

Springhyme SPR 1004

SONG BOOK

OSSIAN

springhyme

‘OSSIAN’, named after the legendary 3rd century Celtic bard and folk hero, was formed in 1976, and this was their first, ground-breaking album of Scottish/ Celtic music. The band went on to record a series of albums on their own ‘Iona’ label.

All four members of the band are from Glasgow, but George and Billy Jackson are of Irish extraction and they developed a taste for Celtic traditions on the family croft in the Donegal Gaeltacht. John Martin comes from a long line of Aberdeenshire fiddlers and still plays the fiddle owned at one time by his grandfather. Billy Ross has his roots in Skye, and from this background he inherited his love of Gaelic song.

The band play a wide variety of mainly Scottish traditional music ranging from their lively jigs and reels to the plaintive ‘Oh my Country’, a sad tale of an emigrant from Uist who arrives in Manitoba to find a cold and hostile land.

1. THE CORNCRAKE (Song)
I HAE A WIFE O MA AIN (Jig)
2. SITTING IN THE STERN OF A BOAT (MI ‘M SHUIDH’ AN DEIREADH BÀTA) (Slow Air)
3. MA ROVIN EYE (Song)
4. Ó MO DHÙTHAICH (OH MY COUNTRY) (Gaelic Song)/ OSSIAN’S LAMENT
5. THE 72nd HIGHLANDERS FAREWELL TAE ABERDEEN (Pipe March)
THE FAVOURITE DRAM (Bumpkin)
6. AE FOND KISS (Song)
7. BROSE AND BUTTER (Song)
MONAGHAN JIG
JACKSON’S BOTTLE OF BRANDY (Jig)
8. MUSIC OF SPEY (Slow Air)
9. LET ME IN THIS AE NICHT (Song)
10. SPOOTASKERRY (Shetland Reels)
THE WILLOW KISHIE/ SIMON’S WART
11. OIDHCHE MHATH LEIBH (GOODNIGHT TO YOU) (Gaelic Song)

1. THE CORNCRAKE I HAE A WIFE O MA AIN

Billy Ross – lead vocal & dulcimer; Billy Jackson – whistle, small pipes & vocal; George Jackson – guitar, mandolin & vocal; John Martin – fiddle, cello & vocal.

A traditional love song, *The Corncrake* comes from south west Scotland – mentioning the town of Ayr and the river Doune which flows to the sea just south of the town. The sound of the corncrake (a harsh rasping call which might not be thought particularly romantic) has now become rare in mainland Scotland with the loss of meadow habitat. The song is known throughout Scotland and is in the *Greig-Duncan Folk-Song Collection*.

This is followed by the air of another song, in jig time – *I Hae a Wife o Ma Ain* which was written by Robert Burns and contributed by him to Johnson’s *Scots Musical Museum* in 1792.

The Corncrake

- 1: Oh the lass that I loed best of all was handsome
young and fair,
Wi her I spent some merry nights upon the banks
o Ayr;
Wi her I spent some merry nights by yon wee burnie
rows,
Whaur the echo mocks the corncrakes among the
whinny knowes.
- 2: Oh we loed each other dearly and disputes we
seldom had,
As constant as the pendulum her heart beats always
glad;
We sought for joy and found it by yon wee burnie
rows,
Whaur the echo mocks the corncrakes among the
whinny knowes.

3: Ah ye maidens fair and pleasure dames drive tae
the banks o Doune,
An ye'll dearly pay for every scent tae the barber for
perfume;
But rural joy is free tae aa whaur scented clover
grows,
Whaur the echo mocks the corncrakes among the
whinny knowes.

4: Oh the lass that I loed best of all was handsome
young and fair,
Wi her I spent some merry nights upon the banks
o Ayr;
Wi her I spent some merry nights by yon wee burnie
rows,
Whaur the echo mocks the corncrakes among the
whinny knowes.

2. SITTING IN THE STERN OF A BOAT (MI 'M SHUIDH' AN DEIREADH BATA)

Billy Jackson – clarsach; George Jackson – fiddle; John Martin – fiddle;
Billy Ross – whistle.

This beautiful slow air was composed in the 18th century by the Rev. William McLeod and represents his thoughts as he sailed away from his native Bracadale in the Isle of Skye to take up a parish in Argyll. Taken from Captain Simon Fraser's *Knockie Collection* of 1816.

3. MA ROVIN EYE

Billy Ross – lead vocal & guitar; Billy Jackson – whistle & vocal; George Jackson – mandolin & vocal; John Martin – fiddle.

In one form or another this song is still widely popular – in Ireland as *As I Roved Out*, in England as *Seventeen Come Sunday*. This version is from the North East of Scotland.

