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2001-2 Leabhar XVIII

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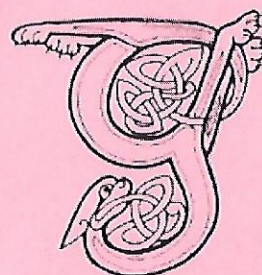
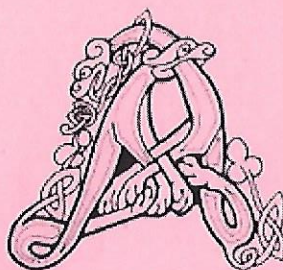
The Winter

2001-2 Volume XVIII

Number 4

Eachdraidh a' Ghaisgich Òig

ACGA Activities & Reports



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An Naidheachd Againne

The quarterly newsletter of ACGA

An Geamhradh - Wunter 2001-2

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Brath bho'n Cheann-Suidhe

President's Report

"Tha mi sgìth dhe'n fhoghar seo."

It's a lame pun*, I know, but an understandable sentiment. October was beautiful, but after the constant rain we've been having for so long, a hard freeze will come as a relief.

Autumn is the time for Highland games down here, rather than summer, and last fall I had the unexpected opportunity to visit a small festival a few hours away. Since there would be no ACGA tent there, I covered myself in legible clothing and figured that I would saunter about like a Gaelic billboard, inviting inquiry. Not a nibble. I chatted with a lot of strangers, but not one asked about Gaelic in any context.

It was only among the vendors that I found encouragement. The availability of Gaelic books and music continues to improve -- even out in the hinterlands. I bought a copy of "An Lasair" and several CDs. Since I don't believe that the merchants bring goods that they don't expect to sell, this signifies the presence of people interested in the Gàidhealtachd beyond the Highlands who would be interested in ACGA were they ever to hear of us.

As Glenn Wrightson describes in the board minutes, we are working on some changes in committee organization, and debating the allocation of our slender funds to better reach those people and to expand the services we offer ourselves as members.

"Tha mi sgìth dhe'n fhoghar seo."

'S e carfhacal mairg a th'ann, tha fhios agam, ach beachd a ghabhas tuigsinn. Bha an Damhair breagha, mar bu tric, ach, leis cho fad 's a tha sinn air a bhith fo'n sileadh, fàiltichidh sinn an sàr-gheamhradh, 'nuair a thig e. 'S e àm an fhoghair àm nan cluichean Gàidhealaich air taobh deas na dùthcha, agus fhuair mi cothrom obann turas a dhèanamh gu fèiseag bheag nach robh fad às. Seach nach biodh teanta ACGA ann, chuir mi orm aodach so-leughaidh, agus chuir mi romham spaidsearachd a dhèanamh a null 's a nall, mar phòst-sanais Ghàidhlig, gus an cuireadh daoine ceist orm air dè bha na faclan a' ciallachadh.

Ach, ged a bhruidhinn mi ri mòran daoine nach b'aithne dhomh, cha do dh'fhaighnich duine mu dheidhinn na Gàidhlig idir. Bha e na bhrosnachadh dhomh, ge-tà, ri tadhail air na ceannaichean. Tha an uimhir de leabhraichean is clàraichean Gàidhlig a tha ri reic a' meudachadh -- anns an dùthaich cho math 's a tha e anns a' bhaile mhòr! Cheannaich mi "An Lasair" agus grunn CDan. Cha chreid mi gun toir na marsantan leotha bathar mura bi dùil aca a bhith 'ga reic. Dhomh-sa, tha sin a' ciallachadh gu bheil daoine ann aig a bheil ùidh ann an sàr-Ghaidhealtachd -- daoine aig am biodh ùidh ann an ACGA nan robh iad a' cluinntinn idir m' ur deidhinn.

Anns a' gheàrr-sheanchas (faic a-staigh) tha Glenn Wrightson a' toirt tuairisgeul air na tha am bòrd-stiùiridh a' beachdachach mar atharrachaidhean air cruth nan comataidhean agus mar a chaitheadh sinn ar cuid airgid (nach eil ach gann) gus am faigh sinn aithneachadh agus gus an leudaich sinn na tha ACGA a' toirt dhuinne fhèin mar bhuill.

John Fraser
president, ACGA
jfras@aol.com

*What's the pun? The line is a play on "Tha mi sgìth dhe'n fhoghar seo," "I am weary of this exile," the title of a song by Gaelic bàrd Iain Mac Mhurchaidh or John MacRae, a loyalist during the American Revolution.

Seanchaclan

Proverbs

Is tiughaid am brat a dhùbladh.

The mantle is thicker of being doubled.

Is giorraid an t-slighe cuideachd.

The way is shorter for company.

Is giorraid an Gall an ceann a chur dheth.

The Lowlander is the shorter of losing his head.

FACAL bho'n fhear-Deasachaidh

A Word from the Editor

Alec McDonald, 1904-2001

I was saddened to learn of the recent death of Alec McDonald, 96, of Glengarry County, Ontario. I never met Alec McDonald – in fact, I've never set foot in Glengarry County. I only learned of his passing when a friend sent me a copy of his obituary from the *Toronto Star*. But his death, and, more importantly, his life, should be of interest to every reader of this journal. Alec, you see, was considered the last native Gaelic speaker in Glengarry, a region settled by Gaelic-speaking Scots more than 200 years ago.

"His was the one home in Kenyon Township, north of Alexandria, where Gaelic was spoken in the house for five generations," Alec's cousin and friend Rod McDonald wrote. "It was considered close to treason to speak English in the McDonald home."

