

Two Boats Under the Moon : Album Notes

Introduction;



Two Boats Under the Moon is the solo song debut of Scottish musician and musical instrument inventor / builder, Donald WG Lindsay. It is a two-disc collection of 14 live-in-the-studio recordings, made during December 2024 at Watercolour Music in Ardgour, in the Scottish Highlands. Donald sings, plays guitar, and plays on his own Lindsay System Scottish smallpipes. Roo Geddes plays fiddle, and on three numbers, piano.

The first disc is themed as a disc of original songs, including the title song "Two Boats Under the Moon" which Donald wrote during his three year stay on Ascension Island, South Atlantic. This first disc also includes a setting of a Scots poem by Vale of Leven poet Hugh Caldwell to an original tune he wrote a few years ago, and a rendition of a little-sung number by Allan Ramsay "An Thou Were My Ain Thing".

The second disc is themed as a disc of traditional, mainly Scots, songs from a variety of sources and directions. These are songs that have held their seat in Donald's repertoire for many years - in most cases for many decades. This second disc also includes two instrumental sets, pairing Roo's fiddle with Donald's Bb Lindsay System Scottish smallpipes.

Foreword by Alasdair Roberts;

Donald WG Lindsay is rightly renowned as a piper of considerable skill, and many will be aware of his innovative work as the inventor of the novel extended-range chanter system which bears his name. However what many piping aficionados (as well as more general listeners) might not know is that he is also a very fine singer, guitarist and writer of songs. Indeed, Donald's embrace of these activities pre-dates his immersion in piping. He might be abashed to know that I still have

the cassette of his teenage songs which he gifted me thirty years ago, although he needn't be, for his considerable talents were evident even then, however greenly expressed.

It might seem confounding that it's taken Donald until now, in his late forties, to release his first full-length album of songs (following the 2003 Album of pipe tunes *To the Drum of the Sea*). But he's a careful, patient man; one surmises that he's been quietly and diligently serving out a very thorough apprenticeship, emerging when he feels the time is right as a fully-formed master craftsman. And, as if making up for lost time, he's generously bestowed upon the world a long-awaited double album, spanning some ninety-one minutes over fourteen tracks.

Among the offerings, Donald offers a handful of self-written songs from various points in his life. They are redolent of the places in which they were created, whether that's his native Scotland ("When You Were Young", "The Fisher") or Ascension Island, which was his home for three years ("Casuarina" and "Two Boats Under the Moon"). His lyrical concerns are personal yet universal, focussing on family life and childhood experiences as well as the subtleties and nuances of adult relationships and communication.

Aside from Donald's compositions there are several songs drawn from the venerable Scots tradition which has consistently provided him with nourishment and inspiration over the years. These are by turns satirical, romantic and convivial ("Tak It Man Tak It", "An Thou Were Mine Ain Thing" and "Guidwife Count the Lawin" respectively). The selection ranges from distinctive takes on much-loved chestnuts ("Wild Rover" and "Tramps and Hawkers") to less well-known pieces, like the rare and grand old ballad of "Hind Horn".

Donald invokes the album's varied moods with his soulful baritone and subtly deft twelve-string guitar. The gifted young fiddler Roo Geddes provides accompaniment throughout: full of play and nuance and of an almost telepathically sympathetic and responsive nature. On a couple of tracks Donald eschews guitar and voice for smallpipes - a rollicking set of tunes and the more stately air of "Soor Plooms o Galashiels" - in which the interplay between the two musicians shines particularly strongly.

Such is the keenness of Donald's musical vision, the traditional and original songs in combination with the instrumental pieces form a cohesive whole. The album honours tradition, as one would expect given Donald and Roo's commands of their respective idioms; yet it is, at the same time, a gently questing and unassumingly personal piece of work. As such, it's sure to delight traditional music and song enthusiasts, fans of quality songwriting and of acoustic music alike.

- Alasdair Roberts, 6th April 2025

01 When You Were Young

Written between 2007 to 2009, this song considers parenthood, family separation, emigration, inheritance and the way we sometimes use wishes, tokens, and symbols to reinforce bonds with those we love, and as a healthy means to come to terms with - and sometimes quietly to resist - experiences that may threaten to overwhelm us.

