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
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.

**Stòras na h-Òigridh | Treasures of Youth 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

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2015 Scholarship Winners: Roddie MacInnis & Stephanie MacDonald

2015 Fiddle Loan Recipients: Lileag Watson & Mia Nordine

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & ACCOLADES
Facal bhon Neach stiùiridh | From the Director’s Desk

Highland Village 3.0 - Made of Stories

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 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.

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 1st, 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, lomairtean na Gàidhlig | Gaelic Affairs and Comhairle na Gàidhlig | Nova Scotia Gaelic Council, thirty three posters were created incorporating three themes: Óigrídh (youth), Seanfhaclan (proverbs) and Na h-Órain, 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 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’ (Óigrídh), symbolized by the dandelion, enduring and irrepressible harbingers of renewal, ‘Proverbs’ (Seanfhaclan) the insightful wisdom of the Gaels and ‘Nova Scotia Composed Songs’ (Na h-Órain), 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.

“A’ ghrian bheag” (Ma chithear anull mu thri uairean feasgar cnap beag a’ sineadh amach on ghre’n fhéin, tha stoirm mhòr 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

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

an rubha
Vol 15 No.1
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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. Biaadh 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 theses institutions.

Also in August, we welcomed the Lieutenant Governor of NS, Brigadier-General 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 Drochaid 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.
When reminiscing about pioneer times, the comment most frequently made by many older descendents of the Highland settlers is on the immensity of the forest that greeted their forebears. The late Ena Chisholm (Ena n’Iain ‘ic Eòin na h-Albminn), 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-seachdadh là diag do Mharch an 1908. NicIòsag 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 òite, gu robh an t-òite leò, na h-òtteachan a’s a robh ‘ad ann a Scotiaidh. Bha ‘ad gan draoiheadh amach: gun do chur ‘ad caoraich ‘s an òite. ‘S e sin a chaidh a dh’ràdhainn aig an am co dhiubh.

Thànaig ‘ad (Cloinn Iosaig) gu tir ann am Pictou agus às a’ sin suas a Ghlencoce. Bha an t-òite gu math doirbh. Cha robh sion ann ach coille mhòir. Cha robh sion ann ach coille ‘s thog ‘ad taighgean-logainчеann 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 Tiree 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 Tiree. Having settled at Bail’ a' Chnuic at Barny’s River, he expressed bitter disappointment with his new circumstances, which required of him more exertion than was his custom.

Cha n-ìoghnadh dhomhsa ged tha mi brònach. ‘S ann tha mo chòmhairdadh air chàl nam beann, Am meadhon fàsaich air Abhainn Bharaidh Gun dad is ìftr na buntàta lom Mun dean mi àiteach ‘s mun tag mi bàrr ann. ‘S a’ choillidh ghàbhaidh chur às a bonn. Le neart mar ghràidein, gum bidh mi sàrachd. ’I sa trèis 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 Barny'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 Mòr 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 Fìonnlaidh Mòr ‘s an teaghchadh ‘s dar a rànaig e air tir anns na Coalmines ann a Ceap Breatann, cha robh fàsgadh aig’ ach am bàta a tha rraing astaigh far a’ mhùir, air a thionndadh bhon na thùas ‘s a dhol fodha sin airson fàsgadh ‘s na bh’aca a chur amach.

‘S dar a dh’èirisich ‘ad, bha am mathan as deaghaidh tighinn agus a’ mhòr-chuid a thoirt leis agus ith. Cha robh mòran aca co dhiubh. Ach bha na bu lugha’ uil’ aca nauir a bha esan réidh a thoirt leis

Continued on page 23
Iain Dhomhnaill, John Dan, John Dan MacDonald, (An Taillear Bharra). O, bha e ainmeil geur. Bha... bha deagh... Bha `ad uile gu léir, bha beagan dhe `n fhaobh a bha seo orra. Ach cha robh gin ac` suas ris an fhearr seo. Chan fhaigheadh tu idir e. Bha e `pòsd` aig nighean a mhuintir na h-Intreabhag. Agus bha e `s a`... bha e air chéileidh `san taigh, `s bha athair na h-Ìghnne a bha posd` aige-san, bha e, bha e `g innean muidheidhinn latha a bha `ad ris an fheur.

Bha `ad a` cuir astaigh feur. Bha `ad an deagadh tighinn dhan t-sabhail le lòd feòr, agus `ad `ga chuir dhan dala taobh, `s thàinig fras mhòr uiste `s bhanidhinn. `S bha fheur gu leòr `na laigh` amuigh a bheireadh `ad astaigh, `s chanas sinn a fhearsa-loidhne. Bha i eadar e feor is `am bhall` a bha air an taobh eile. Chum i sios ann a` siod agus cha do fhluich e `feur idir`.

"Nach robh thu fortanach", os esan, "gu robh an fhearsa-loidhne. Ach amum gum`e an fhearsa a chumadh an t-sìthe air falbh!"

John Dan, John Dan MacDonald (An Taillear 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!