Alec McDonald was born Dec. 9, 1904. As Rod McDonald wrote in his obituary, Gaelic was forbidden at the Kenyon school, where Alec and his brother Donaldie went. Therefore, the brothers became bilingual at an early age. It was Gaelic, however, that Alec and Donaldie continued to speak together until Donaldie died in 1987. In his tribute to Alec, published Dec. 1, Rod McDonald described how integral the language was to their lives:

"He and Donaldie used to speak Gaelic in the stable when they stumbled around with coal oil lanterns in the dead of winter. And they relied on it when they gathered the fields of hay with nothing more than a team of horses, some hay forks and the sweat of their brows. It formed a great part of his culture and his soul, his sensibilities and his poetry, and his desire to occupy the land with character and determination, as so many of his Scottish forbears had done."

Those forbears planted a rich culture in Ontario. Many of the Highland settlers who populated Glengarry were loyalists who came to Ontario from the newly independent United States after the American Revolution. Others emigrated directly from Scotland to join friends and relations settled in Ontario. Five hundred Knoydart emigrants arrived in Glengarry in 1786, led by Father Alexander MacDonnell, known to his flock as Maighstir Alasdair.

In the past century, however, the tide turned against Gaelic. Out migration to Toronto, Detroit, and even North Dakota already was established in the 19th century. Anglicization, aided by the proximity of large cities such as Toronto and Detroit, gained speed in the 20th century. "Nobody seems to use Gaelic as a mother tongue any more," Rod McDonald wrote in his article in the *Toronto Star*. "Even back in the '50s, Alec was one of a very few."

One of the others was Rod McDonald's father, who died in 1987. "I still recall Alec arriving at our front door in town, hollering at his beloved team of homes, bolting out of a sleigh, ruddy cheeks glowing like apples, and saying, 'Ciamar a tha thu?' and my father answering something like 'Meadhanach math.'" Long hours of Gaelic conversation would ensue.

It's important to note that Alec McDonald was always eager to share his Gaelic with others, whether they were native speakers from Scotland or learners from Ontario. "Alec spoke it with Donaldie and with anyone else he could," McDonald wrote. Fortunately, the BBC interviewed Alec in Gaelic and recorded him in 1992, so his voice will not be lost to posterity.

To Rod McDonald, Alec's struggle to preserve Gaelic was symbolic "of every Canadian who labors to speak and safeguard a language that is precious to him or her. Even if he were just 1 in 30 million and was forced to speak his beloved Gaelic only in his dreams."

Fortunately, Alec McDonald was not just one in 30 million. The language still survives in Cape Breton and Gaelic speakers and learners may be found in many parts of Canada. But Alec's death is a stark reminder of the fragility of Gaelic, both in Scotland and North America. I would hope that his obvious love for his language will continue to encourage others to learn it, speak it and keep it alive.

Fois do t' anam, Ailig, agus a h-uile beannachd leat.

Liam Ó Caiside
liam@gaidheal.com

We are a Gaelic Community

Bha mi glè thoilichte tòrr Ghàidlig a leughadh anns an Naidheachd sa chaidh (Leabhar XVIII - Aireamh 1). Agus is toigh leam an t-ainm ùr, *An Naidheachd Againne*. Mar a thuirt am fear-deasachaidh, 's e "coimhearsnachd Ghàidlig" a th' annainn anns na Stàitean Aonaichte. Agus, ma dh'fhaoidte, bu chòir dhuinn na faclan a rinn Màiri Mhòr nan Òran a chleachdadh le caochladh beag: "Cuimhnichibh gur sluagh SINN."

I was very happy to read so much more Gaelic in the latest issue of Naidheachd. And, I like the new name, *An Naidhachd Againne* ("Our News"). As the editor said, we are a "Gaelic Community" in the USA. And, perhaps, we ought to use the words of Màiri Mhòr nan Òran with a small change: "Remember WE are a people".

Mo dhà sgillinn

Harry M. Webb
Cranberry Township, Pa.

Féis Shiàtail 2002

Sponsored by Slighe nan Gaidheal

May 28 to June 2

Fort Worden State Park, Port Townsend, Wash.

Four days of classes in the Scottish Gaelic language, song, stepdancing, piping, fiddle, harp, history, and culture. Instructors include Catriona Parsons, Maureen Lyon, Cathy-Ann MacPhee, Aonghas Dubh MacNeacail, and others.

See the article on page 26 for more information!

ACGA's board of directors meets quarterly by teleconference to address issues facing this organization and for officers and committees to report back to the full board. However, in between these periodic meetings, we are also busy through the use of e-mail, addressing matters that need more immediate resolution.

One such instance was a proposal for ACGA to lend financial support to Lews Castle College in Stornoway, Scotland, for their program of training future teachers to work in Gaelic-medium schools. By e-mail the board hashed out and approved \$2,000 in grants over the next 2 fiscal years. This was done just in time for Past President Nick Freer and ACGA Mòd Committee Chair Joan Weiss to make an announcement at the Royal National Mòd in Scotland last October. Later, at the board teleconference meeting on Oct. 28, Weiss and Freer reported how the news of our grant was covered in the *West Highland Free Press*, *The Stornoway Gazette*, *The Scotsman*, *Oban Times*, and *The Press & Journal*!

The board also decided online to sponsor the airfare for Gaelic scholar and teacher Catriona Parsons to attend the Royal National Mòd. Catriona has been a great, great supporter of our own Mòd, as well being as a teacher and Gaelic resource for many of our members.

A third decision made prior to the teleconference was that of opening up ACGA's new official address in Richmond, Va. At our July meeting the resolution was passed to move it from Takoma Park, Md. to Alexandria, Va. However, it was later decided that Richmond would make more sense. So here's our new address:

ACGA
PO Box 17004
Richmond, VA 23226.

