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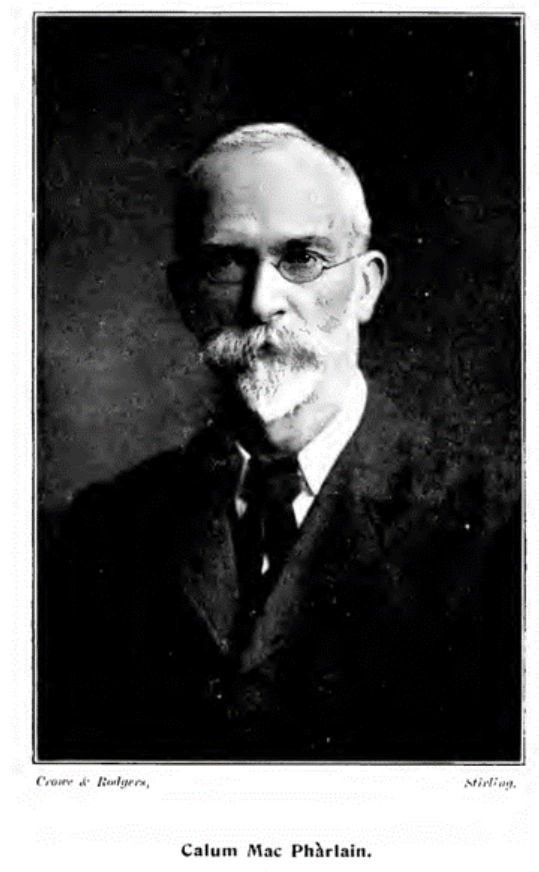
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Malcolm MacFarlane (Calum MacPhàrlain, 1853-1931)

New perspectives on the Gaelic language movement in Scotland at  
the turn of the twentieth century



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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of PhD

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## Abstract

The thesis examines Malcolm MacFarlane's (Calum MacPhàrlain, 1853-1931) substantial contributions to the Gaelic language movement in Scotland at the turn of the twentieth century. It argues that MacFarlane should be recognised as one of the movement's leading figures, addressing the neglect in our understanding of his prominent position to date. This is the most substantial study and comprehensive investigation of both MacFarlane's life and the archive of his papers and correspondence, held at the National Library of Scotland. The study provides a detailed analysis of MacFarlane's involvement with the different social, cultural and political movements that were active within the Gaelic literary networks at the time. It illuminates the relationships he had with several of the movement's other key figures, both in Scotland and in Ireland. The study reflects on MacFarlane's ideologies and aspirations for the Gaelic language and its culture, highlighting his criticisms of the language movement's central organisation, An Comunn Gàidhealach. It investigates the foundation of An Comunn Gàidhealach's propagandist publication, *An Deo-Ghréine*, of which MacFarlane was the inaugural editor, and gives much needed critical examination of its contents and the changes it underwent in its earliest years. The study presents a detailed account of the establishment and operations of The Gaelic Academy (Àrd-Chomhairle na Gàidhlig), which emerged to address the perceived deficiencies in the policies of the wider Gaelic movement. An overview is given of MacFarlane's substantial contributions to Gaelic literature, calling attention in particular to the resources he produced in his lifetime that were intended to stimulate the production of contemporary Gaelic literature and provide tools for future Gaelic writers. A catalogue of MacFarlane's known printed Gaelic work is given here, underlining the scale of the contribution he made and providing for further scholarly research.

## Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature: (Eleanor E. Thomson)

Date: 24/08/25.

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## List of Abbreviations

NLS	National Library of Scotland
ACG	An Comunn Gàidhealach
GA	The Gaelic Academy
GL	The Gaelic League
GSG	Gaelic Society of Glasgow
GSI	Gaelic Society of Inverness
GSL	Gaelic Society of London
SNL	Scots National League
SSPCK	Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge
<i>ACS</i>	<i>An Claidheamh Soluis</i>
<i>ADG</i>	<i>An Deo Ghréine</i>
<i>CR</i>	<i>The Celtic Review</i>
<i>CM</i>	<i>The Celtic Monthly</i>
<i>GNB</i>	<i>Guth na Bliadhna</i>
<i>OT</i>	<i>The Oban Times</i>

## Introduction

This study focuses on Malcolm MacFarlane's (Calum MacPhàrlain, 1853-1931) substantial contribution to the Gaelic language movement in Scotland at the turn of the twentieth century. It provides vital detail and examination of this under-represented period in the development of Gaelic revitalisation efforts and increases our understanding of the history of the movement as a whole. Crucially, it sheds light on the ideological and political standpoints which have impacted the evolution and progress of language revitalisation work to date and thus impacts contemporary debate on language planning and provision for Gaelic in the present day. The study illuminates the tensions which existed within the language movement and provides necessary detail on the individuals and factions who, at various points, proposed alternative strategies or policies to those being implemented by the movement's governing body, An Comunn Gàidhealach (ACG) (The Highland Association, est. 1891). With competing objectives for the language, from its academic study to its representation in the social or artistic contexts of the period, the activities and efforts of the movement largely failed to operate as a united whole.

The intention of this study is to illustrate the complexity of the language movement in Scotland in order that we better understand its operations and activities, its key figures and the critical debates which impacted its development. In doing so, it will illuminate the role Malcolm MacFarlane played within the movement and question to what extent he should be considered as one of its leading figures. MacFarlane was dedicated to improving the condition of the Gaelic language for future generations and was deeply rooted in the Gaelic literary networks of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This study will investigate the impact which MacFarlane had on the development and direction of the language movement, as he and his friends and colleagues worked tirelessly to ensure that the language and its culture had a viable and meaningful future in the modern world; and consider their place amongst the academics and aristocrats who filled out the wider linguistic, literary and social scene. The study examines the role MacFarlane played in shaping the Gaelic language movement; and consequently, considers how his legacy should be understood today.

The Gaelic movement had developed from the social and political campaigns of the 1870's and 1880's, which sought to improve the socio-economic condition of the people living in traditionally Gaelic speaking communities in the Highlands and Islands of



Scotland.<sup>1</sup> The Gaelic movement is distinguishable from what can later be identified as the Gaelic language movement, with its emphasis on culture, education and language specifically, as a social and political campaign to address the injustices of insecure land tenure, rack renting and the practice of illegal eviction taking place in the largely Gaelic speaking crofting communities.<sup>2</sup> Though linked to similar political and social unrest in Ireland, the movement in Scotland was largely reluctant to pursue the radical and more quintessentially anti-British policies deployed there. Nationalism and the land question were intimately linked in Ireland at this time, whereas much of the Gaelic speaking population in Scotland remained loyal imperialists.<sup>3</sup>

The Gaelic movement was fundamental in bringing about the passing of the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act of 1886, granting security of tenure to those working and living on the land. John Murdoch (Iain MacMhuirich, 1818-1903) had been a driving force, as a vocal and effective land reformer and the editor of the influential newspaper, *The Highlander* (1873-1882).<sup>4</sup> Together with other leading personalities, such as John Stuart Blackie (1809-1895) and Mary MacPherson (Màiri Mhòr nan Òran, ‘Big Mary of the Songs’, 1821-1898), Murdoch called on the urban Gaelic speakers of Glasgow and Edinburgh to support and contribute to the Gaelic cause, using the unrest and protest taking place in Ireland as an example.<sup>5</sup>

In response, prominent Gaels such as John Whyte (Iain MacGhille-bhàin, ‘Iain Bàn Òg’, 1842–1913) and his brother, Henry Whyte (Eanraig MacGhille-bhàin, ‘Fionn’, 1852-1913), wrote extensively in defence of the Gaelic speaking people, vindicating their rights and celebrating the richness of their language, history and culture in the process.<sup>6</sup> Henry Whyte composed the Gaelic translation of the 1886 Crofters Act, though Donald Meek has suggested that it may have been his brother; as well as several popular Gaelic and English

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<sup>1</sup> James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community*, (Edinburgh, 2018), 281-305.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ewen Cameron, ‘The History of Gaelic Scotland: The Highlands since 1880’, *School of History, Classics and Archaeology* <<https://www.research.ed.ac.uk/en/publications/the-history-of-gaelic-scotland-the-highlands-since-1880>> [Accessed: 01/04/25] (Edinburgh University, 2013) 15-16.

<sup>4</sup> Derick Thomson, ‘John Murdoch’, *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, ed. Derick Thomson (Glasgow, 1994), 206. Calum Cameron-Whyte, ‘The Highlander: The Radical Gaelic Politics of John Murdoch’, *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* (TGSi), Vol. 68 (2016), 129-171.

<sup>5</sup> Christine Lodge, ‘MacPherson, Mary’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB) (2004), <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/38584>> [Accessed: 18/03/24]. George Reid, ‘Blackie, John Stuart’, *ODNB* (2009), <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/2524>> [Accessed: 18/03/24]. Donald E. Meek, ‘Radical Romantics: Glasgow Gaels and the Highland Land Agitation, 1870-1890’, *Glasgow: Baile Mòr nan Gàidheal. City of the Gaels*, (2007), 161-185. On the Irish protests see: Michael J. Winstanley, *Ireland and the Land Question, 1800-1922* (London, 1984), 27-32.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Meek, ‘Radical Romantics’, 161-162. Tomas M. Murchison, ‘Henry Whyte (1852-1913)’ *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland* (1994), 307. MacFarlane also composed a biography: C. M. P., ‘Henry Whyte’, *The Celtic Monthly* (CM), Vol. 1, No. 2 (1892), 17; and several obituary notices, including: M. M., ‘Henry Whyte: ‘Fionn’’, *The Celtic Review* (CR), Vol. 9, No. 36 (1914), 332-336.

collections, such as *The Celtic Garland* (1881), which appealed simultaneously to the literary and artistic zeitgeist of the Celtic Revival.<sup>7</sup> MacFarlane was close to Henry Whyte throughout his life, and later reported that his father had played with their uncle, Robert Whyte, also a Gaelic writer, when they were young.<sup>8</sup> It seems, however, that Henry and John Whyte were more politically active than MacFarlane was during the 1880's, although he did claim to be a disciple of John Murdoch.<sup>9</sup> In a small file of photographs found amongst his papers, MacFarlane had portraits of himself, John Murdoch and John Stuart Blackie.<sup>10</sup> MacFarlane's poem in defence of the Vatersay Raiders, 'Coitearan Bhatarsaidh: Iorram' ('Vatersay Raiders: Boat Song', 1908), has been praised by Donald Meek, though to date his poetry has largely been considered sentimental and lacking in the political potency of his contemporary Gaelic writers.<sup>11</sup> Anthologies of nineteenth and twentieth century Gaelic verse, such as Donald Meek's *Caran an t-Saoghail* (The Wiles of the World, 2003) and Ronald Black's *An Tuil* (The Flood, 1999) overlook MacFarlane's output entirely.

Although politically driven, the land campaigns of John Murdoch's time had generated a critical momentum behind the Gaelic language, its culture and in support of the Gaelic speaking people. With the establishment of Gaelic cultural organisations to bolster its campaigns, such as the Gaelic Society of Inverness (GSI) (Comunn Gàidhlig Inbhir Nis, est. 1877), and with the institution of the Celtic Chair at the University of Edinburgh in 1882, held first by Professor Donald MacKinnon (1839-1914), the Gaelic language and culture became the focus of credible and sustained scholarly interest.<sup>12</sup> There was also the growth of the Gaelic press, with an increase in the volume of Gaelic material being presented in newspapers, periodicals and books. Alongside Murdoch's *The Highlander*, which regularly contained Gaelic material, there was the *Oban Times (OT)* (est. 1861) and *The Northern Chronicle* (1881-1969) which carried regular Gaelic columns, catering to the Gaelic and

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<sup>7</sup> Henry Whyte, *The Celtic Garland* (Glasgow, 1881). Michael Shaw, *The Fin-de-Siècle Scottish Revival: Romance, Decadence and Celtic Identity* (Edinburgh, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh', *Guth na Bliadhna*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1909), 231-232. MacFarlane reported that Robert Whyte had published the poem 'An t-Earrach' in *An Teachdaire Gae'lach* under the initials, 'O. T': C. M. P., 'Henry Whyte', 17.

<sup>9</sup> 'Correspondence of Malcolm MacFarlane, with related literary, lexicographical and musical papers', National Library of Scotland, Acc. 9736, Fol. 48: 20/04/07. Returned letter from MacFarlane to the editor of the *Oban Weekly News*.

<sup>10</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 123. A small file of photographs.

<sup>11</sup> Meek, 'Radical Romantics', 163. D. Thomson, *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry* (Edinburgh, 1974), 232. MacFarlane, 'Coitearan Bhatarsaidh: Iorram', *Alba* (25/07/08). The Vatersay Raiders had occupied and cultivated the island before being evicted and then imprisoned in a high-profile dispute with the landowner. See: Ben Buxton, *The Vatersay Raiders* (Edinburgh, 2023).

<sup>12</sup> Mairi A. MacDonald, 'History of the Gaelic Society of Inverness', *TGSI*, Vol. 46 (1969-70), 1-21. Donald Lamont, 'Professor MacKinnon', *CR*, Vol. 10, No. 38 (1915), 97-105. William Gillies, 'A Century of Gaelic Scholarship', *Gaelic and Scotland: Alba agus a' Ghàidhlig*, ed. William Gillies (Edinburgh, 1989), 3-21.

Celtic interests of this emerging literary sphere.<sup>13</sup> Newspaper articles generally appeared in English, though Gaelic poetry and song were also printed.<sup>14</sup> Gaelic periodicals, beginning substantially with *An Teachdaire Gae'lach* (The Highland Messenger, 1829-1831), stimulated this growing market, as did the production of Gaelic collected readings and verse, particularly popular with the Lowland Gaels.<sup>15</sup>

The provision of Gaelic education in the Highlands had also played an important role, as Gaelic teachers with a broader scholarly interest were supported by charities such as the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) (est. 1709), fostering the creation of Gaelic research and literature.<sup>16</sup> This organisation and others sought to improve the Gaelic speakers' literacy and proficiency in English through the study of scripture, though coupled with independent and local school boards, they were relatively successful in providing Gaelic teachers and provisions to the Gaelic communities.<sup>17</sup> This was undone by the Education (Scotland) Act of 1872, which made no provision for Gaelic education in Scotland. As a result, Societies such as the Gaelic Society of Glasgow (GSG) (Comunn Gàidhlig Glaschu, est. 1887) and ACG set out to support, agitate for and provide materials to Gaelic schools, whilst operating from the more affluent urban areas of Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Criticisms of these organisations were common, despite the herculean task of combatting Gaelic language decline; a process which had gained momentum and speed by the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Supporting the Gaelic language and Gaelic education had been the central ambitions of ACG at its formation, alongside the wider language movement, and it is important to recognise that these organisations operated on limited, primarily donated funds and were run by those willing to volunteer their own time and resources. The scale of the fight that they had on their hands cannot be overstated, despite protestations at their ineffectiveness. Nevertheless, there was a perceived disconnect between the literary networks of the Lowlands, and even London, and the welfare and prospects of the Gaelic speakers in the Gàidhealtachd, which became less and less central to the activities of these groups. For example, Wilson McLeod noted that often 'their goal was

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<sup>13</sup> Meek, 'Gaelic Printing and Publishing', *The Edinburgh History of the book in Scotland*, Vol. 2, ed. Bill Bell (Edinburgh, 2007), 107-122.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>15</sup> Sheila Kidd, 'The Scottish Gaelic Press', *The Edinburgh History of the British and Irish Press, Volume 2: Expansion and Evolution, 1800-1900*, ed. David Finkelstein (Edinburgh, 2020), 337-356.

<sup>16</sup> D. Meek, 'Beachdan Ura à Inbhir Nis/New Opinions from Inverness': Alexander MacBain (1855-1907) and the Foundation of Celtic Studies in Scotland', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, Vol. 131 (2001), 24.

<sup>17</sup> Jamie Kelly, 'The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge: education, language & governance in the British State and Empire, c.1690-c.1735', Unpublished PhD thesis (University of Glasgow, 2020).

no more than to celebrate the language in certain narrowly defined cultural contexts and prevent it from dying out.’<sup>18</sup> Issues such as the prevalence of English and the important place which social and other benevolent events occupied in their operations arise frequently throughout this study. Despite these complaints and the sheer scale of the challenge, the organisations did manage to impact government policy, as in 1891 when the GSG successfully lobbied in the House of Commons to include those who spoke Gaelic and English alongside those who spoke only Gaelic in its census records from that year onwards.<sup>19</sup> By this measure, 254, 415 individuals in Scotland reported that they could use the language in 1891.<sup>20</sup> In 1931, with MacFarlane coming to the end of his life, Gaelic speakers had almost halved to just 136, 135.<sup>21</sup> In his own native village of Dalavich (Dail Abhaich), a village on the banks of Loch Awe in the Lorn district of Argyll, the Gaelic speaking population had decreased from 91.5% in 1891 to just 56.8% in 1911.<sup>22</sup> This steep decline sits in stark relief to what was a hugely productive period of MacFarlane’s work for the Gaelic language, as he urgently sought to slow this trajectory.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had also been fertile ground for the Romantic fascination with Gaelic tradition and culture which spread across Europe, known as the Celtic Revival. MacFarlane resolutely objected to the term ‘Celtic’ being used when the people being described were the Gaelic speaking people of Scotland, saying that he was personally ‘sick of it.’<sup>23</sup> The term could just as readily be used to describe anything Celtic related as it could be applied to the Gaelic language or its people specifically. MacFarlane objected to the blanket characterisation of things as Celtic as he believed this was a symptom of the waning self-respect of the Gaelic people themselves.<sup>24</sup>

In Scotland, this intense Celtic curiosity had sprung from the controversial publication of James MacPherson’s (1736-1796) Ossianic work, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry collected in the Highlands of Scotland* (1760).<sup>25</sup> With this, reproduction of the traditions, tales, music and culture of the romanticised Scottish Gael increased, resulting in

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<sup>18</sup> Wilson McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland: Policies. Movements, Ideologies* (Edinburgh, 2020), 58.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Preface’, *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Glasgow*, Vol. 1 (Glasgow, 1887-1891), iv.

<sup>20</sup> Charles W. J. Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland, 1698-1981: the geographical history of a language* (Edinburgh, 1984), 162.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Kurt Duwe, ‘Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Studies. Vol. 18: An t-Oban & Latharna a Deas (Oban & South Lorn)’, *Linguae Celticae* < [https://linguae-celticae.de/GLS\\_english.htm](https://linguae-celticae.de/GLS_english.htm) > [Accessed: 01/05/25] 9.

<sup>23</sup> MacFarlane, ‘The Gaelic Language and the People who speak it: A Paper read before the Glasgow High School Cèilidh’, *The Oban Times* (OT) (21/03/03). The article was later re-printed: ‘The Gaelic Language and the People who speak it’, *The Old Highlands: Papers read before the Gaelic Society of Glasgow, 1895-1906*, (Glasgow, 1908), 281-316.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas M. Curley, *Samuel Johnson, the Ossian Fraud, and the Celtic Revival in Great Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2009).

the production of popular folklore collections such as John Francis Campbell's (1821-1885) *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (1862).<sup>26</sup> In Ireland, the movement evolved into the Irish literary revival, with the emergence of the Anglo-Irish school of writers and artists, depicting an idealised pastoral image of Ireland for the modern English-speaking audience.<sup>27</sup> Organisations such as ACG and The Gaelic League (GL) (Conradh na Gaeilge, est. 1893) in Ireland were established in part to protect the Gaelic language and culture from being lost in the process of packaging it to appeal to these largely English-language based audiences.

As well as identifying and examining MacFarlane for his central role in the Gaelic language movement, this study acts as a means to develop our understanding of the complex networks and machinations of it as a whole. McLeod's recent study has outlined some of the issues which faced the language movement, including the strongly bourgeois composition of its membership and the legislative resistance it encountered regarding Gaelic education.<sup>28</sup> McLeod also surveyed the language movement's key organisations, noting the differences of strategy and approach between them at differing points.<sup>29</sup> This present study, however, deals specifically with the language movement in relation to the central organisation of ACG and proposes that it was in itself fractured, with diverging intentions and motivations driving the efforts of smaller groupings of members operating within, and then outside of, its wider framework. These tensions have been alluded to in recent work in the field. For example, discussing a heated exchange between ACG and MacFarlane on the issue of judging practices at its annual festival, the Mòd, Sheila Kidd pointed to the fact that there were clearly 'undercurrents among the various groups and individuals active at the time.'<sup>30</sup> Kidd noted in particular the relationship between MacFarlane and Angus Robertson (Aonghas MacDhonnchaidh, 1871-1948), whose literary abilities MacFarlane was critical of and who was later credited as the author of the first Gaelic novel in place of MacFarlane's longstanding colleague, John MacCormick (Iain MacCormaic, 1860-1937).<sup>31</sup> This study examines these events and relationships in detail and brings to light the ideological positions and strategies for the Gaelic language which distinguished them from one another. Overall, it provides much needed detail on the debates taking place within the language movement at this time and presents evidence for the existence of counter and splinter movements which pursued a more radical ideological course for the Gaelic language.

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<sup>26</sup> Francis Thompson, 'John Francis Campbell (1821-1885), *Folklore*, Vol. 101, No. 1 (1990), 88-96.

<sup>27</sup> Philip O'Leary, *The prose literature of the Gaelic revival, 1881-1921: ideology and innovation* (Pennsylvania, 1994).

<sup>28</sup> McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 56-111.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Kidd, 'The Forgotten First: John MacCormick's Dùn Àluinn', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, Vol. 22 (2006) 202.

<sup>31</sup> 'An t-Ogha Mòr', *DASG* < <https://dasg.ac.uk/corpus/textmeta.php?text=68&uT=y> > [Accessed: 29/07/24] and Kidd, 'The Forgotten First', 197-219.

Regarding his early life, MacFarlane was born in Dalavich to native Gaelic speakers John MacFarlane (Eòin Bàn a' Mhuilleir, 1807-1871) and Sarah MacFarlane, nee. MacIntyre ('Mór Nic an t-Saoir', 1815-1894).<sup>32</sup> MacFarlane recalled that after suffering a health episode in his later years his father became unable to speak English at all.<sup>33</sup> He described his mother as a skilled Gaelic conversationalist, particularly relishing debates in Gaelic with visiting ministers. She was also a competent Gaelic translator and some of her work had been read at the Mòd.<sup>34</sup> MacFarlane also had a sister, Margaret MacFarlane ('Peigi', 1855-1920) who lived with him in Elderslie in Paisley until her death; and also a brother, Dugald MacFarlane (1851-1926), who does not appear in any of Malcolm's extant correspondences, perhaps losing contact at one stage.<sup>35</sup> Dugald was listed as a director at the preliminary meeting of the GSG in October 1887, alongside his brother, however he was not listed in any further records of the meetings of that Society.<sup>36</sup> In the first instalment of its Transactions, a paper given by Dugald in February 1889 was published, titled 'The Science of Thought Exemplified by the Gaelic Language.'<sup>37</sup> The brothers were then, at one stage at least, aligned in their support for the Gaelic language and the movement which promoted it.

The family moved from Dalavich to Paisley when MacFarlane was young. He attended the village school in Inkerman, a small mining village established in the 1850s, where he was taught by the native Gaelic speaker Andrew Ross (1823-1905) from Brora in Sutherland.<sup>38</sup> Ross lived and worked on his family croft until the age of twenty-three before pursuing teaching, spending considerable time in the West of Ireland where he learned Irish Gaelic.<sup>39</sup> This may have been where MacFarlane acquired his own skills in the language. He

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<sup>32</sup> 'John MacFarlane' (Statutory registers, Deaths, Ref: 568/27) and 'Sarah MacFarlane', (Statutory registers, Deaths, Ref: 559/3 12), *Scotland's People* <<https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>> [Reports generated 29/05/24]. John MacFarlane was a labourer and shipyard gate-keeper. The cause of death was long-term paralysis. Their son, Dugald MacFarlane, registered his death. Gaelic names are given in Lachlan MacBean, 'Malcolm MacFarlane', *The Celtic Who's Who* (Kirkcaldy, 1921), 94.

<sup>33</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh', *Guth na Bliadhna*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1909), 232-233. The sudden changes to speech were likely a form of aphasia and the result of a stroke or similar neurological condition. *National Clinical Guideline for Stroke for the UK and Ireland* (London, 2023) <[www.strokeguideline.org](http://www.strokeguideline.org)> [Accessed: 18/15/25].

<sup>34</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh', *Guth na Bliadhna*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1909), 232-233.

<sup>35</sup> 'Dugald MacFarlane' (Statutory registers, Deaths, Ref: 564/2/13) and 'Inventory of the Personal Estate of Miss Margaret MacFarlane', (Wills and Testaments, Ref: SC58/42/93), *Scotland's People* [Reports generated on 29/05/24]. Dugald MacFarlane is registered in Greenock in the 1881 census with a wife, Susan, and two daughters, Annie and Susan: 'Household of Dugald MacFarlane (born 1851, Argyllshire)', *Find My Past*, <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/1881-census/dugald-mcfarlane-0029492145>, [Accessed: 29/05/24]. The alternative spelling of the surname is also that given on the death certificate of their father, John, suggesting that Malcolm had adopted his own spelling.

<sup>36</sup> 'Comann Gàidhlig Ghlaschu; Glasgow Gaelic Society', Glasgow City Archives, MS 891237, 26/10/87.

<sup>37</sup> Dugald MacFarlane, 'The Science of Thought Exemplified by the Gaelic Language', *TGSG*, Vol. 1, 88-107.

<sup>38</sup> Whyte, 'Malcolm MacFarlane', *CM*, Vol. 1, No. 10 (1893), 153. John D. McCreadie, *The Missing Inkerman / Mining Village Renfrewshire* (2023). Whyte, 'Malcolm MacFarlane', 153. 'Obituary: A Veteran Schoolmaster', *The Glasgow Herald* (25/12/05), 9.

<sup>39</sup> *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the Condition of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, Vol. IX (1884), 3156.

gave evidence to the Napier Commission in 1883, supporting the rights of the crofters to have access to adequate amounts of land, and stressing the importance of the rural Highland population for the overall health of the nation. He prefaced his testimony by stating that he held ‘no extreme or radical views on the land question.’<sup>40</sup> Ross believed that teachers in Gaelic speaking areas should have a working knowledge of the language, though did not go so far as to call for mandatory Gaelic medium education. He also believed that Gaelic was in irreversible decline and that its expiry as a living language was ‘unavoidable.’<sup>41</sup> MacFarlane echoed much of Ross’ conservatism, in particular his views on the importance of the union and in support for non-radical socio-economic policies. MacFarlane deviated from Ross’ pessimistic outlook on the Gaelic language, however: motivated instead to combat what his former teacher had believed to be its inevitable decline. MacFarlane recognised the detrimental impact which being raised in the Lowlands had on his own abilities in Gaelic and took great pains to study the language and, as evidenced here, became an accomplished Gaelic scholar. He was employed as an architect and land surveyor by J. B Lamb of Paisley from 1875, aged around twenty-two, though he may have joined as an apprentice from the age of fifteen.<sup>42</sup> He worked in this role for his entire career.

The parameters of this study are defined by MacFarlane’s active years within the language movement. This begins with his role as a founding member of the GSG in 1887, before he also helped to establish what would become the most significant cultural organisation for the Gaelic language, An Comunn Gàidhealach (ACG), in 1891. MacFarlane then worked continuously for the Gaelic language until as late as 1929 when the last of his printed works, an article titled ‘Half a Century of Vocal Gaelic Music’, was published by the GSI.<sup>43</sup> A catalogue of MacFarlane’s known printed work has been provided here in Appendix 1, demonstrating for the first time the scale and scope of his output. MacFarlane wrote under the English and Scottish Gaelic spellings of his name, as well as under the initials ‘C. M. P.’ and as ‘Colum Mac Phartholain’ in the Irish press. As the editor of the ACG’s propagandist magazine *An Deo-Ghréine* (ADG) (The Sunbeam, 1905-1922), MacFarlane authored a substantial number of its unsigned articles and other content, which this study has now attributed to him. Overall, this exploration of his life and work will identify him as a decidedly important figure in the Gaelic language movement, central to its evolution and progress, and as the creator of a corpus of Gaelic literature and resources which

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 3152.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 3156.

<sup>42</sup> *Watson’s Directory for Paisley: 1875-76*, (Paisley, 1875), 84. Roderick MacLeod suggests the earlier age of fifteen: Roderick MacLeod, ‘Malcolm MacFarlane (1853-1931) of Dalavich and Elderslie; Writer, Editor, Composer, Correspondent and Controversialist’, *TGSI*, Vol. 64 (2006), 301.

<sup>43</sup> MacFarlane, ‘Half a Century of Vocal Gaelic Music’, *TGSI*, Vol. 32 (1929), 251-272.



sought to safeguard the Gaelic language and its culture and provide for its future relevance and success.

Lachlan MacBean's (Lachlann MacBheathain, 1852-1931), *The Celtic Who's Who* (1921), highlighted many of MacFarlane's literary publications and achievements, describing him as '14 years a strenuous worker in An Comunn Gàidhealach until its then conduct made further co-operation impossible.'<sup>44</sup> Similarly complimentary biographies of MacFarlane appeared in other contemporary publications, including in *The Celtic Monthly* (CM) (1892-1912) in 1893; and then later in *The Celtic Annual* in 1916.<sup>45</sup> As will be explored in more detail, these accounts were often composed and printed by MacFarlane's friends and colleagues and are on the whole flattering. Exceptions did exist, however, with a personal and scathing account of him published by Angus Robertson in *The Northern Chronicle* in 1923.<sup>46</sup> It has been noted that tensions existed between the two men, though Robertson punctuated his account of MacFarlane's achievements with evocative descriptions of his explosive personality and censorial mentality.<sup>47</sup> Evidently, MacFarlane was not viewed as favourably by all as he was by his own close friends and colleagues. Despite this, Robertson and others acknowledged the tremendous contribution which he made to the Gaelic language movement. Similarly, MacFarlane operated outside of the academic institutions and networks of the early twentieth century and his contributions to the field solicited mixed responses from some of its leading figures. This included many of his published works intended for schools as well as his edition of the *Fernaig Manuscript* in 1923.<sup>48</sup>

More recently, MacFarlane was listed in Derick Thomson's *Companion to Gaelic Scotland* (1994) in four separate entries broadly concerning his work for Gaelic Societies and the production of his Gaelic dictionary amongst other literary outputs.<sup>49</sup> There is however no individual account of MacFarlane himself. McLeod recognised his contribution, in particular for his provision of Gaelic material for schools, including his Gaelic dictionary, *Am Briathrachan Beag* (The Little Dictionary, 1912).<sup>50</sup> A recent publication by Martina Reiterová examined the foundations of ACG and the wider Celtic sphere, acknowledging

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<sup>44</sup> MacBean, 'Malcolm MacFarlane', *The Celtic Who's Who*, 94. MacBean, 'Lachlan MacBean', *The Celtic Who's Who*, 85-86. See also D. Thomson, 'Lachlan MacBean', *Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, 160.

<sup>45</sup> Whyte, 'Malcolm MacFarlane', 153 and Malcolm C. Macleod, 'Calum MacPhàrlain', *The Celtic Annual* (1916), 26-28.

<sup>46</sup> Angus Robertson, 'Calum MacPhàrlain: The Man and his Work: A Pen Picture', *The Northern Chronicle*, (04/06/23).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> MacFarlane, *Lamh-Sgriobhainn Mhic Rath* (The Fernaig Manuscript, Dundee, 1923).

<sup>49</sup> Kenneth D. MacDonald, 'Scottish Gaelic Dictionaries', *Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, 62; Donald MacAuley, 'Gaelic: phonetics, experimental and instrumental', 104; D. Thomson, 'An Gaidheal', 115; and D. Thomson, 'Learned Societies', 270.

<sup>50</sup> McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 109.



MacFarlane's position as the first editor of its magazine, *ADG*.<sup>51</sup> A biographical article of his life and work was published by Roderick MacLeod which stands as the most detailed overview of his life and work to date.<sup>52</sup> It gives five categorisations to MacFarlane's life: 'Writer, Editor, Composer, Correspondent and Controversialist', drawing on the extant archival material at the National Library of Scotland (NLS). This substantial resource of MacFarlane's papers has been useful to other scholars in the field, containing thousands of letters from hundreds of correspondents in his Gaelic literary networks. Materials from MacFarlane's archive therefore often appear in the biographical and literary studies of these other key figures. For example, recent work by Sim Innes on the Gaelic playwright and author Katherine Whyte Grant (Catriona NicIlle-Bhàin Ghrannnd, 1845-1928) and by Sheila Kidd on the Gaelic novelist John MacCormick both include evidence from the respective author's correspondences with MacFarlane.<sup>53</sup> A recent examination of the role of women within the Gaelic movement by Priscilla Scott equally made use of MacFarlane's archived materials, drawing on the many and sustained relationships and collaborations which he held with several prominent female figures over the course of his life.<sup>54</sup> What has become clear, however, is that MacFarlane's contribution to the Gaelic language movement and to the language itself is deserving of a much more detailed and expansive study.

Methodologically, the research which underpins this study was primarily carried out with MacFarlane's expansive archive at the NLS. It was originally deposited by Sorley MacLean (1911-1996) and William Matheson (1910-1995), the literary trustees, to the offices of the Scottish National Dictionary and the School of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh. In 1988 it was presented to the NLS.<sup>55</sup> It consists of 161 files, folders or boxes, the first thirty-one of which have been organised chronologically, beginning in 1891. The rest of the materials have either been loosely categorised, according to theme or correspondent; or have not yet been organised or arranged. Although much of the correspondence is in English, there are a large number of Gaelic items, including MacFarlane's own Gaelic compositions, and a substantial body of work from other authors which he either collected or edited. There are notebooks which contain hundreds newly created Gaelic works; dictionary proofs; architectural textbooks used as scrapbooks to collect cuttings of Gaelic material from the

<sup>51</sup> Martina Reiterová, 'Scottish Gaelic Movement and Celtic Identity: An Comunn Gàidhealach at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', *International Review of Scottish Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (2023), 94-123.

<sup>52</sup> MacLeod, 'Malcolm MacFarlane', 299-315.

<sup>53</sup> Sim Innes, *Dùsgadh na Féinne* (1908): Katherine Whyte Grant's Scottish Gaelic kinderspiel', *The Gaelic Finn Tradition II*, eds. Sharon J. Arbuthnot, Síle Ní Mhurchú & Geraldine Parsons (Dublin, 2022), 198-211 and Kidd, 'The Forgotten First', 197-219.

<sup>54</sup> Priscilla Scott, 'With heart and voice ever devoted to the cause': Women in the Gaelic Movement, 1886-1914', Unpublished PhD thesis (University of Edinburgh, 2013).

<sup>55</sup> 'Inventory, Acc. 9736, Malcolm MacFarlane', NLS (2007).

newspapers and magazines; and a wealth of Gaelic music. There are also selected photographs, official notices, circulars, invitations, and other documents which passed through MacFarlane's hands, making the archive an invaluable resource for understanding his life and appreciating the scale of the work which he undertook for the Gaelic language.

A challenging aspect of the archival work was the substantially fewer extant letters written by MacFarlane himself, compared to the number of those he received. There are some drafts of letters, as well as returned or rejected letters submitted to the correspondence pages of the contemporary press. Nevertheless, in many cases it was necessary to infer what MacFarlane had said, either to have received the response which he then did, or indeed if the correspondence suddenly stopped. A lecture MacFarlane gave to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal (est. 1896) in 1927, which a copy of exists within his archive, has been an invaluable resource in this respect, as he outlined in his own words the events of his life and his relationship with ACG.<sup>56</sup> The full lecture has therefore been transcribed and is given in full here in Appendix.

2. The intimacy of such a biographical study has also been challenging at times, as the immersion in MacFarlane's life and work inevitably created a sympathetic perception of him. As the chronology of his activity played out in his personal papers, it was a demanding task to view his effort and obvious determination through a critical and objective lens. In exploring his literary networks and understanding the myriad strategies employed throughout the wider movement, it was possible to contextualise MacFarlane and, through comparison, evaluate the significance and uniqueness of his contributions. Ultimately, however, he was not without fault and received his share of criticism along the way. The wider historical consideration employed here provided balance and allowed for a more substantial analysis of MacFarlane than a reading of his archive alone may have achieved.

The structure of this study takes a chronological approach, allowing for a detailed analysis of the circumstances, debates, and tensions evident within the different spheres of influence of the Gaelic language movement. The first chapter examines the foundation of ACG and the difficulties and criticisms which it faced at the turn of the twentieth century. It sheds light on its early operations and illuminates the close relationship which MacFarlane had with ACG's long-serving secretary, John Mackintosh (Iain Mac an Tòisich).<sup>57</sup> This relationship is key to understanding the position of influence which MacFarlane occupied within its ranks and the early evidence of his role as one of the movement's leaders.

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<sup>56</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, (1927). Tòmas MacAilpein, 'Comannachd ann an Cèilidh nan Gàidheal (Glaschu, 1896)', *Pròiseact AME: A' Cheàrdach: Eachdraidh is poileataigs a' chlas-obrach ann an Gàidhlig* (Glasgow, 2017-present) <<https://ceardach.blog/2021/07/22/comannachd-ann-an-ceilidh-nan-gaidheal-glaschu-1896/>> [Accessed: 12/04/22].

<sup>57</sup> MacBean, 'John Mackintosh', *The Celtic Who's Who*, 102.

MacFarlane's influence on the early direction and intention of ACG is thereby brought to light, and it is demonstrated that that he had a significant impact on its development. The discussion goes on to examine how funding, personal allegiances and the largely bureaucratic make-up of the organisation's patronage and leadership had to be balanced against the pursual of ACG's objectives as it had set them out in 1891; and how these aims and objects began to be compromised. This is critical to our understanding of MacFarlane's impact, as he wrestled with the financial and social demands which could cause ACG to deviate from the track he and others had intended it to take.

Chapter two explores the period from 1905-1907, beginning with MacFarlane's editorship of ACG's propagandist magazine, *An Deo-Ghréine* (ADG). MacFarlane was the inaugural editor, and this chapter provides the first in-depth examination of its inception and MacFarlane's intentions for it as a literary vehicle for the Gaelic language movement. It considers the conditions of the magazine's establishment and provides valuable insight into the issues facing Gaelic publishing at this time, with MacFarlane himself expressing concern over ADG's viability. The discussion then turns to the substantial contribution which he made as editor, including in the sheer number of articles and notices written by him. In this, his ambitions for the Gaelic language movement are again set out, alongside his views on the movement's current shortcomings. These articles and other short pieces are invaluable to better understand both the complexity of the Gaelic language movement at this time, and the effort which MacFarlane expended in attempting to direct its evolution. The chapter develops to survey the intention and tone of several pieces by MacFarlane's contemporaries which he chose to include. Occupying the central editorial role, MacFarlane spotlighted Gaelic language material and sought out like-minded contemporaries who could make impactful contributions. Examining the editions of ADG under his tenure provides needed insight into the ideology of the Gaelic language movement at this time, as well as MacFarlane's wider literary networks.

The discussion then examines the changes which occurred when Rev. Malcolm MacLennan (Calum MacGillinnein, 1862-1931) became the editor in his place in 1906.<sup>58</sup> This illustrates the alternative strategies and intentions which were being pursued by others in ACG and the Gaelic language movement more broadly. It also considers the critical perspectives of nationalism, politics and religion which had found their way into the magazine under both editorships. This includes the attempts made by Ruairaidh Erskine of

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<sup>58</sup> MacBean, 'Rev. Malcolm MacLennan', *The Celtic Who's Who*, 103-104. Murchison, 'Revd Dr Malcolm MacLennan (1862-1931)', *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, 181. M. M., 'The Rev. Malcolm MacLennan, D.D.', *An Gaidheal*, Vol. 27 (1931), 9.

Marr (Ruairaidh Arascain is Mhàirr, 1869-1960), MacFarlane's colleague and well-known Scottish nationalist, to galvanise the language movement along a decidedly political path.<sup>59</sup> MacFarlane's responses to these alternative approaches for the language movement provide key evidence of his central and leading role in its development in the early twentieth century.

The third chapter considers the evolution and fragmentation of the Gaelic movement in the period from 1908 leading to the First World War in 1914, as MacFarlane transitioned away from ACG and sought new and independent avenues for his language work. The discussion proposes that MacFarlane remained an influential leader of the movement in this period, examining the approaches of several other agitating political groups and organisations which looked to recruit him to the nationalist cause. In particular, it provides a comparative analysis with the cultural and political developments taking place in Ireland at this time, as the language movement there became increasingly bound to the struggles for Irish independence. Prominent leading figures, including Patrick Pearse (1879-1916), would incorporate the language movement into broader opposition to British rule, in contrast to MacFarlane's general approval of the Union and Scotland's place within it.<sup>60</sup> The chapter then brings to light for the first time an in-depth account and analysis of the Gaelic Academy (Àrd-Chomhairle na Gàidhlig, 1909), a Gaelic organisation established by MacFarlane and others to address what they perceived to be the deficiencies of the language movement at that time. This organisation was entirely independent of ACG and grounded in MacFarlane's defining values and commitment to improving the condition of the Gaelic language. As witnessed in this discussion, this organisation was not, however, immune to many of the issues which others, including ACG, had also faced. This discussion provides much needed insight into the fractured nature of the Gaelic language movement in the early twentieth century, as leading figures and organisations sought out alternative strategies for it. MacFarlane's commitment to the language, evidenced also in his extensive work to its modernisation through linguistic innovation, remained unflinching throughout this turbulent political period. As much of the current scholarly understanding of MacFarlane concerns his associations and dealings with ACG, this chapter is critical to expanding our knowledge of his work and the scale of his overall contribution to the Gaelic language.

The concluding chapter of this study steps away from the chronological account and provides a broader examination of the vast corpus of Gaelic literature which MacFarlane

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<sup>59</sup> Comprehensive resources and information relating to Erskine found here: Petra Poncarová, *Project Erskine: Exploring Gaelic Magazines Founded by Ruairaidh Erskine*, <<https://erskine.glasgow.ac.uk/>> and a biography of his life here: Gerard Cairns, *No Language! No Nation! The Life and Times of the Honourable Ruairaidh Erskine of Marr*, (Perth, 2021).

<sup>60</sup> David Thornley, 'Patrick Pearse', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 55, No. 217 (1966), 10-20.

produced throughout his lifetime. It proposes that his achievements in this field were incredibly substantial and that, coupled with the work and determination documented throughout his life, he was an influential and critical figure driving the language movement in Scotland. This includes his involvement in the academic circles of the Gaelic movement and their reception of his contributions to Gaelic scholarship. His major work in this field and a cornerstone of his legacy in academic circles to date was his edition of *The Fernaig Manuscript* (1923); and he maintained longstanding, though shifting, relationships with key academic figures such as Donald MacKinnon and William Watson (1865-1948).<sup>61</sup> The chapter begins with an outline of MacFarlane's educational publications and their intended impact, before also highlighting his contributions to the wider sphere of Gaelic literature. Particular analysis is given to his series of essays, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh' ('Today's Poetry', 1908-1910) printed in Erskine's *Guth na Bliadhna (GNB)* (The Voice of the Year, 1904-1925).<sup>62</sup> This brings to light MacFarlane's own perception of his contemporary literary field, whilst highlighting his determination and resolve to plan and provide for the future of the Gaelic language. This closing chapter is key to understanding MacFarlane's legacy. It underlines his substantial contributions to Gaelic literature and to the health of the language itself which, taken in concert with the evidence presented here of his central and leading role in the Gaelic language movement, provides for a much deeper understanding and appreciation of his life, work and importance to scholars working in the field today.

This exploration of MacFarlane's life and in the broader perspective of his literary output and ideological ambitions provides a unique window into the operations and tensions within the Gaelic language movement in Scotland. It demonstrates that the fundamental approaches to the language movement had changed over time and in response to shifting socio-economic, cultural and political factors. MacFarlane himself demonstrated a steadfastness of conviction and ambition for the Gaelic language which was unwavering in the face of criticism and debate. Whilst individuals and groups changed around him, and although he may have flirted with alternative strategies to achieve his ambitions, those ambitions did not change. This was perhaps a result of his upbringing in a Gaelic speaking household and as a native of Dalavich; though other formative influences, such as his school teacher Andrew Ross, and the Gaelic speaking communities of Paisley and Glasgow, evidently had their own impact. This study is necessary in order that we better understand

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<sup>61</sup> MacFarlane, *The Fernaig Manuscript* (1923). D. Thomson, 'Watson, William John Ross', *ODNB*, (2004) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/53990>> [Accessed: 19/02/22].

<sup>62</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh', *Guth na Bliadhna*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1908), 311-334; Vol. 6, No. 1 (1909), 25-41; Vol. 6, No. 2 (1909), 118-134; Vol. 6, No. 3 (1909), 223-241; Vol. 6, No. 4 (1909), 333-359; Vol. 7, No. 1 (1910), 40-60; Vol. 7, No. 2 (1910), 118-128; and Vol. 7, No. 3 (1910), 223-236.

and acknowledge the contributions which MacFarlane made to the Gaelic language movement and the central and leading role which he played within it. In doing so, we can better understand the impact that he had and the extent to which he shaped its evolution and development. It is also vital that the complexity of the Gaelic language movement is recognised, as MacFarlane and others pursued a range of policies and strategies, often at odds with one another, under its broad operational and ideological framework. It is necessary that we better understand these complex networks, their leaders, and the debates which took place in the language movement at this time, in order to better shape current academic and legislative discourse on the Gaelic language today.

## Chapter One: An Comunn Gàidhealach

### Introduction

This chapter will examine and develop our understanding of Malcolm MacFarlane's involvement with the Gaelic cultural organisation, An Comunn Gàidhealach (ACG), established in 1891.<sup>1</sup> It provides hitherto lacking detail on the events and debates which surrounded the inception of ACG, drawing extensively and uniquely from the archive of MacFarlane's correspondences and papers. These valuable resources have illuminated the interpersonal dynamics of the language movement at the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, and shed much needed light on the financial and cultural difficulties which it faced at the time. It will examine in particular the debates and issues which MacFarlane and ACG faced prior to the organisation's inception, including the context and creation of its constitution, as it set out to become the central organising body for Highland and Gaelic Societies in Scotland. With this, it intended to unite the many active bodies, often working at cross-purposes, into a unified language movement. Alongside those already mentioned, such as the Gaelic Society of Inverness (GSI) and the Gaelic Society of Glasgow (GSG), other prominent bodies included the Gaelic Society of London (GSL) (Comunn Gàidhlig Lunnainn, est. 1778) and the distinctive clan organisations which were regionally specific, such as The Clan Mackay Society (est. 1888).<sup>2</sup> A central body would be able to galvanise the largely disparate support which existed for the Gaelic language and its culture, born from the public protests of the land agitators such as John Murdoch in the 1870's and 1880's, and the increased demand for Gaelic literature which the conditions of the Celtic Revival had created. The Federation of Celtic Societies (est. 1878) had previously failed in this culturally and politically heightened climate to provide the over-arching support and stability needed to direct the Gaelic movement.<sup>3</sup> ACG was established to try again.

The chapter will consider advice which MacFarlane offered the prospective founders of ACG; and many of the obstacles which they faced in its earliest years, including the

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Thompson, *History of An Comunn Gàidhealach: The First Hundred (1891-1991): Centenary of An Comunn Gàidhealach* (Inverness, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> Charles W. J. Withers, *Urban Highlanders Highland-Lowland Migration and Urban Gaelic Culture, 1700-1900* (East Linton, 1998). Janice M. Fairney, 'Highlanders from home: the contribution of the Highland Society and the Gaelic Society of London to Gaelic culture 1778-1914', Unpublished PhD thesis (University of Edinburgh, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 57.

organisation of its annual cultural festival, the Mòd, based on the Welsh cultural festival, the Eisteddfod (est. 1861).<sup>4</sup> Consideration will be given throughout the discussion to recent scholarship on the history and criticisms of ACG, in particular regarding its activism for the Gaelic language; the largely aristocratic composition of its membership; and accusations of English language prevalence in its day-to-day activities and events. Financial issues were also rife in these early years, as ACG struggled to formalise its policies and procedures. John Mackintosh as its secretary and MacFarlane worked extensively to create and implement these policies, though often under difficult circumstances and time constraints, such as the annual Mòd, which was envisioned to be held at a different location each year.<sup>5</sup> Salaries and expenses, as well as judging protocols and the election of office-bearers to the Executive Council, all feature prominently in the correspondence and activities of its organising members and will be discussed in detail here. Parallels will also be drawn to the Gaelic language movement in Ireland, as MacFarlane and others often referenced the developments taking place within those similarly established institutions and took inspiration from its leading members. Much needed consideration is given to the cultural and political backdrops of the language movements, as innovation and influence flowed between Scotland and Ireland. The chronological nature of the study, with this chapter dealing with the period up until 1905, sheds light on some of the complicated mechanics of the organisation in its formative years and gives needed insight into its operations. The correspondence in MacFarlane's archive has been essential to unlocking this important period in ACG's history; the intricate personal dynamics of its members; and establishing a new appreciation and understanding of several of its central yet neglected leading members who were fundamental to its future success.

### Establishment (1891)

It is first of all necessary to provide some context and detail on MacFarlane's position within these organisations in the early period. He had been a founding member and Director of the GSG in 1887 alongside his lifelong friend Henry Whyte, a vice-president, John MacFadyen (Iain MacPhaidein, 1850-1935), Magnus Maclean (Maghnus MacGilleathain, 1857-1937)

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<sup>4</sup> Hywel Teifi Edwards, *The Eisteddfod*, (Cardiff, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> The Mòd was held in Oban for the first three years (1892, 1893 and 1894). In 1895 it was held in Glasgow, and has changed location each year to the present day. See: *An Comunn Gàidhealach: Organisers of the Royal National Mòd*, < <https://www.acgmod.org/> > [Accessed: 27/05/24].



and Archibald Sinclair (Gilleasbuig Mac-na-Ceàrdadh, 1850-1899).<sup>6</sup> This group collaborated and corresponded throughout their lives on numerous ventures within the Gaelic language movement, its literary publications and in its various organisations. Several other key figures were amongst those present at GSG meetings and events, including Mary MacPherson, who delivered a Gaelic speech to the Society in 1893, and John Murdoch, who regularly contributed to discussions and debate and who was a vice-president from 1895 until 1897.<sup>7</sup> Donald MacKinnon had initially been intended as its first president, though he subsequently became honorary president and Alexander MacNeil was installed in his place.<sup>8</sup> Eugene O' Growney (1863-1899), an Irish priest and scholar as well as a founding member of the GL, was the honorary president for the 1893-1894 session, delivering a lecture to the Society on 'Scotland in Early Irish Literature' in January 1894.<sup>9</sup> Highlighting the interconnectedness of these networks, MacFarlane was in turn involved with the Glasgow branch of the Gaelic League (Conradh na Gaeilge Glaschu, est. 1895), attending regular events and later elected as its honorary president in 1913.<sup>10</sup>

MacFarlane's Directorship of the GSG initially ran from 1887 until 1891, the year in which ACG was founded, when he became a joint secretary with Magnus Maclean.<sup>11</sup> The following year he was appointed as the sole secretary, a position he held until 1895 at least, before being appointed president in 1898.<sup>12</sup> The first meeting under MacFarlane's Presidency took place in October 1898, at which he gave a lecture exploring the need to produce new Gaelic literature and to explore 'new channels of expression.'<sup>13</sup> This meeting was also the first to incorporate music at a Society event, with a performance by the St.

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<sup>6</sup> Ian MacDonald, 'MacPhaidein, Iain (John MacFadyen) (1850-1935)', *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, 188. MacFadyen published the well-known volume of songs, poems and prose tales, *An t-Eileanach* (1891) and then *Sgeulaiche nan Caol* (1902); and won literary prizes for prose compositions at the Mòd in 1892: Sinclair, 'John MacFadyen', *CM*, Vol. 2 (Oct, 1893), 15. Murchison, 'Magnus MacLean', *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, 181. See also: '20th Century: The Department of Celtic', *The Gaelic Story at the University of Glasgow*, <<https://sgeulnagaidhlig.ac.uk/20th-c-department-of-celtic/?lang=en>> [Accessed 22/01/2024]. Whyte, 'Archibald Sinclair: Printer and Publisher, Glasgow', *CM*, Vol. 1, No. 12 (1893), 185. See also: Murchison, 'Learned Societies', *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, 269-270.

<sup>7</sup> GCA, MS 891237. MacPherson delivered her speech on 25/11/93. Murdoch was recorded as present at a number of meetings: 30/02/8923/12/1890; 26/01/1892; 23/02/1892; 29/11/1892; 30/01/1894; 23/04/1895 and 28/04/98.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 26/10/87.

<sup>9</sup> Lesa Ní Mhunghaile, 'O'Growney, Eugene (Ó Gramhnaigh, Eoghan)', *DIB* (2006) <<https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.006774.v1>> [Accessed: 20/04/25].

<sup>10</sup> Seán O Fiannaí, *Conradh na Gaeilge (Gaelic League) in Scotland*, (Glasgow, 1995). NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 19: 16/05/13. Letter from Mícheál Ó Nualláin. Glasgow City Archive holds records from the Glasgow branch of the Gaelic League (GCA, TD 1641, 1897-1956) though MacFarlane is not mentioned in the minutes of its meetings.

<sup>11</sup> GCA, MS 891237, 28/04/1891.

<sup>12</sup> MacFarlane is listed as a director from 1887-1891 and as secretary for 1891-1892 in *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Glasgow*, Vol. 1 (1887-91); secretary from 1892-1895 in *TGSG*, Vol. 2 (1891-1894). GCA, MS 891237, 25/10/1898.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

Columba Gaelic Choir. Three of MacFarlane's own compositions were included in the choir's repertoire, part printed in 1892 and 1893, before the full collection, *A' Chòisir Chiùil* (The Gaelic Choir, 1900), was later published.<sup>14</sup> MacFarlane remained as president for the following year (1899-1900) before returning to his role as a Director in 1901. Interestingly, the minutes of the GSG from 1899-1904 seem to have been written almost entirely by MacFarlane himself, despite his changing roles in the Society. This level of commitment is testament to his work-ethic and dedication to the movement. He was also not slow to draw attention to this, publishing several flattering accounts of his own contribution.<sup>15</sup> He remained active until at least 1908, when his advice to alter the Society's accounting practices were recorded, though his participation had begun to decrease from the end of 1904 onwards.<sup>16</sup> MacFarlane remained an affiliated member until 1911, when he may have resigned owing to a disagreement about funds being sent to ACG.<sup>17</sup>

MacFarlane was a member of the Executive Council of ACG at its foundation in April 1891. He was also appointed a member of the Educational and Musical Committees at the time, alongside Henry Whyte, Duncan Reid (1848-1912) and others.<sup>18</sup> The Education Committee had 'full powers to prepare School Books, suitable for requirements of Code with due regard to the financial support received.'<sup>19</sup> The Musical Committee was simply to 'prepare Music Books for children and for adults.'<sup>20</sup> He was elected in 1903 as the vice-president of ACG and remained a member of its Executive Council until his final departure from the organisation in 1907.<sup>21</sup>

Before ACG was officially established, MacFarlane had expressed concerns over its viability and the robustness of the planning taking place. As the secretary for the GSG, he had been approached by the organising group for his opinions and advice, alongside other prominent members of the Gaelic literary and cultural scene.<sup>22</sup> In a response which was then published in the *OT*, MacFarlane suggested that ACG's business should be conducted fully in Gaelic and that it should give details of their activities and meetings to those who might

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<sup>14</sup> *A' Chòisir-Chiùil: The St. Columba Collection of Gaelic Songs arranged for Part-Singing* (Paisley, 1900).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 24/11/03. MacFarlane recorded the reception of his own paper, 'The Gaelic language and the People who Speak it', that 'all speakers agreed on the merits [...] though differing on some details in one or two cases.'

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 23/04/1908.

<sup>17</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 04/5/11. Draft letter from MacFarlane to the secretary of the Gaelic Society of Glasgow, Donald MacKenzie.

<sup>18</sup> Jean C. MacLeod, 'Duncan Reid, 1848-1912', *The Magazine of the Kintyre Antiquarian and Natural History Society*, Vol. 71 (2012), 2. Murchison, 'Story of An Comunn,' *An Gaidheal*, Vol. 50 (1955), 24.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 9: 19/10/03. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>22</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 2. MacFarlane, 'An Comunn Gaidhealach. Sketch of its inception and development', *An Deo-Ghrèine*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1905), 4.

want it in English ‘as an act of grace.’<sup>23</sup> He also proposed employing a Gaelic-writing secretary, which they did, and framing the rules and constitution in Gaelic, which they did not. He suggested that new Gaelic terms would need to be created to conduct its business and achieve its objectives, a position which he maintained throughout his life.

As a central member of the GSG, MacFarlane’s advice would have been invaluable to those proposing the formation of ACG. It is worth noting in this context, however, that the first volume of the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Glasgow* (1891) was written predominantly in English.<sup>24</sup> This included its constitution and rules; the records of office-bearers for the period; and the summary of its inaugural meeting in Glasgow in 1887, which MacFarlane was present at, which were all presented in English. Of the papers given in the volume, only two of the sixteen are written in Gaelic.<sup>25</sup> The minutes of the Society meetings and records of events were all also recorded in English, for many years by MacFarlane himself.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps MacFarlane’s warnings to ACG were borne out of frustration with the GSG and their use of English as its dominant language of business. In calling for the creation of new terms, however, MacFarlane recognised the limitations, as he perceived them, of the language to transact and record business in. These concerns about the capability of the language in the modern era, or indeed of the standard of Gaelic required by members to enable Gaelic to be used as the language of business, were mirrored elsewhere. For example, An Comann Oiseanach (The Ossianic Society, 1831), based at the University of Glasgow, had kept their minutes in Gaelic from its foundation until 1892, when it switched to English.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps the widespread use of English in these Societies reflected wider ambitions to increase membership and broaden appeal, in particular towards those who had not been taught in Gaelic as a consequence of the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act; or towards non-native learners who may equally have been intimidated by a Gaelic-only agenda.

Further to this, as MacFarlane corresponded throughout his life with the wider Gaelic sphere, he did so largely it seems in English rather than Gaelic. As the majority of the letters which he received were composed in English, it is reasonable to assume that he had used the same language in his responses. There are notable exceptions, for example his correspondence is punctuated with regular postcards and letters from his closest friend, Henry Whyte, who for the most part used Gaelic.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Glasgow*, Vol. 1 (1891).

<sup>25</sup> *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Glasgow*, Vol. 1 (1891). The Gaelic items were: Neil Macleod, ‘Gilleasbuig Aotrom’, 8-17 and Rev. R. Blair, ‘Oidhche air Chèilidh’, 70-87.

<sup>26</sup> GCA, MS 891237/1.

<sup>27</sup> Glasgow University Library, Sp. Coll., MS Gen 1370/114 (04/03/1892). Thank you to Dr Aonghas MacCoinnich for this reference.

MacFarlane wrote of the first planned Mòd as follows:

In fact, a year or more would require to be devoted to working up everything for the first annual gathering, so that there would be no risk of Gaelic literature and music being disgraced instead of honoured.<sup>28</sup>

The organisers had waited over a year before their first gathering, with the first Mòd being held on the 13th of September 1892; and the success and longevity of it to date suggests that Gaelic literature and music has not been at all disgraced. Despite these anxieties, MacFarlane had been altogether supportive of the idea of the Mòd, proposing that it be called ‘Comh-fharpais nam Bàrd’ (*The Competition of the Bards*), instead of what Magnus MacLean eventually coined as simply the ‘Mòd’.<sup>29</sup> He and others involved with its inception were highly influenced by the Welsh Eisteddfod, which had roots dating back to the medieval period, and which was already operating along similar lines to what ACG intended for their event.<sup>30</sup>

The first meeting to discuss the establishment of ACG had outlined the intention ‘to institute in the Highlands a national festival on lines similar to those of the Welsh Eisteddfod.’<sup>31</sup> Kenneth Morgan has noted the vastly positive impact which the revival of the Eisteddfod in the 1880’s had on Welsh language and culture, in particular the professionalism of its organisers and their adherence to traditional literary and music techniques in their competitions.<sup>32</sup> The festival was also crucially endorsed by public figures such as William Gladstone (1809-1898) in 1881.<sup>33</sup> The Welsh-speaking prime minister, David Lloyd George (1863-1945), would also go on to attend annually. He would give an address on the Thursday of the festival, which became known as ‘Lloyd George Day’.<sup>34</sup> The Mòd organisers in Scotland intended to establish similar competitions in music, choral singing and literature, and to have the endorsement of similarly influential figures.

<sup>28</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Murchison, ‘Story of An Comunn’, 24.

<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, ‘Romantic Wales and the Eisteddfod’, *The Cambridge History of Welsh Literature*, eds. Geraint Evans and Helen Fulton (Cambridge, 2019), 285-305.

<sup>31</sup> MacFarlane, ‘An Comunn Gàidhealach’, *ADG*, (1905), 4. Links between the Mòd and the Eisteddfod were also noted in Thompson, *History of An Comunn Gaidhealach*, 1; and Reiterová, ‘Scottish Gaelic Movement’, 120-121.

<sup>32</sup> Kenneth O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1980* (Oxford, 1980), 97-98.

<sup>33</sup> H. C. G. Matthew, ‘Gladstone, William Ewart’, *ODNB* (2004) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10787>> [Accessed: 16/08/24]. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 97.

<sup>34</sup> Kenneth O. Morgan, ‘George, David Lloyd, first Earl Lloyd-George of Dwyfor’, *ODNB* (2004) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34570>> [Accessed: 16/08/24]. ‘David Lloyd George Research Resources’, *The National Library of Wales*, <<https://www.library.wales/index.php?id=8154>> [Accessed: 16/08/24]. There is a film of the 1937 Eisteddfod featuring David Lloyd George: ‘Machynlleth. Hen Dref Owain Glyndwr’ (1937), *BFI Player* <<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-machynlleth-hen-dref-owain-glyndwr-1937-online?play-film>> [Accessed: 16/08/24].

ACG recognised the important role which patronage would play for it to succeed, and the organisers secured a range of academic and aristocratic supporters before its establishment in 1891. The list of patrons was published in its first manifesto, another piece advertising for the newly formed institution, which also included a Gaelic version of its aims and objectives.<sup>35</sup> It also pursued high status and influential figures to attend its events, with the Princess Louise (1848-1939) and her husband, the Marquess of Lorne (1845-1914), both present at the final evening concert of the first Mòd in Oban in 1892.<sup>36</sup> Wilson McLeod discusses the class composition of ACG at its inception, noting the gulf in socio-economic circumstances between the largely aristocratic patronage and leaders and the Gaelic speaking people of the Highlands and Islands themselves.<sup>37</sup> The deference which ACG went on to show towards its patrons was similarly contentious, as Princess Louise, a non-Gaelic speaker, was elected as its president in 1905.<sup>38</sup> Although she may have been relatively well received in the Gàidhealtachd, she was not a Gaelic speaker and was therefore less favourably viewed by some in ACG, such as MacFarlane.<sup>39</sup> He commented on the appointment in January 1906:

The Executive Council of An Comunn Gàidhealach honoured the Princess Louise by offering her the Presidentship of the Association. The Princess has accepted office. Some time ago the Comunn abolished all honorary offices, alleging that what was wanted was not figureheads, but workers. We presume the working president has now been found in the ranks of the alien: it seems there are none capable enough for the position or sufficiently deserving of honour in the native ranks.<sup>40</sup>

The very first president of ACG, Lord Archibald Campbell (1846-1913), had in fact taken little interest in learning Gaelic himself and, as the Mòd progressed, many participants,

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<sup>35</sup> For example, in the 1891 Manifesto, patrons included The Duke and Duchess of Sutherland, The Marquis of Breadalbane and The Marquis of Lorne. *To Highlanders at Home and Abroad: Manifesto* (1891) <<https://digital.nls.uk/125451976>> [Accessed: 10/10/22].

