

# The Glen of the Bards

Further Investigation into the Musical Heritage of Glenmoriston



Undertaken on behalf of Glenmoriston Improvement Group

by Munro Gauld and Ceit Langhorne

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## **The Glen of the Bards**

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The views and opinions set out in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of any other involved organisation or individual.

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## 1 Introduction

This report outlines the second phase of research carried out by musician Munro Gauld and creative practitioner/ Gaelic singer Ceit Langhorne into the musical and poetic heritage of Glenmoriston. It builds upon the research findings detailed in *The Musical Heritage of Glenmoriston – A Scoping Exercise*, carried out March 2021. Both research projects were carried out on behalf of the local community through the Glenmoriston Improvement Group through funding from NatureScot.

This project involved research into the collected and composed works of the Glenmoriston bard, Alasdair Macdhòmhnail- otherwise known as Alexander Macdonald (1860-1928) as contained in material (songs, poems and stories) deposited in the archives of the National Library of Scotland. The research also examined material relevant to Glenmoriston by Macdonald and others contained in the Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness. The report offered a unique perspective of the glen and local people's relationships with each other and nature, through the work of local Gaelic poets.

Due to the brief amount of time available to the consultants to examine the relevant material in the National Library of Scotland archives, it was not possible to gain anything more than an overview of the material (there are in the region of 2,000 separate items). However, from the selection of the various folders, scrapbooks etc examined, the consultants identified a sample which gives an indication of the quality, range and value of the material in the archives. The report highlights some of this significant material found.

Finally, this report also identifies opportunities for future research, and for the potential use and development of Glenmoriston's musical and cultural heritage.

## 2 Background

Glenmoriston has a particularly rich musical heritage: -

*“Perhaps there is not a small glen in Inverness-shire —perhaps not even in any part of the Highlands of Scotland—that has produced so many singers as that little, narrow one that lies in a south-westerly direction between the western shores of Loch-Ness, and the borders of Kintail, namely, Glenmoriston.”*

Alexander Macdonald, presentation to The Gaelic Society of Inverness, 24th February 1886.

The glen was home to a succession of poets in the late 18th and throughout the 19th century, known collectively as “The Glenmoriston Bards”. These bards wrote songs and poems in praise of Glenmoriston, its geography, environment, notable local people and events. The songs and poems provide a unique perspective of the area and local people's relationships with each other and the world around them.

Alasdair Macdhòmhnail- Alexander Macdonald from Achnanconeran in Glenmoriston is one of these bards. He came from a culturally rich family which had strong interest in both collecting and writing Gaelic poetry and song – in 1863 his mother Isobel produced and edited an anthology of the works of Archie “Tàilleir” Grant – *“The Bard of Glenmoriston”*. Throughout his life Alexander Macdonald

collected material from the Glenmoriston and Loch Ness-side area, some of which was published in his 1914 book, *Story and Song from Loch Ness-side*. But he also published a book of his own poems and songs, "*Còinneach 'us Coille*" (1895). In addition, throughout his adult life, Macdonald was extremely active in various cultural organisations, such as the Mod and the Gaelic Society of Inverness. He wrote extensively for a variety of newspapers, periodicals and cultural organisations and over a 35-year period right up to his death in 1928 "barely a week went by where he didn't have an article published". These were usually under various pen-names. According to Hugh Barron, Macdonald "usually went under the name "Gleannach" but he also used "MacAonghus", "Domhnullach" and "Gael"". A list of his 13 pen-names, compiled by himself, is provided in the MacDonald Archive at the beginning of the second scrapbook (Acc.13587/2). These include: A MacD, AM, Taobh Loch Nis, A. MacAonghus, MacDhomhnuill and Mac Nessa.

In 1976, the collected papers, scrapbooks, manuscripts and compositions collected over a lifetime by Macdonald were donated by his family to the National Library of Scotland and they sit in two separate archives. To date they do not appear to have been systematically examined, catalogued or put in any structured order. As there are in the region of over 2,000 separate items, (at least 1,500 of which relate to songs, poems and stories) the archive represents a considerable cultural "treasure hoard". Given that most of the material was collected by Macdonald from Glenmoriston and the Loch Ness-side area and relates to the everyday lives of its inhabitants, the landscape and land uses, this archive is of enormous local value. However, due to its extensive nature, it is also of considerable national interest and value.

As part of the community's wider celebration of the 'Glen of the Bards', a weekend of events in late May 2022 will share the Glenmoriston Musical Heritage report findings through a multi-media concert at three venues. Trees For Life have committed to filming one of the performances for use in the Dundreggan Rewilding Centre (a major cultural heritage centre near Glenmoriston, opening in autumn 2022). Professional sound recordings will be made at the other two venues for use on the local community website and social media.

This will link in to Gaelic classes in the glen at Beginner and Intermediate level, which will be running for 10 weeks between February and June 2022.

A musical performance of Glen of the Bards is also scheduled at Taigh Chearsabhaigh (North Uist) in early May 2022 as part of the museum's Taigh Chiùil initiative.

### **3 Project Brief and Remit**

#### **Aims of Project:**

To encourage a deeper understanding of local cultural and natural heritage and foster awareness of the importance of Gaelic in the connections between people and place.

#### **Rationale**

NatureScot's Gaelic Language Plan pledges to encourage a greater understanding of the important and unique connection between people and nature through Gaelic language and culture by working in partnership with organisations and community groups to scope, develop and delivery such projects. Furthermore, NatureScot's plan seeks to identify research opportunities to grow and preserve our understanding of the natural environment through Gaelic.

This new project will contribute to both of these strategic aims, whilst also acting as a mechanism to encourage a greater interest in Gaelic locally.

### **Research Objectives**

To identify and analyse additional material relating to the natural and cultural heritage of Glenmoriston contained in Gaelic poetry, song and writing. Sources to include:

- Papers relating to Alexander Macdonald held in National Library of Scotland Manuscript Collections
- Articles by Alexander Macdonald published by The Gaelic Society of Inverness in addition to those already previously identified and detailed in the Musical Heritage of Glenmoriston Report
- Articles published by The Gaelic Society of Inverness by Hugh Barron relating to Glenmoriston.

### **Outputs**

- A report detailing the extent of the additional material and resources identified.
- Identification and analysis of particularly valuable and relevant material relating to the environment, landscape and culture of Glenmoriston.

## **4 Research Findings**

The research undertaken identified the extent of the material relating to Alexander Macdonald and Glenmoriston from the following two sources:

### **4.1 National Library of Scotland**

There are two separate depositions in the National Library of Scotland relating to Alexander Macdonald:

- a. Alexander Macdonald family papers
- b. Alexander Macdonald scrapbooks.

#### **a. Alexander MacDonald and Members of his Family**

National Library of Scotland Identifier: Acc. 7708

<https://digital.nls.uk/catalogues/guide-to-manuscript-collections/inventories/acc7708.pdf>

This archive includes Macdonald family papers – the majority of which relate to Alexander Macdonald and his daughter Mairi. However, there is also an exercise book containing the poems of Alexander’s mother Isobel. The items span the period from the late 1890s to the 1970s.

The most relevant papers to this research are:

- Acc. 7708/1: Letters and other personal papers  
These principally relate to Alexander Macdonald’s personal (rather than cultural) life and thus are not necessarily all relevant.  
Given time constraints, the contents of this folder were not examined.
- Acc. 7708/3 and 7708/4: Music  
Both these folders contain cuttings, musical notation etc of songs. Of particular interest and value are the cuttings in 7708/3 which are taken from Macdonald’s weekly article in The Highland News *Guthanan beag o chuil a’ chiùil* (Little voices from behind the music) which

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ran from June 1907 until January 1912. According to editorial comment in the 1982 edition of *Story and Song from Loch Ness-side*, these articles contained “*the words and music of songs as heard by him (Macdonald) in his native district*”. The articles include the melodies associated with the songs, written in solfa notation. This resource is of considerable value as some of the song melodies are not recorded anywhere else.

- Acc. 7708/27 and 7708/28: Poetry  
The poetry in these folders are compositions by Alexander Macdonald, at least some of which are unpublished.
- Acc. 7708/29: Miscellaneous papers  
Given time constraints, the contents of this folder were not examined.
- Acc. 7708/30, 7708/31 and 7708/32: Press cutting books  
Given time constraints, the contents of this folder were not examined.
- Acc. 7708/84: Isobel Macdonald. Exercise book containing poems, ca. 1912  
Given time constraints, the contents of this folder were not examined.  
Alexander Macdonald’s mother, Isobel, had a keen interest in Gaelic poetry and had edited and published a book of 67 poems and songs by Archibald Grant of Glenmoriston (Archie Tàilleir): *Dain agus Orain, le Gilleasbuig Grannda, bard Ghlinnemorasdain. Inbhirnis, 1863*. Isobel also wrote poetry herself with her songs collected in this exercise book. As the only recorded female *Bard of Glenmoriston* they are important, giving a different perspective and representing the rich wider tradition in Gaeldom of women poets.
- Acc. 7708/85 up to Acc. 7708/130: Printed items. This includes copies of some 31 periodicals, magazines and books which had contributions by Alexander Macdonald, as well as a collection of “leaves from newspapers with songs, stories etc”. The items span the period 1889 – 1933.  
Given time constraints, the contents of these archives were not examined.

### **b. Scrapbooks of correspondence and papers of Alexander MacDonald ("Gleannach")**

National Library of Scotland Identifier: Acc.13587

Dates: 1878-ca. 1925

<https://manuscripts.nls.uk/repositories/2/resources/4440>

A huge amount of material. Even discounting Scrapbook No.1 (as it is mostly personal correspondence) there are over 1,300 separate items authored by Macdonald with newspaper cuttings, articles, containing songs, poetry, stories and anecdotes. The songs and articles which he preserved cuttings in the scrapbooks were printed in the following newspapers: the People’s Friend, Inverness Courier, Northern Chronicle, Highland News, Highland Times, The Highlander, The Scottish Highlander. Unfortunately, there are no publication details or dates supplied with any the individual cuttings.

A significant proportion of the articles containing songs also have the melodies for the songs written in solfa notation. This is potentially an incredibly valuable resource and, if catalogued and cross-referenced with Macdonald’s other works as well as with C18th and C19th anthologies of Gaelic song and poetry - most of which don’t include musical notation of the melodies. It is likely that such work would unearth the melodies for many Gaelic songs hitherto thought lost to the tradition.

**Scrapbook No. 1 - Scrapbook containing mostly correspondence addressed to Alexander MacDonald**

Acc.13587/1

Volume of 326 folios. Entitled by MacDonald: "Book of personal scraps, including letters from persons of note, etc., etc." Contains correspondence, papers, formal invitations and newspaper cuttings (some with photographs) concerning MacDonald's own publications and his involvement in Gaelic culture and cultural events. Until ca. 1888, the letters are mainly letters of reference for MacDonald. There is also correspondence concerning MacDonald's work for the Highland Railway.

**Scrapbook No.2 - Offprints and newspaper cuttings of articles contributed by MacDonald, mainly in English**

Acc.13587/2

Scrapbook of newspaper articles and offprints of journal articles, foliated and numbered to 655 by a later hand. With a list of his own publications written by MacDonald at the beginning of the volume.

**Scrapbook No. 3 - Newspaper cuttings of original Gaelic poetry of MacDonald, as well as articles on Gaelic subjects**

Acc.13587/3

249 folios and press cuttings. The volume is entitled by MacDonald: "Newspapers cuttings &c. (mainly original compositions) and for publication - Gaelic particularly. Commenced June 1902. Completed March 1925."

The volume also includes publications translated into Gaelic by MacDonald. The Gaelic poetry was mostly composed by MacDonald, usually to older tunes which he wished to revive by giving them more modern lyrics.

**Scrapbook No. 4 - Further offprints and cuttings of journal articles and newspaper contributions by MacDonald**

Acc.13587/4

464 folios and newspaper cuttings. A note by MacDonald at the beginning states that it was begun in October 1910 and completed in 1924. The volume brings together offprints of journal articles and press cuttings of letters and contributions of MacDonald to newspapers. The Gaelic songs or poetry he quotes in the newspaper articles in this volume is usually traditional or composed by other named poets; for his own original poetry see Acc.13587/3.

## **4.2 Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness**

Articles by Alexander Macdonald in the Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness were examined (in addition to those which had previously been looked at in the Musical Heritage of Glenmoriston report). Also, TGSI articles by other authors which related to the music, stories and cultural heritage of Glenmoriston were also examined.

**a. Papers presented by Alexander Macdonald on a variety of subjects (additional to those papers analysed in Phase 1 of the research);**

- Unpublished Gaelic Poetry – Volume 28
- Fragments of Gaelic Song and Lilt – Volume 29
- Some Rare Gaelic Words and Phrases – Volume 29

These papers provided a large number of songs and fragments of songs of various origins - the contents are detailed in Appendices 1 and 2. Whilst few of the songs / fragments are directly attributed to Glenmoriston by Macdonald, given that the material he published throughout his life

was predominately sourced locally, it is likely that a good proportion either originated from the Loch Ness side area, or was popularly sung there.

It is possible that the Gaelic words and phrases detailed in Macdonald's paper in TGSI Volume 29 are from the Glenmoriston / Loch Ness-side area\* and, if this is the case, would be of considerable local importance and value.

\* Hugh Barron in his paper to the Gaelic Society of Inverness states, *"Some of the words which are now recorded appear also in a valuable paper "Some Rare Gaelic Words and Phrases" by Alexander MacDonald, a native of Glenmoriston, in Volume XXIX of the Transactions."*

Barron then goes on to list words and phrases peculiar to the Aird, Glenurquhart and Badenoch, thus inferring that the words and phrases detailed by Macdonald are from Glenmoriston.

**b. Papers by other authors relating to relevant material from Glenmoriston;**

- A Modern Raid in Glengarry and Glenmoriston by Kenneth Macdonald – Volume 15
- Verse, Story and Fragments from Various Districts by Hugh Barron - Volume 46
- Verse, Story and Fragments from Various Districts by Hugh Barron - Volume 47
- Verse, Fragments and Words from Various Districts by Hugh Barron - Volume 48
- Notes on Bards by Hugh Barron – Volume 48
- Verse, Fragments, etc, from Various Districts by Hugh Barron - Volume 50
- Notes on People and Places along with Traditions Collected by the late Iain R MacKay by Hugh Barron – Volume 63

The contents of the above papers are detailed in Appendix 3.

c. The following TGSI papers were examined but didn't appear to have any direct relevance to the research objectives:

- Celtic Poetry collected by Alexander Macdonald – Volume 11
- Observations on Highland Ethnology, with special reference to Inverness and District by Alexander Macdonald – Volume 17
- Social Customs of the Gaels by Alexander Macdonald – Volume 32
- Social Customs of the Gaels Part II by Alexander Macdonald – Volume 33
- Music in the Home Life of the Gael by Alexander Macdonald -Volume 33
- A Manuscript of the Young Dr William Mackay by Iain R Mackay – Volume 46
- Verse, Fragments and Words from Various Districts by Hugh Barron - Volume 49
- Notes on bards by Hugh Barron – Volume 50
- Verse, Fragments, etc, from Various Districts by Hugh Barron - Volume 52

## 5 Identified material relevant to Glenmoriston

Given the limited project budget, it was only possible for the consultants to spend a limited time in the Macdonald archives in the National Library of Scotland. Also, given the extensive size of the material in the archive (in the region of 2,000 separate items), there was the opportunity to only examine a small sample of the available items. However, the material in this section, gathered during the visit to NLS, gives an overview of the type and quality of the songs, poems etc available. This is augmented by material pertaining to Glenmoriston contained in the Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness.



Material has been grouped together in broad themes, roughly in line with the themes used in the initial research, *The Musical Heritage of Glenmoriston* (March 2021)

### A Note on the Transcription and Translation

All poems and songs have been reproduced in the original language in which they were transcribed or published, and have not been put into modern standardised Gaelic. The translations of these should be considered as a guide to the original, and do not stand on their own poetic merit.

