d shuidhe.”

“Uilleam bi' d shuidhe,” thubhairt i.

“Nì mi sin agus deagh bhean-an-taighe ag iarraidh orm.”

“Ma nì,” thubhairt i, “cha bhi agad ach talamh lom is leacan fuara agus deargadan donn a' criomadh do mhàis.”

“Rinn e an gnothach dhuit-fhéin is nì e an gnothach dhomh-sa,” thubhairt e.

“Ach có às a thàine' tu?”

“Thàine' mi á àite - Bi gu math dhomh.”

“O! sin agad, cha chuala mi riamh an t-àite sin. Bi gu math dhomh.”

“Dèan sin agus coimh ghealladh t-fhacail — bi gu math dhomh. Tha an t-acras orm-sa.”

“Chan eil dad agam-sa 's an taigh,” thubhairt i, “ach ceann cha deach a dhàthadh.”

“Dàtha' mi-fhìn e.”

“Có e do dhlighe,” thubhairt i.

“Dà liop, dà léir,

Dà shùil is dà chéir

Is dà chom-pheirceall”

“Sin an ceann uile. Agus chan eil agam ach buntàta beag is tha iad bog agus chan eil móran ann dhiubh.”

“Ma tha iad bog cuir dithist còmhla. Ma tha iad bog fàisg iad. Biodh iad bog, biodh iad beag, bidh mo leòr ann dhiubh.”

Shuidh iad mu'n bhòrd agus thubhairt ise.

“Nach bu mhath céile,” thubhairt i.

“Tha mi deònach,” thubhairt e, “agus comhlaichidh sinn le ùghdarras cléir.”

“Tha mi deònach,” thubhairt i, “théid sinn a-staigh do'n bhaile agus gheibh sinn a h-uile nì a bhios a dhìth oirnn airson na banais.”

“Gun teagamh,” thubhairt e.

Agus dh'fhalbh iad. Ach seo air an robh e a' cumail a shùil, a' stocaidh anns an robh an t-airgead is e an crochadh taobh a' ghealbhain. Chuir i siud ann an cliabh agus beagan de dh'fheur a thug Uilleam a-staigh. Is dh'fhalbh iad do'n bhaile. Fhuair iad air adhart gu ro-mhath 's a' bhaile ach 's ann a thòisich iad air beagan deoch a ghabhail. Is bha an deoch a' sealltainn air a' chailleach mu dheireadh:

“Feumaidh mi a dhol gu taobh a seo. Chuir mac na braiche a gheàrradh orm.”

“O, tha mo chead agad. Theirg gu taobh,” thubhairt e.

'N uair a fhuair e a' chailleach gu taobh, thug e an t-airgead às a' stocaidh agus chuir e clachan 'na àite. Agus dh'fhalbh iad dhachaidh gu gasda. Ach mu'n d'fhalbh i dhachaidh, dh'fheuch i ciamar a bha a' stocaidh:

“O! tha e a seo fhathast, 'n uair a dh'fhairich i an cuideam anns a' stocaidh. Thàinig iad dhachaidh. 'N uair a bha iad a' dlùthadh air an taigh, thubhairt Uilleam rithe:

“Tha agam-sa ri dhol gu taobh cuideachd.”

“Tha mo chead agad,” thubhairt ise.

Chaidh e gu taobh. Ach bha mogan stocaidh aige agus dh'fhàg e a' chailleach fuar, falamh. Is dar a thuig i gun deach an car a thoirt aiste, leag i aon sgreud aiste a dhùisg mòthar 's a' ghleann. Is chan fhaca i Uilleam tuillidh agus

thug e gu deas air thar an d'fhuair e air adhart gu math le airgead na caillich. Is cha robh a' chailleach fada beò leis a' bhristeadh cridhe.⁴¹

Two other versions were recorded from John but these are merely fragments of the above version given.⁴² Compared with the version given by J.G. MacKay from *An Gàidheal* it must be said that John's version is very much a fragmentary one. It would also appear that William's marriage to the old woman, and the stealing of the money, are perhaps, taken from another story to form a Lochaber ecotype of the tale. I do not know of any other version in which these incidents occur. A still more modern version, recorded from the Rev. Norman MacDonald, in 1956, is included in *Scottish Traditional Tales*.⁴³ Here, the story is presented in a more logical form, making the story more intelligible compared to John's version.

In almost all the versions she is referred to as the *Cailleach Dhoicheallach*, meaning the stingy hag. The import of the name identifies the hag as Cailleach Bheurr who in all the traditions is described as extremely mean despite her many riches. In a fascinating article J.G. MacKay analyses the story as follows: "There are six versions of a tale of a man, who disguised as a beggar, visits a witch in her own den, nominally to cure her of stinginess, but really in order to ridicule her pretensions to the supernatural and of proving her a sham. She tries to persuade him that she is unearthly, but tries in vain. There is an undercurrent of good-humoured fun in these tales, and he plays one or two practical jokes upon her; they have certain competitions also, but he wins all or almost all. It is impossible to tell whether these tales are old or recent. But they show hard-headed common-sense in the very act of conquering magic and superstition. However, the point about them that chiefly concerns us is that one version the witch bears the name of a gigantic deer-goddess...The fact that the man selected a deer-priestess as his objective when attacking magic and feminine supremacy, suggests that he thought that, in making an example of her, his action would be equivalent to capturing the very citadel of superstition."⁴⁴

This, then gives us some indication to the apparent antiquity of the Cailleach Bheurr. There can be no doubt that she is an import from Ireland and

with her introduction to Scotland she may have superseded some of the tales that once may have belonged to other divinities. References to the Cailleach Bheurr in Medieval Irish Texts are quite common, and the tradition surrounding her, both in Irish and Scottish Gaelic tradition, have continued well into this century.

The figure of the Cailleach Bheurr is an extremely complex one. It has been given considerable treatment in the Irish tradition (which also partly takes into consideration material from the Scottish Gaelic tradition). Indeed, the forms and functions of the Cailleach Bheurr have become rather obscured through the process of oral transition. She can be interpreted at different levels: as a type of *Mater Mundi*, or Mother/Earth Goddess, originating in Indo-European cosmology; as a Divine Hag of the Pagan Celts which has a close analogy to the Sovereignty Queen tradition; and as a supernatural female wilderness figure.⁴⁵ Gearóid Ó Crualaoich also suggests that the latter interpretation may be influenced by Norse Cosmology.

Many references to this model of the Cailleach Bheurr recur in the Lochaber tradition not only in the oral tradition itself, but also in the literature, as Cailleach Beinn Bric, mentioned earlier. When considering the Scottish material Gearóid Ó Crualaoich writes: “the supernatural female bearing the names Cailleach Bhéarra/Bheurr reveals a multitude of association between her and the forces of wild nature, especially the storms of the winter, the storm clouds and boiling winter sea. She is also...very much the spirit of high ground, of mountain and moor and is seen frequently to personify, for instance, the life and well-being and fertility of the deer herd.”⁴⁶ All of these characteristics are applicable to Cailleach Beinn Bric. Allan MacDonell, for example, relates a tradition that Cailleach Beinne Bric came after a great storm,⁴⁷ which, no doubt, emphasises her otherworldly, or chthonic, origin. He goes onto to describe her in the following terms, which re-echo Ó Crualaoich’s definition:

Bhiodh i aig Ceann Loch Tréig a' beireachd air an iasg le làimh is iad 'ga faicinn. Chaidh a faicinn uair neo dhà aig Bràigh Eas Bhàin, Bràigh Ghlinn Nibheis. Chaidh a faicinn a' bleoghan nan agh uair neo dhà. Nam faiceadh

poitsear i, bha e tilleachd dhachaidh. Chan fhaigheadh e beothach nam faiceadh ise e. Bha fiaclan innte is cha robh mac-samhail ann dhaibh ach fiaclan cliath-chliait, an fheadhainn a chunna i.

Bha òran air a dhèanamh dhith cuideachd.

Cailleach Beinne Bric ho ró,
 Bric ho ró, Bric ho ró,
 Cailleach Beinne Bric ho ró,
 Cailleach Mhór an fhuarain àird.

Cailleach Mhór nam mogan liath,
 Na mogaibh liath, na mogaibh liath,
 Cailleach Mhór nam mogan liath,
 Chan fhacas do leithid riamh.

'S ann a-siud bha a' ghroighean fhiadh,
 A' ghroighean fhiadh, a' ghroighean fhiadh,
 'S ann a-siud bha a' ghroighean fhiadh,
 Seachad sìos an càthair 'ud thall.

Cailleach Mhór nam mogan fhada
 Nam mogan fhada, nam mogan fhada,
 Cailleach Mhór nam mogan fhada,
 B'astarach i 's an talamh dhearg.⁴⁸

A fuller version is supplied by D.C. MacPherson which also gives the tradition behind the song, and also shows that it may have been composed as a type of 'duel' between the hunter and the cailleach. Having gone to hunt the deer he returns to a bothy situated at *Ruighe Mór Féithe Chiarain*, and while kindling a fire, he disparagingly sings a song. Interrupting him, the cailleach continues the song as given above. She later intimates to him that when he sees her the next day milking her herd of deer, he is to take note and afterwards pursue whichever

hind she strikes with the *buarach*. The *cailleach* is here punishing the deer for being refractory at milking time, and thus the hind so struck is doomed to become the prey of the hunter.⁴⁹

As can be seen from the song the hunter accuses the *cailleach* for his failure in hunting, but also for stealing the kail and dulse from the women-folk. Presumably this would have happened during the winter when snow on the heights forces the deer lower to forage for food. The *cailleach* denies such calumny and the song ends somewhat self-piteously with her lamenting her own wandering existence exposed to the elements. Another version of this song is given in *Carmina Gadelica*,⁵⁰ although it contains a number of quite different verses. It was collected from a dairywoman, Mary Macrae (*Màiri Bhreac*, due to smallpox), in Harris. This also shows the wide geographical distribution of *Cailleach Beinn Bric*. The origin of the song, however, has been typically rationalised as the ranting of a deranged woman (*Màiri Bhochna*) who roamed the hills, until a lone hunter startles her back into reality. Quite a different tradition to that of Lochaber, although it contains similar motifs it, nevertheless, lacks the supernatural element.

In the Lochaber tradition the *Cailleach Beinn Bric* is known to have transformed herself into a grey deer or a white hind. J.G. Campbell writes: "The association of the fairies with deer is one of the most prominent features of that superstition. Deer were looked upon in the Highlands as fairy cattle; and the common form into which a fairy woman transformed herself was that of a red-deer, and sometimes though not infrequently, into that of a white filly."⁵¹ Elsewhere he notes that witches transform themselves into hare, mice, cats and so forth.⁵² Whereas the witch never actually transforms herself into a deer. This tale occurs frequently in Lochaber tradition, two examples occur in John MacDonald's repertoire: *Fear a Mharbh Fiadh Iongantach*⁵³ and *An t-Seann Éilid*.⁵⁴ Another comes indirectly from John MacDonald, via John MacLeod, Glenfinnan, who originally heard it from John: *Dòmhnall MacFhionnlaigh nan Dàn*.⁵⁵ The other two references occur in the literature: *A' Bhean-Shìdhe agus an Sealgair* in *Carmina Gadelica*⁵⁶ told by John Fraser, sometime gamekeeper in Brae Lochaber. The hunter in this instance is Dòmhnall Mór Òg, a source of

many of the traditions told in this area. The other occurs in *Fairy Tales and Fairly Lore*⁵⁷ where the hunter's name is given as Dòmhnall MacIain. Perhaps Dòmhnall Mór Òg and Dòmhnall MacIain are one and the same individual to which various traditions have been attached. I shall presently look at the relation between the Cailleach Beinn Bric and the Hunter in more detail. Firstly, it would be instructive to look at the first tale mentioned:

Chaidh duine 'mach ri mònachd le ghunna agus le chuilein agus e 'dol a dh'fhaotainn fiadh. Agus bha ceum togarrach, aoigheil aige 'falbh agus e ann a' sunnd math.

Cha deach e fad' air adhart an àird a' mònachd 'n uair a chunnaic e feadhainn a' geàrradh mòna.

“Thig a-nall òganaich,” thubhairt iad ris. “Tha sinn a' dol a ghabhail 'nar biadh agus gheibh thu share de na biadh ann.”

“Och,” thubhairt e, “taing dhuibh-se. Chan eil móran feum agam air biadh.”

“O, faodaidh tu bhì feumach gu leòr air mu'n till thu. Faodaidh alaban a bhith agad mu faigh thu fiadh.”

Is dh'aontaich e ri seo 's thàinig e nall.

Chaidh na h-ìoclaidean a chuir go taobh agus shuidh iad mu'n cuairt do'n bhòrd a bh' aca agus bha 'm pailteas a sin de dh'im is de chàise Ghàidhealach agus de dh'aran coirce agus de bhainne is ghabh e a leòr dheth.

“Nist bidh mi air falbh,” thubhairt e, “agus móran taing dhuibh airson 'ur biadh.” Agus dh'fhalbh e.

Cha deach e fad' an àird an t-aonach 'n 'ar a chunnaic e ùdlach cho breàgha 's a chunnaic e riamh.

“N dà,” thubhairt e, “cha deach mi fada airson mo shealg.”

Agus dar a thog e an gunna airson a thilgeil 's e bh' aige boireannach.

“Dhia, dé tha seo?” thubhairt e.

Leig e sìos an gunna agus thog e rithist i agus 'n uair a thog e 'n gunna rithist, bha i ann a sin boireannach breàgha agus falt, fada ruadh oirre agus i

'cìreadh a cinn agus na b'e dé bha 'tuiteam ás a cheann air clach bha farachan aic' agus bha i 'ga bhualadh.

“O, 's e gnothach tha seo!” thubhairt e, “ach chuala mi le sia-sgillinean a chur 's a' ghunna gun dèanadh e feum.” Chuir e sia-sgillin anns a' ghunna agus chuir e 'n àirde ri shùil i agus dé bh' aig' ach a a' fiadh agus dh'fheuch e air agus thuit a' fiadh. Chaidh e 'n àirde far an robh a' fiadh agus bha e 'dol 'ga ghreallachach—'dol a thoirt a mhionaich ás—agus 's e sin a rinn e agus mar a bha e teannadh air an fhiadh dh'fhàs e uamhasach fhéin fann—uamhasach, thubhairt e ris-fhéi': “Nach math gun do ghabh mi biadh air neo dh'fhanaichinn,” agus 'n uair a dh'fhosgail e 'fiadh 's dar a choimhead e staigh, dé fhuair e 'na bhroinn ach an t-aran 's an càise a dh'ith e shìos aig a' bhlàr mhòine agus chuir e mór-iongantas air. Phàisg e 'n gunna 'na achlais agus dh'fhalbh e dhachaidh agus cha d'fhuair e fiadh an latha sin.⁵⁸

On the surface this may look like a very simple tale. Nevertheless, if the surface is scratched then it can be seen that it contains traditions of great antiquity. Although Cailleach Beinn Bric is not mentioned by name, it can be assumed that the woman in question is a deer-priestess. In the tale, each time that the hunter takes aim with his gun, the deer transforms into a woman. J.G. MacKay suggests that this is a folk-memory survival of a pagan practice: “In these tales of a deer becoming a woman, and reverting again to deer-shape, and doing this the customary three times, I see a folk-memory of pagan ritual, during the course of which, the deer-priestess would don and doff her official canonicals and vestments, the hide of a deer with antlers and hoofs attached.”⁵⁹ In the process of transition storytellers, mostly conservative, like John MacDonald in this instance, understood this metaphor as shape-changing rather than that of a ceremonial change of deer-hide. A similar tale is told in Campbell's *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* where the hunter falls in love with the deer-woman, and after many adventures, eventually marries her. Campbell of Islay believed this not to be an uncommon tale of the West Highlands. It would seem that the woman who had the ability to change shape is possessed of some supernatural power, however, in reality, if it is understood as a religious practice, then it can

be seen that she is a mortal woman. Also the introduction of the silver sixpence enhances the supernatural aspect of the story, which is understandable in the way in which the story had developed, i.e. the confusion of the cailleach with the deer-priestess.

The relation of the hunter to Cailleach Beinn Bric also deserves attention. From Allan MacDonell's account it can be seen that it was unlucky to meet with the Cailleach. The hunters would invariably return home in this event as any hope of catching game would have been in vain. According to J.G. MacKay the 'Lochaber Deer-Goddess was of a bad omen to hunters, but protected outlaws.'⁶⁰ And doubtless, this is why Dòmhnall MacFhionnlaigh nan Dàn and Dòmhnall Mór Òg have been associated with her. In the case of the former and Dòmhnall MacIain that if the animals in any way become refractory she condones them to be hunted. One may ask why or how such a situation arose between the hunter and Cailleach Beinn Bric. Clearly, she doted on her herd of deer and took a dislike to any hunters who killed them as game. J.G. MacKay suggests that this may be a modern development in this relationship about the time when deer forests dwindled as the result of the forests being burnt. A Brae Lochaber tradition of how this is said to have effected her appears in *Folk Tales and Fairy Lore* entitled *An Sealgair agus Glaistig na Beinne Brice*:

Bha sealgair latha a' tilleadh o'n Bheinne Bhric, agus an uair a ràinig e bun na beinne, bha leis gun cuala e fuaim coltach ri cnacail dà chloiche 'gam bualadh ri chéile, no ri greadhnaich adhaircean an daimh, an uair a bhitheas e 'gan tachas ri creig. Chum e air a cheum gus an d'fhàinig e an sealladh cloiche móire, a bha 'na laighe ri taobh an rathaid, agus an sin chunnaic e coltas boirionnach 'na gurrach aig bun na cloiche, le tonnaig uaine m'a guailnibh, agus 'na làmhan dà lurgainn fhéidh, a bha i a' bualadh gun sgar r'a chéile. Ged thuig e gum bi a' Ghlaistig a bh' innte, ghabh e da dhànachd a ràdh rithe: "Gu dé a tha thu a' dèanamh an sin, a bhean bhochd?" Ach b'e an aon fheagairt a fhuair e: "O'n loisgeadh a' choille, o'n loisgeadh a' choille;" agus chum i air a' cheileir so cho fhada is a bha e an astar chluinntinn dhi.⁶¹

In fact, before this, it would seem rather the deer-goddess approved, or at least tolerated, the hunter who “could not have thought that his divinities disapproved of his hunting, for that would have implied he made his living in defiance.”⁶²

However, the development of this change in relationship may have been brought about by the change of perception in the Cailleach’s role. No longer was she seen as a deer-goddess but as a witch i.e. the survivor of the previous pagan priestess. This change was probably symptomatic of the decline in pagan belief. A common custom in the Highlands at this time was to entreat the blessings of a witch in order to make sure that the hunt would be successful one. The riposte which Gormshùil is said to have reproached Locheil with, before he met the Duke of Atholl, who resented her curiosity is said to have been: “S minic nach bu mhidse iasgair no sealgair mo bheannachd agus co dh'an duraichdinn e.”⁶³ The share of the catch would then be divided proportionately. J.G. MacKay is of the opinion that the witch became so greedy that she would take all game only to send out the hunter again for more. The hunter could not tolerate such a state of affairs and began to question his own (then) inferior position in relation to the witch. Not only the decline of the faith in the old pagan belief system can be seen here, but also the establishment of patriarchy over matriarchy. It has been argued that woman in old pagan Celtic society were in a superior position.⁶⁴ This again echoes the antiquity of the Cailleach in the Scottish tradition. And the whole aspect of the Cailleach in Lochaber tradition seems to have been particularly robust: “A Gamekeeper⁶⁵ at Corroun Lodge....told my friend Mr. Ronald Burn, in 1917, that the Cailleach of Ben Breck, Lochaber, had cleaned out a certain well of hers, and had afterwards washed herself therein, in the same year! And in 1927 the late Dr. Miller of Fort William....informed me that the old Cailleach is still well-known there.”⁶⁶

John MacDonald also tells us that talk of Cailleach Beinne Bric was a common talking point of the traditional céilidh. The reason why I have, perhaps, laboured the tradition of Cailleach Beinne Bric in the local tradition is that it pervades much of the lore connected with supernatural belief and also with hunting tradition.

More often than not in the Lochaber tradition at least, Cailleach Beinne Bric is indifferently referred to both as Cailleach and Glaistig. In modern Gaelic cailleach is understood either as an old woman, or less commonly as a nun. One may ask whether there is a connection here. The original meaning of cailleach meant a veiled woman.⁶⁷ D.C. MacPherson notes that the phrase ‘cho buidhe ri plaide Cailleach Beinn-a’-Bhric’ originated from the fact that the cailleach was never seen without a speckled bréid, with long, grey curling shoulder-length hair over her a bright yellow plaid.⁶⁸ It would seem that the deer priestess wore a bréid as it was deemed unlucky to meet a goddess’ representative face to face, as it were. Therefore it was for a benevolent reason. Not so the cailleach whose glance would have been one to avoid especially considering the belief in the evil eye. This may be due to the malevolent character of the glaistig akin to that of the witch. Carmichael writes that glaistig really means water-imp, derived from obsolete Gaelic word for water ‘glas’ and ‘stic’ giving imp.⁶⁹ MacBain in his *Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language* agrees with this derivation.⁷⁰ Whereas J.G. Campbell derives glaistig “from *glas*, grey, wan, or pale-green, and *stìg*, a sneaking or crouching object, probably in allusion to her invisibility, noiseless motions, or small size.”⁷¹ He further adds: “In the *Highland Society’s Dictionary*, she is called a “she-devil, or hag, in the shape of a goat,” and the definition is accepted by McLeod and Dewar. This, however, is a mistake. The shape of the goat, in the Highlands and elsewhere, has been assigned to the devil only, and there was nothing diabolical, or of the nature of an evil spirit, seeking the perdition of mankind, ascribed to the poor Glaistig. She occupied a middle position between the Fairies and mankind; she was not a Fairy woman (*Bean shith*) but one of the human race, who had a Fairy nature given to her.”⁷² Carmichael disagrees with this describing her as normally dressed in either grey (perhaps a misunderstanding of the word ‘glas’) or green, of an evil repute, physically half woman/half goat and frequenting solitary lochs and rivers.⁷³ It seems that the classification of the denizens of the ‘Secret Commonwealth’ is a difficult task, where so many of the attributes of one supernatural being can be attributed to another leading to confusion, i.e. the acceptance of milk-offering as a kind of appeasement is a characteristic of many of the ‘fairy people’. In the

case of the glaistig she is also said to have herded cattle, and frequented sheilings, and so has been consequently confused with the cailleach, whose bovine peculiarities are well known. One of the most famous instances of the glaistig in Highland folklore occurs in Brae Lochaber. John MacDonald gives the following version of the story where a Kennedy meets the Glaistig of Lèanachan:

Bha an Gille Dubh Mac Uraig ann a Lèanachan a' tighinn dachaidh às a' cheàrdaich le soc a' chroinn. Agus bha e a' marcachd air ainmhidh. 'N uair a bha e a' tighinn seachad air a' bheul-àtha aig an abhainn, dé chunnaic e ach coltas boireannach air thoiseach air. Is thubhairt i ris:

“Am faigh mi an t-aiseadh?”

“Gheibh.”

“Cò dhiubh is fheàrr leat cùlag na beulag?” thubhairt ise.

“O! thig air mo bheulaibh,” thubhairt esan.

Chum e greim oirre, dar a fhuair e thar an abhainn i:

“Leig às mi.”

“Cha leig,” thubhairt e. “Tha bruidhinn air gum bheil iad 'gad fhaicinn a seo o chionn iomadh bliadhna. Agus bheir mi a follais an t-sluaigh thu a dearbhadh gum bheil thu a seo.”

“Leig às mi,” thubhairt i, “bheir mi dhuit air Srath Lèanachan buaile do chrodh maol, odhar.”

“Cha ghabh mi e.”

“Ma-tà, an gabh thu,” thubhairt ise, “sabhal na seachad suidheachan a bhith air an togail agus a bhith deas 's a' mhadainn dhuit.”

“Gabhaidh.”

“Agus crathadh dhith d' làimh dar a bhios mi a' falbh is beannachd leat,” thubhairt i, “dar a bhios an obair deas.”

Bha e a' tighinn beul an anmoch agus chaidh an duine dhachaidh. Agus dar a chaidh, dh'fhairich e an aon fhuaim is iad a' togail. Sidhchean laghach - am bheil thu a' faicinn: ‘dà chlach air muin clach agus clach eadar dà clach’.

Agus bha a' clachaireachd a' dol air adhart. Dar a fhuair iad a' clachaireachd air dòigh, ghlaoidh i an uair sin:

“Bior fòid, fair sgolb
Is mairg fhaigheadh mar a chuireadh,
Is nach cuireadh mar a gheibheadh.”

— is i a' cuir nan cabair suas air an taigh. Agus bha a' sabhal deas 's a' mhadainn. Agus bha esan a' dèanamh deas air a son. Dé chuir e 's an teine ach coltar a' chroinn. Thàinig i seachad air an uinneig is i a' dol a dh'fhalbh dhachaidh agus:

“Thoir dhomh a-nise do làmh gus am bidh crathadh làmh againn 's an dealachadh.”

Dé chuir e a-mach air an uinneig ach coltar a' chroinn. Agus ruig i air sin agus thug i trì sgreuchan aiste. Agus ghuidh i air. Agus bha e fìor an guidhe a bh' ann:

“Fàs mar an luachair,
Crionadh mar an raineach,
'S liathadh 'nan leanaban,
'S caochladh an treun an neart.”

Agus dhearbhadh e sin. Cha d'fhuair mórán do Chloinn 'ic Uraig is bha gràinne dhiubh ann, cha d'fhuair aid an còrr na dà fhichead bliadhna a dh'aois.⁷⁴

The part at which the Kennedy crossed the river Curr is called *Beul-Àth Chroisg*. A longer and more literary version is published in *An Duanaire*. Unfortunately the name of the informant is not given, although it may have been known to D.C. MacPherson himself. In this version the Kennedy is also given the epithet *Mór*. It follows all the episodes given by John MacDonald but also adds more details. For instance, instead of the ploughshare, an iron instrument used to negate the effects of evil, the enchanted belt of Fillan (*sian chrìos Fhaolain*) is used. Kennedy swore that he would not let go until the being was exposed for what she was.

'S bhóidich, 'us bhriathraich e,

Gu dian, 's gu h-ascaoin,
 Nach deigheadh e slàn á 'ghlaic i,
 Gus an nochdadh e 'n làthair dhaoin' i!⁷⁵

She then tried to bribe him with promises of herds and folds and success in the hunting field and in the councils of men for himself and his posterity, but he would not heed her, saying his strength and his sword would secure him that without her assistance.⁷⁶ The next offer was too tempting for the Kennedy:

“Leig ás mi 's fàgaidh mi d' fhóinn,
 'S an robh mi 's an tóim a thàmh;
 Agus togaidh mi dhut a nochd,
 Air an Fhoich ud thall:
 Taigh-mór daingeann, dige—
 Taigh air nach drùigh teine,
 Uisge no saighead, no iarunn;
 'S a ghleidheas tu gu tioram, seasgair,
 Gun fhiamh, gun eagal, 's bith sain ort
 O nimh, o cheathairn, 's o shithchean!”⁷⁷

The Glasitig is said to have given a call that could have been heard over seven mountain ranges reminiscent of *Còrn na Féinn*. The poem describes how she set the summoned fairies to work. They collected flagstones from far distant *Clionaig* carrying them hand to hand; wooden pins to fix the divots and thatch form *Tom Innis a' Chladaich*; rafters, side-rafters and long smooth beams from *Caornach*; while the Glaistig shouted orders:

“Aon chlach air muin dà chloich,
 'S dà chloich air muin aon chloich;
 Bior, fòid, fair sgoib,—
 Gach fiodh 's a' choill,
 Ach fiodhagach.

'S mairg nach faigheadh mar a chuireadh,
'S nach cuireadh mar a gheibheadh.”⁷⁸

And as John MacDonald describes, Kennedy then gave the ploughshare rather than his hand to the Glaistig in fulfilment of the promise, whereupon she uttered her famous curse. The poem gives a somewhat graphic description of her departure.

“S mis a' ghlaistig-bhròin,
'Bha 'm Fearann an Lòin a thàmh,
Thog mi taigh-mór air an Fhoich,
'S chuir e aiceid ann am chóm;
Cuiridh mi fuil mo chridhe 'mach,
Air Sgùrr-Finisgeig gu h-àrd—
Air tri tomanan luachrach,
'S bith iad ruadh gu Là'-bhràth!”
'S leum i 'n a lasair uaine,
Thar gualainn na Sgurra!”⁷⁹

The poetic version compliments John's oral narration very well. It seems that the Braes of Lochaber certainly had its fair share of supernatural beings in the form of hags. These types of tale involving the 'fairy' people are extremely popular not only in the Highlands but world-wide. It is fortunate that the traditions in at least the previous few tales have been relatively well preserved.

