Chan eil gèam coltach ris air thalamh
le Somhairle Mac Dhòmhnaill

There’s no sport quite like it
by Sorley MacDonald

It is said that shinty, or camanachd as it is also known, first came to Scotland over fifteen hundred years ago with the first Gaelic settlers from Ireland. As well as their sport, these pioneers brought with them their language, songs and culture. For that reason alone, it is clear that the history of this sport is inextricably linked with the history of the Gaels of Scotland (and therefore of Scotland itself).

For hundreds of years not too much change happened in the world of shinty. The game was played in order to keep fighting men fit and battle-ready. Games could last for hour upon hour with an unlimited number of men on each team. Each district would also have its own particular variation of the rules.
It was not until the late 19th century that a national set of rules was agreed upon, and in 1893, at a meeting in the Badenoch village of Kingussie, the Camanachd Association was formed. From that meeting evolved the formalized, structured game that we have today.

But what is shinty anyway? I’m sure that most in North America will have utterly no idea. Despite this, it is a sport that has had a profound effect on sport on that continent. It is widely believed that shinty is responsible for the development of the particularly Canadian pastime of ice-hockey. It is said that in the absence of suitable tree-less fields, many of the first Gaelic immigrants had no option but to play their sport on the frozen lakes in winter.

That gives you an indication of the type of game that shinty is. It is played with a curved stick, known as a caman, and a leather ball. Today the number of players on the field is limited to twelve per team, and the size of the field, whilst still large, is much reduced from the glen verses glen contests of long ago, being now set at a maximum size of 170 by 80 yards. The ball may be struck on the ground or in the air with either side of the stick. The swing of an opponent’s stick may be blocked by your own, and an opponent may be pushed with the shoulder in an echo of the game’s fighting past. The ball may not be kicked or handled, although it may be stopped with both feet together and the goal-keeper may stop it with a flat palm.

In my own opinion, there is no sport quite like it for sheer speed, skill and physicality. Players never play for money and it is rare to find someone playing for a team other than their home town club. All players see it as a real honour to be chosen to represent their communities on the field, and that is reward enough.

It is striking how often the top players come from famous shinty playing families. Also noteworthy is
The Shinty/Hurling International takes place once a year between Scotland and Ireland. Hurling (iomáint), the national game of Ireland, is similar to camanachd although the ball is played more in the air in the Irish game, and the shape of the Irish camán is slightly different from the Scottish version. The rules for the International combine elements from both sports so that neither side has an advantage.

Although “our side” played valiantly in this year’s match, with one game played in Co. Kildare and one in Inverness, the Irish prevailed to take home the Marine Harvest Quaich for 2011.


The huge success enjoyed by teams from very small villages or districts. Shinty ‘blood’ is often a more important factor than a large player pool. A quick glance through the winners of the sport’s most prestigious competition, the Camanachd Cup, shows the same names appearing over and over. Teams like Kingussie, Newtonmore, Kyles Athletic and Inveraray have enjoyed massive success over the years despite having only small numbers of players to pick from.

As for myself, I have been obsessed with shinty from a very young age. My father gave me my first caman on my first birthday and I've been playing since then. I was brought up on the Isle of Skye and have been proud to represent the island's senior team from the age of fifteen onwards. This is despite leaving the island at the age of eighteen for a university degree and for work. I have spent many long hours on buses and trains and certainly missed many a wild university night because of shinty, but for me, and many others, shinty took priority. Some would call it lunacy!

Over the course of those years though, shinty has given me far more than I've put in. Many of my very best friends have come through the sport, I have a far better knowledge of my country’s varied towns and villages than I would otherwise have had, and it has also kept me fit and healthy. I have played in teams challenging for the very top prizes in the sport and in teams struggling for survival and all those experiences have had a positive impact on me as a person. I was also extremely honoured this year to be selected to represent Scotland in the annual challenge match against Ireland.
Blueberry Maple Scones

1/4 cup white sugar
3 cups flour
1 tsp baking soda
1/4 cup pure maple syrup
1/4 cup buttermilk
1/2 cup shortening
1 egg beaten
1/2 tsp salt
1 cup blueberries

Sift together dry ingredients in a large bowl. Cut in shortening until crumbs form. Add blueberries. In another bowl, beat the egg, then add the maple syrup and buttermilk. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and combine all ingredients together. Turn dough out and knead 10-12 times. Roll out the dough until ½ inch thick. Cut into squares then cut squares into two triangles. Bake at 400°F oven for 20 minutes until golden brown.
Greetings to you all! I am Scott Morrison, the new President of ACGA, and this is my first letter. Don’t worry, it will be short enough but I would like to tell you a little about myself and what I am hoping to achieve out of my presidency. First, myself.

I started learning Gaelic in August of 2003 with Nick Freer. I intended only to teach the language to my children and I will always be doing that, perhaps my entire life. However, something happened that I did not expect. I ended up getting involved in many Gaelic activities while I was learning, and it hasn’t stopped to this day! Now, I know many Gaelic songs, I teach through the Atlantic Gaelic Academy online, I work as an interpreter in Gaelic with the company Language Line, and I have been involved in ACGA activities as a board member, as the Vice President, and now the President. That’s enough about me. Here is what I am hoping to set afoot while I am in the President’s seat this year.

First, I would like to continue with every business and activity that Rudy Ramsey (the outgoing-president) has been doing. Rudy has made many improvements to our organization that were (and are) terrific. Truth be told, too many to mention in this letter. However, there is still plenty to do! Because of that, the Vice President, Randy Waugh from Canada, and I will be working very closely together to divide the duties between us, thus making the work easier to do and allowing us to accomplish more. Some of what we hope to do will be to find a way to increase our membership (and along with that, to attract new members and to be sure that our weekend immersion will be held again this year. I am speaking to some people in Arizona about that. More about that in the next issue). Also, the two of us will be calling for more people to get involved in our organization……beginning right now!

