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The Gaelic Society of America



# Naidheachd

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The Winter

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1996**

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### **\* Dues are Due**

Just a reminder that dues for 1997 are now due. If you haven't done so already, please remit as soon as possible. As a membership driven organization, ACGA is highly dependent on your continued support.

**Dues are \$20 per member. Added contributions for our charitable activities are appreciated.**



## LITRICHEAN DHUINN (LETTERS TO US)

Progress happens. Letters have begun to come to the Journal by channels other than post. It is not a process that we approve of but accept as Life with the wry thought that it is the unfortunate consequence of running the world by replacing each generation by amateurs. Thus, the letters are now to us and not just to the Editor.

James B. Grandon writes in part:

... I often see the following bit of wry humor in Naidheachd, without an author or source referenced. "Tis the melancholy season, The saddest of the year. Much too warm for whisky, Much too cold for beer". In deference to "The Author", I'm offering the following which I translated into Gaelic... and I'll not make any statement about my knowledge of poetry. " *'Se 'n t-àm a tha dubh-bhròn, a's brònaich' na bliadhn'. Cus blàiths airson uisg'-beatha, Cus fuachd airson leanna*".

James B. Grandon  
Citrus Heights, California

[The original poem was recited to me in a moment of exuberance over beer by a friend who was much Classically oriented by his schooling. He now says that I misquoted him and was not exact - my quote "does not scan", but that the poem is someone's parody of a poem by William Cullen Bryant that begins: "The melancholy days have come, the saddest of the year, of wailing winds and naked woods, of meadows brown and sere".] ED

About a year ago we published a letter from Francis Mangers requesting information about early Celtic music. We sent him a copy of the last Naicheachd with the account of Prof. Verlyn Flieger's series at the Smithsonian Institution about the the Celts on the chance that he would find some sources of interest to him. He replied in part:

Thank you for the information. I shall follow up on it. To date I have found or received almost nothing. A.H. Jones in Celtic Studies at Berkeley granted me an interview where she stated " Celtic Music is a 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon. There is some from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, mostly Scottish Poets, almost nothing from the 17<sup>th</sup>, and that's it!" Her pronouncement appears to be coming true. If 16<sup>th</sup> century or earlier Celtic music exists, it is extremely rare. I am still chasing it, but all leads have so far been false or secondarily documented. I've found considerable first millenia tunes, mostly ecclesiastic, but it appears that the Celts had no cultural music. They borrowed it all from elsewhere [see page 16, this issue]. I'm discouraged but still looking.

Francis Mangers  
901 Morris  
No. 3  
Mt. Shasta, CA 96067

If anyone has any information, send it to Mr. Mangers. ED

\* \* \* \* \*

*Abair ach beagan is abair gu math.*  
Say but little and say it well.



## **PRESIDENT'S NOTES**

### **\* Board Approves Funding for Games**

At its October meeting the ACGA Board of Directors agreed to make available a limited amount of funds for individuals or groups to represent ACGA at various Highland Games this coming year. Those interested should contact a Board member by **31 March 1997**. Applicants will need to tell us the venue location, date, and expected costs.

Other information that would be helpful to the Board in its evaluation process would address questions such as: (1) Will the applicant be representing any other group such, as a clan society, at the same event? (2) What displays or activities are being planned for the booth? (3) Is there a local study group/class in place or actively being planned that can follow up on the interest generated by having an ACGA table? (4) Are there alternate or supplemental sources of funding available if ACGA can't cover the full cost? (5) Why is this a good locale for ACGA to try to advance Gaelic?

The Board will consider at its spring meeting all proposals that have been received by the deadline. We strongly discourage members from incurring expenses without the Board's prior approval and then seeking reimbursement after the fact. By approving requests in advance using the above mentioned criteria, it is felt that we can better direct our limited resources.

### **\* Mòd Vancouver**

Mòd Vancouver will take place 7-10 May 1997. This biennial event will begin on Wednesday evening with a

concert by guest artists from Scotland as well as local musicians. Competitions are scheduled for Thursday and Friday evenings and all-day Saturday. The Mòd will finish Saturday night with a concert featuring both the guest artists and the main prize-winners. It is expected that the West Side Choir from Lewis and the Stirling Gaelic Choir will attend. For more information, please write to the Gaelic Mòd Musical Association of Vancouver, 8886 Hudson St., Vancouver, British Columbia V6P 4N2.

