

## Song lyrics and translations for Battlefield Band's

# 'Zama Zama ...try your luck...'

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THIS ALBUM started as a collection of songs and tunes about gold. But as we searched, like the alchemists of old, it turned into a wider idea. In the process we saw the greed, disasters and human resilience and victories inherent in the search and exploitation of various sources of wealth in this world.

Then, as if by demonic serendipity, along comes the worldwide economic crisis. We watched the major banks, insurance companies and hedge funds etc., implode, discrediting the entire financial system and many of its managers and advisers - but there was still more to come.

We, in Britain, could only stand and watch aghast as many (too many), Members of Parliament, and the House of Lords at Westminster, 'the Mother of Parliaments' were exposed for their cynical misuse of the expenses system, often amounting to fraud.

As we put this album together, with our producer Robin Morton, we have in turn, been amazed, amused, heartened, angered, depressed and hilariously horrified. We have given notes about the background of each track, but you can find much more on the internet if you dig further. Who knew about the Zama Zama Boys? Seek out Ku'ula-kai, the Hawaiian god of fish; or the extraordinary folklore and history of chocolate. We will leave you to mine these extraordinary stories for yourselves.

Enjoy the music.

## Publishing Details for the Songs:

**The Auchengeich Disaster** - Norman Buchan  
**Robber Barons** - Alan Reid, pub. Kinmor Music  
**Uamh An Oir** (Cave of Gold) - Trad. Arr. Allan MacDonald & Battlefield Band, pub. Kinmor Music  
**Zama Zama Boys** - Mike Katz, pub. Kinmor Music  
**Three Brothers** - Alan Reid, pub. Kinmor Music  
**Greenland's Icy Waters** - Brian McNeill, pub. MCPS/PRS  
**Baile An Or** (Gold Town) - Tune Trad. Arr Alan Reid; Words - Alan Reid, pub Kinmor Music  
**Plain Gold Ring** - Nina Simone, Pub. Thandewye Music

you can find the entire album, including all the tunes and music which aren't mentioned here, at:

[www.templerecords.co.uk](http://www.templerecords.co.uk)

## The Auchengeich Disaster

Coal has been a great source of wealth, conflict and misery in Scotland throughout the centuries.

On the 18th September 1959, 47 men were killed in the Auchengeich mine in Lanarkshire. The song's lyrics are by the late Norman Buchan MP, and the tune is the traditional "Skippin Barfit thro' the Heather". It is one of many songs dealing with the awful tragedies which have claimed the lives of too many husbands, sons and fathers who worked in the mines. Sean sings the lead here.

Sean: Vocals; Alan: Vocals; Mike: Bouzouki, bass, highland pipes, whistle; Alasdair: Fiddle

In Auchengeich there stauns a pit  
The wheel above it isnae turnin  
For on a gray September morn  
The fires o Hell below were burnin

Tho in below the coal lay rich  
It's richer nou for aa that burnin  
For forty sieven brave men lie deid  
Tae wives an sweetherts ne'er returnin

The seams are rich in Auchengeich  
The coal below is black an glistenin  
But, och, the cost is faur ower dear  
For human lives there is nae recknin

For coal is black an coal is reid  
An coal is rich ayont a treasure  
It's black wi wark an reid wi bluid  
It's richness nou in lives we measure

Faur better that we'd never wrocht  
A thousan years o wark an grievin  
For the coal is black like the mournin shroud  
The women left behind are weavin

## Robber Barons

Anyone who has travelled by the river Rhine north of Mainz will not fail to have noticed the castles perched on the hillsides at almost every bend. And it is here that the original 'Robber Barons' (or Raubritter in German) in medieval times extracted dues from merchant boats in return for safe passage. The phrase was borrowed to describe unscrupulous tycoons of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as they built up their empires and amassed great wealth, often using questionable methods to overcome competition. In these stringent times of sickly banks, vast public debt and swathing cost cuts it is particularly galling that many who have presided over failed institutions have continued to award themselves huge salaries and bonuses..... just like those barons of long ago. In the final verse Alan mentions 'the hallowed house'. This refers to the British Houses of Parliament whose members were recently found to be abusing the expenses system in a cynical and sometimes fraudulent way.

