

AN RUBHA

The Highland Village Gaelic Folklife Magazine



Léine An Duine Gun Chùram
The Man without Worry's Shirt

Naidheachd a' Chlachain
The Village News

A' Luadh a' Chlò
Milling the Cloth

Corp Crèadha
The Clay Corpse



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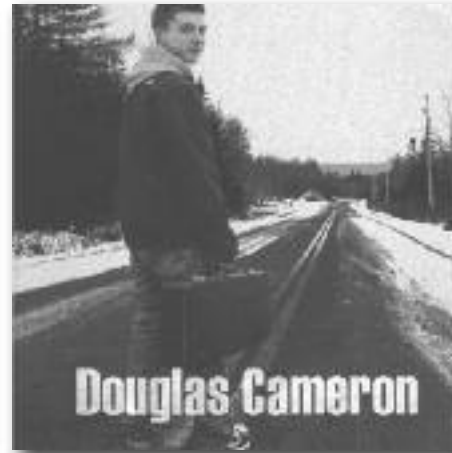
Vol. 12 No. 1

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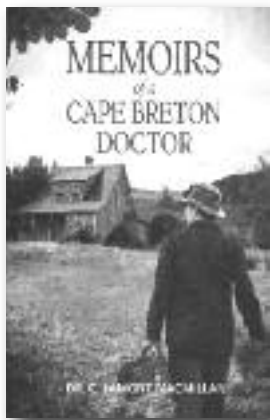
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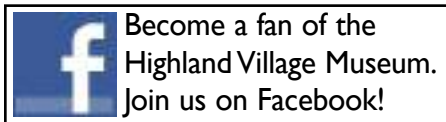
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Front cover photo: Milling frolic outside the MacDonald House (l-r) Maria MacMillan, Catherine Gillis & Paul Geddes. For more on milling see Vicki Quimby's article on page 24.

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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Inside This Issue

<i>From the Director's Desk</i> Celebrating the Past 50 Years & Planning for the Next 50 - Rodney Chaisson	4
<i>Mar Is Léir Dhomh Fhìn / My Own Viewpoint</i> Seeking Innovation in Interpretation and Exhibit Design - Katherine MacLeod	5
<i>Sgeulachdan/The Story Telling Tradition</i> Léine an Duine Gun Chùram/The Man Without Worry's Shirt - Seumas Watson	6
<i>Fo na Cabair / Under the Rafters</i> An Taigh Dubh/The Blackhouse - Pauline MacLean & Katherine MacLeod	8
<i>Naidheachd a' Chlachain / The Village News</i> The Interpretive Season of 2010 at Big Hector's Point - Caraman NicArtair	10
<i>Uisge an Airgid/The Silver Water Cure</i> Archie Dan MacLellan at Work in the Woods and Mines of Cape Breton - Seósamh Watson	12
<i>Naidheachd Bheag Éibhinn</i> A Funny Little Story - Seumas Watson	13
<i>Excerpt from "Mac-Talla"</i> Corp Crèadha/The Clay Corpse - Seumas Watson	14
<i>An Rubha Photo Album</i> Scenes from the 2010 Season	16
<i>Ag Éirigh Air Òrain/An Rubha Song Selection</i> Tha Mo Rùn air a' Ghille - Seumas Watson	18
<i>MacPherson House: A Newly Discovered Log House</i> Jim St.Clair	19
<i>Seinn fo Sgàil nan Geugan Uaine/Song from the Greenwood</i> Luadh Chaluum - Seumas Watson	20
<i>From Sgurra Breac (Big Pond Community Newsletter)</i> Gaelic Singers I Knew and Remember Well - Kenneth Morrison & Jack MacNeil	21
<i>Duilleagan Sònraichte</i> Featured Books from the Father Brewer Celtic Collection, St. FX - Susan Cameron	22
<i>Dèante le làimh / Handmade</i> Milling the Cloth - Vicki Quimby	24
<i>Obair a' Bhaile - Featured Artifact</i> A' Chas-chrom/The Foot Plow	26
<i>An Gàidheal Portmhor/The Musical Gael</i> Buan na Rainich/Cutting Ferns	27
<i>An Rubha Reviews</i> Michael Anthony MacLean's "Good Boy M.A.!" - Caraman NicArtair Margaret Bennett's "Dileab Ailein" - Seumas Watson	28
<i>Our People - Acknowledgements & Accolades</i>	30

From the Director's Desk

CELEBRATING THE PAST 50 YEARS & PLANNING FOR THE NEXT 50

Rodney Chaisson, Director



Throughout the past year, the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society marked a significant milestone - its 50th anniversary as an organisation that promotes and celebrates Nova Scotia's Gaelic language, culture and folk-life traditions.

Our anniversary celebrations launched in November 2009 with a live broadcast on CBC Cape Breton Radio's *Mainstreet* hosted by Wendy Bergfeldt. The anniversary programme, which carried on through to the end of the 2010 visitor season included a dinner and dance, a "real" milling frolic on Pioneer Day, a concert series in the Malagawatch Church, a special lecture on St. Columba, launch of the Highland Village's new Gaelic Policy, and a quilt contest.

Throughout the year, through these events as well as coverage in the Cape Breton Post and on CBC Radio, we reflected on the history of the organisation, those tireless volunteers who worked hard to create what is here today, and the role the Village has played in the life and culture of Nova Scotia. Our achievements over the past five decades stand as a testimony to volunteers and staff that have come together with a common vision. *A complete history of the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society is on our website.*

As we marked the 50th anniversary of the incorporation of the Society, we also marked a more recent, but no less significant milestone - the 10th anniversary of becoming part of the Nova Scotia Museum. That new relationship with the Province of Nova Scotia enabled the Highland Village to renew its commitment to its vision and to significantly grow its ability to providing a truly immersive Gaelic experience for visitors and outreach programming to the Gaelic community.

Commemorating these two landmark events for the Highland Village occurred as the Society's board of trustees adopted a new strategic plan which would guide the operation through the next five years, setting in place a foundation for the next fifty. The strategic plan was generated through "collective thinking, saying, doing and making" with many Highland Village stakeholders through the guidance of Marlene Ivey, coordinator of strategic initiatives. The plan addresses five key areas including programming & product development, strategic human resources, maintenance & infrastructure, marketing, and financial.

The implementation of this plan is well underway. A policy guiding the Society on

the use of Gaelic language and culture has been prepared and adopted. Interpretive development initiatives completed or underway include: a content and interpretive framework with themes and objectives for each era presented on site; a research program to support presentation and animation; a renewed walking tour guide and interpretive signage; visitor feedback and analysis; introduction of second person role playing; a program with hands-on experiential activities for visitors; pilot interpretive program with the Mi'kmaq community; and reconciled interpretive goals with the Nova Scotia Interpretive Master Plan. A plan for the development of the farm program including interpretive programming, farm area presentation and exhibition, and community outreach has been prepared.

Under maintenance and infrastructure a full 3-D computerised rendering of the Highland Village site has been completed. This rendering will help with the development of a site development plan for the Highland Village. That plan will take shape this coming winter.

One of our marketing objectives is to grow our on-line presence. Early in the new year, we will launch *An Drochaid Eadarainn* (The Bridge Between Us), which is a prototype for an interactive on-line social space for the Nova Scotia Gaelic community.

While most of our efforts in the plan to date have been focused on programing and product development, the plan will also address many other strategies to support the Highland Village in the future. These include: human resources skills development, future needs assessment and succession planning; professional development for staff; volunteer planning; enhanced membership/friends program; and a fundraising program.

Evidence based research has guided the development of the plan. The world around us, in particular the needs and demands of our visitor and constituent community, are changing rapidly. In order to effectively engage with our community and provide experiential opportunities for our visitors, we must conduct on-going research to stay on top of current trends, embrace emerging technologies, and seek best practices in innovative interpretive delivery.

The last fifty years have seen the Highland Village grow from a dream to a Provincial museum for Gaelic language and folk-life. Our goal for the next fifty is to build on that strong base and be an international leader in cultural interpretation. ☺



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

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The Society is a member of National Trust of Scotland, CLI Gàidhlig, Gaelic Society of Inverness (Scotland), Association of Nova Scotia Museums (ANSM), Canadian Museums Assoc. (CMA), Heritage Cape Breton Connection, 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), Celtic Heart of North America Marketing Cooperative, Tourism Industry Assoc of NS (TIANS), Baddeck & Area Business Tourism Assoc. (BABTA), Sydney & Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Strait Area Chamber of Commerce.

Mar is léir dhomh fhìn

SEEKING INNOVATION IN INTERPRETATION & EXHIBIT DESIGN

Column by Katherine MacLeod, Collections Assistant



Recently the Highland Village has begun the process of redeveloping and redesigning the way in which it interprets the agricultural life of the Nova Scotia Gaels. The revitalizing of the farm program began in early 2009. Over the last year a number of research projects have been completed, as well as several focus groups held with various community members.

One task was to explore some of the current benchmarks in exhibit design. The result was an in-depth paper entitled *Seeking Innovation in Interpretation/Exhibit Design: How to Provide Museum Visitors with Meaningful Experiences*. The research findings suggest that the use of both technology and sensorial events could help aid the Highland Village to create meaningful museum experiences for its visitors. The paper outlines some of the most innovative practices and theories used throughout the museum world when planning and designing interpretation/ exhibitions. Initially the research began by focusing mainly on living history and agricultural museums. However, it was quickly realized that the findings were not providing any innovative practices; rather they demonstrated how the Highland Village was and is currently exhibiting and interpreting the site. Therefore, it was essential not to limit the research to this specific area, but rather to encompass a broader view of different museums in order to find the most innovative benchmarks in interpretation/exhibit design. What follows is a small excerpt from the paper.

Today's visitors to museums no longer want to look in 'cabinets of curiosity', nor do they want to walk through rooms filled with artifacts and labels on the walls. Rather, museum goers seek what some call 'Edutainment'.¹ They need to feel that the time and the money they spend will provide an equal balance of both education and entertainment. The entertainment market is always finding new ways to bid for individuals and families attention, be it new amusement or theme parks.² This has created increasing demand on what people do with their leisure time. The question then arises, how do museums compete in this mar-

ket? Joseph Pine II, author of the *Experience Economy*, states that we now live in a world where we expect experiences. What can the Highland Village Museum do in order to fulfill the needs of visitors by providing them with the experiences they seek without compromising the Highland Village mission and vision? It must not only entertain and educate the visitor in a non-formal set-

"Many open air museums feel that families are their most important visitors. If they manage to develop more activities for children, and for children and adults together, they have all the potential for a new image and an increased public."

ting, but also provide a valuable experience which they feel is worth their hard earned dollars. As well, our interpretive framework aims for the visitor to develop a deeper understanding of the Nova Scotia Gaels through interpretation of their language and culture.



Destination Cape Breton

Many living history and outdoor life museums have begun to take their cues from science and children museums. They have created programs and interactives which allow for the visitors to step back in time by donning period costumes and taking part in hands-on activities where they are then transported

back in time to another era. "Many opened air museums feel that families are their most important visitors. If they manage to develop more activities for children and for children and adults together, they have all the potential for a new image and an increased public."³ Living history sites, like traditional museums, were told by the visitors that they now expected more from their visit. "Among the complaints that visitors have about historical museum is that they can look but not touch."⁴ Several sites have begun to change the way in which they present the intended content by creating more of an immersed environment.⁵ Living history museums have begun to remove ropes from doorways and have allowed for visitors to enter into the rooms rather than having them lean over barriers to see what was inside.

Visitors, both young and old, may enter a museum and become overwhelmed or find it hard to grasp certain concepts or stories which the exhibit is trying to convey.⁶ By creating spaces that allow the visitor to have sensorial experiences that encompass both the intellect, as well as the five senses (*sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing*), it allows for an individual or group to gain a better understanding of a certain topic. Also, the visitors may be more likely to remember the topics weeks after leaving the museum.

At the USS Constitution Museum curators found more families stopped at interactive stations than any other kind of exhibit. While conducting exit surveys, staff found that most families were able to describe concepts, which were interpreted through the use of interactives.⁷ An example of this working was seen firsthand at the museum. A panel with a quote, making reference to someone *holy-stoning* the ship's deck was placed in the exhibit. The museum soon realized that the visitors were not grasping the concept of the term. "...Few visitors read the quote and very few [understood] its implications."⁸ To try to solve this issue the museum, added a simple interactive

continued on page 13...



Illustration by Ellison Robertson.



Tha sgeul a' seo a chuala mi. Cha n-fhaca mi ann a' leabhar e, ach chuala mi e aig duine còir 'ga innse. 'S e Léine 'n Duine Gun Chùram an t-ainm a thug sinn air a' sgeul.

Bha duine uasal ann, duine beairteach, agus dh' fhàs e tinn. 'S bha 'ad a' faighinn a h-uile lighiche a thigeadh dha 'n àite 'ga rannsachadh m' a shlàinte, 's bha e 'dol ionnsaidh a h-uile lighich' a chluinneadh e mu dheoghainn, 's cha robh e ' faighinn leigheas. Ach co-dhiubh, thànaig a' seo lighich' òg dha 'n àite, agus chaidh e dh' ionnsaidh agus nuair a rannsaich a' fear sin e, thuirt e ris nach robh ann ach aon leigheas dha, nan gabhadh e faotainn. Agus nam faigheadh e sin, ma dh' fhaidhte gun leighiseadh e. Agus thuirt e gu feuchadh e air rud sam bith fhao-tainn a dheanadh feum.

"Uell," ors' esan, an lighiche, "'s e sin, thu a chosg léine An Duine gun Chùram."

Co-dhiubh dh' fhasdaidh e dithist 's chuir e air falbh 'ad a shiubhal feuch am faigheadh 'ad léine an Duine gun Chùram. Agus na rinn iad do shiubhal, cha robh cunntais air, ach cha robh duine 'tachairt riuth' a chanadh gu robh e gun chùram. Ach bha 'ad a' siubhal a' rathaid latha, agus bha 'ad gus a bhith air an càs a thoirt suas buileach nuair a chunnaig 'ad duine 'na shuidhe taobh bothan do

thaigh agus bha coltas gu math sun-dach air an duine. Chaidh 'ad suas a sheanachas ris agus nuair a chuir 'ad fàilt' air 's nuair a chuir e fàilt' orra, dh' fhoighneachd 'ad dheth a' robh cùram air 's rinn e gaire 's thuirt e nach robh cùram idir air. Dh' fhoighneachd e dhaibh carson a bhiodh cùram air. "Seall," ors' esan, "a' loch a tha nist mu choinneimh an taighe ann a' sin," làn do

"Well," said the healer, "the cure is to wear the shirt of the Man without Worry."

dh' iasg! Gheobh sibh iasg ann latha sam bith a bhios side mhath againn air son a dhol ann 'ga iasgach. Coimhead air a' réidhlean fearainn a th' agam ann a' seo," ors' esan! "Nuair a chuireas mi sìol," ors' esan, "fàsaidh e le mór-thoradh agus tha pailteas agam an còmhnaidh. 'S carson a bhios mi fo chùram?"

