

CALUM I. MACLEAN'S FIELDWORK DIARIES IN ARISAIG, MORAR, AND MOIDART, 1954 *Part one*

Born into a large yet talented family of humble crofting background, Calum Iain Maclean (1915–1960) was one of five boys and two girls to Malcolm Maclean (1880–1951), from Raasay, and Christina Nicolson (1886–1974), from Braes, Isle of Skye. Sorley, his elder brother, was an outstanding poet and scholar. Raised in Raasay, he attended in turn Raasay Public School, Portree Secondary School and the University of Edinburgh, graduating with a first in Celtic in 1939. A gifted student, he won two scholarships and enrolled at University College Dublin. His studies were, however, disrupted by the outbreak of war, but through his contacts he was offered employment by Professor James Hamilton Delargy as a part-time fieldwork collector for the Irish Folklore Commission.



Calum Iain Maclean, 1956
WERNER KISSLING

By 1945, Maclean was employed on a full-time basis and, towards the end of that year, returned to Scotland to undertake further collecting, concentrating on the Southern Outer Hebrides, and collaborated with John Lorne Campbell. Delargy stated that Maclean was "the best equipped and most successful collector of all time of Scottish Gaelic tradition."

Throughout most of his career, spanning some eighteen years, Maclean kept a fieldwork diary written in turn in Irish, Gaelic and English. On the foundation of the School of Scottish Studies in 1951, Maclean was appointed its first researcher/collector working alongside Hamish Henderson, Donald Archie MacDonald and John MacInnes.

With a broadened remit, although focussing upon the Gaelic-speaking areas of the Highland and Islands, Maclean collected oral materials throughout the length and breadth of Scotland. Diagnosed with cancer in 1956, necessitating the amputation of his left arm, Maclean continued to collect on his recovery even though his health remained indifferent. Idiosyncratic perhaps but never dull, *The Highlands* (1959) remains his only published book.

By no means prolific, he nevertheless contributed academic articles about folklore to various journals as well as popular pieces to mainstream publications. Maclean's lasting legacy is his numerous fieldwork recordings and transcriptions, held in the archives of University College Dublin and the School of Scottish Studies. On his untimely death many tributes were paid to him, not least a moving elegiac poem by Sorley and also a pibroch by his colleague Francis Collinson.

By following in the footsteps of Maclean, we can look over the shoulder of a young and assiduous fieldworker going about his business. He had passed through the district before, in 1947, but it was not until the summer of 1954 that he began to collect intensively over a two-month period, at first in Arisaig, Morar and then Moidart. In many ways, as he had done before in Lochaber and Barra, Maclean was entering virgin territory. The former locality was the first place he started to collect, in the winter of 1951, for the newly established School of Scottish Studies. He hardly knew anyone but that was all set to change.

The first extract relates his arrival from Edinburgh to Arisaig and booking into the hotel, and then, the next day, he introduces us to a few folk from whom he was going to collect a rich vein of oral materials, including song, stories and later still, instrumental music. Those whom he met, at least initially, were Allan MacDonald, a retired policeman, Anne Gillies, a retired teacher, who both mentioned other folk in the district including Donald

MacEachen and William MacDonald. Maclean would later meet and record from both of them. On his second day he met Donald MacDonald, a son of George MacDonald who was a famous piper in his day, from whom he got some interesting material about piping traditions. He next visited Lachlan Gillies, a local stalwart, then Lachlan Stewart, a Skyeman and Estate Manager, in Arisaig, who stayed in Borrodale House. Later still on his second day, Maclean visited the MacDonalds in Drumgorm who recommended that he spoke with Donald MacDonald from Bunacaimbe. Maclean failed to meet Joan MacDonald when he visited but his patience would soon be rewarded. All in all, not a bad start.

Monday, 17 May 1954

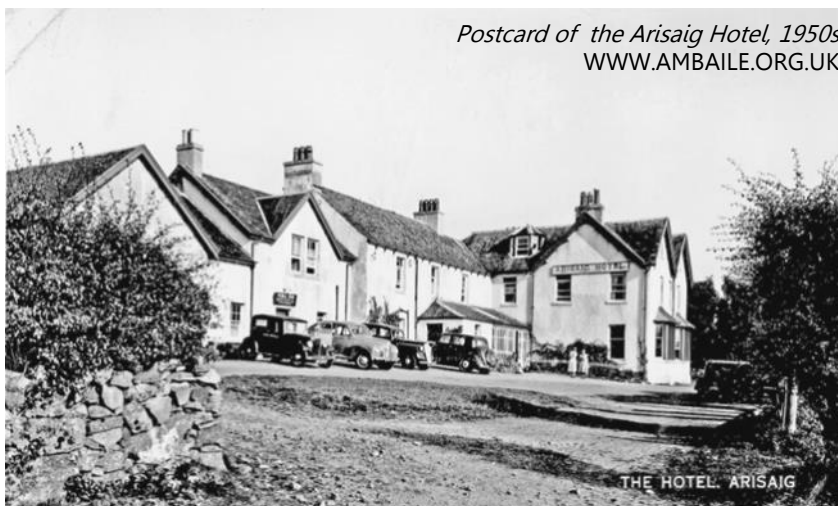
I left Oban today at 11.30 a.m. and took the train to Crianlarich. A beautiful day it has been. I arrived at Crianlarich at 1.44 pm and had to wait there until 6.30 [p.m.]. The train from Glasgow was late. On the south-going train, I saw a fleeting glimpse of Mrs Jackie Ross of Portree, a Miss Graham as I knew her in my schooldays at Portree. I boarded the north-going train. It was a lovely evening with bright sunshine. I took two photographs of Beinn Dòbhrain [Ben Dorain]. Lochaber and Ben Nevis were beautiful in the rays of the setting sun. I arrived in Arisaig close on ten o' clock. There were two old ladies from Edinburgh who were visitors to Arisaig. I got my luggage and equipment safely into the hotel. I hope to be here [Arisaig Hotel] for a week. I do not know a living soul here. I hope to know one or two people before this time tomorrow night. I did not sleep last night. So to bed!

Tuesday, 18 May 1954

A beautiful day today. After breakfast, I walked along the road by the shore from the hotel southwards. On the road a fine old Highlander spoke to me. We passed the time of day, and I told him why I had come to the district. He said that most of the old people had now gone, one woman who had a great number of old songs died two years ago. The old gentleman was none other than Allan MacDonald,¹ a retired policeman who had been many years out in Uist and Benbecula. He was well known to Aonghas Barrach [MacMillan]² and other people out in Benbecula. I had heard them talk about him very often. He was very popular out in the Isles and had evidently been a very powerful man in his day. Allan MacDonald told me to call on Miss Anne Gillies, a retired schoolteacher living in Arisaig. He also mentioned three good tradition-bearers: Donald MacEachen and an old man living in the village, Lachlan Gillies and William MacDonald who lives at [the Back of] Keppoch. These, he said, were the best people left in the place. I walked around the district for some time. There is a lovely view of Eigg, Rum and Skye from here. The day was very clear.

I took the train into Mallaig at 12 o' clock as I wanted to buy a map and some films. On the train I met Duncan MacInnes, the "Calamity Dan" of my schooldays at Portree. He is now a seaman and was on his way home to Broadford, Skye. He was not changed so very much. He speaks beautiful Gaelic and is still completely unspoilt and natural – a thorough gentleman. In Mallaig, I bought what I

Postcard of the Arisaig Hotel, 1950s
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required and took the train back to Arisaig. I arrived back in time for lunch.

In the afternoon I called to see Miss [Anne] Gillies.³ She had been the local schoolmistress and is now retired. I told her my mission to the district. She said she had always been more interested in the practical and did not have much interest in traditions. She had done her best to teach Gaelic but had found that real interest and enthusiasm was lacking; the young people were not interested in Gaelic. She thought the efforts of An Comunn Gàidhealach were quite futile. There was far too much cheap sentiment about it all. She mentioned other people whom she thought might be helpful. She mentioned the local minister, Mr [Donald Macintosh] Logan,⁴ who was a good Gaelic scholar and interested in traditions. She also mentioned a Miss Joan MacDonald whose grandfather was a poet and who did know some old songs herself. Others in the district were Mrs Marion MacDonald from Barra, Mr and Mrs John MacKinnon. She also asked me to call on the sons of the late George MacDonald, the famous piper of the last generation. George and his brother Angus [MacDonald] were great pipers, Angus being a great master of *ceòl mòr* [pibroch], and George a splendid player of strathspeys and reels. The late Pipe-Major John MacDonald of Inverness,⁵ Pipe-Major William MacLean, Kilcreggan,⁶ Sheriff [J. P.] Grant of Rothiemurchas⁷ and many others came to the MacDonalds of Arisaig for tuition. Angus [MacDonald] died during the closing years of the 1914–18 war. George [MacDonald]⁸ died in the early years of the century. I hoped that some of their musical MSS. might still be available. I was to be disappointed.

I walked along the southern shore of Loch nan Ceall to Hazel [Grove] Cottage, where the MacDonald brothers live. I knocked at the door and a woman with an English voice came and answered. She said she was a visitor, but the MacDonald brothers were somewhere about the house. One of them soon appeared at the door of an outhouse and I went to speak to him. This was Donald MacDonald;⁹ the son of George. I explained who I was, and we had an interesting talk. He had much to say about his father [George MacDonald] and his uncle Angus [MacDonald].¹⁰ He is not a piper. He spoke of visits paid by Pipe-Major John MacDonald, Inverness, Pipe-Major [William] MacLean and Lt. Col. [J. P.] Grant to his father and uncle. They had tuition from a piper Duncan Campbell¹¹ and also from Angus MacKay.¹² They had left a lot of MSS. behind them, their own settings of tunes, tunes which they had written down, and collections of pibroch – printed collections, with their own corrections written in red ink. All those had been burnt, he said, along with a diary kept by his father. Donald [MacDonald] himself had seen them. That, I must say, was a very great loss. How very much valuable material had been consigned to the flames. All this is very shocking. Donald had also very interesting accounts of *Raghnall mac Ailein Òig* [Ronald son of Young Allan, Ronald MacDonald]. These he promised to record for me on Friday evening. Donald MacDonald is a very pleasant and interesting man. I have still to meet the other brother Charles [MacDonald].

I then returned in the direction of Arisaig and called at the house of Lachlan Gillies. I was there re-introduced to [Lt.] Col. [James] Gray Simpson,¹³ whom I had met four years ago going out to Lochboisdale with Seton [Paul] Gordon¹⁴ and [Francis] Cameron-Head of Lochailort. Lachlan Gillies and his wife [Isabella MacNeil],¹⁵ a lady from Moidart, are a charming couple. Lachlan had met John [Maclean] and Alasdair [Maclean], my brothers, coming from Portree Games some years ago. He was a noted dancer in his younger days and also an athlete. He served with the 4th Camerons in the 1914–18 War and was badly wounded. He comes of a family of singers and musicians. He himself sings and plays the fiddle. He sang some old songs for me. I had not heard them



Angus MacDonald, c. 1910
M.E.M. DONALDSON

before. He also had stories about *Raghnall mac Ailein Òig* and also *Ailean nan Corc* [Allan MacDonald of the Dirks], who lived at [the Back of] Keppoch. There is a huge tacksman's house there today. It is about a quarter of a mile north of Arisaig Hotel. I said I would go over on Thursday evening and would bring the recording machine. Lachlan walked a bit of the way with me, and we sat down on a bridge and talked. As we sat there a man came by riding on a bicycle. He was introduced to me as John MacKinnon.¹⁶ He lives here in Arisaig and is a piper. He was taught by Pipe-Major John MacDonald [*Seonaidh Roidein*] of the Glasgow Police. Lachlan Gillies also spoke of the Estate Manager, Lachlan Stewart from Skye. He said that Lachlan Stewart had many songs which he learned from old people in Skye. While we sat on the bridge Lachlan Stewart's car passed in the direction of the hotel.

I parted with Lachlan Gillies and went back to the hotel. I went into the bar and there was a person who I took to be Lachlan Stewart.¹⁷ I introduced myself to him and he turned out to be the man I wanted. He had been in Portree School a decade before my time. He had lived for some time at Tote [near Skeabost], Skye. He has very many songs, mostly songs of the nineteenth century. We arranged to meet and do some recording on Saturday night.

I returned to the hotel and had dinner. After dinner, I went up to visit the MacDonalds at Drumgorm. Mrs MacDonald is a sister of Norman MacLure¹⁸ in Oban. John MacDonald,¹⁹ the husband, was very helpful and spoke about old Donald MacEachen and asked me to go to see him. He also mentioned a potential source of information, Donald MacDonald of Bun na Caime [Bunacaimbe], a surface-man on the railway. He imagined that he had some stories. I spent some time with the MacDonalds and then went to visit a Miss Joan MacDonald. There was no answer at her door, and I assumed that she was not at home. I went back to the hotel and did some writing. So far, I have been quite successful and have made good contacts. The district seems promising. The people I have met so far are certainly very nice.

In the next extract, we shall meet Donald MacDonald (*Dòmhnall Màiri Ruairidh*), from Bunacaimbe, Donald MacEachen (*Dòmhnall Iain Bhàin*) from the Back of Keppoch, Calum MacKellaig, whom Maclean had met in 1947, and also hear about the sad passing of Angus Barrach MacMillan (from Benbecula) who had recorded hundreds of stories. Also, a ceilidh takes place in Lachlan Gillies's house (in Morroch, Arisaig) where mention is made of Simon Peter MacDonald, a local schoolmaster, Angus MacDonald (the Drover), Charles MacDonald (brother of Donald), Joan MacDonald and her brother John, Marion MacDonald (originally from Barra), John MacKinnon and his wife, Cecilia Teresa MacDonald. With such talent abounding, it must have been quite a ceilidh!

Andrew Wiseman

Diary extracts by courtesy of the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

Footnotes

1. Allan MacDonald (1885–1962).
2. Angus MacMillan (Aonghas Barrach, 1874–1954), an outstanding storyteller from Griminish, Benbecula, and from whom Calum Maclean collected hundreds of stories.
3. Anne Gillies (1887–1966).
4. Donald Macintosh Logan (1887–1976).
5. Pipe-Major John MacDonald (1865–1953).
6. Pipe-Major William MacLean of Kilcreggan (1876–1957). He was related to Calum Maclean.
7. Lt. Col. John Peter Grant of Rothiemurchas C.B., M.C., T.D. (1885–1963).
8. George MacDonald (1850–1905).
9. Donald MacDonald (b. 1896).
10. Angus MacDonald (c. 1837–1922).
11. Duncan Campbell (1814–1860).
12. Angus MacKay (1813–1859).
13. Lt.-Col. James Gray Simpson, D.S.O., M.C. (d. 1955).
14. Seton Paul Gordon (1886–1977).
15. Ishbel MacNeil was born to Ewen or Hugh MacNeil, known as 'An Diùc' (The Duke) and Margaret MacDonald, daughter of John and Isabella MacDonald from Blain, Mingarry, Moidart.
16. John 'Johnny' MacKinnon (1911–1989).
17. Lachlan 'Lachie' Stewart (b. c. 1905), from Tote, Skeabost, Isle of Skye.
18. Skye-born Norman Campbell MacLure (d. 1961).
19. John MacDonald (1884–1974).

Having spent only two days in Arisaig, Calum Maclean takes the opportunity to continue networking to find out the best tradition-bearers that are still in the district. His strategy begins to pay dividends. Although failing again to meet Joan MacDonald, he goes on to meet John MacDonald from Drumgorm who introduces him to Donald MacDonald, or *Dòmhnall Màiri Ruairidh*, who turns out to be an excellent storyteller. Maclean then visits the Back of Keppoch and, after initially



Calum Iain Maclean, 1956
WERNER KISSLING

going to the wrong house, meets Donald MacEachen, or *Dòmhnall Iain Bhàin*, who proceeds to tell him a series of local traditions, including a story about MacDonald of Clanranald. During the evening Maclean attends a concert in the Astley Hall where Robert Wilson is singing. He also meets Lachlan Gillies there.

The next day proves to be rather a sad one for he hears about the passing of Angus MacMillan (*Aonghas Barrach*) from Griminish, Benbecula, an exceptional storyteller from whom Maclean collected hundreds of stories, including one of the longest ever to have been recorded in Western Europe. After writing an obituary notice and appreciation, Maclean attends a ceilidh at Lachlan Gillies's house in Morroch where many of the locals are foregathered including Simon Peter MacDonald, Angus the Drover, Charles MacDonald, the son of the noted piper George MacDonald, Joan and John MacDonald, Marion MacDonald and John MacKinnon, the piper, and his wife. A draw for that evening's entertainment was the recording equipment which produces rather amusing reactions from the participants when listening back to their own voices. Simpler times back then!

Wednesday, 19 May 1954

I spent some time in the morning writing. I then went out to call on Miss Joan MacDonald, but did not find her at home. I had a few words with Lachlan Stewart, the Estate Manager. I then went up to the station and there saw John MacDonald, Drumgorm, who introduced me to Donald MacDonald of Bun na Caime [Bunacaimbe]. Donald MacDonald [*Dòmhnall Màiri Ruairidh*]¹ was working on the railway line when we went to talk to him. He is a huge man and rather fine looking. He spoke Gaelic very well. He evidently has some stories and knows a good deal about local traditions. He seemed to know most of the current local traditions I have come across since I came here. I promised to go to see him on Saturday at 7 p.m. I then went back to the hotel and did some writing until lunchtime.

After lunch, I went out to find the place where old [Donald] MacEachen lives. I went to the wrong house first, but a tall woman brought me over to MacEachen's house. Mrs MacEachen [Mary Elizabeth 'Lizzie' Smith] was in and I spoke to her and told what I wanted. She said the old man was bed-ridden, but quite ready to talk. I went in to see him and he seemed lively enough. He had evidently been a tall, good-looking man once. He has now been confined to bed for the past nine weeks. He began to talk immediately. He spoke of *Iain Dubh mac 'ic Ailein* [MacDonald of Clanranald] who sold himself to the Devil. I told him that I had a recording machine and that I did not write the stories down. He said that he had never heard his own voice except in an echo – *mac stalla*. He seemed quite ready to talk.