Notes

- ¹ Mackellar, Mary. 'Traditions of Lochaber'. *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*. Vol. XVI (16) (1889-90): 272.
- ² Stewart of Ardvorlich, John. *The Camerons: A History of Clan Cameron*. Published by The Clan Cameron Association. 2nd ed., 1981: 23.
- ³ John MacDonald. *Loch Iall agus an Diùc Athall*. CIM I.I.1, TSB 1: 64-67. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 20/1/1951. This local tradition appears in almost all books pertaining to Lochaber. A Gaelic version, translated into English, collected by John Dewar, appears as Tale 11 in *The Dewar Manuscripts: Scottish West Highland Folk Tales*. Ed. by Rev. John MacKechnie. Glasgow: MacLellan, 1961: 89-91.
- ⁴ Allan MacDonald. *Gormshùil Mhór na Maighe*. CIM I.I.1, TSB 1: 1-16. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 17/1/1951.
- Archibald MacInnes. *Loch Iall agus Diùc Athall*. CIM I.I.3, TSB: 246-248. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 31/1/1951.
- ⁵ ref. 2 *The Camerons*: 29. No reference is given for this quotation. However, taken from Livingstone, Colin. 'Lochaber: Place Names'. *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* Vol. XIII (13) (1886-1887): 264.
- ⁶ ref. 1 *Traditions of Lochaber*: 272.
- ⁷ Campbell, John G. *Superstitions of the West Highlands and Islands of Scotland*. Glasgow: James MacLehose & Sons, 1900: 304-305.
- ⁸ Martin, Martin. *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland circa 1695*. Ed. & Intro. Donald J. MacLeod. Edinburgh: Brilinn Ltd., 1994. [reprint of Aenas Mackay, Stirling, 1934]: 172.
- ⁹ *ibid.*: 173.
- ¹⁰ ref. 7 *Superstitions of the Highlands*: 309.
- ¹¹ A similar description is given under *Taghairm* in Dwelly, Edward. *The Illustrated Gaelic-English Dictionary*. Glasgow: Gairm Publications 74, 1988: 920.
- ¹² Spence, Lewis. *The Magic Arts of Celtic Britain*. London: Rider & Co., n.d.: 97.
- ¹³ ref. 8 *A Description of the Western Islands*: 173.
- ¹⁴ ref. 7 *Superstitions of the Highlands*: 305.
- ¹⁵ *ibid.*
- ¹⁶ Drummond of Balhaldie, John. *The Memoirs of Sir Ewen Cameron of Locheil*. Maitland Club, 1842: 29.
- ¹⁷ Charles Cameron. SA 1969/174/A5. Recorded by John MacInnes. Transcribed with the assistance of Professor Donald MacAulay.
- ¹⁸ John MacDonald. *Ailean nan Creach*. CIM I.I.5, TSB 5: 457-458. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 22/2/1951.
- ¹⁹ ref. 2 *The Camerons*: 25.
- ²⁰ MacMillan, Somerled. *Bygone Lochaber: Historical and Traditional*. Glasgow: K. & R. Davidson, Ltd., 1971: 193.
- ²¹ ref. 2 *The Camerons*: 26.
- ²² ref. 7 *Superstitions of the Highlands*: 310-11.
- ²³ I am grateful to Professor Donald MacAulay for pointing this out to me.
- ²⁴ ref. 2 *The Camerons*: 25—Kilmallie; Kildonan; Kilchoireil (Roy Bridge); Kilchoan (Knoydart); Killkellan, Laggan; Arisaig. ref. 18 *Bygone Lochaber*: 93—Kilmallie; Kildonan; Cill Choireil, Brae Lochaber; Kilchoan in Knoydart; Arisaig; Morvern; Killkillen at Loch Laggan. MacDonell, Ann & MacFarlane, Robert. *Cille Choirill: Brae Lochaber*. 2nd ed., 1993: 2—Cille Choirill, Brae Lochaber; Cille Choinnich, Laggan, Badenoch; Cille Mael Rubha, Arisaig; Cill Chongain, Knoydart; One at Morvern; One at Kilmallie; One at Kildonan; also St. Munda's, Loch Leven; St. Finan's, Loch Seil.
- ²⁵ John MacDonald. *Loch Iall agus a' Chailleach*. CIM I.I.9, TSB 9: 955-956. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 17/6/1951.
- ²⁶ Abrach [D.C. MacPherson]. 'Clu Eobhain'. *An Gàidheal* Vol. 4, No. 40 (January 1875): 113-114.

- ²⁷ ref. 20 *Bygone Lochaber*: 253.
- ²⁸ Mackechnie, Rev. John. *The Dewar Manuscripts: Scottish West Highland Folk Tales, collected originally in Gaelic by John Dewar Vol 1*. Glasgow: MacLellan, 1961: 154-155.
- ²⁹ ref. 20 *Bygone Lochaber*: 272.
- ³⁰ John MacDonald. *Mar a chaidh Gormshùil a bhàthadh*. CIM I.I.5, TSB 5: 414-415. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 11/3/1951.
- ³¹ ref. 1 *Traditions of Lochaber*: 274.
- ³² *ibid.*: 273.
- ³³ *ibid.*: 274.
- ³⁴ MacPherson, D.C. *An Duanaire*. Edinburgh, 1968: 42-44.
- ³⁵ ref. 1 *Traditions of Lochaber*: 274-277.
- ³⁶ ref. 33 *An Duanaire*: 44.
- ³⁷ Ó Baoill, Colm. *Gàir nan Clàrsach: An Anthology of 17th Century Gaelic Poetry*. Translated by Meg Bateman. Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd., 1994: 58-62.
- ³⁸ MacKay, J.G. *More West Highland Tales. Vol 1*. Edinburgh, 1940: xvii.
- ³⁹ 'Cailliach Mhor Chlibrich'. In Campbell, J.F. *Popular Tales of the West Highlands Vol. 1*. Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 1994: 417.
- ⁴⁰ MacKay, J.G. 'A' Chailleach Bheurr'. *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 3 (1930): 10.
- ⁴¹ John MacDonald. *Uilleam bi'd Shuidhe*. CIM I.I.6, TSB 6: 485-488. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 25/3/1951.
- ⁴² John MacDonald. *Uilleam bi'd Shuidhe*. SA 255/A.14. Transcribed by me.
- ⁴³ Bruford, Alan & MacDonald. *Scottish Traditional Tales*. Edinburgh: Polygon, 1994: 205-207.
- ⁴⁴ MacKay, J.G. 'The Deer-Cult and the Deer-Goddess of the Ancient Caledonians'. *Folklore* XLIII (1932): 158.
- ⁴⁵ Ó Cruaiaich, Gearóid. 'Continuity and Adaptions in Legends of Cailleach Bhéarra'. *Béaloides* 56 (1988): 154.
- ⁴⁶ *ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ Allan MacDonell. *Cailleach Beinn Bric*. CIM I.I.1, TSB 1:17. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 17/1/1951.
- ⁴⁸ *ibid.*
- ⁴⁹ Abrach [D.C. MacPherson]. 'Cailleach Beinn a' Bhric'. *An Gàidheal* Vol. 3, No. 26 (February 1874): 370.
- ⁵⁰ Carmichael, Alexander. *Carmina Gadelica [Ortha nan Gàidheal]: Hymns and Incantations*. Vol. V. Ed. by Angus Matheson, 1954: 168-173.
- ⁵¹ Campbell, J.G. 'MacPhee's Black Dog'. *The Scottish Celtic Review* Vol. IV (1885): 262.
- ⁵² ref. 7 *Superstitions of the West Highlands*: 50.
- ⁵³ John MacDonald. *Fear a Mharbh Fiadh Iongantach*. SA 1952/126/4. Transcribed by Donald Archie MacDonald.
- ⁵⁴ John MacDonald. *An t-Seann Éilid*. SA 1952/126/5. Transcribed by Donald Archie MacDonald.
- ⁵⁵ John MacLeod. *Dòmhnall MacFhionnlaigh nan Dàn*. CIM I.I.8. TSB 8: 770-771. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 16/4/1951.
- ⁵⁶ ref. 50 *Carmina Gadelica*: 174-175.
- ⁵⁷ MacDougall, Rev. James. *Folk Tales and Fairy Lore*. Calder, Rev. George (ed.). Edinburgh: John Grant, 1910: 236-239.
- ⁵⁸ John MacDonald. *Naidheachd mu Fhear a chaidh a shealg*. SA 1952/126/4. Transcribed by Donald Archie MacDonald. There is a shorter version of this also: *Naidheachd Seilge*. CIM I.I.4, TSB 4: 324-326. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 18/2/1951.
- ⁵⁹ ref. 44 *The Deer Cult*: 156.
- ⁶⁰ *ibid.*: 159.
- ⁶¹ ref. 57 *Folk Tales and Fairy Lore*: 248.
- ⁶² *ibid.*: 149.
- ⁶³ ref. 1 *Traditions of Lochaber*: 273.
- ⁶⁴ Ross, Ann. 'The Devine Hag of the Pagan Celts'. In *The Witch Figure*. Newall, Venetia (ed.). London, 1973: 139-164.
- ⁶⁵ ref. 44 *The Deer Cult*: J.G. MacKay writes that the informant was Duncan Robertson.

⁶⁶ ref. 44 *The Deer Cult*: 166.

⁶⁷ ref. 40 *A' Chailleach Bheurr*: 17.

⁶⁸ ref. 49 *An Gàidheal*: 371.

⁶⁹ Carmichael, Alexander. *Carmina Gadelica [Ortha nan Gàidheal]: Hymns and Incantations. Vol. II.* Edinburgh: T. & A. Constable, 1900: 287.

⁷⁰ MacBain, Alexander. *An Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language.* Glasgow: Gairm Publications Vol. 57, 1982: 196. It should be noted that MacBain's authority for this derivation is Carmichael.

⁷¹ ref. 7: *Superstitions of the West Highlands*: 156.

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ ref. 69 *Carmina Gadelica*: 287.

⁷⁴ John MacDonald. *Gille Dubh Mac Uaraig.* CIM I.I.1, TSB 1: 58-60. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 20/1/1951.

⁷⁵ ref. 34 *An Duanaire*: 124.

⁷⁶ Fionn [Whyte, Henry]. 'A Lochaber Hag: The Glaistig of Lianachan'. *The Celtic Monthly* Vol. IX, No. 10 (July 1901): 189.

⁷⁷ ref. 34 *An Duanaire*: 124.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*: 125.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*: 126.

Clan Legends and Historical Tales

Many of the tales recounted by John MacDonald concern historical events. He had poured out the unwritten history of Lochaber to Calum MacLean. Tales of Robert the Bruce, Calum Cille, Eóghainn Dubh Cameron, clan feuds and battles, the Keppoch Murder, and of course, the Earl of Mar's flight from the first battle of Inverlochy abound and are told with obvious relish. Of all the stories in his repertoire these are probably the best as they are receptive to the laconic style in which they are told. They are told in a terse economic manner which carries the oral narrative along, and yet there is always some outstanding element, whether a memorable sleight of phrase or episode, which transforms them from the merely mundane, an accusation, at times, which could be levelled at such historical narratives. And, perhaps, the best of these tales is *The Earl of Mar as a Fugitive* which has been discussed earlier. Professor Kenneth Jackson in his paper *The Folktale in Gaelic Scotland* lucidly summarises the types of stories in question: "Another important body of Gaelic folktale, and a large one, is the stories about known historical characters and events, particularly about clan chiefs and the relations between clans. These may sometimes contain fragments of real history unknown to conventional historical sources. The clan tales are a type of folklore very much developed in Scotland than in Ireland, where the upheavals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the English rule of the eighteenth century and nineteenth seem to have wiped almost all memory of the local aristocracy from the popular mind. Here in Scotland one may gather traditions about the battle of Inverlochy, the Keppoch murders, Culloden, the massacre of Glencoe, and much else, and endless tales of the clan chiefs, often involving some element of the marvellous or supernatural."¹ This is particularly appropriate for the tales that are in John MacDonald's repertoire as Kenneth Jackson wrote the article based on the Lochaber material collected in the previous year by Calum MacLean. He further gives summary accounts of some of the more popular tales such as the *Lochan a' Chlaidheimh* story familiar from the previous chapter. Many of these historical tales centre around the time of *Linn nan Creach* (the Age of the Forays), a period of instability (c.

1500 to c. 1745) in Gaeldom after the collapse of the Lordship of the Isles. Once the hegemony of the Lordship was broken a power-vacuum led to an anarchic struggle for predominance amongst the clans. Thus tribal jealousies and clan feuds substantially checked in the time of the Lordship broke out with renewed vigour much to the annoyance of central government, although, at times this allowed for manipulation by playing the clans off one another. If traditional clan tales, such as the one just mentioned, have their supernatural elements or folklore motifs extracted, then, perhaps, a residue of historical fact remains. Loss of such embellishments, however, would also take away some of the skill of an oral narrator's artistic delivery. Besides, the story teller's art does not consist in lecturing on historical truths as this is not the point of oral tradition which is rather to entertain an audience of whom some were probably descendants of the characters who take part in the action. Historians readily dismiss clan legends as mere fictions only to give credence to other more recent traditions such as the clearances. Sometimes they are taken to be fact, as recollection of an actual experience in the narrator's life untainted by emotion or prejudice, whereby the real difference between them lies in their subject matter. Historians only seem to acknowledge the restrained narrative in which they are presented—the common element which historical tales tend to share. To re-echo John MacInnes, the style of the narrative however cannot guarantee historical veracity.² Given the large 'historical' material that has been collected in Gaelic oral tradition it would be a mammoth task, although no doubt a worthwhile one, to try and separate fact from fiction.

One area in which a fair amount of historical material has been written concerns the Keppoch Murders, perpetrated in 1663. Iain Lom, *Bàrd na Ceapaich*, plays a paramount role in this rather sordid affair. It would be instructive to see whether the oral tradition surrounding the Keppoch Murder coincides with or diverges from historical fact. In order to give the oral tradition a context it will be necessary to sketch the background to the Keppoch Murders. Stuart MacDonald gives a compelling account, as do the Sobieski Stuarts, of this infamous episode in Highland history. The Sobieski-Stuarts version is taken from the oral tradition as they write: "The following tradition of

the tragedy is derived from the oldest and best informed of the last generation in Loch-Aber.”³ The actual deed was committed on the 25th of September 1663. However, the animosity which led to such drastic and dramatic action was a long time in the making.

Alasdair nan Cleas, 10th of Keppoch, of whom many stories are related, the victims’ grandfather, was the principal instigator of the blood feud between the House of Keppoch and one of its branches *Sliochd an Taighe*. This branch has also been variously referred to as *Sliochd Iain Duibh*, *Sliochd Taigh Iain Duibh*, *Taigh Bhoth Chunnainn*, and also *Sliochd na Ban-fhighe*. I shall refer to this branch simply as *Sliochd an Taighe* in order to avoid confusion. The progenitor of *Sliochd an Taighe* was Iain Dubh Bohuntin. He is described as follows in *Back to Lochaber*: “Iain Dubh, or Black John (c. 1530-1604), was the third son of Ronald Mór of Keppoch and the progenitor of the cadet families of Bohuntin, Tulloch, Gellovie, Cranachan, Dalchosnie, Aberarder, and Tullochrom, collectively called the *Sliochd an Taighe*.”⁴ In actual fact, Iain Dubh was a bastard son of Ronald Mór by a daughter of Big Lachlann Cameron, son of the Bard (*Lachlann Mór, Mac a' Bhàird*).⁵ However, his half-brothers Alexander of Bolyne (*Alasdair Bhoth-Fhloinn*) and Ranald were related to the MacIntosh, who by right of a 1443 charter, granted the tracks and wadsetts.⁶ This, of course, included Bohuntin. It is also around this time that the MacIntoshes settled in the Braes—*Tòisich a' Bhràighe*, who were descended from the Kyllachy family of the clan. Agnes, a natural daughter to Lachlann MacIntosh, married *Raghnaill Mór Mac Dhòmhnail Ghlais Mhic Raghnaill* (7th of Keppoch), from whom the patronymic of the clan derives (earlier it had been *Sliochd Alasdair Mhic Aonghais*), and who died in 1546. She had been accompanied by a young man and woman who married and settled at Bolyne. As Stuart MacDonald points out the real cause of the murders were due to leases and land and all the power which that entails. Therefore, the root cause of this trouble was one with which all the Highlands and Island were only too familiar with at this time, leading to so much animosity and hardship. What makes it particular and noticeable is the summary fashion in which the rightful Keppoch chiefs were murdered. When Iain Dubh, who must have already been

on extremely friendly terms with the MacIntoshs, married a daughter of Donald Glas MacIntosh of Dunachton, gaining the Bohuntin lease, and thus consolidating his position further, *Ranald Òg* saw this as a greater threat to his power in his own dominion and so he sought to thwart *Sliochd an Taighe* at each and every opportunity. Thus the power struggle for supremacy was sown a century and more before it culminated into the murder of the two brothers.

With the death of *Ranald Òg* (also known as *Ranald Gòrach*), 9th of Keppoch, in 1587, *Alasdair nan Cleas* inherited not only the chieftdom but also the power struggle. Alasdair seems to have been an unscrupulous character with a calculating mind. He bided his time in regard to *Sliochd an Taighe*, at least until after Iain Dubh's death. A reputation for studying the Black Art during his education in Rome gave rise to his name. And, perhaps this is why a Migratory Legend (ML 3000) should attach itself to such a ruthless individual. John MacDonald relates the following, entitled *Fear na Ceapaich agus an Donas*:

Bha Fear na Ceapach agus caraide dha a' cumail comunn ris an Donas, mar tha a' naidheachd a' dol. Agus 's e 'n co-dhùnadh a bh' ann gum faigheadh an Donas a' fear mu dheireadh dhiubh a' dol a-mach air an dorust. Bha iad a' faotainn air adhart leis na cumhnantan a bha seo glé mhath. Agus bha a' fear a bha seo...chaidh e a-mach agus e a' tarrainn uisge agus cha stadadh e. Smaointich e gun robh cuideigin a' gabhail beachd air agus choimhead e gu h-àrd. Bha Fear an Ceapach agus a cheann a-mach air an uinneig. Dh'fhalbh a' fear a bha a' tarrainn uisge agus chuir e cròcan féidh air an fhear a bha gu h-àrd aig an uinneag is chan fhaigheadh e a cheann a-staigh. Bha iad mar sinn ann an nàthan le chéile. Thubhairt a' fear a bha gu h-ìosal ris an fhear eile:

“S fheàrra dhut mise a leigeal às a seo, feuch am faigh mi cuidhte 's a bhith a' dèanamh m'uisge.”

“Cha leig gus an toir thu dhìom na cròcan.”

“Is tu-fhéi' a thug orm-sa tòiseachdainn an tòiseach air an ealaidh a tha seo agus thoir orm stad. Agus bheir mise na cròcan dhìot.”

'S ann mar seo a bha. 'N uair a fhuair e cuidhte 's bhith a' dèanadh uisge, thug e na cròcan do'n fhear a bha gu h-àrd. 'N uair a bha iad cuidhte 's an uair

seo agus a' sgoil dhubh aca cho fad is a ghabhadh i cur, bha iad a' fàgail na sgoil a bh' aig an Donas. Agus mar a thubhairt mi riubh, 's e na cumhnantan a bh' ann: a' fear a bhitheadh air deireadh gur h-e bhitheadh aig an Donas.

“Theirig thusa air thoiseach agus nì mise rudeigin deth,” thubhairt Fear na Ceapach.

Chuir e a' fear eile air thoiseach. Bha latha grianach ann agus iad a' dol a-mach agus:

“Is tusa an duine ma dheireadh,” thubhairt an Donas, is e a' dèanadh leum airson beireachd air.

“Chan e; shin agad e a' tighinn 'na mo dheaghaidh.”

Is dé bha seo ach a' faileas aige. Agus leum an Donas agus rug e air an fhaileas aige. Agus chan fhaca iad faileas aig Fear na Ceapaich riamh an deaghaidh sin. Theich an Donas leis.⁷

The very same story has a wide distribution not only in Scotland but in Norway, and also in Iceland where it is attributed to Saemund Sigfusson.⁸ In the Highlands it is attributed elsewhere to Donald Duival [Diabhal] MacKay, the Wizard of the Reay Country. Miss Dempster presents the Sutherland tradition as follows: “Donald-Duival learned the black art in Italy. The devil sat in the professor’s chair of that school, and at the end of each term he claimed as his own the last scholar. One day as they broke up there was a regular scramble, for none wished to be last. Donald-Duival really was so [slow?]; but just as Satan snatched at him, Donald Duival, pointing to his shadow, which fell behind him, cried, “Take the hindmost!” and his shadow being seized, he himself escaped. When he returned to Scotland he was never seen to have a shadow.”⁹

A more prosaic reason for this may have been Alasdair’s ability to perform Italian conjuring tricks which, in those superstitious times, would have been connected with a diabolic origin.

No doubt Alasdair nan Cleas’s vile reputation was enhanced further when he set out to break the Bohuntin brother’s hold over the MacIntosh’s Lochaber lands. With the aid of Sir James Dunyvaig’s men, (the rebel Islay Lord whose daring escape from Edinburgh Castle in 1615 Alasdair had been

instrumental in executing), he planned to take *Sliochd an Taighe* by surprise. A squad of men raced up toward Bohuntin at the same time that others proceeded towards Tulloch, home of Alexander's (Mac Iain Duibh) brother Angus. Both of them managed to escape, however Alexander was badly wounded by an arrow in the thigh. Gille-Chalum, their half-brother, found the wounded Alexander and after a close brush with Alasdair nan Cleas and his henchmen at Corrie Arder, lifted him to the relative safety of nearby Aberarder. Returning to Tulloch, Gille-Chalum then secured the safety of Angus, the infant heir of *Sliochd an Taighe*, and escaped by the skin of his teeth from the clutches of Keppoch. On his way to their MacIntosh relations in Dunachton, where Angus would be safe from the predatory nature of the chief, Gille-Chalum had Alexander removed to *Eilean an Rìgh* in the middle of Loch Laggan, where provision was made for his recuperation. To remind him of this dastardly act a limp was to remain with Alexander for the rest of his days, no doubt, a constant reminder for revenge that must have burned in his heart.

According to the Sobieski Stuarts in *Lays of the Deer Forest* the second and third brothers fled to relations in Glencoe. They were said to have been captured through the treachery of a MacGlasraich-Campell known as *Dùghall na Sgàirde*, who lowered the gate of the moat-house in return for a bribe. The two brothers were in turn handed over to Huntly, who considered any friend of the MacIntoshes such as the Bohuntin brothers as enemies, and were executed.¹⁰ Thus by murdering the Bohuntin brothers Alasdair had strengthened his foothold in the Braes, but nevertheless the enmity between the two houses deepened. Stuart MacDonald points out that four of Iain Dubh's descendants were to be involved in the murder of Alasdair nan Cleas's grandchildren.¹¹ Untypically D.C. MacPherson writes, perhaps unaware of the full facts: "None of "*Sliochd an tighe*" took part in the murder."¹²

Alasdair nan Cleas's voracious appetite for murder did not stop here but continued in the form of fratricide. The motive, of course, was land and power. His brother, Ranald Inch (*Raghnall Innse*), successfully applied for a wadsett from Huntly, his feudal superior, for the Lochtreig lands, containing the best grazing grounds in the Braes. This infuriated Alasdair who saw this as an act of

usurpation and immediately had the title-deeds burned. Archibald F. Campbell informs us that the title-deed “was handed over to Keppoch who, having no doubt scanned its contents, pushed it into the middle of the fire! “Now,” he said, “my rights (to Loch Treig) are as good as yours.” (*Tha mo chòir cho math ris fhéin*). From that time the Loch Treig Lands were ‘incorporated’ in the Keppoch property. This was the cause of many disputes and ultimately led to the murder of his grandchildren.”¹³ It was while on his way to Huntly to re-new these title-deeds that Ranald Inch was captured by his three nephews, Ranald Òg, Alexander Buidhe and Donald Glas, at *Loch na h-Earba*, a lochan between the two heights of *Binnein Shìos* and *Beinnein Shuas* to the south of Loch Laggan. Ranald Inch’s companion on this occasion was the recalcitrant Iain Odhar, a MacGlasraich-Campbell, who slyly excused himself from any involvement saying:

Cha téid mise ri fear
 Is clann chàirdean sibh-fhéin
 Ma théid mise 'nar fuil an-diugh,
 Bidh sibhse 'nam fhuil a-màireach!¹⁴

Ranald Inch was easily overcome by this three assailants and taken to a place called *Losaid Ach' an Doire*, near Bunroy. His nephews returned to their father, leaving Ranald under guard, to seek his advice. The Sobieski Stuarts relate that Alasdair’s reply was “Why do you ask me? Cuir 'an leaba e!”¹⁵ His sons returned to where Ranald was and took him to a place called *Glac an Dòmhnach* where they decapitated him. “At their return, their father asked, with affected simplicity, what they had done; and upon hearing the truth, feigned a shock of horror, and demanded ‘how they dared to put their hand in the blood of their father’s brother!’”¹⁶ And of course such a drastic action as this caused deep resentment from Ranald’s family which would remain unavenged for a short time only.

It is somewhat ironic that *Alasdair nan Cleas* later sold the Lochtreig lands, granted in 1628, to his son Ranald Òg, in 1640. Ronald however died

shortly afterwards of smallpox in London.¹⁷ And with Alasdair nan Cleas in his dotage, the powers to be in the Braes became Ranald Òg's brothers, Donald Glas and Alasdair Buidhe, as Ranald's sons were in their minority, and faraway in Rome for their education. They would later come home, very much as sacrificial lambs.

Donald Glas's involvement in the Battle of Inverlochy, 1645, cost him the forfeiture of his lands. He went into hiding and no more is heard of him.

Another intrigue was to follow shortly afterwards when the Keppoch MacDonells, along with their kindred, the MacIains of Glencoe, descended into Breadalbane to raid Campbell country. The Campbells hearing of this latest audacity left the wedding festivities they were attending, which had given the reivers the pretext for lifting the creach in the first place, in hot pursuit. When the Campbells caught up with them near Killin, the battle of *Sròn a' Chlachain* was fought either in 1640, or on the 4th June 1646.¹⁸ The youthful Iain Lom was present at this conflict which not only saw his father slain, *Dòmhnall MacIain*, but also MacIain of Glencoe and *Aonghas MacRaghnaill* himself, as they fought a rearguard action. D.C. MacPherson gives the following account of Angus's death: "...some of this men were about to take him home on their shoulders, his uncle Donall Gorm Inveroy forbade them, telling them to take care of the "spoil." So poor Angus was left in "Tigh Beag" Choire-Charmaic where the Campbells unceremoniously despatched him."¹⁹ Another tradition gives a different account of Angus's death, and strange to relate it involves a kind of pre-echo to the fate of the Keppoch murderers. A Menzies, with the derogatory nickname of *Crùnair nan Cearc*, had a hand-to-hand combat with Angus Odhar. Angus in derision is said to have taunted Menzies by crying out "Cearc, cearc", however Angus's rashness was more than repaid when Menzies decapitated him, and his head rolled down the hill still calling "Cearc, cearc".²⁰ Earlier D.C. MacPherson referred to Donald Gorm as a "fiend incarnate". A man it seems worthy of the epithet—little wonder as this wicked uncle left his nephew, Angus Odhar, chief presumptive, to die at Campbell hands, thus securing Keppoch for himself and his elder brother, Alasdair Buidhe, the new powers in the Braes.

Alasdair Buidhe, styled the Tutor, consolidated his position during the eleven years he controlled the Braes by gaining leases for the most of it. With the coming of his nephew Alexander, and his brother Ranald, in the summer of 1661, the scene was set. The two brothers settled into Keppoch house, the only property which they actually owned, once they had the Tutor removed to his own residence *Tom an Taigh Mhóir*, Bohuntin. An action which raised the ire of the Tutor's eldest son, *Ailean Dearg*, who saw himself as rightful heir according to the old law of Celtic Tanistry.²¹ The Tutor and his sons waited for a false move to be made.

Such is the rather byzantine background to the Keppoch Murders. The version which John MacDonald gives does not linger on such historic aspects but is quite content to tell the events immediately before the murder:

Bha duine a' fuireach ann an Inbhir Làire agus bha e glé chàirdeach do dhuine na Ceapach. Dh'fhàs a' fear a bha an Inbhir Làire easlainteach. Chaidh a' fear a bha 's a' Cheapaich an àirde agus thubhairt e:

“Ma thig dad daoibh-se, 's ann leam-sa a bhios an talamh a tha seo.”

