

Irish Links and Perspectives

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There is substantial evidence available regarding the physical, cultural and linguistic proximity of Gaelic Scotland and Ireland. The two countries have much in common in many ways but especially in the sphere of folk tradition. Shared connections, achievements and aspirations include the documenting of folklore, making a joint contribution to folkloristics, ongoing research and future co-operation and development.

The nineteenth century witnessed a surge of interest in oral tales and names and influences such as the brothers Grimm and Thomas Crofton Croker spring to mind. Some of the earliest publications, which serve as an introduction to the folktales and folklore of Scotland, are John Francis Campbell's *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* that first appeared in 1860. Here, it is stated that Campbell of Islay travelled to the Isle of Man and lowland Scotland in his search for wonder tales. But he was more fortunate

in Ireland, it appears, and the fourth volume of Campbell's *Popular Tales of the West Highlands, Orally Collected* contains a brief account of what he found in Ireland:

A lot of stories got from a carman in Waterford in 1861, included – 1. The water-cow and her progeny. 2. The Bansithe, which the narrator “had seen and heard.” 3. A version of the man who travelled to learn shivering. 4. A haunted tower. 5. Treasure finding. 6. A spirit haunting a road and asking for a ride. 7. A lake spirit. 8. The man and dog in the subterranean passage, and many others were alluded to. It was evident that the Irish peasantry had the very same legends as the Scotch, and these were told in a different and very characteristic way.

It is to be hoped that some Irishman will collect and publish the Irish popular tales. If it be honestly and faithfully done it will be the most amusing collection of all; but if any one polishes the language of Irish peasants, he will most certainly spoil it.¹

Campbell recognised the abundance of the material and hoped that the Irish oral tradition would be collected. This urgency to document a shared storytelling tradition was mutually recognised by the first Irish and Scottish folklorists. Campbell's approach and work were to influence Irish folklore scholars for generations, particularly Douglas Hyde as evidenced in his publication *Beside the Fire*.² Séamus Ó Duilearga, founder of the Irish Folklore Commission and first Professor of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin played an active part in the preparation of material from John Francis Campbell for publication and also in gathering information about him. Ó Duilearga corresponded for a number of years with J. G. McKay, the Scottish scholar. He wrote:

1 Campbell, J.F., *Popular Tales of the West Highlands, Orally Collected*, vol. iv, Edinburgh 1862, 435. See also Zimmermann, G. D., *The Irish Storyteller*, Dublin 2001, 296–297; Dorson, R., *The British Folklorists, a History*, London 1968, 399.

2 Hyde, D., *Beside the Fire: A Collection of Irish Gaelic Folk Stories*, London 1890.

*I knew J. G. well and hold his name in affectionate remembrance. We corresponded for years (1929–42) and his many letters to me contain much valuable information on the Campbell of Islay mss [manuscripts] and on the difficulties he encountered in having his transcripts, translations and commentaries published. In that work I was privileged to help.*³

In Ireland, the limitations of the efforts by a few individuals to explore the folklore of a culture were evident and thus the Irish Folklore Commission came to be. The guiding principle of the Commission was a central archive fed by resident county collectors who would canvass their home areas, an idea implicit in the collecting technique of Campbell of Islay. McKay spent most of his leisure time in transcribing and studying the unpublished tales in the Campbell *Nachlass*. The transcription was given to Ó Duilearga. J.G. McKay knew Scots Gaelic and modern Irish well and was widely read in both languages.

The closeness of the two traditions continued to be emphasised and in a review of *More West Highland Tales* Ó Duilearga wrote:

*The oral traditions of the people of Ireland and western Scotland form a natural unit ... a community of tradition language and manners. Along these western coasts of Ireland and Scotland is still spoken a Celtic language in which is preserved the oldest written vernacular literature in Europe north and west of the Alps.*⁴

And he continued:

*The oral traditions of Ireland and Scotland have so much in common that it is impossible to understand or to interpret them separately. In Ireland we have been engaged for over twenty years in the active collection of our oral literature and tradition both in Gaelic and in English.*⁵

3 *Scottish Historical Review* 41 (1962), 146.

4 *Ibid.*, 144.

5 National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin (NFC), Scottish Correspondence.

In 1926 the voluntary society An Cumann le Béaloideas Éireann/The Folklore of Ireland Society was established with Pádraig Ó Siochfhradha (An Seabhac) as president and Ó Duilearga as editor of the journal *Béaloideas*. From its inception, the journal included material in Scots Gaelic.⁶ The society was arguably the first step towards the establishment of the Irish Folklore Commission, now the National Folklore Collection.

