Scotland’s First Minister Alex Salmond has promised to boost spending on Scottish Gaelic by £7.5 million — about $14.6 million — over the next five years, with special emphasis on Gaelic-medium education and broadcasting. That includes funding for a controversial digital television station dedicated to Gaelic.

“The Scottish Government is not satisfied with maintaining the status quo for Gaelic,” Salmond said at the 14th annual televised Sabhal Mòr Ostaig lecture Dec. 19.

“We will work to enhance the status and use of Gaelic,” he said. “We will promote and expand Gaelic education provision at every level. We will secure progress in key areas of Gaelic development … And we will put our full support behind the new dedicated Gaelic digital TV channel.”

The extra funding includes £1 million per year for education, £1 million for projects in the National Plan for Gaelic, and £500,000 a year for broadcasting.

“Education will be central to our effort to secure the future of Gaelic,” Salmond said. “My Government will ensure that Gaelic-medium education supports growth — and that future generations of speakers receive the full educational curriculum through the Gaelic language.”

The televised address was the first Sabhal Mòr Ostaig lecture not held on the college’s Isle of Skye campus. It was held at St. Cecilia’s Hall at Edinburgh University.

“We are here this evening to show that Gaelic is not a regional language — it is a truly nationwide language,” Salmond said. “And the future success of Gaelic depends on attracting new speakers to the language here as much as it does on fostering Gaelic in its traditional heartland.”

He rejected the claims of some critics that the language is dying of “natural causes” — an allegation often used to oppose further financial support for Gaelic initiatives.

“There has been nothing accidental about the other efforts to damage the Gaelic language,” Salmond said. “Often the attacks have been systematic and calculated.”

He cited legal attacks on Gaelic from the 1609 Statutes of Iona, which required Highland chieftains to send their children south for education in English, to the 1872 Education Act that for decades made English the sole language...

(Continued on page 3)
**President’s Letter**

_Beachdan bhon Cheann-Suidhe_  
_Get Ready for ACGA Events, Elections in 2008_

..."Beannaich an taigh-sa ‘s na bheil ann  
Eadar fhear is bhean is chlann:  
Pailteas bidh, pailteas aodaich,  
Slàinte dhaoine gu robh ann." *

Bliadhna Mhath Ùr Dhuibh! Tha mi an dòchas gu robh saor-làithean math aig na h-uile agus gun robh cothrom agaibh air uine a chur seachad còmhla ri’r teaghlaichean agus ur càirdean.

An cùm thu cleachdaidhean na seann dùthcha? Bha mo mhac as òige aig an taigh am feasgar deireannach den Dubhlaichd agus dh’fhaignich mi dha an biodh e a’ falbh an taighe aig mionaid gu meadhan-oidhche tron doras-thaoibh agus a’ tighinn a-steach air an doras-bheòil aig mionaid às dèidh meadhan-oidhche, ach cha do ghabh e úidh anns a’ ghnìomh idir! Gu fortanach, b’ e ar mac as sine a’ chiad fhear a thàinig tron dorus againn anns a’ mhadainn—’s e gille dubh árd eireachdail a th’ ann ’s mar sin, bidh deagh fhortan againn anns a’ bhliadhna a’ tighinn.

Tha sinn aig ACGA air a bhith gu math trang, saor-làithean ann no às. Tha sinn a’ tòiseachadh sreath ùr anns an iris seo den _Naidheachd_ — léirmheasan air leabhrainneach ‘s clàir ‘s bhiodhasan ‘s stuth eile anns a’ Ghàidhlig. Tha sinn an dòchas gu còrd iad ruibh agus gum bi iad feumail dhùibh.

Tha planaichean a’ dol air adhart airson Beinn Seanair agus bidh an seachdain seo co-iomaint leis an Deireadh Seachdan Tumaidh a-ritist (6mh Iuchar-11mh Iuchar.) Tha còignear luchd-teagaisg againn — Jamie MacDonald (Canada), Calum Martin (Alba), Mary Ann Kennedy (Alba), Gillebride MacMillan (Alba) agus Maureen Lyon (Canada). Bidh Gàidhlig gu leòr ann ’s bidh spòrs mòr ann cuideachd, tha mi cintteach.

Agus na diochuimhnichibh an taghadh bliadhnan an t-Earrach seo. Ma bhios úidh agaibh ann an àite air a’ bhòrd, dìreach cuir post-dealain gu Eva (egclarsach@gmail.com) no Ken (klmccor@yahoo.com) roimhe 31mh am Màirt.

Mar as trice, ma bhios smaoin agaibh aig rud sam bith air cuspair sam bith, cuiribh post-dealain thugam no duine eile air a’ bhòrd!

