Anent Hamish Henderson

Essays • Poems • Interviews

Editor **Eberhard Bort**

In Tune with the 'Underground of Song'

Alison McMorland and Geordie McIntyre

Geordie: We are dealing here with the 'Underground of Song'.[1] It has a double meaning – 'underground' as something subversive, radical, anti-establishment, and then there's the fact that songs have been driven underground, out of sight. Many songs, and particularly the muckle ballads, were kept alive by the Travellers, and they were totally marginalised.

This is based on an article written by Hamish Henderson in *The Scots Magazine* of 1963.[2] But he didn't have a chance in the article to develop the idea that all the songs were underground because they were not readily available. They were held within family traditions, which kept them alive. There's always been different views in the last two centuries when folk song whichever way defined was declared moribund, if not actually dead. And that has most obviously not been the case. So what we want to try here is to illustrate some of these points, highlighting the fundamental importance of song and singing. If Hamish was about anything it was about getting people to express themselves in, broadly speaking, the folk song idiom.

It might surprise that we start with an example from the American tradition – the American song-writing tradition. Because the balladeer Woody Guthrie was not only a collector of songs who roamed the country collecting from the dustbowls of Oklahoma to California, he also wrote some wonderful songs which are still in the global repertoire. 'Pastures of Plenty' is interesting because it was commissioned under the umbrella of

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[1] This conversation recreates a song-filled presentation, 'The Underground of Song', given by Alison and Geordie at the Scottish Storytelling Centre as part of Tradfest Edinburgh Dùn Èideann on 6 May 2014.

[2] Hamish Henderson, 'The Underground of Song', *The Scots Magazine*, May 1963, reprinted in Hamish Henderson, *Alias MacAlias: Writings on Songs, Folk and Literature*, edited by Alec Finlay, Edinburgh: Polygon, 1992, pp. 31-36.

Roosevelt's New Deal, and it is just a wonderful song written to the slightly re-worked traditional tune of the murder ballad 'Pretty Polly', an example of the well-established practice of setting new songs to old 'service' or 'carrying' tunes.

Pastures of Plenty

[Words and Music by Woody Guthrie]

It's a mighty hard row that my poor hands have hoed
My poor feet have traveled a hot dusty road
Out of your Dust Bowl and Westward we rolled
And your deserts were hot and your mountains were cold

I worked in your orchards of peaches and prunes
I slept on the ground in the light of the moon
On the edge of the city you'll see us and then
We come with the dust and we go with the wind

California, Arizona, I harvest your crops
Well its North up to Oregon to gather your hops
Dig the beets from your ground, cut the grapes from your vine
To set on your table your light sparkling wine

Green pastures of plenty from dry desert ground
From the Grand Coulee Dam where the waters run down
Every state in the Union us migrants have been
We'll work in this fight and we'll fight till we win

It's always we rambled, that river and I
All along your green valley, I will work till I die
My land I'll defend with my life if it be
Cause my pastures of plenty must always be free[3]

It is worth pointing out that the roots of the modern British revival, including the Scottish revival, reach back to the United States. The late Alistair Cook – whose famous 'Letter from America' is very much part of the broadcasting tradition – was alerted to a repertoire of songs from America – chain gang songs, songs from the Southern cottonfields, field recordings made by John Lomax and his son Allan in the 1930s. Some of these songs

[3] Judy Bell and Nora Guthrie (eds), *Woody Guthrie Classics Songbook*, Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Publishing Corporation, 2000.

winged their way to London and ended up on a programme called 'I Heard America Sing'. These had a profound influence on Alistair Cook. Here was a body of song that was creative, dynamic, and with something to say. He was immensely attracted by them. So, the American influence is there, built in right from the beginning.

Fast forward, and we find some of the young, inspired revival singers like Hamish Imlach modelling themselves on American singers. In the case of Hamish, who developed his own individual style, the major influence came from a New York based singer called Dave van Ronk. And there were countless others – like that New Yorker who had never been out in the prairies, but suddenly became Ramblin' Jack Elliott – rather than just Jack Elliott. And that, too, would be replicated here, when young, urban singers would turn up in rural sweaters and tweed, maybe to creatively underline their claim of authenticity.

Alison: But if we go back to the immediate post-war era when Hamish Henderson returns from the Second World War – just before leaving Italy he stays with the Olivetti family who introduce him to a tape recording machine. Its possibilities fire him up with ideas which he wants to try and put into practice on returning to Scotland. And, when meeting up with Alan Lomax, this gives his activities a direction that would take to him to becoming the leading researcher and fieldworker for the School of Scottish Studies after its foundation in 1951. In that very year, he had been heavily involved in creating the first Edinburgh People's Festival, organising the Festival Ceilidh, which was recorded by Alan Lomax.[4] It ran for three years, and the audiences may not have, numerically, been huge, but there were people in the audience like Thurso Berwick (Morris Blythman) and Norman Buchan, exposed to singers whom Hamish brought 'out of the woodwork' – out of the underground. Like Flora MacNeil from Barra (who was working in Edinburgh at the time as a telephonist), Jessie Murray, the fishwife from Buckie, Jimmy MacBeath from Portsoy and, of course, Jeannie Robertson, the settled Traveller from Aberdeenshire, and the wonderful piper John Burgess. Hamish took them out of their local, family context – 'You people deserve to be heard,' was his message. Now, there are views that say traditional song is a private matter and it should stay within the family, that it inevitably

[4] See Eberhard Bort (ed.), *'Tis Sixty Years Since: The 1951 Edinburgh People's Festival Ceilidh and the Scottish Folk Revival*, Ochtertyre: Grace Note Publication, 2011.

changes in character when performed on a stage. Hamish encouraged public performance, and Jessie Murray sang a beautiful song at the first People's Festival Ceilidh:

Skippin' Barfit Through the Heather

As I was walkin' doon yon hill,
'Twas on a summer evenin',
There I spied a bonny lass
Skippin' barfit through the heather.

Oh but she was neatly dressed,
She neither needed cap nor feather;
She was the queen among them a,
Skippin' barfit through the heather.

Her gown it was a bonnie blue,
Her petticoat of pheasant colour,
And in between the stripes was seen
Shinin' bells o' bloomin' heather.

'Oh lassie, lassie, will ye come with me?
Will ye come wi' me and leave the heather?
It's silks an' satins you shall have
If ye come wi' me and leave the heather.'

'Well kind sir, your offer's good,
But it's well I ken you'll deceive me.
Gin I gie my heart awa
Better though I'd never seen you.'[5]

The way I first heard of that song illustrates very well how songs are being transmitted: within family settings, groups of friends, communities, both working and living communities, and of course the radio and TV programmes of the day.

