

# An Rathad Cam 's An Rathad Dìreach

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## Faclan agus Fiosrachadh (Lyrics and Information)

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## An t-alltan dubh

Séist: Tha ligh an diugh 's n alltan dubh,  
'S chan urra' mi dhol fhairis air.  
Tha eagal orm aig miad an t-struth  
Nach fhaigh mi'n diugh a null air

Tha 'n t-alltan dubh cho bagarrach,  
'S e 'n dùil gun till e dhachaidh mi;  
Le thùraraich 's le thartaraich,  
Le bhagartaich 's le bhùidich.

Chì mi na daimh chràiceach thall  
'S an lagan far am b' àbhaist dhaibh;  
'S nan tiginn uair mun dàna mi  
Cha bhiodh iad slàn 's a' chunntas.

Saoil thu fhéin a Fhoinnlaigh  
An gléidh thu dhòmh-s' do ghealltanas,  
Ma gheibh sinn thar an alltan seo,  
An toll thu fear dhe'n triùir ann?

'S tha seachd bliadh'n is tamull ann  
O'n thug mi a Strath-charrainn thu;  
'S i Nic-an-t-saoir a cheannaich thu,  
'S chan aithreach leam an cùmhnant.

'S thuirt Mòrag 's i freagairt rium,  
"Na cuireadh sin bonn-eagail ort.  
Nach fhaigh sinn fear as treasa dhiubh  
Ma fhreagras do chuid fùdair."

I learned this song from the singing of the great Cape Breton Gaelic singer, Mary Jane Lamond. This song is about the flooding of a river and how the singer does not want to cross it going home. It was a popular sing-along song in Cape Breton. I love the lilting rhythm.

Chorus: There is a spate today in the little black  
brook  
And I cannot go across it.  
I fear the strength of the current  
I will not be able to traverse it today.

And the little black brook is so threatening  
Expecting that it will turn me back home  
With its rumbling and its bustling,  
Its denouncing and its babbling.

I see the antlered stags over there  
In their usual hollow;  
If I had arrived an hour before I came,  
They would have decreased in their number.

Do you really think, Finlay,  
That you will keep your promise to me,  
If we get over this brook,  
Will you put a hole in one of the three (stags) there?

Seven years and a little more have gone  
Since I took you from Strath-carron.  
It was Miss MacIntyre who bought you,  
And I do not regret the bargain.

Marion said in reply to me,  
"Do not allow that to give you cause for alarm.  
We will surely get the strongest one  
If your powder is suitable."

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## Na Rosan (copyright control)

Shuidh i ri m' thaobh  
Aig cùl ar dachaigh  
A' ghrian 's i gun neul  
A' siaradh a null  
Ach bha neul 'nar smuain  
A' toirt bhuainn a beannachd  
'S gun sunnd gun do shuidh sinn  
Greiseag bheag dlùth

'S gach flùr a bha mun cuairt  
Gu snuadh-mhor fallain  
Chuir agus dh' àraich  
A làmhnan le mùirn  
O nach truagh i bhith falbh  
'S 'ga fàgail uile  
Mo ròsain luraich  
Ò nach fuirich thu leam

Sheall i le truas  
Air an tuar 'san coltas  
Is mhothaich i 'n cràdh  
A bha 'na mo shùil  
Ach 'se thuirt i rium  
"Tha na ròsan maiseach  
A' call an lannair ann  
An dubhar a' chùil

'S nuair a sheargas am blàth  
Tog an àird iad uile  
Is cuir iad an àit  
Far am faic iad a' ghrian  
Is chì thu 'san t-samhradh  
Greann am maise  
Ach a ghaoil, chan fhaic mis' iad  
'S mi 'n impis bhith triall"

*She sat beside me  
Behind our home  
The cloudless sun  
Was shining down*

*But the cloud in our thoughts  
Deprived us of all its blessings  
And we sat without joy, close together  
For a short while*

*And every one of the flowers around us  
So beautiful and healthy  
Her own hands had planted  
And reared with joy  
Oh how sad that she must go away  
And leave them all behind  
My lovely little rose  
Won't you stay with me?*