### **\* Ruesch to the Rescue**

Readers should be pleased to learn that there is now an inexpensive alternative to commercial banks for obtaining a draft drawn on foreign currency, such as pounds sterling. Ruesch International out of Washington D.C. will secure for you a check payable in a foreign currency for only \$3.00. They can be reached by calling 202:408-1200 locally or 1-800:424-2923.

### **\* ACGA to have a GAELIC IMMERSION WEEKEND!**

ACGA will hold an Gaelic Immersion weekend at St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland: 30-31 May and 1 June 1997. There will be classes at the beginning and intermediate level by native and fluent speakers. Costs of food & lodging will be reasonable. Expect further notice by mail.

The ACGA Annual Meeting will follow on Sunday afternoon.

le Glen Wrightson



# SRADAGAN BEAGA



le Catriona NicIomhair Parsons

Professor Parsons is a native speaker of Gaelic, a professor of Celtic Studies at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, and a member of An Comunn Gaidhealach, America. She is the author of the three volume series of Gaelic language instruction *Gàidhlig Troimh Chòmhradh*. The following are her answers to questions submitted to her through Naidheachd.

## 1. Q. How do we say the alphabet in Gaelic?

A. What follows is an attempt at a rough pronunciation guide. My father taught me to say the alphabet as he himself had been taught in school around 1920 in Sgoil a' Chnuic (Knock School) in the Point District of Lewis. The elementary school would be equivalent nowadays perhaps to Grades 1-8.

An aibidil: ah bé sé (English s) dé (unpalatalized d) é ef  
žé ash ee(ì) el em en aw(ò) pé er es té (unpalatalized t)  
ù.

That it is so like the French is certainly no accident, although French was not taught in Knock School at the time.

## 2. Q. What is the difference in meaning between "trobhad" and "thugainn"?

A. There is a series of words which we translate as if they were verbs although they are not verbs at all. In fact they

are prepositional pronouns. These include *tro(m)had* and *thugainn*: *tro(m)had* from *troimh*, 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular; *thugainn* from *gu, chun*, 1<sup>st</sup> person plural. In his *A Gaelic Grammar*, George Calder tells us that *tro(m)had* is "derived from *romhad* (page 175). I don't know what he means by "derived from" but *romhad* (before you) seems closer to making sense as "come here" than *tromhad*, "through you".

*Thugainn*, "to us", therefore "come!" is more readily understood. The leader in battle would call out to clansmen *Thugam!* "to me", therefore "come to me!"

Having said all this - perhaps more than you bargained for! - what it boils down to in actual usage is this: Use *trobhad/troghadaibh* in a strictly 2<sup>nd</sup> person imperative sense. *Thugainn*, because it is 1<sup>st</sup> person plural, suggests more "let us go". It's not in my Gaelic to say *Thugainn comhla ruinn* (let's go with us). *Thugainn comhla riutha* (let's go with them), yes.

Variant forms *tugainn* and *tiugainn* also exist.

## 3. Q. You refer to the Rassias Method in the foreword to your book. Is the Backward Build-up exercise part of the Rassias Method? Is this exercise more effective than the traditional Forward Build-up method? The Backward exercise would seem to defeat the "natural process" of language ....

A. The answer to your first question is yes. As to your second question: I can only respond here from my own experience. I've found the Backward Build-up drill (*A 'cur ri chéile bho 'n Chùl*) to be perhaps the most effective of the drills that I use. It may be because the student knows the end of the sentence from the time the drill proper starts:



he knows where he's headed; he's not launching out into totally unknown territory. Psychologically, the Backward Build-up drill is good. The student doesn't have the anxiety of NOT knowing where he's heading or just how long a sentence he's launching into! In the Forward Build-up method, even if he hears the whole sentence at the start of the drill, he's too busy responding with the first structure to remember what the final structure of the sentence might be! In any case, I believe the anxiety level decreases with the Backward Build-up drill and, conversely, the student's confidence increases.

