

**GAELIC IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND: A CULTURAL REMNANT**  
**(GAELIC FIELD RECORDING PROJECT)**

**Compiled by Dr. John Shaw 1987**

**Indexed and introduced by Dr. Michael Kennedy 2002**

## PREFACE

Prince Edward Island is Canada's most Scottish province – a fact not commonly known. By the time the first British census of Prince Edward Island was conducted in the late eighteenth century Scots already nearly outnumbered all of the Island's other ethnic groups combined. By the time of the first Canadian census for Prince Edward Island in 1881 when the Island's population had reached its post immigration peak, their status was unchanged, comprising nearly half of the population. In Nova Scotia, by contrast, which is more usually recognized as the pre-eminent seat of Scottish culture in Canada, the Scottish portion of the population peaked at only about a third of Nova Scotia's total, although that was sufficient to make Scots the largest ethnic group in the province for about a decade.

Provincial boundaries, however, mask more than they reveal. In truth, the concentration of Scottish Gaels in eastern Nova Scotia and particularly in Cape Breton made for an even larger and more homogeneous community than in Prince Edward Island. Perhaps more importantly, however, the Scottish communities of the two provinces were essentially parts of one larger whole – in some areas more tightly concentrated - in others less so. They were the result of the same large-scale settlement in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, sharing close ties and developing under similar circumstances. Together, they became the richest Gaelic culture zone in the New World, maintaining some important forms of cultural expression that disappeared even from the ancestral Scottish Highlands.

Regrettably, despite its size and importance, this community has received little academic attention. This is particularly true of Prince Edward Island, where, to date, not so much as a single scholarly book has been published on the subject of the Island's Gaelic heritage. This represents not only a major local research lacuna but also an international one. In recognition of this, and also of the critical state of Gaelic culture in Prince Edward Island after centuries of intense assimilative pressures, the Institute of Island Studies together with the Celtic Studies Committee at U. P. E. I. commissioned Celtic scholar, Dr. John Shaw, to record the best remaining examples of Gaelic culture in Prince Edward Island in 1987.

Shaw was able to identify one remaining fully fluent speaker of Prince Edward Island Scottish Gaelic and a number of "semi-speakers" (who had undoubtedly been fluent in their youth), in addition to other important non-Gaelic speaking informants and traditional musicians. Recording sessions with these people over a few short weeks in the late summer of 1987 resulted in 33 audio reel-to-reel tapes and three videocassette recordings. The tapes consisted largely of oral tradition in English and Gaelic as well as traditional violin music. To accompany the tapes and field notes, Dr. Shaw produced a report outlining the scope of the recording project and the outcome. Resources were not then available to produce a detailed index to the recordings.

In August of 2002, the Institute of Island Studies, in conjunction with the Special Collections section of the Robertson Library at U. P. E. I., commissioned Dr. Michael

Kennedy to review the collection with an eye to making it more accessible to the general public. Dr. Kennedy wrote a preface explaining the rationale for the collection and how it reached its present form; edited, for public review, Dr. Shaw's field notes and summary report to the Institute of Island Studies on the scope and importance of the material collected; extracted information (where available) from the recordings and field notes in order to compile brief biographies of the informants; wrote a biography of the collector, Dr. John Shaw; and created a detailed item by item index of the recordings, including a list of most of the tunes that were played during the traditional violin music recording sessions. It is hoped that the valuable material that has been recorded can now be readily used by researchers and will prove a popular research resource.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface

Introduction: Brief cultural history of Gaelic P. E. I. and scholarly context of recordings

Note on Sources

Summary and Final Report compiled by Dr. John Shaw in 1987 and edited by Dr. Michael Kennedy in 2002

Biography of Dr. John Shaw

Biography of Dr. Michael Kennedy

Informant Biographies

List of Musicians

Contents of Gaelic Recordings Fonds

Audio Tape Index

Video Tape Index

Printed Field Notes

## INTRODUCTION

### Prince Edward Island's Celtic and Gaelic Heritage

Prince Edward Island is Canada's most Celtic province. Two thirds of the immigrants to the Island were Celts and more specifically Gaels. However, severe cultural decline both internationally and locally, married to often confused interpretation in the media has very much obscured what those terms mean today even to the descendants of those same immigrants. Even less clear may be what cultural markers most distinguished these people from other ethnic groups and, therefore, what sorts of materials would be sought (or ignored) for a field recording project such as this. In order to best understand the collection it is helpful to have some knowledge of the historical context of Gaelic or Celtic culture, including a brief overview of its evolution in Prince Edward Island and other attempts to document the tradition.

Gaels form one of the two branches of the modern Celtic language family tree. Their division originated in Ireland before spreading north into the Isle of Man and Scotland. Scotland, in fact, takes its name from the Latin term for these Gaelic-speaking people. Following the collapse of the Roman Empire this large Gaelic cultural zone became one of the most important and influential intellectual regions in Europe. It developed as a stronghold of Christianity and Classical learning and centres of higher education were established not only throughout Ireland and Britain but also throughout Dark Age Europe. During this period, Gaels became the first Europeans after the Greeks and Romans to develop a written language (centuries before English was written down). Over the centuries Gaelic eventually developed into three distinct languages – Irish, Manx and Scottish Gaelic – but Gaels maintained a common literary language referred to as Classical Gaelic - which was used by political leaders, scholars and other professionals throughout the Gaelic world. This common literary language, an integrated educational system and the movement of scholars and artists back and forth throughout the various regions of Gaeldom helped keep the large region intellectually and culturally united during the middle ages.

However, centuries of warfare with incoming Germanic tribes saw this large Gaelic culture area begin to fragment, retreat and eventually collapse. Gaelic slowly began losing ground, as the other Celtic languages in Britain were, to English. Lowland Scotland, the seat of government and of the most important trading and economic centres in Scotland, became so thoroughly Anglicized that Gaelic eventually came to be seen in many circles as a foreign language and culture. The Gaelic language had, by that time, retreated almost to the Highlands, with which it became indelibly associated.

The Conquest of Ireland in 1603 represented a grievous collective blow as well. The professional and institutional infrastructure of Irish Gaelic society was destroyed in the wake of the conquest. Since the Gaelic educational infrastructure in Ireland was such an important part of Scottish Gaelic intellectual and cultural life, its disappearance also had a profoundly negative impact on the Highlands. Although the Highlands would maintain a traditional, integrated Gaelic society for roughly 150 years after its counterpart had

been dismantled in Ireland, effectively surviving until the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, it became seriously retrenched over that century and a half. The Gaelic educational structures would slowly deteriorate and the common literary language, as well as Gaelic literacy, generally, would go into steady decline, further undermining the natural links between Ireland and Gaelic Scotland.

Following the last Jacobite Rising of 1745 what remained of Gaelic independence in the Highlands was lost and measures were quickly taken by British authorities to finish breaking up the region's unique social organization and economic structure and to replace the Gaelic language and Gaelic culture with English. Gaelic had been the subject of repressive legislation for centuries and this new round of legal restriction revived something of the philosophical approach to Celtic culture regions developed under the reign of Henry VIII some 200 years earlier for England, Wales and Ireland, going so far as to forbid traditional, distinctive forms of Highland clothing in an effort to entirely eradicate the people's sense of a Celtic identity.

As had been the case in Ireland, the Gaelic leadership and the Gaelic professional classes were almost immediately deprived of any sort of meaningful role in the new social order that was being created. Similarly, the Gaelic institutional infrastructure and Gaelic formal culture, long in a process of slow strangulation, were finally dismantled. Even families such as the Beaton physicians and the Currie dynasty of poets, who had been literate for more than 500 years, appear, for the most part, to have been unable to read or write so much as vernacular Gaelic let alone its literary counterpart by the time they began settling in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. All of the great centres for the Gaelic arts closed their doors before the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century as patronage disappeared and the practical role for their students disappeared from society.

However, as had also happened in Ireland, to a degree, a great deal of material was reabsorbed into the folk culture, rather than lost entirely. Much literary material was simply transferred to the oral tradition and formal methods of education and training were replaced by more informal methods of cultural transmission. Gaelic tradition would now be passed on almost solely in the intimate environment of the home and among family and close friends. Despite the decline of the overarching institutional and formal cultural infrastructure, Gaelic culture remained remarkably uniform throughout Gaelic Scotland. Certainly, there was a powerful tradition of local creativity, but all Gaelic art operated within a cultural idiom familiar to all in the Highlands and all Gaels, in all social classes were familiar with the same master literary works, mythology, beliefs, history, music and dance. It was largely in this form, as a dynamic folk society, structured around the oral tradition, that Gaelic society was established in the New World.

### **Establishing the Gaelic Community in Prince Edward Island**

At the dawn of the emigration era, Scottish Gaelic society was undergoing profound change. A new social and economic order was taking shape in the Highlands, which included rapidly escalating rents, confiscation of land, loss of customary rights and

widespread attack on traditional beliefs, cultural forms, and the native language of the region. Many Highlanders, as a result, looked to the New World as a place where they might find freedom and prosperity.

They would be aided in the realization of this hope by the fact that their old social order had not yet been entirely dismantled, except, possibly, for the part played by Highland Chiefs, who had been the earliest target of assimilative measures and who were rapidly adapting to their new roles as wealthy landlords and English aristocrats. The Gaelic professional classes – or tacksmen – by contrast, may have lost their traditional cultural functions, like the chiefs, and were in the process of being squeezed out of their economic and social roles entirely but remained in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century an important pool of well-educated, cosmopolitan, multi-lingual and, for the most part, culturally loyal leaders. They would play a critical role in organizing the early migrations to the New World.

Ironically, it was the revitalization of one of the tacksmen's traditional roles by British authorities that helped them play a particularly informed and useful part in the emigration process. Chiefs and tacksmen traditionally organized and led the military wing of the clan. Following the subjection of the Highlands, British authorities saw merit in using this system to raise entire Highland regiments, under British leadership, of course, to supply much needed manpower for Britain's imperial wars. Three such regiments saw action in North America during the Seven Years' War, which culminated in the fall of Quebec and the loss of most of France's North American possessions to Britain following the Peace of Paris in 1763. Many Highlanders gained first hand knowledge of the New World and its great potential, as a result. As importantly, land grants were offered to those who would stay in North America. Included among those was an 80,000-acre grant in Prince Edward Island, then part of Nova Scotia, for the Fraser's Highlanders.

Not much of the initial grant in Prince Edward Island was taken up but there was some settlement as early as 1764. An important outcome of this was the information sent back to increasingly desperate friends and family in the Highlands. There was not, then, a great deal of intercourse between the Highlands and North America, particularly with the new Canadian territories, and landlords predicted that attempted settlement would end in disaster. In part, this prediction was made to intentionally discourage prospective emigrants as most landlords and British political figures were strongly opposed to losing a large pool of people for whom they had other planned uses. The example and information provided by actual settlers whom those in the Highlands could trust, which contradicted the landlord rhetoric, was a strong encouragement for prospective emigrants. This, coupled with the organizational skills of the tacksmen, helped overcome the potent obstacles to 18<sup>th</sup> century emigration. By the 1770s, Gaels began leaving for North America in earnest and alarmed officials in the Highlands were remarking on the "rage" for emigration that was sweeping through the region.

In spite of the many obstacles, not least of which was opposition to emigration on the part of powerful officials in Britain, major Highland settlements were established in

North Carolina, New York and Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The American War of Independence essentially cut off the settlement in North Carolina from further immigration and the colony in New York was relocated to Glengarry County in Upper Canada following the cessation of hostilities, becoming a rather difficult and expensive destination to reach. These developments helped make the settlements in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island the most important New World destination for prospective emigrants from the Highlands.

Such external factors played a significant role in making the large settlement area in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island indisputably the most important Gaelic cultural zone outside of Scotland but there were internal factors at work as well. Gaelic society was structured around the family and was resolutely rural. Gaels vastly preferred to migrate in community groups organized around extended families and with the intention of getting freehold land upon which to establish new rural communities. It was not at all unusual to see everything from infants to pregnant women to the very elderly in the Gaelic emigrant stream in addition to the young adults who were more characteristic of many other emigrant groups.

Additionally, the early emigrant groups tended to represent a fairly complete cross-section of Gaelic civilization. As a mostly subsistence society, almost everyone worked the land in some fashion or other but there were also those who fulfilled roles as doctors, clerics, sailors, poets, musicians, teachers, tradesmen and the like. Once established in the New World, these first pioneers generally encouraged others to follow and assisted them in making the transition to the new environment. This process of “chain migration” generally went on for generations, ensuring a remarkably complete transfer of old communities and old cultural forms to Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia.

This cultural orientation resulted in very distinctive migratory patterns. Prince Edward Island received immigrants from virtually every corner of the Scottish Highlands and Islands but the bulk of the settlers came from five fairly distinct regions, reinforced by geography and clan ties. These tended to recreate themselves in large discrete settlement districts in the New World. They were: Clanranald, Skye, Argyll, Sutherland and Perthshire.

The earliest to come to P. E. I. in large numbers were from the Clanranald territories, arguably the most culturally conservative bastion of the former MacDonald domain and the Lordship of the Isles (and essentially Catholic). This emigration zone comprised territories in the west central Highlands, the Small Isles and the southern Outer Hebrides.

The next important group (and the largest overall) came from the Isle of Skye and neighbouring areas, including the Isle of Raasay and the adjacent mainland of Wester Ross. The MacDonalds, the MacLeods and the MacKenzie’s were the dominant political families in this area at the time of emigration and most of the area had been recently converted to Presbyterianism.

The third largest group first emigrated in the same expedition as the Skye people and hailed from the northern Isles of Argyll – principally, Mull, Coll and Colonsay, with much smaller representation from the mainland of Ardnamurchan and the other Isles. This territory was, for the most part, traditionally overseen by the MacLeans, formerly important lieutenants to the MacDonalds during the era of the Lordship of the Isles. Most of this district had also been recently converted to Presbyterianism.

The fourth largest group came from Perthshire in the eastern Highlands. This area tended to be divided between traditional clan organization, such as the Stewart controlled territories in the west and by organizational structures more in step with the neighbouring Scottish Lowlands, such as the regions controlled by the Duke of Athol and by the Gordons of Huntly. This area tended to be somewhat more fragmented along religious lines as well, with a strong representation of Episcopalians, a smaller but significant Baptist following and, of course, Presbyterians.

The final group came from Sutherland – principally from the north and west of that district, an area traditionally known as, *Dùthaich Mhic Aoidh* (MacKay Country). It was one of the earliest areas to have been converted to the Presbyterian faith and the only one of the regions represented in Prince Edward Island to have fully supported the Hanoverian dynasty during the Jacobite Rising. The Gaelic literary tradition, however, suggests that support was not especially passionate.

As might be expected, given the preferred method of migration, this regional pattern was essentially recreated in Prince Edward Island. The Clanranald settlers, who began arriving in the 1770s spread out along the “Northside”, from the original settlement in Tracadie to East Point and from there, down the south coast as far as Cardigan. There were also smaller settlements in western P. E. I. (primarily from South Uist and Barra) around Indian River, Grand River and Brae. Settlement from the Catholic Highlands tended to be redirected to Nova Scotia and Cape Breton by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The major locus of settlement for the “Skye” people, who first came to P. E. I. in the famous Selkirk expedition of 1803, was in southern Queen’s and King’s County, moving inland from the earliest communities along the coast of the Belfast district to the backland areas such as Valleyfield and Caledonia. There were also significant later settlements in central Queen’s County around Strathalbyn and pockets of settlement in eastern King’s in places such as Forest Hills, Lorne Valley and Dundas.

There was settlement from Argyll along the north shore of Prince Edward Island as early as 1770, if not before, but this was a comparatively isolated expedition, which did not expand much after it was initially established, and was seemingly unconnected to the main body of migration from northern Argyll. It is not even certain whether Gaelic was widely spoken among these Malpeque settlers (who hailed from Kintyre) although it seems very likely that the language had at least some presence in the community. The major Argyll settlement in P. E. I., instead, would trace its origins to northern Argyll, which was one of the indisputable bastions of Gaelic culture, being home to some of the

last traditionally trained and patronized Gaelic professionals. These pioneers came out with the Skye people in the Selkirk expedition of 1803 and established two important settlement districts. The first was just south of the Skye settlement in Belfast and stretched along the coast from Flat River to Little Sands. The larger was located across Hillsborough Bay, along the West River and spreading down the southern coast of Prince Edward Island as far as DeSable. Internal migration would later establish settlements in western Prince Edward Island, in Prince County around Dunblane on the south coast and Coleman closer to the north shore.

The smallest discrete Gaelic settlement district in P. E. I. was founded by the Sutherland emigrants in Queen's county in 1806. They took up land in the vicinity of New London and French River along the north shore and a few miles inland in the Granville hills. Although migration spanned nearly half a century, the waves were smaller and fewer than from the other regions and, as a result, settlement remained localized in this comparatively small district. This region, too, like the other Gaelic emigration districts was resolutely Gaelic in its cultural orientation.

Settlers from Highland Perthshire composed the final important segment of P. E. I.'s Gaelic population but they did not establish major settlement districts like the other settlers. Perthshire was a landlocked region that straddled the Highlands and Lowlands. The Highland settlements there tended to be in mountain valleys, which were comparatively separate from one another, unlike the communities of the coastal western Highlands and Islands, which enjoyed somewhat easier communication. The region also tended to be somewhat more broken up in its governance between not only various clans or families but also between Gaelic and Lowland systems than was the case with the other large emigration districts that have been identified. Perthshire settlements in P. E. I. largely mimicked this and were smaller and more dispersed than their other Highland counterparts. Otherwise the patterns of migration and settlement were quite similar.

There was an early Perthshire settlement along the North Shore in 1770 but, like the Kintyre settlement of that same year, this was an isolated venture and not, apparently, a predominantly Gaelic community, although Gaelic is known to have been spoken by at least some of those first immigrants. The earliest indisputably Gaelic settlement began in 1803 in the Brudenell and New Perth area and was followed by a series of small settlements: along either side of the Hillsborough River; in the inland sections of central Queen's County; mixed in among the major Skye and Argyll settlements in southern Queen's and King's Counties; and along the south coast of eastern King's County, east of Souris, predominantly. Because of their proximity to the Scottish Lowlands in the Old Country, Perthshire emigrants often had earlier access to the improved farming techniques that were being developed there but also to the distinctly negative attitudes towards Gaelic that were also frequently met with. This, combined with their more dispersed settlement pattern, tended to make their communities quicker to assimilate in Prince Edward Island.

### **Gaelic Culture in Prince Edward Island**

Gaelic culture was undergoing a sweeping transformation at the time the first Gaelic communities were being established in P. E. I. in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Gaelic social structure was changing dramatically and that dealt a deathblow to what remained of the Gaelic professions. Already weakened, the great centres of learning and art began to fade away in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century as the social roles for which they prepared students disappeared – at least in a Gaelic context. There was no longer a demand for judges, doctors, administrators, poets, musicians or any of the other learned orders trained in the Gaelic tradition as English culture began to forcibly intrude on the Highlands and as the former patrons of these professions, the Highland chiefs, began embracing the new culture's values and its professional classes.

### A Collapsing Infrastructure

By the emigration era, the traditional Gaelic education system had long been in ruins. Judges, doctors and the like, trained in the traditional Gaelic manner, disappeared from Gaelic society. Classical Gaelic, the language of scholarship, governance and literature had all but disappeared by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and with it a highly evolved literary tradition and access to a great deal of written literature. Alexander MacDonald or *Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair* (Alexander, son of Master Alexander) as he is better known, was arguably the most important literary figure in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Highlands, despite his own conviction that his art was inadequate due to his lack of fluency in this older tradition. When his relatives began emigrating for Prince Edward Island in the 1770s he is believed to have been one of the last, if not the last person in Scotland who could read and write Classical Gaelic. His poems, composed in the vernacular, made the transition to the New World very strongly but the classical, literate tradition to which he had been exposed, did not; nor did it survive in Gaelic Scotland. In fact, the ancient tradition of the professional literary figure effectively came to an end in Gaelic Scotland roughly two generations later in 1819 when John MacLean of Tiree left his patron the Laird of Coll and migrated to Nova Scotia.

These educational centres were not simply training grounds for “artists” but for the Gaelic political and intellectual leadership. Their demise could not help but erode Gaeldom's intellectual strength. Scholars have indicated that by the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for instance, there was a notable decline in the quality of Gaelic poetry, the chief means of literary expression for Gaels. This extended not only to poetic technique and richness of language but also to social and political insight and commentary. Those who wished to play any sort of influential role in those domains would henceforth need to depend almost entirely on an English education and would be, consequently, drawn even further away from their native culture.

Even the great centres of musical instruction failed to survive the transition to the new anglocentric social order. Harping disappeared by about the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the great piping colleges ceased to operate shortly thereafter. By the late 1700s, the Rankins of Mull and Coll closed their centuries-old college of piping, possibly the oldest in Scotland, and the heirs to that tradition left their ancestral homeland. Con Douly, who would have become piper to the principal family of the region, the MacLeans of Duart,

and his brother, Eachan, who would have succeeded their father as head of the college, immigrated to Prince Edward Island. Similar events were occurring across the Highlands.

Beneath this collapsing institutional culture was a robust folk culture that was comparatively insulated from these socio-political changes. It made the transition to the New World quite strongly and was probably strengthened by the absorption of at least some elements of the former professional Gaelic arts. Gaelic society may have been stratified but it was comparatively compact and intimate and there is good reason to believe that there was much overlap and interchange between the folk and professional layers of the culture even when the latter was at its zenith. It is abundantly evident that the chiefs and tacksmen, the class from whom these professionals were drawn, actively engaged in the cultural pastimes of the wider community, indicating familiar cultural reference points between the two streams. The merging of these two disparate tributaries – the folk and the professional – as the elite cultural structures faded may be part of the reason why Gaelic has been referred to as the richest folk culture in western Europe.

### Literature

The blending of the two strands of Gaelic culture was evident in the development and transmission of literary material from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onward. Manuscript redactions of traditional tales which were meant to be read aloud at the court of the chieftain and which date from the 12<sup>th</sup> century correspond exceedingly well in their essentials with tales that have been passed down, after the decline of this manuscript tradition in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, solely by the oral or folk tradition to the present day. These tales were, in fact, already centuries old when they were written down in the medieval period, many of them dating to the pre-Christian era. Even the somewhat newer Fenian tales, which dealt with the exploits of a semi-legendary band of warriors who protected Gaeldom from invaders (particularly the Vikings), included much older elements of mythology and belief.

It is entirely likely that these oral and literate traditions survived side by side until the more formal literate tradition was reabsorbed into the oral tradition over the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. These larger tales were the gems of the prose tradition and were highly prized by Gaels. They were the purview of master storytellers and frequently took several nights to recount. Examples of this genre have been passed down to the present day in Nova Scotia but have not survived in Prince Edward Island.

These large tales took pride of place in the Gaelic prose tradition but probably the most common stories were those that related to the history and traditions of the clans. They were preserved with the same customary attention to accurate transmission as other items in the Gaelic oral tradition and supplemented the ancient mythology of the larger tales, providing the foundation for the understanding of medieval and early modern Highland society. Maintaining this genealogical and historical material had once been a key function of professional men in the Gaelic court but transferred entirely into the oral tradition after the demise of court life. A great deal of the important historical and genealogical information recorded generally by amateur scholars in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and often written up into community, parish, church or family histories was

taken from this body of material. A familiarity with Gaelic genealogy and the sense of its importance to community life was very evident among the informants recorded for this collection.

Even more durable than historical tales, however, have been the many timeless tales relating to the supernatural. For some reason, tales of the supernatural seem to be the most successful survivors in cultures that suffer language death. Several good examples of this genre were recorded for this collection.

Humorous tales were arguably the most creative aspect of the Gaelic tradition. Although humorous tales were passed on from generation to generation like other elements of the prose tradition, a large portion of this body of oral literature appears to have been created to describe contemporary events and individuals. Tales or anecdotes in this genre, however, had an intimacy and an immediacy that meant they frequently did not travel well. As a result, many humorous tales tended to drift in and out of the communal repertoire on a regular basis. Like the supernatural tales, humorous tales have made a comparatively strong transition to the English language environment of modern day and several good examples in Gaelic and English were recorded for this collection.

The literate tradition of poetry failed to achieve the same impressive result as its literate prose counterpart in making a transition to oral form and surviving to the present day as a living part of Gaelic social culture. This is hardly surprising considering that much of the art in poetry is in the creative use of language and that the language used for the literate tradition was no longer well understood by the 1700s when elements of the elite culture were being reabsorbed into the folk tradition. Much of the subject matter of that poetry also concerned the Gaelic court, which itself had become an anachronism. The highest poetic achievements in common Gaelic, by contrast, such as the poems of *Iain Lom* (John MacDonald), *Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair* (Alexander MacDonald) or Duncan Ban MacIntyre, which succeeded this classical written tradition in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, were immensely popular throughout all ranks of Gaelic society and have been faithfully passed on for centuries via memory and oral transmission. There are literary references to some of these songs in Prince Edward Island but, unlike Nova Scotia, none appear to have survived long enough to be audio recorded.

In addition to the works of the known master poets of the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, who emerged following the decline of the literate tradition, a huge number of anonymous songs began to come to light. Working songs composed by women, for example, and offering important insight into their lives, have survived from as early as the 1600s. Songs such as these in the vernacular tradition had undoubtedly always played an important part of artistic life in Gaelic communities but it was only as the professional or elite tradition of poetry began to fade that the extent of their strength became apparent. At least one of these 17<sup>th</sup> century songs was recorded in written form in Prince Edward Island, surviving into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although none survived long enough to be recorded for this collection.

Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of poems were passed on through the generations in Gaelic society both in the Highlands and in the communities of the New World but there was also a dynamic tradition of creativity. All Gaelic communities had their own respected (and sometimes feared) poet or poets who were considered pre-eminent in their district. They chronicled important events in the life of the community and were occasionally engaged by others to make particular statements of celebration or criticism. They would have existed in a stratum just below that of the former master poets, who were extremely active in the political sphere and often tackled issues of a national scope. Their songs, instead, tended to have a strong currency in the local community although their best efforts sometimes travelled farther a field.

Many of these village bards were noted for an ability to compose verse on the spot – some even while engaged in a conversation on the very theme they would versify. The better poets also tended to have a large store of traditional poems in addition to their own compositions and were frequently very knowledgeable about Gaelic literature in general. However, this knowledge and the talent for composition were by no means restricted to this particular group. Poetry was highly regarded by Gaels and there was heavy participation in composition, recitation (singing), discussion and the transmission of older poetry throughout the ranks of Gaelic society. Gaels also made use of this store of literary material as a form of living dictionary, referring to it for guidance in grammar, vocabulary, idiom, pronunciation and diction among other things. The quality of the spoken language in Gaelic communities, as a result of the widespread familiarity with the best of Gaelic literary tradition, tended to be very high.

