

Baile nan  
Gàidheal  
Highland Village  
MADE OF STORIES

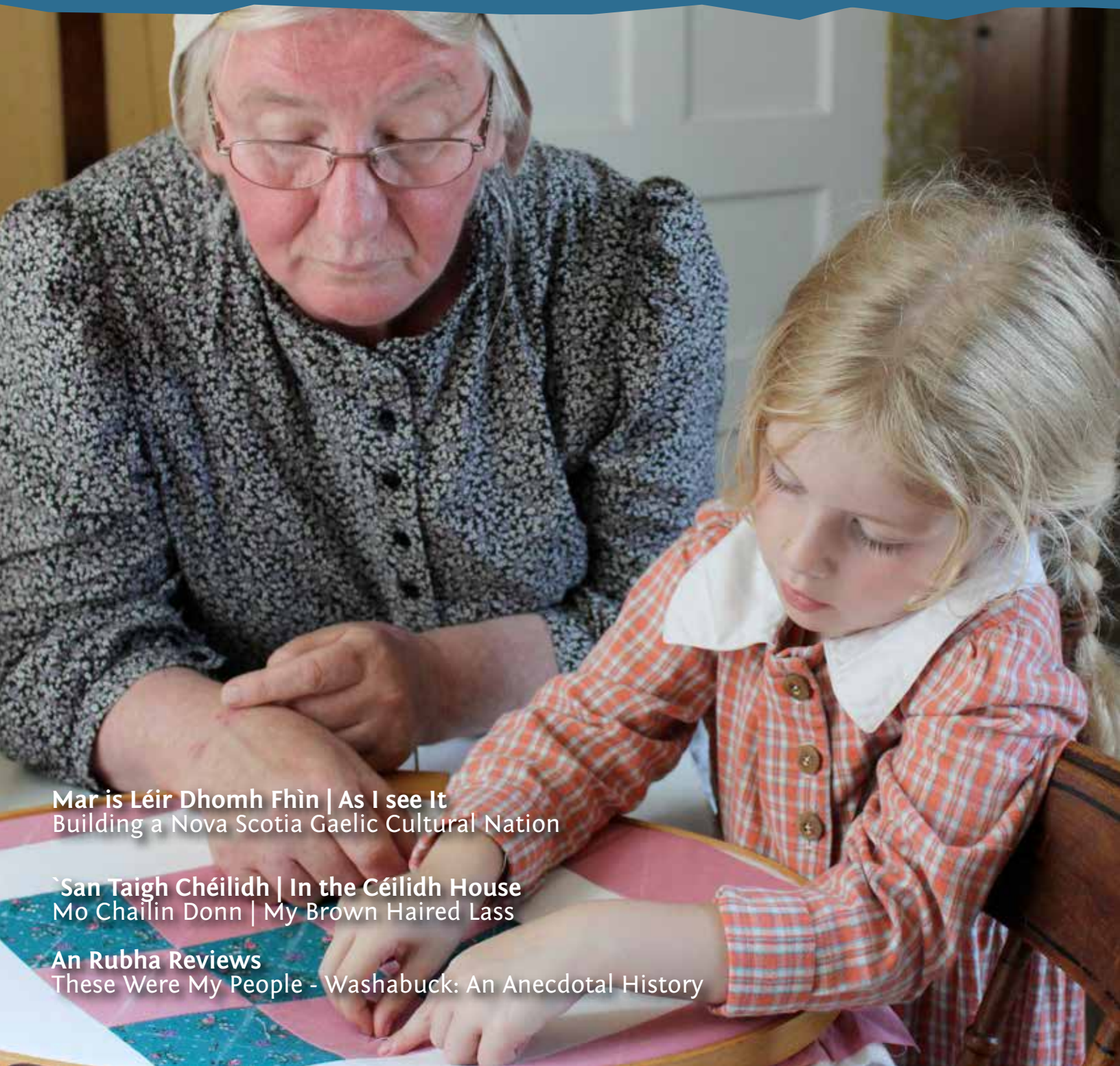


The Highland Village  
Gaelic Folklife Magazine

# an rubha

HIGHLANDVILLAGE.CA

VOLUME 15 • NUMBER ONE



**Mar is Léir Dhomh Fhìn | As I see It**  
Building a Nova Scotia Gaelic Cultural Nation

**San Taigh Chéilidh | In the Céilidh House**  
Mo Chailin Donn | My Brown Haired Lass

**An Rubha Reviews**  
These Were My People - Washabuck: An Anecdotal History





*Stòras na h-Òigridh* | Treasures of Youth Scholarship Fund provides financial support and assistance to up-and-coming Nova Scotia youth between the ages of five and twenty-one, who are keen to advance their skills in the Gaelic tradition including: fiddle, pipes, piano, language, storytelling, song, and dance. Scholarships are awarded each spring.

The Fund welcomes donations. A downloadable brochure with details and a pledge form is available on our website. Donations may also be made online through Canada Helps.

[www.treasuresofyouth.ca](http://www.treasuresofyouth.ca)



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Treasures of Youth Fund



2015 Scholarship Winners: Roddie MacInnis & Stephanie MacDonald



2015 Fiddle Loan Recipients: Lileag Watson & Mia Nordine



## AN DROCHaid EADARAINN

Tha An Drochaid Eadarainn stéidhichte air Stòras a' Bhaile: sgoil bheul-aithris air a cumail aig Baile nan Gàidheal gu bliadhnail. 'Na làraich-lìn eadar-gnìomhail, tha An Drochaid Eadarainn a' cleachdadh teicneolais mar mhodh a' lìonadh beàrn far a bheil du-alchas air tar-aisig o ghlùn gu glùn a dhìth.

*An Drochaid Eadarainn* (The Bridge Between Us) is an interactive website emulating the social transmission of Gaelic language and culture through technology. Communicating recorded expressions of Nova Scotia Gaelic culture, visitors will witness native speakers through storytelling, music and dance, dialectal samples, kinship, belief, traditional foods, home remedies and cures.

Participants can meet, share and exchange Nova Scotia Gaelic traditions on *An Drochaid Bheò* (The Living Bridge), an interactive feature of the website.



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Aileen MacLean shows Living History participant Salerah how to sew a quilt patch.

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# Baile nan Gàidheal Highland Village

## MADE OF STORIES

The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society has achieved much in its 56 year history. Looking back to 1959, the journey has been an incredible one. It is a story of pride in our culture, perseverance of our people, and quest to continually grow and improve our contribution to our community and our province.

The Highland Village has recently embarked on an exciting new phase in its history. We refer to it as Highland Village 3.0, our path to 2020 and beyond. Our goal is to be the premier venue for experiential presentation and transmission of Nova Scotia Gaelic language, culture & folklife. How do we get there? We get there by addressing the five core areas that contribute to the long term sustainability of the operation: branding; programming; site development; human resources; and earned income.

Here is a quick recap of the journey that has taken us to this stage:


•*Embryonic Stage (1938-1959)* - Angus L. MacDonald & the United Empire Exhibition in Glasgow, Scotland; 1950's presentation to Cabinet from the NS Association of Scottish Societies; regional competition to be the home of a "Highland Village"; determined group in Central Cape Breton makes the case for Hector's Point, focusing on the cultural assets of the area; and a steadfast group of volunteers focused on bringing the dream to reality.

•*Highland Village 1.0 (1959-1999)* - Incorporation of the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society; perseverance of the community to build, grow and operate the Highland Village as a community cultural, social and economic asset; Highland Village Day Concert; outreach programming; site renewal; quest to maintain and enhance museum standards; and evolution of a community museum.

•*Highland Village 2.0 (2000-2014)* - A Part of the Nova Scotia Museum, Provincial Museum Status; strategic planning; renewed linguistic and cultural focus; 1st person animation; program growth; community outreach and ca-

capacity building; Malagawatch Church; governance renewal; branding & marketing; on-line exhibits/assets; and partnerships.

The first element of our Highland Village 3.0 plan is branding. This past season, we introduced our new brand "Made of Stories" which reflects our new emphasis on first person animation, storytelling and experiential programming. Supporting our new brand is a new logo, designed by the Vibe Creative Group in Sydney, and approved by the NSHVS Board of Trustees, the Nova Scotia Museum and Communications Nova Scotia last spring. The new logo has a modern look with a focus on the oral traditions and intangible cultural heritage of our Gaelic community. It positions the Highland Village as a place that is "made of stories." Thus, the *a's* in *Gàidheal* are stylized quotation marks. The logo is also designed to relay the message that the Highland Village is telling a Nova Scotia Gaelic story. As a result, the Gaelic name for the site has changed from *An Clachan Gàidhealach* to *Baile nan Gàidheal*, which literally translates to the Village of the Gaels. *(Please note that the branding change is for the Highland Village Museum only. We will continue to use the Society crest where appropriate to represent the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society.)*

There are four versions of the new logo. A primary version will be used in most applications. Long and rectangular versions will be used for applications where the primary version is not practical, e.g. banners, or items with height limitations. A fourth version has been developed specifically for signage, to ensure that the English is legible for passing motorists. The introduction of the new logo began last season and will continue through 2016. Our new branding certainly sets the stage for Highland Village 3.0 and the many exciting things that are to come over the next five years. Stay tuned... 



Rodney Chaisson is Director of the Highland Village.



Leanaibh dlùth ri cliù bhur sinnsir.

*Commun Baile Ghàidheal na h-Albann Nuaidh* | The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society was incorporated on November 3, 1959 under the Societies Act of Nova Scotia. Its purpose was to construct and operate an outdoor folk museum dedicated to the Scottish Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia.

Since 2000, the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society has operated the *Baile nan Gàidheal* | Highland Village, A Part of the Nova Scotia Museum, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Museum (Department of Communities, Culture & Heritage).

Baile nan  
Gàidheal  
Highland Village  
MADE OF STORIES

A PART OF THE NOVA SCOTIA MUSEUM

Our vision is to be internationally acknowledged for advancing research, fostering appreciation, learning and sharing authentic Gaelic language and heritage while serving a vibrant Gaelic cultural community.

Our mission is to research, collect, preserve and share the Gaelic heritage and culture of Nova Scotia and represent it accurately and vibrantly.

We are a member of Gaelic Society of Inverness (Scotland), Association of Nova Scotia Museums (ANSM), Canadian Museums Assoc. (CMA), Heritage Cape Breton Connection, Council of NS Archives (CNSA), Genealogical Assoc. of NS (GANS), Cape Breton Genealogical & Historical Association, Interpretation Canada, Assoc. of Living History, Farms and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM), Celtic Heart of North America Marketing Cooperative, Tourism Industry Assoc of NS (TIANS), Baddeck & Area Business Tourism Assoc. (BABTA), Sydney & Area Chamber of Commerce, Strait Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Cape Breton Partnership.



# Mar is léir dhomh fhìn | As I See It

## BUILDING A NOVA SCOTIA GAELIC CULTURAL NATION

Marking the Month of the Gaels on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, I was privileged to make a few comments on behalf of Highland Village at Province House. The occasion was Highland Village's contribution to *Léirsinn*, a showing of posters featuring Gaelic themes known to Nova Scotia. The launch also included announcement of an online Gaelic place name map for Nova Scotia, produced by the Office of Gaelic Affairs, and introduction of digitized copies of the Celtic journal *Am Bràighe*, now available online.

*Léirsinn* (layr-sheen), meaning perspective, insight, or vision, is an exhibition of NSCAD student's work produced in the 2015 Designing for Cultural Restoration class. Led by Associate Professor Marlene Ivey, in collaboration with the Village, *Iomairtean na Gàidhlig* / Gaelic Affairs and *Comhairle na Gàidhlig* / Nova Scotia Gaelic Council, thirty three posters were created incorporating three themes: *Òigridh* (youth), *Seanfhaclan* (proverbs) and *Na h-Òrain*, Nova Scotia's living Gaelic song tradition. *Léirsinn* traveled to other venues, including the Angus L Macdonald Library, St Francis Xavier University and *Baile nan Gàidheal* | Highland Village, where it remained until the third week of October 2015.