<sup>36</sup> Mark Stoker, 'Louise, Princess, duchess of Argyll' *ODNB*, (2008) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34601>> [Accessed: 22.02.20]. P. B. Waite, 'Campbell, John George Edward Henry Douglas Sutherland, marquess of Lorne and ninth duke of Argyll', *ODNB* (2005) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/32269>> [Accessed 25/02/20]. There is an account of the 1892 Mòd: *The Oban Times* (17/09/82), 5; and: 'The First Mod', *Am Mod Naiseanta Rioghail An t-Oban 1992* (1992), 3.

<sup>37</sup> McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 59-60.

<sup>38</sup> 'Presidents of An Comunn Gaidhealach', *Mod Naiseanta Rioghail Chataibh 1995* (1995), 138.

<sup>39</sup> Their marriage had been celebrated in Gaelic song: C. C. MacPhail, 'Fàilte air Mac Ceann-feadhna Earra-Ghàidheal is air Ban-phrionnsa Louise', D. Meek, ed, *Caran an T-Saoghail: The Wives of the World* (Edinburgh, 2003), 188; and 'Fàilte na Ban-phrionnsa do'n Ghàidhealtachd', discussed here: Innes, Barbara Hillers, 'A Mixed-Media Folklore Trove: Celtic Folklore Collections in Harvard Libraries', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, Vol. 31 (2011), 191-193. The song is printed here: A. Sinclair Ed., 'Oran', *An t-Oranaiche* (1879), 23-25.

<sup>40</sup> MacFarlane, *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (1906), 64.

particularly in the choral contests, did not need anything beyond a very basic level of competency in Gaelic to enter.<sup>41</sup>

Similarly, the Dingwall Mòd in 1905 had been presided over by the then honorary president, Sibell Blunt-Mackenzie, the 3rd Countess of Cromartie (1878-1962), who remarked in her speech that ‘it was a pity to have chosen me for President this year instead of someone who could speak to you in Gaelic.’<sup>42</sup> This was perhaps a refreshing moment of self-awareness from the Mòd’s stage representatives. Looking at the list of presidents until the time of Princess Louise’s appointment in 1905, only three out of the six were native Gaelic speakers.<sup>43</sup> MacFarlane questioned the value of royal or aristocratic patronage to achieving the objectives of the Gaelic language movement, writing later: ‘You can see by that incident the stupidity of the class of people I found myself associated with; and can fancy the snash I had to put up with from the same crowd when they were advocating the appointment.’<sup>44</sup> Evidently displeased, MacFarlane’s criticisms were not emblematic of overtly anti-monarchical or anti-imperialist views, rather that he disapproved of patrons and figureheads who took little interest in the real work being done for the Gaelic language and the wider movement.

From the outset of ACG and the Mòd specifically, the majority of the organisers had nevertheless been eager to appeal to the aristocratic and therefore wealthy classes for support. As with the Eisteddfod, the appearance of well-known public figures at the events lent credibility and stirred public interest. Interestingly, Màiri Mhòr had sung at the first Mòd, illustrating the intersection of the social and political Gaelic movement with the primarily cultural agenda of ACG.<sup>45</sup> The presence of both Màiri Mhòr and Princess Louise at the same Mòd is also revealing of the broadness of ACG’s approach in these early years.

In preparation for the first Mòd in 1892, ACG part published the choral song collection of the St. Columba Gaelic Choir, noted above for their performance at the 1898 GSG meeting, *A’ Chòisir Chiùil*. This furnished the participating choirs with the songs and music required in order to compete. The first instalment was printed in advance of the Oban

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<sup>41</sup> ‘Lord Archibald Campbell’, *Who was Who: a companion to Who’s Who, containing the biographies of those who died during the period 1897-1916*, (1920), 113-114. McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland*, (2020), 63-64.

<sup>42</sup> Sibell MacKenzie was an eclectic figure and represented the Celtic Revival era outlined in works such as Michael Shaw, *The Fin-de-Siècle Scottish Revival: Romance, Decadence and Celtic Identity*, (2020). She joined the Celtic Union in 1902; had a fascination with the occult; and wrote a series of Celtic-themed romance novels. She also published a volume of eleven Highland tales, *The End of the Song* (1904) and was a correspondent and friend of W. B. Yeats. See: *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats: Volume IV, 1905-1907*: 134. The NLS has her catalogue of Celtic-inspired writings, an avenue for future research. Countess of Cromartie, ‘The Dingwall Mod’ *ADG* (1905), 21

<sup>43</sup> These were John Mackay (1822-1906), Charles Fraser-Mackintosh (1821-1901) and John Stewart-Murray, the Marquis of Tullibardine (1871-1942) in 1894-1896, 1896-1898 and 1898-1904 respectively.

<sup>44</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Meek, *Màiri Mhòr nan Òran: Taghadh de a h-Òrain* (Edinburgh, 1998), 27-28.

Mòd in 1892, with the second instalment available from January 1893.<sup>46</sup> The full collection was then published in 1900, with a prefatory note on its impact to date: ‘The movement [...] for the advancement of native vocal music in the Highlands has [...] been much helped by the opportune publication in parts of *A’ Chòisir Chiùil*.<sup>47</sup> MacFarlane had three compositions included in the volume: ‘Cumha na h-òighe’ (‘Lament for the Maiden’), ‘Mo Dhachaidh’ (‘My Home’) and ‘Ochoin a ri! ‘se’n leon an gaol’ (‘Wae’s me! But love it tries the heart’).<sup>48</sup> There were also several by Henry Whyte and one was harmonised by his brother, John Whyte.<sup>49</sup> Gaelic song collections produced for the Mòd were vital for the competitions themselves, though also equally valuable as Gaelic resources for schools in the Gaelic speaking areas more generally, and as a form of advertising the new festival to the Gaelic speakers.

Following the first annual Mòd in Oban 1892, John Mackintosh had been appointed to the role of secretary, with ten pounds per year as salary, as MacFarlane had advised.<sup>50</sup> Although the *Celtic Who’s Who* (1921) states that Mackintosh was the secretary from ACG’s inception, another person was named on its manifesto, published after the inauguration of the Society in April 1891.<sup>51</sup> The pamphlet, addressed to ‘Highlanders at Home and Abroad’ states that John Campbell of Oban initially held the position.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, when the first committees were established in 1891, Mackintosh was not mentioned as a member of the Finance Committee, which again had John Campbell at its head.<sup>53</sup> Something must have changed in the interim and Mackintosh took his place the following year. He then served as secretary until resigning in 1907, before swiftly being appointed Treasurer instead in 1908. The events leading up to this are particularly revealing of the close relationship which Mackintosh and MacFarlane had, and of the unstable nature of ACG during the period. The pair had been in touch from as early as 1895, evidenced in MacFarlane’s papers, though likely the connection began before this as both were present at the 1892 Mòd and the subsequent business meeting which took place.<sup>54</sup> Corresponding frequently from 1895-

<sup>46</sup> ‘Reviews’, *CM*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (1893), 64.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Prefatory Note’, *A’ Chòisir-Chiùil* (1900).

<sup>48</sup> MacFarlane, ‘Cumha na h-òighe’, ‘Mo Dhachaidh’ and ‘Ochoin a ri! ‘se’n leon an gaol’, *A’ Chòisir-Chiùil* (1900), 8, 34 and 43.

<sup>49</sup> The song harmonised by John Whyte was: William Ross, ‘Brulhaichean Ghlinn Braoin’ (‘Braes of Glen Braon’), *A’ Chòisir-Chiùil* (1900), 3.

<sup>50</sup> Thompson, *History of An Comunn Gàidhealach*, 20.

<sup>51</sup> MacBean, ‘John Mackintosh’, 102.

<sup>52</sup> Listed on ACG’s manifesto as ‘John Campbell, solicitor, Albany Street, Oban.’ This is not the John M. Campbell listed in the Executive Council, which is John MacMaster Campbell (1859-1938): Thomson, *Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, 34. *To Highlanders at Home and Abroad: Manifesto*.

<sup>53</sup> Murchison, ‘Story of An Comunn’, 24.

<sup>54</sup> John Mackay, ‘An Comunn Gàidhealach. The Mod, or Gathering, at Oban’, *CM*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1893), 11-12. MacFarlane was a member of the Executive Council and Mackintosh had been installed as the Treasurer and acting secretary: ‘The First Mod’, *Am Mod Naiseanta Rioghail* (1992), 2.

1907, the two discussed all aspects of ACG news and business, including finances, executive meetings, agreeing Mòd competition songs, allocating judges and a wide variety of related organising activities. The pair shared similar outlooks on the wider Gaelic movement too, in particular bemoaning the lack of real work being done for the Gaelic language, which they believed were increasingly being replaced with social events. For example, Mackintosh commented in 1897 on the GSI, which he would become secretary and treasurer of in 1921, as follows:

They can do a dinner fine but precious little are they doing to keep up the Gaelic so far as I can see. I do not much care about dinners but I am going to theirs this week for the sake of peace and to see if I can get them to do anything for Gaelic music.’<sup>55</sup>

The GSI had been established in 1871 to promote the language, culture and music of the Gaelic speaking people as well as to work for ‘the vindication of the rights and character of the Gaelic people.’<sup>56</sup> McLeod argues that it was nevertheless largely directed towards the bourgeois class, operating primarily in English and, as Anne Lorne Gillies had also concluded, that it became less politically active with time.<sup>57</sup> As we shall see, Mackintosh’s comment strikes a similar tone to many of MacFarlane’s criticisms of the language movement as a whole which would follow. Specifically, he complained that its institutions ‘lose sight of every object for which their Society exists, except the social and benevolent ones.’<sup>58</sup> He also often complained about the leadership of ACG and its direction; the prevalence of English in its operations and publications; and in general, of the lack of real work being done for the Gaelic language. Much of the correspondence over the years between MacFarlane and Mackintosh centred on their frustrations as they witnessed the dilution of the intended scope and output of the various associations in real time. ACG, though it had not set out to address the ‘rights and character’ did have in its objectives to ‘promote the cultivation of Gaelic Literature and Music’ and to ‘encourage the Teaching of Gaelic in Highland Schools.’<sup>59</sup> What we see in the evolution of the Gaelic language movement is the narrowing of these goals, as space and concessions are made to English and to the aristocratic class which, having the means to achieve their preferred outcomes, increasingly held more and more influence over its activity and direction.

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<sup>55</sup> MacBean, ‘John Mackintosh’, 102. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 4: 18/08/97. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>56</sup> Constitution, *The Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* (1871), v.

<sup>57</sup> McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 57-58. Anne Fraser, ‘Gaelic in primary education: a study of the development of Gaelic bilingual education in urban contexts’, Unpublished PhD thesis (University of Glasgow, 1989), 52.

<sup>58</sup> MacFarlane, ‘An Comunn Gaidhealach’, *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1905), 6.

<sup>59</sup> *To Highlanders at Home and Abroad: Manifesto*, 2.



### John Mackintosh and the Mòd

As is common in large organisations, groups with similar views formed, leading to the development of alliances and loyalties. This created a complex environment for debate and criticism, as ACG's membership came from diverse professional and social backgrounds and held varying views on the Gaelic language movement. This study represents the divide from a uniquely 'Malcolm MacFarlane' perspective, though it is necessary to acknowledge that attitudes and events could as equally be presented from the opposing side, which is critical to our understanding of MacFarlane. For example, there were those not as convinced as MacFarlane evidently had been about John Mackintosh's abilities in the role of secretary. Mackintosh wrote: 'Sorry to hear I am "reckoned stiff"' in August 1897.<sup>60</sup> Complaints about Mackintosh's handling of ACG affairs would persist for the next decade, though MacFarlane was generally always supportive of him.

In the late 1890's, the sheer volume of the correspondence between the two men offers valuable insight and evidence on the operations of ACG, with the issue of financing their events and competitions, as well as competitors looking to claim expenses, their main preoccupations. This provides a new perspective when considering MacFarlane's contribution to ACG at the time, as he was evidently relied upon for financial planning and advice, despite only being appointed initially to the Educational and Music Committees and simultaneously executing a vast amount of work in that direction. The reliance on MacFarlane at this time was perhaps a result of his experience in the role of secretary of the GSG up until 1895, as he had practical knowledge and application of the fiscal operations of a similar organisation. Mackintosh would often appeal to him 'in private' for advice, particularly when discussing his own financial frustrations and the 'small allowance made' to him in terms of his salary from ACG.<sup>61</sup> There were issues too in these early years of members not keeping up to date with their subscriptions, some of whom had never paid at all, as well as patrons who had neither paid their one-off fee for life membership nor given anything to date in the form of prizes.<sup>62</sup> MacFarlane and Mackintosh discussed these pertinent financial issues at length, alongside the benefits which advertising could bring to alleviate the costs of some of its more expensive ventures. For example, with the publication *An Comunn Gàidhealach: (The Highland Association)* (1897), Mackintosh believed that it

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<sup>60</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 4: 15/8/97. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>61</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 5:28/09/98. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>62</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 4: 10/12/97. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

could be reduced in cost by five or even ten pounds if they included advertisements.<sup>63</sup> With these ongoing discussions, it is evident that MacFarlane played a pivotal role in the financial operations of ACG during this period and that he was responsible for, or certainly took responsibility for, a large swathe of its expenses and logistics.

When MacFarlane represented ACG at the Oireachtas in Dublin in 1898, he was able to approve any and all expenses which he incurred.<sup>64</sup> The Oireachtas was the cultural festival of The Gaelic League (GL), also conceived from the example of the Welsh Eisteddfod.<sup>65</sup> Presumably the Mòd made some impact too, as the first Oireachtas in 1897 was five years after the inaugural Mòd in 1892 and both groups often sent representatives to the other event, as well as the Eisteddfod. Thomas Murchison recorded that MacFarlane was sent as ACG's delegate to the Oireachtas in 1897 with Magnus Maclean; and again in 1899 with Dugald MacIsaac (1848-1940), though no mention is made of this intervening trip in 1898.<sup>66</sup> MacFarlane delivered an address at the Oireachtas in 1898 and 'got on famously' according to Mackintosh.<sup>67</sup> John Mackay (1822-1906) had even requested a copy of his speech to use as the basis for his own address to the Eisteddfod later that year.<sup>68</sup> The GL had sent their own delegates to the Mòd in 1898, with Eoin MacNeill (1867-1945) and Patrick Nally (Pádraig Mac An Fhailghe, 1868-1911) both appearing at the festival in Oban.<sup>69</sup> MacNeill was a founding member of the GL and an immensely influential figure in Irish politics into the twentieth-century. MacFarlane and he corresponded at this time and MacNeill even hosted MacFarlane at his home when he attended the Oireachtas in 1898.<sup>70</sup> MacFarlane later organised for MacNeill to give a lecture to the GSG in 1903, though funds could only stretch to cover his travel expenses and not an actual speaking fee.<sup>71</sup> MacNeill intended to discuss a recently published book, *A Social History of Ancient Ireland* by Patrick W. Joyce (1903),

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<sup>63</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 88. Copy of 'An Comunn Gaidhealach (The Highland Association): constitution and rules, office-bearers, list of members, secretary and treasurer's reports for session 1897, and general information on the position and prospects of the Association' (1897). NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 4: 10/12/97. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>64</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 5: 17/05/98. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>65</sup> Caoimhín De Barra, 'A gallant little 'tírin': the Welsh influence on Irish cultural nationalism', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 153 (2014), 65-67.

<sup>66</sup> 'The Late Mr. Dugald MacIsaac', *An Gaidheal*, Vol. 35 (1940), 102-103. Murchison, 'Story of An Comunn', 53.

<sup>67</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 5: 13/06/98. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>68</sup> MacFarlane, 'Death of Mr John Mackay, Hereford', *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (1906), 89-90. John Mackay, 'The Welsh Eisteddfod', *CM*, Vol. 6, No. 12 (1898), 224-225. The account is highly enthusiastic of the Scottish delegates in Wales, and mentions MacFarlane's successful speech in Dublin.

<sup>69</sup> Patrick Maume, Thomas Charles Edwards, 'MacNeill, Eoin (John)', *Dictionary of Irish Biography (DIB)* (2013) <<https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.005283.v1>> [Accessed: 17/01/22]. Máire Ní Mhurchú, 'Mac An Fhailghe, Pádraig', *Ainm*, <<https://www.ainm.ie/Bio.aspx?ID=265>> [Accessed: 29/09/24]. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 5: 24/08/98. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>70</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 20: 20/08/14. Draft letter from MacFarlane to R. Erskine.

<sup>71</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 9: 14/09/03. Letter from J. MacKeggie.

as it dealt with the time when ‘the Gaels were practically one people.’<sup>72</sup> Eoin MacNeill had a lasting impact on MacFarlane, discussed in more detail in chapter three, as we consider the political aspects of the Gaelic language movement and MacFarlane’s position within it. For now, let us return to the financial issues of ACG, though the GSG does not seem to have been in much better shape if they were unable to pay Eoin MacNeill.

Several influential figures in the Gaelic and Highland spheres were associated with ACG, and as a result they were also discussed by MacFarlane and Mackintosh. A key component of facilitating and funding the Mòd was through patronage and the giving of prizes for individual competitions. Even to this day, the Mòd relies on sponsorship and carries many prizes donated by individuals and groups. Memorial competitions were established for MacFarlane following his death, for example three competitions in his name for the recitation of poetry, folktales and two-person dialogues at the 1966 Mòd.<sup>73</sup> In 1897, MacFarlane was invited to accompany ACG’s president, Charles Fraser-Mackintosh (1828-1901) to the platform for the opening Mòd ceremony that year.<sup>74</sup> Fraser-Mackintosh, president from 1896-1898, was an MP for Inverness between 1874 and 1885 and an associate of both John Murdoch and Màiri Mhòr.<sup>75</sup> He had been a member of the Napier Commission of 1883; and was an ardent campaigner for increased Gaelic language provision in Highland schools.<sup>76</sup> Following the Mòd in 1897, Fraser-Mackintosh renewed his ten pounds prize donation despite also having notched up a sizeable luncheon bill during his stay, which John Mackintosh reported to MacFarlane was over fifty pounds.<sup>77</sup> Similarly supportive, *The Highland News* (1883-1915) of Inverness sponsored a competition for ‘Gaelic Teaching’, rewarding the highest number of passes in Gaelic, attendance and registered students taking part in Gaelic examinations.<sup>78</sup> In 1898, they awarded over thirty pounds in prize money and the editor, John McLeod (1862-1931), wrote that the following year it would be increased to fifty pounds.<sup>79</sup>

Further confusing events and procedures, MacFarlane was himself a competitor in several of the competitions. In 1903, Mackintosh agreed in advance of the Mòd to keep

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<sup>72</sup> Patrick Weston Joyce, *A Social History of Ancient Ireland* (New York, 1903). NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 9: 16/10/03. Letter from E. MacNeill.

<sup>73</sup> *Programme of the Sixty-Third Annual Mod: Inverness* (1966), 62.

<sup>74</sup> Ewan A. Cameron, ‘Mackintosh, Charles Fraser (1828-1901)’, *ODNB*, (2004), <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/58140>> [Accessed: 12/04/2022]. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 4: 03/09/97. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>75</sup> E. Cameron, *The Life and Times of Fraser Mackintosh, crofter MP*, (Aberdeen, 2000).

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 4: 11/10/97. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>78</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 5: Undated. Letter from J. McLeod. The winners in 1898 were: Hillipool, £11; Kilchoan £9; Cornaymore £6;6 and Oban £4:10.

<sup>79</sup> Joseph MacLeod, *Highland Heroes of the Land Reform Movement* (Inverness, 1917), 57. NLS, ACC. 9736, Fol. 5: 10/09/98. Letter from J. McLeod

MacFarlane's intention to enter a composition competition secret.<sup>80</sup> This was the lyric competition set by Walter B. Blaikie (1847-1928) in 1903, to compose 'The Crofters Song of Hope', which MacFarlane won. Blaikie was a prominent printer, active in the academic circles at the University of Edinburgh; a member of the Royal Society of Edinburgh; and connected with Alexander (1832-1912) and Ella Carmichael (1870-1928).<sup>81</sup> It was through Ella Carmichael that MacFarlane had sent the songs on to Blaikie.<sup>82</sup> The prize money was an impressive ten pounds, though MacFarlane later claimed to have donated all of his prize winnings from the Mòd events back to ACG.<sup>83</sup> The song itself refers to the successes of the crofters' disputes at the end of the nineteenth-century and incorporates similar themes to his later children's play, *Am Mosgladh Mòr* (The Great Awakening, 1914, 1915 and 1925).<sup>84</sup> These included the common Fenian theme of re-awakening the sleeping Gaels, also found in Katherine Whyte Grant's play, *Dùsgadh na Féinne* (The Awakening of the Fians, 1908).<sup>85</sup>

Despite the generosity of MacFarlane and ACG's official patrons and sponsors, Mackintosh's preoccupation with funds remained, as he contended with expenses claims from a number of the Mòd participants and choirs. Gross profits had totalled a meagre sixty-eight pounds in 1897, though they had also successfully recruited five new life members in the course of the event.<sup>86</sup> The Oban Choir were however looking to claim £29:12:6, on top of prize money won and the support given to them by the Oban Committee in the first instance to allow them to attend.<sup>87</sup> Similar claims and complaints were put to John Mackintosh throughout his tenure. Again, looking to the Eisteddfod as an example of best practice, he wrote that:

<sup>80</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 9: 01/08/03. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>81</sup> Domhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart, 'The Theology of the Carmina Gadelica', *The History of Scottish Theology, Volume III: The Long Twentieth Century* (2019), 13; and 'Walter Biggar Blaikie', *The Genealogy of the Blaikie Family*, <<https://web.archive.org/web/20211128092146/>> [Accessed: 10/03/23]. MacFarlane, 'The Crofter's Song of Hope', *CM* (1903), 118-119. Stiùbhart, Ed., *The Life and Legacy of Alexander Carmichael* (2008), 118. Elizabeth Ewan, Sue Innes et al, Eds, 'Carmichael, Elizabeth Catherine (Ella)', *The Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women: From the Earliest Times to 2004* (2007), 67.

<sup>82</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 9: 29/09/03. Letter from Ella Carmichael.

<sup>83</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 9: 21/04/03. Letter from J. Mackintosh. MacLeod, 'Malcolm MacFarlane', 311.

<sup>84</sup> MacFarlane's play was originally published in three parts in the *CM* in 1914, with a second instalment following in 1915, also in three parts. It was later heavily revised and entered into the 1925 Greenock Mòd literary competition, winning second place. MacFarlane, 'Am Mosgladh Mòr', *CM*, Vol. 22 (1914), 136-139, 156-158, 171-174 and Vol. 23 (1915), 54-57, 74-77 and 82-86. MacFarlane, *Am Mosgladh Mòr*, (An Dara Duais, Mòd, 1925).

<sup>85</sup> Katherine W. Grant, *Dùsgadh na Féinne* (1908). Innes, 'Dùsgadh na Féinne', 198-211. See also: Innes, 'Dùsgadh agus Mosgladh: Catriona NicGhille-Bhàin Ghrannnd, Dùsgadh na Féinne (1908) & Calum MacPhàrlain, Am Mosgladh Mòr (1914-1915)', *Scotland's Early Literature for Children's Initiative* (2017) <<https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/selcie/2017/10/>> [Accessed: 10/02/21].

<sup>86</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 4: 11/10/97. Letter from J. Mackintosh. In 1891, ACG had a two-tier membership plan: Life Members would make a one-off payment of £5:5s and Ordinary Members paid 5s annually. *To Highlanders at Home and Abroad: Manifesto*, 3. By 1907, fees had reduced for Life Members to £2 2s; Ordinary Members stayed the same at 5s annually; and Affiliated Societies and Branches paid £1 annually. *The Féill Cookery Book* (Glasgow, 1907), 9.

<sup>87</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 4: 11/10/97. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

because of their organisation and because the people support locally, I should think they have not to coax and cajole choirs and competitors as we have to do, nor have they to pay choirs travelling expenses which does away with a lot of our funds which could otherwise be given in Prizes.<sup>88</sup>

Wilson McLeod's study has touched on the variety of criticisms levelled at ACG over the years due to the running of the Mòd.<sup>89</sup> In particular, he notes an enduring frustration from the membership at the lack of Gaelic at the event, noting in particular some of MacFarlane's later remarks on the subject.<sup>90</sup> With the detail which the correspondence of MacFarlane's archive provides, we have new evidence and perspectives on some of the issues which impacted the early operations of the Mòd, and potentially impacted the direction of travel it would take as it developed. If money had been less contentious, perhaps more focus could have been directed to the quality of the competitions themselves, and the Gaelic language which would have benefitted as a result. As it was, the accessibility of the Mòd as a result of finance was a prominent issue.

As the Mòd moved into the beginning of the twentieth century, these issues persisted. In 1902, Harriet Stewart (1866-1947), a Gaelic teacher from Clackmannan, had taken her children's choir to the Dundee Mòd.<sup>91</sup> She wrote after the event to MacFarlane about her expenses not being covered by ACG, complaining that John Mackintosh had been ignoring her letters and that she had been assured before entering the choir by 'Miss Carmichael through an Edin lady'<sup>92</sup> that they would be covered in full. She wrote: 'Sorry indeed that I ever took my children to Dundee. Not so much for the sake of the money but for the shabby treatment I have got.'<sup>93</sup> The 'Miss Carmichael' mentioned here would be Ella Carmichael, mentioned above for her involvement with Gaelic song competitions, and a key figure in the Gaelic and Celtic literary circles in Edinburgh. It is probable that Harriet Stewart did receive the expenses from the 1902 Mòd, as Mackintosh wrote to MacFarlane the day after her letter: 'It will never be right until we abolish this system of paying choirs sums for travelling expenses.'<sup>94</sup> Until that policy was resolved, presumably Stewart would have been awarded the sum. Stewart and MacFarlane remained in touch up until at least 1921.<sup>95</sup> She had staged

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<sup>88</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 5: 26/06/98. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>89</sup> McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 61.

<sup>90</sup> MacFarlane, 'Half a Century of Vocal Gaelic Music', 251-272.

<sup>91</sup> Scott, 'With heart and voice ever devoted to the cause', 92-94. Sim Innes and Kate Mathis, 'Gaelic tradition and the Celtic Revival in children's literature in Scottish Gaelic and English', *The Land of Story Books: Scottish Children's Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, Sarah Dunnigan and Shu-Fang Lai, eds, (Glasgow, 2019), 112. See also: 'Gaelic Teachers, VII. Miss Harriet Stewart, LL. A.', *An Gaidheal*, Vol. 23 (1928), 130-131.

<sup>92</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 8: 19/12/02. Letter from H. Stewart.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 8: 20/12/02. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>95</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 27: 08/2/21. Letter from H. Stewart.

MacFarlane's Gaelic play for children, *Am Mosgladh Mòr*, in 1914 and was confident enough in the familiarity of their relationship to suggest that the Gaelic of the play was more difficult than it should be for school-aged children.<sup>96</sup>

Other financial claims, including from John MacMaster Campbell (1859-1939) who had been given a two pounds advance by Mackintosh in Dundee in 1902 to attend the Mòd as a judge, and was looking for the rest of his payment, also arrived regularly.<sup>97</sup> Suspicious of their agendas, Mackintosh wrote that some of those involved were 'meaning to make a fortune out of this thing.'<sup>98</sup> William Cameron, a Gaelic teacher based in Poolewe who frequently entered his pupils in the Mòd competitions, and received prizes and recognition himself for his work for the language, complained in 1907 to MacFarlane: 'the Mods and the Gaelic Movement have nearly landed me in the poor house.'<sup>99</sup> This must have been frustrating, particularly in 1907, as MacFarlane and others were protesting the financial management of the Féill event, concerned over the mis-appropriation of funds; and suspicious of the motivations of the Trustee Committee more generally. The Féill a' Chomuinn Ghàidhealaich (Highland Association Bazaar, 1907) was an ACG fundraising event with stalls, concerts and the recreation of a typical Highland village, 'An Clachan', which took place in Glasgow, hoping to raise money to carry out their activities on behalf of the Gaelic language and culture.<sup>100</sup> Complaints such as those from Cameron, though warranted, would have been a further discouragement for the likes of MacFarlane and Mackintosh, who were navigating an already strained financial terrain.

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid. Stewart wrote that for MacFarlane's next children's play 'something simpler might be advisable.' The play was successful though 'it might be just a little too much for the average child.' In an accompanying description to the first instalment, it was described as having 'just enough difficulty about the plot and the properties to make it work striving after excellence' when performed. It also claimed not to have attempted 'literary excellence.' 'Gaelic Musical Play for Children', *CM*, Vol. 22, 130. Innes has also suggested that the language of the play was more difficult than Whyte Grant's *Dùsgadh*: Innes and Mathis, 'Gaelic tradition and the Celtic Revival', 118.

<sup>97</sup> Thomson, *Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, 34. 'Death of Sheriff J. M'M Campbell', *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, (04/02/39), 5. Macmaster was a founding member of ACG and went on to become its president between 1927-1930: 'Past Presidents', *An Comunn Gàidhealach: Sixty-Ninth Annual Report 1959-60* (1960), 2. There is now a Macmaster Campbell Memorial Trophy for rural choirs at the Mòd: *Comunn nan Còisirean Gàidhlig* < <https://www.gaelicchoirs.org.uk/choirs/lairg.htm> > [Accessed: 10/07/24]. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 9: 11/03/03. Letter from Macmaster Campbell.

<sup>98</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 9: 09/01/03. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>99</sup> Cameron was originally from the Black Isle and there are several portraits of him, including his 1903 Gaelic Choir, available here: 'Royal National Mod', *Am Baile*, (Photo ID: GAIROCHM\_7740) < <https://www.ambaile.org.uk/groupitem/235/> > [Accessed: 10/05/24]. Cameron delivered a paper at the Poolewe branch of the Education Institute of Scotland, 'School Board Elections versus Gaelic in Schools', *ADG*, Vol. 6, No.5 (1911), 76. In 1906, MacFarlane wrote in *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (1906) p. 88: 'One of the crying needs of Gaeldom is 100 or so schoolmasters such as Mr. Cameron, master of Poolewe School. For the profession to which he belongs is far from being over- stocked with men possessing broadmindedness, originality and the will to put forth patriotic effort.' The Prize List for the Oban Mòd in 1906 provides one example of the involvement and successes of the Poolewe children: 'The Prize List', *ADG*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1906), 24-26. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 10/12/07. Letter from Cameron.

<sup>100</sup> *Féill a' Chomuinn Ghàidhealaich* (Glasgow, 1907).

Not only a ‘fortune’, but favouritism would also become an issue as the Mòd evolved. In 1914, Stewart again suffered supposedly ‘shabby’ treatment, as the then editor of the *CM*, Annie Mackay wrote to MacFarlane that Kate Fraser’s (1863-1921) ‘chickens’ had marched off with all of the prizes.<sup>101</sup> It seems from this exchange and others at the time that there had been some favouritism from the judges at several of the Mòd events, as with Mackay’s insinuation here that Fraser’s pupils had won unfairly. As a result, MacFarlane was involved in the sometimes public debates about the appointment of specific judges.<sup>102</sup> Before turning to some of the specific issues with the judging protocols, it is worthwhile to note here, as the evidence from Stewart and Campbell have demonstrated with the expense issues, that John Mackintosh, as secretary and therefore the person responsible for ACG’s finances, was often bypassed by members who would contact MacFarlane directly and potentially in anticipation of a more favourable response. This underlines his leading role in the organisation at this early juncture and the position of influence which he was invariably perceived to hold.

A key problem with the appointment of the judges was perceived to be bias, with local judges favouring local participants and choirs. Mackintosh received a number of complaints and wrote to MacFarlane that points were being given for ‘bad Gaelic’ and there were even accusations of competitions being fixed.<sup>103</sup> Ella Carmichael was aware of the same issues, noting that ‘there is a good deal of bad feeling in some of the judging [...] I daresay there is room for improvement.’<sup>104</sup> Other suggestions were also proposed, such as those from Malcolm MacLennan in Edinburgh, who suggested that non-Gaelic speakers with an interest in Gaelic music should be allowed to enter the competitions; and that judges who themselves did not speak Gaelic should similarly be allowed to adjudicate, though not for Gaelic expression.<sup>105</sup> MacLennan and MacFarlane had a tumultuous relationship as the editorship of *ADG* was transferred to MacLennan in 1906, which will be discussed below. McLeod’s study recognised the points of contention around allowing non-Gaelic speakers to compete, stating that participants could have simply mouthed the words without any grasp of the sentiment or meaning.<sup>106</sup> As late as 1911, and arguably to the present day, ACG

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<sup>101</sup> ‘The Miss Kate Fraser Memorial: An Appreciation’, *ADG*, Vol. 16, No. 9 (1921), 131. Kate Fraser, Inverness, was a longstanding member and worker in ACG as the honorary secretary and treasurer for the Inverness branch: ‘Official Information’, *1899-1912 – Inverness Burgh Directory* (1908-1909), xviii. She was also a member of the Education Committee in 1910: *ADG*, Vol. 5 (1910), 21; and a member of the Executive Council: *Féill a’ Chomuinn Ghaidhealaich* (Glasgow, 1907), 16; and *ADG*, Vol. 9 (1914), 42.

NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 20: 10/6/14. Letter from A. Mackay.

<sup>102</sup> Kidd, ‘The Forgotten First’, 175-176.

<sup>103</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 8: 13/10/02. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>104</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 9: 14/10/03. Letter from E. Carmichael.

<sup>105</sup> MacBean, ‘Rev. Malcolm MacLennan’, *The Celtic Who’s Who*, 103-104. Murchison, ‘MacLennan, Revd Dr Malcolm (1862-1931)’, *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, 181. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 8: 18/11/02. Letter from M. MacLennan.

<sup>106</sup> McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 61.



grappled with the issues of Gaelic proficiency in its musical competitions, with the Mòd and Music Committee convened to discuss the possibility of including new tests in order that a sufficient understanding of Gaelic could be demonstrated by the participants.<sup>107</sup> The presence and position of non-Gaelic speakers within ACG was a longstanding issue; as were the consequences of their inclusion, such as the committees within its operational structure, and the Executive Council itself, being unable or unwilling to only conduct business in Gaelic, as MacFarlane had suggested they do even before the organisation had been established.<sup>108</sup> The Minutes of ACG's Executive Committee are in English up until 1913, when a change of policy meant that they were recorded from September 1913 onwards in Gaelic.<sup>109</sup>

Other issues which MacFarlane dealt with in the early years of the Mòd included arbitrating between various periodicals and newspapers as to who would be able to print the winning competition papers, particularly the literary entries. John Mackay (1865-1909) of the *CM* complained that although his magazine contributed substantially to funding the prizes, he was then prevented from printing them, writing in 1903 that publications which 'give no tangible help get plenty of them.'<sup>110</sup> He was willing to give two pounds for a short story on any historical event in Scottish Highland Warfare, and to be allowed to print them:

If not, I despair for the literary influence of the Mod! It's time it stopped business and called a meeting of creditors!<sup>111</sup>

At this time, Mackintosh was sending MacFarlane a vast amount of the literary materials, alongside the lists of donors, though it is unclear exactly who was officially in charge of managing their subsequent publication.<sup>112</sup> It seems likely, with the generally chaotic nature of the correspondence at the time, that this was another detail in the delivery of the Mòd that had not yet been officially designated. However, and illustrative of the overall complexity of understanding the language movement at the time, it had in fact been Henry Whyte who had published the papers that Mackay wanted. In 1903, Whyte had printed a series in the *Highland News* from the previous year's Mòd competitions without permission. A flurry of letters ensued before finally MacFarlane wrote to Whyte that 'on no account was any one to

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<sup>107</sup> 'An Comunn Gaidhealach: Meeting of the Executive', *ADG*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (1911), 38.

<sup>108</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 2.

<sup>109</sup> NLS, Acc. 13695/1-10: Minutes of the General Council (until 1974: Executive Council), with some minutes of the Northern Area Sub-Committee., 1891-1979.

<sup>110</sup> Thomson, 'Mackay, John (1865-1909)', *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, 175. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 9: undated though with papers from 1903. Letter from J. Mackay.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. Another undated letter from J. Mackay.

<sup>112</sup> For examples, there are numerous such letters from Mackintosh here, including: NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 8: 17/12/02. Letter from J. Mackintosh.



edit them but myself.’<sup>113</sup> Whyte returned the papers to him, adding: ‘Fhir mo chridhe – Cum ort d’ fhalt’ (*My dear man – Keep your hair on*).<sup>114</sup> This was typical of the general tone of their correspondence throughout their lives, with MacFarlane being reprimanded for his seriousness on more than one occasion. However, MacFarlane did feel a personal responsibility for the literary papers and their proper production, regardless of personal relationships and affections. Other interested parties had appealed for the rights to print prize papers, including Ruairaidh Erskine, who asked Mackintosh to send him winning translation papers in October 1903.<sup>115</sup> That these requests were then forwarded to MacFarlane supports the suggestion that he was the person taking responsibility in this arena, even if unofficially. Erskine and MacFarlane went on to collaborate on a variety of projects and publications in the following decade, producing a vast amount of Gaelic literature. Their important relationship is discussed in detail in the following chapters, though their correspondence began in 1905, when Erskine had applied to MacFarlane to advertise his new Gaelic newspaper, *Alba* (Scotland, 1908-1909), in *ADG*.<sup>116</sup>

It is also interesting that MacFarlane insisted on editing the Mòd competition papers before publication. His role as an editor in the Gaelic movement becomes increasingly apparent as his own literary career and networks developed, going on to work with influential Gaelic writers such as John MacCormick, John MacFadyen and Katherine Whyte Grant. With so much Gaelic literature passing through MacFarlane’s hands to edit or comment on that was unattributed to him, it is evident that his role as an editor of Gaelic text has been under-estimated to date.<sup>117</sup> This is similar to his central role in ACG in these early years following its establishment, as he carried out a substantial amount of work in his official and non-official capacities. It is clear, for example, that John Mackintosh relied heavily on his expertise and guidance and that he played a critical role in the operations of the Mòd during this time. This serves to substantiate the argument that he ought now to be considered as one of the Gaelic language movement’s leading figures.

## Criticisms

<sup>113</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 9: 10/10/03. Letter to Whyte from MacFarlane. Returned with comments and papers.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. Comments on returned letter by Whyte.

<sup>115</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 9: 17/10/03. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>116</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 11: 7/9/05. Letter from E. Mackay negotiating advertising deals; and NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 11: 13/10/05. Letter from R. Erskine, pleased with the adverts in first issue of *ADG*.

<sup>117</sup> MacLeod’s biography mentions some editing work of Gaelic school books, though is primarily focussed on MacFarlane’s contributions to Edward Dwelly’s *Illustrated Gaelic to English Dictionary* (1902-1911) and his edition of the *Fernaig Manuscript* (1923): MacLeod, ‘Malcolm MacFarlane’ (1853-1931), 303-304.

As has been demonstrated, the beginning of the twentieth century was turbulent for ACG, particularly as the management of its finances and the operations of the Mòd were complex and responsibility and accountability do not appear to have been very well defined, despite the original establishment of its three committees for Finance, Education and Music.<sup>118</sup> MacFarlane dealt with a number of issues and, from the evidence reviewed above, appears to have taken a more prominent role in the functions of ACG at this time than has been previously understood. As for Mackintosh, although evidently working under a heavy burden of responsibility, complaints about his performance were made intermittently throughout his tenure. In 1903, new committees were formed to better cope with the growing demands of the organisation.<sup>119</sup> Meetings to establish these began following the 1902 Mòd, where an issue was raised by the honorary secretary, John Campbell, 'regarding the dissatisfaction with the general conducting of the business of the Association.'<sup>120</sup> Isaac MacBride, convenor of the Financial Committee at this time, had informed MacFarlane of the complaints which were being made against Mackintosh, stressing that although the criticisms were not his opinions necessarily, he was obliged to acknowledge that the unhappiness did exist.<sup>121</sup> At this time, MacFarlane was a member of the Executive Council, though it seems that he was informed for advice and to mediate the disagreement, rather than in any official capacity.

Mackintosh defended himself against Campbell's accusations, complaining that in fact Campbell had not kept up to date with money which he owed for prizes, even after being asked three or four times. Mackintosh paid the money from his personal account, writing: 'I feel that in a movement like this there must be a good deal of give and take in matters of that kind.'<sup>122</sup> He then sent a lengthy list of the work which fell under his remit as secretary, particularly noting the steady and relentless stream of correspondence.<sup>123</sup> Mackintosh claimed that 'there is as much trouble in collecting 5 shillings as £5 or £500 in one sum.'<sup>124</sup> The crux of the dispute appears to have been Mackintosh's request for an increase to his annual salary of ten pounds, which he proposed was 'such a nominal fee.'<sup>125</sup> Murchison stated that Mackintosh's salary had increased from ten to fifteen pounds in 1895, and then again to twenty in 1899, though this letter in 1902 suggests this had unfortunately

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<sup>118</sup> Murchison, 'Story of An Comunn', 24.

<sup>119</sup> MacFarlane, 'An Comunn Gaidhealach: Sketch of its inception and development', *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1905), 6.

<sup>120</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 8: 10/10/02. Letter from I. MacBride to J. Mackintosh, forwarded to MacFarlane.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 8: 29/10/02. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 8: 06/11/02. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

not taken place.<sup>126</sup> Mackintosh wrote again to MacFarlane in 1903, complaining about his overall working conditions and insufficient salary. The letter is given here in full as it serves as excellent evidence for the complex inter-personal dynamics of ACG in this early period. He wrote to MacFarlane:

I am getting thoroughly disgusted with this business. Both my clerks and myself have done practically nothing but work for the Mod since the beginning of August [...] and yet although I do it all for nothing (my allowance being insufficient to pay my clerk who devotes all her time to the work) there is nothing but grumbling everywhere and if there be any deviation from grumbling its growling I get in place of it. If I could make them all Presidents, give them all free tickets for the concert, give them all first prizes and conduct everything on similar lines I daresay I would be a good secretary. [...] if a man was paid even a little for his services he could stand a reasonable amount of that sort of thing. [...] it is just too much of a good thing to get well paid by kicks in place of thanks. Perhaps it is best that some other one should have a time at it.<sup>127</sup>

Ella Carmichael supported him, commenting that:

I think the attack on Mr Mackintosh is most unwarranted. He has been a very good Secretary and worked well for the Society. What is wanted is not a change of Secretary but more life in the members. Many of them are drones.<sup>128</sup>

As MacFarlane seems to have taken responsibility for the papers, it makes sense that Carmichael had sent this suggestion to him. She did have her own suggestions on how to improve ACG, and the running of the Mòd specifically at this time, proposing that the choirs, of which she was often a member, received more detailed feedback following the competitions to help them improve.<sup>129</sup> Carmichael also contributed the article, ‘Some Things Women Can Do’, to the first issue of *ADG* in 1905, which is discussed in the following chapter.<sup>130</sup>

In 1903, with The Marquis of Tullibardine (1871-1942) serving as president (1898-1904), MacFarlane was elected as the vice-president and as the convenor of another committee ‘appointed to consider the re-organisation of the society.’<sup>131</sup> Evidently, the organisation had structural as well as bureaucratic issues and an arguably unclear leadership hierarchy. MacFarlane and Mackintosh’s positions and responsibilities at the time seem on the whole to have been largely undefined and certainly underfunded, with MacFarlane later

<sup>126</sup> Murchison, ‘Story of An Comunn’, 53.

<sup>127</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 9: Undated. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>128</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 9: 14/10/03. Letter from E. Carmichael.

<sup>129</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 9: 29/10/03. Letter from E. Carmichael.

<sup>130</sup> E. Carmichael, ‘Some Things Women Can Do’, *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1905), 8-10.

<sup>131</sup> Jane Anderson, ‘Murray, John George Stewart-, eighth duke of Atholl (1871–1942)’, *ONDB* (2004) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/59480>> [Accessed: 10/09/24]. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 9: 19/10/03. Letter from J. Mackintosh. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 9: 15/10/03. J. Mackintosh.

describing the work as a ‘drudge in many ways and spending from 10/ to 20/ a year on postage stamps alone.’<sup>132</sup> Even in these early years of ACG and of the Mòd, it struggled to effectively organise itself in a cohesive and united way. As Ella Carmichael remarked, many members were ‘drones’ and the issues which ACG faced, rather than being resolved, continued and evolved into the twentieth century. The commentary in the contemporary press presented an altogether positive outlook on ACG and the Mòd in these years, though underlying tensions did occasionally surface. For example, Rev Malcolm N. Munro (Calum MacNeacail Mac an Rothaich, 1869-1934) reported in *The Celtic Review* (CR) (1904-1925) in 1904:

Within the ranks of An Comunn Gaidhealach those who do work, work well and nobly, and every year shows progress and extension.<sup>133</sup>

Munro appears to be suggesting that there were those within the organisation who, even at this early point in its development, were not contributing to the work or towards achieving the ambitions of ACG as they were set out in 1891.

Before moving on to consider the period from 1905, when MacFarlane took on the role as the first editor of ACG’s propagandist magazine, *ADG*, let us briefly outline the events which followed for John Mackintosh. He and MacFarlane continued to correspond frequently, consulting on Mòd competitions and prizes, as well as the finances in general. In 1907, when MacFarlane was embroiled in bitter dispute with ACG’s leadership surrounding the management of the Féill, Mackintosh had supported him and his allies, including both Henry Whyte and John Mackay. After a particularly ‘sickening’ meeting in June 1907, where the appointment of unfairly elected members to the Executive Council was discussed, and opposed vehemently by Mackay, MacFarlane and Whyte, Mackintosh wrote:

I can understand perfectly that it must be extremely annoying to you, who have worked up the Mod so successfully for fifteen years, to see it now drifting aimlessly into the hands of irresponsible people, who are almost sure to wreck the movement, and I can see that it is affecting your health. [...] People, who have really no interest in the cause, but are taking the work up to advertise themselves, and for other purposes, will be found out.<sup>134</sup>

Concerns raised at the meeting had also considered Mackintosh’s position, however, and it was at this point that he suggested to MacFarlane that he may resign.<sup>135</sup> He wrote:

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<sup>132</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 4.

<sup>133</sup> MacBean, ‘Rev. Malcolm Nicolson Munro’, *The Celtic Who’s Who*, 115-116. Death recorded in 1934 in Muckairn, Argyll: ‘Malcolm Nicolson Munro’ *Scotland’s People* [Ref: 529/3] [Report generated on 15/18/24]. Malcolm N. Munro, ‘An Comunn Gaidhealach’, *CR*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1904), 189.

<sup>134</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 21/06/07. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>135</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 19/08/07. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

My impression is we will now (like the Inverness Gaelic Society) be domineered by those who know no Gaelic and have no interest in it.<sup>136</sup>

Evidently, his frustrations with the GSI, expressed as early as 1897, had not dissipated in the intervening decade.<sup>137</sup> The operations of this Society have been outwith the scope of this present study, though a similar investigation of its own membership and operations would be advantageous to the field and our understanding of the language movement at this time. MacFarlane advised that Mackintosh should resign, which he did in August of 1907.<sup>138</sup> Kate Fraser and William Cameron, amongst others, wrote to MacFarlane at the time expressing their support for Mackintosh and hoping that he would be re-appointed.<sup>139</sup> An Executive meeting then took place in November to consider his replacement and in February of 1908, Thomas. D. MacDonald (Tómas Domhnall MacDhòmhnuill, b.1864) was installed as organising secretary, while Mackintosh was appointed as Treasurer.<sup>140</sup> Evidently, Mackintosh decided that he would be better to remain inside the organisation than to be outside of it. MacFarlane had himself resigned from the Executive Council during these debates, alongside Henry Whyte and John Mackay. Mackintosh had advised caution, however, perhaps contemplating his own future in the organisation:

I quite agree with what you say as to the complications in the Comunn, but I question very much the wisdom of your clearing out of it. Although things are far from what you would like them to be, still I think that you can do a lot of good in the Council, and I think it would be a great mistake for you to sever your connection with the cause, at least for some time. It seems absurd for me to advise you [...] my advice would still be patience.<sup>141</sup>

Although deciding to resign in 1907, MacFarlane did re-join the Executive as a representative of the Greenock branch of ACG in April 1907, though this was short-lived.<sup>142</sup> Mackintosh became the factor and law agent to the Féill in July 1908, and remained in this more defined and stable position until at least 1921.<sup>143</sup> The secretaryship remained a contentious role for ACG, with Henry Whyte himself applying unsuccessfully in 1911. After

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 4: 18/08/97. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>138</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 28/08/07. Letter from J. Mackintosh. He tendered resignation on 27/8/07.

<sup>139</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 13/11/07. Letter from K. Fraser and NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 10/12/07. Letter from W. Cameron.

<sup>140</sup> 'Meeting of the Executive', *ADG*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1907), 41-42. L. MacBean, 'Thomas Donald MacDonald', *The Celtic Who's Who* (1921), 90-91. 'Mr. T. D. MacDonald, Appin', *ADG*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1907), 45-46. 'An Comunn Gaidhealach', *ADG*, Vol. 3, No. 7 (1908), 152.

<sup>141</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 48: 26/11/07. Letter from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>142</sup> 'An Comunn Gaidhealach: Special Executive Meeting', *Oban Times* (06/04/07), 5. MacFarlane took his seat as the representative for Greenock and was 'heartily welcomed.'

<sup>143</sup> 'An Comunn Gaidhealach Executive Meeting', *ADG*, Vol. 3, No. 10 (1908), 188. Mackintosh reported income from the Féill was £6,964 8s. 6d. and that £4650 had already been invested. MacBean, 'John Mackintosh', 102.

MacFarlane's own resignation, and the establishment of his relationship with Ruairidh Erskine in the following years, he and those closest to him largely operated outside of ACG and were altogether disparaging about Whyte's continued presence within it. Malcolm C. MacLeod (Calum MacLeòid, 1872-1954), Eneas Mackay (Aonghas Mac Aoidh, 1860-1922) and Erskine all expressed their dislike for the proposal of Whyte as its secretary.<sup>144</sup> Erskine went so far as to say of him: 'Tha e lag [...] nach eil esan cho duineil seasmhach sa chuir agus a tha e gabhail air fein a bhi, agus a tha moran a' saoilsinn.'<sup>145</sup> (*He is weak [...] he is not as manly reliable as he pretends to be, and that many think*). Fortunately for positive relations, in June 1911, Whyte was ruled out of the running by ACG, writing to MacFarlane: 'You have the right to say "served you right – did I not warn you."'<sup>146</sup>

## Conclusion

The early period in ACG leading up to 1905 was crucial in establishing its operations and activities following its inception in 1891. The Mòd ran successfully from 1892 until the onset of the First World War caused the event to be suspended between 1914 and 1918. Resuming in 1919, it continued until the Second World War, which prevented it going ahead between 1939 until 1946, when it returned.<sup>147</sup> Taking a broadly chronological approach, this discussion has outlined some of the key operational issues which ACG and its leadership faced, with its finances, competition prize funding, the printing of the literary papers, allocation of judges and the expenses incurred from its entrants and their choirs, all featuring as pertinent issues for its organisers. The presence of English, too, was debated frequently and MacFarlane's early warnings to ACG that its business should be conducted in Gaelic, and that it should frame its constitution and rules similarly, were not heeded. This remained the case when MacFarlane delivered his lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal in 1927.<sup>148</sup> He explained then that the task of translating the constitution had been given to Ella and Eoghan Carmichael (1878-1928) sometime between 1905 and 1907, though the two had not

<sup>144</sup> Thomson, 'MacLeod, Malcolm Chisolm', *Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, 183. Elspeth King and Stuart J. Campbell, *The Story of Eneas Mackay, Stirling* (Stirling, 2008).

NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 04/05/11. Letter from M. C. MacLeod and NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 12/06/11. Letter from E. Mackay.

<sup>145</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 03/05/11. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>146</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 22/06/11. Postcard from H. Whyte.

<sup>147</sup> Am Mòd Nàiseanta – Ionadan gach Bliadhna/ The National Mòd – Centres every year', *Sabhal Mòr Ostaig* < <https://www3.smo.uhi.ac.uk/gaidhlig/mod/> > [Accessed: 12/06.24].

<sup>148</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 3.

completed the task, despite yet another committee being formed to consider the project.<sup>149</sup> The two had appealed to MacFarlane for assistance, though he had replied that he had too much work already on his shoulders.<sup>150</sup> Of the Carmichaels, he wrote: ‘It was felt by all that they were about the last people in the association that had any intention of being useful in the work, but would be first to take credit for it.’<sup>151</sup> He went on to criticise Ella Carmichael in particular, as she was later elected a vice-president of ACG: ‘for services unrendered apparently.’<sup>152</sup> These comments are useful in contrast to the otherwise positive and collaborative relationship that she and MacFarlane seem to have had in the subsequent years.

The tensions within ACG in these early years, and the disorderly and ill-defined management of its affairs, were evident from the beginning. Few had a better insight into the workings of the organisation than MacFarlane, one of its most vocal critics. When considering the complexities of the Gaelic language movement as the twentieth century unfolded, it is vital that we understand the obstacles ACG faced from the outset. In doing so, this discussion has provided a unique insight into its early operations and business activities, drawing from the expansive archive of MacFarlane’s correspondence. This chapter has detailed the central role which MacFarlane played in not only the establishment and operations of ACG, but also as a person of influence in its decision making and therefore in the mapping of its evolution. MacFarlane’s papers, alongside reports in the contemporary press, have revealed in great detail the immense amount of work and effort which he and those around him undertook in service of the organisation at this time, as well as the complex dynamics which existed in the personal and professional relationships of these networks. These resources are fundamental as we re-frame our understanding of MacFarlane as one of the Gaelic language movement’s leading figures.

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<sup>149</sup> ‘Alexander Carmichael (1832-1912)’, *Our History*, University of Edinburgh (2014) <[https://ourhistory.is.ed.ac.uk/index.php/Alexander\\_Carmichael\\_\(1832-1912\)](https://ourhistory.is.ed.ac.uk/index.php/Alexander_Carmichael_(1832-1912))> [Accessed: 12/04/24]. There were two other Carmichael brothers, Alexander (1868-1941) and Iain (1878-1928), though Eoghan corresponds with MacFarlane on ACG business, and so it is likely him that MacFarlane is referring to: NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 133. 06/04. Letter from Eoghan Carmichael. He is listed as a member of the Executive Council of ACG in 1906: ‘An Comunn Gaidhealach’, *ADG*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (1906), 14. He was later reported to have assisted Ella in founding Home Industries in the Highlands: ‘The Late Mrs Watson, Edinburgh’, *An Gaidheal*, Vol. 24 (1929), 50.

<sup>150</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 4.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

## Chapter Two: *An Deo Ghréine*

### Introduction

The study has shed new light and insight into the early workings of An Comunn Gàidhealach (ACG) and argued using substantial archival evidence that Malcolm MacFarlane's held a central and leading position within the organisation, and the Gaelic language movement more broadly. This chapter will continue with the chronological approach taken to this point and incorporate fresh archival evidence from MacFarlane's personal and professional correspondences. It continues with the overall intention to re-position MacFarlane at the centre of his own networks and as a leading figure in the Gaelic language movement at this time. The period under discussion here is key to unlocking the necessary detail of MacFarlane's life and association with ACG as it re-defines our perception of him. It also provides much needed detail on the social, political and literary contexts of the language movement and is therefore a substantial contribution to our understanding of it as a whole, and in the detail provided concerning many of its central members.

The discussion initially focusses on the establishment of ACG's propagandist magazine, *An Deo-Ghréine* (ADG), as the debates and tensions which arose in this period ultimately led to MacFarlane's complaints against, and eventual resignation from, ACG. The magazine was initially proposed in 1904 and a publication committee was established to carry out the work of bringing it to life, with MacFarlane installed as its convenor and intended first editor.<sup>1</sup> *The Celtic Review* (CR), following the release of its first issue, applauded MacFarlane's appointment:

No one with any knowledge of the working of the Comunn will disagree with us when we say that, during the years of the existence of the society, no member has done so much steady and solid work for it as Mr. Macfarlane.<sup>2</sup>

ADG was published from 1905 until 1922, before being renamed *An Gaidheal*, which itself circulated until 1966. MacFarlane was the editor from October 1905 until the appointment of the Rev. Malcolm MacLennan in his place from March 1906.<sup>3</sup> MacLennan oversaw three

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson, *History of An Comunn Gàidhealach*, 25.

<sup>2</sup> A. MacDonald, 'An Deo-Ghréine', CR, Vol. 2, No. 6 (1905), 188.

<sup>3</sup> 'Notice', ADG, Vol. 1, No. 6 (1906), 104.



volumes of the magazine, ending his own tenure in 1908.<sup>4</sup> The magazine published in both Gaelic and English, featuring opinion pieces; Gaelic cultural news and event listings; historical pieces; as well as poetry, prose and song. It had as its *raison d'être* to be a 'propagandist organ on behalf of the language, literature, arts and industries of the Gael.'<sup>5</sup> These ambitions fell comfortably with the cultural remit of ACG to promote the Gaelic language, encourage Gaelic education, and to work for the Home Industries of the Gael.<sup>6</sup> Several of the key figures mentioned in the discussion so far also became involved with the production and content of the magazine, as well as with the many incidents and arguments which it invariably created within these networks.

The chapter begins by examining ADG's contemporary literary field and points to similarly aligned magazines and periodicals, briefly highlighting the contributions which MacFarlane also made to these publications. As noted above, there is a comprehensive list of MacFarlane's known printed works given in Appendix 1, which is a highly valuable resource for future research in the field. The chapter then goes on to discuss a range of important and illuminating articles and other literary and musical contributions to *ADG* under MacFarlane's editorship. These include his own editorials as, read alongside the correspondence which underpin this study, they are highly revealing of his own perspectives and outlook on the progress of the language movement at the time. It will examine, for example, a selection of the comparisons which he made to the successes of the language movement in Ireland, as he viewed them. The discussion will then examine the articles and materials which MacFarlane chose to include in the magazine, including those from Ella Carmichael and Katherine Whyte Grant. These serve to demonstrate the tone and scope of the publication as MacFarlane envisaged it. Throughout, our understanding of the complexities and points of tension within the literary sphere will be expanded by incorporating extant correspondence from MacFarlane's papers. The discussion will then turn to the events surrounding MacFarlane's resignation as the editor of *ADG* and will reflect upon the different editorial priorities and ambitions of the newly installed Malcolm MacLennan. With this developed understanding of the period, examined through the lens of *ADG* and its evolution, the discussion will examine the circumstances of MacFarlane's penultimate, and then final, resignation from ACG.

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<sup>4</sup> By December 1908, submissions were to be sent to an unspecified 'Editor', whereas until this point, the notices had given either MacFarlane or MacLennan's details. The Publication Committee's convenor is recorded in the same issue to be, as of 23/09/08, Lieut. E. E. Henderson. MacLennan remains a member of the committee: *ADG*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1908), 28-29.

<sup>5</sup> MacFarlane, 'Preface', *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1905).

<sup>6</sup> *To Highlanders at Home and Abroad: Manifesto*.

## The Literary Landscape

*ADG* was first published in October 1905 by Eneas Mackay of Stirling, already a close collaborator and frequent correspondent of MacFarlane's and within the networks of ACG, who printed a number of Gaelic texts.<sup>7</sup> Amongst other works, Mackay was responsible for the publication of MacFarlane's school readers, *An Treòraiche* (The Leader, 1903) and *Dàin Thaghte* (Selected Poems, 1906); edited prose collections such as *Uirsgeulan Gàidhealach* (Highland Legends, 1905); and much of John MacCormick's work, including *Gu 'n d' thug i Spéis do 'n Àrmunn* (She gave her love to the Soldier, 1908) and *Seanchaidh na h-Airigh* (The Storyteller of the Shieling, 1911), which MacFarlane had also edited. Another prominent publisher in the early years of ACG, and to the Gaelic language movement more broadly, had been Archibald Sinclair who ran *The Celtic Press* in Glasgow. Sinclair was responsible for the collection *An t-Oranaiche* (The Gaelic Songster, 1879) and works such as Henry Whyte's *The Celtic Garland* (1881). Sinclair was also one of the publishers responsible for printing *The Celtic Monthly* at its outset, which MacFarlane wrote extensively in, including his regular musical column, 'Our Musical Page', his Gaelic play, *Am Mosgladh Mòr*, and numerous other articles and biographies.<sup>8</sup>

Eneas Mackay published the contemporary Gaelic magazine, *Guth na Bliadhna* (*GNB*), edited by Ruairidh Erskine. This was a bi-lingual and ambitious quarterly, featuring a range of editorials, scholarly papers and contemporary journalism relevant to its Highland and Gaelic readership. For example, it included the work of Angus Henderson (Aonghas MacEanraig, 'A. M. E', 1866-1937), a pioneering Gaelic journalist and longstanding associate and collaborator of both Erskine and MacFarlane.<sup>9</sup> MacFarlane's own contributions to *GNB* included two series on Gaelic poetry: 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh' and 'Bàrdachd nam Bàn' (Women's Poetry, 1913-1914).<sup>10</sup> He also wrote for a range of Erskine's other periodicals, including *An Sgeulaiche* (AS) (The Storyteller, 1909-1911),

<sup>7</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 11: Undated draft of contract between MacFarlane and Mackay. Cost for printing was: '500 copies at 16 pages: £8 3/; 1000 16 pages: £9 10/; every 500 over 1000 £1 7/; Gaelic matter 1/ extra per page.' Price per copy was three pence, or four with postage. True copy of the contract was signed 05/09/05.

<sup>8</sup> *CM* was also published by various houses in Edinburgh, Inverness and Oban: J. Mackay (Ed.), *The Celtic Monthly*, Vol. 1 (Glasgow, 1893). Sinclair published the *CM* until his death in 1899. Contributions to 'Our Musical Page' included his well-known composition 'Mo Dhachaidh': Vol. 1, No. 3 (1893), 71; a prize-winning composition 'Na Gàidheil an Guaillibh a Chèile' ('Highlanders Shoulder to Shoulder'), which won the Fraser Mackintosh prize of £20: *CM*, Vol. 2, No. 10 (1894), 192; and 'A Bhean Agam Fhin' ('My own Wife'), which appeared in its final issue: *CM*, Vol. 20, No. 12 (1912), 239.

<sup>9</sup> For recent research on Henderson, including his writings: MacAilpein, *Pròiseact AME*, <<https://ceardach.blog/>> [Accessed: 16/04/23].

