

AN RUBHA

The Highland Village Gaelic Folklife Magazine



Wool Dyeing

*In Gaelic Scotland
& Cape Breton*

Guthan nan Marbh

*Ghost Stories from
Archie Dan MacLellan*

Barra Glen Remembered

John Dan MacNeil

Naidheachd a' Chlachain

The Village News

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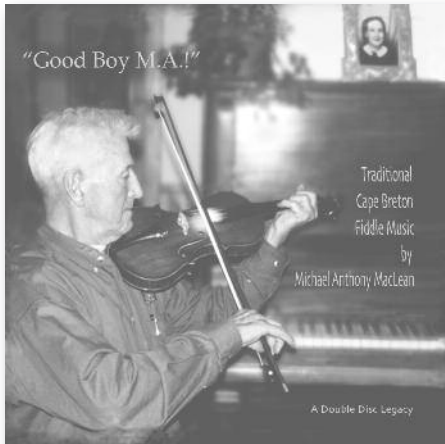


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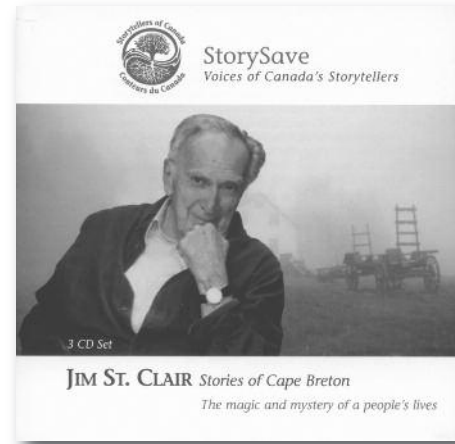
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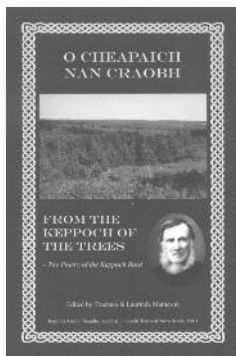
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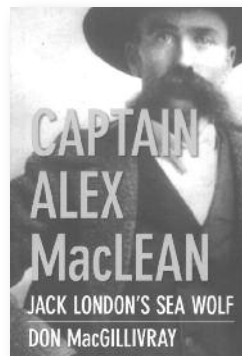
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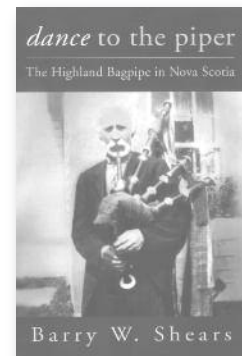
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Front cover photo: Zoie Chaisson & Cameron MacIntyre with rock candy treats in the General Store. Zoie is the daughter of Highland Village Director Rodney Chaisson and Cameron is the youngest son of Chief Interpreter Joanne MacIntyre. Photo by Steve Wadden.

Also, on the front is the image for Gaelic Nova Scotia. The image is that of a salmon in the shape of the letter 'G'. The salmon represents the gift of knowledge in the Gaelic storytelling traditions of Nova Scotia, Scotland and Ireland and the Isle of Man. The 'G' represents the Gaelic language and the ripples are the manifestations of the language through its attendant culture: song, story, music, dance and custom and belief system.

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From the Director's Desk

CELEBRATING OUR PAST, PREPARING FOR OUR FUTURE

Rodney Chaisson, Director



This coming fall, the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society will celebrate a significant milestone, its golden anniversary. It was 50 years ago, on November 3, 1959, that the Society was officially incorporated.

Over the past five decades there has been tremendous development and growth on these 43 acres over looking the Barra Strait. Today, we are not only a provincial museum dedicated to the Gaelic Nova Scotia story, we are also a principal resource and partner in Gaelic development in Nova Scotia; a major economic generator for the Central Cape Breton community; and one of Cape Breton Island's premier tourism attractions.

We have a lot of reasons to celebrate and many individuals and groups to thank for these successes. Plans are underway to mark this special anniversary, celebrating our successes and acknowledging those important contributions.

In addition to planning our anniversary programme, the Board of Trustees, with the support of staff, is also setting in place a strategic plan to guide the organisation through to the middle of the next decade. This plan will provide a framework to guide our growth, leverage our strengths and opportunities, and address our weaknesses and challenges.

Our strategic priorities include; interpretive theme development, experiential programming and animation, farm life interpretation and presentation, site development, visitor centre enhancements, market development, fundraising, web devel-

opment, human resource development, and more. In the months to come, each of these priority areas will be further defined with detailed action plans. Our hope is to have the overall strategic plan ready to launch during our 50th anniversary celebrations this fall.

One of the overarching themes that we will examine through our planning process is that of community relevance. Discussions on the role of museums and the relationship to their communities are taking place across the planet. As a result there is a corpus of materials developing on how to better engage our visitors, become more relevant to our constituents, and develop new and innovative interpretation and programs. Much of the emerging thought is focused on museums becoming community centres.

In the weeks to come, the Nova Scotia Museum will be releasing its *Interpretive Master Plan*, a document that is for the most part about connecting museums and community. This plan will provide a framework that will guide the Heritage Division "as it moves into the future, serving and attracting audiences with engaging and relevant interpretation of the natural and cultural heritage of the province."

The Interpretive Master Plan will help us, at Highland Village, better position our themes and messages and introduce innovative programs. It will also validate our direction to become a community centre for Gaelic language and culture in Nova Scotia. ☺

Mar Chuimheachan - Dedication

This issue of *An Rubha* is dedicated to the memory of Catherine "Honey FX" MacNeil of Iona who passed away this past December. Honey was a great supporter and volunteer of the Highland Village. In 1995, she was awarded our Volunteer of the Year Award. Honey will be missed by all of us. Our sympathies go out to her family - Sharon, Louise (Joey), Marguerite (Ray), Francis (Gail), Paul (Stacey) and Pius (Gail), as well as Honey's grandchildren.



Nova Scotia
Highland Village
Society

The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society (*Comunn Clachan Gàidhealach na h-Albann Nuaidh*) was incorporated on November 3, 1959 under the Societies Act of Nova Scotia. Its purpose was to construct and operate an outdoor folk museum dedicated to the Scottish Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia.



The **vision** of the Highland Village Museum/*An Clachan Gàidhealach* is to be internationally acknowledged for advancing research, fostering appreciation, learning and sharing authentic Gaelic language and heritage while serving a vibrant Gaelic cultural community.

The **mission** of the Highland Village Museum/*An Clachan Gàidhealach*, a living history museum, is to research, collect, preserve and share the Gaelic heritage and culture of Nova Scotia and represent it accurately and vibrantly.

The Highland Village Museum/*An Clachan Gàidhealach* is a part of the Nova Scotia Museum Family of Provincial Museums, Department of Tourism, Culture & Heritage. The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society operates the site on behalf of the Province.

A PART of THE NOVA SCOTIA MUSEUM
MEUR de THAIGH-TASGAIDH
NA H-ALBANN NUAIDH

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The Society is a member of *Comhairle na Gàidhlig* (Gaelic Council of NS), National Trust of Scotland, CLI Gàidhlig, Gaelic Society of Inverness (Scotland), Canadian Museums Assoc. (CMA), Iona Connection Heritage Co-op, Council of NS Archives (CNSA), Genealogical Assoc. of NS (GANS), Cape Breton Genealogy & Heritage Society, Interpretation Canada, Costume Society of NS, Assoc. of Living Historical Farms and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM), American Assoc. for State & Local History (AASLH), Tourism Industry Assoc of NS (TIANS), Baddeck & Area Business Tourism Assoc. (BABTA), Destination Cape Breton Assoc., Sydney & Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Strait Area Chamber of Commerce.

Mar is léir dhomh fhìn

STÒRAS, GAELIC FOLKLIFE SCHOOLS & COMMUNITY RELEVANCE

Seumas Watson, Manager of Interpretation

A good article with a view towards museums as evolving institutions - titled *On Museums, Culture and Sustainable Communities* (see www.geocities.com/dcworts/articles.html) - appeared in staff mailboxes during the summer. In it, the author, interpretive planner Doug Worts, asserts that, "For the most part, the cultural life of Canada (and most other western nations for that matter) is more significantly reflected and directed by popular culture (for example: television, media, etc.) and by the economic orientation/preoccupation of our society. Although unavoidable in our world, such strong private-sector influence over social/cultural dynamics creates a dangerously superficial situation that does not penetrate into the emotional, intellectual, imaginary and spiritual depths of human needs. If museums want to play a more substantial role in promoting the healthiest cultural dynamics possible, particularly in the realms of facilitating symbolic experiences with significant objects, or through creating relevant forums for debate and discussion about our histories and futures, then there needs to be some serious thinking about the overall framework for museums."

At the risk of over simplification, the interpretive direction contained in Worts' quote comes down to questions of how museums innovate and assume leadership roles that inform the current context in ways that help sustain community. Such thinking prompts Highland Village, an institution that advocates for its community both as a museum and cultural centre, to reflect on how it serves its public. In considering the challenge, it can be said with assurance that the Village is mindful of relevancy in facilitating its constituency on fronts that make a measurable difference. In sum, Village contributions to sustainable community have included the provision of logistical support, cultural knowledge, delivering educational opportunities for a living culture and proactive undertakings that foster relationships and make good neighbours.

Of various outreach initiatives that Highland Village has piloted over the past while, *Stòras*: Gaelic Folklife School, held in the summer of 2008, has perhaps been, the most forward-looking, integrating as it did archived recordings of Gaelic culture through digital technology with *Gàidhlig aig Baile* immersion techniques. The school's mission was to create a program model that establishes the centrality of Nova Scotia's cultural corpuses to local Gaelic renewal efforts. The impetus for organising *Stòras* 2008 came from partici-

pants' suggestions gathered during the *Stòras nan Gàidheal* Workshop 2007, co-operatively organised by the Angus L. Macdonald Library, St. F.X. Celtic Department and Highland Village (See an *Rubha* Vol.10, No.2, Spring 2008).

Stòras 2008 convened over three days of lectures and presentations that combined technology and Nova Scotia folklore with immersion language instruction held in the Village's historical houses. Resource people for the school's presentations on songs and stories drew on expertise provided by Dr. John Shaw, School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh; Susan Cameron, Father Brewer Celtic Collections, St. F.X. and Gaelic songstress Mary Jane Lamond. *Gàidhlig aig Baile* sessions were conducted by Gaelic speakers Sadie MacInnes, Skir Dhu, Kay Potribney, Howie Centre/Benacadie, Catherine MacNeil, Christmas Island and Allan MacLeod, Catalone. These tradition bearers taught domestic skills such as food preparation and open hearth fire making.

...if museums want to play a more substantial role in promoting the healthiest cultural dynamics possible...then there needs to be some serious thinking about the overall framework for museums...

Planning for *Stòras* Gaelic Folklife School proceeded with a team approach based on the conviction that traditional arts and folkways can effectively help sustain people and communities by fostering cultural continuity and identity. To achieve this end, Highland Village and its partners believe that community members should not be just observers, but participants in maintaining expressions of their own heritage. It is our shared view that Gaelic Folklife projects, by making people both the givers and recipients of cultural information, have the capacity to become social conduits for cultural transmission in a manner that transcends the limits of ordinary classrooms. A model such as this that blends technology with organic learning is a substantive means for synergistically transmitting community traditions.

Stòras Gaelic Folklife School was the first of its kind in Nova Scotia and is envisaged to establish the format for events that can be flexibly implemented throughout



the province's Gaelic community. Working group goals for *Stòras* are as follows:

- To meet expressed needs of the Nova Scotia Gaelic community for learning opportunities and materials relevant to its own cultural heritage, as stated during *Stòras nan Gàidheal* Community Education Resource Development Workshop 2007;
- To increase the understanding and knowledge of Gaelic Nova Scotia's cultural expression and aesthetics in regional representations;
- To provide a social environment for individuals and communities to share, celebrate and maintain the vitality of arts and folkways indigenous to Gaelic Nova Scotia for present and future generations;
- To promote lasting partnerships for cultural programming that will benefit all constituents of the Nova Scotia Gaelic community.

Douglas Worts also states that, "...People need to feel that they are connected to the world - that they are more than helpless receivers of information that someone decides is good for them. Such a change in direction is nothing less than a revolution for museums."

Highland Village is on board with Worts' credo. Programing such as *Stòras*: Nova Scotia Gaelic Folklife School makes its case for relevancy and leadership in the community it is privileged to represent.

Susan Cameron, Father Brewer Celtic Collection, has provided for readers a few URLs with examples of established folklife schools and resources:

- John C. Campbell Folk School
- www.folkschool.org
- Nordic Folk School
- www.scandinavianseminar.org
- North House Folk School
- www.northhouse.org
- Culture Mondo: An Open Network of International Cultural Portal Specialists
- www.culturemondo.org
- Northwest Folklife
- www.nwfolklife.org ☺

Mar is léir dhomh fhìn (My Own Viewpoint) is a regular contribution from Seumas Watson, Manager of Interpretation.

Obair an Taighe - FEATURED ARTIFACT

A' Bhrà - THE HAND QUERN

Milling grain by quern goes back to the origins of agrarian society when hunter-gatherer lifestyles began changing to static settlement. Prior to transition, nomadic hunting people pounded wild grains with rocks to make cereal that could be eaten as coarse porridge. Early prehistoric querns milled by placing a movable stone on top of a stationary stone. Pushing and pulling the upper stone back and forth crushed the quern's contents. Dating to the Stone Age, circular shaped querns were turned round by a handle in the top stone having a center hole into which grain could be poured. The grinding mechanics of the *brà* are simple, but effective. The flat sides of the stones are notched around their perimeter so as to make fine the meal produced from grinding. In some instances, two handles were placed in the top stone, allowing for another individual to assist with its turning. Such hand mills have been a common feature of agricultural regions everywhere at some point in time, and, in remoter regions of the world, remain in use to the present.

Termed in Gaelic *brà*, or *muileann-brà*, the quern was a convenience to the householder whose at-home grinding stone yielded speedy production of *gradan* - a meal for making *fuarag*, *bonnach* and *lite* (porridge) - with grains reaped in an adjacent field. (In Scotland, use of the *brà* denied the miller his monopoly, often provoking destruction of hand querns by landowners with vested interests in grain mills.) I.F. Grant reports in Highland Folkways on the commonality of querns in Gaelic Scotland, "So late as 1876 'thousands' of querns were still said to be in use in the Highlands and the older ones are much better made."

A common artifact of Nova Scotia's Gaelic speaking districts, Highland Village has two hand querns in its collection: one with origins in Gaelic Scotland and another cut and grooved on this side of the Atlantic in Cape Breton. The late Jimmy MacKay (*Seumas mac Aonghais 'ic Uilleim 'ic Mhurchaidh*) of Kingsville, Inverness County described the reaping of grain and its preparation for grinding, pointing out the facility querns afforded in the early days of Gaelic Cape Breton: *Nuair a rachadh coirce na cruithneachd a bhuain, bha e air fhà-gàil na sguaban, 'na sheasamh amuigh a' tior-machadh ris a' ghréin. 'S ann leis a' chorrán a bha 'ad 'ga ghearradh. Ma bha pàirt dheth r' a bualadh airson siol-chur, dh'fheumadh e bhith gu math tioram. 'S ann le buailtean a bhiodh 'ad 'ga bhualadh. Bhiodh iad 'ga bhualadh an t-àm*

a bhiodh i rèidte leis gu froiseadh i na b'fheàrr. Tha 'ad ag ràdhainn gur e obair shunndach a bh'anns a' bhualadh nuair a bha dithisd a' bualadh còmhla... Bha coirce, eòrna agus cruinneachd 'ga thogail. Bhiodh 'ad a' bleith le brà nuair a bhiodh e dhìth orra. (When oats, or wheat, were cut, it was left standing in sheaves outside drying in the sun. It was reaped with a sickle. If part of it was har-



vested for seeds, it would have to be very dry. They would thresh it with flails. They would thresh it when frozen so that it would winnow better. They used to say that threshing was pleasant work when there would be two at it... There were oat, barley and wheat crops. They would grind it with a hand quern whenever it was wanted.)