*As she looked with regret  
On all that beauty  
She noticed the pain  
That was in my eyes  
But she only said  
"The lovely roses are losing  
Their bloom in the shadow  
Of the back of the garden*

*And when their blossoms wither  
Lift them all  
And plant them somewhere  
Where they can see the sun  
And then in summer you will see them  
In all their beauty  
But darling, I won't see them  
For I must soon pass on"*

(lyrics and translation source: <http://www.celticlyricscorner.net/compilations/narosan.htm>)

This song is a powerful song written at a time when the composer's wife was dying of cancer. She made a comment about how the roses in the yard needed to be moved so they could see the sun to grow and flourish after she passed on. I learned this song from a captivating Gaelic singer from Scotland, Màiri MacArthur, when she adjudicated at the Gaelic Mòd competitive singing festival in Vancouver, BC in 2003.

## Dòmhnall Iain Duibh

### Sèist:

Dhòmhnail 'an Duibh, Dhòmhnail lé ho  
Hi ri iùl eile  
Dhòmhnail 'an Duibh, Dhòmhnail lé ho

A Dhòmhnail a chrìdh' an tig thu 'm bliadhna

Chuala mi gun deach do bhàthadh

Ann na dam a' mhuilean-shàbhaidh

Chuirinn mo long mhòr 'gad iarraidh

Long mòr na stiomar iarainn

Gheibhinn gillean 's chosgainn biadh riuth'

Cha b' e an t-aran dubh bu bhiadh dhaibh

Ach peasair agus muic-fheòil bhiadhtha

An tè aig Domhnail gun bhi glé geal

Thug seachd bliadhn' an cuan Eirinn

Cumail cogadh ri na ceudan

Cumail Gàidhlig ri luchd Beurla

Cumail Laidean ri luchd Greugais

Nuair a thig mo Dhòmhnail-sa dhachaidh

'S cinnteach mo chìr chùil a falach

'S cinnteach siod' 's pasgan anart

### Chorus:

*Donald of Black John, Donald lè ho*

*Hi ri iùl eile*

*Donald of Black John, Donald lè ho*

*Donald, my heart, will you return this year?*

*I heard that you were drowned*

*In the dam of the saw-mill*

*I would put out my long-boat to rescue you*

*The long-boat with the iron bands*

*I would get a crew of boys and feed them well*

*Black bread would not be their food*

*But peas and pork will feed them*

*Donald's share would be worthy*

*You spent seven years on the Irish sea*

*Fighting with armies of hundreds*

*Driving Gaelic to the English-speakers*

*Driving Latin to the Greek-speakers*

*When my Donald comes home*

*Certainly my hair-combs will be covered*

*And certainly, the shroud will be folded*

Lyrics and translation source: <http://www.celticlyricscorner.net/lamond/domhnail.htm>

This is a special recording as this was the very first song I sang at a milling table. It is a song about the death of a man by drowning. I heard this song from Mary Jane Lamond. The people singing in the background are friends and locals who gathered at the Gaelic College in Cape Breton in August of 2001 to sing Gaelic songs to keep the tradition of beating a wet cloth around a milling table (or wauking as it is known in Scotland) alive. This was done traditionally by women to make raw cloth from the loom wearable or usable. It is an unaltered recording because I wanted the feeling of being there. One can sure tell that people were streaming into that cavernous room to experience a Milling Frolic!

## The Connor and Liam March

**Séisd:** An gille buidh' gur fad' a-muigh  
An gille buidh' mo laochan  
An gille buidh' gur fad' a-muigh  
An gille buidh' mo laochan

Cha toirinn bainne gobhar dhut  
No idir bainne chaorach  
Oir learn gur math an airidh thu  
Air bainne chruidh 's nan laogh thu

Bidh mis' air uisg' an lònain dhuibh  
Bidh mis' air uisg' an lònain;  
Bidh mis' air uisg' an lònain dhuibh,  
Is bainn' a' chruidh aig Mòraig!