The first verse is borrowed from "The Dreime", by the renaissance Scots poet Sir David Lindsay, and provides an evocative recollection of the time he spent caring for the infant King James IV.

The second verse is borrowed from the Orcadian narrative ballad "The Great Silkie of Sule Skerry", for its image of a father (the Great Silkie of the title) offering tokens to his son in an attempt to ensure his ability to be recognised on his future arrival from his childhood home in Norway. The anonymous balladeer describes the destination of the young Silkie (as we later discover him to be) simply as Scotland, rather than Orkney, from which it seems likely that his father is hoping to meet him on or near Sule Skerry itself, in his natural habitat.

Verses three and four are original, a series of wishes and lettings-go. St Blane's Well is on the Isle of Cumbrae, in the Firth of Clyde, and wishes can be placed there by selecting a (preferably tiny) quartz pebble from the beach. The pebble should be placed in cupped hands, which should then be filled with water from the well. The wisher should then drink the water, make

the wish, and hide the pebble in the well-cairn. The Cloutie Tree referred to here is in the grounds of the Kagyu Samye Ling Tibetan Buddhist Centre, on the banks of the river Esk in the Scottish Borders, and full instructions for its use are provided at the monastery there.

When you were young I held you in my arms,
Fu tenderly til you got up to gang,
And in your bed, happit tight and warm,
Lute in hand, sweetly to you sang

I'll put a gold chain around your neck,
A good gold ring upon your finger too,
So when to Scotland you come home again,
Sure of a welcome you will be

One pebble, white, washed in St Blane's Well,
One ribbon, red, upon the cloutie tree,
One diamond tossed intae the swell,
Where Clyde's dark waters, they meet the sea

Here's two wee trinkets, now, for the pawn,
Eighty-two pound and then they're gone,
A sooty letter, from up the lum,
Wi pencil wishes all across it drawn

02 Casuarina

This song is titled for the casuarina tree, also known as the whistling tree, after the distinctive shushing or whispering sound made by its pines when even a light breeze blows through them. It's a sound that, if I were to hear it anywhere else, would instantly remind me of Two Boats Village. That tells you a fair bit about the pace of life in Two Boats, probably the sleepest inhabited corner of Ascension Island.

The second and third verses name two other shrubs found in Two Boats: bougainvillea and yellowboy. In the absence of grass, the fresh pink, white or orange bougainvillea petals provide food for feral rabbits and sheep, as well as for the wild land crabs that roam the village. Once fallen they quickly dry out and heap in corners here and there. The vivid yellow flowers and bright green leaves of the yellowboy tree (Tacoma Stans) overhung our patio alongside the pink bougainvillea. Yellowboy grows wild on the slopes of Mountain Red Hill nearby, its colourful intensity providing a contrast with the deep red of the volcanic dirt below and bright blue sky overhead.

The chorus begins: "We used live here", a borrowed line that I saw handwritten on the wall of a disused former accomodation block in Georgetown, the only other village on the island. It neatly sums up the experience of living on Ascension, where residence is only available to those with a contract of work on the island (and their families, depending on the role), and all contracts are short-term. Travel to the island is expensive, and from most parts of the world (with the exception of South Africa and St Helena) the route is complicated. Sort of like life itself, when you leave, you're unlikely to be coming back for a visit.

How the breeze rolls,
Shushing under the,
Casuarina-a-a-a

We used live here,
Long ago,
We used live here,
But no mo-o-ore

How the trades flow,
Dry the petals up,
Bougainvillea,
Orange, pink and green

We used live here,

Long ago,
We used live here,
But no mo-o-ore

How the winds blow,
Rolling over the,
Yellowboy, yellowboy,
Bright yellowboy

We used live here,
Long ago,
We used live here,
But no mo-o-ore

03 Johnnie Blues Well

Johnnie Blues Well is a cherished local landmark in the back roads district of East Renfrewshire, and can be found at the side of Springfield Road, between Neilston and Barrhead.

It's named after printmaker and poet James "Johnnie Blue" Ferguson, who according to local tradition used the well to wash himself of blue dye on his way home to Neilston after his day's work.

Two of Ferguson's poems are preserved as part of a brief 'flyting' between himself and Vale of Leven poet Hugh Caldwell, who was himself apparently living in or near Neilston at the time.

