

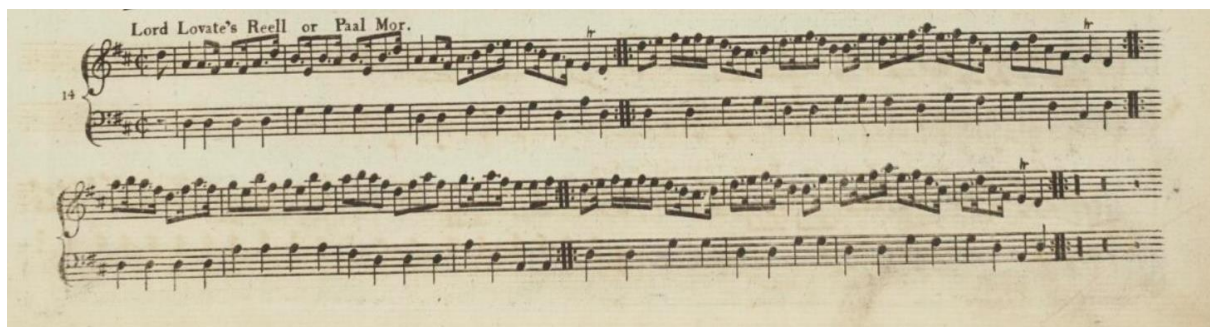
## An Eighteenth-Century musical view of Fort Augustus and Kilchuimen Part Two: The Lovat Frasers

Continuing our look at music from the C18th connected to the Fort Augustus area, we now look at music relating to the then-owners of the land at the south end of Loch Ness – the Lovat Frasers.

### Lord Lovate's Reell, or Paal Mor

In the early to mid C18th the Lovat Frasers, based at their Beaulieu home at Castle Dounie (later known as Beaufort Castle), owned extensive estates including the land west of Inverness and the whole of the eastern side of Loch Ness. This included the southern end of Loch Ness where the ancient church of Cille Chuimein (Kilchuimen) was located. Fort Augustus and the earlier Kilwhimen Barracks were both built on Fraser land – this being done with the support of the then landowner and clan chief, Simon Fraser, 11<sup>th</sup> Lord Lovat (1667 -1747).

Lord Lovate's Reell was first published by Angus Cumming in 1780. Cumming (c.1730-1780) was born into a family who for generations had been musicians at Grantown, Strathspey. He was also a piper, and served in one of the Laird of Grant's Independent Companies raised to fight for the Hanoverian side in the '45 uprising.



From: A Collection of Strathspey or old Highland Reels, by Angus Cumming (1780)  
Source: Glasgow University Library

Here it is played as a reel:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-396491986/lord-lovates-reell>

Lord Lovat's views on the competing Jacobite and Hanoverian claims to the British Crown is not straightforward and it is unclear which side Lovat was on. Perhaps the answer is both - and neither. In the four Jacobite uprisings, some of the more politically savvy Highland landed aristocracy looked to hedge their bets, encouraging their different sons to join opposite sides so that they could claim loyalty whichever side was victorious. The tenants on their estates were forced to join whichever side their landlord thought was most personally expedient – expendable pawns in their political maneuvering for power and wealth. Simon Fraser, 11<sup>th</sup> Lord Lovat, played this political chess game perhaps more than any other clan chief, earning himself a dubious reputation for wiliness and double-dealing - and the nickname "The Fox". He also gained notoriety for his amoral private life: he married three times, and was accused of bigamy, abduction, rape and forced marriage.

In the early years of the C18th both Hanoverians and Jacobites were suspicious that Lord Lovat was a double agent (the world's first "quadruple agent"?) Whilst lobbying the court of the exiled Stuarts in



Simon Fraser, 11<sup>th</sup> Lord Lovat (1667-1747)

France, he was suspected of being a Hanoverian spy and was jailed. He was eventually released, but with the result that the British Crown then saw him as siding with the Jacobites and his title and lands were in jeopardy of being lost. Lord Lovat remained in exile in France for the following 10 years but with the outbreak of the 1715 rebellion he saw an opportunity to re-instate himself. He returned to Britain and successfully lobbied to fight for the Hanoverians. He raised a regiment from the tenants of his estate and marched on Inverness, recapturing it from the Jacobites in November 1715. His reward was the reinstatement of his title and lands. Lord Lovat went on to cement his position as a leading establishment figure, being appointed as Sherriff of Inverness and with George II becoming godfather to his daughter. He had arrived!