"Tha mi toilichte," orsa fear aca, "gun do thachair sinn riubh. Tha rud a dhìth oirnn agus bheir sin dhuibh prìs sam bith a dh' iarras sibh air."

"O," ors' esan, "tha e duilich dhomh-sa rud a thoirt do dhuine sam bith aig prìs bheag na mór."

"Tha," ors' esan, fear aca, "sinn ag iarraidh na léin' agaibh."

Rinn e gaire. "O," ors' esan, "tha e duilich dhomh-sa sin a thoirt dhuibh 's gun léine idir agam."

Bha 'ad an uair sin cho dona dheth 's a bha 'ad riamh 's cha robh ac' ach tilleadh dhachaidh. Thug 'ad suas an càs agus a nuair a rànaig 'ad air n-ais far a robh an duine uasal, dh' fhoighneachd e dhaibh an d'fhuair 'ad a' léine."

"Cha d'fhuair," ors' esan. "Ged a thachair An Duine gun Chùram ruinn, cha d'fhuair sinn a léine."

"Carson nach d'fhuair sibh i" ors' esan?

"Cha robh léin' aige," thuirt e ruinn.

"Agus tha sibh ag ràdhainn gu robh e gun chùram."

"Tha. Sin a thuirt e ruinn."

"Uell," ors' an duine uasal, "Ma 's ann mar sin a tha e," ors' esan, "chan eil feum agam-s' air léine an duine gun chùram tuilleadh," ors' esan, "'s dòcha gu bheil mi a nist," ors' esan, "a' toiseachadh air leigheas."

Leig a seachad a h-uile cùram a bh' air 's thòisich e air riarachadh, tha mi cinnteach, fhorstan. Agus bha e leighiste 'na dhuine gun chùram.

'Ga innse aig Eòs Nill Bhig a dh'ionnsaich an stòraidh seo aig fear Eòs Pheadair Chaluim Ghobha (Mac'Illeathain) a mhuinntir Eilean na Nollaig

TRANSLATION

I heard this story, I didn't see it in a book, but rather heard a charitable fellow telling it. We called the story *The Man Without Worry's Shirt*.

There once was a nobleman, a wealthy man, and he became ill. Every physician that would travel to his place was gotten to diagnose his health. And he went to every doctor he heard word of, but he wasn't finding a cure. In any event, there then came a young healer to his place. When this fellow examined him he declared there was only one cure for him, if it was possible to obtain, and that it might make the rich man healthy again. The nobleman said that he would make every effort to get what would improve his condition.

"Well," said the healer, "the cure is to wear the shirt of the Man without Worry."

So, he hired two men and sent them on a journey to try and find the worryless man's shirt. There's no account of how much they traveled, but they encountered none who could say that he was without care. They were going about one day - and on the point of abandoning the matter - when they saw a fellow looking very lighthearted sitting beside a hovel. They went up to talk to the man and after greeting each other, the travelers asked the fellow if he was troubled by worry. He laughed and said he suffered from no concerns whatever. He questioned them as to why he should be worried.

"Look," he said, "at that lake there in front of the house! It's full of fish You'll catch fish there any day the weather is suitable for us to go fishing. Look at the plot of land I have here," he said! "When I plant seed," he said, "it grows a great

crop and I always have an abundance. Why should I be troubled?"

"I am pleased," said one of the travelers, "that we met you. We are in need of something and will give you any price you ask for it."

"Oh," he said, "it is difficult for me to sell anything to someone, whether the price is big or small."

"We want," said one of the others, "your shirt."

The Man Without Worry laughed and said, "It is hard for me to give you that since I have no shirt."

The travelers were now just as stymied as they were before. There was nothing left to do but return home. They quit their search, and when they arrived back at the nobleman's place he asked them, "Did you get the shirt?"

"We didn't," said the fellow. "Even though we met the Man Without Worry, we didn't get the shirt."

"Why did you not get the shirt," he replied?

"He told us that he didn't have a shirt."

Joe Neil MacNeil

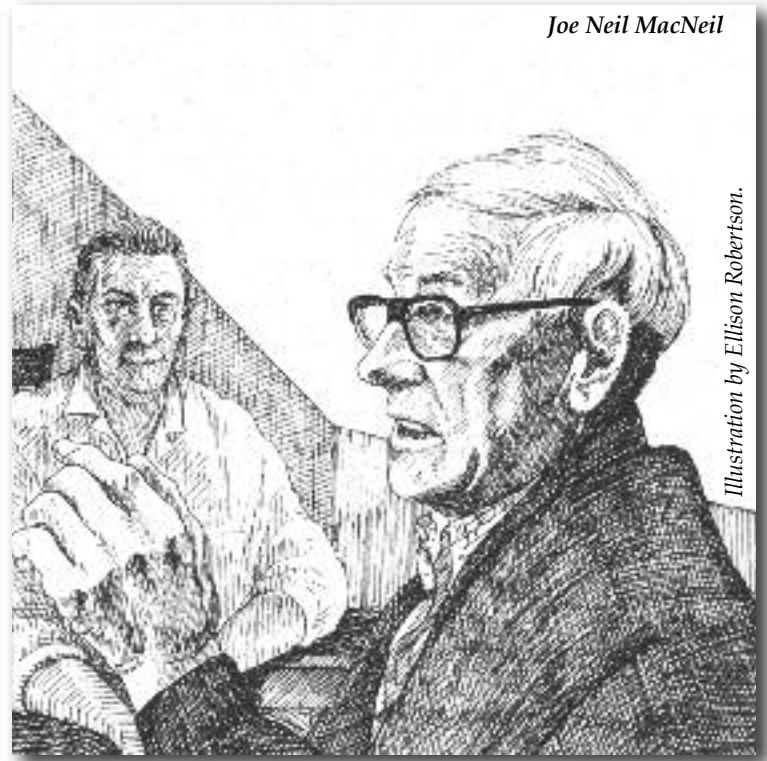


Illustration by Ellison Robertson.

"And you say he had no concerns?"

"Yes. That's what he told us."

"Well," said the rich man, "if that's the way things are, I have no more need of the Man Without Worry's shirt. Likely I'll now start to regain my health."

He rid himself of all his cares and began, I'm certain, distributing his wealth. And he was soon rejuvenated as a man with no concerns or worries. ☺

Told by Joe Neil MacNeil. Joe Neil learned this story from Joe MacLean (Eòs Pheadair Chaluim Ghobha), Christmas Island, Cape Breton County. © Recorded, transcribed and translated by Seumas Watson.

Tapadh leibh-se gu mór

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An taigh dubh / THE BLACKHOUSE

Pauline MacLean & Katherine MacLeod

It is easy to see why the fire was so important to the Gaels, not only for its social and supernatural aspects but also for its practical features. Almost all houses had a large three legged pot (poit thri-chasach) which hung from a hook attached to the rafters by a long black iron chain (slabraidh) to suspend the pot over the fire.

Its thinness or massiveness gave a good idea of the owner's financial position because iron had to be bought and its use was a luxury."¹ For Gaels who could not afford an iron chain, two pieces of wood connected by wooden pegs were used instead. However, it seems that no matter the family's financial situation, they owned at least one iron pot. "Lesser people, even if their belongings were meager, almost always seem to have had a cooking pot."² Depending on the individual's house there may have been anywhere from one to three iron pots varying in size. A cover, however, was fashioned out of wood, where as earlier lids were often made of flat stones which had been chipped to form the needed round shape.

The chain like fire itself was thought to have supernatural powers. Children were warned not to touch the chain. "The *slabraidh* had very sinister characters in folktales. Children were sometimes not allowed to touch it because it was associated with the powers of evil and it could be used for the unlawful purpose of taking milk from someone else's cow. But if a bit of fir-wood were stuck into its links this would prevent the fairies from coming down the chimney..."³

Several writers also remarked that when the children were left alone in the house they often would use the chain as a swing. "The whole apparatus made an ideal swing for the children with the added attraction of risking the fire if the roof fastening gave way."⁴

Some families may have had a griddle for cooking scones or oatcakes. I.F. Grant remarked that griddles were universally used in the Highlands. They consisted of a large iron ring with several narrow decorative bars of iron attached to the perimeter of the ring. This was known as a barred griddle. The earliest type might have had a flat handle which attached to the *slabraidh*, however, later griddles seem to have had a half looped handle. In *The Past and the Present*, Arthur Mitchell describes a toasting or baking stone which may have been used before the griddle. "The baking or toasting stone, for toasting oat-cakes before an

'open fire' — that is, a fire on the hearth, and not in a grate."⁵ Thomas Pennant who travelled throughout the Hebrides in 1772 says that "Bannock was...baked or rather toasted on it, by laying it upright against a stone placed near the fire."⁶ In the *General View of Agriculture*, James MacDonald described that when the cakes were made they were "...placed edgewise against a flat stone opposite to a good fire."⁷ MacDonald



also described a round stick which the women would use to shape the cakes. This may have been an early form of a rolling pin.

Before the cakes or bannock could be made, the grains needed to be ground after they were harvested. To do this the Gaels needed a quern or *brà*. It seems as though every house had a quern. "In some humble turf huts hereabouts you may still see...the old quern or hand mill, consisting of two hard gritty grindstones, laid horizontally one about the other..."⁸

During Samuel Johnson's travels throughout the Western Islands in 1773 he wrote, "The house-wives grind their oats with a quern, or hand-mill, which consists of two stones, about a foot and a half in diameter; the lower is a little convex, to which the concavity of the upper must be fitted. In the middle of the upper stone is a round hole, and on one side is a long handle. The grinder sheds the corn gradually into the hole with one



plocan `s slige-chreachainn / masher & cream skimmer



they quern as much grain as their diets require.”¹⁰ Thomas Pennant mentioned the use of a sheep skin sieve as well, “instead of a hair sieve to sift the meal the inhabitants here have an ingenious substitute, a sheep’s skin stretched round a hoop, and perforated with small holes made with a hot iron.”¹¹ ☺

This is an excerpt from Rannsachadh Taisbeanaidh a’ Chlachain Gàidhealaich: Na Gàidheil an Albainn, 16mh Linn -19mh Linn/Highland Village Interpretive Research: The Gael in 16th to 19th Century Scotland was researched and written by Pauline MacLean, Manager of Collections and Genealogist, and Katherine MacLeod, Collections Assistant. This report of life in Gaelic Scotland, specifically the Blackhouse,

takes into account material culture representations that should be found in the building and the story of how Gaels lived with the land. As Gaels went about their daily lives, they were completely unaware that they were a unique culture, or that others would find their way of life significant. The various aspects of culture cannot exist alone. Language, religious observances, beliefs, customs and traditions are intimately tied together to constitute the whole story of the Gael. The report is the first in a series research documents which support the presentation of the four eras interpreted through our living history site: Gaelic Scotland (1770s-1830s), The Forests of Nova Scotia (1770s-1850s), Building New Communities (1850s-1880s), and Gaelic Nova Scotia (1880s-1920s).

Footnotes:

- (1) I. F. Grant, *Highland Folk Ways*, 164.
- (2) *Ibid*, 190.
- (3) *Ibid*, 164.
- (4) MacDonald, *Lewis: A History of the Island*, 84.
- (5) Mitchell, *The Past in the Present*, 257.
- (6) Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides*, 322.
- (7) MacDonald, *General View of the Agriculture of the Hebrides*, 204.
- (8) Gordon-Cummings, *In the Hebrides*, 272.
- (9) Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, 236.
- (10) Buchanan, *Travels in the Western Hebrides*, 157.
- (11) Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides*, 322.



The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society is selling tickets on a 2011 Celtic Colours package for two. The prize includes:

- Tickets For Two To 3 Celtic Colours Concerts
- Two Passes To A Special Highland Village Living History Experience
- 3 Nights Lodging In Baddeck
- \$200 Spending Money
- 8 GB iPod Touch
- A Selection Of Traditional Music CD’s

Tickets are \$10 each or 3 for \$20. The Draw takes place June 20, 2011.

Proceeds from the draw will go towards digitising audio and video resources featuring the oral and musical culture of the Nova Scotia Gaels.

Tickets are available through the Highland Village, 4119 Highway 223, Iona, NS, B2C 1A3
Phone: (902) 725-2272 - Toll Free: 1-866-4GAELIC (1-866-442-3542) - highlandvillage@gov.ns.ca



Licensed by the Alcohol and Gaming Division # AGA-005199-10

THE INTERPRETIVE SEASON OF 2010 AT BIG HECTOR'S POINT

Caraman NicArtair, A/Chief Interpreter

Interpretation of Gaelic Nova Scotia continued during the 2010 season as staff developed second person animation as the foundational interpretive approach of the site. Scheduled animation activities focused on both tangible and intangible aspects of the culture of the Gaels. Material culture representations such as textile production and preparation of traditional foods continued this year. As well, house céilidhs and milling frolics showcased the rich tradition of story, song, music and dance as it was, and continues to be practiced, in Nova Scotia. Youth had the opportunity to participate



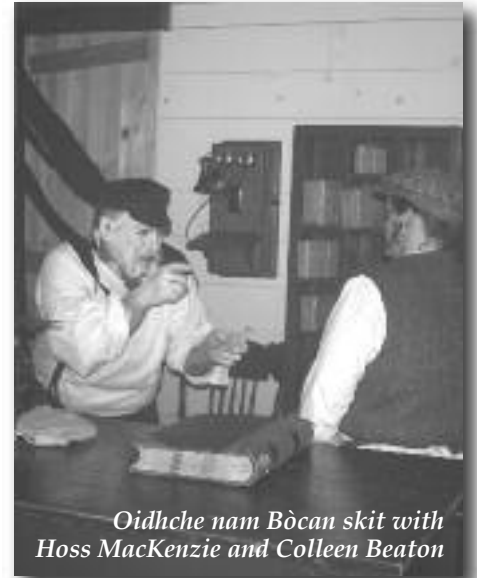
Dr. Margaret Bennett

in interpretive activities through programs such as *Spòrs*, *Na Deugairean* and *Làithean Sona*. For the 3rd consecutive year *Stòras a' Bhaile* featured three days of Gaelic immersion and provided language learners and native speakers with an opportunity to share linguistic, cultural skills and knowledge in an informal social setting.

Nova Scotia's rural life and culture was celebrated this year through events such as Open Farm Day, and Pioneer Day. On September 21st the Highland Village participated in the 22nd annual Open Farm Day program organised by the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture. Visitors were welcomed free of charge to witness and participate in a wide variety of agriculturally based skills and activities.

Despite wet weather, Pioneer Day was also well attended. Animation staff were on hand to demonstrate their skills throughout the site. Tradition bearers from various parts of Cape Breton also contributed to the event such as, Allan MacLeod of Catalone who demonstrated hand hewing and Richard MacInnes of Mabou, who demonstrated net knitting. One of the highlights of this annual event was a genuine milling frolic made possible by textile students at NSCAD University. In honour of the 50th anniversary of the Highland Village Society, the students prepared a hand woven blanket for us to full.

