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A Festschrift for John Shaw

Edited By

Virginia Blankenhorn
Robert Dunbar
Tiber Falzett

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About the journal

First published in 1957, *Scottish Studies* has striven to reflect the mission of the University of Edinburgh's School of Scottish Studies, founded in 1951 to preserve and explore Scotland's rich and diverse cultural and linguistic heritage. Research topics have included archaeology and pre-history; demographics; ethnography and ethnology; history; land use and distribution; fishing and seafaring; material culture; onomastics; oral culture and traditions; and spiritual beliefs, customs and observances. Today, in addition to these topics, we welcome research centering on Scotland's evolving landscapes, physical and social, and the peoples who call Scotland home in the twenty-first century.

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Reviews are normally commissioned, but we welcome readers' suggestions of works that they would like to see reviewed.

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Editor's Note

Readers familiar with the first seventeen volumes (1957–1973) of this journal will recall that, in its early days, *Scottish Studies* appeared semi-annually. Alas, we no longer have the staff or resources to publish twice a year. This year, however, is an exception.

In 2023, when I agreed to edit the journal, I learned that colleagues at the University of Edinburgh had long planned a Festschrift to honour John Shaw, retired Senior Lecturer in Ethnology in the School of Scottish Studies. As so often happens these days, however, the difficulty of identifying a suitable publisher willing to devote resources to a niche book had slowed progress on this worthy project. For the editors – Rob Dunbar, Professor of Celtic at the University of Edinburgh, and Tiber Falzett, who achieved his doctorate here under John Shaw's supervision, and who is now Head of Folklore & Ethnology at University College Dublin – *Scottish Studies* would have been an obvious choice; but as long as John Shaw was himself editing the journal, they could hardly ask the man to publish his own tribute, even if they had not wished to surprise him. With the change in editorship, however, publishing the Festschrift in *Scottish Studies* became possible, and I happily joined the editorial conspiracy.

As such volumes are wont to do, this one reflects the breadth and depth of the honoree's interests as well as those of the friends and colleagues who have contributed to it. The Gaelic language and its culture – folklore, storytelling, song, and community life – provide the focus for several articles. Cultural links between Scotland and elsewhere – Ireland, Iceland, Norway, and the Scottish diaspora in Canada and Appalachia – are explored in others. The work of folklore collecting and stewardship – activities at the heart of Shaw's own scholarly legacy – is touched upon in connection with the work of earlier collectors. Interestingly, some authors present different views of the same subject: Hugh Cheape and Rob Dunbar discuss the work of John Lorne Campbell in Scotland and Nova Scotia; Maxim Fomin and Séamus Mac Mathúna reveal aspects of sea lore in Scotland and Northern Ireland; and Tiber Falzett and Terry Gunnell explore the traditional association between musical inspiration and running water. Summary abstracts of all of these articles can be consulted at the back of the volume.

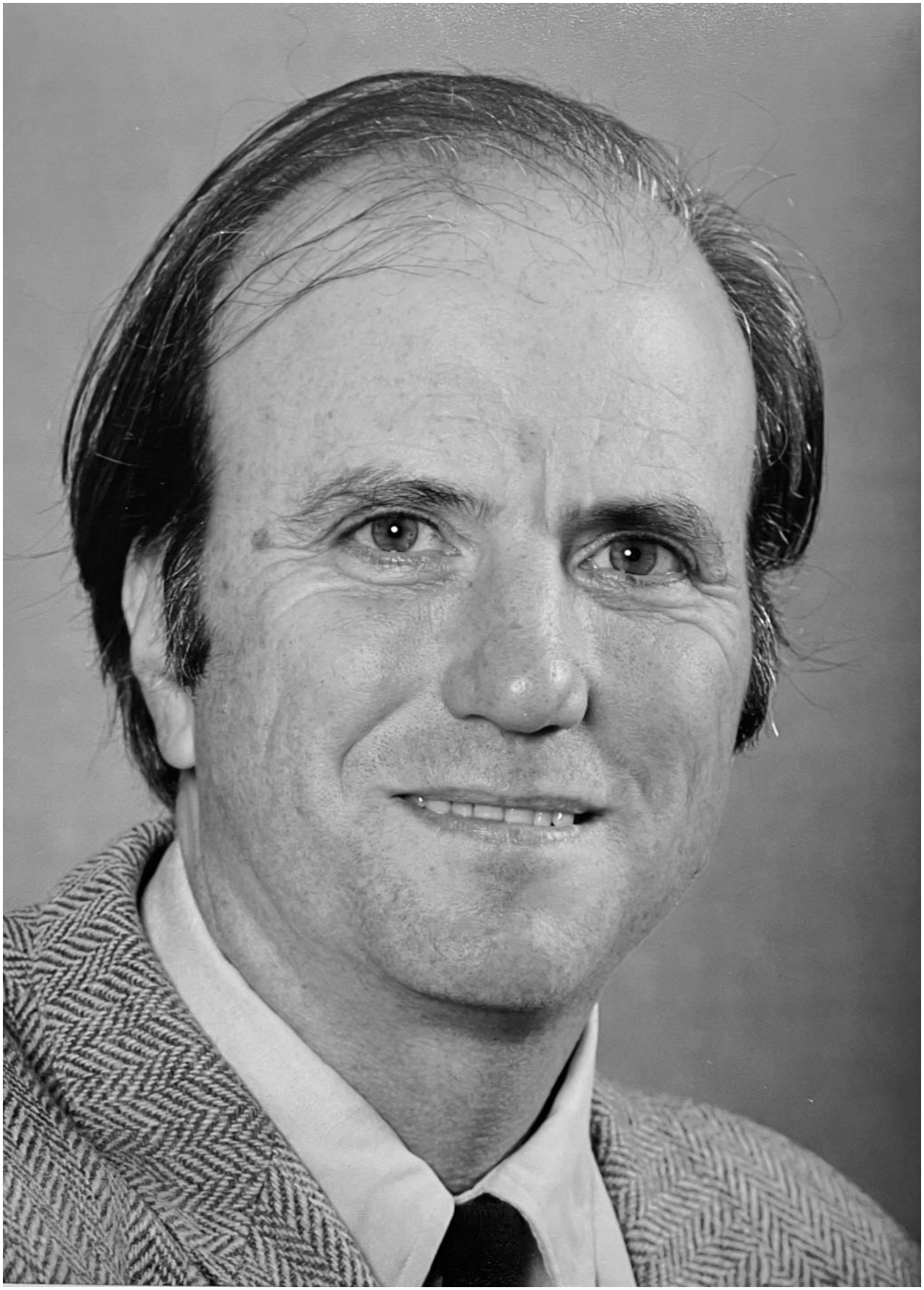
In any such undertaking as this, thanks are due. First, I must express my heartfelt appreciation to my co-editors who, recognising the importance of this project, identified and recruited potential participants, stayed in touch with them when progress seemed slow, and encouraged them to work with me as we entered the home stretch. This has truly been a team effort.

My thanks, too, to Dr Emily Lyle, Honorary Fellow of Edinburgh University, whose friendship, steadfast support and deep experience of getting things published has sustained me throughout this whole process.

Finally, my sincere gratitude to our contributors, not least for their patient willingness to put up with my editorial nit-picking and what one of them called my 'real world' deadlines as we inched toward the finish-line.

May these offerings stand as a lasting tribute to our friend and colleague John Shaw, to whom we express our warm congratulations on reaching his eighty-second birthday this month. May we all continue to enjoy his company for many years to come. *Gum bu fada beò e!*

VIRGINIA BLANKENHORN
Editor, *Scottish Studies*
March 2026



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John William Shaw
A Biographical Note

VIRGINIA BLANKENHORN and ROBERT DUNBAR

In 2006, John Shaw published an article entitled 'The Collectors: John Francis Campbell and Alexander Carmichael'.[1] Both men were no doubt worthy subjects; but if we wished to expand the list of 'collectors' whose contributions have been foundational to the study of oral culture in Scotland, we should add others. Where would Scottish ethnology be without the work of Frances Tolmie? Of John Lorne Campbell? Of Alan Bruford, Eric Cregeen, Hamish Henderson, Emily Lyle, Donald Archie MacDonald, John MacInnes, Morag MacLeod, Ian Paterson and the many others whose collecting here in Scotland, now housed in the School of Scottish Studies Archives, allows us not just to read transcriptions, but to hear and remember the voices of people we knew?

What about the people who travelled from Scotland – some willingly, others less so – and the cultural legacies of their emigrant communities? These have historically been less well documented. John Lorne Campbell's visits to Cape Breton in the 1930s convinced him that someone should be encouraged to explore the Gaelic settlements of the region. Fortunately for us, the 'someone' he encouraged was John Shaw.

We are delighted to present this issue of *Scottish Studies* as a Festschrift in honour of our colleague Dr John Shaw, presently an honorary fellow in Celtic & Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Each contributor has been inspired in some way by some aspect of John's fieldwork, scholarship, teaching or mentorship, and all have benefited from his conversation, advice and friendship.

Beginnings

John William Shaw began his journey a long way from Cape Breton Island and, indeed, from Gaelic culture. Born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1944, he grew up in Ohio, where his father, an experimental physicist, held a professorship at Ohio State University in Columbus. The Shaws were Scots-Irish, and had emigrated to Ontario in the nineteenth century to farm; John's grandfather, however, moved to California, where John's father Charles Shaw was born. John's mother, Jane Thomson, grew up in New Jersey. Her father's people, originally from Dunoon, had lived in Kingston, St Vincent, in the British Virgin Islands, where they had been ship owners. Jane's mother's people, early settlers in Massachusetts, were United Empire Loyalists and had moved to Canada in the wake of the American Revolution; they eventually returned to the U.S. and settled at Cape Cod.

John and his sister attended the University School on the OSU campus, an environment catering to faculty offspring that he characterised as 'nominally a fairly broad-minded, liberal place'.[2] At the same time, however, this was the 1950s, and he also witnessed the paranoia of McCarthyism and the 'red scare'. He recalled one uneasy moment when his father and several other faculty members, having

[1] John Shaw, 'The Collectors: John Francis Campbell and Alexander Carmichael', in *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature. Volume Two: Enlightenment, Britain and Empire (1707–1918)*, edited by Ian Brown, Thomas Owen Clancy, Susan Manning and Murray Pittock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 347–352.

[2] Many of John Shaw's comments quoted here are taken from an interview conducted with him in Edinburgh on 12 November 2025 by Virginia Blankenhorn. The authors are grateful to John for sharing his thoughts, as well as copies of relevant unpublished work, on that occasion.

objected to the administration's abrupt cancellation of an invited speaker on the grounds that he was a communist, were hounded by the *Columbus Dispatch*, which published their names, addresses, phone numbers and salaries – something they could do because faculty were technically Ohio state employees. One evening, the telephone rang at the Shaws' home near the village of Worthington, about ten miles outside Columbus:

> So the phone rang and I answered it and the guy at the other end said, 'This is the Worthington Police, and we're just checking on you to make sure that you're alright because we're a little worried watching this stuff coming out in the paper and really afraid you might have gotten some calls or had somebody blow up your mailbox or whatever they do – we're just going to watch out for you.' And I thought that was quite unusual.[3]

John was interested in languages from a young age. When he was fourteen, his father took a sabbatical leave and moved the family to Paris for a year, and it was then that John, enrolled in an all-French school, first learned to speak a language other than English. When he was sixteen, he spent a summer in Germany, and was subsequently encouraged to enrol in German courses at OSU, where he encountered 'philologists, refugees from World War 2, who had come to the US to work – highly educated people – and I began to get more interested in linguistics and how languages were related to each other'.[4]

It was while he was still in school that John first became aware of Gaelic. Discussion of his family's origins had made him aware that he had Scottish and Irish ancestry:

> So I was kind of interested in what language do these people speak in Ireland and Scotland? It was very hard to find that out. They had the 1911 edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* at home, and I found some stuff there which was helpful; but then my mother just kind of added as an aside, 'You know, I read somewhere that the languages in Scotland and Ireland are connected to the languages in India.' I thought, wow![5]

While the family were living in Paris, John visited one of the big bookstores there and was able to order a copy of James MacLaren's *Gaelic Self-Taught,* based on Latin Grammar. After working his way through that book, he said, 'I was able to begin to try to read – I'd never heard Gaelic – and I also began to look at Irish'.[6]

John's experience of Gaelic came to life in 1961 – and it was a pivotal moment. In an article in the *West Highland Free Press* John describes how, while still in school, he spent a summer in Canna as the guest of John Lorne Campbell.[7] How had he managed that?

> It was pure luck. His wife Margaret Fay Shaw,[8] who was from Pittsburgh, had a sister who was living in Worthington near us, and somebody mentioned to my father that there was a woman in Worthington whose sister was living in Canna. So I went and talked to the sister, just to find out more. I ended up writing a letter in Gaelic to John Lorne

[3] Interview, 12 November 2025.
[4] Interview, 12 November 2025.
[5] Interview, 12 November 2025.
[6] Interview, 12 November 2025.
[7] 'Tobar an Dualchais: A visit to Canna, South Uist and Barra in 1961', *West Highland Free Press*, 12 January 2022.
[8] Author of *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955). See Margaret Fay Shaw, *From the Alleghenies to the Hebrides: an autobiography* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2008); also Fiona J. MacKenzie, *The Cadence of a Song: The Life of Margaret Fay Shaw* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2025).

> Campbell, which I think would be a total embarrassment if I saw it now – but he wrote back and said, 'Please come to stay with us for the summer'. This was in 1961. So without really knowing very much about anything I came through Glasgow, took the train to Mallaig, took the boat from Mallaig to Canna, and the first time I heard Gaelic spoken was on the boat. And that was it. Campbell was unfailingly generous to me.[9]

Summarising this experience years later, John remarked:

> For a high school student arriving from the American Midwest in June six decades ago this year, spending the summer on the Isle of Canna (*Eilean Chanaigh*) as a guest of the laird, John Lorne Campbell (*Fear Chanaigh*), was by any standard a memorable experience. [...] My own objective was to learn to speak Gaelic, a language I had not heard until I set foot on the island, which in those days was almost entirely Gaelic-speaking.[10]

In addition to spending time with Gaelic-speaking boys his age on Campbell's farm, John had the run of the well-stocked Celtic library at Canna House.[11] One afternoon, he came across Fear Chanaidh transcribing traditional tales he had recorded from Angus MacLellan ('*Aonghas Beag*') of South Uist (1869–1966), one of the best Gaelic informants Campbell had ever recorded.[12] Campbell mentioned that although Aonghas Beag was elderly, he was still alive, and that it would be well worth John's time to visit him. Campbell provided letters of introduction to his main Gaelic contacts in South Uist and Barra, and John headed first to Loch Eynort, South Uist, where he was 'warmly welcomed into a very patient household'. He made his way to Bornish to call on Agnes Currie, a housekeeper for the parish priest, who was well-known for her large repertoire of Uist songs, mouth music (puirt-à-beul), and prayers. In Bornish, John also visited Allan MacInnes, whom he had met in Canna where MacInnes had been shearing sheep. John recalled 'a lively household, with his wife, handsome daughters, and a son, Cailean (*Cailean Ailein Bhig* [Fr Colin MacInnes]) of my own age, who was later to receive widespread recognition from his exemplary community work in Ecuador'.[13] The next day, 11 August 1961, John visited Aonghas Beag himself in Frobost, South Uist, and kept this note in his diary:

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[9] Interview, 12 November 2025.

[10] 'A visit to Canna', *West Highland Free Press* 12 January 2022. Sharp-eyed readers will note that the island is spelled *Canaidh* in some places, and *Canaigh* in this quoted passage. Although *Canaigh* is the generally recognised Gaelic form of the island's name, John Lorne Campbell referred to himself as *Fear Chanaidh* (the 'Laird of Canna'), and that spelling will be used hereafter when using his title.

[11] The following account of Shaw's 1961 travels relies on the article he wrote for the West Highland Free Press; see n. 7 above. In 1980, the Campbells gave the island to the National Trust of Scotland. Recently restored, Canna House houses Campbell's library, his sound recordings, his papers, and his extensive butterfly collection.

[12] Campbell recorded and translated MacLellan's reminiscences, published in English as *The Furrow Behind Me: the Autobiography of a Hebridean Crofter* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962) and later in Gaelic as *Saoghal an Treobhaiche* (Inbhirnis: Club Leabhair, 1972). Forty-two of MacLellan's folktales and stories, also translated into English by Campbell, were published as *Stories from South Uist* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961); for MacLellan's version of the folktale 'Conall Gulbann', recorded and transcribed by Campbell, see J. L. Campbell, 'The Story of Conall Gulbann, Son of the King of Ireland', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inveress* 44 (1964–66): 163–178. This story was also recorded from Angus MacLellan by the late Calum MacLean; see Tobar an Dualchais https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/30532?l=en.

[13] Shaw, 'A visit to Canna'. Fr. MacInnes also played a pivotal role in relation to Gaelic cultural maintenance through the founding of Fèis Bharraigh in 1981, out of which the Fèisean movement, which provides tuition in the Gaelic traditional arts to young people, has grown; see https://www.feisean.org/en/.

> I got there about 1:45 and met Bean Nèill (his older sister), who told me she had no English but volunteered that she could understand the radio sometimes. After about 10 minutes Aonghus himeslf came in (he had been outside digging potatoes) and sat down near the fire. We started a conversation about the weather, how bad the summer was, etc... After about half an hour, Bean Nèill asked him to tell a story ... His style of reciting was remarkably varied and interesting; he never paused until the end of the story. I stayed there until 4:30, and then left to catch the bus. The bus schedule had been changed, but I managed to get a ride to Lochboisdale without much trouble.[14]

John recalled that as he left, Bean Nèill 'gave her advice and encouragement in two words: *Cum oirre*' ('Keep going with it'). It was advice which John clearly took to heart. Although he recalls that Aonghas Beag's story had stretched his Gaelic to its limits, he understood enough of it to be able to find it later in the reciter's autobiography, *Saoghal an Treobhaiche*.[15] At Lochboisdale, John visited the outstanding traditional singer Donald Joseph MacKinnon ('*An Eòsag*'); MacKinnon and his wife insisted John stay for dinner. John made visits to a number of other notable informants. He went to see Peigi and Màiri MacRae in Glendale, South Uist, with whom Margaret Fay Shaw had lived and who had provided much of the material which Margaret published in *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist*.[16] He visited Dr Alasdair Maclean, the brother of Sorley, John and Calum, and his wife; Dr Maclean was himself a notable collector, and played recordings for John of some of the songs he had collected in South Uist. John also met John MacInnes (*Iain Pheadair*), from South Lochboisdale, 'who willingly sang and was tactfully helpful with pronunciation'. In Barra, John called on Annie Johnston (*Anna Aonghais Chaluim*), another very significant tradition-bearer and a close friend of the Campbells, who after some conversation led John out to weed the garden. After John was stung by nettles, Annie advised him to apply a dock leaf, and recited a rhyme which, although John did not remember it at the time, he later recovered: *Cop mhìn, mhìn [mhìn] / Loisg an fheanntag bhiorach mi* ('Dock leaf smooth, mild, gentle / The nettle has stung me'). John's abiding memory was of the generosity of those he met in Uist and Barra. While in Canna, John spent a lot of time with young men of his age who worked on the farm; mostly native Gaelic speakers, the time spent with them added considerably to his Gaelic language skills.

After a year in France learning French and German, three years' study of university-level German at OSU, and his remarkable experience in Canna, John chose to apply to Harvard because 'for better or worse I was seduced by the fact that they had a Celtic department, which is a very rare thing.'[17] Indeed, Harvard's Department of Celtic Languages and Literatures remains unique among US universities to this day. But because the department did not offer an undergraduate degree, John chose Linguistics and Germanic Languages as his major subject. He was inclined to keep his interest in Gaelic quiet, because however much he would have liked to do Celtic, he wondered about 'the chances of making a living doing that stuff'.[18]

Even so, despite this undoubtedly realistic assessment, he maintained his interest in Gaelic – again with the encouragement of John Lorne Campbell. In 1963, following his first year at Harvard, he travelled to Nova Scotia, where Campbell had given him an introduction to Fr Malcolm MacDonell (1919–2015), a native Gaelic-speaker from Hillsdale, Inverness County, Cape Breton, who taught in

[14] Shaw, 'A Visit to Canna'.
[15] See above, n. 12.
[16] See above, n. 8.
[17] Interview, 12 November 2025.
[18] Interview, 12 November 2025.

the history department at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, and served as president of that institution from 1970 to 1978. With Fr MacDonell's assistance, he made his way to Cape Breton, where he earned his bread and board working on a farm in Glendale:

> Glendale is on Trans-Canada 105, the main road from the Canso Causeway, which connects Cape Breton to the Nova Scotia peninsula and goes to Sydney and the industrial area. It was a poor parish, and still is. The people were mostly from Morar and Uist originally – there are some good genealogies on the parish. I stayed with Fr John Angus Rankin[19], his mother Sarah, and his uncle Alec Beaton; the Beatons came from a place called Sight Point, a shore community near Mabou, closer to Inverness town. Fr John Angus's father had worked in the coal mines in Inverness County – these miners came from the nearby countryside, lived in company houses in Inverness, and worked for very little wages. But they had a world of folklore – songs, stories, fiddlers in the family. People from there used to come and see Fr John Angus quite often – 'visiting' is what they called it – so I heard a lot about Inverness. And we'd go there sometimes from Glendale, where Fr John Angus had a farm – horses, a cow, chickens, a garden – I took care of the horses and the cow, made the hay. The Rankins and the Beatons were real drivers – you were on your feet all the time.[20]

It was during the summers of 1963 and 1964 that John began to develop a habit of 'fieldwork' that went beyond haymaking and animal husbandry. When there was nothing else to do after dinner, he went out with a small Phillips tape recorder to record people in Glendale. Fr Rankin's parish consisted of about one hundred families, most of whom were Gaelic-speaking, and John recalled that 'people were not only friendly, but having never before encountered someone above infancy learning the language, unfailingly patient with my efforts'.[21]

The annual Glendale parish concert made a particular impression on John during his visit. He described a 'festive atmosphere...where kinship groups were reunited, friendships renewed, news exchanged, all underlain by the serious business of celebrating the song, music and dance central to the life of the region', and observed that he was able to experience 'Highland culture from the 18th century performed with a natural competence and vigour which, even with the benefits of a PA system and floodlights, had little if any relation to the modern concert stages of North America or Europe.'[22]

> Performers were neatly – almost formally – dressed, yet in their manner they were unassuming, often appearing shy when introduced on stage. The audience, however, knew what to expect. Whenever a fiddler made particularly skilful work of the transition from strathspey to reel the listeners, many of whom knew the tunes and were following the playing intently, responded with a spontaneous swell of applause. During the Gaelic songs people in the audience joined in the chorus with gusto.[23]

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[19] Fr Rankin was priest of St Mary of the Angels parish. A native Gaelic speaker, he was a traditional musician, an important source of Gaelic tradition, and an indefatigable promoter of Nova Scotia's Gaelic culture.
[20] Interview, 12 November 2025.
[21] 'Tobar an Dualchais: Memories of Glendale, Nova Scotia, in 1963', *West Highland Free Press,* 29 January 2025. This article provides the basis for our survey of his activities that year.
[22] 'Memories of Glendale', *West Highland Free Press*, 29 January 2025.
[23] 'Memories of Glendale', *West Highland Free Press*, 29 January 2025.

Most of the Gaelic songs were performed by groups of four or five men, a leader singing the verses and the rest joining in the refrain. Two performances stood out. The first was a song about a drowning at sea, sung by Glendale resident Roddy MacInnis (*Rodaidh Ailig Ruairidh*) 'in a powerful traditional style'; the second was a performance of a sailing song, *Air faill ill ó ro, faill ill ó*, by a group of men from Broad Cove parish led by 'a trim man in his 50s by the name of Lauchie MacLellan, [who] sang the verses with an ease and authority that commanded and held the listeners' attention, appearing to be totally absorbed in the song and unaware of the audience'.[24] MacLellan's singing on this occasion impressed John greatly, and was to have important consequences for his career:

> The first time I met him was maybe three weeks after I landed for the first time in Glendale. They had the parish concert, and Lauchie got up and sang, and I thought 'Oh, God, this guy's terrific.' So I got up my courage and I went up and I talked to him in Gaelic, and he said, 'Come over and see me some time.' But I was intimidated by the guy – he was that sharp. So years later I called him on the phone, and said 'Lauchie, you may remember me. I'm staying at Katie Florence's place.[25] Could I come over and see you sometime?' And he said, 'I'll be right with you.' And within five minutes his car pulled up outside the house. And I thought, that was a good sign!

Much of what John subsequently learned from Lauchie, and what Lauchie himself had learned from the life he had lived and the culture he had absorbed, is in the book he and John compiled together, *Brìgh an Òrain / A Story in Every Song*.[26] Lauchie was the sort of person anybody would want to call a friend, and John felt privileged to do so.

When John returned to live in Cape Breton ten years later, both Roddy MacInnes and Lauchie MacLellan (*Lachlann Dhòmhnaill Nìll*) became close friends and important informants. Other residents from whom John would later record important traditional material included Johnny Williams (*Seonaidh Aonghuis Bhig*), a well-known singer from nearby Melford, Inverness County, and Glendale storyteller Patrick MacEachern (*Pàdraig Aonghuis Sìne*). By the end of his second summer in Cape Breton, John had recorded seven reel-to-reel tapes containing some 400 items, all of which he catalogued. Copies of the tapes and the catalogue are now available for study at Harvard University and at the School of Scottish Studies Sound Archive at Edinburgh University.

The question of what to do after graduation, however, remained a concern. For male university students in the 1960s, a major consideration was the looming likelihood of military service, unless an allowable alternative – a 'deferment' – could be found. While the draft had begun in the late 1950s, conscription for the Vietnam conflict began in earnest in 1964. With graduation approaching in 1966, John had to figure out how to avoid being swept into uniform. His efforts were supported by Harvard University, which 'didn't like the idea of its products being blown up in rice paddies'.[27] With their help, John won a Fulbright Scholarship to study at L'Ecôle Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris, where

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[24] 'Memories of Glendale', *West Highland Free Press*, 29 January 2025.
[25] Katie Florence Kennedy was a Gaelic teacher and one of John's informants. She and her husband Archie lived in Dunvegan, in Broad Cove Parish, not far from Lauchie MacLellan's farm. The Kennedys' home was a magnet for many of the area's musicians and tradition-bearers.
[26] Lauchie MacLellan, *Brìgh an Òrain / A Story in Every Song: The Songs and Tales of Lauchie MacLellan*, ed. John Shaw (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000). The song that Lauchie sang at the concert is transcribed on pp. 180–183.
[27] Interview, 12 November 2025.

he studied with, among others, noted Celtic scholar Edouard Bachellery (1907–1988), who later invited John to contribute to *Études Celtiques*, of which Bachellery was editor.[28] Tragically, however, John's time in France was cut short by the death of his father in a road accident, necessitating his return to the US. In the autumn of 1967 he re-enrolled at Harvard, this time for a PhD.

The following year, John was awarded a three-year NDEA fellowship in Celtic Studies.[29] In addition to pursuing the study of languages like Sanskrit and Hittite – comparative philology being a major preoccupation of Celtic linguistics at the time – John also resumed collecting in Cape Breton; the results of his 1969 fieldwork are available for consultation in the School of Scottish Studies Sound Archive. Then in 1970 he was awarded a Harvard Travelling Fellowship to study Old Irish with Daniel Binchy at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, and to write his dissertation.

Living in Ireland was a liberating experience after the hypercompetitive atmosphere of Harvard in those days. Alongside his studies, John took the opportunity to re-engage with the fiddle – he had had violin lessons as a child, and his experience of attending parish concerts and parties in Cape Breton years before had inspired him:

> The parish concerts were money-raising events in all these little parishes around Cape Breton. It was to keep the glebe house in repair, all practical stuff. Fr John Angus would take me with him to various concerts around the island – the distances are great; you could easily drive 100 miles each way – and I got to know fiddlers. One of them was a good friend of Fr John Angus called Bill Lamey. He was raised in Inverness County in the industrial area. He didn't speak Gaelic, but he was a good player and he knew a lot about fiddle music. So I'd go to parties with him and Fr John Angus, mostly Fr John Angus's relatives, and you'd have the fiddle tunes, then you'd have the singing, then you'd have the lunch, then you'd have more singing, people occasionally going outside to the trunks of cars for a drink of rum– rum was 'it' – and this was the background socialising. Bill taught me a lot about fiddle music and about other stuff as well.[30]

John might have preferred to learn to play in the Cape Breton style; but meanwhile, he was in Dublin – and Irish fiddling was everywhere:

> I thought maybe I should try to play! They had Irish music sessions right across from the Guinness brewery, in James Street. Those were dry – you couldn't drink there – the sessions were great. But I'd also go to pub sessions. I bought a fiddle for, I don't know, twenty-five quid or something. I had lots of time. And I had four tune-books – *Kerr's Merry Melodies*, they were easy to carry, and there are probably about 1,000 tunes in there. So that's what I began with. And I got to know people, and began playing here and there, and I began to recognise a lot of tunes from Cape Breton.[31]

During his time in Dublin, however, John's doubts about the wisdom of pursuing an academic career resurfaced. Raised in an academic family, John was well aware of the political pressures and the financial precarity of such a life, and he held no illusions about the ivory tower:

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[28] An article and two reviews were published in *Études Celtiques* 12/1 (1968–1969).
[29] The National Defense Education Act (1958) allocated government funding to US educational institutions to strengthen provision in science, mathematics and foreign languages in support of national security needs.
[30] Interview, 12 November 2025.
[31] Interview, 12 November 2025.

> At that point, shall we say I had taken a good, hard look at things, and I didn't really see much of a future being an academic in the US. The way I saw it was, you get the job, you end up in the Rust Belt or wherever they send you, and then what happens? Age thirty-five rolls around, you've got a wife, kids, a mortgage – and tenure comes up. I wasn't really interested in being part of what I perceived as being not a very good deal, for me – American academic life. Maybe in a different field. But here I was in linguistics. Or Celtic. It hardly mattered. It was something I had been interested in, but it was never going to pay off. I had no intention of finishing my thesis. So, I took half the grant that I had, and decided to go through Asia.[32]

The world – and Cape Breton

If John's life up to that point seemed like a fairly straight and well-greased trajectory into an academic career, his decision in 1971 to abandon his studies and head east changed things. Or did it, really? His travels certainly took him quite a distance in terms of geography. After returning briefly to the States to earn some travel money, he went to Greece, where friends were living in a lighthouse; it was there that he met Londoner Jill Whittaker, his future partner. Over the next four years they travelled to Israel, where they worked briefly in a kibbutz; then onwards through Turkey, Pakistan and India to Nepal – he and Jill got married in Kathmandu – and even as far as Australia. But as they experienced different cultures, John found himself being reminded of people he had met in Cape Breton, including Lauchie MacLellan, whom he had first met in 1963:

> I'd thought a lot about Lauchie when we were in Australia and Nepal. And I'd thought a lot about North Shore singers[33], and about Hughie Dan[34], and that whole world. In Nepal, when we were married, we were living above Tibetans. They had a little school; they were instructing young men to be lamas, and we became very friendly with them. That opened up a little bit of that world. And I saw that they were trying to hang onto their culture and their language, and they'd been through a really rough experience – it's really not that much worse than what Gaels have gone through – but the parallels are right there. And I began to see some of the older Tibetan people, and how faithful they were to who they were, and the joy that they took in being who they were. And I thought, that's something that's there in the Hebrides and in Cape Breton and in other places, and nobody's doing anything about it! So that was why I was thinking about these guys, I think.[35]

Four years later, in 1975, John returned to the US. After taking Jill to meet his mother, he wanted to see Cape Breton again, so he and Jill travelled north, 'just to see what was there':

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[32] Interview, 12 November 2025.

[33] Located in Victoria County, the North Shore of Cape Breton preserved singing traditions that reflected the Lewis and Harris ancestry of many of its residents. Local bards and singers became known for their high-energy performances at local milling frolics and concerts, and The North Shore Gaelic Singers – a group of six men – performed immediately before Bob Dylan 'electrified' the crowd at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965.

[34] Hughie Dan MacDonnell (1898–1976) was a former coal-miner and Gaelic storyteller from Inverness County who, as John tells it, 'came out with stories about "The Magic Flight", which is an international tale; "Cath nan Eun" – The Battle of the Birds – he just did it like that, knew the whole thing, he had beautiful phrases. And I was transcribing that, and I thought, there's something really important going on with this guy, and with what it's part of.'

[35] Interview, 12 November 2025.

> I was perhaps a little more pessimistic than I should have been. I thought Gaelic would have been wiped out there by then, because it had been several years. But that turned out to be far from the case. We were staying with people in Inverness County, in Dunvegan, and we got a message from the College in Sydney, saying 'Will you come down, we want to talk to you.' I said, 'What about?' and they said, 'We're thinking of offering you a job.' So I began thinking about that; and there was a lot more Gaelic than I'd realised, so I thought, OK, what do we have to lose? So we drove down to Sydney, Jill and I, and we took along Katie Florence, the old lady that we were staying with.[36] The person who wanted to see me was a priest, and he said, 'we need somebody with qualifications' – I had an MA – 'to teach Gaelic Studies here; and we're willing to put you on the faculty.' He said, 'we're a community college' and I'd be working with the community. And I thought, great! This was the Nova Scotia education system, and the College of Cape Breton had become aware of the 'Roots' phenomenon in North America. And somebody there had this flash of insight: 'Hey! Cape Breton's got "roots" too!'[37]

As a consequence of this meeting, John and Jill spent the following year in Cape Breton, where John joined the faculty of the Beaton Institute, University College of Cape Breton (UCCB), in Sydney.[38] The Institute possessed significant holdings of Gaelic material, including donated field recordings.[39] In addition to research, John taught night school classes in the Sydney area, and was designing a Gaelic language course 'based on local traditional materials and methods and incorporating tradition-bearers in their former, time-honoured role as teachers'.[40] One of his night classes was called 'Gaelic for fluent Gaelic speakers':

> It was run entirely in Gaelic, and it was really a course in [Gaelic] literacy, which they hadn't had access to, and tradition, which I tried to show them they knew a lot more about than they realised.[41]

One person who attended was Joe Neil MacNeil (*Eòs Nìll Bhig*) of Middle Cape, who was to become John's most important source not just for folktales, but for his understanding of the communities that had kept them alive:

> That's when I met him. Actually, the first time I heard him was on tape, in the College of Cape Breton's archive. And I thought, this guy's Gaelic is unusual. I hadn't heard anything better from anyone anywhere. One friend of mine described his Gaelic as 'ringing'. And his stories were some of the best I'd heard, so I began talking to him, recording him now and again. He started coming to these classes, and afterwards – this was on Tuesday nights – we'd go a few streets down to see Dan Neil MacNeil and his

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[36] Katie Florence Kennedy, of Broad Cove; see n. 25 above.
[37] Interview, 12 November 2025. Alex Haley's *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976), inspired enormous interest in family genealogy throughout North America.
[38] Part of the University College of Cape Breton, now Cape Breton University.
[39] John Shaw and Michael Kennedy, 'Gaelic in Prince Edward Island: A Cultural Remnant (Gaelic Field Recording Project' (1987 and 2002), 47.
[40] Joe Neil MacNeil, *Sgeul gu Latha / Tales until Dawn: The World of a Cape Breton Gaelic Story-Teller,* edited and translated by John Shaw (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), xx.
[41] Interview, 12 November 2025.

> wife Mary, and we'd have our tea there. And Dan Neil would sing, and they'd both tell stories, and we'd just have a fabulous evening.[42]

John would later write that the story he had heard Joe Neil tell on the archive recording was *Nighean Rìgh na h-Èipheit*, 'delivered with a sureness of details and a command of Gaelic that I recognised as the work of a master story-teller', and he recalled that what began as an effort to introduce Joe Neil's lore into the language programme 'grew into a more detailed study of his tradition and an effort to recover as many as possible of the apparently endless stock of tales that he recalled from his youth'.[43]

It was during this period that John worked with Rosemary Hutchinson, a native of South Uist who lived in Cape Breton, to record Cape Breton tradition-bearers for the British folk music label Topic Records, which released two albums of Cape Breton traditional music and song in 1978.[44] The first of these, *The Music of Cape Breton, vol. 1: Gaelic Tradition in Cape Breton*, contained fourteen tracks including both songs and instrumental music, while the twelve tracks on the second LP, *The Music of Cape Breton, vol. 2: Cape Breton Scottish Fiddle* focused on the instrumental music for which Cape Breton has become famous.[45] The accompanying booklets, handsomely illustrated with photographs, provided an excellent introduction to Cape Breton Gaelic history, culture and traditions, as well as the names of tunes, song lyrics, and biographical information on the performers; these materials were written by John with contributions, for the second volume, from Fr. John Angus Rankin – John's host in 1963 and an accomplished piano accompanist – and fiddle player Bill Lamey.

Unfortunately, the beginning of John Shaw's professional life as an academic turned out to be something of a false start. Shortly after recruiting him to teach at UCCB, John's sponsor was killed in an accident on the Trans-Canada Highway, and the College began having second thoughts about his contract:

> They shifted me from a teaching job with a so-called faculty standing to 'adult education'. And inevitably, there was a 'test dialogue' about what my promised salary was really going to be – they wanted 15–20 percent off, and they wanted the summer school for free, and I said, 'that's not in the contract'. They wanted to see what I'd do. So I called in the union.

The inevitable upshot was that John became unemployed; and because he now lacked a job, his work visa was no longer valid, just as John was finding himself increasingly committed to Cape Breton and its Gaelic communities. John was always a meticulous folklorist and ethnographer, recording and providing detailed insights into the cultural and intellectual life of these communities. He wanted to help bring awareness of Cape Breton's Gaelic culture to the wider world, and to build an educational infrastructure that could help to preserve and perpetuate the language and its associated traditions:

> I suppose from the broadest perspective I began to get my own views about what was really happening, and what was important. And I began to see that there was something that I thought was very valuable and precious that was being lost. Nobody was even

[42] Interview, 12 November 2025.
[43] MacNeil, *Sgeul gu Latha*, xix–xx.
[44] For the history of this label, see: https://www.topicrecords.co.uk/topic-records-full-length-biography/. See also Alex Petridis, 'Topic Records – 70 years of giving a voice to the people', *The Guardian*, 23 August 2009: https://www.theguardian.com/music/2009/aug/23/topic-records-70th-anniversary.
[45] *The Music of Cape Breton, Volume 1: Gaelic Tradition in Cape Breton*, Topic Records TSDL353 and *The Music of Cape Breton, Volume 2: Cape Breton Scottish Fiddle,* Topic Records TSDL354, 1978, LPs.

> commenting on it, really, and I felt that this was not right, and I felt that it was important that people know, from now on, that such a tradition existed, and that it was kept alive by such men as Joe Neil and Lauchie.[46]

But without a job that would allow him to stay in Canada, John's way forward seemed uncertain.

There was, however, one ray of hope. John's labour dispute with the College of Cape Breton had been reported in the local press, where it drew the attention of Allan J. MacEachen (1921–2017), Liberal Party of Canada MP for the Cape Breton Highlands-Canso constituency and a senior member of the government of Pierre Elliot Trudeau.[47] Born in Inverness County, MacEachen came from a family of Gaelic-speakers and had a great interest in and love for Gaelic culture. John recalls that MacEachen invited him over for breakfast:

> He said, 'What do you think we should be doing?' and I said, 'The best thing I can see, is to have a methodical recording project, from community to community, and get this culture in a form that it can be accessed when the older people are gone, and can be used for the future. And his answer – always – was 'We'll see what we can do.'

If they were to settle in Canada permanently, John and Jill had to apply – from abroad – for landed immigrant status. They left Canada while the political deals were struck, spending the winter in England. By the following year, MacEachen had managed to work things out, and John was able to return to Canada as a full-time employee of what became known as the Cape Breton Gaelic Folklore Project, which ran from 1977 to 1983. Administered through St Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, the project was designed to systematically record the Gaelic traditions of Nova Scotia.[48] As John describes it:

> We promised to do two publications, and the rest was just fieldwork. I did the fieldwork and the publications, which were Joe Neil MacNeil's book and Lauchie MacLellan's book.[49] So that's where I began. Joe Neil and Lauchie were hired as sources, so they got a small amount per month for working with me, and I had access to them pretty much whenever I needed. When I wasn't out in other places I concentrated on them, getting as much of their tradition as I could.[50]

The next several years were among the most productive of John's life, and the beginning of his career as a recognised scholar. Between 1977 and 1983 he recorded approximately 2000 items for the Cape Breton Gaelic Folklore Collection, digitised copies of which are now held in the archives at St Francis Xavier University in Antigonish.[51] The year 1981 saw publication of the first of three books focused on a single informant. This was *Luirgean Eachainn Nìll*, a collection of stories recorded from Hector Campbell who lived near Judique, a village on the west coast of Cape Breton about twenty

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[46] Interview, 12 November 2025.

[47] In 1977, MacEachen was appointed Deputy Prime Minister; he subsequently served as Minister of Finance (1980–82) and Secretary of State for External Affairs (1984) before being appointed to the Senate of Canada as member for Highlands-Canso, where he served until he retired in 1996.

[48] The project had the active support and involvement of St Francis Xavier's president, Fr Malcolm MacDonell (1919–2015), and particularly of his sister, Sr Margaret MacDonell (1920–2023) who became head of Celtic Studies there in 1977; both were native Gaelic speakers from Hillsdale, Inverness County, Cape Breton.

[49] See notes 26 and 40 above.

[50] Interview, 12 November 2025.

[51] https://dasg.ac.uk/gaelstream/.

miles north of the Canso Causeway.[52] John had first visited Campbell during the summers of 1963 and 1964, while he was still an undergraduate:

> Hector was a bachelor who lived on his own in a small house up in the hills. The postal address is Hillsdale, but they used to call it *Beinn Noah* – 'Noah's Hill' – that was the local name for it. He had stories that clearly came from the hero tales of the middle ages. Kenneth Jackson had recorded some from him in the late 1940s.[53] When I'd go to see Hector, I was maybe eighteen or nineteen years old, and I'd take a drink of rum up, and I always wondered what would happen if the Mounties stopped me, driving around at that age with a bottle of rum, and me trying to tell them that I was just taking it up to help with my story recording! Anyway, the title of the book comes from Hector's community out in Beinn Noah. There was a post office there. There would be snow there six months of the year, and people were leaving the community, and one person said, 'The only thing that will be left now will be Hector's footprints in front of the post office, in the snow'. *Luirgean* is a weird local plural of *làrachd*, the Gaelic word for 'footprint'. So the title means 'Hector's Traces'.[54]

While *Luirgean Eachainn Nìll* drew from John's early collecting – Hector Campbell had died by the time he returned to Cape Breton in 1975 – John's next project was *Sgeul gu Latha / Tales until Dawn*: *The World of a Cape Breton Gaelic Story-Teller*, a dual-language edition of Gaelic stories told by Joe Neil MacNeil of Middle Cape, one of his two principal informants from 1977 onwards. Following an introduction in which John describes how he got to know Joe Neil, the book begins with the storyteller's reminiscences of hearing and learning stories from family members and others in his community. It is this account which provided the guiding principle when it came to organising the book's contents. Asked about his editorial process, John remarked:

> Well, that comes down to the question of – how were the books organised? With Joe Neil's, I thought about this. You can divide it up into what seems to be most ancient, or you can do it by 'cycles', hero-tales, all of that. With his, I decided to do it more as the community itself would have organised it. I did it by storytelling families. So if you wanted to find out if it was an international tale or a legend or whatever, that's in the notes. This gave a more accurate, accessible portrait of a storytelling community, which in this case was Middle Cape, where Joe came from. And there have been questions about this.[55]

Indeed, most collections of oral tales, going back to the nineteenth century, have relied upon categories developed by scholars – 'Ulster Cycle' tales, for example, or 'Fenian Cycle', or 'international tales', or 'legends'. Other collections group tales according to thematic material, or the presence of characters of a certain type. There has been a preference for comparative analysis, often aimed at identifying the earliest

[52] Hector Campbell, *Luirgean Eachainn Nìll: Folktales from Cape Breton*, transcribed and translated by Margaret MacDonell and John Shaw (Stornoway, Isle of Lewis: Acair Ltd., 1981).
[53] Kenneth Jackson, 'Notes on the Gaelic of Port Hood', *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 6 (1949): 179–83. Hector Campbell also recorded stories for Fr Malcolm MacDonell and for Edward MacLeach; see John Shaw's introduction to Joe Neil MacNeil, *Tales until Dawn*, xviii and notes.
[54] Interview, 12 November 2025.
[55] Interview, 12 November 2025.

possible exemplars. But John concluded that it wasn't Joe Neil's stories as such that would provide the most compelling organising principle for his book, but the storytellers themselves and their communities:

> I'd heard James Delargy talk at Harvard, and for me that was a very influential lecture.[56] I'd spent enough time in communities in Cape Breton – and in South Uist and Barra – to understand what he meant about the 'hidden people' – the people who were the custodians of the tradition that was in the kitchens. It wasn't a public role: in Cape Breton, the important forum was the kitchen, for storytelling especially. The reputation would go out, and I think it was like that for a long time.
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> The more I talked to Joe and Lauchie and other people, and the more events that I went to, the more interested I became in the social context. And I began to see that storytelling, maybe its main importance, is as a social activity – what it does for bringing people together, but also what it does for personal, mental integration. It keeps people sane. Things would happen in the stories that would help them understand what was happening to them. There is a feeling of some kind of unity with characters in stories who had been through the same challenges. This is what I began to see. One thing that was difficult, sometimes, about fieldwork recording sessions was – you get everything set up, you have the people that you want to record, and then other people turn up, and it very rapidly turns into a social occasion. To hell with the programme, with what you were trying to record; it was the social occasion that was really important to them. So I'd just kind of relax, and turn off the machine, and come back later quietly and get it. No conflict.[57]

The organisation of Joe Neil's book reflects John's conviction that the real story lies in the holistic picture that emerges of a community held together, as it were, by their shared storytelling tradition – the shared ownership of the tales, the people's identification with the characters and their adventures, and their delight in the social occasions that storytelling afforded.[58] In the longest section of this book, headed 'The Reciters and the Tales', the fifty-two tales are presented as Joe Neil credited them to the people from whom he had learned them, including four storytelling families and an additional eight individual storytellers. Today, we can only wonder what it must have been like to live in a small community boasting such a rich tradition of oral narrative, and so many talented bearers of it.

It was in this connection that John also expressed frustration with another aspect of folklore scholarship:

> I think genre analysis in folklore is a nightmare. It's almost impossible. The efforts that have been made – Heda Jason and her assault on the international folktale classification system put up the right challenge, which is that it doesn't really work all that well.[59] Another person who showed the difficulties of genre analysis for folklore was Dan Ben-

[56] James Delargy, 'The Gaelic Storyteller' , *Proceedings of the British Academy* 31 (1945): 178–221.
[57] Interview, 12 November 2025.
[58] Discussion of how particular tales are categorised is included in the notes at the back of the book.
[59] Heda Jason, *Motif, type, and genre: A manual for compilation of indices and a bibliography of indices and indexing*. FF communications 273 (2000). Suomi, Finland: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.

> Amos in Philadelphia.[60] You've got to have a rule of thumb, but it is messy, and it's imperfect, and sometimes you can probably miss the point.[61]

Similar difficulties have plagued the search for a useful classification system for Gaelic song, as anyone can attest who has ever tried to edit a song collection. When it came to organising the songs he collected from Lauchie MacLellan several years later, John realised that, absent any authoritatively emic classificatory system, he was on his own:

> I just did the best I could. I couldn't see any point in being more rigorous. Lauchie himself didn't have many names for various types of songs. I told John MacInnes that I was having a problem with this, and [asked him] what terms would he suggest – 'drinking songs' (*orain botuil)*, for example, was one that he suggested – but otherwise I hadn't found a good system for classifying Gaelic songs. [62]

The publication, in 2000, of Lauchie MacLellan's book *Brìgh an Òrain* completed John's commitment to the project he had undertaken on behalf of the Cape Breton Gaelic Folklore Collection in 1977. That project, initiated in the aftermath of his labour dispute with the College of Cape Breton, was the true beginning of John's career as a university scholar.

For the remaining years of the 1980s, John and Jill continued to live in Cape Breton, where they bought property in Glendale, built a house, and set about raising their daughters, Katie (b. 1978) and Jenny (b. 1984), as well as various livestock. John continued his collecting activities, completing a Gaelic oral history project for the Institute of Island Studies and the Celtic Studies Committee of the University of Prince Edward Island, during which he made audio and videocassette recordings of twenty Gaelic-speaking tradition-bearers, including the last fluent Gaelic speaker in P.E.I., as well as a sampling of the island's traditional violin style.[63] One of his colleagues on that project, Jim Watson (1949–2018), had been a close friend since the 1970s, and the two helped spearhead various other initiatives including Cape Gael Associates Co-op, which launched an ambitious programme of activities in support of Gaelic language and culture in Cape Breton.[64]

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[60] Dan Ben-Amos, 'Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context', *Journal of American Folklore* 84/331 (Jan–Mar 1971), 3–15.

[61] Interview, 12 November 2025.

[62] Interview, 12 November 2025. A couple of attempts have been made; see James Ross, 'A Classification of Gaelic Folk-Song', *Scottish Studies* 1 (1957):95–151; and Virginia Blankenhorn, 'A new approach to the classification of Gaelic song', *Oral Tradition* 32/1 (2018): 71–140. The first of these John Shaw described as 'uncomfortable'; the second appeared long after Lauchie's book was published.

[63] For a summary of this project, see John Shaw and Michael Kennedy, 'Gaelic in Prince Edward Island: A Cultural Remnant (Gaelic Field Recording Project)'. https://islandstudies.com/files/2014/07/GAELIC-IN-PRINCE-EDWARD-ISLAND.pdf

[64] These included organising performances of Gaelic traditional arts at the Expo '86 World's Fair in Vancouver, with a follow up concert at Vancouver's Folk Festival in 1987, and an 'International Conference for Gaelic Language and Culture' held at UCCB in 1987, which drew prominent participants from Scotland. Cape Gael also provided support for fundraising efforts for UCCB's Gaelic Cape Breton Island Play Group Fund; produced Gaelic learning materials based on local cultural resources; and engaged in ongoing advocacy and consultancy with the aim of making Gaelic language and music more accessible and more closely linked to Cape Breton's economic and social development. A concert organised in support of the Play Group Fund provides not only an excellent introduction to the Cape Breton Gaelic tradition but an insight into Cape Gael's vision: see https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=e18Zc2BiXzk. See also Veronica Gillies, 'Four people guarding a fragile legacy: Cape Gael Associates Co-op', *Worker Co-op: The Voice of Economic Democracy in Canada* 9/1 (Summer 1989), 20–21.

Also in the 1980s, John was working on Joe Neil's stories; and it was that project that rekindled his ambition to complete his doctorate. In 1982, through a process of discussion with Harvard University and the advocacy of Prof. Charles Dunn, John was awarded a PhD in Celtic Languages and Literatures for his manuscript of Joe Neil's stories and traditional lore.

In 1990, at the conclusion of a three-month teaching contract at St Mary's University in Halifax, John and Jill decided to extend their absence from Glendale and go to Scotland, expecting to stay for six months. But at the beginning of 1991, with their two daughters enrolled in the Gaelic Medium unit in Inverness, John was hired as a Gaelic Development Officer for Comunn na Gàidhlig, an organisation founded in 1984 by the Scottish Office to co-ordinate developments in Gaelic language policy.[65] It was this position that ultimately launched his full-time career as an academic, first, in 1994, as a lecturer in Celtic at King's College, University of Aberdeen, and in 1996 as Senior Lecturer in Scottish Ethnology at the University of Edinburgh, a post from which he retired in 2009.

Tobar an Dualchais

In the early 1990s, John's work for Comunn na Gàidhlig was actually located within the offices of Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE). As he explained, 'I was officially working for Comunn na Gàidhlig, but I was within HIE, and my job was to get every penny that I could [for Gaelic] out of HIE, and they had a big budget'.[66] Even so, John's boss at the time, Roy Pedersen, came to him one day saying that they had a problem. 'The ground is shifting under our feet,' he said. 'We've got only six months left working on this Gaelic business'.[67] With his own and others' livelihoods dependent upon obtaining additional funding, John focused urgently on the problem – and an idea came to him:

> There was a visit to Brittany, about language maintenance for Breton, and one of the visits we made was to the archive in Rennes. You've probably heard of [Breton musician and singer] Alain Stivell? He put together a project there where people went out into communities and recorded, brought back these cassette tapes, and they were put on a little network called 'Minitel'.[68] And I was looking at that, and on the way home, it came home to me: Jesus, you know, we've got these huge collections, why not put big collections on a big network and make them available to everybody? So I went back to Pedersen, and Pedersen said, 'Well, what are we going to do with ourselves?' and I said, well, 'I saw something very interesting in France, we might try it.' And Pedersen said – he was my boss – he said, 'Let's do it!'[69]

As a consequence, John was commissioned by Comunn na Gàidhlig to prepare a report that would 'assess the current state, needs and potential of Gaelic oral heritage'.[70] Entitled 'DUALCHAS: Gaelic Cultural Heritage, Community and Technology', this report was submitted to Comunn na Gàidhlig and HIE in 1994, and eventually served as the initial blueprint for Tobar an Dualchais / Kist o Riches,

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[65] This was in the years before the creation of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, a government quango.
[66] Interview, 12 November 2025.
[67] Interview, 12 November 2025.
[68] Officially 'TELETEL', Minitel provided an interactive videotex online service through telephone lines in the years before the launch of the World Wide Web.
[69] Interview, 12 November 2025.
[70] John Shaw, 'From the Shoulders of Giants to the Global Arena: Scotland and its Intangible Heritage', in Chris Wright, ed., *Tobar an Dualchais: Ulaidh Nàiseanta / Kist o Riches: A National Treasure* (Tobar an Dualchais, 2014).

the online resource that today provides global access, free of charge, to some 40,000 audio recordings of traditional songs, stories, oral history and folklore in Gaelic and Scots – the vernacular heritage of Scotland's people, and those of Scottish descent around the world. The report conceived of Gaelic cultural heritage as 'the extensive store of arts, traditions and skills as practised and transmitted in Gaelic speaking communities and regarded as fundamental to Gaelic culture', and specifically referenced traditional singing and song composition, verbal arts including storytelling, instrumental music and dance – in short, the range of cultural expression which John had first encountered in the Hebrides and in Cape Breton thirty years earlier.[71] The report reviewed efforts made since the late 1700s to record what was perceived to be an endangered tradition but that had, until the mid-twentieth century, received no public support. Its summary of the situation is worth quoting at length:

> In spite of the generous intentions of informants and collectors, the effects on the tradition in the Gaelic communities have been minimal. This is because materials have been by and large confined to university archives or private collections, or published in scholarly works virtually inaccessible to Gaelic communities.
>
> Within the communities, the oral tradition has constituted one of the vital and enduring institutions on which Gaelic identity has depended. As the vehicle through which Gaelic intellectual life has remained alive among the ordinary people, it has served as an informal but powerful force in socialisation, skill development and thought formation....
>
> From the beginning of this century activities such as Gaelic singing and instrumental music have received little, if any, support from formal institutions and are still suborned to 'high' and state culture. There has been considerable encouragement from Gaelic organisations, but their support has often been accompanied by practices and standards introduced from outside Gaeldom (termed 'acculturation' by researchers), often giving rise to confusion as to 'what is real', and consequent weakening of the local aesthetic and loss of self-esteem. Compounding this has been the quantitative decline brought on by imposed priorities through modern education, mass media, social mobility and out-migration, greatly reducing the numbers of exponents of Gaelic tradition in recent generations.
>
> There has also been a qualitative decline: concerning the present generation of singers the view has been widely expressed that the song repertoire has declined noticeably in quality and breadth. The same is even more demonstrably true for Gaelic storytelling.[72]

The report listed a range of objectives for the project. These included the creation of 'an archival and organisational resource for Gaelic oral and musical cultural heritage that is easily and widely accessible throughout Scotland', a resource that would 'support and develop oral and musical heritage skills, arts and aesthetics transmitted in Gaelic through traditional methods where possible, including traditional song and singing styles; storytelling and other verbal arts; language usage; instrumental music and dance'.[73] It listed the major sound archives that had emerged in the twentieth century and on which the project would be based, including the School of Scottish Studies Archives at Edinburgh University; the BBC Gaelic archive; the recordings John had made for the Cape Breton Gaelic Folklore Project held at St Francis Xavier University; Gaelic material held at the Department of Irish

[71] John Shaw, DUALCHAS: Gaelic Heritage, Community and Technology. A Report for Comunn na Gàidhlig, (Inverness: 1994), 3.
[72] Shaw, DUALCHAS, 6.
[73] Shaw, DUALCHAS, 12.

Folklore, University College Dublin; and a number of smaller collections, as well as Dr John Lorne Campbell's private collection in Canna.[74] In addition to encouraging the use of the resource by individuals, community groups, 'and all relevant educational and Gaelic development organisations', the report envisaged that the project could provide Gaelic tradition with an economic base 'through business creation, marketing and promotion, with special reference to the media and cultural tourism'. Also important, however, were raising the awareness and image of Gaelic tradition and making it available to a wider audience, and the promotion and development of social aspects of content, transmission and performance.[75] The report provides further evidence of John's vision: the recording of Gaelic tradition was important not simply as an historical artefact, but as a resource of fundamental importance for linguistic and cultural maintenance and revitalisation of Gaelic-speaking communities.

John described his report as something of a shot-in-the-dark, something 'to keep things going, to keep people employed'; but he soon became aware that his idea might be one whose time had come:

> I thought, I'm not sure this will get off the ground. So I started calling people for information, and – it's never happened to me before in my life – everybody I called said, 'Oh, yeah! I'd love to help with that!' And the information came in – all the information I needed. People were just extremely helpful the whole way through.[76]

The plan gradually changed as these conversations took place, and progress was slow. Launched at last in 2006, the Tobar an Dualchais / Kist o' Riches project was declared complete in 2010,[77] although it maintains a staff to this day, with new material constantly added. The initial delay was perhaps just as well, given the improvements in technology that had taken place in the meantime. One of its great strengths, however, was that the project became the work of many hands. The collaboration of institutional partners – Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, which housed and managed it; the BBC, whose Gaelic recordings became part of the database; the National Trust for Scotland, owner of John Lorne Campbell's Canna collection; the sound archives of the School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh – supported a successful grant proposal to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The hard work of many individuals – from advisors and steering-committee members and people with fundraising expertise to technology specialists, copyright experts, digitisers, editors, cataloguers – ensured that the work was done not just with due diligence, but with care and respect for the recordings, for the contributors and their families, for the fieldworkers, and for communities whose legacy they represented. John expressed astonishment at how collaborative the project became, and how it remained mercifully free of the usual egos and posturing:

> It's been an amazing experience. It took some time to put together. It was decided that Scots should be included as well as Gaelic, and probably Scottish English. Sabhal Mòr got involved; Hugh Cheape came on board; and Dr Martin MacIntyre got the money. It's been rough at times keeping it going, but we've had people who've really hung in there, like Donnie Munro, who understands this stuff and has enough courage to follow

[74] Shaw, DUALCHAS, 8–9.
[75] Shaw, DUALCHAS, 12.
[76] Interview, 12 November 2025.
[77] Hugh Cheape and John Shaw, 'Tobar an Dualchais / Kist o Riches Evaluation Report'. 20 December 2010. Unpublished report prepared for the Heritage Lottery Fund, whose support totalling £3.2 million made execution of the project possible.

> through.[78] But – and this is something that's never happened to me before – nobody tried to get the credit for any part of this. Nobody tried to control it. You didn't have any of that 'primate' stuff.[79]

To this day, John continues to be involved in *Tobar an Dualchais / Kist o Riches* as a member of its steering group.

Academic and activist

During his time at Edinburgh University, in addition to teaching and post-graduate supervision, John returned regularly to Cape Breton to make recordings for the School of Scottish Studies Archives. In 2005, he obtained a major grant from the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council to launch the Calum Maclean Project (2005–2009) which aimed to create a searchable catalogue of material collected in Gaelic Scotland by Calum I. Maclean (1915–1960), the first fieldworker hired by the School of Scottish Studies after its founding in 1951.[80] Between 1945 and 1950, Maclean had worked in Ireland for the Irish Folklore Commission collecting Gaelic material in Scotland. Maclean's written transcriptions of these field recordings amount to 10,511 hand-written pages – approximately 2.1 million words – bound in twenty-three volumes held in the National Folklore Archive, University College Dublin. A further ten volumes of transcriptions from audiotape, amounting to 2,224 hand-written pages of approximately 440,000 words, are held in the School of Scottish Studies Archives. Primarily containing long folk-tales, these two collections constitute the entire known corpus of Calum Maclean's Scottish Gaelic field transcriptions. The catalogue developed by the Calum Maclean Project is thus of immense value to researchers of Gaelic oral narrative and tradition.[81]

Since retiring from the Department of Celtic and Scottish Studies in 2009, John has remained active. His editorship of *Scottish Studies*, which began when he was hired in 2006, continued until 2022, when he had been retired for over a decade. He continues publishing, lecturing, and following the work of other scholars. He plays the fiddle on Monday nights at Sandy Bell's bar in Forrest Road. Above all, he regularly returns to Cape Breton to visit friends and to support efforts aimed at revitalising Gaelic language and culture. The welcome creation in 2006 of Nova Scotia's Office of Gaelic Affairs (*Oifis Iomairtean na Gàidhlig*) has, in an effort to slow the ongoing decline of Gaelic in Cape Breton, supported a number of language acquisition and other language promotional initiatives there.[82] John was centrally involved in developing one of these, *Stòras a' Bhaile*. Designed

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[78] Dr Hugh Cheape is a Vice-President of the National Trust for Scotland and executor for the estate of John Lorne Campbell, whose collection of recordings, dating from the 1930s, became part of the project database. Dr Martin MacIntyre served as Project Co-ordinator and was a powerful advocate for it with the Heritage Lottery and other funders. Donnie Munro, a member of the Gaelic band Run Rig, has been involved in the project for years, and is a constant advocate when further support is needed.

[79] Interview, 12 November 2025.

[80] https://www.calum-maclean-project.celtscot.ed.ac.uk/home/.

[81] Outputs of the project included 'Fear Beag a' Chridhe Mhòir', a series of twelve programmes on the life and work of Calum Maclean broadcast on Radio nan Gàidheal, the BBC's Gaelic radio service; a conference, 'The Life and Legacy of Calum Maclean', held at Edinburgh University on 23 November 2013; an exhibition (https://www.calum-maclean-project.celtscot.ed.ac.uk/resources/exhibition/); and a double CD, *Cruinneachadh Chaluim*, featuring a rich selection of Maclean's field recordings of Gaelic song curated by John and project researcher Dr Andrew Wiseman (https://greentrax.com/product/cruinneachadh-chaluim-field-recordings-of-gaelic-music-and-song/).

[82] *Gàidhlig aig Baile* ('Gaelic at Home'), promotes basic fluency through interactive, immersion-based approaches, conducted in homes rather than formal classroom settings; another initiative, *Bun is Bàrr* ('Root and

by John and Jim Watson, *Stòras a' Bhaile* is a week-long folk-life school, established by the Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum, which brings Gaelic learners and local native speakers together to explore songs, tales and other forms of Nova Scotia Gaelic oral tradition by utilising material both from the native-speaking participants and from sound recordings, particularly those made for the Cape Breton Gaelic Folklore Project.[83] Founded 'on the principle that Gaelic language development in Nova Scotia entails restoring a group identity based in shared cultural expressions', the programme seeks 'to build group identity while fostering language acquisition through experiences and representations of communal Nova Scotia Gaelic Culture'.[84]

In the years since John left Canada, all of the recordings he made for the Cape Breton Gaelic Folklore Project have been digitised and made available online.[85] A project developed by Dr Heather Sparling of Cape Breton University, 'Cainnt is Ceathramhan/Language in Lyrics', is working to catalogue, digitize, transcribe and facilitate access to the Gaelic songs and folklore of Nova Scotia.[86]A searchable index of over 6,000 records of Gaelic songs made or known in Nova Scotia, with over 1,000 digitised texts, has been created.

In many ways, then, John's life and work has come full circle. His fieldwork has provided present and future generations of scholars with an extremely valuable record of remarkable New World Gaelic communities. John's vision, however, was that this cultural and linguistic resource be used not only by scholars but, most importantly, by the communities in which the fieldwork was first conducted, as a means of linguistic and cultural regeneration. While Gaelic remains fragile, John's work has played a central role in current revival efforts, and for that, all those concerned with Gaelic language and culture, both in Nova Scotia and elsewhere, should be extremely grateful.

As for the study of folklore, there can be no doubt regarding the value of John Shaw's contribution. By enabling us to hear the voices of Gaels from Cape Breton and Prince Edward Island, not just by giving us what we may call the 'artefacts' – the stories, songs, music and lore – but by sensitively exploring the social context of those activities, John has expanded our understanding of what 'collecting' is all about, and encouraged us to think holistically about the work of earlier collectors and the communities they studied. Most crucially for the future, the realisation of his vision for Tobar and Dualchais has proved that the academy is capable not just of collecting and archiving the oral remnants of cultures assumed to be 'dying' or 'lost'– the sort of 'museumifying' activities sometimes critiqued as 'salvage ethnography' – but also of meaningfully sharing those collections with the descendants of those whose cultural legacy they were, and with the world at large. What we do with this national treasury is up to us.

Branch'), provides more intensive learning opportunities and seeks to strengthen links between Gaelic learners and Nova Scotia's Gaelic elders, allowing elders to share their knowledge, cultural tradition and wisdom with younger generations. See Frances MacEachen, *Am Blas Againn fhìn. Community Gaelic immersion classes in Nova Scotia: An evaluation of activities in 2006–2007* (Halifax: Office of Gaelic Affairs, 2008), 7–8. https://gaelic.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/inline/documents/am_blas_againn_fhin.pdf; also Seumas Watson and Marlene Ivey, 'Nàisean cultarach nan Gàidheal: Ath-chruthachadh tìr-dhùthchasaich ann an Albainn Nuaidh', in *Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig 8*, ed. Wilson McLeod, Anja Gunderloch and Rob Dunbar (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2016): 183–94.

[83] Watson and Ivey, 'Nàisean cultarach nan Gàidheal', 189.

[84] Nova Scotia Highland Village, *Stòras a' Bhaile 2013: Highland Village Gaelic Folklife School and Celebration, July 22nd–25th, 2013, report to the Office of Gaelic Affairs.* (Halifax: Office of Gaelic Affairs, 2013), 1, 2.

[85] https://dasg.ac.uk/gaelstream/.

[86] https://languageinlyrics.com/.

We are delighted to present this issue of *Scottish Studies* as a Festschrift to our colleague Dr Shaw, presently an honorary fellow in Celtic & Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Each of us has been inspired in some way by some aspect of John's fieldwork, scholarship, teaching or mentorship, and we have all have benefited from his conversation, advice and friendship. In honour of John's work, his life, and his enormous contribution to our field we, his colleagues, former students and friends offer him this volume of essays, with love and affection.

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Oral Narrative and Propaganda

RONALD BLACK

I first knew John Shaw around 1970 when he and I were both young scholars at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies. He had long black hair and a big black hat. He got on famously with Prof. Binchy, which made us wonder if he was destined for a career in Early Irish Law. But he seemed to talk much about the young Skye poetess Catrìona Montgomery, 'Monty', which suggested a different trajectory. Monty must have won out, because after disappearing for a while to a kibbutz (trendy in those days) he reappeared in Cape Breton to do the priceless work with Joe Neil MacNeil, Lauchie MacLellan and others which has earned him his deservedly high reputation as a scholar of Scottish Gaelic oral narrative.

The purpose of this contribution is to examine – and if possible explain – certain inconsistencies in oral narrative thrown up by the recent publication of *John Dewar's Islay, Jura and Colonsay*.[1] The inconsistencies concern the following historically attested events which took place during the dispute between Angus MacDonald of Islay and Sir Lachlan MacLean of Duart over possession of the Rhinns of Islay:

1578 Angus MacDonald's forces besiege Sir Lachlan's island castle of Loch Gorm in the Rhinns, burning and looting his property and killing his servants.

1586 Angus MacDonald invites Sir Lachlan and his followers to a feast at his house of Mulindry in Islay. After the feast he sets fire to the barn in which the MacLeans are sleeping, and hangs eighty-four of them. Sir Lachlan is left to the last, but Angus falls off his horse and breaks his leg, as a result of which Sir Lachlan is spared long enough for an urgent message to come from the king, James VI, ordering his release. The site of the slaughter was remembered until the twentieth century as *Geadhail na Fala* ('the Bloody Field').

1598 Sir Lachlan sails to Islay with an armed force, meaning to fulfil his aims by negotiation or conquest. Leaving part of his force on Nave Island, where it is stranded by the tide, he lands at Poll Nùstaig, not far from Loch Gruinneart. Following the failure of negotiations with Angus's son Sir James (his own nephew), a battle is fought at Tràigh Ghruinneart. The MacDonalds are victorious; Sir Lachlan is killed, and his body is brought for burial to the church of Kilchoman.

1602 A battle is fought at Beinn Bhigeir in Islay between forces led by Sir Lachlan's son Hector and Sir James MacDonald. With the aim of sacking Mulindry, the MacLeans and their allies – Camerons and others – land on the south-east coast of Islay at Proaig and/or Ardbeg. Sir James hastily gathers together a force which attempts to stand in their way, but is defeated on the high pass called the Lorg Réidh, close to the summit of Beinn Bhigeir. Mulindry is sacked and the entire length of Islay is plundered.

[1] Ronald Black and Christopher Dracup, *John Dewar's Islay, Jura and Colonsay* (Kinross: John Dewar Publishers, 2024).

This sequence of events is, I think, beyond dispute. It has been pieced together from works by Thomas Pennant (1790), 'A Seneachie' (1838), the Rev. Dr Norman MacLeod (1842), William MacDonald (1850), Donald Gregory (1881), the Rev. A. Maclean Sinclair (1899), J. D. Mackie (1969), and Peggy Earl (n.d.).[2] These sources appear to be of three kinds: neutral, pro-MacLean or late. The Gaelic oral tradition of Islay offers a different sequence, however. The earliest example is found in the polemical work *Vindication of the Celtic Character*, where the following version of events is offered by its author, the Islay poet William Livingston.[3] He says of Sir Lachlan:

> At last he invaded Islay with some forces and a numerous fleet of gallies. He landed at Loch Gruinart, in the north west extremity of the country; from thence he proceeded to Mullindrai. His nephew, Sir James MacDonald, mustered his retainers; the two clans met on the *Bloody Field*, so called from that circumstance. After an obstinate resistance, the MacDonalds were overpowered; they retreated towards the Bein Mor, thinking that that mountain might screen them from the vengeance of their pursuers; but it proved otherwise, the enemy followed them hard over that barrier; nor was the conflict ended till night seperated [*sic*] them, at Ardbeg, on the south coast of the Island, after both parties maintained a running fight for about eight miles. MacLean returned to his camp at the bay of Gruinairt, fully confirmed that his object was secure . . .

Livingston then describes the battle of Tràigh Ghruinneart. To sum up, he has said that Sir Lachlan lands at Loch Gruinneart (as in 1598), then marches to Mulindry and meets Sir James in a battle which Livingston calls 'the Bloody Field' (a version of the events of 1586). The MacDonalds retreat to the 'Bein Mor', by which Livingston can only mean Beinn Bhigeir, Islay's highest mountain (there is no Beinn Mhór in the island). He then describes a running conflict over the shoulder of Beinn Bhigeir, ending at Ardbeg – exactly the events of 1602, but in the opposite direction. Finally he brings us back to Tràigh Ghruinneart, so setting the stage for the battle there. The sequence may be summarised as 1598, 1586, 1602, 1598. Livingston has not merely changed the chronological order of events – he has also blended them together and reversed the action of the battle of Beinn Bhigeir.

It can of course be argued that Livingston's evidence is of little weight, as even in his prose works he tends to be economical with the truth. But he has backing from other sources, the first of which is John Dewar (1802–72), a native of Arrochar who visited Islay in 1869 or 1870. After describing an initial row between Angus and Sir Lachlan, in which the latter demands to be given the whole northern half of Islay, Dewar says:[4]

> *Chuir iad batailt air Beinn Bhigeir. Chaidh an aghaidh Chlann Domhnuill. 2 Chuir iad an ath bhatailte aig àite ris an abaireir Muladradh (Muilàradh). Chaidh Clann Ghill' Eathain gu léir ach Lachun-more e fein a mharbhadh. Uair eile, thainig Lachun le dhaoine gu eileanan Locha Guirm. Chaidh sgrios thoirt air Clann Ghill' Eathain.*
>
> First they fought a battle on Beinn Bhigeir, which went against the MacDonalds. They fought the next battle at a place called Mulindry, and all the MacLeans except Lachlann

[2] See Bibliography for full citations of these works.
[3] William Livingston, *Vindication of the Celtic Character: or, The Scotchman as He Was and as He Should Be* (Greenock: Joseph Blair, 1850), 112.
[4] Black and Dracup, *John Dewar's Islay,* 82–83.

> Mór himself were killed. On another occasion Lachlan came with his men to the islands of Loch Gorm, and the MacLeans were badly beaten.

Dewar then goes on to describe the battle of Tràigh Ghruinneart. It will be noticed that all the events are called battles, even Mulindry, despite the fact that elsewhere he describes what happened there quite correctly as a mass execution.[5] Moreover, he has radically altered the sequence: it may be described as '1602, 1586, 1578, 1598'. And if we believe notes made by Elspeth Kerr in 1897 from William Campbell, Bridgend, Beinn Bhigeir was indeed fought before Tràigh Ghruinneart:[6]

> The first battle was fought at Beinn-a-Mhicear, (the Vicar's hill),[7] where it seems the Mac donalds lost the day, and were forced to retreat…. The next battle was the decisive one of Traigh Ghruinairt…. Some time after the Battles of Beinn-a-Mhicear, and Traigh Ghruinairt, a daughter of Macdonald's, and a daughter of Sir Lachlan Mac leans met some where, and not being very friendly to one another, Mac lean's daughter, to taunt the other, said – "Latha blar Beinn-a-Mhicear, cha be 'n sliomair Lachlan" (Lachlan was no clown the day of the battle of Beinn-a-Mhicear); to which the other retorted – "Latha Traigh Ghruinairt, chaidh 'n urram sin dhachaidh" (On the day of Traigh Ghruinairt, that honour went home)

– meaning of course that at Tràigh Ghruinneart it was Sir James who was no clown.

This evidence leads us to suspect that Islay storytellers placed Tràigh Ghruinneart after Beinn Bhigeir, in order to show that even if the MacDonalds had lost a battle, they won the war. In fact, the standpoint taken by some later Islay tradition-bearers was even more extreme. David Mackay writes, 'The MacDonalds do not admit that they were defeated at Beinn Bhiogair, nor indeed that any fight took place there after the date of Traigh Ghruinnairt'.[8] He speaks of a belief 'common among Islay men at the present time' that there was a fight at Beinn Bhigeir, but that it preceded Tràigh Ghruinneart. In support of this he cites 'an ancient Islay couplet, which is still in use':

> Latha Beinn Bhiogair cha b'e an gliocaire Lachunn,
> Latha Traigh Ghruinneart cha d' thug e an t-urram sin dhachaidh.

He translates this very accurately as:

> The day of Beinn Bhiogair no wise man was Lachlan,
> The day of Traigh Ghruinneart he took not home that honour.

So William Campbell's *sliomair* ('clown, slouch') has been replaced by *gliocaire* ('wise man'). But the logic of Mackay's version of the couplet is very doubtful. I think for *gliocaire* we should read *glugaire* ('stammerer, slouch'), a word similar in general meaning to *sliomair*. This would give us the translation:

> The day of Beinn Bhigeir no clown was Lachlan,
> The day of Tràigh Ghruinneart he took not home that honour.

In other words, Sir Lachlan won at Beinn Bhigeir, then lost at Tràigh Ghruinneart.

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[5] Black and Dracup, *John Dewar's Islay,* 78–81.
[6] MML 3065–66, R. C. Maclagan Manuscripts, School of Scottish Studies Archives, University of Edinburgh.
[7] A more plausible derivation is from the Norse personal name *Víkarr* 'Viking'; see Black and Dracup, *John Dewar's Islay,* 461.
[8] David N. Mackay, *Clan Warfare in the Scottish Highlands* (Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1922), 176.

On this verse, then, my conclusion is that Islay tradition-bearers were agreed that Beinn Bhigeir was fought before Tràigh Ghruinneart, and that some of them went still further, falsifying the poetic record rather clumsily in order to turn Beinn Bhigeir into a MacDonald victory. This is propaganda, or as some would say, 'fake news', albeit well after the event.

We must turn now to the even more curious matter of Sir Lachlan's *giùlan* or funeral procession following his death at Tràigh Ghruinneart. Again there are two contrasting scenarios, but this time they read like an 'official' and an 'unofficial' version. Of these, the latter is the first to appear on record, thanks partly[9] to the Rev. Dr Norman MacLeod, 'Caraid nan Gaidheal' (1783–1862), who was familiar with MacLean traditions through his Morvern connections, but was also no stranger to Islay:[10]

> *Thainig boirionnach bochd a Chloinn-'Leathain, agus thug i leatha corp Lachuinn Mhóir air slaod gu eaglais Chillechomain, far na thìodhlaic i e. Le gluasad a' charbaid air an robh an corp, thainig atharrachadh mór air 'aogus; agus thòisich mac na mnatha so ri fochaid air, agus ri gàiricich. Bu Dòmhnullach an gille, ach chuir so uiread chorruich air a mhàthair 's gu'n d'thug i ionnsuidh air a mac féin le biodaig; agus leòn i e, airson a bhi 'magadh air a ceann-cinnidh.*
>
> There appeared a poor MacLean woman who took Lachann Mór's body away on a slipe to Kilchoman church, where she buried it. By the movement of the vehicle the corpse was on, a great change came over its face, so this woman's son started making fun of it and laughing. The lad was a MacDonald, but this so enraged his mother that she attacked her own son with a dirk and wounded him for mocking her chief.

A *slaod* or *carn* ('slipe', 'sledge') is a wheel-less horse-drawn cart, usually used for transporting peats or manure, an inappropriate conveyance even for the meanest of funerals. Basically, it consisted of two long timber beams joined by cross-struts.[11] Tradition is absolutely consistent that Sir Lachlan was buried at Kilchoman, five or six miles over moor and bog from the battlefield; the issue is how his body was brought there, and by whom. Here is Dewar's account:[12]

> *Bha a' bhanaltram leis an deach Lachun Mór altram chomhnuidh anns an Roinn Illeach [= Ìleach]. Fhuair i fios gun deach Lachun Mór a mharbha aig Tràigh Ghruinnaird, 's chuir i roimpa [= roimhpe] gun tiodhlaiceadh i e. Bha gille aice. Theirte Donacha Dubhchasach ris do bhrìgh gun robh fionna dhubh a' fàs air a chasaibh. Thug i air Donacha Dubhchasach an carn chuir air each a bh' aice, 's chaidh iad gu Tràigh Ghruinnaird a thogail corp Lachuinn Mhóir, gus a thoirt gu Cille Chomain gu e bhi iar a thiodhlac ann.*
>
> *Dh'fhalbh iad, 's rainig iad Tràigh Ghruinnard. Cha robh cobhan air bhith aca gu corp Lachuin Mhóir chuir ann, no neach gus iad a chuideacha gus an corp chuir air a' charn, ach chuir iad fein suas e 's dh'fhalbh iad leis. Bha an aghasdar aicese, is i a'*

[9] Nicholas Maclean-Bristol writes that 'the story of the simple young man who mocked Lachlan Mor's corpse appears in Donald Macdonald's unpublished manuscript of 1826', footnoting his comment simply *BCP* – Breacachadh Castle Papers; see Nicholas Maclean-Bristol, *Murder Under Trust: The Crimes and Death of Sir Lachlan Mor Maclean of Duart, 1558–1598* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999), 243. The Breacachadh Castle Papers are currently unavailable to scholars.

[10] Rev. Dr Norman MacLeod, 'Lachunn Mór Dhubhairt', *Cuairtear nan Gleann* 2 (1942), 245–246.

[11] I. F. Grant, *Highland Folk Ways* (London: Routledge, 1961), 208–209 and 281–283.

[12] Black and Dracup, *John Dewar's Islay,* 94–97.

treòireacha an eich, 's bha Donacha Dubhchasach a' freasdal do Mhac Ghill' Eathain chumail ceart air a' charn. Tra bha iad air an t-slighe, chaidh spàg a' chuirn sìos ann an easgaidh, thug clap [= clab] Lachuin cratha, rinn Donacha gàire. Phill muime Lachuin far an robh an gille, 's dh'fharraid i dheth, "Ciod fàth do ghàire?"

Thubhairt es', "Tha air mar a ta clab Lachuin Mhóir a' cratha tra theid spàg a' chuirn thair na torrain a's anns na h-easgaidh."

Chuir ise a làmh stigh fo a h-earasaid, thug i mach biodag & stog i anns an ghille i, 's mharbh si e. Chaidh an gille adhlac ann an sin, a's b'e Carn Donachaidh theirte ris an àite sin a-rithis.

The nurse who'd reared Lachlann Mór lived in the Rhinns of Islay. She got word that Lachlann Mór had been killed at Tràigh Ghruinneart, and decided she should bury him. She had a servant who was called *Donnchadh Dubhchasach* ('Black-Legged Duncan') because he had black fur growing on his legs. She ordered him to harness the slipe to a horse she had, then they set off for Tràigh Ghruinneart to pick up Lachlann Mór's body and bring it to Kilchoman so that it could be buried there.

They set off, and got to Tràigh Ghruinneart. They had no coffin to put Lachlann Mór's body in, nor did they have anyone to help them put it on the slipe, but they put it on themselves and took it away. She held the halter and led the horse, while Donnchadh Dubhchasach concentrated on holding MacLean steady on the slipe. When they were on their way the beam of the slipe went down in a bog, Lachlan's open mouth quivered, and Duncan laughed. Lachlan's foster-mother came back around towards the servant and asked him: 'Why did you laugh?'

He said, 'Because of the way Lachann Mór's big open mouth shakes when the beam of the slipe goes over the bumps and into the pot-holes'.

She put her hand in under her cloak, took out a dirk, stuck it into the servant, and killed him. The man was buried there, and *Carn Donnchaidh* (Carnduncan, 'Duncan's Slipe or Cairn') was the name afterwards given to the place.

So the poor woman has become Sir Lachlan's foster-mother, her assistant is no longer her son but her *gille* (usually 'servant'), she not only stabs him but kills him, he has a name, and (as is frequently the case with Dewar) the story turns out to be *dindsheanchas*, place-lore, designed to explain the name Carnduncan, a township still inhabited to this day. There are problems with this aspect, however. For one thing, the *carn* which gave its name to Carnduncan dates from the Bronze Age.[13] And for another, Carnduncan is not on the natural route from Tràigh Ghruinneart to Kilchoman – passing that way would have involved a detour around the north side of Loch Gorm, adding a couple of miles to the journey. So the servant may or may not have been called Donnchadh Dubhchasach, but he did not give his name to Carnduncan.

Next up is a storyteller of the following generation, a Mr MacGilp who came from Lochgilphead but lived at Kilchoman. In 1894 Elspeth Kerr noted his words as follows:[14]

After Lachlan Mór was slain, his foster mother, and another clanswoman conveyed his dead body in a rude car from the place where he fell to Kilchoman church yard. They

[13] Steven Mithen, *Land of the Ilich: Journeys into Islay's Past* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2021), 102–104.
[14] MML 542, R. C. Maclagan Manuscripts, School of Scottish Studies Archives, University of Edinburgh.

> had engaged a man of the name of Duncan, as driver, ~~and tradition has it that~~, as they were going over the rough hill, there being no roads in those days, the driver laughed when he saw the head of the lifeless body dangling over the side of the cart. The women being enraged at his levity took the sword from the dead man's sheath, and cut off the driver's head. Whether from sympathy with Duncan, or from the practice of the times, of raising a cairn on the spot on which a person met with an unnatural death, a cairn was raised where the driver lost his life, and of course was known as Duncan's Cairn: and so, as is quite common, the name came to be extended to the whole district which is now called Carn-Dhonnacha.

So one woman has become two, and the Carnduncan fiction is maintained. Perhaps the least probable embellishment of all, however, is that Sir Lachlan's corpse is still replete with sword in scabbard, and that Duncan is decapitated. The level of violence has increased with each telling.

Our first twentieth-century rendering is a little more restrained, however, and there is no mention of Carnduncan:[15]

> The body of Sir Lachlan lay upon the field a little to the north-west of the modern farm of Aoradh. A standing stone, near an open ditch, and about twenty yards to the right of the road to Loch Gorm, still marks the spot. So far as the men of Islay were concerned, the body was allowed to remain where it lay, but at length two kindly women, who had a respect for the dead chief, decided to secure for him a decent burial in a kirkyard. The nearest was the romantic burial-place at Kilchoman, six miles across the moor, so they procured a vehicle for the removal of the body. It is the tradition in Islay that, as the cart jolted on the way, the body was stirred with a motion so reminiscent of life that the cart-driver smiled, and that this so enraged one of the ladies that she seized the dead chief's dirk, and with a single stab ended the life of the smiler.

Mackay's information about the first stone erected to Sir Lachlan on the battlefield is useful, as it was subsequently destroyed by an incoming tenant farmer.[16] By the time we enter the era of systematic field-recording, the story has become a caricature – not through embellishment but through compression. The following was recorded from John MacCormick, Gruinard, in 1953, and contains a final detail of great value:[17]

> *Bha piuthar leis agus bha ogha leis, agus thug iad a chorp a chladh Chille Chomain le slipe, agus bha a phiuthar 's am balach a' folbh, agus bha cheann a' glagarsaidh a-mach, 's thòisich am balach air gàireachd a dheanamh, agus thog i chlaidheamh roimhe (?) is shnaip i an ceann den bhalach, agus tha carn aig Trian Donnchaidh fhathast far an d'thug i an ceann dheth.*
>
> There was a sister of his and a grandson of his, and they brought his body to the churchyard of Kilchoman with a slipe. And his sister and the boy were going along, and his head was dangling out, and the boy started laughing, and she raised his sword in

[15] Mackay, *Clan Warfare*, 173–174.
[16] Black and Dracup, *John Dewar's Islay,* 471.
[17] SA1953.133.7, 'Lachlann Mòr ga mharbhadh aig Tràigh Ghruinneart'. John MacCormick, Gruinard, rec. Calum Maclean, 1953. School of Scottish Studies Archives, University of Edinburgh.

> front of him (?) and chopped the boy's head off, and there's a cairn at Trian Donnchaidh to this day where she took his head off.

Trian Donnchaidh is indistinct on the tape. It sounds to my ear like *Trian Dùchair*, but as *Dùchair* is (I think) meaningless, I am satisfied that John MacCormick meant *Trian Donnchaidh*, 'Duncan's Third'. It is not an alternative name for Carnduncan. There is a large white rock in the moor approximately a third of the way from Aoradh to Kilchoman in a direct line (*Fig. 1*). There are no other rocks or stones in the vicinity. On Ordnance Survey maps it is called *Carn Bhiogairt* 'the Cairn of Jerking', which I take to refer to the sudden movement of Sir Lachlan's head. Its upper surface is flat, and slopes gently down to the ground. Although its lower half is now almost completely overgrown, it is certainly long enough for a body to have been laid on it. When I visited it in September 2024 I searched all around for any loose stones that might justify the usual meaning of *carn*. I found none. Rightly or wrongly, I concluded that in this case the term has more to do with slipes than cairns.



Fig. 1. Carn Bhiogairt 'the Cairn of Jerking'. A large single rock rather than a cairn, it slopes gently down to the right, and is long enough for a body to have been laid on it. The 'unofficial' monument to Sir Lachlan's funeral procession? (Photo: Author.)

The next version is that of the late Graham Donald, whose pen-name was Domhnull Gruamach.[18] 'Captain Donald', as he was called, was a propagandist historian, a twentieth-century William Livingston minus Gaelic and poetry, but still worthy of our attention, for he came to live in Islay and kept his ears open. He begins by claiming that Sir Lachlan's body lay on its bier at Aoradh until his widow arrived from Mull for the funeral:

> The funeral party fell in behind the heavy bier, heading for Kilchoman Church by the track with which the present road from Aoradh to Loch Gorm must surely co-incide, and if you follow this road and continue straight on and down the *old* road which leads to the Loch-side

[18] Graham Donald ('Domhnull Gruamach'), *The House of Islay*, 2nd edn (Port Charlotte, 1967), 86–87.

> at Allt na Criche you will come upon a simple small Cairn, which is situated almost exactly half-way between the battlefield and Kilchoman Church and stands on the right-hand side of the old road, between the road and the shore of the Loch. This is where the funeral party, who would be taking turns at the heavy task of the carrying of Sir Lachlan, sat down for their much-needed rest and their customary food and refreshment.
>
> As they were finishing their meal, it was noticed that Sir Lachlan's lower jaw had dropped and that his mouth was now hanging open. Whereupon a certain low and base fellow stepped forward with a laugh – and stuffed a piece of bread into the corpse's open mouth. In a flash Lady MacLean leapt forward, drew a dirk from the belt of one of her kinsmen, and stabbed the base fellow to the heart. They buried him on the spot – and the small Cairn was built to mark his burial place.

So the slipe has gone, and MacLeod's *bean bhochd* of 1842 receives the ultimate promotion – to Lady MacLean herself. Storytellers have always tended to attach their stories to top people. And the bread is clearly a modern accretion, perhaps influenced by the well-known story of how bread and cheese was placed in Drummond of Drummondernoch's discorporate head.[19] In other respects, this version is in line with John MacCormick's evidence, except that the cairn is placed at the halfway mark, by Loch Gorm. That has the backing of no less an authority than the Rev. Charles Robertson, who writes of '*Carn Mhic Illeathain* at Lochgorm where the boy was killed by Lachunn Mór's aunt'.[20] It is still there (*Fig. 2*).



Fig. 2. Carn Mhic Illeathain 'MacLean's Cairn' at Loch Gorm, looking east towards the barren moor where Carn Bhiogairt lies. The 'official' monument to Sir Lachlan's funeral procession? (Photo: Author.)

[19] E.g. Seton Gordon, *Highways and Byways in the Central Highlands* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1949), 50.
[20] Jacob King (ed.), *Scottish Gaelic Place-Names: The Collected Works of Charles M. Robertson 1864–1927* (Sleat, Isle of Skye: Sabhal Mór Ostaig, 2019), 399.

There is another version, recorded from Gilbert Clark, Port Charlotte (1904–1989) by Donald Archie MacDonald and Ian Fraser in 1968:[21]

> *Anns na làithean a bha sin, bha e 'na chleachdadh leis na Gàidheil – cinnidh Ghàidhealach – na mnathan a bu dìlse a bhith leotha aig na blàirean. Agus bha Lachainn Mór mar an ceudna, a mhuime leis 's a mac . . . Latha 'n deaghaidh a' bhlàr nuair a shìolaidh gnothaichean a-nìos, thug a mhuime 's a mac, Donnchaidh, leotha slype is each airson Lachann a thoirt do Chille Chomain, a thiodhlagadh an eaglais mhór Chille Chomain. Bha 'n duine cho mór, foghainteach, gus a robh a chasan a-mach air aghaidh an t-slype agus a cheann a' glagarsaigh air a' cheann eile. Thòisich Donnchaidh air fanaid a dheunadh, a' gàireachdaigh. Dh'fhoighnichd a mhàthair dheth dé bha e ciallachadh. Thuirt e: "Nach b'e 'n dà latha do Lachainn Mór e a bhith 'na laighe air a dhruim a' glagarsaigh mar siud!" Ghabh a mhàthair a leithid do cholg gus an do thug i mach a sgian is mharbh i a mac fhéin. Agus shin agaibh an t-àit' a their iad ris an-diugh Carn Dhonnchaidh – baile beag far a robh móran chruiteirean on am sin.*
>
> In those days it was customary for the Gael – Highland clans – to have their closest female relatives with them at the battles. And so it was with Lachainn Mór – he had his foster-mother with him and her son….. On the day after the battle, when things had settled down, his foster-mother and her son Duncan brought a slipe and horse to take Lachann to Kilchoman and bury him in the great church of Kilchoman. The man was so big and substantial that his feet were sticking out at the front of the slipe and his head was jolting from side to side at the other end. Duncan began making a joke of it, laughing. His mother asked him what he meant. He said: 'What a come-down it's been for Lachainn Mór, lying on his back nodding to and fro like that!' His mother got so furious that she took out her knife and killed her own son. And that's the place they call Carnduncan today – a little township where there have been a lot of crofters since then.

This represents a return to the standard motifs – the foster-mother, her son, the slipe and Carnduncan. But it is outstanding for its graphic description of the body on the slipe. And I have identified one more telling, this time a confused joint effort by Gilbert Clark and Neil Ferguson (1892–1980) recorded in 1970.[22]

> *Chaidh Lachann Mór […] a Chille Chomain. Tha e tiodhlaicte ann an Cille Chomain. Agus thug a mhàthair – an e a mhuime? – a mhuime – 's a mac, nuair a bha iad a-nall Carn Donnchaidh, bha cheann a' glagadh air a' sloidhp, 's thòisich Donnchaidh Dubh a' gàir' ann – thug a mhàthair – a mhuime – a-mach a sgian 's mharbh i e. Mharbh i am fear a bha dràibheadh a' slèids.*

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[21] Gilbert Clark, 'Blàr Thràigh Ghruinneart', transcribed, edited and translated by Alan Bruford and Donald Archie MacDonald in *Tocher* 44 (1992), 114–115. This passage is part of Clark's full account of the battle of Tràigh Ghruinneart, SA1968.098, School of Scottish Studies Archives, University of Edinburgh. For other English translations see Alan Bruford and Donald A. MacDonald, eds, *Scottish Traditional Tales* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1994), 429–434 and Maclean-Bristol, *Murder Under Trust*, 238–243. This portion of Clark's account can be heard online at https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/63668?l=en.

[22] 'Lachlann Mòr Dhuairt agus MacDhomhnaill Ìle', recorded from Gilbert Clark, Port Charlotte, and Neil Ferguson, Port Wemyss, Islay, by Mary MacDonald and Gilbert Clark. SA1970.54.B5, School of Scottish Studies Archives, University of Edinburgh. Listen online at https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/72606?l=gd.

> Lachann Mór was […] to Kilchoman. He's buried in Kilchoman. And his mother – was it his foster-mother? – his foster-mother – and her son, when they were coming over by Carnduncan, his head was rattling on the slipe, and Black Duncan started laughing there – his mother – his foster-mother – took out her knife and killed him. She killed the man who was driving the sledge.

We now come to what I have tentatively called the 'official' story of Sir Lachlan's *giùlan*. This time our earliest authority is William Livingston, in his epic poem 'Blàr Thràigh Ghruineart'. We cannot confidently take any work by him as an accurate reflection of oral tradition. But its broad outlines find support in subsequently-recorded oral narratives, as I will show, and there is no reason to imagine that these were based on Livingston's work. I use the exact spelling of the 1882 edition. After describing the battle, Livingston writes:[23]

> *Dh'fhalbh Mac Dhòmhnuill 's na trì Raonuill,*
> *Fear Arois is Niall a' Chaolais,*
> *Bràthair Mhic Aoidh na Ranna,*
> *Gu lag na sgitheig far an d' fhuair iad*
> *Mac Ill' Leathain 'na chor duaichnidh,*
> *'Na shìneadh air bruachag fhàsail,*
> *Fuar marbh 's a chuislean tràighte,*
> *A dhà chomh'alta, clann fear Bhròlais,*
> *'Na'n luidhe leis 's an dithist leònte,*
> *Chuir iad e air breacan flath nan Ileach,*
> *Le bòid chruaidh mar a chaidh ìnnseadh.*
> *Thuirt Raonull na Learga, "a dhaoin'-uaisl', éisdibh.*
> *Ma'n tog sinn am Flath so le chéile,*
> *Gabhadh gach fear a ghreim air beann de'n bhreacan,*
> *'S ni sinn mar Dhòmhnullaich an reachd so,*
> *Nach stad 's nach leig sinn gu làr e,*
> *O'n àit' an do thuit e 'san àrfhaich,*
> *Gus an ruig sinn Cill-a'-Choman,*
> *'S ma leigeas aon a ghreim gu fàillinn,*
> *Gu'n cuir an triùir eile,*
> *Gun anail dàil da, na biodagan,*
> *Troimh far an d'fhàg,*
> *Greim Chlann Dòmhnuill, Lachann Dhubhairt.*
> *A chàirdean cha'n àm so gu tuireadh."*
> *Thog, is rinn iad mar a gheall iad,*
> *Tha uaigh 's a Leac a' sin o'n àm ud.*

The following is my translation:

> There went forth MacDonald and the three Ronalds,
> The captain of Aros, and Neil of the Kyle,
> The brother of MacKay of the Rhinns,
> To the hawthorn hollow where they encountered

[23] Uilleam Mac Dhunleibhe, *Duain agus Orain* (Glasgow: Archibald Sinclair, 1882), 110.

MacLean in his disfigured state,
Stretched out on a deserted little brae,
Cold, dead, with his veins run dry,
His two foster-brothers, Brolas's offspring,
Lying beside him, both of them wounded.
They set him on the plaid of the prince of Islay
With a steadfast vow, as it has been told.
Ronald of Largie said, 'Gentlemen, listen.
Before we lift this prince together,
Let each man grip a corner of the plaid,
And as MacDonalds we'll make this rule:
That we won't stop or put him down
From the spot where he fell in the battlefield
Until we reach Kilchoman,
And if anyone slackens and causes a fall,
Let the other three put,
Without a breath of delay to him, their dirks
Through where the MacDonald grip
Left Lachlan of Duart.
My friends, this is not the time for lamenting'.
They lifted, and did as they had promised.
His grave and gravestone are there since that time.

According to Livingston, then, Sir Lachlan's corpse was carried to Kilchoman by six men. This is the normal number for carrying a coffin, but there was no coffin, only Sir James's plaid. One of the men was Sir James himself. There were three other MacDonalds, all called Ronald, all apparently of the Largie family from Kintyre and Arran. They are also mentioned by Dewar, and their identity has been discussed by Black and Dracup.[24]

The captain of Aros is the only MacLean involved in the *giùlan*. Livingston has had a good deal to say about him in describing the battle, calling him *Alastair Arois*; his heroism has been extraordinary, and his life has been spared, says Livingston, at the request of one of the three Ronalds, Raghnall Arannach.[25] This point was confirmed in 1953 by Hugh Currie, Ardnahoe (1878–1968), who told Calum Maclean that the MacDonald who saved Fear Àrais in the battle was *aon de dhaoine an Leirg* 'one of the Largie men'.[26] The captain of Aros Castle in Mull in 1592–93 was a Niall mac 'ille Chaluim;[27] perhaps Alastair was his brother or son.

The sixth man is Niall a' Chaolais, brother of MacKay of the Rhinns. He is difficult to identify, as many Islay MacKays of the period were called Neil, but the kyle in question is probably the one at

[24] Black and Dracup, *John Dewar's Islay,* 125, n. 98.
[25] It seems perfectly possible that this is the Raghnall Arannach, 'Randall McSorley', who became 1st earl of Antrim in 1620 and died in 1636; see Black and Dracup, *John Dewar's Islay,* 125, n. 97.
[26] 'Blàr Tràigh Ghruinneart', recorded in 1953 from Hugh Currie, Ardnahoe, by Calum Maclean. SA1953.135.B13, School of Scottish Studies Archives, University of Edinburgh. Available at https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/11423?l=gd.
[27] See Ronald Black, 'The Captain of Aros in 1598', *West Highland Notes and Queries* ser. 5, no. 9 (November 2023): 26.

Portnahaven. There is some evidence that the MacKays did not take part in the battle at all.[28] Livingston speaks of each man gripping 'a corner of the plaid', and of an extraordinary agreement that if any lapse occurs, the offender is to be dirked by 'the other three'; it sounds from this as if the MacLean and the MacKay are mere reserves.

In 1896 Elspeth Kerr obtained the following information from an unnamed source. It confirms Livingston's basic story:[29]

> When Sir Lachlan was killed, James McDonald spread a plaid on the ground, and having put the body on it, called out three of his own men, to each of whom he assignened [*sic*] a corner of the plaid, he himself taking the remaining corner, and in this manner they carried the body, which had been over seven feet in height, when alive, to the burying ground of Kilchoman, on condition that any man who should let go his corner, or be the means of allowing the body to touch the ground, until they would reach the grave yard, would be put to death on the spot.

Hugh Currie's 1953 account of the same incident omits the gratuitous threat of violence:[30]

> *Chuir iad e anns a' bhreacanan, agus chaidh ceithir tiulam [= timcheall?] air, agus se 'n cumhnant a bh' ann nach leigeadh iad e sìos gus an ruigeadh iad far an robh iad ga thiodhlacadh ann an Cille Chomain. Agus rinn iad sin. Thug iad e do Chille Chomain, agus tha e tiodhlaicte ann an cladh Chille Chomain, dìreach aig a' gheata, mar a theid thu a-staigh don chladh.*
>
> They put him in the plaidie, and four came around him, and the agreement was that they wouldn't set him down until they'd reached where they were to bury him in Kilchoman. And they did that. They brought him to Kilchoman, and he's buried in Kilchoman churchyard, right at the gate, where you go into the churchyard.

It is not clear that Hugh Currie was aware of Sir James's alleged part in the *giùlan*, and indeed in another recording he increases the number of Ronalds:[31]

> *Thuirt na ceithir Raghnaill ás an Leirg gun togadh iad e agus nach leigeadh iad a-sìos e gus an ruigeadh iad far an robh iad ga thiodhlacadh. Agus rinn iad sin. 'S tha e tiodhlaicte ann a-sin, agus chaidh an sin tuireadh a dheunadh.*
>
> The four Ronalds from Largie said that they'd lift him and not set him down until they'd reached where they were to bury him. And they did that. And he's buried there, and then a lament was made.

There is sufficient here, I believe, to satisfy us that Livingston's poetic account of the *giùlan* is substantially derived from tradition. If we compare the 'official' version with the 'unofficial' one, we find both similarities and contrasts. The main similarities are the lack of a coffin and the threat of

[28] Black and Dracup, *John Dewar's Islay,* 403–404.
[29] MML 2212–2213, R. C. Maclagan Manuscripts ('Folk Lore of the West Highlands'), School of Scottish Studies Archives, University of Edinburgh.
[30] SA1953.135.B13.
[31] 'Tiodhlacadh Lachlainn Mhòir Dhubhaird', recorded in 1953 from Hugh Currie, Ardnahoe, by Calum Maclean. SA1953.136.A2, School of Scottish Studies Archives, University of Edinburgh. Available online at https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/5626?l=gd.

violence. The dominance of low-born women in one version contrasts with the dominance of high-born men in the other. The actual occurrence of violence in one contrasts with the unfulfilled threat in the other. And, most obviously, in one the corpse is usually carried on a slipe, in the other on a plaid. Let us take each of these points in turn.

Lack of a coffin. Highland funerals frequently involved carrying corpses for long distances across moors, bogs, streams, rivers and lochs. The assumption that they were always carried in coffins is probably incorrect. It was however essential that the dead be buried in a coffin. Logically, then, most carpenters would have plied their trade in the vicinity of a churchyard – *anns a' chlachan*, to use the Gaelic phrase. A runner would have gone ahead of the *giùlan* to order the coffin and provide the necessary measurements. In a case mentioned by Dewar where corpses had to be carried across both land and sea, he does speak of *ciste-mairbh* ('coffins'), but also says: *Bheireadh iad an giùlan air snaoidh* ('They would carry their burden on poles').[32] I deduce from this that on the difficult parts of the *giùlan*, the corpse and coffin were carried separately.

Threat of violence. Violence at funerals appears to have been surprisingly common at one time, the reasons being the taking of drink and the gathering together of tribes who may have been at feud.

Dominance of low-born women. Women were supposed to have no role in funerals other than waking the body, serving food and drink, following the coffin only as far as the first burn,[33] and showing emotion, e.g. by keening, ululating, tearing their hair, and clapping or rubbing their hands, even to the effusion of blood. Each time the 'unofficial' story is told in our sources, the social status of the woman or women seems to rise a little: 'poor woman', nurse, foster-mother, 'two kindly women', Sir Lachlan's sister, Sir Lachlan's widow. The earliest, the 'poor woman', is probably the most authentic. And Livingston actually takes pains to remove women from the equation. The sun was rising on the day after the battle, he says:[34]

'Nuair a chualas gul, is basraich,
A ràinig iad fada m' am fac iad,
Bean a'n earradh mnà uaisle,
A' teàrnadh o Dhàil-na-buaile,
'S a sùil air a h-ais gu lag na sgìtheig,
Cha do thuig aon na bha i sireadh,
A' caoidh gu muladach a léir-chreach,
'S ag iarruidh Dhubh Sith a cheusadh,
Mu'n do ràinig i na h-uaislean,
Dh'fhiosraich Mac Dhòmhnuill, le truas di,
Co shaoilte b'e bhean bhrònach,
Fhreagair fear Arois 's aithne dhomhs' i,
Tha sinn a nis aig ceann na cùise,
Cha bheò Lachann, fàth a tùirse,
Cha chuala thusa gus a nis e,
Ach chuala mis' e, ged nach b' fhios domh
Far an do thuit e, sgeula brònach,
Seachainn a bhean so, 'Mhic Dhòmhnuill,

[32] Black and Dracup, *John Dewar's Islay,* 58–59.
[33] Anonymous, 'Highland Funerals', *The Celtic Monthly* 13 (1905): 123.
[34] Mac Dhunleibhe, *Duain agus Orain*, 109–110.

