

# An Naidheachd Againne

*The Newsletter of An Comunn Gàidhealach, America*

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## Fàilte dha'n Naidheachd Ùr

Welcome to the redesigned newsletter of An Comunn Gàidhealach, America – *An Naidheachd Againne* (“Our News”). With this issue we depart from the familiar book format used for the past several years. That popular format, unfortunately, has become too time-consuming and too costly to continue, especially since the loss of our long-time printer in Alexandria, Va. There are few printers, we have found, that even are willing to print a newsletter in the old format at an affordable price.

This new format has its own limitations, but we hope that we will be able to produce the newsletter much more quickly and provide you, the membership of ACGA, with a quarterly newsletter on a quarterly basis.

I know many ACGA members have been wondering what had happened to *Naidheachd*, though few have asked. I thank you for your patience. The production of *Naidheachd* is a demanding volunteer job, and in the past six months it has been plagued by several mishaps, loss of the printer being one of them. As a result, Managing Editor Mike MacKay and I are taking several steps to ensure that *Naidheachd* is produced on a more timely basis.

In addition to the redesign, we are going to change the publication schedule. For several years *Naidheachd* has been published on the “Celtic” calendar, with its publication dates coinciding with the major quarterly festivals traditionally celebrated by the Gaels and other Celtic peoples. Unfortunately, this traditional doesn’t always mesh with the demands of

modern life — especially in the period between Oct. 1 and Feb. 1. Therefore, we will shift publication back toward to the “standard” calendar. We will publish four issues of *Naidheachd* in 2003, with the next to be released early this summer. The volume and number of this issue reflect that change.

Thanks to many ACGA members, we now have enough material on hand to plan more than one issue of *Naidheachd*. Again I thank all those who have contributed columns, articles, notes and letters. Your contributions (continued, I hope) will make it much easier to produce *Naidheachd* on a more regular basis.

A great deal of thought has been put into the direction of this newsletter over the past two years — from the addition of new columns to the change of its full name to *An Naidheachd Againne* (“Our News”). We hope to incorporate the best of those changes into this new design. Some of the information previously provided in *Naidheachd* may be transferred to separate publications, or moved to the ACGA website. As always, we would like to hear your opinions on the type of information you want to receive from ACGA, and the content of this newsletter. I look forward to hearing from you.

*Liam Ó Caiside, deasaiche (editor)*  
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## Brath bho'n Cheann-Shuidhe: *President's Report*

*Mar chlach a' ruith le gleann, feasgar fann Foghair.*

**T**hoiribh dhomh maitheanas, a chàirdean. 'S ann a dh'fhàg *An Naidheachd Againne* air dheireadh mi. Nochd litir a sgrìobh mi 'sa gheamhradh anns an iris a fhuair sibh 'san fhoghar an uiridh agus tha mi nis 'nam shuidhe an seo ann am "feasgar fann Foghair" agus an ùine a' ruith dhà-rìribh.

Cò-dhiubh, thachair mòran o chionn geamhraidh 'sa chaidh. Leugh sibh ann an *Naidheachd* shamhraidh, gun teagamh, iomradh a' bhùird a sgrìobh Glenn Wrightson mu 'n dà choinneimh a chaidh an cumail 1/20/02 agus 4/28/02 agus tha athaisg air a' choinneimh bhliadhnail agus air a' choinneimh fhoghair ri fhaotainn 'san iris seo.

Mar as àbhaist, 's e leasachadh na ballrachd agus neartachadh nam buidhnean ionadal am prìomh amas a' bhùird am bliadhna. Mar a tha Glenn ag ràdh anns an iomradh aige 'san iris seo, tha sinn an dùil gun tèid sinn an sàs nas fhaisge ann an cluichean Gaidhealach agus comuinn Albanach a chum's gun tèid againn air cur na Gàidhlig agus a' chultair sar-Ghaidhealach (agus ar comuinn-ne) air adhart am measg nan boneidean breacanach is nan paighean-feòla.

Feumaidh sinn a bhith ann 'gan sìor chumail 'san lèirsinn an luchd Albanach-Ameireaganach, agus, is dòcha gum bi an teanta ACGA mar "Chèilidh Central" do na buill ACGA a tha a' fuireach 'san sgìre. Sgrìobh Micheal Mac Aoidh aithris air Ceann-Seachdain an Tumaigh roimhe seo (spòrs mòr a bh' ann gu dearbha fhèin) ach tha againn fhathast ri cunntas a thoirt dhuibh air toradh taghadh a' bhùird.

'S iad Janice Chan, Tracy Bhochanan agus Seumas Ruaraidh na stiùraichean ùra. Fàilte dhaibh! Agus chan eil an àm fada bhuainn nuair a bhios Comataidh an Taghaidh ag obair a-rithis.

Tha mi cinnteach gum faigh sibh cuideachd 'san iris seo aithris air a' Mhòd a bh' againn 'san t-Sultainn. Bha slugh math ann agus spòrs gu leor. Dh'fhairich sinn gu sònraichte onoraichte leis an fheadhainn a bha air cèilidh oirnn as an t-seann dùthaich.

Dè eile? Uell, ma leughas sibh *Am Braighe*, chunnaic sibh iomradh tlachtmhor air na rinn an Comataidh Taic-Airgid againn. Chì sibh tuilleadh anns na litrichean 'san iris seo.

Feumaidh mi co-dhùnadh; "Bliadhna Mhath Ùr" dhuibh uile!

*Is bochd am fear nach fhaigh a leòr as t-fhoghar.*

Pardon me, everyone. I have fallen out of step with *An Naidheachd Againne*. My last letter, written last winter, appeared in the last issue you received in the fall, and now I sit here one "feeble fall evening" with time going by rapidly indeed.

A lot has happened since last winter. You doubtless read in the summer issue of *An Naidheachd* the report Glenn Wrightson wrote about the board meetings held 1/20/02 and 4/28/02, and a report on the Annual General Meeting and the fall meeting of the board is to be found in this issue. The prime concerns of the board remain increasing membership and strengthening local organizations.

As Glenn explains, we hope to become more closely involved in order that we might move Gaelic language and culture (and ACGA) to a position more central to the activities and more constantly visible to the Scottish-American community. Manning the ACGA tent might become a social event for ACGA members living nearby.

Mike Mackay has reported on our immersion weekend, but we have yet to give an account of the board election. Janice Chan, Tracy Buchanan, and Jamie MacDonald are the new directors. We welcome them. It will not be long before the election committee will be at work again.

I am certain you will find in this issue a report on the Mòd last September. We had a good attendance and a good time. We felt particularly honored by the presence of our guests from Scotland.

What else? Well, if you read *Am Braighe*, you saw a very gratifying notice on some of the activities of our good works committee. There's more to see in the Letters section of this issue.

That's about all. A "Happy New Year" to you all.

**John Fraser**  
**President, ACGA**  
*Jfras@aol.com*

## Facal bho'n Fhear-Dheasachaidh: A Word from the Editor

With the parliamentary election past, expect renewed attempts to gain a new legal standing for Scottish Gaelic in Scotland. The reelected First Minister, the Labour Party's Jack McConnell, pledged on the campaign trail in April that a Gaelic language bill would be among the first items of business for the new government — he said his goal was to get such a bill passed before the 100th annual Royal National Mòd in Oban this October.

