

An Naidheachd Againne

The Newsletter of An Comunn Gàidhealach Ameireaganach / The American Gaelic Society

Earrach 2008, Leabhar XXV, Aireamh 2, Àireamh Iomlan 98: Spring 2008, Volume XXV, No. 2, Whole Number 98

Immersion Weekend in Carolina

Weeklong program features five Gaelic language, song teachers

Come to the beautiful mountains of North Carolina, a state rich in Gaelic heritage. Enjoy Scottish Gaelic language classes for beginner, intermediate, and advanced speakers and singing classes covering a range of traditional Gaelic song forms, including waulking, or milling, songs and mouth music.

This year's Grandfather Mountain Gaelic Song and Language Week (once again combined with the Immersion Week) will run from July 6th through the 11th. The course will consist of language and song classes at graduated levels. Other activities include special interest sessions in the afternoon, an evening cèilidh, Gaelic videos, a silent auction, hikes in the beautiful surrounding mountains and the North Carolina Gaelic Mòd which is held during the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games the weekend following.

The workshop is housed at Lees-MacRae College in Banner Elk, North Carolina. Information about the cost of tuition, room, and board is available on the registration form at our Web site, <http://www.acgamerica.org>.

We are pleased to announce the following instructors for 2008:

Mary Ann Kennedy is a Glasgow Gael, now living in Lochaber where she and her husband,

Nick Turner, run Watercolour Music Studios in the idyllic West Highlands.

A traditional music background and a classical training coupled with 15 years of experience with the BBC has established her as a major figure in the Scottish music scene, equally respected as a performer and as an authoritative commentator on world, classical, traditional and folk music.

Mary Ann's musical career covers several roles as performer, producer, writer and teacher. She has won several major awards, including the *Concours Internationale de l'Harpe Celtique* and both the Gold Medal and Traditional Medal at the Royal National Mòd. Her band, "Ciar," won the all-time Best Album accolade at the inaugural Scots Trad Music Awards, and earned her a Saltire Award.

Her broadcast credits include radio work for BBC Radio Scotland, BBC Radio 3, RTE and BBC Radio nan Gaidheal, and presentation and performance on BBC Scotland, BBC2, TG4 and BBC4, fronting major series and specials on world and traditional Scottish and Irish music.

Her production credits include several albums of Gaelic song and the soundtrack of the award-winning BBC series, "Aig Cridhe ar Ciùil."

Mary Ann's current passion is for the Gaelic song powerhouse, "Mary Ann Kennedy & Na Seòid," whose debut album was released at this year's Celtic Connections festival in Glasgow.



Mary Ann Kennedy

In This Issue

- **Krawchuk wins \$2,000 ACGA college scholarship**
- **ACGA awards \$1,800 in member scholarships**
- **Reviews of New Gaelic Textbooks, Poetry**
- **Survey of Gaelic Learning Materials (Part 2)**

Go to <http://www.acgamerica.org> for more information on upcoming ACGA events and other Gaelic-related activities.

(Continued on page 3)

Beachdan bhon Cheann-Suidhe

Gaelic Language Films, Storytelling, Thanks and a Goodbye

Am faca sibh filmichean matha o chionn ghoirid? Chunnaic mise grunn dhiubh, agus bha iad uile anns a' Ghàidhlig. Is e trìuir dhaoine òga a th' ann a chuir na film-ichean seo a-mach 's iad air an aon chuspair — na seann sgeulachdan Ghàidhlig anns an t-saoghal an-diugh.

Anns a' chiad fhilm (“Seachd,” à Alba), cha chuireadh balach òg luach air na sgeulachdan aig a sheanair gus a thigeadh e gu inbhe. Anns an dàrna fear (“Faire Chaluim Mhic Leòid,” à Ceap Breatainn), tha teaghlach a' cruinneachadh còmhla ri chèile aig deireadh an là a chionn sgeulachdan an athar.

'S e bana-Chanèideanach a stiùirich a' film mu dheireadh (“Dà Shealladh”). Tha am fear seo a' leantainn Dòmhnall Angaidh agus a chàirdean anns an Eilean Sgìtheanach. Bha iad an ginealach mu dheireadh a dh'fhàs suas gun dealan 's telebhisean ach le dualchas beartach.

Tha mi an dòchas gum bi cothrom aig a h-uile duine a cur sùil air na filmichean seo 's iad cho math ri filmichean sam bith anns a' Bheurla.

Chan eil fhios 'am ma bhios cothrom eile a sgrìobhadh thugaibh agam mar cheann-suidhe oir bidh mi a' falbh a' bhùird às dèigh Beinn Seanair (am bi mi gur faicinn an-sin?). Mar thà, tha mi airson taing mhòr a thoirt gu gach saor-thoileach ACGA. Cha b' urrainn dhuinn dad sam bith



Actairean ann an “Seachd.” Some of the cast of “Seachd.”

a dhèanamh as ur n-aonais.

Mar na seann sgeulachdan Ghàidhlig, tha sibh ann an còmhnaidh agus tha sibh uamhasach cudtromach.

Save you seen any good films lately? I have, and they were all in Gaelic. Three young people have put these films out and they share a theme — traditional Gaelic tales in today's world.

In the first film (“Seachd,” from Scotland), a young boy couldn't appreciate the traditional stories of his grandfather until he became an adult. In the second one (“The Wake of Calum MacLeod,” from Cape Breton), a family comes together eventually because of their father's tales.

A Canadian woman directs the last film (“Dà Shealladh”). This one follows Donald Angie and his friends on Skye. They were the last generation to grow up without electricity and television, but with a rich cultural heritage.