Happy New Year to you! I hope that you all had a good holiday, and that you had an opportunity to spend time with family and friends.

Do you follow the customs of the old country? My youngest son was at home New Year’s Eve, and I asked him if he would leave the house just before midnight through the back door and come in by the front door just after midnight, but he would have none of it! Fortunately, the first person to enter our home in the morning was our oldest son, who fulfilled the requirements of a “tall, handsome, dark-haired man” to bring our household luck for the coming year.

We at ACGA have been very busy, despite the holidays. We are starting a new series in this issue of Naidheachd — reviews of books, CDs, videos and other Gaelic material. We hope that you enjoy them, and find them useful.

Planning is also well underway for the second joint Grandfather Mountain Language and Song/Immersion Weekend (July 6-11) as well. Jamie MacDonald, Calum Martin, Mary Ann Kennedy, Gillebride MacMillan and Maureen Lyon round out the instructor lineup.

And don’t forget the annual election this spring. If you’re interested in a place on the board, just send an email to Eva egclarsach@gmail.com or Ken klmccor@yahoo.com before March 31.

leis gach deagh dhùrachd,

Janice Chan  
ruadh@idirect.com

* Duan Callainn às Na Hearadh/Hogmanay poem from Harris.*
of education in the United Kingdom.

Scottish Gaelic did not achieve even semi-official legal status in Scotland until the passage of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act by the Scottish Parliament in 2005.

Salmond then took a shot at more recent criticism of plans for an all-Gaelic digital television station.

“We fully support the need for Gaelic broadcasting, and we are absolutely committed to the establishment of a Gaelic digital service,” the first minister said. “This new channel can play an important role in securing the future status of Gaelic in Scotland and in the economic development of the Highlands and Islands. … I am confident that both the BBC and the Gaelic Media Service will be able to respond to the issues raised by the BBC Trust and ensure that this service is of wider benefit for the people of Scotland — both in terms of education and attracting new speakers of the Gaelic language.”

The first minister borrowed a line from former U.S. President Bill Clinton’s 1992 campaign when he linked the survival and growth of Gaelic to jobs, housing and opportunity in the Hebrides: “‘S e [an] eaconomaidh a th’ann, amadan!” (“It’s the economy, stupid!”)

“At present our Gaelic funding is creating economic opportunities in publishing, in translation, in education, in arts, tourism and broadcasting in the Highlands and Islands,” he said, “but we must do more to ensure economic success and prosperity, and to empower our rural communities to take their destiny into their own hands.”

He promised support for traditional industries such as agriculture, forestry and fishing as well as new industries such as information technology and energy.

“We will support these sectors through our rural development programme — which will be worth £1.6 billion (approximately $3.2 million) over the next seven years. … The language will thrive only once there are real economic opportunities for Gaelic speakers.”

Salmond’s plans for added funding are the latest of several steps taken to strengthen Gaelic over the past several years, including the release of the National Plan for Gaelic last year. That plan, required by the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act passed by the Scottish Parliament in 2005, envisions 100,000 Gaelic speakers in Scotland by 2041.

“We must recognize that a vibrant Gaelic language and culture are central to what it means to be Scottish in the modern world,” Salmond said. “My government's ambition is to see Gaelic emerge again as a truly national language — and to support a flourishing Gaelic culture and community as part of a resurgent Scotland.”

— Liam Ó Caiside

BBC Trust Gives Tentative OK to Digital Gaelic TV Service

A n all-Gaelic digital television channel that would broadcast seven hours of programming a day got a tentative green light from the BBC Trust and may be broadcasting as early as this summer.

The channel will be a partnership between the BBC and Seirbheis nam Meadhannan Gàidhlig (Gaelic Media Services), with both providing more than £10 million a year in funding for a total of £20.8 million a year.

Gaelic Media Service, funded by the Scottish government, funds, commissions and produces Gaelic-language programs for television, radio, online or new media.

In the meantime, BBC will continue its Gaelic programming. Eventually, that programming is expected to be transferred to the new digital service. Funding from the BBC will include the £7.2 million the BBC spends on its existing Gaelic TV service, £2.5m for new content and related costs and about £1m to cover distribution costs.

The agreement to proceed with the station was widely welcomed, though some letter-writers complained in the media about the £20.8 million price tag. However, the additional £3.5 million in spending by the BBC — about $6.9 million — represents only a fraction of the BBC’s budget in Scotland, where it just completed a £188 million headquarters building in Glasgow.

