

Bonnie Rideout

HARLAW

SCOTLAND 1411

ancient music and stories commemorating the legendary battle

Bonnie Rideout and friends

Bonnie Rideout - Fiddle, Viola
John Purser - Narration

Matthew Bell - Bodhran
Barnaby Brown - Triple Pipes
Paula Glendinning - Highland Bagpipes
Grant Herreid - Theorbo, Lute
William Jackson - Clarsach
Allan MacDonald - Vocals, Highland Bagpipes & Small Pipes
Ronn McFarlane - Lute
Chris Norman - Flute
Al Petteway - Guitar
Betty Rideout - Piano
Elizabeth Stewart - Vocals
William Taylor - Clarsach and Harp
Cathy Fink, Marcy Marxer, Katia Fallon, Jim Robeson,
Jesus, John & Bonnie - Chorus
Alan Riach - Reader

"Simply stunning musicianship"

NEW YORK TIMES

"the music... speaks with a massive mythic power"

THE GUARDIAN, UK

"stunning... revelatory"

THE HERALD, GLASGOW

"spectacular display of artistry."

WASHINGTON POST



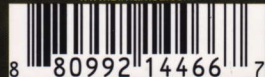
SABHAL
MÒR OSTAIG

Iarann Nàiseanta Canan a' Cultar na Gàidhlig

Music Disc - Harlaw 1411 52'44"
Narrative Disc - The Story of Harlaw 39'10"

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FILE: SCOTLAND/CELTIC/WORLD/SPOKEN WORD

HARLAW 1411 – MUSIC DISC

1. *The Battle of Harlaw, March* (1'42")
2. *Harlaw Brosnachadh* (2'21")
3. *Cogadh no Sith - War or Peace* (7'10")
4. *Battel Harloe (Clarsach)* (2'07")
5. *Black Donald's March to Harlaw* (3'42")
6. *The Battle of Harlaw, Ballad (Andrew Hunter)* (5'04")
7. *Battel Harloe (Piano)* (1'50")
8. *The Battle of Harlaw Pìobaireachd (Viola)* (5'15")
9. *Battel Harloe (Lute)* (1'47")
10. *Rothiemurchus Rant* (2'10")
11. *Cumha Eachainn Ruaidh nan Cath - Lament for Red Hector of the Battles* (4'03")
12. *The Battle of Harlaw, Ballad (Elizabeth Stewart)* (5'34")
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THE STORY OF HARLAW – NARRATIVE DISC

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10. *Battel Harloe (Guitar)* (1'55")
11. *The Meaning of "Harlaw" and "Benachie"* (3'51")

All compositions and arrangements

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Music and music extracts on the narrative disc are listed at the end of the liner notes



Dear Listener,

The story of Harlaw has captured my imagination for many years. My kin are MacGregors on one side and Stewarts on the other. My son is a MacDonald. In all likelihood ancestors of ours fought on both sides of this legendary battle; and many Scots, scattered across the globe, are descended from those who were present at the Battle of Harlaw on that summer day in 1411.

Music and song have carried this story through the centuries, and it is as relevant today as ever before. There is simply too much material for one fiddler to play, so I am ever grateful to the many musicians and tradition bearers who contributed to these two discs in the retelling of this tragic event through music and poetry. Some of you may wish to listen first to the narrative CD, as it provides the background and setting for the music disc and will add an extra dimension to your listening experience.

Thank you for sharing this musical offering with me.

Your fiddler,

Barlaam 1411 - Bonnie Rideout - Narration Disc
per ingre per terads



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COMPACT
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DISC



Harlaw - Scotland 1411

600 years ago, the windswept fields of Harlaw in north-east Scotland were witness to one of the bloodiest of battles in Scottish history. Although forgotten by many people today, the Battle of Harlaw was well remembered in music and song, much of it centuries old. The bones of the dead are still turned up with the plough, and the ghosts of the dead are still seen by the travelling people who have camped on the site – though they have never stayed for long.