The popular event, *Oidhche nam Bòcan*, Night of Spooks, was presented successfully this season to a full house for three consecutive nights. Staff were busy leading up to the event creating and preparing skits based on Cape Breton Gaelic folklore. As usual, the tour concluded with a lively céilidh complete with *fiarag*, fiddle tunes, ghost stories, song and dance. The event was contributed to greatly by a number of enthusiastic volunteers, especially students from the Rankin School of



the Narrows, who operated special effects, acted in skits and helped to perform a number of other essential duties.

During the months of September and October high school students from Rankin School of the Narrows also contributed to interpretation on the hill through their participation in the Community Based Learning Program. Three students, Zoe Kirste, Caitlin Bennett and Michael MacKenzie, took a day a week from their busy academic schedule to job shadow animation staff. The students gained valuable work experience and enthusiastically performed duties ranging from house cleaning to greeting tour busses. The students commented positively on their experience at the Village and we look forward to offering the same opportunity to new students in the spring.

Talks and workshop presentations during the 2010 season included demon-



strations pertinent to cloth making such as a sheep shearing demonstration held on carding mill day, and a natural dye workshop led by animator and textile researcher Vicki Quimby. This year's *Seòmbar na Gréineadh / Summer Room* lecture series included the annual Joe Neil MacNeil memorial lecture which was delivered by Margaret Bennett on the topic of her fieldwork with Gaelic speaking tradition bearers in Northeastern Quebec and Newfoundland's Codroy Valley. (In attendance at Margaret's lecture were Mr. & Mrs. James Martin from Grand Mira South, who kindly donated some memorabilia from the late Joe Neil MacNeil including the 1989 Marius Barbeau Award, his Honourary Doctor of Letters from St. Mary's University in 1990, and other items.)

In August, Dr. John Shaw delivered a lecture on the role of Intangible culture in community development in Scotland. During the busy week of Celtic Colours, a Gaelic song workshop was lead by the Scottish group Meantime, as well as a presentation on the on-line Gaelic song collection of the Beaton Institute.

As usual, interpretation and daily operations of the site were enhanced by



Vicki Quimby measures the cloth.

One of the Highland cows peeking over the fence at the taigh dubh.



the skills and abilities of summer students. Returning this year were animation staff Evan Bonaparte, Laura MacNeil, and Crystal MacNeil - who also lead the *Spòrs* program. Shannon MacIver also returned this year as PR coordinator and we had the addition of Julius Wukitsch who joined site operations. Sincere thanks to all summer students for their contributions during summer 2010. We wish them all the best in their future endeavors.

Once again, we would like to express gratitude to all staff and volunteers who made the 2010 a great success. Both staff and volunteers went above and beyond the call of duty to present Nova Scotia's Gaelic story to the greater public and to honour and celebrate Gaelic language and culture among the local community. We would like to extend a special thanks to an exceptional volunteer, Sharon MacNeil, whose tireless work helped to provide a hospitable experience for the many tour bus visitors who came through the village this fall.

Mòran Taing dhuibh uile! ☺

Carmen MacArthur, a Gaelic learner and teacher, is acting chief interpreter at the Highland Village.

Conference Notice

CELTS IN THE AMERICAS 2011

The Celts in the Americas conference will be held 29 June - 2 July, 2011 at Saint Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia, hosted by the Celtic Studies Department of St FX and the Centre for Cape Breton Studies at Cape Breton University.

The Celts in the Americas conference will offer a unique opportunity to share scholarship about the history, culture, and literature of Celtic-speaking peoples in North and South America: it will be the first academic conference devoted to this theme, with presentations about aspects of the experiences and literatures of the communities speaking Breton, Cornish, Irish Gaelic, Manx Gaelic, Scottish Gaelic, or Welsh in the Americas. One day of the conference will be devoted to examining the interactions between Celtic peoples and non-Celtic peoples in the Americas, with a special emphasis on indigenous peoples and peoples of African descent.

Highland Village will be participating with a talk given by Marlene Ivey, NSCAD University, and Jim Watson, Highland Village Manager of Interpretation titled "*An Drochaid Eadarainn: Prototyping An Online Social Space for the Nova Scotia Gaelic Community - Concept, Content Parameters & Design.*"

For more information on the conference visit <http://www.mystfx.ca/academic/celtic-studies/conf2011.html>



50TH ANNIVERSARY QUILT CONTEST



The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society is sponsoring a quilt contest to commemorate its 50th anniversary. To complete this special quilt, we are seeking blocks with your interpretation of the historical life of the Gael in Nova Scotia. The theme is based on the Society slogan: "*Leanaibh dluth re cliu bhur sinnsir - Remember the ways of your ancestors.*"

Blocks should be standard 12" by 12" with a 1/4" seam allowance. Highland Village will supply prizes for the contest. The winning blocks will be announced, and the finished quilt displayed, at the 50th annual Highland Village Day Concert on Saturday, August 6, 2011. All submissions are final. Names of the entrants will appear in fall 2011 edition of our folklife magazine *An Rubha*.

The deadline for entries is May 1, 2011. Thank you in advance to all who enter. Entries should be sent to: Quilt Block Contest, c/o Highland Village, 4119 Highway 223, Iona, NS, B2C 1A3.

Uisge an Airgid /The Silver Water Cure ARCHIE DAN MACLELLAN AT WORK IN THE WOODS AND MINES OF CAPE BRETON

Collected by Seósamh Watson



TRANSLATION

I'll tell you how I always was myself here: if I saw a person with a fine horse it was drummed into me by the folks at home, well, you know, 'God bless you!', you know, so readily. Well, it was drummed into me so much that it made no difference to me what - the animal would be, you know.

This existed - the evil eye, you know. It means - you know, evil eye, they'd say. Yes. There's silver water now and a holy saying with it. And there's a prayer and my sister, she'd do that and a woman who used to do it told her. The prayer went with it. Putting little ten-cent pieces into a wooden vessel. It wasn't an iron bucket of a vessel or suchlike. And if the animal or person had been harmed this coin sticks [to the vessel]. And if it hadn't been harmed none of them would stick. And I have proof of that.

We had a horse here and, well, he was hard to beat. And I was coming one day out of the town, out of Inverness. A man ran out and he asked, 'Would I sell that horse?' - he was speaking English.

'No, I won't!' (The tan horse.)

He offered me a hundred and seventy-five dollars for him, you know. It was a big price.

'No!'

He offered me two hundred for him. And I didn't want that either. Finally, he went to two.

'No, I won't sell him at all, though you give me a - thousand dollars. I'd sooner the horse than that.'

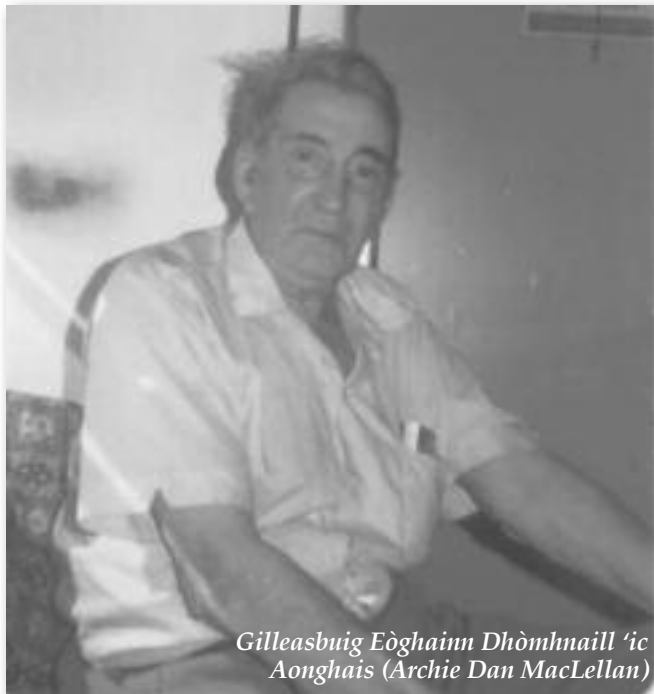
I came home and I wasn't driving fast and the horse went inside. The horse lay down in the stall and there wasn't a drop of sweat on him or anything.

'God!' said my father, 'what's wrong with the horse?'

'I don't know - what's wrong with him.'

And he wasn't eating or anything. He wasn't - he didn't look as if anything was the matter with him but he was lying down.

Well, I heard, the woman here who was making the silver water, as you said, I headed over to her and she put - these



Gilleasbuig Eòghainn Dhòmhnail 'ic Aonghais (Archie Dan MacLellan)

Photo from Seósamh Watson

Innsidh mise mar a bha mi fhéin riamh lan seo: nam faicinn each brèagha aig duine chaidh e `chur ionnam aig an fheadhainn aig an taigh, uell, *you know*, 'Dia 'gad bheannachadh!' fhios agad fhéin, cho socair seo. Uell, chaidh e ionnam cho mór sin nach robh e gu diofar leam dé - am beòthach a bhiodh ann, fhios agaibh.

Bha seo ann - tha droch-shùil, fhios agaibh, tha i `mìnigeadh - *you know*, droch-shùil, theireadh iad, sheadh. [Uisge] airgid tha sin a-nis agus tha briathar beannaichte `falbh `na chois sin. Agus tha ùrnaidh ann, agus mo phiuthar-sa, dhèanadh i sin agus dh'inns boireannach dhi dhèanadh e. Bha `n ùrnaidh `falbh `na chois. Bonnanan beaga deich *centachan* a chur ann an soitheach fiodh. Chan e soitheach bucaid iarrainn no leith'd sin. Agus ma chaidh cron a dhèanadh air a' bheòthach no air an duine tha - am bonn seo ' *stickadh*. Agus mura - mura `n deachaidh cron a dhèanadh, cha *stickadh* gin diubh. `S tha *proof* agamsa air a sin.

Bha each againn an seo agus, uell, bha e duilich a *bheatadh*. Agus bha mise `tighinn là ás - an *town*, á *Inverness*, rith fear a-mach `s dh'fhaighneachd e 'Would I sell that horse?' - `s e `Bheurla bh'aige.

'No, I won't!' ('n t-each buidhe.)

Thairg e dhomh a *hundred and seventy-five dollars* air, fhios agaibh. `S e prìs mhór a bh'ann.

'No!'

Thairg e sin an *two hundred* air. Agus cha bu toil leam seo na bu mhotha. Mu dheireadh chaidh e an *two*.

'No, I won't sell him at all though you give me [a] - *thousand dollars*. I'd sooner the horse than that.'

Thàinig mise dhachaidh agus cha robh mi `draibheadh luath `s chaidh an t-each a-staigh. Laigh an t-each anns an *stall* agus cha robh boinne fallais air no sian.

'Dé, a Dhia,' thuirt m'athair, 'tha ceàrr air an each?'

'Chan eil fhios agam-as - dé tha ceàrr air.'

`S cha robh e ag ithe no sian. Cha robh e - cha robh coltas air gu robh gréim air, ach bha e `na laighe. Uell, chuala mise, am boireannach a bha seo bha `dèanadh an - uisge an airgid, mar a thuirt sibh, chàraich mi rithe a-null agus chuir i - na buinn a bha seo, na *ten cents* - `s a - `n t-soitheach a bha seo.

'Tha aon duine seo - a rinn an - an *job* sin.'

Agus chrath i ás an fheadhainn eile. `S b'fheudar dhi, cha mhór, sgian fhaighinn gus - an *ten cents* - is bha e - *stick* e cho mór.

'Còimhead ort! Tha seo ann, agus tha mi `dol ... an t-uisge - an t-uisge an airgid - tha mi `dol a lionadh botal dheth. Agus thig thusa null dhachaidh agus crath air an each e agus ma's urrainn dhut chuireadh tu `na - amhach e sìos!'

Thàinig mise dhachaidh `s am botal agam `s dh'inns mi dha m'athair. Bha `n t-each `na laighe. Chrath mise seo air an each. Thug an t-each - dith is leum suas dìreach. Agus dh'fhaodadh sibh an cluinnteil ann an Èirinn mar a chrath i. Chaidh an còrr dheth a chur `na amhach sìos. Bha an t-each *all right*. 'Fhios agad, tha - uisge airgid, tha e mìnigeadh poidhle, tha, `n duine a chreideas e.

coins, the ten cents - in this vessel.

"There's one person here - who did - that."

And she shook out the other coins. And she nearly had to get a knife to - the ten cents - and it was - it stuck so hard.

"Take a look! this is here, and I'm going to fill a bottle with the water - the silver water. And you go over home and sprinkle it on the horse and if you can you'd put it down his throat!"

I came home with the bottle and told my father. The horse was lying down. I sprinkled this on the horse. The horse gave a - and leaped up right away. And you could hear them in Ireland the way she [the horse] shook. The rest went down his throat. The horse was all right. You know, silver water - it means a lot. It does, the one who believes in it. ☺

© Collected, transcribed and translated by Dr. Seósamh Watson, 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 by 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.

NAIDHEACHD BHEAG ÉIBHINN

Stories in the late Joe Neil MacNeil's repertoire encompassed a wide range of genres and sources. Here he tells a humorous anecdote that he recalled hearing from the late Margaree storyteller Archie Neil Chisholm.

'Sann aig Gilleasbaig Niall a chuala mi an naidheachd. 'S e a bha dùil aca ri teaghalch 'Sfhaighinn agus cha d'fhuair iad duine 's an àm. Thànaig an gnothach car ann an cabhaig, agus seann duin' a bha seo, bha e a's an taigh. Agus thuirt a' bhean-ghlùine ris, "Cuma tusa ris a' lampa."

Cha robh solas aca-san a dh'ionnsaidh an taighe a's an aimisir a bh'ann. Chaidh am fear a bha seo astaigh agus co dhiubh fhuair eadhuine teaghalch.

"Tha e math," ors' esan, "gu bheil an gnothach seachad."

"O, cha n-eil," ors' ise, "cha n-eil an gnothach idir seachad fhathast. Tha neach eile ri tighinn."

"Thànaig an sin an dàrna neach.

"O," ors' esan, 's math gu bheil an gnothach seachad."

"O, Dhia," thuirt ise, "chan-eil an gnothach idir seachad fhathast. Tha neach eile ri tighinn."

"An ainm an Fhortain," ors' esan, "tiugainn gus an dùin thu an lampa! 'S ann a' tighinn amach a dh'ionnsaidh an t-solais a tha 'ad."

TRANSLATION

I heard this story from Archie Neil (Chisholm). The situation was that they expected a child. They hadn't any children before this. Things started up very quickly, and there was this old fellow who was in the house. The midwife told him to tend to the lamp. The old fellow went in (to the room) and in any event a child was delivered.

"It's a good thing that's done with," said the old fellow.

"Oh, it's not over yet," said the midwife. "Things aren't finished yet. There's another one coming."

The second one arrived then.

"It's a good thing that's over," said the old fellow.

"Oh God, it's not over yet," said the midwife. "Things aren't finished yet. There's still another one to come."

"In the name of heaven," exclaimed the old fellow, "come over here and put out the lamp! The light is attracting them." ☺

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Seeking Innovation in Interpretation and Exhibit Design

continued from page 5....

that consisted of a piece of wood and sandstone. Visitors were encouraged to get down and scrub the deck. Shortly after the interactive was installed, visitors who were surveyed after leaving the museum almost always mentioned the term *holy-stoning* and were able to describe in detail what was meant by the term.⁹ ☺

Mar is léir dhomh fhin (My Own Viewpoint) is a regular feature. Katherine MacLeod is collections assistant at the Highland Village. She is a graduate of the Museum Studies program at Algonquin College.