The significance of the *brà* in the lore and material culture of Gaelic Nova Scotia is emphasized by an anecdote from the late Joe Neil MacNeil (*Eòs Nill Bhig*), recorded at Highland Village in 1987.

Am Falbhanach Agus Am Bonnach The Traveller and the Bonnach from Joe Neil MacNeil

Bha mi staigh ann a' seo a' coimhead air brà airson bleith gràin. Bha i staigh 's an t-seòmar air mo chùlaibh. Chunna mi gu robh i air a togail suas; gu robh iad a' dol 'ga breacadh, a' gearradh innte claiseachan beaga mar a fhreagras. Agus tha sin a' toirt dha mo bheachd naidheachd.

Bhiodh 'ad a' bleith a' ghràin 's an t-seann aimis (aig an taigh.) Bhiodh iad a' bleith a' ghràin a bha 'ad a' togail leis a' bhrà. Cha robh 'ad 'ga chuir gu muileann; a' mhór-chuid dhe na bh' ann. Agus thall aig a' Phòn Mhór, air taobh eil' a' loch mhóir ann a' seo, thall faisg air an àite 's a

bheil mi-fhìn a' fuireach aig an àm seo, bha fear a' gabhail a' rathaid mar a bheireamaid. Bha e 'dol sìos an dùthaich. Agus co-dhiubh, bha e 'na cheannaiche-siubhail, na fear a bha 'falbh mun cuairt a' gabhail òrdan na gu dé bha dol. 'S e fear-siubhail a bh' ann co-dhiubh. Ma dh' fhaoidte gura h-ann a chuid dhe 'n chléir a bha e - gur h-e ministear a bh' ann.

Ach thànaig e dh' ionnsaidh an taigh' a bha seo thall aig a' Phòn Mhór agus dh' fhoighneachd e do bhean an taigh' a faigheadh e biadh, gu robh an t-acras air. O, thuirt i ris gu faigheadh, ach gu feumadh e dàil bheag a dheanamh. "Ach tha mi cinnteach," ors' ise, "gu bheil sibh sgìth, agus gum biodh e cho math dhuibh a dhol tacan 'nur sineadh ann a' sin air beinge agus gu faigh mi biadh a dheasachadh dhuibh."

Agus thug i leath' an corran, 's e sin sgian-bhuain, 's ghabh i amach agus bhuain i bad dhe 'n ghràn a bha muigh, co-dhiubh 's e cruinneachd, na eòrn' a bh' ann. Agus thug i sin astaigh. Bha an gràn dìreach abaich anns an àm, agus fhrois i a' sìol dheth, agus chriathair i sin, na shéid i dheth a' chath, am moll, air dòigh air choireiginn agus chuir i sin ann am pan', na ann an amhuinn', agus thug i teasachadh dha agus chruadhaich i a' sin an gràn. 'S chuir i an gràn a' sin thro' 'n bhrà. Chuir i mun cuairt a' bhrà agus nuair a thog i a' mhin, tha mi cinnteach gun dug i criathradh oirre airson 's gun tigeadh an stuth garbh aiste, agus rinn i breacag, na mar a thogras sinn a dh'ràdh bonnach beag, leis a' mhin a bha sin. Bhruich i e co-dhiubh, cha dean e deifir.

Bhruich i a' bhreacag a bha sin agus 's cinnteach fhads a bha a' bhreacag sin blàth gun deachaidh im gu leòr a chuir oirre, agus còmhla ri bobhla do bhainne, thug i am biadh dha 'n fhear-siubhail a bha seo. Agus tha mi 'smaointinn gu robh e cho toilichte gun duirt e gum b' e sin biadh cho math 's fhuair e fad uine mhóir. Agus bha naidheachd aige air a' sin 's a h-uile h-àit' a rachadh e fad greiseadh: an taigh a thànaig e thuige agus am biadh a' fàs amuigh anns an achadh agus nuair a leig e tacan dhe sgios seachad gun do dh' ith e-fhein pàirt dhe 'n bhiadh a bha sin air a bhruch.

Agus sin ariamh mar a bha gnothaichean a' dol. Agus sin mar a bha cuid mhór dhe na gnothaichean a' dol air obair an àite. Bha iad a' deanamh móran do dh' obair a tha 'ad an diugh a' faighinn air a deanamh ann an ceann eile na dùthchadh, ma dh' fhaoidte na dùthchan-

nan fada ás. Agus sin agaibh mo naid-heachd-sa.

Translation:

I was in here (at Highland Village) looking at a hand quern for grinding grain. It was in the room behind me. I noticed it was elevated and that they were going to notch it - cut small, corresponding grooves in it. That reminds me of a story.

They used to grind grain in the olden times (at home.) The grain they raised was ground with the hand quern. The majority of grain wasn't sent to a mill. Over in Big Pond, on the other side of the big lake here, near to where I'm living myself just now, there was a man traveling the roads as we would say. He was going down the country. In any event, he was a peddler, or a fellow going around taking orders (for goods), or whatever was going. Anyway, he was a traveler. Maybe he was a clergyman, a minister.

So he arrived at this house over in Big Pond, and he asked the housewife if he could get something to eat. He was hungry. Oh yes, she said that he could, but he would have to wait for a little while.

"But I'm sure that you're tired," she said, "and it would be just as well for you to stretch out on the bench there until I prepare food for you."

And she took the sickle, that's a reaping knife, and she went outside and cut a bunch of the grain out there, whether it was wheat or barley. She brought it indoors. The grain was just ripe at the time, and she stripped the seed and winnowed it, or blew the chaff of it, the dross, in some way, and she put it in a pan, or in the oven, gave it heat and then hardened the grain. Then she put the grain through the hand quern. She turned the quern around and when she picked up the meal - I'm sure she gave it a fanning to take the rough portion out of it and she made a *breacag*, or as we like to say a little bannock, from that meal. No difference, she cooked it anyway.

She cooked that *breacag*, and for sure it was lathered with butter while still warm and given to the traveler with a bowl of milk. I suppose he was so pleased that he declared it was the best food he had gotten for a long spell. And for a while after that he took that story everywhere he went: about the house he came to, and the food growing outside, and how - after he rested a bit - he ate a share of that food when it was cooked.

And so that's the way things have always gone. And that's the way things have been around local work. They were doing lots of things at home that they now get done at the other end of country, or even from countries far away. That's my story. ☺

Recorded, transcribed and translated by Seumas Watson.

Ag Èirigh Air Òrain / An Rubha SONG SELECTION

"Ailean Duinn a Nì 's a Nàire"

Collected from Rod C. MacNeil

Recorded during the *Nòs is Fonn* project the following òran *luaidh* was contributed by Rod C. MacNeil (*Ruairidh Iain Dhòmhmaill Sheumais Dhòmhmaill Òig Iain Ruairidh*), Barra Glen, Victoria County. He recalled it being sung by other singers at a time when milling frolics were a popular form of entertainment in the surrounding districts. Words to Rod's setting of *Ailein Duinn a Nì 's a Nàire* are drawn from *An t-Òranaiche*. (See page 458, *An t-Òranaiche*, 2004, Siol Cultural Enterprises).

Chorus

Ì 's na hug oirn o ho
Ì 's na hi ri ri ù

1. Ailean duinn a nì 's a nàire
Brown haired Allan, his riches and shame
2. 'S goirt 's daor a phàigh mi màl dhut
My rent to you was paid sore and dear.
3. Cha chrodh-laovich, na caoraich bhàna
It isn't calves, or white sheep
4. Cha bhola, cha pheic, 's cha mhàm e
It isn't the bole, peck or handful of grain
5. Cha nì, chan innseiridh, 's chan àirneis
It isn't wealth, possessions or furnishings
6. Ach an luchd a thaom am bàta
But the folk who bailed the boat.

7. Bha m'athair oirre 's mo thrìuir bhràithrean

My father and three brothers were on board

8. 'S laogh mo chuim a rinn mi àrach
And the calf of my womb whom I nurtured.

9. Chan e sin a léir 's a chràidh mi
That's not what vexed and pained me.

10. Ach am fear a ghlac air làimh mi
But the one who took me by the hand.

11. Leathanach a' bhroillich bhàn-ghil
The fair chested MacLean.

12. 'Se a thug o 'n Chlachan Di màirt mi
He took me from the Clachan on Tuesday.

13. Ailean donn, b'e beul a' mhàrainn
Brown Allan, his speech was sporting.

14. A Rìgh nam Fear, bu mhór do ghràdh dhomh
God, your love for me was great.

15. Gur iad na ròin do luchd-taighe
The seals are your house servants.

16. Do choinnlean àrd na reultan geala
Your tall candles are the shining stars. ☺

*Recorded by Shamus MacDonald.
Transcribed and translated by Seumas Watson.*



Rod C. MacNeil sings to his grandson Rory

Naidheachd a' Chlachain - The Village News

THE SEASON OF 2008 AT BIG HECTOR'S POINT

Seumas Watson, Manager of Interpreter

Each passing season seems to bring more change and innovation to Highland Village as we strive to interpret the Gael in Nova Scotia and lend support to our cultural community. This past year witnessed much activity in the areas of new programming initiatives, community outreach and efforts in consultation to enhance delivery of the Highland Village message to the visiting public and on-line vacation planners.

Guide staff were in motion before our June 1st opening, engaged in two weeks training to refresh Gaelic and cultural skills for interpretation. April saw Dr. John Veverka, of John Veverka & Associates, Interpretive Consultants, convene Highland Village animators and management to inform on best practices for interpretive theme development. His presentation on honing messaging to reflect all facets of interpretive organisation was delivered over a day and a half of informative sessions held at the visitor centre boardroom. Highland Village was Dr. Veverka's third stop as a consultant working with Nova Scotia Museum sites, having previously been at Sherbrooke Village and Ross Farm. Staff members Catherine Gillis and Vicki Quimby were retained post-seasonal to develop this key initiative. It is expected that Dr. Veverka will return in 2009 to further advise.

Interpretive undertakings for 2008 blended new projects with programs already in place. Standbys included research and presentation of workshops pertinent to cloth production in the province's 19th century Highland settlements, along with a robust daily animation schedule. Ongoing programs continue to be popular. These include *Spòrs* (Fun) for children, *Na Làithean Sona* (Happy Days), regular house céilidhs, milling frolics and tunes and square set dancing in the schoolhouse. New programming also saw the inauguration of *Stòras: Gaelic Folklife School* and *Sgadan is Buntàta* (Herring and Potatoes) in-class school visits and *Na Deugairean* (The Teenagers).

Improvements in Gaelic language and cultural interpretation are moving ahead noticeably. Student workers again made a strong contribution to intangible interpretation as pipers, fiddlers and step-dancers. It seems to be the case that the Village is now being sought by youth with cultural skills as a place to continue learning about Gaelic language and cultural expression. Summer students continued to make important contributions to animation and daily operations.

Student animators for 2008 were Maria MacMillan - who also led the *Spòrs* program, Kyle and Keith MacDonald, guides and musicians and Justin MacKenzie, baker and farmer. In the office, Crystal MacNeil ably handled public relations and served as event photographer. Student research by Colin MacDonald resulted in further annotation and digitized storage of the Ralph Rinzler Collection (with permission from the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.) Paul Geddes, a *Sabhal Mòr Ostaig* student, joined the Village through the provincial Memorandum of Understanding with Highland Council. Spending ten weeks with us as a secondment from *Comunn na Gàidhlig*, Paul gave assistance to various projects including *Cainnt Mo Mhàthar*, editing *An Rubha* and interpretation during céilidh sessions.

After much long distance communication, interpretive panels for the Malagawatch Church were installed this season. Thanks are due to Iona's Katherine MacLeod, a graduate of Algonquin College with a degree in Applied Museum Studies. While finishing her classes in Ottawa, Katherine designed and fabricated the bi-lingual panels (Gaelic/English) for the Malagawatch Church as a special project in collaboration with Highland Village.

As in past seasons, afternoon céilidhs and milling frolics have proven to be a favorite of visitors. Sessions introduced Gaelic storytelling, singing and dancing at the MacDonald House and Portage Schoolhouse, giving visitors an opportunity to socialize and be educated in a Gaelic cultural environment.

Research on and off the site by Vicki Quimby provides regular support for interpretation of pioneer cloth production in the log cabin and centre chimney house eras. Vicki's textile workshops are well attended by the public of interest and there are plans to bring her activity and research to staff training provision in 2009.

Mary Jane Lamond led cultural apprentices through two weeks of *Eilean*



Kyle (left) & Colin MacDonald playing tunes in the School.

Photo by Crystal MacNeil.

nan Òg. Held in cooperation with *Comhairle na Gàidhlig*, the program completed its eighth year. Highland Village is grateful for the participation of the many tradition bearers who give so generously to this important program.

Of outreach initiatives that Highland Village has piloted over the past while, *Stòras: Gaelic Folklife School*, held in August of 2008, has perhaps been, the most forward-looking, integrating as it did archived recordings of Gaelic culture through digital technology with *Gàidhlig aig Baile* immersion techniques. The school's mission was to create an advanced program focusing on Nova Scotia's distinct cultural aspects for applications to local Gaelic renewal efforts. The impetus for organising *Stòras 2008* came from participants' suggestions gathered during the *Stòras nan Gàidheal Workshop 2007*, co-operatively organized by the Angus L. Macdonald Library, St. F.X. Celtic Department and Nova Scotia Highland Village (See *Mar is Léir Dhomh Fhìn* on page 5).

Naidheachd a' Chlachain appears in this the fifth issue of *An Rubha* (Uh Roo-uh.) As an innovative publication reporting in Gaelic and English, the magazine has become a flagship for getting the Highland Village's word out about Gaelic folklife in Nova Scotia and serving as an attractive take away for visitors and at networking functions such as conferences and museum related meetings

As always, credit for Highland Village's advances is due to staff and volunteers whose combined efforts make Nova Scotia's Gaelic story accessible to community and the greater public. ☺

This edition of Naidheachd a'Clachan was prepared by Seumas Watson, Manager of Interpretation. See images from 2008 in our Photo Album on pages 14 & 15.

CROFTING - AN APPRECIATION OF TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

By Margaret Bennett

A career in writing books and sharing traditional music may have more to do with typewriters and tape recorders than hayforks, milk pails and butter churns. Nevertheless, when asked about my greatest source of inspiration, without hesitation I single out a croft in Glenconon, Isle of Skye, home of my grandparents, John and Flora Stewart.

