

An Naidheachd Againne

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

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Tha ùidh aig Steaphan MacRisnidh (Steven Ritchie) ann an saobh-chràbhadh agus mith-sgeulan, agus san alt seo, tha e a' beachdachadh air coltasan eadar sgeulan Iapanach agus sgeulan Gàidhlig. Tha Steaphan a' fuireach ann an Iapan, ag obair aig companaidh Iapanach is a' cuideachadh le trèanadh tar-chultarach a liubhairt do chosnaichean à dùthchannan cèin agus ag eadar-theangachadh sgrìobhaidhean dhaibh bho Iapanais gu Beurla. A bharrachd air sin, bidh e ag eadar-theangachadh o Bheurla gu Gàidhlig agus o Iapanais gu Beurla air a cheann fhèin.

Informed by his interest in superstition and folktales, Steaphan MacRisnidh discusses here some similarities between Japanese and Gaelic folktales. Steaphan is currently living in Japan where he works for a Japanese company, helping to provide cross-cultural training for foreign employees and translating from Japanese to English for them. He also freelances as a translator from English to Gaelic and from Japanese to English.

Coimeas Eadar Sgeulan Gàidhealach is Iapanach *le Steaphan MacRisnidh*

Tha saobh-chràbhadh o shean air toirbheartas de sgeulachdan fhàgail againn san latha a th' ann, agus tha suim mhòr agamsa orra – ge be cò no càit às a bheil iad. Bho chionn greis, thug mi fa-near co-choltasan aig mith-sgeulan Iapanach a leugh mi agus corra mhith-sgeul Gàidhlig as aithne dhomh. Bu toil leam, a-rèiste, coimeas a dhèanamh eatorra cho math 's as urrainn dhomh anns an airtigil ghoirid seo.

Bho chionn grunn bhliadhnaichean, bha mi a' leughadh sgeulachd (Am Figheadair Crotach) san leabhar "The Book of Arran" mu fhigheadair crotach a thug toileachas cho mòr do na sìthichean (sìbhrich ann an Gàidhlig Arainn) 's gun tug iad a' chroit far a dhroma dha. Ge-tà, rinn iad a choimhearsnach crotach eile "dà uair na bu chrotaiche" nuair a mhill esan am port a bha iad a' seinn. Aig bonn na duilleige, laigh mo shùil air nòta ag innse gun robh sgeulachdan Iapanach ann coltach ris an tè seo, ach gur e fliodh air bathais a bh' anns a' pheanas, seach croit air a sparradh air druim.

Tha mion-sgrùdair Junganach, Kanai Hayao, am beachd gu bheil *ego* boireann sa mhòr-chuid de sgeulachdan Iapanach seach an *ego* fireann a th' air a leigeil ris ann an sgeulachdan na h-Àird an Iar. Dhomhsa dheth, dh'fhaodadh an "at air bathais" a bhith na chomharra dhen spèis a th' aca do choltas na gnùise ann an cultar Iapain agus cho maslach 's a bhiodh e nan rachadh

A Comparison of Gaelic and Japanese Folktales *by Steaphan MacRisnidh*

The superstitions of yesteryear have left us with a super-abundance of stories in modern times, and I have a great interest in them – whoever and wherever they are from. A while back, I noticed similarities between Japanese tales I'd read, and a few Gaelic folktales that I know. Therefore, I'd like to make a rough comparison between them as best I can in this short article.

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Go to <http://www.acgamerica.org> for more on upcoming ACGA events and other Gaelic-related activities.

a mhilleadh (mullach mòr a' mhì-mhoidh a bhith a' nàireachadh neach air beulaibh chàich ann an cultar na h-Iapain).

Cha do thòisich sgoilearan Iapanach air mith-sgeulan na tìre a rannsachadh gus na 1960an, ach a-nis gheibhear na deicheadan mhiltean de sgeulachdan dùthchasach air an cruinneachadh. Coltach ri sgeulachdan Gàidhealach, tòisichidh mòran dhiubh le pàtrain shuidhichte, cleas “Uair dha robh saoghal”, “Bha siud ann uair”, msaa.

Tha còig prìomh mhith-sgeulan Iapanach ann air a bheil fèill aig an t-sluagh fhathast agus a tha air nochdadh ann an iomadh riochd sna meadhanan agus an leabhraichean. Canar sgeulachdan “Muromachi” riutha bhon a tha iad a' buntainn don linn ‘Muromachi’ (1333-1573). Niste, ma smaoinichear air na sgeulachdan Gàidhealach a thathar ag aithris an-diugh, 's ann a bha gu leòr de na fiosraichean aig aois mhòr nuair a chruinnich Iain Òg Ìle iad eadar 1850 - 1874. Mar sin, 's ann don 18mh linn a bhuineas tòrr dhiubh – an linn san do rugadh na daoine a thug seachad iad. Is e sin àm san robh coirce na bu lìonmhoire na buntàta (nach deach a chur air Ghàidhealtachd gu 1780). Fada air ais, gu dearbh, ach cha tig iad suas ri aois nan sgeulan Muromachi!



Urashima Taro Edmund Dulac

Is e “Urashima Taro” sgeulachd Iapanach eile a tha glè aithnichte fhathast agus a thug gu m' aire coltasan ri sgeulachdan Gàidhealach a thaobh plòta na stòiridh. Tha seo eadar-dhealaichte bho na sgeulachdan Muromachi san t-seagh 's gu bheil eileamaidean dhith stèidhichte air eachdraidh cho fada air ais ris a' bhliadhna 720. Mar sin, buinidh i do na seann-sgeulan anns nach fhaighear na foirmlean suidhichte a gheibhear anns na mith-sgeulan. An seòrsa aig a bheil càirdeas fad às ri seann

Some years ago, I read a story “The Hunchbacked Weaver”, in *The Book of Arran, Vol 2* about a weaver who delighted the faeries so much that they took the hump off his back for him. However, his hunchbacked neighbour from the same village spoiled the tune they were singing (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday), which displeased them so much that they took the weaver's hump and sent his neighbour home “twice as hunchbacked” as before. There was a note below the text which mentioned similar Japanese stories of this kind, but that the punishment was often a wen on the forehead rather than a hump forced onto a back.

The Jungian analyst, Kanai Hayao, believes that the majority of Japanese folktales suggest a female ego rather than the masculine ego revealed in Western tales. I suppose that the “swelling on the brow” could be construed as a mark of the esteem in which the face's countenance is held in Japan, and the disgrace that would be felt if it was spoiled perhaps symbolises the disgrace in Japanese culture of causing another person to lose face.

It was only in the 1960s that scholars' study of Japanese folktales really took off, but since then tens of thousands of stories have been collected. Similar to Gaelic folktales, many of them begin with set patterns such as “Once upon a time” and “A long, long time ago”, etc.

There are five principal Japanese folktales which remain popular today and have appeared in many different guises in media and in books. These tales are known as the *Muromachi* folk tales because they belong to the Muromachi period (circa 1333-1573). Now, if we consider the Gaelic tales that are known today, many of the informants were extremely old when John Campbell of Islay collected them between 1850 and 1874. Thus, many of them actually belong to the 18th century – the period in which the informants were born. That was a period when oats were more commonly grown than potatoes (which didn't reach the Highlands until 1780). A long time ago indeed, but the Muromachi tales beat those hands down for antiquity!

“Urashima Taro” is another very well-known Japanese tale and one that brought to mind similarities with Gaelic ones in terms of the storyline. This one is different from the Muromachi tales in that it has elements based on legends as far back as the year 720. Therefore, it belongs to the legends category which lack the folk tales' set

phearsachan is tachartasan a dh'fhaodadh a bhith fìor ach a chaidh atharrachadh thar nan linn.

San tè seo, sàbhailidh iasgair òg, Urashima Taro, sligeanach a bheir leis e gu lùchairt Rìgh nan Dràgon fo uachdar a' chuain mar thaing. Gabhaidh e gaol air bana-phrionnsa agus cuiridh e seachad trì bliadhna ann. Thig an cianalas air agus nuair a nì e airson tilleadh don t-saoghal bhon tàinig e, bheirear dha seotal draoidheachd le rabhadh gun a fhosgladh. Mo thruaighe, fosglar e agus air ball, thèid e na sheann duine liath 's chan aithnich e duine no togalach am baile àraich oir tha 500 bliadhna air a dhol seachad seach na trì a chaith e anns an t-sìth-chruith air grunn na mara. Ann an sgeulachdan Gàidhealach a leugh mi dhen t-seòrsa, mar as trice, thèid am fear a-steach do shìthean agus thig e a-mach na dhuine liath, aosmhor mus crìon e gu luathre.

Uill sin an sop às gach seid agamsa seachad, ach tha mi an dòchas gu bheil am blasad beag seo de na co-choltasan eadar sgeulachdan na h-Alba 's na h-Iapain gur piobrachadh gus barrachd a leughadh san ùine tha romhainn.

Iomraidhean / References

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formula. These are tales which have links to historical persons and events who may have existed, or which may have happened, but that have been altered over the centuries.

In this story, a young fisherman called Urashima Taro saves a turtle who then takes him to the Dragon King's palace under the ocean as thanks. He falls in love with a princess and spends three years there. After becoming homesick, he decides to return to the world from whence he came, and is given a magical casket with a warning not to open it. Unfortunately he does open it and immediately he becomes an old wizened man and he doesn't recognize anyone or any building in his home village. The three years he spent in the fairyland beneath the sea have become 500 years in the real world. In Gaelic stories of this kind, the character usually goes into a fairy mound and comes out an old, grey man before he crumbles to dust.

Well, that's my ramblings over for now, but I hope that this little taste of the similarities between traditional Scottish and Japanese stories stimulates you to read more of them in the future.



Urashima Taro Returning on the Turtle
Tsukioka Yoshitoshi



Reminder

The First Annual ACGA Fèis and the 30th ACGA Mòd are coming up fast, September 22-24 in Ligonier, Pennsylvania.

The Fèis will feature presentations and workshops on Gaelic song, music, and tradition, and the Mòd's usual singing, poetry, and storytelling competitions have been expanded to include harmonized singing and accompanied singing. Special guests from Scotland will include adjudicators Margaret Stewart and Murdo "Wasp" MacDonald along with 2016 Royal National Mòd Gold Medal Winners Carol Maclean and Eachann MacEachairn.

For more information click on "events" at <http://www.acgamerica.org>.

Litir bho'n Cheann-Suidhe

le Mìcheal MacAoidh



A Chàirdean,

Tha sinn a' teannachadh air àm a' bhuain, àm a tha gu math cudthromach do mhuintir Ameireaga a Tuath bho'n a chaidh sinn an seo. Ann an Gàidhlig, tha facal ann a tha ceangalaichte gu cudthromach ris an àm seo – agus 's e sin “toradh”. Faodaidh sibh coimhead san fhaclair airson eadar-theangachaidhean eile a dh'fhaodadh a bhith aig an fhacal seo, ach 's e “results” an rud air a bheil mise a-mach an turas seo.

