Our People and Places

This booklet is full of interesting information about place names, folklore, history and stories from Lochaber. All of the stories were collected by Féis Lochabair and Féis nan Garbh Chriochan participants who interviewed local people about the heritage of the area.
Pròiseact nan Tasglann
Fèisean nan Gàidheal

’S e pròiseact aig Fèisean nan Gàidheal a th’ ann an Tasglann far an teid com-pàirtichean nam Fèis air feadh Alba a bhrosnachadh gu bhith a’ cruinneachadh, a’ clàraichadh agus a’ taistealadh dualchas ionadaidh nan ghirean aca thein. Tha com-pàrtichean Fèis Lochabair agus Fèis nan Garbh Chriochan, a tha uile a’ fuireach ann an Loch Abar, air a bhith an sàs anns a’ pròiseact seo bhon Ghibbean 2010 agus tha iad air ag agallamhan a dheanamh fdhòmhla ri luchd na Gàidhilg às an sgìre gu barrachd ionnsachadh mu dhualchas na coimhearsnachd agus an Fèisean. Dh’ obrach na com-pàrtichean gu math cruaidh air a’ pròiseact; ’s iad thein a chuir na ceisteachan ann an òrdugh agus a th’ ann na h-agallamhan.

Mun phróiseact

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Caomhin Rodgers
Oifigear Leasachaidh airson Fèisean ann an Loch Abar

About the project

Archiving Project
Fèisean nan Gàidheal

Fèisean nan Gàidheal’s archiving project is aimed at encouraging Fèis participants from across Scotland to collect, record and present local heritage from their own areas. Participants from Fèis Lochabair and from Fèis nan Garbh Chriochan, all of whom live in Lochaber have been involved in the project since April 2010, have been interviewing local Gaelic speakers to find out more about the history of their own area and their Fèisean. The participants of both Fèisean worked very hard on this project; putting together the questions and conducting the interviews themselves. A job very well done!

We are very fortunate that there are a number of Gaelic speakers in Lochaber who have a great knowledge of the history and heritage of the area as well as being friends of the Fèisean. We very much value the time they spent with us in helping to complete this project. All of the transcriptions and English translations reflect the dialect and language of the informant as accurately as possible.

We hope you enjoy reading and learning about the Lochaber area and our Fèisean!

Kevin Rodgers
Lochaber Fèisean Development Officer

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Ally Weir
Donald MacAmhlaigh
Joanne Ford
Laural Davie
Raonaid NicIlebrath
Laura Davies
Joanne Ford
Laura Davies
Rachel MacGillvray
Rosa Gibson

Informants:
Alasdair Dòmhnaich
Iain MacPhàrlain
Iain MacMhaighstir
Ingrid Nic Eanraig
Raghnall Caimbeul

Lochabair Fèis CheoChian

Lochabair Fèis nan Garbh Chriochan

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Informants:
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Caitriona MacIntyre
Iain MacFarlane
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Ingrid Henderson
Ronald Campbell
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Agallamhan

Iain MacPhàrlain agus Ingrid NicEanraig
Iain MacMhaighstir
Catriona Nic an t-Saoir
Raghnall Caimbeul
Alasdair Dòmhnallach
Aonghas Grannd

Interviews
Iain MacFarlane and Ingrid Henderson, Iain MacMaster, Catriona MacIntyre,
Ronald Campbell, Alasdair MacDonald, Aonghas Grant
“S e an craic a gheibh thu leis na com-pàirtichean sa chlas agad agus an ceòl math a gheibh thu aig an deireadh. ‘S e na daoine sgoinneal a choinnicheas tu ris cuideachd, chan ann a-mhain na com-pàrtichean ach na luchd-teagaisg cuideachd – tha e an-còmhnaidh math.”

Agallamh còmhlachsach ri Iain MacPhàrlain is Ingrid NicEanraig

Interview with Iain MacFarlane and Ingrid Henderson

Laura: Am bruidhinn sibh beagan mu ur deidhinn fhéin, có às a tha sibh againn a caite an deach ur tosgail?
Ingrid: ‘S ann a Mallaig a tha mise agus bha mi a’ fuireach ann am Malaig gus an roh bha mi dà bhliadhna deug agus an uair sin, thainig mise dhan a’ Ghreasasdan agus bha mi anns a’ Ghreasasdan gus an roh bha mi ochd bhliadhna deug. ‘S ann a Loch Abar tha mi.
Iain: Thogadh mi ann an Gleann Fhionnainn agus rugadh mi ann an Sròn an t-Sithein ach chan eil cuimhnne agam air sin idir, idir. Dhìthadh mi Sròn an t-Sithein nuair a bha mi sia miosan a dh’aois no mar sin. Thogadh mi ann an Gleann Fhionnainn agus tha mi fhathast ann.

Laura: Càite an deach sibh dhan sgoil?
Ingrid: Chaidh mi gu Bun-sgoil Mhalaig an toiseach agus an uair sin ghluais sinn suas dhan a’ Ghreasasdan agus chaidh mi gu Ard-sgoil Loch Abar.

Laura: An do chòrd e ribh?
Ingrid: Chòrd – bha an dà sgoil agam sgoinneal. Bha deagh charaidhean agam – cha robh an obair cho math ach bha tòrr chraic aig mo charaidhean is chòrd am pàirt sin rium. Chòrd na làthean-sgoile rium gu mòr.

Laura: Can you say a bit about yourself, where you are from and where were you brought up?
Ingrid: I’m from Mallaig and I lived in Mallaig until I was twelve years old and then, I came to Fort William and I was in Fort William until I was eighteen years old. I’m from Lochaber.
Iain: I was brought up in Glenfinnan and I was born in Strontian but I don’t remember that at all. I left Strontian when I was six months old or about that. I was brought up in Glenfinnan and I’m still there.

Iain: Chaidh mi gu Bun-sgoil Ghleann Fhionnainn agus an uair sin Ard-sgoil Loch Abar. Cha robh an sgoil a’ còrdadh rium ag innse na firinn. ‘S e an seòrsa duinne a th’ annam, tha e a’ còrdadh rium a bhith a-muigh agus bha againn eirigh uabhasach tràth sa mhaidinn airson coiseachd suas dhan stèisean trèana gus an trèana fháginn gu Bannbhaidh agus an uair sin bha againn ri coiseachd thar am Blàr Mòr. An uair sin bhi dhà againn ri a h-ùile sian a dhèanamh a-rithist an rathad eile aig deireadh an latha agus cha robh sin cho math! Ach, bha e math, deagh charaidhean agus deagh spòrs.

Laura: Where did you go to school?
Ingrid: I went to school in Mallaig Primary to start off with and then when we moved up to Fort William and I went to Lochaber High School.

Laura: Did you enjoy it?
Ingrid: Yes – both my schools were great. I had good friends – the work part wasn’t so great but my friends were good craic so I enjoyed that part of it. I really enjoyed my school days.

Iain: I went to Glenfinnan Primary School and then Lochaber High. I wasn’t a big fan of school to be honest. I was a bit of an outdoor kind of guy and we used to have to get up very very early in the morning to walk up to the train station to get the train to Banavie and then we used to have to walk across the Blàr Mòr. Then we’d have to do it all in the reverse procedure at the end of the day so that wasn’t always the best! But och it was good, good friends and a good laugh.
Laura: Do eabhar a bhith agaibh?
Ingrid: Uill, tha an dithis againn a’ chlachd ceol fad na h-ùine. Tha sinn a’ chlachd ceol traídiseanta agus mar phàirt den obair againn bidh sinn a’ teagasg aon latha agus ’s dacha a’ déanamh consart an latha eile. Tha mise ag obair dà latha airson Sabhal Mòr Ostaig a’ teagasg air a’ chùrsa ciùil aca agus tha mise san Eilean Gigheanach gach seachdain. Cuideachd, tha studio againn ann an Gleann Fhionnainn agus tha sinn a’ ruith studio airson ceol aacharadh.

Iain: Tha mi fhìn a’ chlachd ceol agus tha mi a’ teagasg dà latha gach seachdain anns a’ Phloc ag Sgoil Chiùil na Gàidhealtachd ann a’ shinn. Tha mi ag obair mu chairst a tigh agus tha digger agam agus tha mi a’ cumail trang le sin. Bha crodh agam ach chan eil an-dràsta agus tha mi an-còmhnaidh a’ déanamh rudeigin!

Laura: What is your job?
Ingrid: Well, we both play music full time. We play traditional music and as part of our work we’ll be teaching one day and maybe doing a concert another day. I work two days at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig teaching on the music course and I’m in Skye every week. We also have a studio in Glenfinnan and we run the studio to record music too.

Iain: I also do music and I teach two days every week in Plockton at the National Centre of Excellence in Traditional Music there. I work around the house and I have a digger and I’m kept busy at that. I had cows but not at the moment and I’m always doing something!

