

# Weathering by broken david

## Album credits – full length version

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### Acknowledgements

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[David McNeish](#) – lead vocals, acoustic guitar (1-11), nylon string guitar (7), harmonium (9)

[James Groat](#) – mandolin (2, 5, 7, 8, 11), banjo (7, 10), 12 string (1, 9), dobro (3, 6)

[Jenny Hill](#) – double bass (1-11)

[Karen Tweed](#) – accordion (2,3,4,5,6,)

[Beth Porter](#) – cello (5,8), recorded on tour in Englandshire

[Douglas Montgomery](#) – fiddle (10), recorded in his Burray Shed.

[Karina Smillie](#) – vocals (3,4,6,7,10,11)

[Euan Burton](#), [Boo Hewerdine](#), [David McNeish](#), [Karen Tweed](#) - Hand Claps (3)

Engineered, mixed and mastered by [Jamie Savage](#).

Recorded in [Chem 19 Studios](#), Hamilton. Hand claps, accordion and backing vocals, recorded in [Gloworm Studios](#), Glasgow by [Euan Burton](#).

Harmonium recorded in [St Magnus Cathedral](#), Kirkwall by [Mark and Nicol Summers](#).

Produced by [Boo Hewerdine](#).

Front cover painting by [Calum Morrison](#) (1956-2022).

Album design by [Elly Lucas](#).

Inner paper texture scanned from the reverse of a 1774 sea chart by [Mark Summers](#), the [Hamnavoe Bookbinder](#).



Thanks are due to many people for encouraging me.

To the wonderful musical friends who listened, played and made everything so much better. To Boo whose gentle insistence is the reason this is more than an aspiration. To Sally, I'll always be grateful. To Fran and the staff at St Magnus Cathedral for letting us play harmonium after hours!

To everyone reading this who supports independent music – thank you!

Whoever you are, whatever your politics, please ensure Palestinians can access health care. Join me in supporting Medical Aid for Palestinians: [www.map.org.uk](http://www.map.org.uk)

All songs words and music written by David McNeish except  
(2) words by Lainey Dempsey, music by Donald Livingstone & David McNeish, (8)  
words and music by David McNeish & Alison Nimmo, (9) verses 1-3 words  
traditional, (12) chorus words traditional

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## 1. Wilder Time

David plays guitar and sings, James plays 12 string, Karina sings and Jenny plays double bass.

"I grew a beard, it was not universally appreciated. But there is hankering in all of us for wildness – its just hard to find the right balance let alone the right amount of wildness in someone else."

I find hope in the strangest places  
In the strife of a whiskered kiss  
I struggle out of false embraces  
Seeking bliss

Give me peace in a world of cages  
Just a breath of quietened air  
The outlook's calm while the inlook rages  
Crazened prayer

Cause I keep looking for an altar on a hill  
A cathedral bell of grass and dew  
I belong to a wilder time with you

Coming back from the foulest weather  
Seeking solace in the scouring gale  
Though it tears at every tether  
I won't bale



Cause I keep looking for an altar on a hill  
A cathedral bell of grass and dew  
I belong to a wilder time with you

Let's leave it all together  
Slip out into the woods  
Bury me in moss and leaves  
This wildness that I seek  
Oh this wildness that I need

Cause I keep looking for an altar on a hill  
A cathedral bell of grass and dew  
I belong to a wilder time with you  
a wilder time with you  
a wilder time with you

– words and music by David McNeish

## 2. Our Dancing Days

David plays guitar and sings, James plays mandolin, Karen plays accordion and Jenny plays double bass.

"This gorgeous lyric by [Lainey Dempsey](#) was set to music by myself and Donald Livingstone at a songwriting week with Boo Hewerdine in [Moniack Mhor](#) in 2019. It's a poignant and heartfelt ode to relationship breakdown."