The *Léirsinn* exhibition acknowledged the presence of Gaelic Nova Scotia in the Province's social and economic weave. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, and onward to the mid-nineteenth century, Gaels from the Highlands and Islands arrived in Nova Scotia in their scores of thousands. Not just an historical fact, their language-based culture has become an impactful underpinning for the cultural expression that in large measure defines our contemporary province, both at home and internationally. The quality of its output is shared on an equal footing with its cousins in Gaelic Scotland and Ireland, while embracing Canadian values of inclusivity with a simple open invitation to participate.

*Léirsinn* exemplifies the range of that inclusivity beyond being an undergraduate classroom project. It is a model for applying the creative energies of a provincial arts and design institution, supported by an international faculty and student body, to inspirations so redolent in Nova Scotia Gaelic culture. The themes of 'Youth' (*Òigridh*), symbolized by the dandelion, enduring and irrepressible harbinger of renewal, 'Proverbs' (*Seanfhaclan*) the insightful wisdom of the Gaels and 'Nova Scotia Composed Songs' (*Na h-Òrain*), expressed in metaphoric visuals, take us across the threshold from every day mass culture to a place of celebrating in the Gaelic Nova Scotia context.

Alluding to that principle, *Nàisean nan Gàidheal* (Nova Scotia Gaelic Cultural Nation) could be seen inscribed on a number of the exhibitors' posters. A suitable slogan for Gaelic Nova Scotia, its message is well-placed, emanating from contributors who have shared their imagination and talents in bringing language-based culture to the attention of a greater public through exhibition and associated technology. The boundaries of Nova Scotia Gaelic Nation extend over horizons that encompass multiple levels of interest and skills. Citizenship is not defined by language ability, but rather a consensus that continuity of language dependent cultural expression is valued for its transmission and generational significance.

Nation building is not an easy thing to do. Its requirements are many. A steady hand on the rudder guided by conviction and perseverance is elemental. So too is the need for an encompassing vision that joins all stripes to subscribe to foundational tenets. In its social being, Nova Scotia's Gaelic nation has experienced rupture and manipulation of its cultural representations for at least a century. The situation is now less dire, as we enter an era with supporting apparatus and a degree of acknowledgement unknown in

the near past. And so the question arises, how do we muster our resources to build a Gaelic-speaking cultural nation with universal support?

It may be helpful to underscore that Gaelic culture is language dependent for expression of its social markers. In the absence of language, there is no indigenous literature and all the domains it comprises. In the absence of language bourn cultural distinctions, identity is, otherwise, a matter of heritage manifest only in times gone by. Gaelic culture as a living, measurable, social quantity rests on the word. However, the priority isn't trying to conserve a language for its own sake, but rather maintain a people identifiable by way of their own cultural expression as Nova Scotians. Language is the primary tool for our Gaelic initiatives and requires treatment as such. It is not, however, the end game of itself, but rather a delivery system for maintaining the people's cultural stuffing: the product of their social expression. One could say that for the want of a language the culture was lost. For the want of a culture the language was lost. It would be cliché to point out that these are not separate issues. The beating heart of the matter ultimately becomes that for the want of both a people is lost.

Unlike the designation 'Scottish', the term Gael, in Nova Scotia at least, is broadly inclusive, since its provenance is determined by language-based cultural expression, rather than genetics, or ethnic origin. *Baile nan Gàidheal* welcomes all with a wish to participate in our story, or witness its telling. ©



Seumas Watson is the Highland Village's Manager of Interpretation.

*"A' ghrian bheag" (Ma chìthhear anull mu thrì uairean feasgar cnap beag  
a' sìneadh amach on ghréin fhéin, tha stoirm mhór dol a bhi ann.)  
Peadar mac Jack Pheadair*

"The wee sun." (If, around three o'clock in the afternoon, a little ball is  
seen extending from the sun itself, there's going to be a big storm).  
Peter Jack MacLean

# Naidheachd a' Bhaile | The Village News

## 2015 - ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR AT BAILE NAN GÀIDHEAL



*Mi'kmaq Artist Ursula Johnson presents for ANSM's Stone Soup Symposium.*



*Lèirsinn Opening - Jocelyn Spence, Kelsey Walker along with Associate Professor, Marlene Ivey.*



*Charlie Cash and his daughter Corrine on hand to talk about Cash's Carding Mill.*

2015 proved to be an exciting year for the Highland Village. With the launch of our new branding, the opening of two traveling exhibits and the introduction of our new family living history program, we accomplished a lot throughout the year. As well, we were recognized for our achievements with two awards.

During the spring we hosted the Association of Nova Scotia Museum's Stone Soup Symposium. Participants from around the province gathered for an innovative learning opportunity focused on theatrical presentation in museum interpretation. The two day symposium of workshops and groups sessions provided valuable knowledge and skills, which we were able to apply to our animation and programs.

As Gaelic Awareness month concluded, and as a kick off to the season, we opened two exhibits. *Lèirsinn* (Layr-sheen), an exhibition of 32 posters created by students from NSCAD University's Designing for Cultural Restoration class was displayed in the Malagwatach church for most of the season. The second exhibit was "The Gaels of Nova Scotia" which showcased the Gaels who left Scotland to settle in northeastern mainland of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton. This display of panels was found throughout the site in various buildings. Staff noted that visitors were interested in both exhibits, taking extra time to read panels and view

the posters.

There were a number of special days celebrated throughout the season. *Biadh is Baile*, formally known as Carding Mill Day was held in June this year. Visitors to the site were able to take part in preparing traditional meals or helping to plant gardens. The carding mill was also in operation to demonstrate how wool was processed. Charlie Cash was on hand to speak about the history of the mill and his family's connection. The 4th annual Donald Òg Day was held in August. We would like to express our thanks to both Eskasoni Cultural Journeys and the Fortress of Louisbourg for attending many of our special events. Their presence on site enhances the visitor experience and creates great partnerships with these institutions.

Also in August, we welcomed the Lieutenant Governor of NS, Brigadier-General The Honourable J.J. Grant & Mrs. Joan Grant to the site. Animator Colin Watson led the couple on a guided storytelling tour of the Village. His Honour was in the area to present The Community Spirit Award to the nearby community of Washabuck.

This past season saw the introduction new family programming. Much like our children's living history program, families dressed in period costume and took part in hands-on activities. Visitors who participated in the program provided us with great feedback. We will offer the family

living history again this year. As well, for the second year in a row Shelly Campbell's grade 7 class from Whycocomagh Education Centre joined us for our living history program which we now offer to schools.

We acknowledge the students from Dalhousie University's Computer Science Community Outreach course who worked for a semester with NSCAD University Professor Marlene Ivey and the Nova Scotia Gaelic Community to refresh the *An Dro-chaid Eadarainn* (The Bridge Between Us) content management system.

We would like to acknowledge our countless volunteers who without their generosity of time, many of our special programs would not be possible. We thank them for their continued support.

As always, we must mention the dedication, hard work and commitment of Highland Village staff. Last spring the Village received the "2015 Product Development Award" from Destination Cape Breton, recognizing our achievements with first person animation and experiential programming. Also, for the second year in a row, we were awarded TripAdvisor's Certificate of Excellence. All of these successes would not be possible without our staff. Ceud taing! 🍷

*Katherine MacLeod is the Highland Village's Learning & Media Specialist.*



*Eskasoni Cultural Journeys participating in Donald Òg Day.*



*Lieutenant Governor of NS - Brigadier-General The Honourable J.J. Grant & Mrs. Joan Grant.*



*Students from Whycocomagh Education Centre taking part in our Living History program.*



# Fo na Cabair | Under the Rafters

## A' CHOILLE MHÓR | THE GREAT FOREST - Part four

When reminiscing about pioneer times, the comment most frequently made by many older descendants of the Highland settlers is on the immensity of the forest that greeted their forebears. The late Ena Chisholm (*Ena ni'n lain 'ic Eòin na h-Aibhneadh*), who was born and raised in Glencoe, Inverness County, remarks on her antecedents situation in coming to Cape Breton:

*Rugadh mi ann a Glencoe an t-seachdamh là diag do Mharch an 1908. Niclòsaig a bheireadh 'ad (rium) ann an Gàidhlig. Thànaig 'ad às Eilean Eige.*

*Uell, bha 'ad ag ràdhainn gur e na Sasanaich a chur amach 'ad às an àite, gu robh an t-àite leò, na h-àiteachan a's a robh 'ad ann a Scotland. Bha 'ad gan draoibheadh amach: gun do chur 'ad caoraich 's an àite. 'S e sin a chaidh a dh'ràdhainn aig an àm co dhiubh.*

*Thànaig 'ad (Cloinn Iosaig) gu tìr ann am Pictou agus às a' sin suas a Ghlencoe. Bha an t-àite gu math doirbh. Cha robh ann ach coille mhór. Cha robh sìon ann ach coille 's thog 'ad taighean-logaichean ann.*

I was born in Glencoe, Inverness County, March 17th, 1908. My surname is MacIsaac. They came from the Isle of Eigg.

Well, they say that the English speakers drove them out, claiming that the properties belonged to them. In any event, so it was said at the time.

They landed in Pictou and from there they went to Glencoe. The area was very rugged. There was

nothing but a wilderness. There was nothing but forest and they built log-cabins there.

Indeed the forest that greeted the Highland immigrant was an awesome and untouched wilderness. Termed the Acadian Forest, eastern Nova Scotia's woodlands were a substantial confrontation to many who had little experience in cultivating the forested wilds.

Early settlers arriving in the eastern counties were faced with a forest that had rarely heard the axe's ring. Most of the landscape was covered with a mixed coniferous-deciduous composition. Along the coastline, the principal species were balsam fir and spruce, interspersed with larch groves. Inland, the countryside supported extensive tracts of mixed forest in which grew pine, elm, hemlock and spruce along with maple. The higher ground accommodated the growth of ash, birch, fir and spruce.

Not surprisingly, some Gaels were daunted by the task of settling in a new homeland. The reaction of Tìree bard John MacLean (*Iain mac Ailein*, 1787-1848) to his New World holdings is best recollected in his poem *A' Choille Ghruamach* (The Gloomy Forest). Known to present generations of Gaels, it was made shortly after the composer's arrival in Pictou County in 1819. MacLean had enjoyed status as the laird's bard in his native Tìree. Having settled at *Bail' a' Chnuic* at Barney's River, he expressed bitter disappointment with his new circumstances, which required of him more exertion than was his custom.

*Cha n-ioghnadh dhomhsa ged tha mi*

*brònach. 'S ann tha mo chòmhnaidh air chùl nam beann, Am meadhon fàsaich air Abhainn Bharnaidh Gun dad is feàrr na buntàta lom Mun dean mi àiteach 's mun tog mi bàrr ann. 'S a' choillidh ghàbhaidh chur às a bonn. Le neart mo ghàrdein, gum bidh mi sàraicht'. Is treis air fàilinn mum fàs a' chlann.*

It's no wonder that I am melancholy. My home is on the back side of the mountains deep in the wilderness at Barney's River. There's nothing better to be had than bare potatoes. Before I can cultivate the land, raise a crop and clear the awful forest by the strength of my arms, I will be exhausted and nearly spent before the children are grown.

Despite the sombre depths of Nova Scotia's pristine woodland, there were some advantages. An extraordinary supply of fish and game was readily available to the early Gaels as sustenance and protein. The surrounding seas and Lake Bras d'Or (*Loch Mór nam Barrach*) abounded in fish such as cod, haddock, mackerel and herring. Reputedly, lobsters were so plentiful they could be gathered by wading near to shore in any coves or along the coast. On land moose, caribou, deer, partridge, and rabbits were to be had in plenty. The carnage endured by the moose population in one northern area of Cape Breton was so great that ships sailed farther out to sea in order to avoid the stench of carcasses rotting on the shore.