Laura: Can you tell me a bit about how you have been involved with the Fèis over the years?
Ingrid: I have been involved with the Fèis for many many years. I, like Iain, am too old to have gone to a Fèis unfortunately – just by a few years though. So when I was about seventeen I started teaching at Fèisean and the first Fèis that I taught at was down in Acharacle at Fèis nan Garbh Chriorchan. I taught their ongoing harp classes for about five years and I used to teach at their Fèis. Then I was at Fèis Lochabair here and I’ve taught at loads of different Fèisean round the country and I also used to work for Fèisean nan Gàidheal. I worked for the organisation for about five years doing support working and development work in Lochaber. I’m still involved with the Fèis in different guises, teaching and supporting it and it’s just a brilliant thing and I’ve always loved my time at the Fèis. My best memory of the Fèis, unfortunately I probably can’t record it down just now because it’s usually the antics that happen with the tutors sometimes when the classes are finished and the ceilidhs that happen at night!
In my own personal experience, I am very lucky that my father is a piper and fiddle player and my mother and father ran a hotel in Glenfinnan and a lot of musicians would call in for ceilidhs and they would let me sit beside them and play along and pick up tunes."

Lauria: A bheil cuimhne as fheàrr a th' agam air an Fhèis, uill tha gu leòr agam ri àm eile a-nis b' e ùine mhòr air ais!

Iain: Mar a thuirt Ingrid, cha robh Fèis a' tachairt nuair a bha sin na b' òige agus cha robh cothroman ann a choinnreachadh ri mòran dhaoine ann an anois rinne gun ceol a chluich. Nam bheachd fhein, bha mise uabhasach aig mo sheanair agus uabhasach lar an taigh ann an Loch Abar.

Laura: Uill, nuair a bha mise òg bha Gàidhlig aig mo sheanair agus uabhasach lar a bha ag bheil a chluich ann an cothroman.

Ingrid: Uill, nuair a bha mise òg bha Gàidhlig aig mo sheanair agus uabhasach lar a bha ag bheil a chluich ann an cothroman.

In general though I think it's the good craic that you have with your pupils in the class and the great music that's produced at the end of it. It's the great people that you meet too, not just the participants but tutors as well – it's always great.

Iain: As Ingrid said, the Fèis wasn't on the go when we were younger and there was no opportunities to gather with lots of people your own age to play. In my own personal experience, I am very lucky that my father is a piper and fiddle player and my mother and father ran a hotel in Glenfinnan and a lot of musicians would call in for ceilidhs and they would let me sit beside them and play along and pick up tunes. A lot of the time just sitting listening, and listening to the stories, and I was very lucky to get that chance but a lot of children didn't get that chance if it wasn't in the house so it's thanks to the Fèis now that thousands of young people get the opportunities. I first taught at a Fèis way back in 1991 and that was also the Fèis nan Garbh Chriochan down in Acharacle – that seems like a different time now it was a long time ago!

My favourite Fèis memory, well I've quite a few but I was at the Barra Fèis and there was a ceilidh - I'll not mention any names but it was a friend of mine, a fisherman from Mallaig who was in the company and it was in the small hours of the night when he unfortunately fell asleep and one of the piping tutors, Rona Lightfoot, who is a character, decided that it was too early for him to be going to sleep and she decided to go and get her make-up bag. Off came the boots and the shoes and his hat that he'd been wearing all week and covered him in make-up and nail varnish the lot! We had to make a sharp exit the next morning when the landlady wasn't very happy about the mess! We ran across the field to the road and we got a lift from a passing bodach heading for Castlebay and we jumped in and I'd totally forgotten about Lachy covered in make-up – now that's a pseudonym – and we jumped in the car and he didn't know that it had all happened! He was covered in lipstick and had big rosy cheeks and eye shadow and driving along into Castlebay and the old fellow was looking at him!

Lauria: Do you remember hearing Gaelic spoken in Lochaber?

Ingrid: Well, when I was young my grandfather and grandmother had Gaelic and I was hearing Gaelic but only when they were speaking to the dog! They were saying...
Iain: Tha cuimhne agam nuair a bha mise òg bha a h-ùile duine sa bhaile agam ag bruidhinn Gàidhlig ach mo mhàthair agus tè eile sa bhaile – cha robh Gàidhlig aca – `à ann a Dùn Èideann a tha mo mhàthair. Ach, na cibairean agus na g excuse, bha iad a cleachdadh Gàidhlig a h-ùile latha agus bhiodh sinn suas an fhaing ag obair le caoraich is ruda mar sin a h-ùile samhradh agus bhiodh iad a suidhe ann an cearacl tìr a bruidhinn Gàidhlig fad na h-ùine. Ach, chaochail na seann daoine agus cha robh Gàidhlig air fhàgal sa bhaile idir idir. Chan ann ach `s docha siaran a thà a bruidhinn Gàidhlig san latha an-dliugh.

Laura: An robh ceol aig an taigh nuair a bha sibh a` fàs suas? Ingrid: Bha tòrr san taigh agam. Tha tòrr ceol san teaghlach agam, chan ann a` mhàin ann mo teaghlach nas fhiasg` ach a` dol air ais tro na ginealaidhean tha tòrr poibearaid agus daoine a` cluich a bh`ogha. Nuair a bha mi a` fàs suas bha tòrr ceol ann an taigh agam, daoine a` cluich ceol a`g eisteachd ri ceol cuideachd is bha e fad na h-ùine mun cuairt orm. An e an aon rud a h`ann ann san taigh agad Iain?

Iain: Bha gun teagamh. Mar a thui mi na bu thràitte, bha mi fortanach a` fàs suas leathair a bha a na phibearaid agus filldean. S` e poibearaidh an rud as l`aidire san teaghlach agm`inn. Bidh mi a` cluich a` phibh cuideachd agus tha mi a` smaoineadachd gur e mise am t`reas no an ceathrach ginealach a h`tha na phibearaid.

Laura: An robh tòrr ceòildean ann? Ingrid: Bha tòrr ceòildean san taigh agam ann agus ann an taigh agadsa Iain agus a`-nis san taigh againn! Tha ceòildean ann fad na h-ùine agus tòrr ceol.

Laura: Co na ceoladairean ainmeil a` h`inn nuair a bha sibh a` fàs suas? Ingrid: Bha na luchd-ciùil ainmeil, Aonghas Gràinid – bhiodh esan ann agus tha Aonghas Gràinid fhathast na h`ear-cluich ainmeil. Fearchar MacRath, filldean agus fear a` bh`ogha a bha a na b`aidh bha Iain ann a Gleann Fhionnainn. Cuideachd athair Iain, ged nach robb e cho ainmeil airson a h`ann a bha a na phibearaid agus daoine a` cluich air feadh an a`ite – ach `s iad na feadhainn a bha a nan ca`taraphan Gàidhealach agus car`tarach Loch Abar ch`ainn. Mar sin, Tèar`lach MacPhàrlain, Fearchar MacRath agus Aonghas Gràinid ach cuideachd nuair a bha mi na b`i` oige Iain Dòmhnaillach a Gleann Ùige, bha e a` cluich sa ch`omhlan Ossian agus The Battlefield Band agus airson neach-ciùil òg ag ionnsachadh m` ionnsraiad bha sin gu math taimseachadh dh`omh. Bha e cho laghach – thigeadh e dachaidh agus dh`h`has mi eol`ach air tro Iain ach cuideachd le a bhith a teagasg aig Fisean agus bha e an-còmhnaigh laghach agus a` toirt brosnachadh dh`uinn nuair a thàinnieg dh`h`eachaidh. `S iad na luchd-ciùil ainmeil ris an robh sinn a` toirt spèis agus urram.

Iain: Very much so. As I mentioned earlier on I was lucky growing up with a father who was a piper and a fiddler. Piping is probably the strongest thing in our family. I play the pipes as well and I think I`m the third or fourth generation that`s turned out as a piper.

Laura: Were there lots of ceilidhs? Ingrid: There was loads of ceilidhs in our house and in your house Iain and now in our house! Tha constant ceilidhs and loads of music.