We have been, and always will be looking for bodies. Is it you? Sure it is! Come on in and be

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Fàilte oirbh! Is mise Scott MacIlleMhoire agus tha mi a-nis nam cheann-suidhe ùr air ACGA agus ‘s e seo a chliad litir buam. Na gabhaibh dragh! Bidh i goirid gu leòr ach tha mi airson rud beag insne dhluibhum mheidhinn fhèin agus na tha dùil agam a dèhanamh leis a’ cheann-suidheachd agam. An toiseach: mi-fhin.

Thòisich mi air Gàidhlig ionnsachadh san Lùnastal anns a’ bhliadhna 2003 le Neacail Freer. Cha robh mi aig an às ud ud airson a’ Ghàidhlig a thoirid do mo chuid chloinne, agus bidh mi an-còmhnaidh ri sin ma dh’fhaoide fad mo bheatha. Ach, thachair rudeigin nach robh dùil agam ris. Chaidh mo làmh a chur ri oimadh gnàth Gàidhlig is mise ag ionnsachadh, agus tha e mar sin fhathast! Air sàillibh sin, a-nis: tha torr òrain Ghàidhlig agam, bidh mi a’ teagasg tro an Atlantic Gaelic Academy air loidhne, tha mi ag obair mar eadar-theangair sa Ghàidhlig leis a’ ghnothach ris an canar Language Line, agus tha mi air a bhith an sàs air gnothaichean ACGA agus tha mi air a bhith nam bhall de bhòrd-stiùiridh ACGA agus mar iar cheann-suidhe, agus a-nis mar an ceann-suidhe fhèin. Ach, tha sin gu leòr mum dheidhinn-sa. Seo na tha mi an dòchas gun cuir mi air chois is mise anns a’ chathair am-bliadhna.

An toiseach, tha mi airson cumail oirnn leis a h-uile gnothach agus gniomh a bha Rudy Ramsey (is e na cheann-suidhe romham) air a bhith a’ dèhanamh. Rinn Rudy mòran leasachaidhean air a’ bhuidheann againn a bha (agus a tha) uamhasach math. Leis an fhìrhinn innse, cus airson iomradh a thoirid air san litir seo. Ach tha gu leòr ann a tha thathast ri dhèhanamh! Air sgàth sin, bidh mi fhin is an t-iar-cheann-suidhe, Randy Waugh à Canada, ag obair an ire mhath dùth ri chèile a’ roinneachadh an dreuchd eadarainn airson obair a dhèhanamh nas fhasa agus airson tuilleadh neartachaidh. Nam meag, tha mi sinn lân dùil gum faigh sinn dòigh a’ bhallrachd againg a mheudachadh (agus an lùib sin dòigh air buill ùra a tharraing a-steach), gun tèid an deireadh-seachdain tumaide againn a chur air chois a-rithist am-bliadhna (agus tha mi a’ bruidhinn ri daoine ann air an Arizona a thaobh sin. Thig tuilleadh fios a-mach air a’ chuspair seo anns an ath iris againn!) Bidh an dìthís againn cuideachd a’ gairm airson tuilleadh dhaoine a bhith an sàs na bhuidheann againn.…..a’ toiseachadh an-dràsta fhèin!

Tha sinn air a bhith agus bidh sinn a’ lorg taic. An e thusa a th’ ann? Seadh, ‘s e! Thig a-steach agus bi nad bhall de
An Gaisgeach Mac Aoidh

by Liam Cassidy

Tell me, please, who or what under the sun is a “hero”?

I know what Dwelly says: “champion, hero, warrior” — a steadfast person who would stand with you when the time of need or hardship comes. Cúchulainn and Osgar, certainly! But who should we call a “hero” today?

In my opinion, if someone gives help of any sort to people, without their “asking or seeking,” he or she is a hero. In a way there are heroes on every side of us of all sorts. You may choose your own hero. Healers, teachers, fire fighters, those who protest for justice and those who defend us in the armed forces.

But I have a special hero on behalf of Gàidhlig, a man who has spent many years learning Gaelic and working for the language and Gaelic learners around the world. And that’s Mike Mackay.

Mike Mackay? Yep. Perhaps you know him, if you’ve been involved in ACGA and the Gaelic scene in North America in the last twenty years. Perhaps you met him at our Mòd in Ligonier, or the Great Lakes Mòd in Ohio, or Mòd Canada, or at the Gaelic Week at Grandfather Mountain, or the ACGA immersion weekend, or teaching...
Seanair, no deireadh seachdain tumaidh ACGA, no a’ teagasc ann an Virginia, no air an eadar-lion … tha an duine seo anns a h-uile h-àite.

‘S dòcha gun cuala sibh Micheal a’ bruidhinn air BBC Radio nan Gàidheal, air Aithris na Maidne no prògram Choinnich. Dh’fhaoide gu cuala sibh Micheal ag aithris naídheachdan, ag innse sgeulachdan no a’ seanachas rium air Gaelcast.

Thachair mise ri Micheal, ma ‘s math mo chuimhne, aig aon de na ciad deireadh seachdainnean tumaidh aig ACGA ann an Annapolis. Cha b’ ann an-dè a bha sin! Bu tric a dh’obraich sinn gualainn rì gualainn thar nam bliadhnaichean, airson a’ Mhòid aig ACGA, a’ teagasc na Gàidhlig ri chèile ann an Richmond, Virginia,agus nuair a thoisich sinn Gaelcast còmhla ri Ed Bradshaw.

Nan robh sibh aig a’ Mhòd ann an Steòrnabhagh am-bliadhna, bha cothrom agaibh Micheal fhacinn agus a chluinntinn air an àrd-ùrlar, ann am farpais an t-seann nós. Fhuair e an dàrna àite — euchd a bha glè ghaisgeil nam bheachd. Chan ann a-mhain air sgàth ‘s gun robh misneachd mhòr aige dhol ann agus gun robh e cho math gu seinn , ach air sgàth ‘s gun do sheas e, na mo shùilean-sa, airson a h-uile neach ionnnsachaidh dhen Ghàidhlig, gu h-àraidh sinne a-bhos ann an Canada agus na Stàitean Aonaichte, agus sheall e dha na Gàidheil ann an Alba dè ‘s urrainn dhuiinn dèanamh.