Incidents concerning bears remain a common theme in recollections of settlement days in Cape Breton. Dan Angus Beaton's story of Big Finley's coming to America contains a bear encounter at Finley's Point (*Rudha Fhionnlaidh*), Mabou Coal Mines, where Finley arrived by small boat.

*Dar a thànaig Fionnladh Mór 's an teaghlach 's dar a rànaig e air tìr anns na Coalmines ann a Ceap Breatann, cha robh fàsghadh aig' ach am bàta a tharraing astaigh far a' mhuir, air a thionndadh bhonnaibh suas 's a dhol fodha sin airson fàsghadh 's na bh'aca a chur amach.*

*'S dar a dh'éirich 'ad, bha am mathan as deaghaidh tighinn agus a' mhór-chuid a thoirt leis agus ithe. Cha robh mórán aca co dhiubh. Ach bha na bu lugha' uil' aca nuair a bha esan réidh a thoirt leis*



# Sgeul ri Aithris | The Story Telling Tradition

## BEACHD EIRMSEACH | A WITTY OBSERVATION

Told by Iain Ruairidh mac Mhicheil, Steabhain, Ruairidh 'ic Dhòmhnaill Òig nach mairean | John Rory MacNeil

Iain Dhòmhnaill, *John Dan, John Dan MacDonald*, (An Tailleir Bharra). O, bha e ainmeil geur. Bha... bha deagh... Bha 'ad uile gu léir, bha beagan dhe 'n fhaobhar a bha seo orra. Ach cha robh gin ac' suas ris an fhear seo. Chan fhaigheadh tu idir e. Bha e pòsd' aig nighean a mhuinntir na h-Intreabhal. Agus bha e 's a'... bha e air chéilidh 'san taigh, 's bha athair na h-ighne a bha pòsd' aige-san, bha e, bha e 'g innse mu dheidhinn latha a bha 'ad ris an fheur.

Bha 'ad a' cuir astaigh feur. Bha 'ad an deaghaidh tighinn dhan t-sabhal le lòd feòir, agus 'ad 'ga chuir dhan dala taobh, 's thàinig fras mhór uiste. 'S bha feur gu leòr 'na laigh' amuigh a bheireadh 'ad astaigh fhathast air a' latha chiadn' a bha sin. Bha 'fear seo, athair céile, 's e ag innse do chuideigin eil' a bha 'staigh mu dheidhinn fras mhór uiste a thàinig nuair a bha 'ad a's an t-sabhal.

Dh'innis e co-dhiubh gun dàinig a' fras uiste a bha seo 's a' feur amuigh. Agus, mar a 's tric' a chunna' tu as t-samhradh, thigeadh uiste 's bidh... dìreach mar gun gearradh tu loidhne far a stad e. (Bhiodh) tu 'gabhaill a' rathaid, chì thu, uell, talamh bog ann a' seo 's tha e tioram air an

taobh eile.

"Agus", os esan, "ghabh a' fras uiste sios a' phairce agus lean i, lean i dìreach sios far a robh, mar a chanas sinn, an fheansa-loidhne. Bha i eadar e-fhein is am bail' a bha air an taobh eile. Chum i sios ann a' siod agus cha do fhliuch e 'feur idir".

"Nach robh thu fortanach", os esan, "gu robh an fheans' ann." Ach mar gum b'e an fheans' a chumadh an t-uisde air falbh! ©

John Dan, John Dan MacDonald (*An Tailleir Bharra*). Oh, he was very sharp. They all had something of a keen edge, but none of them came up to this fellow. You couldn't stick him. He was married to a girl from McKinnon's Harbour. One time he was visiting the house and his wife's father was telling about the day when they were working at the hay.

They were putting in hay. They were after coming to the barn with a load of hay and they put it away, and a big shower of rain came down. There was a lot of hay outside to take in on that same day. This fellow, his father-in-law, was telling somebody who was visiting about the big rain shower that came down when they were in the barn.

Anyway, he described this big rain shower coming while the hay lay outside. You often see that in the summer time, a rain that comes down just like you'd cut a line to where it stopped. You could walk the road and you can see, well, wet ground here and it's dry on the other side.

"And", he said, "the shower went down the field and followed straight on what we would call the line fence between his own property and the farm on the other side of it. It kept on this course and didn't wet a bit of the grass."

"Weren't you lucky the fence was there," remarked John Dan." As though it was the fence that would keep the rain away! ©

Iain Ruairi, Mhicheil, Steabhain, Ruairidh 'ic Dhòmhnaill Òig nach mairean, An Gleann Mór. Recitation by John Rory MacNeil, Barra Glen.



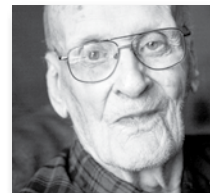
© Recorded, transcribed and translated by Seumas Watson.

## SÌTHEANAICHEAN AM PÒN NA MAISEADH | FAIRY SIGHTING AT BENACADIE POND

Told by Seumas Mhigi Shandaidh Dhòmhnaill a' Chùil | Jimmy Mickey Handi

Bha cnoc-sitheanach cros an uiste uair ann a' seo. Chan eil anisd, chuir 'ad a' rathad 'roimhe. Chan fhaca mi 'ad ariamh, ach chuala mi 'ad a' bruidhinn mu 'n deidhinn. 'S a' gheamhradh, bha cuideigin a' tighinn anall le sleigh', anuas am pòn, agus bha 'ad air an deigh: ceudan dhiubh. 'S lean 'ad am beòthach 's sleigh gu 'n dànaig 'ad dhan chnoc 's ghabh 'ad astaigh dhan chnoc: sluagh. Bha 'ad amuigh, tha mi 'creidinn, feuch an cumadh 'ad an slàinte. (Gàireachdainn) ©

One time there was a fairy mound over there across the water. It's not there now. They put a road through it. I never saw them, but I heard people talking about them. In the wintertime, this person was coming across in a sleigh, down the pond, and the fairies were on the ice: hundreds of them. They followed the horse and sleigh until they reached their mound and they went inside, the fairy host. I think that they were outside for their health. (Laughter) ©



Seumas Mhigi Shandaidh Dhòmhnaill a' Chùil, Pòn na Màiseadh. Recitation by Jimmy Mickey Handi MacNeil, Benacadie Pond.

© Recorded, transcribed and translated by Seumas Watson.

## DUAN CALLAIN | NEW YEARS RHYME

Told by Flòiri Eòghainn 'ic Dhòmhnaill 'ic Aonghais 'ic Iain ('ic) 'ic Iain 'ic Dhòmhnaill | Florence MacLellan

Oidhche Chùllan, Challain chruidh  
Thàna' mi gun ghruaim dh' ur taigh  
Thuir am bodach 's a' chòrn'  
Nach bu chòir mo leigeil astaigh  
Thuir a' chailleach a b' fheàrr na 'n t-òr  
Gum bu chòir mo leigeil astaigh  
Airson aon mhìrean a bha bhuam  
Criomag chruidh 's drama leis. ©

On a harsh New Year's night,  
I came cheerfully to your house.  
The curmudgeon in the corner said,  
I shouldn't be let in.  
Said the old lady more worthy than gold,  
That I should be let in,  
For the one piece that I wanted:  
A hard morsel and a dram with it. ©

Flòiri Eòghainn 'ic Dhòmhnaill 'ic Aonghais 'ic Iain ('ic) 'ic Iain 'ic Dhòmhnaill. Recitation by Florence MacLellan, Broad Cove.

© Recorded by Seumas Watson and Frances MacEachen



# ˘SAN TAIGH CHÉILIDH | IN THE CÉILIDH HOUSE MO CHAILIN DONN | MY BROWN HAired LASS



Made up of nonsense verses, this unusual song was recorded from the singing of Collie MacIntosh (*Colaidh Angain Dhòmhnaill a' Chùbair*), Valley Mills, Inverness County. Collie's humble home was a well-known céilidh house, where folks from all walks of life gathered for conversation, Gaelic singing, music and a good cup of tea. Collie Angain can be heard singing this song, with some variation in the verse order, on *Sruth nan Gàidheal*:

<http://gaelstream.stfx.ca/greenstone/collect/capebret/index/assoc/HASH391b/90090cbb.dir/GF255i08.mp3>

*Pictured on the left is Collie MacIntosh and Dr. John Shaw singing on stage at Highland Village Day, 1980s.*

© Recorded, transcribed and translated by Seumas Watson.

## Mo Chailin Donn

O hì ri rinn o rò ho-ho gù  
Hì ri ho rò mo chailin donn  
O hì ri rinn o rò ho-ho gù

O hì ri rinn o rò ho-ho gù  
Hì ri ho rò mo chailin donn  
O hì ri rinn o rò ho-ho gù

1. (˘S e) turas mo luaidh thug Alastair bhuam  
Nuair thug e mo chuallach (?) chaileag leis

1. Alastair stole my love's affection when he went off  
with my (?) girl.

2. (Gur) mis' tha fo ghruaim bho mhadainn Di luain  
On thàna' mi luath dhan bhaile seo

2. I've been in poor cheer since I quickly arrived at  
this village.

3. (Tha) an t-earrach a' fàs `s a' sgadan a' snàmh  
Gun téid sinn gun dàil le barrailean

3. Spring is coming on and the herring are schooling.  
We'll go right away with barrels.

4. Tha i cho fine amacha `san oidhch'  
`S chan fhaiceadh ri soills' na gealaich i.

4. It's so fine out in the night air. She couldn't be seen  
by the light of the moon.

5. Bha i cho fann nuair labhradh i cainnt  
Gun fhiacal `na ceann ach staragan

5. She was so faint of voice when she spoke, with  
nothing but nubs of teeth in mouth.

6. Casan cho caol ri slatagan fraoch  
`S mi seasamh ri taobh mo leannain-sa

6. Her legs were as narrow as heather fronds, as I  
stand beside my sweetheart.

7. Bu mhinig bha spòrs (?) `s fion air a' bhòrd  
Bhite `ga òl le glaineachan.

7. There was often merriment (?) and wine on the  
table. It used to be drunk from glasses.

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## AN TELEGRAPGH | BEAM ME UP!

MacTalla - Vol.3 July 7, 1894

Thuirtean bean Ghàidhealach bho cheann  
ghoirid ri duine àraidh air am bheil  
sinn eòlach, gu'n cuala ise aig na gillean  
a thainig á Gallabh gu `n robh innleachd  
ùr aca an dràs air son daoine, a thoirt a  
dh'America; nach bitheadh dad aca ach  
dol `nan seasamh air bàrr slàit mhóir  
iaruinn agus gu'm bitheadh iad a null air  
a' "helegra" nan ceò, ann am prioba na  
sùla. Thuirtean eile a bha `s an éisdeachd  
gu'm b' fheàrr leithe fhéin dol a null air

té dheth na seann soithichean, na `n  
doigh ùr sin; air eagal `s nach rachadh  
aice air i fhein a chruinneachadh a rith-  
isd thall.

A Highland woman remarked lately  
to a fellow we know, that she heard  
from Galloway lads that there was now  
a new machine for transporting folk  
over to America. All they had to do was  
stand on top of a big iron pole and in the

blink of an eye, they would be over on  
the "helegra" in the form of smoke.

Another woman, who was listening,  
said she would prefer to cross over on  
one of the old ships than use that new  
way; afraid that she wouldn't be able to  
put herself back together again on the  
other side.

*Transcribed and translated by Seumas Watson.*

# Naomh Eòs is Deagh Bhiadh

## MARAG GHEAL | HOW WE MADE MARAGAN

Catriona ni'n Iomhair Mhìcheil 'an Shaoir

© Photo by Ryan MacDonald.