This commitment from Scotland's chief executive should encourage Gaelic supporters frustrated by the failure of the first Scottish Parliament since 1707 to pass legislation granting the language some form of secure status within Scotland. Members of the Scottish Parliament came within a hair's breadth of passing a Gaelic language bill introduced by the Scottish National Party's Michael Russell, but shamefully allowed the bill to die before the end of the last parliamentary session March 31.

Russell, then MSP for the South of Scotland and the SNP's culture spokesman, introduced his *Bile Cànan na Gàidhlig (Alba)* or Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill last November. It was co-sponsored by John Farquhar Munro, the Liberal Democrat MSP for Ross, Skye and Inverness West. Russell did not return to parliament this year, but the SNP's Alex Neil, MSP for Central Scotland, plans to introduce legislation based on Russell's bill, raising the prospect of two competing Gaelic language bills — one backed by Labour, one by the SNP — being debated this summer and fall.

Russell's bill would have required "certain public bodies to publish, maintain and implement plans giving effect to the principle that in the exercise of the functions of those bodies the Gaelic and English languages should be treated on a basis of equality." The act would have applied to a wide range of public bodies — including local councils, health boards, police and fire services and local enterprise companies — in the Highlands, Western Isles, that part of Argyll and Bute that was formerly the Argyll and Bute District Council and the islands of Arran, Greater Cumbrae and Little Cumbrae. Those public bodies would have had two years to draw up Gaelic language development plans. Those plans would have spelled out how the bodies would communicate with other organizations and individuals, provide translation services, and train staff to provide services in Gaelic. The plans would have been reviewed after five years.

Despite initial opposition from a broad array of interests opposed, directly or indirectly, to further support for Scottish Gaelic, the bill passed its first major hurdles, first by winning the unanimous backing of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee Feb. 28, which sent the bill to the

floor of the Scottish Parliament for "Stage One" consideration. The committee actually proposed that the bill be extended to cover local authorities throughout Scotland.

The entire Scottish Parliament then gave its unanimous backing to the "general principles" of the bill March 6. Unfortunately, the bill never proceeded to "Stage Two" of the parliamentary process.

When Michael Russell rose to make his case for the bill, he did so partly in Gaelic. He noted that as many as 90% of the world's 6,000 languages were in danger of extinction. "Gaelic can die just like all those other languages," he warned MSPs. "It will die unless we can do everything we can — and this afternoon 'we' means each one of us in this chamber — to keep it alive." Russell, it should be noted, is a Gaelic learner and long-time supporter of the language.

It is encouraging to note that as Russell's bill advanced the argument shifted from "Should we support Gaelic?" to "How best can we support Gaelic?" The strong support shown for the bill's general principles makes it more likely that some version of the legislation finally will be passed in this session. Supporters of Gaelic everywhere owe great thanks to Michael Russell for his efforts to secure legal status for Gaelic within its own homeland and push the debate over how to ensure its future forward. *Tha sinn fada 'na chomain.*

Additional reasons for optimism are the launch last year of Bòrd Gàidhlig na h-Alba by the Scottish Executive (although the board's chief executive, Ailean Caimbeul, recently noted that it has yet to receive adequate funding to hire its full staff) and a recent Scottish Parliament report calling for a comprehensive language policy embracing Gaelic, Scots and other languages.

Particularly noteworthy is the growing breadth of support for Gaelic in Scotland outside its northern and western heartland. As journalist Murchadh MacLeòid pointed out in *Scotland On Sunday* March 2, Russell and other supporters of Gaelic in parliament are not connected to the Gàidhealtachd or Gaelic "bho thùs" (in origin). "Where now is the old cliché that the Lowlander has nothing but hatred for the Gael?" he asked.

Let's hope that it's been sent to the bottom of Corrieveckan, and that the newly elected parliament will meet its obligation to protect and promote Gaelic and encourage and strengthen the Gaelic-speaking community.

*Liam Ó Caiside, deasaiche  
liam@gaidheal.com*

## Litrichean: Letters

Part of the mission of An Comunn Gaidhealach, America, is to provide financial support and assistance to the Gaelic community in Scotland and North America. The following letters thank ACGA for recent grants and awards supporting a Gaelic-medium teacher training program at Lews Castle College in Stornoway, Scotland; Eilean nan Òg, an apprenticeship program that teaches Gaelic language and culture skills to teenagers in Cape Breton; and an exchange student program that sends Gaelic students from Dalbrae Academy, Mabou, Nova Scotia, to Scotland.

### *Now Teaching on Harris ...*

Thank you for the generous cheque which I received from your organization. I have just finished the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (Primary) course at Strathclyde University, which was run in conjunction with Lews Castle College, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, and have taken up post at Leverhulme Memorial School, Isle of Harris, Western Isles. Toward the end of my course, I received a cheque from Annie Macsween, Lews Castle College, and was told that it had been given to the college by your organization.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the cheque received, and to assure you that it has been spent on buying Gaelic resources which will help me at the start of my teaching career. I am privileged to be able to teach children on Harris in my native tongue, and hope that the love and enthusiasm which I afford to my native language will be passed on to the children who I teach now, and in the future. Mòran taing dhuibh airson ur coibhneas.

**Lena Morrison  
Isle of Harris  
Scotland**

### *... and on Lewis*

I am one of the students who took part in the new teaching course for Gaelic Primary School teachers at Lews Castle College in Stornoway. This letter is to thank your organization for the very welcome grant of money you made to myself and my fellow students on this course. It was very useful.

I am now a probationary teacher at Sgoil Lionail (Lional School) in Ness on Lewis, and very much enjoying it. I hope to become a registered teacher next year and make my profession as a Gaelic medium teacher in Lewis. Again, mòran taing.

**Catriona M. Campbell  
Isle of Lewis  
Scotland**

### *From Mabou to Scotland*

On behalf of the Dalbrae-Scotland Exchange Students, I wish to express my sincerest thanks to you for your generous donation toward their fundraising efforts. Due to your generosity, the students are that much closer to achieving their goal. Bha sinn uamhasach taingeil air son an t-suim mhór airgid a chuir sibh ugainn. Bha sibh còir dà-rìreabh agus air son sin tha sinn fada nur comain.

The students are looking forward to their trip and will make every effort to represent their school, community and country well. They are all Gaelic and Music students and will be promoting the language and culture of the Gaels of North America, while in Scotland.

**Margie Beaton  
(Trip coordinator with Mary Janet Mac Donald)  
Dalbrae Academy  
Mabou, Nova Scotia**

## *Có a dh'iarradh na b'fheàrr?*

Fhuair sinn tabhartas a' Chomainn Gàidhealaich bho chionn beagan ùine. Bu toil leinn ceud mìle taing a thoirt dhuibh-se uile airson ur cuideachaidh leis a' phrogramme chudthromach seo do chloinn Eilean Cheap Breatainn. Bidh am programme a' tòiseachadh an ceann seachdainn a thide agus mairidh e fad dà sheachdainn.

