

Cowe the Nettle

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Gin ye be for lang kail,
Cowe the nettle, stoo the nettle;
Gin ye be for lang kail,
Cowe the nettle early.

Cowe it laich, cowe it sune,
Cowe it in the month o' June;
Stoo it ere it's in the bloom,
Cowe the nettle early.

Cowe it by the old wa's,
Cowe it where the sun ne'er fa's,
Stoo it when the day daws,
Cowe the nettle early.

Auld heuk wi' no ae tooth,
Cowe the nettle, stoo the nettle;
Auld gluive wi' leather loof,
Cowe the nettle early.

Ford CR 138, whence Montgomerie SNR (1946), 73 (No. 85);
from Chambers PRS (1847), 193, (1870), 34, "from
recitations in Fife and Ayrshire."

Cowe and stoo are practically synonymous, = "cull; crop".
Young tender top leaves are washed in salt water, dried and
chopped finely. They are added to a pot where a bird
(dressed and stuffed) has been brought to the boil in 2 qts
of water, along with a handful of oats or barley meal. Add to
taste: salt, butter, wild garlic, onion, mint. Simmer till
tender, and season the kail to taste. Nettle soup itself is
made with chopped nettles, steamed in a little water, to
which is added butter, pepper, salt; thickened with cornflour
or potato flour, etc. [Cf. McNeill Scots Kitchen (1963), 94-
5; Fitzgibbon, A Taste of Scotland (1970), 47.]

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