

WORLD MUSIC

SCOTLAND

UAMH AN ÒIR (CAVE OF GOLD)

SONG BACKGROUND:

There are at least four caves on the Isle of Skye in Scotland that bear the name, Uamh an Oir (Cave of Gold): one at Harlosh Point, which is about 100 feet (33m) long; another at Greshornish northeast of Loch Diubaig, which is 175 feet (58m) long; a third (100 ft. long) in basalt at Kilmuir in the Ru Bornesketaig headland (see photo), and yet another never located one in the Cuchullins (or Coolins) Mountains in northeastern Skye. (Oldham 1975 & Swire 1961) But things get complicated, for there are four more caves called, Uamh an Oir (Cave of Gold), elsewhere in Scotland on the coast at



Gruinard Bay some 50 kms northeast across the North Minch from the northern tip of Skye, on the shore of Loch Maree, on the south side of the Liathach Mountains above Torridon, and also on the Isle of Barra. (Oldham 1975; 2008; Oldham et al. 2006) "The derivation of the name, Uamh an Oir, is explored [in MacDiarmid article] but may merely relate to the growth of a bright yellow lichen on the surrounding rocks." (Nicolson 2012)

Probably the most famous is the Cave of Gold (also called Piper's Cave) at Harlosh (see photo). It is also the most likely the Cave of Gold that inspired this piece of music. Tony Oldham describes the entrance as 30 feet high and 15 feet wide. "After 60 feet with a gallery of similar dimensions the cave divides. The right hand passage is 15 feet wide by 12 feet high for 30 feet, then 6 feet square in section and gradually decreasing for the next 60 feet until it terminates in a blank wall. The left hand passage is only 4 feet wide by 3 feet high and 10 feet long. Both passages have a man made appearance due to their regular cross section, but they are most certainly natural." (Oldham 1975)

Cave at Ru Bornesketaig

Oldham goes on to say that this cave "has a pedigree as long as a Scotsman's tassel." Johnson and Boswell went out of their way to visit this cave during their tour of Skye and Scotland in 1773. According to the legends it has many entrances and connects with the Golden Cave at Duhbeag (Loch Diubaig). Otta Swire tells the tale –

"It was into this cave that the first of the great MacCrimmon pipers, as a young man, found his way and in it that he met a beautiful woman, believed to have been the Fairy Queen. He spent some time with her, feeling it but a few moments, and she asked him to tell her what parting gift he most desired: she presented him with his wish, a silver chanter, but she gave him also the gift to play it so that 'when you would dance all shall dance and when you lament the lamenting shall be on all the island.' But at a certain day and time he must promise to return to the cave and to her ... He returned to Borreraig and became not only the greatest piper of his own day but the most famous there has ever been. He and his family were made hereditary pipers to Macleod of Macleod. In due course the day arrived on which he must keep his tryst with the Daoine Sithe. He said goodbye to his



wife and family ... took his fairy chanter and set off for Harlosh, but before he left home he 'wished' his gift of music upon his son. MacCrimmon entered the cave playing his pipes, with his little terrier dog at his heels barking madly. His sons and others had accompanied him to the cave's mouth. They followed the sound of his pipes and the barking of his dog, both of which could be heard beneath the moor, to a spot near Fairy Bridge: here the sound of the pipes ceased but the barking could still be heard, and this led them to Dhubaig. As they approached the bay the barking grew clearer until at last out of the Golden Cave ran the little terrier, with every hair singed off his body! " (Swire 1961) The photo of the cave at Harlosh Point is by D. Brison, 1977.

The cave at Greshornish is some 16 km north northeast of the one at Harlosh Point on the other side of the island. The third Cave of Gold, at sea level north of the hamlet of Bornesketaig, is plotted on the Ordnance Survey as Uamh Oir. It is located another 17 km north northeast of the Greshornish cave across the Loch Snizort. The legend here affirms that the cave contained a hoard of pure gold guarded by a terrible monster that was harrying the whole countryside. "The MacArthur of the day felt it was laid upon him to enter the cave and deal with the beast. He said farewell to his family and, with pipes skirling (and an audience watching from a safe distance) he entered the cave. Here is a translation of the chant that he was playing:

I shall come never, return never;
Ere I return from the Cave of Gold
The kidling flocks will be goats of the rocks
And the children weak will be warriors bold.
I am woe, woe, under the spells to go;
I'll be for aye in the Cave of Gold.