Bidh bainn' a' chruidh aig Mòraig dhuibh,  
Bidh bainn' a' chruidh aig Mòraig;  
Bidh bainn' a' chruidh aig Mòraig dhuibh,  
Is mis' air uisg' an lònain.

This was originally "An gille dubh mo laochan" (The dark-haired lad my hero). I altered it to "An gille buidh' mo laochan" (The blond-haired lad my hero) for two special people - Connor and Liam McFayden, my nephews who are both blond. The singer is saying that only the best may be given to her son - namely cow's milk, and NOT goat's milk.

**Chorus:** The blond boy, though far away  
The blond boy, my hero  
The blond boy, though far away  
The blond boy, my hero.

I will not bring goat's milk to you  
Nor sheep's milk  
For to me, you richly deserve  
cow's milk and of the calf.

I will be on water, prattling to you

And Morag has the cow's milk!

Morag's cow's milk will be to you

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## 'Ill eileadh hò gu

'Ill eileadh ho gu  
Dh'fhalbh mo run bho chionn seachdain  
'Ill eileadh ho gu

Dh'fhalbh mo rùn bho chionn bliadhna  
Dh'fhalbh mo chiall bho chionn seachdainn

Dh'fhalbh mo rùn air a'bhàta  
Gum bu slàn a thig e dhachaigh

'S i mo nighean gile broilleach  
Gile tòrrach, cùl chleachdeadh

Leis bu mhiann a bhi rèidh riut  
Latha fèille 'sa chlachan

Tha mo cheist ort a'Dhomhnaill  
'Be tu 'n t-oganach dreachmhòr

Math thig dèise ort dhe'n t-aodach  
Tha cho daor 's a thig à Sasuinn

This song is very old and is about the loss of a loved one. This is a traditional theme in Gaelic song. The maid mourns the loss of her man who has gone to sea and left her alone. I love the mournful feeling and the tune that you can just get lost in!

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## Puirt-a-beul

Mouth Music tunes are most often played as pipe or fiddle tunes now, but do have Gaelic words. More often than not, they are songs whose words were chosen because of percussive and not poetic value. This is a traditional strathspey/reel combination.

Strathspey - Poca sil an t-sealgair - Trad.

Eadaraibh a h-uinn O! Poca sil an t-sealgair  
Eadaraibh a h-uinn O! Poca sil an t-sealgair  
Eadaraibh a h-uinn O! Poca sil an t-sealgair  
Am poc a bh'air, an sac a bh'air, am poc a bh'air's e falbh leis

Am poc a bh'air, an sac a bh'air, am poc a bh'air's e falbh leis  
Am poc a bh'air, an sac a bh'air, am poc a bh'air's e falbh leis  
Am poc a bh'air, an sac a bh'air, am poc a bh'air's e falbh leis  
H-Eadaraibh a h-uinn O! Poca sil an t-sealgair

Reel - An "number" aig Aonghas - A. McFayden © 2004 SOCAN (copyright control)

C'àit' an do chuir mi an number aig Aonghas?  
C'àit' an do chuir mi an number aig Aonghas?  
C'àit' an do chuir mi an number aig Aonghas?  
Sin agam a-seo, 's e an number aig Aonghas!

'S ann ri taobh mo phàipeir-naidheachd, pàipeir-naidheachd, pàipeir ùir',  
'S ann ri taobh mo phàipeir-naidheachd, c'àit' a'bheil mo phàipear ùir?  
'S ann ri taobh mo phàipeir-naidheachd, pàipeir-naidheachd, pàipeir ùir',  
Sin agam a-seo, 's e an number aig Aonghas!

I don't remember where I first heard the strathspey. I was attracted to it because of its driving rhythm, and forceful tune. The reel was written when I was feeling frustrated that I could not find a friend's phone number. I uttered "Cait' an do chuir mi an number aig Aonghas" (Where did I put Angus' phone number?). The song flowed from there.

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## Fàill-ill-ò agus hò ro eile / Puirt-a-beul

Fàill-ill-ò agus hò ro eile - Trad.