Agus 's ann a dh'fhàs an duine seo gu math agus 's e Fear na Ceapach a chaochail an tòiseach. Is chum am bodach a bha an Inbhir Làire an gnothach 'na chridhe riamh. Dar a fhuair e cothrom, thàinig e a-nuas do'n Cheapaich agus mharbh e na gillean aig a' bhodach a's a' Cheapaich. An nuair seo chaidh an gnothach air bonn agus có chaidh ma'n cuairt do'n chùis ach Iain Lom. Chaidh e a-nunn thar an robh Mac 'ic Alasdair ann an Gleanna Garadh 'ga iarraidh airson a' bhodaich a bha an Inbhir Làire a mharbhadh. Agus bha sianair mhac aige. Bha an t-eagal air Mac 'ic Alasdair tighinn a-nall agus thubhairt e:

“Is clann chàirdean iad-fhéin agus biodh iad a' cur an gnothach ceart. Agus cha téid mi ann. Cha mhutha a gheibh thu feadhainn a nì e air do shon a leithid sin de dh'olc.”

“Gheibh mise duine a nì e,” thubhairt e, “ged nach dèan thusa e. Agus dearbhaidh mi dhuit gum faigh.”

Chaidh e chun Dòmhnallach nan Eilean agus bhruidhinn e ris. Is thubhairt e gun cuireadh e na daoine 'na dheaghaidh. Cha do chuir e air adhart

idir e. Rinn e dearmad air a' chùis. Chaidh Iain Lom far an robh an Dòmhnallach air ais agus thubhairt e:

“Cha chreidinn dé theireadh Eileanach, ach chreidinn dé dhèanadh e.”

“O! ma 's ann mar sin a tha e, cuiridh mi na daoine 'na dheaghaidh.”²²

The following is the oft-quoted conversation that it said to have been held (although most certainly were not the actual words) between Sir James MacDonald and Iain Lom:

He turned to Sir James MacDonald of Sleat:

“Where have you come from?” asked James.

“From Laodicea,” replied the Bard.

“Are they hot or cold in that place?” asked James.

“Abel is cold,” said the Bard, “and his blood is crying in vain for vengeance: Cain is hot and red-handed, and hundreds around are lukewarm as the black goat’s milk.”²³

The account given by John MacDonald is rather brief and vague but it does point the finger at Inverlair, who was definitely involved in the murders. As Annie M. MacKenzie notes in her scholarly edition of Iain Lom’s songs: “The chief sources of information for the facts of the murder are the Records of the Privy Council, a contemporary account written in English by the Rev. James Fraser, Wardlaw, and the compositions of the Keppoch Bard.”²⁴ Using this contemporary material the oral tradition can be fleshed out, although the veracity of John’s version can sometimes be questioned.

The false move, eagerly awaited by the Tutor, came when the young Keppoch moved against *Alasdair Ruadh Mac Dhùghaill*, Inverlair. Many of the writers say that these MacDonalds came from either Sunart or Moidart.²⁵ However, it appears that this branch came to Inverlair in 1545 after *Blàr na Léinidh* from Morar hence the patronymic *Sìol Dhùghaill Mhórait*. D.C. MacPherson supplies us with the following tradition: “Alexander’s grand father²⁶ took *Ranald Gallda*’s side. So he asks Huntly,²⁷ “What am I to do now? John Moydartach is now the man; I dare not return.” “I see” said Gordon, “I will

give you a home.” So he gave him Inverlair on the following terms: “Cho fad 's a bhios clach 'an Creag-an-Fhithich, no boinne uisge a' ruith 'an Tréig.”²⁸

Alasdair Ruadh refused to pay rent to Keppoch instead paying it to the Tutor who leased the land from Huntly. The young chief resented this blatant disregard of his authority and refused to acknowledge any titular deeds other than Keppoch's own to these lands. The bitterness between the two branches soon led to punitive measures: “Early the following year, on 30th January 1662, a complaint was lodged against him by Alexander MacDonald, tacksman of Inverlair, for having invaded his lands the previous month, accompanied by sixty of his dependants, and conducting himself in a most riotous and barbarous manner, as a result of which he himself was forced to seek refuge among strangers. He further stated that Keppoch boasted that he would eject him from his lands, and that before the would be satisfied ‘one of them tuo must dy.’²⁹ By this action the young upstart Keppoch lost the little respect that he had among the Braerians. All but one of the cadet branches came when summoned. *Sliochd an Taighe* remembering their murdered kindred stood apart. Strange to relate that they stood with the Tutor's sons, who had the very same grandfather, but they too were of Bohuntin blood. The Tutor's wife was of Bohuntin stock,³⁰ a sister of the bard *Dòmhnall Donn*. The young chief was now in a quandary. Turning to the chief-worshipping advice of Iain Lom was probably a mistake. His forthright views were not unanimously shared among the Braerians especially concerning the young Keppoch. He later gave vent to his spleen in the song *Iorram Do Shiol Dùghaill*, composed during his exile:

Siol Iùdais gun fheartaibh,
 Chuir an cùl ri deagh bheartaibh,
 D'am bu dùthchas bhith creachadh nan crò;

Rag mhèirlich gun bhaiste,
 Nan caorach 's nan craiceann,
 Luchd shlaodadh nan capall gu fròig.³¹

Alasdair turned to his superior, the Tutor, for redress. Any prevarication on the Tutor's part would have been negated by his brother 'the fiend incarnate.' Spurred on by Donald Gorm and his own eldest son, Allan Dearg, the plot of murder was soon hatched. What then was the real motive? Or perhaps a better question would be what were the real motives? The Sobieski Stuarts favour the murders as just retribution on behalf of *Sliochd an Taighe*.³² Annie M. MacKenzie reduces the value of this explanation by pointing out the inaccuracy of the 1665 date for the murders. She favours the contemporary accounts: "With regard to the motive which prompted the murder he [Iain Lom] is also very specific, and states explicitly that it was committed solely on account of the attempt made by the young chief to curb the unruly habits of his assailants...It seems clear that an attempt was made to raise the general standard of conduct within the clan...it is probable that they were resented by the MacDonalds of Keppoch, who were a predatory clan by tradition and economic necessity."³³

The young Keppoch's ill-conceived and somewhat naive conception for the introduction of new order in the Braes, together with the inherited mistrust of Keppoch House as seen by *Sliochd an Taighe*, sealed his fate.

The swearing of the oath took place sometime before the 24th of September, 1663 at *Tòrran nam Mionn*, just south of Bohuntin. According to Charles Cameron, Iain Lom was said to have been present at this meeting!:

Agus bha iad a' cruinneachadh air Latha Sàbaid aig Tòrrann nam Mionn tha 'n ceann shuas Both Chunndainn. Agus bha 'm pàipeir ri tharraing an uair seo—ri thoirt a-mach. Ach mu dheireadh ràinig Iain Lom 's làimh dheis aige, bha e air a' dèanamh suas ann an anart. Thug iad dha am pàipeir. "O!" thubhairt e, "chan urrainn dhomh-sa mo làimh a chuir ri pàipeir ann." "Uill," thubhairt feareigin ris, "tha thu a-seo có-dhiubh, Iain, feumaidh tu rudeigin a dhèanamh." "Cha dèan mi còrr dheth," thubhairt e, 's thilg e dheth a bhròg 's a stocainn. Chuir e am peann eadar an òrdag mhór is an té 'ile agus rinn e nàdar de sgriobhadh air choreigin air a' phàipeir."³⁴

Regarding Iain Lom's later movements this piece of tradition cannot be attributed to the Keppoch Bard, however D.C. MacPherson offers a more plausible version: "Gilleasbu was educated at a school in Forres, and when signing the paper for the murder known as a' Bhann-Dubh—the black-bond, he placed between his big toe & second Do—to show his dexterity at penmanship—but in reality to avoid the "Law"."³⁵ The said Gilleasbuig was the Tutor's second eldest son, and later became the 14th of Keppoch. He was also a gifted bard.

The 25th of September saw the two brothers Alexander (*Alasdair MacDhòmhnaill Ghlais*) and Ranald (*Ragnall Òg*) murdered by around 30 assailants (judging by the number of wound inflicted on Alexander (35) and Ranald (28)), each dirk stab corresponding to a signature on the "black bond". Iain Lom explicitly names the guilty party in *Cumha do Mhac Mhic Raghnaill na Ceapaich agus a Bhràthair*:

'S ann air madainn Di-h-aoine

Rinn na mèirlich do reubadh:

Dà mhac bràthair t'athar,

Gum bu sgrathail leam féin sud,

Agus seachd de Shìol Dùghail,

Luchd a spùilleadh nan ceudan.³⁶

The Braerians maintained loyalty to the Tutor and his sons reflected in their apathy after the murder had taken place. This was to incite Iain Lom into action: "The callous attitude thus displayed appalled the poet, who was horrified not only by the murder, but by the indifference of his kinsmen."³⁷ The only ones baying for more blood were Iain Lom, and their murdered brother's sister, who tradition simply recognises as the lady of Keppoch. The sight of her slaughtered kin is graphically described in the following lament, *Cumhna na Peathair*, recited by Allan MacDonell:

Ach có-dhiùbh Sile Nic 'ic Raghnaill [sic], bha i ann Tìr nan Dris. Bha Tìr nan Dris aca còmhla ris a' Cheapach. Dh'éirich i. Thug i sùil suas air a' Cheapach. Cha robh fhios aice air nìtheann. Chunna i nach robh smùid 's an taigh agus thubhairt e:

“Dh'éirich mi moch madainn Dhòmhnach,
 Chunna mi taigh m'athar gun cheò ann.
 Fàth mo lionn dubh o hao o ho,
 Is goirt a bhuail iad 's an dà thaobh sibh,
 A ghràidhean mo ghaoil o ho ill ó.
 Dh'fhosgail mi dorus an t-seòmair,
 Hi ri 's na lu o ró,
 Bha fuil Alasdair agus Dhòmhnach
 A' tighinn thairis air bheul mo bhròg.”³⁸

The persistence of Iain Lom's campaign for justice especially through the effective use of his muse entreated Sir James MacDonald of Sleat which resulted in a commission of fire and sword issued by the Privy Council on the 29th of July, 1665, listing the following names:

Allan MacDonald, son of the Tutor of Keppoch;
 Donald MacDonald, brother of the said Allan;
 Alexander MacDougall in Inverlair;
 John Roy MacDougall, brother to the said Alexander;
 Donald Orie McCoull there;
 Dugall McCoull in Tallie;
 Patrick Dunbar.³⁹

Iain Lom is said to have guided the Islesmen, numbering around fifty, under the leadership of Sir James' brother, Archibald MacDonald of North Uist, better known in Gaelic tradition as *An Ciaran Mabach*. The Islesmen arrived in

the Braes on Sunday at dawn after a four days' march and immediately set about their business. In preparation for such an eventuality the wily Alasdair Ruadh had built a wattled hut, complete with sliding doors set against the sheer backdrop of the since then named *Lochan Taighe Mhic Dhùghaill*. An earlier decoy had taken care of Alasdair Ruadh's sons, including his two youngest not even mentioned in the list, as the stalwart veteran kept the Islesmen at bay with musket shot. The tradition that Alasdair Ruadh was assisted in defending the stronghold at Inverlair by his wife, who supplied him with ammunition by melting all the pewter vessels she had to hand,⁴⁰ is supported by John MacDonald's account: "Agus mharbh iad an fheadhainn a bha ann an Inbhir Làire..cha chreid mi nach e cailleach a thug an aire dhaibh a' tighinn....tha iad a' tighinn ann an sin. O chaidh am bodach go ùbaraid feuchdainn a dhol falach. "Bidh e mach," thubhairt ise, "bi na do dhuine." Chuir i mach iad. Agus chaidh an marbhadh tuillidh 's a' chòrr air am beulaibh, tha fhios agad, agus chaidh iad marbhadh. Agus bha ise a' leaghadh nan truinnsearan feòdar ann an sin a' cumail peilearan riutha...a' chailleach. Ach theirig uidheam...s chaidh iad marbhadh."⁴¹ They were eventually smoked out just as they were running out of ammunition. Alasdair Ruadh with broadsword in hand offered some resistance against insurmountable odds but was soon overcome and hacked to pieces by Lochaber axes. Eight headless corpses were left for the woman to bury.

John MacDonald continues the narrative: "Agus 'n uair seo thuit iad anns an òtrach..am bheil sibh a' faicinn...agus anns a-siud bha e salach agus cha bu toigh leis a dhol air beulaich Mhic 'ic Alasdair agus tha iad cho salach sin. Ghlan e ann an Tobhar nan Ceann iad. Agus fhuair e gad-seileach agus chuir e romhpa e mar a chuireas sibh roimh iasg iad. Agus bha e aige air a dhruim. Dar a bha e a' teàrnadh a-staigh Coire an t-Sithein bha iad a' gagail ri chéile. Agus thubhairt e, "Bi sàmhach, dé an aimhreit a th' oirbh, càirdean sibh-fhéin uile." Agus ghlan e 's an tobar iad. Thilg e mu chasan Mac 'ic Alasdair iad."⁴²

Similar words said to have been addressed to the severed heads are "Ud, ud, nach còrd sibh, nach còrd sibh, 's gur cloinn chàirdean sibh."⁴³ In an earlier account Iain Lom has these words attributed to him when he threw the heads at Glengarry's feet:

“Sin agad a-nise an dearbhadh dhuit gun d'fhuair mise duine a mharbh iad ged nach tigeadh tusa.”⁴⁴

Although Glengarry was only too happy to erect a monument, full of half-truths, to commemorate the event, his cool reception to Iain Lom's pleas were influenced by his reluctance to interfere in an inter-clan feud. Sir James's prevarication was eventually swayed by the fact that the murdered brothers were his foster sons.

John also mentions Tobar nan Ceann:

Agus chaidh carraig chruinn a chuir an àirde. Mac 'ic Alasdair a chuir ann e agus tha na seachd cinn ann. Agus 's e Eóghainn MacLachlainn a rugadh an Coire Uanain ann an 1775 agus a chaochail an 1822 —Eóghainn MacLachlainn—'s e a chuir an cànan air an 1812—Gàidhlig, Frangais agus Laideann.”⁴⁵ John neglects to mention English as it was probably given to be understood.

If the original list of the names are compared with the heads displayed on the 7th December, 1665, at the Gallows Hill between Edinburgh and Leith a telling discrepancy can be seen as the Tutor's sons' names are wanting as they had escaped decapitation, although they were still outlawed.⁴⁶

Conclusive proof of this tradition came when a Dr. Smith of Fort William, who had misgivings about the whole affair, had his scepticism removed when eight skull-less skeletons were exhumed. One of which was identified to be Alasdair Ruadh himself, who was said to have had a limp due to a badly set fractured thigh-bone.⁴⁷ However, according to the Sobieski Stuarts this may have been Alasdair Mac Iain Duibh who, it will be remembered, sustained a similar injury.⁴⁸

What in the end did Iain Lom's so called cry for justice achieve? The *status quo* remained as Alasdair Buidhe was re-elected chief, no doubt as a benevolent despot, until the river Roy finally claimed him c. 1669. None of the real perpetrators of the crime were brought to justice. And in reality the action instigated by Iain Lom was really a massacre of scapegoats. Perhaps Iain Lom had a personal vendetta against Inverlair. And perhaps, Alasdair Ruadh, was

unwittingly manipulated by the Tutor, as a disaffected member of the clan, who shared the common purpose of wanting to get rid of the troublesome young Keppoch. The Tutor had been vindicated with his re-election thus partially exonerating him of any guilt for the crime. Not so for Iain Lom who found it expedient to remove himself from the Braes of Lochaber, to seek shelter under the MacKenzies of Seaforth, Kintail, returning many years later from this self-imposed exile, after his kinsmen's hostility had cooled, to die in extreme penury at *Allt a' Chaorainn*, near *An Urchair*, where his great-great-grandfather, the deposed 4th Chief of Keppoch, *Iain Àlainn*, ended his days. Iain Àlainn had unwisely handed over a notorious cateran, *Dòmhnall Ruadh Beag Mac Gille Mhanntaich*, to MacIntosh, who as Steward of Lochaber had commanded him to be handed over, thus acknowledging the Badenoch chief's feudal superiority over Keppoch's lands. So incensed were the Braerians at this capitulation that they refused to recognise Iain Àlainn as their chief henceforth. By the ancient tradition of Celtic Tanistry a successor was chosen, a first cousin of the deposed chief, *Dòmhnall Glas*, 6th of Keppoch. The branch of Keppoch to which Iain Lom belonged was called *Sliochd a bhràthair bu shine*. Iain Lom's full patronymic, showing his descent from *Iain Àlainn*, is *Iain Mac Dhòmhnail, mhic Iain, mhic Dhòmhnail, mhic Iain Àlainn*. This, no doubt, was a keen psychological factor which may have partially influenced his actions, and also helped create the myth that surrounds the Keppoch Murders as the massacre of the blood of innocents.

Other traditions also surround the Keppoch Bard who lived in an era which saw great political upheaval whose effects were strongly felt in the Highlands. In the surviving corpus of Iain Lom's songs the bard composed many which reflected the events which he had witnessed. Perhaps none are as stirring as *Latha Inbhir Lòchaidh*, despite its inhumanity it retains many aspects of great poetry, where Iain Lom pours his bitter vindictive verse with scorn and sarcastic abandon upon the Clan Campbell, who as Calum MacLean puts it, were "swept...into the icy-cold waters of Loch Linnhe."⁴⁹ John MacDonald

relates that it was from Iain Lom that Montrose had received intelligence about Argyll's movements:

Bha baiteal eile aig Inbhir Lòchaidh ann a 1645 agus 's e Montrós a bha sin agus na Caimbeulaich. Bha iad a' cur an àite 'na theine, na Caimbeulaich. Agus có chaidh as deaghaidh Montrós agus a fhuair greim air teann air Cille Chuimein ach Iain Lom. Is dh'innis e dhà mar a bha an dùthaich a' dol 'na lasair theine, mar a tilleadh e. Ghabh e a chomhairle. Dar a bha iad a' tighinn a-nuas ro' Ghleann Ruaidh, an àite ris an abair iad Achach a' Mhadaidh, bha craobh mhór ann a sin agus thubhairt e ris:

“Mur a fhaic mise a' smùid ann a seo is ma tha thu 'gam thoirt iomrall théid do chrochadh ris a' chraobh.”

“Faoda tu sin a dhèanamh,” thubhairt Iain Lom. Agus dar a thàinig iad a dh'ionnsaigh a' chraoibh a bha seo, chunnaic iad a' smùid. “Mo chreach, tha an call dèante,” thubhairt Montrós.

Is dh'fhalbh iad glé chabhadh is chaidh iad thairis air a' bheul-àtha aig Linge nan Nigheannan aig Bun Ruaidh, an t-ainm a fhuair Linge nan Nigheannan: chaidh triùir de na nigheannan aig Mac Raghnaill na Ceapach a bhàthadh air a linge sin is iad 'ga faraiceadh fhéin air Di-Dòmhaich. 'S ann mar sin a tha Linge nan Nigheannan oirre. Agus ghabh iad taobh thall a' mhonaidh. Agus thàinig iad a sin ri Gleann Nibheis.⁵⁰

Internal evidence from the song can leave no doubt that Iain Lom was present at the counter-march to the Battle of Inverlochy. He mentions a hillock, Cùil Eachaidh, near the modern day Fort Augustus.⁵¹ The sole authority for the route taken by Montrose's men is the Clanranald bard, MacMhuirich, who said the army marched over *Làirig Thurraid* descended into Glen Roy and then crossed the Spean.⁵² No mention is made by MacMhuirich of the army crossing the Roy at *Linne nan Nigheannan*. The interesting detail supplied by John MacDonald is corroborated by D.C. MacPherson where the following verses of *Crònan nan Nighean* were sang to commemorate the incident:

O, boban gaoil
 O, gaolach Iain.
 O, boban gaoil.

'S ann 'tha 'n cadal ciùin
 Aig an triùir nighean:
 O, boban, &c.

Aig Anna mo ghràidh,
 'Us aig Móir chridhe.
 O, boban, &c.

'S aig an t-Seònaid duinn,
 Dh'éireadh m' fhonn rithe.
 O, boban gaoil,
 O, gaolach Iain.
 O, boban gaoil.⁵³

This composition has been attributed to *Gilleasbuig na Ceapaich*, the father of *Silis na Ceapaich*, who has been mentioned earlier. Although such a tradition has also been attributed to Gilleasbuig's mother, the Tutor's wife.⁵⁴ If it had been his mother then the incident may have been fresh in some of the Highlander's memories as they crossed the river.

The battle conveyed by Iain Lom's song is one of a victorious drubbing of the Campbells by the MacDonalds. In reality it was more complex than this. Iain does not so much as even refer to Montrose and many of the other clans were only fleetingly mentioned. One clan which was prominent by its absence on the field is said to have been the Camerons. A rather amusing tale is told by John MacDonald concerning this affair.

Dar a bha am baileal aig Inbhir Lòchaidh, bha Loch Iall toileach a dhol ann ach bha e 'na fhìor sheann-duine. Agus thubhairt a mhac ris: "Fana' sibh-se

aig an taigh. Chan eil sibh murrach air a dhol ann. Tha sibh a' fàs sean.” “Tha mi murrach gu leòr air a dhol ann agus théid m'fhacal glé mhath a-measg nan daoine. Agus chan eil agaibh ach mo chur ann an ceas air muin an eich dhonn agus siùbhlaidh mi cho math riubh-fhéin.” “O, théid mi-fhìn ann agus fana' sibh-se aig an taigh.” “Theirg ann agus tha mi a' cur làn-earbsa gun dèan thu math ann, thu-fhéin agus na daoine.” Agus cha deach e thun a' bhaiteil idir. Dh'fhuirich e anns a' Chorpaich, àite ris an abair iad am Bad Abraich 'na shìneadh fad an latha is e a' faicinn a' bhlàir a' dol gu fuilteach. Thàinig iad dhachaidh. Chaidh Loch Iall a chuir fàilte orra is dh'fhaighneachd e: “Ciamar a rinn mo mhac is na daoine.” “Cha deach e idir ann. Dh'fhuirich e 'na shìneadh anns a' Chorpaich 's a' Bhad Abraich.” “O!” thubhairt e, Loch Iall, “chan e mo mhac a bh' ann ach mac na bidse, mac na ban-Leathanaich. Dé 'n earbadh a chuireadh tu às.”⁵⁵

It could be that the Battle of Inverlochy has been mixed up with Killiecrankie as in a similar version given by Somerled MacMillan.⁵⁶

The first Battle of Inverlochy, also involved the Keppoch MacDonells under the leadership of *Alasdair Carrach* the progenitor of the Brae Lochaber clan, youngest son of John, first to be styled *Dominus Insularum*, to his second wife, Margaret, daughter of King Robert II. This Alasdair is commemorated in a place-name *Tom a' Charraich*, near the modern Inverlochy castle, and in *Òran na Comhachaig*:

Chunnaic mi Alasdair Carrach,
An duine b'allail' bha an Albainn;
Is tric a bha mi 'ga éisdeachd,
Is e ag réiteach nan tom-sheilge.⁵⁷

Consensus for the actual date of the battle is divided, although the majority give the year as 1431. John MacInnes specifically states that the battle took place on 13th of June, 1429.⁵⁸ From which authority this comes he does not state. It may appear that confusion arises here due to the desertion of the Clan Cameron and

Clan MacIntosh around this time, before the actual battle,⁵⁹ despite the claims of *Pìobaireachd Dhòmhnail Duibh*, said to have been composed after the battle:

Theich is gun do theich
 Is gun do theich Clann an Tòisich
 Dh'fhalbh Clann Mhuirich
 Ach dh'fhuirich Clann Dòmhnail.⁶⁰

Although the Islesmen together with Alasdair Carrach's archers won the day killing the Earl of Caithness, and wounding the Earl of Mar, while allegedly only sustaining twenty-seven casualties, the outcome was that the lands of Keppoch were forfeited to the MacIntoshes, which would lead to the final inter-clan battle fought in the Highlands.⁶¹ John MacDonald's fine tale *Iarla Mhàrr agus an Fhuarag Eòrna*, which has been discussed earlier, exemplifies his best historical story:

Bha [Dòmhnallach nan Eilean]...Mac Dhòmhnail nan Eilean, 's e Dòmhnall Dubh Ballach a theireadh 'ad ris, agus bha [e] feachd làidir aige do na Gàidheil cho math 's a thacharadh air duin' ann an astar mìos.

Agus gu dé smaointich a thigeadh 'ad...a thigeadh a thoirt tarrainn air agus baiteal a bhith aca, ach Iarla Mhàrr a thàinig a-null á Bràigh Mhàrr, eadar sin agus Peairt.

'S c'à 'n do thachair 'ad ach aig Inbhir Lòchaidh thar am bheil an taigh-beairt air chur an àird an-diugh—mar a their 'ad “an fhactory”.

Bha sin ann [anns a'] anns na ceithir cheud deug agus a h-aon deug thar an fhichead. Agus 's e Dòmhnall Dubh Ballach a choisinn 's chuir e 'n ruaig air Iarla Mhàrr.

Theich Iarla Mhàrr agus ghabh e 'n àirde mar a tha Lèanachan agus a-suas na caran sin gos na ràinig e air Gleann Ruaidh. Agus mar a bha e 'teannadh a-suas [air] air àit' ris an abair 'ad Coire Choingligh, chaidh e 'staigh thar an robh cailleach agus dh'iarr e biadh oirre.

“Chan eil biadh agam, ach ma dh'fhanas tu tacan,” thubhairt i, “nì mi biadh deiseal dhuit.”

“Chan eil ùin' agam air,” thubhairt e, “agus an ruaig 'a mo dheaghaidh, ach thoir dhòmh-sa deanntag bheag do mhin agus nì mi-fhìn biadh an àiteigin.”

'S e seo a rinn i. Fhuair e 'mhìn agus a' chiad allt gos an d'thàinig e 's e smaoineachdainn gun robh e sàbhailte chuir e [‘n fhuarag]...chuir e 'mhìn ann a' sàil a bhròig' agus dileag de dh'uisge agus dh'ith e e le bioran.

Agus thubhairt e:

“S math an còcaire 'n t-acras
 'S mairg a dhèanadh tàir air a' bhiadh
 Fuarag eòrna á sàil mo bhròige
 'm biadh a b'fheàrr a fhuair mi riamh.”

Agus rinn e gu...le 's gur h-e beul na h-oidhche a bh'ann—rinn e eadar sin 's mhadainn a-suas air Gleann Ruaidh agus dar a bha fàireadh na madainn a' tighinn, 's nach fhaiceadh feadhainn e, fhuair e 'staigh ann an taigh—duin' ann a-sin ris an abair 'ad Ó Brian, agus cha robh móran biadh 's an taigh 's an t-acras air an duine:

“Ach innsidh mi dé nì riut,” thubhairt e. Marbhaidh mi 'n aon mhart a th' againn, agus gheibh thu i—h-ith.”

Agus 's e sin a chaidh a dhèanadh. Dh'fhuirich e trì là th' ann a-sin agus e 'na chadal air leabhaidh fraoich agus 's e 'm brat a bha thairis air na 'na cuibhrige, mar a theireadh 'ad seiche 'mhairt. 'S dar a fhuair e 'sgìos a chuir dheth dh'fhalbh e 'beul na h-oidhche 's e a' dèanadh air an àit' aige-fhéin dhachaidh. Agus thubhairt e ris:

“Ma bhios tu 'smaoineachdainn gum bheil 'faotainn coire dhuit na gamhlas aig daoine riut gun do shàbhail thu mo bheatha-sa, dèan air an àit' agam-sa agus nì mise dith-beath' thu.”

'S ann mar seo a bha. Bha e 'smaoineachdainn 'na bheachd-fhéin gun robh 'ad 'na aghaidh mar a shàbhail e 'n duine agus dh'fhalbh e chun an àit' aige [ann a...] aig Iarla Mhàrr. Agus mar a bha e 'teannadh air an àite agus dorsair a-mach ann a-sin aig cachaileith mhór agus nach robh duine ri leigeil a-staigh air an àite sin mar a bhiodh e air a sméideadh bho'n taigh 'na sanail a thoirt da bho'n dorust.

Thàinig a' duineachan abalach a bha 'seo air adhart agus ghabh e fìor iongantais dar a chunnaic e 'n t-Iarla 'g iarraidh air a dhol an àird thun an taighe agus b'iongnadh leis an crathadh-làmh a bha shuas a-sin agus cho dìth-beathte 's a chaidh a dhèanadh.

Thubhairt an t-Iarla ris:

“Thig a-staigh dha'n taigh agam-sa agus gheibh thu 'n seòmbar as fheàrr a th' ann agus am biadh as fheàrr a th' agam mar a fhuair mise bhuaht-sa agus mar a h-eil thu toileach a dhol air ais a Ghleann Ruaidh, gheibh thu talamh air an oighreachd agam agus bidh thu ann cho fad' 's a bhios tu beò.”

