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(Vol 1)

THE KING O THE BLACK ART:

A Study of the Tales of a Group
of Perthshire travellers
in their social context

Vol I

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I declare that this thesis and story collection are my own work, written and transcribed by me and based on my own researches, except where help has been acknowledged.

...*Sheila M. Douglas*.....

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FOREWORD ON THE RECORDINGS

The tape recordings were made in the house of Belle and Alec Stewart, "Lyndhurst", 2 Yeaman Street, Old Rattray, Blairgowrie, in John Stewart's house in Gowans Terrace, Perth, then in Victoria Road, Kirriemuir, before he moved to his present address in Blairgowrie, in my house in Scone and in Willie MacPhee's trailer at Springbank, Redgorton, from April 1978 until August 1984. The 1974 tape was not included in the tape collection because of its poor quality and because it was made some time before my project began. I have made use of the transcript because it contained interesting material.

These recordings were nearly all made in what might be called ceilidh situations, on occasions when we were visiting our friends or they were visiting us, sometimes with other friends present. As well as singing and story telling involving everyone, there would be exchanging of news, eating and drinking in an informal way. I always tried to avoid the idea of a recording "session," so the fact that I could afford only modest recording equipment that sat unobtrusively wherever it was needed, was an advantage from that point of view, even if I sometimes longed for a Uher.

My policy in recording was to give my informants absolute freedom to do whatever they wanted, after asking a preliminary question or two to get them started. I very rarely asked them for a specific story but left the choice to them. I kept my attention on whoever was being



Sheila Macgregor and Belle Stewart



Bella and Willie MacPhee

recorded so that they would talk to me rather than to the microphone. This was possible because my husband Andrew usually helped by setting up and operating the recorder. I tried not to make my informants feel pressured into giving any particular answer or adopt any particular point of view, so that they would feel at liberty to express themselves as they wished. I also did the minimum of talking myself.

My reactions to their stories and their family history were quiet appreciation and continuing interest, rather than over-dramatic enthusiasm, such as I have seen expressed by some other collectors, which can have unfortunate results, usually some kind of distortion of the material.

The making of the videotapes was accomplished on one action-packed Wednesday at Easter 1982. I discovered on the day, having set up the recording session with Stirling University Audio-Visual Department, that Willie MacPhee had been in Stirling Royal Infirmary since the day before, following a heart attack. There was still the possibility of recording Belle, however. I telephoned the hospital to find out how Willie was and was told he had gone home. Robin Hawthorne the technician was quite prepared to make the two videotapes in one day, so we drove out to Redgorton to see Willie. His iron constitution seemed to have survived the heart attack although he felt unable to sing or play more than a short burst on his pipes. I recalled another occasion on which Willie turned up to ceilidh in Perth with a badly gashed head and broken ribs after a car accident. The hospital which

had failed to hold him that time was at Fort William. So he had on that occasion driven over a hundred miles and even managed to play his pipes at the ceillidh, despite suffering untold agony while doing so. While we made the videotape in the trailer, Willie's wife Bella was out at the nearby stream with an old-fashioned washing board, a bar of yellow soap and the strength of her elbow, washing clothes and wringing them on an old Acme wringer, fastened to a fence. I had often wondered how Bella got her clothes so spotlessly clean! I wished we could have videotaped her too, but the scope of our activity and our time were both limited.

When we reached Blairgowrie, Belle was sitting in her cheerful cottage livingroom waiting for us, in company with her daughter Sheila and her grand-daughter Michelle. Belle is no stranger to the camera and has a natural sense of how to perform naturally in front of it. She addressed most of her life story to the man behind the camera, which means that when the video is shown, she is talking directly to the audience. Belle is always aware of the larger audience, as I noticed when making the sound recordings.

As regards my attitude to my informants, I very much agree with the words of Samuel Bayard, endorsed by Hamish Henderson and Kenneth Goldstein, that it is very important to have "a deep and loving regard" for the people who are allowing us to tape their valuable material, and this is "the very thing that makes us clear-headed at evaluating." Twenty years of loving friendship and shared experience have

been made possible by living in close proximity to my story tellers and being involved in their day-to-day life as well as their performing activities, and sharing joys and sorrows. Through all this, I think I have gained a clearer perspective on their lives, very necessary for this project, and a great advantage over collectors who have been only occasional visitors.

As regards methodology, I had no training before I began my project, but have learned an enormous amount from my two supervisors, Dr. David Buchan and Dr. Emily B. Lyle. Dr. Buchan, for example, taught me early on that I should not attempt to manipulate my informants or their material, to fit in with pre-conceived theories, but record "what was there" and then draw conclusions from it. This I have always tried to do. Dr. Lyle helped me to organise my material and deal with it in a scholarly way. I have made many mistakes, from which I have also learned much. For example, I have realised the importance of taking constant notes, when building up the family history, and of listening to tapes immediately after they have been made, so that I can fill in blanks right away. On some occasions I did not take enough notes, nor listen to tapes soon enough to spot points on which more information was needed. I also regretted not having from the start kept a list of dates. This involved me in a lot of extra work which could have been avoided.

There are advantages in knowing informants well and living in the same area and also being, like them, a native of Scotland. It means

that they can communicate with me far more readily and with less chance of being misunderstood. I speak the same Scots language and know the dialect they speak. They can refer to places and people known to both of us, without having to explain. Belle usually explained things, even when it was not necessary for me personally, because she was always aware of the "larger audience" who might eventually listen to the tapes. Seeing the material in a context rather than a vacuum, I can evaluate the material much more easily. I am also aware of widely varying attitudes and points of view held by people in different parts of Scotland to the travellers and to Scottish tradition. Although it is sometimes a disadvantage to be too close to informants, when a degree of objectivity is called for, in this kind of project the "participant observer" as Kenneth Goldstein describes a role that has been both his and mine,* can often make the most valuable contribution to the understanding and appreciation of information and tale material.

Belle and Alec Stewart had years of experience of recording for collectors, long before I began my project and it might be supposed that this gave them a better awareness of what was wanted and how to present it. But when I came to record John Stewart, who had never been recorded to the same extent, he showed the same amount of expertise in handling what he chose to give me and how he expressed it. This suggests that the ability to do this is at least partly innate and not a skill learned totally from collectors. This is hardly surprising, as my informants have been presenting themselves to the public verbally for generations in the process of earning their living.

* Kenneth Goldstein, A Guide for Fieldworkers in Folklore, Folklore Association, 1964.

At first, I thought my informants would be more at ease in their own homes when recording material, but some of the recordings were made in my house and there does not seem to be any significant difference. Of course my informants had visited me often, some of them for nearly twenty years, so naturally they felt themselves to be in familiar surroundings, among friends.

How far the presence of the tape recorder influenced the way in which informants reacted can be gauged from a consideration of one or two examples. The first tape, which is of Belle and Alec trying to sort out their complicated family tree, begins with both of them addressing the tape recorder in quite a formal way. But as they wrestle with the task of trying to recall the names and identities of aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, they increasingly address each other or me, rather than the machine. This happens on other tapes too.

On the second tape, where we have Belle and Alec, Willie and his wife Bella, myself and husband and a friend who is a singer, Joan Harkness, the tape recorder gets forgotten, to the extent that a good deal of what is said on the second side can only be called gossip. This was not part of the purpose of the recording, but nevertheless it is illuminating to listen to, as it provides some valuable pointers to my informants' activities and social life. This gossip was possible only because we were all familiar with the people and events mentioned.

It is clear from most recordings that family and social life are going on around the story tellers. Responsive noises can be heard from others present, including, in John's house, his Down's Syndrome son, Bennie, who thoroughly enjoys listening to his father's stories (they may even have had therapeutic value in his life). Sometimes he is so responsive that his mother Maggie shushes him loudly. In Belle's house, doors open and shut as grand-children pass through the room, going in and out to play. Tea cups rattle in saucers as Belle or Maggie dispense hospitality. Once or twice the telephone rings. I do not regard these as interruptions but as factors that help to create a natural context for the telling of the stories. Some of the best recordings have been made on winter evenings, round a blazing fire that recaptures the close-knit family feeling that must have existed when old John Stewart and his wife Nancy told stories to their children. Housed travellers of the older generation still prefer a coal fire or a wood fire to an electric or gas one. The fireplace is the focal point of the room, not, as in many modern houses, the television set, although most of them have one. Belle cannot afford a fire all the time, but always lights one when there are visitors, even in summer.

In transcribing the tapes, I have tried as far as possible to reproduce my informants exact pronunciation and to that end I have followed the Scots Style sheet reproduced below.

SCOTS STYLE SHEET

Aa for long vowel as in aa, baa, caa, faa, waa, etc.

ae as in frae, isnae, cannae

ee or ei as in een, yestreen, heid, deid.

~~E~~-ie for diminutive ending and adjectives such as laddie, lassie, bonnie.

~~D~~oo for long vowel as in toon, doon, roon, noo, hoo.

ui or u(consonant)e for modified "u" sound in puir, guid, mune, abune

ch as in nicht, sicht, licht, thocht, bocht

verbal endings -in and -it as in walkin, lookit

~~E~~ain for "own" but ane for "one" (or sometimes yin)

wha, whatna, for who, what.

~~E~~tae for too and toe.

Negatives -na or -nae at end of verb, depending on pronunciation indicated

No apostrophes for supposedly "missing" letters when these do not in fact go in.

When it has not been possible to make out a word or phrase on the

tape this has been indicated thus: [missing word] or [missing phrase].

Even if I asked my informants about these blanks, they were sometimes

not able to remember what they had said.

I have tried to explain background noises wherever they occurred.

In the transcription of videotape I have included a few indications of what was happening visually if it was relevant to what was being said.

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

- Brune - John Brune's tape transcripts
- Douglas IA3 - refers to my own recordings, with number of tape, side
 and track.
- EF - Edith Fowke
- HH - Hamish Henderson
- KG - Kenneth Goldstein
- MF - Maurice Fleming's tape transcripts
- SA - Sound Archive of School of Scottish Studies
- TMSA - Traditional Music and Song Association of Scotland
- I.2 - second story in the First Appendix, and so on.
- II.3 - Third story in the Second Appendix, and so on.

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

The thesis consists of an introductory chapter, three chapters of family history and three of tale study, two appendices, the first containing sixteen stories in all known versions and the second seventy eight stories recorded by me, based on field recordings from Alec, Belle and John Stewart and Willie MacPhee, 1978-84.

The introductory chapter examines theories of the origins of Highland travellers and sets out the historical, psychological and aesthetic concerns of the tale study.

The family history sets out the material recorded from informants. The first chapter deals with Belle's early life in Blairgowrie which is the geographic focus of the family's later history. The second traces the fortunes of the Stewarts in Perthshire and Ireland, showing how they adapted to altered circumstances when they returned to Scotland. The third chapter covers the period since the Second World War, during which Alec's family became well-known through the Folk Revival and their children began to integrate with the settled community and lose their oral culture.

The historical tale study shows the links with Gaelic tradition to be found in the story collection. The psychological chapter reveals the functions the stories had in travellers' lives: teaching ancestral wisdom, strengthening kinship ties, reinforcing values,

passing on skills for survival, containing fears. The aesthetic chapter looks at the structuring of stories and demonstrates the use of signal words and phrases to guide the listener's ear, as well as giving story tellers a means of recreative transmission. Styles and versions are compared and aesthetic principles deduced from the use of different kinds of language and imagery.

CHAPTER ONE

Origins and Background

Introduction to Historical, Psychological

and Aesthetic Tale Study

CHAPTER ONE: ORIGINS AND BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION TO HISTORICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND AESTHETIC TALE STUDY

Origins

To the question of the origin of the Scottish Highland travellers there is no simple answer and there is no hard and fast historical evidence to prove the various theories that have been put forward. Calum Maclean described them as "descendants of itinerant craftsmen",¹ and Timothy Neat and Hamish Henderson see "a link between traveller tinsmiths and the great metal-workers of Celtic society in the Heroic Age".² The Highlands were never conquered by the Romans, so age-old ways continued there outside the influence of classical civilisation. Ross Noble of the Kingussie Folk Museum points out, that the travellers' name in Gaelic describes their function:

They were known in Gaelic as cairdean, the iron-workers or metal-workers, and their original function was to go round from warring clan to warring clan making weapons and repairing weapons: they were the armourers of these warrior Celtic princes.³

Many of the travellers themselves believe that their forebears were the remnants of the scattered clans after Culloden, although their skills are much older than that. The clans themselves, of course, have an equally shadowy history, and claim legendary progenitors with whom their connection is based simply on oral tradition and for which there is no proof.⁴ Oral tradition, as this tale collection and study will show, is not an entirely unreliable source of information. One thing that is certain is that the Highland travellers were not Gypsies, although there may have been some inter-marriage between the two groups in the 16th century and after, when:

... the gypsies or Egyptians, a Romany people from central Europe ... were forced into Western Europe by the Mongol invasions of Russia led by Ghenghis Khan."⁵

The Gypsies certainly came into the Border areas of Scotland, but never came far north in any numbers, almost certainly because they found native metal workers there already as also happened in Ireland. In fact there seems to be some similarity in the origins of the Scottish and Irish travellers:

Not all the travelling people originated at the same time. Some families have been on the road for centuries, while others have become itinerant in recent times. Moreover they did not all originate in the same way. First, tradesmen and specialists often became itinerant because the population in their area and consequently the demand for their skills was not great enough to allow them to remain sedentary. Secondly, many peasants were forced onto the road through evictions, unemployment and famine ... Thirdly, there have always been drop-outs from settled society - persons who left their homes due to some personal misfortune or indiscretion or who simply chose to live an itinerant life.

Scottish travellers are made up of the same elements, in which only the oldest sort were tinsmiths or tinkers: drop-outs can be easily distinguished from the rest for they are loners while tinkers travel in family groups. Sharon Gmelch's description of early Christian times when "itinerant whitesmiths, working in bronze, gold and silver travelled the countryside making personal ornaments, weapons and horse-trappings in return for food and lodging",⁶ matches that of Duncan Campbell of Glenlyon, a teacher and journalist born in 1828, who wrote of tinkers in the time of his grandfather as "skilled silversmiths" who made "brooches, rings and clasps for girdles or to decorate hilts of swords and daggers."⁷ The fact that she was writing about before the 10th century and he was writing about the early 18th century, only serves to indicate the antiquity of the metal-working tradition whose secrets had been handed down through countless generations. Historical change has repeatedly rendered obsolete the ancient skills of the traveller through changing fashion, technologi-

cal progress and political and social upheaval, such as the Act of Proscription of 1746 which forbade the wearing of Highland dress and the carrying of weapons.

William Howatson, writing of "The Scottish Hairst and Seasonal Labour 1600-1870," shows that travelling to get work was not confined to Highland metal-workers:

Contemporary sources make it clear that from the tentative beginnings in the seventeenth century, the travelling of Highland harvesters to the grain fields of the south in search of temporary work became more pronounced as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries progressed. This increase runs parallel with the changing economic circumstances of the Highlands: a look at that first will perhaps show why seasonal migration was becoming such a necessity.⁸

David Buchan also, in writing about the "trades followed by the folk who occupied the towns along with the cultivators" in the north-east of Scotland in the late 17th century, mentions, as well as "weavers, cordiners and masons, wrights and smiths," who lived in the community, others who "used the town as a base for operations that carried them further afield." These included chapmen, tailors and cairds and tinklers. "These travelling tradesmen had an importance for rural society beyond their trades for they were the channels of communication by which the towns exchanged news and, in all probability, lore."⁹
^

These "changing economic circumstances" were of course closely bound up with the Clearances, about which I was not taught in my school history classes in the West of Scotland, nor was my experience

untypical. Calum Maclean, as a Highlander, has strong things to say on this subject:

It has been argued that the Clearances were necessary because the Highland areas were overcrowded and unable to support the number of people subsisting on poor and barren soil ... There was a great deal more poverty in the Highlands in the middle of the century and it was principally due to the fact that the best land was taken from the people and leased to sheep-farmers and tacksmen. ... The Clearances instead of alleviating poverty and hardship increased both.¹⁰

and also:

During the Clearances the people were hounded from the rich inland straths and forced either into the emigrant ships or to eke out a precarious livelihood on the barren, crowded coasts.¹¹

He sums it up as "a heavy weight on the conscience of any civilised government."¹²

After the '45, the travelling artisans who were affected by the Clearances also then turned more to tinsmithing, the making of pans, kettles, flagons, bowls, buckets and other useful household items needed by the rural community. Soon this too went out of date when the industrial revolution provided the means of mass-production and in our own time has been superseded by plastic. Brooms and scrubbers, baskets, horn spoons, wooden flowers no longer provide part of the traveller's living.

Farewell to the besoms of heather and broom

Farewell to the creel and the basket

For the Folk o today they would far sooner pay

For a thing that's been made oot o plastic.¹³

Horse-coping, another subsidiary trade of the wandering smith, has been replaced by dealing in second hand cars. As farming methods improved in the Lowlands, the tinkers were forced to desert their beloved glens among the Highland hills and come down to the potato or berry harvest or to do other seasonal work on the farms of Strathmore and the Mearns. One thing that has contributed more than anything to their survival is their adaptability and their readiness to turn their hand to whatever offered a subsistence. Knife-grinding, umbrella-mending, stripping larch trees for telegraph posts, stripping oak bark for dye, tarmacing paths and drives, stone-cleaning and pearl-fishing are among the jobs undertaken or spoken about by my informants.

In taking up other occupations, however, the tinkers did not radically change their way of living. Their oral culture, their attitudes and values remained the same and it is only in the present day, when they are settling in houses in greater numbers and having their children schooled that these are disappearing. My informants, being mostly of the older generation, still exemplify the old ways, but in their families the transition is clearly apparent. Through school and the mass media the grand-children and great grand-children are absorbing the materialism of the twentieth century. The extended family group is broken up into the conventional family units of the settled population. This virtually destroys the basis of the old way of life that was founded on kinship. They try to reassert it at weddings and funerals and other celebratory occasions, but in everyday living it is very hard to maintain.

It is in the oral culture of the travellers, the songs and stories handed down through many generations, that one finds the most convincing proofs of their identity. "They still keep alive an ancient and vital oral literature that makes theirs one of the most dynamic folk cultures of Europe,"¹⁴ and, "they are carriers of an essentially Celtic culture."¹⁵ Apart from piping, which, in my informants' family, has always been of prime importance the story repertory I have been able to record from them is largely Gaelic in origin, content and style. I have been able to find Gaelic parallels for many of the stories which, in the case of the international tale types, have been closer than any of the European ones, except sometimes the Scandinavian. The song repertory on the other hand is entirely Scots, which seemed puzzling at first. But the fact that the stories had passed from Gaelic into Scots, when Gaelic was suppressed after the '45 and Culloden, suggested that, since Gaelic song tradition has no equivalent of the ballads, the travellers with their love of narrative, found the Scots ballad tradition very much to their taste, when Gaelic began to decline as it did in parts of Perthshire as early as the end of the 18th century.¹⁶ It may also be, of course, that the ballad tradition was known in the Highlands even before that especially on the fringes of the Gaeltacht. The travellers' ballad singing style is certainly not a Lowland one, but has the passion and decoration of Gaelic singing. They are also fond of the kind of lyric song that is popular in Gaelic. Most of the songs and ballads I have recorded from them were in the repertoires of other Scots singers at the turn of the century, when Gavin Greig was collecting in Aberdeenshire. While the settled population thereafter neglected, forgot or undervalued this song tradition, the travellers

have preserved, remembered and treasured it. Even the Irish songs in my informants' repertoire are a feature of Scottish tradition and not just a legacy of this particular family's years in Ireland between the two World Wars. There is no trace in either the story or song corpus of any alien culture such as that of the Gypsies, apart from a few songs in Cant, most of which, I suspect were made up by the singers to please English or American collectors, hungry for the exotic. Cant is such a limited, functional language, suitable only for coding conversation, and quite inadequate to express the rich imaginings of a talented and articulate people. This is borne out by Willie MacPhee on the Videotape, who when asked if travellers used to speak cant to one another in the absence of non-travellers, replied, "Oh no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no," as if the idea was patently absurd. (Willie MacPhee Videotape).

Another factor that points to the native origins of the Highland travellers is their attachment to one region or area, where they were born and reared. Perthshire travellers look on themselves as belonging to Perthshire and always return there no matter how far afield they travel. Struan is a tiny village near the falls of Bruar, where the River Bruar joins the River Garry, in the heart of the Atholl Highlands of Perthshire. In the time of my informants' ancestors, the whole area would have been Gaelic-speaking. The predominant clan in Atholl was that of the Stewarts, whose descent was from Alexander Stewart, the Wolf of Badenoch, and considering the scattered nature of their settlements, even today, it is easy to see why local metal workers, if not completely nomadic, would have to be fairly mobile.

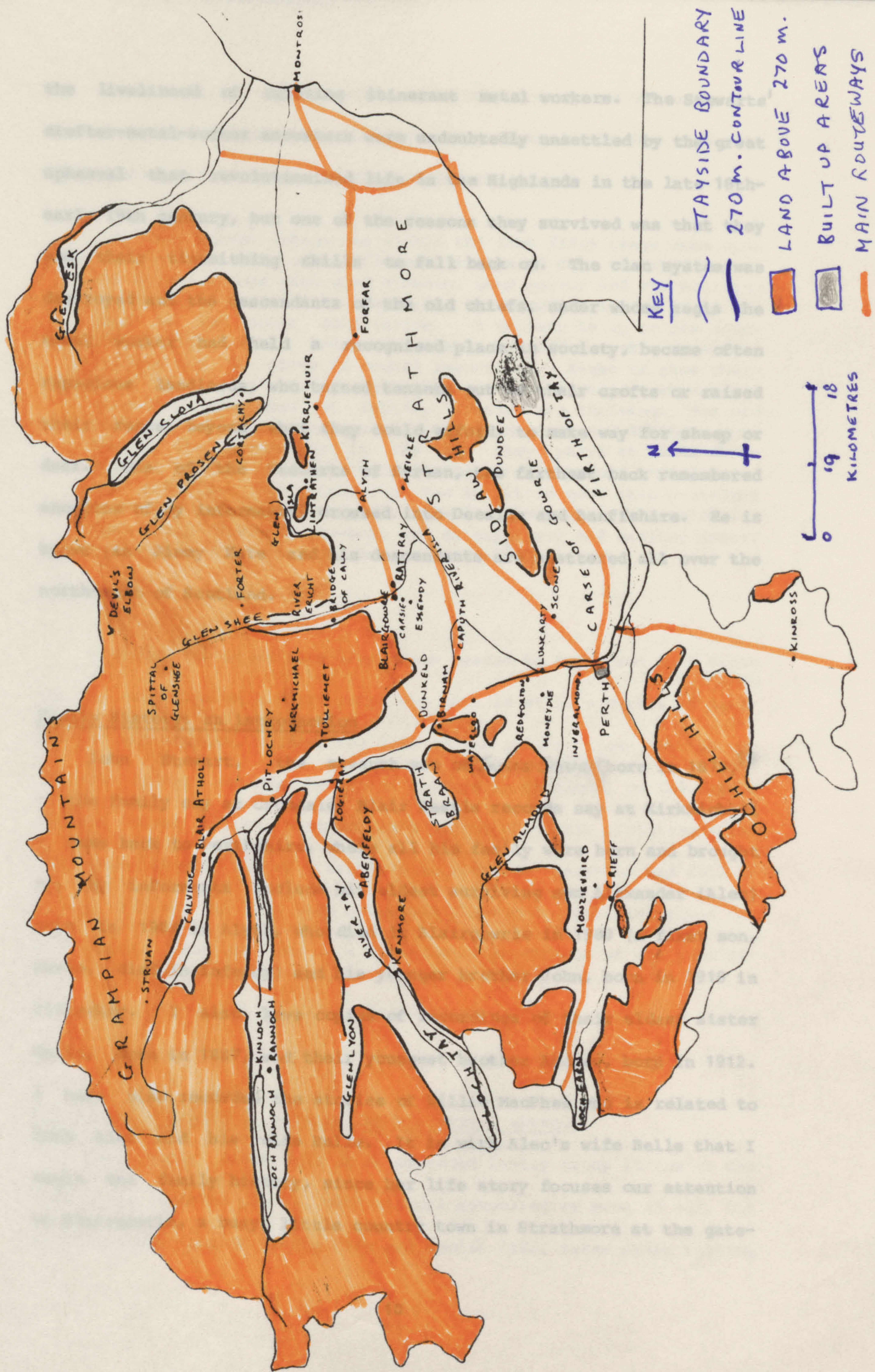
Struan is mentioned by my informants as the locality in which their ancestors had land "up till the Battle of Culloden." (Brune, p.30) That they had some land and could still be tinkers is borne out by the fact that this has been true of every generation of the family in living memory. John Stewart, the father of two of my informants and descendant of the James Stewart who had land at Struan, lived on various crofts and small farms in the Dunkeld-Pitlochry area and still carried on his tinker trades. This pattern of existence seems to have been not uncommon in the Highlands:

... the Highland croft was generally a base for diverse economic activities: it was not a self-sufficient operational unit. Even in times of economic expansion crofters pursued dual occupations, some of which might involve periods of absence from home. In times of crisis, when the small parcel of land could not offer sufficient income, the need for movement from home to earn a cash wage became greater.¹⁷

The family of John Stewart's son Alec had a berry farm near Blairgowrie at one time, and Alec's son John has had a small-holding near Blairgowrie for many years, which has now been converted into a travellers' camp-site. As far back as the 17th century there is a record of

a resident tinker or tinsmith in Aberfeldy, John Stewart by name, born in the 17th century, lived through the 18th and was even married in the 19th, dying at the age of 112. Though the Colonel, as he was styled, was married in the 19th century, he was married in the 18th century also, for in 1751, according to the Parish Register of Weem, John Stewart, tinker in Aberfeldy and his wife had there a son baptised and called Charles..¹⁸

The idea that my informants' forebears were farmers, who went on the road and became tinkers at the time of the Clearances, as a member of the family has claimed, is very unlikely. A dispossessed farmer would be extremely hard put to it to become a tinker at a time when the proscription of Highland dress and weapons had taken away a good slice of



the livelihood of existing itinerant metal workers. The Stewarts' crofter-metal-worker ancestors were undoubtedly unsettled by the great upheaval that revolutionised life in the Highlands in the late 18th-early 19th century, but one of the reasons they survived was that they had their tinsmithing skills to fall back on. The clan system was destroyed and the descendants of the old chiefs, under whose aegis the metal worker had held a recognised place in society, became often rapacious landlords, who turned tenants out of their crofts or raised their rents beyond what they could afford, to make way for sheep or deer. One of the Stewarts of Struan, the farthest back remembered ancestor of my informants, crossed into Deeside and Banffshire. He is known as Jimmy Kate and his descendants are scattered all over the north-east of Scotland.

Family History: an introduction

John Stewart, the seventh son of James Stewart, born in 1870,¹⁹ - the family say at Cromdale, Blair Castle records say at Kirkmichael - came back to Perthshire, where all his family were born and brought up. My informants include his eldest surviving son Alexander (Alec) born in 1904 in Alyth, who died in Blairgowrie in 1980 (a first son, Davie, died in infancy) and his younger brother John, born in 1910 in Pitlochry. I also have copies of recordings of their eldest sister Bella, born in 1887, and their youngest brother Andrew, born in 1912. I have also recorded the stories of Willie MacPhee who is related to both Alec and his wife Belle. It is with Alec's wife Belle that I begin the family history, since her life story focuses our attention on Blairgowrie, a busy, little country town in Strathmore at the gate-

way to Strathardle and Glenshee, where she grew up and where she and Alec and their family have lived for most of their married life. In 1885, Blairgowrie was described as follows:

A very great change has within the last fifty years come upon Blairgowrie. An insignificant village of mean thatched houses has become a town with good streets, good houses and the stirring business of ten mills employing two thousand hands. Half the land is now under cultivation. A railway is up to its door. Three first class hotels invite visitors. A weekly newspaper printed in it, gives it social importance. Eight or nine churches show some strong religious energy. Auction markets draw excellent specimens of cattle. Banks are thriving. The old complaint of ague occasioned by bad drainage is now little known; though the rheumatism in the low rimy parts at times shows itself. Rents have very much increased; the valued rental being now £26,378. The population has in little more than a century increased from 1,596 to 5,000. Now it is a grand start point for the royal drive to Braemar; and an excellent and healthy resort for summer visitors from the sea coast.²⁰

Although the mills have long since ceased to turn, and soft fruit has replaced flax as a local crop, the town is still a centre of agriculture and tourism, despite the loss of the railway line. Set in one of the richest and most beautiful valleys in Scotland, on the swift-flowing River Erich, Blairgowrie's surroundings are picturesque and the town itself is of a traditional Scottish character and full of charm. It has for long been a meeting place and a settling place for travellers, who now make up a significant percentage of its population.

The family's tradition affected by historical change

The family background of an extended family group living on the road or in isolated places, with minimal schooling or none at all, but with a great love of family life and social life, makes story telling

and singing natural and essential activities. By studying the tales in the context of the family history many things become apparent that would not emerge from a study of the tales in vacuo or in relation to literary tradition. The characteristics of oral tradition are such that its material cannot be studied in such isolation, since the life, the personality and the style of the individual story teller or singer are as much part of the story versions or song versions as the stories and songs themselves. The circumstances surrounding the telling of the story, the circumstances and the occasions on which the story teller has learned the story, the relationship between the story teller and his or her audience and between the story teller and his sources, all affect the telling of the story. The story teller's choice of material, the way in which he or she chooses to modify it, sometimes modifying it differently on different occasions, the beliefs and attitudes the stories seem to embody all tell us something about him or her, if we relate these things to what we know of the area and community and family background to which the story tellers belong.

When the lifestyle of informants undergoes changes then we can expect this also to be reflected in cultural activities such as story telling and singing and the story and song versions recorded over a period of transition should reveal what shifts of emphasis have taken place, what has been gained or lost and how the functions of story telling and singing have altered or disappeared or taken on new purposes.

Since the area to which these story tellers belong was once Gaelic-speaking (Duncan Campbell's grandmother spoke to the tinkers in Gaelic)²¹ and even today has not entirely lost this feature, it is safe to assume that their forebears were Gaelic speaking, as I believe they were natives of the area and not incomers, and that their stories would have parallels in Gaelic tradition. This has proved to be the case and not only are the same types of stories found in Gaelic tradition but versions very close to the Stewarts' versions can be cited from the collection of Campbell of Islay and from the archives of the School of Scottish Studies. This is undoubtedly a confirmation of the identity of the travellers, which in the past has been the subject of much fruitless conjecture. Family history also tends to support the idea that the songs and stories occupied much the same highly regarded place and had the same important uses in people's lives as with the Gaels. Many of the stories in the collection have been recorded in Gaelic by Calum Maclean in the Gaeltacht in the 1950s.

The fact that now among Perthshire travellers no Gaelic speakers are to be found - the language has not lingered on with the stories - and the stories and songs are sung and told in Scots is related to the fact that the upheavals of the 18th Century - the defeat of the Jacobites, the Act of Proscription and the Highland Clearances - helped to kill the Gaelic language and culture and drove the travellers down the glens of Perthshire to seek for work in the non-Gaelic speaking area on Lowland farms in Angus and Strathmore. There they could sell and mend pots and pans, horn ware, baskets and brushes, collect rags, sell small wares, fish for pearls in the streams and help with the harvest.

To survive they had to turn their hands to anything, but their metal-working skills stayed with them as long as they were useful to the community. Willie MacPhee still has the tools and skill to make tinware, although there is no living to be made from it and he does it only occasionally to please some visiting folklorist or film-maker anxious to record it as a curious survival. It is also true that Gaelic is spoken nowadays only by a small minority of the settled community.

Although a family of farm-servants from Angus researched recently by a Scottish folklorist,²² felt themselves quite separate and different from the tinker people who had often worked side by side with them in the fields, and positively resented the fact that some of them were held in high esteem in the Folk Revival, a comparison of their song repertoires reveals that they overlap considerably, although the manner in which they were sung by each group differed considerably in style. In particular, songs which could be got from broadsheets were shared, which is hardly surprising as both groups had access to them. Both were motivated by the necessity to make their own entertainment.

At one time travellers were much more socially isolated than they are today. This is a very different thing from saying they were social outcasts, since this implies that they would have no dealings with the settled community at all and suggests that they would have been actively and constantly harrassed. Certainly Scottish legal history

reverberates with punitive legislation against "Common sorners, vagabonds and masterful beggars,"²³ but it is my contention that this did not apply to the itinerant Highland artisans, since they had a recognised trade. It is also true that law was not enforced with any consistency in the Highlands until after the break up of the clan system. But the tinkers did survive and continued through all the changes brought about by history to make a living somehow. It is true that the picture we get of this from the family history is one of poverty and hardship, but that was the lot of most people who lived in the Highlands. There has also to be taken into consideration the evidence of local people and writers such as Duncan Campbell of Glenlyon who grew up in a community where the tinkers provided necessary services and articles for everyday use. More important, he recalls how his grandfather told him how they had been at one time silversmiths who made the ornaments worn with Highland dress, before the Act of Proscription.²⁴ Campbell does not idealise the tinkers but also refers to their reputation for thievery, but when one considers the petty scale of this against the background of centuries of marauding and cattle lifting on the part of the Highland clans, one cannot see it as something that made the tinkers exceptional. Even in this, they were not outsiders. The way in which they must be regarded, since the settled community depended on them for so many things, just as the tinkers depended on the settled community for survival, is that they are not a separate people but an integral part of the native population, whose trade necessitated that they live a nomadic or semi-nomadic life. Their story tradition is one of the strongest proofs of this, since it can be shown to have such strong links with Gaelic culture, both in the structure and content of the stories and in the style and use of language of the story tellers.

Introduction to psychological study

It is possible to read all kinds of psychological meaning into any kind of story, oral or literary, but this is of little value unless it can be shown to be related to the function the story has in real life for the story teller and the listeners. In the repertory of my informants, there are different types of story, which can be shown to have different functions and there are some where shifts of emphasis have occurred, differentiating these versions from older ones in a way that reflects the changes that have taken place in the travellers' life style. In reading what psychologists have written about folk tales or folk lore generally, I have found ideas that seem valid in more than one sphere of thought. I have also used the psychological insights I have gained as a teacher and as a marriage counsellor. This may make my interpretations seem rather an eclectic ragbag, but, just as with religions, there seems to me no system with a monopoly of the truth.

It goes without saying that the travellers themselves do not consciously analyse their stories or ascribe psychological functions to them. At the same time, it is clear that the function of story telling in their lives has been much more than entertainment, although that is also an important consideration, and one capable of having a higher value and character assigned to it, depending on the level of culture.

The wonder tales appear to be most highly valued, which is hardly surprising since they are the most complex and the most spectacular. But it is doubtful if the travellers would have transmitted them so faithfully through so many generations if they had not regarded them in some way as important for their survival. After all, travelling on the road, they do not burden themselves with anything but essentials. The stories have aesthetic value, also, and it is not always easy to separate this from the psychological aspect. Generally speaking, I would say that I consider "psychological" to apply to those aspects of the stories that reveal the meaning and function they have for the people who tell them, and "aesthetic" to have to do with artistic features of the stories, such as style, structure, use of language and imagery.

I would be doubtful of the advisability of eliciting from my informants any observations about the importance of story telling in their lives, as I feel that, no matter how I framed the question, their acute powers of perception would help them to sense the kind of answer that would please me, and as such, would be without value for this particular purpose. Some of them have had long practice in providing collectors with such answers and are very skilled at it. This, in itself, of course is worth studying as a trait of traveller character, and as one of the subjective factors that are important in the telling of tales. I am not suggesting that they would tell deliberate untruths - far from it - but they are highly suggestible and also regard it as courtesy and loyalty to agree with the ideas of a friend or someone for whom they feel respect. The most valuable comments I

have had from them are ones made not in answer to any question, but when they are so to speak "off their guard."

However, I think much more reliable and more objective evidence can be found in the content of the stories and their characters and their relevance to the informants' lives. The first things that strikes one in examining these is that, contrary to what the name "wonder tale" suggests, the stories are not escapist fantasies, but reflect in a symbolic way, the realities of the travellers' life. Journeys, for example, form an integral and necessary part of many of the stories. As well as representing the distances between each of the places where the episodes of the story take place, they also denote lapses of time. In this way they simultaneously separate and bind together the structural elements of the story. The journeys are often quests, as in "The King o the Black Art" (I.3), "The Speaking Bird of Paradise" (II.8) and "The Water of Life" (II.4). Sometimes the hero is out to "push his fortune" as in "Friday, Saturday" (I.2), "The Nine Stall Stable" (II.5) and "Johnny Pay Me for my Story" (II.7). Often the journey or quest requires the hero to perform one or more seemingly impossible task, or at least to rescue a princess, although the last mentioned is often incidental and goes with the "kingdom" that constitutes the hero's reward for going through his ordeal. What is central to the story is the testing of the hero, who by undertaking the journey/quest/task realises his full potential. This clearly suggests that travellers are meant to learn from the stories how to cope with and overcome the difficulties of their own

lives. The stories provide what C.J. Jung calls, "symbols of transcendence of a state of immaturity."

This idea gains support from a consideration of the nature of the hero, who is often Jack, the younger or youngest brother, the despised one, regarded as a fool and an incompetent by his family. That is how travellers are regarded by the settled community. The stories demonstrate to the traveller how he can achieve what seems impossible to him, and also demonstrates to others how he is in fact more clever, more courageous and more fortunate than he seems to be: "... one jump ahead of the country hantle." (John Stewart, Douglas 11A2) Jack is enabled to accomplish his task by supernatural helpers who fall into two categories: old men or women and talking creatures. The old man or woman frequently lives in a hut or hovel in a wood at a great distance from the nearest habitation, which can also represent a great length of time. He or she usually expects Jack to arrive, sometimes chides him for being "long in coming," gives him shelter for the night and sets him on the next stage of his journey, with advice or instruction, often giving him a magic object to help him overcome some of the difficulties that lie ahead. This invests the old man or woman with the character of a druid or a wise woman, the repository of ancestral wisdom, which is available to the present generation. They live in a world that is a symbol of the unconscious mind and are symbols of the powers that are contained in the unconscious. The talking creatures include birds, as in "The Speaking Bird of Paradise" (II.8), "The Water of Life" (II.4), a frog as in "The Three Feathers" (I.4), dogs as in "The Three Dogs" (I.1). In John Stewart's own wonder tales some of

the animals talk or, at least, the human characters are able to understand their speech, as in "The White Stag" (II.17), "The Master Bull" (II.18) and "The Cockatrice"(II.16). This suggests man's closeness to nature, a closeness that is both actual and desirable. This is intended to show that the natural world and other living creatures can be a source of help.

Jack has many adversaries in the stories, but usually they are personifications of some kind of power, a king or a magician, a malevolent witch or an ogre. The power which these characters wield is used quite arbitrarily often without apparent reason, against others, which is how the traveller sees authority figures in the community around him. For example, travellers have often been turned off land, insulted and humiliated, moved on by police or otherwise harrassed, when they are, in fact, doing no one any harm.

In confrontations between the humble character and his adversaries, the dialogue significantly places them on an equal footing. Take for example, the conversation between the old fisherman seeking his son and the King o the Black Art who has abducted him, when the old fisherman arrives at his castle door:

"I've come tae see," he says, "where my son is."

"Oh," he says, "I don't know."

"Now, now," he says, "don't come that. You got my son," he says, "away for a year an a day, an he come back, an ye got him for another year an a day an he come back. But," he says, "the third time ye come for him tae take him away, he never come back. Now," he says, "I want him. And," he says, "I'll tell ye another thing," he says, "it's a good thing that I come," he says. "If she hadda come," he says, "it was dear days to you."

"Well," he says, "wait there," he says, "and I'll go in," he says, "and see if I can get him." (Douglas 7B1)

There are several possible explanations of this. Perhaps the traveller's lack of education makes it impossible for him to know how kings speak or how one would speak to a king. This idea is at odds with what I know about my informants: they have a highly developed sense of how to address people and get on terms with them. They have relied on this to help them make their living for centuries. They know how to show deference without losing dignity and how to ingratiate themselves without appearing to fawn. In this lies the key to the question of the dialogue: Highland culture, and the traveller culture which is a part of it that tends to preserve traditional attitudes, has always been inclined to regard all men as having worth. In the Lowlands, Burns gave expression to this in "A Man's a Man for a That." In stories that show the poor despised one becoming a hero, it is necessary for him to hold his own verbally with his enemies, particularly those who have greater power in other ways than he has, whether it be physical or magical.

A large proportion of the stories, both with and without AT numbers, involve the supernatural. Some are in origin religious tales like "The Heid" (II.3), "The Cloven Hoof" (II.10), "The Blacksmith" (II.9) and "The Old Fisherman"(I.7). Others feature supernatural creatures like fairies or the bean nighe, the little washerwoman, in "The Shepherd and the Wee Woman"(I.14). There are many stories of revenants, usually told as personal narratives or memorates. Although witches feature in many of the wonder tales there are actually only one or two actual witch tales in these informants' repertoires, a fact

which in itself could have some significance. I thought it might be helpful to check with another story teller, related to those I have recorded, to see if this imbalance existed also in his repertory. Stanley Robertson of Aberdeen, nephew of Jeannie Robertson, who was a second cousin of Alec and John, has many tales of white witches or spae wives, sometimes called hen-wives, as well as some stories of black witches. He pointed out that very often the witch was not the most important character in the story. This is certainly true of "The Three Dogs" (I.1), "Friday, Saturday" (I.2), "The Water of Life" (II.4) and "The Speaking Bird of Paradise" (II.8). In the tales specifically about witches such as "The Silver Sixpence" (II.47) and "The Straw Leggings" (II.48) the witches are malevolent, and the stories themselves are traditional in the Highlands. None of the Stewarts or Willie MacPhee claims to have met a witch, in the way they claim to have encountered ghosts. Stanley suggested that this could be because they feared witches so much and therefore considered it ill-advised to talk about them or tell stories about them. One of his own forebears was reputed to be a witch and was known as Jennie the Deevil. Betsy Whyte also claims her mother was able to put the "buchlatch" or curse on other people,²⁵ and regarded this power as a burden rather than a source of satisfaction. Remembering the ancient association of metal-workers with magic, I think it is not inconceivable that the reason why travellers seem not to tell so many stories about black witches could be because the "black art" may be regarded as one of their own secrets. Traveller women, in particular, have always been associated with the supernatural.

In a family of pipers, it also seems strange that only one story of a fairy piper has been recorded, although we must remember that the family legend of John Stewart is of great importance and this possibly became the focus of their stories about piping. This story called "The Fingerlock"²⁶ was recorded by Hamish Henderson from Andrew Stewart in 1955. "Johnny-in-the-Cradle" (I.15) is the Stewart version of a popular changeling story to be found all over the Highlands. It does seem that the repertory includes a representative selection of the kinds of story that were to be found at one time among the settled population.

The wonder tales make little use of humour or comedy, even though most of them end happily. As they are serious attempts to pass on ancestral wisdom, and are concerned with the hopes, fears and dreams of human life, this is perhaps not surprising. But just as in the theatre comedy and tragedy can achieve the same purpose by different methods, so in story telling, the structured comic tales told by my informants, are hardly ever designed simply as amusements. They also can be shown to reinforce the values and beliefs of the group and indicate ways of coping with problems, just as the wonder tales do.

Duncan Campbell has given us evidence that fear of bodysnatchers was prevalent all over the Highlands after the Burke and Hare case,²⁷ and the travellers were even more afraid perhaps than other people, and had reason to be, since very often there was no record of their existence. But this does not explain the curious fact that

travellers continue to tell Burke stories, as they call them, long after the settled population had stopped telling them. Hamish Henderson has suggested that this is because of a fear of genocide, a fear in some respects justified by attitudes and views to be found in the present day. I have actually heard a local government official say at the 1979 Planning Exchange at Gorebridge, Midlothian, that "the travellers should have been put in the gas ovens with the Jews."

Certainly, travellers in the early 19th century had good cause to fear outsiders and unlike the settled community, who guarded against bodysnatchers by building grave-watcher's stone huts with windows on four sides that can still be seen in some old graveyards, and heavy wrought iron grills over the graves of their departed, travellers regarded Burkers as a threat to the living as well as the dead, and felt particularly vulnerable since they were accustomed to camp in isolated spots. Also bodysnatchers and doctors became one and the same thing in their minds, the "noddies" were creatures out of nightmare, dressed in black with tall hats and cloaks, riding in a black coach with rubber wheels and muffled horses hooves. I suspect travellers feared doctors long before the Burke and Hare case but this certainly intensified it beyond rational bounds.

Like most legends among travellers, Burke stories have a basis in fact but in their development have acquired not only fictional features like the description of the noddies and the coach, but features that are patently absurd and are quite clearly not believed in

nowadays by those who tell the stories or those who listen to them, although at the time of telling they all appear to co-operate in a willing suspension of disbelief. All the informants from whom I have recorded Burker stories have attended doctors frequently and been treated in hospitals during their lifetime. Alec Stewart attended Ninewells Hospital in Dundee regularly over a period of six years for treatment for the form of leukaemia he suffered from. Belle has been in hospital at least three times during the period I have known her and has attended her local doctor a great deal in the last few years. John Stewart and Willie MacPhee have both been taken to hospital more than once with heart trouble, and Willie was in hospital in Fort William after a car accident. It is perfectly obvious that the old-time tinkers' distrust of the medical profession is a thing of the past. Yet these people still tell Burker stories in an almost ritual manner. The explanation for this can be found only by examining the stories themselves.

What can be said of the stories told by travellers can nearly always be said of folk tales generally and not just of those from the past. Recent Contemporary Legend Conferences run at the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language at Sheffield University have furnished me with quite a number of modern parallels to some of the stories I have recorded. Some dissatisfaction was expressed by conference members on more than one occasion with the name "legend", an issue which Professor W.M.F. Nicolaisen dealt with in his paper in July 1985. He pointed out that the practice of using "legend" and "Sage" as more or less interchangeable terms was not satisfactory

either. No alternative was decided upon, but I personally felt that the term "contemporat", which I suggested at the 1985 Conference, had much to commend it.

There were several contemporats presented at this and the past two conferences in 1984 and 1982, which seem to me to be related to some of the stories in the appendices. To take the most obvious examples, people are still seeing ghosts as in "The Arbordale Pizza Hut Ghost" (Sheffield, July, 1985) recorded by Bill Ellis of Hazleton Campus, Penn. State from people who worked in this fast food franchise and "Swinging Chains" recorded by Edgar Slotkin of the University of Cincinnati from LeRoy Gruber who worked in King's Mills Engineering Plant.

Frightening experiences akin to Burker stories are the subject of quite a few contemporats such as "The Hairy-Handed Hitchhiker" which has now appeared in print in Paul Smith's Nasty Legends, published by Routledge & Kegan Paul. This story is found quite widely and indeed there is a version of it that goes back to the 18th century and the days of the stage coach. The modern version concerns a motorist who picked up a hitchhiker, apparently female, but got alarmed when "she" seemed to have very hairy hands. The driver made a pretext of asking the hitchhiker to get out of the car to check his back lights, then drove off fast. Later he discovered in the hitchhiker's bag, which had been left behind, a bloodstained axe. This has all the

elements of the narrow escape from death embodied in the Barker stories.

A story that breaks the taboo against desecrating corpses, as found in "The Face" (II.19) is the tale of "The Runaway Grandmother" or "The Vanishing Grandmother" that appears in The Vanishing Hitchhiker by Jan Harold Brunvand. The story has been recorded in America by Robert H. Woodward and in Britain by Stewart Sanderson. In this story a family are on holiday touring in their car, usually in a foreign country, when the grandmother dies and they feel obliged to fasten the body to the roof-rack, wrapped in canvas or something similar. Stopping for a meal, or petrol, or sometimes to report the death, they return to the car to find that the body has disappeared. Like "The Face" this is a comic tale with a macabre line in humour.

A story that is concerned with an obscene type of revenge like that in "The Artist" (II.20) is "The Superglue Revenge" (Sheffield, July, 1985) recorded by Mark Glazer of the Pan American University in Edinburg, Texas. It concerns a wife who finds her husband in the act of being unfaithful to her and who waits until he is sleeping, then applies a tube of superglue to his penis.

Contaminated food stories, like the one John Stewart tells about "Lice in Stovies," are exemplified by the "Kentucky Fried Rat" tales recorded by Donald Ward and Gary Alan Fine in Los Angeles and Minnesota, as recorded in The Vanishing Hitchhiker, and which have a very wide distribution, along with other "nasties."

Even a talking horse, which appears in several of the stories in the appendices such as "The King o the Black Art (I.3), "The Three Feathers (I.4) and "The Nine Stall Stable" (II.5), is featured in a story found by Linda Ballard of the Irish Folk and Transport Museum in Co. Down. According to the story in her paper at Sheffield, July, 1985, Linda collected from a local story teller, the President of the Gaelic League, Albert Fry, was driving through the district when his car broke down for no apparent reason. As he stood scratching his head, he was addressed in Gaelic by a black horse, who helped him to find and put right the fault. When he got to the pub in Ballyhornan, he told John McKeown the owner about his experience, whereupon he said, "You're damn lucky it wasn't the brown horse. He doesn't know a word of Irish and he knows damn all about motor cars." This story illustrates what sometimes happens to motifs: the magical quality of the old stories has given way to jokiness that operates through modern scepticism.

When all these stories, but particularly the wonder tales, are considered in the light of Jungian psychology and its theory of archetypes, their meaning and significance in the lives of the story tellers becomes very clear indeed. In reading Jung's own writings, or those of his disciples, I found there were so many statements and observations that seemed to have particular relevance to the wonder tales that I could not disregard their implications.

First of all, in defining the archetype, he seems to be describing the very nature and character of these stories:

The archetype is a tendency to form ... representations of a motif - representations that can vary a great deal in detail without losing their basic pattern.²⁸

The motifs of the stories seem to represent in a very consistent way quite recognisable forms of the archetypes that Jung describes. The unindividuated self is portrayed over and over again by Jack or his equivalent, the unlikely hero, the despised youngest brother. The journey or quest that features in so many stories is "a symbol of transcendence of a state of immaturity." The stories are designed to assist the process of development of the individual, which shows why the travellers considered them to be their education.

Elsewhere von Franz writes:

Many myths and fairytales symbolically describe the initial stage in the process of individuation by telling of a king who has fallen ill or grown old.²⁹

This is illustrated by "The Water of Life" (II.4) and "The Three Feathers" (I.4). It is this situation which leads to the events by which Jack proves himself.

Once he has embarked on his journey or his quest :

... the painful and lengthy work of self-education begins, a work we might say that is the psychological equivalent to the labours of Hercules. This unfortunate hero's first task ... was to clean up in a day the Augean stable - a task so enormous that the ordinary mortal would be overcome by discouragement at the mere thought of it.³⁰

This task actually features in Willie MacPhee's story of "The Nine Stall Stable" (II.5). This is a story that also features two brothers who are opposites in every way. They seem to represent the Jungian concept of the Self and the Shadow, the positive and negative sides of human character. "Friday, Saturday" (I.2) is another story of this kind, while in "The Three Dogs" (I.1) the faithless sister seems to symbolise the anima. The characters in the stories begin to appear as projections from the travellers' own unconscious mind, and are symbols or archetypes of forces within themselves. They also support Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, since some of them represent the wisdom of the past and the forces of nature - things of which the uneducated, undeveloped character is unaware in conscious terms.

The basic archetype of completeness is fourfold and this is reflected in stories like "The Miller's Four Sons," told by an old story teller to Johnny in "Johnny Pay Me for my Story" (II.7). This fact makes the story's function more clearly seen: it is intended to give Johnny an ideal to aim for in his life and to suggest to him the means by which it can be attained.

Although, as I have said, the story tellers do not themselves analyse their stories, and the stories do not explain themselves in this way, at the same time it is clear that they are based on values and beliefs that are taken for granted. In his essay on Psychology and Literature (1930) Jung wrote:

An exciting narrative that is apparently quite devoid of psychological exposition is just what interests the psychologist most of all. Such a tale is built upon a groundwork of implicit psychological assumptions, and in the measure that the author is unconscious of them, they reveal themselves pure and unalloyed to the critical discernment.³¹

In writing this essay, Jung was considering written or literary stories, but this paragraph applies just as appropriately to the oral tales studied here, which undoubtedly rest "on a groundwork of implicit psychological assumptions." The story tellers presumably thought the stories worth telling, regarding their function as an important one and expected their listeners to benefit from hearing them. The content of the stories, while seemingly fantastic, was clearly assumed to have realistic and relevant truths to teach. The hero was often an unlikely character, apparently doomed to failure, who always achieved success. There seemed to be a paradox at the heart of things that it was deemed necessary to believe in. Impossible tasks could be accomplished, hopeless quests succeeded in, the most unequal contests won, with the help of ancestral wisdom, natural instincts and the will to succeed. An Other World was never far away and the world was made up of more than the material. These are just a few of the psychological assumptions that the stories are based on.

Aesthetic aspects

The aesthetic aspects of the stories in this collection are also better appreciated when seen in the context of the story tellers' lives. As well as being a part of the traveller's education, they were also included in the oral culture and entertainment of this group of people. Their richness and variety is a testimony of the importance attached to them; they were not told merely to pass the time but

to fill it with pleasure and delight. Their quality reflects the taste and sense of beauty possessed by both story tellers and listeners, bearing in mind that many of them were both. They were handed down from one generation to another like precious heirlooms cared for lovingly in honour of ancestors. The fact that they are now rarely passed on in this way is undoubtedly related to the extent to which travellers have settled, no longer live in extended family groups and have come into contact with the education and the entertainments of the settled community. At the same time, when they were being transmitted, while their structure and essentials remained constant, their variable features, such as style, language, characterisation and descriptive details varied from one story teller to another or even from one telling to another, to make every version paradoxically both similar to and different from every other.

The oral tale is quite different from the literary one. Literary versions of folk tales, even those based on oral versions, tend to be short, contain a greater amount of narrative than dialogue and use more formal language and sentence structure. Even many of the versions collected by Campbell of Islay from actual story tellers have these characteristics because they were either dictated or summarised and tend therefore to lose their spontaneity and immediacy. I have two story versions of my own written in this way, after hearing stories that I could not record at the time. One was told by Belle Stewart on the first occasion on which she visited my house, about how she and her mother came to visit Cortachy Castle and to meet the Dowager Countess of Airlie. The other is a version of "The Nine Stall

Stable" told by Willie MacPhee. Both of these story versions show what happens when a collector, especially an educated one used to literary expression, tells the story in his or her own words. I noticed that whenever I remembered the story tellers' actual words or form of expression, the story came to life. In paraphrasing Willie's story I consciously tried to follow his style and I think it improved my version.

Consider first of all the beginning of my version of Belle's story:

When Belle was very young and motor cars were a rarity on the roads of Perthshire her brother Donald was accidentally knocked down by one of the younger members of the Ogilvy family. So concerned was he about the boy's welfare and being unable to persuade Belle's mother to let him take the boy to hospital, he made her promise to come to Cortachy Castle next day to let him know how the boy was, and gave her a note so that she would be admitted. (1967)

This is the English teacher writing! By the time I wrote Willie's story down I had learned a little better:

There was this old man and woman and they lived on a croft and they had two sons. The eldest wouldn't do anything to help his father, but the youngest worked very hard all the time. The eldest decided to go and push his fortune, so his mother gave him an oatmeal bannock with some bacon and he went on his way.

After he travelled along the road a bit, he came to where some boys were throwing stones at two swans.

"What are ye doin?" he said to the boys.

"Oh we're throwing stones at these swans," they said, "to stop them building their nests."

"Well, I'll give you a hand," he says, and he joined in and threw stones at the swans till they swam away into the middle of the lake. (1982)

If this story opening is compared with that of the version of "The Nine Stall Stable" in Appendix II, which is a tape transcription

of Willie telling the story, the differences are clear. Willie's is more detailed, has more dialogue and is much livelier.

In the same way the opening of "The King o the Black Art" (I.3) by John Stewart can be compared with that of "Fichaire the Smith" (Fichaire Gobha) collected by Campbell of Islay³² and translated thus:

There was once a collier in Scotland and Fichaire the Smith visited him and asked him to hand his son over to him for a year, saying that he would educate him (in magic). He took him away, gave him a year's instruction and at the end of the year returned with him. He asked to have him for another year and was granted that. He took the boy away, gave him another year's instruction, and at the end of the year, brought him back. Then he asked to have him again and the collier gave him his son, but this time Fichaire did not mention any period. The year ran out and Fichaire did not bring the collier back his son.

This is simply going to be a bald summary of the story, devoid of interesting detail, lively dialogue and visual description such as John's version abounds in. Similarly a French literary version begins:

There was once a poor man who had a twelve year old son. He sent him to find work. The boy departed wearing a jacket that was red in front and white behind.

He passed in front of a castle; it was the residence of a doctor who happened to be standing at the window. As he needed a servant, the master of the castle called the boy.³³

Apart from the detail of the parti-coloured jacket, reminiscent of the jester, this is also prosaic compared with the oral Stewart version with its mysteriously discovered and lovingly reared foundling and the first sight of the King of the Black Art standing in the bows of the ship juggling with "poison balls with spikes" or "fiery balls."

The dialogues between the old fisherman and his wife and between the King and the fisherman also enhance the narrative.

Another pedestrian version, correct and polished though it may be as writing, is a German one that begins:

There was once a poor shoemaker renowned far and wide as a drunkard. He had a good wife and many daughters but only one son. As soon as the boy was old enough his mother dressed him in his best clothes, combed his hair until it shone and led him far, far away; for she wished to take him to the capital and there apprentice him to a master who would teach him a really good trade.³⁴

Being written in this way distances the story teller from the listener or reader, in this case. In print the story is accessible to thousands of people, who have never seen or heard of the person narrating the story, so it acquires an objective and impersonal character. The oral tale is subjective and personal because it is "told". The story teller addresses the listener directly, uses a great deal of dialogue, taking on the persona of each of the characters, and builds on a memorised structure, much as the ballad singer did, "leaping and lingering", using formulaic language and three-fold repetition, question and answer and other dramatic techniques. Description has to be minimal yet immediately effective, which tests the ability of the story teller to conjure up a whole scene in a few words. There is very little character description beyond brief identification since the characters reveal themselves more clearly in dialogue. The length of the story depends on the time available for telling it and the story teller's idea of how long the listener wants to sit and hear it. Many of the stories would have been told at greater length in the old

days sitting round the camp-fires, hence the need for the story teller to embellish his basic storyline with interesting and amusing details.

"The King o the Black Art" has been chosen as the title story for this project because the characterisation in the story is central to an understanding of the traveller. The characters in the story, especially the young man who is the apprentice magician and the King himself who symbolises the kind of trickster the traveller admires, and also that he sees in authority figures, are archetypal figures, the motifs among the most ancient in folk tradition. The source of this version is Celtic and suggests travellers' origins are also, since other European versions differ from them. The story is about survival, which the travellers' family history shows to be the main problem they faced and to which they had to address themselves daily. Many of the travellers' occupations have depended on quick-wittedness, trickery, manipulation and the ability to "work" people. The travellers to survive have had to be adaptable like the boy in the transformation flight, through the four elements of air, water, earth and fire. In traveller tradition the younger generation have learned from the old, worked alongside them and finally surpassed them, so the essence of the story perpetuates traveller ideas, and reinforces values like kinship, hospitality and the wisdom of ancestors. Just as the stories are part of a Scottish tradition, so are these values, although among the settled population both have become overlaid with modernity and materialism.

CHAPTER ONE - FOOTNOTES

1. Calum Maclean. The Highlands. p.153.
2. The Summer Walkers Timothy Neat. Film script draft 3.
3. Ross Noble, Curator of Highland Folk Museum, Kingussie. Radio Inverness broadcast, October, 1984, transcribed and reproduced with permission.
4. J. S. Keltie. History of the Highland Clans. Vol.2. p. 117-8
5. Sharon Gmelch. Tinkers and Travellers. p. 8.
6. Gmelch, Ch.1, p.8
7. Duncan Campbell of Glenlyon. Reminiscences and Reflections of an Octogenarian Highlander. p.25.
8. Scottish Studies. 1982, Vol.26, p.
9. David Buchan. The Ballad and the Folk. Ch.3, pp.24-5.
10. Calum Maclean. The Highlands. pp.171-2.
11. Maclean, p.167.
12. Maclean, p.39.
13. Song by Ewan MacColl from Radio Ballad The Travelling People, 1956.
14. Timothy Neat, p.3.
15. Neat, p.3.
16. Charles W.J. Withers. Gaelic in Scotland 1698-1981. p.80.
17. William Howatson. Scottish Studies, Vol.26, 1982. "Scottish Hairst and Seasonal Labour 1600-1870", p.20.
18. N.D. Mackay. Aberfeldy Past and Present. p.104.
19. Records from Blair Castle, Perthshire, by kind permission of his Grace the Duke of Atholl and Mr. J. Stewart, Keeper of the Records.
20. J. McPherson. Strathmore Past and Present. p.56.
21. Duncan Campbell, p.28
22. Edward K. Miller. The Use and Meaning of Song within a Scottish Family. Ph.D. Thesis in University of Austin, Texas. 1981.
23. Statute of James VI, 1592. A similar law passed in 1597.

24. Duncan Campbell, p.24.
25. Betsy Whyte. The Yellow on the Broom. pp.41-2.
26. The Fingerlock SA 1955/153/A3.
27. Duncan Campbell, p.5.
28. C.J. Jung. Man and his Symbols. p.67.
29. Jung, p.167.
30. Jung, pp.168-9.
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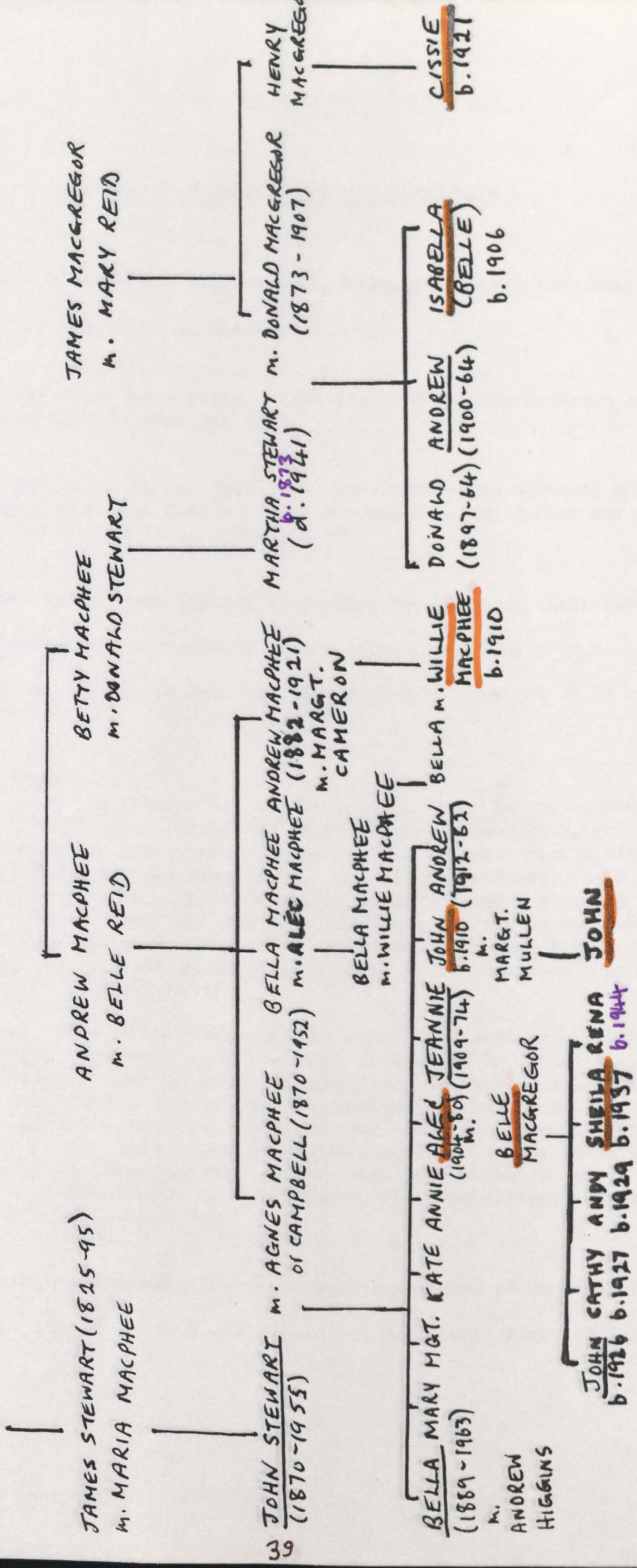
CHAPTER TWO

Family History : Belle's Early Life

Text cut off in original

JAMES STEWART (STEVAN)

"JIMMY KATE"



— Recorded by Sheila Douglas

— recorded by others.

