



A Mari Usque...

In which our intrepid correspondents give us news from one coast of Canada to the other and to the other:

Fall 2001: Cape Breton, Nova Scotia

By Heather Sparling

Based on a number of trips to Cape Breton, I feel relatively secure in asserting that Scottish Gaelic culture in Cape Breton is not so much visual as aural: the sounds of fiddles, step dancers, and Gaelic singers. In the place of the visual splendour of Highland Games, you'll find *ceilidhs*, *fèisean*, and milling frolics. "Ceilidh" is the Gaelic word for visit and involves the community coming together for an evening of storytelling, songs, music, and dance. Some are widely advertised and are held at community fire or legion halls. Others are spontaneous gatherings of neighbours in someone's kitchen. "Fèisean" are festivals where Gaelic culture is explained, performed, and transmitted. At the annual Christmas Island festival, *Fèis an Eilein*, there is a pipers' ceilidh (at which both local and Scottish pipers perform), several square dances, Gaelic language classes, song workshops, and step dance lessons. Although these events are open to the public, including tourists, they are particularly important for the education and promotion of Gaelic culture to Cape Bretoners, encouraging children to learn the culture, and providing an opportunity for more advanced students to teach and perform.

This year, I attended both *Fèis an Eilein* events and a new, four-day Gaelic song workshop led by renowned Gaelic singer, Mary Jane Lamond. It was held in the nearby community of Iona at the Highland Village, an outdoor museum similar to Toronto's Pioneer Village. Mary Jane invited native Gaelic speakers and singers from the Island to speak about their singing experiences, and to share their songs with the students. We listened carefully in an attempt to grasp, not only melody and pronunciation, but variation, ornamentation, and the more general "Gaelic flavour" of their singing styles. Our afternoons often ended with a little ceilidh, involving any guests remaining and Jim Watson, an incredibly knowledgeable Gaelic speaker and singer on the Highland Village's staff. Students could participate, but more often we simply absorbed the Gaelic spoken, the stories told, and the songs sung. For the rest of our time, we were

exposed to a range of Cape Breton Gaelic songs (either originating in Scotland but popular in Cape Breton, or more often, songs composed by Cape Breton bards), ranging from love songs to milling songs.

Each evening, I attended different events hosted by *Féis an Eilein* at the Christmas Island fire hall. One of the main attractions is their annual milling frolic. Milling frolics are known as waulkings in Scotland and continue to be practised in Cape Breton today. Originally, milling frolics involved the shrinking of wool by pounding it. Wool shrinkage was important for tightening the weave of the wool, thereby making it warmer and more waterproof. Since it was a long and arduous process, neighbours were invited for a night of singing and milling. Each person at the table would take a turn singing a Gaelic song solo while everyone kept time with the beating of the cloth and all would join in on the choruses. Although there is no practical need to shrink wool anymore, Gaelic-speakers still look forward to milling frolics today as an opportunity to speak in Gaelic and share their songs with each other. Now, most communities have a single milling blanket that is used repeatedly and expressly for such events.

Milling frolics and other Scottish Gaelic cultural events are held throughout Cape Breton all summer long. They are also featured as part of each year's highly successful "Celtic Colours" festival, which will run October 5 to 13 this year. Torontonians are also fortunate this year as the Celtic Studies Department at the University of Toronto is hosting a one-day conference called "Words and Music of Cape Breton" on November 3rd. Speakers and performers will include Mary Jane Lamond, Jim Watson, Alistair MacLeod, and Cape Breton fiddlers Sandy MacIntyre and David Greenberg.

Heather Sparling is our web mistress.

Celtic College at Goderich, Ontario

By Jean Mills

The highlight of my summer was a week spent at the Celtic College in Goderich, Ontario.

Despite a heat wave that plastered our shirts to our backs and made contact with any kind of string and fretboard a sticky proposition, the experience was inspirational – and at times humbling. It's an exercise we should all undertake at some point in our lives: to become a student again!

The Celtic College is the brainchild of Goderich folk music movers and shakers Warren and Eleanor Robinson, who organize the takeover of the Goderich high school for a week in August, bring in elite Celtic (in this context, "Celtic" means "mostly Irish") musicians and craftspeople from around the world, and register hundreds of adult students for four days of intensive training ranging from beginner concertina to Irish song (sung in the original Irish language) to fiddling to guitar accompaniment to tin whistle and flute, not to mention dancing and drawing and calligraphy and even instrument repair. While the days are filled with classes, the evenings are filled with concerts by the instructors and, later, sessions scattered around town. The whole enterprise wraps up on Friday when willing students take the stage on the opening afternoon of the Celtic Roots Festival that runs throughout the weekend.