Agus 's ann mar seo a bha. Thàinig am bodach go co-dhunadh gun robh e cho math dha fuireach anns an àit 'ud gun tilleadh a Ghleann Ruaidh 's cha d'fhuair 'ad forbhais tuillidh air 's dh'fhuirich e air an talamh aig Iarla Mhàrr.⁶²

The killing of the last cow is a fairly common motif in stories such as these. The rhyme concerning the barley gruel is elsewhere attributed to Robert the Bruce, while he was in exile in Kintyre, after his defeat in 1306.⁶³

Another tradition also surrounds the aftermath of the Battle of Inverlochy, 1645, concerning Iain Lom when he is said to have visited Inverary. It seems, if the story is taken at face-value, that bards at this time still enjoyed a kind of diplomatic immunity which, perhaps, partially absolves Iain Lom from the charge of cowardice levelled at him from Sorley MacLean who wrote, commenting on the Bard's words to Alasdair MacColla before the commence of the battle: “I consider [it] disgusting, however expedient they might have been to the exigencies of the situation, and however wise he might have been in the long run.”⁶⁴ To confront the very man who placed the bounty on Iain Lom's head was not merely an act of folly, but one of bravery. John MacDonald tells this well known anecdote as follows:

Bha airgead cinn a-mach aig Earra-Ghàidheal air a shon na faigheadh e an ceann aig Iain Lom, bheireadh e airgead do dhuine sam bith a bheireadh dhà e. Chaidh Iain Lom a sìos a choimhead air:

“Tha mi-fhìn is mo cheann a seo,” thubhairt Iain Lom.

Dar a chunnaic e mar a chaidh an duine sìos 's ann a ghabh e bàidh ris agus cha b'fhiach leis dad a dhèanamh air.

“Ach trobhad a seo, Iain,” thubhairt e ris. “Bha sinn aig sealg an dé agus a faic thu a' sealladh brèagha a tha seo.”

Thug e mu'n cuairt ann a' seòmbar a sin e agus dé bh' ann ach coilich dhubha:

“Am faca tu uibhir sin de choilich dhubha riamh, Iain?” thubhairt e.

“Chunnaic,” thubhairt Iain. “Is mi a chunnaic.”

“C'àite? Tha mi a' gabhail iongantais ma chunnaic.”

“Chunnaic aig Blàr Inbhir Lòchaidh,” thubhairt e, “na bha marbh de na Caimbeulaich.”

“O! cha do sguir thu riamh,” thubhairt e, “a' cagnadh nan Caimbeulach.”

“S e is dorra leam,” thubhairt Iain Lom, “nach urrainn domh an sluingeadh.”⁶⁵

The latter dialogue appears in MacKenzie's *Sar-Obair nam Bard Gaelach* almost word for word.⁶⁶ This may indicate that the story re-entered the Lochaber tradition from such a source. Charles W. Dunn commenting upon the effect of MacKenzie's *Sar-Obair nam Bard Gaelach* upon oral tradition trenchantly notes: “Though the volume was a product of the machine-culture, the Gaels turned its contents into a folk-possession.”⁶⁷ Once again Iain's sharp tongue and audacious nerve saved him on the day when it could so easily have been otherwise. However, one may be sceptical regarding the actual veracity of the story. Would the same Iain Lom so careful to avoid battle, in order to praise the victors in 1645, have risked his own life in such a fool-hardy enterprise? And even if the great Argyll were so magnanimous would not there have been other Campbells only too willing to claim the reward that Argyll had offered in the first place? The problem with stories of this kind is that their truth or otherwise can probably never be determined with any degree of certainty. Nevertheless their inherent value as an entertaining piece of oral narration remains. Or, in other words, they simply make good yarns. And even if the

story's veracity can be questioned it is still an exploit which would befit the Keppoch Bard.

The vagaries of politics continued to be a source of inspiration for the Keppoch Bard well into his maturity. The last composition which can be ascribed to him with any degree of certainty is *Òran an Aghaidh an Aonaidh* c. 1707. Tradition gives the date of his death in 1710, although he may have lived on to compose an elegy to Alasdair Dubh of Glengarry who died in 1724.⁶⁸ Appropriately an elegy was composed at the Bard's funeral as related by John MacDonald:

Chaochail e ann an 1710 agus chaidh a thiodhlachadh ann an Cille Choirill. Theireadh iad Tom Aingeal ris. Là an tiodhlachadh có bh' ann ach Aonghas Alasdair Ruaidh á Gleanna Comhann, bàrd ainmeil.

“Cluinneam dé th' agad ri 'g ràitinn,” thubhairt Gilleasbui' na Ceapach ris a' bhàrd. Thubhairt e na briathran seo.

“Bha mi an duigh ann an Tom Aingeal
 Is chunna mi crìoch air m'fhear-cinnidh;
 Iuchair nam bàrd, Rìgh na Filidh,
 A Dhia, a dhèanamh sìth ri t'anam;
 B' fhuath leat Màiri, b' fhuath leat Uilleam,
 B' fhuath leat luchd Siol Dhearmaid uile.
 A h-uile neach nach bitheadh rìoghail
 Dh'innseadh tu dhaibh e gun irraidh.
 Gaol an Leóghainn is fuath an Tuirc
 Anns an uaigh 's a bheil do chorp.
 Dhia thoirt mathanas dhuit,
 Bha thu dioghaltach anns an olc.”⁶⁹

A small slip occurs when John names Gilleasbuig na Ceapaich who asked for the elegy as Iain Lom outlived the chief by some twenty years, and indeed composed an elegy for him. It seems that the Bard was reconciled to

Gilleasbuig perhaps through respect for his poetic talents. This did not stop Iain Lom from reminding the chief about that dark deed as D.C. MacPherson tells us when Gilleasbuig showed him his scrophulic skin for sympathy, he said to have retorted, “Nothing compared to Alexander’s fair skin.” And Gilleasbuig is said to have replied, “You’re never done with us, John.”⁷⁰ The chief present at Iain Lom’s funeral was Gilleasbuig’s successor Colla na Ceapaich, better known in Gaelic tradition as *Colla nam Bó*.

A monument was placed by Charles Fraser-MacKintosh to commemorate the Bard’s memory in the early part of this century. However, it was mistakenly placed over the grave of another bard, Dòmhnall Mac Fhionnlaigh nan Dàn, which lies near the entrance to Cille Choirill. Iain Lom’s grave which was pointed out many years ago, further up on the hill known as Tom Aingeal, has been forgotten now.⁷¹

Traditions of the famous hunter-poet Dòmhnall Mac Fhionnlaigh nan Dàn, or more simply Dòmhnall nan Dàn, were popular at céilidhs until relatively recently. He flourished c. 1585 judging by the references made to the Keppoch Chiefs, which forms one of the poem’s many themes, the others being the dialogue between the bard and the owl, the praise of hunting, topographical aspects and musings upon old age.⁷²

Regarding Dòmhnall nan Dàn’s origin the tradition is divided. According to D.C. MacPherson he may have belonged to different places: Brae Mar (favoured by the Sobieski Stuarts), Glencoe or to Brae Lochaber itself. Robert Rankin, in his excellent paper, argues the following: “However, local tradition reinforced by Diarmad’s [D.C. MacPherson’s] article, insists that he was one of the MacDonalds of Glencoe, and that a quarrel with Mac ‘ic Iain made him decide against returning to Glencoe from Lochaber.”⁷³ This view is supported by two verses given in *An Duanaire* collected from *Raghnull Dòmhnallach* who belonged to *Achadh nan Cothaichean*:

Bu mhath mo bharanta-cogaidh,
Ged a thogair mi tigh'n bhuithe,
Gur h-e Eòin á Taigh na Creige,

O'n a bhagair e mo bhualadh.

'S o'n a bhagair e mi gu teann,

Cho fad 's a mhaireas crann, no clach;

Cha tog mi h-uige mo thriall,

Ni mò dh'iarrainn dol 'na theach.⁷⁴

Elsewhere, D.C. MacPherson further adds that Donald's father was a bannerman to MacIain. When he reached maturity he returned to his maternal grandfather's residence, who had been Keppoch's bard and hunter. He is said to have wintered at Fersit, *An Fhearsaid Riabhach*, at the north end of Loch Tréig, and summered at *Creag Guanach* at the south end of Loch Tréig.⁷⁵ There he passed his time in the pursuit of the muse and his beloved deer. Donald's hunting was not confined merely to the Braes of Lochaber. A tale given by John MacDonald extols Donald's prowess with the bow when he was caught poaching in Breadalbane. A favourite resort, it seems, for Lochaber reivers:

Dòmhnall Mac Fhionnlaigh nan Dàn, Dòmhnall Dòmhnallach, Dòmhnall nan Dàn a theireadh móran ris. Bha e a' fuireach an Loch Tréig, an ceann Loch Tréig. Agus bha e uamhasach math air a' bhogha-saighead. Cha robh móran anns an dùthaich ri linn a b'fheàrr na e air an t-saighead. Agus smaointich e gun gabhadh e cuairt sìos gu Earra-Ghàidheal a dh'fhaicinn dé seòrsa dùthaich a bha sin. Chaidh e sìos air a thuras. Dé a chunnaic e ach damh-féidh cho breàgha 's a chunnaic e riamh. Agus leis gun robh de mheas aige air an damh agus air a bhith a' marbhadh nam fiadh, cha b'urrainn dà leigeil leis. Ach dh'fheuch e an t-saighead is mharbh e am beothach. Có a bha a' gabhail beachd air ach na daoine aig Earra-Ghàidheal. Agus dh'innis iad do'n bhodach e, do dh'Earra-Ghàidheal. Agus duine sam bith a bha a' dol a mharbhadh fiadh an uair sin 's e' a' chroich a bha a' feitheamh air. Ach chaidh innseadh gun d'rinn e urchair uamhasach mhath leis an t-saighead is nach fhaca iad riamh a leithid. Is thubhairt am bodach ris fhéin, Earra-Ghàidheal: "Bidh an duine 'ud math 'na mo chuideachada, ma thig na nàimhaidean teann orm. Agus

feucha mi ri bhreugadh cho math is b'urrainn domh, feuch an cum mi e dhomh-fhìn.”

Thug iad an duine seo air beulaibh Earra-Ghàidheal:

“Chuala mi,” thubhairt e, “gun robh thu feadh a' mhonaidh.”

“Bha,” thubhairt Dòmhnall.

“Mharbh thu fiadh is tha e glé fhada 'nad aghaidh. Ach bidh e maithte dhuit, ma dh'fhanas tu air an talamh agam-fhìn.”

“Fanaidh,” thubhairt Dòmhnall.

Dh'fhuiribh e ann treis. Ach bha e a' fàs sgìth ann ma dheireadh. Is thubhairt e ris-fhéin:

“Tha mi a' falbh. Chan eil mi a' dol a dh'fhuireach idir 'na do chuideachda na air an talamh agad.”

“O! tha mi glé dhuilich,” thubhairt e. “Bheir mi dhuit an còrr talamh.”

“B' fheàrr aon sgrìob. B' fheàrr taobh Loch Tréig na na bheil agad uile.”

Is dhealaich iad. Chaidh e an àirde do Loch Tréig.⁷⁶

As Robert Rankin points out the identity of Sir Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy, called Black Duncan of the Cowl (*Donnachadh Dubh a' Churraic*), had become Argyll in the Lochaber tradition.⁷⁷ A similar story from Archibald MacInnes fills in an important episode, missed out by John, where Donald manages to turn the deer's head with a sharp whistle. Archibald MacInnes sums it as follows: “Rinn e fead chruidh dar a bha e deas. Thionn' an t-agh ma chuairt. Leig e ás e. Chuir e dìreach an t-saighead anns an t-sùil aice.”⁷⁸ Also D.C. MacPherson fills in the detail with his usual flare: “...Mar a bha iad a' cumail air an aghart chunnaic iad eilid na 'laidhe air fuaran, agus os iadsan ris 's iad a' fanaid air, “Bheir sinn do chead dhut ma chuireas tu an t-saighead 'an sùil dheis na h-éilde ud.” Bu rud mi-choltach so leis mar a bha an eilid 'na laidhe, agus an rathad a bha a' ghaoth. Ach coma, chuir Dònull a bhogha air lugh, 'us gheàrr e gaoth 'us talamh air an eilid; ach cha dianadh calg dhi. An uair a dh'fhairtlich air tialadh oirre, rinne e seòrsa miabhail de dh-fhead 's thog an eilid a ceann. Rinn e rithist i 'us thiondaidh i 's thàinig i na 'choinnimh. A' sin ghabh e 'n cothrom, 's chum e

an t-saighead ri 'sùil, 's “cha ro òirleach gun bhàthadh eadar corran a gàine 's a smeòirn.”⁷⁹

It comes as no surprise that Dòmhnall nan Dàn is supposed to have encountered Cailleach Beinne Brice during his hunting career. This tradition is given by John MacLeod who originally heard it from John MacDonald:

Thuit do Dhòmhnall Fhionnlaigh gun robh e an latha seo ann am Beinne Bhric anns a' Choire Odhar. Agus aig an ám a bha sin, bha a' bhan-bhuidseach, Cailleach Bhó a' Bheinne Bhric agus gràinn aighean aice còmhla. Bha a' seann-fhacal ag ràdhainn gun robh i a' bleoghan nan aighean is a' dèanadh gruth is im is càise is 'ga chreic. Agus a-measg nan aighean, bha agh sònraichte aice ris an abradh iad agh bàn. Chunnaic ise Dòmhnall Fhionnlaigh a' tighinn a-staigh air na h-aighean agus chuir i stad air:

“Dé tha a dhìth ort?”

“Tha té dhe na h-aighean,” thubhairt Dòmhnall Fhionnlaigh, “agus gun sònraichte an té bhàn.”

“Chan fhaigh tu an té bhàn.”

“Gheibh mi an té bhàn” thubhairt esan

“Chan fhaigh tu an té bhàn.” thubhairt ise

“Gheibh mi an té bhàn” thubhairt e.

“Fàg an té bhàn,” thubhairt ise, “is bheir mi dhuit guidhe sam bith a tha a dhìth ort.”

Choimhead e orra agus smaointich e:

“An toir thu an t-sròn dìth,” thubhairt e.

“Bheir mi sin, a Dhòmhnail,” thubhairt a' Chailleach—na Beinne Bhric.

“Fàgaidh mi i agad leis, bheir mi-fhìn an t-sùil dhùil dhith.”

Tha na sean-fhacail ag ràdhainn nach d'fhuair agh na fiadh riamh o'n latha sin gaoth air Dòmhnall MacFhionnlaigh.⁸⁰

This story indicates that it may have been this supernatural gift, the taking away of the deers' sense of smell, that gave Dòmhnall nan Dàn his legendary status as a hunter.

There is no general agreement concerning either Donald's domestic situation or, indeed, the manner in which *Òran na Comhachaig* is said to have been composed. D.C. MacPherson says that Donald's wife was one of the Keppoch MacDonells who, nevertheless, died young. Thereafter he was looked after by his young daughter Màiri. Others say that he married a young woman who often despaired of her choice and who maltreated both Donald and his dog. She is said to have found an injured owl and thought this a suitable companion for Donald. Charles Cameron gives the following tradition, similar to that given in MacKenzie's *Sar-Obair nam Bard Gaelach*, also shared by John MacDonald's brother, Duncan,⁸¹ concerning the poem's origin:

Chuala mi iomradh air an rud a bha sin gur h-e a bhean...bha e sean...cha b'urrainn dha càrachd 's an leabaidh...bha iad ag ràdh gur h-ann car a' fanaid air a bha a bhean. Fhuair i comhachag a-mach an doras 's a cas brist. Thug i a' chomhachag a-staigh 's thilg i i air a chùl 's an leabaidh. 'S ann a sin a rinn e an t-òran...Comhachag bho chd na Sròine.⁸²

John MacDonald fleetingly mentions the above tradition as follows:

Agus bha té òg, a bhean na b'òige na e. Agus 's ann a sin a thubhairt i is i a' falbh air chéilidh—thug i dhà a' chomhachag—

“Cumaidh sinn cuideachda riut gus an till mise.”

Agus 's ann mar sinn a rinn Dòmhnall ‘Òran na Comhachaig’.⁸³

Robert Rankin writes that John preferred the other tradition given by D.C. MacPherson.⁸⁴ The occasion for the composition of the poem was a feast prepared by Raonull Gòrach, Chief of Keppoch (1554-1587), who had restored a crannog named *Taigh nam Fleadh*, on an *t-Eadarloch*, a small loch separated from Loch Tréig by a small channel and spit of gravel called *An Déabhadh*. By some oversight or other the bard was not invited. So hearing of the feast Donald made his way to the island, but had arrived only to find the company dispersed

and the feast at an end. While on his way back to Fersit he overheard an owl hooting on *Sròn na Garbh Bheinne*, and thus *Òran na Comhachaig* was made.⁸⁵

As stated earlier John's brother Duncan recited the whole of *Òran na Comhachaig*, a remarkable survival of over 350 years, to Robert Rankin. In conversation with John MacInnes of the Scottish School of Studies, John himself could only recite five verses of the song and remarks on how his father used to recite the song:

Bhiodh e 'ga sheinn. Bhiodh e 'na shuidhe taobh an teine a tha sin 'na shineadh 's an leabaidh na rud sam bith. Thòiseachadh e air an òran mar seo chuireadh e crìoch air.⁸⁶

John, however, could not remember the music that his father used to recite the words of the song with. It has been suggested by J.L. Campbell that an air recorded from Angus *Beag* MacLellan, South Uist, when he recited *Òran na Comhachaig*, may have been used for the chanting of bardic verse in general.⁸⁷

The last tradition concerning Dòmhnall nan Dàn is the killing of his last deer when he was house-bound and bed-ridden:

Bha e a' fàs sean agus glé shean. Ged a bha a bhean na b'òige na e, chaochail i air thoiseach air. Agus bha e gu h-àrd taobh Loch Tréig 'na shuidhe ann an bothan agus e a' coimhead a-mach air an uinneig. Bhitheadh e an uair sin ceithir fichead bliadhna is a h-ochd. Agus bha nighean ag obair air aran a dhèanamh, air fuineadaireachd taobh an teine. Leig an duine osna:

“Dé th' ort, a dhuine,” thubhairt i.

“Tha mi a' faicinn ùdlaiche a' tighinn a-nuas ann a-sin agus cho breàgha is a chunna riamh. Agus 's e a bha a' cur caimir-inntinn orm agus dragh nach urrainn domh a chumail leis an t-saighead.”

“Och, na bithibh a' coimhead air rudan mar sin, a dhuine,” thubhairt i.

“Thoir thusa an t-saighead a-nuas bharr an fharadh. Tha i treis ann a-nise agus am bogh'. Faic am bheil an taifeid fallain. Agus faigh an t-saighead is fheàrr smeòir. Agus ma tha i garbh anns an roinn, suath i ri clach an teinntein.”

Rinn a' nighean seo. Leag e a thaice ris an uinneig. Agus tharrainn e an t-saighead agus leig e air falbh i. Agus thuit a' fiadh. Agus cha mhór nach do thuit am bodach taobh an teine leis an briogadh a thug e air.

“Agus seo agad m'iarratas,” thubhairt e.” “Sin agad an damh mu dheireadh a thilgeas mise. Agus 's e seo e. Feannaibh e agus cuiribh an t-seiche aige air dòigh agus théid mo thiodhlaiceadh an seichidh an daimh sin ann an Cille Choirill. Is na cuiribh air mo dhruim idir mi. Ach cuiridh mi m'aghaidh air Loch Tréig is air na monaidhean air am bheil m'inntinn a' siùbhal a h-uile latha.”⁸⁸

His grave can be seen to this day. Unfortunately, an iron fence post was struck through his flagstone by forestry workers in the latter half of last century. Perhaps they should have paid more attention to the bard's epitaph said to be attributed to him:

Fhir a chéumas thair mo lic,
Seall a rithist as do dhéigh;
'S cuimhnuich ged tha mi 's an uaigh,
Gu'n robh mi uair cho luath riut fhéin!⁸⁹

This shares the same sentiments (and may have even influenced) Donnachadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir's *Marbhann an Ughdair dha féin*:

Fhir tha 'd sheasamh air mo lic
Bha mise mar a thu 'n dràs;
'S i mo leaba 'n diugh an uaigh,
Chan 'eil smior mo smuais am chnàimh;⁹⁰

Charles Cameron offers the following as the bard's last wish:

'S ann. “Air cùl gaoithe,” thubhairt e, “s an aodann gréine agus m'aghaidh ri Meall Ciarainis.” Sin a dh'iarr orra dar a dh'eug e. Airson na meallan a bhiodh e-fhéi' a' sealg thall.⁹¹

The last historical tradition I wish to deal with is the last inter-clan battle known as *Blàr na Maoile Ruaidh* fought on 4th of August 1688 between the MacIntoshes and the MacDonells. The origin of the dispute went back to the forfeiture of the Brae Lochaber lands in favour of the MacIntoshes after the first Battle of Inverlochy in 1431.

Am baiteal mu dheireadh a bh' aig na Finichean, 's ann gu h-àrd aig Drochaid Ruaidh. Agus their iad ris gus an latha an-diugh Blàr a' Chatha. Agus 's e b'adhbhar dha'n bhaiteal a bha seo, Loch Iall a bhith ag iarraidh Gleann Spithean cho math Gleann Ruaidh. Ach cha toireadh Dòmhnallaich na Ceapach sin dhà. 'S e 'n co-dhùnadh gus an d'thàinig iad gun cuireadh iad blàr air son an àite, an duine a choisneadh 's e bha a' dol a dh'fhaotainn a' chuid a b'fheàrr. Agus dar a thàinig Mac an Tòisich, thubhairt e ri Dòmhnallach na Ceapach:

“Tha thu a' dol a chall an latha.”

“Molaidh mi an latha fhad 's a mhaireas e.”

Chaidh iad an greim agus bha sin ann 1687. Agus 's e Mac an Tòisich air an deach an ruaig ged a bha a na saighdeirean aige. Chaidh an ruaigeadh thar cnoc gus an do chuir e a-staigh iad an àite ris an can iad Allt Ionndrainn, ann an glac. Cha d'fhuair iad às a sin. Chaidh a marbhadh uile. Theich aon fhear dhiubh agus leum e an abhainn aig Both Fhìnidh, abhainn Ruaidh. Agus tha leum ann an sin agus their iad Leum an t-Saighdeir ris gus an latha an-diugh. Ach tha an leum cho fada agus am bealach aig an abhainn cho farsainn gum bheil iad a' dèanamh dheth nach d'rinn duine riamh e. Ach nach iomadh atharrachadh a dh'fhaodas an t-uisge a dhèanamh air bruachan na h-aibhne. Theagamh gun robh e móran na bu chumhainge an uair sin.⁹²

Tradition also has it that a Campbell ‘bouman’, or MacDonald,⁹³ who was somewhat simple had not been summoned to the fight, but nevertheless

appeared with a club. Stricken by a bullet, or an arrow, he became so infuriated that he laid low several of the MacIntoshes causing them to lose their confidence, and regaining the initiative for the MacDonells. According to Alasdair Campbell, he attacked from the rear causing much confusion in the Clan Chattan ranks.⁹⁴ Either way he materially contributed to the MacDonell victory.

The MacIntosh chief was actually captured beforehand and is said have been at Keppoch House during the hour-long battle. The MacPhersons, to add to his embarrassment, arrived later to rescue him. However, the killing of MacKenzie of Scuddie, who had lead the government troops, by Angus Tulloch, earned Coll na Ceapaich the extreme displeasure of the Privy Council. Sixty dragoons and two hundred foot under the command of John Crichton were ordered to Lochaber to waste the Braes. To commemorate this victory the clan's salute, the pibroch *Blàr na Maoile Ruaidh*, and the march *Latha na Maoile Ruaidh* were composed.⁹⁵

All the stories touched on are historical, some more than others, and, with John MacInnes, it is probably best to view these "historical stories as narrative fictions rather than reflections of Gaelic history."⁹⁶ It will also be noted that any moralising is absent from all the historical tales told by John MacDonald. It is not part of the narrative style and, no doubt, if introduced would detract from its epigrammatic energy so well reflected in its almost unassuming manner of terse scene making, contrasted with its bursts of dialogue and memorable turns of phrase.

Notes

- ¹ Jackson, Kenneth H. 'The Folktale in Gaelic Scotland'. *Proceedings of the Scottish Anthropological and Folklore Society* Vol. IV, No. 3 (1952): 131-132.
- ² MacInnes, John. 'Clan Sagas and Historical Legends'. *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* Vol. LVII (1990-1992): 380.
- ³ Stuart, John Sobieski & Charles Edward. *Lays of the Deer Forest Vol. II*. Edinburgh, 1848: 399.
- ⁴ MacDonald, Stuart. *Back to Lochaber*. The Pentland Press, 1994: 100.
- ⁵ MacMillan, Somerled. *Bygone Lochaber: Historical and Traditional*. Glasgow: K. & R. Davidson, Ltd., 1971: 146.
- ⁶ ref. 4 *Back to Lochaber*: 100.
- ⁷ John MacDonald. *Fear na Ceapaich agus an Donas*. CIM I.I.3, TSB 3: 212-213. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 4/2/1951. A similar version is recounted by Archibald MacInnes. *Mac 'ic Raghnaill agus an Sgoil Dubh*. CIM I.I.3, TSB 3: 252-254. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 22/2/1951.
- ⁸ Hanford, Mark. 'Demonic Magic in the Icelandic Wizard Legends'. *Northern Studies: The Journal of the Scottish Society of Northern Studies* Vol. 29 (1992): 26.
- ⁹ Dempster, Miss. 'The Folk-lore of Sutherlandshire'. *The Folk-Lore Journal* Vol. VI (1888): 152.
- ¹⁰ ref. 4 *Back to Lochaber*: 104.
- ¹¹ *ibid.*: 107.
- ¹² MacMillan, Somerled. 'A Letter from D.C. MacPherson to Juliet MacDonald, 1879'. *Scottish Gaelic Studies* Vol. XI (1968): 241.
- ¹³ Campbell, Archibald Fortrose. 'The Keppoch Murders'. *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* Vols. XXXIX/XL (39/40) (1942-1950): 170.
- ¹⁴ *ibid.*: 171.
- ¹⁵ ref. 3 *Lays of the Deer Forest*: 409.
- ¹⁶ *ibid.*
- ¹⁷ ref. 4 *Back to Lochaber*: 110.
- ¹⁸ Watson, W.J. *Bàrdachd Ghàidhlig: Specimens of Gaelic Poetry 1550-1900*. Stirling: A. Leanmonth & Son. 2nd ed., 1932: 322. The affair of Sròn a' Chlachain has been placed in 1640, but a document in the possession of Mr. John MacGregor, W.S., Edinburgh proves conclusively that it happened on June 4, 1646. Annie M. Ross persuasively argues that the correct date is 1640, where she quotes MacMhuirich, as Angus MacDonald's uncle Dòmhnall Glas, presumably as head of the MacDonalds of Keppoch, joined Alasdair MacColla in August 1644, so Angus Odhar was probably dead by this time. Further, the Campbells raided the Braes early in 1640, or perhaps late in the previous year, and therefore it would seem unlikely that such a predatory clan as the MacDonells would suffer a wait of six years before avenging the Campbells of Breadalbane.
- ¹⁹ ref. 12 *Scottish Gaelic Studies* XI: 240.
- ²⁰ MacDiarmid, John. 'The Folklore of Breadalbane'. *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* Vol. XXVI (26) (1904-1907): 148.
- ²¹ ref. 4 *Back to Lochaber*: 115.
- ²² John MacDonald. *Murt na Ceapaich*. CIM I.I.1, TSB 1: 52-54. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 20/1/1951.
- ²³ MacDonald, Rev. Angus J., & Archibald. *The Clan Donald. Vol. 2*. Inverness, 1900: 636-637.
- ²⁴ MacKenzie, Annie. M. (ed.). *Òrain Iain Luim: Songs of John MacDonald, Bard of Keppoch*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Gaelic Texts Society Vol. 8, 1964: 210.
- ²⁵ ref. 4 *Back to Lochaber*: 116; ref. 4 *Bygone Lochaber*: 157.
- ²⁶ ref. 3 *Lays of the Deer Forest*: 399. Dùghall nan Gaorr, who gained this name by his outstanding bravery at Blàr na Léinidh where he is said to have cut down 19 of his father-in-law's (Locheil's) bodyguard.

