



Comunn Eachdraidh

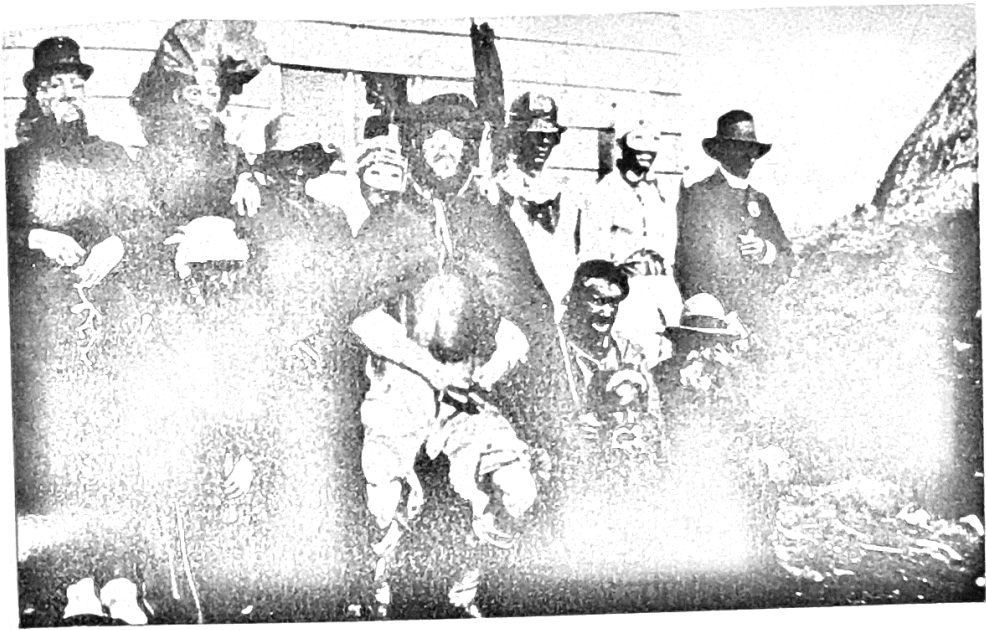
Sgìr' a Bhac

Old School Canteen
BACK
Isle-of-Lewis
PA86 OLT
Tel. - Back 610

LITIR FIOSRACHADH



AN T-OG MHIOS 1988



Carnival:

L-Standing: Iain Murray 'Eagan', 9 Back Mary Jane MacDonald 'Mairi Sine a Lally', Lighthill Peggy Stewart 'Peigi a Phlangaich', 4 Vatisker Katie Mary MacDonald 'Katie Mary a Lally', Lighthill Alfred Kelly, 2 Back. John MacDonald 'Iain a Lally' and Robert Burnside 'Rob Burnside'

Front:

Ishbel MacDonald 'Iseabal Shandy', 1 Church Street Sandy Murray 'Sandy Alick Rhuaraidh', 9 Back Norman MacRitchie 'Tarmod Tharmoid Mhurchaidh Oig', Lighthill Angus Murray 'Prigishean', 52 Vatisker Neil Angus MacLeod 'Neil Angus', School Road

Front Cover: Anna Broon and Catriona Aonghais Ruaidh

INTRODUCTION

We have tried to make our Newsletter as interesting and informative as possible with snippets of historical information about the district of Back. There are a few lines of poetry by our own local bard. The romantic quality is materialistic - but who else but Katie Bell could have romanticised the plot of potatoes, the full barrel of herring, the stock well-tended and the glories of youth.

It is proper to acknowledge the good-will of the many people whose co-operation enabled us to embark on this project. We hope the historical snippets will re-awaken memories of old sayings and stories, perhaps hidden in the depths of your memory. These, hopefully, we will mention in future Newsletters.

Bhitheadh sinn gle thaingeil daoine tadhal a stigh le seann eachdraidh sam bith mu thimcheall an sgire.

We would also like to remind you that we hope to have an exhibition again this Summer and would be grateful for your co-operation in loaning material for this exhibition which will last from the beginning of July until the end of August.



Crois a' Rathaid Chuil c.1930'S

SEASONS OF THE YEAR

April

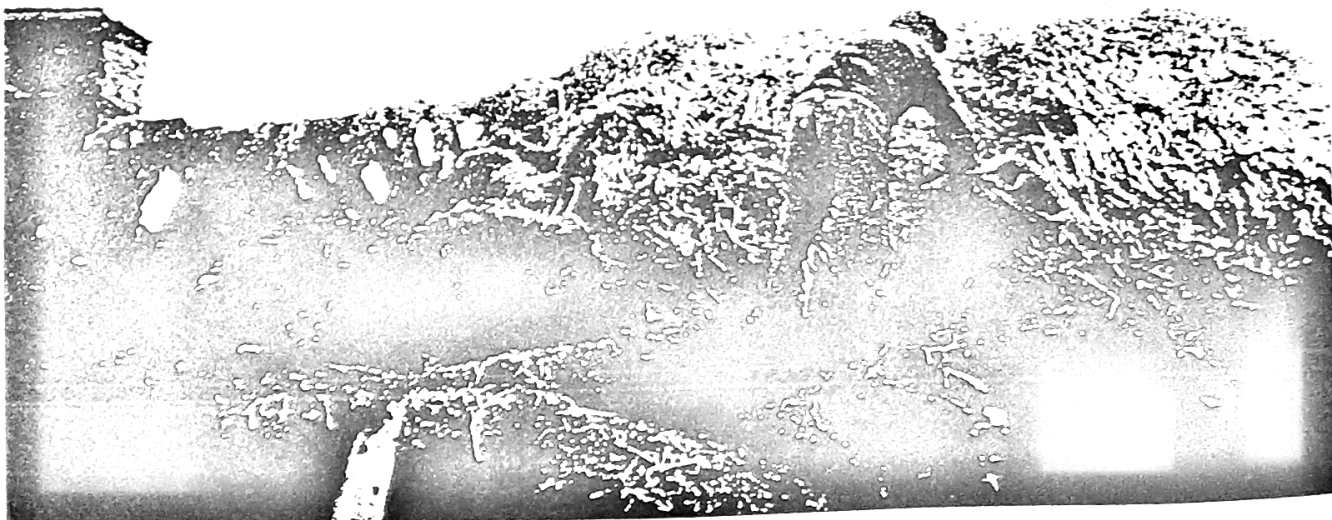
Now came the lambing time and the planting of the potatoes. Towards the end of the month the oats would be sown. During this month fell the "Caisg" (Easter) and snow showers at that time were referred to as "Sneachd na Caisge".