It was there I first heard the sound of milk in the pail to my mother's singing, turned the handle of a wooden butter churn under my grandmother's supervision, made brose, peeled onions for *mara-gan*, minced the suet for the clotie dumpling; turned and raked hay, thinned turnips, planted and lifted potatoes and did my little part at the *slochd buntata* (pit for storing potatoes).

I picked raspberries and brambles, helped make jam, scones, oatcakes, *stapag* and *ceann cropaig*; wound hanks of wool, darned old socks and knitted new, patched *briogais* (pants), cut up strips of old garments for the "hokkie" rag-rug; sandpapered knife-blades; fed pet lambs; paid attention to the shearer who said exactly where to put the keel-mark; gathered shellfish, picked dulse; turned peats and fetched them from the stack.

In early childhood there was no question that carrying just one peat at a time was a help – and did *seanair* (grandfather) not say that God made the hands and the back fit for the task? Looking back, it seemed that no hands were too small to take part.

By the time youngsters realized that the child-sized hayforks were not custom-made but converted from ones with broken shafts, they had moved on to a bigger size.

What may be called "basic training" or "skill acquisition" today was simply the way of life – a myriad of crofting skills assimilated with no apparent instruction, yet taught so precisely as never to be forgotten.

At the same time, these skills were woven with rhymes, games, proverbs, riddles, songs, tunes, stories, creative crafts and even dances.

Traditions about plants, insects, animals and birds came in several guises, many

etched in my memory – my grandmother's rhyme about the *corra-chosag* (woodlouse, or slater); my grandfather lifting me up to



Photo by Duncan MacNab

the eaves of the barn to gaze in to a nest and watch the mother bird feeding her young.

Then there were the neighbours – fellow labourers at the fank, the peats, the harvest, who also became fireside philosophers.

Unless visitors arrived, they spoke entirely in Gaelic and it was not uncommon to hear a sentence begin; "*Mar a thuir Mairi Mhòr... (or Donnchadh Bàn...)*" after which a long quotation of poem or song would emphasise a point in discussion.

These congenial gatherings took place in homes that never had a telephone and among folk who knew nothing of e-mails; nevertheless all had the assurance that, if help were needed for planting or harvest, a

white sheet on a distant peat-stack could summon a team faster than any mass e-mail.

Wherever you moved in crofting circles, from the most northern tip of Unst to the furthest point of the Western Isles there was a similar way of life and regard for the community.

By the standards of the western world there was little material wealth but the cultural richness of the crofting community could readily hold its place in any artistic, literary, scientific or intellectual arena.

Where tested and tried wisdom was taken for granted and old ways abandoned, we might take a moment to reflect on some "discoveries" which tell us something that tradition taught us long ago.

I began my talk at the Scottish Crofting Foundation gathering in September (2007) by playing an old recording of a woman singing a Gaelic song to her cow as she milked. After long and expensive scientific research, modern farmers now benefit from the discovery that the sound of music (or MUZAK) in milking parlours produces a higher milk yield.

The importance of handing on tradition from one generation to the next is not so that we can turn back the clock and do things exactly as our grandparents did; it's so that we can progress with each generation adapting to changes without compromising our languages, traditional knowledge or culture with its wealth of music, song, literature and art.

Today when we hear new discussions on "identifying transferrable skills" let's not forget the crofters who have them in spades. ☺

Dr. Margaret Bennett is an internationally renowned musician, writer, lecturer, storyteller, folklorist and broadcaster. Born on the Isle of Skye, she is now based in Glasgow, Scotland. For more on Margaret and her work visit: <http://www.margaretbennett.co.uk> This article was originally published in "The Crofter" the magazine of the Scottish Crofting Foundation.

Fios Bho 'n Taobh Thall (A word from the other side) features contributions from Scotland.

GAELIC NOVA SCOTIA ON-LINE

Nova Scotia Office of Gaelic Affairs
www.gov.ns.ca/oga

Comhairle na Gàidhlig/Gaelic Council of NS
www.gaelic.ca

Fo na Cabair / UNDER THE RAFTERS An taigh dubh / THE BLACK HOUSE

Seumas Watson

Ceann an Taighe/The Roof

The roof of the Hebridean blackhouse is hipped at its ends, which are pitched slightly steeper than its sides. Trusses (*na ceangail*) for the roof are collar beam (*sparr-gaoithe*) in type. They are made up of two rafters joined by a cross piece (*maide-tarsainn*) fixed at the halfway point by two wooden pins (*tairgnean*). At the top extremity, the rafters come together in a fork (*gòbhlag*).

The lower ends are solidly set onto the inner walls' stones. Two purlins (*taobhain*), upper and lower, override the couples. These extend forward in correspondence with the ridge pole (*maide droma*) which lies in the bed formed by the crossing rafter ends.

The hip construction at the houses' ends is formed by hip rafters (*roinn oisinn*) which reach to the height of the end-couple.

John MacCullach remarked on this unusual roof design in the 1824 printing of *The Highlands and Western Islands of Scotland*.

Everyone knows how a Highland house is built, but everyone does not know the architecture of a Barra house. In these, the roof springs from the inner edge of the wall instead of the outer; in order that the rain may be caught by it and make its way among the stones; thus preventing the inconvenience of minute drops from the eaves.

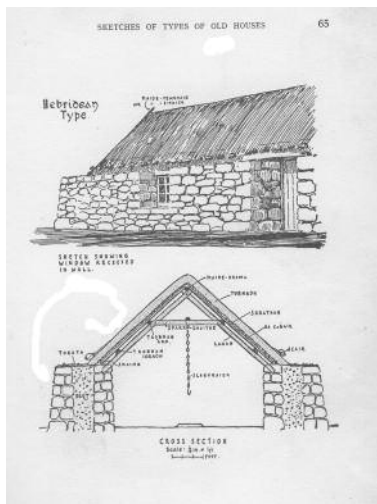
For the purpose of providing an anchor to which ropes for securing the thatch could be tied, a peg called the raven stick (*maide fithich*) protruded through the roof at both ends of the ridge. As can be imagined, the raven, often a significant figure in Gaelic lore, was a frequent visitor to this perch.

The process of covering the roof was begun by evenly spreading out rods (*cabair*) near to each other from the head of the wall to the ridge. Turf sods (*sgrathan*) were then placed on top of them as a foundation for the thatch (*tughadh*). Thatching materials consisted of whatever flora grew near to hand and included heather (*fraoch*), rushes (*luachair*) and moor grass (*muran*). Barley straw (*bun an eòrna*), however, was favoured for its long-wearing qualities. In some islands, a combination of grass under heather served as a thatch noted

for its durability.

Thatching the blackhouse roof was a labour requiring the community's help. In the case of 42 Arnol, as described in *The Hebridean Blackhouse*, six men were required to place the netting over the thatch to hold it in place. Other thatching tasks requiring team effort included a chain brigade for supplying materials to the thatcher. Thatching cannot be carried out in winds stronger than a light breeze.

The thatch served a dual purpose. As peat smoke meandered through rafters and the roof's underside before exiting out the smoke hole, it suffused the thatch with soot (*sùidh*). The smoke-permeated materials were then taken from the roof and put to use as crop fertiliser. Removed during the summer, the stripped portion of the roof's thatching was usually its



The Thatched Houses of the Old Highlands by Colin Sinclair, published by Oliver & Boyd, 1953.

wall, giving a degree of weather protection while allowing more headspace.

Windows were a random feature. Their lintels were set into the inner wall, extending only to meet the edge of the thatch. Deep set as they were, this arrangement allowed a greater amount of light to penetrate the house's interior.

Near the door leading to the inner compartment, some blackhouses maintained a small storage area for peat which was otherwise stacked outside. It was in this area that the wanderer's stone (*clach an t-seabh-dail*) was situated. This rock for sitting, or sometimes a block of wood, accommodated the occasional traveller passing through the district to another destination. Doubtless, it also served as the raconteur's seat from which the wanderer delivered accounts of his journey to avid ears.

Àirneis an Taighe Household Furniture

The modest furniture of Highland dwellings is of particular interest as a reflection of the Gaels' shared material culture, despite varying degrees of personal wealth. I.F. Grant in *Highland Folkways* concludes that "Therefore (as in their dress) the old Highlanders evolved no separate 'peasant style' of furniture such as one sees in Continental folk museums."

If nothing else, the common Gaels' furniture was serviceable and pragmatic. Alexander Smith recorded in *A Summer in Skye* that "The sleeping accommodation is limited and the beds are comprised of heather and ferns... the furniture is scanty; there is hardly ever a chair - stools and stones worn smooth by the usage of several generations have to do instead."

This rather uncomfortable sounding description of unadorned seats does not seem to have always been the case. Many examples of furniture skillfully crafted by local carpenters have been preserved for posterity. Some of these items were meticulously modelled on styles of French chairs and other elegant designs such as the Chippendale type which were imported by the Highland gentry. Interestingly, the adaptation of these chairs to households filled with peat smoke from the open fire is apparent in their shortened legs which allowed sitters some modicum of relief below the constant haze.

Other items of essential furniture generally found in the Gaels' unassuming eigh-

...continued on page 24

Guthan nam Marbh / Voices of the Dead

GHOST STORIES FROM

ARCHIE DAN MACLELLAN

Recorded by Seósamh Watson

Dr. Seósamh Watson is a recently retired Professor of Modern Irish at University College Dublin. Author of numerous articles and books on Gaelic language topics, he has collected folklore and samples of dialect extensively in the field throughout Cape Breton. Along with similar work in Ireland and Scotland, he is a founding member of the International Society for Dialectology and Geo linguistics, and joint editor of the multi-volume UNESCO Atlas Linguarum Europae, published in the University of Florence. A long time advocate for Gaelic at the community level, Dr. Watson is also a co-founder of *Oideas Gael*, *Gleann Cholm Cille*. For this issue of *An Rubha*, he has kindly submitted transcriptions of stories recorded from the recitation of the late Archie Dan MacLellan (*Gilleasbuig Eòghainn Dhòmhnail 'ic Aonghais*), Broad Cove, Inverness County.

Tuagh ri Toirt air ais aig Duine Marbh

Fhuair e tuagh bho chomharsnach agus — thàinig am bàs air car ealamh agus nuair bha e réidh leis an tuaigh chuir e an tuagh — gus a bhi an àite a — a-staigh fo'n fheansaidh mu seo. Agus thachair e air a' ghille seo, an ceann bliadhnaichean. Chunnac e an gille bh'ann, an spiorad. Bhruidhinn e leis,

'Uell, tha mise — an rud a tha — 's coireach mise bhi a' tighinn dh'ionnsaidh 'n t-saoghail: thàinig am bàs ormsa agus fhuair mi tuagh bhom chomharsnach' — agus dh'inns e dha an t-àite sa robh e ris an fheansa — 'agus chuir mise an tuagh a-staigh an seo agus tha i ann fhathas agus ma bhios tusa cho math 's gun coimhead thu gheobh thu an tuagh agus their dhachaidh i!'

Chaidh an gille seo a choimhead son na tuaigh 's bha'n tuagh ann agus an t-samhach grod innte.

'Agus shin an trioblaid a bh'ormsa.'

Bha siod cho ceart 's a ghabhadh. Thachair seo shìos -- bha iad ann an àite air choreigin.

Translation:

Axe to be returned by Dead Person

He got an axe from a neighbour and — he died quite suddenly and when he was finished with the axe he put the axe — to be in a — place — in under the fence around here. And he met this boy, years later. The spirit saw this boy.

He spoke to him,

'Well, I'm — the reason I'm coming to this world: I died and I got an axe from my neighbour' — and he told him where it was by the fence — 'and I put the axe in here and it's still here and if you'll be kind enough to look you'll get the axe and take it home!'

The boy went to look for the axe and the axe was there with the handle rotted in it.

'And that's what was troubling me.' That was as true as could be. This happened down — some place.

Not a Chaidh a Thogail sa Bhanca

Tha spioraid ann ... [O, tha.] ... agus tha gnothach aca ris an t-saoghal. Agus se Eachann Dhoinc (agus chan e naidheachd a bha air dèanamh suas idir a bha ann.) Ach chaidh duine a mharbhadh ann an càr shuas an Glenville, fhios agad, agus bha Eachann an deaghaidh tighinn dhachaidh. Bha Eachann — dhèanadh e ròlaistean ach an fhirinne ghan a bha seo. Agus cha dug e cuimhne riamh air an duine seo gu robh e marbh agus — thàinig e dha — ach innsidh mise dhuibh càit a robh iad a' fuireach an uair sin, far a robh Willie Fraser, bha Hector MacDonald seo ' fuireachd ann.

Agus bha e tighinn a-nuas staidhir am bial na h-oidhche 's bha an duine seo dìreach roimhe aig bonn na staidhir. Cha dug Eachann cuimhne riamh gu robh e marbh agus — agus — 'Good night, Alec!'

'Good night!' thuirt esan.

Uell, thuirt e fhéin, chaidh an duine seo ' mharbhadh le càr.

'Agus thog mi not sa bhanca agus chan eil fhios aig duine aire sin ach an fhi-anais a bha agam, John Alec Gillis, fhios agad, John Alec Gillis, John Alec Aonghais Ailein.'

Agus dh'fhalbh Eachann sìos ri ceum a bha gàbhaidh.

'Chunnaic mi leith'd seo ' dhuine.'

'N am faca?'

'Chunnaic.'

Bha John Alec — cha robh trust aige an Eachann.

'Dh'innis e dhomh chuile —.'

Dh'innis an spiorad dha chuile — dolar a bha e dh'ionnsaidh an t-cent ' — agus gun tusa a chaidh an urra air.'

Agus gu robh seo a' tighinn due sa bhanca 's gun fhios aca aig an taigh aca fhéin air idir. Am faiceadh esan seo air a shettligeadh. Thuirt e — John Alec,



'A-nis, dé a bh'ann, ' Eachainn? Innis dhomh na figure-an!'

A' cheart-fhigur-ean a thuirte e — (Chuala tu'n naidheachd ud roimhe?) Agus am bith gu dé rinn John Alec chunnaic e seo gu robh e air a phàigeadh. A' cheart dh'ionnsaidh a' four cents, dh'ionnsaidh an rud mu dheireadh. 'Fhios agaibh, nach robh a-nis? — bha e cur trioblaid air an duine bhochd. Bha, bha.

Translation

A Credit Note taken out in the Bank

There are spirits. [SW: Oh, yes.] and they have business with the world. And it was Hector Doink (and it's not a made-up story at all). But someone was killed in a car up in Glenville, you know, and Hector had just come home. Hector was — he would make up yarns but this was the pure truth. And he didn't remember that this person was dead — and he came to — but I'll tell you where they were staying that time, where Willy Frazer was, Hector Macdonald was living there.

And he was coming downstairs at nightfall and this person was just in front of him at the foot of the stairs. Hector never remembered that he was dead and — and 'Good night, Alec!'

'Good night!' said he.

Well, he said himself, the man was killed by a car.

'And I took out a credit note in the bank and nobody knows about it except the witness I had, John Alec Gillis, you know, John Alec Gillis, John Alec Aonghais Ailein.'

And Hector went down at a tremendous rate.

'I saw such and such a person.'

'Did you?' 'Yes.'

John Alec, he didn't believe Hector at all.

'He told me every — The spirit told him — every dollar it cost down to the cent —

'— and that you stood surety for him and that this was falling due in the bank with nobody at his own home knowing about it at all. Would he see it settled?'