He stood alone among the crowd  
And watched her lose herself in dance  
Last orders rang, he crossed the floor  
To make his move and take his chance  
He walked her home as light as air  
She asked him in, the time was right  
For now they were the only ones  
Another sleepless city night

Six years along they've settled down  
He works in sales, she stays at home  
The kids are great but take her time  
He often feels like he's alone  
She's looking worn with three to mind  
When one goes down the others fight  
He's out his depth and out the door  
Another sleepless city night

These tired streets know loves demise  
How time creeps by and hearts part ways  
It saves our dreams for morning light  
And our dancing days

She watches as the hands go round  
And hopes tonight that he'll return  
The bed seems big without him there  
She wonders what they have become



Their youngest cries out in her sleep  
She rushes through and holds her tight  
Its been so long since last she danced  
Another sleepless city night

Its been so long since last she danced  
Another sleepless city night

– words by Lainey Dempsey,  
music by Donald Livingstone and David McNeish

### 3. When You Haven't Done Well

David plays guitar and sings, James plays dobro, Karen plays accordion, Karina sings  
and Jenny plays double bass.

"Some folks just never quite get it together, life keeps taking the wind out their sails  
and success is a foreign country. Written in the great Scots tradition of pairing  
miserable lyrics with a cheery tune."

What do you do when you haven't done well,  
When you keep falling off that carousel.  
When everyone expects you to excel,  
What do you do when you haven't done well.

Behind the wheel at seventeen  
Desperate to pass oh she kept me keen  
I couldn't see all that would entail  
When he said "son I'm afraid you've failed".

What do you do when you haven't done well,  
When you keep falling off that carousel.  
When everyone expects you to excel,  
What do you do when you haven't done well.

We got married and I tried again  
Learned how to drive, how to stay in lane  
Fifteen years as man and wife  
When she said "son I want a different life"

What do you do when you haven't done well,  
When you keep falling off that carousel.  
When everyone expects you to excel,  
What do you do when you haven't done well.

I only drink til the bottle's dry  
I drink until I don't want to die  
Get half an hour and then there's tears  
Say "son I'm sorry for these wasted years"

But still I'm walking on  
Still I'm walking on  
Still I'm walking on

But still I'm walking on  
Still I'm walking on  
Still I'm walking on



What do you do when you haven't done well  
When you keep falling off that carousel  
When everyone expects you to excel  
What do you do when you haven't done well.

What do you do when you haven't done well  
When you keep falling off that carousel  
When everyone expects you to excel  
What do you do when you haven't done well.

– words and music by David McNeish

#### 4. Nervous

David plays guitar and sings, Karen plays accordion, Karina sings and Jenny plays double bass.

"I once experienced a psychosis away from home when there was a perigeon spring tide (look it up!). It was terrifying. I genuinely thought that as the water got higher and higher it was going to swallow the house and just keep on coming. In fact it was a fairly accurate picture of what was happening in my head. Singing about it, paradoxically, helps calm me down, even now."

See the tide come in, makes me nervous  
I think its never going to stop  
And the harbour wall, will come tumbling down  
Send us spinning out to sea

Feel the north wind blow, makes me nervous  
I think it's never going to stop  
And this shingled roof, will come tumbling down  
Lift us spinning to the sky

I never planned to go, you never planned to stay  
And all the things I know, have been written anyway  
There were times when I thought that I had it all  
That's when you would watch me fall  
Help me find a broken winning way

Hear the rain pour down, makes me nervous  
I think it's never going to stop  
So I cry along, tears come tumbling down  
Watch them spinning down the drain

I never planned to go, you never planned to stay  
And all the things I know, have been written anyway  
There were times when I thought that I had it all  
That's when you would watch me fall  
Help me find a broken winning way

See the tide come in,  
Feel the north wind blow  
Hear the rain pour down

– words and music by David McNeish



## 5. Into The Ground

David plays guitar and sings, James plays mandolin, Beth plays cello, Karina sings and Jenny plays double bass.

"A love song about dying. We fear loss so much and yet it is the fear itself that causes the greatest losses. To love someone in the clear eyed knowledge that death is coming is actually rather beautiful and liberating. The earth accepts us all and we have such a hard time accepting this."