I hope that everyone will have an opportunity to take a look at these films, as good as any in English.

I don't know if I will have another opportunity to write to you as president because I will be leaving the board after Grandfather Mountain (will I see you there?) So, I want to thank each ACGA volunteer very much. We couldn't do anything without you.

Like the old Gaelic tales, you're always there, and you're tremendously important.

leis gach deagh dhùrachd,

Janice Chan

ruadh@idirect.com

AN NAIDHEACHD AGAINNE

VOLUME XXV, NUMBER 2, WHOLE NO. 98

An Naidheachd Againne is the quarterly newsletter of An Comunn Gaidhealach Ameireaganach, The American Gaelic Society. It is published in the Spring, Summer, Winter and Fall.

Editor: Liam Ó Caiside, liam@gaidheal.com
Managing Editor: Mike Mackay, mackay@progeny.net

Contributing Editors:
Rachell Blessing, r_blessing@woodburycorp.com
Anne Landin, alandin@centernet.net
Cam MacRae, cam.macrae@insightbb.com
Jeanne Pendergast, jeannep99@yahoo.com
Glenn Wrightson, thegaelicguy@hotmail.com

An Naidheachd Againne welcomes submissions. Contact the editor for more information.



Maureen Lyon

(Continued from page 1)

Maureen Lyon is a native Gaelic speaker from the Isle of Lewis, Scotland, now residing in Surrey, British Columbia. Her dedication to promoting Scottish Gaelic culture in its various forms has been a life-long interest that has brought her great satisfaction and many friends.

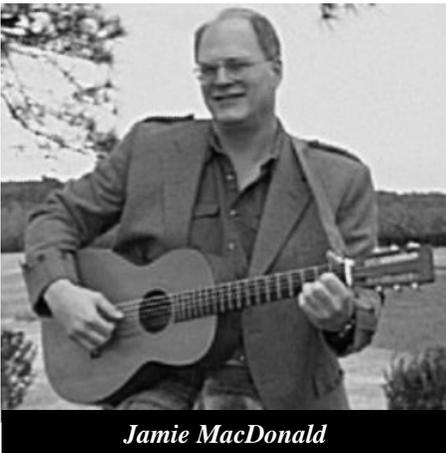
Scottish Gaelic was a main subject in her schooling. After graduating as a teacher of Physi-

cal Education in Aberdeen, she studied Gaelic with a view toward gaining teaching proficiency in the language.

Since 1985, she has been Gaelic tutor to the Vancouver Gaelic Choir, and has taught various class levels in that city for many years. Other Gaelic teaching venues have been: the North Idaho School of Scottish Studies, Winnipeg School of Scottish Studies, and Slighe nan Gaidheal in Seattle.

Her ability to present Gaelic songs in class adds considerably to her students' complete understanding of the language and culture. She views her association with Gaelic culture as a delightful opportunity to promote a rich heritage and to enjoy the valuable interchange of all cultures.

Dr. **Jamie MacDonald** is a native of North Carolina and has spent many years studying Gaelic language



Jamie MacDonald

and song. He was the first American to compete and win a prize at the Royal National Mòd in Scotland in Gaelic singing. Jamie has won medals at the Vancouver Mòd and at the U.S. National Mòd, where he has won the men's Gold Medal four times. He earned his

Ph.D. in Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh and has taught in Scotland, Canada and the United States.

Gillebride MacMillan was brought up in the rich Gaelic culture of Gearraidh Bhailteas in South Uist, where Gaelic was his first language. He has been singing since childhood and he is one of the only people to win all the major competitions at the Royal National Mòd in the child and adult competitions. He won both gold medals for solo singing at the Royal National Mòd, the traditional in 2000 and the regular in 2004. He also won the Pùirt-a-beul competitions four times.

In late 2006, he released his first solo CD, "Thogainn Ort Fonn." He also has a degree in Celtic Studies from Glasgow University and he currently works as a Gaelic translator, Gaelic distance learning teacher and writer.



Gillebride MacMillan

Calum **Martin**

is a musician and native Gaelic speaker from the Isle of Lewis. Calum is probably best known for his Gaelic psalm recordings with the Free Church congregation in

Back, Isle of Lewis. He fronted the local Lewis band Island Express, which has been compared to Runrig in both its style of song and actual sound. He is currently working as a music singing specialist in schools in Lewis.

He recently put together a program called "The Meganitic Outlaw" for the Celtic Connections Festival in Glasgow, taking its name from Donald Morrison (1858-1894), a celebrated outlaw in the frontier folklore of Quebec whose parents had been cleared from Lewis. ❖



Calum Martin

Thall sa Bhos

News from the Growing Gaelic Community

Nova Scotia's Krawchuk Wins ACGA Scholarship

Kelly Krawchuk of Cape Breton has been named winner of the 2008 University Scholarship presented by the An Comunn Gàidhealach Ameireaganach/The American Gaelic Society.

Kelly, a student at Cape Breton University in Sydney, Nova Scotia, will use her \$2,000 scholarship to attend Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Scotland's Gaelic College on the Isle of Skye, this fall.

Kelly has been a serious student of Scottish Gaelic since she began her university classes, studying the language



Kelly Krawchuk

both at the university and through the Total Immersion Plus program offered on Cape Breton Island. She has also been active in local Gaelic activities.

Kelly attended the U.S. National Mòd sponsored by ACGA last year in Ligonier, Pa. She recently spent two months at Ardnamurchan High School in Lochaber, Scotland, as part of a craft worker exchange organized by the Highland Council and the Province of Nova Scotia.