SIMPLIFIED FAMILY TREE

Showing only those members of each generation necessary to show relationships of informants.

CHAPTER TWO

FAMILY HISTORY : BELLE'S EARLY LIFE

Belle Stewart was born Isabella Macgregor on the 18th July, 1906 in a tent on the banks of the Tay.

I was born at a place called the stretch Stenton which is just beside Caputh. (Douglas 3B7)

I was born in a wee, wee bow tent - the wee-est, auldest-fashioned things that a tinker can build ... My father was pearl-fishing at the time. (Brune p.14)

Traveller women never lay for long after the birth of their babies, a practice now being followed in modern hospitals. They were anxious to register the birth as soon as possible and to have the child baptised:

I was registered at about eleven o'clock in the morning same day as I was born. My father walkit fae Caputh, ken? Doon yonder whaur that wumman caught the big salmon - Miss Ballantyne. That's where I was registered. And he went and registered me ... and he come back to the camp and my mother and she got up when I was about four or five oors auld, and she got up and walked wi him tae the minister. And I was baptised in that kirk. Because long ago you always got a good piece at the minister's or a hauf croon. (Douglas 2A11)

But they were never mairrit, none o the auld generation o the tinkers, and never even knew what it was tae be mairrit ... Well, my father took the name Macgregor, but wi them no being mairrit, ye see, Sheila, you all had to take your mother's name long ago - ye couldnae get your father's name, even though your father was there. My father was there registering every one of us when we were born. But you still had to take your mother's name. So, ye see, my name really and truly on my birth certificate is Isabella Stewart. (Douglas 1A3)

There were many reasons why the travellers wanted to do these things, to have their children registered and baptised. First of all, once

registered in a parish, they could claim relief from that parish. Secondly, the fear of body-snatchers was very strong among them and the fact that their existence had been recorded appeared to them as a form of protection. Thirdly, whether from religious or superstitious belief, they attached great importance to baptism, just as they also set great store by a decent funeral. Very few travellers go to church, but it would be quite wrong to say they are without any belief in God.

Belle's father was Donald (Dan) Macgregor, born at Black Spoot, Monzievaird in 1867 and her mother was Martha Stewart. He fished for pearls in the rivers of Perthshire.

And I know the only distance they went in the summertime ... was to Speyside. ... My father never hawked in his life ... He worked on farms ... But I'll tell you one thing, he was a very clever man at making all these tin basins and tin ware, you know, making the stuff for my mother to go and hawk, but he couldnae go and sell, and he couldnae beg ... And he made baskets ... My father did work at harvest. He was a great man for among wood, you know. (Douglas 1A6)

But Belle felt that it was the woman who had the hardest time:

Truthfully speaking, the tinker women got the heavy end of the stick. Right enough the men made the baskets and made the scrubbers ... and the milk basins, naturally, for the dairies ... and the jugs and milk cans and flagons aa that sort o thing. They made aa that tinware and stuff and the women had to go and sell them. (Douglas 1A1)

The women also had to cook the food (often after having begged it) and look after the children. Belle's mother must have been a strong, active woman:

... and she was counted one of the best in Scotland at peeling larch trees. Ye see, they used tae peel the larch trees long ago, for the telegraph poles. ... They couldnae beat ma mother at that. ... Then they used tae go tae the oak peelin. ... The men did the peelin o the oak trees which is too hard I think for the women to peel really and I think they peeled them wi spades. ... Then they cut them in lengths. The women cut them in lengths and packed them. ... an sixpence a day they got for doin that. (Douglas 1A6)

Hard work and poverty, living in a tent, were the circumstances into which Belle was born, the youngest of nine children of which, not surprisingly, only three survived, Belle and her two older brothers, Donald and Andy.

My brother Donald was the eldest. There was Donald, then Andy and then there was Jimmy and there was Davie and there was Betsy - Elizabeth, but we jist ca'd her Betsy. And myself. Now I know my mother had a stillborn baby in Kingussie ... she collapsed at the door of a house and they took her ... to a poorhouse ... too much walkin and in labour all the time and no attention at all ... And the one they ca'd Jimmy, he lived till he was nine month auld and he died wi double pneumonia. ... But there are two ... I can't account for ... my mother never revealed this to us ... but they were overslept when they were drinking. ... So Donald and Andy and masel were the only three that lived out of the nine and my mother had that nine of a family in thirteen years. (Douglas 1A5)

When Belle was seven months old her father died on the 8th March, 1907 an event whose bitter story she had from her mother and which she tells with tragic eloquence:

What I am gaun tae tell you here is something that had to be told from my mother, for the simple reason that I was only seven months old when my father died. As far as I can gather they were camped just outside of Alyth at the time. My father was fairly fond of a dram these days, which most of the old travelling folk were, - they worked a few days or weeks on a farm, made a few pounds and then just came down intae the nearest town and blew the lot. My father was pretty fond of that sort of thing.

He had a pony and cart and this was a very wee old fashioned thing. The pony had been tied up for a couple of nights and days without anything to eat - so my mother got onto my father that morning about the horse being tied up with no food and she says, "If the Cruelty comes along this morning Dan, ... , we'll get intae bother."

"Oh aye," he says, "I ken."

So he went up to a farm about a couple of miles outside of Alyth ... the man's name was Jimmy Lindsay that owned the farm, ye see, he kent ma father for years and years - he used tae work on the place. So my father told this Jimmy Lindsay about his horse ... "Oh," says Lindsay, "dinna fash. I'll gie ye a puckle hay. Away ye go roond the stack and get what you want yourself Dan." ...

Comin doon the road from the farm to where my mother was camped, my father got kind of tired and drowsy with the spirit of the bottle fae the night before. So he says, "Stop the cart a minute, Jimmy (an uncle of Belle's) and I'll go into the cart and hae a lie doon."

He went into the cart and lay doon and my uncle drove on - but it was an awfy rattly auld road, ye ken, in they days, comin doon fae the fairm and my father must have dozed off to sleep and with the rattles of the old road, the bunch of hay cam over my father's face.

So when they came doon intae Alyth, it was Edwards the grocer, the name is still in the town to this day - ... he was passing wi his horse and van and this Edwards stopped because he thought that my father looked awfie queer-like in the back o' the cairt and he gaed ower and lookit at him and said, "God bless me - there's something far wrang wi Macgregor the day!"

Now my mother had been hawking the toon ... so this man Edwards went lookin for her with his van and he says to my mother, "Look, Martha, you better up and have a look at Dan, there's something far wrang wi him, he's in an awfu bad colour."

... So my mother gaed up; but by this time there'd be a puckle folk gathered round about the cairt. It was just opposite the doctor's hoose there - it was Dr. Kidd at that time. They took my father out o the cairt and carried him over to the doctor's. But the doctor wouldnae hear a word o him gettin inside his surgery or his house - oh no - he was a tinker and he had to go to the garage which had a stone floor - and the doctor sent the servant lassie into the house and he says, "Bring him out a drink o milk."

Now it was an awfu cold day - and I've heard several times since, that if he had been taken into a warm fire and got a hot drink, he would have been revived, ye ken. But he was stretched oot on the cold cold stone floor there in the garage. And the doctor says, "Och this man's deid - I canna dae naethin for him. Who is his parents or who is his wife and who belongs to his gear?" And of course my mother was standing there greeting with me in her airms and Donald and Andy was with her you see - and no one ever asked how the thing happened. They never held an inquest on the sudden death - he was just tinker Donald Macgregor and that was the end of it ... He never even got a shroud .. his body was not washed or made decent - cause he was a tinker. I don't think there was even a cord on the coffin ... So it was a very poor show, was my father's burial. (Brune, pp.5-6)

What Belle has to say about the Alyth doctor seems to be borne out by a report in the Blairgowrie Advertiser of Saturday 9th December, 1899 in which he is quoted as saying at a meeting of the Alyth branch of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, during a discussion of the problem of schooling for tinker children, that "nothing short of legislation would put an end to the nomadic life of the tinker." He had had many talks with them in their camps and they had a fixed idea that drink was an absolute necessity on account of the life they led. The children were not only nourished but brought up in the midst of drink and they were consequently (sic) led to practise and view life in the same nomadic fashion as their parents. He was thoroughly convinced that legislation was the only cure. These words, typical as they were of the time in which they were uttered, beg more than one question. They assume, first of all, that there is something intrinsically wrong about leading a nomadic life, an assumption that seems to be worldwide. There is also the implication that a nomadic life is a feckless life. In this case, the doctor attributes the cause of it to drink. He also apparently believes that legislation can change human nature. The rigid moralism behind these statements, which might sound quite respectable at the kind of meeting where they were spoken, unfortunately sometimes results in the kind of treatment meted out by the same doctor to Belle's father.

With her husband dead, Martha Macgregor's first problem was to pay for his burial, poor though it was.

So they put him in the mortuary here, ye ken, it's doon the Green there, and they said, "Now ye'll hae tae register his death." Of course my mother, nane o them could read or write,

you know, and so of course, she just telt his name, his age and where he was born. Then they said, "Hoo are ye goin tae pay for his coffin and all his funeral expenses?"

"Well," she says, "I havenae a ha'penny," she says, "I have nothing - but I have two wee laddies and my brother."

"A weel, there's something will have to be done about it." ... about six to seven mile fae Alyth (at Lintrathen) ... they were planting trees there at the time - my two brothers and my uncle got a job planting these trees at half a crown a week, and they had to bide up there and plant trees till they had saved three pounds - that was what the funeral expenses came to at that time. (Brune, p.7)

After that it was a matter of scraping a daily living and from Belle's account of this it can be seen that there is very little room for fecklessness when the struggle is for survival and any travelling done is purposive: to find work or to sell goods.

Well, my father died on the 8th of March, as I told you, they went to this place Lintrathen to plant the trees, and then, you see, my mother hawked about. My uncle made baskets, my brothers made baskets, they made heather rangers, the heather scrubbers they clean pots with. They made heather bisoms - brooms and brushes - but it was heather bisoms they were called then. Well, Donald and my uncle Jimmy made these things at night when they cam hame fae their work, so as my mother could hawk them during the day. And they were going out during the day planting they trees for this half a crown a week to pay for their funeral expenses, while my mother she just hawked all round and about the glens with me in her airms, maybe ten or twelve mile out, and walk back to get as much as she could beg and sell for these brushes and things to get their supper and a wee bite at night.

They kept making these baskets and heather rangers and things all the year round, but they were aye working on the land these days - maybe forestry in the winter and the early Spring, and then the neep time cam on - that was June month again. Well, we always had a wee turn at that, you see - and my mother went hawk-ing fae place tae place - and July the berries started. (Brune, pp.7-8).

It is clear from this that the yearly pattern of traveller life was worked out according to the availability of different kinds of casual work, the travellers' own ability to make articles for sale and the places where these things could be sold. The increase in mechan-

ised farming and factory mass production of household goods, naturally, has robbed the travellers of these two sources of income, since the days when Belle's family subsisted by these means.

When Donald Macgregor died, Martha took a house in Blairgowrie, probably no more than a room or a room and kitchen "in a place called The Croft - that's where the police station of Blairgowrie is now - it was an auld, auld building at the time." (Brune p.8)

A tinker woman without a man was not considered able to look after children, although, as Belle pointed out, the women were the ones who carried the responsibility for this most of the time. Belle's mother was afraid the authorities would take her children from her if she stayed on the road, so she settled down, Blairgowrie then becoming the base for her hawking activities.

She went roond hawking in the toon of Blairgowrie and Rattray, she cam owre tae Alyth where she was always very weel kent and liked - or she'd go to Coupar Angus. I've known my mother get up before the break o day when I was three year auld - I wouldna know a lot about it, but there's things that stand out in a bairn's memory, you know. And she would pack her basket full - maybe a hundredweight or more - as full as she could wi a' kinds o wee odds and ends, arranged in some definite order in which she expected to dispose of the goods, and she'd take that basket on her back, and she'd put me on top o that basket, and she'd walk to the Bridge o Cally - which is six miles fae Blair on the straight road, but she gaed off and on tae all the fairmhooses - up an auld road here, up an auld road there - I would say she'd cover ten miles up to the Bridge o Cally and she'd come right down the other side again. There was aboot twenty mile a day hawking - wi a hundredweight at the start and what with swapping one thing for another, generally mair than that at the finish o the day. (Brune, p.11)

Martha Macgregor and her basket of odds and ends would be a welcome figure to the farming people in Glenisla and Glenshee, bringing

useful commodities that were needed in everyday life such as pins, ribbons, thread, combs, elastic and a multitude of other small wares, besides the tinware and brushes her sons made. When they were not doing casual farmwork "the menfolk gathered fichles, that is, auld clothes and rags, and whatever else they managed tae get hame on their bikes - sheepskins, wool and such - whatever was saleable and they managed to get off people." (Brune, pp.10-11)

I have met one person in Perth, a Mrs. Kathleen Slater, who remembers as a child being on her grandparents' farm when Martha Macgregor appeared with her pack at a most opportune moment when a length of white knicker elastic was urgently required. This kind of incident must have been commonplace.

Donald Macgregor had been a pearl-fisher, like many of the Perthshire travellers, and Belle recalls that her brothers carried on this trade too.

It was away up the Speyside for the pearl-fishing and away over maybe Glenesk way - there's quite a good river up there for pearl-fishing, and down at Brechin there's a place called Justinhaugh. There's a good river down there as well. And that was the main living in the summertime away back - the pearl-fishing for the men-folks, and for the women, the hawking. If the men did get a couple of pearls, they got maybe two or three pounds each for them, which was quite a lot of money at that time. If you got a fiver then, you know, it was a lot of money.

After the pearl-fishing, when the men had sold the few pearls of the season, the women were allocated a certain amount of money for to buy stock - such as brushes and combs - from local wholesalers at wholesale price. They were well-off then, they didn't have to wait on their men making the stuff then - they bought the stock to put in their baskets. ... This hawking was never as profitable as the pearl-fishing but it made the profit on the pearls grow - and you could never barter pearls - you had to sell them

to a jeweller. So it was important that the men kept at the pearl-fishing and the women at the hawking or we would never have made ends meet. You see, basket-making and that was a lot of hard work for very little profit.

Then when they did manage to make up to eight or nine pounds at the end of the season they would go and buy a wee horse and cairt - see, long ago they had tae hae wee horses and cairts - at least my mother hadna for many a year. My father's was taken off her. It was just a pram or a barrow-like and she just walked around wi that here and there when she had a bigger load. It was a very, very poor existence. It really and truly was. (Brune, pp.9-10)

In spite of this, Martha Macgregor's greatest fear continued to be that her children would be taken from her and when it came to the beginning of October each year, she made sure that Donald and Andy and eventually Belle, attended school from then until the end of April, as traveller children were allowed to do.¹ In spite of Belle's mother being "weel kent and weel liked" by householders who gave her rags and bought her goods, Belle was taunted at school because of her background.

... it was pure hell - a lot o kids taking it out o me because my mother was a hawker-woman ... and the worst in that school, in Blairgowrie High School where I went to first, was the school-mistress's own son. I never got anything but, "Tinkie, tink e live in a tent, can't afford to pay the rent" or "Tinkie, tinkie, tinkie - dinna play wi her she's a tinkie!" and that sort of thing ... it didna matter how well-dressed I went tae school. (Brune, p.11)

Martha always took a delight in dressing Belle in pretty things she had been given by local householders and sometimes even sold things back to them that Belle had grown out of, and their children would be wearing them, when they shouted their taunts. Belle did not retaliate.

I wouldna fight back or speak back - I rather just stood aside and tried to keep out of their way whenever possible. But Andy - he was never out of fights; he fought all the time; it didna matter if they were big or wee; if they called Andy a "tinkie" they never got away with it. (Brune, p.12)

Belle reckons she only had, "aboot four years education all told, for I only had the winter months in the schools." (Brune, p.12) Nevertheless, she did learn to read and write better than her brothers. Donald's health was poor and he was already thirteen years old when his father died. Before that, as Belle says, "ma father wasna bothering wi things like that when he was alive," (Brune, p.9) so Donald could not even sign his own name. His teacher, according to Belle, said to their mother, "Oh I would never dream of learning that laddie anything, he is the best message laddie I have in the school - and for the tinker life that is mapped out for him he doesna need to read or write." (Brune, p.9)

A colleague in the teaching profession, Mr. George Stirling, who has taught in the Blairgowrie area for thirty years, answered some questions which I asked him about his experience of working in a school where there has always been a proportion of traveller children. He said on the whole as far as he has observed teachers have been sympathetic towards travellers, although "in some degree or other 'agin the system'." He has seen only limited evidence of persecution of pupils who were travellers, but was willing to admit that it could have been greater than the staff realised. He thought some traveller children were extra-sensitive and inclined to be suspicious of staff or other pupils, sometimes imagining slights and insults where none were meant. A full transcript of the questionnaire and his answers can be found at the end of this chapter. It should be noted that Belle's family had great liking and respect for this teacher.

Belle's feelings about her schooling she summed up as follows:

I would have liked a better education, but it was a great relief getting away from these schools; there didn't seem to be much of a future for our kind even then, though things were a deal rosier in some ways than they are nowadays. (Brune, p.12)

She said that in 1963, but it applies even more in the 1980s, when large numbers of unemployed compete with travellers for what little casual farm work is available.

Belle declares that, as the youngest of the family and the only girl, she was spoiled by her mother and her brothers, if anyone living in such poor circumstances could be said to be "spoiled". In speaking of herself as a teenager left school, she gives us an illustration of this.

When I was sixteen and seventeen, I wasna just the worst-looking in Blair, and I thought a gey lot o mysel, 'cause I was the only lassie in the hoose; and I've seen my poor auld mother many a day - when she could hae done wi the few bob, she used tae go an leave on a frock or a dress for me, and pay it up and get it out when it was paid - and I really did think a lot o mysel when I went down the street dressed in my finery. I went oot wi a lot o the laddies o Blairgowrie, the sons o the big trade people and some o the professionals too - like there was the Davidsons the chemists, for instance - but none o them ever thought in terms o gettin married - all they wanted was just Belle Macgregor, the tink; that's what they thought they were following, you see. Oh if I spoke to one of them one night, then maybe we went to the pictures - just once; you'd never see me back wi that same lad again - because he wasna wantin Belle Macgregor for to be anything but what he thought the lowest o the low. But I wasna lyin wi ony man behind the green bushes till after we were married. That's what applied to the men in Blairgowrie and the townsfolk. They thought because we were low as they made us down to be that they would hae nae bother at aa and just be gettin their ain way wi us. But they made a mistake in that. Well, then, the travelling geddis, I never had any time for because they were all Townsleys, more or less. So I never really got interested in them as boyfriends. (Brune pp.12-13).

This reference to Townsleys, another travelling family, as not the kind she would choose for a boyfriend, perhaps dates back to the murder of her grandfather, Donald Stewart, by Townsleys, some time before the turn of the century.

Well, the thing was telt tae me by my mother ... Now at that time, most o the tinker families never had caravans or cairts - they just travelled about wi their tents packed on the backs o their ponies, and it was one thing, my grandfather seemingly was always frowned upon by the rest o the tinkers in the camps around here - that he always had what they call a "yoke" - which is an auld-fashioned pony-cairt. ... Now this particular yoke that my grandfather had at the time - he went to Perth Horse Sale and he bought this wee pony ... and he went down to a joiner in Rattray, Jimmy Scott and he got this wee cairt really made to his own design. At that time, I suppose he would be a great man. The cairt if I mind right what my mother said cost £6.10.0 to make, new, right fae the foundations - so that's a long time ago.

Well, he had this wee yoke and they left the auld fairm - it must have come around June-month or July; anyway it was in the summertime - I ken that because that was the time they all used tae come doon fae Pitlochry. They were drinkin, because when they used tae meet the Townsleys, they were all very friendly for a beginning, and that was the first thing they did when they had-na seen each other for a few months. They'd go down to the pub and it was half a croon for a bottle of whisky; but they never had to buy their beer in bottles - they used to go to the brewery and get the fill o a great big can o beer for tuppence or thrup-pence. ... Whoever had the most money bought the most drink and then they'd just keep goin you see till it was all gone ...

But this auld Andrew Townsley he wasna just interested in roar-in away drinking and singing - he was awfully interested in this yoke my grandfather had ... But no, my grandfather wouldnae hear of it. "No, no, Andrew," he says, "no, I'm no sellin ma horse and I'm no swappin - I'm no dealin at all."

Now the Townsleys were a big family, four great muckle sons and five daughters, you see - and my grandfather only had my granny and some quite young bairns. ... So they all went up the road now to make their way to Pitlochry, and they still had mair drink wi them - and I suppose my grandfather would be drinking on the way up and gettin gey fu as it were. So he fell asleep in the back o the cairt. These Townsleys they followed on; they were determined to have it - so they followed on. It was gettin in the gloamin ... and my granny said, "Look," she says, "he's lyin drunk in the back o the cairt; can ye no leave us alane? My man telt ye he's no goin tae sell."

Now my grandfather he got wi the doldrums o the drink, ye know, and he's talkin away at them and trying tae get his horse feeth o them - they were takin it away - they were trying tae force it off him by this time - and my granny was feared to go and run for

help - she was feared to go an tell anybody in case the police would come on the scene and the bairns would be taken off her. ... They didnae ken in the squabble whether it was auld man Townsley or whether it was his son Hughie Townsley - they can't make out to this day which o them took the hammer out o the back o the Townsley's cairt. He took the hammer ... and he hit my grandfather on the back o the head wi it; well, of course, my grandfather went down - he was knocked unconscious ...

At this the Townsleys got the wind up ... they turned roond and awa they went back to Blair. ... The nicht they [Belle's grandparents] landed at Pitlochry, they wadna go to nae doctor [travellers had a fear of doctors whom they connected with body-snatching] ... He lasted only nine days and on the tenth day he died. He was never in a hospital. He died in his tent ... They [the police] put out a search for these Townsleys, you see and they were put on trial in Perth for the murder of Donald Stewart. ... They put it down as ... not proven - because auld man Townsley had his family all grown up and they could give evidence ... my uncles Donald and Jimmy Jack were supposed to be too young to give evidence. ... So the Townsleys said that my grandfather was on provocation like, and that they had to do it in self-defence. ... From that time on there has always been ill-feeling between us and that branch o the Townsleys. (Brune, pp.1-4)

When Belle was eighteen events took a turn that was to change her life completely. A letter arrived from Ireland from a relative of Belle's mother, Nancy MacPhee or Campbell, who was married to John Stewart. They had gone there with their family after the First World War broke out. Two of the daughters of the family had married Higgin-ses, and Perthshire travellers at that time did not feel any duty to fight for king and country, so Ireland probably seemed the natural place to go to keep out of the war. "Why dae ye no come tae Ireland," the letter read, "... it's a great country for pearl-fishing." (Douglas 3A12) Belle's brothers and uncle, as has been mentioned "were all great pearl fishers." (Douglas 3A12) But Belle's mother would not go, although her brother Donald and her uncle Jimmy were keen. They needed someone to go with them who could read the names of the stations and streets and do any reading and writing that was to be done, so they asked Belle to give up her job in Lindsay and More's jam

factory in Dundee to go with them. This she did, "and we went tae Ireland and we went tae a place just above Derry, called Carrigan. It's on the borders to County Donegal. And that's where we met them [her Stewart relatives] for the first time in years and years and we all went pearl fishing. That's where I met Alec." (Douglas 3A12)

Pearl-fishing is a traditional source of livelihood among the Perthshire tinkers and is carried out by means of a glass-bottomed jug and a long stick with a cleft at the end of it. Belle describes her brother Donald's pearl jug.

... it is really a good thing for seeing the bottom o the river. But it had a narrow top and a wide bottom, ye ken. He just used tae cut the bottom out ye see and pit it in theirsels and they silvered it sometimes. ... They cut the glass round ... I've seen Donald cut it wi a chuckie stane. They would take a chuckie stane ... and they'd break it and they'd have an edge, and they'd go roon wi the edge, ye ken. When they cut the bottom out the jig, this big tin jug thing, they always left a wee rim on the inside. They didnae cut it right tae the dent o the rim. They left a wee bit, so that when they pit the glass in, it fell on this. ... Then it was candle grease they pit roond aboot it ... they could put putty ... but the candle grease aye took the trick, because ye put the candle grease right roon. ... When the candle grease was on the cauld water, well, it always hardened, ye ken. (Douglas 8A7)

Belle's father was pearl-fishing when she was born in a tent on the banks of the Tay. In fact, she claims that on that day he got the biggest pearl that had ever been taken out of the river.

That was the day I was born - the 18th of July (1906). Two hours after I was born he found it at the stretch called Stenton, not far from Caputh. It weighed 42 grains. My father sold it to a couple from America who were salmon fishing in the Tay at the time. It was a perfect ball, as clear as crystal. ... my father used to say he got two pearls in the one day. (Brune, p.52)

Pearl fishing was what took Belle's brothers and uncle to Ireland in 1925 and they were also lucky there.

My brother also got a perfect ball in the River Moy in Ireland in 1926, weighing 37½ grains. (Brune, p.52)

Alec describes the first time he went pearl-fishing with his father:

The first time I went to pearl fish was doon the Tay there. My father and Hughie Higgins - 'twas him that had that hoose where that tiled hoose is over there (across the road) Hughie Higgins. So we were out wi the boat and I was just goin up be the water-side when I seen a shell. I went down an I liftit it and I never opened it. I pit it in ma pocket. My father came in an he was openin his shells and he - I says, "I got a shell too." I was only a laddie at the time, nine or ten year auld. An he says, "Whaur is it?" I says, "Here it is." I pit ma hand in ma pocket and I handed it tae him. It was a great big pearl the size o your nail into the shell and they fished the whole day and never got a haet, never got nothin. (Douglas 4A1)

Belle related how her family used to trade pearls for groceries and clothes from village shopkeepers who sometimes, Belle thinks, exploited the fact that they were only concerned with their immediate needs:

There's the River Esk ye know, oot there at Kirriemuir, the Esk, the River Esk, and it's in Glen Clova, it rins doon Glen Clova. And my father and a' the rest o ma folk, ma uncles an them, used tae fish pearls long ago. ... There was a man that had a shop there and his name was Mr. Winter. He'd a grocer's shop and a draper's shop and that, in Cortachy. ... And he would say, "Now, boys, I hope ye's are lucky the day. Mind, bring them aa doon tae me." ... And he'd gie them five bob an about three shillingsworth o groceries. Ye ken, at that time they were lovely big pearls, great big pearls. And they were glad o that. And mony the time they would go doon and he would say, "I'll gie ye wan o ma auld suits, or I'll gie ye a pair o ma auld shoes." He really made a mint off them, when they camped up there. That was the way they did long ago. (Douglas 4A1)

Alex recalls an occasion when his father made a shrewd deal with another pearl fisher:

There was a big man - I'm called after him - Alec Reid ... and he was a great pearl fisher. He jist went up tae the Isla and he was over six foot two - jist went up tae there [indicates waist height]. No frightened o the water. And ma father met him - was up at Callander and we was comin doon wi the cart -and we met this Alec Reid. ... "I'm jist new oot the river there," he says, "pearl fishin." "Did ye get anything?" he says. "Oh aye," he says, "I got one ... I'm goin to Callander to try an sell it." ... So he went to Callander and ma father says, "Whatna a jeweller's ye go tae?" He says, "I'm gaun tae this jeweller here. Will ye come wi me?" he says. ... They went owre tae the jewellers and he took the pearl oot and put it in his hand and he says, "That's a good one Mr. So-an-so." And the jeweller said, "By God, aye," he says. "It's a nice pearl." And he took it and weighed it. He says, "It's ten and a half grain." ... He said, "How much will you give me for it?" My father's standin listenin tae him. He says, "I'll gie ye two pounds for't," he says, "and a good watch." My father laughed, you know, tae hissel. "Oh," Alec Reid says, "It's worth mair than that," he says. So ma father picked him on the shoulder and Alec Reid lucked round. He says, "I'll gie ye six pund for it," he says, "and ma watch." "Done!" he says. So ma father gave him six pounds and he's watch an chain. The jeweller got on tae ma father for makin the deal in his shop and ma father walkit oot and he sent it - he always sold his pearls tae Delvin ... it was a fortnicht passed before my father got a letter. Sixty five pounds in it, a cheque for the pearl. (Douglas 4A1)

John describes a strange experience his father had while pearl fishing with travellers called Davis in the north of Scotland. This story comes into that hard-to-define grey area between personal experiences and tales of the supernatural told in the first person.

Him an this Davises wis pearl-fishing ... and they were fishin this pool. You wade the streams wi waders. But in the deeper water ye've got a pearl boat. Y'know a flat-bottom made like that, jist a square ... and ye have a plank along it, an ye lie on your stomach like that, wi your glass-bottomed joog and your pearl-stick, ye know, an ye'd pick up shells. Well, ma father an this Davises was fishin an ma father was oot on the bank, openin shells. ... But he got a ball, a lovely ball it wis! About maybe twelve fourteen grain, ye see. An he put it in cotton wool and put it in his match box. An this gen'leman came doon. Noo, some o the gen'lemen for the sake o the salmon fishin would try tae put ye off the water ... He says, "What are ye doin?" Ma father says, "I'm pearl fishin," he says, "lookin for pearls."

"Oh you're a pearl fisher?"

"Yes."

He says, "Did ye get any?"

Ma father says, "Yes," he says, "I got one," he says, "nice pearl."

... "Could I see it?" Ma father took it oot an showed it him - a lovely ball, ye see. He says, "Where did ye get that one?"

Ma father says, "I got it in the pool there."

Ye know, he walked straight to the edge of the pool. He says, "That's the pool I drowned in." ... The Davises an ma father'll tell ye that. He plunged straight from the bank, straight into the pool! ... Noo that was queer wasn't it?" (Douglas 13A1)

Although many of Alec and Belle's relatives still carry on the pearl-fishing, a naturalist writing in the Dundee Courier 5th April, 1980 on the subject of pearl-fishing, remarked:

From time to time ... I've seen "tinks" trying their luck at this game. But it's a ploy that needs patience and perseverance - commodities that the "travelling folk" seldom have.

This is just one example of the ignorance that exists among the settled community about the traveller's activities. Alec, speaking of the present day, however, saw a decline in the traveller's knowledge of how to practise pearl-fishing in such a way that the supply of shells can be maintained:

But the pearl-fishing is finished in Scotland. Even the very young ones is killed. They take any size o shells noo, kill them. Ye get these shells, the first size noo, wee totty ones. It jist ruins the river. Them up there [indicating up the street to relatives' houses] Donald and Neillie, they ruin the river. And they sell a lot o pearls too. (Douglas 4A1)

Perhaps by living in houses, these relatives have started to absorb the materialistic values of the towndwellers - a far cry from those forebears of Belle's (and their own) who were content with enough to buy a few groceries and some old clothes.

Alec Stewart was the eldest surviving son of John Stewart and Nancy MacPhee or Campbell, their seventh child, born in 1904. Belle and Alec had of course known of each other's existence and even met

as children, but this meeting was different, as they fell in love and were soon intending to wed. But before that, Belle had to return home with her brother Donald, who was

...always a sick man, he always had this bronchitis, ken what I mean? He wasna well, and the freshwater in the burns didnae suit him at all. He was always no well and coughing. So he wanted hame. (Douglas 3A12)

Soon after their return to Blairgowrie, her other brother Andy said, "If I'd my fare I'd go to Ireland to fish for pearls." (Douglas 3A12) So Belle wrote to Alec's mother "so she sent back a five pound note ... Andy and I we packed up and back to Ireland. This time we went to a place called McGuire's Bridge." (Douglas 3A12)

There Andy went pearl fishing with Alec and his father and they caught a huge pearl, which they decided to bring back to Scotland to sell as they evidently thought they could get a better price there than the forty pounds they were offered in Omagh.

... we decided to come back to Scotland to sell the pearl. Alec said to his father and mother the night afore, he says, "Mother I'm gaun tae Scotland wi them." 'Course it was me he was gaun wi, richt enough ... So we came here and it was jist aboot berrytime. ... And Alec stayed a fortnight wi us, wi my mother like and Donald. And he says, "I think," he says, "me and Belle's gettin married. Have you any objections?" But they said, "No." But what angered my mother was, she thought me bein the only lassie, I should hae been married here. Instead o that we went back tae Ireland, got married in Ballymoney in the County Antrim. (Douglas 3A12)

Their wedding was on the 17th August, 1925. The fact that they were second cousins of course did not make their marriage unusual. In fact cousin marriage was a distinctive feature of tinker genealogy, just as it had been typical of the old clan system and is just one

more example of the way in which the tinkers preserved old Scottish customs.

There were, then, three important influences on Belle's life up till her marriage: her family life, her traveller origins and her Blairgowrie context. These were of course inter-connected in many different ways and not always easy to consider separately. For example, many facets of her family life took their character from the traveller attitudes and values that were inherited by the members of the family. Also, these attitudes and values were affected by the fact that they lived in a house in Blairgowrie.

Belle and her mother and brothers formed a very closeknit family group, with Belle as the youngest being as she says herself "spoiled" and made to feel the favourite. For the first five years of her life she was taken by her mother on her hawking rounds, a practice not uncommon among tinkers, even when there was someone else to watch the child. A woman with a young child hawking very often got more sympathy at the doors. But in Martha Macgregor's case there was no alternative. This would make Belle's going to school even more of a shock, being suddenly launched on her own, from this loving and protective environment, into a classroom full of strangers, some of whom were not at all friendly. This happens to many children when they go to school, of course, but to be a "tink" in these circumstances was an added disadvantage when Belle was a child. Even after she started school Belle would accompany her mother on her rounds, on days when there was no food in the house.

The family group was also where she first learned her father's songs from her brothers and family history from her mother.

My mother and my granny and my grandfather - I didnae see any o ma grandfather - but aa my back generation, that's what they delighted in - sittin tellin their bairns about their folk.
(Douglas 1A5)

As well as accounts like those of her father's death and her grandfather's murder, Belle also heard stories about how her father learned his songs, like the following:

I was just a baby and knew nothing about this. But there was a plooman at Lintrathen and my father always used tae go to the hairvest there, to a farm called the Peel ... There was this plooman on the binder ... and he was aye singing "The Road and the Miles to Dundee". My father bein sae fond o songs, ye ken, he was really interested in the auld-fashioned air that this had. But he was a shy plooman and he wad never sing tae ye. My father, my mother said, used tae coax him but - no! But he always used tae go doon and eh - get a few drams on a Setterday nicht and he bud in the bothy. And ma faither and mither camped just in the stackyaird, ye ken. And he used tae crawl up an sit at the door o the bothy tae learn the air o the song, "The Road and the Miles tae Dundee." Now that's goin back to when I was - I dinnae ken if I was even born. I think it was just Andy that was the bairn. (Douglas 2B3)

Another story explained how Belle's uncle Jimmy, who was more like another brother to her, came to be given his name. Apparently her grandmother went into labour one night when she was camped in Glenisla and when it was clear that she was in difficulty, Belle's grandfather appealed for help to the farmer he was working for, who rode all the way to Blair to get a doctor. In gratitude, they gave the baby his name, Jimmy Jack.

There was a great deal of contact between the travellers and the farming community who needed the casual labour they provided, and who

more often than not employed the same travelling families year after year, just as Belle's father got work at harvest time every year at the Peel near Alyth. This is a practice that continues to this day, even though the amount of casual work available has declined. One local farmer I know, for example, has had the same tinker families working for him for years, and he refers to them as "our traivellers", to distinguish them from those who come from outside Perthshire in the summer months. Contact between farming folk and tinkers has gone on for generations, as the following excerpt from a thesis on an Angus family shows:

The Angus and East Perthshire region with its seasonal demands for casual labour, has long been an area which attracted the tinkers or travelling people of Scotland. Despite the close contacts between travellers and the settled farm servant population in jobs such as potato and raspberry picking, and despite their sharing many other aspects from poverty to dialect, they remained highly segregated groups, each of which is suspicious and often hateful of the other.³

This was certainly the case concerning Grannie Davidson and her family⁴ and their relationship to the traveller families who camped a few yards from their West Muir (Kirriemuir) house during the berry-picking season. Although they worked together and although Grannie sometimes provided food, bought heather besoms and tin jugs, or listened to the pipers performing, the travellers were never allowed in her house. As Janet (her grand-daughter) recalls from her childhood visits to West Muir:

The tinkies aye came up an camped during the summertime ... up at the back o' whaur ma Grannie bed; an they were the right travellin tinkies, they'd the right tents an that; an I mind o them sittin singing - to me it sounded like they were sittin wailin - roond the tent or the fire. We [the children] were there some nights, gettin jeely pieces and sittin roon the fire ... but Christ! ye got a hidin if ye were found near them. They could smell the smoke aff ye when ye went back in the hoose ... I've no had it explained why I should or shouldn't like them, it's just ingrained that there's a dividing line.⁵

The dividing line that Janet talks about is not so much that between the tinkers and the settled population as the old one between Lowlander and Highlander.

... the strident, decorated style and dramatic flair of traveller singers is seen as the opposite of what is judged the right or acceptable form of singing by Janet and her family, so traveller culture as a whole is seen as the antithesis of the Lowland Scottish life with which they identify.⁵

The culture of the settled Angus people is described as "dogmatic, dour and unexotic". The singers from the farm community have been compared unfavourably to the travellers by A.L. Lloyd who wrote

Good as they are, the farmer singers seem very formal and matter-of-fact compared with the inventive and passionate tinkers.⁷

Janet's description of the tinkers singing round their campfires as "sittin wailin" is just the kind of remark that is often made by Lowlanders about singing in Gaelic. The Perthshire tinkers' ancestors were undoubtedly Gaelic speaking and their singing style is clearly derived from the same source.

Janet's mother Tibbie "had worked in the berryfields of Strathmore" with "the Stewart family of Rattray" who were Belle and Alec's family and relations, so what has been said about travellers and the farming people's attitude to them applies to them too.

In spite of the dividing line between them, however, the tinkers and the farming people shared many things, as Edward K. Miller has observed, "from poverty to dialect" and this spectrum includes the practice of making their own entertainment.

When the tinkers were engaged on casual farmwork and were camped on the farmer's ground, they could be heard singing round their campfires or in their tents at night, as has already been noted. Even when they were living in houses, in those days, this continued, as Belle describes:

My mother was a great old body for listening to the song. She couldnae sing unfortunately but she just loved tae sit and listen tae Donald and masel singing the auld songs or making up verses. Andy was fairly good at the verses but he wasnae much o a singer ... We always had a sort o thing between us Donald and Andy and me, that on Hogmanay night we'd aa make up something different ... (Douglas 3A2)

In this context singing went hand in hand with composition and Belle got the habit of song-making as well as of singing, although in those days the singing was only in the family circle. It was from her brothers that she learned her father's songs, since Donald, illiterate as he was, and a sufferer from chronic bronchitis, seems nevertheless to have been a song carrier with a considerable repertoire, with a continuing interest in songs and singing, even after his father's death. Indeed, this may have been another reason for it, since travellers use songs as one way of commemorating a member of their family. When Andy Macgregor's son-in-law died suddenly in September, 1980, I vividly recall this happening on the evening of the next day when I was ceilidhing at Belle's house: Cathy, Belle's elder daughter sang a song associated with the dead man "The Lakes of Shilin" holding the hands of a relative and singing with such intensity that the performance took on the quality of a lament that was very moving to hear. Belle's attachment to her brothers made it natural that she should learn songs from them and this explains why so many of the songs she knows could be accounted men's songs, in the sense that many of them

are sung from a masculine viewpoint. Whether Belle set out deliberately to learn the songs or whether she learned them simply because she heard them sung so often, it is not now easy to establish. Her recognition in the folk revival has perhaps inclined her to give the impression, and indeed believe it to be true, that she looked on herself as a tradition bearer from an early age, but when she was "discovered" in the 1950s by Maurice Fleming, prospecting for songs for the School of Scottish Studies, she was apparently surprised that the songs that were sung in the family circle were of interest to anyone else.

The singing that went on among farm servants Edward K. Miller describes in some detail, differentiating between the women's and the men's singing. The women tended to sing in a domestic context as they performed their many duties around the farm house, and as such were not accounted as "singers". Thus Joe Forbes, a brother-in-law of Tibbie Weatherston could say, "I never mind o Tib daein ony singing really,"⁸ while her daughter could say, "She was aye singing tae us when we were bairns ... there was aye a song comin oot o Mum."⁹ Janet's aunt Agnes, wife of Joe Forbes also says, "We jist gaed aboot singing in the hoose jist on wur own. We just sing them as they come to wur minds."¹⁰ Farm maids had a long working day and a great deal of pure drudgery to get through, cleaning and cooking, carrying water, feeding hens and making butter, so it is hardly surprising that they sang to keep their spirits up, although Tib's sister Helen notes that she sang "as long as she didn't have too much to do."¹¹ When the work was heavy the singing was abandoned. Nevertheless it seems that

a lot of singing did go on in the course of the day and the children of the family were aware of it even if they did not always take a lot of notice of it, and even if their menfolk did not count it as singing. The men, of course, sang in the bothies and Joe Forbes describes the sort of thing that went on:

When I was at Reddie there wis fower o us in the bothy. Maybe one night the Mains lads, the Auchendoran lads an quite a few lads fae roon aboot wad come in. The next nicht ye was at the Mains. It really wis some bloody good nichts we had. Ye had yer lads wi the fiddle, yer lads wi the moothie, the accordion, ye had singers, lads that did recitations. It was bloody good entertainment, that's no jokin.¹²

The men who sang in the bothies were regarded as "singers" in a way that the women who sang in the house were not, yet Edward K. Miller points out that,

They did not begin their song learning when they entered the bothies. Rather the social context of the bothies provided a performance situation in which they became more self-conscious of what they had picked up in a non-deliberate way in the domestic situation.¹³

Many of the farm servants picked up songs also from penny song sheets, which could be purchased at The Poet's Box in Dundee. Usually they heard the song first, then bought the song sheet to learn it themselves. Tinkers like Belle's father sometimes picked up songs from farm workers, like the shy ploughman at Lintrathen who sang "The Road and the Miles to Dundee." Belle herself and her brothers bought song sheets at the Poet's Box. It is not surprising therefore to find that the song repertoires of the tinkers and the farm servants overlap to a great extent. As well as old ballads like, "The Bonnie Hoose o Airlie," and "The Dowie Dens o Yarrow," and "Mill of Tifty's Annie," there were bothy songs like, "The Overgate," "Betsy Bell," and "The Road and the Miles to Dundee," and old broadsides like, "Jamie

Foyers." [Bothy songs are here taken to mean songs sung in the bothies and not just songs about farm work.] Other old songs found in both repertoires were, "Huntingtower," "The Lowlands of Holland," (called in Miller's informants' case, "The Rocks of Bonnie Gibraltar") and variants of the lover's ghost/night visiting song family, entitled in Belle's repertoire, "Here's a Health to all True Lovers," and in the Miller informants' "As I sat Drinking." ¹⁴ Most of the other songs in both repertoires come into the same categories: old ballads, broadsides, music hall or bothy songs. Later Belle added a number of Irish songs to her repertoire and composed many songs herself, mostly for the family circle, with the exception of one or two that she sings in public. The bothy chieles often adapted songs to their own locality, for example, by substituting the name of their own farm for the one in the song, or adding verses about their own farm and workmates. In fact Belle's version of "The Overgate," has three verses in it about people on a farm that have little to do with the rest of the story and must have been added by some bothy singer, poking fun at his comrades. Parodies were also popular in the bothies, like the "Loch Lomond" parody found among Miller informants, which is still sung in Perthshire and Angus. Belle also has some parodies among her own songs, for example, "Brockie and the Hielan Chief," which is a parody of "The Dowie Dens of Yarrow." (Douglas 3B7)

In reviewing the links that existed between the song repertoires of the tinkers and the farm servants in the same area, something can be learned of the context of Belle's early life in Blairgowrie. Although each community kept to itself, they shared the work on the

land at different seasons of the year and each needed the other in certain ways. The farmers needed the work and the wares of the tinkers and the tinkers needed the employment and the custom afforded them by the farming community, which also gave them a certain degree of protection. Although the tinkers were low on the social scale, it would not be true to describe them as outcasts. Any resentment that existed between the farm servants and the tinkers, if it was not founded on the old antipathy of the Lowlander for the Highlander, probably had to do with the difference between the virtual slavery of the farm servant as compared with the apparent freedom of the travelling tinker, who seemed to please himself when and where he worked. The farm servant with his "kist" of belongings was no better off than the tinker and in many cases was conditioned by the Calvinistic work ethic to consider work for its own sake a good thing. For example one of the Miller informants, John Weatherston, spent his free time as a ploughman "working in his vegetable garden (a traditional indication of a good farm worker)." Whereas Farnham Rehfisch observes of the travellers,

Relatively untouched by the Calvinistic ethic, they ascribe no value to work as such. Labour is seen to be a means of obtaining sufficient money to sustain oneself and family and that is all. The widely held concept that work has a virtue on its own right is completely alien to them.¹⁵

This has led to a picture of the travellers as the drop-outs of society, loafers and scroungers, which does not tally with the description Belle has given of the way her mother and her brothers scraped a living when she was growing up. This is well put in a verse or two of one of Belle's songs, reminding us that this wretched existence was being eked out in Glenisla, where the Miller informants worked on farms, and at roughly the same time:

O we went up by Fortar or maybe the Linns
Lookin for rags or a wee puckle skins,
And naebody kent what we had tae bear
Or the hardships and cauld till we got back tae Blair.

Aye, but me an mi mither we aye trauchled through
And we aye got the price o a wee taste o brew,
And Donald and Jimmy they baith did their share,
And that was the reason we never left Blair.

(Douglas 3B1)

Belle was not the only member of her family to write songs. By her own account it was not till she was five years married, about 1930, that her brother Donald started her off in this direction:

What started the thing off for me anyway - I used tae make up wee silly things talking tae the bairns, but they didnae maybe rhyme or anything, didnae even rhyme. But Donal had a lot of illness in his time and he lay for weeks and weeks at a time with very bad bronchitis. Well, he couldnae read and he couldnae write and he couldnae lift a book tae amuse himsel lyin there and these were the wee things 'at he would do and he would compose verses and sometimes they rhymed and sometimes they didnae. We never took them serious. I never bothered about them, just said, "Oh that's no bad, that's quite good," sort o thing, ye know. But this particular time anyway I would be about five year married tae Alec and he would be about five year married ... and unfortunately they hadnae any family, an Donal was just a man that was dyin for bairns. But life was - didn't turn out for him - his first five years of his married life - as it should have. ... this is his verse for hissel;

Oh five years and more since I took the door and started
on my own
But luck was aye against me and caused me mony a frown
But I wish that I was hame again and I wad settle down.

Noo my sister was the youngest and she tried the same aul
game
Five years an more since she took the door tae sail across
the main.
'Twas over in aul Ireland she tried tae mak her hame
But nae doot she's wishing she was back tae be caaed her
mammy's wean.

But my brother was the wisest - he hung around the door
And shortly after suppertime he wad danner tae the bar
A couple o drinks was in his line, aye and maybe something
more,
But of coorse we canna aa be wyce and hang aroon the door.

It just sort of set me off and then we just sort o started from there. (Douglas 1B7)

For the next thirty years till her brothers died Belle kept up with Donald the custom of always writing some verses for Hogmanay.

About ma mother wi her hard times when she used tae go hawkin round the glens, the hard times we had, aw, bringing in some o ma relatives that had died before that. It all concerned our own family. It wasnae like aboot songs that would bring in the countryside or aa that type o thing, modern thing. It was just what happened tae wursels. (Douglas 1B7)

Nevertheless, it was a song about the Berryfields of Blair that first brought Belle to the notice of collectors. Belle's authorship of the song has been called in question, according to Maurice Fleming,¹⁶ but he is inclined to dismiss the charge as he felt the person concerned was motivated by jealousy and also he thinks "The Berryfields" is very much in the same style as the rest of Belle's songs. I am very much in agreement with this, having been close to Belle for many years. I once asked Willie MacPhee about the matter and he admitted he had heard it had been composed by an old man called Whyte. Whoever the author was it was Belle who made the song known and the song made Belle known, and this is what really matters.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE TRAVELLERS IN BLAIRGOWRIE

Answers given by Mr. George Stirling who taught Mathematics for thirty years in the Blairgowrie area.

Q. When you started teaching how many traveller children were at the school?

A. Variable from two or three to perhaps twenty.

Q. Were the children from tent, trailer or house dwelling families?

A. From trailers and houses.

Q. Over the years has there been an increase in the number of traveller children at the school?

A. Decrease - many families have now become house-dwelling and their families have remained settled.

Q. Are there any at the school now from other than house-dwelling families?

A. Not at present (1980).

Q. When you came to the school was the attendance of traveller children good, poor or moderate?

A. Moderate.

Q. Were they still allowed to attend from October till April?

A. Yes - when this privilege was rescinded, I am not sure.*

Q. What were the reasons for poor attendance - lack of parental control, accompanying parents on hawking rounds or to do farm work, or poor health?

A. It was not lack of parental control, but they did accompany parents on their hawkings rounds or to do farm work. The children always appeared well nourished and as strong healthwise as most others.

Q. Was there a lack of interest in school?

A. Definitely.

Q. Was there persecution by other pupils?

A. Only very limited evidence of this but it could have been greater than staff realised.

* It was never rescinded but few people realise that.

- Q. Do you think the attendance of traveller children has improved? If so, why?
- A. Yes, because more families are house-dwelling.
- Q. Do you think traveller children make better progress at school than they used to?
- A. Yes, because of the settled way of life; itinerant families are fewer.
- Q. When you came to the school what were your first impressions of traveller children and their families?
- A. First impressions are often wrong but - as I remember (it is a long time ago) I thought it a pity that their way of life deprived them of fellowship of many children who did not understand or who were deliberately "put off" traveller children and the brighter ones had less opportunity of realising their academic potential. I seem to remember one young girl being resentful of this.
- Q. Would you say your attitude was sympathetic or unsympathetic at the time?
- A. Sympathetic.
- Q. What would you say was the attitude of most teachers at that time?
- A. Sympathetic to the children but in some degree or other "agin the system."
- Q. Has there been any change in your attitude?
- A. A mellowing and a general acceptance of the attitudes of travellers.
- Q. What would you say was the attitude of other pupils to traveller children when you first came?
- A. Accepted them at face value in most instances.
- Q. Did they mix in the playground?
- A. Traveller children tended to remain aloof.
- Q. Do you think there has been any change in this?
- A. Yes - both "sides" integrate better.
- Q. Have you ever thought that travellers were unnecessarily suspicious of teachers or other pupils, imagining insults where none were intended?
- A. Extra-sensitive perhaps. This is confirmed by other members of staff with long service at Blairgowrie High School.

- Q. Have you found traveller children on the whole to be better at oral work than written work?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Has any attention ever been paid in your school to the traveller's oral tradition of ancient ballads and folk tales?
- A. No.
- Q. Do you think that in Blairgowrie travellers are more accepted in the local community than they were?
- A. Difficult to say. More people have recently become resident in the district and so have no real worthwhile views. Travellers still tend to remain aloof.
- Q. What is your attitude to travellers who want to continue their old way of life, i.e. travelling to where work is, living in extended family groups, etc?
- A. In a free country all should be allowed to live as they please as long as they remain within the law and as long as they are prepared to respect the needs, way of life and rights of others. The travellers appear to do and if they think and believe the advantages of such a nomadic life outweigh the advantages of settled life then they should have every right to pursue this life.
- Q. Most of our local travellers engage in casual farm work, pearl fishing, car and scrap dealing, tarmac and piping for tourists. Do you think most people appreciate the usefulness of this work?
- A. No. The only people who appreciate it are the employers.
- Q. What are your views on the question of camp-sites for travellers?
- A. My view is that camp sites should be set up complete in the same way as other caravan sites and travelling people required to pay the equivalent of rates on a pro tem basis when they occupy these sites.
- Q. Of the traveller children at Blairgowrie High School are there any likely to take Highers or "O" grades?
- A. Most here are not permanently housed and do well if their character is of a static nature, less well if the travel urge is strong.
- Q. How many would you say will leave at 16 and take up traditional traveller occupations?
- A. Very few, if any.

- Q. Of the traveller children you have known how many tend to get into trouble with the police?
- A. Only a few.
- Q. Among travellers in Blairgowrie as compared with the rest of the community is there more or less drunkenness, violence or immorality?
- A. If there is any, it is confined to their own community.
- Q. In considering the values of travellers have you noticed any differences between them and the settled community in the importance they attach to money, work, children and old people?
- A. Money less important. Work when necessary - most are conscientious and hard workers. Children and old people always appear well cared for now. In past times one rarely saw old people and children seemed less well clad and looked after (I go back 45-50 years in my memory). As a child I lived near the old drove road or cattle rake at Trinity, Brechin and so had perhaps a fair degree of contact with the tenters there.

CHAPTER TWO FOOTNOTES

1. Education (Scotland) Act, 1908.
2. Stewart O. Miller, Rosefield, Balbeggie.
3. Farnham Rehfisch. The Tinkers of Perthshire and Aberdeenshire. Dissertation in School of Scottish Studies, 1975. p.272.
4. The Use and Meaning of Song within a Scottish Family. Ph.D. Thesis by Edward K. Miller, University of Austin, Texas, 1981.
5. Miller, p.16.
6. Miller, pp.17.
7. Miller, pp.16-17.
8. Miller, p.174.
9. Miller, p.174.
10. Miller, p.174.
11. Miller, p.174.
12. Miller, p.166.
13. Miller, p.163.
14. The songs named can be found as follows:-

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>BELLE OR SHEILA</u>	<u>MILLER</u>
Bonnie Hoose o Airlie	Douglas (rec.date)	p.69
Overgate	Topic 12TS 307	p.84
Betsy Bell	" " "	p.93
Road and Miles to Dundee	Douglas 2B3	p.68
Huntingtower	Topic 12T	p.73
Here's a Health/ As I sat Drinking	Topic 12TS 307	p.96

Willie MacPhee sings "Jamie Foyers" on Douglas 16.

"The Lowlands of Holland" can be found sung by Bella Higgins on SA 1954/102.

"The Dowie Dens of Yarrow" I have heard sung in different versions by Belle and Sheila and by members of the Weatherston family.

15. Rehfisch, p.51
16. Conversations at his house in Blairgowrie, in November, 1979.

CHAPTER THREE

Family History: The Stewarts in Perthshire and Ireland

CHAPTER THREE

FAMILY HISTORY: THE STEWARTS IN PERTHSHIRE AND IRELAND

Alec Stewart was born on the 6th February, 1904, in Touttie Street in Alyth, seventh child and eldest surviving son of John Stewart and Agnes MacPhee or Campbell. The farthest back ancestor that he can trace is James Stewart of Struan who, according to Alec, was a "farmer" who married a travelling woman. Alec believes he comes from "a real fine aristocratic family" (Brune, p.30) and that his people had to go on the road because of the Jacobite Risings or the Clearances in the late eighteenth century.

Originally my family was settled in the neighbourhood of Struan, where they had a piece of land and some cattle up till the Battle of Culloden. Not many months after that, some of them had to shift fae there and later on the rest were evicted in the Highland Clearances. A number of them emigrated - mainly to Canada - and the rest took to the roads, where they intermarried with tinkers and other travelling families.

There was auld Jimmy Stewart of Struan - the last to leave the place and still a Gaelic speaker¹ - shifted fae the auld place tae Glenshee, then into Aberdeenshire, in the middle of last century - he was my great-grandfather - a great piper."

(Brune, p.30)

Alec's account of what happened to his ancestors could well be a perfectly true one, since many Highland "farmers" lost their land in this way, for a variety of reasons, including being identified with the Jacobite cause (as Stewarts would be), a huge increase in rents and the introduction of large scale sheep farming, which was variously seen as an attempt to make the country more productive and a sign of the greed of the new lairds who replaced the old clan chiefs. Certainly the relationship between clan chiefs and clansmen was replaced by the more commercial one of landlord and tenant, with none of the

feeling of kinship that used to exist. As most of the "farmers" in the Highlands were very poor, many of them could not pay the new rents and lost their land, many of them emigrating or moving to the Lowlands. A pamphlet entitled A View of the Highlands printed in 1780 paints a truly appalling picture of poverty in the Highlands, perhaps, as the historian Keltie suggests for propaganda purposes against absentee chiefs who raised the rents too much:

If, with great labour and fatigue the farmer raises a slender crop of oats and barley, the autumnal rains often baffle his utmost efforts and frustrate all his expectations; and instead of being able to pay an exorbitant rent, he sees his family in danger of perishing during the ensuing winter, when he is precluded from any possibility of assistance elsewhere.

Nor are his cattle in a better situation; in summer they pick up a scanty support amongst the morasses or heathy mountains; but in winter when the grounds are covered with snow, and when the naked wilds offer neither shelter nor subsistence, the few cows, small and lean, and ready to drop down from want of pasture, are brought into the hut where the family resides and frequently share with them the small stock of meal which had been purchased or raised for the family only; while the cattle thus sustained are bled occasionally, to afford nourishment for the children after it has been boiled or made into cakes.

The sheep ... are frequently buried under the snow for several weeks together ... They eat their own wool ... but even in moderate winters, a considerable number are generally found dead after the snow has disappeared ..."²

Thus it can be imagined that in those days travelling tinkers were not really noticeably worse off than the settled population, so for a "farmer" to take the road with a tinker woman would not be so remarkable as if it happened today. It is unlikely however that a "farmer" would readily become a tinsmith, if he had not been one before. Tinkers were just as jealous of the secrets of their craft as any other group of artisans. It is more likely that Alec's forebears were tinsmiths who, as Alec's father did in his lifetime, worked pieces of land here and there, as it suited them. When Alec claims

that his ancestors "had" a piece of land, he presumably means that they rented it. Keltie points out "that in those times, every one was, to a more or less extent, a cultivator or renter of land,"³ farms were very small and rent was more usually in services than money, and there were numerous other exactions such as thirlage or multure. "All the tenants of each district were thirled or bound to take their grain to a particular mill to be ground. ... In the same way many parishes were thirled to a particular smith."⁴ Now a smith was a metal worker and the tinkers were really travelling smiths, who could shoe horses as well as make the articles needed by the community. Duncan Campbell of Glen Lyon whose father lost his farming land at the Clearances through not being able to afford the increase in rent, wrote his memoirs in 1910 entitled Reminiscences and Reflections of an Octogenarian Highlander. Duncan Campbell, born presumably about 1830, became first a schoolmaster, then a journalist and edited The Northern Chronicle for thirty years. He writes of the tinkers:

In my childhood I looked on the coming of the tinkers as a great and welcome event ... I liked to sit ... and watch them at their work, men roasting horns and shaping spoons out of them; women scraping and polishing the moulded and sliced spoons, the better sort of which were not without embellishment; other men making tin lanterns and cans and old cunning hands mending pots and pans or rings and brooches.⁵

This picture of the tinkers as a common and accepted part of the rural scene shows that there was not the same gulf between tinkers and the settled community that exists today, especially in towns. Duncan Campbell's view of the tinkers certainly is not that they were an alien people like the gypsies further south:

It seems to me that the tinkers had been a feature of life in the Highlands long before any Lord of Little Egypt ever came to

Scotland and imposed upon James V and his Parliament and that afterwards gypsies and tinkers got to some extent intermingled in the Highlands, but to an infinitely less degree than they did in the Borders. In my young days tinkers mended pots and pans and made spoons out of the horns of rams and cattle. In the time of my grandfather and even later they still retained their old repute for being capable silversmiths to whom people brought silver and gold to be melted down and converted into brooches, rings and clasps for girdles, or to decorate the hilts of swords and daggers. ... With the end of plaid, girdle and buckled shoe fashion among the Highland men and women, [i.e. after the Act of Proscription 1746] came the end of the demand for the neatly and artistically designed ornaments the tinkers had made for untold generations and when the demand ceased the art was soon lost.⁶

This loss of such an important source of livelihood is undoubtedly what brought the tinkers down out of the Perthshire glens to work on farms in Strathmore and Angus, as both Alec's and Belle's families did. James Stewart of Struan, as Alec has related, moved to Aberdeenshire, another great farming area.

James Stewart, son of "Jimmy Kate" married a travelling woman called Maria MacPhee and had nineteen of a family, one of whom was John Stewart. It is not surprising therefore that the travelling Stewarts are scattered all over the north east of Scotland. An entry in The Piping Times reads as follows:

STEWART, James (Jamie)(c.1825-1895) Was of a family of "hereditary ear pipers" in the Atholl district of Perthshire. His brother was a piper to the Duke of Atholl. A good natural player. Migrated to the parish of Kirkmichael, Banffshire as a young man. Became the father of seven strapping sons, all of whom served in the Aberdeenshire Militia (later 3rd Gordon Highlanders after 1881) six of them being pipers to the Gordon Highlanders for well over half a century ... (Information supplied by Dr. J.M. Bulloch.)⁷

The records at Blair Castle also supply information on John Stewart who joined the Atholl Highlanders as a piper in 1909.

<u>Regd.No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Height</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>
1112	John Stewart	5'8"	39	General dealer: piper.

His address is given as Aldour, Pitlochry and his birthplace The Dunies, Kirkmichael and in brackets in pencil "in a tent." He was allocated to "D" Company and remained with them. His address was given on the various parade rolls as 1901 Aldour, Pitlochry, 1910 Milton of Tullymet, 1911 Birnam, 1912 Blairgowrie. He attended all the parades from 1909 to 1913. Parades after this were for special occasions. He was on parade for the visits of George V and Queen Mary to Perth on 10th July, 1914, and also to the General Assembly in Edinburgh in 1919.⁸

Record-keeper James Stewart also reports a conversation with a retired gamekeeper called Donald Stewart (notice the prevalence of the surname in the district) who remembers having been a piper with John Stewart in the Atholl Highlanders. He remembers him as being a very good piper and in great demand for playing for dancing because of his excellent timing. He also remembers him as having won the Piobaireach award at the Atholl Gathering in 1912.⁹ The Atholl Gathering brought the leading pipers in Scotland together.

Another list of information was supplied by James Grewar of Blairgowrie from the records of the Glenisla Highland and Friendly Society's books showing John Stewart's prize list at the Glenisla Games from 1898 - 1913.

1898 Marches 2nd. Strathspey and reel 3rd.
 1899 Marches 2nd. Strathspey and reel 2nd.
 1900 No returns.
 1901 Marches 1st. , Strathspey and reel 1st. Best performer -
 winner of Gold Medal.
 1901 Marches 1st. Pibroch 2nd. Strathspey and reel 1st.
 Dancing Highland reel 3rd.
 1903 Marches 3rd. Strathspey and reel 3rd. Pibroch 2nd.
 1904 Marches 2nd. Strathspey and reel =3rd. Pibroch 3rd.
 1905 Marches 1st. Pibroch 1st equal. Strathspey and reel 2nd.
 1906 Marches 2nd. Strathspey and reel 1st. Pibroch 3rd. Best
 dressed Highlander 2nd.
 1907 Marches 1st. Strathspey and reel 2nd. Pibroch 3rd.
 1908 Marches 2nd. Strathspey and Reel 2nd equal. Pibroch 3rd.
 1909 Marches 1st. Strathspey and reel 1st. Pibroch 3rd.
 1910 Marches 2nd.
 1911 Marches 1st. Strathspey and reel 1st. Pibroch 3rd.
 1912 Marches 1st. Strathspey and reed 3rd.
 1913 Marches 2nd. Strathspey and reel 1st. Pibroch 3rd.¹⁰

The Perthshire Courier, Tuesday July 29th, 1913 reports:

At Dunning Highland Games, John Stewart was first in both Marches and in Strathspey and Reel.