The story takes us back through those centuries, with the extraordinary Gaelic incitement to the battle, and the age-old struggle between War and Peace. Included are Black Donald's March to Harlaw, two powerful ballads describing the battle, and an eighteenth-century fiddle piobaireachd, based upon one of the ballad tunes. The performers and performances are exceptional, representing some of the finest exponents of Scottish and Gaelic traditional music. They are drawn together by an event that haunts the imagination and underlines the terrible pity of war, its prides, its sorrows, its courageous deeds and its grim tragedies.

The name "Harlaw" is itself as hard as the battle, for it means the stony, or hard hill. On account of the amount of blood shed on that momentous day, July the 24th, 1411, the hill is also known as "Reid Harlaw" or "Red Harlaw".



Amongst the many noblemen who died, the best remembered are Hector MacLean of Duart, and Alexander Irvine of Drum, who met in single combat and fought each other to the death. Ever since then, the two families have exchanged swords on the anniversary of the battle, in honour of the courage of their forebears. MacLean's body was carried from the field by the MacInnes and Morison clans, and he was buried on Iona.

Not far from Harlaw is the Drum Stone, where Alexander Irvine of Drum marshalled his troops before the battle. It was also there that he asked his younger brother Robert to marry his widow, Elizabeth Keith, should Alexander die in the battle. The marriage was recent and had not yet been consummated. It was intended to end a long-standing feud between the Irvines and the Keiths. In the event, Robert did indeed marry Elizabeth – and also changed his own name to Alexander.

Who won the Battle of Harlaw? Both sides claimed victory. MacDonald retreated during the night, leaving the Earldom of Ross in the hands of Alexander Stewart, Earl of Mar. But MacDonald had inflicted great losses on the nobility, and his son was to regain the Earldom of Ross when the Scottish King James I was released from prison in England in 1424. In effect, the terrible carnage of the battle achieved little, save that it resonates through the centuries, its grim warning inspiring our pity, and its conflicts and claims of right as universally relevant today as ever they were.

1. The Battle of Harlaw, March (G.S.MacLennan)

It is good to be cheerful when you are heading for the battle-field, and this splendid march is certainly full of self-confidence. This is a pipe march composed centuries after the event, as though the grim outcome of the battle of Harlaw was unknown, and Bonnie and Matt play it as though victory were assured.

Violin Gdae - Bonnie Rideout; Bodhran - Matthew Bell

2. Harlaw Brosnachadh

A brosnachadh is a Gaelic incitement to battle, and this one is as powerful as it is poetically virtuosic. Each line consists of adjectives all starting with the same letter, and the lines move through the Gaelic alphabet from 'a' to 'u'. It is written in an ancient style, from the same era as the battle, and exhorts the men to be "stout-hearted, martial, venomous and implacable" - to select but four from over sixty adjectives. An English version of many of the words can be heard on The Story of Harlaw (Narrative CD, Track 4).

We do not know the tune to which the brosnachadh might have been chanted or sung. Allan MacDonald chose to sing it to Cogadh no Sith (War or Peace) which seems to have been made for the incitement, with its repetitions driving the words home. Cogadh no Sith is a piobaireachd - an early example of ceòl mòr or "the big music" for Highland bagpipes. Here, Allan uses the small pipes to accompany his own superb rendering of the demanding Gaelic text, as edited by Derick Thomson.

Voice and Small Pipes - Allan MacDonald; Violin GDgd - Bonnie Rideout

O children of Conn remember

3. Cogadh no Sith - War or Peace

Is comadh leam 's comadh leam, cogadh no sith,
Marbhar 'sa chogadh na crochar 's an t-sith mi.

It's all the same to me, war or peace.
In war they'll kill me, in peace they'll hang me.



These are the almost despairing words from which this powerful pìobaireachd derives its character, and although it is a battle pìobaireachd par excellence, and has been so for hundreds of years, it carries within it the seeds of its own lament. It was played in 1813 at the Battle of St Pierre, by a piper of the Gordon Highlanders. He was killed before he could finish, but a second piper took up the theme and was also killed; a third piper then carried it on and completed it.

Such courage and determination are inherent in this theme and variations, but in this version for violin, from Patrick MacDonald's collection of 1784, Bonnie brings out their emotional depth, so that "War or Peace" becomes a question. We may honour the memory of the Battle of Harlaw, but the pìty of war cannot be out-flanked.