### Music and Dance

Gaelic musical culture at the elite levels suffered the same precipitous decline as the professional literary arts during the century leading up to emigration. Like them, however, it managed some degree of transition into the folk idiom but also enjoyed a strong counter current of cultural growth. The *clàrsach* or Gaelic harp had been the pre-eminent musical instrument at the Gaelic court until the late medieval period when it was superseded, although not entirely replaced, by the Highland bagpipe. Harping survived up until about the time of the last Jacobite Rising in 1745 but was not absorbed into the folk tradition, perhaps because the expense of procuring and maintaining such an instrument was prohibitive. Piping declined in importance at pace with the general deterioration of the court and the other Gaelic professions but did have a strong parallel folk tradition into which the elite pipers appear to have been largely reabsorbed by the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This once highly popular folk tradition, however, has been largely overshadowed by a more modern style of piping that developed in the Scottish Lowlands in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, including the emergence of the pipe band. This modern style has generally replaced the older style of playing in the Highlands and in Highland communities in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island in the modern era. No examples of the Gaelic style of piping survived to be recorded for this collection.

One area of strong cultural growth in 18<sup>th</sup> century Gaelic Scotland was in the playing of violin music. The violin appears to have established itself as the pre-eminent bowed

string instrument in Scotland by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It was noted in the courts of chieftains but had not developed into a full-fledged professional instrument in the fashion of the harp or pipes, with training centres and dynastic families of players before the Gaelic court ceased to function. It was, however, extremely popular and widespread throughout the Highlands before emigration to the New World began. In fact, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, just as emigration for the New World was reaching a fever pitch, Scotland had entered into what has become known as a “golden age” of violin music. The most important centres for the tradition were in the eastern Highlands but the influence was wide ranging, reaching into Ireland, Lowland Scotland, and England and even in some respects to Continental Europe, where it arrested the attention of some of the great composers such as Beethoven and Mendelssohn.

This tradition made a strong transition to the New World and it is in the communities of Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia (and especially in Cape Breton) where it has flourished best, all but disappearing in the Scottish Highlands. A wide variety of tunes were popular but the most common and most distinctively Scottish were the strathspey and reel. The strathspey, named for the valley of the River Spey in the eastern Highlands appears to have developed in conjunction with the violin tradition in Scotland but appears to have been widespread by the emigration era.

The disappearance of the strathspey and the decline in the tradition of stringing groups of tunes together in a medley by the early decades of the twentieth century suggest that the Gaelic violin tradition was in some trouble in Prince Edward Island before the significant changes in rural social life brought on by what historians have termed “the break”, following the Second World War. The advent of local radio, which brought Cape Breton music into the homes of eastern P. E. I., and increased interaction with violinists from that island appear to have had an impact on the local violin tradition from the 1930s on. Comments from some of the informants interviewed for this collection, as well as interviews conducted elsewhere in eastern P. E. I., however, strongly suggest that the older generation considered that the changes that came into the P. E. I. tradition as a result of this increased interaction with Cape Breton represented a return to the older style once common in Prince Edward Island as well. Some excellent recordings of the Prince Edward Island tradition are included in this collection. They could be usefully supplemented by a reading of Jim Hornsby’s informative and highly entertaining, but, as yet, unpublished thesis on Prince Edward Island fiddling, available in the Robertson Library.

Music was a passion for Gaels and it is probably not surprising, as a result, that dancing was immensely popular as well. Ancient ritualistic dances with pagan overtones were known to have made it to the New World but no trace of them has yet come to light in Prince Edward Island. Social dances, mostly reels of some sort or another, by contrast, have been well attested. They were the main form of dancing in New World Gaelic communities until about the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They were largely replaced by incoming square dances, such as quadrilles and lancers, which were, for the most part, heavily adapted to the Gaelic tradition by incorporating traditional Gaelic stepdancing and setting them to Gaelic music. One more ritualistic reel, however – the Wedding Reel

– did survive well into the 1950s, complete with its social function of welcoming the bride and groom into the community in their new roles as husband and wife. Although the dance itself could not be taped for this collection several settings of the tune popularly played for this dance in eastern P. E. I. were recorded.

Stepdancing, which was performed as a solo dance (both to strathspeys and reels) and also as an integral part of Scottish reels, and later square sets, is probably the most conservative dance form remaining in Highland communities in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. The tradition has remained very conservative in Cape Breton until very recently and its evolution and context is comparatively well described by oral tradition. In Prince Edward Island, by contrast, it is more difficult to make a definitive statement. Interaction with Cape Breton, the influence of Irish dancing, tap and other forms and the decline of traditional social dances have all undoubtedly influenced the Scottish stepdancing style of Prince Edward Island but there is a lack of both folk tradition on the subject and scholarly work to make an accurate assessment.

It is ironic, however, that forms of Gaelic cultural expression such as stepdancing and traditional violin music, which demonstrate the greatest continuity within a community context, are so frequently not recognized as particularly Scottish, or even Scottish at all, while the traditions that are most often given the greatest symbolic recognition, such as Highland dancing, modern piping, Highland games and so on, evolved into their modern form in the Scottish Lowlands largely from the later 19<sup>th</sup> century onward and largely in response to Victorian and later tourist tastes. Other forms of dance now considered as especially symbolic of a Highland Scottish heritage, such as Scottish Country Dancing originated in England and did not even reach the Scottish Highlands until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and, as a result, were entirely unknown in New World Gaelic communities. Despite this rather widespread (and usually innocent) tendency toward misrepresentation of Highland tradition, the violin tradition remains the healthiest expression of Gaelic culture in modern day Prince Edward Island and stepdancing remains strongly linked to it.

### **The Social Context of Gaelic Folk Culture**

The Gaelic society that was established in Prince Edward Island consisted of a healthy, rural-bound folk culture with a severely eroded professional class that was being rapidly pushed into oblivion by an incoming English institutional infrastructure. This same process of change would eventually destabilize the culture as a whole but not until well after it had put down strong roots in New World soil. Gaels obviously had to make some adaptations to the new environment but these do not seem to have significantly affected cultural process in Gaelic communities. Certainly, there is no evidence of any of the cultural art forms failing to make the transition from Scotland to Canada. In fact, some of these arts, such as traditional violin music and stepdancing flourished to a degree not evident even in the Highlands themselves.

Cultural process in Gaelic communities was very localized. The oral tradition is inherently intimate as it requires close interaction and is not well suited for mass

transmission. People shared songs, stories, witticisms, riddles, weather lore, prayers, beliefs, tunes, dance steps and the like at every available opportunity. Communal work was often lightened by the use of work songs. Songs and stories helped pass the time while waiting on tides or fishing nets or while doing repetitive handiwork such as weaving or knitting. Prayers and charms played an integral role in many work and social processes. There was little or no formal separation between the cultural arts and the normal processes of working life.

There were, of course, moments when the celebration of the cultural arts took on heightened importance. As an example, there were numerous calendar celebrations and festivals, in which all in the community had an active part to play, including, in some instances, the very young. Many of these had ancient ritualistic significance, predating Christianity. Valuable recollections regarding New Year's Eve practices were recorded for this collection – a particularly important calendar event in the Gaelic world – as was some material related to weddings such as courting practices, inauspicious and auspicious days for marrying, and ritual dance – such as the P. E. I. Wedding Reel.

Some communal activities tended to be less ritualistic and more segregated. Dances, for instance, in the home, might include younger members of the family but such was not generally the case in larger venues, such as at dances held in barns, on wharves, in schoolhouses, and later in community halls. Children did tend to learn the dance steps and patterns – and certainly the music – long before they themselves became participants in these other venues, as some of the interviews for this collection highlight. Dance could have a ritualistic role to play but Gaels had a tremendous love of dancing just for the pure joy of the art and frequently used it as the climax to other sorts of gatherings, such as communal work parties, house parties and other sorts of social get-togethers. The potent opportunity dancing provided for members of the opposite sex to socialize was one important reason for its popularity.

Another one of the more restricted gatherings was the Milling Frolic. This was a gathering, originally of women only, to work freshly woven cloth to make it suitable for tailoring and dyeing. This was done by soaking the web of cloth and then pounding it on a hard surface for several hours in order to shrink the cloth and raise a nap. Although onerous work, this became one of the most popular events in the Gaelic social calendar. Rhythmic singing lightened the work and the exchange of song – mostly compositions by women about important events in their lives – was an important means of self-expression. As mentioned previously, some of the oldest songs in Gaelic vernacular, dating back well into the 1600s, were passed on from this tradition into 20<sup>th</sup> century Prince Edward Island.

An older woman with a good knowledge of songs and of the milling process, generally led the singing with the others joining on the choruses. It has been recorded that as the work was drawing near to its end, that the lead singer might engage one of the younger single women in friendly banter about her lover or lack thereof; the young woman generally had only the time that passed while the other women sang the chorus of the

song to come up with a suitable verse to sing back either praising or rejecting the prospective suitor named by the older woman.

In Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island men began to participate in these gatherings at least by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century if not earlier, a practice never adopted in Scotland. Their participation also introduced a wider range of song types, such as rowing songs, more typical of men's experiences. Usually the milling frolic would be followed by a dance. This tradition has long since fallen by the wayside in Prince Edward Island but it is still practiced in Nova Scotia for its social enjoyment.

The chief forum for education and socialization in the various Gaelic cultural art forms was the home. The family played the most important role in introducing young people to the various arts and demonstrating how they integrated with life in their community. There was no formal way of doing this. It was a case of learning by example and by emulation. Children were exposed to these art forms immersed in their all-important social context before they were old enough even to comprehend them. They informally absorbed not only the art forms but also the values associated with the modes of transmission, such as hospitality, pride, patience and respect as well as a myriad of other subtle social intricacies. They heard their mothers, grandmothers, elder sisters, aunts and other women in the community singing or exchanging tales while working in the home; reciting prayers to accompany their many domestic chores; and creating various folk tonics for illness; they heard their fathers, grandfathers, older brothers, uncles and other men in the community referring to ancient rhymes about the weather; reciting charms to protect livestock from ill fortune; and singing (and making) songs about events, both trivial and important, while working around the farm. Poetry (always in the form of songs), stories, history, mythology, music, dance and other such pursuits were the common fare of Gaelic family and community life. Young Gaels were wrapped up in a rich folk-cultural milieu just about everywhere they went in their community and during virtually every waking hour that they interacted with their family and neighbours.

Despite the omnipresence of the cultural arts in the community, evening gatherings in homes, particularly in the winter when the workload was eased somewhat, were an especially important and popular means for celebrating the cultural arts. Every home would be a forum but some were particularly popular gathering places within a community. Such homes generally went by the name *taigh-cèilidh* (ceilidh house) from the Gaelic word *cèilidh* meaning "to visit". The fact that these homes were known as "visiting houses" rather than as "cultural houses" or some other such term, demonstrates how important the social context was to the sharing of the cultural arts. Children generally did not actively participate in these evening gatherings but were often allowed to observe. General news of the community or of wider importance was usually discussed, followed by poetry and tales and sometimes by music and dancing. It is clear that the importance of the ceilidh house survived the decline of Gaelic in some areas, apparently enduring in a comparatively complete form until the popularization of other forms of entertainment such as radio and television and the decline of more traditional rural social patterns.

Much depended upon who was in attendance at a ceilidh but Gaels were generally exposed to the entire gamut of their cultural heritage and developed knowledge in depth concerning their traditions. There were, of course, those in the community who developed particular expertise in various fields such as history, lore, tales, songs, music and dance but even they were generally deeply acquainted with and, often highly skilled in the other arts. The variety and complexity of many of the arts made prodigious intellectual demands since everything had to be remembered and passed on largely without the benefit of written sources. Tradition bearers, as a result, tended to have staggering memory skills. Because the forum for cultural expression was a dynamic one, it was stabilized by those who actively participated and by those who may have had no apparent active skills but who were often extremely knowledgeable “passive” tradition bearers. The latter helped by supplying missing verses to songs or correcting mistakes in the recounting of an item of history and so on and by making the sort of extremely high demands on what might today be called “the performers” that only an audience highly educated in the art form possibly could.

Such interchanges were critical to intellectual life in Gaelic communities. No longer enjoying a formal education in their own culture, they used their cultural arts to teach the complexities of grammar, word meaning, poetic technique, history, morality and ethics, musical forms and such and drew from that well to develop strategies for dealing with issues that confronted them. This required not only accurate reference to old traditions but also vital creativity. Many of the new compositions, usually in the form of poetry, were not strictly for entertainment; they were often expected to have a real social impact, just as one might expect from newspaper columns and editorials today. The recordings in this collection indicate that the tradition of hiring poets to make social commentary continued into comparatively recent times in Prince Edward Island.

Interestingly, the respected poets did not need to be high status members of the community either to master their art or to earn the admiration (or fear) of their neighbours for their skill. One such individual, Jane MacLeod, known generally as, *Sìne Mhòr* (Big Jane), is probably the best Gaelic poet to have survived into the modern era in Prince Edward Island but was an itinerant, who travelled from home to home between Caledonia and Valleyfield and was known as a “character”. There are several valuable references to her in this collection. Although none of the informants interviewed for this project were active poets, the tradition of composition was well remembered, as was its importance to the community. A considerable number of Prince Edward Island Gaelic compositions have been published but only a few fragmentary verses were recorded for this collection.

With such a high regard for literature and with such wide participation, it is perhaps not surprising that Gaels began redeveloping their written literary tradition, despite facing daunting obstacles, such as no longer having a standard literary language or any means for formal instruction. Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia both became active in publishing Gaelic material during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Original literature as well as classics from the Gaelic tradition and other translated works began appearing in newspapers, pamphlets and books. Traditional songs were especially popular but there were also items

on history and tradition and substantial works on religious and ethical matters, including, not only Bibles but also books of Gaelic hymns, such as the collection composed by Rev. Donald MacDonald and Ewen Lamont of Prince Edward Island. Classic anthologies of Gaelic poetry published in Scotland were reprinted in Canada and Canadian anthologies of the great literary works were also compiled and published in P. E. I. and Nova Scotia. Original literary compositions from Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia appeared in Nova Scotia's Gaelic newspaper, *MacTalla*, which flourished at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and still holds the record as the longest running Gaelic weekly in the world) as well as in prestigious journals such as the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, the latter courtesy of Rev. Alexander MacLean Sinclair, a noted Nova Scotian Gaelic scholar who ministered in the Belfast district of Prince Edward Island in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. An emphasis on home Bible study in Protestant communities and the increasing availability of Gaelic Bibles in the 19<sup>th</sup> century helped offset the complete lack of formal education in the language. However, it seems that the oral tradition remained paramount even here, as at least one account in this collection indicates that members of the community preferred to gather together to have these works read aloud by one particular individual.

In many ways it would seem a rural folk society such as this could remain vigorous and vital so long as the wider society of which it was a part maintained its stability. To a certain extent that was true and many of the traditions survived comparatively strongly until after the decline of subsistence farming as the backbone of Prince Edward Island social and economic life by about the time of the Second World War. However, on a more fundamental level Gaelic culture was in an advanced state of decline by the beginning of the twentieth century. This was largely due to the fact that even in the relative independence of the rural subsistence community institutions had become increasingly influential by the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even the remotest rural-dwellers had to deal with systems of governance, commerce and education, regardless of their day-to-day work and, as the 19<sup>th</sup> century wore on, those systems and their associated institutions grew increasingly intrusive. In Prince Edward Island those institutions were resolutely English and that meant that as they grew in importance in daily life, the scope for Gaelic language use and for its associated forms of cultural expression began to severely erode.

### **Fragmentation and Decline**

Despite the fact that Gaels made up two thirds of Prince Edward Island's population and that Scottish Gaelic folk culture was particularly vigorous, the strength of the community was not what it seemed. Gaelic society was badly fragmented and, in many fundamental ways, substantially undermined. Scots and Irish, for example, no longer shared a common language. There are anecdotal accounts of Irish and Scots conversing with one another using their respective versions of Gaelic but mutual intelligibility could only have been rudimentary at best; certainly it would not have been in any way adequate enough for them to have established a common forum for education or literature, let alone fluent communication. Moreover, Ireland had been exposed to more intense anglicizing forces than the Scottish Highlands for some time and the number of Gaelic speakers was in decline. Along with that came increasingly negative attitudes towards

Gaelic – a sense that it was backward. For every anecdote of Irish and Scots attempting to use Gaelic to communicate, one generally encounters another, such as the one recorded for this collection, of the Irish mocking their Highland counterparts for their backwardness due to their loyalty to the language and culture. Irish and Scottish Gaels were unable to mutually support one another in the New World environment in the way they had centuries earlier in Europe and failed to constitute a united collective.

Similarly, within the Scottish community, which still accounted for nearly half the Island's population, there were serious divisions that substantially weakened Gaelic's prospects. A small portion of P. E. I. Scots had come from the Scottish Lowlands and according to reports they demonstrated naked hostility to Gaelic – more so than any other ethnic group. One account of this negative attitude is included in the recordings in this collection. Areas that bordered the Lowlands, such as southern and eastern Perthshire, tended to absorb many of these negative attitudes and there are anecdotal accounts of immigrants from that area also mocking settlers from other regions of the Highlands for their backwardness, due to their slowness in acquiring English.

The most important fault lines, however, ran within the Gaelic-speaking Highland Scottish community itself. The Highlands were a remarkably well-integrated cultural area, considering the long exposure to intense assimilative pressures and the breakdown of the overarching and unifying institutional structures that had once served the region. This was equally true of the Gaelic settlements in the New World but there were strong regional rivalries and in some important ways these were exacerbated by the social changes of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Chief among those divisive social forces was religion.

Catholicism was heavily repressed in the Highlands following the Scottish Reformation but Protestantism – and particularly Presbyterianism – did not establish a strong hold there until after the long and vicious religious wars between Episcopalians and Presbyterians in the Scottish Lowlands concluded at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Highlanders, for the most part, did not share the same dogmatic approach to religion as their Lowland counterparts and relations between Catholics and Protestants and between the various Protestant denominations that began to emerge were generally good. Indeed, even into the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries some Presbyterian clerics noted with dismay that there was little to distinguish Catholic and Protestant Highlanders in their religious observances. Certainly, this was true of their general social patterns and their cultural life. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century that began to change significantly.

A series of remarkable evangelical “awakenings” throughout North America and Europe encouraged increasing orthodoxy in Protestant religious practice. This began to polarize the Highland Scottish community and relations are noted to have soured as the 19<sup>th</sup> century wore on. One notable outcome was the decreased ability of Highlanders in New World communities to find marriage partners within their own ethnic group as religion, rather than language and ethnicity, became the ultimate arbiter for determining suitable pairings. The environment for intermarriage between Catholic and Protestant Highlanders grew increasingly negative, while marriages outside the ethnic group but

within the same religion – with Irish and Acadians, primarily, in the case of Catholic Highlanders, and with English and Lowland Scots, primarily, in the case of Protestant Highlanders - became increasingly acceptable. Because the community was so large in Prince Edward Island and the settlements relatively homogeneous, this did not result in abrupt change but did help speed the process of anglicization.

Arguably more noteworthy was the effect that this increasingly dogmatic environment had on cultural life in Highland Protestant communities themselves. Many of the traditional Gaelic cultural practices and beliefs were deemed sinful in this era of heightened religious sentiment and were actively condemned by clerics. Music and dance were particularly strongly discouraged. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it appears that the formerly rich musical heritage of Highland Protestant communities and their accompanying dance traditions had all but vanished in Prince Edward Island, as the recordings in this collection, again, help to demonstrate. This seems to be broadly similar to experience in Nova Scotia and the Scottish Highlands.

Ironically, the many supernatural beliefs that clerics condemned with equal fervour seem to have survived just about as well in Protestant communities as in Catholic, demonstrating that it is easier to control what people do than what they think. Activities which had a particularly public face, such as gathering to dance or playing music, which could be heard outside the home even when it was not played publicly, were easy targets for social approbation whereas personal belief and private conversations shared in the home, were much more difficult to stigmatize or, at least, to actively discourage.

While the decline and even loss of many of these cultural traditions such as music and dance in Protestant communities is comparatively easily observed, less obvious is the impact that such decline would have had on social interaction and the socialization of younger generations as these cultural practices had formed much of the matrix of community life. An important cultural touchstone lost a good deal of its relevance to a significant segment of the Highland Scottish population. This would almost certainly have profoundly affected not only how that part of the community came to understand and identify Gaelic culture but how non-Gaels did as well. Considering that the most culturally vital Gaelic area of Prince Edward Island in the modern era was that settled by people from the Isle of Skye, who were Protestant, and that this was possibly the most culturally rich Skye settlement in the New World, this is particularly unfortunate as a window on a very important aspect of that regional cultural group's cultural continuity and evolution was effectively closed.

None of the various weaknesses in Prince Edward Island's Gaelic community were fatal or necessarily even severely debilitating had it not been for the powerful external pressure Gaelic culture was under. Centuries of repression had severely damaged Gaelic society, most notably its institutional culture. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, active repression declined only to be replaced by the strongly anglicizing effects of an increasingly important English institutional infrastructure in Gaeldom. Gaels who settled in places like Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island may have escaped the worst effects of land dispossession and the deterioration of the Highland economy but they were still within

the same larger cultural environment and governmental structures of the British Empire and those were not only resolutely English but decidedly hostile to Gaelic.

In this continued environment of heavy pressure on the local culture, Gaels began to make a strong association between power, progress and the English language – a message that was overtly inculcated by various authorities intent on eliminating Gaelic and other languages from within the Empire. Moreover, as institutions began to re-establish themselves in Gaeldom, they were effectively barred to Gaelic, exacerbating the growing impression that Gaelic was inherently backward and unsuited to advanced social functions such as governance, commerce or education and, therefore, of little practical use in the modern world. This message, in fact, was not only inherent in the way institutional life in Gaelic communities was being constructed but was overtly and frequently stated by native English speakers.

Education was the most conspicuous domain for this process of assimilation. From as early as 1609 British authorities had enacted legislation designed to remove Gaelic children from their home environment to be educated in the linguistic, religious and cultural mores of the Scottish Lowlands or England. It was not until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, that an effective anglicizing educational system was put in place. This series of evangelical schools established throughout the Highlands was designed again to anglicize the population and also to inculcate Protestant religious belief. Gaelic was absolutely barred, even though the prospective students and most of the parents understood no other language. Notwithstanding the fact that some educationalists argued that even assimilation, let alone education, would be greatly aided by at least some use of the Gaelic language, the English only delivery of education continued for roughly a century. In 19<sup>th</sup> century P. E. I., the ban on Gaelic was likewise almost complete, again despite the recommendations of some educational authorities who observed that where Gaelic was used in the classroom, children generally seemed to progress much more rapidly in their education and in their acquisition of English.

Formal education in Gaelic communities helped undermine rather than reinforce inter-generational cultural transmission. Gaelic was generally barred as a medium of instruction, as a language and culture worthy of study and even as an acceptable medium of communication among students. Indeed, some of the informants interviewed for this collection remembered forms of punishment that were still being used in their day to discourage children from speaking Gaelic in and around the school. Accounts throughout Gaeldom speak not only of corporal punishment but also of abusive stigmatization of the language spoken by students (not to mention their relatives in the community) as nothing but “gibberish”. The educational system refused to operate in the language of the community that schools ostensibly served. It failed entirely to draw from their rich cultural store or to use culturally relevant references and indoctrinated students with both directly and indirectly negative messages about Gaelic’s value and usefulness. Allied with outright punishment merely for using the language even while at play on the school grounds this system of education instilled in students a whole host of harmful associations to attach to their culture such as humiliation, backwardness and wrongdoing.

What this system of education succeeded in doing was not merely to introduce English to the Gaelic community and underline its importance, which might have led to a slow assimilation of the community, but to actively disparage Gaelic culture and advocate its immediate abandonment. It is not surprising as a result, that observers noted a strong inferiority complex developing around the language and culture by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Jonathan G. MacKinnon, the editor of Cape Breton's Gaelic newspaper, *MacTalla*, provided one such valuable account. Visiting relatives in Prince Edward Island at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century he remarked that there were many Gaels on P. E. I. and that some of the Island's Gaelic communities such as Valleyfield and Heatherdale were as Gaelic as any to be found in Canada. However, he then went on to mention that he encountered many people there, as he did in his home province of Nova Scotia, who were too embarrassed to admit that they spoke the language tongue even when it was readily apparent from their abysmally poor English that Gaelic was their mother tongue.

The Gaelic language seems to have been in widespread decline across Prince Edward Island by about the time Jonathan G. MacKinnon made his observations at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Fluent speakers of the language appear to have been rare by the 1920s and 30s in most districts but this was not true of the backland Skye settlements. Areas such as Strathalbyn received substantial settlement in the 1850s and areas such as Valleyfield and Caledonia were still receiving immigrants through the 1860s. In general, this was about a generation later than any of the other 5 regional settlement districts and two generations later than the Catholic districts. This helped refresh that community and consequently language retention was much stronger in those districts. There were still people in Prince Edward Island into the late 1930s who spoke only Gaelic and understood no English and it is likely that most of them were in these later settled districts. In general, the last generation who were more comfortable in the Gaelic language than in English began dying out in these backland communities by the 1950s but fully fluent speakers survived long enough to be interviewed and recorded for this collection in 1987 and at least one native speaker remains to this day.

As has been noted in other ethnic groups, the loss of language appears to seriously destabilize other aspects of culture, too, although the effects are often uneven. Within Prince Edward Island, it is impossible to create an accurate timeline of cultural decline or even, with absolute certainty, a really accurate picture of regional linguistic decline but there are some interesting references in this collection to the disappearance of some practices and the greater retention of others, which will help researchers construct a broad picture of Gaelic's general evolution and decline.

Some aspects of supernatural belief have proved particularly durable although belief in such phenomenon, generally, is in decline in modern society and, as a result, they are unlikely to survive much longer. Elements of Gaelic musical and dance culture have also reached the present day in relatively robust form, although this continuity has been much more restricted to Catholic communities than other survivals of the culture have been, a circumstance which is beginning to show signs of slow change for the better now that religious attitudes have once again changed. In recent years there have also been classes offered in Gaelic at the University of Prince Edward Island, helping ensure that one of

the most important tools for understanding the culture as it once existed will remain available to future generations. In this context, the Gaelic Field Recordings by John Shaw are an invaluable resource.

### **Significance of the Shaw Gaelic Field Recordings**

Despite being one of the outstanding folk cultures of Europe, Gaelic has received comparatively little attention. This is undoubtedly a direct consequence of the value that was attached to the culture in the many years of repression and discouragement it suffered. When the brothers Grimm of Germany spurred the organized collection of folktales in Europe with their famous publication of what are now generally and inaccurately known as “fairy tales”, Gaelic culture was fortunate in having its own renaissance man, John Francis Campbell of Islay, on hand. Campbell was independently wealthy and possessed of an amazing array of talents, not the least of which was an inherent understanding of how the nascent science of folklore collection should be approached. Unlike many of his contemporaries in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, John Francis Campbell understood that the manner of presentation was as important as the artifact itself. Most felt that folklore needed to be “improved” by educated collectors before being presented to the public, substantially lowering the actual value of the material collected. Campbell likened this to gilding an ancient copper penny. His published collection of unvarnished folktales from the Scottish Highlands remains the most extensive of its kind nearly a century and a half after it was first published notwithstanding the fact that it represents only about half of what he and his researchers collected.