But where did Lord Lovat's true allegiances lie? Many suspect that he remained a Jacobite at heart and at the time no-one could say with certainty where he stood – perhaps not even Fraser himself. His lack of personal moral compass and chaotic private life, his "complicated" relationship with the truth and his ability to change his views and swop sides depending upon what was expedient for his own immediate benefit bears more than a passing resemblance to current politics and politicians.

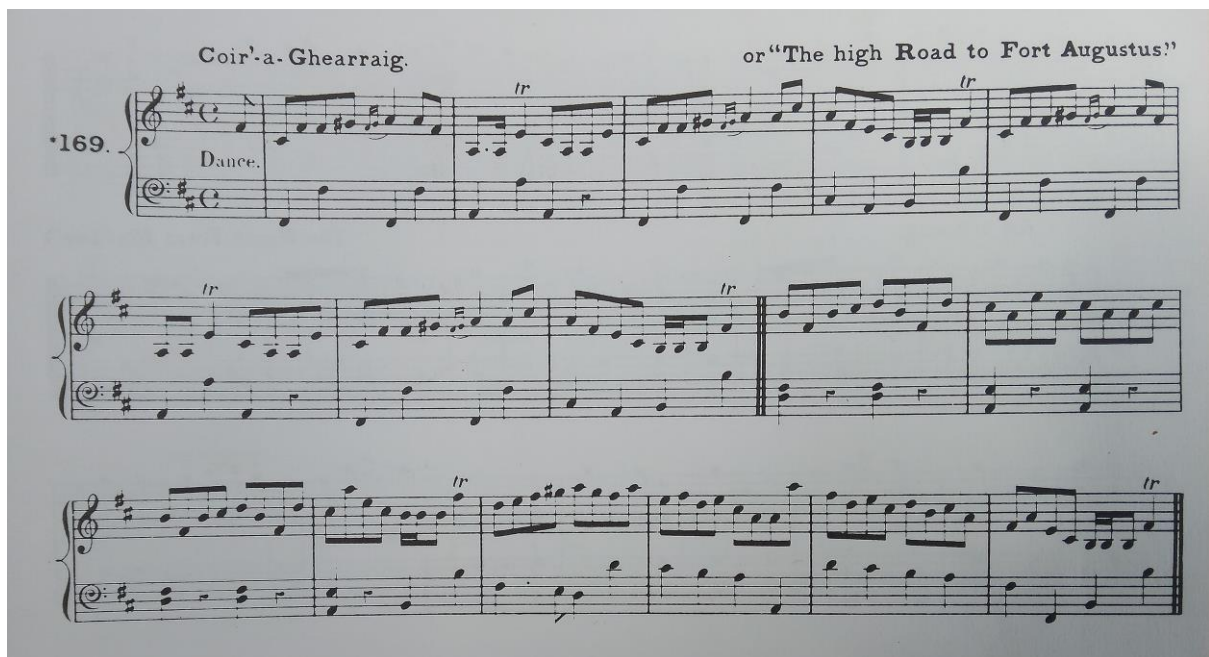
When the 1745 rebellion kicked off, the by-now elderly Lord Lovat decided to gamble his future (along with that of his son and the lives of his clansmen) by joining the Jacobite cause. However, following the eventual defeat of the Jacobite army at Culloden, Lord Lovat's days of playing both sides came to an end. He was captured by the Hanoverian troops and taken to Fort Augustus and confined in one of its dungeons pending transportation to London to face trial for treason.