May

This month was called "Bealltuinn," and a cold spell about the middle of the month with hailstones was called "Gaisean coimheach na Bealltuinn". Most of the other festivals were named after saints of the Celtic Church but this one was a pagan festival of very ancient origin. It has been said that the name is derived from the heathen god "Baal", so often mentioned in the "Old Testament". It was about the middle of this month that the barley crop meant that the meal chest would be filled during the winter. The fertiliser used was byre manure and this was applied liberally. Barley was not sown as thickly as the oats and the ratio was 9 grains in a man's footprint. In the rotation of crops, the barley was planted where last year's potatoes were; the potatoes in last year's oat field, and the oats in last year's barley field. After the first week of May the oat crop would be appearing and the sheep were then driven to the moor where they stayed till all the crops had been harvested. After the crops had been planted, the year's supply of peats were cut.

June

About the 6th of June there would be a few cold days which were called in the south "Buchan's cold spell" but here they called it "Feill Donain".



Thatching roof:

Donald Stewart 'Dolly Willie', 4 Vatisker and Lighthill

A' BHEIL SEO CEART?

An Uga -	Collar-bone
Suil na Leis -	Hip-socket
Builg -	Blister
Guiseid -	Gusset of a shirt
Fuine -	Kneading/Baking
Slacan -	Mallet for washing clothes, etc.
Bainne a' Mhineid -	First milk put into the stomach of newly-born killed calf - used for cures, etc.
Aghastar -	Horse halter
Sgrath an fharlais -	A thin sod on the windward side of the smoke-hole to prevent blow-back
Sileadh -	Dripping of rain through a roof during a shower
Dileadh -	Foundation seepage
Di-Luain a' Bhreabain -	Monday of Chastisement
Snaim as an Athar -	Formation of clouds - a sign of bad weather
Bogha Frois -	Rainbow
Corra-thulchainn -	Beam extending through thatch on 'Tigh Dubh'

Is mis' a chunnaic an iongnadh
An griclican a' bualadh
A chearc a' tarring na mona
Agus a mhointeach air a gualainn
An calaman a' treabhadh
An t-seabhag ri cliathadh
An dreadhan-donn air a' bheairt
An each a mach a riaghailt (a' deanamh sioman)
An tarbh a' bualadh ord
An ron a' seideadh balg
'S a' chuthag 's i ri piobaireachd
'S a' fidheall aig a' sgarbh

SMUAINTEAN LAITHEAN M' OIGE

Le Katie Bell Sheonaidh 'an Alasdair a Ceann a Muigh Chuil

O eisidibh a chairdean, 'is bitheabh rium baidheil
Gus an dean mi clo-bhualadh, aon rann no a dha
Mu na laithean 'chaidh seachad, tha an diugh dhomh mar fhaileas
'Sa bhitheas dluth ri mo chridh', gus a sinear mi marbh

'N am eirigh 'sa mhaduinn, gu do lit 'is do bhainne
Bhitheadh do sheanhair a togail, an uachdar bho'n mhias
Le slige mhor chreachainn, 'is tusa ri feitheamh
Ri glanadh do bhilean, 's do smigead lan barr

A mach 'nis le cabhaig, leis a chrodh chun a mhonaidh
Le do bhat a cuir charan, 's tu gun stocainn, gun bhrog
'Sann ort fhein bhitheadh a suigeart, 'is d'inntinn 'leum romhad
'S tu cunntadh na seachduinn, gun tigeadh An Drobh

Och, Och, 'is mo theannadh, 'nam faigheadh an crodh as ort
'Sann ort bhitheadh an deannal, fiachainn faighinn gu'n cul
Bhitheadh an corc' air a mhilleadh, 's na sneipean air ithe
Ach mo chreach gu h'iochd araidh, an clar mhor de bhuntat'

'Nuair thigeadh an t-Sathuirn, 's thigeadh d' athair gu baile
Le corp a bhitheadh claidht', agus sgith anns a bhat'
Dh'theidheadh an cairt lan de sgadan, a thaomadh air glasach
'S cha bhitheadh taigh anns a bhaile, nach fhaigheadh diot no dha

Ach nach diomhain mo cheard dhomh, 'bhith ri caoidh laithean m' araich
Tha gach uile dhaibh seachad, 'is gach nith a nis ur
Ach mo chuimhneachan mhuirneach, cha dhealaichain ri h-aon ac'
Air na tha sheudan 'n Tur Lunnainn, no air mo chuideam de'n oir.



ANOTHER DISASTER - BATHING CLANN IOMHAIL

In our first Newsletter in March 1986 the following appeared:

Nell Murray, 52 Veolakar, recalls Isabel Goshie telling Old Kennedy about a boat which left Back with a crew of 6 to buy a boat in Ness -

"Cha d'fhuairadh bliadh 'flann goshie".

When did this incident occur and who were involved?

We now have the following record of this incident.

Back Decoding

MORNING OF 18TH MARCH 1881 AT SEA BETWEEN TOLSTA HEAD AND BURT OF LAULE

Angus Ferguson	age 27	(single)	father - Evander Ferguson mother - Ann Murray
Murdo Ferguson	age 25	(single)	father - Evander Ferguson mother - Ann Murray sons of Iomhair Goshie, 53 Back and Anna Konghals Ruadh
Nell Ferguson	age 23	(single)	father - John Ferguson mother - Isabelle Morrison son of Iain Goshie, 22 Back
Murdo Murray	age 30	(single)	father - Angus Murray mother - Ann MacLennan son of Konghals Konghals Ruadh, 61 Back
Nell MacLeod	age 24	(single)	father - Williem MacLeod mother - Isabelle MacLeod
John MacLeod	age 19	(single)	father - Williem MacLeod mother - Isabelle MacLeod sons of Uilleam Saor, 40 Back

ANOTHER DISASTER - BATHADH CLANN IOMHAIR

In our first Newsletter in March 1986 the following appeared:

Neil Murray, 52 Vatisker, recalls Isabel Gobha telling Old Kennedy about a boat which left Back with a crew of 6 to buy a boat in Ness -

"Cha d'fhuaradh bioran 'riamh dhith".