The listeners heard his pipes beneath the ground, then the tune changed and broke, there were sounds of a conflict, fierce and terrible, and then these words were heard in Gaelic:

Pity me, without hands three,
Two for the pipes and a sword hand free.

MacArthur, as he had foretold, never returned, but he achieved his purpose, for the monster was never seen again and the people of Kilmuir lived in peace." (Swire 1961)

Regarding the four other caves with this name, there is the Uamh an Oir on the coast of the Sron na Carra headland just east of Mellon Udrigle (near Opinan), another on the south side of the Liathach Mountains above Torridon, some 40 kms due south, which is said to be linked to the one at Opinan, a third on the northeast shore of Loch Maree, located somewhere between the other two, and another on the Isle of Barra southwest of Skye across the Hebrides Sea. The legend for the cave near Opinan says that "long ago a Piper led a party of children into the cave and they were never seen again, and if children went alone to the cave the same fate would happen to them." (Oldham et al. 2006 & 2008)

The best known Traditional Celtic song inspired by the Cave of Gold was first recorded on tape by William Matheson in 1961 with an introduction and the five stanzas (see reference below) using the same Gaelic lyrics as Donnie MacLeod (see [celticyricscorner](#)). No other vocal recordings are known until 1994 when Talitha MacKenzie performed it. Her version was followed by three other recordings of variants of that song. It is noteworthy that all the known vocal versions and variants of the song, with the exception of one, were performed by women.

But this cave has inspired three other completely different songs: two traditional Celtic songs from the Isle of Skye, authors unknown (see below [WD-SCOT-CG6](#) and [WD-SCOT-CG7](#)) and the third, a traditional waulking song reworked by Mark Kane (see below – [WD-SCOT-CG8](#)).

Other variants and fragments of the song, "Uamh an Oir," have been published (see references below) and one, "Uamh'n Oir," from an unidentified book of Scottish Gaelic poetry, was sent to me by Mrs. MacKinnon of the Piping Centre Museum at Borreraig, Skye.

Ref: Boswell, James 1786 (1984), *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, Penguin Books, London, p. 301
Bowman, Derek (Editor) 1977, *The Old Songs of Skye – Francis Tolmie & Her Circle – Ethel Bassin*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. 3-4

Carron, James n.d., Seeking out Sea Caves, Isle of Skye, Cave of Gold, Harlosh, [travelthruhistory](#)

Johnson, Samuel 1775 (1984), *A Journey to the Western Island of Scotland*, Penguin Books, London, p. 86

MacKinnon, Mrs. 1977, Letter dated Sept. 9, 1977, Piping Centre, Borreraig, Isle of Skye

MacRae, Cam n.d., Cave of Gold, Songs & References, [macrae](#)

MacDiarmid, Neal 1952, Harlosh Cave, *The Clarion of Skye*, Issue 17, June 1952. p. 12, [ambaile](#)

Nicolson, A. W. 2012, Cave of Gold, Harlosh & Bornesketaig, *The Clarion of Skye*, Issue 17, June 1952. p. 12, [ambaile](#)

Oldham, Tony 1975, *The Caves of Scotland*, Bristol, p. 99-101

Oldham, Tony; Mills, Martin; & Jeffreys, Alan 2006, *The Caves of Scotland: A Bibliography*, sat.dundee.ac.uk Website

Oldham, Tony 2008, *The New Caves of Scotland*, showcaves.com Website

Ordnance Survey 1976, North Skye, Sheet 23, 1:50,000 second series

Swire, Otta F. 1961, *Skye: The Island and Its Legends*, Blackie & Son Ltd., London, p. 23, 60, 80, 135, 167-168

Tolmie, Frances, Four versions of this song from Skye, *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, v. IV, pt.iii, December 1911, p.157-59

William Matheson 1961, Uamh an Òir, Early recorded version (3:12) + Afterword (4:11), School of Scottish Studies, [tobarandualchais](#) (◀COMPLETE AUDIO SAMPLE with AFTERWORD) and Introduction (2:53) + Song (6:09), [tobarandualchais](#) (◀COMPLETE AUDIO SAMPLE with INTRO)