One of the earliest contacts in this regard appears to be with Anna Nic Iain, a schoolteacher in Castlebay, in the island of Barra. We find a letter to Ó Duilearga, written in 1929, indicating that Anna must have stayed with his family in Dublin as she thanks them:

I feel quite ashamed that I never wrote to thank you and your mother for your hospitality and kindness to me when I was in Dublin last April ... I was charmed with Dublin and the people I met there.⁷

In the letter she also refers to meeting An Seabhac and his wife. Some of Anna's material was published in the second vol. of the journal *Béaloideas* and also in subsequent volumes.⁸ With the establishment of the Irish Folklore Commission one of its first ventures was what is known as the Schools' Collection which took place in 1937–1938. This was a scheme by which folklore collecting was undertaken by senior pupils in primary schools under the guidance of teachers and parents and supported and encouraged by schools' inspectors and the Department of Education. As this scheme was getting off the ground, the possibilities of parallel collecting work in Scotland arose. As a schoolteacher, Anna was sent the booklet of guidelines for the teachers involved in the scheme. She was asked if she would find it possible to collect tales and other material in Barra through the school children or in any other way she could. She wrote:

I have just received the notebook, and goodness knows if I'll ever be able to fill it with unpublished stuff, for most of the stories I have heard

6 See, for example, *Béaloideas* 2 (1930), 210 and *Béaloideas* 4 (1934), 46.

7 NFC Scottish Correspondence.

8 See footnote 6.

this winter are already recorded in Campbell's tales. Co-dbiu. I'll do what I can. I think I was telling you when I was in Dublin, about a peculiar song I heard with Ealasaid Eachainn [McKinnon], which seemed to me to be of Irish origin. I wrote it down from her, and am sending it in to you for I do not think it should go in the notebook. It is a lament for one Seathain, son of the king of Conway. There are many lines which I think may be irrelevant, but I noted them all and pencilled in a translation. It is sung very slowly – verse line and chorus line – alternately and it makes a right dirge. Let me know if it is of any interest. She knows nothing of the story of the song, except that she learned it from her mother, who told her it was a marbh-rann, lament or death-croon.⁹

One example of a tale contributed by Anna, or 'Miss Johnson', as she was known, in 1930 was 'Sgeulachd a Ghamhna Dhuinn' where the English translation of the tale is included line by line under the Gaidhlig text.¹⁰ In the context of the National Folklore Collection, this appears to be a somewhat unusual approach, where material is written either in Irish or in English. Correspondence with Anna and with other interested people, continued over the years and connections were maintained. Through the offices of the Irish Folklore Commission, Anna also met storytellers in different parts of Ireland. In one letter, following a visit to Ireland, she wrote:

In every case where we visited older people, we could understand their Gaelic, and they a little of ours. We rooted out Micheál Bán at Baile an Sceilg and he and I cracked proverbs and riddles at one another, and found that we had many in common.¹¹

Ó Duilearga viewed Irish folklore in the context of world folklore. His emphasis on the Scandinavian connection comes to light together with

9 NFC 182:288.

10 NFC 102:309–343.

11 NFC Scottish Correspondence.

the Scottish/Irish linkage also. While working with Scandinavian scholars he included his Scottish connections. One person advised by Ó Duilearga to visit Ealasaid Eachainn (McKinnon) was Carl Borgström, a Norwegian. As Ó Duilearga wrote, Borgström was a pupil of Prof. Marstrander of Oslo and came as an:

*... exchange student to TCD [Trinity College Dublin] about 1931–1932. I got to know him fairly well. At my suggestion he went to Baile an Sceilg, Co. Kerry and later to Dún Chaoin. I arranged for his visit to Barra also, and I prevailed on him to record tales there. Some of these tales he took down from an old woman I knew there in 1919 – Ealasaid McKinnon.*¹²

Borgström followed the advice and visited Barra. He was later to write on the dialects of Barra and of the Outer Hebrides.¹³

But the Irish Folklore Commission's emphasis in Scotland was on the urgency of collecting material in Scots Gaelic. Before the establishment of the Commission a small but significant collection of around 180 pages was collected in the form of a manuscript of tales brought together at the request of Séamus Ó Duilearga through, as Ó Duilearga wrote, "*the kindness of my friend Dr D.J. MacLeod, M.M.I.S., Inverness 1931*".¹⁴ The collection was made by the pupils of Sgoil MhicNeacail/The Nicolson Institute in Stornoway. This may well have been seen by Ó Duilearga as a forerunner to the possibility of a Schools' Collection and he may have envisaged a similar collecting scheme in the schools in Scotland. The Nicolson Institute material consists mostly of ghost stories and a great deal of local history. The teacher in the school, Mr A. Urquhart, mentions that the pupils of Class V understood that 'one side of the paper' meant the translation on the other so that stories were given in Scots Gaelic and in English.