Sin Ni' Mhic Artni a mhuime,
Tha i nis gun eagal duine,
Feuchaidh mi'n toir mi gu céill i,
'S co tùirseach an diugh 'san dé dhuinn.

When weeping was heard, and clapping of hands,
Which reached them long before they saw
A woman in a lady's clothes
Coming down from Dail na Buaile,
Looking back to the hawthorn hollow.
No one knew what she was looking for,
Sadly lamenting her destruction
And seeking to crucify Dubhsìth.[35]
Before she got to the leading men,
MacDonald asked, out of pity for her,
Who they thought was the wretched woman.
The captain of Aros replied, 'I know her.
Now we're at the end of the matter.
Lachlan is dead – that's the cause of her grief.
You haven't heard it until this moment,
But I have heard it, though I didn't know
Where he fell. It's terrible news.
Avoid this woman, MacDonald –
That's MacArtney's daughter, his foster-mother,
She has now no fear of anyone.
I'll try to bring her to her senses.
Today is as sad for us as yesterday'.

At this point we come straight to the passage already quoted, beginning *Dh'fhalbh Mac Dhòmhnuill 's na trì Raonuill*. It will be noted that the status of MacArtney's daughter is implicitly lowered by the description 'A woman in a lady's clothes'. And we hear no more of her or any other woman in the poem.

Dominance of high-born men. A funeral directed by women would have been considered unnatural. High-status interments were large, dominated by the deceased's peers, and involved conspicuous consumption.[36] The burial of Alexander Campbell of Lochnell in 1714 was said to have been witnessed by 'more than 4000 men attending the different chieftains'.[37] In the eyes of the time, Sir Lachlan deserved such a send-off.

Unfulfilled threat of violence. In this case the violence had already taken place. It was important now for the funeral to pass off peacefully.

Slipe or plaid. Nothing could be more undignified than being jolted along to one's grave on a slipe. Even down to the early twentieth century it was considered derogatory for the deceased to be carried to the grave in a hearse, never mind a slipe. There is a story of Alasdair Ranaldson MacDonell

[35] Dubhsìth was a little man who, spurned by Sir Lachlan, had offered his services to Sir James. He had hidden himself in a hawthorn tree and shot Sir Lachlan in the back; see Black and Dracup, *John Dewar's Islay,* 74, 86–87, 92–93 and 96–99.
[36] Anonymous, 'Highland Funerals', 122.
[37] Ronald Black, *The Campbells of the Ark: Men of Argyll in 1745*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2017), 461.

of Glengarry (1788–1828) that when a fellow-clansman was dangerously ill and had to be brought from Invergarry to the steamer, Glengarry disliked the idea of a carriage being used, being too like a hearse, and said, 'No, he shall be carried in his plaid, shoulder high, like his father's son, and the pipes before him'.[38] Similarly, Sir Lachlan's status required him to be carried by his peers, and Sir James's plaid was a high-status object. It would have consisted of a web of finely-woven tartan cloth as much as two yards wide and six yards long – enough to wrap twice around the body and conceal decomposition.[39]

It is of course curious that we have two different monuments to the *giùlan*, one on what was until recently the road from Aoradh to Kilchoman, and one on the more direct route across the moor. As we have established, the former (*Fig. 2*) is a real cairn, the latter (*Fig. 1*) is perhaps only called a *carn* because of its association with a slipe. It may not be going too far, then, to suggest that even in stone memorials we have an 'official' and an 'unofficial' version, though these have become a little confused in the course of oral transmission.

Finally we may ask: where does the truth lie? How is it possible for two entirely different narratives of the same historical event to coexist?

In answer to the first question, my opinion is that the 'unofficial' version has the ring of truth. Livingston provides us with some clues. He is anxious to sweep 'MacArtney's daughter' out of the way. He describes a situation in which the MacDonalds do not know whether Sir Lachlan is dead or alive. The reality may have been that this enterprising woman, far from being hysterical, removed his body under cover of darkness while the MacDonalds were following the rout or licking their wounds.

In answer to the second question, clearly we are not dealing with a MacDonald version and a MacLean version as in the 'sequence of events' case. Both accounts of the *giùlan* are MacDonald-derived, but as I have repeatedly suggested, one seems to be 'official' and the other 'unofficial'. In a different case, we might speak of 'fact' and 'rumour': that is to say, first there is speculation, and then speculation takes a life of its own, and becomes a 'story'. Then when the truth is finally established, the truth becomes another story – and people will always believe whichever story they wish to believe.

Here, however, politics were involved. As Dewar pointed out, Sir James was now in trouble for going to war without the king's permission.[40] How much worse would it look if the story got out that Sir Lachlan MacLean of Duart, his own mother's brother, had been buried like a pauper? Sir James, a worldly young man of about twenty, had been brought up as a hostage in the king's court at Holyrood, and had learned to lie like a politician. Perhaps he underestimated the power of Gaelic orality to spread news like wildfire. So (I argue) his mother, his father, the king and all other enquirers were given a version of the truth in which the nurse became himself, the slipe became his plaid, Donnchadh Dubhchasach became the three Ronalds, and everything else stayed much the same.

Niall a' Chaolais was already in Sir James's pocket. As for the shadowy MacLean of Aros, is it possible that having been taken prisoner, his life was only spared on condition that he join the conspiracy?

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[38] Anonymous, 'Highland Funerals', 123.
[39] James Logan, *The Scottish Gaël*, vol. 1 (Inverness: Hugh Mackenzie, 1876), 249; see also Grant, *Highland Folk Ways*, 318–319.
[40] Black and Dracup, *John Dewar's Islay*, 195.

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The above items were collected and written by Elspeth (Elizabeth) Kerr, Port Charlotte, Islay. All were dated by the present author using the evidence provided by the correspondence which appears here and there throughout the collection.

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From Farm to Fork in South Uist

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Writing in the *West Highland Free Press* a couple of years ago, John Shaw recalled how he spent several weeks in the summer of 1961 as a guest of John Lorne Campbell and Margaret Fay Shaw in Canna.[1] That same year, equipped with introductions from his hosts, he travelled to South Uist and Barra, where he met tradition-bearers whose enormous contributions to the Gaelic collections of the School of Scottish Studies have given them legendary status.

Ten years later, when I first visited South Uist, John Shaw had become something of a legend himself. Known to local residents as 'Iagan', he was remembered by repeat guests at the Gatliff Trust youth hostel in Howmore not just for his long hair and broad-brimmed black hat – hardly unique fashion choices among young American males in the 1960s – but for his uncommon interest in Gaelic. People told me he had studied Celtic languages at Harvard.

In describing his summer experiences, Dr Shaw drew upon what he called his 'intermittent diary'. While fieldwork diaries are now regarded as valuable sources of social context for the fieldworkers' activities and the lives of their informants, I do not imagine that someone who was a high-school student in 1961 took such a longsighted view of his own notes. These were travel diaries, not fieldwork records. But after reading his article in the *West Highland Free Press*, I wondered if my own equally intermittent diary entries might contain anything of interest. What follows is my offering to him, in gratitude for the example he set.



Fig. 1. Old croft buildings in Howbeg, South Uist, in 1979. Kenneth and Teenie MacIntyre had built a new bungalow elsewhere on the croft, but the byres – which Kenneth himself had built – were still in daily use, while the old house sheltered farm equipment and functioned as feed store, dairy and henhouse. (Photo: author).

[1] John Shaw, 'Tobar an Dualchais: A visit to Canna, South Uist and Barra in 1961'. *West Highland Free Press,* 12 January 2022.

In 1973, on what by then had become my annual summer visit to South Uist, I became acquainted with the family of Kenneth (Coinneach Phàdruig) and Christina 'Teenie' (Ross) MacIntyre, who owned a croft in Howbeg. The picturesque croft buildings – the old house, surrounded by three thatched byres – have featured more than once in photographic collections.[2] I got to know these buildings and their owners following a chance encounter with their teenaged granddaughter Christine one afternoon as we were both walking south up the road.[3] She said it seemed daft to be walking the same road in the same direction without speaking to the only other person there.



Fig. 2. A supply of dry peats kept Teenie's range burning, but cutting, drying and gathering them was hard work, especially in humid weather with no breeze to keep the flies off. (Photos: author)

Kenneth MacIntyre, born and orphaned in Glasgow, was raised in Uist by his uncle Pàdruig and his wife. Like many islanders, as an adult he spent a good deal of time as a sailor in the merchant navy and working at various jobs on the mainland – including a spell as a gravedigger. Christina 'Teenie' Ross, also born in Glasgow, came to South Lochboisdale as a small child along with her mother and two siblings after the death of her father. She, too, had worked on the mainland – 'in service' in the Oban area, as well as on farms and in hotels. Following their marriage, Kenneth and Teenie lived for five years in South Lochboisdale with her mother before moving north with Kenneth's aunt – always referred to as 'the *cailleach*' ('the old lady') – who obtained the croft in Howbeg through family connections. They raised three sons and a daughter: Angus Donald was tragically drowned as a teenager; a second son, Angus Peter, lived with his parents for much of the period of my visits; their

[2] The MacIntyres and their croft are pictured and described in Bill Innes, *Old South Uist*. (Stenlake Publishing, 2006), front and inside front cover; another photograph, by Dr Kenneth Robertson, appears in Kenneth Robertson, Shona Grant and Lesley Harley, *Dualchas àraid agus prìseil: A unique and precious culture – The changing face of South Uist and Eriskay* (Kershader, Isle of Lewis: Islands Book Trust, 2009), 87.

[3] I am grateful to Christine (Stewart) MacIntyre for reading a draft of this article, confirming many details, correcting others – and for being my steadfast friend for half a century.

youngest, Ian, had moved to Glasgow before I met the family; and Christine's mother, Penelope, was married in Glasgow where she and her husband David Stewart worked in hotels. Penelope and David's daughter Christine, their only grandchild, grew up in Uist until she was fourteen.

From 1973 onwards, as I became a frequent visitor to Uist and to the MacIntyres' croft, Christine and I spent days exploring the island, running errands for her grandparents – to Lochboisdale to buy a scythe, to the co-op at Creagorry, to Fraser MacDonald's shop (*bùth Fhraser*) in Howmore, where gossip with neighbours enlivened the wait for delivery of the *Daily Record* – rounding up the cattle if they were late returning from the common grazing in the evening, and helping with summer work.[4] Although still remarkably fit, Christine's grandparents were then in their late seventies, and rarely left the croft; they were glad of help with heavy chores like lifting peats and haymaking.

The Fank



Fig. 3. Howmore fank, 1973. Howbeg sheep often turned up in other fanks, and someone would have to go and deal with them. Duncan MacEachearn (Donnchadh Iain Alasdair) in foreground; beyond the gate, Kenneth MacIntyre (Coinneach Phàdruig), left, talking with Duncan MacDonald (Donnchadh Ailig Bhig). (Photo: author)

[4] Department of Agriculture regulations governed the use of common grazing and other agricultural practices in crofting townships. Alasdair MacDonald of Kilmoluag, Tiree, described the regulations in detail to Eric Cregeen in 1982; School of Scottish Studies Archives SA1982.096 (https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/ track/103096?l=en).

One particularly demanding summer task was the 'fank' (*faing*) – the gathering, shearing, dipping, and vetting of the blackface sheep that had wintered on the Uist hills. On a dry day in midsummer, people and dogs would go out early to scour the landscape for as many sheep as they could find, in order to get them penned in the fank by midday.

Gathering the sheep was a communal effort, but in the days before many crofting villages formed cooperatives, shearing them was up to their individual owners. Whereas other Howbeg crofters owned a few dozen sheep, the MacIntyres owned over 100 animals. Kenneth regularly hired other men to help at the fank; but even so, the work often went on until late at night – not fully dark at midsummer, but a very long and tiring day.



Fig. 4. Traditional *deamhais* ('sheep shears'). (Photo: author)

After lunch, the strenuous work began. Because the animals were agitated, catching one might be difficult, although the fact that blackface sheep have horns is helpful. After tying three of its legs together and laying the beast on its side, the shearer began working from its belly towards the spine.[5] When the sheep was shorn as far as its backbone, it was turned onto its other side and the process repeated until the fleece could be lifted, neatly rolled up inside out, and stuffed into a burlap sack. No longer used locally to manufacture clothing, the fleeces were sold to Scottish Wool Growers, Ltd in Paisley for cleaning and processing.

Shearing the animal was only the start. Once shorn, each sheep received a prophylactic dose for protection against internal parasites, was anointed with weatherproof marking fluid, and finally went through the dipping trough for control of external parasites. Lambs were subjected to the bloody indignity of ear-marking (today, tags record ownership – a tidier process); and all but the most robust of the ram lambs were castrated.

In Howbeg, despite shearing being a man's job, Christine had for some time been part of her grandfather's shearing crew. When I volunteered to help, I was put to work administering red *peint*

[5] Sharp-eyed readers will note that, in *Fig. 2*, Donnchadh Iain Alasdair has dispensed with the rope and adopted a slightly different technique – something a number of the men were able do.

('War Red') to the shoulders and backside of each animal with a flat stick. After watching how Christine went about it, however, I wondered if I might be up to the shearing itself. If she hadn't already proven to him that such a thing was possible – and if he hadn't needed all the help he could get – Kenneth might not have agreed to let me try; but after confirmation that I could handle the *deamhais* ('shears') without harming the animal, Kenneth MacIntyre's shearing squad included two women.[6]



Fig. 5. Rolling up the *rùsg* ('fleece'). (Photo: author)

Having demonstrated our efficiency – and perhaps because of our novelty value – Christine and I were in demand. We joined the crofters at Drimsdale, who had formed a cooperative and had an impressively large flock – a two-day job that actually earned us a few pounds plus repeat bookings. We also regularly visited neighbouring villages where – unsurprisingly, given the random distribution of the sheep on the hills – some of the MacIntyres' animals regularly turned up. The following note for 3 July 1976 is typical:

[6] In Lewis, the women's role at the fank was limited to bringing food and tools for the shearers; see School of Scottish Studies Archives, SA 1973.154.A5 (https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/55864?l=en).

> If yesterday was hot, today was worse – mist on the hills and hardly a puff of wind. They were shearing in Howmore today and we went down around two o'clock, and sure enough there were four of ours there, old ladies with two fleeces on each of them.[7] After that we went down to Drimsdale and there were a few more, plus two lambs. I am covered in sheep-shit and paint and blood and oil and whatnot up to the eyes and I'm sure there will be complaints in the hostel about how I smell.

The Larder

Sale of the rough blackface fleeces might have contributed little to the crofters' income, but the animals themselves – specifically, the wethers – added richly to their diet. As a happy consequence of owning all these sheep, the MacIntyres' deep-freezer was always well-stocked with mutton and with black and white puddings. The mutton was beyond excellent; and it was for that reason that I wanted to witness the process – and show some respect to the animal – that made it possible. I made the following notes during close observation of the slaughter of a wether by Roderick MacDonald (Ruairidh an Tàilleir) of Peninerine on 23 July 1979 in the old house on the MacIntyres' croft:

> Tie the beast's legs as if you were going to shear it (i.e. three out of four) and lay him on a table (or an old door off its hinges) with his head over the end. The knife should go in the side of his neck to one side of his wind-pipe. Another person will have to hold him down while the one doing the killing grips his head. The blood should be allowed a long time to run out, so that the meat & guts will be clear. Keep the blood in a basin for black puddings *(maragain);* if it clots add a bit of salt to it & stir it until it gets cold.
>
> Remove the sheep's head. Cut round all 4 legs at the knee, through the skin, and cut through the skin on the inside of the thighs towards the belly, and begin flaying the carcass, working towards the belly and then from the belly around towards the back of the beast. Cut through the knees and remove the feet. (It's important to wash your hands after handling the feet particularly in case they would be dirty & the rest of the carcass would then be contaminated.) The hind legs have two bones in them, connected lengthwise by a piece of tissue. Cut through this tissue until you are able to put a stout rope between them and hang the beast from a beam in the house. It is then ready to have the guts removed.
>
> First remove the urethra etc. which can be plainly seen on the outside of the belly, and throw it to the dog. Cut down the belly to the breast-bone, and the guts will fall out of the hole but will still be attached inside. Remove the white fat that is amongst them and put it in a separate basin, for puddings. Hunt at the back of the sheep until you find the ends of the intestines and tie knots in them – these have to be pulled away from the back, they are stuck down inside, but I didn't see exactly where: one end is white, and it gets tied twice or 3 times; the other was pink and not so big around, and Ruairidh cut into it lengthwise and drew the end through the slit before tieing it off 2 or 3 times. The stomach and the guts can then be put into a basin for puddings (including contents at this stage – they are cleaned later.) The liver can be eaten so long as it hasn't got fluke (cut into it to see how it is), but cut away the part surrounding the black thing

[7] These were sheep that hadn't been sheared the previous year. Some ewes grew crafty and managed to avoid the pre-fank dragnet.

(gallbladder?) attached to it and give this to the dog as well. Clean out anything else that may be left in the intestinal cavity and throw it away – except the kidneys. These are easier removed when the beast has hung for a while & they are dried out.

Cut through the diaphragm and remove the lungs *(sceamhan)* & heart & windpipe – you will need to cut through breast-bone with a hack-saw *(sabh)*.

Hoist him up to rafters. The carcass can be wrapped up to keep off the flies.

Killing a beast in this way is considered to be better from the point of view of the meat, since all the blood flows out of it.[8] It is however not so good from the sheep's point of view as it can take rather a long time for him to die, and it is on this account that such killing is now against the law, which says you must take your beasts to a slaughterhouse to be dispatched, for a fee. This traditional style of killing is, however, widely practiced.

Ruairidh killed two wethers for us on this occasion, and said that last Christmas he had killed 27 beasts in the neighbourhood. His skill at the business is much sought after.

Slaughtering was indeed common in November and December, but why two animals were slaughtered on this occasion in July is not recorded in my notes. Once the carcass was butchered, however, the meat would not have required salting, as in earlier times, because the deep-freeze preserved it very well.[9]

Watching this process allowed me to honour the sheep, but it was not something I would care to repeat. I was happy enough, however, to observe the steps taken to ensure that it had not died in vain – specifically, the manufacture of black and white puddings. While more precise recipes surely exist, here are the ones I noted down from observing Teenie MacIntyre in July 1979:

Before making black or white puddings, clean the stomach and guts [under running water] & scrape them inside & out (soaking them for a day helps with the scraping & put some salt & washing soda in the water).

Maragain dubha ('black puddings')
Mix some oatmeal and pepper, bicarbonate of soda & cream of tartar in a basin. Pour in some of the blood, through a sieve, and some plain self-raising flour. Mix it to the consistency of paste, then add the suet, chopped fine. When it is the consistency of very gooey paste (the more fat you put in the better), then stuff it into the stomach of the beast, rough side out, and sew up the opening twice. Put it on a dish in a big pot with lid of boiling salted water and cook for some hours. The thing smells terrible when it's cooking. You must puncture the skin with a big needle when it gets tight with gas in the cooking, so keep an eye on it.

Once the pudding is cooked, put it on a plate and store it on a shelf in the cupboard to cool thoroughly.

[8] Indeed – apart from the religious observances – this method is identical to *zabiha*, the method of slaughter approved for the production of *halal* meat in Islamic countries. Islam, however, would not countenance any use of the blood, which is considered unclean.

[9] Norman Paterson of Barvas, Lewis, told Morag MacLeod how mutton was preserved before refrigeration; School of Scottish Studies Archives SA1967.28.A4 (https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/36449?l=en).

Although easier to watch than the slaughtering of the animal, the making of these puddings – especially of the black puddings – is perhaps not for the fainthearted. In 1998, when TV chef Nick Nairn was in North Uist filming Ena MacDonald making black puddings for a BBC cookery program, the sight of the congealed sheep's blood was too much for him – an incident that led to a story in the *Scottish Daily Record* and an hilarious interview on BBC Radio nan Gàidheal.[10]

When cooked and cooled, Teenie's black pudding was round in shape, about the size of a large grapefruit. All of the animal ingredients came from the sheep; I never saw a pig in Uist, and pig's suet – frequently listed as an ingredient in black puddings today – did not feature in her recipe.

> *Maragain geala* ('white puddings')
> Mix oatmeal and plain (self-raising) flour in a basin; add a good fistful of raisins, some pepper, bicarb soda, cream of tartar, chopped suet, and salt. The mixture can be moistened very slightly with milk, then stuffed into the pouch and sewn up. The puddings must not be filled too full in case they would burst in the pot. Another item of the guts is shaped rather like an hour-glass, with two holes in it which need to be sewn up. The name of it in Gaelic is something like *mudal mhór* or *muadal mhór*.

This last item, correctly spelled *maodal*, is translated as 'paunch' in Fr Allan's lexicon; Dwelly's dictionary also gives 'paunch' as well as 'stomach' and 'tripe'.[11] These definitions all seemingly refer to the stomach, and I suspect that, despite its being connected to the recipe for white puddings, my note on this word may be connected to the black pudding process. Whatever the precise meaning of *maodal mhór* as she intended it – and I would be glad to know – I believe Teenie used the large intestine as casings for her white puddings, which were sausage-shaped.

Aside from those used to make the black and white puddings, no other items from the sheep's carcass were used on this occasion, that I knew of, apart from the mutton and the liver. I heard nothing about haggis, which typically utilises the heart and lungs and is encased in the stomach of the animal; and as for utilising the sheep's head, I can only report that on this occasion I saw the skull of this particular sheep lying on the ground outside the house for some days after the events I have described. Nor have I any record of what became of the kidneys or the sheepskin.[12]

The Dairy

To a large extent, the life of a crofter's wife revolved around her kitchen, whether she was gathering the food herself or preparing it for consumption. The MacIntyres' cows required milking twice a day and, apart from that needed for immediate household use or to feed a calf, much of the milk would be allowed to stand in covered pails in the old house to allow the cream to rise. Before churning, Teenie would transfer the cream to the churn using scallop-shell ladles that had holes drilled in them. I never witnessed the churning myself, but Christine tells me that her grandmother owned two churns:

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[10] 'SICK NAIRN SHOW; Blood makes chef throw up', accessed 4 March 2025 from *The Free Library*, https://www.thefreelibrary.com/SICK+NAIRN+SHOW%3b+Blood+makes+chef+throw+up.-a060570739. The story also featured on Radio nan Gàidheal's *Pròg*ram *Choinnich*, hosted by Kenneth MacIver on 17.03.1998 (https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/14436?l=en).

[11] Rev. Fr Allan McDonald, *Gaelic Words and Expressions from South Uist and Eriskay* (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1958), 174.

[12] I suspect that a use would have been found for these and other by-products in the not-too-distant past; see the account given to Alan Bruford by Laura Malcolmson in Cunningsburgh, Shetland, School of Scottish Studies Archives SA1970.236 (https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/64870?l=en).

> Her favourite was a long narrow upright one and you pushed a long broom handle with a flat wooden block on the end which you pushed up and down until you had butter. The other was a round wooden one she could put on a table and it had a wooden paddle which you turned on a metal handle; she didn't much like it. I donated it to the museum in Kildonan.[13]

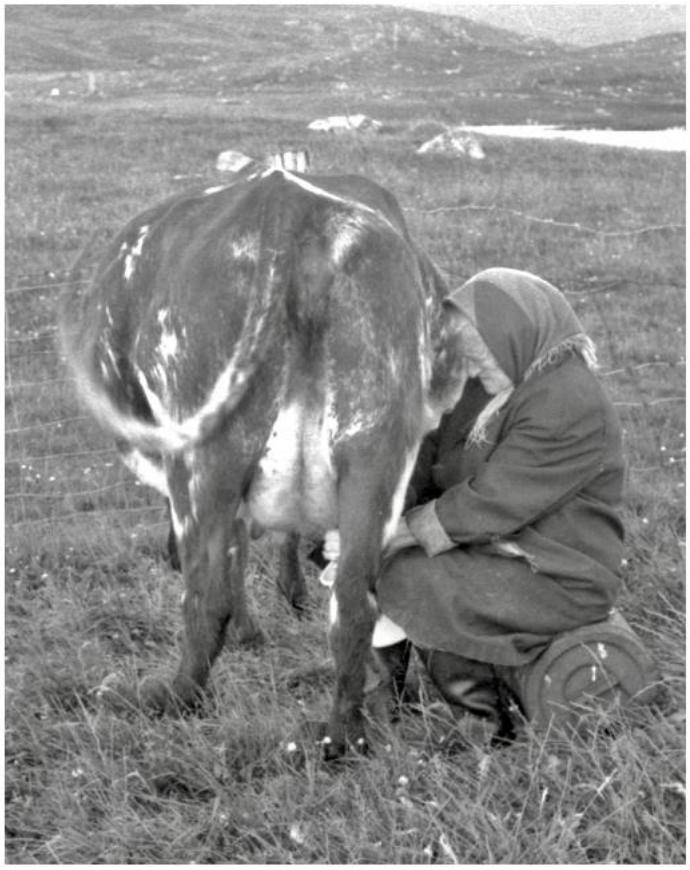


Fig. 6. Teenie milking one of her cows. (Photo: author)

Teenie's homemade butter – made from unpasteurised milk and thus no longer strictly legal – was wrapped in paper and stored in the deep-freeze until needed. Spread on fresh girdle scones or pancakes, it was food for the gods; it could even make a treat out of a toasted slice of stale Mother's Pride from *bùth Fhraser*.

Another product from the dairy was *cruth* ('crowdie'), a soft cheese made from skimmed milk. It was made as follows:

> Allow some milk to go sour and lumpy. Put it in a pot on the stove (low) until it goes flat, floating in whey. Break it up, strain it dry; add a bit of salt and some cream.

Milk was also used to make *cairgean* ('carragheen'), a sort of blancmange that depended for setting on a mossy seaweed 'collected at Eilein Vorran at a low tide the day after a new moon':

> Wash the seaweed carefully to rinse all the salt & sand out & put it in a sunny place for some days to bleach. When it is dried it will stand for any amount of time.

[13] Christine MacIntyre, email to the author, 25 January 2022.

> When you want to make pudding, soak a handful of the seaweed in water overnight. The next day, put it into a muslin bag and boil it in a saucepan with a couple of pints of milk. When it is boiled, strain it well a couple of times & set it aside in a basin until it sets like a jelly. You can sprinkle it with sugar and put cream over it when you serve.

I myself experimented with adding some melted chocolate to the carragheen mixture to make this dessert even more delicious. For Kenneth, unfortunately, this was a step too far.



Fig. 7. Christina 'Teenie' MacIntyre at the back of one of the byres with some of her hens, which furnished both eggs and the occasional chicken dinner. (Photo: author)

Feeding the Animals

In addition to the human beings, the cattle and poultry also required feeding. As well as their grazing in summer and their winter fodder of oats, barley and hay, Teenie's cows got a special tonic:

> There is another kind of seaweed which used to be boiled up & fed to the cattle among potatoes or meal or something – *feamainn-chìrein*. Also [collected] in Eilein Vorran, this kind smells very strongly of iodine. Two or three handfuls with a little of the juice mixed with some potatoes, or meal, to the cattle when they get a feed in the morning.

The benefits of *feamainn-chìrein* ('channelled fucus') were known throughout the highlands; and while often administered as a general tonic to beasts in good health, in some places it was regarded as a cure for specific ailments. As Norman Paterson of Barvas, Lewis, explained to Morag MacLeod:[14]

[14] SA1967.28.A4; see n. 9 above; Gaelic transcription by Mòrag MacLeod, translated by the author. *Teas-broillein* may refer to an inflammation of the manyplies (omasum), the third stomach of a ruminant.

> *Uill, bha feamainn-chìrean, nam biodh bò tinn no beathach crodh, bhiodh iad a' dol sìos chun a' chladaich, agus bhiodh iad a' buain rud ris an can iad feamainn-chìrean. Tha i a' fàs air a' chladach rudeigin coltach ris a' chairgean, agus bhiodh iad ga thoirt dhachaigh agus ga bhruich ùine mhòr air an teine, gus an draodhadh i gu math, 's bhiodh iad a' cur sin ann am botal, 's bhiodh iad ga thoirt dha crodh, gu h-àraid nam biodh rud ris an canadh iad teas-broillein orra, 's bha sin a' dèanamh fiosaig dhan a' chrodh, anns na seann làithean mus robh bheataichean ann man a th' ann an-diugh.*
>
> Well, as for *feamainn-chìrean*, if there were a sick cow or cattle, they'd go down to the shore and they'd pick something they call *feamainn-chìrean*. It grows on the shore something like the carragheen, and they'd take it home and boil it for a long while over the fire, and drain it well, and they'd put this in a bottle and be giving it to the cattle, especially if they were suffering from something they called *teas-broillein*, and that gave a physic to the cattle in the old days, before there were as many vets about as there are today.

As for the hens, their diet consisted of what they pecked for themselves; but 'growing chickens' benefited from a regular feed of 'oatmeal and plain flour dampened to a very stiff paste with a very little boiling water'.

'Research' – or something else?

My diary entries from South Uist span ten years, and reflect my growing understanding, gradually reinforced by formal study, of the community in which I found myself. On my first visit in 1971, a longtime visitor introduced me to the youth hostel and to some of the local people as well as to Uist's abundant bird and animal life. Reading my notes reminds me that Scotland itself was new to me at the time, never mind the Western Isles.

In 1972, travelling alone, I returned to Uist and renewed acquaintance with those whom I had met the previous year. I began to get a sense of relationships among them, what villages they lived in, what the crofting life entailed, and how they viewed the hostel visitors – including some they regarded as a nuisance. My notes from then onwards reflect the people's gift for sharp-eyed, sharp-witted repartee and their love of gossip and anecdote – the more scandalous the better.

From 1973 to 1979, beginning with my first encounters with Kenneth and Teenie MacIntyre and their granddaughter Christine, I continued to lodge at the hostel but increasingly spent my days in Howbeg during visits that lasted up to six weeks. My diaries and letters home began to deal less with wildlife than with the summer rhythms of the croft. As I got to know the local people – and was determined to become neither a nuisance nor a scandal – I found that a 'fly-on-the-wall' approach worked best. I had no specific research agenda, did not regard my friends as 'informants', did not question them about a topic unless it came up naturally, and avoided using my camera or tape recorder unless invited to do so. Even Gaelic, which I had begun to study in 1972 and which they knew I wanted to learn, did not intrude, because our relationship had begun in English, and I did not want my lame efforts to speak Gaelic to filter our communication. As I wrote home in July of that year:

> Have managed to swot up a bit more Gaelic than I knew before, in spite of being very slothful about it. Christine and her grandparents talk it constantly when I'm around and bits of it seep through. If I could figure out some way to stay in Uist for a year or so I might get a grip of it.

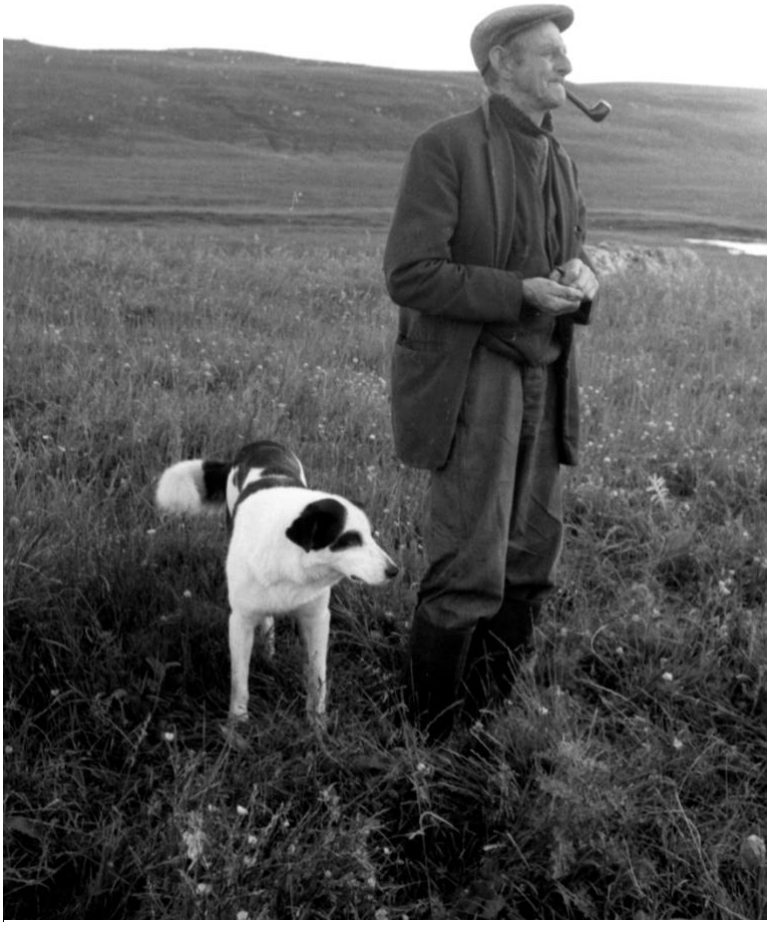


Fig. 8. Kenneth MacIntyre (Coinneach Phàdruig), 1979. (Photo: author)

Many of the activities recorded in my diaries have been reported by other observers and, indeed, by members of Gaelic-speaking communities themselves. The accounts given here reflect topics that might interest ethnologists. Other notes contain telling anecdotes and details about relationships that were every bit as complicated as we might expect. While these might fit someone's definition of legitimate ethnographic enquiry, however, I shall not be publishing them any time soon – or, indeed, ever.

For me, the most vivid memories are of certain moments – such as when Christine and I tried to hang new wallpaper in her grandparents' living room and discovered that because the walls weren't quite straight the coach-and-horses pattern would never trot properly round the corners; or when I arrived at the croft to find haymaking underway and grabbed a tool, only to be laughed at because the graip (the dung fork) was not considered suitable for turning hay; or when Christine and I were expelled from the hotel at Pollochar by '*bean* Hotel' (the proprietor's wife) because we looked disreputable; or the second day of the fank at Drimsdale when one of the shearers, who had done the work of three men the day before, arrived so drunk that he could do nothing but lean against a solid object and sing Gaelic songs; or when my efforts to milk a cow inevitably ended in abject failure; or

when, defying her tendency to become seasick aboard the *Claymore*, Christine led me on a visit to Barra; or when, accompanied by a friend from the hostel, I visited an elderly lady named Isbeal MacLellan in Peninerine who was in the midst of telling us a ghost story when one of her cats, in a bid to get in, launched itself at the window behind us, causing my friend, already on tenterhooks, to perform a sitting high-jump; or when Kenneth MacIntyre, standing in his living room, poured everyone a dram to toast the successful hanging of the wallpaper, or the conclusion of the fank, or the end of my visit, expressing his wish that I would return the following year.

I don't need diary entries to remind me of those moments.



Fig. 9. Christine in 1995 at the grave of her grandfather and an uncle who died young. Teenie lived to be nearly 100. (Photo: author)

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Scottish Studies 42/2 (2026): 56–67

‘Up in the Air’ or ‘The Grey Mare’: A Scottish and English Prosimetrical Form of ATU 1540 ‘The Student from Paradise (Paris)’

KATHERINE CAMPBELL and EMILY LYLE

This prosimetrical piece was performed for Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) by a friend and was published by Scott in 1830. As he explains, it was included in the repertoire of light-hearted informal entertainments that Scottish lawyers engaged in during the eighteenth century. An English parallel published in 1824 shows that the lawyers were performing a component of the widely known international tale type ATU 1540 ‘The Student from Paradise (Paris)’. The song beginning ‘Good morrow shepherd & my friend’ in the eighteenth-century Edinburgh manuscript of Elizabeth St Clair is also identifiable as belonging to this tale type.

So far as is known, the lawyers’ tradition of entertaining themselves with performances like this did not survive after the eighteenth century, but it is worth observing that a prosimetrical form – the *chantefable*, with a set song repeated during the course of the prose narrative – continued more recently. Sheila Stewart in her book *A Traveller’s Life* describes how she first hears ‘Aippley and Orangey’ (the Scottish title of ATU 720 ‘The Juniper Tree’) told by her granny round a campfire in Aberfeldy when she was a little girl.[1] It remained a favourite story which she told frequently herself, and the verse given here (*Fig. 1*) was included in a performance she recorded on video in 1983:[2]

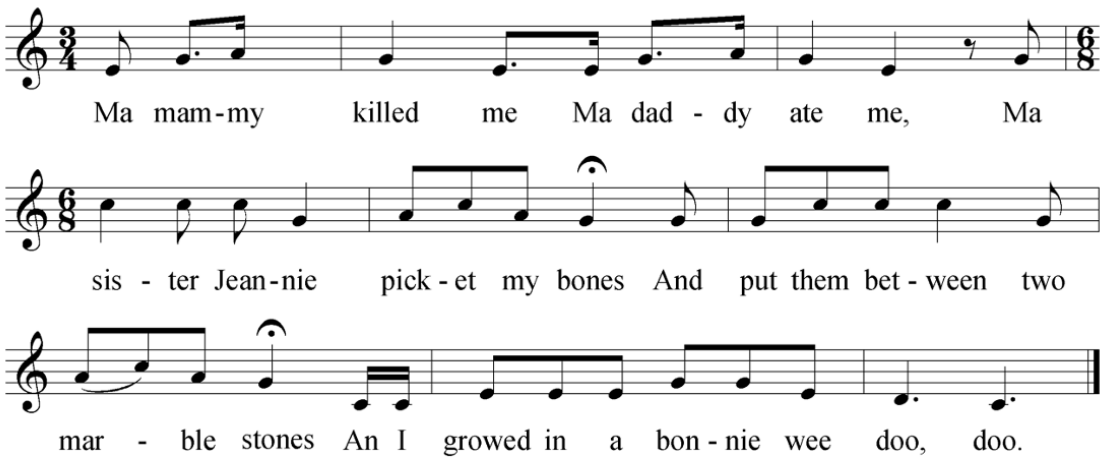


Figure 1 ‘Aippley and Orangey’, transcribed from the singing of Sheila Stewart.

Another once familiar Scottish nursery story, ‘The Well at the World’s End’ (ATU 440 ‘The Frog King or Iron Henry’) has not been found in tradition recently, and it was thought that the tune of the song had been lost. Luckily, however, the tune known to Scott’s friend, Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe (1781–1851) has been preserved in manuscript. The verbal text of Sharpe’s version, which was told to him by his nurse,

[1] Sheila Stewart, *A Traveller’s Life* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2011), 12–16.
[2] ‘Aippley and Orangey’, Sheila Stewart (contributor); Sheila Douglas (fieldworker); ref. VD011, School of Scottish Studies Archives, University of Edinburgh.

Jenny Blackadder, was published by Robert Chambers in 1842.[3] The tune and accompanying words given here (*Fig. 2*) are from the manuscript derived from Sharpe, where the title is ‘The Paddo’:[4]

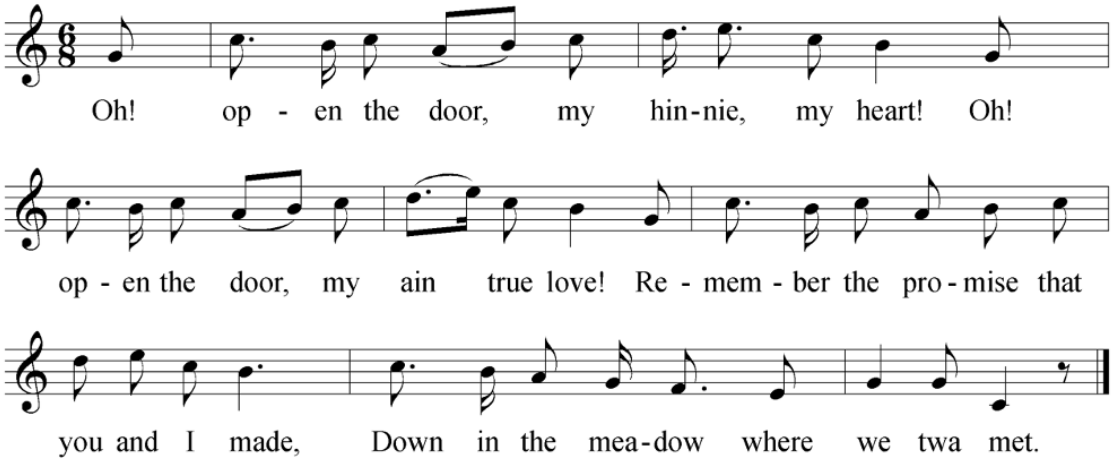


Figure 2 ‘The Paddo’ from NLS MS 843, f. 31.

Scott knew both of these *chantefables* and referred to them as ‘nursery stories of my childhood’;[5] but in the case of the lawyers’ entertainments, he was dependent on the reminiscences of his older friends. He speaks of these performances as ‘High Jinks’, and he gives two instances.

The first, ‘Gerunto’, was evidently quite widely known. Scott turned a performance of it into fiction in his novel *Guy Mannering*,[6] published in 1815, and he added the following note on it in the *Magnum Opus* edition in 1828.[7] He made particular use of information derived from Alexander Keith of Ravelston (1737–1819), who was still living when *Guy Mannering* appeared, but had died before Scott’s *Magnum Opus* was published:

> I believe this strange species of game or revel to be the same mentioned in old English plays,[8] and which was called ‘Coming from Tripoli’. When the supposed King was seated on his post of elevation, the most active fellow in the party came into the presence,

[3] Robert Chambers, *Popular Rhymes* (Edinburgh: W. and R. Chambers, 1842), 52–53.

[4] National Library of Scotland MS 843, f. 31. The manuscript was prepared in 1847 by Thomas Legerwood Hately, who commented on f. 30: ‘Mr Sharpe's nurse used to sing this tune to the fairy-tale of the “Well at the World’s End.” – It was noted down by Mr Sharpe for the purpose of accompanying the tale on the same subject which he intended to write for Lady John Scott’. ‘The Well at the World’s End’ is another name for ‘The Paddo’.

[5] H. J. C. Grierson, ed., *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, 12 vols. (London: Constable and Co., 1932–7), vol 6: 311, Letter to Edgar Taylor, 16 January 1823. Taylor’s translation of the Grimms’ fairy tales, *German Popular Stories*, was published in 1823; see further, John Shaw, ‘The Grimms, Scotland and “This new science of ‘storyology’”’, in *Grimm Ripples: The Legacy of the Grimms’* Deutsche Sagen *in Northern Europe*, ed. Terry Gunnell (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 288–315, esp. 293.

[6] P. D. Garside, ed., *Guy Mannering* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 204, 553.

[7] J. H. Alexander with P. D. Garside and Claire Lamont, *Walter Scott. Introductions and Notes from The Magnum Opus: Waverley to Legend of the Wars of Montrose*, Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels 25 [A] (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 123.

[8] There are references in Ben Jonson, *Epicoene or The Silent Woman*, Act 5, scene 1, lines 38–40 (ed. L. A. Beaurline. London: Edward Arnold, 1978, 123) and John Fletcher, *Monsieur Thomas or Father’s Own Son*, Act 4, scene 2, lines 64–9 (ed. Nanette Cheri Clinch. New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987, 92–3, 291 n. 69) and these may indicate a game involving leaping over stools, but there is no text or account of a performance.

> leaping over as many chairs and stools as he could manage to spring over. He is announced as
>
> A post –
>
> King. From whence?
>
> Post. From Tripoli, my liege.
>
> He then announces to the mock monarch the destruction of his army and fleet. This species of High Jinks was called 'Gerunto,' from the name of the luckless general. I have seen many who have played at it. Among the rest, an excellent friend and relation, now no more (the late Mr Keith of Dunnottar and Ravelston), gave me a ludicrous account of a country gentleman coming up to Edinburgh rather unexpectedly, and finding his son, who he had hoped was diligently studying the law in silence and seclusion, basely engaged in personating the King in a full drama of 'Gerunto'. The monarch, somewhat surprised at first, paid it off with assurance, calling for a seat to his honoured father, and refusing to accost him otherwise than in the slang of the character. This incident – in itself the more comic situation of the two – suggested the scene in the text.

In his novel, Scott quotes a little more of the play:

> Where is Gerunto now? And what's become of him?
>
> Gerunto's dead because he could not swim, &c. &c.[9]

The other instance of High Jinks mentioned by Scott is 'Up in the Air'. When Scott published it in his essay on 'Popular Poetry' prefaced to the 1830 edition of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*,[10] he alluded to the adaptation published by Allan Ramsay in *The Tea-Table Miscellany*[11] which is given on the next page (*Fig. 3*) with the music published by Alexander Stuart.[12] The Ramsay text includes an indication of a repeat of the last lines (beginning 'Up in the Air' in verse 1). This is indicated in the music with a repeat sign, though this is not present in the Stuart original.

[9] Garside 1999, 204. See also item no. 24, described as 'a pub game', in David Hewitt, ed., *Poetry from the Waverley Novels and Other Works* (Edinburgh University Press, 2024), 18, 338–9.
[10] Walter Scott, 'Introductory Remarks on Popular Poetry and on the Various Collections of Ballads of Britain, particularly Those of Scotland', in *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh and London: Cadell and Company and Simpkin and Marshall, 1830), vol. 1: 1–83.
[11] Allan Ramsay, *The Tea-Table Miscellany* (Edinburgh: Thomas Ruddiman, 1723), 147–149; also Murray Pittock and Brianna E. Robertson Kirkland, eds, *The Edinburgh Edition of The Collected Works of Allan Ramsay*, Volume IV, *The Tea-Table Miscellany* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023), R75, pp. 98–99, 602. See also Rhona Brown, ed. *The Edinburgh Edition of The Collected Works of Allan Ramsay*. *Poems.* 2 vols. Volume II *Poems: 1721 & 1728* and Volume III *Poems: uncollected & dubia* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023), vol. 1: 513.
[12] Alexander Stuart, *Musick for Allan Ramsay's collection of Scots songs set by Alexr. Stuart and engrav'd by R. Cooper*. Edinburgh: Allan Ramsay, 1724–5.



Figure 3 ‘Up in the Air’, text from Ramsay (1723: 147–9); tune from Stuart (1724–5: 146–7).

2 The Wind’s drifting Hail and Sna’
O’er frozen Hags like a Foot Ba’,
Nae Starns keek throw the Azure Slit,
’Tis cauld and mirk as ony Pit,
The man i’ the Moon
Is carowsing aboon,
D’ye see, d’ye see, d’ye see him yet.
The Man, &c.

3 Take your Glass to clear your Een,
’Tis the Elixir heals the Spleen,
Baith Wit and Mirth it will inspire,
And gently puffs the Lover’s Fire,
Up in the Air,
It drives away Care,
Ha’e wi’ ye, ha’e wi’ ye, and ha’e wi’ ye Lads yet,
Up in, &c.

4 Steek the Doors, keep out the Frost,
Come, Willie, gi’es about ye’r Tost,
Til’t Lads, and lilt it out,
And let us hae a blythsome Bout.
Up wi’t there, there,
Dinna cheat, but drink fair,
Huzza, Huzza, and Huzza Lads yet,
Up wi’t, &c.

Scott made the link between this song and the prosimetrical performance when he treated the material in a long note to his essay:[13]

[13] Sigrid Rieuwerts and Emily Lyle, eds, *The Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott’s Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming), 2: 421–2.

> Another song [besides 'Bessie Bell and Mary Gray'], of which Ramsay chose a few words for the theme of a rifacimento, seems to have been a curious specimen of minstrel recitation. It was partly verse, partly narrative, and was alternately sung and repeated. The story was the escape of a young gentleman, pursued by a cruel uncle, desirous of his estate; or a bloody rival, greedy of his life; or the relentless father of his lady-love, or some such remorseless character, having sinister intentions on the person of the fugitive. The object of his rapacity or vengeance being nearly overtaken, a shepherd undertakes to mislead the pursuer, who comes in sight just as the object of his pursuit disappears, and greets the shepherd thus:–
>
> PURSUER.
>
> Good morrow, shepherd, and my friend;
> Saw you a young man this way riding,
> With long black hair, on a bob-tail'd mare,
> And I know that I cannot be far behind him?
>
> THE SHEPHERD.
>
> Yes, I did see him this way riding,
> And what did much surprise my wit,
> The man and the mare flew up in the air,
> And I see, and I see, and I see her yet.
> Behind yon white cloud I see her tail wave,
> And I see, and I see, and I see her yet.
>
> The tune of these verses is an extremely good one, and Allan Ramsay has adapted a bacchanalian song to it with some success; but we should have thanked him much had he taken the trouble to preserve the original legend of the old minstrel. The valued and venerable friend to whom we owe this mutilated account of it, has often heard it sung among the High Jinks of Scottish lawyers of the last generation.

Scott's son-in-law, John Gibson Lockhart, identified the 'valued and venerable friend' who gave Scott the 'mutilated account' as 'The Right Honourable William Adam, Lord Chief Commissioner of the Scotch Jury Court'.[14] Scott had become friendly with Adam and wrote about him very warmly in his *Journal* on 20 January 1826:

> [The Commissioner] is not a very early friend of mine for I scarce knew him till his settlement in Scotland with his present office. But I have since lived much with him and taken kindly to him as one of the most pleasant, kind-hearted, benevolent and pleasing men I have ever known.[15]

William Adam (1751–1839) grew up in Scotland and attended Edinburgh University, but he spent a good part of his life as a parliamentarian in London. He returned to Scotland in 1814 and he and Scott along with William Clerk and Adam Ferguson founded the Blair-Adam Antiquarian Club in 1817. The members of this small club of enthusiasts met about midsummer each year for a weekend at Adam's estate of Blair-Adam near Loch Leven and they went on excursions to places of interest

[14] John Gibson Lockhart, ed. *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.* 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1833), 1: 49.
[15] W. E. K. Anderson, ed., *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1998), 74.

round about. Adam may have performed this item for Scott repeatedly, but one occasion was almost certainly in the summer of 1826 when it was just too hot to go on excursions, as Scott mentions in a letter to Lockhart, written from Parliament House, Edinburgh, on 30 June 1826:

> We have had a course of the most sultry weather I ever remember and the crops I fear will suffer considerably. To stir out in the forenoon is almost sickening and the court where I am writing feels like an overheated oven. Last Saturday I went with Will Clerk and Chief Baron [Sir Samuel Shepherd] to Blair Adam where we lounged about and eat hotch-potch & drank Sauterne as actively as heat would permit.[16]

Adam recalled talking about the lawyers’ entertainments during this relaxed meeting, although he did not specify ‘Up in the Air’. He first mentioned that Scott and Clerk could remember their boyhood years together and that they reminisced about acting plays in the school-room, and he then added that Shepherd and he could recall the ‘Circuit fooleries’, including specially composed songs, that they took part in in England when they began their ‘professional pursuits on the Circuit’ in 1783.[17] It is apparent from this that the ‘fooleries’ were part of the legal tradition in England as well as in Scotland, but Scott does appear to place his version in Scotland by saying that Adam had ‘often heard it sung among the High Jinks of Scottish Lawyers of the last generation’. At any rate, it follows from this statement that it was certainly being performed by Scots.

Scott regretted that Ramsay had not preserved ‘the original legend of the old minstrel’, and the fragmentary account in his note in the *Minstrelsy* is the only known Scottish version to indicate any prose narrative. Fortunately, however, it is possible to give a longer English parallel entitled ‘The Grey Mare, A Derbyshire Tale’ which was published in the review *Saturday Night*.[18] The opening of this version strongly engages the sympathies of the reader or listener for poor Jack, who has been badly treated. Jack, however, is not an innocent victim like those listed as possible protagonists by Scott, but is a trickster who plays on his foster-mother’s gullibility:

> In a remote part of Derbyshire, a wealthy old farmer and his wife, having lived together many years childless, adopted a poor but arch boy, called Jack, and put him to school, with a view of bringing him up to some comfortable trade. In a short time afterwards, the good old man fell sick, and, on his death bed, enjoined his wife to take care of poor Jack, which she faithfully promised to do: But soon after the death of her husband, she forgot both him and her promise; and captivated the miserly old farmer, who used to sit opposite to her at church, to whom she was married, and found means to get rid of poor Jack, who was again thrown on the mercy of the world. He, however, did not remove far, but remained in a situation where he could observe all their proceedings. One day, when the farmer was gone to Ash-down fair, Jack took an opportunity to visit his old dame, who received him with great kindness, and asked him where he had been so long, to which he answered, in heaven, with his good old master; to which he added, his master had sent him for his grey mare, great coat, ten pounds, and a flitch of bacon,

[16] Grierson, *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott,* vol. 10: 67.
[17] William Adam, *Blair-Adam. Being a description of the house and grounds. With plates and plans,* 6 vols. (Blair-Adam: Privately printed, 1834), vol. 1: xxvii–viii.
[18] Anonymous, ‘The Grey Mare, / A Derbyshire Tale’, in *Saturday Night: comprising a review of new publications etc*., 2/49 (1824), 294–5.

which request was immediately granted; and Jack took his leave in high glee. On his road he met with a shepherd, whom he desired to say, if any one enquired for him, that he went over the hill, and fled away in a cloud. The farmer on his return, being made acquainted with the transaction, called his wife an old fool, and went in pursuit of the wag, till he overtook the shepherd, whose tale so perfectly convinced him, that he returned and commended his wife for this kindness to the memory of her late deceased husband. This is the argument of the following ballad:

‘Good morrow Shepherd! welcome friend!
Did not you see a man going this way,
In his own black hair, upon a grey mare,
And I think I’ve describ’d him something near.
Fal, &c.

‘O, yes! O, yes! I did him see:
And he’s just bereav’d me of my wits;
For the man and the mare fled into the air,
And I do think, I do see them yet, yet, O yet’.
Fal, &c.

‘What is the man a going mad,
Or into some wild and frantic fit,’
‘O, wounds!’ said he, ‘I do not lie,
For I think I do see them yet, yet, O yet.
Fal, &c.

O look! O look! Sir! In yonder cloud
Methinks I spy the grey mare’s snout,
See ho! See ho! She gallops amain,
See how she kicks the clouds about!’
Fal, &c.

Then the old man alighted from his horse,
And for to look he did not fail,
‘O wounds!’ said he ‘thou dost not lie;
For now I spy my grey mare’s tail!’
Fal, &c.

Then the old man called out aloud,
As if he had been calling to a friend,
‘Hollo! hollo! hollo! Jack, hollo!
To my wife’s first husband me commend!’
Fal, &c.

Then the old man mounted up again,
And home again he rode with speed;
And his wife Joan he did much commend
For doing her husband so good a deed.
Fal, &c.

The first trick, in which Jack claims that he has been sent from heaven to earth to bring back goods to heaven, is not present in Scott’s account which focuses on the second trick in which the shepherd claims (on Jack’s suggestion) that he has seen Jack ride up into the sky and that he is still visible. The motivation for the second trick stems from the earlier one in the Derbyshire account and convinces the farmer that Jack had really come from heaven as he claimed and is returning there. There is no trace of this in Scott’s account which is a secular story that could be told of various pursuit situations, but the St Clair song quoted below contains the reference to heaven where the wife’s first husband dwells.

The English narrative is clearly identifiable as a version of ATU 1540 ‘The Student from Paradise (Paris)’ which has not been known to scholarship hitherto. The type description runs:[19]

> A (beggar, traveler, clergyman) tells a (foolish) woman that he comes from Paris. She understands this to be Paradise. (Or, he sings, ‘I come from heaven’, or says he comes from the beyond or is a messenger from hell).The wife tells him that her husband (son) died shortly before. The student claims to have met him in paradise (hell) and tells her that her husband needs certain things. The wife gives the student money (clothes, food, horse, etc.) to take to her husband.
>
> The oldest son (brother-in-law, husband) goes after the trickster to retrieve the money. The trickster steals his horse (the son runs his own horse to death).

ATU gives no instance from Scotland and notes only one version from England.[20] This is ‘Jack Hannaford’ which was collected in Devonshire by the Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould and published in his collection of ‘Household Tales’ included as an Appendix in William Henderson’s *Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties and the Borders* in 1866. In the episode of the pursuit, the farmer rides after Jack Hannaford, an old soldier reduced to poverty who has been given ten pounds in gold by the farmer’s wife:

> There was no time to waste words; so the farmer mounted his horse and rode off after Jack Hannaford. The old soldier heard the horse’s hoofs clattering on the road behind him, so he knew it must be the farmer pursuing him. He lay down on the ground, and shading his eyes with one hand, looked up into the sky, and pointed heavenwards with the other hand.
>
> ‘What are you about there?’ asked the farmer, pulling up.
>
> ‘Lord save you!’ exclaimed Jack, ‘I’ve seen a rare sight!’
>
> ‘What was that?’
>
> ‘A man going straight up into the sky, as if he were walking on a road’.
>
> ‘Can you see him still?’

[19] Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales*. 3 vols. Folklore Fellows Communications 284–6. (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2004), vol. 2: 277–8.

[20] Katherine M. Briggs, *A Dictionary of British Folk Tales*. 4 vols. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970–1); Ernest W. Baughman, *Type and Motif Index of the Folktales of England and North America*, Indiana University Folklore Series, no. 20 (The Hague: Mouton, 1966). Under ‘England’, ATU notes Briggs 1970, A II, 131–3 and Baughman 1966, Type 1540, and both have only a reference to ‘Jack Hannaford’ as it was given by Joseph Jacobs, *English Fairy Tales* (London: David Nutt, 1890), 40–43, 232. Jacobs identifies his source as Baring-Gould in William Henderson, *Notes on the Folk Lore of the Northern Counties of England and the Borders with an appendix on household stories by S. Baring-Gould, M.A.* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1866), 299–344. Henderson is the source of the story quoted here.

'Yes, I can'.
'Where?'
'Get off your horse and lie down'.
'If you will hold the horse'.
Jack did so readily.
'I cannot see him,' said the farmer.
'Shade your eyes with your hand, and you'll soon see a man flying away from you'.
Sure enough he did so, for Jack leaped on the horse, and rode away with it. The farmer walked home without his horse.
'You are a bigger fool than I am,' said his wife, 'for I only did one foolish thing, and you have done two'.[21]

Both 'Jack Hannaford' and the 'Up in the Air' narrative speak of a report that the pursued man on horseback has gone up into the sky,[22] but 'Up in the Air' introduces the extra character of the shepherd who willingly enters into Jack's quick-witted ploy. In 'Jack Hannaford', as in one of the directions taken by the tale-type outline, the trickster steals the farmer's horse. In this form of the story, the farmer recognizes that he has been fooled, by contrast with the 'grey mare' form, where the farmer becomes convinced that his wife's previous husband has been in touch from heaven. The partial narrative supplied by Scott lacks the ending, but probably the farmer is finally persuaded that he sees the grey mare, as he does in the other Scottish version, the song text from Elizabeth St Clair given below.[23]

1. Good morrow shepherd & my friend
   Saw ye a young man this way riding
   With long black hair & a Bob'd tail'd mare
   And Im sure I cannot be far behind him

2. O yes I saw him this way rideing
   And what much surprised my wit
   The man & the mare flew up in the Air
   And I see him yet & I see him yet

3. O certainly ye are mistaken
   Or are in some frantic fitt
   Sirrah says the shepherd say not so to me
   For I see him yet & I see him yet

4. At first I thought you was mistaken
   But now I plainly do percieve

[21] Henderson, *Notes on the Folk Lore of the Northern Counties,* 319–20; quotation from 320.
[22] Although there is no mention of a tree, this episode is similar to the motif in Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature. A classification of narrative elements in folk-tales, ballads, etc*. 6 vols. (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1955–58), vol. 4: 276: 'K 341.9. Thief tells his pursuer that the thief has gone to heaven by way of a tree. While the man lies on the ground and looks up, the thief steals his horse'.
[23] The text is given here from pages 159–60 of the Mansfield MS in Broughton House, Kirkcudbright, by kind permission of the National Trust for Scotland. For context, see Ronnie Clark, compiler, *Mansfield Manuscript: an old Edinburgh collection of songs and ballads* (Glasgow: The Glasgow Ballad Workshop, 2015).

Behind yon little cloud see my Grey Mares tail
And I see it wave & I see it wave

5. Then fare ye well my son John
I wish ye well to your journeys end
See ho, see ho, see my son john
To my wifes first husband me commend.

The tale has an unusual form since, as can be seen in the full ‘grey mare’ version, it is told only in prose up to the point where the dialogue begins but continues the narrative within the verse passage after the dialogue is over. Possibly there was once an entire treatment in verse, of which the opening has survived only in prose, but the extant witnesses show that the story did have currency in this hybrid form in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in both Scotland and England.

For Scotland we have its intriguing context as an element in the lawyers’ ‘fooleries’ and the St Clair song text, and we also have the tune given with the Ramsay adaptation. When the tune is set to a stanza in the St Clair MS the result runs as shown here (*Fig. 4*), with the music necessitating a repeat of the last two lines of the text beginning ‘The man & the mare’:

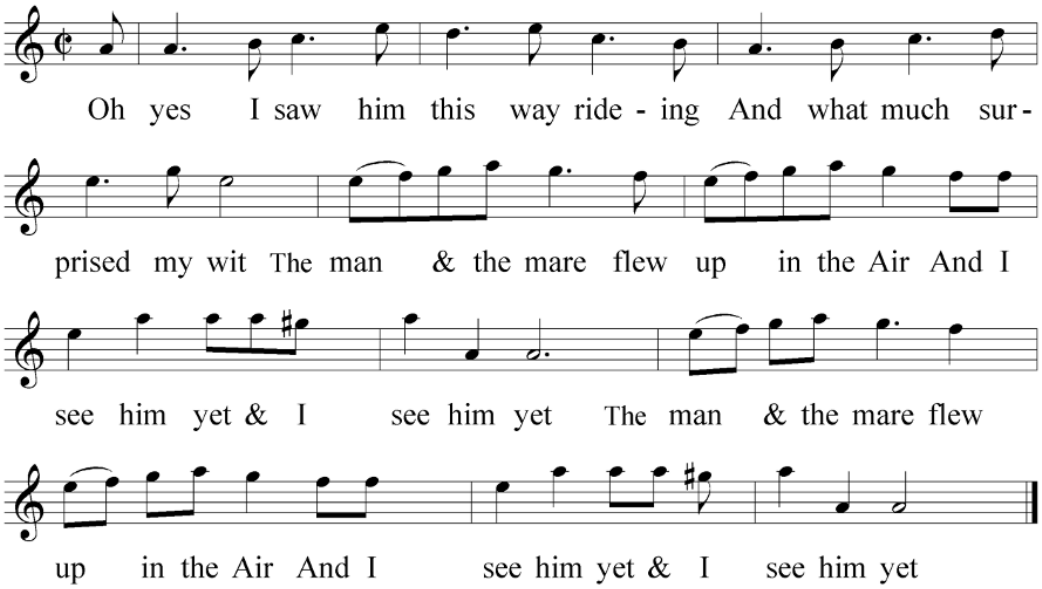


Figure 4 ‘Up in the Air’ verse 2: text and repeat from Elizabeth St Clair, Mansfield MS, p. 159; tune from Stuart (1724–5: 146–7).

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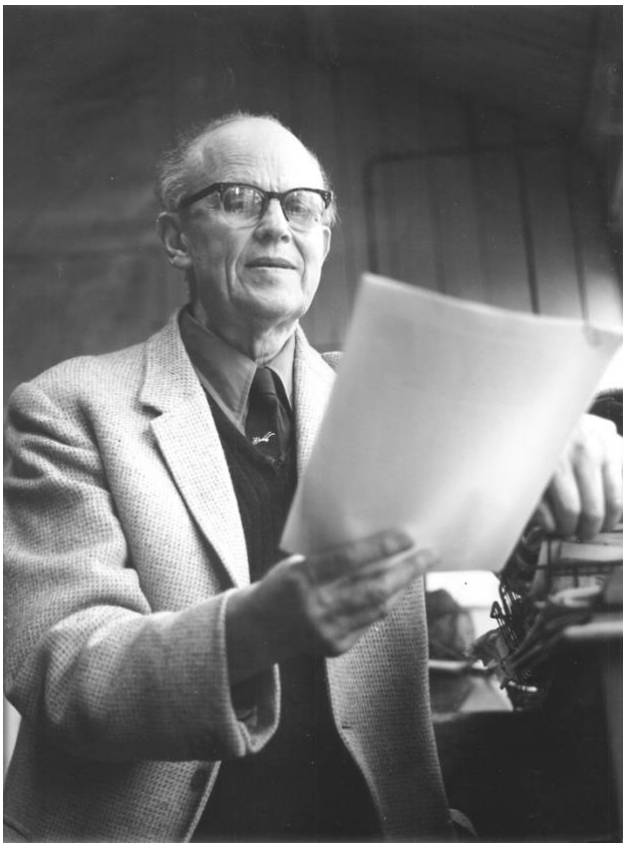
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‘Folklore Reminiscences’ of John Lorne Campbell

HUGH CHEAPE

Fear Chanaidh

Dr John Lorne Campbell, scholar, folklorist and farmer, was born on 1 October 1906 and died in Fiesole in Italy in his ninetieth year on 25 April 1996. He was the eldest son of Col. Duncan Campbell of Inverneill, the laird of the estates of Inverneill and Taynish on Loch Fyne, and this rural patrician background formed in different ways an important part of his upbringing, for example, imbuing him with expectations of succeeding to his patrimony.[1] Campbell’s mother was Ethel Harriot Waterbury, of Morristown, New Jersey, offering a maternal link with the United States. Buying the islands of Canna and Sanday in 1938, Campbell adopted the old tacksman style of *Fear Chanaidh*, a traditional mark of identity in the Gaelic world.[2]



John Lorne Campbell, Canna House, 1971. (Photo: by courtesy of Tom Weir)

John Lorne Campbell was one of the leading Gaelic scholars of the twentieth century and a fieldworker who pioneered the use of mechanical and electrical recording equipment in the Hebrides for exclusive purposes of scholarship and advocacy for the Gaelic language. He dedicated his career to the recording, transmission and publication of the Gaelic song, literary and linguistic record of Scotland, eventually extending this work to Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, and the North American Gàidhealtachd. He wrote and edited more than two dozen books of seminal importance for Gaelic literature and history, as well as a long list of scholarly articles in the learned journals of his disciplines. In addition, he published significant essays on the people and places of his subject area in journals and magazines with a wide circulation, intentionally laying his research before a wider readership.[3]

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[1] His expectation was frustrated by his father’s sale of the estate in 1928; but while this was a matter of regret, it effectively set him on his alternative career as Gaelic folklorist; see Ray Perman, *The Man who gave away his Island* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2013), 18–19, 30–31.

[2] The spelling ‘*Canaidh*’ was Campbell’s preferred spelling of the island’s name, and the one that he himself used. ‘*Canaigh’* is now the standard Gaelic form; see Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba (AÀA) – Gaelic Place-names of Scotland, https://www.ainmean-aite.scot/.

[3] E.g. the following articles which he wrote for *The Scots Magazine*: ‘Highland links with Nova Scotia’(October 1953): 29–32; ‘Duncan of the Stories’, (September 1954): 473–74; and ‘Songs of the Hebrides: a reappraisal of Marjory Kennedy Fraser’ (January 1958): 307–14.

‘Reminiscences’

John Lorne Campbell’s interest in Scottish Gaelic developed in his late teens in his home district in Argyll. He described being drawn to listening to four lads from the islands speaking fluent Gaelic at the Oban Games in 1925, and in 1926 he began to learn the language from Hector MacLean, a Tiree man who was his father’s Ground Officer on the Taynish Estate. Despite his experience of Gaelic being limited at the time to songs sung at ceilidhs and weekly Gaelic services in the Tayvallich Church of Scotland, Campbell became determined to learn the language. As he declared in an interview towards the end of his life, *‘thuirt mi siud an rud bu chòir rium a bhith agam!’* (‘I said, that’s what I should have!’).[4]

Dr John Shaw first stayed with Campbell and his wife, Margaret Fay Shaw, at their home in Canna in the summer of 1961, and became good friends with both of them thereafter.[5] Although Campbell later remarked that ‘few non-natives have become really fluent in Gaelic’, he listed a handful whom he judged to have succeeded in doing so, including Carl Borgstrøm, K. C. Craig, and John Shaw of Harvard. Campbell himself undoubtedly had a hand in Shaw’s success. Understanding that time spent in the Gàidhealtachd was the key to learning the language, Campbell recalled that ‘we arranged with the parish priest of Bornish to find a suitable family who would take him in and speak nothing but Gaelic to him’, adding that he himself had ‘followed this course when I stayed with John MacPherson, the Coddy, at Northbay in Barra between 1933 and 1935’.[6] In addition, Campbell provided letters of introduction to an informal network of Gaelic contacts in South Uist and Barra.

Given that John Shaw’s name appears in the opening pages of one of John Lorne Campbell’s principal notebooks titled ‘Folklore Reminiscences’, some extracts from the ‘Reminiscences’ are offered to John as insights into Hebridean trends and events in ‘folklore’ in the twentieth century. Consideration is given here also to the term ‘folklore’, to Campbell’s understanding of it, and to his development as a folklorist and field worker.

In the ‘Reminiscences’, Campbell follows the mention of successful learners with further comments on his early experience of the learning process:

> The difficulties of acquiring colloquial Gaelic are considerable. People do not wish to converse with a stranger who is obviously not a native speaker. The local idioms abound with expressions, words, pronunciations and grammatical forms unknown in the literary language, and only mentioned, if at all, in MS collections of folklore from the Hebrides or in papers in out-of-the way journals. Native speakers rarely can read their own language, which is not standardised, and it is useless to ask them how a word is spelt. Very slight deviations from the traditional pronunciation will render a non-native speaker unintelligible or ridiculous. …. I do not pretend to have done more than learn to use ordinary conversation and understand folksongs and folktales and write them down from dictation. I would certainly hesitate to speak or sing publicly in Gaelic unless

[4] ‘Fear Chanaidh’, BBC Alba, https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00w4bfm. See also Hugh Cheape, ‘Cuir siud sa’ Ghàidhlig: toradh na h-obrach aig Fear Chanaigh’, in *The Carrying Stream Flows On. Celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of the School of Scottish Studies,* ed. Bob Chambers (Kershader, Isle of Lewis: The Islands Book Trust, 2013), 96–97.

[5] John Shaw, ‘A visit to Canna, South Uist and Barra in 1961’, *West Highland Free Press,* 17 December 2021, 17.

[6] This article draws on John Lorne Campbell’s notebook entitled ‘Folklore Reminiscences’, CH2/1, in the Canna House Archive, National Trust for Scotland. Other sources include extended personal conversations with Dr Campbell between 1992 and 1996, and a holograph six-page manuscript, ‘J. L. Campbell & Gaelic Studies’, also in the Canna House Archive.

> the audience were a half-baked one and I would not dare to do so in the Outer Isles where such performances are very critically judged.[7]

'Folklore'

The term 'folklore' emerged as a neologism in the mid-nineteenth century with the foundation of The Folklore Society in London in 1878. The Society's purpose was to bring together those interested in the study of vernacular culture, including traditional song, music and narrative, drama and dance, custom and belief, and arts and crafts with the objective of promoting the collection of information, specimens, objects and books, and the publication of such finds in learned journals. Then, as now, the subject and its development drew on a range of disciplines so that the term 'multidisciplinary' described much of the folklorist's activity. When Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm began to publish their volumes of oral folk narratives in 1812, they described their work as *Volkskunde*; and this term, adopted by the English-speaking world as 'folk-lore', replaced earlier phrases such as 'popular antiquities'. John Lorne Campbell understood the term 'folklore' to include storytelling, oral traditions, and verbal arts or oral literature of all types, and embraced it as a definition of his core work; he would readily and customarily describe himself *inter alia* as a 'folklorist'.

In Europe, the term *Volkskunde* later broadened to include the study of the folk cultures of European peoples beyond the explicitly spoken and sung traditions. This expanded definition in turn gave rise to the term *Folkliv* in the Scandinavian academic context, a term which then seems to have been borrowed into English as 'folklife' to reflect growing interest in the development of folk- and open-air museums. Since the late twentieth century, the terms *Folkliv* and 'folklife' have tended to be replaced by 'ethnology', a concept that embraces material as well as oral traditions.[8] While Campbell did not pursue 'ethnology' in its wider sense, he drew attention to its potential in analysing and interpreting folksong; for example, he suggested that conventional terminology in the songs is noteworthy for evoking the culture of seventeenth-century Hebridean society.[9] Principally, therefore, his use of the term 'folklore' in his 'Reminiscences' defines an intellectual pathway and a relative fixity of purpose.

Beyond the model of The Folklore Society, the scope of John Lorne Campbell's 'folklore' can be defined in terms of the culture of song and story and the example of the Folklore of Ireland Society and its journal *Béaloideas – The Journal of the Folklore of Ireland Society*, both established in 1927, whose Irish founders drew inspiration from European and Scandinavian models, especially those developed at the time by Carl Wilhelm von Sydow of the University of Lund in Sweden, and by Reidar Thoralf Christiansen of the University of Oslo.[10] Both von Sydow and Christiansen strongly supported the subsequent establishment of the Irish Folklore Commission (IFC) in 1935, a development that put Irish 'folklore' on a more secure and permanent footing.[11] Swedish principles shaped the work of Séamas Ó Duilearga (James Delargy), whose six-month sabbatical study of folklore archives in Lund and Uppsala in 1928 greatly influenced the

[7] It should be added that the learning environment has improved in every way since Campbell recorded his views.

[8] The semantics of these terms and their application are usefully summarised in Richard M. Dorson, *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972) and in Alexander Fenton, 'The Scope of Regional Ethnology', *Folk Life: A Journal of Ethnological Studies* 11/1 (1973): 5–14.

[9] J. L. Campbell, *Gaelic Folksongs from the Isle of Barra* (London: The Linguaphone Institute for the Folklore Institute of Scotland, [1950]), 9–11.

[10] Bo Almqvist, *The Irish Folklore Commission: Achievement and Legacy* (Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann, 1979).

[11] Patricia Lysaght, 'Swedish ethnological surveys in Ireland 1934–5 and their aftermath', in *Tools and Traditions. Studies in European Ethnology Presented to Alexander Fenton,* ed. Hugh Cheape, (Edinburgh: National Museums Scotland), 22.

founding of the IFC; they also informed the work of Ó Duilearga’s colleague Seán Ó Súilleabháin, whose *Láimhleabhar Béaloideasa* (1937) and subsequent *Handbook of Irish Folklore* (1942) shaped the work of the IFC and the disciplines of Irish folklore for many years. Guided by its Scandinavian models, the Irish Folklore Commission developed a holistic approach, ranging from settlement and dwelling to popular belief and practice, that defined folklore in terms of the totality of human culture from material to spiritual.

If ‘material culture’ as such was not prominent on John Lorne Campbell’s scholarly palette, the notion of a unity of tradition between Ireland and Scotland and an institutional base for folklore collecting was in the forefront of his thinking. He was of course conscious of the achievements and influence of his namesake, John Francis Campbell of Islay, on Ireland’s folklore studies from 1859. He was in close touch with Ó Duilearga, who had become Director of the IFC and editor of *Béaloideas*, and who had contributed significantly to the development of Irish folklore studies in these years. Ó Duilearga was in effect the first professional Irish folklorist, and not only did Campbell study Ó Duilearga’s work closely in the mid-1930s, but Ó Duilearga developed a reciprocal regard for Campbell’s efforts. When Campbell sent the IFC a copy of *Sia Sgialachdan*, a collection of six stories from South Uist and Barra that Campbell had printed privately in 1939, Ó Duilearga informed Campbell that this had roused the Commission to the fact that the Gaelic oral tradition was still alive in the Hebrides. Calum Maclean, who at the time was working for the Irish Folklore Commission, was subsequently sent home to Scotland to record oral materials on behalf of the IFC.[12]

As a ‘modern folklorist’, Campbell espoused a highly individual and pioneering approach, drawing on the disciplines of philology, lexicography, etymology, literature, history, sociology, and the sciences; in addition, as an active farmer in Canna, he moved readily between agriculture, silviculture and entomology. His technical acumen in handling recording machinery meant that he kept up with the technology as it developed. He charted his career as folklorist and field worker through the technology he employed and through the publication of scholarly editions of Gaelic texts. As a scholar, his concern with the academic content of his subject was paramount, and he was robust and outspoken in his contribution to the published record.[13] He avoided the then-current debates over folktale origins, archetypes and versions, rarely mentioning von Sydow’s theoretical examination of international *Märchen*; by contrast, his approach revealed a humane focus on the tellers of tales and the singers of the twentieth century in their respective communities. In this respect, his methodology seems to have been sharpened by a stance in conscious opposition to that of many university-based scholars.

A vigorous commentator and critic, Campbell was unusual: he was outside the institutional framework of a university and vocally – sometimes fiercely – independent of the universities. He contended that the systematic study of the popular culture and traditions of the British Isles had rarely found a place in the universities, and he described the prevailing attitude in Scotland as ‘blatantly uninterested and reprehensibly negligent’.[14] The wealth of material was known, he suggested, but ignored by academics, who may have felt that it was tainted by the romanticism of James Macpherson’s

[12] J. L. Campbell, *Sia Sgialachdan* (T. and A. Constable Ltd., 1939), 7; Cailean MacGhilleathain “‘A’ beothachadh na cuimhne aosda” – Calum Iain MacGhilleathain (1915–1960): bho Alba gu Èirinn’, *Béaloideas* 79 (2011), 9. A copious correspondence between Campbell and Ó Duilearga is preserved in the Canna House Archive, e.g. CH2/2/2.

[13] As a memorable example, his 1933 introduction to *Highland Songs of the Forty-Five* stressed the integrity of the Gaelic voice; and when the book was republished in 1984, he did not soften his depiction of the British State’s ‘genocidal campaign against the religion of many and the language of all Highlanders’; see J. L. Campbell, ed., *Highland Songs of the Forty-Five,* 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1984), xiv.

[14] J. L. Campbell, letter to author, 10 November 1994.

'Ossian' and the works of Sir Walter Scott. Campbell also commented freely on the orthodoxies of university-taught history, regarding what he called its 'pro-whig and anti-Highland bias', devoted to a Calvinist rigidity and accepting of the unequal union of Scotland with England after 1707, as having cast a shadow over the university study of Celtic and Scottish History.[15]

Campbell also felt that the teaching of Gaelic in the context of Celtic Studies over-relied on the Gaelic Bible, and argued that the influence of Macpherson and Scott, though inspiring curiosity and interest in Gaelic history and traditions among many students, had to be recognised for the skewed cultural force-field that it had created. He maintained that the study of grammar and comparative philology had reigned supreme to the exclusion, he felt, of spoken Gaelic and its dialects, songs, stories, and demotic forms. In arguing that more attention should be paid to the spoken language, Campbell followed the precept of his teacher and mentor at Oxford, Professor John Fraser, who had advised him to 'study a good spoken dialect with a notebook in hand to put down words and expressions which you haven't heard or read. Book Gaelic is too often artificial.' For Campbell, this principle was canonical. As he wrote in his introduction to the stories of John Macpherson, 'the Coddy':

> The process of getting inside the tradition itself was by no means easy. First the local dialect had to be learnt; here 'book Gaelic' was an actual obstacle. All spoken Scottish Gaelic dialects differ from the literary language, in some respects consistently: the dialects of the Outer Hebrides are, in fact, more vigorous than the modern literary language, and contain many words and expressions that are not in the printed dictionaries.[16]

A Bharraigh – To Barra

Campbell's arrival in the Outer Hebrides on 4 August 1933 was a defining moment for him and the beginning of what was to become his life's work in the recovery and transmission of the Gaelic song, literary and linguistic record. He recalls in the 'Reminiscences':

> I had settled in Barra in August 1933, extending a visit of 3 weeks eventually to nearly five years. Having studied Gaelic at Oxford with Professor J[ohn] Fraser and having published Highland Songs of the '45 in the spring of 1933 but being still deficient in knowledge of the colloquial language, I went to live in the house of the Coddy (John MacPherson) whom I had met in 1928. Coddy was a most excellent Gaelic speaker and persevering teacher but unfortunately his house was usually full of English-speaking visitors. However, I was able to get outside help from Mr Neil Sinclair, school master, who took me at various times to spend evenings with Alasdair Aonghais Mhóir, while the Coddy took me at times to see Seumas Iain Ghunnairigh – both storytellers, and the latter particularly good. Also Miss Annie Johnston, whom I first met in August 1933, was very helpful. I also got to know Carl Borgstrøm of Oslo who was then working on his famous study of the Barra dialect – now Professor Carl Borgstrøm.[17] Mr Roderick MacNeil, 2 Ardveenish, was then Compton Mackenzie's host, and his father-in-law, Murchadh an Eilein, was a monoglot Gaelic speaker and another of my conversationalists.[18]

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[15] J. L. Campbell, ed., *Tales from Barra. Told by the Coddy,* 2nd edn (Edinburgh: W. & A. K. Johnston, 1961), 22.
[16] Campbell, *Tales from Barra*, 23–24.
[17] Carl Hjalmar Borgstrøm (1909–1986), Norwegian scholar of linguistics, visited Barra in 1932, 1933 and 1934; see Carl Hjalmar Borgstrøm, *The Dialects of the Outer Hebrides* (Oslo: Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap, 1940).
[18] CH2/1.

Campbell’s first six months in the islands were entirely spent learning the language and culture. His conversion of a three-week sojourn to a five-year residence suggests how profound his experience was, and explains his fresh confidence. His enthusiasm for being amongst new friends is palpable in his enthusiastic descriptions of those he met. With regard to language-learning, he believed that any competent student who could spend a winter in a Gaelic-speaking parish could add to our knowledge of the language, in contrast to standard grammars and dictionaries that tended to teem with omissions, rendering the study of the oral tradition and dialects ‘both difficult and interesting’. As regards his fieldwork methodology, Campbell described his own experience with a hint of cynicism:

> I approached Gaelic songs in Barra from the inside. I only started to record them after I had been living there for over three years and they had started to become part of my life. … I was not like a stranger just turning up with a recording machine and a bottle of whisky.[19]

Urged on, as he told it, by the Coddy and by Annie Johnston, Campbell started his collecting work with James MacKinnon (*Seumas Iain Ghunnairigh*) in Northbay, and Murdo MacDonald (*Murchadh an Eilein*) in Ardveenish, writing down what they said to him in a personal version of shorthand. With further help he also recorded and published, in 1936, a collection of Gaelic songs by local bard Seonaidh Campbell (*Seonaidh mac Dhòmhnaill ’ic Iain Bhàin*) of South Uist, to whom he had been introduced in 1934 by John MacInnes (*Iain Pheadair*, 1907–1991) of South Lochboisdale in circumstances described below.[20] In the same year, he also sent four of Seonaidh’s stories to *Outlook,* a monthly magazine published in Edinburgh. These efforts stand as John Lorne Campbell’s first effective exercise in recording for public consumption the oral literature of the islands, and demonstrate his wish to publicise the wealth of the Gaelic oral tradition to a wider Scottish readership.

A further product of this ‘learning’ phase was *Sia Sgialachdan*, the book of six stories from South Uist and Barra that had so impressed the Irish Folklore Commission. Transcribed and privately printed in 1939, the book’s small print run of 250 copies was quickly sold out. What Campbell saw as the imperative to publish and the importance of the spoken word supplied the editorial principle for *Sia Sgialachdan.* His introduction describes his methodology and provides his rationale for the work:

> In writing down these stories, whether from the speaker’s own dictation (for which purpose I used a kind of abbreviated script in order to allow them to talk at their usual pace without regard for me) or from Ediphone records, I have deliberately reproduced the dialects of the speakers.[21] This is in accordance with the method used by contemporary Irish collectors of oral Gaelic literature, for example by most of the contributors to *Béaloideas* (the Journal of the Irish Folklore Society). In my opinion, any attempt to force oral Gaelic literature into the artificial mould of the standardised literary spelling and grammatical forms is a mistake, as it not only actually produces a false impression of the real language of the stories, but also obscures many interesting grammatical points.[22]

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[19] J. L. Campbell, personal communication to author, 1993.
[20] Iain Latharna Caimbeul, *Òrain Ghàidhlig le Seonaidh Caimbeul (Seonaidh mac Dhòmhnaill ’ic Iain Bhàin)* (Dun Phàrlain: I. B. MacAoidh agus a Chuideachd, 1936).
[21] Examples of Campbell’s ‘abbreviated script’ are in the Canna House Archive CH2/1/5/20/5, a notebook with Gaelic stories taken down from Seonaidh Caimbeul, October–November 1935.
[22] Campbell, *Sia Sgialachdan*, 6.

As noted, this book drew the attention of Séumas Ó Duilearga's Irish Folklore Commission to the Hebrides and the vigorous oral tradition surviving there, and they arranged to send over Calum Maclean, who had also had archive training in Uppsala, to carry out recording work on their behalf in Gaelic Scotland.[23] Delayed by the outbreak of war in 1939, Maclean's posting began in 1945 when he was sent to Uist and Barra. Campbell's tactic of sending his publications to Dublin and the Commission's response must have helped to prompt the subsequent establishment of the School of Scottish Studies. As Campbell later hinted: *'S e farmad a nì treobhadh* or 'emulation gets the ploughing done' as background to Edinburgh University's subsequent initiative.[24]

On arrival in Barra, Campbell joined with Compton Mackenzie, then resident in the island, in founding the Sea League, a lobbying group that sought to safeguard the livelihoods of Hebridean fishermen by calling for the closure of the Minch to trawlers and increased fines for illegal trawling. The movement took its title from the nineteenth-century Land League and its philosophy and dynamic from the fishery policies of Norway, Iceland and the Faroes. The story was told in the pages of the *Sea Leaguer* between 1936 and 1939 – a bilingual news-sheet that, Campbell suggested, 'deserves its place among the literature of Highland protest'.[25]

When John Lorne Campbell visited South Uist in February 1934 to discuss the political initiative of the Sea League with John MacInnes from South Lochboisdale, MacInnes told him about his neighbour and close friend Seonaidh Caimbeul, a highly regarded *bàrd baile* ('local bard') whose songs had never been properly written down. (Some had been taken down by Fr Allan McDonald and Dr George Henderson about forty years earlier, but these had been lost, and MacInnes had been writing them down on his own initiative.) Born in 1859, Seonaidh made songs about people, events and topics of the day. As MacInnes wrote in a brief biography of Seonaidh Caimbeul which appeared in Campbell's published collection of Seonaidh's songs in 1936: '*Iomadh rud nach saoileadh feodhainn eile cus dheth dheanadh Seonadh òran dha*' ('Many a thing that some others wouldn't think too much of, Seonaidh would make a song for it').[26] Campbell arranged that if Iain Pheadair were to take his songs down, he himself would try to arrange for their publication and see them through the press. Iain agreed to do this.

It was also on this visit that Campbell records, in passing, that 'I met Miss Margaret Shaw'. Margaret Fay Shaw was staying at the time in the home of Peigi and Màiri Macrae in North Glendale. Campbell's courtship prospered:

> In June 1935 MFS and I were married and went to Norway (the Lofoten Islands) for our honeymoon, returning to Barra by yacht 'Gille Brighde' with John MacNeil (Iagan a' Chruguil) in August. [Coddy's] bungalow was not then available for us and we stayed first on the yacht, then at Lochboisdale Hotel, and then (November) at Taigh Mairi Anndra at North Glendale with Peigi and Mairi MacRae. Seonaidh Caimbeul my fellow

[23] MacGhilleathain, '"A' beothachadh na cuimhne aosda"', 9–10.
[24] J. L. Campbell, *Seanfhocail agus Comhadan. Scottish Gaelic Proverbs.* Highland Information Pamphlets No. 11 (Inverness: An Comunn Gàidhealach, 1968), 3; see also Alexander Nicolson, *A Collection of Gaelic Proverbs* (Edinburgh: MacLachlan and Stewart, 1881), 232.
[25] J. L. Campbell, 'Fields of Battle. Our Barra Years (2)', *The Scots Magazine* (September 1975): 617. Documentation for the Sea League, of which John Lorne Campbell was Secretary, is in the Canna House Archive, National Trust for Scotland, CH2/2; see also Hugh Cheape, 'Taking forward perceptions of identity. The Sea League's campaign to protect maritime communities and the environment', *Angles: New Perspectives on the Anglophone World* 17 (2024). https://doi.org/10.4000/11qj6.
[26] Iain MacAonghuis, 'Beatha Sheonaidh', ann an Caimbeul, *Orain Ghàidhlig le Seonaidh Caimbeul*, vi.

> clansman lived about half a mile away by a rough path which had an exceedingly haunted atmosphere on dark and stormy nights. Here I found my way every evening and began to take down Seonaidh’s tales and revise Iain Pheadair’s transcriptions of his songs with the bard.’



Remains of the bard Seonaidh Caimbeul’s house in North Glendale, South Uist, 2023. (Photo: Flòraidh Forrest)

Seonaidh and his wife Peigi lived in a house built for them by his brother Iain Clachair, with gable-end and chimney of stone and the body of the house framed in timber and clad in corrugated-iron sheeting of a modest style known as a *leth taigh* (‘half-house’).

The preparation for publication of Seonaidh’s songs continued into the following year. Campbell’s preface, headed ‘*Cànail Sheonaidh agus Obair an Deasachaidh*’ (‘Seonaidh’s speech and the work of editing’), is dated 15 May 1936:

> Seonaidh had a beautiful clear diction in Gaelic (he only knew a few words and phrases in English) and unlimited patience to deal with an unpractised transcriber like myself. It was from him I learnt most of all, and from him I took down the first tales I transcribed. Most of these were stories about local history. Some I printed in Sia Sgialachdan. Seonaidh did not care for the old fabulous stories.[27]

In his ‘Reminiscences’, Campbell eulogises Seonaidh as a man of deep faith:

> Seonaidh was a man poor in worldly goods but rich in oral lore and blessed with an exceedingly happy and good-natured temperament. He and his wife Peigi lived in a small house, partly or mostly made of wood, with their dog Craobhag. They had no

[27] CH2/1/15; By contrast, Uist commentary maintains that Seonaidh could speak Gaelic, English and Doric, the latter picked up among East Coast fishermen. Campbell used anecdotes by Seonaidh to supply Gaelic text for the bilingual newspaper of the Sea League, for example, ‘*Mar a fhuair sinn ar riasladh a’ togail nan cliabh’* (‘How we got in a tangle lifting the creels’) printed in *The Sea Leaguer* No. 7 (March 1938) and No. 8 (July 1938).

> children, but his brother Iain Clachair – 'John the Maor' – equally well known as a bard and reciter left a family of whom the best-known today is Mr Angus John Campbell, Lochboisdale. Seonaidh (and I believe his brother Iain) was a man whose life and personality provide an edification – particularly in this materialistic age. Cheerful and good natured in spite of a life spent in continual poverty and hardship as a crofter-fisherman and insecurity (until the coming of the old age pension) he was deeply and sincerely religious and well versed in his faith (Catholic). His type is passing away and the isles will be the poorer for it. Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.[28]

The public treatment of the Gaelic language was a constant concern for Campbell, who commented in his 'Reminiscences' on the 'ridiculous suppression of Gaelic dialect by the BBC' and raised questions about this with the Corporation. It may have been due to his urging that the BBC formed a plan to make a series of recordings of Gaelic dialects, and in October 1935 Campbell arranged to travel to Glasgow, taking Iain Pheadair and Seonaidh Campbell with him, so that the BBC could record some speech in Uist Gaelic. The resulting five-minute recording, in which Seonaidh told an amusing anecdote, was the first sound recording of a Gaelic dialect ever made, and is the earliest recorded item included in the website Tobar an Dualchais.[29]

A' Clàradh – Recording

Campbell pioneered the use of modern technology and the application of scholarly methodology to the study of spoken Gaelic and the culture of Gaelic communities. His recording work advanced in step with contemporary developments in recording equipment, beginning in January 1937 with a clockwork Ediphone Recorder using wax cylinders. An early surviving recording was made in Glen, Barra, in July 1937, of Mrs Ann MacDougall (*Anna Raghnaill Eachainn*, 1875–1949) singing some lines from a waulking song, '*O hùg o, chailleach chrùbach'*, an amusing satire on an old lady. Given its age, the quality of the recording is classed as '*meadhanach math*' or 'middling' but, as Flòraidh Forrest has observed, it 'captured the informality of the moment, with Anna and some other ladies in the background chuckling as they forget and remind each other of the words to the song'.[30]

That autumn, John Lorne Campbell and Margaret Fay Shaw took the recorder and a car to Canada, and in September and October made recordings in Cape Breton and Antigonish County. The linking of Scotland and Nova Scotia was another facet of Campbell's innovative approach to Gaelic Studies. He had made a brief visit to Cape Breton in April 1932 when he had set up his 'Unofficial Gaelic Census' by parishes.[31] Having begun productive recording work in Barra and South Uist, he wanted in particular to record the Gaelic oral tradition in eastern Canada among the descendants of eighteenth-

[28] CH2/1/17. The record of Seonaidh's family's achievements has recently been brought up to date with a collection of the poetry and songs of three generations, and it includes an illustration of a letter to Seonaidh from J. L. Campbell written in Gaelic from New York on 14 December 1937; see Jo NicDhòmhnaill agus Màiri Anna Chaimbeul, *Bho Ghinealach gu Ginealach: Taghadh de na h-Òrain aig Caimbeulaich Taobh a Deas Loch Baghasdail* (Dalabrog: Ceòlas Uibhist Earr., 2015).

[29] Flòraidh Forrest, 'Tobar an Dualchais: Seonaidh Caimbeul – a lost recording of a Uist bard', *West Highland Free Press*, 1 September 2023, https://www.whfp.com/2023/09/01/tobar-an-dualchais-seonaidh-caimbeul-a-lost-recording-of-a-uist-bard/. 'Naidheachd Iain agus Dhomhnaill' can be heard on Tobar an Dualchais, Track 41039, https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/41039?l=gd.

[30] 'O hùg o, Chailleach Chrùbach', Tobar an Dualchais Track ID 40457, https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/40457?l=en. See also J. L. Campbell, *Gaelic Folksongs from the Isle of Barra* (London: The Linguaphone Institute for the Folklore Institute of Scotland [1950]), 6, 42–46; also Forrest, 'Tobar an Dualchais: Seonaidh Caimbeul' as above, n. 29.

[31] J. L. Campbell, 'Scottish Gaelic in Canada', *An Gàidheal* (Am Màrt 1948), 69.

and nineteenth-century emigrants, particularly those of the period c.1770–1830 from the west-coast areas of Lochaber, Moidart and Arisaig, South Uist and Barra and the Small Isles. The significance of Cape Breton for Gaelic tradition was, in his own words, as ‘a Highland community where there are no lairds’.[32] Here he benefited from local guidance from Cape Breton Gaels such as Jonathan G. Mackinnon, the founder of the *Mac Talla* newspaper.

Leaving Canada in the autumn of 1937, Campbell visited New York where he bought a Presto Disc Recorder – state-of-the-art equipment at the time – before returning to Barra in January 1938. In the ‘Reminiscences’ he writes of having made ‘outstanding recordings of Ruairi Iain Bhàin [renowned Barra singer Roderick MacKinnon, 1858–1944], some with the help of Gordon Marsh (US)’.[33] On a subsequent visit to the USA in January and February 1948, Campbell again stopped in New York, where he bought a Webster Wire Recorder. He recalled the difficulties of getting the Webster through the (for him) excessive bureaucracy of Customs: the machine was detained for six months. In November 1949, however, Campbell used it to record Angus MacLellan (1869–1966) of Frobost, South Uist; and that same year the importance of his task was recognised by the Leverhulme Foundation, which awarded him a two-year grant of £250. By the winter of 1957–1958, magnetic tape recorders had become the norm, and Campbell was using a Grundig; four years later, in 1962, he had purchased a Phillips Portable Recorder, a lighter machine that made fieldwork easier.

Facilitated by steady improvements in technology, Campbell’s post-war fieldwork was especially successful. He recorded a full portfolio of material from Angus MacLellan and his sister, Marion Campbell (*Bean Nìll,* 1868–1971), whom he had first met in 1948 when they were in their eighties. To demonstrate to the outside world how a single talented storyteller could sustain a vast and varied repertoire, Campbell translated and published a selection of Angus’s material, including a variety of story types, in *Stories from South Uist* in 1961.[34] He also recorded from Angus a version of *Conall Gulbann*, ‘one of the greatest, if not the greatest of the romantic tales that were popular with traditional Gaelic storytellers in Scotland and Ireland’.[35]

Stories from South Uist included a section titled ‘The Storyteller’s Own Story’, a feature that Campbell later developed into a full-length autobiography, published in English in 1962 as *The Furrow Behind Me*. In 1967, Campbell noted in the ‘Reminiscences’ that he had heard from Norwegian linguist Magne Oftedal, professor at the University of Oslo and editor of the journal *Lochlann.* Oftedal understood that the Scottish Gaelic Texts Society had decided not to publish the original Gaelic narrative of Angus’s autobiography, and asked Campbell if he could publish it in *Lochlann*, of which he was the editor. The Gaelic text of *Saoghal an Treobhaiche* was duly published, filling the whole of volume 5 of *Lochlann.* Campbell was flattered, commenting ‘I have been able to publish my work, at no expense to myself, in London, Oxford, Dublin, and now in Oslo, but never in book form in Scotland!’[36]

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[32] J. L. Campbell, *Songs Remembered in Exile*, 2nd edn (Birlinn), 19–20; also John Shaw, ‘Brief beginnings: Nova Scotian and Old World Bards compared’, *Scottish Gaelic Studies* XVII (1996), 343.

[33] In his ‘Reminiscences’, Campbell credited Gordon Marsh of Columbia University as being another competent learner; the two eventually fell out of touch.

[34] J. L. Campbell, *Stories from South Uist told by Angus MacLellan* (London: Routledge, 1961).

[35] J. L. Campbell, ‘Conall Gulbann, Son of the King of Ireland’, *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 44 (1965): 153–92; see also MacLellan’s recording of this tale on Tobar an Dualchais, Track ID 98040, https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/98040?l=en.

[36] CH2/1/223. *Saoghal an Treobhaiche* fills the entirety of *Lochlann*, vol. 5 (1972); it was eventually published in Scotland in 1974; see J. L. Campbell, *Saoghal an Treobhaiche le Aonghus Mac ’illFhialain MBE (‘Aonghus Beag’) air a recòrdadh ’s air a sgrìobhadh le Fear Chanaidh* (Inbhirnis: Club Leabhar, 1974).

In August 1959, Calum Maclean told *The Scotsman* of having witnessed the first missiles being fired from the rocket range on the Gerinish machair in South Uist. He added wryly that, while it was said that the 'Corporal' missile was already obsolete, in Uist 'there is something which is still not obsolete, even after a thousand years'. He was referring to the epic story of Cú Chulainn, which he had recorded from Angus MacLellan a few weeks earlier:

> On the 11 June I saw Angus MacLellan of Frobost uncover his head in honour of Cu Chulainn and then proceed to tell the heroic saga of Cu Chulainn's first feat, his exploits in warding off those who came to take forcible possession of the Donn Ghuailleann, and his death after he had slain Fear Diad Mac Deafain.... [37]

Campbell celebrated Angus MacLellan's storytelling career in a detailed appreciation in *Scottish Studies*, including the citation for the award of MBE 'for his extensive contribution to the preservation of Gaelic oral literature'.[38] In a heartfelt elegy in the 'Reminiscences', he noted Angus MacLellan's passing:

> March 19 [1966] St Joseph's Day came the sad news of the death peacefully in his sleep, of Angus MacLellan MBE in his 97th year. *Fhuair thu aois Aonghuis agus fhuair thu cliu agus bha daoine ciatach coir timcheall oirbh mu dheireadh ged a bha am beatha agad cruaidh gu leor aig uaireannan reimhe sin. Tha mi gle thoilichte gun d'fhuair na leabhraichean agad rudeiginn air do shon. Tha eagal orm nach fhaic sinn fear do d' leithid tuilleadh. Fois is sith dod anam 's tusa thoill iad.*[39]
>
> [You attained age and fame Angus and there were decent generous people around you at the last, though your life was hard enough at times before that. I am very pleased that your books brought you something to your benefit. I fear that we shall not see your likes anymore. May your soul have rest and peace and it is you who deserves them.]

A' faighinn fiach – Getting recognition

From the mid-1930s, having learnt good island Gaelic and with his recording activities well under way, Campbell advocated vigorously for public and academic recognition of the oral culture of the Scottish Gàidhealtachd. In 1947, he was one of the main instigators of the Folklore Institute of Scotland (FIOS), whose main object was to lobby for official recognition of the importance and value of the Gaelic oral tradition in Scotland, and to argue support for the urgent recording of it by modern methods.[40] As the first President of FIOS, Campbell himself promoted the case for systematic collection of Gaelic folksong on a properly organised basis, preferably by the endowment of a body in Scotland similar to the Irish Folklore Commission.

The efforts of FIOS together with those of other interested parties must have influenced the creation of the School of Scottish Studies in the University of Edinburgh in late 1951, although its academic founders

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[37] Calum I. Maclean, 'Cu Chulainn and the Rocket Range', *The Scotsman*, 11 August 1959, 6. See also Calum I. Maclean, 'A Folk-Variant of the Táin Bó Cúailnge from Uist, *ARV: Tidskrift för Nordisk Folkminnesforskning: Journal of Scandinavian Folklore* XV (1959): 160–181; for Angus's recording of 'Cù Chulainn agus an Donn Ghuaillfhionn', see Tobar an Dualchais track ID 40664, https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/40664?l=en.
[38] J. L. Campbell, 'Angus MacLellan MBE ("Aonghus Beag") 1869–1966', *Scottish Studies* 10 (1966), 196.
[39] CH2/1/221.
[40] The papers of FIOS are in the Canna House Archive, National Trust for Scotland, CH2/2. See also Hugh Cheape, '"Tha Feum air Cabhaig". The initiative of the folklore Institute of Scotland', *Scottish Studies* 37 (2014): 53–62.

do not seem to have admitted to any such influence.[41] In spite of contributing copies of more than 300 of his own wire recordings to the founding of this new archive, Campbell expressed disappointment at not being consulted by the School of Scottish Studies regarding its archiving of recorded sound. When ‘the School’ held a conference at the end of May 1952, Campbell refused to attend, commenting in his ‘Reminiscences’ that he felt that those in charge of the initiative were taking advantage of people like himself – amateur enthusiasts with deep contacts and rich local knowledge – and then dropping them once their brains had been picked. His conviction that this was the case was certainly one of the reasons that, as he put it, ‘I refused to have anything to do with the School of Scottish Studies’.[42] The other circumstance that set him apart from the enterprise was what he termed ‘the Lomax affair’.

The Lomax episode, described in brisk language in the ‘Reminiscences’, began when Alan Lomax wrote to Campbell in October 1950, asking for help with a ‘British folksong’ recording project. After consulting Professors Angus McIntosh and Kenneth Jackson, Campbell refused to assist Lomax, arguing that Scotland merited an album of its own – a proposal to which Lomax could not agree. Campbell clearly distrusted the Lomax project.

In March and April of 1951, Campbell made a recording trip to the Outer Isles with Francis Collinson, only to later discover that Lomax had followed in May, had sought out the identical reciters and had paid them to record material for him. How Lomax had learned of Campbell and Collinson’s itinerary was ‘a mystery’, and Campbell was furious, since such information was normally handled with discretion. He suspected that Ó Duilearga might have sent Lomax to communicate with Calum Maclean, bypassing Campbell and Collinson; Ó Duilearga, however, later denied that he had had anything to do with Alan Lomax’s visiting Scotland.

In July of 1951, Campbell wrote to Hugh MacPhee at the BBC in Glasgow to protest about the ‘disgraceful situation’ in which Lomax was receiving the support of the Corporation ‘over the heads of Scottish folksong collectors’. He complained about the ‘recording of Hebridean Folksongs for the BBC by non-native collectors’, commenting, ‘I am interested to learn that the BBC considers ignorance of the Gaelic language no disqualification for undertaking such work’.[43] Campbell’s ‘Reminiscences’ leave no doubt about his intense disappointment with the Lomax situation:

> Atmosphere of islands poisoned by personal disputes – folklore collection supplemented by folklore politics – I decided to retire rather than be made use of and let down. Lomax leaves trail of bad feeling and resentment everywhere.[44]

Campbell rationalised what seems like a fit of pique as retiring from fieldwork in order to work on publishing the wealth of traditional material which he maintained was still part of the fabric of life in the Hebrides – a project that would enable him to honour the singers and storytellers. He must have understood, however, that the objective for which FIOS had worked – the establishment of a ‘recording institute’ – had indeed been attained, even if FIOS and its achievements had received little acknowledgement. Far from retiring from fieldwork, his personal dedication was undimmed, as this note from 1964 makes plain:

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[41] Cheape, ‘“Tha Feum air Cabhaig”’, 60–61.
[42] CH2/1/27 and CH2/1/30. The late Dr John MacInnes commented that John Lorne Campbell was one of the main influences behind the creation of the School of Scottish Studies, thanks in part to his personal friendship with Professor Angus McIntosh.
[43] CH2/2 correspondence with Hugh MacPhee in the FIOS papers.
[44] CH2/1/21-23.