Despite the promising start, the organized documentation of Gaelic folk culture and the associated collection of materials stalled. When another independently wealthy Gaelic scholar, John Lorne Campbell of Canna, tried to find a home for his valuable collection of material in the 1930s, including some of the earliest wax cylinder recordings of Nova Scotian Gaelic songs, he found that no institution in Scotland was able or willing even to receive them, let alone to do anything useful with them or sponsor further collecting.

Professional, academically backed collecting did not get underway in any serious fashion until the 1940s when the Irish Folklore Commission in Dublin, Ireland dispatched Calum MacLean of the island of Raasay back to his native Scottish Highlands. MacLean, incidentally, was a cousin to the late Hon. Angus MacLean, former premier of Prince Edward Island. Calum MacLean complained bitterly about the relative indifference of Scottish academics to Gaelic culture but, in spite of the apathetic institutional attitudes, his collecting helped establish the School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh in the 1950s. In the years that followed much valuable field recording was done throughout the Highlands. Unfortunately, despite knowledge of the rich traditions in Canada, resources did not allow for serious collecting expeditions and the amount of Canadian material in the School of Scottish Studies archives, as a result, is minimal. A massive digitization project is currently underway in Scotland, however, to make thousands of hours of oral tradition available online and this will probably include John Lorne Campbell’s important Nova Scotian collection.

Collection of material in Canada was even less extensive than in Scotland. However, there was some important activity. As was happening in Scotland, publishing houses were busy turning out Gaelic material both in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Newspaper articles, pamphlets, magazines and books were all appearing in Gaelic and due to the nature of the culture they chronicled tended to be dominated by traditional material. Because the community's oral tradition was usually the most important source for these published works and because of the subsequent decline of the culture, these published works have become an important archive of Gaelic tradition in the New World. To be certain, this was not organized collecting or documentation but it is difficult to underestimate its importance in transmitting valuable material to the present day and in offering a glimpse of the cultural and intellectual life of Gaelic communities before they faded into obscurity.

The most important collector of Gaelic cultural material in the New World in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the Reverend Alexander MacLean Sinclair of Glenbard, Nova Scotia. He was the grandson of John MacLean of Tiree, known generally as the Bard MacLean, the last professional Gaelic poet in Scotland, who migrated to Nova Scotia in 1819. A Presbyterian minister, MacLean Sinclair conducted his ministry in Prince Edward Island in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and in Nova Scotia and actively collected and published Gaelic material from both provinces.

His output was prodigious. He wrote numerous booklets and smaller articles, including submissions to Nova Scotia's Gaelic newspaper, *MacTalla*. It appears that Alexander MacLean Sinclair may have also submitted many of the traditional songs that were anonymously published in *MacTalla* while he was minister in the Belfast district of Prince Edward Island. They appear to correspond very closely with material in his personal notes, in any event. He collected over 600 lines of traditional and original poetry from *Sine Mhòr* (Big Jane) MacLeod of Caledonia and published some of this in the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*. He also published most of the Bard MacLean's poems and some of his hymns as well as the poetry and hymns of other Gaelic poets in *Clàrsach na Coille* (The Harp of the Forest). He published an anthology of traditional Gaelic poetry entitled, *The Glenbard Collection*, as well as a four-volume anthology of various Gaelic poems composed between 1411 and 1875 entitled, *The Gaelic Bards*. He published two volumes of Gaelic poems by various MacLean poets and two miscellaneous volumes of Gaelic poems entitled, *Filidh na Coille* (The Forest Poet) and *MacTalla nan Tùr* (Echo of the Towers). He also produced a volume of the poetry of *Iain Lom* (John MacDonald) and of Alexander MacKinnon. In addition to these editions of literary works, he produced an extensive volume on the genealogy of the MacLeans, entitled, *The Clan Gillean, or History of the MacLeans*. Much of the material as well as the associated background information needed to properly edit the volumes was collected in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia and several of the volumes were published in Charlottetown.

The one drawback to MacLean Sinclair's extraordinary efforts was that, unlike his predecessor, John Francis Campbell of Islay, Sinclair subscribed to the "improver" mentality of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century making editorial changes to the oral tradition in order to

make it more morally or aesthetically acceptable as he saw it. Despite this unfortunate, decision, MacLean Sinclair left an astounding legacy of the oral tradition current in Gaelic communities in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island at the turn of the century. Even this impressive output, however, gives only the scantiest glimpse of the intellectual and cultural life of Gaelic communities at that time. MacLean's son, Rev. Donald MacLean Sinclair, also a keen amateur Gaelic scholar, kept the parish in Valleyfield in the 1930s and is known to have collected material. He did publish some observations relating to Gaelic Nova Scotia in the *Dalhousie Review* in the 1950s but does not appear to have made much reference to Prince Edward Island in any of his publicly available writing.

In Nova Scotia, audio recordings began to supplement written recording of Gaelic tradition from the 1930s onward. John Lorne Campbell and Nova Scotian native Helen Creighton both began documenting the Nova Scotian Gaelic song tradition at that time on wax cylinders. Creighton carried on her recording work through the 1960s, publishing in concert with Major C. I. N. MacLeod of St. Francis Xavier University a book of Nova Scotian Gaelic songs transcribed from her field recordings. MacLeod, too, published several small books on Gaelic story telling and poetry collected in Nova Scotia around this time. Sister Beaton was also active at Xavier College (later University College of Cape Breton) in Sydney from the 1950s onward, gathering together amateur recordings of Gaelic material for that centre's Beaton Institute Archive (named posthumously in her honour).

Unfortunately, very little collecting of any sort was done in Prince Edward Island after Rev. Alexander MacLean Sinclair left Prince Edward Island at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. John Lorne Campbell visited Prince Edward Island in the 1930s as part of his early recording expedition to Nova Scotia but although he left an account of some of the places and people he visited and conducted an invaluable parish census of Gaelic use in P. E. I. and in Nova Scotia, he did not record any P. E. I. tradition bearers during that visit. Campbell was particularly interested in the folk traditions of Catholic settlements and an informed recording trip through the Catholic settlements of P. E. I. at that critical time would have been of tremendous significance. He may have been in time to record the last fluent speakers of the language in those districts and, at the very least, would certainly have found many semi-speakers and a wide variety of songs still current. Recordings of the violin music of that era would have told much about the evolution of the tradition as well during a period of rapid cultural decline. Similarly, John Lorne Campbell's contemporary, Helen Creighton, does not appear to have recorded any Gaelic songs in Prince Edward Island throughout her long, distinguished career as a collector of folklore.

It was not until roughly three quarters of a century after MacLean Sinclair left Prince Edward Island that a skilled Gaelic scholar conducted an organized expedition to record Prince Edward Island tradition. Alphonsus "Phonsie" Campbell, a native of the Souris Line Road in eastern Prince Edward Island encouraged Gaelic scholar Gordon MacLennan to investigate the remnants of Gaelic culture in Prince Edward Island, while a professor at the University of Ottawa in the 1960s and 70s. Unfortunately, but not

surprisingly, MacLennan concentrated his efforts on the Catholic districts of eastern P. E. I. where his colleague Phonsie Campbell had been raised. At that late date, however, a full generation after John Lorne Campbell had last visited the Island, MacLennan was able to collect only very fragmentary pieces of Gaelic tradition, which are now archived in Ottawa. Had he been more familiar with Prince Edward Island, he might well have decided to concentrate his efforts on the much stronger survival of Gaelic culture in the Skye settlements of southern Queen's and King's County, in areas such as Valleyfield, Heatherdale, Caledonia, Glen William and so on. There were still a considerable number of fluent speakers of Gaelic in that district at that time and a collecting trip would have almost assuredly succeeded in gathering full texts of songs and a great deal of other valuable material. Recording efforts in Nova Scotia have generally proved more successful in targeting areas of greatest Gaelic cultural strength.

It was not, in fact, until 1987, when the Institute of Island Studies and the Celtic Studies Committee of U. P. E. I. sponsored the recording of this collection, that an organized attempt was made to identify and record the best examples of Prince Edward Island's Gaelic tradition and to provide an overview of Gaelic life on the Island. The timing could not have been more fortunate as Gaelic was then at its terminal stage in Prince Edward Island; there were only a handful of fluent and strong semi-speakers still living at the time, and they were quite elderly. Regrettably, there was no longer a diverse regional mixture of Gaelic traditions to be recorded by that late date. Examples of the Gaelic traditions of the Sutherland and Perthshire settlements of Prince Edward Island, for instance, seem to have gone entirely unrecorded throughout their long history in P. E. I. and did not survive into the 1980s. One song from Sutherland, thankfully, was collected and published by Rev. Alexander MacLean Sinclair. The song is not known elsewhere and would certainly have disappeared had it not been for the P. E. I. source. What must have been a phenomenally rich Argyll culture in Prince Edward Island was also largely missed but it is quite possible, however, that a great deal of Alexander MacLean Sinclair's published material, which is largely concerned with Argyll tradition, was derived from the community culture of the Argyll districts in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Prince Edward Island. This, however, can never be known for sure. The only regional areas strongly represented in these recordings, as a result, are the Clanranald and Skye settlement districts. By 1987, the Gaelic speech community was restricted almost entirely to the Skye settlements and the best examples of surviving musical tradition were all but exclusively in the Catholic (or Clanranald) districts of eastern P. E. I.

The 1987 recording project, then, helped identify the discrete cultural districts remaining in Prince Edward Island, illuminate their relative rates of decline and target the best surviving examples of Gaelic culture in Prince Edward Island for recording. This process and the results of the project are described in detail in the summary report submitted by Dr. John Shaw and included in the collection. Shaw had extensive experience in this field. He compiled the Gaelic Folklore Project recordings of Nova Scotian material (almost exclusively from Cape Breton) for St. Francis Xavier University in the late 1970s and early 1980s. That project, which received \$150,000 in federal funding, ran for five years and resulted in the recording of more than 2,000 items on 350 tapes from 168

informants, in addition to gathering several other collections of taped material, which had been compiled informally by amateur enthusiasts.

The 1987 Prince Edward Island recording project, by contrast, produced 192 items on 33 tapes, recorded from 20 informants. While clearly not as impressive in scope as the Nova Scotian project, this was a significant result from a community that was, even in its most conservative districts, at least a full generation ahead of Nova Scotia in terms of Gaelic cultural decline. Had the same generous federal funding, which had allowed five years of collecting in Nova Scotia, been available in even a proportional amount, considerably more time than a few weeks would have been allowed to cultivate Prince Edward Island informants and to collect material. In light of the virtually complete dearth of academic study that has been conducted into the Gaelic cultural community in Prince Edward Island, however, it is difficult to underestimate the importance of the present collection of Gaelic field recordings. They make an important contribution to the wider study of Gaelic culture, particularly in the New World, and also to the social history of Prince Edward Island by opening a window on the cultural life of what has been, historically, the Island's largest ethnic group.

## Note on Sources

Anonymous. *Memorial Volume: The Scottish Catholics in Prince Edward Island, 1772-1972*. Summerside: The Journal Publishing Co., Ltd. 1922.

Bailyn, Bernard. *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986.

Bumsted, J. M. *The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to North America, 1770-1815*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1982.

Campbell, John Lorne. *Scottish Gaelic in Education and Life: Past, Present, and Future*. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Saltire Society, 1950.

-----, Ed. *Songs Remembered in Exile: Traditional Gaelic songs from Nova Scotia recorded in Cape Breton and Antigonish County in 1937 with an account on the causes of Hebridean Emigration, 1790-1835*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1990.

Dunn, Charles. *Highland Settler: A Portrait of the Scottish Gael in Cape Breton and Eastern Nova Scotia*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953.

Durkacz, Victor Edward. *The Decline of the Celtic Languages*. Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1983.

Kennedy, Michael. *Is leis an Tighearna an Talamh agus an Lan (The Earth and all that it Contains Belongs to God): The Scottish Gaelic Settlement History of Prince Edward Island*. Edinburgh. Ph. D. Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1995.

-----, *Gaelic Nova Scotia: An Economic, Cultural and Social Impact Study*. Halifax: Nova Scotia Museum Curatorial Report No. 97, 2002.

MacQueen, Malcolm. *Skye Pioneers and 'the Island'*. Winnipeg: Stovel Company Limited, 1929.

Thomson, Derick S. Ed. *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1983.

Withers, Charles W. J. *Gaelic Scotland: The Transformation of a Culture Region*. London: Routledge, 1988.

## SUMMARY AND FINAL REPORT BY DR. JOHN SHAW

The present report describes the project titled *Gaelic in Prince Edward Island: A Cultural Remnant* sponsored by the Institute of Island Studies at U. P. E. I. and the Celtic Studies Committee. Briefly, the project consisted of compiling field recordings of the most important items of Scottish Gaelic tradition on the Island. The recording in the field was carried out over the period from August 17 to September 12, 1988 by Dr. John Shaw of Cape Gael Associates Co-operative with the assistance of Mr. James Watson of the same agency during the week of August 21-30, with an additional music recording session by John Weyman on September 19.

The greater part of the collected material is in the form of sound recordings made on an UHER 4200 Report Stereo reel-to-reel machine. Interviews were done in mono, singing and music in stereo. In addition, selected sessions were video-recorded. These included all of the music sessions, in order to furnish as complete a record as possible of the Island's traditional Scottish and Irish fiddling techniques; a singing session in Caledonia with the Island's last active Gaelic singers; and a Gaelic interview with John (*Iain Néill*) MacLennan, age 88, the last remaining fluent speaker known to us in the province.

Although John MacLennan may now be unique in this regard, the region is the home of a number of good semi-speakers, many of whom were doubtlessly fluent as children, whose information in terms of language, folklore, sociolinguistics, ethnography and music has been valuable indeed. Many of the important informants were identified prior to the field recording stage by John Weyman of the Celtic Studies Committee, whose excellent volunteer work expedited the entire project by many days and contributed greatly to the final results.

Of the 192 items recorded on the project 153 were sound recordings and 39 were videotaped. These were recorded from a total of 20 informants out of the 29 informants visited over 31 visits. A look at the relative frequencies of the kinds of items recorded gives a fair indication of the internal strengths and weaknesses of a culture in its terminal stage, and a comparison on this basis with folklore materials from Cape Breton would reveal much about the progressive effects of language loss on Gaelic culture. It is not surprising that items from music and dance with accompanying lore should be the most numerous category (47), since such items are quite capable - in some form, at least - of crossing language barriers. The relatively high frequency of song items collected (21) is misleading, since these are either extremely fragmentary, often consisting of a single verse or a part thereof, or are reinforced by a standard printed text. The 19 story items clearly reflect the end of a tradition, since they are either anecdotal and/or humorous, or concern psychic phenomena: these are the brief, simple and hardy remnants of a larger, highly-evolved tradition, including the recitation of major international and hero-tales, of which no trace remains now on the Island. Materials reflecting language attitudes (19) owe their frequency to the collector's attempt to record an internal account of the demise of the language in a once vigorous Gaelic area and some of the social causes underlying this. Much work remains to be done to expand on the number of miscellaneous folklore items (nicknames, Placenames, yearly festivals: 15) which can still be found in all the

Island's Scottish communities. P. E. I. informants are quite aware of their family origins, as the 14 items under this category show. Our impression is that the area of genealogy and accompanying family stories has assumed more importance here than among Cape Breton informants. A large proportion of P. E. I. informants are able to trace their families back to the time of settlement, and some cases beyond, while the time elapsed with its intervening social changes has been at least as great as that applying to Cape Breton. Anecdotes concerning bards and characters (often one and the same: 9) could also be profitably added to: we would suggest that one of their major functions was to embody and pass on much that was admired in Gaelic culture but at variance with English-speaking values being introduced. The 7 proverbs and expressions recorded are of some interest, since most of them are not familiar to us from other Gaelic-speaking areas. The dialect items (5) hint at the beginning of some independent developments in the vocabulary of P. E. I. Gaelic. A thorough analysis of John MacLennan's dialect would reveal more in this regard.

Before examining the materials recorded in the field we should remind ourselves that the portrait drawn from these is only a partial one, and that the most complete and accurate account of Gaelic life on the Island can only be achieved by combining the orally transmitted materials with information contained in the written documents. We hope to compile a more complete account of this kind at a later date.

It became evident quite early in our recording with the Island's Gaelic informants that family histories, both in the sense of genealogy and family based anecdotes, provide an ideal starting point from which to explore an informant's knowledge of the culture. These accounts are among some of the best to have survived among Gaels into our own time, and as we shall see from the following items recorded from Rev. Donald Nicholson of Clyde River and a native of the Gaelic-speaking community of Hartsville, they supply fascinating glimpses into the Gaelic settlement of the Island, and of the Western Islands in the first half of the nineteenth century. The first story concerns a Murdoch MacLennan of Raasay, near Skye, a first cousin to Rev. Nicholson's grandfather, and his encounter with army recruiters whose use of liquor and other devices to fill their ranks have been well described in more than one Gaelic song. In Rev. Nicholson's own words: "When they would get the young man pretty well over the bend they would get him to sign up for the army." Murdoch was more fortunate than most, for the transaction was observed by two of his brothers, who during the night somehow managed to get him out of the building where the recruits were being held until the morning. The narrow escape earned him the Gaelic nickname of *Murchadh an Saighdear* "Murdoch the Soldier" forever after.

Two of Murdoch's brothers, John and Ronald, arrived in Hartsville (then known as Scotch Settlement) in 1855 and moved in with an uncle for their first year. After the year had passed "John began to feel that he had been mistaken leaving the old country and he got lonesome and wished to return." He packed his belongings and Big Murdoch, a cousin, agreed to take him to a cattle vessel that was scheduled to leave the Island. Murdoch's planned departure, however, was regarded as a major mistake by his relatives and neighbours and Big Murdoch consequently took the longest possible route to the

wharf, passing the time with conversation and stories. They arrived in time to see the ship departing under sail some 500 yards from the shore, and had to return home. This was the only instance known to Rev. Nicholson of a settler in the Scotch Settlement wishing to return to Scotland and the story has it that Murdoch never again mentioned returning to the old country. A few months later both he and his brother took up land in the Scotch Settlement.

The above family stories are also distinguished by the wealth of old country Placenames given, which indeed are far more numerous than those generally heard from Cape Breton informants. These include the small-island names of Flodda and Rona off Skye, as well as Sleat in the southern part of the island. The names are all linked with precise genealogical references, and dates (some of which can be found published in local histories) are frequently included.

The Hartsville-Scotch Settlement area is not alone in retaining a strong attachment to Scotland through family histories. Theresa Wilson (née MacPhee) of Goose Cove on the North Shore can recite her genealogy back over five generations to Highland settlers (some of whom arrived with Lord Selkirk), and Mary Bruce, raised in Valleyfield remembers that her mother regularly wrote MacKinnon cousins in Uig, Isle of Skye. Her mother's family arrived in the Island in 1857.

Despite the strong bonds with Scotland maintained in families, written and oral sources stress the rapid and progressive changes that characterized the Gaelic-speaking settlements, particularly when compared to Cape Breton, and this being so, it is no surprise that views of Gaelic language and culture should be complex. A fascinating, almost global view of this comes from my friend Dan MacPherson of Caledonia concerning the demise of the language based on a very ordinary circumstance in 1980. I quote this in full:

I was shingling there that day. There was nine of us altogether. There was Neil MacLean, who was married to my sister, and there was Dan Duncan MacFarlane, an old Scotchman... and he got this kilt from Scotland. And he went to the Scotch gathering and there was no one showed him how to put it on. And Angus MacLean... he saw Angus MacLean and went over and Duncan he was a cross fellow: right right cross and a real, real Scotchman. A good piper and a good fiddler. "Can you put this damn thing on me?" "Oh well," says he, "you got a MacFarlane plaid" – pretty red, you know – and, "To tell you the truth," says Angus, "I don't know the first thing about it." And it was a hot, hot day. And he put it on his arm and carried it around. Isn't that something? But anyway, he was there and Neil MacLean, and Neil MacLean looks up and he says, "There's something happening right now here in this house that will never happen again. I can swear to that: it will never, never happen again. There's nine people here and every one can talk Gaelic." Isn't that something? And there was one woman near ninety who was a scream altogether: she was a storyteller. And it'll never happen again.

One family that showed unusual loyalty to the language in the Caledonia area is that of Percy MacPherson from Glen William. This family, descended from Skye immigrants, was anxious that the children should speak Gaelic and in no way equated the language with social or cultural backwardness. Family worship was conducted in Gaelic only: Percy's grandmother, who lived with them, was a strong influence that assured he spoke the language well as a child. Although Percy also spoke English before he began school, Gaelic was used in the home perhaps more often than in other families. Older people spoke the language well, but not all the young people of his generation. Catherine MacLean of nearby Iris describes the older people's preference for Gaelic, saying that "They wouldn't want to learn anything else... They thought the Gaelic was the only thing." One old lady in Caledonia so vastly preferred the language that she was heard to remark to local visitors that she hoped they had Gaelic the next time they called in.

Whether real or imagined, the advantages of knowing the language became part of the storyteller's repertoire, as illustrated in the following story, apparently originating in Cape Breton, told by Rev. Donald Nicholson:

Two men, one of them Gaelic speaking, were walking through the countryside on a warm day. The man without Gaelic said he saw no great purpose or advantage to knowing Gaelic, and the Gaelic speaker replied that it could prove handy at times. They stopped at a house to ask for a drink of buttermilk and as the buttermilk was brought up the elderly lady there said something to her daughter in Gaelic. The Gael politely declined the buttermilk but the other man, unheeding, drank it down and they continued on their way. And after they were on the road again the English speaking man said "Now why didn't you drink the Buttermilk?" "Well," he said, "if you'd had the Gaelic you would have known the woman said, "Give them the buttermilk that the rat was in."

In the early days of the Gaelic settlement, at least, institutional views toward public use of the language were not always unfriendly. Rev. Nicholson's account of tradition from his native Hartsville shows a degree of institutional understanding and enlightenment toward Gaelic which may well be unique in the history of the Maritimes:

The first settled minister in Hartsville Congregation – or Strathalbyn as it was called at the time – was linked with Clifton-New London. And this man, Alexander Sutherland, when he came out he did not have the Gaelic, especially sufficiently to preach in Gaelic. And in the Strathalbyn church practically the entire congregation were Gaelic and the older people had nothing else but Gaelic. So this elderly man was asked to lead in prayer. And during his prayer he mentioned to the Heavenly Father, what did they ever do to bring such judgement upon them that He should send a minister who could not speak unto them in their own tongue? And later on one of the parishioners informed the preacher either trying to excuse the man or otherwise and the minister said, "I understand it very well. I think I'll be able to correct that." So he took some time off and went to Scotland to a school – a Gaelic school – and came back and preached Gaelic and English.

Oral accounts show a rate of literacy in Gaelic that is surprising considering the absence of the language from the school system. The mainstay was naturally enough the Bible, but the fact that the Gaelic newspaper *MacTalla* published in Sydney, N. S. around the turn of the century was not uncommon points to a recreational aspect to literacy in Gaelic. No less noteworthy is the number of women able to read Gaelic, and in some families both parents were literate in the language.

There is some evidence from informants, both in private and public settings, that would lead us to believe that the language transition, during the nineteenth century at least, was not as smooth as might appear from our modern perspective. In a humorous anecdote one old timer with rudimentary English after a day in town remembered on the way home that he had forgotten to purchase ginger. The word gave him trouble, so before sending the young lad who was with him home, he rehearsed the pronunciation carefully and returned, asking the merchant, "Have you got any danger here?" "No danger here." "Any danger in town?" "Oh, yes. There's a lot of bad places in town" Another man in describing his responsibilities at home is reputed to have said, "I have two blind mans on my hands and one of them is a woman."

The language according to our informants seems to have fallen out of usage at various rates and times which differed according to locality and could probably be correlated with time elapsed since the period of settlement, and, possibly, with religion. The language seems to have persisted in Caledonia as long as anywhere else: Dan MacPherson, now well into his nineties, remembers a monoglot woman when he was nine. English here appears to have been often used here in the majority of households by 1900, with the consequence that the younger children within a large family did not know the language. Mary Bruce from Valleyfield mentions that the family worship would be conducted in Gaelic or English depending on which children were present. This led to linguistic scenarios well known in other Gaelic areas. We have come across frequent memories of Gaelic being used as a code within a family to talk over the heads of the younger members, and in one instance children were teased for their mistakes when they attempted to speak a language which was becoming increasingly inaccessible. Catherine MacLean of Iris, near Caledonia, remarks that the monoglot generation ceased to exist around the time of her grandmother's death in 1936, adding that Gaelic effectively disappeared from usage in her area in the late 1920s. The major cause for this language change, according to informants, is that parents did not "teach" their children to use it.

Goose Cove, on the North Shore, witnessed much the same process: Gaelic ceased to be heard in the early 1930s; in fact, the first fluent Gaelic heard by our informant Theresa Wilson was from a Cape Breton man, Dan MacEachern of Judique, who visited the area in 1937-38. Before this time, however, Gaelic was used in a large number of households, with some literacy among speakers: Theresa's grandmother often read the Gaelic newspaper *MacTalla* to an enthusiastic audience. This was in spite of Theresa's grandfather, who being of Lowland extraction, opposed the use of Gaelic on the grounds that it would spoil one's English.

There is ample oral evidence that many of the Island's schoolteachers were Gaelic-speaking – schools mentioned are Springton, near Hartsville (founded in 1837), and High Bank – but no accounts have come down to us of the language being used in any capacity in the schools, and as was often the case with native peoples well into this century, children were not encouraged to speak in their native language in the schoolhouse. As a rule the English-only policy stopped short of physical punishment. However, Margaret MacLeod (103) of Little Sands, our oldest informant, states that this did occur in the local school, where Gaelic was actively discouraged with switches from the woods or a strap. In this case methods extended to a version of the *maide-crochaidh* or “hanging stick”: “Perhaps they’d have the shingle themselves, you know, and they’d be watching for Gaelic and then it would be put on them... No Gaelic allowed, and the children would tell on each other if the other fellow was talking Gaelic.”

In Goose Cove, King's County, Gaelic was likewise ignored in the school. In Theresa Wilson's grandmother's time (c. 1856) the school inspector was reported to have expressed his displeasure with the quality of English spoken by the pupils. However Theresa recalls hearing from her father, born in 1889, that Greek was at one time taught in this same school.

Field recording has yielded some information regarding linguistic features of P. E. I. Gaelic which deserve to be commented on in passing and show some signs of linguistic adaptation and innovation in the Gaelic settlements. Historically the most interesting is the term *pàirc-coillidh* or *pàirce-choilleadh*, literally a woods-field, referring to the burnt clearings where the settlers planted their potatoes. This differs from the term used universally in Cape Breton which is *coille dhubh* or “black woods”. Another Gaelic term which is unfamiliar to me outside of the island is *loda* meaning the little velvet pouch on the end of the stick used for church collections. For “farming” we have encountered *fermeireachd* instead of the common term *tuathanachas*. In more than one instance we have observed the genitive singular of the personal name *Niall* as *Nèill* rather than the form *Nill* so often used by Cape Breton speakers. Finally there is one small piece of evidence pointing toward dialect differences within a single family of mixed Skye and Colonsay origins in the pronunciation of the word *caoraich* “sheep”.