The BBC Trust apparently overcame skepticism it had expressed in November about the value of the channel and the benefits it would bring to television license payers in Scotland. “The BBC is already providing significant public value for the Gaelic speaking community with its existing services on radio, the Internet and TV,” the trust said in November. “The increased expenditure could not be justified if all the service achieves is better coverage for the existing audience.”

The GMS responded by promising a service that would reach out beyond the Gaelic-speaking community to learners and non-Gaelic speakers. “The new service will offer programming which will be attractive and accessible to non-Gaelic speakers, learners and people who currently do not consume any Gaelic content,” said Ken MacQuarrie, controller of BBC Scotland.

What’s not clear is whether the channel’s programs will be available on Freeview, a service partly owned by the BBC that offers free digital television programming on-demand, rebroadcasting existing programs already shown on the BBC channels and other channels.
A small group of children in the Washington area are learning Scottish Gaelic through Cròileagan DC, a Gaelic playgroup that opened last fall — perhaps the first in the United States.

“Cròileagan DC uses Gaelic as the language of play,” says Liam Ó Caiside, playgroup organizer and teacher. “We’re introducing children to vocabulary about themselves, their homes, surroundings, friends and families through fun activities that they already enjoy, such as drawing, music, games and storytelling.”

The group got its start when the McNultys, a family from Glasgow, arrived in the Washington area last summer. Arbory and James McNulty wanted to find a tutor who would help their daughter Aoife, 5, keep up the Gaelic she had learned in a nursery program in Glasgow.

They plan to return to Scotland in about two years, and want to prepare Aoife and her younger brother, Lorien, 3, for Gaelic-medium primary school.

The McNultys contacted Ó Caiside through Gaelectcast.com, the Gaelic-medium podcast produced in Washington. After discussing various options, they invited another local family, the Morrisons, to join them in forming the Gaelic-medium playgroup.

Scott Morrison, a Gaelic learner who also is teaching the language to his children Brenna, 8, and Luke, 5, joined Liam as a playgroup “leader.”

The group meets twice a month for a very active afternoon at the McNultys’ home in Maryland.

“This isn’t exactly a cròileagan like those organized by Comhairle nan Sgoiltean Àraich in Scotland, but we’re inspired by the work they’ve done,” Ó Caiside says.

“Scott and I speak to the children almost solely in Gaelic, using English only when we have to. Our goal is to expose them to Gaelic and get them to use it naturally.”

He’s very pleased with the results. “It’s amazing how quickly the children learn and how eager they are to use what they’ve learned, and to learn more,” he says.

For more information on the program, visit the group’s Web site at www.croileagandc.blogspot.com.
‘Night of Renewal’ Evokes, Explores Two Traditions

America’s racial politics often oversimplify the complex historical and cultural relationships between African-Americans and their neighbors of European descent, emphasizing differences while obscuring connections and traditions that underscore a common experience and humanity.

Night of Renewal, a musical and dance production staged in North Carolina in November and December, set out to correct that by evoking the history and folk life of two of the North Carolina’s communities, African-Americans and Scottish Highlanders. “Although their fortunes differed greatly — Scottish Highlanders coming to America to escape oppression and Africans coming to America in the yoke of oppression — the destiny of these two peoples became interwoven in complex and profound ways on Carolina soil,” the dance group 2NearTheEdge said in its program notes for the production.

“In the main region of Highland settlement, the Cape Fear, several generations of African-Americans spoke Scottish Gaelic and played Highland music,” the group noted.

Night of Renewal was created by 2NearTheEdge’s artistic co-directors L.D. Burris (pictured above holding the Quaich and dancing at right) and Keval Kaur Khalsa in collaboration with Celtic scholar and author Michael Newton (above at right) and musician Ed Butler.

The production is grounded in the New Year’s traditions of both communities. It begins with the Oidhche Chal-lainn rituals of Scotland and then turns to the Jonkonnu festival, a brief period when slaves traveled from house to house dressed in wild costumes, mocking plantation owners. “This program acknowledges the inter-relationship of African-American and Scottish Highland peoples in North Carolina while re-visioning two important holiday traditions celebrated in these cultures,” 2NearTheEdge said.


Naidheachd Seeks New Editor

An Comunn Gaidhealach Ameireaganach is seeking a new editor-in-chief for An Naidheachd Againne. After several years as editor-in-chief, Liam Ó Caiside will step down at the end of 2008. ACGA would like to recruit his successor and have that person in place for the first issue of 2009.