In the 1960s I was living in Helston, Cornwall, home of the *Furry Dance* May custom, and also the *Hal an Tow*, a song which later became very famous through the Watersons' recording of it. I

[5] Alison McMorland learned her version of this song from Jessie Murray and recorded it in 1977 for her album *Belt wi' Colours Three.* It is also on her Tradition Bearers CD *Cloudberry Day* (2000).

found myself at the heart of living traditions, surrounded by a folk culture that was very much alive and no more so than the ancient *Padstow Obby Oss on May Day* – an annual favourite of Hamish's which he visited over many years. I was asked to be a resident of a folk club just opening. This became my weekly night out for 5 years, and in the course of it I came in touch with a huge amount of songs and singers from Cornwall's folk community. Traditional singers like Charlie Bates of St Issey, fisherman Tommy Morrisey of Padstow's Peace Oss, to name but two. Oh, and Cyril Tawney, of course, was very active in the South West, as well as the visiting guests in the summer on the folk circuit.

In 1964 I managed to buy myself a reel-to-reel tape recorder and the first thing I did was record the regular Sunday morning radio programme 'As I Roved Out'. This was showcasing really the field recordings Séamus Ennis and Peter Kennedy made in the 1950s, and these BBC Home programmes popularised Irish and British folksongs. So this is how I first heard Jessie Murray singing 'Skippin' Barfit Through the Heather'. She made a huge impression on me. I think there is nothing like being away from your birth-home to strengthen your sense of identity. So, although I felt very much at home in Cornwall, with all its Celtic connections, in listening to Jessie Murray I realised also the depth of my own Scottish roots – which before I had not thought about much. When I heard 'Skippin' Barfit Through the Heather', that did it for me. I immediately learned it. Her singing was so direct, so pure, and the song – a gem! So, that is a good example: you learn from other people's singing, directly, but also via the radio and recordings, although I had no records at the time while my father had albums by the brothers Rory and Alex McEwan and by Mary O'Hara.

And, linking in with what Geordie has said, there were two Americans who came over in the late 1950s and early '60s, and both proved to be influential in the two-way passage of Scotland's music. One was Kenneth Goldstein and the other the graphic artist and calligrapher Howard Glasser. I have treasured the meetings with Howard and our correspondence, having received letters and copies of his publications. In one letter he describes visiting Edinburgh at the beginning of his three-month sojourn to Scotland when, at Hamish Henderson's invitation, he attends a pre-concert meeting with the singers of the 1963 Festival Fringe. Around a table were Jeannie Robertson, Jimmy

MacBeath, Davy Stewart and others. He was fascinated by the Ceilidh – the happening itself of singers and musicians informally meeting at home or in the community to make music, tell stories and the news of the day. And when he went back to America, over the following forty years – wherever he worked at universities as professor of graphic arts – he organised informal gatherings and concerts which were titled Ceilidhs. These then grew into a famous folk festival, the Eisteddfod, which ran for many, many years, starting in 1971. He would design wonderful posters and flyers, showing the invited guests and featuring many Scottish artists. These are now considered collector's items.

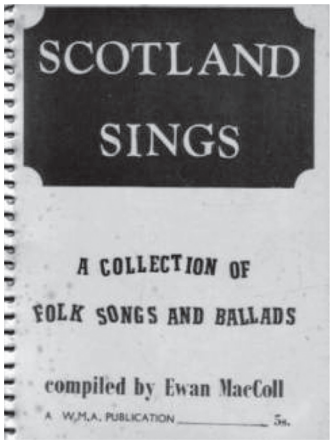
Geordie: In the decade following the People's Festival Ceilidh a great deal happened. There was a mushrooming of folksong clubs, particularly from the end of the 1950s onwards. While music halls closed down, folk song clubs were springing up all across Scotland. Songbooks were printed; the most significant, for me, being Ewan MacColl's compilation *Scotland Sings*[6] – a wonderful collection with music, and a big input from Hamish Henderson, which ought to be reprinted.

There was a lot of experimentation going on among young singers – some excellent, some perhaps lamentable, but all in a way inevitable. There was such an excitement of learning in the air. We were lucky to be caught up in this. Some singers would come from Skiffle, others from traditional song. My background was quite different from Alison's – I was inspired by black American gospel singers and the likes of Paul Robeson – not just by the calibre of his vocal technique, but also by the contents of his songs. Young people were looking for songs of substance, something that said something for them, dealing with social issues.

Now, my luck was in, on one particular day. In the early '60s I was a radio and TV technician and was called out to do a repair job – and the man in the house was Andrew Tannahill, a direct descendant of the weaver poet Robert Tannahill's youngest brother. He was a bibliophile, his knowledge about Scottish poetry an tradition was encyclopaedic, and he could not have done more for me. He gave me books, he gave me advice, he introduced me to George Douglas Brown's *The House with Green Shutters Minstrelsy* and Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Cloud Howe*, to Doric books, books like William Alexander's *Johnny Gibb of Gushetneuk*. I had not even been aware of Doric – having been

[6] Ewan McColl, *Scotland Sings*, London: Workers' Music Association, 1953.

Howard Glasser with his recording machine in Scotland, 1963 [Howard Glasser forwarded this photo to Alison McMorland for inclusion in the book *Up Yon Wide and Lonely Glen*; it is here reprinted with her kind permission.]



Cover of Ewan McColl's seminal Songbook (Workers' Music Association, 1953)

brought up in Glasgow. And he introduced me to a friend of his, Arthur Lochead who had a magnificent repertoire of songs which he had learnt from his aunt – who, by the way, had supped tea with William Motherwell of Motherwell's Minstrelsy. And I recorded these – ballads like 'Lamkin', 'Braes o' Yarrow' and 'The Douglas Tragedy', or 'The Croppy Boy', an Irish rebel song, and many more.[7] That is an example of the opportunity that existed to actually field-record, from singers who were not performers. Arthur Lochead described them as 'family songs'. He had them written out in his beautiful copperplate writing. They may have found their way into the family tradition by way of chapbooks,

[7] 'Lamkin' and 'Braes o' Yarrow' are recorded on the Tradition Bearers' CD *Ballad Tree* (LTCD1051, 2003) – by Alison McMorland, Geordie McIntyre with Kirsty Potts.

broadsides or direct oral tradition.

Lamkin

It's Lamkin was as guid a mason
As ever hewed wi' stane,
He built Lord Louden's House
But payment he got nane.

The lord said to the Leddy,
E'er he gaed abroad,
Beware of the Lamkin
That lives in the wood.

Then Lamkin he rockit,
And the fauce nurce she sang
Till the tores o' the cradle
Wi' red bluid doon ran.

Now, increasingly, songbooks and records were being published: the fantastic *Bo'ness Rebel Ceilidh Songbooks*, with songs by Hamish Henderson, Morris Blythman, Norman Buchan and Roddy Macmillan; and then Norman Buchan's *101 Scottish Songs*[8] and, eventually, *The Scottish Folksinger*.[9] And on telly, of course there were the shows with Jimmie Macgregor and Robin Hall and Rory and Alex McEwen. Archie and Rae Fisher were appearing on the Hootenanny show.

Alison: I think one of the songs that was very popular and that everybody sang was 'The Plooman Laddies' from the singing of Lucy Stewart. It was Arthur Argo, the grandson of Gavin Greig, who knew the Stewart family up in Fetterangus. They were neighbours. And when Howard Glasser came over, it was Arthur who took him to meet Lucy Stewart. Arthur himself went over to America, too, and he produced *A Wee Thread o' Blue* – an LP with extensive notes.[10] He was invited by Kenny Goldstein.