Storytelling is the most extensively represented of the various kinds of Gaelic folklore materials recorded over the past summer. It was, in an informant's words, “the entertainment people had.” In living memory stories were told in English as well as Gaelic, and apparently achieved a fairly high standard in the second language, yet one informant has observed that “stories sound better in Gaelic” echoing a widespread and possibly accurate piece of storytelling folklore that is frequently encountered among Cape Breton reciters. The repertoire includes both local Island stories and those brought over at the time of settlement from western Scotland. Percy MacPherson of Glen William recalls hearing the following two stories, the first of which very likely originated in Scotland:

I heard a story one time that happened in Scotland: it was about witchcraft. This man had quite a herd of cattle and he was losing them one by one and one

morning he got up at daylight and he looked out and he saw a neighbour coming to his barn. The neighbour opened the barn door and he put something above the door. And after the neighbour left he went out to see what he was doing and he found this stick above the door and he took it out and he laid it outside someplace and whenever it got dark he took the stick and he went to this neighbour's place that had put the stick above his door and he put it above the neighbour's door. And the next morning one of the neighbour's cattle was dead. *Nach robh sin eagalach?* (Wasn't that frightful?)

This couple were going home after getting married. And this cat came from nowhere and it was going around the bride's feet and tripping her. And he had a long knife and he pulled it out of his pocket and he stabbed the cat, and the cat left. And the next day there was one of the neighbours sick and he went over to see him. And he was in terrible bad shape, and the bridegroom, he pulled the clothes off him in bed and when he pulled the clothes off him he was all bandaged up where this stab wound was in him.

Whether or not this second story originated in Scotland it bears a strong resemblance to tales of witchcraft, cats and shape-changing current in Skye until our own times.

A further item of witchcraft tradition from Skye, this time linked with a fragment of song, is recalled by Dan MacPherson and concerns the Martins:

**'S ann à Baile Throtairnis a dh'fhalbh nan còmhlan grinn**  
*Dol a dh'ionnsaigh Port Rìgh mar a dh'òrdaicheadh leinn*  
**Gun do bhàsaich dithis còmhla riu'...**

Our fine company set out from Trotternish  
Going to Portree as had been set out for us.  
Two of our number perished...

“They came to the river and the witch was there and she killed them both.”

Another interesting story brought over from Scotland, this time concerning the devil and having at least one close parallel recorded in Cape Breton was told to us by Catherine MacLean of Iris:

There (was) the story in the Old Country there about a man who was fond of playing cards and there was a big rock there. He was sitting on this rock playing cards and this man came along and asked him if he could have a game of cards with him. So he sat down and he was getting every game – couldn't get a game on the man at all. So the man got up and went away: he left the man and the cards there and he went. After a while he came back and there was no sign of the man and the edge of all the cards was a little burnt – a little burnt corner of all the cards... We know who that was.

Stories concerning the *sìthichean* – the little people or fairies – for some reason are relatively rare among Gaels in North America. Among the few that may have survived on the Island, we recorded this one from Rev. Nicholson which was known in his family.

Big Murdoch would be telling about the fairies that he had seen in the Old Country. And he said that the way [one] could escape the fairy, if there was a field of potatoes – rows of potatoes – rather than trying to run away from it you'd run criss-cross on the potato-patch. And he said the fairies would have to run up and down each row in order to get across.

No less popular than witch stories and fairy stories are those dealing more directly with the supernatural in the form of ghosts and forerunners. Indeed, we have recorded only a very small proportion of those known during our fieldwork, for such stories, along with humorous anecdotes, seem to have most successfully survived the language change. Witch stories enjoyed some popularity, and one family is reputed to have practised witchcraft within living memory, but it is the stories dealing with forerunners, especially death premonitions, which seem to have held the most enduring interest for Island Gaels. Examples of these latter are numerous, and the examples given here are typical of many Gaelic communities. The first, from Catherine MacLean, contains the frequent motif of lights being associated with an impending death:

My father-in-law, when he lived in Lewes, he was coming home from somewhere one night and little light lit on his shoulder. And that light stayed on his shoulder until he got to wherever this place was. And it was a child that died and he helped make the coffin for the little child. And that's what it was: the light stayed on his shoulder until he got to this place where the child died.

A further story featuring lights as forerunners, this time with an almost chilling quality, has been passed down through the family of Rev. Nicholson of Hartsville:

When I was quite a young lad I had an uncle living in the neighbourhood and his son became very ill with double pneumonia. But some weeks prior to his taking ill they were having breakfast early in the morning in the wintertime and there was a light shone through the window. And the uncle thought, well, that might be a forerunner that someone was going to pass away there. When the son took ill the doctor gave him no encouragement that he would ever recover. He had been very sick for a couple of weeks, but he did recover. But during that time his father going for a doctor got a severe cold and before the son recovered the father passed away. And two weeks later the mother passed away with pneumonia. I can remember the folk talking that that undoubtedly was a forerunner: that they had seen the light shining in on their table in the early morning.

Such lights occur here and elsewhere in a more specialized form: that of the *dreag* of traveling light, much like a large shooting star in appearance, which has been sighted in Caledonia. It is believed by Gaels that the length of the trail corresponds to the importance of the person whose death it presages, the longest trail indicating the death of

a clergyman. Other signs mentioned by informants are the face of the deceased appearing clearly in a dream, and the appearance of a single bird inside a house. This last tradition is widespread and, along with other signs, was part of the tradition of Theresa Wilson's family in Goose Cove, King's County:

If a bird flew in your house, that was somebody was bringing bad news to your house and there was a lot of things: dishes rattling in the cupboard was the sign that somebody was going to die; and a picture falling off the wall was another; and if you opened the stove and the sparks flew at you... that was supposed to mean you'd hear of a death.

The key to association with birds in this family's tradition was that birds were souls from purgatory, and a search for parallels to this belief elsewhere in Gaelic written or oral literature could yield some interesting results; as far back as medieval Irish literature birds were a clear sign – almost a literary convention – indicating passage through the membrane separating this world from the other world. Theresa's people further associated such flocks of birds with the *sluagh* (lit. the host) which was capable of transporting people quite rapidly and over considerable distances. Here is her account of her paternal grandfather's experience with the *sluagh*.

The *sluagh* – I don't really know what the name for *sluagh* was. Apparently if you went out after night you could be taken by the *sluagh*. And some believed that it was like a flock of birds would come, take you off your feet and carry you away. And my grandfather – my father's father – he would go to lie down after his hard day's work and get up to go outside at night before he'd go to bed and he'd probably never come back in until the next day they'd see him coming. One night he woke up on the railroad track and it was in the morning. He woke up with the vibration of the train. He walked in his sleep. And he believed that the *sluagh* took him... and if you rolled you pants legs up that the *sluagh* wouldn't take you.

Signs of death with more obviously religious overtones occur, as in the case of the appearance of the form of a lamb superimposed in an old woman who was on her deathbed.

No discussion of Gaelic stories would be complete without some mention of humorous anecdotes, and these too have often crossed intact into English. One such anecdote is of special interest, incorporating as it does the faculty of *geur-bheachdachadh* or close and detailed observation, so highly prized by old Gaeldom. According to Mary Bruce of Valleyfield a minister called on an old lady who lived by herself and was not as concerned with modern hygiene as some of her neighbours would have liked. The minister knew full well that he must accept the inevitable cup of tea so after it was poured into the slightly discoloured cup – the only one left in the house – and he had taken it gingerly in his left hand in order to sip out of the safest side the old lady remarked brightly, "I see you hold your teacup with the same hand as I do."

Field recording has garnered no full text of Gaelic songs from the Island, but a good number of fragmentary ones have appeared along with ample evidence of a strong song tradition generally similar to that in Cape Breton. Our informants tell us that singing was passed on largely by ear and informally: young singers just “picked it up”. Most people interviewed had some memories of family members who sang Gaelic, and many could name close relatives who composed songs in Gaelic. Singing, of course, was an important form of recreation, rivaling stories and in some localities instrumental music, but interestingly there is only the scantiest evidence of singing during work, as was observed among Gaels from at least the end of the eighteenth century. More research in the Catholic areas of King’s County might throw some light on this apparent anomaly. As we have noted in the case of storytelling, some local bards made songs in both languages. The songs sung or mentioned in our collecting cover the whole range of Scottish community life, taking in humour, love songs, the “big songs” of the eighteenth century bards, local events and satire. One vastly intriguing aspect of Gaelic songs is the nature of the repertoire preserved: there is a marked preference for songs of the nineteenth century composed in a “new” style in Scotland after the middle of that century, and a corresponding scarcity of songs transmitted from the older tradition. How this reflects the state of affairs during the initial decades of Gaelic settlement is a good question, for the Gaelic population of Cape Breton shows a far higher degree of conservatism in its repertoire. The answer may lie in a higher rate of literacy in P. E. I.

Nevertheless traces of some of the old song customs are present, not least among them the belief in the power of satire. Often as not a community would contain someone who was particularly adept at this song form, and as Rev. Nicholson’s account shows, it was often a form of retaliation as a last resort when all else failed:

One crippled man who used to make the rounds of settlements staying [in] each for a few weeks or months. In one of these the younger men were teasing him, a court case resulted and someone had to pay a small fine. So he went to Murdoch MacKenzie, as people often did who were sinned against, to make a song for him against the man who had injured him:

**Cha tèid mi ‘n-diugh dhan Èipheit  
Cha tèid mi measg nam bèisdean**

*Air eagal gun coinnich Blake rium*

**‘S gun tugadh e an t-anam dhìom**

I’ll not go to Egypt today,  
and join that brutish company  
for fear I’ll meet up with a fool  
who will strip me of my immortal soul

Dan MacPherson has furnished a good example of the link between song and story that is known elsewhere. This particular item also touches on instrumental music being based on the mouth-music words to a popular fiddle tune *Miss Drummond of Perth*:

### Calum Crùbach anns a' ghleann

*Cum thall na caoraich agad  
Calum Crùbach anns a' ghleann  
Cum a thall na caoraich.*

*Ged a tha do leth-shùil cam  
Chì thu leis an t-sùil a th' agad  
Ged a tha do leth-shùil cam  
Chì thu leis an aon shùil.*

Lame Malcolm in the glen  
keep you sheep over yonder  
Lame Malcolm in the glen  
keep your sheep there.

Though you are blind in one eye  
you can see with your good eye  
though you are blind in the one eye  
you can see with the other.

**“He was making out he was so blind and he was letting his sheep over to graze on the other fellow. The other fellow wasn't letting him, you know. He was pretty good too.”**

The practice of precenting the psalms, a distinctively Gaelic form of religious singing is remembered by one of the oldest of our informants. Alice MacLeod, raised in High Bank, remembers thickening frolics, known in Scotland as waulking the cloth and in Cape Breton as milling or, rarely, tucking frolics. It has been mentioned that men on the Island also participated in these work songs. If so, this is a practice shared with Cape Breton and absent in Scotland. What the original state of affairs was is a good topic for future research. A further exception to the general lack of work songs is Alice MacLeod's memory of women singing at their spinning.

Associated with the Island's Gaelic songs are a series of anecdotes about song composers, many of whom were memorable characters in themselves. Among these, most frequently mentioned is a certain Jane MacLeod of Caledonia, who was blind. Sìne Mhòr, as she was known in Gaelic, seems to have had little material wealth and visible social standing, yet her gifts as a bard and her whimsical independence established her as a cultural reference point. Her songs were said to have been written down and lost, but the orally surviving fragments range from humorous songs to prayers, and had they survived intact would have furnished a valuable internal record of the life of her community. Hers was a role shared by many old itinerant women in Cape Breton who left many of their traditions behind them with young children; the kindness they received is an indication of the degree of tolerance found in Maritime Gaelic communities.

Family nicknames are widely recalled on the Island, and often have much to say of the histories of families at the time of emigration, or before. Thus on the North Shore we

have MacInnises styled Tinkers; MacDonalds styled Bornish, after a small locality in South Uist, which has its parallel in my own parish of Glendale; a certain family styled *Bòcain* “ghosts” also with a Cape Breton parallel; and another styled *Giobain*, meaning something like “tatters”. The nickname *Alasdair Mucach* does not refer to a swinish individual, as some Gaelic-speakers might reasonably suppose from Gaelic *muc* “pig”, but rather to his family origins on the Isle of Muck in the Inner Hebrides.

Gaelic Placenames are relatively rare in peoples’ memories, perhaps because of the widespread renaming with the introduction of rural post offices, yet the old name *An Tuirc* for Lewes in King’s County may share its origins with the identical old name for Glencoe in Inverness County, Cape Breton, possibly the Bridge of Turk in Scotland.

Proverbs in Gaelic are also infrequently encountered, though many more could be likely recorded than have appeared so far. John MacLennan’s *Chì an òige an aois ‘s chì an aois am bàs* “Youth sees old age and old looks at death” was unknown to us before.

John MacLennan was able to recall the practice of applying water with a silver coin to animals in order to protect them. This is known to him as *uisge far airgid* “water over silver” which is the equivalent of the *uisg’-airgid* “silver-water” used elsewhere. Chester Martin of Caledonia mentions that a Gaelic rhyme was recited with this and recalls an account of the efficacy of the technique against the curses placed on a horse by a man in Glen Martin who wanted it but could not obtain it.

This recalls a cursing of animals in the Highlands arising from envy called *aithiseachadh*. People also placed silver money in churns in order to bring the butter.

Memories of beliefs and customs relating to the seasons have likewise been retained. One such item is a seasonal rhyme concerning the privations of early spring which arrived from Scotland. The custom of striking houses on Hogmanay was often recalled, and we were most fortunate to collect from Dan MacPherson a good example of one of the Gaelic *duain* or chanted verses that accompanied this yearly ceremony where youths would make the rounds with a sack full of food, treats, or in this case a sheep’s head:

*Hé o ill é o  
Thàna mise a- nochd dhan Challainn  
Caisean Challainn na mo phòca  
‘S math an ceò thig bhon fhear sin.*

He o ill e o  
I have come tonight for New Year’s  
the sheep’s wooly breast bone in my pocket  
and good the smoke that will come from that one.

“...the sheep’s head you know, and the woman would have to come across with it. She couldn’t stand the stink (and) she’d have to come across with the goodies.”

Traditional dishes with their Gaelic names have also been recorded, and the list could doubtless be added to. These include *maragan*, a kind of blood pudding; *stapag*, a meal and cream mixture; *bainne deasgainn* made with milk and rennet; and a dish called *càraich* made with cracked oats. Various tonics, mostly from tree bark, have been retained as well, along with the old pan-Gaelic belief in the healing powers of the seventh son of the seventh son.

Descendants of the Island's Gaelic immigrants have long been conscious of their music and dance traditions, and the extent of these, along with their Cape Breton parallels is nowhere more apparent than in the material recorded from Theresa Wilson and her sister Emilina Crossman of Goose Cove, an area once noted for its Gaelic. The sisters belong to the sixth generation of a family of MacPhees which originated in South Uist. In the old days, they tell us, it was all Scottish music along the North Shore from St. Peter's eastwards. People danced both four and eight-hand reels, and the older people stepped through these as Cape Bretoners do to this day. Dance music consisted mainly of jigs and reels, and music and dance were performed to a high standard. Theresa first heard strathspeys when the Antigonish station began broadcasting around 1938, introducing a strong influence from Cape Breton players to that region of the island. She mentions, nonetheless, that the strathspey was very likely reintroduced at this time, for Jimmy MacCormick, a local fiddler born in the mid-1800s and regarded as old-fashioned in his musical style, is reported to have played strathspeys before her time. In the meantime an Irish element in the tune repertoire had gained popularity among local fiddlers. This area also featured some local pipers, the best remembered of whom seems to have been an Emmanuel MacInnis.

Hugh MacPhee of Fairfield, further east along the same shore, is an active fiddler whose grandfather Archie Angus MacPhee was Gaelic-speaking and a dance player. The original settler received the grant of land held today for having fought among the Highlanders at the Siege of Québec. Many of Hugh MacPhee's tunes came down through his father, and he himself became a dance player. Much like Cape Breton fiddlers, he employs cuts in his bowing and knows a number of tunes on the high bass. One of the most interesting items recorded during our visit with Hugh was a local story concerning a piper Peter MacPhee and how he acquired a certain tune:

In the early days of the land settlement they had live on a piece of property a couple of months or something per year in order to hang onto it. And this chap, a Peter MacPhee, he had a grant of land in Rockbarra way back in the woods and he had a log cabin on it and no well – there was a spring there. And he used to go out in the summer and he'd spend his two months out there hanging on to the grant or whatever. And he was at a spring there to get a pail of water and he fell asleep. And there was a fairy came out of the spring and played this tune. This old chap incidentally was a piper. And this fairy played the tune and after a while the fellow woke up. He had a strange name: they called him Togany (*Toganaidh*). Well, this Togany, he went back to his log cabin and he got his pipes and he played the tune. That was it.

Omar Cheverie is also an active old-style fiddler and a descendant of a Captain Neil MacPhee from the North Shore. His grandmother, a Campbell from Fairfield, spoke Gaelic more easily than English. Certain homes in those districts became recognized as gathering places for music and dance, corresponding to the *taigh-cèilidh* of Scotland and Cape Breton. Omar's grandfather played tunes on the high bass, and it was often the custom for fiddlers to double up at dances, as was also frequently the practice at the old schoolhouse dances in Cape Breton. He remembers seeing note-players from the time of his youth, and mentions that there were a number of active women fiddlers. Although he has never seen them danced, Omar thinks it likely that four-hand reels were present: in any case dancers step-danced through sets, and strathspeys were danced to. Cape Breton influence on the music of the North Shore, at any rate, may well have started at an early stage through tunes brought back by Islanders fishing mackerel off the Cape Breton coast, and there was doubtless contact through the Cape Breton music featured on the Sydney radio station before the founding of CJFX in Antigonish. Scottish music on the Island was a style easily distinguishable from that of the French-speaking musicians. Scottish music was often accompanied on the organ, as it was in Cape Breton before the introduction of pianos; occasionally rhythmic accompaniment was provided by a second person striking the strings with knitting needles as the fiddler played. Chording on the piano has suffered a general decrease in quality in recent years because young people cannot seem to find the time to develop the skills.

Francis MacDonald of St. Peter's, a Scottish-style fiddler who played his first dance at age 14 agrees wholeheartedly with the essence of this last observation, remarking that playing fiddle in his area is not considered "cool" by today's youth. His father was a fiddler, yet Francis' development as a musician owes much to a range of outside influences including old-time music on the radio, Don Messer, and Acadian and other French-speaking players. In Francis' youth, dance-sets consisted of jigs, reels and waltzes, with strathspeys apparently not in evidence, although there were other noted Scottish players in his district.

The main exponent of Scottish fiddling in the Caledonia area, John Dan MacPherson, played pipes before he took up the fiddle. His father was a brother to Dan MacPherson mentioned above, spoke Gaelic "all the time" and played the pipes. Many of the tunes learned on the pipes carried over into John Dan's fiddle music, but he recalls a Scottish fiddler John MacLean in his neighbourhood who was an early influence on his playing. At any rate he early on acquired a taste for the Cape Breton style and made some effort to model his playing after this. Due no doubt to his exposure to pipe music, John Dan's style contains the most interesting and varied ornamentation we have observed among the Island's Scottish players; this is reminiscent of such Cape Breton piper-fiddlers as Gordon MacQuarrie of Inverness County and Michael MacLean of Big Pond and may point to a close association between fiddling and piping in the Western Highlands before the period of emigration.

Further conversations and recording sessions leave us with the general impression of a vigorous fiddling tradition in the region around Caledonia which thrived until three generations or so ago. Alice MacLeod mentions a family in High Bank with six boys all

learning fiddle at once; both Dan MacPherson and John MacLennan are able to list the names of Gaelic-speaking musicians in the area, many of whom played dances.

Emmett Hughes' family background and fiddling repertoire are Irish. He is a sixth generation descendant of pioneers from Dromore, Co. Monaghan. Tunes from his family's tradition – his father was a player – consisted of jigs, hornpipes and reels, but did not include strathspeys or slow airs. He developed a vigorous and accurate style of Irish music largely his own, based partly on the music of Cape Breton's Angus Chisholm taken from phonograph records. This influence may be most apparent in the bowing, employing a large number of single strokes, when compared to the bowing styles of old country Irish fiddlers. An informed survey of bowing techniques among fiddle players in the Island's Irish districts would be timely.

We return to the North Shore for a moment to remark on an item of musical lore which to our knowledge has never before been recorded. It concerns the story behind the mouth-music words to the strathspey *Lord Moira*, much like the words to *Miss Drummond of Perth* that we have already seen. The words to the tune given by Theresa Wilson accurately reflect those recorded elsewhere in Scotland and Cape Breton, but the accompanying story describing the jilting of a wishful old maid is new to us and may have reached the Island with the settlers, having been lost elsewhere.

The mouth-music words were also important for jigging tunes, an art that Theresa Wilson's mother learned from her own mother. Jigging, called *puirt-a-beul* in Gaelic, was a frequent feature of wedding and dances on the North Shore, where two people would be hired to sit on either side of the fiddler and jig the tunes as they were played. Theresa's mother also regularly jigged tunes unaccompanied at home for her children to dance to. Omar Cheverie recalls an Angus Smith near Souris who was noted as well for jigging tunes.

As for stepdancing, Mary Bruce, raised in Valleyfield, remembers clearly the way dancers used to step through the sets, though there were not so many stepdancers in her time, but in her own words "just the occasional one". In the square sets: "When they'd be standing on one side and the other side joined they'd be stepdancing and stepdancing at the corners."

She does not remember seeing people perform tricks – snuffing out candles with the two heels and the like – as they stepdanced.

John MacLennan of Caledonia was able to describe in his own language the pipers he knew in his youth, among them a Willie Alex MacQueen whose sister, a fiddler, is still living. He added during another interview that local pipers on occasion played for dances, which recalls the lively dance-playing of pipers such as Neil MacIsaac of Big Pond, Cape Breton whose art lasted until the first decades of this century but has now disappeared entirely.

Our survey of items and observations from fieldwork in Gaelic on the Island is, of course, selective, presenting only some of the many questions that such a project raises. There remain many items yet to be recorded, and important comparisons to be drawn.

Gaelic in Prince Edward Island: A Cultural Remnant

Final Report

Sponsored by the Institute of Island Studies, U. P. E. I. and the Celtic Studies Committee

Compiled by John Shaw  
Summer, 1987

Edited by Mike Kennedy  
Fall, 2002

## BIOGRAPHY OF DR. JOHN SHAW

John Shaw was born 9 March 1944 in Baltimore, Maryland. He demonstrated an early interest in Gaelic culture, which eventually led him to Scotland and Canada. In 1961, while still a teenager, he began an intensive academic study of Gaelic, spending the summer studying with renowned Gaelic scholar, John Lorne Campbell, at the latter's estate on the Isle of Canna, Scotland. Campbell had been one of the early pioneers in the recording of Gaelic oral tradition in Scotland and had also made some of the earliest wax cylinder recordings of Nova Scotian Gaelic tradition, during trips to Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island in the 1930s (See: *Songs Remembered in Exile*). Campbell felt that Nova Scotia's rich Gaelic heritage was under appreciated and under studied, and encouraged the young scholar to turn his investigation in that direction.

Taking Campbell's advice, John Shaw enrolled at Harvard University in Boston in 1962, spending the summers during his four-year degree program studying with Rev. John Angus Rankin at St. Mary of the Angels parish in Glendale, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Rev. John Angus Rankin was not only a fluent Gaelic-speaker, a traditional musician and a strong source of Gaelic tradition in his own right, he was also very knowledgeable about other tradition bearers in Nova Scotia's Gaelic community and an active promoter of Gaelic culture. With this excellent portal to Nova Scotia's Gaelic culture and a strong academic grounding, Shaw developed a fluent command of the Gaelic language and an intimate knowledge of Cape Breton's Gaelic community.

In 1966 he graduated from Harvard University with a degree in Linguistics and German Languages. He spent the following year in France as a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Paris. In the 1967-68 academic year he entered Harvard Graduate School to study Celtic Languages, Literatures and Linguistics, spending the summer of 1968 on the Isle of Skye, Scotland. In 1969 he was awarded the degree of M. A. in Celtic Languages and Literatures and took up a post as a teaching fellow in Scottish Gaelic at the Department of Celtic Languages and Literatures at Harvard. In 1971 he was awarded a Harvard Travelling Fellowship to study in Ireland at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.

After his time in Ireland, Shaw returned to Nova Scotia. In 1975-76 he was a researcher at the Beaton Institute, University College of Cape Breton. In 1977 St Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia hired Shaw to conduct the Gaelic Folklore Project. During this five-year, federally funded program he recorded approximately 2,000 items on audio reel to reel from some 168 individual Gaelic tradition bearers in Cape Breton. In 1982 he was awarded his PhD from Harvard University for his work with one of these informants - Gaelic storyteller and tradition bearer, Joe Neil MacNeil of Middle Cape, Cape Breton. This relationship resulted in the award-winning McGill-Queen's book, *Sgeul gu Latha (Tales Until Dawn): The World of a Cape Breton Gaelic Story-Teller*.

In 1987, the Institute of Island Studies and the Celtic Studies Committee of U. P. E. I. provided funding to record the remaining Gaelic tradition bearers in Prince Edward Island. During August and September of that year, with the assistance of Jim Watson of Cape Gael Associates in Cape Breton and John Weyman of Prince Edward Island, Dr. Shaw interviewed informants throughout the province. This resulted in the recording of 20 Scottish Gaelic tradition bearers on reel-to-reel and videocassette in both Gaelic and English. The recordings also included a sampling of the Island's traditional Gaelic violin style.

After his recording project in Prince Edward Island, Dr. Shaw worked as a Gaelic Development Officer in Scotland and as a lecturer in Celtic Studies at the University of Aberdeen. He is currently a senior lecturer at the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh and has recently published another seminal book on Cape Breton Gaelic tradition: *Brìgh an Òrain: The Tales and Songs of Lauchie MacLellan*.

## **Biography: Dr. Michael Kennedy**

Michael Kennedy was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia on 12 June 1962. His ancestors were part of the wave of emigration from the Scottish Highlands to Prince Edward Island, mainland Nova Scotia and Cape Breton in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The language and traditions they brought to these communities were passed on through the generations but served almost as a backdrop or secret culture which seemed quite distant from the images of “Scottish” culture popularly portrayed in the media. This apparent anomaly fuelled Kennedy’s early interest in understanding the foundation, evolution and presentation of Gaelic culture in the Maritime Provinces. He was able to begin pursuing that interest academically while still a student at U. P. E. I. majoring in English literature. A summer course taught by Dr. John Shaw introducing students to the language, customs and history of Scottish Gaels helped put a lot of his informal observations in perspective and encouraged a deeper interest.