He — John Alec said,

'Now, what did it amount to, Hector? Tell me the figures!'

He said the exact figures —. (Did you hear that story before?) And whatever John Alec did he saw that it was paid. To the four cents exactly, to the last item. You know, now wasn't it — it was troubling the poor man. Yes. It was, indeed. ☺

Watch for more of Archie Dan's stories in the next issue of *An Rubha*.

Mac-Talla.

“An nì nach cluinn mi an diugh cha’n aithris mi maireach.”

VOL. II.

SIDNI, C. B., DI-SATHAIRNE, SEPTEMBER 9, 1893.

No. 11.

Na Seann Sgeulachdan

le A. Mac G. Sinclair

Bho *Mhac-Talla*, Vol. II, No. 11, (d. 5)

“Dìomhanas nan dìomhanas,” arsa Dòmhnall Mùgach, nuair a leugh e mun fhear a ghoid nighean an easbaig. “Nach uabhasach an obair,” ars’ esan, “a bhith craobh-sgaoileadh a leithid sin de bhreugan air feadh an t-saoghail.” Cha do rinn Dòmhnall breug riamh ach an uair a bhiodh e gu buannachd shaoghalta dha. Mar sin, bha sgeulachdan nan dìomhanas fìor mhór ‘na bheachd. Chan innseadh e sgeulachd fhaoin mu ghoid eich; ach nuair a bhiodh e creic eich dh’innseadh e gun robh e mòran na b’ fheàrr na bha e. Agus aig a’ cheart àm bheireadh e an deagh aire nach innseadh e cron sam bith a bhiodh air. Nam b’ e seann each a bhiodh ann, each a bhiodh fichead bliadhna dh’aois, dh’innseadh Dòmhnall gun robh e ceithir-deug. Cha bu toigh leis a ràdh nach robh e ach ceithir-deug, ach nan tigeadh a’ chùis teamn air theireadh e sin cuideachd.

Bha na seann sgeulachdan Gàidhealach anabarrach taitneach. Bha cuid diubh a bha air an cur ri chèile gu fìor shnasmhor. Cha b’ e bumailairean, no cealgairean, no daormannan a dhealbh iad; ach daoine tuigseach, fìrinnach, blàth-chridheach. Thigeadh dhuinn a bhith gu mòr ann an comain Iain Chaimbeil, an t-ìleach ionnsaichte, uasal, eireachdail, measail a chaidh gu dhìcheall gu ‘n cruinneachadh. Chuir e a-mach ceithir leabhraichean diubh, ‘s thatar a-nis a’ cur a-mach nan leabhraichean sin as ùr. Dhèanadh e feum mòr do Dhòmhnall Mùgach, an t-snaim chruaidh a th’ air a sporan fhuasgladh, agus an ceannach, ‘s an leughadh gu cùramach. Cha chosdadh iad dha ach sia dollair, agus is nì gun bhrìgh sia dollair ann an coimeas ri sia fichead sgeulachd mhath. Bha Caimbeulach Ìle na chliù d’ a chinneadh agus do na Gàidheil uile.

Bha mòran de dh’fhiosrachadh de bhàidhealachd, agus de shonas am

measg dhaoine ri àm nan seann sgeulachdan. Chruinnicheadh buidheann chàirdeil an ceann a chèile aig beul na h-oidhche. Dh’innseadh fear sgeulachd mu shithichean, mu bhuidseachd, mu dhraoidheachd, mu dhaoine a reic iad féin ris an droch-spiorad, agus mu chrìoch nan daoine sin. Dh’innseadh fear eile naidheachd mu bhochdan, no mu thaghairm nan cat. Sheinneadh fear eile, no bean no nighean, òran a chuireadh fonn air gach cridhe. Gheibheadh na h-athinnean, sgaoileadh a chuideachd, agus rachadh an luchd-céilidh dhachaidh gu sunndach, sòlasach.



Ach chuir an t-srì agus a’ chabhadh às don chèilidh. Nuair a tha daoine gu dìcheallach a’ feuchainn ri airgead a chur ri chèile, chan eil ùine aca gu dhol air chèilidh. Agus ged a rachadh cha bhiodh mòran toileachaidh aca. Leis mar a bhiodh an cridhe air an t-saoghal, cha b’ urrainn iad labhairt mu nì anns am biodh brìgh no taitneas.

Their cuid nach robh mòran fiosrachaidh aig na seann Ghàidheil. Chan urrainn mise sin a ràdh. Na seann daoine air an robh mi eòlach, cha bu daoine gun fhiosrachadh iad. Gheibheadh eachdraidh is sgeulachdan, is òran ‘nam measg. Thug iad uile greis mhór anns an

sgoil-oidhche. Sgoil-oidhche! An robh sgoil-oidhche aig na bodaich a thàinig a-mach às an t-seann dùthaich? ‘S ann aca fhéin a bha ‘n sgoil-oidhche. Gu dé a bha sa chèilidh ach sgoil-oidhche? Agus bu sgoil mhath i. Bha i math gus an inntinn a gheurachadh, gus a chuimhne a neartachadh, agus gu eòlas a thoirt don òigridh mun t-sluagh bhon d’ thàinig iad, mun dùthaich dom buineadh iad, agus mu euchdan Wallais, Bhruis, agus ghaisgich eile.

Co-dhiù a bha fiosrachadh am measg nan seann Ghàidheal no nach robh, bha sgeulachdan ‘nam measg. Ach dh’fhalbh na sgeulachdan. Chuir an t-aineolas, a’ mhórchuis, an tì, agus na paipearan naidheachd às daibh. Nuair a sguir na mnathan den bhrochan, agus a thòisich iad air an tì cha b’ fhiach na seann sgeulachdan. Chan fhoghnadh an sin ach còmhradh mu na fleasgaich ‘s na caileagan a bhiodh a’ gluasad an cuideachd a chèile, mun dòigh san robh ‘n té mu dheireadh a phòs air a sgeadachadh, mu chumadh aodaich, mu bhoineadan is adan, mu chearcail ‘s mu shumagan-cuil, mun chloinn a thàinig ‘s a bha ri teachd, agus gu sònraichte, mu mheud mhór, cabaireachd, struidhealachd, cealgaireachd, agus droch dhòighean am bana-choimhearsnach.

Nuair a fhuair na daoine na pàipearan-naidheachd cha robh ùine aca air a dhol air chèilidh, agus chan éisdeachd iad ri seann sgeulachd. Cha bhiodh iad-san cho aineolach ‘s a bha ‘n athraichean. Bhiodh fiosrachadh aig an fhear bu lugha tùir dhiubh nach robh riamh aig a sheanair. Bhiodh iad an-sàs anns na pàipearan-naidheachd cho luath ‘s a bhiodh e dorcha gu leòr gu coinneal a lasadh. Leughadh iad le solas inntinn mun a’ mhòrt eagallach a chuireadh an gnìomh an California, mun adhbhar a bha aig mnaoi òig ann an Chicago air litir-dhealachaidh a thoirt d’ a fear, mu chuillbheartachd tiolpadair-pòca ann an Boston, mun dòigh anns an do chrochadh am mortair mu dheireadh an Ontario, mun phrionnsa òg mu

dheireadh a rugadh san Roinn-Eòrpa, mu chuairtean is òraidean luchd-riaghlaidh na dùthcha, agus gu sònraichte mu innleachdan riaghlaidh a dhèanadh an t-airgead cho pailt agus gum faodadh daoine a bhith 'nan tàmh leth na h-ùine. Nach math an gnothach gun deachaidh na seann sgeulachdan às! Nach tait-neach, blasda, beannaichte na nithean a thàinig 'nan àite! ☺

Air a dheasachadh is eadar-theangachadh le Pòl Geddes.

Translation:

THE OLD STORIES

by A. Mac G. Sinclair

From Mac-Talla, Vol II, No 11

“Vanity of vanities,” said Surly Donald, when he read about the man that stole the bishop’s daughter. “Isn’t it a terrible deed,” he said, “to be broadcasting such lies throughout the world?” Donald had never told a lie, apart from when it would be of some profit to him. Therefore, stories were a great vanity in his opinion. He wouldn’t tell a foolish story about the theft of a horse; but when he was selling a horse he would say that it was far better than it actually was. And at the same he would take great care to not inform about any faults the horse had. If it was an old horse, say a horse twenty years old, Donald would say that it was fourteen. He wouldn’t like to say that it was only fourteen, but if push came to shove, he would say it.

The old Gaelic stories were an exceptional delight. Some of them were put together extremely elegantly. They weren’t fashioned by idiots, deceivers, or misers; but by people that were intelligent, truthful, and warm-hearted. We have come to be greatly in the debt of John F. Campbell, the learned, noble, fine and esteemed Islayman, who diligently went to collect them. He published four books of them, and those books are now being re-published. It would do Surly Donald a great good, to undo the tight knot on his wallet, and buy them, and to carefully read them. They would only cost him six dollars, and six dollars is

nothing in comparison to twenty six fine stories. Mr. Campbell of Islay was an asset to his own people, and to all Gaels.

There was much experience of kindness and of happiness amongst men, in the time of the old stories. A friendly group would gather together at sunset. One man would tell a story about the fairies, about witchcraft, about magic, about people that sold themselves to the devil, and about the end of those people. Another man would tell a story about ghosts, or about the Summons of the Cats (*see note*). Another man, or a woman, or a girl, would sing a song that would delight every heart. Then the fire-brands would be taken, the company would disperse, and the visitors would return home, merry and happy.

But constant striving and haste has almost killed off the house-visit. When people are diligently attempting to make money, they don’t have time to go on a proper visit. And even if they were to go, they wouldn’t get much pleasure from it. Because of the way that their hearts are set on worldly things, they wouldn’t be able to speak about anything meaningful or pleasant.

Some say that the old Gaels were quite ignorant. I for one can’t say that. The old people that I knew, they weren’t people without knowledge. History, stories and songs could be got amongst them. They all spent a fair time in the night-school. Night-school! Did the old men that came from the Old Country have a night-school? They did indeed have a night school. What was the house-visit if not a night-school? And what a good school it was. It was good for sharpening the mind, for strengthening the memory, and for passing on knowledge to the younger generation about the people they came from, about the land they belonged to, and about the exploits of Wallace, Bruce, and other heroes.

Regardless of whether the old Gaels were well-informed or not, they had stories. But the stories have gone. Ignorance, pride, tea, and the newspapers have killed them. When the women stopped having gruel and started on the tea, the old stories weren’t good enough.

Nothing would do but talk of the young men and the girls that were seeing each other, about the way the last woman to be married was done up, about the shape of clothes, about bonnets and hats, about hoops and pack-clothes, about the children that were born and that are still to come, and especially, about the great size, gossiping, extravagance, deceitfulness, and bad ways of their neighbour.

When the people got newspapers they didn’t have time to go on a house-visit, and they wouldn’t listen to an old story. They wouldn’t be as ignorant as their forefathers were. The man of the least sense would have knowledge that his grandfather never had. They would get stuck into the newspapers as soon as it was dark enough to light a candle. They would blissfully read about the terrifying murder that had been committed in California, about the reason a young woman in Chicago had to give a letter of divorce to her husband, about the cunning of a cut-purse in Boston, about the way the last murderer in Ontario was hanged, about the young prince in Europe most recently born, about the circuits and the speeches of the country’s rulers, and especially about the machines that would make money so abundant that you could be idle half the time. Isn’t it a good thing that the old stories were done away with! Aren’t the things that came in their place so delightful, tasteful and blessed! ☺

Note: Summons of the Cats is a method of divination, where cats would be roasted alive until demons appeared, attracted by their screaming. The demons would come in the form of black cats, lead by the Devil himself.

Translated by Paul Geddes. Paul is a student at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig in Scotland. This past summer he was seconded to Highland Village as a cultural management apprentice from Commun na Gàidhlig in Scotland, through the Memorandum of Understanding between the Highland Council in Scotland and the Province of Nova Scotia through the Office of Gaelic Affairs. An excerpt from Mac-Talla is regular feature of An Rubha.



Each issue of AN RUBHA features an excerpt from Jonathan G. MacKinnon’s MAC-TALLA (*Echo*) with translation. MAC-TALLA, published in Sydney, Nova Scotia, was the longest running Gaelic weekly (ending as a bi-weekly) 1892-1904. MacKinnon, born in Dunakin in 1869, published his first issue at 22 years of age. He was a life-long promoter of Gaelic and was involved in other publications including Gaelic translations of English literature. Digital copies of MAC-TALLA can be found on the Sabhal Mòr Ostaig website at:

<http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/en/leabharlann/mactalla/>



Paul Geddes in milling frolic (centre).

Photo by Steve Wadden



Highland Village Photo Album *The Faces of 2008*



This page (clockwise from top left): Alex Trebek celebrated his 68th birthday this past July with a visit to the Highland Village (L-R: Kyle MacNeil, Alex Trebek, Keith MacNeil, and Maria MacMillan); Jamie Kennedy, our new blacksmith, in the forge; Jean MacNeil on the MacIver-Nash steps; and Marie Chehy (left); Catherine Gillis act in one of our skits for Oidhche nam Bòcan/Night of the Spooks; and John Shaw (L-R), Jim Watson and Allan MacLeod share a Gaelic song during our Stòras Gaelic Folk School & Festival.

Opposite page (clockwise from top left): Jim Bryden loads wool in the picker to demonstrate the workings of the Cash Carding Mill; Jim St.Clair tells a story during a Candlelight Tour; Eilean nan Òg apprentices with our horse "Mira Jean" (clockwise from to left: Glen Malkowicz, Ryan MacKenzie, Neil MacInnis, Caitlin Bennett, Rachel MacNeil, Alex Penny and Ashley MacKay); the MacNeil family of Castle Bay sings a Gaelic song at our annual fundraising dinner for the Cape Breton Cancer Centre in memory of Dan E. MacNeil; the Boisdale Trio (L-R: Joe Peter MacLean, Paul Wukitsch & Janet Cameron) performs on Highland Village Day; Pauline Campbell (right), Caddy MacNeil and Donna Morrison serve our famous codfish; a cheque for \$4,117 is presented to the Cape Breton Cancer Centre from the annual dinner sponsored by the Highland Village and District 1, Victoria County (L-R: Rodney Chaisson, HV Director, Jim and Donna MacNeil, dinner founders and organisers, Walter MacNeil, HV Trustee, Tom MacNeil, Social Worker with the Cape Breton Cancer Centre, and Paul MacNeil, Victoria County District 1 Councillor); and Catherine Gillis making bread with a participant in our living history program for children - Làithean Sona. Photos by Crystal MacNeil and Pauline MacLean.



Gleann Bharriagh air Chuimhne/Barra Glen Remembered John Dan Nill Mac na Bantraich

Recorded by Seumas Watson

The late John Dan MacNeil was reared in Barra Glen, Victoria County, where he was born in 1909. He moved to Sydney in 1939 and married "Mutsie" MacNeil (Katherine Sheumais Dhòmhnail) in 1942. They raised a family of four.

John Dan was employed as a carpenter with various contractors in the Sydney area most of his adult life. Despite his long residence in the relatively cosmopolitan industrial community, John Dan remained a Gael loyal to his culture and first language. He publicly supported Gaelic through years of active service to the Island's Scottish cultural organizations, most notably as member and Chief of Comunn Gàidhlig Cheap Breatunn. He was recognized as a fiddler, story teller, singer and historian. John Dan MacNeil was a man who never forgot where he came from.

