I Saw The Wild Geese Flee Jim Reid





JIM REID'S 'Wild Geese' album, first issued in 1984, immediately established him as one of Scotland's finest singers. With Arbroath's famous Foundry Bar Band, Jim Reid was for many years a weel kent face at festivals and ceilidhs throughout Scotland and Jim's song tracks on the band's albums have provided some of their most popular numbers. Here in this re-issue is Jim's selection of songs ranging from his own compositions *Vinney Den* and *The Spark among the Heather* to the lovely traditional ballads *Bogie's Bonnie Belle* and *The Shearin's No for You*. The title song *The Wild Geese* was written as a poem by the Angus poet Violet Jacob and set to music by Jim. Old ceilidh favourites include *Lassie withe Yellow Coatie* and *Flower of Northumberland*, and Jim gives his own treatment to the 'golden oldie' *Rowan Tree*.

The Musicians:

Jim Reid – vocals, guitar and mouthorgan Bob Dewars – accordion Chae Geddes – fiddle Sandy Beattie – bass

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1. THE WILD GEESE/ NORLAND WIND

"Far abune the Angus straths I saw the wild geese flee – A lang, lang skein o' beatin' wings wi' their heids toward the sea." Set to music by Jim, this was originally written as a poem by Violet Jacob in 1915. The song is also known under the alternative title *Norland Wind*.

- "Oh tell me fit was on yer road ye roarin Norland wind?
 As ye come blawin frae the land that's never frae ma mind.
 Ma feet they traivel England but I'm deein for the North."
 "Ma man, I saw the siller tides rin up the Firth o Forth."
- 2: "Aye wind, I ken them weel eneuch an fine they fa and rise, And fain I'd feel the creepin mist on yonder shore that lies. But tell me as ye pass them by fit saw ye on the way?" "Ma man, I rocked the rovin gulls that sail abin the Tay." 3: "Bit saw ye naethin leein wind afore ye come tae Fife? For there's muckle lyin 'yont the Tay that's mair tae me nor life." "Ma man, I swept the Angus braes that ye hivna trod for years." "Oh wind, forgie a hameless loon that canna see for tears " 4: "And far abin the Angus straths I saw the wild geese flee, A lang, lang skein o beatin wings wi their heids toward the sea.

And aye their cryin voices trailed ahint them on the air.""Oh wind, hae mercy, haud your wheesht for I daurna listen mair."

Words by Violet Jacob. Music by Jim Reid. Published by Springthyme Music.

2. LASSIE WI THE YELLOW COATIE

The Foundry Bar Band never recorded this, but it has long been a favourite at ceilidhs and Jim often sang it with the band – not only a lovely song, but a good old time waltz.

1: "Lassie wi the yellow coatie, Wud ye wad a muirland jockie? Lassie wi the yellow coatie, Wud ye busk and gang wi me?"

2: "I hae meal and milk in plenty, I hae kale and cakes fu dainty, I hae a but and ben fu gentie, [i.e. comely But I want a wife like thee."

3: Ower the lea and through the boggie, Wi ma lassie and ma doggie, Nane on earth wud be sae vogie, [i.e. happy As ma lass and I wud be.

4: "Haste ye lassie tae ma bosom, While the roses are in blossom, Time is precious dinna lose them, Flooers wud fade and so will we."

5: "Lassie wi the yellow coatie, Wud ye wad a muirland jockie? Lassie wi the yellow coatie, Wud ye busk and gang wi me?

Wud ye busk and gang wi me?"