- ²⁷ The Sobieski Stuarts maintain that Dùghall nan Gaorr had been given the Inverlair lands by Keppoch. This scarcely makes sense as Keppoch had no legal power to do this as Huntly was his superior, and further, that Keppoch sided with Iain Mùideartach whom Dùghall had fought against.
- ²⁸ ref. 12 *Scottish Gaelic Studies* XI: 241.
- ²⁹ ref. 24 *Òrain Iain Luim*: 269.
- ³⁰ ref. 4 *Back to Lochaber*: 116.
- ³¹ ref. 24 *Òrain Iain Luim*: 114, lines 1468-1473.
- ³² ref. 3 *Lays of the Deer Forest*: 402ff.
- ³³ ref. 24 *Òrain Iain Luim*: 271.
- ³⁴ Charles Cameron. *Murt na Ceapaich*. SA 1969/174/A1. Transcribed with the assistance of Professor Donald MacAulay.
- ³⁵ ref. 12 *Scottish Gaelic Studies* XI: 241.
- ³⁶ ref. 24 *Òrain Iain Luim*: 112. lines 1436-1441.
- ³⁷ *ibid.*: 271.
- ³⁸ Allan MacDonell. *Murt na Ceapaich*. CIM I.I.1, TSB 1: 27-29. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 17/1/1951.
- ³⁹ ref. 24 *Òrain Iain Luim*: 62-63. As quoted from *Records of the Privy Council of Scotland. Vol. II*.
- ⁴⁰ *ibid.*
- ⁴¹ John MacDonald: *Iain Lom*. SA 1958/20/A9. Recorded by Calum MacLean. Transcribed with assistance from Professor Donald MacAulay.
- ⁴² *ibid.*
- ⁴³ Sinclair, Rev. Allan. 'John MacDonald, The Lochaber Bard, and his times'. *Celtic Review* Vol. V, No. LI (January 1880): 102.
- ⁴⁴ ref. 41.
- ⁴⁵ *ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ ref. 24 *Òrain Iain Luim*: 272-273.
- ⁴⁷ *ibid.*
- ⁴⁸ ref. 3 *Lays of the Deer Forest*: 417.
- ⁴⁹ MacLean, Calum I. *The Highlands*. Club Leabhar-Inbhirnis, 1975: 15.
- ⁵⁰ John MacDonald. *Baiteal Inbhir Lòchaidh (1645)*. CIM I.I.1, TSB 1: 68-70. Transcribed by Calum MacLean.
- ⁵¹ ref. 24 *Òrain Iain Luim*: 241.
- ⁵² Cameron, Alexander. *Reliquiae Celticae Vol 2*. MacBain, Alexander & Kennedy, Rev. John (eds.). Inverness, 1894: 184-185.
- ⁵³ MacPherson, D.C. *An Duanaire*. Edinburgh, 1968: 98.
- ⁵⁴ ref. 12 *Scottish Gaelic Studies* XI: 242; Nicolson, Alexander (ed.). *A Collection of Gaelic Proverbs and Familiar Phrases: Based on MacIntosh's Collection*. Glasgow: Caledonian Press, 1951:255.5.
- ⁵⁵ John MacDonald. *Mac Loch Iall agus Blàr Inbhir Lòchaidh*. CIM I.I.6, TSB 6: 513. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 20/1/1951.
- ⁵⁶ ref. 4 *Bygone Lochaber*: 121.
- ⁵⁷ Rankin, Robert A. 'Òran na Comhachaig: Text and Tradition'. *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Glasgow* Vol V (1958): 157. As recited by John MacDonald's brother, Duncan.
- ⁵⁸ MacInnes, John. 'Sùil ar Bàrdachd na Gàidhlig'. In *For A Celtic Future: A tribute to Alan Heusaff*. Ó Luain, Cathal. Dublin: The Celtic League, 1983: 8.
- ⁵⁹ MacDonell, J.M. *An Historical Record of the Branch of Clan Dòmhnail called the MacDonalds of Keppoch and Gargavanach*. Glasgow, 1931: 12.
- ⁶⁰ ref. 58 *For a Celtic Future*: 8.
- ⁶¹ ref. 59 *MacDonalds of Keppoch*: 13.
- ⁶² John MacDonald. *Iarla Mhàrr agus an Fhuarag Eòrna*. SA 1952/125/4. Transcribed by Donald Archie MacDonald. A translation of this appears in Bruford, Alan J. & MacDonald, Donald A (eds.). *Scottish Traditional Tales*. Edinburgh: Polygon, 1994: 422-424.
- ⁶³ Campbell, Lord Archibald. *Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition*. Argyllshire Series No. 1. London: David Nutt, 1889: 76-77.

- ⁶⁴ MacLean, Sorley. *Ris a' Bhruthaich: The Criticism and Prose Writings of Sorley MacLean*. Edited by William Gillies. Stornoway: Acair, 1985: 12.
- ⁶⁵ John MacDonald. *Iain Lom*. CIM I.I.1, TSB 1: 118-121. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 20/1/1951.
- ⁶⁶ MacKenzie, John. *Sar-Obair nam Bard Gaelach*. Glasgow, 1841: 35.
- ⁶⁷ Dunn, Charles W. *Highland Settler: A Portrait of the Scottish Gael in Nova Scotia*. University of Toronto Press, 1980: 50.
- ⁶⁸ MacDonald, Alexander. 'Iain Lom'. *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* Vol. XXXII (32) (1924-1925): 219. According to Colm Ó Baoill rather the date should be 1721. Even so, it is extremely unlikely that Iain Lom lived to such a great age, therefore this composition cannot be attributed to him. Ó Baoill, Colm. 'Bàs Iain Luim'. *Scottish Gaelic Studies* XVI (1990): 94.
- ⁶⁹ ref. 59 *MacDonalds of Keppoch*: 13.
- ⁷⁰ ref. 12 *Scottish Gaelic Studies* XI: 243.
- ⁷¹ ref. 43 *Celtic Review* Vol. V: 104.
- ⁷² Thomson, Derick S. (ed.). *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*. Glasgow: Gairm Publications 110, 1994: 64.
- ⁷³ ref. 57 *Òran na Comhachaig*: 128.
- ⁷⁴ ref. 53 *An Duanaire*: 117.
- ⁷⁵ Diarmad [D.C. MacPherson]. 'Donull MacFhionnlaidh agus Oran na Comhachaig.' *An Gàidheal* Vol. 5, No. 50 (February 1876): 328-329.
- ⁷⁶ John MacDonald. *Dòmhnall Mac Fhionnlaigh nan Dàn*. CIM I.I.1, TSB 1: 43-46. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 20/1/1951.
- ⁷⁷ ref. 57 *Òran na Comhachaig*: 128.
- ⁷⁸ Archibald MacInnes. *Dòmhnall Mac Fhionnlaigh nan Dàn*. CIM I.I.3, TSB 3: 236-237. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 31/1/1951.
- ⁷⁹ ref. 75 *An Gàidheal* Vol. 5: 329.
- ⁸⁰ John MacLeod. *Dòmhnall MacFhionnlaigh nan Dàn*. CIM I.I.8, TSB 8: 770-771. Transcribed by Calum MacLean.
- ⁸¹ ref. 59 *Òran na Comhachaig*: 130.
- ⁸² Charles Cameron. *Dòmhnall MacFhionnlaigh nan Dàn*. SA 1969/175/A4 & A5. Transcribed with the assistance of Professor Donald MacAulay.
- ⁸³ ref. 70.
- ⁸⁴ ref. 59 *Òran na Comhachaig*: 130.
- ⁸⁵ *ibid.*: 129.
- ⁸⁶ John MacDonald. *Òran na Comhachaig*. SA 1961/45/A8. Recorded by John MacInnes. Transcribed by me.
- ⁸⁷ Collinson, Francis. *Traditional and National Music of Scotland*. London, 1960: 60.
- ⁸⁸ ref. 76.
- ⁸⁹ ref. 75 *An Gàidheal* Vol. 5: 330.
- ⁹⁰ MacLeod, Angus (ed.). *Òrain Dhonnachaidh Bhàin: The Songs of Duncan Bàn MacIntyre*. Edinburgh: Scottish Gaelic Texts Society Vol. 4, 1952: 392. Lines 5600—5604.
- ⁹¹ ref. 82.
- ⁹² John MacDonald. *Am Baiteal mu Dheireadh*. CIM I.I.1, TSB 1: 81-82. 21/1/51. Transcribed by Calum MacLean.
- ⁹³ MacKay, David N. *Clan Warfare in the Scottish Highlands*. Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1922: 261.
- ⁹⁴ Campbell, Alasdair. 'Traditions of Lochaber'. *Transactions of Gaelic Society of Inverness* Vol. XXVI (26) (1904-1907): 305.
- ⁹⁵ ref. 4 *Back to Lochaber*: 146.
- ⁹⁶ ref. 2 *Clan Sagas and Historical Legends*: 380.

International Tales

As the chapter heading implies these types of stories are to be found throughout the world. Quite a few of the tales found in John MacDonald's repertoire are recognised by the Aarne-Thompson (AT) index such as AT 221 (Legend of the Oldest Creatures), AT 922 (The King's Question) and so forth. A list of all the International Tales identified by this index is given in Appendix 2. Space prevents a detailed analysis of all these types of tales, nevertheless I shall presently discuss some of them which give at least give an indication of the content of the repertoire. Up until recently it was a fairly common experience to find International Tales in any story-teller's repertoire. Nowadays, however, it is becoming rare to find such stories, in any given repertoire, which are recognised by the AT index. Such a situation can often be a discouraging to budding folk-story collectors.

Before discussing any of the tales individually, it would be worthwhile to give, briefly, some background information concerning the various theories behind such International Tales, which have received considerable attention since the Brothers Grimm. These various theories examine the origin, meaning, dissemination, variations and relations of different forms of the folktale. A singular question concerning such folktales is: how did the distribution of these various stories arise? There is, however, not a satisfactory solution to such a question, despite the various theories which have been propounded.

A classic introduction to the International Tale in a Celtic language is *The International Tale and Early Welsh Tradition* written by Professor Kenneth Jackson.¹ It is lucidly written and is still used today despite having become slightly dated, reflecting the value of Jackson's scholarship. Although Jackson provides a useful introduction to the various theories behind International Tales he does not unduly procrastinate over them, instead giving his attention to the description of the international folktale's characteristics. His decision not to enter deeply into the debate over the origination of the folktale reflected, I think,

his view that an all-embracing theory, resulting in excessive generalisation, would have been unacceptable.

The Brothers Grimm, in the early part of the nineteenth century, were the first to attempt a theoretical explanation for the distribution of the folk-tale world-wide. It was their belief, under the influence of comparative philology, that folktales were conterminous with the development of the Indo-European languages. In other words, the stories had spread as the languages had spread. Although this theory gained some currency at the time, it does not comprehensively embrace the complexity of the folktale.

Another school of thought, the Anthropological one, had a different theory regarding the origin of folktales. They disregarded the idea that any distribution had necessarily taken place, instead positing polygenesis, i.e. resemblances in stories are due to independent invention in many places, as each culture shared common beliefs, customs, etc. at the same level of development. A criticism of this approach is that it presumes the parallel development of diverse cultures, although it is attractive when considering extremely simple narrative motifs. Further, as Jackson points out, this view can be criticised as it does not take into account the contribution of travellers as an important cause of the oral transmission. In the Highlands, for example, tailors, dance-masters, and tins-smiths were well known not only as an important repertory of folk tradition but also as disseminators of lore through their itinerant trades.

Theodor Benfey, perhaps still under the influence of the Brothers Grimm, emphasised the role of India as the centre from which all folktales had emerged. His theory also acknowledged literary diffusion by arguing that after the tenth century various folktales spread due to Islamic influence, particularly through Byzantium, Italy and Spain. Elsewhere Buddhist material came from China and Tibet via the Mongols. Thus, in effect, India can be seen as the fountain from which European tales had flowed.² This view due to its inherent simplicity has been modified by modern scholarship, which still recognises India as an important reservoir of folk-lore material, but only as one of the many great centres of invention and dissemination, others being Egypt, Greece and ancient Sumeria.

The theory most widely accepted and used regularly nowadays for the analysis of folktales is the historic-geographic method of the Finnish school, where it was first developed. This posited, to put it simply, a 'ripple theory', whereby tales travelled from a centre by oral transmission, undergoing various mutations in the process. By examination of the available versions an attempt could be made to determine (or re-construct) the life history of a certain story. This method primarily depends upon the analysis and distribution of each motif (the smallest unit of a narrative tale), in order to see in which geographical direction had it moved, and what changes it had undergone in the process,³ thus allowing for comparative criticism. Therefore, by analysing as many versions as possible the original form of the tale may be re-constructed and thus would give a basis to explain the changes the story had suffered in order to produce all the different versions. It would indicate not only the origin of diffusion, but also the time and place of its origin. Stith Thompson offers a strong analogy between the process of forming a theoretical Indo-European word from modern languages, and the method used in the historic-geographic theory. Here, he argues that the process of arriving at a hypothetical archetype, the mould from which the variations have arisen, is essentially similar to the comparative philology of the Indo-European languages, i.e. a hypothetical word which acts as a common ancestor from which various words present in modern European languages are descended.⁴

However, a weakness, perhaps, of this approach is its reliance upon a large number of variations as the historic-geographic method is essentially a technique for the study of the dissemination of oral tales. Unlike the other theories concerning folktales, criticism of the historic-geographic method has not led to its detraction, rather various criticisms have been taken on board which has led to remodification, and has further consolidated its favoured position amongst folklorists. Nevertheless, modern folklore scholarship exercises due caution in regard to over-generalisation, or to 'cure-all' theories, in all attempts to explain the diffusion and origin of folktales.

One of the most popular tales once told in Brae Lochaber was a version of The Legend of the Oldest Creatures (AT 221). This was better known to the

reciters simply as *Iolaire Loch Tréig*. A version collected by D.C. MacPherson, in the last century, has been reprinted on numerous occasions.⁵ This version is clearly a more literary production, as it seems to have been “touched up”, compared with the examples given in oral tradition. Three versions were collected from John MacDonald, Archibald MacInnes and Charles Cameron respectively.⁶ The versions recited by the latter two follow closely the one given by D.C. MacPherson. The version given by John MacDonald adds the single-motif narrative of the ‘election of a bird-king’ i.e. the wren appears from underneath the eagle’s wing to gain a higher altitude which is also meant to represent superiority. Also, due to the appearance of the (seemingly ubiquitous) Cailleach Beinne Brice, the introduction to the tale is quite different. This may be due to the fact that a supernatural element is needed in order that the audience does not balk at the ability of the animals to speak, a common enough occurrence in folktales. In any case it makes the suspension of disbelief an easier process:

Bha cailleach mhór ann am Beinn a' Bhric ris an abradh iad Cailleach Beinn a' Bhric. Tha a' bheinn seo gu h-àrd aig ceann shuas Loch Tréig. Bha de bhuaidh aice air a h-uile beothach mu'n cuairt dhith agus gun robh i a' toirt orra bruidhinn. Agus 's ann a-sin a thòisich a' chéilidh. Tha iad a' bruidhinn oirre agus an latha an-diugh, air a chéilidh. Thàinig geamhradh uamhasach fhéin dona. Agus thubhairt i riutha aon oidhche a bha seo:

“Feumaidh sibh falbh,” thubhairt i, “agus a h-uile duine sgarbh a thoirt á creag dhà fhéin. Chan urrainn duine fuireach beò na's fhaide a-seo. Agus tha am bainne a' falbh far na h-aighean ged a bha mise 'gan leigeil is a' toirt daoibh a' bhainne. Chan eil e ann tuillidh. Agus chan eil iad a' seasamh boisean dhomh ged a tha mi a' muidheadh Dòmhnall Mac Fhionnlaigh an t-Saighead orra, agus dar a nì mi sin, tionndaidh an gealagan air an t-sùil leis an eagal.”

Ach dh'fhalbh iad is rinn iad dhaibh-fhéin mar a thubhairt i. Agus an aon bheothach a dh'fhuirich leithe 's e an Iolaire. Thubhairt an Iolaire:

“Chan urrainn domh seo a sheasamh na's fhaide. Feumaidh mi falbh.”

“Feumaidh,” thubhairt i, “agus latha math leat.”

Dh'fhalbh an Iolaire sìos do Loch Tréig—Coire Mheadhoin agus a-staigh Bràigh Allt nam Bruach agus a' Chaorannaich gus an d'thàinig i gu Drochaid Ruaidh, Bun Ruaidh:

“Am bheil thu a-seo, a Ghobhair Duibh?” thubhairt i ris. 'S e sin Gobhar Dubh nan Allt air am bheil am broilleach geal.

“Tha.”

“Am bheil forfhais agad air geamhradh riamh cho dona seo.”

“Chan eil. Ach cha robh mi ach 'nam isean glé bheag às deaghaidh mo mhàthair,” thubhairt esan, “agus chan eil forfhais agam air. Ach tha fiadh thall an Coille Innse 'na chrùban aig bun craobh dharaich is mar am bheil eòlas aigesan”

Chaidh i null far an robh a' fiadh.

“Chan eil,” thubhairt am fiadh, “forfhais agam-s' air. Ach b'aithne dhomh caifeanach a bha gu h-àrd ann am Bothan Choire na Ceanna. Cha robh ach 'na mo laogh glé bheag agus bha e a' ruith feadh a' lochain agus an t-sùil às.”

Ràinig i shuas:

“Am bheil forfhais agad,” thubhairt i, “air geamhradh riamh a bha cho dona seo?”

“Tha,” thubhairt e.

“O! ma-thà, tha mi glé thoilichte a do naidheachd. Agus mar sin thàinig a' seòrsa againn beò as an droch-gheamhradh sin agus bidh earbsa againn gun tig sinn às an fhear seo.”

“Thig,” thubhairt e. “Agus bha mise 'ga mo chluich fhìn taobh lochain ann a-seo. Droch-gheamhradh a bh' ann, agus bha e air adhart ann a June, dar a chuir pios de'n deigh an t-sùil asam.”

“O! nach robh e dona.”

“Bha.”

“Théid mi an àird do'n iarmailt,” thubhairt i, “feuch am bheil mo neart a' cumail fhathast.”

Chaidh i an àirde. Dar a bha i a' fàgail talamh dé leum air cùl a' sgéith aice ach dreathann donn.

“Tha mi a-nis gu h-àrd 's an athar is chan eil beothach a théid na's àirde na mise.”

“Tha mi fada fos do chionn,” is e a leum.

“O! ablaich,” thubhairt i. “Ma tha thusa beò, chan eagal duinne. Latha math leat.”

Is dh'fhalbh i leis an tamailt is cha do stad i gus an do ràinig i a' Mhaingir thall taobh Loch Airceig. Agus theireadh iad Creag na h-Iolaire rithe far an d'fhuirich i 'na crùban ann a-sin gus an do chuir i dhith a' sgìos. Agus gheibh iad aois mhór, an iolaire:

Tri aois cù, aois each,

Tri aois each, aois duine,

Tri aois duine, aois fir-eoin

Tri aois fir-eoin, aois craobh dharaich.

It would, no doubt, come as a surprise to John MacDonald if, at the time of the recording, he were told that the story of *The Oldest Creatures* originated in India sometime in the fourth century.⁷ Whether he would have been interested, sceptical or plain unbelieving is another matter. However the resemblance to the Buddhist story, entitled *Tittira Jataka*, where the animals dispute their ages and similarly where a search is made for an independent criterion in order to settle the dispute is so striking that it can be no mere coincidence:

Long ago there were three friends living near a great banyan-tree, on the slope of the Himalayan range of mountains—a partridge, a monkey, and an elephant. They were wanting in respect and courtesy for one another, and did no live altogether on befitting terms.

But it occurred to them, “It is not right for us to live in this manner. What if we were to cultivate respect towards whichever of us is eldest?” “But which is the eldest?” they asked; until one day they thought, “This will be a good way of finding out.” So the monkey and the partridge asked the elephant, as they were sitting altogether at the foot of the banyan tree: “Elephant, dear, how big was the banyan-tree at the time you first knew it?” “Friends!” said he,

“when I was little I used to walk over this banyan, then a mere bush tree, keeping it between my thighs; and when I stood with it between my legs its highest branches touched me underneath. So I have known it since it was a shrub.”

Then they both asked the monkey in the same way. And he said: “Friends! when I was quite a little monkey I used to sit on the ground and eat the topmost shoots of this banyan, then quite young, by merely stretching out my neck. So that I have known it from my earliest infancy.”

Then again the two others asked the partridge as before. And he said: “Friends! there was once a lofty banyan-tree in such and such a place, whose fruits I ate and dropped the seeds here. From that this tree grew up; so that I have known it even before the time when it was born, and I am older than the either of you.”

Thereupon, the elephant and monkey said to the clever partridge: “You, friend, are the oldest of us all. Henceforth we will do all manner of service to you, and pay you reverence, and make salutations before you, and treat you with every respect and courtesy, and abide by your counsels. Do you in future give us whatever counsel an instruction we require.”

Thenceforth the partridge gave them counsel and kept them up to their duty, and himself observed his own. So they three kept the five commandments; and since they were courteous and respectful to one another, and lived on befitting terms with each other, they became destined for heaven when their lives should end.⁸

This tale was clearly used as a didactic aid in the Buddhist version and differs from the Lochaber ecotype in this respect. However, the common motif is clearly present. The tale itself appears both in Welsh and Irish Tradition. It appears in *Culhwch and Olwen*, one of the oldest tales of the Mabigionian;⁹ and also, under the title of *The Hawk of Achill*, in an early sixteenth century Irish manuscript written in Leinster.¹⁰

The Lochaber version of the tale, given in *An Gàidheal*, tells how an eagle travelled to discover an older creature than herself, and was sent by an old

wren to a still older blackbird which had made a hole in an anvil by cleaning its beak on it, which sent the eagle to a still older stag, which sent her to a still older trout, which had become blind when his eye froze to a rock on the coldest night.¹¹ Jackson rightly points out “...that the Eastern motif of the Oldest Animals was modified in the British Isles into a new form which appears in strikingly similar guise in Wales, Ireland and Scotland.”¹² In fact, Jackson goes onto suggest “...that the Lochaber version is very likely the most primitive, since the point of the quest here, to find an older animal, is closer to the Oriental story than any of the others are.”¹³

An interesting character who appears sporadically in some of John MacDonald's tales is George Buchanan (1506-1582), the sixteenth century humanist and Latinist, as a clever trickster. He seems to be a popular subject of folk anecdotes in the Gaelic tradition. J.L. Campbell published a typical example of this type of tale, *George Buchanan and the Dogs*, in *Stories from South Uist*.¹⁴ This story was collected from Angus Beag MacLellan. Also, in the South Uist tradition George Buchanan is the character who tricks the devil in the Migratory Legend (ML 3000) discussed in the previous chapter.¹⁵ Similarly, in the Lochaber tradition, the saviour in the case of The King's Question (AT 922) is George Buchanan who takes the place of the priest. The version recounted by John MacDonald is entitled *An Sagart agus an Rìgh*:

Bha sagart ann agus cha robh e-fhéin is an Rìgh a' còrdadh ro-mhath.
Ach chuir e fios air agus thubhairt e ris:

“Ma dh'fhuaisgleas tu na trì céistean a tha seo, bidh réichte eatorainn agus faoda' tu fuireach far am bheil thu. Agus 's e na céistean a th' ann: Dé 'n ùine a ghabhas an Rìgh a' dol ma'n cuirt dha'n t-saoghal: agus dé is fhiach an Rìgh: agus có air a tha an Rìgh a' smaointeachadh?”

Chuir seo gu bruailean agus gu caimir-inntinn glé throm a' sagart agus e a' falbh dhachaidh. Có thachair ris ach Deòrsa Bochanan.

“Tha sin a' coimhead car muldach dhiubh-fhéin.”

“Tha mi sin. Bidh mi air mo sgùirseadh às an dùthaich seo mar a fasgail mi na trì céistean a tha seo”

“Cò dha a tha agad ri fosgladh?”

“Tha do'n Rìgh.”

“Cui iad?”

Dh'innis e dhà gun robh: dé 'n ùine a ghabhadh an Rìgh a' dol cuairt air an t-saoghal agus dé b'fhiach an Rìgh agus dé a bha an Rìgh a' smaointeachdainn:

“Thoir dhomh-sa do dheise agus théid mi 'nad àite a-màireach agus gu fosgail mi na céistean sin.”

“Tha mi ro-thoilichte agus ro-thaingeil.”

Agus 's ann mar seo a bha. Dh'fhalbh Deòrsa agus chuir e air deise an t-sagairt agus ràinig e an Rìgh.

“Seadh,” thubhairt an Rìgh, “tha thu air tighinn.”

“Tha.”

“Am bheil thu deas airson nan céistean a tha seo fhuasgladh?”

“Tha mi a' samointeach' gum bheil.”

“Dé 'n ùine a ghabhadh an Rìgh a' dol ma'n cuairt air an t-saoghal?”

“Ma dh'éireas an Rìgh leis a' ghrian anns a' mhadainn agus cumail rithe gu h-oidhche, théid e ma'n cuairt air an t-saoghal ann an ceithir uaire fichead.”

“O! nì sin an gnothach,” thubhairt an Rìgh. “Is dé is fhiach an Rìgh.”

“Chaidh nar Slanaighear a chreic air son deich piosa fhichead de dh'airgead. Agus chan fhiach an Rìgh sin.”

“Chan fhiach,” thubhairt e. “Nì sin an gnothach. Is dé air am bheil an Rìgh a' smaointeachdainn?”

“Tha an Rìgh a' smaointeachdainn gur h-e th' aige an sagart ach chan e th' aige ach Deòrsa Bochanan.¹⁶

The late Alan Bruford has discussed The King's Question in Gaelic tradition,¹⁷ based upon the classic study, *Kaiser und Abt*, by Professor Walter Anderson. Bruford notes, commenting upon the version supplied by John MacDonald, that it differs from the standard ecotype in lacking the brother relationship, which may indicate an English influence perhaps from a once popular series of chapbooks.¹⁸

Five of the fifteen versions analysed by Bruford depart from the Gaelic ecotype or redaction which has been identified in his study. These differences are not significant as they are fairly superficial: the change of one of the three questions or a change of the name of the main character.¹⁹ Bruford describes the Gaelic ecotype as follows: “Anderson might have described it as a ‘Brother Redaction’, for a person who is set the question is in regular forms described as a priest (*sagart*—in versions from Protestant as well as Catholic areas, which may provide an indication of the age of the story) and one who answers them is his brother, a simpleton (*amadan*), who remarks in most cases that if he is killed it will be less of a tragedy than the death of the priest.”²⁰ Another version of this tale, collected in Lochaber from Ewen MacPherson entitled *an t-Impire agus an t-Amadan*, who learnt it from an Appin man, conforms to the Gaelic ecotype as described.²¹

Elsewhere, it has been suggested by Bruford that because of the similarity between the Gaelic ecotype and the so-called ‘Old French Redaction’ (as termed by Anderson), formed around 1500, the Gaelic ecotype may have followed the Highland chiefs’ wine route, coming to the Highlands from France, via the west coast of Ireland.²²

Another of John MacDonald’s jocular tales in which George Buchanan appears is entitled *Deòrsa Bochanan agus a’ Phearsair* (AT 821B). This has a definite influence from the chapbook:

Bha duine bochd a' gabhail a thurais agus chaidh e 'staigh do thaigh-bidhith na do thaigh-òsda agus dé fhuair e ach uighean agus dar a thàinig air a phàigheadh bha e prìs uamhasach.

Thubhairt e 'n uair seo nach robh e dol a phàigheadh na prìs a bha sin air son na fhuair e — nach d'fhuair e ach dà ugh agus am beagan biadh a fhuair e leotha.

“O, ge-tà,” thubhairt àd-sa, “bha sinne 'dol a chuir nan uighean a bha sin fo chearc 's bha sinn a' cunntas dar a thigeadh na h-iseinean a-mach dé gos an tigeadh e 'n ceann na bliadhna agus na h-uighean.

“Chan eil mise 'dol a phàigheadh air son sin!”

“Feumaidh tu phàigheadh!”

Agus cha phàigheadh e e 's chaidh a thoirt go cùirt 's tha...tha e coltach gun robh e 'dol a chall na cùirt a-réir an luchd-lagha bh' ann.

Thàinig e 'mach á Taigh na Cùirte agus thubhairt e ris.

“Nach eil seo truagh — mi 'dol a chall na cùirt?”

Có thachair air ach Deòrsa Bochanan, 's dh'innis e dha—cha robh fios aige có bh' ann.

“C'à 'n robh do thuras?”

Dh'innis e h-uile car dha.

“O, chan eil e ceart idir!” thubhairt Deòrsa.

“Innsidh mi dé nì mi thu: gladhaidh sinn cùirt eile agus bidh mise aig a' chùirt agus seasaidh mi thu.”

“Seadh!”

Bha seo gasda. Sheas a' chùirt a-rithist agus dar a thòisich 'ad air bruidhinn air na h-uighean agus air a h-uile rud a bh' ann, dé bha Deòrsa Bochanan a' tilgeil feadh an ùrlair ach peasair bhrùich.

“O, gu dé 'n obair a tha 'seo?” thubhairt 'ad.

“O, tha mi a' cur na peasair tha seo.”

“Nach eil sin fad-air-ais dhuit,” thubhairt a' Siorram ris, “a'cur peasair agus i bruich. Ciamar a tha thu 'smaoineachdainn a dh'fhàsas i?”

“Agus ciamar a tha sib'-fhéin a' smaoineachdainn agus sibh a' toirt breith air an duine tha 'seo, gun tig iseinean á uighean bruich. Nach iad fhéin a bhrùich na h-uighean 's cha b'e 'n duine agus chan e mise bhrùich a' pheasair tha 'seo, ach chaidh iarraidh orm a chur,” thubhairt e. “Agus rinn mi mar a dh'iarr 'ad orm a chur 's ma tha sib'-fhéin a' smaoineachdainn gum 'fàs peasair às a' pheasair bhrùich, faodaidh sibh an duine thoirt a-suas 's a dh'ràdh gun tig iseinean á ugh bruidh 's ma thig 's e gnothach mìorbhailteach e.”