<sup>10</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd nam Bàn', *Guth na Bliadhna*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (1913), 41-355; No. 4 (1913), 433-452; and Vol. 11, No. 1 (1914), 17-35.

where he translated medieval Irish works edited by the German scholar Kuno Meyer (1858-1919) into Scottish Gaelic: ‘An Rìgh 's an Dithreabhach’ (‘The King and the Hermit’) and ‘Liadain agus Cuirithir’ (‘Liadain and Curithir’).<sup>11</sup> He also wrote extensively for Erskine’s Gaelic newspaper, *Alba* (1908-1909), with articles including a series on ‘Creachadh nan Èiphiteach’ (‘The Devastation of the Egyptians’, 1908) and new Gaelic vocabulary lists, including “‘Politics” anns a’ Ghàidhlig’ (‘Politics” in the Gaelic language, 1908).<sup>12</sup>

Another contemporary publication to *ADG* was *The Celtic Review* (*CR*) edited by Ella Carmichael and published quarterly. It was written predominantly in English and was academic in focus, though it had committed to the reporting of issues which touched on the Gaelic speaking people, their language and culture. This excluded politics or religion, which the editors deemed would be out of place.<sup>13</sup> MacFarlane’s two articles were his own arrangements of the Ossianic Gaelic song, ‘Garabh agus na Mnathan’ (‘Garabh and the Wives’, 1904), part of the wider ballad tradition of Fionn and the Féinn; and ‘O, 's tu 's gura tu th' air m' aire’ (‘You are always on my mind’, 1905), a traditional melody from Eriskay which Father Allan MacDonald (1859-1905) had provided the Gaelic words for.<sup>14</sup> Carmichael likewise contributed to *ADG*, with the English article ‘Some Things Women Can Do.’<sup>15</sup> The piece was directed towards already Gaelic-speaking women, as well as those who had Gaelic-speaking families or who lived in a Gaelic speaking environment. Carmichael had initially protested the traditional model of having a dedicated space for women in comparable publications at the time, though MacFarlane does not appear to have suggested following this format and the article appears without the categorisation. The

<sup>11</sup> Aidan Breen, ‘Meyer, Kuno’, *DIB* (2022) <<https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.005810.v1>> [Accessed: 12/06/23]. MacFarlane, ‘An Rìgh 's an Dithreabhach’, *AS*, Vol. 2 (1910), 16-23; and ‘Liadain agus Cuirithir’, *AS*, Vol. 2 (1910), 125-132.

<sup>12</sup> MacFarlane, ‘Creachadh nan Èiphiteach’, *Alba* (1908), 03/05/08, 09/05/08, 06/06/08, 27/06/08 and 11/07/08. “‘Politics” anns a’ Ghàidhlig’, *Alba* (1908), 24/10/08. Poncarová has published the contents of *Alba* and other resources for the *Project Erskine*.

<sup>13</sup> Carmichael, ‘Introductory’, *CR*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1905), 1

<sup>14</sup> MacFarlane, ‘Garabh agus na Mnathan’, *The Celtic Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1904), 36-47; and ‘O, 's tu 's gura tu th' air m' aire’, Vol. 2, No. 6 (1905), 112. John Lorne Campbell, *Father Allan MacDonald of Eriskay* (Edinburgh, 1954). There are a few mentions of Father Allen in MacFarlane’s correspondence, though none directly between the two. For example, Carmichael reported that she had sent three ladies to Eriskay to collect music and that “‘Fr Allen” who is a dear old friend of mine helped them.’ [NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 11: 06/09/05]. This is likely to have been Amy Murray (b. 1865) and her acquaintances. Murray went on to write *Father Allan’s Island* (Edinburgh, 1920); Marjory Kennedy-Fraser (1857-1930) claimed that she had taken some of the material for her *Songs of the Hebrides* (London, 1909) down in Eriskay, which Henry Whyte declared a fraud: “‘You see how these shams go to work – it is not necessary to go to Eriska to steal melodies. You may yet find if she publishes many that your MS collection and others have been “milked”. She is a ‘dreaded fraud’ – possible some of the tunes from The Mod may appear in Celtia or The Celtic Review!’ and: ‘Mrs Fraser seems a bit of a quack.’ [NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 27/09/07 and 28/09/07. Letters from H. Whyte].

<sup>15</sup> E. Carmichael, ‘Some Things Women Can Do’, *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1905), 8-10.

exchange between Carmichael and MacFarlane on this topic is discussed in greater detail by Scott in her work on women in the Gaelic movement.<sup>16</sup>

Scott also observed that Carmichael had been ‘an important mediator between a number of differently focussed networks both inside and outside the Gaelic movement.’<sup>17</sup> This refers to her association with several prominent Gaelic scholars, including Donald MacKinnon, who supervised the *CR* in its early stages, and her husband from 1906, William J. Watson.<sup>18</sup> Alongside these personal and professional connections, Carmichael contributed practically to the Gaelic language and cultural movement, demonstrated in her work for ACG and publications such as the *CR* and *ADG*; and in her early established relationships with key female figures in the Irish language movement, including Agnes O’ Farrelly (1874–1951) of the Gaelic League (GL).<sup>19</sup> Balancing these, Carmichael was also central to the vibrant culture of Celtic Revival Edinburgh, where theatre and romanticisation of the Gael and the Gàidhealtachd were very much in vogue.<sup>20</sup>

It is worth mentioning here that similarly positioned publications were operating in Ireland at the time of *ADG*’s inception, including *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* (The Gaelic Journal, 1882-1909), initially founded by The Gaelic Union (Aondacht na Gaedhilge, est. 1880) before being taken on as an organ of the GL from 1893. *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* was edited by Eoin MacNeill in 1894, with important contributors to the Irish language movement, Joseph H. Lloyd (Seosamh Laoide, ‘Mac Tíre na Páirce’, 1865-1939) and Tadhg Ó Donnchadhna (‘Torna’, 1874-1949), also editing the paper in the early twentieth century.<sup>21</sup> Arguably the counterpart to *ADG* in Ireland at the time was *An Claidheamh Soluis* (*ACS*) (The Sword of Light, 1899-1932), which was similar also to the likes of Erskine’s *GNB* and *AS*, as they showcased a wide range of Gaelic literary genres. *ACS* was edited in its early years by Patrick Pearse, who played a central role in the Gaelic movement in Ireland, ‘evident in the hundreds of poems and stories and many dramas that were printed

<sup>16</sup> Scott, ‘With heart and voice ever devoted to the cause’, 41-42.

<sup>17</sup> Scott, ‘With heart and voice ever devoted to the cause’, 109.

<sup>18</sup> MacKinnon is credited as the Consulting Editor of the *CR* from: Vol. 1 (1904) until Vol. 9 (1913).

<sup>19</sup> Bernard Maier, ‘The female quest for the Celtic tongues of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales’, *Women in the History of Linguistics*, Wendy Ayres-Bennett and Helena Sanson, eds, (Oxford, 2020), 134. Scott discusses Carmichael’s early involvement with Mòd competitions: Scott, ‘With heart and voice ever devoted to the cause’, 32; she was a member of the Executive Council of ACG from 1903: An Comunn Gàidhealach: Executive Meeting’, *OT*, (07/11/03); and later elected a vice-president. Marie Coleman, ‘O’ Farrelly, Agnes Winifred’, *DIB* (2021) <<https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.006741.v1>> [Accessed: 13/09/22]. On Irish associations: *Ibid.*, Scott, 33-34.

<sup>20</sup> Kate Mathis, ‘Medieval Gaelic literature in the Scottish Celtic Revival: The case of Deirdre in the work of Alice C. Macdonell’, *Women’s History Scotland* (2018) <<https://womenshistoryscotland.org/2018/10/02/kate-mathis-bursary-winner-report-medieval-gaelic-literature-in-the-scottish-celtic-revival/>> [Accessed: 08/09/22].

<sup>21</sup> Diarmuid Breathnach and Máire Ní Murchú, ‘Laoide, Seosamh’, *Ainm*, <<https://www.ainm.ie/Bio.aspx?ID=25>> [Accessed: 26/03/24]. Paul Rouse, ‘Ó Donnchadhna, Tadhg’, *DIB*, (2009) <<https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.006347.v1>> [Accessed: 12/02/24]. O’ Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival*, 8.

throughout its publication.’<sup>22</sup> MacFarlane subscribed to the magazine up until at least 1917. In 1915, he had been reprimanded by the then manager, Sean Ua Concubhair, for not having kept up to date with his fees.<sup>23</sup> He also contributed to its correspondence pages, including one lengthy and heated exchange with Seágan Mac A’ Bháird (1842-1914) on the origins of Scottish Gaelic and the issue of eclipses in 1904.<sup>24</sup>

MacFarlane took inspiration from these Irish publications and the leading figures of the Irish language movement, evidenced in his own editorials during his short tenure as editor of *ADG*. Clearly MacFarlane intended the magazine to operate along similar propagandist lines as he sought to instil a renewed energy into the language movement in Scotland by contrasting it to the successes of its Irish counterparts. As *ADG* evolved, and the editorial control changed hands, the ethos and direction of the magazine shifted, and it grew further from its original objectives as MacFarlane had set them out in 1905.

### Establishment

Several key figures in the language movement sent MacFarlane notes of encouragement as the news spread in 1905 of *ADG*’s establishment. For example, from William Gillies (Liam MacGill’Iosa, 1865-1932), who wrote: ‘I wish every success to the new venture, may it shine like ‘An Claidheamh Soluis.’’<sup>25</sup> Gillies was a highly prominent London Gael, Gaelic writer, member of the Gaelic Society of London (GSL), and went on to establish the Scots National League (SNL) (Comunn nan Albannach) with Erskine in 1909.<sup>26</sup> Although an infrequent correspondent of MacFarlane’s in the early years of the twentieth century, Gillies did enter into a very public debate with him in the *OT* in 1907, surrounding the business conduct of ACG and the burning of a Gaelic play at a GSL event.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Regina Uí Chollatáin, ‘Literature Reviews in An Claidheamh Soluis: A Journalistic Insight to Irish Literary Reviews in the Revival Period 1899-1932’, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, Vol. 23 (2003), 284-298 (p. 286).

<sup>23</sup> This could be: Ní Murchú, ‘Seán Seosamh Ó Conchubhair (1877-1927)’, *Ainm* < <https://www.ainm.ie/Bio.aspx?ID=189>> [Accessed: 19/10/24]. He had links to the GL in Limerick: NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 21: 27/11/15. Letter from S. Ua Concubair. Another correspondence: Fol. 23: 29/08/17. Letter from office of ACS.

<sup>24</sup> Ní Murchú, ‘Seán Mac A’ Bháird’, *Ainm*, < <https://www.ainm.ie/Bio.aspx?ID=266>> [Accessed: 10/01/2024]. Debates taking place in ACS from March to April, 1904: ‘Irish and Scottish Gaelic’, culminating in Colum Mac Phartholain, ‘Irish and Scottish Gaelic’, *ACS*, (21/05/04), 5.

<sup>25</sup> William Gillies, ‘Liam MacGill’Iosa: A Friend of the Gael’, *TGSI*, Vol. 56 (1991), 503-533. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 11: 03/09/05. Letter from W. Gillies.

<sup>26</sup> Cairns, *No Language!*, 47. Evidence from MacFarlane’s papers suggest an earlier formation of the SNL in 1909, outlined in chapter three.

<sup>27</sup> William Gillies, ‘An Comunn Gaidhealach’, *OT*, 22/01/07, 3. MacFarlane replied: 11/02/07, 3. It had been Gillies’ own *Ceithir Mallachdan nan Gaidheal* (The Four Curses of the Gael), which was burned, and not, as MacFarlane believed, *Dùsgadh na Féinne*.

A circular had been distributed amongst the Gaelic and Highland literary networks prior to *ADG*'s foundation, outlining its ambitions, and proposing the establishment of a fund to support it.<sup>28</sup> In the lecture given in Appendix 2, which MacFarlane had delivered to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal in 1927, he described the financial prospects and position of the magazine when it had been established:

I did not favour the proposal as I thought we would land ourselves in debt before long. And I would only give the idea my support if a fund were established to meet the expenses. That was done and I was myself the subscriber of the largest sum although I believe I had the smallest purse of the lot among whom were really rich men. I was, besides that, appointed Editor of the magazine at the big salary of nothing.<sup>29</sup>

Despite his reservations, MacFarlane carried out an extensive amount of work for the magazine and was therefore invaluable as one of its primary founders. Nevertheless, similar misgivings had also been expressed from the wider membership of ACG. Kenneth Campbell (1862-1929), a member of the Executive Council and an advocate for Gaelic education, had written to MacFarlane of 'the strong conviction I hold that we have launched the magazine on wrong lines.'<sup>30</sup> Campbell believed that the magazine should have been priced as a penny paper, rather than the three pence which had been decided on. Perhaps the higher price had been implemented to mitigate the potential debt which MacFarlane had warned of. As with Gillies, Campbell and MacFarlane also went on to publicly disagree in the *OT*, this time on the election of members to the Executive Council and the direction of the Gaelic movement more broadly.<sup>31</sup> In 1905, however, Campbell had been supportive of MacFarlane's editorship and offered to do whatever he could to help it along the right path.<sup>32</sup>

At the time of *ADG*'s institution, *Guth na Bliadhna* (*GNB*) was already publishing substantially in Gaelic and on topical issues to its largely Gaelic-speaking readership.<sup>33</sup> *GNB* was a quarterly publication, giving its editor, Ruairaidh Erskine, more time to curate the pieces and, crucially, he was financially supporting it himself. MacFarlane had less time, no salary, and substantially fewer financial resources or support from ACG as he set out to

<sup>28</sup> Another fund was set up in July 1906: 'Magazine Fund', *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 10 (1906), 171. In general, the magazine was not financially successful. The accounts up to 31/05/09 showed a loss of £8 2s and 4d: 'Executive Meeting', *ADG*, Vol. 5, No. 11 (1910), 170.

<sup>29</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 8.

<sup>30</sup> 'Our Portrait Gallery: Dr Kenneth Campbell, Oban', *ADG*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1907), 43-44. 'The Late Dr Kenneth Campbell, Oban', *An Gaidheal*, Vol. 24 (1929), 105-106. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 11: 26/08/05. Letter from K. Campbell.

<sup>31</sup> Campbell, 'Mr John Mackay and An Comunn Gàidhealach', *OT*, 11/04/07, 4.

<sup>32</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 11: 26/08/05. Letter from K. Campbell.

<sup>33</sup> For example, the journalism of A. Henderson: Tòmas MacAilpein, *Pròiseact AME*.

establish the magazine.<sup>34</sup> The lack of Gaelic material in the *CR* had angered MacFarlane, complaining to the editor, Carmichael, who then replied:

I am as strong on Gaelic as most people but there are many good people interested who through no fault of theirs do not know the language, or not enough of it, and if I overdo the Gaelic the mag. will never pay its expenses which it is desirable it should do in a year or two!<sup>35</sup>

A substantial part of the problem in establishing a predominantly Gaelic language based publication at the time, evidently, was that its readership would first of all have to be literate in Gaelic, and second of all, have the disposable income to spend.<sup>36</sup> These difficulties were well known to MacFarlane and other editors of the time: John Mackay of the *CM* wrote that ‘despite the unfortunate fate of some of our predecessors we are not discouraged’<sup>37</sup> Of *ADG*, MacFarlane wrote that: ‘its promoters were neither ignorant of the past history of similar undertakings in Scotland and elsewhere, nor were they unacquainted with the difficulties to be met with.’<sup>38</sup> In the atmosphere of the literary circles of Glasgow and Edinburgh at the turn of the twentieth-century, and without the comparative funding available in Ireland from government and public institutions, English was undoubtedly a more reliable income generator for these types of publications.<sup>39</sup> As Carmichael noted, copies had to be sold for the publication to be viable, and for this it was necessary to appeal to the broadest possible readership base. MacFarlane’s reservations about the financing of *ADG* prior to its establishment were then justified, and it is evident that fundraising would have to play a vital role in its potential successes and longevity.

The fund received considerable support, although as noted above MacFarlane was still required to take on the role of editor with no pay. Ronald MacInnes (Raonall MacAonghais), another London Gael, sent five pounds and three shillings to the fund, asking if a list of subscribers could appear in its first issue.<sup>40</sup> Thanks were given to the magazine’s supporters in the preface to the first published volume, though no list of subscribers was

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<sup>34</sup> For example, exchanges with Eneas Mackay on the outstanding balances of the magazine not having being paid by ACG at the time of his resignation from the Publication Committee in March 1906. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 45.

<sup>35</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 38: Undated postcard from E. Carmichael.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Newton, ‘Tradition and Innovation in Twentieth Century Scottish Gaelic Literature’, *The Edinburgh companion to Scottish traditional literatures*, (2013), 123-125.

<sup>37</sup> Mackay, ‘Our Aims and Objects’, *CM*, (1892), 8

<sup>38</sup> MacFarlane, ‘Preface’, *ADG*, Vol. 1 (1905). See also: Kidd, ‘The Scottish Gaelic Press’, 337- 356.

<sup>39</sup> Newton, ‘Tradition and Innovation’, 125.

<sup>40</sup> Member of the Gaelic Society of London in 1905 (NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 11: 22/04/05) and Cèilidh Secretary of the Scots National League by 1911 (NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 12/11/11). MacInnes looked to MacFarlane for leadership of the Scottish national movement at this time. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 11: 05/09/05. Letter from R. MacInnes. R. MacInnes may have remained active in the London Gaelic Society at least until 1933, where someone by that name presented a trophy at the London Mòd: ‘Mod Bliadhnail Comunn Gàidhlig Lunnain’, *An Gaidheal*, Vol. 28 (1932-1933), 139.



included.<sup>41</sup> MacInnes also suggested that the fund could appeal to the wider Gaelic sphere, highlighting connections with Cape Breton and the readership of the Gaelic newspaper, *Mac-Talla* (1892-1904), edited by Jonathan G. McKinnon (1869-1944).<sup>42</sup> MacInnes rounded off his letter of support with an illuminating comment on the deficiencies of the language movement and the position of leadership which MacFarlane invariably held within it, able to direct its course:

Doubtless you intend devoting part of the mag to instructing the Gael regarding the aims and objects of the Gaelic movement. This will have to be done constantly as you know that 99% of our rank and file have not the foggiest notion of the path we wish them to travel. [...] Re. name of the paper why not at once identify it with our race and call it ‘An Gaidheal’?<sup>43</sup>

MacFarlane had certainly hoped to influence the direction of the Gaelic language movement in his role as the editor of ADG, evident in his first editorial, which will be examined below. The name of the magazine was another contentious issue. MacInnes’ suggestion to name it *An Gaidheal* (The Gael) was reasonable as a Gaelic newspaper by that title had previously existed from 1871-1877.<sup>44</sup> It would also become the new title of ADG in 1923, published until 1967.<sup>45</sup> However, MacFarlane had deliberately chosen the title and its spelling ‘An Deo-Ghréine’ as it referenced Fionn’s banner in the Fenian ballad tradition, which he explained in the first issue:

To quote from the ballads referred to: “Thog sinn an Deo-ghréine ri crann” – “We have raised the Sunbeam aloft.” And there it waves, inviting the friends of the Gaelic Language Cause to rally around it and carry it forward to success.<sup>46</sup>

This was the kind of propaganda for the language movement which MacInnes had in mind, aligning the fate of the Gaelic language with the Fenian rallying cries of Gaelic tradition. These were popularly called upon themes in the literature of the language movement, and in the Celtic Revival more broadly, as the image of the sleeping Gael, to be roused in defence of their language and race, was used often and in a variety of formats.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, the

<sup>41</sup> ‘Preface’, ADG, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1905). Lists of new ordinary and life members of ACG were occasionally included, as were donations to the Mòd Fund: ‘New Life Members’ and ‘Donations to Mod Fund’, ADG, Vol. 5, No. 12 (1910), 190-191.

<sup>42</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 11: 12/10/05. Letter from R. MacInnes. ‘Mac-Talla’, DASG <<https://dasg.ac.uk/corpus/textmeta.php?text=81008>> [Accessed: 18/03/24]. See: Michael Newton, ‘Gaelic Organisations in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Ontario’, *The International Review of Scottish Studies*, Vol. 41 (2016).

<sup>43</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 11: 22/4/05. Letter from R. MacInnes.

<sup>44</sup> See: Kidd, *Còmhraidhean nan Cnoc: The Nineteenth-Century Gaelic Prose Dialogue*, (2016).

<sup>45</sup> *An Gaidheal (Formerly an Deo Gréine): The Monthly Magazine of An Comunn Gaidhealach*, Vol. 19 (1923).

<sup>46</sup> MacFarlane, ‘Sinn Fein-Ourselves’, ADG, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1905), 2.

<sup>47</sup> See: Sim Innes and Kate Mathis, ‘Gaelic tradition and the Celtic Revival’, 107-110.



lenition of the word ‘Ghréine’, where an ‘h’ is inserted following the first letter of the noun, was contested, as some believed that the true form of the phrase was ‘An Deo-Gréine’. When MacLennan took over the editorship, he had initially defended the original spelling, though by November 1906 it had been changed to the unlenited form.<sup>48</sup> MacFarlane had been offended by the implication that his spelling was incorrect, citing a long list of his sources in yet another heated letter in the *OT*. His sources included Alexander MacBain’s (1855-1907) *Reliquiae Celticae* (1892) and Campbell’s *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*.<sup>49</sup> MacFarlane wrote that the change and the implicit critique of his abilities was an attack:

against Gaelic literature; and against my humble self, who am accounted, even by the opposition, to have the ability to, at least, spell Gaelic, which hardly a soul among the leading men of the Council as now constituted, can do. [...] What real title have these men and women to pose as Gaelic leaders and critics? Their title is gained by the least possible work and the greatest possible make-believe.<sup>50</sup>

Gaelic proficiency within ACG became a prominent issue within the language movement and in ACG specifically, not only highlighted by MacFarlane in his editorials, but by several other members of the movement at the time. The tone of MacFarlane’s statement conveys the sentiment which he increasingly began to adopt from 1905 onwards, as his belief in the leadership, wider membership and direction of the Gaelic language movement began to dissipate. It is clear, however, that MacFarlane was central to the establishment of *ADG* and that it was his advice to source financial support for the publication that allowed the magazine to operate, publishing in its long history a substantial amount of Gaelic literature and contributing immeasurably to Gaelic and Highland scholarship. It is therefore necessary to acknowledge MacFarlane’s work to establish *ADG*, which this discussion has done for the first time, as we develop our understanding of the Gaelic language movement at the turn of the twentieth century.

### Malcolm MacFarlane’s Editorship

This discussion will demonstrate the ways in which MacFarlane set out to achieve his ambitions for the Gaelic language movement as the editor of *An Deo-Ghréine* (*ADG*). The first issue was printed in October 1905 and, as MacFarlane was the editor for the first five

<sup>48</sup> MacLennan defends original spelling: MacLennan, ‘Queries and Answers’, *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (1906), 104. The first issue with the new spelling was: *An Deo-Gréine*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1906-1907), 21.

<sup>49</sup> Ronald Black, ‘Alexander MacBain’, *ODNB*, (2004) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34670>> [Accessed: 22/03/21].

<sup>50</sup> MacFarlane, ‘An Comunn Gaidhealach’, *OT*, (19/01/07), 3.

issues only, there were a surprisingly large number of editorials, articles and notices written by him and advocating his own perspectives on the Gaelic language movement. Twelve articles altogether have now been attributed to him, though there are dozens of notices and other editorial matter which he also likely authored. This was a substantial effort given the limited time he was in post. The magazine itself is a valuable resource to the field, and there has been recent research by Martina Reiterová on its ideological discourses, dealing in particular with Celtic identity and pan-Celticism at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>51</sup> In this study, we will look at MacFarlane's unique perspective on the development of the Gaelic language movement and discuss the contexts and consequences which the prevalent comparisons to the Irish language movement presented. It will also consider the different manifestations of Gaelic, Scottish and Irish identity at the time, as the cultural and political nationalist movements converged. This will be done by examining MacFarlane's own writings in *ADG* as well as looking to his wider literary networks.

'Thog sinn an Deo-Ghréine ri crann' ('We have raised the Sunbeam aloft') was MacFarlane's first editorial, the name of which has been explained above, and which was written in Gaelic.<sup>52</sup> It was a metaphor-rich essay that firmly positioned the magazine as a propagandist vehicle for the Gaelic language movement. MacFarlane described its intentions: 's i a' tàladh sùilean ar cinnidh o amaideachd gu gliocas' (*drawing the eyes of our race from foolishness to wisdom*).<sup>53</sup> The way to attain this wisdom was to have knowledge, according to MacFarlane, of the history, art and literature of the Gàidhealtachd and the Gaelic speaking people; to mark and honour their traditions; and above all to speak, promote and preserve the Gaelic language. The following editorial piece, 'Sinn Fhèin – Ourselves', was written in English, repeating some of the explanation of the magazine's title given in the preceding piece.<sup>54</sup> It then provided an overview of the history of Gaelic in Scotland and ended with calls for optimism in the face of obstacle:

It is the wavering hesitancy of the forces behind us which tends to lower hope and slacken zeal. It is the main purpose of "An Deo-ghréine" to remove that hesitancy, and to imbue the movement which The Comunn Gaidhealach is endeavouring to lead, with the rigidity it requires to enable it to work out success.<sup>55</sup>

This was an altogether positive piece of advocacy from MacFarlane, albeit acknowledging the existence of the 'wavering hesitancy' of some of the movement's members.

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<sup>51</sup> Reiterová, 'Scottish Gaelic Movement', 94-123.

<sup>52</sup> MacFarlane, 'Thog sinn an Deo-Ghréine ri crann', *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1905), 1-2.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>54</sup> MacFarlane, 'Sinn Fein – Ourselves', *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1905), 2-3.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

Such hesitancy could be found in the reluctance of some members to promote the Gaelic language for its own sake, and their reliance on English as the means of improvement. Kenneth Campbell, noted above for his work for Gaelic education, contributed an English article for *ADG*: ‘The Educational Point of View.’<sup>56</sup> Campbell promoted the need to improve Gaelic education in the Highlands, appealing to the Scotch Education Department to continue their efforts to ensure Gaelic-speaking teachers were provided in Gaelic areas.<sup>57</sup> He also promoted technical education and industrial development, through English, as the means to create a successful bi-lingual education system for Highland and Gaelic-speaking children.<sup>58</sup> MacFarlane would have challenged this position, as he had worked vigorously in the field of word creation in order to ensure that Gaelic did have a place in the modern world. Although, it says something about his professionalism as an editor, and as a believer in rigorous debate, to have included a contrary position to his own in his own magazine. Campbell disappointed MacFarlane in other ways too, later commenting that Campbell’s Gaelic spelling was ‘atrocious’ and ‘only a blind to conceal his laziness.’<sup>59</sup> Rather than rely on English as a means of improvement in the manner advocated by Campbell, MacFarlane sought to strengthen the effectiveness of the language movement and its commitment to the Gaelic language, drawing throughout his tenure as editor on the comparative successes of the language movement in Ireland.

MacFarlane’s editorial, ‘An Comunn Gaidhealach: Sketch of its Inception and Development’, itself a very useful article on the early workings of the organisation, contrasted ACG and its leadership with the Gaelic League (GL).<sup>60</sup> He observed that there was ‘some reason for congratulation’ when considering the progress which ACG had made from the period before its inception, but that when Ireland is examined side-by-side, this progress ‘sinks into insignificance.’<sup>61</sup> This was perhaps a less inspiring observation than the rousing calls to action which the opening editorials had articulated. The factors which he believed were impacting the lack of progress in Scotland were the ‘thousand-and-one Societies working at cross purposes’; and that the Gaelic literary tradition had a more substantial basis in Ireland, with a larger number of Gaelic texts and a larger number of native speakers, who were altogether more enthusiastic and supportive of their language than those involved with the language movement in Scotland had been to date.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Kenneth Campbell, ‘The Educational Point of View’, *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1905), 42-43.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 8.

<sup>60</sup> MacFarlane, ‘An Comunn Gaidhealach: Sketch of its Inception and Development’, *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1905), 4-8.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

ACG had set out to provide stability and to be a central governing body of Gaelic and Highland affairs. However, as already mentioned, there remained a large number of clan and other Highland-affiliated Societies which operated outside of ACG. For example, John Mackay of the *CM* was a founding member of the Clan Mackay Society (Comunn Chlann Aoidh, 1888), which published MacFarlane's collection, co-edited with Adam Gunn, *Oran agus Dain le Rob Donn Mac-Aoidh* (Songs and Poems by Rob Donn, 1899).<sup>63</sup> MacFarlane raised his objections to clan organisations in an address to the GSG:

Clan societies keep alive clan prejudices; they cannot do otherwise. It is contended in favour of clan societies that men are reached through the clan sentiment who cannot be reached through the Gaelic sentiment, and that when they are caught by the Clan their sympathies are enlisted in the Gaelic cause. That may be true concerning a few; but, after all, the man who can be clansman first, in this age, and Gael afterwards, is not an acquisition to the Gaelic cause.<sup>64</sup>

This gives an indication of the type of person which MacFarlane looked to recruit to the language movement at the time. He was aware that there were members who were not wholly committed to the cause and who therefore, MacFarlane believed, would hinder rather than help its progression. He was later asked by the secretary of the Clan MacFarlan Society (Comunn Chloinn Phàrlain, 1911) if he would consider joining that organisation and to be its official bard, which he refused citing the reasons above, though he had also pointed out that he could not join a Society which had mis-spelt their own name, omitting the final 'e' of 'MacFarlane' in English.<sup>65</sup> In the biography of MacFarlane's family given in the Introduction, however, it has been noted that both his father, John, and his brother, Dugald, both used the 'MacFarlan' spelling of the surname.

Competing Societies and organisations were just some of the obstacles which MacFarlane believed were hindering the progress of the language movement, and which were particularly frustrating when Ireland and the movement there, was used as a comparison, which he so often did. For example, MacFarlane had highlighted an exhibition and sale of Irish goods by the Gaelic League in London, comparing it to ACG's own intentions to promote the arts and industries of the Gaelic speakers in Scotland.<sup>66</sup> He had also re-printed entire passages from the pages of *ACS*, including a dramatic description of Hyde's departure for America; and summarised other activities in Ireland's language movement, such as the campaign to put an end to those 'petty tyrannies' surrounding the use

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<sup>63</sup> *Clan Mackay Society: Constitution, Office-Bearers, List of Members & Etc for session 1896-97*, (1898).

<sup>64</sup> MacFarlane, 'The Gaelic Language and the People Who Speak It', 306.

<sup>65</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 18: 24/02/12. Letter from James MacFarlane.

<sup>66</sup> MacFarlane, 'Items of Interest', *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1905), 52. MacFarlane, 'Preface', *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1905).

of Irish names on official documents; and acknowledging the 1904 Oireachtas competition to find the best sample of shorthand for Irish Gaelic.<sup>67</sup> This last item would have appealed to MacFarlane's personal interests, as he had created and published his own Scottish Gaelic shorthand system in 1889.<sup>68</sup> This form of pan-Gaelic reporting was prevalent in later years of *ADG* and in the contemporary publications, as the Scottish and Irish movements in particular looked to each other for inspiration and direction.<sup>69</sup>

Another aspect of the comparative successes of the Irish movement were the actions and determination of its leadership. MacFarlane wrote:

The president is a fighter, aims straight and hits hard. He is surrounded by others not a whit behind him in knowing what they want and adopting means to get it. The supplies are ample. The subordinate officers are well paid and proportionately zealous [...] The objective is well defined, and the merest camp-follower is aware of it. On the other hand, the Comunn Gaidhealach is fighting a soldiers' battle with sergeants as commanders; the supplies are meagre, and the objective is but hazily defined [...] But to everybody with insight into the movement, it is plain that the objectives of both movements are the same, the rehabilitation of the Gaelic language in the respect of those whose race language it is.<sup>70</sup>

The president of The GL was Douglas Hyde (Dubhghlas de hÍde, 1860-1949), the organisation's founder who would go on to become the first president of Ireland in 1937.<sup>71</sup> The president of ACG at the time was Princess Louise, an undoubtedly stark contrast given MacFarlane's objections to her appointment mentioned above. MacFarlane wrote of Hyde:

Dr Douglas Hyde, President of the Gaelic League of Ireland, is meeting with great success in his tour in America in the furtherance of the Gaelic cause. The first fruit of his work has been flashed across the sea in the shape of an announcement of a donation of £1000. There's a president for you!<sup>72</sup>

MacFarlane and Hyde corresponded briefly in 1907, and Hyde was contributing at the time to other contemporary publications in Scotland, including *The Celtic Review*, where he had published 'A Few Rhymed Proverbs' in its first issue in 1904.<sup>73</sup> When MacFarlane resigned from ACG in 1907, he had declared himself as a 'disciple of John Murdoch', in a rejected letter to the editor of the *Oban Weekly News*.<sup>74</sup> MacFarlane must have sent a similar

<sup>67</sup> MacFarlane, 'Items of Interest', 53-54.

<sup>68</sup> MacFarlane, *The phonetics of the Gaelic language, with an exposition of the current orthography and a system of phonography* (Glasgow, 1889).

<sup>69</sup> McLeod, 'Linguistic Pan-Gaelicism: A Dog that Wouldn't Hunt', *Journal of Celtic Linguistics*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2008), 93.

<sup>70</sup> MacFarlane, 'An Comunn Gaidhealach', 7.

<sup>71</sup> Maume, 'Hyde, Douglas', *DIB* (2009) < <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.004185.v1> > [Accessed: 05/03/22].

<sup>72</sup> MacFarlane, *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (1906), 59. The report is untitled and inserted at the bottom of the page.

<sup>73</sup> Douglas Hyde, 'A Few Rhymed Proverbs', *CR*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1904), 18-22.

<sup>74</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 48: 20/04/07. Rejected letter from MacFarlane to the editor of the *Oban Weekly News*.

letter to Hyde at this time, as he received a supportive and sympathetic letter in response which stated: ‘Is deiscioball do Ian Murdoch mi féin’ (*I myself am a disciple of John Murdoch*).<sup>75</sup> This is particularly revealing, as MacFarlane had taken an arguably less radical route within the Gaelic movement than Murdoch had done as a leader of the land agitations in the 1870’s and 1880’s. Hyde had taken pains to avoid the amalgamation of the Gaelic language movement in Ireland into the rapidly developing nationalist campaigns in Ireland. We know, however, that Murdoch and MacFarlane were both active in the GSG in the 1890’s and knew each other socially in this capacity.<sup>76</sup> Whilst his radical politics may have influenced others in these circles to a greater extent, Murdoch undeniably had a profound impact on MacFarlane.<sup>77</sup> Certainly, each carried out their work for the Gaelic speaking people with the highest levels of conviction and determination.

Douglas Hyde had clashed with John Dillon (1851-1927), an Irish nationalist MP and advocate for Home Rule, publicly in 1909: Hyde wanted Ireland to regain its national character and independence as a race through educational and cultural revival; Dillon believed that those ambitions were unrealisable without first attaining political independence from the British State.<sup>78</sup> Rejecting this, Hyde promoted the culturally nationalistic objectives, seeking to unite ‘nationalist and unionist, Catholic and Protestant, landlord and tenant.’<sup>79</sup> Hyde would disassociate himself from the GL altogether in 1915, as it committed itself to the politically nationalistic policies which sought to imbed the language movement within the broader calls for Irish autonomy from the British state.<sup>80</sup> He believed at this time that the cultural remit of the GL would suffer as a result of the new direction being taken.<sup>81</sup>

John Murdoch remained a symbol of the potential strength of the Gaelic movement in its broadest sense and both Hyde and MacFarlane drew inspiration from his steadfast commitment to improve the conditions of the Gaelic speaking people. According to James Hunter, the pioneering campaigning of John Murdoch, also active in the Irish movement in the later part of the nineteenth century, had begun ‘a transmission of Irish ideas and influences into Scotland [...] and was to make a considerable impact on the emerging

<sup>75</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 22/07/07. Letter from D. Hyde.

<sup>76</sup> GCA, MS 891237. Murdoch was present at meetings on the following dates: 30/14/89; 23/12/90; 26/01/92; 23/02/92; 29/11/92; 30/01/94; 23/04/95; 28/04/98; and elected as vice-president for the term 1896-1896.

<sup>77</sup> For example, John and Henry Whyte: Meek, ‘Radical Romantics’ (2007).

<sup>78</sup> ‘John Dillon: Irish Leader’, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2024) <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Dillon>> [Accessed: 05/09/24]. John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (Boston, 1987), 1-2

<sup>79</sup> Liam Mac Mathúna, ‘Great War Strains and Easter Rising Breaking Point: Douglas Hyde’s Ideological Ambivalences’, *Éire-Ireland*, Vol. 53 No. 1 (2018), 7.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., Maume, ‘Hyde, Douglas’.

<sup>81</sup> Seán Ó Lúing, ‘Douglas Hyde and the Gaelic League’, *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 62, No. 246 (1973), 135-136.

Scottish nationalism of these decades.’<sup>82</sup> In 1886, Hyde remarked that Gaelic in Scotland was in a ‘much healthier and more vigorous state than Irish in Ireland.’<sup>83</sup> This was not necessarily the case, as MacFarlane’s paper in the transactions of the GSG, *The Old Highlands*, presented the Gaelic speaker numbers in both countries for 1901. In Ireland at the time, Gaelic speakers amounted to 641,142: 14.4% of the population; whereas in Scotland, the figure was just 230,809: 5.16% of the population.<sup>84</sup> Ireland was invariably the example to follow, and MacFarlane was keenly aware of the contrasts. He had also included the figures broken down into counties, islands and the principal towns, conscious of the reality of the language depletion in areas such as his native Argyll.<sup>85</sup>

As John Murdoch had done, it was the fighting spirit which MacFarlane sought to instil in the Gaelic speakers of Scotland through the pages of *ADG*, evident in passages such as that given above which employed militaristic analogy.<sup>86</sup> Like Hyde, MacFarlane wanted ‘the rehabilitation of the Gaelic language’ and in his view, it was the ineffectiveness of its leaders and the confusion of the organisational structures of the language movement in Scotland, as well as the lack of institutional or financial support, which were inhibiting it from achieving that aim.<sup>87</sup>

MacFarlane was not alone in his admiration of the Irish position. Ruairidh Erskine often commented on the Irish example in his contemporary publications, though he was undoubtedly more politically engaged than MacFarlane, and therefore more receptive to the political developments taking place, as an ardent and highly vocal Scottish nationalist.<sup>88</sup> Erskine had printed an article in the first volume of *Guth na Bliadhna* (*GNB*) comparing the two:

that every man who joins the Irish movement, be he Tory, Nationalist or Whig, be he Catholic or Protestant, does so with a full knowledge and consciousness of the fact that it is Ireland – *his nation* – that he is desirous to better. Now, can we truthfully say that such a lofty conception of patriotism exists in Scotland?<sup>89</sup>

Ideology and dialogue were freely transmitted between Scotland and Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century. However, concepts of patriotism and of national identity had evolved

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<sup>82</sup> Hunter, ‘The Gaelic Connection: The Highlands, Ireland and Nationalism, 1873-1922’, *Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 54, No. 158 (1975), 180.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>84</sup> MacFarlane, ‘The Gaelic Language and the People who speak it’, *The Old Highlands* (1908), 309-310.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 310-311.

<sup>86</sup> See: Hunter, *For the People’s Cause; From the Writings of John Murdoch* (London, 1986).

<sup>87</sup> MacFarlane, ‘An Comunn Gaidhealach’, 7.

<sup>88</sup> For an overview of Erskine’s political trajectory and work for the Scottish nationalist movement see: G. Cairns, *No Language! No Nation! The Life and Times of the Honourable Ruairidh Erskine of Marr*, (2021).

<sup>89</sup> Erskine, ‘Ireland and Scotland’, *Guth na Bliadhna*, Vol. 1 (1904), 202-20.

differently in each place, in consequence to the historical treatment they had received from the ruling British state. In Scotland, it was at once possible to identify as part of a Gaelic nation, and therefore as a Gaelic patriot, without ascribing to the more radical doctrines of the Scottish nationalist movements. Support for the Empire, Britishness and Gaelic identity could co-exist and did so in a large proportion of Gaelic society.<sup>90</sup> In Ireland, support for the Empire and the British establishment was, and as Innes has pointed out, simply not as feasible as it was in Scotland.<sup>91</sup>

MacFarlane and his contemporaries such as Katherine Whyte Grant, whose imperial sympathies have also been discussed by Innes, constituted part of a literary scene where the British state was fully compatible with their Gaelic identity.<sup>92</sup> Grant had contributed a series of articles to *ADG*, ‘Na Cunnartan a tha ’Bagradh na Gàidhlig’ (‘The Dangers Threatening Gaelic’) from October to December 1905.<sup>93</sup> These essays have been dealt with in more detail elsewhere, though they present broadly similar propagandist themes on behalf of the Gaelic language as MacFarlane had done in the editorials being discussed here.<sup>94</sup> She wrote: ‘Am bheil sinne, Gaidheil na h-Alba, dol a leigeadh leis a’ Ghàidhlig dol a dhith?’<sup>95</sup> (*Are we, the Gaels of Scotland, going to let Gaelic go?*) Grant’s essays highlighted the responsibility of the Gaelic speakers themselves to act on behalf of their language. In another of MacFarlane’s articles in *ADG*, ‘Luchd-Labhairt na Gàidhlig’ (‘Gaelic Speakers’), he had echoed these calls, encouraging the Gaelic speakers not to let the language disappear, or for its soul to be lost to antiquarianism and academia.<sup>96</sup> His Gaelic song ‘The Crofters Song of Hope’ (1903), mentioned above as the winning entry to W. B. Blaikie’s competition, told the Gaelic speaking people: ‘Cha ’n ’eil leigheas anns an t-saoghal/ Leth cho éifeachdach ri saothair’ (*There is no cure in the world/ Half as effective as labour*).<sup>97</sup> He also positioned the Gaelic speakers at seemingly irreconcilable odds to the acquisition of wealth, prioritising the

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<sup>90</sup> Silke Stroh discusses the ‘Janus face’ of Celtic identity in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, at once a distinct colonising force within the structures of empire, and subject as a group to sustained colonial stereotyping and racism, both internally and externally. See: Silke Stroh, *Uneasy Subjects: Postcolonialism and Scottish Gaelic Poetry* (Amsterdam, 2001), 191-193.

<sup>91</sup> Innes, ‘Dùsgadh na Féinne’, 204-208.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 199 and 209. Innes discusses the support for Empire which Grant demonstrated in her work, in particular, her differentiation between native and non-native landlords as cause for the poor condition of the Gael, and MacKinnon’s wariness of this. [NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 12/12/07. Letter from K. W. Grant to MacFarlane]. MacFarlane had also positioned the Gael at irreconcilable odds to wealth, seen in *AMM* and other compositions, such as ‘The Crofter’s Song of Hope’ (1903), which prioritised closeness to and reclamation of the land and its uniquely Gaelic culture over the pursuit of financial stability or success.

<sup>93</sup> K. W. Grant, ‘Na Cunnartan a tha ’Bagradh na Gàidhlig’, *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1905), 10-12, 36-38 and 45-47.

<sup>94</sup> Kate Mathis and Eleanor Thomson, ‘Our poetry never lacks clearness if read in Gaelic’: Demystifying Gaelic and Anglo-Highland women’s writing in the Celtic Revival’, *Scottish Literary Review*, Vol. 14 (2022).

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> MacFarlane, ‘Luchd-Labhairt na Gàidhlig’, *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1905), 18.

<sup>97</sup> MacFarlane, ‘The Crofter’s Song of Hope’, 119.



reclamation of the land and Gaelic culture over the pursual of financial stability or success, perhaps an apt observation from a middle-class land surveyor in Glasgow. Fundamentally, however, the critical aspect of this propagandist campaigning was that it would have to be the Gaelic speakers who rehabilitated the language, as nobody else was going to do the work for them. Gaelic was not seen, despite the efforts of activists such as MacFarlane, as a national Scottish language, and therefore Gaelic identity was able to exist outside of the political national and imperial discourses.

In Ireland, the history of British oppression meant that the language, entwined with an innate sense of ‘Irishness’, simply could not support the duality of Irish and British identity and, as a result, the language movement in Ireland became political, and the one in Scotland did not. Joep Leerssen has built on the works of other nationalism scholars such as John Hutchinson, and proposed that all cultural and political nationalist movements define themselves by those characteristics within their communities, such as language, which differentiate them from other societies, cultures and nations.<sup>98</sup> If MacFarlane, and many of those around him, identified themselves as members of a Gaelic nation, with its distinctive historical, linguistic and cultural characteristics, operating within a broader Scottish or even British nationalism, then that nationalism was certainly as tenable as Erskine’s description above of the ‘lofty’ Irish one.

MacFarlane announced his own patriotism to the Gaelic nation and his own sense of Gaelic identity at several points in his life and writings, including in this vivid analogy submitted in 1907 to the *OT*:

I have only been spanking the Gaelic national baby for wanting to get out of the kilt into trousers. Like other young things it has got the false notion that trousers are the badge of manhood and manliness.<sup>99</sup>

The letter was, perhaps unsurprisingly, not printed, though it clearly outlines what MacFarlane was trying to achieve from his own perspective. He had also called out those ‘sham patriots’ who postured and pretended to work for the Gaelic cause.<sup>100</sup> For MacFarlane, the purpose of the language movement was to secure and strengthen the position of Gaelic for its speakers, and not to have the language folded into wider political discourses, or to be used as a signifier of a broadly defined ‘Scottish’ identity. McLeod noted that ACG specifically tended to view Gaelic as a regional language, ‘rather than a national language

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<sup>98</sup> See: John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the creation of the Irish Nation State* (1987). Joep Leerssen, ‘Nationalism and the cultivation of culture’, *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (2006), 559-578.

<sup>99</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 48: 20/04/07. Rejected letter to the Editor of the *Oban Weekly News*.

<sup>100</sup> MacFarlane, ‘The Teaching of Gaelic in Highland Schools’, *Guth na Bliadhna*, Vol. 6 (1909), 408-413.

for all of Scotland.’<sup>101</sup> In Ireland, the evolution of the GL and their success in incorporating the language movement into the national political debate, meant that Gaelic in Ireland was proposed as the language of the whole nation. This was not the objective of ACG or MacFarlane in the period considered here, or indeed the case later, as political events unfolded in Ireland in the lead up to the Easter Rising of 1916.

MacFarlane explained in 1905 that the Gaelic movement in Scotland was not ready for such a full-steam-ahead approach as was taking place in Ireland. It would have to progress cautiously until it had more ‘supporters, workers [...] and the ability of the leaders are greater than they are at present.’<sup>102</sup> Even then, the ambition was not for Gaelic independence, but for a robust Gaelic nation. In an early review of *GNB*, and arguably also of Erskine himself, MacFarlane reported to the readers of *ADG*:

This magazine is sectarian and political, and there is much in it, therefore, which we are precluded from criticising. Sects will be, and political parties will be to the end of time, political: that is a fact which has to be reckoned with. We are endeavouring to avoid both. But it is not always easy to steer a course which will not give offence to some sectarian or political party. Indeed, a simple word will sometimes send the extremists into hysterics. [...] We prefer one good man to a hundred religious men and one patriotic Gael to a hundred political, local or clan partisans.<sup>103</sup>

As with the clan Societies, MacFarlane sought a united Gaelic movement, working in unison to achieve the security and future of the Gaelic language for the Gaelic speakers and communities. Politics and religion, in MacFarlane’s view, had no place in it. *ADG* and *GNB* set out on different principles, though the extent to which *ADG* remained politically neutral as its editorship changed will be examined below. This was also the beginning of Erskine and MacFarlane’s relationship and, despite some ideological differences, the two would spend much of the following decade working together for the Gaelic language; creating a wealth of printed Gaelic literature; and themselves establishing an alternative organisation to ACG in 1911, The Gaelic Academy (Ard-Chomairle na Gàidhlig). They had also agreed on the current position of the language movement and expressed similar criticisms of ACG’s leadership, and the priorities of the membership more broadly. Erskine wrote that:

There is far too prevalent a disposition abroad to regard the language movement as something that may be played with – as a hobby suitable for dull winter evenings, or as an excuse for “social gatherings” at which tea and gossip (for the most part in English) may be indulged in to the weak heart’s unbounded content.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 64.

<sup>102</sup> MacFarlane, ‘An Comunn Gaidhealach’, 8.

<sup>103</sup> MacFarlane, ‘Items of Interest’, *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1905), 67.

<sup>104</sup> Erskine, ‘Ireland and Scotland’, 202

MacFarlane echoed these sentiments in *ADG*, frequently commenting on the overt prevalence of English in ACG's activities, calling those members in particular 'Silly Geese' for their ineffective and unambitious contributions to the real progress and work of the language movement.<sup>105</sup> In an article on the successes of the Dingwall Mòd, he wrote that a 'perverse conservatism seems to dog Gaelic at every step, hastening instead of retarding decay.'<sup>106</sup> MacFarlane had exhibited a form of conservatism with respect to the work being done to raise the 'character and condition of the people', which he had celebrated as one of Murdoch's and the Irish language movement's central aims.<sup>107</sup> It is an interesting dynamic to his character that he did not more actively engage in agitating for the improvement of the socio-economic position of the Gaelic speakers, or at least that his efforts to do so were primarily directed towards the condition of the language specifically.

MacFarlane's final issue of *ADG* was published in February 1906, and contained considerable Gaelic material, including the prose tale 'Mac Rìgh na Sorcha' ('The Son of the King of Sorcha'); 'Mar a Sheachainn Domhnall Politics' ('How Donald Avoided Politics'); and a long list of technical Gaelic terms for modern farming, which had been sent to ACG in 1899 by Rev. Charles M. Robertson (1864-1927).<sup>108</sup> There was also an article by another female writer, Sheila MacDonald, titled 'The Gaelic Revival.'<sup>109</sup> It highlighted the need for education in Gaelic, though as Kenneth Campbell had also noted, not at the expense of English proficiency. MacDonald rejected the notion that English as 'the dominant speech of the world should be neglected or excluded.'<sup>110</sup>

The several articles written by women in *ADG* under MacFarlane's editorship offers some insight into his own view of their status and capacity to work for the Gaelic movement. Scott noted in her study that he did not have 'any strong objection to women's involvement.'<sup>111</sup> He corresponded regularly with many women and, as demonstrated here, had a deep respect for those who he saw as credible writers in Gaelic, regardless of their gender. In particular, his closeness and collaboration with Whyte Grant comes to mind. In this, MacFarlane contrasted with contemporaries, notably Ruairaidh Erskine, who would

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<sup>105</sup> MacFarlane, 'An Comunn Gaidhealach', 8

<sup>106</sup> MacFarlane, 'The Dingwall Mòd' *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1905), 27

<sup>107</sup> MacFarlane, 'An Comunn Gaidhealach', 7.

<sup>108</sup> M. MacLeòid, 'Mac Rìgh na Seorcha', *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (1906), 74-75. A prizewinning story from the 1902 Mòd. The author was from Lewis but no first name was given. Gilleasbuig Mac Cullaich, 'Mar a Sheachainn Domhnall Politics', *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (1906), 77-79. Donald J. MacLeod described it as 'a highly successful blend of esoteric discussion with humour.' 'Twentieth Century Gaelic literature: a description, comprising critical study and a comprehensive bibliography', Unpublished PhD thesis (University of Glasgow, 1969), 137. Charles Robertson, 'Gaelic Technical Terms', *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (1906) 84-86. Jacob King, ed, *Scottish Gaelic Place-Names. The Collected Works of Charles M. Robertson: 1864-1927*, (Isle of Skye, 2019).

<sup>109</sup> Sheila MacDonald, 'The Gaelic Revival', *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (1906), 75-77.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>111</sup> Scott, 'With heart and voice ever devoted to the cause', 39.

later say that women should be left out of Gaelic organisations altogether, as well as John Mackay of the *CM*, who protested at their involvement in the Executive Council of ACG.<sup>112</sup>

In December 1905, MacFarlane complained that he was suffering ill-health as a result of the heavy workload, and had given notice of his resignation of the editorship, offering to personally fund the payment for an interim editor to be installed.<sup>113</sup> ACG had, however, asked him to carry on with the next two issues, and had not, according to MacFarlane, disclosed his financial offer in their official records. MacFarlane wrote to Mackintosh that the evidence ‘was suppressed by the Council [...] cut with scissors – just for all the world to see as if we lived in Russia.’<sup>114</sup> MacFarlane related his account of these events in the 1927 lecture, given in Appendix 2.<sup>115</sup> MacFarlane did go on to edit the January and February editions, despite ill health, and remained as the convenor of the Publication Committee as late as October 1906. There had been a dispute over the quality of that month’s issue, with Eneas Mackay appealing to MacFarlane directly: ‘Please as my most esteemed Boss say if I can officially be allowed by you to issue the Oct No?’<sup>116</sup> Henry Whyte had commented that it was not an attractive number in either Gaelic or English.<sup>117</sup> It was subsequently published, though this evidence demonstrates that MacFarlane, despite his resignation from the editorial role, remained an influential figure in the operations of *ADG* until at least September 1906.

This discussion has shed light on some of the most fundamental aspects of the Gaelic language movement and the circumstances and contexts impacting its development in Scotland in the early twentieth century. These have included MacFarlane’s criticisms of the complacency of the wider movement and his admiration for the work which the Irish language movement was doing at the time of his editorship of *ADG* in 1905-1906. His agency during this period is testament to the significant role he played in the language movement at this time, able to define and direct its discourses with his editions of the magazine. He was also comfortable to directly criticise the leadership of ACG in the pages of its own propagandist magazine, actions which ought to be recognised as vocal protest against the organisation and the direction they were taking the language movement in. There were tensions within these networks, including on prominent ideological issues such as

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<sup>112</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 13/12/11. Letter from R. Erskine. On potential membership of the newly instituted Gaelic Academy (1911), he wrote: ‘Fir goodness sake don’t admit any women! They are apt to spoil the show.’ NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 27/06/07. Letter from J. Mackay. ‘I held the view that ladies ought not to be there. If they will insist in taking part in public matters they must stand public criticism.’ Also in Scott, ‘With heart and voice ever devoted to the cause’, 38.

<sup>113</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 12: 22/05/06. Draft from MacFarlane to J. Mackintosh.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 8-9.

<sup>116</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 12: 17/09/06. Letter from E. Mackay.

<sup>117</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 12: 22/09/06. Letter from H. Whyte.

nationalism and cultural identity, and a much clearer picture of MacFarlane's ambitions for the language movement within these contexts becomes apparent in his own writings. A substantial number of valuable literary contributions were made to *ADG*, from the wider literary sphere and MacFarlane himself. He was acutely aware of the obstacles facing Gaelic publishing, evidenced in his accounts of its inception and the debates which surrounded it. MacFarlane's decisions to include Gaelic language material, including from female contributors, is revealing of his commitment to continually develop the language in the modern day and to present opportunities for Gaelic writers to create new and innovate Gaelic literature. Despite his concerns over the financial viability of *ADG*, MacFarlane was deeply committed to ensuring the magazine's success, believing in its potential to galvanise the Gaelic speakers and those who supported the Gaelic language cause. Perhaps, had the resources of ACG been better directed, he may have been able to continue this valuable work and more substantially realise these ambitions in his own tenure. The editorship was, however, given to Malcolm MacLennan, and the intention of his own efforts will now be discussed.

### Malcolm MacLennan's Editorship

Malcolm MacLennan had initially been installed as the editor of *ADG* on a temporary basis, and had assured MacFarlane that he would endeavour to make his role as the convenor of Publication Committee, which he had remained in, as light as possible given his health concerns.<sup>118</sup> Rev. Duncan MacGillivray (Donnchadh Mac Ille Bhràth, b. 1864) from Inverness, was also given an editorial role.<sup>119</sup> MacGillivray was in charge of the English department and MacLennan dealt with the Gaelic contents, though MacLennan did have overall editorial control of the magazine.

MacLennan was originally from Uig in Lewis and was the minister of St. Columba United Free Church in Edinburgh. He compiled several Gaelic texts, including Gaelic readers and translations of the Bible into Gaelic; and as well as editing *ADG* from 1906 until 1908, was also the editor of *An Fhianuis* (The Witness), a Gaelic supplement of the *Monthly*

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<sup>118</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 12: 17/04/06. Letter from M. MacLennan.

<sup>119</sup> 'Duncan MacGillivray', *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* (1928), 187-188. MacGillivray was a member of the Executive Council in at least (1906-1907): 'An Comunn Gaidhealach', *ADG*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1906), 14; and a member of the Inverness branch of ACG, instituted in 1906: 'Comunn Gaidhealach Inbhirnis', *ADG*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1906), 16. He was a member of the Clan Chattan Address Committee (1906): *Am Baile* has a portrait of the group, including MacGillivray: < <https://www.ambaile.org.uk/gd/asset/47409/> > [Accessed: 14/17/23].

*Record of the United Free Church*.<sup>120</sup> He was responsible for an impressive list of Gaelic books that were created for Gaelic-speaking soldiers during the war; a life member of ACG; a member of the Association of Highland Societies of Edinburgh; and an honorary member of the Edinburgh University Celtic Society.<sup>121</sup> MacFarlane and MacLennan were similar in terms of their output of Gaelic literary material and their affiliation to Highland and Gaelic Societies. MacFarlane would also later support the war effort, recruiting in his town of Paisley, though by that time his literary output had begun to decrease, and producing in the post-war years mainly competition compositions for ACG's Mòd events, and scholarly articles for the GSI.<sup>122</sup> MacFarlane did not, however, approve of religion, as has been noted above, and took the opportunity to comment on what he believed to be its injustices frequently. For example, he wrote in a furious letter to Ruairidh Erskine in 1914, the context of which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter:

You join religion – the cursed thing which divides mankind and keeps good men from uniting against evil – to the Gaelic cause. I myself know no religion but which has as its bottom tenet a gross superstition which is absolutely opposed to all human experience. It wouldn't be religion without that.<sup>123</sup>

Erskine was a Catholic, often publishing and campaigning in that capacity, and the issue of sectarianism and discrimination in the language movements of Scotland and Ireland frequently arose in his various literary publications.<sup>124</sup> The Gàidhealtachd in this period was primarily protestant, with pockets of Catholicism existing mostly in the Western Isles.<sup>125</sup> This was almost directly contrasted to the position of religion within the language movement in Ireland, as the majority of Irish language sympathisers were Catholic, though notable advocates, such as Hyde, were Protestant.<sup>126</sup> MacFarlane had printed a letter from the Irish writer and member of the GL, James. J. Doyle (Seumus Ua Dubhghaill, 1855-1929), in the final instalment of *ADG* under his editorship, calling out the apathy of the Catholics in

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<sup>120</sup> MacBean, 'Malcolm MacLennan', *The Celtic Who's Who*, 103-104 and Murchison, 'MacLennan, Revd Dr Malcolm (1862-1931)', *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, 181.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> For example, the translation of an excerpt from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, published in 1916: MacFarlane, 'Paradise Lost/ *Mar Chailleadh Sealbh Air Parras*', *The Celtic Annual* (1916), 29-33; and his revised edition of *Am Mosgladh Mòr* (1925). MacFarlane, 'Gaelic Elements in the South-West Lowland Scots English', Vol. 31 (1927), 175-191; and Half a Century of Vocal Gaelic Music', Vol. 32 (1929), 251-272.

<sup>123</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 20: 20/08/14. Draft letter from MacFarlane to R. Erskine.

<sup>124</sup> For example, the very first issue of *GNB* was 'The Church in the Highlands', Vol. 1, No. 1 (1904), 1-4; and the second issue began with Martin Hume's article, 'The Scottish Catholics in Spain', Vol. 1, No. 2 (1904), 1-4. For commentary on Erskine's religious position see also G. Cairns, *No Language!*.

<sup>125</sup> For an overview of religion in Gaelic speaking areas see: Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 127-140; and John MacInnes, 'Religion in Gaelic Society', *TGSI*, Vol. 52 (1983), 222-242.

<sup>126</sup> Timothy G. McMahon, *Grand opportunity: the Gaelic revival and Irish society, 1893-1910* (New York, 2008).

Scotland to actively engage in the Gaelic language movement.<sup>127</sup> Whilst opposed to the religious perspective of the piece, MacFarlane likely included it as a useful piece of propaganda, again calling on the Irish example to inspire his readership. Religion was one aspect of the differences between MacFarlane and MacLennan, though their ambitions of the magazine, and the trajectory of the Gaelic language movement and ACG as a whole, would be what set them apart.

There were a number of tense correspondences between MacFarlane and MacLennan during the transition, with the new editor looking to acquire the Gaelic material held by a seemingly reluctant MacFarlane. MacLennan wrote to him in March 1906:

It may not be amiss if I point out that the reason may be that at the last meeting of the Publication Committee, you refused positively to allow your name to go on the proposed editorial committee, or to consider yourself bound to do any particular work in connection with it. My committee is anxious, as you may well understand, to lose no time in making a survey of what material may be available and suitable for publication.<sup>128</sup>

After a series of exchanges, MacFarlane agreed to send him the relevant Gaelic material, if only ‘from time to time’:

I am quite satisfied with your suggestion that you send me such papers as I want from time to time for the purposes of the Magazine. As it has been agreed that I look after the Gaelic parts myself none of these papers need pass out of my hands.<sup>129</sup>

Unsurprisingly perhaps, MacFarlane does not appear to have been enthusiastic about the editing of Gaelic materials being done by anyone other than himself. However, in his later account of the events, MacFarlane claimed that it had been the English materials, and therefore also the editor of the English content, MacGillivray, which had caused the tensions between the two, commenting:

The English editor did his work under the impression that his duty was to promote English, and, especially, among the young. His first act was to send me a peremptory letter asking me to send on to him all the English papers. I replied in a quiet note that there were no English papers. This seemed to have riled him much, for I received in return an insolent letter which could only be expected from a rude tinker or drunk man.<sup>130</sup>

The magazine had evolved under MacLennan and MacGillivray’s joint editorship into an altogether different publication, becoming not so much a propagandist organ on

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<sup>127</sup> Breathnach and Ní Mhurchú, ‘Ó Dubhghaill, Séamas (1855–1929)’, *Ainm*, <<https://www.ainm.ie/Bio.aspx?ID=198&xml=true>> [Accessed: 21/09/24]. Seamus Ua Dubhghaill, ‘Scottish Catholics and An Comunn Gaidhealach’, *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (1906), 87.

<sup>128</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 41: 05/03/06. Letter from M. MacLennan.

<sup>129</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 44: 07/03/06. Letter from M. MacLennan.

<sup>130</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 9.

behalf of the Gaelic language or the Gaelic speaker, but more decidedly as a voice-box of ACG and their own activities. Highlighting this, an editorial in the April issue announced that many of the more commonly expected items in *ADG* had been ‘crushed out’ in favour of papers read at the February Oban Conference of Gaels, given in full in English, which they had been delivered in.<sup>131</sup> The notice went on to propose an essay competition for children on a lesser-known Highland legend or custom, to be no longer than 150 words and composed in English. The prize had been set at five shillings with the potential to have the essay published in a future issue.<sup>132</sup> Whilst lengthy accounts of the Mòd events had been given under MacFarlane’s editorship, these were also an opportunity to print the names and achievements of its competitors; and MacFarlane would likely have dismissed the idea of establishing a literary competition for compositions in English.

There were other important points of departure from what MacFarlane had established as the magazine’s general tone and output. Two incidents in particular will be examined here as evidence of these changes. These events will significantly improve our understanding of the reasons why MacFarlane felt he had to resign from ACG in September 1906.