If it sounds overwhelming, I wouldn't disagree. The instructors' roster was impressive if not downright daunting: internationally recognized performers, here to share their expertise and experience. The list included Sharlene Wallace, Ken Perlman, Brian Taheny, Lorretto Reid, Frank Edgley, Joe Grady, Patrick Orceau, Ben Grossman, Julie Schryer and on and on.

"Who's Peter Horan?" I whispered to Jean Hewson, the accomplished singer and guitarist from Newfoundland, one half of a duo with fiddler Christina Smith. We were sitting in the packed concert hall listening to a "concert" of Sligo tunes, which was really more like an amazing session, with Peter in the centre of it all.

Jean looked at me and just managed to keep the irony out of her voice as she informed me, "Well, he's kind of a legend." Oops! I didn't know, but I do now. A learning experience.

But the aspect of the College that struck me the most was how humbling it was to be a struggling beginner again. I can play a number of instruments reasonably well, but Frank Edgley's beginner concertina class brought me quickly to a standstill. It had nothing to do with the fact that the other members of the class were toting their beautiful hand made Lachenals and Stagis (and even an Edgley) which towered, figuratively, over my little red Hohner with its paper bellows and noisy buttons. No, it seemed to have more to do with the fact that I was the only one having trouble with the "pat the head and rub the tummy" brainwork required. At the student concert on Friday afternoon I felt flight-or-fight sweat break out when it was our class's turn to play. My friends down on the grass watched with amusement as I struggled. Afterwards, safely off stage, I laughed too. I have a lot of work to do if

I'm going to make music with this particular instrument.

The Celtic College was a week of memorable moments strung together like beads: standing on the sidewalk outside the hotel one evening and watching through the window a session that was so packed with musicians and spectators that the hotel lobby was overflowing; a singing session at the little pub next door, with perhaps forty voices raised in multi-layered harmony; Frank Edgley playing amazingly quick polkas on stage one night and coming to class the next day, shaking his head, bemused at how *slow* they were; Irish musician Gearóid Óhallmhúrain dressed in a heavy blue robe while serving on the *Panel of Experts* during a rowdy episode of Celtic Jeopardy, looking every inch like Gandalf; duo James Fagan and Nancy Kerr (he from Australia, she from Northumberland) bringing the house down with their evening concert; Ben Grossman on his brand new hurdy gurdy, accompanying Jean Hewson as she sang a traditional French song from Newfoundland – the list is endless. It was an amazing week.

It was also exhausting! By the time Friday rolled around and I sat at the Festival's main stage listening to performances by musicians who had been teachers all week, I was beat. One more Irish jig, I thought, and I'm going to keel over.

I couldn't stay for the festival weekend. My family expected me home to get ready for our annual trip to Nova Scotia. That's all right, though, because I honestly don't think I could have absorbed much more. In fact, I think I'm going to be feeling the effects of my week at Celtic College for quite some time.

Jean Mills is a dulcimer player from Guelph, Ontario.

Northern Report

By Moira Cameron

Summer has ended too soon in the North. We are now gearing up for the long winter nights. This Fall, a celebration of music will be held at the Northern Arts and Cultural Centre in honour of International Music Day. It will be a night of mini-concerts and jamming; a showcase for many styles of music and composition.

With Remembrance Day around the corner, and in light of recent events in the USA, many Yellowknifers are turning their thoughts to Peace. An impromptu gathering was held on the shores of Great Slave Lake where locals were 'Drumming for Peace', using a variety of traditional drums and

percussion instruments from around the world. Knowing this community as I do, this will be the first of many such demonstrations.

In celebration of Remembrance Day, Mary and Friends Tea Room will be hosting a special concert featuring 'Ceilidh Friends' who will be singing traditional and contemporary war and anti-war songs. There are always two or more artistic venues honouring this holiday in the Northern capital. A few years ago, Bob MacQuarrie and Bill Gilday, two members of the Yellowknife band 'The Gumboots', composed a song specifically for the occasion entitled, *An Ode to Valour*, which is now played annually at one of the venues.