'Sann ann an Eilean na Nollaig a rugadh mise. Rugadh mi 's dh'fhuirich mi a' seo. Mo màthair, bha i à Glascho (Eilean Cheap Breatainn). Bha tè dha mo sheanmhairean on a' Bhidse Mhór 's bha 'n téile á Baghasdail (Eilean Cheap Breatainn). Cloinn Níll a bh'annam mun do phòs mi agus bha m'athair John Edward Mhìcheil Iain Shaoir. Iain Saor, feumaidh gur e a' cheud fhear a thànaig anall. ('S e) Gàidhlig a bh'againn gu 'n do start sinn 's a' sgoil.

Bhathas a' deanamh nam maragan air mionnach a' bheòthaich: beòthach cruaidh, mart. Geir a bha 'm broinn a' bheòthaich, bhathas 'ga gléidheadh 's an uair sin min-choirce 's uinneanan 's bhathas 'gan goil

sin 's bhathas na maragan 'gan deanamh. Mun dèante sin, dh'fheumte 'dhol ann dhan fhuaran a ghlanadh mionnach a' bheòthaich. An t-uisge fuar 'ga dhoirtheadh 's na bucaidean 's glanadh a' mhionnach mar sin. Obair fhuar a bh'ann, anull toiseach a' gheamhraidh 's mar sin, air a bhiodh an t-side fuar. Cha robh uisg' aig duine 'staigh.

Cha bhitheadh 'ad 'gan tiormachadh idir (na caolain), dìreach 'gan tionnadh amach. Bha 'ad an uair sin a' cuir na min-choirce 's a' gheir 's a chuile sian am broinn sin: min-choirce, geir a' bheòthaich, uinneanan 's salann 's piobar. Cha robh cus dhan chòrr aca, ach salann 's piobar. An dràs'd', tha *steak spice* dhan a chuile seòrs' ac' airson blas a chuir oirre. 🍴

### How We Made Maragan

I was born in Christmas Island. I was born here and I stayed here. My mother was from Glasgow (near Big Beach). One of my grandmothers was from Boisdale (Cape Breton). The other one was from Big Beach. I was a MacNeil before I was married. My father was John Edward son of Michael son of John the Carpenter. John the Carpenter must have been the first one to come across. We had Gaelic until we went to school.

The maragan were made from the animal's intestine: beef animal, a cow. The

tallow from inside the cow was saved and then oatmeal and onions were boiled and the *maragan* were made.

Before that would be done, it was necessary to go to the spring to wash the cow's intestine. Cold water was poured into a bucket and that's how the intestines were cleaned. It was cold work around the first of winter, when the weather was chilly. People didn't have running water in the house.

The casings weren't dried at all. They were just turned inside out. Then they put in the oatmeal and tallow and everything else inside that: oatmeal, tallow, onions, salt and pepper. That's about all they had. Now there's *steak spice* of every kind to add taste to the marag. 🍴

Catriona NicNill, Eilean na Nollaig. Told by Catherine MacNeil, Christmas Island.

© Recorded, transcribed and translated by Seumas Watson.

### Marag Gheal

- 1 chupa min-choirce
- 1/2 chupa do gheir
- 3/4 cupa do dh'ùineannan air an caobadh
- 1 spàn mhór do shalann
- 1 spàn bheag do phìobar
- 1 spàn bheag do spìosradh steige

Bioraich le snathad gus nach sgàin i. Goil a' mharag fad uair gus a deanamh seasmhach.

### White Pudding

- 1 cup oatmeal
- 1/2 cup Suet
- 3/4 Chopped oinons
- 1 tbsp. Salt
- 1 tsp. Pepper
- 1 tsp. steak spice

Pierce the casing with a needle to prevent it from bursting. Boil the pudding for 1 hour until firm.



During Stòras a' Bhaile, Catherine shows a group of participants how to make Maragan.



# Air Bràigh Bhaile | On the Farm

## CAORAICH SHOIGHE | SOAY SHEEP



The Highland Village farm program features a rare Scottish sheep breed, with genetic origins in the Stone Age. Pure-bred Soay sheep (*caoraich shoighe*) are on annual loan from the Matheson family of St. Andrews, Antigonish, who provide a small flock of these ancient sheep each summer for viewing by the visiting public. As a living exhibit of domestic animals indigenous to Gaelic Scotland during the eighteenth-century, they join the Village's Highland cattle in grazing near the blackhouse (*taigh dubh*), the usual dwelling of Highlanders before emigration.

Soay sheep take their name from the Isle of Soay, an outlier from St. Kilda, the most westerly island of the Hebrides. The word Soay is derived from Old Norse and means Sheep Island. It is thought possible that the sheep were present on Soay over a thousand years ago, when Scandinavian Vikings were passing by to engage Scotland's western seaboard. The breed remains typical of Neolithic sheep brought to the British Isles by early people before the birth of Christ. It is believed that their forbears had spread throughout Europe during the Bronze Age. Skeletons of sheep predating Roman times strongly resemble the bone structure of the modern Soays,



which have continued to preserve their characteristics in a remote and isolated setting.

The Soays are small in size. Their legs are short and fleeces usually brown in colour. A fall ram will weigh about 80 pounds and the ewes around 55 pounds, after a summer's grazing. Soay sheep wool is of an excellent quality and much in demand by hand spinners from around the world. Rather than being sheared, the Soay's wool falls easily from its springtime coat and is collected by plucking, or gathered from bushes and fences.

The Highland stock of sheep, however, was not utilitarian just as a source of wool for domestic cloth. Soay sheep were also prized for their dairy products. As noted in late eighteenth century verses composed by Duncan Ban MacIntyre (*Dunnchadh Bàn*) in *Òran do Chaora* (Song for a Sheep):

*'S nuair a thigeadh mìos roimh  
Bhealtainn  
B' fheàrrde mi na bh' aice bainne.*

*Chumadh i rium gruth is uachdar  
Air fhuairead `s gum biodh and t-earrach*

When the month before May arrived, I  
was the better for her milk.

She would keep me in supply of curds  
and cream, however cold the spring.

As living links to Scotland's rural past,  
Soay sheep illuminate the nature and  
practice of animal husbandry prior to  
Highlanders immigration to Nova Scotia.



*Seumas Watson is the Highland Village's Manager  
of Interpretation.*

Are you looking for your  
Cape Breton ancestors?



Sinnsearachd

*Có ris a tha do dhàimh?*  
Who are your relatives?

We can help. Roots Cape Breton is a research service for those in search of their connection to Cape Breton. With our knowledge of sources and local history plus our research library, we have information to cover most of the Island. Fill in your details on our research form, click submit and we will reply with our estimate.

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# Calum mac Dhòmhnaill Aonghais `ic Iain `ic Aonghais `ic Eòin Maxie Dan Angus MacNeil



Nova Scotia witnessed the passing of another of its great Gaelic heroes with the death of Maxie Dan Angus MacNeil (*Calum mac Dhòmhnaill Aonghais `ic Iain `ic Aonghais `ic Eòin*), February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

On a personal note, my own relationship with Maxie went back to the late seventies, when, as a then young man, I began attending Gaelic cultural events throughout Cape Breton Island, particularly milling frolics. More often than not, Maxie, and others of the Iona Gaelic Singers, would be present, making major contributions to the songs being sung – if not leading the charge.

I got to know him better when, from his home in Highland Hill, Victoria County, Maxie would visit at nearby River Denys, Inverness County, usually accompanied by the late John Rory MacNeil (*Iain Ruairidh Mhìcheil Steabhain*), another of the Iona Gaelic Singers. Afternoons there were spent in conversation and song at the house of my neighbour Collie MacIntosh (*Collaidh Angain Dhòmhnaill a' Chùbair*), a well-known local singer, originally from *Beinn nan Comhachag* (West Bay).

In 1984, Maxie, John Rory and Roddy John Dan MacNeil (*Ruairidh Iain Dhòmhnaill*), all contributors to Highland Village from its early days, came to my house with a proposal that I go to work at the Village to set up Gaelic language programming for the museum and the surrounding community. Since then there have been many changes at the Highland Village, now *Baile nan Gàidheal*, in the surrounding region and across the Nova Scotia *Gàidhealtachd*.

As a tradition bearer, Maxie was a humble star in the community at large. Among his enduring qualities were his generosity, loyalty, cultural skills and keen interest in the Gaels' stories, customs and songs. A very few of the projects and events to which he made significant contributions are mentioned here: Highland Village Pioneer Day, two weeks of performance at Vancouver Expo '86, where he assisted in bringing Cape Breton Gaelic singing to world audiences with the Gaelic Cape Breton Show, collaborating with daughter Susan in compiling a collection of Iona area Gaelic songs and making recordings for the School of Scottish Studies over two occasions. His archival work for the Highland Village included a key role in the recording projects *Nòs is Fonn* (Customs and Songs) and *Mar Bu Nòs bho Shean* (Customary of Old). Socially active in encouraging all to maintain the Gaels' cultural heritage, Maxie served as a mentor in the *Eilean nan Òg* (Island of Youth) program, sponsored by Highland Village and *Am Bràighe* magazine, and was a leading figure in organizing the now defunct *Féis nan Òran* (Song Festival) at Highland Village. His own initiatives have been noteworthy as well, including most recently before his death 'The Wit, Humour and Ingenuity of the Cape Breton Gael', a DVD compilation of humorous anecdotes drawn from memories of characters known in Central Cape Breton.

Perhaps, it could be said that Maxie's most prominent passion was for the milling table and Cape Breton's song tradition. From the Christmas Island *Féis* annual milling frolic, to small song events throughout Cape Breton and mainland Nova Scotia, reminiscences of Maxie Dan Angus will continue as long as the blanket is beat and the songs are sung. He will be much missed, as he joins others of the Iona Gaelic Singers who passed before him, some of whom are named here: John Rory *Mhìcheil Steabhain*, *Peadar mac Jack Pheadair*, *Niall Iain mac Ruairidh `ac Nill `ic Eòghainn*, *John Dan Nill mac na Bannraich*. No doubt still singing, Maxie Dan Angus will find himself in the good company of old friends. *Ar ceud taing dha `s Dia `ga bheannachadh.* © Seumas Watson



*The Iona Gaelic Singers (L-R): Mickey J.H. MacNeil, Maxie MacNeil, Beth MacNeil, Jamie MacNeil, Peter Jack MacLean, Rod C. MacNeil & John Gillis.*



# Cumha Do Mhìcheal Murbhaidh

A favorite of Maxie's, the air for this lament is that of *Och, och mar tha mi `s mi `nam ònar*. The composer was Donald MacNeil of Red Point, Victoria County, "*Fear dhe na Bens a mhuinntir a' Rubha Dheirg*." (One of the Bens from Red Point). The song was made on the occasion of the death of Michael Murphy, a close friend of the bard's from the McKinnon's Harbour area. Its source is The Highland Village Song Collection, a manuscript of Gaelic songs from the Iona area compiled by Susan (MacNeil) MacFarlane, Maxie's daughter, in 1985.

## Chorus

Och, och mar tha mi, `s mi `nam ònar,  
Siubhal chaoil air an robh mi eòlach;  
S ochain a Rìgh gur e `m bàs chuir dhìth orm,  
An caraid dileas air a robh mi eòlach.

Och, och my sad state.  
I'm alone travelling about familiar harbours  
Oh god, death has left me with this want  
for the loyal friend I knew so well.

1. Air Là na Bliadhn' Uire, cha mhór mo shunnd ris,  
Nuair tric bhiodh sunnd orm agus sòlas,  
A' dol a choimhead air com na h-uaisle  
An diugh do `n uaigh a' dol uam a chòmhnaidh.
2. A' rubha caol air am bu bhòidhche craobhan  
Dh'innseadh a' saoghal a bh'againn còmhla,  
`S ann leams' a b' fheàrr sin gum b'e bu bhuaine  
No ùir na h-uaghach a dhol `g a chòmhdach.
3. `S e sin an t-àite thug dhomhsa cuimhneachan  
Chuireadh snaoim air cridhe brònach,  
Gun flath far `m b'abhaist ceòl is gàir'a bhi,  
Gur fuar, fàsach tha `n dachaidd bhòidheach.
4. B'e sin an cridh' anns nach robh `n fhoill  
`S a dheanadh coimhneas ris an deòrach,  
Cha mhór bhiodh dhìth air am biadh no `n aodach  
An neach a thaobh thu, ged bha thu `d ònrachd.