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[8] Norman Buchan, *101 Scottish Songs*, Glasgow: Collins, 1962.

[9] Norman Buchan and Peter Hall, *The Scottish Folksinger*, Glasgow: Collins, 1973.

[10] Prestige 13048 (1962).

The Lamkin.
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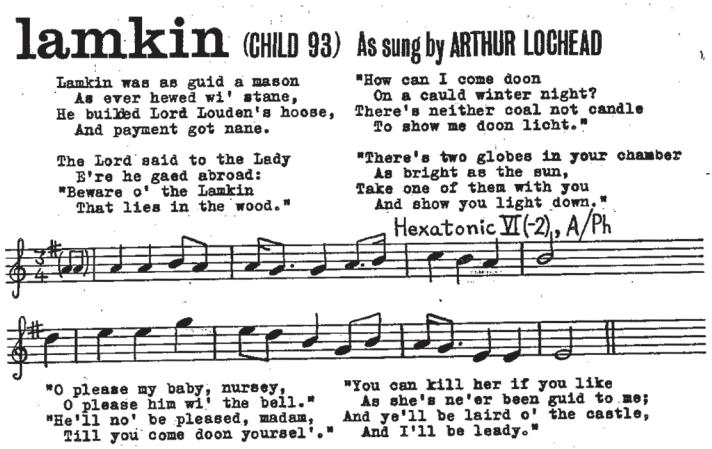
The Lamkin was as guid a mason,
As ever hewed stane,
He builded Lord Loudens House
And payment got nane.

The Lord said to the Leddy,
e'er he gaed abroad,
Beware o' the Lamkin,
that lives in the wood.
. . . . .

The Lamkin he rockit,
And the fauce nurce she sang
Till the tones o' the cradle
wi' red bluid doon ran

Ah please my babie nurcie

'The Lamkin' in Arthur Lochead's copperplate writing (Letter to Geordie McIntyre)



'Lamkin' - *Chapbook*, vol.3, no.2 (1966), p.23

Kenny, too, when he was over in 1959-60, was taken up to meet the Stewarts, by Hamish and Kätzel Henderson. The influence in the North-East of this settled Traveller family cannot be overestimated. There were ten brothers – military pipers, singers, whistle players and accordion players. The youngest daughter of the fourteen children was Elizabeth Stewart's mother Jean, who had taken piano lessons and formed her own family dance band when still a teenager. She went on to broadcast regularly from Aberdeen for many years, becoming a household name.[11]

So, Arthur Argo sang the 'Plooman Laddies', picked up from the Stewarts, and spread it round on his travels. This bothy ballad about a young female farm worker admiring the handsome young ploughman from afar became a firm favourite of folk singers, and it introduced a distinctive North-Eastern flavour to their song repertoire:

Plooman Laddies

Doon yonder den there's a plooboy lad,
And some simmer's day he'll be aa my ain.

Chorus:
An sing laddie aye, and sing laddie o,
The plooboy laddies are aa the go.

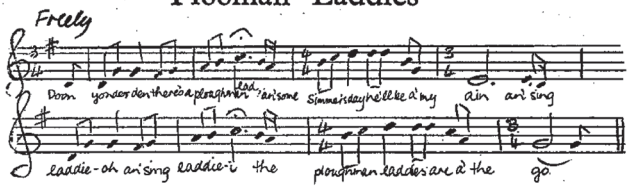
Doon yonder den I could hae gotten a miller,
But the smell o stour would hae deen me ill

Doon yonder den I could hae gotten a merchant,
But aa his riches wereny worth a groat

I love his teeth and I love his skin,
I love the very cairt he hurls in

[11] See Elizabeth Stewart, *Up Yon Wide and Lonely Glen: Travellers' Songs, Stories and Tunes of the Fetterangus Stewarts*, compiled and edited by Alison McMorland, Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, in association with the Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, 2012. See also Alison McMorland, 'Challenge and Response: Elizabeth Stewart and the Fetterangus Stewarts', in Eberhard Bort (ed.), *At Hame Wi' Freedom: Essays on Hamish Henderson and the Scottish Folk Revival*, Ochtertyre: Grace Note Publicatons, 2012, pp.43-52.

Plooman Laddies



I love his teeth and I love his skin --
I love the verra cairt he hurls in: Cho.

Doon yonder den I coulda gotten a merchant,
Bit a' his stuff wisna worth a groat: Cho.

Doon yonder den I coulda gotten a mullart,
Bit the smell o' dust widda deen me ill: Cho.

It's ilka time I gyang tae the stack,
I hear his wheep gie the ither crack: Cho.

I see him comin' fae yonder toon,
Wi' a' his ribbons hingin' roo an' roon: Cho.

An' noo she's gotten her plooman lad,
As bare as ever he left the ploo: Cho.

Doon yonder den there's a plooman lad,
An' some simmer's day he'll be a' my ain: Cho.

Lucy Stewart, one of the most magnificent of Scotland's traditional singers, has an equally magnificent repertoire. When I first taped Lucy singing this haunting love-song, I considered it one of the musical highlights of my life...A.A.

'Plooman Laddies', with a note by Arthur Argo, *Chapbook*, vol.2, no.1 (1965), p.3.

I see him comin fae yond the toon,
Wi aa his ribbons hingin roon an roon

And noo she's gotten her plooboy lad,
As bare as ever he's left the ploo.

Geordie: What Hamish Henderson was concerned about was people expressing themselves. We had the good fortune to be able and meet genuine tradition bearers like Jeannie Robertson, Jimmy MacBeath, Willie Scott and Lucy Stewart – it was possible to meet them and to learn from them. They were both self-effacing and confident – this is what we do, and we believe in the quality of what we're doing – and that had a big influence on us.

Alison: I very much see the 'Plooman Laddies' as a song that came into the folk revival. And it was Hamish who sent me up to Fetterangus in the early 1970s to meet Lucy, after I had listened to recordings of her in the School of Scottish Studies. She was an extraordinary singer, like a beacon of light for me. As singers ourselves, both Geordie and I were inspired to meet and learn from the older singers, it was important not just for the songs but also the background and to be in touch with them as people within the living tradition.

Geordie: One of he important things we picked up from those older singers in the 1960s and '70s was the importance to acknowledge where a song came from, how it was created, who sang it, whether there were different versions, was it composed or traditional. Some would say that if a song was composed, it would disqualify it in terms of folksong – which is total nonsense. I am reminded of Alan Lomax's *Folk Songs of North America* way back in 1960 – a great collection of songs, with the music transcribed by Peggy Seeger. There are on two consecutive pages two songs: the first one is 'Dark as a Dungeon' and the second one is 'Sixteen Tons', both written by Merle Travis. According to Lomax, these songs tick all the boxes – tune, narrative style, use of language – and they qualify as folk songs, as far as he is concerned. Being too rigid about these definitions simply does not wash. And that liberates young people's creativity. Songs are made and remade, written and re-written; it is an organic, creative process.

