

# Birlinn Ghoraidh Chròbhain

## Goraidh Crobhan's Galley

**Le Donnchaidh MacIain**

By Duncan Johnson

*Sèist*

*Hò bhan na hò bhan hò*

*Hì ho ro na hu bhan*

*Hò bhan na hò bhan hò*

*Air birlinn Ghoraidh Chròbhain*

*On Goraidh Crobhan's Galley*

Rann 1

**Fichead sonn air cùl nan ràmh,**

Twenty heroes behind the oars,

**Fichead buille lùghmhor;**

Twenty mighty strokes;

**Siùhlaidh i mar eun a' snàmh,**

She will travel like a swimming bird,

**Is siaban thonn ga sgiùrsadh.**

And the wave-spray driving her on.

Rann 2

**A' bhirlinn rìoghail 's i a th'ann,**

The royal galley is she.

**Siubhal-sìth 'na gluasad;**

Moving peacefully as she goes;

**Sròl is sìoda àrd ri crann',**

Satin and silk high on the mast ,

**'S i bratach Olaibh Ruaidhe.**

The flag of Olaf the Red

Rann 3

**Dh'fhàg sinn Mannainn mòr nan tòrr,**

We left the great Isle of Man of the hills,

**Eirinn a' tigh'nn dlùth dhuinn;**

We passed close to Ireland;

**Air Il'e an fheòir tha sinn an tòir,**

For grassy Islay we were heading,

**Ged dh'èireas tonnan dùbh-ghorm.**

Though dark blue waves should rise.

**Fichead** – twenty; **sonn** – heroes; **air cùl** – behind; **nan ràmh** – the oars;

**buille** – strokes; **lùghmhor** – mighty;

**Siùlaidh** – will travel; **i** – she; **mar** – like;

**eun** – a bird; **a' snàmh** – swimming;

**Is** – and; **siaban** – spray; **thonn** – wave; **ga sgiùrsadh** – whipping, driving;

**Bhirlinn** – galley; **rìoghail** – royal;

**Siubhal** – travel; **sìth** – peace; **gluasad** – movement;

**Sròl** – satin; **sìoda** – silk; **àrd** – high;

**Bratach** – flag;

**Dh'fhàg** – left; **sinn** – we; **Mannainn** – Isle of Man; **mòr** – great; **nan tòrr** – of the hills;

**Eirinn** – Ireland; **tigh'nn** – came; **dlùth** – close; **dhuinn** – to us;

**Il'e** – Islay; **fheòir** – grassy; **sinn** – we; **tòir** – hearing;

**Ged** – although; **dh'èireas** – should rise; **tonnan** – waves; **dùbh-ghorm** – dark blue

The origins of this song are in the eleventh century when there existed a part Norse part Gaelic kingdom that extended from the Isle of Man to the outer Hebrides and included much of the west coast of Scotland. The kingdom was ruled by Goraidh Crobhan, and later by his son Olaf the Red.

This song is about Olaf the Red sailing his father's birlinn, a twenty oared galley similar to the Viking longboats, from the Isle of Man to Islay.