**Alan:** Lead vocal; accordion; **Mike:** Guitar; small pipes, whistle; bouzouki; **Alasdair:** Fiddle; **Sean:** Harmony vocals

The robber barons of long ago  
Hung iron chains across the Rhine  
And with the blessings of Mother Church  
Demanded tolls from passing ships  
And dined like gods within their walls  
Like gods within their castle walls

The robber barons of yesteryear  
Build the railroads, steelyards and mills  
Just like a whirlwind scatters dust  
They trampled all who dared resist  
And lived like kings within their halls  
Like kings within their gilded halls

Robber barons are here today  
The faces change but the games the same  
And though their empires may collapse  
They still command their pound of flesh  
And drink their wine within their walls  
Drink their wine within their hidden walls

Gambling bankers, they knew no bounds  
Their house of cards came crashing down  
Begged for help from the public purse  
We paid the debt, every one of us  
They keep their gold within their walls  
Keep their gold within their mansion walls

You who served in that hallowed house  
You took our votes then you took our trust  
Lined your pockets, thought us fools  
Said you had observed the rules  
We'll watch your walls come tumbling down  
Your old boys club come tumbling down  
Pay the price and take the fall  
We'll watch your walls come tumbling down

## Uamh An Òir (Cave of Gold)

Allan MacDonald sings a Scottish Gaelic song accompanied by his own small pipes. There are a lot of variant melodies and texts associated with this song that can be identified with several caves from different parts of the Western Highlands of Scotland.

The gist of the story is that a piper and several others enter a subterranean passage looking for legendary gold and several hours later the voice of the piper is heard despairingly crying for help. The common motif is that he wishes he has three hands; two for the bagpipes and the other to fight off some subterranean evil who takes the lives of him and his friends. In some areas the story has a dog accompanying them who manages to make it out of the cave but has become hairless and green. It may also be that the 'ghall' uaine' or green dog was the enemy. Some writers have pointed out that the piper here is playing music as a protective charm against the 'monster' but when he stops playing, he loses his powers and is overcome.

This tune was often used as a lullaby and like many lullabies has particular moral codes or warnings to protect children. There are two different fragments of the song here with variant melodies. The first three-lined verse repeated laments the changes that will have occurred in society before they ever get out of the Cave of Gold.

**'S iomadh maighdean òg fo ceud bhearr,  
Théid a-null, théid a-null,  
Mun till mise, mun ruig mis' a Uaimh an Òir**  
*Many a young maiden with her first hair growth, will go over, will go over before I  
return from the Cave of Gold.*

**Is truagh a rìgh gun trì làmhan  
Dà làimh sa phiob, dà làimh sa phiob  
Is truagh a rìgh gun trì làmhan  
Dà làimh sa phiob 's làmh sa' chladheamh**  
*It's a pity I don't have three hands  
Two hands for the pipes, two hands for the pipes  
It's a pity I don't have three hands  
Two hands for the pipes and one for the sword.*

**Eadarainn a' chruit, a' chruit, a' chruit  
Eadarainn a' chruit, mo chuideachd air m'fhàgail  
Eadarainn a luaidh, a luaidh, a luaidh  
Eadarainn a luaidh, 's i ghall' uain a shàraich mi**  
*Between us the arch, the arch, the harp  
Between us the arch (of the cavern), since my kin has left me  
Between us, my love, my love, my love  
Between us, my love, it's the green bitch that devastated me.*

**Mo thaobh fodham m'fheòil air breòthadh  
Daol am shùil, daol am shùil  
Dà bhior iarainn gan sìor fhiaradh  
Ann am ghlùin, ann am ghlùin.**  
*Lying on my side, my flesh rotting,  
Beetle in my eye, beetle in my eye  
Two iron pins continually thrusting  
Into my knee, into my knee.*

## Three Brothers

Here is another story song written by Alan. The great Alaskan Gold Rush of the late 1890's occurred after a period of financial recession and bank failures (sound familiar?). It attracted people from far and wide, most of whom were utterly ignorant of the vast distances involved and the tribulations to be endured just to get to the gold fields. In Alan's story it's the brother who doesn't go chasing gold who comes off best and in truth in these frenzied stampedes for great wealth it was those who sold goods and services to the prospectors who were the ones most likely to benefit. Somebody should make this into a movie!

