Stories of the Sea

Maritime Memorates of Ireland & Scotland

Maxim Fomin & Séamus Mac Mathúna

in collaboration with
John Shaw & Criostóir Mac Cárthaigh
assisted by Séamus Mac Floinn

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Maxim Fomin and Séamus Mac Mathúna
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Foreword

The following publication presents the preliminary findings of the research project 'Stories of the Sea: A Typological Study of Maritime Memorates in Modern Irish and Scottish Gaelic Folklore Traditions', based at the Research Institute for Irish and Celtic Studies at the Ulster University, and carried out in partnership with staff of Scottish and Celtic Studies, University of Edinburgh, and the National Folklore Collection, School of Irish, Celtic Studies, Irish Folklore and Linguistics, University College Dublin (UCD). The project was funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) between September 2010 – February 2013, and we are grateful to the AHRC for their generous support and co-operation.

The aim of the project was to examine a variety of extraordinary maritime personal experiences from Ireland and Scotland which occur in liminal spatiotemporal contexts. Characteristically, these experiences involve encounters with ghosts, water creatures as well as other beings and objects. The stories include personal recollections ('memorates'), accounts retold on the basis of someone else's experience ('fabulates') and legends associated with particular events ('folk legends') or specific location ('local legends'). For a detailed overview on the project see further Fomin & Mac Mathúna 2015.

The material selected for the present work ranges from the late nineteenth century stories of the MacLagan collection (Edinburgh) down to contemporary legends from Dublin of the 1980s. The stories were collected from the following areas in Ireland – Antrim (Rathlin), Donegal (Teelin, Tory), Galway (Ballinakill), Mayo (Kilgalligan, Portacloy), Kerry (Great Blasket, Dingle, Curraghatoosane), Wexford (Duncormick), Waterford (Ardmore) – and in Scotland: Western Isles of Grimsay, Eriskay, Lewis (Stornoway), Berneray, Barra, Vatersay, Isle of Skye (Glendale), and Islay (Port Ellen) as well as Highlands (Glenelg, Lochcarron) and Argyll (Morvern).
Fig. 1: Left to right: Criostóir Mac Cárthaigh, Maxim Fomin, Séamus Mac Mathúna
Editorial note

A short editorial note suffices to introduce the reader to the editorial practices of the team. Apart from standardising the pre-1958 Irish Gaelic and pre-1981 Scottish Gaelic forms along with the norms of An Caighdeán Oifigiúil (up-dated 2012) and Gnàthachas Litreachadh na Gàidhlig (up-dated 2006), we chose to follow the following conventions:

When dealing with archive materials, both transcriptions and audio recordings, the editorial approach of the team was to retain a number of dialectal forms as they may be of value for the study of Irish and Scottish dialects.

This concerned a number of conditional conjunctions (Mayo dial. *mara* vs. standard *muna* ‘if’), simple pronouns (Glenelg *ad, siu* vs. standard *iad, sibh* ‘they/them, you’; Barra *sinn fhín* vs. standard *sinn fhéin* ‘we ourselves’), prepositional pronouns (Mayo/Galway dial. *leob*, Ulster *leofa* vs. standard *leo* ‘with them’; Galway dial. *orthab, acab* vs. standard *orthu* ‘on them’, *acu* ‘at them’; Ulster *daoithe, uaidhe* vs. standard *dí* ‘of her’, *uaidh* ‘from him’; Eriskay *ugam* vs. standard *thugam* ‘to me’; Glenelg *ama-sa* vs. standard *agam-sa* ‘at me’), prepositions (Munster dial. *roim, age* vs. standard *roimh*, *‘before’, ag an* ‘at the’; N. Uist *dhan a’* vs. standard *do* ‘n ‘to the’; Vatersay an *deoghaidh* vs. standard *an déidh*, ‘after’), adverbs (Vatersay *reimhid* vs. standard *roimhe* ‘before’; Eriskay *a-bhus* vs. standard *a-bhos* ‘this side, here’), verbal nouns (Mayo *tíocht, ráit* vs. standard *teacht* ‘coming’, *rá* ‘saying’; Kerry *feiscint* vs. standard *feiceáil* ‘seeing’; Morvern *radhainn* vs. standard *ràdh* ‘saying’; N. Uist *cluinntei* vs. standard *cluinntinn* ‘hearing’), nouns (Mayo *céibhe, trághadh*, dial. gen. sg. of *cé* ‘quay’, *tré* ‘shore’ vs. standard gen. *cé, trá*; Morvern *dorast, ceidhe* vs. standard *dorus* ‘door’, *cidhe* ‘quay’), and verbal forms (Ulster dial. *tionn* vs. standard *feiceam* ‘sees’; Kerry *chonac, ní fhacaigh* vs. standard *chonaic, ní fhaca* ‘saw, did not see’; Eriskay *thionndaich* vs. standard *thionndaidh* ‘turned’; Vatersay *gura h-i, gun fhaca* vs. standard *gur i* ‘that it was she’, *gum faca* ‘that she saw’).

Unless otherwise stated, transcriptions of tape recordings and manuscript sources have been carried out by members of the project team.

Square brackets are used with question marks to indicate difficulties in deciphering words/phrases in the audio recordings or to indicate omissions in the recordings. We sometimes suggest possible readings in these instances. Round brackets are used in the Gaelic original text to mark deletions of unnecessary words or phrases introduced by the informants while telling the stories. In English translations, square brackets are used to enter words and phrases to assist in better understanding of the original meaning of the stories.
With regard to our policy on dealing with place-names, some names are known only by their Gaelic forms in Gaelic-speaking areas. These generally have been retained in translation. On the other hand, other names are well-known by English forms and have been translated accordingly.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to various people and bodies whose advice and co-operation contributed to the successful completion of the project: Professors Séamas Ó Catháin and Liam Mac Mathúna (UCD), Drs Cathlin Macaulay and Margaret Mackay (Edinburgh) of the project’s advisory board, and Dr Pádraig Ó Tiarnaigh (Ulster University), our former doctoral student.

We would like to thank the Director of the National Folklore Collection, Professor Ríonach Uí Ógáin, for permission to publish material from the collection; we also thank Anna Bale (UCD) and Caroline Milligan (Edinburgh); Professor Ailbhe Ó Corráin, Director of the Research Institute for Irish & Celtic Studies (Ulster University); Gemma Devlin, Director of the Inishowen Maritime Museum, Greencastle, Ireland; Anna Nic Guaire, Cultural Heritage Project Officer, Niall Woodrow, Manager of the Ionad Chaluim Chille Ile, Bowmore, Islay, Scotland, and Joan MacKenzie (Edinburgh).

Every attempt has been made to contact various bodies and organisations involved in collecting and making available the stories published in this collection. Finally, we are deeply grateful to those informants who shared these stories of the sea with folklore collectors, which can now be presented to a wider audience for further dissemination, reflection and appreciation.

We acknowledge the following permissions:

1-0001 An Bád Sí – Fairy Boat Vision (p. 3), 1-0003 Coinín Sí agus Úir Bheannaithe Thoraigh – The Fairy Rabbit and the Blessed Earth of Tory (p. 5), 1-0009 Crocs in the Quarry (p. 13), 1-0010: Bá ag Ceathrú na gCloch – Drowning at Ceathrú na gCloch (p. 15), 1-0011: Taibhsí ón Trá – Ghosts from the Beach (p. 18), 1-0012: Na Daoine Maithe agus Oileán Draíochta – The Good Folk and a Magical Island (p. 19), 1-0013: Cill Stuithín – Kilstiffin Island (p. 22), 1-0014: St. Martin’s Night / City of Bannow (p. 26), 1-0015: Pat John Eoghain’s Sea-Horse (p. 27), S-0011: Manadh an Sgadain – Premonition about Herring (p. 51), S-0012: Am Faireachadh – The Inkling (p. 54), S-0013: Na Ròin a bha a’ Tilgeadh nan Clach – Seals throwing Stones (p. 56):

Courtesy of Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann, Cnuaasach Bhéaloideas Éireann/The Folklore of Ireland Council, National Folklore Collection UCD.
Illustrations

Fig. 1 (p. viii); fig. 5 (p. 10); fig. 17 (p. 76): courtesy Natalia Abelian.