Violin F#C##c# - Bonnie Rideout

hardihood in time of battle

4. Battel Harloe

Some time in the early 1600s the story of the Battle of Harlaw was performed for King James VI and I. All that survives of that performance is one piece of music, Battel Harloe, taken down in 1625 by someone who didn't understand what he was hearing. So we tidied up the music and gave it to the musicians to make of it what they could. They all loved it, indeed were intrigued by it, and the results are as varied as they are beautiful. Battel Harloe punctuates the rhythm of both CDs, with its own strange insistences. On this track, Billy's version for clarsach combines beauty with pride.

Clarsach – William Jackson

5. Black Donald's March to Harlaw

This magnificent march tune comes in many versions, mostly from the 19th-century, but its roots are in the Piobaireachd Dhòmhnnull Duibh, which one MacDonald piper claimed was from the early 15th-century. MacDòmhnnull Duibh was the patronymic of the Camerons of Locheil, so the piobaireachd is also known as the Cameron's Gathering. It may refer to the march to the battle of Inverlochy, which took place in 1431 – not long after Harlaw – and which was an undisputed victory for the MacDonalds, but a number of versions claim it for Harlaw. The tempo of this performance is suited to a slow march across rough terrain.

Highland Bagpipes – Paula Glendinning; Violin 1 AflEflBflf Violin 2 BflFbflf – Bonnie Rideout

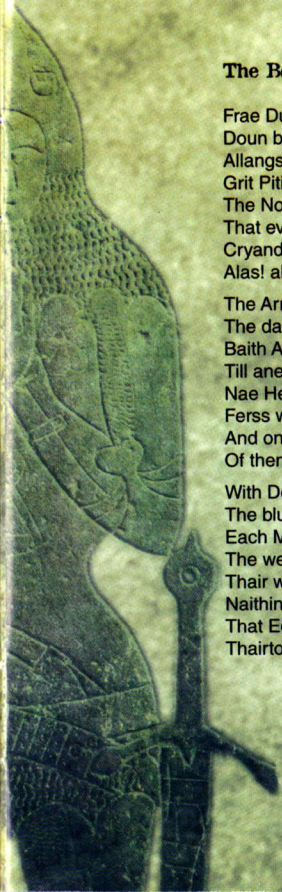
6. The Battle of Harlaw, Ballad

This is probably the earliest poetic account of the Battle of Harlaw, "foughten upon Friday, July 24, 1411, against Donald of the Isles". It was published by Allan Ramsay in Edinburgh, in 1724, in *The Evergreen* – a collection of ancient Scots poetry and song, "wrote by the ingenious before 1600", as Ramsay claimed. The full ballad is 31 stanzas long.

Ramsay did not publish the tune to which it was sung, but this tune has long been associated with it. It appears first as a fiddle piobaireachd in Daniel Dow's *A Collection of Ancient Scots Music* of 1776, and in this form probably dates from around 1720. However, the opening tune or ùrlar matches the verses perfectly, as you will hear from Andy's fine rendering of a selection of the verses.

Voice – Andrew Hunter; Wire-strung Clarsach – William Taylor; Viola AAea – Bonnie Rideout





The Battle of Harlaw

Frae Dunideir as I cam through,
Doun by the Hill of Banochie,
Allangst the Lands of Garioch;
Grit Pitie was to heir and se
The Noys and dulesum Hermonie,
That evir that dreiry Day did daw,
Cryand the Corynoch on hie,
Alas! alas! for the Harlaw.