### **Coir'-a-Ghearraig - The High Road to Fort Augustus**

The first leg of Lord Lovat's journey to London saw him being taken from Fort Augustus along Wade's military road up through Glen Tarff and over the Corrieyairack Pass. The fiddle tune *Coir' a Ghearraig* appears in Simon Fraser's 1816 Collection along with the following note:

*"The words associated with this air give anecdotes regarding that stupendous work, the road cut in traverses, by General Wade, down the face of a mountain, in forming a communication betwixt Fort Augustus and Garvamore. By this road old Lord Lovat was carried, when on his last journey to London, on a litter."*

<https://soundcloud.com/user-396491986/coir-a-ghearraig>



Source: *Airs and Melodies peculiar to the Highlands* by Captain Simon Fraser (1816)

This climb over the Corrieyairack Pass is described by Mrs. Anne Grant of Laggan\* in her "Letters from the Mountains" (1806):

*"Another story is that he (Lord Lovat) was captured on an island in Loch Morar with some of his humble friends who follow'd his march, and attended him at the inns where he stopp'd, he did not wish to be exhibited like a wild beast, to use his own words, to the people who surrounded his travelling conveyance. Governor Trapaud, who long fill'd that station at Fort Augustus, was then a Capt. And commanded the party who carried Lovat over (the Corrieyarrick Pass) to Drimochter, being then a lively, bustling young man. He was impatient to see Lovat, who, keeping the curtains of the litter close about him, and being help'd out and in by his friends, long evaded the young officer's curiosity, who, tho' dying to see this singular personage, did not choose to force an intrusion on his privacy, but frequently peep'd into the litter to observe whether he were sleeping, hoping then to have a full view of him. Lovat, perceiving this, affected one day to snore while his friend rode slowly by. The latter, delighted to obtain at length his object, put his head into the litter and bent it over the suppos'd sleeper, who, rising with a sudden jerk, snapp'd at the nose of the terrified Capt., and then seem'd highly amus'd at his consternation, yet deign'd not during the whole journey to exchange a word with him."*



"The Fox" as sketched by William Hogarth at St. Albans, on his way to London for trial. Source: National Portrait Gallery London



\* Anne Grant, nee Macvicar (1755-1838) spent six years from 1773 at Fort Augustus whilst her father was stationed there as barrack-master. Whilst there she met James Grant, the Fort's chaplain, whom she married in 1776.

### Mac Shimi Mòr a' basachadh - Lord Lovat Beheaded

The trial of Simon Fraser, 11<sup>th</sup> Lord Lovat lasted seven days. He was found guilty and, as per the punishment for treason, was sentenced to be hung, drawn, and quartered. The King commuted his sentence to execution and Lovat was beheaded at Tower Hill on April 9<sup>th</sup> 1747. It is said that he maintained a light demeanor throughout the proceedings, finding amusement at the collapse of an overcrowded timber stand which killed nine spectators. He was still laughing when he was executed - said to be the origin of the phrase "to laugh your head off".



The execution block at the Tower of London. Used for Lord Lovat's beheading in 1747.  
Photo: Royal Armouries Collection

The following tune, *Mac Shimi Mòr a' basachadh*, commemorates Lord Lovat's execution – the last person in Britain to be beheaded. According to notes in Captain Simon Fraser's Collection:  
*"The name of this melody bespeaks what gave occasion to it. It is the production of the famous poet, Alexander McDonell, who is never at a loss in addressing his feelings, and who says he would for ever regard Lord Lovat's death as murder, having been tried merely by his enemies."*

Captain Simon Fraser translated "a basachadh" as "beheaded" rather than the more literal "dying." Ever looking to embellish and exaggerate (both musically and in writing), he no doubt wanted to elevate the prosaic tune title to a more dramatic one.

<https://soundcloud.com/user-396491986/mac-shimi-mor-a-basachadh>

A page of a musical score for a piano. The page is numbered 21 in the top right corner. The title of the piece is "Mac Shimi mor a basachadh." and the subtitle is "Lord Lovat beheaded." The score is written in G major and 3/4 time. It begins with a piano (p) dynamic and a trill (tr) in the right hand. The tempo is marked "Solemnly Slow." and there are markings for "cres." (crescendo) and "tr" (trill) throughout. The score is divided into two systems. The first system has a measure number of 59. The second system has markings for "cres.", "exp" (accent), and "dim." (diminuendo).