> Thursday, called on Mrs Archie MacPhee at Stonybridge, sister of Seonaid Shomhairle Bhig, and recorded from her *Ach a Mhurchaidh oig ghaolaich* and another waulking song. She is a good singer and ought to be revisited. One could get from her the songs Mrs Kennedy Fraser took down from her mother and published in Vol IV of *Songs of the Hebrides*, and by printing these originals expose the methods of Mrs KF – and her deficiencies. I am afraid Kenneth MacLeod would not come too well out of this either as he contributed a lot of fantastic nonsense to this series.[45]

Marjory Kennedy Fraser (1857–1930), Scottish doyenne of early-twentieth century classical music, had aroused intense interest in Gaelic oral tradition through her art-song renderings of material she had recorded from singers in the Hebrides. When the centenary of Kennedy Fraser's birth was being commemorated, Campbell reminded readers of *The Scots Magazine* that the reception of Kennedy Fraser's works – *Songs of the Hebrides* was published in several volumes beginning in 1909 – had been coloured by the 'fog of the Celtic twilight', and the popular notion that hers was a sufficient record of Gaelic song obscured the work of others such as Francis Tolmie.[46] Campbell and Collinson, in the third volume of *Hebridean Folksongs*, published a chapter headed 'Hebridean Folksongs and Songs of the Hebrides' in order 'to set the record straight' and identify original versions of the 'art-songs'.[47] Importantly for Gaelic studies, he later adopted a more generous tone in assessing the long career of Kenneth MacLeod.[48]

Co-dhùnadh – Conclusion

How do we judge John Lorne Campbell's contribution to Gaelic scholarship in the twentieth century? Campbell clearly occupied a significant and even seminal position, not only in pioneering the mechanical recording of Gaelic for scholarly purposes and the archival preservation of songs (mainly chorus songs or *orain luaidh*) and folktales, but also in his concentration on the Gaelic language, culture, and communities of the Outer Hebrides. Campbell influenced subsequent generations of scholars through his innovative and rigorous approach to fieldwork and recording, his insight that work among Gaelic speaking communities is best undertaken by those with knowledge of idiomatic Gaelic and of its dialects, and his insistence that historians should more fully represent Highland culture by learning to understand it from within. Although he did not live to see it, his archive of sound recordings eventually became a foundational component of the *Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o' Riches* initiative, alongside Gaelic items from the School of Scottish Studies Archives and recordings made for the BBC. This digitised database of traditional materials, launched in 2010, makes the voices of Gaelic traditional singers and storytellers accessible worldwide, and is an invaluable resource for scholars and artists, not to mention the descendants of those who so willingly contributed when asked.[49]

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[45] CH2/1/201 This followed a visit to the South Uist GP, Dr Alasdair Maclean, on Wednesday 29 January 1964.
[46] J. L. Campbell, 'Songs of the Hebrides: a reappraisal of Marjory Kennedy Fraser', *The Scots Magazine* (January 1958): 307–14. A decade earlier, Campbell had contributed to an argument in the letters column of *The Scotsman,* arguing against the public acclaim accorded Marjory Kennedy Fraser's recording work; see 'Better recordings being made', *The Scotsman*, 11 September 1948, 4. Whilst the phrase 'fog of the Celtic Twilight' does not appear in Campbell's *Scots Magazine* article, it was one he often used with me and others when discussing *Songs of the Hebrides*.
[47] J. L. Campbell and Francis Collinson, *Hebridean Folksongs III. Waulking Songs from Vatersay, Barra, South Uist, Eriskay, and Benbecula* (Oxford University Press, 1981), 324–326.
[48] J. L. Campbell, review of *Sgriobhaidhean Choinnich Mhic Leoid. The Gaelic Prose of Kenneth MacLeod,* edited by T. M. Murchison, *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 16 (1990), 197–201.
[49] https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk. Beginning the work of digitisation in 2006, the project was administered

While this account has concentrated on Campbell’s role as a pioneering fieldworker, his published work sets him apart as one of the foremost Gaelic scholars of the twentieth century, with major contributions on the Moidart poet Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair, on the papers of the Welsh polymath, Edward Lhuyd, and on the importance of Fr Allan McDonald of Eriskay, whose gathering of oral materials among his parishioners constituted ‘one of the most important local collections of folklore ever made anywhere’.[50] Campbell and Collinson’s three volumes of *Hebridean Folksongs*, a collection of waulking songs published by the Oxford University Press between 1969 and 1981, is today regarded as essential by students of Gaelic song and culture. His crowning achievement, however, must be the fact that he achieved one of the most significant collections of Scottish folklore gathered by a single individual.

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[50] J. L. Campbell, ‘The late Fr Allan McDonald, Miss Goodrich Freer and Hebridean Folklore’, *Scottish Studies* 2 (1958), 178.

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A Song Remembered in Exile: *Annag a Ghaoil, hao ill o*, Fear Chanaidh, agus Eòin G. MacFhionghain

ROBERT DUNBAR

Tha an Dr Iain Seathach air a ràdh gun robh Iain Latharna Caimbeul (1906–1996), no 'Fear Chanaidh' mar a dh'aithnichte e, na oide agus na charaid dha, agus is cinnteach gun tug Fear Chanaidh buaidh mhòr air a bheatha agus obair.[1] Fhad 's a bha an Dr Seathach fhathast anns an àrd-sgoil ann an Ohio, sgrìobh e gu Fear Chanaidh, agus thug Fear Chanaidh cuireadh dha a thighinn a dh'Alba gus ùine a chur seachad leis agus le a bhean, Mairead Fay Sheathach—i-fhèin às na Stàitean bho thùs. B' ann an 1961 a bha sin, agus dhùisg an turas sin ùidh mhòr ann an Iain Òg anns a' Ghàidhlig agus ann an cultar na Gàidhlig, agus spèis dha na Gàidheil, agus cha do lagaich an ùidh agus an spèis sin a-riamh.[2] Ach bha an càirdeas eadar an dà Iain, agus eisimpleir Fhear Chanaidh, cudromach ann an dòighean eile. Chaidh Fear Chanaidh a dh'Alba Nuaidh an toiseach ann an 1932, agus thill e iomadh uair as dèidh sin. Bha caraidean aige ann an Ceap Breatainn, agus bha na ceanglaichean sin feumail do dh'Iain Seathach nuair a thug e Alba Nuadh air airson a' chiad uair, ann an 1963.[3] Agus b' e Fear Chanaidh a' chiad neach a rinn clàraidhean-fuaime de dh'òrain agus de bheul-aithris Ghàidhlig ann an Alba Nuaidh: chaidh e agus a bhean, Mairead, a dh'Alba Nuaidh ann an 1937 a dh'aona-ghnothach gus clàraidhean a dhèanamh, agus thill iad ann an 1953 agus bho àm gu àm as dèidh sin. Bha fios aig Fear Chanaidh air cho beairteach is a bha dualchas na Gàidhlig ann an Ceap Breatainn, agus gun gabhadh mòran a bharrachd clàraidh a dhèanamh le neach-rannsachaidh dealasach aig an robh ùidh anns a' Ghàidhlig. B' e Iain Seathach an neach-rannsachaidh sin.

Anns an aiste seo, thèid sùil a thoirt air dìreach aon dhe na clàraidhean-fuaime a rinn Fear Chanaidh air an turas aige ann an 1937. Air Dihaoine 10 An t-Sultain anns a' bhliadhna sin, ann an Hogoma,[4] Eilean Cheap Breatainn, rinn e clàradh-fuaime de dh'òran luaidh; 's e 'Annag a Ghaoil, hao ill o' an tiotal a thug Fear Chanaidh air an òran. Bha an duine a ghabh an t-òran, Eòin G. MacFhionghain, aig aon àm ainmeil ann an saoghal na Gàidhlig, ach mar fhear-deasachaidh agus a chuid sgrìobhaidh seach airson nan comasan seinn aige. Ach aig an àm a chlàraich Fear Chanaidh e, bha dearmad air a dhèanamh air, co-dhiù ann an Alba: sgrìobh Fear Chanaidh gur ann air sàillibh mearachd a rinn an t-Urr. Dòmhnall MacIlleathain, fear-deasachaidh *Typographia Scoto-Gadelica*, a bha sin: chum MacIlleathain a-mach gun tàinig am pàipear-naidheachd a dheasaich MacFhionghain, *Mac-Talla*, gu ceann ann an 1904 air bàs MhicFhionghain.[5] Ann an 1937, bha MacFhionghain na bhodach agus bha e a' fulang le droch shlàinte, ach bha e fhathast beò!

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[1] 'S e an litreachadh 'Chanaidh' (seach 'Chanaigh') a chleachd an Caimbeulach fhèin.

[2] John Shaw, 'A visit to Canna, South Uist and Barra in 1961', *West Highland Free Press*, 12 January 2022.

[3] John Shaw, 'Memories of Glendale, Nova Scotia in 1963', *West Highland Free Press*, 29 January 2025.

[4] Hogoma (Whycocomagh). Gheibhear fiosrachadh mu ainmean-àite Gàidhlig air a bheil iomradh san artaigil seo aig https://data.novascotia.ca/Arts-Culture-and-History/Gaelic-Placenames-in-Nova-Scotia/8y56-h92y.

[5] John Lorne Campbell, *Songs Remembered in Exile* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1990), 77.

Cha ruigear a leas cus a ràdh mu Fhear Chanaidh: b' e fear dhe na sgoilearan Gàidhlig agus beul-aithris nan Gàidheal a bu chudromaiche agus a b' ainmeile an fhicheadamh linn. Rugadh e ann an Dùn Èideann air a' chiad latha dhen Dàmhair, 1906.[6] B' e an Còirneal Donnchadh Caimbeul, Fear Inbhir Nèill, fear dhe na h-uaislean Caimbeulach ann an Earra-Ghàidheal, na athair. B' e Ethel Waterbury, tè às na Stàitean Aonaichte, nighean bancair agus fear-gnìomhachais beartach, na mhàthair.[7] Thogadh Fear Chanaidh ann an Taigh Thaighnis, taigh mòr air oighreachd athar ann an Earra-Ghàidheal, ach coltach ri mòran òigridh uasail eile, chaidh e gu sgoiltean spaideil, prìobhaideach, an toiseach Sgoil Ullachail Cargilfield ann an Dùn Èideann agus an uair sin gu Sgoil Rugby, ann an Sasainn. As dèidh sin, chaidh Fear Chanaidh gu Colaiste Naomh Eòin aig Oithigh Oxford, far an do chuir e crìoch air ceum ann an Eaconomachd Dhùthchail ann an 1929. Ged a chuala e a' Ghàidhlig air oighreachd athar nuair a bha e òg, cha b' ann gus a' bhliadhna 1926 a ghabh e barrachd ùidh anns a' chànain. Nuair a bha e aig na geamannan Gàidhealach anns an Òban, chuala e ceithrear ghillean bho na h-eileanan a bha a' bruidhinn na Gàidhlig ri chèile, agus ann am faclan Iain, 'I had never heard Gaelic spoken like that, and I said to myself "that's something I should have"'.[8] Fhuair e leasanan anns a' chànain le Eachann MacIlleathain, Tirisdeach a bha na mhaor-oighreachd air oighreachd athar, agus nuair a thill e a Oxford, ghabh e clasaichean anns a' chànain le Iain Friseal (1882–1945), Ollamh na Ceiltis aig an oilthigh, a bha na Ghàidheal bho Shiorramachd Inbhir Nis.

Agus dè mu dhèidhinn Eòin G. MhicFhionghain? Rugadh e air 2 An t-Sultain, 1869, ann an Dunakin, Siorramachd Inbhir Nis, Ceap Breatainn, baile beag shuas air cùl Beinn nan Sgìtheanach, faisg air Hogoma, agus chaochail ei air 13 Am Faoilleach, 1944, ann an Hogoma. B' e Aonghas MacFhionghain, Sgìtheanach a rugadh ann an Cearnasdail,[9] baile Pheighinn Choinnich, Sgìre Ùige, anns a' bhliadhna 1830, na athair, agus b' e Catrìona NicGill'Iosa, bàn-Sgìtheanach a rugadh ann an Cille Moire anns a' bhliadhna 1831, na mhàthair. Thogadh MacFhionghain ann an dachaigh anns nach robh ach a' Ghàidhlig ga bruidhinn, ann an sgìre a chaidh a thuineachadh le Sgìtheanaich agus daoine bho eileanan beaga Pròstanach eile leithid Thioraidh agus Eilean nam Muc (MacDougall 1972, 456-62, 464-6. 468-70).[10] A-rèir an Ollaimh Teàrlach Dunn bho Oilthigh Harvard, bha MacFhionghain na ghille euslainteach a bha gu math tric tinn, agus cha b' urrainn dha an sgoil a fhrithealadh gu riaghailteach. Fhad 's a bha e glacte aig an taigh, ge-tà, 'he spent his time acquiring information about his Gaelic forefathers'.[11] Thogadh MacFhionghain ann an dachaigh a bha beairteach ann an dualchas na Gàidhlig, agus mar a mhinich e fhèin, bhiodh e a' cluinntinn òrain Ghàidhlig fad a bheatha.[12]

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[6] Chaochail e air 25 An Giblean, 1996.

[7] Ray Perman, *The Man Who Gave Away His Island: A Life of John Lorne Campbell of Canna* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2010), 9–10.

[8] Perman, *The Man Who Gave Away His Island*, 22.

[9] Chan eil e gu buileach soilleir càite a bheil Cearnasdail. Air seann mhapa a chaidh fhoillseachadh ann an 1824, tha àite fon ainm 'Craigsinsdale' tuath air baile Ùige, agus is dòcha gur e sin baile-breithe athair Eòin: Johnson 1820. Tha mi fada an comain Airt MhicCarmaig airson an fhiosrachaidh seo. Bha sinnsearan Aonghais a' fuireach ann an Cuidreach, deas air baile Ùige, ach dh'fhàg Aonghas agus a phàrantan Talla nan Taighean, ann an Gleann Conan, faisg air baile Ùige nuair a chaidh iad a Cheap Breatainn ann an 1840; faic Norman Macdonald agus Cailean Maclean, fir deas., *The Great Book of Skye: From the Island to the World, People and Place on a Scottish Island* (Portree, Isle of Skye: Great Book Publishing, 2014), 256.

[10] Hector MacDougall, *Smeòrach nan Cnoc 's nan Gleann / The Songster of the Hills and the Glens* (Glasgow: Alexander MacLaren & Sons, 1939), 456–62, 464–6, 468–70.

[11] Charles W. Dunn, *Highland Settler: A Portrait of the Scottish Gael in Nova Scotia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953), 83.

[12] Litir bho MhacFhionghain air 13 An Lùnastal 1937: Canna House Archive, CH2/1/1/14/48.

Thòisich e a dhol dhan sgoil ann an Hogoma, ach fhuair e foghlam àrd-sgoile ann am Baile Shuidni,[13] aig Acadamaidh Shuidni, far an do dheasaich e pàipear-naidheachd na sgoile, 'The Sydney Academy Record'. Is coltach gur e seo a dhùisg ùidh MhicFhionghain ann an sgrìobhadh agus foillseachadh, agus aig aois fichead 's dhà, stèidhich e *Mac-Talla* ann am Baile Shuidni, an aon phàipear-naidheachd Gàidhlig a bh' againn riamh a thàinig a-mach a h-uile seachdain no a h-uile dàrna seachdain agus a mhair na b' fhaide na grunn mhìosan. Thàinig *Mac-Talla* a-mach gach seachdain, agus an uair sin gach cola-deug, eadar 1892 is 1904. Cha robh riamh barrachd na mu 1,500 fo-sgrìobhaichean, ach bha iad bho gach àite anns a' chruinne far an deach na Gàidheil. Eadar 1928 agus 1930, dheasaich MacFhionghain iris Ghàidhlig eile, *Fear na Cèilidh*, a thàinig a-mach gach mìos. A bharrachd air a' phàipear-naidheachd agus an iris, rinn e eadar-theangachaidhean agus beagan bàrdachd. Uile-gu-lèir rinn MacFhionghain an t-uabhas airson na Gàidhlig: ann am beachd Theàrlaich Dunn, 's e glè bheag anns an t-Saoghal Ùr a rinn barrachd airson na cànain agus a litreachais, agus cha robh ach aon duine eile, Alexander Maclean Sinclair, a rinn an uiread.[14] 'S e seo am beachd a bh' aig Fear Chanaidh air:

> He was always zealous concerning the Gaelic language and concerning the reputation of the Gaels, and he would not put up with any contempt or disrespect directed at either by anyone. Had he had the opportunity to receive a university education, I am certain that he would have reached the highest levels of scholarship. He didn't have much worldly wealth, and the was often troubled with bad health and, shamefully, the indifference of many a person who should have been encouraging him.
>
> All Gaels, wherever they may be, should remember Jonathan MacKinnon as a person who stood up for, and fought on behalf of, and worked for his mother tongue and its literature with learning and with patience.[15]

Thachair Fear Chanaidh ri MacFhionghain airson a' chiad uair ann an 1932 aig àm duilich ann am beatha Fhear Chanaidh. Chaochail a bhràthair, Teàrlach, agus chaidh e dha na Stàitean Aonaichte le a mhàthair gus dust Theàrlaich adhlacadh ann an cladh teaghlach a mhàthar, ann an Darien, Connecticut. Thug a sheanmhair airgead dha, gus cuairt a ghabhail mus deach e fhèin agus a mhàthair air ais a Bhreatainn, agus chuir e roimhe a dhol a dh'Alba Nuaidh,[16] far an deach iomadh Gàidheal bhon chairteal mu dheireadh dhen 18mh linn suas gu meadhan an 19mh linn, 'to discover the lie of the land', na fhaclan fhèin.[17]

Ràinig e Baile Shuidni, Ceap Breatainn, air Diluain, 11 an Giblean, far an do thachair e ri Dòmhnall MacFhionghain, bràthair Eòin, agus chuir Fear Chanaidh eòlas air Eòin fhèin air an ath latha. A reir Fhear Chanaidh, bha MacFhionghain meadhanach àrd, plocagach, agus car mall na ghluasad agus na chainnt, le blas Canadach air a' Bheurla aige agus blas Sgìtheanach air a' Ghàidhlig aige.[18] Bha an t-uabhas eòlais aig MacFhionghain mu eachdraidh agus cor na Gàidhlig ann an Alba Nuaidh agus ann an Eilean a' Phrionnsa, agus thug MacFhionghain fios do dh'Fhear Chanaidh mu shuidheachadh na Gàidhlig anns na sgoiltean agus anns na h-eaglaisean, mu àireamhan luchd-labhairt agus crìonadh choimhearsnachdan, mun bhàrd ionadail, Coinneach MacFhearghais, agus mun Urr. Tormod MacLeòid (1780–1866), a thug mu cheud gu leth duine bhon a' cho-thional aige ann an Ceap Breatainn gu Sealann Nuadh ann an 1851.[19]

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[13] Baile Shuidni (Sydney).
[14] Dunn, *Highland Settler*, 87.
[15] Fear Chanaidh [John Lorne Campbell], 'Mac Talla', *An Gàidheal* 45 (January 1950): 3.
[16] Perman, *The Man Who Gave Away His Island*, 12–13.
[17] Campbell, *Songs Remembered*, 2.
[18] Fear Chanaidh, 'Mac Talla', 3.
[19] Airson barrachd fiosrachaidh mu MhacLeòid, faic Flora MacPherson, *Watchman Against the World: The Story of Norman McLeod and His People*. Halifax, N. S.: Breton Books, 1993.

Air an ath latha, 13 An Giblean, thug MacFhionghain dha leth-bhric de *Fear na Cèilidh*, an iris mhìosail Ghàidhlig a dheasaich MacFhionghain eadar 1928 agus 1930, dreachd de dh'aiste a sgrìobh MacFhionghain a bha, am beachd a' Chaimbeulaich 'of no small interest' mu thuineachadh Gàidhealach ann an Ceap Breatainn, agus dreachd de dh'aiste eile a sgrìobh MacFhionghain mu eachdraidh nan Gàidheal. Gheall MacFhionghain gum lorgadh e leth-bhric de *Mac-Talla* do Fhear Chanaidh, agus thug e seachad beagan fiosrachaidh mu na fiachan a bh' air nuair a sguir e leis a' phàipear-naidheachd sin. Bhruidhinn iad mu dhualchainntean na Gàidhlig ann an Ceap Breatainn, mu Chloinn Mhuirich, an teaghlach bàrdail ainmeil às Uibhist, cuid dhiubh a thàinig dhan eilean, mu na Mi'kmaq, tùsanaich an eilein aig an robh talamh fhathast ann an Hogoma, agus thug MacFhionghain dha an aiste a sgrìobh e mu eachdraidh Cheap Breatainn,[20] agus an t-eadar-theangachadh a rinn e dhen stòiridh a sgrìobh Leo Tolstoy, 'Far am bi Gràdh, bidh Dia' ['Where Love Is, God Is'].[21]

Thachair Fear Chanaidh ri MacFhionghain aon uair eile air an turas seo, air feasgar Diardaoin 14 An Giblean. Thug MacFhionghain dha leth-bhric de *Mac-Talla*, bhruidhinn iad air eachdraidh na h-Alba, agus thug MacFhionghain dha eisimpleirean de dh'fhaclan àraidh ann an Gàidhlig Cheap Breatainn.[22] Chaidh Fear Chanaidh a Shanndraigh (Iona, sa Bheurla) air an ath latha, agus an uair sin dhan a' Bhaile Mhòr,[23] mus deach e gu Baile Québec, Montréal agus Toronto.[24].

As dèidh do Fhear Chanaidh tilleadh a dh'Alba, thòisich e agus MacFhionghain a sgrìobhadh dha chèile—b' ann air 22 an t-Ògmhios 1932 a sgrìobh MacFhionghain a' chiad litir gu Fear Chanaidh—agus lean an conaltradh seo eatorra gu faisg air deireadh beatha MhicFhionghain. Beagan agus bliadhna as dèidh do Fhear Chanaidh tilleadh o Chanada, air 4 An Lùnastal, 1933, chaidh e a Bharraigh. Bha e an dùil ri trì seachdainean de làithean-saora anns an eilean, ach dh'fhuirich e ann gus an do cheannaich e eilean Chanaidh ann an 1938.[25] Fhad 's a bha e ann am Barraigh, chuir e eòlas air Mairead, a bha a' fuireach ann an Uibhist a Deas, a' clàradh òrain Ghàidhlig agus beul-aithris,[26] agus phòs iad anns an Ògmhios, 1935.[27] Bha Fear Chanaidh fhèin trang anns na bliadhnaichean seo, a' clàradh òrain agus beul-aithris ann am Barraigh, Èirisgeigh agus Uibhist a Deas.

A thaobh a' chonaltraidh eadar MacFhionghain agus Fear Chanaidh, cha d' fhuaireadh lorg air na litrichean a sgrìobh Fear Chanaidh gu MacFhionghain, ach tha fichead is a h-ochd litrichean bho MhacFhionghain anns an tasglann aig Taigh Chanaidh[28]. Chìthear anns na litrichean seo gun do dh'fhàs an càirdeas eadar an dithis fhear; chuireadh MacFhionghain tòrr fiosrachaidh gu Fear Canaidh mun a'

[20] Chan eil e cinnteach dè an aiste a tha seo, ach cha tuirt Fear Chanaidh gur e dreachd no làmh-sgrìobhainn a bh' ann. Le sin, tha seansa ann gur e aiste a chaidh a chur an clò a bh' ann, is dòcha an tè seo: Eòin MacFhonghuin, 'Na Gàidheil an Ceap Breatunn', ann an C. W. Vernon, *Cape Breton, Canada, at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: National Publishing Co., 1903), 72–81; faic Campbell, *Songs Remembered,* 25–26.

[21] Eòin G. MacFhionghuin, *Far am bi Gràdh, bidh Dia* (Sydney, C.B.: Donald MacKinnon, 1924); Campbell, *Songs Remembered*, 26.

[22] Campbell, *Songs Remembered*, 29.

[23]Am Baile Mòr, Antaiginis (Antigonish). Gheibhear fiosrachadh mu ainmean-àite Gàidhlig air a bheil iomradh san artaigil seo aig https://data.novascotia.ca/Arts-Culture-and-History/Gaelic-Placenames-in-Nova-Scotia/8y56-h92y.

[24] Campbell, *Songs Remembered*, 29–32.

[25] Perman, *The Man Who Gave Away His Island*, 33, 86–97.

[26] Chaidh cuid dhen stuth a chlàraich i a chur an clò; faic Margaret Fay Shaw, *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955). Mun àm seo ann am beatha Iain Latharna Chaimbeul agus Mairead, faic Perman, *The Man Who Gave Away His Island*, 47–59, agus airson barrachd mu bheatha Mairead, faic Margaret Fay Shaw, *From the Alleghenies to the Hebrides: an autobiography* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 1999).

[27] Perman, *The Man Who Gave Away His Island*, 60.

[28] Canna House Archive, CH2/1/1/14/48.

Ghàidhlig ann an Canada, agus chumadh Fear Chanaidh fios dha MhacFhionghain mu ghnothaichean na Gàidhlig ann an t-seann dùthaich. Chuir MacFhionghain leth-bhric de *Mac-Talla* gu Fear Chanaidh, agus chuir Fear Chanaidh leabhraichean Gàidhlig, leithid a' chruinneachaidh de dh'òrain a rinn Seonaidh Caimbeul à dh'Uibhist a Deas a dheasaich Fear Chanaidh, gu MacFhionghain. A rèir litrichean MhicFhionghain, bha iad an dùil ri dà chruinneachadh dhe na sgrìobhaidhean aig MacFhionghain a chur an clò, pròiseact nach tàinig gu buil, ach taing do chuideachadh Fhear Chanaidh, chaidh eadar-theangachaidhean a rinn MacFhionghain air na sgeulachdan *The Other Wise Man*, le Henry van Dyke (1852–1933), agus *The Three Strangers*, le Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) a chur an clò.[29]

Ann an 1937, thàinig Fear Chanaidh air ais a dh'Alba Nuaidh, an turas seo leis a' bhean, Mairead. Bha Fear Chanaidh ag iarraidh cèilidh a dhèanamh air cuid dhen fheadhainn air an do chuir e eòlas ann an 1932, ach cuideachd a chlàradh òrain agus beul-aithris a thug na h-eilthirich leotha bhon t-seann dùthaich agus a bha fhathast beò am measg sliochd nan eilthireach. A bharrachd air sin, bha ùidh aige ann an eisimpleirean de dhualchainntean bhon t-seann dùthaich a chaidh a ghlèidheadh anns an dùthaich ùir.[30] As t-samhradh, sheòl iad a Bhaile Québec—thug iad leotha an car aca, Vauxhall—agus dhràibh iad gu Alba Nuaidh, far an do dh'fhuirich iad fad sia seachdainean. Chlàraich Fear Chanaidh air an Ediphone aige naochad is a còig òrain a thàinig bhon t-seann dùthaich bho thùs, deich òrain a chaidh a dhèanamh ann an Alba Nuaidh, agus caochladh rudan eile. Dheasaich agus chlò-bhuail Fear Chanaidh an stuth seo anns an leabhar *Songs Remembered in Exile* a chaidh fhoillseachadh ann an 1990. Tha na clàraidhean seo air leth luachmhor, oir b' iad na ciad chlàraidhean de dhualchas nan Gàidheal ann an Alba Nuaidh a chaidh a dhèanamh, agus tha iad a' toirt dhuinn sealladh annasach de stòr agus stoidhlichean seinn a bh' aig cuid dhe na beulaichean a bu chudromaiche ann an Alba Nuaidh aig an àm, obair air an do thog an Dr Iain Seathach gu mòr.

Ràinig na Caimbeulaich Ceap Breatainn tràth anns an t-Sultain, agus is coltach gur ann air MacFhionghain, ann an Hogoma, a rinn iad a' chiad chèilidh, air 10 An t-Sultain, agus b' e cèilidh gu math feumail dhaibh a bh' ann. Fhuair Fear Chanaidh tòrr a bharrachd fiosrachaidh bho MhacFhionghain mu chor na Gàidhlig ann an Alba Nuaidh is Eilean a' Phrionnsa, fiosrachadh feumail mu chultar nan Gàidheal, agus fiosrachadh mu obair-sgrìobhaidh MhicFhionghain fhèin. Dh'fhaighnich Fear Chanaidh dha mu òrain agus sgeulachdan, agus thuirt MacFhionghain dha gun robh fhathast fèill mhòr air na h-òrain agus gun robh mòran dhiubh a rinneadh ann an Ceap Breatainn. Thuirt e gun robh gu leòr fidhlearan barraichte ann an Siorramachd Inbhir Nis, ach nach robhar ag ìnnse nan sgeulachdan tuilleadh.[31] Tha fhios againn bho obair Iain Sheathaich agus luchd-cruinneachaidh beul-aithris eile gum biodh fhathast gu leòr dhaoine aig an robh sgeulachdan ann an Ceap Breatainn aig an àm, ach a thaobh nan sgeulachdan mòra, is coltach nach robhar gan ìnnse ach gu math ainneamh aig an àm.[32]

Chuir na Caimbeulaich agus MacFhionghain seachad an latha a' dèanamh chèilidhean ann an sgìrean faisg air Hogoma. Rinn iad tadhal air Niall MacFhionghain agus a theaghlach ann an Gleann nam Màgan,[33] dachaigh far an deach, ann am faclan Fhear Chanaidh, dualchas seinn anns a' Ghàidhlig a

[29] John Lorne Campbell, *Sgeul an Draoidh eile* (Dun Phàrlain: I. B. MacAoidh, 1938); Jonathan G. MacKinnon, *An Triùir Choigreach* (Sydney, C.B.: Donald MacKinnon 1944).
[30] Campbell, *Songs Remembered*, 16.
[31] 'The songs are still popular and there are many current that were composed in Cape Breton. There are also some excellent fiddlers in this county (Inverness). But the old stories, *sgeulachdan*, have gone quite out of fashion' (Campbell, *Songs Remembered*, 41).
[32] Litir bho MhacFhionghain air 13 An Lùnastal 1937: Canna House Archive, CH2/1/1/14/48.
[33] Gleann nam Màgan (Ainslie Glen).

chumail suas. A rèir Fhear Chanaidh, b' e gille òg, aois dà bhliadhna dheug, fear dhe na seinneadairean a b' fheàrr a chuala iad. B' ann à Eilean nam Muc a bha sinnsearan an teaghlaich. Sgrìobh Fear Chanaidh gun cuala iad cuid dhe na h-òrain a rinn Calum MacGill'Iosa, bàrd ainmeil à Bràigh na h-Aibhne,[34] Siorramachd Inbhir Nis, Ceap Breatainn,[35] agus grunn òran a thàinig bhon t-seann dùthaich. Chaidh fear dhe na h-òrain a chuala iad aig Niall MacFhionghain, 'Càite an-diugh a bheil mo dhìlsean', fhoillseachadh ann an *Songs Remembered in Exile*.[36] Rinn iad cèilidhean air grunn theaghlaichean eile faisg air Hogoma agus air taobh an Ear Loch Ainslidh, iad uile nam Fionghanaich agus sìol nam Mucanach. Aig Loch Ainslidh an Ear, chlàraich Fear Chanaidh Eòin MacFhionghain agus Niall D. MacFhionghain ag aithris 'Tiugainn a dh'iomain', còmhradh a nochd ann an *Songs Remembered in Exile*,[37] agus ann an Gleann nam Màgan rinn Fear Chanaidh clàradh eile a nochd anns an leabhar sin, tionndadh dhen duanag altraim 'Dèan Cadalan Sàmhach' a rinneadh, a rèir choltais, leis a' bhàrd Tàileach, Iain mac Mhurchaidh, mun bliadhna 1774, fhad 's a bha e ann an Carolina mu Thuath.[38] Is soilleir gun do dh'fhàg na cèilidhean seo Fear Chanaidh ann an deagh shunnd: sgrìobh e gun do ghlèidh Gàidheil Cheap Breatainn nòsan aoigheachd Gàidhealaich a b' fheàrr, agus gur gann gum faigheadh coigreach àite far am faigheadh e fàilte leis an uiread de choibhneas, gu h-àraidh nan robh a' Ghàidhlig aige.[39] B' ann air an latha seo a chlàraich Fear Chanaidh MacFhionghain a' gabhail 'Annag a Ghaoil, hao ill o'. B' ann an Hogoma a rinneadh an clàradh; le sin, feumaidh gur ann aig toiseach an latha, mus deach iad air an cuairt, no aig deireadh an latha, as dèidh dhaibh tilleadh, a rinneadh e.

Fhad 's a bha iad còmhla, dh'fhaighnich Fear Chanaidh mu òrain a chaidh a dhèanamh ann an Alba, agus gu h-àraidh mu na h-òrain luaidh, agus co-dhiù an robh cuimhne aig Gàidheil Cheap Breatainn air na seann òrain luaidh a thàinig bhon t-seann dùthaich—mar a chì sinn, b' e an t-òran a ghabh MacFhionghain fear dhiubh sin. Chaidh ìnnse dha gun robh gu leòr dhiubh aig sìol nam Barrach agus nan Uibhisteach a bha a' fuireach air cladaichean Loch Mòr nam Barrach[40] air nach robh muinntir Hogoma agus Loch Ainslidh eòlach,[41] agus gum biodh 'froilig'—am facal a chleachdas Gàidheil Cheap Breatainn fhathast air luadhadh—ann an Abhainn a Tuath, air Cladach a Tuath, sgìre anns an do thuinich muinntir Leòdhais agus na Hearadh. Nuair a dhealaich iad, chaidh Fear Chanaidh agus Mairead dhan a' froilig, agus an uair sin chaidh iad dhan Chaolas Mhòr, no Caolas nam Barrach,[42] gus

[34] Bràigh na h-Aibhne (South West Margaree).

[35] Chaidh cruinneachadh dhe na h-òrain aig MacGill'Ìosa agus bàird ionadail eile a chlò-bhualadh dà bhliadhna as dèidh turas nan Caimbeulach: faic MacDougall, *Smeòrach nan Cnoc*, 1939.

[36] Campbell, *Songs Remembered*, 85–87. Is soilleir gur e òran ionadail a bh' ann mu dhèidhinn crìonadh an t-sluaigh anns an Abhainn Mheadhanaich, Siorramachd Inbhir Nis, ach stèidhichte air sèisd agus fonn bhon t-seann dùthaich.

[37] Campbell, *Songs Remembered*, 80–81. Mar a mhìnich Fear Chanaidh, chaidh an còmhradh iomraiteach seo a chlàradh le Iain Seathach bhon aithris aig Eòs MacNèill, 'Eòs Nìll Bhig'; faic Joe Neil MacNeil agus John Shaw, *Tales until Dawn / Sgeul gu Latha: The World of a Cape Breton Story-Teller* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 390; tha gu leòr eisimplearan dheth bhon t-seann dùthaich, cuideachd.

[38] Faic Màiri Sìne Chaimbeul, *Iain mac Mhurchaidh: The life and work of John MacRae, Kintail and North Carolina* (Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 2020), 236–239.

[39] 'Here I may say that the Gaels in Cape Breton have preserved the best traditions of Highland hospitality. There can be few places where a stranger is received with so much kindness, especially if he has a knowledge of Gaelic' (Campbell, *Songs Remembered*, 41–42).

[40] Loch Mòr nam Barrach (Lake Bras d'Or). Faic Campbell, *Songs Remembered*, 42.

[41] Ann an litir a sgrìobh MacFhionghain gu Fear Chanaidh goirid ro thuras nan Caimbeulach, thuirt MacFhionghain gun robh e na bhritheamh aig co-fharpais seinn ann an Sanntraigh, Ceap Breatainn (Iona) beagan bhliadhnaichean roimhe sin, agus nach cuala e riamh roimhe an darna leth dhe na trì fichead is a sia òrain a chaidh a ghabhail: 13 An Lùnastal 1937, Canna House Archive, CH2/1/1/14/48.

[42] Campbell, *Songs Remembered,* 45.

clàraidhean a dhèanamh le sìol nam Barrach is nan Uibhisteach. Rinn iad clàraidhean ann an Eilean na Nollaig, Còbh a' Bhiobhair, Pon na Maiseadh, Glasbaigh, agus Baile Shuidni, agus an uair sin chaidh iad gu Louisbourg, gus làrach na seann daingniche Frangaich fhaicinn.[43]

B' ann às dèidh sin a thàinig iad air ais a Hogoma, a dh'aona-ghnothach gus soraidh-slàn fhàgail aig MacFhionghain, a ghabh, a rèir Fhear Chanaidh, ùidh mhòr anns an obair aca fad an turais, agus a bha ag iarraidh an cruinneachadh aca fhaicinn mus do dh'fhàg iad an t-eilean.[44] Bha na Caimbeulaich cuideachd an dòchas gun cuireadh MacFhionghain ann an aithne a chèile iad agus cuid dhe na tùsanaich Mi'kmaq, a bha a' fuireach ri taobh Hogoma, oir bha iad ag iarraidh cànain nam Mi'kmaq a chlàradh agus, is dòcha, rud sam bith a sheinneadh na Mi'kmaq dhaibh. Chaidh MacFhionghain leotha gus cèilidh a dhèanamh air Gabriel Syllibuy, ceann-cinnidh nam Mi'kmaq ann an Hogoma, far an do chlàraich iad a' chànain, agus aithris a chuala Syllibuy aig a sheanair air mar a thàinig na Gàidheil dhan sgìre an toiseach. Chlàraich iad cuideachd nabaidh Syllibuy, Levi Poulette, a ghabh laoidhean ann an cànain nam Mi'kmaq. B'e seo an turas mu dheireadh a chunnaic MacFhionghain agus na Caimbeulaich a chèile, ged bhiodh MacFhionghain agus Fear Chanaidh a' sgrìobhadh gu cunbhalach dha chèile as dèidh an dealachaidh seo.

Agus dè mu dheidhinn an òrain a ghabh Eòin MacFhionghain nuair a chunnaic na Caimbeulaich e aig toiseach an turais? A rèir na meatarachd, 's e òran luaidh a th' ann: tha trì sreathan anns an t-sèist, agus na h-aon fhaclan anns a' chiad agus anns an treas loidhne, le gu leòr fhaclan gun bhrìgh (vocables) annta, agus dìreach aon loidhne anns gach rann, le gach loidhne ceangailte ri chèile le comhardadh-deiridh.[45] Ghabh MacFhionghain an t-sèist agus seachd rannan (faic *Figear 1*):[46]



Fig. 1. 'Annag a' Ghaoil, hao ill o' mar a chaidh a chlàradh bho Eòin MacFhionghain, Hogoma, 10/9/37.

Annag a ghaoil, *hao ill ó*
Hao ill o ro bha ho o
Annag a ghaoil, *hao ill ó*
An cuala sibhs' mar dh'éirich dhomh? (*dà uair*)

[43] Caolas nam Barrach (Grand Narrows); Eilean na Nollaig (Christmas Island); Còbh a' Bhiobhair (Beaver Cove, Victoria County): Pon na Maiseadh (Benacadie); Glasbaigh (Glace Bay).
[44] '[T]hroughout our stay in Cape Breton [MacKinnon] had taken the greatest interest in our work and had expressed the desire to see our collection before we left the island' (Campbell, *Songs Remembered*, 47–48).
[45] James Ross, 'The Sub-Literary Tradition in Scottish Gaelic Song-Poetry', *Éigse* 7 (1953–55): 220–221, 233–234; William Gillies, 'The Form of Scottish Gaelic Poetry', in Carla Sassi (ed.), *The International Companion to Scottish Poetry* (Glasgow: Scottish Literature International, 2016), 98–99.
[46] Campbell, *Songs Remembered*, 79.

Annag a ghaoil, *hao ill ó*
Hao ill o ro bha ho o

Mar a dh'fhalbh iad leis an dròbh,
Bhrist an t-acair, shrac an seòl,
Chaill mi m' athair is m' fhear pòst',
Chaill mi mo thriùir bhràithrean òg.
Uisd a nighean, sguir dhe d' bhròn,
Fhir an taighe, faigh an stop!

Is coltach gur e criomag de dh'òran na b' fhaide a th' ann, ach is soilleir gur ann mu thubaist mara a tha e, anns an deach grunn fhireannach, iad uile càirdeach ri ùghdar (gun urra) an òrain, a bhàthadh.

Anns an leabhar *Songs Remembered in Exile*, thug Fear Chanaidh iomradh air òran luaidh eile a nochd anns a' chiad iom-leabhar dhen chruinneachadh a dheasaich e fhèin is Francis Collinson, *Hebridean Folksongs*, ''S fhada bhuam a chì mi 'n ceò'.[47] Fhuair Fear Chanaidh an t-òran seo anns na làmh-sgrìobhainnean aig Ailean Dòmhnallach (1859–1905), 'Maighstir Ailean', sagart Èirisgeigh, agus fhuair Maighstir Ailean e bhon t-seinn aig Catrìona Nic an t-Saoir, Èirisgeigh.[48] Cho math ris a' chlàradh a rinn e le MacFhionghain, rinn Fear Chanaidh fhèin clàraidhean dhen òran luaidh seo ann an Alba: fear a rinn e le Màiri, 'Bean Dhonnchaidh MhicAonghais', An Rubha Bàn, Èirisgeidh, ann an Èirisgeidh air an dàrna latha dhen Ghiblean, 1951;[49] agus fear eile a rinn e le Màiri, Bean Ailig MhicIain, 'Màiri Mhòr Iain Choinnich', An Gleann, Eilean Bharraigh, ann am Bàgh a' Chaisteil, air an còigeamh latha dhen Ghiblean 1951.[50] Seo na faclan a dh'fhoillsich Fear Chanaidh agus Collinson ann an *Hebridean Folksongs*, stèidhichte air an teacsa ann an làmh-sgrìobhainnean Mhaighstir Ailein:[51]

Hó i rì i liù i leò
Hó, hó, i iù ra bhò ho,
Hó i rì i liù i leò.

'S fhada bhuam a chì mi 'n ceò,
Hó i rì i liù i leò . . .
Chì mi Bheinn Bheag 's a' Bheinn Mhór,
Chì mi 'n driùchd air bhàrr an fheòir.
An cuala sibh mar dh'éirich dhòmhs'?
Bhrist an rachdan, shrac an seòl,
Dh'fhalbh na croinn 'sa chuan mhór,
Dh'fhalbh na b' fhaide leam na seòid.

[47] John Lorne Campbell and Francis Collinson, *Hebridean Folksongs: A Collection of Waulking Songs made by Donald MacCormick* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), Òran XXXVIII, 154.
[48] Campbell agus Collinson, *Hebridean Folksongs*, 193. Tha Campbell agus Collinson cuideachd ag ràdh gun robh tionndadh grinn dhen òran ann an Marjory Kennedy-Fraser and Kenneth MacLeod, *From the Hebrides: Further gleanings of tale and song* (Glasgow: Paterson's Publications, 1925), 60, anns an robh a' chiad ceithir loidhnichean co-ionnann, ach bha iad dhen bheachd gur ann à òran eile a bha an sèist agus am fonn.
[49] Campbell agus Collinson, *Hebridean Folksongs*, 337; faic cho math Tobar an Dualchais (TanD), àireamhan a' chlàir 33647 agus 62768. A thuilleadh air a sin, chaidh an t-òran a chlàradh le Dòmhnall Eairdsidh Dòmhnallach aig Ciorstaidh NicFhionghain (1893–1968), 'Ciorstaidh Mhurchaidh Eachainn, Banntrach Aonghais Uilleim', ann am Malacleit, Uibhist a Tuath (TanD àireamh a' chlàir 105073); aig Ceit NicCarmaig, 'Ceit Nèill 'ic Sheumais 'ic Iain 'ic Dhòmhnaill', no 'Ceit a' Bhota', ann an Cladach Bhalaigh, Uibhist a Tuath (TanD àireamh a' chlàir 22449); agus aig Peanaidh Mhoireastan (1906–1990), 'Peanaidh Bheag', anns an Iochdar, Uibhist a Deas (TanD àireamh a' chlàir 71838).
[50] Campbell agus Collinson, *Hebridean Folksongs*, 338; Tobar an Dualchais, àireamh a' chlàir 88960.
[51] Campbell agus Collinson, *Hebridean Folksongs*, 154–155.

Ge math leam mac m' athar beò,
Mac mo mhàthar rinn mo leòn,
E bhith 'san fheamainn gun deò,
'S nach giùlain a cholainn clò,
'S nach giùlain a chas a bhròg!
'Illean cridheil, bithibh còir,
Tadhlamaid ann as taigh-òsd,
Fair a' ghlainne, lìon an stòp!
Luadhadh nam boineidean mu'n bhòrd,
Cuireamaid air chùl am bròn,
Cha doir caoineadh daoine beò.

Bha Fear Chanaidh dhen bheachd gun robh dà fhonn eadar-dhealaichte air an òran, ach a rèir nan clàraidhean fhèin, is coltach gu bheil ceangal ann eatorra.[52]

Tha an aon mheatarachd anns an tionndadh seo ris a' mheatarachd ann an tionndadh MhicFhionghain: trì loidhnichean anns an t-sèist (ach le faclan gun bhrìgh a-mhàin anns an tionndadh seo) agus aon loidhne anns gach rann, iad uile ceangailte ri chèile le comhardadh-deiridh. Anns an tionndadh seo, gheibhear cunntas nas iomlaine air an tubaist, agus, is dòcha, fiosrachadh mun sgìre anns an do thachair an tubaist no anns an robh an t-ùghdar agus an fheadhainn a chaidh a bhàthadh a' fuireach, ged nach eil fhios againn le cinnt cò 'a' Bheinn Bheag' agus 'a' Bheinn Mhòr' air an tugadh iomradh. Aig deireadh tionndadh MhicFhionghain, thugadh iomradh air deoch, ann an taigh-òsta, is coltach. Tha an aon sheòrsa dùnaidh anns an tionndadh seo ann an *Hebridean Folksongs*, ach le fada a bharrachd fiosrachaidh mun adhbhar a bha daoine anns an taigh-òsta—seòrsa de fhaire, is coltach. A dh'aindeoin nan diofaran, tha grunn loidhneachan anns an dà thionndadh a tha co-ionnann no gu math coltach ri chèile.

Anns na nòtaichean aig deireadh 'Annag a ghaoil', thug Fear Chanaidh iomradh air tionndadh eile dhen òran a nochd anns a' chruinneachadh bheag luachmhor de dh'òrain luaidh a dheasaich K.C. Craig, *Órain Luaidh Màiri nighean Alasdair*. Fhuair Craig gach òran anns a' chruinneachadh seo bhon aon sheinneadair, Màiri Dhòmhnallach, à Snaoiseabhal, Uibhist a Deas. Seo an tionndadh aice:[53]

hó hi rì hi liù hi leò
hó hó hi iù bhó ho
hó hi rì hi liù hi leò

'S fhada bhuam chì mi an ceò.
Chì mi an Cuileann, chì mi an Crò,[54]
Chì mi Muile nam beann mór,

[52] Campbell and Collinson, 193 agus 337–338. Chìthear tar-sgrìobhaidhean de chuid dhe na tionndaidhean anns an eàrr-ràdh, agus cluinnear iad uile, seach an tionndadh aig MacFhionghain, anns na ceanglaichean gu Tobar an Dualchais no Youtube, a chìthear anns an teacsa seo.

[53] K. C. Craig, *Órain Luaidh Màiri nighean Alasdair* (Glasgow, Alasdair Matheson & Co., 1949), 100.

[54] Chan eil e soilleir dè as ciall dha na faclan seo. Tha 'cuileann' a' ciallachadh 'holly', agus is dòcha gur e sin ciall an fhacail seo. Ach chleachd Craig litir mhòr, mar gur e ainmear sònrachaidh a th' ann. Is coltach gur e 'Cuillin' a th' ann an 'Cuileann', ged 's e 'Cuiltheann' an dòigh-litreachaidh àbhaisteach anns a' Ghàidhlig. Is coltach gur e ainm-àite a th' anns a' Chrò, oir chaidh litir mhòr a chleachdadh aig toiseach an fhacail, agus is coltach gur e àite ann an Cinn t-Sàile a tha seo. Ann am faclair Dwelly, chìthear na leanas: "cho fad is a bhitheas monadh an Ceann tSàile, cha bhi MacCoinnich gun àl sa chrò', as long as there are moors in Kintail, MacKenzie will not want cattle in the pen — crò has a double meaning here, being also the name of a place in Kintail, girt with hills and from which the river Crò is named": faic Edward Dwelly, *The Illustrated Gaelic English Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2001), 274, *s.v.* 'crò'.

Chì mi a' bheinn bheag 's a' bheinn mhór,
A mhoighdeannan 's a mhàthan òg,
An cuala sibh mar dh'éirich dhòmhs'
Stoigh go acarsaid na Sròm?[55]
Bhrist an t-slat 's gun shrac i an seòl.
Thuit na croinn anns a' chuan mhór,
Thuit na b' fhaide liùm na seòid.
Mac mo mhàthar rinn mo leòn
A bhith an druim a' chuain gun deò.
'Illean, biomaid cridheil, còir,
Cuireamaid air chùl am bròn.
Cha chum caoineadh daoine beò.
Tadhlamaid ann as taigh òsd
Dh'òl deoch-slàinte na bheil beò.
Lìon an siola far an stop.

Tha an tionndadh seo gu math coltach ris an fhear a nochd ann an *Hebridean Folksongs*, iom-leabhar a h-aon, agus ged nach eil fios againn mun fhonn air an deach an t-òran a ghabhail, cha mhòr nach eil e cinnteach gur e an aon òran a th' ann. 'S e an diofar as motha eatarra gu bheil barrachd fiosrachaidh anns an tionndadh seo mu àitean, le iomraidhean air Muile, a bharrachd air an Eilean Sgìtheanach, Cinn t-Sàile, agus cladaichean Loch Carrann, far an do thachair an tubaist, co-dhiù a rèir faclan an tionndaidh seo. Air sàillibh an fhiosrachaidh seo, tha seansa ann gur ann bho na h-eileanan a-staigh a thàinig an t-òran bho thùs, ged tha e duilich ri ràdh leis na h-òrain luaidh a bha, gu math tric, beò air bilean an t-sluaigh thar iomadh ginealach agus a shiubhail, coltach ris an fhear seo, gu tòrr diofar àitean. Coltach ri tionndadh MhicFhionghain agus an tionndadh ann an *Hebridean Folksongs*, tha an t-òran a' crìochnachadh leis an fhaire ann an taigh-òsta, ach tha comhairle anns an tionndadh seo mu mar bu chòir do dhaoine a bhith a' dèiligeadh ri bàs: cha toir caoineadh na mairbh air ais, agus bhiodh e na b' fheàrr a bhith a' smaointinn air an fheadhainn a tha beò.

Chan eil e soilleir cuine no ciamar a thog MacFhionghain an t-òran. Mar a chunnacas, bha an t-òran aithnichte ann an Uibhist, ann an Èirisgeidh agus ann am Barraigh, ach cha robh ceanglaichean teaghlaich no coimhearsnachd aig MacFhionghain ris na h-eileanan seo, agus is coltach nach robh Fear Chanaidh eòlach air tionndadh eile dhen òran. Nuair a chuir MacFhionghain *Mac-Talla* air bhonn ann an 1892, bha e a' fuireach ann am baile Shuidni, agus bha na litrichean aige gu Fear Chanaidh a' dèanamh soilleir gun robh e fhathast ann am baile Shuidni ann an 1932, ged is coltach bho na litrichean gun do thill e a dh'fhuireachd ann an Dunakin agus an uair sin ann an Hogoma mun bhliadhna 1933. Le sin, bha MacFhionghain ann am baile Shuidni fad mu dhà fhichead bliadhna, agus bha e gu math eòlach air a' bhaile.[56] Bha Gàidheil gu leòr bho air feadh eilean Cheap Breatainn agus bho tìr-mòr Alba Nuaidh ann am baile Shuidni nuair a bha MacFhionghain ann. Chan eil mòran fios againn mu bheatha MhicFhionghain ann am baile Shuidni, ach is dòcha gun do thog e an t-òran anns a' bhaile bho chuideigin le ceanglaichean sinnsireil ri Uibhist, ri Èirisgeidh, no ri Barraigh, agus bha gu leòr dhiubh sin ann.

[55] Gur dòcha gur e seo am baile beag air cladaichean Loch Carrann, Rois an Iar, ach tha àitean eile anns na h-Eileanan an Iar air a bheil an t-ainm seo, cuideachd: faic Am Faclair Beag, agus dean lorg airson 'An Sròm'.
[56] Gu dearbh, sgrìobh e eachdraidh a' bhaile, ann am Beurla; faic Jonathan G. MacKinnon, *Old Sydney* (Sydney, C.B.: Donald MacKinnon, 1918).

Ach tha e nas coltaiche gun d' fhuair MacFhionghain an t-òran anns a' choimhearsnachd aige fhèin agus, is dòcha, anns an dachaigh aige fhèin nuair a bha e òg. Mar a chunnacas mu thràth, bha na h-òrain Ghàidhlig pailt anns an dachaigh aige nuair a bha e òg,[57] agus taing do chruinneachadh a rinn Catrìona Dhùghlas (1893–1965) ann an sgìre Thròndairnis, air taobh tuath an Eilein Sgìtheanaich, tha fhios againn a-nis gun robh an t-òran seo ri fhaighinn anns an sgìre sin, sgìre gu math faisg air an sgìre às an tàinig pàrantan MhicFhionghain, cuideachd. 'S e nighean Iain Mhic an Aba a bha ann an Catrìona, agus coltach ri a h-athair, bha i ri bàrdachd. Gu dearbha, bha Clann-an-Aba aithnichte thar grunn ghinealach mar bhàird.[58] Nuair a chaochail i, thug Seumas Dùghlas, an duine aice, na làmh-sgrìobhainnean aice dhan Urr. Dòmhnall Buidse, a chuir an clò taghadh dhe na h-òrain agus na dealbhan-cluiche airson cloinne a rinn i, ged nach b' urrainn do Bhuidse rudan eile anns a' chruinneachadh fhoillseachadh.[59] A rèir Bhuidse, thòisich Catrìona a chruinneachadh seann òrain a bhiodh i a' cluinntinn am measg sluagh na sgìre goirid as dèidh dhi sgoil Thròndairnis, sgoil anns an robh a h-athair na cheannard, fhàgail, agus chùm i oirre fad iomadh bliadhna as dèidh sin. Cha bhiodh i a' cruinneachadh ach seann òrain nach robh riamh ann an clò agus a bha ann an cunnart a dhol à bith. A bharrachd air na faclan, chuireadh i sìos air pàipear fuinn nan òran. Uile-gu-lèir, bha suas ri trì fichead òran anns a' chruinneachadh.[60] 'S e 'Annag a' ghaoil' fear dhiubh, a nochd air taobh-duilleige 38 dhen chruinneachadh. 'S e seo am fiosrachadh a sgrìobh Catrìona sìos mun òran: "Traditional air + words taken down from the singing of Mary Nicolson of Cnoc Ruaraidh, Kilmuir, Skye. This song though very tragic, was used as a Waulking Song in this district. Very ancient". Agus 's e seo na faclan: [61]

Annag a ghaoil, *hao il ó*
Ho il obha, Hao il ó
Annag a ghaoil, *hao il ó*

'S fhada bhuam a chì mi 'n ceò
An cuala sibh mar dh'éirich dhomhs'
Mach 's stigh mu leachd an Stòir
Bhrist an t-acair, 's rac[62] an seòl
Chaill mi an t-airgiod is an t-òr
Chaill mi, na b' fhaide leam, na seòid.

Tha an aon shèist, gu ìre mhòir, air an tionndadh seo agus air tionndadh MhicFhionghain, agus coltach ris an tionndadh aig MacFhionghain, tha an tionndadh seo gu math goirid. Anns an dà dhòigh seo, tha an

[57] Litir bho MhacFhionghain air 13 An Lùnastal 1937: Canna House Archive, CH2/1/1/14/48. Thuirt MacFhionghain gun cuala e grunn sgeulachdan Gàidhlig nuair a bha e òg, cuideachd, ach cha chuala e sgeulachdan leithid 'na Muileartaich' (thug e iomradh air 'Muileartach'); is dòcha gun robh e a' ciallachadh Duan na Muilidheartaich, agus tha gu leòr eisimplearan dhen duan seo ann an dualchas na Gàidhlig (ged 's e duan a th' ann, seach 'sgeulachd').

[58] An t-Urr. Dòmhnall Buidse, 'Baird an Eilean Sgitheanach, Clann-an-Aba, Throdairnis', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 48 (1972–4), 584–601.

[59] Domhnall Budge (ed), *Na h-Orain is an ceol gu h-uile Catriona Dhughlas* (Dunbheagan: Domhnall Budge, 1971); agus *Pein-Ora. Dealbhan-cluich, le an cuid ceol, Orain agus Oraidean. Freagarrach airson na cloinne*. (Dunbheagan: Domhnall Budge, 1972).

[60] Buidse, 'Baird an Eilean Sgitheanach', 600. B' e 'Fior Sheann Orain Taghta le an Ceòl a chaidh an cruinneachadh ann an Tròtairnis an Eilean Sgiathanaich, le Catriona Dhùghlas' an t-ainm a thug i air a' chruinneachadh seo.

[61] Tha mi fada an comain Anna Mhàrtainn, Tròndairnis, a tha na seinneadair aithnichte agus na beul-aithrisiche aig a bheil làmh-sgrìobhainnean Catrìona Dhùghlais a-nis, a thug dhomh leth-bhreac dhen duilleig air a bheil an t-òran anns a' chruinneachadh.

[62] Srac.

dà thionndadh eadar-dhealaichte bho na tionndaidhean ann an *Hebridean Folksongs* agus ann an leabhar K.C. Craig. Ach, a bharrachd air an t-sèist, chan eil ach dà loidhne a tha coltach ri loidhnichean anns an tionndadh a bh' aig MacFhionghain, 'An cuala sibh mar dh'èirich dhomhs', agus 'Bhrist an t-acair, shrac an seòl', agus tha an dà loidhne sin ri fhaighinn anns na tionndaidhean uile. Tha a' chiad loidhne anns an tionndadh seo, ''S fhada bhuam a chì mi 'n ceò' ri fhaighinn anns na tionndaidhean eile bhon t-seann dùthaich ach chan eil e ri fhaighinn ann an tionndadh MhicFhionghain. Tha dà loidhne anns an tionndadh seo bho Thròndairnis agus anns an tionndadh aig MacFhionghain a tha a' tòiseachadh anns an aon dòigh, leis na faclan 'chaill mi', ged tha na rudan a chailleadh eadar-dhealaichte anns an dà thionndadh. Anns na tionndaidhean eile bhon t-seann dùthaich, chan eil an loidhne seo ann an tionndadh Thròndairnis, 'Chaill mi an t-airgiod is an t-òr', ri fhaighinn idir, ach tha loidhnichean anns na tionndaidhean sin anns a bheil na faclan 'na b' fhaide leam, na seòid'. Mu dheireadh, chan fhaighear an t-iomradh air leac an Stòrr ann an tionndadh sam bith eile: tha seansa ann gun deach seo a chur ris an òran gu h-ionadail ann an Tròndairnis no anns na sgìrean mun cuairt gus an t-òran a shuidheachadh anns an sgìre anns an robhar ga sheinn. Eu-coltach ri gach tionndadh eile, chan eil iomradh sam bith anns an tionndadh aig MacFhionghain air àitean sònraichte, agus is beag an t-ioghnadh sin, oir, thar ùineadh, cha bhiodh Gàidheil Cheap Breatainn cho eòlach air àitean ann an Alba.

Mu dheireadh, chan eil fonn an òrain ann an diofar sgìrean a' toirt dhuinn cus fianais mun cheangal eadar na tionndaidhean, ach gu bheil, mar a thuirt mi roimhe, shuas, ceangal air choreigin ann eatarra uile. Tha an seinneadair Anna Mhàrtainn, bho sgìre Chille Mhoire anns an Eilean Sgìtheanach, air clàradh a dhèanamh, stèidhichte air an fhonn ann an làmh-sgrìobhainnean Catrìona Dùghlais.[63] Ged tha an clàradh de MhacFhionghain ann, chan eil ri fhaighinn air Tobar an Dualchais no ann an àite poblach sam bith eile. Chuala mi an clàradh a rinneadh le MacFhionghain[64] agus tha am fonn gu math coltach ris an fhonn air na tionndaidhean eile, gu h-àraidh ris an fheadhainn bho na h-Eileanan an Iar. Chan eil sin na dhearbhadh nach do thog MacFhionghain an t-òran aig an taigh, no anns an sgìre dhualchasaich aige ann an Dunakin is Hogoma; tha seansa ann gun do dh'atharraicheadh am fonn beagan ann an Tròndairnis eadar an t-àm a dh'fhàg parantan MhicFhionghain an t-eilean, ro mheadhan an naoidheamh linn deug, agus an t-àm a thug Catrìona Dhùghlas sìos e, tràth san fhicheadamh linn, is coltach.

Gus co-dhùnadh a dhèanamh, ged tha rudan anns an tionndadh aig MacFhionghain agus an tionndadh a chuala Catrìona Dhùghlas ann an Tròndairnis a tha coltach ri chèile, tha diofaran cudromach eatorra cuideachd, agus bhiodh e doirbh a ràdh gu bheil dlùth-cheangal eadar an dà thionndadh seo. Ach, tha tionndadh Thròndairnis na fhianais gun robh an t-òran seo ri fhaighinn air an taobh tuath dhen Eilean Sgìtheanach, agus tha deagh sheansa gur ann tron eilean sin, agus tro theaghlach MhicFhionghain no tro mhuinntir na coimhearsnachd aige a thàinig an t-òran gu MacFhionghain. Bhon a' chiad chruinneachadh de bheul-aithris a dheasaich Iain Seathach,[65] tha ùidh air a bhith aige ann an tar-chur beul-aithris—ciamar agus cò bhuaithe a thog na beulaichean air an robh na cruinneachaidhean aige stèidhichte an cuid beul-aithris agus òran—agus bha e an dòchas gum faigheamaid barrachd eòlais air cò às a thàinig cultar nan Gàidheal an Ceap Breatainn bho thùs agus na dòighean a bhite ag aiseag fiosrachadh cultarach bho ghinealach gu ginealach anns na

[63] https://youtu.be/npkroWrV034?si=B9CFnF6vy6oTR3rl.

[64] Bu mhath leam mo thaing a thoirt do Fiona J. NicCoinnich, a bha na tasglannaiche aig Taigh Chanaidh, a thug dhomh cothrom èisteachd ris a' chlàradh.

[65] Margaret MacDonell agus John Shaw, *Luirgean Eachainn Nìll: A Collection of Folktales Told by Hector Campbell* (Steòrnabhagh: Acair, 1981).

coimhearsnachdan beaga dùthchail ann an Gàidhealtachd Alba Nuaidh.[66] Tha eachdraidh an òrain ‘Annag a’ ghaoil, hao ill o’ a’ toirt dhuinn co-dhiù beagan a bharrachd fiosrachaidh a thaobh nan ceistean seo.

A bharrachd air seo, tha an clàradh a’ toirt dhuinn fiosrachadh luachmhor mu MhacFhionghain fhèin. ’S e duine a choisinn cliù mar chuideigin a bha air a bhogadh ann an dualchas sgrìobhte, mar neach-deasachaidh agus foillsichear, sgrìobhadair roisg, agus eadar-theangair. Ach mar a mhìnich e fhèin, bha an dachaigh teaghlaich aige loma-làn òran, agus is dòcha gu bheil an t-òran seo na dhearbhadh gun tug an t-ionnsachadh òg aige aig an taigh buaidh air a mhair fad a bheatha.

Mu dheireadh, fiù ’s nuair a thàinig Fear Chanaidh agus Mairead Fay Sheathach dhan sgìre ann an 1937, bha a’ chànain agus an dualchas air lagachadh ann an Hogoma, Dunakin, agus na sgìrean mun cuairt—tha fios againn gun tàinig crìonadh mòr agus cas air a’ Ghàidhlig air feadh Cheap Breatainn anns na 1930an[67] – agus ’s e glè, glè bheag dhen chànain is dhen chultar a tha air fhàgail anns na sgìrean seo an-diugh. Le sin, tha an clàradh a rinn Fear Chanaidh cho prìseil dhuinn, oir thug e dhuinn sealladh, ge b’e cho beag, air dualchas Gàidhlig nan sgìrean seo. ’S e Iain Seathach a chuir ris an tuigse againn mu dualchas nan òran anns na sgìrean seo. Mar phàirt dhen phròiseact a dhealbhaich Iain agus a thug e gu buil, ‘The Nova Scotia Gaelic Folklore Project’ (1978–83), rinn e clàraidhean le dithis anns na sgìrean seo: Jenny NicNèill ann an Gleann Ainslidh (ceithir òrain), agus Murchadh MacGill’Ìosa, An Gleann Sgìtheanach (sia òrain). Tha sinn air leth fortanach gun do rinn Fear Chanaidh agus feadhainn eile, gu sònraichte Iain Seathach, an uiread de dh’obair-rannsachaidh is obair-chlàraidh ann an Ceap Breatainn, agus gun do rinn Catrìona Dhùghlas anns an Eilean Sgìtheanach, a thug dhuinn fianais luachmhor mu eachdraidh ‘Annag a’ ghaoil, hao ill o’ anns an eilean aig an robh dlùth-cheanglaichean aig Eòin G. MacFhionghain.

English Summary

Visiting Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, in the 1930s, John Lorne Campbell became aware of the rich heritage of Gaelic song and culture brought to Canada by Scottish settlers. This article examines Campbell’s relationship with an industrious and influential Canadian Gael: Jonathan G. MacKinnon (Eòin G. MacFhionghain, 1869–1944), writer, translator, and editor of the Gaelic weekly *Mac-Talla*. In addition to describing their friendship, the author discusses a fragmentary waulking-song, *Annag a Ghaoil, hao ill o* (‘Anna my love, *hao ill o*’), which Campbell recorded from MacKinnon in 1937 – a song that he later mentioned in the first volume of *Hebridean Folksongs* (1969), and eventually published as the first item in his anthology of Cape Breton songs, *Songs Remembered in Exile* (1990).

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[66] MacNeil agus Shaw, *Tales until Dawn / Sgeul gu Latha*, xviii.

[67] Elizabeth Mertz, ‘Sociolinguistic creativity: Cape Breton Gaelic’s linguistic “tip”’, in *Investigating obsolescence: Studies in language contraction and death*, ed. Nancy Dorian (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

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Music from the Source: *Am Muileann Dubh* and North Atlantic Supernatural Music Legends

TIBER F. M. FALZETT

In August 1987, John Shaw recorded a legend in Bayfield, Prince Edward Island, Canada from Hugh MacPhee concerning his ancestor Peter 'Toganaidh' MacPhee, a piper who had emigrated from South Uist in the late-eighteenth century:

> There was in the early days in the land settlement – they had to live on a piece of property a couple of months or something – for a year – in order to hang on to it. And this chap Peter MacPhee, he was – had a grant of land in Rock Barra a way out back in the woods and he had a log cabin on it and well there was a spring there and he used to go out in the summer and he'd spend his two months out there to hang on to the grant or whatever. And he was at a spring one day to get a pail of water and he fell asleep and there was a fairy came out of the spring and played this tune. This old chap incidentally was a piper and this fairy played the tune and after a while the fella woke up. He had a strange name. They called him Toganaidh. Now what does that mean to you in Gaelic – Toganaidh? [...] Well this little Toganaidh he went back to his log cabin and got his pipes and he played the tune. And this – that was it.[1]

MacPhee performed the supernaturally-sourced tune learned by his piping ancestor on the fiddle for Shaw, titling it 'Fairy at the Spring'. The legend presents a pattern familiar in several North Atlantic traditions: a supernatural being at a water source transmits music to a musician. The fairy emerges from a spring (*tobar*) and plays a tune; the piper carries it away and passes it on across tradition's carrying stream. The Gaelic word, *tobar*, embodies a semantic range that encompasses both the physical spring and the metaphorical source or origin. That this legend of music flowing from a

[1] John W. Shaw, *Prince Edward Island Gaelic Field Recording Project*, Institute of Island Studies, UPEI, Audio Tape 17, Cut 1: 'Fairy at the Spring', recorded in Bayfield, Prince Edward Island, 30 August 1987. Performers: Dan MacPhee (violin), Hughie MacPhee (violin), Ann MacPhee (piano). Recordings held in the Island Special Collections, Robertson Library, UPEI. The present author learned the melody of the tune on the bagpipes from Shaw's field recording of Hughie MacPhee playing it on the fiddle, and today it can be heard again among both fiddlers, including the author's good friend Ward MacDonald, who has since transcribed the tune from MacPhee's recording, and pipers at céilidhs and dances in Prince Edward Island. The tradition of supernatural music acquisition remains embedded in the cultural memory of the Prince Edward Island Gaelic community. According to MacPhee family lore, Toganaidh received not only the tune but a hereditary gift for musical retention transmitted through subsequent generations; see Ken Perlman, *Couldn't Have a Wedding Without the Fiddler: The Story of Traditional Fiddling on Prince Edward Island* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2015), 117. For an extended discussion of the Peter 'Toganaidh' MacPhee legend and supernatural music acquisition traditions and tunes in the Southern Outer Hebridean diasporic traditions of 'The North Side' (the north shore of Kings County, PEI), see Perlman, *Couldn't Have a Wedding*, 15, 116–17, 157–58; also Bowing Down Home Music Collection: Fiddle Music of PEI, Island Archives, University of Prince Edward Island, Canadian Museum of History control No. A2012–0143, https://bowingdownhome.ca/islandora/object/bdh:2162).

supernatural source should be preserved in Shaw's field recordings carries its own resonance in marking Shaw's remarkable contributions to the field, documenting, analysing, advancing, and renewing our knowledge of these traditions, from which the intergenerational knowledge transmitted and expressed in Scottish Gaelic on both sides of the Atlantic continues to flow.

Set alongside Donald Archie MacDonald's Scottish supernatural migratory legends index, the PEI legend finds parallels in the communities from which Peter MacPhee had emigrated.[2] Hugh MacPhee's telling combines elements of two related types: F101, 'Fairies Teach Piping', describing active supernatural tuition,[3] and F103, 'Fairy Song or Tune Overheard and Learned', in which Peter MacPhee is not directly instructed but rather receives the tune while asleep and reproduces it upon waking. F103 shows a notable concentration in Shetland, where MacDonald identified several variants referring to the origin of the tune 'Winyadepla' as potentially reflecting a single legend type.[4] His index also includes F12, 'Music Heard from Hill', and F18, 'Fairies Haunt Mill', the latter situating supernatural encounters at the same site frequently found in Scandinavian tradition.[5]

The circumstances of Peter MacPhee's acquisition mirror those found in the Shetland tradition that underlies MacDonald's Winyadepla variants. As noted by Katherine Campbell in a tale from Fetlar, Gilbert Laurenson goes to the Fir Vaa water-mill one winter night to grind his corn. Sitting among the straw while the mill turns, he falls into a drowsy state, 'not sleeping but, you know, nodding, when he heard music outside'. 'Peerie folk' arrive by boat, enter the mill-house, and finding him there, one says: 'Don't meddle with him, he's no a bad boady'. They produce a stringed instrument and play and dance;

[2] Donald Archie MacDonald, 'Migratory Legends of the Supernatural in Scotland: A General Survey' (*Béaloideas* 62/63, 1994–95): 54–55.

[3] The School of Scottish Studies Tale Archive holds seventeen variants of F101. Outer Hebridean oral recordings predominate, particularly from South Uist, where traditions of the Smearclait pipers (*Pìobairean Smearclait*) were collected from Donald MacIntyre, Snishival (SA1952.146.1), Roderick Bowie, Ormaclete (SA1953.036.A1), Archie MacDonald, Garryhallie (SA1953.036.B1), and Donald MacInnes, South Glendale (SA1953.274.B9). MacCrimmon traditions appear in recordings from Donald MacLean, Grimsay, North Uist (SA1977.187.B3); Patrick MacCormick, Hacklete (SA1958.026.A5; SA1968.276.B4); Donald Alasdair Johnson, Àird Mhòr (SA1970.189.A9); Peggy MacDonald, Loch Aoineart (SA1958.082.B1); Nan MacKinnon, Barra (SA1958.152.1); Donald Alick MacEachen, Benbecula (SA1963.052.A2); and Donald John Stewart, Stilligarry (SA1975.032.A1). Published sources include Kenneth MacLeod, 'MacCrimmon Traditions', *The Celtic Monthly* 3 (1895): 186; and John H. Dixon, 'William Maclean's Fairy Chanter', in *Gairloch and Guide to Loch Maree* (Edinburgh: Co-operative Press, 1886), 160. Manuscript sources include 'MacCrimmon Learning Music' (1891), Lady Evelyn Stewart Murray Manuscripts, LM MSS 186, SSSA/TA/FL101/009. Non-Hebridean variants from Perthshire include Andrew Stewart, 'The Finger Lock' (SA1955.153.A3), and Bella Higgins, 'Johnnie One-Tune' (SA1955.149.B14; SA1955.150.A22). For a full transcription and translation of Patrick MacCormick's Benbecula variant, with editorial commentary on the Smearclait traditions, see 'Fairies and Fairy Music', *Tocher* 26 (1977): 108–12.

[4] The School of Scottish Studies Tale Archive holds four variants of F103, confirming MacDonald's observation of a Shetland concentration. Two Shetland recordings preserve *trow* music traditions: George Peterson, 'The Fiddler o Gord', Papa Stour (SA1974.204.B1); and Brucie Henderson, 'Man Learns Trowie Reel', Arisdale, Yell (SA1954.113.3). See also John Spence, 'Tune Overheard and Learned from Fairies', in *Shetland Folk-lore* (Lerwick: Johnson & Greig, 1899), 151–52. A Hebridean manuscript variant appears in Mrs Crawford, 'Three Fairy Songs', Uist (1900), Maclagan Manuscripts, MML pp. 8041–42, SSSA/TA/FL103/001. For the Winyadepla tradition underlying MacDonald's Shetland variants, see Katherine Campbell, *The Fiddle in Scottish Culture: Aspects of the Tradition* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2007), 108–110. For a full transcription of 'The Fiddler o Gord' with Alan Bruford's editorial notes on the combination of motifs (fairy hill time-lapse, fiddler at fairy wedding, tune learned from fairies), see 'Fairies and Fairy Music', *Tocher* 26 (1977): 103–5.

[5] MacDonald, 'Migratory Legends', 68–69.

Laurenson, 'a man 'at had a great ear for music' remembers the tune, and upon returning home whistles it to his fiddler son, who named it 'Winyadepla' after a nearby loch.[6] The pattern echoes across the Atlantic: a musician in a hypnagogic state at a water-associated site, supernatural beings who arrive and play music, a tune carried away and transmitted to the next generation. In both cases, the recipient is not directly instructed but overhears and retains, adhering to the passive acquisition that characterises MacDonald's F103 rather than the active tuition of F101. The Shetland legend, notably, situates its encounter at a mill. The PEI legend places it at a spring; the Cape Breton legends that this paper will explore move the site to the mill and substitute the devil for the fairy. But the underlying structure persists: a supernatural being at a water-associated site, and music that passes from the otherworld to human hands. MacDonald's identified Scottish F-types and Christiansen's Migratory Legend type 4090 'Watersprite Teaches Someone to Play' catalogue regional articulations of this legend complex.[7] ML 4090 preserves the fullest narrative structure, combining site, offering, supernatural tuition, and consequent proficiency within a single type, while MacDonald's F101, F103, and F18 distribute these elements across distinct categories, reflecting the forms in which they survived in Scottish and Shetlandic tradition. The Cape Breton legends, as this paper will observe, maintain structural features absent from recorded Scottish and Irish material but present in Christiansen's Norwegian variants, suggesting a Scottish Gaelic cognate to ML 4090 carried from the Highlands and Hebrides during the era of emigration.

ML 4090 and Its Distribution

Christiansen's description of ML 4090 in *The Migratory Legends* establishes the type's core structure: a water-sprite, the *fossegrim* or *nökk*, dwelling in a river or lake, is willing at a certain time to teach a would-be musician to play the violin in exchange for an offering of meat. A learner who attempts to cheat the sprite receives only the ability to tune but not to play; the narrative concludes with the player's later proficiency (or lack thereof). The mill appears as a significant site across Christiansen's Norwegian variants. General references note the exchange occurring 'close to the mill; somebody heard the music'. A Telemark variant records the being as 'heard playing in a river close to a mill', while another from the same region describes an 'accidental listener in mill compelled to dance to the music all through the night; exclaiming "God save us" until he was free'. A Southern Norwegian variant places the supernatural 'in the shape of a goat in a mill', while a Western Norwegian account specifies 'on Christmas eve in a mill'. Two Northern Norwegian variants also locate the encounter 'in a mill'.[8]

Equally significant is the documented substitution of the devil for the water-sprite in certain variants. Christiansen records that in Eastern Norway 'the thing was dangerous, it meant committing oneself to the devil', while in Southern Norway 'to learn to play one had to commit oneself to the

[6] K. Campbell, *The Fiddle in Scottish Culture*, 108–10. The tale was collected from Jeemsie Laurenson of Fetlar (1899–1983); Campbell also cites a version in John Stewart and Peter Moar, 'When the Trows Danced', *Shetland Folk Book* II (1951), which dates the encounter to 1803. Campbell subsequently (127–28) cites Alan Bruford's observation: 'The fiddler asked or forced to play for a fairy wedding or other dance is a theme very popular in Shetland with its strong tradition of fiddle playing [...] if the idea [is] a mainland one it is certainly one that flourished when transplanted to the soil of Shetland'; see Alan Bruford, 'Trolls, Hillfolk, Finns, and Picts: The Identity of the Good Neighbours in Orkney and Shetland' in *The Good People: New Fairylore essays,* ed. Peter Narváez (New York: Garland, 1991), 126.

[7] Reidar Th. Christiansen, *The Migratory Legends: A Proposed List of types with a Systematic Catalogue of the Norwegian Variants*, FFC 175 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1958), 77–80.

[8] Christiansen, *The Migratory Legends*, 77–80.

devil' and on 'successive Thursday nights, devil appeared'. Most explicitly, a Northern Norway variant, told about renowned violinist Ole Bull, specifies that 'the teacher in this case was the devil himself'.[9] The malleability of the supernatural being encountered at the mill, whether water-sprite, devil, or fairy, is a characteristic feature of this tradition complex across ethnolinguistic contexts.

The distribution of ML 4090 beyond Scandinavia illuminates its relationship to the Scottish and Irish material. Bo Almqvist's systematic catalogue of Irish migratory legends lists ML 4090 with no Irish attestations, only a cross-reference to the fairy type MLSIT 4091, 'Music Taught by Fairies (The Fiddle on the Wall)'.[10] In her comparative study, Ríonach uí Ógáin clarifies the distinction: the sacrifice to the supernatural being central to ML 4090 has no correspondence in Irish tradition, nor are there Irish legends in which the gift of music is bestowed by water beings, 'though this is relatively often the case in Scottish tradition', explaining that on the Scottish mainland and in the Hebrides the supernatural music teachers are specified as fairies rather than water-sprites, while in Shetland, trolls also appear in this role.[11] Katherine Campbell's survey of Shetlandic Fiddler and Trow legends reinforces this picture: 'The Shetland form of the tradition, in which music and musical skills are learned from fairies rather than watersprites, clearly has Scottish rather than Scandinavian connections' although she agrees with Bruford's observation that the theme 'flourished when transplanted to the soil of Shetland'. [12]

Like the Shetlandic variants, Scandinavian tradition maintains a pattern centering on water beings at mill sites: the Norwegian *fossegrim* or Swedish *strömkarl* dwells in waterfalls and mill-races, teaching fiddle to those who seek him out.[13] These beings bear a range of names associating them with age, water, and the mill itself: Norwegian *kvernkall*, Swedish *kvarngubbe* ('old man of the mill'), *strömgubbe* ('old man of the stream'), *forsgubbe* or *forskarlen* ('old man/man of the falls').[14] Merrill Kaplan notes that the *strömgubbe* might show gratitude for an offering of tobacco by playing a tune (similar to the exchange in some Hebridean piping legends), while narratives locate the musical *fossegrim* 'under a falls, especially by a mill, where he played so beautifully that millers forgot their work.[15] A Scottish Gaelic cognate to this transactional pattern appears in a South Uist variant of MacDonald's F101 recorded from Donald John Stewart of Stilligarry, in which a boy entering a *sìdhein* ('fairy mound') offers tobacco to a *seann bhodach bochd glas* ('a poor old grey fellow') in return for *buaidh na pìobaireachd* ('the gift of

[9] Christiansen, *The Migratory Legends*, 78–80. On the devil and fiddle music more broadly, see Herbert Halpert, 'The Devil and the Fiddle', *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin* 2/2 (1943): 39–43; Herbert Halpert, 'The Devil, the Fiddle, and Dancing', in *Fields of Folklore: Essays in Honor of Kenneth S. Goldstein*, ed. Roger D. Abrahams (Bloomington: Trickster Press, 1995), 44–54; Maiko Kawabata, 'Virtuosity, the Violin, The Devil... What Really Made Paganini "Demonic"?', *Current Musicology* 83 (2007): 85–108; Holly Everett and Peter Narváez, '"Me and the Devil": Legends of Niccolò Paganini and Robert Johnson', *Contemporary Legend* 4 (2001): 20–47.

[10] Bo Almqvist, 'Crossing the Border: A Sampler of Irish Migratory Legends about the Supernatural', *Béaloideas* 59 (1991): 276.

[11] Ríonach uí Ógáin, 'Music Learned from the Fairies', *Béaloideas* 60/61 (1992–1993): 211.

[12] K. Campbell, *The Fiddle in Scottish Culture,* 127–128; Bruford, 'Trolls, Hillfolk', 126.

[13] Christiansen, [ML 4090] *The Migratory Legends*, 77–80; Bengt af Klintberg, [F111–F113] *The Types of the Swedish Folk Legend*, FFC 300 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2010), 125–126; Dag Strömbäck, 'Some Notes on the Nix in Older Nordic Tradition' in *Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies: Essays in Honor of Frances Lee Utley,* ed. J. Mandel and B. A. Rosenberg (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 252–253.

[14] Merrill Kaplan, 'Trolls in the Mill: The Supernatural Stakes of Waterpower' in *Myth, Magic, and Memory in Early Scandinavian Narrative Culture*, ed. J. Glauser and P. Hermann (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), 130.

[15] Merrill Kaplan, 'Supernatural Encounters in the Haunted Mill: Perception and Experience', *Journal of Folklore Research* 59/1 (2022): 16–17.

piping').[16] Strikingly, the Norwegian *kvernkall* denotes both the supernatural being and the vertical axle of the horizontal water-mill, a polysemy suggesting, as Kaplan observes, 'a metaphoric enchantment of the mill environment'.[17] The Scandinavian terminology finds a precise Gaelic cognate in *bodach a' mhuilinn* ('the old man of the mill'), likewise the term for the vertical shaft of the horizontal mills, *muilnean dubha* ('black mills'), that once turned on swift flowing bodies of water throughout Scotland's Gàidhealtachd.[18] The PEI legend discussed above situates the encounter at a spring; the Shetland legend at a water-mill; the Cape Breton legends place the supernatural musical encounter at *am muileann dubh* and substitute the devil for the fairy. In every mill-situated legend, the anthropomorphised mechanical beating heart of *bodach a' mhuilinn* carries the potential for various sensory encounters, its sound and motion generating the conditions for both material sustenance and supernatural music to pass into human hands. The transaction encoded in the Cape Breton legends of the devil in the black mill, where a tune is exchanged for a soul, embodies this dual character.

The Mill as Site

The structural correspondences outlined above, the supernatural being at a water-associated site, the transmission of music, the mill as the persistent locus of encounter, establish a formal relationship between the Cape Breton legends and the wider North Atlantic tradition complex. But formal correspondence alone does not explain why the mill persists. Shaw's study of the relationship between language, music, and local aesthetics in Gaelic tradition argues that 'traditional Gaelic culture is far more a unity than is widely perceived', with evidence for their interconnection residing not in transcription but in performance.[19] To understand the site's tenacity across ethnolinguistic boundaries accordingly requires attending to the place the horizontal water-mill occupied in the social, acoustic, and cosmological life of the communities that carried these traditions, and to the historical pressures that transformed it from a living institution into a remembered one. The horizontal water-mill and the adjacent corn-drying kiln were gathering sites where labour, performance, belief, and encounters with other beings converged. John Francis Campbell of Islay observed that 'the mill was probably the resort of idlers and the place for news, as it still is';[20] the kiln, where grain was dried before milling, served a similar function, extending collective labour into the night hours. As gathering sites for evening labour, these were also places where traditional repertoire of verbal art circulated. As Hector Maclean elaborates regarding Ann Darroch's 1859 account of the tale *An Nighinn agus an Duine Marbh* ('The Woman and the Dead Man'), learned from Margaret Conal:

> A child would not easily forget a story learned amongst a lot of rough farmers, seated at night round a blazing fire, listening to an old crone with palsied head and hands; and accordingly, I have repeatedly heard that the mill, and the kiln, were the places where my informants learned their tales.[21]

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[16] School of Scottish Studies Archives, SA1975.032.A1.
[17] Kaplan, 'Supernatural Encounters', 7.
[18] Alexander MacKay, 'The Horizontal Mill at Kirtomy, Farr, Sutherlandshire', *The Celtic Magazine* 11 (1886), 470–71.
[19] John Shaw, 'Language, Music and Local Aesthetics: Views from Gaeldom and Beyond', *Scottish Language* 11/12 (1992–1993), 37.
[20] J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands, Orally Collected*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1860), 155.
[21] J. F. Campbell, *PTWH* vol. 1, 218.

Margaret Conal, Darroch's source for many of her tales, frequented the mills and kilns, 'where she was frequently rewarded, for amusing them in this manner, by supplies of meal'.[22] The exchange is explicit: narrative performance for grain, tradition circulating through the same channels as the agricultural product.

As well as narrative, musical repertoire circulated at and about the mill. The tune *Am Muileann Dubh* carried a *port-à-beul* whose verses describe the mill site itself.[23] The lyrics first appear in print in Donald Macpherson's *An Duanaire* (1868: 118) and were recorded across Scotland and the diaspora throughout the twentieth century, from South Uist to Cape Breton and beyond.[24] The song served the same function Campbell described for tales at the kiln: entertainment during communal labour or gathering, traditional repertoire exchanged in everyday settings. As Gregor MacGregor noted:

> Only an old Highland herd intimately acquainted with the habits and habitats of grouse, goats, sheep and *crodh-laoigh*, and who has for many a long winter forenight sat by the glowing hearth, and heard the smuggling tales then so common, can appreciate the suggestiveness of the song. Every line is pregnant with meaning.[25]

The imagery of the *port-à-beul* encodes the mill's liminal quality. Wild birds nest in the human structure: from *nead na circe fraoich* ('the red grouse of the moorland'), a nearly universal verse found from MacPherson's earliest printed reference onward, to *nead a' Ghille-bhrìde* ('the oyster-catcher of the shore') in a Mull variant.[26] Domestic animals take possession of the workspace, with consistent reference to *gobhair 's crodh-laoigh* ('goats and cattle'), *gobhair agus caoraich* ('goats and sheep'), and *crodh a' breith nan laogh* ('cows calving'). A Skye version adds *feamainn agus maorach* ('seaweed and shellfish'), products of the tidal margin appearing in the grain-processing site.[27] The expected contents are sometimes absent: *Shaoil leam gun robh min-eorna / 'S a' Mhuilionn-dubh 's gun deann*

[22] J. F. Campbell, *PTWH* vol. 1, 217–218. Conal's storytelling is discussed in Carl Lindahl's contribution to this volume.

[23] The tune's documentary trail through instrumental collections spans over two centuries and reveals the same semantic instability visible in the *port-à-beul* and associated narrative tradition; see Appendix 1, p. 124. Its earliest known appearance, as 'Snuff in the Black Mill' in the James Christie music manuscript collection (Northeast Scotland, c. 1730–1760), already embeds the snuff-mill association that became a source of debate among later commentators; the oscillation between 'mill' and 'snuff-mill' is apparent across the sources listed, while the Rook (1840) and Aird (1803) appearances confirm the tune's early penetration into Lowland and English repertoire.

[24] The *port-à-beul* tradition of 'Am Muileann Dubh' is extensively documented in both print and field recordings from both Scotland and Nova Scotia; see Appendix 2, p. 124–5. The *port-à-beul* also crossed into Irish-language tradition in East Ulster. Máire Nic Aoidh of Caolasnasg, Gleann Airimh, County Antrim, sang a version referred to as a *suantraí* (lullaby) to Aoidhmín Mac Gréagóir (1884–1950), published in *An tUltach* in 1927 with a *luinneog* describing the mill as going '*ar bhogatan*', nearly identical to its Scottish Gaelic counterparts. Nic Aoidh's version includes the distinctive opening *Tá mé i gcoinne 'tol 'sa Mhuileann dubh... Shíos ag bun na h-abhainne* ('I am against going to the Black Mill... down at the foot of the river'); see Máire Nic Aoidh, 'An Muileann Dubh', in *Athchló Uladh,* ed. Gearóid Giolla Domhnaigh and Gearóid Stockman (Béal Feirste: Comhaltas Uladh, 1991), 72.

[25] Gregor MacGregor, 'Am Muileann-Dubh', *Celtic Monthly* 8 (1900): 159–60.

[26] Donald MacPherson, 'Am Muilionn Dubh', in *An Duanaire: A New Collection of Songs and Poems* (Edinburgh: MacLachlan & Stewart, 1868), 118; Capt. Dougald MacCormick (Dùghall Iain Nèill Dhùghaill, 1877–1960), Fionnphort, Muile (Mull), recorded by Calum Iain MacIlleathain, July 1953 (SA1953.117.B4; Tobar an Dualchais track 92274).

[27] Alasdair Mac Neacail, 'A' Mhuileann Dhubh', in *Oideas na Cloinne* (Glasgow: Archibald Sinclair, 1900), 86.

ann ('I thought there was barley meal in the Black Mill, but not a grain to be had').[28] In their place, many things you wouldn't expect (*iomadh rud nach saoil sibh*) were found: from *snaoisean* ('snuff'), an imported luxury become commonplace, to, in some versions, the devil himself. Ferguson, recounting the tradition of the Black Mill of Tullochcurran in Strathardle, Perthshire recorded: *Tha 'n Diabhull-dubh air adhaircean / 'S a' Mhuilionn-dubh* ('The black devil with horns is in the Black Mill'), interpreting it as:

> From the uncanny noises heard about it at nights, he thought the great muckle Deil himself was there by the horns […] If Great Hornie himself was not there, there certainly were smaller hornies, as the cows and goats had taken possession of the deserted mill, in which calves and kids were born.[29]

Robert Craig MacLagan recorded a similar verse: *Tha an Donas fhein 's taod air 's a' mhuilean dubh* ('The Devil himself with a halter on is in the Black Mill').[30] The diabolic association present in the Cape Breton legends thus appears in the song tradition as well. Ferguson's account also confirms the mill's wider supernatural reputation: 'the Black Mill was always reckoned an uncanny place to go near after dark, being haunted by everything evil'.[31] Each image resolving in the chorus: *Tha 'm muileann dubh air bhogadan/thurraman… 's e togairt dol a dhannsa* ('The black mill is shaking/bouncing/whirring/humming… wanting to go dancing').

John MacInnes observed of the Gaelic conceptualisation of wilderness and domesticated space: *Tha creutairean an fhàsaich a' tighinn dhar n-ionnsaigh-ne o àm gu àm. A dh'aindeoin sin, tha a' chrìoch daingeann* ('Creatures of the wilderness come toward us from time to time. Despite that, the boundary is firm').[32] MacInnes' *creutairean an fhàsaich* encompassed both the natural and the supernatural: the deer as both game animal and fairy livestock, the seal as both marine mammal and shape-shifting ancestor. The mill and spring occupy analogous positions: sites where the *crìoch* between *baile* ('home') and *fàsach* grows permeable, where grouse nest in the rafters, goats calve among the millstones, and beings of more ambiguous ontological status, whether fairy, devil or *bodach a' mhuilinn*, emerge to transmit what humans could not produce alone. Mayanthi Fernando's coinage of 'more-than-natural' offers a useful term for this convergence, capturing 'the more-than quality of supernatural without being saddled with the latter term's baggage'.[33] The *port-à-beul*'s inventory of *iomadh rud nach saoil sibh* ('many things you wouldn't expect') catalogues precisely this convergence of natural and supernatural presence at this threshold site. A dynamic pattern of such paired imagery within the lyrics co-constitutes nature and culture, labour and play, assembling beings and materials from across boundaries, shieling, shore, and otherworld, encoding them all within the mill's liminal matrix. MacInnes' characterisation of the *fàsach* applies equally to the mill as threshold node in which

[28] Charles Ferguson, 'Sketches of the Early History, Legends, and Traditions of Stratharle and its Glens, Part IV', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 20 (1894–96): 260.
[29] Ferguson, 'Sketches', 260–261.
[30] Robert Craig MacLagan, 'Gaelic Erotica', *Kryptadia* 10 (1907): 346.
[31] Ferguson, 'Sketches', 261.
[32] John MacInnes, 'Am Fàsach ann an Dùthchas nan Gàidheal', in *Dùthchas nan Gàidheal: Selected Essays of John MacInnes*, ed. Michael Newton (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006), 498.
[33] Mayanthi Fernando, 'Uncanny Ecologies: More-than-Natural, More-than-Human, More-than-Secular', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 42/3 (2022): 580, n. 9.

these domains converge: *Tha cunnart is toradh annta le chéile* ('There is danger and productive yield in them both').[34]

Versions of the song's text crossed the Atlantic with Highland and Hebridean emigrants. It appears in Jonathan G. MacKinnon's Cape Breton Gaelic newspaper *Mac-Talla* in 1902[35] and in the collection published by Prince Edward Island-born Rev. Murdoch Lamont (*Murchadh mac Eòghain 'ic Caluim 'ic Mhurchaidh Bhuidhe*, 1865–1927), *An Cuimhneachan*, glossed as a collection of *Òrain Céilidh Gàidheal Cheap Breatuinn agus Eilean-an-Phrionnsa* ('Ceilidh Songs of Cape Breton and Prince Edward Island Gaels').[36] A field recording from the 1970s documented it among other *puirt-à-beul* from Angus A. Gillis (*Angaidh Aonghais Ailein*) in Broad Cove, Inverness County, Cape Breton.[37]

Beyond the legend tradition, the reel *Am Muileann Dubh* and its associated *port-à-beul* lyrics hold an iconic place in Cape Breton social dance music.[38] Calum Mac Gill-Iosa's song '*Bàl na h-Aibhne Deas*', describing a house dance in South West Margaree, lists *Nead na Circe Fraoich* among the repertoire of tunes the fiddlers enjoyed at such gatherings (1939: 45).[39] Charles Dunn noted that the tune carried a social charge in Margaree, where playing it could give offence to the local MacDougalls, who were sensitive to any reference to poultry on account of a joke once told and remembered at their expense.[40] The tune thus functioned not only as bearer of supernatural legend but as a living relational element in community social dynamics, capable of giving offence or delight depending on context. The tune's dynamism is encapsulated in Shaw's 1980 recording of the legend from Angus J. Gillis of Mabou Harbour, where the narrative concludes with the observation *port cho math 's a chaidh a dheanamh riamh* ('as good a tune as was ever made'). In Gillis' telling, legend and song are performed as a unit, the narrative providing an origin account for the tune that the community continued to play *nam b'e an deamhan a rinn e* ('even if it had been composed by the Devil himself').[41]

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[34] J. MacInnes, 'Am Fàsach', 496.

[35] 'Am Muileann Dubh', *Mac-Talla* 10/28, 11 April 1902, 215.

[36] Murchadh Mac Laomuinn, *An Cuimhneachan: Orain Céilidh Gaidheal Cheap Breatuinn agus Eilean-an-Phrionnsa* (Quincy, MA: Vanity, 1917), 5. Rev. Lamont's documentation of Scottish Gaelic song in Prince Edward Island and the wider diaspora is discussed in Tiber Falzett, '"Rachainn fhathast air m'eòlas' (I'd go yet by my experience): (Re)collecting Nineteenth-century Scottish Gaelic Songs and Singing from Prince Edward Island,' in *North American Gaels: Speech, Story, and Song in the Diaspora*, ed. Natasha Sumner and Aidan Doyle (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020), 339–70

[37] Angus Gillis (*Angaidh Aonghais Ailein*), 81 years old, Broad Cove, Cape Breton, recorded by Gordon W. MacLennan, 1972–74 (Canadian Museum of History, MacLennan Collection, Acq. 78-78, MAC-B-2, Side B).

[38] The reel 'Am Muileann Dubh' (variously listed as 'Black Mill', '*Moulin Dhu*', 'Mullean Dhu', 'Muhlin Dhu', etc.) remains a staple of the Cape Breton fiddle repertoire. Alan Snyder's *Cape Breton Fiddle Recording Index*, Edition 5.0, s.v. 'Black Mill' (T920), https://www.cbfiddle.com/rx/tune/t920.html, documents over forty commercial recordings of the tune, predominantly played as an A minor or B minor reel; see Appendix 3, p. 126 below, for a list of these. The tune is also documented in the Prince Edward Island fiddle tradition; see Omar Cheverie, 'Miss Drummond of Perth / Devil in the Kitchen / Black Mill / Drunken Piper', *Bowing Down Home* Music Collection, Canadian Museum of History; Peter Chaisson Sr. (Bear River), violin, with Kevin Chaisson, piano, Shaw, Tape 15, Cut 1 [PEI Gaelic Field Recording Project], 30 August 1987.]

[39] Mac Gill-Iosa, Calum, 'Bàl na h-Aibhne Deas', in *Smeorach nan Cnoc 's nan Gleann*, ed. Hector MacDougall (Glasgow: Alexander MacLaren and Sons, 1939), 45.

[40] Charles W. Dunn, *Highland Settler: A Portrait of the Scottish Gael in Nova Scotia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953), 102.

[41] Angus J. Gillis, Mabou Harbour, Cape Breton, recorded by John Shaw, 1 December 1980 (Cape Breton Gaelic Folklore Collection 302A3). Transcription and translation in John W. Shaw, ed. and trans. *Na Beanntaichean*

Polysemy of '*am muileann dubh*'

The term *muileann dubh* designated the horizontal water-mill in Hebridean and Highland usage. Stevenson recorded its currency in the Inner Hebrides in the early 1880s: 'In Colonsay they are called *Muileann Dubh* or Black Mills'.[42] The toponym is widely distributed across the Highlands and Hebrides: in Argyll, the Ordnance Survey Name Books record Blackmill near Taynuilt (OS1/2/23/34), Blackmill *Loch* at *A' Chruach* (OS1/2/56/89), and on Luing a "*Muileann Dubh* (Ruin)" near Black Mill Bay (OS1/2/53/171); in Inverness-shire, Blackmill in Duthil and Rothiemurchus Parish where *Allt na Criche* enters the River Feshie (OS1/17/4/52) – the site associated with the Glen Feshie origin tradition discussed below; and in Benbecula, *Loch a' Mhuilinn Duibh* (OS1/18/10/32), with Alexander Carmichael among the informants consulted by the surveyors.[43]

The persistence of these toponyms in living memory is attested in a Lochaber anecdote recorded by Calum I. Maclean from Iain MacDhòmhnaill ('Iain Beag') of Highbridge, near Spean Bridge, in 1951. A stranger arrived with a map and asked an old man born in the area about 'Allt a' Mhuilinn Duibh' at the boundary at Bracleitir; the old man denied its existence. MacDhòmhnaill, overhearing the exchange, confirmed both name and site:

> *Bha e ag oibreachadh muileann air son min a bha a' dol a sìos àite ris an abair iad Sloc an Amair. Agas tha làrach a' mhuilinn a sin gus an latha an diugh agas tha làrach a' bhothain a bh'aig a' mhuileann*.
>
> It was working a mill for meal that went down to a place they call Sloc an Amair. And the ruins of the mill are there to this day and the ruins of the bothy that was at the mill.[44]

The disjuncture between cartographic and local knowledge encoded in the exchange mirrors the interpretive plurality of the term itself.

The *muileann dubh* of the *port-à-beul* similarly resists singular definition. Commentators have variously identified it as a horizontal water-mill of the Norse type, its wheel lying flat in the stream; a snuff-mill, the small hand-held tobacco grinder carried by many Highlanders; or an illicit still, the *smùid* ('smoke') of which blackened the bothy walls and gave the operation its name.[45] The interpretive debate

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Gorma agus Sgeulachdan Eile à Ceap Breatainn / The Blue Mountains and Other Gaelic Stories from Cape Breton (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 184–187.

[42] William Stevenson, 'Notes on the Antiquities of the Islands of Colonsay and Oransay', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 15 (1880–81): 136.

[43] Additional *muileann dubh* toponyms appear in Colonsay; see John de Vere Loder, *Colonsay and Oronsay in the Isles of Argyll: Their History, Flora, Fauna and Topography* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1935), and Stevenson, 'Notes', 136–137. In Lathurna, see Dugald Gordon MacDougall, *Bràiste Lathurna (The Brooch of Lorn): A Memorial Volume of Gaelic Poems and Songs*, ed. Somerled Mac Millan (Glasgow: K. & R. Davidson, 1959), 38. In Nairnshire, the OS Name Books record Black Mill (Corn), 'a Farm Steading and corn Mill... worked by Water power' (OS1/22/6/29). Grid references for extant Blackmill place-names include NH855035 and NM730085 (Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba database; pers. comm. Dr Jacob King, 7 October 2025). OS Name Book references via ScotlandsPeople, https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/virtual-volumes/os-name-books-main.

[44] School of Scottish Studies Archives, Calum Maclean Notebook 9: 802–803.

[45] The literature reflects three principal interpretations. For the **horizontal water-mill,** see Stevenson, 'Notes', 136–37; and Ferguson, 'Sketches', 260–61. For **snuff-mill**, see D. MacKinnon, 'Muileann Dubh', *Celtic Monthly* 8 (1900): 49. Angus MacKay's MS (1826–1870) gives the title as "*Muilean Dubh an t-Snaoisean*" (The Black Snuff Mill): see Ronald Smith, 'The Black Mill', *Piping Times* 16/8 (1964): 24. Ferguson explicitly

itself is significant: it reflects both the semantic capaciousness of the image and the vicissitudes of life in the nineteenth-century Gàidhealtachd, where the horizontal mill was passing from use, smuggling was being suppressed, and the social contexts that gave the song meaning were under pressure. More radical readings push further.[46] R.C. MacLagan, noting the resemblance of *mulan* (hillock) to *muileann*, interpreted the song as 'evidently phallic', its metaphorical imagery of nesting, animals, and hidden contents lending itself to bawdy elaboration.[47] Such readings find mechanical grounding in the *' a' mhuilinn*, the vertical shaft of the horizontal mill that drives the grinding stones, a term that invites symbolic extension into the life-cycle drama of *bodach* and *cailleach*, the old man and old woman whose interplay structures so much of Gaelic seasonal ritual.[48] A proverb preserved by Finlay MacLeod's Lewis informants encodes this gendered pairing within the grain-processing cycle itself: "*Balach fireann 's e ri fàs, / Dh'itheadh e mar mheileadh brà, / Mar thioradh bodach air an àth, / Mar dh'fhuineadh cailleach ann an clàr*" ('A male boy a-growing / Eats as a quern mills, / As an old man drying grain in the kiln, / As an old woman baking on the board').[49] The proverb maps the transformation of grain onto gendered

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rejects this reading; see his 'Sketches', 260. For **illicit still**: Charles Fraser-MacIntosh notes 'the 'Moulin Dhu' always at work' in his 'Minor Highland Families, No. VI. The Frasers of Guisachan (Culbokie), style Mac-Huistean', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 18 (1891–92): 321. Andrew Mackintosh comments, 'The "Muileann Dubh", we know, is a smuggling bothy', in his 'English and Gaelic Words for Strathspeys and Reels', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 28 (1912–14), 294. Raghnall Mac Ille Dhuibh reports being told that *muileann dubh* was a code-word for an illicit still, the discharge (*smùid*) blackening the exterior stonework, and notes that *dubh* can mean 'obscure, hidden' (cf. *dubh-fhacal*, riddle); see Raghnall MacIlleDhuibh, 'Seall Seo', *The Scotsman*, 27 March 1982. MacGregor's reading suggests that *iomadh rud nach saoil sibh* ('many things you wouldn't expect') may encode a reference to illegal whisky production, and that the song tradition preserved a memory of the *muillear dubh* (black miller), the local term for a whisky smuggler; see MacGregor, 'Am Muileann-Dubh', 159–60. The *Piping Times* exchange between James E. Scott and Ronald Smith (1963–64) repeats the water-mill vs. snuff-mill debate from earlier sources without resolution; Scott dismisses the verses as 'pure nonsense' and 'mnemonic'; see 'The Black Mill' in *Piping Times* 16/1 (1963), 11; 16/8 (1964), 24; and 16/11 (1964), 21.

[46] Beyond the Gàidhealtachd, *Am Muileann Dubh* circulated as an increasingly romanticised emblem of Highland culture in the broader Scottish imagination. James Hogg places 'The Mullin Dhu' within an explicitly Jacobite repertoire performed to rally Stuart adherents; see his 'Song XIX: The Piper o' Dundee', in *the Jacobite Relics of Scotland* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood), 43–44. An itinerant fiddler in Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor* offers 'Mullin Dhu' to test whether a stranger is 'a north-country gentleman', using Highland repertoire as an ethnolinguistic aesthetic marker; see Walter Scott, *The Bride of Lammermoor* in *Tales of My Landlord*, *Third Series,* vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1819), 253–254. By mid-century, the tune could circulate without explicit Highland or political marking, as in Grace Webster's 1845 novel *The Disputed Inheritance* (vol. 1, 57) where 'the Moulin Dhu' figures simply as vigorous dance music. The progression from Jacobite repertoire to ethnolinguistic shibboleth to unmarked dance tune traces the tune's absorption into a broader Scottish musical culture, even as late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century commentators debated its origins.

