

Guid New Year

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1.

The guide new year it is begun,
B' soothan, b' soothan.
The beggars they're begun to run,
An awa b' mony a toon.
Rise up, gueede wife, an dinna be sweer,
B' soothan, b' soothan,
An deal yir chirity t' the peer,
An awa b' mony a toon.
May your bairnies n'er be peer,
B' soothan, b' soothan,
Nor yet yir coo misgae the steer,
An awa b' mony a toon.
It's nae for oorsels it we come here,
B' soothan, b' soothan,
It's for sae scant o' gear,
An awa b' mony a toon.
We sing for meal, we sing for maut,
B' soothan, b' soothan,
We sing for cheese an a'thing fat,
An awa b' mony a toon.
Fess naither cog nor yet the mutty,
B' soothan, b' soothan,
Bit fess the peck fou' lairge and lucky,
An awa b' mony a toon.
The roads are slippery, we canna rin,
B' soothan, b' soothan,
We maun myne oor feet for fear we fa',
An rin b' mony a toon.

2.

Ye gae but to your beef stan',
Ye cut a collop baith lairge and lang,
And see that ye dinna cut your han',
And aye Besuthan toonie;
By Bairnsdale and Coventry,
And awa' by Rillanatoonie.

3.

Here begins a gweed new year,
Be soothin, be soothin,
An' joy an' peace an' a' be here,

An' awa' by Lunnon toonie.

By Baernisdell and Coventree,
Be soothin, be soothin,
An' up an' doon the hail countree,
An' awa' by Lunnon toonie.

Rise up, goodwife, an' binna sweer,
Be soothin, be soothin,
An' gie's a dram to grace the year,
An' awa' by Lunnon toonie.

4.
Here comes in a guid new year,
A guid new year, a guid new year,
Here comes in a guid new year,
An' awa' b' soothin' toon.

The back o' yer hous is thackit wi' rye,
Thackit wi' rye, thackit wi' rye,
The back o' yer hous is thackit wi' rye,
An' awa' b' soothin' toon.

Rise up, goodwife, an' shak' yer feathers,
Dinna think that we are beggars,
For we are bairnies come to play,
Rise up an' gie's oor hogmanay.

Up stocks, doun steils,
Dinna thin that we're feils,
For we're but bairnies come to play,
Rise up an' gie's oor hogmanay.

My feet's caul, my sheen's thin,
Gie's a piece an' lat's rin,
For we're but bairnies come to play,
Rise up an' gie's oor hogmanay.

5.
The auld year's oot an' the new year's in--
Be soothin', be soothin';
The beggars are noo begun to gang,
An' we'll a' be soothin' toon.

Rise up, guidwife, an' binna' sweer--
Be soothin', be soothin',
An' deal your charity to the peer,
An' we'll a' be soothin' toon.

(1) Gregor (1881), 161. He explains:

Very often on New Year's Day companies of young men in twos, threes, and fours set out shortly after breakfast to `thigg' for an old woman, or an old man, or an aged couple, or an invalid that might be in narrow circumstances. Carrying a sack to receive the alms of meal and a small bag for the money, they travelled over a good many miles of the district of the country in which they lived, getting a `bossiefu' of meal from this guidwife and a contribution of money from this other one. [After the song:] Then came the question: `Are ye gueede for beggars?' `Sometimes,' was the answer, followed by the question, `Fah are ye beggin for?' `For so-and-so.' The alms was then given, and then came the words of thanks, which were often improvised in a kind of doggrel.

Cf. "Rise up, gudewife", some of whose lines occur above. B' soothan here = "by the south". SND refers to a Banff 1858 source (National Mag. III.198): Ower to the minister's hoose,/ And awa' by Soothin toon. - Another version of this?? [SND: misgae the steer = "fail to conceive by the bull"; cog = dish made of wooden staves bound with hoops; mutty = measure of grain, one fourth of a haddish or half a stone, or (as here) a vessel of this measure.]

(2) Greig FSNE clxi.2, a rhyme "sung by a man who came through Rosehearty begging when [the informant's] grandmother was a girl, circ. 1775"; after singing this he cried "Hogmanay!"

Greig adds that "some four years ago [i.e. c. 1907] there appeared in an Aberdeen paper one or two versions of `Besuthian', a New Year traditional song, with some discussion of the observances referred to in the ditty."

(3) John Davidson, in SNQ I.9 (Feb 1888), 140: "In the beginning of the present century the following verses used to be sung as a new year's greeting by a Collieston fishwife to her customers in Udney."

(4) J. Christie, Kenmore, SNQ I.10 (March 1888), 163, [+ tune, a version of The Keel Row.]

(5) SNQ loc. cit., J.G. Michie :

A version of the rhyme to which Dr. Davidson refers was very well known as late as thirty years ago [i.e., c. 1858], and much better at an earlier date, in the upper parts of Aberdeenshire. In that district cases of distress, arising from poverty or misfortune, generally culminated at what was called the `dead o' winter,' that

is about the New-Year. When such a case did occur, it was a common practice for sympathisers to go round among the neighbours soliciting charity, accompanied by some one who could play an accompaniment on the fiddle or bagpipes to the following ditty:- [song follows].

The above two verses are all I have ever heard of this rhyme. It is evidently not an addition to, but a different version of the verses Dr. Davidson supplies.

I have ascertained that the air he gives, if not exactly, is very nearly the same as I have heard it played to.

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WBO

OCT98