1: As I gaed o'er yon Hieland hill,
I met a bonny lassie;

And she gied me a wink wi the tail o her ee,
And faith but she was saucy.

2: "Where are ye gaun my bonnie lass?
Where are ye gaun my honey?
Where are ye gaun my bonnie lass?"
"For baccy for my grannie."

Chorus:

Wi ma rovin eye,
Fol di doodle die,
Wi ma rovin fol di derry,
Wi ma rovin eye.

3: "Oh what is your name my bonnie lass?
What is your name my honey?
What is your name my bonnie lass."
"Oh they cry me bonnie Annie."

4: "And how old are you my bonnie lass?
How old are you my honey?
How old are you my bonnie lass?"
"I'll be sixteen come Sunday."

5: "Whaur dae ye sleep my bonnie lass?
Whaur dae ye sleep my honey?
Whaur dae ye sleep my bonnie lass?"
"In a wee bed next my mammy."

6: "Oh gin I were tae come tae your hoose then,
When the moon is shining clearly;
Would you arise and let me in,
So yer mother wouldn't hear me?"

7: Oh when I went doun tae the lassie's door,
I found that she was wakened,
Oh but lang, lang e'er the mornin come,
Her mother heard us talkin.

8: She ran tae the grate tae poke up the coals,
Tae see gin she could ken me;
But I kicked the auldwife intae the fire,
And bid my heels defend me.

9: "Oh it's soldier, soldier marry me noo,
It's either noo or never;
Oh soldier, soldier marry me noo,
For I am done forever."

10: "Come o'er the burn my bonnie lass,
Blink o'er the burn my honey;
For you are a sweet and a kindly lass,
For all your cankered mammy."

4. Ó MO DHÙTHAICH (OH MY COUNTRY) OSSIAN'S LAMENT

Billy Ross – lead vocal; Billy Jackson – clarsach & flute; George Jackson
– fiddle; John Martin – fiddle.

The song *Ó mo Dhùthaich* was collected in South Uist by Margaret Fay Shaw and is in her 1955 collection *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist*. Composed by a native of South Uist, Allan MacPhee, as a lament it tells of the hardships he endured – expelled from Skye during the Highland clearances only to experience the even harsher conditions of the Canadian winter in Manitoba. *Ossian's Lament* is an ancient tune to which it is said the Ossianic bardic poems were chanted.

1: Ó mo dhùthaich, 's tu th'air m'aire,
Uibhist chùmhraidh ùr nan gallan,
Far a faighte na daoine' uaisle,
Far 'm bu dual do Mhac 'ic Ailein.

2: Tìr a' mhurain, tìr an eòrna,
Tìr 's am pailt a h-uile seòrsa,
Far am bi na gillean òga
Gabhail òran 's 'g òl an leanna.

3: Thig iad ugainn, carach, seòlta,
Gus ar mealladh far ar n-eòlais;
Molaidh iad dhuinn Manitòba,
Dùthaich fhuar gun ghual, gun mhòine.

4: Cha ruig mi leas a bhith 'ga innse,
Nuair a ruigear, 's ann a chitèar,
Samhradh goirid, foghar sìtheil,
Geamhradh fada na droch-shìde.

5: Nam biodh agam fhìn do stòras,
Dà dheis aodaich, paidhir bhrogan,
Agus m'fharadh bhith 'nam phòca,
'S ann air Uibhist dheanainn seòladh.

Oh My Country (translation)

1: Oh my country, of thee I am thinking,
Fragrant fresh Uist of the handsome youths,
Where may be seen young noblemen,
Where once was the heritage of Clanranald.

2: Land of bent grass, land of barley,
Land of all things in plenty,
Where there are young men and youths,
A place of songs and drinking ale.

3: They come to us, cunning and deceitful,
From our homes they would entice us;
To us they praise Manitoba,
A cold country without coal or peat.

4: To tell you of it I need not trouble,
For when one arrives it may be seen,
A short summer, a peaceful autumn,
And a long winter of bad weather.

5: If I was in possession of the wealth,
Of two suits of clothes and a pair of shoes,
And if the fare was in my pocket,
Then for Uist I would be sailing.

**5. THE 72nd HIGHLANDERS FAREWELL
TAE ABERDEEN
THE FAVOURITE DRAM**

Billy Jackson – clarsach; George Jackson – fiddle; John Martin – fiddle;
Billy Ross – whistle.

The first is a traditional North East pipe march, the second an old set dance tune in 9/8 (or slip jig time) from the Simon Fraser collection where it is referred to as a ‘bumpkin’ or Highland bacchanalian.