Firstly, in an editorial section titled ‘Only a Medley’ in the June issue of 1906, MacGillivray had reported on the progress of the language movement in Ireland.<sup>133</sup> This had been an established norm in *ADG*’s editions, however, unlike the high praise which it had received in previous issues, MacGillivray instead quoted a Scottish correspondent to the *Irish Independent*, who had criticised not only the Irish speakers themselves, but the political intentions of the leaders of the language movement in Ireland.<sup>134</sup> The newspaper article being quoted also reported that the Gaelic speakers in Scotland used their language wherever possible in preference to English; in contrast to what he described as a general sense of apathy amongst Irish speakers, and particularly Irish speaking parents. It went on to comment on the party-political machinations of the Gaelic League (GL), writing:

the majority of its members use the language propaganda for political purposes, one of which is to make Ireland a separate and independent nation and so sever its connection with the Empire. In Scotland the Gaelic language movement is associated with loyalty to the throne, and so it commands the respect of all classes; in Ireland, it is not so, he maintains, and the well-to-do classes view it with suspicion and dislike.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> ‘Only a Medley’, *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 7 (1906), 111. ‘Oban Conference Proceedings’, *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 7 (1906), 113-126.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Only a Medley’, 111.

<sup>133</sup> Duncan MacGillivray, ‘Only a Medley’ *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 9 (1906), 149.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, Quoted from the unattributed report in the *Irish Independent*.



In an earlier editorial note on the need for English as well as Gaelic education, MacGillivray had commented that the ambitions of the movement ought ‘not to isolate, but to unite the Highlands with the rest of the empire.’<sup>136</sup> We have discussed above the existence of a unique and independent Gaelic identity, able to exist within, and irrespective of, the broader framework of Scottish or British nationhood. This was not as dominantly the position in Ireland. However, there had to this point been no editorials or other contributed articles which had so openly declared a political position from the Scottish perspective, and the piece was viewed antagonistically by many. The uniqueness of the Gaelic patriotism demonstrated in MacFarlane’s issues was the decided lack of political commentary such as this, which could be construed as attempting to influence the Gaelic speakers and communities along a distinctive political path.

There were those, however, who were less understanding of the offence which may have been taken to the expression of overtly sympathetic British or Imperial material being printed in the magazine. For example, Mackintosh sent a concerned note to MacFarlane at the height of these debates asking whether *ADG* was to ‘disseminate disloyalty to the British Crown?’<sup>137</sup> Neither position had been specifically articulated under MacFarlane’s editorship, though Mackintosh was clearly anxious that the magazine not be drawn towards the nationalist agenda, if it did have to choose a side.

Following the report from the Scottish correspondent, Erskine launched a series of highly animated complaints, sent initially to John Mackintosh before being forwarded to MacFarlane in his role as the convenor. Erskine had outwardly supported the GL and its leadership; and Patrick Pearse, one of the leading figures in the 1916 Easter Risings, had contributed the article, “‘Education” in the West of Ireland’ to *GNB* as recently as 1904.<sup>138</sup> Cairns commented that the collaborative relationship which was formed between Erskine and Pearse had begun a ‘serious process of radicalisation that would fuse their language and political activism together.’<sup>139</sup> James Hunter has outlined Erskine’s pursuit of Scottish nationalism, an ideal founded on a pan-Celtic premise which took Irish nationalism and the notion of an ‘Irish-Ireland’ as its inspiration.<sup>140</sup> His anger at the highly critical report of the Gaelic speakers in Ireland, alongside the leaders of the language movement there is therefore understandable, and sparked a rift in ACG which would split the Gaelic language movement in Scotland.

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<sup>136</sup> ‘Only a Medley’ *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 8 (1906), 134.

<sup>137</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. Fol. 11. 1906. Undated Mackintosh.

<sup>138</sup> Patrick Pearse, ‘Education” in the West of Ireland’, *GNB*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (1905).

<sup>139</sup> Cairns, *No Language!*, 41.

<sup>140</sup> Hunter, ‘The Gaelic Connection’, 192-195.

Henry Whyte, himself a member of the Publication Committee at this time, had been quick to write to MacFarlane, having heard of Erskine's 'wild letter.'<sup>141</sup> Whyte suggested that it was time for the Publication Committee to 'take exception to the manner in which the DG is being conducted'; and news spread quickly from there to most of MacFarlane's close colleagues.<sup>142</sup> An extract of the letter which Erskine sent is given here to demonstrate the full wrath of his response:

The Editor has no business whatever to make his columns a vehicle for airing his own political news, and for misrepresenting the work of a large and important body in the movement, to whom the sort of rapid talk indulged in is utterly repugnant. The organ of the Society should be what it professes to be, a non-political non-sectarian organ. It has nothing to do with politics [...] I have written to the Rev. Editor myself; but the matter is one for the members of the Comunn to take up [...] if the Comunn and its mouthpiece are going to forsake their professed principles, and to become political institutions I shall withdraw altogether from them, and that the Hon. Mrs Erskine and myself will devote our prize money to some more worthy object.<sup>143</sup>

MacLennan defended the editorial, writing to MacFarlane following the initial complaint:

My collaborator is much surprised that his medley should have been suspected of even the shadow of politics [...] no intention of trespassing or saying anything distasteful. He was reporting rather than commenting.<sup>144</sup>

In June 1906, MacFarlane called a meeting of the Publication committee to discuss the representation of party-political views in the magazine, alongside other issues including the established 'Technical Terms' article being crowded out; and the volume of English material which had been included in recent editions. The first issue of *ADG* had carried five Gaelic articles and four English; and the second had an equal split of each, though a large proportion of this issue was devoted to a thirteen-page account of the Dingwall Mòd (1905), which listed the names of all of the prize-winners.<sup>145</sup> By comparison, the first edition of *ADG* under MacLennan had five English to three Gaelic articles.<sup>146</sup> There were some elements of continuity, for example, Katherine Whyte Grant published the story 'Turus Eoghain Bhain Do'n Eorpa'<sup>147</sup> ('Fair Ewan's Journey to Europe') in the magazine under MacLennan. This

<sup>141</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 12: 18/06/06. Letter from H. Whyte.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 44: 06/06/06. Letter from R. Erskine to J. Mackintosh.

<sup>144</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 12: 21/06/06. Letter from M. MacLennan.

<sup>145</sup> These were Vol. 1, No. (1905): MM, 'Thog Sinn an Deo-Ghréine ri Crann', 1-2, I. D. Mackay, 'A' Ghàidhealtachd', 3-4; 'Oran-Chiùil', 8; K. W. Grant, 'Na Cunnartan a tha 'Bagradh na Gàidhlig', 10-12; and D. Mac Eacharn, 'Am Fiadh', 12-14. MacFarlane, 'The Dingwall Mòd', *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1905), 20-33.

<sup>146</sup> The Gaelic articles were: Vol. 1, No. 6 (1906): Leisgeul Anna nan Or-Chaibh, 90-93; 'How Caoilte Failed to run against Conan', 93-95; and A. Nicolson, 'Na Tugaibh breith a reir Coltais', 101-103.

<sup>147</sup> K. W. Grant, 'Turus Eoghain Bhain Do'n Eorpa', *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 10 (1906), 159-162; No. 11, 177-180; and No. 12, 192-196.

was then printed in her collection *Aig Tigh na Beinne* (1911). However, MacLennan did complain about the length of these essays, concerned that they were taking up too much of the space which had been allocated for the Gaelic material.<sup>148</sup>

The second substantial issue of MacLennan's editorship, and a significant point of departure from MacFarlane's tenure, was the inclusion in *ADG* of an English story, 'Another Reapeth', written by Norman MacLeod (d. 1931).<sup>149</sup> This was an agricultural tale of cattle-driving and pestilence, which MacFarlane believed was not 'suited to a propagandist magazine.'<sup>150</sup> In advance of the June meeting, MacFarlane had sent a circular to members of the Publication Committee titled, 'An Deo-Ghréine – Accusations', setting out the four areas of business which were to be consulted. These were: the prominence of English compositions; the suitability of 'Another Reapeth'; the removal of the 'Technical Terms' column; and party-political opinions being printed in the magazine. A reduced version of MacFarlane's responses to each of these issues are given here:

1. It is entirely unconstitutional to spend effort on cultivation of English. [...] We have more than we can do to keep Gaelic on its feet. In any case, the public are sceptical about the genuineness of competitions when the prize-winners names are withheld. They are sceptical, sometimes with good reason of the Mod results. [...] It is necessary that the names and addresses of the prize-winners should be announced this coming number, and the competitions brought to a stop.
2. The story 'Another Reapeth' is most unsuitable [...] It is weak to say the least and the class of people who would find pleasure in it is of no use to the Gaelic cause: quite the reverse.
3. We are under obligation to publish 'Technical Terms' [by donation to the magazine fund for the specific purpose].
4. It is impossible to deal with the Irish or Scottish Gaelic case without touching on some subject of party-political significance; but it is absolutely unnecessary to bring in Imperial politics, and it should not be done. Surely we have plenty to do within the limits of our own clearly defined work without taking the Empire on our shoulders.<sup>151</sup>

This is a highly valuable and revealing insight into the complex layers of debate which were taking place at the time of the transition between MacFarlane and MacLennan's editorship of *ADG*. Explicitly opposed by MacFarlane, these changes substantially altered the direction in which the central body of the language movement, ACG, was headed. Critically, this evidence and the debates surrounding them substantiate the argument that two groups had begun to emerge within ACG, pursuing alternative strategies for the Gaelic

<sup>148</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 12: 18/06/06. Letter from M. MacLennan.

<sup>149</sup> Norman Macleod was Gaelic Master at The Glasgow High School, member of the Publication Committee of An Comunn Gàidhealach and published a revised version of Duncan Reid's *Elementary Course of Gaelic* (1908). Murchison, 'Norman MacLeod', *Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, 183.

<sup>150</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 44: 09/06/06. 'An Deo-Ghréine-Accusations.'

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

language movement. MacLennan, MacGillivray and others, including John Mackintosh, were pursuing a policy along very similar lines to what McLeod has described as the approach taken by Gaelic and Highland associations more generally during the period: ‘to celebrate the language in certain narrowly defined cultural contexts and prevent it from dying out.’<sup>152</sup> The decreasing volume of Gaelic material in the magazine, and the simultaneous increase in reports on social events; literary competitions in English though with a ‘Celtic’ theme; and certainly ‘Another Reapeth’ being prioritised over a Gaelic composition, all point to the prospect that the Gaelic language and culture were being ‘celebrated’ rather than actively campaigned for. In contrast, MacFarlane and his group of supporters, aimed to actively cultivate the Gaelic language, promoting innovation and modernity.

The replies to the circular from the other members of the Publication Committee were received and are similarly useful to allow us to identify and distinguish this fractured group. Henry Whyte had resoundingly agreed with MacFarlane’s initial statements, adding that he had been a member of the Irish Land League and that those Irishmen had ‘never mixed religion with land or language causes.’<sup>153</sup> T. D. MacDonald, who became the secretary of ACG from 1908-1911 and who was fundamental in campaigning and establishing new regional branches in the 1910’s, however, thought that MacFarlane was making a ‘mountain out of a molehill’ and believed that the initial report from the *Irish Independent* had rather warned against the inclusion of politics in the magazine, than engaged in doing so itself.<sup>154</sup> MacFarlane later described MacDonald’s response as a betrayal and ‘what was to be expected from a coward.’<sup>155</sup> MacLennan’s own response defended the comparatively high volume of English material as they had been intended to stimulate ‘interest among children in Celtic matters in general’, noting that ACG itself conducted its business in English, which he believed to be appropriate.<sup>156</sup> He continued: ‘it did not occur to me that it was at all a violation of the unwritten law that neither politics nor religion are to be discussed or referred to in our columns.’<sup>157</sup> MacLennan therefore felt justified in expressing his own political views, despite having recently defended MacGillivray’s article as having no political hue.

It seems certain that few within the committee had a clear sense of what was and what was not permitted to be included in the magazine. *ADG* had been instituted as a

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<sup>152</sup> McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 58.

<sup>153</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 44: 11/06/06. Response from H. Whyte.

<sup>154</sup> MacLeod, *Twentieth Century Gaelic Literature*, 15. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 44. Undated. Response from T. D. MacDonald.

<sup>155</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 10.

<sup>156</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 44: 26/06/06. Letter from M. MacLennan

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

‘propagandist organ on behalf of the language, literature, art and industries of the Gael’ and the constitution of ACG made no mention of politics or religion in its manifesto in 1891.<sup>158</sup> At the time of the debates being discussed here, an amendment was proposed by Mrs Burnley Campbell of Ormidale (1857-1938), rejected by MacFarlane and others at its first vote, and carried to include in ACG’s constitution the provision that: ‘The association is non-political and non-sectarian.’<sup>159</sup> This was enacted in 1907, and first appeared in its souvenir handbook for the Féill in 1907.<sup>160</sup> MacFarlane later noted that it had not been until this phrase was included in their objectives that the organisation in fact became those things, stating that:

politics go so merrily on that the Executive of the Association may soon be composed of one political party. It was since that phrase became part of the Constitution that I noticed in the Mod Syllabus a proposal to introduce into it a Roman Catholic section.<sup>161</sup>

McLeod observed that ACG had ‘never agreed exactly what this stricture meant and what kinds of activities were to be avoided.’<sup>162</sup> This seems highly likely, as in MacFarlane’s editorship of *ADG*, although support for the language movement in Ireland was expressed frequently, the articles had remained altogether politically neutral. This was unlike MacLennan and MacGillivray who, and as Mackintosh had also expressed, felt that they were justified in demonstrating their support for the British establishment in *ADG*’s pages, including for the monarchy. It should be recognised here that in appointing Princess Louise to the presidency of ACG, the political sympathies of ACG had arguably already been vocalised to the wider Gaelic community. As we have discussed, MacFarlane had opposed the appointment, and had ‘hated, above everything, that we should be making the association ridiculous in the eyes of Gall and Sassenach.’<sup>163</sup> The ridicule was a result of the Princess being a non-Gaelic speaker specifically, and not because of her royal position. Whether or not he believed in the monarchy as an institution was not an issue which he raised in any of his known writings on the Gaelic language or the language movement more broadly.

This was an extremely turbulent period for ACG, with heated exchanges taking place privately between its leading members, though often also being articulated in the highly public realm of the correspondence pages of the *OT*. MacFarlane had gone so far as to privately accuse MacLennan and his group of themselves forming an independent movement

<sup>158</sup> MacFarlane, ‘Preface’, *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1905).

<sup>159</sup> The most comprehensive study of Mrs. Burnley Campbell to date has been in Scott, ‘With heart and voice ever devoted to the cause’. See chapter two, ‘“Suas leis a’ Ghàidhlig”: Women in An Comunn Gàidhealach’, 27-65. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 6.

<sup>160</sup> *Souvenir and handbook of Féill a’ Chomuinn Ghàidhealaich* (1907), 22.

<sup>161</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 6.

<sup>162</sup> McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland* (2020), 63.

<sup>163</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 5.

within ACG, a claim which would soon be turned on MacFarlane and his own supporters.<sup>164</sup> Several people within MacFarlane's networks wrote to him at the time expressing their support. For example, school master and frequent Mòd competitor, William Cameron of Poolewe, wrote:

I understand there is to be a stormy meeting at Stirling on Saturday – a lot of dirty linen to wash. I hope the Comunn is not to come to grief. The finances are in a forlorn state and I am afraid the Council is breaking up into factions.<sup>165</sup>

This referred to a meeting of the Executive Council in September 1906, at which MacFarlane had requested to have the minutes of the Publication Committee's meeting read. They were, however, not read, with MacFarlane later writing that his request had been blocked by a majority who 'upheld the dirt and the English and the politics.'<sup>166</sup> This group, he reported, included its current president, Princess Louise, and one of the vice-presidents at the time, Archibald Menzies (1846-1914).<sup>167</sup> Menzies had initially supported MacFarlane though, in a highly dramatic turn of events, had retracted his support and rejected the request to have the minutes read. The account of these events appears in full in Appendix 2, though an extract is given here in order to illustrate the severe impact which this decision had on MacFarlane, as well as to give a flavour of his personality. He believed that his rights as a member of ACG had been denied, which became the catalyst in a series of disputes which led to his final resignation the following year.

I promptly stood up, turned round facing him and said: Mr Chairman, I have no alternative but to charge you with giving a dishonourable ruling. He literally squirmed and a lady – well, hardly a lady; hardly a woman – there are decent women, thank goodness – I shall call her an impudent hussy – some of you know her well – kissed me. I turned to her, and snapping my fingers at her, said: I care not that much for your kiss; and turning again to the chairman, I repeated my charge of his having given a dishonourable ruling and I expressed my sorrow that it was necessary for me to do so. He squirmed again, but said nothing. This Queen's prize man at Aldershot hadn't the courage of a mouse, and could not face up against the influence of my opponents – a class for whom I have no respect and no use whatever. They claim to be your and my countrymen; and I am afraid it is too true.<sup>168</sup>

It is unclear who the lady may have been that kissed MacFarlane, or indeed why, though looking at the Executive Council in 1906 there were only two female members of it, Burnley Campbell and Ella Carmichael, then Watson.<sup>169</sup> MacFarlane went on to oppose the 1907

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<sup>164</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 44: 26/07/06. Letter from M. MacLennan.

<sup>165</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 12: 16/08/06. Letter from W. Cameron.

<sup>166</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 10.

<sup>167</sup> 'The Late Mr. Archibald Menzies, S.S.C.', *ADG*, Vol. 9, No. 6 (1914), 89-90.

<sup>168</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 10-12.

<sup>169</sup> 'An Comunn Gaidhealach', *ADG*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (1906), 14

Féill, which Burnley Campbell had been the convenor of, accusing its organising committee of financial mis-management. Presumably then it was Burnley Campbell, and not Carmichael who had kissed him. MacFarlane and Henry Whyte had left the meeting, with MacFarlane noting: 'From that day, I ceased to be a member of the association which denied me my membership rights in the meanest, most cowardly and fraudulent manner.'<sup>170</sup> He had however, almost immediately re-joined ACG's Executive Council as the representative of the Greenock Highland Association. It had been an established policy in ACG to include representatives from affiliated organisations in its Executive Council and for them to have voting rights.

Following the September meeting, two successive accounts of the Oban Mòd (1906) and its business meetings were printed in *ADG*, neither of which made any reference to the events which had transpired. The Mòd was described in the first account as: 'an unqualified success, a success beyond the fondest hopes of the most optimistic members of An Comunn Gàidhealach.'<sup>171</sup> This is somewhat stark, as the work which MacFarlane did inside of ACG, evidenced in this study, was certainly done with the belief and optimism that it would benefit the Gaelic language and further the attainment of the objectives with which the Society had been established in 1891. The second account was a copy of an address given by Louisa Farquharson (1868-1942) of Invercauld to the GSL, titled: 'The Oireachtas and the Mod of 1906.'<sup>172</sup> Farquharson had been present at the Executive Council meeting, though made no mention either of the events which took place regarding MacFarlane. It is worth noting that Farquharson was not a recognised member of the GSL at this time, only receiving honorary membership in 1913 after successfully raising money for the Society's Education Fund.<sup>173</sup> It was also only in 1914 that her role as a conduit between the GSL and ACG was officially recognised, and members from Scotland travelling to London were directed to her for introductions and invites.<sup>174</sup> In a letter to the editor of the *OT*, MacFarlane nevertheless criticised her 1906 account, stating:

At the Council Meetings she saw indignities put on men whose fault was their faithfulness to the Gaelic cause and the constitution of the Comunn. At the General meeting she saw members whose work cannot be reckoned, on the humblest footing, at less than ten times that of the average member, refused the right which is due to every member, no matter

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<sup>170</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 12.

<sup>171</sup> 'The Oban Mod of 1906', *ADG*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1906), 22.

<sup>172</sup> 'Miss L. E. Farquharson of Invercauld', *The Celtic Annual* (1916), 4-7. She was a member of the Féill Executive Committee, with a portrait here: *Souvenir and handbook of Féill a' Chomuinn Ghàidhealaich*, 19. Miss Farquharson, 'The Oireachtas and the Mod of 1906', *ADG*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (1907), 65-70.

<sup>173</sup> 'Gaelic Society of London', GCA, MS 891034, Vol. 4 (1910-1912), 09/06/13. £83:13:10 was raised from the Highland Ball in May 1913.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*, 15/06/14. Farquharson resigned her membership: 22/04/15.

what he is – the right to discuss the minutes. She heard the writer of this characterise the ruling, and he heard him hissed for so characterising it. She made no protest and no effort to know the underlying cause of these occurrences; but she glosses over her story of the business of the Comunn.<sup>175</sup>

MacFarlane ended his letter by asking of ACG's leadership: 'what real title have these men and women to pose as Gaelic leaders and critics?'<sup>176</sup> The correspondence pages subsequently erupted with many correspondents entering into the debate. 'Farsuinn', for example, had defended Farquharson's account, claiming that MacFarlane was angered by it only as it 'did not wax eloquent and indignant on the causes which led to his own resignation.'<sup>177</sup> MacFarlane's rebuked them, stating, quite rightly, that: 'It would take an ingenious historian to write the tale of the Comunn during the last fifteen years without including some of my biography.'<sup>178</sup> Whilst these debates unfolded, it is noteworthy that MacFarlane simultaneously published a series of eight articles on Gaelic Music to the same newspaper, testament to his enduring efforts in the field of Gaelic song collection, composition and historical examination.<sup>179</sup>

Amongst the flurry of letters, one particularly sympathetic correspondent articulated the rift which had taken place in ACG's leadership at the time and the reality of the impact it was having in the Gaelic speaking communities:

Some are wishing to be away apprehensive of something which they cannot understand; others, anxious to steer to the centre of the current where the velocity is greatest, have been dropped overboard. [...] I have never met anyone in the Gaeldom who knew anything about it: have never heard of any propagandist literature, and have only seen wishy-washy circulars, which, showing that the drafters had themselves no settled convictions, would hardly influence even the mind of a child.<sup>180</sup>

Similar comments came from William Gillies, mentioned above as a prominent member of the GSL, echoing the need to target the Gaelic speakers themselves if the language movement were to have any success. Literary competitions in English were fundamentally not going to help the cultivation of the Gaelic language. Gillies wrote:

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<sup>175</sup> MacFarlane, 'An Comunn Gaidhealach', *OT* (19/01/07), 3.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> 'Farsuinn', 'An Comunn Gaidhealach Affairs', *OT* (26/01/07), 3.

<sup>178</sup> MacFarlane, 'An Comunn Gaidhealach', *OT* (20/01/07), 5.

<sup>179</sup> MacFarlane, 'Gaelic Music', *OT* (1907). The instalments appeared in the following editions: 05/01/07, 3; 12/01/07, 3; 19/01/07, 2; 26/01/07, 2; 02/02/07, 3; 09/02/07, 3; 23/02/07, 2; and 02/03/07, 7.

<sup>180</sup> Domhnall Mac Iain Mhic Dhomhnuill, 'An Comunn Gaidhealach', *OT* (30/01/07), 5.



If it is that the masterminds of the movement are afraid of letting the powers-that-be see the drift of the current on which they are gaily sailing, then I pray you let them know for their own sakes, before it is too late, and for the sake of the movement too. It would then more than recompense itself for their departure by the accession of those who have not yet been even appealed to – the rank and file of the Scottish Gael.<sup>181</sup>

Gillies' comments suggest that MacFarlane was perceived as a driving force of this counter-movement, although it does seem itself counter-intuitive that the group which had most adhered to the values and upheld the constitution of ACG, should be the ones who would end up outside of it.

*ADG* had set out to be a propagandist voice for the Gaelic language movement, though, as noted above with the issues facing the Gaelic press and the practical realities of circulating Gaelic texts in the Gaelic speaking areas, if the language movement was to succeed in Scotland, it would have to reach and influence the Gaelic speakers. In 1904, there had been a change in policy on the formation of branches of ACG, with McLeod's study noting that member numbers had subsequently increased from just 194 to almost 4000 by 1912.<sup>182</sup> When the *Mòd* took place in Dingwall in 1905, its first Highland location other than Oban, Malcolm Munro had praised the ambition of ACG as it had 'taken a step which is sure to have good results, for if Gaelic is to be encouraged anywhere, surely it should be first of all in the land of its hereditary.'<sup>183</sup> MacFarlane's commitment to this has been demonstrated through his relationships with Highland school teachers, such as Harriet Stewart and William Cameron, and in the wealth of material which he produced for use in Gaelic speaking Highland schools, as he actively worked to engage these communities.

The change in *ADG*'s editorship, and the subsequent changes in content, can now be seen as a point of departure within ACG in its fulfilment of the objectives which it had set out with when it had been established in 1891. The momentum which had driven ACG up to this point seems to have given way, as it became increasingly inward-looking, celebrating the Gaelic language and its culture increasingly within their own social circles. Fundraising remained an important aspect of their activity, though the impact of ACG at this time on the socio-economic condition of the Gaelic speaking people was negligible. Arguably, MacFarlane generated much of the momentum which had driven ACG in its formative years and into the twentieth century. Changes in its operations and outlook came about despite MacFarlane's protests and attempts to steer it back to its original course. This is pivotal as we seek to understand the central role which he played in the development of the language

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland* (2020), 62.

<sup>183</sup> M. N. Munro, 'An Comunn Gaidhealach', *The Celtic Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1904), 189.

movement, as his retreat from the editorship of *ADG*, and therein the control of the movement's public messaging, brought about the shift in direction and focus of its central organising body.

It has been demonstrated that there were opposing groups and ideologies within the language movement in the early twentieth century. MacFarlane and his supporters, such as Henry Whyte and Ruairaidh Erskine, had maintained the position that the movement should work for the Gaelic language and its culture; while the other, led by various important figures in ACG, including MacLennan, MacGillivray and Burnley Campbell, had appealed more broadly to the interests of the bourgeois patrons that funded the organisation. These issues continued to be played out in the contemporary press and, as the newly installed representative of the Greenock Highland Society, MacFarlane remained a vocal and critical component of the Executive Council of ACG. The debates which followed the initial rift will be examined below in order to distinguish between the complaints which MacFarlane had made about MacLennan and MacGillivray's editorship of *ADG* specifically, and the much broader rows which ensued on the position and values of the organisation as a whole.

### Criticisms

MacFarlane had driven the complaints levelled at the management of *ADG*, though there had been simultaneous structural and operational changes made to ACG's constitution at the 1906 Mòd in Oban that had also sparked controversy. The first of these had been a change in the procedures by which members were appointed to specific offices or the Executive Council; and the second arose in consequence to those changes, which impacted the proposed management of ACG's fundraising event, the Féill, set to take place in October 1907. This discussion will look at each of these events in turn and highlight some of the key factors impacting the critical responses which they resulted in, helping us to better understand MacFarlane's position in ACG at the time, and the discordant nature of the wider language movement during the period.

The first agitator was John Mackay of *The Celtic Monthly*, who, with his own publication to air his frustrations in, wrote a critique of the new voting rules in ACG in January 1907. In this relatively short piece, Mackay explained that ACG had been taken over by 'eloquent gentlemen' who had brought the organisation into financial difficulty and who, having proposed the idea to hold the Féill fundraising event, would inevitably be the recipients of whatever money was raised by it, working under the false pretence that the

funds would be used to further the objectives of the Gaelic language movement.<sup>184</sup> Mackay also mentioned the inclusion of ‘ladies of oratorical gifts into the executive’ and commented that they had given ‘somewhat undignified performances’ when addressing the Executive in that capacity. These women were Ella Carmichael and Burnley Campbell, and Mackay’s critical opinions of women in ACG’s leadership have already been noted.

Commenting on MacFarlane and Whyte’s resignation from the Executive, Mackay wrote:

That two such prominent Gaels as Mr. Henry Whyte (Fionn) and Mr. Malcolm MacFarlane, Elderslie, have declined to join the executive, and have denounced its policy, is sufficient proof of the sad state to which the affairs of this national organisation — which they helped to originate and carry on successfully for fifteen years — have now degenerated.<sup>185</sup>

Mackay then made the complaint that the election processes had been unfair, even illegal, and that the Oban members had effectively taken up all of the available positions in the Executive Council. In a later letter to the *OT*, Mackay expanded on the details, claiming that the number of seats occupied by the Oban members was disproportionate, particularly with regard to the Glasgow representation, which contributed more in terms of fees paid to ACG, and which had ended up with only four members. A previous vice-president, John MacMaster Campbell had lost re-election and Kenneth Campbell had been ‘illegally’ installed in his place. Six others had been elected who were not even ordinary members of ACG; and others were appointed who were already representatives of affiliate Societies to the Executive Council, and so their appointment was unnecessary and deprived others of the opportunity.<sup>186</sup> Archibald Menzies, then president of ACG, Kenneth Campbell and MacLennan composed a response to Mackay’s accusations, printed in March 1907.<sup>187</sup> The group refuted all of the accusations and addressed in particular the claims of financial mismanagement in ACG, assuring Mackay and his readership that the finances were in a fit state, and that all proceeds of the Féill would go towards the objects of the association.<sup>188</sup> These disagreements were also ongoing in the *OT*, with Kenneth Campbell personally refuting claims of unfairness in the Executive elections.<sup>189</sup> These debates continued and took up much space in both the *CM* and the *OT* and, without devoting too much space to the

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<sup>184</sup> Mackay, ‘The Highland Association and the Gaelic Mod’, *CM*, Vol. 9 (Jan, 1907), 70.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> Mackay, ‘An Comunn Gaidhealach: A Reply to the Oban Branch’, *OT* (30/03/07), 3.

<sup>187</sup> A. Menzies, M. MacLennan, K. Campbell, ‘To the Editor’ under the column title: ‘An Comunn Gaidhealach: Its Finances and Mismanagement’, *CM* (March, 1907), 111.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> Campbell, ‘Comunn Gaidhealach an Obain’, *OT* (16/03/07), 5.

business of ACG's election processes, some of the other important aspects of the debates will be dealt with.<sup>190</sup>

MacFarlane entered the debate, recalling a meeting of the Executive which took place in Stirling in June 1907, specifically called to discuss the proper management of the funds which would be raised for the Féill. MacFarlane had first of all insisted that the business should not be discussed at all, as there were members present who had not been constitutionally elected; and that a temporary trust should be established for the Féill, to prevent the funds from 'being squandered in a reckless way.'<sup>191</sup> Burnley Campbell had responded, suggesting that decisions on the issue should be delayed until the next meeting, at which point MacFarlane again left the meeting in protest.<sup>192</sup> He recalled of the president, Menzies, at that meeting:

He was so glad to see me and would have shaken hands; but I put up mine to warn him off and said not until you have done your duty shall I shake hands with you.<sup>193</sup>

Menzies had not, as far as MacFarlane saw it, re-instated his membership rights, as he had refused to read the minutes of the Publication Committee. Menzies did eventually concede that the minutes should be read in the final annual meeting which MacFarlane would attend, though in the intervening time, more pertinent issues had surfaced from MacFarlane's perspective as to the perceived failings of ACG as a whole, and the minutes were subsequently never read.<sup>194</sup>

In the midst of these heated exchanges, Kenneth Campbell accused Mackay, with MacFarlane and Whyte as conspirators, of forming a counter movement that sought to challenge the established order of ACG. Campbell claimed that Mackay's protestations were a result of having lost re-election to the Executive Council himself, and that he had been:

Eager to form a new party - and Heaven knows we have enough already - he succeeded in calling the sympathies of Mr Malcolm MacFarlane and Mr Henry Whyte. The coalition was not a happy one. Those gentlemen have already seceded, and returned to their first love.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> 'Reply by the editor of the Celtic Monthly' appears in the same issue as the letter from Menzies et al: 111-113. Underneath, he prints 'Rules relating to branches', with extensive commentary, 113. In June, 1907, another editorial 'An Comunn Gaidhealach' gives an account of the Executive meeting at Stirling, calling K. Campbell a 'Gaelic Dictator!' and wanting Burnley Campbell to stop publishing her 'long list of aristocratic patrons, and supplies us with a list of those who have shown their sympathy in cash' in the lead up to the Féill: *The Celtic Monthly*, (June, 1907), 176.

<sup>191</sup> MacFarlane, 'An Comunn Gaidhealach: Special Executive Meeting', *OT* (06/04/07), 5. 'Editorial Chat', *ADG*, Vol. 2, No. 10 (1907), 160-161. There is no mention of any of the events discussed here in this editorial, only that the meeting was 'unusually well attended.'

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 13.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> Campbell, 'An Comunn Gaidhealach Troubles', *OT* (11/04/07).

Perhaps Campbell had not been too far from the mark, as just a few days before, Eneas Mackay had written to MacFarlane stating that: ‘it is your duty to gather round you an opposition for there is nothing like party government.’<sup>196</sup> As witnessed in the debates which took place surrounding *ADG*, the formation of two distinct factions within ACG became increasingly apparent. Mackay had even called the opposing group ‘enemies’ in his letter, claiming that they had ‘acted so meanly and broken faith.’<sup>197</sup> These issues have until now been glossed over in the early accounts of ACG and the *Mòd*, though the tensions which were rising between 1906 and 1907 can now be identified as causing irreconcilable division within the language movement as a whole.

Following Campbell’s letter in the *OT*, Whyte had sent MacFarlane an urgent telegram telling him to read the ‘wild letter’ as ‘he includes us.’<sup>198</sup> MacFarlane was quick to respond in the *OT*, clarifying that he was a member of the Executive Council as a representative of an affiliated Society, and had not ‘returned to his first love’ as an elected member; that Menzies was an ‘outsider with a surface knowledge of things’; that the leaders were operating only superficially, without carrying out the necessary real work; and that the level of Gaelic in ACG was then ‘below the grade of fourth-standard schoolboy or girl.’<sup>199</sup> Whyte also clarified that he had only been in attendance as a reporter and by the ‘courtesy of members’, and not as a re-elected member of the Executive Council, which he was not.<sup>200</sup> John Mackay submitted a lengthy reply, which is valuable to give in part here as it clearly illustrates the existence of this robust opposition within ACG and their justifications:

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<sup>196</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 03/04/07. Letter from E. Mackay.

<sup>197</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 06/07/07. Letter from J. Mackay.

<sup>198</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: Undated. Telegram from H. Whyte.

<sup>199</sup> MacFarlane, ‘An Comunn Gaidhealach Troubles’, *OT* (20/04/07), 3.

<sup>200</sup> Whyte, ‘Letter to the Editor’, *OT* (20/04/07), 3.

“Fionn” and “Calum”, since the Association’s inception, performed the great bulk of its practical literary and musical work, and little thanks they ever received for their labours. [...] We are entirely at one in our attitudes towards the Executive; and, what is more, we have the hearty support of many of the leading members and former officials of the Association.

That I attempted to form a “new party” is totally incorrect. [...] I have never asked anyone to join such a party, and in fact the conception is entirely of the doctor’s own making.

Permit me to say, in conclusion, that Messrs Whyte, MacFarlane, and myself are too deeply interested in the great cause which An Comunn represents to wish to do it any harm. We assisted at its birth, and have worked loyally and energetically in its interest all these years. We are not likely to injure our own handiwork; but we do object to the way in which the Association has been arranged of recent years and that a thorough “showing up” was badly needed is evident from the efforts the Executive are presently making to get trustees appointed to prevent the Executive themselves from squandering the proceeds of the bazaar!<sup>201</sup>

Several letters of support were sent to MacFarlane in response to these exchanges. Alex Cameron of the National Bank of Oban, for example, wrote that he had stopped supporting the language movement as a result of the mis-management of the Mòd and the wider ACG leadership, believing that: ‘It is nowadays a race between several people as to who will receive the most recognition from the nobility, and at the same time make the most of things for themselves.’<sup>202</sup> The importance of the patronage of ACG is visible in the *Féill Souvenir Handbook* (1907) which dedicated three pages to listing them individually.<sup>203</sup> Inserted beneath was a comment from King Edward VII (1841-1910) on the position of the Welsh language in Wales, evidently as an example of his sentiments on indigenous languages, though which did not specifically address any of the issues concerning Gaelic in Scotland.<sup>204</sup> Burnley Campbell, convenor of the Féill Executive, came under sustained attack as a consequence of this perceived deference, and as a result of the lack of confidence which MacFarlane and others had in her intentions regarding the distribution of the Féill funds. For example, Eneas Mackay had asked: is it because it was an old Celtic custom that you allowed women on your board of directors?’<sup>205</sup>

There are substantial historical accounts which have portrayed Burnley Campbell in a more favourable light than has been possible here, for example the extensive investigation

<sup>201</sup> Mackay, ‘An Comunn Gaidhealach’, *OT* (15/04/07), 5.

<sup>202</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 15/05/07. Letter from A. Cameron.

<sup>203</sup> *Souvenir and Handbook of Féill a' Chomuinn Ghàidhealaich*, 24-26.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid, 26. On the relationships between Wales and the crown in the period see: John S. Ellis, ‘Reconciling the Celt: British National Identity, Empire, and the 1911 Investiture of the Prince of Wales’, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (1998), 391-418.

<sup>205</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 17/04/07. Letter from E. Mackay.

into her leadership of ACG by Scott.<sup>206</sup> Concluding her arguments, Scott noted that it had been Burnley Campbell's leadership which had 'secured the immediate financial future of the organisation' following the 1907 Féill.<sup>207</sup> It is somewhat unfortunate that Burnley Campbell was so negatively perceived by MacFarlane and his group of supporters, though these relationships do serve as vital evidence of the duality of the Gaelic movement and the tensions which existed within it.

These exchanges in the contemporary press shed much needed light on the formation and existence of an opposing body within the Gaelic language movement at this time. This group was centred around MacFarlane and directly challenged the leadership of ACG. It is important to recognise that this was a critical juncture in the history of ACG, as some within the nationalist movement in Scotland increasingly sought to incorporate the Gaelic language into its own broader campaigns. With the language movement in disarray, and a distinctive faction emerging which were opposed, within the language context at least, to ACG's established deference to the British state, figures such as Erskine and Alexander McLaren of the recently formed Crofters and Cottars Association, began to directly appeal to MacFarlane for support, as the perceived leader of this splinter group.

In May 1907, MacFarlane received a letter from McLaren, asking for donations and for MacFarlane to circulate the details of the organisation amongst his networks.<sup>208</sup> MacFarlane sent five shillings and correspondence between the two continued, with a particular emphasis in their exchanges on the exclusion of the land issue in the contemporary Gaelic movement. As demonstrated, MacFarlane had professed an admiration of the radical activist and land rights campaigner, John Murdoch, though he had decidedly aligned himself with the culturally nationalistic efforts of the Gaelic language movement rather than in overtly political matters. However, the correspondences from McLaren and then Erskine suggest that MacFarlane was at this critical point considering broadening the scope of his efforts to include the socio-economic, and therefore political, conditions of the Gaelic speaking people. This was perhaps a consequence of the enduring influence that John Murdoch had on MacFarlane's ideology.

Erskine had distanced himself as a patron of ACG following the contentious editorial in 1906 and in a revealing letter he expressed his intentions to form a new party, outwith the reach of that organisation. This new 'active party', he wrote, would have to be:

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<sup>206</sup> Scott, 'With heart and voice ever devoted to the cause'.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>208</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 21/5/07. Letter from A. McLaren. McLaren went on to mention that his mother had known MacFarlane's father, John: NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 20/6/07. Letter from A. McLaren.

absolutely sound on the land question [...] and opposed to Parliamentaryism (English) in any shape or form. A party in which we can talk of Gaelic politics without the contaminating stinks imported from Westminster is what is required if our country is to be saved from the death in life which threatens it.’<sup>209</sup>

He proposed McLaren as a potential recruit to this shared cause, suggesting that his newest literary venture, the Gaelic newspaper, *Alba*, could be used as its propagandist voice. Erskine wanted ‘the best writers and the best spirits, “Fionn” and the rest.’<sup>210</sup> Correspondence between the three men was forthcoming at this point, as McLaren expressed similar distaste for the aristocratic leadership of ACG as MacFarlane had done, with ‘Sir so and so or Lord this or that in the chair.’<sup>211</sup> McLaren’s enthusiastic letter went on:

You speak of a propagandism that would have in view the upkeep of the Gaelic language combined with helping to keep the people on the land: Most certainly that is what is wanted. What is wanted is something to rouse up Highlanders to think of the condition of the Highlands at the present moment. [...] The object of the Old Land League is not dead but it is very much asleep and that is one reason why the swells get things their own way in Highland and Gaelic matters. [...] I hope we may live long enough to see much needed reforms brought about in the Highlands, and perhaps Home Rule for Scotland.<sup>212</sup>

These remarks are themselves striking for their hubris and insight into the class-consciousness of these urban Gaelic networks and must have resonated with MacFarlane in his admiration of Murdoch and his values. Whilst MacFarlane does not appear to have supported Home Rule specifically, this extract suggests an interest in using some of the resources of the Gaelic language movement to improve the socio-economic circumstances of the Gaelic speaking people. It has been a limiting aspect of this study that his replies to so many of these letters have not yet been uncovered, as the manner in which MacFarlane envisaged being able to ‘keep people on the land’ may have taken myriad forms and would be invaluable insight into this aspect of his character.

This was the final correspondence on the matter from McLaren at the time, as MacFarlane’s response must have discouraged the group to pursue the venture any further. A reply was received from Erskine which supports this notion. Erskine wrote: ‘a protest such as I had in mind might be as you think a trifle premature. Our numbers are still few, though we are a growing force and it would not do to give the enemy cause to blaspheme or to attempt to ridicule us.’<sup>213</sup> The issue fell away, though Erskine’s own pursuits of Scottish nationalism would continue to impact his relationship with MacFarlane, as they went on to

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<sup>209</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 27/06/07. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> NLS Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 15/07/07. Letter from A. McLaren.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 17/11/07. Letter from R. Erskine.



collaborate outside of ACG, and were successful in establishing an organisation outside of it, the Gaelic Academy (Àrd-Chomhairle na Gàidhlig). MacFarlane was, however, recognised long before the establishment of this organisation as a leading figure in the language movement, and even at the head of a counter movement within the ranks of ACG. The evidence also suggests that the rift which emerged in ACG can be attributed in part to the transfer of editorial control of *ADG* from MacFarlane to MacLennan in 1906. This series of events witnesses the evolution of MacFarlane's role within the language movement, as well as the structural disintegration of ACG as a united cultural organisation with a shared ideology and cause.

### Reforms and Resignation

In August 1907, MacFarlane composed a series of reforms to the ACG, in a final attempt to impact its operations and focus. Drafts of these, which had been revised and edited with help from John Mackintosh, are located amongst MacFarlane's papers and correspondence.<sup>214</sup> The reforms included a revision of the rules for life and ordinary members; a change to the criteria necessary to be eligible to vote on ACG matters; the establishment of additional branches, and for them to be given representation in the Executive Council; and that a majority of 75% would have to agree in order to bestow an honorary membership, with the subsequent provision that this could only be considered if that person had substantially contributed to the Gaelic language movement. The reforms also suggested that all of ACG funds would be paid into a central bank, only accessible with the signatures of the president, vice-president and the treasurer who would act as trustees; and that Councils and Committee structures should be revised and stream-lined.<sup>215</sup> MacFarlane further requested that the Executive Council should be disbanded immediately for a fair election process to occur. On the proposed trustees for the Féill, who would act as 'conscience for the Comunn', MacFarlane argued that it was un-constitutional and that its purpose was simply to facilitate a way for those without a real interest in the condition of the Gaelic language, to contribute financially to the organisation.<sup>216</sup> McLeod has observed that the Féill had prioritised the promotion of the arts and industries of the Gaelic communities over the Gaelic language

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<sup>214</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 47: 16/08/07. Draft with comments from J. Mackintosh.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 47. Undated draft of Proposed Reforms.

itself, and that it served to ‘reinforce the sense of disconnection between the bourgeois leadership of An Comunn and the ordinary population of the Gàidhealtachd.’<sup>217</sup>

These were radical proposals, though MacFarlane acknowledged that they would likely be rejected by those ‘who seem to want to remain ignorant of what is going on or who are too indifferent or sycophantic to try to free the association from the net that is being woven around it.’<sup>218</sup> The reforms were eventually rejected by the Executive Council. It is noteworthy, however, that MacFarlane made this attempt, despite the intensity of the events and debates which had punctuated the previous few years.

MacFarlane had at this time suggested to John Mackay that he was considering his resignation and withdrawing his proposed reforms from consideration. Mackay responded that this was useless and that he may as well stay and ‘enjoy the lark!’<sup>219</sup> Mackay was certainly having fun, as he had been asked to publish an account with portraits in the *CM* of the Farquharson family, mentioned previously for the account given of the 1906 Mòd. Mackay reported to MacFarlane that he had told her no: ‘we don’t care a hang for all the aristocratic snots in the Trust.’<sup>220</sup>

MacFarlane did not resign, as Mackay had advised, but rather was not elected to the Executive Council at the next meeting in the St. Andrews Halls in Glasgow, 1907.<sup>221</sup> He had secured only seventeen out of a possible seventy votes.<sup>222</sup> Presumably, he could have remained in his role as the representative of the Greenock Highland Society, though he had evidently decided to stand for election independently. That Society later wrote to MacFarlane with ‘high appreciations of your service and [...] regret at your finding it necessary to withdraw from ACG.’<sup>223</sup> Reflecting on the circumstances of his final departure from ACG, MacFarlane reported:

After that the voting in of the Executive Committee proceeded, and when summed up I had only 17 votes out of about 70 and was outside where I was glad to be; and I have been outside ever since, after all my work for the Society which no unpaid man in the Society has ever come up to.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland*, (2020), 61.

<sup>218</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 47. Undated draft of Proposed Reforms.

<sup>219</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 28/09/07. Letter from John Mackay

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> ‘Meeting of the Executive Council’, *ADG*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1907), 41-42. No report is made of MacFarlane’s departure. He is noted as a member of a committee to consider the next secretary, in place of J. Mackintosh, though this could have been done without being a member of the Executive Council. Likely, MacFarlane withdrew his membership completely at this time and so would not have acted on this committee, and is not named on any others.

<sup>222</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 14.

<sup>223</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 14: 11/01/08. Letter from A. Nicolson.

<sup>224</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 14.

MacFarlane's official involvement with ACG ended in 1907, though he never completely separated from it. Evidence from his papers demonstrates that he was in almost constant correspondence with members of his networks who had remained inside the organisation. Some would report positively to MacFarlane on its progress and activities, though the majority would write with continuations of the criticisms which MacFarlane had cited in the period between 1906 and 1907. For example, Henry Whyte often reported of Burnley Campbell's bad Gaelic, even asking MacFarlane in 1909 to correct a Gaelic circular she had printed, as he had also done with the Gaelic School Syllabus.<sup>225</sup> Whyte complained: 'What audacity of her to translate for An Comunn. She really takes the cake for chuck.'<sup>226</sup> This is particularly revealing as not only did MacFarlane continue to discuss the business and operations of ACG consistently in the years after leaving it, he may in fact have continued to work for them, albeit unbeknownst to them.

MacFarlane had also been appealed to at several stages by members of ACG to re-join the organisation, though he never did. For example, Donald MacPhie (Domhnall Mac-a-Phì, 1852-1922), then editor of *ADG*, wrote to him in 1910 expressing his unhappiness at the situation:

Speaking plainly, Calum, I regret to see a man of your calibre, in spite of your faults, remain outside the C.G. like Achilles sulking in his tent. I am beginning to see that there is need of men who are able, or have the courage to call a spade a spade.<sup>227</sup>

Conversely, Erskine had remarked that MacFarlane had done 'the only thing consistent with your own dignity and self-respect' by leaving ACG, which he believed was as 'shifting in conduct and principle as the quick sands themselves.'<sup>228</sup> MacFarlane's papers contain numerous similar exchanges with other prominent figures in the language movement, though there is not space to outline them all here. Of particular note are drafts of letters which MacFarlane wrote to the GSG in 1911, threatening to resign from that organisation too if they continued with their intentions to donate financially to ACG. He contended that they were 'ten times richer than itself [the GSG], has paid officials, and a reputation baser than any society of any standing in the land, and an administration of the loosest and most wasteful kind.'<sup>229</sup> He asked the secretary for one good reason for him to remain a member of that organisation, dramatically stating: 'If you can I will stay. If you can't I go.'<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, 15: 23/08/09. Letter from H. Whyte.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> MacBean, 'Donald MacPhie', *The Celtic Who's Who*, 108-109. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 16: 13/05/10. Letter from D. MacPhee.

<sup>228</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 3/5/11. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>229</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 4/5/11. Copy of a letter to the GSG from MacFarlane.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

These negative attitudes towards ACG have been the prevailing image of MacFarlane and his legacy to date. However, the question of why he had continued to enter its competitions has until now been difficult to answer. As already noted, he had edited Gaelic texts which were submitted to the Mòd and had taken a prominent role as both an organiser and participant of many of the Mòd competitions during his time within ACG. After his departure, however, MacFarlane had entered a literary competition for the 1913 Mòd, which was to translate a passage of John Milton's (1608–1674) *Paradise Lost* (1667).<sup>231</sup> The work was later printed by MacFarlane's friend and colleague, Malcolm C. MacLeod (1872-1954), alongside a highly flattering biography in *The Celtic Annual* in 1916.<sup>232</sup> We also know that his 1914 Gaelic play, *Am Mosgladh Mòr*, was revised, heavily edited and then submitted to the Mòd competition in 1925.<sup>233</sup>

The critical detail that we had been missing, evidently, was that in 1907 MacFarlane had in fact wanted to remain inside of ACG, and had expended a substantial amount of effort and time drafting a series of reforms which may have brought the organisation back to its original objectives. Perhaps it was his pride that stopped him from remaining inside the Executive in an affiliated capacity, though this was an option open to him. However, the work which he then carried out in the service of the Gaelic language, operating outside of ACG, must now be re-evaluated. Arguably, had MacFarlane been re-elected and ACG not enacted his reforms, he likely would have resigned at that point. Nevertheless, it is vital to note that his preferred route for the Gaelic language movement to take in 1907 was with the support of the central body which he had been so instrumental in establishing back in 1891. That his proposals were rejected, that he was not re-elected and that he then resigned any avenue to remain inside of ACG, demonstrate the acute divergence which that organisation took at this point, away from the ideals of its original constitution.

## Conclusion

This chapter has continued the chronological examination of MacFarlane's activities within An Comunn Gàidhealach, focussing its attention on the establishment and editorship of its first literary magazine, *An Deo-Ghréine*, printed in 1905. It has illuminated the many complex debates which its institution gave rise to, fundamentally centred around what the

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<sup>231</sup> MacFarlane, 'Paradise Lost (Mar Chailleadh Sealbh air Parras)', *The Celtic Annual* (1916), 29-33. M. C. MacLeod, 'Calum MacPhàrlain', *The Celtic Annual*, 26-28.

<sup>232</sup> Thomson, 'MacLeod, Malcolm Chisolm', *Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, 183.

<sup>233</sup> MacFarlane, *Am Mosgladh Mòr*, (An Dara Duais, Mòd, 1925).

message was that ACG wanted to present to its readership. As a propagandist organ for the Gaelic language movement, MacFarlane and others intended to inspire the Gaelic speakers to read and cultivate new Gaelic literature; to engage with contemporary discourses of the movement; and crucially to support ACG achieve its objectives to rehabilitate the Gaelic language. This was evidenced in the editorials and articles which were produced under MacFarlane's editorship, and in the vast amount of time and energy which he devoted to the magazine and its success. The discussion has also included original insight into many of the key members of the Gaelic literary circles at the beginning of the twentieth century, using the vast archival materials of MacFarlane's correspondences to gain an intimate view of the relationships, tensions and wider debates taking place.

When the editorship of ADG changed to Malcolm MacLennan in 1906, there was a decided change in the magazine's priorities, as it increasingly published English language articles and stories, and began to express overtly political and imperial sympathies. MacFarlane had instead promoted a sense of Gaelic nationalism, identity and pride. This concept could at once exist independently, and as part of a sense of British identity, though MacFarlane had largely avoided political advocacy in his own writings. The rift which emerged inside of ACG can now be seen as emerging amongst and as a result of these ideological differences, and the divergent intentions of the two editors of *ADG*. This is particularly revealing as we examine the impact which MacFarlane had on the evolution of the language movement as he was at this point agitating for it to remain on course. The path which it subsequently took was in contradiction to that which MacFarlane believed would have had the best outcomes for the Gaelic language and its speakers.

The chapter has provided necessary insight into the divergent groups operating within ACG during this period, revealing in detail the key protagonists and the ideological points of resistance which existed between the two emerging factions. MacFarlane has been identified as the leader of the movement which sought to maintain the values of ACG as they had been established in 1891. The opposing faction instead were steering the organisation towards a much less culturally engaged agenda, prioritising instead the celebration of Gaelic language and culture, though largely carried out in English and with little impact on the Gaelic speaking communities. Vital evidence in establishing these events has been the proposed drafts of reforms which MacFarlane had created, which evidenced much needed detail on the specific financial and organisational changes that was impacting its development and causing such discord within its ranks.

The value of the extant papers and correspondences of MacFarlane cannot be overstated. They have informed and led this substantial account of MacFarlane's work inside of

ACG from its outset, and as the editor of its first magazine, *ADG*. They have also illuminated the detail of MacFarlane's exit from ACG which has contributed to our revised understanding of him and the events which took place. MacLeod informed us that the events of the final meeting of the Executive Council had been 'the final straw' for MacFarlane, concluding that he had himself decided to resign.<sup>234</sup> However, it has now been demonstrated that he in fact perceived his association with ACG leadership to be untenable after the low show of confidence which the majority of its leadership had demonstrated in him in the process of the elections. With so much of our current understanding of MacFarlane based on the assumption that he had resigned from ACG in protest, this new detail is highly revelatory, and underlines the need for this fresh examination of MacFarlane's work and his contributions to the Gaelic language movement. As it was at this stage in MacFarlane's life, he had removed himself from the central organ of the movement which he had played a significant role in establishing. This signifies to modern scholarship a moment in which the future of ACG, had it been in MacFarlane and his allies' hands, could have been dramatically altered. It also demonstrates the unwavering commitment that MacFarlane had to the Gaelic language, as he relentlessly refused to compromise his own position in the face of institutional pressure.

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<sup>234</sup> MacLeod, 'Malcom MacFarlane', 310.

## Chapter Three: Àrd-Chomhairle na Gàidhlig

### Introduction

The period from the turn of the twentieth century until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 was crucial in determining the direction of the Gaelic movement in Scotland, as several groups agitated and evolved away from the decidedly cultural agenda of An Comunn Gàidhealach (ACG). Frank Thompson has termed this as the movement's 'political potential', as so many opportunities arose which, if taken, could have strengthened the position of Gaelic language and culture even to the present day.<sup>1</sup> He wrote that the language had been:

the basis of political change in favour of that language and its culture in many countries in Europe and in Scandinavia and [...] either the lessons presented by the history of linguistic revivals were not taken up, perhaps as being irrelevant, or their implications for Gaelic were not fully realised.<sup>2</sup>

This study has already examined some of the key events and disputes which challenged, or even resisted, the non-political agenda of ACG, as it has delineated the complex web of activity in the Gaelic sphere until the point of MacFarlane's departure from that organisation in 1907. MacFarlane had attempted to re-centre ACG through a series of proposed reforms and clarifications to its constitution, believing that this central body could, if properly organised and directed, have a real impact on the progress of the language movement as he saw it. In the midst of this, Ruairaidh Erskine's calls to align the Gaelic language movement with an overtly politically nationalist agenda went largely unanswered, as he looked to MacFarlane in particular for assistance to promote the Gaelic elements of the Scottish national consciousness.

This chapter will focus on MacFarlane's activities outside of ACG, though as noted above, the organisation continued to impact and arguably influence his work for the Gaelic language, despite his ongoing criticisms of it. Continuing the chronological approach taken so far, and similarly substantiated by the valuable resources of MacFarlane's personal correspondences and papers, this discussion will consider the period beginning in 1909 and leading up to 1914. The tensions and debates which had been present in ACG in the earlier

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Thompson, 'Gaelic in Politics', *TGSI*, Vol. 47 (1972), 81.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

period continued to impact the development of the Gaelic language movement. Here we will deepen our understanding of the groups that have been identified so far and which emerged on either side of these debates, furthering the contention that the language movement during the early twentieth century was deeply divided.

The first section will consider the continued efforts of Erskine to incorporate the Gaelic language and its workers into a broader nationalist movement. This will begin with his establishment of the literary journal, *An Sgeulaiche* (AS), and his continued political enticements which aimed to recruit MacFarlane to the nationalist movement. It will then turn to other nationalistically agitating groups, predominantly associates of Erskine, who were operating from London and sought similar goals. This includes the early iteration of the Scots National League (SNL) in particular and the interactions of some of its key figures with MacFarlane at the time. These were the political forces which looked to MacFarlane as a leader of the Gaelic language movement and therefore as one who could solidify it as the ‘basis of political change.’ This was being seen in Ireland with the evolution of The Gaelic League (GL), and in the gradual politicisation of its cultural agenda in the lead up to the events of 1916.<sup>3</sup> This was the ‘political potential’ of the Gaelic language movement of Scotland in the early decades of the twentieth century.

The second half of this chapter will then outline using substantial archival evidence the establishment and operations of the organisation which MacFarlane instead chose to institute, The Gaelic Academy (GA) (Àrd-Chomhairle na Gàidhlig). This organisation was established with the objectives to standardise and modernise Gaelic as a living and fully functional language. Ruairidh Erskine, involved alongside MacFarlane with forming the GA, also established the Scottish Society of Letters (SSL) (Comunn Litreachas na h-Albann) in 1913, with the remit to encourage and facilitate Gaelic publishing. The existence of both of these groups goes some way to challenging McLeod’s observation that: ‘Gaelic writers and cultural activists during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries almost all conceded that Gaelic had no ‘commercial value.’<sup>4</sup> This discussion will propose that there were organisations and workers within the Gaelic movement who were determined to strengthen its commercial value and its prospects as a living national language. It will suggest that both MacFarlane and Erskine were instrumental as leaders in determining the direction and successes of these alternative movements, and that even within these subsequent groups there were ideological division and dispute. MacFarlane believed that a sense of Gaelic nationalism and identity could exist independently and in complement to

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<sup>3</sup> See: Hutchinson, *Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*.

<sup>4</sup> McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 58.



Scottish or indeed British national identity. Erskine believed, during this period at least, that Gaelic language and culture should be held up as marker of Scottish identity, distinct from its British or Imperial context. Both were nevertheless active throughout the period, agitating against the cultural confines of ACG and looking for a practical solution and future for the Gaelic language itself.

### Ruaraidh Erskine and the Scots National League

MacFarlane had been in contact with several key figures in the Gaelic cultural and political spheres, both inside and outside of Scotland. It has been discussed that he had close links with the Gaelic League (GL) in Dublin: corresponding in the early years of the twentieth century with many high-profile characters, such as Douglas Hyde and Eoin MacNeill; as a contributor to influential Irish language publications, such as *An Claidheamh Soluis* (ACS); that he was able to read and write Irish; and was a member of the Glasgow Gaelic League. We have also considered MacFarlane's pan-Celtic associations, as he met with and translated works by European Celticists, for example Kuno Meyer. Pan-Celtic movements, involving Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Brittany began around 1901, with the establishment of the publication *Celtia* (1901-1904), under the editorship of prominent Celticist, Edmund E. Fournier (1868-1933).<sup>5</sup> The associated Pan-Celtic Congress was held in Dublin in 1901, with Erskine as the official Scottish delegate, though MacFarlane was also present and delivered the paper 'Highland Gaelic Music'.<sup>6</sup> MacFarlane was embedded in this pan-Celtic atmosphere and corresponded with Fournier in 1902, asking that he review John MacFadyen's work, *Sgeulaiche nan Caol* (Storyteller of the Channels, 1902).<sup>7</sup>

In London, a key organisation was the Gaelic Society of London (GSL), which we have noted at various points in the discussion above, as they had maintained close links to ACG and several of its members were highly active in the Gaelic literary networks. In the period under discussion here, we will focus on MacFarlane's relationships and correspondences with key figures of the GSL and the SNL, including Erskine in the first instance, before going on to consider others such as William Gillies, Kenneth MacKenzie (Coinneach Òg MacCoinnich) and Ronald MacInnes. Hugh Cameron Gillies (1856-1925)

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<sup>5</sup> Linde Lunney, 'Fournier d'Albe, Edmund Edward', *DIB* (2009) <<https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.009268.v1>> [Accessed: 08/02/24].

<sup>6</sup> Hunter, 'The Gaelic Connection', 192.

<sup>7</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 133: 26/03/02. Letter from E. E. Fournier.

was another prominent London Gael, member of the GSL and close friend of MacFarlane.<sup>8</sup> Detail will be given on his and MacFarlane's relationship within the context of the GA in the second half of this chapter. For now, let us very briefly consider the political landscape and the issues impacting Gaelic affairs in Scotland in the lead-up to the pre-war period of 1909-1914, before turning to Erskine's continued activism and the establishment of the SNL itself. This early group is highly valuable as evidence of MacFarlane being appealed to as a leader of the Gaelic language movement at the time.

Politics in Scotland and as represented at Westminster had been shifting under mounting pressure for Home Rule, inextricably linked to the Home Rule developments in Ireland at the time. William Gladstone's (1809-1898) liberal governments had proposed two unsuccessful bills on Irish Home Rule in 1886 and 1893; before the third, put forward by Herbert Asquith's (1852-1928) liberal government in 1912 was passed, leading to constitutional crisis and civil unrest throughout Ireland.<sup>9</sup> In Scotland, a similar piece of legislation had been voted through parliament in 1913, known as the Scottish Home Rule Bill, though neither took effect as the onset of war put a continued pause on their delivery. As noted throughout this discussion, there were strong links between the cultural and political movements of Ireland and Scotland during the period, and inevitably one impacted the development of the other to varying degrees.<sup>10</sup>

At the centre of the Home Rule campaigns in Scotland had been the Scottish Home Rule Association (SHRA) (1886-1900), agitating under a separatist agenda for political autonomy from Westminster, though falling short of what would later become a movement for complete independence. The Young Scots Society (YSS) (1900-1920) similarly campaigned for Home Rule in Scotland, operating under a liberal umbrella and galvanised by the rejection of Scottish land reform bills in 1907 and 1908.<sup>11</sup> Ruairidh Erskine had been the vice-president of the SHRA in 1892 and was also involved with the YSS in its

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<sup>8</sup> Colm Ó Baoill, 'Hugh Cameron Gillies (c.1856–1925): A Biographical Sketch', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 25, 263–301.

<sup>9</sup> H. C. G. Matthew, 'Gladstone, William Ewart', *ODNB*, (2004) < <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10787> > [Accessed: 16/07/24]. H. C. G. Matthew, 'Asquith, Herbert Henry', *ODNB*, (2015), < <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30483> > [Accessed: 16/06/24]. See: James Doherty, *Irish Liberty, British Democracy: The Third Irish Home Rule Crisis, 1909-1914* (Cork, 2019) and James McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis* (Dublin, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> See Naomi Lloyd-Jones, 'Liberalism, Scottish Nationalism and the Home Rule Crisis, c.1886–93', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 123, No. 539 (2014), 862-887. It is also interesting to consider the impact of Irish unionism on Scottish Home Rule thinking and developments. See Peter Dunn: Forsaking their 'Own flesh and blood'? Ulster unionism, Scotland and home rule, 1886-1914', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 146 (2010), 203-220.

<sup>11</sup> Ewan Cameron, 'Young Scots' Society (act.1900–c.1920)', *ODNB* (2010), < <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/100417> > [Accessed 10/05/2024].

development.<sup>12</sup> London-based Scottish interest organisations were also increasingly politicised and served as fertile ground for politically nationalistic ideas to take root.