Nuair a smaoinicheas sinn air ar beatha fhèin, tha e cumanta a bhith ag obair air rud – iomairt, obair, ullachadh airson coinneamh no tachartas cudthromach – agus a' coimhead air dè a thig, no a dh'fhaodadh tighinn às an spàirn a tha seo. Uaireannan, tha sinn airson dèanamh a-mach an t-fhiach an t-saothair ris a bheil sinn, a' coimhead air an toradh, gus faighinn a-mach a bheil e ciallach a bhith tuilleadh ris an obair a tha sinn a' dèanamh. Mura h-eil an toradh math gu leòr, no mura h-eil sinn fhathast ag iarraidh an toraidh, 's dòcha gum bu chòir dhuinn ar n-ùine agus air neart a chur mu choinneimh iomairt eile. Sin rud a nì sinn turas agus turas, agus nach iomadh turas a chunnaic sinn, a tha nar tidsearan, daoine eile a' tighinn gu co-dhùnadh nach eil iad airson a' Ghàidhlig ionnsachadh a chionn 's nach eil iad a' faicinn toradh an cuid saotharach a' tighinn gu buil – no gu bheil iad a' faicinn nach eil iad airson an toradh sin a bhith aca tuilleadh.

Cuideachd, tha iomairtean ann, mar am Mòd againn, far an tig “toradh” a-steach gach bliadhna – ann an seadh 's gu bheil sinn ag obair air bàrdachd, òrain, agus sgeulachdan, agus aig an àm sin, aig àm a' Mhòid, gu bheil cothrom ann sùil a thoirt air dè seòrsa toraidh a th' againn, leis gu bheil neach-cuideachaidh – am breitheamh – ag innse dhuinn rudan a leigeas leinn faicinn co-dhiù an do dh'ionnsaich sinn, agus an do dh'ullaich sinn gach rud mar bu chòir. Dhomh-sa, 's e rud mìorbhaileach a th' anns a' Mhòd, oir gheibh sinn a-mach gu soilleir dè na toraidhean a fhuair sinn bho'n spàirn a rinn sinn. 'S dòcha nach bi sinn an-còmhnaidh toilichte leis na gheibh sinn a-mach, ach chan eil teagamh sam bith ann nach cuir seo ar cuid sgilean agus ar cuid Gàidhlig air adhart le bhith a' gabhail pàirt ann.

Letter from the President

by Mike Mackay

Friends,

We are nearing harvest time, a time that has been very important to people in North America since we arrived here. In Gaelic, there is a word connected in an important way to this time, and that's “toradh”. You can look in the dictionary for other translations for this word, but I'm talking about “results” this time.

When we think of our own lives, it's important to work on something – a project, work, preparations for an important meeting or event – and look at what will come, or might come, out of this effort. Sometimes, we'll want to figure out whether the effort is worth it, looking at the results, to determine if it makes sense to continue doing the work. If the results aren't good enough, or if we no longer want those results, it's perhaps better to put our time and efforts behind some other project. That's something we see often, and haven't we who are Gaelic teachers seen many times that people come to the conclusion that they don't want to learn Gaelic anymore because they don't see the results coming to fruition, or that they see that they no longer want that result.

Also, there are events like our Mòd, where “toradh” comes into play each year – in the sense that we work on our poems, songs, and stories, and, at that time, during the Mòd, we have a chance to see what kind of results we have, because a helpful adjudicator tells us whether we've learned and prepared everything as we should have. To me, the Mòd is marvelous since we find out quite clearly what our results are from all the effort we've put into the pieces. Maybe we're not always happy with what we find out, but there's no doubt that this adds to our skills and our Gaelic by taking part in the whole event.

Agus càit a bheil mi a' dol leis an dà shealladh a thug mi dhuibh an seo? Uill, 's a' chiad rud, tha an Comunn againn deiseil, comasach, agus deònach cuideachadh a thoirt do dhuine sam bith a tha a' coimhead airson toradh an cuid obrach a thoirt gu buil. Cha leig daoine a leas smaoineachadh gu bheil iad leotha fhèin ann a bhith a' strì airson Gàidhlig ionnsachadh – agus tha iomadach toradh ann le bhith ag ionnsachadh Gàidhlig as urrainn dhuinn sealltainn dhaibh!

An darna rud – nach tig sibh dhan a' Mhòd againn am-bliadhna! Bidh tòrr spòrs ann, agus tha cothrom ann cuideachd – cothrom a bhith a' faicinn dè cho math 's a tha na rudan air an robh sibh ag obair thairis air a' bhliadhna a chaidh seachad, co-dhiù an deach sibh gu Beinn Seanair, an robh sibh ag obair air òran, no sgeulachd, no an robh sibh ag ionnsachadh agus a' coimhead airson cothrom bruidhinn ri daoine leis an aon amas, agus aig an aon ghaol air cànan luachmhor, às an tig mòran toraidhean.

Le meas,

Micheal MacAoidh
Ceann-suidhe, ACGA

So where am I going with all this? Well, first, ACGA is ready, capable, and quite willing to help anyone who is looking to realize the products of their learning. No one ought to think that they are alone in striving to learn Gaelic. Also, there are many good results from learning Gaelic that we can show them!

The second thing – why not come to the Mòd this year? There will be plenty of fun to be had, and there is an opportunity to see how far you've come with what you've been learning over the year, whether you've been working on something since Grandfather Mountain, working on a song, or story, or just learning, and looking forward to a chance to talk with people with the same goals, who have the same love as you do for this valuable language, from which we can receive so much.

Respectfully,

Michael Mackay
President, ACGA



Can You Help?

Rudy Ramsey has been engaged in a serious effort to put together an electronic archive of all issues of *An Naidheachd Againne*, ACGA's newsletter. With help from Glenn Wrightson, we have the list of needed issues down to just a few:

- 1984-86: All issues
- 1987: Summer issue (v. 4, no. 2)
- 1998: All issues
- 1999: All issues except Spring (need v. 16, nos. 2-4)
- 2000: Spring (v. 17, no 1)
- 2001: Autumn (v. 18, no 3)
- 2002: Need Spring & Summer (v. 19, nos 2-3)
- 2003: Winter (v. 20, no. 4)
- 2005: Fall & Winter (v. 22, nos. 3-4)
- 2006: Fall & Winter (v. 23, nos. 3-4, maybe also v. 24, no. 1)

If you have one of these issues, we would love to add a PDF of the issue to the archive. You can create the PDF yourself and email it to Rudy at rudy@ramsisle.com. Or email him for instructions if you would like to send it to him for scanning, in which case the issue will be returned to you.

Earlier this summer, Cam MacRae, one of the editors of ANA, spoke on Skype with Liam Cassidy, author of *Sgoil nan Eun*, the Gaelic serial adventure story that's been running in ANA for five years. Liam is a Gaelic learner, a Gaelic teacher, and a member of the ACGA board of directors. Cam, who had been following the adventures of Iain Fhearchair Òig from the beginning, asked Liam what led him to write *Sgoil nan Eun*.

What follows is a transcript of Liam's and Cam's conversation.

The story of *Sgoil nan Eun* and Iain Fhearchair Òig will continue in our December issue.

Sgoil nan Eun neo Sgeulachd Iain Fhearchair Òig

Interview with Liam O'Caiside by Cam MacRae

Liam Cassidy: For a long time, as a Gaelic learner, I've had a fascination with *sgeulachdan*, with folklore and story. That's really the genesis of *Sgoil nan Eun*. It's a serialized novel in the old-fashioned sense, and it's also a *sgeulachd*, a story. I remember going to an immersion weekend in Richmond, Virginia, in 2007 that had a session on Gaelic storytelling, and I came out of that inspired. I was looking through a number of books of really good traditional tales, and the material began to organize itself in the back of my brain into this story, *Sgoil nan Eun*.

The second thing that happened, about that time, was a debate over whether *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* should be translated into Scottish Gaelic. It had been translated into Irish, Welsh and many other languages but they did not translate it into Scottish Gaelic. A number of people were upset about that. While I understood that, I thought there's so much rich traditional material in Scottish Gaelic folklore that could form the basis for a fantasy adventure, why not create something new drawing on that? That's what I set out to do.

MacRae: That's exactly what you've done with this story. You've packed it full of themes and characters and situations that should be very familiar to people who've read a lot of Gaelic stories and mythology. Before we get to that, for anybody who hasn't been reading *Sgoil nan Eun*, which means the "School of the Birds" in English, could you tell us a little bit about what type of a school it is and what's going on there?

Cassidy: It's a school of wizardry, or druidism. The story itself is set in the 18th century, starting about 12 years after Culloden in 1746. We're close to 1760 now. *Sgoil nan Eun* is a school of magic on the Isle of Skye, and its instructor is called an *Draoidh Mòr*,

the Great Wizard or Great Druid. He has a number of apprentices, and one of them is the protagonist, Iain Fhearchair Òig. In the first part of the story, Iain arrives at the school and is immersed in magic and finds out a lot about the hidden world he's discovering, which is very different from his everyday world.

MacRae: You're writing this one chapter at a time, and we've been publishing it one chapter at a time. Something exciting happens in each chapter and we're often left hanging at the end of the chapter. But it's one very long story. Is there an overarching theme you're conveying here?

Cassidy: If you've been following from the first chapter, we're now on the 12th chapter, there's a picture [that] I hope is emerging of a world that is heading towards a crisis. An underlying theme, which you may not see from chapter to chapter, is the use of power — how power can be used and misused. This comes up in conversations between many characters throughout the book, and will become clearer in action as we move toward the culmination of the story.

MacRae: Is this a common theme in Gaelic mythology or something you're thinking about because we're living in the 21st century?

Cassidy: It's something I've been thinking about but other writers have thought about it and written about it too. It's certainly one of the themes of *The Lord of the Rings*. Most of the characters in that story are given the opportunity to claim the ring of power, and the good ones turn it down. There's an underlying lesson in Tolkien's book. It's a theme J.K. Rowling explores too. Harry makes a choice not to pursue the elder wand. Fantasy helps us to look at these issues in different ways, I think. It's an issue of what is the right and the wrong use of power.



In *Sgoil nan Eun*, it comes down to the druids. You may think how can we have a story about druids in the 18th century? Historically, the period when druids existed was much, much earlier. But the world of *Sgoil nan Eun*, like that of Harry Potter, has a hidden magical society. The druids of *Sgoil nan Eun* went “underground” at some point and survived in the era of the bàrd and seanchaidh and the (Gaelic) learned classes of the Middle Ages. That may not be far from the historical truth! By the time of the story, Gaelic society has pretty much dissolved or been broken down by external forces, so the druids who are left, like the Great Druid who runs *Sgoil nan Eun*, what they have left is their magical capabilities. There’s emphasis on building that capability and gaining power, but also knowing when to use it and when not to use it.

MacRae: What are some of the sources you’ve drawn on in mythology and *sgeulachdan*? Are there particular sources you draw on?

Cassidy: Definitely. When we talk about mythology, it’s more what we know of Gaelic or Celtic belief through storytelling, whether through stories orally collected by J.F. Campbell in Scotland in the 19th century or John Shaw in Cape Breton in the 20th century, or stories that were written down in manuscripts in the Middle Ages. And there are certainly a number of those I rely on and enjoy reading. If you look at J.F. Campbell’s *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, it’s a great collection of stories gathered by his informants in the field. Some of those stories are still told today in Cape Breton. John Shaw put out a number of great books of collected stories, the main one being *Sgeul gu Latha* or “Tales Until Dawn,” the stories of Joe Neil MacNeil of Cape Breton.