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Fig. 12 (p. 36): REF 8621; fig. 13 (p. 42): REF 8615; fig. 14 (p. 46): REF 5103; fig. 15 (p. 50); fig. 16 (p. 59): MS MacLagan 8122: © courtesy School of Scottish Studies Archives, University of Edinburgh.

Maps page 2, 30, and 62: curach bhán publications.
Stories from Ireland
Map 1: Stories from Ireland

Black Symbols: Stories in English
White Symbols: Stories in Irish
An Bád Sí
Fairy Boat Vision

Pádraig (Peats Tom) Ó Cearnaigh

Myself and Muiris Cuainí set off one day for the cliff in the boat' with the sail raised. I saw a three-man curragh coming towards us. I felt it should be easy to make out who they were if I looked carefully. The other man was tending to the sail at the time and I said nothing to him. She was heading directly towards us, and when she got very close she swung away to our starboard. As she did so her bow passed out of sight behind our sail and then her stern, and I expected to see her bow emerge on the other side of the sail, but it didn’t. We lowered the sail immediately, but there was no trace of it. At no stage did Muiris Cuainí ever see her.

Fig. 2: Loading a two-man ‘Skay’ curragh in the island of Inishkea North (Co. Mayo, 1938).

¹ Curragh, traditionally a skin-boat or a hide-boat; naomhóg is the form of the word used in Cork and Kerry.
An Bá agus an Sampla  
_The Drowning and The Vision_

_Dingle (Kerry), Map No.: 2 (notes p. 66) I-0002/MM(G)_

**Anonymous**

Báthadh Peáidí Mhuiris agus iad san, agus is cuimhin liom a bheithe age baile amhain sin, ní rabhas pósta, agus dúirt duine éigin go raibh naomhóg a’ missáil, agus bhí m’athair ag iascach an oíche sin. Agus bhí _stations_ thoir ag na Sullivans i mBaile Dháith, agus tháinig Fr Tom i leith, bhi sé ag féachaint siar ar an gcuan. Dh’fhanas istigh i dteannta Neain, mar bhiodh sé ag teacht i leith chun Comaoine a thabhairt dí, mar ní raibh sí ábalta ar dhul soir an uair sin. Ó! Nuair a chuala mar cad a bhi tarlaithé! Ach chuala rud éigin mar gheall air sin roim ré.

Dearfadh mé leat é. Bhi Griffin ó Bhaile Dháith ann, a’ dtuigeann tú, Kelly a ghlaoídis air, agus bhí a mháthair sin amuigh i Leac Snámha, dulta amach ar turas go dtí mac dí a bhí pósta ann. Agus an oíche Dhomhnaigh sin, dhubhgoil si amach as a codladh, agus chonaic sí an fear amuigh, agus maincréal móir go roin ina láimh aige. Saghas éigin taibhséas mh ná rud éigin. B’e a mac san a bhi ann, agus Peáidí Mhuiris agus an Doll ó Arda Mór. Agus bhíleanaí éigin ag teacht ó scoil, n’fheadar an oíche tar éis gur báthadh iad, agus go raibh fear éigin ina gcoinne agus go rabhadar ag caint leis agus gurb é Kelly a bhi ann. Ach duradh go ndeineadh sampla éigin do naomhóg éigin an oíche sin, go bhfachtas rud éigin ar a’ bhfarraghe.

**Paddy Mhuiris** and the others were drowned, and I remember being at home that morning. I wasn’t married. And somebody said there was a boat missing, and my father was fishing that night. And there were Stations [of the Cross] over in Sullivans’ in Baile Dháith, so Fr Tom came over and he was looking over at the harbour. I stayed in the house with Neain because Fr Tom used to come over to bring Communion to her, as she was not able to go over by herself by that time. Oh! When we heard what had happened! And I heard something about this in advance.

I’ll tell you about it. There was a man called Griffin from Baile Dháith, but they called him Kelly, you know, and his mother had gone over to Leac Snámha [Lixnam], on a visit to a son of hers who was married there. And that Sunday night she awoke out of her sleep and saw a man outside with a huge mackerel in his hand. A kind of vision or something. It was her son who was there together with Paddy Mhuiris and the [man whose nick-name was] Doll from Arda Mór. And there were children coming from school. I don’t know if it was the night after the men were drowned—and they [the children] had met a man on the road—and they were talking to him; and it was Kelly. And it was said that a certain boat had some kind of apparition that night, that something was seen at sea.
Coinín Sí agus Úir Bheannaithe Thoraigh
The Fairy Rabbit and the Blessed Earth of Tory
Tory Island (Donegal), Map No.: 3 (notes p. 66) I-0003/MF(G)
Jimi Dixon

A iscaire móir m’athair móir. Donnchadh Ó Duibhir ab ainm dó, agus le cois a bhéith in a fear mhaith farraige, bhí snámh iontach aige. Fear ládir i gceart a bhí ann fosta. Ba ghnách leis a ghabháil soír go ceann toir an oileáin, agus fear ón bháile sin a thabhairt leis amach a dh’iascaireacht. Í b’Port an Dún a bhí an curach aige, agus ba thart ar an taoibh ó thuaidh den oileán a níodh sé cuid mhoir dá chuid iscaireachta.

D’imigh sé soír tráthnóna amháin deas samhradh. Tharraing sé ar a chomhrádaí, agus chuairt an bheirt go Port an Dún. Thug siad an acúinn⁲ agus an curach síos ó bharr an cladaigh, agus d’imigh siad thart ag tarraingt ar an aird a tharla.

Tá áit ar an taoibh thoir den oileán comhghacroch ar Den Dún, a dtugann siad Poll an Rutáin air. Tá uaimh ann, agus théid siad isteach ar thaoibh daoithi agus amach ar an taoibh eile, agus tá aichearra mhóir ansin le taoibh a bheith ag gabháil thart le gaosán an Toir Mhóir. Frid Pholl an Rutáin a bhí siadsan ag gabháil an tráthnóna seo. Cha rabh smid ghatáí an cláir, agus bhí an fháráoir chomh ciúin le clár.

Chonaic siad coinín ina shuí in aird i fear an bhinn os a gcionn, agus dar leofa go rabh sé dána i gceart. Tharraing m’athair móir isteach a chéaslaigh, agus theisigh sé dá hruadh ar bhéith an churaigh, ach dheamhán ribe a bhog siad ann, agus char fhág sé áit a bhóinn. Bhí an curach caite ansin ar an uisce, agus theisigh an bheirt a’ scáirt agus a’ bhúirfi, ach is cosúil nach rabh tobhair ar bith le cur Air.

“A Dhonnchaíd,” arsa fear a bhí i ndeireadh an churaigh le m’athair móir, “chán coinín saolaithe é seo!” Leis sin féin tionn siad an tóin mhóir ag tarraingt orthu.

“Coisreacan Dé orainn!” arsa siadsan. Tháinig an tóin orthu, agus d’eirigh an curach ar an tóin thairse le leath. Leis sin féin tionn siad tóin eile ag tarraingt orthu a bhí i bhfad ní bha mheasa ná an chéad cheanna. Bhuail an tóin seo an curach sa taoibh, agus chuir sé a’ tóin as a cionn, agus sula rabh faíl acu a n-anam a thabhairt do Dhia is do Muire, tháinig tóin eile den chineál chéanna, agus thaosc sí anuas sa mhillach orthu féin agus ar an churaigh, ach mar sin féin char lig siad amach a ngreim. Scáirt m’athair móir leis an tóin thar eile greim maith a choimeáil ar an churaigh. Chuairg sé féin ar an tsnámh, agus é ag tarraingt an churaigh ina dhaithd lena leathláimh. Cha rabh sé abalta an curach a thabhairt chun talaimh san “áit a rabh siad, agus b’éigean do an curach agus an fear a bhí crochta aiste a tharraingt ina dhaithd píosa fada.