Móran taing to ACGA Treasurer Jana Blue for coordinating this.

The actual October teleconference meeting began with President John Fraser setting the tone with his vision of how the board could function better. John observed how currently too many issues are being handled by the full board, whereas more could be decided at the

committee level. If we could come up with a overall plan on how we're going to allocate our resources -- how much for advocacy work (Good Works), how much on activities that benefit our members directly, and how much to strengthen ACGA as organization -- we then could let that serve as a guidepost for committees to follow.

Michael MacKay suggested that we establish a "low water mark" for what we think prudent our asset balance to be and then based on that develop an expenditure plan for the next several years. The question was posed whether committees like the Good Works or Education could do their own fundraising to supplement the budgets given them by the board, or would that end up saturating our members with requests?

Anne Landin opined that there should be a fundraising component to the board's Finance Committee itself. As we brainstormed these issues, perhaps more questions arose than were answered, but the board did agree to revive the budget process and work on this via e-mail before our next meeting.

Committee roles were discussed, and these assignments were accepted as follows:

Administrative: John Fraser, Brian Turner, Glenn Wrightson
Mòd: Joan Weiss, Mike MacKay
Immersion Weekend: Harry Campbell, Jana Blue
Education: Nick Freer, Anne Landin
Good Works: Glenn Wrightson, Jana Blue
Finance: John Fraser, Jana Blue, Mike MacKay
Publication: John Fraser, Mike MacKay
Membership: Anne Landin, Jana Blue

ACGA's bylaws are silent on whether non-board members can be added to these committees. However, the board was in general agreement that it is desirable and, in the case of the Mòd and Immersion Weekend committees, absolutely necessary for rank and file members to be included, as we have too many board members doing double and sometimes triple duty.

John asked that we look at amending the bylaws to bring them in line with current practice, and this we expect to do at our next quarterly meeting. In the meantime those of you, who would like to be considered for any of the above committees, please don't hesitate to

contact one of us listed above. The more folks we can get participating in ACGA, the better ACGA is going to be.

Joan Weiss was re-elected by the board to again chair the Mòd Committee, pending internal committee approval. While in Scotland at the Royal Mòd, Joan did a lot of networking and was able to enlist two outstanding adjudicators for ACGA's 2002 and 2003 Mòds.

Margaret MacKinnon Kirkwood, who has been a judge at the Royal Mòd and has tutored several Mòd winners in Scotland, will be our adjudicator next year. She is wonderful in helping Gaelic learners with their singing, and the Mòd Committee may consider the possibility of allowing mail-in contestants who've never had the chance to come to Ligonier the opportunity to make and send in tapes of their singing for Margaret to evaluate and offer feedback. And at Ligonier itself it may be that she will be asked to do smaller, more individualized sessions instead of the one big group workshop.

Beathag Morrison will be our adjudicator the following year. She is quite active in Gaelic drama, and we can expect a good dose of that as part of the "mail-in Mòd" materials. Beathag is also involved in many other aspects of the Gaelic world, including being a singer in the well-known waulking group Bannal, which has a CD out on the Greentrax label. Joan Weiss also informed the Board of the Mòd Committee's donation of 44 copies of *Brìgh na Gàidhlig* to primary and secondary schools in the Western Isles and the main library in Stornoway. This is the excellent CD/booklet that Catriona Parsons put together for our 2000 ACGA Mòd.

In other Board news, we are exploring the idea of creating ACGA bookmarkers. Anne Landin will be contacting various Gaelic book vendors in North America to gauge their interest in distributing such bookmarkers to customers when they order Gaelic materials. Mike MacKay has been in contact with the Radio nan Gaidheal concerning their series "*Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh*" that is written and broadcast each week by Ruairidh MacIlleathain. This program is also available on the Internet at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/alba/foghlam/litir/litir.shtml>. Mike would like to gain permission for ACGA to gather these weekly installments onto a CD to make available to Gaelic learners in North America. *Nach bitheadh siud dìreach sgoinneil!*

Glenn Wrightson, Recording Secretary
gwrights@carbon.cudenver.edu

Feast Follows Famine in Colorado

By Glenn Wrightson

Gaelic-wise it was a wonderful summer and fall for ACGA members in the Rocky Mountain region. First, as you all know, there was the Immersion Weekend that was held in Boulder last June. That was followed in July with a concert and two days of workshops given by Christine Primrose, one of Gaeldom's premier singers and tradition bearers. Then in August, Dr. Jamie MacDonald came out from North Carolina to teach Gaelic singing for a week at the Rocky Mountain Fiddle Camp, as well as do an afternoon workshop for beginners here in Denver. Last but not least was the return in early October of another of our Immersion Weekend instructors, Muriel Fisher, to do a weekend of workshops for Gaelic learners at different levels. *Abair gu bheil sinn air a bhith trang!*

Of course, it's not always been this way. Back in the mid-1980s when I joined ACGA, there was just Dr. Rickey up in Evergreen and myself who were members at the time. In the years since then, a combination of Gaelic classes and study groups has attracted some enthusiastic learners, which in turn has helped lay the groundwork and create the potential for events such as the ones this year to take place. Still, even that isn't always enough, and had it not been for the initiative and stalwart efforts of former ACGA vice-president Pam Nation and ACGA Rocky Mountain Coordinator Anne Bekoff as well as contributions from other volunteers, none of these post-Immersion Weekend events could have occurred. *Móran taing dhuibh uile!*

Christine Primrose was coming to the United States to teach at the Grandfather Mountain Gaelic Song & Language Workshop in early July, and Pam thought why not see if she would be willing to fly out to Colorado when she was finished in North Carolina. After many trans-Atlantic calls and wrangling with local concert promoters, arrangements were finally worked out. ACGA's Board of Directors was asked to contribute financial support, which it did, and ACGA

members were extended a discount for these workshops. This served not only as a means of providing a tangible benefit to the local locals, but we also gained some new members.