The position is voluntary, and open to any ACGA member. The editor-in-chief is responsible for producing ACGA’s newsletter four times a year. That entails soliciting and editing articles from contributors, working with text and photos in readily available desktop publishing software, proofreading finished pages and working with the printer to publish and mail the newsletter. The editor-in-chief may write articles, but also should solicit articles from ACGA committee leaders, working closely with the managing editor and ACGA board of directors. Experience as a journalist or writer and competence in Scottish Gaelic is an advantage, but not a requirement. Responsibilities may be delegated to staff and other members of the Publications Committee as appropriate.

Liam will help provide any assistance the new editor may need to ease the transition to new leadership. If you are interested, please write to ACGA President Janice Chan at ruadh@idirect.com or Liam at liam@gaidheal.com.
The Celtic Monthly magazine of November 1876 in Scotland stated, “Mr. Sinclair has placed the Celtic literary world under a deep debt of obligation to him for producing a collection of Gaelic poetry which promises to be the best collection of Gaelic poetry ever issued.”

Archibald Sinclair, or Gilleasbuig mac na Ceàrdadh, who published the original “An t-Òranaiche” with 527 pages of Gaelic songs, was the owner of a publishing company that began with his father, Archibald senior, a native of Mulin-dry, Killarow, in Islay. Apparently the family came to Glasgow around 1852 and the first of their many Gaelic publications appeared in 1853. There is very little information to be found about this family of publishers, of which there were three generations.

Their business was located during most of its life at 62 Argyle Street, Glasgow — premises which were a mecca for the city’s literary Gaels of that period. Islay and Argyllshire authors featured prominently in their publications. The Sinclairs’ publications were extremely important to the Highland community at a time when Gaelic was officially discouraged. Their publishing business was eventually taken over by Alexander MacLaren in 1951 and that firm was taken over by Gairm, with whose work we are all familiar, in 1970.

“An t-Òranaiche,” “The Gaelic Songster,” was taken to the far corners of the earth wherever the Gaels scattered — and where they sang and remembered the songs of their homeland. Songs include the well-known “Fuadaich nan Gaidheal”, a Clearance song said to have been the “national anthem” of the Cape Breton Scots and heard frequently on recordings made there in the 1950s, ’60s and ’70s. Another song, written by the parish minister for a young man on the verge of emigrating to Australia, lauds the beauties of Glendaruel in Argyll on the Cowal peninsula. The minister himself later emigrated to Prince Edward Island. In addition, there are love songs, sea songs, laments and many other types of songs.

This beautiful reprint, in blue hardcover with gold trim, accomplished by the efforts of Trueman Matheson and other volunteers, was the first book actually published by Sìol Cultural Enterprises, but definitely not the last. True-man is to be congratulated on reproducing such a great and valued resource since the original, published in 1879, is long out of print and very rare. It is probably the most revered Gaelic song book in Cape Breton. The new version has 585 pages with larger and clearer printing than the original.

“The Celtic Monthly” article stated two criticisms of the book: one, that improvement would have been made had the editor spelled all words consistently the same.

They note, “It is the province of the Editor to secure uniformity as far as possible in the spelling — indeed it is a duty which he owes to his readers. He ought not to consider himself bound by the orthography of his authors, many of whom, although they could compose good poetry, could not write a line, and had to depend upon the best Gaelic scholars within reach to commit their compositions to paper. It is expected in such circumstances that the orthography should vary, but that is no excuse for the Editor of such an excellent work as this to allow so many unnecessary variations…”

The other criticism was that the composers’ names should have been added in the table of contents.

Both these criticisms have been addressed admirably in this new revision. Thanks are due to Effie Rankin of Mabou and Catriona Parsons and Ken Nelson, both faculty at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, for their hard work in this endeavor.

This book contains a wealth of Gaelic poetry. According to Dr. Hugh Cheape, it was the first book of Gaelic popular songs ever to be published. For those who sing these songs or hear them frequently, it is a treasure, for it is a major reference book. For the serious student of the Gaelic language and song, it is a “must have.” To read and study these songs is to learn about the lives of the Gaels for several hundred years through this beautiful language.
Some of the songs go far back in time, although most appear to have been composed in the 18th and 19th century.

This book may not be suitable for the casual Gaelic singer or for the beginning Gaelic student. There is no English translation and no help with pronunciation other than from the 21 songs on the accompanying CD. The biggest problem with both the original and the revision of this book is that there is only the text of the song, with no indication of the tune except for some references to the names of other tunes which few people may know these days.

While the CD is an excellent addition to the original book and well done, I wish there had been a way to include more CD’s with more songs. There are people who still know how to sing some of the songs while memory of many of the tunes have faded; however other recordings of many of these songs are certainly available in libraries and collections. A comparison of the way the songs are sung in both Cape Breton and in Scotland would be interesting.