## 5.1 The Natural World

### A' Bhadan Canaich

A' Bhadaìn Canaich was sourced as a handwritten manuscript in the National Library Archives, and does not appear to have been published. See below:

<p>A bhadaìn bhig Canaich Bu mhaith leam do (?) <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò</i> 'S fhada bho d' dhachaigh Air t-aineol a thriall thu <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i></p>	<p>Oh wee sprig of bog cotton Greatly I would have liked <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò</i> Far from your home To unknown territory you departed <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i></p>
<p>'S fhada bho d' dhachaigh Air t-aineol a thriall thu <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i> Is fhada na sràidean Bho d' chàil is do mhiann-sa <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i></p>	<p>Far from your home To unknown territory you departed <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i> The streets are a far cry From your temperament, from your desires <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i></p>
<p>Is fhada na sràidean Bho d' chàil is do mhiann-sa <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i> 'S gur cinnteach tha mise Gur minig thu 'g iarraidh <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i></p>	<p>The streets are a far cry From your temperament, from your desires <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i> I am certain that You are often seeking <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i></p>
<p>'S gur cinnteach tha mise Gur minig thu 'g iarraidh <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i> A dh' ionnsuidh na mòintich A lointean 's a riamhlaich <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i></p>	<p>I am certain that You are oft to be seeking <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i> Up onto the moorland Around its pools and wild ducks <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i></p>
<p>A dh' ionnsuidh na mòintich A lointean 's a riamhlaich <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i> 'S gu cuideachd na luachrach Feadh bhuachagan fiarach <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i></p>	<p>Up onto the moorland Around the pools abundant in fish <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i> And to company of the rushes In the slanting low hills <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i></p>

<p>'S gu cuideachd na luachrach Feadh bhuachagan fiarach <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i> A dhannsa a mhireach Ri luinneag na h-lar-ghaoith <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i></p>	<p>And to the company of the rushes In the slanting low hills <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i> Dancing gleefully. To the ditty of the western wind <i>Hiùill-ò-'s na hug-i-ò.</i></p>
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Source: National Library Archives: Acc.7708/27-28 - 'Unpublished Poetry.'

Translation: Ceit Langhorne and Roddy Maclean.

This can be compared to another, rather evocative poem called 'Do Dhuilleach' in which Alexander Macdonald addresses a leaf in autumn. It can be seen in many of his poems and songs, that the landscape, its flora and fauna are sentient. They are worthy of addressing and considering in the context of contemporary human concerns; for example, clearance, migration to the towns and death.

### Do Dhuilleach

<p>Ged a b' ard air craobh an de thu, Tha thu 'n diugh na d' luidh' 's an fheurach; Thaing t' am 'us sguab an t-Eug Le 'sheid gu lar thu; 'S cha 'n fhaicear tuilleadh thu air geug— Tha greim a bhais ort.</p>	<p>Although you were high on a tree yesterday, You are today lying in the grass; The time came and death swept you with a gust to the ground; And you will be seen no more on the branch- Death has a grip on you.</p>
<p>'S cha dhuig thu 'm feasda ris a mhaduinn A danntsa feadh nan gleann 's nam badan, 'S a sgoileadh beath' 'us blaths air talamh, Mar mhaighdionn ghradhach A lasadh gaoil an uchd a leannain Le gath a tlath-shuil.</p>	<p>You never waken with the morning Dancing all over the glens and thickets, And dispersing life and vitality and warmth on earth, Like a lovely maiden Burning with love in the embrace of her lover A beam in her soft eye.</p>
<p>Sheinn an samhradh crann-ghorm cuachadh, 'S am foghar fallain, tairis, uachdrach, An uchd a cheil iad fhein 'an suain, 'S 'am brudard diomhair, Air broilleach caidreach nach leig bhuidhe lad gu siorruidh.</p> <p>'S o nach 'eil aig mac an duin', Ach cuairteag bheag do 'n t-shaoghal uile, Cia'r son a bhiodh a la cho duilich, 'S is tric a tha e? Cia'r son nach gaireadh e an diugh Gun ghal a' maireach?</p>	<p>The lushy-branched, unfurling summer, And the wholesome, kind, bountiful autumn, Asleep in a secret dream, in the bosom of each other, In the breast of friendship that will never falter.</p> <p>And since mankind has only, A brief journey through the world, Why would this day be so sorrowful, As it often is? Why would he not laugh today Without crying tomorrow?</p>

Source: *Coinneach 'Us Coille.*

Translation: Ceit Langhorne and Roddy Maclean.

**Air Cluinntinn na Comhachaig ann am Preas mu Àm Cadail**

To continue this theme, Macdonald addresses an owl in the following poem, which he hears outside his window one night.

<p>Thig a' Chomhachag bho chd, Seinn a rithisd dhomh 'nochd. Tha mo chridhe ri gloc ri' d' cheòl, 'S ged us tùrsach do bhéus, 'S tu a' crònan air ghéig, 'S binne leam-s 'e no-teud fo mheòir.</p>	<p>Come, poorly owl, Sing for me again tonight, My heart chimes at your music. Although your demeanour is melancholy, As you murmur on a branch, It is sweeter to me than a clarsach string plucked by finger.</p>
<p>Leam is goirt e ri 'luaidh Na tha nise dhiùbh bhuam, Agus cuid dhiùbh bhi suaint' fo'n fhòd; 'S cuid eile dhiùbh sgaoilt' Air feadh cheàrnaibh an t-saogh'il Fhad's a bheirt iad le gaoth is seòl.</p>	<p>Painful it is to me to relate Those that are now far from me And those others that lie under the sod; Some others are dispersed To all corners of the world Where they can be carried by wind and sail.</p>
<p>A ghaoth air feadh fhalt Agus aodann do dhealt 'S e 'na shuidhe air bac 's a cheò; Mar is minig tha mis', Is mi 'smaointeachd gu tric Air a' chomunn nach tig 'na m' choir.</p>	<p>The wind in his feathers And his face bathed in dew Sitting on steep banks in the mist; As often I think, Of the company that will no longer come seeking me.</p>
<p>Ach a Chomhachag chaoimh Leiginn riutsa mo ghaoir, Tha coibhneas an glaoth, do bheòil; Cha'n aithne dhomh na h-aon Dha'n innsinn cho saor An acad tha m' thaobh 'gam leòn.</p>	<p>But gentle owl I would tell you of my pain, There is kindness in your wild cry; I don't know of anyone whom I could tell so freely Of the sharp pain in my side that grieves me.</p>
<p>Ghabh an saoghal droch car, 'S chaidh e' thaobh ann an clais Mar fhear daoraich fo shac de'n òl Dh' fhalbh an tlùs bh' ann o chian Mar bhoillsgeadh roimh shian, No mar aiteal de'n ghrian an ceò.</p>	<p>The world took a strange turn, Collapsed down in a ditch Like a man under the burden of the drink The tenderness that was once here has fled Like a shimmer of light before a storm, Or a glimpse of the sun through the mist.</p>

Source: National Library Archives: *Acc. 13587/4 continuation of Acc.13587/2, 1910-1924.*

Translation: Ceit Langhorne and Roddy Maclean.

We know from his articles and scrapbooks, that Macdonald was a very articulate regular correspondent with various publications, on issues of land management and reform; language decline; and Gaelic education in schools. A particular movement to the cities would have happened within his community in his lifetime. The resulting disconnection of the Gael from their culture and homeland, would very much have been present in his mind.

The songs and stories written in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries give an indication of the use and management of land. Corrie Dho appears frequently – in relation to its fir trees, its flora, deer hunting and illicit whisky production.

An article by Gleannach (Macdonald) about Corrie Dho gives a history of the area along with stories from its past:

*Coire Dhodha (The Corry of the River Doe)*

*“In the following rather gruesome tale frequently told in ceilidhs in Glenmoriston in the times that are probably now no more, Coir-Dhodha figures somewhat differently. The corrie has always been characterised as most fertile, sheltered on all sides, its temperature is always genial and warm. Archibald Grant, one of the best-known bards of Glenmoriston in an interesting hunting song to our corrie somewhat after the style of Duncan Ban MacIntyre’s “Ben Doran” describes it as of luxuriant productiveness in herbs and wild-flowers. There is upon the whole no reason to disbelieve the tradition that at one time the corrie produced an enormous crop of natural grass which, when the season happened to be particularly good, the people stored in barns of rough wickerwork “saibhlean caoil”.*

Northern Chronicle, January 15<sup>th</sup> 1902

The article goes on to tell the story of one of the *saibhlean caoil* being infested with snakes, resulting in it being set on fire.

## 5.2 Songs of Place

### Meallfuarhnaidh

The following panegyric praise poem comes from an unknown publication, and was found as a cut-out in one of Alexander Macdonald’s scrapbooks in the National Library Archives. The date and title of the publication was not sourced. This poem however, was signed under one of Macdonald’s many pseudonyms; ‘Gleannach.’

‘Meallfuarhnaidh’, which translates as the ‘rounded hillock of the cold moorland,’ is situated to the east of Glenmoriston, above Loch Ness. It is directly to the west of ‘Lòn na Fala’, (the plain of blood). This is named after a skirmish between the Mackenzies and Ailean Dubh MacRanald, after Ailean Dubh burned the congregation alive in the church of Kilchrist, near Inverness, in 1602.

It appears from the last verse that the ‘Meall’ was a place of meeting and music, as much as any taigh cèilidh in the glen. It is interesting to consider the surrounding hills in the context of outdoor gatherings and celebration. Macdonald collected numerous marriage announcements and obituaries pertaining to Glenmoriston in his scrapbooks. One undated scrapbook cutting reads of the marriage in Invermoriston of A. Deniston, from a London family with associations to the glen. After cake and a banquet at the Invermoriston Hotel, the party, along with the locals, built a bonfire on a hill overlooking Invermoriston and Loch Ness, named as ‘Craig Dhu.’ ‘Meallfuarhnaidh’ is clearly not where this party met on this occasion, but this source nonetheless allows us to consider the diverse, and more intimate relationship people enjoyed with their environment. The following are a selection of verses from a longer poem in praise of ‘Meallfuarhnaidh’.

Mo bheannachd gu Meallfuarhnaidh Ged theireadh cach gur gruamach i. Is mise nach cuir cuarach e 'S e th'ann an t-uasal mor.	My blessings on Meallfuarhnaidh Although others will say that (she) is gloomy. I certainly wouldn't speak ill of it It is the noblest entity around.
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Mo threun laoch 's mo churaidh e, M' ard-rìgh am measg nam monaidhean 'S e 's crun da fraoch mhullaichean 'S 's e 's curachd dha an ceo.	He is my mighty hero, my champion, The highest king amongst the moorland A crown above heather-covered summits The mist makes a cap for it.
Tha creamh a'fas gu h-uaibhreach ann; Tha biolaire nam fuaran ann; Tha dearcagan 's na bruachan ann; 'S tha luachair air na loin.	Wild gentian grows proudly there; The cress of the springs grows there; The berries of the banks grow there; And rushes around its pools.
'S gu'm biodh surd is eibhneas oirnn, 'N uair a thigeadh tìm na ceilidh oirnn; 'S ann bhiodh an srann air sgeulachdan; 'S cha bhiodh eis air ceol.	There we would be merry and joyful, When the time would come for us to join together; The murmur of stories heard; And no hindrance to the music.

Source: National Library Archives; *Acc.13587/3: publications and newspaper articles in Gaelic or about Gaelic, and Gaelic songs sent to newspapers, 1902-1925;*

Translation: Ceit Langhorne and Roddy Maclean.

### Smuaintean na Sròine Inbhirrhoireasdain A' Bhliadhna' Ùr, 1926.

The following poem is written by Macdonald, from the point of view of Sròn na Muice, above Invermoriston. This poem is particularly interesting and important for connecting the history and rich oral tradition of Glenmoriston around a geographical 'anchor'.

With Sròn na Muice as the protagonist, we learn of the flux of people through Glenmoriston over a millennium. This spans the hunt of the superhuman warrior band the Fianna through the Glen. The poem describes the actions of the violent 'cailleachan;' supernatural old women. These characters were touched upon in our previous report, *The Musical Heritage of Glenmoriston* (see pages 27-31). The change in clan leadership, from the hands of the Macdonalds to the Grants, is described, as is the coming of Christianity with Columba and St Merchard.

As you will see below, the Sròn and the River Moriston remain uncaring and undisturbed amidst the short-lived journeys of humans and otherworldly creatures.

Gur fada 'n so' na m' bhuachaill mi; 'S chan urra mi gun smuaineachadh Mu 'n chunna mi 's na chuala mi Bho 'n dh' fhàs mi suas a m' òig'.	I have been here long since I was a boy; And I cannot help but ponder About what I've seen and heard Since the days of my youth.
'S ged nach' eil mo chiabhagan Air tanachadh na liathachadh O! 's iomadh aois chaidh sìos orm Gu siorruidheachd mar sgleò.	Although my tresses Haven't thinned or greyed O! Many a year has descended on me And gone into eternity like mist.
'S mu 'n chunna mi 's na chuala mi, Gur tric a bhios mi brudalachadh; Na'n éisdeadh ris an tuairisgeul An sluagh tha nise beò.	Of all that I saw and heard, I often dream and ponder; And listening to the current goings-on Of the people living around me now.

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<p>Chuala mi mu shìthichean          'Bhi mach 's a stigh mu shitheanan          'S dannsa ri'n cuid fidhleirean          'S piobairean gu leòr.</p>	<p>I heard of fairies          Going in and out of the sìtheanan          And dancing to the fiddle tunes          And the pipes.</p>
<p>'S mar mu dhéighinn fuathanan          Is ùrisgean is gruagaichean,          A bhi'te faicinn uaireigin          Air feadh nam bruach 's nan còs.</p>	<p>Around about us demons          The fairies and urisks and the gruagachs,          Would be seen often          Around the banks and caverns.</p>
<p>'S an Dùnan shuas bha liath-chailleich          'S an Tùr bha té'il na b' fhiadhaich i;          'N uair a theannadh iad ri briathrachadh,          Bu chianail 'bhi na'n còir.</p>	<p>And in the Dùnan below there was a grey-haired          Cailleach          And in the Tùr there was another one fiercer than she;          When they set their mind to speaking,          It was terrible to be in their company.</p>
<p>Tha Tom-na h-Aorainn urras ud          'S bha bochdan mòr a' fuireach ann;          A chluinnte tric a' burallaich          Mar neach ri tuireadh bròin.</p>	<p>And Tom na h-Aorainn certainly would be there          Many poor folk lived there;          Often would be the wailing be heard          As some sorrowful person laments.</p>
<p>'S tha cuimhn' agam an Fhéinn a thighinn          A nall le sùrd a Eirionn oirnn;          'S b' iad sud na laoich éuchd-bhuilleach,          'N uair a dh' éireadh air an treòir.</p>	<p>I remember the Fèinn coming          With cheer from Ireland to us;          They were the champions of the hard-hitting feats,          When they set out on pursuit of their prey.</p>
<p>'S bha Conachair mòr na faing' againn          'S a rìreadh cha bu chearbach e;          'S e rinn Loch-Nis cho ainmeil dhuinn,          Mar 's dearbht' 's na seanchuis mhòr.</p>	<p>And great Conachair of the ocean swell was with us          He was not clumsy in his actions          It was him that made Loch Ness so famous          And secured its position in the greatest of sagas.</p>
<p>'S chunna mi na ginealaich          Bho linn gu linn ga'n iomaineadh          A' tighinn, 's a' falbh mar thigeadh iad          Mar chuifean de cheò.</p>	<p>I have seen the generations          Across the centuries driven over to us          Coming and leaving as they had arrived          Like wads of mist.</p>
<p>Cloinn Dòmhnuille mhòir nan Eileanan,          Bu rìghrean iad 's cha cheilleire          'S a dh' aindeoin 'na co theireadh e,          Gu'm beireachdail am pòr.</p>	<p>And Clan Donald of the Isles          Kings and great musicians          It is them who would bear the seed.          Despite what people may say of them,</p>
<p>'S na dhéigh sin thainig Granndaich oirnn          Fir mhòra, làidir, cheannsgalach.          'S cha b' fhada gus 'n do cheangladh dhoibh,          An gleann 's na bh ann mar chòir.</p>	<p>And after that came the Grants          Great, strong, commanding men.          It wasn't long before they connected,          The glen together in all its facets.</p>
<p>'S mar bha bliadhna' is bliadhnaichean          A' toiseachadh, 's a' crìochnachadh          Bha beatha 's bàs ga 'n riarachadh,          'S bu tric bha iarguinn òirnn.</p>	<p>And as year after year          Begins and comes to an end          With life and death rounding it,          And often we were grieved.</p>

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Ach bho'n thainig Crìosdalachd Mar sholus gréin' na ar n-iarbhailte Chaidh dorchadas an crionachas Mar a dh' iarrte 's mar bu choir.	But Christianity came to us Like a beam of sunlight from the heavens Darkness was diminished As was righteously and greatly desired.
Is 's e mo mhiann 's mo dhùrachd-sa Deagh bheannachadh bliadhn' ùire dhuibh, 'S gach maduinn mar a dhuisgeas sibh Ur mùirn bhi dol a' mò.	It is my greatest desire To wish you all the blessings of the New Year, And that every morning in which you wake Your happiness increases ten-fold.
Ach mis' is Abhainn Mhoireasdainn, Do'n t-saoghal gura coma sinn; 'S ma gheibh clann-daoine coire dhuinn, Mo thogair ors' an t-Sròin.	But me and the river Moriston, Are uncaring about this world; And if humankind regard us with honour, That would be my wish, replied the Sròn.

Source: National Library Archives: Acc. 7708/27-29 - *Unpublished Poetry*.

Translation: Ceit Langhorne and Roddy Maclean.