¹ acmhainn ‘fishing gear and boat equipment’ (see also Ó hEochaidh’s note in the text of the tale: iomlán gleasraí báid ‘all equipment of a boat’).
Bhí go maith. Streacháil sé leis go dtug sé an curach isteach ag taoibh leice, agus d’éirigh leis a chomrádaí a chur i dtír. Nuair a tháinig siad chucu féin beagán, thiompaigh siad an curach, ach bhí an dá chéaslaigh ar an tsnámh go fóill. Chuain Donnchadh ar an tsnámh aris, agus chuaigh sé amach, agus thug isteach na cásailse. Chuaigh an bheirt amach ansin gur thóg siad na crannógá agus an treachlaisc eile a chaill siad. Phill siad isteach go Port an Dúin ansin fluich báite, briste brúite.

Bhí barúil ag an bheirt fhear sin rith a saoil, agus chualaí mé féin m’athair mór ag trácht air fiche uair, gur coinín sí a bhí sa cheann a bhí in aire sa bhinn os a gcionn, agus gur fhéach sé lena gcailleadh. Bhí gráinnín de úir Thoraigh leofa ins an churach, agus, ar ndóiche, char éirigh leis siocair go rabh.

My grandfather, Donnchadh Ó Duibhir, was a great fisherman, and as well as being a good seaman he was a wonderful swimmer. He was a very strong man, too. He used to go over to the eastern point of the island, and take a man from that area out fishing with him. It was in Port an Dúin he kept his curragh and it was on the north side of the island he did most of his fishing.

One fine summer evening he went east to meet his comrade and the two of them went over to Port an Dúin. They took all the boat-gear and the curragh down to the edge of the strand and set out for the northern shore.

There is a place on the east of the island near the Dún called Poll an Rutáin.³ There is a cave there, and one goes in one end and out the other and it is a shortcut compared with having to go round the nose of Tor Mór. It was through Poll an Rutáin they were going that evening. There was not a breath of wind and the sea was as flat as a board.⁴

They saw a rabbit sitting up on the height overhead and it seemed to them it was very bold. My grandfather drew in his paddle and began to beat it against the edge of the curragh but not a hair did they move of the rabbit which did not stir from where it sat. The curragh was bobbing about on the water by then and both men began to shout and roar but it seems there was no hunting it away. ‘Donnchadh, that is no earthly rabbit!’ said the man in the stern of the curragh to my grandfather. With that they saw a great wave coming upon them.

“God save us!” they cried. The wave swept the curragh halfway over its crest. With that they saw another wave much worse than the first one. It struck the curragh amidship and capsized it, and before they had time to offer their souls to God and Mary another wave of the same kind broke over them, but they did not let go their hold of the curragh. My grandfather shouted to the other man to keep a good grip,

³ Mod. Ir. rután ‘small route, hidden track’. ⁴ ‘As flat as a board’ is a translation of the Irish phrase *comh ciúin le clár* which means ‘dead calm’.
and he himself began to swim and draw the curragh after him with one hand. He was not able to bring the curragh to land where he was, and he had to draw the curragh and the man hanging on it a long way.

Well and good. He struggled on until he got the curragh in beside a flat rock and succeeded in landing his comrade. When they had come to themselves a little they turned the curragh but the two paddles were still afloat. Donnchadh went out swimming again and brought in the paddles. They both went out then and rescued the line-frames and other gear they had lost. They returned to Port an Dúin sodden wet, bruised and exhausted.

As long as they lived both men held, and I heard my grandfather speak of it a score of times, that it was a fairy rabbit they had seen on the height above them and that it was trying to drown them. They had a small amount of the earth of Tory in the curragh, and that surely is why it did not succeed.

Fig. 3: Group of men with fishing equipment. Left to right: John Gannon, Anthony Gannon, Seán Rowland, Michael Corduff, Ros Dumhach/Rosspoint, Co. Mayo (c. 1939)
It was one Saturday night long ago when we were out fishing for salmon. There were four of us—three of us rowing, at that time, and one man at the rudder. It was a Saturday night and, of course, they used to be going out poaching as it were—if the Guard or a bailiff caught you, it would be too bad; you would lose your nets and your curragh. Anyway, we went out at twilight or after and we thought it a bit too early to cast our nets on the way out—the night was sort of, somehow we didn't have enough wind for salmon—it was a bit on the calm side. So the man who was in control of the boat in the stern said: 'We'll take shelter in An Poll Dorcha for a while,' said he. That's An Poll Dorcha over behind An Leac, you know, under An Strapa Ghorm at Barr na Spince. That's where An Poll Dorcha is. So when we went in there a while a man lit his pipe. 'Well, damn your souls,' said the man at the rudder, 'put out your
oars and row for all you’re worth. Look what’s in on the rock! So I glanced round, anyway, and from that day to this, I think it was the headless ghost I saw. Even so—we shed some sweat before we landed at Portacloy beach. The man at the rudder said that he saw that he was looking at it a while and that it was a man with no head. Be that as it may, it was a hard earned evening by the time we reached the shore. Ever since then I have never gone out fishing for salmon on a Saturday night.

Baling Water

Rathlin Island (Antrim), Map No.: 5 (notes p.67) I-0005/MF(E)

Donal McCurdy

It was an uncle of mine was coming from Ballycastle, and this is true, as these here will tell you, and this sea beast with two great staring eyes put its head up at the stern and looked at them. My uncle was at the helm and it reached forward and caught a hold of the helm. Someone started to bale water out of the boat and it disappeared. But off Killinney it reappeared again, but didn’t attempt to take hold of the helm. It was man-eating whatever it was.

Fig. 4: Curraghs put to sea. Inis Meán/Inishmaan, Co. Galway.
(Photographer: Tomás Ó Muirchertaig, c.1940).
In 1991, James T. Quain of *The Ardmore Journal* published a selection of stories telling of various appearances of ghost vessels in the area of the Ardmore Head between 1900–1936. The stories were recorded from local fishermen and coastal dwellers who saw them. In the section that follows, we include three such accounts by different persons telling of a vision of the same phantom boat.

**Paddy Downey’s Phantom Boat**

**Ardmore (Waterford), Map No.: 6 (notes p. 67)**

There were two curragh-men in the boat with me—Tom Harty and Johnny Brien. We were out at Faill na Dairí just beyond the Hotel. We had the nets fully out when we saw a small light off the point of the Head. I can only describe it as very weak—like a candle in a lantern. We thought ’twas the Muirchú [fisheries patrol boat] so we left the nets out there and came ashore. Within a week the Nellie Fleming under relief captain Mike Duggan was lost, with all hands. She was a three-masted schooner—one of the last trading out of Youghal under sail. She left Lydney Gloucestershire in the Bristol Channel on Saturday 8th February 1936 with a cargo of coal and was expected in Youghal on or about the 12th Feb. A fierce southerly gale blew up and she was never seen again. Some years previously Tom Harty was out trawling one night. He saw a phantom boat coming down on top of them and then disappearing.
Mikie Lynch’s Phantom Boat

Ardmore (Waterford), Map No.: 7 (notes p. 68) I-0007/MM(E)

We went out at about eight o’clock on a Sunday evening. It was a bright moonlit night and there wasn’t a puff of wind. There were just two of us, Jack and myself on the oars. We stayed in close to the rocks to avoid being spotted from the Garda Barracks above. Our berth was at the Clais under the Well. We had the nets almost out when I looked up and saw a big boat coming down from the Head and making for us. There was a light on her and she was so big it was easy to see her outline. Thinking it was the Muirchiú fisheries patrol boat we threw out all the nets and made for the pier. I remember Paddy Flynn coming in soaked to the skin with his new blue suit destroyed by the salt water. That night Rooney said “’twas a ghost boat and ye’ll hear of something yet.” Some days later a fierce storm blew in from the east and lasted four or five days. The nets were blown up on the strand in bundles and Martin Hurley’s lobster box landed over in Power’s bog. There wasn’t a pole left on the pier, some of them ended up at Chapel Row near the old school. When Fleming’s boat went down we decided it must have been a phantom boat and she appeared just before the Nellie Fleming was lost.