Kelly is a weaver who also works in new media

such as digital photography and Web site design. Developing Gaelic language skills was an important part of the craft worker residency program.

Kelly would like someday to teach Gaelic in Cape Breton and to be an active member of the Cape Breton Gaelic community.

Gura math a thèid leibh aig Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, a Kelly!

For more information on ACGA's University Scholarship, go to the ACGA web site at acgamerica.org and follow the links at the left to "financial aid," and then to "scholarships." ❖

ACGA awards \$1,800 in scholarships to members

Eleven people took part in the American Gaelic Society's annual scholarship competition for members this year, and the winners are:

Deborah Beach, who won the \$300 beginner level award. She will use her prize to attend this year's Grandfather Mountain Gaelic Song and Language Week in Banner Elk, North Carolina.

Debbi has been studying Gaelic for a little more than a year and has just completed a nine-month beginner course through the Atlantic Gaelic Academy. She is looking forward to being surrounded by Gaelic.

Second place at the beginner level goes to **Jeff Burton** and third place to **Anna Bruce**.

The \$500 Intermediate Level award goes to **John Grimaldi**, who will also attend the Grandfather Mountain week. This will be the third year at Grandfather Mountain for John, also known as "the Kilted Juggler." You have to see it to believe it!

An Phillips and **Amy Johnson** tied for second place at the intermediate level and **Ken McCormick** came in third.

The \$1000 Advanced Level award goes to **Jeanne Pendergast**. Jeanne has used part of her award to attend this year's Féis Shiàtail and will use the rest to travel to Cape Breton in August for a week at the Gaelic College. **Sharon Kestrel** took second place.

Congratulations to all! *Meal-a-naidheachd, a h-uile duine!*

ACGA thanks **Kathleen Reddy** of Halifax, Nova Scotia, who prepared this year's translation exercises and acted as adjudicator for the competition.

For anyone who would like to have a go at them after the fact (and without adjudication or comments), the exercises Kathleen prepared for each competition level are available for download from the ACGA web site at www.acgamerica.org. Follow the links on the left to "financial aid" and then "member scholarships." ❖

Duan Nollaig: A Gaelic Christmas

Fiona MacKenzie

CDTRAX320D
Greentrax, East Lothian, Scotland. CDTRAX320D

This two-CD collection of 35 Gaelic Christmas songs fills an important gap in Gaelic song repertoire and recordings.

As anyone knows who has tried to teach holiday-appropriate songs to Gaelic learners or tried to program a Gaelic choir concert, there are very few well-known Gaelic Christmas songs, aside from “Leanabh an Àigh” (set to the tune better known as “Morning Has Broken”). The impetus for this collection arose during Fiona MacKenzie’s tenure as the Highland Council’s Màiri Mhòr Gaelic Song Fellow, whose mandate is to promote Gaelic song. In addition to having received requests from around the world for Gaelic Christmas songs, MacKenzie noted that there was a need for Christmas songs for use in Gaelic nursery schools and Gaelic-medium classes.

This recording provides a variety of Gaelic Christmas songs, from newly composed songs (such as “Bodach na Nollaig”/“Father Christmas” by Mairi Macinnes), to traditional Christmas carols translated into Gaelic (such as “Silent Night,” “Away in a Manger,” and “The Twelve Days of Christmas”). There are several songs which use newly created lyrics set to traditional tunes (such as “Seall thall tighinn bhon Ear”/“Look, coming from the East” set to the tune of “The Dark Island” and “Tha e tighinn ann an cabhag”/“He is rushing” set to the tune of “She’ll be coming round the mountain”).

Some songs use lyrics from *Carmina Gadelica* and the Bible (such as “Oidhche Nollaig Mòire”/“Great Christmas Night” with lyrics from *Carmina Gadelica* and “Bha Bua-chailleann an Dùthaich Shear”/“There were shepherds in an Eastern Country” based on Luke 2).

Other songs are based on the poetry of some of Gaelic’s greatest bards, including Sileas na Ceapaich (“Laoidh Mhoire Mhaighdeann”/“The Virgin Mary’s Hymn”), Iain Mac-a’ Ghobhainn (“Nach glòrmhor an naidheachd”/“How glorious the news”), and Tìree (and Pictou County,

Nova Scotia) Bard John Maclean (“Nuair dh’ èirich grian na Fireantachd”/“When rose that Sun of Righteousness”). And, of course, there are some traditional Gaelic Christmas songs (such as “Rinn sinn bodach sneachd an diugh”/“We made a snowman today”). There are even some North American connections, as with Rosemary McCormack’s “Aoibhneas Mòire Mhìn”/“Mary’s Joy” and Cape Breton’s Rev. Malcolm Campbell’s “Òran na Bhliadhna Ùir”/“New Year Song.”

The arrangements are as varied as the repertoire, ranging from *a cappella* renditions to simple piano accompaniment to rock-band arrangements. I particularly like the arrangement of a translation of Leonard Cohen’s “Alleluia,” which, as a review quoted on her Web site notes, would make Runrig proud (an excerpt is available on MacKenzie’s website). Although the variety of arrangements means that the CDs lack a certain consistency of style, it also ensures that there is a lot to inspire listeners and that all listeners — whether purists or not — will find something to like.

Fiona MacKenzie is a well-known Gaelic singer in Scotland, having won the Royal National Mod’s Gold Medal in 2005 and the BBC Scotland’s Scots Trad Music Personality in 2004. Her voice is well suited to these songs, as her high, thin, and pure tone colour ensures that the melodies sparkle. However, it is sometimes difficult to make out the words, especially for Gaelic learners. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the lyrics are not included in the CD liner notes although listeners can download them from either MacKenzie’s or Greentrax’s website.