Sìtheanaichean am Pòn na Maiseadh | Fairy Sighting at Benacadie Pond
Told by Seumas Mhigi Shandaidh Dhòmhnaill a' Chùil | Jimmy Mickey Handi

Ode noc-sìtheanaich cros an uiste uair an ann a` seò. Chan eil anisid, chuir `ad a` rathad `roimhe. Chan fhaca mi `ad ariamh, ach chuala mi `ad a` bruiddhinn mu `n deidhinn. `S a` ghearradhadh, bha cuideigin a` tighinn anall le selghe, anuas am pòn, agus bha `ad air an deigh: cudan dhuiubh. `S lean `ad am beòtach `s selghe gu `n dànaig `ad dhan chnoc `s ghabh `ad aisteag dhan chnoc: sleagh. Bha `ad am uisge, 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. You often see that in the summer time, a shower coming while the hay lay outside.

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.

© 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 chruaidh Thàna` mi gun ghruaim dh` ur taigh Thuirte am bodach `s a` chòrr` Nach bu chuir mo leigeil astaigh Thuirte a` chaileach a` b` fhèarr na`n t-òr Gum bu chuir mo leigeil astaigh Airson aon mhiherean a bha bhùan Criomag chruaidh `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.

© Recorded by Seumas Watson and Frances MacEachen
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/copebret/index/assoc HASH391b/90090c

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 rìnn o rò ho-ho gü
Hi ri ho rò mo chaillin dön
O hì ri rìnn o rò ho-ho gü

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

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

3. (Tha) an t-earrach a’ fás ‘s a’ sgadan a’ snàmh
   Gun téid sinn gun dàil le barrailean

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

5. Bha i cho fann nuair labhradh i cainnt
   Gun fhaicil ‘na ceann ach staragan

6. Casan cho caol ri slatagan fraoch
   ‘S mi seasamh ri taobh mo leannan-sa

7. Bu mhinig bha spòrs (?) ‘s fion air a’ bhòrd
   Bhte ‘ga òl le glaineachan.

O hì ri rìnn o rò ho-ho gü
Hi ri ho rò mo chaillin dön
O hì ri rìnn o rò ho-ho gü

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### An Telearagph | Beam Me Up!

MacTalla - Vol.3 July 7, 1894

Thuirt bean Ghàidhealach bho cheann ghoirid ri duine àraidh air am bheil sinn eàbhal, gu’n cialla ise aig na gillean a taing a Gàllabh gu’n robh inneachd ùr aca an dràisd air son daoinne, a thoir a dh’America; nach biathadh dad aca ach dol ‘n seasmh air bàrr slàit mhoir iaruinn agus gu’m bhithadh iad a null air a’ “helegra” nan ceò, ann am prioba na sùla. Thuirt té eile a bha ‘s an éisdeachd gu’m b’ hfeàrr leithe feùn dol a null air té dheth na seann soithichean, na ‘n doigh ùr sin; air eagal ‘s nach rachadh aice air i fheùn a chruinneachadh a rith-

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.
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.

Catrìona NicNìll, Eilean na Nollaig. Told by Catherine MacNeil, Christmas Island.

© Recorded, transcribed and translated by Seumas Watson.
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 Bàin*) in *Òran do Chaora* (Song for a Sheep):

’S nuair a thigeadh mìos roimh Bhealtainn
B’ fheàirde mi na bh’aice bainne.

*Chumadh i rium gruth is uachdar
Air fhuaireadh ’s gum biodh a 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.

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an rubha
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 26th, 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 Mhicheil 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’ Chùbar), 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 Óran (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 Mhicheil Steabhain, Peadar mac Jack Pheadair, Nìall Iain mac Ruairidh `ac Nìll `ic Eòghainn, John Dan Nìll mac na Banndraich. 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

Cumha Do Mhicheal 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 mhuintir 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 choail air an robh mi eòlach;
S ochoin a Rìgh gur e’m bás chuir dhith 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 Bliadh’n Uire, cha mhòr 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.
     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.

2.  A’ rubha caol air am bu bhòidche craobhan
     Dh’innseadh a’ saoghal a bh’againn còmhla,
     ’S ann leams’ a b’fhèarr sin gum b’e bu bhuaine
     No ùir na h-uaghach a dhol ‘g a chòmhdach.
     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.

3.  ’S e sin an t-àite thug dhomhsa cuimhneachan
     Chuireadh snaoim air cridhe brònach,
     Gun flath far ’m b’abhaist ceol is gàir’a bhi,
     Gur fuar, fàsach tha ’n dachaidh bhòidheach.
     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.

4.  B’e sin an cridh’ anns nach robh ’n fhool’
     ’S a dheanadh coimhneas ris an déorach,
     Cha mhòr bhiodh dhith air am biadh no ’n aodach
     An neach a thaobh thu, ged bha thu’d onnachd.
     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.
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 sets 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 MacClaren tartan sets.

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 woeful 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 sets.”

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 chief came 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’ sets. 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 worn. 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. 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-
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.