[47] MacLagan translates *mulan* as 'black hill' and interprets the song as 'evidently phallic', translating *air bhogadan* as 'shaking', and *a' togail, dol a dhannsa* as 'rising, going to dance'; see his 'Additions to the Games of Argyleshire (Continued)', Folklore 16/4 (1905): 457. Two years later, MacLagan's *Kryptadia* piece provides additional potentially bawdy verses: he glosses *Tha ministeir na glaodhaich* ('the minister cries out') as '"A useless wooden minister", a simile used for an erection of an impotent member', and also extends the framework to other mill imagery: 'it was said of a poor woman that "her mother left her two mills, one a water-mill, the other a windmill". "The little mill" is used as a term of endearment. In Gaelic the first mentioned legacy is designated "the black mill". There is a well-known Gaelic air so-called which lends itself easily to extemporised variations of the song.' (MacLagan, 'Gaelic Erotica', 346).

[48] Alan Gailey, *Irish Folk Drama* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1969), 97–98.

[49] Finlay MacLeod, *Muilnean Beaga Leòdhais* (Stornoway: Acair, 2009), 38; and Finlay MacLeod, *The Norse Mills of Lewis* (Stornoway: Acair, 2009), 38.

labour: the *bodach* ('old man') at the kiln (*àth*), the *cailleach* ('old woman') at the baking board (*clàr*), the appetite of the growing boy measured against the productive capacity of both. Gunnell places such gendered semiotics within a wider North Atlantic framework of masked 'old woman' figures, from the straw *Cailleach* of Islay and Kintyre to Icelandic *Grýla*, Faroese *grýlur*, and Norwegian *Lussi*.[50] The mill, in this light, becomes not merely a site of labour or supernatural encounter but a nexus where the energies of nature and culture, life and death, the quotidian and the numinous converge.

The *cailleach* of Gaelic tradition is, as Ó Crualaoich observes, 'the personification, in divine female form, of the physical landscape within which human life is lived and also of the cosmic forces at work in that landscape'; the term itself signifies the last sheaf of the corn harvest in both Irish and Scottish Gaelic tradition.[51] The ritual dimension of this pairing is further reflected in *Cailleach an Dùdain* ('Carlin/Old Wife of the Mill-Dust'),[52] a dramatic performance documented from the mid-eighteenth century in which a *bodach* and *cailleach* enact a combat, death, lamentation, and limb-by-limb resurrection. The etymology is significant: *dùdan* is the dust produced when a small variety of oats is threshed, blackening the thresher's face;[53] and MacInnes equates *dùdan* with *sadach na muilne* ('mill dust'), running in parallel to the pipe tune's translated title in English.[54] The *cailleach*'s *dùdan* is thus the product of the mill's *mìn* ('meal'), a consequence of its *toradh* ('product'), her body the site where grain is transformed into sustenance. MacInnes observes that while the opening lines of the *port-à-beul*, *A Chailleach an Dùdain cum do dheireadh rium* ('Old wife of the mill-dust, keep your rear to me'), carry only 'a hint of bawdiness', he also mentions that 'one of the strains of bawdry in Gaelic is particularly associated with the words of dance-tunes; that this may be an old tradition of erotica, possibly going back to fertility rites', now surviving 'in caricature'. [55] The drama was performed at Michaelmas, the harvest festival, and later as a children's game at Bealtaine. The structural parallel to the mill's mechanics is suggestive: the *bodach* ('mill-shaft') acts upon the *cailleach* ('dust/product'), death yields to resurrection, grinding yields flour.

That seasonal, erotic, and productive registers converge within a single performance complex points beyond the Gaelic evidence. De Martino's analysis of southern Italian tarantism identifies a polysemous symbolic system operating through precisely these registers simultaneously, tracing a sequential pattern: the harvest animal that possesses the reaper of the last sheaf, the bodily animation through music's power, and the collapse upon music ceasing and revival upon music resuming, demonstrating a pattern that mirrors the death and limb-by-limb resurrection of the Hebridean drama.[56] De Martino's insistence that tarantism cannot be reduced to any single register but operates as a unified symbolic order provides

[50] Terry Gunnell, 'Masks and Mumming Traditions in the North Atlantic', in *Masks and Mumming in the Nordic Area*, ed. Terry Gunnell (Uppsala: Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien för svensk folkkultur, 2007), 298.
[51] Gearóid Ó Crualaoich, *The Book of the Cailleach: Stories of the Wise-Woman Healer* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2003), 10–11, 139–40; see also Calum I. Maclean, 'The Last Sheaf', *Scottish Studies* 8/2 (1964): 195–196.
[52] The *Cailleach an Dùdain* tradition warrants fuller treatment than is possible here and I am grateful to Dr Andrew Wiseman for sharing sources on this with me in our conversations over the years. Primary documentation is summarised in Appendix 4, p. 127 below.
[53] T. M. Flett, 'Addenda et Corrigenda: Some Hebridean Folk Dances', Journal of the English folk Dance and Song Society 7/3 (1954): 183.
[54] John MacInnes, 'Gaelic Song and the Dance', in *Dùthchas nan Gàidheal: Selected Essays of John* MacInnes, ed. Michael Newton (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006), 253; and see "*Cailleach an Dùdain*. (The old wife of the mill dust)" in *Pipe Major William Ross's Collection of Highland Bagpipe Music,* Book 3, 46.
[55] J. MacInnes, 'Gaelic Song and the Dance', 253–254.
[56] Ernesto De Martino, *The Land of Remorse: A Study of Southern Italian Tarantism,* trans. and annot. D. L. Zinn (London: Free Association Books, 2005), 114–118 and 124–125.

theoretical warrant for treating the *bodach*/*cailleach* complex of the mill-site similarly. The regenerative logic at work is what Bakhtin identified in the grotesque body as 'pregnant death, a death that gives birth': the *bodach* kills the *cailleach*, the *cailleach* rises, the mill grinds on.[57] Willie Fraser's telling of the Cape Breton legend, as we shall see, transposes this cyclical logic into narrative: the *cailleach* dies, the tune is gained, but what was regenerative in the ritual becomes transactional in the telling. The competing legends on the tune's origins in Scotland, however, variously attribute *Am Muileann Dubh* to specific mills and historical events, and may be understood as localisations of this deeper pattern: the tune and its performance attached to sites where the energies the *cailleach* personifies (fertility, production, transformation) operate along the ambiguous boundary between human and more-than-human ontological spheres.

Competing Legends on the Tune's Origins

The tune's fame generated competing claims across the Highlands, each locality attaching *Am Muileann Dubh* to a known mill and a memorable historical event. Charles Ferguson located the original at Tullochcurran in Strathardle, where a miller-poet composed the tune when his wheel turned again after the devastating frost of 1571; the mill thereafter acquired an uncanny reputation, haunted by 'the largest and most dangerous water kelpie on the Ardle'.[58] The Rev. D. MacDougall and others placed it at the Black Mill of Invereshie in Glen Feshie, where an Argyll piper composed the tune after the 1594 defeat at Glenlivet, the retreating Campbells finding shelter and sociability at the mill.[59] Hugh MacMillan attributed it to Rothiemurchus, where Rob Roy burned Mackintosh's mill in a territorial dispute.[60] What unites these narratives is the absence of the teaching structure central to ML 4090: in each case, a human composer (miller-poet or clan piper) creates the tune in response to circumstance. Where the supernatural appears, it is rationalised: Ferguson's devil with horns becomes goats sheltering in the abandoned mill; his kelpie is encountered by a man returning drunk from celebrating the fall of Sebastopol.[61] Yet the water-horse at the mill-lade persists as a trace, linking Ferguson's Strathardle tradition to Donald MacDonald's shape-shifting *bodach a' mhuilinn* appearing in the form of a great white horse, great black dog, or *Satan* himself, as discussed below.[62] Both bear semblance to the Scandinavian *nøkk* or *näck*, the water-sprite of ML 4090, which frequently appears in equine form and is associated with mills and watercourses. Shetland tradition preserves a cognate figure in the *njuggel*, likewise haunting mills at night; the cluster of equine water-beings at mill-sites across the North Atlantic suggests a shared tradition complex within which the Cape Breton devil-at-the-mill legends may be situated as cognates rather than isolates.[63]

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[57] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 25.

[58] Ferguson, 'Sketches', 260–262.

[59] D. MacDougall, 'The Argyll Stone', *The Cairngorm Club Journal* 3/16 (1901): 301–302.

[60] Hugh MacMillan, *Rothiemurchus* (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1907), 46–47.

[61] Ferguson, 'Sketches', 261–262.

[62] Donald MacDonald, 'Bodach a' Mhuilinn', in *Bard Bharbhais | The Barvas Bard: Songs, Poems, Stories, and Sketches* (Glasgow: Alexander MacLaren & Sons, 1920), 72. These specific forms belong to a widely documented European pattern: Valk's statistical analysis of 1874 manifestations in Estonian folk religion shows horse and dog among the most frequent zoomorphic devil forms, a distribution consistent across Estonian, Lithuanian, Russian, and German traditions; see Ülo Valk, *The Black Gentleman: Manifestations of the Devil in Estonian Folk Religion.* FFC 276 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2001), 105.

[63] On shape-shifting as a defining feature of the Gaelic water-horse, see Raghnall MacIlleDhuibh, 'An t-Each Uisge', *Scottish Studies* 37 (2014): 127–128. On the Shetland njuggel (< ON nykr) and its mill-haunting

The Vicissitudes of Vernacular Practice: Autonomy, Suppression and Resistance

A sensory evocation of the soundscape of an eighteenth-century *baile* in Lewis is recalled by Geddes: 'It is told of a man of exceptional prosperity, that when he laid his head on a pillow "he could hear on the one side the clacking of his corn mill and on the other the babble of his still". What more could the good man want?'.[64] The *glagadaich* (clacking) of the rotating stones is remembered in an oral testimony from Siadar, Lewis, recalling how when the sluice was opened, '*thòisicheadh na rothan a' glagadaich agus na clachan-muilne a' cur char*' ('the paddles would begin to rattle and the millstones would begin to turn').[65] The affective quality of this soundscape is further captured in testimony from Finlay MacLeod's Lewis informants. One recalled the nocturnal mill in terms that name the phenomenological conditions for supernatural encounter:

> '*S e àite fuar a bh' innte, àite iargalta a bhith innte air an oidhche leat fhèin le fuaim nan clachan 's a' bhùirn. Bhiodh teine innte 'son teatha a dhèanamh le canastair dubh*.
>
> It was a cold place to be; an eerie place to be by yourself at night with the noise of the millstones and the water. There was a fire in it to make tea in a black tin.[66]

The Gaelic term *iargalta* ('eerie,' 'uncanny', 'forbidden') directly names the quality that precipitates otherworldly encounter: isolation, darkness, cold, and above all the rhythmic acoustic saturation of stone against stone and rushing water.

Such anecdotes, linking various types of simultaneously competing and complementary productivity, embed their sounds within these ambiguities: the audible yet unintelligible clacking of the *glagan* ('clapper') turning against the rotating stones, the murmur of the still, the trickle of droplets of *bainne* ('milk') from *a' chaora chrom* (lit. 'the crooked sheep,' i.e. the still's worm) and the splashing of the rushing stream against the *bodach*'s *sgiathan* ('wings/paddles') driving it all, serve as aural indices of autonomous production in an era of increased imbalance and uncertainty. The three practices, grinding grain, distilling spirits, playing music, processed the harvest in distinct but parallel ways, transforming raw material into sustenance, libation, and dance. Both horizontal mill and still stood apart from the rest of the township's economy, both increasingly situated in secluded locations away from everyday life.

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behaviour, see Jakob Jakobsen, *An Etymological Dictionary of the Norn Language in Shetland* (London: David Nutt, 1928–32), 186; also J. A. Teit, 'Water-Beings in Shetlandic Folk-Lore, as Remembered by Shetlanders in British Columbia', *The Journal of American Folklore* 31/120 (1918): 180–201. Ülo Valk notes: 'The name näkk is borrowed from a Germanic language: either from Scandinavia (the Swedish näcken) or from Germany (the south-eastern Estonian näks, naks are related to the German word Nix, Nixe). These Germanic names are probably derived from the demonized image of St Nicholas'; see Ülo Valk, 'The Guises of Estonian Water-Spirits in Relation to the Plot and Function of Legend', in *Islanders and Water*-Dwellers, ed. P. Lysaght et al. (Dublin: DBA Publications, 1999), 338. The formal malleability of these figures (horse, man, formless mass) aligns with the substitution of devil for water-sprite documented in Christiansen's ML 4090 variants. Bruford observes that the Northern Isles water-horses (nyuggle, tangie, shoopiltie) 'unlike the water horses of the Highlands seem to appear only in horse form, not human', revealing a pattern that contrasts with the explicit shapeshifting capacity of MacDonald's *bodach a' mhuilinn* and with the devil-for-water-sprite substitutions documented in Christiansen's Norwegian variants; see Bruford, 'Trolls, Hillfolk', 123.

[64] Arthur Geddes, *The Isle of Lewis and Harris: A Study in British Community* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1955), 227.

[65] F. MacLeod, *Muilnean Beaga*, 39; and F. MacLeod, *Norse Mills*, 39.

[66] F. MacLeod, *Muilnean Beaga*, 38; and F. MacLeod, *Norse Mills*, 38.

The suppression of fiddle music is documented most vividly from Cape Breton itself, where the maintained sociability of the tradition generated resistance to clerical censure well into the latter half of the nineteenth century. John Shaw records that the Rev. Kenneth MacDonald, who served the parishes of Port Hood and Mabou between 1865 and 1894, 'is remembered almost solely for his single-minded and unremitting efforts to discourage the playing of Scottish fiddle music'.[67] One parishioner after being asked if he feared anything, replied: '*Tha, tha an t-eagal orm ro' dà rud: Maighstir Coinneach agus an tàirneanach!*' ('Yes, I'm afraid of two things: Fr Kenneth and thunder!').[68] Shaw's liner notes for *The Music of Cape Breton Volume 2: Cape Breton Scottish Fiddle* link the Cape Breton anti-fiddle campaigns led by clergy to similar efforts in Scotland during the age of Clearance: 'The abundance of fiddle-players in the country areas of the West, even after the time of migration to Cape Breton, is attested to by accounts of the large heaps of fiddles and pipes that were burned in Skye in the 1800s by certain members of the clergy in their attempts to suppress the music'.[69] The same notes record the Cape Breton folk belief that not only contested but completely inverted the diabolic associations with the instrument: 'the fiddle is the only instrument that the Devil can't play because the bow and the body of the instrument form the sign of the cross'.[70] The inversion is precise: where the clergy denounced the instrument as diabolic, community tradition reclaims it as apotropaic, being powerful enough to ward off evil. Both priest and devil emerge as external authorities whose claims the community resists through continued social engagement.

The Scottish evidence appears in Alexander Carmichael's introduction to *Carmina Gadelica*, a source with documented connections to Cape Breton tradition; Carmichael himself noted that informants' earlier sources 'had emigrated to Cape Breton'.[71] What Carmichael documented was wholesale destruction:

> the good men and the good ministers who arose did away with the songs and the stories, the music and the dancing, the sports and the games, that were perverting the minds and ruining the souls of the people, leading them to folly and stumbling... They made the people break and burn their pipes and fiddles. If there was a foolish man here and there who demurred, the good ministers and the good elders themselves broke and burnt their instruments.[72]

The diabolic accusation was explicit. Carmichael recorded the denunciation of a fiddler in Eigg:

> *Tha thu shios an sin cul na comhla, a dhuine thruaigh le do chiabhan liath, a cluich do sheann fhiodhla le laimh fhuair a mach agus le teine an diabhoil a steach*.

[67] John W. Shaw, 'Observations on the Cape Breton Gàidhealtachd and its Relevance to Present-Day Celtic Studies', in *Proceedings of the First North American Congress of Celtic Studies*, ed. Gordon W. MacLennan (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988), 85–86 and fn 12. See also Kenneth E. Nilsen, 'The Priest in the Gaelic Folklore of Nova Scotia', *Béaloideas* 64/65 (1996–1997), 185–186; and Jodi McDavid, 'The Fiddle Burning Priest of Mabou', *Ethnologies* 30/2 (2008): 125, 133.
[68] Nilsen, 'The Priest', 185, fn. 41.
[69] John W. Shaw, liner notes to *The Music of Cape Breton, Vol. 2: Cape Breton Scottish Fiddle*, produced by John Shaw and Rosemary Hutchison. Topic Records (LP, 1978), 6.
[70] J. W. Shaw, liner notes, *The Music of Cape Breton, Vol. 2*, 6.
[71] Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* I, 6, 284; II, 162. See also J. W. Shaw, 'Observations', 77.
[72] Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* I, xxvi.

> Thou art down there behind the door, thou miserable man with thy grey hair, playing thine old fiddle with the cold hand without, and the devil's fire within.[73]

The instrument denounced was a violin made by a pupil of Stradivarius. The emotional cost of such campaigns is captured in the fiddler's response when his family pressed him to surrender it:

> *Cha b'e idir an rud a fhuaradh na dail a ghoirtich mo chridhe cho cruaidh ach an dealachadh rithe! an dealachadh rithe!*"
>
> It was not at all the thing that was got for it that grieved my heart so sorely, but the parting with it! the parting with it!

Carmichael adds: 'The voice of the old man faltered and the tear fell. He was never again seen to smile'.[74]

Yet the suppression was never complete. Carmichael documented clandestine practice continuing in the *cùlaist* (the recess behind the sleeping quarters in the black house), where girls danced 'for fear of their life and of their death upon them, that they may be heard or seen should the good elder happen to be passing the way [...]. But the girls have a blanket on the door and another blanket on the window to deafen the sound and to obscure the light'.[75] In Cape Breton, Donald Beaton, an accomplished fiddler and grandson of Alexander Beaton of Skye, 'refused outright to hand over his fiddle when ordered to do so by Rev. MacDonald, remarking that it was common knowledge that music was played in heaven and therefore highly unlikely that it should be sinful here on earth'.[76] The emotional register of these accounts, the fiddler's tear, the old man's faltering voice, counterbalances the defiance narratives with evidence of genuine loss. What was at stake was not merely the instrument or the tune but the social bonds that communal music-making sustained, the collective heat of the gathering that suppression sought to extinguish.[77]

Like the fiddle in Scotland's *Gàidhealtachd*, the horizontal mill was not simply passing from use due to outward migration; it was being actively suppressed. As early as 1735, instructions for a new mill at Stornoway specified 'that the Querns in aboutt Starnaway is to be broke'.[78] Where people continued to use their own mills and querns, 'those in authority not infrequently came and broke the millstones in the small mills and often took away the querns that were being used at home'.[79] Carmichael, writing in 1900, described the policy and its consequences:

> When mills were erected, the authorities destroyed the querns in order to compel the people to go to the mills and pay multure, mill dues.[80] This wholesale and inconsiderate destruction of querns everywhere entailed untold hardships on

[73] Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* I, xxviii.
[74] Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* I, xxviii.
[75] Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* I, xxvi–xxvii; J. W. Shaw, Liner notes, 6.
[76] J. W. Shaw, 'Observations', 85, fn. 12.
[77] The metaphorical concepts of *te* (warm/hot) and *fuar* (cold) as structuring principles of social experience in Irish-speaking communities will be discussed further below; see Lillis Ó Laoire, 'Metaphors We Live by: Some Examples from Donegal Irish', *Western Folklore* 59/1 (2000): 38–42.
[78] F. MacLeod, *Norse Mills*, 21.
[79] F. MacLeod, *Norse Mills,* 13.
[80] I.e., typically a portion of the grain milled.

> thousands of people living in roadless districts and in distant isles without mills, especially during storms.[81]

Such destruction accompanied the Clearances and continued through estate consolidation, from the burning of barns, kilns, and mills in Strathnaver in 1814[82] to the closure orders enforced against the small mills of Lewis in the 1860s.[83] The enforcement of thirlage, a law that bound tenants to send their grain to the landlord's mill, was widely despised.[84] In Lewis, crofters told the Napier Commission in 1883 that they had been 'compelled by the estate to send all our grain to be ground at Breasclete Mill, six miles distance', that 'the estate ordered that they be destroyed', and that '[q]uerns are still in use in some of the houses. If we did not do so we could not live'.[85] Oral tradition preserves accounts of resistance: the miller who came to break the township stones and was thrown in the river; the elderly man who, told on his deathbed that his millstones had been smashed, replied that he would rather have lost his best beast.[86]

The semantic field of *dubh* ('black') in *muileann dubh* becomes legible against this background. The term could attach to the horizontal water-mill (capable of circumventing the multure extracted by estate-controlled mills) or to the illicit still, because each occupied the same structural position in the economy of the *baile*: subsistence production outside landlord or state control. The suppression of illicit distillation followed the same trajectory as the suppression of the mills: what had been 'a legitimate home industry by which to pay the rent' was criminalised by legislation favouring large operations.[87] John Shaw noted the pattern of response with characteristic irony: 'It is heartening to observe that similar attempts to discourage fiddle music in Cape Breton some decades later met with no more enthusiasm or compliance than did the clerics' occasional exhortations and dire warnings against the distilling of moonshine'.[88] The *dubh* of the black mill is the darkness of the unlicensed, the unsanctioned, the hidden from official scrutiny: the blanket on the door, the still in the secluded ravine, the mill beyond the factor's or cleric's eye. To play the tune and dance to its rhythm is to subvert, through collective resistance, the forces that would marginalise and silence.

Although the *muileann dubh* that an eighteenth-century Lewisman could hear clacking beside his pillow had become, by the late nineteenth century, a curious ruin by the burnside or a memory preserved in oral tradition, the mill's symbolic acoustemology survived the physical auditory

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[81] Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* I, 255.
[82] Donald MacLeod, *Gloomy Memories in the Highlands of Scotland* (Glasgow: Archibald Sinclair,1892), 8, 17, cited in Hugh Cheape, *Kirtomy Mill & Kiln* (Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group, 1985), 42.
[83] Cheape, *Kirtomy*, 46, citing Donald MacIver, 'Cuid de na h-Atharraichean a Thainig air Leodhas bho 'n Bhliadhna Ochd-Ceud-Deug', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 34 (1927–28): 341.
[84] John Shaw, *Water Power in Scotland 1550–1870* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1984), 124.
[85] MacLeod, *Norse Mills*, 13.
[86] MacLeod, *Norse Mills,* 29. On quern destruction and thirlage enforcement: Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* I, 255; Cheape, *Kirtomy*, 15–18, 42, 44, 46; Hugh Cheape, 'Horizontal Grain Mills in Lewis', in *Highland Vernacular Building*, ed. Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group (Edinburgh: SVBWG, 1989), 74; J. Shaw, *Water Power*, 124. On oral traditions of resistance: MacLeod, *Norse Mills,* 29, 37–38. On the suppression of illicit distillation: Geddes, *Isle*, 227; MacLeod, *Norse Mills,* 14. On the broader transformation of the rural economy: Geddes, *Isle*, 225, 241, 251; J Shaw, *Water Power,* 127.
[87] Geddes, *Isle*, 227.
[88] J. W. Shaw, Liner notes, 6.

environment of the *baile.*[89] Indeed, metaphorically, it became enmeshed in the conceptual vocabulary by which Gaels evaluated verbal skill. A proverb recorded by MacLeod captures this aptly:

> *Chanadh na cailleachan mu fhear a bhiodh a' còmhradh gun abhsadh: "Tha e a' dol ann an siud mar glagan muilne".*
>
> The old women used to say of anyone who talked too much: 'He's going on there like a mill clapper'.[90]

To be likened to the *glagan*, the wooden piece that rattled against the rotating millstone to shake grain into the eye, was to be marked as one whose speech, however voluble, lacked substance, and in turn value. Shaw's study of Gaelic verbal taxonomies illuminates the evaluative system within which such comparisons operated, and demonstrates that 'purpose or appropriate content in speech is a prominent feature in Gaelic society and should be assigned a high position in the taxonomic hierarchy'.[91] Fr Allan McDonald's collection from South Uist and Eriskay recorded thirty-seven words describing kinds of talk, twelve of which denote useless or senseless speech, including *glagraich*, *gleigeil*, *golamadh*, *sgèadal*, and *ràfard*; the proverb *na h-abair ach beag ach abair gu math e* ('say little but say it well') encapsulates the principle.[92] Against this standard, the *glagan muilne*, voluble, mechanical, undiscernible, represents the antithesis of valued speech. The mill thus operated on multiple registers simultaneously: site of labour, gathering place, phenomenological environment, and conceptual resource. It furnished the metaphors through which the community evaluated speech, distinguished purpose from noise, and calibrated the value of human expression. It was also a site invested with supernatural associations, where the beings encountered took various forms across traditions but where the pattern of otherworldly encounter at these water-powered, liminal spaces persists.

Similarly, the association between grinding and music was not incidental but structural. Finlay MacLeod, in reference to Carmichael, observes that 'no other sound was heard more frequently coming from the fairy knoll than that of the rotary quern, often accompanied by song'.[93] Carmichael's account of a fairy woman grinding at a quern beneath a house built on a fairy mound encodes the relationship explicitly: *Thòisich a' bhleith, agus thòisich a' bhruidhinn agus an ceòl* ('The grinding began, and the talk and the music began').[94] This acoustic tripling of *bleith* ('grinding'), *bruidhinn* ('talk'), *ceòl* ('music') situates the wider process within an established pattern whereby the rhythmic percussion of grain-grinding generates the conditions for verbal art and supernatural sound alike. The horizontal mill inherited and amplified what the domestic quern had established: if grinding at the fairy knoll could be accompanied by song, grinding at the water-powered mill, with its louder, more insistent acoustic signature, provided an even more reverberant environment for the emergence and discernment of otherworldly music.

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[89] Steven Feld, 'Acoustemology', in *Keywords in Sound*, ed. D. Novak and M. Sakakeeny (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 12–21.
[90] F. MacLeod, *Muilnean Beaga*, 39; and F. MacLeod, *Norse Mills*, 39.
[91] John W. Shaw, 'The Ethnography of Speaking and Verbal Taxonomies: Some Applications to Gaelic', in *Celtic Connections: Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Celtic Studies*, vol. 1, ed. R. Black et al. (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999), 316.
[92] Allan McDonald, *Gaelic Words and Expressions from South Uist and Eriskay*, ed. J. L. Campbell (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1958); J. W. Shaw, *Ethnography of Speaking*, 316.
[93] MacLeod, *Norse Mills*, 12.
[94] Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica: Hymns and Incantations*, vol. 5, ed. Angus Matheson (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1954), 114, 246, cited in MacLeod, *Muilnean Beaga*, 11.

Supernatural Encounter and Experience

A striking anecdote of kiln-related phenomenological conditions of verbal art performance appears in John Francis Campbell's account of a performance at Grulinn. A man named Iain Mac Ghilleathain recited a story in such a fashion that 'the voice seemed to come from the singed sheep's head, to the dismay and terror of the lad, who could recite the story, but would not'. The lad 'thought it was the devil'.[95] Here the kiln becomes a site where performance itself takes on an uncanny quality: the voice displaced, the source uncertain, the diabolic association invoked. The nocturnal mill as a site of supernatural encounter extends into Northern Isles tradition, where the same convergence of isolated labour, darkness, and otherworldly presence recurs.

Indeed, the sound of more-than-natural labour at the mill conflates the human work of the site with an otherworldly presence. In Kirkcudbright, Campbell found that familiar Gaelic narrative patterns had undergone local transformation: 'the hill has become a mill, and the fairies Brownies'.[96] The site and the beings shift in name and form, but the association persists. Donald MacDonald (Dòmhnall Chràisgean, 1861–1916), a blacksmith and bard from Galson, Lewis, set his story entitled '*Bodach a' Mhuilinn*' at Arnol Mill, presenting the mill as a site of fear, humour and supernatural danger.[97] A boy, Calum, disappears from the mill at night; his fate is attributed to the *bodach a' mhuilinn*, a being that the community believed appeared in multiple forms: *Bha cuid 'ga fhaicinn 'na each mor geal agus cuid eile 'na chù mor dubh* ('Some saw him as a great white horse and others as a great black dog').[98] When the being is encountered, it declares: *Thainig mi bho shios agus thainig mi bho shuas, agus tha cumhachd agam mi féin a nochdadh ann an iomadh seorsa cruth* ('I came from below and I came from above, and I have the power to reveal myself in many forms'). Asked its name, it replies: *'Se Sàtan is ainm dhomh* ('Satan is my name'). Although the short-story framing of local traditions of the supernatural is revealed ultimately through a prank, the mill's uncanny reputation for otherworldly encounter is reinforced through the potentialities of local belief and social practice in recent memory. The site of the *bodach a' mhuilinn*'s operation, the *taigh-làir* ('under-house') where the water-wheel turned in darkness beneath the grinding floor, was understood as the mill's generative core. A Lewis description articulated this with striking directness: *'S e an taigh-làir* 'secret' *na muilne. 'S e bha ga dèanamh* ('The underhouse was the "secret" of the mill. It was what made it).[99] The hidden space where the anthropomorphised shaft struggled against the water's force, where grain was transformed into meal, was explicitly identified as the apparatus's mystery.

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[95] Quoted in George Henderson, 'Sgeulachd Cois' O'Cein', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 25 (1901–1903): 187–188.

[96] J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* II, 55.

[97] MacDonald, 'Bodach', 71–74. Donald MacDonald was himself no stranger to supernatural encounter: his sister Mary Murray recalled that he composed his first song, '*Òran na Lice*', after being visited by a ghost while apprenticed to a smith in Beauly (SA1967.029.A8, recorded by Morag MacLeod, 1967; Tobar an Dualchais, track 38929). The biographical detail lends irony to his rationalist comedy.

[98] On the cross-cultural distribution of the dog and cat as the most frequent zoomorphic devil manifestations in European folk religion, see Valk, *The Black Gentleman*, 105, 109–116. Linda-May Ballard documents comparable zoomorphic devil traditions on Rathlin Island, Co. Antrim, where the devil appears as 'a big black dog with red eyes' and in multiple variants as a large black cat. On Rathlin, the devil is interchangeably termed the *gruagach*, a word more usually denoting a fairy or hobgoblin figure, illustrating the same formal interchangeability between devil and fairy that characterises the Cape Breton and Lewis mill traditions. See Linda-May Ballard, 'Fairies and the Supernatural on *Reachraí'*, in *the Good People: New Fairylore Essays*, ed. P. Narváez (New York: Garland, 1991): 76–82.

[99] F. MacLeod, *Muilnean Beaga*, 37 and *Norse Mills*, 37.

Alan Bruford documented a legend type unique to Orkney and Shetland (F16C) in which a man working alone in a water-mill at night hears trows entering to warm themselves at the kiln fire and hides under a pile of straw; when it stirs, one trow remarks to the other in rhyme that straw cannot walk.[100] Here again, the mill is the site where human and supernatural presence converge during the solitary nocturnal labour of grinding, the same phenomenological conditions documented in the Lewis testimony of the mill as 'an eerie place to be by yourself at night with the noise of the millstones and the water'.[101] The beings encountered at mills and kilns thus show considerable formal variation (*bodach*, fairies, Brownies, water-horse, black dog, goat, devil) but their association with these sites remains constant across the Gaelic, Scandinavian, and broader North Atlantic tradition areas. The mill's role as a site of supernatural encounter belongs to a wider pattern in European folk tradition whereby the devil appears not in wild or mythical landscapes but in the spaces of human labour. Ulrika Wolf-Knuts documents that when the devil 'meets a human being in a non-mythical location, the meeting usually takes place in a human environment, e.g. in a farmer's house, at the end of the table, in the cellar, at a dance hall, in the hay-loft of a barn... in a smithy, a church, in a churchyard'.[102] The mill, the kiln, and the smithy share a common profile: enclosed working spaces where fire or water drives transformation of raw material, where solitary or nocturnal labour creates the conditions for encounter. That the Cape Breton legends and their Scandinavian cognates locate the devil at the mill rather than in the wilderness is thus consistent with the broader pattern Wolf-Knuts identifies in Finnish-Swedish tradition, where the supernatural intrudes upon the site of productive work rather than upon the uninhabited margin.

The Cape Breton Evidence

1. Willie Fraser (2007): The Devil Completes the Tune

The version closest to the ML 4090 teaching structure was recorded from the renowned dancer, singer, and raconteur Willie Fraser (*Uilleam mac Shaimein*, 1915–2015) of Deepdale, Inverness County.[103] In addition to Fraser, the session included Anna MacKinnon (née MacDonald), Hector B. MacIsaac (1919–2011), and Alex Francis MacKay (1922–2012), all interviewed by Jim Watson (1949–2018) and John

[100] Bruford, 'Trolls, Hillfolk', 125.
[101] F. MacLeod, *Norse Mills*, 38.
[102] Ulrika Wolf-Knuts, 'The Devil between Nature and Culture', *Ethnologia Europaea* 22 (1992): 111.
[103] Fraser was recorded at Glenora Distillery, Glenville, 14 August 2007, as part of the *Mar bu Nòs bho Shean* project of Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum. The recording session included John Shaw, the late Jim Watson (1949–2018), Shamus Y. MacDonald, and the present author. A transcription of Fraser's telling is deposited in the School of Scottish Studies Tale Archive (SSSA/TA/TR001) without any comparisons. I am grateful to the late Cathy Scott for her kindness and assistance with any questions I would bring to her in the Tale Archive. During doctoral research at Edinburgh under John Shaw's supervision, I brought this transcription to Cathy in order to search for Scottish cognates, of which none were catalogued. I initially framed the legend within the Faustian bargain tradition familiar from Robert Johnson lore; see Everett and Narváez, '"Me and the Devil"'. Wolf-Knuts' observation of cognate Finnish-Swedish material clarifies the distinction: 'Dr Faustus lost his soul because he wanted more knowledge and understanding of the world. This grandiose wish is not explicit in Finland-Swedish folklore. The wishes are much more connected with concrete, everyday rural life'; see Ulrika Wolf-Knuts, 'What can we do today with old records of folk belief? On the Example of Devil Lore', *Folklore* 131 (2020): 128. The Cape Breton transaction fits this pattern: the boy wants to finish learning a tune in an everyday context of playing the fiddle at home. The ML 4090 classification proposed here emerged from that search and from my own retelling of Willie's version to students and colleagues over the years.

Shaw.[104] That afternoon, while we recorded in one of the distillery's outbuildings, fiddler John MacDougall (1924–2008) was performing across the way in the main hall with Robbie Fraser. I spoke briefly with MacDougall during a break. MacDougall, a fixture at Glenora every Saturday and Sunday, was then in the final year of his life: 'The dead want to get the music back', he had told the *Globe and Mail* the previous year: 'It's from the people who lived here before [...] they could make [the songs] but they couldn't write them'.[105] The convergence was unwitting but apt: in one room, Willie Fraser describing how the semblance of a young dancer visited him in a dream (*bruadal*) as a child, declaring *Tha thu 'dol a bhith nad dhannsair* ('You are going to be a dancer'), and imparted over twenty steps to him that no living person had seen before;[106] and across the way, MacDougall playing tunes no living person had composed. Of the first-language Gaelic speakers who were recorded during that day's session, only Anna survives.

In Fraser's telling, a fifteen-year-old boy is sent at night with horse and wagon to fetch the priest to administer last rites for a dying woman. He is learning the fiddle and knows only part of the tune:

> *Bha seo bho chionn bhliadhnaichean agus thog e rith' air each 's* wagon *'s bha an fhidheall aige 's bha e 'g ionnsachadh na fidhl'—an fhidheall agus bha e 'sireadh* turn *air: [...] "Nead na circe fraoich"—o,*
>
> > *Nead na circe fraoich a's a' mhuileann dubh, 's a' mhuileann dubh,*
> > *Nead na circe fraoich a's a' mhuileann dubh air samhradh.*
>
> *O bha siod air an fhidheall agus cha robh an còrr aige.*
>
> He had the fiddle and he was learning the fiddle and trying to get a turn [of *"Nead na circe fraoich a's a' mhuileann dubh"*] on it... Oh, that was on the fiddle and he didn't have the rest.]

[104] The Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum's *Mar bu Nòs bho Shean* project, developed in consultation with John Shaw (University of Edinburgh) and Seósamh Watson (University College Dublin), documented Cape Breton Gaelic tradition bearers discussing modes of oral, aural, and visual transmission of cultural knowledge and art forms.

[105] Karen Mazurkewich, '33,300 Songs and Still Writing', *Globe and Mail,* 15 July 2006.

[106] Willie Fraser (1915–2015) described learning his distinctive dancing style through a series of dreams during the recording session that day. As a boy of six or seven, a young man appeared in his bedroom, *air a dreasadh suas 's a chuile sìon eireachdail* ('all dressed up and everything fine-looking'), and declared: *Tha thu 'dol a bhith nad dhannsair... Tha mi 'dol a shealltainn dhut ceithir no còig do steapanan* ('You are going to be a dancer... I am going to show you four or five steps'). The next morning, Fraser's father asked how he had slept: *Glé mhath, bha bruadal agam* ('Very well, I had a dream'). His father took up the fiddle and Fraser performed the steps he had learned from the dream. The figure returned a fortnight later with more. Transcribed by the present author from the *Mar bu Nòs bho Shean* recording, Glenora Distillery, 14 August 2007. Years later, while performing at Ceòlas in South Uist, Fraser was told by an elderly woman that she hadn't seen such steps since her father had passed away some seventy years before, leading Fraser to wonder if it was that person who had come to him in his dreams; see 'Willie Fraser' in Electric Canadian, https://www.electriccanadian.com/canada/breton13.htm. In a 1986 interview, Fraser recounted an English version of the dream encounter: 'I had a dream then. A fellow come to me right in the bedroom all dressed up and he'd show me a step. When he finished a step, a big hatch would open and he'd fall right down.... That went on for the longest time until I learned maybe a dozen steps from my dreams. After that I picked up steps from other good dancers'; see Inverness County Dance Project, 'Interview and filming with Willie Fraser', 31 July 1986, Item 86-46 LEB/SAY-Ac-22, Beaton Institute Digital Archives, https://beatoninstitute.com/leb-say-ac-22). On the recording Fraser performs *Am Muileann Dubh* among other *puirt-à-beul* (1:25–6:00).

The boy heads off into the darkness, playing and singing what he knows. The horse stops at a 'large dark black mill' beside the road and the boy hears music coming from within:

> *Stad an t-each dìreach mar siod 's thug e sùil 's bha* building *mòr ann a' sin – muileann dubh, muileann mòr, muileann dorch' ri taobh a' rathaid mhòir. 'S chuala 'staigh 's a' mhuileann – bha 'n donas a-staigh 's a' mhuileann:*
>
> > *Tha crodh 's cearcan fraoich' a's a' mhuileann dubh 's a' mhuileann dubh.*
> > *Tha crodh 's cearcan fraoich 's a' mhuileann air samhradh.*
> > *Tha iomadh rud nach saoil sibh 's a' mhuileann dubh, 's a' mhuileann dubh.*
> > *Tha iomadh rud nach saoil sibh 's a' mhuileann dubh air samhradh.*
>
> *"'S e sin an deireadh dhen a' phort agam."*
>
> The horse stopped right there, and he looked, and there was a big building there – a black mill, a big mill, a dark mill at the side of the main road. An inside the mill he heard – the devil was inside the mill:
>
> > There are cattle and red grouse in the black mill, the black mill,
> > There are cattle and red grouse in the black mill in summer.
> > There are many things you wouldn't expect in the black mill, the black mill,
> > There are many things you wouldn't expect in the black mill in summer.
>
> And that's the end of my tune.

The boy continues on to fetch the priest, but they arrive back to the home too late. The old woman has died. The legend concludes with the boy's retort: *Tha mise coma dhen diabhal càite an deach a' chailleach fhad 's a fhuair mi am port!* ('I don't give a devil where the old lady went as long as I got the tune!').

Fraser's version preserves the core ML 4090 structure: a would-be musician with incomplete knowledge receives completion of a tune from a supernatural being at a water-associated site. The devil functions as teacher, providing what the boy could not learn on his own. The transaction carries a cost, a soul is lost, but the boy's final words claim the tune while dismissing the framework within which its acquisition might constitute a loss. The phrase *'S e sin an deireadh dhen a' phort agam* ('That's the end of my tune') frames the exchange explicitly: the lad discerns the otherworldly tune and claims it as his own.

The figure of the dying *cailleach* in Fraser's telling connects the Cape Breton legend to the *Cailleach an Dùdain* tradition discussed earlier. Where that ritual drama enacts death and resurrection: the *bodach* kills the *cailleach*, then revives her limb by limb; Fraser's narrative literalises the exchange: "*an t-sean tè seo a' caochladh, air leab' a' bhàis*" ('this old woman dying, on her deathbed'), whose fate is traded for the completed tune. The boy's closing remarks are the first to name the transaction that the telling has left unstated. In the ritual, the *cailleach* rises; in the legend, she does not. The mill remains the site of transformation, but what was cyclical has become transactional; what was regenerative has become sacrificial. The Cape Breton material thus preserves the supernatural and acoustic dimensions of a polysemous complex whose ritualized registers of (re)productivity and pleasure, still visible in the Scottish evidence, have been transposed into diabolic narrative.

Yet the legend does not end in loss. It ends in laughter. Fraser concluded his telling with collective laughter, alongside the others gathered, as he launched into jigging the tune itself,

performing legend and *port-à-beul* as a unified act. This laughter answers the devil's claim. Where Angus Gillis' version records the devil's *gàire mór, cridheil* ('great, hearty laugh') mocking the priest's failure, Fraser's telling transfers the laughter to the human side.[107] The boy's transgressive wit enacts precisely the carnivalesque inversion that Bakhtin identified as the 'people's second life': a view from below that refuses the seriousness of official culture, that asserts the body and the collective against hierarchical authority.[108] The laughter is ambivalent: it includes death, acknowledges loss, yet regenerates through the very act of laughing. To play the tune is to refuse the terms on which both supernatural and clerical authority would constrain cultural practice.

2. Comparative Variants: Beaton (1983) and Gillis (1980)

Two earlier recordings preserve related versions from Inverness County. John Allan Beaton (*Iain Ailean mac Iain 'ic Raghnaill*) of Broad Cove Marsh told his version to Seósamh Watson in July 1983;[109] Angus J. Gillis of Mabou Harbour (1907–1984) told his to John Shaw on 1 December 1980.[110]

In Beaton's telling, a priest and his companion, both *uamhasach measail air ceòl* ('terribly fond of music'), pass a mill at night on their way to attend a dying man and hear *port cho* slick *'s a dh'fhairich 'ad riamh* ('as nice a tune as they had ever heard'). But the tune has neither beginning nor ending: *cha robh am port a' tighinn gu ceann no crìoch*. The priest identifies the source as the Devil and they flee, arriving too late to reach the dying man. Yet *dh'ionnsaich 'ad am port an oidhche sin* ('they learned the tune that night'). The tune carries a local toponym, *Muileann Dubh a' Logadair*, whose referent Beaton himself could not identify with certainty.

Gillis's version, the most complete in narrative detail, sets the legend in penal-era Scotland. A priest who is himself *na fhìdhleir 's 'na leth sheòrs' do phìobaire* ('a fiddler as well as being something of a piper') passes a mill at night and hears *Nead na Circe Fraoich* played *cho sunndach 's cho math* ('so cheerful and well played'). When it ends, he hears a *gàire mór, cridheil* ('a great, hearty laugh') and the mocking cry, *Chaill thu an t-anam!* ('You have lost the soul!'). He arrives too late, 'crosses' the tune (i.e. declares its association with the devil), and declares *nach robh còir aig feadhainn a bhith cluith' a' phuirt gu bràcha tuilleadh* ('that people should never play it again'). But Gillis concludes:

> *Ach tha e air a chluith' dh'ionnsaigh a' lath' an diugh* [...] *port cho math 's a chaidh a dheanamh riamh. Bhiodh iad 'ga ghabhail nam b'e an deamhan a rinn e, nach biodh?*
>
> But it's played down until this very day... as good a tune as was ever made. And people would play it even if it had been composed by the Devil himself, wouldn't they?

Where Fraser's devil completes a tune, Beaton's traps with one: the endless melody, without *ceann* or *crìoch*, functions as the devil's snare, holding the listeners in place while the soul slips away, a pattern that echoes the Telemark variant in Christiansen's catalogue where an accidental listener in a mill is compelled to dance all night until invoking God's name.[111] Acquisition is passive rather than active, aligning Beaton's version more closely with MacDonald's F103 than with ML 4090's teaching structure. Gillis foregrounds the aftermath: clerical prohibition and community defiance. The priest's crossing of the tune represents the same assertion of ecclesiastical authority over cultural practice

[107] Shaw, *Na Beanntaichean Gorma*, 184, 185.
[108] Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 9, 11–12.
[109] Seosamh Watson, 'An Muileann Dubh: Story and Tune', *An Rubha* 9/1 (2005–2006): 14–15.
[110] J. W. Shaw, *Na Beanntaichean Gorma*, 184–187 as well as the field recording mentioned on p. 213, n. 26.
[111] Christiansen, *Migratory Legends,* 78.

documented in the suppression material above, and the community's response enacts the principle MacInnes identifies: *Na doir géill do gheas is géillidh geas dhut* ('Do not submit to superstition and superstition will submit to you'), observing 'its injunction is only an alternative to more complex rules for keeping the unpredictable elements of the imagination, and therefore the human universe, in equilibrium'.[112] Gillis' rhetorical question invites the listener into complicity, affirming that the community's judgement supersedes both threats to salvation and clerical interdiction.

Yet the substitution of devil for water-sprite in the Cape Breton tellings is nominal rather than functional. In none of the three versions does the devil operate as Christian moralist. He does not punish sin or enforce doctrine; he plays a tune, completes a tune, laughs. The transaction is framed as amoral: musical skill exchanged for a soul, with no reference to the victim's moral conduct. Valk's study of Estonian folk religion documents the broader process by which such substitutions occur: 'the Devil gained the dominant position in Estonian folk belief by taking over the roles and functions of other mythological creatures', a pattern of absorption in which the name changes while the narrative function persists.[113] His analysis of the analogous relationship between the Estonian *näkk* (water-sprite) and the devil illuminates the distinction at work in the Cape Breton material. As he observes, 'the *näkk* shares the same guises as the devil, but the frequency of occurrence of the various forms differs';[114] the two figures can wear similar shapes while retaining distinct narrative functions. The distinction is sharpest in the pragmatics of encounter:

> The devil can be avoided by living a virtuous Christian life [...] but the *näkk* does not have the function of supporting morals [...]. It cannot be avoided by following the Ten Commandments and Christian rules of behaviour; the only solution is to exercise extreme caution near bodies of water.[115]

The Cape Breton devil in the mill behaves as the water-sprite does: he cannot be avoided through piety, only through caution at the site itself. The boy in Fraser's telling does not sin; he is stopped in an hour of need seeking both the *cailleach*'s salvation and the tune. The priest in Gillis's telling is himself a musician who stops to listen. Neither transgresses morally; both encounter a being whose power operates outside the moral framework presented in the legend's framing. That cosmology required no physical mill to sustain it. It traveled in the tune and those who played it and danced to it. This is not indifference to the price but refusal to let the cost go unrecognised.

Conclusion

The mill in the Cape Breton legends is an imagined site, a setting embedded and remembered in the tune and its associated narratives rather than a feature of the local landscape. Yet the tune continued to circulate, and with it the charge that the mill tradition had encoded. The *port-à-beul* lyrics describe the mill's motion: '*'s tha 'm muileann dubh air bhogadan / thurraman... 's e togairt dol a dhannsa*' ('the black mill is shaking / bouncing / wanting to go dancing'). The mill is anthropomorphised, imbued with desire; it wants to dance. In Cape Breton, where the tune was (and is) played at virtually every gathering, the mill's desire finds fulfilment not in the turning of stones but in the movement of

[112] John MacInnes, 'Looking at Legends of the Supernatural', in *Dùthchas nan Gàidheal: Selected Essays of John MacInnes,* ed. Michael Newton (Edinburgh: Birlinn), 476.
[113] Valk, *The Black Gentleman*, 21.
[114] Valk, 'The Guises of Estonian Water-Spirits', 339.
[115] Valk, 'The Guises of Estonian Water-Spirits', 346.

bodies on the dance floor. The *turraman* of the mill becomes the rhythmic driving of the reel; the collective physical exertion of the dancers generates the heat that the mill's friction once produced.

Lillis Ó Laoire's study of dance and entertainment in Donegal Irish-speaking communities offers a framework for understanding this transfer. Ó Laoire analyses the metaphorical concepts of *te* ('warm, hot') and *fuar* ('cold') as they structure social experience. A successful dance, an *oíche mhór* ('great night'), is one in which participants achieve collective heat, keeping people *te dá chéile* ('warm to each other'), a phrase denoting the warmth of kinship and community solidarity.[116] Conversely, a failed dance is *fuar*: John Ó Duibheannaigh's account of a dispirited gathering captures the failure: 'they rose to dance and they did a cold little set (*cúrsa beag fuar*)... it wasn't with any *croí* ('heart') or *aigneadh* ('spirit') that they were there'.[117] The dance also creates continuity with the absent: 'through the enactment of particular dances, songs, and other forms, associated with other community members, no longer alive, or emigrated, these same high spirits might elicit feelings of *cumha*, of longing for those departed'.[118] Ó Laoire draws an explicit parallel to the merry wake, citing Ó Crualaoich's argument that the wake 'articulated in traditional symbolic language both a commentary on and a resistance to social forces threatening the continuance of old ways and old mentalities'.[119] The tune *Am Muileann Dubh*, with its legends of diabolic origin and clerical prohibition, was played at these gatherings despite its associations. The community's continued performance enacted what Ó Laoire calls a 'flexible, actively constituted *dúchas*': not a frozen inheritance but a living capacity to negotiate the forces that threaten communal survival.[120]

Shaw's own summary of the legend captures its dual nature as 'a musical/tune legend as well as being a religious legend':

> A priest, hurrying to give extreme unction to a dying man passes the house where he hears remarkable music coming forth. He stops for a few moments to listen until the tune is finished, and then, as he continues on his way, he hears a great laugh echoing and the words *Chaill thu an t-anam* (You have just lost the soul). As a result of the negligence and the eternal consequences, the particular tune, a reel known as 'The Black Mill', is considered to be 'crossed' (associated with the devil), but that does not prevent it from being one of the most popular traditional Scottish reels down until the present.[121]

Wolf-Knuts' analysis of devil lore in Finnish-Swedish tradition identifies a similar dual function that illuminates this pattern:

> […] to dare to tell humorous stories about the Devil creates a feeling of freedom in the narrator, freedom from all the restrictions of society, whereas the serious stories help people to be conscious of their sins and to stick to the rules of society. Thus, Devil lore is both revolutionary and conservative, but the borderline between these two opposites

[116] Ó Laoire, 'Metaphors', 42.
[117] Ó Laoire, 'Metaphors', 38–39.
[118] Ó Laoire, 'Metaphors', 42.
[119] Gearóid Ó Crualaoich, *'The Merry Wake',* in *Irish Popular Culture 1650–1850,* ed. James S. Donnelly Jr., and Kerby A. Miller (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1998), 193, cited in Ó Laoire, 'Metaphors', 42.
[120] Ó Laoire, 'Metaphors', 45.
[121] John W. Shaw, '(E)Migrating Legends and Sea Change', *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore* 37, 51.

> is not one to be found between pious literature and folklore. Rather, the borderline is to be found within folklore.[122]

Wolf-Knuts' duality characterises the Cape Breton legend complex as a whole, its revolutionary and conservative registers both present in each telling, but the three versions differ in how they position authority in relation to musical desire rather than distributing those functions between them. In Beaton's telling, the priest names the Devil, flees, arrives too late, and learns the tune that night. In Gillis', the priest crosses the tune, yet Gillis sets this prohibition within a penal-era frame in which the priest himself was forced to operate clandestinely, and the community plays on regardless. In Fraser's version, the boy is waylaid on his errand not by his own choice but by the horse, which refuses to budge in front of the dark mill until the devil provides the rest of the tune; hence they are delayed, the *cailleach* dies, and the tune survives. The borderline runs within the tradition itself, and in every case the devil occupies not the position of moral agent but of the being at the water site capable of bestowing the gift of music to those who discern it through their own performance.

Dan Rory MacDonald, the prolific composer of Cape Breton fiddle music in the twentieth century, described his own compositional process in strikingly consonant terms: 'Well it comes to you like a dream you know, you can think up anything in the middle of the night or whatever time of day it is by whistling, and you go and you put that together'.[123] The tune arrives; the musician discerns and assembles what has come. John Shaw's account of Dan Rory's funeral in 1976 captures the tradition's continued operation within community life. When a eulogist consoled the congregation that there would now be a fiddle playing alongside the harps in heaven, an old man near the back of the church, of Lochaber descent and related to one of Mabou's outstanding fiddling families, turned to his companion and said: *Ma fhuair Dòmhnall Ruairidh astaigh dha na Flathanas, c'àite an diabhal a bheil Maighstir Coinneach?* ('If Dan Rory got into Heaven, where the devil is Father Kenneth?').[124] The old man's question at the back of the church requires the same answer as Gillis's: the listener is invited to laugh, and in laughing to affirm the community's judgement over the assertions of external powers. Gillis' own conclusion returns to the tune itself: *port cho math 's a chaidh a dheanamh riamh*. As good a tune as was ever made. The judgement is not defiance alone but discernment: the tune's value warrants the cost. *Bhiodh iad 'ga ghabhail nam b'e an deamhan a rinn e, nach biodh?* The question re-enacts the choice each time it is asked. Every performance of the tune at every gathering renews the transaction that the legend narrates as singular. The *cailleach* does not rise in Fraser's telling, but the tune does. The people dance on.

'*S tha 'm muileann dubh air thurraman... 's tha togairt dol a dhannsa.*

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[122] Wolf-Knuts, 'What can we do', 119.
[123] In Ron MacInnes' 1972 CBC documentary *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler*.
[124] J. W. Shaw, 'Observations', 86.

spent hours listening to field recordings, transcribing, and examining every word in detail. Even in his final years, Jim continued to offer care, encouragement, and support as I sought to develop projects and find my footing in the field, his mentorship shaping the skills that would later serve me in my doctoral research at Edinburgh. Finally, to my doctoral supervisor and friend John Shaw, whose scholarship has illuminated the traditions from which this legend flows, my debt is greater than I can express. I am pleased to offer this paper in memory of Jim Watson and in honour of John Shaw, in gratitude for many years of support and friendship.

APPENDICES

1. Sources for 'Am Muileann Dubh' in musical repertoire (without text)

Date	Title	Source
c. 1730–1760	'Snuff in the Black Mill'	James Christie music manuscript collection, Northeast Scotland.
1757	'Oyster Wives Rant'	Robert Bremner, *A Collection of Scots Reels or Country Dances*, 80.
1803	'Mullindough, or the Black Laddie'	Aird's *6th and Last Volume of Scotch, English, Irish and Foreign Airs*, No. 3.
1840	'The Black Laddie'	John Rook, manuscript, 'A Collection of English, Scotch, Irish and Welsh Tunes'.
1844	'Muilean Dubh an t-Snaoisean'	Angus MacKay, *The Piper's Assistant*, No. 81.
1848	'Am Muilen Dubh'	William Gunn, *The Caledonian Repository of Music Adapted for the Bagpipes*, 16.
1869	'The Black Mill, Reel'	William Ross, *Collection of Pipe Music*, No. 166.
1876–1900	'Oyster Wives Rant'	David Glen, *Collection of Highland Bagpipe Music,* Book 5, No. 41, 21.
1876–1900	'The Black Snuff Mill, Reel'	David Glen, *Collection of Highland Bagpipe Music,* Book 6, No. 6.
1884	'Oyster Wives Rant' 'Muileann Dubh'	James Stewart-Robertson, *Athole Collection of the Dance Music of Scotland*.
1899	'The Black Snuff Mill'	James Bett, *A Collection of Pipe Music*, No. 21.
1940	'The Birds are Building Nests in the Little Mill'	Malcolm MacInnes, *120 Bagpipe Tunes, Gleanings, and Styles*, 67.

2. Sources for 'Am Muileann Dubh' in the *port-à-beul* tradition

Date	Print Sources
1868	Donald MacPherson, *An Duanaire A New Collection of Gaelic Songs and Poems*, 118.
1881	Henry Whyte ('Fionn'), 'Ceilidh. Litir do dh-Iain Bàn Òg,' *The Celtic Garland*, 210–218 [refs. pp. 215–217].
1894–96	Charles Ferguson, 'Sketches of the Early History, Legends, and Traditions of Strathardle and its Glens. Part IV', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 20: 260–262.
1900	Alastair MacAoidh, 'Muileann Dubh', *Celtic Monthly* 8: 28.
1900	D. MacKinnon, 'Muileann Dubh', *Celtic Monthly* 8: 49.
1900	Gregor MacGregor, 'Am Muileann-Dubh', *Celtic Monthly* 8: 159–160.

1900 Alasdair Mac Neacail, ‘A’ Mhuileann Dhubh’, in *Oideas na Cloinne*, 86.

1902 ‘Am Muileann Dubh’, *Mac-Talla* 10/28, 11 April 1902: 215.

1905 Robert Craig MacLagan, ‘Additions to the Games of Argyleshire (Continued)’, *Folklore* 16/4: 457.

1907 T. D. MacDonald, ‘Am Muileann Dubh’, *Puirt mo Sheanmhar*, 7–8.

1907 Robert Craig MacLagan, ‘Gaelic Erotica’, *Kryptadia* 10 (1907): 346.

1910 ‘Origin of a Spirited Strathspey’, *Kingussie and Upper Speyside (Badenoch): A Descriptive Guide,* 65–66.

1912–14 Andrew Mackintosh, ‘English and Gaelic Words for Strathspeys and Reels’, *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 28: 294–295.

[1912] M. N. Munro, ed., ‘Am Muileann Dubh (For Unison Singing Competition)’, *Coisir a’ Mhòid: The Mod Collection of Gaelic Part Songs 1896–1912*, 21.

1917 Murchadh Mac Laomuinn, *An Cuimhneachan: Orain Céilidh Gaidheal Cheap Breatuinn agus Eilean-an-Phrionnsa*.

1921 Lachlann Mac Bheathain, ‘An Saoghal Eile ann an Rìogachd Fìobh’, *An Ròsarnach* III, 35.

1927 Maire Nic Aoidh, ‘Tá mé i gcoinne ’tol sa Mhuileann dubh’, *An tUltach* IV/6–7, June 1927, ‘Criomáin Aondroma III’.

1939 Calum Mac Gill-Iosa, ‘Bàl na h-Aibhne Deas’, in *Smeorach nan Cnoc ’s nan Gleann*, ed. Hector MacDougall, 44–45.

1953 Charles W. Dunn, *Highland Settler: A Portrait of the Scottish Gael in Nova Scotia,*102.

Date **Field Recordings**

1950 Duncan MacDonald (Donnchadh mac Dhòmhnaill ’ic Dhonnchaidh, 1882–1954), Peighinn nan Aoireann, Uibhist a Deas (South Uist), recorded by John Lorne Campbell, 21 July 1950 (CW0089B.366; Tobar an Dualchais track 49305).

1951 Peigi MacRath (Peigi Anndra, 1874–1969), Ceann a Tuath Ghlinn Dail, Uibhist a Deas (South Uist), recorded by Margaret Fay Shaw, 22 March 1951 (CW0160C.814; Tobar an Dualchais track 34892).

1953 Capt. Dougald MacCormick (Dùghall Iain Nèill Dhùghaill, 1877–1960), Fionnphort, Muile (Mull), recorded by Calum Iain MacIlleathain, July 1953 (SA1953.117.B4; Tobar an Dualchais track 92274).

1959 Nan MacKinnon (Nan Eachainn Fhionnlaigh, 1902–1982), Bhatarsaigh (Vatersay), recorded by James Ross, 26 July 1959 (SA1959.065.B8; Tobar an Dualchais track 106505).

1961 Norman Kennedy (1933–), Aberdeen, December 1961 (SA1961.121; Tobar an Dualchais track 91289).

1969 Donald Sinclair (Dòmhnall Chaluim Bàin, 1885–1975), Cùiltean Haoidhnis, Tiriodh (Tiree), recorded by Eric R. Cregeen (SA1969.158.A1a-A2; Tobar an Dualchais track 102735).

1972–74 Angus Gillis (Angaidh Aonghais Ailein), 81 years old, Broad Cove, Cape Breton, recorded by Gordon W. MacLennan, 1972–74 (Canadian Museum of History, MacLennan Collection, Acq. 78–78, MAC-B-2, Side B).

1977 Mrs Jean Conway, Canberra, recorded by Emily Lyle, 23 March 1977 (SA1977.045.B2b; Tobar an Dualchais track 70781).

1980 Angus J. Gillis, Mabou Harbour, Cape Breton, recorded by John Shaw, 1 December 1980 (Cape Breton Gaelic Folklore Collection 302A3).

1984 Seumas Campbell (Seumas Chaluim Sheumais, 1902–2000), Ròdhag, An t-Eilean Sgitheanach (Skye), recorded by Mòrag NicLeòid, 25 February 1984 (SA1984.002.A3b; Tobar an Dualchais track 74535).

3. Commercial recordings of 'Am Muileann Dubh' by Cape Breton fiddlers

Performer	**Album title(s)**
Willie Kennedy	*Cape Breton Violin*
Joe Cormier	*Scottish Violin Music from Cape Breton Island* (also *The North Atlantic Strings)*
Little Jac MacDonald	*The Bard of Scottish Fiddling*
Dan Joe MacInnis	*The Cape Breton Fiddle of Dan Joe MacInnis*
Dan Hughie MacEachern	*The Land of My Love* (two settings, A minor and G minor)
Wendy MacIsaac	*The "Reel" Thing*, *Timeline*, and *Off the Floor*
Natalie MacMaster	*Live* and *Live in Cape Breton*
Howie MacDonald	*Cape Breton Fiddle Music Not Calm* and *Live! West Mabou Hall*
Donald MacLellan	*The Dusky Meadow*
Morgan MacQuarrie	*Loch Ban*
Sandy MacIntyre	*Steeped in Tradition*
Glenn Graham	*Drive*
Jerry Holland	*Jerry Holland and Friends*
Mac Morin	*Mac Morin*
Barry Shears	*A Cape Breton Piper*
Joe Peter MacLean	*Back of Boisdale*
Karen Beaton	*How Sweet the Sound*
J. J. Chaisson	*In the "Genes"*
Michael Anthony MacLean	*Good Boy M. A.!* (two settings)
Jason Roach	*Jason Roach*
Mike Hall	*A Legacy not to be Forgotten* (two settings)
Melody and Derrick Cameron	*Looking Forward and Looking Back*
Marc Boudreau	*Live at the Doryman Pub*
Compilation albums	*Glendale '77* *Festival of Scottish Fiddling 1973* *Highland Village Ceilidh* *The Rover's Return* *The Cape Breton Fiddle* *MacKinnon's Brook* *Cape Breton Live Radio, Take 02*

4. Sources for the tradition of '*Cailleach an Dùdain*'

Date	Details
1740	Discussion of the MacFarlane MS, c. 1740.
	'Cailleach an Dordon', in T. M. Flett, 'Addenda et Corrigenda: Some Hebridean Folk Dances', *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society* 7/3 (1954): 183.
1804	'A mainland solo character dance'.
	Alexander Campbell, *The Grampians Desolate: A Poem in Six Books.* (Edinburgh: Printed for the Author, 1804), 261–262.
1829–31	Recording of a Hogmanay performance.
	Norman MacLeod, *Caraid nan Gaidheal,* ed. Archibald Clerk (Glasgow: William MacKenzie, 1867 [1829–31]), 397–98.
1890s	A full account of the Hebridean paired combat-revival drama.
	Fr Allan McDonald, 'Strange Things', manuscript c. 1890s, Canna House MS CH2/1/1/12/128/1, §86.
1900	Description of a tradition at St. Michael's festival with two women as 'famous dancers' at Clachan-a-ghluip, North Uist, in 1871.
	Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1900), 208–209.
n.d.	A variant *port-à-beul* text: '*An toir thu do nighean domh, Chailleach an dùdain*?'
	Alexander Carmichael, unpublished notebook CW120/344, f 100v. Carmichael Watson Collection, University of Edinburgh.
1911	Reproduction of Carmichael's account with song text, '*Cailleach an dùdain, dùdain, dùdain, / Cailleach an dùdain, cum do dheireadh rium'*.
	Edward Dwelly, *The Illustrated Gaelic-English Dictionary* (Herne Bay: E. Dwelly, 1911), 148.
1933	Major Norman Macleod, a native of North Harris, recalling a childhood performance of the tradition under the name 'Black Witch's Dance', including mock death, lamentation, and revival. 'Black Magic in Uist: Weird Rites in Lonely Cottage, Strange Beliefs', *People's Journal*, 20 May 1933, 9.
1956	An incomplete version from Angus John MacLellan of Benbecula in 1953.
	J. F. and T. M. Flett, 'Dramatic Jigs in Scotland', *Folklore* 67 (1956): 92–93.
1966	Kate MacDonald, Garryheillie, South Uist, providing the '*cum do dheireadh rium*' lyrics alongside *canntaireachd* of the tune.
	School of Scottish Studies Archives, SA1966.096.A3; Tobar an Dualchais track 107096
1982	Donald Allan MacQueen, Iochdar, South Uist, recalling a memory of the tune's being used as a dance: '*O cò fear a bhiodh a' dèanamh ruidhle Cailleach an Dùdain*?' ('Which one would do the Cailleach an Dùdain reel')
	School of Scottish Studies Archives, SA1982.141; Tobar an Dualchais track 128919

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Maritime Folklore in the West Highlands: Some Mid-century Collectors and their Informants (1953–1970)

MAXIM FOMIN

Introduction

The people of Scotland have long held an interest in things folkloric. It can be argued that the interest in the vernacular tradition exhibited by the medieval monastic scholars of Iona, Melrose, Haddington, Elcho, and Aberdour, writing in Latin and Middle Irish and later in Scottish Gaelic, can be explained by their zeal to record and codify local popular beliefs, legends, and histories.[1]

However, it was not until the beginning of the eighteenth century that city folk, including lawyers and antiquarians rather than monastic scholars, became interested in folklore, primarily the poetic narratives sung by the maids and servants in their households. As an interest in national origins increased throughout the eighteenth century and crescendoed in the nineteenth, the collecting of both poetic and prose tales increased as well.

Scholars of the time noted the cultural and historical value of the narratives told in ballads. James Macpherson, a Scotsman, raised in the district of Ruthven, Inverness-shire, and educated at King's College, Aberdeen, indicated he had obtained manuscripts in western Inverness-shire, and on the islands of Skye, North Uist, South Uist, and Benbecula for further publication. Once the translation of the sources was finished, he began the adaptation of Scottish ballads for a popular readership in 1761.[2]

At this early stage in the history of folklore studies, the distinction between folklore and literature had not yet been made. The Ossianic lays published by Macpherson had to withstand strong criticism from other scholars of the time, who were not easily convinced that such things as native ballads existed. For example, a strong opponent of Macpherson's, Samuel Johnson, wrote of the Gaelic language:

> It is the rude speech of a barbarous people, who had few thoughts to express, and were content, as they conceived grossly, to be grossly understood. After what has been lately talked of Highland Bards, and Highland genius, many will startle when they are told, that the Earse never was a written language; that there is not in the world an Earse manuscript a hundred years old; and that the sounds of the Highlanders were never expressed by letters.[3]

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[1] See Kimm Curran, '"Through the Keyhole of the Monastic Library Door": Learning and Education in Scottish Medieval Monasteries', in *The Edinburgh History of Education in Scotland*, ed. Robert Anderson, Mark Freeman and Lindsay Paterson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 25–38.

[2] On Macpherson and the Ossianic controversy, see, for example, Fiona Stafford, 'Primitivism and the "Primitive" Poet: A Cultural Context for Macpherson's Ossian', in *Celticism*, ed. Terence Brown (Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1996), 79–96, and Mícheál Mac Craith, 'The "Forging" of Ossian', also in Brown, *Celticism*, 125–42.

[3] Johnson, Samuel, *A Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland*, The Project Gutenberg eBook, #2064, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2064/2064-h/2064-h.htm, accessed 28 July 2025.

Instigated by such an example, Scottish scholars of the nineteenth century were extremely careful not to mix literature and folklore when publishing further collections. For example, *The Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (1862) was a four-volume collection of folk tales, and its compiler, John Francis Campbell, took extreme caution to collect the stories word for word. He included details of their narrators, the story's origin, the place where the storytellers resided, their occupation and age, and he placed the original Scottish Gaelic text alongside its translation in English.[4]

Collection of Scottish Gaelic folklore continued throughout the twentieth century, with a highlight being the activity of the School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh since January 1951.[5] The School of Scottish Archives are today part of the University of Edinburgh Library Heritage Collections and boast a rich store of legends, songs, and other items of intangible heritage, a substantial proportion of which are available online at the extensive Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o' Riches database.[6]

This contribution will focus on a specific topic of the collection: oral maritime heritage, and the wealth of legends and stories concerned with the sea and with water that are held in the School of Scottish Studies Archives (SSSA). And while the topic of our stories is concerned with water, yet, it is also, in the words of Lauri Honko, 'at least as important that the tradition is not connected with water in general, but to certain places where one swims, fishes, etc.'.[7]

The stories presented in this contribution were collected by the academic and technical staff of the School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh between 1953 and 1970, at various locations in the west of Scotland. Contributions from some of the School's most prolific informants, including Kate Dix (*Ceit an Tàilleir*) of Berneray, Harris, and Nan MacKinnon (*Nan Eachainn Fhionnlaigh*) of Vatersay are discussed in detail, alongside the work of important mid-century collectors including Calum I. Maclean, Ian Paterson and James Ross.[8]

Maritime Legends – Charms against Misfortune?

Maritime stories told by twentieth century Scottish fishermen cover a wide range of topics. One of the most popular is the recording of superstitions about antidotes against a disaster or shipwreck, as well as the portents of and the ways to protect oneself from drowning. An anecdote told by Donald Campbell to Calum Maclean in July 1953 in Borve, Barra, was about a local priest teasing a local fisherman named Iain Mac Caluim. And what seemed like a yarn to the former was a serious matter for the latter – keeping a little bottle of holy water on board his boat:

> *Maighstir Tormod a bha sa Mhorbhairne. ...] Bha e cho eòlach air Iain Mac Caluim 's bhiodh e a' tadhal air. Bha iasg aige a h-uile bliadhna nuair a bhiodh e a' dol a Ghlaschu, is bhiodh Maighstir Tormod a' tarrainn às:*

[4] His work and contribution have been given brief discussion in Francis Thompson, 'John Francis Campbell (1821–1885)', *Folklore* 101/1 (1990): 88–96.

[5] See John McQueen, 'The Work of the School of Scottish Studies', *Oral History* 2/1 (1974): 62–4; also Ailie Munro, 'The Role of the School of Scottish Studies in the Folk Music Revival', *Folk Music Journal* 6/2 (1991): 132–68.

[6] https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk.

[7] Lauri Honko, 'Four Forms of Adaptation of Tradition', *Studia Fennica* 26 (1981): 21.

[8] Several of the stories discussed here were collected by Calum Maclean. The AHRC-funded project led by Dr John Shaw devoted to the work of Maclean has been on-going at the University of Edinburgh since 2009; see https://www.calum-maclean-project.celtscot.ed.ac.uk; also John Shaw and Andrew Wiseman, 'From Spoken Word to Digital Corpus: The Calum Maclean Project,' *Oral Tradition* 28/2 (2013): 355–62. Many of Calum Maclean's recordings, some of them transcribed, are available at https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk.

"Dè a tha agad 's a' bhotail bheag a tha siud, Iain?"

"O rud leam fhìn, rud leam fhìn," ars Iain.

"'S ann a bh' orm," arsa Maighstir Tormod, "nam biodh uisge-coisrigte a dhìth ort gun dèanainn fhìn uisge-coisrigte dhut."

"Ò," ars Iain, "'s iongantach gun dean thu dhomhsa e 's nach dèan thu dhut fhèin e."

Father Norman […] knew Ian MacCalum and he used to visit him. He had fish every year when he would go to Glasgow and Father Norman would tease him: 'What do you have in that little bottle there Iain?'

'Oh, something for myself', said Ian.

'What's bothering me,' said Father Norman, 'is if you want holy water that I could make holy water for you.'

'Oh,' said Ian, 'it's funny that you would make holy water for me but not for yourself.'[9]

In this short story, one can see the wit of the fisherman, who is able to both keep his dignity and poke fun at the priest who was eager to make fun of him, as the latter settled the matter once and for all.

Of course, it was not all fun and games: fishing was a serious business, and the fishermen depended on signs and premonitions to keep them away from drowning and disaster. Seeing an extraordinary vision of blazing light at sea, called a *dreag*, was a premonition of death, possibly of some important person, such as a priest or a minister. The following account was recorded by Calum Maclean from John Campbell (*Iain Shéamais Aonghais*) on South Uist in 1960:

Calum Maclean: *An cuala sibh iomradh riamh air rud, air rud ris an canadh iad dreag?*

John Campbell: *Chuala agus chunnaic. Chuala, chuala...* Well*, an aon té chunna mise ceart riamh, 's ann aig muir a bha mi... Agus dh'fhalbh sinn à Glaschu beul na h-oidhche agus bha i gu math dona... Bha rubha dìreach aig Belfast agus bha solus ann agus dh'èibh mi air-san agus dh'iarr mi air an log fhaighinn ann a' shiod... Agus dh'èibh mi air a choimhead air a' log. Dh'fhalbh e sìos a' dol a dh'iarraidh na log agus chunna mi 'n gnothach ... cha robh soluis ann <bhon> a bha an Cogadh Mòr ann. Dh'fhalbh e sìos. Chunna mi fhìn an gnothach – bha e cho soilleir geal romham 's bha mi coimhead thall 's bha mi a' coimhead a-bhos. Cha robh mi faicinn gu dè bha a'deanamh an t-soluis… 's thug mi sin sùil os mo chionn... Bha i cho goirid sin dhuinn. Ma tha, bha an dreall aice, teine a bh' ann a' sheo innte, agus bha dealbh na ciste-laighe innte ceart cho soilleir 's gum biodh i leat air ar beulaibh ann a' shiod...*

Calum Maclean: *Agus bha iad ag ràdh gur e seòrsa do mhanadh a bha anns an dreag a bha seo.*

[9] School of Scottish Studies Archives SA1953.116.B7. Numbers beginning 'SA' refer to tape recordings made by researchers at the School of Scottish Studies, now part of the School of Scottish Studies Archives. The audio recording of this anecdote, along with Calum MacLean's Gaelic transcription provided here, can be found at Tobar an Dualchais, Track ID 5334. Unless otherwise noted, translations of the Scottish Gaelic text are by members of the Stories of the Sea project (https://cid.ulster.ac.uk/storiesofthesea).

John Campbell: *Manadh bàis, manadh bàis, manadh bàis a bh'ann. Bha ise a'deanamh air an dà rud – rud a bha a' dol a thachairt. Bha, fear nach fhac' thu idir. an dà chuid dhiubh.*[10]

Calum Maclean: Have you ever heard mention of a thing that they used to call *dreag* ?
John Campbell: I have heard of it and seen it. Yes, yes... the only one that I ever saw properly was when I was at sea... We left Glasgow at nightfall, and the conditions were bad... There was a promontory at Belfast with a light on it, and I called him and asked him to get the log there... And I shouted to him to look at the log. He went below to look for the log, and I saw the thing – there was no light there since the Great War. He went below. I saw the thing myself – it was so clear and bright in front of me, and I was looking back and forth [but] I wasn't seeing what was causing the light... and then I looked overhead...It was so close to us. Even so, it had a blaze, a fire in it here, and an image of a coffin in it quite as clear as if it were right there in front of us...

Calum Maclean: And they used to say that this *dreag* was some sort of premonition.

John Campbell: A premonition of death, a premonition of death, it was a premonition of death. It was pointing toward the two things – something that was going to happen. Yes, one that you didn't see at all.

This story is classified in folkloric terms as a memorate as it refers to a personal experience that includes a pronounced supernatural element.[11] Other supernatural sights or extraordinary events recorded from fishermen and boatmen have included seeing 'a phantom-boat' (*tàsg* or *farra-long*), also believed to bring bad luck. While this story describes a *dreag* seen from afar, the phenomenon can also be seen onboard, at the stern of a boat, as in the following account narrated to Calum Maclean in March 1953 by John McGillivray in Maryburg, Ross-shire, who had heard the story from a man in Àrd Dorch, near Loch Ainort on the Isle of Skye:

Thuirt e rium gum b' aithne dha bàta mu ochd troigh deug a dh' fhad. Chaidh a chur suas gu bràigh a chladaich a chionn gu robh sgioba a' bhàta a' faicinn solus timcheall air a deireadh air oidhcheannan nuair a bhiodh iad aig iasgach. Ghabh iad eagal gun tachradh bàthadh innte 's thug iad gu bràigh a' chladaich i. Chuir iad ann an geodha sàbhailte i 's chaidh a fàgail an sin. Dh'fhàs iad mì-chùramach oirre 's lìonadh le uisge i. Thachair aon fheasgar gu robh clann a' cluich timcheall oirre is thuit caileag bheag mu cheithir bliadhna a dh' aois innte 's chaidh a bàthadh. 'S sann le lainntear a chaidh an corp a thogail aiste, 's bha am bodach a dh'innis an sgeula dhomh am beachd gum b' e sin an solus a bhathar a' faicinn ioma bliadhna roimhe sin innte.[12]

[10] SA1960.19.A2; Tobar an Dualchais Track ID 38615.
[11] Such classifications are explained in detail in Marjatta Jauhiainen, *The Type and Motif Index of Finnish Belief Legends and Memorates*, Folklore Fellows Communications 267 (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1988); Maxim Fomin, Séamus Mac Mathúna, John Shaw and Críostóir Mac Cárthaigh, eds, *Stories of the Sea: Maritime Memorates of Ireland and Scotland* (Berlin: Curach Bhán, 2016); and Maxim Fomin, 'Name Avoidance and Circumlocutory Terms in Modern Irish and Scottish Maritime Memorates', *Studia Celto-Slavica* 11 (2020): 51–68.
[12] SA1953.20.A2. Listen at Tobar an Dualchais Track ID 2618, where Calum MacLean's Gaelic transcription, given here, is also provided.

> He said that he had known a boat that was about eighteen feet long. It was moved up to the top of the shore because the boat's crew had seen a light around its stern during nights when they were fishing. They were afraid that a drowning would take place in it, so they dragged it up to the top of the shore. They secured it safely in a cove and it was left there. They neglected it and it got filled up with water. It happened one afternoon that children were playing around the boat and a little girl around four years of age fell into it and was drowned. Her body was lifted out of the boat by the light of a lantern, and the old man who told me the story believed that this was the light the people had seen in it many years before.

These two stories fall under the 'Portent of Death' category, and can be classified as a memorate and a local legend respectively. They exhibit a widespread international motif attested, for example, in Finland as 'A341 Death omen – a supranormal light, flame is seen'.[13] At the same time, we recognise that an intrinsic element of these stories is their 'milieu-morphological adaptation', their characteristic identification with the community in which they are told. As Honko explains, the external elements

> must sometimes be replaced by well-known natural features in the physical milieu of the tradition community. This adaptation may be called familiarisation. Belief legends and historical legends are generally given a concrete, plausible frame in the visible milieu. They could not otherwise derive their characteristic evidence of plausibility from the obvious immediate surroundings.[14]

Plausibility – the veracity of the event described in the story – is considered its most important characteristic. Physical surroundings, man-made objects embedded as features of the surrounding landscape, observations of conditions of the natural environment – all of these details are included to enable the audience to believe in the truth of the story. Without plausibility, the story could not be told.

An important feature of good storytelling is to continue in the same vein as the just-told story by narrating a similar one – only to make the next one sound more ominous and frightening. Immediately following John MacGillivray's account of the local legend from Àrd Dorch, Calum Maclean recorded the following incident as recalled by the Rev. Malcolm MacLean, who was also present at the same recording session in March, 1953. The tale includes similar incidents: the action takes place close to a body of water; the audience learns of the drowning as the pivotal event in the plot; and the plot establishes a connection between the drowned persons and the speaker, the only difference being that it is the crying heard near the seashore rather than the lights on the stern of the boat that serves as the omen of approaching disaster. There is further importance attached to its genre, in that the informant shares the story as belonging to his family heritage, saying he received it from his father. Because of that family connection, the story is classed as a fabulate rather than simply a local legend:

> *Well, ma tha, tha loch beag mu choinneamh a' Sgarp againn ann ann Leòdhas air a bheil Loch Thamnabhaigh. Acarsaid mhath agus àite math iasgaich a th' ann. Agus bliadhna dhe na bliadhnaichean bha m' athair, agus bràthair m' athar – bràthair m'athar a tha fhathast beò air a bheil Aonghus – agus dithis eile do Chlann 'IllEathain,*

[13] Jauhiainen, *The Motif Index of Finnish Belief Legends*, 72.
[14] Honko, 'Four Forms of Adaptation', 20.

bha iad le eathar iasgaich anns an loch sin oidhche, ceathrar aca. Agus bha iad a-staigh ris a' chladach agus an dorchadas ann, agus chuala iad duine a' caoineadh air... anns a' chladach, a' daor-chaoineadh anns a' chladach. Bha fhios aca a-nis nach robh duine beò air àrainn an àite a bh' ann, agus thàinig an caoch air m' athair-sa gus a dhol air tìr, gum feumaidh gun robh cuideigin ann, ach thuirt càch ris nach robh 's nach bitheadh duine anns an àite. Agus 's e àm iasgach nam bradan a bh' ann agus bha iad a' smaoineachadh gum faodadh cuideigin a bhith gam mealladh gu tìr ach am faiceadh iad cò bha san eathar, a bheil sibh a' faicinn.... Ma-thà, thàinig iad dhachaigh 's cha robh an còrr mu dheidhinn.

Ach an dearbh fhoghar sin fhèin thàinig muinntir à Leòdhas a dh'iasgach sgadain ann an Loch Thamnabhaigh, agus chaidh tè dhe na h-eathraichean fodha 's iad a' tarraing nan lìon. Chuir iad tuilleadh 's a chòir innte agus lìon i orra agus chaidh i fodha fon casan. Agus thàinig an càirdean, tha fhios agaibh, ga sgrìobadh, ach an togadh iad na cuirp agus fhuair iad na cuirp uile ach an corp aig aon fhear. Cha d' fhuaradh am fear sin riamh. Agus anns na lathaichean a bha iad a' sgrìobadh agus e a' failleachdainn orra an corp sin a lorg, bha athair an fhir a chaidh a bhàthadh a' caoineadh anns a' chladach dìreach anns an dearbh àite anns an cuala na Sgarpaich an caoineadh an samhradh ron a sin.[15]

Well then, there is a small loch across from Sgarp here in the Isle of Lewis, which is called Loch Tamnabhaigh: a good anchorage and a good fishing place. One year my father and my uncle – my father's brother who is still living and is called Angus – along with two other Macleans, they had a small fishing boat on that loch one night, the four of them. And they were in near shore after dark and they heard a man crying on the shore, and crying intensely on the shore. Now they knew that there was no one living in those parts, and my father took the notion to land there, for something must be there, but the rest told him it was nothing: no one could be in that place. It was the time of the salmon fishing, and they thought that somebody might be trying to entice them to land so they could see who was in the boat, you see. In any case they returned home and no more was said about it.

But that very same autumn, some Lewismen came to fish herring in Loch Tamnabhaigh, and one of their boats sank as they were hauling in the nets. They put too much in the boat, and it filled up on them and went down under their feet. And their relatives, you know, came to drag the bottom to see whether they could raise the bodies, and they got all of them except for the body of one man. That man was never found. And that day as they were dragging for the bodies, and failing to find that last one, the father of the man who was drowned was crying on the shore in the very place in which the Scarp people heard the crying the previous summer.

Despite its intrinsic local character and connection with familiar local landmarks, this story exemplifies an international motif registered in the motif-index of memorates and belief legends:

[15] SA1953.20.A3. Listen at Tobar an Dualchais Track ID 2621, where Calum MacLean's transcription is also provided.

'A431 Omen of death, accident – a cry for help, moaning, wailing portends death, accident'.[16] It is the father of the storyteller who wanted to go ashore to investigate the sound, in contrast to the rest of the crew who preferred to ignore it. The phenomenon, however, did not have any effect on the outcome of their fishing that day; the informant's father and his companions all returned home safely. As the story unfolds, however, it is a different group of fishermen that are lost – drowned because they have tried to load too large a catch into the boat, which sank under the weight of it.

The story has a moralising element, a warning about the dangers of excessive fishing. Control of fishing quotas was an important part of the collective welfare of fishing communities. This fabulate should be interpreted as a lesson to fishermen to avoid excessive fishing in the interest of protecting their lives.

Seals

Any fisherman understands that where there is fish, there are likely to be seals. Mary MacLucas from Benderloch in Argyllshire related to Calum Maclean an account she had heard from a certain MacDonald from Lismore:

> *Bha bràthair do… bha e 'na chìobair anns a' Chaisteal Dùghlas shuas an-seo. Shiubhail e co-dhiubh còig bliadhna a' sinach. Agus bha e... an àm a bhiodh e ri iasgach, bha bàta aige agus bhiodh e a' dol a-mach a dh'iasgach a-mach shìos an rathad seo.* Well, *bha ròn daonann ga leanailt:* aye, *ròn beag, ròn a' leanachd a bhàt' aige. Bha e ag ràdh a h-uile bliadhna cho luath 's a thòisicheadh an t-iasgach, bha an ròn… chitheadh e an-sin e.*[17]
>
> There was a brother of… who was a shepherd in Castle Douglas up here. He died there anyway five years ago. And he was...when he used to fish, he had a boat and he used to fish out from down the road here. *Well*, there was always a seal following his boat: *aye*, a small seal following his boat. He said every year that as soon as the fishing would start, the seal was... he would see it there.

While following a fishing boat might be natural behaviour for a seal, fishermen considered it lucky for them, too. Because it was thought that seals were able to predict storms, a friendly seal could warn fishermen against going to sea if a storm was approaching. Kate Dix, from Berneray, Harris, gave the following account to Ian Paterson about a woman who befriended a seal and saved many people's lives when the seal predicted the storm. She had heard the story from her father, who himself had first heard it as a child from the doctor's wife, a Mrs Livingston from Ross-shire who was living in Heisgeir:[18]

> *'S ann mu dheoghainn boireannach a thàinig à Siorramachd Rois, agus bha i a' fuireach ann a Heisgeir ma leth mhìle bhon a' chladach...Agus bhiodh i 'dol sìos a h-uile làtha chon a chladaich a' cruinneacheadh duilisg.... Agus a' latha a bha seo co-dhiù ann àm gealaich fhoghair 's ann a chunnaic i spot bheag am meadhan a' chuain, agus bha i a' smaoineachadh, "Uill...ma 's e ròn a tha siod, thig a-staigh agus feuch an inns' thu dhomhsa dè tha am muir a' ràdha."*

[16] Jauhiainen, *The Motif Index of Finnish Belief Legends*, 74.
[17] SA1958.80.A7; Tobar an Dualchais Track ID 38648.
[18] i.e. the Monach Islands, an island group to the west of North Uist.

Thòisich a' ròn air gàireachdaich ach ruith e staigh far a robh i. Agus, "Robh thu 'g èibheach orm?" ars eisean.

"Ò, bha," ars ise. "Bha mi deònach gun innseadh thu dhomh dè tha am muir a' ràdha."

"Ò, tha e a' ràdha an dràsda gu bheil sgadan gu leòr an taobh a-muigh dheth."

"Thalla, ma tha, ga iarraidh," ars ise "'s gu seall thu dhomsa 's gun creid mi thu."

Thug e a-staigh làn a' bheòil dhen a' sgadan, agus chreid i e.

"Thugainn còmhla riumsa dha mo thaigh fhéin agus mi aonranach. 'S bidh mi co math dhut 's a bhios mi dha mo nighean fhéin."

Dh'fhalbh an ròn còmhla rithe. 'S rinn i bonnach dha air a' ghreideil, 's bha iad 'ga h-ithe. Agus a h-uile madainn bha iad a' dol sìos ag iarraidh a' tiùrr a bhiodh a' tighinn a-staigh air a' chladach, agus an duilisg.

Ach nuair a bha gealach mhór t-fhoghair ann 's ann a chaidh iad sios an latha bha seo, agus dh'fhaighnich i dhe, "Dè a nis, dé a nis a tha am muir a' ràdha an-diugh?"

"Tha e a' ràdha, 'fhir a' bhaile, fhir na mara, fhir na mara, na teirig ro fhada o thìr. Tha stoirm mhòr a' tighinn a nall. Bidh i a' tàrrsainn air ur cinn'".

Dh'èibh i sin ris na h-eithirichean a bha a' dol seachad, agus thill iad agus shàbhail i beatha a h-uile duine aca.[19]

It was about a woman that came from Ross-shire, and she was living in Heisgeir about a half-mile from the shore. ... And she would go down every day to the beach to gather dulse. And anyway, it was on this day, at the time of the harvest moon, that she saw a small spot in the middle of the sea, and she thought to herself, 'if that's a seal, come in and see if you can tell me what the sea is saying.'

The seal began to laugh, but it headed in toward her. 'Were you calling me?' it said.

'Oh, I was,' she said. 'I was willing you to tell me what the sea is saying.'

'Oh, it is saying just now that that there is plenty herring out there.'

'Go on, then, and look for some,' she said, 'to prove it, so that I can believe you.'

The seal brought in a mouthful of herring, and she believed him.

'Come along with me to my house. I am lonely, and I will be as good to you as I will be to my own daughter.'

The seal went along with her. She made him a *bonnach* on the griddle, and they ate it. And every morning they went down to collect whatever flotsam was coming ashore, and to gather dulse. But on one particular day, at the time of the great harvest moon, they went down and she asked, 'What, now, is the sea saying today?'

[19] SA1970.296.A1; Tobar an Dualchais Track ID 36457.

> ‘It is saying, ‘men of the township, men of the sea, men of the sea, do not go too far from land. There is a great storm on the way. It will descend upon your heads.’
>
> The woman called out to the boats that were going past, and they returned, and she saved the lives of every one of them.

This folktale differs in several ways from our earlier examples. One notable feature is that both the woman and the seal are able to speak, and their ability to converse leads to their subsequently developing a close relationship. This is a feature characteristic of animal folktales, in which all of the characters typically can speak and share other human characteristics.[20] In addition, the story also takes on some overtones of a migratory legend, as the story presents a warning of impending disaster.[21]

Most strikingly, however, the protagonist of this tale is female, in contrast to the male protagonists of the local legends and fabulates cited above. Not only is she female, but she is presented as a fully-credible member of the community who can communicate with the departing fishermen – men who take her seriously and act on her advice. Typically, fishermen were governed by the taboo not to deal with women before going out fishing, as doing so would bring bad luck or disaster.[22] In this tale, however, the communication between the woman and the fishermen is presented in a positive vein, with the woman’s involvement proving crucial in saving their lives.

To explain her story’s plausibility, we may like to consider the fact that – unlike most storytellers, who tended to be male – Kate Dix would have had no trouble imagining her protagonist as a woman, and her audience would have had no trouble believing her. Born in 1890, Kate MacLeod, or ‘Ceit an Tàilleir’ as she was known in her community, was the daughter of Archibald MacLeod (*Gilleasba’ Tàillear*), originally from Balemartin, North Uist, who was himself known as a great storyteller. Having grown up in Berneray, Kate married Jack Dix, an English marine engineer in 1918, and they settled in Sunderland, where her children were born:

> *Bha mi shìos ann a’ Sunderland suas ri deich bliadhna fichead is bha triùir chloinneadh agam, agus tha mi uamhasach toilichte a ràdha gu bheil a’ Ghàidhlig aca cho math ’s a th’agam-sa… Is scrìobhaidh ’ad i, is léibhidh ’ad è, is gad a bha sinn ann a shen is gun facal Gàidhlig aig an duin’ agam, bha e daonnan deònach gun ionnsaicheadh iad Gàidhlig*.
>
> I was down in Sunderland close on thirty years and I had three children, and I am very pleased to say they have as good Gaelic as I have. They can write and read it, and though we were down there and my husband had not a word of Gaelic, he always wanted them to learn Gaelic.[23]

Returning to Berneray with her children during the Second World War, Kate Dix became not only a very active member of the community but also a willing informant for School of Scottish Studies

[20] ATU 150–199, ‘Wild Animals and Humans’; see Hans-Jörg Uther, ‘*The Types of International Folktale*, *Part 1: Animal Tales, Tales of Magic, Religious Tales, and Realistic Tales, with an Introduction.* Folklore Fellows Communications 284 (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2011), 103–125.
[21] ML 6025–30, ‘The message of the fairies’; see Reidar Th. Christiansen, *The Migratory Legends. A Proposed List of Types with a Systematic Catalogue of the Norwegian Variants.* Folklore Fellows Communications 175 (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1958), 161–162.
[22] Fomin, ‘Name Avoidance’, 52–5; Bairbre Ní Fhloinn, *Cold Iron: Aspects of the Occupational Lore of Irish Fishermen* (Dublin: Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann, 2018), 124–160.
[23] Ian Paterson, ‘Ceit an Tàilleir’, *Tocher* 20 (1975): 122.

fieldworker Ian Paterson, who recorded nearly 600 items from her beginning in 1967. With her deep knowledge of the island's familial relationships and a rich storytelling repertoire influenced by that of her father, she clearly possessed considerable self-confidence in expressing herself. Kate Dix's family background, as well as the perspective she gained from living for several decades in England, may explain why she would not shy away from placing a female protagonist at the centre of one of her stories.

Water horses and mermaids

Seals were familiar animals, and their curiosity and human-like qualities inspired folklore relating to them. But whatever magical characteristics the stories bestowed on them, these are animals that actually exist, and their relationship to human beings is generally depicted as beneficial. The sea, however, is mysterious, and there are many stories about other creatures inspired by that mystery.

Water horses, for example, posed a grave danger, and legends about them are widespread.[24] Informants reported life-threatening dangers associated with meeting or interacting with these creatures – encounters that were normally accidental, later recalled in connection with some sort of everyday activity that the informant was engaged in at the time. Mrs Janet Shaw from Jura reported to Calum Maclean in August 1953 about an incident involving her great-grandfather:

> *Bha mo shìn-seanair co-dhiù... bha iad aig an taobh tuath...a' toirt a-staigh eich a'* laird*. ... Agus bha an oidhche seo bha iad air falbh dh'obrach' nan each. Agus thàinig an oidhche orra agus bha… fhuair esan each aig ceann ... a' locha, chuir iad an taod 's an each 's thug e e chun na h-uamha far a robh e a dol a' d'fhanachd san oidhch'. Agus nuair a bha e air èirich anns a mhaidinn cha robh sgeul air an each… 'S e each-uisge a bha aige. Bha e riabhach a' loch' air a aodach. Agus bha iad a ràdh gur e aran coirce agus tombac a bh' aige 'na phòc', gur e a shàbhail a bheatha*.[25]
>
> My great-grandfather it was anyway...they were at the north side...taking in the laird's horses. ... This night they had gone to work the horses. And night fell and… he found a horse at the end of the loch, they put a rope on the horse and he took it to the cave to where it was going to stay for the night. And when he had arisen in the morning there was no sign of the horse... It was a water horse that he had. He was marked with stripes of the loch all over his clothes. And it was said that it was the oatbread and the tobacco that was in his pocket that saved his life.

This man believed that it was some oat bread and tobacco that had saved his life. In another story, collected in the 1890s and preserved in the Maclagan Manuscripts at Edinburgh University, Norman MacAndrew, originally from the Black Isle but living at Ardgay in Sutherlandshire, reported the following local legend about water horses:

> I heard my mother often telling about a water horse that was at one time in a loch in the parish of Rogart, and it would be coming up on the land sometimes. One Sabbath

[24] See ML 4085, 'The Sea-Horse and the Sea-Serpent' in Christiansen, *The Migratory Legends*, 75–7; B71, 'Sea horse. Horse living in sea' in Stith Thompson, *Motif-index of folk-literature: A classification of narrative elements in folktales, ballads, myths, fables, medieval romances, exempla, fabliaux, jest-books, and local legends*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955-1958 (the on-line edition, accessed 4 August 2025).
[25] SA1953.127.7; Tobar an Dualchais track ID 8722.

> evening it came out, and a lot of young lads who saw it proposed that they would have a ride on it. So away they went, and it appears it was quiet enough till they got on its back. They were saying there were twelve of them, and they all got on it – except one, but when he was going on, somehow he could not get up, and one of his fingers stuck to its back and he could not get it away. So, he asked his brother, who was one of those that were on the horse, to cut his finger through, which his brother did, and that was what saved him. The horse carried all the others into the loch, and they were all lost, and they said the water was red with their blood, and livers.[26]

In MacAndrew's story, cutting off a finger protected the person from being carried off by the water horse. A similar detail is contained in a story told in 1958 by Nan MacKinnon (*Nan Eachainn Fhionnlaigh*) of Vatersay during a visit by collector James Ross to the home Nan shared with her brother-in-law, Jonathan MacLeod (*Eòghann Dhòmhnaill*).[27] Here Nan recounts an incident where her grandmother, Màiri Iain Mhìcheal of Mingulay, met a 'sea horse' (*each mara*) as she was cutting seaweed to fertilise the potatoes, and was so frightened that she cut herself, leaving a scar that she later showed to Nan. Due to the personal character of the story and its connection to the speaker's family, it can be classified as a fabulate:

> James Ross: *An cuala sibh iomradh a-riamh aig daoine air an each mara?*
>
> Nan MacKinnon: *Chuala. Chunnaic mo sheanmhair an t-each mara, Màiri Iain Mhìcheal a chainte rithe. Bha i anns an tràigh a' buain langadal – 's e langadal a bhiodh iad a' cur ris a' bhuntàta ann am Mionghlaidh. ... Agus chuala i fuaim a bha seo an taobh thall dhi, agus thog i a ceann, agus bha an t-each air leum a-mach air a' mhuir, dìreach an taobh thall dhi, agus bha i ag ràdh gur e 'n druim aige a chunnaic i, gur ann glas a bha e, agus gu robh carragan air a'druim aige mar a chìtheadh sibh air na leacan – air leacan a'chladaich – agus leis an eagal a ghabh i cha mhòr nach tug i a' chorrag dhith fhèin leis a' chorran.*[28]
>
> James Ross: Did you ever hear anyone mentioning the sea horse?
>
> Nan MacKinnon. I did. My grandmother saw the sea horse, Màiri Iain Mìcheal they called her. She was on the shore collecting tangles – it was tangles that they used to put on the potatoes in Mingulay... And she heard this noise on the other side, and she raised her head, and the horse had jumped out of the sea, directly opposite her, and she said that it was its back that she saw and that it was grey, and there was dulse on its back just as you would see on the rocks – on the rocks on the shore, and with the fright that she took she nearly cut her finger off with the sickle.

If encountering a water horse was dangerous, seeing a mermaid was supposed to be an omen of bad luck, and it was also a premonition of bad weather. Fishermen seeing a mermaid were supposed to head for home as fast as they could. The following account was given by Nan's brother-in-law

[26] Maclagan Manuscripts MML8055, https://openbooks.is.ed.ac.uk//record/121766/1/0340096c. Centre for Research Collections, Edinburgh University Library.
[27] Nan MacKinnon and Jonathan MacLeod had lived in the same household since the death of Nan's sister some years earlier, at which time Nan had moved in to help raise her sister's children.
[28] SA1958.156.1–8. Tobar an Dualchais, Track ID 101190; 'Nithean os-nàdarrach' begins at 3:04 from start.

Jonathan MacLeod in response to a question from James Ross. As Jonathan describes an experience of his own, his account can be classified as a memorate:

> James Ross: An cluin thu duine a' bruidhinn air a' mhaighdean mhara, Eòghainn...?
>
> Jonathan MacLeod: *Chuala. Agus tha mi a' smaoineach' gura h-i a chunna mi – a' mhaighdean mhara. ... Bha latha breagha 's gun deò gaoithe ann, agus an grunnd cho clìor. Agus chunna sinn beathach, agus shaoil sinn an toiseach gun e ròn a bh' ann, ach nuair a thàinig e bàrr na fairge, dh'aithnich sinn air an t-*shape *aige nach e ròn a bh' ann idir. Agus cha do thuig sinn gu dè rud a bh' ann. Ach bha guaillean a' seo aige, mar gum biodh boireannach no duine a bh' ann, agus an còrr dhe 'na iasg, agus gruag air mar gum biodh air boireannach, na air fireannach air am biodh gruag fhada, agus thug sinn aon chairsteal na h-uarach 'ga choimhead, agus chaidh e fodha an uair sin, agus chan fhaca sinne tuilleadh e.*
>
> James Ross: *Dè a bha e a' dèanamh fhad 's a bha sibh a' coimhead air*?
>
> Jonathan MacLeod: *Cha robh e ach a' snàmh – bha e a' snàmh fon uisge 's air uachdar an uisg'. Ach tha seansa a rithist gun fhaca boireannach e agus fireannach, a mhuinntir a' bhaile a rithist.*
>
> James Ross: *Agus dé bhiodh iad a cantainn ma'n a' mhaighdean mhara – an e comharra na...?*
>
> Nan MacKinnon: *Chuala mise co-dhiù gur e droch-comharra a bh' ann a faicinn.*[29]
>
> James Ross: Have you heard anyone talking about the mermaid, Jonathan...?
>
> Jonathan MacLeod: I have. I think it was her that I saw – the mermaid... It was a fine day and there wasn't a breath of wind and the seabed was so clear. And we saw a creature, and we thought at first that it was a seal but when it came to the surface of the sea, we realized from the shape of it that it wasn't a seal at all. And we couldn't understand what it was. But it had shoulders, as if it were a woman or a man, and the rest of it was like a fish, and it had hair like a woman's, or like a man with long hair and we spent all of a quarter of an hour watching it; and it went underwater then, and we saw no more of it.
>
> James Ross: What was it doing when you were watching it?
>
> It was just swimming – it was swimming underwater and on the surface of the water. But there is a chance that a man and a woman saw her again, local people.
>
> James Ross: And what would they be saying about the mermaid? Was it an omen, or...?
>
> Nan MacKinnon: I heard anyway that it's a bad sign to see her.

Upon hearing Jonathan's account, Nan MacKinnon followed it with a local legend going back to her grandparents' era. The protagonist of this story was a man named Iain mac Ruairidh:

> *Chuala mi bodach a bh' ann am Mionghalaidh uaireigin dhen t-saoghal, ris an canadh iad Iain mac Ruairidh, agus tha 'n ùine cho fada bhuaidhe 's gur e còta mòr a bhiodh*

[29] SA1958.156.1–8. Tobar an Dualchais Track ID 101190, 'Nithean os-nàdarrach' begins at 4:13 from start.

orra a' dol dhan chuan agus éileadh – éileadh clò. Ach co-dhiù dh'fhalbh iad latha a bha seo dhan a'chuan 's chunnaic Iain mac Ruairidh a bha seo, chunnaic e a' mhaighdean mhara. Agus bha iad ag ràdha gun do dh'èibh i dha: "Iain 'ic Ruairidh, an fhaic thu mise?"

" A Leabhra, ma chì," ars' Iain Mac Ruairidh, "'s droch bhàrr déis' thu."

"An deach thu riamh," arsa ise, a'mhaighdean mhara, "an deach thu riamh," arsa ise, "'na leithid a chunnart reimhid?"

"Chaidh," arsa esan, "nuair a bha mi eadar an eilid 's an iomairt."

"Latha mhic do mhàthar," ors' ise, "gun robh fuasgladh facail agad dhomhsa."

Cha robh ach dh'fhàg iad na lìn is thug iad an taigh orra, 's cha robh sgath ann ach dìreach gun tug iad a-mach a'chreag leis a' stoirm.[30]

I heard of an old man one time ago in Mingulay, who they called Iain mac Ruairidh and it is such a long time ago that they used to go to sea with long coats and a kilt – a kilt of tweed. Anyway they set out to sea one day, and this same Iain mac Ruairidh, he saw a mermaid. And it was said that she called to him: "Iain Mac Ruairidh, do you see me?"

'I swear if I do,' said Iain Mac Ruairidh, 'that you are a bad sign.'

'Have you ever been,' said she, the mermaid, 'have you ever been,' said she, 'in such danger before?'

'Yes,' he said, 'When I was between the hind and the hunt.' [31]

'A good day for your mother's son,' she said, 'that you have given me a clever answer.'

They just abandoned the nets and headed for home, and barely reached the cliff with the storm.