Given that this recording is designed in part for school children (the second disc is devoted to children’s Christmas songs), it would also be helpful if there were some musical transcriptions available to help accompanists and music teachers.

Overall, I highly recommend this recording to Gaelic enthusiasts, but especially to language instructors and Gaelic-medium teachers. You will no doubt enjoy having an alternative to the usual English Christmas CDs during December.

Wouldn’t it be fun if someone could convince some stores or radio stations to include it in their holiday music rotations this year?

For more information, visit MacKenzie’s Web site or Greentrax’s site at: www.fionamackenzie.org and www.greentrax.com.

— Heather Sparling

“MacKenzie noted that there was a need for Christmas songs for use in Gaelic nursery schools and Gaelic-medium classes.”

Leughadh agus Sgrìobhadh, Books 1 & 2

Laurinda Nic Mhathain

Siol Cultural Enterprises
St. Andrew's, Nova Scotia, Canada, 2007

There are two different mindsets when approaching the books “Leughadh agus Sgrìobhadh” by Laurinda Nic Mhathain.

The first is that of the learner who is trying to grasp the language while the second is that of the learner who is nearing a stage of fluency. A true learner with no access to a speaker would find this book of little help. Written in Nova Scotian dialects, it would add confusion to the student who is exposed mainly to Scottish material. In this instance, the material would be inadequate.

However, the books are written with almost a clear intent that they are not for the beginner. In fact, the books appear to be crafted so that a teacher or parent has the desire and capacity to teach small children. It is under these circumstances that this reviewer chose to apply the book.

Having a five-year-old child and living in the United States provide obstacles to raising a child to be fluent in the language. The lack of material is most troublesome. This book however filled in nicely as a way to compliment a child's education as long as a parent is working with them. Obviously, the material could not be simply handed over to a five-year-old, but neither can the English speaking homework given in the public school system.

Nowadays, with more and more focus on reading and math at a younger age, seeing complex homework focusing on reading, writing and math is common even in kindergartens. However, not all the material is applicable for a younger child. Complex paragraphs would be difficult to read, if not impossible in the beginning (as are English-themed equivalents for native English-speaking children).

However, for a parent that is a learner, large paragraphs can be overcome and read aloud, problems in the material answered verbally, and recorded by the parent and the child. Surprisingly, many activities are in the range of children such as crossword search puzzles and various other activities. Some activities, designed to teach spelling skills, might be a bit more challenging and questionable such the filling the words in boxes that are pre-designed for specific words.

More interesting is how my daughter enjoyed the time and that quality time spent together. She was very interested in many of the activities.

One draw back however is the CD. It is difficult to understand and in a Nova Scotian dialect that makes it difficult for a learner who is accustomed to Scottish sources. It might be questionable as to the worth of the CD as the speaker often goes too fast for the average non-fluent learner.

However, the book is well produced with clear illustrations that allow a child, and an adult, to quickly stay focused on Gaelic. This reviewer would recommend it to any parents or fluent teachers.

— Isaac Baird

Dannsam led Fhaileas

Let me Dance with your Shadow

Màrtainn Mac an t-Saoir

Luath Press Ltd, Edinburgh, Scotland, 2007

Tha Màrtainn Mac an t-Saoir air mòr-chliù a chosnadh dha fhèin thar nam bliadhnaichean airson iomadh adhbhar. Bidh cuid nas eòlaiche air mar sheinneadair seann-nòs, cuid eile mar sgeulaiche, no mar eòlaiche-beul-aithris. Anns na beagan bhliadhnaichean mu dheireadh tha Màrtainn air duaisean a chosnadh dha fhèin airson a chuid sgrìobhaidh. Tha e air dà leabhar rosg fhoillseachadh fo bhratach Ùr-sgeul — aon leabhar de sgeulachdan goirid, “Ath-aithne,” agus 's e nobhail a tha anns an leabhar eile, “Gymnippers Diciadain.”

Mura robh sin fhèin gu leòr, tha Mac an t-Saoir a-nis air leabhar seo fhoillseachadh le Luath Press agus tha e a' taisbeanadh tè de na sgìlean eile aige gu h-ealanta.

Tha a' bhàrdachd ann an “Dannsam led Fhaileas” a' bualadh air iomadh cuspair agus a' buntainn ri iomadach suidheachadh agus àite air feadh an t-saoghail. Ged a chaidh Màrtainn Mac an t-Saoir a thogail ann am baile air taobh a-muigh Ghlaschu, tha dlùth cheangal aige ri Uibhist a Deas air taobh athar. Tron bhàrdachd aige tha e follaiseach gu bheil Mac an t-Saoir a cheart cho cofhurtail ann an Uibhist agus a tha e ann am bailtean-mòra Ghlaschu agus Dhùn Èideann agus gu bheil sealladh farsaing aige air an t-saoghal mhòr cuideachd.

Tha an dàn “A' caoidh,” faisg air toiseach an leabhair, a' toirt blasad air eachdraidh a theaghlach fhèin. Tha an dàn

sin breàgha agus tha e a' toirt sealladh air cruadal a' bheatha anns na linntean a dh'fhalbh agus mar a tha an eachdraidh sin a' dol à bith beag air bheag — gun air fhàgail ach litir dhen eachdraidh 's de bheatha agus strì a shinnsirean.