Mar a thuirt aon de na daoine aig a’ BhBC as deaghaidh na farpais a chluinntinn, bha feadhainn dhiubh “gobsmacked!” Sheall e dhaibh cuideachd gu bheil Saoghall na Gàidhlig na farsainge na Alba fhèin — rud a tha feadhainn a’ diochumhneachadh bho uair gu uair. Agus bu chòir dhuinn uile brosnachadh fhaighinn bhuaithe agus bhon deagh-éisimpleir a thug e dhuiinn.

‘S iomadh rud a rinn Micheal, ach cha b’ iad sin fhèin as cudthromaiche, ge b’ e cho fada ‘s a bhiodh an liosta. Roghnaich mi Micheal mar ghaisgeach seach ‘s gu bheil e cho fhalaidh ris a’ chuideachadh a tha e ‘toirt a-mach air gach taobh do luchd-ionnsachaidh a bhiodh ga iarrassd. Cho fhalaidh ri flath anns na sgeulachdan anns a bheil úidh cho mòr aige. Sin agad gaisgeach.

in Virginia, or on the Internet … This guy is everywhere.

Perhaps you heard Mike speaking on BBC Radio nan Gàidheal, on the morning news show or Coinneach Maclomhair’s program. Maybe you’ve heard Mike reporting news, telling stories or chatting with me on Gaelcast.

I met Mike, if my memory is good, at one of the first weekend immersion programs organized by ACGA in Annapolis. That wasn’t yesterday! We’ve often worked shoulder to shoulder over the years, for the ACGA Mòd, teaching Gaelic together in Richmond, Virginia and when we set up Gaelcast along with Ed Bradshaw.

If you were at the Mòd in Stornoway this year, you had a chance to see and hear Mike on the stage, in the Seann Nòs competition. He got second place — a very heroic deed in my opinion. Not just because he had the great courage to go there and because he sang so well, but because he stood, in my eyes, for all the learners of Gaelic, especially those of us over in Canada and the United States, and he showed the Gaels in Scotland what we’re capable of doing.

As one of the folks at the BBC said after the competition, some of them were “gobsmacked”! He showed them as well that the World of Gaelic is wider than Scotland itself — something a few forget from time to time. And we should all be encouraged by him and the fine example he gave us.

Mike has done many things, but that itself isn’t what’s most important, however long the list may be. I chose Mike as a hero because he is so generous with the help he gives out on all sides to learners who want it. As generous as a hero in the sgeulachdan or old Gaelic tales he has such a great interest in. Now that’s a hero.
Mo Bheatha Fhalaichte Mar Fheachdaire Mongolach
le Neacal Freer

Is mise Neacal Freer, agus tha mòran dhibh eòlach orm a cheana mar oileanach 's thidsear na Gàidhlig, ach tha mi cuideachd an sàs ann an cómhlan eile. 'S e sin Comann As-Aimsireachd Chruthachail. Tha úidh mòr aig na daoine sa chòmhlan seo ann na Linntean Meadhanach, gu h-àraidh 600 gu 1600 AD, san Roinn Èòrpa. Bìdh daoine ag ionnsachadh eachdraidh, cultur, aodaich, biadh, innealan-cogaidh, ealain de gach dùthaich, agus ath-chruithraidh iad iad na rudan a bha math agus inntinneach. Na Linntean Meadhanach mar bu chóir dhaih a bhith. Mar a bha anns na laithean ud, tha an saoghal roinnte eadar rioghadh, banachd, agus a leithid, ach le ainnean ùra. Anns a' Chomann, tha naoi rioghadh deug anns na Saìthean. Tha mise, anns an t-saoghal fhior, a' fuireach ann an Bhirginia, ach ann an Saoghal a' Chomann, tha Rioghadh Atlantia a' ghabhail a-steach Bhirginia, Maryland, Carolina a Deas, Carolina a Tuath, Georgia, agus Washington DC. Tha an sgìre seo (Bhirginia a Tuath) na páirt dhen Bharanachd Ponte Alto.

Tha baran 's bana-bharan os cionn nan daoine an seo, agus bìdh iad ann fad tri bliadhna. An uair sin, taghaidh ann an Rìgh agus a' Bhanrigh baran 's bana-bharan ùra. Bìdh Ridirean a' sabaide gach sia miosan gus Prionnsa 's Bana-Prionnsa a thaghadh nam measg, agus an dèidh sia miosan thèid an crùnadh mar Rìgh 's Bhanrigh airson sia miosan.

Gu tric tha tachartasan ann far am bi sabaide phearsanta eadar ridirean 's sabaideichean, a tha air an armachadh, le eolaidhean, măille, claidheamhan (air an dèanamh le rattan), sgiathan. Bìdh an t-sabaide fiadhach, ach chan fhaigh duine bàs sa bhatal. A bharradh air sin, uaireanan bìdh batal ann le mòran dhaoine, agus 's dòcha le bhoghadairreachd (boacha faida agus croisbhogha), a loisgeas saighdean, le padan an aite puingeann biorach. Bho am gu am, anns na batail mhòra,

My Secret Life as a Mongolian Warrior
by Nick Freer

I’m Nicholas Freer, and many of you already know me as a student and teacher of Gaelic, but I’m also involved in another group. That’s the Society for Creative Anachronism. People in this group are very interested in the Middle Ages, especially between 600 -1600 AD in Europe. People learn about the history, culture, clothing, food, weapons and arts of each country, and recreate the things that were good and interesting. The Middle Ages as they ought to have been. As they were in those days, the world is divided between kingdoms, baronies and the like, but with new names. In the Society, there are 19 kingdoms in the US. In the real world, I live in Virginia, but in the world of the SCA, the Kingdom of Atlantic includes Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Washington, DC. This area (Northern Virginia) is part of the Barony of Ponte Alto.