### Gleanna Moireasdainn by Angus Grant

The below song by Angus Grant is part of a long tradition of Gaelic praise poems to Glenmoriston composed by those who have been forced to leave. Written in the 1930's, it is the very tail end of the local Gaelic tradition and is a direct link to the Glenmoriston bards of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

According to Hugh Barron who collected *Gleanna Moireasdainn*:

*"Angus Grant was from Achlean in Glenmoriston. In his youth he was in the army and served in various lands. He latterly lived in Fort Augustus where he had a shop and died a year or two before the war in 1939-45. The song was composed in the 1930s and is probably one of the last composed by a native of that glen. His son, Angus, who is a well-known player of the fiddle, lived in Fort William."*

Angus Grant (the son of the poet) currently lives in Fort William and for many years has been a notable player and teacher of the West-coast style of fiddling. He has taught many of today's prominent fiddlers and as such is an important part of the legacy of Glenmoriston's musical heritage and tradition. His son, also called Angus Grant tragically died in 2016. He was the fiddler and co-founder of the hugely popular and influential band, *Shooglenifty*.

Ged tha mi 'n diugh 'n Dun Eidinn, Measg uaislean is Beurla, Tha m' inntinn trom fo eislean, 'S mi fad bho Gleanna Moireasdain.	Although I'm in Edinburgh today, Among nobles and the English language, My mind is heavy with grief, As I'm far from Glenmoriston.
Seisd: Tha mi sgìth, sgìth, sgìth, Tha mi sgìth dheth sraid a' bhaile, 'S mor gum b'fhèarr leam fhin bhith thall Coille Bhlàraidh 's mi dol dhachaidh.	Chorus: I'm tired, tired, tired, I'm tired of the city streets, And I would much rather be there myself In Blaraidh Forest on the way home.
'S e siud a' ghleann tha bòidheach, Bho 'n Rudh' Bhàn gu Ceannacroc, 'S cait' bheil na càirdean, Le caoimheas 's na blàth-shuilean?	That's a beautiful glen, From Rudh' Bhàn to Ceannacroc, Where are the relatives, With kindness in their warm eyes?

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Bha mi deas is bha mi tuath, 'S an Eiphit 's na Innsean shuas, Ach Lagan Bàn is Coire-Dhò Cha robh air leithid ri fhaicinn ann.	I was south and I was north In Egypt and the heights of India, But in Laggan Bàn and Coire-Dhò There is beauty unseen anywhere.
Mo charaid? Ailean Camaran, B' e siud a' ghaisgeach àluinn, 'S gur tric aig taobh a teinntean Dh' éisd mi ri sgeulan aigharach.	My friend Alan Cameron, That was the beautiful hero, And often by his firesides, I listened to his entertaining stories.
Chual' mi sgeul Di-ciadain, Chuir smuaintean mòr air m' inntinn, Gleanna beag a b' àill leam, Bhith 'n diugh an làmh na coigreach.	I heard the story on Wednesday, Great thoughts got me thinking, Little glen that I dearly loved, Is today in the hands of a stranger.
Ach bithidh mi 'n duil 's an dòchas, Mu 'n càirear mi 's an Cille, Gu faic mi fhàthasd tàmh ann, Na Granndaich mar a b' àbhaist dhaibh bhith.	But I do hope, That before I am laid to rest in the Church, May I see them peacefully residing yet, The Grants as they used to be.

Source: Verse, Fragments and Words from various districts by Hugh Barron, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, Volume 48

Translation: Ceit Langhorne and Munro Gauld.

**Air cul Achleagan Boidheach** (Behind beautiful Achleagan)

Luinneag - Air seann fhonn (Work song, sung to an old tune)

Tha neoinean an 'us fluraichean Air cul Achleagan boidheach— Air cul Achleagan, Braigh' Achleagan, Cul Achleagan boidheach	There are daisies and flowers Behind beautiful Achleagan— Behind Achleagan, Brae Achleagan, The back of beautiful Achleagan.
'S tha meanbh-choill bharrach dhlu-phreasach Air cul Achleagan boidheach— Air cul Achleagan, etc.	And the small thickets are full of dense shrubs Behind beautiful Achleagan— Behind Achleagan, etc.
'S tha alltan lin neach lub-shruthach Air cul Achleagan boidheach— Air cul Achleagan, etc.	And the streams and meandering currents Behind beautiful Achleagan— Behind Achleagan, etc.
Is iomadh ceum a shiubhail mi 'Measg ruidheachan 'us lointean Air cul Achleagan, etc.	I have travelled many steps Among the ridges and meadows Behind Achleagan, etc.
A buachailleachd chruidh chais-fhionn Feadh na 'm bruach na 'n glaic 's na 'n cos-chnoc Air cul Achleagan, etc.	Herding white-footed cattle Along the banks and the glades and the foothills Behind Achleagan, etc.
'S cha bu tric leam fhin ann mi— Bhiodh gruagach riomhach comhl' ruim Air cul Achleagan, etc.	And I was not often alone there— I would be accompanied by a fine girl Behind Achleagan, etc.
'S mi g' innseadh sgeula 'n uaigneas di, Nach fhaod mi luaidh na m' oran Air cul Achleagan, etc.	I would tell her a secret story, That I would reveal in my song Behind Achleagan, etc.



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'S coin bheag' air bharr na' meanganaibh Ri leadanachd 'us ceol duinn Air cul Achleagan, etc.	And little hounds on the tops of the branches Melodiously creating sweet music for us Behind Achleagan, etc.
'S osag Ruidhe-na-h-Ulaidh, Gabhail luinneag dhuinn 'us cronan Air cul Achleagan, etc.	And the breeze of the Ruidhe-na-h-Ulaidh, Warbling and singing a ditty Behind Achleagan, etc.
'N uair bhiodh am feasgar camhanach, A sanais feadh na 'n og-chrann Air cul Achleagan, etc.	When the gloaming would draw near Signalling itself amongst the young trees Behind Achleagan, etc.
O! 's tric 'o sin a smaoinich mi, Air slainte 's saorsa m' oige Air cul Achleagan, Braigh' Achleagan, Cul Achleagan boidheach.	Oh! often since then I thought, To the health and liberty of my youth Behind Achleagan, the Brae of Achleagan Behind beautiful Achleagan.

Source: *Coinneach 'us Coille*, Alexander MacDonald, Inverness, 1895.

Translation: Ceit Langhorne and Munro Gauld

The melody to *Air cul Achleagan Boidheach* is given in solfa notation in a newspaper article by Macdonald:



Source: National Library Archives: Acc.7708/3, Alexander Macdonald Family Archive, NLS.

Newspaper article by *Gleannach*, part of a series in The Highland News called *Guthanan beag o chuil a' chuil*. Date unknown.

Transcription from Solfa Notation: Munro Gauld

According to Alexander Macdonald, this tune was originally the melody to the following:

Air cùl a' phrisean Bèul a' phrisean Cùl a' phrisean bhòidhiach.	At the back of the thicket At the mouth of the thicket At the back of the thicket beautiful
--	---

Alternating with:

Cùl a chinnean Bèul a' chinnean Cùl a chinnean bhòidhiach.	The back of his head The mouth of the head The back of his beautiful head.
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### Chunna mi, chunna mi

The tune Bealach a' Mhorbheinn is the basis of the below song.

*"Of the same order of melody, more or less, is the one to which the following words were chanted, sometimes as an exercise in Gaelic pronunciation and articulation: "*

Chunna mi, chunna mi, Chunna mi 'n t-iomlan; (Repeated twice).	I saw, I saw, I saw the whole; (Repeated twice).
Chunna mi 'n t-lonbhar, 'S chunna mi 'n t-Sròn. Mullach Ruidh' Spidein, Is bealach Ruidh' Chaomhaidh, Bealach Ruidh' Spidein, Is mullach Ruidh' Chaomhaidh; Mullach Ruidh' Spidein, Is bealach Ruidh' Chaomhaidh, Mullach a' Chaol-doire 'S Goirtean-a'-Chòis.	I saw Inver, And I saw Strone. The summit of Ruidhe Spidein, And the bealach of Ruidhe Chaomhaidh, The bealach of Ruidhe Spidein, It is the summit of Ruidhe Chaomhaidh; The summit of Ruidhe Spidein, And the bealach of Ruidhe Chaomhaidh, The summit of Chaol-doire And Goirtean a' Chois.
Tiugainn an fhireach A thilleadh nan caorach, (Repeated twice). Tiugainn a laochain, 'Shiubhal nam beann. Buachaille ghobhar, Is buachaille chaorach, (Repeated twice). Buachaille laogh, Is buachaille mheann.	Let's go to the high ground To drive home the sheep, (Repeated twice). Let's go, wee lad, Travelling the mountain. Herdsman of the goats, And herdsman of the sheep, (Repeated twice). Herdsman of calves, And a herdsman of the young goats.

Source: Fragments of Gaelic Song and Lilt Alexander Macdonald, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, Volume 29.

Translation: Ceit Langhorne and Munro Gauld

The place names in the song are:

lonbhar: Inver – The Confluence

Sròn: Strone - The Nose

Ruidhe Spidein: The Shieling of the Pinnacle

Ruidhe Chaomhaidh: The Gentle Shieling

Chaol-doire: The narrow woodland

Goirtean-a'-Chòis: The field at the foot (of the hill)

The source of this song was not given by Alexander Macdonald and are no definitive place names that would identify the area that it came from. It may have been Glenmoriston (many, if not most, of Macdonald's songs were collected from the Loch Ness area) with Strone and Inver(moriston) being identifiable. The remainder of the other place names could perhaps be those used locally at the time to identify fields and individual shielings but which, due to changing land use and management, fell out of use. For most areas in the Highlands the names of individual shielings were not recorded by Ordnance Survey as by the time the first surveys were carried out for their 6" to the mile maps (1860-1880) shielings had not been in use for 70 or more years.

Melody: Bealach a' Mhorbheinn. See: <https://digital.nls.uk/early-gaelic-book-collections/archive/75848426?mode=transcription>

Key of G: Moderate, beating twice in the measure

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leave Morar for ever." "If thou wilt vow and swear that by altar, book and candle, I shall let thee go." The spectre on bended knees vowed to leave those regions for ever, and it has kept its vow. On being liberated it flew towards the Misty Island singing the following Gaelic ditty. The words and air are now used as a fairy lullaby in the West Highlands.

FROES.

**BEALACH A' MHORBHEINN—THE PASS OF THE MORVEN.**

Key G. *Moderato, beating twice in the measure.*

<p>   r : n : r   a : - : -   r : r : f   n : r : d   r : n : r   a : - : -   r : n : f   n : - : d  </p> <p>'S fada bhuan fhin bonn Beinn Eadarain; 'S fada bhuan fhin Bealach a' Mhorbheinn.</p> <p>Fare ye well noo, lady Ben Ederin, Fare ye well noo, Pass o' the Morven,</p>	<p>   r : n : r   a : - : -   r : r : f   n : r : d   r : f : n   n : r : d   a : l : d   r : - : d  </p> <p>'S fada bhuan fhin bonn Beinn Eadarain; 'S fada gun teagamh bhuan Bealach a' Mhorbheinn.</p> <p>Fare ye well noo, bonnie Ben Ederin, Farewell for ever dear Pass of the Morven.</p>	<p>   r : n : r   a : - : -   l : n : f   n : f : n   r : n : r   a : - : -   r : n : f   n : - : d  </p> <p>Bho bhonn gu bonn, bonn Beinn Eadarain, Bho bhonn gu bonn Bealach a' Mhorbheinn.</p> <p>Green are thy knowes, bonnie Ben Ederin, Cozey thy knowes, Bealach o' the Morven,</p>
<p>   r : n : r   a : - : a   l : n : f   n : f : n   r : f : n   n : r : d   a : l : d   r : - : d  </p> <p>'S fada bhuan fhin bonn Beinn Eadarain, 'S fada gun teagamh bhuan Bealach a' Mhorbheinn.</p> <p>Bare are the knowes awa frae Ben Ederin, Gaud are the knowes awa frae thee, Morven.</p>	<p>Bho chid nam beann, bonn nan bealachean, Smooth are the hills roon' thee, Ben Ederin, Bho chid nam beann, Bealach a' Mhorbheinn; Pure are the hills rushing down Morven; Bho chid nam beann bonn nan bealachean— Rough are the hills far frae Ben Ederin, 'S fada gun teagamh bhuan Bealach a' Mhorbheinn, Dark are the rivulets far frae thee, Morven.</p> <p>Cid nam monaidhean bial nam bealachean; Knowes and rough hills far frae Ben Ederin, Cid nam monaidhean Bealach a' Mhorbheinn, Howes and dark hills far frae thee, Morven, Cid nam monaidhean bial nam bealachean— Are na like thee, thou bonnie Ben Ederin, 'S fada gun teagamh bhuan Bealach a' Mhorbheinn. Are na like thee, thou Pass o' the Morven.</p>	

**HIGHLAND SOCIETY NEWS.**

THE GLASGOW SKYE ASSOCIATION held their Annual Gathering in the Queen's Rooms on 6th ult. Mr. Cecil Kennard, of Outag, in the chair, who was supported by Colonel Williamson, Lieut-Colonel J. Maclean, Dr. Magnus Maclean, Mr. Hugh Macleod, etc. The hall was crowded. The chairman and Dr. Maclean delivered rousing addresses. The ball which followed was a brilliant spectacle, many of those present wearing the Highland dress.

GAELIC SOCIETY OF GLASGOW.—There was a large turn out of prominent Highlanders at the last meeting of this Society to hear an address from Professor Mackinnon on "Gaelic Hymns." The lecture proved a most interesting one, and led to an equally pleasant discussion.

THE GAELIC HIGHLAND ASSOCIATION held their Annual Concert in the Public Hall, on 28th ult., Ex-Baillie Munro, J.P., in the chair. The hall was filled to overflowing, and the concert proved a great success.

THE CLAN MACLEOD are taking steps to form a Society in Glasgow.

**EDINBURGH SKYE ASSOCIATION.**—This Association has just been formed, and a Social Meeting, under the presidency of Reginald Macleod of Macleod, C.B., was held in the Literary Institute, on 26th December, which was well attended.

**GAELIC CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR CARDS.**

We are glad to learn that the success which attended the introduction of these specialties last year has caused Mr. Whyte to secure quite a variety for the present season. They all bear Celtic designs, with appropriate Gaelic mottoes, while the cards themselves are works of art equal to any that are manufactured in or out of Germany. As there is likely to be a large demand, early application should be made to

**MR. HENRY WHYTE,**  
4 BRIDGE STREET, GLASGOW.

Source: The Celtic Monthly, Volume 4 1896 pages 68 and 69

### 5.3 The Otherworld

Quite a few of the songs collected by Macdonald related to the sithichean or fairies:

**Am bun a' chruidh cha chaidil mi**

<p>Am bun a' chruidh cha chaidil mi; Am bun a' chruidh cha bhi mi; Am bun a' chruidh cha chaidil mi. 'S mo leabaidh anns an t-sithean</p>	<p>At the cattle's feet I do not sleep; At the cattle's feet I will not be; At the cattle's feet I do not sleep. And my bed in the fairy knoll</p>
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Am bun a' chruidh cha chaidil mi, Am bun a' chruidh cha bhi mi; Cha chaidil mi am bun a' chruidh, 'S mo leabaidh stigh 's an t-sìthinn.	At the cattle's feet I will not sleep, At the cattle's feet I will not be; I cannot sleep at the cattle's feet, And my bed is inside the fairy knoll.
--	--

Source: Fragments of Gaelic Song and Lilt by Alexander Macdonald, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness Volume 29

Translation: Ceit Langhorne and Munro Gauld

Melody: A man's a man for a' that.

**C' ait' an robh thu 'n diugh 's an dé**

C' ait' an robh thu 'n diugh 's an dé, A mhicein ghasda, 'mhicein ghasda?	Where were you today and yesterday, Handsome son, handsome son?
Anns a' choille ris an spréidh, 'S a' buain nan dearcag, buain nan dearcag	In the forest with the cattle, And picking the berries, picking the berries

Source: Fragments of Gaelic Song and Lilt by Alexander Macdonald, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness Volume 29

Translation: Ceit Langhorne and Munro Gauld

Melody: Highland Laddie

**Tha mi Sgìth / Buain na Rainich,**

Macdonald gives a Loch Ness-side version of this well-known song:

A h-uile latha 'buain na rainich; A h-uile latha 'm ònar: A h-uile latha 'buain na rainich, Anns a' ghleannan bhòidheach. Tha mi sgìth 's mi leam fhìn, A h-uile latha 'buain na rainich; Tha mi sgìth 's mi leam fhìn, A h-uile latha 'm ònar. Cùl an tomain, beul an tomain, Cùl an tomain bhòidhich; Cùl an tomain, beul an tomain, A h-uile latha 'm ònar	Every day pulling the bracken; Every day alone: Every day pulling the bracken, In the wee beautiful glen. I'm tired and on my own, Every day pulling the bracken; I am tired and on my own, Every day alone. Back of the mound, mouth of the mound, Behind the beautiful mound; Back of the mound, mouth of the mound, Every day alone.
Sometimes varied by: Cùl a' chinnein, beul a' chinnein, Cùl a' chinnein bhòidhich, etc., etc.,	Back of the hoard, mouth of the hoard, The back of the beautiful hoard, etc., etc.,
and Cùl a' phrisein, beul a' phrisein, Cùl a' phrisein bhòidhich. Tha mi sgìth 's mi leam fhìn, A h-uile latha 'buain na rainich; Tha mi sgìth 's mi leam fhìn, A chuideachd air an smeòrach.	Behind the bushes, at the mouth of the thicket, At the rear of the beautiful bushes I am tired and I am alone, Every day pulling the bracken; I am tired and I am alone, In the company of the thrush.