Jimmy Rooney’s Phantom Boat

Ardmore (Waterford), Map No.: 8 (notes p. 68) I-0008/MM(E)

It was a Sunday night in the month of February, 1936. I remember we had our good clothes on. We rowed out to the Head to moor the nets and leave them out for the night. We dropped the anchor and paid off the nets going out N.N.E. towards the ‘Miner’. We had about half the nets out when we saw this vessel, bearing down on us from the S.E. We thought it was the bailiff’s launch coming out from Youghal. We began pulling in the nets as fast as we could and soon lost the vessel behind the Head. We waited inside at the little sea inlet of Gaibhlin na Rinne but there was no sign of the vessel coming around Ardmore Head. Jim Drohan known as Bob said it must have been a herring drifter. In those days a lot of English and Scottish herring drifters came to Ardmore and stayed on for days or even weeks. Occasionally they’d give a few bags of coal to the fishermen. This was the nearest point to the fishing grounds. During the months of February to May in the 1930s I often saw half a dozen of them in here. They’d do the herring fishing at night. By the time the War came they were gone completely and we only saw Dutch trawlers after that. Anyway, after waiting a while we decided to

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1 Jimmy Rooney uses both ‘pay off the nets’ and ‘pay out the nets’ in the meaning ‘to release the nets’.
pay out the nets again. This time we saw the hull of a big ship and she seemed to be in close near Faill na Sleannaire. We thought we’d be run down by this big ship. We pulled in the nets again and then we put Paddy Flynn ashore. Paddy walked up along the cliff and we rowed around the Head. None of us saw anything, there was no ship there. Within a week the big storm came and Fleming’s boat went down. That was the time the Ballycotton lifeboat rescued the men from the Daunt Rock lightship.

Fig. 6: Making a spiller, Oileáin Árainn / Aran Islands, Co. Galway (c. 1901).
Then there was one at the back of Marble Jars, that was a formidable looking quarry altogether, had a bridge on it. There was a woman I knew, and she’s still alive, and one of her little boys was drowned in there a couple of years ago, three or four years ago. Craigy had a pumping engine on it, or built on the side of the bank and it used to take the water to the west and they’d bottle it [?] you know? And then, according to what I heard he shoved in hundreds upon hundreds of rainbow trout into it, to purify the water, you know? Of course that’s filled in now. And the one on the Ballybogan Road, that’s filled in too. And the one on Drumseen Lane, that’s filled in. But the one on the Ballybogan Road, there was a gypsy, his wife and a couple of children who used to caravan around that, you know? Nice fella, nice fella. What the hell is this his name was? Ward! Nice fella. Well, where he was parked there was just a little bit of a bank, barbed wire, and there was a slope down to the water’s edge and, eh, I was going out one morning, myself and another man and we missed him beside the bank and when we got up Cappagh Hill, well Moffitt’s Hill we used to call it, it leads now up to Belmont’s, [...] West, he was away up on the hill and we were stopped and we were chatting and talking to him. The other man says to him: “Was the Garda on you?” “Oh, no,” says he, “no.” “Did you shift it?” “Aye, got out, had a look at that place,” he says. And we asked him why. “Well,” he says, “I’m in the habit of going down,” he says, “washing myself in the morning, you could wash yourself in the water, you could walk out the quarry to the water’s edge. The next thing I knew I was washing myself down a couple of mornings back, says he, and I seen enough,” says he, “I got a fright in the nerves,” I says to him “what did you see?” “Oh,” says he, “you know them lads,” says he, “with the big jaw?,” he says. “Fish?” “No, no,” says he, “not a fish, no.” “If it was a fish,” he says, “I would have him.” “ ‘cause … would clean a river out in no time.” “Oh, you know them things,” he says, “does be out in the foreign countries in the water, big jaws on them.” “A crocodile, an alligator?” “That’s it, a crocodile, I seen one about that length, fierce looking.”

“Now people would think that was a yarn but it is possible it’s the truth because I’ll tell you why; that could have been a person now we all knew, an old farmer, could have made a place for a miniature croc that got too big, and that was down on that farm. Throw him into the quarry.”

Éilis NíDhuibhne: Did people have miniature crocs?

Paddy Lynch: So I believe, you know? So I believe. People used to […], well, not the likes of me, but, why would a man like me be interested in anything like that, you
know? But that’s it. He, he ran back down around our necks. Ah sure he wasn’t....
“I’m telling you,” said he one time, said he.
Bhuel, tá píosa, inseoidh mé píosa de scéal duit a d’éirigh atá thimpeall trí scór blianta ó shin ar an mbaile seo. Bhí na daoine ag dul amach ag iarraidh murlas ins an am sin agus bhi siad amuigh agus eangacha caite acu, ach bhí an fear seo, an curach seo ag dul amach chun deiridh agus bhí fear ar an gcéibh, bhí sé ag marú bólóg, Tomás a’ Búrca; agus chonaic sé an curach seo ag dul amach ach níor aithnigh sé ach beirt den fhoireann.

Bhuel, dúirt sé go raibh beirt eile ann agus nach raibh a thosnaigh aige cé a bhí féin ach dúirt sé, bhi, bhi fear as... triúr as Ceathrú na gCloch ann agus (fear)... beirt as Ceathrú na gCloch agus beirt as an gCóirrán Búi a bhí ann. Bhí Mártan Ó Mionacháin agus Andál Chónaill agus bhi fear eile de na Gallchobhairigh agus Pádraig Ó Conólaigh as Ceathrú na gCloch. Bhí an ceathrar sa gcurach ach níor aithnigh sé Conólaigh nó Gallchobhair nuair a bhí sé ar bharr na céibhe agus ní raibh siad a chur chun thimpeall scór slat ann uaidhe. Agus bhí Albannach ann amuigh ag iascaireacht le gceann de na Raghallaigh a bhí ar an mbailio de na Gallchobhairigh agus d'tiocfadh siad ach iascaireacht in Albain.

Bhuel, nuair a dúirt sé... fuaidh siad an róghra a chuir na saighdeachas le dul ag dul suas agus bhi an fharrage ag éirí ramhar feedh an ama agus dúirt sé go raibh rud aisteach ar an tráigh anocht thar oíche ar bith dá bhfaca sé ariamh ach an oíche seo a bhí sé in Albain. Agus dúirt sé, “má dhéanann síbh mo chomhairle-sa,” a dúirt sé, "ghabhfaidh muid abhaile ná beimid báite ná beidh duine eicint báite." Níor thug siad aon aird ar achar gur mheádaigh na himchóiraithe an-mhór go deo agus an was a dhiaidh siad ag bordú isterach na n-eangachtaí agus bhi an tráigh, bhí sé in aon toim amháin ulig agus nuair a tháinig siad chun na trághadh an sé an airidís agus an mhaide leis na Gallchobhairigh a bhí agus a bhí an tráigh agus 'ach uile dhuine ag caoineadh agus bhi beirt thear báite ar an tráigh: bhí Ó Conólaigh agus Gallchobhair bháite ar an tráigh.