A baron and baroness rule the people here for a 3 year period. Then the king and queen pick a new baron and baroness. Knights fight every 6 months in order to pick a new prince and princess among them, and after 6 months they are crowned king and queen for 6 months.

Often there are events where there will be individual combat between knights and fighters that are armed with helmets, mail, swords (made with rattan sticks), and shields. The fight is fierce, but no one dies in the battle. In addition, sometimes there are battles with many people and sometimes with archers (long-bow and cross-bow) that fire arrows with pads instead of sharp points. From time to time in the big battles there will be siege weapons like ballistas and catapults.
duilleag 9

that fire stones (made with foam rubber). You’ll also see rapier fighting with shields, and depending on the place, rubber band pistols.

as to myself and my persona, my name is Naran Numuchi. I’m a Mongol and a good archer. Just target archery in the Mongol style. I use a traditional bow with a thumb-ring instead of the 3 fingers used by people in Europe. I wear traditional clothing often made with silk, high boots with with curled up pointy toes and fabulous hats....

people frequently camp at the events with historical tents. I myself have a ger (a big round Mongolian tent with a door), and inside a bed with oriental carpets. The ger is very comfortable, particularly in summer, since it’s possible to raise the walls and move the smoke hole cover aside so that cool air comes in from below, and the hot air goes out the smoke hole on the roof of the ger.

Each year the Pennsic War happens near Pittsburgh PA in August. Up to 12000 people gather in the camp for 2 weeks with the traditional tents, and there is a war between the kingdoms that have come from every area all over the country and also from Europe. The first week is called Peace Week, and then everyone will go to the field to declare war between the kingdoms. Folk get points in the competitions each day: fighting, archery, cooking, arts, brewing and other things. And at the end of the week the kingdom with the highest points wins. And everyone will be pleased and friendly and preparing for next year!
Dè Do Naidheachd?

by Cam MacRae, Jeanne Pendergast, and Anne Landin

Three more short, short stories written as exercises where the required words or phrases are in boldface.

Jeanne: Ag iasgach?

“‘S e caidreachas beag a th’ anninn ach chan eil sinn gun chumhachd. Mar a thathas ag ràdh gu cuimir, ‘Bàthaidh toll beag long mhòr.’ ‘B’ e sin am fear-stiùiridh a’ bruidhinn le fosgarrachd, a’ cur nar cuimhne na cuimsean againn.

“Cha leig sibh a leas long a chur fodha ach aig a’ char as lugha úpraid a dhèanamh corra uair gus... “Aig a’ mhòmaid ud thàinig sgairt bhon taobh a-muigh doras a’ bhothain bhig fhalaichte, agus bhrùchd duine claoidhde a-steach le sgeul cha mhòr do-chreidsinneach.

Bha e na aonar a’ feuchainn ri drochaid a mhilleadh le spreadadhadh, ach cha deach culsean gu math leis. Air sgàth an deagh thrèanaidh a fuair a’ chàirn e ge-tà, bha e cinnteach nach fhaca duine e. An dèidh sin, an ceann còig mionaidean chualas gnog air an doras. ‘S e a’ chiaid cheist a bh’ aig na poilis a bha nan seasamh an sin (gu h-iongantach, le iasg air sreang) “Nach ann leatsa a tha seo? Feumaidh sinn do chur an grèim; tha e an aghaidh an lagha a bhith ag iasgach le dineamait!”

Glossary:

Mar a thathas ag ràdh – (impersonal) as it is said, as people say
gu cuimir – neatly, succinctly
Bàthaidh toll beag long mhòr. – (seanfhacal) a small hole will sink a large ship
le fosgarrachd – with openness, candidly
Cha leig sibh a leas – you needn’t
aig a’ char as lugha – at the least (handy with the superlative of other adjectives as well)
corra uair – occasionally, on several occasions (a singular noun is used after corra)
chualas – (irregular past passive) was heard

Anne: Rabhadh! Foill Àrdachadh.

Leis a’ chuimse air daoine bochda an amannan trioblaide, claoidhde le cùram mu dhèanamh teachd-an-tìr agus àite-fuireach, tha caidreachas de rògairean ag obair ann an Alabama an-dràsta. Dh’innis boireannach dìreach an-dè air an rèidio a sgeul cuimir le fosgarrachd mhòr, mar a thug na rògairean a car aiste le tairgse air an taigh aice a chàradh. Bha e feuch air na salmon e slàn a dhàna a’ bhothain, agus i a’ dèanamh sgairt mhòr a’ chuimhneachadh, “nam b’ e an-diugh, an-dè!”

Glossary:

Rabhadh! Foill Àrdachadh – used as in a newspaper headline: Warning – Fraud on the Rise (this was written just after tornados hit Alabama in May of 2011)
claoidhde – worn out (a form of the past tense; the past participle passive is used as an adjective)
caidreachas de rògairean – company of rogues
a sgeul cuimir – her terse/succinct story (“a” is the possessive pronoun)
le fosgarrachd mhòr – with great candor
thug … a car aiste – tricked her (literally, took a turn from her)
agus i a’ dèanamh sgairte – and she yelling or exclaiming loudly (primary verb is implied in this form of compound sentence and refers back to the first part of the sentence “she was so angry”)
“nam b’ e an-diugh, an-dè!” – (proverb or saying) if yesterday were today; if I could do it over again; if I knew then what I know now
Theireadh mo mhàthair rium, “Bàthaidh toll beag long mhòr,” agus bha i ceart.

Fad bhliadhnaichean, bha mi sàsaichte a bhith nam aonar anns a’ bhothan bheag chuimir agam, gun chaidreachas sam bith. Agus carson nach bithinn? Nuair a bha an t-side dona, agus bha gu dearbh, bhiodh cat blàth na chadal air m’uchd, leabhraichean a’ feitheamh air na sgeilpichean, agus poit bhrot a’ bruich air an stòbha. Nuair a bha na làithean math, bhiodh obair gu leòr anns a’ ghàrradh.