Source: *Airs and Melodies peculiar to the Highlands* by Captain Simon Fraser (1816)

### Cumha Mhic Shimidh (Lord Lovat's Lament)

Another tune connected to the death of Simon Fraser, 11<sup>th</sup> Lord Lovat, is the piobaireachd, *Cumha Mhic Shimidh* (Lord Lovat's Lament). It was written by Lovat's piper, David Fraser. (1716-1812) who

was indentured and sent to Skye to learn piping from the famous MacCrimmons, hereditary pipers to the Chiefs of Clan MacLeod of Dunvegan:

*"It is Contracted and Agreed upon betwixt the Right Honourable Simon Lord Fraser of Lovat, On the One part And David Fraser his Lordships servant Brother german to William Fraser Tacksman in Bewly his Lordships Musician, And the said William Fraser as Cautioner and surety for his said Brother On the other part, In manner following That is to say, Whereas the said Simon Lord Fraser of Lovat has out of his own Generosity Cloathd and mantaind the said David Fraser for these severall Years past, And has also bestowed upon him during that time for his Education as a Pyper with the now deceast Evan McGrigor his Lordships late Pyper, And that his Lordship is now to send him upon his own Charges to the Isle of Skie, In order to have him perfected a Highland Pyper by the famous Malcolm Mcgrimon."*

**LORD LOVAT'S LAMENT.** 35

**CUMHA MHC SHIMIDH.** Composed by DAVID FRASER.

14. *Ùrlar.*

Var. 1<sup>st</sup>

Var. 2<sup>nd</sup>

Var. 3<sup>rd</sup> *Tour-luath.*

\*1<sup>st</sup> time only.

Communicated by Mr Simon Fraser, Melbourne, Australia.

Written Played

From: A Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd compiled and arranged by David Glen (1880)  
Source: Ceol Sean website: <https://www.ceolsean.net/>

Here is the piobaireachd Cumha Mhic Shimi played by Murray Henderson accompanied by a string quartet, recorded in 2015 at Cottiers Theatre as part of Piping Live.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqtGWvBUzfE>



### **Cumha Mhic Shimi (1747)**

*Beir mo shoraidh le dùrachd  
Gu Dùnaidh mo luaidh,  
'S gu tìr àrda mo rùnachd,  
Mo dhùthaich gu tuath;  
Tha mo cridh' ann am fiabhrus,  
Ag osnaich 's ag iarraidh  
A dh'ionnsaidh nan ciar-ghleann  
'S nam fiadh bheanna fuar.*

*'S tric, am brúadar na h-oidhche,  
Mì'n coibhneas mo shluaigh,  
'Measg na h-aoidheachd 's a chàirdis,  
'S na fàilt' a bu dual;  
Ach a Rìgh! Gur a ciùrrt-a  
Sa' mhadainn mo dùsgadh,  
Gun taitneas, gun surd  
Da mo shùil no mo chluas.*

*'S tha nì-éigin ag ìnnseadh  
Na m' chridh' dhomh, gach là,  
Nach fhaic mi mo dhùthaich  
No Dùnaidh gu bràth;  
'S ann tha nial-cheo a' dùbhradh  
A nios bho na stùcan,  
'S tha caoineadh is tùirse  
Dha 'n cluinntinn 'san Aird.*

*Mu 'n tig Samhradh nan neòinein  
Le 'bhòidhchead 's le bhlàths  
A dhùsgadh nan crò-choill  
'S a chòmhdach nam blàr,  
Bidh na h-eòin anns na h-òg-phris  
A' seinn le guth brònach,  
'S Mac-Shimi, gun deò ann,  
Fo 'n fhòd aig a' bhàs.*

### **Lament for Mac Shimi / Simon Fraser / Lord Lovat**

*Take my blessing with good-will,  
To Dùnaidh my beloved,  
And to the high lands of my fondness,  
My land, to the north  
My heart is in a fever.  
Sighing and wanting  
Longing for the dark glens  
And the cold mountains of the deer*

*Often, in the dream of night,  
I am in the kindness of my people  
Amongst the hospitality and the friendship,  
And the welcome that was their want,  
But, o King, how fraught  
In the morning, my waking,  
Without pleasure, without vigour  
For my eye or my ear.*

*And something tells me  
In my heart, each day,  
That I won't see my country  
Or Dùnaidh ever;  
A dream mist is eclipsing  
Down from the peaks,  
And weeping and sadness  
Are to be heard in the Aird.*

*Before summer of the daisies comes  
With its beauty and warmth,  
That would waken the nut woods  
And cover the plains,  
The birds in the young thicket  
Sing with a sad voice,  
Mac Shimi, without life in him  
Is under sod, at the dying.*

### **Morair Sìm**

Another piece of local music connected to the Lovats from the same period is the Gaelic song, *Morair Sìm* (Lord Simon), written around the year 1750 for Simon Fraser (1726-1782) – the son of the beheaded 11<sup>th</sup> Lord Lovat.