When did this incident occur and who were involved?

We now have the following record of this incident.

Back Drowning

Morning of 18th March 1861 at Sea Between Tolsta Head and Butt of Lewis

Angus Ferguson	age 27	(single)	father - Evander Ferguson mother - Ann Murray
Murdo Ferguson	age 25	(single)	father - Evander Ferguson mother - Ann Murray sons of Iomhair Ghobha, 53 Back and Anna Aonghais Ruaidh
Neil Ferguson	age 23	(single)	father - John Ferguson mother - Isabella Morrison son of Iain Ghobha, 22 Back
Murdo Murray	age 30	(single)	father - Angus Murray mother - Ann MacKenzie son of Aonghas Aonghais Ruaidh, 41 Back
Neil MacLeod	age 24	(single)	father - William MacLeod mother - Isabella MacLeod
John MacLeod	age 19	(single)	father - William MacLeod mother - Isabella MacLeod sons of Uilleam Saor, 40 Back

PARTS OF BOATS

Thwarts or Seats

1. An Tobhta Braghad
2. An Tobhta Meadhon
3. An Tobht' Amar
4. An Tobhta Deiridh - no an Sguit

Floorboards

1. Sola Toisich
2. Sola Mor
3. Sola Deiridh

Parts of a Boat

Urlaran - Floorboards
Fluich Bhord - Garboard
Druim - Keelson
An t-Slige - Skin
Beul Mor - Gunwhale
Maide "Builgs" - strake

Rangan - Ribs
Urlar - Flat floor
Druim Fuadain - Rubbing piece
Fiodhraich Tharsuing - Cross timbers
Aparan Thoisich - Inner stem post

Items used in the Boat

Acair - Anchor
Botag - Boat hook
Ramh - Oar
Bior Iaruinn - Marline-spike
Cnagan - Rowlocks
Brog a' Chroinn - Mast step
Lion Beag - Small lines
"Rifichean" - Reefs in sail
Sgrioban - Rake

"Balaisd" - Ballast
Toll an Tuc - Plughole
Sguman - Baling dish
Spuidsear - Pump
Stuir - Rudder
Falmadair - Tiller
Lion Mor - Long lines
Put - Buoy

Sguil (Sguil Mhor) - The Creel in which the line was baited
Iarunn Sgrobaidh - Iron used for unhooking big fish
Iarunn Iorach - Rudder fixture
"Pentair" - Painter
Lunnan - Rollers
Dorgh - Handline
Snut - Snood

DISASTER AT GRESS

Towards the end of the Eighteenth Century, there is an interesting record of a shipping disaster at Gress. This disaster is verified in a letter written by a Swedish sea captain to a representative of the Earl of Seaforth at Stornoway. According to the contents of the letter this ship was one of a fleet of whaling ships that had been fishing off Greenland and due to bad weather had to seek shelter near the rocks off Gress.

As they were unfamiliar with the coast line they misjudged the entrance to the anchorage or "Poll Ghriais" and they ran onto a hidden reef known locally as "am Braga Mor ". In his letter, this sea captain relates that his ship was manned by a Swedish crew and that six of them were drowned after the shipwreck and that one died after bringing him ashore. He also praised the hospitality shown both by Evander Maciver, tacksman at Gress, and his tenants to the survivors and also mentioned that the victims were interred at Gress. Local folklore relates that they were buried in a place called in Gaelic "an t-suabachan". This is a piece of tidal flat land, or "fideach", to the west of Gress Bridge and it is covered over by spring tides. The local people deemed it as an honour for seafarers to be buried where they would be visited by the sea, morning and evening.

There is an old saying in the village of Back about what the parents used to tell their children if they misbehaved.

Man a gabh thu comhairl
Cuiridh mi gan 't-suabachan thu
Comhla ri na Suainich
Far am faigh thu muir
Moch agus anmoch

If you do not behave
I will send you to the 'suabachan'
Along with the Swedes
Where the tides will cover you
Morning and evening



Remains of 'Glenesk'

AN TAIBHSE NACH ROBH ANN

Nuair a bha mi a fuireachd ann a Ard Thung bha e mar cleachdadh agam a bhí a dol a thadhal air mo mhathar síos a Chol air oidhche Di-sathuirne. Air an oidhche a bha seo, s' mi air an t-slighe dhachaidh thainig mi bho'n a 'bhicycle' aig bonn leathad Ghearraidh Ghuirm agus bha mi a coiseachd suas a leathad. Chunnaic mi an duine seo a coiseachd na'm aghaidh agus ghabh mi longantas nach cual' mi fuam na casan aige. Ghabh e seachad mar nach fhac e mi idir. Air an ath oidhche Shathuirne, agus anns an' aon aite, thachair an aon duine ruim agus chaidh e seachad a cheart cho samhach. Thubhairt mi 'nuair sin leam fhein, "Cha ni duine ceart a bha siud".

Air a ath Dhi-Shathuirn thachair an aon rud agus anns an aon aite cho-dhuin mi gur e' taibhse a bha ann. Thainig crith na mo chnamhan agus leum mi air 'a bhicycle agus dhean mi dhachaidh cho luath s' bha na mo chomas, agus mi a sealltuinn air mo culaibh le eagal, 'nuair a rainig mi dhachaidh thilg mi mi-fhein air a bheing agus thubhairt mo bhean ruim, "De a thachair dhuit?", "O" arsa mise "s coma sin, chunnaic mi taibhs". Agus dh'innis mi dhi mar an duine a chunnaic mi. An deidh sin bha mi a deanabh cinnteach nach fhuirichinn ann a Col gus an tigeadh an oidhche.

Co-dhiu, chaidh tri seachdainean seachad agus bha mi a deanamh na slighe leis a latha, ach an ath Dhi-Shathuirne chaidh maille a chur orm an tigh mo mhathair agus thainig an oidhche orm. Suas a leathad thainig mi bhon a' 'bhicycle' as an aon aite agus aig a cheart am thuit an solas dheth agus chrom mi síos gus a thogail. Nuair a thog mi mo cheann bha an aon duine samhach a tighean nam ionnsaidh. Cha deach e seachad orm mar a b' abhaist ach rinn e direach orm. Agus cha robh fios agam de a dheanainn, a fuirichinn far a robh mi, no a ruithinn. Mas do rinn mi suas m'inntinn, bhruidhinn an duine rium, "A bheil," arsa esan, "'match' agad?". "Tha", arsa mise, "ach' ni thusa bha coinneachadh rium anns an aite seo air na Di-Sathuirnean roimh seo?"