All these people, the movers and shakers in England and Scotland, Bert Lloyd, Ewan McColl, Norman Buchan, Morris Blythman, Hamish Henderson, they were not antiquarians – they all were, after all, songwriters.

Alison: Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger had a missionary zeal in all they did, and Peggy, when speaking of Ewan's songs very recently at the Charles Parker Day 2015, was emphatic as to their always having a political thrust. To both of us Ewan and Peggy were very positive and supportive. They encouraged the singing of old songs but, importantly, also added new songs to the tradition.

Geordie: A very interesting ballad is 'The Twa Corbies', first published by Walter Scott in the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. It was known as a poem, until Morris Blythman married it to a Breton tune. The ballad in print was a bird in the cage – it had to be released from its cage to let it sing and fly. Another example how songs entered the revival.

The Twa Corbies

As I was walking all alane,
I heard twa corbies makin a mane;
The tane unto the ither say,
'Whar sall we gang and dine the-day?'

'In ahint yon auld fail dyke,
I wot there lies a new slain knight;
And nane do ken that he lies there,
But his hawk, his hound an his lady fair.'

'His hound is tae the huntin gane,
His hawk tae fetch the wild-fowl hame,
His lady's tain anither mate,
So we may mak oor dinner swate.'

'Ye'll sit on his white hause-bane,
And I'll pike oot his bonny blue een;
Wi ae lock o his gowden hair
We'll theek oor nest whan it grows bare.'

'Mony a one for him makes mane,
But nane sall ken whar he is gane;
Oer his white banes, whan they are bare,
The wind sall blaw for evermair.'[12]

[12] Norman Buchan, *101 Scottish Songs*.

Alison: Francis Collinson, a member of the newly formed School of Scottish Studies, first met and recorded Willie Scott in 1951. He had thought 'the flood of song of Walter Scott's day had dwindled to a trickle' until he was tipped off about a singing Liddesdale shepherd. This was the start of several recording sessions when on one occasion, moving to Bonchester Bridge where there was electricity for the recording machine, his brothers Jock and Tom and son Sandy joined Will. You can hear on this early recording how the men come in out of the pouring rain, shaking it off their coats before sitting down and launching into 'The Kielder Hunt'.

Hark hark I hear Lang Will's clear voice sound through the Kielder Glen,
Where the raven flaps her glossy wing and the fell fox has his den,
There the shepherds they are gathering up wi' monie a guid yauld grew,
An' wiry terrier game an' keen an' fox-hound fleet and true.

Chorus:
Hark away! Hark away!
O'er the bonnie hills o' Kielder, hark away.

A wonderful rendition from this family of big men with hearty voices finishing off with Willie hollering 'Whup, Whup, Whup!'

From then on Willie, who had been a shepherd in Liddesdale, Yarrow, Ettrick and in the Lothians, moved up to the Cleishhills above Keltie in Fife after the death of his wife. One day a young joiner lad, Sandy Scott, was doing a job in the house of John Watt, all the time whistling tunes and singing a particular song. John Watt asked him, 'What's that song?' 'Oh, that's one o' ma faither's.' 'Who's your faither?' 'Oh. He just bides near here.' Word got to Hamish, and he wrote to Willie that there was a seat for him in the front row of the newly opened Dunfermline Howff Folk Club. But Willie was not at all sure about going, because he thought it would be, as he said, 'full of hippies'. But Hamish's invitation did the trick.

Now, Liddesdale is a very remote area. And Willie Scott had all the local memory. He was a very important figure, as he was a link with the very old world. His mother was born in the mid-nineteenth century, and James Hogg, whom Willie identified

with – the Ettrick Shepherd – and Walter Scott and Robert Burns would have been within people's living memory. Willie was aware of this literary tradition. Although he sang only one Burns song. But then, Burns was rarely heard in the early folk revival – the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had 'elevated' him to the salon, and it was only in the course of the folk revival that he was rediscovered as a fellow folk singer and songwriter. The older traditional singers seemed not sing much Burns.

It was a great privilege for me to have known him closely in the final ten years of his life. From the days of 1963, singing in the Dunfermline Howff, his 'career' had taken off, both in Scotland and in England. He would be repeatedly invited down to sing at the Whitby Folk Festival. He sang in Arnold Wesker's Centre 42, he sang at the Singer's Club in London, and in many English folk clubs. He was taken out to America by Jean Redpath; he went to Australia, where his son Sandy was working and living. If he was asked – he would go. If people could get him there, he would go. He acquired a huge following, but remained a very down-to-earth person.

He would stay with me *en route* to or from Whitby, and eventually I had the privilege of putting together his book with him. On one visit, he was sitting there writing out the words of a song with a pencil, licking it every now and then. 'Ah, I should have a book.' He muttered. And I asked him did he really mean it. 'If you really want to do it, I'll be your scribe,' I said, not realising what I let myself in for, of course.[13]

Hamish Henderson and Francis Collinson had recorded his work songs – the songs of the shepherd. I was particularly interested in his early childhood memories, the songs he learned in the family. He had not wanted to become a shepherd. He wanted to be a gamekeeper, so at the age of 11-12 he would go to a shooting club, where after the practice, they would 'aye hae a sang'. That was where he first sang outside the family.

He was particularly known for singing 'The Shepherd's Song', but since his death and from my recording of it, 'Time Wears Awa', a song by the nineteenth-century Fermanagh born Thomas Elliot, who was of Border descent, has been taken up by many, many singers.