My reason for giving all this data on John Stewart is that there is a legend in the family that he was private piper to the Duke of Atholl and champion piper of Scotland for nine years running. While it is clear that neither of these things is true, his membership of the Atholl Highlanders and his record of prizes at the Glenisla Games and at the Atholl Gathering, which is typical of other Games that he took part in, do show that he was a remarkable man and an excellent piper. He is remembered to this day with respect among the older pipers in Perthshire, whom I have talked to at Piping Championships.

Alec Stewart's younger brother John, born in Aldour, Pitlochry in 1910 has his own account of his father's activities.

My father ... was piper to Lord Dudley in Dunkeld House. ... Before that ma father was with the Duke o' Atholl ... he was with the Atholl Highlanders ... He was Pipe-Major of Pitlochry Pipe

Band. He was one o the members o the Fishing Club. Going back before that he was wi Laird Stewart o Rannoch and actually I've heard it said that Laird Stewart was the same Stewarts ... My father was piper tae him and ma mother worked in the laundry ... So I'll come forward again till he was in Pitlochry. He went and he bought Tullymet Fairm. ... There was a good few acres o ground in that fairm tae. The next time I remember is ma father havin the house in Blairgowrie at the Connies. ...¹¹ It was the year I was born when he was either in Tullymet or Aldour ... that would be the year he won the gold medal in Edinburgh, 1910, ye see. But he was gaun strong at the Games there, so ma father left Blairgowrie and bought a place in Dunkeld at Torwood, a house, and he got a shop in Dunkeld and he had a yard and stables for his horses in Birnam ... He met Angus McRae, a piper he knew, and Angus McRae took him tae ... Angus McRae was a piper for Lord Dudley, but he wanted another man and Angus took ma father down and got ma father the job as another piper wi the Lord, ye see, Lord Dudley. Anytime that the Lord wanted him, ma father had tae be there. But when he wasnae, he was oot wi his horse an cart. He had dishes aa among the straw at the back o his cart ... So ma father would go oot up aa these glens, aa round Strathbraan and up by Pitlochry ... (Douglas 26A3)

It was around this time that John Stewart was winning prizes at the Games for his piping and becoming known as "great Jock Stewart the piper" or "Jock the Tink" among competitors at the Games. "Everyone, the kids on the street knew Jock Stewart ... the piper." (Douglas 26) So he was a remarkable man who went on to become even more remarkable, by bringing the silent films to Perthshire glens and becoming one of the first tinkers in Scotland to own a motor car.¹² Again John tells it in his graphic and detailed way:

... my father went to Glasgow one day on business of some kind and he bought a picture machine for the silent films, wi the handle. An I remember the name o that oul thing yet - they called it a Gaumont Maltese Cross - that was the name o it and it was rolled in a sheet and then the picture screen - ye know the white screen? It was folded aa roun it, ye know. An there were tripods for it and aa this material along wi it an it was in a big chist, ye know, like this, aboot that height. He come back and he was at McCairney one day in Perth sellin his stuff. He kept his stuff for a certain length o' time and then sold it ... So he was in wi a load o stuff tae McCairney and ma father seen McCairney's car sittin at the door, an auld Ford. Mind yon auld TT Fords? So ma father was intae the garage, he said, "One o them would suit you John." See? So ma father said, "So it would." Now what went through ma father's heid was - the picture

machine, ye see? So ma father bought the car off him. I think it was £150 or £155 he gave him for the car. So ma father came drivin home with it, sittin up in this - wi the auld hood at the back, ye know, folded doon, open, this auld TT Ford wi the brass lamps on it. An aa the folk was lookin at Jock Stewart comin back fae Perth in a motor car! Ye see? So then he showed his pictures in the Institute at Birnam, one night and then he would take it over tae Dunkeld and show it in the hall in Dunkeld another night. Then he'd put it in the back o his car wi his spools o film. An he got them fae Green's o Glasgow. That was the - aa the - Green's nearly owned aa the picture hooses in Glasgow at that time ... Green's Playhouse, that's right. So ma father would get a complete weekly programme ... I think it was three or four pound ... for a week's programme o films. An he would go up the Glen, maybe Amulree, these wee country halls, ye see and show them and then back again ... But he was still goin up to Dunkeld House in between times, ye see. Or if there was any stuff lyin at a fairm they generally sent down for him or they met him an telt him, "Ye'd better come up an tak so-and-so, Jock," this, that and the next thing. Oh he was gettin on well. The man was makin money, at that time ... (Douglas 26A3)

It is clear from all this that Alec's and John's family background and early life were of a more prosperous nature than the poor existence led by Belle and her brothers. Of course they had the advantage of having their father to direct the family fortunes, and a father who was a man of outstanding talent and enterprise, so it would be unfair to make an invidious comparison as Belle's family did. It is easy to see, also, how he became a legendary figure in the family, becoming in their admiring memories, not just one of the Atholl Highlanders, but "personal piper to the Duke of Atholl," and not just a champion piper, but "champion piper of Scotland."

Alec's claim that he was descended from settled people who were once among the aristocracy is impossible to prove. That they were highlanders cannot be disputed, since their piping tradition and their story telling tradition are Highland and at one time every clansman in

the Highlands considered himself a "gentleman." Even the physique of the Stewart family is like the rest of the men in the Atholl area.

Prior to the erection of the bridge (at Logierait) a ferry boat mainly driven by the river, plied to and fro and was considered a curiosity by strangers. The ferrymen - Messrs James and John Stewart - were tall, handsome, athletic, courteous and fine specimens of the Atholl Highlander, who is second to none in Scotland.¹³

Allowing schoolmaster James Kennedy a little local bias, his description of the two ferrymen, one of whom must have been Jimmy Kate's father, could equally well have applied to John Stewart and any of his sons and grandsons. According to Alec, it was the Duke of Atholl who gave the ferry to the two brothers to be their livelihood, when they "retired" from piping. But both Belle and John say it was Laird Stewart of Rannoch, with whom Alec's father was a piper.

In considering Alec's claims about his ancestry, we have to view it against the background of travellers as a whole. It has been my experience in talking to travellers that most of them make claims of this kind: that their forebears were settled people, often gentry, sometimes royalty. It is a symptom of the travellers' desire to be respected. It could also be a folk memory of something that was a reality but there is no way of knowing and speculation is of little value. What can be seen in the members of the family at present living would certainly suggest to me that they are people who were once of more consequence than they are today.

Alec's mother seems to have been known either as Agnes (Nancy) MacPhee or as Nancy Campbell.¹⁴ Belle explained that - she often took over the lengthy explanations as Alec's illness in his last years made him tire quickly of interviews - as having to do with deserting from the Militia. But another possibility would be that the name Campbell was taken for protection. The Campbells were a powerful clan and tinkers who worked and travelled around the Glenlyon area might conceivably adopt the name. Nancy, however, was born in Kintyre and came to Perthshire from Dunbartonshire as Willie MacPhee relates.

Alec's mother's family seems to have a tragic history which Belle tells very graphically.

I'll tell you of the tragic family Alec's mother's people were. Her mother's mother was Belle Reid. That's Alec's mother's mother. And as all the old tinkers long ago, she was fond o a dram and it was winter time, no very long before New Year and there was a big storm on the ground and she'd been into a wee ... inn or an alehouse ... at Struan, up Calvine way ... And they had been drinking in there - I don't know who all was with her - I don't know if her man was with her or who was with her, but they used tae camp a lot up there in the winter time, and she'd been intae this pub and got a good wee dram. Then she came oot and it was a night of a blizzard and a storm, and she just went a couple of hundred yards from the alehouse and sat down at the side of the dyke for shelter, to light her pipe ... And she was gotten frozen to death in the morning and her pipe was in her one hand and her box of matches in the other ... Then Alec's mother's father ... he was murdered with Irish navvies ... it was ... that Highland railway they were building ... And he was a piper ... and he could always get a drink for playing his pipes ... And aa these navvies were working on the railway at the time and naturally the pub was full of these men on a Saturday night. And he was playing ootside the door but they went oot and asked him if he could play inside ... So one of these Irishmen came up to him and says, "Could you please play 'The Boyne Water'?" But he was sensible enough for that. "Oh," he says, "that's a tune I never learnt." ... But they kept feedin him wi drink till they got him three parts drunk and he played 'The Boyne Water.' He went oot, that was it, there was no more to it. And he'd to go up some dykeside ... to where they had their tents pitched, you know.

And they got his body in the morning, his pipes were broken in bits and he was lyin murdered. The Irishmen followed him and killed him for playin 'The Boyne Water' after makin him do it, you know.

Then she (Alec's mother) had a brother ... and him and his wife and three of a family - you know how they all dealed and swapped in auld horses these days? ... And that was what happened. And the horse they gave him ... in the travellin way o speakin they ca'd him a reist. You know, it was a horse that wouldnae go forward, that wouldnae pull a cairt. It was aye gaun back. ... So they were at Fort Augustus the Canal ... and instead o the horse goin forward when he whipped it ... it went back, back, back and it backed right intae the Canal and him and his wife and three bairns were drooned. ... So I mean it was just tragedy that followed Alec's mother's folk, ye ken. ... Then now she had a sister, her name was Bella, Bella MacPhee and she was Willie's Bella's granny, this woman I'm goin tae tell ye about now. ... Now all the travellers ca'd her The Deif Lassie. ... Now her dochter was wi her. She was a young lassie and she was havin her first bairn. And she was just almost her time, you know, jist a matter o days till she'd hae her bairn. ... And they were going across a level crossing - and the train had tae come roon a turn. Well, the auld woman ran in front. ... She hurried across first and she never heard the train. ... And the lassie that was goin tae hae the bairn ran right after her mother tae catch her and she only got her in the middle of the rails and the three o them was made mince. ... So I mean, if ye look back on it - in the Canal drooned, murdered wi the Irishmen, her mother gotten dead at Struan dyke and then that - ye know what I mean - killed wi the train - it was really a tragedy just throughout Alec's mother's family. (Douglas 1A2)

The recital of these tragic episodes paints a vivid picture of the hardships of the tinker life and the fate of those who were not strong enough or clever enough or just plain lucky enough to withstand them. Nancy MacPhee was fortunate to be married to a man who could not merely survive the tinker life, but who could do well out of it. His situation at the beginning of the First World War was enviable by tinker standards. He had a settled home. He had several sources of income that included piping, selling dishes, collecting scrap, rabbit skins and any other items that be sold, pearl fishing and showing silent films. He was a well known figure in the community and his family were growing up and able to do all the various jobs available to earn money, such as farm work of all kinds.

Most of them were also pipers, dancers and story tellers, as Alec and Belle relate:

Alec: There were two of them very good pipers - ma auldest sister Bella. ... When we were up in Pitlochry, Aldour, ma father sent her to a man for to learn the fiddle ... and she was a good fiddler. An awfy good fiddler. An then she started the pipes and she said, "I want the pipes. I don't want no fiddles." So she started the pipes and she was a very good player o the pipes. Then I had another sister Kate, her who died in Ireland. And she was a very good piper too. Ma father learned her. And she was at it for years and years and years. She was an awfy good piper.

Belle: Used tae play the fairs in Ireland. Used tae play with Alec when Alec used tae play the fairs, together. ... The one that's in D.R.I. at the moment, that's Maggie ... she really and truly was a classical dancer. She won furst at aa the Games wi her father. ... And Jeannie was a very good dancer ... an a great storyteller ... Bella played the accordion tae, Alec.

Alec: She played the accordion tae. She could play anything.

Belle: Your brother John was a good dancer. ... Ye see, in Alec's father's time, at least this is what happened at the Games, a piper had tae be a dancer.

Alec: John's a good singer hisself ... he plays the pipes tae, John, ye know. ... Oh he tells stories tae ...

(Douglas 1B3)

Alec's youngest brother Andrew also had a fine singing voice and was nicknamed "Hoochtan" for his ability to cantarach a tune. But at the time of which we are writing, Andrew was hardly more than a toddler. Alec's sisters Bella, Maggie, Kate, Mary and Annie were all older, with Jeannie coming between him and John, and then, the youngest, Andrew.

But then came a change in fortunes which most likely occurred when conscription was brought in during the First World War in 1916.

Alec's sisters Maggie and Bella had married two brothers, Donald and Andy Higgins. According to John it was these two who "were liftit for the army - before they would soldier they run away tae Ireland. An when they landed in Ireland it was full o deserters, Scotch, English, Welsh, travellers, dozens o them." (Douglas 26A4) Jeannie, the sister who came between Alec and John corroborates this:

It was my sisters' husbands - they had deserted from the army and fled to Ireland to save their skins. There were three or four of them went across. So my mother was always onto my father to see how the lassies were getting on over in Ireland. "Aa-right," said my father one day, "let's go across and see the lassies," and we just packed up and went over to Derry and we travelled all round pearl-fishing, piping - anything we could put our hands to. (Brune, pp.1-32)

That's what ruined ma father wi the brother-in-laws goin away wi the sisters away across tae Ireland. (Douglas 1A4)

Belle also has her version of the migration to Ireland.

Alec's two sisters were married to the Higginses. There was Bella married to Andy Higgins and Maggie ... she was married to his brother Donald Higgins. ... Noo the tinker people always said, "What in the name of God are we gonnae fight for? We've got no country." 'Course Alec's folk were settled and so were we, but the ordinary tinker person at that time, they had no country tae fight for. They were hunted about, nobody wanted them, they were a despised race. People didnae have any time for them. So Ireland was a free country and they wouldnae be called up for the army there. So that was the reason they went tae Ireland when Alec was sae young. They didnae want ... to fight. (Douglas 3A12)

But Belle adds the comment on how this affected John Stewart's life, "His son-in-laws ruined him." John describes their departure for Ireland as he remembers it:

He (his father) gae up the china shop in Dunkeld. He selt his car tae. I think it was a fella Henderson, that stayed roon beside his stables. An he selt the horse, selt everything. An we went. I remember goin tae Glasgow wi him, the lot o us. There was a big family o us. An on the boat, right across to London-

derry, an I remember the name o that boat yet: it was the Rose. An it was 7/6 for your ticket at that time, for your passage.

So we come off at Londonderry, we stood aboot on the quay. Ma father went now tae look for a horse an a cart. 'Cause there still wasnae many cars aboot, ye know what I mean? So he went an he got a man they caad Mickey Ward, he was a horse dealer in Derry. An he selt ma father this oul black horse; it was as thin as a rake, ye see, wi a big long heron neck oot o it, an this cart. We got aa wur baggage an wur stuff in it, aa up on top o it, an we were goin along the road wi this horse an cart. So we had tae go up fae there - Donald an Maggie an them were stayin at a camp, they were at a place caad Ballachie outside Donegal. An we went to Ballachie at Donegal, met them: that started the Irish stay. (Douglas 26A4)

John was seven when they went to Ireland in 1917 and he was twenty one when they came back to Scotland for good. He recalls how his father and mother set about earning their living in Ireland:

Ma father was goin tae show his pictures but the people in Ireland were that funny that he was frightened tae show them ... So instead o doin that ma mother started hawkin an drukkerin [telling fortunes] ... An she would buy her lace in Shutkey St. ... Ma mother would put that in her basket an she'd have her crystal ... Ma mother never took cards wi her, 'cause ma mother always said the cards were the Devil's picture books ... An they would ring the bell an they would say, "Oh good mornin ma'am. Ye've got a lucky face," an aa this cairry-on ... An then ma mother would sell her a couple o yards o lace ... an ... maybe get a shillin or a couple o bob off her to read her fortune. Then ma mother would sprach her for eggs ... aa the Irish hooses had plenty o hens ... So she'd get eggs and maybe she'd get flour meal in her bag, an some hooses would give her tea ... Ma father would go out for rags ... an he would take his pipes an he would play in certain parts ... He would engage himsel at big days ... he'd maybe get four pounds each for the day at the Twelfth of July. An there was St. Patrick's Day. (Douglas 26A5)

The move to Ireland meant a great many changes in their mode of life. They were on the road in a poor country where they were not known, a completely different state of affairs from their more or less settled life in Perthshire, where John Stewart was not only well known but well respected and where they had been making, by tinker standards, a good living. In 1961 Jeannie looked back on those times as follows:

I canna mind too much aboot Ireland and that; its mony years since we travelled in earnest. There were ten children in our family; - my oldest sister Bella was married - and they had a caravan; and Maggie was married and she'd two children - Bella had six at that time; and we all travelled in the old fashioned horse caravans in Ireland - in the round caravans you know - round at the top like a traveller's tent on a float. (Brune, p.32)

Jeannie married an Irishman as did her older sisters Mary, Kate and Annie. But Alec, as we have seen, married Belle and their marriage from the start was beset with problems. By the time he married, Alec had been on the road in Ireland for something like eight or nine years and was by then used to the life. Belle, on the other hand, had been living a settled life in Blairgowrie, "spoiled" by her mother and two brothers. She had never been used to living in a bow-topped wagon or having to make a living on the road. When her brothers took up the invitation to come to Ireland, she had been working in a jam factory in Dundee. Her family were not really enthusiastic about her marriage.

Now I'm being frank wi this. ... Neither ma mither, nor Donald nor Andy, nor my Uncle Jimmy, never ever wanted me tae marry Alec. (Douglas 3A12)

Weel my brother Donald didna think it was a good idea at the time - considering the rough life Alec was leading and the sheltered life I was used to at the time. (Brune, p.13)

There is every indication that Belle did not adapt well to the travelling life and she came home to Blairgowrie for the birth of her eldest son John in 1926. John was brought up by Belle's mother and grew up like her in Blairgowrie. Her next child, Cathy, was born in Strabane in Ireland in 1928, during the lengthiest period that Belle seems to have stayed in Ireland. She and Alec certainly started off

with nothing: Alec even had to build a wagon by himself for them to live in. Alec describes how he did this:

I built a wagon like that in four days. ... From the foundations. I went and got four wheels and axles, and I got a frame on the four wheels ... all in the one day and I went to Belfast and bought a cover. It was an aeroplane cover. I got it out of a store and it was an awfy size. Pure rubber. So I started tae build it. I had to go out and earn two-three shillins before I could buy the wood. [Belle interjects here, "Pipin. He went pip-ing."] And the boy in the sawmill ... gied me the whole lot of the stuff. I had tae cairry it on ma shoulder ... three mile ... and throw it doon and go back for the rest. ... So I built it in four days. So I had nothing for tae pull it wi at the time. (Douglas 3A12)

He bought a horse to pull the wagon, but it died and he had to pull the wagon himself for several miles till he got to a place where he could buy another horse. So Alec had a caravan of his own but as his sister Jeannie observes, "he was only married on a part time basis during the haggis season," by which, presumably, she meant when Belle was over from Scotland. Belle's account of this period is a very fair one, with the benefit of hindsight and many years experience of life which, of course, she did not have at the time:

I didna want to travel; I didna like it. ... But Alec thought I was being unfair, as I knew exactly what was involved when I married him. So he left me and went back to Ireland [he had come over to the flax-spreading during their first year of marriage] ... and I stayed with my mother. ... I never saw Alec again till John was five month auld ... But I went away over to Ireland to try an patch things up wi Alec. You know my mother kept John ... and of course that caused a lot of strife between Alec and me. He wanted his bairn to grow up wi him ... Well, he finally decided to let my mother bring up the bairn ... The same thing happened when I had Cathy and when I had Andy ... though Alec was with me the time I had Cathy (in Ireland) and Sheila and Rena [adopted]. ... But I must give him his due - it was all more or less my fault - because I just thought myself that wee bit better, and I didna think I should have tae wander round about the country waiting for two or three shillings wi Alec playing the pipes - and sending me oot tae hawk - something I never had to do wi my mother; it just seemed a silly backward step to take compared to the real productive way of life in our family. ... I would say we

were two stubborn young people and neither one of us would give way to the other. (Brune, pp.14-15)

During the time Alec's family were travelling in Ireland, there were troubled times there, although the tinkers took no part in it and tried to avoid any friction with either side as the following story shows:

So I was sitting at the fire that night (Alec relates) and who come along but some o the IRA. See, they were comin along the road and they come over to the camp fire and asked me where I come fae. My father was in the wagon. I says, "We come fae Scotland." "Oh," he says, "ye come fae Scotland," he says. "Ye long in this country?" I says, "Aboot five or six years." So they sat down. Ma mother made them tea, an that, ye know, tryin tae keep in wi them, an we were tellin stories an jokes an cracks.

He says, "We'll have to go now, boys," he says, the sergeant said. "We have a good round tae make." So they're away. So next mornin, who passed but five and six o the Black an Tans, in a "carry" an they pulled up at the camp and they came oot an sat doon at the fire. Ma mother was makin some breakfast. He says, "Don't mind us," he says. "We're not hungry," he says, "we're just new after our breakfast." "Oh," ma mother says, "ye'll tak a cup o tea anyway." "Oh yes," he says, "we'll take a cup o tea," he says, "but no breakfast." He says, "We drove along here," he says, "tae take away some dead folk."

I listened tae him, I says, "What dae ye mean by dead folk?" "Well," he says, "we was on a raid last night. They killed two policemen," he says, "and so we followed them and we got them. There was eight o them all together and so we tied them wi a rope, and put the rope right across a gateway and put a bomb below them and blew them up in bits."

"My goodness," I says, "that's a terrible death."

"Oh," but he says, "we had to do it or we'll never get them settled. Have tae do it."

So we was sittin there an they were passin again and one o them held up a han', held one o the hands up.

"We got them," he says, "here they're here. They're in bits."
(Douglas 8A2)

John recollects that the reception they got as "Gypsies" could vary from place to place and it was something they had always to view with caution:

... Ye would be campit maybe at a crossroads. We would go up the hedges looking for sticks ... somebody was away for water, another would be up the road wi the horses, tryin tae get the horses a place to graze. Another wad take the pipes wi him - for they were fond o music in Ireland - an I've seen maybe me an Alec goin up maybe a couple o wee farms where we'd noticed straw or hay - play a tune down in front o the door ... We begged the hay ... So we cairried it doon tae the horses. ... Roun the glens at night (there was no wireless or nothin at that time). ... But when they knew the gypsies was doon at the crossroads, they would come doon fae aa roon aboot ... an they'd aa be sittin roun this outside fire. An they would carry peats down, make a bigger fire, an they would start singing. Then they wanted a tune on the pipes, then they'd be up dancin ... an they would sit doon and they would start story-tellin. I mean, ye got some good places where the people wouldnae bother with ye. But then ye got other areas that ye stopped an as soon as they were goin home an the fun an the diversion was kin o finishin, they'd start throwin stones an big divots at ye, to get more fun out o ye. ... An that's what ye had to watch in it. There were areas when we would say, "We'll not stop here. We'll go on," tae places we knew were quieter. ... Ye could be in a good place where the people would give ye anything. ... An then ye could go tae another place and they would do that wi ye, but it was tae get a cairry-on wi ye, after the show was over sort o way. (Douglas 26A5)

They came back to Scotland when John was in his late teens to the flax spreading in the Carse of Gowrie and stayed in a cottage in the tiny village of Waterloo near Bankfoot for six months, before returning to Donegal. This time, John and his brothers made their living selling fish which they bought from the Scots fishing boats that put into Killybegs:

We drove fae there [Castle Finn] ... maybe fifty miles tae Killybegs and we waited till the early hours o the mornin till the boats were comin in and we'd buy wur fish when they were auctionin them at the boats there. I could tell ye the price o a cran o herrin there yet ... the last time we bought them there they were 3/6 a basket and there were four baskets tae the cran. So the men that sell the fish ... they've aa their donkey cairts and yokes standin there ... and they'll tell you, "Oh don't buy them yet, boys, don't buy them." They wanted the price tae come doon, ye see. But we'd a long ... way to go. An when the man says, "3/6 a basket ..." noo the Irish donkey men were waitin tae try an get them for half nothing. But Alec an me an Andra says ... "What's the good of waitin? We're wastin time waitin here. We could still give that for them an be back get away back owre

the hill and hawk them roon Ballybofey an aa them places where they hardly seen fish, before they could get out of the way with their donkey carts." ... So we give the 3/6 a basket for them ... an the rest o the fishmen were wild, ye see. ... When the herrin boats go away, great big trawlers come in. ... The trawler fish are no herrin. They're any big kin o fish ... the likes o crooners an great, big oul cod, an sithe an aa that, an they're aa on ice. So we bought some off him, three or four boxes we bought off him, pit them on wur lorry. Efter half a day when the sun came oot ye could hae felt the smell o it a mile away. ... They were gettin rotten, ye know, wi the heat. We had tae dump them in a ditch. (Douglas 26A7)

Shortly after that the three brothers went on what they called a "straik", a few weeks travelling, to the north of England to play their pipes:

So we went, me an Alec an Andra, an we took the two sets o pipes wi us, the Armstrong Siddeley, a few blankets in the car, an we went away for what we caad a straik, stayin away fae home for three or four weeks. ... An collectin aa oor money an goin from one place tae the ither, actually beggin your grub. ... An we generally got through the day wi cups o tea an pieces an that an we'd maybe only one meal tae buy at night. ... We were playing all through Yorkshire, Market Weighton, an went right doon tae Bridlington, Whitby, Filey, an we played aa them oh when I was aboot twenty one, me an Alec an Andra. An aa them toons we're gettin five pound, seven pound, four pound ... maybe two or three a day. An that was big money then. (Douglas 26A9)

After that, they spent a spell in Ayrshire in Irvine Yard, and John describes what he thinks must have been an embarrassing experience there, when they were recognised by members of the piping fraternity, who remembered him as a medal winner at Perthshire Games and gatherings in his more prosperous days:

I took my pipes this day at Irvine, me an Andra, an I went out the Glesca Road. ... An I was playin in front o this house ... a wee cottage, in through an iron gate ... An this wumman come oot. ... an she said, "What do they call you?" I says, "Stewart." She says, "I thought that. ... Will you not be a son of John Stewart?" ... Now my father didnae want anybody tae know at all aboot Ireland and the bad time he went through an comin back, ye see. She says, "Where are you stayin?" I says, "In a caravan - a trailer in Irvine." She says, "Tell your father ... me an ma husband'll be in tae see him." ... What a shamin ma father got,

he must ha done; he lands up wi a caravan trailer, ye know what I mean? He says, "Good God, Jock," he says, "what are ye daein here, min?" Ye see? It was the Campbells, Alec and Roddy Campbell, they've tunes in the book, professional pipers, ye see. (Douglas 26A10 and B1)

Alec Campbell offered to tutor John so that he could take part in the competitions at the Games as his father had done. "Leave him wi me, an I'll have him playin at the northern meetings in six months." (Douglas 26) But they moved away from Irvine before long, although John says his father always kept in touch with Alec Campbell. But while they were still in Irvine a family tragedy took place, involving John's sister Annie:

... ma sister Annie, we ca'd her Touttie for a by-name, 'cause she was born in Touttie St. in Alyth. Well, she married auld Sammy Young, ye see. We ca'd him auld Sammy Young because he was a few years aulder than her. ... An he was wild cruel tae them, tae the weemin. ... An she had a kid ... an he made her get up after three days an go an hawk the hooses for him, an she took gallopin consumption. An ma father had tae leave Irvine Yard an go over tae Ireland an take her across tae Scotland. ... An he come off the boat wi her at Stranraer carryin her like a young wean. She was only aboot three or four stone. An she went intae the hospital at Irvine an she was only in there a couple o months when she died an she was buried in Irvine. (Douglas 26B2)

It was after this that they went to the berry-picking in Blairgowrie and John believes this was the time when Alec and Belle were eventually reunited and settled down together. But this reconciliation was preceded by an interlude of drama as Alec and Belle relate:

Alec: I came back to Scotland and I was caught by the neck an put into jail, 'cause she was lifting the parish money [being paid a welfare allowance] and I was caught.

Belle: Did ye expect me to rear up four bairns without a penny?

Alec: I went to Perth Penni [prison] for one night an she went an pawned my bag-pipes -

Belle: Na, it was ma mother's new blankets - it wasnae pipes at aa - we didnae hae your pipes.

Alec: She pawned the blankets an got me out. Five pound bail it was. So I went to the court an my case was dismissed.

Belle: Och aye, because I had a hoose o my own, then ... I got a lovely wee hoose from Colonel Nunn of Parkhill - that was the man who owned these buildings - for half a croon a week - gas, light and water and everything except electric was put in this house; I had it furnished but I didna live in it - I carried on living wi ma mother; but so long as I had a house of my own an kept paying the rent for it I was entitled to the full parish money if my man didna keep me. This was £1 a week for me an the bairns - quite a large amount in these days.

The four years that Alec was away I cycled every morning to a place called Coupar Grange - dressed potatoes; worked on a farm - Donald and Andy were there too - and I got twenty five shillings a week for working there. So with the Parish money I got £2.5.0. I gave my mother twenty five bob and kept the pound to get clothes and things for the bairns an myself.

So I was considered by the parish people and by the court as a responsible person who had hit on bad luck - but was trying to make good - but Alec they just thought of as a pilgrim o the mist and a ne'er-do-well; he only had a square topped wagon and that was not thought a suitable home for to bring up bairns, while I had a house; he was just busking, while I worked to a farmer; and he had not paid maintenance money for his family so I had to draw money from the parish to make ends meet.

To get him out of trouble, I had to agree to take him back, and, well, to tell you the truth, I wasna wanting to take him back at all ... but my mother said to me the night before I went to the court, "Now," she says, "look Belle, you'll hae your man when ye'll no hae me; and he's the father o yer bairns; so for goodness sake give up this daft carry-on of always being separated; get together," she says, "and rear your bairns up respectably and decently, and bide thegither for ye'll no aye hae me." So I went to the court and they asked me if I was willin to have him back and I said, "Yes, on the condition that he forgets about this caravan life and will settle down in a house." (Brune, pp.16-17)

Thus, not long before the Second World War began, Alec and Belle were finally reconciled. Alec gave up the travelling life and lived with Belle in a house in Blairgowrie. There he carried on with all the same kinds of occupations as his father had followed, pearl-fish-

ing, rag-collecting, piping, casual farm work, scrapping, dealing of all kinds. When the war began, he joined the Black Watch as a piper and was involved in the tragic events of Dunkirk.

Meanwhile his brother John had an adventure of an equally romantic sort on the berryfields of Blair. His own words describe it:

So we come back to the berries again. ... An I was standin speakin tae auld Andy Higgins, that's Bella's man ... an I sees your woman, ye see. [Maggie] I was twenty two; an I says tae Andy, I says, "That lassie there's got a stiff leg." He says, "Aye." I says, "But she's a well made yin though." Ye see? That's just what I said. Says I, "She's a well made wee thing." He says, "Aye." I says, "I'm gaun tae ask a date wi her." So I ... "What about gettin a date on me the night?" So me an her started pullin berries thegither, partners, ye see, an about a year efter that, we were married, weren't we, Maggie? (Douglas 26B3)

To begin with John and Maggie stayed with her family, the Mullens, but John did not get on with them too well. It is paradoxical but true that many Scottish travellers, although they may range the country over in search of work, still retain a strong attachment to their own locality and their own kith and kin, and view travellers from elsewhere with suspicion. Maggie's people belonged to the Fife and Kinross area, and were once described to me by Belle as "mush fakers" - umbrella menders [in cant]. John described them as follows:

... her mother was all right, but I couldnae get on so well wi auld Hughie and his Kinross, Fife, lot, they were affa queer. Different type o traveller fae us. They would call us the minks, an we would ca them bucks. Ye ken, that sort o way. An although the people was nice enough tae me, this was the bit between. (Douglas 26B3)

[Minks are low-class tinkers, bucks are tramps; both used here as insults.]

All John had in the way of possessions at this time was a Norton motor bike and some carpets, with which he made a tent on the common green at the end of the bridge in Blairgowrie. Maggie by this time had a baby, so John did his best to make his carpet tent as comfortable and convenient as possible, with consequences that were very nearly fatal:

I put an iron bed in it tae keep us up off the grund, ye see, wi a mattress. ... I put a wire on top o the bed an screwed it an made a hole where I could stick the can'le through the hole; an the wire was sittin like that wi this loop on it an the can'le stuck through it, ye see, up at the bed end for her tae light when the wean was. ... She wakened through the night tae dae something an she lay doon an she forgot about the can'le. ... It burned doon ... tae the hole and then it dropped through onto the straw o the bed [laughs]. ... If I hadna wakened ... I looked up an there were bits o the carpet fallin on top o the bed. I dived! An I grabbed her an gien two roars, an I liftit the wean wi one airm an kin o half tore her tae, an oot, oot o the thing an it was jist in blazes. An me standin there in ma shirt tail! The wean aneth ma oxter. ... Left wi not a thing, not a thing. (Douglas 26B4)

After that, they bought a tent with a stove in it and went over to St. Andrews for the potato harvest. With a regular routine of work, things got better for them:

An I'd a good tent then an I'd a wee Austin wi a bogie on it, baby Austin wi a wee trailer ahin it for puttin stuff in. We worked away at the tatties aa the time, then we left ... an we went tae Dundee for the winter. An it was in Dundee when Patsy was born, Dundee. Then away travellin again, berries, then back on the tatties again, ye know, sort o style, just a rotation. (Douglas 26B5)

Shortly after this John took a house in Montrose as his children were reaching school age, which shows that, despite his travelling, John had inherited his father's values as regards schooling:

I was doon in Montrose this year and Andra was leavin Montrose an he telt me where tae get this wee attic, ten bob a week, an attic hoose in Ramsay St. So I went doon an I took the attic in Ramsay St. got aa the weans tae school ... I was seven year in Ramsay St. (Douglas 26B5)

The family would continue to lift potatoes and pick berries in season, but at other times John made his living by dealing and scrapping:

I used tae do a lot o work for ... a man ... cried Willie Henderson. He'd a shop, a wee sweetie shop, he dealt in good class cars ... he was the best man tae me that ever I saw ... He was better than even - than my own people. 'Cause every year I used tae drive him tae sales, polish cars up for him when I was-nae daein nothing. An I've saw me goin up maybe aboot the end o January, maybe February, an he wad say tae me, "Ye no gaun away this year?" I'd say, "Na! Money's too scarce, Willie. I've nae car." "Go doon there an take that yin." He gave me a car every year, didn't he Maggie? ... an if I had money, I always gave it to him. But if I didnae have the money, I'd go roon an give him so much an he wad tell me, "Forget aboot it" ... but I was always kin o genuine wi him, know what I mean? ... He dealt in everything. He was a great man for furniture. Goin buyin whole houses o furniture. Ye know, the man had plenty o money. An he wad say tae me, "You take aa that stuff, sell that rags, that claes, that stuff there, you take that." He wad gie me aa this, ye ken. (Douglas 26B6)

Of course, John would have helped him to gather the stuff in the first place, with the prospect of sharing in the profit. No other motive would have made a traveller work for a non-traveller. John describes "the best deal ever I lost" with Willie Henderson.

He went oot an bought a target that was lyin oot on the sea for the Air Force tae shoot at ... two great big barges. But they were made o metal, the metal was that thick, iron, and he bought them off Arbuthnot. So I drove him out wi hissels, an Jimmy Mann the blacksmith was oot there an aa his men. An they cut them up in squares aboot the size o that table top. An they heaped them aa up on the beachy sand. An I come back in aboot a fortnicht after that. Oh there were aboot two or three thousand tons o scrap, ye see. An he says, "Are you wantin that scrap?" I says, "Hoo we gonnae shift it." "Well," he says, "ye could shift it wi a yoke ... a hand barra." ... an when I went out I lookit - I said, "I'll no get in there." Because there were pill-boxes ...

tae keep the tanks fae comin oot. An ye couldnae get in wi a lorry, on the sandy dunes. ... I says tae her, "I'll get a yoke, a yoke'll go through there ... I'll take it oot ... a few hundredweight at a time. ... So I waited for aboot a fortnight or three weeks, and went away doon tae have another look at it. An when I went doon there was no scrap at aa. It was aa washed away wi the tide! (Douglas 26B6)

Thus John lost a fortune, and though he may not have been very amused at the time, he tells the story now as if it were a joke. This is quite typical of travellers who never seem to be embittered about deals that go wrong. Their philosophy is always to live each day for itself. The day after he discovered that the tide had washed away the load of scrap, John would be away making money in some other way. One can see from this one of the qualities that have made the travellers good survivors: a readiness to try something else if a source of livelihood disappears. This has very much been the pattern of their lives since the eighteenth century, a pattern that is seldom noted by the settled community or officialdom in general, because they see only one part of it. A councillor in Falkirk, for example, said of the travellers that they were "only glorified scrap merchants," being ignorant of the ways in which their old metal working skills had been rendered obsolete by technological change, so that scrap-dealing was the one manifestation of it left. Ideas about travellers being idlers and wasters tend to melt away in the light of facts which show that they have repeatedly found themselves new ways of adapting to change by finding odd jobs thrown up by the modern industrial scene, that no one else wanted to do, like small scale scrapping or tarmacing. Their reason for being willing to do these jobs has been the simple one of having to make a living somehow. Farnham Rehfisch has something to say about the traveller attitude to work, the terms on which they will work and the ways in which the settled community misconstrues these:

Work is defined by them as an expenditure of energy indulged in to satisfy needs and obligations whether rewarded for this activity by money or goods. ... Many of our informants kept their needs down to what appeared a bare minimum. ... The tinker believes that the vast majority of those who are not members of his group are both stupid and inefficient. He is aware that most Scots work hard and for what he believes to be long hours; he assumed they must do this because they are unable to obtain enough money to live by working less. He deduces therefore that he, the tinker, must be more astute or as he would say, "flyer," than the non-tinker. ... The tinkers do not believe that they can increase their social status either by working hard or by acquiring capital. ... Tinkers need not go to another person to seek employment, but have the ability to earn money independently. The tinker does not have to subordinate himself to another to earn his wage, but can go out collecting scrap, rags, selling objects, either of his own manufacture or goods he has bought for resale; he can tell fortunes too, and finally he can beg. ... All these activities are performed on his own account. The tinker believes that he himself is free and that the rest of the population are for the most part wage-slaves. ... The tinker ... looks on begging in the same way as he does any other means of making a living ... there is no shame attached to this activity. ... The outsider believes that tinkers, especially the males, are lazy and totally lacking in ambition. ... We were also frequently told that tinker males rarely if ever work and that they expected their wives to support them. ... Often during what are said to be working hours tinkers are seen loafing. ... It is on such occasions that tinkers pick up information of a kind that can be turned into money. ... When tinker women are in the public eye they are usually doing some type of work. ... Men of course do most of their work in public but then often the average person may not identify a man working as a tinker largely because of his preconceived notion that tinker men never work ... the average flattie believes that most tinkers are lazy and good for nothing. ¹⁵

John Stewart has certainly provided evidence that these statements by Farnham Rehfisch are accurate as regards tinker attitudes to work and the settled community:

You would never get the ordinary person to think along the lines of a traveller. Because I actually think maself ... if you're traveller-brained and you had no education, ye're jumps ahead - of the country folk. Even them that can neither read nor write are jumps ahead of the country folk. And you know it! Because you'll no see any o them bein led by the ear for a job o work. An they can drink every other day. Am I right? And some o them can turn roon an keep their cars and some o them can buy hooses. And some o them cannae read or write! ... So it just shows ye. (Douglas 11A2)

It is sometimes hard to tell whether this boastful talk, travellers indulge in really springs from a deeply held conviction or whether it is a defence put up against the contempt expressed against travellers by the settled community. Travellers become aware at an early age that they are looked down on, particularly by town dwellers. Belle's account of her school days makes this clear and more recently John Stewart's son John painted a similar picture of his school days in Montrose:

You were classed like the Jews in Germany. When you were at school you were classed like the Jews. You were an outcast. You either had to fight or lie down because you couldn't take the insults ... my father always had a car. But he was still a tink, a hawker ... (Douglas 1973 tape transcript)

But in spite of these experiences John still lives and works in Montrose. John did well at school and could have stayed on beyond the leaving age, if his family circumstances had permitted.

I went to school. I was pretty well educated. My father and mother did not have the money at the time to send me to college but I was supposed to go to college ... I didn't actually go to college, 'cause I was the eldest of eight children and I had to go to work to help my mother and father bring up the rest of my brothers and sisters. So I didn't actually have the chances the kids get nowadays and any education I've had since has been self-taught through reading books, which I am very good at, and I prefer reading a book or a good biography to watching TV and all that bull. I prefer reading books. (Douglas 1973 tape transcript)

It must not be assumed that John could not go to college or that his parents lacked the money to send him there, because he was a tinker. What he said could have been said by many other Scots of his generation and earlier including my own parents before local authority grants made it possible for pupils from poor homes or big families, to continue with their education.

John is a great believer in education and sees it as what the travellers most need to help them occupy the position in the world they deserve to occupy. In this he differs from his father who believes the traveller has the innate ability to stay "one jump ahead" of the country hantle. When he goes on to explain himself further it seems that it is not book learning but moral training he is talking about:

It all comes back to lack of education. It's not actually the children, it's the children's parents, it's what the children are taught when they go home from school not what they're taught actually at school. My father always brought me up - and I've been a traveller all my life - my father brought me up - never steal, for if you're a thief, you're looked down on. Being a traveller, I've been in company where I've seen other fellows steal and I would have nothing to do with it, but it's been brought to light and I've been blamed, and through sheer pride would not point my finger at the guilty party. ... I would never down my fellow man even if he did me dirty. This is how you were brought up. (Douglas 1973 tape transcript)

Most teachers would agree that the family background and upbringing is the deciding factor in how a child behaves and the school fights a losing battle if the right principles are not instilled in the child at home. But John does not agree with his father's belief in the innate cleverness of the traveller:

If all the travellers in Scotland could get together and really put their brains together, there's nothing in Britain that would touch them, because they've got lawyers, business men, you name it - they can do it, but just being shy - I would say shy - backward - ... Just because they think they're still travellers ... why won't they push themselves forward? Because they think they're still travellers. (Douglas 1973 tape transcript)

Being a traveller seems to mean having no rights and being made to feel inferior, so for this reason it could be argued that the boastful talk is a defence. At the same time there is evidence to

suggest there is plenty of intelligence, imagination and talent among the travellers to prove that the boasting has some foundation. The song and story repertoire is a part of this foundation, but so also is what I like to call the trickster element in the traveller character.

John tells a story that at once illustrates and defends traveller dealing:

Someone would come to me and say, "That hawker lad sold me a bicycle." And I would say, "What did he sell you the bicycle for?" and he would say maybe, "Oh, three pounds ten." I'd say, "Did you argue with the price?" and he would say, "No, not at the time." I'd say, "Were you happy with the price you paid him?" He'd say, "Yes." I'd say, "Well, that's business." "But, Christ, the bugger took it roon the corner and selt it for a fiver." I'd say, "That's your hard luck. This is business." (Douglas 1973 tape transcript)

Similarly when John's father has gone to an area to look for tarmacing work, he has not gone dressed in old clothes or in a trailer. He has worn a respectable suit, has booked into a hotel and introduced himself to the manager as Mr. Stewart the road contractor from Montrose. He has the bearing and manner to carry this off. By a skilful softening up process he then induces the hotel manager to lend him money with which he buys his raw materials. When he has found and carried out some tarmacing work, he pays the manager back, pays his hotel bill and goes home with his profit. There is nothing illegal or even reprehensible in what he has done. In fact he has simply put into practice one of the basic principles of business dealing, the inspiring of confidence in his credit-worthiness, just as the previous story typified the principle of caveat emptor.

A great many of the stories told by John's family feature skilful dealing and the kind of trickery that can never be pinned down as a crime or a violation of the law. Travellers really admire this kind of cleverness and also love to create illusions in order to manipulate people. The simplest example of this could be John Stewart's mother Nancy with her crystal ball, selling lace round the doors in Ireland with, "Good mornin, ma'am, you have a lucky face," to play on the housewife's belief that the gypsy can foretell the future and has supernatural powers. People have only themselves to blame if they fall for such tricks and part of the travellers' success in earning their living has always depended on making use of people's gullibility, whether he is selling a second hand car, or formerly a horse, or being interviewed by a collector or entertaining tourists. They have been used since time immemorial to creating illusions and legends to manipulate people to their own advantage and any traveller would regard this as a perfectly legitimate practice.

Now to return to the story of John's father and his settled life in Montrose. Like Alec and Andrew, John also served in the forces during the Second World War, which showed that some kind of change had come over the family's way of thinking since his brothers-in-law had fled to Ireland to avoid conscription in the First World War. Perhaps being pipers had something to do with it, although it was the RAF that John joined which would not involve piping. Alec and Andrew, on the other hand, were both pipers in the Black Watch. Pipe-Major Alec McCrae of the Atholl Highlanders who is also curator of the Clan

Donnachaidh Museum at the Falls of Bruar, remembers meeting Andrew in Keith Barracks and admiring his piping. John has not a great deal to say about his service days, except that he had the good fortune to be posted back to Montrose for part of them.

After the War he became Pipe-Major of Montrose Pipe Band and also succeeded in obtaining a bigger house in the town:

I was in the pipe band for a couple of year. Fred Adams was goin away to Australia, the pipe major. So ... I went doon tae the practice night, an I said, "Is Fred away yet?" tae "Froggie" Skinner. He says, "Aye. He's away," he says. "We're having a meetin the night," he says. "You better come into the meetin." I says, "How?" He says, "Because I'm proposin ye as Pipe Major." Ye see? So I went into the committee meetin. Willie "Froggie" Skinner stands up. He says, "I'm proposin John," he says, "Stewart," he says, "tae be Pipe Major. Who'll second that?" Some other body stood up an seconded it. ... I was Pipe Major there for about three year.

... So I was in this attic, it was, I think, aboot nine by ten, wi eight o a family for seventeen year. An I got fed up askin for a hoose. An I went up the street this day. There was a meeting on in the Bull House an I went straight on up. I didnae ... tackle none, I just walked straight in. They were aa sittin roon that big table. Oul Glory Adams was sittin just the same as you're sittin. She was the wumman used tae put the bull tae ye tae, she was the Provost, Provost o the toon ... Provost Glory Adams. ... I says, "Will ye let me speak a minute?" ... She says, "On you go." I says, "I've put umpteen lines in here for a hoose ..." I says, "I'm seventeen years stayin in Ramsay Street wi eight o a family in an attic," I says, "nine by ten. So any time," I says, "I fill a form up," I says, "tae put in here," I says, "I'm the tink." Says I, "They look at an tear it up an put it in the waste paper basket. Well," I says, "I'm no having it." Says I, "Because tomorrow I'm puttin it aa in the paper, tomorrow mornin. In the Montrose paper, also the Courier." So they camouflaged me off, anyway, an I come doon the stair. ... An a week after that a letter come from Glory Adams. ... "Congratulations on gettin a hoose in Wishart Avenue." That was a good block, a good street, nineteen Wishart Avenue. That was about the first - the second new hooses that was built in Montrose. (Douglas 26B8)

John lived there with his family till they were all grown up and left school, when he felt that the place did not have enough opportunities for them:

There was nothing in Montrose but tatties. An if ye didnae dress tatties or gether tatties, it was nae use. An it was a blue lookout for a family o bigger ones, ye know what I mean? So I just pulled ma lorry oot one mornin, on wi aa the stuff. I put ... a cover on the back, you know, so that you could sit, nobody could see ye. An the lot in. South o England right away. Tata Bella tae Montrose ... (Douglas 26B8)

John's family travelled often to England and spent a good deal of time there, especially in Cambridgeshire, where Patsy met and married an English traveller Matt Hilton, whose sister Mary-Anne married Belle and Alec's son John. This is a good illustration of how tinkers, gypsies and other travellers have mingled and even inter-married, brought together by the casual work that is available in different places, either on farms or building sites. John's family also went to Canada and returned for a few months to Montrose but "we got fed up wi it again and went away again ... went tae England." (Douglas 26B8)

Eventually all the family were married except their mongol son Bennie. John and Maggie have loved and cared for Bennie with exceptional devotion. Never has there been any question of putting Bennie in an institution. He sleeps in the same room as his parents so that they can watch over him even during the night. Mongols are not notably long-lived but Bennie is in his mid-forties, childlike, affectionate, ready to laugh, a very lovable individual but a constant responsibility. He listens attentively to his father's stories and obviously enjoys them. His parents believe that he has special powers

like the second sight and when they stayed in a haunted house in Ireland, they claim he was the only member of the family who actually saw the ghost. (Douglas 6B10 and 11A3 and B1)

CHAPTER THREE - FOOTNOTES

1. Charles W.J. Withers. Gaelic in Scotland 1698-1981. John Donald, Edinburgh, 1984. p.80. By 1806 the Gaidhealtachd did not include Struan, according to survey evidence. Reasons may have included a shift of population and the effect of schooling. Travellers were more likely to retain Gaelic due to lack of schooling and were also more likely to move.
2. J.S. Keltie. History of the Highland Clans. Vol.X, p.6
3. Keltie, p.6.
4. Keltie, p.6.
5. Duncan Campbell, pp.24-5.
6. Duncan Campbell, pp.24-5.
7. Piping Times. Vol.27, No.5, 1975. p.29.
8. Extract from records kindly supplied by James Stewart, Keeper of the Records, Blair Castle 25/9/79.
9. Information given in letter dated 25/9/79.
10. From records of Glenisla Games, supplied by secretary.
11. Local name given to concrete houses of which there was a row, all inhabited by travellers.
12. Further information contained in Douglas "Statement concerning John Stewart" 1985, in closed section of School of Scottish Studies archives.
13. James F. Kennedy. Folklore of Strathtay and Grandtully. Chap.3, p.6.
14. On her tombstone in Alyth Cemetery her name is given as Campbell.
15. Rehfish, 1959. Ch.7.

CHAPTER FOUR

Family History: Blairgowrie and Beyond

CHAPTER FOUR

FAMILY HISTORY: BLAIRGOWRIE AND BEYOND

In 1952 old Nancy Stewart, mother of Alec and John, died and three years later old John himself died in Blairgowrie at the age of 85:

As he lay dying in the home of his son, Mr. Alexander Stewart, Berrybank, Rattray, old John Stewart asked his son to play some tunes on the chanter.

Then the old man - he was nearly 85 - took the chanter in his fingers from which the strength was slowly ebbing and raised it to his own lips.

He managed to sound it but his fingers had lost their cunning and he could not raise a tune. Soon afterwards he slipped quietly away ... Three hundred came from all parts of Scotland to pay their last respects and stood outside the house in Rattray in a silent throng while Rev. A.F. Taylor Young, Hill Church, Blairgowrie, conducted the funeral service.

At the cemetery he was borne to the grave by his eldest surviving son, Alex, his grandsons John and Andrew Stewart and Billy Higgins, and his nephews Andrew and David Stewart.

Before them marched Piper Hugh MacMillan, Kirkmichael, whom he had taught to play so many years before. He played "Lord Lovat's Lament" as the coffin was carried to the grave and the "Floo'ers o the Forest" as he was laid away.¹

Having attended Alec's funeral in May 1980, I can confirm that this newspaper report faithfully conveys the moving atmosphere of a traveller funeral. Travellers, like Highlanders generally, set great store by a funeral that is solemn, ceremonial and expressive of deep mourning. Afterwards they may relieve their feelings by getting drunk and singing all night, dancing and piping, almost as if reasserting that life goes on. But at the funeral service and the burial, they are grief-stricken and make their mourning almost tangible in their bearing and deportment. They show their sorrow in ways that the

stolid Lowland Scot would regard as embarrassing - openly weeping, embracing each other, in some cases even sinking to the ground in genuine paroxysms of grief. The poignant skirling of the pipes is the keynote of the occasion, so it is easy to understand Belle's account of how Piper Hugh MacMillan felt at first that he dare not risk playing at the funeral, in case he broke down under the tide of emotion that he knew would be flowing all around him:

When Alec's father died, Alec and I went along one night to Jordanstone to see Hugh MacMillan, to see if he would pipe at Alec's father's funeral. And he stood and the tears run doon his face at the door. "Oh my God," he says, "John Stewart's not dead, is he?"

"Aye," said Alec, "my father's dead. I've come to ask you will you pipe at his funeral." He stood a while and said, "Honestly Alec, I couldn't. When I think back," he says, "the sort of teacher he was and such a man, taking him all over, the kin o man he was," he says, "it would break my heart," he says. "I would break down. I couldn't do it," he says. "I'm sorry" ... But we were just back at the bungalow, we wouldnae be hauf an oor in the hoose, when this big car pulled up. This was Hugh MacMillan. "No," he says, "Alec, I've been thinking about it. It wouldnae be fair if I didnae play," he says. "After all," he says, "he's the man that taught me to play the pipes. Why shouldn't I play to him now? But," he says, "one thing I'll have to do, Alec, I'll have to take another piper with me, a friend of mine to stand in, in case I break down." (Douglas 3A7)

After their reconciliation Belle and Alec lived in Blairgowrie, first of all in a council house, then in Belle's mother's house which they moved into when she died:

So from that time on we managed better-like. Some time we had a wee shop; some we had bits of land hereabouts; - and the children all had wee plots around and aboot here too.

Then a few years ago [taped in 1963] we went into the berry business. Just in Blairgowrie, my youngest son Andrew Stewart - he had about eighteen acres of raspberries there - and we had to have campers, naturally, to pick them. We thought the travellers would be by far the best people for the job, because you can get them to work under more difficult conditions than you can the local people. So at that time that I am talking about we had

twenty two tents - about twenty families - eighty or ninety people, including the bairns - and they were camping out in a field that belonged to Andrew. (Brune, p.18)

But this enterprise soon ran into trouble with the authorities, who appeared to discriminate against them, using the lack of running water on the site as an excuse to move on their campers:

We'd no running water and they wouldn't allow campers to stay at any place in berries at that particular time if there wasn't running water for them and toilets. (Douglas 3A4)

This regulation did not seem to be consistently applied to all berry farmers according to Belle:

Well, all the other local growers had neither toilets nor running water or anything for their campers. But they, seemingly, could carry on without, simply because they had been fruit growers for a long period of years. (Brune, p.18)

She even names some of the growers concerned:-

Hodge the solicitor - he had a farm wi hundreds o acres of raspberries - and various other farms roon aboot - Macintyre and them a' - not one of them had running water in the actual field. The berry pickers had the bothies, had to walk maybe a quarter o a mile, half a mile, to a tap at the farmyard for to get that water, ye ken. (Douglas, / 3A4)

The Stewarts nevertheless tried to comply with the demands of officials who came to see them, sanitary inspectors from Perth and Blairgowrie, Medical Officer James Kelman and the RSPCC inspector:

Blair Oliphant (the Stewarts' neighbour) gave a sanction to have a connection from his water supply ... and we got a running tap in the field. And Alec and Andy had three toilets for women and three toilets for men ... They were naturally dry toilets, you know ... Now Sheila's man Ian, Andy wi him, dug doon aboot eight feet, really eight feet down, for these toilets and I had a wee luggie ... full o chloride o lime ... and that was in every toilet. Now, Proctor of the sawmill in Blairgowrie made these toilets and they were really made perfect with seats and every-

thing, you know, and things for across your feet tae sit and wi this big drop. Now whenever anybody used that they would put a handfu o chloride o lime in it and it was away through the ground ... (Douglas 3A4)

Officials came and went, one saying that the campers had to be near the running water, another saying that they had to move to the bottom of the field so as not to be beside the road, until the pickers were frightened away altogether:

One night round about the 3rd or 4th of August, Alec and I were just having our tea back hame in Old Rattray when a policeman came to the door and he says, "You'll better go an get all your campers out o thon field - they're no tae be there."

I says, "How - have they had a fight or what?"

"Oh no, no, no," he says, "they're just no tae be there."

So by the time Alec and I got out to the camp, all but three of the tents had disappeared altogether - the other families had shifted and there was not a trace of them to be seen anywhere - during the time we had gone off for our tea, they just packed up right away at the sight of the police because they werena supposed tae be fit tae be there. (Brune, pp.18-19)

According to another account of Belle's the campers had moved to the bottom of the field, which led the Stewarts to being charged with having their campers too far away from the running water. Whatever happened, Belle and her son were taken to court for contravening the health regulations and things might have gone badly with them if, by this time, they had not met Hamish Henderson of the School of Scottish Studies. Hamish had come across the song, "The Berryfields of Blair," sung by John MacDonald of Pitgaveny, Elgin, known as the Singing Mole-catcher. He had told Hamish that it had been written by someone in Blairgowrie, and when Maurice Fleming, a local journalist and song collector, whom Hamish knew, made inquiries about the song in the town, he was soon knocking at the door of "Berrybank," the Stewarts' house in Old Rattray. Finding not just the composer of the song in

Belle Stewart, but a whole family of singers, pipers and storytellers, Maurice, who first recorded the Stewarts, soon alerted Hamish, who followed up the discovery and also made many recordings of them and other travellers on the berry fields themselves, the berry time being an excellent opportunity to meet travellers from far and wide. By the time the Stewarts were in trouble over their berry field, Hamish was well acquainted with them, and obtained first rate help for them in court, in the person of Lionel Daiches, Q.C., who was engaged to defend them. Twenty two other people were to be charged in connection with the case, being among the pickers who had been involved in camping on the Stewarts' field, but their cases were held in abeyance to await the outcome of the Stewarts' case.

The court's proceedings were reported in detail in the local press:

BLAIR DISTRICT CAMPERS IN COURT

ALLEGED CONTRAVENTIONS OF COUNTY REGULATIONS

Bye-laws "Meaningless Verbiage," says Q.C.

Mr. Lionel Daiches Q.C. in Perth Sheriff Court on Tuesday described Perth County Council's camping bye-laws as a mass of meaningless verbiage and utter nonsense.

All but one of the charges against 22 tent-dwellers, who were alleged to have contravened the bye-laws, were dismissed by Sheriff-Substitute A.M. Prain ... The charges against the tent-dwellers included:

Failure to notify the local authority of the location of their tents; failure to provide the tents with a suitable water supply; suitable toilet accommodation, and a means of disposing of waste water and refuse; and failing to keep the tents and their surroundings in a thoroughly clean and wholesome condition.

Mrs. Stewart was charged with failing to provide a sufficient supply of wholesome water for the occupants and failing to provide sufficient means of disposal of waste water. The complaint also alleged that it was by agreement with her or authority from her that the tents were there.

Objections to the complaints

Mr. Daiches objected to the complaints on the grounds that there was not sufficient specification against the accused. The prosecution had failed to state what was "pure and wholesome water," "suitable means of disposal of refuse," and so on. No relevant complaint could be formed on any of the bye-laws said to have been contravened, because the said bye-laws did not specify the standards of "sufficiency, wholesomeness, cleanliness and suitability." He described the local bye-laws as, "a mass of meaningless verbiage," and "utter nonsense."

... The Depute-Fiscal Mr. T.F. Aitchison said the bye-laws dealt with matters of hygiene for which it would be difficult to lay down precise standards. ... He could see nothing wrong with the court deciding what was reasonable and not reasonable ...

Sheriff's Opinion

Sheriff Prain said that the complaints did not clearly designate in what capacity the accused were going to be charged or whether they were persons liable to be charged.

"The main point," he said, "is whether the paragraphs of the bye-laws which form the substance of the complaints against the accused are capable of being translated into relevant complaints in a criminal court."

Members of the public, he contended, who were affected by regulations, should know in their ordinary acts whether or not they were committing a breach of the regulations and a breach of the law, and were hence liable to punishments in criminal courts. For that purpose the person had to be aware of the standard against which his conduct was to be set.

If an offence were to be described by reference to words such as "suitable reasonable or sufficient," then there had to be a standard which was of sufficient reasonableness and suitability to be recognised by the public and to which normal people normally conformed. If any particular standard was established it had to be laid down.

In the present case they were dealing with standards of sanitation and the duties laid on persons were described as "suitable supply of whole water," and so on. The question was whether these words in their context disclosed a standard by which any normal member of the public could recognise whether or not he was in breach.

In the Sheriff's opinion, there was no such general recognised standard that would make it reasonably practicable for a normal member of the public to know whether or not his actions were in breach of the bye-laws. He therefore considered that the complaints were not relevant and must fall.

That left, the Sheriff, added, only one charge under bye-law 1 which required prospective tent-occupiers to give notice to the local authority if they proposed staying for more than two days.

Mr. Daiches then formally tendered a plea of not guilty on this charge and trial was fixed. All the tent-dwellers were accused under it.

Mrs. Stewart was dismissed from the case. The Sheriff said that before the complaint would be relevant against her, there would require to be further specifications of the agreement she was alleged to have made or the authority she was alleged to have given.²

Two months later the trial came round to deal with the third charge against the Stewarts. For very much the same reasons it also could not be made to stick:

The regulations to be enforceable would require to embody more specific guides of the requirements which they sought to impose ... I am of the opinion that no relevant complaint can be framed under those parts of the bye-laws which form the subject of the first and second charge, and these two charges must therefore fail on those two grounds.

Regarding the third charge he says, "The phrase, 'if a nuisance is likely to arise,' is too vague to receive effect in a criminal court." Therefore it also fell.³

For the first time a court case against Scots travellers had been seriously defended and was successful in that it clarified the laws concerning camping in the Blairgowrie area.

But the beneficiaries were certainly not the Stewarts, Daiches' fee of £100 was certainly not exorbitant - it may well have been less than his bare costs - but it was more than the Stewarts could afford, particularly after the loss of most of their fruit crop. None of the other growers were prepared to contribute towards the costs of the case and so after another rather bad season their little enterprise folded. (Brune, p.29)

In spite of this misfortune the Stewarts viewed the Berryfields Court Case as a victory for travellers, and if the discrimination of local officials against them was what had brought them to court, then it was also a victory for justice and human decency. Anyone who has picked berries in Strathmore knows not to expect "all mod. cons." in camping conditions. At the same time, there has never been any notable outbreak of typhoid or any other illness liable to be caused by insanitary conditions. The worst risk is probably a touch of diarrhoea through eating too much fruit. One thing that does emerge from the newspaper reports is that the travellers were treated by the law, as "normal members of the public." The only reference that can be seen to approach any distinction between them and other people is when they are included under the heading of, "the congregation of itinerant workers in encampments in the Blairgowrie area during the raspberry season." This is a perfectly correct description and would have a derogatory meaning only to those already prejudiced against the travellers, some of them being the local officials who had been harassing the travellers in the first place. A letter to the Blairgowrie Advertiser highlights the folly of this very clearly, showing how in fact it is not in the community's interest to do this:

CAMPING BERRY-PICKERS

Dear Sir,

Berrytime is always fun in Blairgowrie and Rattray. Funny hats, queer jeans, shocking shirts and other garments sported by pickers are always good for a laugh.

This year an official is adding to the merriment. He has been reported as going round the countryside, notebook in hand, and policeman at his elbow, looking for tinkers' tents.

It is said that when he finds one, he peeps inside and asks the occupants if they have running water and a chemical latrine.

The answer I am told is usually, "no," so he then orders the travellers to move.

Now, this of course is rich comedy in the Clochmerle tradition, and we are grateful to the official for his performance. But there is a serious side to the situation:-

- 1) Campers are being needlessly harrassed and worried.
- 2) They are being deprived of a means of livelihood.
- 3) Farmers are waking to find their pickers gone.
- 4) The fruit crop is endangered.

Comedy in short is bordering on tragedy.

Yours etc.

SCALDIE⁴

When Belle was waiting to appear in court in Perth, she wrote her own comment on the events that had brought her there, in the form of a poem:

It happened at the berrytime
When the travellers came to Blair
They pitched their tents on the berryfields
Without a worry or care.

But they hadnae been long settled
When some heid yins come fae Perth
And told them they must go at once
And get off the face o the earth.

These folk of course were worried
For of law they have no sense
They only came to the berryfields
To earn a few honest pence.

For it was hard to make them stay here
When the policeman said to go.
So they just packed up and took the road
To where I do not know.

It's a hard life being a traveller
For I found it to be true.
I've tried in every possible way
To live in times that's new.

But we're always hit below the belt
No matter what we do.
But when it comes to the Judgment Day
We'll be just the same as you.

(Douglas 3A4)

These few simple little verses contain a great deal of truth about the travellers and their problems. Belle's identification with them is typical of her, even though most of her life has been lived in houses. It would be wrong to interpret this identification as a wish to pose as something she is not; it is, rather, an expression of her sympathy with the travellers and their problems. Many of them were, after all, friends and relations. Her apparent exaggeration of the orders of petty officialdom to the travellers to "get off the face of the earth," is also a true interpretation of the attitudes of many local government representatives and supposed guardians of justice and fair dealing. Any number of newspaper cuttings of reports of town council meetings in different parts of the country could be quoted which echo these very sentiments.