"S'mi" arsa esan. Agus arsa mise, "Carson nach do bhruidhinn thu ruim". "Carson" as esan "nach do bhruidhinn thu fhein ruimse". Thug mi nis suil ceart air an duine agus dh'aithnich mi e, bha deise shoilleir ghlas air agus brogan aotrom. Thuig mi nise cho samhach s'a bha e' coiseachd. Fhaighnich mi dheth de an aobhar gu robh e' coinneachadh ruim ann a seo, aig an aon am. "Tha mi," arsa esan, "a suirghe air nighean a Ard Thuinge agus bhitheadh sinn a tighinn a Steornabagh air bus Ard Thuinge anmoch oidhche Shathuirn agus bhitheadh mise a coiseachd dhachaidh a Chol".

Sin agaibhse ma tha, agus 's iomadh bliadhna on' thachair e, an taibhse a bha smocadh agus a caitheabh brogan 'rubbar'.

(THE GAZETTE, MONTREAL, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1987)
TOWNSHIPERS CLING TO DYING TONGUE IN A REGION REMINISCENT OF SCOTLAND

SCOTSTOWN - Few Quebecers can make the claim that's on the door of John and Christine MacKenzie's home in Scotstown: "Tha Gaidhlig air a bruidhinn an seo". It means Gaelic is spoken here.

They are among about a dozen people in the Megantic region of the Eastern Townships bordered by the Beauce district and the state of Maine whose first language is Gaelic and who still speak this ancient language fluently.

About 50 others in the area have some knowledge of the haunting, melodic tongue which some refer to as the language of Adam and Eve.

Language of the Celts

Megantic is the only region in Quebec where Gaelic is spoken. It was originally the language of the Celts who conquered much of Western Europe in the 4th century BC and were subsequently driven to Brittany, Wales, Cornwall, Northern Scotland and Ireland, where their descendants live today.

"They say its a hard language to learn. Course, I always knew it, so I can't think of it as hard", Mrs MacKenzie said.

She and her husband have been married 57 years. She is 90 years old and he, 95.

"I speak more to him in Gaelic, just a habit, you know. It's hard to give up. He's more inclined to speak English. I stick to my Gaelic a lot but I get answered in English a lot," she says.

Although Gaelic was the first language she learned to speak, she never learned to read or write it. But she can manage to read her Gaelic Bible, going by the sounds. The language has only 18 letters, and the sound of the alphabet is different from English, she explains.

"We talked Gaelic at home. My mother didn't like to speak English. She was always afraid of making mistakes", Mrs MacKenzie says.

"When I went to school, I knew how to tell the teacher my name but that was about all the English I knew. And it kept us backThe teacher didn't stop us from speaking Gaelic, though."

Mrs MacKenzie had five sisters and nine brothers. "We never any of us lost our Gaelic," she says. Now she's the only one left. "It's a desolate feeling."

Her father was 4 years old when his parents brought him to the Megantic area from the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides in 1852. Her mother was born in 1856 in the same area soon after her grandparents had completed their three month boat trip to Canada.

These young families and many more migrated to this part of the Townships from the late 1830s to the 1860s during the infamous Highland clearances. Their Scottish landlords on the Isle of Lewis and Harris drove out their tenants because leasing the land to sheep-breeders brought them more money.

The Highland Scots went as far as Australia and the United States. The annual Highland Games held each year in Nova Scotia, rural Ontario and St. Lambert mark their passage here.

The Gaels who came to the Megantic area travelled by ox-cart from Quebec City to Lennoxville and on through more rugged and less settled country to Megantic. Here they found a land as rough and rocky, as haunting and mystical as their home in Scotland.

The two highest mountains of the Townships, Mt. Megantic and Mt. Gosford, rise nearly 1,200 metres above sea-level. Their slopes sweep down to forested countryside where winter arrives a few weeks earlier and lingers that much longer than in the rest of the Townships.



Mrs MacKenzie's parents came from Ness. Her maiden name was Christina Murray. John MacKenzie, her husband, was the grandson of John MacKenzie from Beck who was the miller in Gress. The above photograph is of Christina MacKenzie taken in 1987 in Quebec.

Towns Grew After 1883

In 1838, the first year of settlement, eight or nine families arrived, followed the next year by 27 more. After that, there was a shipload or two every year.

"They landed in practically the wilderness and all these towns grew up from that", Mrs MacKenzie says.

Lingwick, Stornoway, Gould, Hampden, Marsboro, Scotstown, Bury, Marsden, Winslow, Dell, Tolsta, Gisia, Echo Vale, the names of the villages recall home.

By the turn of the century, the Scots formed the majority in the Megantic region.

Mrs MacKenzie remembers when there were five churches, all Presbyterian, holding Gaelic services Sunday morning and English services in the evening.

She remembers the social gatherings too. "A lot of men composed songs, bards they called them. They were very nice songs and there were a lot of good singers. At quilting parties, the men would all sit around on the floor and sing those songs while the women quilted."

"There were songs of love, songs about the early settlers, and songs of home. A lot was written for the Isle of Lewis - some that remembered the place and was lonesome for the place."

Musical instruments didn't accompany the singing, but there was fiddle music for dancing.

There were waltzes, square dances, reels and schottisches when partners glided to a fast two-step and then a five-step. "It was so different from the dances today", she recalls.