—o—

MORAIR SIM.

Till dachaidh, tiugain dachaidh,  
Till dachaidh, Mhorair Sim ;  
Till dachaidh, tiugain dachaidh,  
Till dachaidh, Mhorair Sim.

Thàinig litrichean bho 'n chòirneal,  
'S thàinig òrdugh mach bho 'n rìgh,  
Gu'n robh nighean aig Rìgh Deòrsa,  
Dol a phòsadh Mhorair Sim.  
Till dachaidh, &c.

Cha 'n eil plòbaire no drumair,  
'N Cille-Chuimein aig an rìgh ;  
No fear cota-dheirg 's a' chaisteal,  
Nach bi mach an coinnimh Shìm  
Till dachaidh, &c.

Frisealaich, an cinneadh ainmeil,  
Theid iad 'shealg do Chill-Fhinn ;  
'S ged nach marbhadh iad ach gearr,  
Gu'm faidheadh pàirt d'i Morair Sim.  
Till dachaidh, &c.

—o—

Like his father, Simon Fraser had come out in support of the Jacobite army during the '45 rebellion. However, he didn't fight at Culloden - it appears that he was stationed in Inverness and therefore missed the battle. Upon the Jacobite defeat he (wisely) fled the area but soon realised that his only hope for leniency was to voluntarily surrender to the victorious Hanoverians. He tried to absolve himself of responsibility by arguing that he was forced to join the rebels by his "overbearing father" - the "I didn't want to, but he made me do it" excuse. And remarkably, the Hanoverian forces accepted the twenty-year-old's justification; perhaps the fact that his father had been executed for treason made the Crown more lenient. At any rate, Simon Fraser followed his father's modus operandi and quickly changed his allegiances and was keen to be seen as a loyal Hanoverian. He was firstly imprisoned in Edinburgh castle and subsequently in 1748 kept "at the King's pleasure" in Glasgow. However he was allowed to attend the university there, graduated with a law degree and was eventually fully pardoned in 1750.

An Ghaideal, Volume 4 (1875)

Source: National Library of Scotland

It appears that *Morair Sim* was written shortly afterwards with the lyrics relating how Simon Fraser's clansmen tried to persuade him to return north, painting him a picture of a utopian life with both friends and his former foes in "*Kilchuimen of the king*" (i.e. Fort Augustus), ready to welcome him back home.

*Return home, let us go home, Return home, Lord Simon; Return home, let us go home, Return home, Lord Simon.*

*Letters came from the colonel, And an order came from the king, That King George had a daughter, Going to marry Lord Simon. Return home, etc.*

*There is no piper or drummer, In Kilchuimen of the king; Or a redcoat in the fort, Who won't be out to meet Simon. Return home, etc.*

*Fraser, the famous clan, They go hunting to Killin; Though they would but kill a hare, Lord Simon would get a share of it. Return home, etc.*

Translation: Raignaid Sandilands



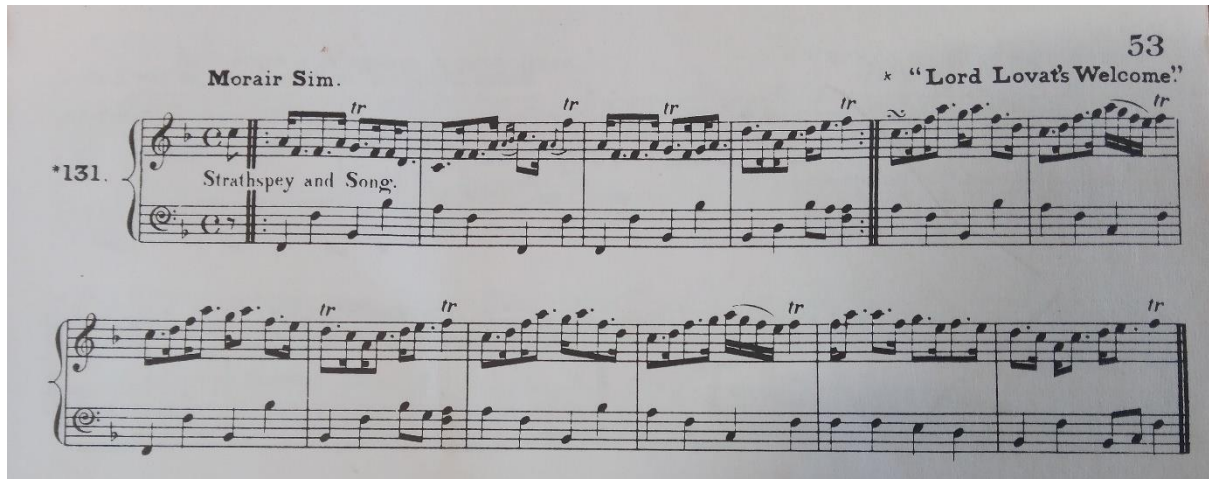
General Simon Fraser (1726-1782)