After a term of service in the Canadian navy as a navigating officer, Kennedy was awarded scholarships to undertake postgraduate work at the School of Scottish Studies and the Department of Celtic Studies at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. He studied history, Gaelic language, literature and culture while at the University of Edinburgh and conducted field research in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. His thesis work focused on the establishment of Gaelic communities in Prince Edward Island. By its very nature, this required a similar assessment of the Gaelic settlement of Nova Scotia. He attempted to access the Gaelic sources so central to the immigrant story which historians working in the field of the Highland clearances and in Scottish history generally have so largely ignored. In so doing he developed an intense interest in the presentation of ethnic or minority historical viewpoints and, in particular, in the many misleading stereotypes surrounding the history and culture of the Scottish Highlands and the Gaelic Diaspora. In 1995 he was awarded his Ph. D for his thesis: *Is leis an Tighearna an talamh agus an lan (The Earth and all that it contains belongs to God): The Scottish Gaelic Settlement History of Prince Edward Island*. The title was taken from a Gaelic inscription in Belfast, Prince Edward Island, an acknowledgement of both his own ancestors, who first settled that parish in 1803, and of the collective, articulate commentary on the Highland Clearances left by a once flourishing Gaelic community.

After graduating from the University of Edinburgh, Kennedy returned to Canada, where his main academic interest lay. He continued his studies in the Gaelic cultural strongholds of rural Cape Breton and worked independently as an historian and heritage consultant. In 1998-99 he attended a Gaelic immersion course at the Gaelic college, *Sabhal Mòr Ostaig*, on the Isle of Skye. The following year he worked as a sessional lecturer in the Department of Celtic Studies at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. As an independent consultant, Kennedy assisted in the creation of a 5-year development plan for the Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum and recently authored the report, *Gaelic Nova Scotia: An Economic, Cultural and Social Impact Study*, for the Nova Scotian Department of Tourism and Culture.

Dr. Kennedy is currently living in Calgary, Alberta. In his spare time he is working on two books examining the history and culture of Gaelic Prince Edward Island.

## **INFORMANT BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Rev. Donald Nicholson**

Rev. Donald Nicholson was born in Hartsville, Prince Edward Island in 1906 and was 81 years old at the time he was recorded for the Gaelic field-recording project. His grandparents immigrated to Prince Edward Island from Rona, Raasay and the Isle of Skye in the 1850s, settling in the Strathalbyn district of central Queen's County. This was one of several large communities in the province settled predominantly by people from this district in Scotland and was established in the 1830s. Rev. Nicholson's ancestors were part of a later immigrant group known in Strathalbyn as the "late comers". The Strathalbyn district was overwhelmingly Scottish but was already in transition from Gaelic to English language use when Rev. Nicholson was growing up in the early decades of the 20th century. His older brother (who emigrated to Quincy, Massachusetts along with many others from the district) was a fluent Gaelic speaker, while Rev. Nicholson had only a partial command of the language – a situation very common in families of that era. Rev. Nicholson supplied many story anecdotes in Gaelic and English.

### **Dan MacPherson**

Dan MacPherson was in his 90s when interviewed and hailed from the Caledonia district. His people were from the Isle of Skye and were part of the movement from that Island to the backland settlements like Caledonia in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Dan was undoubtedly completely fluent in Gaelic as a youngster and demonstrated a good command of the language and a large store of Gaelic material when interviewed. Dan noted that his people were recognized as great tradesmen but did not say whether this originated in Skye or in Prince Edward Island. Several members of his family were good storytellers and singers, such as his uncle, Johnny MacLennan. Dan had a particularly strong interest in Gaelic songs and in local composers, supplying a great many interesting references to the tradition around the Caledonia area as well as fragments of songs and Gaelic anecdotes from Skye and Prince Edward Island. His brother was a piper, as is his nephew, John Dan MacPherson, who was recorded playing the violin in this collection.

### **Margaret MacLeod (née MacNeil)**

Margaret MacLeod was the oldest informant interviewed for this collection. She was born in Little Sands in October of 1884 and was about a month short of her 103<sup>rd</sup> birthday when she was interviewed. She was a daughter of Murdoch MacNeil, son of Archie and Sarah (Currie) MacNeil of Little Sands. This district of Prince Edward Island had been settled by people from Argyll and her paternal grandfather, Archie, had come out directly from Colonsay. Her mother's people, however, like her late husband, were Skye people. She was raised in a still strongly Gaelic environment but English was making headway by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Her father had very little English as a young man, while her mother spoke good English. English had become an important language in their family by the time of Margaret's youth and her sister, consequently, had very little Gaelic. Their

uncle, Ewen Lamont, by contrast, was a famous Gaelic poet, whose hymns were published in a joint volume with those of the Rev. Donald MacDonald in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and enjoyed several printings.

### **John MacLennan**

John MacLennan was born in Caledonia in 1901 and was 87 years old at the time he was interviewed. He was the only fully fluent speaker to be recorded for this collection and most of the material he recorded is in Gaelic. John was descended from Skye people who came late to Prince Edward Island, settling the backland districts, like his native Caledonia. He left P. E. I. at the age of 22 to work in the Maine lumber woods but returned to the Island a few years later to become a farmer and raise a family. John noted that children spoke Gaelic in Caledonia school when he was a student and that Gaelic songs and storytelling were popular forms of entertainment at that time. There were several Gaelic poets in his close family, such as his uncle, *Seonaidh* (Johnny) MacLennan. John was able to provide several fragments of Gaelic songs composed in the district as well as a host of other items during his interviews.

### **Percy MacPherson**

Percy MacPherson was approximately 76 years of age when interviewed in his home in Glen William. His people came from the Isle of Skye, his grandfather originally settling in nearby Bellevue. His parents had an unusually positive attitude towards Gaelic and did not consider it a backward language. Percy's father conducted family worship exclusively in Gaelic every morning and evening. Both parents were literate in Gaelic and sang Gaelic songs. They encouraged the use of the language in the home when Percy was growing up, particularly for the benefit of Percy's grandmother, who lived with them. This contributed to Percy's fluency in his youth, although he also had English before going to school. English was generally used with visitors but many families in the district still spoke Gaelic when Percy was growing up. Percy was able to recount some particularly interesting anecdotes concerning the supernatural.

### **Mary Bruce (née MacDonald)**

Mary Bruce was born in Kilmuir and was 88 years old when she was interviewed at her home in Valleyfield. She was the daughter of John Neil MacDonald and Effie MacKinnon. Her people came from the Isle of Skye and were part of the later settlement of the backland districts of Valleyfield, Heatherdale, Kilmuir and Caledonia in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Her father's people were from Kilmuir in Skye and her mother's from Uig. Her mother's people came out in the 1850s and the families in Skye and P. E. I. were still in touch at the time Mary was interviewed. Both of Mary's parents were literate in Gaelic. Family worship was conducted in both Gaelic and English when Mary was growing up, depending upon which children were present. Mary was taught English in preparation for school, although Gaelic was her mother tongue. This, she believed, was rather typical of the district when she was a child. Many of the children she attended school with understood Gaelic but she did not remember children speaking the

language, which was discouraged, in any event. She, however, was encouraged to use Gaelic in the home in order to be good company for her grandmother Mary (wife of Neil MacDonald), who lived with them. Her grandmother could speak only Gaelic but understood a small amount of English. Mary noted good storytellers in her family and at least one minor poet. Gaelic songs were commonly sung in her family when she was a child.

### **Catherine MacLean (Mrs. Jim MacLean)**

Catherine MacLean was born in Poplar Grove in western Prince County in 1921 and was 66 at the time she was interviewed. Her family moved to Iris, or Caledonia West in 1928 where she was raised. Catherine's people were originally from the Belfast district, her great grandparents having come out from the Isle of Skye with the Selkirk expedition of 1803. Catherine's parents were both native speakers of Gaelic but had worked for a time in the United States and were also fluent in English. Catherine's mother tended to use English in the home with the children but spoke Gaelic with her brothers. Catherine's grandmother Mary Gillis, who lived with them, had only a few words of English and always spoke with Catherine in Gaelic. She also read the Gaelic Bible aloud. She died in 1936, when Catherine was 15. Catherine did not hear Gaelic spoken in the Caledonia school when she was a student. Gaelic songs and stories were popular in her youth and older people in the community would gather to speak in Gaelic.

### **Theresa Wilson (née MacPhee)**

Theresa Wilson was born in Goose Cove on the "Northside" of Prince Edward Island, an area settled in the late 1700s by settlers from the Catholic Highlands. Her people were primarily from the Isle of South Uist and her first ancestor in Goose River, Murdoch MacKinnon, came out in the Selkirk expedition of 1803. Gaelic was commonly spoken in the Goose River area in Theresa's grandparent's generation but her parent's generation was not fluent. Theresa's mother's aunt Cicily, for instance, spoke Gaelic with very little English and used to sing Gaelic songs to Theresa's older brothers in the 1920s and 1930s. Theresa's mother could understand Gaelic quite well and perhaps generally better than most in her generation because of Cicily's influence. Her mother could sing *puirt-a-beul* (mouth music) and Theresa was able to sing at least part of one herself during her interview. Theresa indicated that in her early years in the 1930s few people in the Goose River area spoke Gaelic fluently anymore. In fact, the first fluent speaker she remembered hearing was Dan MacEachern who visited the area from Judique, Cape Breton around 1936-37. Gaelic was not spoken in the schools in the district. Music and dance traditions, however, were very strong in the Goose River area when Theresa was young. Her father and many other relatives played violin and several traditional style pipers were still active in the area. Theresa and her siblings could all play violin as well and frequently danced in their home either to their father's playing or their mother's singing.

## **Allan Cameron and Chester Martin**

Allan Cameron and Chester Martin were born in Caledonia at the turn of the century and grew up in that district. Allan was born in 1899 and Chester in 1902. The ancestors of both men came to Prince Edward Island from the Isle of Skye. Allan and Chester grew up with some Gaelic but were never fluent speakers. They developed an interest in the language as youngsters and in Gaelic singing. Allan's father sang a bit of Gaelic but Chester's father, although a Gaelic speaker and member of the Caledonia choir, apparently did not. Allan also improved his Gaelic while in military service, learning material from a Padre by the name of Gillies. Chester's grandfather was a fluent reader of Gaelic but Chester had to teach himself to read the language as an adult, visiting an older gentleman in the district for assistance. Allan and Chester used to sing in a Gaelic singing group with Willie Bruce from Valleyfield, known usually, as the Caledonia Trio. Most of their song repertoire came from published collections of a more modern style rather than from the traditional genre or from the local tradition of composition. They frequently sang hymns and psalms at community concerts and, in later years, at funerals of Gaels from the district.

## LIST OF MUSICIANS

### Violinists:

Omar Cheverie	(Souris)
Peter Chaisson, Sr.	(Bear River)
Dan MacPhee	(Bayfield)
Hughie MacPhee	(Bayfield)
Emmett Hughes	(Dromore)
John Dan MacPherson	(Caledonia)
Francis MacDonald	(St. Peter's)
Jack Webster	(Cardigan)
Carl Webster	(Cardigan)
Joe Kearney	(Sturgeon)

### Pianists:

Kevin Chaisson	(Bear River)
Ann MacPhee	(Bayfield)

### Guitarist:

Gerard Murphy	(Montague)
---------------	------------

## CONTENTS OF GAELIC RECORDINGS FONDS

1. 33 half-track reel to reel audio tapes (tape 31 is missing from master collection - check to see if it is in with copies)
2. 3 standard VHS tapes of traditional music and interviews with tradition bearers
3. 1 standard VHS tape; excerpt from *Compass* profiling Dr. John Shaw interviewing Rev. Donald Nicholson (Ann Thurlow, reporting)
4. 1 large blue binder with field notes and contact information
5. 3 small bound notebooks of field notes and contact information (2 orange; 1 green)
6. 1 Photocopy of computer print out of Dr. Shaw's field notes
7. 1 Photocopy of computer print out of final report by Dr. Shaw
8. 1 copy of project proposal submitted by Dr. Shaw prior to making recordings
9. 2 small bound booklets - Strathalbyn Jubilee (green); History of Valleyfield (red)  
(These should probably be removed from the fonds)

## AUDIO TAPE INDEX

### **Title: Gaelic Field Recording Project Audio Tapes**

Date of Creation: August-September 1987

Physical: 33 half-track reel-to-reel audiotapes, speed 7 1/2 (11 hrs.): master; analog; mono (interviews); stereo (music and songs)

### **Tape 1: Interview; Rev. Donald Nicholson, Strathalbyn 1987 08 20**

#### Rev. Donald Nicholson

1. Family History in Skye, Raasay and Rona
2. Prohibition of marriage on estates of Lord MacDonald of Skye; resultant family move to Rona
3. First settlement of ancestors in Hartsville/Strathalbyn district of P. E. I.
4. Powerful men: story of *Seonaidh Mòr* (Big Johnny) of Portree and the policeman
5. Storyteller and trickster *Seumas Iain Sheòrais* (James son of John, son of George)
  - Story of James and the man who accidentally set fire to district (English with Gaelic punch line)
  - Story of James and the temperance minister
  - Story of James getting John MacLennan in trouble with neighbour John MacKay by telling MacKay's father that his son had been very drunk and that he had heard this from MacLennan (neither of which were true)

### **Tape 2: Interview; Rev. Donald Nicholson, Strathalbyn 1987 08 20**

#### **Rev. Donald Nicholson**

1. Conclusion of story about *Seamus Iain Sheòrais* and his prank on John MacLennan and John MacKay
2. First school in district (Springton, c.1837)
  - First teacher, Alexander MacLeod, used Gaelic
  - After new school was built several years later, Mr. Richards, from the north shore of P. E. I., was hired as teacher; he had no Gaelic and his students had no English
  - Next teacher, Malcolm MacDonald, a classical scholar from Scotland, insisted on the use of Latin in his school; a strict disciplinarian who used corporal punishment; not being a very big man he sometimes came out on the losing end
6. First settled minister in Hartsville/Strathalbyn, Alexander Sutherland, had no Gaelic
  - Story of old man's Gaelic prayer, which encouraged Rev. Sutherland to return to Scotland to learn Gaelic
2. Story of grand uncle, Big John MacLennan, in Isle of Flodda (English with Gaelic ending)
  - Very timid as a boy, sent to well by mother at dusk and scared of ghosts

4. Advice from relative, *Murchadh Mòr* (Big Murdoch), on how to use a field of potatoes to escape from fairies
5. Forerunners
  - Death of Rev. Nicholson's uncle and aunt
  - Rev. Nicholson and his mother experience forerunner of death of an elderly woman from Kelly's Cross

**Tape 3: Interviews; Rev. Donald Nicholson, Strathalbyn 1987 08 20; Dan MacPherson, Caledonia 1987 08 24**

Rev. Donald Nicholson

1. Conclusion of Rev. Nicholson's forerunner experience

Dan MacPherson

1. John MacQueen (MacPhee in field notes and in later recording - tape 27) made a song insulting Jane MacLeod, his aunt, a famous local character and song maker, known as Sine Mhòr (Big Jane) or Blind Jane; he compared her to a *coileach* (rooster) after she ate like a glutton at a Sunday supper put on in honour of his brother, Rev. Sam MacQueen; sings fragment of this song; *A Shìne...* (O Sine...)
2. Recites fragment of Gaelic song Jane made about her fear of ghosts as she travelled through Pleasant Valley
3. Jane made a little Gaelic song about two girls who came to wall paper her house
4. Dan's father saved Jane when her house caught fire; Jane was burnt but not seriously injured
5. Anecdote about Jane's big laugh, usually made when she was nervous or startled; anecdote refers to a pet lamb and local minister, Rev. Sutherland; concludes with fragment in Gaelic
6. Dan recalls Gaelic song about several Martins being killed by a witch in Skye; sings fragment of song and then recites it:

***'S ann à Baile Throtairnis a dh'fhalbh nan còmhlan grinn***  
*Dol a dh'ionnsaigh Port Rìgh mar a dh'òrdaicheadh leinn*  
***Gun do bhàsaich dìthis còmhla riu'...***

Our fine company set out from Trotternish  
 Going to Portree as had been set out for us.  
 Two of our number perished...

7. *Alasdair MacAoidh* (Alexander MacKay) from Breadalbane noted as a good Gaelic story teller; would keep children up to 1:00 in the morning telling stories about witches
8. Recites Gaelic proverb: *'S ann dha fhèin a nì an cù an comhart* (It is for himself the dog barks)
9. Grandfather was Donald MacLennan

10. Recites humorous Gaelic fragment about Alasdair Gillis, a good dancer in the area
11. Sings *puirt-a-beul* (mouth music), *Calum Crùbach* (Crippled Malcolm); sings and briefly explains story

***Calum Crùbach anns a' ghleann***

*Cum thall na caoraich agad  
Calum Crùbach anns a' ghleann  
Cum a thall na caoraich.*

*Ged a tha do leth-shùil cam  
Chì thu leis an t-sùil a th' agad  
Ged a tha do leth-shùil cam  
Chì thu leis an aon shùil.*

Crippled Malcolm in the glen  
Keep your sheep over yonder  
Crippled Malcolm in the glen  
Keep your sheep

Though you are blind in one eye  
You can see with the one eye  
Though you are blind in one eye  
You can see with the one eye

[Ed. note: An instrumental version is played on Video 1, Recording Session 2 (Dan MacPhee, Cut 2) and Audio tape 18 (Dan MacPhee, Cut 2)]

12. Notes that his grandmother's people (MacPhersons) were very good at handiwork - carpentry, blacksmithing, weaving, spinning; his grandfather, Donald Big Donald MacPherson was known as, *An Gobha Mòr* (the Big blacksmith)

**Tape 4: Interviews; Dan MacPherson, Caledonia 1987 08 24; Margaret MacLeod, Little Sands 1987 08 25**

Dan MacPherson

1. Notes MacPhersons as great tradesmen
2. Notes his uncle, John MacLennan, as a great story-teller and singer
3. Sings fragment of Transvaal song (Gaelic) possibly by his uncle, John MacLennan
4. Anecdote about local store keeper, *Calum Ruadh* (Red Malcolm) "meanest man to hit Canada" who had a book he refused to lend
5. Anecdote about "John P.", grandson to *Calum Ruadh*, and his failed attempt at courting; John P. falls asleep in chair while MacDonald girl is making lunch; she puts lunch back and goes to bed with her mother

Margaret MacLeod

1. Notes that father's people were from Colonsay and grandmother's people from Skye; her father was Murdoch MacNeil; her grandfather, Archie MacNeil; her grandmother, Sarah Currie from Little Sands
2. Father had little English when younger; mother had good English
3. Humorous anecdote about Margaret's sister who had no Gaelic but tried to memorize "Happy New Year to you" to wish it to her neighbours; instead she came out with, *Bliadhna Mhath Ùr againn* (Happy New Year to us)
4. Her great grandmother (Sarah Currie, but possibly Mary) was born in Skye and had no English; she and her husband had different dialects; example of pronunciation of *caoraich* (sheep)
5. Notes that no Gaelic was allowed in schools
  - Children forced to tell on each other
  - Children were sometimes beaten with a switch for speaking Gaelic
  - Another punishment was to wear a shingle
4. Attitudes toward Gaelic in Little Sands
5. Importance of New Year's Eve
  - Recites Lowland Scottish New Year's Eve rhyme
  - Recounts practice of striking house with switches at New Year's Eve
2. Song composers in the area
  - Uncle Ewen Lamont, was a great Gaelic scholar and poet
  - Ewen's two sons, Murdoch and Donald were also good Gaelic poets
  - Angus Lamont taught school in Stanchel and then moved to Cape Breton as a store keeper
  - Murdoch composed song about dragging mussel mud; sings fragment:

*Bidh a huile fear againn... Ho ro 's droch-obair a' mhaorach* (Every one of us will be... Ho ro the rotten work of the mud....)

[Ed. note: *Maorach* literally means “shellfish” but is likely used in this context to refer to “shellfish mud” or more specifically “mussel mud”, the lime rich mud which was dug along the shores and spread on farm land to help balance and fertilize P. E. I.’s naturally acidic soil]

5. Jigs a tune
6. Mentions square dances with stepdancing
7. Notes that mother could read and write Gaelic

**Tape 5: Interviews; Margaret MacLeod, Little Sands 1987 08 25; Dan MacPherson, Caledonia 1987 08 26**

Margaret MacLeod

1. Forerunners
  - Boy sees his own funeral
  - *Dreag* (forerunner light)
3. Witchcraft

- Shape shifting into a cat to steal
  - Making cows hold back their milk
  - Remedy for curing cows that were bewitched – silver water
4. Cures
- Back manipulation – walking on back
  - Belief in curative power of seventh son of seventh son

### Dan MacPherson

1. Story of rivalry between Valleyfield and Caledonia congregations
- Bill MacPherson of Glen William, a great speaker, did not get on well with a MacLeod gentleman; made a song satirizing him and his family; sings fragments:

*'S iomadh boll mòr...* (Many the big bail of rope...)

*A Mhuladach mhòr a suidhe air a tòin...* (The big grumpy lady sitting on her backside...)

2. *Òran dhan Transbhal* (Transvaal Song)
- Sings verses about a regiment of young lads under General Roberts leaving on a steamer on New Year's Day for war in the Transvaal, Africa
2. Discussion about a minister Sutherland from Scotland
3. Story about Dan's christening
- *Màiri Anna Dhòmhnail Mhòr a' chnuic* (Mary Ann daughter of Big Donald of the hillock) was a Christian Baptist who was weaving upstairs when Dan was christened by Rev. Sutherland from Helmsdale, Scotland; forced to come down to witness the christening, Mary Ann, who spoke no English, noted sarcastically that this was the first time she had ever seen the River of Jordan in a bowl
2. Mentions Jimmy MacLean's grand uncle was *Seumas a' Ghlinne* (James of the Glen), the best song maker in the area and as good as any in Scotland
- Sings fragment of satirical song James made for Angus Matheson's father when he went horse trading in Souris
4. Recounts last gathering of Gaelic speakers in Caledonia (c. 1980) with names of those present
- Humorous anecdote about local man getting a kilt from Scotland

### **Tape 6: Interviews; Dan MacPherson, Caledonia 1987 08 26; John MacLennan, Caledonia (Gaelic) 1987 08 27**

### Dan MacPherson

1. Conclusion of account of last Gaelic gathering in Caledonia (c. 1980)
2. Account of Gaelic singer Sandy Matheson who was a heavy drinker and a winter horse trade that went badly wrong when the horse died on the way; sings fragments of Gaelic song: *'S fheudar dhomh... ?... a sgur dhen dram* (I should put an end to drinking)

3. Sings fragment of Gaelic song about a lost bag of flour, mentioning several local women who helped in the search: *bean Sheumais* (James' wife), *bean Iain a' Ghlinne* (John of the Glen's wife), and *bean Iain an Tàillear* (John the Tailor's wife)
4. Place names
  - Possibly: *Cnocach Mhic Shuibhne* (The Hilly Ground of the MacQueen's?)
  - Possibly: *Eilean Leòdhais* (Island of Lewis), formerly known as *An Tuirc* (The Boar)
  - *Eilean Naomh Eòin* (Prince Edward Island - lit. Island of St. John's)
  - *Am Baile Shearlot* (Charlottetown) also known as *Am Baile* (The Town) or *Am Baile Mòr* (The Big Town)
1. Story about a young man who broke a window striking a house at New Year's Eve
2. Recites Gaelic New Year's Eve *duan* (rhyme) and brief explanation of the practice of visiting and purifying the house with a smoldering sheep's head:

*Hé o ill é o  
 Thàna mise a- nochd dhan Challainn  
 Caisean Challainn na mo phòca  
 'S math an ceò thig bhon fhear sin.*

He o ill e o  
 I have come tonight for New Year's  
 the sheep's wooly breast bone in my pocket  
 and good the smoke that will come from that one.

3. Fiddling
  - List of local fiddlers
  - Discussion of style and tunes
  - Comparisons with Cape Breton fiddling
  - Locations of dances

### John MacLennan (Gaelic)

1. Discusses background (b. 1901, Caledonia)
  - Family background and use of Gaelic and English in family
  - Skye ancestry
3. Gaelic name for Caledonia was *Sgonsair* (Sconser)
4. Gaelic Songs and rhymes
  - Discussion of Gaelic singers in family: *Seonaidh MacIlleanan* (Johnny MacLennan), *Coinneach Peutan* (Kenneth Beaton), *Murchadh Peutan* (Murdoch Beaton)
  - Recites fragment of 18<sup>th</sup> century Gaelic song by Duncan Ban MacIntyre, *Moladh Beinn Dòbhrain* (In Praise of Mount Dobhran)
  - Sings fragment of *Òran Faoillich* (February Song)
  - Sings fragment of *puirt-a-beul* (mouth music), *Casan ruadh*, *casan ruadh*, *casan*

*ruadh ris a' sheanair...*(The old man's ruddy legs...) [Ed. note: This line can be interpreted in many ways but most likely refers to an old man's legs reddened by sitting too close to the fire. It is a common enough motif in humorous ditties of this type. It is sung to an air known generally as, *Chuir i a glùn air a bhodach* (She put her knee on the old man) and may be a variant. An instrumental version of this reel is played on Video 1 (Peter Chaisson Sr., Cut 2) and Audio tape 14 (Peter Chaisson Sr., Cut 1)]

- Recites fragment of seasonal lore: *Mios Faoillich* (Month of February)
- Recites seasonal rhyme: *Thuir an Gearran leis an Fhaoillich...* (Said March to February....)

[Ed. Note: *Faoillich* and *Gearran* refer to January and February in modern Gaelic usage. They traditionally mean "late winter" and "early spring" and do not correspond exactly with the months of the year. As a result, their correct traditional dating is not agreed upon. *Faoillich* generally began sometime in January and ran through most of February. In some sources *Gearran* corresponded with February but in many others it began in March and ran into the second week of April. The traditional application of the terms in the Maritimes would better suit February and March than the modern usage of January and February.]