Footnotes:

- (1) John A. Veverka. "Interpretive Master Planning Workshop" Highland Village Museum, September 25th, 2009
- (2) Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore. "Museum & Authenticity", *Museum News*, May/June (2007), <http://www.aamus.org/pubs/mn/aauthenticity.cfm>
- (3) Sten Rentzhog. *Open Air Museums*. Kristiand, Sweden: Jamtli Förlaf & Carlsson Bokförlag, 2007.p.443.
- (4) Trena Bagnell. "The Hands-on Historic Home." *ALHFAM* 34, no. 4 (2005) p.19.
- (5) Bedno. *Museums Exhibitions: Past Imperfect, Future Tense*. p.3.
- (6) USS Constitution Museum Team. "Use Interactive Elements to Convey Key Messages" www.familylearning-forum.org/rethinking-exhibitions/designing-exhibits/interactive-elements.htm
- (7) *Ibid.*,
- (8) *Holy-stoning - a block of soft sandstone used in scrubbing the decks of a ship. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/holy-stoning>
- (9) USS Constitution. *Using Interactive Elements to Convey Key Messages*.
- (10) *Ibid.*

Mac-Talla.

"An ni nach cluinn mi an diugh cha'n aithris mi màireach."

Vol. IV.

SIDNI, C. B., DI-SATHAIRNE, OCTOBER 12, 1895.

No 14.

"An, ni nach cluinn mi an diugh cha'n aithris mi màireach

**Corp Crèadha
agus Sgeulachd "Challum Gille."**

Bho Mhac-Talla, Vol. 4, No. 14,

Sidni, C.B.

Di sathairne, October 12, 1895

Is minig a chuala mi an làithean m'òige beul-aithris air buidseachd. Còmhla ris a h-uile geasag eile air an d'fhuair mi iomradh, bha 'n "Corp crèadha." Bha an corp crèadha air a dhèanamh air son dioghaltas a dhèanamh air duine sam bi nach bu toigh leat. 'S dòcha gu bheil sibhse an dùil gun do sguir an obair fhaoin so o chionn fhada, ach cha do sguir. Chaidh corp crèadha dhèanamh ann an Ceap Breatunn ri mo latha féin, agus leugh mi gu robh an cleachdadh ceudna air a leantuinn ann an Alba gus o chionn dusan bliadhna, agus dh'fhaointe gu bheil e ri fhaotainn eadhon air an latha 'n diugh.

Anns a' bhliadhna 1883, thànaig càs air beulaibh cùirt ann am baile mór Inbhirnis, agus thug fear de luchd na còmhstri a làthair corp chaidh a dhèanamh dha fhéin. Mun innis mi mu'n chorp a tha 'nam bheachd, feumaidh mi innse an t-aobhar a bha e air son a dhèanamh. Mar sin innsidh mi sgeulachd "Chaluim Gille."

Cha n-eil mi cinnteach ciamar a fhuair Calum am far-ainm seo. Bha e 'na ghille èasgaidh, fuasgailte. An déidh dha a' ghriasachd ionnsachadh, agus teaghlach 'athar gun bhi ro chothromach, chuir e roimhe gu rachadh e 'ga chosnadh. 'S e toiseach a' gheamhraidh a bh'ann, 's cha bhi obair sam bith glé phailt mun am sin de 'n bhliadhna. Thog e air gu dhol a ghriasachd air feadh nan taighean, a' dèanamh bhrògan ùra, no chàradh sheann bhrògan, mar a thachradh ris. Cha robh mòran acainn a dhìth air; bha minidh no dhà aige, sgian, òrd, turcais, snàth bhròg, mìr de ròsaid agus friodhain mhuiice. Leotha sin, agus le beagan de nithean eile, nach d' rinn an t-eallach

glé throm, thug e 'n rathad air gu sunndach. Thug e a' cheud sgrìob thun an Eilein Mhóir far an robh an sluagh uile glé chothromach, agus an ùine ghoirid thànaig e gu fàrdaich Iain Raib 'Ic Leòid air "rudha 'n eilein," far an d' fhuair e pailteas oibreach.

Bha bràthair do dh' Iain a' cur seachad a' gheamhraidh còmhla ris do'm



b'ainm Donnacha, sgiobair soithich. Bha bòtainnean móra aig Donnacha a cheannaich e ann am port Frangach a bha tuilleadh 's farsuinn dha. Thug e do Chalum iad gus an dèanamh ni bu lugha. B' iad sin bòtainnean a dhùnaich do Chalum; thòisich e orra, agus ma bha iad ro mhór roimhe, rinn esan ro bheag iad, agus bha iad air an tur mhilleadh. B' fheudar do Chalum bochd teicheadh, no bheireadh Donnacha droch làimhseachadh dha; ach nuair nach d' fhuair Donnacha greim air, rinn e òran dha. Bha e 'na dheagh bhàrd. Chan eil agam air chuimhne dhe'n òran ach rann no dhà. Bha e air fonn "Blàr na h-Eipheit.

'M b' aithne dhuibhse Calum Gille?
'N gille sean aig Dòmhnall P;
'Nuair a thàinig e an tùb seo
Bha mi 'n dùil gu faighinn brògan;

Thug mi bòt'nan dha ri chàradh,
Sgaoil e 'n àird a chum nam beòil iad ;
'S a h-uile gréim a chaidh an ait sin,
Bha dhà dhiubh a' dol gu òrleach..

Bha e cho math air a cheàird, na'm b' fhìor, 's gun do shiubhail e gach ceàrna de'n t-saoghal, agus bha'n t-òran a' toirt cùinntas air na chunnaic e. Mu dheireadh ràinig e sin agus bha 'n t-òran a' toirt cùinntas air na chunnaic e.

Cha robh 'n sin ach brògan iaruinne,
Cha robh miadh ac' air a cheàird-san,
&c, &c.

Thàinig e 'n déidh sin dhachaidh 'na dhuine beairteach, Bha 'n t-òran ag innse gu robh e uair a mach a shealgaireachd.

Ach 's tu ni 'n càs marbhaiche
'Nuair a thacharas na ròin riut
Bidh tu a' falbh an chis a' chladaich
'Measg nan creagan air do spògan.
Lùbaidh tu do ghlu'n's an amharc
Dùinidh tu do ghial-shùil bòidheach.
Théid iad fodha 'n coinneamh 'n casan
"Taing you, Challum," their an ròin riut.

Agus mar sin air adhart. Bheireadh an t-òran toileachadh mór do luchd-leughaidh a Mhac-Talla anns an dùthaich seo. Ach, coma co-dhiù, 'nuair chuala màthair Chaluim mu 'n òran seo, ghabh i 'n caothach dearg. Cha robh ioghnadh ann an sin, oir cha bu toigh le màthair sam bith a bhi dèanamh tarcuais air a mac. Cha robh dòigh sam bith aice air son an torachd a thoirt a mach ach le buidseachd a dhèanamh. Ann an làn chreidsinn gun tigeadh a guidhe gu crìch, rinn i corp crèadha air cumadh Dhonnacha, chàraich i e 's an allt far am biodh an sruth a ruith thairis air, le guidhe mar a chaitheadh an corp crèadha gum biodh corp Dhonnacha a' caitheamh mar an ceudna! A bhean bhochd, c'ait' a' bheil i 'n diugh agus Donnacha beò fhathast?

Iain, Rothach, Rudha Mharsden, New Zealand.

TRANSLATION

The Clay Corpse

From *Mac-Talla*, Vol. 4, No. 14
Sydney, C.B.
Saturday, October 12, 1895

I often have heard talk about spells in the days of my youth. Along with every other kind of hex I heard mention of, there was the clay corpse. The clay corpse was made to gain revenge on anyone you didn't fancy. You may think this foolishness ceased long ago, but it didn't. A clay corpse was made in Cape Breton during my own time, and I have read that the same practice continued in Scotland up to 12 years ago, and possibly it persists even to the present.

In 1883 a case came before the court in Inverness (Scotland), and one of the plaintiffs exhibited a (clay) corpse that was made for him. Before I describe the figure I have in mind, I have to relate the reason for making it. Consequently, I will tell the story of *Calum Gille*.

I don't know how Calum got his nickname. He was an industrious, straightforward lad. After learning the cobbler's trade, and since his father's family wasn't well off, he decided to get on with earning his living. It was the beginning of winter and no kind of work is plentiful at that time of year. He proceeded to work at cobbling from house to house, making new shoes or repairing old ones – whatever came his way. He had most of the implements: an awl or two, a knife, hammer, tweezers, shoe thread, lump of rosin and pig bristles. With these, and a few other things that wouldn't make his load too heavy, he happily took to the road.

He made his first trek to *Eilean Mòr*, where the people were all prosperous

and soon arrived at the home of Ian Rob MacLeod on the 'island's point' where he found more than enough work. Ian's brother, a man called Duncan who was a ship's captain, was spending the winter there. Duncan had a large pair of boots that he bought in a French port, and they were too big for him. He gave them to Calum to make smaller. These were the boots of Calum's undoing. He began working on them, and if they were too big beforehand, he then made them too small and they were completely ruined. Poor Calum had to flee or Duncan would have given him a bad going over. When Duncan, an excellent bard, failed to collar Calum, he made a satire on him. I can only remember a verse or two of the song. It was set to the air of *Blàr na h-Eipheit*.

*Did you know Calum Gille,
The son of Donald P____.
When he came by this way, I thought
I'd get a pair of shoes.
I gave him boots for repairing,
He spread them from top to bottom,
And every stitch that was put in place,
There was two to the inch.*

The song describes him as being so good at his trade that he traveled every corner of the world and gives an account of what he saw.

*At last he reached China;
Only iron shoes could be found there,
There was no demand for his trade, etc.
He then returned home a wealthy man.*

The song also tells of an occasion he went hunting.

*But you are an exemplary hunter,
When the seals happen upon you;
You go about the shoreline,*

*And around the rocks on all fours.
You bend your knee at a sighting,
And close your handsome eye, They go
under, head over flippers,
"Thank you Calum," the seal will say to
you.*

And so forth. The song would greatly please many of Mac-Talla's readers in this country.

In any event, when Calum's mother heard about the song she became enraged. That's not surprising since no mother wishes to hear of her son being ridiculed. However, she had no way to address the situation other than with witchcraft. Fully believing her curse would come to fruition, she fashioned a clay corpse in Duncan's form. Placing it a stream where the current would run over it, she wished that as the clay corpse wore away with the water so would Duncan's body waste away! The poor woman, where is she today and Duncan still living?

John Ross, Marsden's Point, New Zealand ☞

**corp criadhach, (WC), s.m. Clay corpse. When a witch desired to destroy any one to whom she had an ill-will, she often made a corpse of clay resembling the unfortunate one, and placed it in an out of the way burn under a precipice, in such a way that the water trickled slowly on it. As the clay body wasted, so did the live body of the person it resembled was also suppose to waste away. Were the body found, it was carefully preserved, and so the spell of the witch was broken. Sometimes pins were stuck in the body to make the death of the doomed one more painful. Several such bodies have been found, even of late years – Dwelly's Illustrated Gaelic to English Dictionary.*

Translated by Seumas Watson.



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/Foghlam/Leabharlann/Mac-talla/index_en.html



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/>



Communications Nova Scotia



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An Rubha Photo Album: Images of Gaelic Folklife Experiences at Highland Village

As reported in *Naidheachd a' Chlachain*, Highland Village hosted the *Stòras a' Bhaile 2010*, three days of workshops focusing on language acquisition through living Gaelic culture and folklife. Thanks to the Office of Gaelic Affairs, this year's event was documented digitally by Shirley Robb, a photographer with Communications Nova Scotia. Here are a few of those photos (this page clockwise from top left): *A' gabhail naidheachd* - Dr. John Shaw shares a Gaelic story; *Còmhairle Ailein*- Aileen MacLeod discusses traditional farming techniques with Jim Watson; *Buaidh na Fidhleadh* - Beth MacNeil enjoys a few tunes from Anita MacDonald; *Ag èirigh air puirt* - Eòs Peadar MacIlleathain and Carmen MacArthur play a few tunes together; *Sealladh na Linne* - Catherine Gillis takes in the spectacular view near the Blackhouse; *Sòlas gun dealan* - Annag NicFhionghain and Mary Jane Lamond discuss the how homes were lit before electricity.



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Nova Scotia Museum



Nova Scotia Museum

This summer also saw a few opportunities to update our promotional images of Gaelic folklife experiences at Highland Village. Our goal for these shoots was to show families and children doing hands-on activities around the site. The top three shots are from a photo shoot for the Nova Scotia Museum with photographer Roger Lloyd. The bottom four photos were taken by Dale Wilson for Destination Cape Breton. (This page clockwise from top left): Hannah MacNeil and Kaye Anne MacNeil spinning wool; Lili Watson with Hannah & Rory MacNeil in the dump cart talking to Joanne MacIntyre; Lili Watson and Hannah MacNeil making *marag*; Aileen MacLean and Zoie Chaisson washing butter with Colin & Angela Higgins and family; Zachary Chaisson feeding Mira Jean with the help of John Phillip Rankin; Debi MacNeil telling a story over the fire to Carmen MacArthur, Zoie Chaisson and Colin & Angela Higgins & Family; and Zoie Chaisson making butter with Aileen MacLean.



Nova Scotia Museum



Destination Cape Breton



Destination Cape Breton



Destination Cape Breton



Destination Cape Breton

Tha Mo Rùn air a' Ghille

Collected from Johnny Williams

Tha Mo Rùn air a' Ghille is an Old Country song that has been widely sung throughout Gaelic Nova Scotia with much variation in the verses. Its origins go back to at least the 17th century with a setting ascribed as having been made by "Nighean Tighearna Ghrannnd" (Laird of Grant's Daughter) for Donald Donn of Bohuntin, a famed cattle reaver said to be her lover. Her father captured Donald and executed him by beheading. Versions in print can be found, among others, in *An t-Òranaiche*, page 209 in the Matheson edition, and as a transcription from the singing of the late Lauchie MacLellan (*Lachainn Dhòmhnaill Nill*) on page 139 in *Brìgh An Òrain*, edited by John Shaw. Lauchie can be heard singing his setting on *Sruth nan Gàidheal* under his name as a creator (gaelstream.com).

Although the transcription from Johnny Williams (*Seonaidh Aonghais Bhig*), late of Melford (*Criochan Bràigh na h-Aibhneadh*), Inverness County appearing here is taken from a different recording, he also can be heard singing solo and with Collie MacIntosh (*Colaigh Angain Dhòmhnaill a' Chùbair*) on *Sruth nan Gàidheal* under Williams, Johnny.

Fonn:

Tha mo rùn air a' ghille
`S mór mo dhùil riut a thilleadh
`S mi gu siubhladh leat na firibh
Fo shileadh nam fuar-bheann

(I love the lad. Great is my desire for your return. I would travel the deer forests with you under cold mountain rain.)