After a Friday evening concert on July 29 with her musical partner, harpist Alison Kinnaird, Christine followed with two afternoon workshops of Gaelic singing that Saturday and Sunday. (Alison gave harp workshops as well at another venue.) About 15 folks showed up each day and were not disappointed. These workshops were quite valuable, even for those of us who see ourselves as singers banished to the shower. Christine imparted valuable tips on pronunciation, as well as elaborated on the social backdrop to the songs she taught. In introducing "Chaidh mo Dhonnchadh dhan bheinn," she explained how "going to the mountain" meant "going hunting." However, in those times one had to be careful with whom one went hunting. If you were courting a woman whose family did not approve of you, you wouldn't want to go hunting with any of her brothers!

Many of us know Jamie MacDonald from his classes at the ACGA Immersion Weekends or from the Grandfather Mountain workshop week. "Seumas Ruairidh" also does long-distance Gaelic instruction via telephone and e-mail. The nephew of the late great singer, Kitty MacLeod, Jamie has gone far in his own Gaelic development, but he's perhaps at his best in the classroom. I wasn't able to make it to the Fiddle Camp that was held outside of Denver, but the workshop he did for beginners here in town confirmed for me his reputation as a teacher with a special ability to connect with students, particularly those just beginning in the language. The workshop was relaxed and fun, and his rendition of "Seann MhacDhomhaill Air a' Chroit" was a great way to cap off the afternoon.

Finally, a few words about Muriel Fisher. She came up from Tucson, Ariz., where she now resides, but Muriel is a native Gaelic speaker originally from the Isle of Skye. The weekend started off on Friday evening in Boulder with an introductory workshop to Gaelic and an overview of pronunciation basics. That was followed the next day in Denver with a day-long series of classes, starting out at the beginners' level and growing progressively more advanced with each succeeding time slot. Students were encouraged to attend as many of these Saturday sessions as they cared to -- it was the same price to attend one or all of them.

I stayed the entire day and jotted down 10 pages worth of notes!

Here are some tidbits from the beginners' session:

- “e” and “i” are the evil vowels
- naoi – don’t move your lips when you say this
- chd – the sound of an angry cat followed by a “k”
- Beginners can bypass the genitive case by using, for example, “an cas aig a’ bhòrd” instead of “cas a’ bhùird”.
- thick t’s – when in doubt bite your tongue
- a-raoir – don’t move your lips on this one either
- am, an, a’ – sometimes mean “the”
- “m” loves other m’s, b’s, f’s and p’s

I think the highlight for me was Muriel’s reading of *Spot*. I haven’t seen anyone milk so much from so little in quite a while, but then that’s the kind of thing great teachers are able to do! The weekend shifted back to Boulder on Sunday morning with a closing workshop about her life growing up in one of the last Gaelic-speaking areas of Skye.

Isolated members might despair in the belief that they are condemned to go without these types of workshops ever coming to their neck of the woods ... that stuff like this only happens in Colorado or Seattle or Toronto or the greater D.C. region. One needs to remember, though, that these areas of high-level Gaelic activity weren’t always that way. At some point someone or two or three rolled up their sleeves and started from scratch. The size of one’s town doesn’t seem to be a factor either, as there doesn’t appear to be a whole lot of Gaelic activity in places such as Chicago or Philadelphia or Los Angeles. On the other hand, I was amazed a few years back when I heard the story of a woman in a small Oklahoma town who was teaching Gaelic to some 20+ students and she was still very much a learner herself! Sometimes you gotta “just do it,” as the commercial teaches us.

Co-dhiù, sin an naidheachd a th’againn bhos a-seo ann an Colorado am bliadhna, agus math dh’fhaoidte gum bi barrachd ann a dh’aithghearr!

Eachdraidh a’ Ghaisgich Òig

Le Michael Newton

C huala mi còisir na coille nuair a dhùisg mi, driùchd ùr na maidne mu mo bhilean, an oidhche a’ falbh agus an latha a’ tighinn. Bha mi fhéin aig beul **m’ fhearachais**, gun oighreachd, gun airgead, gun dùthchas ach **làn spionnaidh**, an tréine mo neirt. Thrus mi mo chuid agus chuir mi **cuaran ascaoin** mu mo chasan, léine theann anairt ri m’ chneas agus am breacan daithte dìonach mu m’ thimcheall agus nuair a shocraich mi an claidheamh mu m’ chrios, ’sann a chuala mi gràg-gràg an fhithich. Air bhàrr nan geug bha e, a’ coimhead orm. Nuair a ghabh e a-mach mu dheas, ghabh mi as a dhéidh.

Latha na b’fheàrr chan fhaigheadh tu. Bha gach gleann gorm feurach ciùin, gach abhainn bradanach làn de’n fhìor-uisge, gach doire beò le ainmhidhean agus deò. Chuir mi seachad na mìltean thar chnoc, bheanntannan agus àthan gun bheachd a ghabhail air an aimsir no air sgìos.

Cha b’ fhada gus an cuala mi gliongadaich, glagadaich, glaodhraich ghaisgeach is iad air an tràigh, ag uidheamachadh bìr-linne, agus bu **iùbhrach nam buadh** i. Bha fear air an ceann agus **léine-chròich** air, ’gan seòladh mar bu chòir do’n t-soitheach a bhith air a saod. Bha gach fear tapaidh èasgaidh, fiamh a’ ghàire air gach aodann le macnas na h-obrach. Nuair a chaidh mi ’nan còir agus chunnaic iad mi, sguir iad de’n obair ris an robh iad. Nach robh mi a’ dèanamh **aithne-gun-chuimhne** air fear na léine-chròich?