Ach an uair sin, thàinig Mairead agus Beathag, an nighean aice. Aidichidh mi le fosgarrachd, nach robh mi coibhneil riutha, agus dh’fhàlbh iad an dèidh uair a thìde. An ath mhìos co-dhiù, thàinig iad air ais, agus an ath mhìos. Beag air bheag dh’hàrs mi cleachdte ris na cèilidhean aca.

Nach do dh’atharraich iad mo bheatha!

[This is part of a longer story about Mòr, an older woman living alone in an isolated glen.]

Glossary:

theireadh – would say (conditional tense of irregular verb abair)
fad bhliadhnaichean – for years (fad + the genitive means literally the length of)
cat blàth na chadal – a warm cat sleeping (literally, in his sleeping)
bidh fadachd orm – I will look forward to; I will long for (literally, a longing will be on me)
suas an gleann – although “up” is a preposition in English, suas is an adverb and nouns following it stay in the nominative case.
do Bheag – I have read that Beag was used as a nickname for Beathag in Islay.

Dè Do Naidheachd Air Loidhne

In our fall issue we introduced an on-line writing workshop based on our regular feature “Dè Do Naidheachd” and invited readers to write their own flash fiction which would include the words and phrases mu dheireadh, ann an cabhag, clann, latha, a’ ciallachadh, and dearg.

The plan was that members of the workshop would critique and comment on each other’s stories through ACGA’s forum. Surprisingly to our editors, however, only one ACGA member, Mike Moffitt, took up our challenge.

We all enjoyed working with Mike on his story “Ruith, Forrest, Ruith,” which appears below. Good job, Mike, and if you, or any other readers, want to do this again, let us know.

Ready, set, go!
Ruith Forrest Ruith
*Sgeul goirid le Michael Moffitt*

Mas math mo chumhna, thachair e air latha àraidh nuair a bha mi nam òganach. An t-àite, Iorc Nuadh, air Eilean Statain. Bha am feasgar ciùin ‘s aímsir shnog, agus bha mi fadalach! Bha e anns an 90an, agus b’ e an ceòl a b’fhéarr leam le còmhlain ciùil mar Nirvana, Pearl Jam ‘s Megadeth. Ghabh mi leasanan giotair bhó fhear dom b’ a’innn Steve. Uill, air ais dhan sgeul, bha Steve a’ feithcheamh rium.


Mu dheireadh thall, is m’ aodann dearg is mo lèine fliuch (on a bha mi a’ ruith cho luath), ràinig mi a’ bhùth-ciùil, far an robh mo thidsear a’ fuireach rium. A’ chiad rud a thuirt Steve nuair a’ ràinig mi ‘n sin, “Mo chreach, a Mhìcheil, carson a tha thu cho tràth?”


“A Mhìcheil, dè an latha a th’ ann?” thuirt Steve.

“Dè seòrsa ceist a th’ ann an sin? ‘S e Dihaoine a th’ ann...?” fhreagair mi le eagal orm.

“Chan e, a Mhìcheil, ‘S e Diardaidh a th’ ann.”

Uill, nam biodh m’ aodann dearg roimhe sin, bha e na bu dheirge às dèidh seo a’ chluinninn. “Na gabh dragh ort,” thuirt Steve, “chan eil mi cho trang an-diugh. ‘S urrainn dhut leasan a’ dhèanamh a-nis.”

‘S e fear laghach a th’ ann Steve dha-ribh!

Dè tha an sgeul seo a’ ciallasadh? Ceannaichbha is cleachdaibh Miosachan ACGA, agus na bítheibh ro fhadalach no ro thràth, a’ chàirdean.

**An Naidheachd Againne**

*An Naidheachd Againne* is the quarterly newsletter of *An Comunn Gàidhealach Ameireaganach*. The newsletter is published in the Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. It is produced by the Publications Committee of ACGA.

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*An Naidheachd Againne* welcomes submissions. Contact the editor for more information.
Liam Crouse, a student at the University of Edinburgh and recipient of one of ACGA’s 2011 university scholarships, discusses here the origins of this late 16th century epic poem. You can read the whole poem here [http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/~sm00gt00/Sealg/Oran%20na%20Comhachaig.htm](http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/~sm00gt00/Sealg/Oran%20na%20Comhachaig.htm) or in Duanaire na Sracaire: Songbook of the Pillagers, the anthology of Medieval Gaelic poetry edited by Wilson McLeod and Meg Bateman who have described Òran na Comhachaig as “an exposition of the Gaelic idea of dùthchas, a unity between land, people, and culture.” (p. 393) Liam’s article will be concluded in our spring issue.

Òran na Comhachaig (c.1585) le Dòmhnall mac Fhionnlaigh nan Dàn

Seanchas Òran na Comhachaig (Pàirt 1)
le Liam Crouse

Traditions of the Song (Part 1)
by Liam Crouse

It was in the 15th century, when the power of the MacDonalıs of the Isles was at its height, that Alasdair Carrach, son of John of Islay, Lord of the Isles, chose the forests and crags of Brae Lochaber for his clan. From that time, the Keppoch MacDonals grew powerful, with Alasdair Carrach fighting in the Battle of Harlaw (1411) and the first Battle of Inverlochy (1431). After the dispossession of the Lordship of the Isles, during Linn nan Creach (The Age of Forays), Raghnall Òg (†c.1587), the ninth clan chieftain of the

Duilleag 13
cinnidh air Sliochd mhic ‘ic Raghnaill, a bha an seilbh air Bràigh Loch Abar, àite a bha coillteach fiadhaich.