However, the song's lyrics do not necessarily accurately describe the reality of the situation. It is unlikely that King George II would have aspired to have any of his eligible daughters marry the son of



traitor, Lord Lovat. It is also doubtful whether the commanding officer in charge of Fort Augustus would have wanted the risk of the area being destabilised by the return north of the son of "The Fox." And I suspect that the promise of hunting around Killin in Stratherrick for the share of a hare wouldn't necessarily have been the enticing lure that the writer envisaged. Simon Fraser had his eyes on frying far bigger fish .....

The melody for *Morair Sim* is a beautiful slow Strathspey to be found in Captain Simon Fraser's 1816 collection.



Source: *Airs and Melodies peculiar to the Highlands* by Captain Simon Fraser (1816)

A note in the appendix to the Collection states: *"This is the composition of Lord Lovat's minstrel, already mentioned, and celebrates his lordship's return from a proscription, which the Culloden papers narrate. This was taken down from the singing of Thomas Fraser of Achnacloch, father of the present Mr. Fraser of Eskadale, who remembered the event and sung it with enthusiasm. It is the only instance wherein the editor obtained one of these melodies better sung elsewhere than at home."*

Here is a version of *Morair Sim* played as a slow, laid-back Strathspey.

<https://soundcloud.com/user-396491986/morair-sim-2>

*Morair Sim* can also be heard played as a 2/4 march in the below Tobar an Dualchais recording made in 1970. It is played by Allan MacKenzie, originally from Roshven, Arisaig.

<https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/104153?l=en>



What happened to Simon Fraser in the period after *Morair Sim* was written? Did he head back north to live in the Highlands? Well, no! After his pardon in 1750, his principal aim was to re-instate his social position within the Establishment, and he pursued this with relentless ambition and ruthless self-interest. His first opportunity came in 1752 when, having recently qualified as an advocate, he persuaded the legal authorities to appoint him as counsel to the widow of Hanoverian Colin Roy Campbell against the framed Jacobite, James Stewart, in a notorious case known as the Appin Murder.



GENERAL SIMON FRASER OF LOVAT.

However, despite having emphatically thrown his hat into the Hanoverian ring, he essentially still found himself in the same position his father had been pre-1715: i.e., having backed the losing side and consequently having lost the Lovat title and Fraser estates. However, Simon Fraser was to use the same ploy previously used by his father to get his land and his political capital back: namely, trading the lives of the tenants from the Lovat estate. The onset of the Seven Years War in 1756 and the resulting conflict in America and Canada against the French gave him exactly the opportunity that he needed. The British Army was desperate to recruit more soldiers and consequently Simon Fraser obtained permission to raise a regiment from his “ancestral lands” with volunteers from the west and south of Inverness forming the basis of the 800-strong 78<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot – the “Fraser Highlanders”. To the Crown, having only recently subdued the Highlands and their troublesome, warlike clans, arming a whole regiment of former Jacobites must have seemed a risky option. However, it was also an excellent opportunity to export the troublesome

Highlanders, and to set them upon the French. General Wolfe who led the British army against the French (and who had been at Culloden) saw that using the Highlanders as shock-troops was doubly useful as they were enthusiastically adept at fighting, and as he rather cynically put it, “it is no great mischief if they fall.”