4. Q. Refer to Black's *Cothrom Ionnsachaidh*, page 180, section 11, para 11.3 (5): "When the object of a finite verb is a *pronoun* it should, for style, go to the end of the *clause*, even if the clause is a long one:

"Thug Calum MacDhomhaill fad na slighe bho Bhàgh a' Chaisteil gu Dun Éideann i."

This example wouldn't in my opinion, justify putting the object so far from the subject.

A. In your letter you also noted examples where **pronoun subject** is followed by **pronoun object**: *Chunnaic e i aig a' bhùth* = *Chunnaic e aig a' bhùth i*. On the double pronoun I would just note two things:

1. We have no problem with *chunnaic e i* as a simple sentence.

2. Also my feeling with *chunnaic e aig a' bhùth i* is that the transference of the adverbial phrase from its usual place at the end of the sentence to an earlier place in the structure emphasizes that he saw her at the **shop** and not someplace

else. This would also be my explanation for Black's longer example above: that Calum brought her all **the way from Castlebay to Edinburgh** is being emphasized, it seems to me.

On the other hand, stylistic considerations may apply. Or more specifically, the last phrase should read rhythmical - or intonational - considerations: in any case it has to do with the musical effect.

Take *Chuir iad an Caisteal a' Ghlinne mi*.... Now certainly that is the first line of a song ; but even if it weren't, would *Chuir iad mi an Caisteal a' Ghlinne* be more euphonious? I don't think so. Take a non-song, common example. Which would be preferable an order, do you think

*Chì mi thu 's a'mhadain*

or

*Chì mi's a mhadain thu?*

I hope that you will agree with me that the second fulfills the arc-ed intonational curve of the simple Gaelic sentence somewhat better than the first. Otherwise the only difference between the two structures is that - once again! - the early placement of the adverbial phrase emphasizes **when** I will see you.

Tha mi'n dòchas gun d'rinn na freagairtean seo beagan cuideachaidh dhuibh!

Bliadhna mhath ùr dhuibh uile.



## FAR WEST OF THE HEBRIDES CELTS IN THE NEW WORLD

le James F. Goff

*How does one learn the language without a native speaker?*  
There are texts of course, all very good in different ways.  
Here is a list in alphabetical order:

Ronald Black, *Cothrom Ionnsachaidh* (with tapes)  
Bill Blacklaw, *Bun-Chursa Gailig*  
George Calder, *A Gaelic Grammar*  
James Maclaren, *Gaelic Self-Taught*  
Roibeard Ó Maolalaigh, *hugo's Scottish Gaelic in Three Months* (with tapes)  
Colin B.D. Mark, *Gaelic Verbs*  
Catriona Parsons, *Gàidhlig Troimh Chòmhraidh* (with tapes)  
Boyd Robertson and Iain Taylor, *Teach Yourself Gaelic* (with tapes).

Some of these texts have tapes, some have international phonetic pronunciations, some have only equivalent pronunciations, some have both, and some have nothing. Tapes generally do not pronounce every word (Parsons may be the exception), and usually the speakers do not even pronounce the same word in the same way. Linguists say that such is to be expected; even the same speaker may not pronounce the same word in the same way twice. Many years ago a young friend and I discussed some current slang: being a *Big Cheese*. He pointed out that there was quite a difference between a *Big cheese* or a *big Cheese*.

Pronunciation is only part of the problem. The other part is what Black calls the Funny English problem: what is being said literally and why it is said that way. In this case I would

call it the Funny Gaelic problem. Early on I stumbled on to the Funny German problem, the Funny Spanish problem, and the Funny French problem. Then here in America there is the Funny American English problem. A native speaker is perhaps not even aware of his Funny Language problems. I recently commented to one of my German friends that German did not really have a future tense but instead said that something *became* to go or whatever. He stopped for a moment, thought, and said "That's right".

It could be an axiom that a native speaker most likely does not know his own grammar. Why should he? He can speak the language. It used to be that the young here in America were encouraged to study Latin in order to "learn English grammar". Someone scathingly asked why then not just study English grammar. Well, the English teachers did not know it either, albeit better then than now.