Belle also in her claim that the travellers only aim "to earn a few honest pence" highlights the fact that travellers are basically law-abiding people; they do not want trouble. Police records support this; most travellers who fall foul of the law do so for offences like illegal camping, not having their vehicles taxed (if times are hard) or being drunk. There are comparatively few instances of travellers being convicted of crimes like robbery or murder. This was confirmed by James Petrie the Assistant Chief Police Constable of Strathclyde, when I spoke to him at a planning exchange conference at Middleton in Midlothian, when sites for travellers were being discussed by representatives of local government and planning authorities in 1979.

Belle points out also that the travellers' reaction to being moved on by the Police is seldom defiant or aggressive: they simply pack up and go, although often they do not know where they are going, having come to that particular place for a particular purpose, in this case, to pick berries for several weeks. Finally, Belle forces the reader or listener to consider the moral implications of the law's actions against the travellers, by cleverly reminding us that the Sheriff Court in Perth is not the final authority to which we have to account for our actions. In the sight of God, travellers have no less rights than any other human beings. Fortunately the decision of the Court vindicated this view. Unfortunately, as we have seen, this vindication came too late to undo the harm official interference had already done:

It was no use; the crop was coming on in the middle o the season - the berries were coming on at their best - and I couldna get enough pickers so most of my crop went to waste. We were doing well at the time, and we could aye be doing well - doing honest work - if all these local busybodies had not interfered all the times; - so now we've berries on our land, though we've still got some of the land under weed to this day. (Brune, p.20)

Another insight into the Berryfields case is afforded by Farnham Rehfisch who was encamped on the Standing Stones Berryfield with his wife, along with Hamish Henderson, when authorities began to harass the Stewarts. His detached and objective manner of reporting, as a trained social anthropologist, helps to highlight the way in which they were being discriminated against. It is particularly significant that his efforts to share the lot of the other campers and be summonsed were completely disregarded:

A traveller who had been settled in Blairgowrie for several decades and owned a berry field for some time, had made several

attempts to establish social relations with the local population. His attempts were rebuffed and he told me that the only Flattie ever to enter his house was the local policeman. At berry picking time about thirty travellers camped on his field, as was customary, in preparation for the picking to start. Equally a researcher for the School of Scottish Studies and my wife and myself set up our tents on the spot. After about two days of picking, the health authorities came and inspected the site. They told the campers to go stating that there were not adequate facilities on the site, meaning too few taps and toilets. The campers were given forty eight hours to go. The owner was frantic, for if his labour supply left his crop would go to ruin. Hence he agreed that if the campers were fined for disobeying the order he would pay. In two days the authorities returned and issued summonses to all on the site except to the other researcher and myself in spite of my making our presence very obvious and indeed asking for a summons. In the interim period I had toured several other fields, owned by Flatties of course, and found that many if not most, had less facilities than this one. The owner and myself contacted other berry field owners, trying to enlist their support, but of course to no avail. The result was that the owner was forced to obtain the services of a barrister, at great expense, who, with no difficulty had the summons quashed. I should perhaps mention here that the landowners of Blairgowrie had established a protective association but Travellers were not invited to join.⁵

In his earlier thesis, Rehfisch also says:

In 1956 just before the berry-picking was to begin, a group of tinkers were camped on a berry field owned by one of the Blairgowrie tinkers. Soon after their arrival, the Sanitary Inspector accompanied by a policeman appeared on the scene and told them that they would all have to leave for the site did not afford sufficient sanitary facilities. He gave them forty eight hours to get off. The owner of the field, realising that if his campers were made to go he would have difficulty in harvesting his crop, agreed that they should stay and he guaranteed to pay all fines. Two days later the police arrived and issued charges to all those residing on the field; they informed Mr. Hamish Henderson who had just arrived that if he did not leave within forty eight hours he would be summoned to court, and they threatened all the other newcomers. After the time set had expired the police returned again and issued charges to all the newcomers but the aforementioned Mr. Henderson. By that time my wife and I had set up our camp on that field; the police must have been aware of this fact, but they neither told us to leave nor threatened us in any way. The end result was that all the campers with the exception of Mr. H. Henderson and ourselves were charged with infringing the bye-laws. The owner of the field was also charged. An investigation carried out by myself showed to my entire satisfaction that the vast majority of the berry fields

in the region offered no better sanitary conditions than the one discussed above yet this field was the only one where campers were troubled.⁶

This on-the-spot account by an accurate and careful reporter who was also a trained anthropologist confirms the main facts as related by Belle and clearly proves that the feeling of being victimised was justified. This is very important when one comes to consider the stories told in the family, many of which feature Jack, the despised one, who overcomes kings and ogres, or the dreaded Burkers, the bodysnatchers who, many travellers still believe, are on the prowl to make away with them in lonely places. It is noteworthy that in these stories Jack always wins in the end and the Burkers' victims always escape. Thus, the function these stories have or had in the travellers' life, can be summed up by saying they helped the traveller to preserve his identity. This will be considered in detail when the stories are examined.

The berry time has always been a turbulent time in Blairgowrie, attracting as it does casual workers of all kinds from all over Scotland. It all started in the 1890s when an enterprising local man by the name of Hodge planted the first berry field from which the large scale growing of soft fruit in Strathmore developed. The best way of harvesting the fruit was found to be hand-picking, so large numbers of casual workers were needed. Even before the appeal was sent out during the First World War for pickers to provide jam for the armed forces, the berry time drew travellers and others when the strawberries and raspberries ripened in July and August. In the Blairgowrie Advertiser of 1899 for example there are numerous

references to berry pickers, some of whom spent their earnings in the pubs around the Wellmeadow in the centre of the town and ended up in court for creating breaches of the peace. Not all were as appreciative of the leniency with which they were treated as Margaret McDonald who in September 16th, 1899 reacted to a fine of 10/6 or 14 days for quarrelling and fighting in the Wellmeadow, by exclaiming to the magistrate, "Thank you sir! It's sixty days I should get. I canna behave masel when I come to this place!"

Not all of these disturbers of the peace were travellers, although, as Alec Stewart remarked on one occasion, "It will generally be the travellers that gets the blame." (Brune, p.42) However, in 1957 there was a famous battle on the berry fields involving travellers and taking place actually on the Stewarts' berry field at the Standing Stones near Cleaves Farm, Essendy. Moreover this battle had as one of its main protagonists Willie MacPhee, a cousin of Alec's, whose stories and songs also form part of the material on which this project is based. Willie was born in a farm cottage in Helensburgh in 1910 and travelled a great deal in Dumbartonshire, Argyllshire and Perthshire, a tinsmith, piper and casual farm worker, who even served two years as a blacksmith. Alec gives an account of this Battle of the Cleaves as it came to be remembered:

Well, it would be about two mile out fae Blairgowrie ... there is a place called the Standing Stones ... and there were about 80 travellers campit all by the side of the road - in the field like - and this Willie MacPhee and another two men, they went to the town - to Blair - and they had a drink or two in the pub but they werena drunk; and there was this Highland man - he comes from Skye - McDonald you call him, and Shemish they call him for a by-name - means James; - and he says to Willie MacPhee, "Could

you give me a pint?" - and Willie says, "Aye, I'll give you a pint," and he bought him a pint. So he says, "Will you give me a cigarette?" so he gave him a cigarette tae.

So when he got his pint and the cigarette he says, "Will you give me a loan of a pound?" So Willie says, "No I cannae - I have not got a pound on me." So Shemish he says, "O youse can give nothing at all," he says, "all that youse can do is take money off anybody." So this Willie MacPhee draws out and hit him, you see - knocked him down flat. The barman chucked them outside.

So Willie MacPhee went away hame to the camp; and Shemish came back about eleven o'clock and he started a barney with this Willie MacPhee and them; and then when one started, the whole lot started; - the whole of the field - over 80 of them.

So the policeman came up for me an my son - he says, "You better come out and settle them, Sandy." I says, "I have nothing to do with them; - I'm not going out into a big field with about 80 or more people having a scrap, and try and settle them; - do you want me killed?" He says, "It's your field." I says, "Aye, it's my field right enough, but you are there for to settle them - you are the policeman." He says, "I'll have to send for reinforcements."

So they sent to Perth - and there was two cars of 14 police came - and they couldnae settle them; - and a doctor came, two nurses and an ambulance - and there was one man taken into the hospital to have his head seen to; and there was another man lying among the drills - I don't know where he went to ... They were hitting each other with bottles, paling posts, snottams, kettles - anything they could lay their hands on.

So I went out on the road watching them - oh, an awful carry-on; the policeman they run aboot without jackets, without caps, and shirt and trousers all torn; and I says to the sairjant, "Hello, where's your tunic?" He says, "Lying out there," he says. "You better come out an give us a help." "Oh no," I says. "No me - I'm not going near them at all."

So they got kind of settled anyway ... and then the police came out an shifted the MacPhees away. So I says, "You may as well shift the two, when you are shifting one; - one was just as bad as the other," I says, "shift the two of them." So the policeman says, "You go and try and shift them - you're still fresh; and see what they'll say to you." So I went to them and I asked them to go and they said, "We can't, we've paid no taxes on the lorry - we can't get out on the road." So I gave them a week to get out. But Willie MacPhee and them, they went quietly before I got out to the field that day. (Brune, pp.42-43)

Willie and his son John appeared in court, along with one of the McDonalds, as reported in the local press:

Family Feud at Berry Pickers' Camp

A melee at a berry pickers encampment in a field at the Cleaves, Essendy Road, where a fence post and a metal bar were used as weapons, was described in Perth Sheriff Court last Friday.

William MacPhee and John MacPhee, general dealers of no fixed abode, and Samuel MacDonald, outworker, of no fixed abode, appeared before Hon. Sheriff-Substitute Sir Robert Nimmo.

The MacPhees admitted conducting themselves in a disorderly manner, and assaulting James MacDonald, mill worker, by striking him on the head with a wooden post and a metal bar.

Samuel MacDonald (17) who appeared by himself, pleaded guilty to assaulting Constable Alfred Valentine.

Mr. W.R.D. MacMillan, Procurator Fiscal said that shortly after ten o'clock the MacPhees arrived back at the encampment under the influence of drink. They threatened people with violence and challenged them to fight. Eighty men, women and children were alarmed.

The MacPhees were armed with a wooden post and a metal bar. One of the assaulted parties, James MacDonald tried to pacify them but was rendered unconscious. His brother went to his assistance but he was also struck and rendered unconscious.

Mr. C. Smith solicitor, said the MacPhees were inflamed through excessive drink. The encampment had been the scene of a certain amount of friction between two sets of brothers. An argument which started after the MacPhees returned to the camp lost all sense of proportion. It developed into a general melee in which blows were struck by all concerned on both sides. One and all seemed to lose their heads.

The Sheriff told the accused he would normally have jailed them for such offences. But as there appeared to be an element of family feuding involved, he would give them the option of paying a fine of £10 each or thirty days.⁷

The newspaper account of the trial makes no mention of the episode in the pub described by Alec, when the MacDonalds were obvious out to annoy the MacPhees. In Alec's account also it seems that he was speaking about Willie MacPhee as if he hardly knew him, but this was because he was being interviewed by someone who did not know Willie. When I brought the subject up with Belle and Alec with Willie present, asking if the Willie MacPhee mentioned in the newspaper report was indeed the Willie I knew - a fact I was in doubt about

because in all the years I have known Willie I have never known him to be violent - Belle's reply showed that he was a friend and ally at the time:

That was Willie aa right. We were damned glad, damned glad Willie was there tae gie us a hand that night. (Douglas 2B2)

Willie also rather shamefacedly acknowledged his part in the melee. (Douglas 2B2)

The Sheriff's remarks about the element of family feuding involved showed a good understanding of the situation in the light of past history. Willie's wife Bella points out:

If you read anything ... about the MacPhee clan. The MacPhee clan and the MacDonalds - there were always a feud. (Douglas 2B2)

It is also worth noting that it is also a feature of past history that traveller violence, when it occurs, seldom involves non-travellers; but is usually a family feud or a fight between travellers. For this reason the police have often ignored it, unless it alarmed outsiders. It was the grand scale of the Battle of the Cleaves that called in the forces of the law and caused the protagonists to wind up in court. But travellers' fights of this kind were really the exception to the rule; most of the violence at the berry time came from pickers from the cities, especially Dundee and Glasgow. Alec makes this clear:

Now, Standing Stones - that was a travellers' battle - all the other troubles we've had since was between Glasgow and Dundee roughs coming from the berry picking. These folk of the two cities dinna like each other but you ask any local people and they'll tell you it's the travellers causing the trouble all the time. They think because you are a picker, you must automatically be a tinker. (Brune, p.46)

Cathy speaks of the female counterparts of the city roughs:

... it was all girls from the rough parts of Glasgow and Dundee - with the blonde hair, all bleached, you know; and all the black stuff on the eyelids, and with thick belts round their middles and that - jeans; - had knives and knuckledusters - Oh, they are terrible! (Brune, p.46)

Another letter in the local press from SCALDIE bears out this point:

The fruit-picking season is fast approaching and Blairgowrie and district will soon be inundated with people coming to work on local farms. May we who live in Blairgowrie all the year round hope that those responsible for employing labour in the fields may make an effort to avoid engaging possible trouble-makers?

Last year there was a most unpleasant campaign against tinkers, while the real nuisances were allowed to brawl, swear loudly and openly in the streets and generally pollute the atmosphere.

I feel that farmers have a real duty to the rest of the community and I am glad to see at least one employer has been advertising for students, women and girls. But what of the rest. Do they take anyone who comes along, regardless of their potentialities as vandals and social rebels?

How much happier we should all be and how much pleasanter the town would be if there was a ban on engaging teddy-boys and teddy-girls as berry pickers this summer.

Yours etc.

SCALDIE⁸

Ten years later when the Traditional Music and Song Association was running its festival in Blairgowrie, at the berry time, in order to catch the singers and story tellers and pipers among the travellers who came there, the same tough city element was still coming and still causing trouble in the streets and pubs. Only, by this time, the local people were blaming it on the festival crowd!

The discovery of the Stewarts by Hamish Henderson of the School of Scottish Studies had far-reaching consequences for them, particularly with regard to their oral tradition of ballads, songs and stories:

Through the good services of Hamish Henderson, Peter Kennedy (at this time collecting for the "As I Roved Out," BBC series) was introduced to the Stewarts. Kennedy and family arrived with Bob Rundle, the Northumbrian piper from Devon. He later introduced Farnham and Anne Rehfisch - also collecting for the BBC - who were taken by the Stewarts on a round trip of Scotland for about six months in 1953 or 54. In fact there was a whole stream of people - academics, folklorists, singers wanting traditional material and others. Later German and Danish film companies sent teams to Blairgowrie to shoot the Stewarts.

The John Brune connection was not made until 1961 when I linked up with Peter Kennedy on a couple of projects ... I arranged a meeting between the Stewarts and Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger, which resulted in many reasonably rewarding recording sessions, folk club bookings and inclusion in Centre 42 concerts. One of the highlights of the period was the much admired Parker/MacColl Radio Ballad programme, "The Travelling People," in which Belle Stewart featured as one of the main singing - and speaking - voices. (Brune, pp.49-50)

Hamish Henderson himself recorded the Stewarts extensively for the archives of the School of Scottish Studies and was undoubtedly the first person to make them realise that the songs and stories they had been singing and telling in their family circle all their lives, off and on, were of real interest to people outside the family circle. Maurice Fleming who first found them and who got to know them very well confirms that this was a new discovery to them. He had to persuade them to take part in local concerts he organised, and says Belle was very, very nervous the first time she sang at one of these concerts. The local press has a record both of Maurice Fleming's early taping visits and of the concerts at which the Stewarts appeared:

FOLK SONGS AND TALKS (sic)

BLAIR AND DISTRICT PEOPLE MAKE RECORDINGS

A number of people in Blairgowrie and district have made recordings recently for the School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh University.

Their traditional folk songs and tales go to swell the growing collection in the School's archives. The songs and stories were recorded on a tape recorder. Officials of the School have expressed themselves delighted with the material.

Folk songs were recorded by Mrs. A. Stewart, Berry Bank, Rattray; her daughter Miss Sheila Stewart; Mr. and Mrs. J. Higgins, 14 Lower Mill St., Blairgowrie; Mrs. I. Higgins, 17 Ashgrove Terrace; Mrs. Higgins, Bankhead; and Mr. W. MacPhee, Gothens, Blairgowrie.

Mrs. I. Higgins, Mr. J. Higgins and Mr. W. MacPhee contributed the folk tales.

This is the second time recordings have been made by Mrs. Stewart, Sheila and Mrs. I. Higgins. Over forty songs have now been collected from them. As well as rare classical ballads, bothy ballads, this number also includes some songs of Mrs. Stewart's own composition.

The Staff at the School of Scottish Studies were particularly impressed with "The Berryfields of Blair".

The recordings were made by Maurice Fleming, who is a voluntary part-time research worker for the School of Scottish Studies.⁹

It was just about this time that Hamish Henderson was making his first recordings of Jeannie Robertson, who, like the Stewarts could trace her descent back to old Jimmy Stewart of Struan. Not surprisingly the same type and quality of ballads and tales were found in both branches of the family.

One of the earliest of the local concerts at which the Stewarts appeared is reported in the local paper as follows:

BLAIR ARTISTES TO TAKE PART IN "SCOTTISH GATHERING."

"Scottish Gathering" is the title of a concert sponsored by Pitlochry Tourist Association to be held in Pitlochry Public Hall on Monday 11th August. The concert is to open "Tartan Week" in the town.

A real ceilidh night is promised. Several Blairgowrie artistes are to take part in what will be a feast of Scots folk-singing, fiddle music, piping, accordion playing and Gaelic mouth music.

The artistes have been selected and the programme arranged by Mr. Maurice Fleming, Craigard, Blairgowrie, well known for his work in collecting folk songs in the district.

Local artistes taking part include Mr. and Mrs. Alex. Stewart, Berry Bank, Rattray, Mrs. Charlotte Higgins, 14 Lower Mill Street; Mrs. Cathie Higgins; and Mr. Kenneth Beaton, Burrelton, winner at the recent Perthshire Mod at Aberfeldy and a prominent member of Blairgowrie and District Highland Association.

Mr. Fleming has written a script to link the items, and this will be narrated by Mr. Alistair Steven, writer, journalist and broadcaster who resides in Edinburgh and at Dalhally, Glenisla.

A big attraction will be Mr. Ian Powrie who with his accompanist Miss Pamela Eadie, will give fiddle selections.

Also taking part will be Miss Jeannie Robertson, Aberdeen, start folk singer of "The Pleasures of Scotland" at Edinburgh Festival, and representative for Scotland at the folk song rally at the Royal Festival Hall, London. ¹⁰

It is noteworthy that Maurice Fleming and Hamish Henderson both saw the Stewarts as bearers of an essentially Scottish tradition, not a separate and different traveller one. In this concert also they were appearing on the same footing as local singers and musicians, who took part regularly in local events and were well known in the area. The idea of making a gimmick out of their traveller identity was certainly not implanted in them by either of these two collectors. It is also worth considering that there was nothing so very extraordinary about the members of the family of old John Stewart becoming prominent as performers in their home area, when one remembers how old John had played his pipes at Perthshire Games and shown his silent films in halls similar to the one at Pitlochry. It was just that the family

singing tradition had not been brought to the fore, mainly because it came from Belle's side of the family, and up till then had been thought of as just something for the family circle, although Belle remembers her mother telling her how other travellers would walk miles to hear her father sing. (Douglas videotape) Now the Scottish Folk Revival pioneered by Hamish Henderson brought this family of singers to prominence, along with bothy singers from the farming community.

Hamish Henderson saw more clearly than anyone else the real importance of these tradition bearers, because he saw them and their material with relation to Scotland and the Scottish people, not as a source of prestige and profit for himself. His work of translating "Letters from Prison" by Antonio Gramsci and his work of collecting with Alan Lomax, had provided him both with the motivation and the expertise to fulfil what he now saw as "an urgent need: that of placing examples of authentic, native singing styles and - wherever possible - actual performances of good traditional artistes within the reach of the young apprentice singers of the Revival."¹¹

One of the earliest attempts to do this was the People's Festival Ceilidh of 1951 organised by Hamish Henderson and sponsored by "a body composed of the organisations of protest - Labour Party, Communist Party, trades unions, Trade Councils."¹² Norman Buchan describes how at this event, the public, including himself, heard for the first time "the material and the traditional singers themselves. Singers like Jimmy McBeath, Jessie Murray (who gave us that night that most

fragile of tunes, "Skippin Barfit through the Heather,") John Strachan, Flora McNeil, young Arthur Argo, great grandson of Gavin Greig." Hamish did not discover the Stewarts through Maurice Fleming till 1955, but had he done so earlier they would certainly have appeared at the People's Festival Ceilidh. The song referred to by Norman Buchan is another version of "The Queen among the Heather," one of Belle Stewart's best and most beautiful songs, learned from her brother, who got it from their father orally - being illiterate there was no other way he could have got it.

Like the artistes who took part in the People's Festival, the Stewarts began by performing in their own area, although being travelling people they had more social barriers than the others. These appearances at local concerts arranged by Maurice Fleming continued, sometimes designated rather grandly as a "Scottish Folksong Recital," sometimes billed rather more dashingly as a "really off-beat attraction" in Dundee's Civic Week. Once again other local artistes performed alongside the Stewarts, as for example on 10th July, 1956:

Mr. Ian Redford well-known Kirriemuir band leader and singer of bothy ballads is also to take part and the Gaelic side is in the hands of Miss Cathy Fraser who is much in demand for concerts in and around Dundee. Miss Fraser belongs to Fortingall.

The programme will therefore range from rhymes sung in city streets through Hebridean lullabies to the Big Ballads of Miss Robertson and Mrs. Alexander Stewart.

The reason why these concerts were put on in Pitlochry and Dundee rather than in Blairgowrie was explained to me by Maurice Fleming. The Stewarts themselves felt that people would not come to hear them if they performed in Blairgowrie. It was to be another ten years before



Belle singing "Johnnie My Man".



Belle telling "The Blacksmith."

they felt confident enough to do this, by appearing as guest artistes at the Traditional Music and Song Association's first festival which was held in Blair. Even then they knew that people from outside the town would be coming to it and that is perhaps why they thought it safe to take part. By that time of course they had become better known to a wider audience as folksingers. An excerpt from a letter written by Maurice Fleming to the Blairgowrie Advertiser makes this clear:

I wonder if many Blair people realise just how famous the name of their town is in folk circles, and I mean international circles. A number of leading collectors have visited the district from time to time and I know of others whose dream it is to collect, "The Berryfields of Blair."

Collectors who have already been to Blair include Ewan MacColl, Peggy Seeger, Peter Kennedy, Hamish Henderson ... and Alan Lomax. All have been enthusiastic about their visits. Lomax described the berry picking season as one of the leading folk festivals of the British Isles.

The fame of the town as a folk song centre has also been spread abroad by the Stewart family ... It is Scotland's loss that the Stewarts have appeared more often in English clubs and at English Festivals than in their native country.

More than one authority regards Belle Stewart as one of the finest folk artistes in these islands. This very weekend she and other members of the family are singing at the important Keele Festival, holding the flag for Scotland as they have done at several other notable events.¹³

About this time, 1956, they had been involved in Charles Parker's Radio Ballad on "The Travelling People" in which he collaborated with Ewan MacColl. I believe that this experience greatly influenced the image they began to have of themselves, which was to some extent to alienate them from the rest of their family and from their local community. The programme purported to present the actuality of the situation as far as the travellers' relationship with the settled

community was concerned. There were tapes of travellers putting forward their views and experiences on the road and there were tapes of householders, local councillors and officials. In fact the picture presented was far from objective and was never intended to be. The real aim of the programme was to highlight the injustices suffered by the travellers, who were taken to include the English gypsies and the Scottish tinkers, among others. Certainly these people had all endured the same kind of harassment, but they had very different origins, the English gypsies being alien, Romany and separate from the rest of the English people, while the Scottish tinkers were native, Highland and kin to the rest of the Scottish people. X

While the radio ballad certainly provided actual examples of traveller harassment and rejection by the settled community, it would be quite wrong to say that it gave a true picture of the travellers' life. It is a deliberately one-sided picture made for propaganda purposes to draw attention to an injustice, and it was made with a white-hot sincerity. But to achieve its objective it used means that paradoxically had the effect of romanticising its subject. Travellers are described in the opening sequence of the ballad as "the wild ones" and "pilgrims of the mist" and "nomads of the road." The music and song that intersperses the actualities, based on the words used by informants, dramatise them and make a direct appeal to the emotions of the listener. A smug-sounding English alderman describes the gypsies as "the maggots of society" and a traveller quotes another local official as saying, "If I had anything to do with you people I'd burn you off the face of the earth." It is quite true that people do say things X

like this. I myself heard an Assistant M.O.H. for Motherwell say at a Planning Exchange meeting in Gorebridge, Midlothian in 1979 that "the travellers should have been put in the gas ovens with the Jews." In the radio ballad Minty Smith, an English gypsy, describes how one of her babies was born as a policeman was drumming their caravan along the road. This was reinforced by Ewan MacColl's "Moving-On Song" in which this story is incorporated:

"You can't stop here," the policeman said
"You'd better get born in some place else,
So move along, get along, move along, get along,
Go! Move! Shift!"

With consummate skill the travellers are portrayed as a rejected, despised minority on the basis of real life evidence. Then the romantic details are added: the gypsies' origins are traced to the Bible story in Genesis of Abram and Sarai; the gypsy is a "Jack-of-all-trades" who can, "make a living out of the dust of a man's feet;" their seasonal meetings at horse fairs are appealingly depicted as clan gatherings that lay emphasis on family ties; their urge to travel is a mysterious call that comes with the Springtime when:

There's nothing beats the lovely heather and the moors and the
birds whistlin and the clean burn and ye've nae coo, nae care.
(Belle)

They look back to a past when there was no harassment and they
could camp anywhere:

Don't I wish they old times would come back again, where we
used to go and have a drink in the public house, all come back
singing on the old common, hang on our pots, great big suety
puddings, hocks of bacon, pigs heads. We done nice then.
(Caroline Hughes)

Taking part in the radio ballad and meeting all the other travellers involved - English gypsies, Welsh Romanies, potters and didekais - the Stewarts not surprisingly identified with them. They had the same problems and the same attitudes to life and enough similarities of life style, occupation and tradition to feel the truth of the Scots saying, "travellers are aa sib." Certainly, Ewan MacColl thought of them as all the same people and his implicit assumption of this must have encouraged them to do what they have done ever since: exploit their traveller origins in performance to satisfy audiences that were looking for something different. They have been so successful in this that, although Belle frequently says, "Of course, I never travelled," it makes no difference. People still think of her as someone who grew up on the road, learning ballads round camp-fires and hawking from door to door. This has alienated Belle and Alec and their two daughters from members of their own family who are settled and do not want to be reminded or their neighbours to be reminded of where they came from. Belle's brother Andy's grandson who has been the lead singer with a famous Scottish folk group on the commercial circuit confided his views to me in a personal interview.

I don't feel I have anything to do with people who lived in tents. It was a terrible way for people to live. As far as I am concerned, my grandfather was a Blairgowrie business man. I was still at school when they [the Stewarts] were getting known, and I had to fight every week.

This was because his school mates called him "a tink."

He has a very high regard for Belle and learns songs from her, as he also learned songs from his grandfather and father, but he says

in performance or on the sleeves of his records, only that he learned them from his family, with no reference to traveller tradition. He also realises that his family tradition is a Scots one and sees no advantage in making the point that it was preserved because his forebears were travellers who retained an oral tradition. The truth is that both he and the Stewarts are following a traveller instinct in either suppressing or exploiting their background: they are adopting what they each believe to be the best way of presenting a good image of themselves.

Many people have believed that the Stewarts' discovery by the folk world brought them fortune as well as fame. The majority of their own relatives have been under this impression and it has caused jealousy and alienation. But the truth is that they were not paid huge fees for their club and festival appearances or their part in the radio ballad or any of the other events they were involved in, and what they were paid, they spent, as travellers always will do. Saving money in a bank account is not something travellers do. So in between times, when there were no club or festival bookings, they had to earn their living in the ways they had always done: doing seasonal farm work, collecting rags and so on. Belle gave me one of the cards Alec used to use when they went to gather "fichles" (rags) with a verse on it she had composed:

Dear Madam I'm calling your district today
When you pick up this card please don't throw it away.
Just you sit down and read it, you never can tell,
You may have some old junk that you want to sell.

Perhaps a hair mattress or maybe some brass
For old stuff like that is far better in cash.
You may have some old jewellery you no longer like
Or a second hand car or your husband's old bike.

Your old rags or woollens are of no further use
I am sure they are far better oot o the hoose
Then your old cast-off clothing - yer ain or the man's,
Your old iron pots or your brass jelly pans.

They're the things that I'm efter just tae mention a few,
So get up and get busy - gie the hoose a guid do,
And you'll no be sorry when I call to collect
I'm the first honest dealer that you've ever met.

Alec did what he called "gaffering," which was organising squads of casual workers to shaw neeps or lift tatties for local farmers. Belle describes this when she is relating how she came to write her song, "Whistling at the Ploo."

A good few years ago when Alec was really well and at himself, he used tae take on tatties by the acre, you know, contracts. And I think it was ... Halley, Coupar Angus. Alec used tae take on the acres because he could guarantee a good squad. It was aa travelling people and they can really work, you know. And of course it was by piece work, by the acre. Now we did a place awa doon between Coupar Angus and Newtyle ... I cannae mind exactly the name o the fairm, but that's where we were working anyway. And ye know it was one o those very very bitter cold keen frosty nights at tattie lifting time, and in the forenoon till about eleven o'clock it was real caul' ye know, liftin the tatties wi the frost but it came out the most beautiful day you ever saw. You know the sun comes oot efter the frost and Alec was of course the gaffer. In the efternoon it was three o'clock we got a piecie time. We get a break in the mornin from nine o'clock till quarter past and in the afternoon we got from three till quarter past. An we were sittin on wir basket, and I just looked owre and two fields breadths away was this plooman, and it had been a bonnie day, sleeves rowed up, ye ken, and he'd two white horses, real white horses and he was whistlin. An I thought it was the most marvellous sight, after so much tractors and mechanism and aa the rest o it, you know. To think back on the ordinary plooman, well, plooin wi two horses, so I jist sat doon and I said to Alec, "Could I get a page oot o your book?" Ye ken, the book for takin doon the names o the fowk for their peys an that. "What ye gaunnae dae wi a page?" I says, "Gie me it and a lend o your pencil." That was the hardest work he was daein, takin the folk's names! We were aboot half murdert. Big long pits and the digger comin up and the harry at the back o it. Never mind, I got the paper and I sat doon and these are the few verses I wrote:

Noo I'm jist a common plooman lad that whistles at the ploo
The story I'm aboot tae tell will seem gey queer tae you.
For I'm no keen on skiffle groups nor onything that's new
For I am quite contentit jist gaun whistlin at the ploo.

Noo I'm workin wi a fairmer and he bides no far fae Crieff
But if he hired a teddy boy I'm sure he'd come tae grief
Wi this new-fangled rock and roll and ither things that's new,
Naw he wouldnae be contentit jist gaun whistlin at the ploo.

Noo jist take a common plooman lad that works among the neeps
I'm sure he wouldnae feel at ease in a pair o yon ticht
breeks.

Nor wi his hair growin owre lang an hinging owre his broo,
Naw he wouldnae be contentit jist gaun whistlin at the ploo

But we canny blame the teddy boys that's jist their way o
life.

So I think that I will settle doon an take masel a wife.
We'll bide in yon wee cotter hoose and she'll ne'er hae cause
tae rue

O the day she wed her plooman lad that whistles at the ploo

Noo I think ma story's ended but I'm shair that you'll agree
There's nae life like a plooman's life as far as I can see.
We rise content in the mornin and we work the hale day through
And we never seem tae worry when we're whistlin at the ploo.

(Douglas 3B8)

Thus we have two examples of how Belle's verse and song writing grew out of her daily life and work, sometimes even being put to practical use to earn a living, at other times an expression of her thought and feelings about something she saw. In this latter connection she is quite remarkable: I have lived in Tayside for nearly thirty years and have talked to many people who have "lifted tatties" there, and I've still to meet one who felt like writing a poem at "piecie-time" about anything to be seen in the surrounding countryside. As my younger son observed with some feeling after his first spell at "the tatties," "all you see before your eyes is tatties and more tatties." But this is typical of quite a lot of travellers. In the midst of toil and hardship, somehow or other they retain an aesthetic sense, a love of song, story and music and an eye for the beauty of the countryside.

Rag-collecting and gaffering squads of casual farm-workers were traditional traveller occupations and ones that did not bring Belle and Alec into conflict with the authorities, as the berry-field project had done. Belle's brother Andrew and her eldest son John, however, ran into trouble when they tried to better themselves, in John's case, by building better accommodation for himself and his family, in Andrew's by seeking to establish a caravan site in the town.

John was born in Blairgowrie in 1926 and was brought up by Belle's mother while Belle and Alec went through the unsettled early years of their marriage. When he got married he found "two women in the same house is not such a very good idea," so he began to look for a place of his own. He was on the housing list for seven or eight years, but felt "they've no intention of giving us a house." The only alternative he could find at first was a double decker bus, which his wife Mary Ann was not too keen on staying in with their two children, which led to him building "a wee hut at the end of the field." Mary Ann was then in hospital for five months with tuberculosis, after which "she came back and had doctor's lines for to get a new house - but they just turned them down." John decided to try and build something better:

So then I got what they call 'minor warrants' on the council here - you fill up these minor warrants and you hand them in. You get your next door neighbour on all sides of your plot to sign these warrants, you know; they sign to give you their permission for to build on either side of them. So we filled them in and filed with the Council. Then we had a right carry on. It was a Mr. Coutts at that time was the borough surveyor. He says, "Carry on, build away." So we built on with a rough cast on the outside, slated roof, put in piles grates. I spent about £500 on the place - electric light, water supply - the lot! It cost me every penny I had at the time.

So we were there for about 4½ to 5 years. And then there a Mr. Grant came on as borough surveyor. He came up to inspect the place and, "No, no, no," he says. "Who gave you permission to put this here? And who passed your plans for it in the first place?" "It was the last burgh surveyor," I said. "We've filed our minor warrant and it's in your office."

He went away back and he hunted and lookit for these forms. He came back up and he says, "There's no form there - you never signed any forms." So I went down and met them in a barney at the office and I says, "I've got reputable witnesses here to prove it - there's Mrs. Adamson across the road from here," I says, "she's one of your biggest ratepayers in the town. She signed one of them and she gave me permission to put an electric pole in her ground. And anyway," I says, "if I hadna permission for this wee place, how come I was made to pay rates for it?" (Brune, p.38)

John's point seemed to be taken, for he was left alone for another six months. Then he was visited by the Medical Officer of Health for Perthshire, Dr. Kelman, who inspected it and even admired it, but pointed out that the ceiling was below the minimum regulation height. "It'll have to come down." John pleaded that he had no where else to go if the town would not house him and nothing happened for a month or two.

Then there was one morning I was still lying in bed and I heard these boys pulling up a truck and knocking very hard on the door - well, banging very hard they were - and I thought they were just knocking at the door. So I got up and pulled on my trousers to answer the door. They had half the porch away! They had the front door off! So I made a charge at them with my double-barrelled gun - I says, "Look if you don't get out o here I'll shoot yese wi this." But maybe they could see it wasn't loaded and I was just bluffin - they wouldna go away.

So I jumped in the car to old Grant. "There's nothing we can do about it now," he says, "there's been a court order, an eviction order on you." I says, "I never had it." "No," he says, "you never had it, but the Town Council has it." So I says, "I should have had some kind of notice - an option to make the necessary alterations - you can't just throw people out in the street like that without any alternative accommodation. What am I going to do? Where am I going to go?" "Oh," he says, "ye'll find some place." "Look," I says, "if you don't find me a place, me and the wife and children is landed - you take the roof off the place and we've had it."

So anyway, they started taking the slates off - they were rubberoid slates on the roof, and they were starting to knock them doon by the time I came back from Grant's. Up came Grant and he says, "There you are, fill in this application and we'll try and get you into a house for the weekend." But this was while they were still going on knocking doon the place. They took the windows out, took all the doors off, cut off the electricity, tried to cut off the water supply - they couldnae cut that off because there were no place to cut it off unless they cut the pipe - so we still had the water supply - but that was no use to us in that shambles, was it? We were out in the street then.

On the Friday we got a place at Craighall Place anyway. We got the key o that for the time being. But they knocked my house down flat and carted it away. My property - they carted it away! The following week I got a bill for £7.15.0d. for labour charges for them knocking down my property. There are reputable witnesses in the town here will bear me out in this. That was definitely done - and no compensation either. (Brune, pp.39-40)

John and his family were housed and stayed there for a couple of years, but the outrage and humiliation caused by his eviction and the destruction of the home he had built with his own hands eventually drove him away from his home town, down to the South of England.

But I never was a traveller till then, even though my grandparents were all on the road. I've been 34 years in this burgh - living in a house all the time; working with the next man, educated in the school here - and still I'm not welcome in the town - I am still not a first class citizen. (Brune, p.40)

But John found that, down South, things were not much better for travellers.

I went to England for three years but it was the same thing there. Always told to move on, move on. There was no room for travellers there either. So I took a flat in Hatfield, Herts, and worked for the building sites and for Hawker Siddeley aviation for two years ... I finally got out, came back to Scotland and said, "Tae hell wi it, I'm emigrating to Canada!" as there was no life in Britain for the traveller, and it was the best move ever I made. (Brune, p.40)

Nevertheless, at the same time he was writing:

I am back in Scotland again for a while and I have bought a small farm; and I have applied for permission to make a caravan site for travellers so that I can give them a place to stay - a thing I never had. (Brune, p.41)

His application to make a caravan site for travellers at his small-holding at Burnbank, Carsie on the Perth Road was turned down at that time. In the late 1950s his uncle Andrew Macgregor made a similar application:

I have always wanted to open up a caravan site in Blairgowrie: I had the land and the know-how and there was no good reason that I could see why I should not do so. But when I applied for my site to the Town Council I was turned down on my first application. Then I applied again and I was turned down again by the town - that was through my solicitor, you see - and then I sort of gave up hope for a while. And then I took it to the Town and Country people - and the county people turned me down as well. Then I forgot about it for a while; and then I took it up again with the Secretary of State for Scotland - and this time it went through a' right.

I was to put up facilities on the site, you see, and I complied with all they asked for - that was in 1959. Then when 1960 came round, they laid down a lot of new rules and regulations - making up a lot of local bye-laws as they went along - and I complied with all of them - additional conveniences and firefighting equipment, and hard stances and a tarmacadamed road in, and a turning stance and fences and everything they had set down to me, I completed the lot. But then the following year, they laid down a new set of additional rules again - and again I complied with them; which was adding additional W.C.s to the ladies bathroom and compartment, and extra basins and hot water, electric fittings, electric shavers - in the gents, where I also had to extend the washroom facilities.

And now I still have to lay water across to the people on the other side of the site away from the toilets - the caravans on the other side of the drive-in, and they also want me to put down a separate parking ground for the cars on the site - for all cars to park away from the caravans, you see, to prevent a conflagration. So, having a caravan site is a very expensive game if you have to comply with all their 1960/61 rules.

There is a limit to the number of caravans allowed on a site. This has not necessarily to do with how much space you've got or how many facilities you can afford to lay on. I could quite easily put up 200 caravans on my green - and with no congestion either - but when they grant you a licence, they give you a ceiling limit above which you must not go - and they keep sending an official round regularly to make sure you don't exceed the

limit they allow you. I am limited to thirty caravans; and I want tents but I haven't been granted them yet; and I would like to have from 10 to 20 residential caravans all the year round - so that I can make a profit instead of a loss.

When I first opened this caravan site, they told me I am free to take in travellers if I like, so long as I keep them on one side of the site and the tourists on the other, nearest the wash-house. So I told them, I canna sit there all day keeping check on who's who, 'cause I've got other things to do as well, and if the tourists don't like travellers they can go somewhere else. So the man from the council said that they won't make an issue of it as long as there are no complaints from any of the tourists and so long as the travellers behave themselves ... I find that travellers are no different from other people, once you make a point of telling them the rules and regulations on your site and show them where the dustbins are kept. I've never had any trouble with any of the travellers on my site at all.

Another thing I was told when I first opened the site was that I mustn't have any tents. Now about three weeks ago I had a travelling family in. They had a van and a trailer, but their two wee girls had to sleep in a tent. An inspector came round and the next day I got a stiff letter from the town clerk's telling me the tent will have to go. So I went over to the woman and gave her the letter and I told her she would have to shift the tent and put the two wee girls in the van. I asked her to burn the letter after she had read it - but she went straight over to the town clerk who had written it and told him that she was here on business and there was no other place where the lassies could bide. So, an exception, he gave her written permission to keep the tent pitched for up to two weeks. So there are strict rules and regulations and common laws which must be obeyed at all times, except when some minor official is in a good mood and gives you written permission to break them.

So this is the law: you own the land; you have all the responsibility to keep it going; if it's building land you may not farm on it; if it's farm land you may not build on; and either way you may not camp or caravan on it, without permission. When you have got the permission, you spend thousands of pounds on it; the Council spends nothing on it at all. Yet they have all the say and you have no say whatever as to what to do with your own property. (Brune, pp.35-36)

Andrew Macgregor ran his site until his death in 1964, and the site is still in operation today.

There is a significant different between Andy's complaint against the Council's bureaucracy and John's, "I'm not welcome in this town,

I'm not a first class citizen." (Brune p.40). Andy's words could be echoed by any ordinary citizen embarking on a business venture involving the obtaining of planning permission and finding his way through the complexity of legal requirements and local bye-laws. He did not suggest in his very articulate account of his struggle to comply with the law, that he was being victimised because he was a traveller. Admittedly, John suffered the indignity of having the home, humble though it was, that he had built himself, demolished before his very eyes. But he was also younger and less experienced and not so well-off as Andy, and also of a more tempestuous temperament. It is clear that Andy felt settled in Blairgowrie and however frustrating he found his dealings with the Council, he was not inclined to go on the road or emigrate. Even John, of course, came back to Blairgowrie again and again, despite regular trips to Canada, which he liked because he was not labelled a traveller there: it was not who you were but what you did that mattered there, and if you worked hard, you made money. John was able to obtain a small holding at Burnbank, a few miles out of Blairgowrie on the Perth Road, and use the profits he made in Canada to improve the house. Eventually, he succeeded in getting planning permission for a caravan site there, which is now operating. John, in his fifties, is a very handsome and impressive man, articulate, enterprising and intelligent.

1964 was a tragic year for Belle for at the end of it she lost her two brothers within a week of each other:

They both died just a week between them, Sheila. Donald died on the - on the 20th of December, 1964, at a quarter past five on

a Sunday evening. That was Donald. On the Monday morning Andy and I went along tae Alyth to Mr. Bell the undertaker to make the arrangements for Donald's funeral. Nothing wrong wi Andy. Did all the arrangements, got it all fixed on the Monday. Him dyin on the Sunday, we couldnae get offices open or anything, ye know. And Donald was buried on the Wednesday. And - Alec and I went down to Blair on the Saturday of the same week Donald was buried on the Wednesday. Went down on Saturday to do wir shoppin - we were stayin in Alyth at the time. An when we were comin back - Andy owned that big, big house at the bottom o the hill beside the shop doon there - Craiglea they called it, ye know ... Well, that Saturday Alec and I went down, he says, "We'll no stop at Andy's the noo, we'll go in on the way back." So we went in tae see him and he's sittin at the fire, and he's just sittin wi his socks on - he hadn't his shoes. It must have been about two o'clock in the afternoon. I says, "What're ye sittin like that fur at this time o day?" "Oh," he says, "Belle, I've an awfy cauld," he says. "An awfy cauld. It's all in ma heid." I says, "That was that stan'in at that graveside, ye know." Because he was just like Alec, he was very bare on the top, Andy. Well, naturally, you've tae take your hat off in a case o that kind, ye know. I says, "You've caught a cauld, Andy at the graveside, there, that day." "Aw," he says, "maybe I did."

That was Saturday. We had a cup o tea and Alec and I went back to Alyth. He says, "I'll come and see ye, the morn, Alec and Belle." I says, "No," I says. "We'll come and see you. You're no comin out wi that cauld ye've got." See?

That's all there was to it. My John says, "I'm away along tae Blair," he says, "tae see if ma Uncle Andy has sold any cars this weekend." That was ma brother Andy, his uncle. But John wasnae very long away when he came back. He'd be about an hour away and he says, "Mother, ma Uncle Andy's no feelin awfy well." I says, "I ken, he's got an awfy cauld." "Ah but," he says, "he's got an awfy pain in his stomach." "Ach," I says, "he's maybe had a dram, again." Like that, he was - but no, he hadn't. So John says, "But," he says, "mother I'll tell ye what. I'm goin tae get a shave," he says, "an are ye comin along wi me tae see him." I says, "Aye, certainly I'll go along and see him." Alec says, "I'll no bother the night," he says. So John was gettin shaved, he wasnae finished shavin, when Andy, my son Andy, pulled up wi his car at Alyth. Och Andy was dead - ... he was dead. At a quarter past five on the following Sunday! the same minutes of the clock as Donald died the Sunday before. (Douglas 1B1)

To the superstitious mind, such a coincidence must have significance, and many travellers would believe that Andy's brother had come back to fetch him away, although Belle gave the commonsense explanation when she said, "Ye've caught a cold ... at the graveside ..."

(Douglas 1B1) She also of course has said to me, "There's nae doot about it. Donald came back for Andy."

The tragedy certainly attracted attention and even the national press thought it a striking enough story to report, "The reporters came to me from the Daily Express." (Douglas 1B1) As Belle pointed out, Donald had been ill for a long time and his death came as no surprise, but Andy's was totally unexpected:

I mean there was nothing wrong with Andy. If it had been something wrong with him, I mean, like. Donald was an ailing man wi bronchitis for years and we knew he was goin. That was understood. But oh! my God! It was all ever I knew, because ma mother's forty years dead and I never saw ma father, an Donald and Andy was all I had. That's why - an it's ma auldest brother Andy that learned me that song - taught me that song, "The Twa Brothers." An that's why it means so much to me, because I only had - always had the twa brithers ... ye know what I mean? It's just - certainly doesn't refer to them. They weren't scholars or college boys or anything tae that effect, but they were my twa brothers, ye know. (Douglas 1B1)

Belle mourned for her two brothers in a song she wrote about this time to the tune of "Corachree" or "Drumallachie":

Twas on a cauld December nicht when fruits and flowers were gone
My brother Andy left me tae be wi his brother Dan.
The sorrow they have left behind is more than tongue can tell
For I was their only sister and I dearly loved them well.

When I sit and think on days gone by it makes ma hert sae sair
When I think about the happy times the three o us spent in
Blair,
O I ken I have my bairns and I have my man and aa
But never in this wide wide world was there brothers like my
twa.

Jeannie has a gey sair hert and so has Mary tae,
When they sit and think about the things the baith o you did
say.
And then there is their bairns, it's hard on them and aa
But to me my life is empty since I pairted wi you twa.

But I hope that God will ease my pain as the weeks and months go
by,
For whenever I am be masel, ma een are never dry.
O I ken I'm no the only yin, for you aa feel it tae,
And it's grand tae ken we'll meet again on the good Lord's
Judgment Day.

(Douglas 3B2)

It was shortly after this sad time that I first heard the Stewarts sing, and not long before I first met them. I had very little first hand knowledge of tinkers or travellers and I had never heard unaccompanied singing of this kind. The Stewarts were guest artistes one night at Perth Folk Club, where I was a regular attender and singer. By this time they were singing in English folk clubs, thanks to Ewan MacColl, but were not often heard in Scottish ones. At this point in the Folk Revival quite a lot of excitement was generated by the appearance of guest artistes in clubs and the Stewarts were no exception. The club organiser spoke their name as if it were a magic incantation, "The Stewarts of Blair" and everyone had the impression that we were to hear someone very special and out of the ordinary. When they arrived they looked quite different from the other guest artistes we had had, who mostly wore jeans, had long hair and played guitars. Belle wore a fur coat and she and Sheila and Cathy wore bright dresses, jewellery and make-up and Alec, like all traveller men, kept his hat on all the time. They sang with an intensity that was almost embarrassing to some of the audience. I felt as if I had stepped through a doorway to another world.

Some time later I heard a friend, Angus Langlands, singing a song called, "I Wish I Was Back Yince Mair in Dalry," a bothy song from Ayrshire that mentions my father's birthplace. Angus had learned the

song from Belle, to whom I wrote and soon after received a visit from Belle and Alec that marked the beginning of our years of association and friendship.

My first impressions of their cottage in Rattray are described in a poem I wrote entitled, "Belle's Room" as part of A Blairgowrie Garland.

A bright fire and the walls with their mementoes
Pictures and ornaments from days gone by
A First World War poster for the berrytime
A tiny dog and a garrulous mynah bird
All make it a fascinating place in itself.
But it is not a room for things only:
It is a room where people matter most.
Belle's own family, her children and grand-children
A numberless, close-knit handsome-eyed clan.
Then singers, travellers, scholars from far and near,
All kinds and classes made welcome.
In their midst sits Belle, tall, fair and queenly,
Pouring out tea or whisky, telling tales,
Singing, admonishing, joking, sympathising,
Spreading a magic that wins the dourest hearts.

Belle has the courtesy to make every visitor feel he or she is doing a favour by coming to see her, and no-one ever visits without being offered tea and something to eat. This is not of course a peculiar traveller custom, but the old custom of Scottish hospitality, to which many Scots are still brought up. There is also another Scottish custom of never going visiting empty handed, which many of Belle's visitors from furth of Scotland do not know about and consequently do not observe. I am sure there must have been many occasions on which unexpected visitors were given hospitality and went away thinking how well-off the Stewarts seemed, unaware that they had consumed a good part of the week-end's groceries.

I have seen their living room and the only other room the house had at the time, packed to capacity, at the time of the Traditional Music and Song Association Blairgowrie Festivals in the late Sixties, when it seems dozens of people went to Belle's house for "the ceilidh after the ceilidh" into the "wee sma' oors o the mornin." At these late, late ceilidhs there would be piping, singing and story telling. I first heard Alec telling tales at one of these occasions. This was really the hey-day of the Stewarts of Blair. They were booked annually for English clubs and festivals such as Keele Festival, and were specially invited down south at Hogmanay - a time when they, as Scots, would particularly want to be at home - and they went because it was paid work. They were also winning more recognition in Scotland, mainly through the Blairgowrie Festival and were appearing in Scottish clubs and at Scottish festivals. They were guest artistes at the Festival I organised in Perth in 1970 during the time I was running Perth Folk Club between 1968-74. They were also invited by local organisations to social evenings, such as the one I attended with them, held by Aberfeldy Young Farmers' Club. This was only one of many occasions when I had the opportunity to observe the reactions of a Scottish audience to them.

The function was held in a modest hotel and was informal. The audience was composed of farming people most of whom seemed already to know the Stewarts or at least to be ready to welcome them. They were immediately warm and friendly, and exchanged good-natured repartee particularly with Belle. The singing seemed to appeal to them very strongly and they joined in choruses readily. It must be said here

that Aberfeldy has a strong Gaelic influence and tradition, which of course features unaccompanied singing, piping and story telling.

Also present that night was local Police Sergeant Jimmie Macgregor, who doffed his tunic to sing a couple of bothy ballads. Born in Garmouth, Morayshire, Jimmie is a well-known figure in Perthshire as an entertainer and singer, in great demand for Burns Suppers, ceilidhs and concerts. He has more than once discussed the travellers with me and has always viewed them with a fairly benevolent eye. He confirms my view that the travellers have always been a lowly but accepted part of the local scene and, on the whole, as law-abiding as the rest of the community. Most of the offences for which they were convicted tended to be illegal camping (often in places where it used to be allowed), driving with expired licences or insurances, as could happen if they had to get to where there was work to earn the money to pay for them; and breach of the peace through drunkenness. It was almost unheard of for a tinker to attack an outsider or to engage in serious crime. People in Aberfeldy were certainly not in fear of them, which is hardly surprising, considering that tinkers have been in the area at least since the 17th century.¹⁴

It was in the Seventies that international recognition came to the Stewarts and they were invited to events on the Continent and in the United States of America. In the summer of 1973 they accompanied ethno-musicologist John Brune to Austria for the second European Music-Ethnology Seminar at St. Polten from May 28th - June 2nd.

Lecturers and performers attended from Norway, West Germany, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Serbia, Denmark, Poland, France, Sardinia, and of course Austria. The bulk of the sessions dealt with bagpipes, hurdy-gurdies, fiddles and related instruments such as the Sardinian launeddas, but there was also a short session on Jew's harps and on traditional noisemakers used either on their own or for accompaniment in Switzerland.

This time the best contribution definitely came from Great Britain. The session announced for 4 p.m. on Thursday, 31st May was for a lecture by John Brune entitled, "Piob Mhor and other British and Irish bagpipes." As the entire text had been duplicated and distributed already on the previous Monday, there was no point in reading it to a bored audience. Instead a demonstration-cum-concert was given by the five-strong British party as follows: running commentary, interpretation and answering questions as they occurred during the session, by John Brune; canntaireachd examples and singing by Belle Stewart; Highland piping by Hamish Macgregor (grandson of Belle Stewart) Highland dancing by his sister, Heatherbelle Macgregor; Northumbrian piping by Bruce Watson. The advantages of having actual performers and instruments at the seminar, rather than tapes and prints, were that every technical and musical point could be demonstrated instead of being argued and talked around inconclusively, as was the case with a lot of other contributions ... the Austrian trip became a highly successful concert and recording tour. This included a demonstration of piping, dancing and canntaireachd at the Institute of Music Science in Vienna; a musical evening at the Germanic Institute of Vienna University; and a recording session at the Phonogrammarchiv in Vienna. The tour ended in the Upper Austrian village of Haiback, where a civic reception was arranged. Hamish piped at a wedding of a local dialect poet and in church, and a highly successful farewell concert with singing, dancing and piping brought the tour to an end on Saturday, 9th June.¹⁵

John Brune, who accompanied them on this trip, and who in fact was instrumental in having them invited, hoped at one time to write a book on them and to that end made the recordings of them, whose transcriptions are now in my possession. He gave up the idea about 1973 because he found that the Stewarts became very reluctant to record for him any more, being under the impression that he was making money out of them. He had also been embarrassed on the Austrian trip by their constant demands for money everywhere they went. Travellers find it very hard to understand that academic people hold gatherings and do

vast amounts of work for which they are not paid or are not paid more than will cover the cost of the activity.

In the next few years the Stewarts were also invited to the United States, Germany, Italy, Brittany and Ireland. Sheila visited the States in the American Bi-centenary Year in 1976 to take part in a festival in Washington and she was also invited to sing in Bellahouston Park, Glasgow, on the occasion of the visit of Pope John Paul in 1982.

Belle describes how their visit to Austria came about:

John Brune came up to Blairgowrie ... and he wanted a Scots family, an Irish family and an English, young people if possible, y'know, to go abroad, over to St. Polten, that's no too far - about forty miles fae Vienna. But, well, us travelling people are a wee bit scared of lettin our children go away anywhere, especially on their own like that. An they had never ever been abroad: neither had I, as a matter of fact. An their mother, of course, Sheila, ma daughter oh! she wouldn't hear of it, going themselves, ye see. But however we got talking in the house and Alec says tae me, "How do you no go, Belle?" An I says, "Oh I couldnae go tae that foreign country!" But John Brune finally convinced us, onyway, and we did go, and we went to a place St. Polten and they didnae call it a festival there, they called it a seminar. (Douglas 17A2)

Belle and Alec's most extensive tour took place early in 1974, when they went to the States on a trip organised by Dave King, a photographer, who had visited them in Blairgowrie the previous year. The projected tour was reported as follows in the popular press:

TRIP OF A LIFETIME FOR BLAIRGOWRIE GRANNY

The wee cottage at 2 Yeaman Street, Rattray, Blairgowrie, will be a bustle of excitement just after the New Year.

Great-granny Mrs. Belle Stewart and her husband Alex will be packing their suitcases to fly to Chicago.

They are booked into a luxury hotel, all expenses paid.

How come?

... Earlier this year, an American was in Scotland looking for folk songs. In Blair he was told about Belle.

At her home, he was spell-bound when Belle started to sing. He also sat up for hours enthralled by Alec's stories.

He returned home with tapes of them both.

Soon after, a letter popped through the Stewarts' door.

It was a contract to go to Chicago in January for a big festival ... Alex and Belle will be away for at least a month.¹⁶

As I was on the spot at the time and actually met Douglas King in Belle's house, I find the newspaper account of how they came to be making the trip to Chicago quite amusing. Douglas King, like many Americans, had heard of the berry time at Blairgowrie and of the Stewart family and had come to Blair at the berry time on purpose to meet them and record them and probably also had the Chicago Festival in mind. He did not represent big commercial interests but people in the States who genuinely foster folk music, and the "luxury hotel" was probably one with which the Festival Organisation had an agreement to accommodate guests. The TMSA and every other Scottish Folk festival does exactly the same. The night I met Douglas King, however, he seemed to be more interested in telling us about a film he hoped to make about the berry picking than to listen to or record Belle and Alec, and I kept wondering why he did not switch on his tape-recorder. However, it seems, I misjudged him, for it was through him that their American trip was arranged, one that they enjoyed tremendously and Belle still looks back on with pleasure.

In 1974 Alec and I were booked to go to the States. We were booked for three weeks but it finished up we were eleven weeks and four days there. During the day time people would be ringing up where we were living - we didn't go to hotels at all - we just stayed with ordinary people. We were more at home that way, 'cause we'd the late ceillidhs at night ... During the daytime it was really a hard hectic time. We did Universities, 'cause they were ringing up tae get us tae come and talk on our tradition ... we were about ten days in Iowa City ... we stayed there with a man John Blaine whom we knew years before that ... and we had a wonderful party one night, because his wife was private secretary to the head surgeon of the big hospital there ... they held a big party in the place ... the first old Scots couple that had ever been in that area, doing what we were doing, singing, piping and storytelling ... It went on till four in the morning with Alec with his stories an that ... I remember we went to Binghampton. Alec was waiting for the rest of the artists, you know - was a huge hall. It was packed ... "Well you'll have to open up the concert," the man ... he said. An of course naturally, the pipes. Alec went up an he opened it and I did a couple o songs. We were waiting for the rest o them. An "Oh," he says, "there's no any ... it's just your two selves," he says. "There's no any artistes." An we'd three an a half hours to do. (Douglas 27A2)

To give some idea of the impression they made on audiences in the States, I quote just one of the newspaper reports of one of their concerts, sponsored by Ceilidh-Eistedfodd in South-Eastern Massachusetts, University:

A dour Scot and his earthy wife came "doon atta the heelands" Thursday night in the North Lounge of the Group 1 Building at SMU.

The keening, spine-chilling notes from Alex Stewart's bagpipes scaled the sheer concrete of the SMU battlements to the spectators who hung over the third floor balcony to look down on the plaid clad couple.

His wife Belle poured her simple songs and bawdy tales to a sea of eager faces and a battery of microphones as folks from Boston, Newport, R.I. and to the Cape, gathered to collect some gems of traditional Scottish music and songs from Perthshire, a county of Scotland important for its raspberries and strawberries.¹⁷

It is easy for a Scot to laugh at the American-ness of this report, with its rather caricatured idea of what is Scottish, its attempt to catch the Scots idiom and the wild incongruity of the

"plaid-clad couple" and the "battery of microphones," all reminiscent of Evelyn Waugh's "Wee Kirk o Auld Lang Syne." The fact remains that the Stewarts were given a warm and friendly reception and made friends wherever they went, among the kind people they found themselves amongst. There were people in the States who were well-informed about the Stewarts and about Scottish travellers and tradition and who had been in Scotland. One newspaper article read:

The descendants of "auld Jimmy Stewart" of Struan who crossed from Perthshire into Aberdeenshire via Glenshee and the Devil's Elbow about the middle of last century, are now scattered up and down the high roads and low roads of Scotland and there is a flourishing colony of them in Canada. There can be few more musically gifted clans or families in all Europe.¹⁸

This sounds so startlingly like an echo, if not a direct quotation, of the words of Hamish Henderson that I am reasonably certain they were written by someone who had contact with Hamish and had been to Scotland, like Kenneth Goldstein. The cutting shown me by Belle, did not give the name of the reporter, but it was written in connection with the same concert in SMU.

The first report quoted contained later on this shrewd observation of Belle's performance of cantarach:

Topping off a performance in which the casual air of unrehearsedness belied the professional quality of the performers, Belle "sang" the chanter part of the bagpipe music. In a solo of intricacy and split second timing, she rattled off with perfection the melody line from the music played by her husband.¹⁹

Accepting that cantarach is a pipers' shorthand for passing on tunes and not really intended for performance, it has to be admitted that

many audiences have enjoyed listening to Belle doing it. The comment really worth noticing here is that which recognised their performance as having a "casual air of unrehearsedness" which "belied the professional quality of the performers." (I believe what the journalist meant was "was belied by". It is obviously meant as a compliment.) That is exactly the quality that I recognise in them and the one which has endeared them to Scottish audiences in folk clubs and festivals.

Another report in an Iowa newspaper from Art Rosenbaum, who had "lived down the road from them in Blairgorie (sic) two summers ago," comments on their awareness of the past:

The travelers have a strong sense of folklore ... Here when somebody talks about the old days they mean what their grandfathers remembered about the Civil War. There the old days might mean the 14th century. Belle would sing us songs and then take us to where the song happened. Like "The Bonnie House o Airlie." She showed us where that castle had burned.²⁰ (Of course this is well known among people in Perthshire.)

This recalls something that was quoted in the film "The Summer Walkers" in which a young Aberdeenshire traveller observed about a passing tramp, "That kind of lad's not one of us - Charlie Doyle just lives from day to day - but we live entirely in the past."

Art Rosenbaum's article announced the Stewarts' performance in the Macbride Auditorium, Iowa City, in a concert sponsored by Friends of Old Time Music, shortly after the University of Chicago Folk Festival. It also quotes Belle as saying:

"I'll never deny being a traveler ... If I were an ordinary Scotswoman I wouldn't be here (University of Chicago) because I wouldn't have picked up these songs..." She told how she had been taught to think of herself as inferior to the better educated Scots so it felt good to sing in front of college people who had paid to hear what at home was done free to both entertain and pass on the lore.²¹

Unfortunately at the end of the tour Alec became ill. He had been concealing the fact during the tour, as Belle told me in 1984, talking about that time:

An little did I know at that time, that Alec was really having bad wee turns ... that he never let on to me. It was really the beginning of his illness anyway. (Douglas 27A2)

Despite generous offers of medical help from American friends, he flew home to Scotland, where he went almost at once into Ninewells Hospital in Dundee. He was given massive blood transfusions and tests later carried out led to the diagnosis of a form of leukemia and Belle was warned that he might not live for very much longer:

He didn't seem to be suffering any pain, but he was so weak he could hardly stand up ... He wasnae too bad after that for a few years. But he never ever was the same certainly. No, he was a very sick man. But ye see, the travellers ... didnae get much attention in their illness, going away back in their younger days. They just had to sort of fend for theirself and their wee cures and all the rest of it. But unfortunately the illness Alec had, it would have taken more than a traveller to help that, I think; leukemia of the bone-marrow ... But he was cheery and when he got his transfusion - he was just the same old Alec. (Douglas 27A2)

The next six years saw the illness become progressively worse, with the transfusions becoming more and more frequent until at last his body ceased to accept them. He died on 5th May, 1980. At his funeral

Alec Stewart's Funeral



Tribute to a King of the Travellers.