Erskine had set out in the early twentieth century with a largely cultural and literary interest in the Gaelic language. This became increasingly politicised, as by 1905, with the inception of *Guth na Bliadhna* (GNB), he looked to ‘fuse a radical Scottish nationalism with the preservation of the national language.’<sup>13</sup> In 1907, he had been heavily influenced by the separatist agenda of Sinn Féin in Ireland, instituting his weekly Gaelic newspaper, *Alba*, to cultivate those ideas in Scotland.<sup>14</sup> We have mentioned Erskine’s earlier assurances to MacFarlane that this paper would act as a propagandist publication for the new movement which he was at that time trying to form. In the years which followed, Erskine’s objective became to ‘Celticise the whole of Scotland, building on the bases created by An Comunn Gàidhealach, the Gaelic Society of Inverness and other bodies, but working outside the confines of these bodies.’<sup>15</sup>

By 1909, despite the reluctance which MacFarlane had demonstrated earlier to join a decidedly nationalist cause, and the caution which he had advised should be taken, Erskine had nevertheless persisted, talking of politics and the nationalist agenda often in their regular correspondences. For example, when Lloyd George’s budget had been announced in 1909, Erskine commented that it was only meant to ‘plunder Scotland and Ireland for the benefit of England. How any sane man can remain a Unionist [...] baffles me.’<sup>16</sup> This is particularly revealing of the confidence with which Erskine expressed his political opinions. MacFarlane appears to have been much more reserved in this regard and perhaps even increasingly conservative in his older years. In a letter responding to ACG’s handling of the death of King Edward VII in May 1910, Erskine stated that ‘the whole world seems to have gone daft [...] and our poor Gaels are licking up the spittle along with the best of them.’<sup>17</sup> He subsequently went so far as to say that he had seen a stronger national spirit in Canada, Australia and New Zealand than he had from the Scottish Gaels: ‘a poor lot for the most part and quite unworthy of their language.’<sup>18</sup> This is a compelling yet depressing statement, and indicative of a wider discourse which simultaneously patronised the Gaelic people and their way of life, whilst also longing for it. MacFarlane had exhibited a similar idea in some of his own writings. These were picturesque visions of an idealised Highlander, what Thomson described as a

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<sup>12</sup> Thompson, ‘Gaelic in Politics’, 80.

<sup>13</sup> Cairns, *No Language!*, 42.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>15</sup> Thompson, ‘Gaelic in Politics’, 83.

<sup>16</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 15: 26/05/09. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>17</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 16: 13/05/10. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>18</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 16: 03/06/10. Letter from R. Erskine.

‘pretty picture postcard of a song’ when commenting on MacFarlane’s Gaelic song ‘Mo Dhachaidh’.<sup>19</sup> Highlighting the inactivity of the Gaelic speakers, and frustrations therein, was a common theme in the propagandist literature of the Gaelic movement, outlined already. However, Erskine made this comment in private, and not in an effort to inspire or stir any person to action. He was also an aristocrat and, although he claimed to be ‘for the people’, there was evidently a separation between the working-class Gaelic communities and the Gaelic literary networks of Glasgow and Edinburgh, which were in their own ways innately elitist.

Fundamentally, Erskine wanted to unleash the potential of the Gaelic language movement, including the ‘poor lot’ of speakers who remained in traditional Gaelic communities, to address, in tandem with existing Scottish nationalist groups, the socio-economic issues facing the Scottish people as a whole. It is valuable to note too that whilst Erskine was sending these highly animated letters to MacFarlane, we have been mostly unable to see his responses. From examining the responses which MacFarlane elicited from Erskine we can infer that he continually sought to return him, and the conversation, back to the Gaelic language and the work being carried out in that direction between them. This seems to have been a trend in their mutual correspondence, as Erskine would often write lengthy letters complaining of recent political developments in the first instance, whereas the second would concern the practical issues of editing Gaelic materials for his publications. In the lead up to and including the outbreak of war in 1914, Erskine’s political intentions became increasingly at odds with MacFarlane’s cultural and language-based ambitions. These competing ideologies would impact the practical successes of their attempts to restore and revitalise the Gaelic language, and their ‘political potential’, which was not fulfilled.

The SNL was founded in London by Erskine and William Gillies, its president. The organisation’s secretary, Kenneth MacKenzie, wrote to MacFarlane as early as 1909 for advice and leadership:

Several here have long ago felt the real position in Scots National affairs – so well voiced in your most excellent letter in this month’s People’s Journal – and are, thro’ the medium of Comunn nan Albannach, making an attempt to readjust the Gaels view of the movement. We feel, however, that little can be done here, unless our Socy be affiliated to a parent Socy in Scotland – which we hope may soon be set a-foot.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Thomson, *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry*, 232. MacFarlane, ‘Mo Dhachaidh’, *A’ Choisir-Chiùil* (1900), 34.

<sup>20</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 15: 03/04/09: letter from Coinneach Òg MacCoinnich of SNL.

Looking for leadership, in another letter in 1910 MacKenzie wrote: ‘We young men are made of the right stuff; but we lack a leader.’<sup>21</sup> MacFarlane remained a member of the Gaelic Society of Glasgow (GSG) at this time, though evidently it was not an existing organisation which the SNL hoped to be incorporated into, but a new one which MacFarlane would ideally be a part of, if not lead. The date of the letter from MacKenzie is also revealing. According to the *Encyclopaedia of British and Irish Political Organizations*, the SNL was not established until 1911, while Cairns’ biography of Erskine dates it to 1910, making this letter to MacFarlane in 1909 valuable evidence of its earlier formation.<sup>22</sup> This first group should also be distinguished from the later SNL, founded in 1920, again by Erskine and Gillies.<sup>23</sup> This rejuvenated organisation of 1920 again campaigned for Scottish independence over Home Rule, rejecting the unionist-nationalist model which could be achieved through devolution alone. MacFarlane and Erskine do not seem to have agreed on the prospect of Scottish independence or where the Gaelic language and its culture fit into those debates in the 1910’s and 1920’s.

It is also worthwhile to note the relative lack of connection between MacFarlane and Gillies, as the co-founder and president of the SNL. Gillies had corresponded with MacFarlane as a representative of the GSL in the years 1904-1905, speaking cordially on issues such as the establishment and prospects of *ADG*; the *Mòd*; and the possibility of MacFarlane giving a lecture to them in London.<sup>24</sup> MacFarlane also had an undated manuscript of Gillies’ Gaelic play, *The Four Curses of the Gael* (*Ceithir Mallachdan nan Gael*), the same play which was mentioned as having been burnt at a GSL event; and which would likely have appealed to MacFarlane’s personal values. Gillies’ four curses were: drink, fear of the clergy, the bondage of the army and the landlords.<sup>25</sup> There are several letters which demonstrate that MacFarlane abstained from alcohol. For example, Whyte Grant replied to a letter from MacFarlane complaining of writer’s block with advice which included the following: ‘as long as it is not a whiskey shop, and I know it can’t be that!’<sup>26</sup> We do not know if MacFarlane simply read Gillies’ play, and it had remained with his correspondences and papers, or if he was in any way involved in editing the manuscript. Nevertheless, the two men do not appear to have remained in correspondence after 1905.

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<sup>21</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 16: 17/05/10, letter from K. MacKenzie.

<sup>22</sup> Cairns, *No Language!*, 47.

<sup>23</sup> Gillies, ‘Liam MacGill’Iosa’, 503-533.

<sup>24</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol.11: 03/09/05 where Gillies writes of *ADG*: ‘may it shine like An Claidheamh Soluis.’; and in Fol. 11, 12/10/05 where Gillies invites MacFarlane to London.

<sup>25</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol.78. Hand-written copy of *The Four Curses of the Gael*. The play appears to have been printed by a Kent publisher, available in the MacLean Room of the Celtic & Gaelic department, University of Glasgow: Ref: Box 25:5.

<sup>26</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 14: 16/03/08. Letter from K. W. Grant.

This is somewhat odd as they had such similar outputs as Gaelic writers and activists: both operated in the same Gaelic networks in London; and both had been supporters of John Murdoch. Gillies had met John Murdoch around 1887 and the two had remained friends until the end of Murdoch's life.<sup>27</sup> As MacFarlane had also been in regular contact with Murdoch and other members of the GSL, and therefore operated in the same networks, perhaps it was Gillies' zealous pursuit towards Scottish nationalism which had separated the two men.

Returning to the SNL of 1909-1911, they have since been described as a 'relatively unimportant group', distinguished from mainstream nationalism by their 'taint of Gaelic separatism'.<sup>28</sup> From correspondence between members of the group and MacFarlane, it is possible to see the SNL's incorporation of the Gaelic separatist agenda into their more mainstream intentions towards Scottish nationalism, and set to position it as one of the central components of a united Scottish identity. The inaugural meeting of the group, as noted by Cairns in his work on Erskine and by Bob Purdie in his discussion of the Irish influence on Scottish nationalism, set this out clearly:

The Gaelic spirit must be revived within us. The fire and enthusiasm that should characterise the dweller among the hills must be welded with the sturdiness and perseverance of the peasant farmer of Lowlands. For this union we must work. Our aim, our ideal should be a Scottish Scotland.<sup>29</sup>

One way in which this was intended to be achieved was through agitating for improved Gaelic education in the Highlands and Islands. This was in a similar fashion to what the GL were doing in Ireland, exerting 'continuous pressure [...] at all levels of the state educational system.'<sup>30</sup> ACG had worked in this arena too in its formative years; and MacFarlane in particular had advocated for and produced materials to support the improvement of Gaelic provision in Highland schools. From MacFarlane's papers we also know that the SNL were involved in campaigning for local School Board elections in Scotland, with materials suggesting only to vote for those candidates which supported the teaching of Gaelic in Highland schools and in maintaining the £10 Gaelic grant.<sup>31</sup> Leading community figures such as William Cameron were calling for the same, and that the grant be added to the

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<sup>27</sup> Gillies, 'Liam MacGill'Iosa', 511.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Barberis, 'Comunn nan Albannach (Scots National League)', *Encyclopaedia of British and Irish Political Organizations: Parties, Groups and Movements of the Twentieth Century* (2005), 389.

<sup>29</sup> Cited from Kenneth MacKenzie, *The Booklovers' Resort* (1910) in Bob Purdie, 'Crossing Swords with W. B. Yeats': Twentieth Century Scottish Nationalist Encounters With Ireland', *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (2007), 193. Cairns, *No Language!* also cites Purdie, 48.

<sup>30</sup> Peter Murray, 'Irish cultural nationalism in the United Kingdom state: Politics and the Gaelic League 1900-18', *Irish Political Studies*, Vol. 8 (1993), 59.

<sup>31</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 82. leaflet from SNL.

salaries of the Gaelic teachers in the districts.<sup>32</sup> This demonstrates that the SNL's ambition to 'rekindle the Gaelic dimension of Scottish culture' was not done solely to further a purely politically nationalistic agenda.<sup>33</sup> The organisation was evidently engaged at a local level with Gaelic education and campaigned actively for its preservation and improvement. These factors are useful when we consider MacFarlane's own reluctance towards nationalistic politics, and therefore help us to understand his relationship with the SNL in this early form.

Ronald MacInnes had, alongside Kenneth MacKenzie in 1909, also sought MacFarlane's advice and leadership. The two had been in touch in 1905 when MacInnes had written as a member of the GSL. Similar to Gillies' correspondence at the time, MacInnes had expressed his support for *ADG* and stressed the potential that the publication, and MacFarlane as its editor, had to impact the direction of the Gaelic movement at the time. As given above in a fuller extract of the letter, MacInnes wrote: 'you know that 99% of our rank and file have not the foggiest notion of the path we wish them to travel.'<sup>34</sup> Therefore, from as early as 1905, with both Gillies and MacInnes, we can see MacFarlane being sought out as a potential leader.

By 1911, MacInnes was writing under the auspices of the SNL and again appealed to MacFarlane for help and advice. He asked at various points for him to write introductions and forewords for their concert programmes, requesting these to be written in English in order to 'get the ear and understanding of a bigger crowd [that] might awake a few lost souls to the possibilities of Gaelic in Scotland.'<sup>35</sup> He went on to say that there were those in London who were seeking direction from the 'genuine leaders and genuine workers in the movement.'<sup>36</sup> These appeals certainly give the impression that there were leaders and workers within the SNL who were perhaps not so genuine, or at least not working solely to the objectives of the Society. However, this interpretation depends on a much better understanding of exactly what the group was trying to achieve in the first place. The inaugural excerpt above, with its notions of a 'Scottish Scotland' give the impression of a purely nationalistic focus, and could be easily understood as an early iteration of the 1920 SNL manifesto pledge. On the letterhead of their stationary in its first formation, the objects of the group were set out as follows:

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<sup>32</sup> 'Timchioll an Teallach', *ADG*, Vol. 6, No. 5 (1911), 76.

<sup>33</sup> Barberis, 'Comunn nan Albannach (Scots National League)', 389.

<sup>34</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 11: 22/04/05. Letter from R. MacInnes. Other 1905 letters from MacInnes include Fol. 11: 07/06/05 and Fol. 11: 12/10/05.

<sup>35</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 12/11/11. Letter from R. MacInnes.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

The object of Comunn nan Albannach is to have Scotland free, Scotland sovereign, Scotland a Nation once again. It employs lectures, literature, and every means competent towards this end. Above all, for the reviving of patriotism and a sense of nationality, it cultivates the ancient language of the Gael, and ensues the extension of its use as a living tongue.<sup>37</sup>

This offers a more nuanced view of the group's aims, in particular their commitment to the Gaelic language. The presence of SNL promotional material in the 1911 School Board elections also underlines the suggestion that they were operating under a much more culturally nationalistic agenda than has been so far understood.

MacInnes had encouraged MacFarlane to start his own bilingual newspaper or, better yet, to get the *Celtic Monthly* (CM) under his control, sending him a copy of the London Branch of the Gaelic League's new paper, *The Irishman*, to take inspiration from.<sup>38</sup> Like the GSL, and with so many members in common, this group were actively supporting and encouraging the Gaelic language movement in Scotland. The vice-president of the SNL, another London Gael, Hugh Paterson (Uisdean Mac Phadruig), wrote to MacFarlane on several occasions between 1910 and 1911, recommending the work of other members, including Mackenzie, for his consideration. There is a real sense from the correspondence between this small group that important and mutually beneficial relationships were being formed. In April of 1911, MacInnes wrote to MacFarlane again to tell him about a 'political bust up' that had taken place within the SNL, which had led to the resignation of several of its key members.<sup>39</sup> By September, MacInnes reported that the group were in complete disarray as it had been infiltrated by the 'pure fireworks' of nationalism, giving the following account:

The latest craze is called "Separatism". A powerful Tory non-Gaelic and Landlords man got among us and his continued advocacy of this so-called Nationalism and Separatism has led almost to our undoing. Unfortunately, a good Gaelic man like J.S. Mackay favours his views with the result that they set out to bust up the Empire, smash the Union and compel Scotland to become all Gaelic with American speed. [...] It was more than any radicalism could stand this continued spurting of pure Toryism in the name of Gaelic Scotland.

Your experience is of great value and what I do know of your politics and aims makes me personally ever anxious to sit at your feet and learn!<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., Fol. 17: 05/04/11. Letter from MacInnes.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 21/09/11. Letter from R. MacInnes.



This serves as substantial evidence that the earlier iteration of the SNL was a decidedly different group from the one which Gillies and Erskine went on to establish in 1920. It was not simply a failed version of its later self.

The earlier group were not separatist in their agenda from the outset in 1909-1910, but became so in late 1911, under this 'Tory non-Gaelic and Landlords man', which led to its eventual collapse. This would also explain why MacFarlane had engaged with their members to this point, having in common pursuit the improvement of Gaelic education and the revitalisation of the language for modern use. It also offers insight into MacFarlane's politics at this time: likely leaning towards a form of conservative-unionism which supported a sense of independent Gaelic identity incorporated into a more universally British one. The separatist figure could be Erskine himself, a non-native Gaelic speaker and a member of the aristocratic land-owning elite. The infiltrator had been described as 'non-Gaelic', which could have applied to him as his speech would have made him easily identifiable as a learner. Nevertheless, our current understanding that Erskine was one of the organisations founding members in 1909-1910 does not fit with the description of this newcomer as an outsider.

The letter from MacInnes indicates that the group had not been established along separatist lines at all, nor does it necessarily hint at their inherent support for Home Rule. It much more strongly suggests, as the involvement that they had with School Board elections similarly suggests, that the SNL was a culturally nationalistic group and that claims of its 'Gaelic separatism' or our understanding of it as an early vehicle for Scottish nationalism under Ruairaidh Erskine are largely mis-placed. There were some who believed that Gaelic could be a useful tool in unlocking a feeling of broader Scottish identity, and certainly this was what Erskine went on to attempt, though many Gaelic organisations supported Scotland's place within the union and promoted a sense of Gaelic nationalism in terms of the preservation of Gaelic language and culture, independent of its wider Scottish context.

It is useful here to examine Gillies in comparison to MacFarlane a little more closely, as the two quite similar men were drawn in such different directions. Gillies' grandson, Professor William Gillies, himself a Celtic scholar, wrote:

It is not that he ceased to be involved in Gaelic, Highland or Irish matters; quite the reverse, in fact. But his political instincts had begun to tell him that Scottish nationality and self-determination was a prior question, upon which the rest should wait.<sup>41</sup>

It made sense, however, that MacFarlane was being approached by members of these predominantly culturally nationalistic groups in London, given his determination and drive

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<sup>41</sup> Gillies, 'Liam MacGill 'Iosa', 527.

to work for the Gaelic language and its culture. Unlike Gillies, MacFarlane did not concede the work as a lower priority to a politically national Scottish cause. Similarly, he does not appear to have outwardly supported the political trajectory of the Gaelic language movement in Ireland, as events reached boiling point in the lead up to the 1916 Easter Rising. From material found in his papers at the NLS we also know that he recruited locally in Paisley for soldiers during 1915, working for the National Registration Canvass.<sup>42</sup> With the outrage expressed by MacInnes at the prospect of dismantling the Union, alongside other revealing evidence which will follow, it is reasonable to assume that MacFarlane was at least comfortable with unionism and most likely confident in the possibility of Gaelic language and culture holding a prominent place within that construct. It is therefore understandable that he was being appealed to by the London Gaels in the 1910's as an alternative leader for the Gaelic language movement, which was itself being drawn into a controversial nationalistic political arena.

MacFarlane's interactions with the London Gaels, and the support and encouragement he received from them, add significantly to our understanding of the complexity of the language movement as a whole. The suggestion that there was a unified Gaelic language movement in the early decades of the twentieth century becomes increasingly impossible to suggest as we better understand the tensions which existed between these different groups and their leaders. More work is needed specifically on the formation of the SNL from 1909, though the evidence presented here of its earlier foundation will be a valuable point of departure. This discussion has brought to light some of the critical aspects of the cultural and political Gaelic networks which were operating around the time of the establishment of the Gaelic Academy (GA). This has been done in order to provide political and cultural context, and also to illustrate the often-relentless calls on MacFarlane from individuals and groups throughout the wider movement to provide leadership and direction. This will impact on our understanding of the work that he chose to do by forming the GA in 1911, and indeed that he conducted for the rest of his life, in service to the Gaelic language and its culture.

### Establishment

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<sup>42</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 55. Letters and materials relating to recruitment for the National Registration Canvass, including the details of twenty-four local men who could be eligible.

For many years and by many friends it has been felt that there is a want of cohesion in much of our Gaelic work. Valuable services have been rendered by individuals in various departments, but through lack of uniformity these services have lost much of their effect. It is therefore felt that, to obtain the needed inspiration, unity of purpose and efficiency, there ought to be formed a central body representative of the Gaelic Language and Literature and comprising our ablest scholars. Such a body could be consulted by new workers and would be in a position to remove many difficulties that hinder the development, and detract from the standing of our venerable and valuable tongue.<sup>43</sup>

This extract is from the first promotional circular of the newly formed Gaelic Academy (GA) (Àrd-Chomhairle na Gàidhlig), sent out in November of 1911. The new body had been suggested to Erskine by Hugh Cameron Gillies in March that year, who had then approached MacFarlane with the proposal. H. C. Gillies was involved with the GSG; a prominent member of the GSL; a lecturer in Gaelic at King's College London from 1895-1900; and a lifelong supporter of improving Gaelic education in Highland schools. He was also the secretary of the Federation of Celtic Societies and a member of the Skye Vigilance Committee with Henry Whyte in the 1880's, which provided support and guidance to crofters during the land disputes. Gillies campaigned for the recognition of Gaelic in Highland schools and compiled a number of Gaelic texts, including *The Elements of Gaelic Grammar* (1896) and *The Place-Names of Argyll* (1906).<sup>44</sup> MacFarlane must have been aware of Gillies when Erskine first wrote to him of the idea in 1911:

He wishes me to start the idea of a Gaelic Academy, along French lines. [...] The good doctor's idea is alright and he wants to raise the Gaelic movement above the level of the unmeaning ignorant herd which now directs it. I spoke that this is desirable but I doubt if a Gaelic Academy is a feasible idea at all events at present. What do you think?<sup>45</sup>

The Académie Française (French Academy, est. 1635) had been established as an authority on all matters relating to the French language, including its proper use and vocabulary, and remains responsible for the official French dictionary.<sup>46</sup> It was therefore an appropriate and working model on which the founders of the GA could establish their own Gaelic language authority. The 'unmeaning ignorant herd' was more than likely directed towards ACG, following on from the intense disputes which had taken place, and in line with similar comments which Erskine had made to MacFarlane about that organisation.

Colm Ó Baoill's biography of H. C. Gillies is a valuable resource to understanding his life and work, and also what has been written on the formation of the GA to date. Ó

<sup>43</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 52. Copy of first circular of the Gaelic Academy.

<sup>44</sup> Ó Baoill, 'Hugh Cameron Gillies', 263–301.

<sup>45</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 30/03/11. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>46</sup> Alain Viala, 'Académie Française', *Encyclopaedia of the Enlightenment*, Vol. 1, Michel Delon, ed., (London, 2001), 6-9.

Baoill cites a letter to MacFarlane from H. C. Gillies in 1911 confirming the origins of the proposal, in which he wrote: 'I happen to mention to Erskine my (or Our) old idea of a Gaelic Academy [...] The idea is for present ours.'<sup>47</sup> Ó Baoill has traced the origins of the idea to a proposal put to the GSL by Gillies in 1886, recognising the need for a 'settled and recognised system of orthography and grammar in the Gaelic language' and called for a conference of qualified Gaels to discuss these as well as 'other important questions, philological and educational.'<sup>48</sup> It is unfortunate that the extant correspondence in MacFarlane's papers do not precede 1891, as it would be greatly beneficial to understand some of the events and relationships which formed in the 1880's in particular. H. C. Gillies later mentions in a letter, for example, that they had in fact met at an event for the GSL in 1887, recalling that MacFarlane had been laughed at by some of the members for a proposal which he had made, though H. C. Gillies had supported him at the time.<sup>49</sup>

It is therefore possible that the two had discussed the idea of the formation of an Academy in Scotland at this early stage, which would explain why H. C. Gillies referred to it as 'our' idea, though he may have been describing the ideas of the Gaelic language movement at that time more generally.<sup>50</sup> Either way, in 1911, it was MacFarlane and H. C. Gillies who had rekindled it, and the practical work in these stages went on largely between themselves. Even Erskine's involvement was questioned for the value of his contributions.

Ó Baoill's account refers to GA promotional material printed in *GNB* and *The Celtic Annual* in 1913, setting out what had been the objectives of the Society, mainly the standardisation of Gaelic orthography and the creation of new terms.<sup>51</sup> He also refers to the other Society founded by Ruairidh Erskine at this time, The Society of Scottish Letters (SSL), established by a fundamentally similar group, including both Gillies and MacFarlane, as well as others, around the same time.<sup>52</sup> McLeod noted in his summary of the GA that: 'The First World War precluded any meaningful work on the part of the Àrd Chomhairle [...] and activity did not resume after the war.'<sup>53</sup> This discussion will suggest, however, that with MacFarlane as one its main protagonists, which McLeod does not mention, much

<sup>47</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 52: 06/09/11. Letter from H. C. Gillies. Ó Baoill, 'Hugh Cameron Gillies', 289.

<sup>48</sup> 'Àrd-Chomhairle na Gàidhlig: Scottish Gaelic Academy', *The Celtic Annual* (1913), 7-8. Ó Baoill, 'Hugh Cameron Gillies', 275.

<sup>49</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 52: 17/10/11. Letter from H. C. Gillies.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> E. C. M., 'The Scottish Gaelic Academy', *GNB*, Vol. 10 (1913), 386-92; 'Àrd-Chomhairle na Gàidhlig' *The Celtic Annual* (1913), 8; Ó Baoill, 'Hugh Cameron Gillies', 290-291.

<sup>52</sup> Ó Baoill, 'Hugh Cameron Gillies', 293-294. Ó Baoill cites the *Highland News* (Sat, 20/09/13), 3; *The Scotsman* (22/12/1913) and Thompson 'Gaelic in Politics', 87-88.

<sup>53</sup> McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 108.

meaningful work was done by him to fulfil the objectives of the GA from its inception, and which he continued until the end of his life.

Nevertheless, even the beginnings of the organisation were rife with internal dispute. In April 1911, following on from his original letter, Erskine commented that H. C. Gillies was ‘a useful man and might be put to good purpose’, however adding that: ‘It is astonishing to me that he and his like with their many qualifications should write so little Gaelic.’<sup>54</sup> He similarly related that H. C. Gillies had wanted to write an English paper for *GNB* on astronomy; but that he was as ‘lazy’ as Donald MacKinnon, Chair of Celtic at the University of Edinburgh at the time; and that: ‘We have had too much Gaelic astronomy and star-gazing on a different footing.’<sup>55</sup> The astronomy article does not seem to have been published, though one was printed in Autumn of 1911 entitled ‘The Celtic Horoscope’, written in English by Angus Robertson, who had published the second Gaelic novel, *An t-Ogha Mór* (1913) after John MacCormick’s *Dùn Àluinn* (1912).<sup>56</sup> Robertson would also become a member of the GA, though he and MacFarlane did not get along, at different stages each publishing overt criticism of the other. These will be discussed in more detail below. Criticisms of MacKinnon, as alluded to here in Erskine’s letter, will also come to light in the course of this discussion.

Returning to the initial formation of the GA, while it only appears to have been Erskine writing about the scheme as early as April 1911, he seems to have been particularly invested in the idea, suggesting to MacFarlane that it might benefit from having an aristocratic figurehead:

If so, let him be a figure head and nothing more than that. I mean he should be a man who is appointed not for knowledge but for social influence. I could get Earl of Mar who is undoubted head of the Gaelic Nobility. [...] it might be useful for social purposes to have a figurehead. You know how the sheep leap when there’s a coronet at their head to show the way.<sup>57</sup>

Unsurprisingly, MacFarlane does not appear to have taken this proposition any further. It was to be precisely for their ‘knowledge’ that members were to be sought, unlike ACG who, as has already been demonstrated, were more concerned with the ‘social’ aspects of the language movement. It is necessary to highlight that MacFarlane and Erskine were both heavily immersed at this time in the publication of both *GNB* and *AS*, with a large number of related letters going between the two. It was not until September of 1911 that

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<sup>54</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 1/4/11. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Angus Robertson, ‘The Celtic Horoscope’, *Guth na Bliadhna*, Vol. 8 No. 4 (1911).

<sup>57</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 01/04/11. Letter from R. Erskine.

correspondence on the subject of the GA re-emerged in their discussions, and in those involving its wider potential membership.

In the first of a series of letters in April 1911, H. C. Gillies initially suggested that they approach MacKinnon, William J. Watson and Angus Henderson with the suggestion to form the new organisation. He agreed with MacFarlane's caution that forming the Academy would 'depend upon the men and the methods and that it must be done warily.'<sup>58</sup> In a following letter, he mentioned Erskine, noting that he was 'not an innocent [...] He may however be used.'<sup>59</sup> This perhaps points to Erskine's own precarious position within these networks, as a non-native Gaelic learner and himself an aristocrat. As we saw earlier, his ambitions for the Gaelic language were inextricably linked to his political beliefs and determination towards Scottish separatism, anti-imperialism, and what would then evolve into the idea of Scottish independence. Considering Erskine's own comments about H. C. Gillies, however, there may have been a pre-existing discord between the two men, with each warning MacFarlane of the deficiencies of the other.

H. C. Gillies recommended that Lachlan MacBean could be an asset to their cause. Initially, MacBean had replied to MacFarlane that he was not qualified to become a member of the group but would agree to compose and print the circular for them.<sup>60</sup> He had also warned of the need to avoid GA members quarrelling with each other, evidently aware of pre-existing rifts and potential areas of future contention.<sup>61</sup> MacBean was a Gaelic scholar and journalist: a sub-editor of *The Highlander* from 1876-1877 under John Murdoch; and later editor of *The Fifehire Advertiser*. He published several works, including *Popular Gaelic Melodies* (1877) and a number of articles, music and song to the magazines and journals of the time.<sup>62</sup> In his introduction to the collection *The Songs and Hymns of the Gael* (1900), MacBean wrote confidently on Gaelic grammar and composition.<sup>63</sup> What may therefore have hindered him from feeling qualified to become a member of the GA at this early stage was therefore likely humility on his part, and he went on to play an important role within it. He listed himself in *The Celtic Who's Who* (1921) as the first member of the GSI and affiliated with both ACG and SSL, though he did not mention the GA.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 52: 06/09/11. Letter from H. C. Gillies.

<sup>59</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 52: 17/10/11. Letter from H. C. Gillies.

<sup>60</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 52: 23/10/11. Letter from L. MacBean.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> 'Lachlan MacBean', *The Celtic Who's Who*, 85-86. See also: Thomson, 'Lachlan MacBean', *Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, 160.

<sup>63</sup> Lachlan MacBean, *The Songs and Hymns of the Gael*, (1900), xi-xvi.

<sup>64</sup> 'Lachlan MacBean', *The Celtic Who's Who*, 85.

In November 1911, on behalf of MacFarlane and H. C. Gillies, MacBean sent out the first circular to the selected group, comprised mainly of academics and scholars, proposing the establishment of the GA and appealing for members:

I have been asked by some good friends of our cause and supporters of this idea to take this first step by asking you if you will assent to become one of such a body. It can only be a small body, in any case, to begin with; but there are a few young men coming along for whom a place must be found within the membership later on.<sup>65</sup>

Tensions within the founding group were high in anticipation of this first communication, with H. C. Gillies writing, somewhat dramatically: ‘If discretion fails I shall undertake a frontal attack – always knowing that you are there. It must go through – before we are dead.’<sup>66</sup> MacFarlane must have expressed some anxiety in the days before the circular as Gillies wrote in a response: ‘Dear Calum, Keep your hair on. We shall win.’<sup>67</sup> It was not until mid-November that MacBean reported back with a list of responses.<sup>68</sup>

Those who had agreed to join the new organisation were: Magnus Maclean, Kenneth MacLeod (Coinneach MacLeòid, 1871-1955), Dr Cameron Miller (1861-1927), John G. Mackay (1848-1924), Henry Whyte and Angus Henderson.<sup>69</sup> Donald MacKinnon and William Watson had provisionally agreed to join; and they received one immediate refusal by Donald MacAlister (1854-1927).<sup>70</sup> Those who had been contacted and had not yet replied included Alexander Carmichael, Dr George Henderson (1866-1912) and Charles M. Robertson.<sup>71</sup> Erskine was also in the list of non-respondents, though we know that he had joined by at least the end of November, recommending at that time Professor Fraser of

<sup>65</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 52. Copy of first circular.

<sup>66</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 52: 27/10/11. Letter from H. C. Gillies.

<sup>67</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 53: 09/11/11. Letter from H. C. Gillies.

<sup>68</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 14/11/11. Letter from MacBean.

<sup>69</sup> Thomas Moffat, *Sgrìobhaidhean Choinnich MhicLeoid: The Gaelic prose of Kenneth Macleod* (Edinburgh, 1988). It is likely that this is the Kenneth MacLeod who published *The Road to the Isles* (1927) and *The Road to Iona* (1933). He had collected and translated for Marjory Kennedy Frasers’ collections, *The Songs of the Hebrides* (1909-1921) and is mentioned in a letter to MacFarlane from Henry Whyte on the issue of publishing songs and lyrics without acknowledgement: NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 16: 05/06/10. Letter from H. Whyte. ‘Alexander Cameron Miller M.D. (Edin)’, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, Vol. 48 (1929), 228. Dr Miller, Fort William, published extensively on medical conditions in the Highlands. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh from 1908. ‘Deeply versed in the folklore, history, and romance of the Highlands [...] a frequent contributor to Celtic publications.’ H. C. Gillies references his work in *Gaelic Names of Diseases and of Diseased States* (1898), 31. Whyte, ‘J. G. Mackay’, *The Celtic Monthly*, Vol. 1, No. 10 (1893), 145-146.

<sup>70</sup> A. J. Crilly, ‘MacAlister, Sir Donald, first baronet (1854–1934)’, *ODNB* (2004). [Accessed 22 Jan 2024] and see: Edith MacAlister, *Sir Donald MacAlister of Tarbert*, (London, 1935). MacAlister was the principal of the University of Glasgow from 1907-1929 and an advocate for Gaelic and Celtic studies at university level, as well as in Highland schools. He had Gaelic speaking parents and a working knowledge of the language, though he felt that his extended time amongst English speakers had ‘robbed him of the power to use the Gaelic speech of today as a mode of free and spontaneous expression.’ ‘Glasgow Gaelic Society: The Majority Celebration’ *The Glasgow Herald* (25/01/08), 8. Thanks to Dr. Aonghas MacCoinnich for this reference.

<sup>71</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 14/11/11. Letter from MacBean.

Aberdeen, in particular for his knowledge of Old and Middle Irish, and his record of publishing Celtic articles in German philological journals.<sup>72</sup>

Given the academic calibre of many of the figures who had been approached, lots of whom were Celtic scholars, professors and writers, Erskine somewhat stood out. The intention of MacFarlane and H. C. Gillies at this stage was to attract the wealth of linguistic expertise and knowledge of this academic group, which they felt would best serve the objectives of the organisation. This was an important departure from what had been taking place within the leadership and patronage of ACG, as MacFarlane intended the GA to be first and foremost a scholarly authority on the Gaelic language. For that to happen, they relied on support from the academic circles, not just for credibility, but to contribute to the practical tasks, as MacFarlane envisioned them, of linguistic standardisation and innovation. Without the academic rigour to ground the body as a governing authority, MacFarlane was likely aware that much of this work would fall to him and that the GA would struggle to survive. Although he was himself a competent Gaelic scholar, MacFarlane nevertheless existed outside of this academic group, and his relationships with several of its key figures were at times fraught. MacFarlane may have been looking for acceptance from them, though he consistently distinguished his own efforts from the antiquarian approach that had long been dominant in the Gaelic field. MacFarlane wanted to improve the position of Gaelic as a living language, and the formation of the GA was his opportunity to fuse the linguistic study and understanding of the language with the practical need to provide for its evolution and place in the modern world. MacFarlane fundamentally needed the likes of MacKinnon and Watson for this herculean endeavour to work.

The response was not what MacFarlane had hoped for. MacKinnon's provisional consent was based on his uncertainty that the GA would be able to distinguish itself from ACG and operate without any of the party politics which had emerged within it. He wrote that he, Angus Henderson and John G. Mackay hoped that the GA would altogether 'avoid the environs of the Comunn and exclude well known workers who have axes to grind.'<sup>73</sup> Henderson wrote to MacFarlane directly, warning of the dangers of harbouring grudges, as undoubtedly the wider Gaelic literary field had been aware of the developments and arguments which had taken place inside of ACG only a few years earlier. He asked if the GA would be progressive or simply one in opposition to ACG:

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<sup>72</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 28/11/11. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>73</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 14/11/11. Letter from D. MacKinnon.



I hope no countenance will be given to those having axes to grind – those who would use the Gaelic movement as a medium for their own personal aggrandisement. Every possible means must be taken to exclude all snakes from the new Gaelic Eden.<sup>74</sup>

Angus Henderson was a journalist and frequent contributor to Erskine's periodicals, in particular *GNB*, and acted as the editor of his newspaper *Alba* from 1909-1910.<sup>75</sup> He and MacFarlane began their own correspondence and collaborations around this time and Henderson became a loyal admirer of MacFarlane, whom he called his 'Celtic Hero'.<sup>76</sup> Clearly there were concerns within the wider network that this new organisation was simply an anti-ACG venture, perhaps unsurprisingly given the strength of conviction with which MacFarlane and others had earlier challenged it.

As the responses were being received from the first circular, H. C. Gillies had written enthusiastically to MacFarlane that: 'it is quite clear that we have already won. The "wobblers" can easily be brought in. They cannot remain out – and they know that – but we must hasten slowly just for a bit.'<sup>77</sup> The 'wobblers' referred primarily to MacKinnon and Watson, and the group went to lengths in reassuring MacKinnon in particular that they 'propose to work on a different plane' from ACG; that they were 'not a heterogenous lot'; and that if he did agree to come to their first meeting that it should take place in Edinburgh in order to make it as accessible for him as possible.<sup>78</sup> Edinburgh was the hub of academic activity in Celtic studies during the period in Scotland, and therefore where a large proportion of its academics and scholars were based. The Celtic Chair was not established at the University of Glasgow until 1956.

Henry Whyte expressed concerns that if the GA were seen to be working in opposition to ACG that they would not be able to operate effectively in the field, 'especially if we cannot carry the 2 Celtic professors.'<sup>79</sup> The deference shown towards MacKinnon and Watson in particular, alongside other leading scholars, demonstrates the need felt within the group, and by MacFarlane in particular, to have their support. This was an entirely different organisation to ACG, both in its objectives and in what it sought to represent. MacFarlane needed workers and specifically those who were qualified to function as authorities on the Gaelic language. The immediate refusal of the principal of the University of Glasgow, Donald MacAlister, may have signalled the wider reaction, though MacAlister was not a

<sup>74</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 52: 17/11/11. Letter from A. Henderson.

<sup>75</sup> See: Poncarová: 'Angus Henderson', *Project Erskine* and MacAilpein: *Pròiseact AME*.

<sup>76</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 27: 16/01/21. Letter from A. Henderson.

<sup>77</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 14/11/11. Letter from H. C. Gillies.

<sup>78</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 01/12/11. Letter from L. MacBean.

<sup>79</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 18: 07/01/12. Letter from H. Whyte.

scholar in the Celtic field itself. By December of 1911, both MacKinnon and Watson had decided not to join. H. C. Gillies and MacBean both wrote to MacFarlane with the news:

I can see that we might well do without Watson and MacKinnon. Both would be to some extent a source of weakness, at least MacKinnon's hankering after the Comunn might be a nuisance but the other might be worse for we could not get rid of him without a row.<sup>80</sup>

H. C. Gillies had agreed, writing the same day: 'The Edinburgh clique is clearly out of it. Let them go. We can quite well do without them.'<sup>81</sup> Erskine went further, proposing that they sent MacKinnon's letter to the press, as it had suggested 'the lay element in the Academy not worth considering.'<sup>82</sup> The letter was unfortunately not within MacFarlane's papers, as it would have been valuable evidence of MacKinnon's justifications for turning down the invitation. From Erskine's interpretation, we can assume that some observation at least was made as to the academic calibre of the founding group. Erskine went on: 'The man can't even write a decent letter in English, so what his pretensions are to pass as a Gaelic stylist I cannot imagine.'<sup>83</sup> MacFarlane made an attempt to defend him, though admitted his hopelessness in a letter of 1913, to which Erskine responded: 'He couldn't inspire enthusiasm even in a radish!'<sup>84</sup>

MacFarlane had written to MacKinnon in 1909 asking him to resign from ACG in protest at what he perceived to be its failings at that time. MacKinnon had explained that he could not resign as he had been appointed as a Life Member on its establishment in 1891, though he did concede that it was at that point in a 'corrupt state.'<sup>85</sup> It is revealing of the relationship between the two that MacFarlane was able to make such a request, though they did not correspond frequently. MacFarlane also criticised MacKinnon's lack of engagement with the Gaelic language movement outside of academia, in his series of essays, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh' in 1908.<sup>86</sup> He was critical that the wealth of knowledge and expertise which MacKinnon had, and the prominent position of influence and authority which he held in the contemporary field, was not being put to better use. MacFarlane was frustrated at MacKinnon's inactivity in the 'real work' of reaching the Gaelic speaking people themselves, rather than studying their language and culture for posterity. This is an interesting dynamic when we consider the differences which have been noted between MacFarlane and his own 'hero', John Murdoch.

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<sup>80</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 04/12/11. Letter from L. MacBean.

<sup>81</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 04/12/11. Letter from H. C. Gillies.

<sup>82</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 19: 20/09/12. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 19: 07/10/13. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>85</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 134: 02/07/09. Letter from D. MacKinnon.

<sup>86</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh: I', *GNB*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1908), 317.

The exchanges in 1908 and 1909 show that MacFarlane had sought MacKinnon's support before the establishment of the GA in 1911. MacKinnon had not followed him out of ACG despite conceding in his reply that it was in a 'corrupt' state, and did not engage with the practical language work as MacFarlane envisioned it to be. It is perhaps then unsurprising that MacKinnon did not accept the offer of joining the GA. MacKinnon was also seventy-two at the time of the first circular, and it would therefore fall to his successor, Watson, to continue the meaningful work as he saw it to be. Watson and MacFarlane did not corresponded directly, though years later in 1914, MacFarlane refused to go to the memorial service of Henry Whyte as it was being attended by a large swathe of ACG members, and Watson was intended to unveil the memorial stone.<sup>87</sup> MacFarlane also published criticisms of Watson in an article in the *Highland News* in June 1910, where he called out as 'flunkeyhood' Watson's silence with respect to ongoing issues inside of ACG.<sup>88</sup> MacFarlane questioned if he or other members of that Edinburgh group would 'do anything when the time comes?'<sup>89</sup> Evidently, the GA was the moment that he had in mind, for the academic groups to join the language movement and to direct their efforts towards that work, rather than continue to endorse ACG. Watson himself reviewed several of MacFarlane's works, which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, though on the whole the criticisms were measured.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, Watson recognised MacFarlane's scholarship in his edition of *The Fernaig Manuscript* (1923), despite debate surrounding it in the academic community at that time.<sup>91</sup> These dynamics highlight that there were several and distinct groups concerned to varying degrees with the Gaelic language and its culture operating in the early twentieth century. MacFarlane and his network, though linked to the academic sphere, were nevertheless decidedly outside of it.

### The First Meetings

The first meeting of the GA was planned for the sixteenth of December 1911 in Glasgow, necessarily going ahead without the 'Edinburgh clique.' In preparation, MacFarlane drafted

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<sup>87</sup> Several items of correspondence mention this in NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 20. Including John Mackay on 02/11/14 and an undated postcard from the then editor of the *CM*, Annie Mackay, who wrote: 'Netta would be well advised to keep to her father's old friends. The Comunn will do little for her in the long term.'

<sup>88</sup> MacFarlane, 'Gaelic Translation and Flunkeyhood: To the Editor', *Highland News* (11/06/1910), 2.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> 'Book Reviews', *CR*, Vol. 9, No. 35 (1914), 260-263.

<sup>91</sup> William Watson, 'Cor na Gàidhealtachd air an la an diugh', *The Active Gael, being papers read before the Gaelic Society of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1934), 237. Thank you to Dr Aonghas MacCoinnich for this reference.

a constitution to be put to those members present. Extracts are given here as they offer crucial and much needed insight into the organisation and are therefore valuable to include.

Gu'm bi Eoghan Camshron MacGhill-Iosa, Calum MacPhàrlain agus Ruairaidh Arascain is Mhàirr air an sònrachadh a chum breithneachadh a thoirt air Steidh agus Bun-riaghailtean na Comhairle, agus a chum iad sin a chur air caill gu beachdaidh fa chomhair na h-ath choineamh a tha ri bhi air an àm agus anns an àite is freagarraiche dhaibhear a tha cur an aonta ris na rùintean.<sup>92</sup>

*That Hugh Cameron Gillies, Malcolm MacFarlane and Ruairaidh Erskine of Marr be appointed to consider the Rules and the Constitution of the Academy, and to put these on the table for consideration before the next meeting of the Academy to be held at the time and place most suitable for those who agree to these resolutions.*

The draft then gave the main objectives as follows:

Is e prìomh-aobhar na Comhairle ar Cànan Ghàidhlig a shaoradh, agus a chumail saor o thruaillidheachd, agus a cleachdadh 's a cumhachd a chur am meud a chum buannachd ar cinnidh d' an cànan i. Is dleas àraidh do 'n Chomhairle ceistean a réiteachadh a bhuineas do litreachadh fhacal no do shuas bhriathran, agus gus a' chrich sin, misneach a thoirt duibhsan aig am bheil an leithidean sin ri an cur, an toirt fo aire na Chomhairle a chum gu'n suidhichear an cruth anns bu choir a' chainnt no am facal a chleachdadh agus a sgrìobhadh.<sup>93</sup>

*The main purpose of the Academy is to free our Gaelic Language, and to keep it free from corruption, and to increase its use and power for the benefit of our race whose language it is. It is the special duty of the Council to resolve questions relating to the spelling of words or the use of the higher register, and to that end, to give courage to those who have such problems, to bring them to the attention of the Council so that it may determine the form in which the saying or word should be used and written.*

From the extant correspondence there had evidently been a genuine sense of excitement within the group. H. C. Gillies wrote that they should have 'nothing but purpose' and that they went 'into the sun or fail.'<sup>94</sup> MacBean was similarly energised and wrote to MacFarlane about the need for a coherent strategy on Gaelic education; and that they should conduct a comparative study of what was being done for Irish literature at the time.<sup>95</sup> Angus Henderson was anxious at the prospect of not knowing anybody at the meeting and so asked MacFarlane if he would meet him at the station.<sup>96</sup> Erskine sent his best wishes as he was unable to attend the first meeting, despite being named by MacFarlane as one of its three founding members. Erskine warned, however: 'Fir goodness sake don't admit any women!

<sup>92</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17. Draft Constitution.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 11/12/11. Letter from H. C. Gillies.

<sup>95</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 09/12/11. Letter from L. MacBean.

<sup>96</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 14/12/11. Letter from A. Henderson.

They are apt to spoil the show.’<sup>97</sup> Erskine would later concede that Katherine Whyte Grant may be admitted as she was ‘certainly a good worker but that is one.’ Given their close collaborative relationship, perhaps it had been MacFarlane who had convinced Erskine of her qualifications to become a member.

The meeting in Glasgow went ahead as planned although the turnout was much lower than anticipated and, from the tone of the correspondence after the event, it was not as successful either. We learn that only five in total were present on the day, with Henderson pulling out at the last minute: MacFarlane, MacBean, H. C. Gillies, Henry Whyte and Norman Macleod, who wrote to MacBean in the days after complaining that that he would not have come if he had known the attendance would be so low.<sup>98</sup> A disappointing start indeed. MacBean reassured MacFarlane that Henderson and John G. Mackay could still be convinced to join, though in the end he was unsure if the plan of forming such an Academy was going to work at all:

Gillies is too emotional to be a source of strength to any cause. [Fionn is a] reliable and unassuming fellow, as good as you could wish for and you yourself are the solid worker and expert. No doubt you and Fionn with the assistance when required of Erskine’s labours will form a very good nucleus of just the kind of thing we need [...] It is quite possible that you could serve the Gaelic cause more freely without a society that is likely to have no little life.<sup>99</sup>

The concern of lifelessness was perhaps an early indication of McLeod’s view that the GA had never realised any ‘meaningful work.’<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, the comment from MacBean reveals that even within this relatively small group, operating outside of the mainstream Gaelic language movement dominated by ACG, that there were rifts and disruptions; and that MacFarlane and Whyte were, again, together leading its activities and determining its direction. There is also the distinction to be made between the group wishing to establish the GA and the ‘Edinburgh clique’ who had declined to join. MacBean’s suggestion that MacFarlane work independently of an organisation was particularly apt, however, as MacFarlane appears to have been all too aware of the potential obstacles to productive work when working within the confines of an organisation. MacFarlane wrote:

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<sup>97</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 13/12/11. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>98</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 19/12/11. Letter from L. MacBean.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 108.

What I have outlined I am engaged in and have got a certain length on my way. And I don't intend to delay the work for this or any other body. This body may come after and correct my errors or improve my ideas; but I don't think I will go so far astray as to make it difficult for you to follow. But if this body hastens to assist nobody will be better pleased than I.<sup>101</sup>

The statement refers to the priority of the GA, and MacFarlane personally, to create new Gaelic words to meet the 'necessity of modern conditions': to make it possible to teach and to conduct business through the medium of the Gaelic language. Otherwise, MacFarlane was certain, any effort was pointless. On the modernisation of Gaelic, MacFarlane further commented that the Irish were: 'shivering on the brink, hesitating to take the plunge' and that this would, unless the leap was taken, make the Irish language 'as contemptible as Manx.'<sup>102</sup> Language revivalists in Ireland were facing the same challenges as Scotland, with the need to standardise the language and to create new terms to deal with modern life. Although arguably more successful as a language movement, Alan Bliss outlines that at the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, they had to create the words for 'republic' and 'free state', as they had not till then existed. They settled eventually on 'poblacht' for the former and 'saorstát' for the latter.<sup>103</sup>

Efforts to standardise Gaelic orthography in Scotland had been ongoing since the early nineteenth-century, and MacFarlane had already published a number of resources, including the *Phonetics of the Gaelic Language* (1889) which contained an exposition on its current orthography.<sup>104</sup> He would also publish his Gaelic dictionary, *Am Briathrachan Beag* in 1912, which had been very much encouraged from correspondents throughout his Gaelic networks. It is clear from what MacFarlane wrote for the first meeting of the GA, and from his own publications and the tens of notebooks full of newly created Gaelic terms, located in the archive of his papers, that MacFarlane was not only a talented lexicographer, but also determined to work towards achieving the objectives of the newly founded body.<sup>105</sup>

Without the assistance of the Gaelic academics, MacFarlane called on those within the GA to assist in creating the necessary new words in Gaelic, copying out hundreds of English words into notebooks that he then circled to the membership as it was at that time. They would then refer to their allotted wordlists in subsequent correspondence with

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<sup>101</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: Draft Constitution.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Alan Bliss, 'The Standardization of Irish', *The Crane Bag*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Irish Language and Culture: An tEagrán Gaelac (1981), 78.

<sup>104</sup> See also: Susan Ross, 'The standardisation of Scottish Gaelic orthography 1750-2007: a corpus approach', Unpublished PhD Thesis (University of Glasgow, 2016); and Ronald Black, 'Gaelic Orthography: The Drunk Man's Broad Road', *The Edinburgh Companion to the Gaelic Language*, Moray Watson and Michelle Macleod, eds, (Edinburgh, 2010), 229-261.

<sup>105</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 140.

MacFarlane, often amusingly. For example, Erskine's suggestion of 'Roimh-shùilean' for 'spectacles' was wholeheartedly rejected by MacFarlane.<sup>106</sup> Some of these notebooks remain with MacFarlane's papers, as well as many others with thousands of his own new technical Gaelic terms. These papers alone are testament to the magnitude of work and time which MacFarlane dedicated to the Gaelic language. In each of the notebooks which he had circulated, he included an introduction with instructions on how to address the task, given here:

This is a rough collection of words on which I wish members of Committee to practise word-making. It will be found advantageous to begin on the concrete terms. Later on, when I find time, I will add to the list and try to bring some sort of order into it. [...] The first thing to do is to look up the primary and principal dictionary definition of the word being considered. An effort should be made to make the first unaccounted element of a compound of one syllable and never more than two. I don't think we can, as recommended in a letter in Oban Times, borrow from the Classical language. The difficulty is that our accent system is so different from theirs, and although we might be able to make a number of words [...] we could not carry the process far. Best not begin then. The difficulty is not in the word-making. It is in getting the words into use. A good word out of use is not to be compared to a poor word in use. Any word will serve provided it is understood. But the better the word the more acceptable at the beginning. I have made attempts at the most of the words in this list, but I do not wish to influence members in their efforts, because the more varied the material to be selected from the more likely is the choice to be good.<sup>107</sup>

Angus Henderson had endorsed MacFarlane's authority in the work, writing in 1913:

If reforms relating to our spelling are not effected during your lifetime, there is little hope of securing them at all. It is a piece of work for which you must make yourself responsible. Anyone may be at liberty to submit to you any ideas that he may consider likely to be of some value, but the adoption or rejection should be your absolute prerogative. As regards the creation of terms necessary for teaching, that is a task with which we are all more or less qualified to lend a hand.<sup>108</sup>

In 1908, MacFarlane had also published the 'successful' article "'Politics" anns a' Ghàidhlig' in Erskine's newspaper *Alba*, setting out a new vocabulary list.<sup>109</sup> Erskine had written to MacFarlane on several occasions with his own views on Gaelic grammar, taking issue in particular on what he believed was the continued mis-use of the apostrophe. In 1910, he suggested that MacFarlane now 'take up the subject of the apostrophe and give us all a head start in that direction.'<sup>110</sup> As has been outlined, and as is evidenced in the catalogue of his known printed work presented here, MacFarlane produced a substantial corpus of Gaelic

<sup>106</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 19: 18/01/13. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>107</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 140. Introduction to Gaelic Academy members included with notebooks of terms.

<sup>108</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 19: 25/05/13. Letter from A. Henderson.

<sup>109</sup> MacFarlane, "'Politics" anns a' Ghàidhlig', *Alba* (24/10/18).

<sup>110</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 16: 05/05/10. Letter from R. Erskine.

texts, songs and resources for its future study. One of the central intentions of the GA at this time was to create the necessary vocabulary to allow the Gaelic language to continue its development as a living language into the twentieth century and beyond. MacFarlane's contributions to this field have been overlooked, and the notebooks which contain his newly created terms would benefit from further study.

Despite the low turnout of the first meeting in December 1911, the GA published a final written constitution in March 1912; increased their membership numbers to twenty-one in total; and had planned for their second meeting, which took place in June 1912. Newly recruited members included Henderson, John G. Mackay, Eneas Mackay and Malcolm C. Macleod, and in fact this was the first time that MacFarlane and Erskine had met in person, despite having been in very regular contact for over seven years.<sup>111</sup> At the meeting, the issue of the organisation having associate members had been raised, as evidently it was felt by some, including MacFarlane, that it would benefit from the knowledge and guidance of those outside of the working operations of the group, though who could be called upon for advice. Erskine complained that this was unnecessary, again perhaps conscious of his own limitations as a Gaelic scholar. He wrote that they did not need 'foreign scientists whose proper place is amongst the Aristocrats.'<sup>112</sup> Likely, this referred to foreign-born linguists, such as Kuno Meyer, who were influential in these networks in both Ireland and Scotland. Erskine had conceded, however, the need for Gaelic speaking scholars, and agreed with MacFarlane that they may be inducted as associate members where appropriate.<sup>113</sup> With this, MacFarlane was continuing to appeal to the wider scholarly field and was receptive to those he deemed would be able to make meaningful contributions to the work.

At this time, the young Gaelic writer Hector MacDougall (Eachann MacDhughail, 1889-1954) was in correspondence with MacFarlane, who had been encouraging him to submit papers to *GNB* and was providing editorial suggestions on a range of MacDougall's writings. Proofs of draft submissions were sent readily between the two.<sup>114</sup> MacFarlane suggested that he should join the GA and, despite initial reservations, MacDougall eventually agreed, promising to devote every spare moment of his life for Gaelic.<sup>115</sup> He was

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<sup>111</sup> Their first correspondence was in 1905 on the subject of advertising in *ADG*. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 11: 13/10/05. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>112</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 18: 27/06/12. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> MacBean, 'Hector MacDougall', *The Celtic Who's Who*, 92. See also the DASG entry: 'A' Bhràisid Lathurnach', *DASG*, <<https://dasg.ac.uk/corpus/textmeta.php?text=66&uT=y>> [Accessed: 14/06/24]. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 18: 05/02/12. Letter from H. MacDougall. MacDougall thanks MacFarlane for his comments on various essays and stories and replies that he will revise 'and get his "lesson"'. Also, NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 18: 03/07/12. Letter from H. MacDougall. Sending papers for editing for *GNB*, advised by Erskine that MacFarlane would edit.

<sup>115</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 18: 12/02/12. Letter from H. MacDougall.



installed, however, as an associate of the GA, and the 1921 *Celtic Who's Who* referred to him in this capacity.<sup>116</sup> Only one other individual was listed as an associate of the GA in this catalogue, which was Alexander Neil Nicolson (Alasdair Niall MacNeacail, 1873-1960).<sup>117</sup> Similar to MacFarlane, Erskine had encouraged MacDougall to submit his writings to *GNB* and credited the pair for having spotted his talents in the first place: 'You and I were right when we spotted him as a useful man.'<sup>118</sup> MacDougall was similarly complimentary about the formation of the GA in one of his letters to MacFarlane, writing:

I see the Society you mentioned to me before has been formed and a splendid idea it is, in fact it is a landmark in the history of the language and I have every hope that it will prove a great force and an educating institution. Very glad to see such a fine writer of Gaelic as A. M. E. one of the office bearers.<sup>119</sup>

Henderson (A. M. E.) had been installed as Treasurer of the GA, sending out subscription requests to its members for five shillings, and was evidently much admired by the young MacDougall.<sup>120</sup>

As noted above, religion could easily cause rifts within these organisations. In particular, we have noted the often-tense exchanges on the issue between MacFarlane and Erskine specifically. When the issue arose with respect to the constitution of the GA, Erskine was less than willing to relinquish his religious connections. He wrote: 'The Society should be, officially, strictly non-sectarian, but I don't see why it should not "approach" religious bodies, if it think it useful to do so.'<sup>121</sup> It is not clear which groups he had in mind to 'approach', though likely it would have been a Catholic-based organisation. Religion featured heavily in later disputes, though the sheer number of debates taking place within the GA demonstrates a lack of cohesion in this already out-of-the-mainstream group.

Further evidence of disagreements in the GA appear in the large volume of correspondence about the organisation in MacFarlane's papers. For example, in 1912, when a coup of ACG was devised by a group of its members, including Henderson, Eneas Mackay and Malcolm Macleod. As we have seen in this study so far, there were prevailing criticisms of ACG that they were not doing enough practical work for the Gaelic language, and that they were not adequately pursuing the objectives that had been set out at its formation. The dissenting group within the GA proposed that it should be them instead who would lead

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<sup>116</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 18: 6/9/12. Letter from A. Henderson. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 19: 23/12/13. Letter from H. MacDougall. MacBean, 'Hector MacDougall', *The Celtic Who's Who*, 92.

<sup>117</sup> MacBean, 'Alexander Nicolson', *The Celtic Who's Who*, 118-119.

<sup>118</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 18: 09/10/12. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>119</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 18: 03/07/12: Letter from H. MacDougall.

<sup>120</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 18: 24/06/12. Letter from A. Henderson.

<sup>121</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 18: 01/05/12. Letter from R. Erskine.

ACG. This is particularly interesting as we have also noted that MacFarlane had wished to remain a member of the Executive Council in 1907, and so it seems that there was not so much a disdain towards ACG itself, as a central body of the Gaelic language movement, but that the objections to it from the wider sphere were specifically directed towards its leadership. It is useful, therefore, to note that ACG's potential had not been in question. The group wrote to MacFarlane of their plan, stating that once all of the twenty-one members had been officially installed, that:

A mine might be sprung on the Comunn by the twenty-one in a solid body applying for membership in that association. Once admitted, they would proceed to capture the Comunn and take its management largely into their own hands. The potentialities are great, and it is a pity that its destinies should not be in better hands than those which presently hold them. [That it] might be worthwhile to submit it to you and Mr. Whyte [...] you two will be able to judge whether some such scheme is or is not feasible.<sup>122</sup>

The leadership of ACG included MacFarlane's rivals, William Mackay (Uilleam MacAoidh, 1848-1928) as president; Kenneth Campbell and William Watson as vice-presidents; and Margaret Burnley-Campbell amongst its Executive Council; though allies such as Malcolm MacLeod were also present.<sup>123</sup> We can only presume from the lack of any further correspondence on the subject, and that we know there was not in fact a coup in ACG in 1912, that MacFarlane must have quelled this conspiring group. It is nevertheless instructive that it had been MacFarlane and Whyte who had been appealed to for permission for the scheme; and we can only imagine the impact that it could have had on the development of the Gaelic movement in the years that followed: if, for instance, ACG had been instilled with the language-based objectives of the GA, and their financial resources and surplus of willing workers been used towards those aims.

MacFarlane's decisions here were perhaps similar to his reluctance to join with Ruaraidh Erskine's political campaigns for separatism and the positioning of Gaelic as a masthead for Scottish nationalism. So too with his interactions with the young members of the earlier iteration of the SNL, who likewise looked for him for direction and leadership. MacFarlane was amongst those at the centre of the Gaelic literary sphere in the early twentieth-century, and arguably his decisions and determination for a language-based approach to the Gaelic movement, impacted its direction.

Another meeting of the GA took place in Edinburgh in June of 1912, and again, there were tensions evident in the records of it. Henderson accused Malcolm MacLeod of making

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<sup>122</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 18: 26/06/12. Letter from A. Henderson.

<sup>123</sup> 'Memorial to the Late Dr. Mackay', *An Gaidheal*, Vol. 24 (1928), 21. Obituary also: 'Introduction and Review', *TGSI*, Vol. 32 (1924-1925), vi-ix.

too many jokes; and H. C. Gillies complained that: ‘Lachie [Lachlan MacBean] is playing hell with our idea – in every way. He has no purpose of our concept at all. He must be “relieved” – in as nice a way as we can.’<sup>124</sup> Ruaraidh Erskine in particular was displeased with the rate of current progress, complaining in October that nobody had heard from H. C. Gillies and that they would be considered as bad as ACG if they continued to do business in this way.<sup>125</sup> MacLeod also wrote to MacFarlane with criticisms at this point, suggesting that the GA should not limit itself to only Gaelic members. He explained: You want to attract all Scotland and make the movement a national one. [...] It’s better to have a Scotsman with Gaelic sympathies than English sympathies.<sup>126</sup> Recalling what MacFarlane had said on his reluctance to engage with the Highland and Clan Societies, ‘the man who can be clansman first, in this age, and Gael afterwards, is not an acquisition to the Gaelic cause’,<sup>127</sup> it is more than likely that this mode of thinking also applied with respect to the Scottish nationalists. MacFarlane wanted workers who were engaged and invested in the issues and obstacles that were facing the Gaelic language; he did not consider it necessary to involve those who had only a partial or a passing interest in it.

There were no calls to open the membership to non-Gaelic speakers, or to incorporate the national movement more broadly, though the GA would not exist in its current form for very long. Again, with H. C. Gillies’ recommendation, we can clearly see that it was MacFarlane who was the leader and driving force of the GA, and that he had the ability in that capacity to influence the direction of its activities and outlook along his own intended trajectory. Despite his position of authority, Erskine would prove to be a divisive figure in the ranks. Following a meeting in December 1912, Erskine complained that H. C. Gillies was underprepared as the Chair and that there was too much idle chat and time-wasting.<sup>128</sup> He stressed that as they only met twice a year that they should be much more economical with time and that members should be compelled to attend at least one meeting per year going forward. The next meeting was set for June 1913.<sup>129</sup> Leading up to it Erskine exclaimed that it was ‘high time we did something.’<sup>130</sup> He went on to criticise MacFarlane, chastising him for an ongoing and very public dispute taking place in the *OT* with Angus

<sup>124</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 18: 10/06/12. Letter from H. C. Gillies.