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

BIBLIOGRAPHY


An Damhair 10, 1894

A'  bha bheathantaich faoi am muillear, na laidhe na seachdan agus an ceart suas. Tha an seachdan seannDeal.air'na laidhe na seachdan, agus a' cealltaigh an ceart suas. Tha an seachdan seannDeal.air'na laidhe na seachdan, agus a' cealltaigh an ceart suas. Tha an seachdan seannDeal.air'na laidhe na seachdan, agus a' cealltaigh an ceart suas. Tha an seachdan seannDeal.air'na laidhe na seachdan, agus a' cealltaigh an ceart suas.
An uair a chunnaic na gobhair òga seo, thàinig iad `nan ruith `s `nan ruaig a’leum-rach, a’ dannsa agus a seinn, “Chaochail am malladh-alluidh. Chaochail am madadh-alluidh.”

Translation

Long 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 to 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.

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 às bhur taigh
May you live long and may smoke rise from your chimney
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 à beul setting for the often heard strathspey  `S math a dhannsadh 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.

`S math a dhannsadh Uisdean Friseal

Car a h-aon
`S math a dhannsadh Uisdean Friseal, Uisdean Friseal, Uisdean Friseal
`S math a dhannsadh Uisdean Friseal leis an fhichead maighdean. 2x

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

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

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

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

`S e Turas na Dunach
Thug mis` air an sgrìob
Le bén nan sìonnach Niall Gillis `s mi fhìn
`S e Turas na Dunach
Thug mis` air an sgrìob

`S a` mhàduinn 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 `lair acsa sgìth

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

`S e brandraidh 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 cóir
Thug thu dhòmhsha na tri

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

Bheir mis` thu thaigh-bòrdaidh
Far an cumar thu doighil
Thèid biadh dhuic an òrdugh
`S bidh `n t-òl agad free

Nuair rinn mi mo bhargan
`S a phàighheadh dhomh` n` t-airgiod
Gun d`hàs mi cho forimeil
`S cha n-aithnichinn thu Nìll

Cha d`chumhnicnich mi tuilleadh
Mo ghealladh a chumail
Chaidh mis` a thaigh Uilleim
Gunn din` ach mi fhìn

Bha mise gu stràiceil
`S Nìll fheadh na sràide
A` garadh mo làmh
`S mi gun fhàillinn, gun dìth

Chò morbha

This locally made comical song was recorded for the Highland Village Nàs 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.

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.
A descendant 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 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 immigrants, 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 MacLean’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.’
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 Mòr), 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 `creidinn gun canadh iad … An e na barrain a chanadh iad ris?

Catriona NicFhionghain: Um hm. Barrain. Bha leithid do rud ann. Agus chan e rud a chuala mise, no chaidh a dh’innse dhomh. Chunnnaig mi e - aig fear aig dha na gilean agam-fhin. Bha na barrain air. Agus thug mi gu boireannach ann a Benacadie e. Bean Mhìgí Shandaidh. Agus `s e Farrell a bh’innnte. `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 buist i sin. `S nuair dh’fhosgail sin, thòinnig, mar gum biodh, ligeadh air a’ làimh aice. Chunnnaig mise sin mi-fhin. Agus chan e rud a chaidh a dh’innse dhomh, `s e rud a chunnaig mi. `S bha feor beag a bhàire aig dha na gilean sin. Agus chan e h-uile duin a’ rachadh aca sgàth dheanamh mun deidhinn. Bha ann aca duine sìd ‘s e a’ seo. `S nuair 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’ robb fhìos agaibh… A’ robb iad a’ 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 dhìù. Cha robh e gèile phaite, 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 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.
Acknowledgements & Accolades

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Project & Marketing Partners
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Fr. Francis Cameron, Boisdaile; Janet Cameron, Boisdaile; Jill's Chocolates, Iona; and Carol Urquhart, Whyocoomagh.

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 Chaisson, 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 MacNeil); 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; and 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, Shunadie; Damian MacInnis, Port Hood; Vince MacLean, Northside East Bay; Hector (Frankie) MacNeil, Iona; MA (Murdock) MacPherson, Creignish (President); Melissa Nicholson, Baddeck; Meaghan O’Handley, Grand Narrows; Paul Wukitsch, Shunadie (Secretary); and Dan Chiasson, Baddeck (Legal Advisor - Ex-officio).

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Volunteer Programmers - Quentin MacDonald & Mary Emma MacNeil, HV Day Producers.
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:
- Attend general meetings;
- Elect the Board;
- Receive An Rubha, our Gaelic Folklife Magazine;
- Receive notices for events.

Membership is open to anyone.

General Memberships:
Individual: $15.00* per year. Family: $25.00* per year (one household). *Income tax receipts are issued for general memberships.

Membership Plus:
Individual: $25.00* per year. Family: $40.00* per year (one household). In addition to general membership privileges, Membership Plus members get:
• Free admission for the year to the Highland Village *excludes special events & programs
• 10% discount in the Highland Village Gift Shop
• Membership Plus fees are not tax deductible

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.


‘S sin far and chuir ‘ad seachadh a’ chhead gheatrhadh ‘s fhuaire ‘ad ait’ a dheanadh dhaibh p-fhein (ann a’ sin) dhan teaghlaich.

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. ©