I went back to the hotel and got my recording machine. I returned and we started. I could hardly get him to stop once he started. He was quite amazed to hear his own voice. Earlier he had said that the end of the world must be drawing near owing to the invention of the atomic bomb. "It is a pity," he said, "that science is not always put to such good use as the invention of a machine such as

I had." Donald MacEachen [*Dòmhnall Iain Bhàin*]² has been an invalid for the past twenty years. His people had evidently been tradition-bearers. He mentioned his grandfather particularly. He told good stories. He had one very good one about a girl from the district who was abducted by the Vikings. He may have the story slightly confused. She may have been taken by Swedish sailors. She later met some Highland sailors in Sweden and spoke a rhyme about the islands off the coast of Arisaig. He had also some stories about "second sight." He complained that he was not in very good form. I was quite delighted with his readiness to tell what he knew. I said I'd go back to see him on Monday next. I have thus made a start. It seems quite good.

I then returned to the hotel. I did more writing until dinner time. After dinner, I played some records for the visitors at the hotel. I later went to the dance in the village [Astley] hall. The dance followed a concert given by the Scottish singer, Robert Wilson.³ I met several people there including Robert Wilson. Lachlan Gillies was also there. We had a long talk together. Late to bed.

Thursday, 20 May 1954

Did some writing after breakfast today. I phoned up to Morar Hotel about noon, and asked for Calum MacKellaig.⁴ He was not in, but I was told that a message had come from Angus McIntosh⁵ in Edinburgh saying that Aonghas Barrach, Angus MacMillan,⁶ died on Tuesday and that the funeral was today. It was too late to go to the funeral. Poor Aonghas has gone at last – may God rest his soul. He would have been eighty years of age next July. I sent a telegram to Calum [MacMillan, *Calum Òg a' Bharraich*] saying that I regretted not having had time to go to the funeral. Even if I had heard on Wednesday night, it would have been too late to get out to Uist. Angus's death was a bad blow. He was such a loveable old man.

I thought of the years spent with him in Uist, of our long nights of storytelling and of the very long tales. I last saw him on New Year's Eve last. He was asleep when I left his house last New Year's morning. He did suffer a lot during the last years, and it was probably a blessing that he did go. The heart-attacks became very frequently latterly. Benbecula will be a different place now without Aonghas Barrach [Angus MacMillan] and Angus MacLellan [*Aonghas mac Iain 'ic Chalum 'ic Iain Bhàin 'ic Nill* or *Aonghas mac Anna Bàine*]. *Id est perfectum* [That is perfect!]⁷ Both have left much after them. I spent the greatest part of the afternoon writing appreciations of Angus for the papers.⁸ I sent off copies to three papers.

In the evening, I took the recording machine over to the house of Lachlan Gillies. Lachlan Stewart went there with me. The house was full when we arrived. The party included Mr Simon [Peter] MacDonald,⁹ the local schoolmaster; Mr Angus MacDonald, Angus the Drover; Charles MacDonald, the son of the noted piper, the late George MacDonald; Miss Joan MacDonald and her brother John [MacDonald] and Mrs Marion MacDonald¹⁰ from Barra. Mrs



Angus MacMillan, 1948
LARRY BURROWS,
TIME MAGAZINE



Lachlan Gillies, 1978
OBAN TIMES



John MacKinnon piping at the unveiling of the Prince's Cairn in 1953. Beside the cairn stands Seton Gordon, and to the right is Donald Cameron of Lochiel (chief of Clan Cameron), Diana Hay, 23rd Countess of Erroll (High Constable of Scotland), and her husband Sir Iain Moncrieff of that Ilk, with walking stick on extreme right.
 IAIN THORNER COLLECTION

MacKinnon [Cecilia Teresa MacDonald], the wife of John MacKinnon, the piper, was also there. I played Nicol MacCallum's¹¹ record for them first and they enjoyed his playing of *My King has Landed in Moidart*.¹² I then played the specimen song record. There were impressed particularly by the singing of Mrs [Catherine 'Kate'] Laing.¹³ I then fixed up the microphone and let the people in the company hear their own voices. It was most amusing to see the expression on their faces on hearing their voices for the first time. I rehearsed some songs for some of them. They enjoyed the recording machine very much.

In the next extract Maclean meets a few other locals including Calum MacKellaig and Ronald McLean (Cross). Maclean also meets Angus MacDonald, or Angus the Drover, who reminisces about his younger days driving cattle to Falkirk. He also meets and records much valuable material about piping traditions from Charles MacDonald, a son of the famous piper George MacDonald from Morar, and then records some pipe tunes from Johnny MacKinnon.

Andrew Wiseman

Diary extracts by courtesy of the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

Footnotes

1. Donald MacDonald (*Dòmhnall Màiri Ruairidh*, 1891–1964).
2. Donald MacEachen (*Dòmhnall Iain Bhàin*, 1869–1955).
3. Robert Wilson (1907–1964) was a tenor singer and known as the voice of Scotland.
4. Malcolm 'Calum' MacKellaig (1914–1985).
5. Angus McIntosh (1914–2005) was the first Forbes Professor of English Language and General Linguistics at the University of Edinburgh.
6. Angus MacMillan (*Aonghas Barrach*, 1874–1954).
7. Probably stemming from the Latin phrase: id est perfectum et consummatum hominem, that is, the perfect and finished man.
8. These obituary notices and appreciations appeared in *The Stornoway Gazette*, *The Scotsman*, and *The Oban Times*.
9. Simon Peter MacDonald (1891–1963).
10. Marion MacKinnon *née* MacDonald (1893–1973) was a well-known local singer and originally hailed from Scallary, Isle of Barra.
11. Piper-Major Nicol MacCallum (1902–1977) from Kilmartin, Argyll.
12. The Gaelic title is *Thàinig mo Rìgh gu Tìr ann am Mùideart*.
13. Catherine 'Kate' Alexandrina Laing *née* Morrison (*Ceiteag Fhionnlaigh Aonghais Ruaidh*, 1896–1971) from the Isle of Harris.

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In the last few days of his first very busy week, Calum Maclean manages to meet a variety of locals including Lachlan 'Lachie' Stewart, Calum MacKellaig, Ronald McLean, Angus MacDonald, Hugh Cameron, Charles MacDonald, William MacDonald, Donald MacDonald and John MacKinnon. For all these fine folk, Maclean collected some very valuable recordings, including songs, instrumental music and stories. Of particular interest was a recording made by Angus the Drover, or *Aonghas Bàn*, originally from Ardnish, who tells of his younger days driving cattle to the Falkirk tryst. Many piping traditions, for example, were collected from Charles MacDonald, or *Charlie George*. Although not a piper himself, he was the son of George MacDonald, a famous piper from Morar. So too, Maclean also meets William MacDonald, from the Back of Keppoch, from whom he records a number of longer tales, some of which are of the international variety. Another great storyteller from whom he records quite a few tales was Donald MacDonald from Bunacaimbe, Arisaig. In only a short space of time, Maclean, as he did elsewhere, managed to gather in quite a substantial amount of fieldwork recordings.

Friday, 21 May 1954

I did some writing after breakfast and again met Mr Lachlan Stewart, the Estate Manger. I am amazed at the number of songs he has, most of them are songs I never heard.

I took the train to Mallaig at midday to get some cash at the bank. In Mallaig, I met Calum MacKellaig.¹ I had not seen him for years. I also met an old man who turned out to be Ronald McLean,² Cross. He has many stories and traditions. I promised to go to see him later. He was apparently the finest singer in the district in his younger days. His sister [Anne McLean], who died some years ago, was very good on old traditions. His people had come from Argyllshire via Eigg.

I took the bus back to Arisaig and got back to the hotel at 2.30 p.m. I then met the local doctor [Dr John Rattray]. He is a young man and is interested in oral traditions. He told me about another good fiddler in the district, Mr Hugh Cameron, who resides near the station in a house called *Skye View*. He has been ill lately but is now up and about. The doctor also promised to bring me down to old Mrs [Flora] MacKinnon in Rubha [Rhu]. She is over ninety years of age and is reputed to be the best in the district for old songs. The doctor did seem very nice and helpful. Doctors know the people in the locality better than anyone else.

I then went up to visit Angus the Drover, old Angus MacDonald,³ whom I met last night in Lachlan Gillies's house. I found him at home, and he gave me a great welcome. He is an extremely nice old man. I got a very interesting account from him about the droving of cattle to the Falkirk trysts. He had walked with cattle to Falkirk and Stirling about sixty times. He also mentioned that in the old days the cattle were shod with leather. He had not seen this but had covered the animals' hooves with sacking for the same purpose. This he had done himself. Angus had started walking to Falkirk while still in his early teens. He knew Skye and all the Outer Isles and had bought cattle there. He said that on the way home from Falkirk he sometimes walked as much as thirty miles a day. Angus is still a very fit old man. He told me that he still had a song that he wanted to give me. I said that I'd come back to see him again. That I shall certainly do.

I then returned to the hotel for dinner. I then took my EMI machine and walked over to the south of the bay to visit the MacDonald brothers. I met Donald [MacDonald] on the way over and he told me that Charles [MacDonald] was at home and that he was a better informant than himself. I found Charles [*Charlie George*]⁴ at home. I had a long and interesting talk with him. He is not a



Angus MacDonald
(*Aonghas Bàn*)
OBAN TIMES, 1960

piper himself but is very interested in piping. He recorded a good deal of valuable information about his father, and uncle Angus. His grandfather had come from Strathglass and had married a Chisholm of Strathglass. He remembered his uncle Angus [MacDonald] much better than his father [George MacDonald], who had died earlier. I was shown a very fine photograph of the late George MacDonald, and the medal won by Angus at the Northern Meetings in 1886.

Charles recalled a visit paid to their house by Pipe-Major William MacLean, Kilcreggan. Angus was then an old man over seventy and had long ceased to play the pipes, although he still played the practice chanter. Pipe-Major MacLean played the pipes for a long time but could not at first induce Angus to play. He was finally persuaded and played a pibroch. When he was finished Pipe-Major MacLean put by his pipes with the remark "After that I can now stop." Angus's favourite pibroch was *The Desperate Battle*.⁵ Angus MacDonald gave the settings of the pibroch composed by *Raghnall mac Ailein Òig* [Ronald son of Young Allan, Ronald MacDonald] of Morar to the late Pipe-Major John MacDonald, Inverness. Charles MacDonald had some very interesting stories about *Raghnall mac Ailein Òig*. He mentioned the tradition that *Raghnall mac Ailein Òig* composed the pibroch *MacCrimmon's Sweetheart, Maol Donn*. "It was composed," said Charles, "by *Raghnall mac Ailein Òig* about a sea-shell."

Charles also gave very interesting information about the loss of some of Angus

MacKay's manuscripts. After Angus's death the MSS. were lost on a steamer between Kyle and Arisaig. Some person apparently stole them. They were being brought to George MacDonald, Charles's father. Angus MacDonald was the exponent of *ceòl mòr* [pibroch], George of strathspeys, reels and jigs. Charles said that his father won all four first prizes at the Oban Games one year. That record was equalled only by Pipe-Major John MacDonald [*Seonaidh Roidein*] of the Glasgow Police.⁶

About ten o' clock a Mr John Brennan⁷ and Mr Lachlan Stewart came for me and brought me back to the hotel. Along with them was Mr John MacKinnon, the local piper. I went back to the hotel and got the ferrogaph. We then went to Mr [John] MacKinnon's house and recorded some piping. John MacKinnon complained that he was rather out of practice. He did record a couple of marches and some jigs. He was not satisfied with the jigs, and we agreed to erase them and record them again the following night. We had a ceilidh in Mr MacKinnon's house until about one in the morning. Late to bed again this time.

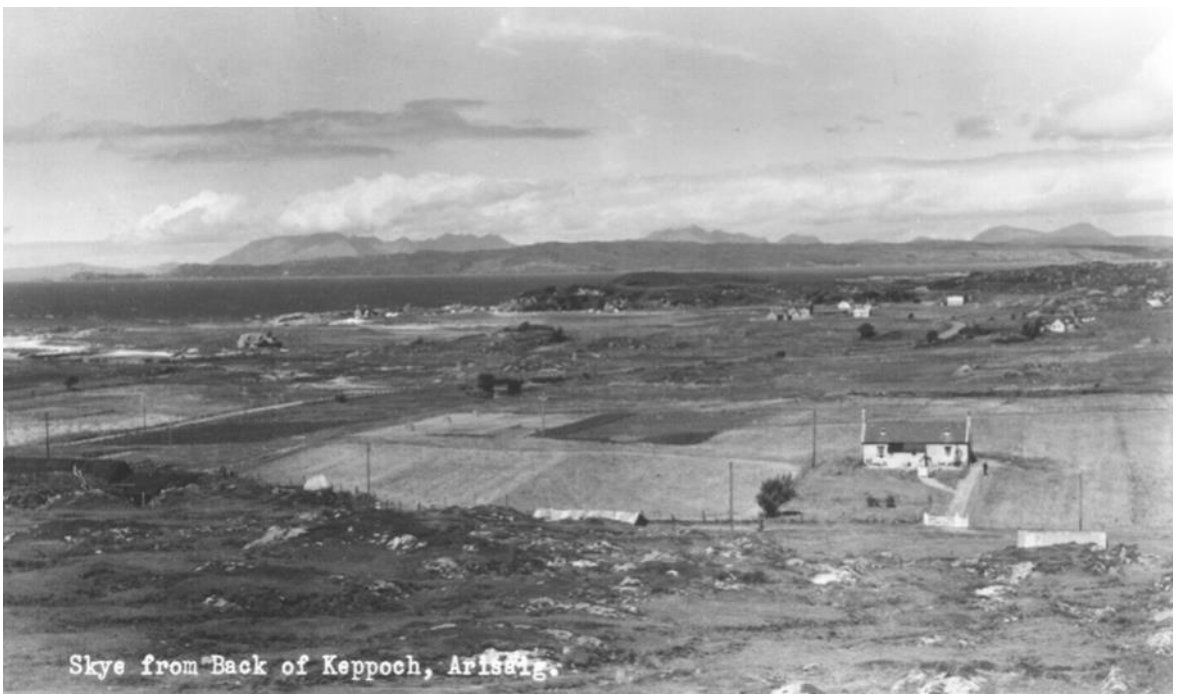
Saturday, 22 May 1954

After breakfast, I played some songs recorded by Mrs [Catherine 'Kate'] Laing,⁸ Edinburgh, to the girls in the hotel. They are both from Scalpay, Harris and one of them knows Mrs Laing. They enjoyed the songs very much. The older of the two girls is called Rachel MacLeod. She knows Angus [Campbell] MacLeod,⁹ the singer, but is not related to him. I did some writing most of the morning. I met Allan MacDonald and told him that Angus [*Barrach*] MacMillan, Benbecula, died on Tuesday last. I had a drink with the Irishman, John Brennan. I met another man who mentioned a Donald MacDonald¹⁰ of Portnanluchag along past Bun na Caime [Bunacaimbe]. He imagined that this Donald MacDonald had songs. I ought to go to see him. I felt very sleepy after lunch and did actually fall asleep for a few minutes.



Angus MacKay from Raasay,
painted by Alexander Johnston

At three o' clock, I took the EMI machine and went by bus out to the Back of Keppoch. I wanted to call on a William MacDonald. I did not tell him beforehand that I was going that way. I knocked at the door of his house. A woman came and answered. I asked if I had come to William MacDonald's house. "Yes," said she. "What is wrong?" I said that there was nothing wrong. I was going around the country collecting old songs and stories. She began to smile and asked me to come in. William MacDonald¹¹ was at home. He is a grey-haired, sturdy man of about seventy years of age. He has a croft. I had



Skye from Back of Keppoch, Arisaig.

come on William MacDonald rather unexpectedly. He was not given much time to remember many stories. He did tell me several, and it is evident that he is a very good storyteller. He had stories about *Raghnall mac Ailein Òig* [Ronald son of Young Allan, Ronald MacDonald], and also told a story about girls at a shielings, who saw a fairy hill open. They were prevented from going into the hill by a voice crying to them "tha an crodh sa choirce [the cattle are in the corn]." I had not heard this story before.

He told me an interesting story about an incident on the day of Culloden. On the morning of the battle, Lord George Murray was seen coming out of the English Camp. Lochiel asked the Prince's permission to shoot Lord George Murray. Permission was refused. He also mentioned some tradition that the Duke of Perth was also suspected of treachery.

He also told of the origin of the *Colann gun Cheann*. This was the spirit of a woman who was decapitated for stealing corn. I spent about three hours with William MacDonald. He came out with me to show me where Donald MacDonald, Bun na Caime, lived. MacDonald said that during the year of the potato famine an old man up above Bun na Caime had a splendid crop of potatoes. He sold potato seeds the following year at a pound a barrel. Most people complained of the price. One man bought the potato seed at the price and had an excellent crop, while the old man from whom the potatoes were bought had no crop.

I left William MacDonald and walked over in the direction of Bun na Caime. It was fairly cold, and rain was threatening to come. I had more than enough time to spare until seven o' clock. I sat down by the roadside. I could see that rain was fast approaching. In Arisaig rain on the Sgurr of Eigg is always a sign of approaching rain.

I decided to go on to Donald MacDonald's house even although it was not seven o' clock. He was in when I arrived, but he explained to me that he let his house in summer and lived in a smaller wooden house behind his bigger house. I imagine a good many folk here do the same with their houses in summertime. We went up to the smaller house. It had electric light and seemed quite comfortable.

Donald MacDonald is a huge and very fine-looking man. He is now sixty-three years of age, but still looks very fresh. He is, as I have said earlier, a surface-man employed by the British Railways. He started off by asking me if I had heard about the Fiann. He then proceeded to tell about the burning of the women of the Fiann. He had the characters slightly mixed up, but nevertheless the story was well told. He must have been accustomed to hearing good storytellers. He also told the story about the hunting of Ossian after the Fiann. His version of this was very good and complete. He also had a version of the *Colann gun Cheann* story. It did not differ much from William MacDonald's version. I was most impressed by Donald MacDonald's storytelling. He said that he had an uncle and

Vintage postcard of Skye from the Back of Keppoch, Arisaig, c. 1950

aunt who were very good storytellers. It was from them that he learned his stories. I was sorry that I had to leave him so soon but promised to revisit him a week next Wednesday.