The opening shot in this flyting was taken by Hugh, then aged about 14, and it seems it was a naive attempt at a poetic tribute to Ferguson, who understandably took exception - particularly to verse four.

I found this poem while researching poetry and songs from the Vale of Leven, where our Lindsays had lived from the arrival of Sir Patrick Lindsay, who became *toshach darroch* ("chief of the oaks" — head forester) to the

Earl of Lennox there in the 13th century, until my great-grandfather's death in 1910 at the Dalmonach dye works – an industry with its own roots entwined with the oaks, although by 1910 the processes involved had evolved beyond them.

As dooncast in sorrow I silently sit,
Some pleasure that's past before me does flit,
And cheers up my heart, sae I laugh tae masel,
As I think on the sport by Johnnie Blues Well

Johnnie Blue was a poet, Gateside his abode,
His well's situated by the Neilston back road,
And owre its waters he has cast a great spell,
That they'd a' be poets, that drank oot the well

Sae aft when I'm passing, I'll laughingly think,
Tae sit for a minute and hae a bit drink,
For a poet I hope tae be someday masel,
Wi drinkin the waters oot o Johnnie Blues Well

Johnnie Blue was a poet...

Auld Johnnie, each night, when he's passing that way,
Spiels clean owre the dyke, tae the fit o the brae,
And murmurs some lines, nae ane heeds but himsel,
In praise o the waters he drinks oot the well

Johnnie Blue was a poet...

Auld Johnnie, poor man, he is now growing old,
And he's wearin awa wi the wind and the cauld,
And soon he'll be laid doon tae rest by himsel,
Free frae aw o his woes, and the bonnie wee well

Johnnie Blue was a poet...

04 The Meantime Song

My eldest son Ryall, now 22, wrote (or rather made up - no pen was involved), the first eight lines of this song as a joke. He was five years old at the time and was experimenting with my guitar while it leaned against the side of the bed. His lyrical contribution appears more or less verbatim, although originally there were added giggles, strums, and appropriate responses from Dad playing the daft laddie/straight man at the required points.

The exchange stuck in my head. After Ryall had fallen asleep later the same night I wrote his lines down, adding a few more of my own to make a song that's essentially about the experience of watching your child grow, particularly as a non-resident parent.

Do you know what this song is called?
This is the meantime song,
That's it finished now!

Do you know what this song is called?
This is the evening time song,
That's it finished now!

Do you know what this song is called?
It's just a song!

Shadow hands upon the wall,
Shadow footsteps on the floor,
You've gone home now

Line of jackets on the peg,
Wear them once or twice and then,
How you've grown, now!

And I hope this wee house it feels like a home

05 Two Boats Under the Moon

This song arose two days before we left Ascension Island in May 2022. Somewhere on Facebook there's still a video of a part of the process, with lead vocals and creative direction being provided by the song's co-author Aaliyah Peters, assisted by my daughter Rosie on a kalimba. She had been gifted the instrument during our stay there, loved it and played it constantly at that point.

Two friends together singing while Dad provided guitar, backup vocals, and a notebook containing a rough first draft of the song: no recording of the song will ever come close to that video, as far as I'm concerned.

The lyrics are a description of Two Boats Village by night, and a counterbalance to the sun-soaked scenes in the song "Casuarina" (the video for which, ironically, shows the island under rare but not unknown cloud cover). The night is lit by a full moon, causing the fronds of the village's fan palms to stand out starkly black against the starlit deep blue of the sky, shining bright silver wherever the moonlight touches them.

The clock tower mentioned in the song belongs to Two Boats School and is visible from most parts of the east (Thistle Hill) end of the village. It tells the right time twice a day at a quarter to two. "Solomon's" refers to the mostly derelict Solomon's supermarket building opposite Two Boats Club.

The chorus, and lines 5-6 of the first verse, allude to the nature of social life in Two Boats and to some extent on Ascension Island more generally - at least while we were there. This was in the very quiet period in the island's life during the COVID-19 pandemic (which didn't reach Ascension while we were there), and while the runway resurfacing was ongoing. "Nobody says, nor knows", but anyone who's lived there recently might well know what's meant by these lines.