Laura: Who were the well known local musicians when you were growing up? Ingrid: The well known local musicians were Aonghas Grant – he would be in there and Aonghas Grant is still a well known local musician. Fearchar MacRae, fiddler and box player who was actually a neighbour of Iain`s in Glenfinnan. I suppose Iain`s father, although he wasn`t well known in terms of being out playing all over the place - but those there were held up as being very strong Highland characters and Lochaber characters I would say. So Charlie MacFarlane, Fearchar MacRae and Aonghas Grant but also when I was younger Iain MacDonald from Glenuig, he was playing with the band Ossian and The Battlefield Band and for a young musician learning my instrument that was quite appealing for me. He was so nice – he would come home and I got to know him through Iain but also through teaching at Fisean and he was always very nice and encouraging when he came back home. So they would be the big well known musicians that you would have looked up to and respected.
Iain: Tha mise cha mhòr an aon rud. Tòrr de na h-ainmean a bha aig Ingrid an sin, ’s e nàbaidean, caraidean no athraichean dhomh! Cha robh m’ athair a-riamh a’ cluich gu coimeitealta, cha robh e a’ cluich aig bainsean, tiodhlanan no rudan mar sin. Ach, bha bràithreachear Fearnach MacRath nan deagh fidhileanar cuideachd, Dòmhnall agus Dougie MacRath agus bha iad ann a’ chomhlan ciùil Rois Bheinn aig nach eil cuimhne agam a’ch sia an còmhlan-ciùil ainmeil timcheall an sùgir againg. Cuideachd, bha buaidh mhòr aig Fergie Dòmhnallach orm nuair a bha mi òg. Bha mi air faibh a’ cluich aig dannsaichean còmhlis ris aig na deireadh seachdalean airson mòran bhliadhnaichean. B’ a’ bhàithais Iain MacLauchlan ùi Uibhist a cluich aig cuid dannsaichean aig am na Nollaig agus a Bhliadhna Ûr agus dhèanadh e an-còmhnaideach ciùlidh a’ Bhliadhna Ùire ann an Gleann Fhionnainn – ’s e righ den bhghosa putain a bh’ ann agus bha e a-riamh na onair a bhith a’ suidhe agus a’ cluich còmhlis ris na dannsaichean. Bha mise gu math òg aig an am. Na Burns cuideachd, Larry Burns agus a bhraithreachan Ewan agus Jimmy, bha còmhla danna aca agus bha iad a’ cluich gu tric aig na dannsaichean ann an Gleann Fhionnainn nuair a bha mi òg. Bhidhion còmhlan-ciuil bhò aiteachan eile a’ tighinn an ùireann agus bha còmhlan air a roh Wild Geese a’ bha a bhàith thuiginn gach bhliadhna. B’ e luchd-ciuil gò sàrnail ann a bh’ annta, Gerry O’Connor air banjo agus fidhilean agus Manus Lunny a tha a’-ris a’ cluich le Capercaille. Bha còmhain mar Ossian agus na bràithreacha Dòmhnallach agus an Uisdean Ùighe, Andy Irvine, Kieran Goss – daoine a bha math air a’ a’dhòmhuil òrain. Bha e math dha-ri-rìrbh – bha tòrr luach-ciuil a’ cluich beò a chuir buaidh orm.

Laura: Cò ris a bha Oidhche Shìmhla, Nollaig agus a’ Bhliadhna Ûr coltach?

Ingrid: Anns an sgìre seo tha mi a’ smaointinn gu hheil e dìreach mar a bha e anns na seann lâtean. Tha daoine a’ dol mun cuairt air na taighgean agus a’ deànann ciùiidhean agus a’ dol a-staigh air an roh Wild Geese a bha a bhaith thuighinn gach bhliadhna. ’S e deagh rud a th’ ann a bh’ ann a smaointinn. Tha an am na Nollaig, thàinig disfach oir ’s ann mu dheidhinn an teaghlach a tha e agus tha gu math saoghal a chàireachd a dìreach a bh’ ann. Aig a Bhliadhna Ùr tha sin a’ dol mun cuairt air na nàbaidean agus ann an Gleann Fhionnainn tha e uabhasach, ach ann am Malaig bha sin e a’ dol timcheall na taighgean cuideachd. Tha Gleann Fhionnainn uabhasach math a chionn ’s gu hheil e beag.

Ingrid: Anns an sgìre seo tha mi a’ smaointinn gu bheil e dìreach mar Ùr coltach?

Laura: What was Halloween, Christmas and New Year like?

Ingrid: In this area I think it’s just like it was in the old days. People go round the houses and have a ciùlidh they go in with a pet or something like that and just have a dram, singing and getting the craic. It’s a great thing I think. Christmas is a bit different because it’s about the family and that’s very important for lots of people. At New Year we go round the neighbours and in Glenfinnan it’s great, but in Mallag we went round the houses too. Glenfinnan is great because it’s a small place.

Iain: Tha mise cho mhòr an aon rud. Tòrr de na h-ainmean a bha aig Ingrid an sin, ’s e nàbaidean, caraidean no athraichean dhomh! Cha robh m’ athair a-riamh a’ cluich gu coimeitealta, cha robh e a’ cluich aig bainsean, tiodhlanan no rudan mar sin. Ach, bha bràithreachear Fearnach MacRath nan deagh fidhileanar cuideachd, Dòmhnall agus Dougie MacRath agus bha iad ann a’ chomhlan ciùil Rois Bheinn aig nach eil cuimhne agam a’ch sia an còmhlan-ciùil ainmeil timcheall an sùgir againg. Cuideachd, bha buaidh mhòr aig Fergie Dòmhnallach orm nuair a bha mi òg. Bha mi air faibh a’ cluich aig dannsaichean còmhlis ris aig na deireadh seachdalean airson mòran bhliadhnaichean. B’ a’ bhàithais Iain MacLauchlan ûi Uibhist a cluich aig cuid dannsaichean aig am na Nollaig agus a Bhliadhna Ûr agus dhèanadh e an-còmhnaideach ciùlidh a’ Bhliadhna Ùire ann an Gleann Fhionnainn – ’s e righ den bhghosa putain a bh’ ann agus bha e a-riamh na onair a bhith a’ suidhe agus a’ cluich còmhlis ris na dannsaichean. Bha mise gu math òg aig an am. Na Burns cuideachd, Larry Burns agus a bhraithreachan Ewan agus Jimmy, bha còmhla danna aca agus bha iad a’ cluich gu tric aig na dannsaichean ann an Gleann Fhionnainn nuair a bha mi òg. Bhidhion còmhlan-ciuil bhò aiteachan eile a’ tighinn an ùireann agus bha còmhlan air a roh Wild Geese a bha a bhaith thuighinn gach bhliadhna. ’S e deagh rud a th’ ann a bh’ ann a smaointinn. Tha an am na Nollaig, thàinig disfach oir ’s ann mu dheidhinn an teaghlach a tha e agus tha gu math saoghal a chàireachd a dìreach a bh’ ann. Aig a Bhliadhna Ùr tha sin a’ dol mun cuairt air na nàbaidean agus ann an Gleann Fhionnainn tha e uabhasach, ach ann am Malaig bha sin e a’ dol timcheall na taighgean cuideachd. Tha Gleann Fhionnainn uabhasach math a chionn ’s gu hheil e beag.

Laura: Ingrid: What was Halloween, Christmas and New Year like?

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Iain: When I young my parents had the hotel and at New Year everybody gathered outside in front of the hotel at midnight, Hogmanay, and my father played the pipes and there was a big reel, maybe forty people dancing an eightsome reel, or a forty-two-some reel! The old folks would fire guns at midnight. After that, they went round the village visiting other people, the old folks and things like that. There would be a bottle of whisky or a pet or something. Christmas was quite quiet, just everybody at home and we would be up at the church at midnight. Not much happened Christmas day but Boxing Day there would be ceilidhs and things like that.
Laura: A bheil thu eòlach air saobh-chràbhadh ionadail?
Iain: Ann ann Geann Fhionnainn fhèin b’ àbhaist sgeulachd a bhith ann mu dheidhinn each a chaidh a chuinnitinn anns a’ viaduct a thuit ann nuair a bha iad a’ fallbhachadh cart de chlachan agus chaidh e a dhoirtachadh agus bha aca ri ga mhàrabhadh taobh a-staigh stac a’ viaduct. Tha cuid dhaoine ag ràdh gun do chuala iad sin. Dh’hàis sinn suas a’ chuinnitinn an sgeulachd sin ach nas aon mìche nam bheatha, leugh mi àiteachan nach b’ ann sa viaduct sin a bha e ach ann an viaduct Loch an Uamh nas fhaid san a dh’ionnsaigh Malaig! Seach sin, tha daoine air taibhsean fhaicinn san taigh-òsta ann an Geann Fhionnainn. Bha tè ’am boireannach liath’ a chuir iad air agus tha gu léor air sin fhaicinn agus tha daoine a tha air a bhith boichte dh’han taigh-òsta agus tha leòr air a hais a bh’ann na toglachd seo a tha dhà no trì ceud bliadhnaichean de dh’aois.

Laura: A bheil sgeulachdan no fiosrachadh inntinneach agaibh mu dheidhinn ainmean-àite ionadail?
Iain: Tha meall de dh’ainmean-àite mu chuairt sa bhailte againn agus tha na beanntan àrda mu chuairt agus tha tòrr a’ bhanntain air, Meall a’ Bhàinne agus Sgùr Ghiubhsachain agus tha iad a’ ciialachadh seòrsa de topographical descriptions. ’S e loch fior-uisge a th’ ann an Loch Shiel.
Seile ann an Gleann Fhionnainn agus tha an abhainn aig Calp a’ tighinn sios agus tha clach ann agus s’e Sgeir an Ròin an t-a’inn a th’air. Tha meall de dhaoine a’ faighneachd dhomhsa, ‘Carson a tha sgeir ann an Loch Seile leis an ainn Sgeir an Ròin? Ach, bha na ròin a’ dol às deidh na bradain nuair a bha iad a’ tighinn a-staigh sa loch aig Àth Tharracail agus bhiodh iad a’ sàmath suas gu ceann na locha agus bhiodh iad a’ laighge agus a’ leigeil anail air an sgeir sin. Chunnaic mi fhein na ròin air agus bidh e a’ tachairt.