<sup>125</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 18: 09/10/12. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>126</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 18: 08/10/12. Letter from M. C. MacLeod.

<sup>127</sup> MacFarlane, ‘The Gaelic Language and the People Who Speak It’, 306.

<sup>128</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 19: 16/01/13. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. This letter also contains a request for MacFarlane to compose a new Scottish national anthem which would combine his ‘love of Scotland and the Gaelic, with a touch of defiance.’<sup>129</sup> Erskine suggested a Gaelic air be put to English words. Details of this meeting were published here: E. C. M, ‘The Scottish Gaelic Academy’ [report on points adopted during a meeting on 28 June 1913], *GNB*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (1913).

<sup>130</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 19: 22/05/13. Letter from R. Erskine.

Robertson. Before returning to the operations of the GA in this period, the discussion will now briefly consider this moment of turbulence between Erskine, Robertson and MacFarlane, expressed in the pages of the newspapers and periodicals of the time and in the formation of Erskine's independent association, the SSL in 1913. These events and relationships will help to develop our understanding of the complex personal dynamics, frustrations and rifts at play within these important literary circles, and give needed additional context to the issues impacting the success of the GA.

## Tensions

Angus Robertson had published the second Gaelic novel, *An t-Ogha Mòr*, in 1913, though it was not well received by MacFarlane. At the Mòd in the same year, John MacCormick's short stories had supposedly been judged unfairly by a 'rival', and it has been suggested by Kidd that this rival was in fact Robertson.<sup>131</sup> MacFarlane, defensive perhaps of the unfair treatment of his friend, incidentally the author of the first Gaelic novel, described Robertson's style as 'unnatural and affected.'<sup>132</sup> On reading the review, Erskine wrote two letters in two days to MacFarlane, arguing that he was fundamentally wrong in his remarks; that it was not good for peace; and reminding MacFarlane that Robertson was himself a member of the GA and that he ought to let things go.<sup>133</sup> Erskine was a close contact of Robertson and had published instalments of his novel in *AS* before its publication.<sup>134</sup> He also published his own review of the novel in *GNB*, beginning with a lengthy commentary on the historical role of the literary critic, whose opinions in the past had been 'sharply expressed', and who used to go:

about like a roaring and ravening lion, seeking whom he might devour, and when the hot blood of the scalp-hunter flowed in his veins, rather than, as at present for the most part, the milk of human kindness, and the liquified soft-soap of 'sweet reasonableness.' [...] To a certain extent, Mr. Robertson has reason [...] to complain of the critics whom Providence, or fate, has allotted to him.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Kidd, 'The Forgotten First', 175-177.

<sup>132</sup> MacFarlane, 'To the Editor', *OT* (08/08/1913), 3.

<sup>133</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 19: 27/08/13. Letter from R. Erskine. Followed by Fol. 19: 29/8/13. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>134</sup> Ronald Black, ed, *An Tuil. Anthology of Scottish Gaelic Verse* (Edinburgh, 1999), 723-724. For contents of *AS* see: Poncarová, 'An Sgeulaiche', *Project Erskine*, <<https://erskine.glasgow.ac.uk/magazines/an-sgeulaiche/>> [Accessed 12/03/24].

<sup>135</sup> Erskine, 'Mr. Robertson's Novel', *GNB*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (1913), 484.

Erskine continued to defend the novel's 'misty' quality and compared Robertson's position to 'many a man of genius.'<sup>136</sup> Knowing that MacFarlane was not celebrated for his 'sweet reasonableness', this review is revealing of Erskine's own confidence to such a stark critique, as evidently much of the piece was directed at MacFarlane himself.

MacFarlane, however, seems to have been largely unaffected by Erskine's letters or indeed by his article and adamantly maintained his negative opinions on the quality of Robertson's novel. He even compared the work to that of an aspiring Gaelic novelist, Seumas MacLeòid (1880-1947) in 1914.<sup>137</sup> He had read MacLeòid's novel, though observed that it was too similar in style to *An t-Ogha Mòr*, stating: 'that book angers me every time I look at it [...] it is a piece of affectation from beginning to end. It is a style that is of no use except in the hands of the very fore-most writers.'<sup>138</sup> MacLeòid did go on to publish the novel, titled *Cailin Sgiathanach, no, Faodalach na h-abaid* (A Maid of Skye, or the Foundling of the Abbey, 1923).

These events demonstrate the building tensions between MacFarlane and Erskine, alongside other members of the wider Gaelic literary sphere, represented here by Robertson. The two did not manage to entirely resolve their differences, with Robertson publishing a biography of MacFarlane in the *Northern Chronicle* in 1923, 'Calum MacPhàrlain: The Man and his Work: A Pen Picture'.<sup>139</sup> Although some positive remarks were included on his dedication to the Gaelic language, his edition of the *Fernaig Manuscript* (1923) and his school books, overall, the depiction was highly critical. The piece is worthy of reading in full, though a flavour of its tone is given here:

His Personality: [...] Hard by the quarries of neglected national tomes he will always be found carrying ample supplies of blasting powder, dynamite, and even high explosives. But, curiously enough, the danger zone of his operations is never marked off by any visible signals. Thus the unwary, and, not infrequently, sympathetic fellow-workers, find themselves in "ane red burial brent."

Keynote on his Mentality: [...] His ear is true to the tunes of blood. Mists may enfold the towering heights and clouds obscure the stars awhile; but he marches goal ward with unwearied zeal and tenacious assiduity [...] were he to meet Cú Chulainn chanting a song in his spirit-chariot he would forthwith proceed to test his performance by some formulae of Gaelic metre and scansion; nor would he forego the opportunity of directing [...] and sextant on the Celtic hero's ethereal plight to ascertain whether it corresponded with the records of the accepted sagas.

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 485.

<sup>137</sup> Dòmhnall R. Moireasdan, 'Seumas MacLeòid', *Gairm*, Vol. 108 (1979), 353-354.

<sup>138</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 20. Undated draft letter to S. MacLeod. Earlier, MacLeod had written asking MacFarlane to read the novel. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 20: 30/5/14. Letter from S. MacLeod.

<sup>139</sup> A. Robertson, 'Calum MacPhàrlain: The Man and his Work: A Pen Picture', *Northern Chronicle*, (04/06/1923). A cutting of the article was amongst MacFarlane's papers at: NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 28.

The Censor: A Cato never practised the censorial office with greater freedom [...] in imitation of the unbending Roman [...] So, if amazing industry, singleness of aim, impatience with counterfeit nationalism, together with enduring services to Gaelic song, Gaelic poetry, and Gaelic literature, have in them the qualities of sterling merit, then Calum's passport will be lovingly visé by Bran for a permanent residence amongst the sons of Lir.<sup>140</sup>

Although this account portrays MacFarlane in a slightly dictatorial way, it nevertheless contributes to our understanding of him. In his contemporary circles, although seen as highly serious and perhaps somewhat obstinate, his dedication and commitment to the Gaelic language was indisputable. The biography is testament to the seriousness with which MacFarlane perceived the work which he was doing, unwilling to compromise his standards or his values. If he had an 'impatience with counterfeit nationalism', which he certainly appears to have had, he undoubtedly had an impatience with counterfeit members of the Gaelic language movement. MacFarlane responded to the article in July 1923, saying of Robertson: 'His art is purely ornamental, and, like that of the ancient illuminated Gaelic MSS., instead of bringing into relief the true form of the initial letter it professes to depict, serves only to obscure it.'<sup>141</sup> He also mentioned Robertson in his lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal in 1927, saying that he should 'hold his tongue.'<sup>142</sup> MacFarlane's work was, while serious, transparent, and singular in its intention: as he strove to bring Gaelic language and literature into the modern day, to be respected as a very much living European language.

In 1913, and while the GA was still trying to build momentum, Erskine decided to form another Gaelic literary organisation, with an altogether different remit, though perhaps in response to his criticisms of inactivity within the GA. This new venture was The Society of Scottish Letters (SSL) (Comunn Litreachas na h-Albann), though as MacLeod has noted, the new body had failed to deliver on its intentions.<sup>143</sup> The aims of the SSL were 'to publish good Gaelic work in all branches of literature which might not secure publication through publishers owing to 1. Cost of production and 2. The limited character of the public appealed to. Provision for the remuneration of authors would also be made.'<sup>144</sup> While the GA had intended to become an authoritative institution on Gaelic spelling and grammar, a council which could be consulted and who could make certain determinations with respect to the language's correct use, the SLL had set out to provide the means, and critically the financial means, by which potential future writers of Gaelic could see their way to have their work published. This had the potential to be a productive two-pronged approach: at once

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> M. MacFarlane, 'Calum MacPhàrlain Explains', *Northern Chronicle* (23/07/1923).

<sup>142</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 25.

<sup>143</sup> McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 108.

<sup>144</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 19: 04/06/13. Letter from R. Erskine.

addressing the issue of the standardisation of the language, and thereby increasing the confidence of the Gaelic writers; and then by providing the publications that would carry and promote this newly created Gaelic work.

Given that the cost of producing Gaelic literature was cited as the first obstacle to it being readily published, Erskine must have envisioned investing a substantial amount of his own personal wealth by committing to providing that service. It is probably for this reason, Erskine recruited several influential patrons, which he had been prevented from doing in the GA, including The Earl of Mar, The Duke of Argyll, Lord Lovat and Viscount Maitland.<sup>145</sup> The president of the SSL was reported by its secretary, Donald Shaw, to be Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham (1852-1936), a Scottish Liberal MP from 1886-1892 and nationalist, founder of the Scottish Labour Party in 1888 and the National Party of Scotland in 1928.<sup>146</sup> With such similar interests in Scottish nationalism, it seems likely that Erskine and Cunninghame Graham had a close relationship. Cunninghame Graham had written a prose sketch in English for *GNB* as early as 1905, 'Tobar na Reil', (The Well of the Star), suggesting that the two must have known each other before Erskine offered him the presidency of the SSL in 1913.<sup>147</sup>

Erskine had offered the editorship of the SSL's new publication to MacFarlane, which he had turned down.<sup>148</sup> It is unclear whether or not MacFarlane was in fact an official member of the SSL, though he had drafted a letter to Shaw, in June 1914, complaining about a meeting of the group being held in Edinburgh instead of Glasgow, which indicates that he must have been associated in some capacity.<sup>149</sup> Henderson did join, and continued in the following years to work with Erskine on a range of projects in pursuit of the Scottish nationalist cause.<sup>150</sup> As well as admonishing Shaw for requesting that members travel to him, MacFarlane queried whether or not his services were in fact needed, as the invitation had not outlined the specific purpose of the meeting, writing: 'I like Edinburgh well enough;

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Donald Shaw was the caretaker secretary as of 09/12/13, with R. B. Cunninghame Graham as president. Fees were ten shillings in the first year. From: Anja Gunderloch, *The Gaelic Manuscripts of Glasgow University: A Catalogue* (2007), 119. Cedric Watts, 'Graham, Robert Bontine Cunninghame (1852-1936), ODNB (2004) < <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/33504> > [Accessed: 01/05/2024].

<sup>147</sup> Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham, 'Tobar na Reil', *GNB*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1905). Discussion of the piece in: Lachlan Munro, 'R. B. Cunninghame Graham's contribution to the political and literary life of Scotland: party, prose, and the political aesthetic', Unpublished PhD thesis (University of Glasgow, 2019), 145-146. See also: 143-146 for discussion of the over-lapping interests of Graham, Erskine and the wider Celtic literary and cultural revivalists.

<sup>148</sup> Erskine decided to use *GNB* as the publication for the Society. He suggested that Lachlan MacBean could be sub-editor under MacFarlane if he desired. Fol. 19: 20/06/13. Erskine thanked MacFarlane for his trouble in responding, evidently, he had turned down the offer. Fol. 19: 23/06/13.

<sup>149</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 20: 01/06/14. Draft letter to D. Shaw.

<sup>150</sup> MacBean, 'Angus Henderson', *The Celtic Who's Who*, 59.

I like fair play much better.’<sup>151</sup> There were further confusions about this new group, with Whyte Grant writing to MacFarlane in early 1914 asking if the SSL and the GA were the same thing.<sup>152</sup> Whyte Grant was looking for someone to help publish a new Gaelic alphabet with illustrations, having been turned down by ACG and unable to afford to publish it alone. She would have been just the kind of Gaelic writer which Erskine was looking to support, though his attitudes towards women may have prevented him from doing so, and the work did not find a publisher.

Both the GA and the SSL have been described by Cairns as part of ‘a new activism that was spearheading language revival.’<sup>153</sup> He described Erskine as at the forefront of this radical movement, though MacFarlane should now also be considered as one of, if not the, leading figure of the language movement. Erskine’s contributions to Gaelic literature were undoubtedly substantial, though even he often deferred to MacFarlane’s advice and authority in the period up to 1914.

The existence of both organisations at this time offers a unique lens through which to better understand the two men and the different strategies they were employing. With the GA, MacFarlane set out to do the necessary work of standardising and modernising the language, providing the much-needed foundations on which the language could flourish. With the SSL, Erskine was establishing yet another Gaelic publication with an unmistakable Scottish nationalistic hue. Although these journals, newspapers and periodicals were intended to improve and increase the production of Gaelic literature, Erskine established each without addressing the question of why they were not having the impact he had intended. Erskine accused other publishers in the sphere of appealing to people with ‘limited character’, citing this as their justification for not printing Gaelic language material. Erskine did not take account of the precipitous decline in Gaelic speaker numbers or indeed the English based system of education which had been in place in the Gaelic speaking areas since the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act. Without at least acknowledging or going so far as to address these issues, Erskine was appealing to a diminishing community of readers and, as MacFarlane knew only too well, without a vocabulary which could cope with expressing itself in modern day life, this cohort would remain the same. MacFarlane later commented that Erskine had even refused to improve or correct his own Gaelic before publishing his articles.<sup>154</sup> MacFarlane sought out innovation and worked to provide the basis and the tools

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 20: 14/03/14. Letter from K.W. Grant.

<sup>153</sup> Cairns, *No Language!*, 50.

<sup>154</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 58: 26/08/28. Draft letter from MacFarlane to A. Henderson.



for the generations of Gaelic speakers which would come after him to live with Gaelic as their national language.

Tensions between Erskine and MacFarlane reached breaking point in 1914. One of the first identifiable issues had been that Erskine had accepted the role as an adjudicator at ACG's Mòd that year, which MacFarlane had taken extreme offence to. It is possible to shed light on MacFarlane's precise opinions here as he had drafted a very angry letter to Ruairidh Erskine in August that year and the letters which had come before it from Erskine are also extant in MacFarlane's papers. We do not know, therefore, if MacFarlane sent the letter or not, though there are very few correspondences between the two after this point, and so it would appear that likely he had sent it, or something similar at least.<sup>155</sup> The drafted letter is therefore a highly valuable resource to witness the correspondence from MacFarlane's perspective, which was most often not possible.

On hearing of Erskine's intention to become a judge at the Mòd, MacFarlane wrote that ACG's Executive Council were 'a set of mean cowardly lying priest-ridden flunkies.'<sup>156</sup> MacFarlane also wrote that his experience was 'of 50 times the value of yours'; and that he had been doing the real work of the Gaelic language movement while Erskine had been 'fumbling, and sowing evil seeds.'<sup>157</sup> He went on to criticise the current editor of *ADG*, Donald MacPhie, stating he had been 'a dumb dead Gael for 30 odd years.' MacPhie was active in ACG, adjudicating literary competitions for the Mòd, and also published Gaelic school readers with William Watson.<sup>158</sup> MacFarlane went on to work with MacPhie in 1921, as a group formed which attempted to re-establish the GA, so this may have been a remark made in the heat of the moment. The second serious issue was a remark which Erskine must have made to MacFarlane about the developing civil unrest in Ireland, as the language movement there had become increasingly politicised. An extract of MacFarlane's response is given here:

You think John Redmond and the Nationalist Volunteers afford the comic element in the serious political situation. The man who first shadowed forth the idea of the National Irish volunteers is the man in Ireland best known to me – I lived several days under his roof when at the second Oireachtas. He is the most thoughtful man in the Gaelic ranks. It was he who shadowed forth first of all The Gaelic League – not An Craoibhinn. What he said regarding the volunteer movement he meant, and it was that the Irish volunteers should be enrolled "for the protection of Ireland – for the Empire." Of Redmond then sticking to that policy, what is there comic about it?<sup>159</sup>

<sup>155</sup> One later letter was a request to contribute to Erskine's newest publication, *The Scottish Review*, which MacFarlane turned down: NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 20: 23/12/14. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>156</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 20. Undated draft letter to Erskine.

<sup>157</sup> NLS M/S 9736, Fol. 20: 20/08/14. Draft letter from MacFarlane to R. Erskine.

<sup>158</sup> MacBean, 'MacPhie, Donald', *The Celtic Who's Who*, 108-109.

<sup>159</sup> NLS M/S 9736, Fol. 20: 20/08/14. Draft letter from MacFarlane to R. Erskine.

John Redmond (1856-1918) had split the Irish Volunteers by encouraging a majority to join the British army. He claimed that they should help to defend Ireland and Britain and encouraged them to fight for the freedom of other small nations.<sup>160</sup> Redmond had done this on the understanding that the Home Rule legislation, The Government of Ireland Act (1914), the implementation of which had been postponed at the outset of war, would be enacted once it was over.<sup>161</sup> Much has been written on these events and will not be dealt with here. Relevant to this study are the reactions to the split in the Irish Volunteers, as the move towards radical separatism which followed, leading to the 1916 Rising, was felt across the Celtic sphere. Some believed those who signed up had been ‘hoodwinked’ by the British state with empty rhetoric.<sup>162</sup> The republican faction of the Irish Volunteers had been led by Patrick Pearse, whose work for the language movement in Ireland has been discussed. It is revealing to see that MacFarlane did not support the republican cause, despite his long involvement with and admiration for the Gaelic League and its publications, including Pearse’s *An Claidheamh Soluis*.

The founder of the Irish Volunteers that MacFarlane referenced was Eoin MacNeill, whom he had stayed with at the second Oireachtas in Dublin in May 1898. MacNeill had then represented the Gaelic League at ACG’s Mòd in Greenock the same year.<sup>163</sup> MacNeill had intended that the existence of the Volunteers would force the British government to grant Home Rule, suspicious of their commitment to it in the preceding years. Generally speaking, MacNeill had not supported the 1916 Rising, and was instead court-martialled and imprisoned for attempting to delay it.<sup>164</sup> He did however go on to several roles in the newly founded Dáil as a representative of Sinn Féin.<sup>165</sup>

The political trajectory of the Gaelic language movement in Ireland was not emulated in Scotland, though Ruairaidh Erskine and others had hoped that it would be. MacFarlane and the majority of urban Gaels supported the war effort and their sense of Celtic or Gaelic nationalism was not seen to be at odds with supporting the Union or the allied effort. Although cultural and language-based national movements had momentum in the early-twentieth century, their ‘moderate and introverted agendas of political reform were indeed

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<sup>160</sup> Michael Laffan, ‘Redmond, John Edward’, *DIB*, < <https://www.dib.ie/biography/redmond-john-edward-a7602> > [Accessed: 01/02/22].

<sup>161</sup> James McConnel, ‘Après la guerre’: John Redmond, the Irish Volunteers and Armed Constitutionalism, 1913–1915’, *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 131, No. 553 (2016), 1445.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 1446.

<sup>163</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 9: 06/10/03. Letter from GSG. And Fol, 9: 16/10/03. Letter from J. MacNeil.

<sup>164</sup> Patrick Maume and Thomas Charles-Edwards, ‘Eoin (John) MacNeil’, *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (2013) < <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.005283.v1> > [Accessed 05/02/24].

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

silenced by the guns of August.’<sup>166</sup> MacFarlane’s own support for a form of conservative-unionism is visible in the support for the Empire which he expressed to Ruairidh Erskine in the letter above; and in the role which he assumed as a war-time recruiter for the British army in Paisley.<sup>167</sup> Erskine’s attempts to incorporate the language movement into wider calls for Scottish nationalism had not been successful. He went on to collaborate with Hugh MacDiarmid (1892-1978), and worked to instil a broader form of Celtic consciousness into nationalist discourse in Scotland, rather than a specifically Gaelic one.<sup>168</sup> As for MacFarlane, he was unrelenting in his refusal of nationalistic politics, despite the persistent calls made to him throughout the early twentieth-century; and his efforts were invariably focussed on the Gaelic language and improving its condition.

### The End of the Gaelic Academy

The Gaelic Academy continued into 1913 and 1914, though they did not produce any published or official work in that period. MacFarlane was determinately creating new Gaelic words himself, though it is not known to what extent others in the group were doing the same. MacFarlane was also working on his edition of the *Fernaig Manuscript* at this time, though it was not published until 1923. Other events, such as the death of MacFarlane’s closest friend, Henry Whyte in December of 1913 and the onset of war in 1914, invariably impacted the chances of the GA’s success. C. B. Fleming of the *Oban Times* wrote to MacFarlane in April 1913 when he heard that Whyte was ill, saying: ‘He has had his ups and downs poor fellow, but when his time comes to go he will leave a good name in the Gaelic world. I believe yourself are his best friend and know most of his work.’<sup>169</sup> Similarly, when Whyte’s son wrote to MacFarlane that he had passed away in December he asked him to write the obituary: ‘You are about his oldest and most intimate friend, so I know you can do it well.’<sup>170</sup> The friendship between the two men had lasted throughout their lives and from the correspondence between them it is clear that they had a close personal connection. It is also clear that MacFarlane could in fact be funny, as the hundreds of letters and postcards

<sup>166</sup> Justin Dolan Stover, ‘Modern Celtic Nationalism in the Period of the Great War: Establishing Transnational Connections’, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, Vol. 32 (2012), 300-301.

<sup>167</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 55. Recruitment materials.

<sup>168</sup> Scott Lyall and Margery Palmer McCulloch, eds, *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, (Edinburgh, 2011).

<sup>169</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 19: 04/13. Letter from C. B. Fleming.

<sup>170</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 19: 28/12/13. Letter from A. C. Whyte. This could be the notice which appeared in the *OT*, ‘The Late Henry Whyte: A Noted Celtic Figure’, *The Oban Times*, no. 3085 (14 January 1914), 3. He also wrote: M. M., ‘Henry Whyte - ‘Fionn’’, *The Celtic Review*, Vol. 9, No. 36 (1914), 332-336.

from Whyte can testify to. A comprehensive biographical study of Henry Whyte would be advantageous for Gaelic and Celtic scholarship today.

The breakdown of the relationship between Erskine and MacFarlane in 1914 may have impacted the publication of the *Fernaig Manuscript*. MacFarlane had drafted a letter to Erskine in May of that year that the manuscript was almost ready for publication, reporting that he had:

about 4000 lines which would make itself a book of 100 pages such as those of the Irish texts. [...] A small percentage of the words are unsolved or doubtful. But as it stands at present the transliteration covers the whole of the original and is a good long way in advance of the state in which the scholars left it, and the percentage of unsolved words in their work.<sup>171</sup>

Previous work on the manuscript had been done by Rev. Alexander Cameron (1827-1888) in his *Reliquiae Celticae* (1894) and by Prof. Donald MacKinnon in the *Transaction of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* (1885).<sup>172</sup> MacFarlane said later ‘that the work of his predecessors had saved him no more than ten days’ labour.’<sup>173</sup> That the manuscript was not published until 1923, despite being almost completed in 1914, may have been due to a number of factors, though his distancing from Ruairidh Erskine a few months later likely impacted his decision not to publish through his publications at least. It was eventually published in 1923 by Malcolm MacLeod in Dundee.

MacFarlane had been editing Gaelic materials for *The Peoples Journal* (est. 1858) and supporting its Gaelic competitions throughout the early 1910’s, as well as contributing to and being featured in MacLeod’s *The Celtic Annual* (1916).<sup>174</sup> The biography given here included the comment that MacFarlane’s edition of the *Fernaig Manuscript* was ready for publication, though we know that it was again not published at this point. MacLeod had noted that the work was awaiting a ‘more propitious time to be transformed into a book’ but that an experienced publisher, such as himself, would have no issues in preparing and editing it for the press.<sup>175</sup> He also mentioned the work of the GA to create new Gaelic technical terms: stating that although a small group had been appointed to assist in the monumental task, that ‘by far the greatest portion must fall to their gifted, scholarly, and versatile

<sup>171</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 20: 04/03/14. Draft to R. Erskine.

<sup>172</sup> Alexander Cameron, ‘Fernaig MS’, *Reliquiae Celticae*, Vol. 2, Alexander MacBain and John Kennedy, eds, (Inverness, 1894), 1-137; and MacKinnon, ‘The Fernaig Manuscript’, *TGSI*, Vol. 11 (1885), 311-39.

<sup>173</sup> M. C. Macleod, ‘Calum MacPhàrlain’, 27.

<sup>174</sup> For example, MacLeod sent MacFarlane twenty-five submissions to his limerick competition to examine in 1911, with seventy entries the following year. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 25/10/11 and Fol. 18: 08/11/12. Letters from M. C. MacLeod. Other competitions take place in 1913 with cash prizes and using MacFarlane’s own writing as example texts. NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 19: 09/10/13 and 22/10/13. Letters from M. C. MacLeod. Macleod, ‘Calum MacPhàrlain’, *The Celtic Annual* (1916), 26-28.

<sup>175</sup> Macleod, ‘Calum MacPhàrlain’, 27.

Convenor.’<sup>176</sup> This was, of course, MacFarlane and the account stands as evidence for the continued activity of the GA into at least 1916, with Macleod himself an active member.

There are some correspondences in 1915 and into 1916 between some of the membership, trying to organise meetings, though these were most often cancelled. Perhaps short-sightedly, Henderson had complained to MacFarlane on this issue in June 1915: ‘What possible connection can exist between the Academy and the war?’<sup>177</sup> H. C. Gillies had himself gone to work as a medical officer on a ship carrying troops.<sup>178</sup> Understandably, the First World War was highly detrimental to the progress of the GA and its abilities to realise its potential and established objectives.

It was not until 1921 that another attempt was made to re-establish the organisation, again with Henderson leading the calls. He wrote to MacFarlane proposing old and new members, including Lachlan MacBean, Eneas Mackay, Donald MacPhie and Rev. George William Mackay (Seoras Uilleam Macaoidh, 1863-), president of ACG from 1919-1922.<sup>179</sup> A meeting was arranged for February 1921, with Henderson writing to MacFarlane:

I am not so sorry as you that the old Academy was a failure, for its failure makes it easier to proceed with a smaller and much better selected membership. [...] I am agreeable to admit a few of the younger men, such as Shaw, Norman MacLeod and MacDougall; but only a very small number can be let in at a time.<sup>180</sup>

The objective of the meeting was to ‘consider the condition of the Gaelic language in relation to the efforts being made to re-invigorate it.’<sup>181</sup> The members were finalised as only MacFarlane, Henderson, Mackay, MacPhie and MacBean. William J. Watson had been a potential candidate and Henderson had even suggested giving him an honorary position, though he still declined to join. Henderson agreed with MacFarlane’s suggestions that the new Society should be named the Comunn Litreachais na Gàidhlig (Gaelic Literary Society) and that they would prioritise the creation of new terms in the first instance; and the standardisation of spelling and grammar, composed specifically as an additional resource to MacFarlane’s school dictionary, *Am Briathrachan Beag*.<sup>182</sup> Correspondence in MacFarlane’s papers frustratingly end on the subject with a letter from Rev G. W. Mackay to say that he was looking forward to the meeting on that coming Saturday.<sup>183</sup> It is therefore

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>177</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 136: 16/06/15. Letter from A. Henderson.

<sup>178</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 54: 18/06/15. Letter from M. A. Evans to A. Henderson.

<sup>179</sup> MacBean, ‘Rev. George William Mackay’, *The Celtic Who’s Who*, 99; ‘Presidents of An Comunn Gaidhealach’, *Mod Naiseanta Rioghail Chataibh* 1995, 138.

<sup>180</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 27: 04/02/21. Letter from A. Henderson.

<sup>181</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 27: 09/02/21. Letter from A. Henderson.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 27: 17/02/21. Letter from G. W. Mackay.

unclear if the meeting took place, though knowing that MacFarlane did not appreciate his or anyone else's time being wasted, it is likely that it went ahead having agreed to it. Again, however, the organisation's ambitions to publish resources were not fulfilled.

Henderson made another attempt in 1928, though MacFarlane's reply stated: 'I am very doubtful if any good can be done now.'<sup>184</sup> Undeterred, in late 1929, he wrote again with a list of potential members, including John MacCormick and Hector MacDougall; and a number of female Gaelic workers, including Ella Carmichael, Miss Campbell of Inverneill and a Miss M. E. M. Donaldson.<sup>185</sup> Henderson admitted that much of the work would have to fall on MacFarlane if he accepted the role of convenor of this organisation, stressing however that he would provide the finances to support its operations.<sup>186</sup> MacFarlane drafted a response saying that it was 'almost hopeless to win success', and that he had looked over his lists of newly created Gaelic terms and had around 11,000 so far.<sup>187</sup> He felt that at least double would be necessary for publication and even that would need to be revised at least two or three times. He continued: 'Our last experiment in this field of word making was an absolute failure.' The other members had been 'up in the clouds' with only himself and Henderson having any real sense of the work which had to be done. Gaelic, he wrote, was down to one hundred and twenty-four thousand speakers, aligning the decay of the last three decades with the simultaneous decay of 'what may be called the health of the language.'<sup>188</sup>

This was despite the life-long efforts of MacFarlane and others in support of the 'health of the language'. In 1929, MacFarlane was also seventy-five years old and had in these later years understandably published and edited less Gaelic material. His later publications were academic in nature, such as the *Fernaig Manuscript* in 1923 and two papers to the *GSI*, published in 1927 and 1929, an organisation which he had not so actively engaged with earlier in the twentieth century.<sup>189</sup> The lecture which he gave to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal in 1927, titled 'Why I am not, and have not been for over 20 years, a member of An Comunn Gàidhealach' serves as insight into his enduring bitterness towards that organisation, though the warnings he gave before its inception in 1891 testify to his consistent approach towards Gaelic language planning.

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<sup>184</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 58: 26/08/28. Draft letter from MacFarlane to A. Henderson.

<sup>185</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 58: 10/09/29. Letter from A. Henderson.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 58. Undated draft from MacFarlane to A. Henderson.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> MacFarlane, 'Gaelic Elements in the South-West Lowland Scots English', *TGSI*, Vol. 31 (1927), 175 and MacFarlane, 'Half a Century of Vocal Gaelic Music', *TGSI*, Vol. 32 (1929), 251-272.

## Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the complexity of the Gaelic language movement of the early twentieth century and provided for the first time a comprehensive account of the Gaelic Academy, an organisation founded on distinctly language-based principles. MacFarlane's leading role has been evidenced, alongside much needed detail on its objectives, activities and membership, significantly contributing to our knowledge of the language movement as a whole. The GA intended to be the authority in Scotland on the Gaelic language: to standardise, modernise and to implement the policies which would secure its future as a working, modern language. Although it did not secure the support of the Gaelic academic communities, which may have improved its chances of achieving that status, it has been shown that MacFarlane continued the work for the remainder of his life, further underlining his commitment to the Gaelic language. The discussion has illuminated tensions between the academic circles and those who worked as part of the Gaelic language movement specifically. This group, including MacFarlane, which aspired to be a scholarly institution, was undermined by the lack of co-operation from the key scholars in the field working on the Gaelic language in Scotland at the time. MacKinnon and MacFarlane's relationship was dynamic and respectful, though repeatedly MacFarlane would call on him to do more for the language and its literature in the present day. It would be unfair, however, to suggest that MacFarlane did not hold MacKinnon in the highest esteem, as perhaps the only Gaelic scholar, indeed likely the only Gaelic speaking person, whom MacFarlane ever appealed to directly for help. To the wider academic community, MacFarlane was known and respected but also decidedly separate from them. He received criticisms of his work, which we will discuss below, though the extent of his contributions to Gaelic literature, to lexicology and linguistic innovation, and to the Gaelic language movement as a whole cannot be understated.

There were several attempts made to politically galvanise the Gaelic language movement and to incorporate it into wider calls and agitations for Scottish nationalism and separatism. MacFarlane, however, had an unwavering commitment to the Gaelic language and in his conviction that his own Gaelic nationalism and Gaelic patriotism could exist independently of its Scottish or British context. The political dimension of the Gaelic language movement in Ireland meant that it gained official support after independence, in marked contrast to the situation in Scotland. Frank Thompson's comments were noted at the beginning of this chapter for the 'political potential' of the Gaelic language movement in Scotland and its perceived lack of success, writing that 'either the lessons presented by the

history of linguistic revivals were not taken up, perhaps as being irrelevant, or their implications for Gaelic were not fully realised.’<sup>190</sup> Perhaps this was the case, or perhaps it was that the political route was too radical for the majority to take at that time in Scotland; and that although the language movements were similar in terms of values and output, they each had their own histories at their core which could not have done otherwise but impact their future.

The work which the Gaelic Academy set out to do was left undone in the lifetimes of its members, and MacFarlane’s 11,000 newly created Gaelic terms have not yet been published, though remain with his collection in the NLS.<sup>191</sup> What we can see from his activities in the pre-war period is his singular determination to work for the future of the Gaelic language and the leading role which he played within the Gaelic language movement. This study has recognised the power that MacFarlane had to direct the language movement at this time, and his efforts to do so, witnessed in the formation of the GA as just one example, should be recognised. The potential which he had should also be considered, as initiatives like the GA, a predecessor perhaps of modern initiatives such as Faclair na Gàidhlig, could well have succeeded if external circumstances had been different. The events which MacFarlane was central to shaping could therefore have provided highly different outcomes for the Gaelic language in Scotland.

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<sup>190</sup> Thompson, ‘Gaelic in Politics’, 81.

<sup>191</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 140.



## Chapter Four: Published Work

### Introduction

The study has provided a detailed examination of Malcolm MacFarlane's various roles and leading involvement in the Gaelic language movement in Scotland. The discussions in the preceding chapters have shed new light on his life and career, and proposed that he was a central and until now under-recognised leader of the movement in many ways. They have also, with this fresh understanding and appreciation of the scale of MacFarlane's contributions, provided much valuable insight into the development of the Gaelic language movement as a whole. The present chapter will provide a survey of the wealth of Gaelic literature which he created, encouraged and edited in his own Gaelic literary career. These publications have been referred to throughout the discussion, though it will add considerably to our understanding of him and his work to explore in this final chapter some of his key literary outputs. This is done in order to contextualise the substantially archive based work that has been done here, as the production of MacFarlane's vast corpus of Gaelic literature ought to be independently recognised in current scholarship. Gaining an understanding of his contributions to Gaelic literature will help to establish his role as a leading figure in the Gaelic language movement at the time.

The chapter will first of all outline MacFarlane's contribution to the promotion of Gaelic education in Scotland and will look specifically at the material which he intended for use in formal educational settings. The publications were directed towards primary, secondary and higher educational institutions, as well as community scholars, interested in the philological, linguistic and orthographical study of Gaelic. MacFarlane's contribution to this field was largely done under the auspices of ACG and in collaboration with some of the key figures as discussed above. Context will be given as to the conditions of educational policy in Scotland which moved MacFarlane and others to create Gaelic texts for schools. As seen in the 1891 manifesto of ACG, their first two foundational objectives were:

1. To promote the cultivation of Gaelic Literature and Music and Home Industries in the Highlands.
2. To encourage the Teaching of Gaelic in Highland Schools.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *To Highlanders at Home and abroad: Manifesto.*

This discussion will therefore survey MacFarlane's educational publications in light of these objectives, and consider what was done by him to promote and cultivate Gaelic literature and music. MacFarlane's musical compositions and collected materials will be outlined in the first instance, along with his other works, such as articles, essays and edited collections. In particular, it will look at the many contributions which MacFarlane made to the publications of Ruairaidh Erskine, and a series of articles which MacFarlane wrote on Gaelic poetry, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh' ('Today's Poetry', 1908-1910).<sup>2</sup> This will provide an insight into the nature of the literature which MacFarlane was creating and the debates and literary atmosphere which he was contributing to. Overall, the intention is to provide the necessary context to the list of his published works, given in Appendix 1, in order to better understand the extent of MacFarlane's literary output. The chapter argues that MacFarlane made a major contribution to Gaelic letters. His literary activity, in addition to his other work noted above, had a significant impact on the direction and development of Gaelic literature and education. If we were to have been without MacFarlane's labour, the availability of resources for Gaelic education would have been decidedly reduced. It is perhaps more challenging to quantify the impact that his other publications had on future Gaelic writers, in particular those which sought to inspire innovation in creative Gaelic writing, though the scale of his efforts is incontrovertible. *The Fernaig Manuscript* (1923) is MacFarlane's most obvious legacy as a Gaelic scholar, though his influence on the Gaelic scene in his own day was considerable.

## Education

The ability, effectiveness and willingness of the Highland school boards to provide comprehensive Gaelic education in the wake of the Education (Scotland) Act of 1872 has been widely debated, and we have discussed aspects of these policies in the study already.<sup>3</sup> The Education (Scotland) Act of 1872, which established the Scottish School Boards, made no provision for Gaelic education and has since become a well-known marker in the historical decline of the Gaelic language in Scotland. Scholars do agree that the position of

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<sup>2</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh', *GNB*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1908), 311-334, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1909), 25-41, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1909), 118-134, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1909), 223-241, Vol. 6, No. 4 (1909), 333-359, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1910), 40-60, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1910), 118-128 and Vol. 7, No. 3 (1910), 223-236.

<sup>3</sup> D. Macrae, 'Education in the Western Highlands', *TGSI*, Vol. 3 (1873), 61 and 'Gaelic Teaching in Schools – Correspondence between the Rev Kenneth A. Mackenzie, Kingussie, and the secretary', *TGSI*, Vol. 3 (1873), 181. See also: Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland*.

Gaelic education leading up to the passing of the Act and the absence of provision which followed it had not, however, pre-determined the decline of the language.<sup>4</sup>

Groups such as the Edinburgh Society for the Support of Gaelic Schools (ESSGS) (est. 1811) and The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) (est. 1709), alongside the Education Committee of the General Assembly, had established the ‘educational advantages of Gaelic literacy’, which primarily sought to promote literacy in English through education in Gaelic.<sup>5</sup> Policies of the Scotch Education Department, and specifically the Scotch Code, could be adapted year on year, evolving so that by 1878 there were several references to Gaelic: children could be tested in Gaelic; school boards were allowed to support a Gaelic teacher; Gaelic could be taught in ordinary school hours by an appropriate person; and Gaelic was recognised as a specific subject.<sup>6</sup> Financial constraints and systemic negative attitudes towards Gaelic education made the implementation of these policies irregular.

In 1876, the Gaelic Society of Inverness (GSI) conducted a survey which highlighted the barriers, including opposition from within the school boards themselves, to properly providing Gaelic education in Gaelic-speaking areas.<sup>7</sup> In 1884, the Napier Commission recommended that ‘the use of Gaelic as an educational medium should be made compulsory’, however this was not done, with Gaelic’s recognition as a specific subject, alongside grants made available to pupil-teachers, implemented instead.<sup>8</sup> As even these were non-compulsory directives, by 1888 it was reported that there were very few Gaelic-speaking students on teacher training courses as a result of the continued restricted access to appropriate level Gaelic education and examination.<sup>9</sup> Gaelic education also suffered as the ideologies of organisations like the SSPCK, for example the deeply rooted attitude that Gaelic education was primarily a route to English literacy, persisted into the twentieth-century.<sup>10</sup>

MacFarlane and other central figures in the language movement looked to tackle this issue and maintained that Gaelic should be taught for Gaelic’s own sake, and not to further proficiency in English. The first of MacFarlane’s printed works in this area was his academic handbook, *The Phonetics of the Gaelic language* (1889), intended as a resource for Gaelic

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<sup>4</sup> Victor E. Durkacz, *The Decline of the Celtic Languages* (Edinburgh, 1983), 164.

<sup>5</sup> See: Kelly, ‘The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge’.

<sup>6</sup> John Smith, ‘The 1872 Education (Scotland) Act and Gaelic Education’, *TGSI*, Vol. 51 (1978-1980), 36-37.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 47. F. O’ Hanlon and L. Paterson, ‘Gaelic Education since 1872’, *The Edinburgh History of Education in Scotland*, Robert D. Anderson, Mark Freeman, Lindsay Paterson, eds, (Edinburgh, 2015), 306.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, ‘The 1872 Education (Scotland) Act’, 53. Jane McDermid, ‘Education and Society in the Era of the School Boards, 1872-1918’, *The Edinburgh History of Education in Scotland*, (Edinburgh, 2015), 190.

speakers. This contained a phonetic survey of Gaelic, with scientific illustrations; an exposition on Gaelic orthography; and an original Gaelic short-hand, or phonography, to be used to facilitate the conducting of business in Gaelic. It was reviewed by *The Highland Monthly* who reported that it had been carried out ‘in an intelligent and thoroughly scientific spirit.’<sup>11</sup> Henry Whyte described the book as ‘an unpretentious little work.’<sup>12</sup> The majority of MacFarlane’s educational publications after this, however, were directed towards school children and their teachers, which will be the focus of this discussion. It will take a broadly chronological approach to the texts which were specifically intended for use in schools, including grammars, readers, dictionaries and songbooks.

As the convenor of ACG’s Education Committee, MacFarlane had helped to produce the Gaelic grammar, *Scottish Gaelic as a Specific Subject* (1893). Its preface stated that it was ‘principally designed for the teaching of the Scottish Gaelic Language as a specific subject under the Education Code for Scotland; but it is also meant for other uses.’<sup>13</sup> Although only one of a committee given the task, and credited for it, from later evidence MacFarlane appears to have been the main contributor. In a later letter to *An Gaidheal* in 1927, John MacMaster Campbell wrote to clarify who the work should be attributed to:

It was thus Mr. Malcolm MacFarlane, and not Mr. Duncan Reid, who was Convener of the Committee. [...] I make acknowledgement to Mr. MacFarlane that it was he and not Mr. Reid (now gone from us) upon whom devolved the greater portion of the work which would necessarily fall upon a Convener [...] it is but fair to Mr. MacFarlane that the principal credit for the book should be accorded to him.’<sup>14</sup>

As early as 1893 in fact, before the text was published, Whyte had written in the *CM* that it had been primarily MacFarlane’s work:

Mr. MacFarlane has largely devolved the work of preparing it, and we are confident in saying that when the book, which is now in the press, is published, it will more than justify anything we may have said regarding Mr. MacFarlane’s knowledge of the genius and construction of the Gaelic language.’<sup>15</sup>

There had evidently been high expectations of the grammar before its publication, as it so directly addressed an identified need in the education system. This was also published by Whyte as part of a biography of MacFarlane and the longstanding nature of their friendship has been demonstrated throughout this study.

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<sup>11</sup> D. Campbell and A. MacBain, ‘New Books’, *The Highland Monthly*, Vol. 1 (1889), 446

<sup>12</sup> Whyte, ‘Malcolm MacFarlane’, 153.

<sup>13</sup> *Scottish Gaelic as a Specific Subject* (Glasgow, 1893).

<sup>14</sup> J. MacMaster Campbell, ‘Gaelic as a Specific Subject’, *An Gaidheal*, Vol. 22, No. 12 (1927), 183.

<sup>15</sup> Whyte, ‘Malcolm MacFarlane’, 152-154.

The difficulty that MacFarlane had in securing a publisher for *Scottish Gaelic as a Specific Subject* is evidenced in his correspondence at the time, as he had contacted at least three separate companies with his proposal, before Archibald Sinclair agreed to produce it, selling for one shilling a copy. Mr Black of William Collins, Sons & Co had turned the opportunity down, concerned that they would not be able to sell enough copies, though he had initially offered a complex deal where after three years ACG would be obliged to buy back the unsold stock.<sup>16</sup> Mr Nelson of Thomas Nelson & Sons rejected the proposal altogether, citing an earlier failed venture to publish a Gaelic book with illustrations as it was too expensive.<sup>17</sup> J & R Parlane claimed that it would cost twenty-one pounds for 1,000 copies or thirty-four pounds for 3,000: ‘this includes stereo plates, which will be your property.’<sup>18</sup> This publishing house nevertheless recognised, unlike so many others, the issues which had prevented Gaelic texts from being profitable and went on to produce a broad range of Gaelic titles.<sup>19</sup>

The preface of *Scottish Gaelic as Specific Subject* stated that although there were several Grammars already in existence, that none of them were appropriate to teaching Gaelic in schools.<sup>20</sup> Earlier texts, such as James Munro’s *Gaelic Primer* (1854), did not have in mind the same level of organised Gaelic education which the school boards would later be in a position to offer, instead calling itself simply ‘a little manual.’<sup>21</sup> This had been Munro’s intention, although much of his Primer was complex as it was specifically directed at students who already had knowledge of Gaelic grammar. MacFarlane’s work had been intentionally designed to assist with the practical job of teaching the material in a regular school setting. Unlike his later texts for schools, *Scottish Gaelic as a Specific Subject* contained English to Gaelic translation exercises, and vice-versa. MacFarlane felt required to justify the use of English in his introduction to the volume, stating that it was included as a means to teach inflection and idiom ‘and then but sparingly.’<sup>22</sup> His reluctance to include English in his school texts was undoubtedly a consequence of his opposition to the notion of Gaelic being taught only as a way in which to acquire literacy in English, and he therefore rarely did. As with the songbooks which he curated for schools, beginning with *An Uiseag* (The Lark, 1898), these were created to be put into the hands of teachers who could use them with confidence, regardless of their own Gaelic education.

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<sup>16</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 1: 10/10/91. Letter from Mr Black and Fol. 1: 14/10/01. Letter from Mr Black.

<sup>17</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 1. 14/10/91. Letter from Mr Nelson

<sup>18</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 1. 05/11/91. Memorandum from J & R Parlane.

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth MacDonald, ‘Glasgow and Gaelic Writing’, *TGSI*, Vol. 57 (1993), 117.

<sup>20</sup> *Scottish Gaelic as a Specific Subject*.

<sup>21</sup> James Munro, *A New Gaelic Primer*, (Edinburgh, 1854).

<sup>22</sup> *Scottish Gaelic as a Specific Subject*.

This was the fundamental need which MacFarlane was trying to address: getting accessible and quality Gaelic materials into the schools and being used. Although, as will be demonstrated, some of his materials were criticised for being overly complex, though with so many barriers in place to publishing Gaelic texts, such as cost, one small work invariably had to do many things. ACG was therefore crucial as the means by which these educational resources could be published and distributed in schools. Without the funding of the many royal and aristocratic patrons and figureheads, financing the production of these resources would not have been possible.

ACG had been central to the organisation of Gaelic education campaigning. In 1904, it held an education conference and sent a ‘large and influential deputation’ to the House of Commons in April of that year to campaign for increased provision.<sup>23</sup> In 1907, it had published a short volume, *The Teaching of Gaelic in Highland Schools* (1907), to set out the scope of the advocacy work which was being done in the field. It included speeches, detailed reports, and letters on the subject, as well as census figures with explanatory notes contributed by Donald MacKinnon. He reported that there had been a decrease in the number of people able to speak Gaelic from 254,415 in 1891 to 230,806 in 1901.<sup>24</sup>

Kenneth Campbell, mentioned for his own poor Gaelic skills, according to MacFarlane anyway, and his illegal election to the vice-presidency of ACG in 1906, had been an active campaigner for the improvement of Gaelic education. He had written on the subject in *ADG* in 1905, though his piece in *The Teaching of Gaelic in Highland Schools* included an illuminating copy of the curriculum used for the teaching of Gaelic in the Poolewe public school, where William Cameron was the Gaelic teacher.<sup>25</sup> Cameron’s students were regular competitors at the Mòd, and he had presented to the Poolewe branch of the Education Institute of Scotland in 1911 on ‘School Board Elections versus Gaelic in Schools.’<sup>26</sup> The curriculum included MacFarlane’s publications for schools: *Scottish Gaelic as a Specific Subject*; a Gaelic primer, *An Treòraiche* (The Leader, 1903); and two edited collections of Gaelic songs and music, *An Uiseag* and *An Lon Dubh* (The Blackbird, 1905). The curriculum notice is a rare insight into the workings of a Highland school, including a

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<sup>23</sup> ‘The Training of Gaelic Speaking Teachers’, *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 7 (1906), 128.

<sup>24</sup> *The Teaching of Gaelic in Highland Schools* (Liverpool, 1907), 43.

<sup>25</sup> Campbell, ‘The Educational Point of View’, 42-43. Campbell, ‘Educational News’, *The Teaching of Gaelic in Highland Schools* (1907), 44-46.

<sup>26</sup> Cameron, ‘School Board Elections versus Gaelic in Schools’, 76.

breakdown of the timetable in terms of Gaelic hours taught, and is illustrative of the prominent position of MacFarlane's publications in practical use.<sup>27</sup>

Other texts included in the Poolewe report, were: *How to learn Gaelic* (1902) by Alexander MacBain and John Whyte; MacBain's *Gaelic Reader* (1905); *A Guide to Gaelic Conversation and Pronunciation* (1905) by Lachlan MacBean; and *A Collection of Gaelic Proverbs and Familiar Phrases* (1881) by Alexander Nicolson (Alasdair MacNeacail, 1827–1893).<sup>28</sup> Though alternative texts were in circulation also, the Poolewe curriculum has been given here as a sample of what a school could reasonably have at its disposal, whilst bearing in mind that not all schools would have had as dedicated a teacher as William Cameron was to Gaelic.

Alongside those mentioned in the Poolewe curriculum, MacFarlane had also edited *Dàin Thaghte* (Selected Poems, 1906), a collection of Gaelic poetry for schools and *Uirsgeulan Gàidhealach* (Highland Legends, 1905), which contained prize-winning prose papers from the Mòd. He also published *An Comh-Threòraiche* (The Fellow Leader, 1912), a follow-on Gaelic primer for children; edited John MacFadyen's collection for schools, *Companach na Cloinne* (The Children's Companion, 1913); and produced the Gaelic dictionary aimed at learners, *Am Briathrachan Beag* (1912). *An Uiseag* and *An Lon Dubh* were followed by the publication of two more collections of songs for school children, *Am Brù-Dhearg* (The Robin, 1909) and *An Smeòrach* (The Mavis, 1908), which formed a set. These publications were all specifically aimed at children, although they varied in terms of difficulty, and as shall be demonstrated as we turn to look at their reception in Gaelic schools and literary circles, many believed that the level of Gaelic in the texts was too advanced for the age-range it had been intended for.

Gaelic primers, or readers, are generally small collections of passages, dialogues, descriptions and stories used to demonstrate key spelling, structural and grammatical convention. *An Treòraiche* was published in 1903 and described as 'an admirable illustrated Gaelic primer.'<sup>29</sup> Harriet Stewart, the Gaelic teacher from Clackmannan mentioned previously, wrote to MacFarlane following its release:

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<sup>27</sup> 'Gaelic Grammar, Composition, etc., are taught twice per week, on Tuesday and Thursday from 3-30 to 4 (one hour). Gaelic Songs, etc., are taught on Tuesday and Thursday from 4 to 4-30 (one hour). Bible knowledge in Gaelic is taught on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10 to 10-30 (one and a-half hours). Total time 3.5 hours per week.' Campbell, 'Educational News', 46. This equated to seven, half-hour lessons per week.

<sup>28</sup> George Stronach, 'Alexander Nicolson', *ODNB* (2004) < <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/20185> > [Accessed: 22/03/21].

<sup>29</sup> *The Teaching of Gaelic in Highland Schools*, 45.

I am very grateful to you and I am sure other teachers are for publishing ‘An Treòraiche’. It was just the sort of book I was longing for. It is a great honour to read Gaelic and I never could lay my hands on a book suitable for little ones before. I hope you do not mean to stop there. Another reader a little more advanced would be very helpful. The accents have been so very carefully attended to, it gives children a good grip of quantities from the very start.<sup>30</sup>

A review in *The Scotsman* similarly noted its value:

A carefully selected series of graduated exercises ought to be useful in enabling children to overcome the initial difficulties in Gaelic grammar and spelling.<sup>31</sup>

The relative simplicity of the exercises in *An Treòraiche*, and the use of illustrations, made it appropriate for use in first and second-year classes, broadly ages five to six. Similarly positioned texts for young students appeared later in 1921, with a series of short stories in simple Gaelic written by Donald MacPhie.<sup>32</sup>

The follow-on from *An Treòraiche*, suggested by Harriet Stewart in 1904, came with the publication of *An Comh-Threòraiche* in 1912. This work was more advanced in its content and aimed at older students: outlining the correct morphology of Gaelic, with emphasis on the correct use of the nominative, dative and genitive cases: as well as looking at the standardisation of plural structures. There were no illustrations, notwithstanding one in the inside cover, although the subjects used to demonstrate grammatical points would have been similarly familiar to Highland pupils, and echo themes that appear in the traditional Gaelic poetry and songs.<sup>33</sup> *An Comh-Threòraiche* ended with a selection of Gaelic proverbs, seeking to inspire action in the Gaelic language movement. Proverbs were included elsewhere in MacFarlane’s works, such as in *ADG* where he regularly included those of Donald MacKechnie (Dòmhnall MacEacharn, 1836-1908), the author of *Am Fear-Ciùil* (The Musician, 1904).<sup>34</sup> Proverbs frequently appeared in contemporary publications, for example, Douglas Hyde’s ‘A Few Rhymed Proverbs’ in 1904.<sup>35</sup> Evidently, they were both interesting literary material for Gaelic students and good propaganda. *An Comh-Threòraiche* included this proverb amongst others: ‘B’ fhèarr gun tòiseachadh na sgur gun

<sup>30</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 38: 17/02/04. Letter from H. Stewart.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Educational Works’, *The Scotsman* (10/09/03), 2.

<sup>32</sup> MacPhie, ed, *Leabhraichean Sgoile Gàidhlig* (Glasgow, 1921).

<sup>33</sup> For example, the frequent use of animals, natural imagery and setting. See: Stuart H. Logan, ‘Nam Bithinn Mar Eun (‘If I were a Bird’) Re-accessing the paralinguistic dimension of traditional Scots Gaelic storytelling’, *eSharp*, No. 10 (2007).

<sup>34</sup> MacKinnon, ‘The late Mr. Donald MacKechnie’, *CR*, Vol. 5, No. 17 (1908), 92-96. See also: Meek, ‘Ath-sgrùdadh: Dòmhnall MacEacharn’, *Gairm*, No. 127, (1984), 235-44. For example, he published this proverb in two separate issues: ‘Tha ’n cridhe fuairidh nach deanadh gluasad / Ri éisdeachd dhuanaig air fuaim cho ceòlar.’ (*It is a cold heart that would not move / Listening to such a melodious sound*). *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1905), 8 and Vol. 1, No. 2 (1905), 33.

<sup>35</sup> Hyde, ‘A Few Rhymed Proverbs’, 18-22.



chrìochnachadh / *It is better not to start than to stop without finishing*.<sup>36</sup> As demonstrated throughout this study, MacFarlane worked on what he saw were the important issues to the progress of the Gaelic language movement continuously throughout his life. He had remarked to the wider network of the Gaelic Academy in 1911: ‘What I have outlined I am engaged in and have got a certain length on my way. And I don’t intend to delay the work for this or any other body.’<sup>37</sup> This was the same message of commitment being sent to the students of Gaelic in 1912, and as MacFarlane saw it, those that would be able to continue the work and ensure the future prosperity of the language.

Similar in difficulty level to *An Comh-Threòraiche*, was John MacFadyen’s *Companach na Cloinne* (1912), a children’s booklet of short prose texts, edited by MacFarlane. These texts were evidently in demand given the relatively short period of time between the publication of two such similar texts. These works were written completely in Gaelic, with no line-by-line English translation, which could be found in other school materials. For example, MacBain’s *How to Learn Gaelic* (1902), also used in the Poolewe curriculum, had included translations in its reading lessons. This is important as although these materials would invariably have reached learners of Gaelic outside the school system, the school system was where they had been intended to be most used. MacFarlane had directed his school texts at children who already spoke Gaelic, and it is therefore indicative of his and MacFadyen’s rejection of the longstanding suggestion that education in Gaelic would be useful only to cultivate literacy in English. MacFarlane simultaneously published the accompanying dictionary, *Am Briathrachan Beag* (1912), similarly aimed at school children and intended to complement his Gaelic primers and companions. He noted that it was also intended to function as a ‘cheap and handy vocabulary’ for words also used in Lachlan MacBean’s work, *Uilleam Uallas, Iain Knox agus Rob Ruadh* (William Wallace, John Knox and Rob Roy MacGregor, 1912). It is useful to think of MacBean’s text as part of this expanding corpus of graded readers, similar in difficulty to *Companach na Cloinne* and also composed entirely in Gaelic.

Contemporary dictionaries available for schools at the time included Alexander MacBain’s *Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language* (1896) and the seminal work of Edward Dwelly (1864-1939), the *Illustrated Gaelic Dictionary*, released in sections from 1901 and published fully in 1911.<sup>38</sup> MacFarlane had proof-read Dwelly’s dictionary and is

<sup>36</sup> MacFarlane, *An Comh-Threòraiche* (Stirling, 1912), 64

<sup>37</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17. Draft Constitution.

<sup>38</sup> D. Thomson, ‘Edward Dwelly’, *ODNB*, (2004) < <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/45922> > [Accessed: 02/08/24].

mentioned in its preface.<sup>39</sup> MacLeod noted that MacFarlane's initials, 'M. M.' are seen throughout the text, indicating where he had made revisions.<sup>40</sup> Dwelly, writing as Ewen MacDonald in the correspondence, wrote to MacFarlane about the proofs in 1901, lacking confidence in the venture:

I feel that I am not sufficient scholar for the work, but then there is a great need of a work at a moderate price to include all the words in the present dictionaries, that induces me to struggle on, and do my best. [...] MacBain says Armstrong's book swarms with Irish words, but I believe he is rather hard on other dictionaries. One might say that he has too many English words in Gaelic dress in his own words.'<sup>41</sup>

This statement refers to Robert Archibald Armstrong's (1788-1867) *Gaelic Dictionary in Two Parts* (1825).<sup>42</sup> Evidently, MacFarlane had taken an interest in compiling dictionaries as early as 1901, and it is notable to see that he had been involved with such a well-known and impactful Gaelic work.

Of MacFarlane's own dictionary, which had been aimed at school children and in complement to his Gaelic readers, he stated that the work was to be used by 'writers of Gaelic who, as a rule, are in great need of guidance in the technicalities of Gaelic literary work.'<sup>43</sup> Not only was the dictionary meant as an accompaniment for young Gaelic learners then, but also as an aide to practised writers of Gaelic, presumably of all ages, again demonstrating the need for Gaelic resources to do a number of different things. For example, it included instructions on 'Writing for the Press' and advice on 'Proof-Reading.'<sup>44</sup> MacFarlane's advice ranged from simple rules such as: 'Write on single sheets and on one side only'; to an elaborate scheme, with symbols corresponding to specific editorial instructions, given for correcting this material; and samples of how that would look in practice. MacFarlane wrote in the Preface to the work that he was addressing the 'ignorance of the proper manner in which to prepare and carry through Writing for the Press.'<sup>45</sup> MacFarlane's qualifications to write authoritatively on these practices can be seen in the volume of editing work that he was involved in, witnessed in publications where he was credited as well as in his personal correspondence, as a seemingly constant stream of requests and material crossed his desk. The professional level of Gaelic writing that he was trying to instil in the wider literary

<sup>39</sup> Edward Dwelly, (Revised Edition) *The Illustrated Gaelic Dictionary*, Vol. 1 (1918), iii.

<sup>40</sup> MacLeod, 'Malcolm MacFarlane', 303.

<sup>41</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 7: 18/07/01. Letter from E. MacDonald/E. Dwelly. In 1903, MacFarlane was again editing proofs sent by Dwelly and liaising with the publishers at The Gaelic Press: NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 9: 14/01/03 and 25/07/03.

<sup>42</sup> W. Steven Dodd, 'Robert Archibald Armstrong', *ODNB*, (2004) < <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/664> > [Accessed: 02/03/24].

<sup>43</sup> MacFarlane, *Am Briathrachan Beag* (Stirling, 1912), i-vi.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 185. *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, vi

community, however, could have been amongst the reasons that some of his works were seen as more difficult than their intended audience required. It seems likely that he was using the opportunity of a Gaelic dictionary for schools to also appeal to the widest possible audience and therefore to have the most practical impact.

A series of reviews of a large number of MacFarlane's texts for schools were published in *The Celtic Review* (CR) in 1914.<sup>46</sup> The reviews were unsigned, though a subsequent review in this issue was written by William Watson and is similar in tone and scope. As we have witnessed, MacFarlane and Watson had a turbulent relationship and it could be possible that Watson was hesitant to sign the reviews as a result. It has been shown that MacFarlane was not opposed to voicing his own opinions, particularly in relation to his abilities in the Gaelic language. Writing of *An Treòraiche* and *An Comh-Threòraiche*, the reviewer highlighted their difficulty in terms of language and questioned their suitability for young children:

The books do not err on the side of ease in respect of language, nor in respect of thought [...] both *An Treòraiche* and *An Comh-Threòraiche* attempt rather too much in vocabulary to be quite suitable for young children [...] their matter lacks sustained interest, being too discontinuous. This does not apply to the *Companach*, which consists mainly of stories of fair length. It would be found suitable as part of the reading for the first or second year of the Intermediate course.<sup>47</sup>

The review did praise the lack of 'unnecessary contractions'; the consistency of spelling; and the 'avoidance of the provincialisms and dialectic forms which disfigure the pages of too many Gaelic writers.'<sup>48</sup> Of *Am Briathrachan Beag*, the anonymous critic wrote:

It is thoroughly suitable for its purpose, being accurate and well printed. [...] It is unfortunate, however, that the erroneous forms of place-names noted above should have been repeated. [...] A capital list of the best forms of words liable to be erroneously spelled should prove useful, if only writers would take the trouble to consult it. [...] There are very few who would not find it to their advantage to have this book at hand when writing Gaelic.<sup>49</sup>

The concern for place-names in particular further supports the suggestion that the author may have been Watson, as he went on to publish *The Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (1926). *Uirsgeulan Gàidhealach*, which MacFarlane had edited, was also reviewed in this anonymous survey. Eneas Mackay had one thousand copies of it printed in May 1905 and by July 1906 had sold four hundred and twenty-five.<sup>50</sup> Thirty-five had been given for free to

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<sup>46</sup> 'Book Reviews', CR, Vol. 9, No. 35 (1914), 260-263.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 260-261.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 261-262

<sup>50</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 12: 14/07/06. Letter from E. Mackay.

be reviewed. This is valuable insight into the practicalities and potential reach of Gaelic publishing at the time. This is also true of its financial precarity, as Mackay also attached the bill for the un-sold copies, which was over seven pounds.<sup>51</sup> Fortunately, the collection had been funded by ACG, again underlining that organisation's fundamental role in the production of these resources at the turn of the twentieth century. MacFarlane was able to reply to Mackay with a credit note from ACG of twelve pounds to cover the expenses.<sup>52</sup>

*Uirsgeulan Gàidhealach* was a collection of Mòd prize-winning prose tales which contained short stories from MacFarlane's frequent collaborators, Katherine Whyte Grant, John MacCormick, and John MacFadyen. The anonymous reviewer in the *CR* mentioned that they had previously so enjoyed one of the tales, Hector MacFadyen's 'Pòsadh an Dealain Dé' ('The Butterfly's Wedding'), terming it 'a delightful fairy fantasy', that they had translated it for the *CR* in 1905.<sup>53</sup> Frustratingly, this translation was also unsigned.<sup>54</sup> However, the 1914 review describes another author, John MacCormick's, writing as simple and natural, quoting the phrase 'the unelaborate magic of the Celt' to demonstrate the style. This phrase comes from *The Oxford Book of Latin Verse* (1912) on the Celtic elements of Virgil's *Aeneid*.<sup>55</sup> It is used again in another of Watson's articles for the *CR* in 1914, 'The Position of Gaelic in Scotland'; and in his revised edition of *Bàrdachd Ghàidhlig: Specimens of Gaelic Poetry* (1932).<sup>56</sup> The frequent use of the phrase 'the unelaborate magic of the Celt' suggests that it was a particular favourite of Watson's and, alongside the fact that he was interested in place-names, was a very frequent contributor to the *CR* and married to its editor, Ella Carmichael, it now seems reasonable to suggest that it was Watson who wrote the reviews of MacFarlane's works in 1914, and therefore also Watson who carried out the translation of Hector MacFadyen's 'Pòsadh an Dealain Dé' in 1905.