Siol Cultural Enterprises is a mail order and internet based Gaelic book store in St. Andrews, Nova Scotia, and the foremost supplier of Gaelic books in North America. It is a worthy descendant of the publishing house of Gilleasbuig mac na Ceàrdadh and deserves our patronage for this and it’s many other offerings.

— Anne Landin

Sgeulachdan an Dà Shaoghal ann an Ceithir Litrichean

Michael Newton

2007, Sandstone Press, Dingwall, Scotland
Part of the Sandstone Meanmach Series of Scottish Gaelic books
76 pp., softcover, in Gaelic with English foreword, afterword

In his first lengthy foray into fiction, Michael Newton taps into one of the deepest and oldest streams feeding Gaelic literature: the lore and lure of the sitheachan, or the fairies, as they are unsatisfactorily called in English. In doing so he is saying something about not just the intrinsic value of Gaelic folklore but the language and origins of human creativity and consciousness.

“Tales of Two Worlds in Four Letters” — as the title translates into English — is a series of letters by an anonymous writer living in the country to his foster-brother Robert, who is studying for a degree in the city. The letters continue a friendly argument over the nature and value of folklore and traditional beliefs. The author, an avid collector of local legends, recounts tales recorded from local tradition bearers. In those tales Newton revisits some familiar traditional stories — starting with “Di-Luain, Di-Màirt” or “Monday, Tuesday” — but his retellings holds new twists for the reader. He also puts into them much of the rich language of the sgeulachdan.

“In the writing of this novella,” he says in his foreword, “I … decided to embrace as many old literary conventions as possible … to highlight the delicious texture of the Gaelic language itself, to revisit traditional prose styles, and to explore the psychological depths of fairytales, the genre of oral tradition that might seem to have the least relevance to the modern reader.”

Actually, that genre seems increasingly relevant — note the recent success of J.K. Rowling and the popularity of fantasy and science fiction among readers of all ages.

It’s surprising that few Scottish Gaelic writers have ventured into the fantasy genre, as they have such rich, imaginative and stimulating sources on which to draw. It’s worth noting that the first Scottish Gaelic feature-length film, “Seachd: The Inaccessible Pinnacle,” does.

“Clearly,” Newton says, “there is something inexorably compelling about this symbolic Other that allows us to express something otherwise inexpressible about ourselves and the human condition.” Or as one of his characters says, “Chan eil ciall no feum anns an t-saoghal mur h-eil criochan ann. … Chan eil ‘sinne’ ann mura h-eil ‘iadsan’ ann cuideachd.” [“There is no sense or value in the world unless there are boundaries … There is no ‘we’ unless there is a ‘they’ as well.”]

In popular culture, the sitheachan, like their counterparts in Irish and Welsh tradition, are often classified as Celtic and even, by some, as Pagan in origin. It might be better to classify the sitheachan — if that’s at all possible — as a Celtic and specifically Scottish Gaelic manifestation of something much more universal and older, predating either the Celts or what we today call Paganism.

Recognition — or invention — of the “Other” is an important step in defining self, both for individuals and communities. The sitheachan, or their distant predecessors, may have played an important part in the creation of our early human and communal identities and, as Newton suggests, the development of art, spirituality, language and religion. And the idea of the “Others” still resonates in our imagination, as fans of the TV series “Lost” will know.

“Sgeulachdan an Dà Shaoghal” is the second in the Meanmach series of short novellas for advanced learners as well as accomplished readers of Scottish Gaelic from Sandstone Press. Meal-a-naidheachd to Sandstone Press for recognizing this market and its needs.

— Liam Ó Caiside

Duilleag 7
Learning Scottish Gaelic From a Distance: Methods and Materials

By Jamie MacDonald

Historically, the number of Gaelic speakers outside of Scotland and Nova Scotia has been so small that those who wished to learn the language had to either move to an area with Gaelic speakers or learn from a book. It is naturally easier to learn a language if you are surrounded by fluent speakers of the language and immersed in the culture associated with it. Those who choose to learn a language at a distance usually do so because their contact with fluent speakers is limited. There are some distinct advantages of learning at a distance: you do not have to relocate or travel great distances to receive instruction; you can usually learn when it is convenient for you and at your own pace; and distance learning options are often cheaper than tuition fees for “in-person” lessons.