IDM - Uell, nan tòisichinn dìreach ri m' thaobh fhéin, na nábuidhean a bha ri ar taobh, a' cheud fhear bu dlùithe dhuinn, fear dhan a' cheud fheadhainn a bha muigh ann a' siod cuideachd, Dòmhnall Beag a chanadh iad ris: Dòmhnall Nill 'ic Dhòmhnail-MacNill a bh'ann. Agus an uair sin bràthair seanair dhomhs' a bha thall air a' chnoc gu math dlùth dhuinn, Iain Chaluim a chanamaid ris: Iain Chaluim 'ic Iain Bhàin, MacNill a bh'ann. 'S e mo chuideachd fhéin a bha sin, Cloinn Nill. Cha mhór nach e Cloinn Nill a bh'annt' uile. Agus anisd air an taobh an iar dhinn, ás a' sin dha 'n cheàrn ud do Ghleann Bharraidh, thog fear ann a' sin ... thog e taigh dìreach ri mo chuimhne. Cha robh mi ach trì na ceithir do bhliadhnaichean a dh'aois. Bha e 'g obair 's na mènnein s' phòs e 's thog e teaghlach 's na mènnein (Glasbaidh). Cheannaich e pàirc', pios do dh'ait, 's thog e taigh air agus sin anisd an taigh bu dlùithe dhuinn air an taobh iar dhinn. 'S e Johnny Bàn a chanamaid ris - MacNill a bh'ann cuideachd. Bha 'ad ann a' sin gus an deaghaidh dhomhsa fagail, shuas ann a Gleann Bharraidh. Cha n-eil duin' ann an dràs'. Tha an taigh falamh.

Ma théid mi nisd an iar air a' sin, 's e Highland Hill a chanas iad ris. Bha trì nábuidhean math, math a bh' againn ann a' sin, nábuidhean gun chiall. Bha mios mór aig m'athair orra. Chanadh iad Clann Aonghuis Eòin riuth' uile. Ach a' cheud fhear 's e tàillear a' bh'ann: Dòmhnall Aonghuis Eòin - Tàillear Aonghuis Eòin. Bha an ath-fhear Eòin Aonghuis Eòin. Thog e fhéin teaghlach agus cha n-eil duin' ann an dràs'. Cha n-eil duin' ann an àit' an tàilleir a bha seo na 's mutha. Cheannaich cuideigin e. Cha n-eil mi

'smaointinn gu bheil duin' a' fuireach air. Tha, anisd, an t-ait' eile an iar air sin ... Tha mi creidinn gun d'fhuair sibh edlas air Maxie.

SW - Fhuair.

IDM - Uell, athair Mhaxie, 's e Dan Angus Iain Aonghuis Eòin a chanamaid ris-san. 'S e fear eile do Chloinn Aonghuis Eòin. Tha piuthar do Roddy John Dan, ma 's aithne dhut e... Cheannaich 'ad an t-àite far a robh athair Mhaxie a' fuireach. Cheannaich Maxie fhéin taigh gu math breagha, àite Thòmais Mhurchaidh, àite Thòmais Mhurchaidh Mhóir MacNill. Agus bha taigh eil' ann.

...He was a recognised fiddler, story teller, singer and historian.

John Dan MacNeil was a man who never forgot where he came from.

Cha n-eil e ann an dràs'. Cha n-eil an taigh suas. Chaidh an taigh a leagail. 'S e àite Sheumais Mhurchaidh a chanadh iad ris. Cha robh e pòsda riamh.

SW - Robh e ri bàrdachd an dràs' 's a rithist?

IDM - Cha robh. An aon fhear a bha ri bàrdachd shuas ann a' sin, rinn e dhà na trì do dh'òrain cuidheasach math, 's e Niall Mór a chanadh iad ris. Tha e shuas anns a' Villa. Tha e gu math spry fhathast. Rinn e trì na ceithir do dheagh òrain. Rinn e òran do Dhòmhnall MacFhionghain far na h-Iontrabhail nuair a chaidh e dha 'n chogadh. Cha robh e fad sam bith anns a' Fhràing nuair a chaidh e mharbhadh. Bha mios mór aig na daoine air. Bha e 'na mharsanta. Cha robh e ach óg, ach bha e 'na mharsanta mun deachaidh e dha 'n arm. Agus rinn Niall Mór an t-òran dha. Bha e-fhéin agus a bhràthair a' fuireach còmhla ri chéile shuas air Highland Hill ann a' siod.

Cha robh an còrr ann o chionn fhada. Nan rachadh sibh astar gun chiall dha 'n iar arithist, far a' robh Niall Mór a' fuireach, a

dh'àite ris an canadh 'ad àite Pheadair Curstaidh Mhicheil ... 'S e mac bantraich a bh'ann. Siod an t-ainm a bh'orra, Curstaidh Mhicheil-Dòmhnallaich. S e Clann Mhicheil, siod na chanadh iad riuth', Clann Mhicheil. 'S e Dòmhnallaich a' bh'annta. Uell, anisd Curstaidh Mhicheil a bha seo, seo a mac, Peadar. An aona mhac a bh'aice. Bha i pòsda ri cousin dhomh-fhìn: Fear à crìoch Barra Glen, an t-àite a thuir mi riut cheana: àite Iain Chaluim 'ic Iain Bhàin. Uell, Peadar Curstaidh a bha seo. Bha e pòsd' aig Curstag Iain Chaluim. Cha robh teaghlach idir aca. Anisd bha Peadar beò ... O, feumaidh gu robh e ninety nuair a dh'eug e. Rànaig e aois mhòr co dhiù.

Agus bha fear a bha càirdeach dha à Washabuck, dh'fhuirich e còmhla ris anns na bliadhnaichean mu dheireadh a bha e beò. Mhove e suas go Highland Hill 's bha e fuireach ann. Eòs mac Alasdair a' Framair - Joseph MacKenzie. Tha esan marbh an duigh cuideachd.

Cha n-eil duin' anisd a' fuireach ann a' sin. Cha n-eil duin' ann an àite Pheadair Curstaidh. Cha n-eil duin' ann an àit' Nill Mhóir ... O seadh, fear eile air Highland Hill, Tarmad Nill 'ic Iain Mhóir. Bha gille aig Tarmad, Steabhan Tharmaid, duine mór, mór, gun chiall mór a' bh'ann. 'S e 'n duin' a bu làidir' a bh'aca aig an obair iarainn thall ann a' seo. Thànaig e dh'obair a' seo (Sidni) air obair iarainn mar a bha cuid mhór dhiubh a thigeadh anuas treis a dh'obair. Bhiodh e 'togail rèil aona ceud deug purnad air na tongs. Cha robh e lag, Steabhan Tharmaid Nill 'ic Iain Mhóir. Niall Mór a bha seo, 's e first cousin a bh'annta: Niall Mór Mhicheil Nill 'ic Iain Mhóir agus Tarmad Nill 'ic Iain Mhóir.

Sin agad na daoine a bh'ann. Bha beagan do chàirdeas aca dha m'athair. M'athair mo mhàthar, thànaig i far an taobh thall anns a' Chòbh, Còbh nam Pìobairean. 'S e té dhe na Tarmadaich a chanadh iad rithe. Cha robh ann an sia na seachd dhiubh nach biodh Tarmad ac' air agus siod mar a thug 'ad na Tarmadaich orra. Anisd bha té dhiubh seo pòsd' aig Niall mac Iain Mhóir agus bha an té eile pòsd' aig Calum mac Iain Bhàin, mo shin seanair. Sin mar a bha 'n càirdeas aca. Nisd Calum mac Iain Bhàin, thànaig esan as an t-seann dùthaich. Thànaig iad à Barraidh. Cha n-eil fhiosam gu dé rinn e sgath na b'fheàrr na àite sam bith eile.

Translation:

JDM - Well, if I should start on my own side...the neighbours beside us...the first one near us and one of the first ones out there too...we called him little Donald; Donald the son of Neil, son of Donald (MacNeil). Then there was my great uncle very near to us over on the hill. We called him John the son of Malcolm; John the son of Malcolm, son of fair John. He was a MacNeil.

Now out of there to the west, to that corner of Barra Glen, a man built a house within my own memory. I was only three or four

He raised a family and none of them are left now. No one is left on "The Tailor's" place either. Someone bought it, but I don't think anyone lives there now.

Now there is another place west of that. I believe you've made the acquaintance of "Maxie" (MacNeil).

JW - I have.

JDM - Well we called Maxie's father Dan Angus the son of John, son of Angus son of John. He was another member of the Angus son of John family. Roddie John Dan's sister,

and he was a merchant before he went into the army. Big Neil made the song for him. Big Neil and his brother lived together up there on Highland Hill.

It's a long time since anyone else lived around there, unless you went a good distance to west again from where Big Neil lived in a place called Peter the daughter of Kirsty, wife of Michael's place. He was the son of a widow. That's what they were called, Kirsty the wife of Michael MacDonald. They were referred to as the "children of Michael." They were MacDonalds. Well now this Kirsty the wife of Michael, her son was Peter, the only son she had. She was married to my own cousin, a fellow from the Barra Glen area. The place I mentioned to you before, John the son of Malcolm son of Fair John's place.

Well this Peter the son of Kirsty was married to Little Kirsty the daughter of Iain the son of Malcolm. They didn't have any family. Peter lived for a long time. He must have been ninety when he died. He reached an advanced age anyway. In his final years he lived on Highland Hill where he stayed with a relative from Washabuck. He moved up there and stayed with Joe the son of Alexander the Framer, Joe Mackenzie. He's dead today too. There isn't anybody living there now. No one there in Peter the son of Kirsty's place. No one in Big Neil's place...Oh yes, someone else from Highland Hill, Norman the son of Neil son of Big John. Norman had a boy, Stephen. An exceedingly big man. He was the strongest man they had at the steel works over there (Sydney steel plant). He came to work here like many who came to work for a while. Oh he was an enormous man. He used to lift an eleven hundred pound rail on the tongs. Stephen the son of Norman son of Neil son of Big John wasn't weak. This Big Neil we mentioned before was a first cousin to Stephen. Big

Neil the son of Michael, son of Neil, son of Big John and Norman the son of Neil, son of Big John.

There you have the folk who lived there. My mother's mother came from Piper's Cove on the other side. She was one of the 'Normans'. Out of six or seven of this family they were mostly called Norman. One of the girls was married to Neil son of Big John and another was married to Malcolm son of Fair John, my great grandfather. That's where the relationship lay. Now Malcolm son of fair John came from the Old Country; they came out of Barra. I don't know what made that place any better than another.☺

Recorded, transcribed and translated by Seumas Watson.



Illustration by Ellison Robertson.

John Dan Nill Mac na Bantraich

years old. He was working in the mines (Glac Bay) and his family was growing up there. He bought a field and built a home on it. That was the nearest house to us on the west side. We called him fair haired John. He too was a MacNeil. They were up there in Barra Glen until I left. There's no one there now. The house is empty.

If I should go to the west from there, we come to a place called Highland Hill. We had three very good neighbours there: extremely good neighbours. My father had great regard for them. They were all called "The children of Angus son of John". The first one was a tailor called Donald the son of Angus son of John. They called him "The Tailor the son of Angus, son of John". The next one was John the son of Angus, son of John.

if you know Roddie... they bought the place where Maxie's father lived. Maxie himself bought a lovely house. Thomas the son of Big Murdock MacNeil's place. There was another house that isn't there anymore. The house is no longer standing. We called him James the son of Murdock. He was a bachelor.

JW - Did he make songs?

JDM - No he didn't. The only one making songs up there, he made two or three good ones, was called Big Neil. He made a song for Donald MacKinnon (from MacKinnon's Harbour) when he went to the war. He's in the "Villa" and still very spry. Donald wasn't in France very long when he was killed. He was very well liked. He was only young

Seinn na Píobadh 's an t-Seann Nós

BAGPIPE TRADITIONS IN GAELIC CAPE BRETON

By Tiber Falzett

The ingenuity among Scottish Gaels, both Old World and New, to construct homemade instruments, specifically bagpipes, from local materials in the absence of store-bought instruments made of foreign materials by professional artisans, reveals their strong affinity for the instruments and their music.

An early account of this resourcefulness comes from an account published in *Mac-Talla* concerning Alasdair Bàn MacIsaac of Smiresary, Moidart, who emigrated in 1843 as a child with his father, Angus Bàn, and the rest of his family, settling in Giant's Lake, Guysborough County, Nova Scotia (*An Tuathanach Ruadh* 1902: 197):

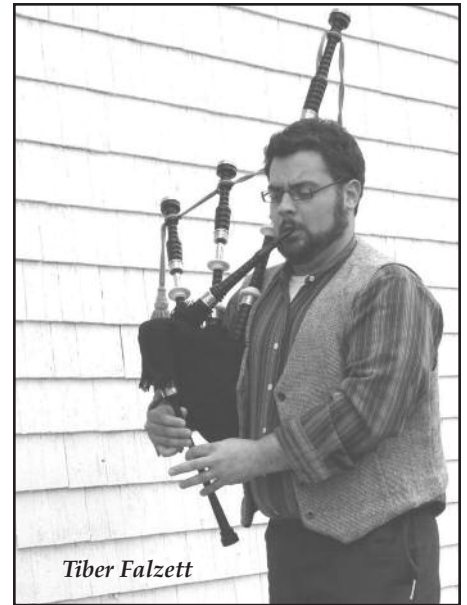
Ged nach robh Alasdair Bàn ach gle òg a' fàgail Mhùideart, cha do leig e air dhi-chuimhne na chunnaic agus na chuala e an Tir nam Beann. Bha e ro mheasail air ceòl na pioba, agus chum e cuimhne air mòran de na puirt a bhiodh e 'cluinntinn aig na piobairean air bòrd nan soithichean. Bhiodh e 'deanamh feadain de bhiorain ùinnsinn anns an cuireadh e ribheid de dh' fhodar coirce, agus leis an fheadan so chluicheadh e gu sunndach. Miannachadh piob a bhi aige, ach cha ghabhadh e piob fhaotainn 'san dùthaich, agus chosgadh e mòran airgid cur a dh' Albainn 'ga sireadh agus smaoinich e gu 'n deanadh e piob dha fein. 'S ann mar sin a bha. Fhuair e fiodh agus tora, craicionn caorach agus linndeanan, 's rinn e piob 's dh'ionnsaich e a cluich. Faodaidh mi innseadh gur i cheud phiob a chuala mi-fhin riamh. Cha b' fhada gus na ruith fathunn feadh na dùthcha aig Loch an Fhuamhair. Agus 's e bh' ann nach biodh procession no election no picnic aig nach biodh Alasdair Bàn agus a' phiob; agus neo-r-thaing mur biodh e aig na bainnsean, a' cur gach bodach is cailleach a dhannsa, agus iad a saoil sinn gun robh iad òg a rithist.

Translation: Although Alasdair Bàn MacIsaac was very young leaving Moidart, he didn't forget what he saw and heard in the Land of the Mountains. He was extremely fond of pipe music, and he remembered many of the tunes he heard from the pipers onboard the emigrant vessels. He would make a chanter out of a piece of ash-wood in which he would put an oat-straw reed, and with this chanter he played lively music. He wanted a bagpipe, but none could

be found in the district and it would cost a lot of money to send away to Scotland for one, and so he thought he would make a bagpipe for himself. That's how it was. He got some wood, an auger, a sheep-skin and hemp, and made a bagpipe and learned to play it. I can say that was the first bagpipe I ever heard. It was not long until word spread throughout the district of Giant's Lake and there wasn't a procession or election or picnic that Alasdair and his pipes wouldn't be present; and also if there would be a wedding, he would set every old man and woman dancing, as if they thought they were young again.