You may have noticed that the druid’s apprentices in *Sgoil nan Eun* all have nicknames because they don’t want to use their real names. In this version of magic, that would give someone potential power over you. So they use nicknames. Uilleam Dèan Suidhe (“William Sit Down”) is one of them, and Uilleam Dèan Suidhe was a character in one of my favorite stories from Joe Neil MacNeil. I packed in a number of other names like that here and there.

There’s no exact Gaelic story like *Sgoil nan Eun*, but there is a story from Tiree called *Sgoil nan Eun, no Mac an Fhucadair*, that John Gregorson Campbell contributed [to] the Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness in 1890.¹ It is similar to a story collected

by J.F. Campbell called *Gille a’ Bhuidseir*, basically “the Wizard’s Gillie,”² and it’s modeled on the “school of magic theme” that I believe goes back, at least, to the *Arabian Nights*.³ Certainly J.K. Rowling drew on that for Harry Potter, but many other authors have as well. I’m one of a long line of authors who have followed that model in a fantasy setting, but for me it comes through the Gaelic tradition. The “School of the Birds” comes up in a number of Gaelic folktales as a school of magic.

MacRae: I’m guessing that some of the students appear in other stories as well. You didn’t just make these names up on your own. For instance, Mac na h-Oidhche comes up fairly often, is he based on a character from other stories? Who is he?

Cassidy: That’s a good question, because we haven’t met him directly yet! Mac na h-Oidhche, “son of the night,” is a villain in this story. We first hear of him when Iain is captured by the *sithichean*, the good people or fairies, and is taken to the fairy mound and questioned by their king. The *sithichean* have been attacked by Mac na h-Oidhche. He’s been raiding them, stealing their magic, and they’re looking for a way to defend themselves. They’re beginning to leave our world, go into the otherworld and close the door between the worlds, and that’s a major crisis in the story. We first learn about Mac na h-Oidhche then, and a bit more in the second part of the story (Chapters 7-12). We’re certainly going to hear more about him! I think you can be assured Iain is heading for a confrontation with Mac na h-Oidhche. Stay tuned. The name itself, interestingly, was a personal name in medieval Ireland⁴. Later in Scottish Gaelic poetry it’s a name used for a raider, probably for someone going out and raiding another clan’s stronghold or cattle in the night. So it’s an appropriate name for this character.

MacRae: Right from the beginning I began to recognize motifs and elements of traditional Gaelic stories in *Sgoil nan Eun*, shape-shifting, for instance, and there’s a stone with a hole in it that Iain is given⁵. One of my favorite things happened in Chapter Seven, when an Draoidh Mòr and Iain travel to Glasgow. Iain was expecting they’d turn into birds, because that’s how they traveled before, but they didn’t. They put on red caps, and an Draoidh Mòr said, “Glaschu a-rithist!” or “Glasgow again!” I laughed out loud, because that’s a line from one of my very favorite stories. I’m sure there are many traditional motifs you’ve incorporated and perhaps I’ve missed them. Can you help me out here?

Cassidy: Those are the kinds of things I like to incorporate in the story because they come from the native tradition. They're there and you can use them in this kind of story and they're organic to the story in a way, as opposed to inventing something entirely different or copying something from an English-language story. The *curraicean* they put on, the red caps, are in a way the Gaelic equivalent of "floo powder."⁶ And they're from a great story, a South Uist story⁷, about witches who use these magical caps to travel to London. In my story, they're the kind of thing druids would use if they want to travel someplace quickly. Personally, I wish I had one myself.

One of the sources I've turned to a lot is John Gregorson Campbell's *The Gaelic Otherworld*. Ronald Black's edition of that ... his notes alone are worth the price of the book. You can do a deep dive into Gaelic traditions, beliefs and stories by going through the notes and reading the book itself. In the chapter where Iain is with the sithichean in the hill, he meets *Mac Glumag na Mias*, who actually is a character from Gaelic folklore.⁸ Mothers would threaten their children that Mac Glumag was going to come get them if they didn't behave. There's also the story of Iain's father. Without giving too much away, that episode was drawn from several stories about hunters who had experiences with deer that transformed into fairy women. These stories were fairly common, and moved around the Highlands and Islands and they pop up in various guises. So I don't feel too bad about dipping into them and applying aspects of them to this story.

MacRae: I think it enriches the story. Do you have favorite passages, or are you the kind of writer who just puts it down and there it is?

Cassidy: I do have favorite passages. There are always passages that when you get them down and you stop and look at them, you're happy with them.

There are other passages that take a lot more work. But there are a couple of passages that when I went back and took a look at them, I really did enjoy them. One of them describes the first time Iain and his fellow apprentices learn the shape-shifting spell *Fàth-Fithe*. That spell in itself is drawn from Gaelic and Celtic tradition, and goes back all the way to early Irish traditions about St. Patrick.⁹ He reputedly used the spell to cast an illusion that made enemies think he and his followers were a herd of deer. In later Scottish Gaelic tradition, it's remembered as a spell hunters could use to become invisible. In this story, I've taken it to be a spell of transformation, and it's mentioned as being the oldest spell the druids have, magic which came to them from the sithichean themselves many, many years ago. When they're in the tower together at Sgoil nan Eun learning this, I give a description of how it happens. Shall I read that to you?

MacRae: Sure. I really like that part too.

Cassidy: "Agus thuir e (an Draoidh Mòr):
'Faoileag.' Mus deach aca facal a bhruidhinn, chaidh iad a-mach tron uinneig: aon fhaoileag mhòr agus trì faoileagan deug air sgèith ann am feò fuar a' chamhanaich.

"Chaidh iad turas timcheall an tùir agus a-mach leotha thar nan tonn. Chuala Iain guth an draoidh na cheann agus e ag ràdh, 'Ròn.' Sìos leotha fon uisge. Bha ceithir ròin deug a' snàmh tron uisge dhubhghorm, na h-èisg a' teicheadh romhpa. Thàinig iad a-mach às an uisge air creig agus thuir an draoidh, 'Fiadh.' Leum ceithir daimh deug bhon chreig gu tràigh agus a-mach a ghabh iad cho luath ris a' ghaoith, boc mòr aig an toiseach.

"Ràinig iad sgeir agus leum am boc agus na daimh uile a-mach dhan adhar. Nuair a bha Iain cinnteach gun rachadh am marbhadh air na creagan fada shìos chuala e guth a mhaighstir aon turas eile ag ràdh,

Seanfhacal na Ràithe – Pictured Proverb

Do you know what familiar Gaelic proverb is illustrated here?

Check page 21 to see if you're right.



Photo by Frank Winkler,
CCO Creative Commons, www.Pixabay.com

‘Iolair.’ Ann an diog, bha iad air sgèith a-rithist nan ceithir iolairean deug, a’ dìreadh suas gu h-àrd dhan iarmailt air sgiathan làidir, leathann.

“Thug iad an caisteal orra, agus a-steach tro uinneagan an tùir. An uair a chuir iad spòg air an ùrlar, bha iad nan daoine a-rithist. Fhuair na foghlaintich an siud ’s an seo air feadh an t-seòmair – sianar nan suidhe agus seachdnar nan sineadh. Sheas an Draoidh Mòr nam measg leis an lurgan na dhòrn. Cha robh ach aon cheist aig Iain. ‘Cuin a nì sinn sin a-rithist?’”

And there you go!

MacRae: That’s what really hooked me on the story when I started reading it, that section right there. Thank you.

Cassidy: You’re very welcome, and that’s great to know. I just loved the way they flowed from one shape to another shape over land, sea and air. These are all animals that are very much part of life in the Gàidhealtachd and the Gaelic world, and hopefully that resonates.

MacRae: That’s what hooked me on the story, when I realized this was going to be part of the action. We should make it clear by the way, that *Sgoil nan Eun* is written in Scottish Gaelic, and the chapters appear in *An Naidheachd Againne* without any English translation. Why are you writing it in Gaelic, and do you plan on a translation in English at some point?

Cassidy: Well, I’m writing it in Gaelic because it’s a Gaelic story, that’s the simple explanation. But there’s a lot of material written in English in the fantasy genre that people can go and read. There’s very little original material in Gaelic drawing on these Gaelic themes and folklore. So there’s a vacuum to fill, in a sense. But this is a Gaelic story I wanted to tell in its own language and allow people to enjoy it as it is. Whether there’s a translation in the future — I’m not going to do one, but someone else may want to. What I do want to do, and I will be doing this with future chapters, is to put a short synopsis in English at the end of each chapter, as well as a vocabulary list, because some of the words and expressions stand out and aren’t what you’d get in your everyday language class, so it might be helpful for people to get those.

MacRae: If someone wants to read this story from the beginning, how can they do that?

Cassidy: I’m hoping to put the story online and make it available to ACGA members in particular. I’ve written the story in six-chapter segments, and we’ve gone through 12 chapters, so that’s Book One and Book Two, and we’re now starting on Book Three. I do have a document with the six edited chapters of Book One which could be put on the ACGA website. Eventually I would like to see the story published in book form, whether electronically or in print.

MacRae: Anybody who wants to start reading from the beginning can find on our ACGA forum each of the chapters from the beginning. Something else I find interesting; because it’s a serial, we’re reminded in each chapter that *Sgoil nan Eun* is a story being told by a sgeulaiche or seanchaidh to a group of children or maybe teenagers around a hearth. I’ve wondered if you’ve considered recording an audio version of *Sgoil nan Eun* so we could listen to the storyteller, too.

Cassidy: I have thought about that. It’s a project I’d love to work on at some point. I’m glad you brought up the storyteller, because this is a story within a story. The storyteller is being interviewed by a group of students. They’re older than children, they’re university students. They’ve been collecting stories from the *sgeulaiche*. At the beginning of the story, one of them, Calum, asks for a story the storyteller has never told anyone else before, kind of as a joke, really. But the storyteller has one ready, and it’s the story of *Sgoil nan Eun*. So you have the storyteller telling the story over several nights and the students coming back to hear more of the story. This is a format that’s been used before in Gaelic literature, in Scottish Gaelic and in Irish. There’s a great book by Douglas Hyde called *Sgeuluidhe fìor na Seachtmhaine*, the “True Stories of the Week.” In it a storyteller has to tell a true story every night for a week in order to lift an enchantment. So this type of structure has been used before. It’s important. To date you’ve heard the storyteller and students at the beginning and end of each chapter. They’re going to become more important as the story goes on. That’s the only clue I’ll give you!

MacRae: Let me see if I can tease something else out of you here. Do you know where Iain and Nighean an Sgàthain are going next? Or are you one of those authors who lets his characters tell you what’s going to happen?

Cassidy: It’s a combination. When I sit down to write dialogue, I never know exactly what Nighean an Sgàthain is going to say until she says it. I may have an idea of what she is going to say, and how Iain is going to respond, but quite often it just comes as I’m

writing. That's to me very interesting. I write for a living, I'm a journalist, but I write news stories and feature articles, it's a very different kind of writing. So this has been very interesting for me, too, because while I do have a general idea of the story arc, how we will get to where we're going, that still has to be revealed to me too!

