



# O Waly Waly up the Bank

A Lowland Lament

Scottish Folk Song

Hugh S. Robertson  
(1874–1952)

**Sir Hugh Stevenson Robertson** (1874–1952) was born in Glasgow, Scotland, son of a Funeral Undertaker and Carriage Hirer, and served as an assistant in the family enterprise, eventually becoming manager. He first established his musical career as conductor of the Toynbee House Choir in Glasgow. He took leadership of the Toynbee Musical Association and transformed it, founding the Glasgow Orpheus Choir. He was director of the Orpheus choir for almost fifty years, leading it to national and international recognition. The Orpheus Choir had no equal in Britain and toured widely. He is recognized as one of the most significant British coral directors in history. He was also active as teacher, composer, adjudicator, critic, poet, playwright, essayist, and lecturer. He died at his home in Cathcart, Glasgow. His son was the Australian politician and diplomat Hugh Robertson. His compositions include a significant number of part-songs, especially settings of Scottish folk songs.

O waly, waly, up the bank,  
 And waly, waly, doun the brae,  
 And waly, waly, yon burn-side,  
 Where I and my Love went to gae!  
 I leant my back unto an aik,  
 I thocht it was a trustie tree;  
 But first it bow'd and syne it brak—  
 Sae my true love did lichtlie me.

O waly, waly, gin love be bonnie  
 A little time while it is new!  
 But when 'tis auld it waxeth cauld,  
 And fades awa' like morning dew.  
 O wherefore should I busk my heid,  
 Or wherefore should I kame my hair?  
 For my true Love has me forsook,  
 And says he'll never lo'e me mair.

waly = exclamation of sorrow: alas!, woe is me!  
 brae = hillside  
 burn = stream  
 gae = go  
 aik = oak  
 syne = soon  
 lichtlie = slight, or forsake  
 gin = but  
 busk = adorn, prepare  
 heid = head  
 mair = more

Anonymous. 17th Cent.  
 Familiar as “The Water is Wide”

# O Waly, Waly up the Bank

Hugh S. Robertson

Reflective; not too slow

S 1 or SOLO

SI *p* O wa - ly, wa - ly, up the bank, And wa - ly, wa - ly, doun the brae, And

S *pp* Hum (open lips)

A *pp* Hum (open lips)

T *pp* Hum (open lips)

B *pp* Hum (open lips)

SI <sup>5</sup> wa - ly, wa - ly, yon burn-side, Where I and my Love wont to gae! All Sop.

S I

A I

T

B I



## O Waly, Waly up the Bank

9

S leant my back un - to an aik, I \_\_\_\_\_

A leant my back un - to an aik, I \_\_\_\_\_

T \_\_\_\_\_

B leant my back un - to an aik, I

11

S thocht it was a trust - ie tree; But first it bow'd and

A thocht it was a trust - ie tree; But first it bow'd and

T \_\_\_\_\_

B thocht it was a trust - ie tree; But first it bow'd \_\_\_\_\_

14

S syne it brak— Sae my true love did licht - lie me.

A syne it brak— Sae my true love did licht - lie me.

T — and syne it brak— Sae my true love did licht - lie me.

B Sae my true love did licht - lie me.

# O Waly, Waly up the Bank

S 1 or SOLO

S1  
O wa - ly, wa - ly, gin love be bon - nie A lit - tle time while it is new! But

S  
A  
T  
B

Detailed description: This system contains the first five staves of the musical score. The Soprano 1 (S1) staff has lyrics: "O wa - ly, wa - ly, gin love be bon - nie A lit - tle time while it is new! But". The Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B) staves provide harmonic accompaniment. The key signature is three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and the time signature is common time (C). The music features a mix of eighth and quarter notes with various phrasing slurs.

S1  
when 'tis auld it wax - eth cauld, And fades aw - a' like morn - ing dew.

S  
O

A  
O

T  
B  
O

21

All Sop.

Detailed description: This system contains the second five staves of the musical score, starting at measure 21. The Soprano 1 (S1) staff has lyrics: "when 'tis auld it wax - eth cauld, And fades aw - a' like morn - ing dew." The Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B) staves provide harmonic accompaniment. The Soprano (S) staff has a "O" below the final note, and the Alto (A) and Bass (B) staves also have "O" below their final notes. The Soprano 1 (S1) staff has the instruction "All Sop." at the end. The key signature and time signature remain the same as in the first system.

## O Waly, Waly up the Bank

25

S where - fore should I busk my heid, Or \_\_\_

A where - fore should I busk my heid, Or \_\_\_

T

B where - - - fore should I busk my heid, Or

27

S where - fore should I kame my hair? For my true Love has

A where - fore should I kame my hair? For my true Love has

T For my true Love \_\_\_

B where - fore should I kame my hair?

30

S me for - sook, And says he'll nev - er lo'e me mair.

A me for - sook, And says he'll nev - er lo'e me mair.

T has me for - sook, And says he'll nev - er lo'e me mair.

B And says he'll nev - er lo'e me mair.

# O Waly, Waly up the Bank

33 S I or SOLO

O wa - ly, wa - ly, up the bank, And wa - ly, wa - ly, doun the brae, And

38

wa - ly, wa - ly, yon burn-side, Where I and my Love wont to gae!

## **TERMS OF USE**

These editions are available as a service to the choral community, offering inexpensive access to public domain literature. Choir resources can purchase other literature still under copyright, especially to support those creating and publishing new compositions and arrangements. These editions have been created using public domain sources under U. S. copyright law. Out of respect to the research, time and effort invested:

please print and issue an edition in its entirety, retaining notices, attributions, and logos.  
please do not consider this edition a source for creating another edition.

If recorded, notification and attribution would be appropriate professional courtesies.

For a full description of these requests and more scores, visit:

[www.shorchor.net](http://www.shorchor.net)