Among those who contributed material to the Irish Folklore Institute, forerunner to the Commission, was Donald MacDonald, a student of

12 NFC 102:345.

13 Borgström, C., *The Dialect of Barra in the Outer Hebrides*, Oslo 1935.

14 NFC 490: 1–180.

Glasgow University who collected riddles and other material in the island of Eriskay in 1933 and forwarded the collection to the Irish Folklore Institute.¹⁵ His ‘*Tomhaseachan*’ and accompanying ‘*Freagairt*’ contained over fifty riddles on all kinds of subjects. He listed the riddles in alphabetical order according to the first word.¹⁶

With such strong ties it is not possible to comment on all the relationships that occurred between Ireland and Scotland in relation to folklore. It may be sufficient at this point to mention a few of the bodies with which the Commission worked so closely. Hundreds of letters exist demonstrating correspondence with the Scottish National Dictionary, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh University Departments including Geology and Law, Inverness County Council, Comunn Gaidhlig Inbhirnis. The University of Aberdeen, The National Museum of Antiquities in Edinburgh, Comunn na Clarsaich and the Guild of Catholic Teachers in the west of Scotland.

In 1943 while concentrating on the future work and organisation of the Commission the desirability of extending the work of the Commission to western Scotland was emphasised.¹⁷ In 1945 the matter was broached with Taoiseach Éamon de Valera and the Minister for Education in a memorandum, some of which reads as follows:

*The oral traditions of Ireland and those of Gaelic Scotland form a natural unity; it is impossible fully to study or understand either without the other. For the student of Irish Gaelic tradition the oral tradition and seanchas of Argyll and the Hebrides is as important as that of Cork and the Aran islands.*¹⁸

15 For an account of the Irish Folklore Institute see Ó Catháin, S., ‘Institiúid Bhéaloideas Éireann (1930–1935)’ in *Béaloideas* (2005) 85–110; Briody, M., *The Irish Folklore Commission 1935–1970 – History, ideology, methodology*, Helsinki 2007, 97–99.

16 NFC 131:151–167. See also NFC 1246:1–635 which contains narrative material collected by Donald MacDonald.

17 Briody, M., *op.cit.*, 299–309.

18 *Ibid.*, 303.

As Micheál Briody also wrote in his history of the Irish Folklore Commission:

*Nevertheless the Commission's proposals to extend its field of operations to western Scotland did not meet with such ready approval in the Department of Education.*¹⁹

Proinsias Ó Dufaigh of the Department of Education dismissed the idea out of hand and wrote:

*I think the suggestion is so impractical that it need not be seriously considered.*²⁰

Little could be achieved, in any event, until after the war. The first mention of progress appears in the Irish Folklore Commission report of 26th January 1945. The report mentions that the Commission wished to employ Calum MacGilleathain on a temporary basis to examine the Commission's published holdings in Scots Gaelic and to index their folklore content. Calum was also to examine and extract similar material held in other libraries in Dublin. Calum had previously worked as a collector for the Commission in Conamara. He began indexing folklore material in Scots Gaelic on 19th March, 1945 and was sent on a trial run to Scotland from 6th December, 1945 until 18th February, 1946 to assess the situation. Calum believed that the folklore of Ireland and Gaelic Scotland was so close that it should be treated as a unit. Thus, he also believed that the collecting of this material should be a single undertaking.

In the employment of the Irish Folklore Commission, Calum began collecting in Scotland in June 1946 and wrote back to Dublin of the great willingness of people to contribute material and of the warm welcome he received everywhere. From one of his prime informants of Beinn nam Fadhlá, he recorded in 1949 the longest folktale ever recorded in Scots Gaelic – ‘*Alastar mac a' Cheird*’ (Alastar, son of the caird).²¹ This tale came

19 Ibid., 300.

20 Ibid., 301.

21 <http://www.celtscot.ed.ac.uk/calum-maclean/about/>. Accessed 16.01.2012.

to 58,000 words. In the four-and-a-half years he worked as collector in Scotland for the Irish Folklore Commission, he collected material to fill eighteen large volumes of folklore amounting to around ten thousand pages of material. News of the Commission's collecting work in Scotland appeared in the *Sunday Express* in 1948. The article reads:

*Fairies, giants and ghosts that have lived for almost 70 years on the island of Benbecula in the Outer Hebrides with Mr Angus MacMillan are being rounded up and inspected by the Irish Folklore Commission. The Commission heard that Mr MacMillan, 74-year old crofter had a great knowledge of folk tales. They took a dictaphone to his home to record them. Night after night, in elegant Gaelic, the old man spoke into the recording machine. One of his tales, filling 31 records, lasted four nights at the rate of four-and-a-half hours per night. Mr MacMillan has now completed 600 records and is halfway through his repertoire of 40 stories.*²²

The note detailing the source of the newspaper cutting is in the handwriting of Seán Ó Súilleabháin, the Commission's archivist, and illustrates ongoing involvement between the Commission's head office and Calum's fieldwork. Members of the Irish Folklore Commission sometimes made suggestions in relation to Calum's work in Scotland and we find, for example, that one member, Fionán Mac Coluim, suggested that Calum should try to collect old prayers, charms and religious songs such as those published in *Carmina Gadelica* to see if they were still part of the living tradition.²³

The island of Canna and Canna House assume a particular significance in relation to Irish-Scottish connections. In January 1937, John Lorne Campbell acquired an Ediphone recording machine while he and Margaret Fay Shaw, his wife, were living on the island of Barra. By this time, both of them had been, for a number of years, collectors of folklore and more especially of folksong. By the end of July 1937, they had recorded almost

22 *The Sunday Express* 30.5.1948.

23 Minutes of the Irish Folklore Commission 25.06.1948, 412; 29.10.1948, 413.

two hundred songs and stories. They subsequently visited Cape Breton where they made cylinder recordings of emigrants from Barra and Uibhist a Deas. In January 1938, they returned home to Scotland bringing with them a Presto disc-recording machine. Campbell stated that the first electrical recording of traditional Gaelic songs was done on the Isle of Barra in February and March that year.²⁴ That same year, the couple bought the island of Canna. The transfer to Canna House caused major upheaval in their lives and the song recordings needed attention. As Campbell said “*the words were little trouble, they had been taken down in the field.*”²⁵ However, “*transcribing tunes was too time-consuming to think of.*” Campbell described his concern for the survival of their recorded material and described his solution to the problem:

*Ediphone cylinders are apt to deteriorate in storage, being attacked by mould, resulting in scratchy and unpleasant reproduction of sound. By 1946 the situation was getting desperate, and an appeal for help in transcribing the tunes was made to the Irish Folklore Commission ... which was well aware of the interest of the Gaelic tradition of South Uist and Barra. The late Professor Delargy, head of the Commission, very kindly responded by sending the late Séamus Ennis, the Commission's musical transcriber, to Canna, along with Dr Calum I. MacLean the well-known folktale collector, then working for the Commission, subsequently for the School of Scottish Studies ...*²⁶

Séamus Ennis was in his early twenties when he joined the Irish Folklore Commission in 1942 as a full-time collector of music and song. Although probably best known as a piper, he proved to be a collector *par excellence*. He departed from the Commission in 1947 to take up a position with Radio Éireann. In the course of these five years with the Commission, he travelled much of Ireland, recording, with pen and paper for the most part, the music and song traditions of musicians and singers for whom

24 Campbell, J.L., *Songs Remembered in Exile*, Aberdeen 1990, 3.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., 4.

65. Cailleach Liath Ratharsair (Port)
Reel.

Ó Aonghus Eachainn MacDhombhnaill,
(c. 183), feistmóra, a athair sin thuas.

Cailleach liath Ratharsair nan ciabharman áine Cailleach liath
Ratharsair 'S í dol a' laighe a Rónaidh. ... dol a' laighe a
Rónaidh. Cailleach dhubh nan cudaigean Gur íomadh gin a
Séitúig i dhuibh Cailleach dhubh nan cudaigean 'S a' chailleach luideach
rómach. Chailleach luideach rómach.

Transcription by Séamus Ennis of 'Cailleach Liath Ratharsair' from Aonghus Eachainn MacDhombhnaill.
(c. 183) *Canna*, 1946 (National Folklore Collection, UCD)

music and song were a primary pastime. Most of his collecting work was done through Irish and the bulk of his harvest is therefore also in Irish. He travelled largely by train, bus and bicycle and sometimes by boat when he visited the small islands off the west and north-west coasts of Ireland.²⁷ On joining the Irish Folklore Commission, his first task was to transcribe music and song from Ediphone cylinders that were held in the Commission's offices and were hitherto untranscribed. Thus, his journey to Canna and to other parts of Scotland was to prove, for the most part, an extension of the work he had already done in Ireland.