Two Boats under the moon,
The breeze is warm tonight,
And the stars are bright,
Two Boats under the moon,
Nobody comes nor goes,
Nobody says, nor knows

And we all may come and go,
All together, we sail alone,
And we all say, but we don't know,
This South Atlantic ebb and flow

Two Boats under the moon,
The palms are black and white,
Jet black, and silvery white,
Two Boats under the moon,
Shining through whispering pines,
Guava and cactus tines

And we all may come and go...

Two Boats under the moon,
Clock tower floating high,
Above the mountain drive,
Two Boats under the moon,
Solomon's faded walls,
Shuttered and darkened halls

And we all may come and go...

06 The Fisher

I wrote this riddling or "wit-combat" ballad around some lines borrowed from

"Broughty Wa's" (Child 258), sometime during early 2010. It's loosely based on events that took place on the pier at Broughty Ferry, and in the town of Crieff (which doesn't get a mention in this version, but does in some others) in mid to late 2009, and has evolved since into a number of versions - including one recorded, but as yet unreleased, by Alasdair Roberts.

Fair Lily's gone tae Broughty Wa's,
And doon by the harbour side,
She has found her old love fishing there,
At the turning o the tide

And first he's hooked a silver fish,
And set it on dry land,
Then syne he's ca'd the golden ring,
Aff of Lily's milk-white hand

Now it's "since ye've taen my ring frae me,
"There is wan thing I wad hae,"
"It's for you tae lend your fishing reel,"
"All atween the night and the day"

"If I should lend my fishing reel,"
"Then a good catch you should bring tae me,"
"A salmon frae the river wide,"
"Aye, and twa frae in the sea"

"Well if I bring the catch you ask,"
"There is wan mair thing I would hae,"
"And it's for you tae gang alang wi me,"
"All atween the nicht and the day"

"And if I break either rod or reel,"
"Then you may keep the ring,"
"But gin I gie ye a ye ask,"
"Then, love, gie tae me a things"

"Now if sic a wish was mine tae grant,"
"Then mair than that you would hae,"
"And yet your ring is on your finger, love,"
"And a the fish still in the sea"

"For though I've little learned by Broughty Wa's,"
"There is this sae far as I can see,"
"That the mair I looked all on your face,"
"The mair I tint my liberty"

07 An Thou Were My Ain Thing

The lyrics for this song were written by Allan Ramsay and published by him in *The Tea-Table Miscellany* in the early 18th century in Edinburgh.

The tune, and the inspiration for Roo's piano harmonisation, are taken from a Scottish lute setting, provided in the Balcarres MS, written c.1695-1701. This same setting of the tune, titled in the MS "If Thou Were Myne Own Thing", has been recorded by Scottish lutenist Rob MacKillop, on his album *Flowers of the Forest*.

The Balcarres manuscript is thought of by some as the "most professional" of the Scottish lute manuscripts. It belongs to, and is thought to have been written by a member of, the family of Lindsay of Balcarres in Fife. It is deposited by them in the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

O an thou were my ain thing,
How I would loe thee, o I would loe ,
And o thou were my ain thing,
Sae dearly would I loe

Like bees that suck the morning dew,
Frae flowers o the sweetest scent and hue,

Sae wad I dwell upon thy mou,
And gar the gods envy me.

O an thou were my ain thing...

Sae lang's I had the use of light,
I'd on thy beauties feast my sight;
And in saft whispers through the night
I would tell how much I looed thee.

O an thou were my ain thing...

How fair and ruddy is my Jean!
She moves a goddess o'er the green:
Were I a king, thou should be queen,
Nane but myself aboon thee.

O an thou were my ain thing...

I'd grasp thee to this breast of mine,
Whilst thou like ivy, or the vine,
Around my stronger limbs should twine,
Formed hardy to defend thee.

O an thou were my ain thing...

Time's on the wing and will not stay;
In shining youth let's make our hay,
Since love admits of no delay;
Oh, let na scorn undo thee.

O an thou were my ain thing...

While love does at his altar stand,
Hae, there's my heart, gi'e me thy hand,
And with ilk smile thou shalt command

The will of him wha loves thee.

O an thou were my ain thing...

02-01 Wild Rover

This began as a half-remembered recollection of Aaron Jones' singing of "The Wild Rover", to a very similar tune. The context was a performance by the Alistair McCulloch Trio, of which Aaron is part, at the Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore on 26th July 2018. By the time we left for Ascension Island, on the Caledonian Sleeper from Aviemore station exactly a year later, the song had evolved into this.