Outing:

Back row:	John Murray 'Iain Mhurchaidh Uisdein', Lighthill	Donald
	Martin 'Dubal', 58 Back	Catherine MacKenzie 'Catriona
	Choinnich Tharmoid', 51 Lighthill	Christine MacRitchie
	'Cairistiona Mhurchaidh Oig', Lighthill	Christina Stewart
	'Cairistiona Shoyan', 17 Back	Ann MacLeod 'Anna Alickan
	Uisdein', 66 Back	
Front Row:	Catherine Martin 'Katag Sholid', 63 Back	Bell Ann Murray, 21
	Back William Macleod, 20 Back	John Martin 'Iain Dhubail',
	58 Back	Evander Morrison 'Iomhair Chuigs', New Street, Back

SGEULACHDAN ANNS AN TIGH CHEILIDH

Bho chionn lomadh bliadhna bha seoladair a Sgìre Bhac air soitheach, a bha 'seoladh thall 's na tìrean cein agus se Eireannach an companach bha aige ri dol air tìr. Latha bha seo 'sann a dh'iarr a charaid air a dhol comhlairis do'n eaglais. 'Se Gaidheal a bha 'san t-sagart agus bu bheag a shaoil e gu'n robh fear 'san eisdeachd a thuigeadh e. 'Se Laideann leis am bitheadh e 'dunadh na seirbheis ach a la bha seo 'sann a thog e 'lamhan agus seo, a reir aithris, am beannachadh a rinn e, "Theid mi", ars' esan, "a null gu tulach gorm a shealltuinn air mo sheanmhair!"

At the time when the line fishing in Broadbay was at its height, crews used to go far afield in search of mussels for bait. At one time a boat crossed over to one of the mainland lochs for a cargo of mussels. An indication of the hard work involved in gathering the bait and carrying it to the boat is shown by this incident. It so happened that the Minister of the district had been more than once assisting at the Back communions. He invited the crew to his manse the night before leaving for home. After supper the minister conducted family worship and after the prayer only one of the crew (Alex MacAskill, "Alex Alasdair Mhurchaidh") got up. The others were all fast asleep on their knees!

SEATAG NO NIGHEAN BHUIDHE SHEATAICH

'San 'nuair a bha e na bhalach air an airigh a chuala Kenny bho'n a "Chriomag" a sgeulachd seo. Bha air a radh gu'n robh cailleach air an robh "Seatag" mar ainm a' fuireachd a muigh air Muirneag. Ged nach robh coltas sam bith gu robh i posd bha air a radh gu robh seachdnar mhic aice ach chan eil moran eachdraidh de mar a bha iad beo. Ach eachdraidh ann no as, bha an t-ainn aic' ainmeil anns a sgìre mar a sheallas an rud a tha leanntuinn. Bha da cailleach ann am Breibhig a chaidh a mach air a cheile agus chaidh a chuis cho dona, 's gun thubhairt an darna te ris an t'eile, gu' robh i cairdeach do "Seatag". "Tha seachd craiceann eader mise agus 'Seatag'", ars ise, ach tha sin a sealltuinn gu robh cairdeas a choireigin ann.

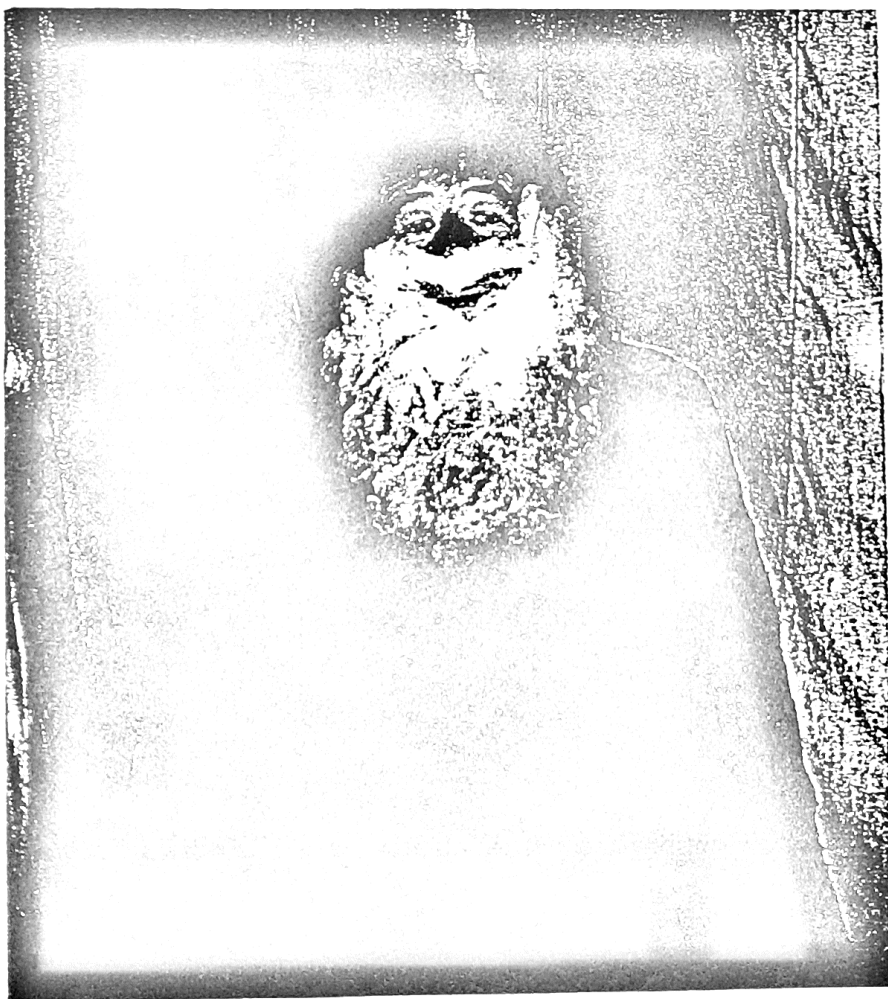


Taking home the pe

MAC AN T-SRONAICH

Bha cailleach air a Bhac ris an canadh iad "Cailleach Mhic Aonghais Bhain". Bha i a fuireachd ann am bothan beag ri taobh tigh sheann-sheanair Aonghais MhicIomhair, ceann a tuath a Bhac. Dh'fhalbh balach leatha 'nuair a bha e aois sia bliadhna-deug dhan an drobh air a chasan lomnachd le da ugh agus cha do thill e dhachaidh. Bha a chailleach de'n bheachd gur e a mac fhein bha an deidh faighinn ann an trioblaid a choireigin agus gur e esan Mac an t-Sronaich. Bhitheadh i a fagail buntat' agus sgadan a muigh dha a h-uile oidhche agus tha mi a creids' gur ann a sgath a bhith a faighinn a bhidhe nach robh Mac an t-Sronaich a cuir dragh oirre. Am mac a bha seo a dh'fhalbh bho'n tigh, tha e coltach gun do rinn e a t-slighe a Chanada oir thainig tri oghaichean dha dhachaidh gu Sgir a Bhac aig am a' Ceud Chogaidh.

