

The
West
Lothian
Trail

A West Lothian Song Cycle

by

The West Lothian
Songwriters Group

© 2009

Frae Lithgae Palace tae the fairms at Avonside
The priory at Torphican whaur ye'd find St Johns' Knights
Tae the hills o' Bathgate, Cairnpapple comes tae view
Whaur sat William Wallace as he thocht oan what tae do

West Lothian, ye hae yer tales tae tell
West Lothian, in oor herts you dwell
West Lothian, ye hae yer tales tae tell
West Lothian, in oor herts you dwell

Doon intae Whitburn fae the toon of Airmadale
Traivel tae West Cawder whaur the Five Sisters dwell
Five bings to remind us o' the men wha dug the shale
And raised pink mountains ower West Lothian's trail

West Lothian, ye hae yer tales tae tell
West Lothian, in oor herts you dwell
West Lothian, ye hae yer tales tae tell
West Lothian, in oor herts you dwell

Tae the new toon at Livi, Pumphia and Upha'
Doon past auld Broxburn, and Winchburgh an' a'
Where The Bruce chased Edward, scourge of all Scotland
and tae Lithgae whaur Queen Mary's life began

West Lothian, ye hae yer tales tae tell
West Lothian, in oor herts you dwell
West Lothian, ye hae yer tales tae tell
West Lothian, in oor herts you dwell



There's a house on a hill, up a very long drive,
Where, not long ago, it was so much alive
With the sounds of the people who called it their home,
But now you've all gone to places unknown.

It was a place of solace, a haven of rest,
For the living and the dying, it seemed it was the best,
There was brightness and laughter, and sometimes there were tears
As we talked of your hopes, your beliefs and your fears.

And what, may you ask, caused the big doors to close
On the house that was your home, well heaven only knows,
The excuse, often given, there was just not enough
To care for you all, and to pay all the staff.

Appeals to keep you going just fell on deaf ears,
Though some of you'd lived there for more than several years,
So now, as I see the rhododendrons in bloom,
I wonder where you are, and if you like your new room.

So what's to become of the house on the hill?
Will it lie there empty, bare, dank and chill?
And what's to become of you folks who lived there?
I hope you are happy, with people who care.

It was a place of solace, a haven of rest,
For the living and the dying, it seemed it was the best,
There was brightness and laughter, and sometimes there were tears
As we talked of your hopes, your beliefs and your fears.

But there's no-one there any more



SILVER DARLIN'S AND BLACK DIAMONDS

© 9/5/03 A Gilland

They rode the swells and troughs intae the night
Crawled on their bellies wi' only candlelight
But the fire in their herts kept them oan the trail
Tae feed their weans, they dare not fail

*An' Silver Darlin's and Black Diamonds
Filled their lives, filled their lives*

At Polkemmet where the men fell
Sinking shafts and digging roads
"The Dardanelles" destroyed them
Wi' each and every load
And in Whitburn when ye pass by
Ye can smell the pit stench still
Their closing doon served up a bitter pill

Chorus

At the time when their were "Garvies"
Throughout auld Bon'ess toon
The boats were set for Russia
And the Baltic ports aroon'
Did they ever think tae see a time
When the fishing widna be
And the trawlermen jist couldnae pit to sea

Chorus

So these working men who's lives were filled
With herrin', dross and damp
Will fade intae legend, lit by a sepia lamp
An' oor children will wonder
How it ever came tae be

**That Scotland was supported
By pit props and the sea**

Chorus

Note “Garvies” - a nickname for Bo’nessians. Garvies were the local name given to tiny herring and sprats landed in Bo’ness and salted and exported to Russia and the Baltic

“Dardanelles” - the nickname for the pit because its opening coincided with the World War campaign and also because of the number of lives lost sinking its shafts and digging the road



Steam trains run o'er Deep Kinneil
But what do tourists Know?
They come in search of auld clay-mines
What do they know of all that coal below?
Who can say?,who can tell?
Was it a dream? or was it real?
The pit-wheel's gone frae the auld pit-heid
O' yes indeed,where lies the Deep Kinneil?
Where lies Kinneil?—Deep Kinneil

Proud and black their faces were
As they sweated blood below.
They were further from heaven and close tae hell.
So where did all-all those miners go?
Who can say?,who can tell?
Was it a dream? Or was it real?
The pit-wheel's gone frae the auld pit-heid
O' yes indeed,where lies the Deep Kinneil?
Where lies Kinneil?—Deep Kinneil

Dae ye mind o'the Dirty Dozen?
And the heroes part they played.
And could you name that Judas pair?
By whom they were rejected and betrayed.
Who can say?,who can tell?
Was it a dream? Or was it real?
The pit-wheel's gone frae the auld pit-heid
O' yes indeed where lies the Deep Kinneil?
Where lies Kinneil?—Deep Kinneil

The pits formed bonds of brotherhood
Of comrades proud and leal
They'd mind your back and share the crack.