Bhuel, d'imigh siad an róghra a chuir na saighdeachas le dul agus iomair siad Cónaill ar chor ar bith agus cuireadh Cónaill amach ón gcurach agus chuaign sé anonn an tráigh agus nuair a bhí sé thall a tháinig bhi an maide i leag ascal agus chieveaphail sé anois ná go dtáinig sé go dtí an tuirling ach níor lig sé an maide uaidhe ná go dtáinig sé isteach i dteach de na Raghallaigh ins an... amuigh
Well, I have something ... I will tell you a story that happened about sixty years ago in this place. The people were going out looking for mackerel at that time and they were out with their nets cast, but this man was going out last in this curragh and there was a man on the quay catching young codfish, Tomás a’Búrca, and he saw this curragh going out but he only recognised two of the crew.

Well, he said that there were two others and that he didn’t know who they were, but he said there was a man from ... there were three from Ceathrú na gCloch and a man ... two from Ceathrú na gCloch and two from An Corrán Buí were in it. They were Márta Monaghan and Andy McDonnell, one of the Gallaghers and Pádraig Connolly from Ceathrú na gCloch, they were the four that were in the curragh. But he didn’t recognize Connolly or Gallagher when he was at the top of the quay and they were only about twenty yards from him. And there was a Scotsman out fishing with one of the Reillys who lived in this village and he said in the middle of the night that the sea was rising a little bit and that he saw as strange a light on the shore as he had ever seen before, and to board, to board the nets so that they would go home and that he hadn’t seen the likes of this ever except once when he was fishing in Scotland.
Well, when he said... they all erupted in laughter about it... but any way they returned home and they noticed the curraghs going by and the sea was becoming choppy all the time and he said that there was something strange on the shore that night, stranger than anything he had seen before apart from that night in Scotland. “If you take my advice,” he said, “go home or we will be drowned or somebody will be drowned.” They paid no attention to him and the rollers just became exceedingly huge and they started taking in the nets and the shore was one whole big wave and when they came to the shore there were lanterns and women and children on the shore and everyone was crying and there were two drowned men on the beach: Connolly and Gallagher were drowned on the shore.

Well, that passed and they lifted Monaghan but they didn’t find McDonnell at all for he was thrown out of the curragh and was over the beach and there he was with the oar beneath his arm and he crept up until he came to the stony shore but he did not let go of the oar until he came into a house of the Reillys over in the village and when the old woman saw... [came] in, as she came in she knew he had been drowned before that... she knew that he had drowned, you know, and the report was out that Connolly was on the beach drowned, and [he had taken] the oar with him to the house. He did not let go – the grip of the person who has been drowned, he did not release the grip, you know, – the grip of the drowned person. And, “oh, it is you,” she said, “it is me,” he said, “did I not [just] hear that you were drowned? ”Well, I have not been drowned yet,” he said, “but it was close.”

The tide went out and the rollers were clearing the top of the pier and back again and the amount of fish that was swept up onto the beach that night were cleared away by morning and the high tide came up as far as the old coastguard-station. You know of the old coastguard-station? Leo Corduff: I know well about it, it is down on the grassy shore. Seán Ó Neachtain: Aye... and there were pieces of wood thrown up on the land and the storm increased and there were two old men, there was another old man over from Scotland there and he had a big long lantern and he went down and he thought he could be of some help to Gallagher who was sort of close [? dying], but Gallagher died and that was the night which most scared the Reillys ever when they came to the beach, and the big wave was and the Scotsman, but he was saying that those people were spirited away...,⁶ that they had been abducted and that he saw many people in Scotland when he was there drowned in the same way and that he saw them spirited away in like manner.

⁶ go gcaithfidh se [floodáil] left untranslated.
I myself was up in New York working on one occasion and I was told a story about someone that had drowned, about four people that had drowned and the four came into this house and they said to the people of the house: “We are drowned, but the four bodies will come ashore tomorrow,” they said, “and don’t lift those bodies or let nobody lay a hand on them and we will be put back.” Well, that was alright and there was a big basket of potatoes on a chair and they ate their fill of the potatoes. “Well, if we are taken tomorrow night,” he said, “we will never eat worldly food again but the food of the Good People.” That was what they said to them. Well, when the next morning came everyone went down to the shore looking for the bodies and they came back again. They said that you could not see anything down there, but pieces of old rope left on the beach. “And we will be gone forever.”
Bhí mé féin lá 7 is é an sórt rud a bhí mé a dhéanamh ag iarraidh feamainn dearg le haghaidh ceilpe. Agus ar charraig a bhíodh an fhéamainn dearg an uair sin againn. Bhíodh siad ar phoíil 7 bhiodh muid dhá tóigeáil ins na báid le rud a dtugann siad crúca mór orthab, gaefféannaí. Agus ansin bhíodh muid dhá tóigeáil chomh domhain scaiti 7 go mbíodh deich dtróithe fichead as an ngaif againn ar na poilí bhíúsí chomh domhain sin. Ach an lá seo ní raibh gaif ar bith againn. Bhí siad sa mbád againn ach ní raibh muid ag obair leob, agus bhí an fhéamainn tirim ar an gcaraígh, 7 bhí ceithre báid againn in éineacht, 7 fuilleach feamainn ag gach aon bhád de na ceithre báid. Agus na báid ligthe air againn le iad a luchtú isteach ar an trá leis an bhfheamainn le cleibh 7 muid lena dtarraingt as.

Ní raibh sé aon achar ann ón áit a raibh na báid ligthe ar thalamh againn 7 gan aon deoir usce fúthu ach leacht déanta ar gach aon taobh di a choinneodh direach í leis an bhfheamainn a chur inti. Agus cé bith caoi ar bhreathnaigh mé féin amach, chuadla mé go minic roimhe sin daoine ag rá go bhfuaiseadh daoine, gurbh é an t-aímn a bhíodh air Árainn Bheag. Chuadla mé caint air go bhí daoine é, 7 ní raibh mé ag tabhairt aon gheilleadh dó go bhfacadar é ann, nó go dtí an lá seo. Agus pér bith caoi a ní raibh muid féin air, dhírigh mé suas [7] chonica mé uaim é siar idir áit a dtugann siad an tOileán Iarthach air. Is air atá Oileán an tSolas atá ar an gceann thiar d’Árainn. Is air atá an teach solais déanta ar an oiléan céanna. Chonica mé é sin, an baile mór—b’fhacthas dom—ba bhreáichte b’fhacthas dom a chonica mé ariamh, 7 na fuinneogaí 7 na tithe a bhí le feiceáil.

There was one day and the sort of thing that I was doing was seeking red seaweed for kelp. And it was on rocks that we would find red seaweed that time. It would be in holes and we would be lifting it into the boats with a thing that they call large hooks or gaffs. And we would by times be lifting thirty foot lengths from the holes with the gaff as they would be so deep. But this day we had no gaffs. They were in the boat with us, but we were not working with them. And the seaweed was dry on the rock, and we had four boats together and each of the four boats had more than enough of seaweed. And we had the boats set out to be filled by us on the beach with creels.

It was not far from where we had the boats set up on land as they were without a drop of water under them, but had two flagstones on each side keeping them upright so as we could fill them, and whatever prompted me to look out. I had often heard people before that saying that people would see, and that it was called Little Aran. I had heard talk of it that people had seen it, but I had never believed it until that day. And whatever way I was, and when I straightened up I saw it in the distance, to the west, between the place that they call the Western Island. It is called the Island of Light, the one on the western part of Aran. It is on the same island that the lighthouse is built. I saw it, the finest town I thought I had ever seen, the windows and the houses that were to be seen.

What we had was a boat that was not too big, approximately two and a half tons each boat was. There were only two in each boat. There were three other boats and the boat that I had. And it was I who saw it at first, and we were rushing to gather the seaweed and to put it in heaps in such a way as we would have it there to fill the boat so as we would have the boat loaded before the flooding tide would come and the boat would be afloat again. But when I saw this I stood up looking at it for a while. And I called out to the others. We were close together in each place. I called out to them to the others to look to the west so that they must see, that I could see should
they see it, because I was able to see it. And each man that was with me stood up. 
There were eight of us in all, two in each of four boats. And each man, he stood up. 
And we were looking at the town and at the fine houses. We had not seen anywhere 
that seemed finer to us neither Galway, nor any place, nor any town. It was just in 
the middle of the sea, and when we were looking between the Island of Light, Aran 
and western side of Connemara.