3. THE SHEARIN'S NO FOR YOU

This traditional song has rarely been published, but is in fact widely known in a number of different versions and must date back at least to the 1700s. Around 1820, Thomas Lyle of Paisley used the tune for his famous song *Kelvingrove*. The song points to the consequences of love: no longer can the lass "whose belly is rowin fu" (i.e. is pregnant) enjoy herself at the dancing, or work in the fields with the shearing hook at harvest time. Jeannie Robertson the Aberdeen traditional singer recorded the song under the title *Tak the Buckles Frae Your Sheen*. (Roud 4845)

1: "Oh the shearin's no for you ma bonnie lassie O, Oh the shearin's no for you ma bonnie lassie O, Oh the shearin's no for you for yer back it winna boo, And yer belly's rowin fu ma bonnie lassie O."

2: "Dae ye mind yon banks o Ayr ma bonnie lassie O? Dae ye mind yon banks o Ayr ma bonnie lassie O? Dae ye mind yon banks o Ayr when ye held me in yer snare,

And yer love ye did declare ma bonnie lassie O?"

3: "Tak the buckles frae yer sheen ma bonnie lassie O, Tak the buckles frae yer sheen ma bonnie lassie O, Tak the buckles frae yer sheen for ye've married sic a loon,

And yer dancin days are deen ma bonnie lassie O."

4: "Tak the ribbons frae yer hair ma bonnie lassie O, Tak the ribbons frae yer hair ma bonnie lassie O, Tak the ribbons frae yer hair and let doun yer ringlets fair,

For ye've noucht but want and care ma bonnie lassie O."

5: "Oh the shearin's no for you ma bonnie lassie O, Oh the shearin's no for you ma bonnie lassie O, Oh the shearin's no for you for yer back it winna boo, And yer belly's rowin fu ma bonnie lassie O."

4. STOBBIE PARLIAMENT PICNIC

Stobswell on the outskirts of Dundee is at the junction of six main roads and at one time was a favourite meeting place (or parliament) for local worthies. Jim was born and brought up nearby and remembers hearing their tales of times past. His grandfather built the Maryfield Stables at Stobswell and ran the horse-drawn Forfar bus. The song, first published around 1908 and rewritten by Jim, is about the annual picnic outing for the old men of Stobbie.

1: In the shelter o the shelter at the top of Albert Street, There's a sturdy crowd of veterans who regularly meet; Discuss the situation in a house of common style,

An they hech an they pech an they haver an they're happy as the while.

Wi ma fal lal lal di ma ral di dal, Ma fal lal lal di day.

2: Ae day while hot debate was on, Jamie Reid cam near,

"I think we'll organise a drive while summer days are here."

The auld lads said it wad be great the countryside tae see, Says Jamie, "I'll get oot the brake, just leave it up tae me."

Wi ma fal lal lal di ma ral di dal,

Ma fal lal lal di day.

3: The plan was soon adopted and arrangements duly made, Wharby the outin wad tak place and aa expenses paid;

There was fellowship and freedom and refreshments beyond praise,

'Twas the rarest and the fairest and the merriest of days. Wi ma fal lal lal di ma ral di dal, Ma fal lal lal di day.

4: He drove the brake tae Tullybaccart, then Kinclaven Bridge,

What they had a marvellous picnic on dismounting from the rig;

The weather was sae kind tae them, the sun shone aa the while,

The return journey took them roun by Meigle and Newtyle. Wi ma fal lal lal di ma ral di dal, Ma fal lal lal di day.

5: So come aa ye that's gaithered here tae welcome them aa hame,

This trip has gained itself a place in Stobbie's hall of fame;

An while ye're cheering ane an aa, just let me hear yer cries

Of thanks for Jamie Reid's horse brake an Durkie's tasty pies. Wi ma fal lal lal di ma ral di dal,

Ma fal lal lal di day.

5. UPON THE MOSS O BURRELDALE

The song celebrates the events at a traveller camp on Burreldale Moss on the night before Michael Fair - an important annual cattle and horse market held at the Kirktoun of Kinkell on the east bank of the River Don near Inverurie (ca. 1600s to 1880s). The Moss itself is about 3 miles east of the ruins of the mediaeval Kinkell church. This old song was likely the inspiration for the stage song composed by George Morris around 1930. Jim got his version from the traditional singer the late Christina Stewart at a ceilidh in her house in Fetterangus. Jane Turriff, the well known ballad singer, is Christina Stewart's daughter. (Roud 1876)

 There were Stewarts, McKenzie and McPhee, Neatly they did plait their knees; [i.e. sit cross-legged Neatly they did plait their knees, Upon the Moss o Burreldale.