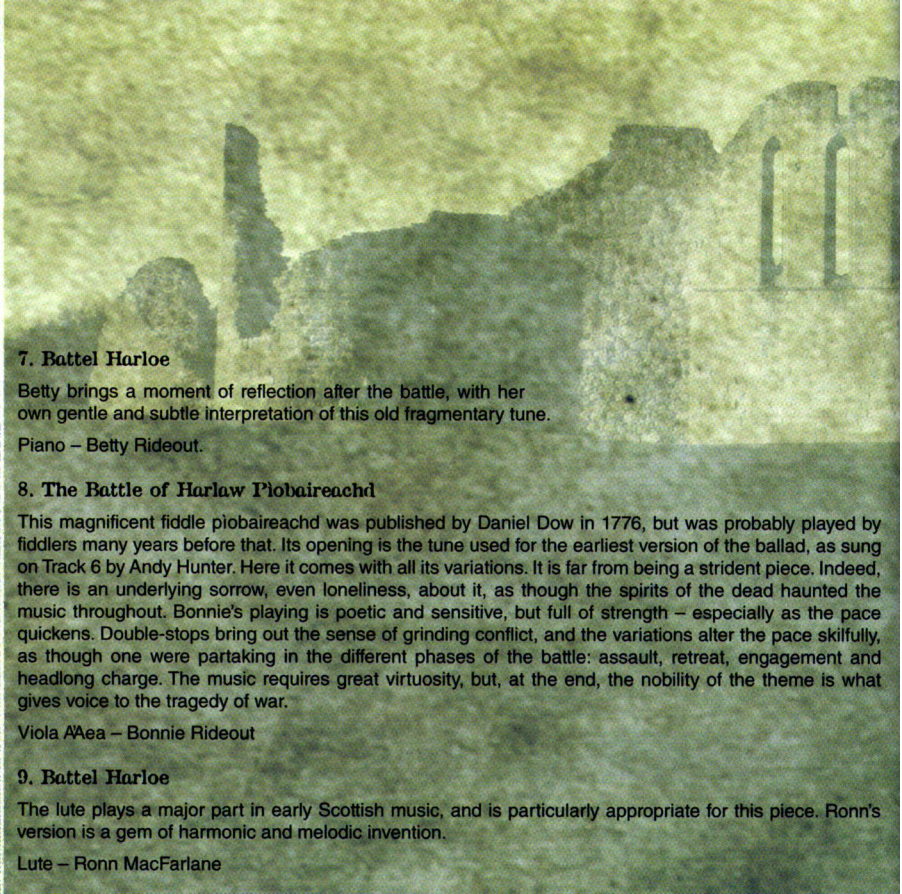
The Armies met, the Trumpet sounds,
The dandring Drums alloud did touk,
Baith Armies byding on the Bounds,
Till ane of them the Feild sould bruik.
Nae Help was thairfor, nane wald jouk,
Ferss was the Fecht on ilka Syde,
And on the Ground lay mony a Bouk
Of them that thair did Battill byd.

With Doutsun Victorie they dealt,
The bludy Battill lastit lang,
Each Man his Nibours Forss thair felt;
The weakeft aft-tymes gat the Wrang:
Thair was nae Mowis thair them amang,
Naithing was hard but heavy Knocks,
That Eccho maid a dulefull Sang,
Thairto resounding frae the Rocks.

But Donalds Men at last gaif back;
For they war all out of Array.
The Earl of Marris Men throw them brak
Pursewing shairply in thair Way,
Thair Enemys to tak or slay,
Be Dynt of Forss to gar them yield,
Quha war richt blyth to win away,
And sae for Feirdness tint the Feild.

Then Donald fled, and that full fast,
To Mountains hich for all his Micht;
For he and his war all agaft,
And ran till they war out of Sicht;
And sae of Ross he lost his Richt,
Thocht mony Men with him he brocht,
Towards the Yles fled Day and Nicht,
And all he won was deirlie bocht.

In July, on Saint James his Even,
That Four and twenty dismall Day,
Twelve hundred, ten score and eleven
Of Zeirs sen Christ, the Suthie to say:
Men will remember as they may,
Quhen thus the Veritie they know,
And mony a ane may murn for ay,
The brim Battill of the Harlaw.



7. **Battel Harloe**

Betty brings a moment of reflection after the battle, with her own gentle and subtle interpretation of this old fragmentary tune.

Piano – Betty Rideout.