Photographs by Barbara MacDermitt



A family in mourning in Alyth Cemetery

The officiating minister paid tribute to him as a 'king' of travellers. ... The long driveway at Alyth cemetery was completely filled with people as the coffin was piped to the graveside with "Loch Duich" which Alec had asked to be played, and "Lochaber no More." No one there will ever forget the poignancy of that moment with the Perthshire hills all around, bursting with greenery and birdsong, the pipes rising above the sound of weeping and Belle standing proud above all and dignified throughout.²²

When Belle visited Berlin, it was Cathy and Sheila who accompanied her and, once again, Belle found the experience enjoyable:

I just cannae find fault in any o the countries we've been in. Whether it was owing to me bein gettin old or something, or just havin a wee bit sometimes too much to say, but we were really accepted for what we had, an we honestly did go down really well, y'know. (Douglas 27A2)

In 1982 Belle and her daughters and grandson Iain, the piper, went at the invitation of Roberto Lidia to Italy where they were asked back a month later, having done three weeks on their first visit, so enthusiastic was their reception:

I never saw audiences like we got in Italy. It was in June and it was the warm time o the year and it was all ootside. We couldnae do anything inside at all, it was all ootside ... an there were thousands! A place called the Palace ... and there were between five and six thousand people, there outside. An when we were singing, ye woulda heard a pin drop. There was bairns runnin aboot an everything but, y'know, I never saw anything conducted like it. But they went mad on the pipes aathegither, wi Iain, y'know. Especially the fast tunes and the hoochin and the carry-on, it was - I can sit an think on it maself, yet, and I just wonder how it could ever possibly come to me, somethin like that. (Douglas 27A2)

In Brittany, where there has been a huge Celtic revival, that has led to festivals that take in artistes from other Celtic areas, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Galicia, the Stewarts were invited to the festival at Rennes in 1978. When they visited Northern Ireland they were very much at home, especially in those places where Alec's family had travelled.

The Stewarts are still invited to Festivals and are contacted by collectors, media people and visitors from abroad, looking for interviews, songs and stories or opportunities to film "The Traveller Culture." Needless to say, these occasions are usually arranged with professional skill on both sides. The travellers know how to sell themselves and they take any opportunity to cater for whatever purpose their visitors have in mind. They are friendly and co-operative and Belle in particular always sees such occasions as a means of keeping alive the tradition she has inherited.

It is interesting to compare two films made of the Stewarts and other travellers: the first is "The Traditions of a Family" which Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger made with BBC producer Philip Donellan in 1978 and the other "The Summer Walkers" made by Timothy Neat of Duncan of Jordanstone Art College, Dundee, with help from Hamish Henderson.

"The Traditions of a Family," show Belle, Alec, Sheila and Cathy, Alec's brother John and Willie MacPhee singing, telling stories and riddles and talking about themselves. As far as this goes, they are well presented and the producer has done a good job in attempting the impossible: to cover a whole oral culture in a fifty minute film. Rich and tantalising glimpses of the treasure store are packed into a short time. What flaws the film is the intrusion of the collectors who, in spite of being, in fact, sympathetic towards and genuinely interested in, their informants, come over as patronising and alien.

They are both very famous people themselves and superb artistes in their own right, but they should have stayed out of this film. More than one person in Perth and elsewhere in Scotland has said - some who knew of the Stewarts but who were uninformed as regards the world of folk music and the Folk Revival - that they were fascinated by the Stewarts in the film but found "those other two people" who kept appearing rather irritating. It made me careful to keep out of camera range when I made my two video tapes!

"The Summer Walkers," is a picture of the Scottish Highland travellers' outdoor life. It tends to give the impression that the weather is always fine for those on the road because it just so happened that filming time was limited for financial reasons and on the days when it took place, the sun shone. Although there is a voice-over speaking the commentary, the commentator never appears to compete with the traveller pearl-fishers, whelk gatherers, berrypickers and basket-makers. There is music on mouth organ, tin whistle and bagpipes, but never a traveller voice speaks. Considering the importance of language in the travellers' life and culture, whether hawking and dealing or from song and story, this seems a serious omission, of which Tim Neat himself is only too aware. But it was lack of money and technical facilities that caused this, not an error of judgment on the part of the film-maker.

In the making of "The Traditions of a Family" there was another error of judgment that struck me at the time and was later confirmed

when Ewan MacColl spoke about the same occasion when I visited him in 1978. The intention was to film a ceilidh in Belle's house and she and Alec were given money to provide food and drink, and told to invite their friends. The snag was that it was intended that only travellers should be there, but Belle and Alec, whose circle of friends was wide, invited a wide variety of people to the ceilidh, including myself and other non-travellers. It was also intended that those present should sit in a tight circle and pipe, sing, tell stories one after the other, like clockwork. Certainly I can see from the point of view of the producer, that would have facilitated filming. But unfortunately, a ceilidh is not like that: people wander about, talking, fetching and carrying food and drink, talk among themselves and generally behave naturally. The producer and Ewan and Peggy did their best to try and get the effects they wanted, but of course that ruined the ceilidh atmosphere. They also had to edit out all the things they did not want, like the songs with guitar accompaniment, comic songs, American songs from an American singer, and ballads sung by non-travellers, which Ewan saw as a waste of film. But in cutting these out he also falsified the picture. He is one of those folklorists who is interested only in what fits in with his own pre-conceived ideas. He spoke very derogatorily of the ceilidh, when I visited him, but in fact it was himself, not the ceilidh that went wrong.

It is a matter of deep regret to me that I had not recorded Alec earlier telling stories. By the time I began this project, he was a sick man and, while he did his best to give me family history and

stories, he was often not in the best fettle to do so. "I'm aye drowsy like this," (Douglas 2B4) he would say. It was very harrowing to watch him being destroyed by the awful creeping blight that was upon him. At first, I comforted myself with the thought that many of his stories had been recorded for the School of Scottish Studies, but when I searched for them, as I did for all recordings of the Stewarts, to listen to, as part of my research, all the best efforts of archivist Allan Bruford failed to turn them up, although there were plenty of recordings of his piping, and of Belle's singing. This is strange in view of the fact that Maurice Fleming, who "discovered" the Stewarts had recorded Alec telling stories and I have copies of his transcripts. Hamish Henderson did tell me once of tapes being "scrubbed" for re-use in the early days of the School's existence when funds were very low. Can this be what happened to tapes of Alec's storytelling?

Fortunately, Belle and Alec introduced me to John Stewart in 1978 and from him I have recorded a magnificent collection of stories of all kinds, many of which would have been known to Alec, from international wonder-tales to humorous anecdotes. When I met him, he and Maggie were living in Perth, in a rather run-down neighbourhood, from which he moved in 1980 to live in Kirriemuir in a picturesque cottage, and in 1982 to a council house in Blairgowrie. John's family, like Alec's, are all married, except for Bennie, his Down's syndrome son, who has been cared for devotedly by his parents for an amazing forty eight years. John has suffered two or three heart attacks that have, along with the deaths of his brothers Alec and Andrew, in Canada, caused him to lead a quieter life than in the past. He still goes up

the glens in summer, not now to play the pipes himself, but with his two grandsons who are promising young pipers and are carrying on the family tradition.

Willie MacPhee has moved with his family onto the travellers' site at Doubledykes, Inveralmond on the northern outskirts of Perth. This site was built with some reluctance by the rather unco-operative District Council of Perth and Kinross, in accordance with present government policy. It is a well-appointed and well-run site that has caused few of the problems foreseen by pessimistic and prejudiced opponents of it. Belle's son John has a similar site at Carsie, which was built with government help on his own land, as he wanted to do twenty years ago, and for which he had to fight long and hard for permission to build. At one point, the local Member of Parliament declared that John's neighbours would not like travellers living next to them, forgetting that John's family had been living there for twenty years. He also accused John of "discrimination" for building a site purely for travellers, to which John replied, "Anyone can stay on my site." This attack was made in revenge for John's sister Sheila's quoting the Race Relations Act at the aforesaid Member of Parliament, which he called "intimidation."²³ Sheila and her sister Cathy for a while ran a branch of the Gypsy Council in Perth, not because they regarded themselves as gypsies, but because the Gypsy Council had fought for and obtained sites for gypsies in England. This venture ended in disaster and a court case over the alleged misuse of money.²⁴

Belle, whose fortitude and courage during Alec's illness, was very moving to see, week after week, month after month, now lives almost alone, as Sheila, who was living with her mother, has re-married (her first husband died of a heart attack ten years ago on a poaching trip). Only Gregor, Sheila's youngest son, sleeps in the house in Rattray, but is rarely to be seen around. Belle is still invited to sing at TMSA Festivals, along with Sheila and Cathy, and she also judges singing and storytelling competitions at these festivals. Storytellers and ballad singers are not much in evidence among the horde of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Many of the grandchildren married non-travellers. Sheila's two sons Hamish and Ian, who has his grandfather's silver-mounted Henderson pipes, are pipers and her daughter Heather has been a dancer, while grandson Roy, whom Sheila has brought up, is a promising singer. None of John's grandchildren tell stories, although they love to listen to John telling them, while Willie MacPhee has one grand-daughter who sings, plays the pipes and has listened to so many of Willie's stories that she must know them. She is known as Wee Bella. The rest of this generation have been to school, have watched television and videos and have become in that respect almost completely indistinguishable from the settled community.

Nevertheless, this advertisement recently appeared in the Personal column of the Perthshire Advertiser:

Psychic Consultant. Consult the best in Scotland from a long line of fortune-telling Gypsies. Only a Gypsy can lift the veil of darkness from future. Home visits for four or more, postal readings.²⁵

The telephone number given is that of John Stewart's home in Blairgowrie; his wife Maggie and daughter Nancy are carrying on the tradition of their ancestors.

CHAPTER FOUR - FOOTNOTES

1. The People's Journal, 4.7.55.
2. Blairgowrie Advertiser, 17.8.56
3. Blairgowrie Advertiser, 19.10.56.
4. Name used for town dweller by travellers. Pseudonym adopted by writer of letter whom Belle states was Willie Webb, evangelist.
5. Farnham Rehfisch, ed. Gypsies, Tinkers and Other Travellers, Ch.11. "Scottish Travellers or Tinkers." A. and F. Rehfisch, p.274.
6. Farnham Rehfisch. The Tinkers in Perthshire and Aberdeenshire. Dissertation in School of Scottish Studies, 1975. Ch.7, p.69.
7. Blairgowrie Advertiser, 9.8.57.
8. Blairgowrie Advertiser, 17.7.56.
9. Blairgowrie Advertiser, 8.4.55.
10. Blairgowrie Advertiser, 10.8.56.
11. Edward J. Cowan, ed. The People's Past. p.15.
12. Cowan, pp.181-2.
13. Blairgowrie Advertiser, 23.7.65.
14. N.D. Mackay. Aberdeldy Past and Present. p.104.
15. English Dance and Song. Winter/Christmas, 1973. Franz Mang reporting.
16. Sunday Post. 23.12.83.
17. Margaret A. Charig. New Bedford Standard Times. 31.3.74. Cutting from Belle Stewart.
18. Article from local paper in Bedford, Mass. week of Thursday 28.3.74. Cutting from Belle Stewart.
19. Margaret A. Charig. New Bedford Standard Times. 31.3.74.
20. Art Rosenbaum, Iowa City, interview in local paper. Cutting from Belle Stewart.
21. Rosenbaum.
22. Tribute written by me which Belle had framed to hang on her wall.
23. Perthshire Advertiser. 13.10.81.

24. Sheila and Cathy as first offenders were given 200 hours of community work as their sentence (which they enjoyed doing as it was with children and old people). It must have been apparent to the court that the case had arisen out of the defendants' lack of experience of administering funds in an official capacity rather than through criminal intent. The amount of money involved was not large and they did little to conceal their actions with regard to it.
25. Perthshire Advertiser. 25.1.85.

CHAPTER FIVE

Tale Study : Historical Links

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TALE STUDY , : HISTORICAL LINKS

In studying the tales in their historical context, it becomes apparent that they have strong links with Gaelic tradition, and indeed my informants' forebears would have been Gaelic speakers. The story which the Stewarts call "The Three Dogs" (I.1) corresponds to the first part of AT300 "The Dragonslayer" and also incorporates some features of AT315 "The Faithless Sister." Told by Bella Higgins and John and Andrew Stewart, it has a parallel in Gaelic in Campbell of Islay's collection, "Tri Coin nan Srang Uaine" - "The Three Hounds with the Green Strings."¹ The tale of the hero with the three dogs is known all over Europe but invariably involves the slaying of a dragon. The Stewart versions and the Gaelic version do not deal with a dragon at all: the emphasis of the story is on what happens to the young man and his dogs, magically acquired, and how they help him to escape from attempts made on his life by a faithless sister and her paramour. There is also an account of how he neglects his dogs or loses them and finds them again. The reason for this shift of emphasis must be that the tale has a different meaning for these story tellers. There are plenty of tales in their repertoire about unlikely heroes who perform wonders or brave deeds and win princesses, but the interest of this story does not lie in that direction. That the Stewart versions and the Gaelic version both show this shift of emphasis, suggests that they must be closely related, especially as they come from the same geographic area. This suggestion is further reinforced by the fact that they are the only versions I have been able to find that have

this emphasis. Every other European version I have found has the dragon story.

It is worth bearing in mind that most travellers on the road have at least one dog for hunting purposes, even today, and even some settled travellers still have dogs for this purpose, certainly in Perthshire, including the Stewarts. "The Three Dogs" is a story whose meaning for the traveller is fully understood only in the context of his life. John Stewart talks of dogs he and his brothers used to have in Ireland for hunting:

Well, we used to go in greatly for good dogs, ye know. A dog that couldnae kill a hare and fetch it back tae ye, was nae use to us. 'Cause that's what kept the pot boiling. (Douglas 26B10)

He describes how he and Alec went out hunting with a farmer and another man who had exceptionally good dogs, especially a black and white one:

Took it owre tae this bits o whins where our dogs never seen where the hare went out, a hare got up (whistles) - away, back tae the man's wud. Another wan, an it was that fast, an wheelin that quick, it was knockin the stooks off the corn - ye know, the sheaves - it was cowpin corn sheaves an everything. After this hare, and kills that one, and then kills another one. An Alec says, "I never seen the like o that dog in ma life." (Douglas 26B10)

This is startlingly reminiscent of Swift, Knowall and Able, the three dogs in the story.

Bella's version of the story, told in 1955 in Blairgowrie, is closest to the Gaelic version, although there are important differ-

ences. In the Gaelic version the brother and sister are a prince and princess, the enemy is a giant not a packman, and when the young man goes on his travels his dogs go with him, while in the Stewart version he is parted from them and has to go in search of them. In fact the search for the dogs seems to be the most important part of the story in all three Stewart versions. The question arises if these traveller storytellers have altered the old Gaelic story, according to the functions of their own oral culture to teach the important qualities needed for survival in their mode of existence. The inconsistencies in recalling the details of the story on the part of John and Andrew, whose versions date from 1982 and 1967 are undoubtedly the consequence of not hearing the stories constantly told within the extended family circle and show, the results also of the traveller's adaptation to the settled way of life. Storytelling no longer enjoys an important place in social life, but has been replaced by television and videotapes, and it is happening as with their old metal-working skills, as Duncan Campbell of Glenlyon pointed out, " ... when the demand ceased the art was soon lost."² The Stewart version of the story is rooted in Gaelic tradition, but has been adapted to the traveller tradition and has suffered alteration through the changes in the Stewarts' way of life in the past fifty years. In this it is typical of quite a number of the stories in their repertoire.

The use of AT302 "The Giant Whose Heart is in an Egg" by Willie MacPhee and John Stewart, exemplifies a story telling technique that is widely used in Celtic tradition both in the Scottish Highlands and in Ireland. In the story of "The Bare-Stripping Hangman," which comes

from Argyllshire,³ and "The Weaver's Son and the Giant of the White Hill" from Ireland,⁴ the killing of the giant whose heart is in an egg takes place as the culmination of a series of exploits, in the first case by the son of the King of Ireland, and in the second, by the son of a weaver in Erin. In the same way, in Willie MacPhee's story, "Johnny Pay Me for my Story" (II.7) it forms the third part of a cleverly dovetailed trilogy, which is a combination of AT653, "The Man who could Fly like a Bird and Swim Like a Fish," AT665, "The Four Skilful Brothers" and AT302. It is also incorporated in the same way into a very elaborate version of AT402, "The Three Feathers," told by John Stewart. Willie and John remembered not only the story but also the relationship it usually bore to the rest of the story of which it formed a part; a structural relation. It was clearly the delight of Celtic storytellers to combine their stories in different ways and, as with pipe music and artistic ornamentation of manuscripts, they did it in set patterns. This characteristic found in these travellers' tales reinforces the idea that they belong to a Celtic tradition, although it is also found in oral tradition more widely. It shows at least that they fit in to the tradition of the area where they lived, which was a Celtic tradition.

"Cats, Dogs and Blocks" or "The Speaking Bird of Paradise" (II.8) is John Stewart's name for his version of AT707 "The Three Golden Sons", a story not recorded from other members of the family, but found in Campbell of Islay's Tales of the West Highlands as "Clann an Righ fo Gheasaibh," or "The King's Children under Enchantment."⁵³ Comparing it with European versions, such as "The Dancing Water,"

"The Singing Apple and the Speaking Bird," in Crane's Italian Popular Tales⁶ and as "The Singing Tree and the Speaking Bird," in Magnus's Russian Folktales,⁷ it does seem again that the Stewart version is closer to the Gaelic version, than to either of these. The Stewart and the Gaelic versions differ quite a lot in inventive detail, but the essential elements remain constant:

- 1) the king's children are abducted by means of some enchantment by malicious agents;
- 2) one of them successfully seeks disenchantment, overcoming various obstacles by means of magic objects and helpers;
- 3) the children are restored to their parents and the villains punished.

In "Clann an Righ" there appears the motif of the animals' "heart's blood," vomited up and kept as a means of disenchantment, as in "The Three Dogs," or "Tri Coin an Srang Uaine." Calum Maclean recorded a version of the story of the king's children in Easter Ross in the 1950s.⁸

The boulder-strewn Sleepy Glen that figures in John's story is taken from the landscape of Perthshire, which has innumerable glens of this kind, with which John's family like all Perthshire travellers were familiar all their lives. Belle recalls how her mother used to earn her living:

[She] would pack her basket full ... and she'd take that basket on her back and she'd put me on top o that basket an she's walked tae the Bridge o Cally ... which is six miles fae Blair on the straight road. But she gaed off tae all the fairmhooses. (Brune p.11)

John describes how his father also worked up the glens:

[He] was oot wi his horse an cart. He had dishes among the straw at the back o the cart ... So ma faither would go oot up aa these glens, aa roond Strathbraan an up by Pitlochry. (Douglas 26A3)

Later John's father took films to all the village halls up the glens. All of his children were born in or near the glens, so that the landscape described in John's story would be so familiar to him and his sisters and brothers that undoubtedly when they heard the word "glen" it would spring naturally to their minds. Perthshire is not all that far removed from the landscape of the wonder tales, with its long country roads, forests and castles, lonely cottages and many rivers and streams.

The Stewart version of AT503 "The Gifts of the Little People" (I.5), a cante-fable widely distributed throughout Europe, is called "The Humph at the Heid o the Glen and the Humph at the Fit o the Glen," or often, for brevity's sake, "The Humph." The story has parallels in Gaelic, notably one recorded by Calum Maclean from Alexander Stewart, a travelling tinsmith from around Dingwall in 1955⁹, the same year as our A version was recorded from Bella Higgins in Blairgowrie. It was also collected in Skye in 1922 by Mary Julia McCulloch¹⁰ and appeared in the Lady E. Murray MS (1881) in which the informant is named as Alex. Small (farmer) Carse, Appin of

Dull.¹¹ All versions of the story found are remarkably similar and the song using the names of the days of the week is almost invariable.

"The King o the Black Art" (I.3) is the Stewart's version of AT325 "The Magician and his Pupil" and is recorded in six versions told by Bella Higgins, Alec and John Stewart. The versions span a period of twenty five years. One of them was edited for Thrice Told Tales by Kenneth Goldstein¹² and another for European Folktales by Hamish Henderson.¹³ Numerous parallel versions exist in, for example, Gaelic, Scots¹⁴, Irish,¹⁵ Norwegian,¹⁶ French,¹⁷ German,¹⁸ and Russian.¹⁹ The Stewart version is the same as the Gaelic, which differs from other European versions, in that the King o the Black Art seeks out the boy to be his apprentice, rather than the other way round, and takes him to an equivalent of the Gaelic college of magic. In the Stewart version the boy is a foundling reared by a fisherman and his wife. This mystery concerning the boy's origins links him with ancient traditions of hero tales the world over, including those of the Celts. The old man who gives help and advice on the way is a favourite character in the Stewart tales and recalls the druid like figures in more ancient tales, like the version of the Irish immram, "The Voyage of Maelduin," which he calls "Jack and the Seven Enchanted Islands," where the hero gets advice from a druid. When John composes a story like "The White Stag," he features a similar character in it.

The King o the Black Art, himself the greatest of wizards, who also rules over a kingdom, seems to be a descendant of the early magician-kings, still found among Australian aborigines, in many parts of Africa and Asia, long ago in ancient Egypt and "among the ancestors of the Aryan races from India to Ireland" - the scope covered by Stith Thomson's survey of The Folktale.²⁰ In the Gaelic versions Fichaire Gobha, the magician, is a smith, a metal worker, traditionally credited with supernatural powers, who might well represent the ancestors of our tinker story tellers.

"The Miller's Four Sons" is Willie MacPhee's version of AT653 "The Four Skilful Brothers" and according to the Tale-Type Index, has not been collected in Scotland before. Willie's version follows the outline in the Index very closely and is part of a trilogy called "Johnny Pay Me for My Story"(II.7). The first part of this story acts as a framework for "The Miller's Four Sons," which is the story an old story teller tells Johnny, then asks for payment. The story teller is a traditional figure in Highland culture and reflects the important function stories had in Highland life. The idea that story telling is a profession and that some payment is due for the story implies that the story had value. A study of "The Miller's Four Sons" shows what this value was.

Willie like the four brothers in the story had to learn skills when he was young in order to survive on the road and to support his family when his father died:

My father was 39 when he died ... I was eleven years old when ma father died ... I learned to do everything. Of course I had to learn for there was naebody there fur to act as a bodyguard for my mother. I was the oldest o the family; so ... ony wee charge that had tae be done, I was the one that had tae dae it. An of coorse I had tae learn tae make baskets ... I was a blacksmith for two years. (Douglas videotape).

It was necessary for travellers to learn different ways of earning a living for they had to be able to turn their hand to whatever work was available to them. One of the reasons for their survival has been their ability to do this. One is reminded of the story of the God Lug in Irish mythology who presented himself at the door of the royal court at Tara as a succession of four craftsmen: carpenter, smith, harper and champion. Being informed that the king already had each of these, he asked if the king had anyone who could claim to be all of them rolled into one. The tinker has always had to be a Jack of all trades so perhaps Lug was his ancestor. On one of the Pictish stones in the Meigle Museum in Perthshire there is a curious phenomenon described in the catalogue as "a human swastika" composed of four human figures in an interlinked swastika shape, all of equal importance but joined in a single structure. This seems to echo the pattern of "The Miller's Four Sons," so it may represent a very ancient concept about the elements of human society, a kind of fourfold character, related to the quaternary structure of the Indo-European cosmos.²¹ To see the Miller's four sons as a triad "completed by a fourth member which encompasses the other three" one must consider that three of the brothers acquire different types of physical dexterity - the archer, the thief and the tailor - while the fourth, the star-gazer, embodies gifts of the mind, that include the judgment of the archer, the quick-wittedness of the thief and the cunning of the tailor. This is a story of great antiquity and the purity of form

which Willie MacPhee has preserved points to a long ethnic ancestry of eastern origin.

"The Heid" (II.3) is John Stewart's name for AT470 "Friends in Life and Death" and is one of the most interesting stories in the collection. Although it has been given a religious veneer to make the central character a minister, and the sights he sees on the way to visit the talking skull or the Heid, are described as parables, it is almost certainly a descendant of an ancient Oisín story. It is also another tale version that roots the tinker tradition firmly in the Highlands. Another version of it was recorded by Calum Maclean in Gaelic from Alexander Stewart, tinsmith, Muir of Ord, Ross-shire in 1955.²² All the Gaelic versions have the reference to the skull's teeth. The changes in the story are not likely to have been made by the Stewarts forebears, since tinkers even today have remained relatively untouched by the influence of the Kirk. Belle Stewart talks of how she was baptised:

... and she [her mother] got up when I was aboot four or five oors auld an she got up an walked wi him tae the minister. And I was baptised in that kirk. Because long ago you got a good piece at the minister's or a hauf croon. That's what made them roon aboot here onyway. Instead o peyin the minister for daein it, he'd gie ye a hauf croon for gettin - for the sake o havin it done. That was a lot o money at that time. (Douglas 2A11)

The attraction was the half crown, not the religious significance of the ceremony. Most travellers get married today in the Registry Office, while long ago there was no ceremony or certificate, as Belle reports:

But they never were mairried, none o the auld generation o tinkers and never knew what it was to be mairried. (Douglas 1A5)

After the Forty-Five, the Kirk gradually extended its influence into the Highlands, which were evangelised by a peculiarly narrow-minded form of Presbyterianism. This was also the moving force behind the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, who set up schools in the Highlands, which did not permit the speaking of Gaelic:

In 1795 the directors reported how "thousands of the natives of the remote Highlands have by means of their schools attained to such knowledge of the English language as qualified them for intercourse with the inhabitants of other parts of the British Empire and for deriving all the improvement which that language affords."²³

War was waged on the old pagan traditions which had existed side by side with the older Catholicism. But now, as Hector Urquhart of Ardkinglas reported in 1860 to Campbell of Islay:

The minister came to the village in 1830 and the schoolmaster soon followed, who put a stop in our village to such gatherings [home ceilidhs] and in their place we were supplied with heavier tasks than listening to the old shoemaker's fairy tales.²⁴

Some of Campbell's informants were tinkers who told and listened to stories in the presence of non-tinkers²⁵ - they were all part of the same community - and it would have been quite possible for a Stewart ancestor to have heard and learned this Christianised version of Oisín's journey to the Otherworld.

AT922 "The King's Questions," or "The Shepherd Substituting for the Priest Answers the King's Questions," has been recorded from John Stewart, his brother Andrew and their father old John Stewart as "The King and the Miller"(I.9). A Gaelic version was recorded in 1972 from

Donald Mackinnon of Barra, called "Domnall Ruadh agus an Claban" (Donald and the Skull)²⁶. Two versions were recorded by Calum Maclean in Benbecula²⁷ and South Uist.²⁸ Another version was recorded by Alan Bruford from Angus Henderson of Tobermory, Mull, in 1967.²⁹ Many European versions exist and were studied by Walter Anderson in 1923 in a monograph entitled Kaiser un Abt.³⁰ The oldest version dealt with in this, is an old French redaction.³¹ Another French version I have found has the same questions as the Gaelic version recorded for the School of Scottish Studies in 1975 from Murdo Macleod of Scalpay,³² at that time resident in Scone. A version called "King James and the Questions" appeared in County Folklore, Vol.VII, Fife, in 1914.³³ The story is the subject of Notes and Comments, "The King's Questions" AT922 in Scotland by Alan Bruford.³⁴

A recurring theme of the stories is the importance of kinship, which also connects them to the Highland way of life, where the very name "clan" comes from the Gaelic "clann" or "children." Kinship is constantly given importance in stories like Willie MacPhee's version of AT303 "The Twins" or "Blood Brothers" which he calls "Friday Saturday," and the "Nine Stall Stable" (II.5) which combines AT303 and 313, the Stewarts' version of AT325 "The Magician and his Pupil," which they usually call "The King of the Black Art," and John Stewart's version of AT551 "The Sons Seek a Wonderful Remedy for his Father" which he calls "The Water of Life." These stories all turn on the devotion of one member of a family for another, brother for brother, father for son, and son for father. It is this devotion which motivates each to attempt the impossible, face danger and death and

travel the world over to seek the other or to bring back whatever is necessary for the other's life. The travellers retain a concept of kinship that is very old in the Highlands and relates to the idea of the clan or extended family group being the children of their chief tain. Among the Stewarts, they look back to old James Stewart of Struan, who spread various branches of the family over Perthshire and Aberdeenshire and into Banff, Moray and Inverness. The family feeling even among the most distantly related of these Stewarts is extremely strong. One is reminded of the saying "tinkers are aa sib," which is common in Perthshire. This kind of genealogy leads to an almost Elizabethan use of the word "cousin" since it is applied to all kinds of relationship, often too complicated to explain. I have been introduced to innumerable travellers who have all been described as "cousins of Alec." In the old days, the wanderings of the Perthshire Stewarts were confined to areas occupied by their ancestors and there were a lot of cousin marriages. Even Alec and Belle are second cousins and Willie MacPhee is related to both of them through his aunt, Nancy Campbell or MacPhee who was Alec's mother and another MacPhee who was Belle's grandmother. Bella Higgins, who was Alec's eldest sister, had a son Billy who is married to his Aberdeenshire cousin Janet Robertson, whose grandmother was Maria Stewart, a sister of old John Stewart. Belle and Alec's daughter Cathy is married to her cousin Jimmy Higgins, whose grandmother was Kirsty Stewart, another sister of old John's. This feeling of family solidarity would pre-dispose these people to appreciate stories like "Friday, Saturday," "The King o' the Black Art," and "The Water of Life" all the more because of their own sense of kinship. John Stewart paints a vivid picture of stories told in the family circle

round the fire that carries strong emotive overtones of the admiration he had for them:

There were seven or eight brothers o ma father's lot ... an aa laughin, nae fightin men among them, ye know; they wouldnae fight. But they would tell a good story an talk ... Aa the travellers in Aberdeenshire knew aul Jimmy Kate, aul Bill, aul Donal, Duncan, ma father an Davie. An they were all storytellers. They could lie on their side, like that, in the dark, ye know, an the stick fire gaun an the sparks flyin up in the air an mebbe a can o tea sittin at the side o the fire an sit crackin an tellin stories.³⁵

Another resemblance between the travellers' sense of kinship and that of the Highlands in general is found in "The Speaking Bird of Paradise" (II.8) to which there is the parallel in Campbell's Tales of the West Highlands called "Clann nan Righ fo Gheasaibh" or "The King's Children under Enchantments." The King's harsh treatment of the Queen is presented as unnatural and monstrous which makes his horror when he finds how unfair he has been all the more extreme. The happy ending consists of a family reunion, while the devotion of one brother for the other is a motivating force in the story.

"The Water of Life" (II.4) is a story found all over Europe and India, South America, Africa and the West Indies. Calum Maclean found it in Benbecula³⁶ and Donald Archie Macdonald³⁷ recorded it in South Uist. John Stewart's two versions of the story concentrate on the quest of the despised youngest son Jack, without elaboration of the rivalry of the elder brothers. I was reminded of John's picture of himself in connection with his father and his brothers. From his account of his growing up in Perthshire and travelling in Ireland, it can be seen that a strong bond existed between him and his father, a

bond that is very important to all travellers and a relic of the old clan loyalty in Highland society. John was also considered something of a "black sheep," by the rest of the family, because of his rather wild and daring ways.

John's admiration for his father as a piper "going strong at the Games" and occupying a position in the local community that was respected, clearly means a lot to John:

... and he was in the Atholl Highlanders, or the Scottish Horse. He was Pipe Major of Pitlochry Pipe Band. He was one of the members of the Fishing Club. Going back before that he was with Laird Stewart at Rannoch ... My father was piper tae him ...
(Douglas 26A1)

He describes with great delight how, "the kids in the street knew Jock Stewart." (Douglas 26A3) When he bought his first motor car, a T Ford, in days when cars were scarce, and not many people had one, let alone a tinker, John recalls the scene with pride, "Aa the folk were out lookin at Jock Stewart comin back fae Perth in a motor car."
(Douglas 26A3)

When they went to Ireland, they went as a family and worked as a team to make their living at the fairs and markets on the road. When Belle married Alec and did not settle down to this kind of life, which she was not used to, the rest of Alec's family felt that she was not pulling her weight. The sense of family solidarity obviously pre-disposed them to telling stories that showed a son willing to go to the ends of the earth to find a cure for his father's illness. Also it

would make them consider such stories as a means of passing on to their children one of the most important lessons of traveller life: that family loyalty mattered more than any other. This was the basis also of the clan system in the Highlands.

The importance of hospitality is another feature which links the stories with Highland life. Clan histories bear this out:

In no country was "the savage virtue of hospitality" carried to a greater extent than in the Highlands and never did a stranger receive a heartier welcome than was given to a guest who entered a Highland mansion or cottage.³⁸

Even Captain Burt, an English officer in charge of soldiers stationed in the Highlands after Culloden, writes in his letters:

It is impossible for me from my own knowledge to give you an account of the ordinary way of living of these [Highland] gentlemen, because when any of us [the English] are invited to their houses, there is always an appearance of plenty to excess; and it has been often said that they will ransack all their tenants rather than we should think meanly of their housekeeping.³⁹

This shows that it was a matter of pride to entertain a guest well and make him welcome even if he was not a friend. It was almost a sacred duty to feed, shelter and protect a guest, as the story told of Chief Alexander Macgregor of Glenstrae illustrates:

His son, while out hunting one day, met the young Laird of Lamond travelling with a servant from Cowal towards Inverlochy. They dined together at a house on the Blackmount, between Tyndrum and King's House, but having unfortunately quarrelled during the evening, dirks were drawn and the young Macgregor was killed. Lamond immediately fled and was closely pursued by some of the Clan Gregor. Outstripping his foes, he reached the house of the Chief of Glenstrae, whome he earnestly besought, without stating the crime, to afford him his protection. "You are safe with me," said the chief, "whatever you may have done." On the pursuers arriving, they informed the unfortunate father of what had

occurred and demanded the murderer; but Macgregor refused to deliver him up, as he had passed his word to protect him. "Let none of you dare to injure the man," he exclaimed, "Macgregor has promised him safety, and, as I live, he shall be safe while with me." He afterwards, with a party of his clan, escorted the youth home; and on bidding him farewell, said, "Lamond you are now safe on your land. I cannot and will not protect you further. Keep away from my people and may God forgive you for what you have done." Shortly afterwards (in 1603) the name of Macgregor was proscribed and the chief of Glenstrae became a wanderer without a name or a home. But the Laird of Lamond, remembering that he owed his life to him, hastened to protect the old chief and his family and not only received the fugitives into his house, but shielded them for a time from their enemies.⁴⁰

It can be seen from stories like this why the Glencoe Massacre was so terrible in the eyes of Highland people. This same duty to protect the life of a guest is alluded to in Shakespeare's "Macbeth," when, in contemplating the murder of Duncan, who as well as being his king and his kinsman, is also his guest, he says:

..... then as his host
Who should against his murderer shut the door
Not bear the knife myself.⁴¹

The tradition of welcoming the stranger and giving him food and drink and shelter if he needed it, remained strong in the Highlands. The breaking of the clan system served to reinforce, rather than abolish it, since there was a greater need for it, when so many were dispossessed and forced to wander. The importance of hospitality to the traveller is very obvious: he depended on it very largely in order to survive. The harsh laws passed against vagrants often mentioned as "sorners" which meant "illegal lodgers in outhouses."⁴² David Buchan describes them as "personal retainers of the laird who did little or no agricultural work but who were always ready for local raid or national campaign." Often, as in the case of Duncan Campbell's father, farmers and crofters did not mind the travellers lodging in barns and kilns; they brought news, they provided useful articles for the house-

hold and they were often entertainers too, with pipes and fiddles, songs and stories. More often than not they would be paid for their tinware and hornware with oatmeal rather than money. Perhaps this was the way the Stewarts in Perthshire got the nickname of Brochans (oatmeal) Stewarts. Travellers themselves are very hospitable to guests, as I know from experience, whether they live in tents, trailers or houses. Among the poorest tent-dwellers in Perthshire are the Mackenzies of Fortingall. Yet when Sheila Macgregor and her sister Cathy Higgins visited them, they were courteously received and treated to home-made scones, made over an open fire.

Hospitality features in many of the stories collected. Whenever Jack or the hero is on a journey, he is always given hospitality along the way, usually by old men or old women, who are sources of wisdom and help. The hospitality is one of the signs that they are good people, and when hospitality is refused it is a way of portraying a character as doubtful or wicked. "Friday, Saturday," "The King o the Black Art" and "The Water of Life" provide examples of this. In "Mistress Bumbee" and "Geordie MacPhee" hospitality is an essential element in the story, whose meaning is bound up with it. The Pishmul's refusal of hospitality is regarded as very bad behaviour deserving to be punished, while in "Geordie MacPhee" it is clear that the giving of hospitality is part of the travellers' code of conduct, because Geordie MacPhee devotes most of his new-found fortune to being generous to his friends, family and relations, not to mention servants. There is tremendous irony in the story, because this generosity which is so admired by travellers, is the sort of thing settled

people regard as folly, extravagance and even fecklessness. A flattie would put money in the bank; the traveller gives it away. If he has an estate, he does not put walls round it to keep people out, he invites all his friends in to camp on it. In the end, of course, this ruins him, but Geordie simply returns to his life on the road without bitterness or any tearing of hair and wringing of hands. Material things are not all that important to him. I have seen this behaviour reflected again and again in my own informants and I can see it as a source of a great deal of misunderstanding by the settled community.

Highland society was built on the clan system, a paternalistic organisation that made all the "children of the chieftain" co-owners of the land on which they lived bound to support the head of their clan, but also entitled to his protection. This relationship enabled even the humblest clansman to retain self-esteem. This system was broken by the Clearances and resentment against the new breed of "lairds," whose outlook towards their people was quite different from that of the old clan chiefs, can still be found.

Generally speaking Perthshire travellers have had a good relationship with the local gentry, but that has largely been because they have in the past been of the benevolent type, like the one Duncan Campbell describes in his memoirs, John Stewart of Fyndynate, "a Highlander of Highlanders," who provided a precedent for travellers camping on the laird's land, as described in "Geordie MacPhee":

Dr. John Stewart of Fyndynate ... had been a navy surgeon for many years, and when he came home to reside on his small ancestral property in Strathtay, and to establish for himself a medical practice over a large district, he was found still to be a Highlander of the Highlanders in language and sympathies. He was one of the small lairds of long descent who helped so much to link all classes together and to sweeten the social life of their locality and age. He gave the tinkers a camping place on his property, where they took care to comport themselves so well that no fault could be found with them by the Justices of the Peace - of which he was himself a member - nor by ministers, kirk sessions or the country people. ... The tinkers who used the surname of Stewart - and they were numerous - looked up to Fyndynate as their special or almost heaven-born chief and those of other surnames were not much behind in their devotion and obedience to him.⁴³

Old John Stewart served Laird Stewart of Rannoch as a piper, while his wife worked in the laundry, was a member of the Atholl Highlanders and later piper to Lord Ward of Dudley, when he occupied Dunkeld House. Betsy Whyte's character called Cameron Cameron⁴⁴ was not as far-fetched as he sounds, nor was the friendly and generous relationship between him and the travellers. Certainly it is true that even today, Perthshire landowners and farmers tend to welcome only Perthshire travellers to hoe their turnips or pick their potatoes. Local farmer Stuart O. Miller of Rosefield, Balbeggie, while strongly objecting to those travellers who stopped in a lay-by next to his farm, spoke warmly and tolerantly of "our traivellers," the Johnstons, Whytes and Reids who had done casual work for him for years. This attitude goes back a long way. Betsy Whyte told me that travellers from elsewhere could go the length and breadth of the county without being able to get any work or a place to stop, whereas those who had frequented the area for most of their lives fared better.

But since the eighteenth century a new breed of landlord has appeared and the one in John Stewart's story "The Artist" (II.20) is

clearly of this sort. So Anglified is he that John actually sets the story in the Midlands of England. This laird, who, in the story, is humiliated in a particularly obscene way, is clearly of the type of the Anglicised "progressive" landlords that superseded the impoverished Gaelic-speaking estate owners and lairds, who were bought out at the time of the Clearances. John describes him as, "A great man to show off - whole big dinners an aa like this, but regards the poor, he chased them from his door." (Douglas 14A1) He is further identified by his southern speech, "My! My! Heah! Heah! What are you doin heah?" (Douglas 14A1)

That John's antipathy was not based purely on aversion to the English accent is proved by the fact that he tells a story of Lord Ward of Dudley using the same accent but illustrating the gentleman's generosity to his father:

... in the morning he [old John] had to be down at seven o'clock an he'd to walk fae Torwood across to Dunkeld, it was about a mile or a mile and a quarter, with his pipe box. So Lord Dudley was comin out the front door this mornin when ma father was goin down. He says, "Stewart! Stewart!" Ye see, smoking a big cigar, the old army man, walked wi a stick, them knickybockers on 'im, and he had a lame leg where he got hurt in the war. "What are you doin walkin?" My father says, "Oh," he says, "I walk every mornin, sir." He says, "Have you not got a bicycle?" Ma father says, "No," he says, "m'lord," he says, "I haven't got a bike." "Well," he says, "you just go in," he says, "to the cycle shop, when you're goin back," he says, "and tell them to give you a cycle.. Put my name down." ... So ma father came back with a new Raleigh. (Douglas 26A3)

Duncan Campbell tells us how his own father lost his land in this way when the old local Laird was succeeded by his brash son and heir full of southern ideas:

Ronald Stewart-Menzies of Culdares completed the twenty first year of his age on the 3rd of January 1845. ... He was educated in England and came back from Eton and Oxford as much a stranger to the people on his property as they were strangers to him. Had he been educated in Scotland and spent his holidays on his own land, many things might have been different. ... As soon as it was made known to them by the Maor Ruadh that he was coming to Meggernie Castle with college companions and local gentry to celebrate his coming of age, preparations were made for giving him a hearty welcome.⁴⁵

This included a bonfire and fireworks display and a ball with piping, fiddling and Scottish dancing (although by now only the older people knew how to do the dances, thanks to the repressive influence of the Kirk) and a shinty match or cammanachd. Everyone seemed on good terms with the new Laird:

In January the people on the Culdares estate were boasting loudly of their Laird to their neighbours on other properties. They saw no cloud on their sky, for although the last short leases granted by the trustees were to expire in May, they had no doubt but that they would be renewed on just terms. They were ready to offer the former rents because seasons and prices were mending, but as the trustees, during the six hard years, had not been able to give abatements of rent like proprietors who were free to do what they thought right, and as the losses incurred in those hard years were yet a heavy weight on them, they hoped the Laird would listen to their request for a small lowering of the rents which had been set up to war price thirty years before and had been kept up ever since. But if he would not give that small reduction for the ensuing nine years leases, they would struggle on to pay the old rents, or even more, rather than be turned out of their holdings. During the lifetime of the young Laird's father, they had been accustomed to bargain face to face with him and his factor.⁴⁶

... The young Laird took good care that the old tenants should not get the chance of having a personal conference with him. He held his setting or re-letting meeting in the offices of the Edinburgh firm which did his legal and factorial business for him. The Maor Ruadh was called to Edinburgh and came back with his own dismissal notice in his pocket. What the Laird decided to do was to turn eight farming families out of their holdings, and three crofters out of their small bits of land. The four farmers of the Eight Merkland of whom my father was one, were among the evicted.⁴⁷

Duncan Campbell's memoirs were published in 1910, sixty five years after these events, which took place when he was young, but

there can be no doubt that the bitterness against those like the young Laird of Culdares who turned farmers and crofters out of their land in this shameful way, was still strong. Duncan Campbell was a journalist and expressed his feelings in words, but others, perhaps less articulate, or more bitter, have resorted to more direct action, like the Canadian soldier of Highland descent, in Scotland during the Second World War, who urinated upon the grave of the Duke of Sutherland who had dispossessed his ancestor who had been forced to emigrate. The way in which the Clearances affected the travellers was to start the process still continuing today and only partly ameliorated by the provision of a small number of sites for travellers, by which they were gradually deprived of all their old camping places, were penalised for being both nomadic and for stopping on land whose new owners did not want them. This new breed of landlord was undoubtedly less tolerant of the luchd-suibhail as Duncan Campbell called them, using a Gaelic name for them that had obviously been long current in the Highlands, as had they themselves.

Thus it can be seen that it is no mere chance or personal idiosyncrasy that accounts for the existence of John Stewart's story. It springs from a very strong and a very genuine resentment still felt among Highland people generally towards this type of landlord.

"The Three Fittit Pot" (II.6) is John Stewart's version of AT591, "The Thieving Pot." The Aarne Thompson Tale Type Index does not record any Scottish versions of the story, yet it is found in the reper-

toire of another Scottish traveller, Duncan Williamson as "The Pot that went to the Laird's Castle," told to him by his uncle. This suggests that it was current in the traveller community and has been adapted to fit their wandering life-style. In the AT outline "a peasant exchanges his cow for a magic pot," but in the traveller version the pot is either found by chance, or is given to the traveller for scrap. In John Stewart's version, when the pot is found to be full of gold and money, the traveller's reaction is "We're quodded," a reflection of the fact that travellers are usually blamed for any thefts that occur in their vicinity. The end of John's version is interesting in that the people who live on the land owned by the rich laird are said to be "taxed to death," and if they are unable to pay their rent and taxes he sequesters their stock and goods. This kind of folk tale reflects the state of affairs in the Highlands at the time of the Clearances, as described by Duncan Campbell, and is an expression of the resentment felt by the poor people taxed or evicted from their land. It may possibly have originated among the settled community, rather than among travellers. Willie MacPhee's version seems to be more of a travellers' story, since it does not feature the laird getting his come-uppance, but seems more to be about the way luck can come and go, and its message seems to be rather than one should make the most of whatever luck one has.

The supernatural tales in the collection, tales of ghosts, witches, changelings, fairy pipers and black dogs, with a few local legends connected with places, are linked both with international tradition, in which such types of story are common and specifically with Highland tradition because many of them exist in Gaelic.

Perhaps the most interesting example is "The Shepherd and the Wee Woman" (I.14) or, as John Stewart says his mother called it, "Alasdair and the Speerit." The wee woman is the bean nighe, the little washerwoman at the ford, about whom there are many ancient Gaelic tales and traditions. One example which illustrates that the bean nighe was an integral part of Gaelic tradition is "Hugh of the Little Head" or "Eughan a Chinn Bhig":

Early on the morning of the fight [between Hugh and the Chief of Dowart] others say the evening before, Hugh was out walking, and at the boundary stream (allt criche) saw an elfin woman rinsing clothes and singing The Song of the Macleans. Her long breasts, after the manner of her kind (according to the Mull belief regarding these weird woman) hung down and interfered with her washing, and she now and then flung them over her shoulders to keep them out of her way. Hugh crept up silently behind her and, catching one of her breasts, as is recommended in such cases, put the nipple in his mouth saying, "Yourself and I be witness you are my first nursing mother." She answered, "The hand of your father and your grandfather be upon you! You had need that it is so." He then asked her what she was doing. She said, "Washing the shirts of your mortally wounded men." (Nighean leintean nam fir ghointe agad-sa). Or (as others say) "the clothes of those who will mount the horse tomorrow and will not return." (aodoch nam feir theid air na h'eich a maireach nach till.) He asked her, "Will I win the fight?" She answered that if he and his men got "butter without asking" (im gun iarraidh) to their breakfast, he would win; if not, he would lose. He asked if he himself would return alive from the battle (an d'thig mise am beo) and she answered ambiguously or not at all, and when going away left him as a parting gift (fogail) that he should go about to give warning of approaching death to all his race.⁴⁸

This excerpt shows that originally the bean nighe and her washing were death omens. In the Stewart tale there is still an element of this, in that, when the wee woman rubs the shepherd's muffler on a stone, sniggering evilly, his life is thereby endangered, and he has to recover the muffler, if his life is to be saved.

The story has apparently modified the tradition of the bean nighe in a way that can be understood better by viewing it in the context of the travellers' life. The shepherd saves his own life by recovering the muffler from the wee woman, but he incurs the vengeful anger of the creature by attempting to strike her in the process, in spite of his father's warning. He is sought out and has to fight for "a year and a day" or "seven years" every night with the wee woman, who is transformed for the contest into a powerful man or the Devil. He survives the ordeal, which seems designed to teach him not "to hit anything he meets on the road," or "not to hit everything he sees." It seems to be warning against violence.

Among travellers as among the old clansmen, there have always been feuds, often between families, since any individual wronged would be supported by his family in a quarrel with anyone. These feuds would frequently erupt into violence. Examples of this in the family history of my informants include the trouble between the Stewarts and the Townsleys that led to the murder of Belle's grandfather, Donald Stewart, (Brune, pp.1-4) and the Battle of the Cleaves that resulted from the feuding of MacPhees and Macdonalds. (Douglas 2B2) It has generally been true of travellers however that any violence seems to be confined to their own group and is not turned against the settled community. This has been confirmed by several police officers with whom I have discussed the subject. Former Sergeant James "Jimmy" Macgregor who retired from the force after serving years in country districts of Perthshire, at Glencarse, Milnathort and Aberfeldy, always made this point clear. Even when harassed by police or other

outsiders, they tend not to retaliate, but simply move on. That this violence is contained in this way may be the result of generations of teaching by their parents "not to hit everything you meet," conveyed in stories like this one. It is good practical advice, because if tinkers were as violent to outsiders as they can be to one another, they would never have survived in Scotland. The wee woman who seems not such a formidable adversary but one who can become transformed into a powerful diabolic figure if her anger is aroused, seems to symbolise this truth.

The bean nigh, also called the bean sigh, nighigh bhead a bhrom or nigheag an ath in Carmichael's Carmina Gadelica, is also mentioned in J.G. Campbell's Superstitions of the Scottish Highlands⁴⁹ and also in Donald A. Mackenzie's Folklore and Folklife.⁵⁰

The stories of Maggie Moloch (I.10) and Broonie Clod (I.49), told by Bella, John and Andrew, also have Gaelic origins, as Macpherson confirms:

The last brownie in Glenlivet was a female who made the farmhouse of Achnarrow her abode about the middle of last century. She was known by the name of Meg Mholoch or Hairy Meg, on account of her abundant hair. ... Grant Stewart identifies this brownie with one of the two brownies in the family of Tullochgorm. The male was known as Brownie Clod from his habit of flinging clods at people. The female was Maug Vulucht, Hairy Mag, a sort of mistress over the servants - a familiar of the house.⁵¹

An accompanying footnote to Andrew's version of the tale as transcribed by Hamish Henderson in Katherine Briggs Dictionary of British Folktales says:

A female Brownie is unusual although there are such house-spirits as Silikie of Haddon Hall. Meg Moulach was the name of the Grant's female Brownie recorded by Aubrey in the seventeenth century.⁵²

The story of Maggie Moloch that the Stewarts call "Mishamahee," a phonetic rendering of "Mise mo fhein," the Gaelic for "Me, myself," is a version of AT1137 "The Ogre Blinded," appearing in classical literature as the story of Blind Polyphemus, with its parallel, "Who has hurt thee?" "No man." The Stewarts' version clearly originated in Gaelic, certainly in the time of old Jimmy Stewart of Struan, and the lifestyle it reflects is a Highland one, a rural community with a mill to grind the meal and women spinning wool from the sheep.

Mishamahee is connected by the Stewarts with Fincastle Mill near Tummel Bridge. It is very much the custom in Gaelic storytelling to link a story with an actual place, in order to make it more interesting to the audience and more convincing. Indeed at one point in the recording of Bella, she says, "This is in Scottish history," and the company round her echo this. John also says, in telling one of the Maggie Moloch stories, "This is true ... it's in history." Another story told in the family, "The Little Tailor in the Haunted Graveyard" is connected with Loch Awe and appears in Folk Tales and Fairy Lore by James MacDougall as "The Animated Corpse of Glenure!"⁵³

Two other local legends that Belle tells are "The Burn that ran Wine" and "The Shearer of Glenshee." The former is connected with Hogmanay and the custom of first-footing and tells of the miraculous

transformation of spring water into wine on the stroke of midnight in Glenisla. The latter concerns a mysterious old tramp man who arrives at a farm in Glenshee one stormy night and who becomes the best shearer for miles around, working in both Glenshee and Glenisla. When he dies the people of the two glens cannot agree on where he is to be buried and come to blows over it, when there is a thunderclap, everything goes dark and when light returns there are two coffins instead of one. Thus one is buried in each glen. Belle learned these stories from her mother, who hawked for a lifetime up and down these two glens. No doubt old Martha Macgregor knew many more such tales and one wonders how many stories were exchanged on her visits to isolated farms and crofts, where she would always get a scone and a cup of tea from the folk of the glen. Even today if one stops at a house in this area for any reason whatever, the people still have all the time in the world to talk to a stranger. Nowadays tourists and weekend skiers speed up and down Glenshee possibly without exchanging two words with the local people.

The popularity of supernatural tales in the Highlands goes back very far into the past. It was only because of the evangelising of the Highlands in the eighteenth century that these tales became disapproved of and went underground. Many old Highland people that I have met, for example, Murdo Macleod, born in Scalpay and living in Scone in the 1970s, still loved to tell stories, most of them supernatural. These included a Gaelic version of "The King's Questions," tales of the Braan Seer, also tall tales of a famous poacher Farquhar

na Gunna, which he no doubt picked up during the years he spent as a gamekeeper in the West Highlands.

The witch tales of "The Silver Sixpence" (II.47) and "The Straw Leggings" (II.48) are straight out of Gaelic tradition and included in Alan Bruford's catalogue of witch tales.⁵⁴ There are very few witch tales in the repertoire of these storytellers, which may have something to do with the fact that while witchcraft of both the black and white variety was recognised in the Highlands, the witch hunts and witch burnings that were practised almost everywhere else in Europe, did not take place there to the same extent. There were so many different kinds of supernatural being or beings with supernatural powers that figure in Highland superstitions, that the witch is only one of many and does not stand out as one to be specially feared.

There are many stories in Gaelic tradition about fairy pipers and about humans who got tunes from fairy pipers. "Johnny-One-Tune"⁵⁵ concerns a lad who could hardly play the pipes all "just two or three bubbling notes," so that he was nicknamed derisively Johnny-One-Tune by his family. To appreciate the story it must be seen in the context of the lives of people who not only had a piping tradition in their family, but who depended on it as a source of livelihood. This applied to many families in Highland society, but it is also true of the tinkers. This is one more piece of evidence that places them firmly in a Highland setting, as belonging there from time immemorial. Bella Higgins who told the story was the oldest sister of Alec and

John and herself a piper, as were her sisters. She even uses a chanter to illustrate the story. Bella was also a good dancer like her sisters. Anyone in the family who played the pipes badly was likely to be viewed with contempt by the rest, just as good pipers were a source of pride.

Among the Stewarts old John Stewart is remembered with tremendous pride because he was an outstanding piper respected by non-tinker pipers, an Atholl Highlander⁵⁶ and a servant to gentry in Dunkeld and Rannoch. The whole family depended on their piping ability to provide part of their income in both Scotland and Ireland. Alex Stewart went up to Glencoe for years until shortly before his death, and his brother John still goes up to Aberfoyle, even though he cannot pipe much now, if at all. But he puts on his Highland dress and stands beside his grandsons, who are promising young pipers. Willie MacPhee used to accompany Alec to Glencoe and still goes up there in summer, although he has lost heart since Alec's death:

And old Alec Stewart used to come along with me. Then when he died I never bothered so much. An odd time. I lost ma best pal. He was a great old man. (Douglas videotape)

There is a piper who is a friend and possibly a relative of the Stewarts called Ecky McPhee from Lanarkshire, who is known as the Rum'lin Piper, because he plays badly, like Johnny-One-Tune.

Burker stories form a unique category in Scottish folk tale tradition and at the same time are typical of other traditions in that

they deal with a phenomenon that causes fear, such as those dealt with in "Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers" by Richard Dorson.⁵⁷ Originating in the Burke and Hare case in Edinburgh in 1824 these stories were common all over Scotland, since it was not just the travellers who feared the bodysnatchers or resurrectionists, although they were probably the most vulnerable to them. Duncan Campbell of Glenlyon recalls that:

... the scare caused by the Burke and Hare case sent such an after fear through the Highlands that, among others, our churchyard was watched for weeks after every funeral because of the bodysnatchers. The key of the churchyard was always kept in our house and the watcher, with loaded gun, used to come for it. So I heard many resurrectionist stories which frightened me worse than the usual run of ghost stories.⁵⁸

Among the travellers, it was fear not so much of grave-robbing but of abduction and murder that was most common. If any of them disappeared there was little their relations could do about it. This was perhaps one of the reasons the travellers became so punctilious about registering the births of their children, who consequently officially existed and could be reported missing. But fear of the bodysnatchers is one more factor that links the travellers to Highland society.

CHAPTER FIVE - FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER SIX

Tale Study : Psychological Interpretation

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TALE STUDY : PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION

I attempted in Chapter One, to show the relevance of the Jungian theory of archetypes to the interpretation of the stories and their function. To recapitulate briefly, I pointed out how the character of the unlikely hero, often called Jack, corresponded to the unindividuated self, and the journey or quest to the process by which he became a fully developed human being in harmony with the world of nature. He was made aware of his own inner resources, as well as of the wisdom of his ancestors, and thereby acquired the confidence to lead his own life. It goes without saying, that this shows the function stories can have in a much wider context than that of the traveller community and has something fundamental to teach us about the nature of education. I am certain that hearing and telling stories is one of the factors that has made the travellers retain their imaginative and intuitive grasp of many profound truths, and kept them free of the materialism of the settled community. It has also helped them in their struggle for survival.

The reason for Jack's success again is that he is "traveller brained." A good and full definition of this is afforded by what Farnham Rehfisch wrote about the attitudes of Perthshire and Aberdeenshire travellers to work, money and material things as quoted in Chapter 3.¹



John Stewart

telling

The King o the

Black Art



This corresponds with what John Stewart has said to me:

... if you're traveller brained and you had no education, ye're jumps ahead of the country folk. Even them that can neither read nor write are jumps ahead o the country folk. ... Because you'll no see any o them being led by the ear for a job o work. (Douglas 11A2)

Farnham Rehfisch has observed that the settled population think of the tinker man very much as Jack's brothers think of him, but all the time he is capable of doing as well if not better than they.² Jack's time in the kitchen in "The Three Feathers" was not entirely wasted.

Perhaps the most important of the wonder tales is "The King o the Black Art" (I.3). Survival certainly seems to be what this story is about. It would be easy for any outsider who learns that travellers tell wonder tales like this to suppose that they were meant to provide a form of distraction from the hardships on the road. But a story like "The King o the Black Art" shows that this cannot be true, since it is concerned with the same problems that the traveller faces daily: keeping the family together, travelling, dealing, obtaining and using skill, outwitting those in authority. The story viewed this way provides pointers as to how these problems can be overcome and makes it understandable that the traveller should regard these stories as his education.

What might a traveller learn from "The King o the Black Art"? He will recognise himself as the foundling whose origins are a mystery. He will approve of the boy and his family's desire to take the chance

to acquire skill and cleverness. It is significant that what he and his father first admire about the King is something akin to sleight of hand - juggling with fiery or golden balls, or spiked poison balls - like a circus performer. Travellers love such tricks and use them in both work and play. A trickster like the Baker Boy who features in two of John's stories and who was probably also a traveller, engage their imagination when he makes people "see" things and a piece of straw becomes "a lerrick tree" and a round piece of leather becomes a "hauf croon."

But the traveller is not the sort of person who will work at long term projects or schemes that require patience. Quick results are what he aims for and quick thinking is what he believes in. He learns from the transformation flight in the story what history taught his ancestors: that he must be able and ready to change and adapt to the demands of changing circumstances. He will also have to be able to exist in any element like a fish in water, like a bird in the air, on the earth like a solid body and in the fire like an ember. Adaptation means survival, one of the lessons of evolution. It is not only the traveller who can learn from these stories. This passing through different elements is reminiscent of myths of death and rebirth and serves to teach the continuity of life, no matter what happens, showing how it can be achieved thus giving reinforcement of confidence. None of these meanings is consciously ascribed to the story by the travellers of course, but there must be intuitive understanding involved since so much importance is attached to the stories. When my informants' forebears were on the road, the stories were clearly of more

importance than they are now, because they were told again and again, which is how my story tellers learned them. Now they are infrequently told, since the extended family unit has been replaced by a more fragmented arrangement, due to settling in houses. Their children and grandchildren go to school and story telling does not figure in daily life, being largely replaced by television and videos. Survival has come to depend less on luck, chance and quick-thinking. Social Security cushions the existence of many travellers from the abject poverty of their grandparents, but even in dealing with the government department that dispenses it, travellers use all the traditional techniques of trickery to get benefits.

One of the difficulties Belle's son John has found in running his camp site is with travellers who give it as their address in order to get residential allowance, then disappear along the road without paying rent or leaving word when they are coming back, which prevents him from re-letting the stance. This has had to be circumvented by having the rent paid directly to John by the Department of Social Security.

Another story that is concerned with education for survival is "The Man Who Flew Like a Bird and Swam Like a Fish," AT665 told by Willie MacPhee as "Johnny Pay Me for My Story" (II.7). This is often found combined with AT302 "The Giant Whose Heart was in an Egg," as it is in this case. The way in which the hero acquires his magic power differs from the tale type index in that they are not given to him by grateful animals whom he helps, nor by an old man with whom he shares

his last penny, although the second one is the nearer to this example. Johnny and his mother are very poor but give shelter to an old story teller with whom they share what they have, and who tells them a story. When he asks for payment Johnny thinks he means money and says he cannot pay. The old man then makes him undertake three forfeits, turning him into a salmon, a lion and a hawk for a year and a day. It is while he is a hawk that he learns how to answer the old man, by overhearing another young man say to him, "I cannae pay you but maybe God'll pay you." This teaches Johnny that stories, that is, education, cannot be paid for or valued in terms of money.

The story that the old man told Johnny was "The Miller's Four Sons," which is Willie's version of AT653 "The Four Skilful Brothers," is a story about the acquisition and use of knowledge and skill. Its inclusion in the framework story AT665 is deliberate and purposeful, since it shows how a story can be used to apply to real life.

First of all Johnny learns that he will make nothing of his life, unless he acquires some skill and experience, which he can do only by getting on the move. This was a lesson Alec and Belle's son John learned from circus-owner Billy Smart:

I'll always remember what he said. ... "Ye'll never make money in one spot. ... If you want to make money ... move! Move, 'cause if ye can get in a rut, and you'll sit in that rut thinking ye'll come out of that rut, but ye won't." ... An I've proved it. Ye get intae a rut, an ye sit, an ye sit, an ye sit. ... Ye've got tae move, because a strange face will get a strange shillin.³

It is clear that Johnny is meant to learn from the story all it has to teach about "pushing one's fortune": it is supposed to give him an education, not just an evening's entertainment, although that is part of its function too. Travellers seem to believe with Sir Philip Sidney in his "Apology for Poetry" that a story should instruct through delight. The third part of the story proves that Johnny was meant to learn from the old story tellers because it shows how he uses to his own advantage the skills he has learned in the first part; how to transform himself into a salmon, a lion and a hawk. The means by which he acquires this ability are also interesting, and was examined when we looked at that part of the story. He is first transformed in turn into each of these creatures for a year as a "forfeit" for thinking the old man wanted payment for his story in the form of money. Only when he learns that what the old man really requires is a spiritual payment, does he understand the real value of what he has been given and the real meaning of his experience. He is then able to make full use of his experience to rescue the princess held by the Giant Whose Heart is in an Egg AT302.

AT851 "The Hero Forces the Princess/King to say, 'That is a Lie'," is recorded in five versions from Alec, John and Andrew as "The King o the Liars" (I.8). It is told as a Jack tale with the unlikely hero once more taking on the highest in the land. Lying contests or tall tales have always been a popular form of amusement, but in this as in what David Buchan calls the "Wit Combat ballads,"⁴ it is not just a straight contest - the whole story hinges on an element of trickery. Jack succeeds not by telling the biggest lie but by catch

ing the king off his guard with an intolerable insult. This is the kind of trickery travellers love and while it is easy to call it cheating, in a struggle for survival this kind of trickery is sometimes essential.

How Jack operates against the King is worth looking at more closely. In the five versions we have from Alec, John and Andrew, there is a certain amount of similarity in how the stories proceed. Alec's and John's versions all feature the fight with the King of Spain's bees, being kicked up to the moon, falling down from the moon, being caught on the backs of swans or geese, who carry him as long as they are able, then he falls into a whinstone rock up to his neck, cuts off his own head and sends it rolling home for help and is chased by a fox, leading to the obscene insult, "The worst fox's shite is better than you, king!" Andrew's version, while appearing different, nevertheless could be seen to be similar in that the faraway place Jack jumps to is not the moon but India - equally remote, as far as these story tellers were concerned. Alec's version also has the episode where Jack falls into a gigantic dog's pawprint from which he is eventually rescued, by an equally gigantic brother. All of these details are designed to stretch the king's credulity to the utmost symbolised by huge leaps or falls. In fact the rule governing them seems to be that they have to be utterly impossible. The King obviously does not find it easy to resist the temptation to say, "That's a lie!" and Jack keeps up a constant pressure on him, by repeatedly asking, "Do ye mean to make me a liar?" each time the king expresses his astonishment or doubt. The reason Jack wins is because he keeps

his head, even in the wildest flights of the story, exerts this constant pressure on the King until he judges him to be near breaking point, then surprises him by switching the attack and hitting him with something unexpected. There must be several lessons here for the traveller on the road or for anyone out to get the better of an opponent verbally.