The hotel car came for me at 8.15 [p.m.] and I returned to the hotel. Lachlan Stewart was waiting for me. We brought the machine into the hotel bar. However, it was very near closing time. We later moved into the hotel, and John MacKinnon brought his pipes along. We recorded some piping. It was getting late by this time. This ends my first week on this trip. It has been quite successful so far. I got to bed a bit earlier tonight.

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At the end of such a busy week Maclean was clearly satisfied with what he had managed to gather in. It wasn't too bad at all considering that he scarcely knew anybody before arriving in the district. In the next extract, Maclean meets Donald MacEachen, Marjory MacDonald, and Flora MacDonald. He also mentions how he began writing the first chapter (about Lochaber) for his book which would later appear as *The Highlands* (1959). Maclean also goes on to meet and record fiddle music from Donald McDonell, from Bracara, and also meets his nephew Ronald MacLellan, who sings some songs and plays the pipes for him. Other locals whom Maclean meets are Marjory Gillies, a singer, Donald John MacLellan, a fiddler, along with his sister, Bella Muir, another fine singer.

Andrew Wiseman

Diary extracts by courtesy of the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

#### Footnotes

1. Malcolm 'Calum' MacKellaig (1914–1985).
2. Ronald McLean (*Raghnall Dubh mac Eòghainn*, 1880–1960).
3. Angus MacDonald (*Aonghas Bàn*, 1866–1959).
4. Charles MacDonald (*Charlie George*, 1893–1959).
5. The Desperate Battle of the Birds or Cath nan Eun; it is also the title of a famous Gaelic folktale.
6. Pipe-Major John MacDonald (*Seonaidh Roidein*, 1898–1988) was born and raised in Daliburgh, South Uist.
7. John 'Johnnie' Brennan (1888–1959), an Irishman from Ulster.
8. Catherine 'Kate' Alexandrina Laing *née* Morrison (*Ceiteag Fhionnlaigh Aonghais Ruaidh*, 1896–1971).
9. Angus Campbell MacLeod (*Aonghas Choinnich Iain*, 1927–1973) was born and brought up in Scalpay, Harris.
10. Donald MacDonald (1900–1974).
11. William 'Willie' MacDonald (*Uilleam mac Ailein 'ic Alasdair 'ic Ruairidh 'ic Ailein a' Slataich*, 1880–1959).

By the end of his fairly frantic first week in the area, Calum Maclean has now managed to settle into a regular routine and continues to record and network with the locals, and again meeting some of the same folk he had already been introduced to. A great source of local stories came by way of Donald MacEachen, or *Dòmhnall Bàn*, who relates many interesting, if short, historical and supernatural anecdotes. He also meets Marjory MacDonald, a well-known Highland dancer, and also records songs from Mrs Flora MacDonald. Maclean reacquaints himself with Calum MacKellaig with whom he had met a few years previously. Another highlight is recording music from the well-known fiddler Donald McDonell, or *Dòmhnall Sheumais*, from Bracara and also from his nephew Ronald MacLellan, a piper and singer, including a moving musical tribute composed on the pipes for Mrs Mary MacLeod. Another rich source of Gaelic song was Marjory Gillies, or *Marsaili Iain Mhòir*, from whom a number of items were recorded. Maclean also meets some of the MacLellans, namely Donald John, a fiddler, Alistair 'Addie' and their sister Bella, or *Bellag Eàirdsidh Chlachair*, from whom he collects a number of songs. Noteworthy too is a mention made by Maclean regarding his book *The Highlands* (1959) which would go on to contain a chapter devoted to Morar, Arisaig and Moidart. Material recorded in his fieldwork diaries were later refashioned or helped as an *aide memoire* when preparing the manuscript for publication and his book, including many interesting insights into the highways and byways of Highland culture and history, is thoroughly recommended.

## **Sunday, 23 May 1954**

Went out after breakfast today and walked in the direction of the Catholic Church [St Cumin's]. I climbed up to the hill in which the War Memorial stands. It bears an inscription in Gaelic.<sup>1</sup> The district lost almost as many men in the Second World War as in the first.<sup>2</sup> There were not so many MacDonalds among them. It looked like rain again this morning. I met William MacDonald on his way to church. I returned and went to the church. I had been in that same church in 1947. After church, there was a phone-call from Mrs Lachlan Gillies [Isabella MacNeil] asking me to go over and spend the evening along with them. I gladly accepted the very kind invitation. I spent the greater part of the afternoon writing. After dinner, I went over to visit Lachlan Gillies. I brought the recording machine and played records for them. We had a pleasant evening. Got home before eleven. Earlier tonight!

## **Monday, 24 May 1954**

It started to rain this morning. I had to attend to my packing as it was to be Morar in the evening. I did some writing and had an early lunch. I set off to Fort William with the 1.20 [p.m.] train to get some money in the bank. On the train, I met Duncan MacInnes, "Calamity [Dan]," on his way to join his ship. We had a couple of drinks together at Fort William. I then went to the bank, and later had to go to phone Stewart Sanderson. Stewart suggested that I write something for *The Scotsman* about Angus MacMillan, and also asked me to write to the family on behalf of the University of Edinburgh. I phoned the MacDonells in Spean [Bridge]. Mrs MacDonell [Emily 'Millie' Cathcart Smith] is now teaching in Inverlochry School. I spoke to her sister Winnie [Winnifred Jessie].<sup>3</sup> I promised to go to visit them the weekend after next.

As I was standing in the main street of Fort William, two young men came up to speak to me. They had Gaelic and seemed to be from the Isles. There were sailors and were on their way south to join their ship. One was from Uig, Lewis – he knew Hamish MacRae in Edinburgh – and the other was from Harris. They asked me what I did. I told them. They asked me to go with them and sing songs for them. We all went to the waiting room at the station. They boys produced a gill of rum and a bottle of beer. I sang for them until I had to leave them to catch the train back to Arisaig. I got the train and arrived back in Arisaig at 6.09 p.m.

I went straight to the hotel, got my machine, and went straight to old Donald MacEachen's house. Mrs MacEachen [Mary Elizabeth 'Lizzie' Smith] said that there were some ladies coming in to hear the recording machine. I'd see the old man later. Several women

did come in, among them was Marjory MacDonald,<sup>4</sup> the Highland dancer. She is a tall, dark-haired girl, rather nice. None of the women had any songs, but a Mrs Flora MacDonald came in later. She sang the old walking song *Seathan*. She said that it was a song by Flora MacDonald to Prince Charles [Edward Stewart]. It was a good version of the song and did not differ much from the Uist and Barra versions. Lachlan Gillies had mentioned this woman as having this song. I let some of the youngsters in the house hear their own voices. I did not have much time to talk to the old man. I did go to see him and explained why I had to go off to Morar. The old man said that he hoped I'd come back again, and I'd be welcome at any time. That was rather nice too.

I returned to the hotel, paid my bill and made for the 9.30 [p.m.] train. The cost of hiring in Arisaig was remarkably modest. I arrived in Morar at 10.30 [p.m.], got my stuff into the hotel, and had a long talk with Calum MacKellaig. I was there last in 1947. Got to bed by twelve.

## **Tuesday, 25 May 1954**

Did some writing after breakfast this morning. I had to pay tribute to the late Angus MacMillan and wrote something for *The Scotsman* and sent it to Stewart Sanderson. I also had to write to the MacMillan family on behalf of Edinburgh University. I got a very nice and friendly letter from Dag Strömbäck<sup>5</sup> today. He is to be in Dublin this July. I shall see him when I am there. I spent most of the afternoon writing. I hope to go up to see [Donald] McDonell, the fiddler, in Bracara tomorrow.

It was a very cold day today. I hardly went out at all. Spent the best part of the evening writing. After nine, I played records for Dr [John] Rattray<sup>6</sup> and the MacKellaigs. Late to bed. I have done some work on the chapter for Lochaber [referring to *The Highlands* (1959)].

## **Wednesday, 26 May 1954**

Did some writing after breakfast today, and continued on this until it was twelve o' clock. At twelve, Dr [John] Rattray called, and I went up with him to Bracara to call on Donald McDonell, the fiddler. It is very beautiful about Loch Morar. There are a few scattered houses all the way up on the northern side of the loch. Dr Rattray brought his car up as far as the road went and turned. We then went to Donald McDonell's house. We met his wife, an English woman [Elizabeth Hazeley].<sup>7</sup> She told us that her husband had gone to Fort William. He went there for treatment. He would be back by the six o' clock train. The doctor had to go to visit one of his patients. He found that the patient was not at home. Then we discovered that the car had a puncture. A wheel had to be changed. It was after one when we got back to the Morar Hotel. One the way down the doctor showed me the island [An t-Eilean Bàn] where Lord Lovat was in hiding after the 'Forty-Five.

I had some writing to do after lunch. I must try to get some specimen pages of that book for Batsford [referring to *The Highlands* (1959)].

At four o' clock, I went down to the river to fish with the doctor and Calum MacKellaig. They had no success. We got back to the hotel about six o' clock. We met Donald McDonell there and made an arrangement with him to go to get him on Friday night. He said that he had some old tunes to record too. He said that his style was that of [James] Scott-Skinner.



*Marjory MacDonald*

After dinner, Calum MacKellaig brought me and the machine over to the house of Ronald MacLellan.<sup>8</sup> I met Ronald MacLellan in Morar last week. His sister [Molly MacLellan]<sup>9</sup> taught in Kildonnan in South Uist for some time. I had not met their parents. They are very nice and friendly people. I played records for them for some time. Ronald MacLellan was most impressed with Alasdair Boyd's [*Alasdair mac Eòghainn Dhòmhnaill Nill*]<sup>10</sup> singing. Ronald MacLellan is a piper. He recorded a tune he composed in memory of the late Mrs [Mary] MacLeod,<sup>11</sup> schoolmistress of Morar. Mrs MacLeod died last November.<sup>12</sup> It was from her that Mrs [Marjory] Kennedy-Fraser [*Marsaili Mhòr nan Òran*]<sup>13</sup> noted down the *Eriskay Love Lilt*. Ronald MacLellan also sang some songs. I promised to go to see the father [Archibald 'The Captain' McLellan] again on Friday afternoon. He has some stories. It was almost midnight when Calum MacKellaig and I got home. I had a very pleasant evening with the MacLellans. They all speak Gaelic.



#### Thursday, 27 May 1954

I had some writing to do in the morning. It was very wet indeed this morning but cleared up later in the day. The doctor [Dr John Rattray] came in the forenoon and said that an old woman in Mallaig Marsali [Marjory] Gillies was willing to record songs.

I was down in the shop earlier in the morning talking to Alec MacKinnon.<sup>14</sup> A porter at the railway came in and Alec spoke to him [Alistair 'Addie' MacLellan]<sup>15</sup> and asked him if he had any old songs. He said he did not have any, but his brother, Donald John [MacLellan], who worked at Mallaig station, had some of the songs composed by his father. I decided to go to Mallaig in the afternoon. I set off by bus in the afternoon and went to the station in Mallaig to look for Donald John MacLellan.<sup>16</sup> It was not too difficult to get him. He said that he did know some of his father's songs but was beginning to forget them. He said that his sister, Mrs [Bella] Muir [Isabella MacLellan],<sup>17</sup> who lives at Lovat Terrace, has a good memory, and does remember a good deal of her father's songs. He would send a message up to her saying that I'd call to see her. He was, unfortunately, on duty but would try to go up to Mrs Muir's house at eight o'clock.

I then set off to look for the house where old Marsali Gillies<sup>18</sup> lived. I followed the directions given by the doctor and had little difficulty in locating the house. The old lady's niece was in. They more or less expected me. The old lady soon appeared. She is very tall and silvery-haired. She must have been a very fine-looking woman in her day. She spoke Gaelic well. She said she had been brought up in Mallaig in the days before it became a railway-terminus. She did hear plenty songs when she was young and remembered the singing at the waulkings in the district. She left to go to domestic service when still quite young. She lived for some time in Fort William. I played back for her the song *Seathan* recorded by Mrs Flora MacDonald,<sup>19</sup> Arisaig. Old Marsali had heard the song, but she could not remember all the verses. She then went on to sing *Mo Nighean Dubh tha Bòidheach, Dubh*.<sup>20</sup> For a woman of her age, 82 years, she sang quite remarkably. She kept to the tune all along. She must have had a fine voice when she was young. She also sang *A Bhanarach Donn a' Chruidh*.<sup>21</sup> This was well sung too. She then sang a beautiful lullaby *Giullan Geal Thu*.<sup>22</sup> I think I saw the text in the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, but I had never heard the melody. She then sung a local song to the tune *Hu oro hu o, Gur Tu mo Chruinneag Bhòidheach*.<sup>23</sup> She then sang the song of the spirit of the dead mother whose children were ill-treated by their stepmother.<sup>24</sup> Mrs [Annie] Arnott [*Annag Iain Mhurchaidh*]<sup>25</sup> in Glasgow is the only person from whom a version of this song has been recorded. Finally, she sang a dandling song<sup>26</sup> I never heard before. A mother,

Above, L to R: Bella McDonell, Mary MacLellan, Ronnie MacLellan, Nancy MacLellan and Mrs Mary MacLeod, taken at the West Highland Hotel, c. 1950. Courtesy of Mary MacLellan.

Right: Ronald MacLellan, as illustrated by Maurice Sochachewsky, c. 1948.



whose husband has been murdered by a robber, while dandling her child tells the servant-man to saddle the horse and pursue the robber. This is done and the robber is killed. I was quite thrilled with this woman's material. It was very good indeed and I did not expect to find such a person in Mallaig.

Old Marsali is just recovering from a severe flu. In a couple of weeks, she will be back to normal. I said that I'd go back to see her in ten days' time. She is said to have a great deal of stories too. I did not touch on stories today. Old Marsali stays with her niece [Joanne MacKay]. Her other niece [Madge MacKay] is Dr [John] Rattray's housekeeper. I had to promise Marsali that I'd not play her records to anyone in Mallaig. She certainly has nothing to be ashamed of. She sings remarkably for a woman of her age. I went down to the West Highland for some time, as I could not go to Mrs Muir until seven o'clock. I had to hang around for an hour. I had a chat with Mr [Archibald] McLellan<sup>27</sup> of the West Highland. I went up to Mrs [Bella] Muir's about seven o'clock. I found the house without much difficulty. Mrs Muir is married to a man [Duncan Muir]<sup>28</sup> from Greenock. She is a small, stout lady, and suffers from arthritis. She was rather a cripple. She said she had some of her father's songs but was beginning to forget them. She sang a couple of her father's songs and a song she learned from a Barra girl, a song about the First World War.<sup>29</sup> We expected her brother to come up about eight o'clock but was apparently unable to do so.

At eight o'clock, I had to set out to join Dr Rattray, as he was going to bring me back to Morar. We called at the doctor's house and played some of Marsali's songs for the housekeeper. It was about ten when we got back to Morar. We had a little ceilidh to ourselves at Morar until almost midnight.

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In the next extract from his diaries, Maclean continues on his rounds and collects material or meets more locals including Archie McLellan or Old Clachan (Mallaig); Donald McDonell (Bracara); Fr John Gillies; Ronald McLean (Cross); Lachie

Continued over

Stewart; Calum MacKellaig; Donald MacKellaig (Mallaig), from whom he had recorded before; William MacDonald (Back of Keppoch); and Donald MacDonald (Bunacaimbe), both of whom were skilled storytellers, the former of whom could recite a version of the Dithreabhach tale, or *Fear na h-Abaide* [The Man of the Habit]. Such types of tales were becoming rarer as the old storytelling generations were dying out and it's almost certain that Maclean, having caught the tail-end, recorded the last local storyteller able to recite a version of this fairly long tale which took around twenty minutes to tell.

Andrew Wiseman

Footnotes

1. The full inscription reads: 'IN PROUD AND GRATEFUL MEMORY / OF THOSE WHO DIED FOR THEIR / COUNTRY IN THE GREAT WAR / 1914-1919 / Mar Chuimhneachan Gràidh air na / Gaisgich a Leig Sios am Beatha Anns / a' Chogadh Mhòr 1914-1919.'
2. For further details, see Brian J. Murray, *Lochaber No More!: Casualties of the Great War from Morar and Arisaig* (Mallaig: Mallaig Heritage Centre, 2016).
3. Winnifred Jessie Smith (1899-1975).
4. Marjory MacDonald (*Marjory Post*, 1920-1989).
5. Dag Strömbäck (1900-1978) was a Swedish ethnologist, religious historian and philologist.
6. Dr John Forbes Rattray (1906-1964).
7. Elizabeth Hazeley passed away, 21 June 1967, aged seventy-eight, at Ravenscraig, Bracara, Morar.
8. Ernest Ronald 'Ronnie' MacLellan (1925-2012).
9. Mary 'Molly' Buchanan *née* MacLellan (1927-2023).
10. Alasdair Boyd (*Alasdair mac Eòghainn Dhòmhnaill Nill*, 1889-1970) from South Uist and later a resident of Oban.
11. 'To the Late Mrs. MacLeod, Morar' which was recorded by Calum Maclean from Ronald MacLellan (Morar), 26 May 1954.
12. Her maiden name was MacInnes and she hailed from the Isle of Eriskay.
13. For further details, see Marjory Kennedy-Fraser, *A Life of Song: The Autobiography of Marjory Kennedy-Fraser*, ed. by Per Ahlander (Kershader, Isle of Lewis: The Islands Books Trust, 2011).
14. Alexander 'Alec' McKinnon (1906-1967).
15. Alistair 'Addie' MacLellan (1909-1999).
16. Donald John 'Donny' MacLellan (1896-1980).
17. Isabella 'Bella' Muir *née* MacLellan (*Bellag Eàirdsidh Chlachair*, 1897-1999).
18. Marsali or Marjory Gillies (*Marsaili Iain Mhòir*, 1871-1961).
19. Flora MacDonald (1888-1975) was possibly a daughter of Donald MacDonald and Peggie Stewart, from Skorroch, Arisaig.
20. SA1954/47/1, 'Gur Tu Mo Nighean Dubh Bhòidheach', recorded by Calum Maclean from Marjory Gillies (Mallaig), 27 May 1954.
21. SA1954/46/4. 'A' Bhanarach Donn a Chruidh'.
22. SA1954/46/5. 'Giullan Geal o ro ro dèan tàmh'.
23. SA1954/46/6-47/1, 'Hu oro hu o, Gur Tu mo Chruinneag Bhòidheach', 'Òlmaid Deoch-Slàint' an Àrmainn', recorded by Calum Maclean from Marjory Gillies (Mallaig), 27 May 1954. Composed by Archibald 'The Mason' MacLellan.
24. 'Nach Mise Bhean Bhochd', recorded by Calum Maclean from Marjory Gillies (Mallaig), 27 May 1954.
25. Annie Arnott *née* MacKenzie (Annag Iain Mhurchaidh, 1887-1978) from Linicro, Kilmuir, Isle of Skye.
26. 'Hill Ò Ro Mo Ghille Math', recorded by Calum Maclean from Marjory Gillies (Mallaig), 27 May 1954.
27. Archibald 'The Captain' McLellan (1924-2006).
28. Duncan Muir (1898-1972) who was born in Dunoon and brought up in Greenock.
29. 'Òran don Chogadh'. Learned from a Barra girl, shortly after the First World War.