This narrative provides us with several insights into the nature of emigration from the Scottish *Gàidhealtachd* and the importance of cultural maintenance and transmission in the New World communities they founded, including a description of the aural/oral transmission and reinforcement of culture that occurred on board the emigrant vessels. It also reveals that a homemade instrument fulfilled the aesthetic expectations of an emigrant community, being an important fixture in the social fabric among the Scottish Gaels of Giant's Lake. This account can go towards revealing differences between Scottish Gaelic aesthetics in the nineteenth-century, before the modern and professionally manufactured Great Highland Bagpipe became the preferred form of the instrument in the twentieth.

The popularity of locally made instruments, namely chanters, among Scottish Gaels in the Old World and New is not fully appreciated, as evident from the lack of archived field recordings and published material on the topic. From experiences through personal fieldwork this is one of the most frequent topics of discussion among tradition-bearers in both South Uist and Cape Breton when being consulted on local piping traditions. However, there are noted difficulties in terms of evidence from the material culture record for homemade chanters as very few examples are extant, perhaps



Tiber Falzett

Library Photo

because they were perceived as disposable due to the ease of their manufacture. The only example of a homemade chanter noted in the course of fieldwork conducted in 2007 was one made of alder in the home of Alex Francis MacKay of Kingsville, Cape Breton. Nevertheless, it is the noteworthy simplicity of these homemade chanters' construction from materials readily available locally that facilitated the transmission of pipe music to a larger portion of the community, as Gibson notes, "[...] there had been chanter players, men and women, well distributed in Gaelic communities, for whom I presume acquiring a set of bagpipes had been impossible" (*Old & New World Highland Bagpiping*, 2002). The popularity of these instruments in making possible the wider dissemination and propagation of vernacular piping traditions at the local level in these communities was noted repeatedly in the course of personal fieldwork with tradition-bearers in both Cape Breton and South Uist. For this reason the following narratives come from Scottish Gaelic-speaking tradition-bearers who, although not pipers, had both experience and practice in making and playing homemade chanters in their youth, emphasizing the wider communal functions of these instruments.

John Smith, styled *Iain mac Phàdraig 'ic Phàdraig*, of Boisdale, South Uist, a notable singer in his community who learned most of his repertoire from listening to local singers and village bards, provides us with a narrative that links the transmission of piping within a communal context to chanter-making from local materials:

TF: *Dè mar a bha iad ag ionnsachadh na piobadh aig an àm ud?*

ImP: *Fhios agad a Dhia, bhiodh iad a' faigh-inn... bhiodh iad a' dèanamh feadain dhaibh-fhèin. Pios de chuilec 's chuir iad wire dhearg sìos 's far a bhiodh iad a' dèanamh tuill ann an uair sin ris a' rud dearg a choireigin, agus chuir iad tri tuill gu h-àirde 's an tè 'ile gu h-iseal. Bha iad a' dèanamh feadan mar sineach 's bha iad—nuair a chitheadh iad aon duine ga dhèanamh dh'fheumadh fear eile a dhèanamh. 'S bha iad ga ionnsachadh mar sin—leis an seann fheadan a bha sin. Agus sin mar a bhiodh iad gu piobaireachd. [...] Dìreach pios cuilce a fhuair sinn no maide caol a choireigin, dìreach bileag caol de iubhar a gheobhamaid mar gum biodh cuilec' fhèin. [...] Bha sinn a' dèanamh nan toll le wire dhearg an uair sin.*

TF: *Dè mar a rinn iad na ribheidean?*

ImP: *Dìreach ribheidean eòrna, bhiodh iad-san làidir ri—bhitheamaid a' dèanamh fideag bheag air a' sin agus stob sinn 's a' mhullach aige. Dheanadh sin an gnothach.*

TF: How did they learn the pipes at that time?

JA: Oh God you know, they would get—they would make chanters themselves. They put a red-hot wire through a piece of cane, where they then would make the holes with something red-hot, and then they put three holes on top and another on bottom [describing the finger holes for the top hand on the chanter]. They made a chanter like that and they—when they would see one person making a chanter another could be made. And they were learning it like that—with that old style of chanter. And that's how they would be piping. They just got a piece of cane or some sort of a thin stick of wood. We would just get a thin bit of yew just like cane—then we made the holes with the red-hot wire.

TF: And how did they make the reeds?

JS: Just barley reeds, they would be strong with—we would make a little reed with that and we'd put in the top of it [of the chanter]. That would do the trick.

John Smith's recollections reiterate the value of these instruments among local pipers, in a district where store-bought instruments were most assuredly difficult to come by. Along with discussing the role of these chanters in the transmission of pipe music, John Smith also notes the ease in acquiring the technology required for making these chanters, stating that seeing one being made provided an individual with enough knowledge to repeat the task.

The relative simplicity in obtaining the skills needed to make these homemade chanters is reiterated by Theresa

Burke (née MacNeil) of Rear Big Pond, Cape Breton styled, *Treasag nighean Pheadair Mhòir Steabhain Mhìcheil*, a niece of the well known piper Neil R. MacIsaac, or Niall Ruairidh Shìm:

TF: *Dè mar a rinn sibh feadain?*

TnPM: *Maide beag de fhiodh cruaidh, maple—cha bhiodh e ach man uidhir sin—dh'fheumadh e a bhith dìreach. Pios de wire, wire an fheadar a chanadh iad rithe, bha i làidir, cha lùbadh i idir nuair a bhiodh i teth. Wire, nuair a bhios iad teth, a bheil fhios agad, lùbaidh i gàbhaidh furasda. Cha lùbadh an wire an fheadar idir. Dheanamaid e teth a's a' stove gus a bhiodh i dearg. Chumamaid 'roimh gus an tigeadh an toll amach air a' cheann eile dhen fheadan. Thuireamaid an uair sin tuill na mèirean ann o chionn bha feadan aig mo mhàthair agus chunna' sinn mar a bha sin air a dhèanamh 's rinn sinn mar sin. [...] Sheinneamaid e. Bhitheamaid a' cur—dè 'n t-òran a bha sin? Port furasda [Ghabh i blòigheag do phort á beul a' seo]. An dòigh a dh'ionnsaicheamaid e—'s e port nach biodh neart de grace notes idir air. Bha mo*

...it is the noteworthy simplicity of these homemade chanters' construction from materials readily available locally that facilitated the transmission of pipe music to a larger portion of the community...

mhàthair—bha i gàbhaidh air an fheadan. Bha ceòl gu leòr a's na daoine. Tha feadan a bh'aig mo mhàthair agam fhathast.

TF: *Agus dè mar a rinn thu na reeds airson an fheadain?*

TnPM: *Fideag, the reed, fideag, fideag, I knew there was a name but it just didn't come. Arbhar, arbhar a gheobha' tu, bhiodh an t-arbhar an uair sin cho slàn, piosan mòr eireachdail. Coirce, an coirce, an t-eòrna, bhite ga chuir a's a' phàirce. Nuair thèid a ghearradh thioramaicheas e 's chuireas tu 'staigh 's an t-sabhal e. Gheobhamaid pios a bhiodh tiugh, na bu mhotha na pios beag. Ghearramaid mar dìrleach gu leth. Stobamaid sìos a's an fheadan e. Cha chreid thu an ceòl a thig às. 'S iomadh latha a bha mi suas an lobhta an t-sabhaill 'ghearradh fideag airson an fheadain.*

TF: How did you make chanters?

TB: [We would get] a small stick of hardwood—maple—it would be about that size and it had to be straight. [We would get] a piece of wire, they called it haywire, it was strong and wouldn't bend at all when it got hot. When wire gets hot it bends very easily. Haywire wouldn't bend at all. We would make it hot in the stove until it got red-hot. We would bore

through the piece of wood with the wire until it came out the other end of the chanter. We would then put the finger holes in, since my mother had a chanter and we saw how it was made and we made it like that. We would play it. We would be playing [on the chanter]—what's that song? An easy tune [provides vocal imitation of a jig]. The way we learned it—it was a tune that wouldn't have many grace notes at all. My mother was wicked on the chanter! The people were quite musical then. I have my mother's chanter still.

TF: And how did you make reeds for the chanter?

TB: *Fideag*—the reed—I knew there was a name [for a chanter reed] but it just didn't come. You would get a piece of corn (straw). The corn would be so perfect then, big beautiful pieces. The oats and the barley would be planted in the field. Once they are cut and dried you put them inside the barn. We would get a piece that would be substantial, bigger than a little piece. We would cut it about an inch and a half. We would stop it down into the chanter. You wouldn't believe the music that it made! I spent many days up in the loft of the barn cutting a reed for the chanter.

Theresa's commentary is unique in that it connects the transmission of the knowledge required for instrument-making as being passed on from mother to daughter, a noted exception to anthropological rule that cites the manufacture of musical instruments as a strictly masculine activity. It is also important to note Theresa's recollection of her mother orally transmitting vocal and instrumental music to her, providing a strong example of the central role of women in the transmission of music through the vocal imitation of instrumental music. These narratives assist in revealing the important role of homemade chanters in the communal maintenance and dissemination of various genres of Scottish Gaelic performance culture. These valuable narratives have implications that extend outside the immediate realm of material culture and provide insights into the transmission of cultural knowledge, including vernacular forms of music and technology, as practiced in the Scottish Gaelic-speaking communities of the Outer Hebrides and Cape Breton. ☺

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WOOL DYEING IN GAELIC SCOTLAND & CAPE BRETON

Vicki Quimby

Colours have always been important to human kind, from the paleolithic cave paintings of Lascaux to the ancient Egyptians and Romans. Highlanders were no exception. By the 17th century they were exhibiting a fondness for patterns using many colours. Martin Martin, in 1703, described a plaid typical of those worn by the men in the Western Islands as:

"...fine wool, the Thred as fine as can be made of that kind; it consists of diverse Colours, and there is a great deal of Ingenuity requir'd in sorting the Colours, so as to be agreeable to the nicest Fancy...."

And song and praise poetry of the 17th and 18th century shows a preference for bright colours, notably in the higher quality fabrics such as plaids and tartans. This is shown by the frequently used phrase, *breacain charnaid*, or 'scarlet tartans.' In most of the early depictions of Highland dress, it is the tartans with a preponderance of reds that are shown, for they denoted high fashion and status.

How were they able to satisfy this desire for colour, especially the bright reds and blues, greens and deep blacks, said to be their favourites? Many of the native plants of the Highlands and Islands gave a range of reliable colours. Ladies bedstraw grew in abundance on the *machairs* (sands) of the western sea-coasts and gave a good red. Yellows and greens came from heathers, and a green could also be made from some seaweeds. Plants such as bog myrtle and gorse, or leaves from trees such as silver birch and willow, gave yellows. Yellow flag roots made a blue-grey, while privet berries gave a dull blue. Peat soot gave a yellow brown, and dock roots, water lily roots, and alder bark were all used (usually with the addition of an iron fixative) to make blacks.

The Highlands of Scotland boast one of the most ideal climates globally for lichens. As a result, lichens were important traditionally as a dye source. Records from the 16th century onwards describe the use of rock lichens: *Parmelia omphalodes*, dark crotal (*crotal dubh*), and (*Parmelia saxatilis*), or light crotal, make a range of brown dyes. *Crotal Coille*, or wood crotal (*Lobaria pulmonaria*) grew on trees and made a red-brown color.

Lichens used to make yellow, tan, or brown colours were generally referred to by Gaels as *crotal*, although technically, it is the correct term for only two specific lichens. These dyes could be easily extracted by boiling the lichens in a pot of water. No mordant to fix the dye was necessary.

Another group of lichens was used to make reddish and purple dyes. These were not as long-lasting as some other red dyes, but did give a brilliant range of colours. These lichens were known as *corcur*, and the dyes were extracted through a more complicated process. The lichen (commonly, *Ochrolechia tartarea*) was dried, then crumbled up into stale urine (*fual*) and soaked for a period of time: "In Scotland not many years ago, particularly in certain districts, almost every farm and cotter house had its tank or barrel of 'graith' or putrid urine, and its 'lit-pig' wherein the Mistress of the house macerated some familiar crottle." (Lindsay, 1856)

These colours became so popular that by the 1750's the commercial manufacturing of *O. tartarea*, or "cudbear" as it came to be known, was begun. The cudbear industry had a far reaching effect on the Highlands, as a new source of income was created in the gathering of the lichens. The lichens were scraped off rocks with metal hoops, spoons, or even seashells. This lasted until the supply of lichens was exhausted, about 50 years later.

It had always been assumed that because of the remoteness of the Highland and Islands, the Gaels relied primarily on locally available dyes to create the colours used in their fabrics. Recent studies by the National Museum of Scotland, however, show that the strong demand for vibrant, stable colours resulted in a steady trade of imported dyestuffs from other areas of the world. Sea trade to the Western Islands was remarkably good, with reliable access to Glasgow. There were also traveling merchants or "chapmen" and a network of fairs and markets, the most important of these being in Inverness until the end of the Jacobite Wars (1746): "The people of all the extensive countries and Isles now mentioned resorted to Inverness, as the only or most convenient market... In exchange for skins, they were supplied... with dyestuffs, salt, coarse linen and iron." (Rose, et al 1793)

Analysis of surviving textiles shows that the imported dyestuffs madder and



Vicki Quimby

Wally Hays, Nova Scotia Tourism, Culture & Heritage

woad were being used in the late 15th century for reds and blues. Woad was the main source of blue for the Gaels from pre-Roman times until the advent of indigo into the Highlands in the 17th century. It was initially grown in Britain. (The Romans reported it being used as body paint by the Highlanders.) By the late 15th century, however, it was being imported from Holland. The dye process for woad was much like the *corcur* dyeing, making use of stale urine to add alkalinity.

Madder, which gives a red colour, has been an important dye since the time of the Vikings. Eleventh century trade records show that it was being imported into areas of Scotland, although it was also grown in areas of Britain in the 10th and 11th centuries. In the mid-1700's a movement to re-introduce madder growing to the Highlands met with little success and madder continued to be imported, largely from Holland.

The blue dye, indigo, became commonplace in the 17th century when it began to supplant woad dyeing in the Highlands. Grown in sub-tropical climates, particularly India, it is a much stronger dye— twice as strong as woad— and will also become an important dyestuff in the New World for the Gaels. The dye process for indigo is similar to that of woad.

About this same time (17th century), cochineal, a scale insect from Mexico (by way of Spain), began replacing madder. One of the more commercially important discoveries of the New World, it gave a brighter and colour-fast red. The majority of the pinks and reds of the 18th century plaids and tartans— high quality weaving— have been shown to be dyed with cochineal in spite of the availability

of madder and the cheaper imported reds of the period, such as Brazilwood and redwood (camwood). By the 19th century, the use of cochineal had certainly spread as far west as the Outer Hebrides. In spite of the high price, the desire for a high quality, bright colour was evident.