6. AE FOND KISS

Billy Ross – vocal & guitar; Billy Jackson – clarsach; George Jackson – mandolin; John Martin – fiddle.

Perhaps the most famous of all Scottish love songs, written by Robert Burns on parting with Clarinda for the last time in 1791, the song was first published in Johnson’s *Scots Musical Museum* in 1792.

1: Ae fond kiss and then we sever,
Ae fareweel and then forever;
Deep in heart wrung tears I’ll pledge thee,
Warring sighs and groans I’ll wage thee.

2: Who shall say that fortune grieves him,
While the star of hope she leaves him?
Oh me nae cheerfu twinkle lights me,
Dark despair around benights me.

3: I’ll ne’er blame my partial fancy,
Nothing could resist my Nancy;
Oh but tae see her was tae loe her,
Oh loe but her and loe forever.

4: Had we never loved sae kindly?
Had we never loved sae blindly?
Never met, or never parted,
We had ne’er been broken hearted.

5: Fare thee weel thou first and fairest,
Fare thee weel thou best and dearest;
Oh thine be ilka joy and treasure,
Peace, enjoyment, love and pleasure.

6: Ae fond kiss and then we sever,
Ae fareweel, alas for ever;
Deep in heart wrung tears I’ll pledge thee,
Warring sighs and groans I’ll wage thee.

**7. BROSE AND BUTTER
MONAGHAN JIG
JACKSON’S BOTTLE OF BRANDY**

Billy Ross – lead vocal & guitar; Billy Jackson – clarsach, whistle & small pipes; George Jackson – whistle & flute; John Martin – fiddle.

The first is a nonsense song – essentially Lowland Scots ‘mouth music’, equivalent to the Highland Gaelic *port a beul* that was used as dance music in the absence of instruments. The song has a particular interest as it was one of the first songs collected by Robert Burns in around 1785 and is in Burns’ *Merry Muses of Caledonia*. The song is followed by two Irish jigs.

1: Oh Johnny got brose, brose,
Johnny got brose and butter
Oh Johnny got brose, brose,
An aa the lave wanted their supper. [i.e. all the others

2: Jenny was up in the loft,
And Johnny wad fain have been at her;
There came a strong wind frae the west,
Aa the windows made clatter.

3: Oh in a goose is guid meat,
A hen is a boss and a bother;
In pie there’s muckle deceit,
There’s nothing like brose and butter.

4: Oh Johnny got brose, brose,
Johnny got brose and butter
Oh Johnny got brose, brose,
An aa the lave wanted their supper.

8. MUSIC OF SPEY

Billy Jackson – clarsach; George Jackson – fiddle; John Martin – fiddle;
Billy Ross – whistle.

A fine slow air by the Scottish fiddler, ‘strathspey king’ James Scott Skinner, from his *Miller of Hirm* collection of 1881. The piece was inspired by one of the great salmon rivers of the North East that flows through whisky distilling country from the Grampian mountains to the Moray Firth.

9. LET ME IN THIS AE NICHT

Billy Ross – lead vocal & guitar; Billy Jackson – small pipes; George Jackson – fiddle & flute; John Martin – fiddle & cello.

This is one of a whole class of songs referred to as ‘night visiting songs.’ Robert Burns knew *Let Me In This Ae Nicht* as a traditional folk song and this is his adaptation.

1: “Oh lassie are ye sleepin yet?
Or are thou wauken, I wad wait?
For love has bound me hand an foot,
An I wad fain be in Jo.”

Chorus:

“Oh let me in this ae nicht
This ae, ae, ae nicht,
For pity’s sake this ae nicht,
Oh rise an let me in Jo.”

2: “Thou hear’st the winter wind an weet,
Nae star blinks through the drivin sleet,
Oh tak pity on my weary feet,
An shield me frae the rain Jo.”

3: “Oh the bitter blast that round me blows,
Unheeded howls, unheeded faas,
Oh the coldness o thy hert’s the cause,
Of aa my grief an pain Jo.”

4: “Oh tell na me o wind an rain,
Upbraid na me wi cauld disdain;
Ah gae back the gait ye cam again,
I winna let ye in Jo.”

5: “Oh the bird that charmed the summer’s day,
Is now the cruel fowler’s prey,
Ah let witless, trusting woman say,
How aft her fate’s the same Jo.”

6: “For I tell ye noo this ae nicht,
This ae, ae, ae nicht,
For aince an aa this ae nicht,
I winna let ye in Jo.”