MacRae: Have you ever written fiction before, or specifically this kind of fiction?

Cassidy: This is my first real effort to write long-form fiction. I've only done one short story before, and that was also in Gaelic, and that was published by *Cli* many years ago. It was science fiction, and it was called "Mo Chiad Turas Chun na Gealaich," "My First Journey to the Moon." It was written in a Q&A format by a boy interviewing his grandfather about his first trip to the moon. It's set far enough in the future that the boy is shocked to learn there were no trees on the moon yet when his grandfather first went there, and he's shocked at how long they had to travel to get to the spaceport in Brussels – there wasn't even a spaceport in Inverness yet! That was a fun story, it was very short, and that was my first attempt to write fiction rather than non-fiction.

So writing *Sgoil nan Eun* has been a great experience for me. I also have to thank my editor, Gillebrìde Mac 'IlleMhaoil, and all the people at *An Naidheachd Againne*. Gillebrìde has been the editor for the entire series, and for me it's been like taking a writing course with a great instructor. His suggestions have been fantastic; he's certainly helped me in many ways.

MacRae: We need to thank you, too. This is a great story. So we're halfway through?

Cassidy: Well, it is 10 years since I began writing it, and I hope I'll be done well before another 10 years pass. My plan is to do four sections or "books" of six chapters each. We're on the third section now, and that will take us to the point where we approach the climax of the story in the last six chapters.

MacRae: I'm looking forward to finding out more and more about Nighean an Sgàthain, an Draoidh Mòr, Mac na h-Oidhche, and of course, Iain. Thank you very much Liam.

Cassidy: 'S e ur beatha. Many thanks to you.



Notes:

¹ "Sgoil nan Eun, no Mac an Fhucadair," page 58, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, Vol. 17, 1892, Inverness, Scotland.

² "Gille a' Bhuidseir" is found in Gille a' Bhuidseir: The Wizard's Gillie and Other Tales, ed. & translated by J.G. MacKay, from the manuscript collection of J.F. Campbell of Islay.

³ There are many schools of magic in literature, some darker than others. Besides Hogwarts, modern examples include the school of wizardry on Roke in Ursula K. LeGuin's *Earthsea* novels and Brakebills Academy of Magical Pedagogy in *The Magicians* by Lev Grossman.

⁴ Mac na h-Oidhche was a forename in early Ireland; the Irish annals give us Mac na hOidhche Mhág Dhorchaidh and Mac na hOidhche Ó Raghallaigh. Mac na hOíche, in its modern Irish form, is also given as the origin of the surname MacNee. The Morrisons of Mull were known as "Clann na h-Oidhche" in memory of an ancestor who helped Murchadh Geàrr recapture Loch Buidhe Castle. During the raid, he identified himself as "Mac na h-Oidhche."

⁵ Clach Choinnich Odhair — the stone of Coinneach Odhar, the famous Gaelic seer.

⁶ The magical powder wizards use to travel from fireplace to fireplace in the Harry Potter books.

⁷ "Kintail Again," Stories from South Uist told by Angus MacLellan, translated and edited by John Lorne Campbell, Birlinn, Edinburgh, 1997.

⁸ "... the 'Son of Platter-Pool' is well known in the Island of Tiree as a hobgoblin or bugbear to frighten children when they make too much noise. ... His full genealogy is the Son of Platterpool, from Greyworm, son of Silkworm, son of Caterpillar (Mac Glumag na Mias, o Liath-Dhurrag, o Dhurrag-Shiodhe, o Bhurrach Mòr)." Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, Vol. 17, 1892, page 66, in a footnote to "The School of the Birds."

⁹ Fàth-Fithe is from the older Féth Fíada, meaning a magic mist or veil that could make someone invisible, or change their appearance or shape. Mannanan Mac Lír could use the Féth Fíada to raise a magical mist about the Isle of Man. Christian saints, particularly Patrick, later had this power. The Fàth-Fithe, wrote William MacKenzie, "was a favourite charm with hunters, for it enabled them to make physical objects invisible to the ordinary eye." ("Gaelic Incantations, Charms, and Blessings of the Hebrides," pp. 371, The Highland Monthly, Volume 4, 1892). Smugglers used the charm, MacKenzie wrote, to avoid excisemen. "It is to be feared, however, that the art has been lost! The expression Fath Fithe is now seldom heard."

Litrichean / Letters

Hello

I was very pleased to read your review of our title Gaelic Gold. Can I make a couple of comments? [See Book Review: *Gaelic Gold, a Learner's Dictionary / Phrasebook*, Translations by Steaphan MacRisnidh in *An Naidheachd Againne*, Summer 2017, page 15.]

You include a double-page spread from the book, which is nice. But I was mightily relieved to verify that it was your scanner and not our proofreading that had gone haywire in the last word of the first line of the entry for ago, where the pronunciation shaKkin has mysteriously changed into shaKkffl.

I must defend our Gaelic translator, Steaphan MacRisnidh, on the matter of the provision of genders. The system used is mine not his. When I was doing Gaelic evening classes a couple of years back it struck me that to say simply that a noun is masculine/feminine leaves the learner with a fair bit of work to do in order to i) arrive at the correct form of the definite article, ii) make any modifications to the following noun and iii) establish what the impact of the definite article on pronunciation might be. These are issues not really paralleled in learning, say, French or German where the step from *voiture f* to *la voiture* or from *Haus nt* to *das Haus* is straightforward. In Gaelic getting from, say, *sròn f* to *an t-sròn* [trawn] is not

such an easy step; more of a leap. So why not show gender via its functionality (at least in the nominative singular). Which is what we did.

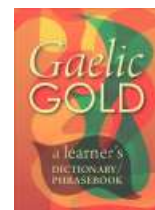
Your review points out that this system does not reveal gender in cases where the article is simply an without any identifiable pattern in the following noun. But Gaelic Gold doesn't leave the learner high and dry in cases like this. We use the label (+len adj) to identify those nouns in this category that are feminine. This is still giving gender through function, but the function here is the lenition of any adjective used together with the noun. So we have *house an taigh* but *beach an tràigh* (+len adj).

The one type of noun where we just have to show gender through m/f is compound nouns like *bus station stèisean (m) nam busaichean*, where Gaelic just doesn't use a definite article at all.

Best wishes

Peter

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A Website to Watch



When he's not busy with his day job as Gaelic Development Officer for the Scottish Parliament, Alasdair MacCaluim rides on trains and trams and writes about them. His blog is a bit quirky and always interesting.

Hitch a ride at <https://treanaichean.wordpress.com>

In our June issue, ACGA member Joyce Campbell explained how she discovered that her ancestor, the Rev. Roderick MacDonald, was a poet. A Presbyterian minister in Harris and then South Uist for many years until his death in 1890, MacDonald was what is called in Gaelic, *bàrd baile*, a village poet. Much respected in their communities, village poets wrote (and still do write) about local events, often in satirical terms. If you'd like more information on *bàird baile* / village poets, click on the link below to the "Bàrd Baile" entry by Sheila Kidd on pages 173-4 in *Celtic Culture: a historical encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, edited by John T. Koch.
<https://tinyurl.com/village-bard>

In *Blàr Hogh* / The Battle of Howmore, MacDonald describes "a bloodless and amusing scuffle that took place among members of the Parochial Board, named here, 'Cùirt nan Cailleachan', (or, the Court of the Old Women) over the medical officer of the parish. The incident occurred in the vestry of the Parish Church, where the meetings were held. Local knowledge is needed to fully appreciate the various allusions."

Joyce and her Gaelic teacher Frances Acar worked together on the English translation. Spelling and accents in the Gaelic version of the poem are as they appear in the original, reflecting dialectical and period usage.

Blàr Hogh / The Battle of Howmore

Leis an Urramach Ruairidh MacDhomhnuill, Ministear Uidhist-a-deas

Fonn: Dh'fhalbh na gillean grinn
Fo 'n cuid armaibh,
Gur boidheach leam fhin
Thig an t-aodach dearg dhoibh.

Refrain: The fine boys departed
Among the martial troops,
Bonny to me
Is their red clothing.

An cuala sibhse 'n dràsda,
'N trod a bh' aig na h-àrmuinn,
Air an Iolain-Aird
'Nuair theabas pàirt dhiubh mharbhadh.

Did you hear, just now,
The quarrels that the heroes
Had on the High-Leap
When some of them were almost killed.

Sud far an robh 'n ùprait
Nach robh riamh 's an dùthaich;
Bha gach claidheamh rùisgt'
'Nuair chruinnich cùirt nan cailleachan.

That's where the uproar was
Such as was never before (heard) in the district;
Every sword was bared
When gathered the court of the old women.

Sud far an robh 'n iomairt,
Coslas Sliabh-an-t-Siorraim;
Bha mi fhin an cunnart
Nach urrainn dhomh sheannachas.

That's where there was a campaign
Like the battle of Sheriffmuir
I myself was in such danger
That I might not be able to report on it.

Dh' eirich na fir mhòra
'Chur a chath an òrdugh;
'S mu 'n do sguir a chòmhstri
Gu 'n d' leònadh Mac Fhearghuis.

The great men rose
That put the battle in order;
And before the brawl was over
MacFergus was wounded.

Thainig Mac-a-Bhànaich,
Ag iomachd gu stràiceil;
'S nuair a dh' fhairtlich càch air
Thug e lamh air Fearchar.

Mac-a-Bhànaich arrived
Strutting haughtily,
And when the others bested him
He attacked Fergus.

Thainig fear na h-ùprait,
Marcaich air each siubhlach,
Fear le ceithir sùilean
'S bu diulnach gu dearbh e.

A man came in confusion
Riding on a swift horse,
One with four eyes
And he was a hero indeed.

'Nuair thòisich an tuasaid,
Ghabh Mac-Phàdrìg fuathas;
'S nuair sheall e mu 'n cuairt air
Bu ghruamach a mhalaidhean.

Cò sud thall is stùic air!
'N cuala sibh a' bhùireich?
Teichibh do na cùilean
Mu 'n tionndaidh an tarbh ribh.

Ach 'nuair chunnacas Tearlach,
A nochdadh air fàire;
Theich iad anns gach àite
Dh' iarraidh àite tearmaid.

Raonull Ban nan duanag,
'S gamhainn glas air chluais aig',
Fiach co fear bu luaithe
Suas gu mullach Haracaidh

Theich na Baolaich dhachaidh,
Surd orra ri astar,
'S an còtaichean fada
Bas-bhualadh mu 'n earbuill.

Fhuaras fear 'na shìneadh,
Bodach glas nan cìlean;
Dh' fhàg iad anns an dig e,
'S rinn mi fhin dha marbhrann.

Thainig bodach liath-ghlas,
'S pòc aig air gach slìsaid,
Agus peann de dh' iarunn
Gu cur sìos na mharbhte.

When the fight began,
MacPatrick got mad;
And when he looked around
His brow was gloomy.

Who is that yonder with a frowning expression!
Do you hear the roar?
Flee to the recesses
Lest the bull turns on you.