Thàinig tòrr atharraichean air Ceapach thar nam bliadhnaichean mòra. Anns na Meadhan-Aoisean, bha na coillteaniomraiteach, an dà chuid – airson nan crann a gheibhteadh asda, agus nam madaidheanallaidh a bha nam falach annta. Bha Ceapach cuideachd na crois-shlighean – bha e air Rathad nan Eilean, o Raineach gu Malaig, agus bha slighe chudromach a’ dol seachad air ceann a tuath Loch Trèig, a’ tèarnadh o Chreag Fhàraidh agus a’ dol tarsainn an locha aig an Dèabhadh, far an robh crannag ainmeil ann a bh’ aig Mac ‘ic Raghnaill, air an robh ‘Taigh nam Fleadh’. A rèir coltas, chaidh a’ chrannag a chleachdadh ann bhon toiseach mar thèarmainn o mhèirleach is madaidh mun do thòisich Mac ‘ic Raghnaill a cleachdadh mar àite-cruinneachaidhean. Am beul-aithris na sgìre, b’ e ‘Eilean na Comhairle’ a bh’ aca air a chionns gu robh an t-àite air a chleachdadh airson connsachaidhean a rèiteachadh. Agus, b’ ann ann an sealladh na crannaig a chaidh an t-Óran a dhèanamh, nuair a dh’hfeuch Dòmhnall a dhol do chuirm ann. An-diugh, tha an t-Eadarloch (an lochan beag anns an robh a’ chrannag), an Dèabhadh agus a’ chrannag fon uisge. Chaidh an t-Eadarloch a thoirt a-steach don loch sa bhliadhna 1933, nuair a chaidh dam a thogail aig ceann a tuath an Eadarlocha. Chuir an dam am falach an t-àite aig an robh dùth-cheangail ri Óran na Comhchaig – ga atharrachadh gu tur.

Keppoch MacDonalds, had customary custodianhip of the wild, forested Brae Lochaber.

Many changes have happened to Keppoch over the many years since then. Where today one might see moor in the Middle Ages, Keppoch was densely forested, renowned for the large timbers one could obtain, and the vicious wolves that hid inside them. Keppoch was also a cross-roads in this period; being on the Road to the Isles, there was a well-used path which crossed Loch Trèig at the Dèabhadh, where there was a well-known crannog, Taigh nam Fleadh, which MacDonald of Keppoch frequently used to host feasts. Originally, the crannog had been used as a place of refuge from wolves and rogues before MacDonald of Keppoch began to use it as an area of gathering. In local tradition, it was known as MacDonald’s Council Island, as it was used to solve arguments. And it was in sight of this crannog that Óran na Comhchaig was created when Dòmhnall could not make it to one of MacDonald’s famous feasts. Today, the Eadarloch (or an t-Eadarloch, the small lochan which enclosed the crannog), the Dèabhadh, and the Crannog are below the restrained waters of Loch Trèig. The Eadarloch was brought into the loch when a dam was constructed in 1933 at the north end of the loch. The dam submerged the area which was so closely related to Óran na Comhchaig – completely changing it forever.

This article will be continued in the next issue.

Thèid an aiste seo a leantainn anns an ath-iris.

[Endnotes are on the following page.—Ed.]
Contestants, friends and fans once again flocked to Ligonier in Pennsylvania for the 24th annual U.S. National Mòd, held at the Antiochian Village and the Ligonier Highland Games. This year we welcomed back Beathag Mhoireasdann as our adjudicator, as well as the Gold Medal winners from the 2010 Royal National Mòd in Scotland, Iain MacLean and Joy Dunlop. We were also pleased to host Iain’s wife Kirsteen, herself a Gold Medal winner, and we continued the fine Mòd tradition of “fun is more important than sleep” over the course of the weekend.

This was an important Mòd for at least two reasons. First, we saw increased participation in the competitions by children, which is truly a reason to be hopeful. Our poetry recitation competition featured Erin Park and Luke Morrison, who impressed our adjudicator with their command of the language. Brenna Morrison competed in storytelling, and Saturday saw children in the duet competition and own choice, and Erin Park,16, prevailed in a very close competition to win the Gold Medal for the women. We hope to see the number of children competing in the Mòd rise as the we go forward!
Another first at this year’s Mòd was the inaugural performance of Còisir Ghàidhlig nan Stàitean—the U.S. Gaelic Choir. The choir was inspired by visits to the Mòd in Scotland, with the idea that the same approaches that Scottish choirs use could be applied in the States. Then, after Ottawa’s Gaelic choir Àr n-Òran competed at the U.S. Mòd last year, it seemed that there was no reason not to have a U.S. choir as well! Many people who have come to our Mòd have commented that it would be wonderful to have a choir in the U.S., and many of them are now either helping or are in the choir. We hope that this is the start of something big. Today—Ligonier. Tomorrow—Scotland!

The Mòd committee encourages you to take part in next year’s Mòd—it will be a special event, and we have big things planned for our 25th year. Expect to see the long-awaited showdown between the Canadian choir and the new US choir! We will be inviting guests from all over the Gaelic world, so watch for news about who’s coming—this might be a good chance to meet people you’ve heard on the radio or from CDs.

Come take part in the competitions, and try your skill at the Gàidhlig you’ve been learning. Don’t forget the mail-in portion of the Mòd as a way to get feedback on your progress. See you next September! Don’t forget to visit http://usmod.wordpress.com for information, news, and Mòd materials!

We congratulate all of the contestants in the 2011 U.S. National Mòd for their hard work, dedication, and their resolve to go up on stage and show what they have accomplished. As Beathag told the audience many times during the weekend, it’s a tough job to pick the places for first, second, and third, but it must be done.

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Among the thousands of visitors to the Royal National Mòd in Stornoway last month were ACGA members Jeanne Pendergast, Anne Landin, Cam MacRae, Rudy Ramsey, Mike and Cathleen Mackay, and Randy Waugh.

Colorful banners informed and welcomed visitors and competitors alike to Stornoway, with a population of 9000 the largest town in the Western Isles.

Mòd venues ranged from Talla a’ Bhaile (Town Hall) and An Lanntair (Stornoway’s Art Centre) to Sgoil Mhic Neacail (Nicholson Institute) and Ionad Spòrs Leòdhais (Lewis Sports Center).

A week of wind and rain did little to discourage participants from Mòd events or from using free time to visit such well-known Lewis sites as the standing stones at Calanais and the blackhouse village, An Gearrannan.