That brings me to a sad note. Bob MacQuarrie will be leaving the Gumboots and the North. He and his wife Irene will be moving south to Alberta in October. Bob joined the group four years after its conception in 1984. His contribution to the band has been tremendous. Bob wrote the lyrics for the majority of the ballads recorded on their three albums, often collaborating with Bill Gilday, who composes the music. Bob's style of songwriting is distinctive, encapsulating the Spirit of the North, its history and its peoples, in each song he writes. He will be sorely missed by us all. (The Gumboots albums are: "Spirit of the North" (1992), "Northern Tracks" (1994), and "Search for a Passage" (2000).)

AN ODE TO VALOR

*Lyrics by Bob MacQuarrie
Music by Bill Gilday*

Bright as a sunbeam
At the first light of the day;
Fresh as a lively breeze
By the sea late in May;
You were so young then,
Strong, sanguine and skilled;
You had a young love then,
Not yet fulfilled.
Your life was green then;
Promise lay at your door.
Then came a darkling cloud:
You must go to war.

You marched off to a distant land
Far from home's warm hearth and from those
who loved you;
Marched along with a brave pipeband
To a raging war where the fighting proved
you.
Rockets slashed at the black night sky;
Bullets whined as they hurtled by;
Warriors cursed and the wounded cried;
Courage fought and Promise died.

Friends fell around you;
 Fear beset you at every turn;
 Yet you fought like a veteran soldier;
 Yet you stood firm.

Lo, how the years have passed
 While you lie deep in the ground;
 Lo, how the precious fruits
 Of your brave deeds abound!
 We now, who look back,
 Lives tranquil and blessed,
 We who owe so much to you,
 We shall not forget.
 Fair men salute you;
 Free men live in your debt;
 We who prize what valour won,
 We shall not forget.

*Moirra Cameron is a ballad singer
 living in Yellowknife NT.*

News from P.E.I.

Georges Arsenault

The 6th Folk-Acadie Festival at the Acadian Museum in Miscouche was held from July 17 to August 9. A new addition to the programme this year was the very successful "Veillées acadiennes" at which participated traditional singers, musicians and storytellers from various Island Acadian communities. Among the invited performers were members of the celebrated Joe Bibienne Arsenault family from the Évangéline Region and the Chaisson fiddlers from Rollo Bay.

The 31st Acadian Festival of the Évangéline Region was held in Abram's Village over the Labour Day weekend. As usual, many of the concerts featured the best of Acadian fiddling and stepdancing. Fiddler par excellence Eddy Arsenault, 80 years old, made his annual appearance at the festival on Sunday afternoon as did a few of his children. The new local folk group "Celtitude", just home from a successful tour in France, was featured during the closing concert. Like the well-known Island musical group "Barachois", "Celtitude" is much inspired by the Acadian and Island musical tradition. Both popular groups performed a number of times this summer at the Confederation Centre of the Arts in Charlottetown. For more information on Barachois, check : www.barachois.com.

Acadian folk music and folk tales recorded in Prince Edward Island in the 1970s are now

available on two CDs produced by Université de Moncton's Acadian Studies Centre: "Refrains et mélodies de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard" and "Dans un an et un jour. Contes de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard". The field recordings featured on the albums are from the Centre's folklore archives. To order:

www.umoncton.ca/etudeacadiennes/center/pubvend.html

*Georges Arsenault is a folklorist
 and author living in PEI.*

From Vancouver

Jon Bartlett and Rika Reubsaat

The Vancouver Folk Song Society is adding another regular night to its roster, a night dedicated to traditional music. This will take place on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 8 pm at the Friends Meeting House, 1090 W 70th Ave., half a block west of Oak St., beginning 14 November 2001.

The definition of "traditional" will be kept generously wide, in order to include an array of Australian sheep-shearing songs, and such Canadian items as "The Squid-Jigging Ground", with known authors, but not so wide as to include such other authors as the professional Cohen (Leonard), Rogers (Stan) or Lightfoot (Gordon). There's always plenty of room for these "folk songs" at the regular first and third Wednesdays. The Vancouver Ballad Group, after 18 months of fairly regular monthly meetings, will fold into this new setting, so we'll have a growing number of ballads and ballad singers to share with those who like to sing, or like to listen, to traditional song.

Jon Bartlett and Rika Ruebsaat, both CSMT Board alumni, will host and coordinate the meets: contact them at Jon_Bartlett@telus.net.