7. Fiddlers and dancers in Caledonia (Some background interference on this section of tape)
  - Mentions a tune or two played on the pipes
  - Mentions Montague and Iona
  - Lists several fiddlers from Iona
  - Mentions person who could do the sword dance

## **Tape 7: Interview; John MacLennan, Caledonia (Gaelic) 1987 08 27**

### John MacLennan

1. Working in the woods
  - Left P.E.I. to work in the Maine lumber woods at age of 22
  - Rate of pay (\$2/day minus 25¢/day board)
  - Length of working day
  - Accommodations
  - Good food
  - Number of men in the camp
  - Time of year they worked
  - Work with an ax and amount of wood that could be cut
  - Dangers of lumbering
  - Home areas of other lumbermen
  - Number of years worked
12. Working as a farmer
  - Term *feirmeireachd* (farming)

- Better work than lumbering
- Lumbering paid more money
- 4. Fragment of late 19<sup>th</sup> century, modern-style song, *O chì, chì mi na Mòr Bheanna* (O, I see, I see the high mountains)
- 5. Mentions song by *Sìne Mhòr* (Big Jane) composed when the minister and John MacLennan's grandfather rescued her from her burning home that has been lost: "Although the minister and the elder took off my shirt, it was not with bad intentions..."
- 6. Discussion about *Sìne Mhòr* and her circumstances; never married, lived alone; blind; no pension; managed well enough
- 7. Discussion of local songs and song makers
- 8. *Buidseachd* (Witchcraft)
  - He did not believe in witchcraft but others commonly did in the community
  - Story of Hector Ross and Jimmy Stewart and use of *uisge far airgid* (water over silver), a cure for horses afflicted by *an droch-shùil* (the evil eye)
  - Story

**Tape 8: Interviews; Rev. Donald Nicholson, Strathalbyn 1987 08 29; Percy MacPherson, Glen William 1987 08 29**

Rev. Donald Nicholson

1. Story from Cape Breton about advantage of speaking Gaelic; non-Gaelic speaker ends up drinking buttermilk that a mouse had fallen into because he failed to understand his hosts' conversation; parts in Gaelic
2. Humorous anecdote about his grand uncle, who wasn't very bright, especially about spiritual matters; he missed church due to a cold and asked his wife what the sermon was; she replied, "*Cur an seann-duine a-mach agus leig an duine òg a-staigh*" (Put out the old man out and let the young man in); he misunderstood and thought she was being advised to get rid of him; parts in Gaelic
3. Gaelic saying of his mother when children were picking on the younger: *Bho nach is urrainn mi na geòidh, pronnaidh mi na h-iseannan* (Translated by Rev. Nicholson as: "If I couldn't beat the strong, I take it out on the weak"; Literally – "Although I am not as able as the goose, I would pound the goslings")
4. Humorous anecdote of his great grand uncle on his mother's side, *Eoin Gobha* (John the Smith) taking advantage of the ambiguous nickname of *Alasdair am Mucach* (Alexander of the Isle of Muck/Alexander the Pig)
5. Humorous anecdote about a MacPherson going from Montague through Valleyfield and being attacked by Rev. Big Roderick MacLean for being drunk; he turns the tables on the minister
6. Traditional foods
  - *Stapag* (partially churned cream, oatmeal and sugar, made by his mother as a treat for the kids)
  - *Marag* (blood sausage)

Percy MacPherson

1. Family background and use of Gaelic
  - Parents spoke Gaelic all the time (but also had English)
  - Grandparents (grandmother's maiden name was Ann Currie) all Skye people
  - Parents encouraged use of Gaelic which was unusual

**Tape 9: Interview; Percy MacPherson, Glen William 1987 08 29**

1. Types of Gaelic songs popular in the area
  - Songs from Skye and songs by Donald Ross (from Surrey, P. E. I.)
  - Names one song that was sung: *Bha 's a chuir iad mi rùisgte(?)*, 's an uisge sa *bheil Seonaid* (As they stripped me (?), Joan is in the water)
3. Gaelic use in family circle
  - Family worship in Gaelic conducted by father
  - Grandmother lived with family, largely responsible for Percy's fluency in the language as a youngster
  - Used English with most visitors but many families in district still had Gaelic
  - Family read Gaelic Bible and *MacTalla*, the Gaelic newspaper from Cape Breton
5. Gaelic stories told in the area of local events and things that happened in Scotland
6. Discusses early settlement of his family in Bellevue
7. Gaelic in local schools
8. Percy saw a *dreag* (forerunner light) dropping on his neighbour's house when he was a child
9. Gaelic expression of his grandmother: *Gu mo thurasachd Dha* (possibly an expression of exasperation meaning – “until my journey to Him”, i.e. God)
10. Witchcraft
  - Story of the witch cat and the newlyweds
  - Story of man in Scotland hexing cattle with a wand over the barn door; "*Nach robh sin eagalach?*" (Wasn't that frightful?)

**Tape 10: Violin Music; Omar Cheverie (Souris), violin; Kevin Chaisson (Bear River), piano 1987 08 30**

Note: The violin sessions and associated interviews were recorded on audio reel-to-reel tape and on videotape. With the exception of the first cut of tunes in the key of C by Omar Cheverie, all of the material on the audio or reel-to-reel recordings is available on the 3 VHS tapes that also accompany this collection, along with other material not recorded on the audio tapes. Generally speaking the quality of the video recordings is superior to the reel-to-reel audiotapes, which suffer from occasional electrical interference. Relevant sections of the notes for the VHS tapes are duplicated here, however, for the convenience of researchers who prefer to use the audiotapes.

Traditional tunes often exist in many variants and under a wide variety of names. Several generations ago, many, if not most of the tunes in the Scottish repertoire of Prince Edward Island would have been known by Gaelic titles; today, they are generally known by English titles, probably because many of them were recorded in that fashion in the major collections of Scottish music compiled since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Many of these

collections became popular in the New World several generations ago. I have endeavoured to identify as many of the recorded tunes as possible and to give the name or names most commonly used in the local tradition or their literary variant. I have also tried to attribute the tunes to their composers where known. Thanks are due to John Donald Cameron of Judique, Cape Breton for his invaluable assistance in this process.

Omar Cheverie, violin; Kevin Chiasson, piano (Stereo)

### **Cut 1: Strathspeys and Reels in key of C**

Strathspey: *Glengarry's Dirk*

Reels: *Bonnie Lass of Fisher Row, Bird's Nest*

### **Cut 2: Strathspey and Reels in key of A**

Strathspey: *Dòmhnall Iain an Tàillear* (Donald John the Tailor)

A variant of this name seems to have first appeared in print on the 78 recording released by Colin J. Boyd of Antigonish in 1934. It likely honours the legendary Cape Breton fiddler, Donald John "the Tailor" Beaton, from Mabou Coal Mines, who probably had a particularly popular and respected setting of this traditional Scottish tune.

Reels: *Sligo Maid, Bonnie Annie* (Daniel Dow)

### **Cut 3: Strathspey in key of A**

Strathspey: (Unknown)

### **Cut 4: Strathspey and Reels in key of G**

Strathspey: *Donside*

Reels: *Lady Georgina Campbell* (S.D.S), *Heather Hill* (Dan R. MacDonald)

### **Cut 5: Strathspey and Reels in key of F**

Strathspey: *The Lass o' Corrie Mill* (William Marshall)

Reels: *Bonnie Lass of Ballantrae, Carnie's Canter* (James Scott Skinner)

### **Cut 6: Jigs in key of F**

Jigs: *The Munster Lass, Light and Airy*

**Tape 11: Violin Music; Omar Cheverie (Souris), violin; Kevin Chaisson (Bear River), piano 1987 08 30**

Omar Cheverie, violin; Kevin Chiasson, piano (Stereo)

(Mono) Interview with Omar Cheverie:

- Omar's family history – MacPhee's
- Captain Neil MacPhee in Gloucester
- Stepdancing and set dancing contacts with Cape Breton
- Ceilidh houses and talented families
- Double fiddles
- High Bass tuning
- Wedding Reels

**Cut 1: High Bass Reel in key of A (Unaccompanied and apparently in standard tuning)**

Reel: *P. E. I. Wedding Reel*

The *P. E. I. Wedding Reel* and a reel in Cape Breton, christened in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as the *Thunderbolt*, appear to be variants of an older traditional Scottish tune, whose name is no longer known. John Donald Cameron notes similarities with *Anthony Murray's*, a tune played as a Strathspey in Cape Breton (and frequently played in high bass tuning) but also presented as a reel in the Scottish music collection published by Alexander McGlashan of Edinburgh in 1780.

**Cut 2: High Bass Reel in key of A (Accompanied and apparently in standard tuning)**

Note: Bad interference at the beginning of this cut

(Stereo) Reel: *P. E. I. Wedding Reel*

(Mono) Interview with Omar Cheverie:

Omar discusses use of Gaelic in Souris area and the “Northside” during his youth; jigging tunes

**Tape 12: Violin music; Omar Cheverie (Souris), violin; Kevin Chaisson (Bear River), piano 1987 08 30**

(Mono) Interview with Omar Cheverie:

- Local players
- Style variations in P. E. I.
- Accompaniment
- Irish tunes
- Attitudes toward fiddlers in the community
- Decline of piano chording for accompaniment

- Omar's fiddle grip
- Note reading and ear playing
- Tune collections
- Fiddlers playing in the area

**Tape 13: Violin music; Omar Cheverie (Souris), violin; Peter Chaisson Sr. (Bear River), violin; Kevin Chaisson (Bear River), piano 1987 08 30**

Omar Cheverie, violin; Kevin Chiasson, piano (Stereo)

**Cut 1: Reel and Hornpipe in key of F**

Reels: *Archie Menzies* (Joseph Lowe)

Hornpipe: *Fisher's*

**Cut 2: Reels in key of A**

Reels: *Miss Betty Ann Gordon, Pigeon on the Gate, Johnnie Cope, Miramichi Fire*

The source for the name, *Betty Ann Gordon*, was the late Winston Scotty Fitzgerald, noted in Dunlay and Greenberg: *Traditional Celtic Violin Music of Cape Breton*.

The third tune in this cut is sometimes called, *Johnnie Cope*, in Prince Edward Island. The versions recorded in this collection, appear to be derived from the Scottish Jacobite folksong of the same name, which describes General John Cope's crushing defeat at the hands of Jacobite forces led by Prince Charles Edward Stewart at Prestonpans during the Rising of 1745. The song air has been adapted into the instrumental tradition in quite varying ways, suggesting not only its popularity but also considerable age. It is played in Prince Edward Island as a reel; in Ireland it is set as a hornpipe; and in Cape Breton the tune is played as a March in two fairly distinct settings in the key of A or G.

Omar discusses tunes and players

Peter Chiasson Sr., violin; Kevin Chiasson, piano (Stereo)

**Cut 1: Reels in key of A**

Reels: *Pigeon on the Gate*, (Unknown)

**Cut 2: March, Strathspey and Reels in key of A**

March: (Unknown)

Strathspey: Dave MacIsaac's (Brenda Stubbert)

Reels: (Unknown), *Johnnie Cope*

**Tape 14: Violin music; Peter Chaisson Sr. (Bear River), violin; Kevin Chaisson (Bear River), piano 1987 08 30**

Peter Chaisson Sr., violin; Kevin Chiasson, piano (Stereo)

**Cut 1: March, Reels in key of G**

March: (Unknown)

Reels: *West Mabou* (Attr: John Alex "The Big Fiddler" MacDonald), *Chuir i a glùn air a bhodach* (She put her knee on the old man)

**Cut 2: Jigs in key of G**

Jigs: *Come Under My Plaidie*, *Kemore 's On and Awa'*, *Maid on the Green*

**Cut 3: Strathspey and Reels in key of G**

Strathspey: *The Lassie Wi' the Yellow Coatie*

Reels: *The Chaisson's*, (Unknown hornpipe), *The Golden Wedding* (Attr: Don Messer), *Lord MacDonald's*, *Paddy on the Turnpike*

**Tape 15: Violin music; Peter Chaisson Sr. (Bear River), violin; Kevin Chaisson (Bear River), piano 1987 08 30**

Peter Chiasson Sr., violin; Kevin Chiasson, piano (Stereo)

**Cut 1: Strathspey and Reels in key of A**

Strathspey: *Miss Lyall*

Reels: *Miss Lyall*, *My Brother's Letter* (Vincent MacLellan), *Annie is my Darling* (Captain Simon Fraser), (Unknown), *Mrs. Stewart of Grantully* (Niel Gow), *Am Muillean Dubh* (The Black Mill)

**Cut 2: Strathspey and Reels in key of A**

Strathspey: *Mr. Murray* (William Martin)

Reels: *Sandy MacIntyre's Trip to Boston* (John Campbell), *John MacNeil* (Peter Milne)

The second reel is now frequently referred to as "Big" *John MacNeil* in Canada but this is not Milne's original title

**Cut 3: Strathspey and Reels in key of D**

Strathspey: *Cameron's Got His Wife Again*

Reels: *Homeward Bound*, *Judy's/The Maid Behind the Bar*

*Homeward Bound* was commonly attributed in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island to Cape Breton and later Boston violinist, “Little” Rory MacDonald, and appeared as his composition in the 1940, *Cape Breton Collection*. However, as Hughie MacPhee of Bayfield and others have pointed out, the tune appears in older collections and is likely traditional. John Donald Cameron notes that it was published in *Ryan’s Mammoth Collection* of 1883 as the *Gem of Ireland*. He also notes that the setting of the tune most commonly played today was recorded by Dan R. MacDonald in 1939.

#### **Cut 4: Hornpipes and Reels in keys of F and Bflat**

Hornpipe in F: *Miss Minnie Foster*

Hornpipe in Bflat: *Newcastle* (James Hill)

Reels: *Mrs. Ronald MacDonald* (Ronald MacLellan), *Mrs. Hamilton of Wishaw* (William Marshall)

**Tape 16: Violin music; Peter Chaisson Sr. (Bear River), violin; Kevin Chaisson (Bear River), piano; Hughie MacPhee (Bayfield), violin; Ann MacPhee (Bayfield) piano 1987 08 30**

Peter Chiasson Sr., violin; Kevin Chiasson, piano (Stereo)

#### **Cut 1: Strathspeys and Reels in keys of C and A**

Strathspeys: *Tweeddale Club* (Nathaniel Gow), *Glengarry’s Dirk*

Reels: *The Bonnie Lass of Fisher Row* (Daniel Dow), *The Bird’s nest*, *John of Badenyon*

*John of Badenyon* was one of the reels formerly played in Cape Breton as a “Wedding Reel” but it is not known if it was used as such in P. E. I.

#### **Cut 2: Strathspey and Reels in key of D**

Strathspey: *Athole Brose*

Reels: *General Stewart/Lady Muir MacKenzie* (Attr: William Gow), *Jenny Dang the Weaver*

Hughie MacPhee, violin; Ann MacPhee, piano (Stereo)

#### **Cut 1: Jigs in key of D**

Jigs: (Unknown), (Unknown), *The Baddeck Gathering* (Alex MacDonald), *Catherine MacIsaac’s Wedding Day* (J. D. Kennedy), *Colonel Willie G* (Alex MacDonald)

#### **Cut 2: March, Strathspeys and Reels in key of A**

March: *Kennedy Street* (Dan Hughie MacEachern)

Strathspeys: *Calum Crùbach* (Crippled Malcolm), *George IV*

**Reels: *Colonel Thornton*, *Miss Wedderburn/The Burn o' Carney*, *Dillon Brown's Fancy***

*Colonel Thornton* is played with two turns in this setting but is often played with a third

**Tape 17: Violin Music; Dan MacPhee (Bayfield), violin; Hughie MacPhee (Bayfield), violin; Ann MacPhee (Bayfield) piano 1987 08 30**

Dan MacPhee, violin; Ann MacPhee, piano (Stereo)

**Cut 1: Reels in key of A**

Reels: *Miss Wedderburn/Burn o' Carney* (partial recording), *Dillon Brown's Fancy*

Hughie MacPhee, violin; Ann MacPhee, piano (Stereo)

**Cut 1: Fairy tune from P. E. I. in key of A**

Fairy Tune: *Fairy at the Spring*

Discussion of how fairy tune was learned by his ancestor Peter *Toganaidh* MacPhee, a piper who immigrated to Prince Edward Island from South Uist, Scotland

**Cut 2: Hornpipe and Reel in key of D**

Hornpipe: *The Liverpool*

Reel: *St. Ann's*

Mentions that *St. Ann's Reel* came into the local repertoire from the French Canadian tradition

**Cut 3: Hornpipes in key of G**

Hornpipes: *Blanchard's*, *Douglas' Favourite*

**Cut 4: High Bass Reels in key of A (Played in standard tuning)**

Reels: *P. E. I. Wedding Reel*, *The Bridge of Bamore*

**Cut 5: High Bass Reel in key of A (Played in High Bass tuning)**

Reel: *P. E. I. Wedding Reel*

### **Cut 6: Hornpipe in key of A**

Hornpipe: (Unknown)

### **Cut 7: Hornpipe in key of A**

Hornpipe: (Unknown tune played in previous cut)

### **Tape 18: Violin Music; Dan MacPhee (Bayfield), violin; Hughie MacPhee (Bayfield), violin; Ann MacPhee (Bayfield) piano 1987 08 30**

Dan MacPhee, violin; Ann MacPhee, piano (Stereo)

### **Cut 1: March, Strathspey and Reel in key of D**

March: *Iona House of P. E. I.* (Wilfrid Gillis)

Strathspey: *East Point* (Wilfrid Gillis)

Reel: *The Mighty Minnows of North Lake* (Wilfrid Gillis)

### **Cut 2: Strathspey and Reels in key of A**

Strathspey: *Calum Breugach* (Lying Malcolm)

Reels: *Pigeon on the Gate*, *John MacNeil* (Peter Milne), (Unknown)

Dan MacPhee discusses repertoire and timing for dance music

### **Cut 3: Jigs in key of E**

Jigs: *Wilfrid's Fiddle* (Dan R. MacDonald), *The New Fiddle* (Dan R. MacDonald), *Harbourview* (John Campbell)

Dan plays the first two jigs in reverse order of his originally stated plan

### **Tape 19: Violin Music; Hughie MacPhee (Bayfield), violin; Ann MacPhee (Bayfield), piano 1987 08 30; Interviews; Mary Bruce (Valleyfield) 1987 08 31**

Hughie MacPhee, violin; Ann MacPhee, piano (Stereo)

### **Cut 1: Strathspey and Reels in key of C**

Strathspey: *Glengarry's Dirk*

Reels: *The Bonnie Lass of Fisher Row* (Daniel Dow), *Auld Stewarts of Fothergill* (James Stewart Robertson), *Cabar Fèidh* (The Deer's Antlers)

## Cut 2: Jigs in key of G

Jigs: *Irish Washerwoman*, *The Bridal*

### Mary Bruce (Mono)

1. Family background and use of Gaelic
  - Parents, John Neil MacDonald and Effie MacKinnon both spoke and read Gaelic
  - Blind grandmother, Mary MacDonald (wife of Neil MacDonald), who lived with them, spoke only Gaelic but understood a bit of English; parents taught Mary to speak and read Gaelic so she could keep her grandmother company
  - Father's (1864-1934) people came from Kilmuir; Mother's (1868-1949) from Uig, both in Skye
  - Family worship in Gaelic and English
  - Family used Gaelic in home but Mary was taught English in preparation for school; thought this was the same for other children in the area
  - Father's brother Allan had to wear *lodan* (pouch) in school possibly as punishment for speaking Gaelic
7. Gaelic songs, singers and storytellers
  - Father's brother Allan made songs in English and Gaelic (mostly comical songs about people in the community)
  - Good storytellers; her uncle Allan and Lachlan MacKinnon – mother's brother's son; both told stories in English and Gaelic
  - Anecdote about *Seumas Ruadh* (Red James) Ross, a big eater of trout
4. Early names of Valleyfield: Douse's Road, Brown's Creek
5. Humorous anecdote about minister visiting lady with reputation for poor hygiene; she turns the table on the minister

**Tape 20: Interviews; Mary Bruce (Valleyfield) 1987 08 31; Catherine (Mrs. Jim) MacLean (Iris) 1987 09 01**

### Mary Bruce

1. Children's use of Gaelic in her community when she was young
2. Family background
  - Mother kept in touch with relatives in Uig, Skye by letters; Mary's sister visited them in Britain during the war; they returned the visit (three sisters); still in touch
  - Mother's people immigrated to P.E.I. in 1857 or 58, staying with other MacKinnon relatives before taking land in Brooklyn
3. Gaelic name for Kilmuir was, *Cille Mhoire* (Church of Mary; literally "Cell of Mary")
4. Music
  - Gaelic speaking fiddlers in Kilmuir: Dan Matheson from Heatherdale
  - "Piper" MacPhersons in Brooklyn, Bellevue and Grand View (formerly known as the Murray Harbour Road); some descendants in Glen William
5. *Sine Mhòr* anecdotes

- Big Jane (also known as Blind Jane) MacLeod was a good knitter with very elegant knitting patterns and would visit any time a birth occurred; she would knit for the baby in exchange for yarn
  - Mary's father gave Jane a little collapsible canvas stool; she was so fond of it that she made a song about it; Mary recounts a Gaelic sentence from Jane telling her mother to put the chair away so the children wouldn't break it: *Cuir sìos dhan pharlòr e mus cuir na pàisdeachan às dha* (Put it down in the parlour before the children destroy it)
6. Supernatural Belief
- Forerunner: Mary's mother had a dream about Nicholson's neighbour having a big wash out on the fence rather than on her line; that winter the Nicholson woman's brother died
  - Bird in the house a sign of a person dying
  - Most fortunate day for marrying was Wednesday; Saturday was inauspicious
  - Crop planting by phase of the moon
5. New Year's Eve
- Custom of striking the house
  - Reciting *duan* (rhyme) and then getting a treat
  - Recites fragmentary variation of Lowland Scottish rhyme: "We're only children come to play/Give us a cake and we'll go away"
4. Stepdancers steppedanced through the sets and on the corners during square dancing
5. Gaelic phrases
- *Trobhad a seo* (Come here to me)
  - *Niall truagh* (poor Neil)
10. Reading spiritual verse in Gaelic: *Tha tìr ann...* (In the Sweet Bye and Bye...)
11. Reading 23rd Psalm in Gaelic: *'S e Dia Fèin as buachaille dhomh cha bhi mi ann an dìth...* (The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want...)

Catherine MacLean 1987 09 01

1. Family background

- Father lived in Poplar Grove, Prince County, where she was born in 1921
- Moved to Caledonia West in 1928
- Grandmother Mary Gillis spoke Gaelic and had only a few words of English; she always spoke to Catherine in Gaelic

**Tape 21: Interview; Catherine MacLean (Iris) 1987 09 01**

Catherine MacLean

1. Family background and Gaelic use

- Mother brought up speaking Gaelic; she spoke Gaelic with her brothers but English with children
- Grandmother died at the age of 89 in 1936
- Catherine's people came out in the *Polly* in 1803

4. Gaelic term: *pàirce-coillidh* (woods field) for early clearings made by pioneers; woman in Caledonia spoke of the early planting
5. Gaelic use in the community
  - Grandmother read the Gaelic bible
  - Did not hear children speaking Gaelic in Caledonia school
  - Remembers Gaelic song, *Ho ro mo nighean donn bhòidheach* (Ho ro my brown-haired lass)
  - Uncle had Gaelic records
  - Grandmother did not like one of the English records, "Halleluiah, I'm a bum"
  - Grandmother used to read the Cape Breton Gaelic paper, *MacTalla*, with a friend
7. Tonics
  - Cure for sore throat; hot oats tied around the neck in a cloth
  - Tonic from green part of cherry tree beneath bark; gave a lift in the spring
  - Tonic from hemlock boughs for improved health
  - Tonic from Sarsaparilla
  - Tonic from Mountain ash berries good for stomach problems; mother used it for her stomach complaints
6. Traditional foods
  - *Bainne Deasgainn* (calf stomach, scraped, salted and left in water for a week or so then soaked in milk); made by her grandmother
  - *Càraich* (cracked oats eaten with jelly and milk); made by Mrs. Dougald Stewart, who lived across the road
  - *Stapag* (oatmeal added to frothy cream made during churning); made by her grandmother
  - Children would gather the cream on the churn and grandmother would threaten the children: *Bristidh mi do chorragan* (I Will break your fingers)
5. Supernatural Belief
  - Grandmother had lots of ghost stories: one about a man who was unkind to his wife; family heard knock at the door and saw this man but he vanished
  - Forerunner: Sweeping sound
  - Forerunner: Three thumps
  - *Dreag* (forerunner light): Foretold death of a little girl in Caledonia
  - *Dreag* (forerunner light): Bright light at the Kilmuir Road, forerunner of death of husband Jim at her home and arrival of the hearse
  - *Dreag* (forerunner light): Father in law, Charles MacLean, living in Lewis; little light landed on his shoulder and stayed there until he got to home where a child died; he helped make the coffin for the child
7. Storytelling
  - Considered the entertainment of the day
  - Best story tellers in district: Dan MacPherson and Martin Stewart (her sister's husband)
  - They told stories in English; not much Gaelic spoken in Iris where she lived as an adult
4. Older people got together to speak Gaelic; Mrs. John P. (Effie) Stewart did not want to hear anything but Gaelic.

**Tape 22: Interviews; Catherine MacLean (Iris) 1987 09 01; John MacLennan (Caledonia) (Gaelic) 1987 09 02**

Catherine MacLean

1. Anecdote about Gaelic attitudes; Effie Stewart was a former schoolteacher who could speak English but vastly preferred Gaelic; after being visited by Catherine's mother, who spoke only English with her, Effie said in Gaelic, that she hoped she would have Gaelic next time she visited
2. Apparition story; old lady in Caledonia lived alone, known as a really good person and considered by some a saint; people saw a vision of a lamb on her breast just before she died
3. Supernatural Belief
  - Evil eye and witches
  - Witches able to shape shift into cats
  - Silver water
  - Practice of placing silver into a churn when butter would not come as this was believed to be the result of the malign influence of a witch and the evil eye
  - Old Country story about a man playing cards with the devil
  - Grandmother thought that cards were the devil's work; father played and brother played; brother slept upstairs and kept his cards in a trunk; grandmother heard the trunk open and close one night with nobody around
  - *Beileag Bhàn* (Fair-haired Bella) met the ghost of a woman who died; the ghost had a story she had to tell about her husband
8. *Sìne Mhòr* (Big Jane) anecdote
  - Mother in law used to give Big Jane meals; Jim (Catherine's husband) had a competition with Jane, who was blind, when in his teens, about how many cups of soup they could drink; Jim wasn't drinking the soup but kept telling Jane that he was; Jane drank so much soup to keep up that she got sick and started throwing up; she cried out, "*Tha mi tinn, chan eil mi slàn,*" ..... (I am sick, I am not well....)

John MacLennan (Gaelic)

1. Working a wood lot
  - How much wood lot each farm would have
  - What sort of wood was cut - saw logs, pit props
  - Pit props for Nova Scotia mines
  - Shipping logs in the 1940s
  - Self-sufficiency of farming families in Caledonia when he was raising his family
6. Traditional foods
  - *Marag* (blood sausage); he remembered them fondly
  - No memory of *Ìsbean* (beef sausage)
3. Sings fragment of Gaelic song

4. Discussion about herring; ate it but never fished for it
5. Children in Caledonia school spoke Gaelic
6. Recites part of Gaelic song: '*S ann sa mhadainn Diluain...* (On Monday morning....)