And we were looking again and again at it until we said to ourselves that it was 
the same story for each of us, that it was as well for us [to get a move on] or the 
incoming tide would come [and take away] the seaweed which was [gathered]. The 
chance would have gone if we were to stay on. And if the tide had come, we would 
not have been able to take any of the seaweed from the place it was, unless we took 
it to the beach. And when we were tired looking at it, we noticed, it was there as it 
had been since we saw it at first or when we had stood up to look at it and everything. 
And when we had spent a while there working again, we looked and not one of us 
could see it. None of us could see it any longer and it was not to be seen.

Fig. 8: National Folklore Collection card catalogue at UCD.
Here is a bank [an island [Cíllsruithín] under water]⁷ outside Ballybunnion by the name of Keelstuheen and several see it and there was a Dalton woman in Faha, she living in a big farm there and her oats used be ate at night and corn and she thought it was the neighbour’s horse that was eating⁸ it and she kept the boy up to watch them⁹ and the horses were there and he ran and, a mare and foal, and he thought to pelt them¹⁰ and he struck the foal with a underwater lump of earth and the foal stood and the mare went and got down to the cliff¹⁰ and went to Keelstuheen¹¹. Her generations were there now up to sixty year ago, I remember the latter end of them¹. Buyers came there and they were the best horses that could be got. The mare went¹² and she was there. Well, up to the day that that mare died while she was down grazing along it the rest of the horses over the cliff¹⁰ she’d begin to neigh and be looking out at the island abroad. She’d begin to neigh, I suppose she used see them¹. The ships used to be coming in that time. There was no pilot boats that time but everyone¹³ to have the first to the ship of the men that used be piloting.¹⁴ And they used be up at night along the cliffs back to Rehy back to Killbaha watching them¹ until they’d be coming in and as soon as they see this fine ship this fine night coming with all white sail, a four-masted ship, they all raced for her as fast as they could and when they were facing her, the first man to face her to get a rope, he was the first man to have her. Just over the island down she went¹—it disappeared. She was a four-masted heavy sailing-ship, all white sails and all, and down she went¹² and they got all surprised¹⁵ and they said often that they used hear the cocks crowing in the island.

They did, several see it. There did an aunt of mine see it, a woman¹⁶ of the Carmodys and she picking duileasc¹⁷ off o’ the cliff¹⁰ and she called them¹ all to look out and all the people abroad in the island and it is known it is there. Well, then there did [something happen to her] and she didn’t live long, she was an able woman, she got a bad fever¹⁸ and died of it. I did [know] a man that was minding cows on the cliff¹⁰, along the back and he see all the people working away—cows

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⁷ In a footnote the NFC transcriber substituted the words ‘an island’ for ‘a bank’ and added the words ‘under water’. ⁸ ‘atin’ in the original NFC manuscript. ⁹ ‘um’ in the original NFC manuscript. ¹⁰ ‘Cliff’ in the original manuscript. ¹¹ ‘Keelstuheen’ inserted by NFC transcriber; ‘Cíllstuheen’ and ‘Keeltuheen’ deleted. ¹² ‘Wint’ in the original manuscript ¹³ ‘everywan’ in the original manuscript. ¹⁴ ‘[d]id have the ship’ suprascript. ¹⁵ ‘All surprised’ inserted by NFC transcriber; ‘afreight fright’ deleted. ¹⁶ ‘One’ deleted by NFC transcriber, ‘a woman’ inserted. ¹⁷ duileasc ¹⁸ ‘Faver’ in the original.
and horses and everything. That’s the reason it is called the Isle of Man. After that man it is called and as soon as he stood there and he wasn’t long there and he walked away and he looked again¹⁹ and he didn’t see it. “By Gorr,” he came back to where he was standing and he used see it as soon as he stand in this spot. So he went²² away again¹⁹ and he came several times and he stuck a kippin²⁰ where he was standing to mark²¹ it and he told²² them²²’ you come and everyone come, and anyone that [d]id stand [d]id see it, so they dug the sod and they put it in to the boat and the men rowed him off and he stood on the sod and steered the boat and landed on the island and the enchantment left²³ it and that is the Isle of Man now. So that is the reason it is called the Isle of Man, that man discovered it. Oh, I heard it all, it is a positive fact. That’s why it is called the Isle of Man, you know. He did and when he missed it he couldn’t get the spot again. Yes, he was a man of the Lynches long [a]go. He see Keelstuheen opened up, and he was looking and he was surprised and he see them all, horses and everything and as soon as he did he went away and when he went away after the cows then when he came back he didn’t know where he was standing; could never find it and if he may mark it he had it. Will you come any other day?²⁴

![Fig. 9: An Coireán, Spuncán, Co.Kerry. (Photographer: Caoimhín Ó Danachair, 1948).](image)

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¹⁹ ‘Agin’ in the original. ²⁰ From Mod. Irish cipín ‘little stick’. ²¹ Changed by NFC transcriber from ‘make’. ²² ‘Tolt’ in the original. ²³ ‘Enchantment left’ changed from ‘claimed’ by NFC transcriber. ²⁴ ‘aside when he was lived’ (added by NFC transcriber in a footnote).
St Martin’s Night

On St. Martin’s Night, any of the Wexford fishermen will never go fishing.

Long ago on St. Martin’s Night, a lot of fishermen were drowned at a place called Bull’s green near Rosslane.

When they were about to go out a strange man in a boat came up to them and warned them not to go out but they took no notice of the warning.

When they got out a few miles a terrible storm arose and they were all lost.

That was a terrible storm.

That’s the night the City

Fig. 10: St. Martin’s Night.
National Folklore Main Collection MS No. 107, p. 245
of Bannow was buried. Bannow was once a great place, a lovely city there, but a great flood drove swept it all over it and buried it all.

The Bear was shifted too on that night into the Town. If the fishermen did not all the fish in the sea they would not venture out to sea on St. Martin’s night, along the Wexford coast.

Fig. 11: St. Martin’s Night:
National Folklore Main Collection MS No. 107, p. 246
St Martin’s Night / Bannow

Duncormick (Wexford), Map No.: 14 (notes p. 70)  
Mary Cox

(1) St Martin’s Night

On St Martin’s Day²⁵ any of the Wexford fishermen will never go fishing. Long ago on St. Martin’s Night a lot of fishermen were drowned at a place called Ballygerry near Rosslare Pier. When they were about to go out a strange man on a horse came up to them and warned them not to go out but they took no notice of the warning. When they got out a few miles a terrible storm arose and they were all lost.

(2) That was a terrible storm

That’s the night the City of Bannow was buried. Bannow was once a great place, a lovely city there but a great tidal wave swept in over it and buried it all. The bar was shifted too on that night with the storm. If the fishermen got all the fish in the sea they would not venture out to sea on St Martin’s Night, along the Wexford coast.

²⁵ ‘Night’ deleted in the original manuscript; amended to ‘Day’ by IFC staff.
Pat John Eoghain’s Sea-horse

Teelin (Donegal), Map No.: 15 (notes p. 71)  I-0015/LL(G)

Micheál Ó hIghne

Bhí sean-iascaire as Teileann thiar fad ó shin in áit a dtugann siad Gobán an Uisce air, ag dulaidheacht ar bhradáin—i gcúl Shliabh a’ Liag thiar. Thug siad dul lá amháin ar iasc, agus nuair a bhí an eangach csónaithe isteach acu, cad é a bhí istigh insan eangaigh ach each uisce. Tugadh isteach insa bhád é, agus bhí cuid den fhóireann nach raibh fhíos acu cad é an cineál beathaigh é, ach bhí seanduine sa bhád a raibh fhíos aige go maith cad é an sórt a bhí ann, fear a dtugadh siad Pat John Eoghain air. Ní ligfeadh Pat dóibh á chur i bhfarraige. Bhí fhíos aige go maith gur each uisce a bhí ann agus nach ndéanfadh sé dochar ar bith daofa.