Laura: A bheil sibh eòlach air sgeulachdan sam bith eile?
Iain: Tha Gleann Fhionnainn ainmeil airson a’ chlach-chuimhne a bha a’ comharrachadh eiridh bratach nan Seumasach leis a’ Phrionnosa Tearlach. Ann an 1745 ruig e Eirisgeidh agus an uair sin chaidh e a thoirt gu Loch nan Uamh agus bh’ e an uair sin ga thoirt dha aite ris an canadh iad Forsaidh faisg air Gleann Úige. Choisich e an uair sin dha ceann eile Loch Seile, aite ris an canadh iad Dalilea, agus an uair sin chaidh e a thoirt air bata seachd mile deug gu Gleann Fhionnainn far an do thachair sluaigh MacDhòmhnaill Dhuih bh ris. Bha da mhile fireannaithe deònach a shabad air cruinmeanadh aig ceann na locha agus thog iad bratach nan Seumasach an sin airson an cothrom mu dheireadh aca – airson an cultur, an dòigh-beatha, an cànan, an talamh. Sin far an do thoisich e uile.

Laura: A bheil dad eile eige a’ bha eadadh a dh’fhaodadh a bhith feumail dh’inn?
Iain: Uill, feumaidh tu a bhith a’ cumail a’ dol leis a’ Ghàidhlig agus ma tha uidd agaibh faumaidh tu a chumail a’ dol a’ cruinmeanadh stoiridhean agus fiosrachadh mu dheireadh a’ Ghàidhealtachd agus Loch Abar. Tha e gu math iainmeanach agus nuair a tha thu a’ bruidhinn ri daoine eile, tha e a’ toirt dh’inn deilbh mòr den aite againn far a bheil sinn a fuireach agus a’ bhuaidh a tha e a’ cur fior m – ged nach eil fios agad uaireannan – tha seo a’ cur buaidh air a h-uile duine againn.

Laura: A bheil eòlach air sgeulachdan sam bith eile?
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Laura: Do you have any other stories?
Iain: Glenfinnan is famous for the Glenfinnan monument which marked the raising of the Jacobite standard with Bonnie Prince Charlie. In 1745 he arrived in Eriskay and then he was taken inland to Loch nan Uamh and he was then taken to a place called Forsay near Glenug. He was then walked over to the other end of Loch Shiel, a place called Dalilea and they then took him by boat the seventeen miles up to Glenfinnan where he was met by Cameron of Lochiel's men. There was about two thousand fighting men gathered at the head of the loch and they raised the Jacobite standard there to fight for the last chance at the cause – for nothing other than their culture, their way of life, their language, their land. That's where it all took off from.

Laura: Is there anything else you know that might be useful for us?
Iain: Well, you should keep up the Gaelic and if you have an interest you should keep collecting stories and information about the Highlands and Lochaber. It’s really interesting and when you are talking to other people, it gives you a bigger picture of the place we live in and the influence it has on us – although sometimes we don’t know it – it influences all of us.
“Tha mi às Na Garbh Chriochan agus bha m’ athair à Cnòideart – tha sin beagan tuath air Malaig. Agus chan ann an sin a rugadh mi, ach ‘s ann an Gleann Úige a rugadh mise, dìreach mu chòig mìle às a’ seo.”

Agallamh còmhla ri Iain MacMhaighstir
Interview with Iain MacMaster

Dòmhnull: Am bruidhinn sibh beagan mu ur deidhinn fhèin, cò às a tha sibh agus càite an deach ur togail?
Iain: Tha mi às Na Garbh Chriochan agus bha m’ athair à Cnòideart – tha sin beagan tuath air Malaig. Agus chan ann an sin a rugadh mi, ach ’s ann an Gleann Úige a rugadh mise, dìreach mu chòig mìle às a’ seo.

Joanne: Càite an deach sibh dhan sgoil?
Iain: Chaidh mi dhan sgoil ann an Gleann Úige an toiseach.

Joanne: An do chòrd e ribh?
Iain: Ò tha fhios gun do chòrd e glè mhath rium. Bha e na sgoil bheag agus tha fhios gun robh seachd deug nuair a bha mise ann. Mu sheachd deug tha mi an dùil.

Dòmhnull: Dè obair a th’ agaibh?
Iain: ‘S e obair dealain a bha mi a’ dèanamh thairis air a’ chuid mhòr de dl’Alba agus beagan de Shasainn. Eilean I cuideachd, chuir mi solas dealain a-staigh do dl’Eilean I uaireigin. ‘S e sin ann obair a lean mi a’ chuid mhòr dhe mo shaoghal.

Joanne: An urrainn dhuibh ag innse dhuinn mun Fhèis agus mar a tha sibh fhèin air a bhith an sàs thairis air na bliadhnaichean?
Iain: Bha mi ag innse roimhe, bha boireannach ag obair anns an dùthaich seo, anns Na Criochan seo, Margaret Mulholland, bha i na community education officer agus bha uiddh aice ann an obair na Fèisean. Bha nòisean aice Fèis a startadh mu Na Criochan seo. Bha meetings aice ann an seo anns an talla, tha mi an dùil, agus bha duine no dhà an cruinn ann agus chaidh e aontachadh gum feuchaimid ri
Donald: Do you remember when you would hear Gaelic being spoken in Lochaber?
Iain: Yes I have some memory of that, yes.

Joanne: Was there music in your house when you were growing up?
Iain: There wasn't music in our own house, no. But, there was a lot of music around us – fiddle and accordion and things like that. None of my own family at that time were playing music. There were pipers amongst us before that but not in my generation. There was a lot of music around The Bounds here, oh yes.

Donald: Dè na tachartasan mòra nuair a bha sibh òg?
Iain: Bha an cogadh mòr eadar '39 agus '45. Bha sin a' dol air adhart an uair sin. 'S e tachartas mòr gu leòr a bha sin. A leithid sin, thug sin buaidh air a h-uile àite.

Joanne: Cò ris a bha oidhche Shamhna, Nollaig agus a' Bhliadhna Ùr coltach?
Iain: Ò bha iad gu math sunndach mar as trice. Bha daoine gu math tric a' coinneachadh sna taighean ri chèile agus bhiodh iad a' gabhail órain is ceòl gu leòr a' dol. Bhiodh iad a' dannsa agus bha iad sunndach gu leòr mar a bu trice. Bha.

Donald: Do you have any stories or interesting information about local place-names?
Iain: They say anyway, rightly or wrongly, that it is Àth Tharracail [Acharacle] and Torcuil was, I expect, a Viking and a part of it was the river where he walked across – Torcuil's ford.

Joanne: Do you know anything else that might be useful to us?
Iain: My daughter is involved in the Fèis now and I was myself, I was involved from when it started. I retired from it four years ago and I was there every year until then. I have to say that I enjoyed it and I still enjoy seeing how the Fèis is going.
“Gach pìos dhen àite bha ainm air, gach cnoc, gach pìos abhainn, gach pìos dhen chladach, na sgeirean uile, na clachan air a’ chladach bha ainmean orra.”

Agallamh còmhla ri Catriona Nic an t-Saoir
Interview with Catriona MacIntyre

Rosa: Am bruiddinn sibh beagan mu ur deidhinn fhèin, cò às a tha sibh agus càite an deach ur togail?
Catriona: Tha mi à Uibhist a Deas, rugadh agus thogadh mi ann an Uibhist a Deas agus tha mi a-nist a’ fuireach sa Ghearasan agus tha mi air a bhith a’ fuireach sa Ghearasan bho chionn dà fhichead bliadhna.

Rosa: Càite an deach sibh dhan sgoil? An do chòrd e ribh?
Catriona: Chaidh mi dhan sgoil anns an Ìochdar ann an Uibhist a Deas an toiseachd. An uair sin, nuair a bha mi dà bhliadhna deug, chaidh mi dhan sgoil ann an Dalabrog an ceann eile Uibhist a Deas agus an uair sin b’ fhéudar dhomh an taigh fhàgail. Nuair a bha mi sia bliadhna deug thàinig mi dhan Ghearasan dhan sgoil agus bha mi an sin airson dà bhliadhna. An do chòrd e rium? Chòrd a’ bhun-sgoil rium – bha a’ bhun-sgoil fior mhath. Bha a’ bhun-sgoil faisg air dhan dachaigh agam agus bha sinn direach a’ coiseachd ann. Bha mòran chloinne eile mu chuairt agus bhith amaid a’ coiseachd dhan sgoil còmhla agus a’ chúch còmhla bha na h-aon chur-seachadan againn. Nuair a chaidh mi dhan ìar-sgoil aig dà bhliadhna deug, cha do chòrd sin rium a chinnoch’s gun robh mi air falbh bhan dachaigh agus bha mi còmhla rì clann air nach robh mi eòlach. Bha mi a’ fuireach ann an taigh anns an taigh anns nach robh mi eòlach agus cha robh mi a’ fhaighinn dhachaigh agh eile ainneamh – cha robh sin a’ còrdadh riom uabhachadh math. An uair sin nuair a bha mi na bu shine agus thàinig mi dhan sgoil dhan Ghearasan – bha sin na b’ fhèarr. Tha mi a’ smaointinn gun robh mi fhìn na bu shine agus bha e nas fhasa dhomh a bhith air falbh bhan taigh. Chòrd sin rium na b’ fhèarr – an dà bhliadhna sin a bha mi sa Ghearasan. Ach, chòrd a’ bhun-sgoil rium gu mòr. Bha e uabhachadh math sa bhun-sgoil agus bha mòran chloinne sa bhun-sgoil aig an am sin anns an Ìochdar - ‘s dòcha mu leth-cheud.