Be all this pre-ramble as it may, there are very few native Gaelic speakers here in America. However, there are Americans who have learned it well enough so it can be done. I can tick off (an expression that changes meaning depending on the relative emphasis of the words) several myself:

Washington D.C. area: Kent Campbell, William Cassidy, Wayne Clarke, Nick Freer, Morgan Hoover, Ashby McCown, Rod Mitchell;

Pennsylvania area: Peter Gilmore, Kevin McLaughlin, Philip Smith;

Illinois area: William Roy;

California: James Grandon, David George Williams.



There are probably more, but it is a big country and there are not enough. Even in the Washington D.C. area, people only fifty miles away plead for help. They study the texts but bog down. So Nick Freer and I started an experiment. We would teach a class with several objectives: to meet the desires of those who wanted only some idea of the language but also to provide the basis for those who wished to **teach someone else**. Nick Freer can speak the language; he wins prizes. I am only a grammarian and can only hope to win surprises. But, it's working. Two classes have been seeded some fifty miles away east in Maryland by Fred Bosworth. I'll let Fred speak to his experience in the section on Study Groups (See page 24, this issue).

\* \* \*

#### ANCIENT CELTIC TUNES AND ORIGENS?

le Francis Mangers

The Germans collected and preserved many of the first millenica songs, origin unknown. They actually sound good on the harp or guitar/lute. Here are some of those and later tunes.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| *Christum wis Sollen Lefen<br>Schön (8th) | *Broom e Cardinowes (16th)              |
| *Kyrie, Gott Vater (6th)                  | *Follow me down to Carlo<br>(16th)      |
| *Dundee (Scottish 16th)                   | *Skane (possibly Irish 8th)             |
| *Komm Gott Schlafen (6th)                 | *Christ du biest Tog und<br>Licht (8th) |
| *Divinum Mysterium (12th)                 | *Christ ist Erstanden (11th)            |

#### DRAMATIC NEWS FOR 10TH U.S. MÒD!

Spring is not yet in the air, but plans are well underway for ACGA's special **Tenth Anniversary Mòd**, beginning with the Mail-in this summer, followed by the Mòd at the Ligonier Highland Games, September 6, 1997.

Newcomers and oldtimers - everyone is invited to join in this celebration of the Gaelic language and culture. Our Tenth Anniversary Mòd will bring back memories and break new ground as well. For the first time, the Mail-in Prose competition will focus on **Gaelic drama** - with special material for Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced learners.

Through the support of the Ligonier Highland Games we shall for the first time bring two adjudicators to the Mòd! **Catriona Parsons**, our Mòd mentor over these many years and adjudicator for all but two will be coming from Nova Scotia to judge the Solo Singing competitions.

**Donnie Maclean**, also a Lewis Gael, will conduct the Mail-in from his home in the Outer Hebrides and will judge the Poetry competition at the Mòd. He is well known for his work in Gaelic drama, both as a producer and playwright. Mr. Maclean, the former director of **An Comunn Gaidhealach** in Scotland, is currently teaching drama at schools on the Isle of Lewis. It will be a pleasure to welcome him back to the U.S. Mòd, for he attended our first in 1988. I've always remembered his inspiring speech at the opening céilidh, expressing the support of ACG for our fledgling Mòd Virginia here in the states. He spoke of the plight of the Gaelic language, the effort necessary for its survival, and our essential role here in America.



I also recall the humorous skit that opened that first Mòd céilidh. Our purpose is indeed a serious one, but we didn't want a tense competition. We wanted everyone to feel at home. The curtains opened on the little stage. There was Granny in her shawl stirring the kettle at the fireplace to the tune of *Brochan lòm* as recorded by a Gaelic soprano singing-star. Lip synching the mouth-music was no problem for our star, for he was a native speaker!

This year the Mòd will give us a chance to learn about the scope of Gaelic drama as a serious art form and the use of humor within it. I hope some of our study groups will take an interest in Gaelic drama and show us some samples on stage. Last summer in Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, the community play *Portrona*, in Gaelic and English, had a tremendous impact in giving back to the people some of their own history.

If you haven't yet come to the Mòd, make the tenth your first! There is a warm welcome for all at our annual gathering of the Gaels. In addition to the competitions the Mòd week-end in Ligonier, September 5-7, will feature special guests and workshops, céilidhs, and a waulking demo.