The men of the regiment played their part by fighting bravely against the French in the capture of Louisbourg, Quebec and Montreal. By doing so, the Fraser Highlanders helped secure both victory for the British and the reinstatement of Simon Fraser. The Lovat forfeited lands in Inverness-shire were returned to him in 1774, some ten years before other forfeited estates were reinstated to their former owners. Simon Fraser was lauded as a hero, gained social respectability, prestige, and influence. He was a General in the British army, later to be made a Colonel, and served as an MP for 21 years, living in Downing Street in London. Ultimately it would appear that the son of *The Fox* proved more adept at “playing the game” than his father.

### **Am Breacan Dubh**

The reality of a soldier’s life in the Seven Years war is captured by a great song to be found in Alexander Macdonald’s *Story and Song from Loch Ness-side*. The lyrics of *Am Breacan Dubh* vividly describes a sergeant in the Fraser Highlanders as he marches in the pouring rain, regretting that he was no longer fighting with his fellow Gaels under Col. Simon Fraser, and wishing he was back home with the young women at the hill shielings in Glen Orchy. It is sung beautifully here by the Cape Breton singer, Mary Jane Lamond:





<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T7M9wERORP4>

### **Am Breacan Dubh**

Source and translation: *Story and Song from Loch Ness-side*, 1982 Edition

*Seist:*

*Tha mo bhreacan-sa fon dile  
Chan fhaod mi innse mar tha e  
Tha mo bhreacan-sa fon dile.*

*Tha mo bhreacan-sa fliuch fuar  
'S cha an urra mi chur suas a maireach*

*Tha mo bhreacan air a mhilleadh  
Aig na gillean bh' air a' bhàrsa.*

*Tha mi nis a dol a sheòladh  
'S cha 'n air m' eòlas a tha mi.*

*Dol do dh' eilean nan eun fiadhaich  
Cha robh duine riamh a thàbh ann.*

*Air thoiseachd air luchd na Beurla  
'S nach do dh'fhàg e "Dè mu Ghàidhlig?"*

*Cha b' ionnan agus Còirneil Friseal  
Gu cur misneachd anns na Gàidheal.*

*'S mòr gu'm b' annsa bhi air m' eòlas  
Far an robh mi òg ga m' àrach.*

*Thoir mo shoraidh do Ghleann-Lochaidh*

### **The Black Kilt**

*Chorus*

*My plaid is black under the deluge  
And past telling how it is  
My plaid is black under the deluge.*

*My plaid is wet and cold  
And I cannot wear it tomorrow*

*My plaid has been ruined  
By the lads who were on the march*

*I am now going to sail  
And I am not on familiar ground*

*Going to the island of the wild birds  
There was never anyone who lived there*

*In the company of English speakers  
No one ever received the least appreciation*

*It was not so with Colonel Fraser  
In encouraging the Highlanders*

*I would much prefer to be on familiar ground  
Where I was reared when young*

*Take my greetings to Glenlochy*



*Far an robh mi òg a' 'm phàisde*

*'S soiridh eile do Ghleann Urchaidh  
Nan tulmanan gorma, fasaich.*

*Far an tric a bha mi m' choibair  
Ann am fridhean nam bean àrda.*

*Far am faighte fiadh air fireach  
Breac air linne, 's fir ri mànràn.*

*S far am faighte gruagach bhòidheach  
'G iomain bhò gu bealach àiridh.*

*'Tha na nighneagan 'an gruaim rium  
Bho'n a fhuair mi 'n còta-sgàrlaid.*

*Bho'n a fhuair mi 'n ite phéucaig  
Claidheamh is crois féilidh Searsdain.*

*Fhuair mi paidhir bhrògan ùra  
Boineid dhubh-ghorm 'us coc-àd innt'.*

*Mìle marphaisg air luchd mi-ruin  
Cha b' iad Sim a' dol do 'n bhlàr iad.*

*Where I spent my childhood*

*And further greetings to Glenorchy  
Of the green moorland knolls*

*Where I was often as a shepherd  
On the moors of the high mountains*

*Where was found the deer in the wilds  
Salmon in the pool and men made merry*

*Where you would find a beautiful maiden  
Driving cows to the shieling pass*

*The girls are displeased with me  
Since I got the scarlet coat*

*Since I got the peacock's feather  
A sword and sergeant's kilt belt*

*I got a pair of new shoes  
A dark blue bonnet with a cockade*

*A thousand shrouds on people of ill-will  
They were not like Simon when going to battle*