It became a favourite with us and with our friends on the island. A singalong was part of the programme at my wife Hannah and my "songs and cake" (Hannah being justly famous for the latter) two-date farewell collaboration tour of Two Boats Club, and of Georgetown community library, during May 2022.

Aaron's version can be found on the Alistair McCulloch Trio album *Off the Hook*, and listeners can make their own speculations about the process involved in its development. It sounds to me like Andy M Stewart's version of "The Blackbird", from Silly Wizard's *Wild and Beautiful* album, has had at least a hand in it.

Well I've been a wild rover for many's the year,
And I've spent all my money on whisky and beer,
But now I've returned home with gold in great store,
And I never will be a wild rover no more

Wild rovin I'll give over, wild rovin no more,
I have been a wild rover, no never, no more,
Wild rovin I'll give over, wild rovin no more,
I have been a wild rover, no never, no more,

I went in to an alehouse I used to frequent,
And I told the landlady my money was spent,
I asked her for credit, she answered me "nae",
Sayin "custom like yours, I can get now, any day"

Wild rovin I'll give over, wild rovin no more...

I took out from my pocket a handful of gold,
And upon the round table it glittered and rolled,
She said "I have whisky and wine, now, of the best,"
"And the words that I spoke, they were only in jest"

Wild rovin I'll give over, wild rovin no more...

I'll go back to my parents, confess what I've done,
And I'll ask them to pardon their prodigal son,
And when they've embraced me, as oft times before,
Then I swear I won't be a wild rover no more

Wild rovin I'll give over, wild rovin no more...

02-02 The Grinder/Hardiman the Fiddler/Fy Let Us A Tae the Bridal

I first learned "The Grinder" from the singing of Mary Ann Kennedy during a musical project in which we were both involved, organised by filmmaker Robin Crichton in Banyuls-sur-Mer, southern France.

I'm pretty sure "Hardiman the Fiddler" first came into my repertoire as part of a set of ceilidh music that my brother Douglas had originally prepared for his Alba ceilidh band (active in Glasgow during the 1990s), and which by then had been adapted for use by The Jiggers and by at least two other Glasgow ceilidh bands of which I'm aware. I think I'm right in saying that the tune had actually been introduced to the set at a later point by the fiddler Graham McGeoch. He had digitally typeset the music from the earlier and harder-to-

read photocopies of handwritten scores that Alba (and the early incarnations of The Jiggers) had been using, making one or two alterations and additions in the process.

The final tune in the set is a version of "The Blythsome Bridal", which I've titled after a line from the song set to it by Robert Semphill of Beltrees (of "Life and Death of the Piper of Kilbarchan" fame). It was part of a set I gathered together for a memorable concert at Piping Live 2018 in Glasgow, titled "Standard Habbie".

The first half of that concert explored and interpreted the repertoire that is attributed to Habbie Simpson in Semphill's aforementioned poem. The second half went on to explore the musical output of Kilbarchan more widely - up to and including "Bonnie Wood o Craigielea" and its offshoot "Waltzing Matilda", and Alistair Hulett's song "Mrs Barbour's Army" about one of the village's most famous daughters.

The line-up on the night included Alasdair Roberts, Roo Geddes, Neil Sutcliffe, Iona Fyfe, Konrad Wiszniewski, Fin Moore and myself, and it was one of those rare nights of musical magic that happen every now and again.

02-03 Tak It Man Tak It

This song was written by David Webster, a Dunblane-born Paisley weaver-poet who published a book in 1835 titled "Original Scottish Rhymes, with Humorous and Satirical Songs". The lyrics are written to be sung to the tune "Brose and Butter", well known on the pipes.

I first got to know of this song from the singing of Andy M Stewart on his excellent album with Manus Lunny, *Dublin Lady*. I am not aware of another recorded version, which is surprising as it's a great song, full of Webster's warm and mildly self-deprecating humour. "I have aye had a voice a' my days, But for singin' I ne'er gat the knack o't".