Tha sùil againn ri deagh sheisean am bliadhna. Bidh mu dheichnear a dheugairean an sàs ann agus ro-inn do luchd na Gàidhlig a bhios gabhail òran 's naidheachdan, a' cluich ceòl agus a' dannsa 's an t-seann nòs. *Có a dh'iarradh na b'fheàrr?*

Bidh iomradh goirid sgrìobhte aig deireadh a' ghnòthaich agus bidh sinn glé thoilichte leth-bhreac dheth siod a chur ugaibh mar theisteanas air gnìomharran a' phrogramme. Arithist, ceud mìle taing airson ur cuideachaidh. Faodaidh sibh a bhi cinnteach às gun cuir sinn an t-airgead gu deagh shaod. Tha sinn a' guidhe gach piseach oirbh-se agus air ur cuid obrach 's an ùine ri teachd.

**Seumas Watson**  
**Gaelic Coordinator, Highland Village**  
**Iona, Nova Scotia**

These awards were proposed by ACGA's Good Works Committee and approved by its Board of Directors. Please contact us if you have a proposal for the committee.



## **Deireadh seachdain tumaidh:** *Immersion Weekend*

Plans for the **ACGA Immersion Weekend** this June 6-9 in Boulder, Colo., are well under way. The faculty who will teach at the event will include Donnie MacDonald, Muriel Fisher, Jamie MacDonald and Richard Hill.

This will be **Donnie MacDonald's** first year with us. A native speaker from Lewis, Donnie has worked with study groups and learners for many years. You may recall his innovative "Gaelic Echo" magazine/cassette series, published in the 1990s. A fine Gaelic singer, Donnie is a member of the duo "Men of Worth."

**Muriel Fisher**, a native speaker from the Isle of Skye, has written two Gaelic courses and teaches in Phoenix, where she now resides, as well as at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. This is her third year with us.

**Jamie MacDonald** -- known to many as Seumas Ruairidh -- has deep Gaelic roots in North Carolina. Currently a full-time Gaelic instructor at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Jamie has taught at

many of our previous immersion weekends.

**Rich Hill** - One of the founding and guiding members of Slighe nan Gaidheal, the Gaelic organization in the Pacific Northwest, Rich teaches Gaelic classes in Seattle and is known here and in Scotland for his Gaelic singing. This is Rich's second year with us.

Meals, lodgings and nightly activities at this year's immersion will be at the CU Conference Center Inn, while classes and workshops will be held in a classroom building. More information on the program will be available shortly.

In addition, the **5th Annual Grandfather Mountain Gaelic Song, Language and Harp Week** will be held on July 6-11, 2003, at Lees-McRae College, Banner Elk, North Carolina.

Catherine-Ann MacPhee (Gaelic song), Jamie MacDonald (Gaelic language) and Debbie Brewin-Wilson (Scottish harp) will share their love of Scottish Gaelic through song, language and harp instruction. Classes will be held Monday-Friday prior to the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games. The cost is approximately \$375 per person for the week of instruction, lodging and meals. For more information contact Jana Blue at [seona@att.net](mailto:seona@att.net). ❖

# Mòd Report: *A Grand Gathering of the Gaels*

By Joan McWilliams Weiss, Mòd director

ACGA's 15th Annual Mòd was such a happy celebration — good friends, good times, a grand banquet/cèilidh and Gaelic to share in poetry, song, story and conversation! It was our largest "Gathering of the Gaels" since the record-setting 10th Mòd in 1997 and it brought together a wonderful community of Gaelic learners, speakers, teachers, competitors, leaders and supporters from Scotland and around the United States. It was a great pleasure to have Dr. Norman Gillies, Director of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, and Dr. Donnie Munro, Director of Development for Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, with us. They brought news of the Gaelic College on Skye and stunning video views of new education and conference facilities overlooking the Sound of Sleat!

Courtesy of An Comunn Gaidhealach, Scotland's Highland Association, the U.S. Mòd was honored to host Guest Artists Riona Whyte of Mull and Archie MacLean of Glasgow, Gold Medal winners from the 2001 Royal National Mòd. They shared their songs at the Mòd Banquet and cèilidhs, on stage at the Ligonier Games and Ligonier's Town Square, and in a beautiful Farewell Concert in Glen Echo, Md. We were also delighted to welcome Reah Whyte, Riona's husband, and Archie's wife, Gillian MacLean.

Beathag Mhoireasdan — renowned Gaelic actress from Lewis, a teacher of Gaelic drama, language and singing, and a member of Bannal (a waulking group based in Glasgow) — led our Mòd. She was an inspiration as she adjudicated the competitions in Gaelic story, poetry and song, and led waulking and song workshops as well as a workshop on acting through the medium of Gaelic — a first for the U.S. Mòd. We were happy to welcome three families to the Mòd. The Frasers, McCowns and MacKays came with some of their teenage and adult children — seven daughters, altogether! It was the largest family attendance since 1997, when a group of parents and ten young ladies came from Lewis.

John Fraser, ACGA President, and his wife Deborah and their daughter Eleanor made the journey from Alabama. Thomas Ashby McCown, who for many years helped lead the Gaelic study group in Bethesda, Md., came with his wife Rosemary and daughters Margaret and Clare. Michael MacKay (who teaches Gaelic in Richmond, Va.), Cathleen and daughters Aileen, Bethany, Jessica and Sarah, sang and worked yards of Harris Tweed around a table as Beathag Mhoireasdan led the first waulking song!

The Mòd began Friday night with the waulking work-

shop and concluded with the Storytelling Competition. Three competitors shared their tales in Gaelic and English. Nicholas Freer, (ACGA coordinator in the Mid-Atlantic region) won with the old tale of a husband who claims he can do his wife's chores better than she can!

Mòd events on Saturday at the Ligonier Games were filled with the Gaelic poetry and songs that each of the fine competitors chose. A Slow Song, that Liam Cassidy sang so well, stands out in my mind for its fine modal melody and the fact that he had just brought it back from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, where he learned it from the singing of a local tradition bearer.

People often mention how nice it is to have music between presentations, while the adjudicator is writing. We add the charm of fiddle or flute to banish the hush that can be so tense in competitions. Kevin McLaughlin, who has been our master of ceremonies since the Mòd moved to Ligonier in the mid-1990s, weaves in history and humor with announcements.

Our gifted musicians were Laura Gilliam (flute) and Harry Webb (mountain dulcimer), John Ward (fiddle) and Trix Whitehall (drum), Ed Bradshaw (guitar, bagpipe) and Liam Cassidy (tin whistle, melodian). Peggy Garrigues-Cortelyou (fiddle) came from Michigan. She played with Mac-talla at our first Mòd. It was good to hear her sing, in our 15th Mòd, the song Kitty MacLeod taught on our 1988 Mòd tutor tape!

Ed Bradshaw and Mike MacKay brought the equipment and "know-how" for the sound system at the Ligonier Games Mòd Pavilion and the Conference Center. This was a major contribution!

By Saturday night we were ready for the delicious banquet — planned by Sherry Hamilton — and cèilidh at historic Ligonier Tavern. There was more music, camaraderie, and a laugh-so-hard-it-hurt funny song by singer Trix Whitehall and fiddler John Ward. Frances Acar sang the mesmerizing, "A Bhean Iadach" (The Jealous Woman) with every one joining in on vocables. All too soon it was time to sing "Oidhche Mhath Leibh."