2: It was on the nicht o auld Kinkell, They filled their belly fu o ale; Filled their bellies fu o ale, Upon the Moss o Burreldale. 3: Now the bonniest laddie on the green, Was a heather merchant cried McQueen; Silver buckles on his sheen, Upon the Moss o Burreldale.

4: Then he blew his bags, he played a reel, They danced the dance wad fleg the deil, And then they toasted auld Lochiel, Upon the Moss o Burreldale.

5: Now the women fought wi jug and pail, Tae see if they could sell their ale; Neatly as they faced the gale, Upon the Moss o Burreldale.

6: Now the auld man bein on the booze, Ahent the dyke tae hae a snooze; [i.e. behind the wall McLaren woke him wi the news, Aboot the row at Burreldale.

Hum de free fa dum di day etc.

7: There was Hieland Rory through the whins, Painted faces and broken shins; Painted faces and broken shins, Upon the Moss o Burreldale.

8: It was on a nicht o auld Kinkell, They filled their belly fu o ale; Filled their bellies fu o ale, Upon the Moss o Burreldale.

6. UP THE NORAN WATER

The poem was published as *Shy Geordie* in Helen Cruickshank's first collection, *Up the Noran Water*, in 1934. In her writing she uses the natural Scots language of the Angus countryside that she had from childhood. Her innate sympathy for the country people shines through her writing and never more so than in *Shy Geordie* with her depiction of the folk of the Noranside in their warm feeling for quiet

Annie who would never name the father of her young child, and of Geordie who wishes that he was the lucky lad. The Noran Water flows into the South Esk near Brechin.

 Up the Noran Water In by Inglismaddy, Annie's got a bairnie That hasna got a daddy.
 Some think it's Tammas's An some think it's Chay's; An naebody expectit it, Wi Annie's quiet ways.

2: Up the Noran Water The bonnie little mannie Is dandlit and cuddled close By Inglismaddy's Annie. Wha the bairnie's faither is The lassie never says; But some think it's Tammas's, And ithers think it's Chay's.

3: Up the Noran Water The country folk are kind: And wha the bairnie's faither is They dinna muckle mind. But oh! the bairn at Annie's breist, The love in Annie's ee — Wad mak me wish wi aa ma micht That the lucky lad wis me!

> And oh! the bairn at Annie's breist, The love in Annie's ee — Wad mak me wish wi aa ma micht That the lucky lad wis me!

Words by Henen Cruickshank. Music by Jim Reid. Published by Springthyme Music.

7. BOGIE'S BONNIE BELLE

Apowerful love song and bothy ballad well known throughout North-East Scotland. The farmer 'Bogieside o Cairney' or 'Bogie' for short, did not approve when his daughter Belle fell pregnant to one of his fee'd farm servants. Belle runs off with a 'tinkler fae Huntly toun' – and 'wi jeely pans and ladles she scoors the country roun.' (Roud 2155)

1: Ae Witsuntide at Huntly toun, 'Twas there I did agree, Wi auld Bogieside, the fairmer, A sixmonths for tae fee.

2: Noo Bogie wis a hungery chiel, An this I knew fu well; But he had a lovely dochter, An her name wis Isabelle.

3: Noo Belle she wis the bonniest lass, In aa the countryside; It wis very soon I lost ma hert, Tae the Belle o Bogieside.

4: An often in the summertime, I'd wander wi ma dear; Tae watch the trouties loupin, By Bogie's water clear.

5: I taen her by the middle sma, An I ca'd her ma wee dear; 'Twas there I taen ma will o her By Bogie's water clear.