But when Charles was seen
Appearing on the horizon;
They retreated everywhere
Seeking a place of refuge.

Fair Ronald of the songs,
With a grey steer by the ear,
To see which man was fastest
Up to the top of Haracaidh.

The men of Benbecula fled home
With alacrity and speed,
And their long coats
Clapping around their tails.

A man was found stretched out
An old grey man of the cod;
They left him in the ditch,
And I myself composed his elegy.

An old, gray-haired man arrived,
With a pocket on each thigh,
And a pen of iron
To record the names of the dead.

Editors' note:

Blàr Hogh appears on pages 323-24 of *The MacDonald Collection of Gaelic Poetry*, edited by The Rev. Angus MacDonald, Minister of Killearnan, and The Rev. Archibald MacDonald, Minister of Kiltarlity, published by the Northern Counties Newspaper and Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd., Inverness, 1911.



Scarista House

Joyce's great grandmother Catherine MacDonald went to live in the manse with her cousin the Rev. Roderick MacDonald after her parents died when she was about 14. The manse, now known as Scarista House, is currently run as a Bed and Breakfast.

<http://www.scaristahouse.com>

In addition to her interest in Scottish Gaelic, ACGA member Jeanne Pendergast is studying Welsh. In May 2017 she was able to spend a month in Wales, and had the opportunity to hear and speak the language.

The Pleasures of Another Language

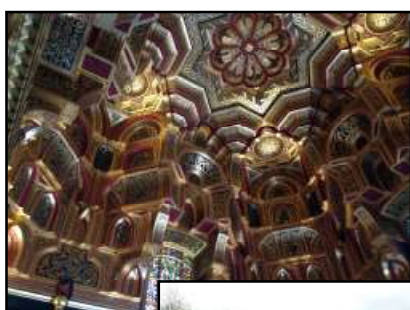
by Jeanne Pendergast

There are many, of course, and each person has individual reasons for wanting to learn another language (or several). A recent trip to Wales, partly in search of opportunities to speak Welsh, has highlighted for me some of the special benefits.

Connections made with other people through language study are one of the most valuable aspects. This is especially true when you have a chance to travel, either to visit with other learners around the U.S. and Canada, or if you can go to places where your new language is spoken as part of daily life.

As with trips to Scotland, key memories of the time in Wales are of the friendliness and helpfulness of just about everyone I met. Several of my hosts were especially generous with their time for extensive conversations in Welsh, and even to taking me places by car that I couldn't easily have reached any other way.

The photos show places of both cultural and natural interest as a very brief summary of a wonderful trip.



Beginning of the trip in the capital city. An ornate ceiling in Cardiff Castle, built in the 1800s on the remains of Roman and Norman ruins.

Carreg Coetan, siambr gladdu (burial chamber), a small neolithic dolmen from about 3000 B.C. It's right in the west coast town of Newport where my cousin joined me at the hostel for the final week.



On a side trip to Skomer Island, a nature reserve, we were right among puffins newly arrived for nesting. The estimate for 2016 was over 22,000 puffin pairs, along with large numbers of manx shearwaters and other seabirds.

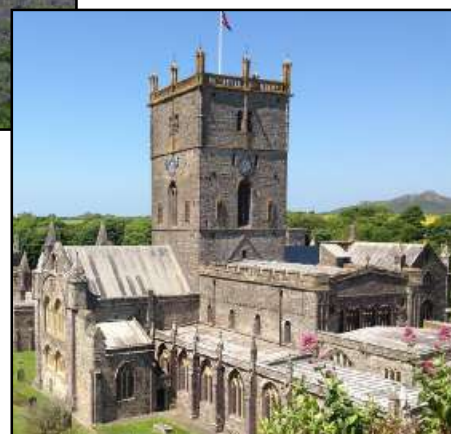
Bryn Eryr, a Bronze Age hill fort reconstruction at St. Fagans folk museum near Cardiff.



Just one example of the interesting and ubiquitous dual-language road signs, this one near the home of my Welsh-speaking host in Llandysul where I had a delightful two-week stay. Welsh is related to Scottish Gaelic, though not as closely as Irish and Manx. As different as most of the vocabulary is, there are still some structural similarities that have survived from a time before the Celtic languages diverged.



Skomer Island's amazing late spring display of bluebells and red campion.



Eglwys Gadeiriol Dewi Sant, St. David's Cathedral, in the far southwest corner of Wales. This was another day trip from Newport on the Poppit Rocket and Strumble Shuttle mini-buses which require extremely skillful driving on the narrow, curvy, hilly coastal roads.

All photos by Jeanne Pendergast, except "Carreg Coetan" by Nancy L. Graupner. You can see more of Nancy's photography at <http://www.peacefulmoonphotography.com/>

Oisean a' Ghràmair / The Grammar Nook

by Wayne Harbert



Scary Things About Gaelic (STAG):

The handle of the door of the poor woman's house, and other marvels of the Gaelic genitive

Some of Gaelic's close cousins, like Welsh, did away with the genitive case in ancient times. It's still hanging on in Gaelic, where it remains perhaps among the scarier matters confronting learners. Even native speakers seem to be more than a little daunted by it, and there are signs that the genitive may soon be shown the door.

The forms themselves are no picnic, of course. Most nouns are well-enough behaved; masculine nouns, like *doras*, typically form their genitives by slenderizing their final consonant.

làmh an dorais the knob of the door

But there are a few, like *taigh*, that do something else:

doras an taighe the door of the house

Most feminine nouns slenderize the final consonant and add an -e, like *uinneag*.

glainne na h-uinneige the glass of the window

But a few do something different: *màthair*, for example, UNslenderizes its last consonant in the genitive.

taigh mo mhàthar my mother's house

And some change in ways that verge on the unimaginable. Would you believe, for example, that *bean*, woman, wife, becomes *mnà* in the genitive?

taigh na mnà bochda the house of the poor woman

And once you learn the forms and the contexts for using them (possessors and objects of verbal nouns among them), there is another set of rules about where NOT to use them. So, for example, in 'knob of the door,' 'door' would be genitive in Gaelic, and in 'door of the house', 'house' would be genitive, and in 'house of the woman', 'woman' would be genitive', but what about: 'knob of the door of the house of the woman'? You might expect that door, house, and woman would all be in the genitive, but you'd be wrong. When you have a chain of possessors like this, only the last of them shows up as a genitive. All of the others appear in their basic form. So you get *doras* and *taigh*, not *dorais* and *taighe*.

*làmh doras taigh na mnà bochda** knob of the door of the house of the poor woman

* You may have noticed that there is only one definite article in this Gaelic phrase, while in English there are three. That is because there is a rule that there can only be one definite article in a genitive phrase, and it comes before the noun that is in the genitive case.

And the grammatical ground appears to be shifting on other fronts. One of the contexts where you use(d) genitive is on the objects of verbal nouns. Back in the olden days, this meant all objects of verbal nouns. So when the Bible translation talks about eating bread, it uses the genitive *arain*.

Chunnaic iad cuid dhe dheisciopuil ag ithe arain.
They saw some of his disciples eating bread. (Mark 7)

But no one would say that these days. The modern rule is that you use the genitive on the object of a verbal noun only if it has a definite article.

Tha mi a' fosgladh na h-uinneige. I am opening the window.

If the object is an indefinite noun, or if it has a possessive pronoun, it appears in its basic form. So, we say:

Tha mi a' dèanamh aran. I am making bread.

Tha mi a' faicinn do mhàthair. I see your mother.

If this seems confusing, you aren't alone: even native speakers are confused by it, and this has led to still more recent language change. William Gillies, in his 1993 sketch of Scottish Gaelic (in Martin Ball, *The Celtic Languages*) suggests that things like the rule suppressing the genitive in cases like 'the knob of the door of the house...' create a kind of slippery slope. After all, if we say

ceann fear na feusaig the head of the man of the beard,

do we really need to say

ceann fhir [genitive] a man's head?

Wouldn't it be simpler if we did the same thing in both cases? And so, sure enough, by now many speakers use the basic form of the noun, not the genitive form, to express possessives which are not accompanied by a definite article – especially with masculine nouns. One now says:

leabhar balach beag a book of a little boy

This is the usual form in some areas, such as South Uist, and has come to be regarded as grammatically acceptable in spoken Gaelic.

When there is a definite article, the genitive still holds its own:

leabhar a' bhalaich bhig the book of the little boy

But it's clear that genitive is losing its grip. Will the Gaelic of the future be able to get along without it? Not to worry. Other languages seem to manage just fine.

“Stay in the Fight”

GaelicUSA recently interviewed ACGA president Michael Mackay about his own experience as a Gaelic learner and his views on Gaelic and the role of ACGA in the Gaelic world. Click on the link to read Mike's ideas on reclaiming Gaelic and leading Gaelic community efforts in the United States.

<https://gaelicusa.org/interview-with-michael-mackay/>

Criomagan / Bits of This and That

An Gàradh aig Sine / Sheena's Garden

A h-aon, a dhà, a trì. Are you a Gaelic learner working on your numbers? Or a gardener looking forward to your harvest? No matter, we think you will enjoy Laurinda Matheson's delightful ebook illustrated by Janice Watson and narrated by Lodaidh MacFhionghain / Lewis MacKinnon.

<http://www.parl.ns.ca/projects/sheenas-garden-ebook.htm>

News from GaelicUSA

Visiting Lectureship in Scottish Gaelic Studies

GaelicUSA has secured full funding for a 2018 - 2019 Visiting Lectureship in Scottish Gaelic Studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Click here to read details of the announcement in their August newsletter.

<https://gaelicusa.org/gaelicusa-quarterly-newsletter-lunastal-2017/>

MacIomhair Student Essay Competition

Funded by GaelicUSA board member Duncan MacIver, this competition is open to any undergraduate at a college or university in the United States who wishes to submit a research essay that discusses a Scottish Highland topic using Scottish Gaelic sources and/or perspective that is written for an undergraduate course in the Autumn term/semester 2017. For details see GaelicUSA's August newsletter.

<https://gaelicusa.org/gaelicusa-quarterly-newsletter-lunastal-2017/>



Litir à Dùn Èideann

By Jeff W. Justice

Mo charaidean ann an Ameireaga a Tuath,

A few days before I started writing this, I was waiting my turn for the (slow-as-it-can-be) 'roller coaster ride' portion of the Scotch Whisky Experience by Edinburgh Castle. The ride operator asked which language I wanted to use for the audio-animatronic tour.

"Gàidhlig na h-Alba, mas e ur toil e," I said.

"You're joking," replied the ride operator.

"Chan eil. No, I'm not."

Gaelic has its struggles in Scotland's national capital, but I find that its heartbeat is still very much alive here. As I write this, I have just completed my master's dissertation and am getting ready to return home. Over this past year, Scotland has become every bit my home in its own right. I came to the University of Edinburgh to do a master's course in Environment, Culture and Society, but I also came here with hopes of deepening my knowledge of Gaelic through living it here. Since I last wrote, Edinburgh has certainly not disappointed.