Sharing perspectives with our guests is a vital part of our Mòd. A panel looked at Gaelic-medium education in view of the predicted loss of half of the world's languages in this century. We read aloud "Fuadach nan Gaidheal," lamenting the Highland Clearances, and Mac-talla sang it. I spoke of the great language immersion efforts of a Native American tribe, and powerful studies by their educators. Riona Whyte told of the great three- and four-year olds in her Gaelic-medium pre-school on Mull.

Dr. Gillies and Dr. Munro had many kind words for our Mòd. We appreciate Sabhal Mòr's annual scholarship, the grand prize for our Mail-in Mòd competitions and share (on a smaller scale!) their "can-do" spirit. An abandoned farmstead was reclaimed as Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, and know

it has a pivotal role in the resurgence of the Gaelic language! Norman Gillies has guided the Gaelic College through a period of extraordinary development, and he's been heavily involved with the creation of a University of the Highlands and Islands. Donnie Munro is a founder member of Iomairt Chalum Chille, the international Columba Initiative linking Scotland, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. His role as director of development at SMO relates to his major work in the arts and education, and many other efforts.

Liam Cassidy spoke of social and economic aspects of language renewal. A journalist who learned and teaches Scottish Gaelic and has studied Irish and Manx, he is an officer of the Celtic League, member of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language, and a former president of the Douglas Hyde Foundation, a now defunct group formed to raise funds for Irish-medium schools.

Our Mòd has flourished, thanks to many loyal supporters: Annie Campbell and April Stewart-Oberndorf come with the fine group from Ohio. Linda and Hugh Knox and Kate and David Coleman gave their support by hosting the Gold medalists in the Washington, D.C., area. Reverdy and Lydia Wright, from Virginia, help greatly with Mòd mailings. Cheryl Mitchell, from Maryland, shared her photos for our Mòd album. Colleen A. Fox, ACGA Membership Secretary from North Carolina, made up several cèilidh food platters with her mom, who lives near Ligonier. Newcomer Meg Hansen, from New York, was soon helping with food and our weekend folders. Former Mòd Registrar Donald MacKinnon kindly brought his big ice chest with food from the ceilidh to the Mòd the next day, for all to enjoy. We've shared many good times, and we all share the loss of his dear wife, our friend, Joan MacKinnon.

The ACGA Mòd Committee deserves special thanks: William Cassidy (Mòd Bulletin Editor), Sherry Hamilton & Kevin McLaughlin (Local Representatives), Cathleen MacKay (Treasurer), Michael MacKay (Producer, Mòd CD/Text), Mary Swope (Fundraising Chair) and Julie Burke. In her two years as Registrar, Julie has been creative, over-qualified, dedicated -- and a role model for other volunteers. A deep and sincere *tapadh leibh* to everyone! ❖

## Bàrdachd: *Poetry*

### NA DEICH AINTEAN

1. Na bitheadh agad Dia ach mi.
2. Na lub do dh'ìomaigh glùn no crìdh'.
3. Na luaidh-sa ainm do Dhè gu faoin ;
4. 'Us là na Sabaid coimhead naomh.
5. Do d'athair 'us do d' mha'ir thoir gèill.
6. O fheirg 's o mhorta cum thu fèin
7. O adhaltras bi glan gun lochd.
8. Na gaoid aon nì ged robh thu bochd.
9. O cheilg 's o bhreugaibh cum do bheul
10. Na sanntaich nì nach buin duit fèin.

This rhymed translation of the Ten Commandments was composed by *an t-Urramach Seumas Mac Griogair* — the Rev. James Drummond MacGregor, D.D., one of the first Presbyterian ministers to arrive in northern Nova Scotia.

Born in Perthshire in December 1759, MacGregor arrived in Pictou, Nova Scotia, in 1786, 13 years after the first Highland settlers arrived in the area, and ministered in English and Gaelic throughout the Maritimes until his death in 1830.

MacGregor was a prolific writer in English and Gaelic. Much of his work was religious in nature, though he reportedly wrote secular poems and articles as well. One of his earliest poems was “Òran Gaoil air Anna Buchanan,” composed in 1785.

His other works include “Leabhar Aidmheil a' Chreidimh,” “Leabhar nan Salm,” and “Dàin a Chomhnadh Crabhaidh.” He translated 106 of the Psalms into Gaelic. Of his work, he said in a letter written in 1819, “I composed these poems in part traveling through the dreary wilderness of America, hoping they might do some good, but seeing little prospect of it.”

This piece was published in “Dàin Spioradail,” a collection of religious poems by Iain Mac-Gilleain published in 1880 by MacLachlan & Stewart, Edinburgh. Along with Mac-Gilleain's poems, the book contained “beagan de laoidhean Mhic Griogair, nach robh gus a so air an clo-bhualadh.” (“a few of MacGregor's lays, not published until now.”)

— *Liam Ó Caiside*

# Criomagan

## *A Unique Proverb about St. Bridget's Day*

Due to economic conditions in the Highlands, native Gaelic speakers have sought refuge in many places far from their birthplace, often taking their inherited lore far from home.

From about 1992 to 1998, I had the unique pleasure of meeting and recording many Gaelic speakers in Scotland, some of them the last speakers of their dialects. One of the most memorable of these cèilidhs was with Iain and Domhnall MacLulaich in their home in Pitlochry in September of 1996.

They had been born in Creaginnis (English: Craignis), Argyll in 1903 (Dòmhnall) and 1913 (Iain). Gaelic is virtually extinct now in this region of Argyll. They farmed and raised sheep and cattle in Argyll but moved to Perthshire in 1947. There were only a few Gaelic speakers left in Pitlochry when they came at that time, but these brothers continued to speak to one another in Gaelic on a daily basis.

We had a long conversation in Gaelic covering many topics, and it struck me that they had a rich vocabulary indeed. They were, for example, the only Gaelic-speakers that I ever recorded (who did not receive formal education in Gaelic) who knew all of the native Gaelic names for trees. This is perhaps not surprising, given the rich flora in Argyll; but one must remember that most Gaelic speakers at the present -- who live primarily in the Western Isles -- live in environments which lack the biological diversity one finds in many parts of the mainland, where Gaelic has ebbed away very quickly.

I usually ask Gaelic-speakers about weather and calendar lore when recording them, and they provided me with one proverb which I have not been able to find in any previous collection. It is:

Olc air math gun tig an tide,  
La Fèill Bhrìde, bidh math  
Clais uisge, clais sneachd'  
Is clais de \*mhuin nan taighean.

(\* Note: I am a little uncertain about this word; it may have been dhruim — but it does not affect the meaning significantly.)

*Like it or not, the weather will come  
On St Bridget's Day, it will be good (to have)  
A furrow of water, a furrow of snow  
And a gutter on the top of the houses.*

It seems to be that the essence of the proverb is that severe weather will come, like it or not, and is necessary in the cycle of seasons. One must simply be well prepared for it.