The folklore motif in which a mermaid warns fishermen of an impending storm is widespread;[32] and the motif of the verbal contest contained in the dialogue between the mermaid and the protagonist is also registered in Scandinavian migratory legends.[33]

As one of the School of Scottish Studies' most prolific informants, Nan MacKinnon was visited by a number of different collectors and, unsurprisingly, she sometimes recorded different versions of the same material. During a 1964 visit from Celtic scholar Anne Ross, James Ross's widow, Nan told the story of Iain Mac Ruairidh and the mermaid somewhat differently, presenting it not simply as a local legend, but as a fabulate – as part of her own family's lore. Having earlier described the protagonist as a *bodach* ('old man'), this time she identifies him as a family member, her mother's great-grandfather – a re-identification that illustrates the fluidity and personal nature of much oral

[30] SA1958.156.1–8. Tobar an Dualchais Track ID 101190, 'Nithean os-nàdarrach' begins at 5:57 from start.
[31] i.e. 'in the firing line' between hunter and prey – a dangerous place to be. The mermaid admits that Iain has won the battle of wits, and lets the fishermen go.
[32] See B81.7 'Mermaid warns of bad weather' in Thompson, *The Motif Index*.
[33] See ML 4055, 'Grateful sea-sprite gives warning of approaching storm' in Christiansen, *The Migratory Legends*, 68–9.

tradition.[34] She does not mention that the protagonist and his crew were escaping a storm, as she did on the previous occasion. She does, however, respond to questions from Anne Ross about the mermaids, what they looked like, whether Nan had seen one herself, or whether people still believed in them:

Anne Ross: *Bha iad a'creidsinn ann a'mhaighdean mhara?*

Nan MacKinnon: *Bha.*

Anne Ross: *A bheil iad fhathast?*

Nan MacKinnon: *Chan eil, chan eil i ri faicinn' is ma tha iad ann chan eil daoine 'ga faicinn a nist 's neach …. thuirt e nach eil iad ann.*

Anne Ross: *Agus 'n cuala sibh naidheachd eile mu dheidinn a' mhaighdean mhara?*

Nan MacKinnon: *Thuirt mo bhràthair cèile gum faca esan agus gille òg eile. Innsidh e dhuibh fhathast nuair chì sibh e gum fac' iad i.*

Anne Ross: *Ciamar a bha i coimhead… ciamar a bha an coltas?*

Nan MacKinnon: *Bha iad ag ràdh gur ann mar gum biodh iasg a bhiodh a chuid ìseal dhi agus gu robh an ceann aice mar gum biodh ceann boireannaich agus gruaig bheag stiallach oirre. Gruaig bheag stiallach oirre agus sìos seachad air a'bhroilleach aic' mar gum biodh boireannach agus an còrr dhi 'na iasg.*

Anne Ross: *Agus a bheil i breàgha? A bheil i snog?*

Nan MacKinnon: *O chan eil, chan eil fios agam's a nist. Cha tuirt esan ach gur e siod an cumadh a bh'oirre. Thuirt e mar a chunnaic iad i, bha iad a'coimhead uan – a'coimhead nan caorach deireadh an earraich. 'S thuirt e gu robh an fhairge cho soilleir 's mar a tha far a bheil a' ghainmheach tha fhios agaibh, mar a tha'n fhairge réidh chì sibh grunnd cho soilleir... Bha iad ag ràdh – bha i fon uisge – cha b'urrainn dhaibh carachd amach às an àite ['s] a robh iad leis an ìoghnadh a ghabh iad… Cha chuala mise a nist gum faca duine anuas i …*

Anne Ross: *An do phòs duine a' mhaighdean mhara riamh?*

Nan MacKinnon: *O, cha do chuala mis' ann gun do phòs.*

Anne Ross: And did you hear another story about the mermaid?

Nan MacKinnon: My brother-in-law said that he and another young lad saw one. He will tell you later when you see him that they saw her.

Anne Ross: What did she look like? How did she appear?

Nan MacKinnon: They said that the lower part of her body was like that of a fish, and that her head was like that of a woman with a little bit of stripy hair. A little bit of stripy

[34] SA1964.77.A11; Tobar an Dualchais Track ID 21256. Nan's narrative is followed by their further conversation about mermaids as transcribed below.

> hair going down over her chest as you would see on a woman, and the rest of her was a fish.
>
> Anne Ross: And is she pretty? Is she nice to look at?
>
> Nan MacKinnon: Oh no, now I don't know. All he said was that she had that shape. He said how they saw her: they were looking after the lambs toward the end of spring. And he said that the sea was so clear, and the way it is where there is sand, you know, and how when the sea is calm you can see the bottom so clearly... And they said as well – she was under water – they could not move from the place where they were with the astonishment that took hold of them… And I haven't heard now that anyone has seen her since …
>
> Anne Ross: Did anyone ever marry a mermaid?
>
> Nan MacKinnon: I did not hear that they did.

James Ross wrote with much affection about Nan MacKinnon:[35]

> *Nan Eachainn Fhionnlaigh*, as Nan MacKinnon is called in her own community, was born in the township of Kentangaval in the island of Barra, in the year 1903. Her father, *Eachann Fhionnlaigh*, Hector MacKinnon, was a native of Barra, and her mother, the source of almost her entire repertoire, left her native Mingulay after her marriage to settle temporarily in Barra... Apart from some five years spent on the mainland of Scotland, in service or in the herring industry, Nan has spent all her life since that time on Vatersay, and since the age of twenty-two has been permanently settled there.

Although non-literate in Gaelic, Nan was 'a gifted conversationalist in her native language, with a superb knowledge of the traditions of her race'.[36] She possessed a vast store of songs, stories, proverbs and anecdotes which she was generous in sharing with collectors. Alan Bruford described Nan's repertoire as 'certainly the most varied and extensive in the archives of the School of Scottish Studies.'[37]

Conclusion

In this contribution, I have dealt with a collection of maritime folklore preserved in the University of Edinburgh School of Scottish Studies Archives, primarily focusing on stories from the Outer Hebrides recorded by fieldworkers and researchers from the School from 1953 until 1970. The narratives, often classified as memorates, fabulates, and local legends, are rich with supernatural elements, moralising messages and premonitions.[38]

Taken as a collective entity, fisherfolk's oral tradition encompasses a wide range of topics. Many stories focus on omens of misfortune – portents of bad luck or death, sometimes visible (such as a vision of blazing light at sea) or audible (such as crying heard near the seashore). Other tales describe encounters with supernatural creatures such as water horses and mermaids, talking seals predicting a

[35] Ross, 'Nan MacKinnon', 201.
[36] Ross, 'Nan MacKinnon', 202.
[37] Alan Bruford, 'Nan MacKinnon', *Tocher* 7 (1972): 201.
[38] See also Séamus Mac Mathúna, 'Fishing, Fishing Boats and Traditional Lore based on Maritime Memorates collected in the 19th and 20th centuries in Ireland and Scotland', *Studia Celto-Slavica* 12 (2021): 105–19.

storm, drownings and accidents. The many dangers involved in fishing and maritime life – from adverse weather conditions to other perils – inform most such stories. Embedded in the community's culture, tradition and history, the tales often contain a moral element, teaching listeners about proper exploitation of sea resources and warning against the dangers of excessive fishing, a practice that went against the collective welfare. Adopting an appropriate survival strategy, fishermen relied on beliefs and traditional practices that served community members on practical level and thus guaranteed the plentiful catch and their chance of survival.

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The Fiddler and the Waterfall
The Quest for Inspiration in Norwegian Legends of Fiddlers

TERRY GUNNELL

Of all the various skills of the rural communities of Northern Europe and North America, those of the midwife[1] and the musician (in particular those of the fiddler, the piper and the Delta blues-guitarist[2]) stand out in the legend tradition for commonly being said to be gifts bestowed on the owner by supernatural beings. This is especially applicable to the legend traditions of Scotland, Ireland and the Nordic countries, and, in the case of fiddle playing, quite understandable when one visits a session at Sandy Bell's and watches the recipient of this *Festschrift* in a session. Perhaps it is something about the eyes and the fingers dancing across the neck of the fiddle.

As those familiar with Scottish legend and fiddle-playing traditions will know, the Northern Isles (and most particularly Shetland), which have close cultural connections with the Nordic world, stand out from other areas in the British Isles with regard to legends and beliefs connecting fiddle music and the supernatural. Many famous fiddle tunes, most of which take the form of fast reels or jigs, are said to have originated from the trows – the Shetlandic equivalent of the Norwegian *huldre*, the Icelandic *álfar* and *huldufólk*, and the Irish fairies.[3] As Katherine Campbell has noted in her excellent book on the Scottish fiddle tradition, the legends in question can largely be divided into two types. In one of these, people hear (and learn) magical trow tunes while walking through a liminal space between farms, often when passing a grave mound or knowe or other archaeological remains such as a stone circle or broch at night, during the autumn or winter, perhaps after a dance or other festive gathering. In the other type, fiddlers returning home (often after dances) are taken into such mounds to play for the trow inhabitants. Here they learn new tunes and other supernatural fiddling skills, and sometimes even gain new instruments. In some cases, they find they have unwittingly stayed with the trows for a number of years, discovering when they eventually return home that the world has changed radically.[4] In his list of Scottish migratory legends, Donald Archie MacDonald classed these two legend types as F101 ('Fairies Teach Piping')/ F102 ('Fairy Song A] or Tune B] Overheard and Learned'); and F24 ('Fiddler Enlisted to Play for Fairy Dancers')/ F21 ('Visit to Fairyland: Visitor Returns after Days, or, more often, Years'.[5]

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[1] Bo Almqvist, 'Midwife to the Fairies (ML 5070) in Icelandic Tradition', in *Legends and Landscape: Articles Based on Plenary Papers Presented at the 5th Celtic-Nordic-Baltic Folklore Symposium*, ed. Terry Gunnell (Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 2008), 273–322, and references cited there. See also Terry Gunnell, 'The Supernatural Power of Art: Potential Parallels between Skálds, Norwegian Fiddle Players and Robert Johnson', forthcoming.

[2] For example, Robert Johnson and the myth of the crossroads; see Patricia R. Schroeder, *Robert Johnson: Mythmaking and Contemporary American Culture* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 27–42.

[3] Katherine Campbell, *The Fiddle in Scottish Tradition* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2007), 102–24 and notes; Ernest Marwick, *The Folklore of Orkney and Shetland* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2004), 34–5; and James R. Nicholson, *Shetland Folklore* (London: Robert Hale, 1981), 76–7 on the various tunes.

[4] Campbell, *The Fiddle in Scottish Tradition*, 102–52.

[5] Donald Archie MacDonald, 'Migratory Legends of the Supernatural in Scotland: A General Survey' in *Sounds from the Supernatural*: *Béaloideas* 62/63 (1994/95), 46, 54–5, and 69. For examples of F24 (sometimes containing

The fact that these legends are mainly found in the Northern Isles and are comparatively rare in England and Ireland (see n. 5 above) raises the possibility that they might have a provenance in Scandinavia, even though, as Alan Bruford notes, the fiddle only became popular in Shetland in the eighteenth century, by which time firm political and cultural ties between Norway and Shetland had been broken for several centuries.[6] Katherine Campbell, drawing on Bruford's earlier conclusions and referring to various translated collections of Nordic folk legends, states quite firmly that 'the Shetland form of the tradition, in which music and musical skills are learned from fairies rather than watersprites, clearly has Scottish rather than Scandinavian traditions…'..[7] To my mind, however, bearing in mind the paucity of material outside Scotland and the focus on Shetland and Orkney, this idea needs a little more attention.

Certainly, clear differences in form exist between the surviving legends from the Northern Isles and the most well-known and widespread migratory legends about fiddlers found in mainland

F21) from Shetland and Orkney, see Campbell, *The Fiddle in Scottish Tradition*, 128–40; Marwick, *The Folklore of Orkney and Shetland*, 34–5; Nicholson, *Shetland Folklore*, 76–7; Alan Bruford and Donald A. MacDonald, *Scottish Traditional Tales* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1994), 331–2 and 472–3 ('The Fiddler o Gord'), and 327–30 and 472 (an example from Glenfinnan); Lawrence Tulloch, *Shetland Folk Tales* (Stroud: The History Press, 2014), 50–3 ('The Fiddler and the Cows), and *The Foy and Other Folk Tales* (Lerwick: The Shetland Times, 2016), 17–22 ('Robbie Anderson'); Tom Muir, *Orkney Folk Tales* (Stroud, The History Press, 2014), 46–9 ('The Fiddler and the Trow') and *The Mermaid Bride and Other Orkney Tales* (Kirkwall: The Orcadian Limited (Kirkwall Press), 1998), 47–50 ('Tam Bichan and the Trow'). For examples of F101/ F102, see Campbell, *Fiddle in Scottish Tradition*, 104–24. Cape Breton storyteller Joe Neil MacNeil told of a family that acquired its fiddling skills – and a fiddle bow – as a gift from a fairy woman the grandfather met on the way home from a wedding; see Joe Neil MacNeil, *Tales Until Dawn: Sgeul gu Latha*, trans. and ed. John Shaw (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 430–431. Various scholars have noted that even outside the Northern Isles in Scotland, such legends are often related to piping tunes: see Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2004), 83–4; Campbell, *The Fiddle in Scottish Tradition*, 124–5; and Alan Bruford, 'Trolls, Hillfolk, Finns and Picts: The Identity of the Good Neighbours inn Orkney and Shetland' in *The Good People*: *New Fairylore Essays*, ed. Peter Narváez (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 125–6. Examples of similar legends in Ireland exist, but they are few in number: see Bo Almqvist, 'Crossing the Border: A Sampler of Irish Migratory Legends about the Supernatural', in *The Fairy Hill Is on Fire! Proceedings of the Symposium on the Supernatural in Irish and Scottish Migratory Legends. Béaloideas* 59 (1991), 271, on the MLSIT legend, 'Music Taught by Fairies' (closely related to F101/ F102), examples of which can be found in Kevin Danaher, *Folktales of the Irish Countryside* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1967), 49–51 ('The Magic Fiddle', on a magic fiddle and a magic fiddle tune); and Eddie Lenihan with Carolyn Eve Green, *Meeting the Other Crowd* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2003), 68–9 ('A Musician's Story' on some 'windy, 'twisty' unplayable music heard by a musician one night). Both types of legend are naturally related to motifs G303.25.17.2 ('Playing for the Devil's Dances'), and F262 ('Fairies Make Music') in Stith Thompson's *Motif Index of Folk Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana U. Press, 1955–58).

[6] Bruford, 'Trolls, Hillfolk, Finns and Picts', 130. See also Mary Anne Alburger, 'The Fiddle', in *Scottish Life and Society: A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology*, vol. 10: *Oral Literature and Performance Culture*, ed. John Beech, et al., 239, 250 and 263–4. Connections were weakening in the fifteenth century. As Brian Smith has noted to the author in a private communication, there was little economic or intellectual contact between Shetland and any part of Scandinavia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: see Terry Gunnell, *The Origins of Drama in Scandinavia* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1995), 179.

[7] Campbell, *The Fiddle in Scottish Tradition*, 127–8 and 170–1. See also Reidar Th. Christiansen, *The Migratory Legends: A Proposed List of Types with a Systematic Catalogue of the Norwegian Variants*, Folklore Fellows Communications 175 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia/ Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1958); Jacqueline Simpson, ed. and trans., *Scandinavian Folktales* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988); and Reimund Kvideland and Henning Sehmsdorf, ed. and trans., *Scandinavian Folk Belief and Legend* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

Scandinavia (mainly Norway and Sweden, rather than Denmark, along with large parts of Finland).[8] Such accounts typically describe people learning the fiddle, such as the man who encounters a male supernatural figure in a waterfall, who, on certain conditions, agrees to teach the visitor to play the instrument, often passing on to him a particularly powerful tune that has the potential to make the furniture move, and people lose their wits, sometimes forcing them to dance down to the water.[9] The supernatural figure in question is variously named *Fossegrimen* (Norwegian: 'the waterfall spirit'), *Näcken* (Swedish: 'a water spirit', cf. Old Icelandic *nykr*), *Strömkarlen* (Swedish: 'the rapids/water current man'), *Strömtussen* (Swedish: 'the rapids/water current spirit'); *Forsgubben* or *Forskarlen* (both Swedish: 'the waterfall man'), *Kvarngubben* (Swedish: 'the watermill man'), *kosenhaltia* (Finnish: 'the spirit of the rapids'), or even – in parts of Sweden and Finland – the Devil.[10]

[8] For an overview of the distribution of the various types of legend, see Christiansen, *The Migratory Legends*, 77–80; Bengt af Klintberg, *The Types of the Swedish Folk Legend,* Folklore Fellows Communications 300 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia/ Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2010), 125–7; and Åke Campbell and Åsa Nyman, eds, *Atlas över svensk folkkultur/Atlas of Swedish Folk Culture*, II: *Sägen, tro och högtidssed / Popular Beliefs, Legends and Calendar Customs* 1 (Kartor), 24–7 (maps XI–XII on 'Waterspirits in the Shape of Men: Names'; and 'Waterspirits in the Shape of Men: Teachers of Fiddler'), and 2 (Kommentar), 65–79 (commentary by Åsa Nyman); legends largely found in the south-west of Finland, closest to Sweden, are described in Marjatta Jauhiainen, *The Type and Motif Index of Finnish Belief Legends*, Folklore Fellows Communications 267 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia/ Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1998), 130, 207 and 260. Nyman's commentary on 'Vattenväsen i manlig gestalt /Waterspirits in the shape of men' (Campbell and Nyman, *Atlas*, 67) notes that legends of supernatural music teachers are not known in Denmark or elsewhere on the continent.

[9] The tune in question has a variety of names, such as *älvaspelet* or *älvaleken* (both mean 'the river tune'); *älvadansen* ('the river dance'); *strömkarlns polska* ('the strömkarl's polka'); *näckens polska* ('the näck's polka'); *fans polska* ('the Devil's polka'): see Bengt af Klintberg *Svenska folksägner*, (Stockholm: PAN/ Nordstedt, 1972), 100–102, and Simpson, *Scandinavian Folktales*, 231. Nyman discusses further names, including *fans polska*, in 'Vattenväsen' (69 and 72–3), noting (73) that the word *älven* (usually 'river') can also apply to the supernatural figure, blending with the Old Norse word *álfr* (lit. 'elf'). On the inducement of madness and how the tune could make tables and benches dance, a motif that goes back to the Middle Ages (Nyman, 'Vattenväsen', 67 and 71), see also Olaf Bø et al., eds, *Norske segner* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1981), 86–8; af Klintberg, *Svenska folksägner*, 100; Kvideland and Sehmsdorf, *Scandinavian Folk Belief*, 254–5; and Arne Bjørndal and Brynjulf Alver, *– og fela ho let –: Norsk spelmannstradisjon* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1985), 156–8, who give a possible explanation of the phenomenon. John Lindow's translation of 'The Näck's Reel' from Småland in Sweden paints a wonderful picture: 'both barrels and benches were dancing in the parlor […] they were panting like bull-frogs, and barrels and chairs and cupboards and benches were dancing wildly, and even the cat, who had been lying against the wall, had to join in, and no one could stop'; see John Lindow, *Swedish Folktales and Legends* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), 117–8. The motif itself is closely related to wonder tale type ATU 592 ('The Dance Among Thorns') in Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales*, and has parallels in the skills of the Pied Piper of Hamelin as well as the legends of the unstoppable legendary dance at Kölbigk in Germany and Hårga in Sweden; see Dag Strömbäck, 'Den underbara årsdansen', *Arv* 59 (1944): 111–26, and 'Kölbigk och Hårga I', *Arv* 17 (1961): 1–48. (Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this article are those of the author.)

[10] The most common widespread names seem to be *Fossegrimen* and *Näcken*, a word which is also used for a water-horse in Norway (*nökken*) and Iceland (*nykur*). As Nyman notes ('Vattenväsen', 66), the Swedish names *Strömkarlen*, *Forsgubben* and *Kvarngubben* are more commonly found in the north of the country. See also Campbell and Nyman, *Atlas* II: 1: map XI, 'Waterspirits in the Shape of Men: Names'. On the Devil, see Bjørndal and Alver, *– og fela ho let*, 155; Jauhiainen, *Index of Finnish Belief Legends*, 207; and Lindow, *Swedish Folktales and Legends*, 118. As Nyman notes ('Vattenväsen', 66), the involvement of the Devil in these legends was probably a late development as the church tried to suggest that all supernatural entities were fallen angels or fundamentally demonic. The relationship is also implied by another migratory legend in which the waterfall spirit, viewed as a fallen angel, is heard crying because it has no chance of salvation: see Christiansen, *The Migratory Legends*, 88–90 (ML 5050: 'The Fairies' Prospect of Salvation'); also Nyman, 'Vattenväsen', 68.

Classified in Norway by Christiansen as Migratory Legend (ML) 4090 ('Watersprite Teaches Someone to Play') and in Sweden by af Klintberg as Swedish legend types F111-30 ('Water Spirit [*Näck, Strömkarl*] as Master Musician'), the legend in question specifies a number of strict conditions.[11] The setting must be right, such as a north-flowing river, or a waterfall where four rivers meet like a cross.[12] The nocturnal timing of such incidents is commonly three Thursday nights, but may also coincide with turning points of the year such as Christmas, Midsummer and New Year. Various types of sacrifice can be required of the would-be musician, from the 'top limb of the fiddler' (af Klintberg type F117), to three drops of blood (af Klintberg type F112); a black animal – often a cat (af Klintberg type F111); and a good leg of lamb (af Klintberg type F113) – which, if it is too small or already gnawed, will ensure that the fiddler, if he learns anything at all, will only learn how to tune his instrument.[13] As the strict conditions suggest, the activity is fraught with danger. Some Swedish and Finnish legends stress the need for student and teacher to attach their belts to each other, the teacher's plan being to drag the student into the waterfall or rapids with him at the end of the class, with the student only escaping by cutting his own belt at the last minute.[14] On occasion, the fiddler will also gain a new instrument with supernatural qualities.[15]

As several scholars have noted, the motif is likely to be very old, and was originally connected with harp playing.[16] Indeed, according to Åsa Nyman, the oldest example of a music-playing *näck* is found amongst other mythical beings on a painting from c. 1475 in Hävarä church in Uppland, Sweden.[17] Perhaps most interesting, however, is a line from the fourth stanza of the poem *Jómsvíkingadrápa* composed by Bjarni Kolbeinsson (1150/60–1222/3), Bishop of Orkney (1188–1222/3), preserved in the Codex Regius manuscript of Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda* from the early fourteenth century.[18] The line, part of an attestation by the poet that his skills are all human rather than gained by supernatural means, runs as follows: *varkak fróðr und forsum* (lit: 'I was/ did not become not wise under waterfalls'), implying that the poet knows of others who believed they had attained knowledge – apparently relating to poetic inspiration – by visiting waterfalls. It deserves to be placed alongside an account in the early

[11] Christiansen, *The Migratory Legends*, 77–80; af Klintberg, *Types of the Swedish Folk Legend*, 125–7.
[12] This is naturally reminiscent of the Robert Johnson legend.
[13] On these conditions, see further Bjørndal and Alver, *– og fela ho let*, 153–6; Christiansen, *The Migratory Legends*, 77–80; Jauhiainen, *Index of Finnish Belief Legends*, 207; and Nyman, 'Vattenväsen', 69–70. For examples of these legends, see af Klintberg, *Svenska folksägner*, 100–3 ('Farligt att hora älvaspelet', 'Näcken skulle ha en svart katt'; 'Näcken stämde fiolerna, 'En blodsdroppe i lön för spelkonsten', 'De dansande kunde inte sluta', 'Älvdansen', and 'Det avgnagda köttbenet'), and 298–300 (notes); Bø, et al., *Norske segner*, 86–8 ('Fossegrimen') and 264 (notes); Rikard Berge, *Norsk sogukunst* (Oslo: Noregs boklag, 1976), 121 ('Fossegrimen'); Bjørndal and Alver, *– og fela ho let*, 153–67; and Nyman, 'Vattenväsen'. For translations, see Simpson, *Scandinavian Folktales,* 230–31 ('The Näck's Fiddle', 'The Dancers Could Not Stop'); Kvideland and Sehmsdorf, *Scandinavian Folk Belief*, 253–6 ('Learning to Play the Fiddle', 'He Gave a Gnawed Off Bone to the Water Sprite', 'They Had to Keep Dancing'); and Lindow, *Swedish Folktales and Legends*, 117–9 ('The Näck's Reel'). For a map of the distribution of the various motifs, see Campbell and Nyman, *Atlas*, II: 1: map XII 'Waterspirits in the Shape of Men: Teachers of Fiddlers'; and maps 12 and 13 in Nyman, 'Vattenväsen' on the effects of the music. For other articles on the subject, see Maja Bergstrand, 'Näcken som musikaliskt väsen', *Folkminnen och folktankar* 23 (1936): 14–31, and Jören Sahlgren, 'Strömkarlen spelar', *Nam och bygd* 23 (1935): 42–55.
[14] See af Klintberg, *The Types of the Swedish Folk Legend*, 126 (F118); Jauhiainen, *Index of Finnish Belief Legends*, 207 (Type E 1051); and 260 (type L51); Nyman, 'Vattenväsen', 70; af Klintberg, *Svenska folksägner*, 101.
[15] Nyman, 'Vattenväsen', 70; Bjørndal and Alver, *– og fela ho let*, 155.
[16] Nyman, 'Vattenväsen', 67; Bjørndal and Alver, *– og fela ho let*, 154; Sahlgren, 'Strömkarlen spelar'.
[17] Nyman, 'Vattenväsen', 67.
[18] For the verse in question, see https://skaldic.org/m.php?p=text&i=1122.

twelfth-century Icelandic *Landnámabók* ('Book of Settlements'), which tells of a man living in Rangá in southern Iceland called Þorsteinn *rauðnefur* ('red-nose') Hrólfsson, who apparently made sacrifices to waterfalls – a detail that offers an interesting early parallel to the later legendary accounts mentioned above of fiddlers offering blood-sacrifices of various kinds.[19]

The implications of the above are that the later legends telling of supernatural music teachers, which many Nordic fiddlers seem to have told about themselves, and even believed in,[20] developed from a central belief, also known in Orkney at an early point, that running water – particularly in the form of waterfalls – had the potential of providing artistic inspiration, something that brings us back to the number of Shetland legends which refer to running water in the form of streams, watermills or the shore.[21] Indeed, as Arne Bjørndal and Brynjulf Alver note in their central work on Norwegian fiddling traditions, it is natural that one should hear music in waterfalls or mill stones.[22] The same idea is echoed in Tommy Goudie's account of the Trowie Burn between Lerwick and Skalloway, quoted by Katherine Campbell:

> Here it is said that you could hear the sound of fiddles playing, but Tommy Goudie explained that 'mainly it was the water running over the stones and making a nice tinkling sound'. This was meant to be the fiddles. He continued: 'Quite often, I think, people, well I know my mother once said that once coming from a wedding, walking home, and they went past there and of course the music was still in their ears, as you might say, the fiddle music, and they sat down there and they thought they could hear the fiddles playing'.[23]

This brings us back Scottish legend type F102 ('Fairy Song or Tune Overheard and Learned') and the knowes and gravemounds that are so often associated with fiddler legends and music in Shetland and Orkney. Here, too, it is hard to ignore very strong parallels in Norway, Sweden and even Denmark.[24] As I have noted in an earlier article, a widespread belief existed in Norway, Denmark, Shetland and Orkney that farm grave mounds were the home of protecting spirits. In Norway, these were probably initially viewed as being the spirits of Bronze or Iron Age forefathers who cleared the land and later came to be referred to as *nisse* or *tomte*, and even came to be connected to the more widespread underground nature spirits known as *huldre* or *underjordiske*.[25] In Norwegian legends, as in Shetland and Orkney lore, grave mounds may

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[19] Jakob Benediktsson, ed., *Landnámabók*, in *Íslenzk fornrit* (Reykjavik: Hið islenzka fornritafélag, 1968), 358. The earliest manuscripts (Sturlabók manuscript, ch. 313; Hauksbók manuscript, ch. 313) date to the second half of the thirteenth century.

[20] See Bjørndal and Alver, – *og fela ho let*, 158. Nyman ('Vattenväsen', 69) notes how often *bygdens berömda spelmän sags ha lärt sig spela eller ha haft fiöl stämd av det övernaturliga väsendet eller annars ha haft förbindelse med detsamma* ('the community's most renowned fiddle players would say they had learned from, or had their fiddle tunes by the supernatural being, or had some other connection with them'), adding that *Mången spelman sökta själv bättra på ett sådant rykte genom att utnyttja folktron* ('many players sought to improve themselves by using such a rumour, making use of folk beliefs'). One is once again drawn to think of the blues players like Robert Johnson.

[21] Campbell, *The Fiddle in Scottish Tradition*, 108–10, 115–8, 149; Nicholson, *Shetland Folklore* (on Gilbert Laurensen learning 'Old Gibbie's Tune' in a mill). See also Muir, *The Mermaid Bride*, 48 ('Tam Bichan and the Trow'), where it is noted that 'the strip between high and low water is the domain of the Devil and all of his subjects', and underlined that it was here that Tam met a mound dweller when walking home one 'Johnsmas'.

[22] Bjørndal and Alver, – *og fela ho let*, 164.

[23] Campbell, *The Fiddle in Scottish Tradition*, 117.

[24] Nyman, 'Vattenväsen', 67.

[25] Terry Gunnell, 'Nordic Folk Legends, Folk Traditions and Grave Mounds: The Value of Folkloristics for the Study of Old Nordic Religions', in *New Focus on Retrospective Methods: Resuming Methodological Discussions: Case Studies from Northern Europe,* ed. Eldar Heide and Karen Bek-Pedersen, 17–41 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia / Academica Scientiarum Fennica, 2014).

be associated with music which is heard within and can sometimes be learnt. Bjørndal and Alver note a number of legends, commonly memorates, that tell of people – usually musicians, but sometimes women – walking home after playing at a dance and hearing strange, wonderful music often issuing from a grave mound, and they learn the music; in the Nordic legends they rarely enter the mound.[26]

Comparatively typical is a late nineteenth-century memorate from Sogn telling of how music could often be heard coming from a local gravemound in which a *huldre* man lived with his family:

> *... me høyrde slik utruleg fin klang inni denne haugen, slikt framifraa felespil, at det baade var til aa verta glade og sorgal af. Som eg segjer: det var reint makalaust altsaman... [...] høyde me berre kor indarleg fint dei spilade derinne.*
>
> … we heard these unbelievably fine sounds in the mound, such excellent fiddle playing, that it could make you both happy and sad at once. And as I said: it was all without equal. […] we could hear them playing such wonderful music playing in there.[27]

As with the Shetland tunes,[28] the tunes said to be learnt from such experiences are often famous, as with the tunes 'Fornesbrunen', from Telemark; 'Tusseslåtten' (lit. 'the spirit air'), said to have been heard in the mountains; and 'Malmangernuten' which was reportedly heard on the way to a wedding.[29] A fine example of this type of legend – once again related to water – is 'She Whistled the Tune', told by a woman from Setesdal in Aust-Agder:

> Once I was sitting by Women's Creek, tending cattle. I clearly heard a *grim* playing a tune. As soon as he had finished, I ran home and whistled the tune to my husband, who, at that time, was still a bachelor and a fiddler.[30]

Since the legends of this type are often short, one can understand why they were not included in Christiansen's *Migratory Legends* as a type.

Like Shetland legends of the F101/102 and the F21/F24 type, their Nordic counterparts focus on the learning of music skills and/or particular tunes. Norwegian legends of this kind typically describe musicians, often on their way home from playing at a wedding or other festive gathering, journeying through the wild, through liminal space, and often at a liminal time; these journeys usually take place at night, and often, as with the legends of music teachers, at a turning point in the year. [31] As Bjørndal and Alver note, one can understand how such memorates come about, with adrenaline, exhaustion and the mental echoes of repetitive tunes combining with beliefs about gravemounds and nature

[26] Similar legends are also noted in Sweden, but are commonly related to waterfalls or rivers. Af Klintberg classes them as common Swedish legend types F120 ('Fidder Hears the *Näck*'s Tune') and F121 ('Bewildered by Hearing the *Näck* Playing'). See af Klintberg, *Types of the Swedish Legend*, 127.
[27] Olav Sande, *Segner frå Sogn* (Bergen: Bokreidingslag, 1992), 68–9.
[28] See Campbell, *The Fiddle in Scottish Tradition*, 117.
[29] Bjørndal and Alver, *– og fela ho let*, 160-3.
[30] Trans. Kvideland and Sehmsdorf, *Scandinavian Folk Belief and Legend*, 254.
[31] Regarding liminal spaces in legends, see Gunnell, 'Narratives, Space and Drama: Essential Spatial Aspects Involved in the Performance and Reception of Oral Narrative', *Folklore: An Electronic Journal of Foklore* 33 (2006), 7–26; 'Legends and Landscape in the Nordic Countries', *Cultural and Social History* 6.3 (2009), 305–22; 'An Invasion of Foreign Bodies: Legends of Washed Up Corpses in Iceland', in *Eyðvinur*: *Heiðursrit til Eyðun Andreassen*, ed. Malan Marnersdóttir, Jens Cramer og Arnfinnur Johansen (Tórshavn: Føroyja Fróðskaparfelag, 2005), 70–9; and 'On the Border: The Liminality of the Sea Shore in Icelandic Folk Legends of the Past', in *Northern Atlantic Islands and the Sea: Seascapes and Dreamscapes,* ed. Andrew Jennings, Silke Reeploeg and Angela Watt (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 10–31.

spirits and with the natural sounds of the landscape, especially when water is involved.[32] This pattern is effectively outlined by Honko, whose important article 'Memorates and the Study of Folk Beliefs' describes how strange experience is interpreted in a narrative by reference to existing cultural concepts, cultural vocabulary and local tradition.[33]

Considering the above evidence from the Northern Isles, particularly that of the early linkage between artistic inspiration and waterfalls in Orkney legends, I think it likely that stories asserting the supernatural origins of fiddling skills and tunes goes back to a shared Nordic, rather than mainland Scottish, tradition which has developed over the centuries in slightly different directions in line with other local folk narrative forms. In Scotland, the account has clearly become connected with those Gaelic legends telling of a hero entering a fairy hill or mound where he stays, playing or dancing, for a number of years before returning. In the Nordic countries, the basic idea of artistic inspiration being associated with waterfalls has become personified in the idea of the demonic supernatural teacher of the waterfall, who receives blood sacrifices like those apparently offered in ancient Iceland for other purposes. In both cases, the fiddle is clearly a comparatively late feature of the accounts, taking over from other skills such as poetry or harp-playing.

Perhaps most interesting is the way in which, as noted above, musicians in both the Northern Isles and the Nordic countries not only actively passed on these traditions, but believed in the accounts they told. As Bjørndal and Alver note, Norwegian musicians would sometimes make use of the legends and beliefs associated with them to gain a well-deserved break from a long session by threatening to play the supernatural tune they had learnt – something which could have dire consequences. Often, it was told, the only way to bring a halt to such a dangerous melody was to cut the strings of the fiddle.[34]

At the heart of all of the legends, we find human wonder at the musician's art and the physical effect that music can have on both players and listeners – an emotion often expressed in legends describing Northern Isles fiddlers, which tell how 'spring after spring flowed effortlessly from his fiddle, and he found himself playing tunes he had never heard before';[35] or how 'the music that flowed from his fiddle was an intoxicating as wine, […] strange tunes they had never heard before';[36] or how one fiddler was 'playing the fiddle like a demon. His fingers flew over the strings as if they had a life of their own'.[37]

As Bjørndal and Alver suggest:

> *Musikken og opphavet til musikken høyrde til det usanselege og det dulde. Spelemannen vart på vis sett på som ein heksemeister, og slåttane hans var trollskap sem han hadde lært av underjordsfolket.*
>
> Music and the origin of music belonged to the field of the unseen and the mystical. The fiddler was in some ways seen as a magician, his tunes being a magical skill that he had attained from the people of the underworld.

To this degree, we are essentially talking about an attempt to put into words the eternal, universal question of where art originates. The suggestion that the answer lives in liminality, in nature and with the forefathers is surely as good as any.

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[32] Bjørndal and Alver, *– og fela ho let*, 161–4; also Campbell, *The Fiddle in Scottish Tradition*, 150.
[33] Lauri Honko, 'Memorates and the Study of Folk Beliefs' in *Nordic Folklore: Recent Studies*, ed. Reimund Kvideland and Henning K. Sehmsdorf (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 100–109.
[34] Bjørndal and Alver, *– og fela ho let*, 156–60.
[35] Tulloch, *The Foy and Other Folk Tales*, 19 ('Robbie Andersen').
[36] Muir, *Orkney Folk Tales*, 48–9 ('The Fiddler and the Trow').
[37] Muir, *The Mermaid Bride*, 48 ('Tam Bichan and the Trow').

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A’ Chluais-chiùil ann an Dualchas nan Gàidheal

WILLIAM LAMB

Ann an aistidh a sgrìobh an Dr Iain Seathach, thug e sùil air fionn-sgeòil anns a bheil ceòl ga chleachdadh gus brath no rabhadh a thoirt seachad.[1] ’S e an sgeul as ainmichte dhen t-seòrsa seo am fear ceangailte ris a’ phìobaireachd ‘A Cholla mo Rùin’ no ‘The Piper’s Warning to his Master’. A-rèir na sgeòil, bha an laoch ainmeil, Colla Ciotach, a’ teannadh air Caisteal Dhùn Naomhaig sa bhìrlinn aige. Gun fhiosta dha, bha a phìobaire fo ghlais aig a nàimhdean anns a’ chaisteal.[2] Thug am pìobaire rabhadh do Cholla tro mheadhain na pìobaireachd mum b’ urrainn a chaisg: ‘A Cholla mo rùin, seachain an dùn, tha mis’ an làimh, tha mis’ an làimh’.[3]

Tha fionn-sgeòil mar seo bitheanta gu leòr ann an dualchas nan Gàidheal. Ged nach eil e doirbh a chreidsinn gun cleachdte òran gus brath falaichte a thoirt seachad,[4] tha e nas duilghe a chreidsinn gum faodadh conaltradh fhighe a-staigh ann an ceòl ionnsramaideach – gun iomradh air an conaltradh a thuigsinn. Shamhlaich an Seathach na teachdaireachdan ciùil seo ri cànanan drumaireachd agus feadalaich, mar a gheibhear ann an Afraca, Gomera agus Ameireaga a Deas.[5] Bidh cuid dhe na cànanan ud a’ dèanamh atharrais air fonn, buille agus ruitheam cainnt nàdarra, mar an Spàinntis, gus brath a sgaoileadh aig astar. Ged nach robh an Seathach a’ cumail a-mach gun robh na fionn-sgeòil Ghàidhlig gun teagamh fìor agus ag obair buileach mar sin, sgrìobh e:

> Whether or not Gaelic is a language capable of meeting the criterion of full intelligibility through speech surrogates, as Gaelic legend claims, is still open to investigation. At the very least our comparisons suggest that […] strong linguistic cues can be transmitted through the music.[6]

Bidh cuid a’ cantail ge-tà gu robh an tàlant airson conaltradh a chur ri ceòl no a thogail bho cheòl – a’ chluas-chiùil – ann gun teagamh bho shean. Seo na thuirt an t-Urr Tormod Dòmhnallach mu dheidhinn ann an clàradh a rinneadh aig Sgoil Eòlais na h-Alba:

> *’S e comas uabhasach iongantach a bh’ anns a’ chluas-chiùil […] Anns an t-seann aimsir, bha cuid de dhaoin’ ann aig an robh cluas-chiùil agus cha robh aca ach air ceòl*

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[1] John Shaw, ‘Language, Music and Local Aesthetics: Views from Gaeldom and Beyond’, *Scottish Language* 11/12 (1992/1993), 37–61.
[2] faic Ronald Black, ‘Colla Ciotach’, *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* XLVIII (1973), 231–236.
[3] Margaret Fay Shaw, *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist.* 3rd ed. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986 [1955]), 130.
[4] Mar eisimpleir, ann am fionn-sgeul an òrain ‘Aoidh na dèan cadal’: faic Norman MacLeod, *Cuairtear Nan Gleann,* Leabhar 3 (Glasgow: J. & P. Campbell, 1842–1843), 79. https://digital.nls.uk/rare-items-in-gaelic/archive/109923622.
[5] John Shaw, ‘Language’, 48–50; faic Theodore Stern, ‘Drum and Whistle “Languages”: An Analysis of Speech Surrogates’, *American Anthropologist* 59/3 (1957): 487–506; agus Julien Meyer, ‘Typology and Acoustic Strategies of Whistled Languages: Phonetic Comparison and Perceptual Cues of Whistled Vowels’, *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* 38/1 (2008).
[6] John Shaw, ‘Language’, 50.

a chluinntinn air a' phìob – cha robh sìon aca ach dìreach a chluinntinn agus dhèanadh iad a-mach na briathran.[7]

Ged a dhèilig sgoilearan ri cuid dhe na stòireannan anns a bheil a' chluas-ciùil a' nochdadh, fhad 's as fhiosrach leam cha do chruinnich iad còmhla iad. Cha mhotha gun do chuir iad a' chluas-chiùil fhèin fon phrosbaig gus a dhèanamh a-mach cò às a thàinig i no dè a th' ann. Anns an aistidh ghoirid seo, nì sinn tòiseachadh air na h-amasan seo agus meòraichidh sinn air na dh'fhaodas a' chluas-chiùil innse dhuinn mu eachdraidh ceòl nan Gàidheal. Bheir sinn sùil an toiseach air mar a tha i a' nochdadh ann am beul-aithris. Tha mi a' tabhainn na h-aiste seo dhan Dr Seathach le spèis agus buidheachas mòr. Is mi a tha na chomain airson an taic a thug e dhomh fad iomadh bliadhna, on a bha mi nam iar-cheumnach faoin chun an latha-an-diugh. Bho aon sgallach à Baltimore gu fear eile, ceud mìle taing, Iain.

Sgeulachdan mun Chluais-chiùil

O chionn beagan bhliadhnaichean, chuir An Dr Seathach far comhair air loidhne am beul-aithris farsaing a chruinnich Calum Iain MacGilleathain.[8] Gheibhear eisimpleirean gu leòr dhen chluais-chiùil ann. Tha a' chiad stòiridh air an toir sinn beachd a' nochdadh sa chruinneachadh seo. 'S ann a chualas i aig fear Iain MacDhòmhnaill ('Iain Beag') às an Drochaid Àird, Bràigh Loch Abar. Tha i na bloigh dhen fhionn-sgeul fhalbhain ('migratory legend') 'Cù dubh Mhic a' Phì':[9]

Bha gille ann am bothan àirigh, agus e a' coimhead an dèidh sprèidh. Agus smaoinich e anmoch, nuair a bha e leis fhèin taobh an teine, nam biodh a leannan còmhla ris, gum biodh e gu sona dheth. [Bha cù ann, ach] le droch-thuiteamas, 's e a bh' aige ach a' ghalla. Agus tha iad ag ràdha gur h-ann a thèid a' ghalla a chuideachadh an droch-bhoireannaich, na an droch-ùraisg sam bith a thig an rathad. Is chunnaic e i a' cur greann oirre fhèin, a' ghalla, agus i a' dèanadh air […] Agus thuirt e an uair seo gum b' fheàrr dha an tromb tòiseachdainn air a cluich.

Agus dè a bha e a' dèanadh ach a' gabhail ùrnaigh agus salm air an tromb. [Agus chan fhaigheadh am boireannach] a-staigh na b' fhaide na an doras, nuair a bha e a' cluich nan salm agus na rudan seo air an tromb. Agus thuirt i, 'Is math am port a th' aig an tromb am brith am pong a tha na dèidh'. Cha do ghabh e air gun cuala e i. Nan robh e air aon uair stad a chluich na tromb chaidh i a-staigh agus dheoghaileadh i a h-uile boinne fala às.[10]

Anns an stòiridh seo, tha e coltach gun robh draoidheachd air choireigin san truimb. Dh'fhaodadh sin tighinn bhon iarann air an do rinneadh i, is dòcha, air neo an dlùth-cheangail aig an truimb ri

[7] An t-Urr. Tormod MacDhòmhnaill, 'Tha biodag aig MacThòmais', Tasglann Sgoil Eòlais na h-Alba, SA1956.54.B1; TAD: Àireamh a' chlàir 70431 (1956).
[8] https://www.calum-maclean-project.celtscot.ed.ac.uk/dachaigh/.
[9] Chaidh cruth GOC a chur os ìseal air litreachadh nan sgeulachdan.
[10] Iain MacDhòmhnaill, 'Shin iad 'ugat, bidh iad agat', Làmh-sgrìobhainnean Chaluim MhicGilleathain, Sgoil Eòlais na h-Alba, SSS NB 11: 1007 (1953).

sèamanachas o chian ann an Eòraisia.[11] Ach ’s e an rud as annasaiche mun stòiridh gun robh an gille *a’ gabhail ùrnaigh agus salm* oirre. Tha an ìomhaigh seo car neònach an-diugh, gu seachd àraid on a tha ceòl na truimb sgagach is eu-choltach ri seinn shiùbhlach nan salm. Na dhèidh sin, tha fuaim na truimb glè choltach ri labhairt. Gu dearbh, tha Nikolsky a’ cumail a-mach gun e an tromb a’ chiad *vocoder*[12] a bh’ ann.[13] Leis mar a tha an tromb a’ gleidheadh cuid a dh’fheartan labhairte, theagamh gun gabhadh ùrnaigh tuigsinn is cuideigin ga gabhail air an truimb. Ged a dh’obraicheadh an stòiridh seo as aonaid na cluais-chiùil, tha e fhathast a’ taisbeanadh an dlùth-chàirdeis eadar seinn, labhairt agus ceòl ann an dualchas nan Gàidheal. Tha e cuideachd a-mach air a’ cho-cheangail eadar ceòl agus feartan os-nàdarra ann am beul-aithris.

Dh’ainmich sinn am fionn-sgeul ‘A Cholla mo rùin’ cheana. Tha bloigh de stòiridh eile coltach ris aig Iain Beag a bhios a’ mìneachadh tùs a’ phuirt ainmeil, ‘Duntroon’s Salute’.[14] A-rèir na h-aithris, bha an ceann-feadhna, Alasdair Mac Cholla Chiotaich (*c.* 1610–1647), a’ feuchainn ri sgrios is murt a dhèanamh air Dùn Treòir mar dìoghaltas do phìobaire athar.[15] Dh’iarr Alasdair air a phìobaire ‘Caismeachd MhicDhòmhnaill’ a chluich, ach an àite sin, chluich am pìobaire faclan rabhaidh do Chaimbeul Dhùin Treòir:

> *Mar a bha an duine agus an ruaig air, bha e gu h-àrd ann an Dùn Treòir. Theirinn gur h-e sin an t-àite san robh e. Agus bha fios aige ri thoirt nam faiceadh e na nàimhdean a’ tighinn. Agus cha robh dòigh aige air ach a chluich air a’ phìob. Agus thuirt e:*
>
> > *Shin iad ugad, bidh iad agad,*
> > *Shin iad ugad, bidh iad agad,*
> > *Shin iad ugad, bidh iad agad,*
> > *Thoir do chasan as, ’ille òig.*
>
> *Thuig Dùn Treòir am port is theich e. Agus cha d’ fhuair na nàimhdean greim air.*[16]

B’ annasach na faclan a chleachd Iain Beag airson na thachair: dh’aithris e gun *tuirt e* rudeigin air a’ phìob, agus gun do *thuig Dùn Treòir am port*. Tha sin ri ràdh gun do dh’fhighe am pìobaire faclan am measg na pìobaireachd a ghabh e agus gun do rinn Dùn Treòir a-mach iad. Seo sàr-eisimpleir dhen chluais-chiùil ann am beul-aithris.[17] A-rèir na thuirt an t-Urr Dòmhnallach sa mhìneachadh aige na b’ àirde, feumaidh gu robh an comas maraon aig a’ phìobaire agus aig a’ Chaimbeulach.

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[11] Aleksey Nikolsky. ‘“Talking Jew’s Harp” and Its Relation to Vowel Harmony as a Paradigm of Formative Influence of Music on Language,’ ann an *The Origins of Language Revisited: Differentiation from Music and the Emergence of Neurodiversity and Autism*, deas. Nobuo Masataka (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2020), 230.
[12] Inneal a bheir seachad cainnt neach-labhairt fhad ’s a tha an t-inneal a’ cleith cò th’ ann.
[13] Nikolsky, ‘“Talking Jew’s Harp”’, 227.
[14] Iain MacDhòmhnaill, ‘Shin iad ’ugat, bidh iad agat’.
[15] Black, ‘Colla Ciotach’, 223–234.
[16] Iain MacDhòmhnaill, ‘Shin iad ’ugat, bidh iad agat’.
[17] Ged a tha mìneachaidhean eile dhe na thachair rin lorg a tha fada nas dualtaiche: faic Black, ‘Colla Ciotach’, 234–235.

Tha fhios gum bi na h-uimhir de luchd-leughaidh eòlach air fionn-sgeul an òrain ‘Uamh an òir’. Chruinnich an Leathanach e bho Chalum MacGilleathain eile a bhuineadh do Ratharsair:

> *’S ann an ceann shìos (an ceann a tuath) an Eilein Sgitheanaich a tha Uamha an Òir. Bha iad a’ dèanamh dheth nach robh ceann idir oirre is dh’fhalbh dusan dhaoine* [sic.] *is pìobaire is chaidh iad an uiread-s’ a mhìltean a-staigh is bha iad gan leanail gu h-àrd air an talamh, agus bha a’ phìob a’ dol an dràsta is a-rithist gus am biodh fios aig an fheadhainn eile dè [’n] rathad a bha iad a’ gabhail agus cha do thill duine riamh aca. Lean iad a’ phìobaireachd fad iomadh mìle agus, mu dheireadh, sguir i, agus bha iad a’ dèanamh dheth gur e tuiteam ann a[n] loch a rinn iad, no gur h-ann le creig a chaidh iad. Bha iad ag ràdha gur h-e seo am port a bha aige – am pìobaire:*
>
> *Cha ruig mise is cha tig mise,*
> *Is cha till mise à Uamh an Òir.*
> *Na mic-uchda na fhir-fheachda* [sic.]*,*
> *Mus ruig mise is mus tig mise,*
> *Is mus till mise à Uamh an Òir.*
>
> *Na minn bheaga nan gobhair chreagach,*
> *Mus ruig mise is mus tig mise,*
> *Is mus till mise à Uamh an Òir.*
>
> *Is na laoigh bheaga nan crodh [alla]:*
> *Mus ruig mise is mus tig mise,*
> *Is mus till mise à Uamh an Òir.*
>
> *Cha ruig mise is cha tig mise,*
> *Is cha till mise à Uamh an Òir.*[18]

Chan eil an sgeulaiche ag innse dhuinn ciamar a bha an fheadhainn shuas a’ tuigsinn brìgh na pìobaireachd. An e port no òran a b’ aithne dhaibh cheana a bh’ ann, air neo an do rinn am pìobaire am port air ball gus leigeil fhaicinn dhaibh nach tigeadh e às beò? Mas e an dara roghainn a th’ ann, feumaidh gu robh a’ chluas-chiùil aig a’ phìobaire agus co-dhiù aig aonan dhen bhuidhinn a bha ga leantainn os a chionn. Ge brith dè bha a’ tachairt an seo, tha sinn a-rithist a’ coinneachadh ri faclan a’ dol an lùib ciùil ionnsramaidich – far nach biodh dùil riutha san latha-an-diugh.

Thog mi am mìneachadh airson na cluaise-ciùil aig toisich na h-aiste seo à aithris na b’ fhaide a rinn an t-Urr Tormad MacDhòmhnaill air tùs a’ phuirt ‘Biodag aig MacThòmais’. Tha an naidheachd caran fada, ach seo na bloighean as cudromaiche dhe:

> *’S e gill’ òg a bh’ ann an MacThòmais a bha caran mòr às fhèin […] Bha e anabarrach deidheil air a bhith ann an comann àrd-uaislean agus -mhaithean na*

[18] Calum MacGilleathain, ‘Uamha an Òir’. Làmh-sgrìobhainnean Chaluim MhicGilleathain, Cnuasach Bhéaloideas Éireann, IFC MS 1026: 221–222 (1946).

dùthchadh agus a bhith ga èideadh fhèin ann an trusgan mar a bha air na cinn-feadhna agus air na h-uaislean a bh' ann a shin […] Bha riaghailt ann nach fhaodadh duine sam bith dhen an tuath choitcheann a' bhiodag a chaitheamh air a chruachan ach a-mhàin an sgian dubh anns an stocainn […] Ach MacThòmais a bh' ann an seo, 's ann a bha e a' caitheamh na biodaig air a chruachan agus cha do chuir e suim anns an riaghailt.

Agus bha oidhche shònraichte ann co-dhiù a bha bàl mòr air a chumail anns a' Mhanachainn agus chaidh MacThòmais ann mar a bhiodh e dol a dh'ionnsaidh a h-uile bàl agus oidhche-chiùil far a robh na h-uaislean uile cruinn. 'S bha e air èideadh a h-uile buille cho math agus cho rìomhach agus cho sgiobalta ri duine de mhaithean na tìr [agus] bha biodag aig' air a chruachan […] Chaidh e timcheall ann an sin a-measg nam bàn-tighearnan òga agus chunnaic e aon tè gu sònraichte a tharraing aire gu mòr agus anns an robh a shùil. Cò bh' ann an seo ach leannan a bh' aig mac ceann-feadhna – oighre nan Siosalach. Agus mar a thòisich an ceòl, chaidh e null gu modhail far a robh a' bhàn-tighearna 's rinn e bèic dhi agus dh'fhoighneachd e dhi am biodh i cho math agus gun rachadh i cuide ris a dhannsa. Thuirt an nighean gun rachadh.

Agus nuair a chunnaic a leannan seo, an Siosalach, bha e air a thàmailteachadh is dh'èirich àrdan […] Cha bu toil leis idir MacThòmais a bhith a' dèanamh a shùilean ris an leannan aige fhèin. Agus dh'fhalbh e co-dhiù 's fhuair e a phìob-ciùil – b' e sin fear dhe na pìobairean […] Agus chaidh e mach às an t-seòmar far a robh an dannsa gus a bhith. Chaidh e a-staigh gu ruige trannsa cùil […] far am biodh am pìobaire a' dol suas is sìos a' cluich na pìob-mhòir. Agus thòisich an dannsa mar a thòisich an ceòl. Agus bha am fios aige glè mhath gu robh a leannan fhèin aig MacThòmais. 'S ann a thòisich e air cluich a' phuirt […]

Co-dhiù bha a' chluas-chiùil a bh' ann an seo aig MacThòmais – rud a bha mì-fhortanach dha fhèin agus dhan an fhear a bha a' cluich, mar a thuit a-mach an oidhch' ud. Nuair a bha an Siosalach a' cumail roimhe a' cluich na pìobadh, 's ann a rinn e an ceathramh a bh' ann an seo:

Tha biodag anns a' chliobadaich
aig mac a' bhodaich leibidich;
ged dh' fhalbhadh e mar thigeadh dha
gur math gum fòghnadh sgian dha.

Agus bha na h-uiread de cheathramhnan eile aige a bha a cheart cho sgaiteach, mur a robh iad na bu sgaitiche. Ach nuair a chuala am fear eile an ceathramh a bh' ann an seo, dh'èirich fhuil agus àrdan 's a thàmailt […] Chaidh e mach air an doras. Rinn e air an trannsa agus bha an Siosalach a' meàrrsadh sìos roimhe 's e a' cluich na pìoba agus a chùl ris. Rinn e dìreach air an t-Siosalach agus thog e a' bhiodag far a chruachain agus chuir e ann an cridhe an t-Siosalaich i. Is thuit an Siosalach bochd marbh.[19]

[19] Tormod MacDhòmhnaill, 'Tha biodag'.

Anns an stòiridh seo, rinn an Siosalach an ceathramh *extempore* – fhad 's a bha e a' seinn na pìoba. Ged as e pìos ciùil a th' ann, tha faclan a-rithist na lùib. Ann an saoghal na sgeulachd, tha e coltach gu robh a' chluas-chiùil aig an t-Siosalach agus MacThòmais le chèile. Ge brith ciamar a bhiodh sin ag obair, tha an naidheachd seo a' toirt far comhair a' chàirdeis eadar briathran agus ceòl uair eile.

Tha an stòiridh mu dheireadh air an toir sinn sùil cuideachd a-measg làmh-sgrìobhaidhean Chaluim MhicGilleathain. 'S e Peigi NicGhilleathain à Ratharsaigh a dh'innis:

> *Bho chionn àireamh a bhliadhnachan, bha ceannaiche siubhail a' dol mu chuairt a's na h-eileanan a bha seo ris an canadh iad Seumas Odhar. Ach aon uair fhuair iad marbh e fo chreig. Is cha robh fhios cò mharbh e. Is bha a h-uile duine dhen a' luchd-lagha is a h-uile duine a' feuchainn am faiceadh iad cò mharbh e, ach [c]ha robh guth cò mharbh e is cha d' fhuair iad a-mach. Ach aon oidhche greis an deaghaidh sin, bha tòrr de ghillean òga air chèilidh, mar a bhios iad a' dol air chèilidh oidhcheannan geamhraidh. Bha fear dhiubh a' cluich tromb, agus 's e 'm port a bha e cuir air an tromb:*
>
> > *Seumas Odhar luideagach,*
> > *'s ann tha an t-òr a Rig* [sic.] *aige,*
> > *Seumas Odhar luideagach,*
> > *gun chuir sinn ann na biodagan.*
> >
> > *Chuir mi a' bhiodag a's a' bhodach,*
> > *is leig am bodach ràn as;*
> > *Chuir mi rithist leis a' chreig e,*
> > *is thug mi dheth a' mhàileid.*
>
> *Thubhairt cailleach is i na suidhe ri taobh an teine, 'Dòch' gun d' rinn thu sin, a bhròinein'. Dh' èirich iad a-mach, iad fhèin is an gille a bha siud, agus sin an fheadhainn a mharbh Seumas Odhar.*[20]

Tha e soilleir an seo gu robh a' chluas-chiùil aig a' chaillich. Co-dhiù a robh fios aig a' ghille air a seo gus nach robh, tha e annasach gun do sheinn e port a dhearbhadh gum b' e esan a rinn am murt. Ma bhios sinn leagte ris gu robh a' chluas-chiùil aige, is dòcha nach robh dùil aige gum biodh i aig neach sam bith eile. Mur a robh i aigesan, is dòcha gun e aideachadh neo-fhiosrach a bh' ann mar gum biodh – gun fhiosta dha. Tha sin a' togail na ceiste: ciamar a bhios an draoidheachd seo ag obair? An fheumte na faclan a chur ann a dh'aon rùn air neo – ann an inntinn nan linntean 's a chaidh – a robh faclan bu dual do cheòl co-dhiù? Nuair a bhreithnichear air fianais eile ann an briathrachas agus dualchas nan Gàidheal, faodar argamaid a dhèanamh air a shon sin agus na aghaidh.

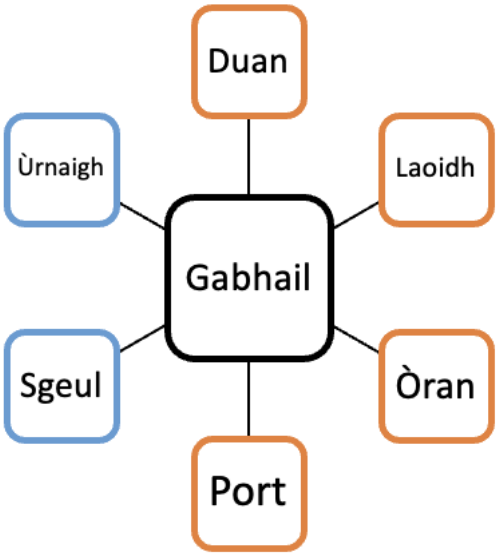
[20] Peigi NicGhilleathain, 'Séamas Obhar', Làmh-sgrìobhainnean Chaluim MhicGilleathain, Cnuasach Bhéaloideas Éireann, IFC MS 1027: 174–175; CC: ei1027-12-07 (1946).

An Buintealas Eadar Ceòl, Seinn agus Labhairt ann an Briathrachas agus Eachdraidh

Mar a sgrìobh Ailean Bruford, chan eil facal tùsach san t-Seann Ghàidhlig airson 'sing':

> It's curious that there is in fact no word meaning 'sing' in Gaelic. Perhaps song comes as natural as speech to Gaels, for the word corresponding to Latin *cano*[21] means 'say' more often than 'sing' in the modern dialects, but the most usual Irish expression[22] for 'sing a song' means 'say a song'.[23]

A-rèir eDIL, bha *seinn* o chionn fhada a' ciallachadh 'bualadh' no a bhith a' cluich ionnsramaid ciùil.[24] A-rèiste, bha na bun-bheachdan *seinn, labhairt* agus *cluich ionnsramaid* a' suathadh ri chèile gu math tràth ann an eachdraidh a' chànain. Ann an Gàidhlig an latha-an-diugh, 's iad na gnìomhairean *gabhail, seinn* agus *cluich* as cumanta airson a bhith a' taisbeanadh òran no pìos ciùil, ach tha na h-ainmearan a thig nan dèidh car sgaraichte o chèile.



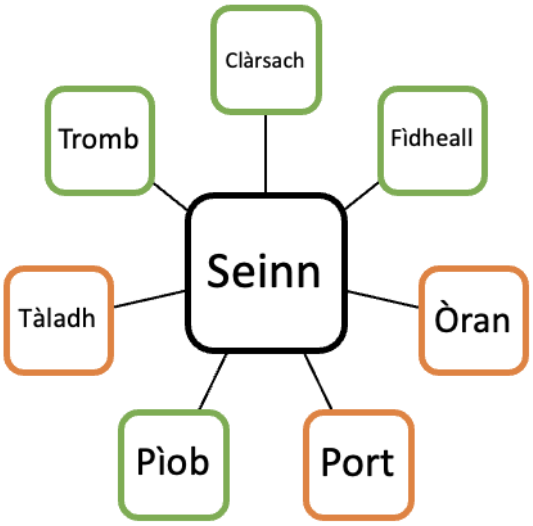
Figear 1: Ainmearan co-cheangailte ris an ainmear-ghnìomhair 'gabhail'

Le AntConc,[25] shiubhail mi corpas anns a bheil 4.3M facal de bheul-aithris airson nan gnìomhairean seo agus nan ainmearan co-cheangailte riutha.[26] Chithear ann am *Figear 1* gu bheil na h-ainmearan *duan, laoidh, port, òran, sgeulachd* agus *ùrnaigh* co-cheangailte ris an ainmear-ghnìomhair *gabhail* (m.e. 'theann

[21] Laideann *cano* 'seinn [òran]', cf. Cuimris *cana* 'seinn [òran]', Gàidhlig *can* 'abair'. Faic Alexander MacBain *An Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language* (Stirling: Eneas MacKay, 1911), 68.
[22] i.e. *abair amhran* 'gabh òran'; *amhrán a chanadh* 'òran a ghabhail'
[23] Alan Bruford and Virginia Blankenhorn, 'Gaelic Songs', *Folk Review* 8 (March 1979): 11.
[24] Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language (eDIL) s.v. 1 *seinnid*: faic dil.ie/36944.
[25] Laurence Anthony. AntConc, Version 4.2.4 (Tokyo, Japan: Waseda University).
[26] Air a dhèanamh air tar-sgrìobhaidhean bho Chruinneachadh Chaluim MhicGilleathain agus feadhainn a tha taisgte aig Sgoil Eòlais na h-Alba: faic Mark Sinclair, William Lamb agus Beatrice Alex, 'Handwriting Recognition for Scottish Gaelic', ann am *Proceedings of the 4th Celtic Language Technology Workshop within LREC2022*, Theodorus Fransen, William Lamb and Delyth Prys, eds, 60–70 (Marseille: European Languages Resources Association, 2022). https://aclanthology.org/2022.cltw-1.9/.

i air gabhail an òrain'). Faodaidh sinn na h-ainmearan a roinn ann an dà sheòrsa: gnìomhan labhairte (**liath**: *sgeul(achd)*[27] agus *ùrnaigh*) agus pìos òrain no ciùil (**orains**: *duan, laoidh, òran* agus *port*[28]).

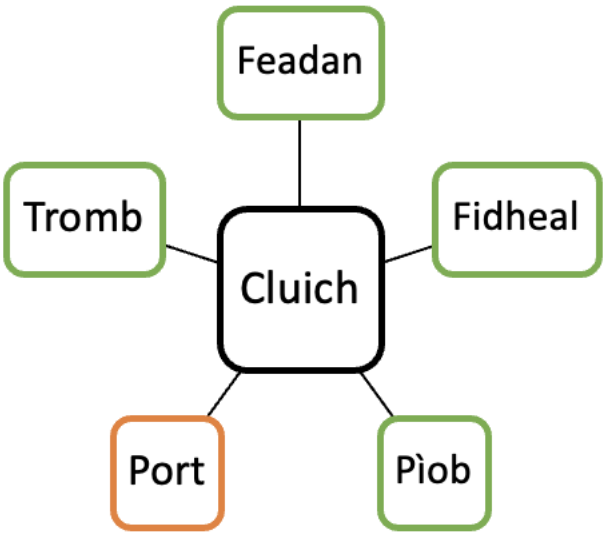
Tha am facal *seinn* an-diugh buailteach a bhith a' ciallachadh 'sing' no 'singing'. Bha e na b' fhosgailte na sin ge-tà am beul-aithris meadhan an fhicheadamh linn, mar a chithear ann am *Figear 2.* Coltach ri *gabhail*, tha *seinn* co-cheangailte ri pìosan òrain is ciùil (**orains**: *òran, port* agus *tàladh*[29]), ach tha am facal cuideachd ga chleachdadh airson ionnsramaidean-ciùil, mar a bha o shean (**uaine**: *clàrsach, fidheall, pìob* agus *tromb*). Ach ao-choltach ri *gabhail*, chan eil gnìomhan labhairte mar *sgeulachd* is *ùrnaigh* nochdte ro thric na lùib.[30] Bidh *seinn* cha mhòr an còmhnaidh a' ciallachadh rudeigin le fonn.



Figear 2: Ainmearan co-cheangailte ris an ainmear-ghnìomhair 'seinn'

An taca ri *gabhail* agus *seinn*, tha *cluich* (faic *Figear 3*) nas cuingichte ri ceòl ionnsramaideach.[31] Mar sin, faodaidh sinn seòrsa de leantaileachd ('continuum') a lorg eadar na trì faclan (faic. *Figear 4*).

[27] Cho math ri na co-fhaclan *naidheachd* agus *stòiridh*.
[28] Tha brìgh 'port' car doilleir an seo; dh'fhaodadh e a bhith a' ciallachadh 'port-à-beul' no 'pìos ciùil (dannsaidh)'.
[29] Gheibhear i cuideachd le *dàn, laoidh* agus *pìobaireachd* anns a' chorpas.
[30] Ach tha Dwelly a' toirt seachad eisimpleir de *seinn* is e a' ciallachadh 'report': *air a sheinn feadh na dùthcha* 'reported through the country'.
[31] Tha *cluich* cuideachd ga chleachdadh le gèamannan, m.e. *cairtean, camain, dìsnean, iomain* agus *tàileasg*.



Figear 3: Ainmearan co-cheangailte ris an ainmear-ghnìomhair ‘cluich’



Figear 4: Leantaileachd eadar labhairt agus ceòl ionnsramaideach ann am brìgh nam faclan ‘gabhail’, ‘seinn’ agus ‘cluich’

A-rèir nan co-cheanglaichean seo, chan eil e iongantach gum biodh fionn-sgeul mar a’ chluais-chiùil a’ nochdadh ann an dualchas nan Gàidhlig. Tha an raon seamantaigeach eadar labhairt, seinn agus ceòl sgleòthail sa chànan. Ach tha rudeigin annasach ga fhoillseachadh anns na figearan shuas; ’s e *port* an aon fhacal a nochdas anns na trì dhiubh. An-diugh, tha *port* a’ ciallachadh ‘tune’ (Dwelly) – an dà chuid seinnte no cluichte – gu h-àraid airson dannsa. Ach o chionn beagan linntean, cha robh innealan-ciùil idir bitheanta air a’ Ghàidhealtachd. Tuigear seo bho bhith a’ measadh fianais sgrìobhte ann an làmh-sgrìobhainnean is leabhraichean ciùil tràth.[32] A bharrachd, bha innealan ciùil mar a’ phìob agus a’ chlàrsaich tuilleadh is daor airson na mòr-chuid: rinn Keith Sanger tuairmse gun cosgadh a’ phìob-mhòr a chuid dhen t-saoghal do dh’fhear-tuatha àbhaisteach ann am meadhan an 18mh linn.[33] Fiù ’s aig toiseach an fhicheadamh linn, bha ionnsramaidean gann anns na h-Eileanan

[32] William Lamb, ‘Grafting Culture: On the Development and Diffusion of the Strathspey in Scottish Music’, *Scottish Studies* 37 (2014): 94–104.

[33] Keith Sanger, Post-dealain pearsanta (6 An Damhair 2013); cf. Adrian Scahill, ‘Irish Traditional Music and the Seventeenth-Century’, ann an *Music, Ireland and the Seventeenth Century*, deas. Barra Boydell agus Kerry Houston. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 40–61; agus Ríonach Uí Ógáin, ‘Traditional Music and Irish Cultural History’, ann an *Irish Musical Studies Vol. 3: Music and Irish Cultural History*, deas. Gerard Gillen agus Harry White (Blackrock: Irish Academic Press Ltd, 1995), 77–100.

an Iar. Nuair a chuir Mòrag NicLeòid à Sgoil Eòlais na h-Alba a' cheist air Màiri Mhàrtainn às na Hearadh, dè 'n seòrsa ceòl a bha agaibh is tu òg, thuirt i: 'Cò 'n ceòl? Cha robh ceòl ann an uair ud ach dìreach am port-à-beul'.[34]

Thuirt Bruford gu robh òrain cho nàdarra dha na Gàidheil ri labhairt.[35] Ged a bha ceòl ionnsramaideach ann gun teagamh o shean, faodaidh sinn a bhith cinnteach gu robh òrain fada na bu chumanta. Tha a choltas ann gu robhar a' seinn bho dhùsgadh gu tràth-cadail. Chuireadh iad òran ri gnìomh sam bith anns an robh buille chunbhalach, eadar bleoghann, dannsa,[36] iomradh, luadhadh, measradh, obair na bràthan, snìomh, spealadh agus tàladh.[37] Mar a thuirt Iain Latharna Caimbeul:

> The singing of songs in the oral tradition [was] part of everyday life and work in the Gaelic-speaking Outer Hebrides. Songs permeate[d] people's lives in a way that is hard for a world that only knows songs as set pieces to be sung on special occasions to understand or appreciate.[38]

Gus tilleadh chun a' phrìomh-chuspair againn: nam biodh òganach an Uibhist san 17mh linn, can, a bha air a chuairteachadh le òrain bhon chreathall a' cluinntinn ceòl na pìobadh airson a' chiad turais, ciamar a bhiodh e ga mheas? A bheil seans ann gum biodh beàrn ga faireachdainn – tha sin ri ràdh, faclan a dhìth? Mas fìor sin, chan eil ach rathad goirid eadar an fhaireachdainn sin agus a bhith a' creidsinn gu bheil faclan an còmhnaidh a' tighinn cuide ri ceòl, an dara cuid gu follaiseach no gu dìomhaire.[39] Ceangailte ri seo, faodaidh sinn cuimhneachadh mun tròp chumanta ann am beul-aithris na Gàidhlig mu eòin aig a bheil comas labhairt.[40] Is dòcha gu bheil e cuideachd freagarrach a bhith a' smaointinn an seo air mar a bha e doirbh do chuid a Ghàidheil co-dhiù sgaradh a dhèanamh eadar fonn agus faclan òrain, mar a thuirt Margaret Fay Shaw: "I once mentioned that I thought a neighbour had the air of a song, and the reply was, 'How could she have the air and not the words?'".[41]

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[34] Mary Martin, 'Weaving and Waulking in Harris', *Tocher* 50 (1995): 24.
[35] Alan Bruford and Virginia Blankenhorn, 'Gaelic Songs', 11.
[36] Tha tiotalan phort-à-beul a' nochdadh ann an Làmh-sgrìobhainn a' Chaisteil Dhruimeanaich agus tha aisneisean ann gu bheil an gnè òrain seo beagan deicheadan nas sine na sin co-dhiù. Faic William Lamb, *Dhannsadh Gun Dannsadh: Dance-Songs of the Scottish Gaels* (leabhran CD), Scottish Tradition Series, Greentrax CDTRAX 9028 (2019); agus David Young, 'A Collection of Country Dances written for use of His Grace the Duke of Perth' (The Drummond Castle Manuscript, 1734).
[37] Faic Virginia Blankenhorn, 'A New Approach to the Classification of Gaelic Song', *Oral Tradition* 32/1 (2018).
[38] John Lorne Campbell and Francis Collinson, *Hebridean Folksongs 3, Waulking Songs from Vatersay, Barra, Eriskay, South Uist and Benbecula* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 6.
[39] Is dòcha gu robh cuid a Ghàidheil cho cleachdte ri òrain 's gun nochdadh faclan nan inntinn bho àm gu àm gun iarraidh is iad ag èisteachd ri ceòl ionnsramaideach – fiù 's mar seòrsa dhen mhealladh-cluaise air an do dhèilig Sacks: faic Oliver Sacks, *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain* (Vintage, 2008).
[40] Stuart A. Harris-Logan, '*Nuair a Bha Gàidhlig Aig Na h-Eòin*: An Investigation into the Art and Artifice of Avifaunal Mimesis as a Mode of Artistic Expression in Gaelic Oral Culture from the Seventeenth Century to the Present' (tràchdas MPhil, Oilthigh Ghlaschu, 2007), 74–104.
[41] M. F. Shaw, 'Folksongs', 76; cf. A. Martin Freeman, 'An Irish Concert', *Journal of the Folksong Society* 6/23 (1920): xxv.

Cò-dhùnadh

Dè nì sinn dhen chluais-chiùil? Tha e follaiseach gun robh ceangail teann eadar seinn agus ceòl ann an dualchas nan Gàidheal,[42] agus gum faodadh tu rudeigin labhairte a ‘ghabhail’ cho math ri ceòl. Is dòcha nach robh anns a’ chluais-chiùil ach fìor dheagh chomas air faclan a chuimhneachadh nuair a nochdadh, air ionnsramaid, fonn-òrain a bha stèidhichte mar-thà. Air an làimh eile, dh’fhaoidte gu robh ceangail no mapa air choireigin eadar faclan agus ceòl ionnsramaideach a chaidh an dìochuimhne. Tha pongan pìoba gan riochdachadh ann an canntaireachd a-rèir àirde nam fuaimreagan. Mar eisimpleir, tha am pong ciùil *b* ga mhapadh chun na fuaimreige ‘o’ agus *a*-àrd gu ‘i’ (faic *Figear 5*). Tha e coltach gu bheil siostaman cuimhne-chiùil eile air feadh an t-saoghail ag obair san aon dòigh.[43] Mar sin, cò aig tha fios nach robh lèirsinn ciùil-chainnt air choireigin aig na Gàidheil o chionn fhada a bha ceangailte ri òrdugh nam fuaimreagan – lèirsinn a tha doilleir dhuinn an-diugh.[44] Dh’fhaodadh barrachd rannsachaidh a’ choltachd seo a mheasadh, can air cò-òrdanachadh fuaimreagan a-rèir nam pongan-ciùil ann am puirt-à-beul no òrain-luaidh[45]. Ach, cha leig sinn a leas a dhol a shiubhail fhuasglaichean coimheach mar seo: tha labhairt, òrain agus ceòl fuaighte gu teann co-dhiù ann an dualchas agus cànan nan Gàidheal.



Figear 5: Mapachadh eadar fuaimreagan agus pongan ciùil ann an canntaireachd[46]

Buidheachas

Thàinig cuid dhen dàta a chleachd an t-ùghdar an seo an cois rannsachadh maoinichte: the Arts and Humanities Research Council (‘Decoding Hidden Heritages’: Grant no. AH/W001934/1), the Irish Research Council (‘Decoding Hidden Heritages’: Grant no. IRC/W001934/1.

[42] Allan MacDonald, ‘The Relationship between Pibroch and Gaelic Song: Its Implications on the Performance Style of the Pibroch Ùrlar’ (tràchdas MLitt, Oilthigh Dhùn Èideann, 1995).
[43] David W Hughes, ‘No Nonsense: The Logic and Power of Acoustic-Iconic Mnemonic Systems’, *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* (2000).
[44] Cf. John Shaw, ‘Language’, 50; Harris-Logan, ‘*Nuair a bha Gàidhlig aig na h-eòin*’, 23–41.
[45] Cf. Campbell and Collinson, ‘The Meaningless Refrain Syllables’, 230–31.
[46] J. P. Grant, ‘Canntaireachd: The Old Pipers' Notation for Pibroch Music’, *Music & Letters* 6/1 (1925): 57.

English Summary

In generations past, Gaels had difficulty separating melody from words: 'I once mentioned that I thought a neighbour had the air of a song, and the reply was, "How could she have the air and not the words?"' (Shaw 1955: 76; cf Freeman 1920-1: xxv). Music and song are also frequently conflated in Gaelic traditional narrative. For instance, when threatened by an evil spirit, a man in one tale sings a prayer and psalm through the Jew's harp: '*dè bha e a' dèanamh ach a' gabhail ùrnaigh agus salm air an tromb'* (MacDhòmhnaill 1951). A wide range of evidence points to a pervasive cultural tendency to mix instrumental music and song.

This tendency is most apparent in tales of the *cluas-chiùil* ('musical-ear'), the ability to transmit and receive messages through instrumental music. Many of these narratives serve as aetiologies for well-known pipe tunes and dance songs (e.g. 'Duntroon's Salute' and 'Thompson's Dirk'). While the *cluas-chiùil* may be regarded as yet another supernatural trope, these tales – coupled with linguistic evidence – point towards an earlier cognitive configuration that entails a very close relationship between words and music.

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The Women of Islay and Issues of Gender in the Core Fairy Tale Repertoires of Scotland and Appalachia

CARL LINDAHL

We do not have, from her own mouth, one word spoken by Margaret Conal, but some who witnessed her narrations would never forget her performative presence.

In John Francis Campbell's monumental *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (hereafter, *PTWH*), Ann Darroch of Islay retells two tales she had heard as a girl from Conal. These were recorded by Campbell's star ethnographer, Hector MacLean, who added his own vivid memories of Conal's power as a storyteller:

> I have some recollection of her myself; she was wont to repeat numerous 'ursgeuln' (tales). Her favourite resorts were the kilns, where the people were kiln-drying their corn, and where she was frequently rewarded, for amusing them in this manner, with supplies of meal. She was paralytic; her head shook like an aspen leaf, and whenever she repeated anything that was very exciting, her head shook more rapidly; which impressed children with great awe.[1]

Highland narrative tradition, in which stories were often told in darkness, typically privileges the spoken word far above the physical gesture. But Margaret Conal did not narrate exclusively at bedtime to children in pitch-dark rooms. Like only a handful of other exceptional female narrators cited by folklorists in her century, Margaret was a crossover artist.[2] Her tales unfolded in public spaces where people of all ages met to carry out essential work. In full view of an unrestricted public, Margaret *became* her stories as she made her own body and its afflictions intrinsic to her style.

John Francis Campbell, Margaret Conal, Ann Darroch, and Hector MacLean were all Islay natives, and all four are crucial figures in my ongoing search to reconstruct vanished traditional narrative communities. Campbell himself never knew Conal, but he was intimately familiar with

> … the very place which Margaret Conal used to haunt …. [T]he kiln and the men about it may be seen now, and such scenes may well account for the preservation of wild stories. A child would not easily forget a story learned amongst a lot of rough farmers, seated at night round a blazing fire, listening to an old crone with palsied head and hands; and accordingly, I have repeatedly heard that the mill, and the kiln, were the places where my informants learned their tales.[3]

One woman's spectacularly told tale, combined with two men's written memories, allow us to retrieve performance scenes dating back at least to the 1830s and invite us to consider what we might gain

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[1] John Francis Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*. *Orally Collected with a Translation by the late J. F. Campbell*, New edition, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1994 [1890]), 1, 267–68.

[2] The model 19th-century crossover artist was the Grimms' Dorothea Viehmann, who, though often portrayed as a peasant homebody, learned and told her tales in her parents' inn and the market where she sold garden vegetables.

[3] Campbell, *PTWH* 1, 268.

from viewing *PTWH* as an ethnographic exploration of the roles of gender in folktale performance and repertoire formation in an island community.

Campbell's masterpiece never stops educating its readers. Depending on your persuasion, folklore can be the most expansive, abstract and theoretical – or the most intimate, concrete, and empirical – of studies. Campbell was of both persuasions. He undertook to collect and publish *PTWH* to develop and bolster his theories that folktales were tools for tracing the origin, age, and worldwide dissemination of an ancient and otherwise irrecoverable mythology; yet, at least equally, his work constituted a gift from, and to, the Gaelic-speaking narrators whose words it captured – a celebratory record of their shared, distinctive storytelling culture.

Campbell derived his theories largely from predecessors, most notably the Grimm brothers and George Webbe Dasent, a British translator of Norwegian folktales.[4] But as an ethnographer, Campbell owed nothing to the theorists who inspired him. Rather, he struck new paths and standards for personalizing each tale, identifying each teller, and honouring each telling's exact words, as well as for orchestrating contexts that allowed performances to emerge naturally in an atmosphere of comfort and familiarity. As an ethnographer Campbell was a century ahead of the emerging field of folklore.

The care and detail that Campbell devoted to his collections allow 21st-century folklorists to take a middle road between cosmic questions of origin and the granular explorations of the phraseology of closely transcribed texts. Campbell's work gives us enough specific information to add the narratives of Gaelic-speaking Scotland to my ongoing study of transatlantic narrative traditions. I begin with the question, What can a close look at the repertoire of one locale (Islay) tell us about the roles of women and men as traditional narrators? This question opens up into others: Can we identify a core fairy tale repertoire that Gaelic-speaking narrators shared with Scots- and English-speaking British and North American communities? Also, to what extent can we identify such a repertoire as 'gendered'? And, finally, how do female and male performers and audiences influence the composition of a narrational core and the variations within it?

In nineteenth-century Scotland (as throughout Europe) the documentation of women's stories depended disproportionately on the attentiveness of privileged males. The great majority of subsistence-class female narrators seldom narrated to men of means. In one of his notes, Campbell of Islay meditates on how stories remain hidden from a searcher who ignores the conditions from which they naturally emerge. Campbell and Donald MacCraw, a hired companion who helped him collect tales as they walked the Western Isles together, had stopped for the night at an inn. Campbell retreated to his room to write up his reflections, but MacCraw lingered downstairs in the kitchen to listen to a memorable performance of 'Morag a Chota Bhain, Margery White Coats' by a 'girl, who told it with a great deal of the queer old language The following day, MacCraw narrated his approximation of the tale to Campbell as they walked through North Uist. Realizing that they had captured only a shadow of the remarkable performance that MacCraw witnessed, Campbell reflects:

[4] Richard M. Dorson, *The British Folklorists: A History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 393–402; see also John Shaw, 'The Collectors: John Francis Campbell and Alexander Carmichael' in *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature, Volume 2: Enlightenment, Britain and Empire (1707–1918),* edited by Ian Brown, Susan Manning, Thomas Owen Clancy and Murray Pittock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 347–352, and 'Scottish Traditional Tales: Distribution and Prehistory', *Cosmos* 32 (2016): 39–62.

> This shows what may be lost by dignified traveling. While the man was enjoying himself in the kitchen, the employer was smoking in solitary dignity, up stairs in his bed-room, writing a journal, and utterly unconscious that the game he pursued was so near.[5]

Campbell was ultimately well served by his acute awareness of how easily a stranger can miss the most important stories and performances. When he could not listen to or remember a tale, he relied on his remarkable team to draw him closer to the narrative community.

Although in Scotland in Campbell's time the recording, publishing, and study of *märchen* was an all-male industry, fairy tales and female narrators had long been yoked together – and trivialized together – in Western imagination. The 'popular tales' that Campbell sought had been gendered as female for millennia. In first-century c.e. Rome, Apuleius of Rhodes knew them as 'old wives tales' (*anilis fabulae*). Through subsequent centuries, such 'nursery tales' – as Campbell introduces them in his collection[6] – were yoked to *Ma Mère l'Oye* ('Mother Goose')[7], and in Campbell's youth English publishers introduced the character of 'Gammer Grethel' as the archetypal old woman storyteller, to serve as the one face of all the invisible storytellers behind their translation of the Grimm fairy tales.[8]

Yet even as the stereotype of the old nursemaid storyteller persisted, linguists and mythologists of the late eighteenth century re-envisaged nursery tales as, in Campbell's words, 'a museum of curious rubbish about to perish' embedding constellations of plots, characters, and motifs of vast geographic distribution with particularly close correspondences within the Indo European language family, and embedding characteristics traceable through the oldest mythological records of Scandinavia, Celtic Britain, Rome, Greece, and India.[9] The old wives were now elevated in stature to assume the role of the conservators and guardians of the great imaginarium of the past. In 1815 the Grimms introduced their readers to Frau Dorothea Viehmann, an 'unusually lively' performer, as the prototypical fairy tale teller.[10] She was the sole narrator, among the scores the Grimms recorded, who was given individual treatment in the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. Unlike Margaret Conal, Viehmann was singled out not for the drama of her narrations, but rather for the precision of her memory. Her ability to retell a tale exactly as she heard it, with few if any changes, was the Grimms' guarantee that her performances fully reflected the original content of the ancient myths. Viehmann was important to the Grimms as a vessel of tradition rather than as a creative participant in it.[11]

In 1842, when the international literati's interest in fairy tales made its first deep impression on Scotland, Robert Chambers personalized the role of aged female storytellers in the male imaginary. 'Gammer Grethel' and the 'Viehmann woman' were transformed into Every Man's Nursemaid. Introducing the 'Fireside Nursery Stories'[12] – to this day the most important collection of fairy tales

[5] Campbell, *PTWH* 1, 275, no. 14.
[6] Campbell, *PTWH* 1, 1.
[7] Charles Perrault, *Contes de Ma Mère l'Oye.* Bound manuscript, 1695. Morgan Library, New York.
[8] Carl Lindahl, 'Storytelling among Lowland Scots since 1800: An All-Female Upper-Middle-Class Family Oral Tradition in the Context of Written Tale Collections', *Scottish Studies* 38 (2018): 81.
[9] Campbell, *PTWH* 1, 2.
[10] Jack Zipes, trans. and ed., *The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm: The Complete First Edition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 270.
[11] Donald Ward, 'New Misconceptions about Old Folktales: The Brothers Grimm' in *The Brothers Grimm and Folktale,* edited by James M. McGlathery (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 91–100.
[12] Chambers' classic *Popular Rhymes of Scotland* was first published in 1828, without folktales; the chapter 'Fireside Nursery Stories' was added in 1842 and expanded in subsequent editions. See Robert Chambers,

in Lowland Scottish tradition – Chambers asks his readers to recreate the era (ending, in his estimation, about 1820) when aged, lower-class nurses entranced young boys with magic tales.

> What man of middle age, or above it, does not remember the tales of drollery and wonder which used to be told by the fireside, in cottage and in nursery, by the old women time out of mind the vehicles for such traditions?[13]

Chambers collected no tales from these iconic old women. Rather, his all-male team of friends and correspondents wrote out the stories as remembered from their childhood.

Chambers' compilation was in effect a portrait of the male memory culture of his contemporaries. Some of the middle-aged men took great pains to serve as vessels for their ventriloquist nursemaids. Chambers' collection is revolutionary in its attempts to reconstruct the contexts and performances that most stirred the memories of his male contemporaries. The vanished nurses of male memory were viewed as creators in a way that the Grimms had never viewed Frau Viehmann, as lively figures who engaged boys' imaginations, much as Margaret Conal had captivated the girls and boys of Islay.

Less than two decades after the publication of 'Fireside Nursery Stories', some of the correspondents who furnished Campbell with Gaelic *märchen* acted exactly as Chambers' friends had done before, by presenting themselves as mouthpieces for their long-dead nursemaids. John Dewar, Campbell's most accomplished correspondent, recalled stories told to him by his childhood nurse, Catherine Macfarlane, and he credited her as the narrator of two stories.[14] Campbell followed suit and in turn listed Macfarlane as the performer and Dewar as the collector, though we have only Dewar's words on record.[15]

Campbell's personal memory culture was gendered differently. He mentioned no childhood memories of elderly female storytellers, but wrote instead of a 'piper nurse'[16] whom he described as

> a stalwart, kindly, gentle man, whose face is often before me, though he has long since gone to his rest. From him I first heard a few of the tales in this collection. They had almost faded from my memory, but I remembered their existence, and I knew where to search'.[17]

In notable ways, then, Campbell was more distant from his material than were his assistants. He publishes one very brief, ten-line tale that he had heard at about age eight from the piper, but his recollection for anything longer is sketchy at best.[18] About another tale, he writes, 'I used to hear the adventures of Comhaoise Ordaig … from my piper nurse myself, but I was so young at the time that I have forgotten all but the name'.[19] Elsewhere, he recalls how he and a childhood friend talked about

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Popular Rhymes of Scotland, New Edition (Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers, 1870), 48–107; also Lindahl, 'Storytelling among Lowland Scots since 1800'.

[13] Chambers, *Popular Rhymes*, 48.

[14] See *PTWH* no. 69 ('*from Catherine Macfarlane in 1809*'; vol. 2, 308–9) and no. 75 ('*from Kate MacFarlane, as early as 1810*'; vol. 2, 367–70). The two differently spelled attributions may refer to two women, as Dewar's mother was a MacFarlane and we may thus assume the presence of several MacFarlanes in Dewar's childhood. Similarly, Campbell cites his late 'piper nurse' as teller, and himself as collector, of no. 57 (vol. 2, 211). But there are inconsistencies: e.g., the table of contents cited collector Donald MacCraw as the narrator of 'Margery White Coats,' though MacCraw had heard the tale just the night before from a female teller (*PTWH* vol. 1, xii; no. 14).

[15] Campbell, *PTWH* 2, x.

[16] Campbell, *PTWH* 2, 309.

[17] Campbell, *PTWH* 1, 10.

[18] Campbell, *PTWH* 2, 211, no. 57.

[19] Campbell, *PTWH* 2, 309, no. 69.

what they would do if they could be the heroes of 'The Three Soldiers'.[20] Clearly, Campbell had once lived with the stories, even to the point of projecting himself into their characters, but the stories themselves did not continue to live in him.

Having lost touch with his childhood *märchen*, Campbell leaned upon his childhood friends, and they were the ones who supplied the depth of context and wealth of narration that, enriched by Campbell's analyses and reflections, make *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* a masterpiece. Part of the contextualization process was the reclamation of the female narrator as a major performer. In addition to MacLean's recollections of the riveting Margaret Conal, there was Donald MacCraw's account of an 'old wife' in North Uist whose tales enthralled him as a child:

> [her] cottage was the resort of all the children for miles and miles. [MacCraw] has often gone himself six or seven miles in the snow, and he used to sit with dozens of other bairns about her fire, mute and motionless for most of the night. The children brought offerings of tobacco, *which* they got from older people, as best they could, and for each bit the old woman gave a story. He 'Never heard her like'.[21]

Through MacLean and MacCraw, Campbell and his readers experienced vicariously the great female Gaelic narrators. Eventually in the course of his fieldwork Campbell himself witnessed firsthand the power of a masterful woman performer, an 'old dame' who 'used action and great emphasis' to provoke 'a shiver of horror' in 'the junior part of the audience, who were listening intently'.[22] These descriptions suggest that female narrators exceeded males in acting out their tales, and also that such dramatization served primarily to impress the children in the audience.

Campbell's team collected so sensitively and assiduously that the whole sweep of their ethnographic work has not yet been adequately summarized, let alone explored. First printed in four volumes (1860–2), *PTWH*, landmark though it is, published and analysed just a fraction of the manuscripts the team amassed. Two further volumes, titled *More West Highland Tales* (Watson, MacLean, and Rose 1940, 1960), appeared long after Campbell's death;[23] and beyond these there remains a vast number of unpublished manuscripts and contextualization awaiting full attention in the National Library of Scotland.[24]

Nevertheless, by concentrating just on the first two printed volumes we can gather more about the provenance, performance, and variants of the tales and the lives, words, and imaginations of their tellers than I have found in any other published nineteenth-century source. Here space allows only groundwork for an exploration of gender in the storytelling traditions of Campbell's native Islay – and of what the Islay tales can reveal about a posited transatlantic core repertoire shared by Highland and Lowland Scotland as well as the Appalachian Mountains of the United States.

In his comprehensive introduction to *PTWH* Campbell describes how he gathered tales: first, at the beginning of 1859, by corresponding with friends and acquaintances from the Highlands and Islands, then by himself making a visit 'at Easter [which fell on 24 April that year] to a Highland district', where he

[20] Campbell, *PTWH* 1, 247, no. 10.
[21] Campbell, *PTWH* 2, 68, no. 44.
[22] Campbell, *PTWH* 2, 552, no. 83.
[23] J. F. Campbell, John G. MacKay, W. J. Watson, Donald MacLean and H. J. Rose, *More West Highland Tales*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd), 1940; and vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd), 1960.
[24] Campbell ended *PTWH* with two catalogues of the tales collected by his team; these lists comprise more than800 texts, far more than have been published in *PTWH* and the two volumes of *More West Highland Tales* combined; *PTWH*, 2, 554–597.

initially encountered diffidence among those he asked to narrate. Once he determined that an indispensable step 'toward the acquisition of a story is to establish confidence', he sought 'men able and willing to write Gaelic'. Then he undertook a contextual examination devoted to 'studying the actual condition of this popular lore, where I found that it existed in the greatest profusion' by walking the length of the Outer Hebrides, listening, reaching rapport, and learning how to ask.[25]

> When I was questioned, I answered, and told my errand, and prospered. 'I was not a drover come to drive cattle at the fair.' … 'I was the gentleman who was after Sgialachdan.' My collector had made my name known. I spoke Gaelic, and answered questions. I am one of themselves, so I got on famously.[26]

For all its value, the account of Campbell's self-education as a traveling ethnographer disguises what I regard as an (at least) equally important dimension of his collection: his team did its most thorough work at home. Campbell concedes that he missed much when undertaking 'dignified traveling', but even when getting on 'famously' among the natives of the Long Island during his fieldwork journey, he failed to find the proportion of female to male narrators, and depth of female repertoire, that *PTWH* records from Islay.

Consider the gender ratio of the tales and variants recorded from Islay: only on Campbell's home island do female-told tales constitute the majority: fourteen of the twenty-six published tales. This fact is all the more remarkable considering the tally for the entire published collection, in which male-narrated tales outnumber female tales by more than seven to one. 'Men and women of all ages could and did tell me stories', writes Campbell of his traveling fieldwork;[27] but when Islay women's tales are subtracted, only five female-narrated tales and variants appear in the collection, about 3.6 percent of the whole.

As *Chart 1* (below) reveals, Campbell's great ethnographic journey began about 24 April 1859. During his first month of collecting, he recorded only one tale told by a woman. Meanwhile, back in Islay, Hector MacLean recorded five tales from women in April of the same year, another four in May and June, and a total of nine by September, when he collected the second of two non-Islay, female-told tales. MacLean is far and away the leading contributor of female-told tales for the entire collection, accounting for more than two-thirds of the texts.

Chart 1 underlines the importance of Islay for a gender-focused survey of collection dates and female-narrated tales: Islay texts account for nearly seventy-five percent of all the female tales in the collection. Hector MacLean, Campbell's friend 'from boyhood',[28] recorded and transcribed all but three of these female-narrated Islay tales. Margaret MacTavish, one of Campbell's 'earliest friends'[29] and the only identified female correspondent who sent him tales, supplied the remaining female texts, one as told by her 'serving maid' and two relying upon her memory of performances she heard earlier in her life.

Dating data, combined with some of written notes (such as MacLean's description of Margaret Conal's kiln performances quoted above), suggest that MacLean began his epic collecting enterprise at home, by invoking the older women whose narrations had impressed him in his youth, and then seeking out female tellers he thought most likely to remember those performances. I think it probable that MacLean began with Ann Darroch and Ann MacGilvray because they were neighbours who shared with him local knowledge (and likely, personal friendship) from childhood, that period in their lives

[25] Campbell, *PTWH* 1, 10–13.
[26] Campbell, *PTWH* 1, 14.
[27] Campbell, *PTWH* 1, 14.
[28] Campbell, *PTWH* 1, 3.
[29] Campbell, *PTWH* 1, 13.

when older female narrators performed for girls and boys gathered together by fireside and bedside. Honouring his childhood bond with female narrators and listeners may have spurred MacLean to guide the collection through Campbell's gender barrier to share with subsequent centuries these portraits of master women narrators and traces of a core Gaelic Island female repertoire.

Chart 1: **Female *Märchen* Narrators in *Popular Tales of the West Highlands***

Narrator[1] / Collector[1]	**Place[2]**	***PTWH* tale no.**	***ATU* type[3]**	**Date**	**Sketch**
Ann Darroch / Hector MacLean	Islay	2-2	313	6/1859	Giant's daughter helps her solve tasks, escape
	Islay	8	2015	4/1859	Chain tale; most popular in *PTWH* (1, 220)
	Islay	13	**480/326**	5/1859	Strong, obedient daughter faces down corpse
	Islay	14	**510B**	5/1859	*Peau d'âne* version of 'Cinderella' tale
Ann MacGilvray / Hector MacLean	Islay	3	**425**	4/1859	Animal bridegroom tale: girl marries crow
	Islay	17-1	**328**	4/1859	*Maol a Chliobain* (cf. 'Molly Whuppie')
Flora MacIntyre / Hector MacLean	Islay	15	**1536A**	5/1859	A poor man bests his abusive employer
	Islay	17-2	**328**	6/1859	*Maol a Chliobain* (cf. 'Molly Whuppie')
Mrs MacGeachy / Hector MacLean	Islay	18	882	4/1859	Wager on wife's chastity; wife wins over cheaters
	Islay	41	**312**	5/1859	'Bluebeard' plot; discussed by Campbell, *PTWH* 2, 47
A Woman / Hector MacLean	Islay	10-4	566	6/1860	Centred on poor soldiers
Mrs MacTavish / Mrs MacTavish	Islay	33	440	n.d.	Female hero, well at world's end, frog-prince story
	Islay	61-1	—	11/1859	Lay of Diarmaid, Gràinne and Fionn
A servant maid / Mrs MacTavish	Islay	11	130	11/1859	Poor male hero, animal helpers
Margaret MacKinnon / Hector MacLean	Skye	39-3	**1535**	n.d.	'Unibos'; poor man tricks greedy, treacherous man
Janet Currie / Hector MacLean	S. Uist	61-2	—	9/1859	Lay of Diarmaid, Gràinne and Fionn
Maid / J. F. Campbell	Argyll	17-3	**328**	25/4/1859	*Maol a Chliobain* / 'Molly Whuppie'
Catherine Macfarlane / John Dewar	Dum-bartonshire	69	700	1809	A 'Tom Thumb' tale written from memory of nurse's narration
Kate MacFarlane / John Dewar	Dum-bartonshire	75	—	1810	Boy a giant herdsman (motif G152) written from childhood memory

Notes:

[1] Of the nineteen *märchen* collected from women, thirteen were recorded by Hector MacLean. Three were contributed by Campbell's friend Mrs MacTavish, two written from memory and one collected from a servant. The two tales collected in Dumbartonshire by John Dewar may or may not have come from the same narrator; John Dewar's mother was a MacFarlane by birth, and these informants may be two different relatives of his. The maidservant recorded by J. F. Campbell in April 1859 was one of his first informants, recorded during his first week of fieldwork.

[2] Fourteen of the nineteen women's tales were recorded on Islay, eleven of them by Hector MacLean.

[3] Nine of these nineteen tales, noted in **bold type**, represent the core repertoire common in both Scotland and Appalachia. Seven of those nine core types are represented in Islay.

Note that this list of nineteen narratives excludes significant female contributors and contributions to *PTWH*; for example, I have excluded Johanna Mac Crimmon's belief tale about a bogle (no. 30-7) and all of the variants of no. 30 because none of these are, strictly speaking, *märchen*; they do not represent variants of a tale type, but rather individual accounts of experiences with one kind of supernatural being: a bogle. Similarly, I have left out the 'Widow M Calder' version of no. 37-1, one in a set of ten accounts of encounters with another supernatural creature, the *brollachan*.

Chart 2. **A transatlantic core repertoire of Appalachian, Lowland Scottish, and Scottish Gaelic *Märchen***

	20th Century United States Appalachian Mountain Core Repertoire				19th Century Scottish Core: Scottish Lowland Core					19th Century Scottish Core: Scottish Gaelic Core
A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H****	**I****	**J****	**K****
International (*ATU*) Tale Type Nos.[1]	***LRC*[2] 112 of ~ 400 tales**	**1 mountain man[3]**	**1 mountain family[4]**	**1 mountain woman[5]**	**Jeanie Durie Fife nurse[6]**	**Chambers 'Fireside Nursery Stories'[7]**	***PTWH* tale number[8]**	**No. of variants[9]**	**Female variants[10]**	**Islay tales[11]**
326	24		3	2	1	1	**[13]**	**1**	**1**	**1F**
366	19	1	2	1	1					
327/8	19	1	3		1		[17]	4	3	2F
312/955	11	1		1			**[41]**	**1**	**1**	**1F**
510/11	11	1	2	2		2	[14] 510B	2	2	1f
							[43] 510A	1	0	0
720/80	10	1	1			1				
480	9		2	1		1	**[13]**	**1**	**1**	**1F**
1535 / 1535A*	5		1	1			[15]	1	1	1F
425*	4		2	1		2	[2]	1	1	1F
							[12]	1	1	1M
Core tales in repertoire	112 of ~ 400 28%	5 of 18 28%	16 of 60 27%	9 of 33 27%	3 of 5 60%	7 of 27 26%		13 of 138 9%	11 of 13 85%	9 of 26 35%

* 1535 and 425 are not heavily represented in *LRC*, but are well enough known in other Appalachian collections to stand among the most often collected Appalachian tales.

** Tale numbers in **boldface** in columns H–K represent the three published core tale types told only by women, only in Islay, and recorded solely by Hector MacLean

Notes

[1] The most common plots in English-speaking narratives of the Appalachian region of the U.S.

[2] The Leonard Roberts Collection, Berea College (1948–83), the principal source collection from which the core repertoire was extracted.

[3] Characteristic Appalachian male repertoire (c. 1940–1954): James Taylor Adams, Harlan Co., KY. James T. Adams, *Grandpap Told Me Tales* (Big Stone Gap, VA, 1993).

[4] Characteristic Appalachian male family repertoire (1950s): The Couch Family, Harlan Co., KY. Leonard Roberts, *Sang Branch Settlers: Folksongs and Tales of a Kentucky Mountain Family* (Austin, TX: American Folklore Society, Memoir Series, 61), items 101–135 and 137–161.

[5] Characteristic Appalachian female repertoire (1950s): Nora Morgan Lewis. Nora Morgan Lewis Folktale Collection, Berea College, KY. See *NML*; 36 tales (three family reminiscence narratives excluded: nos. 2, 30, 35).

[6] Lowland Scottish nursemaid narrator (c. 1820s–1900): Jeannie Durie. See Lindahl, 'Storytelling among Lowland Scots'. At least one of the tales (*ATU* 328) shows evidence of Highland influence.

[7] Lowland Scottish male repertoire (c. 1840–1870). 'Fireside Nursery Stories' in Chambers, *Popular Rhymes.* Most appeared first in the 2nd edn (1842); all had been published by 1870.

[8] Tale nos. from Campbell, *PTWH*, corresponding to Appalachian tale types. Campbell numbers the tales 1–86; here nos. 17a, 28, 30 and 37 are excluded because each contains ten or more variants, most with sketchy attributions; some of the variants are personal experience, some legends, some expressions of belief rather than narratives.

[9] Number of core tale type variants published in *PTWH.*

[10] Number of core tale type variants told by women in *PTWH.* Note that women account for 85 percent of the core repertoire and that the eleven core texts total 58 percent of all nineteen female-told *märchen* in *PTWH.*

[11] Number of core tale type variants recorded from Islay. 'F' and 'M' represent female and male narrators, respectively.

Studies of the 'biology of storytelling' tend to posit two distinct traditions of performing fairy tales: a male-dominated public tradition of master narrators who share their stories with adults, and a female-dominated domestic tradition in which older women narrate to children.[30] By such accounts, the male master tale-tellers travelled from place to place, often for cèilidh events, and often exchanging their artistry for lodging or money, to entertain primarily adult audiences; while female performers – often aged and usually poor – engaged children of relative privilege.

Contextual evidence presented by MacLean, MacCraw, and Campbell muddies the traditional distinctions. Up to a certain age, nearly all children, regardless of gender, sat together to listen to female narrators, some of whom narrated with a mastery that left lifelong impressions upon their auditors. It may seem too easy for us to isolate the Islay women narrators exclusively within the domestic sphere. Nevertheless, the evidence of the *PTWH* texts themselves presents an Islay female repertoire that conforms closely with the domestic, female-focused *märchen* traditions of Lowland Scotland and Appalachia – and that is almost totally lacking elsewhere in the published collection.[31]

Chart 2 demonstrates that the female narrators of Islay narrated sixty-four percent of the core repertoire narratives (nine of fourteen tales) found in the entire published collection. We may expect a certain continuity between Lowland Scotland and the U.S. Appalachian region, which was settled largely by Ulster Scots whose culture dominated the region, influencing groups that arrived later. There were a few Highland families as well, and Celtic influences were amplified by Ulster Scots and Lowland Scottish traditions demonstrably influenced by Irish and Gaelic traditions.[32]

The core repertoire presented in *Chart 2* is derived from the largest archive of orally recorded Appalachian *märchen*: the Leonard Roberts Collection (*LRC*), housed in Berea College, Kentucky, comprising well over eight hundred audio recorded and manuscript tales, of which approximately half are *märchen*.[33] In addition to its size, this collection possesses qualities that enhance its value: Roberts, like Hector MacLean, was a cultural insider who recorded, like Campbell, from anyone who would

[30] Linda Dégh, *Narratives in Society: A Performance-Centered Study of Narration* (Helsinki: Folklore Fellows Communications no. 255, 1995), 47–61; also Gerald Thomas, *The Two Traditions: The Art of Storytelling Amongst French Newfoundlanders* (St John's: Breakwater Books, 1993), and Carl Lindahl, 'Jacks: The Name, the Tales, the American Traditions' in W. B. McCarthy, ed., *Jack in Two Worlds: Contemporary North American Tales and Their Tellers* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), xviii–xxi.