"The King and the Miller" (I.9) which has been recorded from John and Andrew and their father, is the family's version of AT922 "The King's Questions," or "The Shepherd Substituting for the Priest Answers the King's Questions."

What enables the underdog to win in this case is the power of the word. There are other examples of belief in the power of the word in Scottish folklore: secret societies known as the Horseman's Word and the Miller's Word existed in past times. Each involved ritual and belief that were based on secret power-giving words that enabled the horseman or the miller to safeguard, pass on and practise the "mystery" of their craft, controlling horse or mill by virtue of secret knowledge into which they had been initiated and sworn to keep secret. At their ceremonies both were thought to have contact with the Devil, "a shak o aul Hornie," or a shake of the Devil's hand. Both of these characters were regarded with respect tinged with fear, as having supernatural powers. Smiths also were associated with the supernatural and it is no coincidence that tinkers, descended from earlier metal-workers, were also thought to have supernatural powers. In the

Gaelic version of AT325 "The Magician and his Pupil," the magician is Fichaire Gobha, Fichaire the Smith.

The poor miller in the Stewart tale, however, has no such powers and it is someone else who saves him from losing his daughter and his mill, by outwitting the king. This character is not someone particularly noted for his cleverness; in fact, it is quite the opposite, for in the Stewart tale it is, in old John's version, a young shepherd, in John's a young miller, and in Andrew's Silly Jack. In the Gaelic version it is also the fool, an amadan mor, or Guilleasbuig Aotrom. This parallel between Silly Jack and the amadan mor is shown in their ability to give the unanswerable answer.

"The Artist" (II.20) told by John Stewart, is a Rabelaisian story, that uses vulgarity or obscenity to highlight something that to the traveller is equally obscene - pride and avarice. The story itself not only involves the humiliation of the arrogant gentleman, who sets out to play a crude and disgusting trick on his friends, but also once more demonstrates the superior cleverness of the "traveller-brained" artist. Being "caught short" on the way up the driveway to the big house, when he is going up "just tae see what like a man he is," the artist - a thinly disguised traveller - is inspired by this to play a trick on the proprietor:

So he goes up, takes his bag off, an he goes up tae the top, he goes up the stairs an right in front o the big doors, wi powder and stuff like that, he draws a great big shit, ye see. He didnae draw it, he made it, he actually made it. To look at it, ye would have ... He had a bottle, he shook over it that was very, very stink, ye know what I mean?

The gentleman arrives in his car, and John gives us a characteristic detail that helps us to picture him: he has "one o these bristly moustaches, like a major." Of course he is outraged and threatens to send for the police, as he thinks he is looking at a turd, an idea the artist fosters by appearing to be buttoning up his trousers. He is amazed when the artist "draw his nose through it an he gave a blow an it all went away in dust." The artist walks away but the gentleman calls him back and invites him into the house. At this point the gentleman thinks that he is in control of the situation and that he is about to make use of the artist for his own purposes but he does not realise it is the other way round, "This man was working the gentleman now." The use of the word "working" in this sense among travellers indicates "manipulating" and reveals another audacious aspect of this story. We are shown an example of how travellers manipulate people by making some dominant side of their character work against them. This man's arrogance and misanthropy are to bring about his downfall. "Things had switched, ye see." The gentleman reveals his intention to the artist, at the same time showing him "what like a man he is":

You wouldn't know anything about me ... I jump about ... with the aristocracy of the country ... an what you would call the blue circle people, ... I'm holding a dinner ... now ... there's a lot of those young jackanapes ... and men, ... that I know ... that I would like to give a good take-down to ...

What he wants the artist to do is "do the same ... for me to present on the dinner table." From then on, the artist has the gentleman under his control, although it may seem as if the gentleman is employing him. He has the upper hand because he has the skill to do something the gentleman cannot do himself. But he does everything to make

the gentleman feel that he is the master, "I'm here ... to please the customer ... everything'll be done ... to your satisfaction.

The gentleman is jubilant thinking of how he will humiliate "Lord So-an-so and Earl This-and-that." Meanwhile the artist is given fifty pounds advance payment and goes off in true traveller style to spend it on enjoying himself with his friends, "He got boozed up that night wi the fifty quid, and gied his mates a drink or two."

When he goes back to the big house to perform the promised service for the gentleman, he is promised a hundred pounds and left to get on with it. He spends the day eating and drinking, the butler having been told to "give him anything he wants." There is delightful irony in this, as the gourmandising helps him to do what he clearly meant to do from the beginning: fill the gentleman's silver tureen not with an artificial turd, but with a real one, and a particularly offensive one at that, "An it was half diarrhoea, ye know, wi the drink an aa that! It was rotten! Rotten!"

When the gentleman returns he is delighted and pays him handsomely with a hundred pounds and a bottle of whisky. The gentleman is now completely set up, not as he thinks to disgrace his friends, but to be disgraced. The denouement is related with obvious relish, emphasising the contrast between the fine ladies and gentlemen present and the formality of the occasion, with a dinner gong and the table

with its silver service and the obscene contents of the tureen, eventually revealed to all eyes, and noses. The gentleman takes a bet on whether it really is what it seems or not and wagers all he possesses, "he bet everything he had, house and all. And signed a paper for it." He is so obsessed with the desire to discomfit his friends that he does not see what ridiculous lengths he going to: he is carried away by his own pride and this, of course, is what the artist foresaw from the first. Once you have found a person's weakness, all you have to do is to exploit it.

John told a rather similar story to this in his account of an experience he and his family had in Ireland, involving a very superstitious woman:

An we were comin wi the wagons fae Athlone intae a wee place cried Moat ... An we sees this wumman ... She'd got an ould black jaicket on her and a hat on her heid and she's stopping us on the road like this [waving]. Oh an she's in an awfu state. "You'll come back with me," she says tae ma mother, "... you're the Queen of the Gypsies" ... She says, "The Curleys is after me, an the Tullochs is after me, an the fairies is after me ..." (Douglas 26B11)

They go home with the woman, who is quite well-off and has a farm where they can leave their caravans and have plenty to eat, and she soon has them digging in the cow shed for a pot of gold, which she eventually reveals she was told was there by "another gypsy" who read it in the cards. John's comment on this was "Oh ye bad one!" and Maggie says, "That was a take doon!" (Douglas 26B11) This clearly indicates that they recognised this as a trick. They go on to play their own trick on the woman, whom they now know to be gullible enough to believe anything a gypsy tells her. She has asked them to help her

get back her daughter's sweetheart, who is in the Black and Tans, and who has had to go away and never come back because "the fairies put a curse on it." Bridget, the daughter, is pregnant, so it is easy to imagine why her sweetheart has departed. She offers John's mother ten pounds if her daughter can "get the boy." John's mother then went through a strange ritual:

... ma mother had a battle axe ... ye ken a real polished one. She gied ma mother this ten pound and ma mother put the ten pound round the battle axe. "Now," she says, "I'll put it in the fairy rock behin the hoose," and she says, "if this ten pound's away, Katy's gettin the boy. "If she is I'll give ye another twenty," she's gaun on, ye see. So ... ma mother put the battle axe roon the ... end o the hoose. But ma mother had got me and Alec at the back o the hedge ... and when she left the battle axe doon, we sneaked oot and stole the battle axe and the money and aa, ye see. An ma mother came oot an, "Oh," she says, "the battle axe is away," she says, "it must be doin its work." She says, "We'll have to come out later on," she says, "in aboot an hour's time when we'll see." So me an Alec sat for aboot an oor, an we were laughin wur heids off tae, ye know, laughin wur heids off. An we jaggit wur finger ... an put three drops o blood on the battle axe. An pit it back behind the rock. Ma mother says, "It's done its work." ... So we gied ma mother the ten quid. (Douglas 26B11)

This example of the Stewarts working a credulous Irishwoman illustrates the same principle as John's story about the artist and the gentleman. The woman was tricked into parting with her money because she thought she was employing them for her own ends, while all the time they were using her for theirs, by means of her belief in fairies.

"The Lord's Prayer" (I.13) is a story told by Alec, John and Sheila about a "tramp man," or what the travellers would call "a buck." This means he travels the road, but not as a tinker. The solitary tramp is often a social misfit or someone who cannot cope

with his life's difficulties and is a very different person from the travelling tinker with his family group and many skills, who is adaptable to changing circumstances. Nevertheless, despite the dissimilarities of these two types, their needs make them dependent on their own ability to win sympathy and to persuade the settled community to minister to them. This story illustrates the kind of trick which both tramps and travellers might practise on a minister. The guiding principle seems to be to exploit the special proclivities of the subject of the trick, in this case, the fact that he is a religious man, or is supposed to be.

At first it seems as if the minister is to be the butt of the joke. In Alec's version he also seems to be a particularly mean and uncharitable character, as another tramp reports, "I couldn't get nothin out of the house." This first tramp, however, must have been lacking in the skill demonstrated by the second one, whose trick is to put the minister in a position in which he cannot refuse to help. He asks not for charity but to be taught the Lord's Prayer, which begins, "Our Father ..." and he reminds the minister that if God is the Father, then all men are brothers. The minister then feels obliged to help his "brother" get a pair of boots. It seems that the tramp has the advantage of the minister, even if he is thought a rascal for doing so, by those who laugh at the comic aspects of the tale.

But the second part of the story shows the minister who may have seemed easy game for the sly tramp, pulling the same trick on the poor

shoemaker. The minister does as the tramp did, putting the shoemaker in a position where he cannot refuse to help. He rebukes him for poor church attendance and asks him to repeat the Lord's Prayer, to see if he can remember it. On the basis of God being the Father of us all, he tells the shoemaker to pay half the cost of his "brother's" boots. The reason for the second part of the story is puzzling unless it is regarded as a means of showing that the tramp's trick is justified by the fact that the settled community trick one another in worse ways. The tramp genuinely needed the boots, but the apparently generous minister, who was better off than the poor shoemaker, was simply being tight-fisted in being unwilling to pay the whole cost of his charitable gift.

To the non-traveller cheating someone over money is always regarded as immoral as money is always thought of as belonging to someone. The traveller regards money as a means to an end, like spring water or the hare he bags for the pot, does not feel anyone has more right to it than anyone else and does not feel the same satisfaction as the flattie from the actual possession of money, nor does he, as Rehfish has stated, receive any increase in status from it. In the story, of course, no money changes hands. The minister gives the tramp a promissory note, that gives the tramp the right to choose a pair of boots, so naturally he chooses "the best in the shop."

Money also features in Willie MacPhee's story "The Devil's Money" (II.24), which he got from Duncan Williamson, another gifted traveller

story teller. In it the Devil is portrayed as the arch-trickster with his love of contests (cf. "King o the Black Art" (I.3)). Jack, the lazy good-for-nothing is warned by his mother "never come through a near-cut in the dark," a common traveller maxim. He disobeys her and encounters the Devil after following a trail of money. As with the old fisherman in "The King o the Black Art," the money turns into something worthless, in this case, a handful of earth. The Devil then challenges Jack to a contest with a promise of "a box of gold sovereigns ... if ye can bate me." He has to devise some way of taking money out of the box, which sounds easy of course. Jack sees the Devil's cloven foot and that gives him an idea:

Noo Jack was that lazy when he was in his mother's hoose, if his mother telt him tae put a bit stick or peat on the fire, instead o using his hands, he liftit his fit, and he liftit the peat wi his fit, ye see, an pit it on the fire." (Douglas videotape)

So Jack lifts the money with his foot and the Devil is unable to do likewise because of his cloven hoof, through which the sovereigns slip. In this apparently simple way, Jack comes into a fortune and this time he keeps the money, since he has proved himself to be a match for the Devil. Once again the emphasis is on the quick-wittedness of the unlikely hero, which can be shown to represent the traveller's image of himself, or at least the image he would like others to accept. According to Belle:

The men sat roon the campfires all day and all they did was maybe go for some firewood and maybe a bucket of water. That was all the work the traveller men ever did. (Douglas videotape)

This also recalls John's idea that travellers:

... even of those that can neither read nor write are jumps ahead - of the country folk ... Because you'll no see any of them being led by the ear for a job of work. (Douglas 26)

Rehfish noted that everyone thought travellers were lazy and so we can identify Jack as the archetype of the traveller once more. The idea that he is "flyer" than the country hantle is reinforced by stories like this which show him to be a match for the Devil, the arch-trickster.

There must have been characters at fairs and markets in the old days like the one that John mentions called the Baker Boy:

It was ma father that telt me this story. There was a man there - he could dae aa the tricks o the day. You know what I mean? He was like a mesmerist man ... (II.21)

The story describes how the crowd at a market stand round a busker who claims that he has a rooster that can pull a larch tree and they all see it and believe him. An old woman passing with corn for her goats, stops, looks and says, "That no a larch tree, that's a corn strae." The trickster offers her a guinea for the corn and:

... when she took the guinea and gave him the two sheaves o corn and looked round at the cock an she saw it pullin the larch tree. (II.21)

There could be an element of bribery implied here: travellers believe flatties will do anything for money (flatties believe the same about travellers) and so can easily be made to believe anything if it to their advantage (like the courtiers in "The Emperor's New Clothes" AT1620). John Stewart was reported to me by Sheila Macgregor as saying, "You can tell yon hantle anything, and they'll believe you." By "yon hantle" he meant the people who come with tape recorders to collect stories, e.g. myself - which did not surprise me in the least, as

I am perfectly well aware of this traveller propensity. My greatest concern is always to disguise from any of my informants any particular interest I may have, so that they will not use it to manipulate me. There is little value in recordings in which obviously loaded questions are used to elicit information, thereby signalling to informants what is required by way of answer. Such questions always get what they are designed to get from traveller informants as travellers are both highly suggestible and anxious to please.

That there is a trickster element in the traveller character is undoubtedly true and creating illusions and manipulating people to advantage are definite traveller skills. These skills have been developed to enable travellers down the ages to make a living and to protect themselves. In the distant past, according to the motifs found in folk tales all over Europe, metal workers and smiths were reputed to have magical powers. In the Gaelic versions of "The King o the Black Art," the magician is called Fichaire the Smith and the Great Wizard, also being referred to as am Bodach which can also refer to the Devil, all these characters being synonymous.

The basis of this identification in the minds of the people who told or listened to the stories was clearly in the power of the transformation. The smith transforms metal into different shapes - the tinkers were once people to whom the settled people brought ornaments to melt down to make accessories for Highland dress - and the magician transforms one thing or person into another. To see the two processes

as manifestations of the same kind of power is wholly understandable, particularly in a pre-scientific world.

But stories like the "Baker Boy" tales and "The King o the Black Art" suggest that the secret of the magic was that the magician "had them mesmerised" (II.21). The crowd in the market thought they were seeing a cock pulling a larch tree. Curly Donal (II.22) thinks the Baker Boy has given him half a crown, when in fact "it's a roon piece o leather." In "The King o the Black Art" the boy's father thinks the King has given him a heap of gold, but it is only a heap of dung. This concept of magic is based on the idea of creating illusions and depends on the power of the magician's mind over those of his subjects. Far from being an outdated primitive concept based on ignorance and fear, it is in fact timeless and manifests itself today in the world of theatre, television, films and advertising. It can also be seen in political leaders and in military strategy. Belief in this kind of "glamourie" can also be linked with the modern practice of hypnosis and is altogether a more sophisticated view of magic than credence in mere abracadabra. In the light of this, the travellers' ability to create illusions and to manipulate people can be seen as a survival of this old magic power for which they were once highly esteemed.

Family solidarity has been one of the great factors in the survival of the travellers, so it is not surprising that many of the stories hinge on the devotion of parents for children, sons for fathers or

brothers for each other. In the Jack stories, however, Jack usually has two older brothers who despise him, as in "The Three Feathers" (I.4). In that story, Jack was shown to be "traveller-brained" and therefore "jumps ahead" of his more conventional brothers. In "The Water of Life" (II.4), however, no emphasis is put on sibling rivalry, for it is only Jack who goes in quest of the miraculous cure for his father. The two brothers seem content to stay at home and leave it to the doctors to cure their father. In this version of the story told by John Stewart I was reminded of John's picture of himself in connection with his own father and brothers, Alec and Andrew. He always regarded himself as the most enterprising of the three and also claims it was he who accompanied his father to pipe at the Highland Games. He was not the youngest of the three, but he was to some extent looked on as "the black sheep of the family" because of his harum-scarum ways. He was in Ireland when his father died and did not know about his death until after he was buried, as no-one could contact him because no-one knew where he was. He has obviously felt guilty about this and indeed other members of the family have reproached him for it. The result is he has recently erected an expensive memorial on his father's grave, which up till then had no stone. When his brothers were content to do whatever casual work was to be found in the area around Blairgowrie, John organised squads of Irish workers to come over and do contract work for farmers. Alec also eventually did the same kind of "gaffering" locally but did not fetch workers from elsewhere. All three brothers had enough initiative to make their living by traveller methods, but John still likes to think of himself as the clever one, the daring one and the one with most money. He took more risks than the other two, perhaps, and found himself occa-

sionally on the wrong side of the law as a result. Thus in various ways he could identify with Jack in "The Water of Life," doing more for his father than the other two, taking the initiative, while they stayed at home.

The water of life is in the nature of an elixir or a rare and very potent extract of some kind. Being allowed to fall drop by drop from the severed head of the golden-haired maiden, it is also identifiable with blood, another essential fluid. But a little of it goes a long way:

... it took him aa his time tae pit this wee bottle tae his mooth an he got a wee taste o it in his mooth. An his father was as good as gold. (A20)

and:

He was lyin there just aboot gaspin his last. So he gets the bottle quick an he just puts it tae his father's lips like that an the old man came back tae - he didnae get younger - but he turned as virile, an sittin up an gettin his claes on tae get oot o bed. (B20)

This is the magical cure we all wish for, instantaneous restoration, but as the story shows, it is hard to find, not easily won. The significant fact is that Silly Jack the despised youngest brother, as in "The Three Feathers" (I.4), succeeds where others fail, even with the worst weapon and the oldest horse, and shows he really is the cleverest. Travellers like this kind of story because it vindicates their own belief that they, scorned and downtrodden as they are, are always "ahead o the country folk."

Travellers also have a belief in Providence or fate, as is shown in "The Three Feathers" (I.4). The use of feathers to decide the directions in which the brothers are to pursue their quest, seems to suggest chance or luck. It is easy to at first think this means luck is a random thing. But the story strongly illustrates that there is nothing random about it: Jack was definitely meant to win, so his feather does not fall "down behind the castle" by accident.

There are many archetypal motifs in the stories, including living creatures who talk and places that correspond to areas of the subconscious. There are also motifs that transmit ancestral wisdom.

The speaking bird is an interesting and very popular motif in folk tales. It is found in other stories told by these informants. John Stewart is particularly fond of it along with other creatures who speak. It is found in "The Water of Life," in which it is the alternative shape of the wise old woman who gives Jack help in his quest. It also appears in AT720 "My Mother Slew Me, My Father Ate me," or "Aipplie and Orangie," as Sheila Macgregor calls it, learned from her aunt Jeannie Thompson, in which it represents the soul of the murdered child. In Willie MacPhee's story "Johnny Pay Me for my Story," Johnny is turned into a bird as a forfeit, for not being able to pay the old story teller. When he learns the secret of how to answer the old man, "I can't pay you, but maybe God'll pay you," he wins the ability to turn himself into a hawk, a salmon or a lion, whenever he wants. Viewed against the background of the travellers' life in the wild

places of the countryside, it can be seen that they live in close contact with living creatures whose habitat they shared, and a great deal of natural lore was passed on through many generations, thus illustrating the identification of the old woman and the little bird in "The Water of Life": ancestral wisdom and the spirit of nature.

"The Speaking Bird of Paradise" is John Stewart's version of AT707 "The Three Golden Sons," which John also calls "Cats, Dogs and Blocks." It is a story of dispossession, of dispossessed royalty, which for historical reasons is likely to have appeal for people in the Highlands, because of the Jacobite risings and the Clearances. This would be shared by the travellers, particularly the Stewarts, who claim some royal connection, "I come from a fine aristocratic family ... even some o the Royal line." (Brune, p.30)

Of course many travellers claim aristocratic or non-traveller connections, not always for historical reasons. First, it appears as a defence mechanism against the constant under-valuing travellers have had to endure since their original livelihood and status were rendered obsolete by historical change. Secondly, it can be seen as a means of appealing to the romantically-minded among the settled community (and this could include folklorists) to win their approval and interest, to enhance the public image of the tinker, or at least of one particular family. Claiming non-traveller connections may also be an expression of a secret desire, not to be openly avowed, to be part of

the settled community, to be treated with respect and to escape the pressures of constant travelling and hardship.

The Sleepy Glen in this story is an interesting and significant motif and a powerful psychological symbol. The actual image of the boulder-strewn glen that the traveller must toil up, fighting against weariness, is taken from the landscape of Perthshire which has innumerable glens of this kind, with which John and his family were familiar all their lives and where they earned their living. Belle's mother hawked all over Glenshee and John describes how his father, "... would go oot up aa these glens aa round Strathbraan an up by Pitlochry." (Douglas 26A3)

Later on, old John Stewart took films to all the village halls up the glens. All of his children were born in or near the glens, so the kind of surroundings described in John's story would be so familiar to him and his sisters and brothers that one could say that the picture was one that was always in their minds. It is but a short step from that to seeing the glen in terms of a mental landscape, even the collective unconsciousness of a people.

The image of a glen is one always associated with Scotland and could be described as part of the Scottish identity. This fact has been part of the basis of the absurd caricature of Scotland that has come to be accepted even by Scots as the true picture. Nevertheless,

viewed apart from the "tartan and heather" image, there is a connection with reality in that the glen is a characteristically Scottish type of landscape. Hamish Henderson makes use of this image in his poetry:

For there's mair nor a roch wind blawin
Through the great glen o the warld the day.
(Freedom Come-all-ye) 5

The image of the glen and the theme of dispossession come very near the heart of the Scottish consciousness of the past. The strength of feeling about the land and its history is shown by the savagery of the retribution visited on the wicked housekeepers, those within the kingdom itself who act treacherously and do it most harm.

In "The Speaking Bird of Paradise" the bird is the revealer of truth and has to be sought after with great persistence, as can be seen from the fact that such a long train of seekers are released from enchantment at the end of the search, when the dispossessed prince manages to circumvent all the dangers of the glen. Imprisoned in a golden cage and guarded by lions, even a bird is helpless and only man can rescue it from its captivity. This is an illustration of how the great and powerful can put the truth out of the reach of ordinary people. The traveller must have felt the frustration of this thousands of times in his history, particularly when the truth about himself has been kept from being seen by those who spread lies about him or publicise his faults. But the story also shows him how this situation can be overcome: he must shake off the lethargy that the struggle up the Sleepy Glen of oppression has put on him, brave the

lions and let the truth be revealed: that is the message from his ancestors to all oppressed people.

The underground place where Jack encounters the frog also has psychological significance. It is not really a geographical location, but represents the subconscious mind of the travellers, where there reposes the accumulated folk memories, ancestral wisdom and skill, the dreams, that in the travellers' life take the place of education. One is reminded of the house with four floors that Jung dreamed about and interpreted as four different levels of his historical unconscious.⁶ The frog, a symbol of primitive and instinctive life, is surely telling Jack to obey his deepest instincts and not rush out on a world wide quest for wealth and fortune, not, in modern parlance, to join the rat race. The one the others thought good-for-nothing actually has great potential within him, that is realised when the occasion calls it forth, like the stone in the Bible which the builders rejected becoming the cornerstone, a symbol of Christ, or like Prince Hal in Shakespeare's "Henry V":

So when this loose behaviour I throw off
And pay the debt I never promised,
By how much better than my word I am
By so much shall I falsify men's hopes;
And like bright metal on a sullen ground
My reformation glittering o'er my faults,
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
I'll so offend to make offence a skill,
Redeeming time when men think least I will.⁷

Bruno Bettelheim in The Uses of Enchantment also interprets the underground place as "the unconscious mind," of Jack, or as he calls him, the Dummy:

Going down into the darkness of the earth is a descent into the Netherworld. Dummy undertakes the voyage into the interior, while his two brothers roam around on the surface. It does not seem too far-fetched to view this as a tale of Dummy embarking on exploring his unconscious mind ... what enables him to win out is his reliance on his animal nature, the simple and primitive forces within us.⁸

This story teaches the traveller that to realise his potential, he should recognise his place in the natural world and the value of natural powers.

"The Three Dogs" (I.1) AT300, which the Stewarts tell without the dragonslayer story but along with AT315 "The Faithless Sister," must have a different meaning for these story tellers than for those in the rest of Europe. There are plenty of tales in their repertory about unlikely heroes who perform wonders and win princesses, but the interest of this story does not seem to lie in that direction. If one considers the names of the marvellous dogs, the possible identity of the "man on the road," the significance of the disenchantment of the dogs at the end of the story and the fact that in the Gaelic version they have "srang uaine" or green strings, then one begins to get a different picture.

The three dogs were called Swift, Knowall and Able:

There never was a rabbit or a hare took the hill that Swift couldn't catch ... If a rabbit or a hare ... goes intae a dyke ... he [Able] can just knock it doon ... Knowall knows where every rabbit or beast ... lies. When he gets the scent ... he can just whip the other two furrit ... (A4, A6, A8)

They are the embodiments of speed and skill and strength, three qualities very necessary for survival in the natural world, and in the wild country inhabited by the hero in the story and by the Gaelic and traveller story tellers. This world is reflected in the carvings on the Pictish stones at Meigle in Perthshire, where men on horseback hunt with dogs that, even in stone, seem to embody the very qualities mentioned here.

The dogs are certainly worth more than the money he would have got for his cows at the market. This seems designed to suggest that very often money is not the most necessary means of survival but that natural resources and capacities are more useful. The green strings in the Gaelic version connect the dogs and the mysterious donor with the world of nature and magic, perhaps with the Green Man who is such a well known figure in folk tradition, with pagan religion and with supernatural power. This story must be of great age and reflects a society in which people hunted for their food and did not have much use for money, like the Gaels who told "Tri Coin" and the travellers who told "The Three Dogs." When at the end of the story the three dogs become disenchanted, the young man discovers they are his long lost brothers, though they had not been mentioned previously:

They were lyin in the corner. "Here we are, master. But we can't come, we've no heart's blood."

He says, "There's your heart's bluid." Every one o them knows their own. So he took out his handkerchief and spread it out on the floor an each lifted their own heart's bluid.

"Now," says this lady, she says, "that's wir enchantment broken," she says. He lookit roon an there was three boys, three young men. The dogs is three lovely young men. He says, "That's my three brothers an this is my foster mother." (I.1)

The hero showed no sign earlier that he knew he had three brothers, in fact he seems to have known very little. The story seems to illustrate the growth of self-awareness and the discovery of values that will enable him to survive in the world. This is the purpose of a great deal of education, so it can be seen by this story why travellers regard their oral culture as just that. The faithless sister personifies wrong and destructive values, values that are not helpful in survival. She goes against the laws of kinship and she has a selfish and materialistic outlook which is shown to be self-eliminating. Her brother's experience, on the other hand, leads him to a right understanding of his place in the scheme of things and the kind of faculties he should cultivate. In Bella's version the sister could be said to personify the settled community whose values are based on money and possessions, while her brother discovers that the travellers' attitude to living and to living creatures is best. It is easy to understand now why there is not a place in the story for knight errantry: because the emphasis of the story is not on heroism, but on survival.

Another way in which travellers learned to survive was by quick-wittedness, and again and again this recurs as the means of resolving the plight of the hero in the wonder tales. In "Friday, Saturday" (I.2) the two brothers come under the influence of a witch who seems to be able to control their lives until Saturday anticipates her purpose when she offers him three hairs to tie up his horse, his hound and his hawk. He takes them but does not use them and thus his creatures are able to help him when she attacks him. Quick-witted-



Willie MacPhee
storyteller
singer
and
musician.



ness, helped by the forces of nature, represented by the animals, foil the witch's evil power.

When we consider "The Miller's Four Sons," Willie MacPhee's version of AT653 "The Four Skilful Brothers," we find it to be a story of the acquisition and use of various skills by four brothers who of necessity go out into the world to "push their fortunes," very much in the same way that Willie had to do when he was young:

... My father was 39 when he died ... I was eleven years old ... I learned to do everything. Of course I had to learn for there was naeboddy there fur tae act as a bodyguard for ma mother. I was the oldest o the family so - ony wee charge that had tae be done, I was the one that had tae dae it. An of coorse I learned tae make baskets ... I was a blacksmith for two years ... (Douglas videotape)

The four brothers set out in four different directions from a cross-roads where they meet up again a year later, thus creating the impression that, rather than four separate individuals, they together make up a kind of fourfold unity. The four brothers learned four very different skills: one became a stargazer, which seems to mean some kind of seer; another became a thief; a third an archer; and the fourth a tailor. These represent four different kinds of cleverness, not only necessary to the traveller, but also traditionally associated with him. Knowledge of the supernatural is something the traveller has always been credited with and tinker women have supplemented their income for generations with fortune telling from the hand, cards, tea-leaves or the crystal ball. The second sight is also a traditional belief in the Highlands and omens and signs still affect the thinking of many travellers. As regards stealing or "choring," often called "slummering" in Perthshire cant, the travellers, because they have no

highly developed sense of property, do not share the settled community's attitude to thieving. To "moolie the gannies," (as in the song "Jimmy Drummond") is not looked on as a heinous crime and most tinker thieving was never on a larger scale than that, and at one time would have seemed insignificant against the background of plundering and cattle lifting the Highland clans practised against one another. One gets the impression that the ability to carry out such operations with quick wittedness and fast action was definitely admired. Keen sight and a strong arm such as were needed for archery are also important to the traveller who has always hunted for his food. Willie MacPhee can spot a fox sidling along a hedge several hundred yards away and earned himself the nickname of the Blacksmith, not just because he once worked as one, but for his great physical strength in his younger days. Manual dexterity is obviously a quality valued by the traveller and one without which he could not have survived as an armourer, a metal worker, a tinsmith or a maker of ornaments, baskets or horn ware. The tailor in the story can sew together anything so well that the stitches do not show and it is not evident how the result has been achieved. This was how the tinker's work appeared to the uninitiated - perhaps one reason for magical powers being attributed to him - and like all craftsmen he held to his "mystery."

A Lewis tale that goes back to the seventeenth century described how Tormod McUrchy, a warrior of great note, was given a pot of silver that had been dug up. He had noticed how a wandering tinker melted metal with his portable bellows and anvil, and he was able himself to melt down the silver. But he could not make into anything. So when the tinker next came round, he asked him to show him how to work the silver. The tinker said he would do so if Tormod gave him a sixpence each time he saw his face. Tormod accordingly gave him a sixpence and the tinker made off with the silver and never returned to claim another coin.⁹

Isabel Grant also points out, "The tinkers were also the makers of horn spoons ... The making of spoons in this way was the tinkers' secret."¹⁰ In the old days craft guilds safeguarded the secret skills of masons, millers, glovers and smiths. Even in more modern times The Horseman's Word, a secret society of ploughmen, flourished in rural areas of Scotland in the bothy times. Secret knowledge and the power of the word have both played their part in the survival of the travellers.

Most of the stories told by my informants were created "not in my time, nor in your time, but in somebody's time" ("King of the Black Art" (I.3)A), so it was a rare and exciting experience to be present when a story was made up by John Stewart.

"The White Stag" (II.17) uses the same motifs as the other wonder tales - the unlikely hero, the grateful animal that helps him, the old man in the remote cottage who gives him advice, magic objects, a quest for a lost princess, a black king. At the same time, the story is quite different from all the others, because of the story teller's skill. The confident way in which John Stewart used these motifs, never losing sight of the constant elements in the story, while embellishing it with a variety of imaginative devices, shows that he realised, albeit intuitively, their psychological meaning and purpose. He is at home with these symbols, having been given them through his parents' story telling as part of his childhood, and having used them in story telling to his own family. But it is clear they have not

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repository of such motifs, many older than history, which he understands perfectly, and which he shakes like pieces in a kaleidoscope into new patterns and relationships, in which their symbolic meaning is put to use. He seems to do this through the working of instinct, rather than by any reasoned thought process, for when he does try to explain his method, he over-simplifies it, as if he were unaware of the complexities of it:

I just continue on, on my story, but I'd be making it up as I went along. But you'd be interested listenin to it ... [One] could make other bits up to put in. (Douglas 7B1)

This suggests that the symbols come from his unconscious and find their way into his stories by processes of which he himself is not aware.

"The Cockatrice" (II.16) is a story of a boy who was born deformed because his father offended a witch, who made it possible for his wife to bear a child. The witch puts a curse on the child in revenge, and he is "a crupach" with a club foot and only one eye. The boy goes on a long quest "to the Back o Beyond where the Devil fooled the fiddler," to find the witch and break the spell. On his journey, he trespasses on the territory of cockatrices who imprison him in their den, from which he escapes with a cockatrice's egg in his pocket. This hatches out into the helpful creature who aids him in his task and ultimately destroys the witch. The cockatrice's cave is the equivalent of the underground place in "The Three Feathers," and represents Jack's unconscious. This leads to the assumption that the cockatrice itself, that most unusual of helpful animals, and possibly a phallic symbol, represents Jack's potential, what is within him that

only needs the right circumstances to bring to birth. As the cockatrice grows, Jack's quest goes forward ever more positively and the creature is directly involved in the denouement, after which Jack is "standin tall, there was no humph and he could see with his two eyes." (II.16)

This story gains meaning from being looked at in the context of John's own life, since he has a Down's Syndrome son, Bennie, loved and cared for by his mother and father for forty eight years. They have always treated him as one of the family, never thinking of putting him in an institution, and in fact they attribute special powers to him, like a phenomenal memory and second sight. By following the natural parental instinct to love and cherish, they have helped Bennie to realise his full potential and live a great deal longer than most Down's Syndrome people. Bennie always listens to his father's stories and whether he fully understands them or not, he certainly seems to enjoy them, laughing and shouting or clapping his hands in imitation of his father.

John's story of the "The Little Herdsman and the Master Bull" (II.18) was made up to demonstrate how he used to make up stories for his children when they were young. The three girls in the story are named Patsy and Margaret, after his daughters, and Sheila, after me. Patsy and Margaret have the gifts of song and of language, while Sheila has the more mundane gift of being a wonderful knitter. Even in this small detail, John seems to be making a distinction between

traveller and flattie, even as a sly kind of joke, or not even consciously done at all, just an instinctive choice.

Cattle stealing relates directly to Highland history and Celtic tradition and this is reflected in the story, as Patsy recalls, "... always been arguin and fightin an illimosity between ... the two clans." (II.18) The theft of the cattle is not treated as in Gaelic story as something to boast about, a means of gloating over a rival clan, but as a wrong to be righted if the cattle are to thrive, and the clan is to prosper. The king who has stolen the cattle is not portrayed as a hero, but as a greedy and materialistic man, interested only in his possessions and ignorant of the value of his three gifted daughters. The little herdsman who was cattle man to the king from whom the herd was stolen, as well as to the king who stole them, is as we have said a rather contradictory character, perhaps because he is a practitioner of the black art who, like the King of the Black Art himself, in AT325, seems to act arbitrarily, and at first seems out to help the boy who becomes his apprentice, then becomes his adversary. This is all designed to help the boy to grow up and realise his potential, "a symbol of a transcendence of a state of immaturity." The same could apply to the little herdsman and the three princesses.

These three stories of John's own composition, using traditional materials, but bearing the hallmark of a skilled story teller, fulfil the same purposes as the rest of the wonder tales and it therefore seems justifiable to include them under the same heading.

"The Ramshorn" (II.15), which John says he got from his father, but which has not been recorded from any other member of the family, is probably largely John's own creation. It concerns a poor farmer and his family, forced to go on the road because of famine. After overcoming dangers and difficulties through a mixture of resourcefulness and luck, he disenchants a prince who has been transformed into a brown hare and who directs him to a mountain where he can capture the ram whose horn is full of treasure. According to John's family history, or one version of it, at least, his forebears were farmers who went on the road at the time of the Clearances. That this may be echoed in the story is borne out by the fact that, once on the road, the farmer and his wife live very much like travellers in their struggle for existence:

If he couldnae get a pheasant, he always got a rabbit or two. The woman wad boil them wi some tatties an turnips an things tae keep them all going. (II.15)

When there were only potatoes to eat, the woman cooked them and mixed them with sheep fat from "braxie cannles," a dish John had to eat no doubt, on occasions, himself. How often in the times when he and his family lived in such conditions of hardship, must they have wished for a magical horn of plenty to transform their life. The psychological basis of this story could not be clearer.

An interesting motif in the story, which is also associated with John's experience of poverty, is that of the Devil's mill, that grinds the possessions of the rich to dust. John admitted that this motif was not in his father's version of the story, but that he had seen it in a book on the day when he was reconstructing the story, and includ-

ed it because it seemed to fit in. When the poor farmer in the story captures the ramshorn and becomes rich, he is protected against the Devil's power by a magic stone, which he found in his turnip field and used to disenchant the prince and then gave it to him. John's inclusion of the Devil's mill in what is basically a rags-to-riches story, seems to me to be an expression of a very deep-rooted feeling travellers have about wealth. They are not averse to making money and spending it - in fact, that is the only use they have for it - but at the same time, they do not consider money all-important. One of the reasons they despise the settled population is because it is thirled to the acquisition of wealth and possessions and the status they bestow, making its values almost entirely materialistic. The Devil's mill is a warning against materialism.

At the end of the story John describes how the man who found the ramshorn set himself up in a jewellery business, which he suggests - perhaps facetiously - was the start of "Samuel's the big jeweller," a well-known present day chain of jewellery shops. Keeping in mind the Devil's mill, this adds an ambivalent quality to the end of the story - is it a happy ending or not? Like a jewel with different facets, it seems to reflect different ideas, depending on the angle from which you look at it.

"The Jam Maker" or "Grasp the Blue Light" (II.14) was told in John's family and could well have circulated round the camp fires of the berry fields of Blairgowrie and district during the berry picking

season, when travellers forgather there in great numbers, not just to obtain casual work but to meet up with friends and relations. Many songs were sung and stories told and when Hamish Henderson came upon the scene with his tape recorder he described it as like standing underneath Niagara Falls with an egg-cup. Belle and Alec Stewart and their family have always been connected with the berry fields: Belle learned to walk among the raspberry canes, her brothers had their own berries, and Belle and Alec themselves had a berry field that was the subject of a court case regarding travellers' camping conditions. Belle's song about "The Berryfields o Blair," led to their "discovery" in the early days of the Folk Revival, and it was at the berry picking that John Stewart met his wife Maggie. Even yet, there is scarcely a member of the family, man, woman or child, who does not pick berries in the month of July.

✓ The Jam Maker's origins and occupation, however, seem to have very little to do with the rest of the story, apart from providing a link with the familiar berry field setting. The Jam Maker was not a traveller but "an all-round gardener and fruit man" (II.14). The rest of the story takes him to China, where he hopes to better his lot. There is nothing specifically Chinese about the setting, which suggests it was chosen to represent any exotic, faraway place, and is recognisably the Otherworld that features in so many wonder tales. This is confirmed by the fact that the rest of the Jam Maker's adventures arise not from fruit growing or jam making, but from nightly dream experiences of chasing a blue light that always eludes his grasp. He awakens in the morning exhausted and out of breath, until

he begins to fear that "if I don't get out of here, I'm goin tae be found dead" (II.14). Then one night the dream leads him to an old palace "like an old Chinese monastery place, wi big long stairs goin up," and he enters a hall full of people dancing, "courtiers, ladies and nobles" (II.14). When he starts to dance with a beautiful girl, the Devil enters on a black stallion with the blue light between its hooves. He rushes to grasp the light and must have succeeded, because the result is that the palace and the princess, held under a spell, are disenchanted and the conventional happy ending ensues.

The ending of the story really underlines the triumph of the unlikely hero, who awakens in his usual state of disarray, after his dream:

... wrastlin in bed wi the pillaes, half-roads oot the bed and aa the bed clothes an everything on the floor, an he's lyin pantin. (II.14)

Flunkeys come to the door, address him as "Your majesty," dress him in, "a whole prince's regalia," and conduct him with a guard of honour to the palace. "Look, there's some mistake made. I'm the man from the gardener's cottage," he says," but the princess replies, "You're the man last night that grasped the blue light and broke the enchantment" (II.14).

"Jack and the Seven Enchanted Islands" (II.13), which John got from his father, turns out to be a version of the 9th century Irish immram or voyage tale called "The Voyage of Mael Duin."¹² John's

father heard it from a Donegal story teller called Mosie Wray in the 1920s during the family's time in Ireland, when John was an adolescent. John's father told it as a Jack tale and it is a tribute to John's marvellous memory and also to his love of story telling that he remembered the story in such vivid detail, for something like fifty years. In the original story of a young man's quest to find his father's murderers, there were over thirty islands, but John's version incorporates the seven most interesting and with most symbolism attached to them. I explained the reasons for this in my article in Scottish Studies, 1980, "A Scots Folk Version of the Voyage of Mael Duin" which I now quote:

One reason for the selective nature of John's version could be, as experience has shown me, that the Perthshire travellers have a preference, whether conscious or unconscious, for tales that lend themselves to a useful psychological interpretation and function. This is clear when one views the content of their stories in the context of their lives. The descriptions of islands John includes in his version of Mael Duin are not just weird fantasies, but are full of symbolic features, whose interpretation has a bearing on the life of travellers and on human life generally.

To begin with, the hero is Jack, a character with whom the traveller likes to identify himself: the man of humble or mysterious origins, sometimes the despised young brother, who must go on a journey or attempt some difficult task, to prove himself. The driving force behind this is usually family loyalty, which among the travellers is of paramount importance. The druid here is like the old man in the wood, who gives advice and help to the wanderer, another common character in travellers' tales and an archetypal figure in folk tales generally.

The first island in John's story, the island of the queen and her daughters, shows a symbolic picture of the power of erotic love - the golden thread - which irresistibly holds the wanderers from their quest. The richly dressed people on the island ringed with fire represent a way of life inaccessible to travellers. The green island paradise is a popular Celtic vision. In John's version, he identifies the great bird, a common symbol for the soul, with the old man in the church, who stands for wisdom and spiritual power. The monster whose friendly appearance changes as they move away can be taken as a warning not to be tricked into risky encounters - good advice, on the road. The palace with the crystal bridge and the princess represents a more roman-

tic kind of love, although there is sexual symbolism in the well from which Jack wants to draw water. The whole thing vanishes like a dream. The old hermit on the rock represents the wisdom of age and experience, or the widsom of ancestors, greatly respected by travellers.

Viewed in this way, the various episodes of the tale all appear to contain something of symbolic value that makes the story not only an entertainment, but also a source of wisdom. Following the usual wonder tale pattern, John rejects the Christian ending imposed on the story by the original scribe, who must have been a monk. In this he was probably being truer to the original sources of the story, which must have been among oral tales in circulation on the West coast or Ireland, perhaps for hundreds of years, among people who looked out upon the Atlantic Ocean and who suffered Viking raids, "fierce invaders" who killed and pillaged. They would not have told such stories with endings in which heroes like Mael Duin would forgive his father's murderers. John is also less interested in vengeance than in seeing to it that Jack gets the princess and the green paradise island to dwell on, after being revived by the fruit on the branch carried by the great bird, who also carried him to his island and brings him his princess.

Certain of the stories appear to deal with the darker side of traveller life: the rejection they suffer at the hands of the settled community, and the dangers they face from outsiders. These themes are dealt with in a way designed to help the travellers to cope with and overcome the fear and unhappiness such situations engender.

"Mistress Bumbee" (II.1), is the Stewart version of AT280A "The Ant and the Lazy Cricket." This presents an interesting modification in that the Stewart version turns the story round, and whereas in the traditional version it is the ant who triumphs, in the Stewart version Mistress Bumbee wins the moral victory against the ant or pishmool.

"Do you mind," she says, "when ye telt me tae go an get - where I made ma summer's honey, tae go an get ma winter's quarters? Well," she says, "you've got it noo" ... an the next day her and the weans was oot on the top o the foggy dyke, looking doon at the King o the Pishmools gettin buried. (II.1)

The pishmool is portrayed as being greedy, mean and inhospitable, unconcerned about the bumbee's plight. The story is turned from a criticism of laziness to a criticism of inhospitality. In the traditional version, the ant is virtuous and diligent and the cricket's predicament is shown to be the result of its own irresponsibility. This form of the story has clearly no appeal for the traveller, since it obviously upholds the work ethic of the settled population. Mistress Bumbee personifies the traveller woman, concerned to keep her family fed and cared for, who turns in time of need to the King o the Pishmools, who could well afford to give her shelter and refreshment. To be turned away by him re-enacts the travellers' bitter experience of having doors shut in their faces by uncharitable householders. By reliving this experience through the story and vicariously feeling avenged by the triumph of Mistress Bumbee, travellers are showing that one of their uses of story telling is a psycho-therapeutic one. It is also a way of re-affirming traveller values and upholding the idea that the traveller because he knocks on doors is not therefore a feckless wanderer. Begging is usually done by traveller women, and

Mistress Bumbee is depicted as a caring and responsible mother with a contented family round her.

Sheila Macgregor's version of AT720 referred to as "Aipplie and Orangie" (I.6) in the family, was recorded at a children's song and story session at Edinburgh Folk Festival, 1979 and is told on a film shown on BBC Television, in which she is seen telling it to her little niece, Michelle Murphy, an intelligent and imaginative child who listens to it, wide-eyed and serious. Michelle has heard the story many times and none of the children who listened to it in Edinburgh were in the least upset by it. Yet an adult in Blairgowrie who saw the film complained to Sheila the next day that it was a terrible story to tell a child. On the face of it, this is true, yet the story has been a favourite down the ages in many countries and does not seem to have done generations of children any harm. The explanation lies in the important psychological function that the story has.

Many of the wonder tales told in Europe and elsewhere were not originally children's stories, but told by adults to adults and it is only in our literate and sophisticated modern society that they have been relegated to the nursery or swept away altogether. This story seems to be an exception to this rule, since it deals with the relationship between children and parents. On the other hand this may simply be a distancing device. Whether it is, in fact, an exception depends upon the function the story has among the people who tell it.

Stories with stepmothers are legion in folk tradition and the stepmother is almost invariably cruel and wicked. In real life attitudes to stepmothers are often coloured by children's feelings towards any person who tries to take their real mother's place, particularly if the real mother is dead. To many people a stepmother is unacceptable and therefore whatever she does is wrong: evil motives are attributed to her as an expression of resentment that cannot be shown in any other way, since the father has chosen to marry her and install her in the family home.

What we are dealing with is an outlet for socially inadmissible feelings and these are not confined to children. This story with its savage and unnatural stepmother who kills her stepdaughter for breaking a prized jug, and its equally savage revenge, is a fantasy intended to help people come to terms with their own emotions. Telling it as a children's story helps to distance it from themselves, so that a better perspective is gained and the emotions can be got under control. This is a process the human mind often initiates as a mode of self-defence. My son who could not cope with the terror aroused in him by the film "Jaws" bought himself a plastic toy shark to play with in his bath. This is basically the same technique. When Ewan MacColl questioned Alec Stewart in the television film about the propriety of introducing modern elements like "a shop in Perth" into the narrative, Alec's reply was, "It's only a bairn's story." It is an important part of the function of this story that it is thought of in this way, so that the stepmother hatred expressed in it can be pardoned as one would pardon a child who does not know any better, but whose feelings

can be understood. Among Scottish children generally, most of them will have heard one or other parent say to them, "If you do that, I'll murder you," and know that is just a manner of speaking that is never put into practice. What happens in real life and what happens in stories can differ in this respect that the story is often based on the idea of "What if ...?"

What if Aipplie's stepmother really killed her? The violence is imagined violence, imagined by a child who has no experience of it, so that, "killed," "chops her intae bits," "the big aix - pschow! Cuts the head clean aff the Mammy," do not carry the horror they would have for an adult, especially since the listening child is held safely in a loving adult's arms.

The dove is a common symbol for the human soul in folk tales and the motif of a bird or other creature that reveals the truth about a murder is found in both folk tales and ballads. The dove is also a symbol of love and peace and this is also important in this story, in which Aipplie triumphs over death and rises again to express her love for her father and sister as well as taking revenge on her stepmother. Orangie's love for Aipplie is also shown in the way she weeps and hides Aipplie's bones under a pile of stones. Aipplie's father also shows his love for Aipplie in his reaction to finding her finger with the ring on it in the soup and his grief and horror at her death, "Aw! He's goin mad!" (A5)

It seems puzzling at first that the father does not avenge his daughter's death in some way or drive out the murderess. In Grimm's version,¹³ the father is told that the son has gone away to visit an uncle, so the murder is not discovered till the bird reveals it. This might indicate a faulty telling of the story on the part of Sheila Macgregor. It is more likely that the reason for telling the story in this way is to avoid the idea of the father killing the mother, which to travellers would not be in accord with the idea that stories are meant to educate their family. It could also be that they are trying to show that vengeance must come from elsewhere - from God or from the supernatural. The making of the soup and the discovery of the finger in it are such dramatic parts of the story and Sheila did not invent them that it suggests this is the usual version of the story in Scotland or among Scottish travellers. This is borne out by the fact that the other version of the story collected from a Scottish traveller Jimmy MacPhee, tells this episode as follows:

So her Mammy kilt her and baked her in a pie ...

... So she gives the man his dinner, an when he eats hauf-way through the pie, he sees this finger in it, an it had a silver ring on it an he looks an says, "Why! This is my daughter's ring," he says. "What did ye do tae her?" She says, "Well, I told her that if she broke my jug, I wad kill her, so I've killed her." "Now," he says, "look at what ye've went an done." Says, "I've a good mind to kill you." Says, "No," he says, "I'll let ye live."¹⁴

Revenge is important in the story but also important is the fact that it is Aipplie who takes the revenge, dead Aipplie in the shape of her dove-soul. This inevitably suggests that this is how it should be. This is a very important point if one views it in the context of the travellers' history, in which almost all the murders committed by travellers have been of other travellers, because of family feuds.

Belle's grandfather was killed by the Townsleys because he would not sell his yoke (Brune, pp.1-4) and Alec's grandfather was murdered by Irish navvies for playing "The Boyne Water" on his pipes at their request (Douglas 1A2). Most of these Irishmen would be travellers also. In those days tinkers had little recourse to the law, as the police were inclined to arrest them only for crimes against the settled community. Even in Belle's grandfather's case, when the Townsleys were taken to court, they had grown-up sons to swear that their father acted in self defence, while Donald Stewart's children were too young to give evidence. Travellers therefore tend to take their own vengeance which would have the effect of perpetuating the feud, just like the old clan quarrels that used to exist. In this way the travellers show one more resemblance to the people who used to inhabit the Highlands and if no other means was available, they would cherish the idea of a ghost coming back to effect a suitable revenge. The nearest thing to a murder that has happened in the Stewart family in the present day was when Belle's son-in-law Jimmy Higgins, Cathy's husband, was knocked down by another traveller called Macdonald as he was leaving his local pub in Blairgowrie and was so severely injured that he was unconscious for several days and is still suffering the after effects.

No corpus of stories in the travellers' repertory deals more clearly with their fear of outsiders than the Barker stories. These tales of body snatchers arose from the Burke & Hare case in 1827-29 which struck terror into more than the travellers, but which provided a focus and a means of expression for fears that the travellers had had for a long time previously, and still have even today.

Burker stories tend to follow a pattern, a fact that must have some significance. First of all the setting is described and the situation of the people involved is highlighted:

... my father and my uncle and his brother, they were hawkin round about a district ... (Alec - (II.53))

... my great-great-grandfather and his wife and their family and that, they were looking for a camp, and they went intae this wood. (Alec - (II.54)A)

"Now," he says, my father says, "this is the Bogle Brig." (Alec - (II.55))

My mother was a wee lassie ... an ma mother's mother, Belle Reid, she was six foot in her stockin feet ... ma mother's uncle Rob was wi them. Now the Big Dummy she had tae be ... cairried in a chair 'cause she couldnae walk, ye see ... An they went away up - they come on this road an on this road an they were gaun up tae a wud they kent ... (John - (II.54)B)

When I was between four or five years of age, we were at a place not far from Perth here - Glenalmond ... And we were staying in the bell-tent, just at the side of the road. (Cissie - Douglas 1974 tape)

My grandfather was John Stewart ... He told me a farmer put him into this barn and told him he could sleep in the barn till the following morning. (John Jun. - Douglas 1974 tape)

... this is only up the road there at Moneydie a place they call Whitehills ... I would be nine years of age at the time and as you know most of the travelling people took contracts. This particular one was gathering wrack ... Now my father had taken this contract with this farmer ... it was Whitehills Farm. (Cissie - Douglas 1974 tape)

It's at Crieff that I hawkit ... and it was only a push-bike I had, ye see. An a wee new marquee tent, a wee new bowie. ... An I came tae this place in Bridgend o Crieff an it was the backend o the year, maybe the end o October. ... It was the tattie time. An I put up this new tent ... (Willie - Douglas videotape)

When I was a young boy, my father was a tinsmith and he had orders tae go to the country. So he sent me and a sister and a niece of mine's out with this orders. ... An we travelled on tae it was dark. ... We couldnae manage home, for it was about twelve or fourteen miles from home. An I said, "We'll go to this farm here, and we'll maybe get ludgins to lie in the bar aa nicht." (John Sen. - SA 1955/17)

The pattern of the telling of the story creates a pattern of responses in the listeners. The description of setting and situation helps the listener to imagine himself in the circumstances of the people in the story. In the case of the travellers these would have parallels in their own lives, and this is probably why only a few evocative details are given. "Hawking round about a district" or "looking for a camp" indicated that they were peaceably pursuing their lifestyle and occupations and were not looking for trouble. This engages the sympathy of the listener and helps to accentuate the horror of what follows.

Then mention is made of the threat from the Burkers, which creates a feeling of apprehensiveness:

"We'll have to get intae some o the farms," he says, "because it'll soon be time for the Burkers." (Alec - II.53)

Approaching darkness was enough to trigger off this fear of those who operated under cover of the night. Sometimes the camping place seems ill-chosen when the coming of the Burkers is considered:

"Listen, ye shouldhae went farther back intae the wood, because if the Burkers comes an sees that wee tent here," he says, "we're done for." (Alec - II.54 A)

Some individuals even sense the imminence of the threat in a physical way:

I've got a burr itchin at the back o ma heid, ma neck ... I think they're gonnae be here the night. (Alec - II.54 A)

This is no joke, no laughing matter and children who think it is, are sternly told otherwise.

"This is where the Burkers is." An I started tae laugh at him [Alec's father]. He said, "Ye neednae laugh. Get doon in the bottom o the cairt and lie quiet." (Alec - II.55)

John emphasises how the fear of Burkers was general among travellers, "They were at that time always wary of Burkers ..." (John - Douglas 15). John's son John, telling his grandfather's story also underlines how quickly travellers sense when everything was not as it should be:

But there was something very dubious about the whole affair [being allowed to sleep in the barn] and being travelling people there was something in it that made him dubious. (John Jun. - Douglas 1974 Tape)

Sometimes there were clearer indications of danger as Cissie relates about the farm her father took a contract on near Moneydie:

Now my father, he was very suspicious about this farmer and what made him suspicious was that there was a woman who arrived the very day my father arrived, with a wee girl, as a housekeeper - and within two days, neither the housekeeper or the wee girl was ever seen again. (Cissie - Douglas 1974 Tape)

Old John Stewart also finds himself lodged in very ominous circumstances:

... An he took us and put us intae a turnip shed an aa deep snow on the ground ... I said, "Well, if I had plenty o straw, we'd manage fine."

"Oh ye'll need nae strae - straw," he said, "before morning" So he gaed oot an barred the door. (John Sen. - SA1955/17)

In each case something strikes a note of uneasiness and the listener is involved in the story by having this feeling transmitted to him.

Into this situation fraught with anxiety, the Burkers now manifest themselves the people involved being helpless victims, defenceless, "But they're just near the farm, when they hear this machine

comin." (Alec - II.53) Before they can reach a place of refuge they hear the approach of the Burker's coach. This was described as a black coach with muffled wheels driven by "noddies" or doctors in black cloaks and tall black hats.

Sometimes the victims had bedded down for the night and were quite off their guard when the coach was heard:

So they were lyin there as they were aa doverin asleep, you know, and they heard the machine comin in. (Alec - II.53)

The young Alec cowering at the bottom of his father's cart as they pass the Bogle Brig caught a glimpse of an actual Burker:

... just at the beginnin o the arch, there was, as I thought, a wumman, because he had his jacket off an it was a white shirt. (Alec - (II.55))

This evokes the idea of the doctor ready for action, poised to seize and dismember the unwary. In John's story the sharp eyes of his grandmother spots the first sign of the Burker's approach:

... Belle was standin at the fire an she looked don in the dark ... an she seen two peeps o light comin up through the wud ... Belle says, "There's a steejie binging." [There's a coach coming.] (John - II.54 B)

Cissie captures the drama of the moment when she was being abducted and her screams give the alarm:

... it was the weight of the jacket hanging on to my hair that made me scream and this lad they called Donald Whyte, he shouted to my father, "Oh Henry, there's somebody away with wee Isabel ..."(Cissie - Douglas 1974 tape)

John Jun. describes what his grandfather found in the barn he had felt so dubious about staying in:

... there was a barrel in the corner, a rain barrel. There was a lid on it and he was thirsty ... and he lifted up the top off the barrel and in there it was parts of human bodies. There was arms, there was legs, there was torsos. And it wasn't water that was in the barrel - it was vinegar. (John Jun. - Douglas 1974 tape)

Cissie's father went to waken the farmer in the morning by shouting up to his window and was fired on by a gun:

... but instead of walking away from the window ... he walked into the wall, which saved his life actually ... (Cissie - Douglas 1974 tape)

But he was not safe even then for the farmer then revealed himself even more obviously as a Barker:

So he's taken my father to this granary. ... "I've all these trunks here and I've clothes of every description. ... And when my father opened the trunks they were all bloodstained and ma father wouldn't touch them. (Cissie - Douglas 1974 tape)

Willie MacPhee's story of his experience at Crieff also has a striking impact, very simply achieved:

So I'm sleepin anyway. And I waukened up an felt this thing at ma feet. ... An I says, "Hoosh, get away wi ye" ... Two hands came right down below the blankets and right roon ma two ankles. ... An he pullt me oot through the door like that ... (Willie - videotape)

Old John Stewart describes how even when he and his sister and niece got out of the turnip shed, they did not feel they were clear of the Burkers:

... An when we were near hand the bridge, we seen the lantern oot and heard them talkin, an they said, "This is the marks o their feet amang the snaw. Cannae be far away." (John Sen. - SA1955/17)

The snow in the story was likely to lead the Burkers to their prey.

The listeners relive the terror of these experiences along with the story tellers. This is clearly very important in the telling of Burker stories and by the time this part of the story is reached, the whole company is in the grip of an irrational fear that disregards any absurdities and is absolutely certain that the Burkers' victims are in real danger.

In most of the stories the victims escape the bodysnatchers but only very narrowly sometimes by means of cleverness, sometimes with help from others, and always by great good fortune or chance. Alec's story of his father cutting off the Burker's dog's tail almost ranks as a tall story:

So he got the bread knife and he made another wee hole [in the straw] and he's lookin like this an he seen this dog passin an he catched it be the tail, cut the hale tail off it! And the dog's away owre the field, so the Burker says, "Ah they're away over there," he says. "Come on!" An they jumpit in the machine an they run away down the road. (Alec - II.53)

In the tale about his great-great-grandfather, Alec describes how the Burkers, who were young men, overpowered the older travellers and put the old woman in a sack and would have made off with her:

With the commotion that they're makin ... didn't the farmer wake up ... and fired two shots across their head and they droppit the bag and jumped on the machine and they're away. (Alec - (II.53))

Passing the Bogle Brig with the "noddies" at the ready, "... my father put the whip to the horse ...".(Alec - II.55)

John's version of the story about his mother's family, when they take refuge in the "mail hoose" describes how the Burkers drive off when shots are fired:

... the coach came right roond ... and right up tae the mail hoose. An these men ... wi lum hats an thon tippets or cloaks on them ... And now the man let his dog oot, the mail boy ... Noo the coach had a dog wi them an the two dogs started tae fight ... An the man at the toll hoose liftit the windae up an his gun oot an he says, "Call in your dog ... or I'll shoot it." ... An they wadnae so the man up wi the gun an shot the dog. An they got intae the coach an went away. (John - II.54 B)

Cissie's father and relatives rescued her in the nick of time:

My father and Donald Whyte and his brother Dave ... gave chase to the man ... and they were almost at him. When they were just about to put their hands on his shoulder he dropped me in a ditch full of water. My father stopped to pick me up and this lad Donald Whyte ran after him - but by that time he was away. (Cissie - Douglas 1974 tape)

It might be worth remarking that the Burkers, as well as their victims, always got away.

John Jun. in the story of the rain barrel has an actual hand-to-hand combat between his grandfather and the farmer:

And when he tried to make out of the barn, the farmer met him wi a knife and he had to fight his way out, and he ran from there to wherever he was staying. (John Jun. - Douglas 1974 tape)

Cissie's father who, in her own words, "was not a frightened man," also faces the farmer with a demand for wages and for some explanation of the strange things that have happened:

He came in (from the fields) and ... he packed up all our belongings ... and we were ready for the road. And he went to the door. ... "Now Mr. Wilkie I want paid for my job."

"Oh yes, Mr. Macgregor," and he paid him for the job and my father there and then said to him, "These clothes you've got up in the granary, how the hell did ye get aa these clothes? And what happened to the housekeeper who came here, the same day as us, and has never been seen since?"

And he very casually turned round to my father and he said, "Look Mr. Macgregor, there are five brothers of us," he says, "and we are five doctors." (Cissie - Douglas 1974 tape)

This is a good example of a story containing several absurdities that hardly need pointing out but which is made to sound convincing because of the style of the story teller and the listeners' mood of heightened suggestibility brought about by stimulating feelings of fear. In Cissie we see very markedly the trickster element in the traveller character at work. It is worth setting alongside this story the fact that Cissie in the past few years has tried to convince relatives who have known her all her life, that she is actually ten years older than she thought she was.

Old John Stewart gives an account of what happens when travellers running from Burkers cannot find a safe place right away and suffer other indignities before they arrive at a place where they are known and can get protection. It has to be borne in mind that he was speaking about a time when he and his sister were little more than children:

... an we come tae a place they caa the Cock Law an there's twelve little crofts aa in a line ... an when we gaed intae the first wan there was two young men and one o them had a light small axe ... an he was gonnae hit me ... they got a haud o my niece by the skirt an they tore the very skirt off her ... (John Sen. - SA1955/17)

Even when they encounter a kindly woman in a small village shop, she urges them to keep on the road, which they do till they reach a farm where the farmer recognises them:

... an a farmer was up in the high window. ... I said, "I'm Stewart's laddie." ... well then he came doon and I gied the man the crack [told him my story]. "Well," he says, "I'll pit ye where naebody'll get ye. ... I'll be oot an gie them an ounce o leid in their backside." (John Sen. - SA1955/17)

For the farmer to protect the traveller is of course in keeping with what we know from the family history was the attitude of Perthshire farmers to tinkers whom they knew like the present day one who talked to me of "oor traivellers."

The overwhelming feeling of both story teller and listeners at the end of a Barker story is one of relief. In almost every case the victims' escape by a hairsbreadth and the narrower the margin, the greater the sense of deliverance. To generations of travellers for whom Barkers symbolised all outsiders who threatened their existence, these stories obviously helped to give them a means of bringing their fear out into the open and controlling it in a group situation. The pattern of the story telling caused them to live through the kind of experience they dreaded, thereby defusing it of its terror.