Chaidh a' chùirt a chur ma sgaoil agus bha an duine air fhaotainn a-mach.

Nach robh i glan?²³

Compared to the following example of a Lowland Scots version of the tale, taken from *A Dictionary of British Folktales*, it is clear that the Gaelic version,

remains extremely loyal to both the form and content of the plot, is influenced by the chapbook:

There was a travelling man who stayed at an inn, and he had two eggs for breakfast. They didn't give him the bill till next time, and it was two years before he came back. When he came back, they gave him a bill for hundreds of pounds, for the hens that would have been hatched out of the eggs, and the chickens that would have been hatched out the eggs, and so on. The merchant said that he'd pay for the two eggs, but no more, so they took the matter to court, and got a clever lawyer, and things looked bad for the merchant, when George Buchanan came into court, and saw how things were going. He went out and got some boiled peas, and came back, and offered to sell them for seed. The Folks began to laugh, and the judge said: "That's no good. You'll not raise plants from boiled peas." "You're just as likely to raise plants from boiled peas," said George, "as to raise chickens from boiled eggs." And so the merchant won the case.²⁴

The following is a version taken from John Cheap's *The Chapman's Library* shows that the Gaelic version, in all probability, comes from such a source. It may have come directly from the literature or, perhaps more likely, entered the Gaelic tradition via the Lowlands.

A poor Scotchman dined one day at a public house in London upon eggs and not having enough money to pay, got credit till he should return. The man being in lucky in trade, acquired vast riches; and after some years happening to pass that way, called at the house where he was owing the dinner of eggs. Having called for the innkeeper, he asked him what he had to pay for the dinner of eggs he got from him such a time? The landlord seeing him now rich, have him a bill of several pounds; telling him, as his reason for so extravagant a charge, that these eggs had they been hatched, would have been chickens; and these laying more eggs, would have been more chickens; and these laying more eggs, would have been more chickens: and so on multiplying the eggs and their

product, till such time as their value amounted to the sum charged. The man refusing to comply with this demand, was charged before a judge. He then made his case known to George, his countryman, who promised to appear in the hour of cause, which he according did, all in a sweat, with a great basket of boiled pease [sic], which appearance surprised the judge, who asked him what he meant by these boiled pease? says George I am going to sow them. When will they grow? said the judge. They will grow, said George, when sodden eggs grow chickens. Which answer convinced the judge of the extravagance of the innkeeper's demand, and the Scotchman was acquitted for twopence halfpenny.²⁵

A more familiar tale, perhaps, is a version of a tale which is at least as old as Homer's *Odyssey*. In the story of *Polyphemus*, or the *Blinded Ogre*, the hero manages to escape by assuming an ambiguous name such as *No-one* or *Noman*.²⁶ This tale has a wide geographic distribution throughout Asia and Europe. The story also appears in the *Arabian Nights* and the exemplary stories of the *Dolopathos*.²⁷

In the Lochaber tradition the story survives, so far as I am aware, in three forms. Two of the examples are taken from the literature, derived from the oral tradition, in an article in the *Celtic Magazine* by the bardess Mary Mackellar, and in Rev. James MacDougall's *Folk Tales and Fairy Lore*.²⁸ The other is taken from the repertoire of John MacDonald, entitled *Mi-fhìn, mi-fhìn*:

Bha boireannach a' fuireach an àite iomallach dhe'n dùthaich. Bha e daonnan am beul na h-oidhche neach a' tighinn a-staigh, bodachan beag feusgach. Agus bhiodh e 'na shuidhe agus bhiodh e a' gabhail an teine dha-fhéin. Agus cha robh i ag ràdha dad ris:

Trus do chasan ás a sin feuch am faigh feadhainn eile 'un an teine."

Dh'innis i seo do bhana-choimhearsnach a bh' aice:

"Ma-tà, chan eil e ceart, an duine a tha a' tighinn a-staigh an t-aon rud a nì thu," thubhairt i, "n uair a bhios thu ag obair air an lite a dhèanadh, feuch an

cuir thu spòltadh mu na casan aige. Agus bheir sin air gun teich e. Agus na abair facal ach an t-ainm truagh a thug iad ort-s' "mi-fhìn, mi-fhìn."

"Nach truagh an t-ainm a thug iad orm-sa, bha i ag ràdha "mi-fhìn, mi-fhìn" 'n uair a thigeadh am bodachan a-staigh. Ach mu dheireadh 'n uair a fhuair i cothrom agus làn-chothrom, thilg i spòltan de'n lite air a chasan. Tharainn e a-mach. Agus leig e trì sgreuchan nach robh riamh an leithid ann. Dhùisg e mòthar a-mach a's a' ghleann. Thàinig na sidhchean eile mu'n cuairt agus dh'fhaighneachd iad dé thachair ris. Dh'innis e gun deach e losgadh.

"Cò loisg thu?"

"Loisg mi-fhìn 's mi-fhìn, mi-fhìn," theireadh e.

"An e thu-fhéin a loisg thu-fhéin?"

"O! nam b'e cuideigin eile a loisg thu ach thu-fhéin, bhitheadh an taigh mu'n ceann mun tigeadh a' mhadainn. Agus bho'n is e thu-fhéin a rinn e, gabh leis na fhuair thu."²⁹

The version given by Mary Mackellar is in essence the same though it approaches a more literary style. Likewise the version given in *Folk Tales and Fairy Lore* has been "touched-up", though originally coming from an oral source. It will also be noted that the imp is described as an *ùruisg* rather than the vaguer *bodachan*:

Once upon a time there was a farmer in Glenmallie who had a pretty servant lass called Mary. The farmer built a sheiling far up on the glen near the waterfall known in Gaelic as "*Eas-Buidhe*" ("Golden Waterfall"), and Mary was sent there to take charge of the cows and their milk. The girl was very brave-hearted, and although not the least bit afraid to be alone in the sheiling, nevertheless, she began to have company that caused her great alarm. An "Uruisg" (a kind of Brownie said to frequent solitary places) came to her hut every evening just as it turned to dusk, and as he came in he invariably repeated the following rhyme:

"*Uruisg an Easa-Bhuidhe,*

*'S e 'na shuide an Gleann-Màilidh,
'S an uair a chiaradh air an fheasgar,
Thigeadh e dhachaigh gu Màiri."*

He had always some small trout with him, which, in the course of the evening, he would roast one by one, always eating one before he roasted the other, and saying as he ate each troutlet:

"Mar a ròistear bricein ithear bricein."

And as he cooked and ate his fish he ogled Mary the whole time, casting at her the most admiring glances possible to the girl's dismay. At length she got so frightened that she fled to her master's house and told him about the Brownie, and that she was not safe alone in the sheiling. Her master told her he would go in her place for a day or two, and he would see if he could get rid of his troublesome visitor. He went and dressed himself in the rigout of Mary's clothes and sat at dusk spinning the distaff as Mary was wont to do. By and by he heard a footstep, heavy and slow, as the creature came in he exclaimed as usual:

*"Uruisg an Easa-Bhuidhe,
'S e 'na shuide an Gleann-Màilidh,
'S an uair a chiaradh air an fheasgar,
Thigeadh e dhachaigh gu Màiri."*

He then sat down and began as usual to roast his fish saying:

"Mar a ròistear bricein ithear bricein."

and all the time gazing at the one who in silence worked away with the distaff in the corner. At length he began to say angrily:

“Chì mi do shùil, chì mi do shròin,
 Chì mi t'fheusag fhada mhór,
 'S ged 's math a shnìomhas tu do chuigeal,
”

At length, in his indignation at the fraud perpetrated upon him in giving him this masculine creature instead of Mary, he was going to lay violent hands upon the man when he asked him in angry tones, “*C'ainm a th' ort*”. The man falsely gave his name in Gaelic as “*Is mi 's is mi*”, and then taking a pot of boiling water, he threw it about the feet of the poor Brownie and scalded him. He ran away in great pain, howling dreadfully, and this agonising cry attracted the attention of his brother Brownies who ran out to meet him. They were anxious, no doubt, to know who hurt him, in order to avenge the wrong, but all he could tell them was—“*Is mi 's is mi*”. To this answer they replied—“*Ma 's tu, ma 's tu, gu dé a' ghlaodhaich a tha air t'aire*”. Mary got leave to return to the sheiling in peace, and the Brownie never troubled her again.³⁰

A similar type of supernatural being described as a *bauchan* (bòcan) appears in the *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*.³¹ The character of the *bauchan* is less malevolent than the *ùruisg* of the previous tale, but is nonetheless ambivalent. The *bauchan* is even said to have followed the Loch Treig farmer, Calum Mór MacIntosh, to America in the guise of a goat.

Brief mention may also be made of the tale called the Ring of Polycrates (AT 736A). It occurs as *Am Fàinne agus an Iasg*³² in John MacDonald's repertoire. The essence of the story relates how a ring is lost, deliberately or not, in water, and is not expected to be found again; but is later discovered inside a fish which has been caught. The classic version of the story is familiar to us through its rendering by Herodotus.³³ The story is likely to have entered Gaelic tradition from the twelfth century Scottish hagiography *Life of St. Kentigern*. Although the saint is not explicitly mentioned in the Lochaber version, it contains all the instances which would place it in all likelihood from such a source. Likewise, the version given in the hagiography may have an Irish

borrowing as the same tale occurs in the eighth or ninth century *Táin Bó Fraích*.³⁴

None of the Gaelic heroic tales are present in John MacDonald's repertoire. This is symptomatic of the rapid decline of Brae Lochaber's oral culture in his own lifetime. Even at the time when J.F. Campbell was collecting such tales they were on the decline. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that despite such decline at least some of the tales survived to be salvaged for posterity.

Although this chapter has only dealt with a few of the International Tales, it is hoped that it has showed some of the complexities of the variety and dissemination of the folktale. Such tales deserve attention as they were one of the most prodigious elements of a story teller's repertoire. And demand primarily from audiences, until recently, and latterly folklorists, have made sure that such tales have survived, in both literary and oral transmission, the vagaries of time, spanning the centuries, not merely as automatic, unthinking, literal narratives but as a changing, adapting, renewing, integrating and entertaining art form.

Notes

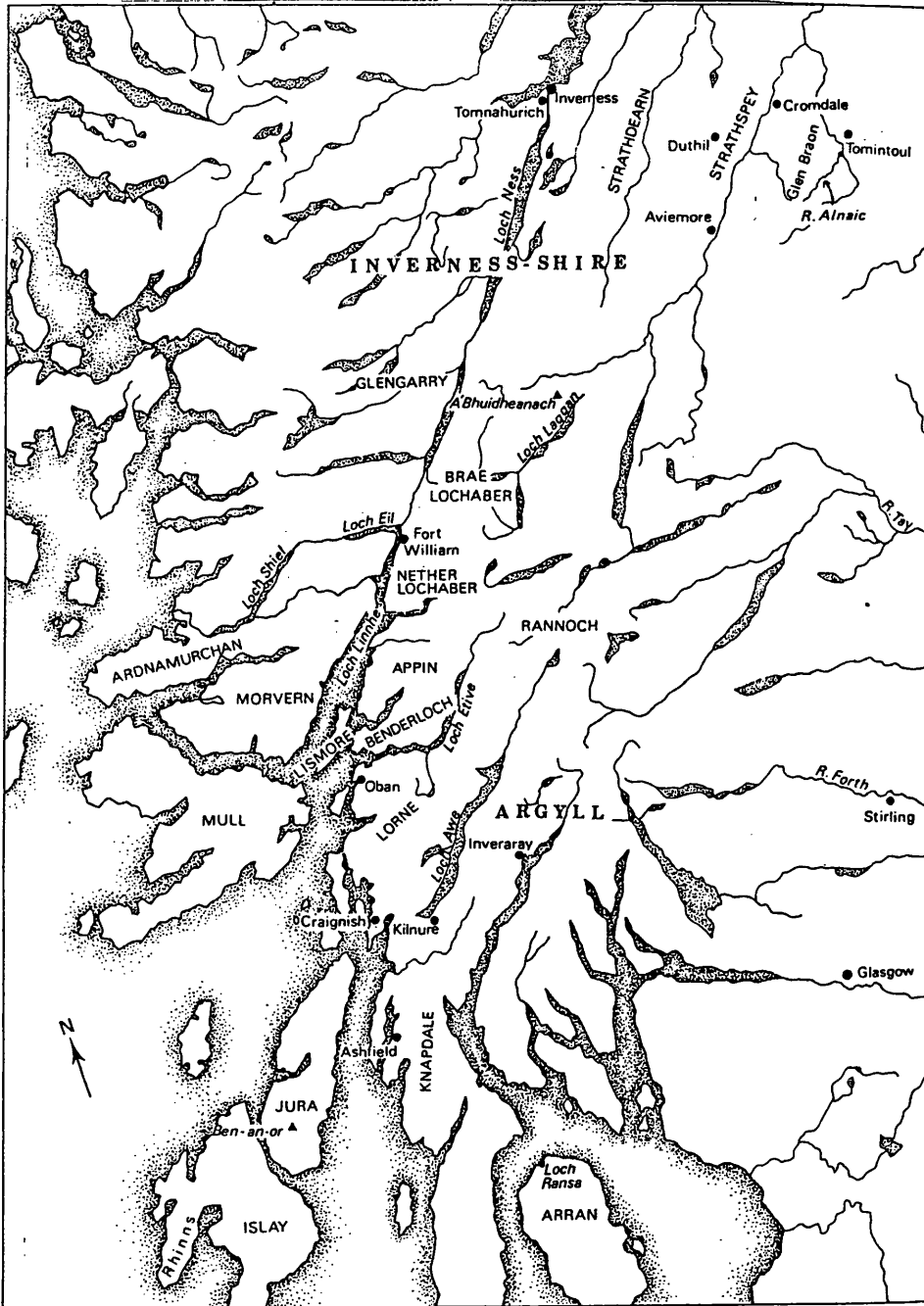
- ¹ Jackson, Kenneth. *The International Popular Tale and Early Welsh Tradition*. Cardiff, 1962
- ² Thompson, Stith. *The Folktale*. New York, 1946: 379.
- ³ *ibid.*: 396.
- ⁴ *ibid.*: 435.
- ⁵ Abrach [D.C. MacPherson]. 'Iolaire Loch Tréig'. *An Gàidheal* No. 11 (January 1873): 285-6. Published with English translation. In MacMillan, Somerled. *Bygone Lochaber: Historical and Traditional*. Glasgow: K&R Davidson Ltd.: 196-198.
- ⁶ John MacDonald. *Iolaire Loch Tréig*. CIM I.I.1, TSB 1: 48-51. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 20/1/1951.
- Archibald MacInnes. *Iolaire Loch Tréig*. CIM I.I.3, TSB 3: 228-229. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 31/1/1951.
- Charles Cameron. *Oldest Creatures*. SA 1969/175/A2. Transcribed with the assistance of Professor Donald MacAulay.
- ⁷ ref. 1 *International Popular Tale*: 76.
- ⁸ Hull, Eleanor. 'The Hawk of Achill or the Legend of the Oldest Animals'. *Folklore* XLIII (1932): 384-385. Quoted from Davids, T.W. Rhys (trans.). *Buddhist Birth Stories, or Jataka Tales*. Vol. I. (1880): 312-314.
- ⁹ ref. 1 *International Popular Tale*: 75.
- ¹⁰ ref. 8 *The Hawk of Achill*: 392.
- ¹¹ ref. 1 *International Popular Tale*: 77.
- ¹² *ibid.*: 78.
- ¹³ *ibid.*: 96.
- ¹⁴ MacLellan, Angus. *Stories from South Uist*. Trans. by John Lorne Campbell. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961: 53-54.
- ¹⁵ D.A. Johnson, Frobost, South Uist. SA 1969/122.A4. Angus MacLellan. SA 1959/4.B2.
- ¹⁶ John MacDonald. *An Sagart agus an Rìgh*. CIM I.I.1, TSB 1: 87-88. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 20/1/1951.
- ¹⁷ Bruford, Alan. 'Notes and Comments: 'The King's Questions' (AT 922) in Scotland'. *Scottish Studies* 17 (1973): 147-154.
- ¹⁸ *ibid.*: 148.
- ¹⁹ *ibid.*: 147.
- ²⁰ *ibid.*: 147.
- ²¹ *ibid.*: 153.
- ²² Bruford, Alan & MacDonald, D.A. *Scottish Traditional Tales*. Edinburgh: Polygon, 1994: 459.
- ²³ John MacDonald. *Deòrsa Bochanan agus na h-uighean*. SA 1952/127/7. Transcribed by Donald Archie MacDonald.
- ²⁴ The School of Scottish Studies, Maurice Fleming from Mrs. Reid in Briggs, K.M. *A Dictionary of British Folktales in the English Language. Part A: Folk Tales. Two vols.* London, 1970: 101-102.
- ²⁵ 'The Witty and Entertaining Exploits of George Buchanan, Commonly Called the King's Fool'. In Cheap, John. *The Chapman's Library: The Scottish Chap Literature of Last Century Classified*. Glasgow: Robert Lindsay, 1877: 20-21.
- ²⁶ ref. 2 *The Folktale*: 200.
- ²⁷ *ibid.*: 201.
- ²⁸ MacDougall, Rev. James. *Folk Tales and Fairy Lore*. Calder, Rev. George (ed.). Edinburgh: John Grant, 1910: 298-301.
- ²⁹ John MacDonald. *Mi-fhìn, mi-fhìn*. CIM I.I.7, TSB 7: 611-612. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 5/4/1951.
- ³⁰ Mackellar, Mary. 'A Lochaber Legend'. *Celtic Magazine* Vol VI, No. LXVIII (June 1881): 324-325. Reprinted in MacMillan Somerled. *Bygone Lochaber: Historical and Traditional*. Glasgow: K & R Davidson Ltd., 1971: 194-196.
- ³¹ Campbell, J.F. *Popular Tales of the West Highlands Vol. I*. Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd., 1994.

³² John MacDonald. *Am Fàinne agus an Iasg*. CIM I.I.6, TSB 6: 490-492. Transcribed by Calum MacLean 25/8/1951.

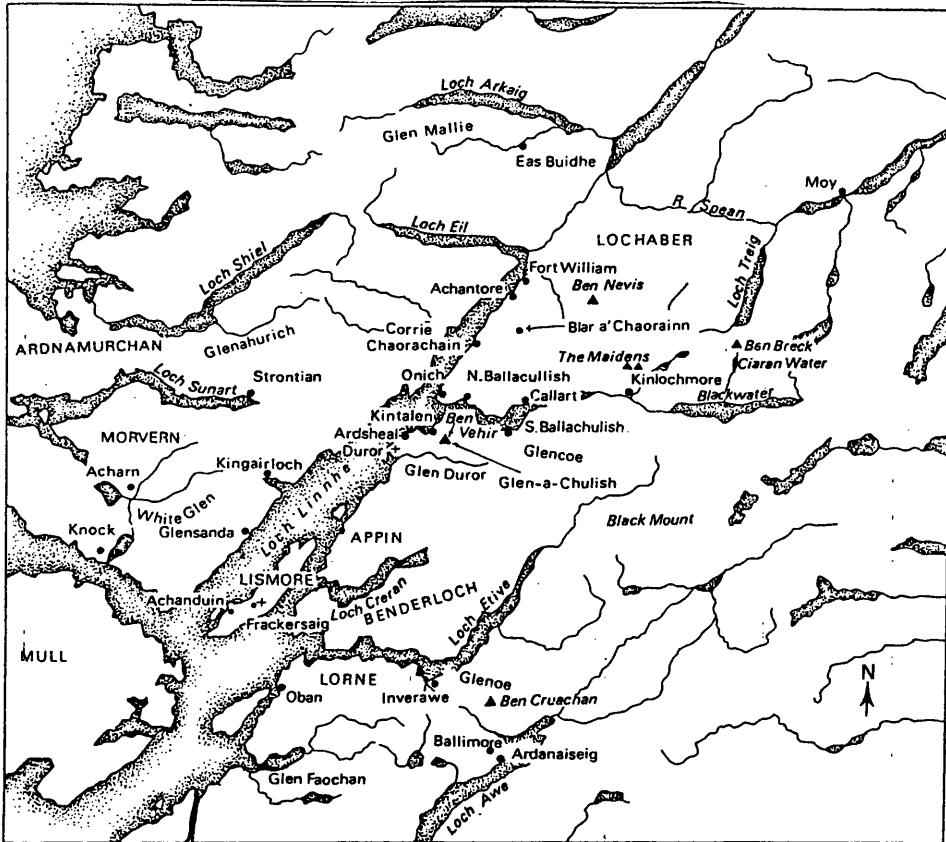
³³ ref. 1 *International Popular Tale*: 25.

³⁴ *ibid.*: 27.

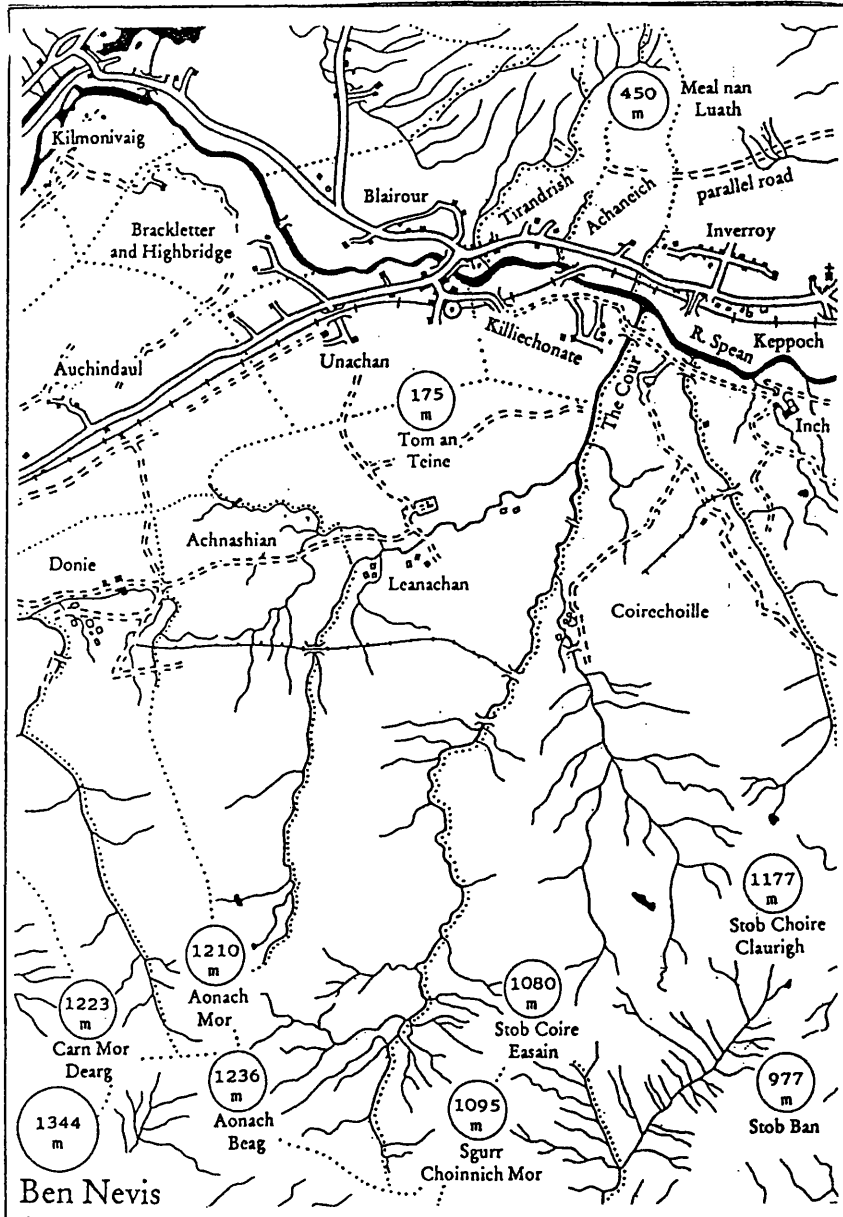
Appendix 1



Reproduced from Highland Fairy Legends



Reproduced from Highland Fairy Legends



Map of Brae Lochaber.
 Reproduced from *Back to Lochaber*, p.3.

Appendix 2

Index for International Tales identified in Brae Lochaber

Abbreviations: JM—John MacDonald, AM—Archibald MacInnes, CC—Charles Cameron
EM—Ewen MacPherson

- AT 221** Hawk of Achill—Legend of the Oldest Creatures
[cf. AT 1921 *The Cold May Night*; B 841, B 124.1, X 1620]
Iolaire Loch Tréig (CIM I.I.1, TSB 1: 48-51 JM 20/1/1951); *Iolaire Loch Tréig* (CIM I.I.3, TSB 3: 228-229 GM 31/1/9151); *The Oldest Animals* (SA 1969/175/A2 CC) (*The Eagle and the Wren*, Popular Tales of the West Highlands: 285., also Published in *An Gàidheal Òg*, Leabhar 11, an t-Samhainn 1959) (See also Folk-lore, Christmas 1952: 376-409; Béaloideas XIV (14): 207-208); (*The Wren and the Eagle* (Isle of Skye). In *Folktales of Scotland*. Galloway, Phillipa, Collins 1945)
- AT 500/503** The Gifts of the Little People
Na sithchean a thog an caisteal
(CIM I.I.3, TSB 3: 230-233 JM 31/1/1951)
- AT 510** Cinderella and Cap o' Rushes
Am Bonnach Mór le mhollachd agus am Bonnach Beag le beannachd
(CIM I.I.6, TSB 6: 668-669 JM 8/4/1951)
- AT 650** Strong John
Fomhaire Creag Chailleach
(Calum MacLean's SSS Notebooks EM)
- AT 736A** The Ring of Polycrates [N211.1]
Am Fàinne agus an iasg
(CIM I.I.6, TSB 6: 490-492 JM 25/3/1951)
- AT 800** The Man in Heaven
Identified by Calum MacLean (see. S.S. Vol. 2 (1958): 114).
I have been unable to identify the source for this reference.
- AT 810** The Snares of the Evil One [S241.2]
Fear na Ceapaich agus an Donas
(CIM I.I.3, TSB 3: 212-213 JM 4/2/1851)
- AT 812** The Devil's Riddle
Mar a bha e eadar an sgalag agus an Donas
(CIM I.I.8, TSB 8: 743-5 AM 16/4/1951)
- AT 821B** Devil as Host at Dinner [J.1192.2]
Deòrsa Bochanan agus na h-uighean
(SA 1953/255/A14 JM; SA 1952/127/7 JM)
Pris Mhór air uighean
(CIM I.I.5, TSB 5: 439-441 JM 22/2/1951)
- AT 835A** Drunk Man in the Mine
An t-Éireannach 's an toll ghuail
(CIM I.I.4, TSB 4: 356-357 JM 18/2/1951)
An tàillear a chaidh gu Ifrinn
(CIM I.I.7, TSB 7: 636-640 AM 28/3/1951)

- AT 921 The King and the Peasant's son
Dòmhnall agus an duine-uasal
 (CIM I.I.1, TSB 1: 103-104 JM 20/1/1951)
- AT 922 The Shepherd Substituting for the Priest Answers the King's Questions
(The King and the Abbot) [H681.1; H711.1; H514.1]
An Sagart agus an Rìgh
 (CIM I.I.1, TSB 1: 87-88 JM 20/1/1951)
An t-Ìmpire agus an t-Amadan
 (Calum MacLean's SSS Notebooks EM)
- AT 990 The Seemingly Dead Revives [K426]
Bean a thiodhlaicheadh beò
 (CIM I.I.4, TSB 4: 321-322 JM 18/2/1951)
- AT 1000 Bargain not to become angry [K172]
Sgalag agus am Biadh
 (CIM I.I.4, TSB 4: 328-331 JM 18/2/1951)
- AT 1005+ Building a bridge or road with carcasses of cattle [K1441]
An tuathanach agus an gille
 (SA 1953 255/A17 JM)
Stoire Chasa Chaorach
 (CIM I.I.9, TSB 9: 856-857 JM 29/5/1951)
- AT 1006 Casting Eyes [K1442] (Cf. 1685)
 Identified by Calum MacLean (see. S.S. Vol. 2 (1958): 115).
 I have been unable to identify the source for this reference.
- AT 1137 The Ogre Blinded (Polyphemus) [K602]
Mi-fhìn, mi-fhìn
 (CIM I.I.7, TSB 7: 611-612 JM 5/4/1951)
- AT 1174 Making a rope of Sand [H1021.1]
Obair, obair Fhearchair
 (CIM I.I.4, TSB 4: 311-313 JM 18/2/1951), S.S. 4 (1960): 85-95
- AT 1281A Getting Rid of the Man-eating Calf [J.1815]
Fear a' teicheadh bho Chuil Lodair
 (CIM I.I.6, TSB 6: 673-675 JM 8/4/1951)
- AT 1319* Other Mistaken Identities
An Hiortach a chunnaic an t-each
An t-amadan trom
 (CIM I.I.9, TSB 9: 859-860 JM 29/5/1951) (cf. AT 1739)
- AT 1336A? Man does not Recognise his won Reflection in the Water [J.1791.7]
Fear às Hiort agus an sgàthan
 (CIM I.I.10, TSB 10: 889-890 JM 29/5/1951)
Hiortach agus sgàthan
 (SA 1952/123/9 JM)
- AT 1360B Flight of the Woman and her lover from the stable [K1271.1.4.1]
Fear pòsda agus a bhean
 (CIM I.I.9, TSB 9: 858-859 JM 29/5/1951)

- AT 1528 Holding Down the Hat [K1252]
Deòrsa Bochanan agus an Rìgh
 (CIM II.5, TSB 5: 458-459 JM 11/3/1951)
 (SA 1952/127/8 JM; SA 1953/255.B5 JM)
- AT 1544 The Man Who got a Night's Lodging [K1981.1]
Uilleam bi'd suibhe
 (CIM I.I.6, TSB 6: 485-488 JM 25/3/1051); (SA 1953/255/A14 JM)
- AT 1585 The Lawyer's mad client [K1655]
An t-Amadan air an Fhéill
 (CIM I.I.8, TSB 8: 714-716 JM 29/4/1951)
Fear a thug a' char às an fhear lagh
 (CIM I.I.2, TSB 2: 105-106 JM 20/1/1951)
- AT 1645 The Treasure at Home [N531.1]
Taigh-òsda le droch-ainm
 (CIM I.I.6, TSB 6: 488-490 JM 25/3/1951)
Am Fear a chunnaic bruadar
 (CIM I.I.2, TSB 2: 128-129 JM 20/1/1951)
- AT 1739 The Parson and the Calf [J.2321.1]
An t-amadan trom
 (CIM I.I.9, TSB 9: 859-860 JM 29/5/1951)
- AT 1791 The Sexton carries the Parson [X424]
Cailleach nan Cnò
 (CIM I.I.3, TSB 3: 205-207 JM 4/2/1951)
Fear nan Cnò agus am Ministear
 (CIM I.I.7, TSB 7: 630-631 GM 5/4/1951)
- AT 1833D What Says David?/The Names of the Persons of the Holy Trinity
 [X435.4]
Am balach agus am pears' eaglais
 (CIM I.I.4, TSB 4: 376-377 JM 18/2/1951)
- AT 1860B Dying like Christ—Between Two Thieves [X313]
Daoine nach robh airson tachairt ris an Donas
 (CIM I.I.3, TSB 3: 283-285 JM 18/2/1951)
- AT 2030 The Old Woman and her Pig [Z41]
Murachan is Meanachan (CIM I.I.7, TSB 7: 624-626 AM 28/3/1951);
 (SA 1958/49/A5 JM)

Appendix 3 (i)
List of the titles in "Tales from Spean Bridge".