VARIOUS VERSIONS OF
UAMH AN ÒIR (CAVE OF GOLD)
In chronological order

WD-SCOT-CG1 United Kingdom 1989

CAVE OF GOLD *

WD – Celtic – Traditional – Instrumental

Comp: (Traditional Celtic song)

Perf: Murray **HENDERSON** (bagpipes)

Prod: Bob McDowall

Prod. Co: Lismor Recordings; Glasgow

Rec. Co: Lismor Recordings

Liner Notes: (4-page Booklet) David Murray (The Piobaireachd Society)

Time: 11:25

1. **CD:** PIOBAIREACHD

Lismor LCOM 9016 (Tk 4)

2. Reissue on Compilation **CD:** THE WORLD'S GREATEST PIPERS –
VOL. 4 (1996)

Lismor LCOM 5159 (Tk 8)

Notes: Murray Henderson emigrated "to Scotland [from New Zealand] as a young man, where he studied under great pipers of the day, and started to make his mark on the competitive scene in Scotland. Throughout the 1970s and '80s, Murray won all the top prizes, many more than once,." (Anon. n.d.)

An extended bagpipe piece called a "piobaireachd" or "pibroch" in English (translated as "piping") of the traditional Celtic tune, "Cave of Gold," with several variations. The theme here is followed by a series of variations, which begin simply and develop in complexity. The main notes of the theme are embellished with clusters of grace notes of increasing complexity and length. (Liner notes)

Ref: Anon. n.d., Murray Henderson, Biography, [allcelticmusic](#)

Murray Henderson, Piobaireachd,, [allcelticmusic](#). (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)



WD-SCOT-CG2 United States 1994

UAMH AN OIR (The Cave of Gold) *

WD – Celtic – Traditional – Vocal & Instrumental

Comp: (Traditional Celtic song) ([LY-WD37](#))

Sources: Rev William Matheson, K.N. MacDonald,
& Puirt-a-beul (Mouth Tunes)

Arr: Talitha MacKenzie

Rts: Riverboat UK Music

Perf: Talitha **MacKENZIE** (vocal)

Gary West (pipe drone)

Prod: Iain McKinna & T. MacKenzie

Rec. Co: Palladium Studios; Edinburgh

Liner Notes: (8-page Booklet) Talitha MacKenzie

Time: 5:03

A. British Release:

CD: SÓLAS

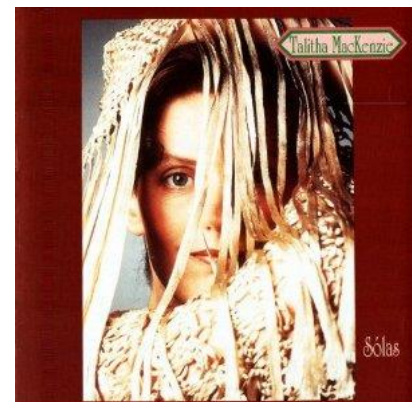


Photo by Gino Spiro

Riverboat TUGCD 1007 (Tk 6)

B. American Release:

CD: SÓLAS (1994)

Shanachie 79084 CD (Tk 6)

Notes: A traditional Celtic song from the Isle of Skye, a thoroughly rousing chant that starts with Talitha MacKenzie singing in Gaelic without accompaniment. On the second chorus, the pipe drone comes in and the tension builds. This is the bench mark version of the song; of the four known vocal versions of this variant of the song, this one is absolutely stunning. If you have any Scottish in ye, I guarantee it'll move ye. When she reaches the fifth and last stanza a slight softening in the voice can be heard as she sings in Gaelic –

Many a young maiden in the first
Bloom of youth will pass away,
Will pass away, will pass away
Before I come, before I return
From the Cave of Gold, the Cave of Gold.

This version includes a stanza (No. 2), which the other later versions do not have (see [LY-WD37](#)).

“Talitha may have got her version from the collection made by Frances Tolmie, who recorded four versions of the song from Skye; see *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* IV:iii (December 1911), 157-59.” (Blankenhorn 1997) The liner notes booklet provides the lyrics in Gaelic and English.