Distance language learning has its disadvantages as well, but these are usually outweighed by the desire of the learner to master the language. Some of the disadvantages encountered when learning a language at a distance are:

- The learner may not have opportunities to hear the language. This makes it more difficult to learn correct pronunciation, phrasing, and tonal qualities of speech.
- The learner often is not able to see a fluent speaker’s mouth and body language.
- There is usually a lack of additional sensual stimuli (other visual, auditory, tactile and olfactory stimuli associated with a word, phrase or concept).
- Learning is often out of context. This includes out of cultural context.
- There is often a lack of repetition and reinforcement.
- Most distance courses lack the opportunity for creativity.
- Many courses suffer from the lack of feedback from experienced fluent speakers.

For many years, Gaelic grammars and “teach yourself” type books were the only option available to those wishing to learn the language at a distance. With advances in communications and technology over the last twenty years, the options for language learning in remote areas have increased dramatically. This series of articles will survey distance language learning materials for Gaelic from the early years, when books were the only medium available, to the latest technology. The future of distance language learning will also be addressed.

Text Based Courses

The oldest method of learning Gaelic at a distance was through text-based only courses. At first this was the only option, and the early courses suffered from all the above disadvantages of distance language learning.

Most text-based only courses have both grammatical and conversational components, but they are usually weighted towards one approach more than the other. The grammatical texts are heavily based on learning the rules of the language and information is often given in list form. For example, the text will list the forms of a noun in the nominative, dative, genitive, and vocative case. Grammar texts do not concentrate on phrases, idioms or dialogues.

Historically, most of the older text-based courses tended to be more grammatical and were modeled after Latin grammars; very few utilized the conversational approach. Today the pendulum has swung in the other direction and most of the texts introduced in the last twenty years have been conversational in nature, including many phrases, idioms and copious dialogues.

The oldest published Gaelic teaching device was Alasdair MacMaighstir Alasdair’s “Leabhar a Theagasc Ainmininn” (A Book to Teach Nouns) or “Nuadh Fhocloir Gaoidhilg agus Béurla: A Galick and English Vocabulary.” This small book was written for use by the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge in their charity schools in the Highlands and was published in Edinburgh in 1741. It is not a grammar or a dictionary, but more of a phrase book in structure. The vocabulary and short phrases are organized around topic headings such as “The Heavens” (words for moon, star, etc.); “Man” (man, woman, old man, youth, etc.); “Kindred” (mother, father, sister, brother, etc.); “Victuals” (foods); and “Drink” (beverages). The book also includes examples of the most common verbs. The “Appendix” consists of Gaelic words associated with religion, weights and measures, and money, as well as a table of consanguinity and affinity (a list of whom one is and is not allowed to marry). The drawback of this book is that it teaches you no grammar, pronunciation or phrases. It is simply an aid to learn the Gaelic names for things.
Not long after MacDonald’s book appeared, William Shaw published a Gaelic grammar in 1778 called “An Analysis of the Gaelic Language.” This was followed up in 1801 by the famous work by Alexander Stewart, “Elements of Gaelic Grammar in Four Parts.”

A number of other grammars were to follow over the years, but a grammar alone is not the most suitable format for learning a language. George Calder’s “Gaelic Grammar,” published in 1923, for example, is intended for use by advanced students of Gaelic and would be very difficult for a beginner to use.

Early grammars did not allow for any opportunities to hear the language, to learn from pictures, to do exercises, to makeup one’s own sentences, or to receive feedback.

The first Gaelic-medium grammar was recently published in 2000, which is certainly a milestone for the language. This is “Facal air an Fhagail” by Michael Byrne from the University of Glasgow. This book would also be of little use to someone not already fluent in Gaelic, since it is written completely in the language. This updated modern grammar does have things like pictures, idioms, and copious examples, however.

Byrne followed up in 2002 with a grammar written in English called “Gramar na Gàidhlig” that is much more accessible to Gaelic learners, since the ability to read Gaelic is not required.

Although Gaelic grammars can be a helpful aid in learning the language, they are not ideal when used by themselves. In order to speak the language a student needs more vocabulary, pronunciation hints, conversational phrases, and idioms than would be included in a strictly grammatical text. The first book whose primary design was for teaching the Gaelic language and the first book to approach “teach yourself” status was “A Gaelic Primer” by James Munro (1794-1870), published in 1828. The rest of the title of the book describes its contents: “Rules for pronouncing the language, with numerous examples., Also a copious vocabulary, … a list of primitive and derivative pronouns; the conjugation of the verb ‘to be’.”

Munro’s primer is a combination of grammar and phrase book. The vocabulary is given with phonetic renderings of pronunciation to help those without access to a teacher. In 1854, Munro expanded and revised his book under the title “A New Gaelic Primer.”