Many Barker stories have a tail-piece that tells of the aftermath of the experience sometimes with a comment on it by the story teller or by someone in the story. When Alec's father shows the farmer the tail of the dog he has cut off thereby saving himself and his brother, the farmer says:

Gie me the tail ... and I'll notify the police. And any dog that's runnin about .. without a tail, the police'll know of it.
(Alec - II.53)

This sounds as if the police would take reports of body snatching seriously. The sequel to Alec's and John's mother's story is more horrific:

So they went back to their camp next mornin an the donkey was tied up with its two front feet like that [up high] and its inside was right oot - they cut right up wi a knife an its puddens was at its feet. An the camp was aa torn doon. The machine they had for the wee donkey, it was throwed away doon owre the back. (Alec - II.54 A)

So they traivelled away back up the way they had come doon and when they got up the camp was made in ribbons! Everything was knockit aboot the place and the donkey was tied up by the hind legs tae a branch and its stomach ripped and its puddens amang its feet. (John - II.54 B)

The close correspondance between the two versions particularly at this point serves to illustrate how indelibly their mother's telling of the story had imprinted itself upon their minds as children: even as grown men they were haunted by this image of the donkey strung up on the tree with "its puddens at its feet." This seems to suggest the boundless ruthlessness of the Burkers and the strength of their fear of them.

Cissie and John Jun. felt they had no recourse to justice, even though the whole community knew that travellers were often the victims of bodysnatchers:

John: You couldn't tell the police about it. It was impossible.

Cissie: When we came down to Bankfoot everyone knew about it. People in the Lodge knew about it. Everybody knew about it.

John: Being travelling people, it was common practice.

Cissie: It was common practice and that's not so very long ago.

John: It was common practice among travelling people, because travelling people moved here and moved there and there was no records of where they had been to or where they went to. No record of where they came from. Travelling people moved anywhere and everywhere. They moved where they could make a shilling and if they didn't make a shilling here, they moved on to the next place. (Douglas 1974 tape)

At the end of the Glenalmond story Cissie says, "... we knew it was a doctor from Trinity College at the time ..." (Douglas 1974 Tape)
The fact that Trinity College is a private school not a medical college shows how the fear of the Burkers, as well as extending to doctors, also extended to any seat of learning.

Belle emphasises the identification of Burkers with doctors when she comments on Alec's story about the Bogle Brig:

Ye mean the doctors. You're aye using the word "Burkers." Ye see, people listening tae that they'll no ken what that is. Bodysnatchers ... it jist seems like a personal name, which of course it was, Burke and Hare. (Belle - Douglas 1974 tape)

John Jun. also identifies Burkers with doctors when he says, "They'd want your body for experimental purposes." (Douglas 1974 tape)

Perhaps the most ghoulish character to emerge from the Burker stories of this group is that of Danny the Burker, the ultimate horror of the traveller who sells his own people's bodies to the doctors in the college at Aberdeen:

Alec: Danny the Burker!

Belle: Och aye, he got that name. He sold them. This man they caa Danny the Burker ... it was Danny Kelly. It was a regular thing for him to go up an get a couple o pound or three pound. At the time I'm talkin aboot - I only heard this - an it was telt where there were some lonely people, tinkers camped. He used tae go up tae the college an tell them.

Alec: An if they got them they gien him five pound, you know.

Belle: And if they did get their bodies, it was five pound, but he still got two pound for tellin them where the folk were camped. And that was the name they gave him - Danny the Burker.

Everybody was terrified of Danny the Burker. He's dead noo ... (II.56)

While it is certain that Danny the Burker was a real person, it would be impossible to verify any of the allegations made against him, which could be the products of the traveller imagination about someone with secret sources of money making. It may even be true that Danny the Burker encouraged other travellers to believe what was said about him; he may even have been the source of the tales; for this would have given him special status and power among his own people. It seems unlikely in the twentieth century that a reputable University's anatomy department would obtain bodies for dissection in this way. The story, in my opinion, is really like all the other Burker stories, significant as an expression of fear and not as authentic fact.

Having examined the Burker stories recorded from these informants in detail, it is possible to suggest reasons why they are still told in the present day. I think the traveller, settled or not, still has a distrust of outsiders, a fear that in the course of daily life in the modern world he has to hide. Hamish Henderson has suggested it

would not be too much of an exaggeration to call it a fear of genocide. Certainly there is a precedent for this in Hitler's Holocaust, and there are people to be heard daily saying in meetings reported in the press, that there is no place in modern society for these people. This kind of fear is too dangerous to repress so I believe the travellers with their sound psychological instincts, have continued to tell Burker stories as a means of expressing and controlling this fear in a way that is socially acceptable to them. The telling has a therapeutic function both for story teller and listener. The relief felt at the end of the story is not just for the people in the story but for themselves and the fact that they are still there safe and sound.

Although travellers are basically non-materialistic, they will accept whatever good fortune comes their way and enjoy it. If it is money, they spend it, usually on their family and friends, to make their social life brighter, but if they lose it, they do not become depressed or bitter. Because of their life style, they know that if they go out the next day and work, they will be solvent again. What they never do is save: not many tinkers have bank accounts, although many of them may possess large sums of money. They look on money as a means to an end, not an end in itself. Flatties or house-dwellers tend to have almost opposite attitudes.

"Geordie MacPhee," told by Andrew Stewart who, John says, made it up, is a tale in which the comic incongruities reveal a comparison of tinker and flattie values in a highly satirical way. It is a story of

"rags to riches and back again," and can be interpreted in two entirely different ways, depending on whether it is judged from the tinker or the flattie point of view. It must be said here that the story teller is clearly aware of both. To the flattie, it would appear as an illustration of how impossible it is for the incorrigibly feckless tinker to better himself, even when he has the means to do so. To the tinker it is an affirmation of those things he considers to be important in life: independence of spirit, bonds of kinship, generosity to others and lack of concern about material things - all, by the way, supposedly ancient Scottish virtues. Geordie MacPhee, who becomes very wealthy overnight by magical means, like Shaw's Alfred Doolittle, refuses to be intimidated into conforming with standards that appertain to his new station in life, but which are quite alien to him. "I'm no m'lord, I'm Geordie MacPhee," (A18, B18) he tells the sycophantic lawyer, who changes his attitude and manner towards Geordie, when he discovers him to be a man of substance.

Indeed the story is a satire on the country hantle's obsession with money and property, which leads them to judge men by what they possess rather than by what they are. It pokes fun at the idea that a rich man must eat, dress and live in a style that befits his social status, instead of how he pleases. The lawyer advises Geordie to get a tailor-made suit and he has to travel everywhere in a Rolls Royce. When he goes to collect his wife and children from the shelter of the derelict cottage where they were camping, he has to take a whole contingent of servants to dress and wait upon them, which terrifies his poor wife. Life gets more and more complicated. This sounds enough

to intimidate the most inveterate of travellers but Geordie's response is to allow his friends and relations to camp on his land, to double the servants' wages and to treat his chauffeur as an equal, offering him bottled beer when he is on duty, and insisting on walking when he feels like it.

In the story then, Geordie MacPhee retains tinker values and philosophy, caring for his wife and children, sharing his good fortune with his friends and not letting his new found wealth fill him with the kind of pride that characterises the country hantle. It is because of this that he is able to accept going back on the road when his store of gold runs out, without being too upset about it. If he had become a materialist, this would have seemed like the end of the world. John Stewart showed the same stoic acceptance of the vagaries of fortune when he refers to "the best deal ever I lost," - a load of scrap that had been an RAF target, lying on the beach at Montrose, worth an enormous amount of money but impossible to shift, eventually washed away by the sea. (II.75)

When the former laird and his lady visit Geordie the contrast between their values and standards and his is emphasised and we realise how much importance is attached to appearances by these two "respectable" people. Since Geordie has not given up his tinker ways, he probably seems dirty to them and such people always equate dirt with wickedness. They describe him as a "terrible" man yet he and his wife offer the visitors hospitality - tea, whisky and braxy ham - not just

out of a sense of duty or mere politeness, but with genuine friendliness. This is the sort of behaviour other tinkers would approve of and Geordie is doing absolutely the right thing, yet they repulse him and decline his invitation as if it were an insult. I am reminded of an occasion on which Sheila and Cathy, Belle's daughters, went up to Fortingall to visit the tent-dwelling Mackenzies, who are incredibly dirty but unfailingly courteous to strangers, and were given scones baked over an open fire and cooled on the ground. They could hardly bring themselves to eat them, so much had living in a house almost all their lives removed them from the life of their ancestors.

The story helps to show that the differences between tinker and country hantle have arisen because of the differences in their lifestyles and not because the tinkers are "dark strangers" from another culture. Geordie MacPhee's nomadic life has led him to attach less value to possessions, steady work and settled living and more to family and social life, kinship and hospitality because the former do not enhance his existence and the latter do.

Farnham Rehfisch's comments on tinker values and attitudes reinforce the points made by Geordie MacPhee's behaviour. While he points out "the flattie feels insecure and unhappy unless he is dressed up," especially for special occasions, the tinkers "do not recognise clothes as a symbol of social status," and among them, "money is not valued as such," but is simply something to be used. Social obligations are important and "a tinker should if possible help

a fellow member who is in need of either money or goods." Another social obligation is that of welcoming the stranger, which is a very old and deeply rooted Scottish custom. Rehfish also notes that:

... tinkers do not believe they can increase their social status either by working hard or by acquiring capital. As the acquisition of money and/or hard work is not one of the tinker's ideals, these two acts will not enhance a man's social position.¹⁵

Stories like Geordie MacPhee's seem not unheard of amongst tinkers, according to Rehfish's findings:

Most of the rich tinkers are said to have worked hard in their own lifetime but some are said to have acquired wealth by magical means ...

... In all the cases we were told of grandparents being wealthy in the past, the children rapidly spent their inheritance and themselves died poor men. Drink usually was given as a reason for this. Perhaps the off-spring of the rich merely went back to an acceptance of the tinker philosophy. Rather I think that being unable to obtain higher social status either inside or outside of the group because of their wealth and not feeling accepted persons outside their fraternity as social equals, they were forced to return to members of the fraternity, to enjoy social intercourse. To retain their place in the group and a standing possibly lost by their father, in view of his abandoning tinker values, they have been forced to be overly generous and in that way spent their inheritance.

Sometimes, stories are needed to allow expression for emotions or subjects not acceptable in everyday life.

"The Face" (II.19) is a trilogy of tales, skilfully dovetailed together in the same way as "Johnny Pay Me for my Story." It is told by both John and Alec in versions that correspond in most essentials. It deals with what is essentially a series of comic situations of the type that involve humiliation or embarrassment, being connected with nakedness and unseemliness, but with the main protagonist being the

innocent victim of circumstances. The story has a very Rabelaisian flavour about it that is typical of the humour of Scotland and represents the opposite pole of the national character from the prudish Calvinistic one that would be shocked by such stories. In fact the story is clearly meant to delight those with an earthy sense of fun and to shock and scandalise the prim and proper.

The story is told as a personal narrative purporting to deal with an adventure or series of adventures met with on the way home on leave from the forces and starts off in Edinburgh, whose ancient closes make a perfect setting for the first part of the story. Alec begins, "When A was in the Terries [Territorials] ..." (A1) which he never was, although he was in the Black Watch, but John makes use of genuine facts about himself:

This story was when I went into the RAF. It was about 1939. I went into the RAF and I was stationed at a place they call Walkin Camp. (B1)

The young serviceman is killing time between trains, looking in shop windows in Alec's case, "having a half pint here and a half pint there" in John's, when a young woman accosts him, claiming to be his cousin. She is able to satisfy him as to the authenticity of her claim. The fact that she is a relative might at first make the listener think that she has no ulterior motive in inviting him to her house, but to a traveller that need not necessarily follow. Many travellers in the past married their cousins and there are plenty of examples of this in the Stewart family. Alec married a second cousin in Belle, and their daughter Cathy married her cousin Jimmy Higgins.

So romance is by no means ruled out in the story. She takes him to the house which is undoubtedly in the old part of the town, from the way it is described:

So I went up tae the hoose, was up this closes, ye know, an up a stair, an a complicated looking place ... (A2)

Through more streets and up back streets, see? An it was up one o them outside stairs, then in an up an inside stair an it was kin o an attic where she stopped, ken. (B2)

Once there, he is treated to tea, bread and pastry, and whisky and this giving of hospitality is again intended to lull the listener into a false sense of security, as it all seems very respectable, so that when the girl says, "Just take off your clothes and get into bed," (A2) there is a sense of shock. Alec does not question the propriety of doing what she says, but John asks, "Where are you gonnae lie?" When she replies, "In the bed," he says, "I couldnae dae that ... I'll sit in the chair aa night." But when she goes out to get more whisky, he gets into bed and, according to family custom when in a strange bed, he lies "mother-naked" (A3) or "without a shirt" (B3). This is regarded among travellers as a clean practice, designed to avoid catching lice. But it also has the effect of putting the young man into a most compromising position when the girl's husband makes a sudden dramatic appearance from behind a wood panel - a real piece of Victorian melodrama - furiously angry and wielding a knife. At least, this is the young man's interpretation of the situation. The more worldly-wise listener might conclude that this is a trick pulled by a prostitute and her pimp, a variation on the theme of:

I met a wee lassie and oh! she was shy
Wi a smile on her lips and a tear in her eye
We'd a few drams thegither till the drink took ma heid
And she stole all my money, bad scorn tae her breed!
(I Wish I was Back Yince Mair in Dalry)¹⁶

The young[/] man runs for his life naked as he is, down all the stairs and closes onto the street. This highly comic spectacle makes the point that, when it is a matter of survival, modesty and seemliness no longer matter. To make matters worse, it is a freezing cold night and, worst of all, he runs straight into the arms of the law. There could not be imagined a more agonising or embarrassing situation, but the young man does not give up hope - he believes he can give a satisfactory explanation of his behaviour. But as with every subsequent twist of the story, his embarrassment is only compounded, in this instance, by the fact that he cannot find the house again, to prove his story. To anyone who has explored the closes and wynds of the Old Town of Edinburgh this is entirely credible. The policeman thinks he is "a bloody loony." There is nothing for it but to leg it again, alone, naked, in a strange city, at night.

The young man runs on until he finds himself crossing the Forth Bridge, robs a scarecrow in a field of a tile hat, which does not exactly solve his dress problem, disturbs a courting couple, then a wake, gets some clothing - again not very suitable as it is women's - encounters an ugly man who challenges him to find a face uglier than his, which he does by returning to the wake and cutting the face from the corpse. This desecration of a dead body is a daring touch, even more than the nude episode, as among travellers, as among other people, such an act in real life would be deeply shocking. Travellers

have tremendous respect for the dead, and anything like the deed in the story would be absolutely taboo. The horror is intensified - as well as the comedy - by ending the story with the discovery that he has cut off not the corpse's face, but its arse. The purpose of the story is to allow taboos to be broken in a harmless way, in order to show the need for them. This is one of the functions of comedy.

Another story with the same function is "The Bailer" told by Willie MacPhee which is a version of a tale known in Ireland as "The Man who had no Story to Tell." Willie tells it as a personal narrative, which greatly adds to its comic effect, as he is a big burly man, nicknamed the Blacksmith, and in the story he turns into a beautiful woman, who marries and has children. I have heard the same story told by Betsy Whyte in the third person, making the farmer in the story into a "laird of the black airt."

The visit to the Otherworld with a magical time lapse is a common motif in Celtic stories and is also found commonly in European and other folk traditions. A close parallel to Willie's story was told by the Irish story teller Eamon a Burc. It is called in Irish Criathrach Coirill and was translated for me (not word for word) by Angela Partridge of the Irish Department, University College, Dublin:

One day when Eamon a Burc was out shooting, a hare ran out in front of him. He followed it all the way to Coireall Bog, halfway between Derryrush and Mam Ean before it got away from him. He came upon a house on the bog and went in. The man of the house asked if he had any new story. He said he had not, but that he would be glad to hear one.

"I'll tell you one," said the man of the house. "I was here one day without a fire, so I went out for an armful of turf to light one. I poked about looking for kindling and then I saw down by the lake, a little boat. I saw it had one gold oar and one silver one. I went to take hold of the gold oar but I couldn't. I put one foot in and as I did, the boat took off. Off it went from the Bog of Coireall to Inver between Ros Muc and Derryrush. I was completely amazed when what should I see but that instead of my corduroy trousers, I was dressed up like a beautiful woman with a fine white breast!

The boat didn't stop at all till it came to land in Spain. One day, when the son of the King of Spain was out walking, he saw the boat on the beach. He went down and saw the beautiful woman. He took a fancy to her, brought her out (of the boat) and got permission from the King of Spain to marry her. They were married and a year later she gave birth to a son, and after another year another son, and a year later again, a daughter.

I decided one day to go down and see how the boat was. I went down and got into it, to bale it out, and as soon as I did, the boat floated away. It came back here all the way to Inver. I got out at Cos a' Locha (foot of the lake) and took up my little bundling of kindling and the fire was only just set by the time I came in.

"Well now," said the man of the house, "this country always was poor and still is, but since the time I was a mother - although I'm a man - not a year has gone by for a long time that my children haven't sent me fifty pounds each at Christmas and Easter. That's why I'll be able to give you a good dinner tonight, and you're very welcome.

(Story continues less coherently - ends by saying that Eamon woke the next morning on the bog Coireall and saw only a large stone, Clock Coireall (local landmark) when he went to thank the man for his hospitality.)¹⁷

One of the main sources of comedy in Willie MacPhee's story "The Bailer" is the change of sex, which the main character undergoes. This is a rare motif in folk tale and used in this story to provide a really extraordinary adventure for "the man who had no story to tell" for future reference. The fantasy, however, has realistic touches, provided by Willie's gestures and facial expressions as he acts out the experience of finding himself with breasts and without a penis. Like "The Face," the story allows taboos to be broken in a harmless way.

People imagine that travellers living in tents that afford little privacy or in trailers where quarters are still pretty cramped, are easy-going about matters of modesty, or even morality. Nothing could be further from the truth. Nudity and natural functions such as urinating and excreting, sexual intercourse and childbirth, are all the subject of numerous taboos, that extend even to provocative dress and posture and apply to children as well as adults. Incidentally, I have noticed the same kind of prudery amongst respectable working class people living in overcrowded city accommodation, with whole families living in "single ends" as they are called in Glasgow, or in "room and kitchen" flats. This suggests to me that there is some link between the overcrowded conditions and the strict taboos these people impose on themselves, as if they represented a desire for decency in conditions that made it difficult to achieve.

An incident which drew my attention to the traveller taboo against nudity took place in July 1980 when I was in Denmark with Sheila Macgregor and the question of sea bathing arose. The Danes bathe both with and without bathing costumes and in fact our particular friends bathed nude. Not only could Sheila not be persuaded to join them, with or without a costume, she declared that she had never in her life possessed or worn a swim-suit. Frequently, when I visited Belle and Alec's house in Blairgowrie, while their daughter Rena and her family were living with them, the two grandchildren, Michelle and Michael were taken out of the room to be undressed for bed, and Belle often admonished Michelle, aged between four and six, for sitting or lying in positions that were too revealing. Betsy Whyte told her

"scaldie" sister-in-law, who complained at being rebuked for hanging her knickers up to dry without covering them with an apron:

Mother is telling you for your own good. Remember the beating you got from Johnnie when you sat in front of the men with your legs apart.¹⁸

A story such as "The Face" could afford entertainment only in a society in which to be caught naked was the ultimate disgrace. Similarly "The Artist" (II.20) would have its full effect only on people who regarded bodily functions as requiring complete privacy, and looked on them as shameful. According to Brycie Whyte, he thinks it is much cleaner and more private to urinate and excrete somewhere out of doors, in a wood or bushy hollow, than in someone else's bathroom where other people have been and where other people can hear what he is doing. Many travellers think like this, and to illustrate the point Brycie told us of a traveller family who settled in a house in Montrose but always went somewhere else for toilet purposes, because "you didn't do that sort of thing in the house." Travelling with the Stewarts to Carrbridge ceillidh week up the A9, I noticed that when we had to stop in the middle of the wilds to relieve ourselves, they seemed to melt into the bracken like ghosts, to reappear a few minutes later apparently out of thin air, while I, on the other hand, crashed about in the bracken looking for a secluded corner that was not easy to find. Brycie's information also made me realise the true explanation of a story I was told more than twenty years ago by a neighbour in Scone who was a former sanitary inspector. He once had a complaint from a farmer about tinkers encamped on his land who were causing a nuisance by fouling the area around their camp site. They were forced to erect primitive toilets, one for men and one for women, to conform

with regulation. When he inspected the site some weeks later he found the toilets still there but unused. The head of the tinker family pointed out that although the law said they had to erect the toilets, it did not actually stipulate that they were to be used. This was told me as an illustration of how dirty the tinkers were. In fact it is really an indication of their particular kind of fastidiousness: to use the same toilet as everyone else, and to be seen by everyone going there and possibly even heard - this was unacceptable to travellers.

The story Appendices contain both supernatural tales of ghosts and revenants and stories that in the International Tale Type Register are classed as religious tales such as "The Heid" (II.3), "The Blacksmith" (II.9) and "The Cloven Hoof" (II.10) as well as "The Old Fisherman and the Devil" (I.7). Travellers do not distinguish clearly between the two. The appeal of these tales does not seem to be a religious one, from the way they are told, with all the emphasis on the supernatural elements in them and very little if any on the religious. In "The Heid" the most striking features of the story, without doubt, are the supernatural elements and belief in an Otherworld about which there are many stories of the visits of mortals, with the supernatural time lapse. The main character in the Stewarts' version is a minister, which is not always the case in its Gaelic parallels, and there are parables in the story, but these are only superficially Christian and that only a very narrow Old Testament sense, based on "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." The two men shovelling sand on the Sunday are breaking the rule of Sabbath observance, which is a strict Presbyterian practice, though meaningless to a tinker. However the

traveller would know that a minister would not approve of Sunday work. The old woman being punished for ill-treating the orphan girl and the woman who gave contaminated milk to a beggar's child, having rats and mice jumping in and out of her mouth like a figure in an Hieronymous Bosch painting, while seeming satisfactory to a traveller's sense of justice, hardly fits the Christian doctrine of forgiveness. The sermon such a minister would have preached on his return to the everyday world would have been full of hell-fire. These are not aspects of the story that tinker story tellers would be interested to emphasise and John's telling of the story with the "going away in dust" clearly illustrates this. Apart from explaining that the scenes the minister saw on his way to visit the Heid, that is, on the way to the Other-world, were "parables" the lessons they were meant to teach are only briefly mentioned. The conversations between the minister and the skull are only vaguely reported as "they cracked away and cracked away," and "the two o them talked away and talked away."

On the other hand, those parts of the story where the supernatural elements are to the fore, are told in vivid detail, and even with touches of humour. The meeting of the minister with the skull just beside an old tomb is saved from Gothic gloom by the minister's remark, "My goodness, what a lovely set o teeth!" This detail is in all the Gaelic versions of the story too. When the skull approaches the minister's house, it is described as "a thing like a turnip comin rollin up the drive." When it arrives, it points out that, despite the minister's offer of hospitality, it cannot eat dinner with him, "the like o this is nae use tae me."

The parables are seen more as graphic scenes than as moral illustrations. In the quarry the two workmen working on a Sunday are, "... shovellin sand ... the more they shovelled in, there was as much came skitin back oot again ..." (II.3) In the second parable there is:

... an auld wumman in her eighties, bendy-backit like that, an there's a young lassie layin intae this auld wumman wi a brush, wi one o them brooms, ye know, the brooms made wi birch. (II.3)

The third parable has the gruesome Bosch-like detail:

An there was this big stout farmer-like woman standin at the door, leaning against the jamb o the door, an her mouth's gapin open like that an there's rats and mice jumpin oot an intae her mooth. (II.3)

The Skull's description of the "great city" that he warns the minister he will find where his manse once stood captures the feeling of an alien world:

Ye'll see flying machines in the air ... iron horses ... going on wheels. Noises ... that you've never thought in your life ... nor ever heard of ... (II.3)

The minister on horseback in the middle of the modern scene is strikingly pictured:

It was another world! The horse was rearin up in the air wi the noise o the traffic, it was nearly boltin. He was hangin on tae its mane tae keep hissel in the saddle. An aa the people's lookin at him wi his auld-fashioned clothes on, an the weans is runnin alongside his horse, "Look at the funny mannie, look at the funny mannie." (II.3)

These passages illustrate the story teller's interest in the supernatural elements in the story and not the moral and religious lessons it contains. According to Hamish Henderson, the Gaelic versions

of this story do not feature a minister so perhaps it was not originally a religious tale. It was also suggested to me at the Irish Folklore Commission in Dublin that this was a descendant of an Oisín story about a visit to the Otherworld, which is pre-Christian. A version recorded from Davie Stewart is called "The Three Wonders," which also suggests the supernatural emphasis of the story.

"The Blacksmith" told by Willie MacPhee and also by Bella Higgins, does not carry any outward signs of its connection with the religious tale "Christ and the Smith" AT753. A clue to the provenance of the story, however, appears in Willie's version when he describes how the young man produced the beautiful young woman out of the burnt and shattered remains of the ugly old one:

So efter he saw aa the flesh was burnt off her bones, took all the bones oot again [from the fire] an he put them on top o the anvil, broke up all these bones with a hammer, broke them up till they were like dust. Gathered all the dust together, like that, an sput on it twice or three times. Blowed air at it. All of a sudden there was a walf (?) started tae appear at the top o the anvil, turned into the beautifullest young woman anybody ever seen. (Douglas videotape)

Compare this with the Bible:

Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Thus man became a living creature.¹⁹

The tale "Christ and the Smith" is part of another tale type AT330 which is called "The Smith Outwits the Devil," a version of which appears in Popular Tales from the Norse as "The Master Smith."

Christ visits a smith who has "made a bargain with the devil that the fiend should have him after seven years but during that time he was to be master above all masters in his trade." Christ demonstrates his power to the smith, renewing a horse's legs, shoes and all, and when an ugly old woman came along he "smithied a lovely young woman out of her." The power to create and renew life belong to God alone, so when the smith tries the same thing and fails, he has to admit that Christ is a better smith than he, and the devil is powerless against him. Then Christ gives the smith three wishes to enable him to overcome the devil. This makes the devil renounce all claim to him, so that when the smith sets out to see if he is to get into Hell or Heaven, he finds the gates of Hell barred against him. He goes up to Heaven and manages to fling his hammer in, as the door opens just wide enough to let in the tailor. The story ends with, "and if the smith didn't get in then, when the door was ajar why, I don't know what has become of him."²⁰

The travelling artisans of the Highlands have never had much to do with the church in the sense of organised religion, so it is not surprising that the religious character of the story has been lost by them. The function of the tale appears to have become one of suggesting that the tinker should not aspire above his trade, but stick to it.

Alec's story "The Cloven Hoof" (II.10), is more overtly religious. The girl in the story discovers that her intended husband has

cloven feet, so she seeks the help of a minister who offers her the sanctuary of the church as a protection against the Devil when he comes to claim her. This does keep the religious character of the story throughout as in "The Snares of the Evil One" AT810B, although even in this story the discovery of the cloven hoof and the spectacular ball of fire in which the Devil disappears are its most striking features. While I believe my story tellers nearly always grasp the symbolism of their stories, they never make it explicit.

The supernatural tales told by travellers are in many cases versions or examples of types of story in Highland tradition and in folk tradition generally. Revenants, witches and haunted places are their subjects, all of which inspire terror. The functions of these tales become more clearly defined when considered in the context of the traveller's life in the past. Ghost stories told round the fire in the security of a settled home and in the context of a life in which fear is not a daily companion, can be seen to be an expression of an indulgence or a search for excitement. But ghost stories told round a fire in an isolated spot, by people whose lives are not secure from one day to the next, and who have real cause to fear what may come out of the darkness of the night, must be viewed differently.

In the first instance, they are an expression of these justified fears, which in itself is psychologically therapeutic. In many cases the traveller story teller is reliving a frightening experience which modern psychiatry has demonstrated to be one method of helping a

person to overcome and neutralise his repressed terrors. If one keeps in mind that it is incumbent upon any full-grown, self-respecting travelling man never to show fear, it can be seen how the telling of such stories allows this taboo to be broken in a safe controlled way that carries no stigma of shame. When these stories are being told in the first person very often an atmosphere develops created by the story teller, but often enhanced by the listeners, in which there is an element of hysterical laughter. This is done by introducing comic aspects into the story, rather in the same way that Robert Burns did in "Tam o Shanter," which in this sense was a traditional type of Scottish folk tale. To make laughter an outlet for fear is very much in keeping with the Scottish character, with its fear of strong emotion and its machismo.

The second function of the supernatural tales, especially the revenant stories is to satisfy the traveller's subconscious desire to keep the past alive and to have the dead with him. In a life in which family relationships are of such paramount importance, in the absence of material wealth being all the traveller had of value, the separation caused by death is particularly hard to bear. One of the reasons my informants like to speak about their parents, even when they themselves are grandparents is because it keeps their memories alive. Even though it awakens terror in them, they would like to believe that it is possible for the dead to return. It is significant that none of the ghosts that figure in these tales is malignant, except perhaps the animated corpse in "The Little Tailor in the Haunted Graveyard" (II.52). They are feared not for the harm they are liable to do, but simply for being from the Otherworld.

The belief in the existence of the Otherworld that these stories show, is in my opinion an indication of the travellers' religious sense. Few travellers have any connection with institutionalised religion in the form of the Church, but most are not without some element of religious faith. In particular, they like their children to be christened and would never consider a funeral to be a proper one without a minister or priest officiating. Living close to nature and the facts of life and death no doubt influenced their ancestors, whose awareness of some power greater than themselves was implicit in their love of supernatural tales. Their life style with its lack of concern for material possessions recognises the importance of things like parental love, generosity to friends, beauty and a host of other qualities that the Christian community acknowledges to be spiritual. Without dogma or scripture, without organisation or definition, traveller beliefs are easy to despise, but the very Christian community which despises them would do well to remember the words of their Master: "blessed are the poor in spirit for they shall inherit the earth."

The most complicated of the ghost stories recorded from my informants is one about the "Haunted House in Ireland" (II.32). This story involves, as well as a revenant, a whole range of supernatural manifestations of different kinds. These include phantoms, doppelgänger and poltergeists, strange vibrations and unexplained lights. The story is told as personal experience and according to John Stewart's son John, "They were about twenty two people sitting in a room this size." (Douglas 1974 tape) Those actually mentioned in the story include John Stewart, his wife Maggie, sons John, Bennie, Toby,

Joe, Raymond, daughters Patsy, Margaret, Nancy, Patsy's husband Matt Hilton, their children, John's sister Jeannie and her husband Sam Thompson and son Donald, John's nephew John, his wife Mary Ann, son John and daughter Annabel.

The story was first told to me in 1974 in my house at Scone by John Stewart's eldest son John, who lives in Montrose. At that time I had not met his father. When John's father told me the story in 1978, in his house in Perth, I had not previously mentioned to him that his son had told me the story. The two versions are therefore quite independent. In spite of this they correspond in several important details which suggests they were both convinced of the reality of the experience:

- 1) The family had been working down in England before they went to Ireland.
- 2) The place was a farm with outbuildings and a seven/eight roomed house.
- 3) It was near Derry.
- 4) The rent was very cheap.
- 5) There was a ghost in the bathroom that flushed the toilet, ran water, etc.
- 6) Only Bennie saw this ghost, who was female.
- 7) John and Alec (Toby) experienced strange vibrations of their bed.
- 8) Lights moved up and down.
- 9) A ghostly cat appeared, ghostly cows chewed cud.

- 10) Lights were seen to be on which had no bulbs in them.
- 11) A ghostly car drove up the drive which was not to be seen when they went out.
- 12) A stone struck the window.
- 13) Other relatives came to join them.
- 14) Neighbours told them about Annie Gilchrist who had once lived there (Bennie had already said the lady's name was Anne). (II.32)

There are a few other details in each of the stories. For example John talks of hearing the ghostly crowing of hens, while his son describes how someone saw Bennie looking out of an upstairs window, while he was sitting outside in the car. It seems natural to them that Bennie should be the only one to see the phantom in the bathroom. Not only was he the only one who was not afraid; because being born with Down's Syndrome, he did not understand enough to be frightened, but he is regarded by his family as having special psychic powers because of his affliction. On another occasion John told me the stories of Bennie's second sight.

Three features of the story are worth comment. Firstly, the idea of a ghost who manifests herself by using a bathroom repeatedly is highly comic, and gives the story something of the same mixture of terror and comedy that is found in Burns's "Tam o Shanter." When the story was being told by John's son John the group present, which included Belle Stewart and Peter and Cissie Stirling, reacted almost hysterically to it, and John described his own fear in a comic way, by

using expressions like, "the Epsom Salts Kid" and "Diarrhoea Dan." His father has his own way of engendering fear in listeners, by speaking very quietly but with significant emphasis. His sequel to the story of the spiritualist Eddie Friel who came from Derry to investigate the house armed with holy water and who ran off without tasting his Guinness, is also comic. The second noteworthy feature of the story is that relatives come over from Scotland specially to see this haunted house as if it was a treat. This suggests very strongly that they want to believe in the supernatural. Finally, the sounds John heard of ghostly animals on the farm as if everything was going on as it had done in the past, makes one think more of a science fiction story about a time warp.

The atmosphere described by John, who said, "ye knew when it was comin" and "it would go away like that, an you would feel free..." and sometimes "a sickly smell would come " are the sort of things said by psychic people describing their experiences. He also reveals a degree of sensitivity when he says:

... if ye were talkin through one another in your own way, your own carry-on, kept wan ear for what you're sayin tae them, an wan ear some place else, ye heard everything!

Apparently, John found as soon as he called attention to any of the phenomena, they ceased. I have found the same receptiveness to atmosphere in John's relations in Aberdeen, Jeannie Robertson, Lizzie her daughter and Stanley her nephew. All three have stories about places with bad atmospheres that turn out to be scenes of evil deeds. Possibly such people have an effect on those around them and trigger off

the kind of mass hysteria that seems to have gripped the Stewarts who stayed in the haunted house.

"The Story of Old Docherty's Ghost" (II.34) is told as a personal narrative by Alec about a time "before I was married. I had a caravan in Ireland and I travelled myself." Alec was born in 1904 and married Belle in 1925. He got to know the old man of eighty seven or eight when he asked at his thatched cottage for water, to be told that he had "one of the best wells in the country." This benevolent old character is very reminiscent of the old man that often comes into the wonder tales, dispensing hospitality and wisdom. Alec visited him every night for three or four nights to talk with him and his friends. This is not unusual behaviour in a young traveller, as Alec would have been. In the years that I have been visiting Belle and Alec and John, younger members of the family and friends have visited them habitually just for a talk, exchange of news and obligatory cup of tea. This constant calling on each other and time spent conversing is one of the things that help to strengthen bonds of kinship and friendship.

When old Docherty took ill and died, Alec showed his respect by going to the wake. Scottish travellers hold wakes in the same way, sitting up for three nights with the corpse, making it an important occasion of family reunion to "tell stories and smoke and singing." Wakes are still "tale occasions" when there is a return to the sort of circumstances that prevailed in the past, when the travellers did not live by the clock at all, so always had unlimited time to tell long,

complicated stories. The funeral which follows, once the burial rites and expressions of grief are over, also becomes a time for sociable activity and entertainment. "I got my tea, told jokes and tellin stories and singing songs."

Coming back from the funeral "all of a sudden it struck me that I had to pass this old man's house." Thus Alec signals to us that we can expect something uncanny. When he came within fifty yards of the house, "I saw the old man standin at the gate ... and he was lookin straight at me."

In spite of having had a friendly relationship with the old man, who had shown no sign, when alive, of being malevolent, and to whom Alec had done no injury, Alec is terrified and "pulled ma cap over my eyes and ran past the old man and I ran right to the caravan." This shows the travellers' fear of ghosts that has nothing to do with what they felt about the people when they were alive. It is a fear of the uncanny.

The comment of the woman "that used tae go an clean the house" is connected with another belief about ghosts that is widespread and very ancient.

"If ye had spoke to him ... he might have had somethin fur ye. There might be somethin buried in the hoose or some place, and he might hae had somethin fur ye."

This is the same belief that is mentioned in the first act of Shakespeare's "Hamlet," when Horatio questions the ghost and tries to consider all the possible reasons for its appearance.

... if thou hast uphoarded in thy life
Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,
For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,
Speak of it.²¹

There is another story of a revenant "The Blacksmith's Wife" or "The Birch Besom" which Alec tells as a story told to him by a blacksmith in Ireland as a personal narrative. This gives the story another frame of reference, which complicates the telling of it, but is designed to give it a more convincing effect.

Blacksmiths are traditionally associated with magic and as my informants' forebears were travelling tinsmiths, I always feel that there is affinity between them and the protagonists of any blacksmith or magic story. The introduction indicates that the blacksmith has inherited the workshop from his master, which is a way of saying he was a proper blacksmith. Tinkers believed and may still believe that "the art of tinsmithing is not learnt but acquired by heredity."²²

The blacksmith obtains a wife by going down to Belfast and searching the pubs and dances and streets, but finds no one suitable. The landlady of a guest house - who sounds rather like a euphemism for a madame - promises him that she will "get him a woman." He is introduced to a young woman of about twenty who is "an orphand" and, al-

though he feels "that woman wouldn't take me," they seem to get on well together, "and the two o them combined with each other and she came home with him up to Letterkenny." He believes himself to be very fortunate and she proves to be a good wife, although he does not know anything about her or where she has come from. The mystery is not cleared up in the story which leaves a dubious impression of the affair, a suspicion that there is something strange here.

Then, like old Docherty, she takes ill and dies, and the blacksmith and his assistant give her a wake, "they sat up for three night with her and had the funeral in these jantin cars ..."

Coming back from the funeral, they saw someone walkin towards them on the road. "This was his wife. Her they burit that day!" She seems to be coming back from a shopping trip and behaves quite normally, telling the blacksmith to go home and put the kettle on.

The blacksmith finds it hard to believe and "went across and felt her arms and shoulders an that." She seems to be a very solid ghost! They call in a priest to help them and he orders the coffin to be raised. In it they find a birch besom. The birch tree or birk was supposed to grow at the gates of Paradise. When the Wife of Usher's Well's three sons come home, or rather return from the dead, "Their hats were o the birk," and we are told further:

It neither grew in syke nor ditch
Nor yet in ony sheugh
But at the gates o Paradise
This birk grew fair eneuch.²³

This is proof that they have come back from the grave. Their mother is a witch and by means of her magic they have been recalled. But they have to return when the cock crows, whereas the blacksmith's wife "lived for about twelve years after." Whether she was a witch, or whether the magic powers associated with the blacksmith achieved this, is not in the story, or at least, not in this version of it. When a story like this is told in the kind of setting where it is understood, there are probably things that are taken for granted and not said explicitly, and this may be one of them. In later times, this understanding of the assumptions underlying a story may be lost or forgotten, when, in fact, it is even more necessary.

The ghost stories that John heard from his mother, "The Ghost in Skye" (II.35) and "The Ghost at the Kiln" (II.36) show the readiness and desire to believe in the supernatural that manifested itself in the love of telling ghost stories as personal experiences was something that had been in the family for generations. Consideration of whether such stories are true or not or even whether the story tellers really believed them did not seem worth while. The line between truth and fiction is never very clear-cut with travellers, because not much importance is attached to it. In the same way, in their own stories, there is not a rigid dividing line between this world and the Other-world. In the travellers' lives there is no sharp distinction between work and play. All this may puzzle and exasperate the settled community who love narrow distinctions and watertight compartments, but

travellers prefer to see life as all of a piece. As far as stories are concerned, what seems most important is whether it is a good story that gives satisfaction to both story teller and audience. Travellers seldom analyse what they mean by a good story, but it is clear from their preferences, that they attach most value to stories that perform some psychological function for them, fulfilling a need, expressing a fear or a hope, boosting their morals or strengthening their feeling of solidarity. In "The Ghost in Skye" the idea that murder, no matter how secret, will be revealed, is one that could well appeal to people who, because of their lifestyle, are vulnerable to attack. The horrific revenge meted out to the young man would also appear as a warning against marital infidelity. "The Ghost at the Kiln" is an example of a ghost that appears at the place where he died, like the man who appeared to John's father at a pool where they were pearl fishing. "This is the pool I drowned in," he said and plunged in, like the young man in John's story, who smiled at the encamped travellers and dived over the precipice. They are the descendants of a long tradition of phantoms, and the forerunners of the phantom hitch-hiker and vanishing pedestrian. The desire to believe in the dead is not confined to travellers and is a form of wish fulfilment to compensate for bereavement.

Re-telling stories learned from mother or father was also a way of keeping their memory alive, almost in a sense a way of keeping the parents themselves alive, a very deep-seated psychological desire. Betsy Whyte describes this very graphically:

Well, ye're almost hearin yer mother tell it tae ye again, the whole thing, an when you're sittin tellin these stories to yir ain bairns, if your mother's dead ... telling your bairns the story ... you're sittin there listenin tae yir ain mother tellin the story, but the words are comin oot o your mooth, ye ken ... The same way, as far as ye can remember, maybe no exact same words, but the feelin ... it's a sad-happy feelin ... ²⁴

From this study of the psychological interpretation of the wonder tales viewed against a background of history and family life, it can be seen that, while not explicitly didactic, they certainly do have relevance to the story tellers' lives and perform several functions that are important to them. They pass on the wisdom of former generations in archetypal patterns relating the travellers to their families, to the world of nature and to whatever is beyond nature. They reinforce family ties and self-esteem and put emphasis on non-material rather than material values.

The archetypal nature of the story motifs shows their meaning and function to be of universal relevance.

CHAPTER SIX FOOTNOTES

1. Farnham Rehfisch. "Scottish Tinkers in Perthshire and Aberdeenshire." Dissertation in School of Scottish Studies. Ch.VII. pp.52-3.
2. Rehfisch. p.52.
3. SA1973/158/9
4. David Buchan. "Wit Combats Ballads." Unpublished paper at SIEF Seminar, Sheffield, 1982.
5. "Freedom Come-All-Ye." Song by Hamish Henderson. Sung on LP Claddagh CCA7.
6. C.J. Jung, Man and his Symbols. p.67.
7. William Shakespeare. Henry IV, Part I. I.ii.
8. Bruno Bettelheim. The Uses of Enchantment. pp.102-111.
9. Dr. Isabel F. Grant. Highland Folkways. p.247.
10. Grant. p.248
11. Jung. p.67.
12. P.W. Joyce. Old Celtic Romances translated from the Gaelic. "The Voyage of Maelduin sources." pp.112-175. Revue Celtique, Whitley Stokes. IX, pp.447-97 and X, p.50.
13. Grimm's Fairy Tales. Puffin Books, 1948. "The Juniper Tree." pp.260-8.
14. SA1958/112/A1.
15. Rehfisch, Ch.VII, pp.54,55, 79.
16. "I Wish I was Back Yince Mair in Dalry." Bothy ballad from Ayrshire sung by Belle Stewart. Recorded on Topic LP 12TS 307.
17. "The Man who had no Story to Tell." Translated by Angela Partridge from Irish. Collected for the Irish Folklore Commission by Liam mac Coisdela from Padraig o Cualain who got it from Eamon a Burc.
18. Betsy Whyte. Yellow on the Broom. p.1.
19. New English Bible. Genesis II.7.
20. Sir George Webbe Dasent. Popular Tales from the Norse. No.16.
21. William Shakespeare. Hamlet. I.i. 136-9.

22. Rehfish, Ch.VII, p.63.
23. "Wife of Usher's Well," Child. No.79.
24. Tocher 37, p.66.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Tale Study : Aesthetic Aspects

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TALE STUDY : AESTHETIC ASPECTS

The aesthetic aspects of the stories that seem to deserve consideration are techniques used to make the stories effective, structuring and combining of more than one story, the styles of individual story tellers, variation, elaboration and embellishment, sense of performance, standards of taste and judgment among story tellers, the creation of stories, language and imagery.

While in the wonder tales the central character was often Jack or his equivalent, the comic and supernatural tales and Burker stories were often told in the first person. This does not necessarily mean that the story teller wants us to believe that the story really happened to him, but it is used as a technique for adding impact to the story. Similarly some of the stories in the family history which really were personal experiences have benefited from being structured and styled like other stories in the collection. Both of these facts suggest the importance attached to aesthetic effect by the traveller story teller.

Although the manner of telling the stories can be described as dramatic because of the use of dialogue, it seems to me, from observing my story tellers in action and from studying videotape, film and photograph, that facial expression and gesture are not so important as tone of voice in the presentation. This puzzled me all the more since

in conversation my story tellers use a lot of facial expression and gesture. I came to the conclusion that the fact that story telling nearly always took place in the dark or by firelight was the explanation. In these circumstances it is the sound of the voice that creates the drama of the story.

In order to see how constant the structure of a story can remain in a story teller's mind, consider Willie MacPhee's two stories, "Friday, Saturday" (I.2) and "Johnny Pay Me for my Story" (II.7) of each of which two versions are recorded.

"Friday, Saturday" is Willie's version of "The Twins" or "Blood Brothers" AT303, one of the oldest stories in folk tradition, and it follows very closely the outline in the Tale Type Index. The two versions were recorded twenty-five years apart by different collectors, Maurice Fleming and myself, yet there is an amazing consistency between them. Not only are there thirty four parallel episodes but twenty four of them actually begin with similar words or details. There are only three details which differ from one version to the other, and these are unimportant: the supernatural being who grants the laird a child is called a fairy in Version A and a witch in Version B; Saturday kills the witch in A and turns her to stone in B; and when he disenchantes all those who have been enchanted by the witch in B, one of them is a princess whom he marries and this is not in A. The stories are identical, not word for word, but in sequence of events and structure. It is not the kind of memorising that one does

from the printed page or by continual repetition of words. This unlettered story teller holds the structure as a whole in his mind as a sort of skeleton to be clothed with flesh, blood and muscle at each telling. This is the same technique described by Dr. David Buchan in The Ballad and the Folk when he is talking about how the old ballad singers in the days of the oral tradition remembered and sang their ballads, "The oral maker controls his material by patternings."¹ It has been said by his critics that there is no way of proving this theory because we have no tapes or records of these singers in action and nowadays such oral tradition bearers as we have seem to be influenced by present day practice and let their versions "gel" into a constant repetition. But I believe these story tellers who are also ballad singers or accustomed to hearing ballads preserve this "re-creative performance" technique in the way they tell their stories, because story telling, apart from being abbreviated, has not ceased to be orally transmitted.

"In a non-literate society composing is a re-creative process in which the means of composition cannot be dissociated from the means of transmission."²

Comparison of versions allows us to see this technique in action.

In setting out in parallel some of the stories in the Appendices, I was faced with the problem of where to set the divisions. From listening to the stories and reading the transcripts, it was clear to me that they consisted of series of episodes, but I did not know how to decide where one episode finished and the next began. Then I noticed the recurrence of certain very simple words, the most common of which were, "So," "well," "now" and "but" and I realised they were being

used as signals to the listener to mark the start of a fresh episode. But these did not account for all the episodes so I looked for other signals and found three more which seemed to recur fairly frequently. These were, first, an exclamation either in narrative or in dialogue, second, a phrase which contained some parts of the verbs "come" or "go," and, third, expressions denoting time or the passage of time. I also re-examined the episodes beginning with "so," and found three different types: ones in which "so" meant "next" or "thus," ones in which "so" was used along with "anyway," and ones in which "so" was followed by a verb, usually a verb of motion.

To provide exemplars of these signals and also to show how frequently they were used, I looked at four stories: "The Three Dogs" (I.1), "The Three Feathers" (I.4), "The Water of Life" (II.4) and "The Miller's Four Sons" (II.7) which contained a total of 261 episodes.

From these I gathered the following examples of signal words and phrases:

<u>So (next or thus)</u>	No. of examples = 36
So she's layin intae Jack ...	"The Three Dogs" (I.1.C9)
So the first one says ...	"The Three Feathers" (I.4.B10)
So Jack thanks the old woman ...	"The Water of Life" (II.4.A8)
So Jack took him in ...	"The Miller's Four Sons" (II.7.A6)
<u>So anyway</u>	No. of examples = 11
So anyway he walkit on ...	"The Three Dogs" (I.1.C11)
So anyway the brothers ... were no pleased	"The Three Feathers" (I.4.F13)

So + verb of motion

No. of examples = 50

So Jack comes back ...

So he went doon ...

So Jack goes tae the kitchen ...

So back they come ...

"The Three Dogs" (I.1.C11)

"The Three Feathers" (I.4 A14
and B14)

"The Water of Life" (II.4.B3)

"The Miller's Four Sons"
(II.7.A12)Well

No. of examples = 24

Well, he's on again ...

Well, ye've a good bit to go ...

"Well," she says, "before ye go ..."

"Well," he says, "I'm stranded,
sir..."

"The Three Dogs" (I.1.A15)

"The Three Feathers" (I.4.D17)

"The Water of Life" (II.4.A21)

"The Miller's Four Sons"
(II.7.B10)Now

No. of examples = 23

Now this auld woman says tae him ...

"Now," he says, "your next task ..."

"Now," says the wee bird ...

"Now," he says to the thief ...

"The Three Dogs" (I.1.B14)

"The Three Feathers" (I.4.D13)

"The Water of Life" (II.4.B18)

"The Miller's Four Sons"
(II.7.A18)But

No. of examples = 18

But the row quietened down ...

But Jack is doon in the kitchen ...

But he was jist follaein his nose...

But when this come close...

"The Three Dogs" (I.1.C5)

"The Three Feathers" (I.4.D4)

"The Water of Life" (II.4.B5)

"The Miller's Four Sons"
(II.7.B28)But, however/anyway

No. of examples = 2

But however, she says ...

But anyway about a year and a day
came up ...

"The Three Dogs" (I.1.A7)

"The Three Feathers" (I.4.G11)

Exclamations

No. of examples = 39

Oh, she went lamenting around
the house ...

"My God, Jack," he says ...

"Oh," he says, "I'm going ..."

"Oh my God, that's terrible!"

"The Three Dogs" (I.1.A9)

"The Three Feathers" (I.4.B5)

"The Water of Life" (II.4.B6)

"The Miller's Four Sons"
(II.7.A23)Come/go or equivalent

No. of examples = 20

Back he goes wi the ither
greyhound ...They went tae the top o the
castle ...Out he goes, slipped out o the
boat ...

"The Three Dogs" (I.1.B6)

"The Three Feathers" (I.4.E2)

"The Miller's Four Sons"
(II.7.A27)

Time or passage of time

No. of examples = 12

Time or three days passed ...
Next morning they went up ...
Till one day an old woman ...

"The Three Dogs" (I.1.B5)
"The Three Feathers" (I.4.G10)
"The Water of Life" (II.4.A2)

Others

No. of examples = 26

An here the three dogs came
walking oot ...
Jack never bothert, ye see ...
The giant had turned hissel ...
He took them inside ...

"The Three Dogs" (I.I.C17)
"The Three Feathers" (I.4.F11)
"The Water of Life" (II.4.B16)
"The Miller's Four Sons"
(II.7.A29)

The "so" beginnings were by far the most numerous, providing about a third of the examples and half of these were of the type in which "so" is followed by a verb of motion, thus literally moving the story on. Exclamations were the next largest group, signalling in a dramatic way the reactions of characters to situations. "Well" and "now," each contributed about fifteen percent of the examples while "but" followed closely behind, sometimes with a reinforcing "however" or "anyway." Episodes beginning with "Come/go" or an equivalent accounted for about the same number and seemed to be like the "So+" verb of motion ones without the "so." Expressions denoting time or time passing, which added a further twenty percent to the list, are the equivalents in time of the spatial moving-on ones previously mentioned. Why ten percent of the episodes should be without signal words or phrases, I think is accounted for by the fact that, as so many of the episodes do begin with a signal, a small number without one is not noticed. In fact, the ear, accustomed to the pattern of the rest, sometimes does not need a signal, particularly if the story teller pauses. Indeed on listening to the tapes, I noticed that almost all the signal words were accompanied by pauses, either before or after the signal, so I concluded that the pause was an essential part of the signal. This is also supported by the fact that the words used as

signals, such as "so," did occur in places where they were not starting off an episode, and there was no accompanying pause on these occasions.

As well as providing signals for the listener, the signal words and phrases also have a function for the story teller. They are in fact oral structuring devices that allow him to shape the story as he tells it. To call them nuts and bolts that help him to construct his tale, is rather too mechanical an image to be appropriate. A well-told story is more like a tree than a building, so that it is more correct to picture it as a growing thing that puts out more and more shoots and evolves its own symmetry. Thus the signal words and phrases can be seen not as mere passive bits of joining material but dynamic modifiers of the action. To draw an analogy with grammar, the signal words are not just like the conjunction "and" but more like the modifying conjunctions like "because" or "although" which do not merely join, but show the nature of the connection.

The signal words or phrases, then, while being almost unnoticeable when the story is told, perform vital roles for both the story teller and the listener. They are important, not for what they say, but for what they do. Without them, it is hard to see how the stories could be put together. Sequence, development, drama would all be lost and it is not going too far to say that the stories would be much harder to listen to and the sense and meaning of them would not be as immediately apparent as they have to be in oral tradition.

"Johnny Pay Me for my Story" is a trilogy cleverly dovetailed together and which combined AT665 "The Man Who Could Fly like a Bird and Swim like a Fish," AT653 "The Four Skilful Brothers" and AT302 "The Giant Whose Heart was in an Egg." Willie's two versions of the story which again is faithful to the outlines in the Tale Type Index, were recorded eighteen months apart. Once again there is a startlingly close correspondence between the parallel versions. Out of eighty one episodes, only three do not completely correspond. In these stories the episodes are the equivalent of verses in the ballad, each taking the story one step forward. This is a logical progression with few if any arbitrary twists and turns. At least that is how it appears to the story teller, whose mind is familiar with the meaning of the whole story and the motifs which compose it. It shows the patient skill of the craftsman putting together a complex design whose finished totality is realised in his own mind.

The technique of combining two or more stories in one is beloved of Celtic story tellers. Looking at "Johnny Pay Me for my Story," one can see that the stories are joined together in such a way that the connection between them makes them into a complete whole, a perfect unity. The whole story sees Johnny grow from the simpleton, who did not know the kind of value to attach to the old man's wise teaching, given to him in story form, to the hero who kills the giant and wins the princess. The structure of the story enables the listener to follow this development stage by stage and it is clear that more wisdom is contained in the combined story than in the three separate stories which compose it. Since the stories exist separately in

European tradition, it is very likely the Celtic story tellers, who were Willie's ancestors, who combined them.

Another example of three stories joined into one by a unifying idea is "The Face" (II.19). The first story is about someone who ends up late at night in bitter cold weather in a strange city, naked, with no satisfactory explanation of his plight. The second deals with the attempts of a naked fugitive to find clothes, attempts that land him in more embarrassment than he was in to begin with. The third story is about a challenge to find a face uglier than that of a very ugly man. The face is cut from a corpse and adjudged to be uglier, whereupon it is revealed that it came from "the other end." The unifying idea that binds the stories together is that of breaking taboos, as described in the previous chapter. The method of joining the stories together seems to be the same as in "Johnny Pay Me": a motif from the first story, the naked man on the run, becomes the central motif of the subsequent story, from which another motif, the ugliness of the dead, becomes the main motif of the third story. The same method is seen in "The Three Dogs" (I.1) which combines the first part of AT300 "The Dragonslayer" with AT315 "The Faithless Sister." The three dogs are a motif in the first story which becomes the main motif of the second one.

Even in a story like AT325 "The Magician and his Pupil," which is found everywhere with the story of the apprenticeship, the sales at the fair and the transformation flight, it is possible to see this

kind of combination, which suggests that originally there may have been three separate stories. The apprentice in the first story becomes the rival of the king in the second story and in the third becomes the master.

A story frequently found in combination with others is AT302 "The Giant Whose Heart is in an Egg." Willie MacPhee uses it as the third part of "Johnny Pay Me for my Story," in which it provides a supreme test for the hero. John Stewart's version in "The Three Feathers" is uncharacteristically not so felicitous. While it adds several spectacular episodes to the story, at the same time it totally contradicts what the story is specially designed to show: that Jack does not need to go on a quest like his brothers for any of the things his father has demanded: that all he needs is to be found where his roots are. The reason why John committed this blunder, master story teller though he is, was due to a special feature of the occasion on which this story was told. I had recorded stories from John on many previous occasions in his own house, but on this occasion there were present Dr. Alan Bruford and post graduate student Barbara McDermitt from the School of Scottish Studies, complete with recording equipment. As my method of recording is very unobtrusive, if inferior, the presence of a reel-to-reel Uher with a microphone and stand gave this occasion an air of greater moment than usual. Also the fact that two "been hantle" had come from Edinburgh to record him, seemed to inspire John with the determination to impress them. In his desire to do so he forgot the truth of his story in his anxiety to pile one embellishment on top of another. He signalled to us that this was a special version of the

story by saying, "This is the Crodyon version," Crodyon being a character he introduced, as part of the extra episodes he added to the story.

Many of the wonder tales told by these informants have parallels in European tradition, but these are usually found in literary versions. As we have already seen, there are considerable differences between oral and literary versions. By comparing versions of the same story told by different members of the same family, it can be seen that each story teller has a distinctive style. While the essentials of the story remain more or less the same, different details, different language and different emphases are apparent, which reflect the personality of the story teller. "The King o the Black Art" (I.3) is told by Bella Higgins and her younger brothers Alec and John Stewart. Bella's and Alec's versions were recorded in the mid 1950s while John's two versions were recorded in 1978 and 1979. All three learned the story from their father John Stewart who was still alive when it was recorded from Bella and Alec. It might be expected that their versions would be closer to their father's telling and more like each other than John's whose version was told more than twenty years later. In fact all three story tellers stick very closely to the essentials of the story and such differences as do exist do not radically alter the structure of the meaning. The only important differences are of style and inessential detail: it is through these things that the individual story teller's personality is stamped on each version.

Bella has a gentle but expressive style that is full of sympathetic feeling for the characters:-

It wis a wee baby aa rowed up, an he wis sae glad...

The old woman was sae proud ... (to get the child),

O they were aa for enjoyment when the boy was returned home.

... [The boy] didnae come back. So the old man's in an awfu state an so is the old woman ...

"Now," he says, "ma Lass," he says, "don't be alarmed ... don't be afraid ... I won't touch ye."

She also has her own graphic idiosyncracies of phrase which gain from being occasional:

The old man never seen the beat o what the boy was doin.

His head looked just like a rainbow ...

He turned in his own uniform ...

A bonfire for rejoice, celebrate ...

The dialogue is all homely Scots, whether it is the fisherman and his wife and son or the King himself speaking. The old man and woman are characterised by strong parental feelings and admiration for their son. The King is not depicted as a particularly frightening character. Descriptive detail is put in where necessary but not overdone. Bella's false start to the story on the archive tape and her decision to start again shows a consciousness of the proper way to tell a story that does not "go through" it in a way that destroys the full effect.

Alec's style of narrative is well structured and spare like ballad style, with little elaboration beyond what is necessary. He prefers to create his effects by understatement. Its economy of style

can be best appreciated by contrasting it with John's more detailed and dramatic style, as in the coming of the King o the Black Art:

Well, time rolled by and the wee boy was about fourteen or fifteen and oh! a nice little boy he was. One day they were out fishing, him and his father and all of a sudden they saw this boat coming in and on the boat deck of the boat there was a man and he was throwing up knives, four knives and was standing there throwing the four knives up. "My goodness," the old man says, "that's a clever man that. Look at what he's doing, throwing those long knives up in the air and catching them again."

(Alec Stewart, I.3 B2)

Now the wean's getting on aa right, an the auld man's gaun oot fishin every day, doon at the beach, an he's fishin away, so the wean's growin an she's feedin it an the wean's growin month after month, year after year, till the laddie - till the wean's aboot fourteen years o age. So the boy o fourteen an the man, they're both doon at the beach yin day, and they're fishin away an the wee laddie's mendin nets, ye see. When they looks roon the sound an the point o the loch an here's a great big ship comin roond. An there's a man in front o it, firin up poison balls, an a juggler, in the front o that ship. Ye never seen the like o it in your life. An the laddie stands back an the father stands back you know, them that was fishin. He says, "Look, father." His father says, "I see that," he says.

(John Stewart, I.3 B2)

Another version of the story told by John describes how the king appeared to the old fisherman as an even more flamboyant figure:

... "Oh," he said, "that's someone of importance," he says, "I can see jewels," he says, "and a star on his - up on a crown on his head," he says ... "He's some kind o a king," he says, "fae a foreign country."

(I.3 E2)

Alec used words more sparingly than John, which matched his everyday disposition which was to speak always to the point or not at all. He would often be silent for a long time, but when he spoke it seemed as if what he said was the one thing that needed saying. John is a more demonstrative person, who likes the limelight and who can on occasion show a very violent temper. Even in his seventies he is cap-

able of coming to blows with whoever he falls out with so, as a young man, he must have had quite a reputation. He almost acts out a story, strongly identifying with the characters, putting on different voices, taking a delight in making every detail of the story come to life with picturesque turns of phrase, creating as much drama as possible out of every situation. Again this reflects the sort of man he is every day.

The contrast between the two story tellers can be seen in the episode that deals with the way the fisherman comes to the King o the Black Art's castle and gets his son back. In Alec's case, there was no confrontation between the King and the fisherman, who gains access to the castle by taking a job there, looking after the poultry and finding his son as a cockerel, who instructs him how to carry out the rescue. In John's version the fisherman is told by the old man or the hen wife to march straight up to the main entrance of the castle, "don't go down any backs or anything like that," and demand to see the king and no one else or he will "make the highest stone of the castle the lowest in five minutes." He does this and persists in his demands, till the king throws a flock of pigeons in the air, as the old man said he would, and asks him to pick his son out of them, which he does. John's version is actually closer than Alec's to the Gaelic version in Campbell of Islay's collection, Fichaire Gobha and Gille na Bhuidseir.³ There is a version of the story in Irish tradition called "The Knight of the Tricks"⁴ that has a motif of a flock of pigeons, also, but in this story it is the son who tells the father how to rescue him as in Alec's version, although the latter does not

have the flock of pigeons. In a Spanish version of the story, the father has to pick his son out of hounds and is advised by an old man what to do. In a German version,⁵ the boy's mother has to pick him out of "a crowd of coal black horses," who are all "enchanted scholars," and it is the son who tells her how to do it. Thus the kind of variation we see in European versions of this story, seem similar to those found in this group of story tellers, which suggests not only that it is natural but also that it is permissible, just as it was in ballad tradition.

A feature of these story versions is the use of formulaic language also found in ballads. Again looking at "The King o the Black Art," there is quite a list of such expressions that appear in one or other of the versions recorded, so there is no need to differentiate between one story teller and another in this respect, although possibly John uses more than Bella or Alec:

Once upon a time, not in my time, nor in your time, but in
somebody's time.

time rolled on or rolled past

a year and a day

seven long years

that ever ye saw in your life

bake me a bonnock and fry me a collop

here comes up or who comes up but ...

Through sheeps parks, bullocks parks and all the parks of
Yarrow (or Tara)

the Devil take away your learning master

He spits on his stick and away he goes.
her nose and her chin were crackin nuts
she was almost rockin on her two front teeth
my heart will be on the poisoned spears before sunset
they argied and bargied
I'll make the highest stone o the castle the lowest in five
minutes
and that's the last o ma story
if your horses were made or iron and your guns were made of
steel
all the bells in the castle rang
and the last time I was there I got my tea off a wee tin table,
the table bended and my story's ended.

These few examples, which can be added to from the stories in the Appendices, serve to show that these story tellers have a sense of style, that telling a story is something to be done in an artistic way, using special language that will stimulate the imagination of the listeners. They have at their disposal the resources of centuries long tradition.