Nuair a bhí siad ag teacht abhaile cheangail seisean an t-each uisce i ndiaidh an bháid, agus tharraing siad ina ndiaidh é go dtug siad isteach anseo go Teileann é. I ndiaidh an bháid crutha chun an chladaigh naíon ri raibh fhíos aige cad é a dheanfadh sé léi, ach thug an fhóireann air a leigean ar ais ’na farraige. Rinne sé sin agus ón lá sin go dtí an lá inniu ni fhaca siad aon amharc uirthi cé bith áit a dheachaidh si. Bhí siad ag rach go raibh craiceann uirthi comh sleamhain le heascann agus a craiceann lán de stíocacha a raibh móran dathanna iontu. Chonaic go leor an t-each uisce sin nach bhfaca aon cheann ariamh roimhe sin nó ó shin.

Long ago an old fisherman from Teelin in a place named Gobán an Uisce was salmon fishing—behind Slieve League. They took one day to go fishing and when they put the net out what was in the net but a sea-horse. It was taken into the boat, and a lot of the crew didn’t know what kind of a creature it was but there was an old person on the boat that knew what it was, a man named Pat John Eoghain. Pat would not allow them to put it back into the sea. He knew that it was a sea-horse and that it wouldn’t cause them any harm.

When they were going home he attached the sea-horse to the boat and they pulled it after them until they reached Teelin. After they got to the shore he didn’t know what to do with it, but the crew asked him to let it back into the sea. He did that and since that day, up until the present, they didn’t see her again wherever she went. They were saying how her skin was as slippery as an eel and her skin was covered in stripes of many colours. Many saw that sea-horse, yet its like has neither been seen before nor since then.
Stories from Scotland
**Map 2**: Stories from Scotland

Black Symbols:  Stories in English

White Symbols:  Stories in Scottish Gaelic
tha cuimhne air bàthadh na Dubhsgeir gos a’ là ’n diugh, ach nuair a bha mi beag, bha ’m barrachd cuimhne aig na daoine a bha nuair sin a’ cromadh ris a’ cheithir fichead air a’ bhàthadh mhòr a bh’ ann.

Dh’fhaltach lán bata de mhuintir Bràigh ’n Tu Sear gu ruige Port Righ uair, air ceann-gnothaich. Bha ’ad ceart gu leòr a’ falbh. Bha solas a’ là aca, ach a’ tilleadh dhachaidh, rug an t-annoch orra, agus man deach ’ad ro fhad air adhart, dhorchaidh an oidhche. Bha luchd mòr anns a’ bhàta agus, bha feadhaninn diubh airson gun d’rachadh ’ad air tir ann an àiteigin, agus gun aotromaicheadh sin a’ luchd. Co-dhiù, nuair a ràinig ’ad Ruig, chaidh na h-uiread air tir ann a sin, agus, tha collach,¹ fear dhen an fheadhainn a chaidh air tir gun a dh’atharraich e inntinn agus, an deiidh dha cèach a leantainn airson crioman astair suas bhon a’ mhuir, thill e air ais ’na dheann chun a’ bhàta mas falbhadh i, ’s bha ’ad a’ ràitinn gu robh e cur teine as na clachan, cho luath ’s a bha e.

Co-dhiù, rug e air a’ bhàta, ’s chùm ’ad orra, agus bha ’d ceart gu leòr a’ dol air aghaidh ann an dorchas na-oïdhcheadh gus an d’ ràinig ’ad cùl Rubha nam Bràithrean—’s e àite th’ ann a siod a tha an abarrach cunnartach le sgeirean. Tha aon sgeir gu sònraicht’ ann ris an can ’ad an Duibhsgeir—sgeir ghrànda dhuhbh, direadh a-mach gu cas a s’ mhuir. Agus chaidh am bata air a’ sgeir ’s chuir i car dhi, agus bhàthadh a’ chuile duine a bha innte.

Bh’ e ri ràitinn gu robh coin an àite a’ caoineadh fad bliadhna, no còrr is bliadhna man do thachair a’ rud. Agus bha ’ad riabh a’ cur beadh air nuair a bhiodh coin a’ caoineadh, gur e manadh bha ann. Tha ’d a’ ràitinn gu bheil taibhs aig na coin agus aig na h-eich—gu bheil ’ad comasach air gnothaiichean a bhionna deon an t-saoghal eile fhaicinn. Agus bha coin Bràigh ’n Tu Sear a’ caoineadh fad còrr is bliadhna mar nach robh ’ad idir, idir, idir aig am sam bith eile roimhe na às a dhèidh!

Co-dhiù, cha d’fhuaradh am bata idir, agus dh’fhaltbh am bata agus na cuirp leis an t-sruth, agus tha mi a’ tuigsinn gun d’fhuaradh i ma dheidh an cladhach Gheàrrloch air a beul foidhe.

Agus bha aon duine na broinn agus greim-bàis aige air an toibhda. Bha boireannach às an àite againn a chunnaic aislig² anabarrach iongantach timcheall air a’ bhàthadh—chaill i fhèin a mac. Thainig e g’a h-ionnsaigh ann an aislig² na h-

¹ Normally coltach ‘likely, probably’; here reflects pronunciation.
² Normally aisling ‘dream’; here reflects pronunciation.
oidheachadh, agus thuirt e rithe mar seo: ‘Mhàthair,’ ars esan, ‘Saoilidh siu iongan-
tach gun deachaidh mise bhàthadh, duine bha cho math rium air snàmh. Nuair
a chaidh car dhen a’ bhàta,’ ars esan, ‘chaidh mise sios go ruig an grùнд, agus
chaidh mo cheann a sàs,’ ars esan, ‘ann a stamhan fada. Cha b’ urrainn mi mo
cheann a thoir asta, agus ’s e sin a chùm shios mi,’ ars esan, ‘agus a bhàth mi.
Mara biodh sin,’ ars esan, ‘dh’thaodainn an gnothach a bhith air a dhèanu air
faighinn go tir.’

Bha boireannach eile ann a chaill a cuid mac, chan eil cuimh’n’ ama-sa nach
do chaill i barrachd air aona mac. Ach thàinig fear de na chaill i, co-dhiù, ga h-
ionnsaigh ann an cadal na h-oidheachadh, agus thuirt e rithe, ‘Mhàthair,’ ars esan,
’tha’ n corp ama-sa agus corp fhheadhainn eile de na chailleadh ann an Eilean
na Cicheadh. Thàinig sinn air tir ann a sin.’ Agus an còrr cha tubhairt e mar
mhineachadh na mar fhoillseachadh air càite robh Eilean na Cicheadh. Co-dhiù,
uhair a dhùsg a mhàthair, chùm i ’n aislig—bha i ch’ ur dhì—’ na cuimhne, agus
bha i feòrach dhen a’ chuale duine bh’ air fàlbh aig iasgach ’s aig a-as an dùthaich,
robh fios aca cà robh Eilean na Cicheadh. Cha chuala duine riamh guth mu Eilean
na Cicheadh, agus bha tim a’ dol seachad ’s bha i mu dheireadh a’ smaoineachadh
nach robh ann ach direach bruadar, aig nach robh mòran ciall, agus cò thigeadh a’
rathad ach treud cheàrdairean a’ latha bha seo. Agus thàinig ’ad a-staigh. Agus, ’s
ann a smaoinich i gu, gù faighneachdadh i dhe na ceàrdairean an cuala ’ad iomradh
riamh air a leithid a dh’uïte. Dh’thaighneachd i dhùrbh. O bha à-san eòchach gu
leòr air Eilean na Cicheadh, agus thuirt ’ad rithe gu robh cheart eilean mach thar
còrsa Siorramachd Rois. Agus chaidh rannsachadh a dhèanu, agus fhuaradadh na
cuirp ann an Eilean na Cicheadh. Nise, bha cuimhne fada, fada air bàthadh na
Duibhsgeir anns a—air a Tu Sear, anns a’ chuid dheth dam boinninn-sa.