Talitha MacKenzie “is an American world music recording artist... initially known for her work as the singing half [with Martin Swan] of the original Mouth Music lineup... The name “Mouth Music” is an English translation of the Gaelic term *puirt a beul* – the vocalisation (sic) of instrumental music.” (Anon. n.d.)

The chorus of this piece was included in my paper, “Caves Celebrated in Recorded Music and Songs,” which was presented in July 1996 during the international symposium, “Caves in the Arts,” in Jósvalfö, Hungary.

Ref: Anon. n.d., Talitha MacKenzie, Biography, [Wikipedia](#)

Blankenhorn, Virginia 1997, *Uamh an Oir* (Cave of Gold), [mudcat](#)

Talitha MacKenzie, Biography, Official Website, [talithamackenzie](#)

Talitha MacKenzie, Solas CD, [Allmusic](#) (◀[AUDIO SAMPLE](#))

Talitha MacKenzie, *Uamh 'n Oir* (Cave of Gold), [Deezer](#) (◀[AUDIO SAMPLE](#))

Tolmie, Frances, *Uamh 'n Oir* (Cave of Gold), Music & a few verses, [folkinfo](#)

Tolmie, Frances, Four versions of this song from Skye, *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, v. IV, pt.iii, December 1911, p.157-59

Uamh an Oir, Lyrics in Scottish Gaelic & English, [celticlyricscorner](#)

WD-SCOT-CG3 Austria 2000

UAMH AN OIR (The Cave of Gold) *

WD – Celtic – Traditional – Vocal & Instrumental

Comp: (Traditional Celtic song) ([LY-WD37](#))

Arr: Donnie M. MacLeod

Rts: Macmeanmna, Isle of Skye & ARC

Music Productions Int. Ltd.

Perf: Donnie Murdo **MacLEOD** (vocal)

Allan MacDonald (Highland pipes)

Prod: (No 2) Karin Tubbesing

Prod. Co: ARC Music Productions Int. Ltd.

Liner Notes: (No. 2) (32-page Booklet –
in English, German, & Spanish)

Time: 4:22 or (No. 2) 4:34

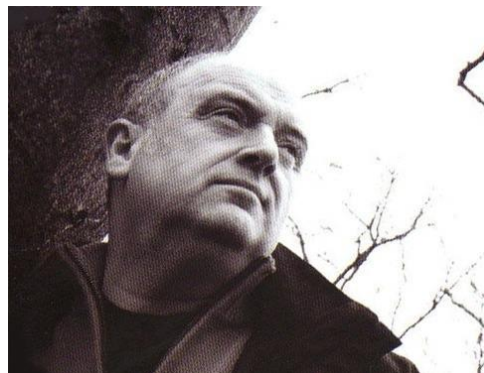
1. **CD:** SQUAB IS DLÒTH

Macmeanmna SKYE CD13 (Tk 14)

2. Compilation **CD:** GAELIC SCOTLAND

ARC Music EUCD 1623 (Tk 8)

Notes: The legend tells of a piper who went into a cave (perhaps the one near Harlosh on the Isle of Skye) with his dog and met a monster of some kind with whom he fought and he was never heard of again. In some versions the dog emerges from the cave with no hair, in others the pipers can be heard playing occasionally to this day. (Liner notes)



This is the only known male vocal performance of the song. Donnie Murdo MacLeod was from Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis. He is established as one of the best traditional Celtic singers of his generation. This album was named "Gaelic Album of the Year" in 2000 by *Scotland on Sunday*.

Bagpipes softly play the intro and MacLeod sings 5 stanzas in a very pure traditional style. The wording of the lyrics (printed here in Celtic & English) differs in many ways from those of the MacKenzie version, but this could be partly due to different translations. Stanza 5 –

Many's the young virgin in her first bloom
Will have gone beyond, gone beyond
Before I come
Before I return from the Cave of Gold,
The Cave of Gold.

The chorus also is handed in a much more playful, happy manner.