*Michael Newton  
University of Richmond*

*Criomagan* is a column by Dr. Michael Newton that will appear regularly in *An Naidheachd Againne*. A *criomag* is a “small bit of anything,” a morsel. Dr. Newton is the author of “We’re Indians Sure Enough: The Legacy of the Scottish Highlanders in the United States” (Richmond: Saorsa Media, 2001); “A Handbook of the Scottish Gaelic World” (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000); and “*Bho Chluaidh gu Calasraid / From the Clyde to Callander: Gaelic Tales, Songs and Traditions from the Lennox and Menteith*” (Stornoway: Acair, 1999). He currently teaches at the School of Continuing Studies at the University of Richmond, where he is director of the Gaelic Studies Program. Visit [www.richmond.edu/~newton](http://www.richmond.edu/~newton) for more information on the Gaelic studies program. Go to <http://home.earthlink.net/~gaelicmichael/> to visit Dr. Newton’s Gaelic Cultural Resource center. ❖

## **Mo shùil ad dhèidh ...**

### *A selection of proverbs*

**Is math an sgàthan sùil caraide.**

A friend's eye is a good mirror.

**Cha d'fhuair sùil ghionach riamh cunnradh math.**

A covetous eye never got a good bargain.

**'S motha làn do shùil na làn do bhronn.**

The full of your eye is more than the full of your belly.

**Na bitheadh sùil no dùil agad.**

Have neither expectation nor hope.

**'S e an t-sùil a ghlèidheas sealbh.**

It's the eye that keeps possessions.

# An Coinneamh Mòr Bliadhnaile: *The Annual General Meeting*

**Richmond, Virginia, May 26, 2002**

You couldn't blame ACGA President John Fraser if he were a bit apprehensive before this year's Annual General Meeting in Richmond, Va. As he explained in his opening remarks, this was not only the first time he was chairing this meeting, but also the first time he was attending it as well! As things turned out, though, John's baptism under fire resulted in a very well run and highly informative session before a full house that finished in less than 70 minutes.

In reviewing his first year as president, John noted that it had been his first year on the Board of Directors as well, and so there was something of a flat learning curve at first. However, a few things were accomplished, which he hoped would bear fruit in the future. Namely, the Board had ratified two changes to the Bylaws, one that would make it possible for local chapters to be formed within ACGA. The other, which John himself had steered through, enables Board committees to follow the lead of the Immersion Weekend Committee and Mòd Committee and recruit committee members from outside the Board, from the rank and file membership itself. This could help committees fill specific skill needs, as John noted how the Board had just lost a lawyer and an accountant whose terms had ended. More importantly, though, was the philosophy of involving more members in the workings of the society in general. "A lot of big ideas are still big ideas," he lamented, adding how he would especially like to see the size and the activities of the Membership and Publication committees be expanded.

Following the president's report, copies were distributed of the minutes from last year's AGM in Boulder, Colorado, and these were approved. Next, Jana Blue passed out the treasurer's report for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2002. While our cash position has eroded some in the past year, we are still fiscally quite sound. However, Jana noted her concern over the lack of growth in membership. ACGA also lost some money on its investments, but her question, "Anyone here who didn't lose money on investments this past year?" got an instant laugh. Next, Jana gave us figures showing how ACGA's grants and membership support had grown dramatically in the past year as we tried to do more as an organization -- to give back more to members and give more to like-minded groups. While income from dues at our current level of membership can cover administrative and newsletter expenses, it isn't enough to sustain the outreach activities, she explained. And to do more outreach, we need more members.

## **New locations for Immersion Weekend?**

The Immersion Weekend report was actually a report of the previous year since the current IW was still in progress. Last year's chairperson, Glenn Wrightson, reported that the 2001 Immersion Weekend in Boulder, Colo., had attracted a record number of attendees (57). There had been particularly strong support from people in Colorado, coupled with a fair sprinkling of folks from the East Coast, a contingent that came up from New Mexico, a few Californians, a couple who motorcycled it from Tennessee, and even an attendee from Alaska! Despite the increased costs of holding it at the CU Conference Center, the event was able to break even. The five instructors for the weekend were Seumas Watson (Cape Breton), David Lowe (Toronto), Michael Newton (Boston), Muriel Fisher (Tucson), and Jamie MacDonald (North Carolina).

John used the IW report to springboard into a discussion item that he wanted to raise: where to have the next three Immersion Weekends? He told us how until recently he had been president of a professional organization that would make its plans for their annual meeting only a year in advance. That had put them at a disadvantage because other groups that were planning farther ahead were able to reserve the best weekends at retreat sites. One year, for example, they were forced to hold their meeting over the Mothers' Day weekend because every other time had already been grabbed up. John noted that it was easiest to hold the IW in places where there was a strong membership base, but it was also possible to hold it in areas where this wasn't true, as the event had a tendency to increase membership in areas where it was held. Jana Blue relayed a conversation she had with attendee Francis Acar (who had to leave earlier in the day) about the suitability of a site she knew of near Cleveland. She and her study group could help put on an IW if it were held there. Richard Hill, one of this year's instructors, told the meeting that the Seattle Gaelic organization, Slighe nan Gaidheal, had discussed the possibility of holding a joint event with ACGA. Another instructor, David Lowe, talked about the strong Gaelic interest in the Toronto area and its potential for hosting the IW. According to David, around 60 students regularly attend Saturday Gaelic classes there, and probably a total of 200 people have been involved on and off in recent years. If we teamed up with the Celtic Studies program at the University of Toronto, there would be substantial cost savings for us, and he reminded us that the favorable exchange rate would make an IW in Toronto a good value for American members. It had already been announced during the weekend that the Board had chosen Colorado to host the 2003 IW/AGM. Perhaps Seattle, Toronto, and Cleveland should then follow. Or maybe Toronto, Cleveland, and Seattle. Current IW Chair, Jana

Blue, said the committee would take this all into consideration.

It was also announced that the Board had approved Anne Bekoff to be a co-chair for next year's IW. Jana said she would be willing to co-chair with Anne and suggested that we might want to try in the future to have a co-chair from the location where the IW is going to be, along with a co-chair from the previous year. Under this scenario, Anne would be a co-chair the following year along with a new co-chair from Toronto or Seattle or wherever it was next being held. That way we would have continuity of experience along with local representation.

Mike MacKay reported for the Mod Committee. As some had already learned, Margaret Kirkwood would not be able to come to Ligonier to adjudicate as previously announced, but IW instructor Beathag Morrison would be there in her place. Margaret would still handle the mail-in prose competition, however. The committee was in the process of putting together the registration form and was trying to make it more user-friendly than in previous years.

#### **ACGA increases Good Works donations**

Nick Freer reported on ACGA's contribution to the Gaelic teacher program to Lews Castle College in Stornoway, Scotland, where education majors are being trained to teach at Gaelic-medium schools throughout Scotland. This year they had 5 students in the program, and ACGA's donation would directly help those students (*see Letters, pages 8-10*). Good Works Committee member Glenn Wrightson reported that ACGA had also made contributions to Gaelic initiatives in North America, namely (1) the Eilean nan Òg youth apprenticeship program in Iona, Cape Breton, (2) the Gaelic Council of Nova Scotia who are the organizational force behind the Gaelic Awareness Month each May in Nova Scotia, and (3) the Gaelic students at Dalbrae Academy in Mabou, Cape Breton for their trip to Scotland next spring. Mary Swope spoke of how important it was to help youth in order to keep the Gaelic culture alive. John Fraser commented how ACGA has members who join not to become fluent learners themselves but to be involved in the struggle to preserve the language.

