

Am Bàrd

Fàilt' ort fhéin, a charaid bhàird,
Siud dhuit mo làmh gam dheòin —
Bu tric a thog thu m' inntinn àrd
Le tàlantán do bheòil;
Nuair bhithinn 'm ònar, 's mi fo ghruaim,
'S mo bhuadhan gun chus treòir,
Cha b' fhada mulad teicheadh bhuam
Am measg nan *Sguaban Eòrn*'.

Is iomadh eachdraidh rinn thu inns'
'S a sgrìobh thu dhuinn le deòin
Le ealantachd a thug dhuit buaidh
Is duais aig iomadh Mòd;
Cha d' dh'fhàg thu 'n easbhaidh tìr nam beann,
Thug thu dhi fuinn is ceòl,
Thug thu an crùn a-nall bharr chuain —
Is sgrìobh thu *Sguaban Eòrn*'.

Dh'inn's thu dhuinn mu ànradh cruaidh
Do chuairt anns an Roinn Eòrp'
Fo bhinn an lasair, is an luaidh,
Is iomadh cruas den t-seòrs',
Am prìosan cogaidh glaiste suas
Cho fad' bho d' dhual is d' eòl,
Cho fad' bho eilean beag a' chuain
'S cho fad' bho bhruaich na Cròic'.

The Poet

I salute you, poet friend,
And most willingly shake hands —
You often raised my mind aloft
With the talents of your mouth;
When alone, and feeling low,
My powers without much strength,
My sadness would not last for long
Amongst the *Barley Sheaves*.¹

Many stories have you told us
And gladly written down
With skill that's brought you much success
And prizes at the Mòd;
You have enhanced our mountain land,
And given her airs and music,
You brought the crown across the Minch —
And wrote the *Barley Sheaves*.

You told us of the dreadful trials
Which you experienced in Europe,
Enduring cruelty, flames of wrath,
And many hardships of that kind,
In prison camp locked up so far
From all you knew and loved,
From the little island of the sea
And from the brae of the Cròic.²

Sgrìobh thu ann am briathran blàth
Mu mhaise 's gràdh nan òigh,
Mhol thu Mòrag dhonn nan dual
Is buadhan Maighread Òig;
Le eireachdas is loinn o d' pheann,
Le còmhradh, cainnt is ceòl
Thog thu suas air stìopall àrd
Taigh a' bhàird nach beò.

Guma fad' thu fallain buan
An eilean uaine d' òig',
Ag àiteach fuinn, a' cur, 's a' buain,
'S a' ceangal sguaban eòrn',
A' sgrìobhadh bàrdachd agus duain
Bha dualach dhuit o d' òig,
'S gu h-inntinneach a' gabhail cuairt
Mu bhruaichean Tràigh na Cròic'.

Dòmhnall Aonghais Bhàin

NOTES

1. Donald John MacDonald's poetry was published by Club Leabhar, Inverness, as *Sguaban Eòrna* ('Barley Sheaves') in 1973, and reissued by Birlinn with Bill Innes's English translations as *Chi Mi* in 1998.
2. Donald John MacDonald spent the years 1940-45 as a prisoner of war in Germany. His graphic account of his experiences appeared as *Fo Sgàil a' Swastika* (Club Leabhar, Inverness. 1974) and was reissued under the same title by Acair of Stornoway in 2000 with an English translation by Bill Innes.

In warm words you wrote of the beauty
And of the love of the girls,
You praised Mòrag of the auburn locks
And the charms of Maighread Òig;³
With your pen's skill and eloquence,
With music, dialogue and speech
You raised on high upon a tower
The house of the late poet.⁴

May you live a long and healthy life
In the green isle of your youth,
Tilling land, sowing, reaping,
And binding barley sheaves,
Writing down the poems and songs
That were in your blood from childhood,
And going out for pleasant walks
Round the braes of Tràigh na Cròice.

Donald MacDonald

3. *Sguaban Eòrna* contains at pp. 99 and 101, poems to Mòrag and Maighread Òig.
4. A reference to the poem 'Taigh a' Bhàird' ('The Poet's House'), for which see *Chi Mi* p.160, *An Tuil* p.424.