In June and July, the High Kirk of St Giles held a marvelous series of evening lectures on Gaelic in Edinburgh, featuring presentations on poet Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t -Saoir, local Gaelic song, shinty, and many other topics. A presentation by Prof. Rob Dunbar, head of Edinburgh University's Department of Celtic Studies,

focused on the capital's role as a major powerhouse of Gaelic publishing, once the Highland Clearances forced many Gaelic speakers to move here in search of work.

Gaelic still has to fight, claw and scrape for respect in some quarters of the city. The National Museum of Scotland began in June a major exhibit on Prince Charlie and the Jacobites. The museum has a Gaelic language plan that it is supposed to implement to promote the language. If there is *any* place where one should expect to see preservation of Scottish culture, it would be a Scottish museum, particularly the National Museum of Scotland.

Very little Gaelic is written or heard anywhere in the exhibit. After hearing some complaints, curators did make available Gaelic translations of exhibit artifact labels through the museum website, but that requires one to do some deliberate searching to find them. Those of us in Edinburgh who speak or are learning the language have been quite displeased over the way the museum treated Scotland's native language in the very exhibit where the language ought to be present. The Jacobites were, largely, Highlanders, and a good many of them were Gaelic speakers. Càit' a bheil an cànan againne? Càit' a bheil i?

Rather than spit vitriol at the museum — which would accomplish what? — we protested with class. If Gaelic would not be heard inside, we'd speak it outside on the front steps, and we did. We sang Highland songs of the Jacobite era. Afterward, we retired to a nearby pub for a Pop-up Gàidhlig event, inspired by the similar movement in Ireland where groups of Irish speakers gather in local pubs, post signs hash-tagged with 'PopUpGaelige' and speak to one another in their national language in a public setting. It was really fantastic to be able to sit in a cozy public place and speak with others in Gaelic over spirits and pints.

Now, it's August, and that means the festival season is in full swing. Gaelic has a presence in the Edinburgh International Book Festival, with Luath Books holding a readings-and-song event in Charlotte Square (where the First Minister's residence, Bute House, stands). Their catalog features books in Scots in addition to Gaelic, and the afternoon put the 'festive' in to 'festival'. We heard delightful excerpts from recently-published and forthcoming works, made better with a fresh glass of wine to enjoy during the readings. Additionally, several traditional Gaelic music groups are performing throughout the Fringe Festival, now celebrating its 70th year. This included one performance I saw at the National Museum, which I encountered ironically as I was leaving the Jacobite exhibition.

Soon, I will complete the work that brought me back to Scotland, and then I'll head elsewhere as I search for new opportunities. I would not trade the past year for anything; it has been every bit (and then some) the enriching experience that I had hoped it would be. I hope you have enjoyed this journey with me in Scotland's magnificent capital.

Leis gach deagh dhùrachd,

Jeff

Clach air a' Chàrn Aca

The Gaelic world lost two of its best-known voices on August 31, 2017, with the deaths of Tormod MacGill-Eain and Seonaidh Ailig Mac a' Phearsain.

MacGill-Eain / Norman Maclean, Scottish Gaelic comedian, novelist, poet, musician, and broadcaster, is also the only person to have won both the Bardic Crown and the Gold Medal at the same Royal National Mòd, in Glasgow in 1967. He was 80 years old.

Mac a' Phearsain / John Alick Macpherson was renowned as a writer, broadcaster, and advocate for Gaelic both in Scotland and in Canada, where he lived for many years. Mac a' Phearsain also won the Bardic Crown, in Stirling in 1961. He was 79 years old.

Regional Mòd Results

Mòd nan Lochan Mòra

Akron, Ohio, June 16-18, 2017
Angus MacLeod, adjudicator

Leughadh aig a' chiad sealladh

- 1 Cam MacRae
- 2 Anne Alexander
- 3 Hilary Rosado

Bàrdachd

1 **Tied:** Hilary Rosado
and Cam MacRae

Sgeulachdan

- 1 Hilary Rosado
- 2 Mike Mackay

Òran Fosgailte

- 1 Mike Mackay
- 2 **Tied:** Anne Alexander
and Sharon McWhorter

North Carolina Regional Mòd

Grandfather Mountain, NC, July 8, 2017
Angus MacLeod and Alasdair Whyte, adjudicators

Women's Division

- 1 Connie Smith
- 2 Amber Brown
- 3 Cathleen MacKay

Men's Division

- 1 James Ruff
- 2 John Grimaldi

Overall High Score

- 1 James Ruff
- 2 Connie Smith
- 3 Amber Brown

North Carolina Mòd 2017
adjudicators and winners



The Online Faces of ACGA

Like most organizations in the modern world, ACGA has several online faces, including more than one website, a Facebook page, a conversational forum, a YouTube page, and even a Twitter account.

Our main website, www.acgamerica.org, includes a blog for announcements, tips, articles, etc. It also contains an archive of newsletters, detailed information about our major events, information about ACGA and how to join, learning resources, and more.

Our forum site, <http://forum.acgamerica.org/>, is a collection of conversational forums, some public, some for members only, and some for ACGA's internal organizational functions.

Our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/ACGAGaelic>, is a public face of ACGA. Because this page is in a social network, it has a very different feel from our website, and likely attracts a different crowd.

We don't have very much video content on our ACGAmerica YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/user/ACGamerica, yet (we're looking for more), but what we do have is interesting and ACGA-relevant.

Our Twitter account, <https://twitter.com/ACGAGaelic>, is used for ACGA announcements.

Some of our events have their own web presence, too. The ACGA Mòd website, <http://usmod.wordpress.com/>, contains a lot of information about past, present, and future Mòds. And our Gaelic Song and Language Week at Grandfather Mountain has its own Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1463155417230179/>.

a-muigh 's a-mach / out and about

Coimhearsnachd / community. ACGA's Board of Directors has been talking lately about community, Gaelic community. Since few if any of us in North America have the luxury of actually living in a Gaelic-speaking community, we need to work to build our communities. For many of us, our community includes a Gaelic study group. Every study group has its own organization and its own schedule of classes and events, but the goal of each is to build a closer relationship between its members and the Gaelic language and the members with each other.

An Naidheachd Againne is starting a new column which will feature activities organized by local study groups, activities that we think will help build a stronger Gaelic community that more of us can be part of.

Does your study group have anything special planned in the coming months? Let one of our editors know and we'll feature it in our next "a-muigh 's a-mach."

Comunn Gàidhlig Toronto

Three members of ACGA were among those attending two afternoon Scottish Gaelic workshops on Wednesday, August 9 in Toronto, Canada, hosted by Comunn Gàidhlig Toronto (<http://www.gaelicsocietytoronto.com/>) and taught by South Uist native Gaelic speaker Gillebrìde Mac 'IlleMhaoil.

The language workshop was aimed at intermediate and advanced learners but the song workshop later in the afternoon was open to all. One of the songs taught was *Bean Tighearna Bhail' 'n Athain*, the song that Gillebrìde sang as Gwyllyn the Bard in the television program, *Outlander*.



Gillebrìde expands on a point

Jeff Grabell.

Later that evening Gillebrìde performed in a two-hour concert, where he treated the audience to a preview of two self-penned songs from his upcoming CD.

Springfield Study Group

Springfield Study Group members will celebrate Gaelic culture and entertain each with a Not-a-Mòd on Saturday, October 21. Participants will read or recite a Gaelic poem or story or sing a song. As there will not be an adjudicator and no points will be awarded for performances, the group decided to call this event a Not-a-Mòd. If you're in Springfield, Illinois, at 1:00 pm, Saturday, October 21, come to the Bicentennial Room of the Lincoln Library and join in.

Gàidhlig Photomac

The Washington, DC-area Gaelic learning community, Gàidhlig Photomac, will hold "Song Sharing" sessions this fall – informal gatherings where learners and singers can bring songs to share and seek help from other learners. A song session is held on the fourth Sunday of each month at 1:00 pm at Fiona's Irish Pub in Kingstowne Center, Alexandria. The group also hopes to host an Oidhche Shamhna event around Halloween. Search for Gàidhlig Photomac on www.meetup.com and Facebook. Contact Cathleen Ransom MacKay (amum44@gmail.com) or Liam Cassidy (willbcassidy@gmail.com).

Sgeulachd à Mongòilia

*From a collection of Mongolian Folktales for learners, by E. Lhagvatsetseg.
Translated from the Mongolian by Seumas Macdonald, Sydney, Australia*

An Serrachan

Latha a bha seo, o chionn fhada, chaidh serrachan, a bha na uilleagan, a thearbadh bho mhàthair, agus bha e a' seabhaid air ais 's air adhart na aonar. Dìreach an uair sin fhuair e poca air an rathad. Thug an serrachan sùil air a' phoca le iongantas agus dh'fhosgail e beul a' phoca. Sa bhad, thàinig madadh-allaidh liath a-mach, 's bha e feargach, agus bha an t-acras mòr air. Bha e airson an serrachan ithe.

Thuir e, "Bha mi nam chadal gu math anns a' phoca sin. Leis gun do dhùisg thu mi, agus leis gun tug thu orm tighinn a-mach, ithidh mi thu an-dràsta."

Bha dearg-eagal air an t-serrachan agus cha b' urrainn dha cur roimhe dè a dhèanadh e. Fhad 's a bha e ann an coire teth, thàinig coineanach 's thuir e, "A dhithis agaibh, dè tha sibh a' dèanamh?" Fhreagair am madadh-allaidh, "Bha mi nam chadal gu seasgairreach anns a' phoca seo gus an do dh'fhosgail an serrachan e agus gus tug e orm tighinn a-mach. 'S e sin an t-adhbhar gu bheil mi an impis ithe."

Thuir an coineanach, "A bheil sibh a' cumail a-mach gu bheil am poca seo mòr gu leòr? Cha chreid mi sin idir idir."

Fhreagair am madadh-allaidh, "Tha rum gu leòr ann! Thèid mi a-steach sa mhionaid agus seallaidh mi dhuibh." Agus chaidh e a-steach dhan poca. Cho luath 's a bha e a-staigh, dhùin an serrachan agus an coineanach am poca 's cheangail iad e, rinn iad gàire gu mòr, 's chaidh iad gu frogail air an slighe. An ceann greiseig choinnich an serrachan ris a' ghreigh aige agus le a mhàthair a-rithist.

The Foal

One day long ago, a spoiled little foal was separated from his mother and was wandering to and fro by himself. Just then, he came across a sack on the road. The foal looked at the sack with curiosity and opened the mouth of the sack. Straight away out of the sack came a hungry grey wolf, angry and ready to eat the foal.

"I was sleeping nicely in that sack. Since you woke me and made me come out, I'm going to eat you now," he said.

The foal was scared witless and didn't know what to do, and was panicking until a bunny rabbit came up and said, "You two, what are you doing?" to which the wolf replied, "I was sleeping nicely in this sack until the foal opened the sack and made me come out. That's why I'm now about to eat it."

The bunny rabbit said, "Do you mean to say that you fit inside this sack? I don't believe it."

To which the wolf replied, "I fit inside it with room to spare! Right now I'll go inside it and show you," and he went into the sack. As soon as he was inside, the foal and rabbit tied up the sack, laughed, and went on their way merrily. The foal reunited with his herd and went back to his mother.