John next spoke on behalf of the Finance Committee. This year the Board had made some progress in establishing a way regularizing how we handle various demands on the society's resources. This involved giving more spending authority to the committees themselves and less piecemeal approval by the Board.

#### **ACGA offered three scholarships**

Anne Landin and Nick Freer reported for the Education Committee. This year we again offered three scholarships: the beginner scholarship to attend the Immersion Weekend

or receive telephone tutoring from Seumas Watson, the intermediate scholarship to attend the Gaelic Song and Language Workshop week at Grandfather Mountain, and the advanced scholarship to attend the Immersion Week at the Gaelic College in Nova Scotia. The deadlines for the first two scholarships had already passed, and those applications were now being considered.

Colleen Fox gave the Membership Secretary report. Of the 318 members currently on the books, 257 were paid up, 42 recently expired, and 19 complimentary memberships. Jana Blue, who as treasurer is the initial person to receive the membership applications and renewals, commented how this looked much better than even a few months ago. The meeting gave a warm applause of acknowledgment to Colleen for all the hard work she has done in reminding people to renew. Charles Beach of Tennessee commented that registering for the Immersion Weekend was itself a reminder for him of when to renew. Gary Mitchell told us how the executive committee of the Colorado St. Andrews Society divides their list of delinquent members among themselves to follow up with phone calls. John Fraser opined that ACGA's regional representatives and/or an expanded membership committee could do similarly.

Mike MacKay spoke for the Publications Committee, discussing the current status of *An Naidheachd Againne*. One possibility for the future might be for *Naidheachd* to serialize Gaelic books that are out of print and now in the public domain. John Fraser mentioned how he had a copy of the first novel to be published in Gaelic, *Dun-Aluinn no An t-Oighre 'na Dhiobarach*, which might be suitable for this. Perhaps three chapters, annotated to the intermediate level, could be featured in each issue of *Naidheachd*. John said he would like to see more done in regard to ACGA's website -- that it should not just be a guide for people to find us, but it should also be a showcase for us.

#### **Buchanan, MacDonald, Chan elected to ACGA Board**

Election Committee member, Jill Franklin, announced to the meeting the results of this year's Board election. Voted onto the Board were Tracy Buchanan of Colorado, Dr. Jamie MacDonald of North Carolina (*now of Antigonish, Nova Scotia — ed.*), and Janice Chan of Toronto. Jana Blue thanked all who took the time and trouble to run for Board, with John Fraser chiming in "and you'll probably be asked to run again!" John went on to explain how when he was on the Election Committee the idea was to try to get someone new to join the committee each year and have someone else rotate off, so you'd have a mix of both continuity and new blood to carry forward. This year, however, the committee didn't get formed until late and its members were all fairly new to the process. However, once they got

going, they did a real bang up job.

Also, Jill Franklin, in her role as ACGA Archivist, asked for members to send her copies of photos and any other items of historical interest.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made and passed. Special acknowledgment should be given to Jana Blue for her astute scheduling of the AGM so that it didn't fall at the end of the IW. This resulted in one of the better-attended meetings that we've seen in recent years.

*submitted by Glenn Wrightson, Recording Secretary*

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The next AGM will take place during the June 6-9 ACGA Immersion Weekend in Boulder, Colo. These minutes will be submitted for approval at that meeting. ❖

## **Iomradh Bòrd nan Stiùirichean: *Board of Directors' Report***

### *ACGA At Stone Mountain*

The Board of Directors held its fall teleconference meeting on Nov. 10, 2002. No major decisions were made at this meeting, but President John Fraser had exciting news about the ACGA tent that he and fellow Board member, Nick Freer, along with Georgia Regional Representative Terry Dexter, had organized at the Stone Mountain Games. Throughout the weekend, Gaelic workshops in language, song, and storytelling were given by John and Nick, and around 45 folks indicated interest in joining a study group that Terry has been trying to get off the ground there. It was also an opportunity for John to fine-tune his "tent-in-a-box" concept, which will provide tools and guidance for other members wanting to organize an ACGA presence at their local Highland Games.

However, the thing that really differentiated these Games for ACGA was the circumstances under which we came to participate in them. John had called the organizers to try to secure a tent space. However, after explaining to them about ACGA, we were invited to become a direct part of the Games as an educational organization, instead of being just another group on "clan row." We also received our tent space gratis (or should I say *saor an asgaidh*).

Next year they would like us to come back and give a seminar on Friday evening before the patrons' reception and submit a description/history of ACGA for inclusion in the Games' program. If it all works out, this type of arrangement could be a model for us to try in other regions.

John continues to be concerned about having a suffi-

ciency of materials to display at our tents, especially items to sell that could fan people's interest in Gaelic when they go home after the Games. The Board discussed the possibility of producing a "best of Naidheachd" compilation issue that could be sold. Or perhaps we could enter into an arrangement to sell Catriona Parsons' *Gàidhlig Troimh Chòmhradh* series or the courses that Muriel Fisher has recently developed.

### *Mod News*

Joan Weiss and Mike MacKay reported to the Board about the 2002 Mod. Despite additional expenses this year, the committee's finances continue to be solid, thanks in large part to the generosity of members and other sponsors whose contributions are the primary funding source. Joan reported how audience attendance at Ligonier was the highest since 1997 and how several families with children had come to Ligonier specifically for the Mod.

Due to circumstances, the grading of the mail-in submissions has run behind, but adjudicator Margaret Kirkwood did tell Joan how surprised and thrilled she was with the quality of the entries she had reviewed. Joan also relayed how very gratifying it was to see quite a few of our mail-in participants progress over the years.

In other Mod news, it was announced that Màiri Sine Campbell has agreed to be the adjudicator for both the mail-in and Ligonier competitions in 2004.

### *Litir Do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh Project*

Mike MacKay also has been busy with the *Litir Do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh* project, and he reported that copies of the booklet/2CD set are now starting to roll off the production line.

For those unfamiliar with *Litir*, this is a weekly 5-minute program on BBC Alba radio, written and read by native Gaelic speaker Roddy MacLean. It can also be heard on the internet and the text is available there as well. Mr. MacLean reads the material in a very clear, deliberate manner, and there are grammatical explanations (thankfully in English!) following the Gaelic text.

By gathering these radio programs together in CD format, ACGA's goal is to make this valuable resource more widely available for learners. Indeed, news of this project has already created a bit of a stir, with inquiries coming in from vendors and groups like Cli in Scotland. The Board discussed the pricing aspect for the CD/booklet set and how to charge postage costs. In granting us permission to reproduce these materials, the BBC had stipulated that we should not make a profit. On the other hand, we will be careful not to lose money either. The final price will be very reasonable.