Oidhche Shamhna `s mi `nam ònar
Gu math b'aithne dhèanainn òran
Bu truagh a Rìgh `s nach robh mi pòsd'
Aig òigear a' chùil dualaich

(Alone on All Hallows Eve, If I knew how, I would compose a song. Lord it's a pity that I'm not married to the youth with curly hair.)

Té thug dhomh-s`an fhuarag Shamhna
Ged bu phailt' aic' bainne geamhraidh
Bha crodh-laoigh an aodann bheann
`S a clann a' ruith mun cuairt dhi

(The woman who gave me Halloween crowdie, although scarce of a winter's milk, her cows were on the mountain side and her children played around her.)

Gu bheil an Nollaig a' tighinn dlùth oirnn
Gur beag mo shòlas dha h-ionnsaidh
`S mis' a' tuireadh mo shùgraidh
`S mi `stiùireadh air na stuadhanan

(Though Christmas time is drawing near, it gives me little joy. I lament for the times with my darling as I steer over the waves.)

An cuimhneach leat-s' mu `n àm seo an uiridh
Nuair a thréig thu mi cho buileach
Mar a thilgeadh craobh a duilleach
Tha thu umam suarach

(Do you remember around this time last year when you abandoned me so completely? Like a tree would cast it leaves, you have lost all feeling for me.)

Gun chuir thu falt mo chinn gu talamh
Chuir thu mo dhà ghruaidh `s an aineol
`S truagh nach mis' a bha `s an anart
Mun dug mi mo luaidh dhut

(You've made my hair fall to the ground. You've left my cheeks unrecognizable (?). Rather that I was in the shroud of death before I gave my love to you.)

Ged tha blàth nam breac `ad aodann
Cha do lughdaich siod mo ghaol ort
`S gur mi gu siubhladh leat-s' a' saoghal
Nan saoilinn do bhuannachd

(Though your face is pocked (small pox scars), that didn't lessen my love for you. If I could win you for my own, I would travel the world with you.)

Gu bheil mi `smaointinn ort `s a' leabaidh
Tha mi bruadal ort `nam chadal
Gu bheil mi `n dùil gu bheil thu agam
`Cadail air mo chluasaig

(In my bed I think of you. In my sleep I dream of you. I imagine that I have you there, sleeping on my pillow.)

Bha thu laghach `s bha thu briatharach
Gun chòrd thu ris na chunnaic riamh thu
Bha thu math air a h-uile sion
`S gun deanadh tu gnìomh bean-uasail
*made by Johnny's father, Aonghus Beag

(You were civil and well spoken. You were liked by everyone who met you. You were skilled at all turns and carried yourself like a lady.)

Johnny Williams



Photo courtesy of John Gibson.

Iain, ma dh'innseas tu an fhìrinn
Cho math `s a leughadh tu `s a sgrìobhadh tu
Gur bu daor a phàighinn fhìn ort
Nan dèanainn do bhuannachd

(If you will tell the truth, Ian, about how well you read and write, I would pay a costly price to have you for my own.)

Leathanach a' bhroillich ghlé-ghil
A thug mis' an gaol a léir mi
`S gur e mis' a bhios gu deurach
Ma bheir téile bhuan thu

(MacLean of the bright, white chest to whom I gave unrequited love, I will be tearful should another take you from me.)

Nighneag a bha cho bàidheil
A choinnich rium air tobht' a' bhàta
`S gur e mo chridh-s' a bha sàsaicht'
Ged bha mo chòta ruadh orm

(Good humored lass who I met on the boat thwart, my heart was filled though I wore my red coat.)

Gu bheil mo chridh briste, brùite
Gur tric na deòir a' ruith o m'shùilean
Bho'n là thug mise mo chùil riut
`S mi ri taobh na muir uaine

(My heart is bruised and broken. I weep often since the day I turned my back on you to be at sea.) ☽

© Collected, transcribed and translated by Seumas Watson.

MACPHERSON HOUSE: A NEWLY DISCOVERED LOG HOUSE

Jim St.Clair

*'T*his said that sometimes "sour milk can masquerade as cream." But nobody had said that a pioneer log house can masquerade as a shed sheathed with metal strips. But so one does - an intriguing discovery and one that encourages further research.

There on a knoll several hundred feet above the Long Stretch Road between West Bay Road and Port Hastings, quite unprepossessing in appearance sits a small building about 27 feet by 26.

But take a careful look at the 45 degree pitch of the roof line. See also how the earth is somewhat piled up around the base of the structure. And there at the base of the small hill is a fine spring coming out of the ground. The water flows to one of the branches of the stream known as River Inhabitants. This is a suitable place for an early house.

Now step across the threshold through an opening clearly not original to the building. And there surrounding you are four walls, constructed of well-hewn logs.

Joined at the four corners by rough notches, log on log, the timbers fitted one to another at right angles reveal that this is indeed a log house.

The adze marks are evident on the almost smooth surfaces of the timbers. The splintery surfaces suggest that the wood is indeed hemlock. They are all quite sound. They vary in size as some are nine inches on two sides with five inches on the other sides. Some are less but not by much.

Except where openings break the walls, the logs are 26 to 27 feet long, each of them very straight. The walls are composed of eleven logs arranged horizontally from the base to the place where the roof line begins. The posts are approximately nine feet high.

So much to see, to measure, to consider! Are the six cross beams the same wood as the wall timbers? And the floor joists - nine of them, all seem quite sound. They are each approximately eleven inches by nine inches -with the top edges smoothed off.

The voices of how many generations of what family might be heard inside this structure? When was the building converted from a dwelling into a shed with the interior walls removed? How many rooms were there? Where was the chimney with the necessary fireplace or fireplaces?

The land records are quite clear about this property located between two branches of the river. A request for land in 1805 by Alexander McPherson to Gov. Despard in Sydney identifies 300 acres of "farm land between the forks of River Inhabitants." In succeeding years, Alexander and his son Adam (so identified) continued to request acreage. In



1808, Alexander states that "he is now an old man" and complains about the survey lines.

In 1810, Adam McPherson states that he is twenty-one years old, born in Scotland and a resident of Cape Breton for eighteen years. He wishes land of his own in the rear of his father's land to be known as Sugar Camp (a name which survives to this day in the area).

Other documents reveal that Alexander was married in Caithness, Scotland to Mary McPherson. Their eldest son is registered as born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1789. It appears that the other children, two sons and two daughters are born in Nova Scotia.

According to Adam's request for land, the family had lived on Cape Breton as early as 1792. It is uncertain just when the McPhersons arrived in River Inhabitants. From land records and the material in Murray's *History of the Presbyterian Church in Cape Breton* and MacDougall's *History of Inverness County*, it is certain that a number of family from Caithness and Rosshire settled in the West Bay and River Inhabitants area by 1810 or so. Perhaps, the MacPhersons came with them or even earlier.



Dr. James McGregor of Pictou states in his diary that he conducted a Presbyterian service in the barn of Adam McPherson during his tour of Cape Breton in 1818.

Six generations of MacPhersons, descendants of Alexander, lived on the land and in the log house until about 1890 when a frame house was built, a structure which may well contain some of the boards from the room dividers of the log house.

If the log house is the first one built by the MacPherson family, father and sons, soon after their arrival in Cape Breton, then it could be as old as two hundred and eighteen years. But if it was a second house, as would be possible, then perhaps it is between 180 and 200 years old.

So far as is known, this modest building, disguised by metal siding and used as a workshop for many years, is the only surviving log house from pioneer times in Cape Breton. It is a metal clad building, hiding a log house within. It opens the door to further research.

The history of the MacPherson family, very early settlers from Scotland in Cape Breton, needs further investigation. The location of each of the plots of land acquired by Alexander and his wife Elizabeth and Adam and his wife Sarah MacDonald needs to be determined. Where did these immigrants from the North of Scotland learn how to construct a log building so well that it is still standing two centuries later?

It is fortunate that the present owner of the property and the log house, Roddie Chisholm, is interested in the old building and quite committed to its preservation and interpretation.

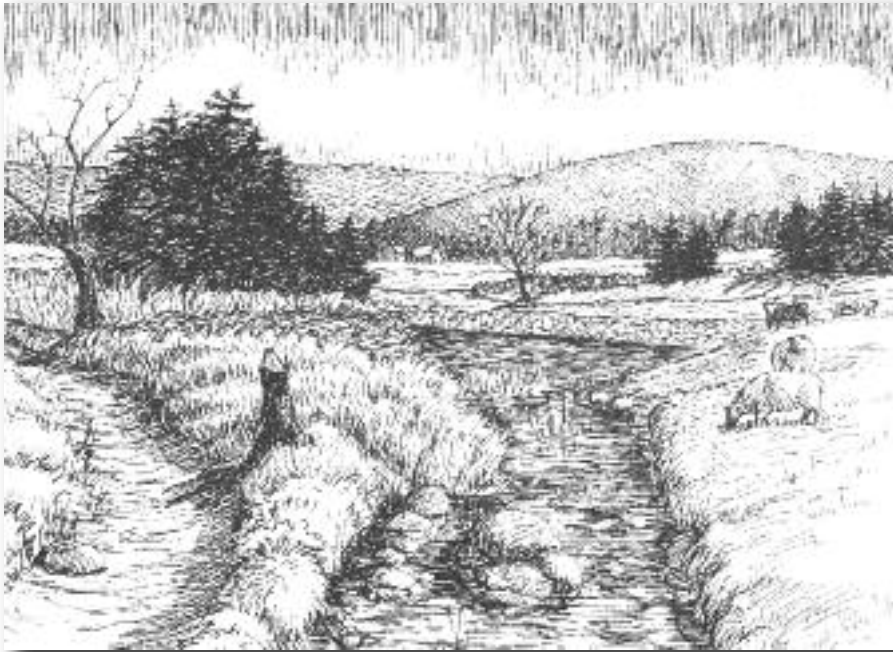
While the Highland Village has a close replica of the log house which once stood in Alba, it can benefit from the further study of the MacPherson-Chisholm structure, its origins and the stories which go with it. ☺

Jim St.Clair is an historian and broadcaster living in Mull River, Inverness County.

Seinn fo Sgàil nan Geugan Uaine / Songs from the Greenwood

LUADH CHALUIM

Seumas Watson



Milling frolics in Nova Scotia remain popular to the present. No longer serving the practical purpose of shrinking webs of moistened cloth recently completed on home looms, gathering to sing Gaelic songs while rhythmically drubbing a symbolic wool “blanket” continues to introduce younger singers to Nova Scotia’s song tradition while providing a convivial time for people to share language and tradition. Although many songs other than those structured for milling cloth may be heard at today’s milling table, *òrain luaidh* (milling songs), are a specific genre of their own and distinguished by a number of characteristics. The majority of such songs belong to antiquity and are not ascribed to a particular composer. Often times having variants in verse, wording and melody by region, or even singer, these songs have been crafted by generations of singers less concerned for a prescribed text than their application to the work of milling: hence, the term *òrain gun urra* (the anonymous songs.)

One exception to the norm for *òrain luaidh* is a well known composition by Duncan Bàn MacIntyre titled *Oran Luaidh* and reported on page 146 in the Scottish Gaelic Texts Society book *The Songs of Duncan Bàn MacIntyre*, edited and translated by the late Angus MacLeod. Its length is twenty four verses. Settings of Duncan Bàn’s song is still heard from time to time in Cape Breton and a version with seven couplets is reported in *Gaelic Songs in Nova Scotia* (page 260) from the singing of the

late *Bean Shandaidh Sheumais* (Gillis) of Gillisdale, Inverness County.

Margaree song maker Donald MacFarlane (*Dòmhnall Dhùghaill `ic Gilleasbaig `ic Dhùghaill `ic Phàdraig*), a decedent of Moideart stock, composed a local song on the same air commemorating a milling frolic held in the house of an unidentified *Calum*, who presumably lived in the general area. MacFarlane’s verses describe the cheer such occasions held for its participants. The text can be found on page 82 of *Smeòrach nan Cnoc `s nan Gleann*, a compendium of songs made by Margaree bards- including Malcolm Gillis (*Calum Eòghainn*) - published in 1939.

Luadh Chaluum Le Dòmhnall Mac Phàrlain

Am Fonn

Ho rò gun togainn air hùgan fhathast
Iù ho ró mun téid mi laighe
Ho rò gun togainn air hùgan fhathast

Cuireadh mór Di-luain a fhuair sinn
Dhol gu luadh a dh’àite Chaluum.
(We received a wonderful invitation on
Monday to attend a milling frolic at Calum’s
place.)

Nionagan is gillean òg ann,
`S daoine pòsda le `n cuid mhnathan.
(Young women and men, and husbands with
their wives were there.)

Nuair a shuidh iad aig a’ chléithe,
O gum b’éibhinn leam a’ chaitheamh
(When they sat at the milling table, o joyful
to my ears the sound of their merriment)

Clò `ga shadadh is `ga shuaineadh,
`S dol mun cuairt gu luath aig lamhan.
(Pushing and wringing the cloth, deftly
passing it from hand to hand.)

Cumail tim ri òrain Ghàidhlig
Sheinn na Bàird an Tìr nam Beannaibh.
(Keeping time to Gaelic songs sung by the
bards from the Land of Mountains.)

Sheinn iad òrain na cleith-luaidhe,
`S chluinnt’ am fuaim ceann shuas a’
bhaile.
(They sang the songs of the milling table.
Their voices could be hear to the other end of
the farm.)

Slàn gun robh na mnathan còire.
Chuir a’ chlàimh gu dòigh cho ealamh.
(Health to the big-hearted women who pre-
pared the wool with expertise.)

Peigi Eòghainn `s Peigi Dhùghaill,
Chuir iad sùrd air null mu Shamhain.
(Peggy wife of Hugh and Peggy wife of
Dugal who went about with industry
around the time of October.)

Gura miadhail bhios an t-aodach
Àm nam faoilteach is na gaillinn.
(The finished cloth will be in much demand
in the time of biting cold and winter storms.)

Cha bhi cnatan, cha bhi òidnidh
Air an òigridh bhios `g a chaitheamh.
(The youth who wear it will be without a
cold or rheumatism.)

`S fhad’ a bhios cuimhne `s an taobh
tuath seo
Air an luadh bha `n àite Chaluum.
(Long will be remembered in this north land
the frolic at Calum’s place.)

Siod a’ chuideachd a bha ciatach,
`S cò nach miannaicheadh bhith ma’ riu!
(That was the excellent company. Who
would rather not to be with them!) ☺

Seumas Watson, manager of interpretation.
Illustration by Ellison Robertson. Used with
permission

From Sgurra Breac / The Big Rock

GAELIC SINGERS I KNEW AND REMEMBER WELL

Kenneth Morrison & Jack MacNeil

An Rubha is pleased to reprint with permission the following article on Gaelic singers from the Loch Lomond/Framboise area as remembered by Loch Lomond native Kenny Morrison. Kenny's article first appeared in the now out of print Sgurra Breac in July of 2008. Back issues of Sgurra Breac are available on-line www.big-pondns.ca.