[31] Campbell drops occasional hints of a potential wealth of female-narrated tales in his unpublished collection. He states, for example, 'I have many Gaelic versions' of his one published variant of *ATU* 510A, *Cinderella,* a tale greatly favoured by female narrators (*PTWH* 2, 61, no. 43); we should expect some female sources among these.

[32] Campbell documents Gaelic influence on Lowland tales and listeners in his Introduction (*PTWH* 1, 27–8).

[33] Throughout this description I use '*märchen*' and 'fairy tale' interchangeably to denote any narrative generally regarded as fiction and told largely to entertain. These include wonder tales, but also animal tales, tall tales, and some legends told both to entertain and instruct. I have made one adjustment in counting tales from the Roberts Collection: tall tales, by far the most popular Appalachian traditional genre. Because literally thousands of tall tales were written and submitted by Roberts' students, any attempt to count them would skew the sample, for such tales appear sparsely in such collections as *PTWH* and the Grimms'. So I limit my count to Roberts' audio-recorded tales (*LRC,* Leonard Roberts Field Recordings). In Scotland, Chambers counted rhymes and songs, including Child ballads, among his 'Fireside Nursery Stories', and my counts respect his editorial judgment. Campbell was clear about the variety of his texts; he lists nine different categories of Highland verbal art, including 'prose tales' from 'the traditions of the Finne', 'children's tales', songs, and 'the romantic popular tales of which this collection mainly consists' (*PTWH* 1, 22–26). Here, I've decided to include nearly all the tales in my count, with a few exceptions noted and explained in *Chart 2*, n. 8. Campbell would have understood the core repertoire sketched here as comprising mainly 'popular romances' and 'children's tales'.

narrate for him. Finally, because Roberts recorded his tales into the 1960s and recorded frequently from children, I have been able to find some of his narrators still living and to record their tales and memories.

Chart 2, column A lists, in descending order, the story plots that Roberts recorded most often. The tales are identified by their international tale type numbers (*ATU*). The top nine tales in the list total more than one hundred texts, about twenty-five percent of all the *märchen* Roberts collected. The first two tale types, accounting for over forty percent of the texts of the top nine tales, focus on fear tests. The following abstracts sketch the most common Appalachian forms of the tale:[34]

***ATU* 326** **The Boy Who Wanted to Learn What Fear Is**. A person accepts a challenge to spend the night in a haunted house. Showing no fear of the spirits that attack him, the hero is rewarded when they reveal the location of hidden treasure.

***ATU* 366** **The Man from the Gallows.** A family digging potatoes find a large toe. They cook and eat it and that night a beast comes to claim the toe, often with fatal results.

ATU 326 is often shared among people of all ages and often told as a belief tale; ATU 366 is almost always told by adults to frighten children (or children to frighten each other) and always told as a fiction. The two types share the motif of a *porous house*, and inculcate the concept that four walls offer no protection from outside forces. Both tales also underscore isolation by focusing on a lone individual facing monstrous challenges. Significantly, Lowland and Highland versions of these tale types do not emphasize the house to the degree that Appalachian texts do. The marauding forces typically attack people in the outside world, often in cemeteries.

The remaining seven most common tale types are more often found in storybooks than the first two, but, in Appalachia at least, are less often told.

***ATU* 327/328** Both of these tale types involve children traveling to confront monsters (cf. 'Hansel and Gretel' and 'Jack and the Beanstalk'). The most common versions in Appalachia (as well as in Lowland and Gaelic Scotland) involve three siblings, more often girls, who are challenged to steal three articles from a giant; the youngest child succeeds, as in 'Molly Whuppie'.

***ATU* 312/955** These types are 'Bluebeard' and 'Robber Bridegroom' tales. Three girls leave home one by one and enter the house of a man (often a prospective husband), who murders the first two when they break a tabu; the third escapes and sometimes revives her sisters.

***ATU* 510/511** These are 'Cinderella' tales usually involving a girl who is exiled wearing ashes, rushes, or animal skins.

***ATU* 720/780** **'Juniper Tree'** and **'Singing Bone'**. These tales involve children who are murdered by relatives and transformed into birds or phantoms that reveal the crime and punish the murderer.

[34] Note that these do not represent the most common *international* forms.

***ATU* 480**	**'The Kind and Unkind Girls'** (including **'The Wal at the Warld's End')** features a good girl who journeys to retrieve water from a distant well, gives food and help to beings she meets along the way, and honours the monsters (named 'Rawhead' and 'Bloodybones)' that guard the well. She is rewarded. Her step-sister then makes the same journey, but mocks the beings that ask for her help and is punished.
***ATU* 1535/ 1536A**	***Unibos* or 'Big Claus and Little Claus'**: a poor man repeatedly tricks an abusive rich man.
***ATU* 425**	**'Beauty and the Beast'** plot in which a bear, bull, or human 'bully' plays the role of the animal bridegroom.[35]

One of the most significant aspects of this core repertoire is that it upends some of the leading stereotypes about Appalachian tales. Richard Chase's overly influential collection, *The Jack Tales* (1943), pushed the ideas that 'Jack' was the dominant American folktale character and that Jack Tales were a male-dominated narrative tradition, as exemplified by the Harmon and Hicks families of Western North Carolina, who, due to Chase's influence, became the most famous American folktale narrators.[36] Roberts' collection, however, indicates that the overemphasis on male narrators and male folktale characters obscured a rich and extensive domestic narrative tradition shared by adults with their grandchildren. Child heroes, most often girls, dominate in this repertoire; among the core repertoire tales, only *ATU* 1535 typically features an adult protagonist and only *ATU* 1535 and *ATU* 328 often feature a character named Jack.

Returning to *Chart 2*, columns C, D, and E, we find that the separate repertoires of one Appalachian woman, one Appalachian man, and one Appalachian family confirm that the core repertoire is well represented in each context.

Moving to Lowland Scotland (columns F and G), note that more than one quarter of the tales in Chambers' collection match the Appalachian core, a strong correlation. Furthermore, the only individual teller's repertoire that I have been able to locate, the stories told by Fife nurse Jeannie Durie in the 1820s, as passed down through an all-female line of in an upper-class family, presents a sixty percent correlation: three of the five tales represent the three most commonly told tales in Appalachia.[37]

The importance of the women of Islay in this transatlantic connection becomes glaringly relevant when we consult columns I – J. A total of fourteen variants of the Appalachian core repertoire appears in *PTWH* (column I), not a large number, but also note that twelve of those fourteen variants

[35] The core repertoire presented here is almost identical to the nine-tale list published earlier with one exception: *ATU* 1535, a tale told mostly by men in the Appalachians, has replaced *ATU* 313, 'The Magic Flight'; see Carl Lindahl, 'Female Narrators, Protagonists, and Villains of the American Mountain Märchen', *Fabula* 52, 1/2. Though *ATU* 313 was the most esteemed folktale in Roberts' own family tradition, it has proved rare in the Appalachians. (If *ATU* were correct in re-classifying 'Jack and his Bull' as 313 [*ATU* 1, 197], the type would indeed be popular in the U.S.; but I and others recognize this tale as *ATU* 511 and thus part of the 'Cinderella' constellation in the core). Ironically, *ATU* 313 was extremely popular among Campbell's narrators, and it would undoubtedly form part of a 'Gaelic island core' with links to Irish, Newfoundland, and French-Canadian traditions (See note 41, below.)

[36] Richard T. Chase, *The Jack Tales: Folk Tales from the Southern Appalachians* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943).

[37] See Lindahl, 'Storytelling among Lowland Scots since 1800'.

are narrated by women. Most tellingly, ten of the fourteen variants were collected in Islay by Hector MacLean, nine of them from women. Three of the nine core tale types in *PTWH* are attested exclusively from Islay, narrated exclusively by women, and collected exclusively by MacLean. Without Islay's female narrators, and without MacLean to listen to them, there would be little if any trace of the substantial body of story connecting Gaelic Scotland to the Lowlands and Appalachia. This transcultural continuity of *märchen* tradition implies that some fairy tale plots belonged to a largely stable, female-dominated narrative tradition in nineteenth-century households, even as male-dominated traditions displayed far greater variation from culture to culture.

John Shaw has done remarkable work tracing *PTWH*'s story elements that can be linked to ancient and prehistoric roots.[38] Here I have attempted a related kind of tracing by identifying *PTWH*'s links to contemporary Lowland and transatlantic narrative traditions. The preliminary results of this comparison offer substantial evidence of a body of Scottish Gaelic *märchen* told primarily by women. This female repertoire featured principally female, child protagonists, and was performed predominately by older women to all children, regardless of gender. But with some exceptions (e.g., Margaret Conal's kiln tales), this repertoire was not repeated publicly to adults, and might have been rarely shared with outsiders in Campbell's time.

This tri-cultural core repertoire varies notably from what today's audiences expect of 'fairy tales', given that only two of the nine types (*ATU* 510, 425) typically present as much as one scene of courtship or marriage. Thematically, core tales depict children facing their fears, and pit child heroes against adult or giant adversaries. Narrative performances likely functioned, at least in part, to inculcate in children the sense that they will eventually succeed in mastering the obstacles that loom so large when one is small. Even so, the path to success is presented as formidable and terrifying. Core tales are crowded with grim images and brutal actions: monsters and adults murder (*ATU* 720/80, 327/28), kidnap (*ATU* 425) and eat (*ATU* 327/328, 720/780) their children and their pets (*ATU* 510/11); children discover their siblings' dismembered corpses (*ATU* 312/955); children must groom or eat dismembered monsters (*ATU* 326, 366, 480, 720/80) and single-handedly endure attacks by corpses, monsters, and spirits (*ATU* 326, 327/328, 366); young heroes must engineer the deaths of the villains' children or grandparents (*ATU* 327/328, 1535) to save themselves. By enacting such tales in dramatic performances, a storyteller like Margaret Conal might be seen as subjecting her young listeners to an initiatory trial by fear.

The transatlantic core tales collected in Islay sometimes correspond precisely to the standard international tale type and sometimes deviate dramatically, yet still retain motifs or details shared with the Lowland and Appalachian tales. Returning again to the remarkable Margaret Conal (as voiced by Ann Darroch), note that 'The King Who Wanted to Marry His Daughter' (*PTWH* no. 14), her version of the Cinderella story (*ATU* 510B), conforms in outline with the Lowland 'Rashie-coat' and the Appalachian 'Rushycoat and the King's Son'.[39] The signal trait setting Margaret Conal's version apart from the others is the father-daughter incest theme, common in Gaelic, Irish, and Traveller versions of the type, but almost always absent from Lowland and Appalachian versions. So 'The King Who Wanted to Marry His Daughter' is persuasively linked to Lowland and Appalachian traditions but also characteristically Gaelic in its deviations.

[38] Shaw, 'Scottish Traditional Tales'.
[39] Chambers, *Popular Rhymes*, 66–8; Leonard W. Roberts, *Old Greasybeard: Tales from the Cumberland Gap* (Pikeville, KY: Pikeville College Press, 1969), no. 22.

Margaret Conal's 'The Girl and the Dead Man' is both a thing-in-itself and highly resonant with the Lowland and Appalachian repertoires. It begins as a typical example of *ATU* 480, 'The Kind and Unkind Girls', with two unkind girls leaving home, selfishly refusing to share with their supernatural would-be helpers, and being punished – in this case, by death, a more extreme punishment than in most versions – for their selfishness. The good girl then takes off, shows kindness to all, and succeeds in her tasks. The typical task in Lowland and Appalachian texts – consider the Lowland 'Wal at the Warld's End' and the Appalachian 'Rawhead and Bloodybones' – is to retrieve water from a well guarded by disembodied heads.[40] But in Conal's narration the good girl has to spend the night with a corpse, and, as Campbell notes, the plot takes on the characteristics of 'The man who travelled to learn what fear was', *ATU* 326.[41] The girl battles the corpse all night long, receiving as her reward 'a peck of gold and a peck of silver, and the vessel of cordial. She rubbed the vessel of cordial to her two sisters, and brought them home alive'. Campbell states, 'I know of nothing quite like it in Gaelic, nor in any other language,' an important observation; yet in all of its major motifs, this text possesses close parallels in Appalachian, Lowland, and other Gaelic Scottish tales.

The body of narratives collected by John Francis Campbell of Islay and his team is likely at least as large as Leonard Roberts' Appalachian corpus that I drew upon to extract the core repertoire applied in this brief study. It would be of great value to examine all of Campbell's texts, published and unpublished, to extract a core Scottish Gaelic repertoire. Some tales relatively rare in Appalachia would figure substantially in a Scottish Gaelic core; some of these would, for example, show a strong affinity with Irish or Scandinavian tradition.[42] Thanks to the care with which they were recorded, the tales themselves (and the Islay tales in particular) display depths of local narrative tradition missing from other printed collections. This corpus, coupled with the remarkable observations of Campbell and MacLean, offers an uncommon glimpse of how fairy tales influenced the lives and embodied the imaginations of Gaelic-speaking island communities in the mid-nineteenth century.

DEDICATION

This sketch is dedicated with admiration to John Shaw, who shares with John Francis Campbell of Islay a fruitful double vision of folk narrative. Like Campbell, Shaw is a dedicated and careful listener who strives to capture every word and meaning of a master storyteller, as illustrated in his collaboration with Joe Neil MacNeil in *Tales until Dawn*, which records the oral autobiography and extensive repertoire of one remarkable Cape Breton storyteller. And like Campbell, Shaw poses the big questions of origin and meaning through inventive explorations linking Gaelic folktales to imaginatively reconstructed ancient narratives.[43] Contemporary folk narrative studies are richer for such double vision. Regarding my present

[40] Chambers, *Popular Rhymes*, 105–7; Leonard W. Roberts, *South from Hell-fer-Sartin: Kentucky Mountain Folk Tales* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1955), no. 13a.
[41] Campbell, *PTWH* 1, 267.
[42] For example, one of the best-attested international fairy tale types in *PTWH* is ATU 313, 'The Magic Flight', in which a demon's daughter helps a human suitor fulfil the demon's tasks. This type does not appear often in the Lowlands or Appalachia (*ATU* notwithstanding; see note 34, above), but clearly shares traits and popularity with the Irish corpus and in the English-language repertoire of Newfoundland, a storytelling community heavily influenced by immigrants from Ireland.
[43] See especially 'Scottish Traditional Tales: Distribution and Prehistory', *Cosmos* 32 (2016): 39–62; but also 'A Gaelic Eschatological Folktale, Celtic Cosmology and Dumézil's "Three Realms"', *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 35 (2007): 250–273; and 'Mythological Aspects of the "Return Song" Theme and Their Counterparts in North-Western Europe', *Nouvelle Mythologie Comparée* 6 (2021): 5–29.

inquiry: I have not yet found persuasive evidence in Shaw's intensive fieldwork and publications that the Appalachian core tales as delineated and described here can also be found in Cape Breton; for example, Joe Neil MacNeil's repertoire of fifty-two tales seems to include versions of only two of the core types (*ATU* 326 and 1135).[44] This is a topic for future work.

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Abbreviations

ATU Aarne-Thompson-Uther. *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography.* Edited by Hans-Jörg Uther. 3 vols. Helsinki : Folklore Fellows Communications Nos. 284–286, 2004.

LRC Leonard Roberts Collection. 1950–1983. Thousands of audio-recorded and hand-written narratives collected by Leonard W. Roberts, on deposit at the Berea College Special Collections, Berea, KY. Written texts catalogued in Series 12, Folktales.

https://bereaarchives.libraryhost.com/repositories/2/resources/567.

More than 800 audio recordings of narrative performances and interviews are catalogued as Leonard Roberts Field Recordings: https://berea.access.preservica.com/index.php?name=SO_c65dd2ea-ce17-41a6-94de-ced994acf461.

NML *Nora Morgan Lewis Folktale Collection*. Berea College, Berea, KY: 36 mss and typescripts based on family oral tradition in Leslie Co., KY in the mid-1950s. https://bereaarchives.libraryhost.com/repositories/2/resources/656

PTWH *Popular Tales of the West Highlands. Orally Collected with a translation by the late J.F. Campbell.* New edition, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1994). Originally published under this title in four volumes, 1860–62; The New Edition ('under the auspices of the Islay Association') was first published in London in 1890. The text drawn upon here, the one now most easily available, is reduced to 2 volumes and paginated differently than the 1890 printing. To aid readers of earlier editions, the *PTWH* tale numbers, in addition to the page numbers, are given in the footnotes here.

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[44] Joe Neil MacNeil, *Tales until Dawn / Sgeul gu Latha: The World of a Cape Breton Gaelic Story-Teller,* trans. and ed. by John Shaw (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1987), nos. 10 and 28.

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Aspects of the Marine Otherworld of Rathlin Island

SÉAMUS MAC MATHÚNA

The coastal areas of Ireland and Scotland and their offshore islands are rich in maritime folklore and, not surprisingly, many legends in the form of memorates, fabulates and belief statements reflect this impressive heritage.[1] A memorate is a short, loose narrative concerning a supernormal or out-of-the-ordinary occurrence, it is local in nature, and it is related as a memory by the person who experienced it. A fabulate, by contrast, is a migratory legend which, while also of supernatural character, tends to be a more elaborate narrative with a stock plot, and is told of someone other than the narrator, who stands at a greater remove from the encounter. Belief is at the core of the legend, and stories of first- or second-hand encounters, and to a slightly lesser extent of third-hand encounters, have a particularly high degree of credibility and strongly reflect the beliefs and values of the people.[2]

Located between the north-east coast of Ireland and Scotland, about six miles from Ballycastle, Co. Antrim and approximately thirteen miles from the Mull of Kintyre, Rathlin Island occupies a special place amongst Irish islands. Over many centuries, it has been a pivotal intermediate point of contact between Ireland and Scotland, assimilating cultural elements from both countries whilst simultaneously generating its own distinctive heritage. Just as its Gaelic language dialect shares a range of linguistic isoglosses with Scottish Gaelic, it also shares many maritime customs, stories and beliefs with both Scotland and Ireland. Seals, mermaids, sea monsters, supernatural boats, shipwrecks, fishing taboos, enchanted islands and other phenomena characterised the island's marine otherworld, and stories about them were central to the culture and supernatural folk beliefs of Rathlin's people. Stories of seals and mermaids, in particular, have been discussed by various collectors and folklorists over the years, versions of the same stories sometimes appearing in the works of different collectors. The present essay draws on these works, and will mainly concern itself with material relating to seals, water-horses and mermaids.

Supernatural beliefs in seals, water-horses and mermaids have been recorded throughout the world, and were an important part of the belief system of people who lived along the coasts and offshore islands of the North Atlantic generally. Although such beliefs are not as strong as they once were, maritime communities have preserved many stories and legends concerning them up until the present time, the memory of individuals serving to authenticate the former, and sometimes current, robustness of the beliefs. In seafaring communities such as Rathlin these stories had important functions for the everyday life and well-being of the people, some of which we will touch upon in what follows.

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[1] This essay is based on various sources containing stories of the sea from Rathlin Island, including Maxim Fomin, Séamus Mac Mathúna, John Shaw, and Críostóir Mac Cárthaigh, *Stories of the Sea: Maritime Memorates of Ireland and Scotland* (Berlin: Curach Bhán, 2016); and Maxim Fomin and Séamus Mac Mathúna, *Stories of the Sea – A Typological Study of Maritime Memorates in Modern Irish and Scottish Gaelic Folklore*, 2010–, https://cid.ulster.ac.uk/storiesofthesea/memorates.

[2] For discussion of these terms, first coined by Carl Wilhelm von Sydow in 1934, see his *Selected Papers on Folklore* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1948), 60–85. See also Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, 'The Memorate and the Proto-Memorate', *The Journal of American Folklore* 87/345 (Jul.–Sep. 1974), 225–239. Dégh disputes the existence of a category called 'belief legend' on the grounds that 'folk belief' is a part of any legend; see Linda Dégh, 'What is a belief legend?', *Folklore* 107/1-2 (1996), 33–46.

Seals

Seals are part of everyday life along the coasts and offshore islands of the North Atlantic. In 2018, an aerial survey detected some 1012 harbour or common seals and 505 grey seals around the coast of Northern Ireland; around Rathlin specifically there were 123 of the former and 46 of the latter. At Rathlin, common and harbour seals enjoy the sheltered habitats of Church Bay and Rue Point where they rest, breed, and rear their young within view of the islanders and visitors.[3] Grey seals, somewhat harder to detect, prefer to come ashore in sea caves.[4]

Seals were considered to have similar characteristics to people, and in both Irish and Scottish tradition were given Christian names – Tadhg, Donncha and Diarmaid being common ones in Ireland. Some seals could talk, with stories about talking seals often told in connection with the hunting and culling of seals, when the creatures would beg the hunters for mercy. One fabulate, 'The Seal who Speaks', was recorded in English in the 1950s by folklore collector Michael J. Murphy from a Rathlin Islander named Paddy Anderson.[5] Paddy said that old men did not like people to meddle with seals, and recalled that his grandfather told a story about a time when seals were plentiful and men were culling them. One fisherman went out with his gun and came upon a seal which he was about to kill, whereupon the seal put its paw up and said: 'Donal, Donal, don't fire at me'.[6]

Although Paddy remarked that the seal had spoken in Irish – undoubtedly the original language of transmission of most of the Rathlin stories – many of these accounts were collected when English had become the island's dominant language. Paddy's story reflects the sociological phenomenon of language change. According to the 1911 census, Irish was spoken by the majority of people over sixty years of age on Rathlin; but by the 1930s, when Swedish linguist and dialectologist Nils Holmer carried out research for his book *The Irish Language in Rathlin Island*, *Co. Antrim*, only about ten percent of the population knew Irish, and they were scattered throughout the island.[7]

A similar story about culling seals was collected in 1936 by folklore collector Seán Ó hEochaidh from Séamus Mac Fhionnlaoich, 68, of Saobh, Meenasillagh, Glencolmcille (An tSaobh, Mín na Saileach,

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[3] Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Northern Ireland, DAERA Marine and Fisheries Division, *The Wild Seals of Rathlin Island*, DMS 19.20.100.

[4] In the seal stories discussed here, as in Irish oral tradition generally, the species of the seal is not given; see Bairbre Ní Fhloinn, 'Tadhg, Donncha and Some of their Relations: Seals in Irish Oral Tradition', in *Islanders and Water-Dwellers*: *Proceedings of The Celtic-Nordic-Baltic Folklore Symposium held at University College Dublin, 16–19 June, 1996*, ed. Patricia Lysaght, Séamas Ó Catháin and Daithí Ó hÓgáin (Dublin: DBA Publications, Ltd., 1999), 224, n. 2.

[5] Michael J. Murphy, *Rathlin: Island of Blood and Enchantment* (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1987), 58.

[6] For further comment on talking seals, see Ní Fhloinn, 'Tadhg, Donncha', 223–45.

[7] Nils M. Holmer, *The Irish Language in Rathlin Island*, *Co. Antrim*. Todd Lecture Series 18, Royal Irish Academy (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis & Co., 1942), 1. When conducting his own research in Rathlin in 1952, Professor Heinrich Wagner reported that 'a few fairly good speakers can still be found'; see Wagner, *Linguistic Atlas and Survey of Irish Dialects* (*LASID*), Vol. I (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1958), Introduction, p. XIV, Section VII (East Ulster), Pt 67 (Rathlin). The last native speaker, Bella McKenna (née McCurdy), was recorded by Liam Mac Carráin of Belfast in 1979; see Ciarán Dunbar, 'Some Phrases of Rathlin Irish'*, The Glynns*: *Journal of the Glens of Antrim Historical Society* 35 (2007), 65–74. Bella died in 1985. Alex Morrison (1915–2012), a relative of Bella's, was considered to be a semi-speaker of Irish, and was an active tradition-bearer with a great knowledge of the traditions and customs of the island; see his book *Rathlin Island – As I knew it,* ed. John A. I. McCurdy (Northern Ireland: Help the Aged, 2003). In the 1980s and 1990s, Morrison contributed place-names to Brian Mac Lochlainn of Glenarm; see Mac Lochlainn's *Minor Placenames of Rathlin*, https://meitheal.logainm.ie/rathlin-island/; Morrison was also an informant for Dónall Mac Giolla Easpaig of the Placenames Office, Ordnance Survey of Ireland, Dublin, who made a scientific study of some 450 of these names; see 'The Place-Names of Rathlin Island', *Ainm. A Journal of Name Studies* 4 (1989), 3–89.

Gleann Cholm Cille), Co. Donegal.[8] In this case, the story was told in Irish and the request not to shoot was given in English. Séamus tells of a certain Hughdie Ó Maonaigh in Mín na Saileach who had the job of culling seals in his area. He used go along the shore, employing a mallet to club them. Arriving at a cave called *Fochair/Fothrach an Tuir Bhriste* ('The ruin of the broken great steep rock') which seals frequented, Hughdie found three big ones lying asleep at the upper end of the shore – but when he raised his mallet to strike one of them, it rose up and said, 'Stop your blow'. He did not strike it, and the three seals escaped to sea. Séamus adds that Hughdie never killed a seal after that until the day he died.

Like the Rathlin story, this Donegal account reflects the dilemma felt by people who kill seals for economic purposes – for improvement of fish stocks, seal-oil, sealskins – while nevertheless feeling an affinity with them as creatures with human qualities. It, too, ends with the seal speaking and requesting mercy; and the narrator's final observation – that the hunter never killed a seal again – is in keeping with similar stories in which the hunter promises not to cull seals in the future.[9]

When Ó hEochaidh recorded this story, most communities in Donegal were Irish-speaking. English, however, was the language of political and economic power throughout Ireland at the time, so the seal's use of English in a story told in Irish probably endows its words with an extra degree of authority. In the Rathlin story, however, the seal speaks in Irish. Perhaps its words would have been reported in English when the story itself was told in Irish; but its use of Irish in an English-language narrative now functions not to invoke authority, but rather to lend credibility to its words by evoking memories of a time when Irish was the island's dominant language.

The playful character and human-like naughtiness of seals is revealed in a Scottish story, collected by Donald MacDonald, a young Glasgow University student, on a visit to Eriskay in 1933.[10] In a story told in Gaelic entitled *Na Ròin a bha ag tilgeadh nan Clach* ('The seals throwing stones') Archibald MacInnes relates how seals were observed firing stones at some fishermen and laughing at their handywork, forcing the fishermen to retreat in their boat so that the stones would not reach them. One of them, Iain, said that the seals must be people under a spell, they were so clever.

There was a strong belief that seals were enchanted people, such as reincarnated drowned fishermen or wise women, or fallen angels who had been trapped in the sea in the form of seals. Certain families, such as the Coneeleys, O'Kanes, O'Dowds, O'Sheas and Gallaghers, were reputed to have a particularly close connection with seals, often tracing their origin to the union between a seal and a mortal. The Rathlin corpus reflects this widespread belief in enchanted seal people, and also has examples of the mermaid legend, which in some versions from Ireland, and particularly in versions from north-east Scotland, Orkney, Shetland and the Nordic world, depicts the supernatural woman as a seal-maiden.[11]

In the story of 'The Wounded Seal', mostly found in Donegal and Shetland, and also in the well-documented supernatural legend of 'The Knife against the Wave' (*An Scian in Aghaidh na Toinne*), the seals share the same ability of speech. Seán Ó hEochaidh recorded a version of 'The Wounded Seal' in

[8] National Folklore Collection [hereafter NFC] vol. 179: 451–3. See also Gregory R. Darwin, 'Mar gur dream Sí iad atá ag mairiúint fén bhfarraige: ML 4080 The Seal Woman in its Irish and International Context' (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2019), 89–90. https://dash.harvard.edu/entities/publication/00967b7d-67e8-4eb3-b159-f08ee295a2b7.

[9] Darwin, 'Mar gur dream Sí iad', 92.

[10] NFC 1246: Donald MacDonald Collection from Eriskay, Vol. 2, 217–19, archived at Tasglann nan Eilean Siar, Stornoway (http://ica-atom.tasglann.org.uk/index.php/folklore-notebooks-of-donald-macdonald;isad). See also Fomin, Mac Mathúna et al., *Maritime Memorates of Ireland and Scotland*, 55, 74; and Ní Fhloinn, 'Tadhg, Donncha', 226–7 for seals behaving like people.

[11] Darwin, 'Mar gur dream Sí iad', 35–38; see further discussion in the section headed **Seals and Mermaids** below.

1941 from Séamus Mac Aodha in Cloich Cheannfhaolaidh, County Donegal.[12] Séamus tells of a time when fish were plentiful off the Irish coast and there were no fish off the coast of Scotland. Some Scottish wise women turned themselves into seals and swam to Ireland to drive away the fish. They encountered two men who were out with forks gathering sea wrack, and one of the forks got lodged in the eye of a seal in the submerged rocks. Some years later, one of those men was among a group of fishermen who were taking a break from fishing in Scotland. Passing a house, they noticed a fork outside the door – a fork very like the one the fisherman had lost years before. When they went in, they found an old lady with a cloth bandage over one eye. The fisherman asked her where she had got the fork, remarking that it looked like one of his that got stuck in a seal. 'Oh', she said, 'it was you stuck the fork in me', and took a pot of steaming water to go after him. He took to his heels as fast as he could.

A Rathlin version of the migratory legend 'The Knife against the Wave' tells of a man called Johnny who was fishing one day at the other side of the island with his son and a friend. A great storm arose and they were almost overwhelmed, but he saved them by throwing his knife into the centre of a large wave. A woman appeared at the back of the wave with a knife lodged in her breast and asked him to remove it. He refused and returned to shore. He realised that he would have to forfeit something on account of what he had done, that he would have to give up fishing as his boat would capsize if he went to sea again, or that the sea would take him back.[13]

Other versions of this story tell how a messenger or relative from the lady of the sea or lake visits the fisherman and brings him to a land, often at the bottom of the sea, to remove the object from the woman's breast or forehead, because he is the only one who has the power to do so. She has fallen in love with the fisherman and wants him for herself, and that is the reason she tried to drown him and the others. In some versions, the fisherman, despite his promise not to return to the sea, does so and is reunited with the sea-maiden whom he can never leave.[14]

The belief that a person who has caused harm to the sea or to one of *uaisle na farraige* ('the sea gentry') must compensate for his action is reflected here and in the proverb *caithfidh an fharraige a cuid féin a fháil* 'the sea must get its own'. The abduction of the fisherman by the sea-people is also partly covered by this proverb. The common idea that those who have drowned at sea have been taken away by the sea-fairies, or that seals are reincarnated drowned fishermen, reflects the notion that these supernatural beings sometimes covet human folk for different reasons, and that the sea has the power to transform human folk into sea creatures with human characteristics.

Seals and Water-horses

The belief in enchanted seals goes back to the Middle Ages at least. In some folklore versions of the early tale concerning Lugh and Balar, Lugh's father Cian was required to release his infant children (other than Lugh) into the sea, where they became seals. In a Donegal version of the story, Lugh's

[12] NFC vol. 799: 238–42; Ní Fhloinn, 'Tadhg, Donncha', 228–9; for another version, see the NFC Schools Collection (NFCS) vol. 104: 63.

[13] See Linda-May Ballard, 'Seal stories and belief on Rathlin Island', *Ulster Folklife* 29 (1983), 40; Colin Urwin, *The Man Who Talked to the Wind: And Other Rathlin Folk Tales from the Tommy Cecil Archive* (Cheltenham: The History Press, 2024), 111–12.

[14] See M. Ross, 'The Knife Against the Wave: A Uniquely Irish Legend of the Supernatural?', *Folklore* 105 (1994), 83–8; Kate Chadbourne, 'The Knife Against the Wave: Fairies, Fishermen, and the Sea', *Béaloideas* 80 (2012), 70–85.

father was called Ceannfhaolaidh (Conneeley), Cloch Cheannfhaolaidh being the area from which the story of 'The Wounded Seal' above was recorded.[15]

Other early legends tell how supernatural seals are transformed into horses/water-horses. In *Stair ar Aed Baclámh* ('A story of Aed Baclámh'), Saint Brendan transforms fifty seals into horses which he gives to High King Diarmait mac Cerbaill in exchange for the freedom of Guaire Aidne, king of Uí Maine, who had slain Áed, Diarmait's retainer. Sometime later, when the horse-riders of the High King are whipping the horses to make them go faster, the animals become agitated and plunge into the sea, both horses and their riders being transformed into seals.[16] One part of this story is reminiscent of the oral fabulate 'The Water-Horse as Race-Horse', in which a magical water-horse (*each uisge*) that someone acquires wins a horse-race. When struck by the owner, or the owner being unable to control it, the horse plunges into water along with its rider.[17]

The associated legend of the water-horse as work-horse was popular in western Ireland and Scotland. A version from South Uist collected in 1954 from South Uist storyteller Duncan MacDonald by his son Donald John MacDonald tells of a water-horse that would come up from the edge of the lake, equipped with reins and a saddle, and would graze alongside the cattle there. Deciding to catch the horse, a local man went into the herd of cattle disguised in a cowskin. He managed to catch the reins of the horse and captured it. It was an excellent working horse and the man became rich. However, the horse having, like the seals, the power of speech, it told the man that he would only have him until a maiden returned his saddle and reins. One day when the man was away, his young daughter found the reins and saddle. She mounted the horse which sped off to the lake and jumped in, and they were never seen again.[18]

Seals and Mermaids

We mentioned above that in a handful of versions of the mermaid legend in Ireland, the lady is a seal in human form who marries a mortal man.[19] While the supernatural maiden in the two Rathlin Island

[15] Ní Fhloinn, 'Tadhg, Donncha', 235–237.

[16] This tale is also found in Mícheál Ó Cléirigh's 1639 compilatory version of the *Life of Brendan of Clonfert*, which Mícheál states in a colophon that he got from a manuscript written by Sioghraidh Ó Maolchonaire in 1636; see Standish Hayes O'Grady, ed., *Silva Gadelica. A Collection of Tales in Irish with Extracts Illustrating Persons and Places* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1892), vol. I: 67–8, vol. II: 72; Charles Plummer, ed. *Bethada Náem nÉrenn: Lives of Irish Saints* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922); vol. I, 88–89, vol. II, 85–86. See also Séamus Mac Mathúna, 'The Irish Life of Saint Brendan', in *The Brendan Legend: Texts and Versions,* ed. Glyn S. Burgess and Clara Strijbosch (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 124–125, 154, n. 100. The anecdote is not in the *First Irish Life of Saint Brendan* contained in the Book of Lismore and other manuscripts.

[17] Darwin, 'Mar gur dream Sí iad', 141. Legends about magical water-horses have also been known in Rathlin, where a song was recorded in which seals and water-horses figure prominently; see Sorcha Nic Lochlainn, 'Long forgotten Gaelic songs of Rathlin and the Glens', *The Glynns: Journal of the Glens of Antrim Historical Society* 37 (2009). Republished online (2018) at https://antrimhistory.net/long-forgotten-gaelic-songs-of-rathlin-and-the-glens-by-sorcha-nic-lochlainn/.

[18] [Sgeulachd an eich-uisge], Duncan MacDonald (contributor), Donald John MacDonald (collector), 24 March 1954. Donald J. MacDonald Notebook 13: 1205–1210, MS 39, School of Scottish Studies Archives, University of Edinburgh. Compare the Icelandic tale discussed in the conclusion to the present article.

[19] This is a migratory legend; see ML 4080 'The Seal Woman' in Reidar Th. Christiansen, *The Migratory Legends: A Proposed List of Types with a Systematic Catalogue of the Norwegian Variants* (Helsinki: Folklore Fellows Communications, no. 175, Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1958). See also Bo Almqvist, 'Of mermaids and marriages', *Béaloideas*, 58 (1990): 1–74; Patricia Lysaght, *The Banshee. The Irish supernatural death messenger* (Dublin, 1996), 159–163, 172, 180–181; Ní Fhloinn, 'Tadhg, Donncha', 234 ff.; and Darwin, 'Mar gur Dream Sí iad', *passim.* In versions of the legend from Orkney, Shetland and northeastern Scotland, the supernatural woman

versions below is not said to have the form of a seal, some other versions from Rathlin claim that she did have such a form.[20] These versions are interesting because they represent different variants of the legend, one sharing features found in other Irish versions, the other those found in some Scottish versions. As elsewhere, the legend is presented as a fabulate, with both versions sharing the basic plot of an unnamed mortal man who marries a mermaid and has a family with her, until one day she discovers where he has hidden her cloak and returns to the sea.

In the first story, the man encounters her among some rocks close to the shore when she has taken her cloak off. He takes her cloak and brings her home with him, hiding the cloak in the scraghs of the thatch. One day a strong wind lifts the thatch, revealing the hiding place. She takes a ladder, retrieves the cloak, and goes back to the sea. He follows her, but does not reach her in time, and she is never heard of again. Michael J. Murphy tells us that he collected this version in 1954 from Rosie McCurdy, aged 83, from Ballinanard:[21]

> I heard Donal n' Ruagha tell of the Raghery mermaid. He would know, for it was to a house in The Upper End she come, to a house in North Claggan.[22] He never named the man who took her - Oh, glory be to Moses, I heard him tell that surely. This man seen her at the rocks, and she had her cloak off her, what sort it was I don't mind. But he got the cloak and took it and took her home, and he hid the cloak in the scraghs of the thatch, and she didn't know where it was. Donal wouldn't say his name, but he said she was happy, very happy, in North Claggan and never wanted to go back to the sea or ever spoke of it at all. She had a family to the man, and was married – whether she was married now I'm not sure, but he was living with her and they had this family sure enough, she had, the mermaid. Till one wild day come and the wind was that bad it was lifting the thatch, and she was out doing something. Her man was there too, trying to hold down the thatch, and this [s]quall lifted the thatch where he hid the cloak. And before he could stop her, or reach her, she lifted this ladder and put it to the roof and was up and got the cloak and away. He followed her but he couldn't reach her and she got away in the sea and was never seen no more. The children lived and he reared them. They said you would never know the difference between them and other children only they had very flat feet.

The second version, shorter and less detailed, was collected in Irish (or Rathlin Gaelic) by Nils M. Holmer in 1937/38 from Mrs Mary McCurdy, Gortconny near Ballycastle, Co. Antrim. Mrs McCurdy, who left Rathlin around 1925, was originally from the townland of Kilpatrick, which is also in the western part of the island, but further east than Cleggan:

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is a seal-woman. This is also the case in versions from most Scandinavian countries. In Gaelic-speaking communities of the Highlands and Western Isles, she is a mermaid; see Darwin, 'Mar gur Dream Sí iad', 77.

[20] Darwin argues that 'an older normal form of The Mermaid Legend in the Gaelic world involved a seal-woman, and that she was transformed into her [mermaid] form under the influence of strong and widespread belief in mermaids'; see Darwin, 'Mar gur Dream Sí iad', 133. In respect of the differing forms of the supernatural woman, mermaid/seal-woman, Sam Henry has the interesting note that a mermaid was accidentally shot on the island of Benbecula in 1815, having been mistaken for a seal – she was given a funeral at the public expense of the island! See Sam Henry, *A Hank of Yarns,* The Coleraine Chronicle, 1940, 78.

[21] Michael J. Murphy, 'Folklore Collector on Rathlin', *Sinsear: The Folklore Journal* 2 (1980), 23. The spelling 'Ballinanard' occurs in Murphy's introduction; the usual spelling is Ballynagard (*Baile na gCeard*).

[22] Murphy's spelling 'North Claggan' reflects local pronunciation; see Wagner, *LASID*, reference in n. 7 above. The official name of this townland is normally 'Cleggan'.

> *Bhá bachlach ann. Thug e aon na bhaile, agus phós e í, agus bhá trí de chlann aca. Agus (chuaidh) an fear go h-Eirinn. Agus thainigh h-aon de na páistean isteach: "A mháthair, an bhfaca thu an rud deas a tá amuigh is' t-shabhal?" — "Coisigh, a ghrádh, isteach agus taiseain domh-sa." Chuaidh ise leis an pháiste, agus a'ir a chuaidh i amach fhuair i an clóca (an cochala) bhíodh uirthe. Agus air a fhuair i e, fhuair i ar shiubhal agus dh'fhág i éad*.[23]
>
> There was a young man. He took one home and he married her and they had three children. And the man went to Ireland. And one of the children came in and said: "Mother, did you see the nice thing that is outside in the stable?" "Go on, love, and show me." She went with the child, and when she went out she found the cloak (the *cochala*) that she used to wear. And when she found it, she went off and she left them.[24]

The interesting difference between this version and the first one is that, while the stolen object is the same in both, the man in the second story hides it in the stable, where the children help their mother in recovering it when her husband is away from home. This feature is typical of versions collected in Scotland as well as some from the northern half of Ireland, situating the tale within a partly northern Irish/Rathlin/Scottish isogloss.[25] In the first version, the concealment of the stolen object within the thatch reflects another isogloss represented by versions from southern and western Ireland, including Donegal.

It is worth noting that just as the mermaid's property is hidden in a secret place by the man, so also are the reins and saddle of the water-horse in Duncan MacDonald's story from South Uist. Although the storyteller says it was not known where the man had secreted them, it appears later that the young girl found them in the stable or the barn.

Conclusion

The foregoing has examined some stories about seals, water-horses and mermaids from Rathlin Island, which are mostly told here in the form of memorates and fabulates. They reflect the central importance of the sea in the folk beliefs and customs of the islanders. Many of them are concerned not only with the culling of seals, but also with the almost sacred nature of the relationship between the people and the sea. The fact that sea-oil and seal skins would have been known through the oral tradition to have helped the people survive the harsh economic conditions of island life should also be borne in mind. Avoidance strategies are articulated to ensure that sea creatures in general should not be unnecessarily harmed but integrated, if possible, into the cultural traditions and social life of the community.

Stories about mermaids and water-horses emphasise certain precautions meant to ensure that they do not to return to their natural habitat. Men attracted to mermaids, for example, are warned to be wary of the exotic and not marry too far from home. As for water-horses, the moral might be that not only should one not 'look a gift horse in the mouth', one should also treat horses well and not abuse them.

In some of our examples, we have seen how differences in their telling reflect sociological change. In the stories about seals, the animal's use of English may reflect the authority of English in an Irish-speaking community, whereas a story told in English may specify that the seal spoke in Irish,

[23] Holmer, *The Irish Language in Rathlin Island*, 152–153.
[24] Note that both the words 'cloak' and *cochala* are used here for the stolen object. For the distribution of the different words used for the stolen object, see figures in Darwin, Mar gur Dream Sí iad, 308, 310.
[25] See also, Linda-May Ballard, 'Seal stories and belief on Rathlin Island', *Ulster Folklife* 29, pp. 35-6, Belfast 1983.

evoking the past to lend credibility to its words. Although Rathlin shares many sea stories and beliefs with Ireland and Scotland, it is worth noting that in the second mermaid story above, the island is viewed as a land in its own right: the husband of the mermaid goes 'to Ireland' (*go h-Eirinn*), not 'to the mainland' (*tír mór*), as Irish offshore islanders would normally refer to going to Ireland.

As many of these stories are also migratory legends (fabulates), it is unsurprising that versions of them have been also recorded in the Nordic countries. For example, the story of the 'Water-Horse as Work-Horse' is recorded in *Landnámabók,* the Icelandic 'Book of Settlements' (S83/H71). In it, a stallion emerges from Lake Hjarðarvatn close to the farm of a man called Auðun *stuti* ('Auðun the Stutterer'), a Hebridean. His wife Mýrun is claimed to be the daughter of the King of the Irish, Maddaðr (Bjaðmakr H).[26] Auðun catches the horse, yokes it to a sledge, and it carts home all the hay from his infarm. In the afternoon, however, it breaks free, runs to the lake, and is never seen again. While the story has analogues in both the Nordic and Gaelic traditions, the names and ethnicity of some of the participants point to diffusion from Ireland and Scotland.[27]

Dedication

It gives me great pleasure to offer this short contribution to our distinguished honorand, Dr John Shaw, who, over many years, has collected, documented and published important work on various aspects of legendary material and folklife in the Gaelic and Nordic worlds. *Guím fad saoil agus sláinte dó!*

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[26] Jakob Benediktsson, ed. *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, Íslenzk fornrit I (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka fornritafélag, 1968). S and H refer to different versions of the text, namely, Sturlubók which dates to the thirteenth century, and Hauksbók to the early fourteenth century. The numbers after the letters refer to the paragraphs in the text.

[27] See Bo Almqvist, 'Waterhorse Legends (MLSIT 408 & 408B): The Case for and against a Connection between Irish and Nordic Tradition', *Béaloideas* 54 (1991): 107–120; also Bo Almqvist, 'Crossing the Border: A Sampler of Irish Migratory Legends about the Supernatural', *Béaloideas* 59 (1999): 212–278. 'MLSIT' stands for 'Migratory Legend, Suggested Irish Type'.

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An Cùbair Collach agus a' Chuibheall-Chnò: Sgeulachd à Tiriodh

DÒMHNALL EACHANN MEEK

Nuair a bha mise nam bhalach anns a' Chaolas, aig ceann an ear Eilean Thiriodh, anns na lethcheudan den linn a dh'fhalbh, bhithinn a' cluinntinn sgeulachdan Gàidhlig bho na 'seann daoine' anns an dachaigh. Bha Teàrlach, bràthair mo sheanmhar, gu sònraichte math air na sgeulachdan, agus cha robh nì a b' fheàrr leis na bhith gan aithris far am faigheadh e èisdeachd.

Teàrlach Dòmhnallach

Rugadh Teàrlach Dòmhnallach (*Teàrlach mac Eachainn Bhàin 'ic Dhòmhnaill 'ic Néill*) anns a' Chaolas ann an Tiriodh ann an 1874. B' esan an treasamh gille à còignear bhalach a rugadh do dh' Eachann Dòmhnallach agus a bhean Oighrig NicLeòid. Bha còignear chaileag anns an teaghlach cuideachd. Thug Teàrlach a-mach a chiùird mar shaor bhàtaichean air Chluaidh, agus, an dèidh dha a bhith na shaor anns an Transvaal ann an Afraca a Deas an dèidh dàrna Cogadh nam Boers, agus cuairt no dhà a chur do Chanada, chaidh e gu muir mar charpantair fad bhliadhnachan a' Chiad Chogaidh. Bha e a' seòladh do na dùthchannan Fada an Ear, agus bha e cho eòlach air Port Said agus Rangoon 's a bha e air a' Chaolas. An dèidh a' chogaidh, thill e don Chaolas airson greis, mus do thog e air do Chanada a-rithist, còmhla ri a phiuthar Annabel. Dh'fhuirich e fhèin is Annabel ann an Bhancùbhar gu 1949, nuair a thill iad le chèile don Chaolas airson a' chòrr dam beatha. 'S e duine air leth laghach, aighearach, sùnndach a bha ann an Teàrlach, luma làn naidheachdan is sloinntireachd is fiosrachaidh. Bha e na fhìor dheagh charaid dhòmhsa nam òige, gus an do chaochail e gu h-obann ann an 1960.[1]

Bha ùidh mhòr aig Teàrlach ann an dualchas na Gàidhlig. Nuair a bha e ann an Glaschu a' toirt a-mach a chiùird, bhiodh e a' frithealadh Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, agus tha a h-uile coltas ann gun do bhrosnaich sin e gu bhith a' truiseadh beul-aithris is sgeulachdan, gu sònraichte ann an Tiriodh. Rinn e cruinneachadh luachmhor de sheanfhacail, agus chuir e sgeulachd no dhà air pàipear a tha air an tasgadh agamsa. Cha robh Teàrlach idir math air Gàidhlig a sgrìobhadh, ach rinn e mar a b' fheàrr a b' urrainn dha leis an ionnsachadh a fhuair e anns an sgoil ann an Rubhaig mus deachaidh e an ceann a chosnaidh. Mar a tha fianais làmh-sgrìobhainnean nan seanfhacal a' soilleireachadh dhuinn, dhèanadh e fhèin ciad oidhirp air an sgrìobhadh, agus an sin bheireadh e na duilleagan do sgrìobhaichean a bha na b' eòlaiche air litreachadh na Gàidhlig na bha e fhèin. Nam measg-san bha m' athair, Eachann MacDhòmhnaill Meek (1906–1984), a rugadh anns an Eaglais Bhric, ach a chaidh do Thiriodh ann an 1913, agus a dh'ionnsaich a' Ghàidhlig gun dragh sam bith. Bha m' athair fìor mhath air a' Ghàidhlig a sgrìobhadh, agus 's e a làmh-san a rinn an 'dreach glan' de sgeulachd a' Chùbair Chollaich a tha mar bhunait don deasachadh seo. Dh'innis m' athair dhomh uair no dhà mar a bhiodh e a' cuideachadh Theàrlaich mar chlèireach nuair a bha e na dhuine òg, agus saoilidh mi, bho choltas an sgrìobhaidh, gun do sgrìobh e an dreach seo mu 1920.

[1] Airson iomradh air a bheatha, faic Dòmhnall Eachann Meek, *Seòl mo Bheatha: Turas eadar Croit is Eilean is Oilthigh* (Inbhir Nis: Clàr, 2019), 31–34 agus 123–126; agus Donald E. Meek, *A Croft in Caolas: A Tiree Holding and its People 1770–2020* (Falkirk: Leabhraichean Tirisdeach – Tiree Books, 2021), 101–108.

Bha Magaidh, piuthar Theàrlaich, a bhràthair Dòmhnall, agus a phiuthar-chèile Mòr, a bha a' fuireach anns an t-seann dachaigh, den bheachd nach robh aig Teàrlach ach 'barraghloir', agus gu math tric 's e sin a bh' aige – sgeulachdan beaga èibhinn gun mòran brìgh. Ach uaireannan eile bhiodh e ag aithris sgeulachdan fada, mar a bu trice mu 'ghaisgich' no mu thachartasan a bhuineadh do na h-eileanan a b' fhaisge air Tiriodh, 's e sin Colla is Muile, a bha air an ceangal gu dlùth ri chèile tro na linntean. Corra uair bhiodh a mhac-meanmna fhèin a' sgeadachadh na seann naidheachd agus ga h-ùrachadh airson na linn san robh e beò. A bharrachd air sin, bhiodh e a' cruthachadh naidheachdan, agus is tric a bhuail e orm gum faodadh e a bhith gur h-e Teàrlach fhèin a chruthaich an sgeulachd seo mun Chùbair Chollach. Ge bith cò a thug tùs is toiseach dhi, chuir Teàrlach a dhreach fhèin air an aithris. Bha fìor mheas aige oirre, agus chuala mi fhìn e ga h-innse uair no dhà. Cha robh e gann de sgeulachdan eile mun Chùbair Chollach, a chionns gun robh cleasan a' Chùbair a' còrdadh ris gu mòr, mòr, ach b' e seo an aon tè dhiubh a mhair ann an riochd sgrìobhte.

An Cùbair Collach

Cò a bha anns a' Chùbair Chollach? Tha Maclean Sinclair a' toirt an iomraidh seo air:[2]

> Alexander Maclean, An Cùbair Colach, was born in Coll. He was an expert seaman. He was a cheerful companion and was highly respected. He was married and had two sons, Robert and John, and also two daughters. He died in Coll about 1838. His wife and children emigrated to Australia about 1842. One of his sons, John, settled in New Zealand.

Tha Maclean-Bristol ag innse dhuinn gun robh e beò eadar 1776 is 1822, agus gun robh e a' fuireach an toiseach anns an Achadh agus an sin anns an Laig Mhòir, agus gun deachaidh a bhean agus a theaghlach do dh' Astràilia ro 1841.[3] Tha e ag aideachadh gun robh e, ma dh'fhaodte, an sàs ann an aiseag mì-laghail an uisge-bheatha ('perhaps a smuggler'), agus gu math measail air na caileagan. Tha Maclean-Bristol, mar as dual, a' toirt dhuinn mion-fhiosrachadh air mar a chaidh an Cùbair a tharraing fa chomhair Seisean na h-Eaglais ann an Colla, 's e fo amharas airson adhaltranais, ged nach eil e idir na chomas an fhianais shusbainteach Ghàidhlig a làimhseachadh.[4]

Tha Maclean Sinclair a' tairgsinn dà òran Gàidhlig a rinn an Cùbair, agus ceathramhan a chuir e ri òran eile.[5] Ann an aon dhiubh sin, tha am bàta a b' àbhaist a bhith aig a' Chùbair, *Struilleag*, ga thagradh airson cùl a chur rithe, agus a ghaol a thoirt do thè eile. Tha e soilleir gu leòr bhon òran sin gun robh *Struilleag* eòlach air cùl-mhùtaireachd a' Chùbair, agus gun robh iad le chèile a' siubhal eadar Innis Eòghainn ann an Èirinn agus eileanan siar na h-Alba leis na buidealan. Bha i deònach cuairt eile a ghabhail 'a dh' iarraidh 'n Tòisich'.[6]

Gu fortanach, chuir deagh Chollach, Eachann MacDhùghaill (1889–1954), a bha mion-eòlach air dualchas Gàidhlig an eilein, cuid de dh'euchdan a' Chùbair air pàipear mus deachaidh iad air dìochuimhn' buileach.[7] Tha MacDhùghaill a' daingneachadh dhuinn gur h-ann ri malairt mhì-laghail

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[2] Alexander Maclean Sinclair, *Na Bàird Leathanach: The Maclean Bards*, vol. 2 (Charlottetown, P. E. I.: Haszard & Moore, 1900), 8.
[3] Nicholas Maclean-Bristol, *From Clan to Regiment. Six Hundred Years in the Outer Hebrides: 1400–2000* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2017), 401, 715.
[4] Maclean-Bristol, *From Clan to Regiment*, 401,442.
[5] Maclean Sinclair, *Na Bàird Leathanach*, 8–17.
[6] Maclean Sinclair, *Na Bàird Leathanach*, 11–13.
[7] Eachann MacDhùghaill, 'An Cùbair Collach: Bàrd Leathanach agus Collach Ainmeil', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 41 (1951–52), 47–67.

an uisge-bheatha a bha an Cùbair nuair a bhiodh e a' cur chuairtean do dh'Èirinn anns an t-*Struilleig*. Bha a' mhòr-chuid de na naidheachdan mun Chùbair ag innse mar a bhiodh an gàidsear air a thòir anns an iùbhraich-chusbainn, agus mar a bhiodh e fhèin is *Struilleag* gu tric ann an cruaidh-chàs – gus am faigheadh iad dòigh air dol às air long a' ghàidseir. Am measg nan sgeulachdan a chuala Eachann MacDhùghaill, bha aithris den dearbh sgeulachd aig Teàrlach Dòmhnallach, agus nì sinn coimeas eadar an dà aithris anns an sgrùdadh seo.

Bha sgeulachdan mu na gàidsearan, agus gu sònraichte mu gach caol-theàrnadh a bha aig luchd nam briuthas agus nam poitean dubha nuair a thigeadh iad air an tòir, gu math cumanta ann an Tiriodh agus anns na h-eileanan eile nuair a bha mi fhìn nam bhalach. Ged a bha iomadh cleas ga cleachdadh an aghaidh nan gàidsearan, cha robh 'gaisgeach' idir ann a bheireadh bàrr air a' Chùbair Chollach agus air *Struilleig* anns an ealain sin. Ach ciamar a bha esan cho ealanta air teicheadh is dol am falach bhon ghàidsear? An robh eòlas dìomhair air choreigin aigesan seach daoine eile? Sin a' cheist a tha an sgeulachd aig Teàrlach Dòmhnallach a' freagairt.

Sgeulachd a' Chùbair Chollaich agus na Cuibhle-chnò

Seo an aithris aig Teàrlach Dòmhnallach, a tha fon ainm 'Snìomh Sìomain' anns an làmh-sgrìobhainn:[8]

> Tha snìomh sìomain, mar a tha iomadh nì math Gàidhealach eile, an dèidh dol à cleachdadh. Bha a dhòigh fhèin aig gach ceàrn air sìoman a shnìomh – cuid le fraoch, cuid le muran, agus pàirt le luachair; ach san àite às an tàinig mise, b' ann le connlach ghlan choirce a bha e air a dhèanamh. Bha na sguaban air am bualadh, 's a' chonnlach air a glanadh – a h-uile sop cho glan ri coinneal – is an sin air a cheangal na ghiobagan, deas gu dol san t-sìoman. Chan eil feum dhomh an còrr innse mu shnìomh an t-sìomain; chunnaic a' chuid mhòr agaibh mar a bha e air a dhèanamh; mura faca, b' eòlach ur seanair air an obair seo.
>
> Bha e na chleachdadh aig na Gàidheil a bhith a' cuideachadh a chèile san oidhche nuair a thòisicheadh an snìomh, agus mar tha fios agaibh, bha na sgeulachdan a' dol mun cuairt. Bha a' chiad naidheachd air Fear an Taighe, ach ged nach robh na b' fheàrr air an t-snìomh, cha robh Eachann còir ro mhath air na naidheachdan.[9]
>
> B' e Fear Ghreasamuil a thòisich an toiseach air an oidhche seo.[10] Ors' esan, 'Chan eil fhios agam fhèin gu dè bheir mi dhuibh. Tha na naidheachdan an-diugh aig a h-uile duine air an teangaidh. 'S ann aig an fhoghlam fhèin a tha an t-urram – cloinn bheaga san sgoil, nach ann a ghearradh iad romham. Tha cuid a phàrantan an-diugh a' gabhail dòigh nan cuthagan air clann àrach, is gheibh iad fhèin faochadh mar a dh'fhàgas iad an sealladh.[11] Feumaidh duine a bhith cinnteach nach dèan e mearachd facail nam measg.
>
> 'Bha mi an-diugh fhèin sa bhaile mhòr is thàinig bàta na smùid a dh'ionnsaigh a' cheidhe, is chaidh mi air bòrd, is chunnaic mi rud a chuir iongantas mòr orm. Bha

[8] Anns an deasachadh a rinn mi den sgeulachd, dh'atharraich mi litreachadh m' athar gu modh-litreachaidh a tha nas fhaisge air cleachdaidhean an là an-diugh, agus rinn mi sgioblachadh beag an siud 's an seo, ach ghleidh mi am blas Tirisdeach air feadh na sgeulachd.

[9] Is cinnteach gu h-e 'Eachann' athair Theàrlaich – Eachann Bàn, mar a theirte ris – agus gu bheil an sgeulachd mar gum biodh i ga h-innse anns an taigh a thog e ann an 1891, 's e sin 'Coll View'. Chaochail Eachann ann an 1924.

[10] 'S e eilean beag faisg air cladach a' Chaolais a tha ann an Greasamul.

[11] Tha 'mar' air a chleachdadh gu cumanta airson 'nuair' ann an dual-chainnt Thiriodh.

sraingeannan caola copair an ceangal ri greallaig aig gach ceann eadar an dà chrann. Cha robh mi a' tuigsinn idir gu dè a bha iad air a shon.

'Thuirt mi ri Dòmhnall Dhùghaill, "Gu dè an innleachd ùr a tha agaibh an seo? An e solas a tha sibh a' dol a dhèanamh air an toit leis na sraingeannan a tha an ceangal eadar na cruinn agaibh?'

'Sin agad,' orsa Dòmhnall, 'an *wireless*, agus ma tha thu airson beannachd a chur a dh'ionnsaigh do leanainn ann an Glaschu, gheibh thu freagairt air ais mum bi am bathair a-mach againne.'

'Cha leig mise a leas,' fhreagair mi, 'tha mo leanann aig an taigh an-dràsda. Air a shon sin fhuair mi cairt phuirt bho Mhairead Anna an-dè, 's bha mi airson an comain a thilleadh air ais. An dèan an innleachd seo an obair gun dad?'

'Cha dèan,' orsa Dòmhnall. 'Coisich, agus faic mar a tha e ag obair.' Dh'fhalbh sinn, is chunnaic is chuala mise na putain 's na cnagannan a' snagail; thug e nam inntinn a' chuibheall-chnò a bh' aig a' Chùbair Chollach;[12] ach bha am bàta a' falbh, agus b' èiginn dol gu tìr.

'Tha mi a-nise a' dol a thoirt dhuibh naidheachd na cuibhle-chnò. B' e an Cùbair Collach a' chiad mharaiche a tha eachdraidh ag innse dhuinn a dh'ionnsaich 's a dh'obraich an innleachd-sìth seo ris an abair iad an-diugh an *wireless*. B' e duine ainmeil a bh' anns a' Chùbair na latha. Tha iad ag ràdh gun robh a' bheairt dhìomhair seo aige fo mhaide-sàil a' chruinn ann an *Struilleag* – b' e seo ainm a bhàta.[13]

'Nuair a thogadh an gàidsear an t-acair, gam bith àite sam bitheadh e, dh'fhòghnadh don Chùbair sealltainn air sàil a' chruinn, 's bhiodh fios aige air a h-uile tac a chuireadh an gàidsear air a bhàta ceart cho math 's ged robh e air bòrd innte. Mar a bhiodh an Cùbair an Eilean Mhanainn no an Èirinn le *Struilleag*, bhiodh fios aige air a h-uile cuartachadh aig bàta a' ghàidseir sa Chaol Channach ceart cho math 's ged robh e na shuidhe air buaile bheag san Eilean Chollach a' coimhead oirre, chionn fhuair e sanas dìomhair aig a' bheairt.

'Bha an Cùbair latha sònraichte a' tighinn à Èirinn, is aig Ùlastac[14] thàinig an sruth na aghaidh, is dhlùthaich e ris a' chreig a' fuireach ris an t-seòl-mhara. Bha latha maiseach ann, an cuan cho rèidh ri gloinne. Bha glaca an sin le lòn na bhràighe, 's gruagach-mhara a' cìreadh a gruaige a bha a' deàrrsadh sa ghrèin cho buidhe ri òr. Bha i an sàs; cha b' urrainn di siud fhàgail – creag os a cionn, agus an Cùbair eadar i agus an cuan farsaing. Sheall an dithis air a chèile.

'Tha latha math ann,' ors' an Cùbair. 'Tha,' ors' ise. 'Nach eil thu a' faotainn do chuid fhèin dheth?' 'Tha,' fhreagair mo laochan, an Cùbair, 'agus gheibh mi thusa

[12] Ann an Tiriodh, b' e 'cuibheall-chnò' ball-cluiche a bhiodh aig pàisde le cnò agus toll na meadhan, dealg a' dol tron toll, agus cnap buntàta air ceann ìosal na deilge. Bhiodh sraing ga cur mun dealg, agus nuair a chumadh tu a' chnò san dàrna làimh agus a shlaodadh tu an t-sraing leis an làimh eile, thionndaidheadh an cnap gu luath air ais 's air adhart. An seo chan eil ann ach far-ainm èibhinn airson *wireless*. A rèir na sgeulachd, bha cnò gu h-àrd is cnò gu h-ìosal air crann bàta a' Chùbair Chollaich.

[13] B' e seo cuideachd ainm 'bàta na cèilidh' o shean, 's i a' riochdachadh sgeulachd. 'Cuiream *Struilleag* seachad orm gu...', theireadh an sgeulaiche aig deireadh sgeòil.

[14] Tha a' chreag seo ceithir mìle mu dheas air an Sgeir Mhòir, faisg air, no co-ionann ri, MacKenzie's Rock. Faic www.tireeplacenames.org fo *Ùlastac*; agus John Holliday, *Longships on the Sand: Viking and later medieval settlement on the island of Tiree*, 2nd edn (Tiree: An Iodhlann Press, 2021), 665–666.

cuideachd.' 'Cha dèan thu sin idir,' ors' a' ghruagach. 'Cha do ghlac duine riamh roimhe mise, agus cha chreid mi gur tusa a' chiad fhear a nì e.' 'Chan eil fhios a'm air sin,' thuirt an Cùbair.

'A bheil thu a' faicinn nan daoimean fada a tha san lòn agus cnò air gach tè dhiubh?' 'Tha,' ors' an Cùbair. 'Sin agadsa, matà, innleachd a bheir dhòmhsa fios mar a bhios nì sam bith a' tighinn dlùth, ach an-diugh cha do chuir mi air dòigh iad. Bha mi a' smaointinn nach tigeadh nì a chuireadh dragh orm san àit' iomallach seo, 's dh'fhàg sin mi air mo mhealladh.'

''S math a fhreagradh e orm fhèin,' ors' an Cùbair, 'airson gum biodh fhios agam mar a bhiodh an gàidsear às mo dhèidh. 'Nan do chuir mise,' ors' a' ghruagach-mhara, 'tè de na cnothan air a' chreig, thug i rabhadh dhomh mar a bha thusa a' tighinn ceart gu leòr, ach cha ghabh sin leasachadh a-nis.'

'Bheir mi leam thu fhèin, na daoimein, is na cnothan,' ors' an Cùbair. 'Cha dèan thu sin idir, ach ionnsaichidh mi dhuit àbsaidh dhìomhair nan cnothan, is tog leat iad. Seo agad mar a tha. Mar a gheibh thu S.O.S., sin agad "Seall-Obann-Sgoth"; B.G., "Bàta Gàidseir"; G.S., "Gabh Sanas"; G.O., "Greas Ort", 's mar sin air aghaidh.' 'Tha mi a' tuigsinn,' ors' an Cùbair. 'Is mar a chuireas tu cnò ann am mullach is tè fo shàil a' chruinn, bidh fhios agad ann am mionaid air a h-uile àite sam bi bàta a' ghàidseir. Cha bheir e ort gu bràth, agus a bharrachd air a sin, tha na daoimein sin fosgailte nam broinn, agus ma nì thu mar a dh'innis mi dhuit, seòlaidh tu an cuan gun eagal, gun chùram, an latha nach feuch bàt' eile a-mach.'

'Am faod mi do chreidsinn?' ors' an Cùbair. 'Tha a h-uile nì a tha mi ag innse dhuit fìor,' ors' a' ghruagach. 'Ma nì sinn còrdadh,' ors' an Cùbair, 'bu ghasda leamsa dual ded fhalt buidhe, bòidheach.' 'Gheibh thu sin,' ors' ise, is thagh i badan dha. Mar a dh'innis i don Chùbair a h-uile nì mar a dhèanadh e, leig e leatha plub a thoirt dhi fhèin don fhairge.

Cha do chaill an Cùbair mòran tìm. Chuir e a' chuibheall-chnò air dòigh, tè ann am mullach is tè fo shàil a' chruinn, is mar a ruigeadh e tìr, bha e na inntinn na daoimein a chur air dòigh. Dh'fhàg e Ùlastac, 's mar a bha e dlùth air Sgeir Mhòr nan Ròn, thug a' chnò-mhullaich an dara-rant ud aiste, 's fhreagair an tè ìosal i. Sheall an Cùbair roimhe. Ceart gu leòr, dè a chunnaic e ach bàta a' ghàidseir. Cha do rinn a' ghruagach breug. Bha an innleachd mar a thubhairt i. Chùm an Cùbair an sgeir eadar an dà bhàta, gus an deach iad à sealladh a chèile, agus bha e anabarrach toilichte mar a bha na cnothan a' dèanamh. Mar a ràinig e dhachaigh, chuir e na daoimein air dòigh mar bu chòir.

Cha robh ann an *Struilleag* ach bàta beag gun mòran àite ri sheachnadh mar a bhiodh luchd innte. Chuir an Cùbair sreath bhuideal air gach taobh, aon san toiseach is aon san deireadh, mar a dh'àithn a' ghruagach-mhara, a cheart dòigh 's mar a tha na dìonagan[15] ann am bàtaichean nam beatha[16] air an latha an-diugh. Chuir e ceann daoimein anns gach buideal, is an ceann eile air chrochadh far beul a' bhàta. Mar a bhiodh *Struilleag* a' plubail, leumadh steall de dh'uisge-beatha a-mach don fhairge, agus, rud glè annasach, chuireadh an stuth prìseil sìth air a' chuan bhorb. Mar a bha an cuan doirbh, cha robh ach na daoimein a chur air rathad sam bith air an tigeadh an

[15] *Buoyancy aids*, is dòcha.
[16] *Lifeboats*.

fhairge, agus cha robh fairge no gaoth riamh tuilleadh às a dhèidh a thill *Struilleag*. Mar a bhiodh bàta a' ghàidseir ga bàthadh is ann an impis dol fodha, bhiodh *Struilleag* a' dèanamh latha math dheth, agus fhathast cha do chuir an gàidsear an sàs an Cùbair.

Cha robh feum aig a' Chùbair air ùilleadh[17] tuilleadh nuair a chuir e air dòigh a' chuibheall-chnò. Dhèanadh e ceò uair sam bith a thoilicheadh e fhèin, ceò [cho] dealbhach 's cho nàdarra ri ceò a chunnaic sibh riamh. Dileag bheag de dh'uisge-beatha a chur an siud 's an seo air an fhairge, is sradag a chur ris le cruaidh-spor, 's cha do dh'fhailc na lusan iad fhèin riamh ann an ceò samhraidh cho àlainn ris an dealt liath-ghorm a dh'èireadh far na fairge. 'S lìonmhor latha a ghabh an gàidsear eagal a ghonaich[18] leis a' cheò a rinn an Cùbair airson a mhealladh.[19]

Aithris Eachainn MhicDhùghaill

Seo an sgeulachd mar a tha i againn bho sgrìobhadh Eachainn MhicDhùghaill:[20]

Innsidh mi an nis dhuibh mar a bha e air a ràdh a fhuair an Cùbair a' bhuaidh shònraichte leis an robh e a' faotainn as ar an iùbhraich-chuspuinn. Is cinnteach nach 'èil ann ach faoin sgeul, ach bha i air a h-innseadh mar fhìrinn: mar sin, ma's breug bhuam i bu bhreug chugam i, mar a theireadh na rò-sgeulaichean. Innsidh mi dhuibh mar a fhuair mi an naidheachd an toiseach cuideachd. Bha mi air bàta MhicBhriuthainn 's mi an dara cuid a' falbh no a' tilleadh aig àm mo chuairt shamhraidh. Bha Tirisdeach 'nam chuideachd, is bha seanachas againn. 'A bheil fhios agad, an nis,' arsa esan, 'gur e fear-dùthcha dhut fhèin a fhuair am mach innleachd an *wireless* is an *smoke-screen* an toiseach?' Is e ám cogadh a' Chaisear a bha ann, agus bha aire mhór air a thoirt do'n dà innleachd àraidh so aig an ám. 'Chan eil,' arsa mi féin, 'nach feàrr dhuit innseadh dhomh.' 'Nì mi sin,' arsa esan, is theann e ris an rò-sgeul so (nach eil mi ag iarraidh oirbhse a chreidsinn) innseadh dhomh. B' e an Cùbair Collach gaisgeach na rò-sgeul.

Bha an Cùbair air a shlighe á Eirinn le luchd uisge-bheatha is dibheannan eile aige fo thobhtaichean *Struilleag*, oir is cinnteach gur i a bha aige, agus thàinig e a staigh air fàire ri leth-oir na Sgeire-mhóire an uair a bha am feasgar ag ciaradh. Cha robh e air mhiann tighinn na b' fhaisge do fhonn tìre gus an tigeadh an dorcha, agus theann e ri luingearachd mu'n Sgeir-mhóir gus an dèanadh a' ghrian nead dhi fhéin anns a' Chuan an Iar. Dìreach an uair a bha a' ghrian a' dol as an t-sealladh, is an Cùbair leis a' bhàta ag gearradh seachad air Ulastac, cnap mór creige a bha dlùth air an fhìor Sgeir-mhóir, ciod air an do rug a shùil ach gruagach-mhara, is i cho trang a' slìogadh a gruaige is ga cur féin an uidheam sùgraidh 's nach fhaca i ciod a bha a' tighinn oirre gus an d'fhuair i i fhéin an teann ghlacaibh a' Chùbair. Dh'fheuch i ri faotainn as air, ach aon uair 's gun d'fhuair an Cùbair 'na ghlacaibh i, cha b' e an sùgradh faighinn as a làmhan. 'Leig as mi,' arsa ise ann an deagh Ghàidhlig nan Eileanan, 'agus bheir mi dhuit nì sam bith a dh'iarras tu, 's a tha nam chomas a thoirt dhuit. 'Thoir dhomh,' arsa an Cùbair, 'innleachd is eòlas leis am faigh mi as air an iùbhraich-chuspainn, oir tha i air mo thòir gun tàmh.' 'A bheil thu ag iarraidh ach

[17] Am facal Tirisdeach airson 'ola'.
[18] Gnàths-cainnte cumanta Tirisdeach a' ciallachadh 'eagal a bheatha'.
[19] Anns an làmh-sgrìobhainn tha Fear Ghreasamuil a' cumail air le sgeulachd eile mun sgiobair Tirisdeach ainmeil, Dòmhnall MacFhionghain, agus mar a bhuannaich e Rèis Mhòr na Tì ann an 1866 leis an *Taeping*.
[20] MacDhùghaill, 'An Cùbair Collach', 49–51. Tha litreachadh MhicDhùghaill air a chumail mar a bha e.

sin?' arsa ise, 'na'n d' innis thu sin dhomh an toiseach, cha leiginn-sa a leis mi fèin – no thusa na's mò – a shàrachadh anns an iomairt so.'

Chuir i an sin sìos a làmh fhìnealta ghrinn gu ruig a crios, is thug i am follais sporan beag airgiodach a bha aice an crochadh ris. Dh'fhosgail i an sporan is thug i am mach an dà chnò-mhàchair,[21] agus toll anns gach té dhiubh, is shìn i sud dhà, is thug i an seòladh seo dhà air mar a bha e ri an cur gu feum. 'An uair a shaoileas tu gu bheil an iùbhrach-chuspuinn dlùth, no amharus agad gu bheil i anns a' choimhearsnachd, cuir dileag bheag de'n uisge-bheatha a tha agad daonnan fo dhìon innte, cuir teine ris, is cuir aon de na gillean suas do'n chrann leatha. Togaidh sin toite mu'n cuairt ort air chor is nach faiceadh sùil an fhìor-eòin fèin d' iùbhrach. Aig a' cheart ám ceangail a' chnò eile aig bonn a' chroinn is cuir fèin no aon-eigin eile cluas rithe is èisd. Innsidh a' chnò dhuit far a bheil an iùbhrach-chuspuinn, is cha bhi strì sam bith agad a seachnadh!'

Co dhiubh a chreid no nach do chreid an Cùbair aig a' cheart ám gu'm biodh stàth sam bith dha anns an dà chnò-mhàchair, leig e cead a coise (no a h-earbaill!) do'n ghruagach-mhara, is thug ise an doimhneachd oirre le guth tiamhaidh.

Ach bha èifeachd anns na cnothan, agus is ann annta a bha, is ri mhaireann beò 'na dhèidh sin, cha do rugadh air a' Chùbair is cha d'fhuair an iùbhrach-chuspuinn uiread agus sealladh air *Struilleag*, gun tighinn air faotainn an uisge na stiùrach dhi.

An dà aithris air an coimeas ri chèile

Tha suidheachaidhean agus prìomh phearsachan na sgeulachd co-ionann anns an dà aithris, ach tha eadar-dhealachaidhean eadar an dà iomradh. Seallaidh sinn an toiseach air na puingean anns a bheil an dà aithris ann an co-sheirm ri chèile, agus seallaidh sinn an sin air na puingean a tha deifirichte.

Tha an leagail aig Eachann MacDhùghaill (EM) a' dearbhadh dhuinn gur h-e sgeulachd Thirisdeach a tha againn an seo, ged a tha an cuspair a' buntainn do Cholla. Cha chuala EM riamh i gus an deachaidh a h-innse dha le Tirisdeach air aon de bhàtaichean Mhic a' Bhriuthainn nuair a bha e air thuras do eilean àraich. Is truagh nach d' innis e dhuinn cò an Tirisdeach a bh' ann. Bha Teàrlach Dòmhnallach (TD) glè eòlach air EM, ach chan urrainn dhuinn a bhith cinnteach gur h-e a thug an naidheachd do dh'EM. A chionns gu bheil an dà aithris eadar-dhealaichte, is coltach nach e. Feumaidh sinn a thuigsinn, ged tha, gun do sgrìobh EM an aiste aige faisg air dà fhichead bliadhna an dèidh dha sgeulachd a' Chùbair a chluinntinn an toiseach, agus gur h-e geàrr-chùnntas a tha e a' toirt dhuinn seach leagail iomlan. Chaidh an aithris aig TD a chur air pàipear uaireigin mu 1920, agus ro 1924 aig a' char as anmoiche.

Tha an aithris aig EM cuideachd a' daingneachadh dhuinn gur h-ann aig àm a' Chiad Chogaidh, agus is dòcha fo bhuaidh a' chogaidh sin, a chaidh an sgeulachd a chruthachadh anns an riochd seo. Thàinig cleachdadh an *wireless* agus an *smoke-screen* gu aire dhaoine aig an àm sin. Tha an aithris aig TD nas mionaidiche ann a bhith ag ainmeachadh a' ghairm-èiginn SOS, a bha air a stèidheachadh gu h-oifigeil air a' chiad latha den Iuchar 1908, agus a bha air a chleachdadh an toiseach anns an Lùnasdal 1909.[22] Tha am *Morse Code* air chùl a' mhìneachaidh air sanasan na cuibhle-chnò anns an aithris aig TD, far a bheilear a' dèanamh fealla-dhà mun àbsaidh neònach seo. Ged a tha an Cùbair

[21] No 'cnò-bhàchair', *molucca bean*.

[22] Peter Kemp (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 816.

Collach, mas fhìor, air thoiseach air na h-uile le bhith a' cleachdadh nan ìnnleachdan seo, tha e follaiseach gu bheil iad air an ceangal ris an dèidh làimhe aig àm sònraichte ann an eachdraidh an t-saoghail. Tha sin a' sealltainn gun robh an Cùbair Collach fhathast beò mar 'ghaisgeach' ann an cuimhne cuid a Thirisdich aig toiseach na ficheadamh linn, agus gun robh sgeulachdan ùra ma dheidhinn fhathast gun cruthachadh, no gun robh seann sgeulachdan gan ath-nuadhachadh le luchd-aithris a bha eòlach air cuid de dh'innleachdan ùra an t-saoghail an dèidh 1908.

A thaobh nan eadar-dhealachaidhean, tha e soilleir gu bheil an aithris aig TD mòran nas fhaisge air modhan-labhairt nàdarra an sgeulaiche na tha an aithris aig EM. Tha an suidheachadh-aithris air a chur an cèill gu snasail aig TD. Tha an sgeulaiche no aon den luchd-obrach a tha a' snìomh sìomain ann an 'taigh Eachainn' ('s e sin athair TD), agus 's ann a thoirt aotromachadh air an obair dhripeil sin a tha na fir le bhith ag innse sgeulachdan. Mar sin, chan ann anns na taighean-cèilidh a-mhàin a bhiodhte ag aithris naidheachdan den t-seòrsa seo. Chan eil soilleireachadh air an t-suidheachadh-aithris anns an leagail aig EM idir, a bharrachd air an iomradh air bàta Mhic a' Bhriuthainn.

Anns an aithris aig TD, tha e furasda gleusan an sgeulaiche a chluinntinn tron aithris gu lèir. Tha na còmhraidhean uile siùbhlach, aotrom, aighearach, bhon iomradh-thoisich a rinn Fear Ghreasamuil agus Dòmhnall Dhùghaill mun *wireless* air a' bhàta aig ceidhe Thiriodh gu deireadh na sgeòil, le cabaireachd èibhinn, m.e., eadar a' ghruagach-mhara agus an Cùbair, nuair a tha ise ag ràdh, 'Nach eil thu a' faotainn do chuid fhèin dheth?', a thaobh an latha mhaith. Tha fuaimean air an riochdachadh gu grinn cuideachd, m.e., nuair a tha a' ghruagach-mhara a' falbh, 'leig e [an Cùbair] leatha plub a thoirt dhi fhèin don fhairge'. Tha cùbhraidheachd a' cheò a rinn an Cùbair air a chur an cèill gu snasail: 'cha do dh'fhailc na lusan iad fhèin riamh ann an ceò samhraidh cho àlainn ris an dealt liath-ghorm a dh'èireadh far na fairge'.

Tha an aithris aig TD a' toirt fada barrachd mìneachaidh dhuinn na cùnntas EM air na h-annasan a fhuair an Cùbair bhon ghruagach-mhara, agus air an dòigh anns an d'fhuair e iad. Chan eil am mìneachadh aig TD coileanta, ged tha, oir chan eil e buileach soilleir dè a tha anns na 'daoimein' a tha an Cùbair a' faotainn bhon ghruagach-mhara, no ciamar a tha iad ag obair ann a bhith a' cur an uisge-bheatha air na tuinn. Tha a' chuibheall-chnò na h-annas cuideachd, agus chan eil fhios ciamar a tha i fhèin agus na daoimein a' freagairt air a chèile, ach ann an sgeulachd den t-seòrsa seo, cha bhiodh feum air mìneachadh iomlan idir. Lìonadh mac-meanmna an luchd-èisdeachd na beàrnan, agus thuigeadh iad gu ro-mhath gun robh tomhas mòr de dh'fhealla-dhà anns an naidheachd gu lèir. Chan fheumadh iad an rabhadh aig EM nach bu chòir dhaibh an sgeulachd seo a chreidsinn. Dhèanadh iad iomadh gàire cridheil am feadh 's a bhiodh i ga h-innse, agus dhealaicheadh iad rithe ann an deagh shùnnd.

Agus dhealaich mise rithe…

'S ann ainneamh a gheibh sinn an cothrom sgeulachd Thirisdeach a leughadh mar a bha i air a h-aithris aig toiseach na ficheadamh linn, nuair a bha an dualchas sin fhathast làidir ann an Tiriodh, agus sgeulachdan fhathast gan cruthachadh anns an eilean, mar a bha an naidheachd seo fhèin, a rèir choltais. Mar sin, 's e ulaidh phrìseil da-rìribh a tha anns an làmh-sgrìobhainn a rinn m' athair den aithris aig bràthair a mhàthar, Teàrlach Dòmhnallach. Chaidh a gleidheil gu cùramach ann am pàipearan an teaghlaich gus an tàinig i thugamsa mar am fear mu dheireadh a bha eòlach air an sgeulaiche.

Bhithinn tric a' beachdachadh gum biodh e luachmhor a cur an clò, agus a-nis, seo i. Ann a bhith 'a' cur *Struilleag* seachad orm', chan iarrainn na b' fheàrr na a tairgsinn mar thiodhlac-spèis do mo dheagh charaid agus mo cho-obraiche còir ann an Obar Dheathain agus ann an Dùn Èideann, an Dr

Iain Seaghach. Bhon a tha Iain na shàr eòlaiche air dualchas nan sgeulachdan air an dà thaobh den Chuan Shiar, tha mi an dòchas gun còrd an sgeulachd seo ris – agus gun innis e fhèin tè eile dhuinn ann an ruith na h-obrach! Guma fada beò Iain agus an Cùbair Collach!

English Summary

In this article, the author presents a tale told by his grand-uncle Charles MacDonald (1874–1960), whose storytelling was part of his childhood in Tiree. The tale concerns Alexander Maclean (1776–1822), the 'Cùbair Collach', a Coll man whose reputation as a daring whisky-smuggler made him the subject of colourful anecdotes. In this one, the Cùbair persuades a mermaid to give him two devices: a 'wireless' that allows him to track the exciseman's whereabouts, and a 'smoke-screen' that obscures his own. The author compares MacDonald's narrative with an outline of the same story summarised by a Coll writer, Hector MacDougall (1889–1954), who says he heard it from a Tiree man. Although it relates to an early nineteenth-century character, the story's technological references strongly indicate that it was first told in this form in the early 20th century.

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Shades of Light and Darkness

SÉAMAS Ó CATHÁIN

The seemingly abrupt fading of the luminosity of sunlit evenings at summer's end gives rise to the phrase *Oíche fhómhair ag tuitim* ('autumn nightfall'). This is sometimes coupled with the formulation *Urchar bodaigh i bpoll móna* – as in *urchar bodaigh i bpoll móna nó oíche fhómhair ag tuitim. Urchar bodaigh i bpoll móna* (literally 'a churl's cast in a bog hole') is defined by Ó Dónaill as a 'random shot'.[1] Thus, this whole combination may be rendered in English, 'A churl's cast in a bog hole or autumn nightfall'.

I have argued elsewhere that a shot of this sort was not merely random but rather calculated and surreptitious in character; and I have also noted that the word spawns various levels of application, many of which are sexual in nature.[2] The disparate parts of this coalition – whether arising from a sneak attack (a 'random shot') or simply the circumstance of having been caught unawares by a rapid onset of changing light ('autumn nightfall') – find a common denominator in the element of surprise.

Towards the end of the year, in the aftermath of Christmas and New Year celebrations, we find another old saying – *Gearrógaí dubha dubha na Nollag* ('The short, extremely dark days of Christmas-tide')[3] – that stands comparison with the graceful phrasing of *oíche fhómhair ag tuitim* in the manner of its taking stock of time's passing. In this instance, rather than registering surprise, the frustration occasioned by the stubborn persistence of winter gloom takes centre stage.

This conversation piece is remarkable for its ubiquity – in the form *Gearrógaí dubha na Nollag* in many parts of Ireland – and for its rarity in the form *Gearrógaí dubha dubha na Nollag* in which the adjective *dubh* ('black') is repeated.[4] In fact, this form is known to me only from Erris in the north-western corner of County Mayo, where I have frequently heard mention of it at that time of year.

Typically, this saying would be bandied about during the end days of December and early days of New Year, its *terminus post quem* occasionally being regarded as 6 January when it would be finally ousted by another popular saying: *Fad choiscéim coiligh (ar an charn aoiligh) ar an lá* – 'The length of a cock's stride (on the dunghill) [added] to the day'. The variable nature of the timing of the delivery of this saying – ranging from St Stephen's Day (27 December) to the Feast of the Epiphany (6 January) – is reflected in the examples cited by T. S. Ó Máille in his collection of Connacht proverbs, including *Fad coiscéim coiligh ó Lá Nodlag Beag* ('the length of a cock's stride from Epiphany'), *Coiscéim coiligh d'fhad ar an lá* ('a cock's stride of length [added] to the day'), and *Lá Nodlag Beag/Lá Fhéile Stiofáin, beidh coiscéim coiligh ar an gcarn aoiligh d'fhad ar an lá* ([from]

[1] Niall Ó Dónaill, ed., *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1977), s.v. *bodach*.
[2] Séamas Ó Catháin, '*Urchar Bodaigh i bPoll Móna* ("A Random Shot") and Other Irish Sayings', *Irish University Review* 54/1 (2024): 72–79. https://doi.org/10.3366/iur.2024.0648.
[3] 'The short dark days about Christmas', Patrick S. Dinneen, *Foclóir Gaedhilge agus Béarla: An Irish-English Dictionary* (Dublin & Cork: Irish Texts Society, 1927), s.v. *gearróg*.
[4] Repetition of a similar character can be seen in the phrases *ar chor ar bith bith* (only known to me from Erris) and in *aon chor in aon chor* (commonly used in Munster Irish), both in the meaning 'at all at all', for which usage in Hiberno-English see Terence Patrick Dolan, *A Dictionary of Hiberno-English: The Irish Use of English*, 3rd edn. (Dublin: Gill, 2020), 11, where *ar chor ar bith* is suggested as the origin of the expression 'at all at all' and the technique of doubling for emphasis is characterized as 'expressing assertion'.

Epiphany/St Stephen's Day, there will be the length of a cock's stride on the dungheap [added] to the day').[5] The saying is sometimes abbreviated in everyday speech to "*Fad choiscéim coiligh…*", featuring thus as an opening gambit in casual conversations occurring at that time of year.[6]

Somehow, for a short period immediately previous to whichever date was viewed as applicable locally, the tenebrity and durability of winter darkness was perceived as being more intense than at any point since the passing of the winter solstice, when the sun is farthest removed from these latitudes and appears to pause before commencing its return journey. But, year in year out, the balance shifts and wins through though at the outset only by a barely discernible margin.

The latter saying – *Fad choiscéim coiligh (ar an charn aoiligh) ar an lá* – conjures up the colourful image of a strutting cockerel perched atop a farmyard dunghill, slowly elevating one leg, then briefly balancing on one foot before gradually lowering it and placing it a minuscule remove in advance of where it had previously stood. *Fad choiscéim coiligh* ('The length of a cock's stride') was deemed to be the extent of the minute gradation by which the process of increasing levels of daylight could be measured i.e. the tiniest of margins.

The sense of impatience with the forces of nature vented in *Gearrógaí dubha (dubha) na Nollag* ('The short, extremely dark days of Christmas-tide') – augmented by the duplication of the adjective *dubh* – is every bit as striking as the sentiment expressed in *oíche fhómhair ag tuitim* ('autumn nightfall'): observation of a year exasperatingly tardy in turning in the first instance, and the sudden, subtly shifting quality of light in the other. These changes are aptly marked in popular parlance – the former with a sense of exasperation and a degree of prolepsis, the latter with a hint of regret and vague foreboding, both sizing up time's passing and chronicling its progress in adages as eloquent as the architecture of a megalithic monument mutely tracking the sun's rays.

Lodged in the interstice between major calendar festivals such as Christmas and St Bridget's Day (1 February, the commencement of the Irish spring) on the one hand, and Lúnasa Day (the beginning of harvest celebrated on a Sunday at the end of July or beginning of August) and Samhain (1 November) on the other, artless sayings such as *Gearrógaí dubha (dubha) na Nollag* and *Fad choiscéim coiligh (ar an charn aoiligh) ar an lá* loiter in the wings of everyday discourse, pending the arrival of the apposite opportunity for their deployment.

For all their unpretentiousness, they form a delightful and integral part of the rich panoply of festival custom and commemoration in Ireland, where they represent neither banal patter nor idiosyncratic invention but rather a time-honoured, if modest, component in the enduring community inheritance of Gaelic-language culture.

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[5] Tomás S. Ó Máille, *Sean-Fhocla Chonnacht* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1948), vol.1, No. 2253, p. 346. Dinneen (*op.cit*., p. 230) gives "*coiscéim choiligh*" as meaning " a cock's step, a very short interval" and adds "*lá coille coiscéim choiligh*","a cock's step is the increase of the day's length on New Year's Day"; see Dinneen, *Foclóir Gaedhilge agus Béarla*, 230, s.v. *coiscéim.*

[6] Archer Taylor traces the origin of this saying to St Lucy's Day (originally 23 December) at the winter solstice: 'On the festival of St Lucy/The day grows by the leap of a flea. "The leap of a flea" refers to the lengthening shadow on the sun dial'. He adds that the '… association of St Lucy and the winter solstice may possibly have some connection with the well-established association of Lucy with "lux" ("light")'. See Archer Taylor, *The Proverb and Index for the Proverb* (Hatboro, PA: Folklore Associates, 1962), 117; or (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1962), 119.

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Craobh nan Ubhal: A Gaelic Panegyric

LILLIS Ó LAOIRE

The waulking song *Craobh nan Ubhal* is well known to followers of Gaelic music. The renowned singer Flora MacNeil (1928–2015) popularised it, recording it as the final item on her second commercial album in 1976.[1] She also named the collection after the song. Hailing from the Isle of Barra, a hotspot for oral Gaelic tradition, Flora was surrounded by numerous excellent singers during her youth.[2] This period, from the late thirties to the early fifties, coincided with an increased interest in the oral traditions of the Hebrides, during which more songs and stories came to light. Flora's own family were tradition bearers, and many of her songs came from within that milieu. Flora chose to name the album for the song for several reasons. It was one of her mother's favourites and among the earliest that she learned from her;[3] but Flora was also mindful of the generations of singers who had carried the songs, and this song for her represented a testament to the tenacity of tradition and its transmission. As her daughter Maggie MacInnes remarked, 'the reference to the many branches of the tree or Clan Chiefs represented or symbolised to her the generations and relations of a family who have carried the songs for centuries'.[4]

Since it was first recorded, *Craobh nan Ubhal* has become a well-known and widely performed song, and has been recorded commercially by others. Recently, a riveting performance by Pàdruig Moireasdan and Claire Frances MacNeil, featuring the recording made by J. L. Campbell from the singing of Roderick MacKinnon (Ruairidh Iain Bhàin), marked the celebrations for the official re-opening of the Canna House archives.[5] With the creation of the online archive Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o' Riches, other audio recordings of the song have become more accessible to the public and researchers alike.

As reported to John Shaw, Lauchie Mac Lellan's blind uncle Neil's advice to him, as he himself learned songs in Cape Breton Island, was: *Tuig an t-òran* ('Understand the song').[6] Following this sound advice, this paper explores the song through an examination of what has been written about it to date, a brief description of the additional recordings now available, and an analysis of the text. The aim is to gain a greater understanding of the song's background, context, and purpose.

Let us first explore Gaelic cultural concepts of the tree, including its link with the Ogam script, and the classification of trees in Gaelic culture into nobles and commoners. This provides a broad

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[1] Flora MacNeil, *Craobh nan Ubhal: Traditional Gaelic Songs from the Western Isles.* Tangent Records (TGS 124), 1976, vinyl LP.

[2] John Lorne Campbell names some fifteen Barra singers whom he recorded between 1938 and 1951; see J. L. Campbell and Francis Collinson, *Hebridean Folksongs II: Waulking songs from Barra, South Uist, Eriskay and Benbecula* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 8–9.

[3] Peter Kennedy, *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland* (London: Cassell, 1976), 62.

[4] Maggie MacInnes, by *Facebook* Direct Messenger to author, 15/04/2025.

[5] https://www.instagram.com/reel/DK9873tOhhL/?hl=en. J. L. Campbell's archive recording can be heard on Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o' Riches at: https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/ 39299?l=en.

[6] John Shaw, 'Language, Music and Local Aesthetics: Views from Gaeldom and Beyond', *Scottish Language* 11/12 (1992–1993): 55.

context for an examination of the commentary on the song and allows the broadest possible parameters for an interpretation of the lyrics.

Trees are an important part of symbolic expression in cultures worldwide, and Gaelic culture is no exception.[7] John MacInnes states the case unambiguously:

> *Chan eil samhla nas bitheanta ann am bardachd na Gàidhlig na samhla na craoibhe. Chan e craoibh neo crann a-mhàin a gheibhear ach na bhoineas don chraoibh, stoc, duilleach, meas, geug, meanglan, gallan, fiùran agus a' choill è fhèin.*[8]
>
> There is no commoner image in Gaelic poetry than the image of the tree. It's not trees in general, or any particular tree, that we find, but all that pertains to the tree – trunk, foliage, fruit, branch, bough, sapling, shoot, and the forest itself.

MacInnes further explores tree imagery in his renowned essay 'The Panegyric Code in Gaelic Poetry and its Historical Background'; and the theme has been further developed and extended more recently by Meg Bateman and Michael Newton.[9]

The five sacred trees of ancient Ireland are well documented, and the characteristics attributed to them continue to influence imaginative engagements with Gaelic tradition. The importance of these trees, named as *Bile Tortan*, *Eó Rois*, *Eó Mughna*, *Bile Uisnigh*, and *Craeb Daithi*, has been comprehensively described by A. T. Lucas.[10] For Lucas, 'sacred' means trees or woods that were venerated in certain ways that protected them from damage. The term *bile* is used interchangeably with *craeb* for these trees; the word *Eó* can also stand for any tree, although it often signifies a yew. Such an understanding is important, because our song is known as *Craobh an Iubhair* ('The Yew Tree') as well as *Craobh nan Ubhal* ('The Apple Tree').

To state that this variation links back to early understandings of the categorisation of trees is difficult, since, prosodically, *craobh nan ubhal* and *craobh an iubhair* are identical. The sacred trees were mainly oak, ash and yew, all in the *airig fedo* ('nobles of the wood') category. Although the word *bile* no longer occurs in everyday speech in Ireland, it is still widely attested in placenames. It is relevant here to note the particular character of the *Eó Mughna*, an oak tree in Kildare. Not only did it produce the expected acorns in abundant quantities, but it was also believed to give apples and hazelnuts. This association between the apple and the *bile* whose title is *Eó* (in one meaning yew, though as we have already said, the tree was an oak) is interesting. Focusing on this interlinkage and co-identification therefore provides another clue as we explore our song. *Bile Tortan* was said to be *mac an chraind a parrdus* ('the son of the tree of Paradise'); but the *Eo Rois* (a yew) is perhaps the most interesting of all, having what Lucas calls 'a curious rhapsodic litany of thirty one epithets'

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[7] J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (London: Papermac, 1987 [1922]), 159–60.
[8] Iain Mac Aonghais, 'Samhla na Craoibhe' in *Sàr Ghàidheal: Essays in Memory of Rory Mackay* (Inverness: An Comunn Gàidhealach and the Gaelic Society of Inverness, 1986), 64.
[9] John MacInnes, 'The Panegyric Code in Gaelic Poetry and its Historical Background', in *Dùthchas nan Gàidheal: Selected Essays of John* MacInnes, ed. Michael Newton (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006), 284; Meg Bateman, 'The Image of the Tree in Gaelic Culture', in *Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig 6,* ed. Nancy R. McGuire and Colm Ó Baoill (Aberdeen: An Clò Gàidhealach 2013), 31–42; Michael Newton, 'The Great Caledonian Forest of the Mind: Highland Woods and Tree Symbolism in Scottish Gaelic Tradition,' in *Craobh nan Ubhal: A Festschrift for John MacInnes*, ed. Virginia Blankenhorn, *Scottish Studies* 37 (2014): 164–173.
[10] Lucas, A.T. 'The Sacred Trees of Ireland', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 68/207–208 (1963): 16–54.

recited to it by a poet named as *Druim Suithe* ('Ridge of Knowledge'). The tree was located at Leathghlenn (Leighlin in modern day County Carlow):[11]

Eo Rosa	Tree of Ross
roth ruirech	a king's wheel
recht flatha	a prince's right
tonn tuinni	a wave's noise
dech duilib	best of creatures
diriuch dronchrand	a straight firm tree
dia dronbalc	a firm-strong god
dor nime	door (?) of heaven
nert n-aicde	Strength of a building
fó foirne	the good of a crew
fer ferbglan	a word-pure man
gart lánmhar	full-great bounty
ren trinoit	the Trinity's mighty one
dam toimsi	a measure's house
maith máthar	a mother's good
mac Maire	Mary's son
muir mothach	a fruitful sea
miadh maise	beauty's honour
mal menman	a mind's lord
mind n-angel	diadem of angels
nuall betha	shout of the world
blad Banba	Banba's renown
brig buadha	might of victory
breth bunaid	judgement of origin
brath bruthach	judicial doom
brosna suad	faggot of sages
saeriu crannaib	noblest of trees
clu Galion	glory of Leinster
caemiu dossaib	dearest of bushes
dín bethra	a bear's defence
bríg bethad	vigour of life
bricht n-eolas	spell of knowledge
Eo Rosa	Tree of Ross

This litany is a eulogy, or perhaps a lament, for the tree, given that its composition is linked to the fall of the tree. Grigory Bondarenko summarizes the significance of this poem as follows:

[11] Bondarenko, Grigory, 'The Alliterative Poem *Eó Rossa* from the Dindṡenchas' in *Studies in Irish Mythology* (Berlin: Curach Bhán, 2014), 69–76. See also Alden Watson, 'The King, The Poet and the Sacred Tree,' *Études Celtiques* 18 (1981): 165–180. My thanks to Professor Mícheál Ó Mainnín, The Queen's University of Belfast, for drawing my attention to these sources.

> The poem… is full of Christian imagery being mixed with or over-laid upon that of the poetic, secular or pre-Christian essence.... Moreover Eó Rossa acquires its sacredness in the poem not only in association with its tribal or all-Leinster importance: it is sacred as a symbol of Christ and within the Christian mind belongs to the divine sphere. There are several levels in the list of epithets attached to Eó Rossa: a level of poetry and poetic craft, a level of heroic and local imagery with both heroic kennings and place-names involved, and a level of Christian adoration where a natural phenomenon is seen as a symbol or a living and tangible icon of Christ Himself.[12]

In light of our song, and the section in which the speaker showers blessings for strength and good fortune on *craobh nan ubhal/an iubhair*, I believe this poem is significant. The prominence of Christian imagery is decidedly more muted in *Craobh nan Ubhal* than in the older poem, not unsurprisingly, because the speaker is a secular woman not bound up in monastic life. However, the heroic imagery and kennings are given full range. Given the older magico-religious contexts outlined above, the similarities should not seem at all incongruous.

Bretha Comaithchesa, an eighth century legal text, divides trees into four groups of seven, founded on their practical value and mirroring of societal hierarchies. The first group, *airig fedo* ('the nobles of the wood'), includes oak (*daur,* also *dair)*, hazel (*coll*), holly (*cuilenn*), yew (*ibar*), ash (*uinnius*), pine (*ochtach*), and apple (*aball*). This classification is clearly significant for the song, as is the identification of the *airig fedo* as *fidenemeda* ('sacred trees').[13] Both yew and apple are considered noble, reflecting their close connection and giving a clue to the way in which one may occasionally represent the other, as well as the high social status of the heroic subject of the song.

Also important here is the story of the first appearance of the sacred trees, which manifested with the birth of Conn Cédchathach, in which the symbol of the tree was directly linked with the idea of kingship, and by association, with sovereignty. Lucas points out the tie between the *bile* and particular places, especially a king's or a chief's dwelling. Although the song *Craobh nan Ubhal* could ostensibly be read as a song of praise for a lover, the identification of the *bile* with the kingdom and the personage of the chief underlies its meaning. The connection between significant places and *bileadha* is also, as both MacInnes and Bateman have noted, a feature of Scottish placename lore. To draw attention to these connections is not to suggest that the makers or the performers of *Craobh nan Ubhal* were overtly aware of the song's historical trajectory. Rather, these understandings were implicit in their inherited tradition and came to them as a matter of course through cultural transmission.

The trees received quite a lot of attention in various early texts, where they stand as cosmological symbols of the Gaelic world, *fidnemeda*, sacred trees,[14] in a way similar to the importance of Yggdrasil, the cosmic ash that stands as a symbolic axis mundi in Norse mythology. The *fid* element in this term stands for a tree, and is also the term used for a letter in Ogam. The modern *fiodh* is found in Ireland in placenames now, but in Scottish Gaelic it is the ordinary word for 'timber'.

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[12] Bondarenko, 'The Alliterative Poem *Eó Rossa*', 76.
[13] Fergus Kelly, 'The Old Irish Tree List', *Celtica* 11 (1976): 107–124; Lionel S. Joseph and Brian Drayton, 'Trees and Tradition in Early Ireland', *Studia Celtica Fennica* 17 (2021): 54–73.
[14] P. L. Henry, *Saoithiúlacht na Sean-Ghaeilge* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1978), 233–235; see also 145.

Since many waulking songs reflect a substratum of Gaelic aristocratic culture that continued to thrive into modern times, it is worthwhile also to look at the occurrence of trees in the more formal aristocratic Gaelic verse from the bardic period.

MacInnes shows that the tree as a kenning for the warrior is a widespread and common feature of Gaelic vernacular praise poetry, which he sees as an outgrowth and development of earlier professional bardic conventions, ultimately related to the idea of the *bile*, the sacred tree, exemplified by the five great sacred trees of Ireland:

> The heroic virtues are expressed in a variety of kennings for the warrior. He is a tree: 'bile,' 'crann,' 'craobh' (especially 'abhall farsaing / freumhach', 'darach', and other 'noble' woods); 'craobh chosgair / chomhraig / as airde 'san doire / shìochaint'; 'fiùran', 'gasan', 'fleasgach', 'slat'.[15]

Writing well before MacInnes, John Lorne Campbell understood the importance of this link though he did not have time to explore it fully. Describing the apple tree as a 'kenning' for a chief, he cites as evidence a twelfth-century Irish praise poem that he argues indicates the importance of the historical depth of the use of the apple tree as symbol.[16] The poem in question is 'Táinig an Croibhdherg go Crúachain,' a poem composed by Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe for Cathal Croibhdherg Ó Conchubhair (1153–1224), King of Connacht. Here is the twenty-sixth quatrain:[17]

Uille gach abhla re talmhuin	The elbow of each apple tree on the ground
a ttír Chathail Cruachna hAoi,	In the land of Cathal of Cruachain Aoi
gach coll úr re heigin innte	Every fresh hazel there compelled[18]
léigidh a ghlún fillti fáoi.	It bends its knee below it.

This quatrain illustrates part of the stock of conventional images expressing the fertility and abundance associated with the rule of the rightful king, spouse of the earth goddess, indicating a superabundance of fruits resulting from their just and sacred union. Campbell's identification of this stanza as a 'kenning' is, however, problematic, as a kenning is a compressed metaphor, normally no more than two words in length, that stands for what it represents. But while the reference to the apple tree in this verse is not a metaphor for the king, it does stand as a manifestation of the fecundity of the land due to his successful and just rule. The association of these 'nobles of the wood', the apple and the hazel, with the ideals of kingship is entirely of a piece with the whole symbolic apparatus of Gaelic panegyric.

In *A History of Ireland in 100 Words*, the entry for 'apple' indicates the high regard in which apples were held, both 'as high-value and delicious food items' and, when used metaphorically, 'in medieval literature to refer to distinguished persons'. The editors also point out the close association with the

[15] MacInnes, 'The Panegyric Code', 284.