Bha fear eile ann ris an canadh iad "Alasdair Mor", athair Dhomhnuill Bhain, 'bha na chiobair anns an sgire, a tighinn tarsuing air Mac an t-Sronaich 'nuair a bhitheadh e air a mhointeach. 'Se duine mor tapaidh a bh'ann an Alasdair agus bha eagal aig Mac an t-Sronaich roimhe agus bha eagal air bho na coin aige cuideachd oir bhitheadh e ag radh, "Caisg do chu". 'San air Traigh Shealabhaig, far an robh daoine a fuireachd an uair sin, 'bha Alasdair a smaoinachadh a chunnaic e mu dheireadh e.



Donald John Macaskill 'Teeny'

DI-LUAIN TROIDHT'

'Se Di-Luain Troidht' a bhitheadh aig na bodaich air a cheud Di-Luain an deidh an treas la deug de'n Fhaoileach (a cheud Di-Luain dh'an sheann Bhliadh'n' Ur). Bha air a' radh, an ard as an robh an gaath aig meadhon-oidhche air an oidhche sin, gum bitheadh a ghaath a tarruing do'n ard' sin airson a coir de'n bhliadhna - "mar laogh gu bo".

The first Monday after the 13th of January (first Monday of the old New Year). It was said, the direction of the wind at midnight on that night will mean that it will be drawing towards that direction for the rest of the year - "as the calf draws towards its mother".



Katie Ann Duncan, - 27 Upper Coll

SGEIREAN GHRIAIS

Tha trì sgeirean a mach a Griais, a' Sgeir Leathainn, an Dun agus Ladaisgeir. Air an taobh a muigh tha am Braga Mor. Anns a bhliadhn' ochd seo. A reir eachdraidh cha robh call beath' orra, ach ceud bliadhna roimhe sin tha e ri aithris gu robh tubaist eile anns a aite seo. Se long Shuaineach eile a chaidh orra agus chaidh seoladairean a bhathadh agus tha eachdraidh a tabhairt cunntas gu bheil iad air an adhlaiseadh ann an Griais.

A' nis an uair a bhitheadh traigh mhor ann, bha e comasach a dhol do'n a Sgeir Leathainn agus an Dun. Aig traighean mor an earraich bhitheadh daoine a gearradh an fheamainn agus ga ghiulain as le cairtean. 'Se obair chruaidh agus chabhagach a bha sin, daoine a feuchainn de na chuireadh iad gu tir mus tionndaidheadh an t-side mhara. Mar a tha 'm focal, "cha'n fhuirich tim no lan ri aon duine". Bhitheadh iad a taomadh na cairtean feamainn ri taobh an aite far am bitheadh iad a dol a chur a bhuntata. A nis mus tigeadh am cuir a bhuntata bhitheadh an fheamainn sin lan de cnuimhean agus se sin an obair a bha againn 'nuair a bha sinn og, ga chuir ann a sgrìob a chrainn latha treabhaidh.

CORCAVAIG

The area to the east of the present day houses in Vatisker was originally a farm paying rent to Colin MacIver (Cailleán Chuil), who was tacksman at Coll. It was called "Tac Chorcavaig". The remains of, what is said to be, eight bothies used by the farm labourers can still be seen near the "Loch na Miall" area. Tradition has it that this was why the area called "Buail' an Ochd" got its name.



IASGACH 'SA LOCH A TUATH

The great line fishing was prosecuted up to the First World War, though in the years before that it was slackening off owing to the deprivations of steam trawling which decimated the grounds for ling and cod.

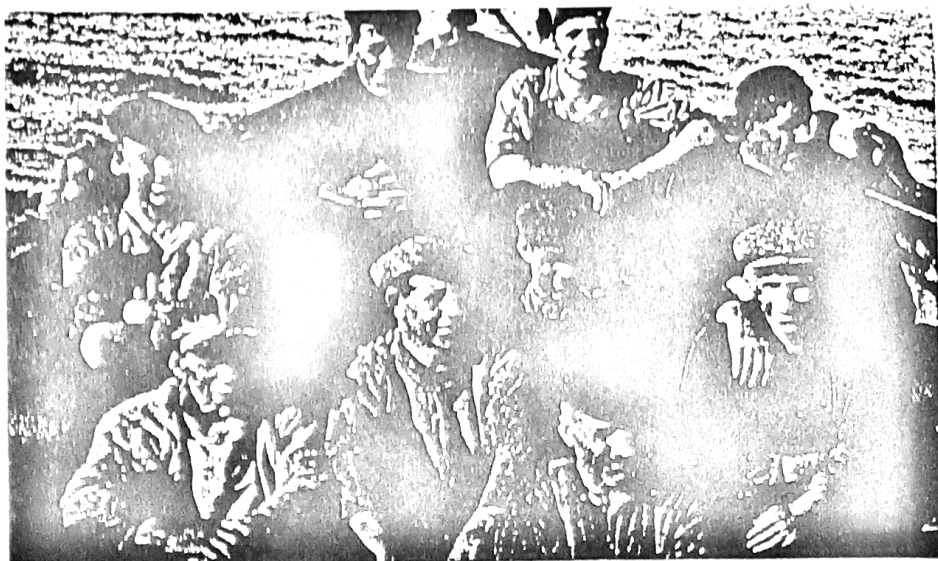
The great line was of hemp 'cocrach' and was about 400 fathoms long with from 120 - 140 hooks spaced about three fathoms apart. The creel in which the line was baited was called a 'sguil mhor'. It was constructed of split hazel strips. The shape was elliptical with the after end deep and the forward end shallower and flatter. This was the end where the baited hooks were laid. To get the big fish unhooked, they used an 'iarunn sgrobaidh'. This was a piece of iron about 2 feet long with a cleft at one end. They would slip the cleft down the darit to the hook to catch the hook. This would enable them to twist the hook to break its grip which could then be pulled out. The boats had four thwarts across. The forward one was the 'tobhta bhraghad' or the mast thwart. The forward side of this thwart had a half circle cut out into which the mast fitted and was secured by a wooden spar which fitted into iron hoops on both sides. The bottom of the mast fitted into the step which was a block of wood nailed to the bottom with a hole to take the bottom end of the mast. The second thwart was the 'tobhta mheadhon'. The third was called the 'tobhta amar'. The short one in the stern was the helmsman's seat and was called the 'sguit'. Under the helmsman's feet was a piece of decking called the 'sola mor'. Just forward of this was the deepest part of the boat and this was where the boat could be baled. The bucket used for this was the 'soitheach taomaidh'. The rest of the boat's bottom was covered by short bits of flooring called 'solaichean' which could be lifted out and right forward was a bigger and higher one called the 'sola toisich' on which the person putting the mast up could stand. The space under these 'solaichean' was clear all along and acted as bilges to let any water run down to the 'aite taomaidh'. This bilge water was called the 'taoim'.