**Tape 23: Interviews; John MacLennan (Caledonia) (Gaelic) 1987 09 02; Theresa Wilson, Goose River 1987 09 09**

John MacLennan (Gaelic and English) 1987 09 02

1. Sings several verses of a short song he made about a local character who wore a little straw hat in middle of winter to show how “hard” he was
2. Piping
  - Had old set of pipes in the home
  - Talks a bit about piping; mentions Montague
  - Talks about tunes
  - Talks about making chanters
  - Sings fragment of song: *e il o mo nighean donn?* (e il o my brown haired lass)

Theresa Wilson 1987 09 09

1. Family background and Gaelic use
  - Murdoch MacKinnon came from Uist with the Selkirk settlers and settled in Goose River – the first settlers in the district.
  - Many MacKinnons in Goose River area and Gaelic widely spoken
  - Grand aunt Cicily spoke Gaelic with very little English; could not pray in English
  - Theresa's mother's mother could read and write Gaelic; she used to read for Sicily; Theresa's mother learned Gaelic quite well because of Cicily and she was able to follow the Gaelic conversation of the older people very well, although they didn't realize; Cicily would get her English backward; she sang little Gaelic songs to Theresa's oldest brothers in the 1920s and 1930s
  - Theresa's mother's father was very opposed to the use of Gaelic as he was of Lowland Scottish stock
  - Local MacCormack family spoke Gaelic and got the Gaelic paper from Nova Scotia (probably *MacTalla*); Theresa's mother's mother used to read the paper to people in the district
  - Gaelic not taught in schools but Greek was taught in her father's generation; School Inspectors were not happy with quality of English in the district during her grandmother's day (c. 1850s on).
  - Theresa thought that people in Irish settlements made fun of Gaelic speakers on the “Northside”

## **Tape 24: Interviews; Theresa Wilson (Goose River) 1987 09 09**

### Theresa Wilson

1. Gaelic use, family background and language attitudes (continued)
  - Theresa's mother's father was very opposed to the use of Gaelic since his family were from the Lowlands; he feared that the Gaelic would spoil her mother's English and he would not allow her to speak it in the house; her grand aunt came to live with them and he forbade her to speak Gaelic in the house, as well
  - Her mother's father's people were Cummings; his mother was a Lewis and her mother was a Douglas and a Protestant; she had married John Lewis, a Catholic estate worker on the Douglas estate in Scotland, which caused a bitter family feud
  - Theresa's father's father, Roddie MacPhee spoke Gaelic; his mother was Ellen MacDonald, and her mother came directly from Scotland
4. Jigging tunes
  - Theresa's mother could jig tunes and sing Gaelic *puirt-a-beul* (mouth music) and could play violin by note; she learned to jig tunes from her mother.
  - Years ago, two people would be hired to accompany the fiddler by jigging as there was no other accompaniment; it was very common for people to jig tunes when Theresa was young.
  - Theresa's father played the violin; if he was not home and a bunch of children came in and wanted to dance, her mother would jig for them.
  - Janie MacKinnon came home from Boston and stayed at Neillie MacCormack's and would sit out on the veranda in the evenings and jig for two hours at a time.
5. Fiddling
  - Fiddling in her family came from the MacPhee's not the MacDonalds; everyone in her father's family could play (all nine); her mother and father could both stepdance; Theresa's family could also all play and dance.
  - Her father would gather them altogether in the evening and play for them and get them all to dance; his strategy was to tire them out so he could have peace in the evenings.
  - Mother went to bed early one night and heard him picking at the fiddle downstairs with his thumb; it was his last act; she found him there in the morning dead
4. Dancing
  - Theresa's father was often called to play at dances; he was badly injured playing in an Irish settlement when somebody threw a large picture at him while he was playing, splitting his head open; local women bandaged him up
  - People danced jigs and four and eight hand reels around Goose River; when older people came home from New York they would have a party and would dance a Jig and a Reel; the younger people would dance a set or square dance; older people stepdanced through their dance and a lot of stepdancing occurred; you had to be a good stepdancer for the older Jig and Reel; similarly, if you could not stepdance well you would not participate in the Wedding Reel; somebody would take your place
3. Style of Music

- “The Northside” from St. Peter's to East Point was overwhelmingly Scottish; there was a Fiddle in just about every house and good dancers all along the coast.
  - Strathspeys were played in the old days; Jimmy Simmons MacCormack, an older piper and fiddler, played strathspeys but other than him Theresa did not remember strathspeys played in her day
  - Radio from Antigonish and Sydney (of Cape Breton fiddling) had a huge impact on fiddling style; older people loved it because it reminded them of the older Prince Edward Island style
4. Musicians
- Jimmy Simmons MacCormack was a carpenter from Selkirk and spoke Gaelic; he became something of an itinerant musician, playing pipes and fiddle; the MacCormacks were very musical people; he was born c. 1850
  - Theresa's father's father, Roddie Joe MacPhee was a good fiddler
  - Emmanuel MacInnes close to Goose River was one of the only pipers in the Goose River district
  - Ronnie Archie MacPhee, a cousin, played the organ at the church and could read music and was also a fiddler

**Tape 25: Interviews; Theresa Wilson (Goose River) 1987 09 09; Allan Cameron (Caledonia) and Chester Martin (Caledonia) 1987 09 10**

Theresa Wilson

1. Sings *puirt-a-beul* (mouth music) learned from her mother, *Gairm sìos, gairm seo*, sung to the air, *Lord Moira*
  - Tells story about song: An unmarried lady met a man named Rory at a party and was attracted to him; he got drunk and she took him home and wrapped him in a blanket but, to her disappointment, in the morning he was gone
2. Nicknames
  - "Tinkers" were a MacInnes family from "Tinkertown", a nickname for Aberdeen, P.E.I. Theresa believes that they were "tinkers" in Aberdeen, Scotland
  - *Bòcans* (ghosts) were a family of MacDonalds; two old ladies walking from Naufrage to St. Charles or Fortune were coming back through the woods at night when they saw a fire and a big shadow of a man with a beard down to his waist; they took fright and ran home claiming they had seen a ghost, only finding out later that it was John MacDonald clearing land; after that they were called the *Bòcans*, a name they never liked
  - *Bornishes* are MacDonalds from Bornish in South Uist, Scotland; they still use the name *Bornish* instead of MacDonald
4. Gaelic use
  - Theresa's grandmother and Sally MacDonald used to speak Gaelic when passing gossip so nobody would understand
  - Older relatives Emma and Lizzy MacDonald also used Gaelic; Lizzy did not speak very good English; she did not get much education
  - The need for English prevented some from going to school

#### 4. Nicknames

- *Giobans* were a family of MacIsaacs from Elmira; Theresa was unsure where the nickname came from but remembered the first time she heard the word was when her father inadvertently broke the teapot while repairing it, exclaiming: "Well, I was getting along so well and I didn't know the *gioban* was going to break off!" The word used by her father probably meant "small protuberance" or "small tail", referring to the spout, while its use as a nickname was more akin to "tatters".

#### 2. Supernatural Belief

- Story of the *sluagh* (spirit host); a person could be taken away by the *sluagh* at night; some believed that the *sluagh* came in the form of a big flock of birds; her grandfather used to disappear at night and once woke up on the train track; he believed that the *sluagh* took him he also believed that if you rolled your pants up you would be protected from the *sluagh*
- [Story by Theresa's brother?] Their mother was returning home from Goose River as a young child with her mother when they were surrounded by a big flock of small birds; the older woman took out her rosary and began praying the little girl asked what was wrong and her mother told her that the flock of birds was the *sluagh*, the poor souls of people in purgatory
- A bird flying into the house meant bad news was coming
- Dishes rattling in the cupboard were a sign of death
- Picture falling off the wall was a sign of death
- Sparks from the stove hitting a person was a sign of an impending death.

Allan Cameron and Chester Martin 1987 09 10

Sing Gaelic song, *An Tèid thu leum a Ribhinn Òg?* (Will You Come With Me, Young Lass?)

### **Tape 26: Interviews; Allan Cameron and Chester Martin (Caledonia) 1987 09 10**

Allan Cameron and Chester Martin

#### 1. Gaelic Songs

- Sing late 19<sup>th</sup> century, modern-style Gaelic Song: *Chì mi na Mòr Bheanna* (I see the high mountains)
- Learned Gaelic songs in the local area (Caledonia); Allan learned some Gaelic singing in the service from a military padre by the name of Gillies; Allan's father would sing a little
- Chester's father sang in church but Chester never heard him sing in Gaelic; Chester's grandfather was a fluent reader of Gaelic

#### 4. Language attitudes

- Older people did not pass Gaelic on to younger people
- They only spoke Gaelic when they were trying to keep secrets from the young
- Allan was interested enough in the news to try to piece some Gaelic together; he did not remember much Gaelic singing being done while people worked

4. Religious Songs

- Sing 23rd Psalm: *'S e Dia Fèin as Buachaille Dhomh* (The Lord is My Shepherd)

**Tape 27: Rev. Donald Nicholson (Strathalbyn) 1987 09 11 (stereo); Dan MacPherson, Caledonia 1987 09 12**

1. Story about how *Murchadh an Saighdear* (Murdock the Soldier) got his name
2. Emigration story about a man who wished to return to Raasay but was tricked into staying on P. E. I. by his friends and family
3. Anecdote about trouble with English while shopping in Charlottetown
4. Anecdote about a man hiring a satirist to compose a Gaelic song after he was required to pay a small fine in court; recites fragment:

*Cha tèid mi 'n-diugh dhan Èipheit  
Cha tèid mi measg nam bèistean  
Air eagal gun coinnich Blake rium  
'S gun tugadh e an t-anam dhìom*

I will not go to Egypt today  
I will not go among the beasts  
for fear I will meet with Blake  
and that he will take my soul from me

Dan MacPherson Caledonia 1987 09 12

1. Gaelic Songs

- Song made by John MacPhee (appears to be MacQueen in earlier recording - tape 3), brother to a minister in Glen William, for his aunt, *Sìne Mhòr* (Big Jane); Dan recounts brief Gaelic conversation between John and Big Jane before John gets permission to sing his song; Dan sings verse of song comparing her to a rooster (same as earlier recording - tape 3)
- Song by John MacPhee about a trip to Pictou; the man who owned the boat was apparently a poor sailor; Dan sings a verse of the song: *Mac Chaluim cho tuas...* (Malcolm's son, so quarrelsome...); he apparently missed Pictou altogether;
- Dan knew the song maker, Ragnall Òg (Young Ronald) MacLean, most of his life; Ronald, who was born in Scotland and emigrated at about nine years old, was not a good singer himself, though a respected song maker; Dan mentions that the air to one of his songs was very popular in the community, *O hi ri le bha ho* and that young people would sing it; Dan indicates that in the song, the poet was pacing to himself and saying, "Chan eil e a' sealltain bòidheach" (It does not look very beautiful); Dan's uncle Johnny was noted as a great singer

**Tape 28: Violin music recorded at Benevolent Irish Society, Charlottetown 1987 09 13**

Emmett Hughes (Dromore), violin; Kevin Chiasson, piano (Stereo)

### **Cut 1: Jigs in key of G**

Note: This first cut is somewhat muffled

Jigs: Unknown jigs taken from Sean McGuire's collection of Irish music

### **Cut 2: Rerecording of previous jigs in key of G with better recording quality**

### **Cut 3: March and Reels in key of A**

March: (Unable to make out the name of this march by Emmett Hughes)

Reels: *Joe MacDonald's* (Emmett Hughes), *Emmett Hughes'* (Emmett Hughes)

### **Cut 4: Reels in key of G**

Reels: (Unknown), (Unknown), (Unknown), *Blodgett's*

### **Tape 29: Violin Music recorded at Benevolent Irish Society, Charlottetown 1987 09 13**

Emmett Hughes, violin; Kevin Chiasson, piano (Stereo)

Note: There are brief moments of electrical interference throughout this recording

### **Cut 1: Slow Air, Strathspey and Reels in key of D**

Slow Air: *Down the Burn Davie Lad*

Strathspey: *Athole Brose* (Attr: Abraham Mackintosh)

Reels: *General Stewart/Lady Muir MacKenzie* (Attr: William Gow), *Garmot Smiddy* (Dan R. MacDonald), *Miss MacDougall of Wollaston* (Gordon MacQuarrie)

Interview with Emmett Hughes:

- Sixth generation in P. E. I.
- Father did not play strathspeys or slow airs; played jigs, reels and hornpipes; Emmett felt that his father's settings were pretty close to the book versions after he learned to read music himself
- His people came from Dromore, Co. Monaghan, Ireland
- Unsure whether they spoke Gaelic
- Six in Emmett's family played the violin
- Emmett's style is unique; a blend of Irish and Scottish (influenced by recordings of Angus Chisholm of Cape Breton); the rest of his family did not go for that style

### **Cut 2: Reels in key of D**

Reels: *Master MacDermott*, (unknown Irish reel)

Cut 3: March and Reels in key of G (Composed by Emmett Hughes)

March: (Unknown)

Reels: (Unknown), (Unknown)

**Tape 30: Violin Music recorded at Benevolent Irish Society, Charlottetown 1987 09 13 (Stereo)**

John Dan MacPherson (Caledonia), violin; Kevin Chiasson, piano

**Cut 1: Polka in key of D**

Polka: *Northside Tune*

**Cut 2: Reel in key of D**

Reel: *Judy's/The Maid Behind the Bar*

**Cut 3: Reels in key of G**

Reels: *Flowers of Edinburgh, The Golden Wedding* (Attr: Don Messer)

**Cut 4: Jigs in key of G**

Jigs: (Unknown), (Unknown)

Interview with John Dan MacPherson:

Note: Interview is muffled

- Had an uncle who lived about 4 or 5 miles away that played the violin; also heard John MacLeod and John MacLean in the Caledonia area
- Mentions influence of Cape Breton fiddling
- He was a piper before a fiddler
- Started playing for dances at about 15
- Father spoke Gaelic “all the time”; not so much on his mother's side; John Dan understands a few words

**Cut 5: March and Reels in key of G**

March: *Space Available* (Marcel Doucette)

Reels: *Sheehan's, Paddy on the Turnpike*

**Tape 31: Violin Music recorded at Benevolent Irish Society, Charlottetown 1987 09**

### **13 (Stereo)**

Note: Moments of electrical interference on this recording, particularly on Cut 6

Francis MacDonald (St Peters), violin; Kevin Chiasson, piano

#### **Cut 1: Jigs in the key of E**

Jigs: (Unknown)

#### **Cut 2: Reel in key of C**

Reel: *Cabar Fèidh* (The Deer's Antlers)

#### **Cut 3: Hornpipe in key of G**

Hornpipe: *Bonaparte Crossing the Rhine/Napoleon Crossing the Alps*

#### **Cut 4: Jigs in key of G**

Jigs: *Irish Washerwoman, Grand Mira* (attr: Mickey Gillis and Angus MacDougall)

#### **Cut 5: Reel in key of D**

Reel: *Jerome's Farewell to Gibraltar*

#### **Cut 6: Slow Strathspey (Repeated in faster tempo) in key of D**

Slow Strathspey: *The Lass o' Gowrie/ Loch Erroch Side* (Neil Gow)

Faster tempo version: *The Lass o' Gowrie/ Loch Erroch Side* (Neil Gow)

### **Tape 32: Violin Music recorded at Benevolent Irish Society, Charlottetown 1987 09 13 (Stereo)**

Note: Moments of electrical interference on portion of this tape, particularly during interview

Francis MacDonald (St. Peters) violin; Kevin Chiasson, piano

#### **Cut 1: March in key of D**

March: *The Balkan Hills* (Gillon)

#### **Cut 2: Reels in key of G**

Reels: *Flowers of Edinburgh, The White Cockade, Lord MacDonald's*

Interview with Francis MacDonald:

- Started playing when 9
- Listened to radio a lot. Fiddlers in the area were Roddy MacAdam, Vincent MacPhee, Angus MacPhee, Joe MacDonald
- He started playing dances at the age of 14
- Discusses dances from Souris, Mount Stewart, Tracadie; mentions Lancers
- Played with Donald Ross from Mount Stewart and Albert MacEachern (a cousin), who played guitar, and Roland Jay's daughter, who played piano
- Played Jigs, Reels and Waltzes

### **Cut 3: Hornpipe, Strathspey and Reels in key of D**

Hornpipe: *The Flowers of Spring*

Strathspey: *Cameron's Got His Wife Again*

Reels: *Homeward Bound, Judy's/The Maid Behind the Bar*

### **Tape 33: Violin Music recorded at Benevolent Irish Society, Charlottetown 1987 09 13 (Stereo)**

Francis MacDonald (St Peters), violin; Kevin Chiasson, piano

### **Cut 1: Strathspey and Reels in key of C**

Strathspey: *Tweeddale Club* (Nathaniel Gow)

Reels: *Rothiemurchus Rant, Braes of Auchtertyre, Auld Stewarts of Fothergill* (James Stewart Robertson), (Unknown)

### **Cut 2: Jigs in key of A**

Jigs: *Teviot Bridge* (Attr: Alexander Givan), *Stool of Repentance* (Niel Gow), *John Allan's* (Dan Hughie MacEachern), *Murray River* (Graham Townsend)

### **Cut 3: Reels in key of E**

Reels: *Cooley's, The Fermoy Lasses*

## VIDEO TAPE INDEX

### **Title: Gaelic Field Recording Project Video Tapes**

Date of Creation: August-September 1987

Physical: 3 videocassettes (5 hrs. 45 min.): master, SP, analogue, col., stereo

Scope and Content: These videocassette recordings are primarily of Prince Edward Island Scottish Gaelic style violin music with traditional piano accompaniment. They include brief interviews with each of the featured musicians. Video 2 also includes two separate interviews (unrelated to violin music) with three Gaelic speaking tradition bearers from the Caledonia area of Prince Edward Island, John MacLennan and Allan Cameron and Chester Martin.

Note: Traditional tunes often exist in many variants and under a wide variety of names. Several generations ago, many, if not most of the tunes in the Scottish repertoire of Prince Edward Island would have been known by Gaelic titles; today, they are generally known by English titles, probably because many of them were recorded in that fashion in the major collections of Scottish music compiled since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Many of these collections became popular in the New World several generations ago. I have endeavoured to identify as many of the recorded tunes as possible and to give the name or names most commonly used in the local tradition or their literary variant. I have also tried to attribute the tunes to their composers where known. Thanks are due to John Donald Cameron of Judique, Cape Breton for his invaluable assistance in this process.

### **Title: Gaelic Field Recording Project Video Tape 1**

Date of Creation: 30 August 1987

Content: Violin Music (2hrs.)

Recording Session 1: Souris Silver Threads Club: Omar Cheverie, violin; Peter Chaisson Sr., violin; Kevin Chaisson, piano

Recording Session 2: Home of Hughie MacPhee, Bayfield: Hughie MacPhee, violin; Dan MacPhee, violin; Ann MacPhee, piano

Note: First cut has a few jumps. Overall condition of the recording is good.

Recording Session 1: Souris

Omar Cheverie (Souris), violin; Kevin Chaisson (Bear River), piano (40 min)

Cut 1: Strathspey and Reels in key of G

Strathspey: *The Duke of Gordon's Birthday* (William Marshall)

Reels: *Lord MacDonald's*, *The Primrose Lass*

Cut 2: Strathspey and Reels in key of A

Strathspey: *Dòmhnall Iain an Tàillear* (Donald John the Tailor)

A variant of this name seems to have first appeared in print on the 78 recording released by Colin J. Boyd of Antigonish in 1934. It likely honours the legendary Cape Breton fiddler, Donald John "the Tailor" Beaton, from Mabou Coal Mines, who probably had a particularly popular and respected setting of this traditional Scottish tune.

Reels: *Sligo Maid*, *Bonnie Annie* (Daniel Dow)

Cut 3: Strathspey in key of A

Strathspey: (Unknown)

Cut 4: Strathspey and Reels in key of G

Strathspey: *Donside*

Reels: *Lady Georgina Campbell* (S.D.S), *Heather Hill* (Dan R. MacDonald)

Cut 5: Strathspey and Reels in key of F

Strathspey: *The Lass o' Corrie Mill* (William Marshall)

Reels: *Bonnie Lass of Ballantrae*, *Carnie's Canter* (James Scott Skinner)

**Cut 6: Jigs in key of F**

Jigs: *The Munster Lass*, *Light and Airy*

Interview with Omar Cheverie:

1. Omar's family history – MacPhee's
2. Captain Neil MacPhee in Gloucester
3. Stepdancing and set dancing contacts with Cape Breton
4. Ceilidh houses and talented families
5. Double fiddles
6. High Bass tuning
7. Wedding Reels

**Cut 7: High Bass Reel in key of A (Unaccompanied and apparently in standard tuning)**

Reel: *P. E. I. Wedding Reel*

The *P. E. I. Wedding Reel* and a reel in Cape Breton, christened in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as the *Thunderbolt*, appear to be variants of an older traditional tune, whose name is no longer known. John Donald Cameron notes similarities with *Anthony Murray's*, a tune played as a Strathspey in Cape Breton (and frequently played in high bass tuning) but also presented as a reel in the Scottish music collection published by Alexander McGlashan of Edinburgh in 1780.

### **Cut 8: High Bass Reel in key of A (Accompanied and apparently in standard tuning)**

Reel: *P. E. I. Wedding Reel*

Interview with Omar Cheverie:

1. Local players
2. Style variations in P. E. I.
3. Accompaniment
4. Irish tunes
5. Attitudes toward fiddlers in the community
6. Decline of piano chording for accompaniment
7. Omar's fiddle grip
8. Note reading and ear playing
9. Tune collections
10. Fiddlers playing in the area

### Cut 9: Reel and Hornpipe in key of F

Reels: *Archie Menzies* (Joseph Lowe)

Hornpipe: *Fisher's*

### Cut 10: Reels in key of A

Reels: *Miss Betty Ann Gordon*, *Pigeon on the Gate*, *Johnnie Cope*, *Miramichi Fire*

The source for the name, *Betty Ann Gordon*, was the late Winston Scotty Fitzgerald, noted in Dunlay and Greenberg: *Traditional Celtic Violin Music of Cape Breton*.

The third tune in this cut is sometimes called, *Johnnie Cope*, in Prince Edward Island. The versions recorded in this collection, appear to be derived from the Scottish Jacobite folksong of the same name, which describes General John Cope's crushing defeat at the hands of Jacobite forces led by Prince Charles Edward Stewart at Prestonpans during the Rising of 1745. The song air has been adapted into the instrumental tradition in quite varying ways, suggesting not only

its popularity but also considerable age. It is played in Prince Edward Island as a reel; in Ireland it is set as a hornpipe; and in Cape Breton the tune is played as a March in two fairly distinct settings in the key of A or G.

Peter Chaisson Sr. (Bear River), violin; Kevin Chaisson, piano (40 min.)

Cut 1: March, Strathspey and Reels in key of A

March: (Unknown)

Strathspey: Dave MacIsaac's (Brenda Stubbert)

Reels: (Unknown), *Johnnie Cope*

Cut 2: March, Reels in key of G

March: (Unknown)

Reels: *West Mabou* (attr: John Alex "The Big Fiddler" MacDonald), *Chuir i a glùn air a bhodach* (She put her knee on the old man)

Cut 3: Jigs in key of G

Jigs: *Come Under My Plaidie*, *Kemore 's On and Awa'*, *Maid on the Green*

Cut 4: Strathspey and Reels in key of G

Strathspey: *The Lassie Wi' the Yellow Coatie*

Reels: *The Chaisson's*, (Unknown hornpipe), *The Golden Wedding* (Attr: Don Messer), *Lord MacDonald's*, *Paddy on the Turnpike*

Peter picks out the strathspey, *The Lassie Wi' the Yellow Coatie* while there is some discussion about the tune being played as a reel, as well

Cut 5: Strathspey and Reels in key of A

Strathspey: *Miss Lyall*

Reels: *Miss Lyall*, *My Brother's Letter* (Vincent MacLellan), *Annie is my Darling* (Captain Simon Fraser), (Unknown), *Mrs. Stewart of Grantully* (Niel Gow), *Am Muilleann Dubh* (The Black Mill)

Peter briefly replays the "unknown" reel and *Mrs. Stewart of Grantully* after finishing the group and discusses tune grouping

Cut 6: Strathspey and Reels in key of A

Strathspey: *Mr. Murray* (William Martin)

Reels: *Sandy MacIntyre's Trip to Boston* (John Campbell), *John MacNeil* (Peter Milne)

The second reel is now frequently referred to as “*Big*” *John MacNeil* in Canada but this is not Milne’s original title

### **Cut 7: Strathspey and Reels in key of D**

Strathspey: *Cameron’s Got His Wife Again*

Reels: *Homeward Bound*, *Judy’s/The Maid Behind the Bar*

*Homeward Bound* was commonly attributed in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island to Cape Breton and later Boston violinist, “Little” Rory MacDonald, and appeared as his composition in the 1940 *Cape Breton Collection*. However, as Hughie MacPhee of Bayfield and others have pointed out, the tune appears in older collections and is likely traditional. John Donald Cameron notes that it was published in *Ryan’s Mammoth Collection* of 1883 as the *Gem of Ireland*. He also notes that the setting of the tune most commonly played today was recorded by Dan R. MacDonald in 1939.

### Cut 8: Hornpipes and Reels in keys of F and Bflat

Hornpipe in F: *Miss Minnie Foster*

Hornpipe in Bflat: *Newcastle* (James Hill)

Reels: *Mrs. Ronald MacDonald* (Ronald MacLellan), *Mrs. Hamilton of Wishaw* (William Marshall)

### Cut 9: Strathspeys and Reels in keys of C and A

Strathspeys: *Tweeddale Club* (Nathaniel Gow), *Glengarry’s Dirk*

Reels: *The Bonnie Lass of Fisher Row* (Daniel Dow), *The Bird’s nest*, *John of Badenyon*

*John of Badenyon* was formerly played in Cape Breton as a “Wedding Reel” but it is not known if it was part of the repertoire of P. E. I. wedding reels

### Recording Session 2: Bayfield (40 min.)

Brief interview with MacPhee brothers: family background

Dan MacPhee (Bayfield), violin; Ann MacPhee (Bayfield), piano

### Cut 1: Jigs in key of D

Jigs: (Unknown), (Unknown), *The Baddeck Gathering* (Alex MacDonald), *Catherine MacIsaac’s Wedding Day* (J. D. Kennedy), *Colonel Willie G* (Alex MacDonald)

### Cut 2: March, Strathspeys and Reels in key of A

March: *Kennedy Street* (Dan Hughie MacEachern)

Strathspeys: *Calum Crùbach* (Crippled Malcolm), *George IV*

**Reels: *Colonel Thornton*, *Miss Wedderburn/The Burn o' Carney*, *Dillon Brown's Fancy***

*Colonel Thornton* is played with two turns in this setting but is often played with a third

Hughie MacPhee (Bayfield), violin; Ann MacPhee, piano

### **Cut 1: Fairy pipe tune in key of A**

Fairy tune: *Fairy at the Spring*

Hughie explains how his pioneer ancestor Peter *Toganaidh* MacPhee (a piper from South Uist, Scotland) learned this tune from a fairy in Rockbarra, Prince Edward Island

### Cut 2: Hornpipe and Reel in key of D

Hornpipe: *The Liverpool*

Reel: *St. Ann's*

Mentions that *St. Ann's Reel* came into the local repertoire from the French Canadian tradition

### Cut 3: Hornpipes in key of G

Hornpipes: *Blanchard's*, *Douglas' Favourite*

### **Cut 4: High Bass Reels in key of A (played in standard tuning)**

Reels: *P. E. I. Wedding Reel*, *The Bridge of Bamore*

### **Cut 5: High Bass Reel in key of A (played in High Bass tuning)**

Reel: *P. E. I. Wedding Reel*

### Cut 6: Hornpipe in key of A

Hornpipe: (Unknown)

Hughie's brother Dan plays a third turn to the tune from another room.

### Cut 7: Hornpipe in key of A

Hornpipe: (Unknown tune played in previous cut)

Hughie attributes tune to Dolphie Cheverie, brother of legendary, Elmira, Prince Edward Island fiddler, Neil Cheverie

Interview with Hughie and Dan:

Discuss family background; pipers in their family; father's violin style; musical term "joober"; dance styles along the "Northside"; use of Gaelic and Gaelic singers

**Title: Gaelic Field Recording Project Video Tape 2**

Date of Creation: August-September 1987

Content: Violin music and interviews in Gaelic and English with Gaelic tradition bearers from Caledonia (2 hrs.)

