

TRANSCRIPTION

Stanley Robertson sings “The Tinker Woman’s Lament”

ScottishVoicesProj.0457

[This recording was made in July 1986 at a house in Auchtermuchty, Fife, that John Niles and his research team were renting at the time. Present were Stanley Robertson, his daughters Gabrielle and Nicole, and eight members of Niles’s research team. While the song is set in the mouth of Robertson’s mother, it speaks to the situation of Traveller women in general.

[The clip begins with some spoken comments by Robertson about the hard lot of his mother and other Traveller women. He confirms that it was his mother who wrote the song.]

[*Stanley Robertson sings:*]

- 1 Ah’m tired on ma knees
Pullin bracken, pullin bracken,
Ah’m tired on my knees
All with pullin bracken.

Pullin bracken aa day lang
Aa with pullin bracken,
Pullin bracken aa day lang
Aa with pullin bracken.
- 2 Ma hands [are] tired sair
Making besoms, makin besoms,
My hands [are] tired sair
Aa wi makin besoms.

Makin besoms aa day lang
Aa wi makin besoms,
Makin besoms aa day lang
Aa wi makin besoms.
- 3 Ma feet [are] blistered sair
Hawkin hooses, hawkin hooses,
Ma feet [are] blistered sair
Aa wi hawkin hooses.

Hawkin hooses aa day lang
Aa wi hawkin hooses,
Hawkin hooses aa day lang
Aa wi hawkin hooses.

4 My back's bent an boo'd
 Cooking haben, cookin haben,
 My back's bent an boo'd
 Aa wi cookin haben.

Cookin haben aa day lang
 Aa wi cookin haben,
 Cookin haben aa day lang
 Aa with cookin haben.

5 My heid's throbbin strang
 Pinchin bairns, pinchin bairns,
 My heid's throbbin strang
 Aa wi pinchin bairns.

Pinchin bairns aa day lang
 As wi pinchin bairns,
 Pinchin bairns aa day lang
 Aa with pinchin bairns.

6 My soul's perjured sair
 Tellin fortunes, tellin fortunes,
 My soul's perjured sair
 Aa with tellin fortunes.

Tellin fortunes aa day lang
 Aa with tellin fortunes,
 Tellin fortunes aa day lang
 Aa with tellin fortunes.

7 When Ah'm deid in ma grave
 I'll find peace and I'll find restin,
 [When] Ah'm deid in ma grave
 Then I'll find some rest.

Then I'll tak a lang lang sleep
 Then I'll get my rest,
 Then I'll tak a lang lang sleep
 Then I'll get my rest.

[After he finishes singing the song, Robertson confirms that its tune is a pipe tune. He then diddles some notes of the tune as if he were playing it on the pipes. If he were teaching the tune to another person, he would teach it by diddling it. What he demonstrates is actually cantarach, rather than diddling, as these terms are usually understood.]