Allan MacDonald also played Highland pipes on the Margaret Stewart version of the third traditional song, Cave of Gold (see below [WD-SCOT-CG7](#))

Ref: Donnie Murdo MacLeod, Squab Is Dlòth, First stanza, [Amazon](#)

Donnie Murdo MacLeod, Squab Is Dlòth, [gaelicmusic](#)

Uamh an Oir, Lyrics in Scottish Gaelic & English, [celticlyricscorner](#)

WD-SCOT-CG4 United Kingdom 2001

CAVE OF GOLD (Uamh an Oir)

WD –Celtic – Traditional – Electronic – Vocal & Instrumental – Nature Sounds Recorded in Cave – Cave Pic Cover

Comp: (Traditional Celtic song) ([LY-WD37](#))

Arr: Lynn Morrison

Rts: Grian Music

Perf: Lynn **MORRISON** (vocal & keyboards)

Rod Paul (guitar & percussion)

Wendy Weatherby (cello)

Mark Duff (wind synthesizer)

Prod: Lynn Morrison & Rod Paul

Prod. Co: Greentrax Records; Cockenzie, East Lothian

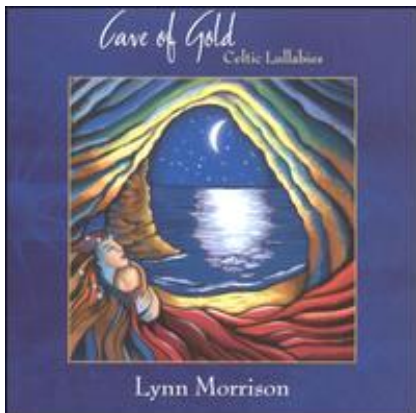
Liner Notes: (12-page Booklet)

Time: 4:20

CD: CAVE OF GOLD: CELTIC LULLABIES ([RIC#](#)) ([CPC#](#))

Greentrax CDTRAX 212 (Tk 7)

Notes: Song "taken from a version learnt by the folklorist Frances Tolmie during her childhood in Skye (1846). This is a more contemporary arrangement of the traditional Scottish piece. One critic remarked – "Lynn Morrison has a clear, warm voice, but on the title cut, it resonates as if she's singing deep with a cave." (MacIassac 2001) We are told that "the natural sounds included on the album were recorded at Findhorn Beach, Oldshoremore, Smoo Cave," etc. all located in Scotland. (Anon., n.d.) (See Music Recorded in Natural Caves – Scotland –Smoo Cave)



The liner notes give a variant on the cave's legend – "Many years ago a piper overheard two Highland women talking of secret treasure to be found in a 'Cave of Gold.' 'Aye,' said one in hushed tones, 'yet not a soul who entered that cave by Harlosh ever came out again... alive.' The piper paid no attention to this warning, as he was desperate to make his fortune. Besides, he knew that music had magical charms, so as long as he kept playing his bagpipes whilst in the cave, no evil could come to him.

So he found the cave near Harlosh, on the Isle of Skye, and marched boldly in, piping proudly. However, that was the last anyone ever saw of him. A woman sitting beside a sacred well nearby claimed she heard his voice circling up from the depths of the well, crying out despairingly that he wished for three hands – two for the bagpipes and one for the sword. It was thought he'd found the treasure and dropped his pipes to carry it away, leaving himself with only a sword to protect against whatever then overcame him.



A tune connected with this legend is still played as a pibroch by pipers today, yet none dared to seek their fortune in the 'Cave of Gold.' " (Liner notes)

Two Internet audio clips provided just some rumbling wind sounds and a few water drops followed by keyboard drop-like notes.

Ref: Lynn Morrison, Cave of Gold: Celtic Lullabies, [Allmusic](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

Lynn Morrison, Cave of Gold, [Amazon](#)

Lynn Morrison, Cave of Gold, [musicscotland](#)

Maclsaac, Virginia 2001, Lynn Morrison, Cave of Gold, Review, [rambles](#)

WD-SCOT-CG5 United Kingdom 2002

UAMH AN OIR (The Cave of Gold) *

WD – Celtic – Traditional – Vocal & Instrumental

Comp: (Traditional Celtic song) ([LY-WD38](#))

Perf: Margaret **BENNETT** (vocal)

Martyn Bennett (samples)

Prod:

Prod. Co: Foot Stompin Records

Liner Notes: Martyn Bennett

Time: 3:30

CD: GLEN LYON (A SONG CYCLE)