**Alan:** Lead Vocal, accordion; **Mike:** Bouzouki; **Alasdair:** Fiddle; **Sean:** Guitar, harmony vocals

We were three brothers born beside the Kelvin  
Ma brother Allan, ma brother Jim and me  
We crossed the ocean and took passage on the railroad  
Never stopped until Vancouver and the sea  
I brought ma last, I brought ma cobbler's hammer  
Ma brothers brought their willingness to toil  
They got work unloadin' freight down at the harbour  
I got their boots to mend, their workmates' ones as well

One day I heard a big commotion at the dockside  
All the workmen crowded round a single man  
His eyes were burnin' as he told us of the Klondike  
Golden nuggets you could pick up with your hand  
We left the sawmills and the chimneys of Vancouver  
Left the pine woods of the coastline far behind  
We met with iceflows in the cold Alaskan waters  
Sailing north in the hopes that we would find  
The precious ore to make our fortune

We joined the trek of souls escaping out of Skagway  
A lawless town of gansters, whores and thieves  
We climbed the Dead Horse Trail that led up to the border  
The Mounties welcomed us then said we had to leave  
With the White Pass won we stood before Lake Bennet  
And still 100 trials and dangers lay ahead  
We fell on anything that might well float on water  
And down the Yukon river then we sped  
To ride the gauntlet of misfortune

Three battered brothers staggered into Dawson  
Exhausted and wasted by the sun  
We crossed a rope bridge to a sea of tents called Lousetown  
And in that mad house lay our weary bodies down  
But the fever of the gold soon gripped my brothers  
They grabbed their picks and pans and left me on my own  
I took my tent and set up business as a cobbler  
And soon the snowclouds came to chase the Autumn rain  
Announcing Winter's icy curtain

It was a season of starvation on the Yukon  
And people came to covet food instead of gold  
In these desperate times still Dawson acted crazy  
But I worked hard to fight the hunger and the cold  
In the Springtime I had news of both my brothers  
Someone had found their frozen bodies in the snow  
I took my money and I headed for the coastline  
On to Vancouver and an Irish girl I know  
Such a fickle thing is fortune

## Greenland's Icy Waters

Brian McNeill, one of the Battlefield Band's founders, wrote this song. The story of Scottish whalers who left the farms and fishing ports of home to set sail for the Antarctic in the hope of making their fortune in the Greenland seas, but endured terrible winters, starvation and disease in their quest. Ultimately the song is a celebration of the fact that the whaling trade is no more in Scotland, and that, Christian Salveson, a former whaling company, gave it up to become a very successful haulage firm. Incidentally the Salveson family, who still stay in the Edinburgh area, are great patrons of the arts.

**Sean:** Lead Vocal, guitar; **Mike:** Backing vocals, whistle, bouzouki, small pipes; **Alasdair:** Backing vocals, fiddle, whistle; **Alan:** Vocals, accordion

A wild and windy morning, the first day of the year,  
I was waiting for the ferry when a working man appeared  
He was joking with his mates about the duty on a beer  
While the exciseman was looking ower his cargo

When the forty-tonner's doors they opened wide  
I saw the name they'd painted on the side  
And oh, Christian Salvensen, perhaps the fault is mine  
But there's things that Auld Acquaintance will always bring to mind  
As I looked into the wagon I was sure that I would find  
The bloody memories of Greenland's Icy waters.