Although native heather tops were commonly used to make a long-lasting yellow dye, imported yellow dyestuffs such as weld from Europe and old fustic (a type of mulberry wood) from Europe, then North America, were also found to have been used in the old plaids. These were sometimes combined with indigo blue to make green hues.

Native or not, with the exception of indigo, woad, and the lichen dyes, most natural dyes must be used with mordants or metal salts. These bind the dyes to the fibres to provide long-lasting colour and can also be used to alter dye colours. Early on, dyers in the Highlands would rely largely on iron salts for their mordants. These often resulted in dull colours, so alum, a form of aluminum, and blue stone (copper sulphate), if available, would be used to produce brighter hues. Although alum was traditionally imported from Holland, other mordants available to the Gaels were native: bog iron, soot, plant leaves containing oxalic acid (sorrel), plant roots containing tannins (dock), and even club mosses, which contained a small amount of aluminum.

When the Gaels began emigrating to the new lands of Cape Breton, they took with them their traditional knowledge of dyeing. Upon arrival they were faced with a new climate, dense forests and a bewildering array of new plants. In the very early years after arrival it is hard to imagine that there would be much attention paid to dyeing. Sheep were scarce and required cleared pasture. A shortage of wool fibres led to a concentration on raising flax and processing linen. These fibres were spun into threads that were then woven on the looms that were built in the new homes. In the Highlands, only occasionally were linens dyed—normally only small bands and ribbons. Wool accepted a dye much more readily and faded less.

With the proliferation of sheep, however, wool clothing was now being produced again. The desire for colour in the threads meant that both old and new ways of dyeing were explored. Some plants native to the Highlands also grew in some form in Cape Breton. Dock and nettles, sweet gale, ragwort and bracken— even dulce and other seaweeds—could all be gathered and used in the traditional manner. Other dyestuffs were similar: where peat soot had been used

for browns, now wood ashes were experimented with, resulting in greys and blacks.

In contrast to some of the Western Islands, Cape Breton sported an abundance of trees. Sometimes the trees and bushes were similar to those seen in some areas of the Highlands. Willows were found here as well as in many areas of the Highlands. The leaves gave yellow colours; blacks and browns came from the bark and twigs. Alder bark and roots were tried and found to give browns, blacks and greys. Native birches, different from the species of the Highlands, still gave similar results: the leaves gave yellow and the inner bark gave brownish orange. New varieties of trees provided new sources for colours: spruce, hemlock and firs gave yellow from the tips of new growth and browns from the twigs and bark. Not only wool was dyed. Fishing nets were darkened to a brown colour in a spruce or alder dye bath in order to make them less visible to the fish.

The Gaels learned much of the uses of plants from the native Mi'kmaq inhabitants. Not only were they a source of knowledge about foods and medicines, but the Mi'kmaq made dyes as well. Blueberries were used for dyeing skins and quills. Juniper berries gave a brown color, as did Labrador tea leaves. Dyes made from birch or alders boiled in a pot of water gave caribou hides a reddish-brown colour.

New plants became important dyestuffs. Pearly everlasting, for example, a plant native to Cape Breton (called *lus ban* by the Gaels) became a source of clear yellow dye. Some dyestuffs were familiar, but had been used for other purposes in the Highlands. A variety of goldenrod, recorded in the 17th century in Skye, was used medicinally there, but in Cape Breton, similar species became an important yellow dyestuff. And onions, although recorded as a food in some areas of the Old Country, now found a new use when the dried outer skins were boiled up to make a fast, orange-yellow dye.

Some lichens in the new land were similar to those in Highlands. Many were new and needed to be experimented with. One of the familiar 'crotals' was especially important: *crotal coillie* (*Lobaria pulmonaria*), or lung lichen. It grew in abundance on hardwood trees in Cape Breton— maple, oak or beech— and was easy to collect. This lichen became the one primarily referred to as *crotal* amongst the Gaels and provided them with a popular rust-brown colour. "Old Man's Beard" (*Usnea dayspoga*) was also frequently used. It grew on conifers, hanging down like grey-green hairs, and gave a tan or rust colour. Also available

were *xanthoparmelia*, found on stone walls and tombstones, and *xanthoria*, common orange lichens. All of these lichens were processed in a boiling water bath and gave a range of yellows, golds, rusts and browns.

Rarely, a purple shade was extracted from an *Umbilicaria* lichen. These were not common in the Highlands, but could be occasionally found in the Maritimes. As was characteristic of the other red-producing lichens, the colour was extracted after weeks of soaking in stale urine.

Although mordants were not generally used with the lichens, they were needed with most of the other dye baths. Some common mordants were rusty nails, salt, vinegar, and ammonia. Purchases from the general store included copperas (ferrous sulphate, or iron) and alum (potassium aluminum sulphate). An early record from St. Ann's Bay lists copperas as a common purchase for dyeing.

Trees in the new land provided a plentiful supply of barks— hemlock, spruce, fir, alder, birch or willows— to get tannins. These were used both as mordants and as brown dyes. Oak galls and sumach were other local sources of tannin.

Just as they had been in the Highlands, imported dyes became important to Nova Scotia Gaels to increase their range of good, non-fading colours. General stores were more and more common as the years passed. Sailing ships followed trading routes between Nova Scotia and the West Indies. Carrying lumber, salt cod and potatoes, they returned with molasses, rum, sugar and dyestuffs such as madder, indigo, fustic and logwood. Now dyers could obtain high quality dyestuffs if they desired.

The blue seen most often in Cape Breton was obtained from indigo. Although it was one of the cheapest dyes that could be purchased, the colour was strong and was particularly long-lasting. It was available even in the very early years here, and became possibly the most important colour for the Gaels. Because the indigo itself is not soluble in water, *fual* provided the alkali solution needed. Needless to say, the vat of dye was always processed out-of-doors. As Eveline MacLeod, in her book, *Colours from Field and Forest*, describes:

Many recipes have been used for indigo vats. The old pioneer recipe used urine as a reducing agent. Urine was saved during the winter months in a barrel by the barn. In June the process of dyeing the homespun yarn began. One woman in the household took on the chore of dyeing yarn and her hands would

...continued on page 26

'S MATH A DHANNSADH & THE BRAES OF MAR

Pauline MacLean



A *strathespey, The Braes of Mar, according to A Descriptive Index of North American and British Isles Music for the Folk Violin by Andrew Kuntz, is attributed to John Coutts of Deeside. It was used for dancing the Highland Fling and Schottische.*

J. Scott Skinner felt it was almost a parody of "Lord MacDonald's Strathpey". It appears under the title "Sir Alexander McDonald's Reel" in a collection by Dav. Young, as "Sir Alexander McDonald" in Robert Bremner's 1757 collection and as the "The Braes of Mar" in *A Collection of Reels consisting of Strathspeys, Athole Reels* by Alexander McGlashen (see score below). According to Kuntz, "in Cape Breton, "The Braes of Mar" is considered as an old tune and it is said that the third turn may be of Cape Breton origin". He also notes that Cape Breton fiddler Jackie Dunn, in her Master's thesis of 1991, states that the tune has Gaelic words and is called " 'S Math a Dhannsadh".

Willie Fraser of Deepdale, Inverness County is a near legend in Cape Breton square dance circles for his exceptional steps, performed in the old style close to the floor. As well, Willie is an accomplished raconteur and Gaelic singer. During the Highland Village Nòs is Fonn recording session in Glenville, Inverness County during the summer of 2007, he

contributed the following *port á beul* and brief anecdote. For more of Willie Fraser and other Cape Breton Gaelic speakers, visit www.cainntmomhathar.com.

Bha coirneil mór thall an Scotland bho chionn bhliadhnaichean. Duine mór breagh' a bh'ann: Frisealach a bh'ann. Agus bhiodh e 'coiseachd sìos 's suas an t-sràid, agus bha na h-igheannan as a dheoghaidh uile gu léir. Bhiodh 'ad mun cuairt air 's 'ad a' feuchainn ri greim fhaighinn air 's a h-uile sìan. 'S rinn e port.

There was great colonel over in Scotland years ago. He was a big handsome fellow, a Fraser. He'd be walking up and down the street and all the girls would be chasing him. They'd be all around him trying to get a hold of him and all that - and he made a tune.

'S math a dhannsadh Uisdean Friseal
Uisdean Friseal, Uisdean Friseal
'S math a dhannsadh Uisdean Friseal
Leis an fhichead maighdean

Hugh Fraser was good to dance
Hugh Fraser, Hugh Fraser
Hugh Fraser was good to dance
With twenty maidens

*Cóignear roimhidh 's as a dheoghaidh
Cóignear roimhidh 's as a dheoghaidh
Cóignear roimhidh 's as a dheoghaidh
Cóignear air gach taobh dheth*

Five in front of him and behind him
Five in front of him and behind him
Five in front of him and behind him
Five on each side of him

*Sin agad am port a rinn e thall ann a
Scotland. There you have the tune they
made over in Scotland*

Air aithris le Uilleam Frisealach (Uilleam mac Shaoimein) ∞

By Pauline MacLean. *Port á beul* transcribed and translated by Seumas Watson.



TAPADH LEIBH-SE GU MÓR

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DI-LUAIN, DI-MAIRT

From Malcolm MacKinnon

The following story is an international folktale of which many Gaelic versions have been recorded in Scotland and Ireland. This Cape Breton setting was recited by the late Malcom MacKinnon (*Calum Jonaidh Iain mac Iain Aonghais Ruaidh Ghilleasbaig mac Fhionnlaidh*) of Ashfield, Inverness County. The first MacKinnon on Malcom's paternal side to settle in Cape Breton emigrated from the Isle of Muck in 1854.

Di-luain, Di-mairt

Dà bhodach a bha croit uamhasach orra, 's bha 'ad gu math... companaich mhór a bh'ann da ri chèile. 'S chaidh fear dhiubh amach dha 'n choillidh, amach air a' rathad suas a choimhead air gnothaichean air choireigin a bh'aige ri fhaicinn. 'S bha creag mhór air a' rathad 'dol amach dha 'n choillidh, 's chual' e 'n ceòl 's an dannsa ann a sin. Agus stad e 's thànaig gioban beag amach 's dé bh'ann a sin ach sìthich. 'S dh'fhoighneachd e dheth dé am port a bha sìod aca.

"Uell, Di-luain, Di-màirt, Di-luain, Di-màirt."

Agus thuirt esan, "Di-ciadain."

Uell, chaidh 'ad astaigh 's thòisich 'ad arithist air a' cheòl Di-luain, Di-màirt, Di-ciadain. 'S bha 'ad ri dannsaichean uamhasach math. 'S dh'èibh 'ad amach dé bha dhìth air airson seo.

"Uell, nan doireadh tu a' chroit seo dhìom, bhithinn glé thaingeil. Cha n-eil an còrr dheth a dhìth orm."

Alright. Nach ann am prioba na sùl' a bha a' chroit far a' bhodaich? Chaidh e dhachaidh. 'S là na dhà as a dhéidh sin choinnich e air a chompanach agus bha e 'cromadh sìos 's nuair a choimhead e suas air thuirt e, "Cé an dòigh a leighis tu do dhruim?"

Dh'inns' e a dha mun a' rathad seo far a' robh creag 's far a' robh na sìthichean a' dannsa agus gu dé am port a bh'aca: Di-luain, Di-màirt. 'S nuair a thuirt esan, "Di-luain, Di-màirt, Di-ciadain," bha an dannsa gu math na b'fheàrr.

Amach thug am bodach eile. Thànaig e 's bha 'n ceòl a' dol air adhart. Sìod am port a bh'ann: 'Di-luain, Di-màirt, Di-ciadain'. 'S thuirt esan, "Di-ardaoin!"

Thànaig fear dhiubh a choimhead gu dé bha seo. (Uell shìod an ath-là as déidh Di-ciadain - Di-ardaoin). Bha 'ad a' feuchainn ri dannsa, 's nuair a ruig 'ad Di-ardaoin bha 'ad a' dol am mìosg a chèile 's a' tuiteam 's... Uell, thànaig trioblaid mhór 'nam mìosg 's amach a thà-



Illustration by Peter Rankin.

naig 'ad. Cha robh 'ad glé thoilichte.

Dh'fhoighneachd 'ad dheth gu dé bha e 'g iarraidh. Uell, bu toil leis 'ad an cnap a thoirt far a dhruim thuirt e. Thionndaich e (an sìtheach) mun cuairt, "Dh'fhaoite gum b'fheàrr leat té eile."

'S thug e air croit a' bhodaich eile, 's chuir 'ad air-san an dà chroit.

Translation Monday, Tuesday

There were two old fellows who had terrific humps, and they were very... they were great companions. One of them went out to the woods, going up the road to see something or other that he had to see. There was a great rock on the road going to the forest. He heard dancing and music going on inside it and he stopped. A little bit of an old fellow came out and who should he be but a fairy. The man asked him what their tune was.

"Well, Monday, Tuesday, Monday, Tuesday."

So the man said, "Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. Try and dance to that."

Well, the fairies returned inside (the rock) and they began dancing again to the tune of Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and they were dancing very well. So they called out as to what reward he wished for this.

"Well, if you would remove this hump from my back, I would be most grateful. There's nothing else I want."

Alright. Wasn't it removed from the

old man's back in the blink of an eye? He went home, and a day or two later he happened on his companion who was going along bent down. When he looked up he said, "How did you mend your back?"

The other fellow told him about the road where the rock was and the fairies who were dancing and about their tune: "Monday, Tuesday." And that when he said "Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday," the dance was much improved.

The other old fellow set off right away. He arrived and the music was in full swing. This was their tune: "Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday."

He shouted out, "Thursday!"

One of the fairies came out to see who was there. (Well, that's the next day after Wednesday - Thursday). They were trying to dance and when they reached 'Thursday' they got tangled up in each other and were falling down and... Well great difficulty arose among them and out (of the rock) they came. They were quite unhappy.

They asked the old fellow what reward he wanted. Well, he said he wanted the hump taken from his back.

The fairy turned around (saying), "Perhaps you'd like another hump."

And he put the other old fellow's hump on him. They put two humps on him. ☹

Recorded, transcribed and translated by Seumas Watson.

Captain Alex MacLean: Jack London's Sea Wolf

A review of Don MacGillivray's book by Stan McLean

This work was officially launched in East Bay in June 2008. Divided into fourteen chapters, it is very well researched, with sixty-five pages of notes and a further fourteen pages of bibliography.

Alex MacLean is a very interesting, informative and enjoyable read. Those that have an interest in Maritime history, blue water sailing, sealing and international relations on the high seas will enjoy this book. Equally enjoyable is the expression of the historical life and times of the Scottish Highlanders in Cape Breton. MacGillivray combines his research with wonderful salty stories of very unique sea-going Cape Bretoners. He takes the reader to wonderful seaports on the east and west coasts of Canada and the United States. Throughout this work, from chapter to chapter, MacGillivray shares with us the strong unbending character of MacLean, a master sailor and a true legend of Cape Breton Island.

It was Jack London, the author of *The Sea-Wolf*, who used Alex MacLean's life and adventures to develop his main character, Wolf Larsen. MacGillivray respects the work of this famous novelist, but he sets the record straight on Alex MacLean, a native of East Bay.

London the novelist can take many liberties in the development of his main character, Larsen. This was also the case in a number of Hollywood productions of *The Sea-Wolf*.