Northern Ontario

Dianne Cameron

The highlight of the summer here is the annual Northern Lights Festival Boreal, held in lovely Bell Park on Lake Ramsey July 6 - 8. This was the 30th festival, and featured a broad diversity of music, story and dance from all over. Some of the many performers:

- Leahy, originally from Lakefield Ont., with their unique Canadian Celtic fusion
- Susan Aglukark from the far north

- De-Ba-Jeh-Mu-Jig (which means 'storytellers' in Oji-Cree) Theatre Group from Manitoulin Island
- Hart Rouge, wonderful Franco-Canadian and roots music
- Njacko Backo and Kalimba Kalimba, from Africa via Montreal and Toronto
- Mauricio Montecinos, a Sudbury local originally from Chile
- The quintessential Jackie Washington, for his 17th time at the festival!
- And my favourite, the one, the only, the superb balladeer-storyteller-musician from Yellowknife - Moira Cameron (cheers from prejudiced mother in front row)!

In August, our long-running series of house ceilidhs throughout the greater Sudbury region continued with a ceilidh in Azilda, just north of Sudbury. The September ceilidh was hosted even further north in Onaping, and in October, it moves south again to Chelmsford. This season, the monthly ceilidhs are once again on the 3rd Saturday every month, and everyone is welcome. Anyone passing through Sudbury at the right time is also encouraged to attend - just check with me for directions to the hosting house.

Performers on tour are also welcome to stop in on their way from gig to gig - Mother Cameron's Home for Wayward Folkies has much room, and we can often get a house concert going on very short notice to help subsidize the journey. Taking us up on this offer this month, Pierre Schryer and his band will be playing a house concert here on Wednesday, October 17.

Our local branch of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann remains very active, offering weekly dance classes and learning opportunities for Irish music and language. All were very excited about the 2001 North American Tour "Echoes of Erin", which was scheduled to visit Sudbury also on Wednesday October 17. Unfortunately, due to the recent devastating events of September, this tour has been cancelled.

Dianne Cameron is a folk musician living in Sudbury, and the proud mother of Moira Cameron (in case you hadn't noticed).

Alberta

John Leeder

I'm going to give you a brief overview of the Calgary situation; those who've read it all before over the years, please bear with me; I'm assuming there are readers out there who are less familiar with our situation.

The Calgary Folk Club (known as "the Calgary") was founded in 1971 and is still going strong. It was patterned after the Jug of Punch folk club in Birmingham, England, where one of the founders had been a regular. It has undergone very few changes over the years, in fact four members of the house band are original. Later, other clubs were founded, following the same model as the Calgary; currently five such folk clubs are operating, with few variations on the original pattern.

The laws of Alberta at the time didn't permit folk clubs in Calgary to emulate British folk clubs by operating in the back rooms of pubs, thus the Calgary clubs rent premises in community halls. The Calgary has used four venues since it was founded, moving from smaller to larger spaces as it became more established and audiences became larger; other clubs have had similar experiences. The Rocky Mountain Folk Club came along in 1975, the Saturday Night Special Folk Club began in 1976, the Nickelodeon Music Club in 1980, and the Bow Valley Music Club in 1992. A few other clubs have come and gone over the years.

The Calgary operates every second Friday during the season (September to April), the Rocky approximately once a month, also on Fridays; the other three clubs run on Saturday nights, every second week or so.

A typical evening at a Calgary folk club will begin with a set by the house band (only the Nick has no house band, although it had one for the first years of its existence). Then will follow guest sets. There may be two sets by a main guest (a touring group or individual or a high-level local), or two single sets by different acts. Sometimes a club will have three shorter sets, or a shorter opening act and two sets by a main guest. The classic pattern would be: house band, opener, two sets by main guest, although the classic pattern is not always followed nowadays.

All the clubs have food and beverages (including alcohol) available during the breaks between the sets. The club runs the bar itself, helping to contribute to its finances, but the bar is closed during the sets, so that distractions are minimized.

All the clubs are operated by volunteers, creating a pool of workers who can also be drawn upon by the annual folk festivals of the region.

I won't clutter up this column with dates, addresses and phone numbers, since some good sources exist for finding out when the clubs are operating and who is performing. The Thursday edition of the Calgary Herald includes a "Hit List" in its Arts & Style section, which usually has information on the folk clubs as well as other folk music events in the city; the Calgary Sun's "Get

Out" section on Fridays sometimes has that information as well, but tends to be less reliable. Lastly, a website maintained by Barrie McCombs, address acs.ucalgary.ca/bmcombs/calfolk, maintains a remarkably complete listing of folk music events in Calgary and to some extent elsewhere in Alberta. All these sources, of course, depend on the diligence of the clubs' organizers in making the information available and of the newspaper's employees in getting it into print.