Source: Fragments of Gaelic Song and Lilt Alexander Macdonald, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, Volume 29

Translation: Ceit Langhorne and Munro Gauld

**Tha mi Sgìth melody:**



The song can be sung either as a lullaby or as a puirt-à-beul for dancing. The story behind the song is that a male fairy fell in love with a girl, but her parent locked her up to prevent them meeting. The song is sung by the fairy as he pines for his lover.

There are two possible translations of *'buain*: pulling; or reaping / cutting, and this reflects the two uses for bracken. Bracken was harvested by cutting when it was to be used as bedding for cattle. In times when the hills were stocked by black cattle (rather than the subsequent sheep), areas of bracken were relatively rare and were hugely valued for bedding- there is an account of tenant farmers on Loch Tay side in the early 19th century drawing lots to see which ones would get the areas of bracken on the common grazing. Bracken was also used as a thatching material and was harvested by pulling it from the ground with the fronds being stripped leaving only the stalk. The black root (*bun dubh*) is harder and more durable than the fibrous stalk and thus doesn't rot as quickly. Thus, when thatching, it is the only bit of the plant left exposed to the elements.

## 5.4 Hunting and Poaching

Given the high social value that was placed on hunting from the mediaeval period onwards, it is not surprising that songs of hunting (and poaching) are quite common in the Gaelic tradition. They can be of particular interest from a local perspective as they are usually very descriptive, identifying specific places, the landscape and land use, flora and fauna etc (exemplified by the various hunting-related songs of Duncan Ban MacIntyre such as *Òran do Ghunna dhan Ainm Nic Coiseim* (Song to the gun named Nic Coiseim)).

From a Glenmoriston context, the most significant song in the canon is *Òran Seilge ann an Coire Dho* (A Hunting Song in Coire Dho) by Archibald Grant a.k.a Archie Tàilleir (see Musical Heritage Report). However, there are also numerous other local songs which refer to the joys of hunting. The following song was collected by Alexander Macdonald and was "well-known on Lochness-side".

Leiginn mo bhalachan, 'Shiubhal nan garbhloch, Leiginn mo bhalachan, Dh' fhalbh nam firichean; Leiginn mo bhalachan,	Let out my boys, To walk the rough moor Let out my boys, To head up to the high ground; Let out my boys,
--	--

'Shiubhal nan garbhloch, 'Chumail an t-sionnaich Bho 'n mheanbh-chrodh.	To walk the rough moor To keep the fox From the wee cattle.
Bheirinn mo chù dhuit, Luaidhe is fùdar, Bheirinn mo chù dhuit Cu is gille dhuit; Bheirinn mo chù dhuit, Gunna nach diùtadh, 'Shiubhal nan stùc, 'S main garbhloch.	I would give you my dog, Lead and powder, I would give you my dog My dog and my lad; I would give you my dog, A gun that would not refuse, To travel around the peaks, And over the rough moorland

Source: Fragments of Gaelic Song and Lilt, Alexander Macdonald, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, Volume 29.

Translation: Ceit Langhorne and Munro Gauld

The melody for the song is not given in the article. However, it is quite possible that it is in one of the many articles by Macdonald in the National Library Archive.

**'S sealgair feidh air fireach thu (You are a deer hunter in the wilds):**

A six-verse version of this hunting song appeared in a paper presented by Alexander Macdonald in 1893 to the Gaelic Society of Inverness (*Scraps of Unpublished Poetry and Folklore from Loch Ness – Part 1*: Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness. Volume 25). However, a more complete version with an additional 4 verses (verses 4 to 8 below) along with the melody is given in a newspaper article by Macdonald - part of his regular weekly column in The Highland News entitled "*Guthanan beag o chuil a' chiùil*" (date published unknown).

*"There was quite a number of one-line verse class among the compositions of the olden time. The following is an interesting specimen. It is very pretty, with simple lyrics and when sung properly was very effective."*

<i>Seisd:</i> <i>Air faill-ill-oro-bha,</i> <i>Huro-bha, huro-bho;</i> <i>Air faill-ill-oro-bha.</i>	<i>Chorus:</i> <i>Air faill-ill-oro-bha,</i> <i>Huro-bha, huro-bho;</i> <i>Air faill-ill-oro-bha.</i>
<i>Rann:</i> <i>Gur sealgair féidh air fireach thu</i> <i>Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>	<i>Verse:</i> <i>You are a hunter in the wilderness,</i> <i>Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>
<i>'S a' bhrìc air an linne leat.</i> <i>Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>	<i>And the trout in the pool is yours,</i> <i>Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>
<i>'S ann a chunna mi fhein,</i> <i>Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>	<i>And I have seen myself,</i> <i>Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>
<i>Thu-sa fhalbh bhuam an dé,</i> <i>Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>	<i>You who left me yesterday,</i> <i>Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>
<i>'S gu bheil mulad orm féin,</i> <i>Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>	<i>And I am sad and melancholy,</i> <i>Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>

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<i>Mu'n sgéul a chuala mi 'n dé, Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>	<i>About the news I heard yesterday, Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>
<i>Ort a shealgair an fhéidh, Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>	<i>Of you; the hunter of the deer, Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>
<i>Chuir siud maillead mo chéum, Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>	<i>That slowed my step, Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>
<i>'S tric a chunna mi fhein, Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>	<i>And often I have myself seen, Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>
<i>Thu-sa 'sealg air na feidh Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>	<i>You hunting the deer, Air faill-ill-oro-bha, etc.</i>

Source: Newspaper article by Gleannach from The Highland News (date unknown). Alexander Macdonald Archive, National Library of Scotland (Acc. 7708 /3).

Translation: Ceit Langhorne and Munro Gauld

The melody for the song is given in solfa notation. To be sung “with slow swinging rhythm.”



Transcription from Solfa Notation: Munro Gauld

The additional verses throw a slightly different light on the song, inferring bad news from the hunt that “slowed my step”. It is likely that this song was written at a time when deer were shot with muskets which required the hunter to get within very close range. It may even refer to a time when hunting was done with bow and arrow and was carried out as a communal group activity, with deer being driven by people and dogs into a specific location where they could be either ambushed by, for example, funnelling them through a steep-sided pass such as *Bealach an Amais* in Corrie Dho, or driven into a deer trap (*An Eilric*). This form of hunting was a much riskier activity than the later deer stalking with guns (as evidenced by the Royal hunt in Atholl in 1563 at which 2 or 3 people were reported as being trampled to death and many more injured by a herd of some 2,000 fleeing deer). See: *Days of Deer Stalking*, William Scrope, London 1883 p.50)

<https://electricScotland.com/history/articles/daysdeer00scrorich.pdf>

The form of the song is a “call and response” work song – usually with one person singing the single-line verse (the *Rann*), with everyone else joining in the 3-line chorus (the *Seisd*). As is usual with this type of song, the 3-line chorus precedes the verse.

### Seann Oran Seilge

Another relatively unknown hunting song, *Seann Oran Seilge* (An old Hunting Song) was, according to Alexander Macdonald, written by Angus Cameron of Stratherrick. The below version collected by Macdonald is focused on the area around Cameron’s home, with the first 4 verses describing the places that he can see from his vantage point on *Sròn na Lairig* (The nose of the pass) in Glenmarkie. As detailed in Section 5.2 above, the listing of place-names in songs and poems is an established and common practice in the Gaelic tradition as a means of rooting the song in the landscape of the writer’s homeland (see: *Literature of the Gaelic Landscape: Song, Poem and Tale* by John Murray).

'S mi na 'n shuidhe 'n so 'm aonar, Air uilinn na Stròine: 'S mi ag amharc a' Mhointich, Aite còmhnuidh nam fiadh.	I'm sitting here alone On the elbow of Strone: As I watch the Moorland. The abode of the deer.
Seisd: Séinn iùro bhinn ò ho, Chall eile ho-rò-ho: Séinn iùro bhinn ò ho, Eile o-ho-ro-hi.	Chorus: Séinn iùro bhinn ò ho, Chall eile ho-rò-ho: Séinn iùro bhinn ò ho, Eile o-ho-ro-hi.
Chi mi Brodan, chi mi Bhùrach, Cam-na Cràchd 's am bi 'mùran: Chi mi Slios-Bheinn a' bhùirich, Agus Cùilbheinn-na-Sgéithe.	I see Brodan, I see Burrach, Cam-na Cràchd where there will be marram grass: I see Slios-Bheinn of the roaring, And Cùilbheinn-na-Sgéithe.
Chi mi Mullach na Maoile, Maolan odhar 's Staonaig: Chi mi Cruaidh, Carn-nan-Caorach, 'S Creag-a'-Chaochain so shios.	I See Mullach na Maoile, Maolan odhar and Staonaig: I see Cruaidh, Carn-nan-Caorach, And Creag-a'-Chaochain below.
Carn Saobhaidh nam badan, 'S tric a' chaidh sinn an t' asdar: Far an taoghailleadh 's an caidleadh, Daimh 's aighean gun fhiamh.	Carn Saobhaidh of the thickets, We have travelled a distance: Where the stag and hind, Would congregate and slumber without fear.
Ach a Thòmais 'ic Uilleam, Bu tu 'n companach monaidh: 'S tric a bha mi 's tu tunaidh, Ann am Monadh Chill-fhinn.	But Thomas, son of William, You were my mountain companion: Often would you and me be dwelling, On Killin Moor.
'S tric a bha mi 's tu Thòmais, Anns na monaidhean mòra: Le ar cuileanan òga, Dheanadh feòlach gun sgian.	I was often with you, Thomas, On the expanse of the great moorland: With our young pups, Making slaughter without a knife.



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'S mòr mo chions' air a' chaiteal, Theid do 'n bheinn sa 'm bi 'n sneachd: 'S nach cuir òireadh no frasan Dh' ionnsuidh caidreamh no dion.	I am much lacking for the cattle Going towards the snow-covered mountains: And may not the sunshine or showers of the years Diminish the fellowship or protection of our kin.
'S toigh leam àiridh nam badan Far am b' èibhinm leam cadal: 'S am biodh fasgadh ri gaillionn Aig aighean 's aig laoigh.	I like the shieling of the thickets, Where I once happily to slept: And there would be shelter from storms For heifers and calves.
Chunnaic mise tric còmhla Tri fichead is còrr dhiubh: 'S iad 'nan laidh' aig a' mhòintich; 'S air an tòir bha mi dion.	I saw them often together Sixty head at least: Lying there on the moor, And in pursuit of them I was sheltering.
Ann am frith nan damh donna 'S nan ceannardan troma; Leam bu mhiann a bhi 'n sealladh Seal mu'n cromadh a' ghrian.	In the thicket of the red stags And the heavy-antlered heads; How I loved to be in their sight At the setting of the sun.
Le mo chuilbheir caol, dùbailt', Fo m' achlais 'ga giùlan: Luiaidhe ghlas air a h-ùrlar 'Bheireadh tuill air a' bhian.	With my slender, double musket, Carried under my arm: Grey lead shot on the ground, Would make holes in their hides.
'N uair thogainn ri 'm shùil thu, 'S tu gun fheachta, gun lùbadh: Bhiodh mo làmh air gach taobh dhiot 'S mo shùil air do dhios.	When I lift my eyes to you, You are without force, without a blemish in you: My hand would be on each side of you And my eye on you.
'N uair a dhennainn a stiùradh, 'S mi a caogadh mo shùil rithe: Bhitheadh fuil a' bhuic ùdlaidh, Ruith air stùcaibh na 'n sliabh.	When I would skilfully use her, Shutting one eye to aim her: The blood of the charming buck, Would run on the peaks of the mountains.
Mharbhainn ràc leat is lacha, Agus tàrmachan creachainn: Earbag riabhach nam badan 'Theid roimh 'n mhadadh 'n a fiamh.	I would kill drake and wild duck And the ptarmigan on the rocks: The brindled roe deer of the woods, Which was timid going before the hound.
Guidheam slàn dha Sir Séumas Thug mo ghunn' a Dun-eidienn: Bha mi èolach m' a bhéusan, 'S cha bu léir dhomh a gheimh.	Farewell and kindest wishes to Sir James, Who brought my gun from Edinburgh: I knew its qualities, And I could see no faults.
Bho 'n tha sinn air ar socair', Bheir sinn sgriob ris a' Phrechdaich Far 'n do chaill sinn a' phraspaig, 'S mòr a' chesd i dhol dhinn.	Since we are at ease, We will take a trip to the Prechdaich Where we lost the telescope, Great is the question where we might find it.
Bheir mi sgriob so le troma Gu Doire Mhiorach mo shireadh Far 'm bu tric bhiodh 'n damh biorach Ri latha sileadh na sion.	I will take the trip heavy-footed To Doire Mhiorach, the object of my desire Where often was seen the sharp- antlered stag On the day of the downpour.

Source: Unpublished Gaelic Poetry, article by Alexander Macdonald, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, Volume 28.

Translation Ceit Langhorne and Munro Gauld

A somewhat different and shorter version (seven verses) of the song can be found in An t-Oranaiche (The Gaelic Songster).

<https://archive.org/details/gaelicsongsterto00sincuoft/page/358/mode/2up>

**Melody:**

480 THE CELTIC MAGAZINE.

SEANN ORAN SEILGE.

*In moderate time.*

Source: The Celtic Magazine October 1878. National Library of Scotland

See also:

- Gilleasbuig Mac-na-Ceàrdadh, An t-Oranaiche: Comhchruinneachadh de Orain Ghaidhealach, a' Chuid Mhor Dhiubh a Nis air an Clo air son na Ciad Uaire (Glasgow: Archibald Sinclair, 1879)
- 'Oran Seilge', An Gaidheal, vol. XX, no. 4 (1925) <https://digital.nls.uk/an-comunn-gaidhealach/archive/125302932?mode=transcription>
- Tobar an Dualchais: Song beautifully sung by Dr Alan MacDonald, recorded in 1955. <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/20625?l=en>

Angus Cameron was also an infamous poacher. One of his songs tells of how he was summoned by the various landowners in Stratherrick to answer charges of poaching, but how he escaped punishment by writing a song, for which Mrs Fraser of Foyers (daughter of Grant of Glenmoriston) paid him £5.

According to Alexander MacDonald, the below song of Cameron's "gives us an interesting reference of fishing with lights at night, at one time common in the Highlands".

Sios is suas an Cheallach, 'S tric a chaithris na fir mhòr, 'Cur an lion an teannachadh, ' S toirt ghealagan gu shore: Bi mordhach geur aig amanan, Gu barrantach nan dòrn, Is òigeirean tréuna, smeorail, Ga 'n leanail le na leòis.	Up and down the Cheallach, The great men often watch, Tighten the net, Taking the brown trout to shore: They are sharp-witted at times, Confident with their fists Strong, courageous youths, Following with the torch.
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Source: Unpublished Gaelic Poetry, collected by Alexander MacDonald, TGS Volume 28  
 Translation: Ceit Langhorne and Munro Gauld

## 5.5 Changing Land Use

The Glenmoriston Bards reflected the topical issues of their day in their poems and songs. A re-occurring theme is the conflict caused by changing land management practices brought about by the introduction of sheep and later deer forests. This effected the traditional cattle-based agricultural economy. The increase in the value of land for sporting purposes also restricted the long-held view that everyone had a right to hunt.

*"To the tune known under the name of " The Bridge of Perth," we have local lines evidently indicating the time when gamekeepers first were on the look-out for cattle trespassing on forbidden ground."*

An cluinn thu mis' a nighean dubh, An téid an crodh an diugh na ghleann? (Same again twice)	Will you hear me, black haired girl, Will the cattle go to the glen today? (Same again twice)
Ach ma théid an crodh an leth-ghleann, Bidh na geamaran 's a' mheall	But if the cattle go to the half-glen, The gamekeepers will be on the round hill

Source: Fragments of Gaelic Song and Lilt, Alexander MacDonald, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, Volume 29.  
 Translation: Ceit Langhorne and Munro Gauld

### Melody: The Bridge of Perth



Source: Robert Millar Music Manuscript Collection (1820)

**B' e m' aighear agus m' òrduchadh**

The below song, again by Angus Cameron of Stratherrick, is of interest in that the first two verses are descriptive of the area and its flora and fauna. The remaining verses however are political, being critical of the landowners and their land management, their introduction of sheep and the consequent hardship and congestion caused by the clearance of townships.