There is little cheer for me on New Year's Day  
when I was often merry.  
I am going to see the fine man's corpse  
who goes today to dwell in the grave.

The point of land covered with the most handsome  
trees defines the world we shared.  
I would prefer that most enduring than  
the dirt of the grave to cover him.

That was the place that made me  
remember and pained a saddened heart.  
Without a champion, where there once was music  
and laughter. The lovely home is cold and deserted.

That was the honest heart who would console  
the tearful. He would only want for food and  
clothing and the presence of company, though  
you lived alone.



Maxie (left), one of the Iona Gaelic Singers, on stage at Highland Village Day for a Milling frolic.



Gaelic singers from around Cape Breton Island sharing songs during a Highland Village Day concert.



Peter Jack MacLean and Maxie MacNeil speaking with CBC's Wendy Bergfeldt at a special event for the Iona Gaelic Singers.



Mickey J.H. MacNeil, Peter Jack MacLean and Maxie MacNeil sharing stories and songs in the MacDonald House.

# Dèante le Làimh | Handmade

## Tartan: Its History and Transformation

### Part Three of Three

The historical disdain for the Highland way of life had turned into a romanticized admiration by the early 1800s. Sir Walter Scott was instrumental in this revised view. His poems and novels (such as *Rob Roy* and *Waverley*) were best sellers throughout Britain and the rest of Europe. He was an advocate of a pre-Jacobite rebellion Scotland, where everyone knew their place and the old Highland culture was celebrated. He saw tartan as emblematic of this idealized past.

One of Scott's admirers was the Regent Prince George. When he became King George IV in 1821 and wanted to visit Edinburgh, Scott was called upon to make the arrangements. What King George presumably hoped to see was his romantic vision of the Highlander from Scott's novels personified.

Scott, in turn, called upon clan chiefs to put on a display of tartan-clad Highlanders, complete with kilts, weaponry and all the pageantry they could muster. Few Highlanders of the time ordinarily wore a kilt, but they all played along in the fantasy as well as they could. As Hugh Cheape states in *Tartan*: "The chiefs vied with each other over the splendours of their retinues, and memories were searched for the setts and colours of a tartan tradition which seemed to have disappeared."

Patterns were decided upon and the tartan manufacturers, such as Wilsons, were hard pressed to keep up with demand for tartan ordered for the occasion. Cloth was sold as soon as it came off the loom.

The result was an extravagant display of tartan at ceremonial parades, balls, and the theatre. King George himself—clad in tartan from head to toe—took part in a magnificent procession from Holyrood to Edinburgh Castle, attended by clan chiefs and their retinues. It was a theatrical display and critics complained that all of Scotland had been turned into a nation of Highlanders and tartan.

With George IV's visit, such a powerful fantasy had been created that the popularity of tartan had increased even more than before. Now it was impossible for weaving firms to keep up with the demand. The *Stirling Journal* reported that "...All the persons formerly engaged in the weaving of muslins in this quarter have commenced the weaving of tartan in consequence of its affording a better return for the labour."

Wilson Brothers built a new weaving mill called 'The Royal George', and sold tartans with pattern names like 'Sir Walter Scott' and 'King George the Fourth'. A

pattern formerly known as 'Regent' was no longer relevant with the Prince Regent becoming George IV, so it was withdrawn, eventually to resurface as one of the MacLaren tartan setts.

The abundance of patterns appearing now was bewildering to serious scholars. Sir Thomas Dick Lauder remarked to Sir Walter Scott: "In these times of rage for tartans...the most uncouth coats of many colours are every day invented, manufactured, christened after particular names and worn as genuine...At present, a woeeful want of knowledge in the subject prevails. Some of the clans are at this moment ignorantly disputing for the right to the same tartans, which in fact belong to none of them, but are merely modern inventions for clothing Regimental Highlanders. Hardly does one of the clans now wear its tartan with its legitimate setts."

Researchers trying to explain the history of tartan wrote books that were greeted enthusiastically by the public, but were sometimes more imaginative than accurate. One attempt to assign a clan identity to specific patterns was made by the 'Sobieski Stuart' brothers in 1842 in their *Vestiarium Scoticum*. These brothers, John and Charles Hay Allan, claimed to be the long-lost grandsons of Bonnie Prince Charlie.

They became known as the 'Sobieski Stuarts' and based their claim as to the origins of the patterns on the discovery of sixteenth-century manuscripts which gave a medieval origin to clan tartans. Although the work seemed plausible enough, it was discredited by some scholars, as well as by Sir Walter Scott who was able to personally examine a specimen of the manuscripts and declared it an imitation.

While the Sobieski Stuart controversy kept interest high in the history of tartans, nothing could promote the popularity of the tartan like the endorsement of royalty. Queen Victoria's first visit to the Highlands was in 1842, where she was greeted in tartan-clad splendour by the Earl of Breadalbane and his retinue of Highlanders at Taymouth Castle. Kilts, tartans and bagpipes were everywhere and she recorded in her journal that day "...It seemed as if a great chieftain in olden feudal times was receiving his sovereign. It was princely and romantic." She was perhaps not aware that the expense of this display would eventually lead to the financial ruin of the Earl.

Queen Victoria's remote family connection to the Royal House of Stewart, and Bonnie Prince Charlie's story, added to her

fascination with the Highlands. She and Prince Albert were able to purchase their own piece of the Highlands when they acquired Balmoral Castle. The interior was decorated in tartan. Royal Stewart in red, Hunting Stewart in green, and Dress Stewart in white were favourites, as well as a pattern personally designed by Prince Albert in marled grey shades.

By now tartan, it could be argued, was indeed more costume than the ordinary dress it had once been. It was increasingly popular as high fashion for men, women and children, both at home and abroad. The textile industry of course geared up to accommodate the demand. Even more variations of patterns were developed, such as 'hunting' and 'dress' setts. By the mid-1800s the colours became more vibrant as synthetic aniline dyes were developed.

The opening up of the Highlands to new railways and shipping routes promoted a tourist industry by the 1840s. Now there was even a demand for souvenirs. No longer was tartan necessarily woven. Tartan patterns were appearing everywhere—on souvenirs and biscuit tins, tea caddies, snuff boxes, etc. Commercial 'Highlandism' was thriving.

But where was the ordinary Highlander in all this? This was the period of romantic notions by outsiders of the 'highland past' and of tartan as high fashion for the affluent. Tartan clothing was all around, but not on the backs of the ordinary Highlander. Some ex-military men might be wearing the kilt — it was a sign of prestige — but poverty would exclude most of the population from anything but the most basic clothing. The Highlander of the past, roaming the hills in his plaid, was no longer a reality.

The Highlands were undergoing economic upheaval throughout the end of the eighteenth century and much of the nineteenth century. Many Highland estates became mortgaged and the owners forced to sell. By the first half of the nineteenth century, it is estimated that more than two-thirds of Highland estates had been sold to new owners, many of whom were Englishmen or Lowlanders.

By the early 1800s, the old clan loyalties were gone, along with the traditional agrarian economy. The old economy had been fragile at best. Now factors such as changes in land tenure, high rents, and the collapse of the herring and kelp industries made life more desperate for the ordinary Gael. This, along with the continued importation of new breeds of sheep by land-





lords eager to 'clear' their tenants to make way for higher profits, contributed to the emigration of thousands seeking a new life in Nova Scotia. 20,000 to 30,000 Highlanders came to Cape Breton alone, from the 1820s to the 1840s.

We know from contemporary accounts of the Highlanders' early years in Nova Scotia that people were wearing mostly 'English' style clothing. It was usually woven woolen homespun of one colour, or with a little patterning, often stripes. There were few kilts and plaids were seldom seen. If they were, they were considered valuable, as a well-woven plaid took great skill. Still, however, there would be no mention of a 'clan' tartan.

In fact, more than one account describes

Highland emigrants as arriving with little clothing at all. Stephen Hornsby, in *19th Century Cape Breton*, quotes an 1833 government petition describing a group of emigrants arriving "destitute of money or clothing" to the St. Patrick's Channel area of Cape Breton in 1829.

So while the rest of the world seemed to be celebrating tartan and the Highland past, the new arrivals were struggling to survive. Tartan was far from their minds. Most settlers of course were able to create their own clothing from their own looms, with wool from their own sheep and often linen from their own flax. Petticoats, dresses, trousers, shirts, jackets, shawls and countless other items were woven and tailored. It was an unending task—mostly for women—and very little variation in pattern was seen in the early years—most descriptions of clothing of the time were simply 'homespun' until the period of settlement was over.

In time, the old skills of dyeing were revived and adapted to the new environment, adding new colours. Weaving plain homespun remained a constant until the 1930s or so, but new patterns were also beginning to appear. Plaids were woven, of course. They remained a popular design. But they had lost the prominence and significance they had enjoyed as 'tartan' in the romanticized past of the Highlands left behind. ©

*This is the third and final piece of Tartan: Its History and Transformation. To see the previous articles and find past issues of An Rubha visit: [www.highlandvillage.ca](http://www.highlandvillage.ca).*

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## Mar Chuimhneachan

### A LOSS OF ONE OF THE GREAT CAPE BRETON FIDDLERS - RAYMOND ELLIS

Raymond Ellis was the son of the late John William and Mary Flora (Northen) Ellis, of Little Narrows. Highly influenced by members of his family, including his grandfather, Charlie Northen, and his uncle, Cosmos Northen, Raymond began to play the fiddle around age 8 or 9. Although he first learned to play by ear, Raymond later learned to read music and was noted as a prolific composer. His influences included early recordings of legendary fiddlers, such as Winston Fitzgerald, in addition to the music of local dance players, including John Y. Gillis. One of his first appearances playing the fiddle was at a music event in Baddeck, where he entered a competition — there were three strings on the fiddle, and he won first prize.

Raymond enjoyed a steady career playing for dances, concerts and ceilidhs

around Cape Breton Island, as well as teaching. He performed as far west as Ontario, where he was a regular at the Down East Dances at Liberty Hall, and down into 'the Boston States' to play at such well-known establishments as the Canadian American Club. He recorded two albums including 'Dedicated to Mom and Dad' (1994) and 'More Like Me!' (1999), and published a collection of his own tunes (2008).

Raymond passed away on November 18, 2015. He was known for his impeccable timing as a dance player, choice tunes and ease with which he played them. His importance and legacy within the Cape Breton fiddling tradition will carry on. ©

*Contributed by Anita MacDonald. Raymond was a grand uncle and mentor to Anita, who is now a well known Cape Breton fiddler.*



*A young Anita MacDonald stepdancing to tunes by Raymond Ellis.*

# MAG-TALLA

An Damhair 10, 1894

**A**nns an àm a chaidh, bha seana-ghobhar ann aig an robh seachdnar ghobhar òga agus ghràdhich si iad mar is abhaist do mhàthair a pàisdean a ghràdhachadh. Là a bh'ann bha i deònach dol do'n choille agus lòn a sholaradh agus ghairm i na seachdnar dha h-ionnsuidh 's thuirt i, "Tha mis' a' dol a mach do' n choille; thoribh fainear nach toir am madadh-alluidh an car asaibh. Na 'n tigeadh e steach mar seo, is cinnteach gun ith e sibhs' eadar bhian 's chalg. Bi an glàmair ag atharrachadh a choslaig gu tric, ach air a chasan dubha agus air a ghuth gharbh, bi sibh 'ga aithnichinn.

Dh' éigh iad mar aon, "Coma leibh, bheir sinn an làn-aire, cha ruig sibh a leas smuain a ghabhail oirnn." An sin thug i oirre, a' meilich agus a' deanamh sòlas di féin air an rathad.