### *Good Works Grants*

John Fraser reported on communications he had received

## ACGA Board of Directors

thanking ACGA for its grants -- from Seumas Watson (on behalf of *Eilean nan Og*), from the Gaelic Council of Nova Scotia, and from 2 students in the Gaelic Teacher Training Program at Lews Castle College. Glenn Wrightson reported on correspondence he's had with *Taigh na Gàidhlig Mealanais* in Scotland, a group working to preserve the Gaelic dialect in Northwest Sutherland. Although the largest share of ACGA's budget is designated for member benefits, we also strive to provide assistance to groups in the *Gaidhealtachd*. By helping to keep Gaelic alive in those areas where the language is indigenous, this works to ensure the availability of benefits (e.g. IW instructors, Mod adjudicators) for our members in the long-term.

### *ACGA Immersion Weekend*

As reported in this column previously, Seattle, Toronto, and Cleveland have been selected as host cities for the Immersion Weekend in 2004, 2005, and 2006 respectively. John raised the issue that perhaps Seattle might not be the best choice for 2004 since that is when *Slighe nan Gaidheal* will next hold its biannual *Feis*, which occurs at about the same time of the year as our IW. If both events were held in Seattle that year, the two organizations could end up competing against each other. If we were to combine the two events, that would mean one less opportunity for Gaelic learners in 2004. John will follow up with Rich Hill for *Slighe's* view on the matter. It may be that Toronto will switch with Seattle. Regarding the 2003 IW in Colorado, June 6-9, Glenn Wrightson, speaking on behalf of chairperson Anne Bekoff, reported on the composition of this year's committee. Jamie MacDonald, the educational coordinator for the IW, ran by the Board a list of some 20 names of potential teachers he is considering.

### *Gaelic Interest in Prisons*

From time to time ACGA receives requests for learning materials from people who are incarcerated. The Board reviewed and confirmed its policy on this, which is to answer all inquiries (regardless of point of origin) with information about resources that are available to learners and where these may be obtained. However, ACGA does not itself honor requests to supply individuals with materials.

*submitted by Glenn Wrightson,  
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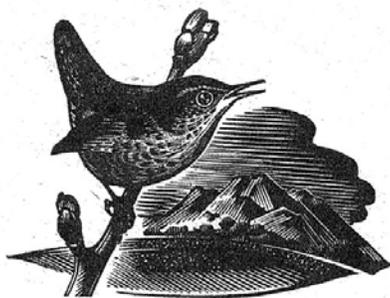
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GED IS BEAG  
ALTHOUGH SMALL IS

AN DREATHAN-DONN  
THE WREN

NI E FUAIM  
IT WILL MAKE A NOISE

In our Gaelic proverbs lies a key to Scotland's greatness. These are the sayings of simple men; expressions of a philosophy won in the fields, in the glens and on the sea. We cannot be reminded too often of our heritage—and that is the purpose of this series of advertisements. They come to you with the compliments of GRAY, DUNN & CO. LTD., Kinning Park, Glasgow, S.1.

GRAY DUNN BISCUITS

Gray Dunn, Scottish Field April 51 x 5 Final Proof 61

chluinntinn. 'S toigh leam an t-eun beag donn seo, "Rìgh na h-eòin," agus tha sgeul agam mu dheidhinn.

Bha mi a' fuireach an t-samhradh sin ann an Ceap Cod aig taigh mo mhàthair, nach maireann. Rugadh i ann an 1903, nuair a ràinig a pàrantan California à Alba, agus bhàsaich i ann an 1998 aig 94 bliadhna a dh'aois. Am feasgar sin, nuair a bha mi a' glanadh an deasg aice, thug mi sùil air dealbh eòin bhige — dreathan donn!

Fo'n dealbh seo bha faclan Gàidhlig, agus fo a' Ghàidhlig bha faclan Beurla sgrìobhte:

Ged is beag an dreathan-donn nì e fuaim.  
*Although the wren is small, he will make noise.*

'S e sanas mu Bhriosgaidean Gray Dunn a bh' ann, sgrìobhte le bràthair còir mo mhàthair, Domhnail Mac Gill' Iosa. Bhàsaich esan ann an 1945. 'S e bard a bh'ann agus sgoilear agus fear glè ghràidhaichte. Rinn e sreath sanais air seanfhacal Gàidhlig anns na 1930s, agus ghlèidh mo mhàthair sabhailt' iad fad mòran bhliadhnaichean.

Bha e mar gun robh bràthair mo mhàthair a' bruidhinn rium mu dheidhinn càin agus cultar na Gaidhealteachd troimh na h-òrain faramach aig an t-eun beag seo, an dreathan-donn.



## Notaichean:

### *Notes from the Membership*

#### *An Dreathan-Donn*

*le Màiri Nic Gill' Iosa Swope*

Tha seanfhacal againn anns a' Ghàidhlig: "Ged is beag an dreathan-donn, nì e fuaim." Tha sin ceart gu leòr. Tha fios agamsa.

Aon mhadainn 's an t-samhradh, dh'èirich mi tràth, agus chuala mi òran eòin. Cha b'e fonn ceòlmhor a bh'ann idir, ach bha e leanailteach gu leòr. Bha fios agam nach b' e lon-dubh a bh'ann no brù dearg; thuir Alison, mo bhana-charaid, gur e dreathan-donn a bh'ann. Bha mi glè thoilichte 'ga

Mary Gillies Swope discovered this advertisement while staying at her mother's house in Cape Cod after the death of her mother in 1998 at the age of 94. She came across several advertisements for Gray Dunn Biscuits based on Gaelic proverbs, while cleaning out her mother's desk. The advertisement was written by her uncle, the late Donald Gillies, who died in 1945. "He was a poet and scholar and a man greatly beloved," Mary writes. We thank Mary for her story, which would have made her uncle proud, and for copies of the advertisements, which will appear in future issues of *Naidheachd*. ❖

## *Cape Breton, Beyond the Classroom*

By Liam Ó Caiside

im Horton's isn't the first place you'd expect to go for Gaelic. But there I was one Saturday morning last August, sitting in a donut shop in Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia, while Gaelic stories poured from Greg Smith, a native Gaelic speaker originally from Cape Breton's Margaree Valley. Our conversation, almost exclusively in Gaelic, lasted about two hours, as Greg recounted his travels in Scotland, humorous stories of old Cape Breton and even a supernatural tale, *Caileagan Banc' Ailein* -- the "Girls of Ailean's Bank."

This was one of several Gaelic experiences I had during a week-long "beyond the classroom" tour of Cape Breton that included *Féis an Eilein*, the Gaelic-language festival held each August in Christmas Island, Nova Scotia. During my brief visit to Cape Breton I attended several concerts, cèilidhs, workshops and two milling frolics (events where waulking or milling songs are sung). I also drove over miles of dirt and gravel roads through small communities such as Denysdale, Valley Mills and West Bay Road. Much of that driving was done at night on my way home from events that ended at, or after, midnight. A cup of tea and the thought that a deer — or moose — might pop up around the next bend kept me alert.