The soil has a song that you'll never have heard  
Mulching the memories of all that has been  
Each tremor and footstep is planted within  
Down, down into the ground

He led her through forest and barley and shore  
Weaving a way to the heart of all things  
The tangle of promises spoken aloud  
Down, down into the ground

And their love took root  
With the greening of leaves that one day would fall  
And their love took root,  
down down into the ground

They fell through the branches of pledges and vows  
Cradled in moss and the sunlight of time  
The swelling of courage and belly and grain  
Down, down into the ground

And their love took root  
With the greening of leaves that one day would fall  
And their love took root,  
down down into the ground

So sure enough one day the sod felt the blow  
Of spade upon turf and the tearing of toil  
A keening, a kindness and a kist for the ring

And their love took root  
With the greening of leaves that one day would fall  
And their love took root,  
down down into the ground

The soil has a song that you'll never have heard  
Mulching the memories of all that has been  
Each tremor and footstep is planted within  
Down, down into the ground,  
down into the ground  
down into the ground.

– words and music by David McNeish



## 6. So Joan

David plays guitar and sings, James plays dobro, Karen plays accordion, Karina sings and Jenny plays double bass.

"The song that started it all. Whilst away in Camas, Mull I made a rash promise to write a song for anyone who could repair my torn trousers. Joan offered and then I had to deliver. No one had ever written a song for her before and, speaking with a friend who knew her, I came up with this. One of the strangest, most delightful things about song writing is that the gift of a song to another is also a gift to yourself. Afterwards I had both the repaired trousers and the new song. And only one of them has endured."

So-o-o Joan

You find the good in things  
others won't condone  
And you gather up the fragments  
Help create this patchwork life

So-o-o Joan

You've learned to sing to plants  
and tend them as they've grown  
And you gather up the seedlings  
Help create this patchwork life

And the trees will sing a long held truth  
This is the summer of eternal youth  
The trees will sing a long held truth  
This is the summer of eternal youth

So-o-o Joan

My holey trousers are  
most wonderfully sewn  
As you gather up the edges  
Help create this patchwork life

And the trees will sing a long held truth  
This is the summer of eternal youth  
The trees will sing a long held truth  
This is the summer of eternal youth

You dance while no one's looking  
You sing when no one hears  
But God keeps count of melodies  
As well as all your tears  
You dance while no one's looking  
You sing when no one hears  
But God keeps count of melodies  
As well as all your tears

And the trees will sing a long held truth  
This is the summer of eternal youth  
The trees will sing a long held truth  
This is the summer of eternal youth, so-o Joan

– words and music by David McNeish



## 7. So Cruel

David plays acoustic and nylon guitar and sings, James plays mandolin and banjo,  
Karina sings and Jenny plays double bass.

"It took a long time to find the right lyrics for this tune. When I did I realised that it was  
a song of two halves in which neither half was happy. All too often, shit happens. Does it  
help knowing you're not the only one? Sometimes."

No one told them the things they need to know  
No one showed them the places they could go  
So they went there alone

Why does life have to be  
Why does life have to be  
So cruel      so cruel

Careful mantle fails to hide the strain  
Friendless rituals barely numb the pain  
Still they try them alone

Why does life have to be  
Why does life have to be  
So cruel      so cruel

Endless efforts, dancing in the grey  
Tearful silence dragging out the day  
So they blamed them alone

Why does life have to be  
Why does life have to be  
So cruel      so cruel

Tell them the reasons they should sing  
What notes can mark losing everything  
How can you say they should have given away  
The only thing they had to give  
So cruel,      so cruel,      so cruel

– words and music by David McNeish



## 8. Jenny And The Starlings

David plays guitar and sings, James plays mandolin, Beth plays cello and Jenny plays double bass.

“Jenny Sturgeon is a gifted songwriter and musician from Aberdeenshire, now living in Shetland. At a songwriting workshop in Orkney she handed out colour swatches to everyone to write a song based on the colour they were given. I was more interested in the fact that she had gone to the DIY store to get colour swatches, not to redecorate a room but to encourage composition.