MacGillivray on the other hand is an academic. His work is bound by primary and secondary sources and detailed research. The result of his work is a true and accurate portrayal of this legend and a true Highland Gael. MacLean was no pirate, no murderer, and no smuggler. He was one tough, rugged, knowledgeable skipper.

Throughout the book one is

impressed with MacLean's acumen, commencing with learning his skills in the famous Bras d'Or Lakes. He had an eye for fiscal gain. Pelagic sealing for years was very lucrative and MacLean had his share of good, profitable trips.

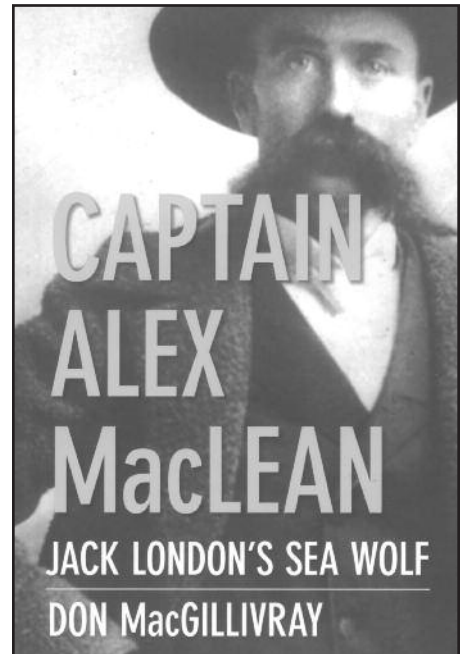
MacGillivray follows MacLean through a number of ports – Halifax, Gloucester, Boston, San Francisco, Victoria, Vancouver, Hakodate (Japan) and many others. In all these ports MacLean is remembered and respected.

While reading this book I was impressed with the courage, knowledge and seamanship of MacLean. At twenty-one, in 1879, he sailed from New England to San Francisco (no Panama Canal, he did the Cape). That's impressive sailing. No GPS, auto pilot or other sailing aids, just good skills and good judgment. This was no rogue. This MacLean was one smart Scot.

MacLean became an American citizen in Boston in 1882. MacGillivray follows MacLean to the west coast of the US and Canada, like many forward-thinking and ambitious young Americans. MacLean's sealing was different from sealing on the east coast of Canada. On the west coast sealing was done in open water (pelagic) and seals were taken in rookeries. On the east coast we hunt seals on the ice. Interesting enough, even back then in the late 1800s and early 1900s sealing had its share of protestors.

As well as mastering the high seas, MacLean also mastered high drama in the international courts. MacGillivray has a chapter dedicated to the *Carmencita* affair. This episode attracted international prominence and is well detailed and documented by the author.

MacLean found himself in Japan, arrested by the Russians, taken by gunpoint, had the *Lewis* captured and even found himself in the Klondike gold rush in 1899.



MacGillivray takes the reader through the high seas, international ports and courts. MacLean was tough, a good bar room fighter, an excellent sea captain and had a supportive family, wife, daughter, brothers and sisters.

Through MacGillivray's work we experience the true character of not only Alex MacLean but of the Highland Gaels who settled in and migrated from Cape Breton. ☺

Captain Alex MacLean: Jack London's Sea Wolf is written by Don MacGillivray, published by UBC Press, Vancouver, BC, 2008.

Stan McLean is a retired director of Family Services agencies in Nova Scotia and Western Canada. Stan and his wife Marjorie live on the Bras d'Or Lakes in Big Pond, just a few nautical miles west of the homestead of Alex MacLean in East Bay.

An Taigh Dubh - The Black House, continued from page 10...

teenth-century homes included a lounge (*beinge*), a table (*bòrd*), stools, (*fuirmean*) and chests for clothing (*ciste-chlà*) and for meal (*ciste-mhìne*) and a dresser (*preasa*). Nineteenth-century beds, in the houses of the more fortunate, were usually of the curtain enclosed box-bed type. Their paddings were routinely of heather and sometimes mattresses were filled with chaff or dried sea-grass. In the Hebrides the wooden roofs of such box-beds were often covered

with clods of turf to protect against a leaking roof on the house.

Cupboards came into general use in the blackhouses of the nineteenth century. On the west coast and in the Hebrides, where wood resources were scant, they were often built of wickerwork on wooden frames. Tables, usual features in most blackhouses, were not always present and in poorer houses the occupants took their food seated about the central fire. Among the black-

house's commonplace furnishings the cradle was a prominent article. Sometimes elaborate and more often not, the cradle typically bore four knobs, two to a side, for securing the baby with cords. ☺

Written by Seumas Watson. *Fo na Cabair/UNDER THE RAFTERS* is a regular feature of An Rubha that looks at the buildings of the Highland Village.

Na Beanntaichean Gorma/The Blue Mountains

A review by of John Shaw's book by Seumas Watson

For the person with enough language ability to at least participate as a listener, Gaelic storytelling in Cape Breton has been a phenomenal experience in a contemporary world where hearing a tale told stove side is an unlikely scenario. I count myself as one of the lucky few who have been privy to a tradition of oral literature otherwise foreign to everyday life in English speaking North America.

John Shaw introduces that experience to readers through the pages of *Na Beanntaichean Gorma agus Sgeulachdan Eile à Ceap Breatainn/The Blue Mountains and Other Stories from Cape Breton*: a compilation of thirty stories recorded between 1964 and 1989 from the recitation of Gaelic informants drawing on their native Cape Breton tradition. Their stories appear in the table of contents divided by genres, chronologically titled as International Tales, Stories About Robbers and Thieves, Tall Tales, Tales of the Fiann, Historical Legends and Clan Traditions.

Seventeen narrators speak through the pages of *The Blue Mountains*. Together they constitute a Gaelic map of the Island covering Cape Breton, Victoria and Inverness Counties. The style of presentation for stories selected has the added value of being reported in an orthographical approach that brings to readers a sense of style in every day speech. As well, words and phrasing provide the extra benefit of spoken registers that will delight the fluent reader and introduce Gaelic learners to the foundations of fluency.

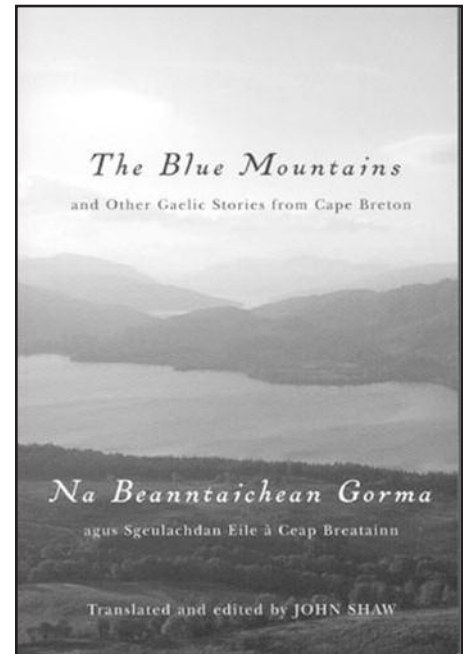
More than just a rich sampler of now rare oral literature, *The Blue Mountains* offers Nova Scotia's active Gaelic community a model for tale artistry that distinguishes the mental life of the province's Gaels to the present. The editor, while noting Scottish lineages for many of the story choices put forward, identifies the storytellers as Nova Scotians native to communities far removed physically and politically from their European cousins across the Atlantic. Embracing cultural standards appreciated by live audiences, the reciters' fidelity to a communal story-

telling tradition provides, in instances, glimpses of literary transmission reaching back to the Middle Ages. Whether belonging to Rear Christmas Island or North River Bridge, their renditions are characterized by a delivery that meets listeners aesthetics as honed over generations. Contrasted to scripted performances on a prearranged stage, the ambiance for Gaelic storytelling is naturally at ease and can engage an audience of any size.

Gaelic stories are told plainly in Cape Breton. They are a multi-layered medium containing the subliminal messages that informed a cultural-linguistic group's value system and world perspective. Having acquired their skills outside the usual reign of institutions, *The Blue Mountain's* storytellers are testimony to a society drawing on the well springs of its own creativity and conceptual adaptation. In his introduction Shaw comments on the educative and re-enforcing aspects of Gaelic storytelling, "Storytelling, in its varied settings, has also functioned in a more practical way, serving as an effective means of affirming and maintaining distinctive cultural values, promoting social cohesion, situating the community and each individual within a larger Gaelic interior oral historical record, and maintaining the Gaelic intellectual life ..."

Here the physical context of Gaelic storytelling may be beyond the ken of many readers. For those who have heard the spontaneous telling of a Gaelic story, the immediate environment can take many forms. Without prejudice, surroundings might vary from kitchen and parlor settings to the roof of a house being shingled, or leaning against a pickup truck on the occasion of a passing neighbour's casual visit.

The Blue Mountains provides a fine repertory of story types, but even at that they are no more than a *blasad* (taste) drawn from a deep reservoir. In recognizing that many other kinds of stories reside in the same fountainhead - ghost stories, humorous anecdotes, religious lore and the like - the editor points out



that his selections cover primarily the major tale classifications familiar to scholars. In his introduction he remarks that, "From the materials on tape yet to be transcribed, there are enough additional stories to produce works comparable to this one several times over."

To that end it would be hoped that *Blue Mountains* is a beginning to future efforts of the same good effect.

Funding to assist in preparation for *The Blue Mountains'* manuscript was provided by Nova Scotia Museum. Suitable for students and the general body of interest, its stories are transcribed in Gaelic and translated in English. Contents include biographical sketches of the storytellers, notes and a select bibliography. ☺

Na Beanntaichean Gorma agus Sgeulachdan Eile à Ceap Breatainn/The Blue Mountains and Other Gaelic Stories from Cape Breton is collected, translated and edited by John Shaw, published by McGill-Queens University Press, Montreal, QC, 2007

Seumas Watson is Manager of Interpretation at the Highland Village



MAC-TALLA: the longest running Gaelic weekly now on-line

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has digitised Mac-Talla ("Echo"), Nova Scotia's weekly Gaelic newspaper/magazine published - later bi-weekly - between May 28, 1892, and June 24, 1904, around 540 issues in all. Its store of news, local, national and international, letters to the Editor, Gaelic proverbs, poetry/song, stories, translations and articles are a repository of Gaelic cultural ideas. Mac-Talla can be found at:

<http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/en/leabharlann/mactalla/>

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The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society gratefully acknowledges the support of many individuals and organisations for their unwavering support:

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CONGRATULATIONS & BEST WISHES

Congratulations to volunteers & musicians

Dèante de làimh

continued from page 21...

be bright blue all summer.... A cake of indigo was put into the urine and stirred gently. After a few days the vat turned a greenish-yellow.... The yarn was wetted and then immersed in the urine and left for some time. It was lifted out on a stick and held in the air where it turned a lovely blue color.

Oral tradition says that many of the old wool coverlets woven on Cape Breton looms in the late 19th and early 20th century were dyed red with madder. Sometimes colourful combinations of indigo blue and madder red were used. Other reds were obtained by the imported brazilwood and camwood, sometimes called redwood, but these colours were not as fast as those of madder. Cochineal was also available, but at a high cost and does not seem to have been used as much as madder.

Another important imported dyestuff seen in late 19th century store accounts, was logwood, the heartwood from a Central American tree. This, in combination with the mordant copperas gave a deep black— always an important 19th century colour. These same stores also carried the mordant alum, traditionally used when a bright colour was desired.

Often imported dyes were combined with native dyes. Indigo-dyed yarns could be dipped into a goldenrod dye-

Paul MacNeil & Tracey Dares on the birth of their daughter Floragael; to Gaelic singer and volunteer Mickey "John H." MacNeil on his 80th birthday; to volunteer Anita MacDonald on receiving the Wendy's Classic Achievers Scholarship; to Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 in Iona and CBC Cape Breton on their 60th anniversaries.

Best wishes to Victoria County District 1 Councillor and volunteer Paul MacNeil who is recovering from a heart attack.

SYMPATHIES

To Society Vice-President Catherine Ann Fuller and her husband Mac on the passing of Mac Fuller Sr.; to animator Beth MacNeil on the passing of her brother Howard MacPhee; to the family of the late Gaelic singer Margaret MacLean of Boisdale on her passing (*see the next issue of An Rubha for more on Margaret*); and to the family of volunteer Catherine "Honey FX" MacNeil of Iona on her passing (*see dedication on page 4*). Our hearts go out to all their families for their loss. ☹

bath to make a vivid green. Sorrel was combined with logwood to give a deeper black.

With the 1856 discovery of the first aniline dye (derived from coal-tar), an irreversible move towards synthetic colours began. By the 1870's many of the new chemical dyes were being widely distributed. Now colours could come out of a 'Diamond Dye' packet with little effort and no need of mordants.

But even with these new choices, the lovely hues of natural dyes continued to be used from the late 19th century until well into the 20th century. A dress in the Highland Village Museum, woven in 1878, was dyed with goldenrod, indigo and redwood. Many older Cape Bretoners remember *crotal* being collected from hardwood trees on the mountainsides to make a rust-brown colour used in dyeing socks and mitts that they remember wearing.

And there are several accounts in local history of memories of indigo dye pots in the summer. All this is a testament to the appeal of the dyes of nature as they were used by the Gaels of Nova Scotia. ☹

By Vicki Quimby, Highland Village textile consultant and animator. Déante le làimh (handmade) is a regular feature of An Rubha that explores various aspects of textiles and craft production in Gaelic Nova Scotia.



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Join the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society!



The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society is incorporated as a non-profit Society under the Societies Act of the Province of Nova Scotia, and a registered charity with the Canada Revenue Agency. The Society is made up of a membership which elects the Board of Trustees (from their ranks) to operate the Society on their behalf.

General Memberships

Individual: \$15.00* per year.

Family: \$25.00* per year (one household).

* *Income tax receipts are issued for general memberships.*

Membership Plus

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Members can attend meetings, elect the Board, sit on committees, receive and approve annual reports including audited financial statements, receive *An Rubha* (semi-annual newsletter), receive notices for events, and feel a sense of pride in contributing to Nova Scotia's Gaelic Culture. Membership is open to anyone.

In addition to general membership privileges, Membership Plus members get:

- free admission to the Museum (excludes special events & programs)
- 10% discount in the Highland Village Gift Shop

***Membership Plus fees are not tax deductible and include 13% HST.*

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Eachdradh, Cànan, Nòs is Dualchas – History, Language, Tradition and Heritage

Highland Village On-line Gaelic Resources



HV Home Page

Event calendar, news, cultural content, genealogy resources, back issue of An Rubha, links to other Nova Scotia Museum sites and resources, and much more...
www.visithighlandvillage.ca



Céilidh air Cheap Breatunn

A multimedia exhibit on the our Gaelic culture
 Part of Virtual Museum of Canada.
www.capebretonceilidh.ca



Anull Thar nan Eilean – From Island to Island

From the Island of Barra to the Island of Cape Breton, we tell the story of the Barra immigrants leaving Scotland and their life in Cape Breton. Part of the Virtual Museum of Canada's Community Memories Program. www.virtualmuseum.ca



Cainnt mo Mhathar - My Mother's Tongue

Unique audio and video recordings of Nova Scotian tradition bearers for Gaelic learners. Features clips from Highland Village's *Nos is Fonn* and *Mar bu Nos* Collections.
 A project of *Comhairle na Gàidhlig*
www.cainntmomhathar.com



AN RUBHA

The Highland Village Gaelic Folklife Magazine



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