Recording Session 1: Violin Music; Home of Hughie MacPhee, Bayfield 30 August 1987: Hughie MacPhee, violin; Dan MacPhee, violin; Ann MacPhee, piano

Recording Session 2: Interview in Gaelic; Wood's Nursing Home Charlottetown 10 September 1987: John MacLennan of Caledonia

Recording Session 3: Interview in English with Gaelic songs; Home of Allan Cameron, Caledonia 10 September 1987: Allan Cameron and Chester Martin

Recording Session 4: Violin Music; Benevolent Irish Society, Charlottetown 13 September 1987: Emmett Hughes, violin; John Dan MacPherson, violin; Francis MacDonald, violin; Kevin Chaisson, piano

Recording Session 1: Bayfield 30 August 1987 (20 min)

Dan MacPhee, violin; Ann MacPhee, piano

Cut 1: March, Strathspey and Reel in key of D

March: *Iona House of P. E. I.* (Wilfrid Gillis)

Strathspey: *East Point* (Wilfrid Gillis)

Reel: *The Mighty Minnows of North Lake* (Wilfrid Gillis)

Cut 2: Strathspey and Reels in key of A

**Dan makes joke about strathspey name being suited for the prime minister**

Strathspey: *Calum Breugach* (Lying Malcolm)

Reels: *Pigeon on the Gate*, *John MacNeil* (Peter Milne), (Unknown)

Cut 3: Jigs in key of E

Jigs: *Wilfrid's Fiddle* (Dan R. MacDonald), *The New Fiddle* (Dan R. MacDonald), *Harbourview* (John Campbell)

**Dan plays the first two jigs in reverse order of his originally stated plan**

Hughie MacPhee, violin; Ann MacPhee, piano

Cut 1: Strathspey and Reels in key of C

Strathspey: *Glengarry's Dirk*

Reels: *The Bonnie Lass of Fisher Row* (Daniel Dow), *Auld Stewarts of Fothergill* (James Stewart Robertson), *Cabar Fèidh* (The Deer's Antlers)

**Cut 2: Jigs in key of G**

Jigs: *Irish Washerwoman*, *The Bridal*

Recording Session 2: Wood's Nursing Home, Charlottetown 10 September 1987 (20 min.)

John MacLennan of Caledonia

Gaelic interview discussing family lineage to Isle of Skye; Gaelic and English use in Caledonia during his youth; farming in Caledonia and working in the Maine woods c. 1920s and 30s; *buidseachd* (witchcraft); the effects of the evil eye and counter measures - *uisge airgead* (silver water); local Gaelic singer, Sandy Big William

Recording Session 3: Caledonia 10 September 1987 (25 min.)

Allan Cameron and Chester Martin of Caledonia

Interview discussing Gaelic singing and decline of Gaelic in Caledonia; Gaelic songs: *An Tèid thu leum a Ribhinn Òg* (Will you come with me, young lass?), *Chì mi na Mòr Bheanna* (I see the high mountains); story about 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm; sing 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm in Gaelic “*S e Dia Fèin as Buachaille Dhomh*” (The Lord is My Shepherd)

Recording Session 4: BIS Charlottetown 13 September 1987 (55 min.)

Emmett Hughes (Dromore), violin; Kevin Chaisson (Bear River), piano (30 min.)

Cut 1: Jigs in key of G

Jigs: Unknown jigs taken from Sean McGuire's collection of Irish music

Cut 2: March and Reels in key of A

March: (Unable to make out the name of this march by Emmett Hughes)

Reels: *Joe MacDonald's* (Emmett Hughes), *Emmett Hughes'* (Emmett Hughes)

Cut 3: Reels in key of G

Reels: (Unknown), (Unknown), (Unknown), *Blodgett's*

Cut 4: Slow Air, Strathspey and Reels in key of D

Slow Air: *Down the Burn Davie Lad*

Strathspey: *Athole Brose* (Attr: Abraham Mackintosh)

Reels: *General Stewart/Lady Muir MacKenzie* (Attr: William Gow), *Garmot Smiddy* (Dan R. MacDonald), *Miss MacDougall of Wollaston* (Gordon MacQuarrie)

Interview with Emmett Hughes:

1. Sixth generation in P. E. I.
2. Father did not play strathspeys or slow airs; played jigs, reels and hornpipes; Emmett felt that they were pretty close to the book versions after he learned to read music himself.
3. His father's people came from Dromore, Co. Monaghan, Ireland
4. Unsure whether they spoke Gaelic
5. Six in Emmett's family played the violin
6. Emmett's style is unique; a blend of Irish and Scottish (influenced by recordings of Angus Chisholm of Cape Breton); the rest of his family did not go for that style

Cut 5: Reels in key of D

Reels: *Master MacDermott*, (Unknown Irish reel)

**Cut 6: March and Reels in key of G (tunes composed by Emmett)**

March: (Unknown)

Reels: (Unknown), (Unknown)

John Dan MacPherson (Caledonia), violin; Kevin Chaisson, piano (15 min.)

Cut 1: Polka in key of D

Polka: *Northside Tune*

Cut 2: Reel in key of D

Reel: *Judy's/The Maid Behind the Bar*

Cut 3: Reels in key of G

Reels: *Flowers of Edinburgh, The Golden Wedding* (Attr: Don Messer)

Cut 4: Jigs in key of G

Jigs: (Unknown), (Unknown)

Interview with John Dan MacPherson:

- 1 . Had an uncle who lived about 4 or 5 miles away that played the violin; also heard John MacLeod and John MacLean in the Caledonia area
- 2 . Mentions influence of Cape Breton fiddling
- 3 . He was a piper before a fiddler
- 4 . Started playing for dances at about 15
- 5 . Father spoke Gaelic "all the time"; not so much on his mother's side; John Dan understands a few words

**Cut 5: March and Reels in key of G**

March: *Space Available* (Marcel Doucette)

Reels: *Sheehan's, Paddy on the Turnpike*

Francis MacDonald (St Peters), violin; Kevin Chaisson (Bear River), piano (10 min.)

Cut 1: Jigs in the key of E

Jigs: (Unknown)

Cut 2: Reel in key of C

Reel: *Cabar Fèidh* (The Deer's Antlers)

Cut 3: Hornpipe in key of G

Hornpipe: *Bonaparte Crossing the Rhine/Napoleon Crossing the Alps*

Tape ends followed by WLBZ test pattern and a partial repeat of Cut 3

**Title: Gaelic Field Recording Project Video Tape 3**

Date of Creation: September 1987

Content: Violin Music (1 hr. 45 min.)

Recording Session 1: BIS Charlottetown 13 September 1987: Francis MacDonald, violin; Kevin Chaisson, piano (40 min.)

Recording Session 2: Webster home in Cardigan 19 September 1987 (Recorded by John Weyman): Jack Webster (Cardigan), violin; Carl Webster (Cardigan), violin; Joe Kearney (Sturgeon), violin; Kevin Chaisson, piano; Gerard Murphy (Sturgeon), guitar (1 hr. 5 min)

Recording Session 1: BIS Charlottetown 13 September 1987

Francis MacDonald, violin; Kevin Chaisson, piano (40 min.)

Cut 1: Jigs in key of G

Jigs: *Irish Washerwoman*, *Grand Mira* (Attr: Mickey Gillis and Angus MacDougall)

### **Cut 2: Reel in key of D**

Reel: *Jerome's Farewell to Gibraltar*

Cut 3: Slow Strathspey (Repeated in faster tempo) in key of D

Slow Strathspey: *The Lass o' Gowrie/ Loch Erroch Side* (Neil Gow)

Faster tempo version: *The Lass o' Gowrie/ Loch Erroch Side* (Neil Gow)

Cut 4: March in key of D

March: *The Balkan Hills* (Gillon)

Cut 5: Reels in key of G

Reels: *Flowers of Edinburgh*, *The White Cockade*, *Lord MacDonald's*

Interview with Francis MacDonald:

1. Started playing when 9
2. Listened to radio a lot. Fiddlers in the area were Roddy MacAdam, Vincent MacPhee, Angus MacPhee, Joe MacDonald
3. He started playing dances at the age of 14
4. Discusses dances from Souris, Mount Stewart, Tracadie; mentions Lancers
5. Played with Donald Ross from Mount Stewart and Albert MacEachern (a cousin), who played guitar, and Roland Jay's daughter, who played piano
6. Played Jigs, Reels and Waltzes

Cut 6: Hornpipe, Strathspey and Reels in key of D

Hornpipe: *The Flowers of Spring*

Strathspey: *Cameron's Got His Wife Again*

Reels: *Homeward Bound, Judy's/The Maid Behind the Bar*

Cut 7: Strathspey and Reels in key of C

Strathspey: *Tweeddale Club* (Nathaniel Gow)

Reels: *Rothiemurchus Rant, Braes of Auchtertyre, Auld Stewarts of Fothergill* (James Stewart Robertson), (Unknown)

Cut 8: Jigs in key of A

Jigs: *Teviot Bridge* (Attr: Alexander Givan), *Stool of Repentance* (Niel Gow), *John Allan's* (Dan Hughie MacEachern), *Murray River* (Graham Townsend)

Cut 4: Reels in key of E

Reels: *Cooley's, The Fermoy Lasses*

Recording Session 2: Cardigan 19 September 1987: Jack Webster (Cardigan), violin; Carl Webster (Cardigan), violin, Joe Kearney (Sturgeon), violin; Kevin Chaisson (Bear River), piano; Gerard Murphy (Montague), guitar (1 hr. 5 min.)

Jack Webster, violin; Carl Webster, violin; Kevin Chaisson, piano (30 min.)

Cut 1: Strathspey and Reels in key of D

Strathspey: *Cameron's Got His Wife Again*

Reels: (Unknown Irish), (Unknown Irish)

Cut 2: March and Reels in key of A

March: *The Headlands* (Ronald Cooper)

Reels: *Brenda Stubbert's* (Jerry Holland), *John of Badenyon*

Jack Webster, violin; Kevin Chaisson, piano

Cut 1: March and Reels in key of A

March: *The Lochaber Gathering* (G. S. MacLennan)

Reels: *Father Francis Cameron* (John Campbell), *Sandy MacIntyre's Trip to Boston* (John Campbell)

Carl Webster, violin; Kevin Chaisson, piano

Cut 1: Strathspey, Hornpipe and Reel in key of F

Strathspey: *Mrs. MacDouwall Grant* (Claimed by Charles Duff and Nathaniel Gow)

**Hornpipe: *Millburn* (Wilfrid Gillis)**

**Reel: *Willie Pottinger's* (Tom Anderson)**

Cut 2: March, Reel and Polka in key of G

March: *Space Available* (Marcel Doucette)

Reel: *Sheehan's*

Polka: *Favourite Polka* (Dan R. MacDonald)

Jack Webster, violin; Kevin Chaisson, piano

Cut 1: Reels in key of G

Reels: (Unknown), *Heather Hill* (Dan R. MacDonald), *Flowers of Edinburgh*

Jack and Carl Webster, violins; Kevin Chaisson, piano

Cut 1: March and Reels in key of G

March: *Campbell's* (Ann Campbell-Brown)

Reels: *West Mabou* (Attr: John Alex "The Big Fiddler" MacDonald), *The Highland Plaid/ Lord Seaforth's*

Interview with Jack and Carl Webster:

Jack and Carl discuss early days playing; influences

Interview with Kevin Chaisson:

Kevin discusses early days playing piano; influences; family

Joe Kearney, violin; Kevin Chaisson, piano; Gerard Murphy, guitar (25 min.)

Cut 1: Reels in key of G

Reels: *Sheehan's*, *Paddy on the Turnpike*, *Lord MacDonald's*

Cut 2: Reel in key of D

Reel: *Homeward Bound*

Cut 3: Reel in key of G

Reel: *The Dismissal* (Sandy MacLean)

Cut 4: Reels in key of A and D

A Reel: *Johnnie Cope*

D Reels: (Unknown), *Soldier's Joy*

Cut 5: Reel in key of A

Reel: *John MacNeil* (Peter Milne)

Cut 6: Reel in key of A

Reel: (Unknown)

Cut 7: Reels in keys of G and D

G Reel: *Princess* (?)

D Reel: *St Ann's*

Cut 8: Reel in key of C

Reel: *Cabar Fèidh* (The Deer's Antlers)

Interview with Joe Kearney:

Joe discusses early playing; playing for dances

Jack and Carl Webster, violins; Joe Kearney, violin; Kevin Chaisson, piano; Gerard Murphy, guitar (10 min.)

Cut 1: Strathspey and Reels in key of G

Strathspey: *Duke of Gordon's Birthday* (William Marshall)

Reels: *Heather Hill* (Dan R. MacDonald), *Lord MacDonald's*

Cut 2: Reels in key of G

Reel: *The Chaisson's*, *The Dismissal* (Sandy MacLean)

Cut 3: March in key of A

March: *Lord Lovat's Lament*

Video ends, formal recording completed, playing and audio continue

Cut 4: Strathspey and Reels in key of A

Strathspey: (Unknown)

Reels: *Tammerack 'er Down* (Donald Angus Beaton), *John MacNeil* (Peter Milne),  
*Picnic*

## DR. JOHN SHAW'S FIELD NOTES

**Margaret MacLeod** 17/8/87 Born Oct. 1884. Little Sands (nr. Wood Islands). Née MacNel. Husband from Kinross (i.e. Lyndale). Mother's people from Skye, father's from Colonsay. Father: c : ic: mother: c: ric *caoraich*. Father's time: no Gaelic in school, shingle with string. Punished with ruler before shingle hung on them. Forced to tell on each other. *Ho ro mo Nighean Donn Bhòideach*. "Striking houses". Father had verses in Gaelic. Jigging for dancing. Ghost stories featuring lights. *Solust* (= *dreag*) Was with great-grandmother who had no English: Mary (Sarah?) MacPherson, born in Skye, née Currie (*Curaidh*). Grandfather Eoghann Lamont made songs and hymns, as did his sons. Uncle Murdoch dragging mussel mud, made song: *Bidh a h-uile fear againn...Ho ro 's droch-obair a' mhaorach* (here, probably shellfish mud). Father's father Archie MacNeil came from Scotland. "Grannies" = *bean-ghlùin*. [Ed. Note: *bean-ghlùin* generally refers to a "midwife". Unfortunately, there is no other information on the meaning or usage of the term in Prince Edward Island other than this brief reference to "Grannies".] 7<sup>th</sup> son. *Buidseachd* in Iris among Beatons.

**John MacLennan** (*Iain Néill*). 17/8/87 87 yrs. Visit: Effie MacClure née MacQueen. 95 b. in Caledonia. Dan's uncle's song: Asthma. *Hé ho ro mo Mhàiri* Kenneth Beaton. Good singer. (d.). *Mac Mhurchadh Peutain*. Composed ditty ...*agus Floraidh* Minister: *Chan eil brògan agam* (I have no shoes) Seasonal rhymes: *Mios Faoillich thuirt an Gearran...cà 'n do dh' fhàg...*

Pipers played for dances Norman MacLean, Wood Islands was song composer. *O chi, chi mi na h-àrd-bheannan* (I see the high mountains).

**Rev. Donald Nicholson**. Clyde River, b. Hartsville. Age: 81 18/8/87 Skye grandm. Christie MacInnis b. Portree 1839-40. Parents: Donald MacInnis, Mary MacDonald. Nicholsons: Grandf. Donald Nicholson b. Rona 1815. M. Rona woman, Catherine Gillis. Father (of Donald N.) John also b. in Rona. Mother Mary Cummings. Murdo b. Sleat, father of John. Gr.'s uncle *Sgòdach*. Great strength. Story *Seonaidh Mòr*. Murdo s. of John s. of Malcolm (Sleat) Early 1850s immigration: MacLeods settled in Breadalbain (1855)

Hartsville: *Murchadh Beag* (Little Murdoch), Hughie, *Murchadh Mòr* (Big Murdoch) (great uncles). Father and grandm. MacLennan.

Gaelic in PEI schools: Springton school. Teacher Alexander MacLeod. 1840s and 50s. Grandfather did not permit English to grandson. Next teacher Richards (recte Douglas) so no Gaelic.

Brother 89 yrs old in Quincy MA.

*Iain Mòr: Robh thu aig an tobair fhathast?* (Big John: Have you been to the well yet?) Grandson Roger MacPhee wishes to learn Gaelic.

Fairy story from *Murchadh Mòr*: rows of potatoes.

**Chester Martin, Percy MacPherson, Caledonia 20/8/87**

Songs by Jane (*Sine Mhòr*) MacLeod: 1. Song about falling into Sandy Beaton's cellar "*Tha thu an seo, a ghalla*" (Here you are you bitch) "*Bheil thu astaigh, a shiursach?*" (Are you inside you slut?) 2. *Marbhrann* (lament) to brother (written down and lost) [ed. note: This lament was published in the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* at the turn of the last century] 3. Song about her house burning down: "Although the minister and the elder took off my shirt, it was not with bad intentions." 4. Story about lime (Montague).

Chester: Lady in Brooklyn = *Aonghas na Drochaid's* (Angus the Bridge's) mother-in-law looking for butter. "Silver water": rhyme went with it. Horse cured of curse from man who wanted it (Glen Martin).

Bards: 1. John MacPhee (gr. nephew of Jane MacLeod). 2. William MacPherson: song for next door neighbour who stole paint to paint home: *A' mhuladach mhòr* Chester has verse. *a' suidhe air a tòin* (The big morose lady sitting on her backside)

**'S iomadh boll mòr A ghoid e bho bòrd seòl a... bho bhàs e.**

**Chester Martin** Age about 87. [Ed. note: Chester was 85] 20/8/87

Jane MacLeod (*Sine Mhòr*). Spinster. Poet. Made song for minister and elder who treated her for burns: "Although they took my shirt off it was not with bad intentions": Ask Dan MacPherson for words.

*Aonghas na Gaoitheadh* (Angus of the Wind): mentioned in family. See *Scotsman* article.

**John MacLennan** 25/8/87

Verse from *Sine Mhòr's* song on house burning.

*Cairistiona Chaimbeul* (Christy Campbell)

*Saor air leth* (an outstanding carpenter) said of Dan MacPherson

*Chì an òige an aois 's chì an aois am bàs* (Youth sees age and age sees death).

Working in woods (3 winters).

Father made songs: 1. *Hao ri ro raill il ó* 2. *Gura mise ghabh an t-iognadh/Toiseach na Faoilleach* On air "*Fear an Dùirn Mhòir*". Dan MacPherson has verses.

*Marbhrann* (lament) for Sam Martin's father by Beaton.

Visit: Neil MacKenzie. Stories?

Death premonitions Chester: light in kitchen. Record. a. Death of grandfather. Paper being taken off casket. b. forerunner of sister going after Maggie Gillis.

Percy: ball of light enters house. Two cans of Paris Green fell off shelf.

*Leth na bochdainne* (half of nothing).

**Murdock Buchanan.** Lyndale. Age 93. 28/8/87

Raised in Heatherdale (formerly Brown's Creek) Parents: English and Gaelic. Grandf. pref. Gaelic Origin: Isle of Skye. Mother's side: Mathesons from Skye.

Saw thickening frolics

Death premonition: dogs howling.

Father from Belfast.

Gaelic-speaking minister (Valleyfield) John MacLean from N.S. Hour in Engl., hr. in Gaelic. Services shortened (Rev. Stuart). Precenting remembered.

Beaton Stewart. age 68. 28/8/87

B. Caledonia

Song: *Ged tha mi...* (Song known in English as *The Tocherless Lass*).

Gaelic monoglots in Caledonia: MacPhees, MacLeans.

**Christine MacKinnon** 28/8/87

B. Valleyfield (orig. Douse's Road) spoke English before school. Née Montgomery. All Gaelic-speaking (or nearly) during youth. Age 90+ Husband Gaelic-speaking but did not use after marriage. Husb. Lachlann MacKinnon was a singer (still living?)

Minister Roderick MacLean.

Husband in Valleyfield (inaccurate).

Alexander Martin Valleyfield

A.C. Fraser

Mary Bruce (deaf). Sr. Cit. Queen's Road.

**Mary Bruce.** Age 88. 28/8/87 Née MacDonald, Kilmuir.

Grandm. (father) Gael. monoglot (Mary MacDonald, Mrs. Neil, d. 1916)

Heard father speak of physical punishment in school Father b. 1864, d. 1934. Mother 1868-1939. *Lodan* (velvet bag on stick) used for punishment. Note: this is the first instance of the word known to the collector. Mary says it refers to a black velvet bag on the end of a stick used for gathering contributions I church. Source for use was her uncle Allan.

Family worship in English or Gaelic depending on which children present.

Parents literate in Gaelic. Uncle Allan (punishment) made Gaelic songs. Storytellers: : Lachlann MacKinnon (see sv. Christine MacKinnon). Jim Ross: one eye: cow's horn: *Seumas Ruadh* (Red Jim).

“I see you're left-handed like myself”

“I have two blind mans on my hands and one of them is a woman.”

Children of her age seldom understood Gaelic.

Origin: Father, Kilmuir Gael. *Cille Mhoire*

Mother MacKinnon fr. Uig. Corresponded with relatives in Skye.

History of Kilmuir (PEI) written by father. Xerox in PEI Collection

Fiddle: Dan Matheson, Heatherdale. Understood Gaelic.

Saw face of deceased person. Death premonition. Mother's dream about Mrs. Nicholson. Death of brother.

*Sine Mhòr* (Jane MacLeod) visited Kilmuir. “*Cuir sìos dhan pharlor e mus cuir na pàisdeachan às dha*” (Send him down to the parlor before the children do away with him)

Roderick MacLeod was also a bard.

Song in form of prayer for children “*Na pàisdean aig mo dhachaigh/ Is Mòrag aig an ceann* (The children at my home and Morag in charge). Note: the author of this was apparently Jane MacLeod.

**John Morrison** 28/8/87

B. 1903 Mount Vernon

Father could read Gaelic. Family worship in Gaelic and English.

Maternal grandf. no English. Double Hill. Alexander B. MacDonald. Mostly English in father's family

**Alice MacLeod** 31/8/87

Father b. High Brook. Norman MacLeod. No English until school. Grandf. Donald MacDonald in Melville. Greatgrandf. Norman from Isle of Skye, arr. 1840.

Mother was English-speaker. Alice grew up on High Bank. Grandm. spoke Gaelic to her and she could understand it.

Some of the schoolteachers were Gaelic-speakers: Archie (Gosh) MacDonald, during parent's time. Incident with sunbonnets in school.

Hector Gillis, High Bank, good Gaelic singer. "It's a wonderful language if you look into it."

Sister of Archie Gosh still living in Dover.

Thickening frolics remembered, but before her time

Father and uncle played violin: 6 boys learning at once. Other families also Murdoch MacLean.

Father could read Gaelic.

"Tapping" the houses on New Year's.

John MacLean was a funny storyteller. B. in Scotland Also singer.

Bard from Crick River.

Songs: *Fhir a' Bhàta* (The Boatman) Grandm. sang Gaelic songs while spinning.

Cape Bear church: Gaelic services when Alice was 7 or so.

Story about woman in High Bank and rent collector: arr. on horseback, she knocked his hat off, jumped on it.

Father's grandmother (MacLean) was born in Skye, worked as servant.

**MacPhee. Hughie, Danny.** Bayfield. 30/8/87 Notes by Jim Watson

Father: John Joe Grandf: Archie Angus Greatgrandf: Angus Greatgreatgrandf: Angus (?) married to Christine Mac (Phee?) b. DeGros Marsh Angus (?) original settler. He and brother Neil divided a 250-300 acre grant to create two farms (mentions that one or both fought with Wolfe at Quebec).

Their mother was a Golden. She shortened her maiden name from McGoldrick.

Jimmy (Seumas) McCormick an Irishman possibly from Sligo is the only one remembered who played the *pìob mhòr* (large pipes) in the district. [Ed. note. This is probably Jimmy "Simmons" MacCormack a Scottish Gaelic speaking carpenter and well-known musician from Selkirk. His MacCormack ancestors were likely from South Uist and not Ireland as the notes indicate here.]

**Mrs. Catherine MacLean,** Iris 1/9/87 B. Poplar Grove, Prince County

Mother Gaelic-speaking Great-grandm. b. in Skye? Grandmother Mary Gillis. Gaelic preferred language. English: "An odd word"  
Grandmother from Caledonia. D. 1936 age 89.

Settlers' stories. *Pàirce-coillidh* (burnt over field created in forest. Fire in hearth.

*Bristidh mi do chorragan* (I'll break your fingers)

Grandm. read Gaelic (Bible). Read *MacTalla*.

Mother and uncle spoke Gaelic and English to each other.

Songs heard: 1. *Ho ro mo Nighean Donn Bhòidheach* (Ho ro my nut-brown maiden) 2. Transvaal Song

Grandmother's cures 1. Hot oats 2. Cherry bark tonic 3. Hemlock boughs (tips?) tonic 4. Mountain ash berries (tonic) 5. Sasparilla tonic 6. Calf's stomach *bainne deasgainn* (rennet-milk) 7. *Càrach* = cracked oats, jelly, eaten with milk. 8. *Stapag*

Short stories (grandmother) 1. Man not good to his wife. His ghost appeared. 2. *Dreag* (light foretelling death): a. sister's husband died, Mt. Vernon. Sweeping b. Own husband (Jim MacLean) died, three thumps. c. Saw light, neighbour girl's death d. Sister Mary saw light before husband died.

Ask for Place-names

**Dan MacPherson** 1/9/87

Mrs. Sandy MacKenzie (née Currie), Percy MacPherson's grandm. could jig tunes for dancing (until 1:00) if fiddler did not show.

Ask for *Nuair thig an Oidhche* (Mouth music to air *Braes of Marr*) Dancing on bridges (Bellevue)

Fairy stones not well known

## QUESTIONS

1. Question of less Gaelic spoken in King's County but stronger musical tradition
2. Participation of men in milling here and in CB.
3. Question of surviving repertoire of songs here compared to Skye, CB
4. Stronger tradition of jigging shows possible divergence from CB
5. Evidence that wider Gaelic community was forming: CB clergy; *MacTalla*; tunes exchanged; intermarriage (Rory MacDonald)
6. Ponder role of formal educ as compared to CB. Remarkable rate of literacy in Gaelic in PEI by comparison. Few documents from period available to give me sense of very rapid social evolution.

## INFORMATION FOR MULTICULTURALISM REPORT

1. Number of items recorded:	
Acoustic	153
Video music	31
Other	5
2. Number of informants recorded	20
3. Number of informants visited	29
4. Number of visits	31

## BREAKDOWN OF ITEMS RECORDED

1. Family background	14
2. Language attitudes	19
3. Dialects	5
4. Stories & storytelling	19
5. Songs	21
6. Bards & characters	9
7. Proverbs and expressions	7
8. Other folklore (nicknames, Placenames, customs)	15
9. Music and dance: tunes and lore	47