

# An Naidheachd Againne

The Newsletter of An Comunn Gàidhealach Ameireaganach / The American Gaelic Society

REPRINT FROM

An t-Earrach 2012, Leabhar XXVIII, Àireamh 1  
Spring 2012, Volume XXVIII, No. 1

Dh'iarr sinn air Catriona Parsons sgrìobhadh a bheireadh dhuinn iomradh is beagan tuigse air àite a breith. Tha i air aiste gu math tarraingeach is pearsanta a dhealbhadh a' toirt dhuinn sealladh air an Rudha agus a togail an siud. Tha Catriona aithnichte mar-thà do dh'iomadh ball ACGA mar thidsear, charaid agus shàr neach-taice don Ghàidhlig.

We asked Catriona Parsons to tell us about the place she was born. She has given us an appealing and personal picture of Point (Lewis) and her early years there. Catriona is already known to many ACGA members as teacher, friend, and supporter of Gaelic.

## Mo Chuimhne air Leódhas *le Catriona NicIomhair Parsons*



Sealladh air pàirt de dh'Aignish / *Aignish, Lewis*

Rugadh mi ann a' baile beag air taobh an ear Leódhais. 'S e Aignis ainm a' bhaile bhig seo, "Aignis air a' mhachair" mar a chanas an t-òran. Tha Aignis 'na laighe ann a' sgìre an Rudha, agus chan eil eadar an Rudha agus an còrr dhen eilean ach aoidh chumhang ris an canar Am Bràighe. Air aon taobh rathad na h-Aoidhe, tha cladach is gainmheach is machair; air an taobh eile, cladach. Agus air taobh na machrach, tha seann chladh far a bheil mo shinnsirean air an tiodhlaicheadh. Ri taobh a' chladh seo, tha seann eaglais—no làrach de dh' eaglais—a tha air a h-ainmeachadh do Cholum Cille. 'S coltach gun deach an eaglais a thogail anns na meadhon aoisean, ach b' ann air làrach cill an Naoimh Chatain a chaidh a togail. Bha Catan beò aig àm Choluim Chille 's an t-siathamh linn. Co dhiùbh, tha naoidh deug de

## Remembering Lewis *by Catriona NicIomhair Parsons*

I was born in a village on the east side of the Isle of Lewis, by the name of Aignish—"Aignish on the machair", as the song goes. Aignish lies in the district of Point which is tied to the rest of the island by a narrow isthmus called the "Bràighe". On one side of the isthmus road are shore and sand and machair; on the other side, shore. On the machair side is an old graveyard where my ancestors are buried and beside it, an old church—or church ruin—named for St. Columba. It seems the church was built in the middle ages on the foundation of a chapel dedicated to St. Catan who was alive in the time of St. Columba in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. In any case, 19 chiefs of Clan MacLeod are buried in this church; my mother was a MacLeod and naturally I'm interested in her lineage.



Taobh a-staigh Eaglais na h-Aoidhe  
*Church ruin detail, Aignish*

chinn-chinnidh Clann MhicLeòid adhlaicte anns an eaglais seo. ‘S e NicLeòid a bha ‘nam mhàthair ‘s mar sin, tha ùidh agam anns a’ chinneadh aice.

A-nis bho chionn fhad an t-saoghail, cha robh an Rudha idir ceangailte ri Leódhas. Aon oidhche dhorcha

geamhraidh, thàinig stoirm a bha gàbhaidh le tuinn mhór uamhasach a bhrùth ‘s a phronn taobh an iar na h-Alba. Fhad ‘s a bha na tuinn eagalach seo a’ cnacadh ‘s a’ bualadh, thachair gun do thòisich Eilean Leódhais falbh leis a’ ghaoith anns a’ chuan shiar. Thug muinntir a’ Rudha aire dhan a’ seo agus chaidh iad an aghaidh na stoirm agus thilg iad ròp tarsainn dhan eilean gus nach flodadh e air falbh. Rè ùine, thuinich feamainn,

barrraig-uaine (no algae) agus gainmheach air a’ ròp;

chnapaich seo beag air bheag gus a’ robh aoidh mu dheireadh eadar an Rudha agus Eilean Leódhais. Mar sin, tha muinntir Leódhais fada an comain muinntir a’ Rudha airson an sàbhaladh. Sin an sgeul co dhiùbh ‘s ma ‘s e breug bhuam i, b’ e breug thugam i!

Nuair a dh’fhàs mi suas ann a’ Leódhas aig àm an darna chogaidh agus anns na bliadhnaichean às a dhéidh, cha robh guth aig duine gu robh a’ Ghàidhlig ann a’ cunnart. Gu deimhinne, b’ ann ‘s a’ Bheurla a fhuair sinn oideachd ‘s an sgoil ach bha a’ Ghàidhlig ri ‘cluinninn anns na dachaidhean agus air na sràidean; agus bha cothroman anns na bun-sgoiltean ‘s na h-àrd-sgoiltean òrain Ghàidhlig ‘ionnsachadh is clasaichean Gàidhlig a ghabhail. B’ ann am Bun-sgoil Shandabhaig aig aois ochd bliadhna a dh’ ionnsaich mi an t-òran a bhuannaich darna duais dhomh aig Mòd Leódhais, a’ chiad mhòd ‘s an robh mi a-riamh! Roimh m’ linn, chuir An Comunn Gàidhealach gnàthasan-cainnt is abairtean a chruinnich maighstir-sgoile Shandabhaig, Donnchadh Mac-Dhòmhnaill, an clò. (“Gaelic Idioms and Expressions, with free translations”, 1932). Tha iad fhathast anabarrach feumail. Gu mì-fhortanach, bidh Bun-sgoil Shandabhaig a’ dùnadh am bliadhna air sgàth gainnead nan sgoilearan.