Cha b' fhad' a bha i air falbh, nuair thàinig neacheiginn do 'n dorus 's a bhuail e air agus thuirt e, "Fosglaidh a chloinn. Is mis' ur màthair agus thug mi leam rudeigin air ur son.

Ach dh'aithnich na seachdnar, air a ghuth garbh, gur e am madadh-alluidh a bh'ann, agus dh'éigh iad, "Chan fhosgail, cha tu ar màthair idir. Tha aig ar màthair guth glan, binn, agus tha do ghuth-sa garbh. Is tu' am madadh-alluidh."

Dh'imich am madadh-alluidh dh'ionnsuidh a' mharsanta agus cheannaich e dha fhéin meall mór de chailce gheal. Dh'ith e

sin agus rinn se a ghuth binn. Thàinig se a rithisd agus bhuail e aig an dorus agus thuirt e, "Fosglaidh a chloinn ionmhuinn. 'S i ur màthair a th'ann agus thug i leatha rudeigin do gach gin agaibh. Ach leig am madadh-alluidh a chas 's an uinneig, chunnaic na seachdnar seo 's dh' éigh iad, "Chan fhosgail, chan eil aig ar màthair-ne cas cho dubh ri sin. Is tus' am madadh-alluidh."

Dh'fhalbh am madadh-alluidh 'na dheann gu ruige fuineadair 's thuirt e, "Tha mi an déidh mo chas a ghoirteachadh. Cuir taois air an sin." Ghabh e 'na dheann ruith gu ruige muillear 's thuirt e, "Cuir falluid de 'n mhìn bhàin air mo chas." Ach shaoil leis a'mhuillear gun robh am madadh-alluidh air tì neacheiginn a mhealladh agus chaidh e an imcheist. Ach labhair am madadh-alluidh "Mara cuir, tha mi 'gealltainn gun ith mi thu." Ghabh am muillear an t-eagal agus rinn e mar a dh'iarr e air. Nach neònach na daoine?

Anis, an treas uair, thàinig am madadh-alluidh do 'n dorus, bhuail se, agus thuirt e, "Fosglaidh a Chloinn tha ur màthair ghràdhach air teachd dhachaidh às a' choille, agus tha aice rud math eigin airson gach aon agaibh. Ach dh'éigh na seachdnar còmhla, "Leig fhaicinn dhuinn do chasan an toiseach chum 's gum bi fios da rìreadh againn gum bheil ar màthair gu dearb ann."

Leig am madadh-alluidh a chas 's an uinneig agus an uair a chunnaic iad gu robh i bàin, chreid iad gun robh gach nì gu ceart, agus dh'fhosgail iad an dorus. Ach am fear a thàinig asteach, b'e am madadh-alluidh e. Dh'oilltich iad roimhe, agus shònruich gach aon àite-falaich dha fhéin. Ghabh fear dhiubh fo'n bhord, fear eile anns an leabaidh, an treas fear anns an àmhuinn, an ceathramh anns a' chùilidh, an còigeamh anns an amraidh, an siathamh fo an t-soitheach fhùraichean, agus an seachdamh ann am bolg anns an uaireadair mhòr. Ach cha deach leò, saor o 'n fhear óg anns an uaireadair. Fhuair am madadh-alluidh amach iad uile, agus rinn e an gnothach orra.

An déidh dha a chìocras a shàsachadh, thriall e mach do 'n mhiadan agus leig se glag dha fhéin fo chraoibh mhóir a bha siud, agus chaidh e 'na chadal.

Cha b'fhad an déidh sin nuair thàinig an seana-ghobhar dhachaidh. Ach ciod e an nì seo a bha i gu bhi 'faicinn ann: an dorus air fhosgladh, am bòrd agus na cathraichean air an tilgel bun os cionn, an soitheach fhùraichean 'na laidhe 'na spealgan, agus

aodaich 's clusagan na leapa air an tilgeadh air an ùrlar.

Rannsaich i an taigh a' sireadh a cuid leanaban 's cha d' fhuair i iad. Ghairm i air ainm orra, 's cha d'thug neach feairt gus an d'thainig i air ainm an fhir a b'òige. An sin fhreagair guth mìn, ciùin. "A mhàthair, tha mi ann am broinn an uaireadair."

Tharruing i amach e agus dh'innis e dhi mar thachair; gun d' thàinig am madadh-alluidh agus gun robh càch air an slugadh agus cha saoil sibh mar a ghulil 's mar a chaidh i, a' caoineadh a cuid cloinne.

Mu dheireadh, chaidh i mach agus lean am fear òg i. Nuair a ràinig i am miadan, bha am madadh-alluidh an sin 'na laidh fo 'n chraoibh 'na chadal fathast. Dh' amhairc i gu geur air o gach uile taobh agus chunnaic i gun robh rudeigin a' càrachadh agus a' tionndadh 'na bhroinn. "A chiall," ars' is' "mo chlann bhochd a bha mar ghriem-chubhaig aig an uile-bheist. Am faod e bhi gu bheil iad beò 'na mhao-dail fathast."

B'éiginn do 'n ghobhar òg an taigh a ruigsinn agus sgian, snathad 's snàth a thoirt leis; nì a rinn e 'na h-uile chabhag.

An sin gheàrr a mhàthair fosgailt brù an uile-bhéist, agus mus gann a rinn i an dàrna srac, chuir fear de na gobhair òga a cheann amach troimh 'n tòll, agus mar a gheàrr i air adhart, thàinig fear amach as déidh fir gus an robh iad uile deas. Agus có ach iadsan a bha toilchte a bhi beò a rithisd.

Chaidh iad air mhìre 's ag iomairt agus a' ruaig a chéile, ach thubhairt am màthair, "Trobhadaibh fòs, thoiribh leibh clachan mòra, agus lionaidh sinn brù an fhir seo, mun dùisg e." Shlaod iad na clachan leò, agus chuir siad asteach 'na bhroinn iad, a liuthad 's a b'urrainn iad a chur ann agus dh'fhuaigheil iad ri chéile a rithisd e, cho sgiobalta 's nach d'fhairich e dad 's nach do chàraich se idir.

Nuair a mhosgail am madadh-alluidh, bha pathadh cho mór air 's gun robh e deònach dol do 'n fhuaran agus deoch fhaighinn às. Agus an àm éirigh dha, thòisich nan clachan air braoidhleach air a chéile 's thuirt e, "Ciod e an nì seo a thachair dhomh? Na gobhair òga a shaoil mi a bhi 'na mo bhroinn, tha iad cho cruaidh 's cho trom ri clachan mòra."

Agus air ruigsinn an fhuaran dha, agus air cromadh os cionn an uisge dha chum deoch a ghabhail, thug tromadas nan clach air tuiteam asteach an comhair a chinn agus chaidh a bhàthadh gu muldach.







An uair a chunnaic na gobhair òga seo, thàinig iad `nan ruith `s `nan ruaig a'leum-raich, a' dannsa agus a seinn, "Chaochail am malladh-alluidh. Chaochail am madadh-alluidh."

Sgeul Gearmailteach air eadar-thean-gachadh le Gall-Ghàidheal. 🍷

Translation  
October 10, 1894

**L**ong ago there was an old she-goat that had seven kids and she loved them as a mother would love her children. One day she wanted to go to the forest for food. She called the seven to her and said, "I'm going out to the woods, watch that the wolf doesn't deceive you if he comes around here. It's certain he will eat every bit of you. The glutton will often change his appearance, but you will recognize him by his black feet and rough voice."

All in one voice, they called to her not to be concerned saying, "We'll be fully watchful and you needn't be worried about us." She then continued on, bleating and making herself happy on her way.

It wasn't long after she left, when someone came knocking at the door and said, "Open up children! It's your mother and I have something for all of you."

But the seven recognized the wolf by his course voice and said, "We won't at all. You're not our mother. Our mother has a soft, sweet voice and yours is harsh. You are the wolf."

The wolf went to the storekeeper and

he bought a great lump of white chalk. He ate that and it sweetened and smoothed his voice. He returned and struck the door saying, "Open up darling children! It's your mother and she has brought something for each of you."

But the wolf put his feet on the window. The seven kids saw this and said, "We won't. Our mother doesn't have feet that black. You are the wolf."

The wolf sped away to the baker and said, "I have hurt my feet. Put dough on them." And he ran to the miller and said, "Put white meal on my feet." But the miller thought that the wolf was going to trick someone and he was perplexed. But the wolf said, "If you don't, I promise that I'll eat you."

The miller did as he was asked. Aren't people strange?

Now, the third time the wolf came to the door, he knocked and said, "Open up children! Your beloved mother has returned home from the forest and she has something for you all."

But the seven young goats called out together, "Let us see your feet first so that we can be sure that our mother is indeed there."

The wolf put his paws on the window. When they saw that they were white, they thought everything was all right and they opened the door. But who came in but the wolf.

They were terrified and each went to their chosen hiding place. One went under the table, another one in the bed, the third in the oven, the fourth in the corner, the fifth in the cupboard, the sixth in the flowerpot and the seventh inside the grandfather clock. Except for the one in the big clock, the rest were captured and the wolf found them all and got the best of them.

After satisfying his hunger, he traveled out to the meadow and made a place for himself under a big tree and fell asleep.

Not long after that, the old goat arrived home. But what did she see before her, the door open, the table and chairs tossed upside down, the flowerpot laying in pieces and the pillows and sheets thrown on the floor?

She searched the house looking for her children and failed to find them, until she came to the name of the youngest. Then answered a small, quiet voice, "Mother, I'm inside the clock."

She pulled him out and he told her what had happened, how the wolf came in and the rest were swallowed down. You wouldn't believe how the old goat cried and wept and lamented her children.

At last she went outside and the young goat followed her. When she got to the meadow, the wolf was still asleep under the tree. She examined him from every side and saw there was something moving and turning in his stomach. "Goodness," she said, "my poor children that were the monster's early victuals, could it be that they still live in his paunch?" The young goat then had to return home to bring back with him a knife, a needle and thread, which he did with great haste.

His mother then cut open the wolf and she had hardly made the first cut when one of the young goats put his head out through the hole, and as she continued cutting one after another appeared until they were all present. Weren't they the ones happy to back in the land of the living?

They went about playing and chasing each other, but their mother said, "Come along now, get some big stones and we will fill this fellows stomach before he wakes." They dragged along the big rocks and filled his stomach with as many as could be put in and sewed him back up again so deftly that he didn't move, or feel a thing.

When the wolf woke, he was so thirsty that he wished to go to the spring for a drink. When he got up, the rocks began bouncing off each other and he said, "What happened to me? The young goats I thought to be in my stomach are as hard and heavy as stones."

When the wolf reached the spring, and he bent down over the water to take a drink of water, the weight of the rocks took him headfirst into the spring and he drowned sorrowfully.

When the young goats saw this, they came running and jumping and chasing and dancing, while singing, "The wolf is dead. The wolf is dead."