Rosa: Dè obair a th’ agaibh?
Catriona: ‘S e tidsear a tha air a bhith annam ach chan eil mi ag obair a-nis. Tha mi air mo dhreuchd a leigeil dhiom. Ach, bha mi a’ teagas airson faisg air

Rosa: Can you say a bit about yourself, where are you from and where were you brought up?
Catriona: I’m from South Uist, I was born and brought up in South Uist and have lived in Fort William for forty years.

Rosa: Where did you go to school? Did you enjoy it?
Catriona: I went to school in Iochdar in South Uist. Then, when I was twelve years old, I went to school in Daliburgh in South Uist and had to be away from home. When I was sixteen years old I came to Fort William to school and was there for two years. Did I enjoy it? I enjoyed primary school – the primary school was really good. The primary school was near my home and we walked there. There were lots of other children in our village and we walked and played together. I didn’t enjoy high school as I was away from home. I got home very rarely – I didn’t like that very much. When I was older and in school in Fort William that was better. I really enjoyed the primary school. There were a lot of children in the primary school in Iochdar at that time – maybe around fifty.

Rosa: What is your job?
Catriona: I was a teacher and am now retired. I taught for nearly forty years, at first through
Rosa: An urrainn dhuibh ag innse dhuinn mun Fhèis agus mar a tha sibh fhèin air a bhith an sàs thairis air na bliadhnaichean? Dè na cuimheachan a th' agaibh bhon Fhèis?
Catriona: Thoisich mi an toiseachd air obair còmhla ri Fèisean nuair a bha mi ag obair an seo ann an Sgoil Àth Tharracail agus bha Fèis nan Garbh Chrìochan dìreach air tòiseachadh. Bha mi a' faicinn am feum mhath a bha e a’ déanamh dhan chloinn agus chaidh mi air a’ chomataidh agus bha mi fad mòran bhliadhnaichean a’ cuideachadh a’ cur na Fèise air doigh agus a’ brosnachadh na Fèise anns an sgoil. Thoisich sinn air classaichean a dhéanamh gach seachdain agus bha sinn a’ déanamh sin aig am sgoile. Bha sin uabhasach math a chionn san sgre seo tha e cho sgapte agus cha robh e furasta dhan chloinn tighinn gu classaichean an déidh na sgoile, ma bha iad a’ dol dhachaigh às an sgoile cha robh e furasta dhathadh gu classaichean agus thoisich sinn na classaichean aig am na sgoile – classaichean Fèis. Bha sin aig obair fior m mhath. Thoisich mi air obair còmhla ri Fèis Lochabair car mun aon òm oir bha mi fhathast a’ fuireach sa Ghearasadhan. Bha mi air a' chomataidh a’ sin agus bha mi a’ cuideachadh a’ cur na Fèisean air doigh fad mòran bhliadhnaichean. 'S e Fèis eadar-dhealaichte a bha sin a chionn ‘s nach robh clann a’ fuireach againn. Bha a h-uile duine a’ tighinn sa mhadainn agus a’ dol dhachaigh feasgar. Bha an dà Fhèis gu math eadar-dhealaichte ach ‘s e Fèisean math a bh’ annsta le chèile agus tha a th’ annsta fhathast le chèile.

Rosa: A bheil cuimheachan agaibh an am nuair a chluinneadh sibh Gàidhlig air a bruidhinn ann an Loch Abar?
Catriona: Uill, ‘s ann an Uibhist a chaidh mise a thogail agus ‘s e Gàidhlig an cànan a bh’ ainig a h-uile duine. ‘S e Gàidhlig a bha a h-uile duine mu chuirte oirn a’ bruidhinn agus ‘s e Gàidhlig an cànan a bha san sgoil ged nach robh iad a’ teagasg tro Gàidhlig agus cha robh sinn a’ cleachdadh Gàidhlig anns na classaichean – ‘s e Gàidhlig a bha sinn a’ cleachdadh nuair a bha sinn a’ cluich a’-muigh agus a’ deannmh a h-uile sian eile sa choimhearsnachd againn. Nuair a thàinig mi a Loch Abar bha daoine mun cuairt orm aig an robh Gàidhlig a' chlaidheanhaichd a the medium of English and then as a Gaelic medium teacher.

Rosa: Can you tell us about the Feis and how you have been involved over the years? What are your memories of the Feis?
Catriona: I first worked with Fèisean when I taught in Acharacle School and Fèis nan Garbh Chrìochan had just been set up. I saw how well the children responded and joined the committee. For many years I helped to organise the Fèis and encouraged children to participate. We introduced weekly Fèisean classes during school time and that was important as it wasn’t easy for the children to come to classes after school. Those classes worked very well. I became involved with Fèis Lochabair at about the same time as I was living in Fort William. I was a committee member for both Fèisean and helped with organisation for many years. The Fèisean are quite different as children aren’t accommodated at Fèis Lochabair. Both are excellent Fèisean.

Rosa: Do you remember when you would hear Gaelic being spoken in Lochaber?
Catriona: I was brought up in Uist and Gaelic was our language. Everyone spoke Gaelic and though Gaelic wasn’t taught or used in the classroom at school it was the language used when we played outside and for everything else in the community. When I came to Lochaber I knew many people who spoke Gaelic, especially as many islanders lived in the area at that time. I was also aware of the local dialect - Lochaber
chionn’s gun robb móran às na h-eileanan a’ fuireach ann an Loch Abar aig an âm sin. Agus cuideachd, bha mi a’ chuíntinn Gàidhlig na sgìre, Gàidhlig Loch Abar. Tha móran dhàoine a’ fuireach ann an sgìre a’ Ghearadsean aig a bhel Gàidhlig na àite.

Rosa: An robh ceol aig an taigh nuair a bha sibh a’ fás suas? An robh ceilidhean ann agus cò na ceoladairean ainmeil aig an àm?


Rosa: An robh thu a’ fuireach air croit agus a bhiel croitearachd air atharrachadh?

Catriona: ’S ann air croit a bha mi a’ fuireach nuair a bha mi òg ach chan e croit uabhasach mòr a bh’ ann idir. Bha direach dà bheathach-mairst agus laighigh, caoraich, cerran an t-ùsagagainn aig bheathaiche. Bha sinn a’ donnadh obair na croite fad na bliadhna agus cha robh robh trachtar againn – s each a bha aig’ m’ athair. Bhiodh e a’ treabhadh leis an each agus bhiodh arbhhar an uisge agus feur againn agus bhithean a’ fheòr aig an t-sìdhe dona agus bha mòran obair fad na bliadhna anns a’ gheamhradh ann. Fad a’ gheamhradh bha an t-sìdhe dona agus bha na taighin fuar agus a’ tighinn. Bha dihit na tachartasan a bh’ ann fad na bliadhna anns a’ Gàidhlig an àite.

Catriona: Cha robh airtharachd na croite san taigh againn ach bha na taighin fuar agus a’ tighinn. Bha dìreach na tachartasan a bh’ ann fad na bliadhna anns a’ Gàidhlig an àite.

Catriona: Dè na tachartasan mòra nuair a bha sibh òg?

Rosa: Dè na tachartasan mòra nuair a bha sibh òg?

Catriona: Cha robh mòran tachartasan san sgìre nuair a bha mise òg. Cha robh ann ach aìte car iomallach is fada air falbh agus cha robh mòran luach-dturais a’ tìginn. Bha direach na tachartasan a bha san aìte fhéin fad na bliadhna ann. Fad a’ gheamhradh bha an t-sìde dona agus bha na taighshe fhair agus bha sinn uile tric. Bhiodh na beathaichean na la féidir a’ chluich a chòir. As t-earraich, bha mòran oibrach a’ dol – a’ treabhadh agus a’ cur. As t-samhradh, bhitheamaithe a’ buain

Rosa: Tha mòran dhaoine a’ ngaothadh a’ bhith a’ fheòr aَ the bhal, agus thachartasan a bh’ ann fad na bliadhna anns a’ Gàidhlig an àite.

Catriona: Cha robh aireachadh na croite san taigh againn ach bha na taighin fuar agus a’ tighinn. Bha dìreach na tachartasan a bh’ ann fad na bliadhna anns a’ Gàidhlig an àite.

Catriona: Tha mòran de na tachartasan a bh’ ann fad na bliadhna anns a’ Gàidhlig an àite.

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an fhéoir agus an arbhair agus a-ríthist ag obair mu chuairt air sin. Foghar – an aer rud agus bhiodh a’ bhliadhna a’ dol seachad mar sin. Bha sinn a’ cuimhneachadh na Nollaig agus a’ Bhliadhna Ùr gu mòr – bha sin a’ còrdadh rinn. ‘S ann gu math abhaisteach a bhua a’ bheatha againn. Cha robh sinn a’ dol air làithean-saora agus cha robh daoine a’ tighinn air làithean-saora ach ’s docha dìreach na aunties againn fhin. Thigeadh iad dhachaigh airson seachdadh no dhà a s t-samhradh.

Rosa: Có ris a bhà ide an fhéin Shàmhna, Nollaig agus a’ Bhliadhna Ùr coltach?