Fàill-ill ó agus hó ró eile,  
Fàill-ill ó agus hó ró eile,  
Fàill-ill ó agus hó ró eile,  
A fhleasgaich dhuinn, nach ann duinn a dh'éirich.

Saoil sibh fhéin nach mi 'bha truagh dheth,  
Feasgar foghair air achadh bhuana;  
A h-uile té 's a fear fhéin ri gualainn,  
'S mo leannan donn-sa air bhàrr nan cuantan.

Shiùbhlainn, shiùbhlainn, shiùbhlainn fhéin leat,  
Shiùbhlainn fada troimh choill nan geug leat;  
'S nuair bha mi òg 's air bheagan céille,  
Gur e do ghaol-sa a rinn mo léireadh.

Gheall mo mhàthair fàinne òir dhomh,  
Gheall m'athair buaile bhò dhomh;  
'S ged gheibhinn siud 's an saoghal mór leis,  
Gu mór gum b'annsa leam gaol an òigeir.

'Phiuthair ghaolaich, déan gu réidh rium,  
Cum an crodh is na laoiigh bho chéile,  
'S ged ghabh mi 'n poca 's ged dh'iarr mi 'n déirce,  
Na cumaibh uam-sa mo rogha céile.

Dé nam faicinn thu seach a' bhuaille,  
Sgealb mi 'n cuman is thilg mi 'bhuarach;  
Chuirinn fhéin mo dhà làmh mu'n cuairt dhuit,  
"S cò, a ghaoil, sin a chuamadh uam thu?"

Cinnidh sòbhraichean anns an Earrach,  
Cinnidh ùbhlán air bhàrr nan meangan,  
Bheir sud 'am chuimhne-sa póg mo leannan  
'S a h-uile té dhiubh mar bhlas na meala.

Strathspey - Calum Crubach - Trad.

Calum Crùbach as a' ghleann, cùm thall na caoraich uile,  
Calum Crùbach as a' ghleann, cùm thall na caoraich,  
Calum Crùbach as a' ghleann, cùm thall na caoraich uile,  
Calum Crùbach as a' ghleann, cùm thall na caoraich,

Cùm thall, na toir a nall, cùm thall na caoraich uile,  
Cùm thall, na toir a nall, cùm thall na caoraich,  
Cùm thall, na toir a nall, cùm thall na caoraich uile,  
Cùm thall, na toir a nall, cùm thall na caoraich.

Reel - Am muilean dubh - Trad.

'S iomadh rud saoil sibh,  
'S a' mhuilinn dubh, 's a' mhuilinn dubh;  
'S iomadh rud saoil sibh,

Tha 'm muilinn dubh air thuraman (x3)  
'S e togairt dol a dhannsa.

Tha nid na circe-fraoiche  
'S a mhuilinn dubh, 's a' mhuilinn dubh;  
Tha nid na circe-fraoiche  
'S a mhuilinn dubh o shamhraidh.

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This was recorded when I was at a "Céilidh" (or gathering) of the Vancouver Gaelic Society (An Comunn Gàidhlig Bhancoubhair) in March, 2003 and sang these songs. The first is one I love to sing around Gaels because they always join in on the chorus. It sounds just beautiful. It is a love song in which the woman is lamenting the fact that her love is at sea while she is at home alone.

I first heard the two puirt from two great Gaelic teachers, singers, and mentors, Hector MacNeil and Angus MacLeod, from Cape Breton. The tunes are well-known in Cape Breton.

## Oran an t-saighdear

(Sèisd:) 'S hì rì 'ill ò rò, thug òroinn ò,  
Hì rì hò rò, mo dheideadh,  
Hì rì hill ò, thug òroinn ò.

Air madainn dhomh 's mi sràidearachd  
Air cabhsair glas Dhùn-Eideann,  
Co thachair orm ach saighdear  
Is gun d'fhoighnich e mo sgeul dhion.

Co thachair orm ach saighdear  
Is gun d'fhoighnich e mo sgeul dhion.  
'S thuirt e "Gabh 'san t-saighdearachd  
'S bi aoibhneas ort na dheidh seo."