Joan McW. Weiss, Mòd Committee Chair

\* \* \* \* \*

*Cha mhidse sgeul mhath aithris da uair.*

A good tale is not the worse for being twice told.

**hugo: Scottish Gaelic in Three Months - a simplified language course (Hugo, Great Britain) 1996. 214 pages**

"There is no Queen's Gaelic" meaning, of course, that there is no consensus as to which dialect or colloquialisms that comprise modern Gaelic or indeed any language is the best. There is no proper Gaelic. An outlander must rather suppose that any book of instruction rather expresses the point of view of the author be it Lewis, Skye, Sutherland, or whatever. **hugo: Scottish Gaelic** would seem to be somewhat idiosyncratic and is conservative. It uses the old orthography with both acutes and graves and even *am bheil* as in *Am bheil mi?*/Am I? rather than *a bheil*; although it does not seem to be slavishly conservative. The beginner should be aware that this text has its differences.

Nevertheless, for the learner the conservative approach is a plus. He can readily guess that the pronunciation of a word like *mòr* is more similar to the English *moor* than *mawr* as he might guess from the reformed spelling *mòr*; and it seems easier to remember that *a bheil* is just a modern practice rather than to wonder, when he inevitably encounters *am bheil*, whether it has some particular meaning.

**hugo** is not a phrase book; it is a grammar. All grammar is composed of three elements: **phonetics** (the sounds and spelling of the language), **semantics** (the vocabulary and meanings of the words of the language), and **syntax** (the structure of the language). Most beginners make a mistake in thinking that grammar consists only of syntax. A grammar gives the student the foundation to carry on a conversation; a phrase book only a few sentences for a few of the exigencies of life. **hugo: Scottish Gaelic in Three Months** will enable a student after only three months of



study to carry on a conversation that would be limited only by his vocabulary - provided that he is willing to study the **one hour a day** that it recommends.

The course consists of a text and two tapes which present the language in 12 lessons consisting of 112 subtopics. Thus it is easy to pace oneself to cover it in three months. As usual in the **hugo** courses, it is possible to buy the book separately. The book begins with a rather complete pronunciation guide with approximate English equivalents but most usefully - for those who know it or are willing to learn it - the equivalents in International Phonetics (IP) spelling. As vocabulary is introduced, the IP spellings are given.

The vocabulary and those things that most usually call grammar are introduced with reading exercises that are representative of modern, cosmopolitan life and are translated into normal English. The literal translations of Gaelic (usually called "Funny English") which are necessary for the student to develop an understanding of Gaelic syntax are given in separate sections. Grammatical points are illustrated by numerous sentences. For example, the declension of a prepositional pronoun may be followed by the seven sentences that are needed to show its use in all its forms.

The text does not wince at grammatical terms and explanations, although one might sometimes wish that it had. Some explanations are rather unnecessarily convoluted, and there are a few mistakes in both English and Gaelic. For example, the Gaelic construction "*Chan eil ach ...agam.*" /I have only .... is translated as "I only have.... indicating that the authors suffer from the English "floating-only" disease. Consider the difference between: Only I

kissed her, I only kissed her, and I kissed only her. Then it lists, in several places, the non-lenitable s's as *sg*, *sp*, and *st*. What about *sm*? The text says that there are only three cases in Gaelic: Nominative, Genitive, and Dative; although some sections farther it does treat the Vocative. Logically, there must be an Accusative case. The fact that it has the same form as the Nominative does not eliminate it. Such things happen in other languages for some declensions and genders. Also, unfortunately the text presents the rather uncommon spelling of a past tense form of *thig*/come as *dàinig* rather than *tàinig* and that of *abair*/say as *duirt* rather than *tuirt*. Although the more common spellings are mentioned, the student is led to believe that they are unusual. Also, there are some inconsistencies. On page 48 the text states that the past progressive tense, a compound tense, such as *bha mi ag' òl* must be translated as *I was drinking* and never as *I drank*. However on page 60 it translates *bha mi a' smaoinichadh*, which is literally I was thinking, as *I thought*. Finally, there is not much written drill and no collected vocabulary at the end of the text.