Foot Stompin CDTSR 1714 (Tk 4)



Notes: A fourth version of this Celtic song is by Margaret Bennett, who was born in Skye. On the audio clip her voice echoed off at the end of each verse, which is certainly not in keeping with a pure folk tradition. In the mix her son has added samples of sounds in nature and the album goes under his name not hers. "Margaret Bennett's repertoire includes some of the big, big songs of Gaeldom. On Glen Lyon you hear her answering the echoes of her own voice in Uamh an Oir, 'The Cave of Gold', a song so elemental that the poet Sorley MacLean regarded it as an allegory for Everyman confronting the very mystery of life itself." (Anon. 2002)

The liner notes relate – "The Cave of Gold in the south (sic) of Skye is said to be seven miles deep (sic) and if you sing a single note inside, without fail it will come back to you. An ancient Hebridean legend tells of a famous piper who goes into the cave to find out why it has claimed so many lives. From deep within his pipe music echoes, playing a tune that nobody has ever heard before. Those listening above ground can understand from the music that a green fairy-dog is attacking him. The song imitates the pipes as chorus repeats his promise to return."

The liner notes (& the Margaret Bennett Website) provide the complete lyrics both in Gaelic and in English, where the English translation is slightly different from the one given by Talitha MacKenzie (for both see [LY-WD37](#) & [LY-WD38](#)).

Excerpts from this song, Uamh an Oir (Gaidhlig), as performed by Margaret Bennett together with a spoken commentary in Gaelic by Martyn Bennett (5:01) can be heard on [YouTube](#).

Ref: Anon. 2002, Showing True Grit, *The Scotsman*, Edinburgh, [Scotsman](#)

Margaret Bennett, Glen Lyon, Lyrics in Gaelic & English, p. 5-6, [margaretbennett](#)

Martyn Bennett & Margaret Bennett, Glen Lyon, [musicscotland](#)

Martyn Bennett & Margaret Bennett, Uamh an Oir (Gaidhlig), (5:01), [YouTube](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLES)

UAMH AN OIR (CAVE OF GOLD)

THREE OTHER SONGS

WD-SCOT-CG6 United Kingdom 1998

UAMH AN OIR *

WD – Celtic – Traditional – Vocal & Instrumental

Comp: (Traditional Celtic song)

Perf: Anne **MARTIN** (vocal)
Malcolm Jones (guitar or mandolin)
Iain MacFarlane (fiddle)
Iain MacDonald (Highland pipes or concertina)
Ingrid Henderson (keyboards)
James Mackintosh (percussion)

Prod: Iain MacDonald & Malcolm Jones

Prod. Co: Whitewave Records

Time: 4:38 or 4:43

CD: CO...? – GAELIC SONG FROM THE ISLE OF SKYE
Whitewave WWAVECD 001 (Tk 3)

Notes: Anne Martin is from the Isle of Eigg, located to the south of Skye across the Cuillin Sound. Judging from the few Gaelic lyrics heard on the 30-second audio clip it is not certain that this is the same Celtic song from Skye as the four entries listed above or similar to the two songs that follow.

Ref: Anne Martin, Co, [Allmusic](#)

Anne Martin, Co, [CDBaby](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

Anne Martin, Co...? (CD), [skymusicshop](#)



WD-SCOT-CG7 United Kingdom 1998

CAVE OF GOLD *

WD – Celtic – Traditional – Vocal & Instrumental

Comp: (Traditional Celtic song)

Perf: Margaret **STEWART** (vocal)

Allan **MacDONALD** (piobaireachd pipes)

Prod: Iain & Allan MacDonald

Prod. Co: Greentrax Records; Cockenzie, East Lothian

Rec. Co: Watercolour Studios; Ardgour

Rec. Date: Summer 1997

Time: (Medley – 3:30)

CD: FHUAIR MI POG

Greentrax TRAX 132 (Tk 13 – Part 1)

Notes: Margaret Stewart is from the Isle of Lewis. She says – “I have recorded two CDs, both of these in conjunction with the well known piper, Allan MacDonald of Glenuig. We focus, although not exclusively, on the connection between Gaelic song and pibroch.” (Stewart n.d.)