Photo by Frank Winkler,
CCO Creative Commons, www.Pixabay.com

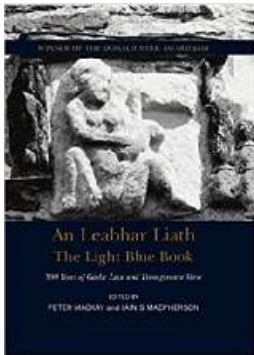
Answer to Seanfhacal na Ràithe, p. 8

An ràmh as fhaisg air làimh, iomair leis.

Row the boat you have on hand.

or

Make do with what you have.



Book Review:

An Leabhar Liath/The Light Blue Book: 500 Years of Gaelic Love and Transgressive Verse,

Peter MacKay and Iain S. McPherson, editors,

Published by Luath Press, Edinburgh, 2016

Reviewed by Heather Sparling

In my life, as in the lives of most Anglo-Americans, sex is something private – something for the bedroom or for the occasional lewd titter at a party amongst tipsy friends. So a book about sex is rather exciting! Especially when the book can be deemed “legitimate” - and even erudite - as it’s been edited by two university professors and can be described as a book about the appearance and evolution of a particular theme in Gaelic poetry over 500 years, rather than about, well, sex.

It’s not really surprising that this book should be attracting all sorts of attention. One need only consider that Michael Newton’s recent *Naughty Little Book of Gaelic: All the Scottish Gaelic You Need to Curse, Swear, Drink, Smoke and Fool Around* (2014) is one of Cape Breton University Press’s best-selling books to get the point. This book is likely to attract a range of readers simply because of its unexpected subject matter, but it will be particularly valuable to Gaelic learners. That’s because the low number of Gaelic speakers means that there are relatively few places where learners can be immersed in a full range of everyday Gaelic – including the “naughty” bits. And yet a language will not survive if it cannot be used in a broad range of contexts and to express a wide variety of experiences and emotional reactions. I can’t tell you how often I’ve been told that Gaelic is a “clean” language, a language that doesn’t have swear words and isn’t lewd and lascivious. The editors have heard the same claims, as they note in their introduction. But it’s simply not true; the perceived absence of swearing, sexual innuendo, and discussions of bodily functions are, to me, simply another indicator of the language’s precarious state. But doesn’t this create a terrific opportunity? Now you can feel that you’re helping to strengthen the Gaelic language by reading this book! Could you imagine a better homework assignment? You’re welcome.

Although the introduction appears in both Gaelic and English, they are not the same essay. I rather suspect that each was written by a different co-editor. I think the assumption is that the introduction is intended to “educate” or prepare the reader for what follows, and perhaps the Gaelic-speaking audience needs a different kind of education than the non-Gaelic-speaking audience does. The Gaelic introduction starts by noting how common “mealtainn a’ chuirp” (lit. “enjoyment of the body” but also “*jouissance du corps*”) once was in Gaelic poetry, and how it changed with the increasing power of the Christian Church (particularly Protestant denominations), the spread of Victorian morals, and the dispersal of Gaels after the Battle of Culloden and the Clearances.

By contrast, the English introduction starts by quoting Hugh MacDiarmid, who observed that “Scottish literature, like all other literatures [including Gaelic poetry], has been *written* almost exclusively by blasphemers, immoralists, dipsomaniacs and madmen, but, unlike most other literatures, it has been *written about* almost exclusively by ministers” (p34). It notes that ideas about “obscenity” vary by culture, arguing that English bawdry tends to be cagily prurient whereas Scottish bawdry (in English) tends to be direct and open, and Gaelic bawdry is “frank, playful and fanciful, and rarely prurient” (p37). It warns us not to impose contemporary morals on earlier literature. Both introductions walk the reader through some of the key texts and poetic eras, although the English introduction notably provides a great deal of references to other literature in case any readers wish to pursue the subject further. By contrast, the Gaelic introduction offers not a single footnote.

The book contains 65 poems and poetic extracts, each appearing in Gaelic on one page with its English translation on the facing page. Most are less than a page long, although a few are longer. The translations are not literal although they do not generally stray far from the Gaelic. However, one of the more enjoyable aspects of the translations is that they often attempt to offer poetic English, complete with rhyme schemes! In “Bod bríoghmhor atá ag Donncha” (“Duncan has a powerful prick”), by Sir Duncan Campbell of Glen Orchy (Sir Donnchadh Caimbeul Ghlinn Urchaidh, 1443-1513), we read:

Bod bríoghmhor atá ag Donncha,
fada féitheach fiordhorcha,
reamhar druimleathan díreach,
sleamhan cuirnach ceirtíneach.

Duncan has a powerful prick:
broad-backed, upright, thick,
long, sinewy, real dark
slick, wattled, bees-waxed.

Cluaisleathan ceannramhar crom,
go díoghainn data dubhghorm;
atá breall ag an fhleascach,
is e ceansa [?] go conachtach [?].

Broad-eared, big-headed, bent,
it turns to indigo when it's vehement:
the knob of this young stallion
can be calm – or act the hallion.

This poem comes from the *Book of the Dean of Lismore*, an important source of early Scottish Gaelic compiled between 1512 and 1526, and is written in classical Gaelic. Aside from just how fun this poem is in terms of its joyful use of adjectives – one of Gaelic poetry's most characteristic traits (whether those poems are “liath” or not) – I find myself grinning as I imagine the co-editors coming up with these English translations. I can only imagine that it involved plenty of *uisge beatha* and late nights. This has to be some of the most amusing scholarly work one could do!

The poems are presented in chronological order with no commentary whatsoever: just the title, the author (if known), and the poem. A biographical sentence or two about each author is available at the back of the book. While I can appreciate that the poems are left to the reader to enjoy and interpret as s/he wishes, as a Gaelic learner, I would have valued some scholarly commentary on each poem. However, as a scholar myself, I also realize just how much work such commentary can entail, and there's also value in getting such a collection published rather than allowing it to whither during years of extra research and writing. Perhaps a subsequent edition will create an opportunity to include scholarly notes.

As the co-editors note, one of the great strengths of the collection is the significant number of women poets included, whether known (such as Iseabal Ní Mheic Cailéin, Countess of Argyll, whose poetry is documented in the *Book of the Dean of Lismore*, and Sileas na Ceapaich, one of Gaeldom's most important poets) or unknown (such as the creators of many anonymous waulking songs). Waulking songs in particular speak to the complexity of love and relationships, and the editors include a number of poems that articulate perspectives that one might be tempted to judge harshly. Their collection is not limited to bawdry but also includes “transgressive” verse, poetry that transgresses social norms. Take, for instance, the anonymous “Ailean Dubh à Lòchaidh” (“Black Alan from Lochy”):

'S toil leam Ailean Dubh à Lòchaidh
Mo ghaol Ailean Donn a' chòta
'S toil leam Ailean Dubh à Lòchaidh

I like Black Alan from Lochy
My love Brown Alan of the topcoat,
I like Black Alan from Lochy

Ailein, Ailein, 's ait leam beò thu.
Sguab thu mo sprèidh bhàrr na mòintich,
Loisg thu m' iodhlann chorca is eòrna,
Mharbh thu mo thriùir bhràithrean òga,
Mharbh thu m' athair is m' fhear-pòsta,
'S ged inn thu siud 's ait leam beò thu.

Alan, Alan, I'm glad you're alive.
You swept my cattle off the moor,
You burnt my stacks of oats and barley,
You killed my three young brothers,
You killed my father and my husband;
Despite this, I'm glad you're alive.

In presenting poetry chronologically over 500 years, the reader can see quite clearly shifts and trends in writing. As we arrive at more recent poetry, we no longer find odes to body parts such as Sir Duncan wrote, but instead find more metaphor and symbolism, and the integration of sex and love. We also find new themes that are the subject of current interest and debate, such as homosexuality and prostitution. Take, for example, “Rùisgt” (“Unsheathed”) by Marcus Mac an Tuairneir (1984-):

Leacan do rathaidean
Salach le cac nam faoileagan,
Sgeith nan siùrsach air
Sràid a’ Mhargaidh.

Thachair mo chas
Ri chasgan caithte
Taobh a-muigh an taigh-sheinnse gèidh.

Sgiolc mi air fianais shleamhainn
De spòrs dithis eile
Air nach robh mi eòlach
Ach bho chliù.

Your filthy flagstones are
Soiled with scorie shit
And doxy boke [prostitute vomit]
On Market Street.

My foot befell
A cast-off condom
Outside the gay bar.

I slipped on the slimy wetness
Of anothers’ good time;
Two, I only knew
Through repute.

The title of this book is titillating and will no doubt attract readers for that reason alone. And some of the poetry is quite funny and amusingly shocking – which is as good a reason to read poetry as any other! But this book’s value is considerably greater. It offers vocabulary and turns of phrases that most Gaelic learners are unlikely to encounter elsewhere. It offers a history not just of Gaelic poetry, but of cultural mores and the ways in which love, sex, and sexuality could (and could not) be discussed in Gaelic. This last point, in turn, ensures that the poems in this collection will inspire questions and hopefully discussion and debate. As a professor myself, I cannot imagine a better outcome for published scholarship.



Given that each of the major smartphone platforms now boasts hundreds of thousands of software packages (“apps”) to accomplish almost every conceivable function, it was only a matter of time before we started to notice apps about Gaelic. So we decided to start a series of short reviews of these, and this is the sixth. It’s been a while since the earlier articles (see Fall and Winter 2012, Spring and Summer 2013, and Fall 2014). There are new things worthy of notice, though, so we thought we should continue the series.



Gaelic on the Go: SwiftKey Predictive Keyboard (Free; iOS, Android) *by Rudy Ramsey*

SwiftKey is an amazingly capable multilingual predictive virtual keyboard. Oh, right, sorry for the tech talk. Let’s cover this ground a bit more slowly.

Probably just about all of us are familiar with virtual keyboards – keyboards that are displayed on the screen of smartphones and tablets, with characters being selected by touching the screen instead of by pushing physical keys. Many of these virtual

keyboards are also predictive at some level. Quite common is smart type-ahead, in which you start typing a word and the keyboard shows the rest of the most likely word so you can just accept it, rather than typing each individual remaining letter. SwiftKey goes far beyond this level of prediction. Using neural-network software technology (see <https://tinyurl.com/swiftneural>), Swiftkey is able to make smart predictions of not just letters, but whole

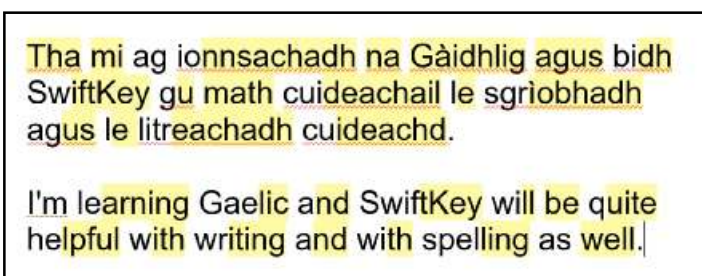
words, based on the context. And it learns as you use it, so that its predictions become better with time. And it supports, so far, 190 languages, including Scottish Gaelic. It even switches between two languages automatically, based on what you type (in an average of about a word and a half, for English and Scottish Gaelic). Now I'll stop and take a breath. ☺



The photo shows what SwiftKey looks like on an iPhone. (There's also an iPad version and an Android version.) The keyboard occupies the bottom 40% or so of the screen. I've deliberately chosen, from the available (free) themes, a colorful keyboard layout that reminds me I'm using this keyboard and not the standard one. More subtle themes are available for the squeamish. ☺

What you can see here (look at the spacebar) is that it's the SwiftKey keyboard, and that it's configured for use with English (EN) and Scottish Gaelic (GD). I've been typing a Gaelic sentence, and SwiftKey thinks my intended next word, *cuideachail*, is one of

the three likely next words. It's calculated as most likely, so it's positioned in the center. The two next most likely words, according to SwiftKey, are positioned on the left and right sides. By touching one of these three words, or entering a space or punctuation character if I want the word in the middle, I can select a word for inclusion in the developing text. Or I can continue typing other characters, whether they're the next characters of "*cuideachail*" or something else.