<p>B' e m' aighear agus m' òrduchadh,          Bhi chomhnuidh anns na glinn          'S a' ghlaic tha 'm Braigh na F??????          'S an t-sròin tha 'm Braigh Chill Fhinn:          Far am biodh na smeòraichean,          'S gach seòrsa dhe gach eun,          A' cur air ghleus nan òrganan,          A sheinneas ceòl bu binn.</p>	<p>It was my joy and my lot,          To dwell in the glens          And in the narrow glade of Braigh na F ???????          On the nose is the Brae of Killin:          Where the thrushes would be found,          And every kind of bird,          Tuning their organs          To sing the sweetest music.</p>
<p>Suas ri Tom-na-Garbh-Rainich,          Bi'dh earbagan is minn,          Gu bior-chluasach, grinn, ghearra-bhasach          'S iad meanbh-bhallach mu 'n druim:          'S na buic a' léum mi meanamhuinneach.          'S an anamoch air Ruighe-'n-Tuim,          'S cha 'n iarr iad tigh na ba-thigh,          Ach fàbhar a' phris ghruim.</p>	<p>Up by Tom-na-Garbh-Rainich,          Are roe deer and kids,          Sharp-eared, graceful, sharply-streaked          They are minutely spotted around the back:          And the bucks leaping horny-backed.          In the late afternoon of Ruighe-'n-Tuim,          And they will not seek the house or the byre,          But the favour of the gloomy thicket.</p>
<p>Ach 's olc leam an tuathailleachd,          Th' air uachdrain na tir,          'Bhi cumail òigear luath-chasach,          A' cur char cuairt nam frith:          Ged bheirinn-sa damh gruamach,          A fuaranan Bhràigh-Shith,          Cha shaoilinn gu 'm b'e 'n éucoir e,          'S nach 'eil an spréidh fo chis.</p>	<p>But I hate farming,          On the lords of the land,          Keeping a fast-footed youth,          To scout the deer forests:          Though I would fell the gloomy stag,          From the springs of Bhràigh-Shith,          I did not think it was the crime,          And the cattle unyoked.</p>
<p>Tha uachdran gach fearann          Fàs gu biorach, greannach, cruaidh,          Le còir a' deanamh ceartais,          Le h-achdachan gun bhuaidh:          Cha cheil mi 'n uair a b' urra' mi,          Nach cuirinn fuil air meann,          'S co 'm fear a b' urra' ràite,          Gur ann dà-san bhiodh an call.</p>	<p>There is a landlord of all farmland,          Grown sharp, grumpy, hard,          With decency doing justice,          With ineffective acts:          I would not conceal it, the hour that would be          at hand for me          That I would not slaughter the kid,          And who was the man who would speak of it,          That the loss was his.</p>
<p>Sud an t-aobhar sònruichte,          Mu 'n d' fhas am pòr cho gann,          Daoine-uails' bhi le mòr chuis,          'G' agar còir orra 's command:          Na 'n d' fhad iad mar chaidh 'n òrduchadh,          Gach loch, is lòn, is gleann,          Bhiodh sluagh ga 'n cur an lionmhorachd,          Is shiòlaicheadh iad ann.</p>	<p>That is the very reason,          Before the (potato?) seed became so scarce,          Honourable gentlemen,          Pleading with them to command:          If they had left as was ordered of them,          Every loch, and meadow, and glen,          Would be teeming with people,          And they would multiply and flourish there.</p>

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<p>Tha mulad mòr 's tha cùram orm,          Bho n thain' an dùmhlachd 's òirnn,          Tha 'n sneachd' a nis air dùnadh,          Thair' na dùthchanan le stoirm;          Tha 'm meanbh-chrodh air an sàrachadh,          Nach ruig iad bàrr an fheadh,          'S an spréidh a th' anns na bàthaichean,          Air fàilneachadh chion lòin.</p>	<p>I am aggrieved and lamenting,          From whence came the congestion upon us,          The snow is now closing in,          Over the countries by storm;          The young cattle are being harassed,          That they do not reach the top of the grass,          And the cattle in the byres,          Failing for want of food.</p>
<p>'S e luchd nan caoraich bhàna,          'S miosa càradh dhe gach seòrs',          'S cha mhòr a chunntadh duilich e,          Ged chaill' iad uile 'n deò.</p>	<p>It is the burden of the white sheep,          The worst placement of all kinds,          And it would almost count as a difficulty,          Although their life-spark left them cold.</p>

Source: Unpublished Gaelic Poetry - Article by Alexander MacDonald, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, Volume 28

Translation: Ceit Langhorne and Munro Gauld

From the Alexander MacDonald Archive (NLS) (periodical and date unknown) under his usual penname Gleannach, is one of MacDonald's own compositions about eviction:

**Ged tha mi air fuadach** (Though I am Evicted)

To the tune of Lochyngar

<p>Ged tha mi air fuadach,          Tha m'inntinn fo ghluasad,          Gu duathaich nam fuaran,          'S nam fuar – bheannaibh ard –          Gu Albainn a' chluarain,          Is leabhainn a' chruadail,          'An tuasaid a' bhlaire.          'S gur tric mi 'am brудар,          Air ais far 'm dual domh,          Ag imeachd feadh bhruachan,          Is chluaineagan blath,          Ag eisdeachd ri nuallan,          Nan eun feadh nan cuach phreas,          Na sadraich nan stuadhan,          A' bualadh air traigh.</p>	<p>Though I am evicted,          My mind is troubled,          To the land of the springs,          And in the cold high mountains -          To Scotland of the thistle,          The hard, unyielding ledge,          'The brawl of battle.          And often do I dream,          Back to where I used to,          Walk following the banks,          And warm meadows,          Listening to the murmur,          Of birds amongst the unfurling, blooming thickets,          (Sweeter to me are they) than the driving of the waves,          Striking the beach.</p>
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Source: Alexander Macdonald Family Archive, Acc. 7708/28, National Library of Scotland

**Melody: Loch-na-Gar**



Source: Edinburgh Repository of Music vol. 2, J Sutherland Edinburgh (1825)

## 5.6 Praise, or panegyric poems and songs

Praise poems (usually composed for clan chiefs) were an important part of the Gaelic bardic tradition. This was particularly prevalent in 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, but continued right up to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The below poem dates from the 1730s.

### Hò fearan, hì fearan

In addition to the verses recounted in *The Musical Heritage of Glenmoriston* report (page 41), Alexander Macdonald identifies a further two final verses of this lullaby written by Archibald Grant (Senior) from Tom Bheallaidh for his pupil / foster son, Angus Òg MacDonell, son of the chief of the Glen Garry MacDonalds.

<p><i>'S leat Cnoideart mhor mheabhrach, Agus Gleabhrach nam meang, 'S mòr du chàirdeas ri Cloinn Dhòbhnuill Da 'm bu chòir Innse-Gall.</i></p>	<p><i>Yours is Knoydart very pleasant, And Gleabhrach of the branches, You have a great friendship with the MacDonalds Rightful rulers of the Hebrides ,</i></p>
<p><i>'S mòr du chàirdeas ri Cloinn Dhòbhnuill Da 'm bu chòir Innse-Gall, Gaul fearan, rùn fearan, Gràdh fearan 's tù th' ann.</i></p>	<p><i>You have a great friendship with the MacDonalds Rightful rulers of the Hebrides , Loved little man, beloved little man, Fondness for you little man.</i></p>

Source: Social Customs of The Gael Part 1. Alexander MacDonal, TGS Volume 32.

## 5.7 Songs of Battle and War

Glenmoriston has an interesting and valuable heritage of (anti) war songs from the writings of Alasdair Mac Iain Bhain who fought in the Peninsular Campaign of the Napoleonic Wars. These songs detail the grim reality of war from a foot-soldier's perspective and thus don't conform to the wider

Gaelic military song / poem tradition of the C19th which generally celebrated the Highlanders' enthusiastic participation in martial affairs. There are other war-related Gaelic songs that were sung in the Glenmoriston area the lyrics of which are also somewhat ambivalent to war. One such song, *C'ar son a bhiodh sinn muladach?* was collected by Macdonald and dates from the last decade of C18th.

**C'ar son a bhiodh sinn muladach?**

Seisd: C'ar son a bhiodh sinn muladach? 'S c'ar son a bhiodh, sinn brònach? C'ar son a bhiodh sinn muladach? 'S gum falbh sinn uile comhla.	Chorus: Why should we be sad? And why would we be miserable? Why should we be sad? And we will all go together.
Tha na h-ighneagan fo mhulad, 'S tha iad uile brònach; 'S a liughad saighdear boidheach dearg A dh' fhalbh gu arm Rìgh Deorsa.	The young girls are dejected, And they are all miserable; And many beautiful soldiers in red, Have departed with King George's army.
'S ioma, mathair bhios gun mhac, 'S piuthair bhios gun bhraithair, 'S maighdeann og gun leannan aic' Mia mhaireas so mar tha e.	Many a mother will be without a son, And a sister who will have no brother, And a young maiden without a lover ' If this continues as it is.

Source: Fragments of Gaelic Song and Lilt by Alexander MacDonald, TGSIs, Volume 29.

Translation: Ceit Langhorne and Munro Gauld

As Alexander Macdonald comments in 1917 regarding the lyrics: “How tragically true, unfortunately, in our own time!”

A more complete version of the song with 5 verses was recorded in 1976 by the School of Scottish Studies from the singing of the Rev. William Matheson:

<https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/101522?l=en>

The lyrics identify that a new regiment has been raised and is going to France with King George's army to fight in the French Revolutionary Wars (1792-1802). It goes on:

*Why would they be sorrowful as they are leaving together,  
 Sailing in a ship faster than any deer on the moor.  
 The summer is here, there is no reason to be unhappy.  
 They will get peaceful leave from France when the fighting's done.*

Matheson heard the song from his aunt, and thought it was composed in Lewis about the Seaforth Regiment. If so, the song relates to the 78th Regiment of Foot (also known as The Ross-shire Buffs) which was raised in the spring of 1793 by Francis Humberstone Mackenzie, heir-male of the family, and afterwards Lord Seaforth. He was known locally as Mhic Choinnich Bhodhair as he was deaf due to a bout of scarlet fever when young. Nearly all the men enlisted were from MacKenzie's own or his clansmen's estates in Ross-shire and the Lewis.



Lord Seaforth by Sir Thomas Lawrence

After receiving their colours at Fort George, the battalion departed for Guernsey in the summer of 1793 and then in September 1794 to the Netherlands to fight against the French. The regiment was taken back to England and then sailed to France in June 1795. Given the song says they are setting off in the summer, it could have been either year / expedition. But the lyrics give the impression that the song was written before they had seen any action so, if this is the case, it would have been written in the summer of 1794.

The below anecdote from the First World War indicates that the song was well-enough known that it was sung by the soldiers of a Highland Regiment (in all likelihood The Seaforth Highlanders):

Bha an reiseamaid air fad an sud an oidhche a dh'fhalbh na balaich; oir cha robh gin againn aig nach robh càirdean 'nam measg. Bha iad cho cridheil 's ged a b'ann air fòrlach a bhiodh iad a' dol. Cha robh coslas dubhachais 'sam bith 'nam measg, is c'uime a bhiodh? Thòisich buidheann dhiubh, mar a bha iad a' gluasad air falbh, air cantuinn an t-sean òrain (agus fear na bu fhreagaraiche cha b' urrainn fhaotainn).

C'ar son a bhiodh sinn muladach?

C'ar son a bhiodh sinn brònach?

C'ar son a bhiodh sinn muladach?

Is gu 'm falbh sinn uile còmhla?

Nach fhaodar a bhi coma c' ait am bithear fhad 's a bhios sinn " uile còmhla."

(The whole regiment was there the night the boys left; for there was none of us who didn't have had relatives among them. They were cheerful although they embarked on a great trip. There was no sign of sadness among them, and why would there be? A group of them began, as they were moving away, to sing the old song (and what better song than this one?!).

Why should we be sad?

Why should we be miserable?

Why should we be sad?

When we should all go together?

It does not matter where we are while we are "all together."

Source: Chi sinn thall thu (See you over there) by I B Stewart (1918)

<https://digital.nls.uk/early-gaelic-book-collections/archive/78502296?mode=transcription>



Alexander Macdonald gives the song's melody as *C'ar son a bhiodh sinn muladach?* and states that: *"The tune that we usually heard these words sung is a very well-known bagpipe march, one of the two-measure melodies of which the Ceol Mheadhonach of the past substantially consisted."* (Ceol Mheadhonach is literally Middle Music- i.e., between Ceol Mor (pibroch) and Ceol Beag (dance music))

The song is now generally known as *Carson a bhios sinn muladach*, with another related version known as *Tha Sinn A' Falbh*.

See:

- Ceitlin L R Smith singing *Carson a bhios sinn muladach* to win the Gold Medal at the 2014 Mod:  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p028vqfk>
- *Tha sinn a' falbh*, sung by Margaret Stewart:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKlz5KLalcg>

## 5.8 Miscellaneous

### The Clach Neart Mheirichard

Throughout the Highlands there are Clach Neart (Stones of Strength) which were once used as tests of "manliness" and strength. Smaller stones were "put" or thrown from the shoulder - the antecedent of the Olympic sport of Shot Put. Larger stones, weighing between 100 and 190 kg (220-420 lbs), were a test of lifting strength. Some had to be lifted onto a ledge or another rock. There are approximately 30 known and named such lifting stones in Scotland. Records show that one such stone, known as *Clach Neart Mheirichard*, was once, and still may be, at Dalchreichart.

*"In Clach Mheirichard is a big Clach Neart which is rarely lifted. One day at a funeral a man lifted it and put it over a fence saying "I never saw a Grant who could do that". At that moment Pàdraig Mòr Chlàir was passing on the road and one of the mourners asked him to take up the challenge. Pàdraig lifted the stone and put it back in its former position, saying to his challenger that if he put it over again, he would lift it back with his challenger on top of it. The challenge was not taken up."*

Source: Told by Alan Macdonald, Torgoil Bridge to Iain R MacKay.

From: Notes on People and Places along with Traditions Collected by the late - Hugh Barron, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness Volume 63

The location of *Clach Neart Mheirichard* is not currently known. Locating it would be of not only local cultural value, but also of considerable wider interest (there is an international community of interest in Scottish clach neart, partially due to the heavyweight events at Highland games and "Strongman" competitions).

For the stories, locations and a history of lifting stones in Scotland, see:

<https://www.oldmanofthestones.com/>

There may be Glenmoriston residents who are aware of the stone and its location. Early local consultation is advised.

**Oran Gaoil**

Air fonn: "O' a' the airts"

O séisd-sa ciùin, a reidh ghaoth chùbar Bho ghleannan ùr nan geug	O gentle melody, smooth, soothing the wind From the fresh glen of the branches
--	---

Source: Scrapbook No.3, Alexander Macdonald Archive, Acc.13587/3. National Library of Scotland

**Luinneag (Work song)**

By "Taobh Loch Nis"

Air Sean fonn (Sung to an old tune)

O! 's fhada bho'n dhealaich Mi fhin 's mo leannan - A' nighnag bu mhaith leam, An comhnuidh 'bhi ma' rium, Ach thug mi ghi gealladh Nach lughdaich ri m' mhaireann, 'S cha leig m a' m' aine rim' bheo i.	Oh! It's a long time ago My lover and I - The girl I want, Always be with me, But I promised May it not diminish for ever, And I will not let my soul live.
O! Gaol na caileige, 'S gradh na caileige, Aoidh na caileige, 'S blatha na caileige, Caomh na caileige, 'S tlaths na caileige, 'Bheireadh an toileachadh dhomhsa.	Oh! The love of the girl, And affection for the girl, The cheerfulness of the girl, And the warmth of the girl The kindness of the girl, And the gentleness of the girl, It would make me happy.