Catriona: Bha oidhche Shàmhna glè mhath agus bhithreamaid uile a’ dol a-mach oideach Shàmhna is a’ dol mu chuairt na taighean agus bha sinn a’ fàighinn dìreach rud sam bith a bhua aig na daoine. Bhà iad ga theòrith dhìunn. Bhithreamaid a’ deànmh ar n-aodannan agus gan cuir cùinn. Bha Nollaig a’ gaisinne uabhasach matb. Bhà auntie againn a’ fuireach ann an Sasainn agus bhiodh iad donannan a’ cur rudan thugann aig a’ Nollaig. Cha robh sinn a’ fàighinn mòran aig an t-ainmigh a bha robh sam bith a bhiodh a’ dol mu chuairt na taighean càch a chèile. Bhà mòran seo as a’ Bheatha agus ceòl agus sgeulachdan agus rudan mar sin a’ dol.

Rosa: A bhith eòlach air saobh-chràbhaidhean ionadail idir?

Catriona: Tha mi a’ creidsinn gun robh beagan dheth ann ach feumaidh mi ràdh nach eil mi fhìn a’ creidsinn mòran ann. Ach, bhà na seann dhàoine a’ creidsinn ann – bha dòigh glè tràth a bhà bhithreamaid a’ dol an fhàtarluidh in ainme an t-aodannan agus d’fhithreamadu tu an deànmh san doigh ceart. Nam biodh iad a’ deànmh obair sam bith, bhiodh iad a’ dol mu chuairt aisteal agus a bhà thu ga deànmh an taobh ceàrr bha thu ga dhèanann an aghaidh an ranna. Bhiodh daoine donannan a’ coinheadh gun robh thu a’ deànmh rudan mar a bhà freagarrach agus ceart.

Rosa: A bhith iad eòlach air saobh-chràbhaidhean ionadail idir?

Catriona: Tha mi a’ creid a bha oideach Shàmhna, Nollaig agus a’ Bhliadhna Ùr coltach a bhà eòlach air saobh-chràbhaidhean ionadail idir?
“Uill, bha mi a’ mealtainn na seann daoine a bha a’ bruidhinn Gàidhlig nuair a bha mi òg agus sin mar a fhuair mi Gàidhlig – a’ bruidhinn ris na seann daoine.”

**Agallamh còmhla ri Raghnall Caimbeul**

**Interview with Ronald Campbell**

Ally: Am bruidhinn sibh beagan mu ur deidhinn fhéin, cò às a tha sibh agus cáite an deach ur togail?
Raghnall: Tha mise à Both-chunndainn, Drochaid Ruaidh ann an Gleann Ruaidh. Rugadh mi ann an Both-chunndainn.

Ally: Cáite an deach sibh dhan sgoil?
Raghnall: Chaidh mi gu Sgoil Drochaid Ruaidh agus às deidh sin chaithd mi gu Sgoil-àrd a’ Ohearasdain.

Ally: Dè obair a th’ agaibh?
Raghnall: Tha mi ag obair air croitearachd agus ciobaireachd agus bha mi a’ sealg na stionnaich. Tha crodh is caoraich agam air a’ chroit.

Ally: An urrainn dhuibh bruidhinn mu dheidhinn an Fhèis agus mar a tha sibh fhéin air a bhith an sàs thairis air na bliadhnaichean?
Raghnall: Cha deach mi do mhòran Fèisean – cha robh mòran Fèisean ach ‘s e Mòd a bhiodh ann nuair a bha mise òg, ach cha robh mi a-riamh aig a Mòd ach bha mi aig fear ann am Ceap Breatainn! Ò bha e glè mhath. Shaoileadh tu nach d’fhalbh iad a-riamh bhò seo agus bha nà Gàidhlig direach mar a bha e seo fhè.

Ally: A bheil cuimhne agaibh nuair a chluinneadh sibh Gàidhlig air a bruidhinn ann an Loch Abar?
Raghnall: Uill, bha mi a’ mealtainn na seann daoine a bha a’ bruidhinn Gàidhlig nuair a bha mi òg agus sin mar a fhuair mi Gàidhlig – a’ bruidhinn ris na seann daoine.

Ally: An robh ceòl àig an taigh nuair a bha sibh a’ fàs suas? An robh ceòlthrainn ann? Cò na ceòladairean a’ bheil à bh’ ann aig an àm?
Raghnall: Ò bha an fhidheal ann. Aig taigh nan ceòlthainn bhi dhìn an fhidheall an sin. Bhiodh Dòmhnall Mor, Dòmhnall Dòmhnallach

Ally: Can you say a bit about yourself, where are you from and where were you brought up?
Ronald: I am from Bohunte, Roy Bridge in Glen Roy. I was born in Bohunte.

Ally: Where did you go to school?
Ronald: I went to Roy Bridge School and after that I went to the high school in Fort William.

Ally: What is your job?
Ronald: I’m work at the crofting and shepherding and I was hunting the foxes. I have cattle and sheep on the croft.

Ally: Can you tell us about the Fèis and how you have been involved over the years?
Ronald: I didn’t go to many Fèisean – there weren’t many Fèisean but there would be the Mod when I was young, but I was never at the Mod but I was at one in Cape Breton! Oh it was really good. You would think that they never left from here and their Gaelic was just like it was here.

Ally: Do you remember Gaelic being spoken in Lochaber?
Ronald: Well, I enjoyed being with the old folks that spoke Gaelic when I was young and that’s how I got Gaelic – talking to the old folks.

Ally: Was there music in your house when you were growing up? Were there ceilidhs? Who were the well known musicians at the time?
Ronald: Oh there was the fiddle. It was at the ceilidh house – the fiddle would be there. There would be Big Donald, Donald MacDonald from Keppoch, he was the best and
Iain Kennedy from Achluachrach. There was a crowd of them that played the fiddle.

Ally: Has crofting changed from when you were young?
Ronald: Oh they would come, yes. They always had a horse and they said they would get a bag of fodder for the horse. They never went on without some hay or fodder for the horse. They always said to me, ‘There you have the folk that never left on the boats when they went abroad during the Clearances.’ The travelling folk were the natives of the place. A lot of them had Gaelic and they made the cans for carrying milk. They were very good at soldering.

Ally: What was it like when the traveller folk came?
Ronald: Oh they would come, yes. They always had a horse and they said they would get a bag of fodder for the horse. They never went on without some hay or fodder for the horse. They always said to me, ‘There you have the folk that never left on the boats when they went abroad during the Clearances.’ The travelling folk were the natives of the place. A lot of them had Gaelic and they made the cans for carrying milk. They were very good at soldering.

Ally: What were the big events when you were young?
Ronald: Now, the factory came, the British Aluminium Company. That was a big thing. They took the water from the glens and they took it down to Fort William and they made the aluminium there. That was a big event in Lochaber.

Ally: What was Halloween and Christmas like?
Ronald: Well, at Halloween the calves would become stirks.

Ally: Do you know any local superstitions?
Ronald: Oh that would be there right enough. They wouldn’t harvest the hay on a Saturday - that was one thing.

Ally: Do you know anything else that might be useful to us?
Ronald: Well there was a good story about when the Hydro work came. There was a man, Iain Campbell [Lipton] was his name and he was in Murlagan and he said to himself, ‘Maybe I’ll open a shop, and he went away down to Glasgow to get stuff for the shop. He was coming back on the train and he lit his pipe – he got tobacco and he lit his pipe coming down Corruor. A gentleman came on the train and he wasn’t at all happy with the smoking. Anyway Iain Campbell was coming off the train at Tulloch and oh when they were near Tulloch the gentleman jumped up - when he came on the train he put two big hares up on the shelf and he took a nap and he pulled the pipe from Lipton’s mouth and he threw it out of the window. Lipton jumped up and he threw the two hares! The train stopped at the station and Lipton went out the other side of the train and they wanted the police! ‘Where’s the man?’ ‘There’s not a man here.’ ‘Oh well, I can’t keep the train here any longer,’ and the train left. Lipton went away up the railway and he got his pipe and took the two hares home.
“Bha mòran ceòl anns an taigh nuair a bha mi òg. Bha m’ athar a’ seinn agus bha cèilidhean gu leòr aig an taigh. Bha bràithrean m’ athar a’ seinn cuideachd anns an taigh.”

Agallamh còmhla ri Alasdair Dòmhnallach
Interview with Alasdair MacDonald

Raonaid: Am bruidhinn sibh beagan mu ur deidhinn fhèin, cò às a tha sibh agus càite an deach ur togail?
Alasdair: Rugadh mi ann an Inbhir Nis agus thogadh mi ann an Caol Loch Abar.

Raonaid: Càite an deach sibh dhan sgoil? An do chòrd e ribh?
Co mheud a bha san sgoil?
Alasdair: Bha mi ann am Bun-sgoil a’ Chaoil agus bha mi ann an Àrd-sgoil Loch Abar agus bha mi ann an Àrd-sgoil Port Righ cuideachd. Chòrd a’ bhun-sgoil agus an àrd-sgoil rium agus bha mile ann an Àrd-sgoil Loch Abar agus ochd ceud ann an Àrd-sgoil Port Righ.

Raonaid: Dè an obair a th’ agaibh?
Alasdair: ‘S e innealadair a bh’ annam nuair a bha mi òg agus tha mi a' obair ann an oifis ola sa Ghearasdan a-nis.

