



Scottish Poets and Poetry

Caroline Oliphant (1766-1845)

Carolina Oliphant (Lady Nairne) was born in the "auld hoose of Gask," south west of Perth in Perthshire on 16 August, 1766.

She was from an old Perthshire family, which had settled there in the 13th century. She was named Carolina in memory of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, as her father had been a staunch Jacobite. Her striking beauty and pleasing manners earned for her the name of the "Flower of Strathearn." Her husband became a Baron thus she later became Lady Nairne.

Lady Nairne, who would have been well aware of Robert Burns and James Hogg, brought out her own collection of national airs set to appropriate words and contributed a large number of original songs, eventually becoming one of the most prolific of Scottish song-writers. Although her poetry was well known during her lifetime, it was all written under the pseudonym of Caroline Oliphant. Many of her poems have become an important part of Scottish Culture including "Caller Herrin" and "Will Ye No Come Back Again".

daughter of Laurence Oliphant, 7th Laird of Gask and Margaret Robertson. She died 27 October 1845 at Gask and is buried at Gask

On 2 June, 1806, she married William Murray Nairne 5th Lord Nairn who was born 1757 or 1758 at Drogheda and died 9 July 1830 Wester Duddingston

Like the rest of her family, Caroline was not only a keen Jacobite but her first name had been borrowed from Prince Charlie. Although a delicate child, she blossomed out in her teens as "the pretty Miss Car" and became a striking beauty as a woman. Born Caroline Oliphant, she obtained her title through marriage to Lord Nairne. Her own family, who had been in Perthshire since the 13th century, claimed a relationship to royalty.

What she is remembered for is her delightful "Annie Laurie", which many people assume to be written by Robert Burns. In fact, Lady Nairne was one of the first 'respectable' Scots to see the talent of Burns, and she persuaded her brother to help Burns's first book into print. Burns's attempt to use more 'refined' English for the words to old Scottish melodies encouraged Caroline to do some of her own writing, so she sought some standard tunes to apply to her muse. Lady Nairne was prey to a compulsion common to Scottish writers: she hid her identity behind a pen-name, Mrs. Bogan of Bogan. She had her work "The Scottish Minstrel" published in Edinburgh. Her lyrics included "the Laird o' Cockpen", "Wha'll be King but Charlie", "Charlie is my Darling", "The Hundred Pipers", "The Land o' the Leal" and "Bonny Charlie's Noo Awa".

However, the big legacy left by this delightful lady, known to her neighbours as "the Flower of Strathearn", remains "Annie Laurie", which belongs to no-one but Lady Nairne.