Source: Scrapbook No.3, Alexander Macdonald Archive, Acc.13587/3. National Library of Scotland

**Mo ghealachasach, mo ghealachasach**

A Loch ness-side version of a puirt -à-beul to be found in KN MacDonald's book (Song no. 77)

Mo ghealachasach, mo ghealachasach, Mo ghealachasach nan caorach (Repeated twice) Tha leiginn a shiubhal mhòintich thu, Air thòir nan caorach mhaola.	My white-footed one, my white-footed one, My white-footed one of the sheep (Repeated twice) I won't let you travel the moorland, In search of the hornless sheep.
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Source: Fragments of Gaelic Song & Lilt collected by Alexander Macdonald, TGSI, Volume 29

**Tir nam beann nan gleann 's nan gaisgeach**

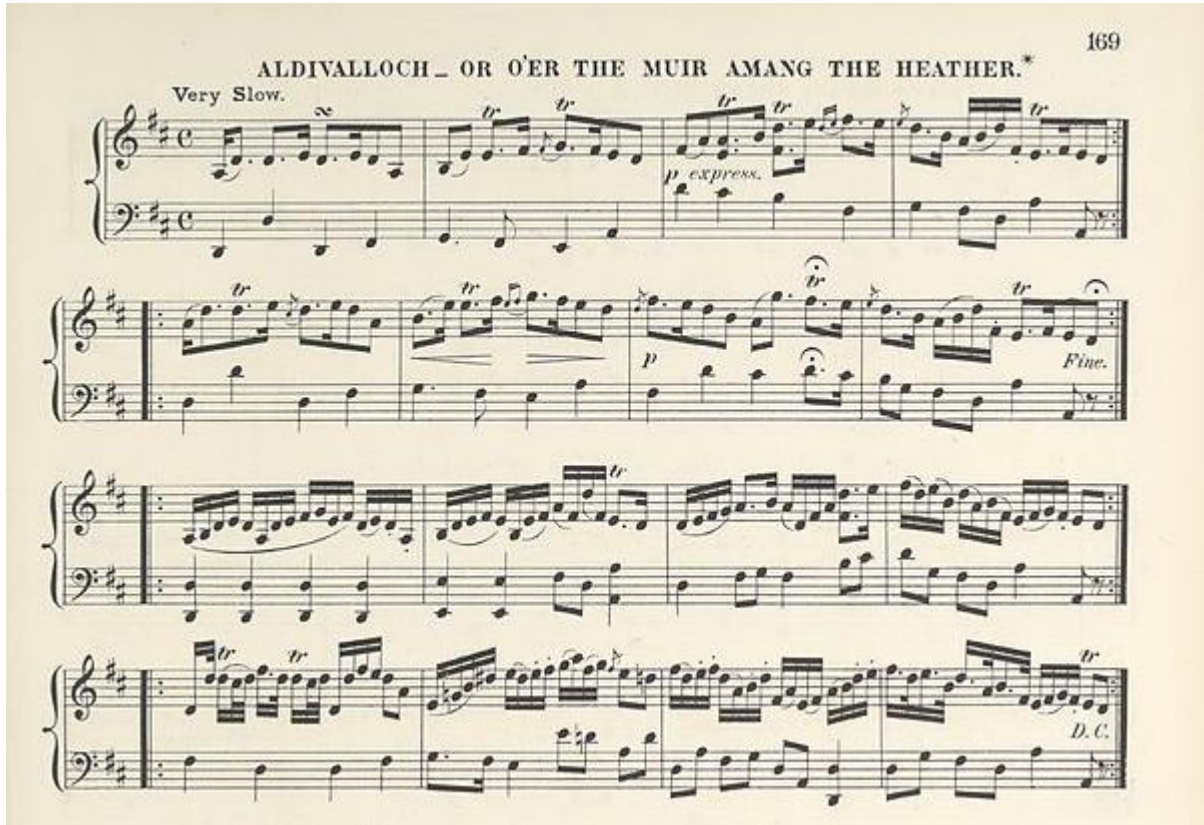
By "MacDhomhnuill"

Oran air fonn – "E ho ro o run an callin", le Uilleam Ros (sung to the song "E ho ro a run an callin" by William Ross.

Tha mo chridhe sa 'n tir na scairteachd, Tir na h-uaisle 's tir a phailteis, Tir mo chairdeas agus m' annasachd, Tir nam beann nan gleann 's nan gaisgeach	My heart is in the land of terror, The land of nobility and the land of abundance, Land of my friendship and curiosity, Land of the mountains of the glens and of the heroes
---	---

Source: Scrapbook No.3, Acc.13587/3. Alexander Macdonald Archive, National Library of Scotland

Alexander Macdonald (using one of his pen-names: “MacDhomhnuill) used the tune and the first line of chorus as the basis of this song. The William Ros song referred to by Macdonald is “*Oran anns am beil am bard a moladh a leannain – agus a’ dhuthcha fein*” (A song in which the bard praises his sweetheart - and his own country), the tune of which is “O’er the muir among the heather”.



Source: The Skye Collection, K N MacDonald (1887); National Library of Scotland

“Tir nam bean nan gleann ‘s nan gaisgeach” is a well-known phrase. The motto was used on the banknotes of The Caledonian Banking Company (Est 1838). And the words form the first phrase of the Regimental Toast of the Seaforth Highlanders.

## 6. Recommendations and Conclusion

### 6.1 Recommendations

The consultants make the following recommendations to further understand and develop the cultural heritage of Glenmoriston:

- To look at ways to re-connect local people with the cultural heritage of Glenmoriston through education, interpretation, musical and heritage projects.
- Local and wider consultation to identify the location of the Clach Neart Mheirichard
- Collaboration with academic institutions, NGOs, cultural organisations etc to develop further research and interpretation projects.

- Educational Gaelic song project with local schools / youth organisations to examine songs pertaining to local places, people and events - e.g., poem about the Sròn a Muice (*Smuaintean na Sròine Inbhirrhoireasdain*) has the potential for examination by schools, taking children to engage with local hills and past practices etc.
- Collaboration with established Gaelic singers to perform / record song material from the local area.
- To produce a book or booklet with transcriptions of these songs and poems in modern Gaelic orthography; connecting the literature with the landscape in maps and illustrations in a proposed song 'trail'.

## 6.2 Conclusion

The initial Musical Heritage of Glenmoriston report identified an extremely rich Gaelic song resource of some 320 songs and poems from the Glenmoriston and Loch Ness-side area. This further research, whilst of limited duration, has identified a significant number of further local songs, poems. These come from two sources:

- a) Items published in the Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness.
- b) The Alexander Macdonald archives in the National Library of Scotland.

The Transactions contain some interesting and valuable songs, fragments of verse, local Gaelic words and phrases and stories relating to the Glenmoriston area which augment the findings of the initial research. Of particular note are:

- The song *Gleanna Moireasdainn* by Angus Grant, written ca. 1930. (TGS Volume 48). This Gaelic song, perhaps the last one composed by a native local Gaelic speaker, has a direct family link to the current generation through fiddler Angus Grant and as such is a cultural thread linking into the glen's past.
- Information relating to Clach Neart Mheirichard - the lifting stone at Dalchreichart. (TGS Volume 63). Locating the whereabouts of this stone would be of local and wider cultural heritage interest.
- Short 'naidheachdan' or anecdotal stories pertaining to Glenmoriston, Glen Urquhart, Fort Augustus; linking characters in the oral tradition with sites in the immediate environment. These merit closer attention and connections made with comparative material.

This second report delves more extensively into the work of local poet Alasdair MacDhòmhnail (Alexander Macdonald). The brief (one-day) examination by the consultants of the Macdonald archives in the National Library of Scotland indicate that they potentially contain a huge number of additional songs, poems and stories from the local area – in total there are approximately 1,500 separate items collected or written by Alexander Macdonald. A resource of this magnitude is not only of immense local interest and value to the Glenmoriston area, but has the potential to be of national significance.

However, although the Macdonald archive is extensive, the individual items are not catalogued or organised in date order, and only roughly by type of content. The items are also in diverse formats (e.g., handwritten poems and notes, unsourced and unattributed newspaper cuttings etc). Given the number of items and their unordered state, it is difficult to fully assess and quantify the archives' contents and importance. In order to do so it would be necessary to thoroughly examine, catalogue, cross reference, attribute and transcribe the contents. This would be a considerable undertaking.

## The Glen of the Bards: Further investigation into the Musical Heritage of Glenmoriston

Of the items in the Macdonald archives examined, the ones that are perhaps of most value to the Glenmoriston community include:

- Unpublished compositions by Alexander Macdonald contained in Acc. 7708/27 and 28
- Songs contained in the Scrapbook No. 3. Acc.13587/3. Mostly made up of songs with lyrics composed by Macdonald but put to existing song melodies.
- Songs in Macdonald Family Archive Acc. 7708/3. These are from cuttings from a regular series of articles by Macdonald in The Highland News called *Guthanan beag o chuil a' chiùil* (Little voices from behind the music). Of particular interest and value is the fact that these songs were collected from the Glenmoriston area and that they also have the melodies associated with them, written in solfa notation.
- Diverse songs and musical notation contained in Acc. 7708/3 and 7708/4
- Press cuttings of songs, stories etc in 7708/30, 7708/31 and 7708/32.
- The poetry of Isobel Macdonald – Alexander's mother – contained in an exercise book in Acc. 7708/84. As these are the only recorded songs / poems written by a woman bard in Glenmoriston, they may provide a different and unique perspective.
- Màiri Macdonald, Alexander's daughter, was a writer and novelist. Snippets of her writing are found in notebooks- Acc.7708/41-45. Her literary talent and perspective on her own cultural background are very worthy of investigation.

Whilst time did not allow a thorough investigation of the above, individual items that initially appeared to be of significant value include:

- The compositions of Alexander Macdonald that are told from the perspective of natural objects (twigs, plants or the Sròn a Muice at Invermoriston). Such poems give a valuable insight into how the natural environment is perceived by Gaelic society and in Gaelic literature – i.e., individual plants, streams hills etc having their own intrinsic voice and life-force, and not being seen as existing only through an exterior perception by the human world.
- The compositions of Macdonald indicating his poetic prowess. In true classical Gaelic poetic style, his language is onomatopoeic, alliterative, and rich. It imitates the movements, colours and temperaments within nature and describes it richly.

The quantity, range and depth of songs, poems and stories collected from Glenmoriston indicate that the glen has considerable cultural heritage value. More time must be allowed in order to grasp the full extent of Macdonald's vast collections and life-works; a task which could not be completed within the scope of this project.

However, through what has been achieved here, it is hoped that the musical tradition that fostered the likes of Macdonald, will be better understood, as well as the prowess and poetic talent of the people in Glenmoriston as a whole. It is greatly hoped that the future will provide an opportunity to investigate other creative links to Macdonald, with his mother Isobel, and daughter Màiri. The works and perspectives of these lesser- represented bards are of great importance to understanding the full tapestry of poetic Glenmoriston; as well as his more distant bardic ancestors, such as Archibald Grant. Throughout all this, the diverse and intimate relationship enjoyed by the people with their environment is clear to see, with the Gaelic language being a crucial element in relating to the land in a similarly intimate way.

## Appendix 1

### Fragments of Gaelic Song & Lilt collected by Alexander Macdonald

Presentation made by Alexander MacDonald, 2nd February 1917.

Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness Volume 29

<https://archive.org/details/transactions29gaeluoft/page/94/mode/2up>

#### Part 1 – Dance Tunes and Lilts

- Dar a thèid thu fhar a mhonaidh (When you go off the hill). Song about Corrymony: Melody Stumpie / Highland Wedding
- Cha tugainn taing air fuachd a' gheamhraidh (No thanks for the winter cold). Song expressing gratefulness for a warm winter coat.
- Hò ma thuiteas, hò ma thuiteas, hò ma thuiteas Drochaid Pheairt (Ho if it falls, ho if it falls, ho if the Perth Bridge falls). Melody The Bridge of Perth - most likely the first words of the original song.
- An oidhche bha mi 'n tigh an leanna (At night I was in the beer house). A "purely frolicsome, fun-provoking" song sung to the tune "The Bridge of Perth".
- An cluinn thu mis' a nighean dubh (Can you hear me, black-haired girl). "Local lines evidently indicating the time when gamekeepers were first on the lookout for cattle trespassing on forbidden ground". Sung to the tune "The Bridge of Perth".
- Chuidh mi sìos, chaidh mi suas (I went down, I went up). Suggestive song about Ruaridh. Melody: Pease Strae.
- Tha fortan oirnn, tha deoch againn (We are lucky, we have drink). Song in parody against gruel. Melody: Pease Strae.
- Nam biodh agam trusdair bodach (If I had an old lech). Melody: Pease Strae.
- Tha long a mharaiche 'tighinn na bhaile-sa (A sailor's ship is coming to this town). Sung to the jig, "Long a Mharaiche".
- Tha mo bhean-sa, bithidh mo bhean-sa (My wife is, my wife will be). Sung to "Long a Mharaiche" (The sailors ship).
- Air cùl a' phris, air beul a phris (Behind the bush, at the mouth of the bush). Sung to "Long a Mharaiche".
- Hum-di-hiuro-bhi, Sabhall beag a' Bhàillidh (Hum-di-hiuro-bhi, The Factor's Little Barn). Sung to the song "Cailleach Liath Raarsaidh" (The grey old woman of Raasay. The tune is now better known as "'S iomad rudh a chunna mi – Many's the thing I saw").
- Calum min Moireasdan, 'S a bhean aig air a ghualainn (Smooth Calum Morrison, with his wife on his shoulder). Version of the above song.
- Dom doom dòichean, Do'm doom deilohean; Sung to the tune "Arndnamurchan Lads".
- Hu-oro, fear dubh tha mi 'g iarraidh (Hu-oro, it is a black-haired man I want). Sung to tune "Domhull na Biodiaige".
- Hò tha 'n tombaoa daor, Hé tha 'n tombaca ginidh (Ho the tobacco is expensive, He the gean tobacco). Melody: "The Lads of Mull "
- Suid an rud a thogadh m' fhoann, Crònan a' ghille Mhuilich, (Here's the thing that would lift my tune, The crooning of the lad from Mull). Melody: "The Lads of Mull "
- Ruidhle Cheit leis a' ghùn mhòr, Agus Seatadh Seònaid (Kate's reel with the big gown, and Janet's Set) sung to the tune of "Cawdor Fair".
- Chi mi 'm bodach 's a dha chù, 'Siubhal dlùth le chròcan (I see the old man and his two dogs, 'Walk close with a crook). Song sung to "Cawdor Fair".

- Thugaibh dram do Bhaldi Coillein (There's a dram for Baldi Coillein) A favourite one for short, local compositions from the West country (Kintail etc) sung to the melody "The Maid of Islay".
- Tha gaath mhor air Loch-an-t-Seilich (There is a strong wind on Loch-an-t-Seilich). Song from Badenoch / Perthshire sung to tune, "The Maid of Islay".
- Tha mi 'n dùil gu 'n tig an clachair (I expect the mason to come). The Loch Ness-side version (of the above song) will be found on referring to Vol. XXV. of our Society's Transactions".
- 'S fhada bhuaam fhin Gleann-a'-Bheadaraidh (Far from me is Gleann-a'-Bheadaraidh). The Lochness-side version of "Bealach a' Mhorbheinn" or " Bealach a' Mhorbhaich".
- Chunna mi, chunna mi, chunna mi 'n t-iomlan (I saw, I saw, I saw the whole). "Of the same order of melody, more or less, is the one to which the following words were chanted, sometimes as an exercise in Gaelic pronunciation and articulation."
- 'S ann a bha 'n othail air cailleach a' ghobhainn (The smith's old lady was in a commotion). Local words (i.e. Loch Ness-side) for "melody usually known under the Gaelic title of " Cailleach a' Ghobhainn is Cailleach a' Mhuilleir".
- Theid mi null gu Taobh Loch-gorm (I'll go over to Loch-gorm Side). "May not the following be the oldest words to the air of " Tullochgorm?"
- Cairistiona Chaimbeul. To the tune "The Miller of Drone". "Has more than one set of words associated with it. The late Dr Macdonald has two in his very excellent work on " Puirt-a-Beul," and another is known in the Western districts in which " Cairistiona " is the subject of a sort of rhyming dialogue the one party praising her good parts, and the other as eloquently pointing out her numerous faults and failings." Also includes a Lochaber version and one by Dr K N MacDonald.
- Domhnull a' ruith nan gobhar (Donald runs the goats). "An air well-known at one time, but now almost forgotten."
- Mo Ghealaichasach nan Caorach (My White-footed one of the sheep). Loch Ness-side version of Puirt-a-Beul found in Dr K N MacDonald's book (Song no.77).
- Gillean nan Caorach (The shepherd boy). Two versions given: Fear nan casan caola, Cha leiginn na mo leabaidh e (The man of the narrow feet, I would not let him in my bed) and the more commonly known words "Lan tighe dh' fhidhlearn" (House full of fiddlers).
- Feumaidh mi mo ghun a dheanamh (I have to carry my gun). Lilted to the tune, "The Braes of Mar".
- Hò, ro, 'nighean dubh, bheag a' chitsinn (Ho ro, dark haired girl, little one of the kitchen). Lochness-side version of the above
- 'S ann chuir am bodach feagal orm (The old man frightened me). Sung to the tune "Cùl an Tigh-òsda " (The Back of the Change-House).
- 'S comma leam buntàta carrach, Bho nach biodh an t-ìm leo (I don't care for mashed potatoes, Since they don't have butter). Sung to the tune "Jenny Dang the Weaver".
- Am mart a bh' aca 'n Ionar-gharradh, Sgarradh oirre, dh' fhalbh i (The cow they had in Invergarry, She was frightened, and she went away).
- Briogais air na luirgean loma, 'S boineid air na maoileanaich (Trousers on the bare legs, And a bonnet on the bald head).
- Tha fear am Beinn an t-Slocain duibh (There is a man on Beinn an t-Slocain). An old set of words lilted to the tune of "The Marquis of Huntly's Highland Fling" - known in Gaelic under the title of " Maighdeannan a' Choire Dhuibh". See also article by Alexander MacDonald in Volume 25 of the GSI Transactions and also in "Story and Song from Lochness-side ".
- A nighean òg a' chòta dhuibh, Bu mhath an diugh bhi 'n cuideachd 's tu, (Young girl of the black coat, Today it would be well to be with you). Sung to tune "The Marquis of Huntly's Highland Fling"

## The Glen of the Bards: Further investigation into the Musical Heritage of Glenmoriston

- Na maighdeannan is boidhche cruth (The maidens with the beautiful shape). Written by Archibald Grant, the Glenmoriston bard, to the tune of "The Marquis of Huntly's Highland Fling"
- O Phadruig Bhàin, seid suas gu bras, 'S e do shiunnsair grad chuir sinn air chas (Oh fair Patrick, blow up swiftly, It was thy swift ancestor that put us on our feet). Song about Patrick Ban, a famous piper and fiddler sung to the tune of Ruidhle Mhor Shrath-Spe.
- Tha ruidhl' aig na tunnagan (The reel to the ducks). Loch Ness-side words / version of the song, Reel of Tulloch.
- An oidhche bha na gobhair againn, Na gobhair mhaol, odhar againn (At night we had the goats, Our bald, dun goats). Sung to the tune "Lady Mary Ramsay".
- 'S e mhisg a chuir an Nollaig oirnn (We got drunk at Christmas). Sung to the tune "Christmas Carousal".