“Gu dé ceann do ghnothaich?” ars esan ann am briatharan biorach geur-chùiseach.

“Is **ceathairneach** mi air ceann m’ fhortain agus claidheamh gorm-lann garbh-bheumnach ri m’ thaobh,” ars mise. “B’fheàrr leam gun dèanadh tu fasdadh rium.”

Thilg iad **damh-shùil** air a chéile. “Bidh sinn a’ dol gu Innis Mirean — Se sin ar dùthchas dlìgheach a chaidh a thoirt bhuainn gun chòir. ’Sann leis a’ chladheamh a gheibh sinn còir air a-rithist,” ars esan.

“Air m’ fhacal fhéin, se sin dùthchas m’ athar-sa,” ars mise, “ged

a chaidh a fhuadachadh agus a fhògairt is e òg. Théid mi fhéin còmhla ribh. Is mór mo mhiann dùthaich m'athar fhaicinn."

"Ma théid an latha leinn," ars esan, "agus ma bhios tu dìcheallach, bheir mise mionnan duit fo fhaobhar do chuid arm gum faigh thu dùthchas d'athar mar dhuais."

Thug iad leotha a h-uile beart-luinge bharr na tìre asteach do'n bhàta agus rinn iad deiseil. Thug mi toiseach a' bhàta do mhuir agus a deireadh do thìr, bhuail mì sàil mo chois innte agus ghèarr mi leum asteach do'n bhàta. Thog sinn na siùil bhreaca bhaidealach an aodann nan crann fada fulaingeach fiùbhaidh is dh'fhàs na siùil lìontach làn leis a' ghaoith. Bha an fhairge 'fulpanaich agus a' folpanaich, na stuaidhean a' bualadh thall 's a bhos mu ' cliathaich is ar làmhan gun fhois gun tàmh ris na buill, am bàta a' sgoltadh na mara is astar math oirre, agus b'e an rud a bha air m'aire fad an t-siubhail, na raointean fada torrach réidh air an do bhruidhinn m'athair iomadach turas an cois an teine.

Ach nan robh na siantan 'gar sàrachadh, 'sann a dh'fhàs an fhairge 'na buinne fiadhaich feargach fraochaidh, tuinn a' chuain ag éirigh gu h-àrd os ar cionn agus am bàta ag éirigh gu h-àrd os cionn tuinn a' chuain. Thog **uile-bheistean** an aigeinn tromghair tiamhaidh agus fhreagair na dùiltean uachdarach iad le guth gaothach gaillionnach. Ged a thug a' mhuir ionnsaidh oirnn tonn air muin tuinn, cha do chuir i laigse no leisg oirnn, ach chùm sinn uidh rithe gus an deach i an **ciùinead**.

Ach ma chaidh, 'sann a chunnaic sinn bìrlinn-chatha a' tighinn 'gar n-ionnsaidh, coille chrann is chalg a' snàmh is a' sàthadh, agus an ceò a' tuiteam mu'n cuairt oirnn. Chum sinn oirnn ag iomradh anns a' cheathach, a' cluinntinn guthan nan laoch, dlùth ruinn, a' gairm air a chéile agus ag ullachadh an cuid airm, làn fhios againn gu robh sinn faisg air ar nàimhdean agus fada bho'r càirdean, gus an do bhuail sinn air a bhìrlinn fhéin, **air thuiteamas**.

Agus ma bhuail, 'sann a bhuail iadsan oirne. An glacaibh a chéile ghabh sinn, air bhoile le **mire-chatha**, gach gaisgeach ris a h-uile cleas a bh'aige, gu dàsanach dian dìcheallach, claidheamhan sleagha is saighdean a' seòladh mar chlachan-meallain, fuil is feòlach a' cur mar an sneachd, gus an do leag beum mi gu clàr na luinge.

Nuair a dhùisg mi, m'inntinn is mo shùilean goirt leis a bhuille, bha mi 'nam aonar anns a' bhìrlinn air muir, gun tìr anns an t-sealladh, gun ràmh, gun siùil, gun bhiadh, gun dòchas.

Notes & Vocabulary

This short story, which draws on the conventions and imagery of Gaelic storytelling and hero tales, contains some vocabulary that may be unfamiliar to intermediate and even advanced learners of Scottish Gaelic. The notes below define and explain some of the more difficult or uncommon words and expressions.

fearachas: Adulthood, manhood. Aig beul m' fhearachais, therefore, translates as "at the beginning (mouth) of my manhood." (fearachais is the genitive form.)

làn spionnaidh: Spionnadh means "strength." Làn spionnaidh, therefore, "full of strength."

cuaran ascaoin: A cuaran is a sandal, shoe or sock. Ascaoin means "harsh" or rough. Cuaran ascaoin is a sandal or shoe of untanned skin.

iùbhrach nam buadh: The wood of the yew tree, iùbhar, was considered to have great virtue in Gaelic tradition, as the yew, like the oak, was a sacred tree in ancient times. Therefore the poetic phrase "iùbhrach nam buadh" means "(made of) virtuous yew" or "yew of the virtues."

léine-chròich: The saffron shirt or mantle worn by the Gaelic nobility. According to Dwelly, it was an upper garment tied around the middle and reaching below the knees.

aithne-gun-chuimhne: An expression indicating that you seem to recognize someone or thing without remembering exactly who or what it is.