From mid-November 1946 until the end of March 1947, Ennis spent four-and-a-half months in Scotland, mostly in the Outer Hebrides, working for the Irish Folklore Commission both as transcriber and collector. Throughout his Scottish visit, Ennis remained in constant communication with the staff of the Irish Folklore Commission, which was located at the time at University College Dublin, Earlsfort Terrace. He wrote on a regular basis to Seán Ó Súilleabháin and somewhat less frequently to Séamus Ó Duilearga and other staff members and they replied. This correspondence between Ennis and the Commission documents many aspects of his Scottish experience. The correspondence helps to reconstruct his visit and also provides an insight into the life of a full-time collector. By mid-November Ennis had settled in to Canna House and begun the transcription work. It had also been suggested that he should collect music and songs in Barra and in other islands on behalf of the Irish Folklore Commission.

When writing to the Dublin office, Ennis wrote in Irish for the most part to Seán Ó Súilleabháin and in English to Séamus Ó Duilearga. Occasionally he wrote in the Scottish Gaelic orthography as opposed to that of Irish, which had been the norm in his letters during his collecting period in Ireland. Ennis had only spent about a fortnight in Canna when he was joined by Calum MacGilleathain with whom he was already

27 For a brief account of Ennis' period with the Commission see uí Ógáin, R., 'A Job with no Clock: Séamus Ennis and the Irish Folklore Commission' *The Journal of Music in Ireland* vol. 6 no. 1 January – February 2006, Dublin 10–15.

acquainted. In Canna and throughout Ennis' Scottish trip, they were to work together. In early December Ennis wrote that Calum had been working with an old man in Canna.²⁸ Ennis had brought his pipes and both he and Calum were to visit the old man together. Also in early December, Ennis and the Campbells visited Uibhist a Deas where Ennis found all the men were pipers. Ennis brought his own pipes along. Here Ennis said he heard a musical tradition he had not previously encountered that was called '*canntaireachd*' and which he described in a letter to Ó Duilearga as "*a developed form of our liltin*".²⁹ He wrote that it was very fine indeed.³⁰

The two collectors spent Christmas in Canna. They then journeyed to Ratharsair where they spent the New Year and Ennis met members of Calum's family and wrote songs and music from them. Ennis and Calum journeyed onwards to Barra. By early February, the two collectors had settled in to life in Barra where Ennis met with the daughter of Ruairi Iain Bhain, a singer, whom Campbell had recorded in 1938 and who had died in 1942. Through his transcription work in Canna, Ennis had encountered Ruairi's singing and when in Barra he wrote: "*I sang them two of the old man's songs they cried, and swore they would think I was he, had they not seen different, for they loved his singing.*" Ennis also observed that the old-style singing was practically a thing of the past in Barra.³¹ He found the people of Barra very friendly and wrote that it was just like Ireland, apart from the language which he found very different to Irish.³² While waiting two weeks for recording discs to arrive, a delay over which he expressed some concern, he spent much of his time learning to speak Scots Gaelic. In all, he spent seven weeks in Barra.³³

28 Ennis wrote tunes from this man, Angus MacDonald (83) or 'Aonghus Eachainn' and from his son, Eachainn (55). John Lorne Campbell described 'Aonghus Eachainn' as the last Canna *seanchaidh*. In *Songs Remembered in Exile* (p.3) Campbell said that he and his wife had the chance to make an occasional disc recording of him.

29 NFC Ennis Correspondence (8.12.1946).

30 NFC Ennis Correspondence (3.12.1946).

31 NFC Ennis Correspondence (5.02.1947).

32 Ibid.

33 NFC Ennis Correspondence (19.03.1947).

The two collectors went to Uibhist and Ennis wrote that he found people in Uibhist were enthusiastic in relation to the uilleann pipes. It was not all plain sailing for Ennis, however, and he encountered some difficulties, not least the bad weather. Travel was slow and supplies sometimes difficult to come by. While he and Calum were waiting for supplies in Barra for example, telegrams were sent back and forth arranging for recording discs to be sent so they must have been relieved to receive a telegram from Caoimhín Ó Danachair of the Irish Folklore Commission – “*30 ten inch discs sent you from London*”.³⁴

Ennis wrote in relation to his work: “It does not keep up to the pace possible to me with Irish material, but then it was slow going in the initial stages due to my complete ignorance of the language.”³⁵ During his time in Scotland Ennis made one-hundred-and-forty-seven transcriptions and eighty-five recordings.