Nonetheless, the text does some very nice things. It has a table of the compound prepositions which shows how they separate when used with possessive pronouns. For example, the compound preposition *airson*/for (requires genitive) is actually a combination of the preposition *air*/for and the noun *son*/sake. If one wants to say *for me* in the sense of that something was done for me, he must write the Gaelic as *air mo shon*/for my sake. The text declines ten of these prepositions; the student can readily understand the basic meaning of such compounds. There is also a nice treatment of the adverbs of place and direction.

The two tapes, 90 minutes each, are for instruction in pronunciation and aural understanding. They are by a male



and a female native speaker and are quite clear. The first 45 minutes are devoted to basic pronunciation of the vowels, consonants, diphthongs, and so on. The next 45 minutes, to the first three lessons leaving 90 minutes for the remaining nine lessons. Such a division is reasonable since one expects to find fewer pronunciation problems as he progresses through his three months.

The first tape gives the initial sounds of the language by words that are not written. There may be some pedagogical rationale for such a practice, but these sounds are left rather disembodied although a number of them are repeated several times. The more experienced student may find these pronunciations useful for improving his own pronunciation. It may be better for the beginner to skip them and learn his pronunciation from the vocabularies as the tape gives the pronunciations of the actual written words.

It is interesting that the speakers make a distinction between the *dh* and the *gh* as one might suspect in spite of the usual statements that they are the same. However the tape does not emphasize the modern tendency to split the digraphs *ea* and *eu* nor the nasalization caused by the *mh*. There are surprises. Although the text says that there is no *k* in the Gaelic alphabet, the guide to the pronunciation of Gaelic consonants does list the *k*! One would have liked to hear the pronunciation of the *á* that is used throughout the text.

The tape of the initial lessons repeats each conversation twice: first at a normal rate of speech and second very slowly. Much of the syntactical parts is also spoken. It is interesting that one hears the *am bheil* of the text spoken as *a bheil*. The second tape is designed to test the learner's progress. Words and sentences are spoken in Gaelic or English for the student to translate and compare with the

verbal translations given on the tape. For someone who has no contact with a native speaker, the tapes are worthwhile.

**hugo Scottish Gaelic in Three Months** is a valuable addition to the several grammars extant. It is not definitive but it does what it intends: to give the student the basis to go beyond the phrase book. It is conservative and does not give many colloquialisms. Any serious student should read it, but he should not read only it. In particular he should read some other treatment of the comparison of adjectives. The text gives a simplification that cannot be correct but which is seen in other courses of this genre. An outlander must wonder if the Gaelic *as* and *nas* are perhaps losing their basic meanings.

The problem of Gaelic is hidden in the succinct comment about no Queen's Gaelic which was quoted at the beginning. It sounds very fair and democratic until one thinks about it. Such is a perfectly reasonable comment for a regional text where Sutherland teaches Sutherland, Lewis teaches Lewis, or Skye teaches Skye. However the very existence of a grammar such as this suggests a national attitude for which there is not yet a consensus. The outlander would like to know what dialect he is learning and perhaps why. **hugo** is not the final text.

JAMES F. GOFF

**NOTE!** **hugo** is not available in the USA although its price in dollars is listed on the cover. A limited number of copies has been imported by Thistle & Shamrock Books. See add following (page 31).



## FRED BOSWORTH STARTS NEW STUDY GROUPS!

Ever since I was a child I have wanted to learn Gaelic, but it was not until recently that I had a practical opportunity. The last native speaker in the family died when I was a baby; and typically, the intervening generations had not been interested in it. I had made several false starts by myself with the old Teach Yourself Gaelic (TYG) book, as is so often the case. But I finally took my family to the Alexandria games a year ago last July, and that was so much fun that we went to the one in Crownsville near Annapolis, and that is where we ran into the ACGA tent and Nick Freer. I was most eager at the opportunity to attend a class, even though the drive to D.C. added up to 10 hours on the road each month, and a lot of gasoline, but at least I could play the tapes while I drove. I liked the atmosphere of meeting in a home, and the other students were interesting people of a wide range of talents. What is language without people you enjoy being around and using it with? It is about as useful and fun-filled as a bag of party favors with no guests, or sheet music without musicians. Okay, we don't get along perfectly, whatever that would be like among humans, but within bounds personality quirks just add interest. The only truly unforgivable social sin after all is being boring, and that none of us are.