A hundred years ago your flags were flying in the shrouds  
From Dundee to St. John you were the proudest of the proud  
But thank God you changed your trade, for tell me where's the glory now  
In the hunting of the species to extinction?

For the silence of the waters tells the tale  
Of how the ocean's lost the singing of the whale  
And oh, Christian Salvesen, is the world's opinion right  
To paint the bloodiest of colours in such simple black and white?  
Or would Auld Lang Syne be better served by following the lights  
Of the mean who sailed for Greenland's Icy waters?

They were lean and they were hard, they were hungry for the prize  
They followed him in open boats, threw steel into his eye  
And looking back across the years their dreams are easy to despise  
Till you think about the lives they left behind them

For what was there to dream of on the land?  
Just a life behind the plough, cap in hand  
For oh, Christian Salvesen, they were young and in their prime  
And for every cup of kindness they drank ten of bitter wine  
Frozen death and bloody iron made them old before their time  
And claimed their lives for Greenland's icy waters

Leviathen for fortune, pantehnicon for trade  
One was ready for the slaughter, one delivers ready-made  
And you know I'd be a liar when the consciences are weighed  
If I justified the bloodiest of hunting  
But through the singing o' the hump-back and the blue  
I hear the voices o' the whalers ringin' true  
So here's to you Christian Salvesen, here's a health unto your name  
I'll drink a glass to all the courage and drown my sorrows in the same  
Lest Auld Acquaintance e'er forget the glory and the shame  
In memories of Greenland's icy waters

## Baile An Or (Gold Town)

Another song by Alan Reid. Scotland is not a place that immediately springs to mind when we talk of gold rushes but here is a song about one such, which occurred on the Duke of Sutherland's estate in 1869. It lasted only a few months under trying conditions and fizzled out when the price of gold dipped and the Duke found he was making more money from hunting and fishing. The miners' hut village was dubbed 'Baile an Or' or Gold Town, and as the song implies it was probably only the midges who got fat. We notice because of the present high value of gold, people are out prospecting again in Scotland, N. Ireland and California.

**Alan:** Lead vocals, piano; **Mike:** Whistles, bouzouki, bass; **Alasdair:** Fiddle; **Sean:** Guitar, harmony vocals

In the spring of 1869 I had a dram with a traveller man  
And he spoke of gold on Sutherland land at a place called Baile An Or  
So I joined 600 hungry men who had gathering by Kildonan Burn  
And I lay my tent upon the ground at the camp of Baile An Or

When day was done  
We sat before the campfire drinkin' whisky  
Singing songs  
And dreamin' of the gold the was in store  
At Baile An Or

The Duke's man came up to my tent he took from me a pound in rent  
He say's his grace takes ten percent of the gold at Baile An Or  
And all you miners should beware for if the Duke is hunting near  
Common folks should stay well clear and remain at Baile An Or

We slithered in the mud and the wet the midges drank our blood and sweat  
And I can feel them bite me yet when I think on Baile An Or  
We worked through cold, we worked through rain  
The Duke's men measured every claim  
Some would lose and others would gain from the gold at Baile An Or

I heard the news at Summer's end the herring fleet was short of men  
So I donned my seat boots once again departing Baile An Or  
And later I heard from a man the price of gold had tumbled down  
And the Duke had moved the miners of from the filed of Baile An Or

When day is doen  
And I see the silver darlings in the hold  
Now I know that all glisters is not gold  
No more miners dreamin' dreams of finding gold  
At Baile An Or, Baile An Or  
Baile An Or, Baile An Or

## **Plain Gold Ring**

This song highlights another social function of gold, as the 'signifier' of love. Robin Morton our producer, knew it from the singing of the great Nina Simone, and brought it to our notice. Sean liked it at once and we all like the darkness and bleakness of this tale of unrequited love - but perhaps there is an underlying hope that the ring might be taken off sometime.

**Sean:** Vocal; **Mike:** Bouzuoki, bass, guitars; **Alan:** Piano; **Alasdair:** Fiddle

This song was written by Earl S. Burroughs and the lyrics are available online in various places