ceathairneach: A soldier, fighter or claymore-for-hire. Once used for as a term for a common soldier, as opposed to aristocratic warrior. The Irish foot soldiers of Elizabethan times were called "kerns" by the English. Cf. common Scots word "Cateran".

damh-shùil: This interesting idiomatic expression literally means "stag's eye" or "ox's eye." "Thilg iad damh-shùil air a chéile" translates as, "they threw a 'stag's eye' at each other." The expression means "to cast a look askance."

uile-bheistean: Monsters and sea serpents of various types. The bellowing creatures here are "uile-bheistean an aigeinn" – "sea serpents of the deeps."

ciùinead: Degree of calmness. "... gus an deach i an ciùinead" translates as, "until she (the boat) went in calmness (smoothly)."

air thuiteamas: By chance, by accident, as fate would have it.

mire-chatha: Joy of battle, or battle frenzy.

Author Michael Newton is a Gaelic scholar and author of "Bho Chluaidh gu Calasraid: From the Clyde to Callandar" (Acair, 1999), "A Handbook of the Scottish Gaelic World" (Four Courts Press, 2000), and "We're Indians Sure Enough: The Legacy of the Scottish Highlanders in the United States" (Saorsa Media, 2001).

A5 Ionnasachadh

Learning Gaelic

From Isolation to Immersion

By Anne Landin

I can't thank ACGA enough for the scholarship to the Gaelic College in St. Ann's, Nova Scotia. It was a great privilege to be able to return to Cape Breton this year. The Immersion Week at the college was a very positive experience that gave me so much encouragement that I have made progress in the last year in understanding and speaking Gaelic and I am continuing to learn at what seems like a faster pace than in previous years.

I am an "isolated" learner, as much as anyone who has Internet access could be considered isolated these days, and I have been learning Gaelic for five or six years. The first two or three were very slow and I thought everything I put in my brain must be running out the other side somehow. Even though I have a very demanding full time job I have gotten in the habit of doing something toward learning Gaelic every day or evening, and I think that has made a big difference. The other thing that made a big difference was when I stopped depending on the grammar books and started doing more reading. Reading is what started to develop my vocabulary and it was only then that I could really begin to understand spoken Gaelic. Of course listening to tapes and attending every ACGA event that I could in order to hear people speak was necessary as well. And that's why I wanted to attend the Immersion Week at the Gaelic College at St. Ann's in August 2001.

The village of St. Ann's is now nothing more than a few buildings at the road's end, but it began as an early French fort and settlement. It is located on a beautiful blue bay that runs out to the sea with high hills surrounding it. The college is at the top of a hill and includes a museum, genealogy center, gift/book shop, weaving studio, classrooms, dormitories and a dining hall. And I shouldn't forget the ice cream shop!

The Immersion Week is the last session the college has in the

summer. Earlier sessions include classes for fiddling, piping, weaving, step dancing, etc. in addition to Gaelic, but for the immersion only Gaelic students are there. It was a great opportunity to meet other learners and get to know them as you were with them constantly all week.

I left North Carolina early on a Saturday morning and arrived at Halifax Airport in Nova Scotia in the mid-afternoon. The college had arranged for a shuttle van to pick me up at the airport late in the afternoon and we also picked up several others on the way. The drive to the college took about four hours. Two of us in the shuttle were going to the college and when we got there about 9:00 p.m., the staff made sure we had some dinner, even though it was well after dinner time. It turned out that the two of us were also roommates.

Classes started Monday morning and we had all day Sunday to settle in, get acquainted and explore. For classes, students were able to choose which classes and which level of Gaelic they felt comfortable going to. There were not just language classes, but singing and writing classes and one that made up a Gaelic skit. There were four classes each day with plenty of opportunity for discussion, conversation and asking questions. During class, at meals and at any other group gathering we were only allowed to speak Gaelic (although there was a small amount of cheating!).

Remembering to speak Gaelic was a little hard at first, but it became more and more natural as time went on. I still have trouble thinking of exactly how to say things, but I was told to just jump right in, so that's what I did. It's true that if you wait until you can say something perfectly, you'll never say it! I soon found that even though I got my tenses mixed up and my prepositional pronouns backwards, usually as soon as I heard myself say them, I realized they were wrong and was able to correct myself.

The teachers at the college, Hector MacNeill, Catriona Parsons and Angus MacLeod, are excellent. They are all very experienced teachers, and are patient, encouraging and totally not intimidating. They seemed to understand all our badly worded questions and our not necessarily proper pronunciations and they made sure that we understood what they were saying to us.

In addition to the teachers, we were extremely lucky to have with us for all or most of the week, two other Cape Bretoners, Peter MacLean and Jamie MacNeill, who are native Gaelic speakers. They at-

tended the classes I was in and were able to offer their experience about various ways things might be said. They also ate meals with us and answered innumerable questions the whole time. I'm sure we tried their patience but they were always kind and thoughtful in their answers. Having them with us was a wonderful experience.

One of my favorite things was a poem by Derick Thomson we read in Catriona's class which contained the words, "Tha an saoghal a bh'againn a' leantainn ruinn chon a' cheum as fhaide."* That sentiment seems to me to apply appropriately to my week at the college.

At night there was always something going on. On Tuesday night we caravanned to Margaree Harbour for a milling frolic (otherwise known as a waulking of the cloth). It was a beautiful drive and a fun evening of singing the milling songs for which Cape Breton is so well-known. On Wednesday night we had a ceilidh at the school. There were several performances from the students, more milling songs, and lots of singing and fiddling. Thursday evening we took a three-hour boat trip out on St. Ann's Bay to the "bird islands." What a beautiful evening and the scenery was outstanding! We saw several bald eagles, lots of cormorants and other birds. Coming back in the bright moonlight, Joe Peter played the fiddle and some of the students danced in the aisle of the boat!