GLENUIG HALL EVENTS



As part of Glenueig's ongoing community arts programme, funded by Awards for All, we are pleased to be able to offer the following events in Glenueig Hall on **15th June**:

3pm- 4pm. An hour's drama workshop with Bright Productions

This active, fun & friendly, come & try drama-workshop is suitable for all ages; from age 8 – adults of any age. No experience needed. Bright Productions will take you through a series of fun exercises to release your theatrical creativity. Wear comfortable clothing. Only £5 to take part. (children younger than 8, are welcome if accompanied by a parent) <https://brightproductions.co.uk>

7.30pm. Performance of "Lament" by Bright Productions.

This short play, 'Lament' is a spellbinding and haunting depiction of the Massacre of Glencoe.

Weaving fact with fiction, story-telling with dramatic enactment, humour with heartbreak and telling the very human story behind the politics of this infamous historical event, the performers brilliantly take on multiple roles to bring characters from the past to life. The music, lighting and setting expertly draw you into the poignant personal stories.

This fantastic show is created and performed by Ilona Munro and Graeme Martin.

For tickets, more information and updates, please see Glenueig Hall website and check our social media links:

www.glenueig.org.uk facebook & Instagram: [glenueighallarts](https://www.facebook.com/glenueighallarts)

Royal Bank of Scotland Mobile Bank

Mondays

Mallaig Harbour	10.30 -12.00pm
Morar Community Playing Field	12.45 - 1.05pm
Arisaig Land Sea & Islands Ctr	1.25 - 1.45pm
Glenueig Community Hall	2.15 - 2.30pm
Glenfinnan House Hotel	3.10 - 3.20pm

Wednesdays

Mallaig Harbour	10.30 - 11.30am
Banking services on the mobile include cash deposits and withdrawals, bill payments and account administration.	

THE ARISAIG FUND

The Arisaig Fund has limited funds now available, and although all applications will be considered, the Trustees will be prioritising those from students seeking support for further and higher education courses. There is also a small fund specifically aimed at supporting individuals taking courses in outdoor pursuits e.g. Outward Bound, sailing (RYA / OYT). Applications are welcomed from young people seeking help with skills development courses.

- ♦ Applicants should have a PH39 postcode.
- ♦ Applications should provide a breakdown of requested funds, where relevant, e.g. course costs, equipment purchase (community groups) etc.
- ♦ Applicants seeking support from other funding organisations for all or part of the same funding must provide information regarding these other applications.
- ♦ Applications can be presented in any form (letter, email etc.)

Need advice regarding your request for support? Please get in touch with Gordon Stewart. All applications are treated in the strictest confidence.

Gordon Stewart,
The Arisaig Fund, Salainn House, Arisaig PH39 4NU
Email: agstewart321@gmail.com

CALUM I. MACLEAN'S FIELDWORK DIARIES IN ARISAIG, MORAR, AND MOIDART, 1954 *Part five*

As mentioned in an earlier extract from his diaries, Calum Maclean notes that the obituary notice and appreciation of Angus 'Barrach' MacMillan appeared in *The Scotsman*. After a quiet morning spent writing, Maclean continues with his fieldwork and visits Archie McLellan known as 'The Old Clachan', a retired sea-captain and takes down some stories and also a song that he composed praising Mallaig. That evening, Maclean, in the company of Dr John Rattray, then goes to visit Donald McDonell at his croft in Bracara and takes him back over to Morar Hotel. Judging by the recordings made in Calum MacKellaig's house, McDonell was a very fine fiddle player who had a great talent in mimicking grace notes and cuts familiar from pipe music. Continuing his rounds, the next day Maclean visits Ronald McLean in Cross from whom he records a number of stories. A relatively quiet Sunday sees Maclean attend Mass at St Cumin's where he meets Donald McDonell again and then spends a relaxing evening with the MacKellaig family at Glasnacardoch. The following three days are quite busy and see him visiting Borrodale house, recording more songs from Lachlan Stewart, and also recording good versions of stories from William MacDonald, Back of Keppoch. Next day, Maclean records even more songs from Lachlan Stewart who knew scores of them. And the following day, Maclean records more stories from Donald MacDonald, Bunacaimbe, another fine reciter. Maclean also notes that the weather has been glorious for the whole of that week.

Friday, 28 May 1954

I had some writing to do in the morning. I was engaged in this work most of the morning. The doctor [Dr John Rattray] was in as usual this morning. After dinner, I went with him to Mallaig. I almost forgot to say that I had a note from Stewart Sanderson¹ today with a cutting of my appreciation of Angus Barrach [MacMillan] which appeared in *The Scotsman* yesterday.² I am glad it did appear in print somewhere. I continued writing until it was near dinner time. The doctor was in today.

After lunch, I went down to Mallaig with him, and returned at three o' clock as I had to go to the house of Archie McLellan in Morar to get down stories from him. Archie McLellan [The Old Clachan] is an old, retired sea-captain. He suffers from heart-trouble but is still able to get up and go about. I spent most of the afternoon with Archie McLellan.³ He is a good storyteller and told a couple of fairy stories.⁴ He told them well. He has very good Gaelic. He also sang a song that he composed himself.⁵ He was at an observation post above Mallaig during the 1939-45 War. As he sat there one evening, he looked down on the village of Mallaig. It had grown very much since his young days when it had only a half-dozen little thatched houses. It was there he spent his young days, cutting peat and herding cattle. The changes and memories evoked the song. He sang remarkably well for a man of his age. The material he had to record was good. I had not expected that much.

I left Archie McLellan's house about six and walked back to the hotel. Calum MacKellaig's car was out of order, and I had to phone to Mallaig for a car to get out to Bracara for Donald McDonell, the fiddler [pictured]. I set out for Bracara at 7.30 [p.m.]. It was a beautiful evening. It was beautiful up by Loch Morar side. Donald McDonell [*Dòmhnall Sheumais*]⁶ lives on the northern shore of Loch Morar. He has land and about two hundred sheep. He is a wiry active little man. He speaks Gaelic well. We brought him down to Morar Hotel. After a couple of drinks, he tuned up his fiddle. He is a beautiful player, about the finest I have ever heard. We did the recording in Calum MacKellaig's sitting room. Dr [John] Rattray was

with us most of the evening, or morning I should have said. He, Donald McDonell, plays marches, strathspeys and reels splendidly. He played MacIntosh's Lament [*Cumha Mhic an Tòisich*]⁷ with the first variation of the pibroch. In all he recorded a complete hour's playing. Donald McDonell is entirely a self-taught fiddler. He started

by playing the pipes. Fr [John] Gillies⁸ from Bracara joined the party before the end of the night. Donald McDonell's final selection of tunes were very good. It would be about one in the morning when we stopped. It was indeed a very enjoyable evening. I was most impressed by the fiddler. Fr Gillies brought him home in his car to Bracara. I promised to see him again on Sunday and play back his records for him.

Saturday, 29 May 1954

It was beautiful a morning. There was bright sunshine. I had some writing to do in the morning, and this kept me occupied for the best part of the time.

After lunch, I decided to go out to visit Ronald McLean out at Cross. I had already met him one day in Mallaig. I was just on the point of setting out there by bus when Dr [John] Rattray came along. He very kindly offered to run me out. Out we went, and the doctor went with me to Ronald McLean's house. We found him at home. He is an old bachelor and lives alone. The poor man appears very unkempt. That is rather [sad], for he must have been a very fine-looking man. He seemed very well informed and intelligent. The doctor started him off on stories. He was quite ready and willing to start in any case. The doctor went away a short while, and I remained with Ronald. He told me several stories including a very amusing fairy story.⁹ I got a great welcome from the old man mainly because I was a Maclean. The clan spirit still lives on.

I left Ronald McLean and started to walk back to Morar. I was overtaken on the road by Mr [Duncan] and Mrs [Bella] Muir [Isabella MacLellan] from Mallaig. They brought me up to Morar by car. It was very hot in the afternoon, and I was lucky to get a lift. I did not do much more in the evening. We recorded some of the talk in the bar in the evening. It was not a great success for there was too much of a din. We played Donald McDonell's recording tonight.

Sunday, 30 May 1954

It was a beautiful day this morning. I went to church at half-past eleven and after Mass I met Donald McDonell from Bracara. He came down to the hotel with me, and we had lunch together. I replayed his records for him. He seemed very pleased with them. He stayed a good part of the afternoon, and I walked up to Loch Morar with him, and he took his boat up the loch. I photographed him as he set out in this boat. I returned to the hotel and went down to bathe.

After dinner, Calum [MacKellaig] and I went out to Glasnacardoch to visit the MacKellaig family. Old Donald MacKellaig¹⁰ recorded some stuff for us years ago.¹¹ He still sings well and recorded two songs tonight that I had not heard him sing before.¹² I played some records for them. It was midnight when we got back to Morar.

Monday, 31 May 1954

It was beautiful again this morning. I spent most of the time doing my packing. I took the one o' clock train south to Arisaig. I had been invited to stay with Lachlan Stewart, the Estate Manager. I had to spend the afternoon lying in the sun. It was a beautiful afternoon really.

At five o' clock, Lachlan Stewart came down to the hotel and I went up to Borrodale with him. He stays in the old house in which Prince Charlie slept. It is a beautiful old house situated in a lovely, wooded glen. There is a strip of old wallpaper in the sitting-room. Their house was supposed to have had this paper when Prince Charlie was there. I slept in the room in which the Prince slept. Adjoining it was a small room in which the Prince was said to have said his prayers. That room is now used as a bathroom. I was very kindly received by Lachlan Stewart and Mrs Stewart [Mary Munro MacDonald].

After tea, Lachlan Stewart motored me and my machine down to Cùl na Ceapaich [Back of Keppoch]. I had promised to go to get some more stories from William MacDonald. I was late in arriving, but the old man was waiting for me. His son and daughters were at home when I reached there. The daughters were very charming. I played records for some time, and then got the old man to record



songs and stories. He told the story of the old man at the time of the potato famine.¹³ He also sang a couple of songs. He has the good old style of singing. He then had mentioned a story the previous week but said that it would take some while to tell. I asked him to tell it then. This was a version of the Dithreabhach tale, or *Fear na h-Abaide* [The Man of the Habit]¹⁴ as it is called. It was a good version and took about twenty minutes to tell. William MacDonald acted a lot during the telling. He waved his hands and stamped his feet on the floor. He went through all the “runs” and knew them well. He had heard several old people tell this tale including his grandfather and *Raghnall Eòghainn* [Ronald Ewen] MacDonald, a brother of the late Angus MacDonald, the piper. He also told a good version of the three sisters tale – the eldest choosing the big cake with the curse and the youngest the little cake with the blessing. The growing cat transforming into a woman motif came into this tale. The two older sisters were disenchanted by the youngest. I was quite surprised to get such stories here. I knew there would have been tales of such a nature here thirty years or so ago. Lachlan Stewart came for me after ten and brought me back to Borrodale. It is a lovely place.

Tuesday, 1 June 1954

It was beautiful this morning. I had some writing to do and went down to the shore below Borrodale and sat in the sun there and wrote most of the day. Across the water I could see the house at Glenuig on Loch Ailort. I hope to go there before I leave the district. John Kennedy [*Iain Dhonnchaidh*], who was for a time a tailor with my father in Raasay, came from there. His sisters still live there. My father [Malcolm Maclean] often said that he had a great number of songs.

In the evening, I went down to Arisaig with Lachlan Stewart. We got back about eight, and Lachlan Stewart started recording songs. He has an enormous number of songs. He had one song to MacKenzie of Brathan, the lullaby of Coinneach of Brathan.¹⁵ I had not heard this before. Lachlan Stewart's father [John Stewart] had a great number of songs. We were recording songs until midnight.¹⁶ The heat of the day tired me. Lachlan Stewart has a great many more songs.

Wednesday, 2 June 1954

A beautiful day today again. I went down to the shore again this morning and did some writing. I found the cave in which the Prince hid after Culloden. It is down towards the shore from the present Arisaig House. The entrance to the cave is very narrow. I took a couple of photographs of the entrance to the cave. I also photographed an old bench at the entrance to Borrodale House.¹⁷ It had wooden pegs instead of nails and looks very old. I went down to the shore again for a short time in the afternoon.

At five, I returned to Arisaig with Lachlan Stewart. I had to get my stuff into the hotel. I am not sleeping in the hotel tonight. I am to be in a house in the village.

At seven, I went out to Bun na Caime [Bunacaimbe] to Donald MacDonald's house. I played some records for him. He was terribly impressed by Alasdair Boyd's singing. He also enjoyed Donald McDonnell's fiddling. He told me some very good stories tonight. There was one very fine story about Fearchar Òg [Young Farquhar] and his dog Bran. Four Jacobites were asked to London and given the choice of decapitation or transportation. They chose the former. Fearchar Òg heard a mysterious voice on the journey. “Bidh dùil ri fear feachda ach cha bhi dùil ri fear lice.” [“The man of war may return, but not the buried man.”]¹⁸ He also had a very moving story about the evictions. He also had a very good story about a nobleman's fool. The fool was given a stick by the nobleman and told to keep it until he met a person more foolish than himself. On his deathbed, the nobleman says he is going far away but has made no arrangements for his journey. The fool gives him the stick.¹⁹ This sounds like an international tale. I have not come across any other versions of it.

The car-man came for me at 10.30 [p.m.] and I got back to the hotel slightly after eleven. A beautiful evening. There has been glorious weather this week.

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In the next extract we'll find Calum Maclean taking a trip to Fort William where he meets Donald McDonnell on the train. He also

records some tunes from Rona MacDonald, a young piper from South Uist. On returning to Arisaig, he takes down more stories from William MacDonald, Back of Keppoch. Next evening, a convivial ceilidh in Arisaig hotel is held where he is entertained by a few of the locals. Next day, Maclean tries to meet Donald MacDonald of Portnaluchaig but without success and due to a death in the community Maclean's plans fell through. He attends the funeral of John Gillies, the brother-in-law of Lachlan Gillies, after which he heads south and soon hears of the death of Duncan MacDonald, a preeminent storyteller from South Uist.

Andrew Wiseman

*Diary extracts by courtesy of the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin*

### **Footnotes**

1. Stewart Forson Sanderson (1924–2016).
2. Calum Maclean, 'The Late Angus MacMillan: An Appreciation', *The Scotsman*, no. 34,632 (27 May 1954), p. 10.
3. SA1954/48/1–5. Recorded by Calum Maclean from Archie 'The Old Clachan' McLellan (Mallaig), 28 May 1954.
4. SA1954/48/2, 'An Greusaiche Buidhe'; and SA1954/48/3, 'Port a' Ghreusaiche Bhuidhe', recorded by Calum Maclean from Archie 'The Old Clachan' McLellan (Mallaig), 28 May 1954.
5. SA1954/48/5, 'Òran mu Mhalraig', recorded by Calum Maclean from Archie 'The Old Clachan' McLellan (Mallaig), 28 May 1954.
6. Donald McDonnell (*Dòmhnall Sheumais*, 1888–1970) was born, 4 July 1888, and raised in Bracara, Morar, the youngest son of James McDonnell (1833–1918) and Mary McDonald (1844–1934).
7. SA1954/50/A4–5, 'Cumha Mhic an Tòisich', recorded by Calum Maclean from Donald McDonnell (Bracara, Morar), 28 May 1954.
8. Fr John Gillies (1923–1983) was born, 8 May 1923, in Bracara, Morar, and who died aged sixty, 13 August 1883, in the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh. He was interred in Cille Chuimein cemetery, Morar.
9. SA1954/54/3, 'Am Pìobaire agus an Sithiche', recorded by Calum Maclean from Ronald McLean (Cross, Morar), 29 May 1954.
10. Aged eighty-five Donald MacKellaig passed away, 4 April 1965, at home. His wife, Catherine MacLellan (1883–1962), predeceased him, as she passed away, 24 March 1962, at Heatherlea, Glasnacardoch, aged seventy-nine.
11. NFC 1030, pp. 15–26.
12. SA1954/51/A8, 'Hiri Im Bo Hil Ò Ro Ho ('S dh'fhàg iad thu 'n damh donn gun anail)' and SA1954/51/A9, 'Chan Òl Mi Deur Tuilleadh', recorded by Calum Maclean from Donald MacKellaig (Mallaig), 30 May 1954.
13. SA1954/037/A9. Recorded by Calum Maclean from William MacDonald (Back of Keppoch, Arisaig), 31 May 1954.
14. SA1954/037/B4, 'Fear na h-Abaide', recorded by Calum Maclean from William MacDonald (Back of Keppoch, Arisaig), 31 May 1954.
15. SA1954/51/B2, 'Tàladh Choinnich Òig', recorded by Calum Maclean from Lachlan Stewart (Arisaig), 1 June 1954.
16. SA1954/51/B1–B10. Recorded by Calum Maclean from Lachlan Stewart (Arisaig), 1 June 1954.
17. Originally constructed by the Clanranald MacDonalds in the eighteenth-century, Borrodale House was later rebuilt on the same site after being razed to the ground in the aftermath of the '45 Jacobite Rebellion, and thereafter was substantially remodelled by the architect Philip Webb (1831–1915) in 1864. These days the house, classified as a Category B listed building, offers comfortable accommodation with modern facilities for tourists and visitors alike to the area.
18. SA1954/52/A2, 'Fearchar Òg', recorded by Calum Maclean from Donald MacDonald (Arisaig), 2 June 1954.
19. SA1954/52/A1, 'An t-Amadan bu Mhotha', recorded by Calum Maclean from Donald MacDonald (Arisaig), 2 June 1954.