The contemporary reviews are valuable evidence for the reception of the school texts and therefore add greatly to our understanding of the contemporary literary field and its networks of Gaelic writers. Critics at the time proposed that MacFarlane sometimes used language which was too difficult for the intended audience, a claim similarly made about his Gaelic play for children and discussed by Sim Innes.<sup>57</sup> It is also greatly valuable to this study that the criticisms of MacFarlane were published, as the transmission of literary and

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 12: 24/07/06. Draft to Mackay from MacFarlane.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>54</sup> 'The Butterfly's Wedding', *CR*, Vol. 2, No. 6 (1905), 178-180.

<sup>55</sup> *CR*, Vol. 9, No. 35 (1914), 263. Heathcote William Garrod, ed, *The Oxford Book of Latin Verse: From the earliest fragments to the end of the V<sup>th</sup> Century AD*, (Oxford, 1912), xix.

<sup>56</sup> Watson, 'The Position of Gaelic in Scotland', *CR*, Vol. 9, No. 35 (1914), 69-84. Phrase at 76. Watson, *Bàrdachd Ghàidhlig: Specimens of Gaelic Poetry* (Glasgow, 1932), xxix.

<sup>57</sup> Innes, 'Dùsgadh agus Mosgladh'.

linguistic evaluation flowed both ways. We know of MacFarlane's willingness to critique: as late as 1927 he asserted that Watson had made over 1,000 mistakes in his Gaelic school book, *Rosg Gàidhlig*.<sup>58</sup> Despite the unsigned review above, Watson recognised MacFarlane's substantial contribution to the field of Gaelic literature in a piece written after his death.<sup>59</sup> Similar praise came from across the academic spectrum, suggesting that perhaps MacFarlane's ire and frustration towards the academic community was largely of his own making, or at least largely one-sided.<sup>60</sup>

MacFarlane's edition of *The Fernaig Manuscript* (1923), a collection of fifty seven Gaelic poems, received some criticism, though its publication was largely celebrated and it remains an enduring part of his legacy to this day.<sup>61</sup> MacKinnon provided a comprehensive history of the manuscript to the GSI in 1885, confirming Duncan MacRae (Donnchadh MacRath, d. c. 1700) as its original author in the late seventeenth century, and an edition of it was published in 1894 in Alexander Cameron's *Reliquiae Celticae*.<sup>62</sup> MacFarlane's edition was criticised by John Fraser (1882-1945) in 1924, who believed that 'much of his transliteration is unintelligible or absurd.'<sup>63</sup> He also criticised MacFarlane's understanding of Irish, calling it 'defective'.<sup>64</sup> There was, however, already contention between the two, as MacFarlane had criticised Fraser's previous work, and specifically his corrections of MacRae's original text and his use of Irish, on *The Fernaig Manuscript* for the GSI in 1918, in his introduction to the 1923 edition.<sup>65</sup> Fraser's subsequent review must then be taken with this discordant atmosphere in mind. It is worth noting that even in Angus Robertson's highly condemning biography of MacFarlane in 1923, his edition of *The Fernaig Manuscript* was described as 'a monumental work and a lasting tribute to scholarship and disinterested labour.'<sup>66</sup> Derick Thomson has since described MacFarlane's edition as 'an accurate transcription, and a less reliable transliteration.'<sup>67</sup> More recent scholarship by Aonghas

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<sup>58</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141. Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, 23.

<sup>59</sup> Watson, 'Cor na Gàidhealtachd air an la an diugh', 237.

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, the dedication given to him by the Gaelic Society of Inverness following his passing: 'Introduction and Review', *TGSI*, Vol. 33 (1932), xii-xiv.

<sup>61</sup> 'Reviewed Work(s): The Fernaig Manuscript: A Handful of Lays Written by Duncan MacRae, 1688 by Malcolm Macfarlane', *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 21, No. 82 (1924), 162.

<sup>62</sup> D. MacKinnon, 'The Fernaig Manuscript', *TGSI*, Vol. 11 (1885), 311-338; Thomson, *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, 72; and Alexander MacBain and Rev. John Kennedy (Eds), 'The Fernaig Manuscript', *Reliquiae Celticae: Texts, Papers, and Studies in Gaelic Literature and Philology left by the late Rev. Alexander Cameron*, LL.D, Vol. 2 (Inverness, 1894), 1-137.

<sup>63</sup> Thomson, 'Fraser, Professor John', *Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, 86. John Fraser, 'Malcolm MacFarlane. The Fernaig Manuscript' (a review), *Revue Celtique*, Vol. 41 (Paris, 1924), 255.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

<sup>65</sup> MacFarlane, *The Fernaig Manuscript*, (1923) ix-x. See also: A. MacCoinnich, 'Clanship, Faith and Jacobitism: a Scottish Gaelic poetry collection, 1688-93', Leith Davis and Kevin James (Eds.) *Shaping Jacobitism: Memory, Culture, Network* (Edinburgh, 2025), footnote. 4.

<sup>66</sup> Robertson, 'Calum MacPhàrlain', *The Northern Chronicle*, (04/06/23).

<sup>67</sup> Thomson, 'The Fernaig Manuscript', *Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, 72.

MacCoinnich defends the value of MacFarlane's edition as 'accurate and reliable', noting the difficulty of transliterating the original orthography and calls for the manuscript to receive renewed scholarly attention.<sup>68</sup>

Returning to the songbook collections mentioned above, they were similarly intended to stimulate Gaelic education: as both literary resources which provided instruction on Gaelic sounds and inflection through singing; and to encourage young Gaelic students to engage with the rich Gaelic poetry and song tradition. Singing and recitation were examined elements in the Highland school-curriculum, forming part of the conditions to achieve the Leaving Certificate, as well as qualifying standards for the Mòd competitions.<sup>69</sup> The Junior Mòd competition was established in June 1906 in Inverness, and ACG had recruited over two hundred children in advance of the event to attend Gaelic classes in spelling, reading, recitation, conversation and singing.<sup>70</sup> The reporter of its success in *ADG* criticised the parents of the children, who had, 'through apathy, indifference or foolish pride ceased to speak Gaelic.'<sup>71</sup> In spite of this, 133 children had entered the recitation, reading and conversation competitions, notwithstanding the singing competitions.

The senior Mòd events gained in popularity with growing numbers of participants, leading to the decision to create a separate event for children. As a result of this, ACG had to create the necessary resources for the increasing number of competitors. The songbooks therefore had to be versatile and appropriately interesting to a range of ages and skill levels. This was not always possible, as the 1906 junior competitors could, according to the reporter, have diversified their repertoire with songs of 'a much greater variety.'<sup>72</sup> The music also had to be simple enough for the teachers to understand in terms of melody and rhythm as well as to be able to demonstrate. Access to a piano and knowledge of standard musical notation was not guaranteed, and therefore MacFarlane and others who helped to compile these texts, set them in an accessible 'Sol-fa' notation, which could have been sounded out on a whistle or recorder and was simple to follow, both for the student and the instructor.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Aonghas MacCoinnich, 'All-utterly barbarous? Gille-Chaluim Garbh, laird of Raasay, and a 16th century Gaelic poem from the Fernaig Manuscript', *Northern Studies*, Vol. 55 (2024), 54.

<sup>69</sup> Lindsay Paterson, *Scottish Education in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 2003), 74

<sup>70</sup> The English editor of *ADG* at this time was D. MacGillivray, also present. Though unsigned, this report is likely from him. 'The Inverness Juvenile Mod', *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 11 (1906), 175-177.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> This system was specifically invented for use in children's early musical education by the Rev. John Curwen (1835-1880) in 1841. This technique identified the note which should be sung by using the first letter in the 'doh (d), ray (r), me (m), fah (f), soh (s), lah (l), te (t)' notation and demonstrated the rhythm by a combination of spaces and punctuation marks. The key of the tune is also given at the start of each piece. Bernarr Rainbow, 'Tonic Sol-fa', *Oxford Music Online* (2001) < <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.28124> > [Accessed: 02/05/21].

*An Uiseag* had been prepared by MacFarlane and Henry Whyte in 1898, with frequent correspondence between the two on its preparation extant in MacFarlane's papers and who expressed their hopes for the volume in its preface:

Cho fad 's a's aithne dhuinne 's i so a' cheud uair a chaidh leabhran-ciùil de 'n t-seòrsa so a chur a mach. Tha sinn an dochus gu'n gabhar ris agus gu 'm bi fuinn bhinn ar dùthcha air an seinn, mar is cubhaidh, anns gach sgoil anns a' Ghàidhealtachd; agus gu'm bi sinn fhèin, no cuideiginn eile, air am misneachadh gu leabhran eile a chur a mach an ceann ùine ghoirid.<sup>74</sup>

*As far as we know, this is the first time such a music booklet has been published. We hope that it will be welcome and that the sweet melodies of our country will be sung, as they should be, in every school in the Highlands; and that we, or someone else, will be encouraged to print another booklet shortly.*

Many of the songs were musical adaptations of nineteenth-century Gaelic poetry: for example, Neil MacLeod (Niall MacLeòid, 1843-1913) 'Am Faigh a' Ghàidhlig Bas?' ('Will Gaelic Die?').<sup>75</sup> Also included was MacFarlane's own song 'Mo Dhachaidh' ('My Home', 1891), published in *A' Chòisir Chiùil* (The Musical Choir, 1900). MacFarlane also had songs in earlier collections, such as *The Songs and Hymns of the Highlands* (1888) and in *The Songs of the Gael* (1890).<sup>76</sup> He contributed a wealth of music and song material to the *CM* between 1893 and 1912, which are listed in Appendix 1. Although outwith the scope of this present study, an examination of MacFarlane's Gaelic poetry and songs would be highly valuable, as would consideration of his musical compositions and settings for traditional ballads.

Mackay, who had published the subsequent songbook collections, *An Lon Dubh*, *An Smeòrach* and *Am Brù-Dhearg*, wrote of the last two: 'the songs in these books are quite different from any other in the market.'<sup>77</sup> He had also sent MacFarlane suggestions for the texts whilst they were being prepared, such as the possible inclusion of rowing ('iorram') and work songs, as his sister could have composed some of the melodies, though she would have needed the words of the songs to be translated for her as a non-Gaelic speaker.<sup>78</sup> Mackay's sister does not appear to have been approved for the task as she was not credited as the composer of any of the melodies.

<sup>74</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 5. Materials and proofs being sent back and forth early 1898. MacFarlane and Whyte, *An Uiseag* (Glasgow, 1898).

<sup>75</sup> MacKinnon, 'Neil Macleod', *CR*, Vol. 9, No. 34 (1913), 151-156. MacFarlane and Whyte, *An Uiseag*, 10-11.

<sup>76</sup> MacFarlane, 'Aslachadh Air Son Beannachd' and 'Smeideadh Oirnn', *The Songs and Hymns of the Scottish Highlands*, MacBean, ed, (Edinburgh, 1888), 17 and 31. MacFarlane, 'A Chailinn tha tamh mu Loch Eite' and 'Oran na h-iubili', *The Songs of the Gael*, MacBean, ed, (Edinburgh, 1890), 30 and 32.

<sup>77</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 03/10/07. Letter from E. Mackay.

<sup>78</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 10/07/07 and 24/07/07. Letters from E. Mackay.

Reviews of the songbooks appeared in the contemporary press, with the *Northern Chronicle* commenting that *An Smeòrach* ‘may be strongly recommended for juvenile choirs.’<sup>79</sup> A review of *Am Brù-Dhearg* by the *People’s Journal* in 1909 said that it ‘advances strong claims to the favour of lovers of Gaelic song. It certainly ought to be as successful as its predecessors.’<sup>80</sup> In 1909, the *CR* published this report by Malcolm N. Munro:

The latest arrival, *The Robin*, ‘*Am Bru-Dhearg*’, contains as interesting a selection of melodies and beautiful airs as any of the others, and deserves to obtain a large circulation. [...] Additional value would be given to these booklets if the editor in future editions could add a page of notes giving explanations of references and remote allusions in the old traditional and historical songs, where such are required for a clear grasp of the meaning of the text. Otherwise, some of the allusions will certainly be obscure to children, and probably to the teachers also.’<sup>81</sup>

The issue of difficulty level in these texts arose in another of MacFarlane’s collections for schools, *Dàin Thaghte*, which the *CR* described as although ‘excellent in themselves, are of distinctly higher-grade standard, both in thought and expression.’<sup>82</sup> As has been proposed, the perceived difficulty of the language of some of MacFarlane’s texts, frequently alluded to in his contemporary circles, may have been due to the fact that they were intended to be multi-functional and to be interesting and accessible to a range of speakers and abilities. Thus, a Gaelic speaking child could enjoy singing the song and a more advanced Gaelic speaker may have taken an interest in the more complex references. As illustrated in Angus Robertson’s portrayal of MacFarlane, however, the ‘remote allusions’ may have been his unwillingness to compromise the correct historical accuracy and language of the text. Robertson claimed: ‘were he to meet Cú Chulainn chanting a song in his spirit-chariot he would forthwith proceed to test his performance by some formulae of Gaelic metre and scansion.’<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, the songbooks were not inaccessible and were used widely, as also witnessed in the reviews. They are also worthy of further study, in particular to examine in greater detail the level of the Gaelic being used, and to re-evaluate their appropriateness.

This discussion has examined MacFarlane’s role in creating, compiling and editing a vast corpus of Gaelic literature and resources for use in schools and other educational settings. We have seen not only the volume of work necessary to produce these texts, but also some of the logistical and financial barriers that were in place. It has been demonstrated that MacFarlane collaborated with a range of Gaelic writers to produce and collect the

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<sup>79</sup> ‘Books Published and Sold by Eneas Mackay’, *Companach na Cloinne*, (1913), 88.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Munro, ‘Gaelic Songs for Schools. ‘*Am Brù-Dhearg*’, *CR*, Vol. 6, No. 22 (1909), 183.

<sup>82</sup> *CR*, Vol. 9, No. 35, (1914), 261.

<sup>83</sup> Robertson, ‘Calum MacPhàrlain’ (04/06/1923).



material, and that the resources were generally well reviewed in the contemporary press. Questions remain as to the appropriateness of MacFarlane's use of advanced Gaelic language, particularly as by doing so he may have in fact deterred potential students, or their teachers, rather than appeal to them as he undoubtedly intended to do. It is, however, clear that MacFarlane was an experienced and successful provider of school resources, and that he catered to a dynamic range of student abilities in the language.

Overall, the school readers, dictionaries, and songbooks did reach those in the Gaelic speaking areas and have no doubt been used by generations of Gaelic speakers and Mòd contestants. It has been noted that MacFarlane could have been more actively engaged with the campaigns to improve the socio-economic condition of the Gaelic speakers themselves, in a similarly tangible way to the works of key figures like John Murdoch. However, and as witnessed in the previous chapter with his efforts and ambitions for the Gaelic Academy, MacFarlane's educational resources were similarly intended to improve the future prospects of the Gaelic speakers themselves and their language. MacFarlane was in this aspect progressive and forward thinking, working diligently and in the background to a large extent, providing one of the means by which Gaelic speakers, its language and culture, would not only survive, but could emerge in the early twentieth century as a language of modernity as well as tradition.

### Articles, Editing, Poetry and Song

This section will highlight and discuss some of the other material which MacFarlane published during his active literary years. In doing this it will revisit some of the key issues, debates and trends of the Gaelic language movement in the early twentieth century. It will begin by considering the extensive output of articles and papers which MacFarlane contributed to the periodicals and magazines of Ruairidh Erskine in the years of their own very productive working relationship. The tumultuous evolution of that relationship, and its eventual breakdown, has been examined above. Despite their differences, MacFarlane nevertheless recognised the importance of the Gaelic publications which Erskine was producing and contributed extensively to them. The parameters of this study prohibit an examination of each of these diverse contributions, though it is hoped that the catalogue of them, given in Appendix 1, will inspire future scholarly investigation. The aim here is simply to give a brief overview of the texts, and an important series, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh'

will be examined as a case study, chosen as it offers a valuable and unique insight into MacFarlane's views on his contemporary literary scene.

MacFarlane's first contribution to *Guth na Bliadhna* was an examination of the origins of the Fenian ballad 'Dan Liuir' [otherwise 'Dàn Liughair'], calling into question the credibility of an earlier version published by Dr John Smith in his volume *Sean Dana* ('Old Poems', 1787), compared to another in J. F. Campbell's *Leabhar na Féinne* ('Book of the Fians', 1872).<sup>84</sup> MacFarlane had another piece in the same volume, 'A' Chànain Ghàidhlig is an Sluagh D'am Buin I'<sup>85</sup> ('The Gaelic Language and the People Who Speak It', 1907). This was a translation into Gaelic of the paper which he had given to the GSG in November 1903, first printed in the *Oban Times* and then later in a volume of the GSG's Transactions in 1908.<sup>86</sup> The recycling of material seems to have been a common occurrence in the newspapers and periodicals of the day. MacFarlane's 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh', for example, had itself already been published in the newspaper, *The Highland News*, before it was given to Erskine for distribution in *GNB*.<sup>87</sup> 'The Gaelic Language and the People Who Speak It' included discussion on the history and evolution of Scottish Gaelic in relation to Irish, stressing the shared literary ancestry of Classical Gaelic, while maintaining the existence of distinct spoken dialects in both Scotland and Ireland. MacFarlane had debated these issues frequently in various newspapers and periodicals, for example in a lengthy exchange in *An Claidheamh Soluis* in 1904 with Seagán Mac A' Bháird, mentioned above.

Other contributions to *GNB* included 'Òran na Comhachaig' ('The Song of the Owl', 1908) and a short series, 'The Bagpipe and the Gael' (1908). Following his 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh', which was published over eight instalments, he went on to also publish the four-part series, 'Ceol-seinn na Tuatha: anns na Trì Cànaichean' ('Vocal Folk Music: in Three Languages', 1911); and 'Bàrdachd nam Ban' ('Women's Poetry', 1913-1914) in three parts. He contributed frequently to Erskine's newspaper, *Alba* ('Scotland', 1908-1909), which Erskine had intended as the propagandist paper of the national movement at the time. Amongst other letters, songs and vocabulary lists, MacFarlane also contributed a four-part series, 'Creachadh nan Èiphiteach' ('The Devastation of the Egyptians', 1908), possibly to demonstrate that he had interests other than Gaelic, though more likely in order to demonstrate the versatility of the Gaelic language to deal with contemporary journalism on

<sup>84</sup> MacFarlane, 'Dàn Liuir', *GNB*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1907), 292-300.

<sup>85</sup> MacFarlane, 'A' Chànain Ghàidhlig is an Sluagh D'am Buin I', *GNB*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (1907), 319-336

<sup>86</sup> GCA, MS 891237, 24/11/03. MacFarlane, 'The Gaelic Language and the People who speak it', *OT* (21/03/03). Re-printed: *The Old Highlands* (1908), 281-316.

<sup>87</sup> 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh', *The Highland News*: 26/09/96, 2; 03/10/96, 2, 10/10/96; 17/10/96; 24/10/96; 31/10/96; 14/11/96; 21/11/96; 12/12/96; 19/12/96; and 26/12/96. A comparison of the two versions has not been possible to date due to issues of access at the point of discovery. The series as it appears in *GNB* has therefore been the focus of this study.

historical subjects. He may have taken inspiration from his close friend, Angus Henderson, who wrote an eclectic range of Gaelic articles and stories for *Guth na Bliadhna* and *Alba* at the time, including ‘Albannaich agus Iasgaich Sgadain’ (‘The Scots and Herring Fishermen’, 1909).<sup>88</sup>

Erskine’s exclusively Gaelic literary magazine, *An Sgeulaiche* (AS), which carried a variety of new and translated Gaelic literature, printed two of MacFarlane’s translations into modern Gaelic of medieval Irish tales. Mentioned above, these were from the work of Kuno Meyer: ‘Liadain agus Cuirithir’ and ‘An Rìgh ’s an Dithreabhach’. AS also contained productions of several of MacFarlane’s collected and composed Gaelic songs and melodies. Erskine wrote to MacFarlane to discuss AS before it was established, saying: ‘I think we could teach the people thro’ the sgeul better than we could thro’ heavy political papers [...] It would be all Gaelic.’<sup>89</sup> Evidently trying to encourage his involvement with the AS, he continued: ‘I attach more importance to your judgement than I do to that of any other worker in the Gaelic.’<sup>90</sup> As evidenced in the record of MacFarlane’s publications, he was a diverse Gaelic writer, tackling a range of subjects in a variety of literary forms. His interests were altogether culturally specific, in particular his passion for Gaelic music, which is evident when his published works are reviewed as a whole. The lack of political dimension or contemporary social commentary in his articles also underlines MacFarlane’s singular ambitions in the work he was doing for the Gaelic language. It makes sense that Erskine would have held him in such high esteem and been eager to publish his work, though evidently, he would have been pleased to have received something on the national question at some stage.

‘Bàrdachd an Latha ’n Diugh’ is of particular value to this present study, as MacFarlane entered into the developing field of contemporary literary criticism, seen in other prominent works, such as MacKinnon’s series, ‘Litreachas nan Gàidheal’ (‘The Literature of the Gael’, 1876), published in the monthly magazine, *An Gàidheal* (1871-1877).<sup>91</sup> MacKinnon’s series was broadly concerned with differentiating spiritual Gaelic hymns from Ossianic material and Meek commented that the work had ‘defined the

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<sup>88</sup> Henderson, ‘Albannaich agus Iasgaich Sgadain’, *GNB*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1909). In her current research project on Ruairidh Erskine, Poncarová has published the contents of *GNB*, *Alba* and many other resources: *Project Erskine*: < <https://erskine.glasgow.ac.uk/magazines/> > [Accessed: 12/05/24].

<sup>89</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 15. Undated. Letter from R. Erskine.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> MacKinnon, ‘Litreachas nan Gàidheal’, *An Gàidheal*, Vol. 5 (1876): No. 49, 1-6; No. 50, 33-39; No. 56, 225-231; and No. 60, 353-359.

hallmarks of the Gael.’<sup>92</sup> What MacFarlane wanted to do with his series, was to bring discussion of Gaelic literature into the contemporary field, and in doing so to move away from the fascination in Gaelic and Celtic discourse with Ossianic material and the Classical Gaelic bardic tradition. Nevertheless, and as Moray Watson has pointed out, there had been an overall lack of literary criticism pertaining to any period of Gaelic literature until this point and it was MacKinnon who had ‘created a model for the kind of critical writing that has only recently resumed through the medium of Gaelic.’<sup>93</sup> When MacKinnon’s successor in the Chair of Celtic at the University of Edinburgh, William Watson, published the Gaelic poetry collection, *Bàrdachd Ghàidhlig* (1918), he commented on some of the more contemporary Gaelic work:

Much of this later poetry is pretty and witty, but it has little of the old fire and virility; often, not without reason, it expresses the wail of a dejected and harassed people.<sup>94</sup>

Donald Meek has discussed this aspect and perspective of Gaelic poetry in the late nineteenth century, as Watson’s categorisation did fit a number of Gaelic texts, centred on nostalgia and longing for home.<sup>95</sup> William Gillies recently argued that the literary criticism of MacKinnon and later Watson’s time sometimes failed to recognise the impact of the ‘powerful but alien images’ that Gaelic literature had of itself: pervaded by the romantic images of Macpherson’s Ossian and the Anglo-Highland image of the Gael and the Gàidhealtachd.<sup>96</sup> Meek also challenged the negative assumptions of nineteenth-century Gaelic poetry as proposed by Watson in 1918.<sup>97</sup> Accepting these tropes often led to an oversimplification and romanticising of Gaelic society and culture, pastoral idealism and, according to Gillies, ‘cleared the way for the mystic dreamers of the Celtic Twilight school.’<sup>98</sup> From this perspective, Gaelic literature came from an innate ‘genius’ as its poetry was inherently spontaneous and full of the natural energy of the Gaels, avoiding contemporary attempts at ornamentation and affectation.

In 1908, MacFarlane decided that he would take the lead in directing the contemporary literary debate of his and Watson’s time away from these specific genres of Gaelic poetry. Instead, he intended to examine the contemporary field which, to him, was

<sup>92</sup> Meek, ‘Gaelic Literature in the Nineteenth Century’, *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature: Enlightenment, Britain and Empire (1707-1918)*, Ian Brown, Thomas Clancy, Susan Manning and Murray Pittock, eds, (Edinburgh, 2007), 260.

<sup>93</sup> Moray Watson, *An Introduction to Gaelic Fiction* (Edinburgh, 2011), 4.

<sup>94</sup> Watson, *Bàrdachd Ghàidhlig* (1918), xxxi.

<sup>95</sup> Meek, *Caran an t-Saoghail*, i-xii.

<sup>96</sup> W. Gillies, ‘On the study of Gaelic Literature’, *Litreachas & Eachdraidh: Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig 2*, Michel Byrne, Thomas Owen Clancy and Sheila Kidd, eds, (Glasgow, 2006), 3.

<sup>97</sup> Meek, *Caran an t-Saoghail*, xiii-xxv.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

composed of more innovative and interesting Gaelic writers and poets, largely neglected elsewhere in the contemporary discourse. Although tensions were present between MacFarlane and Watson, there was also a mutual respect demonstrated in the reviews and commentaries outlined above. MacFarlane was determined in his ambition to promote new Gaelic literature, believing that Gaelic as a language would only be able to thrive when its writers were able to experiment and create new work. This determination has also been seen in his work as a neologist, creating new and standardised Gaelic words, allowing for the expression of modern-day life and business. The abundance and variety of MacFarlane's contributions to the Gaelic language movement, including the practical input he had in its central, and then outlying, organisations, support the revised image presented here of a critical and leading figure at this time.

### 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh'

MacFarlane opened his series with a direct criticism of Donald MacKinnon and his reluctance to enter into the new literary field, going on to say: 'Nis, cha'n 'eil eagal orm-sa roimh na mairbh. Nì mò dh'fhaodas mi bhi geillteach roimh na beòthan.'<sup>99</sup> (*Now, I'm not afraid of the dead. Nor can I be cowardly before the living.*) On his own comparative qualifications for the role of the critic, MacFarlane wrote:

Leugh mi fhèin a' chuid is mò de obair còig fichead fear agus ban. Thàinig os cionn fichead leabhar-bàrdachd fo m' shùil, anns an robh leth-cheud mìle sreath; agus tha agam mu fhichead mìle sreath eile a gheàrr mi as na paipearan naidheachd.<sup>100</sup>

*I myself read most of the work of twenty-five men and women. Over twenty books of poetry came under my eye, containing fifty thousand lines; and I have about twenty thousand other lines that I cut from the newspapers.*

The numbers here seem low, given the much better understanding that we now have of the volume of Gaelic literature he had edited. Although, given that this was published in 1908, presumably updated from his earlier version of the series, MacFarlane had many of the most productive years of his literary career still ahead of him. It was not until 1908 that MacFarlane began editing the prose works of John MacCormick, including collections such as *Oiteagan O 'n Iar* ('Breezes from the West', 1908) and his Gaelic novel, *Dùn-Àluinn* (1912).

<sup>99</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh: I', *GNB*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1908), 315. Ibid., 312.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 317.

MacFarlane also edited the Gaelic plays of John MacFadyen and Katherine Whyte Grant. Following the publication of the Gaelic Kinderspiel *Dùsgadh na Féinne* (1908), mentioned previously and which he had also helped to finance, Grant wrote to MacFarlane that: 'I consider it to be yours, almost as much as mine.'<sup>101</sup> She had thanked MacFarlane for 're-writing the Spiel, and for taking so much trouble to make it as perfect as possible.'<sup>102</sup> Additionally, he had arranged the music of the play for all but two of its songs.<sup>103</sup> MacFarlane edited two of Grant's short prose tales in 1905, 'Clach na Lanain' ('The Couple's Stone') and 'Mórag', later printed in the collection *Aig Tigh na Beinne* (1911).<sup>104</sup> In response to some of MacFarlane's proposed revisions, Grant wrote that while they 'may make them more grammatically correct, they gave me the feeling of giving a stilted style to what was more purely idiomatic and according to universal usage. The change caused the peculiar fragrance to evaporate.'<sup>105</sup> This is particularly illuminating, as it had not only been the readers and the reviewers of MacFarlane's work who had struggled with his use of high Gaelic register, but also his collaborators. MacFarlane worked with lesser-known writers, including Hector MacDougall, who wrote Gaelic plays and short stories. He edited for various publications throughout the years, including an almost constant stream of unattributed corrected Gaelic material going back and forward to Erskine's publications amongst others, including *The People's Journal*, edited by his close friend, Malcolm C. MacLeod.

Evidently qualified to comment on contemporary Gaelic literature, MacFarlane opened his 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh' series with consideration of some of the early nineteenth century Gaelic poets whom, he believed, had taken the necessary amount of care with the words of their compositions, as they had the sound of them. This was a problem which MacFarlane had identified in the older canon. Amongst those favourably mentioned were Evan MacColl (Eòghann MacColla, 1808-1898) and John MacLachlan (Iain MacLachainn, 'An Lighiche', 1804-1874).<sup>106</sup>

MacFarlane's criticisms of the bardic tradition, and of MacKinnon's reluctance to promote new Gaelic literature, in this first issue had, however, caused some upset, as the opening to the second demonstrated. In response to criticisms which he must have received, MacFarlane responded that the writers in question had refused to let go of the past: 'nach

<sup>101</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 13: 21/12/07. Letter from K. W. Grant; and Fol. 13: 26/12/07. Letter from K. W. Grant. MacFarlane had arranged to pay for half of the publication costs.

<sup>102</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 43: 29/01/07. Letter from K. Grant.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> K. W. Grant, *Aig Tigh na Beinne* (Oban and Glasgow, 1911), 50 and 33.

<sup>105</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 43: 15/08/05. Letter from K. Grant.

<sup>106</sup> Alexander Mackenzie, 'Evan MacColl: The Bard of Loch Fyne', *The Celtic Magazine* (1880), 54-58. Sorley MacLean, 'The Poetry of the Clearances', *Ris a' Bruthaich*, William Gillies, ed, (Stornoway, 1985), 56-59.

sguir iad bhi 'g aoradh do na cuilbh fhiodha a tha aca mar dheathan.' (*They do not stop worshipping the wooden columns they have as gods*).<sup>107</sup> MacFarlane was part of a progressive new school of thought, present in Ireland as well as in Scotland, and in his defence he cited the work of the prominent Irish language activist, Máire Ní Chinnéide (1879-1967).<sup>108</sup> Her essay, 'Nuadh-litridheacht na n-Gaodhal, agus cionnus is fearr i chur chum cinn' (*The modern literature of the Gael and how best to promote it*), won the second prize in the 1908 Oireachtas literary competition.<sup>109</sup> MacFarlane gave a section of this work within his own article, where she had stressed that the old Irish poets had been more concerned with how the words sounded, rather than what it was they were actually saying; that they also imitated each other a great deal; and that while they told the legends of the worlds of Cú Chulainn, and Fionn mac Cumhaill, she wished that the modern poets would talk about and describe their own worlds and what was around them. She wrote:

Cuiridís i n-úil dúinn cad iad na smaointe atá i n-aighe an fhile féin - an rud go bhfuil súil aige leis, agus an rud go bhfuil déistin aige air, agus a thuairim ar gach a bhfuil mór thimcheall.<sup>110</sup>

*Let them express to us the ideas which are in the mind of the poet himself - what he hopes for, and what he hates, and his opinion of everything around him.*

Máire Ní Chinnéide was among the first female students to study the Irish language at university and was taught by Eoin MacNeill at St. Mary's College, Dublin, before joining the Gaelic League in 1899.<sup>111</sup> By citing her recent exploration of modern Gaelic poetry, MacFarlane illustrated that he was engaged with the debates and events taking place in Ireland at this stage, evidently sharing similar views to progressive thinkers in the literary sphere there. Another example of this progressive attitude towards Gaelic literature in Ireland can be seen in an anonymous review of John MacCormick's collection *Oiteagan O'n Iar* in *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge*, where it was described as 'chiefly concerned with the ordinary life of the present day [...] and we in Ireland should not forget that when we set out

<sup>107</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bárdachd an Latha 'n Diugh: II', *GNB*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1909), 25.

<sup>108</sup> Máire Ní Murchú, 'Máire Ní Chinnéide', *Ainm*, <<https://www.ainm.ie/Bio.aspx?ID=2173>> [Accessed: 10/01/2024].

<sup>109</sup> Máire Ní Chinnéide, 'Nuadh-litridheacht na n-Gaodhal, agus cionnus is fearr i chur chum' (1909), <[http://corpas.ria.ie/index.php?fsg\\_function=5&fsg\\_id=6435](http://corpas.ria.ie/index.php?fsg_function=5&fsg_id=6435)> [Accessed: 10/03/2024]. Ibid., M. Ní Murchú, 'Máire Ní Chinnéide'.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., M. Ní Chinnéide, 'Nuadh-litridheacht na n-Gaodhal' (1909). Given here: MacFarlane, 'Bárdachd an Latha 'n Diugh', *GNB*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1909), 32.

<sup>111</sup> Riona Nic Congáil, "Some of you will curse her": Women's Writing during the Irish-Language Revival', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, Vol. 29 (2009), 205.

to write original fiction.’<sup>112</sup> The sentiments of MacFarlane and Ní Chinnéide were evidently circulating at this time in 1908 and it is valuable to recognise that MacFarlane was tuned into these modern attitudes towards Gaelic literature.<sup>113</sup>

It is also necessary to acknowledge MacFarlane’s relative blindness to gender when it came to the Gaelic languages and the issues pertaining its future. Undoubtedly there would have been comparable works by men which he could have chosen to reference and we can only infer that he decided instead to publish Ní Chinnéide’s essay because he thought it was the best and most illustrative of the arguments that he was trying to make.

MacFarlane’s series went on to address this want in contemporary Gaelic literary literature that he and others had recognised. Many poets were discussed and the following section will briefly outline MacFarlane’s perspective on why they in particular deserved critical attention. It will also highlight the continued argumentation of the series on the need for modern literary criticism. The wealth of material which MacFarlane published and edited is worthy of further examination and while this present work has not critically examined his own Gaelic compositions, this would be a useful addition to current understanding of his life and work. Exploration of his writings may, for example, shed some light on what served as his own inspiration and function as a gateway to better comprehend MacFarlane’s personal life and the factors which inspired him. It would also be advantageous to better grasp the literary merits of his Gaelic work, in order to assess the extent to which he intended those works to be used as examples for future generations, and how effective he was in this endeavour through comparative analysis. For now, let us turn to his commentary on some of the Gaelic writers producing work in Scotland at the time.

MacFarlane dealt early on in his series with the much-celebrated Gaelic poet Neil MacLeod of Skye and Edinburgh.<sup>114</sup> In more recent scholarship, Derick Thomson conceded that he was ‘the most popular poet of the nineteenth century’ while asserting that he is now seen generally as ‘facile and superficial.’<sup>115</sup> Meg Bateman discusses the literary atmosphere which contributed to his popularity at the time, including the demand from the growing community of Lowland Gaels for authentic Gaelic ‘cèilidh-house’ culture.<sup>116</sup> The demand

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<sup>112</sup> O’ Leary, ‘“Children of the Same Mother” Gaelic Relations with the Other Celtic Revival Movements 1882-1916’, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, Vol. 6 (1986), 113-114. English translation from Footnote. 66, 127-128: (‘Clódhanna Nua’, *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge*, Vol. 18, No. 5 (May, 1908), 235.).

<sup>113</sup> For discussion on the literary idealisation of the Irish peasantry see: Edward Hirsch, ‘The Imaginary Irish Peasant’, *PMLA*, Vol. 106, No. 5 (Oct, 1991), 1116 –1133.

<sup>114</sup> Meg Bateman and Anne Loughran, *The Glendale Bards: A Selection of Songs and Poems by Niall MacLeòid (1843-1913), ‘The Bard of Skye’, His Brother Iain Dubh (1847-1901) and Father Dòmhnall nan Òran (c.1787-1873)*, (Edinburgh, 2014).

<sup>115</sup> Thomson, ‘MacLeòid, Niall’, *Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, 184.

<sup>116</sup> Bateman, *The Glendale Bards* (2014), 14.



for this material was evidenced in the popularity of similar works, such as Henry Whyte's *The Celtic Garland* (1881), a collection of Gaelic and English songs and readings recreating the 'cèilidh-house' for these late nineteenth century audiences. MacKinnon had reviewed MacLeod's work, praising its 'gay humour or melting pathos; happy diction; pure idiom [and] exquisite rhyme.'<sup>117</sup> MacFarlane acknowledged that MacLeod was already well known in Scotland, and that most of those interested in Gaelic language knew every syllable of it.<sup>118</sup> He included some of MacLeod's work in his article as: 'Ach o na tha so a' dol fo shùilean Eireannach, foillsicheam e uair eile.'<sup>119</sup> (*But since this is being presented to Irish eyes, I will publish it again*). *GNB* was therefore being read in Ireland and circulating in Gaelic language circles there, as *An Claidheamh Soluis* and *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* were in Scotland, serving as further evidence of the on-going intellectual exchanges between the two language movements.

MacFarlane presents MacLeod's well-known poem 'An Gleann 'san Robh mi Òg' ('The Glen where I Was Young') to criticise Gaelic singers for forgetting about the best songs and neglecting to include them in their repertoire. He also chastised the writers who by comparison focussed rather on the articulation of the sounds instead of the meaning of the words themselves.<sup>120</sup> Neil MacLeod, however, according to MacFarlane, had been able to give voice to the natural beauty of the Gàidhealtachd without compromising on the sounds or relying on overly romanticised imagery. MacFarlane celebrated his work as an example for the current Gaelic writers of the day:

Tha Bàrdachd Nèill coltach ri lochan fìor-uisge as am faodadh alltan no dha a bhi sruthadh na'n cladhaicheadh muinntir éiginn na claisean.<sup>121</sup>

*Neil's poetry is like a fresh water loch from which one or two streams could flow if some people would dig the ditches.*

Donald MacKechie from Jura was another influential poet mentioned in the series. He had published the Gaelic prose tale, 'Am Fiadh' ('The Deer'), in MacFarlane's editions of *An Deo-Ghréine*.<sup>122</sup> MacKechie had also published the volume *Dain agus Orain* (Poems and Songs, 1897) and the well-known *Am Fear-Ciùil* (The Musician, 1904), which contained a number of poems, songs and translations, as well as prose works. He was also published

<sup>117</sup> Mackinnon, 'Neil Macleod', *CR*, Vol. 9. No. 34 (1913), 154.

<sup>118</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh: III', *GNB*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1909), 119.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>122</sup> D. Mac Eacharn, 'Am Fiadh', *ADG*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1905) 12-14; No. 2, 35-36; No. 3, 48-52; and No. 4 (1906), 62-64.

and wrote frequently in both *The Highlander* and the *Oban Times*.<sup>123</sup> MacFarlane chose one of MacKechnie's poems to include in this instalment of his series, 'Seachran Seilg' ('The Hunt'), noting that he had not often come across very funny things in Gaelic, which he thought was strange as the Gaelic speakers certainly enjoyed a funny story, and that this poem was one he felt the readers would particularly enjoy.<sup>124</sup> He also mentioned that MacKechnie had translated a number of works into Gaelic from the English translations of Omar Khayyam (1048-1131), the Persian mathematician and philosopher.<sup>125</sup> MacFarlane praised MacKechnie's ability to craft the words of his songs, undistracted by how they would fit musically. This addressed the issue which MacFarlane believed pre-occupied many of the contemporary Gaelic writers, writing:

Cha 'n fhuilingeadh inntinn Dhòmhnuill a cuingealachadh le amallan air bith de'n t-seòrsa sin a tha cuartachadh òran-seinn, mar a tha am fonn, an réim, an snas 's an siùbhlachas sin nach gabh cur an céill le facail, ach a thuigeas gach neach a tha cur ùigh 'na leithid.<sup>126</sup>

*Donald's mind would not suffer to be limited by any of those things which surround a song, such as the melody, the rhythm, the polish or the fluidity that cannot be expressed in words, but which everyone with an interest can understand.*

Donald's brother Angus MacKechnie (Aonghas MacEacharn, 'Aonghas Òg', d. 1928) was also praised for his popular ballad 'Coire-Bhreacain' ('Corryvreckan'), though he had stopped publishing at the time of MacFarlane's series in *GNB*.<sup>127</sup>

MacFarlane commented on the work of John MacFadyen, discussed above for his school text *Companach na Cloinne* (1913), and praised his skills as a Gaelic writer. He did suggest that some of MacFadyen's collection, *An t-Eileanach* (*The Islander*, 1890), could be considered as simple rhymes rather than poetry in its purest sense: 'Mar ranntachd tha iad math gu leòir, agus 'nan dòigh fhèin cha tig mòran suas riu.'<sup>128</sup> (*As rhymes they are good enough, and in their own way not many will come up to them.*) MacFarlane conceded that he had nevertheless enjoyed them when hearing them recited by MacFadyen himself at gatherings in Glasgow, reminiscing that he had brought many laughs to those audiences.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>123</sup> For example, correspondence in 1926 on his song 'Soiridh' ('Farewell'): 'The Gaelic Song 'Soiridh': It's Authorship', *OT*, 18/12/26, 3.

<sup>124</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh: VI', *ADG*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (1910), 41.

<sup>125</sup> George Saliba, 'Omar Khayyam', *Britannica*, (1998) < <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Omar-Khayyam-Persian-poet-and-astronomer> > [Accessed: 09/08/24].

<sup>126</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh: VI', 46.

<sup>127</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh: VIII', *ADG*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1910), 229- 231. Angus MacKechnie's work had appeared in the *OT*: 01/09/83; and in *An t-Oranaiche* (1879). His poem 'An Gleannan' ('The Glen') appeared in *An Gaidheal* in 1933: Aonghas Òg, 'An Gleannan', *An Gaidheal*, Vol. 28 (1933), 104.

<sup>128</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh: VII', *ADG*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 118.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

The persistent thread running through these articles was not necessarily an in-depth reading or analysis of the poems themselves, but rather an opportunity for MacFarlane to point to what he thought the individual poets did well as examples for other writers to adopt. This was yet another way in which MacFarlane was conveying his message to the Gaelic speakers and the wider language movement, inspiring and providing them with the necessary tools to write well and to be innovative in Gaelic. When we think of MacFarlane creating resources for schools and Gaelic students, he was simultaneously creating an intellectual environment for the creation of new Gaelic literature.

The final element of MacFarlane's series to consider here are his comments on Gaelic translation, as he entered what was a lively literary debate in both Scotland and Ireland on the topic at the time. These had been taking place around the turn of the century, particularly in Ireland, as the impact of the burgeoning Anglo-Irish school was fiercely contested in language circles. Some believed that translating in either direction between English and Gaelic would negatively influence the style and development of the language being translated into. Native literary traditions should, according to this school, be curated and developed without outside influence.<sup>130</sup> What the Irish writers of English could do, however, was to provide translators with high quality English literature to work with and thereby help to stimulate and encourage both fields.<sup>131</sup>

MacFarlane believed in the benefit of translations, and that adding to the available Gaelic corpus was ultimately beneficial. He mentioned that his mother, Sarah MacFarlane, had herself been a capable Gaelic translator, and had some of her work read at the Mòd.<sup>132</sup> He also described Henry Whyte's work in the genre as 'cho ealanta',<sup>133</sup> ('so elegant'), remarking that his translations were almost indistinguishable as translations at all.<sup>134</sup> MacFarlane's own translations of Kuno Meyer's medieval Irish tales and his translation of a passage from Milton's *Paradise Lost* have already been mentioned in this discussion.<sup>135</sup> As examples of best practice, he gave Whyte's 'Cruinneachadh nan Gaidheal' ('The Gathering of the Gaels'); and three of James Munro's (Seumas Munro, 1794-1870) translated Robert Burns' songs from his collection *Am Filidh* (1840).<sup>136</sup> These were 'An

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<sup>130</sup> O'Leary, 'Unwise and Unlovable: Translation in the Early Years of the Gaelic Revival', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, Vol. 5 (1985), 148.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 151.

<sup>132</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh: IV', *ADG*, Vol. 6, No. 3, (1909), 233.

<sup>133</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh: V', *ADG*, Vol. 6, No. 4, (1909), 334.

<sup>134</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh: V', *ADG*, Vol. 6, No. 4, (1909), 334.

<sup>135</sup> MacFarlane, 'Paradise Lost (Mar Chailleadh Sealbh air Pàrras)', *The Celtic Annual* (1916), 29-33.

<sup>136</sup> James Munro, *Am Filidh* (Edinburgh, 1840).

Gille Fada Mòr' ('The Bold Dragoon'), 'Glogaidh Homh' ('What can a Young Lassie') and 'A' Bhean a bh' aig Fionnladh Fann' ('Sic a Wife as Willie had').<sup>137</sup>

MacFarlane also mentioned Whyte Grant's translation of Friedrich Schiller's (1759-1805) *Wilhelm Tell* (1840), *Uilleam Tell* (1893).<sup>138</sup> He said of her that she was one: 'a thug an oidhirp is àirde air fad'<sup>139</sup> (*which gave the highest effort of all*). Innes has discussed this translation in detail, arguing that it was a confident production and one which sought to celebrate the differences in cultures through translation.<sup>140</sup> MacFarlane then made the distinction between translating what would be intended as written poetry and what was meant to be sung, stressing that the unsuitability of an ascribed melody could hamper a song's translation. As already noted, MacFarlane had written several pieces on Gaelic music, including for the *OT* in 1907; and later delivered the papers to the GSI, 'Studies in Gaelic Music' (1911) and 'Half a Century of Vocal Gaelic Music' (1929). Whilst stressing the importance of creating and translating new Gaelic songs, MacFarlane also valued the attempts which were made to reconcile and properly attribute traditional Gaelic melodies to their original ballads. He was actively engaged in this work and an analysis of his substantial music and song contributions to *The Celtic Monthly* would be an excellent resource to begin such an investigation.

MacFarlane's use of literary criticism as a tool to promote and encourage other writers to create new works, as well as to improve the quality of the work which they were already producing, adds greatly to our understanding of him as a progressive and leading figure in the Gaelic literary circles. In 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh', MacFarlane did not examine the poems in any great critical detail, not commenting for example on individual word choice or imagery. Instead, and as with a considerable proportion of his own writings and published material, MacFarlane was working to promote the Gaelic language amongst the Gaelic speakers. He had opened this extensive series in 1908 with a criticism of Donald MacKinnon for dealing too long with the work of the traditional poets, thereby neglecting the contemporary Gaelic writers. He repeated this appeal to MacKinnon at the close of his series in 1909, writing:

<sup>137</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh: V', (1909), 339, 340-342 and 342-343. S. Munro, *Am Filidh* (1840), 33, 49 and 53.

<sup>138</sup> K. W. Grant, *Uilleam Tell* (Inverness, 1893).

<sup>139</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh', *ADG*, Vol. 6, No. 5 (1909), 344.

<sup>140</sup> Innes, 'Translated Drama in Gaelic in Scotland to c. 1950', *International Journal of Scottish Theatre and Screen*, Vol. 9 (2016), 64-65.

na'm brosnachadh e luchd-deanamh obair Ghàidhlig a tha gealltanach, agus na 'n sgrìobhadh e féin - mar is math 's is glé mhath is aithne dha - rudeigin a b' fhiach leughadh, mar bu ghnàth leis mu 'n do chuir "Mac 'Ille-dhuibh" cathair mhór na Gàidhlig air a cois an Dun-Eidinn - Na'm bu chomasach na nithean sin a thoirt gu buil, cha ruigeadh leas neach a bhi eu-dòchasach mu bheatha na Gàidhlig.<sup>141</sup>

*If he would encourage those doing promising Gaelic work, and if he himself - as he knows very well how to do - would write something worth reading, as he usually did before "Blackie" established the great Gaelic Chair in Edinburgh - If it were possible to make these things happen, there would be no need to be pessimistic about the life of Gaelic.*

Reflecting on the events of the Gaelic Academy in the previous chapter, this request to MacKinnon provides us with some important context. When the group appealed to the 'Edinburgh clique', unsuccessfully, in 1911, MacFarlane did so evidently in the firm belief that MacKinnon and his colleagues would be able to add genuine value to the work that he was trying to do and the specifically language-based organisation that he was trying to establish.<sup>142</sup> Despite reassurances from his colleague, MacFarlane was aware of the impact that they could have, and the detriment that not having their support could bring to the authority and credibility, and therefore the viability, of the GA in 1911. In 1909, MacFarlane had appealed to MacKinnon to resign from ACG, seeking his support in his protest against that organisation, though this request too was declined.<sup>143</sup> MacFarlane and his supporters continued with the work themselves, though perhaps would have been more successful in achieving their objectives had they managed to receive this much needed support. In this series of literary criticism, MacFarlane appealed to MacKinnon specifically, though also the wider academic and literary community, to engage in the practical work of developing the Gaelic language for use in the modern day.

This study has intended to position MacFarlane as one of the leading figures of the language movement, though his appeals to MacKinnon in particular demonstrate the limitations of his influence. Despite not always receiving the support he desired, that he continued with the work regardless attests to his own strength of conviction. MacFarlane's role as a leader in this movement was not always effective, as his appeals to MacKinnon could illustrate. However, in his work, evidenced in particular here in his 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh' series, he was seeking to enhance the calibre of the Gaelic literary debate, while simultaneously providing the resources and encouragement for future generations of Gaelic

<sup>141</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh: IV', *ADG*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1909), 237.

<sup>142</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 17: 04/12/11. Letter from H. C. Gillies.

<sup>143</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 134: 02/07/09. Letter from D. MacKinnon.

speakers, and in that he should be considered as a truly progressive and important figure in the evolution of the Gaelic language movement as a whole.

## Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview and examination of MacFarlane's publications for Gaelic education in Scotland at the turn of the twentieth century. Acknowledging the difficult circumstances and policies which had impacted the provision for Gaelic education in the years leading up to MacFarlane's work, it has demonstrated that he sought to address an identifiable lack in the available resources for schools in Gaelic speaking areas. He did this by composing a Gaelic grammar, *Gaelic as a Specific Subject* (1893), under the auspices of ACG and with the assistance of his colleagues on its Education Committee at the time. It built on existing grammars at the time and was designed with the intention to ease the abilities of Gaelic teachers to communicate the lessons, as much as it was intended to be a useful resource for the students themselves. The multi-functional nature of this text was similarly executed in his accompanying schoolbooks, with his Gaelic readers, *An Treòraiche* (1903) and *An Comh-Threòraiche* (1912) receiving criticism that the language used was perhaps more advanced than the level of the intended students. Similarly, his songbook collections, culminating with *Am Brù-Dhearg* (1909), also received comment from the contemporary press that some of the more complex literary and historical allusions were being lost on the teachers, and could in fact be less than accessible for the children. As the barriers to Gaelic publishing were so great during this period, and resources relatively few, though increasing, it has been argued that MacFarlane intended for his texts to be useful to a range of ages and abilities, and therefore to have the widest possible reach and potential impact. In seeking to establish MacFarlane as an important figure to Gaelic scholarship today and our understanding of the period, the substantial work which he carried out to improve and provide for Gaelic education, must be taken into account.

The expansive scope of his own corpus of Gaelic literature, and in the range of editing and preparation of Gaelic texts which he undertook for the editors of publications alongside individual Gaelic writers, has similarly underlined his central position in the literary sphere. This discussion has also for the first time examined MacFarlane's series of literary criticism, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh', outlining the ultimately propagandistic nature of its creation, as MacFarlane sought to promote not only the contemporary poets themselves, but the elements of their compositions which made the writing innovative and new. These essays

could then be used by future Gaelic writers, as much of his literary work could, as resources on best practices and for inspiration. Simultaneously, MacFarlane was looking to steer the interests of the Gaelic writers around him away from the traditional bardic canon and towards the creation and criticism of new Gaelic literature. This was what he believed would secure the future prosperity of the language: innovation and creation.

When considering whether or not MacFarlane was a leader of the Gaelic language movement during the period, acknowledgement must now be given to the wealth of Gaelic resource that he provided for the generations of Gaelic speakers who would come after him. This study has illuminated the events of his life and demonstrated the scale of the work which he conducted in service to the Gaelic language. Whilst he may have complained of the money spent on postage stamps, as the correspondence relentlessly continued throughout his life, MacFarlane was intrinsic to the establishment of the language movement's key organisations. He was also a reformer of institutional policy; outspoken against injustices; scientific and creative in his own output; innovative in his strategies for the Gaelic language education; and relentless in his pursuit of improvement. He signed off the final instalment of his series in 1910 with a positive piece of advice for the future of the Gaelic language. Speaking of the need to innovate in Gaelic poetry and Gaelic literature more broadly, and of the reluctance of some to see past the bardic tradition as the high-water mark for Gaelic language and culture, MacFarlane concluded:

Slàn leat, a leughadair. Agus cuimhnich nach gabh inntinn an latha 'n diugh a beathachadh air spruilleach an latha 'n dé. Sin brìgh mo theagaisg. Slàn leat.<sup>144</sup>

*Farewell, reader. And remember that the mind of today cannot be fed on the debris of yesterday. That is the essence of my teaching. Farewell.*

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<sup>144</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh: VIII', *ADG*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1910), 236.

## Conclusion

Thogadh an carragh so le luchd-eòlais mar chùimhneachan air Calum MacPhàrlain sar-Ghàidheal a bha barraichte mar bhàrd, is mar sgoilear an litreachas is an ceòl a dhùthcha. Shaothraich e gu dealasach as leth a chàinain: agus dh'fhàg e dìleab luachmhor 'na leabhraichean, 'na òrain agus 'na fhuinn. Choisinn a bhuadhan agus a threibhdhireas dha urram is meas a mhaireas buan an cridheachan nan Gàidheal.<sup>1</sup>

*This monument was erected by acquaintances in memory of the worthy Gael Malcolm MacFarlane, outstanding as a poet and as a scholar of the literature and music of his country. He worked diligently on behalf of his language: and left a valuable legacy in his books, in his songs and in his tunes. His virtues and integrity earned him the respect and esteem that will last forever in the hearts of the Gaels.*

Malcolm MacFarlane died in February 1931, and the above dedication was inscribed on a Celtic Cross memorial which was erected at his grave in Elderslie in 1939. An appeal to fund the memorial had been circulated in the contemporary press by a group of his colleagues and friends, including Hector MacDougall and William J. Watson, who called for donations from all ‘those who knew of his untiring labours for Gaelic and Gaelic music, and who appreciated the results of his efforts.’<sup>2</sup> MacDougall was then the vice-president of the GSG, and MacFarlane’s death was recorded in the minutes as the loss of a ‘great Gael [and] a great Gaelic scholar.’<sup>3</sup> Publications such as *An Gàidheal*, formerly *ADG*, had reported the news, describing him as a ‘life-long worker in the Gaelic cause.’<sup>4</sup> The editor, Neil Ross (1871-1943), president of ACG from 1930 to 1934, published an account of his life in the following issue, praising his substantial contribution to Gaelic literature, in particular noting his work for Gaelic education and his knowledge of the difficulties which surrounded it.<sup>5</sup> He commended MacFarlane’s dedication to resolving these obstacles and how he had ‘honestly tried to provide both teacher and pupil with the means of overcoming the difficulty.’<sup>6</sup> Perhaps surprisingly in an obituary, Ross ventured a light-touch critique of MacFarlane’s edition of the *Fernaig Manuscript*, similar to those of Fraser discussed above and challenged by contemporary scholars, proposing that it was somewhat limited in its analysis as a result of his twentieth century perspective.<sup>7</sup> This is somewhat fitting, as MacFarlane certainly

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<sup>1</sup> Memorial to Calum MacPhàrlain (Abbey Cemetery, Elderslie, 1939).

<sup>2</sup> ‘Lovers of Gaelic: The Late Mr Malcolm MacFarlane Memorial Fund Appeal’, *The Scotsman*, (03/11/36), 11.

<sup>3</sup> GCA, MS 891237/2, 24/02/31.

<sup>4</sup> ‘The Late Mr Malcolm MacFarlane’, *An Gaidheal*, Vol. 26, No. 6 (1931), 93.

<sup>5</sup> Hew Scott, ‘Neil MacLeod Ross’, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, (Edinburgh, 1915), 22.

<sup>6</sup> Neil Ross, ‘The Late Mr. Malcolm MacFarlane’, *An Gaidheal*, Vol. 26, No. 7 (1931), 99.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



would have had the last word if he still been alive. Ross did, however, call on future Gaelic workers to continue the necessary work which MacFarlane had long been doing in the creation of new Gaelic terms, which was imperative if Gaelic were to survive in the modern age. On the second anniversary of MacFarlane's death in 1933, the Scottish Regional Programme featured a radio segment on his life and work: 'A Programme of Gaelic Song and Speech in Memory of the Highland Bard.'<sup>8</sup>

Two months before his passing, in December 1930, a group of MacFarlane's friends and colleagues organised a celebration evening in his honour, where speeches and gifts, including a portrait and a chair, were given to him in recognition of his enduring service and commitment to Gaelic language, education, literature and music.<sup>9</sup> His close friend, Annie Mackay, had told him to 'enjoy all the nice things they will say to you that night.'<sup>10</sup> MacLeod also notes that there had been a celebration of his life and work held by the GSL in 1929.<sup>11</sup> Since that time, MacFarlane's efforts have gone largely unrecognised and this study's main ambition has been to address this neglect and deficiency in the historiography. Gaelic singing competitions have been dedicated to him to the present day, featuring in the Mòd syllabus regularly; and his well-known song, 'Mo Dhachaidh' has had an enduring presence in the traditional Scottish and Gaelic repertoire.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, our historical awareness of him has largely been confined to the mentions of him which have appeared in the studies of other figures within the Gaelic language movement, often portrayed as a fiery correspondent or simply as the editor of the Gaelic texts being discussed.<sup>13</sup> This study has for the first time positioned MacFarlane at the centre of a number of important Gaelic activist networks and as a driving force of the language movement as a whole, with his efforts in the field spanning over four decades.

In the course of this thesis, there have been three significant contributions to knowledge and has been the most in-depth examination of the archive of his correspondence and papers to date. The interpretation and cataloguing of this extensive corpus was a time-consuming, though illuminating and thoroughly rewarding, task; providing a unique insight

<sup>8</sup> 'Scottish Regional Programme', *The Scotsman*, (22/02/33), 8.

<sup>9</sup> Ross, 'The Late Mr. Malcolm MacFarlane', 99.

<sup>10</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 35: 24/12/30. Letter from A. Mackay.

<sup>11</sup> Macleod, 'Malcolm MacFarlane', 312.

<sup>12</sup> For example, in 1933 there was a Mòd competition: 'Best Rendering of Song or Melody by the late Mr Calum MacPhàrlain', *The Scotsman*, (28/09/33), 10; and at the 2023 Mòd in Paisley, the prescribed song in the competition 'Solo Singing Fluent Girls P7' was 'Mo Dhachaidh': *Mòd Phàislig 2023 Competition Programme*, 93. Billy Connolly also played a version of the tune in 1985: 'Billy Connolly playing "My Home", on autoharp', *YouTube*, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-gGjFYH0NE>> [Accessed: 04/10/24].

<sup>13</sup> Priscilla Scott's thesis, 'Women in the Gaelic Movement', uses considerable evidence from MacFarlane's correspondences, acknowledging him as a 'central figure in the Gaelic movement.' (Scott, 'Women in the Gaelic Movement', 24). Martina Reiterová's comprehensive study of ACG points to his presence at pan-Celtic events and as the editor of *ADG*: Reiterová, 'Scottish Gaelic Movement', 100 and 114.

into the personal connections and networks of the Gaelic literary sphere at this time, and in the process gaining an intimate knowledge and appreciation of the life and work of MacFarlane himself. The first contribution which this study has made to our current understanding has been the detailed and critical examination of his activities and output as a central figure in the Gaelic language movement. It has made the case that MacFarlane ought to be considered as one of its leading figures and, as the practical work which he carried out throughout his life and the central role which he played in its literary networks has now been illustrated, his personal contribution to the Gaelic movement ought to be considered prodigious.

Relatedly, the second addition to our current understanding of the Gaelic language movement has been the elucidation of the networks which MacFarlane operated within. It has been witnessed throughout the course of this study that the Gaelic language movement has been perceived in modern scholarship as an altogether united whole, operating primarily under the organisational and ideological umbrella of An Comunn Gàidhealach, though some scholars had suggested the existence of some division within it. This study has for the first time identified and delineated not only the tensions which existed within the movement, but also detailed the individuals and groups which were operating at the various points in its development into the twentieth century. This was demonstrated initially by an in-depth account of the early workings of ACG and its internal tensions as it set out into the twentieth century; and the establishment and intentions of the GA as it set out on its own, language-driven, objectives in 1911. We have then witnessed the academic and intellectual debates which dominated in these literary circles, outlining the fractured nature of the movement which had the best interests of the Gaelic language and its culture as its guiding principle.

The unwavering commitment which MacFarlane demonstrated towards the language has at times appeared in contrast to the ambitions and intentions of others in his field who, for ideological, academic, or political reasons, pursued alternative strategies. These included what McLeod observed as the celebration of Gaelic ‘in certain narrowly defined cultural contexts’, as ACG had increasingly done; the friction between the language movement and the Gaelic scholars; and the desire of the Scottish nationalist movement to incorporate the Gaelic language into its campaigns as a marker of Scottish national identity.<sup>14</sup> This study of MacFarlane has therefore enhanced our knowledge of the complexity and nuance of the Gaelic language movement.

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<sup>14</sup> McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 58.

Finally, as with the new understanding and appreciation of his practical endeavours, the wealth of Gaelic materials and resources he either produced or edited have now been synthesised and presented here. Thus, another major contribution of this study has been the production of a new catalogue of Gaelic literature to facilitate future study across a range of disciplines in the field. The catalogue presented here contains numerous possibilities for students and scholars of linguistics to examine his Gaelic corpus, including his creation of new Gaelic terms, which would prove fruitful as lexical resources for Gaelic scholars and language projects such as DASG (Digital Archive of Scottish Gaelic) and Faclair na Gàidhlig.<sup>15</sup> Reflecting on MacFarlane's objectives, he would likely have greatly admired DASG and Faclair na Gàidhlig's work to digitise Gaelic texts and produce an online Gaelic corpus, as well as to create a historical Gaelic dictionary, alongside an array of other projects which facilitate the future study of the Gaelic language. It could be said that only now is modern Gaelic scholarship picking up where MacFarlane left off. The value of MacFarlane's edition of *The Fernaig Manuscript* has attracted renewed academic interest, with Aonghas MacCoinnich recently investigating the social and political context of its composition through literary and historical analysis.<sup>16</sup> This highlights the potential which MacFarlane's literary output has and points to its relevance in contemporary academic debate.