CIM I.I.1, TSB, Book I: 1-88

Allan MacDonell

- 1 Sithichean (cf. S.S., vol. 4 (1960): 85-95)
 1-2 Dòmhnall Mór Òg
 2 Sean-fhacail
 An duine a thig a-staigh gun rabhabh, suidhidh e gun iarraidh
 Am fear a théid do'n bhaile mhór gun gnothach gun toir e gnothach ás.
 'S e fear gun chiall a théid gu féill gun airgead.
 'S miann le seana-each fhoghlach is miann le each òg leachainn is miann le cù sneachda is miann le earb bhith an doire dlùth is miann le sealgair falbh le chù.
 3 Solus anns na taighean
 4 Léigheas a' chnatain, cnatanaich
 4 An d'rug am mart? Cha d'rug. Chan eil cù na cat na leanabh beag a' feitheamh rithe.
 4-5 Mac 'ic Ràghnaill na Ceapaich agus a' chailleach bhuidseachd.

Angus Stewart

- 6-8 Dòmhnall Bàn Chaillich
 8-10 Bòcan a lean duine

Allan MacDonell

- 10 Bean Mhic 'ic Ràghnaill
 11-12 Cailleach Beinne Bhric
 12 Pòsadh
 12-13 Léigheas
 13 Glanadh bhrog
 13 Glanadh a' chuirp
 13-14 Léigheas
 14 Sean-fhacail
 Is math am baile mór 's a' faighear rud ri iarraidh
 Tha facal ann gun bhean a thoirt á taigh mór gun bhó a thoirt o ghàrnalair
 Gur fheàrr a bhith air mhisg na bhith gun leisgeul
 Gum bu mhath an t-annlann an t-acras
 Gum b'fheàrr a bhith air thòiseach na coille agus air deireadh na féithe
 15 Triùir Ghriogaraich
 15-16 Gormhsuil Mhór na Moighe agus Loch Iall
 17 Cailleach Beinne Bhric
 17-18 Cailleach Beinne Bhric ho ro
 18-20 Coire Choillidh
 21 Murchadh nan Gobhar
 21-22 Seann-Òran - Latha bha sinn an cladh a' Bhràighe

22	Achadh a' Mhadaidh
23-25	Tuathanach agus bean ás Loch Abar
25-26	Mac 'ic Ràghnaill agus Mac an Tòisich
27-29	Murt na Ceapaich
28	Dh'éirich mi moch maduinn Di-dòmhnach
30-32	Iain Odhar
32-33	Blàr Bhó Loinn
34	Tàillear Dubh na Tuaighe
35	Blàr eadar na Tòisich agus na h-Athalaich
35-35	Iain Beag Mac Anndra
37-39	Dòmhnall Donn agus Mac Iain Luim
39	Iain Odhar air Leabaidh a' Bhàis
John MacDonald	
40-43	Alasdair Crotach agus Nigheann Loch Iall
43-46	Dòmhnall MacFhionnlaigh nan Dan
47-48	M'athair
48-51	Iolaire Loch Tréig
51	Trì aois cù aois each, trì aois each aois duine, trì aois duine aois firein, trì aois firein aois craobh dharaich
52-54	Murt na Ceapaich
55-57	Clann 'ic Griogair an Tìr na Dris
58-60	Gille Dubh Mac Uraig
60-62	Coille Choillidh
62-63	Feargus
63-64	Eilean air Loch Tréig
64-67	Loch Iall agus Diùc Athal
68-70	Blàr Inbhir Lòchaidh (1645)
71-73	Baiteal Ionbhar Lòchaidh (1645)
74	Colla Ciotach
75-77	Alasdair Mór nam Bocan
78-79	Clann Mhic Cruimein
80-81	Tàillear Dubh na Tuaighe
81-82	Am Baiteal mu Dheireadh
83-84	Colla Bhàrsdal agus Dalileith
85-86	Loch Iall agus an Sassunnach
87-88	An Sagart agus an Rìgh
CIM I.I.2, TSB, Book II: 88-189	
89-93	Alasdair agus Seònaid
94-96	Stoirm
96-98	Cloinn Mhic an Aba
98-99	Taigh Iain Ghròta agus mar a fhuair an t-ainm
99-102	Càraid á Innse Gall
103-104	Dòmhnall agus an duine-uasal (cf. AT 921)
105-106	Fear a thug a char ás an fhear lagh (cf. AT 1585)
107-109	Fear a thaobh Loch Airceig
109-111	Iain Dòmhnallach agus a' mhuc
111-113	Coinnleirean na Ceapaich
114-115	Goid a' bhainne

115-117	An Cìobair 's a' bhothan
118-121	Iain Lom
122-123	Fear a chaidh a mharbhadh an Cuil Lodair
123-125	Pàidse a chaidh air chall
125-128	Feadhainn a chaidh a dh'iarraidh uisge-beatha
128-129	Am fear a chunnaic bruadar (cf. AT 1645)
130-134	Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir
134-136	Bodach a' Chnuic
137	Fear a thug clachan á cladh
138-139	Fear a bha math 's an t-saighead
139-140	Eóghainn na Drochaide
141-142	Am fear a chaill mairt
143-144	Fear a dh'fhuireachadh aig an taigh Latha a' Bhreitheannas
144-146	Captain Dubh Bhaile Chròbhain
146-147	Cìobair an Taobh Loch Airceig
148-151	An Dubh-ghleannach
151-153	Feadhainn aig an robh briuthas
153	Duine a chunnaic 'elephant'.
154-155	Boireannach Caol Ruadh (cf. S.S., vol. 4 (1960): 85-95)
155-158	Duine 'ga chur a-mach á taigh
158-160	Duine an àth
160-162	Fear a chuir turasdal a falach
162-163	Mac 'ic Ràghnail agus am fear-taidhbhse
163-164	Cìobair a tilleadh bho'n Eaglais Bhreac
165-166	Iain Dubh MacLeòid
167-168	Boireannach agus Sagart
169-171	Mar a dh'ionnsaich Aonghas Dòmhnallach
172-173	Boireannach a chaidh a bàthadh a snàmh
173-176	Taigh-òsda taobh Loch Laoimean
176-179	An sgalach agus an t-Uachdaran
179-187	Doctair Rath Thuaidh
187-189	Toimhseachain
CIM I.I.3, TSB, Book III: 190-289	
190-191	Alasdair Dòmhnallach agus na Lusan
192-193	Clachair a chaidh air chall
193-194	Fear a thiodhlachadh an Cille Choirill
195-197	Gruagach an òr-fhuilt
197-198	Achadh na Bó Bàine
198-200	Boireannach a bha déigheil air uisge-beatha
200-202	Aonghas Mór a' Bhùth
202-203	Na bràithrean a bha an Creithneachan
204	A.A. Cameron
205-207	Cailleach nan Crò (cf. AT 1791)
208-209	Bodach a' cadal 's an eaglais
211	Cìobair air bheagan Beurla
212-213	Fear na Ceapaich agus an Donas (cf. ML 3000)

214-215	An Coirneal Mac Neachdainn
216-217	Balach a rinn feadan
217-220	Òran - Thoir mo shoradh dha'n àite
220-221	Òran - Tha m'inntinn trom
Allan MacDonell	
222-223	Fear a'falbh le each is làir
223-224	Cumhachd ann an gartan
224	Na Sidhichean (cf. S.S. vol. 4 (1960): 85-95)
224-225	Feadhainn a chuala guth
225-226	Iain Lom agus Murt na Ceapaich
226-227	An Tàillear agus am Bòcan
Archibald MacInnes	
228-229	Iolaire Loch Tréig
John MacDonald	
230-233	Caisteal a thogadh le sidheachannan
Archibald MacInnes	
233-235	Cobhair bho Chruachan
235-236	Coin a mharbh duine
236-237	Dòmhnall MacFhionnlaigh nan Dàn
237-238	Airgead ceann air Iain Lom
238-240	Aonghas Beag agus Colla Bhàrasdail
241-242	Ràghnall Mac Ailein Òig
243-244	Duine neo-chiontach 'ga chrochadh
244-246	Coinneirlean na Ceapaich
246-248	Loch Iall agus an Diùc Athal
248-250	Iain Odhar
250-251	Dùghall Dùghallach
252-254	Mac 'ic Ràghnaill agus an sgoil dubh
254-256	Naidheachd a' Choin Duibh
256-257	Call Ghàdhaig
258-260	Am ministear agus mart na Cailliche
261-263	An Tàillear 's a' chaisteal
263-264	Sagart an Cladh a' Bhràghad
265-266	Naidheachd Seilge
Ewen MacIntosh	
266-267	Pàisde 'ga chumail air ais
267	Fear a chaidh a bhàthadh
268	Fear a chaidh air chall
269	Caileag a chaidh air chall
270	Seann-aoir
John MacDonald	
271-274	Dòmhnall Mór Òg (cf. Tocher 39: 162-167)
274-279	Marbhann Dhòmhnail Mhóir Òig (cf. Tocher 39: 162-167)
279-281	Fear a chunntais na sìdhchean (cf. S.S. vol 4 (1960: 85-95)
281-283	Duine agus abhainn a' stri
283-285	Duine nach robh air son tachairt ris an Donas

285-286	Rob Ruadh Mac Griogair
287-288	Rudan a fhuaradh 's a' mhòntich
288	Clach Shònraichte
CIM I.I.4, TSB, Book IV: 290-384	
290-292	Guth a chuala Iain MacDhòmhnaill
293-294	Manadh aig a' Chrois
294-295	Soillse 'gam fhaicinn
295-296	Fear a ghiulan corp a mhic á Cuil Lodair
296-297	Òr am falach
298-299	Saighdear a thiodhlachadh beò
299-301	Fear aig an robh briuthas
301-303	Fear a thug leac ás uaigh
303-305	Ministear air long
305-306	Fear a bha a' dathadh balla
306-307	Dòmhnall Mór Òg agus an Sagart
308	Sagart Cumhachdachd
309-310	Clachdairean agus sgagal
311-313	Obair, obair Fhearchair (cf. S.S. vol 4 (1960: 85-95))
313-315	Ceannaiche pac a mharbhadh
316-317	Feadhainn a fhuair croca òir
317-318	Bodach a mharbh coileach
319-320	Fear a cheannach coileach
321-322	Bean a thiodhlaiceadh beò (cf. AT 990)
323-324	A' fiabhras dubh
324-326	Naidheachd Seilge
326-328	Èilid Bhàin an Coire Mheadhoin
328-331	Sgalag agus am Biadh (cf. AT 1000)
331-333	Fuaimean thar nàdair
333-335	Manadh aig beul-àtha
335-337	Fear a chunnaic manadh
337-338	Corp a dh'éirich
338-339	Blàr na Maol Ruaidhe
340-341	Uilleam Ros, am bàrd
342-343	Fear a thill bho na mairbh
343-346	Cailleach a thachair ri sealgairean
347-348	Fear a chuala guth 's an uisge
348-350	Cat 'na adhbhar aimhreit eadar fear is bean
351-352	Duine 'ga chrochadh ri cuidhle-muilin
353-354	Am bàs a fhuair Coinneach Odhar
354-355	Am bodach a chaidh a Ghlaschu
356-357	An t-Èirreanach 's an toll ghual
357-358	An sagart agus an cat
358-359	Calum Cille
359-360	Leanabh le ceann muice
361-362	Duine làidir ann an Creithneachan
363-364	Duine a fhuair aois mhór
365	An long Spàinnteach an Tobar Mhoire
366-367	Cille Chonaid - ath-shealladh

368-370	A' bhana-bhuidseach agus an urra
371-372	Iomanaiche luath
373-374	Fear a thug laogh beò
374-375	Fear a chuireadh a mach ás a thaigh
376-377	Am balach agus am pears' eaglais (cf. AT 1833D)
378-379	Abhainn a' tiormachadh air dhòigh thar nàdair
379-382	Gilleasbuig aotrom
383-384	An Gadaiche a bha an Lite
CIM II.5, TSB, Book V: 385-484	
385-387	Tom man Fead
387-388	Gilleasbuig MacArtair - sgeulaiche
389-390	Alasdair nan Cleas agus am boireannach a chuir e dhannsa
390	A' Mhaigdeann Bhuana
391	Uisge Airgid
392-393	Teaghlach na Ceapaich
393-394	Loch Iall agus Alasdair nan Cleas
394-395	Mac 'ic Ràghnaill agus Iain Dubh
Archibald MacInnes	
396-397	Iarla Mhàrr agus Ó Biorain
397-399	Mar a fhuair Coire Choillidh an t-airgead
399	Duineachan le cleòca glas
400-401	Am ministear agus an gille a bha a' goid
401-402	Dòmhnall Bàn a' Bhòcain
403-404	Toimseachain
John MacDonald	
405-407	Mac Fear Both Fhionntain
408-409	Meirleach á Baile Dhuthaich
409-412	Seòladair aig an robh brúadar
412-413	Boireannach a chroch i-fhéin
414-415	Mar a chaidh Gormshuil a bhàthadh
415-418	Coinneach Odhar
418-419	Dà fhitheach aig murt
420-421	Aog anns an uisge
421-423	Bruadar a bh' aig gille òg
424-425	Cleas 'ga imirt air ministear
425-426	Guidhe-air geomair agus mar a thachair
427-429	Duine a chaidh a chall
429-430	Bodach a bha coma mu chàch
431-432	Fear a mharbhadh 's a' chogadh a' tilleadh o na maibh
432-433	Cuimeinich Bhàideanach
434	Duine a chaidh a spoth
435-436	Iomradh air Cille Chuimein
436-438	Bruadar a thàinig chuige-fhéin
438-439	Clann Mhic Néil Bharraidh
439-441	Prìs Mhór air uibhean
441-443	Duine a chaidh a bhàthadh
443-445	Gille a bha math 's a' bhogha-saighead

445-447	Iain Beag Mac Anndra
448-449	Cunntas nan Sidhchean (cf. S.S. vol 4. (1960: 85-95))
449-450	Eóghainn na Drochaide a' cunntas spréidh
450-451	Bròg òir aig Loch Iall
451-452	Mac 'ic Alasdair agus an t-amadan
452-454	Mac 'ic Alasdair agus am Bàrd Collach
454-456	Alasdair MacFhionghuin
456-457	Clann nach rachadh dha'n sgoil
457-458	Ailean nan Creach
458-459	Deòrsa Bochannan agus an Rìgh (cf. AT1528)
459-461	Duine a fhuair pàidhir bhròg
461-462	Duine a cheannaich each
462-463	Bodach a fhuair feòl
463-464	Fear a chuireadh 's an uaigh cheàrr
464-466	Mac 'ic Alasdair agus a Bhiodag
466-467	Baintighearna Mhic 'ic Alasdair
467-468	Duine aig an robh dà shealladh
468-470	Bana-bhuidsichean Chinn t-Saile
470-472	Tiodhlachadh an Cille Choirill
472-473	Duine làidir, Camshronach
473-474	Daoine a' trod le bataichean
475	“Leud a dhroma de thalamh”
476	Uaigh nach do dh'fhàs fiar oirre
477-478	Duine làidir de mhuintir Mhic an t-Saoir
478-479	Gillean làidir Chreithneachan a' giulan tearr
480	A.A. Cameron
481-482	Dùghall Lub Èilde
483-484	Fear aig an robh ap
CIM II.6, TSB, Book VI: 485-583	
485-488	Uilleam bi 'd shuidhe
488-490	Taigh-òsda le droch-ainm (cf. AT 1645)
490-492	Am Fàinne anns an iasg (cf. AT 736A)
493-494	Fear a bha toirt seachad pàipeirean mu chreideamh
494-496	Ministear agus damh-féidh
496-498	Ministear agus mi-fhìn
498-500	Urram na bainne
500-501	Duine a bha ri obair-creideamh
501-503	Cash on Delivery
503-504	Bodach làidir, seanair A.A. Cameron
504-505	Freagairt do Bhodach Ruadh
505-506	Rath a bheannachd nam bochd
506-507	Tiodhlachadh cailliche am Bàideanach
508	Cailleach a cheannacih stampaichean
509-510	Taigh-dubh agus taigh-geal — eadar-dhealachadh
510-511	Manaidhean bàis, bruidheann feadh an taighe
512-513	Duine a chuala a chainnt fhéin
513-514	Mac Loch Iall agus Blàr Ionbhar Lòchaidh
515	Cnoc nan Ceann

516-517	Teanga gun urrainn
517-518	Feadhainn 'nan sineadh 's 'an Druim Mhór
518-519	Bòcan Mheóbail
519-520	Na gillean a bha a' togail eaglais
520-522	Am Ministear agus an gille beag
522-223	Gille a thuit le creig
523-524	Duine a chaidh a mharbhadh air drochaid
525-527	Leódhasach aig an robh an dà shealladh
527-528	Sagart agus ministear
528	Each an t-Sagairt
529	Triùir sagart agus na cluig
530-531	Triùir mhinisteirean agus sagart
531	Dithis chaileag agus dealanach
532-533	Fear oighearachd a' tilleadh o na mairbh
533-534	Nighean Tuathanaich agus ministear
534-540	Ailean an Earrachd
541-542	Iain an Fhasaidh Fheàrna
542-544	Bodaich a' dannsa
544-545	Am ministear agus an gille a bha a'stùireadh
546	Am ministear agus na h-uaislean
547-548	An gille bochd agus a' nighean Bheuirteuch
548-550	Gille a fhuaradh marbh am Bracleitir
551-552	An Caisteal Tioram
552-553	Caisteal Bhràthan
553-554	Ealasaid Nic a' Phi
554-555	Fear 'ga mharbhadh a' treabhadh
555-556	Fear aig an robh triùir bhan-dhiòlan
557	A' nighean òg a bha anns an eaglais
558-559	Am boireannach agus an lusrachan
560	Màiri Chaimbeul agus an Donas
561	Màiri Chaimbeul agus Iorball a' Chait
562-563	Am boireannach aig an robh an urra
563-564	Luchd togail chreach agus an t-slinneag
565-566	Fear a' losgadh nead speach
566-567	Dithis bho thaobh Lòchaidh
567-569	An sgalag, Mac Aoidh, agus an laogh
569-570	Imrich Luain
570-572	Alasdair Mac an Tòisich agus am botail
572-573	Fear nam Briag
573-574	Coire an Tagairt
574-575	Torran nam Miann
575-576	Am Caipbean agus a bhean
576-578	Triùir bhodach an Dàil na Bile
578-580	Am Brùsach anns an Uamhaidh
580-581	Rob Ruadh air an ruaig
581-583	Raibeart Brus agus Gillean na Cailliche
583	Dòmhnall Loch Tréig

CIM II.7, TSB, Book VI: 585-683

585-586	Ministear Bréige
586-587	Cailleach le aon léine
588	Iain Dòmhnallach agus a bhàs-fhéin
589-590	Seann-duine a dh'fhàgadh leis-fhéin
590-592	Màiri Chamshron agus an t-aigeis
592-593	Calum Cille
593-595	Nigheann Rìgh Lochlainn agus a' Choille
595-596	Am Ministear agus an Ceàrd
596-597	Am fear a sheas 's an làn
597-598	Am Bodach agus an t-Aol
598-599	Alasdair Mac a' Phi agus a' Bheurla
600	Dòmhnall Mac an t-Saoir
600-602	Uilleam Camshron
602-603	An Corpolair Mac Fhionghuin
604-605	Corp Créadha
605-606	Clach nan Caimbeulach
607	Cùl na Circe
607-608	Seann duine dall nach d'fhalbh fairis
608-609	Mar a fhuair Loch Nis an t-ainm
610-611	Am Bodach Crùbach agus Té Dhall
611-612	Mi-fhìn, mi-fhìn (cf. AT 1137)
612-613	Tom an Teine
613-614	Teine na h-Èiginn
614-616	Mac an t-Saoir agus a' Chailleach
616-617	Calum Cille agus Dóbhran
617-618	Iain Mac Dhòmhnail agus Là a' Bhreithearnais
619	Cailean Creithneachan
620	Iain Mór Chreithneachan
Archibald MacInnes	
621-623	Triùir Chailleachan Ghlinn Cuaich
624-626	Murchan is Meanachan (cf. AT 2030)
626-628	Loch Iall agus an Sassannach
629	Dà bhàrd agus an rann
630-631	Fear nan Cnò agus am ministear (cf. AT1791)
631-632	Am boireannach marbh a dh'éirich
633	Tiodhlachadh Iain Uidhir
634-635	Muintearras a' Chiobair
635-636	Dà eileanach anns an arm
636-640	Am tàillear a chaidh gu Ifrinn
640	Figheadair am Bun Ruaidh
641	An Troich agus an Caimbeulach
642-643	Am boireannach agus uain Dhé
644	Am Ministear Ros agus an sgalag
645	Fear a mharbh damh-féidh
646-647	Fear aig an robh an dà shealladh
647	A' Mhórag

- 648 Solus 'ga faicinn air Bàta
649 Sgùrr Fionnsgeig agus na laoigh
650 Piopaire agus Mhic 'ic Alasdair
650-651 Amadan Mhic 'ic Alasdair
Donald MacDonald
652-653 Mac 'ic Ràghnaill agus a' Bhainfhioch
654 Clach na h-Aidhrinn
655-657 Dòmhnall Bàn a' Bhòcain
657-658 Mac 'ic Ràghnaill agus Gleann Garadh
John MacDonald
659-661 An Gillean agus an Leacag
661-662 Fear a fhuair biadh gun iarraidh
662-663 Bean chòir Lianachain agus an t-Amadan
663-664 Duine air bheagan Beurla agus a' bhean-ualas
664-665 Duine air an d'fhàinig call
665 An Donas, ma b'fhìor, a' tighinn a dh'iarraidh neo
666 Am boireannach agus àirnean a' mhairt dhuibh
667 Fear a chaidh a ghamhainn an toll
668-669 Am Bonnach Mór le mhollachd agus am Bonnach
Beag le beannachd (cf. AT510)
669-670 Clach air an robh fear 'na shuidhe a' carachadh
670-671 Duine a bha a' creic salainn
671-672 Dunnachadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir agus Gille an
Tuathanaich
672-673 Gille a bha coltach ris a' Phrionnsa
673-675 Fear a' teicheach bho Chuil Lodair
675-676 Altachadh a rinn Iain e-fhèin
676-677 Ruairidh Dòmhnallach a cur réisde
677-678 Fear a choisich as a' Mhanachainn
678 Gursal Chamshron a' dol a dh'Ionbhar Nis
679 Dòmhnall Grannda á Both Fhionntain
680 Mac Fhearghuis a' dol a Dhùn Èideann
681-683 Na Boirreanaich Uibhisteach agus an Gille
John MacDonald
CIM II.7, TSB, Book VII: 684-703
684-685 Dithis dhaoine làidir á Creithneachan
685-686 Ealasaid Tait
686-687 Dithis Abrach an taigh-òsda
687-689 Cù a' Mhinisteir
689-690 Cailleach a bha am Banabhuidh
690-692 Gilleasbuig Camshron, bràthair Loch Iall
692-693 Dòmhnall agus a' mhuc
693-694 Am Bodach agus an Smeòrach
695 An taigh Dorcha
696 Am Ministear agus a' chearc 's an leabaidh
697-698 A' Bhantrach agus an t-Uan
698-699 Triùir a bha ciad bhliadhna aig na sidhchean
700-701 Raibeart Brus agus na cruidean

701-702	Bodach Dhàil Chuilidh agus Tighearna Chluanaidh
702-705	M'athair agus Tighearna Chluanaidh
CIM I.I.8, TSB, Book VIII: 705-780	
705-708	M'athair clachaireachd aig Loch Iall
708-709	Am Feile Beag agus an Deargad
709-710	Dòmhnall Mór Òg agus an Reithe
710-711	Colainn gun Cheann
712	Ceannaiche paca a chaidh a mharbhadh
713-714	Maighstir-sgoile an taigh Mhic Griogair
714-716	An t-Amadan air an Fhéill (cf. AT 1585)
717	Cèard a' bruidhinn mu mhaighdeann-mara
718	Coire Choillidh a' tuiteam 's an uisge
719	Gille ann am bothan-àirigh
720-721	An Tàillear agus na sìdhchean
721-722	“Fàg an Ceann”
722-723	Fear a chuala fuaim cairt
724	Manadh mu bheum-shléibhe
725	Sneachda an 1895
726	Rann
726	Rann
726-727	Dòmhnall Gobhainn
728-731	Calum Mac a' Phearsain, Piobaire
731-733	Fidhlear Ainmeil
733-734	Dòmhnall Dòmhnallach, fidhlear
734	Mar thaghadh Fionn a chù
735	Iain Mór Chreithneachan
736-737	Bó nach do ghlan
737-740	Bliadhna an droch-bhuntàta
740-741	Bliadhna a' choirce ghoirid
741-742	An tuathanach agus an sgalag
Archibald MacInnes	
743-745	Mar a bha e eadar an Sgalag agus an Donas (cf. AT812)
745-746	Guidhe duine a chaidh a chur as àite
746-747	Iain Mór Mac Dhùghaill, an Sagart
748	Feadhainn a bha a' cluich cairtean
749-750	Baisteadh a' ghille
750	An ciobair agus a' not
751	Dithis a' trod agus allt eatorra
752-753	Maighstir Dòmhnall Bhoth Fhionntainn
753-755	Sagart a chunnaic rudan
756	Brocair a mharbh a mhac
757	Brocair a' tachairt ri rud neo-shaolghalta
758-759	Boirreannach an riochd maighich
759-760	Boirreannach a' tachairt ri daoine
760-761	Catliceach agus Pròsdanach 'gan éisdeachd
762	Tachairt air tiodhlaicheadh
John MacLeod	Gleann Fhionain, Mùideart

763-764	Slàinte a' choigrich
764	Màiri Mhór nan Òran
765-766	Leac an Duine Mhairbh
766-767	Cù Glas Mhéobail
768-769	Seachain an t-iasg dubh
769-770	Saighdear aig Murt Ghleanna Comhann
770-771	Dòmhnall Mac Fhionnlaigh
772-774	Bodach Sgitheanach
774-777	Seann-seanchaidhean
778-779	Sean-fhacail bho Ailean MacDonell
779-780	Toimhseachain bho Ghilleasbuig Mac Aonghais