With the Mòd brought to a successful conclusion and the Saturday afternoon ferry to Ullapool delayed by more bad weather, passengers waiting in the ferry terminal passed their time singing under the direction of Joy Dunlop.

For more information on the Royal National Mòd, including photos and competition results and updates on next year’s Mòd scheduled for Dunoon from October 12th through the 19th, visit An Comunn Gàidhealach’s website at www.acgmod.org.
Air Fòrladh/On Leave by Gillebrìde MacMillan

Review by Heather Sparling


Air Fòrladh (On Leave) is Gillebrìde MacMillan’s stunning second album. Many in the ACGA will be familiar with Gillebrìde because he adjudicated Mòd nan Lochan Mòra in 2008, as well as instructing at the Grandfather Mountain Gaelic Song and Language Week that year. He also teaches several of our members Gaelic by distance. He is well-known in the Gaelic world for having won both the prestigious Royal National Mòd Gold and Traditional medals.

The CD features fourteen Gaelic songs. Gillebrìde tells us that the title refers to the five years since his first recording, Thogainn Ort Fonn. The liner notes provide the lyrics in both Gaelic and English translation. Brief notes preceding each song identify the composer and/or the singer from whom Gillebrìde learned the song, and some feature a line or two about the song’s story. These notes are also offered in both Gaelic and English but they are not exact translations, although the information is essentially the same.

Originally from South Uist, Gillebrìde has given pride of place on his CD to songs with Uist or nearby Benbecula connections. Some are songs by Uist bards (“Dol do dh’Uibhist” by Dòmhnall Ruadh Phàislig, the Paisley Bard; “Òran nan Giomach,” by Seonaidh Caimbeul; and “Òran Eile air Uibhist,” by Dòmhnall Ailean Dhòmnaill na Bainich) or Benbecula bards (“Iain Mac ‘ic Fhionghainn,” by Seonaidh MacIlleMhaoil). Some are songs Gillebrìde learned from Uist or Benbecula singers (“An Tèid Thu Leam a Rìbhinn Lurach,” from the Benbecula singer Tormod Ruadh MacIlleMhaoil; “Mo Nighean Donn ‘s Toil Leam Thu,” from the Uist singer Iain Pheadair).

Gillebrìde has a personal connection with all of the songs. For example, “Fòrladh Alasdair Bhàin” was composed by Alasdair Boidhd and Dòmhnall Ruadh Phàislig who, together with the Alasdair Bàn of the title, were in the First World War with Gillebrìde’s grandfather. The jaunty song tells of Alasdair’s leave, including how his piping scared the fish and seals away! Gillebrìde learned it from his grandfather, who apparently sang it at every opportunity.
Gillebrìde even tried his own hand at writing a little ditty called “‘S Mòr Mo Shunnd,” for which Fred Morrison composed the melody, and which Gillebrìde paired with “Shealgair nan Sealg,” a song his grandmother and mother used to sing to him when he was a small child.

As someone with a particular interest in puirt-a-beul, I was fascinated by the two “puirt” tracks on this CD. First is a set of two that were made by Neil MacLennan (Nèilidh Eairdsidh) of Lochboisdale, set to two old pipe tunes. Gillebrìde learned them from Neil’s daughter, Mary MacPhee (Màiri Nèilidh Eairdsidh). It is rare to know the composer of puirt-a-beul and clearly these were made not all that long ago. They also do not seem to be widely known as they had not yet made it into my database of over 300 puirt-a-beul!

The second interesting port-a-beul is “An Tàillear Mòr.” As the liner notes tell us, this song used to accompany a Uist dance known as The First of August. I happen to have been privy to an additional and fascinating story about this song and the dance with which it is associated. A traditional Scottish dance scholar and practitioner, Mats Melin, had learned The First of August but he did not know the puirt that was meant to accompany it. While at Ceòlas, a well-respected traditional music and dance fèis (festival) held annually in South Uist, he performed it. He invited Gaelic singer Wilma Kennedy to accompany it with a port-a-beul reel. She picked something, but it didn’t really fit, as Mats had known it wouldn’t. But the next day, Wilma was singing elsewhere and happened to sing “An Tàillear Mòr.” Mats approached her after the event and excitedly asked her to sing it again while he danced The First of August. According to Wilma, who told me the story when I interviewed her in 2003, the hairs stood up on the back of her neck because the song fit the dance exactly. Although Wilma had learned the song from her mother, famous puirt-a-beul singer Kenna Campbell, who’s from Skye, Kenna had learned it from an uncle, who had spent some time as a stone mason in Uist. The family speculates that he had learned the song while there. Although I had heard the story, I had not heard the song. So I’m personally excited that it’s here recorded commercially for, I believe, the first time.

It is a delight listening to Gillebrìde sing these beautiful and varied songs. His voice is far forward in the mix so that the listener can easily hear every syllable. He does a wonderful job of delivering upbeat songs but I was especially moved by the slower “big” songs. The songs are not rendered unaccompanied but rather feature lovely arrangements featuring a range of acoustic instruments. The tracks feature some combination of fiddle, whistle, small pipes, reel pipes, guitar, piano, clàrsach, bouzouki, bodhran, and backup vocals. I was especially smitten by pianist Mhàiri Hall, a classically trained pianist who has recently become increasingly involved with traditional music. Her piano accompaniments are gorgeous, especially in “Teàrlach Mac Sheumais,” by Alasdair MacMhàighstir Alasdair and “An Tèid Thu Leam a Ribhinn Lurach.” Her beautiful playing is also featured in the final song, “Gaoth Tuath,” a Gaelic translation of the Scots song, “Norland Wind,” by Violet Jacobs (music by Jim Reid). Although it’s easy to tell that the melody isn’t typically Gaelic, it’s a beautiful tune rendered sensitively by Gillebrìde and stunningly arranged.