Although some of the students knew each other, most did not, but it didn't take long for everyone to get to know each other, and there was great camaraderie. The positive attitudes and spirit of fun were obvious from day one. In the midst of all the activities, several of us managed to go out for a tasty lobster dinner one night. I really hated to leave when the week was over – I had many new friends and many wonderful memories. The week was "cho math 's a ghabhas"!

'S e an ciad thaom de 'n taigeis as teotha dhith
"The first squirt from the haggis is the hottest"

Good Tales, Good Tunes, Good Times

By Michael Mackay

ACGA's U.S. National Mòd was held Sept. 7-9 last year in our traditional venue, the Ligonier Highland festival in western Pennsylvania. This year, we missed some of the folks who regularly attend the Mòd, but we did get to enjoy seeing and hearing from many newcomers. The Mòd still seems to be going strong, attracting some amazing talent and, though we were tucked away from the main byways of the festival itself, we still managed to attract spectators who were happy to listen to the songs and music of the Gaels.

Friday night started things, with the usual slow trickle of people arriving from all corners and, despite a slightly late start, we still managed to get a storytelling competition in when all were there. Nick Freer, Kevin McLaughlin, Cheryl Mitchell and I provided the stories, and Rosemary McCormack, our adjudicator, pitched in with stories of her own. We retired after the storytelling to get ready for the next day's competition.

Competition day proved to be a bit on the warm side, but everyone hung in till the end. Kevin McLaughlin was, as always, a fine MC, lining us up for our turns. Harry Webb fulfilled his traditional role as intermission musician extraordinaire for the morning session, and Julie Burke and Anne Alexander provided music for the afternoon. After the final song was over, and the final scores were tallied (results are given below), we headed off to get ready for the céilidh at the Ligonier Tavern -- which was one of the longest céilidhs at the tavern in recent years. Wherever the céilidh wound up that night, I'm not sure, but it was late enough for me leaving the tavern!

Through the weekend we were honored to have songs and memories from our 2000 Royal Nation Mòd winners, Innis MacLeod from Lewis and Deirdre Mactaggart from Islay. Innis gave us, among others, the powerful song he sang for the Mòd about how his grandfather saved the lives of many others during World War II through his sailing expertise, and Deirdre graced us with her lovely voice for

many songs of her own. It was, as it always is, a real pleasure having the Royal Mòd winners among us for our own Mòd weekend.

Our thanks go to Rosemary, who adjudicated with her usual helpfulness and grace -- the words of advice she gave to us as competitors on Saturday provided us all with valuable insight into the competition process. It was also a pleasure hearing some of the *seanchas* of the Gaelic world from one of its masters.

I would also like to mention the other folks who made the Mòd possible -- Mary Swope, Julie Burke, our registrar for this year, Liam Ó Caiside, Cathi Mackay, our treasurer, and of course, Joan Weiss, for holding it all together and doing the countless errands and details that she always does, and for the vision and encouragement she provides every year that makes each Mòd special.

I'd like to close by mentioning something that Rosemary said the first night we were gathered -- how impressed she is with the level of Gaelic learning that we have all strived toward, and the quality of what we have produced. In particular, the mail-in competition contains material that could easily be collected and published. I'd like to take the opportunity, then, to encourage those who had submitted mail-in material to let us know whether such a publication would appeal to you, and if you'd be willing to contribute your mail-in material for such a book or booklet. Aside from seeing your name in print, it would be a great way to show off all our hard work and accomplishments as Gaelic learners. *Cha mhisde sgeul mhath aithris dà uair!* (A good tale is not the worse of being twice told).

Na Buannaichean: 2001 Mòd Medallists

Slow Song:

Women:

1st Place: Jonquele Jones
2nd Place: Ellen Beard, Frances Acar
3rd Place: Mary Swope

Men:

1st Place: Harry MacKenzie
2nd Place: Michael Mackay
3rd Place: Reverdy Wright

Work Song:

Women:

1st Place: Frances Acar
2nd Place: Mary Swope
3rd Place: Sofia Calderwood

Puirt:

1st Place: Harry MacKenzie
2nd Place: Tracy Buchannan, Jonquele Jones
3rd Place: Louise McMullin

Final Song:

Women:

1st Place: Louise McMullin
2nd Place: Frances Acar
3rd Place: Mary Swope, Jonquele Jones

Men:

1st Place: Harry MacKenzie
2nd Place: Michael Mackay

Overall:

Women:

1st Place: Frances Acar
2nd Place: Jonquele Jones, Louise McMullin
3rd Place: Mary Swope, Ellen Beard

Men:

1st Place: Harry MacKenzie
2nd Place: Michael Mackay

Poetry Recitation:

1st Place: Micheal Mackay
2nd Place: Stanislaw Gerchak
3rd Place: Nick Freer
4th Place: Mary Swope
5th Place: Cheryl Mitchell

Storytelling:

1st Place: Micheal Mackay
2nd Place: Nick Freer
3rd Place: Kevin McLaughlin
4th Place: Cheryl Mitchell

Mail-In Prose Competitions:

Beginner:

1st Place: Ellen Beard
2nd Place: Cheryl Mitchell
3rd Place: Arian Inigo

Intermediate:

1st Place: Mary Swope
2nd Place: Susann Cobb
3rd Place: Heather Sparling

Advanced:

1st Place: John Fraser
2nd Place: Anne Landin
3rd Place: Nancy Neveln
4th Place: Steve McBride
5th Place: Eve Gordon

Fluent:

1st Place: Richard Hill
2nd Place: Michael Mackay

Original Poem:

1st Place: Jamie MacDonald
2nd Place: Michael Mackay
3rd Place: Susan Cobb

Original Prose:

1st Place: Richard Hill

Special Prizes:

Youth Award: Jessica Mackay
Lewis and Harris Dance Society Award: Kate Herr
Argyle Prize: Michael Mackay
Sabhal Mòr Scholarship: Anne Landin

Bàrdachd

Poetry

A' Fàgail Carolina a Tuath

Ged bu cheòlmhor a sheinn sinn òrain
Ged bu bhinn a sheinn sinn ceòl
Ged bu bhlàth ar còmhraidh crìdheil
'S ann a thèid mi dhachaidh 'nochd.