Now take a look at the boxed text, and you'll have some idea of the power of SwiftKey's predictions. I've typed more or less the same sentence in the two languages. All the characters highlighted in yellow were provided by SwiftKey. I didn't have to type them. All I had to do was touch the words as they were displayed at the top of the keyboard. And having done so, I didn't have to then touch the spacebar to add the space between the words, so basically ALL of those characters were "free", as it were. The results with Gaelic are particularly striking, and deserve some explanation, or you're likely to find them incredible. Because of Gaelic's verb-first syntax, SwiftKey will always include "Tha" in its first-word predictions, as that's undoubtedly the most common first word of Gaelic sentences. But then "mi" is so common as the next word after "tha" that it will be among the top three, too. And after "ag", followed by "io", "ionnsachadh" is a very high-frequency choice. And so on. In this way, SwiftKey has "predicted" five of the first seven words of this sentence. Of course, it hasn't really predicted the exact words. What it has done is to display three likely words, and the correct one has been among those three in 5 cases out of 7.

SwiftKey is both amazing and great fun. It will slow your typing rate significantly, if measured in keystrokes per minute. But if measured in either produced characters per minute or total effort expended, it's likely to be very effective for you. Worth a try, anyway. ☺

You don't have to have a fisherman in the family to enjoy this recipe, just head to the fish department in your local supermarket. Many thanks to Debby Sobey and her co-workers for giving us permission to share some more Nova Scotia recipes in their 2011 cookbook *As an Abhainn Mhòir: English-Gaelic Recipes from Pictou County*. And since this is a Nova Scotia recipe, you shouldn't be surprised that it's written in the Nova Scotia / Cape Breton dialect.

Bonnaich-Éisg

1/2 phunnd truisg thioraim no liùbha
5-6 buntàta
uinnean
ìm
piobar/creamh
1 ugh air a bhualadh

Cuir an trosg tioram am bogadh dà uair a thìde. Siothlaich an t-uisge, còmhdach an t-iasg le uisge ùr agus fuar, thoir sin gu goil agus an uair sin lùghdaich an teas gu meadhonach 'ga eàrr-bhruich 20 mionaidean. Siothlaich dheth an sùgh agus fàg an t-iasg anns a' phoit gu fuaraich e.

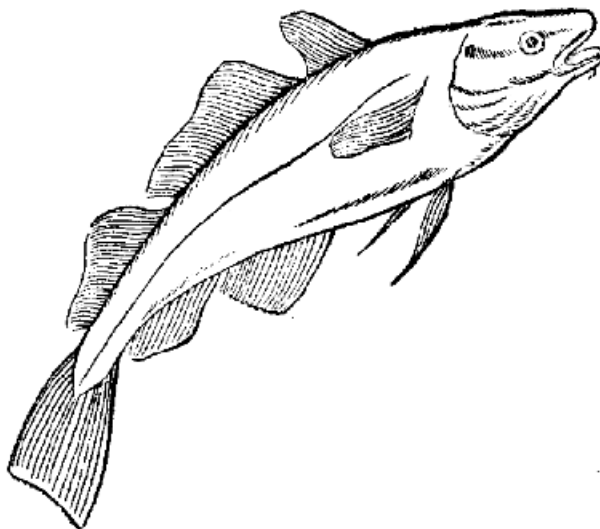
Rùisg agus bruich am buntàta – siothlaich agus fuaraich beagan. Pronn am buntàta leis an ìm, a' phiobar agus a' chreamh, agus leis an ugh air a bhualadh. Cuir ann an t-uinnean sgudaichte. Bris an t-iasg ann a' piosan agus maistrich sin anns a' bhuntàta. Cruthaich am brolamas seo ann a' deàrnagain agus fuaraich iad beagan mus fraighig thu iad.

Fishcakes

1/2 lb dry cod or pollock
5-6 potatoes
onion
butter
garlic, pepper
1 egg, beaten

Soak dry cod in cold water for 2 hours. Drain, cover, with fresh cold water, bring to boil, reduce heat to medium, cook for 20 mins. Drain and cool in pot.

Peel and cook the potatoes – drain and cool slightly. Mash potatoes with butter, pepper and garlic, and beaten egg. Add diced onions. Break up and mix in the fish. Form into patties, cool slightly before frying.



<http://arthursclipart.org/>



Do you have a favorite recipe that you'd like to share with other ACGA members? Submit it in a bilingual format to one of our editors and we'll publish it in a future issue of An Naidheachd Againne. Na gabhaibh dragh – we'll pass the Gaelic by a native speaker to be sure your recipe is delicious in both languages!



Dè Tha Dol? Gaelic Events

An t-Sultain 2017 / September 2017

Fèis ACGA / First Annual ACGA Fèis, Antiochian Village, Ligonier PA, Friday, September 22, 2017
Programming includes a workshop on songs of the Scottish Gaelic diaspora and clearances (Margaret Stewart), a workshop on the history of the Gaelic harp, or clàrsach, and harp technique (James Ruff), a workshop on the Gaelic songs of Siadar a' Chladaich, on the west coast of the Isle of Lewis (Murdo "Wasp" MacDonald), a tutorial program for singers by Margaret Stewart, "Cèilidh 101," a workshop led by Murdo MacDonald, and a Gaelic nature walk on the grounds of the Antiochian Village and the nearby country lanes.
<http://www.acgamerica.org>

Mòd Nàiseanta Aimeireagaidh / 30th U.S. National Mòd, Ligonier PA, September 21 – 24, 2017
This year the Mòd will feature new events and competitions. Famed Scottish singers Maighread Stiùbhart (Margaret Stewart) and Murchadh Dòmhnallach (Murdo "Wasp" MacDonald) will adjudicate. 2016 Gold Medal winners at the Royal National Mòd in Scotland, Eachann Mac Eachairn and Carol Maclean, will also attend. <http://www.acgamerica.org>

An Dàmhair 2017 / October 2017

Celtic Colours International Festival, Cape Breton Island NS, October 6 – October 14, 2017
A celebration of music and culture throughout Cape Breton Island through performances, workshops, presentations and community events. Tickets on sale from July 11, 2017. See <http://celtic-colours.com>

Central Virginia Celtic Festival & Highland Games, Richmond VA, October 28 – 29, 2017
Clan Currie presents a Gaelic song competition from 2 pm – 5 pm (Liam Ó Caiside, judge) on Saturday, October 28. Saturday's events also feature a Scottish harp competition.

On Sunday Clan Currie sponsors a Gaelic song workshop from 1 pm – 1:30 pm (John Grimaldi) and Speaking Gaelic! from 1:30 pm – 2 pm (John Grimaldi). Scottish and Irish fiddling competitions will also take place that day.

For location and competition guidelines see <http://vacelticfestival.com/>

Oidhche Shamhna Gàidhlig / Halloween Immersion, Colaisde na Gàidhlig, St. Anns NS, October 27 – 29, 2017
See <http://gaeliccollege.edu/study-with-us/> for more information as it becomes available.

An t-Samhain 2017 / November 2017

An Nollaig Ghàidhlig / Christmas Immersion, Colaisde na Gàidhlig, St. Anns NS, November 24 – 26, 2017
See <http://gaeliccollege.edu/study-with-us/> for more information as it becomes available.

Am Faoillteach 2018 / January 2018

Celtic Connections, Glasgow, Scotland, January 19 – February 5, 2018
With 2,100 artists, 300 events and 20 venues, Celtic Connections features concerts, ceilidhs, talks, free events, late night sessions and workshops focusing on the roots of traditional Scottish music.
<http://www.celticconnections.com/Pages/default.aspx>

Directory of Gaelic Classes & Study Groups

Arizona

Flagstaff

Study Group
Richard Ferguson
fergusdubh@yahoo.com

Phoenix

Classes
Richard Smith
coindubh@yahoo.com

Tucson

Classes
Muriel Fisher
<http://www.murielofskye.com>

California

Sacramento Area
Classes
Donnie MacDonald
minchmusic@comcast.net

Colorado

Boulder
Study Group
Sue Hendrix
susan.hendrix@colorado.edu

Denver

Study Group
Reese McKay
reese-mckay25@gmail.com

San Luis Valley

Phone and Online lessons
Caroline Root
www.gaidhliggachlatha.com

Connecticut

Hartford area
Classes
Thomas Leigh
tleigh.piper@gmail.com

Gaelic Song Classes
Maggie Carchrie
860-748-7549

Florida

Jensen Beach

Treasure Coast Scots-Gaelic
Study Group
sryan1812@mylincoln.edu

Illinois

Springfield
Study Group
Bill McClain
217-854-7918
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/SpringfieldILScottishGaelic/>

Maryland

Baltimore
Study Group
<http://tinyurl.com/Maryland-Baltimore>
Rick Gwynallen
Rgwynallen@yahoo.com
301-928-9026

Missouri

St. Louis
Missouri Scottish Gaelic Learning
Group
Virtual meet-up group for those in the
Bi-State area:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/STLMOScottishGaelic/>

New York

New York
Classes
New York Caledonian Club
www.nycaledonian.org/studies.php

North Carolina

Triangle / Raleigh area
Study Group
An Phillips
fiongeal@yahoo.com

Chapel Hill

Classes
Michael Newton
gaelicmichael@gmail.com

Oklahoma

Midwest City

Study Group
Barry Acker
bearachanse@yahoo.com

Texas

Hurst
Classes
David Gressett
jdgressett@hotmail.com

Fort Worth

Study Group
Jonquele Jones
jonquele@flash.net

Virginia

Catlett
Local in person and via
Skype
Michael Mackay
mackay@progeny.net

Northern Virginia- Washington, DC- Maryland

Gàidhlig Photomac
Gaelic Learning Community
Regular workshops and
social events
Join us on Meetup.com
Contact Liam
willbcassidy@gmail.com

Tidewater

Classes
Jason Wilson
wilsonsoxford@gmail.com

Washington

Seattle
Classes & Study Groups
Slighe nan Gàidheal
<http://www.slighe.com>

Canada

Toronto

Classes

CLUINN

www.torontogaelic.ca

Québec

Montréal

Study Group

Linda Morrison

linda@lindamorrison.com

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

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AN NAIDHEACHD AGAINNE

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