

# Forest Heritage Scotland

*Discover your roots in Scotland's forests*

[www.forestheritagescotland.com](http://www.forestheritagescotland.com)

## *Gone for a Song* *by John MacFarlane*

Many years ago, in the early 1800s, the people of Taynuilt and Kilchrenan were - and on the banks of Loch Awe in fact as well - were very familiar with a the figure of a young man who had lost his wits and he used to wander about like a wind-blown leaf, ragged and very unkempt. He slept out in all weathers. He slept in leaf-drifts, in the roots of fallen trees and in the empty sheilings in the Lonan Hills. On winter nights, his, his camp fires in the deep dark of Glen Nant, in the woods and forest there and in the summer he bivouac'd out with the seabirds on the coast of Loch Etive, there, sharing shellfish that he had gathered with them.

The two things that really endeared him to the people who listened to him. The first was his very melodious voice, and the second was the song that he sang, which the people who spoke the Gaelic of the area could understand.

Like many people, he had gone off wandering and had joined the British Army and he was in the militia and had been sent to Ireland to serve over there. While he was there, he met met the most beautiful young girl called Molly or in Gaelic Maili. And he and she were courting one another. Her brothers didn't approve of the fact that this soldier from overseas was actually courting their daughter and one day when they were in a rather a lonely place, he

was attacked by the brothers. And as he was defending himself with his sidearm which is a big, sharp sword-bayonet, he actually missed a blow and struck backwards and cut the girl's throat.

As a result, he became totally and utterly distraught, and went out of his mind altogether, and became insane and he was discharged from the British Army and came home to Taynuilt here and to the area round Glen Nant and there he wandered and sang his song. The song had one verse in it which said

*"It's a pity that my arm did not fall from my shoulder  
Before I chanced to strike you with a blow,  
My petite, young Maili."*

But the story doesn't end there. Some years later, Irish labourers came to build the big house which was connected with the Awe Furnace, Bonawe Furnace here and which was called in Gaelic *Tigh Mor Bhun Atha* or 'The Big House of the Loch of the Bones' because beside the house there's a very small loch and apparently these Irish labourers were connected with Maili, heard his song, understood the Scottish Gaelic and they killed him and buried him in the foundations of the house where he's supposed to stay, lying there until this day. And it's odd but a local seer, in the village here, before his time, gave a prognostication saying,

*Great House of the Pool of Bones  
Joyless and out of luck  
No rooster will ever crow there  
And no child suck.*

So that has actually been proved vastly wrong in the generations that have followed but if you stand by the loch

as we are doing now and listen you may hear Lachlan singing his sad song.

© John M. Macfarlane

This is the transcript of the audio file available at  
[www.forestheritagescotland.com](http://www.forestheritagescotland.com)