The Scottish Gaelic lyrics provided on the Celtic Lyrics Corner Website make it clear that this is yet another Celtic song. The second stanza mentions the cave –

Bidh na laoih bheag nan crodh féille

Mas tig mis' à Uamh an Oir

Bidh na laoih bheag nan crodh féille

Mas tig mis' à Uamh an Oir

For the full lyrics in Scottish Gaelic see the [Celtic Lyrics Corner](#) Website.

This song is coupled with “Cumha an T-Seana Chaidheimh.” Allan MacDonald also played Highland pipes on the Donnie Murdo MacLeod version of the first traditional song (see above [WD-SCOT-CG3](#))

Ref: Fhuair Mi Pog CD, [Allmusic](#)

Fhuair Mi Pog CD, Uamh an Oir, Second stanza & chorus, [Amazon](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

Margaret Stewart, Uamh an Oir, Lyrics (in Gaelic), Celtic Lyrics Corner, [celticlyricscorner](#)

Margaret Stewart & Allan MacDonald, Fhuair Mi Pog, [musicinscotland](#)

Stewart, Margaret n.d., Autobiography, [margaretstewart](#)



WD-SCOT-CG8 United States 1999

UAMH AN OIR

WD – Celtic – Traditional – Vocal & Instrumental

Comp: (Traditional waulking song) Mark KANE (LY-WD39)

Arr: Mark Kane & Jennifer Licko

Perf: Jennifer **LICKO** (vocal)

Mark Kane (guitar & fiddle)

Jose Serrano (congas & bongos)

Prod: Bob Noble

Prod. Co: Solstice Records & Jennifer Licko Productions

Rec. Co: Voice Works & Remidi Studios; West Palm Beach, FL

Liner Notes: (4-pages) Jennifer S. Licko

Time: 3:45 (3:41)

CD: CAVE OF GOLD

Solstice SR&P 99001 (Tk 8)

Notes: Jennifer Sheldon Licko is a Celtic singer, guitarist, and Highland dancer, who performs in the tradition of North Carolina's Scottish and Irish heritage. She sings "Uamh an Oir (The Cave of Gold)," in Gaelic and couples it with another piece "Amy's Dance." This is a completely different song from the other songs of this title cited above. It was composed in the traditional Celtic style as a waulking song using a different tune. We have the translation of the lyrics (see [LY-WD39](#)) and they are not the same as the other Celtic songs, but the chorus is quite similar –

Before I come, before I return, before I come out of the Cave of Gold

Whereas the other songs have this chorus –

Before I come, before I return from the Cave of Gold, the Cave of Gold

A soothing guitar introduces her chant-like singing in Gaelic, all in a lilting, playful mode backed by percussion. After the third chorus there is a fiddle break. She returns with four more verses and then the guitar takes a long solo, which brings the piece to the end. One critic said – "Traditional tunes such as ... 'Uamh an Oir' she carries gracefully, her voice trilling with a long Gaelic drawl to the vowels." (MacIsaac 2001)

The liner notes tell us that this song is "based on a legend about a piper who was enticed by fairies to enter the Cave of Gold. They captured the piper and kept him there, so they could enjoy his music for eternity, as Scottish fairies are known for their love of music." (Licko 1999)

Try listening to her 2005 live version accompanied by Alasdair Fraser on guitar on [YouTube](#). If you've got any Scottish blood in you, you may come out of this glowing with pride after the 2:12 is up.

Ref: Dinoia, Maria Konicki n.d., Jennifer Licko, Biography, [Allmusic](#)

Jennifer Licko, Cave of Gold CD, [Allmusic](#)

Jennifer Licko, Cave of Gold CD, Chorus, [Amazon](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

Jennifer Licko, Cave of Gold CD, Chorus, [CD Baby](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

Jennifer Licko 2005, Sings Uamh an Oir (2:12), Different version, Live with Alasdair Fraser, 2005, Rhythms of Scotland, [YouTube](#) (◀COMPLETE AUDIO SAMPLE)

MacIsaac, Virginia 2001, Cave of Gold, Review, Rambles: Cultural Arts Magazine, [rambles](#)



caveinspiredmusic.com