John MacDonald

CIM I.I.9, TSB, Book VIII: 781-876

781-782	Dòmhnall Ó Conall
782-783	Snàth air Crodh
783-784	Duine a' tighinn thairis air Loch Garaidh
785	Na Pollain
786-787	Poistear Monaidh - Mac Mhaighstir
787-789	Fear a ghlachadh an Aird Ghobhar
789-790	Cailean Ghlinn Uibhir
790-791	Dròbhair agus droch-shùil
792-793	Mac Caluim Loch Ailleort
793-794	Gamhainn a thuit marbh
794-795	Geamair a Lùb Eilde
795-796	Uachdarain a' deasbud ma chrìochan
796-797	Duine aig an robh an droch-shùil
797-798	Teanga nan Damh
799-800	An t-Sidhiche agus an deasbud
800-801	Alasdair Dòmhnallach agus Airgead nan Saighdearan
802-803	Fear a' ceannsachadh mu ainmean 's an àite
804	Rowallan Cumming
805-806	Somhairle Dòmhnallach
806-807	Fear na bainnse agus a' chearc
807-808	Triùir a' suirghe air nighinn
808-809	Dòmhnall agus Dùghall
809-810	Triùir a bha ri an crochadh
811-812	Dòmhnall agus t-Iudhach
812	Albannach, Èireannach agus Sasannach
813	Uibhisteach agus an Cràigean
814-816	Allt an Tairbh
816-817	Muc air Slabhraidh
817-819	Meas air a thoirmeasg
819-821	Mac Eóghainn agus luchd-creachadh na h-abhann
821-822	Fear an iasgaich agus piuthair nam poitseirean
822-824	Saor aig an robh cat agus cù ainmeil
824-825	Na coin aig Dòmhnall nan Othaisgean
825-826	Fear á Hiort a chunnaic each
826-827	Am Bùs bu dual

828-829	Cìobar agua a mothar
830-832	Coilleach Menzies
832-833	Fear a thug clachan á cùirn
833-836	Iain Camshron, Fear Chraimhean
837-838	Piobaire a' dol iomrall
838-840	Dùghall Mac Neachdainn agus a phartan
841-842	Naill Mac a' Phàil, Piobaire
842-843	Fidhleirean ainmeil
844-845	Fear a chuireadh a thaigh nam bochd
845-846	Gille tuathanaich agus an coire
847-848	Fear a' ruamhar gàrradh an t-sagairt
848-849	Fear a cheannaich each
849-850	Fear a bhuail fear-lagh
850-851	Sagart a léigheas gille òg
852-853	Léigheas aig bean-ghlùin
853-854	Fear an taigh-aire aig an robh dà shealladh
855	Gille an tuathanaich agus an nighean
856	Talamh an Dùir
856-857	Stoire Chasa Chaorach
858-859	Fear pòsda agus a bhean
859-860	An t-Amadan trom
860-861	Triùir Amadan
861-863	Fear le tòin ghloine
863-864	Té a bha dùil gun robh rodan 'na broinn
865	Amadan a phòs
866-867	Poit Dhubh Iain
867-869	Na sìdhchean agus a' mhin
869-871	Murchadh nan Gobhar
872	Uan Maol an Raineach
872-873	Iolaire a thug leithe gille
874	Colla Mór a' tachairt ri neach
875	Sìdhchean air muir 's air tìr
876	Clach an aisteir

John MacDonald

CIM II.10, TSB, Book X: 877-972

877-878	Fear a thug òrdugh mu a thiolachadh fhéin
879-880	Sgalag air bheagan Beurla
880-882	Bàllidh agus Poitsear
882-884	Mac Iain Ghiorr
884-886	Duine aig Leac an Tuim
886-887	Ciobair a' Ghoirtein
887-889	An Lighiche Mac Uaraig agus an corp
889-890	Fear ás Hiort agus an sgàthan
890-891	Gilleasbuig Dòmhnallach agus sgalag
892	Gillean a chaidh a mharbhadh
893-894	Beann 'Iulleasbui' Bhàin
894-895	Duine air an robh ruith fada
895-896	Peata Càdhag

896-897	Boireannach a gabh an deoch aig cuirm
898-899	An Duine Uasal a thilg an gille
900-901	Coire Choillidh aig roup
901-902	Coire Choillidh anns a' bhanca
903-904	Iain Mac Codrum
904-905	Fear a bha an Glaschu agus Ministear Gàidhealach
905-906	Iain Camshron a' suirghe
906-907	Dia leat, a Chaluim
908	Griasaiche a bha anns an àite
909	Allt Flòraidh
910-911	An Seanalair agus an Saighdear
911-913	Fear a chunnaic feòrag
913-914	Barrach an Lite
914-915	Am fear-siubhal agus na ministearan
916-917	Fear a ghoid airgead
918-919	Abinger agus Iain Gillios
919-920	“Dileag bheag, a Dhòmhnaill Mhóir”
921-922	Lachlann Casruisgte
922-924	Fraochan
924-925	Dithist a bha an Gleanna Cuaich
925	Corp Créadha
927	Nathair fo chloich
928-929	Seann-fhacail bho Iain Mac Dhòmhnaill
Archibald MacInnes	
930-931	Mar a thàinig am bàs air Mac Iain Luim
932-934	Mar a thàinig Sliochd an Taighe
John MacDonald	
934-936	Mac 'ic Ràghnaill agus Seòsra Innse
936-937	Mic Dhòmhnaill Duinn agus Scoltas
937-938	Urnaigh a' Cheird
938-939	Pòsadh a' Cheird
939-940	Feadhainn a' dol a dh'iarraidh mhnathan
Archibald MacInnes	
940-941	An Tàillear agus an nighean
942-943	Boireannach agus maigheach
944-946	Breith a chumadh air ais
946	Fear a thaigh na Ceapaich
947	Doctair Rath Thuaidhe
948-949	An Doctair MacNeachdainn
949-950	Feadhainn a dol a réiteach
John MacDonald	
951-954	Cleachadh Calluin
955-956	Loch Iall agus a' Chailleach
956-958	An Cìobar agus an Clàr Tàilìg
958	Duine a chualas a ghuth
959	Duine a ghoid airgead
960-961	Na Rannan Briagach
961-962	Fear nach gabhadh a chrochadh

962-963	Duine a chaidh a mharbhadh le cuileagan
963-964	An Ceannaiche paca agus an t-Slat Thomhais
964-965	Dithist a' tachairt ri tiodhlachadh
965-966	Guth a chuala mi-fhìn
967	Solust am bothan
968-969	Dà chorp an taigh-soillse
969-970	Ceilearadh eòin roimh bhàs
970-971	Each a chunnaic rud
971-972	Rann Samhna
John MacDonald	
1288-1290	Cailleach ann an Leac nam Friamh
1290-1292	Am Boireannach agus na Leacan
1292-1293	Fear a chreic mart
1294	Mac 'ic Alasdair a 'cur teine ri eaglais
1295-1296	Òran do'n Chrùnadh
1296-1298	Òran an Uireadair
1298-1299	Òran do'n Chloiche

Appendix 3 (ii)
List of Lochaber Sound Archives

MacDonald, Miss Helen (89)

Achadh na h-Annaid

Field Worker: John MacInnes, 1969

SA 1969/176/B1

SA 1969/177/A1

MacIntosh, Angus

Spean Bridge

Field Worker: John MacInnes, 1969

SA 1969/176/A2 The Keppoch Murders (told with
with his wife Mary)

MacIntosh, Mrs. Mary

Field Worker: John MacInnes, 1969

- SA/1969/176/A 1. Na daoine aice-fhéin
2. Account of the Braes of Lochaber
3. Boundaries of Lochaber etc.
4. Facail.

Keppoch

Campbell, Lexie

Keppoch

Field Worker: John MacInnes, 1969

- SA/1969/170/ A2. Fail i fail ó fail óireannan
A3. Beagan m' a beatha fhéin is mu na daoine aice
B1. Hùg seo an té ùr aig Cammell
B2. Mention of Dòmhnall Mór Mac Fionnlaigh
B3. Céilidh in Shepherd Community on Loch Arkaig side
B4. Bàtaichean-seòl
B5. An dà shealladh
B6. Naidheachd m' an dà shealladh
B7. Man who sold his soul to the Devil
B8. Fear a dh'ainmich an Diabhul
B9. Na seann lathaichean-coiseachd
B10. Naidheachd m' a màthair-fhéin a' còiseachd á
Cnòideart
SA/1969/170 B11. Gur mise tha fo mhighean
B12. Duanag a' Chiobair

SA/1969/171/

- A1. Òran do Loch Iall
A2. 'S iomadh oidhche fluich is tioram

- A3. Sniomh is càrdadh is dath
- A4. Figheadair - MacMillan
- A5. Biadh - Buntàta, bainne, etc
- A6. Luadh ann ri linn a màthair
- A7. Cartadh an leathair
- A8. Obair a-muigh is biadh 'n uair a bha a màthair òg
- A9. Naidheachd éibhinn air bodach is air cailleach

SA/1969/171/

- A10. Fang de lion dha na caoirich mhaola
- A11. Sioman beithe a' ceangal sheichdeannan
- A12. Ministear Sgitheanach a ruamhar le cas-chrom
- A13. Àirigh - ron an linn aice-se

- B1. Bodach Fhineisgeig agus a bhean a' fuireach an Uamha Rogain aig ám na h-àirigh
- B2. Bodach a bha seachd bliadhna còmhla ris na sidhichean
- B3. 'S e na sidhichean a thog Taigh Lianachan
- B4. Guidhe na Glastig air muinntir Lianachain
- B5. Fear aig an robh drobh shùil
- B6. Dòmhnall Bàn a' Bhòcain
- B7. Cù Ghlas Mhéobail

SA/1969/171/

- B8. Iasg mór a thathar a' faicinn am Mórair
- B9. Eala 'na manadh roimh bàs Stiùbhairtaich á Fas na Cloiche
- B10. Each is caoirich am bruadal
- B11. Bruadal a chunnaic am màthair air Crìosd
- B12. Bruadal a chunnaic am màthair air a piuthair
- B13. Bruadal a chunnaic i-fhéin - manadh air bàs a peathar
- B14. Murt na Ceapaich

SA/1969/172/

- A1. Anns a' mhadainn is mi 'g éirigh*
- B5. Chuala mi ceòl rinn mo chridhe ris ghléusadh

SA/1969/173/

- A1. Chuala mi ceòl rinn mo chridhe ris ghléusadh (cont.)

SA/1969/173/

- A1. Chuala mi ceòl rinn mo chridhe ris ghléusadh
- A2. Dunnchadh Bàn agus Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair
- A3. Ochan ochan mi/'s mi gun trì làmhan
- A5. Thoir a-nuas dhuinn am botul

SA 1969/179/

- B8. Anns a' mhadainn 's mi 'g éirigh (cont. SA 1969/172)
- B2. Bidh an deoch-s' air làmh mo rùn
- B3. Fear a' choire a' dol a phòsadh etc

SA 1970/324/

- B4. Story and talk re. Loch Crenon and district

- A1. Murt na Ceapaich
- A4. Cemetery in Màm Chùrlain
- A5. Dunnchadh Bàn/Màiri Bhàn Òg
- A6. O Appin, dear Appin
- B2. Story about composer of Òran na Comhachaig
- B3. Cailin Caimbeul Ghlinn Uibhir

MacKenzie, Allen
Keppoch

- SA 1969/172/ A2. Fiddle selections - items (a)-(l)
 B4. Fiddle selections - items (a)-(h)
 SA 1969/173 A5. Music used for tuning pipes and fiddle

Kennedy, Iain
Lochaber

Field Worker: Ailie Munro and Morag Macleod, 1970

- SA 1970/322/A2 Fiddle Music: Mo màthair
 A3. Fiddle Music: March, Strathspey and Reel
 A4. The Skyline of Skye
 A4 (a). The Dark Island
 A4 (b). Gaelic Songs (3)
 A5. Jigs (4)
 A6. March, Strathspey and Reel

Kennedy, Iain & Band

- SA 70.326.A1 Millbank Cottage
 SA 70.326.A2 Millbank Cottage
 SA 70.326.A3 Millbank Cottage

MacDonald, Donald
Keppoch, Lochaber

Field Worker: Frank Collinson

- S/A 1952/67/1 Fiddle and Bag-pipes.
 52/206/A5 Stirlingshire Militia - BP
 52/206/A6 Lord Lovat's Lament - BP
 /A7 Lament for MacDonald of Glencoe - BP
 /A8 Lochaber Gathering - BP
 /A10 Rakes of Kilda - F
 52/206/A3 Smith's a Gallant Fireman - F with James
 MacDonald of Roy Bridge
 52/206/A4 High Road To Linton - F with James
 MacDonald of Roy Bridge
 52/206/A11 Cumberland Reel - F with James

MacDonald of Roy Bridge

- 67/1/195/1 Lochaber Gathering - BP
 67/1/195/2 The Coirechoille Blend - BP

SA 1952/67/ 52/195/3	Blackmount Forest
52/195/4	Lady Madelina Sinclair - F
52/195/5	The Mason's Apron - F
52/195/6	Lord Lovat's Lament - BP

MacDonald, James

Bohenny,

Roy Bridge, Lochaber

Field Worker: Frank Collinson, 1952
Calum MacLean, 1954

52/206/A1	Highland Wedding - F
52/206/A2	La Rouse - F
/A9	Inverness Gathering - F
52/206/A3	Smith's a Gallant Fireman - F with Donald MacDonald of Keppoch
52/206/A4	High Road To Linton - F with Donald MacDonald of Keppoch
52/206/A11	Cumberland Reel - F with Donald MacDonald of Keppoch
SA 1954/56/A3a	Highland Wedding
b	Devil in the Kitchen
c	De'il among the Tailors
SA 1954/56/A4	Is tric a ghabh mi sgrìob Fheasgair
SA 1954/56/A5	Stirlingshire Militia
SA 1954/56/A6	La Rouse
SA 1954/56/B1a	Stirling Castle
SA 1954/56/B1b	Rachel Rae
SA 1954/56/B2	Auchdon House

MacDonald, James Jr.,

Bohenny, Lochber

SA 1954/56/B3	The Road and the Miles to Dundee (Song)
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MacDonald, John

Bohenny, Lochaber

Field Worker: Calum MacLean, 1954

SA 1954/56/A7	MacCallum's Farewell
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Cameron, Charles

Bohentin

Roy Bridge

Lochaber

Field Worker: John MacInnes, 1969

SA 1969/173/	A6. Dòmhnall Donn, Fear Both Fhionntain
	A7. Iain Lom and his son
	A8. Iain Beag Mac Anndra

- A9. Na daoine aige fhéin
 A10. Dòmhnall Mór Òg
 A11. Ban-Cheileach a bha am màthair Theàrlaich Chamshroin
 B1. Naidheachd mu Dhòmhnall Mór Òg
 B2. Latha thiodhlachaidh Dhòmhnail Mhóir Òig
 B3. Saoil sibh, chairdean, nach b'e an giomailteach an gamhainn
 B4. 'S an oidhche sin a chaidh sinn air allaban
 B5. Man proclaims himself bard to avoid law-suit
 B6. Loch Abar & Bràigh Loch Abar
 B7. Facail
 B8. 'S miann le bradan bhith stath chas
- SA 1969/174/
 A1. Iain Lom agus Murt an Ceapaich (w/ Neil Kennedy)
 A2. Diolanas Iain Luim air muinntir Inbhir Làir (w/ NK)
 A3. Mac aig Iain Lom (w/ NK)
 A4. Ailean nan Creach (w/ NK)
 A5. 'S e Iain Beag Mac Anndra a chur ás do Mhac Iain Luim (with Neil Kennedy)
 A6. Alasdair Mór Mucomair (w/ NK)
 A7. Facail
 B1. Naidheachd ma Ghàidhlig Pheairt (w/. NK)
 B2. Facail
-
- SA 1969/174/
 B3. Dunnchadh Bàn nan Òran agus an gille (w/ NK)
 B4. Alasdair Bàn a' Bhòcain (w/ NK)
 B5. Fear a chunnaic sìdhiche (w/ NK)
 B6. Fear a bha bliadhna 's an t-sìdhichean (w/ NK)
 B7. Fhuair mi each o Ruairidh Ruadh (w/ NK)
 B8. Blàr na Maol Ruaidhe (w/ NK)
 B9. Fear a chunnaic a thaidhbhse fhéin (w/ NK)
 B10. An Caibdean Dubh agus an sgalag
- SA 1969/175
 A1. Òran le Uilleam Mac Ruairidh Mac Coinnich
 A2. The Oldest Animals
 A3. Murt aig Lochan Dubh na Làirig
 A4. Dòmhnall Mac Fhionnlaigh a marbhadh damh 'nuair a bha e sean
 A5. Iarratas Dhòmhnail 'ic Fhionnlaigh mu shuidheachadh na h-uaghach aige
 A6. A' Chomhachag
 A7. Call Ghàdhaig
 A8. Murt Ghlinne Comhann
 A9. An leanamh a shàbhaladh leis an t-saighdear aig Murt Ghlinne Comhann
 A10. A' Chroich aig Seumas a' Ghlinne
 A11. Comhradh mu Ghleanna Comhann
 B1. Comhradh mu Ghleanna Comhann (cont.)
 B2. Taigh Mhic Iain an Gleann Comhann
- SA 1969/175/
 B2. Taigh Mhic Iain an Gleann Comhann

- B3. Dithis bhodach a ghabh daorach an Clachaig
- B4. "Tarbh de dh'iarram geal"
- B5. An t-uaireadair - an glag - aig Camshronach Coire Choimhlidh
- B6. Mnathan a' Ghlinne seo
- B7. Mnathan a' Ghlinne seo (repeat of item in B6)
- B8. 'S miann le bradan bhith struth cas
- B9. Chan òl mi deur tuillidh
- B10. Dotair Rath-Thuidh am Port Rìgh
- B11. Mention of Iain Lom

MacDonald, John
Spean Bridge

Field Worker: Calum MacLean, 1952

- SA 1952/123/
- 2. Nigheann a chunnaic an tiodlachadh aice-fhéin
 - 1. Bradan agus Each-uisge
 - 3a,b. Air oidhche na Calluin an am bith tigh'nn dhachaidh
 - 4. Fear nach do thill as a' chogadh
 - 5. Fear a chaidh gu taibhsear
 - 6. Maraiche math
 - 7. Cù mór a' tachairt ri feadhainn
 - 8. Fear a bhiodh ag ùrnaigh
 - 9. Hiortaich agus sgàthan
 - 10. Na caraban an Glaschu

MacDonald, John
Spean Bridge

Field Worker: Calum MacLean, 1952

- SA 1952/124/
- 1. Naidheachd mu Mhór Ailein
 - 2. Boireannach a' coiseachd air bàrr an fhraoich
 - 3a,b. Òran an Uaireadair
 - 4a,b. Marbhann Dhòmhnail Mhóir Òig
 - 4c. Historical anecdote on Dòmhnall Mór Òg
 - 4d. Ghost Story on Dòmhnall Mór Òg
 - 4e. Ghost Story on Dòmhnall Mór Òg
 - 5. Nise có aige chuala sibh cuid dhe na naidheachdan?

MacDonald, John
Spean Bridge

Field Worker: Calum MacLean, 1952

- SA 1952/125/
- 1. Am Brùsach agus na crùidhean
 - 2. Am Brùsach 's an uamhaidh
 - 3. Am Brùsach agus a' chailleachd
 - 4. Iarla Mhàrr agus an fhuarag eòrna
 - 5. Òran nan Griogarach
 - 5b. Anecdote concerning Òran nan Griogarach
 - 5c. Anecdote concerning Òran nan Griogarach

- SA 1952/126
- 1a. Òran na Cloiche
 - 1b. History of the above - Stone of Destiny
 2. Guth na Comhairle aig Àth Chrìosg
 3. Lorg an Dóbhraìn
 4. Fear a mharbh fiadh iongantach
 5. Seann-éilid
 6. "Fàg an Ceann"
-
- SA 1952/127/A
1. Cainnt na Smeòraich
 2. Fear a phòs maighdeann-mhara
 3. Dideag bheag a Dòmhnail Mhóir
 4. Corp Creadha
 5. Calum Cille agus Dóbhraìn
 6. Nigheann Rìgh Lochlainn agus a' choille
 7. Deòrsa Bochannan agus a' pheasair
 8. Deòsa Bochannan agus an Rìgh
 9. Biadh gun iarraidh
-
- SA 53.255
- A1. Maile Beag Òg
 - A2. Loch Maruibhe
 - A3. Nigheann Rìgh Éireann agus Mac Rìgh Lochlainn
 - A4. Ministear a' baisteadh
 - A5. Pears' eaglais agus cailleach
 - A6. Mort Chailean Ghlinn Iubhair
 - A7. Caraid òg
 - A8. Craobh aig Loch Maruibhe
-
- SA 53.255
- A9. Dòmhnall Mór Òg agus am bocan
 - A10. An Darna Rìgh Alasdair
 - A13. Dithis bhodach agus cailleach
 - A14. Deòrsa Bochannan agus na h-uibhean
 - A15. Uilleam bi'd shuide
 - A17. An tuathanach agus an gille
 - B1. Òran Chloinn Ghriogair
 - B2. Dòmhnall Mór Òg
-
- SA 53.255
- B3. Lochan na Fala
 - B4. An gille aig Finisgeig
 - B5. Deòrsa Bochannan agus an Rìgh
 - B6a. Sinn-seanairean Iain Dòmhnallach
 - B6b. Sinn-seanairean Iain Dòmhnallach
 - B6c. Sinn-seanairean Iain Dòmhnallach
 - B7. Brùs agus gillean na bantraich
-
- MacDonald, John
Spean Bridge
- Field Worker: Calum MacLean, 1958
-
- SA 1958/21/
- A1. Togail taigh-slat

- A2. Dòmhnall Bàn Fiadhaich
- A3. Uaireadair a' ghoideadh
- A4. Cailleach a' toirt an torrath às a' bhainne
- A5. An dithis choigreach air an rathad
- A6. An solus agus a' chailleach
- A7. Dòmhnall Bàn Caillich
- A8. Sealgairean agus maigheach

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- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| SA 1958/20 | A8. Sealgairean agus maigheach
A9. Iain Lom
A10. Alasdair Crotach a' pòsadh
A11. Naidheachd mu Fhinisgeig |
| SA 1954/56/
SA 1958/47/ | A11. MacCallum's Farewell (Ballad)
A1. Uachdaran agus duine a' dol 'na àite do'n chogadh
A2. Naidheachd mu'n Mhurt an saighdear agus an gille |

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- | | |
|-------------|---|
| SA 1958/47/ | A3. Cailean Ghlinn Iubhair
A4. Seumas a' Ghlinne |
| SA 1958/49/ | A5. Fear a' caradh uaireadairean
A6. Murachan is Meanachan
A7. Coire Choillidh
A8. An dà shealladh
A9. Stiùbhart 'ga fhaicinn às déidh a' bhàis
A11. Tiodhlachadh 's an eilean |

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- | | |
|-------------|---|
| SA 1958/49 | A12. Donnachadh Dubh
A13. Sagart an Glaschu a' ceasnachadh nan Éireannach
A15. Naidheachd éibhinn
A16. Bacadair
A17. Manadh Tiodhlaicidh
A18. Fineachan |
| SA 1958/87/ | A13. Naidheachd éibhinn
A14. Naidheachd éibhinn mu'n thinneas a' mhnà
B1. A14
B2. Tom Corraig - bana-bhuidseachd
B3. Cailleach a thiodhlaiceadh beò c.f. Aa.Th990 |

MacDonald, John

Spean Bridge

SA 1961/48/

Field Worker: John MacInness, 1961

- A1. Théid sinn uile chun a' Mhòd*
- A2. Òran dha'n Bhanruighinn*
- A3. Marbhann do Dhòmhnall Mór Òg
- A4. Verses of "Òran an Comhachaig" and some comments
- A5. Wattle houses
- A6. Kennedys and the Glasteag's curse
- A7. Some other remarks on taighean-fail
- A8. Place-names and explanatory remarks and anecdotes
- A9. Verses by Duncan Bàn MacIntyre

- A10. The MacNabs
 A11. Historical notes-probably partly derived from reading and partly from oral tradition
 A12. Keppoch Murder

SA 1961/48/	<p>B1. Dòmhnall Donn Fear Both-Thiunnain B2. Buntàt' ann an Sgamadal* B3. Place-names especially hills B4. Òran do Bheinn Nibheis* B5. Air feasgar Di-haoine, 'S mi triall liom-fhéin* B6. A nigheann donn a' chualain réidh B7. Air failllill o agus ho hubh eile</p>
SA 1961/48/	<p>B8. Bha cailleach aig an drobhair* B9. Innsidh mi mar chuala mi* B10. Place-names, surnames etc B11. An turas a chaidh thun na féile* B12. 'S mi 'nam shuidh air an tulaich, Gura mudalach mi* B13. Bho'n chuir mi iuil air mu... Do bhoidhchead toirt barr air gach té* B14. Giomamaich agus tucan na gunna nach diùltadh* B15. Tha m'inntinn trom air bheagan trom*</p>
SA 1961/48/	<p>B16. Gur mi a tha lan farabhus* B17. Soraidh thun na graugaich* B18. Glossing some words B19. Àirighean B20. Coire Chomhlidh an Drobhair (including drove roads) B21. Mac a' Phi cnagairneach dubh B22. Soraidh bhuan</p>
SA 1961/48/	<p>A6. 'Nuair chaidh mi stiagh 'n taigh-éiridinn and some ensuing conversation with some place-names* A7. Vocabulary; siudagan; a' phloc; bradair; eas a' mheurain etc. A8. Oidhche Shamhna - cleachdanna A9. Iu ro bho gur mi tha muldach* A10. An Similear crochaidh</p>
SA1961/48/	<p>A11. Tally-ee, tally oh (partly his own composition) A12. Fragmentary autobiography A13. Am boireannach a chaill uaireadair agus mar a fhuair i rithist e A14. Leanabh - sibh buoc a' chuillin A15. Alasdair 's Seònaid (am pìobaire 's a bhean) A16. Am bodach bodhar droch-amharusach a chaill am mart</p>

- SA 1961/48/
- A17. Sgitheanach a' falbh le aiseal
 - A18. Sgitheanach a' dol a dh'iarraidh sgadan le deibh (is Mr. Justice in?)
 - A19. Cum dèanainn duanag (composed during 1914-1918 war) (Song against Sunday-work composer is a Catholic)*
 - A20. Lag breòite truagh a fhuairear mi*
 - A21. An uair a bhios mi falbh na sleibh*
 - A22. Hi ho ro gur h-e tha foghainneach. (Aoir)*
-

- SA 1961/50/
- A1. O 's mi tha truagh dheth
 - A2. Hi ho hai ho is toigh liom fhìn am Branndaidh
 - A3. Alasdair Crotach a' pòsadh nigheannan le Loch Iall
 - A4. Màiri Nigheann Alasdair Ruaidh air a tiodhlachadh air a beul-foipe
 - A5. Bha mi 'n dé 'm Beinn Dóbhraín
 - A6. Chunna mi an damh donn 's na h-Éildean*
 - A7. 'S truagh nach robh mi 's an ribhinn mhàilde*
 - A8. Hill iù ra bhó tha mulad orm*
 - A9. Place-names - random selection
 - A10. Am bheil sgeul air Chloinn Griogair?
-

- SA 1961/50/
- A11. Hiu ra bho 'nuair chaidh mi Ghlascho*
 - A12. Leabhran beag an acrais*
 - A14. Air fàill io o hó ró gur duilich liom*
 - A15. 'S gur h-ann air Di-haoine*
 - A16. Carson nach biomaid aidhearach, carson nach biomaid sunndach*
 - A17. 'S oidhche dhuinn 's an taigh-òsda*
 - B1. Shiod na daoine bha olc is cunnartach*

Lochaber Dialect Facaill is còmhradh Local Gaelic Miss Rebecca Stewart	Lochaber Field Worker: John MacInnes SA 1969/179/B4
Facaill	Roy Bridge
Vocabulary Charles Cameron (with Neil Kennedy, Ferrindonald, Skye)	Field Worker: John MacInnes SA 1969/174/B2
Facaill	Roy Bridge
Vocabulary Charles Cameron (with Neil Kennedy, Ferrindonald, Skye)	Field Worker: John MacInnes SA 1969/174/A7
Facaill	Roy Bridge
Vocabulary Charles Cameron (with Neil Kennedy, Ferrindonald, Skye)	Field Worker: John MacInnes SA 1969/174/B7
Facaill	Spean Bridge
Gaelic Pronunciation of Words Mrs. Mary MacIntosh	Field Worker: John MacInnes SA 1969/176/A5

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