The catalogue of his published work also offers a considerable number of routes for further historical research, both to consolidate and enhance our understanding of MacFarlane himself as well as his unique perspectives and opinions on the Gaelic language movement. Similarly, the literary merits of his Gaelic poetry and prose ought to be further explored and his vast number of musical compositions, collections and arrangements themselves offer a rich repository for future ethnomusicological studies. Initial analysis of his Gaelic language play for children, *Am Mosgladh Mòr*, has been carried out by Sim Innes, looking in particular at the context of the Celtic Revival and the creation of Gaelic literature for children.<sup>17</sup> With the understanding and detail which this study has provided, there is potential for further analysis of the content of the play as well as its function as a propagandistic piece deployed by a leader of the Gaelic language movement. The full evaluation of the linguistic and literary merits of MacFarlane's Gaelic texts has been outwith the scope of this present study, though as our understanding has developed as to the conditions in which they were created,

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<sup>15</sup> *Digital Archive of Scottish Gaelic*, <<https://dasg.ac.uk/en>> [Accessed: 11/10/24]. *Faclair na Gàidhlig*, <<https://www.faclair.ac.uk/>> [Accessed: 11/10/24].

<sup>16</sup> Aonghas MacCoinnich, 'Clanship, Faith and Jacobitism: a Scottish Gaelic poetry collection, 1688-93', *Shaping Jacobitism: Memory, Culture, Networks*, Leith Davis and Kevin James, eds., (Edinburgh, Accepted for Publication).

<sup>17</sup> Innes and Mathis, 'Gaelic Tradition and the Celtic Revival', 107-157.

and the gaps which MacFarlane was seeking to fill, it is hoped that the Gaelic texts presented here will receive new and invigorated scholarly attention.

Outside of academia, there are various avenues for the renewed dissemination of many of MacFarlane's Gaelic works, such as a staging of his play or in revised editions and performances of his Gaelic music and song. Potentially, as a result of this study and the recognition which it gives MacFarlane as a leading Gaelic figure, ACG may seek to once again recognise and celebrate his invaluable contributions, both to their own organisation and to the Gaelic language and its culture overall.

Amidst so many possibilities for future research on the Gaelic language movement at the turn of the twentieth century in Scotland, there are also potential benefits which comparative analysis with the language movement in Ireland could offer. This study has demonstrated that MacFarlane and the wider Scottish movement had close ties to key figures in Ireland, such as Eoin MacNeill, Douglas Hyde and Patrick Pearse. It has given an overview of the radicalisation of the language movement in Ireland and the lack of political capital which was made of Gaelic in Scotland by similarly agitating Scottish nationalists. This study has offered valuable insight into the mechanics and limitations of the relationships between the two movements through MacFarlane's own activities in Scotland. A fuller survey and examination of MacFarlane's contributions to the Irish newspapers and magazines would now be highly valuable. Building on the evidence presented here from his published letters in *An Claidheamh Soluis*, an evaluation of this corpus would help to better understand MacFarlane's position on the Irish language movement as it evolved and perhaps give further insight into his own political beliefs. In a similar vein, extant correspondence from MacFarlane himself may yet be found in the repositories of other key figures, both in Ireland and in Scotland. A potential resource would be the archive of Eoin MacNeill, currently housed at the National Library of Ireland, which contains letters from leading figures of the movement, including MacFarlane.<sup>18</sup> Knowing that the two corresponded in the early years of ACG, the Oireachtas, and the Mòd, it may be possible that further correspondence could be found.<sup>19</sup>

This study has shed much needed light on several under-recognised and active figures within the language movement and provided new detail on some of its better-known

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<sup>18</sup> 'Letters and postcards from various correspondents to Eoin Mac Neill and Eugene O' Growney regarding the Gaelic League and the Gaelic Journal, Eugene O' Growney's ill health, teaching the Irish language and distributing it through "Simple lessons in Irish", and recording new Irish words', *Eoin MacNeil Papers*, NLI, MS. 10,875/8. MacFarlane is listed as a correspondent from the GSG.

<sup>19</sup> See: 'Letters from various correspondents to Eoin Mac Neill regarding the "An Comunn Gàidhealach" in Scotland and the Chester Welsh Society in Wales', *Eoin MacNeil Papers*, NLI, MS. 10,898. Also: 'Eoin MacNeil Additional Papers', University College Dublin Archives, LA 1/E. MacFarlane is listed as the editor of MacBain's Irish-Scottish dictionary, 23. Thank you to Aonghas MacCoinnich for this catalogue.

members. This includes, for example, John Mackintosh, an until-now largely unknown figure in ACG, and Henry Whyte, who has been deservedly well recognised for his own contributions to Gaelic. There is substantial potential within these networks to better accredit and acknowledge its members. As crucial projects such as Petra Johana Poncarová's work on Ruairaidh Erskine and Tòmas MacAilpein's ongoing studies of Angus Henderson progress, alongside innovative work on the Irish language movement by scholars such as Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh, the central figures and networks of this period are becoming increasingly visible in current scholarship.<sup>20</sup> This study is therefore timely in its response to a growing academic appetite and is itself a valuable resource to inform and direct future research in the field.

In concluding it is appropriate to position this study within the contemporary language debates taking place in Scotland today, as the history of the Gaelic language movement can inform and contribute to modern discourses. Just over 62,000 people were recorded as able to speak Gaelic in Scotland's 2022 census.<sup>21</sup> Initiatives such as Soillse, an inter-institutional network for Gaelic research established to inform public policy on the language, have continued the work of the language movement in the twentieth century.<sup>22</sup> There remain differences of opinions on the strategies which ought to be implemented at local and regional levels with respect to safeguarding Gaelic's future as a minority language. One approach is represented in the collection of position papers, *Gaelic in Contemporary Scotland* (2019), which suggests overall that revitalisation efforts should target the wide range of speakers and communities which engage with the language, including new Gaelic speakers who may have no ancestral claims to Gaelic identity.<sup>23</sup> Such claims are generally considered either to be a geographical connection to what would traditionally be conceived of as a Gaelic speaking area, or to have had some level of inter-generational Gaelic language transmission in the home. The authors of this study crucially recognise that an ambiguity exists 'over what it means to be a Gael in modern Scotland.'<sup>24</sup> This question has been fundamental to Gaelic language debate and planning throughout its history.

Other approaches include those outlined in the volume, *The Gaelic Crisis in the Vernacular Community* (2020), and generally support the position that Gaelic language

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<sup>20</sup> Poncarová, *Project Erskine*; MacAilpein, *Pròiseact AME*; and Irish language publications by Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh such as: *Athrú ag teacht: Conradh na Gaeilge, Ardfheis 1915 agus Éirí Amach na Cásca*, (Dublin, 2016).

<sup>21</sup> 'Gaelic Language Skills', *Scotland's Census 2022*, National Records of Scotland (Table UV208a, Gaelic Language Skills).

<sup>22</sup> Soillse: the National Research Network for the Maintenance and Revitalisation of Gaelic Language and Culture, <<http://www.soillse.ac.uk/en/>> [Accessed: 11/06/24].

<sup>23</sup> Marsaili MacLeod and Cassie Smith-Christmas (Eds), *Gaelic in Contemporary Scotland*, (Edinburgh, 2019).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 174.

planning and resources should be targeted towards the traditional Gaelic communities.<sup>25</sup> In a similar vein and building on evidence published from a 2014 survey by Frank Bechhofer and David McCrone, Iain MacKinnon has argued that Gaelic identity is intrinsically bound to the language and culture of the traditionally Gaelic speaking communities, and essentially that the funding and resources should be focussed on these specific groups.<sup>26</sup> However, academics such as Wilson McLeod and Robert Dunbar propose that this interpretation constricts the definition of Gaelic identity and is unsustainable as a basis on which to develop future language planning.<sup>27</sup> Rather, they argue that for the Gaelic language and culture to flourish in the modern context, that claims on Gaelic identity should be equally available to all those invested in it and to all speaker groups, including learners, thereby widening the appeal of Gaelic as a credible and professional modern European language.

These debates are complex, though the issues of Gaelic identity and of who can claim to be a Gael, and what this really means for language revivalists in terms of targeting their responses, have identifiable roots in the discourses of the language movement in Scotland in the early twentieth century. MacFarlane looked to implement policies which would have seen the prioritisation of Gaelic and Gaelic speakers in the operations and publications of its central body; the production and dissemination of adequate Gaelic resources for schools; the standardisation and, crucially, modernisation of the language so that it could be used in all aspects of life without the need to defer to English; and finally the promotion of innovation, with his calls to Gaelic speakers to write new Gaelic literature and to engage with it as a living language.

As this study has demonstrated, MacFarlane was a determined worker for the Gaelic language and unequivocally identified himself as a Gael and as part of what he conceived to be a Gaelic nation. Born in the traditionally Gaelic-speaking area of Argyll to Gaelic-speaking parents, and by all accounts himself a highly skilled Gaelic scholar, this may appear to be an obvious conclusion. However, even MacFarlane noted the limitations which living

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<sup>25</sup> Conchúr Ó Giollagáin, Gòrdan Camshron, Pàdruig Moireach, Brian Ó Curnáin, Iain Caimbeul, Brian MacDonald, Tamás Péterváry, *The Gaelic crisis in the vernacular community: a comprehensive sociolinguistic survey of Scottish Gaelic*, (Aberdeen, 2020). This volume has received criticism, for example: Claire Nance, Review of 'The Gaelic crisis in the vernacular community: a comprehensive sociolinguistic survey of Scottish Gaelic', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* (March, 2021) < <https://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/id/eprint/152283> > [Accessed: 20/05/25].

<sup>26</sup> Iain MacKinnon, 'Recognising and Reconstituting Gàidheil Ethnicity', *Scottish Affairs*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2021), 212-230. Frank Bechhofer and David McCrone, 'What makes a Gael? Identity, language and ancestry in the Scottish Gàidhealtachd', *Identities*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2014), 113-133.

<sup>27</sup> Timothy Currie Armstrong, Wilson McLeod, Robert Dunbar, Stuart Dunmore, Bernadette O'Rourke and Michelle Macleod, 'Gaelic and Identity: A Response to Iain MacKinnon', *Scottish Affairs*, Vol. 31, No. 1, (2022), 64-83.

outside of the traditional Gaelic areas could have on the ability to write well in Gaelic. In perhaps a rather self-deprecating comment on his own poetry, he wrote:

Cha'n abair mi facal m'an deighinn ach so: Ma tha anfhannachd r'a faotainn annta, cuimhnicheadh gu'n d' rinneadh iad le fear a chaidh àrach air a' Mhachair Ghallda, agus bean gu socrach riutha.<sup>28</sup>

*I will not say a word about them except this: If there is any weakness to be found in them, remember that they were made by a man who was brought up in the Lowlands, and treat them gently.*

Although a little tongue in cheek, there evidently was a distinction to be made between the Gaels of the traditional Gàidhealtachd and the Gaels who operated from the urban and intellectual centres of Glasgow and Edinburgh. Again, this can still be seen at the heart of Gaelic language debate today. The extent to which this had any real impact on the confidence to claim to have a Gaelic identity, however, seems negligible. Although Gaelic can be perceived as a historically regional language, the notion of being a Gael or a part of the wider Gaelic community is not necessarily so geographically confined and certainly was not seen to be in the early twentieth century. John Murdoch's political campaigns of the 1870's and 1880's had galvanised the urban Gael to contribute to improving the material conditions of the largely Gaelic-speaking Highlanders, though as this movement dissipated, the 'Land Question' was invariably replaced with the 'Language Question' and included in its remit a much larger and less geographically identifiable Gaelic community.<sup>29</sup> While there were significant efforts in the twentieth century to improve the provision of Gaelic education in the traditional Gàidhealtachd, and MacFarlane played a key role in these endeavours, fundamentally he was leading a movement which sought out innovation and which employed a broad church of Gaelic planning strategies. Thereby, while MacFarlane proudly claimed to be a disciple of John Murdoch and was unquestionably inspired by his work for the Gaelic movement, that movement had evolved as the twentieth century unfolded and it was the Gaelic language and culture, rather than the specific political campaigns to maintain Gaelic speakers in traditional Gaelic communities, which then became the focus of revivalist discourse and ideology.

MacFarlane recognised that for Gaelic to survive as a living language it had to adapt and evolve alongside and as a functional tool of modern urban and professional life. He championed the creation of new genres and styles of Gaelic literature; new terminology

<sup>28</sup> MacFarlane, 'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh', 235.

<sup>29</sup> James Hunter, 'The Politics of Highland Land Reform, 1873-1895', *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 53, No. 155 (1974), 47. Meek, 'Radical Romantics'.

which would allow Gaelic to operate in the industrial age; encouraging new Gaelic speakers; and welcoming the contributions of any genuine worker in the field who shared his vision for the future of the Gaelic language. As several studies which have touched on his life and work have attested to, and as can be seen in the sheer volume of his correspondences, MacFarlane was continuously discussing and advising on Gaelic matters with anyone who asked for his help or his input. He was critical of those who he believed were using the Gaelic movement to further their own personal ambitions, but he did not exclude any person who demonstrated a real interest in Gaelic language and culture. This was particularly noted in his relationships with women within the movement. Unlike so many of his contemporaries, MacFarlane recognised the equal value of their contributions. The distinction therefore between those who undertook the work of the movement and those who only superficially presented themselves as belonging to it is crucial.

In this respect, rather than being controversial at all, as MacLeod's 2006 biographical article claimed him to be, MacFarlane should instead be considered progressive and inclusive in his approach to Gaelic language planning and as an example of these practices in contemporary language debate.<sup>30</sup> He may not have been the easiest person to get along with, and certainly was unafraid to speak his mind, though the many friendships which he developed throughout his life were deeply rooted in mutual respect and honesty.

It seems only appropriate to let MacFarlane have the final say in this study of his life and work. Throughout, we have argued that he has been neglected in our understanding of the Gaelic language movement to date; and that he should now be recognised for the substantial and multifaceted contributions which he made to that movement, and in service to the Gaelic language and its culture, throughout his life. His contribution has been overlooked and under-appreciated, something this study has sought to rectify. MacFarlane knew just how difficult gaining that sort of recognition could be, writing in 1907:

Reputations are much more easily made by shooting black men from behind stones and bushes than by working for a decaying language and a lapsed people.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Macleod, 'Malcolm MacFarlane', 307-311.

<sup>31</sup> NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 48: Rejected Letter to the Editor of the Oban Weekly News, 20/04/07.



## Appendix 1

### A Catalogue of the known writings of Malcolm MacFarlane.

This catalogue is a comprehensive list of all known published works by Malcolm MacFarlane at the time of its compilation. It gives the books and edited collections which MacFarlane either solely or collaboratively produced in chronological order. It then provides the texts for which he was acknowledged as the editor of another author's text. These are also given chronologically. The catalogue then identifies MacFarlane's published articles and essays and distinguishes them from his collected and composed poetry, song and translation pieces, which follow after. It then lists his Gaelic play. These items are grouped according to their publication, which are given chronologically by the date of MacFarlane's first entry. Where the material, or part thereof, has been originally created by MacFarlane, these are marked with an (\*). The catalogue also lists all of his known correspondences in the newspaper and periodical press. Though not exhaustive, it is hoped that this catalogue will help to direct future research and the discovery of further resources.

### **Books and Edited Collections**

(MacFarlane is the sole author/editor unless otherwise stated.)

*The phonetics of the Gaelic language, with an exposition of the current orthography and a system of phonography* (Paisley, 1889).

*Scottish Gaelic as a Specific Subject* (Glasgow, 1893).

Malcolm MacFarlane and Henry Whyte (eds.), *An Uiseag* (The Lark, Glasgow, 1894).

Adam Gunn and Malcolm MacFarlane, (eds.), *Orain agus Dain le Rob Donn Mac-Aoidh* (Songs and Poems by Rob Donn Mackay. Glasgow, 1899).

*An Treòraiche* (The Leader, Stirling, 1903).

*An Lon Dubh* (The Blackbird, Dundee, 1905).

*Uirsgeulan Gàidhealach* (Highland Legends, 1905).

*Dàin Thaghte* (Selected Poems, Stirling, 1906).

*Binneas nam Bàrd* (Bardic Melodies, Stirling, 1908).

*An Smeòrach* (The Mavis, Stirling, 1908).

*Am Bru-Dhearg* (The Robin, Stirling, 1909).

*Am Briathrachan Beag* (The Little Dictionary, Stirling, 1912).

*An Comh-Threòraiche* (The Fellow Reader, Stirling, 1912).

*Lamh-Sgriobhainn Mhic Rath* (The Fernaig Manuscript, Dundee, 1923).

### **Edited Gaelic Texts**

John MacCormick.

*Oiteagan o'n iar* (Breezes from the West, Paisley, 1908).

*Gu 'n d' thug i Spéis do 'n Àrmunn* (She gave her love to the Soldier, Stirling, 1908).

*Seanchaidh na h-Airigh* (The Storyteller of the Shieling, Stirling, 1911).

*Seanchaidh na Tràghad* (The Storyteller of the Shore, Stirling, 1911).

*Dùn-Àluinn no an t-Oighre 'na Dhiobarach* (Dunlaine or the Banished Heir, Paisley, 1912).

Alexander MacBain, *An Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language* (Stirling, 1911).

Lachlan Maclean, *Uilleam Uallas, Iain Knox agus Rob Ruadh* (William Wallace, John Knox and Rob Roy MacGregor, Stirling, 1912).

John MacFadyen, *Companach na Cloinne* (The Children's Companion, Stirling, 1913).

### **Articles and Essays**

*The Old Highlands: Papers read before the Gaelic Society of Glasgow, 1895-1906*, (Glasgow, 1908).

'The Gaelic Language and the People who speak it', 281-316.

John Mackay (ed), *The Celtic Monthly*, Vol. 1 (1893).

'The Humour of the Gael', 9.

'Henry Whyte', 17.

*The Celtic Monthly*, Vol. 2 (1894).

'The Influence of Gaelic Music on Lowland Song (with Music)', 18-20.

*The Highland News* (1896).

'Bàrdachd an Latha 'n Diugh', 26/09/96, 2; 03/10/96, 2, 10/10/96; 17/10/96; 24/10/96; 31/10/96; 14/11/96; 21/11/96; 12/12/96; 19/12/96; and 26/12/96.

Malcolm MacFarlane (ed.), *An Deo-Ghréine* (The Sunbeam, Vol. 1, 1905-1906).

(Unattributed articles are included where MacFarlane has now been identified as the author.)

‘Thog Sinn an Deo-Ghréine Ri Crann’ (‘We Have Raised the Sunbeam Aloft’), No. 1 (1905), 1-2.

‘Sinn Fhéin – Ourselves’, No. 1 (1905), 2-3.

‘An Comunn Gàidhealach. Sketch of its Inception and Development’, No. 1 (1905) 4-8.

‘Luchd-Labhairt na Gàidhlig’ (‘Gaelic Speakers’), No. 2 (1905), 17-18.

‘Sinn Fhéin – Ourselves’, No. 2 (1905), 18-20.

‘The Dingwall Mòd’, No. 2 (1905), 20-33.

‘The Bagpipe Scale’, No. 4 (1906), 68-69.

‘What’s in a Name?’, No. 4 (1906), 69-70.

‘The Founders of An Comunn Gàidhealach’, No. 5 (1906), 73-74.

‘Some Bagpipes and Bagpipers’, No. 5 (1906), 82-84.

‘Death of Mr John Mackay, Hereford’, No. 6 (1906), 89-90.

‘The Prize List’, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1906), 24-26

Ruaraidh Erskine (ed.), *Guth na Bliadhna*, Vol. 4 (The Voice of the Year, 1907).

‘Dàn Liuir’ (‘The Story of Liur’), No. 3, 292-300.

‘A’ Chànain Ghàidhlig is an Sluagh D’am Buin I’ (‘The Gaelic Language and the People who Speak it’), No. 4, 319-336.

*Guth na Bliadhna*, Vol. 5 (1908).

‘The Bagpipe and the Gael’, Part I: No. 3, 250-273 and Part II: No. 4, 361-379.

‘Bàrdachd an Latha ’n Diugh’ (‘Today’s Poetry’) Part I: No. 4, 311-334.

*Guth na Bliadhna*, Vol. 6 (1909).

‘Bàrdachd an Latha ’n Diugh’, II: No. 1, 25-41; III: No. 2, 118-134; IV: No. 3, 223-241; and V: No. 4, 333-359.

‘An t-Ollamh Sasunnach’ (‘The English Professor’), 366-379.

‘Correspondence: The Teaching of Gaelic in Highland Schools’, 408-413.

*Guth na Bliadhna*, Vol. 7 (1910).

‘Bàrdachd an Latha ’n Diugh’, VI: No. 1, 40-60; VII: No. 2, 118-128; and VIII: No. 3, 223-236.

*Guth na Bliadhna*, Vol. 8 (1911).

‘Ceol-seinn na Tuatha: anns na Trì Cànaichean’ (‘Vocal Folk Music: in the Three Languages’), I: No. 1, 29-45; II: No. 2, 109-119; III: No. 3, 229-240; and IV: No. 4, 329-340.

*Guth na Bliadhna*, Vol. 10 (1913).

‘Òran as an Lamh-Sgrìobhainn a tha ainmichte air Feàrnaig’ (‘Song from the Fernaig Manuscript’), No. 1, 71-78.

‘Bàrdachd nam Ban’ (Women’s Poetry’), I: No. 3, 341-355; and II: No. 4, 433-452.

*Guth na Bliadhna*, Vol. 11 (1914).

‘Bàrdachd nam Ban’, III: No. 1, 17-35.

*The Oban Times*.

‘The Gaelic Language and the People who speak it: A Paper read before the Glasgow High School Cèilidh’, 21/03/03.

‘Gaelic Music’, Part I: 05/01/07, 3; II: 12/01/07, 3; III: 19/01/07, 2; IV: 26/01/07, 2; V: 02/02/07, 3; VI: 09/02/07, 3; VII: 23/02/07, 2; and VIII: 02/03/07, 7.

Ruaraidh Erskine (ed), *Alba*, (Scotland, 1908-1909).

‘Creachadh nan Èiphiteach’ (‘The Devastation of the Egyptians’), Part I: No. 13, 03/05/08; II: No. 14, 09/05/08; III: No. 18, 06/06/08; IV: No. 21, 27/06/08; and V: No. 23, 11/07/08.

‘Dòmhnall Mac Eacharn, Nach Maireann; (‘Donald MacKechnie: Obituary’), No. 17, 30/05/08.

‘A’ Chànain Ghàidhlig is an Sluagh D’am Buin I’ (‘The Gaelic Language and the People who Speak it’) Part I: No. 18, 06/06/08; II: No. 19, 13/06/08; III: No. 20, 20/06/08; and IV: No. 21, 27/06/08.

‘“Politics” anns a’ Ghàidhlig’ (‘“Politics” in the Gaelic Language’), No. 38, 24/10/08.

‘“I” agus “Innis”’ (‘“I” and “Innis”’), No. 40, 07/11/08.

‘Binneas nam Bàrd’ (‘Bardic Melodies’), No. 41, 14/11/08.

‘Binneas nam Bàrd’, Correspondence, No. 42, 21/11/08.

‘“I” agus “Innis”’, Correspondence, No. 43, 28/11/08.

*Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*

‘Studies in Gaelic Music’, Vol. 37 (1911), 47-84.

‘Gaelic Elements in the South-West Lowland Scots English’, Vol. 31 (1927), 175-196.

‘Half a Century of Vocal Gaelic Music’, Vol. 32 (1929), 251-272.

Ella Carmichael (ed), *The Celtic Review*.

‘Henry Whyte: ‘Fionn’’, *The Celtic Review*, Vol. 9, No. 36 (1914), 332-336.

### **Music, Poetry, Prose and Song**

(Collected poetry and songs, compositions, arrangements and translations. Identified original material has been marked with a \*.)

Lachlan MacBean, *The Songs and Hymns of the Scottish Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1888).

‘Aslachadh Air Son Beannachd’ (‘Supplication for Blessing’), 17. \*

‘Smeideadh Oirnn’ (‘Beckoning’), 31. \*

Lachlan MacBean, *The Songs of the Gael: Part II* (Edinburgh, 1890).

‘A Chailinn tha tamh mu Loch Eite’ (‘The Lass by Loch Eive’), 30. \*

‘Oran na h-iubili’ (‘Jubilee Song’), 32. \*

*A’ Choisir-Chiùil* (The Gaelic Choir, Paisley, 1900).

‘Cumha na h-òighe’ (‘Lament for the Maiden’), 8. \*

‘Mo Dhachaidh’ (‘My Home’), 34. \*

‘Ochòin a ri! ‘se’n leòn an gaol’ (‘Wae’s me! But love it tries the heart’), 43. \*

John Mackay (ed), *The Celtic Monthly*, Vol. 1 (1893).

(Collected and published under the column, ‘Our Musical Page’, often with commentary.)

‘Ochoin a ri! ‘se’n leòn an gaol’ (‘Wae’s me! But love it tries the heart’), 71. \*

‘Mo Dhachaidh’ (‘My Home’), 102. \*

‘Oran Luadhaidh’ (‘Waulking Song’), 119.

‘Carvalyn Gailckagh’ (‘Gaelic Carols’), 156-157.

*The Celtic Monthly*, Vol. 2 (1893-1894).

‘Ailean Muideartach’ (‘Allan, Laird O’ Moidart’), 9.

‘Gaelic Airs to Lowland Songs’, 63-64, 88, 118, 139, 160, 166 and 211.

‘S Fheudar Dhomh ’Bhi Togail Orm’ (‘I Maun Rise and Gang Awa’), 70.

‘Na Gàidheil an Guailibh a Chèile’ (‘Highlanders Shoulder to Shoulder’), 192. \*

*The Celtic Monthly*, Vol. 4 (1895-1896).

‘Mairi Anna’ (‘Annie’s Mary’), 9.

‘Is trom leam an àiridh’ (‘The Sheiling Song’), 180.

‘Chailin og nach stiur thu mi’ (‘Young maiden will you guide me’), 200.

‘Seonaid Nic Aoidh’ (‘Jessie Mackay’), 208.

*The Celtic Monthly*, Vol. 5 (1896-1897).

‘Fàilte na Mòr-Thir’ (‘Hail to the Mainland’), 29.

‘Canain nan Gàidheal’ (‘The Songs of the Highlanders’), 88-89.

‘A’ Chuthag’ (‘The Cuckoo’), 169.

*The Celtic Monthly*, Vol. 11 (1903).

‘Moladh Beinn Doran’ (‘Praise of Ben Doran’), 188.

*The Celtic Monthly*, Vol. 12 (1904).

‘Am Fogarrach a’ fagail a’ Ghearrloch’ (‘Farewell to Gairloch’), 82. \*

‘Oran nan Croitearan Gàidhealach’ (‘The Crofter’s Song of Hope’), 118. \*

‘Dan Fhraoich’ (‘Fraoch’s Poem’), 185-187.

‘The Morrisons of Lewis: A Tale and a Song’, 204-205.

‘Bas Dhiarmaid O Duimhne’ (‘The Death of Diarmuid’), 211-215. \*

‘Agus O, Théid I’ (‘On She Goes Bravely’), 229.

*The Celtic Monthly*, Vol. 15 (1907).

‘Blàr Chuil-fhodair’ (‘Battle of Culloden’), 180.

*The Celtic Monthly*, Vol. 1 (1907-1908).

‘Orain na h-Albann’ (‘Songs of Scotland’), 60.

‘Lament of Lìlias of Clan Ranald’, 100.

‘Brathainn nan Steud’ (‘The Steed of Brahan’), 120.

‘Thogainn fonn gun bhi trom’ (‘Raising melodies disposed of mirth’), 140.

‘Tha Mulad, Tha Sgìos Orm’ (‘I am Sad, I am Tired’), 200.

‘Thug mise ’n crodh-guailfhionn’ (‘I gave the brown-shouldered cattle’), 220.

‘Cumha le Silis ni Mhic Raonail na Ceapaich’ (‘Julain MacDonell of Keppoch’s Lament’), 240.

Annie Mackay (ed.), *The Celtic Monthly*, Vol. 20 (1912).

‘Chaochail Màiri’ (‘The Death of Mary’), 20.

‘Naile! ’s iad mo ghaol na gilleann’ (‘Truly! It’s the boys I Love’), 60.

‘La Chùl-odair’ (‘The day of Culloden’), 100.

‘Oran na Gàidhlig’ (‘Gaelic Song’), 140. \*

‘Nighean Donn nan Gobhar’ (‘The Maid that tends the Goats’), 180.

‘A’ Mhàldag Chiùin’ (‘The Quiet Woman’), 220. \*

‘A’ Bhean agam Fhìn’ (‘My Own Wife’), 239.

Ella Carmichael (ed.), *The Celtic Review*, Vol. 1 (1904).

‘Garabh agus na Mnathan (with Music and Translation)’ (‘Garabh and the Wives’), No. 1, 36-47.

*The Celtic Review*, Vol. 2 (1905).

‘O, ’s tu ’s gura tu th’ air m’ aire’ (‘You are always on my mind’), No. 6, 112.

Malcolm MacFarlane (ed.), *An Deo-Ghréine*, Vol. 1 (The Sunbeam, 1905-1906).

‘Oran-Ciùil’ (‘Songs’), No. 1, 8; No. 2, 33-35; No. 3, 47; and No. 6, 93.

‘The Petrie Collection of Irish Tunes’, No. 1, 14-15; and No. 2, 38-39.

‘Unrecorded Gaelic Melodies’, No. 3, 48; No. 4, 62; No. 5, 81-82; and No. 6, 93-94.

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\*

‘Tìr Mo Ghràidh’ (‘The Land I Love’), 211-212. \*

‘Boch Oirnn Ó!’ (‘Oh, Poor Us!’), 213. \*

‘Mo Roghainn A’ Ghàidhlig’ (‘Gaelic is My Choice’), 214-215. \*

‘Òigh mo Rùin’ (‘The Woman of my Heart’), 216-217. \*

‘Ochòin a Rì! ‘se’n leòn an gaol’ (‘Wae’s me! But love it tries the heart’), 218. \*

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‘Na Leigibh Dimeas air Alba’ (‘Don’t Underestimate Scotland’), 296-297.

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‘Co Dhiùbh Thogainn Fonn mo Leannain’ (‘Yet I Would Sing My Love’s Praises’),  
339-340. \*

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## Appendix 2.

### Transcription of Malcolm MacFarlane's Lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal, (1927).

NLS, Acc. 9736, Fol. 141.

I attempted to identify the copyright holder of this resource but without success. The transcription is included here as it supports the research. I have included in the transcription the page numbers of the original document, which are the page numbers cited in the thesis.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I hope you understand that I am here by request to address you on the question: "Why I am not, and have not been for over 20 years, a member of An Comunn Gàidhealach." It does seem odd that I who was 14 years one of the most active members of that association should now be outside of it: and it is quite a good excuse for asking me to address you on that subject – you, a body which professes to have what is called: "the Gaelic cause" at heart. The excuse was there, remember, over 20 years ago, and may I be allowed to hint that it says very little for the Gaelic people that the question was not asked directly until a few months ago, and then only by one of your members. I hope to give you good substantial reasons for my being outside of that Society; and when I am done, I just hope you, who are here tonight, will give me as good reasons for being so late in informing yourselves concerning one of the lowest scandals which disgraces your and my country men and women. I hope you understand these words, they are frank and they are true.

I know the old adage: "Better late than never", and I am quite agreeable to let the case stand there just now. An hour or so will reveal to me whether this section of the Gaelic people present before me, preserve still the old sense of honour which distinguished the good men of their race a few generations ago.

It is little this generation knows, or seeks to know, of the early history of the association called An Comunn Gàidhealach. Before it was founded it was discussed in the newspapers of 1890 and 1891; and I took no conspicuous part in the discussion. (p.1) The movement, I considered, should be from the country of the Gael and not from Glasgow or the South. But when the time came, I, as secretary of the Gaelic Society of Glasgow, had my say in the preliminary movement towards founding the association. When the subject was

brought officially before me I gave utterances to my opinions, and they were reported in the Oban Times, I think. They were as follows:

“I fail to see how Gaelic is to be fostered by doing business in English. It gives the whole affair the appearance of a sham, and that is to be avoided. Those who do not understand Gaelic will be first to note it. If there should be people who would like to know what is being done, let them have English as an act of grace. But do not, for any sake, act on the contrary principle. My opinion is that the proposed association should not enter on any definite action until it has prepared the way. This it should do first by the appointment of a Gaelic-writing secretary, who should be remunerated for his services. The Rules and Constitution should be framed in Gaelic. To that end it would be necessary to prepare and adopt Gaelic terms for use. That would not be a very serious business, I think. In fact, a year or more would require to be devoted to working up everything for the first annual gathering, so that there would be no risk of Gaelic Literature and music being disgraced instead of honoured. Unless the Assn is prepared to give a great deal of attention to preparation, such as I have indicated, I think it might as well not go further.”

The events proved the truth of these remarks.

In summing up that discussion at that meeting, Dr MacDermid, the Chairman, said: “He could wait patiently for years and (p. 2) work up to a successful meeting. Much preparation was necessary if they were to have a successful demonstration, and several years preparation would not be wasted, but would yield quite a rich harvest.”

Very well, you see from this what my attitude was then, and you know that, up to this day, the business is not done in Gaelic nor has any attempt been made to make it possible so to do. There is a Gaelic-speaking and writing secretary; but beyond the minutes there is no official recognition of the language in their business transactions in this the 36th year of the association’s existence. On the other hand, there has arisen among the membership of the association a desire to have the minutes in English as well as the discussions. It does seem odd that the language of the minutes should be different from the language of the discussions. But odd things are the rule, not the exception in this case. The Rules and Constitution have not in the 36th year reached the Gaelic stage. True, a committee was appointed over a score of years ago to render the same into Gaelic. Sometime in the last years in which I was a member, a brother and sister, Carmichael by name, began to advocate the rendering of the Rules and Constitution Gaelic. This had not been mooted before that time by any member. That is to say: nobody at all took to heart my advice as uttered in the Gaelic Society of Glasgow before the Comunn was founded. Those Carmichaels, however, brought up the topic of Rules and Constitution at most unreasonable times, and were,

naturally, not listened to, till they became a nuisance. They ought to have given notice and gone reasonably about their project. It was felt by all that they were about the last people in the association that had any intention of being useful in the work, but would be first to take credit for it (p. 3) when done. So, to put an end to the nuisance of their eternally putting forward the subject of Gaelic Rules and Constitution I moved that the brother and sister Carmichael be appointed a Com. to do so. This proposal alarmed the brotherly and sisterly clique who so keenly advocated the subject, and they, in fright, made the plea: Would not Mr. MacFarlane himself join the Committee. I said no: I had plenty of work on my shoulders already; and that I would gladly be available as a critic when their concoction came before us for approval. The Committee was agreed to and it was remitted to the Carmichaels to do the Gaelicising of the Constitution and Rules.

That was perhaps 23 years ago, and nothing has been done or heard of in regard to the Constitution and Rules in Gaelic since that time. But you will notice that the lady who undertook to do the work and failed has been honoured so far as to be elected a Vice-president – for services unrendered apparently. And you may have noticed that earlier in this year, she was at the same old game of reminding members of their duty in regard to other things of a business order which are being, in her opinion, neglected. She does not think for a moment of her own unfulfilled duties. O no!

There you have a sample of the manner in which business was done – or rather not done – in the past; and I who was drudge in many ways and spending from 10/ to 20/ a year in postage stamps alone, was rewarded by having my membership rights taken from me at an Annual Meeting, in what I have already in this hall characterised as low, mean, fraudulent conduct, I hold to those words. You should be glad to have those truthful words. (p. 4)

As to my attendance at meetings, I think I was absent from only one meeting to which I was called, and I came late to one, owing to losing the train connection at Glasgow. I don't suppose any member had as good a record. The one meeting I was late for is distinct in my recollection. When I arrived, I found that the members were discussing certain words I had used in the official magazine, called then "An Deo-Ghréine" in regard to the princess Louise as president of the Society at the first Féill. To explain: previous to then the membership had in their zeal put away all patrons and honorary offices and had preened their feathers ostentatiously over that one good action of theirs. I took no part in doing this action; but I was glad to see it done. But it put the association in rather a ridiculous position when they proposed to appoint the princess Louise as working president. And, although I had no admiration whatever for Mrs Burnley – quite the reverse – I moved that she be appointed president for the Féill year. I hated, above everything that we should be making the

association ridiculous in the eyes of Gall and Sassenach. But no. They would go on and ask the princess Louise to accept the presidentship of the association. In her reply, she politely reproved them for thinking she could accept the presidentship and attend meetings; but offered to become honorary president – and she was accepted, rules notwithstanding.

You can see by that incident the stupidity of the class of people I found myself associated with; and can fancy the snash I had to put up with from the same crowd when they were advocating the appointment. What good was to accrue to us by associating our affairs with royal names. No good! (p. 5)

In those early days there was no mention of politics or creed in the associations Constitution. Yet it was moved that the association's Constitution should have these words added: "The association is non-political and non-sectarian." This was moved by Mrs Burnley. I went against the motion, saying that as there was no mention or single idea of party politics or creed in the Constitution it was *infra dig* to introduce such words into it. I was successful in keeping out those words; but after I was out of the association the same woman brought forward the same proposal and carried it, and notwithstanding those words there has been brought in a fund for the furtherance of a certain creed; and politics go so merrily on that the Executive of the Association may soon be composed of one political party. It was since that phrase became part of the Constitution that I noticed in the Mod Syllabus a proposal to introduce into it a Roman Catholic section.

In a creedless association I should have been the most acceptable member of the lot: I had no creed since I was 12 years of age. I never want to have such a contemptible thing as a creed. There are in the world hundreds of creeds. Everybody who has a creed maintains that they are all wrong but one, and of course, the probability is that they are all wrong bar none, I believe they are so – all absurd without exception. Not one creed can produce proof of its truthfulness. Not one! The book on which the creeds which prevail in these islands and the continent of Europe are founded is choke a bloc with silly lies and much dirt which it would be better to leave out in the interest of the morals of the group. (p. 6)

But to return to the Comunn, the men who were the best workers in the language and music sections of the association's objects were Henry Whyte and myself. I never found Henry Whyte's actions as a Gael influenced by creed or want of creed never. And he would be a liar of the most extravagant order who would accuse me of sectarianism. Many a meeting have we held in the office of an old Glasgow lawyer named MacLeod at which only the three of us were present out of the whole Executive who were called by a large proportion of whom lived in Glasgow, by circular to attend. That is: we three carried on the association's work without any help worthy of record from the others, for a considerable time at any rate.

One of the first disagreements I can clearly remember was when Henry Whyte's song "Fuadach nan Gàidheal" – which some one, never revealed, alleged to be political was dropped out of a Mod concert programme. Jessie MacLachlan was not allowed to sing it after being announced in the programme. She was told it was political. Yet it had been a test song at a Mòd for choral singing two years previously, presided over by one of the [sic] family and MacLaine of Loch Buidhe when it was sung by the combined choirs and no offence taken. The song is political undoubtedly in the sense in which the association is political: it had to do with the Gaelic people just like the association, and had no party significance in the eyes of British politicians, nearly all of whom affected the Highland Land Policy on those days.

I have favoured you with just a glimpse into the past so as to give you an idea of the things some of us had to content with; and now I will move forward to about the 14th year. (p. 7) In the year 1905, it was resolved to set on foot a magazine for promoting in Gaelic and English, the cause of Gaelic literature and music and for recording and preserving prize papers and prize compositions by literary and musical competitors. Dr Kenneth Campbell and myself were appointed a committee to discuss the question of its feasibility and to report to the Executive Committee. I did not favour the proposal as I thought we would land ourselves in debt before long. And I would only give the idea my support if a fund were established to meet the expenses. That was done and I was myself the subscriber of the largest sum although I believe I had the smallest purse of the lot among whom were really rich men. I was, besides that, appointed Editor of the magazine at the big salary of nothing. Dr Campbell, when I asked him to contribute the many Gaelic articles which he thought the magazine should contain, replied that his spelling of Gaelic was atrocious. I got no many papers from him or any other writer of English or Gaelic. The atrocious spelling I was quite capable of making passable and he knew that. But the spelling was only a blind to conceal his laziness. But I got excellent stuff from K.W.G and Donald MacKechnie, first rate man and woman, and I wrote much myself in both languages.

I carried on the magazine for 3 months under conditions that were very trying. It was the busiest time of my life and there was hardly a day on which I had not done 14 hours work – much of it on a magazine in which I had no faith whatever. I began to feel the effects on my health. So I took with me to the next Executive meeting £9 and offered (p. 8) it to them to pay a substitute to act as editor of the magazine until they could get a volunteer like myself to continue its conduct. Those noble, kindly men and women acting according to their natures, asked me to carry on for other 3 months until they could get an editor to take my place. I took, in the circumstances, the risk involved and finished my 6 months editorship

and came almost safely through. I continued as convenor of the Publication Committee all the same; and gave them too the £9 I had offered. Keep that in mind for a little.

The new Editors were two University-educated men, to do the work which I – a product of a miners school in the Lowlands – was doing single handed, and doing much better than they – look for yourselves and compare our work – don't think I fear being cross-examined, as it were. And such men too: one was a Lewisman as provincial as they rear and educate them in that island. The first heading of the Gaelic literary stuff was “Fad Monadh”. I wondered what that was; but on reading the article, it dawned on me that what it meant was really what literary Gaelic reveals as “fòid moine”. The magazine continued thereafter under that Gaelic editor as provincial as it began; but provincialism in English was avoided like dirt. The English editor did his work under the impression that his duty was to promote English, and, especially, among the young. His first act was to send me a peremptory letter asking me to send on to him all the English papers. I replied in a quiet note that there were no English papers. This seemed to have riled him much, for I received in return an insolent letter which could only be expected from a rude tinker or drunk man. Thereafter, he began to promote a knowledge of English by holding (p. 9) competitions among the young daughters of some northern clergymen and reporting the results in the magazine. He then began to explain English phrases of a popular kind, among which was some dirty stuff out of Shakespeare's plays. You can see it for yourselves in the first volume of the magazine. I drew the attention of my committee to the matter and they agreed with me that it should be stopped. J. D. MacDonald at the same time, complained of party politics having been introduced into the magazine, which complaint was perfectly justified. He, however, like what was to be expected from a coward, gave up his indictment. The minute of the magazine committee came before the Executive Committee held in the Mod week in Oban; and they by a majority expunged it. Among the majority was the present president of the association who upheld the dirt and the English and the politics; and also, mind you, the Lewis member of the magazine committee who had in committee supported my view of the matter: a clergyman, of course did the same. I said nothing, but took quiet note of those who were opposed to me. Among my supporters was Mr. Menzies, one of the vice-presidents. This happened on Tuesday evening. On Wednesday morning this same man expressed himself to me as grieved by the Executive Councils action. On Friday following, the day of the annual meeting, when the bulk of the Oban members who could get a holiday from their employers were busy preparing the station for the Mod Concert, the annual meeting was held. As far as I was able to make out there were 6 men present who were South Highlanders. The remainder were north Highlanders – say 40 – most of whom were notoriously ignorant of the work (p.

10) of the association and knew not who were its diligent workers and who were not, and a considerable proportion of them was composed of ignorant women of the well off class.

I moved that the minutes be read. It is generally admitted that when any one member of a body asks to have the minutes read it has to be done. You can see perfectly that without that safeguard, a small Executive could hide away a case of tyranny or oppression, concerning which the main body is entitled to have a voice, and the power, if fitting, to undo the same deed. No Committee is appointed to oppress a single member, nor to hide away a minute from the main body if a single member asks for it.

But in An Comunn Gàidhealach it was moved and supported by a large majority composed of what shall I call them: cowards and barbarians – gràisg – that the minutes be held as read. I objected as I had a case of injustice to bring forward. I was refused the minutes by the chairman Mr. Menzies, and I was told that I could bring the matter up at next Executive meeting. I had no guarantee that I would be elected to next Executive meeting. And neither had he nor I any right to assume that we would be elected. I asked then for a certain minute to be read in which I was, through my office of Publication Committee's Convenor, interested. With a grudge that was conceded; but a motion by me in regard to it – namely, the restoration of the Magazine Committee's minute regarding politics and low literature being allowed into the magazine pages, was disallowed. This chairman who was on my side on Tuesday night and Wednesday morning was opposed to me on (p. 11) Friday mid-day. I promptly stood up, turned round facing him and said: Mr Chairman, I have no alternative but to charge you with giving a dishonourable ruling. He literally squirmed and a lady – well, hardly a lady; hardly a woman – there are decent women, thank goodness – I shall call her an impudent hussy – some of you know her well – kissed me. I turned to her, and snapping my fingers at her, said: I care not that much for your kiss; and turning again to the chairman, I repeated my charge of his having given a dishonourable ruling and I expressed my sorrow that it was necessary for me to do so. He squirmed again, but said nothing. This Queen's prize man at Aldershot hadn't the courage of a mouse, and could not face up against the influence of my opponents – a class for whom I have no respect and no use whatever. They claim to be your and my countrymen; and I am afraid it is too true.

Fionn and I left the meeting then and when I saw him going out, with head lowered, behind me, I almost turned to spit on the principal men and women in that contemptible clique, who had so indecently opposed one of the best workers in the Gaelic field; whose works had been one of the principal awakening influences in the literature of the Highlands, if not the very principal, in those days between 1875 and 1890. We went out and listened to the Mod work.



From that day, I ceased to be a member of the association which denied me my membership rights “in the meanest more cowardly and truculent manner”. Wasn’t I right when I, before this, used those words in this very hall? (p. 12)

But that did not end my career in the Comunn Gàidhealach. A man who was at first of the group opposed to me that eventful day, having discovered for himself the mean class of people with whom he has sided, left them and came over to me. He asked me if I would care to be a representative of the Society with which he was connected and go back through that channel to the Executive Committee. I said I would try it if he asked it. I did go back to an Executive Council meeting held in Stirling. I met the vice-president who took from me my membership rights. He was so glad to see me and would have shaken hands; but I put up mine to warn him off and said not until you have done your duty shall I shake hands with you. He took my action very much to heart, and I, although he sat next to me at the table, never took the slightest notice of him. He discovered that I was, when I had good cause, much nearer in the character of my fibre to hamper rope than the cotton thread they all took me for. So later, on three occasions he wrote me about his wish to apologise and withdraw his ruling. I replied each time that I did not want his apologies: I wanted my membership rights that he had inexcusably taken from me returned. In the latest of the 3 letters he proposed to meet me and discuss the subject on the occasion of the annual meeting to be held in St. Andrews Halls, Glasgow, the year immediately following my expulsion from the Society – the year of the Féill. I agreed but insisted on a witness being present, and I nominated Mr. Mackintosh, the secretary of the association. He agreed (p. 13) and we met in the cloakroom, and the vice-president again said he wanted to apologise. I said I did not want his apology. “I want you to give me back my membership rights. Your apologies are nothing to me. Restore me those unconditionally and I shall then do what I think fit without regard to your or anybody else’s opinion.” He agreed and presiding at the annual meeting, withdrew his ruling, using no apologetic words, but speaking highly of my work for the Comunn. Then he asked me to move my motion in regard to the minute of the previous annual meeting. I said, for the sake of peace I shall let that go by and try and forget the oppressive action of himself and the association if they would do the same. Not a word was said by the cowardly meeting. After that the voting in of the Executive Committee proceeded, and when summed up I had only 17 votes out of about 70 and was outside where I was glad to be; and I have been outside ever since, after all my work for the Society which no unpaid man in the Society has ever come up to. Ask Sheriff Campbell, if he could do a length of it, and ask him to give a reason for the Comunn’s action which not a soul has ever voiced that I heard or read of. I have waited over 20 years. There is none forthcoming. He

has not the courage to voice the reason. He would be stamped by the world as a narrow-minded religious bigot if he did and rightly too. Contrast his actions with his fellow religionist Dr Blair. His eye blinked and he stamped his foot when reproving those who did the vile deed. This happened at an Oban children's Mod.

Now, I will read you something which if not written by Sheriff Campbell, was written by someone he knew and trusted and (p. 14) agreed with. O, quite near the date of my expulsion from the Society, but previous to it.

"A time like this is opportune to make observation of the invaluable services to the Comunn Gàidhealach and its great Annual Gathering which from the inception of both, have been so enthusiastically given by Mr. M. MacFarlane, Elderslie. As years go on it is being more and more discovered by those taking an active share in the work that Mr. MacFarlane is the "hub" of the movement. It is not often that a single man combines in himself so many excellent characteristics."

"Mr. MacFarlane is one of the foremost bards of the day. It is to his pen indeed we are indebted for the lyric now adopted as the Highland national anthem – Na Gàidheal an Guailibh a Chèile. (It is no longer the anthem, you will notice) and many of our Gaelic melodies, associated heretofore by dogged verse have by him, been wedded to words in every sense worthy of the musical themes."

"But Mr. MacFarlane is more than a bard. He is an amateur musician of a high order, and where it has happened that he could not find old tunes suitable for any given song, he has himself been able to supply tunes unmistakably Celtic and of superior quality. As a Highland journalist, again, Mr MacFarlane occupies a prominent place, and it is remarkable that to these high gifts Mr MacFarlane adds great organising power. For some years he has acted as convenor of the Consultative Committee of An Comunn Gàidhealach and the solution of many perplexing questions has been due to his ready wit." (signed) "Celt." (p. 15)

I cannot say for certain who wrote that stuff. But he knows, I believe, and at the time it was written and published I dare to say he agreed with it. I am and was not moved to vanity by it in any degree whatever. I know the public and press and the value of their puffs which appear in the papers. I bring it before you to show what the prevailing opinions were regarding my work in the Gaelic field, shortly before being expelled from the Comunn. Let the man himself speak and say whether or not it agrees with his expressed sentiments at the time when it was written, and I shall know what to do then. But I don't expect he will: he

never had the courage of his opinions; and has failed to look me once in the eyes for over 20 years. That coward is now President of An Comunn Gàidhealach.

Let us now leave that old time and come down to the year before the war. The Prof. M. Munro, another worthy of the Comunn Gàidhealach who was convenor of the Mod and music Committee entered as a competitor a competition for a melody to be made to Sheriff Nicolson's song: "An t-Eilean Sgitheanach."

One evening after coming home from my work I received a syllabus in which a prize was offered for a tune to that song. I do not know what suspicion actuated me. But I made up my mind to enter a tune for the song specified. John Cameron also did the same. By and bye John came out to me and I wrote his tune, and my own and we sent both in when the time for doing so had arrived. I got the first and only prize. Nevertheless, I had suspicions regarding the fairness of the adjudication which I could hardly account (p. 16) for; and I sent for my markings and induced Mr. Cameron to do the same for his. I shall quote one of these papers now, and by it you shall know the character of two of the men Mr. Cameron and I were up against.

"Am Filidh" 1st Judge – "First 4 lines seem to be a play on some English song familiar to me, but I cannot name it. Deduct 40. Melody not Gaelic, deduct 40. Want of correspondence in last four lines. Deduct 10."

It may be interesting to contrast the findings of the other judges.

2nd Judge – "A tune well built, of good form, accents well marked and rhythm suitable to words and meaning,"

3rd Judge – "An excellent tune."

The judge who gave me 10 and John Cameron 30 out of 100 evidently regarded both tunes as from me, they being in the same handwriting. This judge was precentor in Munro's Kirk and Munro was a competitor. The other judges were W. H. Murray and Duncan Fraser precentor to the Free Kirk assembly. I made a complaint to the Executive Committee stating the case, and before sending in my letter showed it to Mr. Malcolm MacLeod, president of An Comunn Gaidhealach. He expressed his approval of the statement prepared by me, bar one thing, which I altered and knew it only by hearsay. My letter was addressed to the president and members of the Executive Committee. My answer was from the Mod and music Committee's Chairman, the man for whom the fraud was committed. What had I to do with him? A minute ignoring the complaint was made and written by this contemptible clergyman, and I got a copy sent me. My informant in regard to what took place was a

Skyeman, well known schoolmaster whose acquaintanceship I made (p. 17) as far back as 1868. At the Executive Council meeting at which this friend was chairman. The real president having evidently been unable to face the music – the minute was held as read and passed so.

Now, if you can tell me of any Society on earth except perhaps a Society of thieves and blackguards who would act like this Committee, I will not say another word. But you cannot. The President of the Society knowingly shirked his duty – coward that he was. You can see for yourselves the low standards of morals which those religious men adopt, and probably a number of you think me a low man for not having the same creed as they have. My standard is the high one of truth as far as known to humanity and I have no use for falsehood at any time, though I may sometimes fall away from it unaware – we are all human. Two years thereafter the same Convenor of the Mod and music Committee was rewarded by a grant, against the rules, let me remark, of £20, in the motion of Mr. Angus Robertson, for his services as Mod and Music Convenor, and this grant was perhaps continued or repeated. What can we call him – well just a simple minister of the Gospel.

Never you mind. I had my revenge. Wait till you hear! It was quite a laughable one. We are the better of a laugh now and then, even at a clergyman's (p. 18) expense. I was standing on the stair landing of a hotel near St Andrew's Halls when I noticed in the dining room my friend Mr Munn from Oban, at food opposite the so-called Rev. M. Munro. I smiled and nodded to Mr. Munn; and what did the other fellow do but take it to himself, and regard it as a sign of relenting evidently on my part. Later on I was waiting in the vestibule of the St. Andrew's Hall on Mr Mackintosh who was momentarily engaged looking after some official books; when who should come in but his reverence Munro smiling like a mealy potato. "Oh how d'ye do? Mr. MacFarlane. It is a long time since I had the pleasure of shaking hands with you. I trust you are well." I put up my finger so, pointing over my shoulder and said quietly "Go away; go away." And he went like an arrow from a bow round behind me. I never saw anything so sudden, or so laughable. But I didn't laugh: I couldn't laugh. When I came to think of it, I was sorry for the poor silly fool. He had made a mistake which a baby would know better than be guilty of. But never you mind, he was no baby when he came to share in the Comunn's money. I can't vouch for the sum; but the a/cs will reveal to anyone having the curiosity to look them up.

How think you was the other wretch rewarded who had done such a low deed as to lower my points in the tune competition to 10 and John Cameron's to 30 out of 100? He was, in the following year, appointed a judge at a children's Mod. And one day I was remarking to a Highland (p. 19) secretary this judge's later appointment to a children's Mod. "Oh!"

said this secretary: "It is only a children's Mod." One needn't be honest as a judge at a children's Mod.

But never you mind, this wretched dishonest Society which countenanced immoral conduct in its officials were never ashamed to accept from me a good tune to a good song which I had been the means of bringing to their notice. They hadn't the gumption to understand a plain man like me who had no [sic] in his character, but only wanted to find out theirs.

Another incident which well illustrates the failing of the Comunn in having dealings with questionable characters is this. Although Mr. Munro's precentor had as a judge certified himself as an unjust one, music was accepted by An Comunn from him, after he had revealed his character and it was not long ago published in their Mod booklet. When examined two tunes of the kind appear to be taken from John Cameron's Collection, and tampered with. I will only mention one of the tunes because it is of outstanding interest. The build of it is this: 3 lines repeatedly alike and a concluding strain. This is a rare class in British music another in John Campbell's list. There is one which I know in The Irish Song Book. The words are by William Allingham. I do not know of any other of this class which is pure. But these one or two in English and Highland music nearly pure, but not quite. This man MacCallum had tampered with John Cameron's version of a Glencoe song about the homecoming of Fassiefern's body after Waterloo, and the Comunn, in their ignorance and notwithstanding their knowledge of the main character from (p. 20) whom they sort their copy, printed it recently as a genuine subject, showing thereby, their natural leanings to the side of dishonesty and perversity.

If you were to ask Mr. Shaw today for John Cameron's large collection of unrecorded prize melodies, he would tell you it had not been in the hands of An Comunn since he began to act as secretary. I quite believe that. But I – and you too – can draw an inference as to where the links are. And instructions ought to be given to Mr. Shaw to write and get the collection back into the keeping of the association. I possess my drafts of them and a big proportion of them have been published already by me.

Let me now indicate to you the Comunn's influence on the education of the Gaelic pupil through the books it has published. As you may have read in the newspapers, I prepared, against my convictions, a past grammar of the Gaelic language for the school pupil; and you may have read Sheriff Campbell's apology – which is no apology – regarding the preparation of the book, and chiefly its authorship, concerning which he told unfounded, inexcusable falsehoods. Any book could by looking see that the book was not done by a man with the same class of mind as Duncan Reid. It seems to me that he had never cast eyes on

the covers of Reid's book or mine. He is a bright sample indeed of the class of men who are appointed Sheriffs by political parties, especially the conservative section, to which he seems to have appealed for his job. When I made music and other school books for use in the Gaelic field I did them without financial or other help from the Comunn. The only help I got was from Henry Whyte (p. 21) who put second parts to the tunes of the small song book called 'An Uiseag'. The music and song books for schools – five in number – containing songs were all planned and edited by me. I did not do the second parts. The publishers are responsible for those. The first of the lot was 'An Uiseag', and it was my own absolute property, and let me say it has paid itself, perhaps twice over. It is so long ago since it was issued. The others were owned by the publishers who acknowledged my work in books of Gaelic interest, without my asking for them.

The schoolbook for infants which the Comunn did not, on the advice of the Educationists, accept; but which was afterwards published, was my doing. The second book was my own; the third book was John MacFadyen's doing, under my guidance and is an excellent one, containing as it does first rate Highland stuff. Mr. MacFadyen was a labouring man. The President of An C. G could no more produce it than fly over the moon. The advanced books were edited by me, but were put together and selected by Dr MacBain and John Whyte. And I regard that series as a long way ahead of the Comunn's lot, mostly edited by a man who was for 30 years or so silent in regard to Gaelic and who only produced Gaelic for payment as he [sic] to myself. These are not well edited, although Dr. Watson is said to have revised them. Dr. Watson's own Rosg Gàidhlig is a shameful sample of a School Book. I estimated roughly 1000 mistakes. Angus Henderson said nearer 3000. The book has an extract from Bishop Carswell's translation of John Knox's liturgy prepared for the Scottish Episcopalian Church of which Knox was at the time a member, that is absolutely untruthful, and no explanations I can see are given as to why it was tampered with. He introduces a fad of his own as if as if it had been given in the original. He does the same with the well-known quotation in Old Gaelic from the book of Deer which is about 900 years old. (p. 22) Apart from this Dr. Watson's ignorance of the Gaelic of the west is shown in his place names of Scotland recently published where he says eclipsis is absent from the Gaelic of the Isles. Did you ever meet such ignorance from one of his standing? Last winter season some of you may have heard Kenneth MacLeod's lecture to Cèilidh nan Gàidheal. In that lecture the author spoke in what was, as he himself said to me, wholly Argyllshire Gaelic which was practically free of eclipsis. The movers of the votes of thanks were both Lewis men. They both used eclipsis in the pronunciation of their remarks. Kenneth MacLeod's language was not Argyllshire. There is no such thing as Argyllshire Gaelic. Compared with the northern

dialects the Argyllshire dialects show a sharing use of ‘ia’ for ‘e’ or ‘ou’ for ‘o’ and in my father and mother’s day showed little inclination towards eclipsis, south of the sound of Mull and Loch Etive. When my father or mother read Gaelic, they did so in a pronunciation which one might call literary usage. Nowadays there is hardly anything worthy of being called literary usage. And no language can survive without a literary usage – and that usage is to be commended which adheres best to the old literary diction. (p. 23)

I have now reached the limit of time suggested to me for my paper, and I would like to end it here and now. And so I shall let alone the term of Mr Angus Robertson’s presidentship of An Comunn Gàidhealach and confine myself to a few remarks regarding himself and the contempt he is bringing on the Gaelic people by his being taken as a sample of the breed. Mr. Robertson’s actions and movements have all been downgrade; eccentric and unreliable, and he has drawn round the Society the opponents of its original aims. His utterances are sometimes very absurd and sometimes absolutely so. For instance; he has been at the crucifixion and has met a Scotsman there. A sane man would insist on proof that there had been a crucifixion of the kind related in the gospels. Again – as some of you can bear witness – he at a Skye Society’s meeting at which I presented a paper, praised me sky-high and finished by saying: “It is a pity Mr. MacFarlane is so cantankerous.” Very well, there you have the words of a man who is not, and never was to my knowledge, particularly truthful, but who is, in the case referred to – an absolute liar. Judge for yourselves. Here I am at the end of 20 odd years revealing to you An Comunn Gàidhealach’s wretchedly mean, cowardly and [sic] actions – Am I not fit rather to be called a [sic] than a cantankerous person. Is he after all, to be taken seriously? Judge for yourselves. I was going up the stairs of the office of An Comunn Gàidhealach a few days after the occurrence and he met me and without any introductory remarks or salutation asked me if I had seen a Gaelic song in the Comunn’s magazine. I said no. I was just going upstairs to notify that I have not received my copy of that same publication. “O, then, when you get it take a look at a Gaelic song there to be found, and see if you can make a tune for it.” I made the tune next day and sent it on. But seemingly he has since got a better (p. 24) and I at the same time put the words in decent poetical and Gaelic form. But I did not venture to send him those. Mr. Robertson never heard a cantankerous word from my lips. There is a difference between the truth stated mildly and “cantankerousness.” Mr. Robertson should hold his tongue. He wrote a long article in the chronicle about me, in which there is great praise of my humble self. But he wove all through it, that I had a difficult temper. I challenged his paper where it insinuated falsehoods, by putting a question to him for its solution. He has not answered my challenge between the year after last Inverness Mod and this year before an Inverness Mod.

If Mr. Angus Robertson has been tolerated in the office of President of An Comunn Gàidhealach for a certain time, it is mainly due to ignorance of the man and of the acknowledged aims of the Society – the same ignorance which your own Society reveals in maintaining in your Syllabus, year after year the portrait of the man who founded your Society, and of whom your and my countrymen and women have precious little reason to be proud. But, is there, after all, much between the character of the one and the other. The one sold whiskey immoderately and the other drank it immoderately; and whether the one is come to be condoned or pitied than the other is not very clear to me. I leave it to yourselves to solve the question.

The Highland character has during recent years gone down very considerably. The decrease in the number of Gaelic speakers, according to my reading and information is 100,000. The personnel of the Comunn membership so far as it is Gaelic, is tremendously down, and those chosen (p. 25) as workers have little knowledge and ability: there is no attempt, anywhere to be seen, to set up the language for use in a civilized environment.

Before closing my paper let me draw your attention for an instant to some remarks made by a [sic] a man with a Gaelic name: Mac a' Bháird. The value of a single man or woman of open mind, independent judgement and moral courage, who requires to be convinced and refuses to be cajoled, is only concerned to be right, and not afraid to be singular, deferring to reason, but not to rank, true to his or her self and therefore not false to any man – the value of such a man or woman is priceless – a nation of such would leaven and regenerate the world – that should be the aim of education. Put your paltry religious humbug alongside of that, think shame of it and cast it from you. Put the characters of Angus Robertson and I. M. Campbell alongside of that and blot them out of your minds as men ill adapted for the restoration of the Gaelic language and character.



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