6: Noo nine lang months had passed an gane, An she brocht forth a son; An auld Bogie he sent efter me, Tae see what could be done.

7: I said that I wad mairry her, But na, that wad nae dae; For I'm nae match for Bogie's Belle, An she's nae match for me.

8: An noo I've left auld Huntlyside, I've even broke ma fee; For I couldna bear tae see ma dear Condemned tae misery.

9: Noo I hear she's wad tae a tinkler chap That cam ower fae Huntly toun; An wi jeely pans an ladles She scoors the country roun.

10: An mebbe she's gotten a better lad, Auld Bogie canna tell; Sae fareweel ye lads o Huntlyside An Bogie's Bonnie Belle.

8. FLOWER OF NORTHUMBERLAND

A concise version of this popular ballad of the fair flower of Northumberland who falls in love with a prisoner and helps him escape over the border to Scotland. (Child 25)

 A maid went by the prison door, Maids with whiles is easy won,
 And she spied a prisoner a-standin there A-wishing he was in fair Scotland.

 It's, "Oh fair maid wad ye pity me?" Maids with whiles is easy won,
 "Wad ye steal the key and let me gang free? And I'll mak ye my lady in fair Scotland."

3: She went untae her faither's stable, Maids with whiles is easy won, And she's stolen the steed that wis baith fleet and able, Tae cairry them on tae fair Scotland.

4: And when they cam untae a moss, Maids with whiles is easy won, He's bad her licht aff her faither's best horse, And return again tae Northumberland.

5: And when she cam tae her faither's ha, Maids with whiles is easy won,

She's looted her low amangst them aa, [i.e. bowed down Although she's the flooer o Northumberland.

 Then up spoke her faither and he spoke bold, Maids with whiles is easy won,

"How could ye dae so at fifteen years old And you the flooer o Northumberland."

7: Then up spoke her mother she spoke wi a smile, "Maids with whiles is easy won;

Oh ye're no the first one that he has beguiled,

And ye're welcome back hame tae Northumberland."

9. THE FOUNDRY BAR

The earliest version of this song in praise of Arbroath's famous musical pub was written by the local farmer Angus McPherson. Jim later added a few verses (3, 4 & 5).

 Oot alang Millgate an doun by the broo, Ye'll find a wee door that is welcoming you;
 Whar ye get the best service in Arbroath by far,
 When ve met Davie Stott o the Foondry Bar.

Foondry Bar, the reek rollin doun tae the sea, My desire is always tae be near – the Foondry Bar.

2: Noo the furnishins lavish, expense didnae lack, When ye gang tae the bog ye'd tae turn yer back; There's darts and there's dominoes, the best onywhar, The night life o Arbroath is the Foondry Bar.

3: Bit the pub wis taen ower by Bella an Roy, An the bog renovations made peein a joy; There's a place for a woman an ane for a man, An ye jist caw a handle tae flush oot the pan. 4: And when Bella taen ower then aabody kent, What *These are my Mountains* actually meant; Closing time cam an no bell could we hear, Well she jist gave a birl an the hale place wis clear.

5: But what maks 'The Foondry' abin aa the rest, Is the musical evenings – the finest and best; So pit on yer coat, we'll go doun for a jar, Or a tune, or a song, at the Foondry Bar.

10. BUSK BUSK BONNIE LASSIE

A lovely traditional song from the Stewart family of Blairgowrie that has become widely popular in recent years. The song has a superb chorus, so sing and join in –'Busk, busk bonnie lassie and come awa wi me, and I'll tak ye tae Glen Isla near bonnie Glen Shee.' (Roud 832)

1: "Dae ye see yon high hills, Aa covered ower wi snaw? They hae pairted mony the true love, And they'll soon pairt us twa. Busk, busk bonnie lassie and come awa wi me, And Ull where ye are Clear led a near bearing Clear Shae

And I'll tak ye tae Glen Isla near bonnie Glen Shee."