A German tale translated by the Gallowglas. 🍷

*An excerpt from MacTalla, Translated & Edited by Seumas Watson. Images used were originally created by Oskar Herrfurth.*



*MacTalla, published in Sydney, Nova Scotia, was the longest running Gaelic weekly paper and ending as a bi-weekly (1892-1904). Eòin Aonghais Chaluim - Jonathan G. MacKinnon's was a life-long promoter of Gaelic and was involved in other publications including Gaelic translations of English literature.*

GUMA FADA BEÒ SIBH 'S CEÒ ÁS BHUR TAIGH  
MAY YOU LIVE LONG AND MAY SMOKE RISE FROM YOUR CHIMNEY



# An Gàidheal Portmhor | Scotch Music

## `S MATH A DHANNSADH UISDEAN FRISEAL | HUGH FRASER COULD DANCE WELL

The spring passing of Willie Francis Fraser (*Willie Shaoimein*), native of St. Rose (*Na Pònaichean*), Inverness County, at one hundred years of age was noted in a host of articles and eulogies on both sides of the Atlantic. Renowned for his close to the floor style of step-dancing, learned in a childhood dream, Willie was a quintessential Cape Breton Gaelic tradition bearer: storyteller, singer and dancer. Willie reminiscences and stories can be experienced on the *Cainnt Mo Mhàthar* website: <http://www.cainntmomhathar.com>

Reported here is his *port á beul* setting for the often heard strathspey *`S math a dhannsa dh Uisdean Friseal* (Hugh Fraser could dance well), titled in English as *Braes of Mar*, prefaced with a comment on the person *Uisdean Friseal*. Reputedly composed by John Coutts of Deeside, Aberdeenshire, we are informed by piper Tiber Falzett that there is a Donegal setting known as *Deirtear Go Bhfuil An Diabhal Marbh* (Some say the Devil's Dead). A Scottish example of Gaelic words for the tune, sung by Nan MacKinnon (*Nan Eachainn Fhionnlaigh*) can be heard at <http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/93750/8>

Musical notation here is from 'The Athole Collection', held in the Joe MacLean Collection of Cape Breton Fiddle Music, Highland Village Archives.

*Uilleam Friseal: An tritheamh port, bhithinn a' danna dha cuideachd, Uisdean Friseal. Uisdean Friseal, bha e a's an t-seann dùthaich. `S e Frisealach a bh'ann, còirneal mór agus duine mór eirieachdail a bh'ann. `S bha na h-igheannan uile gu léir craiceadh (?)... bha `ad a' craic as a dheaghaidh - a' feuchainn ri greim fhaighinn air. Agus co dhiubh, na co dheth, rinn `ad port dha.*

Willie Fraser: The third tune, I would be dancing to it as well, *Uisdean Friseal. Uisdean Friseal*, he was in the Old Country (Scotland). He was a Fraser, a powerful colonel and a big handsome man. The girls were all enamored of him. They pursued him, trying to get a hold of him. In any event, they made a tune for him. ©



*`S math a dhannsa dh Uilleam Friseal*

### **`S math a dhannsa dh Uisdean Friseal**

#### **Car a h-aon**

`S math a dhannsa dh Uisdean Friseal,  
Uisdean Friseal, Uisdean Friseal  
`S math a dhannsa dh Uisdean Friseal  
leis an fhichead maighdean. 2x

#### **First turn**

Hugh Fraser could dance well,  
Hugh Fraser, Hugh Fraser  
Hugh Fraser could dance well,  
with the twenty maidens

#### **Car a dhà**

Cóignear roimh' `s as a dheaghaidh.  
Cóignear roimh' `s as a dheaghaidh.  
Cóignear roimh' `s as a dheaghaidh.  
`S cóignear air gach taobh dheth. 2x

#### **Second Turn**


Five of them in front of him and five behind  
Five of them in front of him and five behind  
Five of them in front of him and five behind  
And five on each side of him

**OLD SET OF THE BRAES OF MAR. Strathspey.**

Music notation above is from Athole Collection, 1883. The Braes of Mar can be found on page 89 of the collection.

# Seinn fo Sgàil nan Geugan Uaine | Songs from the Greenwood

## Òran Néill is Iain | THE SONG OF NEIL AND JOHN

This locally made comical song was recorded for the Highland Village *Nòs nan Òran* song collection project from the singing of Maxie MacNeil. Learned in part by Neil John Gillis, Jamesville, Victoria County, from Inverness County singers when he worked for CNR, a text was latterly discovered in the pages of *Mac-Talla*, issue 29, January 18, 1901. Verses describe events during a trip to Mabou to sell fox pelts on a winter's day and a dram or two having been taken in excess. The song's composer was John Walker (*Iain Mac an Fhùcadair*), Lake Ainslie. Pictured on the right is Maxie MacNeil and his daughter Susan (MacNeil) MacFarlane. 

### Òran Néill is Iain

*Am Fonn:*

`S e Turus na Dunach  
Thug mis' air an sgrìob  
Le béin nan sionnach Niall Gillis `s mi fhìn  
`S e Turus na Dunach  
Thug mis' air an sgrìob

`S a' mhaduinn nuair ghluais mi  
Bha latha car fuar ann  
`S chuir mise còt' uachdair  
Mun cuairt orm fhìn

Niall Gillis `s a bhràthair  
Air thoiseach a' bàireadh  
Nuair ràinig iad Màbu  
Bha `làir aca sgìth

Nuair ràinig sinn am baile  
`Se 'n *council* a bh'air m'aire  
Nuair thug iad dhomh drama  
`S ann ghabh mis' a trì

`S e branndaich bha `n dà dhuibh  
Do stuth a bha làidir  
Niall Gillis a phàigh iad  
Ged `s nàir' e ri inns'

Nuair a chaidh e `nam phòraibh  
`S ann theann mi ri bòilich  
A Nìll tha thu còir  
Thug thu dhòmhsa na trì

Thuirt mise gu briathrach  
A Nìll tha thu fialaidh  
Nuair reiceas mi `m bian  
Cha bhi sian ort a dhìth

Bheir mis' thu thaigh-bòrdaidh  
Far an cumar thu dòigheil  
Théid biadh dhut an òrdugh  
`S bidh `n t-òl agad free

Nuair rinn mi mo bhargan  
`S a phàigheadh dhomh `n t-airgiod  
Gun d'fhàs mi cho foirmeil  
`S cha n-aithnichinn thu Nìll

Cha d'chuimhnich mi tuilleadh  
Mo ghealladh a chumail  
Chaidh mis' a thaigh Uilleim  
Gun duin' ach mi fhìn

Bha mise gu stràiceil  
`S Niall feadh na sràide  
A' garadh mo làmh  
`S mi gun fhàillinn, gun dìth

Ach Dia leam a dhuine  
`S ann dh'fhàs mi `nam churaidh  
Chan fhaicinn-sa duine  
Bha uiread rium fhìn

Gun d'fhàs mi cho sunndach  
`S mo chasan cho sùbailt  
`S gun dannsain na Flùrs  
Air an ùrlar gun strìth

`S ann feasgar an ath-oidhch  
A thàinig sinn dachaidh  
`S ann oirne bha `n cadal  
`S sinn airtneulach, sgìth

*Mac-Talla, January 18 1901, pg. 224, Issue 29.*

### The Song of Neil and John

*Chorus:* I undertook a hapless journey with Neil Gillis and the fox pelts.

In the morning when I moved out, the day was a bit cold. I wrapped myself in overcoat.

Neil Gillis and his brother were in front breaking trail (through the snow for the horse). When they reached Mabou, their horse was weary.

When we arrived in town, the council was on my mind. When they offered me a dram, I took three.

Two of them were strong brandies. Neil Gillis paid for them, though it's shameful to tell.

When the drink soaked into my pores, I began to boast, "Neil you are generous. You gave me three drams.

I said with articulation, "Neil you are open-handed. When I sell the skins, you'll want for nothing.

I'll take you to a boarding-house where you'll be well treated. Food will be prepared for you and drinks will be free.

When I settled for the skins and was paid the money, I became reserved and wouldn't acknowledge you Neil.

I forgot about my promise (to Neil) and went to William's boarding house alone.

I was arrogantly warming my hands with nothing to want, while Neil was out on the street.

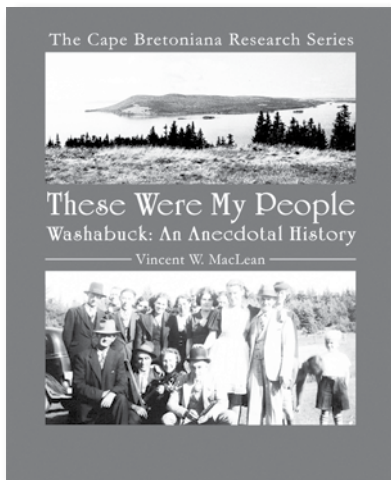
God bless me, I became a champion. I couldn't see another man's equal to me.

I became so merry, and my legs were so supple, I could dance the Flowers of Edinburgh without effort on the floor.

We arrived home the next night. We were sleepy and exhausted.

# An Rubha Review

## THESE WERE MY PEOPLE - WASHABUCK: AN ANECDOTAL HISTORY



A descendent resident of Cape Breton's Washabuck district, Vince Maclean introduces himself describing the influences of his own family and neighbours of his childhood. His half century of collating oral accounts, observations and documentation of his home region have culminated in this socially grounded and engaging volume.

Washabuck lies within the Municipality of Victoria County. Likely a corruption of Mi'kmaw derivation, it seems to be a place name, possibly describing the surrounding land as an isthmus enclosed by a river and the Bras d'Or Lake, or perhaps meaning a place of peaceful waters. In acknowledging other peoples associated with Washabuck, MacLean's grassroots history of the area begins with an outline of the Mi'kmaq as original inhabitants of the peninsula. Prefacing arrival of the Gaels, he moves through the European colonial presence, beginning in the 17th century with the French, continuing on to the 18th century appearance of Empire Loyalists.

The story of MacLean's people starts with the first influx of Highland immi-

grants, arriving from the Hebridean island of Barra in the summer season of 1817. With brief accounts of a number of pioneer families, including Gaelic designations and local names for associated landmarks, Washabuck's anecdotal history commences. Broadening into twenty chapters over a diverse range of topics, it converges over 390 pages, extending into this millennium, to paint the picture of a community's collective of individuals, through their memories, economy, culture and kinship. Unique to Central Cape Breton, yet redolent of Nova Scotia's Gaelic heritage, the Washabuck story is a plaid of familial, civil and social parts, patterned by an interlace of rural life over successive generations. Anecdotes on religiosity, historical incidents, merchants, politics, farming, community organizations, education and murder - among the mix of subject matter, are amply reinforced throughout with precious photos from across the years that reflect the times and people of Washabuck in the age of the camera.

A natural leaven, MacLean has included a good deal of interesting cultural content. Chapter sixteen dedicates itself to the area's prolific fiddling and piping tradition, along with the centrality of dancing and house sessions and the achievements of musical sons and daughters, such as the Barra MacNeils, related in the community. Gaelic and English song compositions are well placed throughout the publication, including thirty verses of the still heard *Along the Shores of Washabuck*, sung to the chorus of *'S e Mo Cheist an Gille Donn* and a rare lament titled *An Long Alexander* (The Ship Alexander). Built in Washabuck, the Alexander sank in a severe storm, with loss of its entire crew, while on route to Newfoundland, Christmas Day 1859.

Of interest, from the sources and reference side of things, notes for all twenty chapters of *These Were My People*

are provided in its final pages, along with appendices and a selected bibliography. Vince MaLean's introduction states that, in part, his childhood inspiration to record his people's stories came from reading the reminiscences of *The Highland Heart in Nova Scotia*, written by another Washabuck native Neil MacNeil and published in 1948. My own introduction to Washabuck came through the same book, which I discovered and purchased in 1969 at a used bookstore off upper Grafton Street in Dublin, Ireland- long before I actually experienced the "Shores of Washabuck." From then to now, *These Were My People* is an update for the lasting record. 📖

*'These Were My People' was published by Cape Breton University Press.*

*This review was written by Seumas Watson, the Highland Village's Manager of Interpretation.*



Vince MacLean, author of 'These Were My People.'

### Highland Village Online Gaelic Resources



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# Mar Chuimhneachan

## MARY CATHERINE 'CATHIE' MACKINNON



Gaelic speakers have called central Cape Breton home for more than two hundred years. For nearly half that time, Mary Catherine (Cathie) MacKinnon was one of them. When she passed away last October, the region lost one of its most knowledgeable and talented tradition bearers.