Raonaid: An innis sibh dhluinn mu dheidhinn an Fhèis agus mar a tha sibh fhèin a bhith an sàs thairis air na bhliadhnaichean?
Alasdair: Tha mi air a bhith ann am Fèis Lochabair airson deich bliadhnaichean tha mi a’ smaoineachadh. Choimhead mi mo theaghlach a’ fás nas fhéarr a’ chluich an bogsa aig an Fhèis agus 's e rud uabhasach math a th’ ann.

Raonaid: An robh ceòl aig an taigh nuair a bha sibh a’ fás suas? An robh cèilidhdean ann?
Alasdair: Bha mòran ceòl anns an taigh nuair a bha mi òg. Bha m’ athar a’ seinn agus bha cèilidhean gu leòr aig an taigh. Bha bràithrean m’ athar a’ seinn cuideachd anns an taigh.

Rachel: Will you say a bit about yourself, where are you from and where were you brought up?
Alasdair: I was born in Inverness and I was brought up in Caol.

Rachel: Where did you go to school? Did you enjoy it? How many were in the school?
Alasdair: I was in Caol Primary School and I was in Lochaber High School and I was also in Portree High School. I enjoyed primary and secondary school and there was a thousand in Lochaber High School and eight hundred in Portree High School.

Rachel: What is your job?
Alasdair: I was an engineer when I was young and now I work in an office to do with oil in Fort William.

Rachel: Can you tell us about the Féis and how you have been involved over the years?
Alasdair: I’ve been involved in Fèis Lochabair for ten years I think. I saw my family getting better at playing the box through the Féis and it’s a great thing.

Rachel: Was there music in your house when you were growing up? Were there ceilidhs?
Alasdair: There was a lot of music at home when I was young. My father sung and there were a lot of ceilidhs at home. My father’s brothers sung at home as well.
Rachel: What were the big events when you were young?
Alasdair: The Ben Nevis race was really big when I was young.

Rachel: Do you know anything about local place-names?
Alasdair: Just Corpach – I lived in Corpach ten or eleven years ago and Corpach means 'place of the dead' - I think so anyway.

Rachel: Is there anything else that might be useful to us?
Alasdair: The Fèis in Loch Abar – it’s great and it grows year after year. There are lots of kids taking part and that’s great.
“I can’t praise the Fèisean movement highly enough for all the great work that it has done in just over a quarter of a century.”

Agallamh còmhla ri AonghasGrannd
Interview with Aonghas Grant

Alexander: Cò às a tha sibh agus càite an deach ur togail?
Aonghas: Rugadh mi ann an Dùn Èideann ann an taigh mo shean mhàthair ach chaidh mi mo thogail anns a’ Chille Chuimein.

Alexander: Where are you from and where were you brought up?
Aonghas: I was born in Edinburgh in my grandmother’s house but I was brought up in Fort Augustus.

Alexander: Càite an deach sibh dhan sgoil?
Aonghas: Cille Chuimein.

Alexander: Where did you go to school?
Aonghas: Fort Augustus.

Alexander: An do chòrd e ribh?
Aonghas: Cha do chòrd!

Alexander: Did you enjoy it?
Aonghas: No!

Alexander: An innse sibh dhuinn mun obair a bh’ agaibh?
Aonghas: Bha mi a’ ciobaireachd.

Alexander: Can you tell us about your job?
Aonghas: I was shepherding.

Alexander: Can you tell us about the Fèis and how you have been involved over the years?
Aonghas: Well I’ve been involved in the Fèis movement since the start and it has been one of the finest things that evolved in the Highlands and I wish it had happened when I was a boy. When I was a boy it was only families like my father’s people and various other families that kept the music and song and that alive and now the youngsters have such a fantastic opportunity with the Fèis. One of the great examples of Fèis nan Garbh Chrìochan here is half of the young tutors were all started as children here at the Fèis and now they are tutors at it so we hope that the next generation will continue this. I can’t praise the Fèisean movement highly enough for all the great work that it has done in just over a quarter of a century.

Alexander: What is your favourite memory of the Fèis?
Aonghas: Well it’s kind of hard to say because I have so many memories. If I joined all the Fèisean I’ve worked with over the years, up in Fèis Spè and Fèis Lochabair and Fèis nan Garbh Chrìochan, I think my favourite Fèis is Fèis nan Garbh Chrìochan but it’s the first one that started in Moidart here. I’ve made a lot of friends down here over the years and I’m very fond of coming down to around here and I teach at the school here twice a month for the Fèis. I can’t say I have any favourite special memories because they are all happy memories of the Fèis, particularly Fèis nan Garbh Chrìochan. There is always such good craic and fun at it.

Alexander: A bheil cuimhne agaibh air daoine a’ bruidhinn Gàidhlig san choimhearsnachd?
Aonghas: Ò tha cuimhne agam daoine a’ bruaidhinn a’ Ghàidhlig. Bha Gàidhlig gu leòr ann an Loch Abar agus Àrassaig agus Mùideart.
Alexander: Do you remember people speaking Gaelic in the community?
Aonghas: Oh I remember people speaking Gaelic. There was plenty Gaelic in Lochaber and Arasaig and Moidart.

Alexander: What was it like when the travelling people came?
Aonghas: Oh well when I was a boy there in Fort Augustus it was quite an event when they came. You would look forward to seeing them coming and they would always camp in the same places over the years. They were predominantly MacMillans and MacPhees and MacDonalds and they were all Gaelic speakers and the womenfolk would come to the house and they were selling milk cans and pots and pans and clothes pegs - they used to make clothes pegs and baskets. There were always two or three kids with them and there always seemed to be a baby with them wrapped in a shawl. You would always give them something - clothes for the children. We were all very friendly with them and they were part of the community at that time in the 30s and 40s. They were helpful to people because they made all these things that was necessary.

I remember an old old bodach would arrive up at the house and they would be sitting outside talking to my father and my father would give them a fill of a pipe and I realised this was the girl who had been stealing the potatoes!

“Hey! What's going on?” and the girl gave a scream and she said, ‘Oh Sir we're starving – we're only taking one or two tatties anyway!' A few days later I was coming along the road with the sheep and they were going along the straight mile, they were clearing off, and there was this lassie with long red hair, a fine looking girl and she gave me a wave and I realised this was the girl who had been stealing the potatoes!

Alexander: Was there music in your house when you were growing up?
Aonghas: The house was full of music. My father, he was a great man for Gaelic singing. There was plenty Gaelic speakers and the womenfolk would come to the house and they were selling milk cans and pots and pans and clothes pegs - they used to make clothes pegs and baskets. There were always two or three kids with them and there always seemed to be a baby with them wrapped in a shawl. You would always give them something - clothes for the children. We were all very friendly with them and they were part of the community at that time in the 30s and 40s. They were helpful to people because they made all these things that was necessary.

They were going down there so that you would never know they were there – they weren't taking out the whole shaw just one or two out of each shaw and putting the ground back so that you would never know. I came up behind them and I said, ‘Hey! What's going on?’ and the girl gave a scream and she said, ‘Oh Sir we’re starving – we only taking one or two tatties you ken.’ And I said, ‘Help yourselves – they’re not my tatties anyway!’ A few days later I was coming along the road with the sheep and they were going along the straight mile, they were clearing off, and there was this lassie with long red hair, a fine looking girl and she gave me a wave and I realised this was the girl who had been stealing the potatoes!

Alexander: Were there many ceilidhs?
Aonghas: Well, in the wintertime there would be ceilidhs and people would come to my father’s house because he was so well known as a singer and for the stories. They were mostly in the wintertime when things were quiet, they would come and tell stories and sing songs and play tunes and that was at home. Nobody would dream of playing in a pub in these days.

That was left to the travelling folk or tramps who would come in and play for a pint of beer. Nowadays you are welcomed into a pub and paid to play in a pub!

Alexander: Who were the well known local musicians?
Aonghas: Well I don’t belong over here but in Fort Augustus a lot of my father’s family had relations there and there was another family of MacDonalds who were well known Gaelic singers. Peter MacDonald and his brother and they were fiddlers as well. There was another woman and she was a very good singer – May Campbell. But at that time, when you look back on it, particularly Peter and Allan and that who were very good fiddlers, they were only known in about a thirty mile area. The like of today when you are travelling all over the place you are known all over the place. I’ve played over in America and that but they never had the opportunity but they were well known and respected locally. And in these days before the Feisean, the only outlet for music was playing at dances or weddings and the odd ceilidh. I remember during the war, there were lots of concerts to raise some money to welcome the boys home from the war – that’s when I started playing first. The first time I was playing at a concert in Fort Augustus I was playing away there and I was looking at my fingers on the fiddle and I happened to look at the audience and everybody was looking at me and I got as nervous and I don’t know how I finished the tune! To this day I don’t look at the audience I just concentrate on playing the fiddle. I think even yet it makes me nervous looking at the audience.
Alexander: What were the big events when you were young?
Aonghas: Well it was mostly the shearing in the summertime – that was a big day. We used to enjoy that. We'd be up at the fank gathering up the fleeces and they used to bump off a couple of wethers and there was all this beautiful mutton and we used to make homemade bread and mutton sandwiches. It was a great event the sheep shearing and the dipping and all that things. And of course, shinty, we all played shinty in school – I've never even played football in my life – I've never even kicked a ball! And even the girls, we used to rope in the girls to play shinty to make up a team.