The lines were always hauled in on the starboard quarter and during this the mast and sail were stowed away. The rowers rowed the boat along the line and in daylight did not require any orders as they could see what was happening. This rowing was called 'fannadh'. During darkness, the person hauling gave orders as follows. If the boat was moving away from the line he would say "thall orra". This meant those on the port side gave more effort. If the boat got too close or on top of the line he would say "a lamh sa fhein" meaning more effort on the starboard side. If they were going too fast with the line trailing behind he would say "cum fodha" to slow her up. If he was not getting enough speed he would say "thugabh leibh i".

When they returned the catch was sold to a merchant after they had taken enough for their own family use. These buyers then had the fish gutted and salted in little bothies called 'tighean saillidh'. The ruins of some are still to be seen. Then they were spread on the shingle for drying before being sold to the mainland. I omitted to mention that during the hauling the rudder was also unshipped and taken aboard.

With the small line fishing the fish caught was mostly haddock though there would be whiting 'caoiteag' and gurnet 'cnodan'. If they were on sandy bottom they would get plaice and flounders. The bait used in summer was herring and later on, mackerel. After the mackerel season was over, they used barnacles or limpets called 'bearnaich' or 'maoraich'. Sometimes they would get lugworms or 'lugaichean' but this was very laborious work turning the sand over with a spade to get at them. The most popular bait in the winter time were mussels or 'fiasganan'. These were not to be got locally as they only grow in sheltered inlets where there is fresh water flowing in. After the middle 1920s when people got lines and lorries they went mostly to Uig for them. The most favoured spots were Garynahine, Grimersta, Gisla, and Lundale. Before that they would go for a boats cargo to Lochs and sometimes worked more than one tide. Sometimes they would get a cargo of mussels sent from the Clyde but these were very dangerous owing to the pollution of that river. If they cut their fingers shelling them they sometimes got poison in the cuts. Some old fishermen had mis-shapen fingers as a result of this. Up to about 1950 the boats were all sailed but about that time most boats got outboard motors. This was an advantage as they went to the grounds in a straight line when previously they had to tack backwards and forward according to the wind.

When they reached port with their catch the method of sharing was to spread the catch on the shingle in equal shares for the crew. Everyone then took their own share home and made it up into strings or 'gadan' with five or six haddocks to a 'gad' according to size and was taken to Stornoway to be sold from door to door by the women. They got one shilling per 'gad'.



Crew of the 'Windfall':

Back row 2nd from left - John Macleod 'Iain Choinnich Neill', Vatisker (skipper)

Far right - Alex Stewart 'Am Plangach', 4 Vatisker

2nd row, 2nd from left - Angus Ferguson 'Aonghas Iomhair', 38 Vatisker

Far right - Donald MacLennan 'An Grass'

Front - William Macleod 'Uilleam Barrant', School Road

SGEULACHDAN EIBHINN

Bha fear seo a coiseachd air sraid Steornabhaigh agus 's iongantach mar do dh'ith e rud nach do chord ris an taobh a stigh aige, agus cha robh tigh beag no clobhsa faisg air laimh. Bha 'nis a chabhaig cho mor agus chaidh e steach 'sa clobhsa 's leag e a bhrìogais agus chuir e a chulaibh ris an t-sraid. Bha fear a dol seachad a dh'aithnich e agus 'nuair a thainig e a mach thubhairt e ris, "Carson, Aonghais, a chuir thu do dheireadh ris an t-sraid?" Se am freagairt a thug e seachad, "Tha iomadh duine dh'aithnicheadh m'aghaidh nach aithnicheadh mo dheireadh!"

Tha cuimhne aig a mhor shluagh an uair a chaidh a ceud duine do'n a ghealaich. Bha seo na ioghnadh mor agus bha e na argumaid anns na tighean ceilidh. A measg a bhruidhinn a bha ann, fhreagair am fear seo, "Se a tha mi fhein ag radh, gun robh e gle shealbhadh dhaibh gun robh a ghealach slan!"

Bha cailleach anns a bhaile a bha fìor ghnòthaicheil agus bha i dha'n a bheachd nach bitheadh dad air a dheanamh ceart mar a bitheadh i fhein ann. Air a dh'fhas i cho aosd s' nach b'urrain dhi obair a dheanamh, bha i 'g innse do' n theaghlach mar a dh'obraicheadh iad an talamh. 'Nuair a bha i sgith a bhruidhinn, 'se a thubhairt i, "De an ni sibh 'nuair a bhasaicheas mise?" 'Se am freagairt a thug te de na nigheanan dhi, "Bheir sinn dhachaidh 's an t-earrach thu agus cuiridh sinn air ais 'san fhoghar thu!"

Bliadhnachan air ais, mas robh tractoran anns an aite, dh'fheumadh a mhoine a chuir chun a rathad le cliabh. Mar bu thrìc 'se na boireannaich a bha deanamh an obair seo, agus se na fir, no na bodaich, a bhitheadh a togail na cleibh orra. 'Nuair a thoisich an Cogadh agus a chuid bu mhotha de na fir air falbh anns a Chogadh, agus ann an obraichean eile, chaidh sorachan fiodha a dheanamh. Bha trì chasan air agus bha e mu cheithir troighean a dh'airde. Bhitheadh iad a lìonadh na cleibh air an t-sorachan, agus bhitheadh e na b'fhasa an iris a chuir mu' na guailleanan agus falbh leis. Se "Am Bodach" an t-ainm a thug iad air an t-sorachan. Bha am boireannach a bha seo air crìochnachadh a mhoine a chuir gu rathad agus chuir i a sorachan no'm bodach dh'an a chliabh agus dh'fhalbh i dhachaidh leis. Air an t-slighe dhachaidh thachair am fear seo rithe, agus thubhairt e rithe, "Tha thu a thabhairt a bhodaich dhachaidh, a Mhairi". "Seadh", ars' ise, "Tha an 'conscriptiòin' air breith air, a Mhurchaidh!".