10. SPOOTASKERRY THE WILLOW KISHIE SIMON’S WART

John Martin – fiddle; Billy Jackson – whistle; George Jackson – mandolin;
Billy Ross – guitar.

Three Shetland reels – composed by three different masters of the form, the first by Ian Burns refers to the ‘spoot’ or spout of water rising in rough seas over a ‘skerry’ – a partly submerged rock, and was the old name for his great aunt’s house at Southness. The second, by Willie Hunter junior, refers to the woven willow basket or ‘kishie’ that was strapped to the back and used in Shetland for carrying peats. The third, by Willie Hunter senior, is named after a stone built look-out station or ‘wart’, this particular one – Simon’s Wart, or Seoman’s as it is pronounced, being in the parish of Nesting.

11. OIHCHE MHATH LEIBH (GOODNIGHT TO YOU)

Billy Ross – lead vocal & guitar; Billy Jackson – clarsach; George Jackson – whistle; John Martin – fiddle & cello.

A Gaelic ‘parting song’ of the 1890s composed by Iain MacPhaidein of Mull. *‘Not an instrument played wakens my thoughts with happiness as songs from the lips of maidens – Goodnight and blessings with you.’*

1: Soraidh leibh is oidhche mhath leibh,
Oidche mhath leibh ‘s beannachd leibh;
Guidheam slàinte ‘ghnàth bhi mar ribh,
Oidhche mhath leibh ‘s beannachd leibh.

2: Chan eil inneal-ciùil a ghleusar,
‘Dhùisgeas smuain mo chléibh gu aoibh,
Mar ni duan o bheul nan caileag,
Oidhche mhath leibh, beannachd leibh.

3: Thuit ar crann air saoghal carach,
‘S coma siud, tha ‘mhaitheas leinn,
Bidh sinn beò an dòchas ro-mhath,
Oidhche mhath leibh, beannachd leibh.

Good Night to You (translation)

1: Farewell and goodnight to you,
Goodnight and blessings with you,
I wish you always good health,
Goodnight and blessings with you.

2: There is not an instrument played,
That wakens my thoughts with happiness,
As songs from the lips of maidens,
Goodnight and blessings with you.

3: Our lot has fallen in a deceitful world,
No matter, its goodness is with us,
We will live in good hope,
Goodnight and blessings with you.

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Credits:

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Engineer: Colin Nicolson

Production: Peter Shephard

Original Sleeve Design: Colin Brown

Released: Originally released July 1977. Remastered and released in cd format with full song texts in 1997.

Additional design: Geyguid Design Associates

Other recordings on SPRINGTHYME include:

Tom Hughes: Border Fiddle (1005). **John Watt & Davey Stewart:** Shores of the Forth (1002). **Foundry Bar Band** (1007), On the Road (1012), Rolling Home (1026). **Bill Black Scottish Dance Band:** Shepherd’s Choice (1008), Coast to Coast (1023), A Reel Cracker (1033) & The Dawning (1037). **Mirk:** Tak a Dram (1009). **Sprangeon** (1013). **Bothy Greats** (1014). **Jim Reid:** I Saw the Wild Geese Flew (1015). **Savourna Stevenson:** Ticked Pink (1016). **Coorse & Fine:** Songs and Ballads of Dundee (1017). **An Teallach Ceilidh Band:** Plough and the Stars (1018) & Drops of Brandy (1028). **Duncan Williamson:** Mary & the Seal & other Folk Tales (1019). **Jimmy McBeath:** Wild Rover (1020). **Lizzie Higgins:** Princess of the Thistle (1021). **Iain McLachlan:** Island Heritage (1022). **Angus Grant:** Highland Fiddle (1024). **Jeannie Robertson:** The Great Scots Ballad Singer (1025). **Billy Ross & John Martin:** Braes of Lochiel (1029). **Aly Bain & Young Champions** (1032). **Jim Crawford:** On the Melodeon (1034). **The Leda Trio:** Airs for the Seasons (1036). **Jane Turriff:** Singin is Ma Life (1038). **Jock Duncan:** Ye Shine Whar Ye Stan! (1039). **Shephard, Spiers & Watson:** They Smiled As We Cam In (1042). **Shephard, Spiers & Watson:** Over the High Hills (1043).

SPRINGTHYME RECORDS

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OSSIAN



BILLY JACKSON:
Celtic Harp, Uilleann Pipes,
Whistle, Vocals

JOHN MARTIN:
Fiddle, Mandolin, Cello, Vocals

GEORGE JACKSON:
Fiddle, Mandolin, Flute,
Whistle, Guitar, Vocals

BILLY ROSS:
Lead Vocals, Guitar,
Whistle, Dulcimer

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