Another club, Celtic Folk, sprang into existence in 1987, patterning itself on clubs in Northern Ireland. It operates only four times a year, and is more determinedly grassroots than the other clubs. It has no house band, and no paid performers. An evening may consist of as many as nine short sets, although sometimes experienced groups may do longer performances. It includes dance demonstrations and storytellers as well as music. Like the other clubs, though, it is volunteer-run, and operates its own bar between sets. Celtic Folk depends on word of mouth, and can't be found in the newspaper listings, but is on the website mentioned above; or phone Ron Duffy, (403) 287-7014.

Other than the folk clubs, the Foothills Bluegrass Society sometimes sponsors bluegrass concerts, usually on Sunday afternoons, and the Irish Cultural Centre puts on concerts by touring Celtic musicians. A recent trend is for British-style pubs to host Celtic sessions, but these often are not listed in the papers, and tend to fluctuate from week to week and month to month, as ownership and management of the establishments is volatile.

I'm involved with a couple of grassroots events which depend solely on word of mouth, the Calgary Singers' Circle and a contra dance group. Both take place on Saturday nights about once a month. You can contact me for information on these by phoning (403) 230-0340.

John Leeder is the banjo-playing secretary of CSTM, and the Bulletin's Review Editor.

What I Did on my Summer Holidays

Merrick Jarrett

Hil We have arrived, from one of the best vacations we have had in years. The weather, both in New Hampshire, where we spent a few days with my wife Mary's cousin, and Duncan's Cove, near Halifax, was exceptional - only one day of rain during the five weeks.

The icing on the cake was doing a gig in Halifax with Clary Croft at the "Word on the Street" festival, for writers, artists, etc, where Clary sets up a tent with a good sound system and invites traditional singers from the Maritimes to perform. Since he is Helen Creighton's biographer and collection organizer, he gets to sing a lot of Helen's songs. His latest CD, "Still the Song Lives On", is worth listening to - he has a beautiful untrained voice, perfect diction, knows the good songs to pick, and it is a pleasure listening to him.

Since I did my programme with a lovely traditional singer doing the half hour ahead of me and an outstanding performer after me who came down from the Miramichi Folk Festival - not a traditional singer, but a singer of traditional folk songs, if you get my meaning. Clary introduced me as a "thorn between two roses"!

Merrick Jarrett is Canada's revered "old folkie".

FOLK SONG and BROADSIDE INDEX

The FOLK SONG INDEX is a computer database which is designed to provide access to all the traditional English-language songs collected in Britain, Ireland, North America and Australia, by indexing published books, journals and recordings, unpublished manuscript and tape collections, and broadsides, chapbooks and songsters. The database stands at over 100,000 references, and is already the most extensive index to traditional songs available, and it continues to grow daily.

For each version of each song, the following details are entered onto the database:
Details of the book/record/etc. being indexed

Song Title
Song First Line
Singer's Name
Name of Collector
Place and Date of Collection
Presence/absence of text or tune
Child and Laws master-numbers
Name of author of song (if known)
Key-words and phrases from texts (selective)
Plus other information

Most importantly, an independent master-number system enables versions under different titles to be located and pulled together very quickly. Once a song has been identified as existing in a traditional version, and thus eligible for inclusion in the Folk Song Index, details of other versions, not necessarily traditional in themselves (e.g. broadside, chapbook or songster versions) are also included to aid comparative and historical research. Each of the indexed elements is searchable, individually or in combination. It is thus feasible, for example, to find all the published versions of a particular song, or all the songs from a particular singer, or collected in a particular area. It is possible to identify a song even if you only know half

the title, a few words of the first line, or sometimes just a striking phrase from the chorus. The user can ascertain, with a few key-strokes, whether a song is rare or common, restricted to certain countries or areas, known on broadsides, and so on.

The BROADSIDE INDEX is organised on similar lines and is designed to include all the songs published on broadsides, chapbooks, popular songsters, parlour and music hall publications, and selected sheet music. In addition to song details (title, first line, named tune, etc.) entries give printer's name and town and, where possible, the location of extant copies. This index stands at over 110,000 references.

AVAILABILITY

Both indexes are available by subscription from the compiler. Subscribers need to have their own database package (e.g. Microsoft Access) in which to set up their database. A test disk is supplied which enables the subscriber to set up the database, practice importing data, and make sure everything is working satisfactorily. Once set up, the full data is supplied on a CD-Rom, in ASCII, comma-delimited format, which can be uploaded by the user. New versions of the Indexes, containing additions and corrections, are supplied at roughly half-yearly intervals, in the same format.

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Folk Song Index: UK £35 Overseas \$75
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