This was my fourth trip to Cape Breton. On two previous occasions I attended the week-long immersion program at the Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts at St. Anne's. Although I arrived too early to attend the immersion program this year, I had plenty of opportunity to speak Gaelic. I met with many of my former teachers, including Seumas Watson, Jeff MacDonald, and Hector MacNeil. However, visits with Gaelic speakers were a high point of the trip. In addition to Greg Smith, I had the chance to meet Johnny Williams of Melford; Roddie J. MacInnis of Glendale and Rod C. MacNeil of Barra Glen. I owe these opportunities to my friend and host Wally Ellison of West Bay Road. Wally — a photographer, writer, lecturer, former high school teacher, Gaelic learner and bagpiper — opened many doors for me during this trip and showed me a side of Cape Breton that few visitors realize exists.

Few visitors are aware of Gaelic Cape Breton because in many ways it still is an "underground" culture in Cape Breton. It would be easy to miss the Gaelic signs welcom-

ing you to "Braighe na h-Aibhne" and "Frith Bhaile a' Rìgh" as you drive north on the TransCanada. The Gaelic signs are hand-painted and much smaller than the official road signs for Glendale and Kingsville. They're not even posted near the English-language signs, but off to the side where you might not see them if you weren't looking. To me, those road signs came to symbolize the status of Gaelic in Cape Breton -- long ignored by the powers that be.

Times are changing, however, and there's a new effort under way that joins government and community leaders to develop a provincial policy and strategy for Gaelic language and culture. This winter a series of meetings in communities in Cape Breton and in Antigonish and Halifax on the Nova Scotia mainland was organized by a Gaelic Development Steering Committee composed of community and government leaders. The results of these meetings will be used to develop a policy paper that will be submitted to the government.

And there's good reason to believe government will listen. Nova Scotia Culture Minister Rodney MacDonald has said his department will cover the cost of the meetings and the discussion paper, about \$6,000 Canadian. The whole process began in 2000 when the Nova Scotia Department of Tourism and Culture convened a meeting with members of the Gaelic community at the Nova Scotia Highland Village in Iona, Cape Breton, to discuss how the province might a strategy to promote and enhance Gaelic language and culture. One result was an audit of Gaelic resources in Nova Scotia conducted by Dr. Michael Kennedy.

The size of the Gaelic-driven economy in Nova Scotia is one of the audit's more surprising findings. The Gaelic economy generates \$23.5 million Canadian in direct revenue, according to Kennedy's research. That figure includes revenue from events, performances, recordings, lessons and products. It doesn't include indirect revenue -- such as money spent on lodging and food.

That's not bad for an "underground" culture, is it?

It's critical that people recognize the economic value of Gaelic, as well as its intrinsic cultural value. How many times have I heard, "Well, what will you do with that language? It won't get you anywhere." If I had a dollar for each time I heard that old saw, I'd be rich now (and I could

buy that house in Cape Breton!).

Kennedy identified 2,070 annual Gaelic-related events throughout the province. Importantly, 17% of those events identify the promotion of Gaelic as their primary purpose.

A full report on the steering committee's efforts was published in a recent issue of *Am Bràighe*, the quarterly newspaper published by Gaeltalk Communications, Queensville, Nova Scotia. It's very encouraging reading. Also encouraging is the growth of programs such as *Eilean nan Òg*, the apprenticeship program for teenagers that teaches them Gaelic language skills and involves them in Gaelic culture by bringing them together with the tradition bearers of the older generation. ACGA is a supporter of the program, sponsoring two students last year (see *Seumas Watson's letter in Gaelic on page 5*).

These efforts to develop a policy and strategy for Gaelic and to bring the generations together come none to soon. The number of Gaelic speakers in Cape Breton, estimated to be about 80,000 in 1900, has dropped to between 500 to 1,000 by most counts. Many of those who learned Gaelic as their first language were born before the First World War, and they aren't likely to be with us in ten or 20 years. All the more reason for learners to seek them out without delay.

I found each of the Gaelic speakers I visited to be warm and welcoming. All were willing to share songs, stories and conversation along with a cup of tea — and sometimes much more.

When Wally and I arrived at Johnny Williams' farm, Johnny was outside stacking firewood. At 88, Williams still works his farm. He invited Wally and myself into his kitchen, where his niece Kathaleen, also a Gaelic speaker, chatted with us over tea. When he was told that I knew a few Gaelic songs, Johnny put me on the spot: "Do you have any songs that I know?" he asked. Well, I tried. I sang "An t-each ruadh" ("The red horse"), a Cape Breton song popularized by the Rankin Family, thinking I'd be safe with that. "Well I know a version of that song too, but it's slower and has different words," he said. Indeed, he sang the chorus and a few verses of an "old-country" version of the song that undoubtedly served as the model for the Cape Breton song. (You can find the older song, "Mo chridhe trom 's cha chairich e," in Helen Creighton's *Gaelic Songs from Nova Scotia*.)

Johnny then sang "A-nochd 's trom tha mo cheum" ("Tonight my step is heavy"), a song he taught to Mary Jane Lamond, who recorded it on her third album, *Làn Dùil*. Johnny also sang an interesting version of "Chi mi bhuam":

*Chì mi bhuam fada bhuam  
Chì mi bhuam fo mo làmh  
Chì mi Muile nam beann fuar ...*

I was quite surprised to hear the reference to *Muile nam beann fuar*. Typically it's "Ceap Breatainn, mo luaidh" the singer sees over the foam, not the Isle of Mull — this is the chorus to an older song that was used as a model by Alexander "the Ridge" MacDonald, the bard who composed the Cape Breton song (I later learned that the same chorus was recorded by Dr. John Shaw from Collie MacIntosh of River Denys in 1977).

Rod C. MacNeil had a full house when we arrived to visit on a Sunday afternoon. Not only was his sizeable family of children and grandchildren there, but the MacNeils were hosts to Dr. Jamie MacDonald, now teaching Gaelic at Saint Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, and Heather Sparling, a Gaelic student from Toronto now studying at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig on Skye.

Not only did we spend several hours discussing Gaelic and sharing songs with the MacNeils, but we were invited to stay for dinner and an impromptu concert put on by a few of the MacNeil grandchildren.

I am very grateful to all those who invited me into their homes or met with me to share their Gaelic last summer. They all seemed pleased to meet someone interested in their language, their songs, their lives, even if sometimes they were surprised to meet a Gaelic speaker from Virginia. These brief visits to the homes of Cape Bretoners gave me insights into their everyday lives, history and culture that could never be gained in a classroom. I hope that more ACGA members and Gaelic students will seek them out. May all *your* Gaelic journeys be as successful and fulfilling! ❖

## Meal-an-Naidheachd!

Congratulations to Carol Zall, who was named 2003 Gaelic Journalist of the Year in this year's Scottish Press Awards, presented this May in Glasgow.

Zall's byline will be familiar to readers of *The Scotsman's* Gaelic column and *An Gaidheal Ùr*. What they may not know is that Zall is an American, from Washington, D. C., and a Gaelic learner. Zall met with Gaelic learners during a visit to Washington a few years ago and wrote an article on the local singing group, Mac-Talla.

The award was presented by the Gaelic Broadcasting Committee. The competition's adjudicator said Zall's success was a sign of how the world of Gaelic writing is changing and becoming more international in the computer age. Aonghas Pàdraig Caimbeul, writer, poet and educator, took second place in the competition, and Ailig Ò Hianlaidh, of the West Highland Free Press, took third place.

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