In 1876 Lachlan MacBean came out with his “Elementary Lessons in Gaelic,” which was heavily grammar-based. This book includes a pronunciation key followed by lessons organized by grammatical categories. For example, there are lessons on the article, the noun, gender of nouns, adjectives, etc. Each lesson or chapter also has a vocabulary list and exercises.

In 1905, MacBean followed up his grammar-based text with his “Guide to Gaelic Conversation,” an English-Gaelic handbook of phrases and dialogues aimed at the visitor to the Highlands. It is apparent that MacBean was influenced by phrasebooks from other European languages that were in vogue at the time. English sentences are presented according to categories such as fishing, shooting, buying, etc., and then their Gaelic equivalents are given. A long list of idiomatic phrases is included. MacBean also provides a 50-page vocabulary list that consists entirely of words in everyday use. Phonetic transcription of pronunciation is given for these words to help those without ready access to a native speaker.

Another one of the heavily grammar-based courses is “An Introduction to Gaelic for Beginners” by James MacLaren. This was first published in 1911, but by 1923 it had evolved into what is now known as “MacLaren’s Gaelic Self Taught” in Britain and “Beginner’s Gaelic” in the United States. The information on the cover of contemporary editions of this book suggests it is a modern course, but in reality is quite old fashioned. There is as yet no audio accompaniment to this book.

One of the most popular of the Gaelic instructions books of the twentieth century was “Gaelic Without Groans” by John MacKechnie, published in 1934. This book is broken up into 29 lessons. Each lesson has a discussion of vocabulary as well as some grammar points. At
the end of each lesson there is a passage to translate into English and one to translate into Gaelic (with the solution provided). This is not really a grammar, but then it is not really a conversation-based course. The author discusses the grammar points in an informal dialogue with the reader. The approach is similar to Paterson’s “Gaelic Made Easy,” discussed below.

The first Gaelic instructional book to be published outside of Britain was “Gaelic Lessons for Beginners” by James MacNeill from Cape Breton. This was first published in Sydney, Nova Scotia, in 1939 and re-released in the 1980s. This too is a grammar-based course.

“Gaelic Made Easy” is a self-instructional Gaelic course by John M. Paterson that first appeared in 1954. The author discusses the grammar points and then gives vocabulary and examples. This book has been revised over the years and is still in print. It now consists of four booklets, each accompanied by a tape to make it easier to learn at a distance.

In the 1960s, the first of several books entitled “Teach yourself Gaelic appeared. The National Library of Scotland received a book for their collection by that title written by a woman named Phyllis Saunders that was published in 1965. This was probably a private printing, since it was in typescript.

The popular “Teach Yourself Gaelic” (Teach Yourself Books) by Roderick MacKinnon came out in 1971. This is a very good, user-friendly grammar-based Gaelic course. Although it has been out of print for a while, copies can still be obtained through the used book market. MacKinnon’s book was replaced by another “Teach Yourself” book in 1993, which I will discuss later.

Jamie MacDonald is vice president of ACGA.

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

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

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**Dè tha ’Dol?**

**Gaelic Events**

**March 29. Cànan agus Òran** (An Comann Luchd Ionnsachaidh Thoronto), Toronto. All-day language and song workshop. Instructors are Rob Dunbar (Aberdeen University), Oighrig Óg (native speaker) and renowned Scottish Gaelic singer Cathrine Ann MacPhee. For more information, see [http://torontogaelic.ca/events.html](http://torontogaelic.ca/events.html)

**March 31.** Deadline to submit application for ACGA’s University Scholarship. Go to www.acgamerica.org/scholarships/university-scholarships for more information.


**June 3-8. Fèis Shìhal (Slighe nan Gaidheal), Port Townsend, Wash.** A biennial festival of workshops, cèilidhs, concerts and community celebration. Go to www.slighe.com. This year’s Gaelic presenters are Muriel Fisher of Skye, founder and director of the Tucson Gaelic Institute; Rachel MacPherson of Skye and Benbecula, Deputy Head Teacher in Glasgow’s new Gaelic-medium school; Finlay Cunningham of Scalpay, who teaches at Stornoway’s Nicholson Institute; and Catriona Chaimbeul of South Uist, head of languages at Lochaber High School. Also Wendy MacIsaac of Cape Breton; Gaelic singer Anne Lorne Gillies; Gaelic-speaking piper Allan MacDonald of Glen Uig; and harper Mary MacMaster.

**June 27-29. Mòd nan Lochan Mòr** (The Great Lakes Gaelic Mòd), Wellington, Ohio. With adjudicator Gillebride MacMillan. Contact Mòd Chair Frances Acr for more information at frances.acar@gmail.com.