[16] John Lorne Campbell and Francis Collinson, *Hebridean Folksongs: A Collection of Waulking Songs made by Donald MacCormick* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 190. Campbell refers to *Prolegomena to the Study of the Later Irish Bards 1200-1500* (E. C. Quiggin, Oxford, 1911), 26 where the poem is quoted in translation as follows: 'The arms of each apple-tree are weighed to the ground in the land of Cathal of Cruachan-Aoi, each bright hazel therein perforce bends down'.

[17] Bardic Poetry Database, stanza 26 of 36, https://bardic.celt.dias.ie/poem/1769. Accessed 02/09/2025

[18] See under *éicen* in eDIL 2019: *An Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language*, based on the *Contributions to a Dictionary of the Irish Language.* Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1913–1976. dil.ie/19711. This line is glossed as 'overpowering exuberance,' entirely in keeping with the sentiments in our song. Accessed 15/02/2026.

otherworld, citing the 'magical apple that sustains a king's son Connlae and does not diminish'.[19] A search of the database of bardic poetry reveals a plethora of references to apples and apple trees, many used in a religious context, others in the conventional language of eulogistic praise. An exhaustive analysis of the corpus goes beyond the capacity of this short paper, but of interest are metonymical references to the patron as an apple. One appropriately Scottish example will suffice here. The poem, 'Triath na nGaoidheal Giolla-Easbuig' praises Giolla-Easbuig Campbell (fl. 1640), first Marquis of Argyll. When eulogising Cailín, the patron's eponymous ancestor, the unknown poet states:[20]

> *Deich nglúine uaibhsi san fhéin curadh*
> *Cailín iongnadh na n-éacht mbúan;*
> *ubhal cumhra chríoch na nGaoidheal:*
> *ní fríth umhla d'aoinfhear úadh.*
>
> Ten generations from you in the catalogue of champions / [is] Cailín of the wonders and the lasting [heroic] achievements; / the fragrant apple of the lands of the Gael: / No man received submission from him.

This quatrain can justifiably be termed a kenning because the hero, Cailín, ancestor of Clan Campbell, is called an apple, if not actually an apple tree. The tie between nobility and the apple is reinforced in the context of panegyric, making this more recent Scottish example all the more relevant to our exploration of *Craobh nan Ubhal*.

Meg Bateman gives a brief but comprehensive account of trees in Gaelic culture with a special focus on the Scottish dimension. Her description of the Fortingall Yew in Perthshire as the *axis mundi* of Scotland is a compelling mirror image of the Irish *Bile Uisnigh*. Also relevant to this paper are her references to trees as symbols in Gaelic poetry. She argues convincingly for a changing but continuous strand in Scottish culture recognising and honouring the sacred nature of trees. The use of tree references by Sìleas na Ceapaich and other poets down to the present shows the centrality of the tree as part of the panegyric code of praise, from which poets drew endlessly, adapting it as their purpose required.[21]

With that background in mind, I turn to the song itself to see what text may reveal. For this purpose, I use here the text transcribed by Donald McCormick and published by John Lorne Campbell and Francis Collinson, and the settings collected in Barra by Alexander Carmichael and edited by Angus Matheson.[22] These two sources provide the longest texts of the song. James Ross refers briefly to *Craobh nan Ubhal* in his detailed paper on classification of Gaelic songs, pointing out that the tree imagery is highly developed, but saying that such literary expression is on the whole rare in the waulking song tradition.[23] Derick Thomson, following Carmichael, cites the praise of a member of the clan MacKay from the Rhinns of Islay, possibly a man called Brian or Niall,[24] dating it to the late sixteenth- and early-seventeenth century.[25] Thomson himself learned this song from his mother, and

[19] Sharon Arbuthnot, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Gregory Toner, *A History of Ireland in 100 Words* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2019), 48.
[20] Bardic Poetry Database, stanza 27 of 36, https://bardic.celt.dias.ie/poem/1870.
[21] Bateman, 'The Image of the Tree'.
[22] Campbell and Collinson, *Hebridean Folksongs: A Collection of Waulking Songs*, 144–149 (text and translation), 188–189 (notes) and 330–332 (musical transcriptions); Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*, vol. 5, ed. Angus Matheson (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1954), 2–8.
[23] James Ross, 'A Classification of Gaelic Folksong', *Scottish Studies* 1 (1957): 114–116.
[24] Campbell and Collinson, *Hebridean Folksongs: A Collection of Waulking Songs*, 189.
[25] Derick S. Thomson, *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry,* (Edinburgh University Press, 1990 [1974]), 94–95.

recordings in Tobar an Dualchais attest to at least three different settings from different communities in Lewis: Uig, Keose and Breasclete respectively.[26] Campbell's text had not appeared when Thomson wrote, so he defers to Carmichael's version as fuller and more complete. The song is of a piece with the waulking song corpus, praising the charismatic chief, whose personal magnetism is abundant and transformative. For example, the man praised has magical attributes, being able to turn wool into silk, water into wine, and white foam into butter. The erotic element found in many waulking songs expressing the speaker's physical attraction to and relationship with the chief is also strongly present in *Craobh nan Ubhal*, the tree itself having a distinct, if muted, phallic significance. *Craobh nan Ubhal* conforms well to Campbell's observation that 'in the older waulking songs, the clothing and the arms and social habits are those of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries'.[27] The strongly magical element in the praise of Mac Aoidh, manifested in his power to accomplish transformations of the mundane into the aristocratic, (wool into silk, water to wine, clay into drinking vessels etc.), is consistent with the supernatural force deemed to reside in the true king. He is the spouse of the goddess, having undergone the *heiros gamos* – the sacred marriage known as *banais rigi* – emblematic of the rites of installation of a royal personage.[28] A line occurring in both of Carmichael's texts calls upon *Somhairle mór agus a chliar* [great Somerled and his band] to support the hero, a clear invocation of the idea of *Triath nan Eilean* [the Lord of the Isles] or *Rìgh Innse Gall* [The King of the Hebrides], and Islay's importance as the original centre of the Lordship.[29] Such mythology underpinned a system through which tribute was collected by the chief, but also, crucially, redistributed by him among the clan, in order to ensure that everyone had enough resources. R. A. Dodgshon comments:

> In character, rents in kind formed part of an economy of direct consumption. In an environment in which poor harvest meant 'not scarcity but emptiness,' having command over a surplus provided a powerful ideological weapon in the search for chiefly status. Though craftsmen of various sorts were given rent-free or discounted holdings, there are no indications that Highland chiefs used the food which they gathered to support such craftsmen directly. Instead, we need to see food rents as providing the basis for a primary circuit of consumption, enabling chiefs to support kinsmen and tenants in times of crisis, to support household men of the chief's retinue, to sustain display of feasting and feuding, and to build alliances through marriage and bonds of manrent with other chiefs and their families.[30]

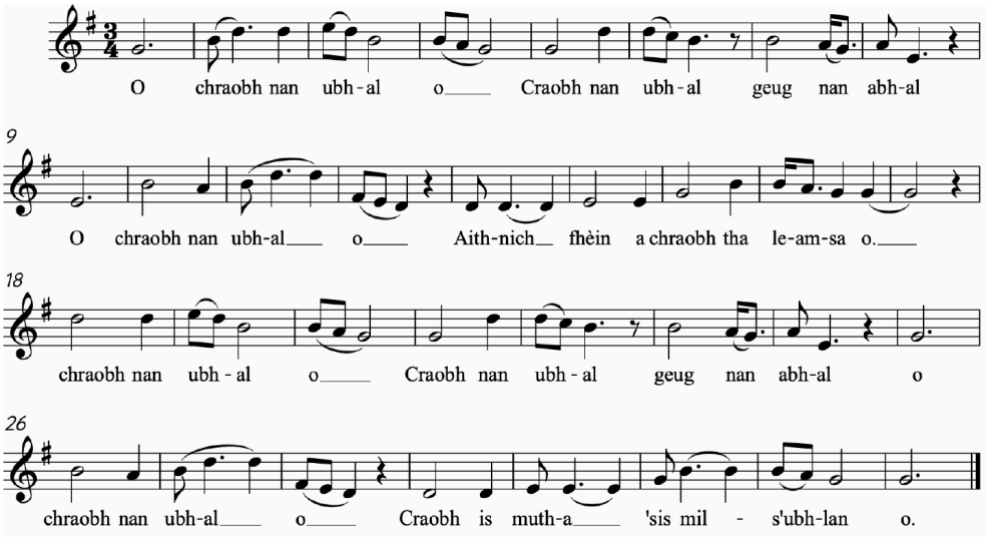
This sort of distribution bears resemblances to patterns identified by Mauss in his seminal work *The Gift* – which elucidates the dynamics of economies based upon prestige accrued and lost in the

[26] Sung by Margaret MacIver from Lochs, Lewis, who names her source for each version; Tobar an Dualchais https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/131255?l=en. See also Otto Andersson 'On Gaelic Music from the Isle of Lewis,' *The Budkavlen* 31/1-4 (1952): 42 and Comunn Gàidhealach Leodhais, *Eilean Fraoich: Lewis Gaelic Songs and Melodies,* (Stornoway: Acair, 1982 [1938]), 61.
[27] Campbell and Collinson, *Hebridean Folksongs: A Collection of Waulking Songs*, 17.
[28] 'A feast, significantly known as *banais rígi*, "wedding-feast of kingship", formed an essential part of the ceremonies with which Irish kings were inaugurated.' T. F. O'Rahilly, 'On the Origin of the Names Érainn and Ériu', *Ériu* 14 (1946): 14.
[29] Carmichael (ed. A. Matheson, *Carmina Gadelica V,* (1987 [1900]), 4–7
[30] Robert A. Dodgshon, *From Chiefs to Landlords: Social and Economic Change in the Western Highlands and Islands, c. 1493–1820* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 77.

symbolism of material gift exchange.[31] The system enhanced those who were successful through battle and feuding, marriage alliances, celebrations of feasting and extravagant consumption, displays that enhanced the chief's political stature and his status among his own clan followers. Without the circularity of the moving gift, the system would not have worked.

All of these ideas are of a piece with *Craobh nan Ubhal/an Iubhair*. A major difference between this song and earlier eulogistic poetry, however, is that the speaker is female. Although it was not unknown for earlier professional poets to occasionally adopt a female persona in their praise of the king, the waulking song corpus generally is one where, unusually in Gaelic tradition, women's voices predominate. Some of the songs, particularly those in which female poets with allegiance to rival chiefs address one another in poetic rhetoric of satire and disparagement are attributed to women known by their patronymics e.g. Nic Dhomhnaill,[32] Nic Iain Fhinn or Nic a' Mhanaich.[33] The best known of these women poets is undoubtedly Màiri Nighean Alasdair Ruaidh, Mary MacLeod.

The gaze in *Craobh nan Ubhal/an Iubhair* conforms generally to that of other similar waulking songs of praise for the nobleman or chief. However, it is unique in its use of the tree name in the refrain, and unusual in that repetition of the tree's name is integral to the refrain, as most other older waulking songs comprise only non-lexical vocables. There is an ambiguity as to whether each repetition of the chorus actually addresses the subject or not, with the difference resting in the lenition of the initial consonant of *craobh* – indicating the vocative case – or its non-lenition. In her recording of the song, Flora MacNeil uses both forms: [34]



O chraobh nan ubhal O,
Craobh nan ubhal, geug nan abhal,

O Tree of apples O
Tree of Apples, branch of orchards

[31] Marcel Mauss. *The Gift: Expanded Edition,* ed. & trans. Jane I. Guyer. (Illinois: Hau Books, 2016).
[32] James Carmichael Watson, *Òrain agus Luinneagan Gàidhlig le Mairi Nighean Alasdair Ruaidh/Gaelic Songs by Mary MacLeod,* Edinburgh: Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1965, 2, 3.
[33] Campbell and Collinson, *Hebridean Folksongs II*, 232.
[34] MacNeil, *Craobh nan Ubhal*. Transcribed from the recording; my thanks to Sean Williams for supplying the musical transcription. In the text, '[my]' represents the use of the vocative indicated by lenition of the initial consonant. *Abhal* can mean simply a tree or also an orchard. Using the latter suggests the chief as one among many, but imbued with supremacy over others by the poet's praise, implying a *bile ós chrannaibh.* For this phrase, see Roibeard Ó Maolalaigh, 'The Mutational Effects of the Preposition *Ós: Bile ós chrannaibh* and related matters', *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 30 (2016): 73–111.

O Chraobh nan Ubhal O.	*O Tree of Apples O*
Aithnich fhèin a' chraobh tha leamsa	Recognise the tree that belongs to me
O Chraobh nan Ubhal O,	*O [my] Tree of Apples O*
Craobh nan Ubhal, geug nan abhal,	*Tree of Apples, branch of orchards*
O Chraobh nan Ubhal O.	*O [my] Tree of Apples O*
Craobh is mutha 's is milse ubhlan	The biggest tree with the sweetest of apples
O Chraobh nan Ubhal O,	*O [my] Tree of Apples O*
Craobh nan Ubhal, geug nan abhal,	*Tree of Apples branch of orchards*
O Chraobh nan Ubhal O.	*O [my]Tree of Apples O*
A bun sìos is a barr a' lúbadh	Its stock [growing] downwards and its top bending
O Chraobh nan Ubhal O,	*O [my] Tree of Apples O*
Craobh nan Ubhal, geug nan abhal,	*Tree of apples, branch of orchards*
O Chraobh nan Ubhal O.	*O [my] Tree of Apples O*
Craobh nan Ubhal, gun robh Dia leat	Tree of Apples, may God be with you
O Chraobh nan Ubhal O,	*O [my] Tree of Apples O*
Craobh nan Ubhal, geug nan abhal,	*Tree of Apples, branch of orchards*
O Chraobh nan Ubhal O.	*O [my] Tree of Apples O*
Gun robh an aird an-ear 's an-iar leat	May the east and the west be with you
O Chraobh nan Ubhal O,	*O [my]Tree of Apples O*
Craobh nan Ubhal, geug nan abhal,	*Tree of Apples, branch of orchards*
O Chraobh nan Ubhal O.	*O Tree of Apples O*
Gun robh gach gealach agus grian leat	May every moon and sun be with you
O Chraobh nan Ubhal O,	*O [my]Tree of Apples O*
Craobh nan Ubhal, geug nan abhal,	*Tree of Apples, branch of orchards*
O Chraobh nan Ubhal O.	*O [my] Tree of Apples O*
Gun robh gach sian a tháinig riamh leat,	May everything that ever existed be with you
O Chraobh nan Ubhal O,	*O [my] Tree of Apples O*
Craobh nan Ubhal, geug nan abhal,	*Tree of Apples, branch of orchards*
O Chraobh nan Ubhal O.	*O [my]Tree of Apples O*

When reproducing waulking songs in writing it is usual to include the refrain only once, a method which undoubtedly saves space, but which also serves to disguise the cumulative, incremental effect of its repetition. By writing each refrain out in full, we are confronted with the fact of repetition, and are therefore compelled to contemplate its impetus and power. The repetition of *craobh / chraobh* pervades the whole song, in total considerably longer than the version sung by Flora MacNeil, the use of apostrophe serving to decrease distance between the speaker and the subject, invoking the chief's presence and cancelling an implied absence.[35] However, by concentrating on these particular lines and by singing the song at a slower tempo than that of a waulking group, the singer provides her own personal setting of the song as one held in especially high esteem. This view is undoubtedly justifiable given the long trajectory of Gaelic tradition that precedes it and lends a dignity and gravitas to the performance that appeals to a modern listener. According to her daughter Maggie MacInnes, their family considered that this and other songs such as *Nach Fhreagair Thu 'Chairistìona* and *Ailein Duinn an nì 's an nàire,* belonged to a different class of song to waulking songs:

[35] M. Whelton, *Teagmháil agus Tnúthán: Staidéar ar an Apostróf i bhFilíocht na Nua-Ghaeilge* (An Daingean: An Sagart, 2008), 12–13.

> Although the structure is that of a waulking song, my mother didn't sing it as one would for shrinking the tweed, more a chant-like love song. But I think it was like others, e.g. *Cairistìona* and *Ailein Duinn an nì is an nàire,* which she heard when growing up sung as slower laments, to which mum said there were two versions. She was very definite that her mother never sang *Ailein Duinn an nì is an nàire* as a work song, yet there are versions as a waulking song.[36]

Flora's MacNeil's repetition of the full refrain after each line differs from the approach taken by other Barra singers. The majority of these are men, including Ruairidh MacKinnon (Ruairidh Iain Bhàin, 1858–1944),[37] his son, Captain Joseph Donald MacKinnon ('An Eòsag', 1907–1962),[38] and Calum Johnston (Calum Aonghais Chaluim 1891–1972).[39] Mary Morrison ('Bean Phluim', 1895–1978) provides the only recording from a Barra woman from the generation preceding Flora MacNeil.[40] Calum Johnston represents the southern Barra tradition, whereas the MacKinnons' variants belong to the north end of the island. Ruairidh MacKinnon repeats the full chorus at various points in the song, whereas both his son and Calum Johnston sing the full refrain only at the beginning of the first stanza and following the last one. MacCormick's version includes the term '*atharraich*' no fewer than eight times, which signifies a repetition of the full chorus.[41]

These various approaches to the song demonstrate the choices available to performers depending on the context of their singing. Constraints of time and other considerations may have dictated the delivery of their performances. Some of the performances are marked by memory lapses, suggesting that this item was not performed that frequently, linked almost certainly to the 'cessation of the handloom production of tweed'.[42] Comparing the Tobar an Dualchais recordings to the settings in *Carmina Gadelica* or those recorded by Donald MacCormick reveals that more recent performances are generally shorter, reflecting a decline in the frequency of performance with a resulting loss of some of the lines. On the other hand, MacCormick's text may represent a composite of many performances, as his manuscript does not indicate the names of his sources.[43] Nevertheless, the audio versions, taken in total, generally give most of the elements found in the earlier textual versions.

Whether it is called 'Craobh nan Ubhal' or 'Craobh an Iubhair', this is an exceptional song for many reasons, especially so because of its links to the Gaelic symbolic taxonomy of trees, and the way in which it deploys that system in a panegyric to a living chieftain. It certainly has religious references, but these are lesser in comparison to earlier monastically based poems. The tree symbolises the chief and is at the same time a cosmic representation of the success and prosperity

[36] Maggie MacInnes by *Facebook* Direct Messenger to author, 04/09/25.
[37] https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/39299?l=en (1938), recorded by John Lorne Campbell.
[38] https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/13426?l=en (1953), recorded by Dr Alasdair Maclean; https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/93809?l=en (1957), recorded by James Ross.
[39] https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/21234?l=en (1949), recorded by John Lorne Campbell, who later included it on a commercial recording, *Gaelic Songs from the Island of Barra* (Linguaphone Institute for the Folklore Institute of Scotland, 1950); Calum Johnston recorded this song on many subsequent occasions for the School of Scottish Studies, including https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/85477?l=en (1954), recorded by James Ross. Thanks to Cathlin Macaulay, Curator, School of Scottish Studies Archives, University of Edinburgh, for help in identifying the recordings.
[40] https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/65737?l=en
[41] Campbell and Collinson *Hebridean Folksongs: A Collection of Waulking Songs,* 144–148.
[42] Campbell and Collinson, *Hebridean Folksongs: A Collection of Waulking Songs,* ix.
[43] Campbell and Collinson, *Hebridean Folksongs: A Collection of Waulking Songs,* 34.

enjoyed by those who follow him, a mythical entity connecting heaven and earth and ensuring the clan's continued success. Though much of the imagery is found in other songs, the invocation of the tree is a unique feature marking the song as one of special and enduring interest for both scholars and performers alike.

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Ossianic Informants Named by the Rev. Dr Alexander Irvine (1773–1824)

ROIBEARD Ó MAOLALAIGH

The Rev. Dr Alexander Irvine was born in 1773 in the parish of Fortingall, Perthshire.[1] His university education was undertaken during the 1790s at St Andrews, where his linguistic talents were recognised. He was ordained as missionary in Kintra in South West Mull in 1797, but early in 1799 took up work as a missionary in Rannoch in North Perthshire. He became minister of Fortingall in 1805. He married Janet ('Jessie') Stewart, daughter of the Edinburgh-trained lawyer Robert Stewart of Garth, *Fear Ghairt*, in April 1805 against her father's wishes. A year later, he moved to Little Dunkeld where he was minister from 1806 until his death in 1824 and where he preached in Gaelic and English. Managing a heavy workload, he balanced his ministerial and scholarly work on Gaelic, the Highlands and ecclesiastical affairs. By his own account, he spent between eight and ten hours studying every day. He was an avid collector, collecting oral and written materials. His contribution to the collection of Ossianic poems is commended along with others such as the Rev. James McLagan (1728–1805) in the Highland Society of Scotland's Ossianic *Report* of 1805, where they are noted amongst those 'from whom the most important materials were obtained'.[2] He also collected the works of contemporary Gaelic poets. In Edinburgh on 22 December 1800, he wrote down poems by, and information about, Rob Donn from the poet's daughter Janet McKay in the presence of the poet Duncan McIntyre.[3] Unlike many of the collectors who went before him, including the Rev. James McLagan (1728–1805), Irvine was meticulous in the metadata he recorded along with his collected materials.[4] Irvine had broad-ranging academic interests in Gaelic, including lexicography, the Gaelic Bible, dialectal variation, orthographical reform, lexical borrowing and particularly Gaelic literature. He worked for many years on a book on Gaelic poets and poetry, *Caledonian Bards*, which was never

[1] It is a great pleasure to offer this brief contribution in honour of my friend and former colleague at the University of Edinburgh, Dr John Shaw, whose life's work has been dedicated to celebrating, respecting, preserving and elucidating the invaluable contribution of Gaelic tradition bearers to Gaelic tradition and culture. *Gum bu fada beò e!*

[2] Henry Mackenzie, *Report of the Committee of the Highland Society of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Co., 1805), iii.

[3] NLS MS Acc. 3184 (Section D) (recently rediscovered), inside back cover; John Mackechnie, *Catalogue of Gaelic Manuscripts in Selected Libraries in Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 1 (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1973), 342; Ulrike Hogg, 'The Life and Papers of the Rev. Dr Alexander Irvine', *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 28 (2011): 161–62. On the rediscovery of some of Alexander Irvine and Donald MacNicol's Gaelic manuscripts, see Roibeard Ó Maolalaigh, 'Lost Gaelic Manuscripts Found', *West Highland Notes and Queries* 5.10 (2024), 18; and Roibeard Ó Maolalaigh, 'Lost MacNicol and Irvine Gaelic Manuscripts Discovered', *Aiste* 7 (2024), i. It should be noted that MS 14787 referred to in these last two publications should read 14877. I am grateful to my colleague Dr Michel Bryne for spotting the typo.

[4] Roibeard Ó Maolalaigh, 'Tradition Bearers Named by the Rev. James McLagan', in *Seumas MacLathagain agus a Làmh-Sgrìobhainnean / James McLagan and his Manuscripts*, ed. Geraldine Parsons and Sìm Innes (Glasgow: CLOG, forthcoming).

completed or published.[5] In order to ensure their survival, Irvine had two copies made of his Ossianic collections, one for the Highland Society of London and another for the Highland Society of Scotland.[6] These or copies of these survive in the National Library of Scotland (NLS MS 14882) and the University of Edinburgh (EUL MS Laing III 475), upon which this article draws in addition to a range of other sources.[7]

The Rev. James McLagan was acquainted with the Rev. Dr Alexander Irvine, who visited him in Blair Atholl in 1802. On 10 September 1802, McLagan wrote to Irvine at Bunrannoch ('Bunranoch'), attaching an English translation of a Gaelic poem he had given Irvine during his visit. In the letter McLagan beseeches him to 'Come soon again' and asks him to remember 'us most kindly to the goo[d] families, by you, to whom I owe so much'.[8] Almost a year and a half after McLagan's death, Irvine, in a letter to Sir John Sinclair,[9] dated 22 September 1806, suggested that he had access to the collections of others, including, it would seem, to those of McLagan who 'left a collection of about 200 [*sic*] songs'.[10]

As previously noted, in his collection of Ossianic materials (NLS MS 14882, EUL MS Laing III 475), Irvine provides information regarding his own informants and in some cases his informants' sources, as well as the names of others from whom he received written copies of poems. Some provenance data for his Ossianic poems are summarised by Irvine in two documents that he wrote in 1802, one headed 'Dalchosnie 3 February 1802' (NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, ff. 1a–2b) and the other headed 'A list of ancient poems & fragments collected by M^{r} Irvine' (NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, ff. 3a–6b). The former provides the testimony of an informant named as 'Daniel McIver alias Robertson', who made an oral declaration before 'Jo[hn] Stewart of Crossmount', 'Alex^{r} McDonald Dalchosnie' and 'Cap^{t} L: S: R:[?] of pool'. The latter document was written in Edinburgh on 8 April 1802 and also refers to a declaration made before 'Capt Alex^{r} MacDonald of Dalchosnie and John Stewart of Crossmount'.[11] The 'Alexander MacDonald' referred to here can be identified as Alexander of Dalchosnie (1762–1808), son of John MacDonald (1721–1809).[12] 'John Stewart' may refer to John Stewart of Crossmount (1732–1812).[13] Dalchosnie and Crossmount are just to the east of Kinloch Rannoch in Perthshire.

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[5] This brief description of Irvine draws from Ulrike Hogg's excellent article on Irvine and Irvine's papers and manuscripts; see Hogg, 'Life and Papers', 97–148. In 2022, the majority of the lost Irvine manuscripts referred to by Hogg, missing since the late 1960s, were rediscovered and repatriated to the National Library of Scotland, where they are available once again to researchers. See Ó Maolalaigh, 'Lost Gaelic Manuscripts Found' and Ó Maolalaigh, 'Lost MacNicol and Irvine Gaelic Manuscripts Discovered'. On Irvine, see also Hew Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae*, vol. IV (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1923), 159, 179.

[6] Alexander Irvine, 'Ossian', in *The Edinburgh Encyclopædia*, vol. 16, ed. David Brewster (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1830), 182, col. 1.

[7] See also J. F. Campbell, *Leabhar na Feinne* (London: Spottiswoode & Co., 1872), xxv–xxvi, Text O.

[8] NLS MS Acc. 3184 (Section A, (11)) (recently rediscovered); Mackechnie, *Catalogue of Gaelic Manuscripts*, 338; Hogg, 'Life and Papers', 149–50. Mackechnie notes the address of 'Reverend James Mc- [*sic*]' as 'Balnaine'. The correct readings are 'James McLagan' and 'Baluaine'.

[9] For Sinclair of Ulbster in Caithness (1754–1835), 'the great agriculturist, writer and politician', see Ronald Black, 'The Gaelic Academy: The cultural commitment of The Highland Society of Scotland [I]', *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 14.2 (1986): 5.

[10] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.11, fo. 74b.

[11] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, fo. 5b.

[12] Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the MacDonalds and Lords of the Isles* (Inverness: A. & W. Mackenzie, 1881), 511–12.

[13] WikiTree s.v. John Stewart, https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Stewart-40976.

The account below, which includes the names of twenty-three informants, only one of whom is female,[14] brings all of the evidence together from the sources mentioned above. The description provided here is supplemented in some cases by further information deriving from an account of Alexander Stewart's tour of the Highlands in 1807 to procure Ossianic verse and prose tales. Stewart, the North Uist schoolmaster and co-compiler of *Co-chruinneacha Taoghta* (1804),[15] was funded by the Highland Society of London to undertake this tour and collection. The account of Stewart's tour survives in Colin Macrae's summary of a report compiled by Stewart himself and sent by Macrae to Sir John Sinclair on 19 September 1808.[16] See Appendix A for an alphabetical list of the informants mentioned by Irvine.[17]

Daniel / Donald McIver alias Robertson (b. *c.* 1717–22)

Daniel McIver alias Robertson is described as a foxhunter in 'Camus Chuirich in Breadalbane aged 82',[18] his place of residence also being referred to as 'Lochtayside'.[19] *Camus Chuirich* represents modern Camusurich on the south side of Loch Tay, five miles northeast of Killin. The Rev. Charles M. Robertson has it as *Camussurich*, *Camas a' Churraichc* and *Camas a' Churraichd*.[20] McIver could 'neither read nor write' and 'recites them all from memory'.[21] This Daniel is also referred to as Donald by Irvine,[22] which confirms that his Gaelic name was Dòmhnall. McIver gave Irvine a manuscript: 'MacIver before mentioned put in his hand a M.S. of modern date which he had no time to read and is now in Rev^{d} Mr Menzies of Dull's hands'.[23] The latter refers to the Rev. Archibald Menzies (1760–1839), minister of Dull from 1789 until his death in 1839.[24] McIver had evidently been learning Ossianic poems since his late teens or early twenties some time before *c.* 1742 ('upwards of 60 years ago').[25] This would suggest that McIver was born *c.* 1722. Alexander Stewart in his 1807 report also refers to Donald Robertson 'aged 90, on the South side of Loch Tay, a Foxhunter' who 'at one period could recite nearly all the Poems known in the Country relating to Fingal & his heroes [. . .] M^{r} Irvine has many of this man's Collection'.[26] Stewart's

[14] This is in sharp contrast to the twenty informants named by McLagan, half of whom were women. See Appendix C and Ó Maolalaigh, 'Tradition Bearers' (forthcoming).
[15] Alexander Stewart and Donald Stewart, *Cochruinneacha Taoghta de Shaothair nam Bard Gaëleach*, 2 vols (Duneidin: T. Stiuart, 1804).
[16] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.14, ff. 102–03; Ulrike Hogg, 'Alexander Stewart's Tour of the Highlands, 1807, and his Findings' (unpublished). I am grateful to Dr Ulrike Hogg for sharing with me a copy of her unpublished paper and digital images of the manuscript. For Alexander Stewart, see John MacInnes, 'Stewart, Alexander', in *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, ed. Derick S. Thomson. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd (1987 [1983]), 275.
[17] In what follows, the names of tradition bearers not interviewed directly by Irvine are given in italics.
[18] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, fo. 1a (February 1802); cf. ff. 4a, 4b (April 1802).
[19] NLS MS 14882, fo. 91b, 101b; EUL MS Laing III 475, ff. 91b, 101b., 111b. There is reference to the year 1802 on fo. 101b of both manuscripts.
[20] Jacob King, ed., *Scottish Gaelic Place-Names: The Collected Works of Charles M. Robertson, 1864–1927* (Sleat, Isle of Skye: Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, 2019), 311.
[21] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, ff. 5a, 5b (April 1802); cf. NLS MS 73.2.15, fo. 2b (February 1802).
[22] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, fo. 4a; NLS MS 14882, ff. 91b, 101b, 113b, 166b; EUL MS Laing III 475, fo. 101b. Irvine, in a letter to Sir John Sinclair, refers to 'a Donald M^{c}Iver an old man at Lochtayside' (NLS MS Adv. 73.2.26, fo. 39v; Hogg, 'Alexander Stewart's Tour').
[23] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, fo. 6b (April 1802); cf. 'From the M.S. of M^{c} Iver, foresaid' (NLS MS 14882, fo. 166b; EUL MS Laing III 475, fo. 162a).
[24] Scott, *Fasti* vol. IV, 177.
[25] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, fo. 4b (April 1802).
[26] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.14, fo. 102v; Hogg, 'Alexander Stewart's Tour'.

evidence would date McIver's birth to *c*. 1717. McIver names four of his own sources: John Henderson, Michael McLeran, Duncan Robertson and Archibald Carmichael.

John Henderson (d. before *c*. 1772)

John Henderson was a tailor in Acharn, Breadalbane, who had died some time before *c*. 1772 ('dead upwards of thirty years ago').[27] Acharn is on the south side of Loch Tay, just under two miles southwest from Kenmore. McIver had learnt Ossianic poems from Henderson before *c*. 1758 ('upwards of 44 years ago').[28] This may be the same John Henderson, tailor, listed by James McLagan as one of the Rev. Dr Donald McNicol's informants.[29] Alternatively, perhaps this is the John Henderson from Glen Orchy, an uncle of Finlay McKenrick / Henderson from 'Croitandeor' in Glen Dochart, Perthshire from whom Archibald Fletcher (born *c*. 1735) from Achalader, Glen Orchy, learnt Ossianic material.[30] For Fletcher, see below.

John McNicol (before *c*. 1720–*c*. 1781 [?])

John Henderson, the tailor in Acharn, had in turn learnt poems from John McNicol in Arimen, Glen Orchy, who is 'reckoned the best in the country for Ossian's and other old poems'[31] and described as 'the celebrated seanachie of Arimen Glenorchy'.[32] The McNicols of Arimen / Arrivain (*Àirigh Mheadhain*) in northeast Argyllshire, about four miles west of Tyndrum, were renowned for their store of Ossianic poems and lore.[33] This is very likely to be the John McNicol (born before *c*. 1720, died *c*. 1781), grandson of Duncan McNicol and 'tenant in Arivean in Glenorchay' referred to below, with whom James Macpherson consulted and from whom Archibald Fletcher learnt a poem *c*. 1771.

Michael McLeran

'Michael Mac Leran' was tenant in Cultie [?], Breadalbane, from whom McIver had learnt poems before *c*. 1762 ('upwards of 40 years ago').[34]

Duncan Robertson / *Donnchadh mac Aonghais Bhàin* (b. *c*. 1705)

Duncan Robertson was a tenant in Craigelig, Glen Lyon, from whom McIver had learnt poems before *c*. 1772 ('upwards of 30 years ago').[35] On 29 July 1801, Irvine got two addresses to the sun from the Rev. James McDiarmid of Weem, 'who says he got them from Duncan Robertson, Craigelig, Glenyon, upward of 40 years ago [i.e. *c*. 1761], when a student at College'.[36] In a document surviving in the papers of the Wedderburn family of Pearsie, now held in Dundee City Archives, the Rev. James McLagan also refers to Duncan Robertson in Glen Lyon, Perthshire, who recited 'an address to the sun' to the Rev. James McDiarmid (1744–1828),[37] Minister of Weem in Perthshire, in or before 1770.[38] In the deposition given under oath before Charles Stewart of Dalguise, a justice of the peace

[27] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, fo. 1a (February 1802); NLS MS 73.2.15, fo. 5a (April 1802).
[28] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, fo. 1a (February 1802).
[29] Appendix C; Ó Maolalaigh, 'Tradition Bearers'.
[30] In 1801, Fletcher gave his own age as 'about sixty-six'; see H. Mackenzie, *Report*, 271; Ó Maolalaigh, 'Tradition Bearers'.
[31] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, fo. 2a (February 1802).
[32] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, fo. 5a (April 1802).
[33] Ó Maolalaigh, 'Tradition Bearers'.
[34] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, fo. 1b (February 1802).
[35] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, fo. 1b, 2a (February 1802); NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, fo. 3a (April 1802).
[36] NLS MS 14882, fo. 117b.
[37] DCA MS GD/We/6/3; Scott, *Fasti* vol. IV, 191–92.
[38] Appendix C; Ó Maolalaigh, 'Tradition Bearers'.

for the county of Perth, at Dunkeld on 8 April 1807, McDiarmid gives the date of 'Summer 1765' for this encounter with Robertson, and names him as *Donnchadh mac Aonghais Bhàin*:

> some time in Summer 1765 he had written from Duncan Robertson, alias Donach mac Aonais bhan's oral recitation the Address to the sun in galic translated by Mr Js McPherson & published in the Poem entitled Carthon, that the original thus procured corresponds almost verbatim with the translation given by McPherson […] that the said Duncan Robertson was then about sixty years old […] that he was a man distinguished in the country for this great collection of Ossianic Poems. that he called the address to the sun Laoigh Osseain don ghrein 's e dall ['Ossian's lay to the sun when he was blind'] that he resided in Craigelig Glenlyon Parish of Fortingall & country of Perth, Deponer [*sic*] farther that he Mr McDiarmid gave a copy of said address to his son John to be given to Mr McKenzie of the Exchequer some years ago; that he received from said D. Robertson many other Poems universally ascribed to Ossian which he lost by lending them to some of his acquaintances & now does not exactly recollect their names or titles. that the said address was preserved by being transcribed on the blank leaf of a book & this is truth as he shall answer to God.[39]

Irvine, who had arranged the deposition on the request of another, states in his undated accompanying cover letter (which can be dated to *c*. April 1807) to an unnamed correspondent that Robertson was still alive 'some years ago':

> Besides I have no doubt that many people in Glenyon can even yet corroborate his [the Rev. McDiarmid] testimony & can dispone that D. Robertson was not only alive some years ago but had, as M^{r} McDiarmid dispones, a great many of Ossian's Poems.[40]

McDiarmid's evidence allows us to date Robertson's birth to *c*. 1705 and his place of residence – in the 1760s at least – as Craigelig, while Irvine's evidence suggests that he may have survived into the 1780s or 1790s. W. J. Watson notes *Creag Eileig* / *Creag Eilig* on Kerrowmore in Glen Lyon as the most southern example of a place-name containing the element *eileag* ('a deer trap').[41] It is situated on the south side of the River Lyon just south of Innerwick.

Archibald Carmichael

McIver got a poem from Carmichael before *c*. 1772 ('upwards of 30 years ago').[42] Archibald Carmichael, 'who had many Fingalian Songs', was from Lic near Killin. Lic seems to refer to Lic / Lix in Glen Dochart.[43]

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[39] NLS MS 14877 (15b), fo. 1r (recently rediscovered). The name 'Donal Mac Aonais bhan' and the date '18th April' given by Mackechnie, *Catalogue of Gaelic Manuscripts,* 338, §15 are both inaccurate.

[40] NLS MS 14877 (15a), fo. 1v. Irvine's cover letter mentions that 'the original of Ossian is now published' (fo. 2v), which supports a date of 1807, the year in which Macpherson's *The Poems of Ossian in the Original Gaelic* was posthumously published.

[41] William J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1986 [1926]): 491, and 'Place-Names of Perthshire: The Lyon Basin', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 35 (1929–30, printed 1939): 292. The Rev. Charles M. Robertson has *Creag nan Eildeag* and *Creag ĕilig*, where the symbol <*ĕ*> represents phonetic [ɛː], a long low-mid front vowel; see King, *Scottish Gaelic Place Names*, 298. I am grateful to Dr Jake King for discussing Robertson's use of phonetic diacritics with me.

[42] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, fo. 2a (February 1802).

[43] The Rev. Charles Robertson has Wester-Lix / *Lic Uachdrach*, Mid-Lix / *Lic Mheadhonach* and Easter-Lix / *Lic Iochdrach*; see King, *Scottish Gaelic Place Names*, 310).

Duncan Lothian / Donnchadh Loudin (Louduinn / Loudinn / Loudaidh) (*c.* 1730–*c.* 1812)

Duncan Lothian is described as a 'millar in Joncastle [*sic*]'.[44] Alexander Stewart recorded poems from the recitation of 'Duncan Lothian, Miller to Col. Stewart of Fincastle', thus illustrating that 'Joncastle' is a transcriptional error for Fincastle, which is less than three miles south of Blair Atholl.[45] This tradition bearer must be the published Gaelic author-editor-translator from Glen Lyon (b. *c*. 1730) who spent his latter years in Glen Fincastle and who died *c*. 1812. His name in Gaelic is spelt variously as *Donacha Loudin*, *Donnacha Louduinn* / *Loudaidh* and *Donnacha Loudinn*.[46] He was a joiner and a miller, and worked as a turner and wheelwright (of spinning wheels) with Dugald Buchanan (1716–68).[47] He translated the reformed catechism in 1779.[48] He also published a Gaelic dialogue between the Pope and Reformation in 1797,[49] and a collection of Gaelic and English songs, including macaronic songs, in 1780.[50] A possible connection with the Rev. James McLagan has yet to be explored.[51]

Alexander Cameron

Alexander Cameron is described as a tailor in Easter Drumcharry, Fortingall.[52] Alexander Stewart refers to him as a 'Taylor in Fortingall' who had apparently 'refused permission to commit them [his many Ossianic poems] to writing' but adds that 'The Rev^{d} M^{r} Irvine can command him'.[53]

Donald Cameron

Alexander Cameron got a poem from Donald Cameron, who was also a tailor in the same place, i.e. Drumcharry, Fortingall.[54]

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[44] NLS MS 14882, fo. 3b (April 1802).

[45] The Gaelic name is recorded variously as *Fonn-Chastail*, *Fon-Chastail* (King, *Scottish Gaelic Place Names,* 263) and (*Gleann-*) *Fonnchaistuil* (Paul Cameron, 'Perthshire Gaelic Songs and their Composers: Paper No. II', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 17 (1892): 341; cf. 'Fonnachastle' (Donnacha Loudinn, *Deasbaireachd eadar am Papa agus an t-Athleasacha* (Edinburgh: Menzies, 1834): [3]).

[46] Donacha Loudin, *Orannaigh Gaedhealach agus Bearla le Donacha Loudin / A Collection of Gaelic and English Songs by Duncan Lothian, and other Hands* (Aberdeen: J. Chalmers, 1780): Gaelic title page; Cameron, 'Perthshire Gaelic Songs', 340, 341; Loudinn, *Deasbaireachd*, title page and p. [3]. The English title page in Loudin 1780 has 'by Duncan Lothian, and other Hands'. Mary Ferguson and Ann Matheson, *Scottish Gaelic Union Catalogue* (Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland, 1984), 88, refer to a printing of Loudin 1780 with a slightly different title: *Comh-chruinneachidh Orannaigh Gàedhealach agus Bearla*.

[47] Loudinn, *Deasbaireachd,* [3]; Cameron, 'Perthshire Gaelic Songs', 340–41; William J. Watson, *Bardachd Ghaidhlig: Gaelic Poetry 1550–1900*, 3rd edn. (Inverness: An Comunn Gaidhealach, 1976 [1918]), 268–69; Derick S. Thomson, 'Lothian, Duncan', in *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, ed. Derick S. Thomson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1987 [1983]), 157.

[48] [Duncan Lothian], *Leabhar Ceasnuighe Aithleasuighte* (Duneudain: Daibhidh Mac-Phatric, 1779). For ascription of the translation to Lothian, see Iain McLachlainn's *roimh-radh* ('preface') to Loudinn, *Deasbaireachd,* [3]; cf. also Ferguson and Matheson, *Union Catalogue,* 88, 163. McLachlainn was an elder in 'Fonnachastle'.

[49] Duncan Lothian, *Connsachadh eadar an Papa agus Reformation; Maille ri Sean Fhocail Gheur agus Comhadan* (Duneidin,1797); cf. Donald MacLean, *Typographia Scoto-Gadelica* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972 [1915]): 168; Ferguson and Matheson *Union Catalogue,* 88; Watson *Bardachd,* 29–37, 268.

[50] Loudin, *Orannaigh Gaedhealach.*

[51] Anonymous, 'A Gaelic Norwegian Ballad', *The Highland Monthly* 3.1 (June 1889),148; Derick S. Thomson, 'A Catalogue and Indexes of the Ossianic Ballads in the McLagan MSS', *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 8.2 (1958), 191.

[52] NLS MS 14882, fo. 152b; cf. 'Druimcharry, Fortingale' (NLS MS 14882, fo. 167b); cf. also NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, fo. 4a (April 1802).

[53] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.14, fo. 102r; Hogg, 'Alexander Stewart's Tour'.

[54] NLS MS 14882, fo. 152b.

Archibald Fletcher (b. *c.* 1735)

Irvine had also heard Archibald Fletcher in Glen Orchy repeat an Ossianic poem but it was 'so imperfect and unintelligible that he did not venture to take it down, as the man promised to get a more perfect edition'.[55] This reference must be to Archibald Fletcher (born *c*. 1735) from Achalader, Glen Orchy, who gave evidence to the Highland Society of Scotland on 19 January 1801 and who deposited with the Society a manuscript of 194 pages consisting of Ossianic poems taken down by others from his own recitation some time between 1798 and 1801. The manuscript survives in the National Library of Scotland (NLS MS Adv. 73.1.24) and is watermarked 1798.[56] In his evidence to the Highland Society, Fletcher named the following nine tradition bearers, from some of whom he had learnt or heard Ossianic poems:[57] John McNicol, Duncan McNicol, John Robertson, Janet McKenrick / Henderson, Finlay McKenrick / Henderson, John McKenrick, John McIntyre, Duncan McIntyre and Nicol McNicol. The information provided by Fletcher about these tradition bearers is summarised in the following subsections, and an alphabetical list is provided in Appendix B.

John McNicol (before *c*. 1720–*c*. 1781)

John McNicol is described as a 'tenant in Arivean in Glenorchay'. John McNicol died *c*. 1781 ('about twenty years ago') and was born before *c*. 1720 ('was above sixty at his death'). He was grandson of Duncan McNicol (below). James Macpherson had consulted him and may have received poems from him. Fletcher had learnt a poem from him *c*. 1771 ('about thirty years ago'). This is most likely the John McNicol referred to above, 'the celebrated seanachie of Arimen Glenorchy', from whom John Henderson had learnt poems.

Duncan McNicol (b. *c*. (1671–c. 1681) – *c*. (1751–*c*. 1761/1764))

Duncan McNicol is referred to as 'tenant in the same place' (i.e. 'Arivean') and is identified as John McNicol's grandfather. According to Fletcher, he died *c*. 1751–*c*. 1761 ('died about forty or fifty years ago') and was born *c*. 1671–*c*. 1681 ('about eighty years of age at his death'). I have tentatively suggested elsewhere that this Duncan might be identified as Donnchadh Riabhach MacNeacail, alias 'Modern Ossian', referred to by the Rev. Donald McNicol and known to the Rev. John Smith (1747–1807) since his boyhood.[58] McLagan names a Duncan McNicol, son of Archibald McNicol from Arrivain as an informant of the Rev. Dr Donald McNicol.[59]

John Robertson

Fletcher learnt a poem from John Robertson 'in Tullochean on Loch-Tay side in Breadalbane, Perthshire', from who he received a written copy of it.

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[55] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, ff. 5b–6a (April 1802).

[56] Campbell, *Leabhar na Feinne*, [v]–vi, xvi–xvii; Donald Mackinnon, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Gaelic Manuscripts in the Advocates Library Edinburgh and Elsewhere in Scotland* (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1912), 277–78; Mackechnie, *Catalogue of Gaelic Manuscripts,* 277; Ronald Black, 'Catalogue of Gaelic MSS in the National Library of Scotland' (n.d.). See also Anonymous, 'Manuscripts of Ossianic Poems by Various Anonymous Hands from Recitation of Archibald Fletcher (born circa 1734), Achallader, Argyll', National Library of Scotland.

[57] H. Mackenzie, *Report,* 271–273.

[58] Smith implies that Donnchadh Riabhach MacNeacail was 'an old man' and still alive *c*. 1764, when he was himself aged 17. See Ó Maolalaigh, 'Tradition Bearers'.

[59] Appendix C; Ó Maolalaigh, 'Tradition Bearers'.

Janet McKenrick / Henderson
Fletcher learnt a poem from Janet McKenrick / Henderson who in 1801 was 'residing in Glenfalloch', who had in turn learnt it from the McNicols of Arrivain (*Àirigh Mheadhain*).

Finlay McKenrick / Henderson
Fletcher had heard Finlay McKenrick / Henderson 'in Croitandeor in Glendochart in Perthshire' recite. He is described as 'a very old man'.

John McKenrick [/ *Henderson*]
John McKenrick is referred to as Finlay McKenrick's uncle 'in Glenorchay' from whom Finlay McKenrick may have learnt poems.

John McIntyre (b. *c*. 1741)
Fletcher learnt a song / poem from John McIntyre 'in Stronmialachan in Glenorchay', who was born c. 1741 ('a man of abut sixty years of age').

Duncan McIntyre
John MacIntyre had in turn learnt the song / poem just referred to from Duncan McIntyre who resided 'near Bunaw, Argyleshire'. This is presumably not the Duncan McIntyre from 'Meggerny in Glen Lyon' referred to by Alexander Stewart in 1807, for whom see below.[60]

Nicol McNicol
Fletcher heard *c*. 1751 ('about fifty years ago') Nicol McNicol 'who resided some time in Achaladar' reciting poems 'in Arivean' and. This is unlikely to be the Rev. Dr Donald McNicol's father, as McLagan does not mention a Nicol McNicol amongst Donald McNicol's informants or sources; see Appendix C.

Captain Dr Alexander Morrison (1717–1805)
Captain Dr Alexander Morrison in Greenock provided Irvine with a number of poems in 1801 and 1802, including copies of two addresses to the sun by Ossian.[61] As Morrison himself corroborated in a signed declaration to the Highland Society of Scotland in January 1801: 'I have given the Rev. Mr. Irvine a true and faithful copy of Ossian's Address to the Sun in the original, and some other fragments of Ossian's Poems.'[62] Morrison, born at Skinidin, Isle of Skye, was a physician; he collaborated with James 'Ossian' Macpherson, who stayed with him in Skye for at least one night,[63] and could himself recite Ossianic poems. His mother was the daughter of Iain Breac MacLeod. He died, aged eighty-eight, on 28 January 1805.[64]

[60] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.14, fo. 102v; Hogg, 'Alexander Stewart's Tour'. For Meggerny, see 'Meggernie *Migearnaidh*' in King, *Scottish Gaelic Place Names*, 290.
[61] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, ff. 3a, 4a (April 1802); cf. NLS MS 14882, ff. 87b (date, 2 December 1802), 90b, 118b (date, 1801), 123b; EUL MS Laing III 475, ff. 87b, 90b, 115b.
[62] H. Mackenzie, *Report,* 178.
[63] H. Mackenzie, *Report,* 176–177.
[64] Thomas C. Parramore, 'Morrison, Alexander', in *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, vol. 4 (L–O), ed. William S. Powell (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 328.

The Rev. James McDiarmid (1744–1828)

Irvine got two addresses to the sun from the Rev. James McDiarmid of Weem on 29 July 1801, 'who says he got them from Duncan Robertson, Craigelig, Glenyon, upwards of 40 years ago [i.e. before *c*. 1761], when a student at College'.[65] For Robertson and the poems, see above.

The Rev. Duncan MacFarlane (1743–1841)

Irvine received an Ossianic poem from 'Mr Macfarlane min[r] of the Galic chapel in perth'.[66] This was the Rev. Duncan MacFarlan, who translated all but three of the Ossianic poems published by Hugh and John McCallum in 1816.[67]

John MacDonald / Iain Mòr Dhail Choisnidh (1721–1809)

John MacDonald, known as *Iain Mòr* in Gaelic, was chief of the MacDonalds of Dalchosnie,[68] *Sliochd Iain Duibh mhic Raghnaill mhòir*, at Bunrannoch in Perthshire.[69] His genealogy is *Iain Mòr mac Alastair mhic Iain mhic Ailein mhic Alastair mhic Aonghais mhic Iain Duibh mhic Raghnaill Mhòir na Ceapaich*.[70] He was an important source for the Rev. Dr Alexander Irvine. Irvine's son, the Rev. Dr Alexander Robertson Irvine (1806–67),[71] Minster of Blair Atholl (1843–67), in a partially surviving letter, dated 23 January 1867, to his own son, the Rev. Dr Alexander Irvine Robertson (1847–1925),[72] Minister of Clackmannan, says that Irvine had taken down Ossianic poems from John MacDonald of Dalchosnie's great store of poems and songs that he had heard and learnt from his father (Alexander MacDonald 1696–1745) and grandfather (John MacDonald), who in turn had inherited them from their ancestors, who had come from Keppoch in Lochaber. John's eleventh son, the Rev. Robert McDonald (1770–1842), Minister of Fortingall (1806–42),[73] had continued the family tradition of memorising and reciting Ossianic lays. Irvine had transcribed from the oral recitation of Charles Robertson (see below) in 1808 a poem at the manse at Fortingall in the presence of the Rev. Robert MacDonald, which as Ulrike Hogg notes, suggests that they may have collaborated in this work.[74] The relevant parts of the Rev. Dr Alexander Robertson Irvine's letter are as follows:

> Say to M[r] McNeill that the Poems he refers to were for by much the greater part taken down by my father from the recitation of M[r] McDonald of Dalchosnie grandfather of the late Sir

[65] NLS MS 14882, fo. 117b; EUL MS Laing III 475, fo. 115b. It is noted in the April 1802 document that Irvine received a copy of Ossian's address to the sun from the Rev. 'Mac Diarmid', Minister of Weem, who in turn got it from Duncan Robertson, who lived in Craigelig, Glen Lyon *c*. 1772 ('about 30 years ago') (NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, fo. 3a (April 1802)).

[66] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, fo. 3b (April 1802).

[67] Scott, *Fasti* vol. IV, 240; Hugh McCallum and John McCallum, eds, *An Original Collection of the Poems of Ossian, Orrann, Ulin, and other Bards* (Montrose: James Wall, 1816), xc.

[68] The Rev. Charles M. Robertson gives the Gaelic form of Dalchosnie as *Dail Chŏisnidh* (King, *Scottish Gaelic Place Names,* 268). I take the symbol <*ŏ*> here to represent phonetic [o], a short high-mid vowel. Iain MacIllechiar ('Place-Names of Rannoch', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 66 (2014): 69) has *Dal* [*sic*] *a' Chosnaidh*, although it is not clear what the authority for this form is.

[69] A. Mackenzie, *History of the MacDonalds*, 505.

[70] A. Mackenzie, *History of the MacDonalds*, 505–23 (esp. 510–15).

[71] Scott, *Fasti* vol. IV, 146.

[72] Scott, *Fasti* vol. IV, 303.

[73] Scott, *Fasti* vol. IV, 179.

[74] Hogg, 'Life and Papers', 106; NLS MS 14882, fo. 37v. See also Charles Robertson below.

> John McDonald[75] [1788–1866] in the period between 1800 & 1804. It may have been a year or two earlier, but certainly not later. The old gentleman had an extraordinary store of similar poetry, which my father had not time to take down. He had acquitted it from his father and grandfather, who had gotten & preserved it in the same way, in their memory. They were of Keppoch in Lochaber & it was then the poems were learnt by the M^{c}Donalds of three generations above mentioned. I cannot say of course thro what channel the poetry first came into the family, but that it was in existence early in the last century is manifest, for the M^{c}Donalds of that time were a long lived race, & if you only go back for two generations from the old gentleman when my father heard repeat the poems, you will reach the 45, or an earlier date, but it is quite safe to go back much farther, tho' I cannot legally prove it to be so. […] There are a fragment or two among the poems taken down by my father from other old people in Rannoch at the same time as the others, but I can't say which they are. […] You may tell him as a proof of the singular gift of memory of many of these old reciters, that old Dalchosnie had a vast store of songs taken down, by his son, Robert who was at home when my father was in Rannoch, & these or at least many of them, are still in the possession of his son Dr McDonald in Strathardle. I have heard old Rob sing some of the songs for a whole night. And with sets of poems, the heroic taken down from my father & the lyrics jotted by Robert, were but a small part of what the old man could repeat.[76]

It would appear that MacDonald's house in Dalchosnie was the location at which Irvine took down some, if not many, of his poems, especially during the years 1801–04. The declaration made by Donald McIver in February 1802 was made at Dalchosnie.[77] One poem taken down by Irvine from MacDonald is dated 26 February 1801.[78] Irvine received a 'more correct' version of *Cath Mhànais* from John MacDonald.[79] Irvine wrote another poem from the recitation of John MacDonald at Dalchosnie, Bunrannoch, on 6 March 1804. MacDonald had learnt it before *c*. 1744 ('60 years ago and more') from Donald Stewart.[80]

Donald Stewart / Dòmhnall Ruadh mac Aonghais Ruaidh

Donald Stewart was known as 'Donald ruadh mac Aonais ruaidh' and was 'resident at Iempar [*sic*]'.[81] Iempar, or possibly Jempar, which is J. F. Campbell's reading,[82] may be a mistranscription (by both of the clerks who transcribed Irvine's Ossianic poems) for Tempar, which was in the parish of Logierait and lies on the south side of Loch Rannoch, two miles southeast of Kinloch Rannoch and just to the east of Dalchosnie.[83] The letters 'I', 'J' and 'T' in NLS MS 14882 and EUL MS Laing III 475 are very similar.

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[75] This John MacDonald, son of Alexander (b. 1762), son of John (1721–1809), succeeded his grandfather in 1809 (A. Mackenzie, *History of the MacDonalds*, 515).
[76] NLS MS 14882, ff. ia–iib.
[77] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, ff. 1a, 2b (February 1802).
[78] NLS MS 14882, fo. 124b.
[79] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15, fo. 4b (April 1802).
[80] NLS MS 14882, fo. 51b; EUL MS Laing III 475, fo. 52b. The same information occurs in two leaves (four pages) of blue paper inserted into EUL MS Laing III 475 between pp. [iib] and [iiia] (at p. [2b]), where Stewart's name is spelt 'Stuart'.
[81] NLS MS 14882, fo. 51b.
[82] Campbell, *Leabhar na Feinne,* 15, col. 2.
[83] Robertson has *Teampar* (King, *Scottish Gaelic Place Names*, 268); cf. MacIllechiar, 'Place-Names', 69, 97. The blue paper insert referred to in n. 81 above has 'Tempar' although the letter 'T' resembles the letters 'J' and 'I'.

Archibald Stewart
Archibald Stewart, described as a 'man servant, Dalchosnie, Rannoch', recited for Irvine on 19 February 1801.[84]

Murdoch McLennan (b. c. 1742)
Roderick McLennan, 'Tacksman in Kintail', took down a poem from the recitation of Murdoch McLennan, Kintail, who was then aged about sixty, in the presence of Mr Alexander Stewart and 'many others' on 25 August 1802 in Milltown, Rannoch. He had in turn learnt it from his father 'many years before'.[85] Roderick MacLennan (1765–1855) was tacksman of Killilan (*Cill Fhaolain*) in Glenshiel and later innkeeper at Shiel House near Shiel Bridge. He died, aged ninety, at the Sligachan Inn on Skye which was run by his second son to be named Alexander (b. 1822).[86]

Charles Robertson
Charles Robertson from Loch Tay Side repeated a poem in the presence of the Rev. Robert McDonald (1770–1842), son of John McDonald of Dalchosnie (*Iain Mòr*) and Minster of Fortingall (1806–42), at his manse on 24 November 1808.[87] For his grandmother, see Helen MacLennan, below.

Helen MacLennan
Charles Robertson had learnt the poem referred to above *c*. 1790 ('18 years ago') from Helen McLennan, his grandmother.[88]

MacIntyre [Duncan] (b. *c.* 1732)
A poem was taken down from '___ Macintyre, Glenlyon, who can neither read nor write'. No forename is given.[89] Another was taken down from 'M^{r} Macintyre, foresaid, Glenlyon'.[90] This is very likely to be the Duncan McIntyre 'aged 75' from 'Meggerny in Glen Lyon' referred to by Alexander Stewart in 1807.[91]

John Stewart (b. *c.* 1722 / 23)
John Stewart, who is described as a tenant at 'Bohaly, aged 86', recited a poem in Irvine's presence on 1 November 1808.[92] Bohally is in Perthshire to the northwest of Loch Tummel, just east of Tummel Bridge. Alexander Stewart in 1807 refers to this John Stewart as being 'aged 84, Tenant in Bohally, Parish of Dull' who 'has been a general Reciter at Late wakes, &c. for many years'.[93]

[84] NLS MS 14882, fo. 20b; cf. fo. 64b; EUL MS Laing III 475, fo. 21b; cf. fo. 64b. Mackechnie's date '19th Dec. 1811' is incorrect (Mackechnie, *Catalogue of Gaelic Manuscripts*, 563, col. 1, (5)); cf. Campbell, *Leabhar na Feinne,* 57, col. 1.
[85] NLS MS 14882, ff. 23b, 24b; EUL MS Laing III 475, fo. 25b.
[86] David Alston, 'Enslaved Africans and Scottish Enslavers in Guyana', s.v. Maclennan (Killilan, Glenshiel), accessed 24/06/2025.
[87] NLS MS 14882, ff. 37b, 101b; EUL MS Laing III 475, ff. 38b, 56b, 101b. There is reference to the year 1808 on fo. 101b of both manuscripts.
[88] NLS MS 14882, fo. 37b; cf. also ff. 46b, 56b, 101b; EUL MS Laing III 475, fo. 38b; cf. also fo. 47b.
[89] NLS MS 14882, fo. 71b; EUL MS Laing III 475, fo. 71b.
[90] NLS MS 14882, fo. 77b; EUL MS Laing III 475, fo. 77b.
[91] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.14, fo. 102v; Hogg, 'Alexander Stewart's Tour'.
[92] NLS MS 14882, fo. 96b; NLS MS 14882, fo. 96b.
[93] NLS MS Adv. 73.2.14, fo. 102r; Hogg, 'Alexander Stewart's Tour'.

Angus Stewart

Angus Stewart recited *An Tailfhear do na Fiannaibh* ('Chaidh mi turus dheanamh eudaich' 'I once went to make clothes') for Irvine at Dalchosnie on 25 February 1801. He is described in NLS MS 14882 as a tailor at Runrannoch [*sic*], a mistranscription for Bunrannoch.[94] Stewart learned it from another tailor, Donald Dewar; see below. I have tentatively suggested elsewhere that this parodic poem about a Scottish tailor from Glen Lochy who served the *Fèinn*, said to have been composed in 1715 by a McNicol from Arrivain, may be ascribed to Duncan Riabhach McNicol, the 'Modern Ossian' referred to above.[95]

Donald Dewar (d. before 25 February 1801)

Donald Dewar, from whom Angus Stewart learned *An Tailfhear do na Fiannaibh*, is described as a tailor 'now dead', i.e. by 25 February 1801.[96]

APPENDIX A – Informants mentioned by the Rev. Alexander Irvine

Cameron, Alexander
  Cameron, Donald
  Carmichael, Archibald
  Dewar, Donald (d. before 25 February 1801)
Fletcher, Archibald (b. *c*. 1735)
  Henderson, John (d. before *c*. 1772)
Lothian, Duncan; Donnchadh Loudin (Louduinn / Loudinn / Loudaidh) (*c*. 1730–*c*. 1812)
MacDonald, John; Iain Mòr Dhail Choisnidh (1721–1809)
MacFarlane, Rev. Duncan (1743–1841)
MacIntyre [Duncan]
  MacLennan, Helen
McDiarmid, Rev. James (1744–1828)
McIver, Daniel / Donald; alias Robertson (b. *c*. 1717–22)
  McLeran, Michael
McLennan, Murdoch (b. *c*. 1742)
  McNicol, John (before *c*. 1720–*c*. 1781 [?])
Morrison, Captain Dr Alexander (1717–1805)
Robertson, Charles
  Robertson, Duncan; *Donnchadh mac Aonghais Bhàin*
Stewart, Angus
Stewart, Archibald
Stewart, Donald; *Dòmhnall Ruadh mac Aonghais Ruaidh*
Stewart, John (b. *c*. 1722 / 23)

APPENDIX B – Informants / sources mentioned by Archibald Fletcher

McIntyre, Duncan

[94] NLS MS 14882, fo. 156b; Bunrannoch appears in EUL MS Laing III 475, fo. 153a.
[95] Ó Maolalaigh, 'Tradition Bearers'.
[96] NLS MS 14882, fo. 156b. Laing III 475 fo. 153a.

McIntyre, John (b. *c*. 1741)
McKenrick / Henderson, Finlay
McKenrick / Henderson, Janet
McKenrick [/ Henderson], John
McNicol, Duncan (b. *c*. (1671–c. 1681) – *c*. (1751–*c*. 1761/1764))
McNicol, John (before *c*. 1720–*c*. 1781)
McNicol, Nicol
Robertson, John

APPENDIX C – Informants / sources mentioned by the Rev. James MacLagan[97]

Chaimbeul, Anna
Henderson, John
McArthur, Catharine
McArthur, Robert ('Rob')
McGregor, Katharine ('Kate')
McIsaac, Alexander; Alastair MacÌosaic
McIsaac, Malcolm; MacÌosaic alias Calum an Ràdhair
McLagan, Janet
McLean, Margaret
McNaughtan
McNaughtan, John
McNicol, Archibald
McNicol, Duncan
McNicol, Janet
McNicol, John
NicAoidh
Robertson, Duncan; Donnchadh mac Aonghais Bhàin (c. 1705–[?]1790s)
Stewart, Isabel
Stewart, Janet
Stewart, William; Uilleam Stuart alias McFhinlay

SOURCES

MANUSCRIPTS

Dundee City Archives: DCA MS GD/We/6/3

Edinburgh University Library: EUL MS Laing III 475

National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh:
NLS MS Acc. 3184
NLS MS 14877 (15a)
NLS MS 14877 (15b)
NLS MS 14882

[97] From Ó Maolalaigh, 'Tradition Bearers'.

NLS MS Adv. 73.1.24
NLS MS Adv. 73.2.11
NLS MS Adv. 73.2.14
NLS MS Adv. 73.2.15
NLS MS Adv. 73.2.26

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‘The Dead Bridegroom’ (ATU 365) in Iceland

RÓSA ÞORSTEINSDÓTTIR

When the German scholar Konrad Maurer (1823–1902) came to Iceland in the summer of 1858, he travelled throughout the country and collected folktales, among other things.[1] He published them two years later as *Isländische Volkssagen der Gegenwart*.[2] One of the folktales which appears there in print for the first time was the story of the deacon of Myrká, told to Maurer by Sigurður Guðmundsson (1833–1874) the painter.[3] It is as follows:

> A young man had promised his beloved to accompany her, on Christmas Eve, to Christmas mass[4] at the church. He set out as planned; but when he wanted to cross a badly swollen stream, his horse shied from the ice floes which were being driven down, an unlucky tug on the reins caused it to sink, and during his struggle to save himself and his mount the rider received a wound on the back of his head from a sharp ice floe, which killed him at once. The girl waited for her lover for a long time; finally, late in the night, the rider came, silently raised her behind him on the horse, and rode with her to the church. On the way, he once turned to her and said:
>
> *Máninn líður,*
> *dauðinn ríður;*
> *sér þú ekki hvítan blett í hnakka mínum? Garún, Garún!*
>
> ‘The moon glides (*veðr í skyjum*, “wades in the clouds”, is the phrase normally used),[5] Death rides; Don’t you see the white spot on the nape of my neck, Garun, Garun?’
>
> The girl’s name is Guðrún, but the ghost cannot pronounce ‘Guð’ (God), causing the distortion of the name. The girl becomes fearful, but they continue to ride until they reach the church. Here the rider stops by an open grave, and says:
>
> *Bíddu hérna, Garún, Garún,*
> *meðan ég flyt hann Faxa, Faxa*
> *austr yfir garða, garða*
>
> ‘Wait here, Garun, Garun, while I take Faxi, Faxi (this is the name of the horse, derived from the word for a horse’s mane; as such it already appears in *Vatnsdæla saga*, ch. 34),

[1] Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir, ‘Konrad Maurer: Cultural Conduit and Collector’, in *Grimm Ripples: the legacy of the Grimms'* Deutsche Sagen *in Northern Europe*, ed. Terry Gunnell (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2022), 359–384.
[2] Konrad Maurer, *Isländische Volkssagen der Gegenwart: Vorwiegend nach mündlicher Überlieferung gesammelt, und verdeutscht* (Leipzig: Verlag der J. C. Hinrichs’schen Buchhandlung, 1860).
[3] About Sigurður Guðmundsson the painter as a teller of tales, see Terry Gunnell, ‘Jón Árnason and the Collection of Icelandic Folk Legends: Ripples, Flotsam, Nets and Reflections’, in *Grimm Ripples: the Legacy of the Grimms'* Deutsche Sagen *in Northern Europe*, ed. Terry Gunnell (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2022), 385–419; and Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir, ‘Konrad Maurer’, 381–382.
[4] Lutheran Icelanders refer to church services as ‘mass’.
[5] In fact, the phrase *veðr í skýjum* is not found in any of the extant Icelandic variants.

> east over the fence, fence'.[6] The words have a double meaning; it is customary that someone arriving at a farm ties up his horse outside the fence around the home-field, so that it will not damage the field; the cemetery, the dwelling-place of the dead, is also surrounded by a fence. When Guðrún hears these words she faints, but luckily the grave next to which she has been put down is right beside the lych-gate (*sáluhlið*), i.e. the entrance to the cemetery, over which bells often hang. As she falls, she grasps the bell-rope, and pulls it so hard it nearly breaks; of course the sound causes the ghost to vanish and she is saved.[7]

In his notes to the story, Maurer says that he does not need to point out for German readers the similarity between it and a German tale that is the basis of the well-known eighteenth-century poem, 'Lenore', by Gottfried August Bürger (1747–1794). In the German tales, like the Icelandic one, a rhymed verse about the moon and death which rides is common:[8]

> *[D]er Mond der scheint so helle, die Todten reiten schnelle* ['The moon shines so brightly, the dead ride fast.']

Then Maurer adds:

> Even with all these parallels, the above narrative is painted in thoroughly local Icelandic colours. The journey late at night to Christmas mass at a distant church, the ride through the swollen stream and its driving ice floes, without any kind of bridge, the lych-gate with the bell-ropes, the names Guðrún and Faxi, and finally the repetition of the last word of the verses which the *draugur* speaks, all this is as uniquely Icelandic as anything can be.[9]

It is noteworthy that the story is set in this specific place in Northern Iceland. Sigurður Guðmundsson grew up in the north, not in the area where the tale takes place, although it is known that he was in that region in the summer of 1856.[10] Someone might have told him the story on that occasion.

Jón Árnason´s collection of Icelandic folktales.

In the years after Konrad Maurer collected folktales in Iceland, Jón Árnason's great project of collecting Icelandic folktales began.[11] A few years earlier, Jón Árnason (1819–1888) and his friend Magnús Grímsson (1825–1860) had begun to collect folklore. They had published a small booklet of Icelandic folktales in 1852, but gave up because of the poor reception their effort had received in Iceland. When Maurer came to the country and learned of their work, he enthusiastically encouraged them to continue, and promised to find them a publisher in Germany. Magnús Grímsson died in 1860, and it fell to Jón Árnason to carry on. He did not himself travel throughout the country to collect

[6] The Icelandic word *garður*, translated as 'fence' by Maurer, literally means 'wall', i.e. a boundary wall, in Iceland made of stone and turf. The poem uses the plural form, 'walls'.
[7] Maurer, *Isländische Volkssagen*, 73–74.
[8] Maurer, *Isländische Volkssagen*, 74.
[9] Although elsewhere he uses the more general German word *Gespenst* for 'ghost', here Maurer uses the Icelandic term, *draugur*, which denotes an animated corpse rather than a specter.
[10] This is known, among other things, because he drew a picture of an old Icelandic musical instrument at Möðruvellir in Hörgárdalur, which is not far from the place where the girl in the story lived; see Matthías Þórðarson, 'Íslensk fiðla', *Árbók Hins íslenska fornleifafélags* 34 (1919): 6–7.
[11] See Terry Gunnell, 'Jón Árnason and the Collection of Icelandic Folk Legends: Ripples, Flotsam, Nets and Reflections' in Gunnell (ed.), *Grimm Ripples*, 385–419.

material, but rather wrote to his friends and schoolmates, many of whom were priests in various parts of the country, asking them to collect material for him. He received four different versions, from different collectors, of the story about the dead lover (or rejected suitor) who visits his beloved. In addition, Jón Árnason himself wrote down the story of the deacon of Myrká and published it in the first edition of the collection in 1862.[12]

Jón Árnason had the story from ‘mistress Ingibjörg Þorvaldsdóttir’ (1807–1873) who was then a housewife in western Iceland, having grown up in the Westfjords.[13] In his copy of the story, Jón Árnason – like Maurer – also mentions Sigurður the painter as an informant, and explains that subsequent additions, corrections and comments were made by Páll Jónsson (1812–1889), a priest at Myrká and one of those who collected material for Jón.[14] It is this version of the story that has become best known. All Icelanders know it, and it has often been translated.[15] The main events are very similar to those in the tale Sigurður the painter told Maurer, the main difference being that everything is described in more detail – for example, the physical environment, which Maurer didn’t need to describe for German readers, but which Páll Jónsson of course knew very well; these descriptions are his additions.

The events of ‘The Deacon of Myrká’ can be summarized as follows. The deacon visits the girl, Guðrún, shortly before Christmas and invites her to a Christmas party at Myrká. On his way home he must ford a river, at which point he suffers an accident, dies, and is buried at Myrká a week before Christmas. The girl receives no news of his death, however, and on Christmas Eve the deacon comes to pick her up. She sits behind him on the horse, and when they cross the river the deacon’s hat is lifted up so that she can see his skull, at which point he says, ‘The moon glides / death rides / don´t you see the white spot / on the nape of my neck / Garún, Garún?’ She does not answer (others say that she lifts up the deacon’s hat, sees the white skull, and says ‘I see that which is’). When they come to Myrká they dismount and the deacon tells her – in virtually the same words as in Maurer’s version – to wait while he ties up the horse. Seeing an open grave in the churchyard, the girl is terrified but manages to ring the church bells. At the same moment she is grabbed, but as she has not had enough time to put more than one arm into her coat before leaving home, the garment is torn apart so that the ghost vanishes into the grave with the coat, except for one sleeve, and the grave closes. Then we are told that Guðrún continues to ring the church-bells until people come to rescue her. At this point, Páll Jónsson adds that it was on this night that the ghost begins to haunt Guðrún, and continues to do so for half a month, so that it is necessary to stay up with her when she sleeps, the priest sitting on the edge of the bed reading the psalter. Later, a magician binds the ghost under a stone by the farmhouse. After that Guðrún improves and goes home, but is never ‘the same as before’.[16]

[12] Jón Árnason, *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og æfintýri*, vol. 1. (Leipzig: Verlag der J. C. Hinrichs’schen Buchhandlung, 1862), 280–283.
[13] Lbs 533 4to, 75r–76v. https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/Lbs04-0533/160?iabr=on#page/75r/mode/2up.
[14] The manuscript in the Jón Árnason collection shows that Jón wrote up the story, and that Páll Jónsson subsequently added to it; see https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/Lbs04-0533/157#page/73v/mode/2up, items 89 and 90.
[15] It has been translated to Danish, there are many translations into German and some into English; see for example Jacqueline Simpson’s translation of ‘The Deacon of Myrká’ in *Icelandic Folktales and Legends* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1979 [1973]), 132–136.
[16] Haunting implies physical attack by the ghost.

Jón's version of the tale is followed by comments by Páll Jónsson about the stone at Myrká.[17] Páll mentions that he had read an account stating that the stone had been brought to Myrká from a nearby mountain during the age of settlement (the 9th–10th centuries), and says that when he moved to Myrká[18] he saw a stone by the farmhouse that was deeply sunk in the earth. The steward told Páll that he had planned to dig up the stone forty years previously, but that his wife refused to allow him to do so because the deacon was underneath it. Páll had the stone dug up anyway, and he sent Jón Árnason a detailed description of the stone and its shape.[19]

In addition to the story he had himself collected from Ingibjörg, the first edition of Jón Árnason's folktale collection contains a variant written down by the farmer Sæbjörn Egilssson (1837–1894) in eastern Iceland.[20] In Sæbjörn's version, it is a hired man who is in love with the farmer's daughter, who wants nothing to do with him. The members of the household are on the way to church on Christmas Eve and must cross a river. The hired hand wants to give the girl a ride across the river, but she rejects him, and asks an old man to do so. Then the hired man says he will take her over the river at Christmas the next year. He dies after Christmas, and the next year someone knocks on the doors to the farmhouse. This happens three times, and someone goes out, but doesn't see anything. Then the old man tells the girl to go out because the person who has come wants to see her, but tells her that she should not answer anything he said. When the girl goes out she sees a man on a horse, and he grabs her up behind him. He rides off and says 'In the hole, in the hole', and then 'What hangs on the nape of my neck, Garún, Garún?' When he rides in through the church-yard gate the girl is able to leap off the horse, and the ghost vanishes.

The remaining versions of ATU 365 collected for Jón Árnason did not appear in print until the entire collection of *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur* was published in six volumes between 1954 and 1961. The first of these had been transcribed prior to the appearance of Jón's first volume, but the manuscript had reached him too late to be included. It came from another of Jón's correspondents, a different Páll Jónsson (1818–1870), also a priest from northern Iceland, who wrote down the tale as told by Guðrún Guðmundsdóttir (1825–1890). She had learned it in the north-east.

In this version, both the boy and the girl are hired hands on the same farm. The boy is in love with the girl, but she wants nothing to do with him. One Christmas they go to church together but can only get one horse. On the way, the hired man asks whether she thinks they will ride together the next Christmas, and she says 'no'. Then he says that they will do so, whether she wants to or not. Later that winter, the hired man gets sick and dies. The next Christmas eve, the hired woman (Guðrún) decides to stay at home while the other members of the household go to church. She is sitting with her coat over her shoulders, without putting her arms through the sleeves, when the ghost comes to fetch her on the priest's horse. She willingly gets onto it, behind the ghost, who rides off an then says: 'Garún, Garún, it is grey around the nape of my neck'. She tells him to be quiet and keep going. He stops by the churchyard and tells her, 'Wait, wait,

[17] For Páll's commentary, see Lbs 533 4to, 77r–77v, https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/Lbs04-0533/163?iabr=on#page/76v/mode/2up.
[18] Jón Árnason adds, '19 years ago'.
[19] Jón Árnason, *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur,* vol. 1, 280–283. Páll told Jón about the stone in a letter dated 5 September 1859, when Jón had asked him about the story of the deacon. Páll asked Jón to send him the story so he could add to it. On Nov. 3, Jón sent Páll the story, and on Feb. 7, 1860, Páll sent him back the manuscript with the additions and notes (Lbs 533 4to, 77r–77v). The letters to Jón Árnason from those who collected folk-tales for him are preserved at the Árni Magnússon Institute of Icelandic Studies, shelf-mark NKS 3010 4to. Many of them have been transcribed and are accessible at https://www.ismus.is/tjodfraedi/bref/?samsafn=2.
[20] Jón Árnason, *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur,* vol. 1, 283–284.

Garún, Garún, while I take Faxi, Faxi, over the walls, walls’. The girl at once throws herself over the church wall and runs to the church. As she escapes into it, the ghost grabs the coat, but Guðrún escapes because it was loose on her shoulders. She tells people what has happened. The priest’s horse is found dead in its stable with every bone broken, and Guðrún’s coat, ripped to pieces, is found in the churchyard.[21]

The fourth version of ATU 365 to be included in *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur* was that of a farmer, Jón Bjarnason (1801–1873) who, like Sæbjörn Egilsson, was from eastern Iceland.[22] This version is nearly identical to Sæbjörn’s. Both Jón and Sæbjörn recorded stories for the priest Sigurður Gunnarsson (1812–1878), another of those who collected material for Jón Árnason.[23]

Finally, a third priest to send Jón Árnason a version of this folktale was Skúli Gíslason (1825–1888). He doesn’t mention the name of his informant, nor where he collected the story.[24] Skúli’s version tells of a lover who promises his fiancée, Guðrún, that he will take her to mass at Christmas, but forgets to add ‘God willing’. Shortly thereafter he dies, and on Christmas Eve Guðrún is outside when her lover comes and pulls her onto the horse, rides to the church with her and jumps over the wall. He says, ‘Wait here Gárún, Gárún, while I take Faxi, Faxi, over the walls, walls’. At that very moment, the church bells are rung, the ghost sinks down into the earth, and Guðrún escapes. Skúli Gíslason recorded many folktales and sent them to Jón, most of them in the early months of 1860. Perhaps Jón did not print this version in his first volume because it was so short.

Torfhildur Hólm’s version

Torfhildur Hólm (1845–1918) was an author and teacher who grew up in south-east Iceland. In 1876 she moved to Canada, where she began to write down and collect folktales from the Icelandic settlers, usually women. One of her informants was Sigríður Pétursdóttir (1841–1916), a housewife in Winnipeg who had emigrated to Canada from eastern Iceland the same year as Torfhildur. From her Torfhildur got the story ‘A ghost visits his intended wife’ and twenty-three other stories. As in other variants from eastern Iceland, it is a hired man who is in love with the farmer’s daughter, and during the summer he suggests that they should ride together to mass at Christmas. The girl says she always looks after the farm while the rest of the household goes to mass on Christmas eve, but he promises that she will nonetheless ride with him at Christmas. In the autumn, the hired man drowns in a pond and is buried in the churchyard. When the ghost arrives, the girl says she is ready to ride with him, but she must first run into the farm. There she puts on a large, old-fashioned cape of her father’s, and fastens it loosely around her throat. On the way, the ghost continually asks the girl to look at the nape of his neck, but she avoids doing so. When they come to the church, he asks her to wait while he takes care of the horse, but she runs off and has just escaped into the church doors when the ghost grabs the cape. The girl tells what has happened, and that the ghost had ridden the priest’s horse. The priest’s horse is found dead, with broken bones, outside the churchyard, and the cape on the grave of the hired man.[25] Torfhildur moved back to Iceland in 1889, and must have written the story down between

[21] Jón Árnason, *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri*, vol. 3 (Reykjavík: Þjóðsaga, 1958), 352–353.
[22] Jón Árnason, *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur*, vol. 3, 353.
[23] Romina Werth, ‘*Vox viva docet’: Um tengslanet milli safnara og heimildarmanna við þjóðsagnasafn Jóns Árnaonar* (MA thesis, University of Iceland, 2015), 107–117.
[24] Many of the stories Skúli recorded are from the north, where he grew up, but others are from the south, where he was a priest. His version of ATU 365 appears in Jón Árnason, *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur*, vol. 3, 353–354.
[25] Torfhildur Þorsteinsdóttir Hólm, *Þjóðsögur og sagnir*, ed. Finnur Sigmundsson (Reykjavík: Almenna bókafélagið, 1962), 68–69.

1876 and 1889. It is striking that the girl seems to know what is going to happen and how she can protect herself using the large cape.

Characteristics of the Icelandic version

All these versions of the story have the Icelandic characteristics mentioned by Maurer: the landscape and society are Icelandic, and in all versions except that of Torfhildur the protagonist is named Guðrún. Its adaptation to Icelandic circumstances and the number of different variants from different parts of the country suggest that the tale has been known here for a long time. But what else is common to these variants, and how do they differ?

The table below summarises the Icelandic evidence by comparing motifs that appear in each of the seven variants studied:

SG (KM) Sigurður Guðmundsson (1833–1874), as told to Konrad Maurer

IÞ (JÁ/PJ1) Ingibjörg Þorvaldsdóttir (1807–1873), as told to Jón Árnason, with commentary by Páll Jónsson 1 (1812–1889)

SE Sæbjörn Egilsson (1837–1894), as written down and sent by him to Jón Árnason

GG (PJ2) Guðrún Guðmundsdóttir (1825–1890), as told to Páll Jónsson 2 (1818–1870) and sent to Jón Árnason

JB (SG) Jón Bjarnason (1801–1873), as told to Sigurður Gunnarsson (1812–1878) and sent to Jón Árnason

Unknown (Skúli) Unnamed informant, as told to Skúli Gíslason (1825–1888) and sent to Jón Árnason

SP (TH) Sigríður Pétursdóttir (1841–1916), as told to Torfhildur Hólm

Informant (Collector)		**SG (KM)**	**IÞ (JÁ/PJ1)**	**SE**	**GG (PJ2)**	**JB (SG)**	**Unknown (Skúli)**	**SP (TH)**
Girl knows of man's death	doesn't know	x	x					
	knows			x	x	x	x	x
Male's status relative to female	higher		x					
	lower			x		x		x
	equal	x			x		x	
Form of death	drowning	x	x					x
	dies			x	x	x	x	
Speech of the *draugur*	'the moon glides'	x	x					
	'into a hole'			x				
	'nape of neck'	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	'Wait'	x	x		x			x
Girl's response	answers *draugur*		x		x			
	says nothing	x	x	x		x	x	x
Whose horse?	rider's own	x	x					
	priest's				x			x
	not stated			x		x	x	
Girl saved by	bells	x	x				x	
	garment		x		x			x
	neither			x		x		

As regards the status of the protagonists, Ingibjörg Þorvaldsdóttir's version, told to Jón Árnason, is the only variant in which the man is of higher status (a deacon as opposed to a serving girl) – a detail

also present in the commentary by Páll Jónsson. The reverse is true in all of the eastern versions, where the protagonists are a hired man and a farmer’s daughter – the girl therefore possessing higher status than the man. For Sigurður Guðmundsson (Maurer’s informant) and for Skúli Gíslason’s unnamed informant the status issue is unstated, as they speak only of a ‘beloved’ (*unnusti*); for Guðrún Guðmundsdóttir, both the man and the girl are hired hands, thus of equal status.

The versions collected by Konrad Maurer and Jón Árnason share several attributes: only in them is the girl unaware that it is a ghost that has come to fetch her; only in them does he come riding his own horse; and only they contain the verse about the moon and death.

Other motifs characteristic of these Icelandic variants include the fact that something is wrong with the nape of the ghost’s neck; the fact that the girl is told to wait while he tethers his horse, and the fact that she does not respond to what he says. In three versions the girl is saved by the ringing of bells; in three others, by the fact that her outer garment is loose on her shoulders; while in the versions of Sæbjörn Egilsson and Jón Bjarnason she saves herself by leaping from the horse. Strikingly, in all cases the girl is saved; only in the commentary by Páll Jónsson do we learn that the ghost continues to haunt the girl after she escapes from him.

‘The Dead Bridegroom’ is known throughout Europe, and is included as ATU 365 in a category headed ‘Tales of Magic – Supernatural Adversaries’ in Hans-Jörg Uther’s update of the Aarne-Thompson classification system.[26] In the following, I will consider various possibilities of how the story may have reached Iceland.

Cultural memory?

Writing about Icelandic folklore, Eric Bryan has recently attempted to connect Icelandic folktales with religious change, both from paganism to Christianity c. 1000 and from Catholicism to Lutheranism in the mid-sixteenth century. He discusses the best-known variant of ATU 365, the one Jón Árnason collected from Ingibjörg Þorvaldsdóttir with the additions by Páll Jónsson, ‘because it is the most complete and most elegant’.[27] Claiming that the story ‘has deep roots in the Scandinavian beginnings of Iceland, reaching, [...] far back into Old Norse and even Proto-Indo-European origins’,[28] Bryan connects it to burial customs in pagan times, and with Eddic poetry in which a woman’s love, and her sorrow for her dead husband, are so strong that she is able to call him back from death to have a single night with her – or else she actually follows her husband in death. Bryan enumerates several ‘common elements’ which he says connect the medieval accounts and the nineteenth- century tale:

> (1) a man of good reputation—a deacon, chieftain, or hero—has died; (2) he is unable to complete his otherworldly journey to the afterlife; consequently, (3) certain burial proceedings are enacted that include the preparation of a beloved or bride.[29]

He then states that an important element in stories of the type ATU 365 is that they are not only about the loss of a beloved man, but also concern his preparation for the journey into the next world:

[26] Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*, 3 vols, Folklore Fellows Communications 284–286 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2004), I 229.
[27] Eric Shane Bryan, *Icelandic Folklore and the Cultural Memory of Religious Change* (Leeds: ARC Humanities Press, 2021), 25, n. 3. Bryan does not describe the other versions collected in Iceland.
[28] Bryan, *Icelandic Folklore*, 24.
[29] Bryan, *Icelandic Folklore*, 29.

> If [...] there is any value in the connections between medieval sources and post-medieval tales, then the difference between the early and late traditions indicate a kind of pejoration process in the development of ATU 365.[30]

This 'pejoration' is the idea that all sympathy that the people hearing the story might have had with the dead man has vanished, and in the stories from the nineteenth century it is apparently unthinkable that a living person would willingly accompany another into the grave, even though she loved him while he was alive.[31] Bryan then says:

> Acknowledging this pejoration process, however, points to a problem with the development of ATU 365. As the function of the bride's joining her fallen bridegroom in the grave becomes pejorated, the bridegroom's safe-conduct during his otherworldly journey to the afterlife is hindered. To put it another way, if the bride does not go with her bridegroom into the grave, then he cannot rest peacefully after death. 'The Deacon of Myrká' illustrates the problem quite well, for after Guðrún is saved from her fate that night, the deacon goes on to terrorize her and the farm at Myrká for two weeks. Only when the townspeople enlist the help of a *galdramaður*, a magician, is the deacon finally laid to rest, and then only after a great struggle in which a large boulder is set upon his grave.[32]

Bryan's conclusion, however, is questionable for several reasons. As has been noted, it is only in Páll Jónsson's addition that the ghost haunts the girl; in all the other versions of the story, she is saved, and that is the end of the story. Another feature of most other Icelandic versions is that, far from being his lover, the girl has not wanted to have anything to do with the man while he was alive. Often, she refuses to ride with him, only to have him threaten that she will do so at the following Christmas, whether she wants to or not. In this regard, the Icelandic stories resemble other tales in which the dead person returns to take revenge.[33]

Bryan also links the story of the Deacon of Myrká with 'Sweet William's Ghost' (Child 77), an eighteenth-century ballad which Francis James Child connects with the Eddic poems mentioned by Bryan.[34] Child himself, however, connects 'The Deacon of Myrká' with another ballad in his collection, 'The Suffolk Miracle', also known as 'The Holland Handkerchief' (Child 272).[35] Child's analysis also relies on the Jón Árnason / Páll Jónsson variant alongside the story as presented by Maurer, considering these two versions equal, and he provides a detailed analysis of the tale type, citing fifty-eight variants of the tale and twelve ballads from many European countries, from Russia to Iceland.[36] In nearly half of these variants the lover goes to war and dies in battle; in even more, the

[30] Bryan, *Icelandic Folklore*, 29.
[31] Bryan, *Icelandic Folklore*, 30.
[32] Bryan, *Icelandic Folklore*, 31.
[33] See Jón Jónsson, 'Heim sækir hefnd um síðir: Sekt og réttlæti í sögnum af afturgöngum', *Slæðingur* 1 (1996): 35–46.
[34] Bryan, *Icelandic Folklore*, 25; Francis James Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads,* 5 vols (New York: The Folklore Press; Pageant Book Company), vol. 2, 226–234.
[35] For connections with other ballads, see Ríonach uí Ógaín and Anne O'Connor, '"Spor ar an gcois is gan an chos ann": A Study of 'The Dead Lover's Return' in Irish Tradition'. *Béaloideas* 51 (1983), 138.
[36] Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, vol. 5, 58–67.

girl is saved by entering a building, most often a deadhouse in a cemetery.[37] Neither of these events is found in the Icelandic version – naturally enough, because neither of these elements reflects Icelandic conditions. The verse about the moon shining and death riding swiftly is found in all but twelve of the fifty-eight versions, including the Icelandic ones – though, as has been pointed out, only the two Icelandic versions recorded by Jón Árnason and Konrad Maurer include it. As Maurer himself noted, there are great similarities between the version he recorded from Sigurður the painter and German tales; even so, when they are examined carefully, it is only the verse, and the fact that the man comes on horseback and the girl sits behind him, which they have in common.[38] While it seems likely that the Icelandic version of the verse came from Sigurður the painter, it may be that he got it either from tales or from the poem by Gottfried August Bürger[39] when he was in Copenhagen from 1849 to 1858.[40]

Irish tales of this type don’t resemble the Icelandic ones much; in them, the horse is also dead, and the ghost vanishes at cockcrow, which is never the case in the Icelandic tales. Irish variants do, however, maintain that the girl does not know about the death of the young man, as in the versions from Maurer and Jón Árnason.[41] This is also true of most of the stories summarized in Katharine Briggs‘ *A Dictionary of British Folk-tales*[42], with the exception of the English ballad ‘The Suffolk Miracle’ or ‘The Holland Handkerchief’, which most closely resembles the Icelandic variant of any of those I have examined. The story might well have arrived in Iceland with English sailors, as discussed below.

Englishmen in Iceland

It is well-known that early in the fourteenth century the English bought fish from Iceland in Bergen, Norway. During that century, however, the Hanseatic League obtained more and more control there, to the detriment of the English, who therefore began to sail directly to Iceland, both for fishing and trade. Their presence in Iceland and its fisheries resulted in the historical designation of the fifteenth century as the ‘English Age’ in Iceland. Björn Þorsteinsson argues that between 1415 and 1475 the English appear to have been the only foreigners that came to Iceland (Norwegians were not

[37] A building in a churchyard where corpses could be kept until the funeral took place. Although Child does not mention examples from Norway or Sweden, in both examples I have found, the girl escapes into a deadhouse. In the Swedish version, the lover dies in battle, and the verse about the moon and death is lacking; the verse is, however, included in the Norwegian version (Lindow 1978, 191–193; Nicolaissen 1887, 26–27).

[38] See Ludwig Bechstein, *Deutsches Sagenbuch* (Leipzig: Verlag von Georg Wigand, 1853), 179; Karl Müllenhoff, *Sagen, Märchen und Lieder der Herzogtümer Schleswig, Holstein und Lauenburg* herausgegeben von Karl Müllenhoff (Kiel: Schwerssche Buchhandlung, 1845), 164; Otto Schell, *Bergische Sagen*, gesammelt und mit Anmerkungen herausgegeben von Otto Schell (Eberfeld: Baedekersche Buch-und Kuntshandlung und Buchdruckerei, 1897); Ulrich Jahn, *Volksagen aus Pommern und Rügen*, gesammelt und herausgegeben von Dr. Ulrich Jahn (Stettin: Verlag von H. Dannenberg, 1886), 404–407; and Gustav Jungbauer, *Böhmerwald-Sagen* (Jena: Verlag Robert Baierl, 1924), 220–221. The verse is found in all but one of them.

[39] The poem is printed in Grimm, Gunter E. (ed), *Gedichte und Interpretationen: Deutsche Balladen* (Stuttgart: Reclam Verlag, 1988), 69–76.

[40] Karl Aspelund and Terry Gunnell, ‘Stiklur úr ævi Sigurðar Guðmundssonar málara’, in *Málarinn og menningarsköpun: Sigurður Guðmundsson og Kvöldfélagið 1858–1874*, ed. Karl Aspelund and Terry Gunnell (Reykjavík: Opna: Þjóðminjasafn Íslands, 2017), 21–23.

[41] See uí Ógáin and O’Connor, ‘The Dead Lover’s Return’ in Irish Tradition.

[42] Katharine M. Briggs, *A Dictionary of British Folk-Tales in the English Language,* Part B: Folk Legends, Vol. I. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul).

considered foreigners!).[43] In his book *Sjórán og siglingar¸* Helgi Þorláksson discusses English trade with Iceland between 1580 and 1630.[44] Initially the English appear for the most part to have come from Bristol and Hull, but in the latter period they were usually from East-Anglia: Essex, Norfolk, and Suffolk. English fishermen salted fish on board, but they also purchased dried fish and bought other kinds of wares, primarily

> stockfish, woollen cloth […] and train oil. The Elizabethians were also fond of Icelandic dogs. [...] Woollen stockings and mittens were certainly imported into Lynn. Hawks and falcons were also popular. [... The English] could supply grain, malt, beer, and honey, ironware such as horseshoes, swords and scissors, hats, shoes and tight boots, glasses and combs, needles, and thread. In short all that Iceland needed [although the Icelanders appear to have been primarily interested in textiles,] cloth and linen, even silk.[45]

Helgi Þorláksson points out that

> the English – were everywhere, on the Westman Islands, Snæfellsnes, the Westfjords, in the north and east. There were no fewer than c. 1250–1500 people, many of whom came annually, often for many decades. They were well-acquainted with many Icelanders, with whom they traded.[46]

It is often forgotten that such interactions could have had a great influence on the transmission of oral material between cultural areas and its re-creation in a new place. None of the discussions of their economic dealings considers what might have happened when Englishmen and Icelandic men and women met seasonally or lived in the same place.

'The Suffolk Miracle' (Child 272), published as a broadside in London in 1689, had undoubtedly been known for some time; the title indicates an origin in East Anglia. In that version of the story, the lovers are not able to marry, probably because the young man is not of high enough rank for the girl's father. (This difference in rank is also the case in three of the Icelandic versions, even though the father is not actively involved in the story.) The dead lover arrives on a horse belonging to the girl's father, and complains of a headache on the way, although the ballad gives no explanation of the headache. Child, referring to a Cornish version of the story, suggests that

> where the revenant complains of a headache, caused by the powerful enchantment which had been brought to bear on him, we may quite reasonably suppose that the headache in 'The Suffolk Miracle,' utterly absurd to all appearance, was in fact occasioned by a spell which has dropped away from the Suffolk story, but is retained in the Cornish.[47]

As noted above, in all but one of the Icelandic variants the ghost mentions or asks about something unusual at the nape of his neck. In the versions published by Maurer and Jón Árnason, the question

[43] See Björn Þorsteinsson, *Enska öldin í sögu Íslendinga* (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1972).
[44] Helgi Þorláksson, *Sjórán og siglingar: Ensk-íslensk samskipti 1580–1630* (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1999). For a good survey in English, with reference to relevant publications, see Anna Agnarsdóttir, 'Iceland's "English Century" and East Anglia's North Sea World', in *East Anglia and Its North Sea World in the Middle Ages*, ed. David Bates and Robert Liddiard (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), 204–216.
[45] Anna Agnarsdóttir, 'Iceland's "English Century", 211–212; also Helgi Þorláksson, *Sjórán og siglingar*, 292–295.
[46] Helgi Þorláksson, *Sjórán og siglingar*, 259.
[47] Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, vol. 5, 64.

is part of the verse about the moon and death; only in those variants is it explained that he was hit by an ice flow when he died in the river. Elsewhere the ghost’s headache is just as unexplained in Iceland as in Suffolk. Also notable is that fact that only in those variants does he come on his own horse, whereas in other versions he arrives on someone else’s horse, as in the English ballad. In all the Icelandic versions except the ones from the east (which may be considered a single variant), the man asks the girl to wait while he ties up the horse. In the English ballad the horse is covered with sweat, but in Iceland he has a worse fate; the horse belonging to the priest is dead with all its bones broken. None of these elements is found in the variants from mainland Europe which I have identified, nor in Child’s analysis.

Conclusion

It is clearly not possible to assert anything about the precise journey of the story to Iceland, but most likely at some point when Icelanders were getting linen in exchange for fish or mittens and socks the story of the miracle in Suffolk, or the Holland-linen handkerchief that was found in the grave of the dead lover, was discussed.[48]

This example shows that it is misleading to consider all Icelandic folktales as native products, as is often done, and assume that they have deep roots extending back to Scandinavian heathendom. Stories have arrived in Iceland, and enriched the oral tradition of its populations, at various times since its original settlement.

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[48] An English friend notes that Holland linen was often used in winding sheets, so it is appropriate in the story.

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‘Giollas na gCos Dubh’

RÍONACH UÍ ÓGÁIN

Ní inniu ná inné a chuir saothar John Shaw ríméad mór orm an lá a dtáinig mé ar a leabhar *Brìgh an Òrain*: *The Songs and Tales of Lauchie MacLellan* agus ar léigh mé a raibh ann.[1] Ba léir go raibh caidreamh faoi leith ag John le Lauchie agus nach raibh Lauchie riamh gan scéal, amhrán nó seanchas nua le roinnt leis. Chuaigh an t-ábhar a tóigeadh ó Lauchie i bhfeidhm go mór orm – an saibhreas, an éagsúlacht agus ceol na cainte féin. Ba léir gur chuir John Shaw an-aithne ar Lauchie MacLellan agus gur iomaí comhrá agus píosa seanchais a bhí eatarthu thairis a bhfuil sa leabhar féin. As an seanchas agus as an gcomhrá a d’eascraigh an suaimhneas agus an caidreamh eatarthu.

Ach oiread le Lauchie MacLellan agus an stór ábhar aige bhí saibhreas iontach scéalta ag Pádraig Vailín Nia ó Chonamara. Bhí formhór a shaol caite ag Pádraig i bhFínis, oileán beag amach ó chósta Roisín na Mainiach, Carna, Contae na Gaillimhe. Baintreach fir a bhí in Pádraig faoin uair ar chuir mé aithne air, agus sa mbliain 1967 bhí sé féin agus a dheirfiúr Brídín tagtha chun cónaithe go Carna, i dteach beag tamall gearr soir ón tsráidbhaile. Nuair a thosaigh mé ag obair go lánaimseartha leis an mBéaloideas ag bailiú ábhair agus ág déanamh obair chartlainne, siar go hIorras Aithneach a théinn den chuid is mó, agus ar thóir amhrán agus a seanchas a bhí mé den chuid is mó freisin. Cé go dtug mé tús áite do na hamhráin sa gcuartú, luadh liom go mb’fhiú dhom cuairt a thabhairt ar Phádraigín Vail agus go raibh stór mór seanchais agus scéalta aige. Nuair a chuir mé aithne ar Phádraig in 1980, bhí sé go maith os cionn na cheithre scór. Ní raibh sa teach ach an bheirt – é féin agus a dheirfiúr Brídín – agus cuireadh fáilte mhór, chroíúil riamh romham sa teach beag sin. Níor thúisce mé seasta ar leic an dorais ná an cupán tae nó an miosúr in uisce te agus siúicre in mo láimh agam. Ar feadh tréimhse cúig nó sé de bhlianta nó mar sin bhí de sheans liom uaireanta fada a chaitheamh i mo shuí cois teallaigh acu. Chuir an bheirt acu an-spéis sna scéalta, sna hamhráin agus sa seanchas, agus bhaineadar an-spraoi as imeachtaí an tsaoil agus as saol na scéalaíochta.



Pádraig Vailín Nia agus a dheirfiúr Brídín. (Griangraf: CBÉ.)

Chuireadar spéis mhór chomh maith i mbailiú an bhéaloidis, agus ní raibh rud ar bith ab fhearr le Pádraig ná go dtabharfainn an leabhar *A Handbook of Irish*

[1] John Shaw, trans. and ed., *Brìgh an Òrain – A Story in Every Song*: *The Songs and Tales of Lauchie MacLellan* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000).

Folklore isteach liom agus go dtosóinn á cheistiú, i nGaeilge, faoina raibh sa leabhar sin.[2] Chuir Pádraig an-spéis sa nGaeilge, i bhfocla, i nathanna agus sna seanfhocla.[3] Ba bhreá leis bheith á bplé. Is cuimhneach liom gur luaigh mé leis an Oll. Tomás de Bhaldraithe go raibh mé ag bailiú béaloidis thiar i gCarna. D'fhiafraigh sé dhíom cé uaidh a raibh mé ag bailiú agus nuair a thug mé ainm Phádraig dhó, dúirt sé: 'Tá an duine is fearr aimsithe agat'.

Chuir chaon duine acu, Pádraig agus Brídín, spéis freisin sa taifeadadh fuaime agus bhí an bheirt acu chomh sásta go mbeadh siad le cloisteáil agus le feiceáil nuair a bheidís féin imithe den saol seo. Sa mbliain 1985 rinneadh físéip de chuid de scéalta Phádraig. Tháinig cuid d'fhoireann an Ionaid Chlosamharc i gColáiste na hOllscoile, Baile Átha Cliath, go Carna leis an obair theicniúil a dhéanamh. Cé nach raibh Pádraig ar fónamh an lá áirithe sin, thoiligh sé a dhul i mbun scéalaíochta. Rinne sé éacht, agus nuair a bhí an taifeadadh déanta agus an tae ólta, d'iarr Pádraig breathnú siar ar an scannán agus ba é a bhí bródúil as a lá scéalaíochta nuair a chonaic sé é féin ar an scáileán.[4] Chuir Bord Fáilte spéis sa togra a bhí ar siúl le scéalta traidisiúnta i nGaeilge a thaifeadadh, agus bhí iriseoir dá gcuid i láthair sa gcistineach beag tigh Phádraig an lá údan.[5] Tóigeadh go leor grianghraf agus bhí pictiúr Phádraig agus Bhrídín a tóigeadh lá an taifeadta sin ar chlúdach *Ireland of the Welcomes,* iris Bhord Fáilte san am, go gairid ina dhiaidh sin, maille le cuntas beag faoi Phádraig, faoina chuid scéalaíochta agus faoin togra a bhí idir lámha. Tamall ina dhiaidh sin, tháinig litir ó Mheiriceá chugam ó bhean thall i Meiriceá, duine gaoil le Pádraig, a fuair cóip den eagrán áirithe sin de *Ireland of the Welcomes.* Scríobh sí gur baineadh siar go mór aisti ach gur chuir sé sciatháin ar a croí, Pádraig a fheiceáil ar chlúdach na hirise agus é i mbun scéalaíochta. Tháinig Pádraig i gcabhair orm lá mór sin na bhfístaifeadadh agus laethanta eile faoi mar a dheireadh sé féin 'chomh minic is tá méar orm'.

Ach cén chaoi le fáilte agus féile Phádraig agus Bhrídín a chúiteamh? Thuig mé go maith nach raibh an meas ná an blas céanna ag Pádraig ar an mbuidéal Paddy a thabharfainn chuige ó am go chéile agus a bhí ar an mbraon dúchasach. Dhá réir sin, chuir sé an-áthas orm nuair a thugadh sé deis dhom anois is arís é a thiomáint fhad leis na hOileáin, áit a raibh soláthar cúpla mí de thogha an stuif le fáil aige. Ar an tine oscailte a dheintí an chócaireacht ar fad. Ba bhreá leo ronnach úr nó bia farraige ar bith. D'íosaidís uibheacha gach darna lá agus ní raibh lá ar bith nach raibh Pádraig ag cangailt creathnaí agus ag ithe carraigín.