Much of the information in relation to the period Ennis spent in Scotland is based on correspondence as Ennis appears not to have kept a diary during his Scottish period. Calum’s diary sheds more light on the period and doubtless more may be gleaned in the future in the Canna archive. Some of Ennis’ work in Scotland has already been illustrated in the book *Songs Remembered in Exile*.³⁶ In the report Ennis submitted to the Commission detailing his trip to Scotland from the ninth of November 1946 until the thirty-first of March 1947 he said that in addition to his transcription of items of music from the cylinders of John Lorne Campbell, he had also travelled Morar, Eigg, Canna, Barra, Uibhist and Ratharsair where he collected seventy-four items in the course of the journey and learned Scots Gaelic. Ennis’ Scottish experience underlines the foresight of the Irish Folklore Commission in relation to collecting traditional song and the Commission’s willingness to ‘lend’ a staff member to Campbell. This idea is further underlined by the fact that Ennis was already acquainted with and had worked alongside Calum MacGilleathain in Ireland. His work in Scotland gave Ennis a firsthand experience of an introduction to

34 NFC Ennis Correspondence (29.01.1947).

35 NFC Ennis Correspondence (19.03.1947).

36 Campbell, J.L., *op.cit.*, 1990.

Scottish Gaelic and to its song tradition. Ennis' musical ear and gift for the speedy acquisition of language contributed to his working trip and were also key factors in developing further links across An Mhaoil.

Others forged these links and found much to be recorded in Gaelic Scotland. For example, between the years 1955 and 1965, the Irish writer and scholar, Máirtín Ó Cadhain, visited the Hebrides and made a number of sound recordings. My own research has brought me to follow Séamus Ennis' journey, and indeed that of Calum, as he accompanied Ennis for most of the trip, and to ascertain if memories, or inherited memories exist in relation to their visit. One of my first steps was to identify relevant photographic material in the National Folklore Collection. This



*Flora Mac Neill, Barra,
c. 1947 (National Folklore
Collection, UCD)*

included some unidentified images of Barra people for the most part and were taken it seems by George Scott Moncrieff at the request of Calum MacGilleathain and Ennis. On the thirtieth of March 1947 Calum met Scott Moncrieff in Eigg and wrote in his diary that he and Ennis arranged that the photographs should be taken. Given that it is sixty-five years since Ennis first visited the Hebrides, it was hardly likely that many would have first hand recall of that visit. I was very fortunate, however, in meeting with Flora MacNeill, who shared some of her memories of Ennis' visit to Barra with me. As she worked with the Post Office in Barra in the 1940s, she still remembers the relief and excitement associated with the delay in the arrival of the discs.

During their time in Barra, Ennis and Calum joined forces in their collecting work and visited and recorded storytellers such as Seamus Iain Ghunnairigh, Séamus Mac Fhionghuin, Bagh o Thuath, the first storyteller from whom Calum collected in Scotland. Mairi Ceit Nic Fhionghuin, a former teacher in Barra introduced me to Charlie Mac Neill, the grandson of Seamus Iain Ghunnairigh and Charlie remembered people coming to collect from his grandfather. Although Mairi Céit was not born until after Ennis' visit to Barra for the Irish Folklore Commission, she showed me the house in which Calum and Ennis stayed and talked of her memories of Ennis and Calum when they visited Barra in the 1950s. Recent fieldwork and the correspondence with the Irish Folklore Commission have been to date the main sources to gain insight and information regarding the Scottish trip. Other sources merit thorough examination such as the Calum MacGilleathain collection in the National Folklore Collection, Dublin and the Campbell archive in Canna.

Séamus Ó Duilearga also maintained his connections with collecting work in Scotland. In 1947 for example, he gave talks at Glasgow University and at training colleges to around fifty student teachers whom he urged to collect folklore through the schools. He also conducted negotiations with interested parties towards the establishment of what was to become the School of Scottish Studies. His aim was to see the establishment of an organisation that would take over responsibility for the collecting of folklore in Scotland. As he wrote:

*Through the cordial co-operation of Scottish cultural associations and of many highland and lowland scholars, we are privileged to assist in the collection of Scottish oral tradition and we have agreed to continue this work until the time comes when a national archive of Scottish tradition will take over the work.*³⁷

In December 1947 Ó Duilearga was in a position to tell the Department of Finance in Ireland that a Folklore Institute was to be set up in Scotland but he felt it was important to keep Calum MacGilleathain as a collector for the Commission until this institute was in operation. In Scotland in 1947 the voluntary society – Cumann Bealaithris na h-Alba/The Folklore Institute of Scotland was established, with John Lorne Campbell as president. The Society's aims were to stimulate interest in folklore, especially in material in Scots Gaelic, to preserve the collection and to make it available for research and publication. Thus it appears that the aims were parallel to those of An Cumann le Béaloideas Éireann/The Folklore of Ireland Society.