8. **The Battle of Harlaw Pìobaireachd**

This magnificent fiddle piobaireachd was published by Daniel Dow in 1776, but was probably played by fiddlers many years before that. Its opening is the tune used for the earliest version of the ballad, as sung on Track 6 by Andy Hunter. Here it comes with all its variations. It is far from being a strident piece. Indeed, there is an underlying sorrow, even loneliness, about it, as though the spirits of the dead haunted the music throughout. Bonnie's playing is poetic and sensitive, but full of strength – especially as the pace quickens. Double-stops bring out the sense of grinding conflict, and the variations alter the pace skilfully, as though one were partaking in the different phases of the battle: assault, retreat, engagement and headlong charge. The music requires great virtuosity, but, at the end, the nobility of the theme is what gives voice to the tragedy of war.

Viola Aa – Bonnie Rideout

9. **Battel Harloe**

The lute plays a major part in early Scottish music, and is particularly appropriate for this piece. Ronn's version is a gem of harmonic and melodic invention.

Lute – Ronn MacFarlane



10. Rothiemurchus Rant

Rothiemurchus and Kildrummy Castles were homes of the Wolf of Badenoch, whose illegitimate son was Alexander Stewart, Earl of Marr. Rothiemurchus Rant is a strathspey – a dance form unique to Scotland that, in this case, displays a characteristic balance between energy and poised elegance, for which Bonnie and Grant make great dancing and musical partners.

Violin Gdae – Bonnie Rideout ; Theorbo – Grant Herreid

11. Cumha Eachainn Ruaidh nan Cath - Lament for Red Hector of the Battles

Hector MacLean - Red Hector of the Battles - was killed at the Battle of Harlaw. This lament was probably composed in his memory. It is perhaps the earliest surviving example of pìobaireachd. The opening ùrlar is set high on the chanter, often resting on the "f", or note of love, and then descending to the low "A" only to cry out its lament starting again on the top note of the instrument. There is a single variation, ensuring that the mood is unbroken. The theme itself might well be an ancestor of the Harlaw ballad tune sung by Elizabeth Stewart on Track 12.

Highland Bagpipes – Allan MacDonald

12. The Battle of Harlaw, Ballad

This more recent but well-known version of the battle probably dates from the later eighteenth-century. Unlike the earlier ballad, sung by Andy Hunter, this one has been kept alive in the oral tradition, and is sung here by Elizabeth Stewart, who as a little girl, learnt it from her aunt, even singing it to her teachers in primary school. Elizabeth belongs to the travelling folk of North-east Scotland, and her voice and style of delivery are the authentic sound of the region. You can hear her talking about Harlaw on the Narrative Disc.

The tune starts each verse in a high almost declamatory style, but gradually the pitch falls and ends with a refrain of vocables which perhaps suggests the sound of the Highland bagpipes.

It is not difficult to hear a relationship between this tune and the  urlar of The Lament for Red Hector of the Battles on the previous track.

Voice – Elizabeth Stewart; Chorus – Cathy Fink, Marcy Marxer, Katia Fallon, Jim Robeson, Jesus Medrano, John Purser, Bonnie Rideout



The Battle of Harlaw

As I came doon by Garioch lands and doon by Netherha'
There was fifty thousan' Hieland men a-marching tae Harlaw
Wi ma dirrum-do ma faltheaday ma diddy an ma day.

As I came doon and further doon and doon beneath Balquhin,
It's there I saw Sir James the Rose and wi' him Sir John the Graham.

Oh come ye fae the Hielands man and come ye aa the way
Saw ye MacDonald and a' his men as they come fae the Skye?

Oh I was near and near enough their numbers I did saw;
There was fifty thousand Hielanmen a-marching tae Harlaw.

As I came doon and further doon, and doon aneath Harlaw,
They fell fu' close in ilkae side, sic stracks ye never saw.

They fell fu' close in ilkae side, sic stracks ye never saw
For ilkae sword gave clash for clash at the Battle of Harlaw.

The Hielanmen wi their lang swords, they laid on wondrous sair
They drave back our merry men three acres width and mair.

Brave Forbes to his brother did say "Oh brother do ye see
They've beat us back on ilkae side and we'll be forced to flee.

"Oh naw, naw naw my brither dear, sic things they canna be
Ye'll tack yer guid sword in yer hand and ye'll come along wi' me."