2: "Dae ye see yon shepherd, As he gaes alang, Wi his plaidie roun aboot him, And his sheep they graze on?"

3: "Dae ye see yon soldiers, As they march alang, Wi their muskets on their shoulders, And their broadswords hingin doun?"

4: "Dae ye see yon high hills, Aa covered ower wi snaw? They hae pairted mony the true love, And they'll soon pairt us twa. Busk, busk bonnie lassie and come awa wi me, And I'll tak ye tae Glen Isla near bonnie Glen Shee."

11. THE SPARK AMONG THE HEATHER

From the early 1800s onwards, thousands of ordinary men, women and children were driven from their homes and their land in the highlands and islands of Scotland. These 'clearances' allowed the landlords to introduce sheep and gain greater profit. The crofters of Glendale in Skye formed a Land League in 1882 which eventually (by 1887) resulted in an Act of Parliament to stop such evictions.

1: When they brought us all together Told us that we had to go Leave our homes that we were born in Leave the only life we know.

2: We were poor but honest crofters Working hard so we might stay On the land our fathers gave us Ne'er thought we'd be forced away.

3: We replied, "We'll never leave home, Never set sail o'er the sea; Let the police come and the soldiers, To leave home we won't agree."

4: Others have been put on board ships Sailed away out o'er the deep; Then the landlords burned their houses To make way for flocks of sheep.

5: Then along came John McPherson, Humble crofter from Glendale; Held a meeting, formed a land league, For his efforts thrown in jail.

6: But the spark amang the heather Soon became a burning flame; And the highlanders united Vowed they'd never leave their hame. 7: But the glens still show the scars Of those evictions of before; And the shells of empty houses Echo laughter sounds no more.

12. ROWAN TREE

Undoubtedly one of the most popular songs among the older generation – a song that still brings tears to the eye of Scots when far away on a foreign shore. (Roud 23799)

 Oh rowan tree, oh rowan tree Ye'll aye be dear tae me, Entwined ye are wi mony ties O hame and infancy; Yer leaves were aye the first o spring Yer flooers the simmer's pride, There wisna sic a bonny tree In aa the countryside.

2: Sae fair ye were in simmer time Wi aa yer clusters white, An.rich an gay yer autumn dress Wi berries red and bright; And on yer trunk were mony names Wha now nae mair I see, But there engraved upon ma hert Forgotten ne'er tae be.

3: We sat alow yer spreadin shade While bairnies roun did rin, And pu'd the bonnie berries reid Their necklaces tae string; Ma mither dear, I see her still, She smiled oor sports tae see, Wi little Jeanie on her lap And Jamie at her knee. Noo aa are gane, we meet nae mair Alow the Bowan Tree

13. BOGHEID

One of Jim's songs which, he is keen to point out, is entirely fictional. As he says, 'Bogheid's piggery is totally free from any kind of aroma – ouch, my nose is getting longer!'

 Frae Lunan Bay tae Dickmont Law, Jist gie yer nose the lead;
 It'll aye tak you the quickest way
 Tae the fairm they ca Bogheid.
 Dounwind o Bogheid,
 And ye'll wish that ye were deid;
 Ye can plainly tell by the Hell of a smell Ye're dounwind o Bogheid.

2: Bogheid it has a piggery, Well kent the country roun; For the wind near shook it tae the grund In Lindsay Ross's tune.*

3: Noo Ethie Castle's a gey braw place, A stately home indeed, But ye widna want tae bide there lang When ye're dounwind o Bogheid.

4: Ken Grant will trudge through sleet an snaw Tae gie his coos their feed, But the peer beasts will jist hiv tae stairve When they're dounwind o Bogheid.

5: The fishermen have got a trick When fishin aff Reidheid, They pit the claespeg on their nose When it's dounwind o Bogheid.