(Some days ago I heard Kenneth Morrison reminiscing about Gaelic singers he knew in his native Loch Lomond and neighbouring areas, and I asked him if he would mind jotting down some notes for Sgurra Breac. Obliging as usual, he soon got together the following notes; modest as usual, he made no mention of himself, so I hasten to supply the deficiency by adding his name to the list who will be remembered. Jack MacNeil.)

Framboise was a hotbed of Gaelic singers. Everyone in Framboise could sing a milling song. I recall being at George MacLellan and Peggy Strachan's wedding in the late forties or early fifties at the home of Kennie Angus and Effie Morrison. What an array of Gaelic singers and songs was there. Peggy herself was a fine singer and she taught her school students music with her piano accordion. She taught the late John Holmes and me "Oran Cheap Breatainn" to sing as a duet in the Christmas concert at Mount Auburn school. Not to be overlooked is that that song was a composition of the accomplished Framboise bard Dan Alex MacDonald--Domhnall Alasdair. (Contact his daughter Eunice Lively or his friend Soutter Strachan to get the details of Dan Alex's life).

To mention a few of the principal Framboise singers: the MacDiarmaid family--Donald John, Norman, Mary and Maggie come to mind. There were also John Alex MacAskill, John MacAskill, George Kane, J. Angus MacKinnon, Kennie Angus Morrison, Jim Morrison, Kennie (Rory Mhor) Morrison, Neil D. Morrison, and Dan Willie Strachan. Dan Willie Strachan and Jim Morrison specialized in precenting. (I asked Kenneth what is involved in precenting -- spelled with a "c", he reminded me-- and he explained that precentors facilitated congregational singing in the early churches in the area, where there were no organs and few hymn books; he added that even when such aids became available, the precenting tradition was preserved for some services. JMN) Before I leave Framboise I must be sure to mention Alex (Iain Ruaig) MacLeod who was in the class of the MacDiarmaids and a contemporary of them.

From Gabarus Lake there were the brothers Angus and Philip MacDonald. Angus was one of the best song singers I remember, and his rendition of my favourite song, "An te sin air am bheil mi'n geall" (She was the one to whom I give my pledge), was second to none. Philip would entertain at the milling table with his personal versions of humorous songs. And from the same community was Donald MacDonald who had a rich tenor voice and sang milling songs at an elevated pitch.

There were many Gaelic singers in Loch Lomond. My father Don Neil Morrison could do it all--hymns, precenting and slower Gaelic songs. Ross MacDonald was blessed with a strong voice and an exceptional memory, and he could sing all vari-

My observation in recalling those singers is that they were unassuming performers who enjoyed their talent and were generous in sharing it with their audiences. It was a great pleasure to hear and to know them.

eties of Gaelic melodies; his brothers Ian and Donald were fine Gaelic singers; those MacDonalds--Norman J.'s family--compared with the MacDiarmaids in Framboise. Johnnie Allan MacDonald, a stalwart of the Loch Lomond community for a many, many years--he died just a few weeks short of his 103rd birthday-- was another able Gaelic singer who could do precenting. Not to be forgotten was Alex MacAskill--a mischievous trickster-- who was second to none in Gaelic singing; Alex's cousin Dan K. MacDonald sang before the era of the recorder: I wish we had a recording of him singing "An Cuag"--"The Cuckoo". Dan K. MacAskill sang milling songs; his rendition of "An téid thu leam, a ribhinn mhàsich?" (Will you go with me, fair maiden?) comes to mind.

There were well-known singers in Grand River Falls. Dan MacLellan, his son Alex and his daughter Alice were good singers. Alice married "Little" Angus Morrison and they comprised a fine duo who sang in Gaelic and English. Angus's brother Malcolm Jr. sang very well. Other good Falls singers were Neil Angus MacCuspic, Alfred Morrison, and Archie MacKay.

Now as to Grand River singers: Sandy MacKay (my mother's brother) and his son

Duncan precented psalms and sang hymns and songs. Dan K. MacLeod, Rod MacKillop, Malcolm Morrison Sr.--the latter two were from Ferguson's Lake-- were good singers.

The majority of these singers have been recorded. My observation in recalling those singers is that they were unassuming performers who enjoyed their talent and were generous in sharing it with their audiences. It was a great pleasure to hear and to know them. God rest ye merry, gentlemen--and ladies.

Kenneth Don Neil.

P.S. My apologies to singers I overlooked.

(I found Dan Alex MacLeod's "Oran Cheap Breatainn" in Helen Creighton and Calum MacLeod's "Gaelic Songs of Nova Scotia". The original Gaelic version is given there (page 48) along with an English translation. I take the liberty of copying the English version here. I wish I had the Gaelic so I could read it as it came from the author. JMN)

Chorus: Cape Breton is the land of my love, the land of trees and high mountains. Cape Breton is the land of my love; we deem it the most beautiful land on earth.

1. Since I am at this time, living in the land of the mountains; and although my Gaelic is meagre, I will compose a verse to the land of the glens.
2. The most beautiful place under the sun, thrushes sing on the tips of the branches. Swallows play with one another, with their nests secure beneath the rafters.
3. On an autumn evening, at haymaking time, when the clouds close in upon us, as the sea mist unfurls in banks spreading a film over the peaks of the mountains.
4. When the sun sets in the West, and the dew covers the grass, melodious to me is the warbling of the birds singing eagerly on the tips of the branches.
5. The tinkling of cow-bells may be heard on the glen-slope, and the young calves may be seen clustering amongst the hillocks under the bondage of hungry flies.
6. In cold winter, the time for weddings and for milling frolics, young men may be heard at the fuller's hurdle, whilst the maidens follow them, singing in clear voices.

continued on page 23

FEATURED BOOKS FROM THE FATHER BREWER CELTIC COLLECTION, ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY

Susan Cameron



I came upon this book in the Cruinneachadh Ceiltach an Urramaich Maighstir Charles Brewer/Fr. Charles Brewer Celtic Collection in a rather circuitous fashion. I have been aware for a long time that my paternal great grandfather, Sir. Joseph A. Chisholm had an extensive library and that the Angus L. Macdonald

Library received a substantial number of these books, as I have often come across them during my time here at the library. During a chat with my uncle about his grandfather Chisholm, I was asking about his memories of his grandfather and his knowledge of Gaelic.

Chisholm was born in 1863 in St. Andrew's, Antigonish County, so I made the assumption that he was a Gaelic speaker from a Gaelic speaking household. My uncle related a story involving the use of Gaelic by Chisholm. While Chisholm was an elderly man living his last days in a hospital in Halifax, my uncle was visiting him, he had a visitor during this time and they spoke entirely in Gaelic for the whole visit. My uncle who had next to no knowledge of the language did remember his grandfather using the phrase 'Sin agad e' at the close of the conversation.

From this small anecdote I became curious to know if there were any Gaelic books among those which ended up in the library. I was able to check some files and find that he had donated, *The Gaelic Class-Book*, by George Lawson Gordon. After locating the monograph I found an interesting review of it published in *The Celtic Magazine*, 1876, the same year the book was published. I am assuming the writer of this review is Alexander MacKenzie who was editor of *The Celtic Magazine* at this time. The quote below illustrates both the writer's surprise as well as delight at the fact that work on behalf of Gaelic is being done in Halifax at this time.

"While the Gaelic is presently warmly cherished in many quarters of our country and faithfully taught in some of our schools, it is pleasant to know that it is not neglected in our distant colonies." ¹

We get a little information about Gordon himself from this article. He was a student in Divinity in what the article describes as "the province of Nova Scotia, North America" even though this would have been post-confederation. He was actually in Halifax and he was teaching a Gaelic grammar and literature class while he was studying. It appears that the motivation for creating the book was as an aid for his students. The reviewer goes on to give high praise indeed:

crept into the work, which are evidently to be laid to the charge of the printer"³

A few other memorable sections of the review include: "We cannot speak of it in too high terms of commendation, as a concise, plain, and intelligible guide to every student desirous of acquiring a correct knowledge of the Gaelic language."⁴ and "His etymological classifications are very distinct and legitimate"⁵ and finally, "while the different parts of speech are communicated with much distinctness, and impressed on the memory by a variety of plain and suitable exercises".⁶

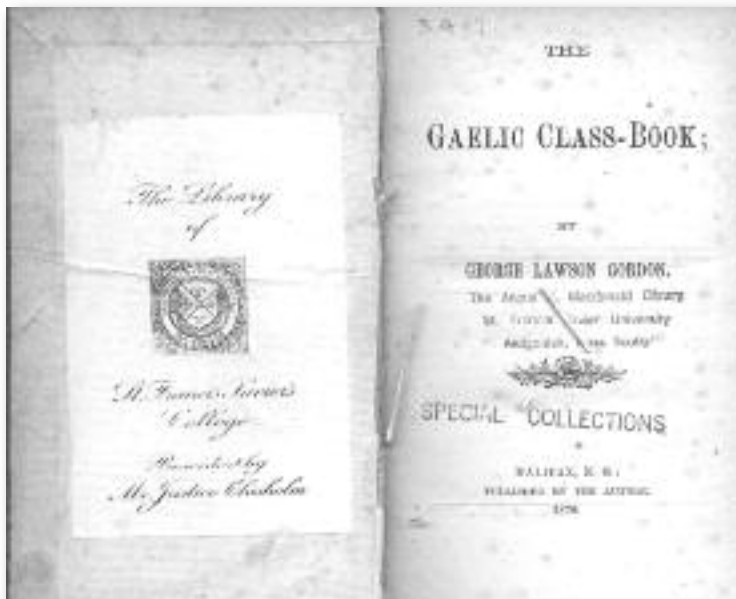
MacKenzie goes on to describe the book in some detail and he gives a fine summation of the book by using the Latin phrase 'multum in parvo' which means 'much in little'.

A little more biographical information about Gordon was gleaned from an entry on him in a book entitled, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Cape Breton*, by John Murray, published in 1921. Gordon was born in 1853 in Brora, Sutherlandshire, Scotland. He came to River Inhabitants in 1874 as a catechist and spent the summer. He attended Dalhousie and the Presbyterian College in Halifax, graduating in 1879. He was the Pastor in

Grand River from 1879 until 1885. From there he went to Salem Church in River John, Pictou County, where he would remain for twenty two years. ⁷

In another issue of *The Celtic Magazine*, 1880 which chronicles Mackenzie's travels in Canada Gordon is mentioned again. I will quote from that piece here.

"There are a great many Gaelic-speaking Highlanders in the City of Halifax, and it will gratify Professor Blackie, and those who reverence and still stand up for the Gaelic language, to know that public worship has been carried on in that city for the last seven years in the vernacular they love. These meetings were originated by the Rev. George



"We respectfully think that the title which Mr. Gordon has given to his book is entirely a misnomer. With unmerited modesty he calls his work 'A Gaelic Class-Book,' whereas he ought to have styled it by the more dignified title of 'A complete Grammar of the Gaelic Language'.² We also find out that it is dedicated to "The Officers and Members of the Highland Society of Nova Scotia." This body was founded in the late 1830's and I have not been able to find out if they funded the publication or if Gordon was a member, but it is possible that this was the case. There is only one small hint of criticism, which is not even directed at the author himself. "A few errors have

Lawson. Gordon, while yet a student at Dalhousie College, about which time he also published a Gaelic grammar, favourably noticed in these pages. I regret that I missed seeing him, for at the very time when I was in one part of Cape Breton, he was being introduced, in another part, to a Gaelic-speaking congregation, who had just given him a call.⁸

One final tidbit showed up in the Nova Scotia Archives site among Alexander Maclean Sinclair's papers. There is a mention of a letter from Gordon to Sinclair, which was written in February of 1891 requesting a copy of *The Gaelic Bards* and *The Glenbard Collection* to be sent to him. It would appear he kept up his interest in Gaelic literature, and he probably knew Maclean Sinclair himself, being in the nearby area of River John.

Gordon also wrote one other book entitled, *River John: Its Pastors and People*, published in 1911. It contains a photograph of himself which is reproduced here. The Class-book has been micro-fiched as part of the CIHMC (Canadian Institute of Historical Microreproductions) series, and is available in that format in many libraries. It is interesting to note that the copy used for this purpose was obtained from the Nova Scotia Legislative Library. A search of online library catalogues also found paper copies of this work at Dalhousie, Mount Allison, the Toronto Public Library and the National Library of Scotland. I was not able to locate it for sale in any of the usual online sites, so it could be fairly scarce and it also does not appear to have been digitized by Google Books or any of the other major digitization initiatives. It was self published and I could not determine how many copies

may have been printed. It shows up in several reference sources, these include the well known *Typographia Scoto-Gaedelica*, as well as *The Canadian Catalogue of Books*, Vol. 1, 1896 and the *Scottish Gaelic Union Catalogue*, a list of Books printed in Scottish Gaelic from 1567 to 1973. The latter publication, compiled in 1984 mentions locations for the



book in Edinburgh University Library and The Free Church of Scotland College in Edinburgh.

For those whom I have managed to spark any interest, this monograph will be digitized by the Angus L. Macdonald Library and will be included in our *Digital Collections*. Check out some of the Gaelic books we already have available through the link for our digital collection: <http://collections.mun.ca/cdm-stfx/> ☞

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Susan Cameron is the Celtic Collection Librarian (Fr. Charles Brewer Celtic Collection) at the Angus L. Macdonald Library, St. Francis Xavier University, and is a board member of Nova Scotia Highland Village. Currently on sabbatical, Susan has been recently researching in Scotland and engaged with Gaelic languages classes at Sabhal Mór Ostaig.

Gaelic Singers I Knew & Remember Well ...continued from page 21

7. When the fulling would be complete and in order, the fiddle would then be tuned; dancing would then take place on a smooth floor; " Cabar Feidh" would be our favourite tune.
8. An affable, kindly old lady would be seen making her visit to measure the cloth. She would measure with the full middle finger of her fist, and there was no means by which they could deceive her.
9. Tonight, I am sad thinking about the days of my youth, and those people who used to be with us making fun; some of them are no longer living.

10. Although these people have departed from us, they went to their eternal home; in the palace of the King of Hosts where there is everlasting happiness.
11. I was reared in my youth in Framboise, in the neighbourhood of the Clan MacLeod. Many a day we were joyful and sportive in the happy days that are no more.
12. I cannot describe to you even the half-measure of beauty that exists in the land. I will conclude because I am tired; blessings be with you and good-night. ☞

"Sgurra Breac" is the name of a series of monthly newsletters published between March 2004

and March 2009, dealing for the most part with the history of the communities along Route 4 from the eastern end of St. Andrew's Channel to the western end of Irish Cove, along with the Glengarry Valley and nearby parts of the Loch Lomond area. All issues of the newsletter can be found at www.bigpondns.ca.

Kenneth Morrison has been living for many years in Sydney where he spent most of his 34-year teaching career, but we may be sure his heart has never strayed far from his native community of Loch Lomond; a faithful and staunch supporter of the community in every way, he has a particular passion for its Gaelic heritage and he does whatever he can to assist in efforts to preserve it.

MILLING THE CLOTH

By Vicki Quimby

When we attend a milling frolic (*luadhadh*), we watch as the cloth is pounded on the table to the refrains of the milling songs (*orain luadhaidh*). This is the modern incarnation of an ancient process, brought by the Gaels to the new world. But now, the cloth is rarely actually being milled, or “fulled.”