Bha Màrtainn Mac an t-Saoir an sàs anns a' phròiseact Tobar an Dualchais aig an toiseach agus 's cinnteach gun tug sin buaidh air an dàn “Canaigh.” 'S e pròiseact a th' ann an Tobar an Dualchais far a bheilear a' cur cruth did-seatach air cruinneachaidhean òrain agus beul-aithris bho stòrasan a' BhBC, Sgoil Eòlais na h-Alba agus cruinneachadh Iain Latharna Chaimbeul, Fear Chanaigh.

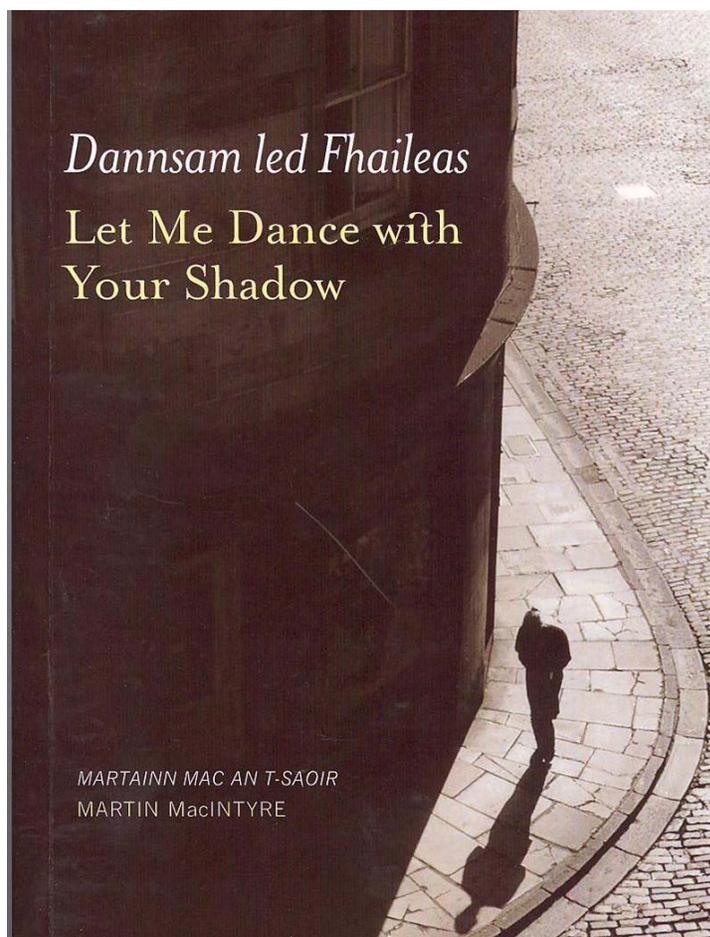
Bha Caimbeul a' cruinneachadh òrain agus sgeulachdan ann am Barraigh agus Uibhist a Deas gu sònraichte agus tha e fhèin, dithis dhe na seinneadairean a b' fheàrr, An Eòsag agus athair, agus bean Chaimbeul fhèin, Màighread Fay Sheathach, a bha à Pittsburgh bho thùs, a' nochdadh anns an dàn. Tha e a' toirt urram dhaibh uile airson an cuid eòlais agus an tuigse.

'S ann ann an Gàidhlig a tha a' chuid as motha dhen bhàrdachd ann an “Dannsam led Fhaileas” ged a tha eadar-theangachadh gu Beurla ann dhiubh air fad, a bharrachd air an dàn mu dheireadh. Tha beagan dhen bhàrdachd ann am Beurla a-mhàin cuideachd. Dhen bhàrdachd ann am Beurla, tha an dàn “At the ceilidh” sònraichte math. Tha an ruitheam agus an comhardadh an seo a' toirt beò bualadh nan casan anns an dannsa agus tha a' bhàrdachd gam thoirt gu deagh chèilidh nam mhac-meanmna le seann-eòlaichean, dannsairean agus deagh cheòl.

'S cinnteach gur e an sgil as fheàrr a tha aig Mac an t-Saoir a thaobh bàrdachd gu bheil e cho math air dealbh a dhèanamh dhuinn. Bho ìomhaighean gaol, gu ìomhaighean cogaidh, eachdraidh agus ìomhaigh de mhisgear a' coiseachd air an t-sràid tha a' bhàrdachd aige a' dèanamh dhealbhan dhuinn le briathran a' bhàird agus le loinn an neach-ealain.

With “Dannsam led Fhaileas” (“Let me Dance with your Shadow”), Martin MacIntyre has showcased another of his talents. Having gained acclaim as a traditional singer, a teller of traditional tales and as a prose writer, MacIntyre has published a book of his poetry with Luath Press. MacIntyre has released two other titles with Ùr-sgeul, his first a book of short stories, “Ath-aithne,” which was followed by a novel, “Gymnippers Diciadain.”

The poetry in “Let me Dance with your Shadow” deals with a wide range of subjects — some on a personal level, some on a local or community level and some others have an international view. MacIntyre's personal poetry has a very tender touch. In “Iain Fhionnlaigh's Lullaby” he creates a very traditional poem with internal rhyme — the rhyme used in traditional Gaelic poetry. It is a poem full



of love and one that could easily be envisaged as being sung by a father to a child.

Martin MacIntyre also has some political poems and in “Baghdad without Beltane” he focuses on the pointlessness of war and on the human suffering caused by war. He uses an image of the cuckoo at Beltane to show the misfortune of ordinary Iraqis whose country has been torn apart by war and violence.

Although most of the poems are in Gaelic with English translations a few of the poems are in English only. One of these is “Maryhill Road, June 2004” and it is a poem which gets to the heart of the language in Glasgow. MacIntyre was brought up just outside Glasgow and it is clear that he has a feeling for the people in the poem and also of the type of place that is Maryhill Road.