The minutes of the Irish Folklore Commission for the twenty-fifth of June 1948 document a visit to the Commission by the Advisory Council on Education in Scotland the previous month. It was reported that they were very pleased with the collection and expressed their appreciation of the urgency of collecting folklore in Scotland. Examples from the Commission correspondence files underline continued involvement at formal and less formal levels.

Ireland, Sweden and Scotland were also linked in the quest for folklore and Ó Duilearga organised that Calum should travel with Åke Campbell, the Swedish ethnologist who was going from Ireland to the Hebrides to continue surveying work he had undertaken in Ireland. Ó Duilearga wrote that Calum would be very helpful to Campbell but would also learn a great deal from him.

Of course, the highpoint in relation to Ireland and the Collection of folklore in Scotland came with the establishment of the School of Scottish Studies. Séamus Ó Duilearga was especially pleased. The School

37 NFC: note with notebooks for collection of oral tradition 1947.

of Scottish Studies took, in many ways, the model of the Irish Folklore Commission as its foundational principle. Following the establishment of the School Ó Duilearga, at the request of the Scottish authorities, spent five days in Edinburgh as advisor in February 1951. It is also important to mention that Ó Duilearga's obituary in the *London Times* of the fourth of July 1980 included recognition of his role in the establishment of the School of Scottish Studies. The 1950s witnessed developments in terms of technology and recording equipment and earlier shared involvement in folklore collecting continued. One example of shared expertise was when Leo Corduff, sound archivist with the Irish Folklore Commission, visited the University in Edinburgh in the mid 1950s to view, and learn about, the tape recording machine which had just arrived there. The Commission minutes note that he spent a week there at the Linguistics Department and that he brought back a great deal of information that would be very useful in relation to the work of the Commission.³⁸

The establishment of the School meant that collected, archived material could be consulted and the shared traditions studied. In 1958 at a meeting of the Irish Folklore Commission the director read a letter from John Lorne Campbell seeking permission to publish music Campbell had recorded in 1947. Ennis had transcribed the music. The Commission decided to allow this but subject to Ennis' agreement. This underlines some of the challenges which face the two collections today – questions of permissions, copyright, intellectual ownership and dissemination.

In 1965 Seán Ó Súilleabháin spent a week in the School of Scottish Studies where he gave advice and instruction to Alan Bruford who had recently been appointed archivist. Bruford was to come to visit the Irish Folklore Commission for a week, later that year, to receive further experience. More recent events have continued forging connections and enhanced ongoing co-operation between folklorists, singers and musicians both sides of An Mhaoil illustrating the importance of mutual support. For example, the year 1985 saw the fiftieth anniversary of the

38 Minutes of the Irish Folklore Commission 16.03.1953, 527.

establishment of the Irish Folklore Commission for which an exhibition of photographs entitled ‘*I gCuimhne na nDaoine*’ was among the events organised. The exhibition contained numerous images taken by Caoimhín Ó Danachair and by others in Scotland with particular reference to vernacular architecture. This exhibition is now available on-line through the website of the National Folklore Collection. A shared pride and sense of joint achievement were expressed in the tunes composed by the School of Scottish Studies to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary.

A few years later, in October 1988, a symposium arranged by the Department of Irish Folklore entitled ‘*The Supernatural in Irish and Scottish Migratory Legends*’ was held at University College Dublin. In his welcoming address, Professor Bo Almqvist said that the symposium was devoted to migratory belief fabulates in Irish and Scottish tradition. The symposium highlighted the richness and unique quality of the sources in the Irish and Scottish archives and printed collections. In addition, as Bo Almqvist said in his welcoming address:

*Furthermore we will aim towards the solution of such problems as establishing the canon of these legends in Ireland and Scotland and the distribution of individual legends and their respective popularity or rarity in both countries. In such a comparative perspective the questions of form, structure and function of these legends will also be tackled. It is hoped that this symposium will be a first step towards furthering and co-ordinating research into legends of this kind in Ireland and Scotland.*³⁹

A number of scholars came from Scotland and participated in the symposium. It might be appropriate to mention here the importance of shared research in our tradition and how contributions by Scottish scholars have expanded the horizons of Irish folklore studies.

So what of the future and of ongoing contact and co-operation between our respective institutions and collections? Despite the economic recession

39 See printed programme to Symposium, 3.

and cutbacks in human and financial resources, the core shared values and emphasis remain. Much has changed since the time when Flora MacNeill relayed the exciting news that recording discs had finally arrived in Barra. The importance of ongoing fieldwork today cannot be overstressed. Fieldwork is the core process by which tradition is documented for inclusion in an archive of vernacular material. Looking back at the work undertaken by fieldworkers on both sides of Sruth na Maoile we have reason to be grateful – not only to those who had the foresight and determination to oversee the collection and preservation work but to those who collected and contributed folklore. The National Folklore Collection has reason to be grateful to the School of Scottish Studies and to Dr John Shaw in particular for spearheading the Calum Maclean Catalogue Project. The Online Catalogue Project is hosted by the University of Edinburgh and partnered with the National Folklore Collection. It has been funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and makes 13,000 manuscript pages, the result of Calum MacGilleathain's fieldwork in Scotland, available in digitised, searchable database form.