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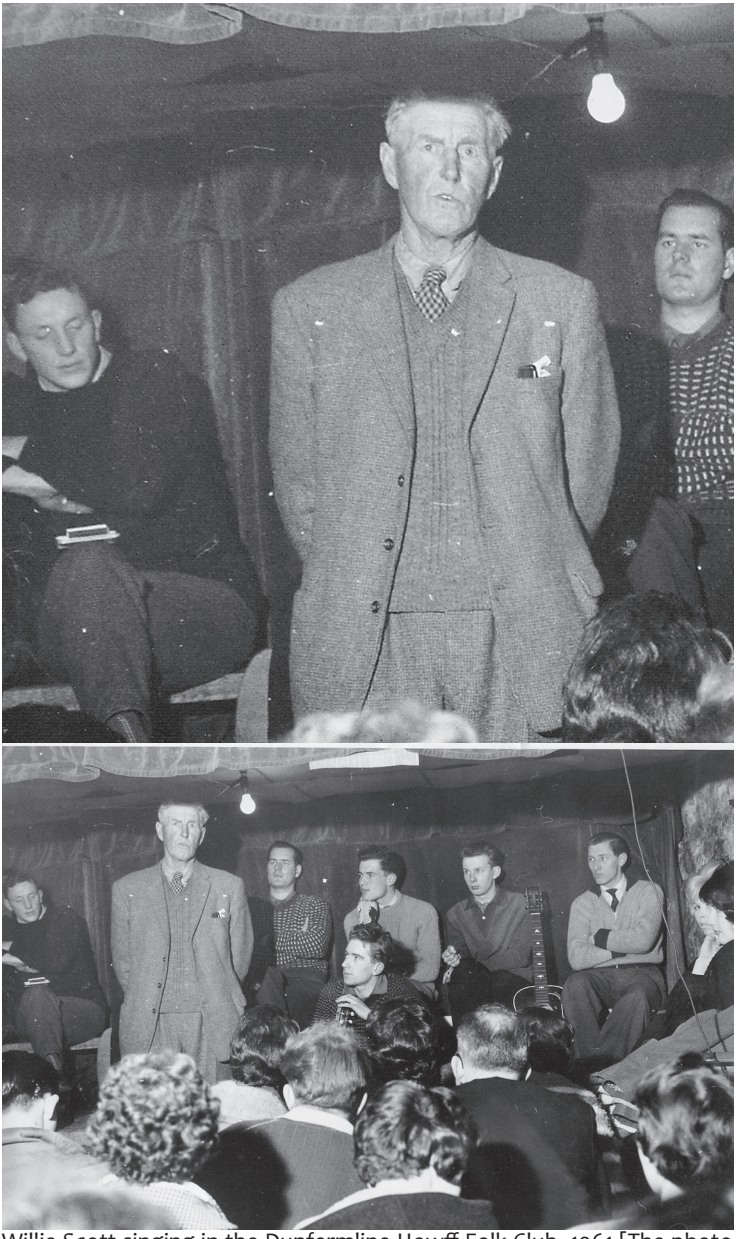
[13] Willie Scott, *Herd Laddie o the Glen: Songs of a Border Shepherd: Willie Scott, Liddesdale Shepherd and Singer*, compiled by Alison McMorland [1988], new and expanded ed., with an introduction by Hamish Henderson, Newtown St Boswells: Scottish Borders Council, 2006.



Willie Scott singing in the Dunfermline Howff Folk Club, 1961 [The photo appeared in the book *Willie Scott, Herd Laddie o the Glen: Songs of a Border Shepherd* and is here reproduced with the kind permission of Alison McMorland – Willie had it in his box of photos for the book.]

Time Wears Awa

Oh but the oors rin fast awa
Like the Kelvin tae the Clyde,
Sin' on its bonnie gowan banks
I wooed thee for my bride

My ain dear love sae sweet and young
Sae artless and sae fair,
Then love was a' the grief we kent
And you my only care

Chorus:
Time wears awa, time wears awa,
And winna let us be,
It stole the wild rose frae my cheek
And the blyth blink frae your ee

When woods were green and flooers fair
While you were a' my ain,
I little reckoned what years would bring
O poortith, toil and pain

Some waefu oors hae flapped their wings
Dark shadows ower oor lot,
Sin like twa cushats o the glen
We strayed in this dear spot

The voices o these happy days
Steal on oor dreams by night,
And cherished mem'ries rise and glow
Wi their depairted light

But still the birds and burnies sing
Their 'wildered melodies,
As in the gowden dawn o life
When we were young and free[14]

That was a song he rarely sang in public, but the family asked me to sing it at his funeral. That was one of his mother's sangs. When

[14] Alison McMorland and Geordie McIntyre, *White Wings*, Edinburgh: Greentrax, CDTRAX 306, 2007.

he was very ill and had only about a year to live, and I asked him what needed to be in the book and what could perhaps be left out, he said his mother's sangs needed to be there. It is a very personal song, but it is also collective, universal. And that is why it has been taken up by so many singers. It simply resonates.

Geordie: As Alison says, his mother was a huge influence on Willie Scott. And so was James Hogg's mother for him, and Walter Scott's, and Burns's and Hamish's – so that gives you a glimpse of women as the most important tradition bearers.

Alison: Mothers have always been the emotional heart of the home. And they would sing while they saw to their work, they would sing lullabies for their babies and play and sing with the bairns. And you might add grannies and nannies into the mix

Geordie: Another very interesting character was Willie Mathieson whom Hamish called a 'ploughman folklorist'. There are over 600 items of his recorded in the School of Scottish Studies. One of his songs was 'My Last Farewell to Stirling', a transportation ballad. Caught poaching the Laird's hare and pheasant, twenty years in Tasmania beckon:

My Last Farewell to Stirling

Nae lark in transport mounts the sky
Or leaves wi early plaintive cry
But I will bid a last goodbye
My last fareweel tae Stirling, oh

Chorus:
Though far awa, my heart's wi you
Our youthful oors upon wings they flew
But I will bid a last adieu
A last fareweel tae Stirling, oh

Nae mair I'll meet ye in the dark
Or gang wi you tae the King's Park
Or raise the hare from oot their flap
When I gang far fae Stirling, oh

Nae mair I'll wander through the glen
Disturb the roost o the pheasant hen

Or chase the rabbits tae their den
When I gang far fae Stirling, oh

There's one request before I go
And this is to my comrades all
My dog and gun I leave tae you
When I gang far fae Stirling oh

So fare thee weel, my Jeannie dear
For you I'll shed a bitter tear
I'll hope you'll find another dear
When I go far fae Stirling, oh

So fare thee well, for I am bound
For twenty years to Van Dieman's Land
But think of me and what I've done
When I gang far fae Stirling, oh.[15]

We have already mentioned the American influence on the Scottish revival. 'King Orfeo' was collected by Patrick Shuldham Shaw, the Englishman who was the founder-editor of the Greig Duncan collection. The English influence on the Scottish tradition has been absolutely positive. Shuldham Shaw is a prime example of that. We have re-energised and revitalised and reinvigorated our own patterns of expression through that cross-border interaction.

Way back in 1967 I was introduced to Duncan Williamson. I recorded him in Argyll where he came from. It was all facilitated by the wonderful Helen Fullerton who had 'discovered' the Williamson family while she was working as cook in the Shira dam hydro scheme and recorded them extensively. Duncan was one of our finest sources. Gems like 'Tam Lin' were big finds. We loved those great narrative songs – 'muckle' ballads like 'Sir Patrick Spens', 'Hind Horn' or 'Tam Lin', wonderful narrative songs with great tunes!

The original tune for 'The Great Selkie of Sule Skerrie' was nearly lost, but was noted down in 1938 by Dr. Otto Anderson, who heard it sung by John Sinclair on the island of Flotta, Orkney. The tune was then matched to a text found in the *Shetland Times.* Sule Skerry is a small uninhabited rocky island in the west of Orkney. A seal from there has a liaison with a maiden in Norway. She has a son by him, but he mysteriously disappears. After seven years he returns to claim his son, and they both return to the sea.

[15] *Ibid.*

The woman then marries a hunter who unknowingly kills two seals, his wife's former lover and her child.

The Great Silkie of Sule Skerry

In Norway land there liv'd a maid, 'hush ba loo lil-lie' this
maid began,
'I know not where my bairn's father is, whether land or
sea he travels in.'

It happened on a certain day, when this fair lady
fell fast asleep,
That in there came a grey Silkie and set him down
at her bed's feet.

'Awak', awak', my pretty fair maid, for oh how soundly
thou dost sleep
I'll tell thee where thy bairn's father is, he's a-sitting close
at thy bed's feet.'