Overall, this is a very rich book with a wide range of styles and subjects covered in the poetry. MacIntyre is as comfortable writing about Gaelic history and traditions as he is writing about international politics and city life. It is this variety which makes “Dannsam led Fhaileas” very satisfying and a book that can be read over and over to gain a fuller insight into MacIntyre's poetry.

— Gillebride MacMillan

Learning Scottish Gaelic From a Distance: Gaelic Courses With Audio

By Jamie MacDonald

Although text-only courses are useful, they do not provide any way for the student to hear what the language sounds like. Mastering the sounds of a language is difficult, and learning the sounds of Gaelic can be particularly difficult because there are so few native speakers.

With an audio component included in the lessons, the learner is able to mimic the pronunciation, stress patterns, phrasing, and tonal qualities of the native speaker.

Sound recordings accompanying Gaelic lessons first appeared in the 1950s. Major Calum Ian MacLeod produced an LP record in the early 1950s in Nova Scotia called “Scottish Gaelic for Beginners.” The record was accompanied by several pages of text. Then, in 1969, the comprehensive Gaelic course “Sàth!” by Calum Ferguson was published in Scotland. It consisted of four 33 1/3 LP 12-inch discs accompanied by four separate books – Script (text), Grammar, Vocabulary and Glossary.

The course contains seventy lessons consisting of narration and dramatized scenes which build up a picture of life in the Highlands and Islands at that time. The text was full of idioms and a number of different Highland dialects are presented on the discs.

This was definitely the finest course of its time, and a forerunner of the Gàidhlig Bheò audio-cassette series.

Cassette Tapes

Although there are many Gaelic courses which have appeared over the years, they differ in suitability for use in distance learning.

With the ever-shrinking number of native Gaelic speakers and qualified teachers and the new interest shown in Gaelic by those far removed from the Gàidhealtachd in Scotland and Cape Breton, the need for distance learning materials has seen a sharp increase in the last 20 years. The invention of the cassette tape greatly enhanced the ability of those interested in learning Gaelic to teach themselves the language. Cassettes are more portable than LP records and they can be easily copied.

“Gàidhlig Bheò” by Jake MacDonald, first published in 1976, was the first comprehensive course to use the new cassette technology. It consisted of three books, an exam booklet, and six tapes, and was originally designed as a Scottish “O” grade course that was administered through the National Extension College in Cambridge, England. Students were assigned a tutor and submitted tapes by mail for correction and help.

This was an excellent course; its main drawback was its high cost. The National Extension College stopped accepting students about four or five years ago, but the books may still be obtained through used book dealers.

Once cassette tapes became popular, someone privately created tapes to go along with the old “Teach Yourself Gaelic” course by Roderick MacKinnon, a course which is still very popular. Donald MacDonald of Montreal produced these tapes and they can still be purchased from him. In 1993, however, a new version of “Teach Yourself Gaelic” came out written by Boyd Robertson and Iain Taylor. This replaced Roderick MacKinnon’s version and it included its own cassette tape. Where MacKinnon’s book was grammar-based, the new “Teach Yourself” is conversation-based. The Robertson and Taylor book has been marketed very widely and is still available in most bookstores. Some students criticize the tape that accompanies the course, however. The spoken Gaelic starts out at a slow pace, but quickly accelerates to a speed that is difficult for the beginner to keep up with.

In 1996, the grammar-based course “Scottish Gaelic in Three Months” by Roibeard Ó Maolalaigh was first published. This was part of the Hugo Series of language books. Known in Gaelic learner circles as “The Hugo Book,” it remains a very popular course and is often out of print.

The book has tapes that can be purchased separately, but few Gaelic learners that I have spoken to have found the tapes very helpful. The tapes are probably not worth the purchase price since only a small sample of what is in the book is given on the tapes, rather than the complete text.

They should be redone — this time in CD format following the text much more closely. As a grammar-based Gaelic course it ranks as one of the best — concise and easy to use, while very inexpensive to purchase when the tapes are not included.

The newest entry into the “teach yourself” books is “Colloquial Scottish Gaelic” by Katherine Spadaro and Katie Graham. This was published in 2001 as part of The Colloquial Series of language instruction. It is similar to the “Teach Yourself Gaelic” book by Robertson and Taylor in that it is conversational in nature, but is much less

cluttered and a little easier to use. It is accompanied by cassette tapes with exercises and examples. The tapes are superior to those that accompany both the Roberston and Taylor and the Ó Maolaligh books. It is certainly one of the best courses currently available.

The availability of cassette tapes changed the face of classroom materials as well. In 1989, two Gaelic courses designed to be used in the classroom came out which employed cassette tapes – one from Scotland and one from Nova Scotia.

In Nova Scotia, Catriona Parsons developed a Gaelic course in three volumes called “Gàidhlig Troimh Còmhradh” (“Gaelic Through Conversation”) for use with students enrolled in her summer Gaelic classes at the Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts in St. Ann’s, Cape Breton. They are currently also used as textbooks for the first-year and second-year Gaelic courses at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

Parsons’ course consists of three volumes accompanied by tapes. There is not a lot of grammar in these books, but they are rich in spoken drills. They are best used in conjunction with a teacher, but some have used them to learn Gaelic on their own.

In 1989, the same year, Annie MacSween from Lewis Castle College in Stornoway produced a course known as “Siuthadh!” This series was produced for use as modules with the Scottish Department of Education. Like Parson’s course, MacSween’s course was really designed for use with a teacher, but some may have tried to use these alone to teach themselves.