Soraidh bhuam do choilltean cùbhraidh
Far am bith na h-eòin ri ceòl
Shuidh sinn cruinn fo chraobh nan òran
'Falbh a-nis do h-uile h-àit'.

Ceòl nam feadag, pìob', is clàrsaich
Guthan ri seinn a measg nam beann
Coibhneas càirdeil air mo chuimhne
Tillidh sinn 'san àm ri teachd

Soraidh slàn do luchd na Gàidhlig
Anns gach àit' a' trialladh iad
Do luchd ciùil, 's do luchd teagaisg
Le gràdh do'n chàin anns gach crìdhe.

-- le Eubha Ghòrdan

Written as the author was returning home to California from the weeklong Gaelic song class at Banner Elk and Grandfather Mountain, N.C., last July.

Tòimhseachain

Ciamar a chaidh dhuibh leis na tòimhseachain a bh'anns an iris mu dheireadh? Seo agaibh fuasglaidhean, is chi sibh cho ciallach 's a bha sibh!

(How did you do with the riddles in the last issue? Here are answers, and you can see how smart you were!)

Tha e a-muigh is tha e a-staigh, tha e eadar an dà thaigh,
tha e fo chasan a' chruidh, 's cha tomhais thusa e.
(It's outside and inside, it's between two houses, it's
under the cattle's feet, and you can't measure it)

Fregairt: Poll (Answer: Mud)

Tha slat chaol, chaol ann an taobh taigh an tuairneir is
chan eil air an t-saoghal a dh'fhaodas a gluasad.
(A thin, thin stick is in the wood-turner's house, and
nothing in the world may move it)

Fregairt: Gath na grèine (Answer: A ray of sunlight)

Tobar gun tòin, cumaidh e làn de fhuil is de fheòil.
(A well without a bottom, it stays full of flesh and
blood)

Fregairt: Fàinne (Answer: A ring)

Nighean bheag a' chòta-bhàin anns an t-sabhal 's anns an
àth, mar is motha tha i 'g ithe 's ann is lugha tha i fàs.
(A little girl with a white coat in the barn and in the
kiln, the more she eats, the smaller she grows)

Fregairt: Coinneal (Answer: A candle)

Seo agaibh feadhainn eile! (Here's some more!)

Togaidh leanabh beag na dhòrn e 's cha tog an t-arm dearg
le ròp e.

(A child may lift it in his fist, and the red army cannot lift it with a rope)

Rud nach eil 's nach robh 's nach bi, sìn a-mach do làmh
is chì.

(A thing that isn't and wasn't and won't be, stretch out your hand and you will see)

Is mi mi fhìn, is mi gach duine, ach sgrìob mo dhruim is
cha mhi duine idir.

(I am me, and I am everyone, but scratch my back, and I am no-one at all)

Féis Shiàtail 2002

Seattle's Gaelic language and cultural society presents workshops and performances by renowned tradition-bearers from North America and Scotland

Slighe nan Gaidheal presents Féis Shiàtail from May 28 through June 2, 2002 at Fort Worden State Park in Port Townsend, Washington. This Scottish Gaelic cultural festival features workshops and performances from renowned scholars and musicians from North America and Scotland. Class topics will include Gaelic language, song, poetry, and literature, harp, fiddle, Cape Breton step dance, and bagpipes. A concert on Friday, May 31 will be one of the festival's highlights. Faculty and friends will delight audiences with Gaelic music, dance and poetry.

Our Gaelic language and literature instructors are:

Catriona Parsons – A fluent Gaelic speaker from the Isle of Lewis, Associate Professor in the Celtic Department of St. Francis Xavier University, and author of *Gàidhlig Troimh Chòmhradh* Catriona joins us to teach Gaelic language and song.

Maureen Lyon – A fluent Gaelic speaker from the Isle of Lewis, Maureen has taught Gaelic privately in Vancouver, at the Celtic Arts programs in Coeur d'Alene and Winnipeg, and many Slighe nan Gaidheal events.

Aonghas Dubh MacNeacail – A fluent Gaelic speaker from the Isle of Skye and award-winning poet, Aonghas will lead workshops on Gaelic literature, poetry, and Gaelic media.

Our other subjects will be presented by:

Catherine-Ann MacPhee – Gaelic song

Wendy MacIsaac – Cape Breton step dance

Rona MacDonald Lightfoot – Highland bagpipe

Judith Peacock Cummings – Scottish harp

Calum MacKinnon – Scottish fiddle

Participants may register for all four days at a cost of \$395 or for Friday and Saturday at a cost of \$245. Meals and accommodation are included. A late fee of \$50 will be charged for registrations received after March 1, 2002. For more information about the Féis contact: Pandora Fitzpatrick, 206-789-2522, pandora@slighe.com, Seumas Gagné, 206-297-8398, seumas@slighe.com or Kathryn Cole, 206-340-1623, kathryn@slighe.com

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

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