In the past, a milling frolic served an important purpose. It was the final task in the process of *calanus*, or the preparation of wool cloth from the sheep to the finished woven fabric. It was also a social occasion. “The fulling was the anticipated climax made enjoyable by the participation of friends, the singing and the food and drink to follow.” (MacLeod, No page)

What was the real purpose of this activity? Woolen cloth must be “finished” when removed from the loom because of the nature of woolen-spun, or carded, yarn. This process can only take place after the cloth is woven so that the individual fibres will loosen from the twist of the yarn and interlock with neighboring threads as the fabric shrinks, softens, and thickens. It is also important that the yarns comprising the fabric are cleaned and that the oils added during the spinning process are removed. There were three requirements for adequate finishing of wool cloth: heat, agitation and the addition of an alkaline substance.

Fulling was a chore requiring much physical exertion, made easier by the inclusion of many hands and the singing of the *orain luadhaidh* to determine the work tempo. At a milling frolic, as the *luadhadh* was known by Nova Scotian Gaels, neighbours were invited in, the kitchen cleared, and six or more men and women would sit down each side of a milling table that had been brought in. It was sometimes made of grooved boards (*harrow*, or *cliath*), but often unplanned boards, or even a door taken off its hinges would serve. A smooth table was not desirable, as friction needed to be created with the motions of pounding and rubbing against the wood. “The cloth was moved around the board in a sunward direction (*deiseal*). As each woman gets the cloth from her neighbour she brings it down on the table to the right, then in front, then left and on to her partner on her left side, all the time keeping the movements in time with the music.” (MacLeod)

The length of cloth—perhaps enough to do four or five blankets—would have usually had its two ends sewn together to form a circle. It was soaked in warm water and an

alkaline cleaning agent. In the early years this would have been stale urine (*fual*) that had been collected and fermented for weeks, thus creating a type of ammonia. In later years, however, *fual* was replaced with soap. “They had the web in a large tub along with a lot of homemade soap in there with it. Then they would wring it out—many’s the soaking I got—and placed it on the milling board..” (Shaw, 81)

Once the wool fibres have interlocked, they can not be separated again. And once the fabric has shrunk it cannot be reversed. Therefore, the woman who had woven the cloth and was now submitting it to her neighbours to be worked upon had a lot at stake, and was usually the one who watched over and measured the amount of shrinkage. She did this with her middle finger. “Kept measuring—a *cromadh*, they called it – that’s the measure. That meant from the tip of the finger to the knuckle. Most of them figured that, I think, as five inches.” (Down North, 24)

Generally the more the cloth was worked on the table, the more it shrank. There were also various techniques required for different stages in the shrinking process, such as the degree of pressure applied or the pace of the rhythm.

Much cloth came off the old looms, but not all of it was suitable for the *luadhadh*. In the Highlands of 18th and 19th century Scotland, tartan and plaiding was woven, but when it was made from combed, not carded wool, it was not usually fulled. The “hard tartan” cloth would have been woven of long, combed fibres, tightly spun and firmly beaten, resulting in a very stiff hard-wearing material with no hairy surface to hide the colour distinctions in the cloth. “In the same way these bright colours would not suffer any dulling or weakening from the alkaline solutions normally used in fulling. Indeed, the cloth was probably given a final wash in an acid solution such as fresh urine, which would increase the firmness of the cloth.” (Grierson, 36)

Drogaid, or *drugget*, was a finely woven fabric, used for clothing. It was made with a linen (and, later on, a cotton) warp. This was filled in with a fine, often single-ply



handspun wool weft. When woven in Gaelic Nova Scotian homes, it also was not normally fulled. “They used to make drugget, we used to call it. That was for dresses. That was fine stuff, you know and it would be different to blankets. That, they didn’t mill. But if it was for any special use, for fine dresses, and for Sunday dresses, they would send it away where they used to get it dressed. And would it ever be nice material.” (Cape Breton Works, 97)

There were two more types of cloth commonly woven in Nova Scotian homes—blankets and *clò*, or “homespun,” a thick cloth for trousers and jackets. These made up the bulk of the material to be milled at the milling frolic. Although starting off at about the same width—about a yard wide—they each required different rates of shrinkage.

Blankets might be shrunk about three inches in width, but *clò* was worked on until it was shrunk so much that it was very thick and fairly waterproof—about 26 or 27 inches in width. “Milling would start in some cases very early in the evening—and usually some of the women would have perhaps thirty yards of homespun. That is for trousers and jackets. And that required three or four, perhaps five hours of milling. And then perhaps thirty or forty yards of blankets, which didn’t require so much milling. In that case they’d very often have to start four or five o’clock in the evening in the fall of the year. Getting dark then, you know. And that would continue on till sometimes two and three o’clock in the morning. Because that old homespun, boy, required a lot of pounding and milling. Heavier stuff. When that was milled, it was that thick and stiff you could almost stand it up on the end. Great stuff. But the blankets, you know, I think the women watched that pretty closely so you wouldn’t mill them too much—around an hour or a little better than an hour.” (Down North, 22)

The pace of the work varied, beginning slowly, with light pressure. But the rhythm, directed by the music, would increase as it

was deemed necessary to speed up the shrinking. The pounding technique varied, according to what was needed, becoming more vigorous as the piece neared completion. "...They'd usually start off by giving it a light pounding first, give it a hit and pass it, rub it along, passing it to the next fellow, he'd do the same- and that was bringing the nap out and shrinking it. And then when they'd come to the last part, the finishing it up, they'd just hold it in their hands and pound it on the table- not pass it along at all, just pound it- that really shrunk it, you know, that last going off. I think the idea of not giving it too much pounding in the start, it would shrink too much in a hurry and not bring the nap out." (Down North, 22)

Working on *clò* was a tedious process, sometimes taking several hours. "It had to be shrunk to a certain width-I think it's 28 inches or 27 was it. And it was pretty hard to get to that last going off, because it was shrunk so much. But some of them insisted it had to be shrunk to that-keep singing, milling-three or four o'clock in the morning before they'd get it shrunk enough to satisfy.... The one that owned the cloth would do that measuring-her finger. She had to be the boss to see that it was done to her satisfaction. Even if somebody else thought it was pretty good, if she didn't think so you'd have to go at it again. Three or four o'clock in the morning....It would be hard work with that heavy homespun, swinging that around, perhaps a fellow would have a song with twenty-five or thirty verses in it-by the time that would be finished a fellow's tongue would be hanging out." (Down North, 24)

The final process- after the cloth was judged to be finished- was the rolling up of the cloth, smoothing it and removing as much water as possible. This was accompanied by "clapping songs" (*òrain basaidh*), and the pace was a brisk 2/4 time. "They'd stretch the blanket out, and then just roll it up tight on the table-fellows on one end holding it back tight and the other two fellows rolling it up tight, right up to the finish. Then, when that was done, they turned it sideways, two strapping fellows now,

one on each side of the board. Each gave the roll two or three whacks from the center out. Then they unrolled it some-perhaps three or four feet-did the same thing-all the way till the end-just driving all the water out of it.... The same principle finished off the homespun. Roll it up right tight then start to unroll it. Two fellows, one on each side, banging it as they were unrolling it, and that would be it...." (Down North, 23)

In addition to accompanying the smoothing and rolling of the finished cloth,



Illustration by Ellison Robertson.

these songs were great fun and allowed for much teasing amongst the participants. As Margaret Faye Shaw described them in a South Uist *luadhadh*: "...The words of these last songs are to a great extent extemporized and consist of witty and ribald remarks about the people present with reference to their actual or possible love affairs." (Shaw, M., 7)

We can see that the fulling of the cloth, although made an enjoyable social event, was a tedious process that required precision work. "...Millings early on became the most highly appreciated form of entertain-

ment that the winters had to offer; yet the work was regarded as serious business and care was always taken to fill the table with people who would mill the cloth correctly." (CD transcriptions, Shaw) ∞

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CD Transcription/Notes: **Gaelic Tradition in Cape Breton: The Music of Cape Breton,** John Shaw

Vicki Quimby is a textile consultant and animator at the Highland Village. Déante la làimh (hand-made) is a regular feature of An Rubha that explores various aspects of textiles and craft production in Gaelic Nova Scotia.

As part of the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society's 50th Anniversary Celebrations, there was a special "real" milling on Pioneer Day (Saturday, September 11). The cloth for the milling was prepared by textile students at NSCAD University in Halifax. The cloth shrunk 5 inches in 3 songs.

Obair A' Bhaile - FEATURED ARTIFACT

A' Chas chrom - THE FOOT PLOW

The *cas-chrom* (crooked foot), a foot plow, is one of the most readily identifiable implements associated with agricultural life in the Highlands of days-gone-by. Its purpose and design was specifically for tilling arable ground otherwise inaccessible to conventional cultivating with animal drawn plows. The *cas chrom*'s antiquity is undeterminable, probably predating the wooden plow.

Construction of the *cas chrom* is rudimentary at a glance, although finding the naturally curving wood for making one might take some time. Certainly a vernacular tool, descriptions of its shape and form are available from various sources, two of which are reported here. The following is credited to Robert Armstrong, who published the first Gaelic dictionary in 1825. It is reported in part as quoted by Edward Dwelly in *Faclair Gàidhlig gu Beurla: It is very inexpedient in comparison with the plough, eight men being necessary to dig as much as it in one day as a horse would plough in the same time. It is chiefly used for tillage, and consists of a crooked piece of wood, the lower end somewhat thick, about two-and-a-half feet in length, pretty straight and armed a(t) the end with iron made thin, and square to cut the earth. The shaft above the crook is pretty straight, being six feet long, and tapering upwards to the end which is slender. Just below the crook or angle, there must be a hole wherein a strong peg must be fixed, for the workman's right foot in order to push the instrument into the earth; while in the meantime, standing on his left foot, and holding the shaft firmly in both hands, when he has in this manner driven the head far enough into the earth, with one bend of his body he raises the clod by the iron-headed part of the instrument making use of the left heel or hind part of the head as a fulcrum. In so doing, he turns it over always towards the left hand and then proceeds to push for another clod in the same form.*

Another description of the *cas chrom*, was observed in the Isle of Lewis is reported by James MacDonald in the pages of *General View of the Agriculture of the Hebrides* published 1811. Comments included its prevalence and somewhat greater detail on the *cas chrom*'s component parts: *It has been in use since ancient times ... In no parishes, however, is it found in exclusive possession of the tillage of the ground, excepting those of Uig and Lochs in the island of Lewis. They have not a single plow, and yet they maintain a population of about 5000 souls. All their corn, all their potatoes, are raised with the caschrom...*

It is formed with a shaft or handle of oak or ash, about 5 feet 9 inches long, and strong enough to bear the whole power of the labourers two hands, without bending or breaking. The head of tool, which is almost at right angles to the shaft, consists of a flattened piece of the same wood, sometimes added and fastened to the same shaft, when the piece of wood admits of it by its natural curvature. This head is two feet nine or ten inches long, and about four inches broad, and one and a half inches thick, and armed with a an iron coulter of quadrangular

form, for penetrating the ground. There is a strong wooden pin fixed at the junction of the shaft and head, on which the labourers right foot applies the whole power of his body for pushing with two jerks the head of the caschrom into the ground ... walking backward during the operation of turning the successive clods. ... The great advantage of this instrument is, that it enables it operator to work in mosses, or bogs, where no horses can walk, and in stony ground inaccessible to the plough ...

There is very little mention of the *cas chrom* as a tool of importance in the early days of Highland settlement in Nova Scotia. However, it is worthy of speculation that the *cas chrom*, and related foot plows, the *cas dhìreach* (straight foot) and *ceaba* (spade for breaking ground), were implements found among the few belongings Gaels brought from Scotland to Nova

Scotia. One can imagine the utility of such a tool in the early stages of cultivating the burnt wood (*a' choille dhubh*) with its myriad of stumps. Some evidence for this may be found among the reminiscences of the late Lauchie MacLellan (*Lachann Dhòmhnail Nìll*), Broad Cove, Inverness County in his book of songs *Brìgh an Òrain : A Story in Every Song*, edited by John Shaw: *Bha an t-àite seo fo choille throm agus `s e mo shìne sheanair a gheàrr a' choille sin - a' mhór-chuid dhi - agus gheàrr mo sheanair an còrr. Tha glé dhuilich dhuinn a thuigsinn an obair chruaidh a bh'aca an uair ud: a' gearradh na coilleadh, agus `s e coille mhór, throm a bh'ann uileadh. Agus dh'fheumadh sin a ghearradh leis an tuaigh, agus a chur air muin a chéile agus an tein' a chur ris agus an luatha , ga fàgail sin agus iad ag obrachadh an talmhainne le cas-ceaba -theireadh feadhainn cas-chrom ris. Agus bha té dhiubh air a' bhaile agus tha cuimhn' agams'*

air a faicinn. ("The district was heavily forested and it was my great-grandfather who felled the forest - the greater part of it - and my grandfather cut down the rest. Today it is very difficult to comprehend the hard work people were faced with in those days - felling the forest, and what a great thick forest it was. The felling had to be done with the axe, the logs piled, set afire, the ash left there, and then they worked the ground with the foot-plough (*cas cheaba*), which some people know as the *cas chrom*. We had one on the farm which I remember seeing. I don't know what became of it; it isn't there today.") Lauchie's antecedents arrived in Cape Breton from Morar.

The importance of plowing to sustaining life in Gaelic Scotland and Nova Scotia is enshrined in various proverbs. One that comes to mind, and still heard occasionally in Cape Breton, says, *Nì farmad an treabhadh.* (Jealousy will get the plowing done;) perhaps a Gaelic way of saying "Keeping up with the Jones'." ∞

Seumas Watson, Manager of Interpretation.



An Gàidheal Portmhor / The Musical Gael

BUAIN NA RAINICH - CUTTING FERNS

The strathspey *Buan na Rainich* (*Cutting Ferns*) is a tune heard frequently at Cape Breton dances and on the concert stage. Also popular as a *port á beul*, its composer is unknown, but also is reported as occurring in Donegal repertoires as a "Highland.*"

Associated with a Gaelic fairy story, the tune is said to have been made by an man who was lured into a fairy mound (*sithean*) by the sound of music being played below. Inside, the man found himself a captive and was sentenced to a year and day with provision that if he could cut the ferns, or bracken (*raineach*), with a sickle (*corran*) from around the hill, he would win early freedom. Setting to, the unfortunate fellow soon discovered that having cut the hill's front side and then its back, the hill's front was again under ferns. Cutting each side repeatedly with no success, he composed the tune. Additional information on this strathspey from *The Fiddler's Companion* <http://www.ibiblio.org/fiddlers/> makes mention of a story in which a young girl falls in love with a fairy lover.

The late Joe Neil MacNeil (Èds Nill Bhig) of Middle Cape, Cape Breton County recited two versions of the tune's accompanying *port á beul*. The second one reported here is a humorous local variant he heard in the Big Pond area.