The University of Edinburgh has used “Cothrom Ionnsachaidh” by Ronald Black as their first-year Gaelic text. This is a very comprehensive grammar-based course, but is best used in conjunction with a tutor. It is not designed to be a “teach yourself” type book. Black’s course has been out for a number of years and updated versions continue to come out. There are tapes that go along with the books, but they are reportedly not that helpful.

Although most consumers in North America and Britain now have audio equipment to play CDs [in fact, many of the latest stereo systems do not have cassette tape decks], it seems that the course manufacturers do not feel comfortable enough yet with this medium to switch from cassettes. One exception to this rule has been Muriel Fisher with her Gaelic learner’s course simply titled “Scottish Gaelic.” Muriel is a native speaker from the Isle of Skye who now lives in Tucson, Arizona, where she teaches Gaelic language classes through the University of Arizona’s Critical Languages Program. Muriel’s course currently consists of three levels, with a fourth in the process

of being compiled. Each level consists of a textbook, a workbook, and audio CDs. Her students listen to the audio CDs, which parallel the textbook, and complete exercises in the workbook. If students have particular questions, they can contact Muriel by e-mail. The audio CDs included in Muriel’s course are particularly helpful — her pronunciation is good and very clear. However, as Fisher states herself on the first CD, her Gaelic is just as she learned it growing up. Therefore, her grammar and spelling do not always agree with the official standard currently used in schools, universities and publishing. If one is willing to overlook the idiosyncratic and inconsistent spelling and grammar, this is a good course by a very good teacher, with probably the clearest examples of native Gaelic speech currently available in any Gaelic course. The cost for Muriel’s course is \$80 for each level and it is available from her Web site, <http://www.murielofskye.com>.

Jamie MacDonald is vice president of ACGA.

This is the second part of an article originally published in the Journal of Celtic Language Learning in 2006 by the North American Association of Celtic Language Teachers in association with the Center for Irish Language Acquisition Research and the CUNY Institute for Irish-American Studies. We thank NAACLT and the other organizations for permission to republish this article.

The third part of the article will appear in the next issue of An Naidheachd Againne.

Dè tha 'Dol? Gaelic Events

July 5. Latha na Gàidhlig, Alexandria, Va. A day-long Gaelic language program with South Uist’s Gillebride MacMillan. For information, contact Nick Freer at neacalban1@aol.com.

July 6-11. ACGA Grandfather Mountain Gaelic Song and Language Week, Banner Elk, N.C. For information, contact Libit Woodington, LibitW@aol.com.

July 24-26. Cruinneachadh nan Gaidheal, Antigonish, Nova Scotia. A gathering of the Gaels in Nova Scotia. For information, contact Catriona Parsons at cparsons@stfx.ca.

Sept. 5-7. The 21st U.S. National Mòd, Ligonier, Pa. The annual ACGA Gaelic song, poetry and storytelling competition. For information, contact Nick Freer at neacalban1@aol.com.

Directory of Gaelic Classes & Study Groups

A listing of classes, groups and individual teachers. If you have information on study groups, classes or teachers you would like to submit, please contact the editor at liam@gaidheal.com

Alaska

Linda C. Hopkins
PO Box 1418
Palmer, Alaska 99645
907-373-6339

Arizona

Muriel Fisher
722 W Vanover Rd.
Tucson, Ariz. 85705
520-882-5308
skye@dakotacom.net

Arkansas

Christie Saunders
1701 N. Bryant, Apt. 4
Little Rock, Ark. 72207
501-663-8434

California

Donnie Macdonald
P.O. Box 607
Citrus Heights, Calif. 95611
916-723-6320

Eva Gordon
Celtic Arts Center
Studio City, Calif.
egclarsach@aol.com

David G. Williams
480 30th Street
San Francisco, Calif. 94131

Claudia Ward
22651 Equipoise Road
Monterey, Calif. 93940
408-373-5069

Tris King
Scottish Gaelic Learners
Association of the Bay Area
(925) 283-8029
tris@speakgaelic.com

Colorado

Glenn Wrightson
2673 S. York St.
Denver, Colo. 80027
303-698-9023

Kyri Comyn
5060 S. Washington
Englewood, Colo. 80110
303-781-0553

Rudy Ramsey
(Stella's Coffeehouse Study Group)
Denver, Colo.
rudy@ramisle.com
303-332-7643

Sue Hendrix
4590 Darley Avenue
Boulder, Colo. 80303
303-499-4927

Florida

Steven McBride
7904 Capwood Avenue
Tampa, Fla. 33637
813-980-0017

Illinois

Dr. William R. Roy
2404 Brookens Circle
Urbana, Ill. 61801-6621

Joshua Wilson
707 W. Melrose (right door)
Chicago, Ill. 60657
773-929-8119

Massachusetts

Callanish School Of Celtic Arts
Maggie Carchrie/Tom Leigh
1 Bridle Path Circle
Sandwich, Mass. 02563
508-888-0107
info@mermaid-productions.com

Maryland

Fred Bosworth
248 Inlet Drive
Pasadena, Md. 21122
410-437-7090

Ken Campbell
69 Burr Hill
Berlin, Md. 21811
410-208-0524

Minnesota/Wisconsin

Robert L. Hoyt
913 15 St. East
Menomonie, Wis. 54751

Missouri/Kansas

Greg L. McCoy
3605 Blue Ridge Blvd.
Independence, Mo. 64052
816-737-5979

New Mexico

Kathy Lare
8715 Silvercrest Ct. NW
Albuquerque, N.M. 87114
505-890-6572

New Jersey/New York

New York Caledonian Club
Don Ross, instructor
Ripley-Grier Studios, 520 8th Avenue, New York, N.Y.
Fpr information, call (212) 662-1083 and leave a message for Priscilla Campbell or Kitty Macmillan.
studies@nycaledonian.org