SEANN-FHACAIL 'CHAIDH FHAIGHINN 'SAN SGIRE

Clacharan air leac lom, searrach lair 'sa thoin rium, chuala mi chuthag 's
mi dith-lon 's dh'aithich mi nach deidheadh a bhliadhna leam

Chan fhearr suid na siad

Fialachadh cul na h-ìosgaid

A bho as sgairdich air a bhuaile 's i as arda nuallan

Thig sonas ri linn iomradh

Theid fear ri dhualachas seachd uairean anns a latha

Ceann coin air maduinn earraich, earball pheacoc air an fheasgair

'S man as miann le bru, bruichidh bonnach

Aiteamh le gaath tuath, cur gu luath air a mhuin

Cha'n ann a h-uile latha bhitheas mod aig Mac an Toisich

Is minig a dh'ith loth fhiathaich siol a bioneid

Bu dual do dh'isean a ron a dhol air a thoinn chun na mara

Dubh, geal, no odhar, is toigh leis a ghobhar nam beann

Tuigidh fear-leughaidh leth fhacal

Cha trom leis an loch an lach

Cha trom leis an each an t-srian

Cha trom leis a chaora a h-ollain

'S cha truimig a chollunn a chiall

Is fhearr a bhi a dhith chinn na bhi a dhith an fhasan

Cha robh fine choir a riamh gun fhalad

Cha'n ann bho'n iar a tha an usbag

Cha'n aithnich am bodach each fhein

Is fhearr eun 's an laimh na dha dheug air iteag

Is fhearr caraid 'sa chuirt na crun 'san sporan

Is mairig nach beathaich a thruadhan

Cha tig ubh mor a toin an dreathann

GEATA BUAILE UIG GRIAIS

Tha Geata Buaille Uig an ear air a' rathad beagan astar air taobh shuas muileann Ghriais.

Tha e na cheist do dhaoine carson a tha an ainm air an aite seo. Tha astar mhor eadar Uig agus Griais, ach tha eachdraidh air innse dhuinn gu'n robh ceangal eadar an da aite anns na ginealaich a chaidh seachad.

Mus tainig Clann Iomhair do Ghriais 'se Clann Mhic Ailean a bha ann, 'se sin na Moireasdanaich. Tha cunntas againn gun do phos Murchadh Moireasdan nighean le Domhnull Cam a Uig aig toiseach an seachdamh linn deug.

Se Domhnull Cam ceann cinnich Clann Mhic Amhlaidh a Uige. Tha cunntas eile againn gun 'phos nighean Iomhar Mhic Iomhair, Cailean Mhic Iomhair (Coll), a bhuineadh do sgìre Uig mu thimchioll deireadh an ochdamh linn deug. Is ann de na daoine aige fhein a bha i.

Tha e furasda a thuigse gum bitheadh Uigich a' tadhal air Griais agus a fuireachd ann. Tha cinnt againn gun robh na Gobhaichean a' fuireachd air a Chnoc Bhuidhe ann an Ghriais, ma's thainig iad a' fhuireachd chun a Bhac, agus tha ri radh gur ann a Uig a thainig iad.

S' iongantach mun a robh barrachd air an aon teaghlach a Uig 'san sgìre.

Bhitheadh seo a nis na aobhar air a buaille a bhi air a 'ainmeachadh air Uig.

Ma choisicheas tu a rathad a tha fagail a geata bheir e thu gu seann laraichean tighean a Chnoc Bhuidhe.



Repairing Vatisker Peat Road in 1936:

Standing: Neil Macdonald 'Neilan' Alex Dan Beaton James Morrison
'Seumas Mor' Malcolm Maciver 'Calum El' Murdo Macleod
'Murchadh Thobain'

Sitting: Rob Burnside Alex Campbell 'Tuxy's brother' Kenneth Campbell
'Kenny Tweed' Donald Martin (home on holiday from USA)
Malcolm Macleod 'Calum Hill'

FRIDAY 9th 1919

EXTRAORDINARY AFFAIR

On Saturday morning the village of Lighthill, Vatisker was thrown into a state of excitement by the noise and appearance of two black balls in the south west sky. One of them swept past about 10 feet off the ground with such terrific force that sheep were blown down, carts of manure were swept away like dust, peat stacks were scattered about, while the barn belonging to John MacLeod, 45 Vatisker was struck, and half of the front side was completely blown away. Then it took its course in a south easterly direction until it took to sea on the south side of Gress farm.

RECORDBREAKERS

The Rudhachs had better look out!!!

Congratulations are in order for the Back Under-14 Football Team in what is believed to be a record for mention in the "Guinness Book of Records". The recent score of 61-0 against the 2nd Stornoway Boys Brigade augers well for the future and we look forward to the team's continuing success.



Back U 14 Football Team:

Back row L-R: D MacDonald (Manager) David MacLeod Murdo MacLennan Iain
MacDonald Kevin Anderson Derek MacDonald Don Murray

Front Row L-R: Robert MacLennan Mark MacLeod Iain Tait Stewart MacLeod
Donald T MacLean Jonathan MacIver

Missing from photograph: Norman MacArthur David MacIver Murdo Murray



Line Fishing in Broad Bay:

Standing: Angus Morrison 'Aonghas Ruadh', 12 Vatisker Alasdair MacLeod
 'Peter', 1 New Park, Vatisker
 Front: Alasdair MacAskill 'Gibearnach' Alexander MacDonald 'Sandy
 Tuilidh', 1 Church Street Kenny Campbell 'Kenny Tweed',
 31 Vatisker Kenneth Murray 'Am Boston', Brevick
 Iain MacDonald 'Iain Dhomhnuill an 'ic Raoill', 9 Coll



Fank at Back:

Standing: 'An Geolthean', Vatisker 'Bean Choinnich Stiubhart', Brevig
 Front: 'Chirsty Bell Aonghais Ruairidh', Vatisker Alex Neil Kennedy,
 Back 'Bean 'an Help', Lighthill Donald MacIver 'Domhnull na
 Criomaig', Vatisker