When I told some folks on e-mail at work about the class, I got some responses and wish-I-could-go's; and I thought, why not have a group of our own? I offered to share what I was learning in a study group and several people went for it. Some inevitably dropped out as the difference between wishing they could speak Gaelic versus wanting to do what it takes to learn a language sank in. Let's face it, it takes some time and effort, and who really wants to be a Freshman at something all over again, let alone go back to

struggling with baby-talk in front of people? But on the other hand, learning something new is a cool, refreshing cup from the Fountain of Youth, and the way of discovery is a delightful path to take. I was enjoying the activity of discovering Gaelic and making it a part of me, and I was happy to find others who enjoyed each insight along the way as a quickening of the mind and heart.

So we have a study group that meets once a week, taking turns in homes, and we dive into it. I was careful to explain the limits of my own capability in Gaelic, as a student of only nine months myself, but if we ran into something I did not know, I knew where I could go for an answer, and that was acceptable. Besides the alternative was to wait a couple years, and why do that? The time would pass surprisingly quickly anyway, and why not have all the Gaelic in the book under your belt by then, and be in a position to move on to the finer opportunities that always appear for the doers?

Sometimes I suspect that they are more at ease and less inhibited with me than they would be with a native speaker. The fact that I am still an active learner myself puts us on the same side somehow: instead of their being so embarrassed to do poorly in front of me, we are moving in the same direction together. There seem to be positive aspects to either situation that can be brought to bear.

Since I had learned and taught foreign languages before, I did have an advantage in being able to make the most of my limited vocabulary and grasp of the structure of Gaelic, and I was not afraid of other people willing to learn with me. The class I am still attending in D.C. is a good resource, too, for borrowing materials and getting ideas, not only from Nick Freer and Jim Goff as teachers, but from my fellow students there as well. Along with the TYG book [new



edition] we use videos from SPEAKING OUR LANGUAGE which is a big help in letting them hear many native speakers so they can know that I am not making it all up, and the fine scenes and pleasant people of Gaeldom boost our morale and give us something to want to associate with. A couple of these videos under your belt and the language and the people who use it seem very much alive. I also suspect that the videos have helped some who were drawn to Gaelic as a relic of druidism or something to be associated with Wallace or Rob Roy make the switch from wanting to just know a bit of specialized Gaelic or a few songs to having feelings for being part of the living world Gaelic community. I also make use of other books and whatever else I can find for enrichment.

The next thing I knew, Nick and Seumas gave me a list of names of people who had signed up as interested at the ACGA booth at events in Maryland and northern Virginia. With a little schedule juggling I was able to add a night for another class a week. This group is of a wider range of ages, experience in language learning, and reasons for wanting to make Gaelic a part of what they are, so there are a few more challenges. That causes me no pain, though, since I may be the prime beneficiary of this activity myself, because of the solid reinforcement I get in reviewing the lessons to explain them to others. Besides, if I want someone to talk Gaelic with, and I do, it seems the best if not the only route to go: in my part of the world Gaels are made, not born.

It has been my experience that people are attracted to a language class for varied reasons, often involving a quest for identity and definition in a broad sense, but if they stay, it is because they enjoy meeting with the others in the class and are contributing something as well as getting something. Prof. Irwin who coached us in teaching Russian at Ohio

State, always insisted that we graduate students teaching undergrads do three things:

a) Make sure we as teachers did not talk more than the students so that they can acquire the habit of interacting in the language not just practice patience while someone else talks about the language.

b) Make sure that the students interact with each other not just with the teacher. After asking a student, "Ciamar a tha sibh?" and getting a reply, ask him "Ciamar a tha (another student)?" and have them go around that way communicating with each other. This takes it beyond a test to see if they did their homework and into the use of skills to really communicate with each other so they start and get used to using Gaelic among themselves as a little community, which is the whole idea, right?

c) Unlike children who have a blank slate and are motivated by a need to speak to survive, an extra language is usually a luxury to an adult. But adults can reason and can enjoy bursts of insight, so the cognitive approach would be used whenever possible, with the teacher arranging scenarios whereby they can make the discovery of how it works. Make it as fun as possible so they want to come back for more because they enjoy the experience. This takes some forethought and planning by the teacher, but it is worth it.