They sweated and they died there in Kinneil.

Who can say?,who can tell?

Was it a dream? or was it real?

The pit-wheel's gone frae the auld pit-heid

O' yes indeed where lies the Deep Kinneil?

Where lies Kinneil?—Deep Kinneil

Words by Glenn.F. Muir,

*Tune and arrangement P Gallagher(adapted from original tune by Neil
MacDonald)*



BRING YOUR LADDIE HOME © P Streater

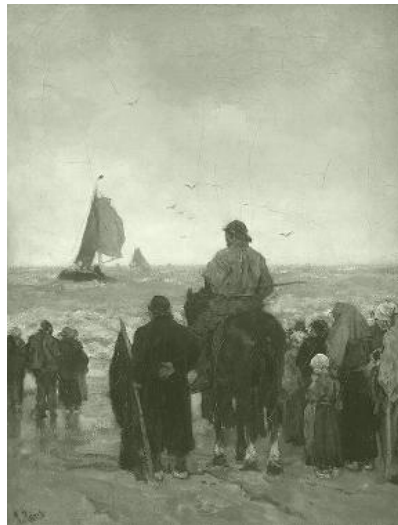
I'm standing on the foreshore, and I'm looking down the Forth
For the wind that brings my laddie home is backing to the north
His mind is full of timber, but my mind is full of him
And my heart will only settle when his boat comes gliding in

Ch

*For the wind that shakes the trees is the same wind says to me
"Don't fret my lass, for I'll bring your laddie home
Though my strength may cause your fright, I will see your man a-right
Don't fret my lass, for I'll bring your laddie home"*

As I strip the bark for pit props, so I dream of what might be
But I fear my love would always rather sail the northern sea
What would he do, were he to stay? He'd toil at hewing coal
And the dark and dust would grind him down,
and wear away his soul

So I'll walk along the foreshore and I'll climb high up the brae
And I'll look out for his boat, and for his happiness I'll pray
But I hope one day he'll settle. and he'll settle here with me
Then no more I'll need to listen to the wind from off the sea



Standing underneath the old town clock
Hecking out their faces one by one
As they pass the time, pass the time
Littered gutters laid to rest as the evening draws it's blinds and say's
The carnivals to close it's eyes
So neon lights flickers out from fun fare stands, from fun fare stands

Ch

*Still younger blood runs through those, those empty streets
Is it a joke a shout or is it some distant scream
To waken up the night, to waken up the night,
To waken up the night, to waken up the night*

Standing underneath the old town clock
The air is filled with foreign smells
To take a walk in china town, or Istanbul
Would fool you now, would fool you now

Ch

The publican shouted time gentlemen please
Some staggered up from their knees
Merry dancers danced then said goodnight
Some lovers loved then had a fight
To waken up the night, to waken up the night

The publican shouted time gentlemen please
Some staggered up from their knees
Merry dancers danced then said goodnight
Some lovers loved then had a fight
To waken up the night, to waken up the night

AS DEEP AS THE SHALE

© Iain McClafferty 2004

Stravaigin ower the fields an braes,
We scaled the bings o bright pink blaes,
An' never thocht thae summer days
 Could end at a'.
But life flees by, leaves us a-daze
 Wi' mem'ries raw.

1st Chorus

An' noo they've tar-mac'd ower my childhood,
 An' my memory's startin tae fail.
My Harrysmuir, Pumpherston childhood
 Lies buried as deep as the shale.

The works that built the giant bings,
Steered up oor youthfu imaginings.
We jouked roond rusted, broken things
 An' thocht nane o't.
Noo mem'ries loup wi sudden sting
 An' stap my throat.

2nd Chorus

They've built a golf course ower my chillhood...

They've hauled away the tarry pond,
The burnin tip an' the cooler's gone,
They didnae need nae magic wand,
 I suppose.
That's progress, jist, a new day's dawned
 And by Christ, it shows!

3rd chorus

Aye, they've busked away my childhood...