### Part 2 – Marching Tunes

- Gillean an Fheilidh (The Killed Lads).  
Chorus: Ho-rì-o slàn, 's ho-rò gum a fallain doibh (Ho-rì-o goodbye, and ho-rò good health to them)  
Verse: Gum a slàn do na gillean (Goodbye to the boys)
- Chorus: C'ar son a bhiodh sinn muladach? (Why should we be sad?)  
Verse: Tha na h-ighneagan fo mhulad (The girls are sad).
- Am bun a' chruidh cha chaidil mi (At the foot of the cattle I do not sleep). Sung to the tune "A man's a man for a' that".
- A h-uile latha 'buain na rainich (Every day pulling the bracken). Loch Ness-side version of a popular song also known as Tha mi sgith, or Buain na rainich.
- O! 's fheudar dhomh fhin, A bhi tarruing dachaidh dìreach (Oh! I have to drag myself home directly). Pipe march with various versions of words given.
- Is also well-known as that associated with the good old song beginning:  
Theid sinn, theid sinn, Le suigear agus aoidh (We will go, we will go, With joy and hospitality). The melody is "suggestive of Macpherson's Lament."
- C'ait' an robh thu 'n diugh 's an dé, A mhicein ghasda, 'mhicein ghasda? (Where were you today and yesterday, Handsome son, handsome son). Sung to the tune, Highland Laddie.
- Nach truagh leat mi ma 's droch bhean i, Nach truagh leat mi thug dhachaidh i, (Don't you feel sorry for me if she's a bad wife, Don't you feel sorry for me she took me home). Sung to the tune "The Highland Wedding".
- Loisg- a' chailleach a casan, air éibhleig (The old woman burned her feet on an ember). Sung to the tune "the Braes of Glen Orchy".
- 'S toigh leis an duin' agam, Bileagan 's duilleagan (My husband likes it, Salad and leaves).  
Words sung to "A Cold Wind over Wyvis"
- Ho rò na 'n tigeadh, Hi rì nan 'n tigeadh; Ho rò nan 'n tigeadh, Na gillean a dh' fhalbh. (Ho rò if they came, Hi rì if they came; Ho rò if they came, The lads who have gone). Sung to "A Cold Wind over Wyvis".
- Gabhaidh sinn an Rathad Mòr (We will take the highway). A well-known march - "While found under various names in different collections, this march is originally, it is believed, one associated with the Clan Macintyre". Several versions of the words are given. Firstly, an old set of words. Secondly a version by Dr John MacLeod, " the High Priest of Morven".
- Leiginn mo bhalachan, 'Shiubhal main garbhach (Let my boys, 'Travel the rough ground).  
Song well-known on Lochness-side.
- Bha mi air banais am Bail' Ionar-aora (I was at a wedding in Inveraray). Old ("Perhaps the oldest") lyrics to the tune "The Campbells are coming".



## Appendix 2

### Unpublished Gaelic Poetry collected by Alexander Macdonald

#### Transactions of The Gaelic Society of Inverness Volume 28

<https://archive.org/details/transactions28gaeluoft/page/326/mode/2up>

#### Songs composed by Angus Cameron of Stratherrick

- Ciamar a dheanainn-s' òran molaidh (How to make a song of praise). Song composed to his daughter whilst she was making porridge.
- Sud an t-slighe mu 'm bi 'n dithis diùmbach (That's the way the two get upset).
- Gur mòr mo spéis do 'n chruinneag ud (Though great is my affection for that girl).
- 'S ann a tha chuir orm a' silich (That's what made me slaver). Song about conversation between Archie Grant of Glenmoriston and Angus Cameron's daughter.
- Oran do 'm nighean bhan (Song to my fair-haired girl). First line: Mo run gach la do 'n nighean bhàn). Eleven verses. "A love-song, at one time immensely in favour on Lochness-side.
- Ged a theid mi do 'n leabaidh (Although I go to bed). Thirteen verses. "Composed while the bard was for a time resident in Glen Roy. He explains the passes through the hills to his own country, and his affection for his fair maid".
- 'S mi na 'n shuidhe n so 'm aonar (I'm sitting here alone). Local version of well-known hunting song by Angus Cameron "Seann oran Seilge". According to MacDonald, "An incomplete version of this can be found in 'An t-oranaiche' but there seems no sufficient reason to doubt the authorship as Cameron's".
- Mi na m' shuidhe air glùn a' Chaiginn (Sitting on the knee of the Cage). Another hunting song.
- Bier an t-soraidh so mhàn dh' ionnsuibh 'n Rudha tha fo 'n mhàn (Send this farewell only to the Point below). Song telling how Angus Cameron was pardoned by the landowners of Stratherrick for poaching.
- Uisdean Mac Mhic-Shimidh Gu 'n ghinneadh e bho 'n òig fhear ud (Hugh Lovat That he would be born from that young man). Song composed by Archibald Grant of Glenmoriston for the Frasers of Foyers.
- B' e m' aighear agus m' òrduchadh, Bhi chomhnuidh anns na glinn (It was my joy and my lot, To dwell in the glen). "Another song in praise of the bard's native country"
- 'S mor mo chion air a' chaileag. A love-song to his future wife.
- A Rìgh! gur muldach tha mi, Na m' shuidhe 'm Braigh' Choire-Ghearraig (A King! I am sad, Sitting in the Braes of Corrie Yarrick). A love song composed when Angus Cameron was away from home.
- Is mithich dhòmhsa carachadh (It's time for me to move). According to MacDonald "The following are all the verses I possess of an excellent song composed by Cameron, entitled "Cor na Dùthcha" in which he appears to have deplored the changes that have come over the country under modern social conditons."
- Sios is suas an Cheallach, 'S tric a chaithris na fir mhòr (Up and down the Cheallach, The big men often watch). "Cameron gives us an interesting reference of fishing with lights at night, at one time common in the Highlands."

See Appendix 3 for comment on the above by High Barron

### Songs by Dr Ramsay of Stratherrick

- Na 'm b' fhear mi dheanadh òran gu 'n toisichinn mu 'n caidilinn (If I were a man, I would make a song to start about sleeping).

### Songs by Hugh Fraser

- Oran air Gleann-a-Garradh (A song about Glengarry). An Gleann-a-Garradh tha mi thàmh, Aig obair dhoibh air figh' an t-snàith: (In Glengarry I rest, Working for them to weave the thread:) Praise song composed by Fraser when he and his family lived in Glen Garry.
- Another is a composition on the formation of a Temperance Society in Glengarry: —
- Fonn — Thigibh. thigibh, togaibh suas; 'Bhratach eireachdail, chliùtach, uasal: (Chorus - Come on. come, take up; 'Elegant, glorious, noble banner:)
- Turus do dh' Can-nan-carn (A trip to Achnancarn). Fonn - An Achnancàrn dh' iarrnuinn fuireach (Chorus - In Achnancarn I wanted to stay).
- Rann air an ollamh Seoras MacAoidh – A bha anns an Eaglais Thuath (A verse by Professor George Mackay - Formerly of the North Church). Na 'm bithiinn na 'm bhàrd dheannin dàn (If I were a poet, I would compose a poem).

### The Abriachan Bard – Thomas MacDonald

“In Volume 23 of the Gaelic Society's Transactions will be found a short sketch of Thomas Macdonald, well known some years ago as "Tomas-a-n-Todhair", the Abriachan Bard, and two of his compositions. I have now become possessed of another song said to be by him, but to whom composed I have not been able to discover. It is characterised with the fluency of language usual to Thomas, who was a master of Gaelic expression.”

Fhir astair a dh' imich o thir nam beann àrd Beir soraidh gu dileas gu filidh nan dàn: 'S na 'm faighinn mar shirinn gun d' innis mi chàch. Deadh dhùrachd mo chridhe dha rithist 's an dràs.	Far away men who departed from the land of the high mountains Farewell to the poet of the poems: And if I do get it, I will tell others. My heart's desire for him again for now.
--	--

### A Strathnairn love story and song

“A number of verses of this composition appear in Turner's Collection (1813)”

- Och nan och mar a' tà mi, 'S mi gu bràth aig a' mhulad (Och nan och as I am, I am forever sad)

### Sacred Songs

- Ionrain An Anam (The Soul Longs). Nach mis' tha gòrach ag iarraidh sòlas (Am I not foolish to seek happiness)
- An Seann Duine (An old man). Ach gur mise tha fo mhulad (But I am sad).
- Comhairle do 's oige (Advice for young people). 'S e so na smuaintean tha teachd na m' fhianuis (These are the thoughts that come before me).
- An samaritanach math - Le Ministear Og Airidh (The Good Samaritan - By the Young Minister of the Shieling). O! las mo chridhe le gàirdeachas, 'N uair ni mo theanga luaidh (Oh! my heart burns with joy, When my tongue utters love). “A composition which seems to have become very popular in its time.”
- Oran Broin (Song of Mourning)  
A rinneadh an deigh bàis ALASDAIR FRISEIL, D.D., Ministear an t-Soisgeil ann an Sgìre Chnuic-Mhuire. Le Iain Nobul, anns an sgìre chéudna. Inbhirnis: Clò-bhuailte le Alasdair Friseil, 1837. (Made after the death of ALASDAIR FRASER (of Kirkhill), D.D., Minister of the Gospel in St. Mary's Hill District. By John Nobul, in the same district. Inverness: Printed by Alexander Fraser, 1837.)

## The Glen of the Bards: Further investigation into the Musical Heritage of Glenmoriston

- 'S gur goirt an dùsgadb maduinn leam, A' chaismeachd so a fhuair (And it was painful to wake up in the morning with me, This announcement I got).
- Tha mi dubhach is déurach, Ga d' shior ionntrain, a chéile (I am melancholy and tearful, I long for each other). A sixty-verse lament to his wife “composed by the Rev. Francis MacBean of Fort-Augustus, a well and widely known minister of the first half of the nineteenth century. Descended from the MacBeans of Dores, the Rev. Francis MacBean was born at Corpach, and thus not a native of Inverness district, as, under a misapprehension, I stated in my " Story and Song from Lochness-side.”

## Appendix 3

### Material relating to Glenmoriston published in the Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness collected by Hugh Barron and others

#### 1. A modern Raid on Glengarry and Glenmoriston by Kenneth MacDonald Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness Volume 15

An account of an expedition taken by Kenneth Macdonald Town Bailie of Inverness, and three others to explore the land in Glengarry and Glenmoriston relating to historical stories and tales.

Stories include:

- The story of and the raid and burning of the Church of Cilliechriost in Brae Ross by Allan Macranald of Lundie (1603)
- The cave and hiding places in Ault Sigh of Allan of Lundie after the raid of Cilliechriost
- The Ceann- a-Mhaim cairns on the ridge between Glen Garry and Glenmoriston where coffins were rested.
- Short descriptions of the Glenmoriston churchyard, the site of the Hanoverian camp at Ballindrom after Culloden, the Inn at Aonach when Boswell and Johnston stayed.
- Story of Roderick MacKenzie who was killed by Hannoverian troops when he pretended to be the Young Pretender.
- The Battle of the Braes of Glenmoriston at Ceannacroc during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms – a battle between a party of Gordons under the Marquis of Huntly, and the Camerons led by Lochiel.
- The Battle of Glenshiel (1719).
- Sgurr nan Conbhairean. Description of the hill, views etc
- Prince Charles and the Seven Men of Glenmoriston.
- The words of the Pibroch of Cilliechriost

#### 2. Verse, Story and Fragments from Various Districts by Hugh Barron Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness Volume 46, p. 232

- Chunna mise là eile, Ged nach eil mi mòr aois (I saw another day, Although I am not very old). Unpublished poem by Alexander MacDonald. (Six verses)
- *“In Story and Song from Loch Ness-side, p50, a song by “Am Pòsta Bàn” is given. Some years ago, Mr I R MacKay received three additional verses from Miss Jessie Macdonald, The Smiddy, Invermoriston.”*

**Nuair ruigidh mise Creat-na-crìche**

In *Story and Song from Loch Ness-side*, p. 50, a song by “Am Pòsta Bàn” is given. Some years ago Mr. I. R. MacKay received three additional verses from Miss Jessie Macdonald, The Smiddy, Invermoriston.

This verse comes after the second published—

Nuair ruigidh mise Creat-na-crìche  
Bheir mi sìneadh dha mo spàl,  
'S ann gheibh mi fasgadh bho gach sian  
Sios gu Sgiath 'n Rudh' Bhàn.

And the following two at the end—

Nuair a chaidh mi air mo chuairt  
Air Di-Luain, chaidh mi sàs  
Air an triatheamh là deug  
Dhe 'n a' mhios, anns a' Mhàrt.

Gum beil i nis an ochd ciad diag  
Tri fichead bliadhna 's a dhà,  
So té a chuireas crìoch  
Air a' bhliadhna tha mi radh.

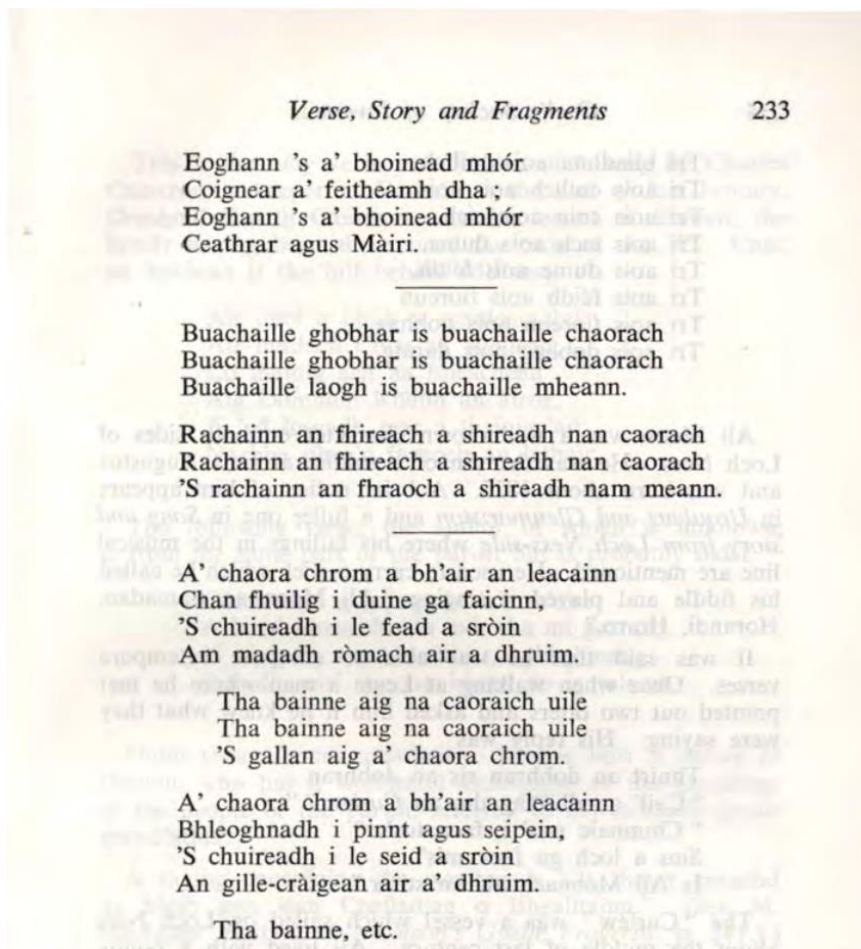
This song has been sung by the late Mr. Duncan Urquhart, Rebeg, Kirkhill, a native of Renudin, Abriachan, to the tune “Leis an Lurgainn.”