Raised in Christmas Island, Cathie was a daughter of Angus 'the Doctor' (Aonghas Sheumais Mhurchaidh) and Mary Ann MacKenzie (Màiri Ann Eairdsidh a' Chòrneir). She spent most of her adult life in Big Beach (Am Bide Mór), where she raised a family, became involved in various community organizations and, for more than fifty years, issued marriage licenses from her home.

Cathie knew a lot of people – and few who met her were likely to forget her. She was strong-willed, energetic and quick to laugh. Visitors to her home were welcomed with warmth and enthusiasm and when Cathie spoke, it was with confidence and conviction – often coming in rapid-fire bursts.

Gaelic was the first language Cathie learned, and according to family, the last one she spoke. In addition to being a fluent Gaelic-speaker, she had a strong interest

in the stories, folklore and history of the parish she called home. In the following, which is shared in her memory, Cathie relates her knowledge of an unusual illness and its associated remedy.

*An t-Samhain 23, 2008*

**Seumas MacDhòmhnaill:** *Bha sinn a' bruidhinn mu dheidhinn tinneas, 's tha mi 'creidsinn gun canadh iad ... An e na barrain a chanadh iad ris?*

**Catrìona NicFhionghain:** *Um hm. Barrain. Bha leithid do rud ann. Agus chan e rud a chuala mise, no chaidh a dh'innse dhomh. Chunnaig mi e - aig fear dha na gilleann agam-fhìn. Bha na barrain air. Agus thug mi gu boireannach ann a Benacadie e. Bean Mhìgì Shandaidh. Agus 's e Farrell a bh'innte. 'S chuir i a làmh anns a' bheul aige, 's phush i suas, bha i a' cantail gu robh cnap air. Chan fhaca mis' e, ach chunnaig i e, agus bhust i sin. 'S nuair dh'fhosgail sin, thàinig, mar gum biodh, ligeadh air a' làimh aice. Chunnaig mise sin mi-fhìn. Agus chan e rud a chaidh a dh'innse dhomh, 's e rud a chunnaig mi. 'S bha 'fear beag alright as a dheoghaidh sin. Agus chan e a h-uile duin' a rachadh aca sgàth dheanamh mun deidhinn. Bha ann ach duine siod 's a' seo. 'S nuair a dh'fhàg ise, nuair dh'eug i, bha i sean nuair a dh'eug i, cha robh duine idir mun cuairt a' seo a dheanadh e.*

**SM:** *Agus a' robh fhios agaibh... A' robh iad ag ràdh carson a bha na barrain aig...?*

**CN:** *Uill, cha robh iad a' cantail, ach bha iad a' cantail gur e sgeun, no eagal a ghabh a' leanabh a thigeadh na barrain air. So, feumaidh gur e sin ceart. Cha robh e aig a h-uile duine co dhiù. Cha robh e glè phailt, ach bha leithid do rud ann.*

**November 23, 2008**

**Shamus MacDonald:** We were speaking about a sickness, and I believe they would say... Is it the barrain they would call it?

**Cathie MacKinnon:** Um hm. *Barrain*. The likes of that existed. And it's not something I heard, or that was told to me. I saw it - one of my own boys had it. He had the *barrain*. And I took him to a woman in Benacadie. Mickey *Shandaidh's* wife. And she was a Farrell. And she put her hand in his mouth, and she pushed up, she was saying there was a little bump there, I didn't see it, but she saw it, and she busted that. And when that opened up, something like pus came out on her hand. I saw that myself. And it wasn't something that was told to me, it was something I saw. And the young fellow was alright after that. And it wasn't everyone who had the ability to do something about it. There was only someone here and there. And when she was gone, when she died, she was old when she died, there was no one at all around here who would do it.

**SM:** And did you know, were they saying why the *barrain*...?

**CM:** Well, they weren't saying, but they were saying that it was a fright or scare a baby took that would bring on the *barrains*. So, that must be correct. Not everyone had it anyway. It wasn't very common, but the likes of it existed. ©

© Recorded, transcribed and translated by Shamus Y. MacDonald. Photo provided by Evelyn MacKinnon.

## Tapadh leibh-se gu mòr

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The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society gratefully acknowledges the support of its government partners. In addition to our core funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture & Heritage (Nova Scotia Museum), support has also been received from:

The Nova Scotia Departments of Internal Services, Labour and Advanced Education, *Iomairt na Gàidhlig* | Office of Gaelic Affairs, and Nova Scotia Provincial Lotteries & Casino Corporation.

Government of Canada through the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency & Service Canada;

Municipality of Victoria County through District 1 and the Recreation & Tourism Department.



# Comunn Ar Rùin | Our People

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & ACCOLADES

### Tapadh Leibh-se Gu Mór

The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society gratefully acknowledges the support of many individuals and organisations:

### Project & Marketing Partners

Cabot Trail Motel; Cape Breton B&Bs; CB Centre for Craft & Design; Castle Moffett; Celtic Colours Festival Society; Celtic Heart of North America; *Colaisde na Gàidhlig*; Central Cape Breton Community Ventures; Community Foundation of NS; Dalhousie University's Computer Science Community Outreach; Destination Cape Breton; Eskasoni Cultural Journeys; *Féis an Eilein*; Fortress of Louisbourg; Glenora Distillery; Inverness County; *Iomairtean na Gàidhlig*; Iona Heights Inn | Jill's Chocolates; Musée Royale; NSCAD University; St.FX University (Angus L. Macdonald Library); *Sgoil MhicFhraing a' Chaolais*; & Victoria County.

### Farm Program Partners

Dell Corbett, Grand Mira ("Mira Jean" Clydesdale horse); Kelly and Jim Booth, Gillis Point (Highland cattle); the late Bill Higgins, Christmas Island (heritage seeds); Trueman and Laurinda Matheson, St. Andrews (Soay sheep); and John Philip Rankin (horse training).

### Donations (2015)

Elizabeth Cameron, Inverness; Robert S. Latimer, Truro; Jolette MacAulay, Fall River; John James MacEachern, Mabou; Ann MacIntosh, River Denys; Melody MacNeil, Point Edward (in memory of Baby Avery); and Kent & Debi Walker, Big Ridge.

### Artefacts & Archival Donations (2015)

Fr. Verne Boutilier, Boulardarie; Don Burns, Mira; Pauline Campbell, Jamesville; Jerry & Claudette Chaisson, Pictou; Velma Humphrey, Big Pond; Rose MacDonald, Washabuck; Sadie MacDonald, Ottawa Brook; Linda MacNeil, Sydney; Rod C. MacNeil, Iona; Mary Nash, Plymouth, MA; and Jim St. Clair, Mull River.

### Stòras na h-Òigridh Donations (2015)

Fr. Francis Cameron, Boisdale; Janet Cameron, Boisdale; Jill's Chocolates, Iona; and Carol Urquhart, Whycocomagh.

### Congratulations

To Beth MacNeil, HV Animator, on 30 years of service to the Highland Village; Sadie MacDonald, Visitor Services Clerk, on 20 years of service to the Highland Village; Max MacDonald, Marketing Coordinator, on the birth of his grandson, Ira Maxwell; M.A. MacPherson, NSHVS President, on the birth of his first grandchild Matilda; Damian MacInnis, NSHVS board member on his new position with the Cape Breton Regional Economic Network; and Dan Chiasson, Highland Village legal advisor, on his pending retirement.

### Retiring Board Members

Many thanks to Susan Cameron, Past President of the NSHVS, who retired from the NSHVS board in June 2015, for all of her contributions to the organization.

### Best Wishes

We send our hearts out to Debi MacNeil,

and her family. Debi, our Senior Animator, has been hospitalized since early December with a serious illness. We are hopeful for Debi's full recovery. Also to Ada MacLean (mother of animator, Aileen) who is currently ill in hospital.

### Sympathies

With heavy hearts we share the passing of our co-worker and great friend Gerry MacNeil. Gerry worked at the Highland Village for 27 years, retiring in 2013 as senior visitor service clerk. Her infectious smile will be missed by all. Also, we extend our sympathies to the families of: Jean MacDonald, (mother-in-law to HV staff member Sadie MacDonald); Mary Nardocchio, (sister to HV staff member Neil J. MacNeil); to HV staff member Jamie Kennedy on the death of his grandmother; Nancy Linkletter (mother of board member Michael), James MacQueen (father of former board member Eleanor Anderson); Bill Higgins, who has provided us with heritage potato seeds; & noted weaver Eveline MacLeod. 🍷



Sadie & Beth celebrating their years of service.

### Commun Baile Ghàidheal na h-Albann Nuaidh | Nova Scotia Highland Village Society

Board of Trustees (Elected June 2015) - John Hugh Edwards, Ross Ferry; Charlene Ellis, Little Narrows; Angie Farrell, Christmas Island; Catherine Ann Fuller, Baddeck (Vice-President); Dr. Michael Linkletter, Antigonish; Betty Lord, Howie Centre (Treasurer); Quentin MacDonald, Washabuck; Pam MacGillivray, Shunacadie; Damian MacInnis, Port Hood; Vince MacLean, Northside East Bay; Hector (Frankie) MacNeil, Iona; MA (Murdoch) MacPherson, Creignish (President); Melissa Nicholson, Baddeck; Meaghan O'Handley, Grand Narrows; Paul Wukitsch, Shunacadie (Secretary); and Dan Chiasson, Baddeck (Legal Advisor - Ex-officio).

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Volunteer Programmers - Quentin MacDonald & Mary Emma MacNeil, HV Day Producers.

Continued from page 7...

na bh'aca. Agus thuirt a bhean ris, "Tha seo gàbhaidh. Bha beag gu leòr againn-ne roimhe 's tha na 's lugh' againn anist. Uell, cha n-eil againn ach gu fimir sin deanamh mar a 's fheàrr 's urrainn sinn.

Chuir 'ad amach lion 's fhuair 'ad iasg. Bha iasg gu leòr anns a' mhuir. Cha robh àite sam bith a chuireadh tu sios lion nach lionadh a' lion suas dìreach ann am beagan mhionaidean. 'S ma bha iasg a dhìth orra, gheobhadh 'ad e anns a h-uile dòigh. Start 'ad a' sgealbadh buntàta bho chionn 's ann air an naoidheamh là do June a thànaig 'ad. Bha 'n t-àm a bhi cur airson buain. Agus chur 'ad buntàta do choillidh dhuibh am miosg nan stumpaichean aice. Bha bàrr aca 'son an ath-gheamhradh. 'S start 'ad air togail taigh-logaichean.

'S sin far and chuir 'ad seachad a' cheud gheamhradh 's fhuair 'ad àit a dheanadh dhaibh p-fhéin (ann a' sin) dhan teaghlach.

When Big Finley arrived with his family, they landed at the Coal Mines in Cape Breton. They had no shelter but the boat hauled up on the shore and turned upside down with its contents unloaded.

When they woke in the morning a bear had come and taken most of the supplies and eaten them. They didn't have much to begin with and now there was even less, after the bear finished with their provisions. His wife said to him, "This is terrible. We had little enough and even less now. Well we'll have to do the best we can."

They put out a net and got fish. Fish were plentiful in ocean. Any place at all you'd put out a net, it would fill up in a few minutes. If you wanted fish you could get it by all kinds of ways. Since they landed on the 9th of June they started cutting seed potato for planting. It was time to plant for a harvest. They planted potatoes in the burnt wood among the stumps and they had a crop for the next winter. They also set to building a log cabin. That's where they put by the first winter. They established a place for themselves and their family. ©

Seumas Watson, Manager of Interpretation. Part five will appear in the next issue of An Rubha. Illustration by Ellison Robertson. ©



We acknowledge our 2015 summer students (from left): Courtney MacDonald, Linden MacMillan & Samera MacNeil. We also recognize Katie MacDonald (right) who has recently completed a year and half internship with us.

We wish them all the best in their future endeavours.



## Help us share Nova Scotia's Gaelic language and heritage by joining the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society!



Join us and support Nova Scotia's Gaelic language and folk-life traditions by becoming a member of the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society.

Members can:

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