Alexander: What was Halloween like?
Aonghas: Oh Halloween was quite good. Everybody used to dress up, even the grown-ups, and we would go round and some of them would be well disguised – you wouldn’t know who they were at all. They used to do lots of tricks, like take off your gate and put it in the byre or something or shift the cows out of one field into another! It was nothing bad but there would always be something. Christmas was pretty quiet and New Year too compared to nowadays. New Year was just the one day and it was about the only one time in the year that you would see somebody having a drink at the house. People in these days, there wasn’t the money around to waste on buying whisky or that so it was only about once a year you would buy it in and two or three friends would come to the house and have a dram and that was it you know. Some of the younger guys they would do tricks at New Year and I mind this old couple there and they had a pig and some of the boys came round to see them and they had a trough with the pig outside. They poured some whisky into the pigs’ trough and the pig drank it and was running round in circles! Another time they came and put whisky in the cats milk and the cat kind of went daft and ran about the house and it was hanging on the curtains and the old couple didn’t know what had happened with the cat – they thought a buidseach had come on the cat or something! Some of the young guys did this for a laugh. There was nothing nasty in it, it was just sort of thing that they did in these days. Or you would get somebody’s bicycle and hang it up on the tree or funny things like that.

Alexander: Do you know any local superstitions?
Aonghas: When I was young all the old people were very superstitious about lots of things you know. They used to be frightened of some people who they thought had the buidseach and they would put a curse on the cows and the milk would turn sour and all this sort of thing. And if you spilt salt you would have to pick another pitch and throw it over your shoulder or something would happen. There were things like that. A lot of the fishermen, if they met a red haired woman when they were going to go out fishing they would turn back because apparently it was a bad omen to meet a red haired woman so they wouldn’t go out fishing. I’m married to a red haired
woman and I’ve always caught a lot of fish so it hasn’t done any harm to me!

Alexander: Do you know any stories or interesting information about local place names?
Aonghas: When I was shepherding at the Inveralort estate at Ranochan and over on the Meoble estate there is a place called Loch an Coin Glais [loch of the grey dog] and the story of that is very interesting. Away back, a good long time ago, I think it was Gilles and he had a deer hound, a bitch, and he went away to the wars. I don’t know was it the Peninsular Wars or one of these wars out in Europe but he was away for a number of years and his bitch was in pup at the time when he left. When he left she took off and was living on this island up in Meoble and when he eventually came home they told him the bitch had left home and she was living up in the island up in the hills in Meoble in Loch Morar side. After a day or two he thought he would go up and get a hold of his bitch and he went up through the hills to the loch and he was supposed to have whistled and called her name and she recognised him and she swam across and she had about four or five grown dogs who were really wild because they had been living in the wild and they all attacked him and killed him. It is said to this day that when some of these Gilles are dying or dead this grey dog appears. It was even supposed to have appeared in America where some of the Gilles went and this was the local superstition around Morar.

Alexander: Do you know any local stories?
Aonghas: Not really round here but I know quite a few round Glengarry and Cill Chuimein [Fort Augustus]. Away back in the in 1600s, there was this Dòmhnall Donn and he was a MacDonald or a MacDonnell from Bohuntine up at Roy Bridge and he was a notorious cattle thief. It was sort of a way of life in these days, the Highlanders would go down to Stirling and that and steal the cattle and take them back and summer them on the hills. They would fatten them up and then come back to Creiff or Falkirk, An Eaglais Bhreac as it was called in Gaelic, and they would sell them back to the farmers they had stolen them from. He was quite notorious and he was a fine looking man, he was a bard and he composed lots of songs which are sung to this day. He was a great favourite with the ladies and he had two or three children all over the place and he started going with Grant of Corriemony, the chief, Glenurquhart’s daughter and he was annoyed about this notorious cattle thief having anything to do with his daughter. This time he went away up Ross-shire and he stole a lot of cattle and came back and very cheekily put the cattle into one of the parks belonging to Grants of Corriemony and sent word for the girl. So, she came down to see him and they had a meeting and in the meantime some of the Ross-shire men who were following him – they were kind of frightened to tackle him because he had a few men with him and he was a famous swordsman. They spotted the cattle in the field and they went up and told Grant, ‘There’s Dòmhnall Donn and he’s stolen cattle and it’s in one of your fields here. Grant of Corriemony was delighted and said, ‘This is our chance – we’ll get him.’ One of the servant girls heard him and she ran away down and told her mistress and Dòmhnall Donn got away and escaped before they caught him. He was living in a cave at Alt Sigh up near Invermoriston and some of the Grants of Invermoriston, my own clan, he was quite friendly with them because he had never stolen any cattle from them and they were supplying him with food. Eventually after a while, Grant of Corriemony found out he was going with Grant of Corriemony. The chief, Glenurquhart’s daughter and he was annoyed about this notorious cattle thief having anything to do with his daughter. This time he went away up Ross-shire and he stole a lot of cattle and came back and very cheekily put the cattle into one of the parks belonging to Grants of Corriemony and sent word for the girl. So, she came down to see him and they had a meeting and in the meantime some of the Ross-shire men who were following him – they were kind of frightened to tackle him because he had a few men with him and he was a famous swordsman. They spotted the cattle in the field and they went up and told Grant, ‘There’s Dòmhnall Donn and he’s stolen cattle and it’s in one of your fields here. Grant of Corriemony was delighted and said, ‘This is our chance – we’ll get him.’ One of the servant girls heard him and she ran away down and told her mistress and Dòmhnall Donn got away and escaped before they caught him. He was living in a cave at Alt Sigh up near Invermoriston and some of the Grants of Invermoriston, my own clan, he was quite friendly with them because he had never stolen any cattle from them and they were supplying him with food. Eventually after a while, Grant of Corriemony found out he was going with Grant of Corriemony.

“I remember during the war, there were lots of concerts to raise some money to welcome the boys home from the war – that’s when I started playing first. The first time I was playing at a concert in Fort Augustus I was playing away there and I was looking at my fingers on the fiddle and I happened to look at the audience and everybody was looking at me and I got as nervous and I don’t know how I finished the tune!”
living up there somewhere but they were frightened to tackle him directly because he was such a famous swordsman. So they sent word that was supposed to have come from the girl that she was willing to meet him at the inn at Alt Sigh, and run away with him back to Lochaber. So he eventually went down and they must have hung about to see that everything was safe, and there was just half a dozen men there and oh they gave him a great welcome and plied him with drink and got him to sing his songs. When they thought he was drunk they tried to overpower him but he got out away from them but he tripped and they got him and he was taken down and he was in jail in Inverness and one of his daughters came round to see him and he composed one of his last songs for her. Some of the people in Lochaber reckon that Mo Nigheann Donn is the song that he composed for her. Grant of Corriemony wanted to see him finished off and he was closely related to the MacDonnells of Keppoch and he was high up in the pecking order. So, he said that he didn’t want to be hung like a common thief but he wanted to be beheaded, so he was taken up to Balmacaan in Glen Urquhart and got the chop and was beheaded. According to the tradition has it, when his head fell off and was lying on the ground he was supposed to have said in Gaelic, well his head is supposed to have said, ‘Togailbh mo cheann a Mhàiri,’ [lift up my head Mary]. So there’s a story for you.

Alexander: Is there anything else you’d like to tell us about?
Aonghas: I think I’d better tell you now that I’d better go back to my class or they’ll think I’ve left the place. Thank you for interviewing me boy!
Com-pàirtichean Fèis Lochabair agus Fèis nan Garbh Chriochan
Fèis Lochabair and Fèis nan Garbh Chriochan: Our People and Places
is one of a series of booklets produced by Fèisean nan Gàidheal as part of The Archiving Project, where Fèis participants are collecting and recording songs, tunes, stories and folklore from their own areas.

Further details about the project can be found at: www.feisean.org/archivingproject

“Lebh th ag obair am measg Fèisean ann an iomadh coimhearsnachd, bha mi riamp den bheachd gun robh cóir aig na com-pàirtichean barrachd fhaighinn a-mach mu dlualchas na sìthe aca fhein - na sgeulachdan agus an t-seòrsa cainnt a th' aig na daoine - cho math ris na h-òrain agus an ceòl. Tha mi air leth toilichte gu bheil sin air tighinn tromhbe ansa' phróiseact luachmhhor seòg agus tha mi an dòchas gum bi com-pàirtichean aig Fèisean a' deanamh feum den stuth a chaidh a chrùinneachadh airson iomadh bliadhna fhathast agus gum bi iad a' cur ris an tasglann a chaidh a steidheachadh.

Art MacCarmaig, Stiùiriche, Fèisean nan Gàidheal

Working with Fèisean in many communities, I was always of the opinion that participants should find out more about the heritage of their own area – the stories and the language of the people – as well as the songs and the music. I am extremely happy that is what is coming through this valuable project and I hope that Fèis participants will make use of the materials collected for many years to come and will add to the archive that has been established.”

Arthur Cormack, Chief Executive Officer, Fèisean nan Gàidheal