'I am a man upon the land; I am a Silkie in the sea,
And when I'm far from ev'ry strand, my dwelling is
in Sule Skerry.

'Alas, alas, this woeful fate, that weary fate that's been
laid on me,
That a man should come from the Wast o' Hoy and that he
should have a bairn with me.'

'O thou wilt nurse my little wee son for seven long years
upon thy knee,
And at the end of seven long years I'll come back and pay
thy nursing fee.'

'I'll put a gold chain around his neck, and a gay good gold
chain it will be,
That if e'er he comes to the Norway lands thou may have
a gay good guess on he.'

'And thou wilt get a gunner good, and a gay good gunner
it will be,

And he shall gae out on a May morning and shoot thy son
and the grey Silkie.'

Oh she has got a gunner good, and a guy good gunner
it was he,
And he gae'd out on a May morning and he shot the son
and the grey Silkie.

'Alas, alas, this woeful fate, this weary fate that's been
laid on me!'
And once or twice she sobb'd and sigh'd, and her tender
heart did break in three.[16]

Alison: We have a wonderful song and ballad tradition in Scotland. And the supernatural songs are a significant part of that tradition. In the 1970s, Pat Shuldham Shaw was funded by the English Folksong and Dance Society to come up to the School of Scottish Studies to work on the Greig-Duncan collection, and he was very helpful, providing me with photocopies of songs. The whole interplay between the singers, the collectors and the tradition bearers constitutes a wonderful milieu of people that make up our folk world.

The 1970s also saw a re-evaluation, a re-discovery of regional voices and dialects, not just here, but across Europe, which helped in the acknowledgement of the diversity and richness of our cultural heritage. But it cannot be said often enough that our traditions need to be supported. Without recognition for the people involved, and the songs, these remain submerged in the underground. But they need to be known and recognised. Hamish wrote in a letter to the *Scotsman* in 1953: 'It would be a great irony if your readers assumed that I did not want my recordings of Scots folksongs to be broadcast. On the contrary, I believe that the broadcasting of them would be an event of great cultural significance in Scotland.'[17]

So we have American, English and Scandinavian influences. Add to that the huge Irish input, from the 1950s ballad boom,

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[16] Alison McMorland and Geordie McIntyre with Kirsty Potts, *Rowan in the Rock: Songs of Love, Land and Nature*, The Tradition Bearers (LTCD302201, 2001).

[17] Hamish Henderson, 'Letter to the *Scotsman*', in *The Armstrong Nose: Selected Letters of Hamish Henderson*, edited by Alec Finlay, Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996, pp.62-63.

featuring the Clancys and, a little later, the Dubliners, and the Travellers and seasonal workers crossing frequently between Ireland and Scotland, we realise how interwoven the tapestry of the folk revival is. Davy Stewart's wife Molly was Irish. Lucy Stewart had a lot of Irish songs in her repertoire. Delia Murphy's broadcast recordings were immensely popular!

New songs find their way into the tradition when songwriters are in tune with the tradition. Sometimes that can be demonstrated when bits and pieces, wee phrases of other songs are incorporated into a new song. Adam McNaughtan shows that brilliantly in the case of Hamish's 'The Freedom Come-All-Ye'.[18] It's a doffing of your cap, a sign of real recognition and respect. Now, we are making no claims for Geordie's 'From Gulabeinn' to be on par with Hamish's song, but here, too, echoes and allusions can be found in every verse. The memory of sound is everywhere.

Geordie: The song relates to the scattering of Hamish's ashes on Ben Gulabeinn, the Curlew Hill, in the shadow of which he had grown up, and to which he had wished to return after death. In the first verse

> From Gulabeinn's bell-heathered slopes
> His dust was scattered to the sky
> Particles of song unite
> With trilling curlew cry.

The 'particles of song' are clearly meant to be Hamish's songs but, in a wider sense, also the songs of the tradition, and the way songs carry echoes from older songs, or even phrases and expressions from older songs. It celebrates song, the idea of putting something out into the ether. Songs are so important, they are the expression of the people's muse. When Ailie Munro was looking for a title for the second edition of her book, I suggested 'The Democratic Muse'.

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[18] Adam McNaughtan in *Chapman*, 42 (1985). He describes the language as 'a tight-packed literary Scots with folksong phrases embedded in it: "heelster-gowdie" from "McGinty's Meal-and Ale"; the rottans that McFarlane flegged frae the toon; the most appropriate "Afore I wad work I wad rather sport and play"; the "crouse crawin" from "Willie MacIntosh"; the repeated "Nae mair" recalling the "No more" of Jeannie Robertson's "MacCrimmon's Lament"; the "pentit room" of "King Fareweel".'

Alison: Folk is about people – it is not just a genre term. It is all about what people put into songs, how they breathe life into them. People are at the heart of the tradition.

Geordie: Appropriately, the last two verses of 'From Gulabeinn' are directly related to the 'Underground of Song': they reflect on the radical roots, the progressive pedigree, if you like, of the revival:

> Rabbie Burns and Thomas Paine
> Gramsci, Lorca, John Maclean
> Listen to the clarion call
> Let peace and freedom reign.
>
> All the sacrifices made
> Do not let them be betrayed
> Raise your voices, stand as one
> Is the song – from Gulabeinn.[19]

Raising their voices, the singers of the on-going Scottish folk revival have come a long way in making traditional songs less 'underground' – having them heard in public spaces, in tune with a living tradition. But that other aspect of 'underground', the anti-establishment, subaltern tradition, the tradition of Robert Burns, James Hogg, Hugh MacDiarmid, Mary Brooksbank, Helen Fullerton, Matt McGinn, of course, Hamish Henderson, and right up to Michael Marra, Dick Gaughan, Karine Polwart, Alasdair Roberts and Penny Stone, needs to remain a focus of folk singers, as an indispensable counterweight to the daily feed of bland, manufactured commercial pop.

[19] The full song lyrics of 'From Gulabeinn' can be found in Eberhard Bort (ed.), *Borne on the Carrying Stream: The Legacy of Hamish Henderson*, Ochtertyre: Grace Note Publications, 2010, pp.23-24. It is recorded on Alison McMorland and Geordie McIntyre, *Where Ravens Reel*, Rowan Records CD, 2010.

Ewan McVicar (photo: Allan McMillan)

Alison McMorland and Geordie McIntyre at the Scottish Storytelling Centre, TradFest 2014 (photo: Allan McMillan)

RESURGIMENTO!
An Interview with Hamish Henderson

Geordie McIntyre

Geordie McIntyre: The thing which most interests me in this context, Hamish, is the extent to which the revival was consciously architected in the beginnings. Can you tell us if there was in fact any such conscious motivation?[1]

Hamish Henderson: I felt in Italy particularly, with the Highland Division originally and with other units, that local cultures that we were encountering seemed to add, for certain people, a tremendous enjoyment to the war. I mean the war needed some enjoyment added to it and that was part of it. For example in Sicily it was great to see, at the very start of the Sicilian Campaign, the Jocks getting taken over by the local Sicilian families. In the evening they would put chairs outside the house: there would be the Jock, sitting in the middle with the old granny and the family sitting round and there you would hear the odd song being raised. And this particular mixing of cultures really did seem to me at the time to be a thing with a future to it. I liked the idea of Scotland contributing something to Sicily, or elsewhere for that matter. People generally seemed to enjoy and like this. I go back to that because this is the point from which I so to speak begin – I mean begin in that I was doing something to steer it together in a concrete way.