Familiar with "Brose and Butter" on the pipes, I'm used to hearing the tune in B minor, with a drone below the keynote on A. It's a common mode on the pipes, and although it's an odd way to harmonise what is essentially a minor tune, it works and provides a shade of harmony a wee bit lighter to my ears than what minor usually attracts.

When I was a miller in Fife
I thought that the sound of the happer
Said, "Tak' a wee flow to your wife,
To help to mak' brose to your supper."
Then my conscience was narrow and pure,
But some way by random it rackit;
For I lifted twa neivefu' or mair,
While the happer said, "Tak' it, man, tak' it!"

Then hey for the mill and the kiln,
The garland and gear for my cogie,
And hey for the whiskey and yill,
That washes the dust frae my cragie.

Although it's been lang in repute
For rogues to mak' rich by deceiving,
Yet I see that it disna weel suit
Honest men to begin with the thieving.
For my heart it gaed dunt upon dunt,
Oh, I thought ilka dunt it would crack it;
Sae I flang frae my neive what was in't,
Still the happer said, "Tak' it, man, tak' it!"

Then hey for the mill and the kiln...

A man that's been bred to the plough,
Might be deav'd wi' its clamorous clapper;
Yet there's few but would suffer the sough,
After kenning what's said by the happer.

I whiles thought it scoff'd me to scorn,
Saying, "Shame, is your conscience no chackit?"
But when I grew dry for a horn,
It chang'd aye to, "Tak'it man, tak'it."

Then hey for the mill and the kiln...

The smugglers whiles cam' wi' their pocks,
'Cause they kent that I likit a bicker,
Sae I bartered whiles wi' the gowks,
Gied them grain for a sowp o' their liquor.
I had long been accustomed to drink,
And aye when I purposed to quat it,
That thing wi' its clapperty-clink
Said aye to me, "Tak' it, man, tak' it."

Then hey for the mill and the kiln...

But the warst thing I did in my life,
Nae doot but ye'll thing I was wrong o't
I tauld a bit bodie in Fife
A' my tale, and he made a bit sang o't.
I have aye had a voice a' my days,
But for singin' I ne'er gat the knack o't;
Yet I try whyles, just thinkin' tae please
The greedy, wi', "Tak' it, man, tak' it."

Then hey for the mill and the kiln...

Now, miller and a' as I am,
This far I can see through the matter;
There's men mair notorious to fame,
Mair greedy than me o' the muter.
For 'twad seem that the hale race o' men,
Or, wi' safety, the hauf we maun tak' it,
Ha'e some speaking happer within,

That says to them, "Tak' it, man, tak' it."

Then hey for the mill and the kiln...

02-04 Guidwife, Count the Lawin

This song, written by Burns based on a traditional fragment, was recorded brilliantly by my sadly-missed friend, singer, guitarist and songwriter Alistair Hulett for Volume 7 of the renowned Linn Records The Complete Songs of Robert Burns series. If you haven't heard his recording of the song, begin there. It's on YouTube so you won't struggle to find it, but in any case if you can get your hands on a copy of the Linn Burns series, it's a treasure trove and a brilliant piece of work.

A home-recorded (on a Tascam DR-100 in the kitchen) version of mine, much more timid than Alistair's tackling of the song, and that I'd posted on Tunecore in 2017 as an experiment, was picked up by Iggy Pop in late 2020 for airplay on his show Confidential, on BBC Radio 6 Music. This unexpected event happened during our second year on Ascension, and the comments and messages that followed from would-be fans seeking an album helped to point me in a direction that's eventually led to Two Boats Under the Moon, so it seemed natural to include it in the set.

To my ears, the version Roo and I have recorded here does more justice to its inspiration from Alistair's always robust and colourful singing, as well as from Burns' warm and subtle writing, than my earlier home recording. I managed to nail a "trout - *fin* him oot" Scots pun in the last verse this time. No idea if Burns meant that; maybe not, but is fun and a great image since the fin's the first bit you'd see nae doot.

Gane is the day and mirk's the night,
But we'll ne'er stray for faute o' light,
For ale and brandy's stars and moon,
And blude-red wine's the rysin Sun.

Then guidwife count the lawin, the lawin, the lawin,
Then guidwife count the lawin, and bring a coggie mair.

There's wealth and ease for gentlemen,
And semple-folk maun fecht and fen;
But here we're a' in ae accord,
For ilka man that's drunk's a lord.