Buain na Rainich

Tha mi sgìth `s mi leam fhìn
Buain na rainich anns a' mhonadh 2x
Tha mi sgìth `s mi leam fhìn
Buain na rainich daonnan

(I am alone and weary cutting ferns in the moorland. I am alone and weary of cutting ferns without stop.)

A chuile latha fad a' latha
A chuile latha daonnan
A chuile latha fad a' latha
A chuile latha daonnan

*(Everyday, all day. Each and every day.
Every day all day. Each and every day.)*

Cape Breton setting:

Tha mi sgìth `s mi leam fhìn
A' deanamh feansa dha na moighich
Tha mi sgìth `s mi leam fhìn
A' deanamh feansa dhroighnich

(I am alone and weary building fences for the rabbits. I'm alone and weary building a fence made from blow-downs.)

A' dèanamh feansa dha na moighich
A' dèanamh feansa dhroighnich
A' deanamh feansa dha na moighich
A' deanamh feansa dhroighnich

(Making a fence for the rabbits. Making a fence of blow-downs. Making a fence for the rabbits Making a fence of blow-downs.) ☺

Transcribed and translated by Seumas Watson Music reference provided by Pauline MacLean.

(Found in the Athole Collection, the Sky Collection and Kerr's 1st, 2nd, 3rd, & 4th Collections of Merry Melodies for the Violin, among others. These and other music books are part of the Joe MacLean Collection of Scottish and Cape Breton Music. This major collection contains many early books of Scottish music and hand noted music of some of our best fiddlers. A complete listing of the collection is available on our website.)

* Highlands is the vernacular for tunes based on Scottish strathspeys as played in County Donegal, Ireland.

CUTTING FERNS. Very old Slow Strathspey.

Athole Collection. J. B. C. 4 47 & 587. Vol. I.

Image scanned from *The Athole Collection of The Dance Music of Scotland*, MacLachlan & Stewart, 1883.

An Rubha REVIEW

"Good Boy M.A.!" Traditional Cape Breton Fiddle Music by Michael Anthony MacLean

A review of the late Michael Anthony MacLean's CD set by Caraman NicArtair

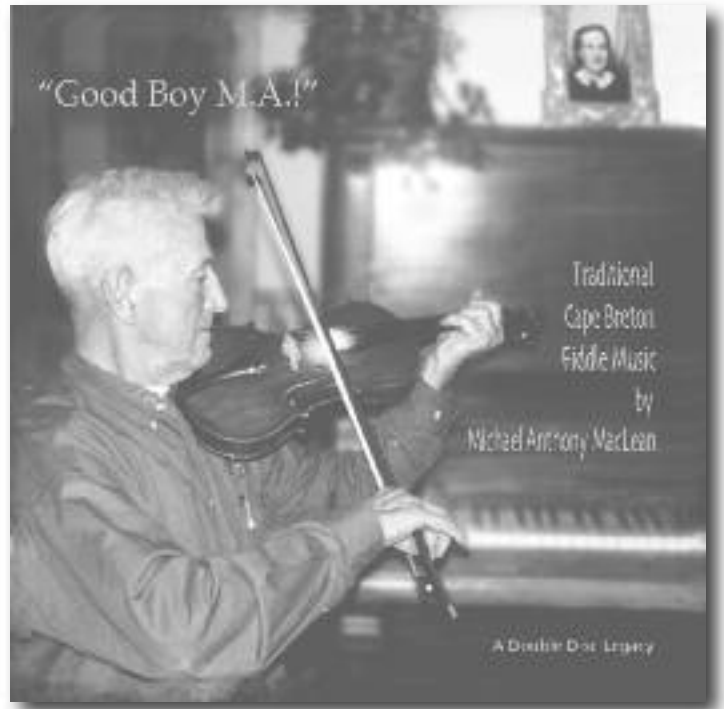
"Good Boy M.A.!" is a musical gem, especially for those interested in older styles of fiddling. The double disc compilation provides the listener with a diverse sampling of Michael Anthony MacLean's fiddle playing because it includes tracks recorded in different venues and over a broad span of time. The compilation is a valuable record of Michael Anthony's unique fiddling style as well as an important piece in the historical record of the Cape Breton fiddling tradition.

The compilation consists of two CDs. The first was recorded in 1994 in Michael Anthony's home and features Gordon MacLean on piano. The second CD starts with a couple of tracks from the same session, but continues with a collection of home recordings made at gatherings and house parties with piano accompanists including Jean MacNeil, Mary Jessie MacDonald and granddaughter Susan MacLean. Although there is some overlap in the repertoire, there are considerable differences between the two c.d.s. While the first CD is undoubtedly a clearer recording, the house party tracks capture the spontaneous energy and excitement that is only evoked by the rapport between a fiddler and an appreciative audience.

For fans of Cape Breton fiddling something that may stand out about these recordings is the slower tempo of Michael Anthony's playing. While his tempo was considerably slower than what we would expect to hear today, his playing certainly did not lack lift. As Stan Chapman points out in the liner notes, Michael Anthony achieved incredible lift through his unique bowing style. In particular, this can be heard in the reels

where he uses a strong up driven bow especially near the end of a musical phrase.

Michael Anthony came from a musical family which produced several other noted fiddlers including Joe MacLean and Theresa Morrison. However, despite this notable pedigree, Michael Anthony's fiddling style was all his own and his playing can be easily distinguished from that of his siblings or any of his musical peers. He gave great credit to the influence of his predecessors, however; what this compilation captures is his uncanny ability to put his own unique spin on traditional tunes which can be heard in his renditions of such classic tunes as, "The Braes of Mar," and "The High Road to Linton." The unique quality of his musical interpretations can in part be accounted for by the fact that he played by ear and preferred to play tunes as he remembered hearing them rather than copying particular settings that were made popular by commercial recordings. Overall, the most striking quality of this compilation is the distinctiveness of Michael Anthony's sound. Clearly he played in the traditional style, but his interpretation of the music was profoundly personal. It is for-



fortunate that this recording has been made available so that future generations can enjoy Michael Anthony's one of a kind sound. ☺

"Good Boy M.A.!" Traditional Cape Breton Fiddle Music by Michael Anthony MacLean features 2 audio CDs and a 36 page booklet containing tributes, photos as well as background and historical notes on over 125 of Michael Anthony's oldtime traditional tunes. "Good Boy M.A.!" is available through the Highland Village Gift Shop.

Caraman NicArtair, a Gaelic learner and teacher, is acting chief interpreter at the Highland Village.



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Comhairle na Gàidhlig/Gaelic Council of NS

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An Rubha REVIEW

Dìleab Ailein, The Legacy of Allan MacArthur, Newfoundland Traditions Across Four Generations

A review of Margaret Bennett's book by Seumas Watson

A late Christmas present arrived on my desk at Highland Village early in 2010 by way of *The Legacy of Allan MacArthur/Dìleab Ailein*, and it's true that big things can come in small packages. *Dìleab Ailein* is a compendium of field recordings - accompanied by a detailed booklet of commentary, acknowledgments and transcriptions - made by Margaret Bennett during her time living and researching in Newfoundland's Codroy Valley during the 1970s. Gaelic has been spoken in the Codroy until very recently by decedents of Highland stock having origins in such places as Moideart, Glen Garry and the island of Canna - ancestral home of Allan's MacArthurs - and the cultural affinity prevails.

Dìleab Ailein comes as an eighty six page book - remarkably comprehensive for its length - divided in two sections: MacArthur's Céilidh (inclusive of transcriptions) and MacArthur's Kitchen Party with commentary and transcriptions. CDs are pocketed front and back. MacArthur's Céilidh CD contains twenty nine recordings of Gaelic, macaronic and English songs, along with toasts, tunes on the fiddle, accordion and cultural references. With much too much of interest to mention in this space, two clapping songs (*òrain bhasaidh*) and a description of how the cloth was rolled after its milling to their rhythm, may stand out in particular: *Fal fal fal de re ro* and *O Có Bheirinn Leam*, along with *Gur Bòidheach am Bàta*, a sailing song. In style and presentation, instrumental representations will be easily recognized by most with a taste for Scotch music, as its played in Cape Breton, with Allan's brother in-law on the fiddle and accordion renditions by Allan's sons that include Dan Hughie MacEachan's Trip to Mabou Ridge. MacArthur's Céilidh cuts are unadorned, conveying the sounds of people, digressions and all, who are making unaffected company in a way known to Highland people wherever they have gathered together to pass the time.

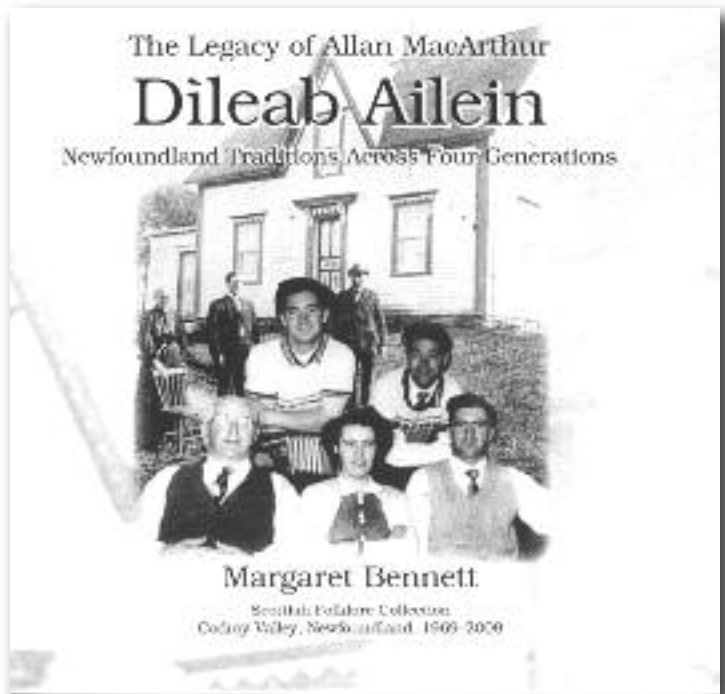
CD number two, MacArthur's Kitchen Party, again twenty nine tracks, is a mixture of English, Gaelic and macaronic songs blended with tunes on the accordion, fiddle and a final pipe tune from Ailean. Sources of the cuts vary, with some drawn from commercial

album productions that reflect broader Newfoundland influences. Allan MacArthur provides a number of Gaelic songs as well as a New Year's *duan* (rhyme), and anecdotes on traditional life in the Codroy when Gaelic was a community language. Margaret Bennett, and late musician son Martyn, also make special appearances in the MacArthur's kitchen vocally and instrumentally. A setting of *Oran nam Mogaísean* made by Allan's brother Murdock is a real ear catcher with Allan singing the song first on track 16 to be followed by an arrangement delivered by Margaret and Martyn on the next cut.

Nineteenth century immigration to the Codroy Valley occurred in measure via Inverness County as Gaels pressed forward from Cape Breton to search for habitable land in Newfoundland, finally finding a place of their own in the "Valley." Small wonder then that so many tracks of *Dìleab Ailein* resonate familiar feelings while we listen to Allan MacArthur, his family and neighbors talk, sing and play music as if they were at home just over the road.

Still manifest after four generations of family life in the Codroy Valley, Allan MacArthur's Legacy is the spirit of tradition alive in his children, grand children and great children. With their curriculum of songs, stories, dancing, reminiscences and immediate social ambience, house *céilidhs* were the medium for the MacArthurs' cultural transmissions. This legacy is a special CD experience for listeners as they join the MacArthurs in the kitchen and parlour.

What makes this publication exceptional are the qualities that recordings in homes bring with them. *Dìleab* provides a cultural overview focused on the



MacArthurs who introduce us in the warmest way possible to Codroy Valley's Gaelic tradition. Coming at a time when Nova Scotia is renewing its own Gaelic heritage, Margaret Bennett has given us a model for developing archival resources into learning materials - inclusive of cultural aesthetics - that can be applied to cultural renewal in the next island down and on the mainland community.

One might well view *Dìleab Ailein* much in the way of being part of Margaret's own rich legacy of telling the story of real people in real places. As Allan MacArthur responded to the toast Slàinte! "Down the track." ∞

Dìleab Ailein, The Legacy of Allan MacArthur, Newfoundland Traditions Across Four Generations is published by Grace Note Publications, Perthshire, Scotland, 2009. The 85 page hardcover book includes 2 audio CDs. Copies are available in the Highland Village Gift Shop.

Seumas Watson is the Highland Village's manager of interpretation.



Our People Acknowledgements & Accolades

TAPADH LEIBH-SE GU MÓR

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

PROJECT PARTNERS - Municipality of Victoria County, NSCAD University, Office of Gaelic Affairs, and St. FX University (Centre for Regional Studies & Angus L. Macdonald Library).

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ARTEFACTS & ARCHIVAL DONATIONS - Dorothy Almon, Mary Campbell & Sandra MacDonald, Francis Forbrigger, Judith Gillis, Jean MacAulay, Georgina MacIsaac, Carole MacNeil, James Martin, Fred Phillips, and Lauren Vaughn.

CONGRATULATIONS

To former staff members **Joanne MacIntyre** and **Marlene Ivey**. Joanne (Éosag), who was our chief interpreter for five years, has accepted a teaching position at Dalbrae Academy in Mabou. Marlene, who worked with us for almost a year and a half as our coordinator of strategic initiatives, is now an assistant professor in the design department at NSCAD University. We wish them both the very best in these new positions.

To **Mary Jane Lamond** recipient of the prestigious 2010 Portia White Prize, which honours an outstanding Nova Scotian artist who has made a significant contribution to the province's cultural life. The award is presented each year in

memory of Portia, an internationally renowned classical singer from the African Nova Scotian community. We are very pleased that Mary Jane has received this recognition from the Province of Nova Scotia for her work. Also, congratulations to **Comunn Féis an Eilein** which was chosen by Mary Jane to be her protégé under the prize, a recognition of their work promoting Gaelic language and culture.

To Highland Village operations manager **Jim Bryden** on the arrival of his second grandchild - *Breagh Mary*.

BEST WISHES

To Highland Village friends who are dealing with or recovering from health challenges: Florence MacNeil, Juanita MacNeil, and Kay "Caddy" MacNeil.

SYMPATHIES

To families of Highland Village friends who have passed away in the past several months: *Len Bryden, Catherine Godwin, Rev. Adam Lees, Norma MacDonald, Archie MacLean, Rhodena MacLellan, and Louise Redden*. Our hearts go out to all their families for their loss. ☹



Éosag - Joanne MacIntyre



Marlene Ivey



Mary Jane Lamond

Commun Clachan Gàidhealach na h-Albann Nuaidh/Nova Scotia Highland Village Society

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Join us and support the preservation and sharing of Nova Scotia's Gaelic language and folk life traditions by becoming a member of the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society. We are an incorporated non-profit Society and registered charity. We are made up of a membership which elects a Board of Trustees (from their ranks) to operate the Society on their behalf. Members can attend meetings; elect the Board; sit on committees; receive and approve annual reports including audited financial statements; receive *An Rubha*, our Gaelic Folklife Magazine; receive notices for events; and feel a sense of pride in contributing to Nova Scotia's Gaelic Culture. Membership is open to anyone.

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