In the following entries Calum Maclean continues his fieldwork and travels to Fort William where he happens to meet Donald McDonell. In Fort William he manages to arrange a recording with Rona MacDonald, a talented young piper from South Uist. On his journey back to Arisaig he chats with Donald McDonell and then goes to Back of Keppoch to record from William MacDonald. That evening a convivial ceilidh is held with other locals such as Lachlan Stewart, Allan MacDonald and Johnny MacKinnon. Next day, Maclean meets Ronald McLean from Cross and then tries and fails to meet Donald MacDonald from Portnaluchaig. On hearing of the death of John Gillies, Lachlan Gillies's brother-in-law, his plans fall through. After attending the funeral where Maclean notes details of the service, he heads south to Glasgow. There he meets Angusina MacLean from Eigg, an old girlfriend. The very next day, Maclean hears that Duncan MacDonald, one of the most preeminent South Uist storytellers, was on his deathbed. Maclean was going to spend the next week in the southern Outer Hebrides and would not return to Mallaig until Friday, 12 June. There he meets up with old friends and acquaintances whom he has known from many years ago and, rather sadly, attends the funeral of one of the greatest storytellers whom he had ever met and from whom was recorded many stories.

### **Thursday, 3 June 1954**

I had some letters to write in the morning. This took me some time. I had lunch early today as I had to go to Fort William to get some money. I took the train to Fort William at 1.20 [p.m.]. It was really a beautiful day. We have not had weather like this for a long time. The whole countryside looked very beautiful, everything so green and fresh. I noticed Donald McDonell, the fiddler, on the train. I spoke to him as we left the train at Fort William. He said that he would be back with the 4.50 [p.m.] train. I said that I'd see him then. I went to the bank and got the money I required. I kept a look-out for young Rona MacDonald,<sup>1</sup> the girl piper from South Uist. She is at school here in Fort William. About four o' clock, as she was coming from school, she came to speak to me. I arranged with her to meet her a week next Saturday and record more pibroch. She is growing into a big girl now. She is a most promising piper. For so young a girl, she is practically first-class already. I took the train back to Arisaig at 4.50 [p.m.]. Donald McDonell was along with me, and we spoke a lot about fiddling. He has remembered a number of old tunes. One of them was a tune called *Stirling Castle*. He also had another with a Gaelic name. I can't recall it at the moment. He thinks he can remember a few old tunes. I said that I'd have another recording session with him before I left the district. I got back to Arisaig after six. I again met Lachlan Stewart. He was down at the hotel.

After dinner, I went out to Cùl na Ceapaich [Back of Keppoch] to collect William MacDonald. I had promised to bring him down to the [Arisaig] hotel. He was expecting me when I arrived. I was late as usual. We got back to the hotel, and were joined there by Lachlan Stewart, Allan MacDonald, the retired policeman, and later by John MacKinnon, the piper. We adjourned to the smoke-room of the hotel, and started recording there. William MacDonald sang a couple of songs as did also Lachlan Stewart. Towards the end of the night William MacDonald told a very fine version of AT 300.<sup>2</sup> It took some time to tell. He stood up while telling the story. He gesticulated a lot with his hands and moved his body forwards when telling something emphatic. The story was very well too. It was from his grandmother's brother, John MacLeod, that he heard the story. There must have been good storytellers here in the old days. We finished up about 11.45 [p.m.]. I saw William MacDonald safely home. He enjoyed the night. Beautiful evening as usual.

### **Friday, 4 June 1954**

A beautiful day again today. I had some writing to do in the morning. At twelve, I had to go to Mallaig to get some money in the bank. In Mallaig, I met Ronald McLean. We had quite a long talk together.

I returned to Arisaig on the 1.45 [p.m.] bus and came off at Portnanluchag. I wanted to contact Donald MacDonald, an old man who had some songs. I was directed to the house where he lives and was told by a little girl there that he had gone out to the hill

with the cattle. I went out to the moor above Cùl na Ceapaich [Back of Keppoch] but was unable to see anyone. It was a lovely afternoon, and also very hot.

I eventually started walking back to Arisaig and got a lift on the way from a Post Office lorry. Lachlan Gillies's brother-in-law [John Gillies]<sup>3</sup> died yesterday, and as there is to be a funeral in the district tomorrow, all my programme has been upset. I wrote for some time in the evening, and then went to join Lachlan Stewart in the bar. I there met a character nicknamed the "Goirtean."<sup>4</sup> He is a crofter living at Cùl na Ceapaich. He is very good at "canntaireachd." We were planning to do some recording in the house of John MacKinnon, the piper, but these plans fell through. I went home early. There have been a lot of late nights recently.

### **Saturday, 5 June 1954**

It was beautiful this morning again. I had some writing to do in the morning. I then went to the funeral of Lachlan Gillies's brother-in-law. I saw some of the gravestones in the churchyard, Col. Simon MacDonald's grave.<sup>5</sup> That was the grave that figured in a story told by Donald MacDonald, Bun na Caime [Bunacaimbe].<sup>6</sup> *Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair* is buried in the graveyard, but the exact spot where he lies is not known.<sup>7</sup> At this funeral I noticed that the corpse was borne sunwise around the church into the graveyard. This must be an old custom here. I had to rush away from the funeral to go to Glasgow. I travelled down to Fort William with Donald MacDonald, Bun na Caime. He showed me the spot where the Prince stepped into the boat<sup>8</sup> that brought him away from Scotland.<sup>9</sup> He also showed me the Bad Abraich [Badabry] between Corpach and Banavie.

It was a beautiful day on the way south to Glasgow. I arrived in Glasgow at seven and phoned A[ngusina]. She met me at eight. I had not seen her for three years. She is as handsome as ever and has not aged much. It was late when I got home to Cardonald.

### **Sunday, 6 June 1954**

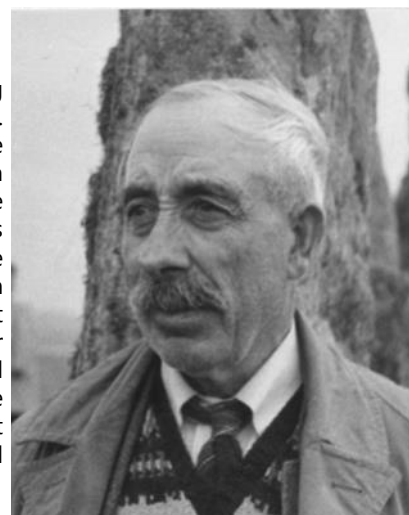
Most of the day was spent with A[ngusina]. We went out to Largs. When I got home about eleven, word had come from [South] Uist that Duncan MacDonald, of Peninerine, was dying. Alasdair [Maclean] had phoned to Arisaig and was told that I was in Glasgow. I was in touch with Alasdair later and he said that Duncan was not likely to see the next day. I then phoned to Angus McIntosh and said that I'd stand by and go to the funeral, if Duncan went. Alasdair said that he would phone at ten o' clock next morning. This is all so very sudden. Duncan is not so very old.

### **Monday, 7 June 1954**

Alasdair phoned at ten this morning to say that Duncan [MacDonald] was still living but not likely to last the day. He advised me to book a seat on the plane and fly out to Uist. I went down town in the afternoon, and booked a seat on the plane for Benbecula. At eleven, Alasdair [Maclean] phoned to say that Duncan died at ten. He was only seventy-one years of age. This is a great loss.<sup>10</sup>

### **Tuesday, 8 June 1954**

Got up early this morning and took a taxi to Renfrew. At the airport I met Nurse [Mary] MacDougall from Benbecula.<sup>11</sup> She told me that Calum MacMillan was working at Renfrew. He appeared soon. He had been there for some weeks but managed to get home for Angus's funeral. The end was peaceful, he said. The plane we boarded at Renfrew refused to start, and



*Duncan MacDonald (Donnchadh mac Dhòmhnaill 'ic Dhonnchaidh) at Callanish, Isle of Lewis, October 1953. GAIRM MAGAZINE*

we were put into another. It started all right. The day was clear, but there was fog in places.

We got to Benbecula at eleven. Fr [John] MacCormick was meeting the plane. I went to Griminish with him, and then we motored down to Daliburgh. I found Alasdair [Maclean] and the family well. The twins have grown big. They knew me when I arrived.

After lunch, Alasdair had to go up to Benbecula and [I] went along with him. He left me at Griminish, and I walked up to Angus MacMillan's house. I felt very sad going that way. Often did I go before to see Angus and record stories from him. How often did I leave his house in the early hours of the morning. That will never be again. Poor Aonghas [Angus] Barrach had found his last earthly resting-place at Baile nan Cailleach [Nunton]. Peggy [Margaret MacMillan],<sup>12</sup> the widow, shed tears when she saw me. Annie, Calum's wife, and the little boy, Alasdair, were at home. The other two children were at school. I waited with them for two hours. I told them how sorry I was not being in time for the funeral. The end had been peaceful. Angus had had one of his attacks. When it was over, he said,

"The mì ullamh. Tha mì a' falbh a-niste [I'm finished. I'm away now]." He said goodbye to everyone in the house and passed away. He had been bed-ridden since September last. He would have been eighty years of age on the 4th of July next.

Alasdair collected me about five, and we went south to Daliburgh. Alasdair has purchased a beautiful Grundig Recording Machine and has made some very fine records of Mrs Archie MacDonald [Kate MacDonald, *Bean Èirdsidh Raghnaill* or *Ceit Nill*]<sup>13</sup> and Miss Joan MacKenzie.<sup>14</sup> He is willing to give copies of all the records he does to the School of Scottish Studies. In many ways the Grundig is finer than the Ferrograph, although the Ferrograph reproduction is better.

Donald John [MacDonald],<sup>15</sup> Duncan's son came in to see us in the evening. The father's death was a shock to them all. Duncan [MacDonald] apparently had had epilepsy when a child. The cause of death was static epilepsy. He had not felt well for a whole week. He had an attack late on Saturday night. On Sunday evening he was brought to Daliburgh Hospital. He had lost the power of speech by then. He remained so until he died. Duncan's funeral is to be on Thursday. I shall not get away until Friday.

Mrs Archie MacDonald [Kate MacDonald] and Archie [MacDonald] himself came in the evening. The songs started again. Mrs Archie sang a number of songs she did not record before. Her memory is quite amazing. She has such full versions of the songs, and they are all sung so very well. It was broad daylight when the party broke up.

### Wednesday, 9 June 1954

I had an easy day today. Went out to see Miss Kate MacPhee [*Ceiteag*]<sup>16</sup> in Garrynamonie at four o' clock. Came back at seven and went with Rena and Alasdair [Maclean] to Donald Joseph MacKinnon's house. Donald Joseph [MacKinnon]<sup>17</sup> was away at Lochmaddy singing at a concert. The wife [Neillina MacPherson] and children were at home. Alasdair played records for them. We got home by one in the morning. Not too late this time.

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In the next series of diary extracts Calum Maclean gives a detailed and moving description of Duncan MacDonald's funeral. In the following few days, he renews his acquaintance with other old friends such as Donald MacPhee, Peter and Catriona MacCormick, all of whom were talented storytellers, singers and musicians. Maclean then crosses the Minch and returns early to Morar and on the same day records piping from Rona MacDonald in Spean Bridge. Next day, still in Spean Bridge, he meets John MacDonald, a



Angus MacMillan and Calum Maclean, Moss Cottage, Griminish, Benbecula, 1948. UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

famous storyteller from Highbridge, and then travels the short distance to Glenroy and records music and song from a family of MacDonalds. On his return to Arisaig, Maclean continues over the next few days to record items from John MacQueen, William MacDonald and also meets up with Donald MacDonald from Portnaluchaig, Donald MacEachen and a young fiddler by the name of John MacMillan.

Andrew Wiseman

Diary extracts by courtesy of the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

Footnotes

1. Rona MacDonald (*Rona nighean Èirdsidh Raghnaill*, 1936–) from Garryhellie, South Uist and presently resides in Inverness.
2. SA1954/52/B2, 'Iain Mac na Banntraich', recorded by Calum Maclean from William MacDonald (Back of Keppoch, Arisaig), 3 June 1954.
3. John Gillies (1886–1954), late of High Buildings, Arisaig, who passed away, 3 June 1954, aged sixty-nine, at Fort William.
4. Possibly referring to John MacDonald (1901–1971) who was a crofter, Gorten Farm, Arisaig. MacDonald passed away there, 4 September 1971, aged seventy.
5. Major Simon MacDonald (1748–1800), known as *Sim Òg*, married Ameila MacDonell (1757–1817) of Glenmeddle, Knoydart, was the only child of Captain James MacDonell of Glenmeddle, younger son of Glengarry, and Jean Gordon, daughter of old Glenbucket.
6. SA1954/52/A5, 'Còirneal Sim Òg MacDhòmhnaill', recorded by Calum Maclean from Donald MacDonald (Bunacaimbe, Arisaig), 2 June 1954.
7. Anon., 'Memorial to Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair Unveiling Ceremony at Arisaig by Mr Wiseman MacDonald', OT, no. 3,887 (29 Jun., 1929), p. 3; see also Norman H. MacDonald, 'Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair—Alexander MacDonald: The Jacobite Bard of Clanranald', *Clan Donald Magazine*, no. 9 (1981), pp. 46–54.
8. A memorial cairn (*Càrn a' Phrionnsa*) was unveiled in a ceremony under the aegis of the 1745 Association, on 4 October 1956, to mark the spot where Prince Charles Edward Stuart departed for France. Ironically the locality where he left is also very close to

where the Prince first stepped ashore onto mainland Scotland on 27 July 1745. The bilingual inscription reads as follows: 'A-RÉIR BEUL-AITHRIS / IS ANN BHO'N TRÀIGH SO / A SHEÒL AM PRIONNSA TEARLACH / AIR AIS DO'N FHRAING / THIS CAIRN MARKS / THE TRADITIONAL SPOT FROM WHICH / PRINCE CHARLES EDWARDS STUART / EMBARKED FOR FRANCE / 20TH SEPTEMBER 1746.'

9. Recorded by Calum Maclean on 2 June 1955 from Donald MacDonald (*Dòmhnall Màiri Ruairidh*, 1890–1964), from Bunacaimbe, Arisaig. Anon., 'Prince Charlie's Cairn Unveiled in Moidart', *OT*, no. 5,309 (13 Oct., 1956), p. 6; and Iain Thornber, 'Unveiling of a unique royal cairn', *OT*, no. 8,468 (18 Jul., 2019), pp. 16–17.

10. Calum Maclean, 'Uist Storyteller: Death of Duncan Macdonald', *S*, no. 34,651 (18 Jun., 1954), p. 8; and Calum Maclean, 'The Late Mr D. MacDonald, Peninerine, South Uist: An Appreciation', *OT*, no. 5,190 (26 Jun., 1954), p. 3.

11. Perhaps a reference to Mary MacDougall originally from Snishival, South Uist.

12. Margaret 'Peggy' MacMillan (1886–1962) passed away aged seventy-six, 25 March 1962, and was interred in Nunton cemetery, Benbecula.

13. Kate MacDonald (*Bean Èàirdsidh Raghnaill* or *Ceit Nill*, 1897–1977) from Garryhellie, South Uist.

14. Joan MacKenzie (1929–2007) from Point, Isle of Lewis.

15. Donald John MacDonald (*Dòmhnall Iain Dhonnchaidh*, 1918–1986) from Peninerine, South Uist.

16. Catherine 'Kate' MacPhee (*Ceiteag*, 1929–1993) was from Garrynamonie, South Uist.

17. Captain Donald Joseph MacKinnon (*Dòmhnall Eòsaph mac Ruairidh Iain Bhàin* or *An Eòsag*, 1907–1962), originally from Bruernish, Barra and then residing in Lochboisdale, South Uist.

KNOYDART HOSTS LAUNCH OF SCOTLAND RAINFOREST STRATEGY

Knoydart hosted the launch of a new strategic approach for Scotland's rainforest in July, aiming to improve the condition and health of the precious habitat. The strategy, developed by Scottish Forestry, underlined the need to deliver community benefits including the creation of rural jobs, skills and training, health, and wellbeing.



Rural Affairs Secretary Mairi Gougeon launched the paper in the shadow of old-growth oaks and hazel in Knoydart's woodland. She said: "Scotland's rainforest is a treasured natural asset. Restoring and expanding our rainforest will contribute to our nature positive net zero ambitions and conserve this iconic ecosystem for the future, as well as securing jobs and enabling green skills development."

"There is fantastic work already being carried out to restore and expand the rainforest here and by a great number of organisations and individuals working across the whole rainforest zone. Much of this has importantly involved communities, such as the case in Knoydart. This new strategic approach published today aims to build on this tremendous work and identify practical steps that the Scottish Government and its partners can take to help rejuvenate Scotland's rainforest."

The Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest have recently highlighted Knoydart as an "excellent example of community-led, landscape-scale rainforest restoration and expansion". The Knoydart Foundation and Knoydart Forest Trust have taken key steps in the past three decades to improve the habitat, including; the near eradication of invasive non-native species *Rhododendron Ponticum*, effective deer management, the restructuring of non-native conifer plantation woodland which surrounds the village of Inverie and, expanding and linking woodland habitats on the peninsula.

Lorna Schofield of the Knoydart Forest Trust celebrated the connection and interdependence of community and the land in regenerating the rainforest habitat and the community. She said: "A lot of our work on Knoydart's rainforest has concentrated on the eradication of invasive rhododendron. This work has spanned 25 years and is ongoing. It has mostly involved the Trust's staff, backed up by volunteers, local residents and some contractors, and funded through a succession of forestry grants. Twenty-five years of community land ownership in Knoydart strongly demonstrates the benefits of long-term community led rainforest regeneration."