...  
"S bi airgead na do phocaidean  
Is or nach cuir thu feum air."

...  
'S gun tug e dha'n taigh-òsda mi  
'S gun do dh'ol sinn slaint' a cheile.

...  
'S gun d'thug e bho mo mhathar mi  
Leis an ardan nach do rinn feum dhomh

I heard this song in a Gaelic class I attended in Cape Breton taught by a wonderful teacher, Effie Rankin. It's about a soldier who was conned into joining the army and regretted it. That is my foot tapping in the background.

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## Mo ribhinn choibhneil

**Séist:** Nan robh mise 's mo ribhinn choibhneil  
Anns a'choill' far an goir an smeòrach,  
Èoin air gheugan 's iad seinn le aoibhneas  
'S a ghrian a'soillseadh gu boilsgeach  
bòidheach.

Tha do ghruaidean cho dearg 's an caorann,  
Mar ite faoilinn do mhuineal bòidheach;  
Dà shuil mhiogach a mhealladh mhiltean,  
'S do chùl snìomhain mar it' an lòn-duibh.

Thug mi gaol dhut 's chan fhaod mi àicheadh,  
Ainnir àluinn an leadain bhòidhich;  
Gaol nach caochail 's air nach tig fàilinn,  
Ach gus an càirichear leo fo'n fhòid mi.

Soiridh slàn leis an ribhinn mhàlda  
Ge b'e àite sam bi i chòmhnuidh;  
'S e mo dhùrachd gu'm bi i sàbhailt',  
'S gach sonas àigh bhi aic' fhad is beò i.

I heard this from Màiri MacArthur and decided to learn it. It is a beautiful and challenging love and loss song with an unusual twist. The man singing it acknowledges that his love found someone else and left him but wishes her well anyway, no matter where she goes.

**Chorus:** My kindly maiden and I were  
In the forest where the robins were singing  
Birds on the branches, singing with joy  
And the sun shining beautifully.

Your cheeks are as red as the mountain ash berry  
Your beautiful neck like the feather of the white gull  
Two smiling eyes, deeply enticing  
And your curled hair like the feathers of the  
blackbird

I gave you love and I cannot renounce  
Beautiful maiden of the beautiful tresses  
Love without ending, and that will never fail  
Until I am buried in the ground.

Healthy farewell to my gentle maiden  
In whichever place she may live  
Tis my good will that she will keep  
And every joyful happiness be with her for as long as  
she lives.

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## Illean Aigh

Séist: Illean aigh ò hu ò ho  
Chalaibh aigh iùraibh ò ho  
Illean aigh ò hu ò ho

Dh'éirich mi moch madainn earraich,  
Thug mi gu siubhal nam beannaibh.

Thug mi gu siubhal nam beannaibh,  
Thachair Dughall rium 'na dheannaibh.

Thachair Dughall...  
'S e ri fiadh bho bheinn gu baile.

As a'sin gu beul na mara.

Dh'iarraidh e luaidh clàr is salann.

Bàta sin dhol dha na h-Earadh.

Sgiobair bh'innt' air cheathar fearaibh

Chuireadh i thro chuan 'na h'ainneoin.

B'fheàrr leam-fhin na bonn 's a luachair.

Donnachadh Bàn a bhith le thruaigh ann.

Glaodh arachais 'ga fhuairheil.

Rinn e luchdmhor làidir, luath i.

Aigeannach gu siubhal chuan i.

'S iomadh faoileag bhàn a bhuail i.

'S iomadh sgeir a rinn i gluasad.

Mun a ruiginn Eilean Uaine.

This was recorded at a Milling Frolic in Sydney, Nova Scotia in August of 2003. I first heard this song sung by Mary Jane Lamond. It is a "woven song" in which the last line of the preceding verse becomes the first line of the next verse. It is about a man who goes out walking one day in the mountains and ends up at the mouth of the sea. There is one extra verse near the end that is not in any version that I have ever seen. I learnt this verse from Bucky Carmichael of Cape Breton one year after a ceilidh in Baddeck in which I sang this song. He pulled me aside and taught it to me.