Then back to back the brithers fought, gaed in amongst the thrang,
They sweepit doon the Hielanmen wi' swords baith sharp and lang.

The first strack Lord Forbes strack he gart MacDonald reel,
The neist strack Lord Forbes strack, the brave MacDonald he fell.

And when they saw that he was deid, they turned and ran awa';
They buried him at Lagersden a lang mile fae Harlaw.

'Twas on the Monday mornin' that the battle it begun;
On Setturday efter glaomin', aw ye'd scarce ken fa had won.

An sic a weary burying, the likes ye never saw,
'Twas on the Sunday efter on the moors a-neath Harlaw.

If onie een they ask at you for them they took awa';
Ye can tell them this and tell them that, that they're sleepin at Harlaw.

13. Cath Ghairidheach – March from Harlaw

This minor key tune was known as Domhnall Ballach a' tilleadh bho Ghairidheach – Donald Ballach's return from Garioch. The Gaels have always called the Battle of Harlaw Cath Ghairidheach, referring to the district in general rather than the specific field of battle. In Bonnie and Betty's rendering, it is not so much a triumphal march homeward, as a thoughtful one.

Violin Gdae – Bonnie Rideout; Piano – Betty Rideout

15. Battel Garlan

The title of this piece is probably a mis-reading for Battle Harlaw. It appears in the Rowallan lute book of 1615 and is difficult to decipher. It is a very basic piece – more like a blueprint than a finished composition, or perhaps the basis for a set of variations. It is arranged and played by Bonnie, with harmonies on solo violin that are both inventive and respectful.

Violin GDgd – Bonnie Rideout

16. Cath nan Eun - Battle of the Birds

This is an old and favourite piobaireachd, also known as The Desperate Battle. Some scholars of piping say it is cousin to the piobaireachd of The Battle of Harlaw. There are various stories behind this piece, not all related to birds, but, in this version, the bird-like exchanges create a unique sound world, full of feathers and whistling bird-calls. Bonnie is joined by Barnaby Brown, who plays triple pipes, circular breathing the single reed drone and chanters. These pipes were originally heard in Scotland over 1000 years ago, but the sound blends so remarkably with the violin that it is sometimes hard to distinguish between the two instruments.

Triple Pipes – Barnaby Brown; Violin Aeae – Bonnie Rideout

THE STORY OF HARLAW

NARRATIVE DISC WITH MUSIC AND MUSIC EXTRACTS

In The Story of Harlaw - Narrative Disc, additional music backs interviews with Professor Alan Riach, Elizabeth Stewart, and John Purser. Alan Riach discusses the poetry associated with the battle, Elizabeth Stewart tells us a ghost story from the battle site itself, and Bonnie Rideout asks John Purser to expand on the historical background.

1. Introduction

Black Donald's March to Harlaw (Paula Glendinning – Highland bagpipes)

2. The March to Harlaw

The Battle of Harlaw March (Bonnie – violin); Battel Harloe (William Taylor – gut-strung Mediaeval harp)

3. About the Ballad – Alan Riach and John Purser

(Alan Riach – reader); The Battle of Harlaw Ballad (Andrew Hunter – vocals, William Taylor – wire-strung clarsach)

4. The Brosnachadh – in Gaelic and English

(Allan MacDonald, John Purser – readers)
War or Peace
(Bonnie – viola)

5. Elizabeth Stewart talks to John Purser

The Battle of Harlaw Ballad (Elizabeth Stewart – vocals)

6. Elizabeth Stewart Ghost Story

Battel Garlan (Grant Herreid – lute)

7. Elizabeth Stewart, Interview Part 2

Battel Garlan (Bonnie – violin); Battel Harloe (Chris Norman – flute)

8. Rothiemurchus Rant

Rothiemurchus Rant (Bonnie – violin, Grant Herreid – theorbo)

9. Bonnie interviews John Purser

Battel Harloe (Bonnie - violin)

10. Battel Harloe (Al Petteway – Guitar)

11. The Meaning of “Harlaw” and “Benachie”

Battle of the Birds (Barnaby Brown – triple pipes, Bonnie - violin).

For transcription of the narration, and translations, visit www.bonnierideout.com