GM: In other words you saw this intermingling of cultures in a concrete situation and you presumably then were intellectually aware of the changing communication pattern and the likelihood of an increasing trend in this direction, for good or ill, in the future and you wanted in some sense to direct this trend.

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[1] From: 'Folk Song and the Folk Tradition' Festival Issue of the *New Edinburgh Review* (August 1973), here reproduced with the kind permission of Geordie McIntyre.

HH: Well, that's rationalising it with extremely powerful constricting rays, as you might say. A great deal of this was just joy and fun, Geordie. I mean I am a writer, I have written songs and one of the things I personally liked was the coming together of these various cultures. I had a prejudice from early times that Scotsmen could do this better than their 'auld enemies': that they could make contact with the other people. On a political basis I enjoyed it because I have always felt that the more human beings know about each other the better, and we were fighting a war against Fascism at the time and the more communication that existed between the troops – the more they understood each other – the more they were able to come together the more there was a practical dynamic to the situation.

GM: You see this on a broadly humanistic level, then?

HH: Yes, quite. As far as I was concerned it goes back to the Spanish Civil War as well, when I was a schoolboy and I came in contact in 1937 with people who had been in Spain and also people who were going to Spain. As far as I was concerned the pattern is a kind of conscious anti-fascist pattern, to put it bluntly.

GM: What intrigues me about the general points you've raised there Hamish, is the fact that, obviously, it is a complex situation we're dealing with and there are a number of motives. We're not dealing with any single-cause motives in any field of human behaviour. But nevertheless, going on just a little bit from the war period – was there any broad consensus between yourself and others as to a conscious creation of a revival in Scotland or Britain?

HH: I don't think that one could claim that it was very conscious, Geordie, except that I wanted and always have wanted to spread around the best of the oral culture that I could. In the army, for example, I was singing Italian songs and things like that and immediately after World war Two I did the same thing in Scotland. But long before that I was interested in the nature of oral culture as opposed to what often seemed to be the kind of 'fossilisation' of print. I liked the free-flowing oral thing. I remember that the idea of writing songs, that is poems with tunes, occurred to me as a definite weapon. I don't think that's expressing it too strongly. I was very conscious of the fact that many of the things that I liked were music – were song in fact.

GM: From what you've said already, Hamish, you did see yourself as part of an ongoing tradition, a continuing movement.

HH: I felt myself as part of an ongoing movement certainly. Nobody on earth felt more Scottish than I did at Cambridge. And I found that the Socialist students at Cambridge were delighted with the folk-song when I wet up there in 1938. The phrase 'Scots Ballads' would link with them quite clearly and would conjure up the idea of a popular culture that was enjoyed by a wide section of people. They had the mythological view of this being some sort of classless society of the past.

GM: There is a definite romantic component, then?

HH: Well there always is a romantic component, let's face it. The idea of a classless society is in itself a romantic idea; but nevertheless it might be a rewarding and even a possible idea. It is an idea which might be a figment – nevertheless it's a perfectly tenable ground on which to proceed.

GM: There was quite a lot of borrowing from America on Clydeside in the '20s and '30s. American tunes and Wobbly[2] songs were sung at climbing clubs, cycling clubs and such. It seems that in your work of the period you were recognising this global culture and drawing on any source.

HH: As far as the hobo songs were concerned they were floating around in the '30s. In the mid-30s Alastair Cook (the same as the 'Letter from America' Alastair Cook) dipped into the John A Lomax collection in the Library of Congress and produced a series of programmes called 'I Hear America Singing'. In this series he used hobo and wobbly songs, chain-gang songs; in fact the Lomax collection of the time. These appeared on the radio to the intense interest of everybody. I notice that Ewan MacColl refers to them in a recent issue of 'Folk'. These programmes were of tremendous importance. The international thing. Well, take France for example. France has never really needed a folk song revival, they have always had clubs and cafes for singing. In the summer of '38 I was earning a bit of money by singing in the Y.M.C.A. in Paris and they thoroughly enjoyed Scots ballads. But certainly what we were doing could be seen, in retrospect particularly, as relating to something of social significance. I don't think anyone could have forecast the strength and exuberance of

[2] wobblies = Industrial Workers of the World, formed in 1905 in Chicago.

the revival as it really developed. I didn't and I was in it from quite an early stage.

GM: You could not, obviously, forecast the revival, but yet a lot of the songs created at this time have a 'missionary' element – a wish to communicate wider ideas in song together with an awareness of past material.

HH: Well, the best example of what you call the 'missionary' element is the preface to the People's Festival Ceilidh of 1952. I can do no better than to quote what I wrote then: 'Although Scotland's heritage of folk-song is justly famed for its richness and variety, very few Scots ever have a chance of hearing the old songs given in the authentic traditional manner. This is a great pity, because on the lips of concert-hall performers most folk-songs completely lose their character – what was robust becomes insipid, and what was simple becomes artful in the worst sense.' Or again: 'The emphasis this year will be on young singers who are carrying on the splendid tradition in its integrity.' And how's this for missionary: 'We are convinced that it is possible to restore Scottish folk-song to the ordinary people in Scotland, not merely as a bobby-soxer vogue, but deeply and integrally.'

GM: Could you give us some concrete examples of these young singers you mention there?

HH: We had quite a few young traditional singers: several people from Glasgow, from Maurice's clanjamfray. They came and sang, mostly mimicking the older singers. Young people from the East had a more obvious continuity and there was great enthusiasm for what was happening. Of course, then, there was skiffle too and for a while the kids were sort of battering the songs into the ground – including singers who eventually turned into really good singers.

GM: These singers remained fundamentally revivalist singers but they had clearly transcended the role of mimic to a stage of understanding and interpretation. Can we take it that implicit in the idea of understanding there is an awareness of the people who created these songs, the individuals, the groups and the particular social background they came from? In other words, the mimicry was transcended only when the singers developed an understanding of the socio-economic structure which created these songs?

HH: I think that's largely true. The abandoning of mimicry to a

large extent means the achieving of understanding and empathy. This obviously means that if the young singers concerned have the opportunity of making contact with the actual environment of people like Jeannie Robertson, then their understanding of and feeling for the songs will be increased tenfold.

GM: This understanding should embrace the fact that someone like Jeannie is obviously a woman of the twentieth century. She has included in her own repertory material songs from other cultures – one thinks of the American songs which were commented on in a recent issue of *Scottish Studies*.