Source: Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness Volume 46

**3. Verse Story and Fragments from Various Districts by Hugh Barron**  
**Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness Volume 47, p.228**

*“The late Alexander MacDonald (Gleannach) noted the following five pieces which do not appear to have been published. Some of them are still known in Glenurquhart.”*

- Air Oidhche na Samhuinn, Bithidh ann, bithidh ann (On Halloween night, It will be there, it will be there)
- Mo ghille dubh tha bòidheach dubh (My black-haired boy is beautifully black)- A version of Mo ghille dubh to be found in K N Macdonald's Puirt-a beul.
- 'S e suirbheach na h-ite duibhe It's the servant of the black feathers
- Eoghann 's a' bhoinead mhòr (Euan and the big bonnet)
- Buachaille ghobhar is buachaille chaorach (A goatherd and a sheep herder)
- A' chaora chrom a bh'air an leacainn (The crooked sheep on the rock-slope). Two verses and a chorus of this song about illicit whisky distillation using the metaphor of a crooked sheep's horn (as the “worm” of a still).
- Thuirt an dobhran, ris an dobhran, “Cait' an dh'fhàg thu an Culew” (The otter said to the otter, “Where did you leave the Culew”). Song written by Ali Moon -detailed in Story and song from Loch Ness-side.



Source: Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, Volume 47

#### 4. Verse, Fragments and Words from Various Districts by Hugh Barron

##### Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, volume 48

- Co-dhiù thogainn fonn air Guaire. (Ten verses and chorus – no melody given). Ceilidh song written by Mrs Isobel MacDonald (mother of Alexander MacDonald) around 1873 to celebrate the local school master returning from holiday having got married.
- Gleanna Moireasdainn, by Aonghus Grannd of Achlainn, Glenmoriston (Six verses and chorus). Song of home written whilst in Edinburgh.
- These verses of a song on the well-known Strathspey outlaw Seumas an Tuim were well known on Loch Ness-side. Alexander Macdonald (Gleannach) gives some information about Seumas and an English version of the lines (TGSi Volume 39, page 206)
- Tha mo ghràidh thar gach duine (My love is above all).
- An t-uan a bheireas i aig Samhuinn (The lamb she gives birth to in November). A further verse of "A' Chaora chrom (TGSi Volume 19, page 84 and Volume 47, page 233)

#### 5. Notes on Bards, by Hugh Barron

##### Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, Volume 48, page 14.

"In every cottage there is a musician, and in every hamlet a bard". - Mrs Grant of Laggan, Letters from the Mountains".

"About 20 pages of Mr Alexander MacDonald's "Unpublished Poetry" (TGSi Volume 28 p327) are devoted to the works of Angus Bàn Cameron, a native of Stratherrick who lived in Oldtown. He describes Angus as one of the best of modern Gaelic Bards whose poems are of a high order in

*respect of clearness of conception and felicity of expression. That Angus was able to read Gaelic is proved by the fact that he is listed as one of the subscribers of Flavell's "Token for Mourners" (Companachd Luchd Broin) in 1828. The Highlander of 5<sup>th</sup> February 1876 contains a statement by the bard's daughter, Mrs Jane Fraser of Westminster, London, Ontario, that he composed 62 pieces in all. Mr Alexander MacDonald tells us that this daughter inherited some of her father's poetic gifts and that a son, Angus, also composed some songs. One of these is given, along with one of the works of the elder Angus in Alexander MacDonald's collection. Some of the songs of the elder Angus were sung in Stratherrick and Strathnairn up to the time of the 1939-45 war, and verses are still remembered there. Descendants are still in Inverness."*

*The bards of the Glenmoriston part of the Urquhart and Glenmoriston parish have been recorded by Mr Alexander MacDonald (Gleannach) in his "Story and song from Loch Ness-side" and in several of his papers of the Society's Transactions. The works of one of them, Archibald Grant, were edited and published by Alexander MacDonald's mother in 1863. Part of a song composed by this lady about 1872 is still known by a few in Glenurquhart. It is about a schoolmaster in Glenmoriston, Mr Macquarrie, and a trip he took to Barra. Alexander MacDonald does not appear to make any mention of Mary MacDonald who lived in the upper part of Glenmoriston early last century (the early 1800s). She is mentioned by Mrs I H Anderson in "Inverness before the railways" who says of her "She was famous for her composition of Gaelic songs, set to the most exquisite airs and filled with the most beautiful ideas and images".*

*Alexander MacDonald composed many poems which appeared in various Highland newspapers. Some of these were published in 1895 in a book "Coinneach us Coille." He usually went under the name "Gleannach" but also used "MacAonghus", "Domhnullach" and "Gael" on occasion."*

#### **6. Verse, Fragments, etc, from Various Districts by Hugh Barron Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, Volume 50 p.418**

Thoir mo bheannachd le dùrachd, Do dhùthaich an fheadìr, O Theampull nan Druinich, Gu Rùsgaich nan cnò.	Give my greetings with sincerity, To the land of the grass, From the Temple of the Druids, To Ruskich of the nuts.
--	---

Source: From the writings of Dr William MacKay, ca. 1870.

#### **7. Notes on People and Places along with Traditions Collected by the late Iain R MacKay - Hugh Barron Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness Volume 63**

Information regarding various places in Glenmoriston:

- Stories relating to Clach Neart (a lifting stone) in Clachan Mheirichard (Dalchreichart)
- Linne nam Ficheid (Pool of the Twenty). Story relating how 20 pedlars were drowned in the pool in the river Moriston (half a mile west of Blairy).
- Ceann a' Mhaim (the head of the Màm (Màm a' Chroisg)) is "on the march is dotted with funeral cairns as funerals used to pass between Invergarry and Glenmoriston."
- Clach Bheinn (Stoney Mountain) is the hill above Inverwick east of Alt Phocoachan.
- Coinneachan is the name of the green behind Ceann a' Chnoc.
- Eas Mòr (The large waterfall) in Coire Dho was a famous place for smugglers.
- Doire Nic Gille Ruaidh (The Wood of the boy Roy) is the name of a small clump of trees on the pony path to Coire Doe.

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- Spideal eich dhuibh (the hospital of the black horse) is on the bill hills of Glen Doe.
- Coltas an Duine (the appearance of a man) – a rock in Glen Doe.
- “The hill near Invermoriston marked as Creag nan eun is properly Creag Iain.”
- “It was near the bridge over the River Doe where Gorry attempted to kill the Duke of Cumberland in May 1746 but the sight and the sound of the mounted troops unnerved him.”

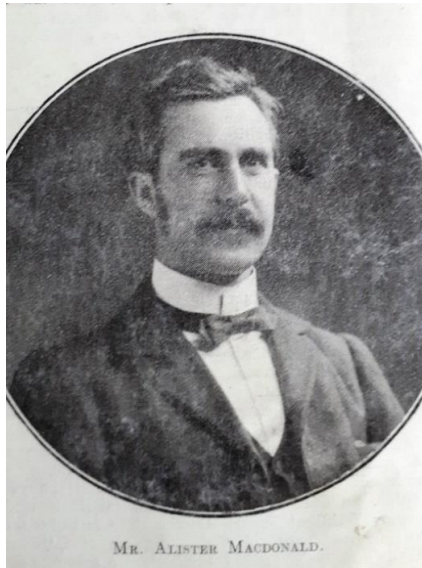


## Appendix 4

### Biography of Alexander Macdonald

From Glenmoriston Website

<http://www.glenmoriston.org.uk/Glenmoriston/Bardachd/Alister%20MacDonald/>



This extract is taken from "MacDonald Bards from Mediaeval Times" by Keith Norman MacDonald. published in 1900. This reference work gives biographies of all the known MacDonald Gaelic bards and examples of their work. This is the entry for Alister MacDonald from Achnaconeran.

#### **Alister MacDhomhnuill Alister Macdonald, Inverness**

Alister (or Alexander) MacDonald, the author of "Còinneach 'us Coille," is the son of Angus MacDonald, crofter, of Achnaconeran, Glenmoriston, a man of exceptional intelligence, still living, and a great great-grandson of Alexander MacDonald, one of the famous seven men of Glenmoriston who protected Prince Charlie for some days in the wilds of the Glen. Our poet was born at Achnaconeran on the 4th of Sept., 1860, and to his mother is due the credit of writing and publishing in the midst of very unsympathetic circumstances, the songs of Archibald Grant, the Glenmoriston bard. When 18 years of age Mr MacDonald removed to Inverness, where he entered the service of the Highland Railway Company as a clerk, and he is now assistant accountant of the company. Having taken several prizes at some of the competitions held some years ago under the auspices of the Gaelic society of Inverness, he had only been a short time in town when he became an active member of that learned body, to the "transactions" of which he has from time-to-time contributed interesting papers. Articles on Highland subjects from his pen have also appeared in other Celtic publications, and he contributed largely at one time - and still occasionally—to newspaper literature. Mr MacDonald is a master of shorthand (Pitman's system). He is the possessor of the National Phonographic Society's teaching diploma, and taught the art successfully for years. He is assistant secretary to the Gaelic Society of Inverness, and an active member of the Clan Donald Society also. But he is, perhaps, best known to his countrymen as an enthusiastic lover of Highland music and song. For years past he has cultivated Gaelic poetry, and his compositions frequently appeared in the Gaelic column of the Northern Chronicle, and other Highland publications. As he is still comparatively a young man, we hope to have many more poems from his poetic pen, and this hope is buoyed up by the fact that he has taken some prizes at the Highland Mòd competitions.

Mr MacDonald's laudable object in publishing his "Còinneach 'us Coille" was to popularize and encourage native song-singing among Highlanders at the present day. He very truly observes that "most of the productions of our ancient bards, beautifully poetic as they certainly are, do not lend themselves readily to modern popular singing," and the writer quite agrees with him when he says

that many of the songs in our standard works are much too long; they are more poems than songs. At the same time, of course, one need not sing all the verses of any song, but there is a heaviness about some for which lighter songs might be substituted. As the demand for Gaelic songs and music increases, no doubt all objectionable features will be reduced to a minimum. At any rate, all the Highland airs should be preserved by everyone who is at all a patriotic Highlander, as it seems much easier to produce a new song to an old air than to compose new music.

In his "Còinneach 'us Coille," a book of 120 pages, Mr MacDonald has given seventy-three poems and songs, exhibiting an intimate and scholarly acquaintance with the Gaelic language. As he himself says "every piece except a few of the long ones should be sung," and they seem well adapted for that purpose. There is a free flow of language in his love songs that is very refreshing, and "there will be found in them something to awaken sympathy, intensify love, sweeten joy, and to reconcile to sorrow."

As a specimen of the sentimental, "Guanag na Duthcha," to the air of "A nighean donn an t-sùgraidh," will convey an idea of his popular style of song: —

Thair dhomh-sa 'ghaoil do chaoimhneas,  
'Se 'chuireadh fàilt' us loinn orm;  
'S a dh' fhagadh làn mi 'dh' aoibhneas  
Gach là 'us oidhche 's maireann mi.

'S mòr a thug thu thaobh mi  
Le d' mhais' agus le d' aoidheachd;  
Tha ni-eiginn 'nad aoduinn,  
Nach cuir an saoghal à m' aire-sa.

Tha cridhe fo do chiochan  
'Tha 'deanamh nàdur grian domh  
'S na'm faodainn 'dhol do t' iarraidh  
Bhiodh Dia agam ri bheannachadh.

Na'm faighinn thu ri' bhuannachd,  
Bu deònach leam an uair tighinn,  
'S am bithinn 's mo ghuanag,  
'An gaol bith-bhuan neo-dhealaichte.

And of his patriotic songs, the following stanzas from "Oran do Chomunn-Chlann Dòmhnuille," shows what the author is capable of:

Thoir tasgaidh bhuaibh 'us beannachadh  
A dh' ionnsuidh uasail cheannasach  
A' chomuinn bhoadhar, fhearalach,  
Dha'n uile dhual 'bhi smearalach,  
A rèir mar 'ghluais an seanairean—  
'S e 'thi mi 'luaidh na maithibh  
'Tha mu Chomunn glan Chlann Dòmhnuille.  
'S e thi mi, etc.

Mac-Dhòmhnuille mòr nan Eileannan,  
'Us Mac-'ic-Ailean sheasadh e:

Gleanna Comhann cha chèileadh e:  
'S a' Cheapuich cha bhiodh deireadh oirr'  
'S Gleann-Garradh dlù's cha theicheadh e,  
'Us iomadh fion-fhuil eile  
Nach biodh leibideach's a' chòmhlán.  
'Us iomadh fion-fhuil, etc.

These specimens are taken at random, and they are not necessarily the best, there are other and many excellent songs throughout the work, which mark our clansman as a contemporary bard of exceptionable ability, and one of whom much more will be expected in the future.

Since the "Còinneach 'us Coille" was published he has written and published the following additional songs, etc. —

- (1) " Brosnachadh Chloin Dòmhnuille," 1896 (a poem);
- (2) "Tìr nam Beann, nan Gleann, 's nan Gaisgeach," a song to the air of "E ho rò mo rùn a' chailin," by Wm. Ross;
- (3) Blàr Allt-a-Bhonnaich, battle of Bannockburn, which took Mr Theodore Napier's prize at the Highland Mòd for the best poem on that subject some two or three years ago (1896);
- (4) " Dunnian," a song on Dunearn, Inverness, to the air of—" There grows a bonnie brier bush";
- (5) "An uair is tinne 'n gad cuaille 's ann is dualaich dha bristeadh," a poem illustrating this well-known proverb;
- (6) " Coire Lusain," a song to an old air, the melody being very fine;
- (7) " Cruinneag a' Chlachain" — the maid of the clachan -a love-song also to a beautiful old air resembling a fairy whisper;
- (8) "Far a' bheil Loch Nis a' sanais Crònán tairis do Chillionan " — Where Loch Ness whispers to Cill Eonan — (Kilninian),
- (9) and some love-songs that have not yet been printed.

Considering that Mr MacDonald has had few educational advantages beyond the usual routine of a country school, before the passing of the Education Act, broken by intervals of herding and crofting, his present position as a writer of English and Gaelic is very creditable indeed. Both his father and mother had a particularly wide acquaintance with the song literature of the Highlands, from whom he inherited that deep love of the music of his native country which he undoubtedly possesses.

Is e an t-ionnsachadh òg  
An t-ionnsachadh bòidheach

Some of the best poems in "Còinneach 'us Coille" are "Mo Dhachaidh Gàidhealach," "Mo chaileag Ghàidhealach," "Am Fear-Fuadain," "Air cùl Achleagan Bàidheanach," "Tom-an-t-sheòmaid," "Cumha Màthair," etc., besides those already quoted. Our promising bard is still singing away, not later than a few weeks ago he composed the following "Luinneag" on finding a small twig of heather under his feet in the office:

Ged thàinig tu g' am ionnsuidh  
Gun fhios a'm ciamar,  
'S mise rinn an surd riut  
A fhùrain chamnich  
Ged thàinig, &c

Fhuair mi'm badan bòidheach  
Anns an ofig bhòrdach,

'S rinn mo chridhe sòlas—  
Bha mi òg feadh bheannaibh.  
Ged thàinig, &c

Ma's ann a' togar càirdeas  
Air fear cinnidh 'thà thu,  
Cha'n'eil sin ro dhàn duit  
'S fuil nan àrmuinn annam.  
Ged thàinig, &c.

Fuil Chlann Dòmhnuille uasal  
D' am bu ghnàth 'bhi uaibhreach,  
'S iomadh blàr a bhuadhaich  
lad fo uaill do chaithream.  
Ged thàinig, &c.

Chuir thu mis' a bhruadar  
Air an làmh a bhuain thu,  
'S shaoil leam gu'm bu ghruagach,  
A bh'air chuairt's a' mhaduinn.  
Ged thàinig, &c.

'S shaoil leam bhi le m' eudail  
Mach a' cuallach sprèidhe  
'Nuair bha 'ghrian ag èirigh,  
Air na slèibhtean fallain.  
Ged thàinig, &c

'S cinnteach mi nach d'fhàs thu  
Am measg pheann 'us phaipeir,  
'S ann a fhuair thu t' àrach  
Air an àrd chnoc ghreannach.  
Ged thàinig, &c.

'S ged bu gheal 'us dearg thu  
Tha thu nise 'seargadh,  
'S tha do ghnùis a' dearbhadh  
Gur a searbh leat t' aineal.  
Ged thàinig, &c.

Cha b'e so an t-àite  
'S am bu mhiann leat bàsachd,  
'S cinnteach mi gu'm b'fhearr leat  
Glacraig àrd a' chanaich.  
Ged thàinig, &c.

'S iomadh de chlann daoine  
Tha mar sin 's an t-saoghal,  
Là 'us là air faontradh  
Fad o'n gaol 's an aithne.  
Ged thàinig, &c.