Tha mi a’ cumail a-mach gur e buaidh mo sheanar ‘s mo sheanmhar, pàrantan m’ athar, ann an Aignis as coireach gu bheil a’ Ghàidhlig agam fhin an diugh. Cha robh ach facal no dhà dhen Bheurla aig mo sheanmhair; mar sin, cha do bhruidhinn mi ach a’ Ghàidhlig nuair a bha mi

Now long, long ago Point wasn’t attached to Lewis at all. One dark winter’s night, a fearful storm came with tremendous waves that pounded and battered the west of Scotland. While these fearful waves were crashing and threshing, the Isle of Lewis began to go off with the wind into the Atlantic Ocean. The people of Point noticed this and, going against the wind, threw a rope across to the island so that it wouldn’t float away. Through time, seaweed, algae and sand settled on the rope; little by little, this accumulated until finally there was an isthmus between Point and the Isle of Lewis. For that reason, the people of Lewis are much indebted to the people of Point for saving them. That’s the story anyway—and if it’s not true, that’s how I heard it!



Eaglais na h-Aoidhe  
*St. Columba's Church (ruin) and graveyard, Aignish*

At the time I grew up in Lewis after the Second World War, no-one spoke of Gaelic’s being in danger. True, it was in English we received our school education but Gaelic could be heard in homes and on the streets; and opportunities existed in elementary and high schools to learn Gaelic songs and access Gaelic classes. It was in Sandwickhill School that I learned at age 8 the song that won 2nd prize for me at the Lewis Mòd, the first mòd I ever attended! Before my time, the Highland Society published a book by Duncan MacDonald, then Headmaster of Sandwickhill School, entitled “Gaelic Idioms and Expressions, with free translations,” in 1932. These are still extremely useful. Unfortunately, this same school is due for closure this year due to shortage of students.

That I have the Gaelic today is due, I’m sure, to the influence of my father’s parents in Aignish. My grandmother had only a couple of words of English and so I spoke only Gaelic with her and my grandfather all the weekends and summers I spent with them. I used to help my grandfather with the outside work (make-believe, on my part!). Years after their death, one lovely summer’s day as I was walking on the path up towards Fortress Louisbourg in Cape Breton, the sea on one side and the scent of clover palpable from a field on the other side, my grandfather came strongly to mind and I put the following lines together:

còmhla riutha, fad iomadh ceann-seachdain is samhraidh. Bhithinn a' cuideachadh mo sheanar leis an obair a-muigh (ma 's fhuair!) Bliadhnaichean às déidh dhaibh caochladh, aon là breagh samhraidh 's mi a' coiseachd na slighe suas gu Dùn Louisbourg ann a' Ceap Breatainn, a' mhuir air aon taobh agus boltrach

sheamragan a' tighinn gu mo shròin bho raon air an taobh eile, thàinig mo sheanair a-staigh orm cho soilleir agus rinn mi na loidhnichean a leanas:

### Cuimhne

'Nam shuidh' am bucas cairt mo sheanar  
'S mi beag biodach, air mo bhrùthadh a-null  
's a-nall

'S na rothan a' leum air clachan a' rathaid  
'S an làir a' toirt céim gu trom's gu mall.

Bha an dithis againn—mi-fhìn 's e-fhéin  
(Mise faireachdain cho mór!)—'dol an tòir air  
gainmhich bho'n tràigh.

Os ar cionn adhar breac gorm 's a' cionacrachadh ar sròintean

Fàileadh cùbhraidh na seamraig bhàin.

Mi coiseachd eadar muir is achadh  
Air mór-thìr eile, 's gaoth bhlàth na mara  
A' gluasad tarsainn air a' raon, geal le seamragan  
'S a' toirt mo sheanar—glan, geur, gràdhaichte—  
gu m' aire.

(an clò ann a GAIRM, An Dùdlachd, 1990)

### Remembrance

There was I, tiny wee, sitting in my grand-  
father's cart  
Jostled back and forth  
As the wheels leapt upon the stones of the road  
And the mare plodded, heavy and slow.

The two of us—myself (feeling so big!) and  
himself—  
Going to fetch sand from the sea-shore.  
Above us, a speckled blue sky and, caressing our  
noses,  
The sweet fragrance of the white clover.



Taobh eile a' Bhràighe  
*The far side of the Bràighe*

Walking between sea and plain on another  
continent  
With the warm sea-wind moving across the field  
White with clover, bringing my grandfather—  
Bright, sharp, beloved—to my attention.

(published in GAIRM, December 1990)



### Links to online ACGA resources

Main ACGA Website: <http://acgamerica.org/>  
ACGA Forum: <http://forum.acgamerica.org/>  
ACGA Facebook Page: <http://facebook.com/ACGAGaelic>  
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ACGA Sub-Forum: <http://forum.acgamerica.org/viewforum.php?f=51>

### AN NAIDHEACHD AGAINNE

*An Naidheachd Againne* is the quarterly newsletter of *An Comunn Gàidhealach Ameireaganach (ACGA)*. The newsletter is published in the Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. It is produced by the Publications Committee of ACGA. The Editors at the time of this reprint are:

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*An Naidheachd Againne* welcomes submissions. Contact the editors for more information.



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