Willie's story telling style has been influenced by several factors, which again are all of a piece with the man himself. He alone of all my informants has never lived in a house, even though he claims he was born in one. His family were never settled. The actual circumstances of travelling, being apart from the settled community, lacking schooling and having to make his own living and his own entertainment, all apply to him. Even now, he lives on the traveller's site at Inveralmond on the outskirts of Perth, although he is in the town nearly

every day. Certainly he and his family watch television and he and Bella go to the theatre occasionally and to the cinema, as well as to folk clubs and festivals. He recalls with great nostalgia the days when it was possible to go from camp to camp, swapping stories with other story tellers. His way of telling stories was definitely forged in those days. He does not hurry but deals with each episode fully, uses simple language most of the time that is nevertheless colourful, in his dialogue he slips into the persona of his characters, without over-dramatising and is clearly conscious of the pattern and structure of his tales, so that he is never at a loss as to what comes next.

Andrew Stewart on the other hand is racy and dramatic, sometimes rather impatient, or thinks his listener is impatient, and hurtles through episodes like an express train. Willie threads the episodes patiently like beads onto the string of narrative, while Andrew wants to shoot them at his hearers like a fusillade of bullets.

All the story tellers in this group, Bella, Alec, John, Andrew and Willie, as well as Belle, Sheila and Cissie (Belle's cousin) all seem equally at home in the timeless world of the stories they tell. Time is really irrelevant to the story in most wonder tales, apart from "seven long years" or "a year and a day" to indicate major lapses of time. It is a curious fact that this also reflects the travellers' sense of time and his attitude to it. In the family history, the only dates mentioned are births, marriages and deaths, and most of these are mentioned by Belle, who also leaves quite a number out. Alec,

John and Willie scarcely refer to any dates apart from their own birth dates. They are vague as to how long they stayed in a particular place or when they did certain things. Sequence of events, the order in which things happened is much more clearly remembered and this corresponds to the way in which the stories were held in their memories. This makes the family history partake of the atmosphere of the stories, with their journeys and encounters and struggle for survival, while the stories themselves do not seem so very far removed from the setting of the family history. They all tell stories or talk about their lives with the same style, that stems from both a sense of realism and a sense of wonder. The stories are full of realistic details, like Jack in "The Three Feathers" (I.4) filling himself with the choicest morsels in the kitchen before the dishes went to the dining room in the castle, or in "Jack and the Seven Enchanted Islands" (II.13) asking the princess at the palace with the crystal bridge for a vessel to carry water in for the men of his crew. On the other hand the accounts of family affairs often have a magical quality, as in the legend of John Stewart the piper or the deaths of Belle's two brothers within a week of each other to the very hour.

This overlapping of story and family history can also be seen in the use of personal narrative. Stories are often told in the first person as a device to make them sound more convincing, and this is done, not with the wonder tales, whose truth is psychological, but with comic tales, supernatural tales and Burker stories, whether or not they actually recount personal experiences, as in some cases they purport to do. Alec's and John's story "The Face" (II.19) and Willie

MacPhee's story, "The Bailer" (II.12A), are good examples of this. At the same time in personal narrative like Belle's account of the Berryfields Case (II.64), the death of her father (Brune, pp.5-6), the murder of her grandfather (Brune, pp.1-4), the story of the tragic MacPhees (II.61), or John Stewart's account of his family's departure for Ireland (II.70), how they tricked a credulous Irishwoman out of money, his stay in Montrose and the haunted farmhouse he stayed in near Derry (II.32), are all structured and styled like their other stories.

A story of which there are seven versions in the collection, recorded over twenty-five years, from Alec, John and Andrew, is "The Three Feathers" (I.4) which is the family's name for AT402 "The Frog as Bride." Again the most striking feature is the close correspondence between these versions as regards the essentials of the story:

- 1) A king decides to settle the succession by means of a test.
- 2) His three sons throw feathers in the air and go off in the direction indicated.
- 3) They have to bring back in turn three things: an embroidered cloth, a ring or jewel, and a bride.
- 4) Each time Jack's feather drops down behind the castle.
- 5) He is not going to go and look for it, but when he does, encounters a frog who takes him to an underground place, where he is given each of the gifts.
- 6) Each time his gift is the best and in the end he wins the crown.

The differences that exist between the versions are comparatively unimportant ones that do not alter the story radically, apart from John's so-called Crodyon version which was commented on earlier. The differences simply add variety and interest to the story. This story affords us the opportunity to see in detail how this is done.

For example, there are slight differences in the way the story begins. A, B and F start without preamble with the king briefly telling his sons of the test that is to decide the succession. E elaborates slightly on the king's age and infirmity, while C, D and G give altogether more detailed introductions. When we identify the tellers of each story version, we find, A, E and F are Alec's, B, C and D are Andrew's and G is John's. This leads us to expect in the rest of the versions, a more economical telling from Alec, a more elaborate telling from John and perhaps some variation between versions from Andrew.

Let us take a further look at the three most elaborate versions, C, D and G. In C the story begins with the old king failing and the doctor sending for his sons. Jack in this version is lazy and

he wis a humbug tae the castle he'd done nothing for the father - in fact he wisnae on the list o getting anything left when the father died at aa.

The Good Adviser tells the brothers about the test with the three feathers. D also features Jack as lazy and one "who would do nothing, in amongst the servants, seein what was to eat and lie down all the

time," which was not suitable behaviour for a prince. His father speaks of him as a "dumbskull who knew nothing." The contrast between him and his brothers is brought out also in a description of their dress, "Smart guards' clothes on them, ye know, princes - and he's in rags, Jack, and he didn't care for nothin." Jack is called up from the kitchens where "he was lyin sleepin in at the back o the boiler," and along with his brothers gets the instructions. G also differentiates Jack from his brothers, who ride out hunting while he is forced to work as a scullion. The king discusses the succession with them and points out about Jack, "he's a son the same as any o youse." He describes the test that he has devised and is "adamant" although they "werenae too pleased at this." When Jack hears of the test he jokes about not being able to pass it:

Oh I'll never get a ring ... The only ring I ken about ... is maybe some o them rings ... that's on the Leghorn legs ... that's in the henhouse.

The sequence of the tasks differs from one story teller to another. Alec's A and E have the sons seeking a table cover, while B has a bedspread instead of a table cover, which is hardly different, if one remembers that they are both large pieces of cloth that can be patterned or embroidered. In a trailer they would be interchangeable. John's version has a ring as the first object, which comes second in Alec's versions, while John's second object is a pearl. As his father was a pearl fisher this is an understandable choice, as he does not have a table cover. Andrew's three versions differ from one another. B only has the ring and the bride, while C has the table cover, ring and bride in what seems to be the standard sequence while D reverses the sequence. B and C were recorded in 1956 in Blairgowrie, while D

was recorded in 1967 in Canada. Separation in time and place seems to have affected this story as it affected "The Three Dogs," recorded at the same time from Andrew, by making it evident that the story teller has to some extent lost his grip on the structure and sequence of the story, through not hearing it told, or telling it, frequently.

The time allowed for the carrying out of the tasks differs from one story teller to another, from a week or three days to six months or a year and a day but these are simply formulas to denote the passage of a reasonable length of time.

The encounters with the frog are similar in all versions as regards the flagstone and the staircase below it. In A, E and F the frog is met at the front of these steps. In G there is a long passage at the foot of the stair, leading to a room. In B, C and D the frog is crying and in C and D is met with before lifting the flagstone. The crying frog is the clue to the fact that it has some connection with Jack and is not merely one of the helpful creatures that normally figure in these stories.

The underground place in all the versions is a place of hospitality. Alec's A version describes

... a big room and it was laden with everything. Roast chicken and plenty of soup and everything you could mention was on the table.

The E version mentions only "he got his tea and food and it was aa wee frogs that was servin him." In F the frogs "set the table and he got och! plenty to eat!" John says in G "He gets a cup o tea from them. Oh the lovely china, aa Crown Derby!" Andrew's B version speaks of "this lovely wee place where the frogs used tae sit," while in D he describes "a big long passage and lectric lights burnin ... an the smell o them eatin, nice smell o restaurant." In G John refers to

... lobbies goin in different directions, ye know, and electric lights and everything burnin ... So he sits down and they ask him if he'd like something tae eat ... and here my goodness! the wee frogs came ben an put a table - lovely food he was eating.

Five of the seven versions correspond in the part dealing with Jack's obtaining his bride, staying in the underground place overnight and returning home next day in a carriage with a frog transformed into a beautiful princess. Only D and G do not follow this pattern. In G as we have seen John's extra embellishment of the story sent Jack on a quest for his bride. D differs because the order of the tasks is reversed. But in the corresponding section in D, Jack is given the frog's daughter transformed into a princess so beautiful that he is scared to speak to her as they drive along in their carriage.

The ring and the table cover are also described with a great sense of what constitutes a precious and beautiful object. In A it is "a great big table cover and it's all gold, tinsel and silver." In E it is "pure silk and fringed with gold right roon," while F describes not its material but its visual effect, "when he throwed it out and aw! it took the eyesight from ye!" C and D speak of it "lined with

diamonds." No ordinary table cover this, but a treasure such as the Celts would have admired. The ring is pictured as having in D "a diamond ... as big as ma thumb nail," and E says, "Oh it jist took the flash o his eyes away with the prettiness o this ring wi diamonds and studs of gold."

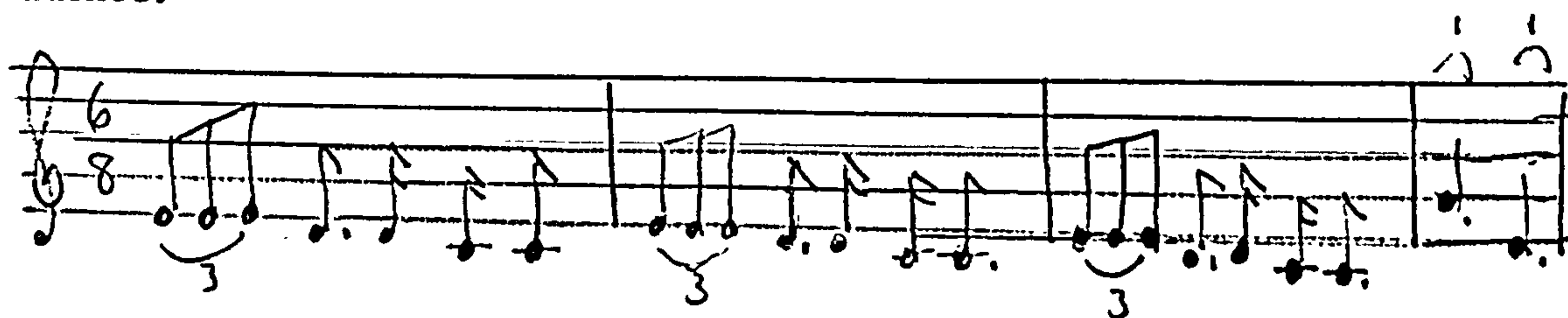
This detailed comparison confirms that the differences between the versions of the story are the result of a creative technique rather than faulty memory or anything else that could be described as a shortcoming. The variety that exists is one of the marks of a healthy tradition. It is when people begin to repeat stories parrot-fashion that the tradition can be said to be in decline.

The Stewart version of AR503 "The Gifts of the Little People" a cante-fable widely distributed throughout Europe, is called "The Humph at the Heid o the Glen and the Humph at the Fit o the Glen," or, for brevity, "The Humph" (I.5). A Gaelic parallel to this story was recorded from a travelling tinsmith called Alexander Stewart near Dingwall in 1955 by Calum Maclean⁶, the same year in which it was recorded from Bella Higgins. Bella's version differs slightly from versions I recorded from her brother John in 1978 and 1979. In Bella's version the two hunchbacks are friends and one tells the other about how the fairies have rewarded him, and this is like certain European versions, particularly the Irish⁷ and Breton⁸, which are both part of Celtic tradition, and not unlike the Italian⁹ and Spanish¹⁰. In John's versions the two characters are a good son and a

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bad son and in one of them only the good son has a hump to start with, which is taken from him as a reward by the fairies and given to the bad son as a punishment.

All versions of the story feature the song sung by the fairies to which the hunchbacks add with different results. Versions of the song vary but nearly always include the days of the week. The principle is always the same: the young man out gathering sticks or some such task hears the fairies' song which sounds incomplete, an impression which using the days of the week helps to create, since everyone knows what should follow. It is in fact a sort of test applied by the fairies to the young man. The tune also sounds incomplete and the young man adds to it not only words but a musical phrase that supplies a perfect cadence:



Saturday Sunday Monday
Saturday Sunday Monday
Saturday Sunday Monday
Tue -----sday !

The fairies' response in Bella's and John's versions and in all the European variants of the story I have found is to reward him by removing his hump. But when the second hunchback seeks the same reward, he is unlucky, because his addition to the song is clumsy and discordant, and the fairies punish him by giving him the other fellow's hump, in many cases, as well as his own. The decision seems to be based on aesthetic rather than moral criteria.

This seems to be a story connected with aesthetic values which may seem strange in connection with people living in poverty and hardship as the travellers have done. But their own family history bears this out. One of the most striking things about them is that, however harsh their existence, they retained a sense of beauty and beautiful things are important to them. In fact it was in the past when their life was hardest that these stories were passed on. In the present, when their poverty is cushioned by Social Security and many of them are settled in houses, with all that implies in terms of creature comforts, the stories are less important and the tradition is disappearing.

Nevertheless, those who still sing songs and tell stories have a very strong sense of performance and style. In the case of Belle, Alec, Sheila and Cathy, one could suppose that they developed this as a result of becoming public performers, under the influence of people like Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger, who involved them in folk clubs and festivals and the Radio Ballad on the Travelling People, in the Folk Revival. Ewan wrote of them in the manuscript of a projected book entitled Doomsday in the Afternoon which he kindly allowed me to read in 1979:

Songs and stories that used to be sung and told in the family circle are now only performed for collectors ... and at clubs and festivals. ... The family singer and story teller has been transformed into an entertainer ... they have attempted to cope by creating stereotyped formats of presentation, borrowed from music-hall, cinema and television ... the performance syndrome.

While I would agree that the songs and stories are not performed as much as they used to be in the family circle, I think this has more to

do with being settled in houses and living a different life style than with public exposure as entertainers. After all, the tinker traditionally brought entertainment to the remote parts of the Highlands they travelled in, and when the Stewarts were in Ireland they earned their living partly by entertaining people with piping, dancing, singing and telling stories. Ewan and Peggy have not had the opportunity to observe the Stewarts in their ordinary daily life, as I have had for twenty years. Long before I embarked on this project to collect and study their stories and songs, I was just a friend who came to ceilidh with them or to share in their joys and sorrows. I have been present on many occasions, birthdays, farewell parties, reunions, wedding anniversaries, New Year celebrations or just little fireside ceilidhs, when the stories and the songs have been heard, and not just for my particular benefit. The only restriction, as I have noticed, is that it is usually one or other of the older generation who sings or narrates. Maurice Fleming, who "discovered" the Stewarts of Blair for the School of Scottish Studies in 1953 has certainly observed to me that when he first persuaded them to take part in informal concerts in and around Blairgowrie they were very nervous and self-conscious. No one would have said that about them in many of the years since then which seems to support Ewan's idea that performing in public affected their style of performance. But it has to be borne in mind that Maurice's concerts meant performing before the "country hantle" on its terms and in a setting where they were not sure if they were entirely accepted. Ewan's "stereotyped formats of presentation" no doubt refer to the fact that Belle, Sheila and Cathy adopted the habit of appearing in concerts standing together, with arms linked and dressed in tartan, which has been the practice of Scottish music hall entertain-

ers, but there the similarity ends. Where they picked up the idea of appearing this way, I do not know, but they certainly did not use it when they appeared at Perth Folk Club in the early 1960s. Their flowery dresses and fur coats contrasted with the rest of the audience, but that was because they were self-consciously arrayed in jeans, Aran sweaters and hippie caftans. The Stewarts' "sang aboot" technique, copied by urban revival groups who aim for a traditional style of performance, like the Clutha or Stramash; the material itself, whether ballad, lyric song or rural ditty, music hall or Irish, and the informal way in which they talk to their audience, are all quite different from the performance of the usual "heather and haggis" type of entertainer. Ewan and Peggy have seen the Stewarts perform at clubs and festivals in England, but since I met them in the 1960s they have not been present, as I have, at their innumerable performances on their home ground in Scottish folk clubs and festivals, at ceilidhs around Perthshire, in village halls, country hostelries and private houses. The fact that has consistently struck me about their performance is that it is always the same, whether it is in the George Square Theatre in Edinburgh or at their own fireside. There is nothing false or artificial about it; these are natural performers. Those many people in Scotland who have enjoyed the Stewarts' performances over the years usually use words like "natural," "down to earth" and "individual" when describing them. It is also very evident to people who know them personally that the characters they project are not modelled upon "stereotyped formats" but are their natural selves. Belle's dignity, friendliness and wit are not "put on" when she is performing in public; they are part of her real personality.

Ewan's performance syndrome theory breaks down altogether when one considers informants like John Stewart. He has never been a public performer in the sense that Alec's family has, and he has not appeared in folk clubs and at festivals, even in Scotland. Yet he has a story telling style just as highly developed as those of Belle and Alec and Sheila. Even Willie MacPhee has not had as much experience of appearing in public, yet his story telling exhibits the same degree of artistry as theirs and he is also a piper and a singer. From the consistency of his story versions it is clear that he had this style from the start; it is not something that has developed through public exposure. Other traveller story tellers I have heard including Duncan Williamson, Stanley Robertson and his sister Janet (also known as Brooks Macdonald), Betsy Whyte and even Stanley Robertson's young daughter Nicole, all tell their stories with a strong sense of style, whose source is undoubtedly their family circle.

At the same time, talking about style of performance with regard to story telling, it must be emphasised that, in spite of all the stylistic features we have noted, the stories were "told" rather than "recited" or "enacted". Nowhere has this point been made more clearly than in the story telling competitions which my husband and I instigated at Traditional Music and Song Association¹¹ festivals. These have attracted a wide variety of entrants, including traveller story tellers such as those referred to above. In these competitions formality is avoided as much as possible, the stories being told in a circle with the judge simply being one of the listeners. The traveller story tellers tell their stories in this setting as if they were at

their own fireside. Alongside them have taken part story tellers whose stories are memorised word for word, sometimes from books, sometimes from their own writing, but which are full of literary features that distinguish them from oral tales. Others dramatise their stories in a manner that shows they are using the tales as vehicles to show off their own talents. The traveller story tellers recreate their stories with each telling much in the same way that ballad singers are thought to have done. Even though there are differences between the two forms, nothing has given me a more positive feeling of the truth of this theory than the hours I have spent listening to these story tellers, most of whom are also ballad singers. What I said earlier in the chapter about the division of the stories into episodes helps to emphasise the affinity between them and the ballads. The stories are not composed in the same way as literary prose, but, in a manner that is more like the stanzaic form of the ballads. While the story tellers may adopt devices of style and language when telling their stories the human and personal level on which they communicate them is the same, wherever they are and whoever they are with.

The same is also true of singing style. The whole hearted, head thrown back, full throated, passionate way of singing that the Stewarts are noted for and that is very Highland, is found among travellers generally, whether or not they have been discovered by researchers and their material collected. I have tapes of Isa MacPhee, Johnny Whyte, and Duncan MacPhee, for example, none of whom have "become public entertainers" in the sense that the Stewarts have, and whose singing style is just like theirs. Belle has often spoken of an inde-

finable quality travellers recognise as an essential characteristic of the best singing, which they call the "coniach" [my spelling]. This Gaelic sounding word seems, according to my inquiries among Gaels, to be related in some way with the Gaelic tradition of "the weeper" (coinneag) and it certainly is to do with the singer's emotional involvement in the song, which gives it power to move the listener. Their story telling style shows a similar degree of emotional involvement.

Both songs and stories are listened to critically by a traveller audience and members of my group of informants certainly have opinions about one another as performers. Their individual views of what is good and bad in someone else's performance can be affected by several factors. First of all, their view can be coloured by whether or not the performer is a member of their own or some other family. This is not mere prejudice, but is based on the fact that members of the same family get their versions of a story from the same source and, as we have seen, this usually means they correspond in essentials. This may not be the case with another family's version of the story. At the same time, it is often members of the same family who are most critical of one another. This is because individuals in the same family can have a different approach to story telling. Some think they should repeat a story exactly as they have been told it, without adding anything or missing anything out or altering anything. Alec believes in telling a story exactly as he remembered his father telling it, although in most cases it was not exactly the same. Belle has often been critical of John, who has a creative approach to story telling.

John, talking about the way he tells a story, reveals a preference for embellishing a story whenever he can:

I just continue on, on my story, but I'd be making it up as I went along. But you'd be interested listening to it. You know what I mean? ... Ah, you could think up other bits - you could make up other bits to put in. (Douglas 7B1)

This is borne out by what John said in an interview recorded by Barbara McDermitt whom I introduced to John, which appeared in Tocher, along with my transcription of John's version of "The Water of Life":

It took me aa ma time ... tae remember that story, an when youse asked me for it A made the biggest half o it up. A had the main ingredients in ma head that A'd learned before, but A had tae make a lot of it up. Now when it's your first time of makin it up an then ye have - there's a pause till ye tell it again, there's a lot o them things ye would tell different ... leave out the bad bits and fetch good bits in it.¹²

What John means by "good" and "bad" bits is clearly intended in an aesthetic sense. In the case of the story in question, "The Water of Life," he had added parts of another story called in Chambers Popular Rhymes of Scotland "The Black Bull of Norroway" AT511A, which had just been mentioned to him by Dr. Alan Bruford, who was also present. John's intention was to make the hero's quest more exciting for his listeners and also perhaps to comply with what seemed to be a request to tell two stories at once.

The picture he paints in the same interview of story telling as it was carried on among travellers when he was a child, as I have heard him do many times, suggests the value and importance that was

attached to a good story and would put story tellers on their mettle to tell as good a version of any particular story as they possibly could, a point also made to me often by Willie MacPhee:

They were seven or eight brothers o ma father's lot ... An they were aa story tellers. They could lie on their side like that in the dark, ye know, an the stick fire gaun up an the sparks flyin up in the air an mebbe a can o tea sittin at the side o the fire an sit crackin an telling stories.¹³

Stories could be used as currency for acquiring articles from other travellers:

I've seen them saying ... as often when the tents were up an they were carryin on playin an that, maybe somebody had something that you could ... do wi, an you would say, "Well, gie me that an I'll gie you a story for it." ... You would swap the story for what ... somethin 'at they had. An if they liked your story, they would give it ye.¹⁴

Stories were usually told at night time, since daylight hours were taken up with earning a living:

The best time was at night when ... everyone was in bed. Ye see ... people thought travellers had a rough way o living, but they didnae ...¹⁵

In John's mind then story telling is a cultural activity whose criteria of quality are artistic ones and something for which he admired his father and uncles. For someone to add to a story in a skilful way was commendable, and for someone to spoil a story was likely to arouse ill-feeling. This is in perfect accord with the fairies in "The Humph," so it can be said that this story expressed aesthetic principles that the traveller could identify with.

Artistic appreciation seems to form a natural part of the travellers' response to life. On the occasion when I recorded "Jack and the Seven Enchanted Islands" from John, his daughter Patsy and her husband and four grown-up children were visiting him. Until I arrived they had been watching television, but when they heard that John was going to tell a story, the television was switched off and they all gathered round with every appearance of being eager to listen. None of them slipped away but were clearly enjoying the story. It seemed however that while Patsy and her brothers and sisters had been told stories by her father when she was a child, she had not passed on the stories to her own children, even though they obviously enjoyed hearing them. Patsy is married to an English traveller called Matt Hilton and has spent quite a lot of time south of the Border, partly in houses, but sometimes, especially in summer, in caravans. So the reason for her not carrying on the tradition is not that she has settled and integrated with a community. At the same time, it is clear that she has been influenced by the values of the settled community, which may date back to her formative years spent in Montrose, where her father settled in order to send his family to school.

John's creative story telling technique extends as far as making stories himself, which provides some excellent insight into the process whereby traditional tales were shaped. John's own stories make use of traditional motifs and tale types, so they can be seen to have grown out of the tradition he grew up in and inherited from his parents.

"The White Stag" (II.17) is a tale about a grateful animal who rewards Jack who helped him when he was injured, by making it possible for him to go on a quest for an abducted princess, overcoming difficulties on the way by means of magic objects. The stag accompanies him on his journey and helps him, but on the way back is killed through Jack's negligence. The dying stag tells Jack to take its head and antlers and set them on a hill above his mother's cottage and to bury his heart under a laurel tree in the garden. The head becomes a palace with "the all-seeing eye." Another white stag appears near Jack's home. The motif of a grateful animal rewarding the person who helped it when injured is found in AT156 "Thorn Removed from Lion's Paw," well known in the version of "Androcles and the Lion," and dating back to Aesop's Fables and Gesta Romanorum. Versions of this story are found all over Europe. John has achieved the first aim of the story maker: to create a new and individual story out of material that has been used over and over again for hundreds of years.

As is usual in Jack stories, Jack is lazy and lies in the ashes all day:

... an when his mother did lay intae him wi a stick an get him ootside tae dae something ... he went ootside the wee thatched door an gien hissel a shake, he just blindit the place for about three days wi ashes an stour off his claes, ye see.

This exaggeration is found in other Jack tales, told in the family, e.g. Alec's version of "The King o the Liars." Jack's mother is the henwife, another character John is very fond of including in his story versions. Jack sees all the "knights and earls and swordsmen" going up to the palace and hears they are out to seek the lost princess. He

does not even consider having a try himself, until the White Stag encourages him to do so. Even then, he thinks the idea is absurd and he has

... hardly a bit o' claes to pit on ma back ... and look what I'm wearing for a sword ... a scythe blade! An a straw rope roon his middle as a belt."

It is the same Don Quixote-like figure that he described in "The Water of Life." Nevertheless the Stag prevails upon him and he presents himself at the palace, where the king's retainers shout, "If you've got any vegetables, round the back!" thinking he is a poor peasant. Jack stands up for himself with spirit a bit uncharacteristic of the way Jack normally behaves but very characteristic of John himself - and says:

✓ /Yes, it's my mother that works in the garden ... Does that make her any poorer or any better if she works in the garden? ... My mother's a woman the same as any other body ... and I'm a man the same as them!"

The king is impressed and promises Jack his daughter's hand in marriage if he rescues her. Jack sets out "towards the sinking sun" and soon encounters "an owl, owl, owl man," who warns him of the Black Wood with the Crushing Trees and gives him a magic rope to help him through it. The stag directs him to "a houlet's nest" in which he finds a piece of magic cloth that later helps him to get across the stormy sea on the stag's back, with the cloth stretched like a sail between its antlers. When they reach the Black King's palace the Stag tells Jack to look in the point of one of its antlers, where he finds a whistle. The Black King's "battleclad men wi' swords and fiery arrows ... comin' for them, and great baying hounds o' dogs" terrify Jack, but when he blows the whistle "every bell on that heather on

that hillside turned into an armed man" a motif reminiscent of Jason and the Argonauts and the sowing of the dragons' teeth, translated into Scottish terms. Once his army and his dogs have been destroyed, The Black King surrenders the princess and Jack takes her back with the White Stag once more to help him. But coming through the Wood with the Crushing Trees, Jack forgets to see that the deer gets through and it is killed. The ancient belief in the external soul is featured in the ending of the story, but the concept of the stag's head palace with the pink windows where the eyes had been and the antlers turned into towers of "yon red polished granite" is John's own creation. John has the gift of shaking together a handful of motifs like pieces in a kaleidoscope to make a completely new story, even though the motifs are among the oldest and most popular in European tradition. This must surely mark him as one of a long line of traditional story tellers and helps us to see why they were given such high status in Celtic society with its high aesthetic standards.

Max Luthi writing about "The Image of Man in the Fairy Tale"¹⁶ describes the hero as "essentially a wanderer" and in outlining the typical fairy tale, he could have been referring to John's story:

When he sets forth to save a king's daughter or accomplish a difficult task, he usually does not know how he will accomplish his purpose. But along the way he meets a little old man, shares his bread with him and gets from him the advice that will lead him to his goal. Or he meets a wild animal and pulls out a thorn that is hurting it, and thus gains the help of the thankful beast, whose abilities just suffice to solve his problem.

This suggests very powerfully that the travellers' nomadic existence has been a strong factor in preserving the story tradition, not just

because it afforded story telling occasions, but because the stories were made out of the very stuff of his life, as well as helping him to cope with it. It also shows that no matter how poor, hungry or cold people may be, they still long for beauty.

Considering the various kinds of language that are used in combination in the stories, one sees first of all that the same variety occurs in the family history and in ordinary conversation:

Then she [Alec's mother] had a brother ... and him and his wife and three of a family - you know how they all dealed and swapped in auld horses these days. ... and that was what happened. And the horse they gave him ... in the traveller wey o speakin they caad him a reist. You know, it was a horse that wouldnae go forward, that wouldnae pull a cairt. It was aye gaun back ... So they were at Fort Augustus, the Canal ... and instead o the horse goin forward when he whipped it ... it went back, back, back and it backed right intae the Canal and him and his wife and three bairns were drowned. (Douglas 1A2)

... his name was Jimmy Stewart, but he wasn't the same Stewarts as Alec's folk at aa, no the same Stewarts. An he was reared up in a reformatory school - I think I told you one time before, if a woman was left a widow wi bairns, they took the bairns off them long ago. And they didnae put them to a criminal school, but they put them to a reformatory. That's what they called it then. So Jimmy Stewart was reared up in a reformatory. He had a good education, good schoolin and he was very religious. He sang hymns on a Sunday, ye ken, on the streets ... But he was really a bit soft. He wisnae all with it. He'd what we'd say a slate off his roof and anither yin slidin. Jimmy wisnae aa there, puir sowl, for aa his education. (Douglas 3B7)

The categories of language that can be identified in the travellers' stories and general usage include Scots, Scots/English, English, archaic Scots, Gaelic influenced Scots, poetic language, slang and cant. This is a wider variety than features in the settled community, who have a narrower concentration on English, Scots/English and slang.

The determining factors in the kind of language used by settled people are the amount of schooling they have had and their social attitudes. Generally speaking the more educated they are the less they will use Scots because they regard it as inferior and "not speaking properly" while the less educated are less biassed against Scots. It is a curious anomaly in the Scottish educational system that the use of Scots is discouraged. The original reasons were political, but these have largely been forgotten by the majority of people, who have simply been brought up to believe that English is "proper" and Scots is not.

Examples of English words or phrases used in the stories include the following:

everything was in a turmoil	"Friday, Saturday, I.2, A4
three or four minutes elapsed	B6
a vacancy	A8
in the same situation	A19
eventually curiosity got the	"King o the Black Art"
better of him	I.3, C1
somebody of importance	C2
it was dark as a dungeon	C8
to feed the poultry	B10
beaten tracks	D10
studded with diamonds and other precious stones	B23
most of the story concerns Jack	"Water of Life" II.4, B1
not by his own exertions	B12
he examined the tablecover	"Three Feathers" I.4, F7
a thunderous wallop	D21
the queen was having her	"Speaking Bird of Paradise"
confinement	II.8, B1

There are also examples of English to be found in the family history transcriptions:

they were really determined to have it (Brune, p.3)

she really and truly was a classical dancer (Douglas 1B3)

Some of these expressions, not remarkable in themselves, are striking because they are found side by side with both Scots and slang, often in the same sentence. Sometimes English is used because they are speaking to an educated person or a foreigner, and an English word is used alongside its Scots equivalent for explanatory purposes:

A wean = a child

up the brae = up the hill

a burn = a stream.

This shows an awareness among travellers of different kinds of language and of the uses to which they can be put, but it is also true that travellers do not make rigid distinctions between different kinds of language. My story tellers certainly do not have the kind of inhibition about using Scots that the settled population has. Their grandchildren, however, whose children go to school and who do not live much differently from the rest of the community, may now be corrected by their parents for using Scots. In the past, travellers needed a good command of language and different modes of expression to survive. Hawking, begging, dealing and trading all require this and we know, from writers like Duncan Campbell and Calum Maclean, that travellers have long been entertainers in the Highlands. Trying to win sympathy from house dwellers, or wheedle goods or work out of people or keep on the right side of officialdom, have always required "the gift of the gab" and necessity has seen to it that the travellers acquired this skill.

The use of Scots English is widespread among travellers as among the settled population that they have had dealings with. By this I mean words that exist in English but are given Scots pronunciation:

walkit	walked
campit	camped
mairrit	married
didnae	did not
hadnae	had not
awfie	awful
doon	down
gaun strang	going strong
jist new oot	just newly out
a cairry-on	a carry-on
hauf croon	half a crown
cauld	cold
hairt's bluid	heart's blood
murnin	mourning
pitten awa	put away (buried)
kennlet	kindled
ludgins	lodgings
kilt	killed
selt	sold
telt	told
naebody	nobody
heid yins	head ones
rummlet	rumpled
waukent	wakened
lang-leggit	long legged
three fut lang	three feet long
no weel	not well
fair seek	rather, or fairly sick
lettin on	letting on
buss	bush.

This Scots/English is widely used all over Scotland and would be a convenient lingua franca for the travellers, especially when they were forced by historical change to come down from the Highland glens into Lowland areas and do casual work. In transcribing the stories and family history, I have taken special care to be as faithful as possible to the pronunciation of informants, in order to show how much use was made of different kinds of language. The travellers, especially of my story tellers' generation, still have a pretty good command of pure Scots, that is of words and idioms that belong to Scots alone:

luggie	a jug or bucket with an "ear" to hold it by
pishmool	an ant
a straik	a journey that took a few days
a chuckie	a pebble
ken	know
a puckle strae	a little amount of straw
oxter	under-arm
fog	moss
spewed	vomited
reekin	smoking or smelling
kirk	church
dinnae fash	don't get upset or angry
muckle	a lot
bud	stayed
puddens	guts
scart	scratch
guddles	catches fish by hand
owre dykes	over walls
dovert	drowsed
lum	chimney
stottit	bounced
lyin reesh-rash	lying all anyhow
joukin	dodging
crackin	talking, having a conversation
chap	knock
abeen	above
oot owre	beyond
hap	wrap up
reist	hold back, refuse to go forward
press	cupboard

Many of these words can also be found in the poetry of William Soutar, the Perth poet who lived from 1898 till 1943, and who is noted for his good use of Perthshire Scots that came naturally to him. In 1984 I presented a list of twenty five Scots words which included ten of the above, to third year pupils at Perth Academy, to discover how many of them were known and used in their family. About half of the words were known by more than half of those asked, but only a fifth of them were in common use, according to the answers given. I strongly suspect that more people use the Scots words that they know much more often than they will admit to doing.

The travellers also use archaic Scots words, and the following appeared quite naturally in the course of stories of family history taped:

gotten deid	found dead
samen	the same
cotter hoose	farmworker's cottage
packman	pedlar
yoke	small cart drawn by pony or donkey
sheep's parks	sheep's pastures
breezes	bellows
tentful	attentive, solicitious

I think these words are remembered because they are associated with parents and grandparents, whom the travellers, unlike the settled population, like to copy and emulate, to keep their memory green. Most of my story tellers ancestors would be Gaelic speakers and quite a number of the stories have been shown to have Gaelic parallels. But just as Gaelic is no longer spoken in Perthshire except for a small number of people (although in recent years there has been an increase in the number of people learning Gaelic, partly because of a good television language lesson series "Can Seo") Perthshire travellers have no Gaelic. But there occurs from time to time in their speech, turns of phrase and idioms that are Gaelic in origin. Margaret Bennett of the School of Scottish Studies and her mother provided the following parallels for some of these phrases:

The kind of language associated with travellers most of all is, of course, cant, and it might be expected that this should feature in the stories. The fact that it hardly appears at all in this story collection is partly explicable by the fact that they were recorded by a non-traveller. Travellers always adapt their language to suit their audience. Possibly if these stories were told in company consisting entirely of travellers, there would be more use of cant, but even under these conditions, it is unlikely that it would be much used, except in dialogue about everyday practicalities. Cant is basically a code language to be used in the presence of non-travellers if it is not desirable that they should know what is being said:

Stall your mangin; the hornies are bingin tae the wattle
(Be quiet; the police are coming to the tent)

Bing tae the granzie and chore a puckle strae for the kinchins
(Go to the barn and steal a little straw for the children)

He's a shan gadgie; he'll no feck us ony haben
(He's a bad man; he'll not give us any food)

Cant consists of only nouns, verbs and adjectives of a purely practical nature. There are the names of the members of the family, animals, objects in daily use, things for eating, drinking and wearing, work tools and places commonly found in the community like shops or pubs.

Here is a list of cant words I got from Belle Stewart, many of which correspond to words listed in The Tinkler Gypsies by Andrew MacCormick, published in 1907,¹⁷ Simson's History of the Gypsies, published in 1865,¹⁸ and even in Thomas Harman's "Caveat for Common Cursitors" published in Elizabethan England¹⁹:

mort	woman
kinchin	child
gadgie	man (also coull)
chate	thing (often used in compounds like "lour chate" jewellery or "noewin chate" cat)
nawken	tinker
buck	tramp
pannie	water
wattle	tent
strammel	straw
buffert	dog
blaw	meal
ruffie	devil
yerras	eggs
geddie	boy
winklers	eyes
haben	food
peeve	drink
lour or lowie	money
barrie	good
shan	bad
drom	road
davies	day
beenship davies	good day
pluffan	tobacco
vile	village, town
grib	take, hold, use
deek	look
jan	know
feck	take, give
bing	come, go
mang	speak
chore	steal
moolie	kill
wanner	buy, sell
stall	stop

This is not an exhaustive but a representative list. It illustrates the nature of cant and shows that while it may be a suitable vehicle for communication in everyday situations, it is certainly not adequate for imaginative and expressive story telling by people who revel in the word play and skilful use of language. A comparatively few cant songs have been collected, whose subject matter is so limited compared with the rich ballad tradition preserved by the travellers. I suspect most of them were specially made up to please collectors, like the one Belle sings:

Grib tae your nais coull my beneship kinchin,
Grib tae your nais coull till the beerie bings anee.
And you'll feck a flattrin and a teepnie mazie
If you'll grib tae your nais coull till the beerie bings anee.

(Dance to your Daddy, my bonnie laddie - a well known Tyneside folk song).

There is a song that Willie MacPhee sings which is a genuine old cant song widely known among travellers, so perhaps there have been many others that have been forgotten as cant is used less and less. The song I refer to is as follows:

My name it is big Jimmy Drummond
My name I will never deny
I'll moolie the gannies in dozens (gannies - hens)
For there'll be naebody there for to tell.

Chorus: And if ever I dae bing a-choring
 I'll be sure for tae gang be masel
 I'll moolie the gannies in dozens
 For there'll be naebody there for to tell.

Last night I lay in the cauld granzie
Tonight I lie in the cauld jail.
My mort and my kinchins are scattered
And I dinna jan whaur they may be.

The origins of cant is a subject full of unexplained mysteries about which one can only speculate. Many of the words are Romany, which shows them to be derived from the travellers' contact with the gypsies who infiltrated the south of Scotland in the early 16th Century. McCormick lists also words that are particular to Perthshire cant, like "stumerer coull" for piper and "cluishes" for ears, derived from Gaelic. Modern Gaelic speaking travellers have their own form of cant or Beurla Caird (language of the metal worker) so undoubtedly the Perthshire travellers also had something similar when they were Gaelic speaking. When they travelled further afield they no doubt found themselves mixing with gypsies and the Romany words would serve their

purpose for everyday practicalities. On the video tape I made of him, Willie MacPhee scoffs at the idea that cant was ever used among travellers when there were no non-travellers present. He also feels that cant is now out of date. The use of a code language in the presence of police or other officials is now counter-productive. After all, the site where Willie now stays was provided, albeit reluctantly, by the local authority in accordance with government policy. Belle Stewart has as wide a knowledge of cant as anyone in Scotland, but will often claim as cant words that are actually Scots, for example, "reist" and "lerrick tree". She probably thinks of them as traveller words because they are not now commonly found among the settled population. Other collectors have, I think, given some of my informants the idea that cant is "their language" and have encouraged them to use it as a gimmick to give them an air of mystery and romance in other people's eyes, when they are performing their songs and stories. To me this is unnecessary, as their treasure house of story and song does this more effectively than any trick of this kind. The cant I have learned from Belle has certainly helped me to make friends with other travellers I have met, but largely because they take it as a kind of joke.

Whatever is the place of cant in the vocabulary of the present day traveller, it is clear from the story collection that they have a whole range of different kinds of language from which they feel able to choose.

Use of different kinds of language is only one of the devices that contribute to the aural effect of the stories. There are others that can only be appreciated by listening to the tapes: variations of tone of voice to suggest feelings like anger, delight, scorn, fear, longing or urgency, variations of pace, the use of pauses, repetition for emphasis and a kind of aural punctuation that I became aware of only when transcribing the tapes. This is achieved mainly through the use of "he says" which provides a pause to the ear, but is quite unnoticeable. It is only when it has to be typed that it becomes a constant irritation because it means opening and closing the inverted commas so often. It also seemed to me that my ear edited out the many repetitions of phrase, so that I had often to go back and check a sentence again, in case I had missed out "he says."

Although the stories are mainly for listening to, it is clear from their telling that the story tellers intended the listener to visualise the characters and incidents and settings described. John Stewart, who does vividly imagine the story happening as he tells it, rather like a colour film, makes constant use of "You see?" which both provides a pause and encourages the listener to make a mental picture. The story teller, of course, has to supply the material for the listener's imagination to work on. Information about size, shape, colour and material has to be skilfully woven into the narrative. Significant details must impinge clearly on the mind's eye. Movement and action have to be conveyed in words that give an immediate picture of it. This is necessary in the wonder tales like "The Speaking Bird of Paradise," "The Three Feathers," "The King o the Black Art" and

"Johnny Pay Me for my Story," as well as in comic tales like "The Face" and "Geordie MacPhee." "Jack and the Seven Enchanted Islands" also relies heavily on visual effects. In the supernatural tales and the Burker stories atmosphere is more important.

These visual effects seem generally to fall into four categories: the beautiful, the grotesque, the magical and the comic. One of the most beautiful pictures created is that of the Speaking Bird of Paradise on its tree guarded by lions:

... And then he saw a glow, a coppery glow, and what was this but a tree, a bushy tree, just like a wee small apple tree or maybe a wee bit bigger, you know, and the leafs were all gold, and there was a lion on that side, maybe about twenty five yards or so, before ye went tae the tree. There was a lion on that side and a lion on this side, tied wi golden chains an a big buckle on their necks, gold collars. And hardly look at it in the sunlight, you know, it was glitterin. And he looked and spied this bird, the bonniest bird that ever ye saw in your life, wi lovely golden, blue and red plumage, and a great big long forked tail hangin doon, and it was in a golden cage, sittin in the tree. (II.8)

Many of the beautiful images in the stories are created in terms of bright colour or something that sparkles like gold, or in the case of the bridge in "Jack and the Seven Enchanted Islands," like crystal:

... and here's the loveliest castle ever ye saw in your life over this bank. An it's at the far side o this wee river an there's a crystal bridge across, glass bridge made o crystal. An the crystal bows on the bridge, y'know. On the far side there was like ramps, irons comin doon, ye would think, but it was crystal an it was aa hung wi silver bells. (II.13)

The Glassy Mountain in "The Water of Life" (II.4) is another bright shining image "like burnished silver" or "like a reflection o a mirror in the sun." Even the princess in the story is pictured as "a golden haired maid an she was sittin on a rock combin her hair."

Animals and other living things are often portrayed as beautiful creatures, reflecting the travellers love of them, not just the legendary Speaking Bird, but the stallion in "The King o the Black Art" whose head was "like a rainbow" and who was so high spirited "he's even clearing the stalls" on the fair ground. The great bird in "Jack and the Seven Enchanted Islands" with "a wing span o about fifty or sixty yards" with its branch of life-giving fruit is exactly described:

... it had in its claws a branch about the size o a young tree. an this branch is full o rid fruit, like between a plum and a grape. An they were pure blood red, this great young tree, ye see. (II.13)

The Queen of the Island of Women passes before Jack and his companions like a vision of delight:

... they sees this horse comin and a lady on it, an she must have been a queen 'cause she had a crown on her head, lovely green silk and satin clothes an - ye ever see yon red satin boots - on her. An this horse is all bells an rings on its reins, an that. (II.13)

Once inside the palace they are ushered into a room:

... and there were a great big sofa an there were seven cups, wine cups aa sittin doon this long table and decanters o wine an bread and fruit upon the table, ye see. (II.13)

Other islands are pictured most vividly:

... an there is another island, an its surrounded by flames o fire, ye see. Flames o fire aa roond it. An the folks aa sittin at tables, an they're enjoyin theirsels an they're laughin an they're drinkin an dancin an drinkin, ye see. (II.13)

They come also to a green island that seems an example of the Celtic vision of paradise:

... they spies another island an they come in to look at this island. It was the loveliest island ye could see. There was a lovely green valley, like that, and a lovely brae like that, an grass on it. An there was an owl church, an this side there was a lovely wood o silver birch trees an there were sheep grazin on these wee slopes. An in the bottom there was a wee lake, like the shape o a harp, ye see. (II.13)

Another wonderful picture created in just a few words is the sight of the people in the Sleepy Glen released from their enchantment in "The Speaking Bird of Paradise":

So he comes down the glen walkin an then he mindit o the fir cone in his pocket. So he took the fir cone oot an he says, "That stone there," and he touched it. Here this was a knight in armour, when he touched it. Touched the next stone - it would be a young farmer, in aa different clothes, frae years an years before that, right on up tae not the present day, but the present day he was in, you know what I mean? Touchin this one, touchin that one, touchin - they were aa - that was them that had fell asleep goin to look for the Speakin Bird o Paradise. An comin down this glen, he touched that many rocks and stones that there was like a regiment behind him. (II.8)

There are some delightful grotesque images in the stories also, some of which are based on ugliness, others on the impossible and a few are meant to shock. Consider the Guardian of the church in "Jack and the Seven Enchanted Islands," who has "a humph on his back half the size o his hoose. An ugly man he was, A Kashimoto (Quasimodo). And big feet," and the little herdsman in "The Little Herdsman and the Master Bull" who had:

... one shoulder up an one shoulder down, like a little hunch-back, and big feet ... his clothes was all patches ... an a big beard. An about two feet high. (II.18)

Both are rather enigmatic figures, endowed with wisdom or special power.

In "The King o the Liars" we have a spectacle of Jack's head which he has cut off so it can roll home to get help, when he falls

into a whinstone rock:

I twistit an I twistit ... till I got the blade oot an ... I cut ma heid off wi one stroke ... o ma sword. Then I told ma heid to go home as fast as ever it could an fetch ma strongest an ma strongest brother an pull me oot o the rock ... Ma heid rowlt away ... an I could see it rowlin doon the hill ... towards the house. (I.8)

Similar to this is the vision of the talkin skull in "The Heid," rolling up to the minister's house like a turnip. We are also reminded by the first glimpse the minister gets of it in the graveyard of one of the most noticeable features of a skull, commented on with slightly incongruous humour, "What a lovely set o teeth!" In the same story the "parables" are presented in very clear visual terms, with more than a touch of the grotesque:

... there's an auld wumman in her eighties, bendy-backit like that, an there's a young lassie layin in tae this auld wumman wi a brush, wi one o thon brooms, ye know, the brooms made wi birch.

... And here there's a big stout farmer-like woman, standin at the door, leanin against the jamb o the door and her mouth's gapin open like that an there's rats and mice jumpin oot an intae her mooth, ye see.

Sometimes the grotesque is used for comic effect as in "Johnny in the Cradle" (I.15) when the changeling starts to behave very oddly when its parents are away at the church:

... it jumped up oot o its cradle, boy, an it went to the press an ... its breath on the lock opened the press, took oot the bottle o whisky an the glasses, yin tae the tailor an yin tae itself, boy.

After they had had their drams, there is music:

So it jumped back into its cradle again an it pulled a corn straw out o the bed, ye see. An it pit this corn straw in its

mooth, boy. An you're talkin about strathspeys and reels and jigs. Callum Beag [cantarachs] Drones an everything going, boy, an this corn strae! An its rattlin out tune after tune. At the finish the tailor's up dancin.

Other comic images abound in "The Face" (II.19). The naked man on the run describes how he, "... wheels right like a hare an wi me bein barefit an me naked, I was liftin bits oot o the grun. I was like a whippet!" Later on, desperate for clothes, he "... looks out an I sees this scarecrow upon the skyline an I goes right owre tae it an all it had on was a tile hat, an auld busted tile hat!" Even in "Jack and the Seven Enchanted Islands" (II.13) there is a comic image of the great bird when its feathers were plucked "like a great bare turkey for the oven." Further along the road in "The Face" the fugitive, naked but for his tile hat, disturbs a courting couple, then a wake:

... as they turned roon to go in the door I says, "Hey" and stood up and roared at them. I says, "I'll make a kirk or a mill o it." But the two o them intae the hoose. An then there were aboot twenty came oot an they aa looked an seen me naked wi the tile hat on. The whole lot run. The whole lot off! Roon the end o the hoose and away up aa this field they run, an away up the other side. (II.20)

In "The Artist" we have the picture of the nobleman's table splendidly set out for dinner, with all his guests gathered round and on the table a fine silver soup tureen filled with what he fondly imagines to be a fake replica, but actually a real, stinking turd.

Geordie MacPhee (I.12) is also rich in comic scenes whose visual aspects are important. Geordie at the lawyer's, knocking at the door and inquiring about the big house which is for sale, is turned away and scoffed at because of his ragged condition and treated like a mad-

man until he pours out the gold pieces all over the table. The situation is vividly portrayed in visual terms:

Now Geordie wasnae very well dressed. The boots was - the toes was stickin oot his boots. His troosers - his backside was oot his troosers. He hadnae a right jacket on - it was in rags. The only thing was, he washed his face and shaved hissel, that's the cleanest bit that was about him ...

An he goes owre an knocks at the door. So he was an auld man and a stoot man and he'd glasses on. He comes to the door and he looks at - and he says, "No, I've nothin today," he says, "and I don't want anythin," he says tae Geordie ... And he slams the door in Geordie's face.

When Geordie knocks on the door again, the police are sent for and Geordie is almost marched off to jail, and is only allowed to look at the title deeds of the house because the police think they will incriminate him in this way, if he has no money to pay for it:

They wanted tae get a right grip on him tae give him about two year in jail, ye see. But Geordie goes wi the solicitor and they sits at this table. An he says, "Here's the title deeds." He's pullin out this drawers and liftin out the papers and everything, till he gets the forms he wanted and the price o the hoose. Och it runs - the price o the hoose runs intae thousands, ye see. So Geordie says, "Well I cannae pay ye just noo ... but A can gie ye a deposit on the hoose" ... So Geordie puts his hand in his trouser pocket. He says, "There's some gold sovereigns ... There's some o part payment ... Can ye tell me how much that is?" So of course they looks at each other, ye see, an the solicitor he takes the coins an counts them.

Subsequently Geordie is depicted in his new tailor-made suit, riding in his chauffeur driven Rolls-Royce, being waited on by servants and occupying a fine mansion with extensive grounds. In spite of all this, he says, "They cry me Geordie MacPhee - no 'ma Lord'," and he drinks bottled beer whenever he feels like it. All his behaviour is that of the tinker man, although he has all the trappings of a gentleman. The contrast is emphasised and the comic effect achieved by the picture presented of him. The listener knows what would be appropriate to his new circumstances and in fact sees the opposite. In the

same way, at the fair, where tinkers normally deal and swap horses and other goods, we have the comic spectacle of Geordie's friends all made so drunk by his lavish treating that they are "handing horses to each other for nothing." We also have a clear picture painted of how the estate is turned into a tinker camp:

He bought some tents off the people in the village and some o them gien them covers for nothing ... Up they goes tae the estate at the front ... right on the front lawn, where the gairdens and the flooers was, they camped there. Dug the snow back and pit up their tents. An before ye could say Jack Robertson there was about a hundred fires burnin. They broke aa the laurel bushes and they've got the fires ootside. See? Some o them puttin on kettles and som o them playin their pipes, and the laddies wi dogs is after rabbits, through the front doors the hooses tearin up the holes, tearin up the burrows, breakin aa the bushes, an they made an awfy mess o the place.

Many of the scenes most strikingly visualised are ones in which magic plays a leading part. Helpful animals perform wonders like the White Stag, (II.17) taking Jack across the raging sea:

So Jack climbs on the white deer's back and he gets a haud o its big antlers like that, ye see, and it plunges intae the sea wi him. An it's swimmin an swimmin an swimmin an swimmin ... an it's gettin whirled about ...

then with the aid of the magic sail cloth, "away it went like a sailing ship." The ants in "The Nine Stall Stable" (II.5) bring back the pearls from the lost necklace:

The sun was just aboot set doon at the back o the mountain, when he sees aa these wee ants comin, wi aa these pearls. Every yin had a pearl, aboot a hundert o them, an maybe mair. Every all these wee ants. They went and searched through wid after the wee frog telt them.

In the horse race in the same story, when the younger brother and the Black Laird of the castle compete, the traditional motif of the obstacle chase is given graphic detail:

"Ah," says the ould horse, "I'm jist aboot finished," he says. "Look roon, owre yer shoulder," he says, "an see'f ye see the laird comin."

He lookit roon owre his shoulder. "Aye," he says, "he's no far ahind me," he says. "He's jist aboot catchin up wi me."

"Well," says the ould horse, "luck intae ma lug, ma left lug, an ye'll see a wee dreep o water. Fling't ahin ye. See what happens."

He lookit intae the ould horse's lug an he seen a wee ... dreep o water hinging tae the hairs at the point o his lug, an he cat-ched it wi his finger an thoomb an flung't ahin 'im, intae this level, efter he went through the first wud and the second wud, this loch o water at his back wi the wee dreep o water oot o the horse's lug. It was a flowin sea, jist a raging sea o water.

The Black Laird swam through the sea and once again was gaining on the young man on the old horse:

"Ah weel," he says, this ould horse, "luck you," he says, "intae ma right lug," he says, "an ye'll get a wee bit thorn."

The rider finds the thorn and throws it behind him:

When he luckit back there was a thing like a forest o thick black thorn, that a flyin midge widnae hae got through't. An this bad laird in the middle o't ye ken. An this bad laird started roarin efter him, but na! he couldnae - couldnae do naethin wi him. Couldnae get oot o this bush an he was tied in a knot.

Another magical scene is in "The Blacksmith" (II.9) when the stranger performs his miracle on the anvil after asking the blacksmith to lend him his tools:

So he went oot to the door, this young man, and he took in this young wumman, an she was aa oot o shape an ill-twisted. An ugly cratur. The smith's sittin in his chair an watchin, an he went owre tae where the coal was, put on a great big fire o coal, an blowed it up an blowed it up till the sparks were goin through the lum. He catches this young wumman an he pits her sittin on top o this, ye see, aa this red hot cinnors roon aboot her. An o course in nae time she was burnt tae a cinder ye see. So efter he saw that aa the flesh was burnt off her bones, took all the bones back oot again an he put them on top o the anvil, broke up all these bones wi the hammer, broke them up till they were just like dust. Gathered all the dust together like that, sput on it

twice or three times. Blowed air at it. All of a sudden there was a walf started tae appear at the top o this anvil, turned intae the beautifullest young woman anybody ever seen, ye see.

In "The Water of Life" (II.4) John Stewart illustrates the magic properties of The Shoes of Swiftness:

So Jack puts this shoes on and when he pit this shoes on he could feel hissel goin aa straight an rigid as a rod, know what I mean? An he looked at the top o the hill like that, an he pit his fit forrit tae walk up the mountain and his two feet went that way - Whzzzzzzzz! Right up the Glassy Mountain wi the Shoes of Swiftness. An he landed up an he fell on his side on top o the Glassy Mountain. He was out o breath, y'know, not wi his own exertions but wi excitement. So ... he lies for a while, looks down at the shoes and he takes them aff and he just turns them like that and lays them doon and the shoes were off like that, ye see!

It has been shown how story tellers remember stories by retaining a mental picture of their structure. I think it is also true to say that they are also helped by remembering imagery, scenes pictured so memorably that they live on in the story tellers' mind. I demonstrated in "A Scots Folk Version of the Voyage of Mael Duin,"²⁰ that John Stewart had kept the details of that story in his mind for about fifty years and many of these embody imagery. It can be seen even when there are several versions of the story, that the visual elements are faithfully preserved, the only differences being in terms of elaboration or embellishment.

Some of this imagery comes from the travellers' own background. The landscape, familiar enough in the folk tale tradition, was not unlike that in which my informants' forebears lived. Long roads, high mountains, dense woods, streams and lochs, castles and cottages were familiar enough to those who lived in the Scottish Highlands. Birds, dogs, hares, deer and horses they lived amongst all the time. Gold

and silver were the metals they originally worked in and for which they retained a high regard.

But the most striking imagery, like the Speaking Bird of Paradise, the crystal bridge and the Palace of the All-Seeing Eye, come from the Celtic story tradition itself, whose spirit is still alive in these story tellers, whose love of beauty endures, despite the hardship and poverty of their lives. Their imagination lifts them above it all and leads them to realms of enchantment, the Other World that is always so near at hand and open to beggar and king.

CHAPTER SEVEN - FOOTNOTES

1. David Buchan. A Scottish Ballad Book. Intro. p.1.
2. Buchan. p.3.
3. J. Mackay, ed. More West Highland Tales. p.152 "Fichaire Gobha." p.210 "Gille na Bhuidseir."
4. Jeremiah Curtin. Myths and Folklore of Ireland. pp.139-156. "The Knight of the Tricks."
5. Roger Lancelyn Green, ed. A Book of Magicians. pp.113-7.
6. Calum MacLean. Scottish Studies. Vol.2, 1958. "International Folktales in the Archives."
7. W.A. Clouston. Popular Tales and Fictions. pp.357-61.
8. Clouston. pp.103-4.
9. T.F. Crane. Italian Popular Tales. pp.103-4.
10. Crane. pp.363-4.
11. The Traditional Music and Song Association was founded in 1966 with the aim of bringing the older source singers and musicians who were the real tradition bearers, into contact with the general public and the Folk Revival, which was being commercialised. The group of people who founded it included Peter Sheppard, Hamish Henderson and Maurice Fleming. The first festival was held in Blairgowrie. Since then festivals have been held in Keith, Kinross and Kirriemuir.
12. Tocher 31, pp.46-7.
13. Tocher 31, pp.35-6.
14. Tocher 31, p.36.
15. Tocher 31, p.36.
16. Max Luthi. Once Upon a Time. Ch.10, p.135.
17. Andrew McCormick. The Tinkler Gypsies.
18. W. Simson. The History of the Gypsies. pp.317+
19. Thomas Harmon. "A Caveat for Common Cursitors." Elizabethan pamphlet. Coneycatchers and Bawdybaskets. Penguin Books. Harmondsworth Middlesex. 1972.
20. Scottish Studies. Vol.24. 1980.

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GLOSSARY

A

abeen - above
 ablow, alow - below
 affa, affy, awfy - awful
 ahint - behind
 airt - direction, area
 ane - one
 aneth - beneath
 atween - between
 auld - old
 axe, ax - ask
 aye - always

B

baffies - slippers
 baird - beard
 bairn - child
 bannock, bonnock - kind of oatcake
 bar - except
 barracade - large tent
 barrie - (cant) - good
 bene - (cant) - good
 besom - broom
 bing - pile, heap
 birlled - spun round
 blid, bluid - blood
 bothy - outhouse where unmarried farm servants ate and
 slept, used for any rough hut
 brae - hill
 braw - fine
 braxy - meat of sheep dead from natural causes
 breckan - bracken
 brecken - broken
 bree - brew, water meat has been boiled in
 breenge - push, thrust
 breezes - bellows (air)
 brunt - burnt. Also - "the brunt o his back" - length?
 buchts - sheep folds
 buck - tramp
 burkers - body snatchers
 burn - stream
 bye-name - nickname

C

cairders - tinkers
 cairry-on - to do
 canny - careful. Also cannot
 chap - knock (at door)
 chawe - work
 chitterin - shivering
 chored - (cant) - stolen
 chuckie stane - pebble
 claes - clothes
 clapped - stroked, caressed
 clout - cloth. Also "cloot"
 cockit - cocked (cockit lugs - cocked ears)

- C (Contd) collop - pancake
 contraiversy - controversy
 cottar - farm worker, countryman
 coul - (cant) - man
 cowp - knock over, fall over
 crabbit - bad tampered
 crackin - talking together in a friendly way
 craigs - rocks, crags
 cromach - shepherd's stick
 crupach - hunchback
- D daunderin - strolling
 dauner - stroll
 dik, deek - (cant) - look
 doo - dove, pigeon
 dovert - drowsed
 drookerin - telling fortunes
 dunt - blow, bump
 dyke - wall
- E eghty - eighty
 enew, eneuch - enough
- F fank - place for dipping sheep
 farrint - foreign
 feart - afraid
 feeth - free, away from (feeth o' them - away from them)
 fittit - footed, as in "three fittit pot."
 fog, foggy - moss, mossy
 forenent - in front of
 forrit, furrit - forward
- G gaads - finery
 gadgie - (cant) - man
 galluses - braces
 ged, geddie - (cant) - young man
 gellie - a tent. Also - ghillie, a servant
 gey - very
 gied - gave
 gien - given
 glamourie - magic
 gloamin - twilight
 gourach - fork (of tree)
 greetin - weepin
 grun, grund - ground
 guddle - catch (fish) with hands
 gutters, guttery - dirt, dirty

- H haet - the least thing (couldn't get a haet)
 hairy gobbit - hairy mouthed
 happed - covered
 harigalds - guts
 haver - talk, nonsense
 houlet - owl
 hurl - ride (gied him a hurl on the cart)
- J jags - thorns
 jinkin - dodging, avoiding
 joukin - dodging
- K ken - know
 kennlin, kennlet - kindling, kindled
 kirk, kirkyaird - church, churchyard
 kist - chest
- L ladeside - side of the millstream
 laird - lord
 laiverock - lark
 lauchin - laughing
 lerrick tree - larch
 lether - ladder
 loor - (cant) - money
 louse - loosen, let go
 luckit, luckin - looked, looking
 lug - ear
 luggie - small bucket
 lum - chimney (lum hat - top hat)
- M midge - mosquito
 mowded - killed, done to death
 murnin - mourning
- N nainsel - own self
 near-cut - short cut
 neep - turnip
 nerra - narrow
- O object - an afflicted or handicapped person
 (in) orginous - enormous
 oxter - armpit

P

packman - pedlar
 pappies - breasts
 pechin - panting
 peerie - spinning top
 piecie time - break from work to eat something
 perdeek - spy-hole, hole to look through
 pirn - bobbin
 pishmool - ant
 pitten - put
 plait leggit - cross legged
 plantin - clump of trees
 prabbit - poor looking
 puckle - a little
 puddens - guts
 puddock - frog

R

rash bush, buss - clump of rushes
 rauch - rough
 reed - part of cattled shed
 reekin - smoking
 reesh-rash - at random
 reist - a horse that will not go forward
 rickle (o' banes) - cluster, handful
 roosty, roosted - rusty, rusted

S

samen - same
 saut - salt
 scart - scratch
 scoor - scour
 seggets - saddle bags
 shan, shannas - (cant) - bad, badness
 share - half
 shaw - leafy top, remove leafy top (of turnip, etc.)
 sheltie - Shetland pony
 shinner - cinder
 shouder, shouther - shoulder
 skelp - slap, smack
 skint - short of money
 skirlin - shriekin
 skirly - oatmeal fried
 skittery - scraggy
 smiddy - blacksmith's shop
 sole - sill (window)
 soger - soldier
 sortin - mending, looking after
 spew - vomit
 sprach - beg (sprach her for eggs)
 stane - stone
 stardie - (cant) - jail
 steejie - (cant) - coach
 stovies - potato, onion and meat cooked on stove

S (Contd) strade legs - astride
 straik - stretch, journey
 stottin - bouncing
 strae - straw
 strath - wide valley

T teem - empty
 tentful - attentive, caring
 Terries - Territorial Army
 thon, thonder - yon, yonder
 tichtener - a good meal (to tighten the stomach)
 tickie - a little
 tile hat - top hat
 tottie - very small
 trachle, trauchle - struggle
 troch - trough

U unlike - handicapped (an unlike laddie)

W waddin - wedding
 wallsteads - gables
 walt - strong blow
 wan - one
 wastins - ruins
 wean - child
 whitterick - weasel
 widden - wooden
 widin - wading
 wur, wursels - our, ourselves

Y yes, youse - you
 yin - one
 yoke - small cart

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