I ken that Time'll no stand still,
But Progress can be a bitter pill,
An' they tell me noo I'm ower the hill,
'Cause I'm auld an' grey.
My only pleasure noo is twa'r three gill -
It keeps the cauld away.

4th Chorus

*Noo there's a mist creepin ower my childhood,
The mem'ries are startin tae fail.
My Harrysmuir, Pumpherston childhood
Lies buried as deep as the shale*



FISHERS BRAE
© G F Muir/T Santer

When spring-time cam tae Fisher's Brae
And the yorlin sang sae sweet
We'd walk thegither airm in airm
Up past Jock Mason's seat
By Balderston and Muirhouse
Onward past Bo'mains.
We'd view the dew-clad Ochils
And Grangemouth's smokey flames.

In summer we'd climb up Fisher's Brae
It's the time we lo'ed the best
We'd listen there for the hoolet's cry
As the sun sank in the west
By Balderston and Muirhouse
Onward past Bo'mains
We'd view the shady Ochils
And Grangemouth's smokey flames.

A whaup's wheep on the autumn wind
Now haunts the Fisher's Brae
And I weary for that dark-haired girl
Wi' whom I used tae stray
By Balderston and Muirhouse
Onward past Bo'mains
Tae view the brooding Ochils
And Grangemouth's smokey flames.

The silent winter snow will come
When none tread Fisher's Brae
A blanket deep, where sorrows sleep
'neath a sky sae dark and grey.
By Balderston and Muirhouse

Onward past Bo'mains
Tae view the shrouded Ochils
And Grangemouth's smokey flames.



THE GUDEMAN O' BALLENGEICH

© A Gilland 12/3/06

Oh ye d'ken wha' tae trust, Jamie
In the war 'tween Rose and Hert, loyalties fa' tae dust
An' a puir wumman needs a man, thru' this life o' trials
But I'd gie ye ma life, James, my son

Noo yer faither's deid and goan, Jamie
An' ah sat there ma lain in ma bower
His earl's lying slain by his side
Others watched his blood flow freely oan.

In '26 at Lithgae Bridge, we made oor stand
Wi' Lennox standing by us; trusty sword in hand
To gain ma son back and set him free
Hame to rule Scotland; as his faither used tae dae

Refrain

But Douglas swore that day, that should my son be taen,
his bodied'd be in pieces, and Douglas hae the main,
Tae stop him, bravest Lennox, fought 'till he was slain
stabbed by cowardly Hamilton; laid at Lennox cairn

Still my boy survived it a', he lived tae fight again,
But grew tae trusting nae man, and allied owre the Main
Found nights o' consolation laying wi' the maids
And tramped the roads dressed as a journeyman

Refrain



TIMES PAST AND PRESENT

© Kate Smith 2004

Rosepink the towers surrounding our towns
Raised by the men as they dug underground
Neat little houses were built on the land
That now forms the county of West Lothian

Palaces and castles stood majestic and tall
Where once our great lords lived and ruled over all
That sheltered Scots Mary the queen of our land
Safe in the county of West Lothian

Chorus

*The winches and mines all lie silent and tame
And quiet are the castles whose ruins remain
To remind us of years past, that now have long gone
Of times in the county of West Lothian*



TORPHICHEN BRAES

© Paul Streater 2002

As children you and I would rise
And find adventures in each summer day,
And homeward bound would trudge at eventide
Torphichen braes and Avon side were where we used to play
The River Avon draws strongly to the sea
As I was drawn, love, was drawn away from thee
The Templar Order has work which waits for me
And always will, though I lament, a thousand leagues from thee.

And as we grew, you and I would walk
To Bowdenhill's old ramparts built of stone
And there would linger, our minds all full of talk
Torphichen braes and Avon side were where we used to roam
The River Avon slips quietly to the sea
As I slipped off, love, to seek my destiny
And now I wonder, if you still think of me
As I lie here, and think of you, a thousand leagues from me.
And as you bloomed, and our love did grow
By Cathlaw and Cairnpapple we'd be sought
Stretched out aloft, we two would look afar
Torphichen braes and Avon side were where we used to court
The River Avon fights fiercely to the sea
As I fight on, love, my head still full of thee
And though I falter, if you still think of me
I'll fight on stronger, every hour, a thousand leagues from thee.

And when at last we did plight our troth
And yet we knew that I would have to leave
To face the mighty Saracen's wrath
Torphichen braes and Avon side were where we both did grieve.
The River Avon spills quietly in the sea
My blood spills here, love, strength fades away from me

And now I wonder, if you still think of me
As I die here, and think of you, a thousand leagues from me.
(repeat tune)
Torphichen braes and Avon side are where I long to be.