Fred Bosworth



## ACGA AND OTHER STUDY GROUPS

### ALASKA:

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907:373-6339

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Bob Watson  
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Burbank, CA 91506  
818:842-6061

### COLORADO:

Pamela S. Nation  
Gaelic song - beginners  
1129 Jefferson Ave.  
Louisville, CO 80027  
303:673-0998

Glenn Wrightson  
2673 S. York St.  
Denver, CO 80027

### ILLINOIS:

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

### MARYLAND:

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### WASHINGTON D.C.:

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Toronto  
416:621-9105

**QUESTION:** Do you know of  
any other study groups? Are  
there changes? Let us know.

\* \* \*

### ACGA SCHOLARSHIP OFFERED

For ACGA members at the intermediate level. Tuition and Board at the Gaelic College in Nova Scotia. For details contact the President, Glen Wrightson.

### THE MINISTER'S CAT

is at Thistle & Shamrock Books. The Cat, more formally presented as **Cat a' Mhinisteir**, is a group game in Gaelic for learning adjectives. Tell your cat how much you love her alphabetically!

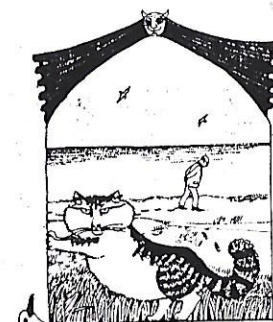
*Tha cat a' mhinisteir 'na  
chat aighearach!*

The minister's cat is a merry  
cat!

or

*beadarrach, cleasach, diuid ...  
uile-chumhachdach.*

Complete with a glossary for  
those who would like to cat  
about from English to Gaelic  
(64 pages). From Thistle &  
Shamrock @ \$9.95 plus \$1.25  
postage.



**Cat a'  
Mhinisteir**

THE GAELIC MINISTER'S CAT

Compiled by Hamish Whyte and Meg Bateman

Illustrated by Barbara Robertson

MERCAT PRESS

\* \* \* \* \*

Thistle & Shamrock Books now has **hugo Scottish Gaelic in  
Three months** with tapes @ \$39.95 plus \$1.25 for postage.  
The book alone is \$13.95 plus \$1.25.

The Thistle & Shamrock Books catalog of Gaelic learning materials is now posted on the world wide web. The address is:

<http://www.Angelfire.com/pg0/thistle/index.html>

where the 0 in pg0 is zero not "oh".

For those who prefer, the mailing address is

PO Box 42, Alexandria, VA  
22313  
Tel. No. 703:548-2207

\* \* \* \* \*

### WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP?

- \* Events, reviews, courses, or your own feature.
- \* Study groups. Regional news. Music (CD reviews etc.).
- \* Personal nostalgia.

**Contact the Editor.**

### EDITORIAL POLICY

Naidheachd is published in accord with the seasons of the Celtic calendar. Submissions by the members or interested readers are appreciated. The deadlines will be no later than a month before publication and are: **January 1, April 1, July 1, October 1.** Copy may be held for the following issue.

Camera-ready copy is preferred: type, courier 12 pt (or times roman 12pt) with title in bold and author in normal, centered on the page; margins on an 8 1/2" by 11" sheet are Top (0.75"), Bottom (3.75"), Left (0.50"), Right (3.75"), and are right justified. Space between paragraphs. No underlining. Legible manuscript can be retyped. Gaelic should be written in the conservative orthography. Type-face is IBM compatible style or similar. **Send two copies to expedite production.**

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Seumas the Goff

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## Remnants from the ACGA Bookstore: Biblical stories

*Is fhada a bhitheadh cuimhne aig Simon Peadar air a' chiad latha a choinnich e ri Iosa.* from **Peadar an t-iasgair**.

*O chionn fhada, bha nigheann air an robh Rut a'fuireach ann an fearann Mhoaib.* from **Rut**.

*Saoil dé a lorg Gideon anns a' mhadainn?* from **Gideon**.

Each page of text is fronted by excellent full-color drawings. Sturdy covers; 31 pages. \$5 each includes postage. Order from Naidheachd editor Jim Goff (address inside front cover). Limited number of copies available.

\* \* \* \* \*

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