**July 6-11. ACGA Grandfather Mountain Gaelic Song and Language Week in Banner Elk, N.C.** The annual ACGA Immersion Weekend will be combined with the Grandfather week in 2008. Gaelic and music instructors are Gillebride MacMillan of South Uist, Jamie MacDonald, Maureen Lyon of Lewis, Calum Martin of Scotland and Mary Ann Kennedy of Scotland. Contact: Libit Woodington at LibitW@aol.com or Cam MacRae at cam.macrae@insightbb.com

**July 12 North Carolina Gaelic Mòd at Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, Grandfather Mountain, N.C.** Contact: Libit Woodington at LibitW@aol.com.

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

**Know of any other upcoming Gaelic events? Please write Glenn Wrightson at thegaelicguy@hotmail.com to have it listed here.**
Ciamar a sheachnar ‘Ciamar a tha thu?’
How to Avoid One of Gaelic’s Most Unavoidable Expressions

For every Gaelic learner comes the inevitable moment when they are ready to find another way to ask the basic question, “How are you?” Usually, it’s when they’ve said “Ciamar a tha thu/sibh” 5,000 times in a row.

Variety is not only the spice of life, it’s the spice of language. Here we offer, thanks to Jeanne Pendergast, several ways to enquire after the health or condition of your friends, acquaintances, family and perfect strangers.

1. Dè do chor? Dè ur cor?

2. Dè an dòigh a th’ ort?

3. Ciamar a tha cúisean/siantan a’ dol?
[“how are things going?”].

4. Dè an saoghal a th’ agad?
[saoghal= world, life, living, means]. “Saoghal math.”

5. Dè tha ’dol [agaibh co-dhiù]?
[“What’s going on with you anyway?”].

6. Dè tha as ùr? Dè do naidheachd? A’ bheil dad as ùr?
[“What’s new?” “What’s your news?” “Anything new?”].

7. Dè do shunnd? Dè ’n sunnd a th’ ort?
A’ bheil thu ann an deagh-shunnd?
[sunnd= humor, joy, health, cheerfulness].

8. Dè ’n triom a th’ ort? A bheil thu ann an deagh-thriom?
[triom/trum = English “trim” as in shape, order].
“Tha sibh ann an trum mhath tha mi ’n dòchas. [As heard on Radio nan Gaidheal’s program “A’ Mire ri Mhòr”].

9. Ciamar a tha a h-uile sian agadsa?
[“How’s everything with you?”].

10. A’ bheil thu air do chois?
[lit., “Are you afoot?” for “Are you up?”].

11. Dè ’n saod a th’ ort?
[saod= condition, trim, humor]. Saod math.

12. A bheil thu ann an deagh fhonn?
[fonn= temper, humor, frame of mind].

13. Dè do stait?
[“What’s your state?”].

14. Dè do shuidheachadh?
[“What’s your situation?”].

15. Dè do bheò? è am beò a th’ort?
[“What’s your life?” or “How’s your life?”].

16. Ciamar a tha thu ’cumail?
Ciamar a tha thu a bhith ’cumail?
[“How are you keeping? How have you been keeping?”].

17. ’S e tusa a th’ ann.
[The ultimate in informality. “It’s you that’s in it.”]

18. A’ bheil thu ann an ire mhath?
[ire= state, condition].
Bha mi an deagh ire. (From Colin Mark’s dictionary: “I was in grand condition.”)

19. Ciamar a tha iad agad/agaibh?
[lit., “How are they with you?” meaning family and friends].

20. A’ bheil an t-slàint’ agad/agaibh?
[“Are you in good health?”].

College Scholarship from ACGA
ACGA is offering a scholarship for students doing a university or college degree or certificate in Gaelic, Gaelic medium education, or any other subject entirely through the medium of Gaelic. This scholarship is for students from or normally resident in North America. Applications must be in before March 1, 2008. If you are interested in this scholarship, go to the ACGA webpage or: http://acgamerica.org/scholarships/university-scholarships to find out more.
Directory of Gaelic Classes & Study Groups

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

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

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Muriel Fisher
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Tucson, Ariz. 85705
520–882–5308
skye@dakotacom.net

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Little Rock, Ark. 72207
501-663-8434

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

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

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

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

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

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Glenn Wrightson
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Denver, Colo. 80027
303-698-9023

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

North Carolina
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Greensboro, N.C.
Contact: An Phillips
angayn@aol.com

Asheville Gaelic Study Group
University of North Carolina
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http://www.saorsamedia.com/gaelicclass/
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703-845-7740

Fairfax County Study Group
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Liam Ó Caiside
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Duilleag 12
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