6: But ye ken the ferm workers They're a stout and a hardy breed, An they never hiv a cough nor cauld When they're workin at Bogheid. Dounwind o Bogheid, And ye'll wish that ye were deid; Ye can plainly tell by the Hell of a smell Ye're dounwind o Bogheid.

* This line refers to a tune *The Wind that shook the Piggery* composed by Lindsay Ross about the farm of Bogheid.

14. VINNEY DEN

The Vinney burn runs through the beautiful Vinney Den at Letham, Angus and all the places named in the song are in the same area. Jim wrote this new ballad in 1983 and it is widely accepted as one of his finest songs.

1: As I gaed ower by Bractley Brig, 'Twas on my way tae Bowrie Fau'd; I met wi sic a bonnie lass, Wad turn the een o ony lad.

2: Said I, "Ma dear it's gettin late, The sun's lang drapped ower Lownie Hill. Have you got very far to go?" She said, "I bide at Idvies Mill."

3: "My faither he's the miller there, An honest man ye'll shairly ken; He'll treat ye fairly if ye'll see me Safely through the Vinney Den."

4: I took her hand and we set aff, Tae struggle doun the burnside; The lengthenin shadows grew sae dark, My growin fear I tried tae hide.

5: I said tae her, "Let's sing a sang, The tune will help us on oor way." She sang sae sweet I lost ma fear, She fairly stole ma hert away. 6: But when we cam tae the Feuar's Inn, Efter we'd won through dark Vinney Den; Ma bonnie lass was taen awa, By four an twenty angry men.

7: But she broke loose, cam rinnin back, When she saw they'd tied me tae a tree, Sayin, "Is this the thanks a laddie gets, For aa the help he's been tae me?"

8: They listened tae her story then, They took a knife and cut me loose; They set us baith upon a horse, And led us tae her faither's hoose.

9: Her faither was sae glad tae see That she was safe and free from harm; And I was asked if I wad fee As horseman on Auchterlownie fairm.

10: I coorted her from that day on, An tae wed wi me she did agree; Tho auld an grey we aye will mind When she cam through the Vinney Den wi me.

15. ROHALLION

One of Jim and the band's favourite songs. So take the floor, in waltz time. Set to music by Jim, this is another poem from Violet Jacob, first published in 1924. Rohallion hill and loch are set in the heart of the Perthshire countryside close to Birnam and Dunkeld. In Jim's opening song from Violet Jacob, *The Wild Geese*, the writer portrays the longing of the exile for the country left behind. In this final song the traveller is leaving the Highlands and as he passes Rohallion he thinks of the land and the family home he is leaving and hears a voice like a ghost in the wind: "I am waitin – Rohallion, Rohallion – Ma lad, ye'll be back!" Ma buits are at rest on the midden, I havenae a plack; [i.e. a penny And ma breeks they're no dandy anes, forrit, And they're waur at the back;
 On the road that comes oot o the Hielands I see as I traivel the airth
 Frae the braes at the back o Rohallion The reek abin Perth.

 2: There's a canny wee hoose wi a gairden In a neuk o Strathtay;
 An ma mither is bakin the bannocks, And the bairns are at play;
 In the gloamin ma faither, the shepherd, Looks doun for a blink o the licht
 As he gaithers the yowes at the shieling Tae fauld them at nicht.

3: Noo there isnae a hoose that could haud me Frae here tae the sea,
When a wind frae the braes o Rohallion Comes creepin tae me;
And niver a lowe frae the ingle Can draw like the trail an the shine
O the stars i the loch o Rohallion A fitstep o mine.

4: Noo the snaw's in the wind, an the weepies [i.e. ragwort Hang deid on the shaw,
An pale the leaves left on the rowan,
I'm soothward awa;
But a voice like a wraith blaws ahent me And sings as I'm liftin ma pack,
"I am waitin – Rohallion, Rohallion – Ma lad, ve'll be back!"

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