Idir na blianta 1980 agus 1986 ba mhó a bhí mé i gcomhluadar Phádraig agus Bhrídín. Ar chuile chuairt bheinn cúpla uair a chloig sa teach agus d'inseodh Pádraig scéal nó dhéanfadh sé píosa cainte faoi amhrán, nó arís ar ais b'fhéidir go mbeadh sé ag cur síos ar chúrsaí leighis nó mná luibheanna nó b'fhéidir go n-inseodh sé slám scéalta faoi Dhónall Ó Conaill nó faoi Naomh Cáillín. I measc na scéalta aige bhí 'Curadh Glas an Eolais', 'An Dearg Mór', 'Rí Lochlainn', 'Scéal Chearbhalláin', 'Dubhmhac agus Donnmhac', 'Conchubhar Mac na Baintrí', 'An Doghardán' agus an scéal is cuid den aiste seo 'Giollas na gCos Dubh'.

An lá deireanach de Mheán Fómhair, 1982, d'inis Pádraig a leagan féin de 'Giollas na gCos Dubh' dom. Ba mhaith leis i gcónaí an maidhc a bheith ina láimh aige nuair a bheadh taifeadadh ar siúl; agus ba chuid lárnach de na seisiúin thaifeadta agus den scéalaíocht í Brídín, Ba bhreá léi na scéalta agus

[2] Seán Ó Súilleabháin, *A Handbook of Irish Folklore* (Hatboro, PA: The Folklore of Ireland Society, 1942). Treoirleabhar i mBéarla do bhailitheoirí béaloidis atá sa leabhar seo.
[3] Tomás de Bhaldraithe, *Foirisiún Focal as Gaillimh* (Baile Átha Cliath: Acadamh Ríoga na hÉireann, 1985).
[4] Físéip, CBÉ V0053. D'inis Pádraig trí scéal an lá úd: 'Curadh Glas an Eolais', 'Sir Lord O'Connor' agus 'Conchúr Mac na Baintrí'.
[5] Tháinig deireadh le Bord Fáilte in 2003; cuireadh Fáilte Ireland ar siúl ina áit.

d’éisteadh sí le chuile fhocal agus chuile eachtra go cúramach. Bhíodh sí féin istigh sa scéal ar bhealach faoi leith – bhí bá aici leis an ngaiscíoch agus leis an scabhaitéara. Cé go raibh an scéal cloiste cheana aici, ba nuaíocht agamsa é agus chaith an bheirt againn tamall ag éisteacht le Pádraig.

Ní fios baileach cá bhfuair Pádraig Vail a chuid scéalta. Bhí na hamhráin, an ceol agus an damhsa go mór chun tosaigh i bhFínis ach tá seans gur ó thaobh a mháthar, Máire Ní Ghuairim, a thóig Pádraig na scéalta. B’as Fínis dhi féin ach go raibh baint aici leis an bpobal taobh thiar de Charna, ceantar a raibh cáil na scéalaíochta air.[6] Tús an chéid seo caite a rugadh Pádraig agus Brídín agus is iomaí athrú saoil a chonaiceadar. Na blianta a rabhadar i bhFínis, ní raibh mórán de mhaoin an tsaoil ag duine ar bith. Ach san am céanna, chaitheadh sé go bhfaca agus gur chuala Pádraig agus Brídín go leor spraoi, ceol, damhsa, agus amhrán sna tithe beaga i bhFínis. I ndaonáireamh 1911 tugtar an t-eolas dhúinn go mba é Pádraig an té ba shine den mhuirín agus go raibh beirt deirfiúr, Annie agus Bridget, agus deartháir amháin, Peter, aige.[7] I bhFínis a rugadh agus a tóigeadh Pádraig, agus an chuid ba mhó dá mhuintir roimhe sin. Nuair a bhí Pádraig ina dhéagóir, bhí pobal bríomhar, timpeall céad, ina gcónaí i bhFínis. Bhí scoil ann agus freastal ar an scoil. De réir a chéile tháinig meath ar an daonra agus faoin uair ar thug Séamus Mac Aonghusa, an bailitheoir ceoil, cuairt ar an oileán daichidí na haoise seo caite, ní raibh cónaí ach ar an leathchéad ann.

Is fiú smaoineamh siar ar obair an bhailitheora seo agus ar an dlúthcheangal a bhí aige le Fínis, thar aon bhailitheoir eile de chuid Choimisiún Béaloideasa Éireann. Ba bhreá leis muintir Fhínse, a gcomhluadar agus a spraoi, agus bhailigh sé neart ceoil, amhrán agus seanchais uathu, go háirithe ó Sheáinín Choilmín Mac Donncha agus a mhuintir. Chomh maith leis an ngreann, leis an spraoi, leis an damhsa, leis na hamhráin agus leis an gceol bhí cluichí cártaí ar siúl agus cupáin dhá léamh.[8] Ach ní cosúil gur casadh mac Vail ar Shéamus, nó más rud é gur casadh, níor luaigh Séamus ina dhialann é, agus níor thagair Pádraig dhó agus mé ar cuairt aige.

Bhí ceangal le dúchas i bfad siar ag Pádraig Vail le Fínis. Chaithfeadh sé, mar sin, go raibh uaigneas mór air agus é ag fágáil slán leis an mbaile le theacht go Carna. B’fhéidir go raibh léargas beag ar an uaigneas seo agam lá a dtug Seán Guairim ó Roisín na Mainiach Brídín agus mé féin go Fínis. Ní raibh aon fhonn go Fínis ar Phádraig. Creidim go gcuirfeadh sé an iomarca uaignis air cuairt a thabhairt ar a fhód dúchais, áit a raibh na coiníní i réim faoin staid seo agus gan duine ná deoraí ina gcónaí ann.[9] Bhí uaigneas dá cuid féin ar Bhrídín. Nuair a shroich muid Fínis, thug Brídín fhad le fothrach tí muid – tigh muintir Nia. Bhí crann spíonán fós ag fás os comhair an tí, an t-aon chrann spíonán i bhFínis a dúirt Brídín. Nuair a chonaic sí an crann, agus é fós ag cur fás uaidh, chaith Brídín í féin ar an talamh agus chaoin sí go géar. Chomh luath is bhí an racht uaignis thart bhí Brídín ar a seanléim aríst agus ar ais abhaile linn sa gcurach. Níor chuir Pádraigín aon cheist orainn faoin turas agus ba bheag cainte a rinneadh faoi. Ach chaitheadh sé gur inis, agus b’fhéidir gur fhoghlaim, Pádraig a chuid scéalta, nó cuid

[6] Mo bhuíochas le Kelly Fitzgerald, le Seán Guairim, le Máire Ní Fhlatharta agus le Jackie Mac Donncha as a gcuid cabhrach leis an alt seo.

[7] http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Galway/Skannive/Finish_Island/453689/; ceadaithe 25/06/2025.

[8] Féach Séamus Mac Aonghusa, *‘Mise an Fear Ceoil’: Séamus Ennis – Dialann Taistil 1942-1946*, eag. Ríonach uí Ógáin (Indreabhán: Cló Iar-Chonnacht, 2007), 119 agus *passim.* Féach freisin Cnuasach Bhéaloideas Éireann ls. CBÉ 1280: 297–299, áit ar thug Seáinín Choilmín Mac Donncha cuntas ar a shaol do Shéamus Mac Aonghusa. Ceol, damhsa, amhráin agus spraoi seachas an scéalaíocht is mó a thagann chun tosaigh sa gcuntas uaidh agus é ag cur síos ar chaitheamh aimsire i bhFínis.

[9] Tá cuntas ag Tim Robinson faoi Fhínis faoi mar a chonaic sé féin é in *Connemara – A Little Gaelic Kingdom* (Dublin: Penguin Ireland, 2011), 194–197.

acu ar a laghad, cois teallaigh sa teach sin – an teach beag a raibh crann spíonán taobh amuigh dhe. Chuile sheans gur ann a chuala sé 'Giollas na gCos Dubh' an chéad lá riamh.

Scéal neamhchoitianta go leor é scéal seo Phádraig 'Giolla na gCos Dubh' agus tá a leagan féin aige dhe. Oíche Shamhna a tharla an eachtra do Ghiollas, oíche a bhfuil cáil i gcónaí uirthi go mbíonn an lucht sí, neacha osnádúrtha agus imeachtaí aisteacha san aer. Is minic gur Oíche Shamhna a chastar na sióga leis an duine beo.[10] Tagann an lucht sí chun tosaigh sa scéal agus go háirithe an chumhacht acu le buidéilín draíochta agus an treoir faoi na trí sraoi a chuireann ar a gcumas an cailín a fhuadach.[11] Is ó na sióga freisin a thagannn an treoir lena hurlabhra a thabhairt ar ais don chailín. Tá a fhios acu gur sa mbiorán suain i gcúl a cinn atá an chumhacht. Cé nach eol dúinn san insint ag Pádraig cén áit go baileach a bhfuil an eachtra suite, tagann na Sé Chontae, Contae na Mí agus an Róimh i gceist – áiteacha atá píosa fada ó Charna.

Go dtí seo, níor tháinig mé ach ar dhá leagan eile dhe, ach is cinnte go dtiocfaidh leaganacha eile chun solais le himeacht aimsire. Tá leagan den scéal ag Dúbhghlas de hÍde ina *Leabhar Sgeulaigheachta.*[12] 'Goillís na g-Cos Dubh' atá ar an scéal ann. Scríobh de hÍde gur chuala sé an scéal fada seo ó shean mhaor géim, Séumas Ó h-Airt, i Ros Comáin, san áit a dtagann an contae sin le chéile le Maigh Eo agus Sligeach. Bhí Séumas básaithe faoin uair a raibh an leabhar á chur le chéile ag de hÍde, agus dá réir sin, is óna chuimhne a scríobh de hÍde é. Scríobh sé 'it was an interminable story'.[13] Tá leagan eile de 'Giollas na gCos Dubh' i mBailiúchán na Scol.[14] Is ó Phádraig Ó Súilleabháin, i mBaile an Sceilg Thiar a bhailigh Maidhcín Sheáinín (Micheál Ó Siochrú) an scéal idir 1932 agus 1934. B'fhiú mionchíoradh a dhéanamh ar an dá leagan eile seo agus iad a chur i gcomórtas le leagan Phádraigín Vail. Agus is cinnte gur leaganacha den scéal céanna iad ach miondifríochtaí agus difríochtaí móra eatarthu. Tá na sióga – a gcumhacht, agus a gcaidreamh le Giollas – go mór chun tosaigh sna trí leagan faoi mar atá an chuairt ar an bpápa agus an ceadú do shagart aifreann a léamh arís.

Nuair a bhí mé ag bailiú ábhair sna blianta sin, go háirithe agus mé ag tosaí amach ar an obair pháirce, ar chaoi eicint bhí comhthéacs agus comhthéacsú an ábhair sa dara háit. Bhí mé ar bís na scéalta féin a thógáil ó Phádraig. Ag breathnú siar anois air, bhí iontas agus áthas mór orm bheith ag éisteacht leisean agus é i mbun scéalaíochta. Ba chuid de na scéalta é agus bhí sé féin istigh iontu. Ní féidir Pádraig agus na scéalta a scaradh óna chéile. Ba bhreá liom dá mbeadh tuilleadh ceisteanna curtha agam air – faoin scéalaíocht agus faoin saol i bhFínis, faoin lucht éisteachta, faoi na hócáidí scéalaíochta agus go leor eile. Ach thar rud ar bith eile, léirigh sé dhom go mba duine é a raibh bua faoi leith aige, é oilte ar ghnaithí na scéalaíochta ó thaobh ealaíne agus aestéitice dhe. Ach faoi mar a dúirt Pádraig féin, 'is dóigh go bhfuil sé cúpla céad bliain ó bhí sé ann'.

'Giollas na gCos Dubh'[15]

Pádraig: Bhí fear fadó ann agus is é an t-ainm a bhí air Giollas na gCos Dubh. Is dóigh gur leasainm a bhí air – Giollas na gCos Dubh. Ach bhíodh sé ag cuartaíocht a chuile oíche, ach bhí sé ag

[10] Féach, mar shampla, Seán Ó hEochaidh, Máire Mac Néill agus Séamas Ó Catháin, *Síscéalta ó Thír Chonaill: Fairy Legends from Donegal* (Baile Átha Cliath: Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann, 1977), 104–108.
[11] Féach 'Na Trí Srófartaigh' in Ó hEochaidh et al*, Síscéalta*, 52–55.
[12] Dúbhghlas de h-Íde, *Leabhar Sgeulaigheachta* (Baile-ath-cliath: Gill, 1889), 12–95.
[13] de h-Íde, *Leabhar Sgeulaigheachta*, 239.
[14] Cnuasach Bhéaloideas Éireann ls. CBÉ S 0478: 429–436.
[15] Cnuasach Bhéaloideas Éireann, An Chartlann Fuaime, Ríonach uí Ógáin, Téip 32. Thart ar dhá nóiméad déag a chaith Pádraig á insint.

cuartaíocht Oíche Shamhna ar chaoi ar bith agus nuair a bhí sé ag teacht abhaile casadh beirt fhear dhó agus bean istigh idir iad agus iad ag tarraingt na mná ina ndiaidh. Agus rith sé go dtí iad.

‘Go mba seacht measa sibh bliain ó anocht,’ a deir sé, ‘agus deamhan agus diabhal ag obair aige agus scaoileadar uathu an bhean. Agus chonaic sé ag gabháil isteach ar mhullach a gcinn in aill iad. Ní raibh an aill i bhfad ón teach a raibh sé ina chónaí ann ar chor ar bith. Ach labhair sé leis an mbean is níor labhair an bhean leis.

Ach sa deireadh rinne sé comhartha léi an dtiocfadh sí in éineacht leis féin agus rinne sí comhartha leis go dtiocfadh. Thug sé isteach go dtína mháthair í, ní raibh ann ach an mháthair agus é féin. ‘Ó, nár laga Dia thú,’ a deir an mháthair, a deir sí, ‘tá bean faighte agat ar deireadh’.

‘Tabhair thusa aire dhi, a mháthair,’ a deir sé, ‘ar chaoi ar bith. Níl a fhios agamsa beo,’ a deir sé, ‘cé hí féin’. Níor labhair sí leis an máthair agus níor labhair sí le Giollas. Níor labhair sí le ceachtar acu. Is bhí sí ina bean oibre chomh maith is bhí sa tír ach ní raibh focal cainte ar bith aici. Ach bhí sí ag imeacht is ag obair léi mar sin nó go dtáinig Oíche Shamhna aríst. Ach nuair a tháinig Oíche Shamhna aríst bhí Giollas amuigh a cuartaíocht. Agus chuaigh sé chuig doras na bruíne, san áit a bhfaca sé an bheirt fhear a gabháil isteach sa mbruíon.

‘Á,’ dúirt an tsióg taobh istigh, a deir sí, ‘bliain san oíche anocht,’ a deir sí, ‘a thug Giollas na gCos Dubh inniu an bhean uaibh’.

‘Muise, cén mhaith dhó í ó shin?’ dúirt an ceann eile, a deir sí. ‘Níor labhair sí ó shin leis.’

‘Muise, m’anam nach mbeadh sé mar sin,’ a dúirt an bhean eile, ‘dá mbainfeadh sé an biorán suain atá i gcúl a cinn as, go labhródh sí leis’.

Níor rinne sé seo ach rith, agus a theacht abhaile. Bhí sé a gabháil timpeall ar an mbean nó go bhfuair sé a ghreim, nó go bhfuair sé an biorán, is go dtug sé leis é agus bhí sí ar nós bean ar bith ansin. Bhí neart cainte aici, an chaint a bhí riamh aici a bhí sé aici ar chaoi ar bith.

‘Well,’ a deir sí, ‘is tú an fear is fearr,’ a deir sí, ‘a chonaic mé ariamh,’ a deir sí.

‘Cérb as thú anois?’ a deir Giollas.

‘As Contae na Mí,’ a dúirt sí.

‘An bhfuil sé sin i bhfad ó bhaile?’ a deir Giollas.

‘M’anam,’ a deir sí ‘go bhfuil sé píosa maith ó bhaile, Contae na Mí, ach ní ghabhfaidh mise go Contae na Mí,’ a deir sí. ‘Tá mise,’ a deir sí, ‘a dhul a fanacht in éineacht leatsa,’ a deir sí, ‘má tá tú sásta’.

‘Ó, *bydad*,’ a deir sé, ‘tá mé sásta,’ a deir sé ‘ach,’ a deir sé, ‘níl mé sách maith le haghaidh thú, agus nuair nach bhfuil,’ a deir sé, ‘téir abhaile,’ a deir sé, ‘go dtí do mhuintir féin’.

‘Well, más mar sin anois é,’ a deir sí, ‘gabhfaidh mé abhaile ach thar éis go ngabhfaidh mé abhaile,’ a deir sí, ‘tá me a dhul a teacht in éindigh leatsa aríst. Mar,’ a deir sí, ‘is tusa a shábháil mise,’ a deir sí, ‘agus ní bheidh mé ag aon nduine eile. An dtiocfaidh tú in éineacht liom?’ a deir sí.

‘*Bydad*, tiocfad,’ a deir Giollas.

Is dóigh nach raibh aon bhóthar ann an t-am sin ach cosáin, ach má bhí an cosán ann nó mara raibh, thugadar bóthar leothub**,** nó go dtáinigeadar go Contae na Mí. Nuair a tháinigeadar go Contae na Mí d’fhiafraigh – dúirt Giollas leis an mbean óg: ‘Má théann tusa isteach anois,’ a deir sé, ‘an doras, go dtí do mháthair,’ a deir sé, ‘titfidh sí i lagar,’ a deir sé, ‘le faitíos romhat’.

‘Tá a fhios agam é,’ a dúirt sí.

‘Ach an bhfuil a fhios agat céard a dhéanfas tú,’ a deir sé, ‘fan ansin agus gabhfaidh mise isteach,’ a deir sé. ‘agus iarrfaidh mé lóistín, go bhfanfainn ann,’ a deir sé, ‘go maidin’.

Chuaigh Giollas isteach agus nuair a bhí sé taobh istigh den doras, dúradh leis suí. '*No*, níl mé a gabháil a suí,' deir sé 'mara bhfaighe mé lóistín go maidin,' a deir sé. 'Tá mé ar an mbóthar' a deir sé.

'Muise, m'anam go bhfaighfidh,' a dúirt bean an tí leis. 'Ach fan mar atá'.

'Muise,' a deir sé, 'a raibh aon chomhluadar anseo,' a deir sé. 'ach an bheirt agaibhse?'

'Á muise, bhí, a stór,' a deir sí. 'Bhí iníon agamsa,' a deir sí, 'chomh breá,' deir sí, 'agus bhí in Éirinn,' a deir sí, 'ná in áit ar bith eile den tsaol,' a deir sí. 'Agus,' deir sí, 'cailleadh í,' a deir sí, 'bliain ó mhí Shamhna seo caite'.

'Meastú,' a deir Giollas, a deir sé, 'dá bhfeicteá í, an n-aithneofá í?'

'Óra, a stór,' a deir sí, 'tuige nach n-aithneoinn?'

'Well, tá d'iníon agamsa,' deir sé.

'Níl, muis,' a deir an tseanbhean.

'D'fhéadfá a rá,' deir sé, 'go bhfuil. An bhfuil tú ag iarraidh í a fheiceáil?' a dúirt sé.

'D'fhéadfá a rá go bhfuil,' a dúirt an tseanbhean.

Sheas sé sa doras. 'Gabh i leith isteach anseo,' a deir sé, is shiúil an cailín óg isteach an doras. Ní raibh faitíos ar bith ar an mbean eile. Anois bhí bainis seacht n-oíche agus seacht lá acu agus gan iad pósta ar chor ar bith. Ach ar deireadh na cúise thiar, phósadar ansin agus tháinigeadar anuas arís go dtína gcontae féin agus d'fhanadar ann. Ach níor shásaigh sin Giollas. Bhí Giollas amuigh i gcónaí.

Brídín: Bhí sé ina 'Flowerín'.[16]

Pádraig: Ach bhí sé an oíche seo amuigh agus casadh slua siógaí dhó – an slua sí mar a déarfá – agus d'fhiafraigh an slua sí dhe, 'An dtiocfaidh tú in éineacht linn?' a deir sé.

'Cá bhfuil sibh a gabháil?' a dúirt Giollas.

'Tá muid ag gabháil don taobh ó thuaidh,' a deir sé, 'chun na Sé Chontae,' a deir sé, 'ag iarraidh bean'.

'Ó muise, m'anam go ngabhfad,' deir Giollas.

Agus bhí sagart sa mbaile agus bhí cead aifrinn bainte dhe ag an easpag, nó ag an bpápa. Agus níor rinne siad seo ach a dhul in éineacht, éirí san aer agus bailiú leothub agus a dhul suas go dtí na Sé Chontae ag iarraidh na mná. 'Tá bainis anocht ann,' dúirt sé, dúirt an tsióg, a dúirt sí, 'agus beidh sí istigh,' deir sí, 'idir dhá bhean ar a leaba agus,' a deir sí, 'cuirfidh tú é seo suas ina srón,' a deir sí, 'agus ligfidh sí trí shraoi. Agus mura ndeirtear,' a deir sí, '"Dia linn!" léi, thríd na trí shraoi,' a deir sí, 'tá sí againne'.

'*Alright*,' a deir Giollas.

Bhailigh Giollas leis agus tháinig sé soir leo is níor stopadar is níor chónaíodar nó go rabhadar i ngar do na Sé Chontae. 'Á, ní ghabhfaidh mise anonn níos faide,' a deir Giollas, a deir sé, 'ná diabhal fad mo choise,' a deir sé, 'a ghabhfas níos faide. Caithfidh mé a dhul amach' a dúirt sé.

'Céard atá ort?' a dúirt na siógaí. 'Ba cheart daoibh,' a deir sé, 'mé a thabhairt don Róimh,' a deir sé.

'Céard atá don[?] Róimh agat?' a dúirt an tsióg.

'Tá,' a deir sé, 'sagart sa mbaile againn,' a deir sé, 'agus tá cead aifrinn bainte dhe ag an bpápa,' a dúirt sé, 'agus go ndéarfaidh mé leis,' deir sé, 'cead aifrinn a thabhairt dhó nuair nach bhfuil aon bhlas as bealach déanta aige agus nár rinne ariamh'.

[16] Leasainm é 'An Flowerín' ar chomharsa le Brídín agus Pádraig i gCarna, Cóilín Sheáinín Choilmín, as Fínis, a bhíodh amuigh i gcónaí. Rinne Cóilín an t-amhrán 'An Flowerín'.

‘Ó, tá an t-achar ró-fhada,’ dúirt na siógaí.

‘Má tá,’ a deir sé, ‘bailigí libh,’ a deir sé, ‘déanfaidh mise mo bhealach abhaile’.

‘Ach ní túisce ná ligfeas muid uainn thú,’ deir an tsióg, a deir sí ‘rachaidh muid don Róimh,’ a deir sí.

Ní rabhadar ró-fhada a dhul ann. D’fhan na siógaí taobh amuigh is chuaigh Giollas isteach. Bhuail sé an doras. Tháinig an cailín go dtí é.

‘Céard atá ort?’ a deir sí.

‘Tá mé ag iarraidh an pápa a fheiceáil,’ a dúirt sé.

‘Ó níl aon ghoir agat an pápa a fheiceáil,’ dúirt an cailín, ‘mara dtabharfaidh sé féin cead. Fan ansin,’ a deir sí ‘go labhraí mé leis’.

Chuaigh an cailín isteach is dúirt sí leis an bpápa go raibh fear sa doras ag iarraidh é a fheiceáil.

‘Abair leis a dhul isteach,’ a deir sé.

Chuaigh sé isteach. D’fhiafraigh an pápa dhe ‘Cá bhfuil tú a gabháil?’

‘Tá cead aifrinn,’ a deir sé, ‘bainte agatsa,’ deir sé, ‘de shagart,’ a deir sé, ‘atá thíos againne,’ a deir sé, ‘agus,’ a deir sé, ‘tá cead aifrinn bainte dhe. Níl aon rud as bealach déanta aige.’

‘Téir abhaile,’ deir an pápa, deir sé, ‘nó cuirfidh mise deifir abhaile ort. Ní bhfaighfidh sé aon chead aifrinn go deo,’ a deir sé. Diabhal blas a rinne Giollas bocht ach a dhul amach.

‘Is ea,’ deir na siógaí, ‘an bhfuair tú cead aifrinn?’ ‘Ní bhfuair,’ a deir sé.

Thug na siógaí buidéilín beag, bídeach dhó. ‘Gabh isteach anois aríst,’ a deir sé, ‘agus iarr cead an aifrinn air,’ deir sé, ‘agus abair leis,’ a deir sé, ‘mura dtabharfaidh sé cead aifrinn don tsagart,’ a deir sé, ‘go lasfaidh tú an pálás air. Agus má abraíonn sé leat nach dtabharfaidh,’ deir sé, ‘buail braon de seo ar an mballa,’ deir sé, ‘agus lasfaidh an teach. Ach ní lasfaidh sé,’ deir sé.

Chuaigh Giollas isteach arís. D’fhiafraigh sé den phápa, ‘Ba cheart duit cead aifrinn a thabhairt don tsagart,’ a dúirt sé.

‘Nár dhúirt mé cheana leat,’ a dúirt an pápa, a deir sé, ‘nach bhféadfainn aon chead aifrinn a fháil chúns atá sé bainte dhe,’ deir sé, ‘nach bhfaighfidh sé go brách é’.

‘Lasfaidh mé an pálás ort,’ a deir mo dhuine, a deir sé, ‘mura dtabharfaidh tú cead aifrinn dhó’.

‘Ní bhfaighfidh,’ a dúirt sé.

Diabhal blas a rinne sé seo ach braon a chaitheamh as an mbuidéal a gabháil amach agus las, las an pálás.

‘Ó, do charghais do chroí ar chaoi ar bith,’ a deir an pápa, a deir sé. ‘Tabharfaidh mé cead aifrinn dhó,’ a dúirt sé.

‘Scríobh i do láimh féin anois,’ a deir Giollas, a deir sé, ‘nóta chugamsa,’ a deir sé, ‘le tabhairt don tsagart,’ a deir sé, ‘amach ó do lámh go bhfaighfidh sé cead aifrinn,’ a deir sé, ‘agus nach mbainfear dhe é go brách aríst é’.

Scríobh an pápa agus níor las an teach air. Ni raibh blas ar bith déanta air. Chuaigh Giollas amach agus an páipéar aige. Tháinig sé go dtí na siógaí.

‘Is ea,’ a deir na siógaí, ‘bhfuil cead an aifrinn faighte aige?’

‘*Bydad*, tá,’ a deir sé.

Choinnigh sé go crua, daingean é sin anois, chuir sé síos ina phóca é agus chas sé ruóg ar an bpóca, faitíos go n-imeodh an páipéar as. Agus diabhal stop a rinneadar go ndeachadar go dtí na Sé Chontae. Tháinigeadar isteach. Bhí daoine a titim anonn is a titim anall agus iad seo a gabháil síos thríd an teach go ndeachadar suas sa seomra san áit a raibh an bhean óg. Daoine a gabháil fhoinn agus daoine a damhsa agus daoine a déanamh chuile spraoi dhá bhféadfaí is dá fheabhas is gá bhfuil ann

go mór as éadan, sin go ndeachadar seo suas sna frathachaí agus ní i bhfad bhíodar ann chor ar bith nuair a chuir sé seo anuas rud mar a d'fheicfeá sop tuí nó rud eicint. Chuir sé ina srón seo é agus lig sí sraoi. Níor rugadh ar a tsraoi, níor dhúradh 'Dia linn!' ná tada an bhfuil a fhios agat. Rinne sé an darna huair é. Níor dhúirt duine ar bith 'Dia linn!' ná tada. Rinne sé an tríú huair é agus níor dhúradh 'Dia linn!' ná tada leis an mbean óg.

'Goirim péin is coisricim thú Dia is Muire is buan baiste,' a dúirt sé.

Caitheadh ina spreas anuas ar an urlár é.

Is bhailigh na siógaí leothub. Is nuair a bhí sé ar an urlár diabhal blas a bhí ar an mbean óg, bhí sí chomh maith is bhí sí ariamh. Is thosaigh sí a fiafraí dhe, 'Céard a d'éirigh dhom nó céard sa diabhal a chuir ansin é?'

D'inis sé dhóibh, cibí fáilte a bhí roimh dhuine ar bith a raibh sa teach, bhí dhá oiread roimh Giollas na gCos Dubh. Ach nuair a bhí na bainiseachaí fágtha aige tháinig Giollas na gCos Dubh abhaile dá shiúl. Is fada an siúl a bhí le déanamh aige. Pébí cén t-achar ó shin é sin, is fadó an lá é is dóigh.

Ach dá mbeinnse an uair sin ann ní bheinn anois ann, ar chaoi ar bith. Is dóigh go bhfuil sé cúpla céad bliain ó bhí sé ann.

Brídín: Anois tá scéilín eile agat.

English Summary

This essay presents and reflects on a tale entitled 'Giollas na gCos Dubh' [Giollas of the Black Feet] recorded from Pádraig Ó Nia in 1982. Pádraig and his sister Brídín, originally from the island of Fínis, County Galway, came to live near Carna, the mainland village closest to them. They were most welcoming and fun-loving, and Pádraig had a wealth of stories and lore. Between 1980 and 1986 the author spent many hours at their fireside, listening, learning and making field recordings. To date, only two other versions of the tale have been identified, although some of the motifs are found in other narratives, especially those connected with the Otherworld.

The tale concerns Giollas and his adventures when, at Halloween, he rescued a mortal girl from the fairies. Giollas brought the girl home to his mother where she was a wonderful worker but had lost the power of speech. The following Halloween, Giollas heard the fairies saying that the girl would recover the power of speech if Giollas released the sleep charm from the back of her head. He did so, and the girl recovered her speech. She said she wanted to be with Giollas and they set off to County Meath to the girl's mother. The mother was overjoyed, and Giollas and the girl married.

Giollas encountered fairies again, and they told him they were travelling to the Six Counties in search of a girl. Giollas said he would accompany them, but had to visit the Pope in Rome beforehand, to have permission to read mass restored to a priest whom Giollas knew, a priest who had done nothing wrong. They journeyed to Rome and, with the help of the fairies, the Pope gave in and signed a piece of paper giving the priest permission to read mass. They continued the journey to the Six Counties until they came to where the girl was. The girl sneezed three times but no-one said 'God bless you!' or such. Giollas said, 'God protect you and preserve you' and the fairies went away, and the girl was as good as ever. Giollas made his way home.

FOINSÍ

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- CBÉ 1280 (ls.)
- CBÉ V0053 (físteip)
- An Cartlann Fuaime, Ríonach uí Ógáin, Téip 32 (téip fuaime)

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Borgstrøm's Word Lists: East Sutherland and Easter Ross Dialects in the Light of the Scottish Gaelic Dialect Survey

SEOSAMH WATSON

I paid my first visit to Easter Ross during the spring of 1967.[1] Having travelled there in order to study the Gaelic language of the area,[2] I immediately observed many important distinctions between the dialect of the area and that of the west of the county as described by Borgstrøm in his volume on Skye and Ross-shire Gaelic.[3] Noticeable, too, was the fact that the Gaelic on the east coast of the county shared features with East Sutherland dialects[4] on the opposite side of the Dornoch Firth which Ross-shire dialects in the west and elsewhere did not. A comprehensive investigation of this whole area was not feasible then when fluent speakers were still extant. Such studies were, however, made possible decades later when the Scottish Gaelic Dialect Survey (*SGDS*) was published (*Fig.*1).[5] The volumes in question supply data collected in the field not only in the Easter Ross region where I had worked (*SGDS* Points 154, 155), but obtained also from points to the north and south (*SGDS* Points 152–53; and 156–162 respectively) of my area, as well as from Points 141–151 which represent the dialects of East Sutherland. Data were also obtained from one single point in (eastern) Caithness (*SGDS* 140) and on account of its close geographic proximity to East Sutherland material from here has also been included. The availability of data from the entirety of these points makes it possible now to undertake comparative research into the varieties of Gaelic spoken in this whole region. Though studies such as this based on the data in question will necessarily be limited in scope they will, in many ways, however, prove valuable in defining some parameters for us.

My approach to the present study based on *SGDS* data has been to adhere to a method which I have employed on previous occasions to examine isogloss boundaries in Lewis-Harris dialects; internally in the case of the dialects of Skye; and most recently within Ross-shire as a whole. [6] This method utilises the 102 item word list which Borgstrøm created in order to examine isogloss

[1] It is with much pleasure that I offer the present paper to my good friend and long-time colleague, Dr John Shaw, on the occasion of his 80th birthday. To him I owe the inestimable debt of having first been introduced by him to the treasure house that is Cape Breton Gaelic, as well as to the friendship of the incomparable Gaelic inhabitants of that island: *Go mba fada beo é Iain agus dúch as a pheann!*

[2] Seosamh Watson, *Easter Ross Gaelic: Lexicon and Texts with Brief Phonology* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2022). For the sake of internal consistency, I have excluded data recorded there from the present study; see further Watson, *Easter Ross Gaelic* 16–19.

[3] Carl Hjalmar Borgstrøm, *A Linguistic Survey of the Gaelic Dialects of Scotland vol. II: the Dialects of Skye and Ross-shire* (Oslo: Norwegian Universities Press, 1942).

[4] Nancy C. Dorian, *East Sutherland Gaelic* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1978).

[5] Cathair Ó Dochartaigh (ed.), *Survey of the Gaelic Dialects of Scotland – Vol. 1: Introductory Essays* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1997); and *Vols 2–5 – Questionnaire Materials* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1994).

[6] Seosamh Watson, 'Borgstrøm's word-list revisited: Lewis and Harris' in *Proceedings of the Eighth Symposium of Societas Celtologica Nordica*, ed. Jan-Erik Rekdal and Ailbhe Ó Corráin (Uppsala:

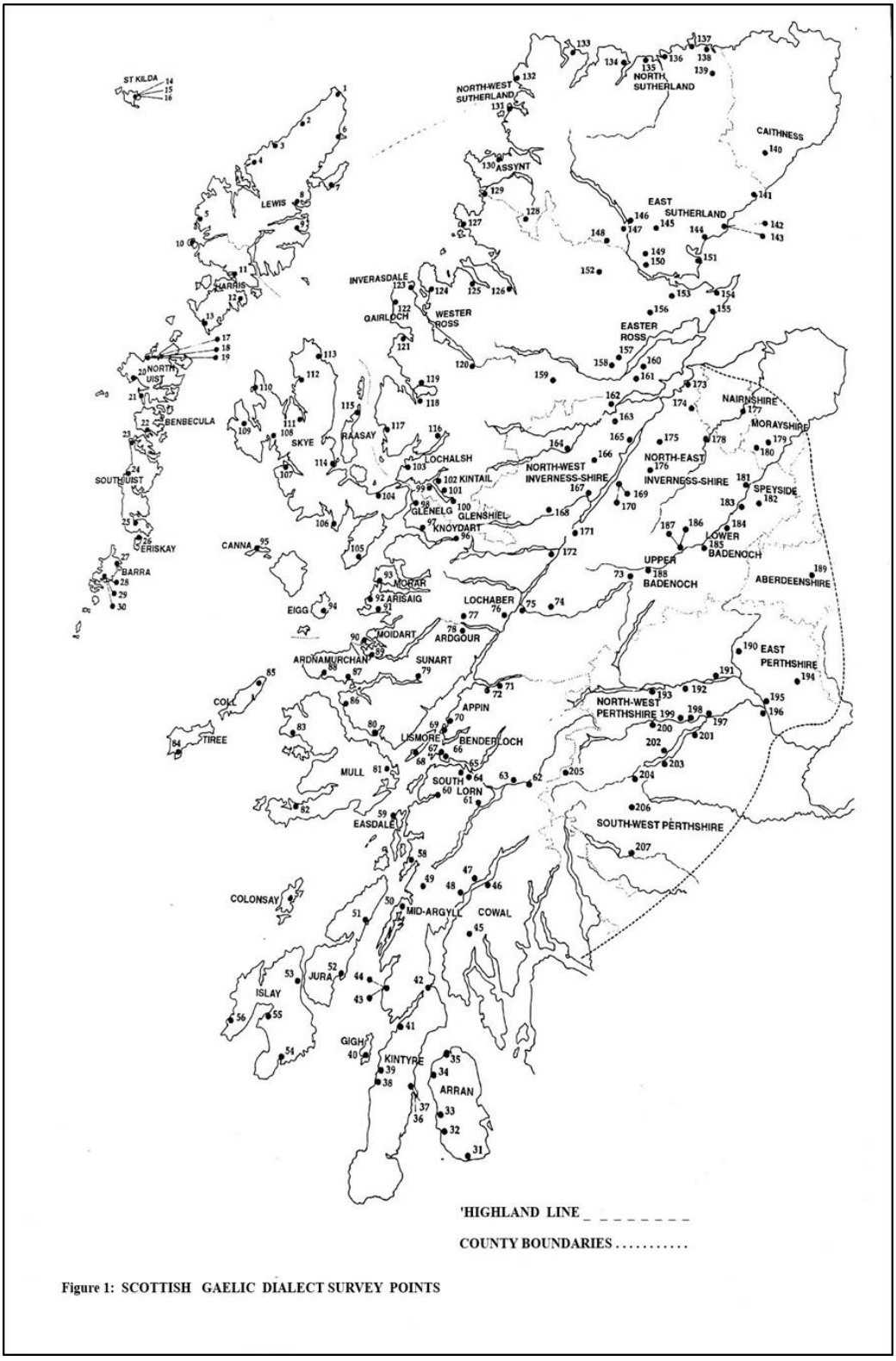


Figure 1: SCOTTISH GAELIC DIALECT SURVEY POINTS

Uppsala Universitet, 2007); Seosamh Watson, 'Liosta Focal Borgstrøm agus Canúintí an Oileáin Sgitheanaigh i bhFianaise *SGDS*' in *Atlantic Currents: Essays on Lore, Literature and Language; Essays in Honour of Séamas Ó Catháin on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday*, ed. Bo Almqvist, Críostóir Mac Cárthaigh, Liam Mac Mathúna, Séamas Mac Mathúna and Seosamh Watson (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2012); and Seosamh Watson, 'Borgstrøm's Word Lists and Ross-shire Dialects in the light of the Scottish Gaelic Dialect Survey' in *Studia Celtica Upsaliensia* (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, forthcoming).

boundaries in Western Isles dialects.[7] The following year he published a volume devoted to the study of Skye and Ross-shire Gaelic, which contained a separate word list constructed specifically to examine western Ross-shire dialects.[8] In the present study these two lists have been conflated, with the omission of a very few items. These omissions correspond to items not occurring in *SGDS* materials and for which an alternative term displaying the target linguistic features, e.g. *SGDS cuairt* (substituted for Borgstrøm's *goirt*) is unavailable. The final integrated list is shown below in alphabetical order (*Fig 2*).

Before proceeding, it is necessary to repeat two caveats noted in connection with my aforementioned studies on Lewis-Harris and elsewhere, first, that Borgstrøm's word lists contain precious little morphological information and virtually nothing with regard to lexicon, syntax or sociolinguistics; and second, that Borgstrøm – to whom we unquestionably owe so much – laboured in the field a couple of decades before the *SGDS* collectors. Nevertheless, the speech communities we are dealing with essentially remained in the intervening period a conservative rural population– a fact readily verifiable by means of a comparison between the data recorded in the two separate survey projects. Such limitations notwithstanding, I am confident that the analysis provided here will prove a useful step forward in our understanding of the dialects of the Eastern Scottish Highlands.[9]

ainm	*cuairt SGDS,* for *goirt DOH*	*mèirleach*
airgead	*cuimhne*	*naoi*
aithne	*doras*[*t*]	*oidhche*
a-null	*dorais*[*t*]	*oirre*
àrd	*druim*	*olc*
bainne	*dùirn*	*pac SGDS,* for *mac DOH*
càirdean	*each*	*rìgh*
ceangail	*faiceadh*	*seachdain*
ceann	*falbh*[*aidh*]	*tairbh*
cearc	*feadhain*	*teamga*[*idh*]
ceart	*fheàrr*	*thill*
ceathrar	*greim*	*thubhairt*
cinnteach	*grian*	*tionndadh*
cloiche	*ìosal*	*treabhadh*
cluinnean	*leac*	*tric*
coirce	*lean*[*aidh*]	*tuiteam*
creid[*sinn*]	*meadhg*	

Fig. 2. Combined word list based on Borgstrøm 1940 and Borgstrøm 1941

SGDS data relating to each item in the list above have been examined in order to identify linguistic innovations which will, as noted, generally be located in the category of phonology. On any occasion where data from two or more of the points exhibit the same innovation, an

[7] Carl Hjalmar Borgstrøm, *A Linguistic Survey of the Gaelic Dialects of Scotland vol. I: the Dialects of the Outer Hebrides* (Oslo: Norwegian Universities Press, 1941), 235–243.
[8] Borgstrøm, *Dialects of Skye and Ross-shire,* 144–147.
[9] The Gaelic dialects of the Eastern Highlands are, of course, distinguished from many western speech forms in that the former stand at an important linguistic interface with Scots. On this little-studied topic see Seosamh Watson, 'Scots and English loanwords in a Peripheral Gaelic dialect of Northeast Scotland' in Manuela Nevaci, Irina Floarea and Ioan-Mircea Farcaş, *Ex Oriente Lux in honorem Nicolae Saramandu* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2021), 1127–1160.

isogloss is recognised, the sum total of isoglosses linking each pair of *SGDS* points is calculated, and the whole then displayed in a table setting forth the total number of isoglosses connecting each individual pair of points.[10] Here follows a presentation of the individual linguistic features (1–55) on which the judgment is based, along with a brief indication of how common the feature in question has been found to be in Easter Ross as a whole, (Pts 152–162 – designated ER) and in East Sutherland and Caithness (Pts 140–151 – designated ES) based on its presence in items on the word list. A comprehensive listing of the innovative features identified, relating these to the same word list, is given in Appendix 1 beside the particular linguistic innovation in question.

DEVELOPMENTS IN VOWELS

Stressed short vowels

1. Raising	*ainm* ES (largely); *airgead* ES (largely); *aithne* ES (largely); *a-null* ES (largely), ER (partly); *bainne* ES (partly); *rathneach* ER, ES (partly); *tionndadh* ER, ES (partly).
2. Lowering	*ceann* ER, ES; *cearc* ER (partly), ES (partly); *ceart* ER, ES; *ceangail* ER (partly), ES (partly); *each* ER, ES; *'s fheàrr* ER, ES; *seachdain* ER (largely), ES (largely); *teanga*(*idh*) ER (partly), ES (partly); *tairbh* ES (partly).
3. Preceded by approximant / semivowel	*each* ER, ES; *feadhain* ER (partly); *mèirleach* ER, ES (partly); *tionndadh* ER (partly), ES (partly).
4. Rounding	*àrd* ES (partly); *'s fheàrr* ES (partly); *mèirleach* ES (partly); *ceangail* ER (partly), ES (partly); *ceart* ES (partly); *falbh* ES (partly); *feadhain* ER (largely); *treabhadh* ER (partly); ES (partly).
5. Rounding and raised	*bainne* ES (partly).
6. Unrounding	*cluinntinn* ER (largely), ES; *cuimhne* ER (largely), ES (largely); *doras* ER (largely), ES; *druim* ER (partly), ES; *oidhche* ER, ES.
7. Advancing	*druim* ER (largely), ES; *tairbh* ER (partly), ES (partly).
8. Retraction	*creididh* ER (partly), ES (partly); *feadhain* ER, ES (partly); *greim* ER (largely), ES (largely); *teanga*(*idh*) ES (partly), ER (partly).
9. Retraction with raising	*airgead* ES (partly); *càirdean* ES (partly).
10. Diphthongisation	*a-null* ER (partly), ES (partly); *ceangail* ER (partly), ES (largely); *ceann* ER, ES; *tionndadh* ES (largely); *cluinntinn* ER (largely), ES (partly); *cuimhne* ER (largely), ES (partly); *druim* ER (largely); *greim* ER, ES; *feadhain* ER (partly), ES (partly); *teanga*(*idh*) ER (partly), ES (partly); *mèirleach* ER (partly), ES (partly); *treabhadh* ES (partly).
11. Lengthening	*a-null* ER (largely), ES (largely); àrd ER, ES; *càirdean* ER (largely), ES; *ceangail* ER (partly), ES (partly); *cinnteach* ER (partly), ES (partly); *cluinntinn* ER (partly) ES (largely); *cuimhne* ER (partly), ES (largely); *druim* ER (partly); *dùirn* ER (partly), ES (partly); *'s fheàrr* ER, ES;

[10] Where, very occasionally, an informant has supplied an alternative response which also constitutes an innovation, the *SGDS* point in question is credited with both innovations. Certain linguistic innovations, of course, are seen in this study at one point only and, though they may constitute isoglosses with points in regions outside Ross-shire, are of no assistance in this geographically limited enquiry. Their connections with such regions are, however, noted with relevant references in Appendix 2 below.

	mèirleach ER (largely), ES (largely); *thill* (/ *fill*) ER (largely), ES (largely); *tionndadh* ER (largely), ES (largely).
12. Independent nasalisation	*faiceadh* ER (largely), ES (largely).
13. Svarabhakti with clear vowel	*ainm* ES (partly); *airgead* ES (partly); *tairbh* ES (partly).
Stressed long vowels	
14. Diphthongisation	*rìgh* ER (largely), ES (partly); *ìosal* ER, ES.
15. Final unhiotorical consonant added	*naoi* ER (partly).
Stressed diphthongs	
16. Centralisation of second element	*cuairt* ER (partly) ES (partly); *grian* ER (partly), ES (partly).
17. Reduction of first element to labial glide	*cuimhne* ES (partly).
Unstressed short vowels	
18. Development to [a/ɑ] in contact with historical labial fricative	*seachdain* (Early Irish *sechtmain*) ER, ES.
19. Development to [a/ɑ] in contact with velar fricative	*cinnteach* ER, ES; *raithneach* ER, ES; *mèirleach* ER, ES.
20. Final apocope	*aithne* ER (partly), ES (largely); *bainne* ER (largely), ES; *corca/ coirce* ER, ES; *cuimhne* ER (largely), ES, *oidhche* ER (largely), ES; *oirre* ER (largely), ES.

DEVELOPMENTS IN CONSONANTS

Pre-aspiration	
21. Single consonants realised as [h, h´]	*faiceadh* ER (partly); *leac* ER (partly), ES (partly); *mac*(/*pac*) ER (partly), ES (partly); *tric* ER (partly); *tuiteam* ER (partly), ES (partly).
22. Single consonants realised as [x]	*faiceadh* ER (partly); *leac* ER (partly); *mac*(/*pac*) ER (partly); *tric* ER (partly).
23. Clusters realised as devoicing of sonant before stop	*cearc* ER, ES (largely); *corca/ coirce* ER, ES (largely); *olc* ER, ES (largely).
Depalatalisation	
24. Initial	*leanaidh* ER (partly).
25. Single consonants	*faiceadh (-ic-* > [k] ES (partly).
26. Single consonants	*seachdain* (*-ain* > [n]) ER, ES (largely).
Clusters	
27. Initial	*creid-* ER, ES (largely); *greim* ER, ES (largely); *tric* ER, ES (largely); *triùir* ER, ES (largely).
28. Medial	*càirdean* ER (largely), ES (largely); *mèirleach* ER (largely), ES.

29. Final	*iiosalcuairt* ER (largely), ES (largely); *dùirn* ER (largely), ES (partly).
30. Unstressed final	*thubhairt* ER (partly), ES (largely).
Reduction	
31. Development to single retroflex consonant	*àrd* ER (partly), ES (partly); *càirdean* ES (partly); *mèirleach* ER (partly), ES (partly).
32. Same development in unstressed final	*thubhairt* ER (partly), ES (partly).
33. Reduction of 3-element final sibilant cluster to two elements	*ceart* ER (partly), ES (partly); *cuairt* ER (partly), ES (partly).
34. Loss of fricative in svarabhakti position	*falbhaidh* ER, ES (partly).
35. Loss of historical voiceless fricative	*aithne* ER, ES; *ceathrar* ER, ES; *raithneach* ER, ES.
Loss of fricative / sonant	
36. Loss of fricative	*feadhain* ER (partly), ES (partly); *thubhairt* ER (partly), ES (partly).
37. Loss of sonant	*teangaidh* ER (largely), ES.
Vocalisation	
38. Vocalisation of fricative / sonant	*ceangail* ER, ES; *feadhain* ER (largely); *tairbh* (in svarabhakti position) ER, ES; *thubhairt* ER, ES.
39. Vocalisation of stop following nasal	*cinnteach* ER (partly), ES (partly).

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

40. Change of sonant category	[ɲ > ŋ′]) *aithne* ES (partly); *bainne* ES (partly); [ŋ > v, ɣ]) *teangaidh* ER.
41. Change of stop category	([t′ > k′]) *tionnd-ail, tionnd-adh* ES (partly).
42. Epenthesis of final –*g* [k]	*raithneach* ER (partly), ES (partly).
43. Retroflexion of historical non-palatalised lateral	*falbhas, ìosal, olc* ES (partly).

MORPHOLOGY

Nouns	
44. Gen. sg. not distinguished	*cloiche* ER (partly), ES (partly); *doraist* ER (partly), ES (partly).
45. Spread of pl. morph –*an*	*ta*(*i*)*rbh*(*e*)*an* ER (partly), ES (partly).
Adjectives	
46. analogical formation	*ìosal* (for *ìseal*; based on *sìos, shìos*) ER, ES.

Pronouns

47. Depalatalisation, velarisation, devoicing	*oirre* (***oi-*** **>** [ɛ]:) ER (partly), ES (partly); ***-rr-*** **> depalatalised**): ER (largely), ES (largely); > velarised [R]): ER (partly); **devoiced** [r, R]): ER (partly), ES (partly); **final *–e* >** [i]:) ES (partly).

Verbs

48. Future Independent termination	*falbh-aidh* (*mi*): **[-a]**) (following deletion of final element): ER (partly), ES (partly); **[-i]** (following deletion of *–bh*): ER (partly), ES (partly); **[-u]** (arising from *-bh-* following deletion of final element) ER (partly).
49. Future independent termination	*creid-as/ falbh-as/ leanas* (*mi*): **[-əs]** separate morph added following deletion of *–bh*: ER (partly), ES (partly).
50. Conditional dependent	*faiceadh* (**termination *–adh*** >**[u/əv]**) ER 153, 154, 155, 156; ES. > **[ək]**) ER 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162.

Verbal nouns

51. Stem change	*treabh-* (**verbal stem > [ɔ]**): ER (largely), ES.
52. Terminations	*tionnd-; –**a**(**i**)**n***; ER (largely), ES (partly); ***–ail***) ER (partly), ES (partly); ***–adh*** **> [u]** ES (partly).
53. Terminations	*treabh-* ***–adh*** > [u/**əv**/**əw]**) ER (partly), ES (largely); > **[ək]** ER (partly).

LEXICON

54.	*corca* ER, ES.
55.	*clàistinn* (replacing/ in addition to *cluinntinn*): ER partly.

Method of analysis

With the median number of correspondences between points calculated as (58/59), those points providing a total correspondence of (69) or above may be considered as in the highest quartile. The table below (*Fig. 3*) shows those points in the top quartile, together with a note of the points with which each is in accord.

Easter Ross	**East Sutherland / Caithness**
152: ER 156	142: ES 143, 144, 145
153: ER 156	143: ES 142, 144, 145
154: ER 155	144: ES 142, 143, 151
155: ER 154, 156	145: ES 142, 143, 146, 147, 148, 149
156: ER 152, 153, 155, 160	146: ES 145
157: ER 158, 159	147: ES 145
158: ER 157, 159, 160, 162	148: ES 145
159: ER 157, 158	149: ES 145, 150
160: ER 156, 158, 161, 162	150: ES 145, 149
161: ER 160, 162	151: ES 144
162: ER 160, 161	

Fig. 3. Sequences of points in highest quartile of correspondences

As to the question of how best to portray the results of this study I am reliably informed that a so-called 'heat map' will summarise the outcomes clearly and succinctly (see *Fig 4*).[11]

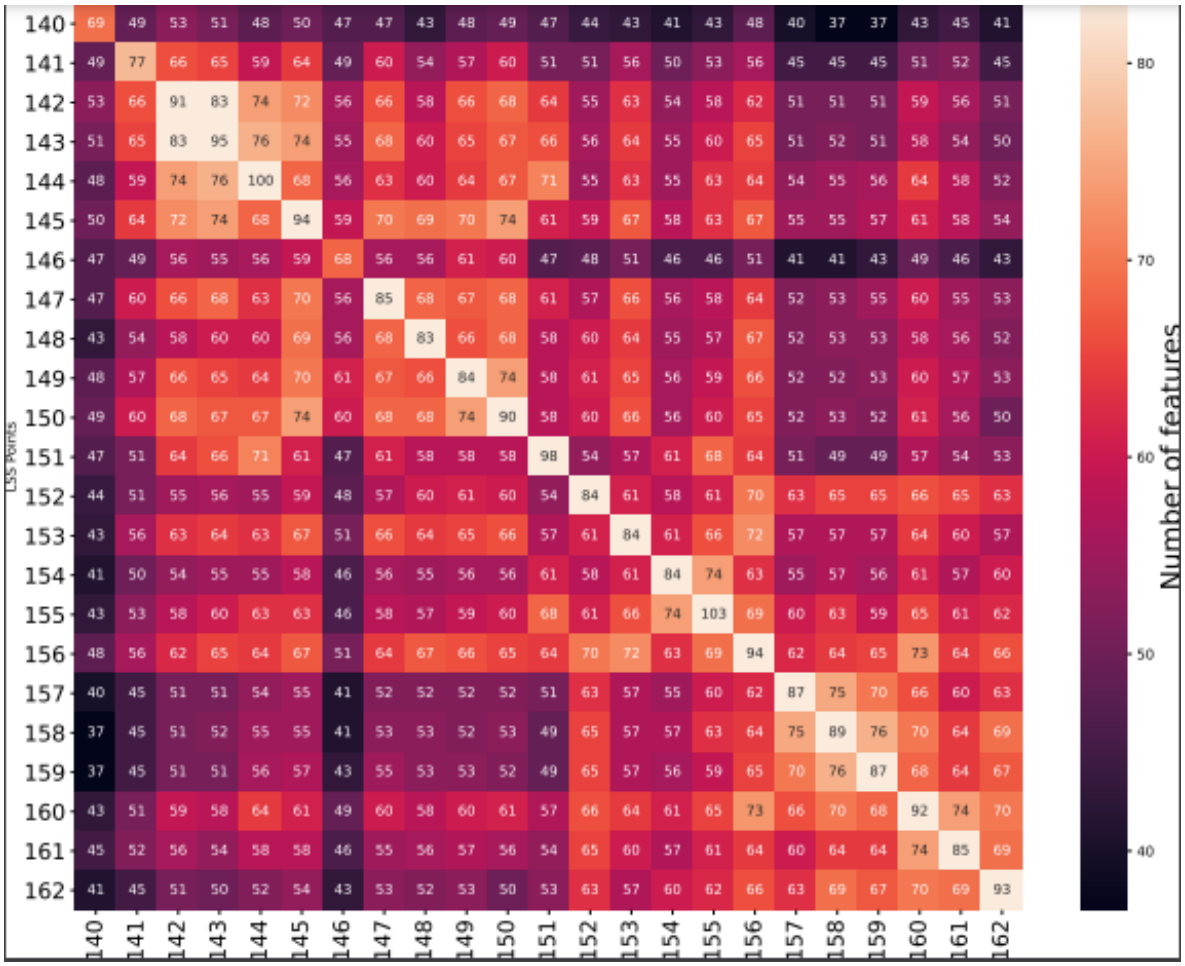


Figure 4: Degrees of relationship between the various *SGDS* points portrayed as a heat map.

In sequence along the top left-bottom right axis are recorded the total number of words out of a possible 141 items (see Appendix 1) in which one or more of the innovations identified for study here have taken place, with the figures forming the top left – bottom right axis itself indicating the total number of innovations which feature at a particular point, without reference to its neighbours. Displaying the data twice, as here, on either side of the axis produces a mirror image, a format which serves to highlight the existence of the clusters or 'hot spots' which we seek.

The heat map shows that there are no clusters linking Easter Ross points with any in East Sutherland; and that clusters brought to light in each of these two regions separately are quite limited in size, e.g. Easter Ross 154–56, 157–59, 160–62. The West Sutherland clusters which are visible are clearly of a different order. Take, for instance, the case of one pair of points (142–43) within a particular cluster (141–45): each point shows a very high correlation one to the other but, at the same time, they are neighbours to points (141, 145) whose correlations with the other points do not fall within the highest quartile. As for East Sutherland, some

[11] I am indebted to Prof. Darach Watson, Nils Bohr Institute, University of Copenhagen, for his kind advice and assistance in the preparation of this map.

'clusters' in this region, will only be admissible if we allow the participation of points from a lower percentile.

On the basis of the analysis performed on these, admittedly limited data, therefore, Wester Ross appears as a distinctive linguistic territory within which clusters of points are linked together through sharing high numbers of innovations. East Sutherland, on the other hand, does not present the same clear-cut picture.

The isoglosses involved here are, it will be recalled, set forth in the section of this paper detailing the various linguistic innovations (numbered 1 to 55) revealed by our word list as occurring at various points within Easter Ross and East Sutherland together. While the constraints of this paper do not allow us to provide a spatial presentation of all of these, a few examples are provided in Appendix 3 (*Figs 5–10*).

It is worth drawing attention to just a few of the phenomena which can be abstracted from the heat map. In the first instance, the East Caithness point (Pt. 140) shows an extremely low correlation with all the other points in the other two counties examined here. Secondly, there exists a high correlation between Easter Ross Pts 154 and 155, both of which are contained within the research area studied by my own monograph.[12] Thirdly, of the three most easterly E. Sutherland points, (Pts 146–52) far inland, Pt 146 shows a consistently low correlation with all of the Easter Ross points. Finally, we find a high correlation between East Sutherland Pt 144 and Pt 151, both of which are compared and contrasted by Dorian in her East Sutherland monograph.[13] In more general terms, an overview based on the data recorded in *SGDS* for its points in Easter Ross and East Sutherland (including part of Caithness), as applied to the items in Borgstrøm's combined word lists, suggests a clear distinction between the two regions. Within each of these there are small areas which show a higher correlation with nearby points, the more so in Easter Ross.

APPENDIX 1

Survey of selected traits as represented at *SGDS* points for East Ross-shire and East Sutherland

PART 1: VOWELS

INHERITED SHORT STRESSED VOWELS

<u>Vowel raised</u>		
ainm		ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 150
airgead		ES 140, 141, 142, 144, 146, 149, 150
aithne	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 158, 159, 160, 162	ES 145, 147, 149, 150

[12] Watson, *Easter Ross Gaelic*.

[13] Dorian, *East Sutherland Gaelic*.1978; see also Nancy C. Dorian, *Investigating Variation: The Effects of Social Organization and Social Setting* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

a-null		ES 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
bainne		ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144
raithneach	ER 155, 157, 158; ES 142, 143, 151	
tionndadh	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 144, 148, 151
Vowel lowered		
ceangail	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150
ceann	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
cearc	ER 153, 162; ES 146, 147, 148, 149, 151	
ceart	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
each	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
(*'s*) *fheàrr*	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
mèirleach	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 147, 151
seachdain	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
teanga(*idh*)	ER 152, 155, 156	ES 148, 149, 151
tairbh		ES 140, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 149, 150
Vowel preceded by approximant / semivowel		
each	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
feadhain	ER 153, 155, 156, 161, 162	
mèirleach	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 147, 150, 151
Vowel rounded		
àrd		ES 142, 143, 144, 151
fheàrr		ES 142, 143, 144, 151
ceangail	ER 154, 155, 158, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 151
ceart		ES 142, 143, 144, 151
falbh		ES 143, 144
feadhain	ER 153, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	
mèirleach		ES 142, 143, 144, 151

treabhadh	ER 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 148
Vowel rounded and raised		
bainne		ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144
Vowel unrounded		
cluinntinn	ER 152, 153, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161	ES 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
cuimhne	ER 152, 153, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150
doras	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 160, 161	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 149, 150, 151
druim	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
oidhche	ER 152, 153, 156, 157, 159, 160, 161	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
Vowel advanced		
cluinntinn	ER 153, 156, 160	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
cuimhne	ER 153, 161	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150
druim	ER 152, 154, 155, 156, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
tairbh	ER 162	ES 141, 147, 148
Vowel retracted		
creididh	ER 152, 154, 155, 159	ES 151
feadhain	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
greim	ER 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 141, 142, 143, 145, 147, 149, 151
teang(*aidh*)		ES 140, 141, 146
Vowel retracted and raised		
airgead		ES 143, 145, 147, 148
càirdean		ES 142, 143, 144, 151
+ diphthongisation		
a-null	ER 157	ES 140
ceangail	ER 152, 158	ES 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150
ceann	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
cluinntinn	ER 152, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 146, 149

cuimhne	ER 152, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 148, 151
druim	ER 152 154, 156, 157, 158, 159, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
feadhain	ER 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 144, 149, 150
mèirleach	ER 156, 160	ES 144, 149, 150
teang(aidh)	ER 153, 156, 160	ES 142, 143, 144, 147, 149, 150, 151
tionndadh		ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 145, 146, 149, 150
treabhadh		ES 140, 147

+ lengthening

a-null	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 158, 159, 160, 162	ES 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
àrd	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 15
càirdean	ER 152, 153, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
ceangail	ER 155, 161	ES 151
cinnteach	ER 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 160, 162	ES 150, 151
cluinntinn	ER 153	ES 141, 142, 143, 145, 147, 148, 150, 151
cuimhne	ER 153, 160	ES 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 149, 150
druim	ER 153, 154, 155, 160, 161, 162	
dùirn	ER 152, 153, 156, 157, 158, 159, 162	ES 140, 145, 147, 148, 149, 151
fheàrr	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	
mèirleach	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 149, 150, 151
thill/fill	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
tionndadh	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 144, 147, 148, 151

+ independent nasalisation

faiceadh	ER 152, 153, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161	ES 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151

+ svarabhakti with tonic vowel

ainm	ER 152, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161	
airgead		ES 140, 146, 147, 148, 150
tairbh	ER 152, 157, 158, 159, 162	

INHERITED STRESSED LONG VOWELS

+ diphthongisation

rìgh	ER 152, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	
ìosal	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151

+ final unhistorical vowel

naoi	ER 158, 159	

INHERITED STRESSED DIPHTHONGS

+ centralisation of second element

cuairt	ER 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 144
grian	ER 162	ES 140, 146

Reduction of first element to labial glide

cuimhne		ES 142, 143, 144

INHERITED SHORT UNSTRESSED VOWELS

development of [a]-type vowel in second syllable

seachdain	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
cinnteach	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161,162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
raithneach	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160,161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
mèirleach	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151

final apocope

aithne	ER 154, 155	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 145, 146, 147, 149, 150, 151
bainne	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 160, 161	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
corca (/*coirce*)	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151

cuimhne	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
oidhche	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
oirre	ER 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 160, 161	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151

PART 2: CONSONANTS

PREASPIRATION

Preaspiration realised as h

faiceadh	ER 157, 158, 159, 162	
leac	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 157, 158, 159	ES 149, 150
pac (/*mac*)	ER 155, 157, 158, 159	ES 145
tric	ER 154, 155, 157, 158, 159	
tuiteam	ER 152, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 145

Preaspiration realised as ch

faiceadh	ER 152, 160, 161
leac	ER 160, 161, 162
mac/*pac*	ER 161, 162
tric	ER 152, 156, 160, 161, 162

Preaspiration realised as devoiced consonant before stop

cearc	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
corca (/*coirce*)	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
olc	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150

PALATALISATION AND DEPALATALISATION

Palatalisation: Final

triùr > *triùir*	ER 154	ES 140, 144, 151

Depalatalisation: Initial

leanaidh	ER 160, 163

Depalatalisation: Medial

faiceadh (-ic- > [k]*)*	ES 145, 151

Depalatalisation: Final

seachdain (*-ain* --> [n])	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150

Depalatalisation: Clusters

Initial clusters

creid-	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 147, 148, 149, 150
greim	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
tric	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
triùir	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 145, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151

Medial clusters

càirdean	ER 153, 155, 156	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
mèirleach	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151

Final clusters

cuairt	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 145, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
dùirn	ER 152, 153, 156, 157, 158	ES 145, 148, 150

Final cluster of unstressed syllable

thubhairt	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 145, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151

REDUCTION

Cluster > single retroflex consonant

àrd	ER 154, 155	ES 144, 151
càirdean		ES 144, 151
mèirleach	ER 155	ES 144, 151

Final cluster of unstressed syllable > single retroflex consonant

thubhairt	ER 155	ES 144, 151

Final three-element cluster [rst] > reduced to two elements

ceart	ER 155, 160	ES 144, 151
cuairt	ER 154, 155	ES 144, 151

Historical voiceless fricative lost

aithne	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
ceathrar	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 15
raithneach	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151

Loss of *-bh-* in svarabhakti

falbhaidh	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 141, 142, 143, 144, 145.

Loss of fricative

feadhain	ER 153, 154, 155, 156	ES 144, 145, 148, 149, 150
thubhairt	ER 154	ES 145, 146, 147, 148

Loss of sonant

teang(*aidh*)	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 162	ES 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151.

Vocalisation of sonant

ceangail	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151

Vocalisation of fricative

feadhain	ER 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 162	
thubhairt	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
tairbh	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151

Vocalisation elsewhere: voiceless stop after nasal > voiced

cinnteach	ER 156, 159, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 147, 151

CHANGE OF CONSONANT CLASS / TYPE

aithne [ɲ > ŋ´]		ES 145, 148, 150
bainne [ɲ > ŋ´])		ES 145, 148, 150
teangaidh [ŋ > v, ɣ])		ES 140, 142
raithneach epenthetic final *–d* [k]	ER 155	ES 144
ìosal, olc, falbhas retroflexion of historical non-palatalised lateral		ES 144, 151
tionnd-adh, tionndadh change of class in palatalised stop ([t´ > k´])		ES 143, 151

PART 3: MORPHOLOGY

NOUNS

Final vowel of genetive singular lost

cloiche	ER 152, 153, 156, 159, 162	ES 145, 146, 148, 149, 150

Genetive singular not distinguished

cloiche	ER 154, 155, 157, 158, 159, 160, 162	ES 142, 143, 144, 145, 151
dorais(*t*)	ER 154, 155, 159	ES 144, 145, 146, 148, 150, 151

Spread of plural morph *-an*

ta(*i*)*rbh*(*e*)*an*	ER 153, 154, 155	ES 141

ADJECTIVES

Analogical re-formation

ìosal (for *ìseal*; based on *sìos, shìos*)	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150

PRONOUNS

oirre (*oi-* > [ɛ])	ER 153, 154, 155, 156, 160	ES 143, 144, 145, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
oirre (*-rr-* > depalatalised)	ER 152, 153, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161	ES 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 147, 148, 149, 150
oirre (*-rr-* > velarised [R])	ER 155	ES 144
oirre (final *–e* > *-i*)		ES 140, 146

VERBS

Future independent

falbh-aidh (*mi*) termination [-a]) (arising from *–abh*) > [a/ɑ]) + [ə] (< *–aidh*) with final element deleted	ER 152, 161, 162	ES 149, 150
falbh-aidh (*mi*) termination **[-u]** (arising from *-bh-*) > [u̯] + [ə] (< *–aidh*) with final element deleted	ER 157, 158	
falbh-as (*mi*) termination **[-əs]** (arising from *–bh*) > ø + [əs] replacement by alternative fut. indep. morpheme	ER 155	ES 151

Replacement by alternative future independent morpheme

creideas	ER 155

leanas	ER 155	
Conditional dependent		
faiceadh (termination *–adh* > [u/əv])	ER 153, 154, 155, 156	ES 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
faiceadh (termination *–adh* > [ək])	ER 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	
Verbal noun		
tionnd- (+ termination *–a*(*i*)*n*)	ER 152, 153, 154, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 146, 147, 148, 149, 150
tionnd- (+ termination *–ail*)	ER 155	ES 142, 143, 145
tionnd- (+ termination *–adh* > [u]		ES 144, 151
treabh- (verbal stem > [ɔ])	ER 152, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
treabh- (+ termination *–adh* > [u/əv/əw])	ER 153, 154, 155, 156	ES 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151
treabh- (+ termination *–adh* > [ək]	ER 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	

PART 4: LEXICON

clàistinn (instead of/ as well as) *cluinntinn*)	ER 152, 153, 155	
corca (/*coirce*) (final apocope)	ER 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162	ES 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151

APPENDIX 2

Linguistic innovations not shared with other Eastern Ross-shire or Eastern Sutherland points but having connections outside these areas

a-null	(diphthongised stressed vowel)	ER 157.	Pts 1–9; 127–130
ceathrair	(palatalised final)	ER 154.	e.g. Pts 1–15; 17–30; 92–116 etc; cf. Borgstrøm (1940: 242)
ceart	(diphthongised vowel)	ER 155	Pts 167–72
cinnteach	(voiced stop following sonant)	ER 156	cf. Borgstrøm (1940: 238)
	(diphthongisation of stressed vowel)	ER 157	cf. Borgstrøm (1940: 238)
each	(diphthongised vowel)	ES 140	Pts 9–13; 91–98; 116–140; 165, 167–169 etc.
ìosal	(epenthetic *–t-* after *–s-*)	ES 141	Possibly arising from sibilant – lateral transition
leac	(diphthongised vowel)	ES 141	Pts 116–118; 165–68; 171–75 etc.
	(preaspiration of *–c* realised as preceding [x])	ER 162	Pts 116–18, 165–68, 171–73 etc.
thill	(diphthongised vowel)	ER 157	Pts 125, 126; cf. Borgstrøm (1940: 238); Pts. 125–26, 128, 130, 169

APPENDIX 3

Maps

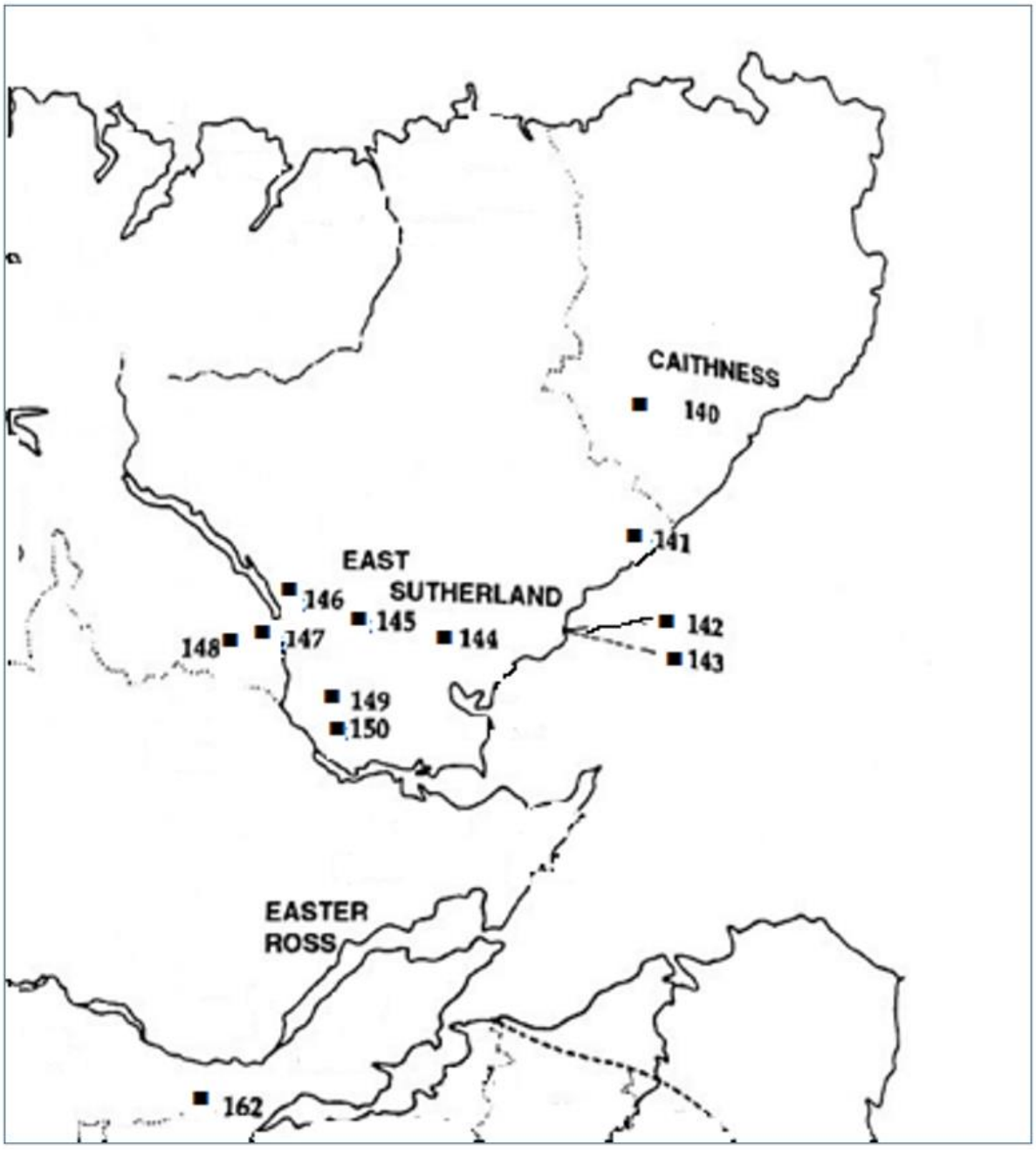


Fig. 5. airgead, tairbh: with tonic epenthetic vowel

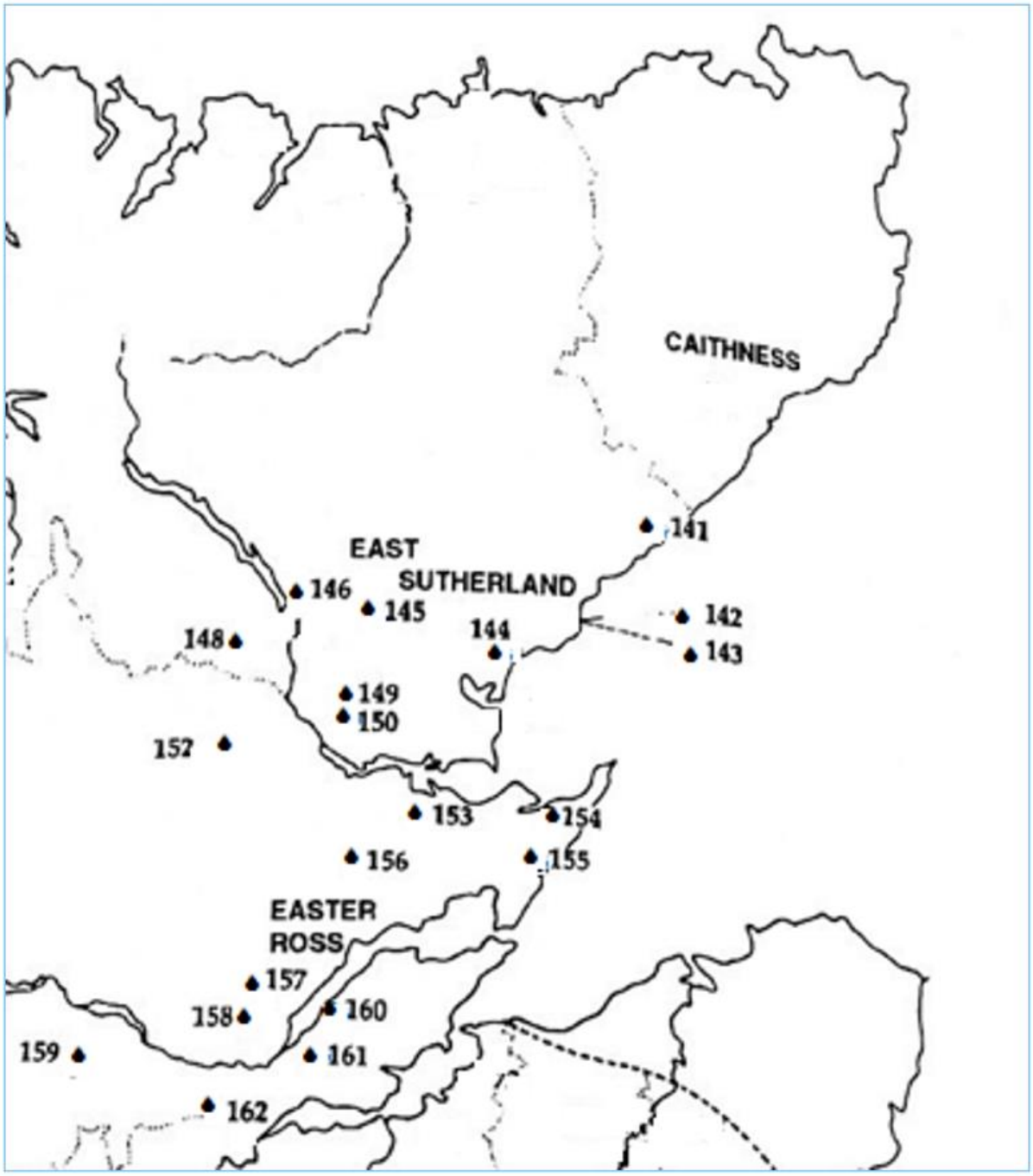


Fig. 6. clach: without genitive singular morphology

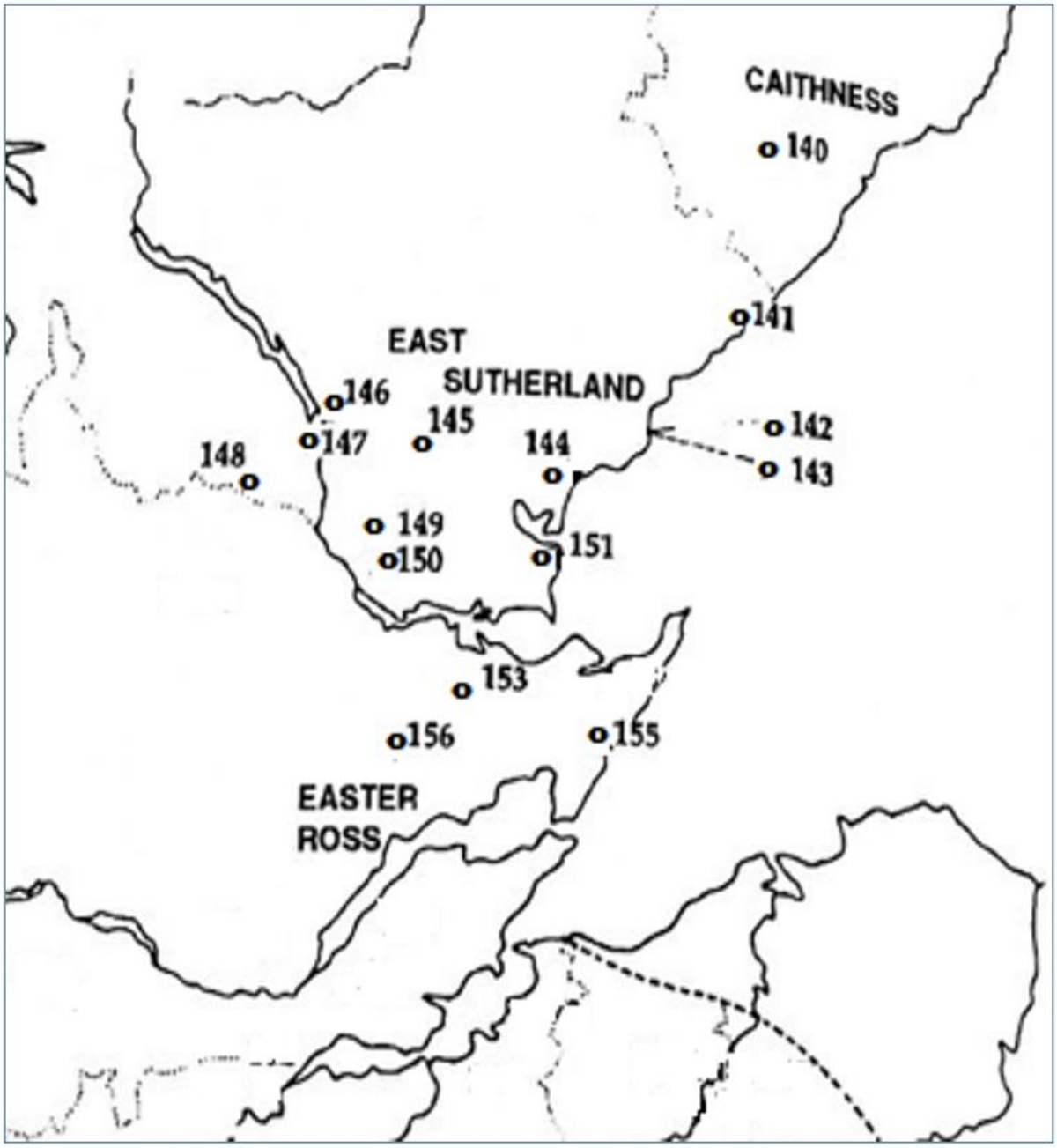


Fig. 7. càirdean: with medial depalatalisation

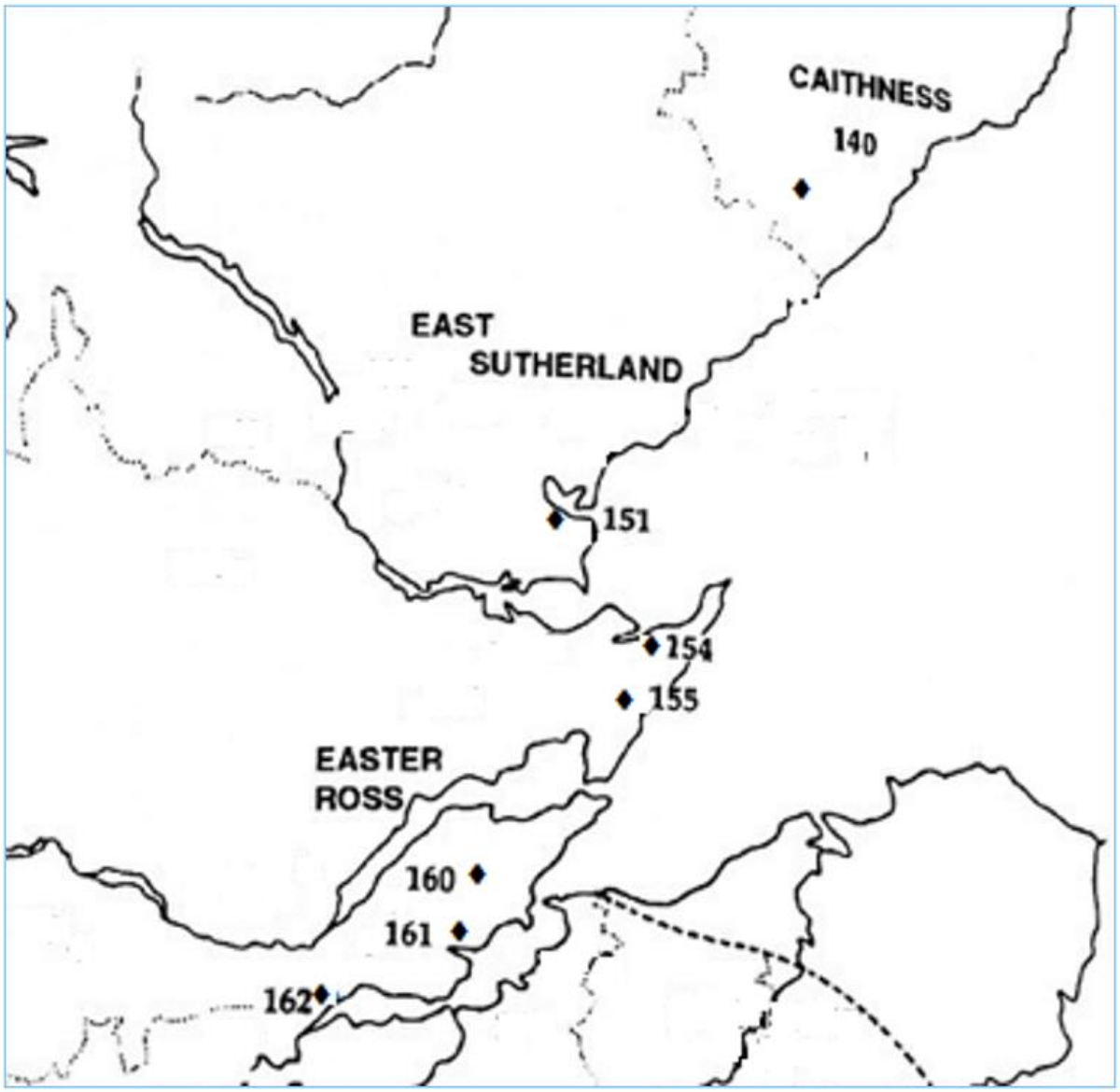


Fig. 8. ceangail: with stressed *o*-vowel

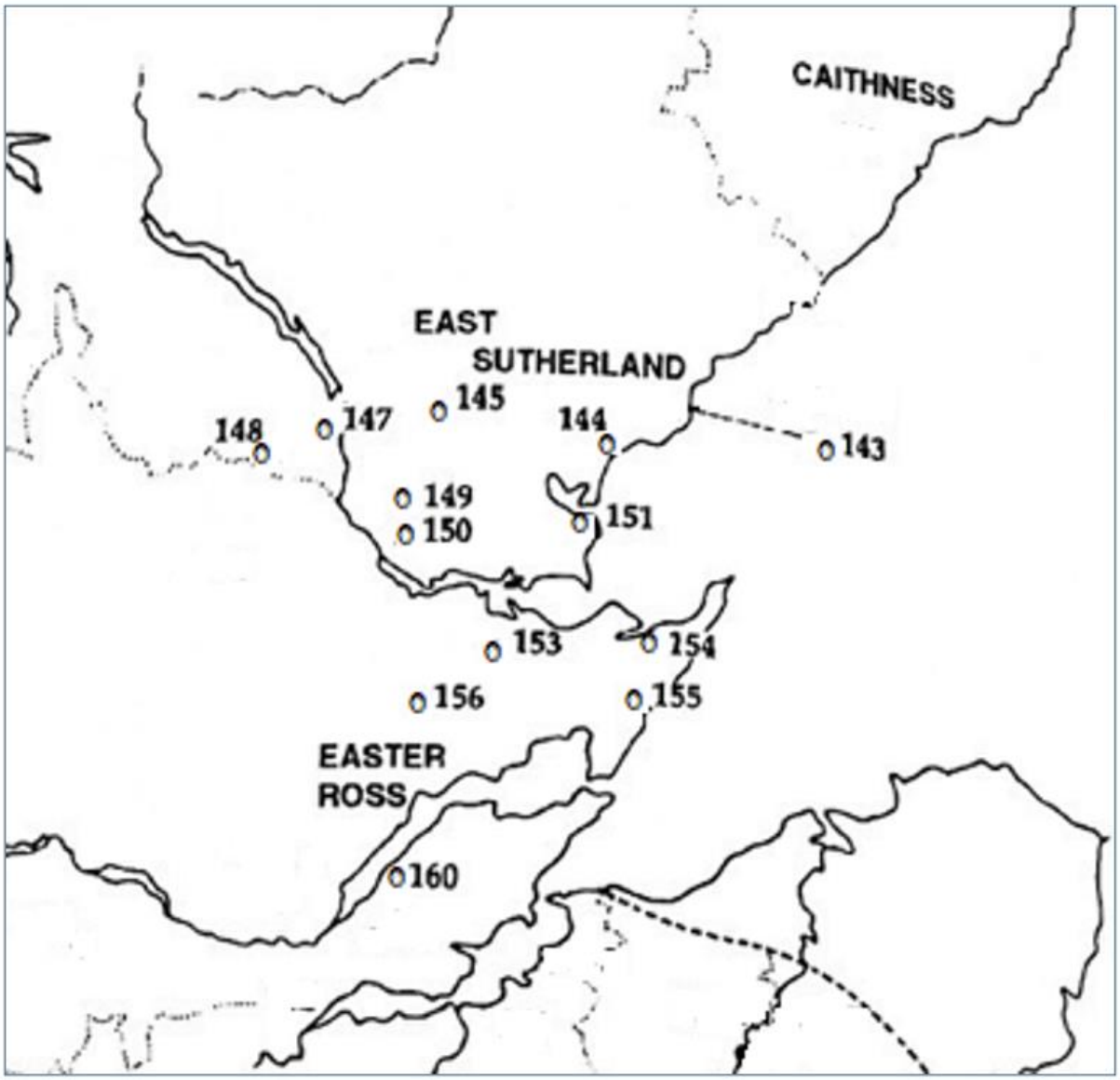


Fig. 9. oirre: with stressed *e*-vowel

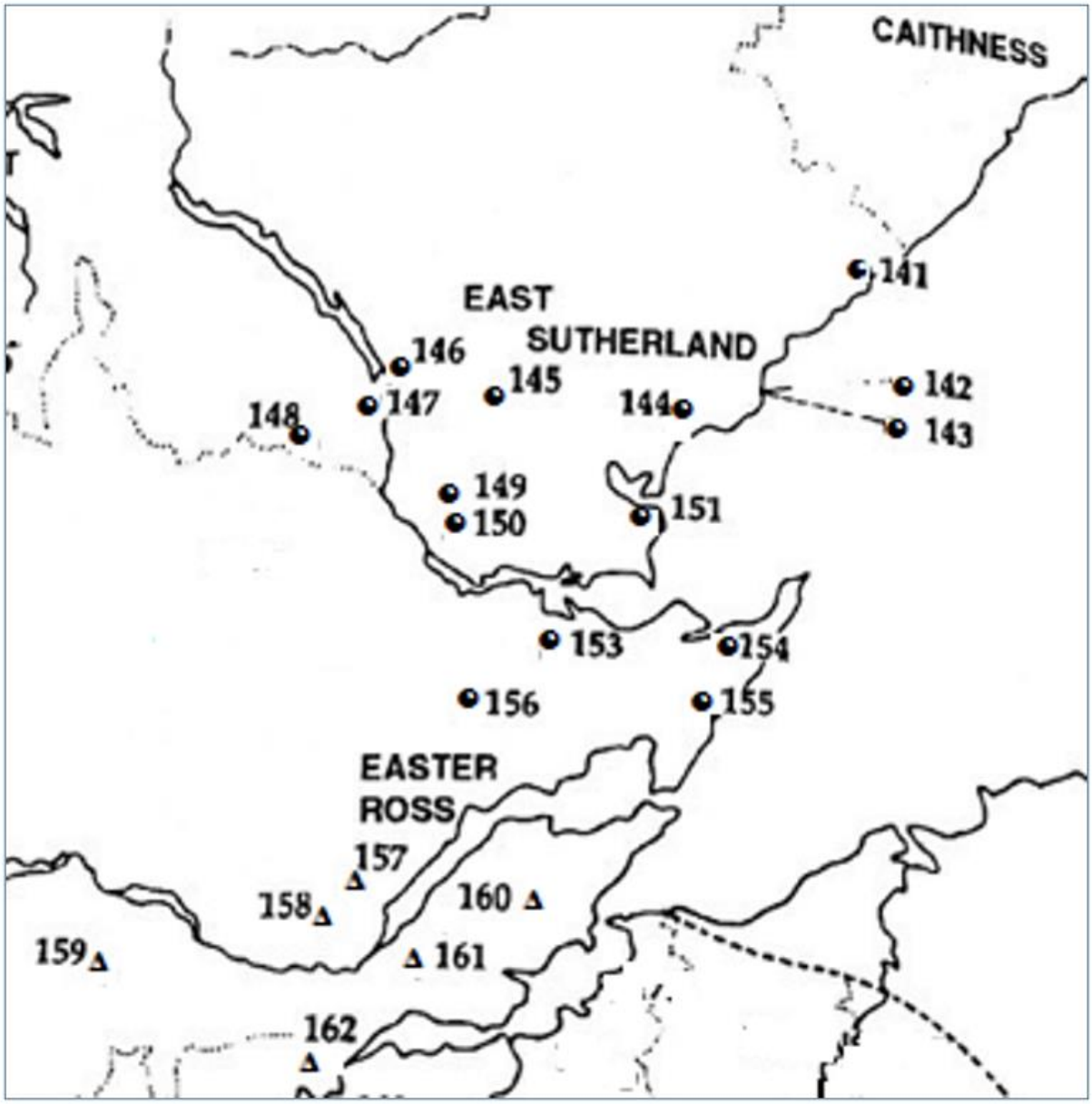


Fig. 10. faiceadh: -u/-əv (•) vs -ək (Δ) termination

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ABSTRACTS

Ronald I. M. Black
Oral Narrative and Propaganda

This article examines some inconsistencies among narratives relating to the dispute between Angus MacDonald of Islay and Sir Lachlan MacLean of Duart over possession of the Rhinns of Islay in the late sixteenth century. While the historicity of the events is not in dispute, local accounts, both written and oral, tended to alter their chronology or other details in order to provide a reading of those events that favoured one side or the other – in other words, propaganda, or as some would say, 'fake news', albeit well after the event.

Virginia Blankenhorn
From Farm to Fork in South Uist

Drawing from her diary of summer stays in South Uist in the 1970s, the author reflects on those aspects of crofting life having to do with food production. Having grown into a comfortable relationship with a crofting family in Howbeg, she witnessed and participated in many of the summer's chores, including lifting peats, haymaking and sheep-shearing, and recorded how the croft's livestock and wild resources provided essential elements of its larder.

Katherine Campbell and Emily Lyle
'Up in the Air' or 'The Grey Mare': A Scottish and English Prosimetrical Form of ATU 1540 'The Student from Paradise (Paris)'

A Scottish lawyers' dramatic entertainment known in the eighteenth century contained a song which Allan Ramsay revised as 'Up in the Air' in his *Tea-Table Miscellany* (1723). The traditional song and air as found in Scotland and a related prose text published in an English newspaper are explored here. They provide an unusual prosimetrical form of a jocular tale which has a wide international currency but is rare in Britain.

Hugh Cheape
'Folklore Reminiscences' of John Lorne Campbell

A leading Gaelic scholar and fieldworker of the twentieth century, the late John Lorne Campbell's writings on traditional Gaelic song and his groundbreaking editions of the stories and reminiscences of islanders have become standard works. Describing himself as a 'folklorist' before that term was widely used, he formed a strong bond with Seumas Ó Duilearga, director of the Irish Folklore Commission, a relationship which inspired him to campaign for the creation of a similar institution that would record and conserve the songs, stories, and lore of Gaelic Scotland. Unaffiliated with a university, Campbell lamented the public neglect of the Gaelic language, and was fiercely critical of Scottish universities' failure to record (or even teach) popular tradition. Eventually, his persistent campaign helped to build momentum for the founding of the School of

Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh in the 1950s. Campbell's 'Folklore Reminiscences' – private notebooks held in the library at Canna House – offer rich background to his public life and legacy, from his early determination to learn Gaelic to his growing understanding of 'folklore' as a discipline, and ultimately to his many contributions to Gaelic scholarship as author, editor, technical innovator, indefatigable fieldworker, commentator and critic.

Robert Dunbar

A Song Remembered in Exile: *Annag a Ghaoil, hao ill o*, Fear Chanaidh, agus Eòin G. MacFhionghain

Visiting Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, in the 1930s, John Lorne Campbell became aware of the rich heritage of Gaelic song and culture brought to Canada by Scottish settlers. This article examines Campbell's relationship with an industrious and influential Canadian Gael: Jonathan G. MacKinnon (Eòin G. MacFhionghain, 1869–1944), writer, translator, and editor of the Gaelic weekly *Mac-Talla*. In addition to describing their friendship, the author discusses a fragmentary waulking-song, *Annag a Ghaoil, hao ill o* ('Anna my love, *hao ill o*'), which Campbell recorded from MacKinnon in 1937 – a song that he later mentioned in the first volume of *Hebridean Folksongs* (1969), and eventually published as the first item in his anthology of Cape Breton songs, *Songs Remembered in Exile* (1990). This article is written in Gaelic.

Tiber F. M. Falzett

Music from the Source: *Am Muileann Dubh* and North Atlantic Supernatural Music Legends

This article examines legends of supernatural music associated with the Scottish Gaelic reel tune *Am Muileann Dubh* ('The Black Mill') across the North Atlantic. Drawing on Prince Edward Island, Shetlandic, Hebridean, Highland, and Cape Breton material alongside Christiansen's Migratory Legend type 4090, it traces a legend complex in which supernatural beings at water sites bestow music upon human recipients. The article considers the mill as a site of encounter in Gaelic tradition, the polysemy of *muileann dubh* across musical, ritual, and social registers, and the cosmological dynamics of *bodach* and *cailleach* as figures of cyclical death and regeneration. Three Cape Breton variants preserve structural features absent from recorded Scottish and Irish sources but cognate with Norwegian tradition, suggesting that a related Gaelic legend type was carried from the Highlands and Hebrides during the era of emigration. The community's continued performance despite diabolic associations and clerical prohibition enacts a vernacular resistance through collective discernment.

Maxim Fomin

Maritime Folklore in the West Highlands: Some Mid-century Collectors and their Informants (1953–1970)

The article focuses on the oral maritime heritage of the West Highlands and Islands of Scotland, discussing legends and stories collected in the mid-20th century and maintained in the School of Scottish Studies Archives at the University of Edinburgh. Items include omens warning fishermen of adverse conditions at sea, premonitions of future disasters, and lore involving seals, water horses and mermaids. The contributions of some of the School of Scottish Studies' outstanding informants, including Kate Dix of Berneray and Nan MacKinnon of Vatersay, are featured.

Terry Gunnell
The Fiddler and the Waterfall: The Quest for Inspiration in Norwegian Legends of Fiddlers

Tracing cultural affinities between stories recorded in the Northern Isles of Scotland (especially Shetland) and those found in the wider Nordic world, the author examines legends and beliefs connecting fiddle music and the supernatural. Tales tell of would-be musicians learning tunes from supernatural masters, and in some legends these are demonic figures with whom the musician must fight for his life. Many stories suggest a belief that running water – a stream, a mill, a waterfall – can provide artistic inspiration, and that such environments possess a liminal quality where natural and supernatural worlds meet. The author argues that stories asserting the supernatural origins of fiddling skills and tunes likely go back to a shared Nordic, rather than mainland Scottish tradition.

William Lamb
A' Chluais-chiùil ann an Dualchas nan Gàidheal

In generations past, Gaels had difficulty separating melody from words. When discussing a song, for example, someone who knew the air to a song was thereby assumed to know the words as well. A wide range of evidence also points to a pervasive cultural tendency to mix instrumental music and song. Lastly, music and song are frequently conflated in Gaelic traditional narrative – most apparently in tales of the *cluas-chiùil* ('musical-ear'), the ability to transmit and receive messages through instrumental music, with many such narratives serving as aetiologies for well-known pipe tunes and dance songs. While the *cluas-chiùil* may be regarded as a supernatural trope, these tales – coupled with linguistic evidence – point towards an earlier cognitive configuration that entails a very close relationship between words and music. This article is written in Gaelic.

Carl Lindahl
The Women of Islay and Issues of Gender in the Core Fairy Tale Repertoires of Scotland and Appalachia

An underappreciated aspect of John Francis Campbell's *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* is the richness of its representation of the women storytellers of Islay. Although female narrators recorded outside of Islay account for less than four percent of Campbell's published texts, women contributed more than half of the published Islay tales. This repertoire represents an otherwise hidden domestic tradition with strong links to women's narrative traditions documented in the Scottish Lowlands in the nineteenth century and the Appalachian Mountains in the twentieth. Both Campbell and his star fieldworker Hector MacLean were Islay natives with lifelong ties to the narrators. This familiarity allowed the two men not only to record the women's tales, but also to describe performance contexts and to show how one island community shaped a repertoire that is both distinctively Gaelic and demonstrably continuous with the female repertoires of Scots-speaking Lowlanders and English-speaking North Americans.

Séamus Mac Mathúna
Aspects of the Marine Otherworld of Rathlin Island

This article examines maritime stories and folklore collected in Rathlin Island. Located between Ireland's north coast and southwestern Scotland, Rathlin has long connected the two countries while also developing its own distinctive culture. Just as its Irish Gaelic dialect shares a range of

linguistic isoglosses with Scottish Gaelic, Rathlin's heritage includes many maritime customs, stories and beliefs also found in Scotland. Seals, mermaids, sea monsters, supernatural boats, shipwrecks, fishing taboos, enchanted islands and other phenomena associated with the island's marine otherworld have been central to Rathlin's culture and its stories.

Dòmhnall Eachann Meek
An Cùbair Collach agus a' Chuibheall-Chnò: Sgeulachd à Tiriodh

In this article, the author presents a tale told by his grand-uncle Charles MacDonald (1874–1960), whose storytelling was part of his childhood in Tiree. The tale concerns Alexander Maclean (1776–1822), the 'Cùbair Collach', a Coll man whose reputation as a daring whisky-smuggler made him the subject of colourful anecdotes. In this one, the Cùbair persuades a mermaid to give him two devices: a 'wireless' that allows him to track the exciseman's whereabouts, and a 'smoke-screen' that obscures his own. The author compares MacDonald's narrative with an outline of the same story summarised by a Coll writer, Hector MacDougall (1889–1954), who says he heard it from a Tiree man. Although it relates to an early nineteenth-century character, the story's technological references strongly indicate that it was first told in this form in the early 20th century. This article is written in Gaelic.

Séamas Ó Catháin
Shades of Light and Darkness

Irish people, especially those living in rural areas, reflected their keen awareness of the passage of time in expressions describing the shortening daylight hours in autumn and the imperceptible advance towards spring in the winter months. The author examines several idioms tracking the sun's progress – and that of time itself – and their linkage with calendar customs in the Irish countryside.

Lillis Ó Laoire
***Craobh nan Ubhal:* A Gaelic Panegyric**

Craobh nan Ubhal forms part of the well-known corpus of Gaelic waulking songs. Drawing on the idea of the chief as a miraculously fecund apple tree, through fulsome praise, the female speaker bears witness to her patron's prosperity, with exhortations to the elemental powers for his continued success. Both singers and audiences implicitly understood inherent concepts of kingship, sovereignty, charismatic personhood and leadership. Using nineteenth and twentieth century printed and audio texts, this paper examines links with early Irish tree lore, which continued to inform a Gaelic worldview for over a millennium. Popularised by the renowned Flora MacNeil, her family's views on *Craobh nan Ubhal* testify to the song's separate categorisation apart from other work songs. The exploration concludes that *Craobh nan Ubhal* is an exceptional example of the continuity and dynamism of Gaelic tradition, continuously adapting to new and varied contexts.

Roibeard Ó Maolalaigh
Ossianic Informants Named by the Rev. Dr Alexander Irvine (1773–1824)

The Rev. Alexander Irvine (1773–1824), minister of Little Dunkeld, Perthshire (1806–1824), was an acknowledged Gaelic scholar and collector of Gaelic oral and written materials. Unlike many

of his predecessors, he was careful to record metadata associated with his sources. This paper, which is based for the most part on key Irvine manuscripts, provides the names and further details of twenty-three tradition bearers or informants of Ossianic material named by Irvine, one of whom was a woman.

Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir
'The Dead Bridegroom' (ATU 365) in Iceland

The tale is familiar: A young woman is collected from her home and taken on horseback by a male figure known to her, but subsequently discovers that the rider is his ghost, and that the grave is their destination. While ATU 365 is known throughout Europe, this article traces the form and details of the story as they were localised to reflect the social reality of Iceland. Beginning with 'The Deacon of Myrká', collected by Konrad Maurer and included in his 1860 collection of Icelandic tales, the article discusses five further variants published by Jón Árnason beginning in 1862, and one collected in Canada by Torfhildur Hólm from a fellow Icelandic settler sometime after 1876. After discussing how these variants reflect the Icelandic context, the author suggests that they may ultimately derive from oral traditions disseminated by trade between Iceland and England during the fifteenth century.

Ríonach uí Ógain
'Giollas na gCos Dubh'

The author recorded the tale entitled 'Giollas na gCos Dubh' from Pádraig Ó Nia, originally from the island of Fínis, Co. Galway, in 1982. To date, only two other versions of the tale have been identified, although some motifs are found in other narratives. After introducing the storyteller and describing his community, the author transcribes the tale, in which the hero rescues a mortal held captive by the fairies, frees her from a sleep charm, and marries her. When Giollas again encounters the fairies, they ask him to help them abduct a mortal woman. He insists that they go first to Rome, where the fairies help Giollas persuade the Pope to allow Giollas' local priest to resume celebrating mass. Returning to Ireland, Giollas sabotages the fairies' planned abduction, and the woman is safe. This article is written in Irish.

Seosamh Watson
Borgstrøm's Word Lists: East Sutherland and Easter Ross Dialects in the Light of the Scottish Gaelic Dialect Survey

This article surveys points of similarity between the Scottish Gaelic spoken in Easter Ross – a distinct dialect area not covered by Borgstrøm's 1942 study of Skye and Ross-shire Gaelic – and the dialects of East Sutherland / Caithness, features of which were identified by Nancy Dorian's 1978 study of East Sutherland Gaelic and subsequently brought together in the *Scottish Gaelic Dialect Survey* published in the 1990s. Basing his study on two of Borgstrøm's word lists, the author identifies isogloss boundaries in light of *SGDS* data to help us towards a better understanding of the dialects of the Eastern Highlands.