UPON THE AVON BRIG

© J. Cooper/T. Santer

Now we stand here upon the banks of the Avon
And we merched up from old Lithgae' town
Got my kin folk and freends all around me
And I swear that I winna let them down

Pulled the falcons up frae the Blackness yesterday
Set the facscines on the brig across the way
Set the watch on Haining's crumbling keep
Look tae the westlands wi' oor orders no tae sleep

And noo in September's milky light
Men we ken come on tae us to fight
Men who stood wi' us at Branxton's reddened field
Call upon oor ranks and pray for us tae yield

But we stand fast here upon Lithgae's borders
And we cannae turn and leave for the toun
As oor Lairds ha'e called us tae the colours
And our families, we cannae let them down

On they come wi' all their banners flying high
Crossing the ford tae the whiffler's rousing cries
Pikes are levelled as they step up tae the slope
God preserve us a', as it is oor only hope

My hert is a-beating ta the soond o' closing drums
Guns are calling frae the brig, whence we'd just come
Hackbuts sparking frae the flankers tae their fore
Weight o' bodies pushing me on tae bloody war.

As we must stand here upon the Pace's ridge line
As we must hold on tae oor files and oor fear
We cannae falter in the cause o' the calling

As we ken that oor King is drawing near

As they lay me doon I see the sun settling westward
The cry of 'A Douglas' is ringing in the air
My brothers lie wi' me thegither in the darkness
And we cannae see any glory frae here

As we must lie here on Avon's shore forever
Never a stone or a mark tae oor name
We died as trueScots, we died thegither
Fighting for..... and against the same (rep last line)



WHEN WE'LL A' BE BETTER DRESSED

© Iain McClafferty 2001 (Tune: The John McLean March)

Hey! Thanks Motorola! Shove your phone up your jacksie!
Awa back tae the USA, your “Land o the free!”
Awa an’ dinnae fash yourself, you big Yankee bastard!
We’ll get by without ye here – jist mind an’ hand back your key!
We’ve heard aa the theories o the monetary madness,
An’ whit’s happened in the past when the mighty dollar stalled.
See, industry’s global an’ we’re aa yoked thegither noo,
An’ when the US sneezes, well, it’s us that gets the cauld!:

Hey! Thanks, NEC! I hear your layin aff some workers,
Getting shot o your wheengin Jocks – flush them doon the pan!
Nae bother, pal, an’ mind, if this recession gets ony worse,
Balance up your books by scuffling back tae Japan!
Sure that wad cause a stushie, an’ we might miss your sushie,
But your karaoke’s shite, Tojo, tak it awa hame!
Shove your semi-conductors an’ your wee micro-processors,
Grab your grants an’ run – that’s the name o the game!:

Bit, hey! List tae me noo, Mac, tak tent tae my bletherin,
Dinnae think thae crusy Yanks an’ Japs are tae blame.
For we’re aa Jock Tamson’s bairns, an’ if the bit wis on the ither fit,
We’d be gie’n *them* the “wellie” – jist the very same!
Sae the moral o my tale is: “Dinnae listen tae moral tales.”
The world’s as ye find it, jist get on an’ dae your best.
If your future’s lukin dark tae you, then licht a bluidy cannell!
An’ I’ll see ye’s sometime later when we’ll aa be better dressed.”



IN YOUR HONOUR (A West Lothian Toast)

A Gilland 27/12/02

I'll charge my glass in your honour
Here's a toast to all freen's here
May your days be filled with beauty
And your nighttimes without fear

chorus

*May you always walk a straight path
May your music ay be sweet
And, throughout your lifetime
Your hearth be stacked wi' peat*

Here's tae the joy of freen'ship
Here's tae the freendly jo
An' hope that all your lifetime
A joyous road you'll go
So, a toast to a' here present
A thocht for a' those by
A prayer gi'en for the future
Tae a kindly, watchfu' eye

So let's raise a glass for Auld Lang Syne
For freen'ship doon the years
An' tae those that's yet to come
May their days be withoot tears
May they always walk a straight path
*May their music aye be sweet
And throughout their lifetimes
Their hearths be stacked wi' peat
And throughout your lifetime
Your hearth be stacked with peat*

*And throughout your lifetime
Your hearth be stacked with peat*

*There is an accompanying cd to this booklet
with all sleeve note information included*

The cd is available by emailing

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