So with the help of Alison Nimmo, we ignored the brief and wrote a song about Jenny. The second verse is about completing a PhD – no one I know who has done this has ever come away unscathed.”

Jenny stole the samples from the paint shop  
She wanted more than they had ever seen  
Like a magpie with an appetite for bright things  
She longed to free the colours in between

All she desired  
Was a starling coloured song  
And an endless stretch of water  
To launch her dreams upon

Hours watching others from the clifftop  
She'd remain while they would fly away  
Sapping strength as pigments fade to nowhere  
You wouldn't wish to paint your life that way.

All she desired  
Was a starling coloured song  
And an endless stretch of water  
To launch her dreams upon

Moving made a difference to the shadows  
Lingering in the length of summers height  
Still unsure how feathers found their finery  
Shimmering rekindled in the light

All she desired  
Was a starling coloured song  
And an endless stretch of water  
To launch her dreams upon

All she desired  
Was a starling coloured song  
And an endless stretch of water  
To launch her dreams upon

– words and music by David McNeish and Alison Nimmo



### 9. Worn, Wounded And Weary

David plays guitar, harmonium and sings, James plays 12-string, and Jenny plays double bass.

“Every island has ship wreck songs – laments not just for the event, but for lancing the boil of other pain and disappointments as well, in a culture that is not known for wild outpouring, unless there is drink involved. Sarah Jane Gibbon collected this song as part of the Big Orkney Song Project. Written by Colonel David Balfour it was based on a fragment of song he heard sung by servants when a boy. This gave me the perfect excuse to dress it in a new tune and add another verse at the end, as if it wasn’t tragic enough already.”

Worn wounded and weary beneath the bleak sky  
Some sank down to slumber some lay down to die  
For the good craft that yesterday breasted the main  
Will ne’er carry sailor nor lading again.

O’er the wild war of waters the thunder may roar  
The slumberers hear not, their struggle is o’er  
O’er the wreck-bestrewn islet calm morning may break  
Till the last trumpet calls them they never shall wake.

Long, long may the mother look out o’er the sea.  
To watch the home-coming that never can be  
And wives sick with longing, half hope and half fear,  
May hearken for voices they never shall hear.

Well I knew from your eyes I should never have gone

But the lure of horizons did carry me on

Pulled down by cruel forces much stronger than death

T’was your name I cried as I drew my last breath

– verses 1-3 traditional, verse 4 and music by David McNeish

### 10. We Will Make It Through The Winter

David plays guitar and sings, James plays banjo, Douglas plays fiddle, Karina sings and Jenny plays double bass.

“My favourite fiddler of all times and all places is Douglas Montgomery, of Saltfishforty and The Chair fame. His touch is sublime and his encouragement of others, especially kids, is legendary. I’m so delighted he was up for being a part of this song.

A declaration of intent, I wrote this in June, after a splendid Orkney Folk Festival, knowing I would need help for the winter ahead. It has since become a good friend and gets sung with feeling at winter concerts. Packing it away each spring is a sadness that is more than consoled by the lengthening of the days.”

We will make it through the winter

Though the nights are dark and long

We will make it through the winter all we need is song

There’ll be dark days ahead

Days when it costs such a lot just to get out of bed

When the weight of the rain,

Seems to carry all of your pain



And it takes all your courage to remind yourself  
what has been said

We will make it through the winter  
Though the nights are dark and long  
We will make it through the winter all we need is song

How to measure a day  
Birds hardly chatter and the sun seems reluctant to stay.  
When the crashing of waves,  
Seems to cower even the brave  
Threatening to drown out all hope  
but you know what they say

We will make it through the winter  
Though the nights are dark and long  
We will make it through the winter all we need is song

Who to tell of the strain  
Now that you're hear then you forfeit the right to complain  
when the ebbing of light,  
seems the proof that you're losing the fight  
but the battles not over  
and some say that nothings in vain

