Skye Boat Song

Skye Boat Song
(Sir Harold Boulton, 1884)

Speed bonnie boat, like a bird on the wing,
Onward, the sailors cry
Carry the lad that's born to be king
Over the sea to skye

Loud the winds howl, loud the waves roar,
Thunder clouds rend the air;
Baffled our foe's stand on the shore
Follow they will not dare

Though the waves leap, soft shall ye sleep
Ocean's a royal bed
Rocked in the deep, Flora will keep
Watch by your weary head

Many's the lad fought on that day
Well the claymore could wield
When the night came, silently lay
Dead on Culloden's field

Burned are our homes, exile and death
Scatter the loyal men
Yet, e'er the sword cool in the sheath,
Charlie will come again.

Words by Sir Harold Boulton, Bart., 1884. Music by Annie MacLeod.

Charles Edward Stewart, the Young Pretender, was routed by the Duke of Cumberland on Culloden Moor in 1745. Aided by a Jacobite heroine, Flora MacDonald, Bonnie Prince Charlie escaped to the island of Skye in the inner Hebrides. He was finally taken by a French vessel to Morlaix on the coast of Bretagne. The first half of the tune is said to be an old sea shanty; the other half is traditionally attributed to Miss MacLeod.

recorded by Paul Robeson
DC