Due to high levels of rainfall and relatively mild temperatures Scotland's temperate rainforests host a variety of rare lichens, bryophytes and ferns. Some of the highest quality examples of this habitat can be found on Knoydart.

Speaking at the launch of the strategy on July 16, Julie Stoneman of Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest celebrated the threatened habitat getting the "attention it deserves". She said: "Scottish Forestry's refreshed approach to collaborative, landscape-scale, long term, and community-centric rainforest restoration is key to the future of this internationally important habitat, building on the work of ASR's partners and rainforest communities."



A few days before, Calum Maclean had travelled to Benbecula and then onwards, or rather downwards, to South Uist. Although meeting up with old acquaintances was always going to be a pleasure, his express intent was rather to pay his last respects to Duncan MacDonald, one of the greatest storytellers in Maclean's estimation that he had collected from in either Gaelic Scotland or Ireland. Given that Maclean collected from hundreds of people over the years this reflects the high regard and esteem in which MacDonald was held. No stranger to funerals and wakes, Maclean offers a detailed and evocative description of that day's events. It must have been an emotional day. That evening Maclean returns to Benbecula in the company of Fr John McCormick where he meets up with Donald MacPhee (*Sunndachan*) and then, later in Hacklett, enjoys a house-party. It was back to business the very next day as Maclean crosses the Minch to return to Mallaig. He then proceeds to Spean Bridge to meet briefly with Fr. Andrew MacDonell and then records Rona MacDonald playing the pipes. Next day, still in Spean Bridge, he attends Mass and goes to visit Killiechonate in the company of John MacDonald. That evening, Maclean visits a family of MacDonalds up in Glenroy where he records music from James MacDonald and a couple of songs from his two sons. Next day, Maclean returns to Arisaig and continues his fieldwork collecting alongside John MacQueen, William MacDonald, Hugh Cameron, Donald MacEachen and a young self-taught fiddler called John MacMillan.

Thursday, 10 June 1954

It was cold and grey this morning as Alasdair [Maclean] and I left Daliburgh to go to Duncan's funeral. I had only a light plastic waterproof, but Alasdair gave me his heavy Inverness cape to wear. I was glad to have it as it proved to be bitterly cold.

The corpse was in the church at Howbeg, and the remains were to be carried to the graveyard at Àrd Mhicheil [Ardmichael]. We called for Archie MacDonald [*Eàirdsidh Raghnaill 'ic Ruairidh 'ic Raghnaill*]¹ on the way up. The chapel at Howbeg is small, but it was crowded. After Requiem Mass, the coffin was taken out and placed on the ground. The people marched off two abreast with a special person directing the procession. He walked alongside the procession. The next-of-kin lifted the coffin and carried it. The person directing the procession then shouted to the men in front "Seasaibh a-mach [Stand aside]." Three stood on each side and the procession filed through until the six standing took the coffin from the first bearers. The day was cold and cloudy and threatened rain. There was a biting wind blowing across the machair. The machair of Uist looked very bare today. There is such a difference between this and the rich, wooded district of Arisaig and Moidart. One car followed the funeral procession. The other cars went round by the main road. It soon came to my turn to carry the coffin. I must have carried it about twenty times. All the while the procession was directed. It had to be kept regular and no gaps were to be allowed. The director



St Joseph's Church, Howbeg, South Uist.

shouted to the people in the procession to stop and close any apparent gaps. The procession passed by Duncan's house at Peninerine. His two daughters [Kate MacDonald, *Ceit Dhonnchaidh* and Annie MacDonald, *Anna Dhonnchaidh*] came to the road-end carrying tins. They turned their backs to the procession as it approached. They were weeping. They went into the car following the funeral.

The graveyard of Àrd Mhicheil is on a headland west of Stoneybridge. It is a bit higher than the adjoining machair. The funeral procession approached it from the north-east. The way however went past the graveyard and the path turned in a westerly direction, sunwise towards the entrance to the graveyard. The last part of the track is grass-grown. It is called *Rathad nam Marbh* [The Road of the Dead]. There are two walled enclosures, the larger Catholic and the smaller for the Protestants – nearer to the sea. The entrance to the Catholic graveyard was on the eastern side, the entrance to the other on the southern. Both graveyards are approached sunwise. The mortal remains of the finest storyteller I have ever met were laid to rest in the sandy soil of Àrd Mhicheil. Fr [John] MacLean [*Maighstir Iain*]² and Fr John McCormick [*Maighstir Iain Nèill Mhòir*]³ officiated at the grave. The Protestants went down on their knees along with the Catholics, the former to pay tribute to the memory of a noted character, the latter to pray for the repose of his soul. A heavy shower of rain came on after the grave was filled in. The mourners sheltered at the leeward side of the graveyard walk and were given biscuits and cheese by Duncan's daughters. I had not seen this before. Farewell, *a Dhonnchaidh mhic Dhòmhnaill 'ic Dhonnchaidh 'ic Iain 'ic Dhòmhnaill 'ic Tharmaid* [Duncan MacDonald's patronymic or *sloinneadh*].

I returned to Benbecula with Fr John McCormick. In Creagorry I met Donald MacPhee, *Sunndachan*.⁴ After a meal, I went up to Nunton. Spent the afternoon with *Sunndachan*. Got back to Creagorry at five.

At eight went to Hàclait [Hacklett]. *Sunndachan* was there also. Fr John McCormick joined me later that night. We had a very enjoyable party. Patrick McCormick's nieces were staying with them. Mrs [Catriona] McCormick remembered three more verses of that lovely song *Is Daor a Cheannaich Mi 'n t-lasgach* [Dearly Have I Paid for the Fishing].⁵ It was marvellous getting these three verses. Mrs McCormick has given two wonderful songs – that one and *Gura Mudalach, Sgith Mi* [I'm Sad and Depressed]. She alone seems to have had these songs. We have had many enjoyable nights at Hàclait. It was broad daylight when we got home from Nunton to Cnoc Fraochaig. I stayed with Fr [John] McCormick.

Friday, 11 June 1954

I left Benbecula in the afternoon, and Alasdair [Maclean] took me down to Daliburgh. Had a lazy day and did nothing. Joined the boat at Lochboisdale at midnight. I had no berth but was given Donald Joseph MacKinnon's cabin.

Saturday, 12 June 1954

Woke up in Mallaig this morning. Took the train out to Arisaig. Started walking out to Borrodale but got a lift. Packed up my Ferrograph and brought it down to Arisaig and joined the 1.20 [p.m.] train to Fort William. Rona MacDonald from South Uist met me at the station. We were to wait for John MacDonell to come and bring us out to Spean Bridge. It was almost six when John did come.

We did go out to Spean Bridge and there met Fr Andrew MacDonell,⁶ who has returned home from Canada. He is now very old. Rona recorded a march, strathspey and reel⁷ and also recorded the *Lament for Mary MacLeod*.⁸ She played quite beautifully. She is going to be a great piper. At nine we had to bring Rona back to the Convent. We then returned to Spean Bridge.

Sunday, 13 June 1954

Went to church at nine this morning. I spoke to little John MacDonald and arranged to meet him at three o'clock. I talked to Fr [Andrew] MacDonell for part of the morning.

At three I met John MacDonald, and we walked out to Killiechonan [Cille Chonaid] together. He told me about five other stories that have not been recorded. He is an amazing man. It was a very hot afternoon, and we did not go very far.

In the evening, Mrs MacDonell [Emily 'Millie' Cathcart Smith], John [MacDonell] and I went up to Bohenie to record some tunes on the fiddle from James MacDonald [*Seumas Both Fhinidh*, known as Jimmie Bohenie or Jimmie Ali]. He was given no warning that we were on our way, but he welcomed us kindly. I played some records and then Jimmie [MacDonald] got his fiddle and played a selection of tunes. He played well but was not in top form.⁹ His sons each sung a ballad. One [John MacDonald, *Johnnie Bòcan*] sang the ballad of MacCallum,¹⁰ the poacher, the other [James MacDonald Jnr., *Jimmie Polly*] a song called "The Miles and the Road to the Town of Dundee."¹¹ I had heard the latter sung in Irish in Connemara many years ago. It was strange hearing it there again. It was late when we go home.

Monday, 14 June 1954

Got up late this morning. I had to go into Fort William to the bank. There was nothing very much I could do during the day. I took the evening train to Arisaig. Lachlan Stewart met me. It has now started to rain here – a change.

Tuesday, 15 June 1954

Got up late this morning. I had some writing to do in the afternoon. In the evening, I went down to the house of John MacQueen,¹² a retired estate coachman. I brought the Ferrograph down and played him some records. His people were noted fiddlers and I hoped that he would record some tunes. He has stopped playing some time ago. He did record some information about local fiddlers and gave me some local history.¹³ The evening was not entirely blank.

Wednesday, 16 June 1954

I was up in time this morning. I went down to Arisaig with Lachlan Stewart and brought my machines with me. The machines were left in the hotel.

I walked out to Cùl na Ceapaich [Back of Keppoch] to see William MacDonald. I was quite wet when I got there. William was at his dinner and promised that he would go down to the hotel with me in the evening. He remembered another couple of stories.

I then went to see Hugh Cameron.¹⁴ He was working at a house nearby. I asked him to come with me to Lachie Gillies's house tomorrow evening. He agreed to do so.

I then walked a couple of miles over to Portnanluchag [Portnaluchaig] to see Donald MacDonald. I went up to the house where he stayed. I met the man with whom he stays, a distant relative. He said that he would deliver my message to Donald MacDonald to meet me at eight in the evening. He warned me not to make the old man drunk!! I said I did not intend to do that.

I walked back to Arisaig and got Archie MacMillan in the hotel to run me up to old Donald MacEachen's house. Old Donald [*Dòmhnall Iain Bhàin*] is still bed-ridden but does get up now and then. I played some records for him. He seemed to enjoy them very much. He told me a few stories about "second sight" and so forth.¹⁵ I was rather disappointed that he did not have more. He seemed most willing to tell what he did know.

I left him about six o' clock and went back to the hotel. There I met the man from Portnanluchag [Portnaluchaig], who told me that Donald MacDonald could not come to see me in the evening. He said something about his sister having had an operation. That simply could not be helped.

After seven, I went for William MacDonald and brought him to the hotel. A young man, John MacMillan from Millburn, Arisaig met us there. He is a fiddler and promised to play some tunes. I got more stories from William MacDonald tonight. He had a fine story called *Drochaid a' Bhòcaich Ruaidh*.¹⁶ I have not heard this one before. He told it very well. He always stands when he tells stories. The story he said was Irish. He also told the tale of the three soldiers who stole the swan-maidens' coverings. The end was rather abrupt. It was short.¹⁷ He also told a Lochaber story of a man MacGregor with the "black art," who forced harvesters to dance. This is a variant of the *Alasdair nan Cleas* [chief of the Keppoch MacDonalds] story.¹⁸ William also sang a song.¹⁹ Singing is not his "fate," but he is a

splendid storyteller. I am sure he has a lot more. John MacMillan gave several selections of tunes.²⁰ He plays very well indeed for a young man. He is hardly twenty. He taught himself to play. Mrs MacMillan very kindly allowed us to use the smoke-room of the hotel for recording. We had a very enjoyable night. It was late when Lachlan Stewart and I got home.

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In the next extract Calum Maclean continues with his fieldwork and attends a small gathering where he records fiddle music from Lachlan Gillies and Hugh Cameron. He also meets up with Flora MacKinnon and her grandson Patrick 'Pat' McCarthy and during an evening gathering meets another group of locals including Marjory MacDonald, Marion MacDonald, Joan MacDonald, Simon MacDonald, Lachlan Stewart and Johnny MacKinnon where he takes the opportunity to undertake more recording. Over the following weekend Maclean returns home to Raasay to visit his mother. On his return to Mallaig on the Monday, Maclean collects songs from Marjory Gillies and afterwards visits John Lynn, the headmaster.

Andrew Wiseman

*Diary extracts by courtesy of the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin*

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#### **Footnotes**

1. Archibald 'Archie' MacDonald (*Eàirdsidh Raghnaill 'ic Ruairidh 'ic Raghnaill*, 1894–1973) was from Garryhellie, South Uist.

2. Fr John MacLean (*Maighstir Iain*, 1919–1986) was from Leanish, Isle of Barra.

3. Fr John MacCormick (*Maighstir Iain Nèill Mhòir*, 1911–1980) was from South Boisdale, South Uist.

4. Donald MacPhee (*Sunndachan*, 1883–1964) was from Lìonaclait, Benbecula.

5. This was one of Calum Maclean's favourite songs and one which he wrote an article on, published posthumously, for which see Calum I. Maclean, 'Is Daor a Cheannaich Mi 'n t-Iasgach', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, vol. IX, pt. 1 (1961), pp. 1–8.

6. Fr (Roderick) Andrew MacDonell (1870–1960) was from Dalcataig, Invermoriston.

7. SA1954/56/A1, 'Conan Bridge/MacBeth's Strathspey/Pretty Marion', as recorded by Calum Maclean from Rona MacDonald (Garryhellie, South Uist), 12 June 1954, Spean Bridge, Brae Lochaber.

8. SA1954/56/A2, 'Cumha Alasdair nighean Alasdair Ruaidh', as recorded by Calum Maclean from Rona MacDonald (Garryhellie, South Uist), 12 June 1954, Spean Bridge, Brae Lochaber.

9. SA1954/56/A3, 'Highland Wedding'/'Devil in the Kitchen'/'The De'il Among the Tailors'; SA1954/56/A4, 'Is Tric a Ghabh Mi Sgrìob Fheasgair'; SA1954/56/A5, 'The Stirlingshire Militia'; SA1954/56/A6, 'La Russe'; SA1954/56/B1, 'Stirling Castle'/'Rachel Rae'; SA1954/56/B2, 'Auchdon House', as recorded by Calum Maclean from James MacDonald (Bohenie, Brae Lochaber), 13 June 1954.

10. SA1954/56/A7, 'MacCallum's Farewell', as recorded by Calum Maclean from John MacDonald (*Johnnie Bòcan*, 1918–1984) (Bohenie, Brae Lochaber), 13 June 1954.

11. SA1954/56/B3, 'The Road and the Miles to Dundee', as recorded by Calum Maclean from James Polland MacDonald Jnr (*Jimmie Polly* or *Poley*, 1924–2006) (Bohenie, Brae Lochaber), 13 June 1954.

12. John 'Johnnie' Charles MacQueen (1877–1969) was from Borrodale, Arisaig.

13. SA1954/56/B4, 'Local fiddlers in Arisaig and Morar', as recorded by Calum Maclean from John MacQueen (Druimindarroch, Arisaig), 16 June 1954.

14. Ewen (Hugh) Cameron (1875–1955) was from the Moss of Keppoch, Arisaig.

15. These items were catalogued SA1954/56/B6–B18 including SA154/56/B9, 'Information on Second Sight' as recorded by Calum

## **CALUM I. MACLEAN'S FIELDWORK DIARIES** *contd.*

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Maclean from Donald MacEachen (Back of Keppoch, Arisaig), 16 June 1954.

16. SA1954/57/A8, 'Drochaid a' Bhocaidh Ruaidh', as recorded by Calum Maclean from William MacDonald (Back of Keppoch, Arisaig), 16 June 1954.

17. SA1954/57/B7, 'Triùir saighdear a theich às an arm', as recorded by Calum Maclean from William MacDonald (Back of Keppoch, Arisaig), 16 June 1954.

18. SA1954/57/A15, 'Na buanaichean a' dannsadh', as recorded by Calum Maclean from William MacDonald (Back of Keppoch, Arisaig), 16 June 1954.

19. SA1954/37/A7, 'Òran Àrasaig', as recorded by Calum Maclean from William MacDonald (Back of Keppoch, Arisaig), 16 June 1954.

20. SA1954/57/A9–A14; SA1954/57/B1–B6, B10–14. SA1954/57/A9, 'Donald Cameron'; SA1954/57/A10, 'Mrs MacDonald of Dunach'; SA1954/57/A11, 'De'il Among the Tailors'; SA1954/57/A12, 'The Wind That Shakes the Barley'; SA1954/57/A13, 'Mrs MacLeod of Raasay'; SA1954/57/A14, 'Fairy Dance'; SA1954/57/B1, 'Bride's Reel'; SA1954/57/B2, 'The Old Wheel'; SA1954/57/B3, 'The Spinning Wheel'; SA1954/57/B4, 'The Duke of Gordon'; SA1954/57/B5, 'The Soldier's Joy'; SA1954/57/B6, 'The Gladstone Reel'; SA1954/57/B10, 'John MacFayden of Melfort'; SA1954/57/B11, 'Donald MacLean's Farewell to Oban'; SA1954/57/B12, 'The Devil in the Kitchen'; SA1954/57/B13, 'Scotsman Leaving Ireland'; SA1954/57/B14, 'Lucknow Polka', as all recorded by Calum Maclean from John MacMillan (Millburn, Arisaig), 16 June 1954.

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In the following diary extracts, Calum Maclean continues collecting and records a number of fiddle tunes from Lachlan Gillies and Hugh Cameron. He also records a few songs from the former. The next day, he visits Flora MacKinnon, from Rhu, Arisaig, in the company of Dr Norman Rodger where he also meets Patrick 'Pat' McCarthy, her grandson, who was the local postman, and also Theresa MacLellan, her daughter. Unfortunately due to a technical failure he was unable to undertake any recording but had hoped to return at some future point. This sadly never happened as Flora MacKinnon passed away early the next year. That evening, Maclean enjoys a convivial ceilidh along with a gathering of locals. Over the weekend, Maclean returns to Raasay to visit his mother. On his return to Mallaig, Maclean then visits Bella Muir and Donald John MacLellan, her brother and then, after a detour to Arisaig, returns to Mallaig to record songs and anecdotes from Marjory Gillies. Afterwards, he then returns to see Bella Muir and Donald John MacLellan and later that evening visits John Lynn, the schoolmaster.



*Patrick 'Pat' McCarthy at Arisaig Post Office*

### **Thursday, 17 June 1954**

I spent most of the day writing. I had some correspondence to attend to, and also I had to bring my diary up to date.