HH: This brings us, of course, to the whole question of the name 'revival' – of what is happening. When I was a kid, as I've pointed out, the hobo songs appeared on our horizon. To a very large extent the tradition in Scotland was luckier than in some other places because the sort of mixing and turbulence that existed in the revival in Scotland only mirrored what happened naturally in the tradition at any time. If you look at the eighteenth century collections you can see quite clearly that to call the Scottish folk-song tradition Scots is often a misnomer. Songs came flooding in from the South and from Ireland and if you go back far enough with the big classic ballads you've got a concatenation of motifs and tunes and texts that cover Europe. So that the international thing that I was referring to earlier on and the consequent stepping up of this owing to the mass media, the L.P., television and all the rest of it – this isn't in a sense two things at all: it's one long stream.

GM: Have you any hopes that the revival should be countercultural? In a sense, of course, it opposes the gimcrack, the artificial, and in that sense it's a radical expression.

HH: Well, that's stated quite explicitly in that Preface, isn't it?

GM: There has been some confusion among people that a folk-song scholar like yourself is solely concerned with antiquarianism. Such people are accused of being concerned with the past for its own sake. Of course, as someone who has been actively involved in the revival, you could not be further removed from antiquarianism.

HH: Antiquarianism is just a word that can be thrown like a brickbat. Quite a lot of people may genuinely feel that some scholarly work does not have as much contact as it might have with the experience of ordinary people. But this is

surely a very short-sighted and philistine view, as we agree. But it is easy to understand how some people could have it. Naturally, the comments on the revival and upon the whole folk-song scene mirror people's predilections – their own advantage too, if you like. It's easy enough for them to accuse scholars of antiquarianism if they have no scholarly advantage. I have got a scholarly advantage and I am also tremendously interested in the songs and ballads and the stories too of course. These stories are fascinating and if they give an added richness to your feeling for the songs then certainly a ballad singer could hardly fail to profit from a study of the stories.

GM: One of the things that interests me, Hamish, is that given the undeniable presence of the revival one of the most obvious effects has been the high level of commercialism that now exists. Performers are in a sense gearing their music to a market. I personally am not pessimistic about this since I think there are now a great many outlets for both songs and poems where few were open formerly, but I'd like your general comments on this. Also, have all these younger singers, with all the pressures now on them, fulfilled their earlier promise? Have they fulfilled your expectations in their development as communicators?

HH: Well, you've got to face the reality of the media; how people are living and working and entertaining themselves at the present time. One can't wish that out of cognisance and because of that it's inevitable that quite a number of the good young singers will in fact be communicators, entertainers, on that level. Again I've never been pessimistic on this count, far from it, although on a purely personal level one can regret certain things. People that one might have thought would have been more fertile, more creative, turn out to be content to churn out the same old stuff time and time again. They can sing to an old folk's home and get the occasional T.V. spot and show not the least spark of creativity – no names, no pack drill! But it seems to me that to counterbalance folk whom you can truthfully say have entered a kind of slough of despond – the filthy lucrative slough of despond – for them you have a still larger number of people who are creative. About the radio I remember arguing years ago. People were saying, you know, that 'old

Maggie Henderson was singing before she bought that old gramophone and now they're only putting on 'Ramona' and the like.' Well, this seemed to me from the start a lot of codswollop. It just wasn't true. People were still singing their own songs, the old songs. To a large extent now T.V. is a problem, but by and large the situation is much the same. Then again, there's always about folk-song something of the rebel, of the underground, something reacting against something else and to that extent some of the most fruitful of the younger singers have had periods in which they are reacting against the commercialisation of the song. To that extent folk-song is only operating along the old traditional rebel lines.

GM: You have said that the People's Festivals were extremely successful. Why then did they cease? Was it felt that there was no longer a need for them?

HH: On the contrary; they became more and more necessary. But after the '52 Festival the Edinburgh Labour Festival Committee was banned by the Labour Party (which was a considerable backer). As it was a prescribed organisation we quickly found that there was a limit to what anyone could do without subsidy. It's amusing to note that a sub-committee of the Labour Party has recently recommended tat the ban be lifted – after 20 years. In many ways that programme of the '52 People's Festival is my finest work of art.

GM: These Festivals were very formative for people who were to become active in the revival, people like Morris Blytheman and Norman Buchan.

HH: Oh, Norman Buchan was bowled over by the first one in 1951 – and so was Janey. They didn't know much about my work at that time and I think it came very new, to Norman particularly.

GM: Are there any particular areas of the revival which you are less optimistic about? Any developments which you deprecate?

HH: I would deprecate anything that artistically falls below par. I deprecate people who are turning out shoddy instead of the genuine article.

GM: The academic criterion of what is a folk-song is, then, irrelevant?

HH: Artistic criteria only. I'm talking in terms of actual aesthetic value – it seems to me that this is the only criterion of

genuine reality.

GM: The classic definition of a folk-song irrelevant?

HH: It is. There is no classic definition of a folk-song.

GM: Well – there are some one or two generally accepted definitions.

HH: Exactly – there are approximations to definitions of a folk-song. But there is hardly a definition which, in the long run, will not yield to manipulation. In this area of the oral shared culture, the criterion is an artistic one: is it pleasing, does it have its own artistic integrity. If not, then we can truthfully deprecate it. Basically the folk culture is oral, not printed.

GM: Your own songs have been printed. I presume that the ideal would be that the singer learns the song, then throws away the paper and sings it?

HH: The essence of the whole revival is oral. I've often been criticised for not printing more, but this is an idea that I have – that it should not primarily be printed. This is not Fifth Monarchy Man nonsense any more than the revival was Fifth Monarchy Man nonsense. The revival exists in reality. It is not something that exists in cloudcuckooland. It was something that could take shape, that could happen. The folk-song revival is the most powerful, enjoyable shared happening of European culture to date. It affects by far the widest number of people. The British movement is being enjoyed all over Europe today. In that it corresponds to the Romantic of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when all sorts of boundaries were broken down by what was then a genuine rediscovery of folk-song too. To that extent the revival today repeats as wide pleasure what was then antiquarian enjoyment.

GM: We have undoubtedly seen enormous political and social changes in the period of the present revival and these changes have been reflected in the songs of the revival. So do you think that, together with the romantic element, there is a higher level of social awareness in this particular movement?

HH: Oh, undoubtedly. If I underplayed this at the beginning, it's because it is all too easy, in retrospect, to see the thing as too organised. It's necessary to start where all the ladders start. But one can't deny that most of the people involved were, to a greater or lesser degree, Marxists. To a certain

extent the revival is an aspect of anti-fascism, a rejection of what was already being planned for Europe – a kind of 'high heid yin's paradise' – the revival is 'a man's a man for a' that' and no wonder therefore that Scotland played a part in it. There is this powerful democratic tradition. You could say that Burns was the Ewan McColl of the eighteenth century. But seriously, there was much in Burns of the conscious revivalist: nearly the last decade of his life was devoted to song. That, without doubt, is the greatest compliment ever paid to Scottish folk-song.

GM: The influence of the revival is obvious in contemporary songs. Is this another indication of the success of the revival?

HH: Absolutely. The revival will sink or swim by its capability to throw up new and constantly fresh thinkers and writers who will be open and free to take and adapt anything. The health of the whole set-up depends on the maximum freedom of movement.