Then guidwife count the lawin, the lawin, the lawin,
Then guidwife count the lawin, and bring a coggie mair.

My coggie is a haly pool,
That heals the wounds o' care and dool;
And pleasure is a wanton trout,
An' ye drink it a', ye'll find him out.

Then guidwife count the lawin, the lawin, the lawin,
Then guidwife count the lawin, and bring a coggie mair.

02-05 Soor Plooms o Galashiels

"Soor Plooms" is the motto of the town of Galashiels, and recalls a successful skirmish with a raiding party of English soldiers, ambushed by the men of Gala while resting in an orchard near the town enjoying the plums. The soldiers from Gala became soor plooms (sour plums) in the orchard, in contrast to the sweet plums the English soldiers had been enjoying.

The story is believed to have given rise to a famous Scottish sweetie, the soor ploom, reputedly invented by a Gala sweetie shop. It also gave rise to this tune, which is associated in particular with Galashiels piper Donald MacLean, who held the office of town piper during the early to mid 18th century.

The tune in its full form exceeds the nine-note range usually associated with

Scottish pipes of all kinds, and MacLean is reputed to have found the extra notes required by "shivering the back lil" - that is, by pinching the top thumb hole on the chanter.

This thumb technique also forms a part of the method whereby I've added these notes to the Scottish smallpipes in the design of my Lindsay System chanter. As a result, "Soor Plooms o Galashiels" has become a part of the repertoire of these new pipes.

I'll dedicate this tune to my father-in-law Colin Bookless, and to my friend the Gala border piper, Scots poet and Chinese translator Brian Holton. Brian's books of Scots translations of ancient Chinese poetry - *Staundin Ma Lane*, *Hard Roads an Cauld Hairst Winds* and *Aa Cled wi Clouds She Cam* - are well worth a read.

02-06 Tramps and Hawkers

This song was recorded on 19th July 1951 in Elgin, from the singing of Jimmy MacBeath, by Alan Lomax and Hamish Henderson. It was released on the anthology *The Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music - Volume VI: Scotland*.

Peter Hall noted on Jimmy's later Topic album *Wild Rover No More*:

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

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

I can't claim to have been as conservative with the song as Jimmy, but hopefully haven't taken it too far up the road.

O come a ye tramps an hawker lads an gaitherers o blaw,
That tramps this country round and round, come listen ain and all.
I'll tell tae you a rovin tale o places I hae been
Far up into the snowy north and south by Gretna Green.

I hae seen the high Ben Nevis that gings towerin tae the moon.
I've been in Crieff and Callander an roun by Bonnie Doon
And by the Nethy's silvery side an places ill tae ken
Far up into the snowy North lies Urquhart's bonnie glen.

Noo it's aftentimes I've laughed tae masel when I'm trudgin alang the road
Wi' a bag o blaw upon my back, an my face as broon's a toad
Wi' lumps o cheese an tattie scones or breid an braxy ham
Never thinkin whaur I'm comin from nor whaur I'm gaun tae gang.

I'm happy in the summer time beneath the bright blue sky,
Never thinkin in the mornin at night whaur I'm gaun tae lie.
Bothy or byre or barn, or oot among the hay,
And if the weather does permit I'm happy a the day.

O Loch Katrine and Loch Lomond they hae a been seen by me,
The Dee, the Don, the Deveron that hurries tae the sea.
Dunrobin Castle by the way I nearly had forgot,
An aye the rickles o cairn that marks the Hoose o John o' Groat.

Well I'm up an roon by Gallowa or doon about Stranraer,
Ma business leads me anywhere, I travel near an far.
I hae got a rovin notion, there's nothing what I loss,
And a my day's my daily fare and what'll pay my doss.

Well I think I'll go tae Paddy's land, I'm makin up my mind,
For Scotland's greatly altered noo, I canna raise the wind.

But I will trust in Providence, if Providence prove true,
An I'll sing ye's a o Erin's Isle e'er I come back tae you.

02-07 Hind Horn

During my final year at the University of Glasgow in 1999, I was offered the chance to participate in a project entitled "Traditional to Digital", and overseen by Professor Ted Cowan.