In the evening Lachlan Stewart brought me and my machines down to Lachlan Gillies's house. I then had to go over to Cùl na Ceapaich [Back of Keppoch] to get Hugh Cameron and Allan MacVarish.<sup>1</sup> They were waiting for me when I got there. We got back to Lachlan's house, and I soon got the man to start recording. Lachlan Gillies<sup>2</sup> played a number of tunes<sup>3</sup> and Hugh Cameron did play one or two also.<sup>4</sup> Hugh Cameron is just recovering from a serious operation and was a bit excited. He did not play up to his usual form. He is a smart, little man, and was said to be the best fiddler in the area when he was young. He had not been playing much recently. His wife [Catherine Gillies] is a sister of Lachlan Gillies and, according to Allan MacVarish, she has a great many songs. Lachlan Gillies did record one or two more songs.<sup>5</sup> We had a late session tonight, and it was almost two in the morning when we got home. I felt a bit tired.

### **Friday, 18 June 1954**

It was a miserably wet day today. I had to go down to Arisaig with Lachlan Stewart in the morning and wait there until I met Dr [Norman Oswald] Rodger after lunch. He brought me out by car to Rubha [Rhu] to see old Mrs [Flora] MacKinnon.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, I discovered that the EMI machine did not work. The batteries must have given out. This was rather strange because the machine had not been used so very much. It was just too bad that the batteries were to fail today. However, we went out to Rubha and there we met Patrick McCarthy,<sup>7</sup> Mrs MacKinnon's grandson. He is a local postman and a very intelligent young man. He spoke both Gaelic and English perfectly. He was brought up with his grandmother since he was a very young boy. Mrs MacKinnon's daughter [Theresa MacKinnon] lives along with her. The old lady herself soon appeared. She must be near ninety years of age. She seemed to have all her faculties about her. I was very much impressed by her knowledge of old songs. She sang snatches of several clapping songs, some of which I had not heard. It was a great pity not to have had the EMI in working order. She also had a number of stories about various subjects – all of them were good. Her memory is still very clear. They were very hospitable people in this house. The doctor and I were given a large glass of whisky each. I drank mine rather slowly. The old lady said, when she noticed this "Òl sin, gum faic mi sogan ort [Drink that so I can see you tipsy]." I was most annoyed that I did not have a machine. I made a note of most of what she told me. I told her that I'd try to go back to see her again.

Young Patrick had a lot of the papers of the late Ann McLean,<sup>8</sup> the sister of Ronald McLean, Cross. Among them I noticed a number of Gaelic songs and collections of proverbs. I impressed upon him that value of such papers, and he said he would collect them all together and keep them in a safe place. I would have time to examine them more minutely later. We had to get back to Arisaig after five. We said goodbye to the old lady with the hope that we'd see her again.

We got back to Arisaig about six. I went to the hotel and there met Lachlan Stewart, Charles MacDonald, John MacKinnon and some others. At eight, we went up to Mrs Marion MacDonald's. There were a crowd of women there gathered including Marjory MacDonald, the dancer. She is a tall, slim girl. Simon MacDonald, the local Catholic schoolmaster, was present and recorded a couple of old songs, songs I have not heard.<sup>9</sup> Mrs Marion MacDonald also sang two songs.<sup>10</sup> Joan MacDonald<sup>11</sup> sang two old and very nice songs, one composed by her grandfather to a Mr Astley drowned at the Niagara Falls.<sup>12</sup> John MacKinnon also played the pipes, but owing to some mistakes the recording had to be scrapped. The party continued until it was rather late. It must have been three in the morning when we got home.

### **Saturday, 19 June 1954**

I went home to Raasay today to see my mother [Christina Nicolson]. It was a rather cold day. My mother came back to Raasay on Tuesday last.

### **Sunday, 20 June 1954**

Rested today. Went over to the farm [at Clachan] in the evening.

### **Monday, 21 June 1954**

Took the boat to Mallaig this morning and arrived there at 12 noon. I met Miss Muir on the street and said to her that I hoped to go up to see Mrs [Isabella 'Bella'] Muir in the evening and hoped that Donald John MacLellan would also be there with his fiddle. I also met Mrs Lynn [Dolina Joan MacBeath]<sup>13</sup> and said that I'd call to see Mr [John 'Johnny'] Lynn before the night was over.

I took the train to Arisaig at 1 p.m. and met Lachlan Stewart on my arrival there. I went out to Borrodale with him. I packed up my luggage and equipment, which I had left out there.

Returned to Mallaig and went up to see old Miss [Marjory] Gillies, *Marsali Iain Mhòir*. She complained that she was not feeling too well, but she did seem bright enough. I had difficulty in getting the Ferrograph to work. When I plugged it into the mains it refused to go. Finally, I discovered that the fuse had gone. I replaced it and all went well. She recorded a couple of songs and several stories tonight.<sup>14</sup> Most of them I had not heard before. She undoubtedly has a great deal of material. I was sorry I had to go away at night.



nine o' clock. A car-man had come for me to take me down to Mrs [Bella] Muir's. I found Mrs Muir at home, but Donald John MacLellan had not put in an appearance. Eventually he did turn up but did not bring his fiddle. Mrs Muir did sing one song.<sup>15</sup> She had another which she could not remember very well. It was half-past ten when I returned to the West Highland hotel. I then went up to visit Mr John Lynn.<sup>16</sup> It was close on midnight when I got home.

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In the next few extracts from his diaries, Calum Maclean takes the ferry from Lochailort to visit Glenuig, Moidart, where he meets a variety of the locals, including Ronnie the Whaler and his wife. He also meets Edith Graham Croll after which he is then introduced to Joanna MacPherson, Ronnie the Whaler's mother, and her brother Angus MacPherson. Another from whom Maclean collected material was Peggy MacDougall who despite being up in years could still remember scores of songs. Despite being in a different part of the Rough Bounds, Maclean's reputation had proceeded him and the locals very much warmed to him and were more than willing to record for the young collector.

Andrew Wiseman

Diary extracts by courtesy of the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

Footnotes

1. Allan MacVarish (1895–1975) was from Back of Keppoch, Arisaig.
2. Lachlan 'Lachie' Gillies (1887–1978) D.C.M., B.E.M., was from Morroch, Arisaig.
3. SA1954/58/A1, 'Thug mi 'n oidhche raor san àirigh' / 'Och och mar a tha mi 's mi nam ònar' / 'Balmoral Highlanders'; SA1954/58/A2, 'Island Herdmaid'; SA1954/58/A3, 'Mas ann gam mhealladh a ghaoil a bha thu'; SA1954/58/A4, 'Creag Uanach' / 'Abercairney Highlanders'; SA1954/58/A7, 'King George'; SA1954/58/A8, 'My Wife She Brewed It' / 'Magdalena Sinclair', as recorded by Calum Maclean from Lachlan Gillies (Morroch, Arisaig), 17 June 1954.
4. SA1954/58/A5, 'Miss Lyall'; SA1954/58/A6, 'Struan Robertson's Rant'; SA1954/58/A9, 'Cairistiona Chaimbeul', as recorded by Calum Maclean from Hugh Cameron (Arisaig), 17 June 1954.
5. SA1954/58/A10, 'Hug oireann oro hù bha hò'; SA1954/58/A11, 'Coire Ceathaich'; SA1954/58/B1, 'A Mhàiri mhìn mheall-shùileach'; SA1954/58/B2, 'Guma slàn a chì mì'; SA1954/58/B3, 'Bheir mi ho horo bhan hò'; SA1954/58/B4, 'Cuach Mhic 'illAnndrais'; SA1954/58/B5, 'Òran Alasdair Òigh Thriaslain', as recorded by Calum Maclean from Lachlan Gillies (Morroch, Arisaig), 17 June 1954.
6. Flora MacKinnon *née* MacDougall (1859–1955) was born, 18 October 1859, in North Morar, to Alexander MacDougall (1824–1901) and Catherine McDonell (1830–1898). She married John MacKinnon (*b.* 1855) from Arisaig, on 10 June 1885. She passed away, 20 January 1955, at Rhu Cottage, Arisaig, aged ninety-two.
7. Patrick 'Pat' McCarthy (1917–1994) was born in Ayrshire but moved to Arisaig at a young age.
8. Anne McLean was from Cross, Morar.
9. SA1954/58/B13, 'O tha mi sgìth 's mi a' siubhal cuain', as recorded by Calum Maclean from Simon MacDonald (Arisaig), 18 June 1954.
10. SA1954/58/B6, 'Dhòirt thu 'm bainne raor sa bhathaich / Clann bheag a' bhaile muigh'; SA1954/58/B11, 'Cainnt nan Gàidheal Gàidhlig Bharraigh', as recorded by Calum Maclean from Marion MacDonald (Arisaig), 18 June 1954.
11. Joan MacDonald (1897–1973) passed away aged seventy-six, 19 August 1973, late of Lower Buildings, Arisaig, at the Belford Hospital, Fort William.
12. SA1954/58/B7, 'Gur cràiteach oidhche Nollaig sinn'; SA1954/58/B8, 'Och och mar a tha mi a' siubhal fàsaich'; SA1954/58/B9, 'O a fhleasgaich as àille na a' ghrian'; SA1954/58/B10, 'Dhòmhnaill 's i air chall'; SA1954/58/B12, 'Thàinig fios thar a' chuain', which is the song referred to as composed by her

grandfather, as recorded by Calum Maclean from Joan MacDonald (Arisaig), 18 June 1954.

13. Dolina Joan MacBeath (1929–2016) was born, 22 November 1929, a daughter of Peggy Turner *née* MacFarlane, in Perth and came to reside in Uiskevagh, Benbecula. She was married to John Lynn on New Year's Eve, 1955. MacBeath passed away on 7 October 2016, aged eighty-six years, in Strathallan, Strathpeffer.

14. These items are catalogued as SA1954/59/A1–A9, and consist of historical, fairy and supernatural anecdotes including Cù Glas Mheòbail, as recorded by Calum Maclean from Marjory Gillies (Mallaig, Morar), 21 June 1954.

15. SA1954/59/A10, 'Gaol an t-Seòladair (Air feasgar Sàbaid samhraidh dhomh)', as recorded by Calum Maclean from Marjory Gillies (Mallaig, Morar), 21 June 1954.

16. John 'Johnny' A. Lynn, M.C., M.A., B.Sc. (c. 1898–1972), was possibly from Skye and moved to Toltsa Chaolais, Isle of Lewis, on his retirement.

Highlands encouraged to get involved in Seachdain na Gàidhlig 2025

Gaelic funding opportunities available in the Highlands for landmark celebration

Seachdain na Gàidhlig (World Gaelic Week) has unveiled dates for its fourth edition and will return from 24th February – 2nd March 2025 under the theme Ceanglaichean gun Chrìch, which signifies 'Building Connections' in English, and Highland locals are being encouraged to get involved.

With funding support from Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Seachdain na Gàidhlig 2025 will continue to promote and preserve Gaelic language and culture across Scotland and the global diaspora, strengthening existing and establishing new Gaelic connections.

People in the Highlands are being called on to take advantage of the initiative's Small Grants Fund, supported by Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Funding of up to £500 is available for individuals, community groups and organisations who are looking to celebrate Gaelic in their community, with applications now open (until Thursday 31st October 2024) at www.seachdainnagaidhlig.scot to Gaelic speakers, learners and enthusiasts in and around the Highlands and right across Scotland.

Back in February, this year's Seachdain na Gàidhlig showcased over 170 events in 100 locations throughout Scotland and across the world, including Nova Scotia and New York. The initiative also delivered its first-ever programme of digital assemblies for schools, which engaged 12,600 pupils from 136 schools across 27 local authority areas. It also encompasses the hugely popular Say a Gaelic Phrase Day which engages thousands online each year and will be back on Thursday 27th February 2025.

This year's theme of Ceanglaichean gun Chrìch celebrates the idea that language is all about connections – linguistic, cultural and human. Joy Dunlop, Director of Seachdain na Gàidhlig, said: "Seachdain na Gàidhlig 2024 was our biggest event to date, with participants across the world celebrating our Gaelic language and heritage, and the vibrancy and richness it brings to cultural life in Scotland and beyond. It doesn't matter if you're a native speaker, Gaelic learner or have never heard Gaelic spoken – all are welcome to participate in our in-person events, online initiatives, and schools programme. As I always say, more is more!

"We are delighted to have our funding from Bòrd na Gàidhlig for the 2025 edition of Seachdain na Gàidhlig confirmed. All events are welcome as long as they have a Gaelic element, and the Small Grants fund was created to help support this, by awarding grants of up to £500. We would love to see lots of applications from the Highlands so if you have an idea for an event or initiative, please do consider applying – we'll be holding online information sessions about how to do this in early October and aim to make the process as easy as possible. We can't wait to see everyone's ideas and help bring them to life!"

Changing focus to Moidart, Calum Maclean in the following diary extracts describes getting up early to catch the ferry-boat from Lochailort to Genuig. There he meets up with Ronnie the Whaler and Dr Norman Rodger. Maclean is put up by the MacDonald family and on his first day there records a couple of songs from Ronnie the Whaler, one of which was his own composition. Next day was busy for Maclean was introduced to Mrs Edith Croll by Ronnie the Whaler with whom he has lunch and then meets up with Johanna MacPherson, Ronnie the Whaler's mother, and her brother, Angus MacPherson, both from whom he records a number of items, including two international tales from the latter. Another woman from whom Maclean records half a dozen songs is Peggy MacDougall, then aged nearly one hundred. The next morning, Maclean returns to Inverailort and goes to Fort William. Having tried and failed to get accommodation in Glenfinnan, Maclean manages to get a place in Glenshian Lodge, where he meets up with a few visitors.

Tuesday, 22 June 1954

I got up at 6.30 [a.m.] this morning and caught the early train south to Lochailort. I had to catch the boat to Genuig at 12.45 [p.m.]. I got all my luggage and equipment off the train at Lochailort. The stationmaster at first did not seem too keen to allow me to leave what I did not require at the station. Finally, he allowed me to deposit it in the Post Office. I brought the EMI and what I required with me. I had to hang about Lochailort most of the morning. I finally did meet one of the boatmen. He spoke Gaelic and was a MacPherson [Angus 'Para'].¹

I went to have some tea in Glenshian Lodge and wended my way down to the jetty. I met Dr [Norman Oswald] Rodger² and Ronald MacDonald from Genuig, the Genuig boatman. Dr Rodger was on his way down to Roshven. Ronald MacDonald is a handsome young man. He has been on whaling ships during his career and goes by the nickname of Ronnie the Whaler.³ The doctor, a Post Office official and I were the only passengers on the boat. It was cold and wet when we started off. There are a great number of islands in Loch Ailort, and the boat had to dodge around and between them. The first place it stopped was at Ardnish. There is only one dwelling there now, a sheep-farmer [Donald MacLeod, *Dòmhnall Fìdhleir*] from Harris, who spent many years out in South America.⁴ Ardnish is a rocky promontory but has good patches of land in places. At one time fifty families lived in Ardnish, but there is only one house occupied today. From the boat I could see several empty houses, some roofed and some roofless. The boat ploughed its way to Roshven on the southern side of the loch. There is a small estate there owned by a Mr [Peter] Blackburn.⁵ The old natives have gone from this place too. A young teacher [Joan Buchanan] from Benbecula has gone there recently to teach Mr Blackburn's children. There are eight of them. There are stretches of very good land here. We eventually reached Genuig.

It was raining cats and dogs. Ronnie the Whaler said that he would put me up in his own house. The doctor was going that way in any case and he came along with me. Ronnie the Whaler's wife [Margaret MacKay] is from South Uist, a tall and handsome woman. They have two little children, a girl [Sandra] and a boy [Angus]. The doctor had to go on to Samalaman further on. I was left where I was. It was still raining very heavily. I could hardly go out at all.

In the morning a message had come from [Stewart] Sanderson asking me to phone him in the evening. I did go out to phone him. He said that he had booked a passage by plane to the C.I.A.P.⁶ conference in Paris. The University had agreed to meet the costs of the passage. That was very good. When I got back to Ronnie's house a small dwarfish man named MacCafferty came in. He spoke Gaelic and had come as a young child to Genuig from some home. I tried to get him to tell stories but without much success. He made some mention of trees planted at Kinlochmoidart to celebrate the landing of

Prince Charlie. Ronnie himself came home finally. He had had to return to Lochailort with the doctor and the postal official. Ronnie sang two songs for me.⁷ He is a very fine singer with a very good voice. One of the songs he sang was composed by himself about a poaching expedition to the head of Lochailort. I was rather tired as I had got up very early.

Wednesday, 23 June 1954

Rain poured all last night. I did not hear it as I must have slept very soundly. Ronnie the Whaler brought me down to Samalaman and introduced me to Mrs [Edith Graham] Croll.⁸ Mrs Croll's son Graham died two or three years ago.⁹ It was he I met the first evening I ever crossed the Minch. He had acquired Gaelic and spoke with remarkable fluency and correctness. I thought he belonged to Moidart but discovered long afterwards that he had acquired Gaelic. Mrs Croll invited me to lunch with them. I accepted the invitation gladly.

I then went down to the house where Ronnie the Whaler's mother [Johanna MacPherson, *Seocaidh Ruairidh*] lives. A brother [Angus MacPherson, *Aonghas Ruairidh*] and sister [Ann MacPherson, *Anna Ruairidh*] live along with her. I told them I'd go back to see them after lunch.

I returned to Mrs Croll's house, and had lunch with Mrs Croll and her daughter [Jean Mairi Croll]. Mrs Croll is a very intelligent and charming woman. She seemed most interested in the place and the people.

After lunch, I went down to Mrs MacDonald's house [*Taigh Ruairidh*]. I spent a very enjoyable afternoon with these people. Mrs [Johanna] MacDonald had songs and she sang several including one clapping song I had not heard before.¹⁰ The old man MacPherson, Angus MacPherson,¹¹ told me a very fine version of



Ronnie the Whaler
MACDONALD FAMILY, GLENUIG



Eigg and Rum from Smirisary, Moidart, 1961
COUNTRY LIFE

the Battle of the Birds tale, AT 313.¹² This was the tale to which Graham Croll referred the first time I met him that September evening away back in 1946. Angus MacPherson is a good storyteller.¹³ He told the story well, and his version was very full. He also told another very long tale.¹⁴ It was well told too. He must have a good deal more. He heard the stories from another old man named [Charles] MacPherson.¹⁵ He is long dead. It certainly was worth coming to Glenuig to get these stories. About seven I left the MacPhersons. The old man Angus accompanied me to the next house I was to visit. He was a very nice old man.