Funding through Colm Cille underlines goodwill towards forging links between Irish and Scots Gaelic and funding has just been allocated by Colm Cille towards digitising the Scots Gaelic sound recordings in the National Folklore Collection made by Séamus Ennis and Calum MacGilleathain in the 1940s. At some future point the recordings in Irish and English, describing experiences of seasonal workers in Scotland who came from Galway, Mayo and Donegal might be similarly digitised and made available. Endless possibilities exist in relation to comparative and joint research. Comparative research on repertoire and style, for example, springs to mind. Investigation into matters of language and lore offers numerous research topics for the future.

A symposium or conference of postgraduate students and early career scholars to be held on a regular basis would stimulate further interest, contact and research. A fresh look at earlier Scottish material in the National Folklore Collection will prove fruitful towards creating an awareness of the importance of previous fieldwork. It will also raise the profile of the Scottish-Irish connection and promote further initiatives in this sphere.

A radio programme was broadcast on BBC Radio Scotland in connection with some of the material mentioned earlier. The introductory page reads:

I trust you find some grains of wheat among all this chaff. Too many of them, I am afraid, touch too closely on comparatively modern local history. Some of the Class V lot, unfortunately, concluded that, 'one side of the paper', meant 'the translation on the other' but if you consider any of them of value I can get other copies at any time.⁴⁰

The radio programme focused on these essays submitted by the pupils of the Nicolson Institute in Stornoway. A number of people are involved in the furthering of Irish-Scottish relations in terms of folklore, language and culture. Prof. Seosamh Watson is one example of such involvement. The fruits of some of his work appeared as a first-hand Gaelic account of the traditional life of a twentieth century east-coast fishing community, *Saoghal Bana-mharaiche*.⁴¹ He also collected from the traveller informant, Lindsay Williamson. He was appointed Research Fellow with the School of Scottish Studies and embarked on fieldwork in Nova Scotia and Ontario.

Beyond the Hebrides and Gaelic-speaking Scotland, links have existed for decades with other island and mainland Scottish communities. Séamus Ó Duilearga who was largely responsible for the establishment of the Irish Folklore Commission and who seized every opportunity possible to ensure the founding of a sister institute in Scotland visited Shetland in 1950. He was working in somewhat similar circumstances, that we face today, in relation to the dire economic situation but his diary highlights perhaps some of the most dramatic changes in terms of communication and technological advances that have occurred in the last 60 years. In July 1950 he visited Shetland to attend the Viking Congress. He sailed from Aberdeen late at night – his diary entry reads:

40 NFC 490:3.

41 Watson, S., *Saoghal Bana-mharaiche: Cunntas Beul-aithris Mu Bheatha Muinntir an Iasgaich Ann am Machair Rois*, Perthshire 2007.

... to bed at 11.30 after watching British Home Fleet at close quarters – air-carriers and destroyers at exercise. Fine night and sunset. 200 miles voyage to Shetland.

Sailed into Lerwick at 7.30 am. Buses to Bruce Hostel where we settled down. Walk through town. 12.30 Civic lunch in Hostel, introductions all round. In evening hired bicycle, got fishing permit and cycled to Tingwall Lake. En route asked way – man was from Rosses. No. of Donegal people here for fishing.

Sunday – to mass at 11 with Scott-Moncrieff etc. Fr Collins from Glasgow said Mass. Only 2 Shetland Catholics. Congregation from Rosses. I had chat in Irish with a McCool from Loch an Iúir.

McIntosh of Edinburgh had arrived and I was very glad to see him. 14 July I spoke to a paper by a Mr John Nicholson on Shetland Folktales in which I urged collection of island's traditions. I went to see John Graham MA teacher at Lerwick Sec. School, a former pupil of McIntosh. I am trying to get someone from Shetland to be trained in Sweden, and so I gave all the encouragement I could to young Graham.⁴²

The spirit of a shared tradition and vision between folklorists and folklore institutes in Ireland and in Scotland continues. When the School of Scottish Studies celebrates its hundredth anniversary it is hoped that we will have continued to work closely together in the intervening years and that folklorists in Ireland will make their contribution.

42 NFC Ó Duilearga papers, courtesy Caitríona Miles.