We will make it through the winter  
Though the nights are dark and long

We will make it through the winter all we need is song

I got nothing, well I got nothing,  
but I'm clinging on, I'm clinging on  
I got nothing, well I got nothing,  
but I'm clinging on, I'm clinging on  
What goes around comes around that's what they say  
But I'm sick of this night and I'm longing for day  
If the planets still spinning please help it along  
Cos I'm all out of options except for this song  
I got nothing, well I got nothing, but I'm clinging o--n

We will make it through the winter  
Though the nights are dark and long  
We will make it through the winter all we need is song

We will make it through the winter  
Though the nights are dark and long  
We will make it through the winter all we need is song

– words and music by David McNeish



## 11. I Remember Falling

David plays guitar and sings, James plays mandolin, Boo and Karina sing and Jenny plays bass.

"A song everyone can relate to about rupturing your spleen on a ski slope and then feeling no pain at all whilst in the helicopter because I was so excited to be flying. Until it got to the roof of the hospital and the ultrasound department was on the ground floor, followed by emergency surgery. It's really about being young and falling in love and making a life from it. I'll always be grateful."

Nineteen and living like twenty'd never come

Bleeding as the chairlift took me up

Pleading as the stretcher took me down

Flying, excitement drowning out the pain

Til we landed on the roof

And the only way was down, down, down

I remember falling, I still remember falling

Now I'm adding up the scars, still, its a beautiful life

And we, we'd only just met,

I told you I loved you

You thought it was the drugs

Flying, excitement drowning out the pain

Til we landed on the roof

And the only way was down, down, down

I remember falling, I still remember falling

Now I'm adding up the scars, still, its a beautiful life

And all, all the signs say, this is not the end

But I've made my vow that's one thing I recall

I remember falling, I still remember falling

Now I'm adding up the scars, still, its a beautiful life

And now, we hold the ashes in our hands

Our children like roses,

singing we will climb again

Flying, excitement drowning out the pain

Til we landed on the roof

And the only way was down, down, down

I remember falling, I still remember falling

Now I'm adding up the scars, the only way is down, down, down

I remember falling, I still remember falling

Now I'm adding up the scars, still,

Its a beautiful life

– words and music by David McNeish



## 12. Skail, Selkie of Suleskerry

David sings.

"I first came across the lyrics in a George Mackay Brown book of short stories. He only quoted the chorus and, travelling by train down from Thurso, I created a story to satisfy myself to fit around it. This ignorance was blissful as it meant I wasn't intimidated by the song's rich heritage. And so I created the back story that there are a host of selkies living in Suleskerry and this just happens to be about one of the lesser known characters. Another few of them appear in my play *The Boy Who Thought He Could Swim*. Keep your eyes peeled."

I am a man upon the land, I am a selkie in the sea,  
And when I'm far from every strand, my home it is in Suleskerry

Six long winters I've endured, for sake of blushing tenderness  
She drew from me the softest touch, that led me far from Suleskerry.

I am a man upon the land, I am a selkie in the sea,  
And when I'm far from every strand, my home it is in Suleskerry

The bairn she bore was dark of hair, like limpet clung upon her breast  
Her cries would drown the brightest thought, and ache my heart for Suleskerry

I am a man upon the land, I am a selkie in the sea,  
And when I'm far from every strand, my home it is in Suleskerry

No loaf can tempt me to remain, no bannocked fire my heart can draw  
For now my pelt I must reclaim, and leave my love for Suleskerry

I am a man upon the land, I am a selkie in the sea,  
And when I'm far from every strand, my home it is in Suleskerry

I found it hanging in the byre, beside the shore I slipped it on  
The waves did claim me for their own, and led me back to Suleskerry

I am a man upon the land, I am a selkie in the sea,  
And when I'm far from every strand, my home it is in Suleskerry

No more a man upon the land, I am a selkie in the sea  
It's hard for you to understand, who are so far from Suleskerry  
You are so far from Suleskerry.

– chorus traditional, verses and music by David McNeish