The bulk of the work which I became involved in over that summer, involved attending recording sessions at the University studios alongside engineer Stevie Lawrence, where recordings were made with singers including Adam MacNaughtan, Gordeanna McCulloch, John Eaglesham, Anne Neilson, Jack Beck, and others, each singing a selection of melodies from their repertoire of ballads found in the F J Child collection of English and Scottish Popular Ballads.

My task was then to take the minidisc output of these recording sessions, and digitise it into Mp3 format in the University's Computing Science Department. These were still the early days of digital music, and the object of the project was to create a multimedia CD resource based on the FJ Child collection, providing texts and background information for the ballads alongside one or two verse clips of a singer performing the ballad.

The melodies became etched into my young, folk-obsessed mind. Many of the melodies were unknown to me, back in those days before Spotify, YouTube and Apple Music rose to dominance, and in fact some of them remain unusual melodies and versions for their respective songs.

Here I've recorded my favourite over all of the songs I learned during Traditional to Digital - "Hind Horn", as sung for that project by the well known Glasgow singer, Adam MacNaughtan. I can still remember being immediately impressed in the studio, both by the melody and the text of the verses Adam sung, and by his typically robust and distinctive delivery.

The ballad has its roots in various mediaeval romances, including one found in the Auchinleck Manuscript (c. 1330-40). Some hold that its basic narrative has an antecedent in ancient Greek epic: the Homeric tale of the return of Odysseus from the Trojan Wars.

O Hind Horn's bound, love, and Hind Horn's free,
Whaur was ye born, or in what country,
"In good greenwood whaur I was born,"
"And a my freens ca me forlorn"

I gave my love a silver wand,
That was to rule over all Scotland,
My love gave me a gay gold ring,
That was tae rule above all things

Sayin "as lang that ring shines, as it were new,"
"Then you'll know that your love, she still loves you,"
"But soon's that ring grows pale and wan,"
"You'll ken that she goes wi another man"

He has hoisted his sails, and away sailed he,
Until he's arrived at a foreign country,
He's looked on the ring, it was grown pale an wan
Says "I wish I wis at hame again!"

He has hoisted his sails, and hame sailed he,
Until he's arrived at his ain country,
An the very first man that he's met wi,
Was a poor auld beggar, aye and blind as can be

"What news, what news, my silly auld man?"
"What news dae ye hae tae gie tae me?"
"Nae news, nae news!" the beggin man did say
"Save that this is oor queen's weddin day!"

"Could ye lend tae me your beggin coat"
"An I'll lend tae you my guid scarlet cloak"
"Could ye lend tae me your beggin rung?"
"An I'll gie ye my guid grey tae ride upon"

"An could ye len tae me your wig of hair,"
"Tae cover mine, for it is fu fair,"
"Could ye show me the gait whaur ye used tae go,"
"Aye an some old beggin words that you used tae know"

"O it's as you ging ower yon high, high hill
"You'll draw your good bent bow nigh until
"And as you come tae yonder toon,"
"Well you'll let your good bent bow low fa doon"

"Askin meat for St Peter, ask for St Paul,"
"Aye, and ask for the sakes o Hind Horn all,"
"But tak ye naethin, frae nane o them all,"
"Til ye get frae the bonny bride hersel"

The bride she came tripping a doon the stair
Wi the scales o good red gowd all in her hair
Wi the glass o good red wine all in her hand
For tae gie tae the poor old beggin man

He has drank the wine oot frae in the glass,
Dropped in the ring, and tae her it did pass,
And it's "Got ye this by sea, or got you it by land,"
"Or got you it out o some poor drowned man's hand"

"I got naught by sea, I got naught by land,"
"Nor got I it out o some poor drowned man's hand,"
"But I got it at our woin, love,"
"An I'll gie ye it at our weddin, my love"

"Well, I'll tak these scales o red gowd frae my head,"

"And tae follow you, and tae beg my bread,"
"An I'll tak these scales o red gowd frae my hair,"
"And tae follow you for evermair"

But atween the kitchie, and the ha,
It's there that he's let his beggin coat doon fa,
And the red gold shone oot owre him all,
And the bride frae the bridegroom was stolen awa

An it's "Hind Horn's bound, love, and Hind Horn's free,"
An it's, "Whaur are ye born, or in what country,"
"In good greenwood whaur I was born,"
"And a my freens ca me forlorn"