This is a truly beautiful and moving CD. My hope is that Gillebrìde won’t take another long leave before creating his next album!
I have to admit that I hadn’t read a graphic novel before I bought this book from Trueman Matheson last summer. Graphic novels are the in thing these days, however, and we have a constantly expanding collection of them at the library where I work. I’ve thumbed through a few but neither the stories nor the illustrations have drawn me in, and so when I saw this book listed in Trueman’s catalogue, I felt it was time to find out what graphic novels are all about.

So what exactly is a graphic novel? A story told through a combination of text and illustrations. In this case not really a novel, but oh, the illustrations!

In this Sìol Cultural Enterprises publication (maybe graphic fiction is a better name for the genre) we have two traditional Gaelic tales presented in the graphic novel format: multiple illustrated panels per page with accompanying text. Well, it’s actually a lot more than that. Aonghas MacLeòid’s imaginative black and white drawings lead the reader through the drama of the story—and we know there is always drama in this kind of Gaelic tale. MacLeòid’s drawings range from detailed interior scenes, to single evocative close-ups of an eye or a hand on a door latch, to side-by-side panes that follow the action of the story.

In An Suiridhe Sìth, the story of a fairy lover who would not be denied, the tension of the story is sometimes reflected through the faces of the characters and other times in the arrangement of the story panels, stacked at times horizontally and at other times vertically. In An Taillear ‘s an Taibhse, a real ghost story, the jumble of panels on the page and the close ups of the tailor’s eyes and his hands keep the reader as unsure of what will happen as is the tailor himself.

The text of these two tales is not for beginning Gaelic learners, but the stories are familiar, and you may have heard them told before. It’s the illustrations, however, which make this all too slim volume so special. In fact, the illustrations are unlike any I’ve seen in the graphic novels in the library where I work. Here they are detailed, dynamic, in turn mysterious and obvious, and worth studying just as closely as is the text.

Did I say the book was “all too slim”? Two short stories with only twenty pages of text and illustrations left me wanting more. I’m stuck on graphic novels now, at least this kind, and I hope this is only the first of a series from Aonghas MacLeòid and Sìol Enterprises.
March 2012
**March Break Fun Camp for children and youth 5–18, March 9–12, 2012**
The Gaelic College in St. Ann’s will be conducting its March Break Workshop beginning Friday, March 9th.
Registration is Friday evening and classes will run on Saturday, Sunday and Monday. Live in and day students accepted. For more information and registration see [http://www.gaeliccollege.edu/school/march-break-fun-camp/general-info.html](http://www.gaeliccollege.edu/school/march-break-fun-camp/general-info.html)

April 2012
**Sabhal Mòr Òstaig, Easter Break Courses, April 2–6, 2012 and April 9–13, 2012**
Classes will run at all levels from complete beginner to advanced learner. These are arranged to fit step-by-step into an overall eight-stage programme which is broadly based on Sabhal Mòr Ostaig’s highly successful distance learning course, An Cùrsa Inntrigidh. For more information and to register see [http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/Foghlam/Tagh-Cursa/Cursaichean-Goirid/cursaichean_caisg_en.html](http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/Foghlam/Tagh-Cursa/Cursaichean-Goirid/cursaichean_caisg_en.html)

May 2012
**Gàidhlig Thall Thairis / Gaelic Abroad**
May 1–6, 2012
Gaelic singer Fiona J Mackenzie and Gaelic tutor Rhoda Meek offer you the chance to learn Scottish Gaelic and Gaelic Song at the Hotel Bandolero (http://www.hotelbandolero.com) village of Juzcar in the Alto Genal, Andalucia, 20 minutes from the historic town of Ronda. Spaces are limited. For more information see [http://www.fionamackenzie.org/Events](http://www.fionamackenzie.org/Events)

**NAACLT conference, May 30–June 2, 2012**
The Conference of the North American Association for Celtic Language Teachers will be held in Bloomington, Indiana on the campus of Indiana University. Additional information will be posted on the NAACLT website as it becomes available (www.naaclt.org) and a call for papers will be sent out.

June 2012
**Féis Seattle June 13–17, 2012**
at historic Fort Worden on the Olympic Peninsula near Port Townsend, Washington
Slighe nan Gàidheal presents 3 days of classes and workshops with traditional evening cèilidhs
For more information and to register see [http://www.slighe.com/feis2012committee](http://www.slighe.com/feis2012committee)

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**ACGA Bookkeeper Needed**
ACGA is in need of a new Bookkeeper. Heather Sparling has performed this function magnificently for several years, but she says it’s time to move on. The good news is that she has set up an excellent system, and she promises to spend a while training her replacement and getting him or her up to speed.

ACGA has separated the offices of Treasurer and Bookkeeper, in order to provide a system of checks and balances. The Treasurer (currently Jeanne Pendergast) manages our actual money accounts, makes payments, etc.

The Bookkeeper categorizes deposits and checks so that we understand where our money comes from and where it goes, reconciles our various bank accounts, and prepares annual budget documents and quarterly financial reports. Although the Bookkeeper participates in our quarterly Board meetings, there is no requirement that he or she be a Board member. Heather has our accounts all set up using QuickBooks, by Intuit, and ACGA will provide this software if our new Bookkeeper doesn’t have it.

If you’re interested or would like more details, contact Heather at [heather_sparling@cbu.ca](mailto:heather_sparling@cbu.ca).
Directory of Gaelic Classes & Study Groups

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www.mermaid-productions.com

Song Classes—Maggie Carchrie
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www.nycaledonian.org/studies.php

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Classes
Atlanta Gaelic Academy
www.gaelicacademy.ca

Sydney
Classes
Cape Breton Gaelic Society
www.capebretongaelsociety.bravehost.com/

Ontario
Ottawa
Classes
Randaidh Waugh
comunngaidhligottawa@rogers.com

Toronto
Classes
CLUINN
www.torontogaelic.ca

Québec
Montréal
Study Group
Linda Morrison
linda@lindamorrison.com

FOR MORE information about these resources and for information on long-distance courses, short courses and private instruction, see our web page at www.acgamerica.org/learn-gaelic/classes-and-distance-learning

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