I next went to visit an old woman, [Margaret] 'Peggy' MacDougall [*Peigidh Bheag*],¹⁶ who lives in a cottage behind Mrs Croll's house. This old lady lives with her nephew and his wife. She is now ninety-two years of age. She is slightly deaf, but otherwise very alert. She sings all day, but her memory is now beginning to go. She seemed to be full of songs. Her deafness made it difficult to work with her, but I did manage to get some six or seven songs from her.¹⁷ I am sure she must be worth another visit. This was a most successful day.

I returned to Ronnie the Whaler's house at eight o' clock. I then had to go to Glenuig to visit John Kennedy's sister and also people called MacKillop, friends of Mrs Lachlan Gillies [Isabella MacNeil] in Arisaig. Ronnie the Whaler very kindly carried my machines for me. I first went to visit John Kennedy's sister [Jean Kennedy].¹⁸ She keeps the Glenuig Post Office. She did not seem to have any songs. There was a man named MacPherson visiting this house. I was told later that he has songs. I then went to the house of the MacKillops next door. There were people here home on visit from South Africa. There was also an old invalid lady in the house. I did not manage to record anything here. I did play some records for them.

Ronnie the Whaler came for me at eleven and helped me home with my records. It has started to rain again. I am troubled with an unpleasant stomach ailment at the moment. I hope it does not last too long. I have to start back for Inverailort in the morning. Felt rather tired tonight.

Thursday, 24 June 1954

It rained buckets all night. It was still raining heavily in the morning. After breakfast, I set out with Ronnie the Whaler on the return journey to Inverailort. It was pouring rain the whole way. There was only one other passenger, the daughter of Blackburn of Roshven, a young girl. I went up to Glenshian Lodge and booked a room for two nights. The Lochailort Inn is now closed.

I then went off to Fort William to get some money in the bank. Sent a p[ost]-c[ard] to Françoise Michel to say that I'd be in Paris on July 3rd. Returned later to Lochailort. Rain pouring in torrents. I phoned Glenfinnan on my way home to book a room for the weekend. The place was booked out. Managed to get rooms in Glenshian until Wednesday morning. There were some fishers staying in Glenshian, a retired naval commander, Commander [Ian] Hamilton¹⁹ and a Greek friend, Mr Johanides, a noted Glasgow photographer [John] Stephens-Orr²⁰ and a friend, a Mr MacDonald. It was pouring rain all evening. I could not go out at all. There was an English lady, a Mrs Thomas living at Glenshian. Mr Matty Morton²¹ and his sister Annabel [Emily Jane],²² who used to have the Lochailort Inn came to visit them in the evening. I played some records for them and recorded their voices. They were intrigued. Got to bed about eleven.

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In the next few diary extracts, Maclean tries to visit Flora MacKinnon but finds out that she is too unwell. At the Arisaig Hotel he bumps into Charles MacDonald who tells him about James Ruadh MacDonald whom he later meets. As he is now based at Inverailort, Maclean takes the opportunity to record the Roshven Ceilidh Band consisting of Walter Begg, Alex Richardson, Farquhar and Dougald MacRae as well as Angus Macnaughton. It was a mammoth and successful event for the recording lasted until four o' clock in the morning! Naturally the next day is rather a quiet one with Maclean noting that he was going back to Moidart, only this time down Loch Shiel.

Andrew Wiseman

Diary extracts by courtesy of the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

#### Footnotes

1. Angus MacPherson (*Aonghas Para*, 1919–1960) was from Smirisary, Moidart.
2. Dr Norman Oswald Rodger (1915–2000) was born in Edinburgh and brought up in Fife. He had only been recently appointed as factory doctor to Arisaig and Moidart in the summer of 1954, and resided at Tullochgorm (originally built by Neill MacEachen), Arisaig.
3. Ronald Allan MacDonald (*Raghnall Ailein 'ic Aonghais 'ic Raghnall 'ic Aonghais Mhòir*, Ronnie the Whaler, 1916–1971) was from Glenuig, Moidart.
4. Donald MacLeod temporarily emigrated to Patagonia as a gaucho or sheep rancher and, it would appear, became a tenant of Ardnish in the late 1930s. On leaving Ardnish, he and his wife retired to nearby Lochailort.
5. Peter Blackburn (1902–1965) was born in Edinburgh and inherited Roshven House and estate on the death of his father.
6. La Commission des Arts et Traditions Populaires (C.I.A.P.).
7. SA1954/45/4, 'Ochòin, a Rìgh, Gura Mì Tha Muladach'; SA1954/45/5, 'Òran Pòidsidh', as recorded by Calum Maclean from Ronald MacDonald (Glenuig, Moidart), 22 June 1954.
8. Edith Graham Alston was born, 10 February 1887, in Trinidad, to George Robert Alston (1854–1918) and Annie Elizabeth Knaggs (1865–1945). Other siblings were Mildred Emily (1885–1973); Annie Winifred (1888–1975); George Robert Goodwillie "Roy" (1893–1978); and Louis Raymond (1894–1969). She married George Croll (1872–1922) with issue. She passed away ninety-seven, 18 February 1984, at a nursing home in Edinburgh.
9. Graham McArthur Croll (1915–1951) was born in Chislehurst, Kent, and came to stay in Glenuig in 1942.
10. SA1954/61/2, 'Thàinig Bean a' Bhail' A-mach', as recorded by Calum Maclean from Johanna MacPherson (*Seocaidh Ruairidh*, 1878–1971) (Glenuig, Moidart), 23 June 1954. She was born, 8 May 1878, to Roderick MacPherson and Barbara MacMaster, and brought up in Smirisary. She married Angus MacDonald (1865–1949) with issue: Mary (*b.* 1907), Catherine (1914–1986); Ronald Allan (1916–1971) and Barbara (1918–2001). She passed away aged ninety-three, 21 August 1971, and was interred in Roshven cemetery, Moidart.
11. Angus Roderick MacPherson (*Aonghas Ruairidh*, 1884–1960) was from Smirisary, Moidart.
12. SA1954/61/1–2, 'Cath nan Eun', as recorded by Calum Maclean from Angus MacPherson (Smirisary, Moidart), 23 June 1954.
13. A description of a house-visit to the MacPherson family in Smirisary is given by Margaret Leigh, *A Spade Among the Rushes* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2011 [1949]), pp. 69–70.
14. SA1954/62/4–63/1, 'Iain Òg mac Saighdeir Albainn', as recorded by Calum Maclean from Angus MacPherson (Smirisary, Moidart), 23 June 1954.
15. Charles MacPherson (1875–1951), was from Smirisary, Moidart.
16. Margaret 'Peggy' MacDougall (*Peigidh Bheag*, 1856–1955) was from Glenuig, Moidart.
17. SA1954/63/2–64/1, catalogued as SA1954/63/2, 'Òran mu Bhanais'; SA1954/63/3, 'Òran do bhàta'; SA1954/63/4, 'Ho gur toigh leinn, hé gur toigh leinn'; SA1954/63/5, 'Tha bata an tàilleir is cromag air'; SA1954/63/6, 'Seann rannan'; SA1954/64/1, 'Ceud soraigh, ceud slàn don ailleagan', all recorded by Calum Maclean from Peggy MacDougall (Glenuig, Moidart), 23 June 1954.
18. Jean 'Jeannie' Kennedy (1911–1983) was from Glenuig, Moidart.
19. Motherwell-born Commander Ian Hamilton (1911–2014).
20. John Stephens-Orr (1907–1990) was a photographer from Glasgow.
21. Matthew George Morton (*Matti a' Mhansa*, 1922–1970).
22. Annabel Emily Jane Morton (1924–2005).

In these penultimate diary entries, Calum Maclean finds himself back in Arisaig when he tries to visit Flora MacKinnon again but, unfortunately, she was too unwell. The day, however, is not totally wasted for he later bumps into Charles MacDonald who tells him about James Ruadh MacDonald whom he later meets and arranges something for the next night. The next day proves to be more fruitful for he meets up with local musicians who form the Roshven (or Lochailort) Ceilidh Band. A mammoth session ensues until four o'clock in the morning where some high-quality tunes of the band are recorded and later each individual gets to show off their musical skill. It was a memorable night for all involved especially for Farquhar and Dougald MacRae, Walter Begg, Angus Macnaughton and Alex Richardson. The next day is rather a quiet one when Calum Maclean has lunch with Francis Cameron-Head who then shows him around Inverailort House, originally a shooting lodge built for MacDonald of Clanranald which was subsequently enlarged in 1828.



*Roshven (or Lochailort) Ceilidh Band, Morar Hotel, 1950s  
(L-R: Simon MacKinnon, George Howie, Angus Grant, Farquhar MacRae)  
ACHARACLE IN THE PAST*

### **Friday, 25 June 1955**

Had some writing to do in the morning. I then took the train up to Arisaig to meet Dr [Norman Oswald] Rodger and go with him out to visit old Mrs [Flora] MacKinnon in Rubha [Rhu]. It was also very wet today. I met Lachlan Stewart at the station, and we went down to the hotel. I met young Patrick McCarthy, and he told me that Mrs MacKinnon had not been too well during the week.

I then phoned Dr Rodger and was told that he was still in bed. He had had to go to Rum on a call during the night and had just come back. He had left a message cancelling the appointment as Mrs MacKinnon was not too well. That was bad, but I hope there'll be a chance some time again.

I had to wait in the hotel all the afternoon. The day was more or less wasted, but there was nothing to be done about it. I saw Charles MacDonald in the hotel. He told me that James Ruadh MacDonald [Seumas Ruadh],<sup>1</sup> who lives behind Glenshian Lodge is one of the best tradition-bearers in the district. He is a native of Bun na Caime [Bunacaimbe], Arisaig, and was brought up with old women there.

On my return to Lochailort, I met James Ruadh [MacDonald] and spoke to him. I arranged to go to see him on Saturday night. It poured rain heavily all evening. I could hardly go out at all. The

weather has been really bad for the past few days, rain, rain, rain all the time. I played records for the visitors in the evening.

### **Saturday, 26 June 1954**

Had to spend most of the day writing. The weather was still not much better. I had to send a religious poem to Mrs Nannie K [atherine] Wells.<sup>2</sup> I did so.

In the evening, I went down to visit the Mortons. Mrs Thomas was there also. A family of MacRaes live next door. They were at Roshven before they came up to Inverailort. At the Mortons, I met one of the family, Dougald. Dougald [MacRae] works on a sheep-farm with one of his brothers [Donald]<sup>3</sup> down Lochsheilside. He was at home for the weekend.

At ten we sent word round to come to record. This band consists of the local stationmaster, Mr [Walter] Begg,<sup>4</sup> the postmaster [Alex Richardson]<sup>5</sup> and the three fiddlers, Farquhar,<sup>6</sup> and Dougald MacRae<sup>7</sup> and Angus [James] Macnaughton<sup>8</sup> of Inverailort. The postmaster plays the drums, Farquhar the accordion, and Mr [Walter] Begg, Dougald MacRae and Angus Macnaughton are the fiddlers. This band trudges over the hill a distance of more than ten miles to dances at Glenuig and Kinlochailort. They do that even in the dead of winter. The young people in Lochailort also go that distance to dances and walk back all the way. I did not think that

there was any place in Scotland where this was still done.

It was well after ten o' clock when we went to the MacRae's house. Angus Macnaughton; Mr Begg, the stationmaster; the postmaster and the two MacRae brothers were all there. Mrs [Mary] MacRae is a very fine handsome woman. The father [Duncan MacRae] is now a very old man,<sup>9</sup> but he stayed up with us all night. Angus Macnaughton, and the two MacRae brothers are all traditional fiddlers and play by ear. Mr Begg reads music. I first made a selection of recordings of the whole band and then recorded all the fiddlers solo.<sup>10</sup> I got some very fine records. They were all very good players. Mr Begg is from



*Vintage postcard captioned  
'Inverailort Castle on the River  
Ailort, near Arisaig'*

Speyside. It was four in the morning before the party broke up. We had a grand night.

I almost forgot to say that James Ruadh MacDonald went off to the pub in Glenfinnan. I did not see him.

### **Sunday, 27 June 1954**

There was no church service in Lochailort today, and no way of getting to Arisaig or Glenfinnan. Commander [Ian] Hamilton brought Mrs Thomas and myself up to Morar. He wanted to see Calum MacKellaig. I got back in time to go to lunch with Mr [Francis] Cameron-Head,<sup>11</sup> the local laird. Mrs [Pauline] Cameron-Head is Irish.<sup>12</sup> I had met Cameron-Head before, going out to Uist. He is very interested in traditions. He showed me two sets of old pipes, one a set of Uilleann pipes discovered in an old horse-hair couch belonging to the family. It was very interesting. I returned to Glenshian after four in the afternoon. The Mortons were again across this evening. I got to bed earlier this time. I have to start out for Moidart in the morning.

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In the next and final diary entries, Calum Maclean goes to Glenfinnan and, after visiting the famous monument, takes the boat down Loch Shiel. Awaiting his arrival at Acharacle was Fr Joseph Campbell, the parish priest, who hails from Barra. After a whirlwind tour taking in points of interest, including Castle Tioram, they end up at Mingarry to take some supper. During the evening, they visit Samuel and John Cameron in Raeland, Acharacle, to record a few songs. On the last day of his field trip, Calum Maclean returns the way he came and lands back at Glenfinnan where he had hoped to meet Ronnie MacKellaig. On his return from Fort William, Calum Maclean goes to Lochailort and finishes off his fieldwork trip by recording even more tunes from the various members of the Roshven (or Lochailort) Ceilidh Band.

Andrew Wiseman

Diary extracts by courtesy of the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

Footnotes

1. James MacDonald (*Seumas Ruadh*, 1884–1956), was born, 22 April 1884, at Bunacaimbe, Beasdale, to Ronald MacDonald (b. 1846) and Catherine MacDougall (b. 1847), from Ardnish.
2. Nannie K. Wells (1875–post 1954), sometimes referred to as Katherine Wells, was a Scottish poet.
3. Donald MacRae (1914–1995) passed away, 27 September 1995, aged eighty-one. He was married to Isabella Cameron (1924–2012) who passed away aged eighty-eight, 22 December 2012. They are both interred in Roshven cemetery, Moidart.
4. Walter Robert Begg (1914–1972) was born, 6 May 1914, in Kingussie, to Robert A. Begg (1882–1958) from Caithness, and Annie Reid Miller (1889–1941) from Strathy, Farr, Sutherland.
5. Alex Richardson was married to Grace (1920–2012) with issue who passed away, 8 January 2012 aged ninety-two, at Abbotsford Nursing Home.
6. Farquhar MacRae (1925–2000) was born, 26 November 1925, in Arisaig, and brought up at Roshven, near Lochailort, Moidart, and passed away, 23 August 2000, in Fort William.
7. Dougald MacRae (1917–1984), brother of Farquhar and Donald MacRae.
8. Angus James Macnaughton (1908–1964), was born in 1908, Arisaig, a son to John Allan Macnaughton (1874–1953) and Elizabeth Fraser (1877–1953) and passed away, 9 September 1964, at Heatherknowe, Lochailort, and was interred in Kilmonivaig cemetery, Spean Bridge.
9. Duncan MacRae (1869–1968) passed away aged ninety-nine, 16 November 1969, Lochailort, Moidart.
10. These recordings are catalogued as SA1954/59/A11–A15, B1–B12 and SA1954/59/B1–B10 with the following tunes SA1954/59/A11, 'Gay Gordons'/'The 72nd's Farewell Aberdeen or The Boy's

Lament for his Dragon'/'The Hills of Perth', Lochailort Ceilidh Band; SA1954/59/A12, 'Brochan Lom' or 'Orange and Blue'/'Lady Magdalena Sinclair'/'The Smith's a Gallant Fireman', Lochailort Ceilidh Band; SA1954/59/A13, 'The Australian Ladies'/'Lovat Scouts', SA1954/59/A14, 'Tulchan Lodge'/'Laird of Thrums'/'Laird of Drumblair'; SA1954/59/A15, 'Fairy Dance'/'Soldier's Joy', Angus Macnaughton and Farquhar MacRae; SA1954/59/B1, 'Teviot Bridge'/'Tenpenny-bit'/'Connaughtman's Rambles', SA1954/59/B2, 'Harvest Homes'/'Irish Hornpipes (x2)', Walter Begg; SA1954/59/B3, 'Balmoral Highlanders'/'Laird of Drumblair'/'Sandy Duff', Angus Macnaughton; SA1954/59/B6, 'The Atholl Highlanders' March to Loch Katrine'/'The Laird of Thrums'/'Jenny Dang the Weaver', Farquhar MacRae; SA1954/59/B7, 'The Lochaber Gathering'/'The Caledonian Society of London'/'Drumard', Dougald MacRae; SA1954/59/B8, 'Farewell to the Creeks', Walter Begg; SA1954/59/B9, 'The Inverness Gathering', Walter Begg; SA1954/59/B10, 'Mrs MacLeod of Raasay', Walter Begg, all recorded by Calum Maclean from Walter Begg, Angus Macnaughton, Farquhar and Dougald MacRae (Roshven, Moidart), 26 June 1954.

11. Francis Cameron-Head (1896–1957) married Lucretia Pauline Rebecca Ann Farrell (1917–1994), nick-named Putschie, in 1942. Cameron-Head instituted the Glenfinnan Games in 1946 to commemorate the raising of the standard at the outset of the '45.

12. Pauline 'Putschie' Cameron-Head was born, 21 August, 1917 in Glasgow. She was married to Francis Cameron-Head in 1942 and, after his untimely death in 1957, the running of the Inverailort Estate fell upon her, a challenge which she took up with alacrity. She passed away, 22 June 1994, aged seventy-six.

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