Donald Mackinnon
26 Miller Drive
Hopewell Junction, N.Y. 12533
914-221-9404

John P. Barlow
951 Sunnyside Drive
Oswego, N.Y. 13827
607-687-3272

North Carolina

The Guilford Gaelic Learners
Greensboro, N.C.
Contact: An Phillips
angelwyn@aol.com

Asheville Gaelic Study Group
University of North Carolina
Asheville, N.C.
Contact: Michael Newton
<http://www.saorsamedia.com/gaelicclass/>

Ohio

Andrew MacAoidh Jergens
2374 Madison Road #4F
Cincinnati, Ohio 45208-1073
513-321-6781
MacAoidh@eos.net

Frances Acar
234 Lowell Drive
Kent, Ohio 44240
frances@kineta.com

Oregon

Geoff Frasier
3722 SE 15th Ave #6
Portland, Ore. 97202
503-234-1582
gfrasier@eleport.com

Pennsylvania

Kevin McLaughlin
46 Huffman Ave.
Washington, Pa. 15301
412-228-3154

Harry M. Webb
380 Central Drive
Cranberry Twp. Pa. 16066
724-776-4382
hwebb@zoominternet.net

Tennessee

Cate Stewart
Nashville, Tenn.
catestewart@myway.com

Phil Smith
Cookeville, Tenn.
931-526-6194
smithphild@aol.com

Texas

David Gressett
Hurst, Texas
res1nntf@verizon.net
(940) 384-6249

Jonquelle Jones
Fort Worth, Texas
jonquele@flash.net
817-294-5901

Utah

Rachell Blessing
Salt Lake City, via Skype
rachell.blessing@acgamerica.org

Virginia

Nicholas M. Freer
4901 Seminary Road Apt 1409
Alexandria, Va. 22311
703-836-5654
neacalban1@aol.com

Stuart Morrison Stone
3079 S. Buchanan Street, C-2
Arlington, Va. 22206
703-845-7740

Fairfax County Study Group
Rhett Lowery
540-786-4895

Michael MacKay
Classes via Skype
3860 Dumfries Road
Catlett, VA 20119
mackay@progeny.net

Washington, D.C.

Croileagan DC (children's playgroup)
Liam Ó Caiside
703-717-0074
liam@gaidheal.com

James F. Goff
3405 34th Place, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20016
202-244-6867

Washington

SLIGHE NAN GAIDHEAL
Richard W. Hill
#212 400 Harvard Ave. East
Seattle, Wash. 98102
206-322-3604
www.slighe.com

Toronto

Toronto Gaelic Learners Association
c/o Janice Chan
43 Norbrook Crescent
Etobicoke, Ontario M9V 4P7
ruadh@idirect.com

Montreal

Donald Macdonald
2220 Claremont, Suite 408
Montreal, Canada H3Z 2P8
514-485-1636
donaldrm@megaweb.ca

Nova Scotia

Seumas Watson
P.O.Box 600
Port Hastings, Cape Breton
BOE 2T0, Canada
Phone: 1-888-4Gaelic

ACGA Officers

President

Janice Chan: ruadh@idirect.com

Vice President

Jamie MacDonald: jrmacon@stfx.ca

Treasurer

David Gressett
jdgressett@amli-denton.com

Co-Treasurer

Rachell Blessing
r_blessing@woodburycorp.com

Book Keeper

Anne Landin
alandin@centernet.net

Recording Secretary

To be determined

Membership Secretary

Wes Mangus: wmangus@wwnet.net

U.S. National Mòd Chair

Nick Freer: Neacalban1@aol.com

Naidheachd Editor

Liam Ó Caiside: liam@gaidheal.com

ACGA Directors

- Rachell Blessing (2006-09)
r_blessing@woodburycorp.com
- David Gressett (2007-2010)
jdgressett@amli-denton.com
- Cam MacRae (2007-2010)
Cam.MacRae@insightbb.com
- Rudy Ramsey (2007-10)
rudy@ramisle.com
- Heather Sparling (2006-09)
hearther_sparling@cape-bretonu.ca
- Harry Webb (2006-09)
hwebb@zoominternet.net
- Christopher Wilborn (2006-09)
Christopher.wilborn@verizon.net

Naidheachd is a publication of
An Comunn Gàidhealach
Aimeireagaidh
The Gaelic Society of America

Moving?? Moved??
Don't let us lose you!
Return this page
with your new address!

Address Service Requested

PO Box 103069
Denver, CO 80250

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ARLINGTON, VA
Permit No. 998

An Comunn
Gaidhealach
Aimeir eaga



Clàr-Innse Table of Contents

❖ Immersion Week in North Carolina	1
❖ President's Letter	2
❖ Nova Scotia's Krawchuk wins ACGA college scholarship	4
❖ ACGA award \$1,800 in scholarships to members	4
❖ Review: Fiona MacKenzie's "Duan Nollaig"	5
❖ Review: "Leughadh agus Sgrìobhadh"	6
❖ Review: "Dannsam Led Fhaileas"	6
❖ Review: "Sgeulachd an Da Shaoghal ann an Ceithir Litrichean"	7
❖ Learning Gaelic: Gaelic courses with audio	8
❖ Dè tha 'dol? (Calendar of Gaelic events)	9
❖ Directory of Classes and Study Groups	10
❖ ACGA Board of Directors & Officers	11