The drowning at Black Rock is remembered to this day, but when I was small people
who were approaching their eighties at that time remembered more about that great
drowning. A full boatload of people from the Braes of Trotternish left for Portree on
business. They were quite all right leaving. It was daylight, but coming back home
they were overtaken by the dark, and before they got much further the night got
darker. There was a heavy load in the boat and some of them wanted to go ashore
in someplace, to lighten the load. Anyway, when they reached Ruig, so many went
ashore there and, it seems, one of those who went ashore, he changed his mind and,
having followed the others for some way up from the sea, he raced back to the boat
before it left, and they said that he made sparks fly from the stones in his haste.

Anyway, he caught the boat and they kept on, and they were all right going on
in the darkness of night until they reached the back of Brothers’ Point—that’s a place
that is very dangerous with rocks. There’s one particular rock there called The Black
Rock—an ugly black rock, coming steeply out of the sea. And the boat went on the rock and capsized and everybody in it was drowned.

It was said the dogs in the place were howling for a year, or more than a year, before this thing happened. And they always noted that when dogs howled that was an omen. They say that dogs have visions, and so do horses, that they are able to see things of the other world. And the dogs of Braes of Trottemish were howling for much more than a year in a way that they never, never, never were at any time before or since. Anyway, the boat wasn’t found at all, and the boat and the bodies had gone with the current, and I understand it was eventually found on the Gairloch coast, upside down.

And there was one man in the boat, with a deathgrip on the thwart. There was a woman in our place who had a very peculiar dream about the drowning—she had herself lost her son. He came to her in a dream at night and he said this to her: ‘Mother,’ he said, ‘you’ll think it strange that I drowned, a man who was such a good swimmer. When the boat capsized,’ he said, ‘I went down to the bottom and my head was caught,’ he said, ‘in long tangle. I couldn’t free my head and that’s what kept me under,’ he said, ‘and drowned me. ‘But for that,’ he said, ‘I could have managed to get to land.’

There was another woman who lost her sons, I don’t remember whether she lost more than one son. But one of the ones she lost, anyway, came to her in her sleep at night, and said to her, ‘Mother,’ he said, ‘my body and the bodies of others who were lost are in Eilean na Cìcheadh. We came ashore there.’ And more than that he didn’t say, neither detailing nor revealing where Eilean na Cìcheadh was. Anyway, when his mother woke she kept the dream—it was so fresh to her—in her memory and she was asking everybody who went fishing and in the district, if they knew where Eilean na Cìcheadh was. Nobody had ever heard anything of Eilean na Cìcheadh, and time was passing and she was eventually thinking it was just a dream without much sense, when who should come the way but a company of tinkers one day. And they came into the house. And, she thought she would ask the tinkers if they had ever heard word of such a place. She asked them. Oh, they knew Eilean na Cìcheadh well enough and they told her the very island was across on the coast of Ross-shire. And a search was made and the bodies were found on Eilean na Cìcheadh. Now, the drowning at Black Rock was long, long remembered in Trotternish, the part of it where I belong.
Everything was going well as far as we could see until we were coming halfway up the Minch—it was then that I first noticed that the vessel was not sticking to the course that I usually went between Caol and Stornaway. And with that when I looked out for a light, I saw that the Miled light was upon us at the back of the vessel, instead of the boat coming into Stornoway and the Stornoway light guiding us in. And she was going like this all the way and as she was coming down she went closer to the fearann a’ Rubha [Point] itself, where she was not meant to go at all. As far to the east as the Point and an island that we call and know as Eilean nan Uan, is where we ended up. And when people saw that the vessel was so far off course, it came up close to the Point, and too close to that land, so that she was by no means out of danger. We had no room to manoeuvre and no idea at all what had happened. That meant that the boat had apparently been on the correct course, and we had no idea what was about to happen to us. There were others who we thought were better at navigating than we could do out there heading for the harbour.
It was just about this time that talk about leaving for Canada spread among the community. People were in a great rush to leave, because there was not a lot of income at hand at that very time. There didn’t appear to be any livelihood at all in spite of the strong connection those people of working age had to the place. Certain people came to encourage people to move away to the Land of Hope overseas, where nobody would want for or lack anything once they arrived. There were great houses to live in and instead of crofters’ patches that they had in Barra, there was going to be farms prepared for every single person. Many of the children who were at school with me were getting ready to go to Canada. Never mind the jealousy that I felt towards them, I couldn’t for the life of me understand why my own father was not heading off like everybody else was. My father’s brother was leaving with a very young family, and
I was present when he confided in his brother “Depending on how you’re getting on, tell me if it is as good as they are letting on, and if it is, we will be leaving ourselves.”

It was a deeply sad day the day that our friends and relatives travelled up to Castlebay, bidding everyone a final farewell, and leaving a deep sorrow in every part of the island. It was Dòmhnall Iain Mhòir, the bard of Vatersay who portrayed that scene best in the song ‘Lament for Barra’ which he composed in 1923. We understand in it how terribly painful the separation was.
An Crodh-mhara
Sea-cattle
Grimsay (Western Isles), Map No.: 4 (notes p.72) S-0004/LL(G)
Peter Morrison

Cha huala ma iuir is uair iad a’ bruidhinn man a’ chrohd-mhara agus bha na daoine bh’ aig an âm a bh’ ann a shen ga làn cheirdsinn, nuair a bha mis’ òg ’s a bhiomaid gan éisteachd, agus ar cluasan cho fad ri cluasan aiseil airson nach caileamaid facal. Bha iad a’ làn cheirdsinn gu robh ’n crohd-mar’ ann. Sàoilidh mi gu faic mi feadhainn aca nuair a bhiodh iad a’ bruidhinn nam measg ëirean, feadhainn a thigeadh a staigh le ceist: “Saoil a-neist ciamar ... Dé cho fad ’s a bhiodh iad ... air tìr na gu dè ... luibh bha iad as a dheaghaidh agus bha a’imh aca air a’ luibh agus tha i air a’ mhachaire fhathast ... gortan na rudeigin ... Well, a neist, a’ luibh a bha seo air a’ mhachaire, tha e collach’ gu h-e seo a’ luibh a bha ’n crohd-mar’ tighinn d’ionailt’ air. Agus dh’fhéumadh a’ ghealach a bhith ann a suidheadadh àraid ... chor ’s gu robh i fhèin ’s a’ seol-mara air feadh na h-oidhche a’ freagairt air a chèile. Agus ’s ann aig suas go isle tragadh, muir-tràigh, ’s ann a bha ’n crodh-mar’ ma b’ fhior, a’ tighinn go tir. Bha buachaillean ri bhith nan cois agus bha iad ri bhith air tir go an t-ionndaidheadh a’ lionadh. ’S nuair a thionndaidheadh a’ lionadh, bha an uair sin, ge b’ e cò ’n ceannard a’ bh’ ann, na cò ’m buachaille bha muigh aig muir, bha e ’tighinn dlùth air cladh tir agus ag èibheach:

Donnach, Tromach, Sgiathan, Liathan!
Thigeadh an crohd-loigh
Codhìu thig na dh’fhan na buachaillean.

Gus cha robh e ullamh leis a seò idir. B’ e seo an t-àm dhan an fhéadhainn a bh’ ann a sgairte-falaich—mar a theireadh iad—air a’ mhachaire a’ feithreamh agus lân an cròigeadh do dh’ uirt aca ’s nuair a bha iad a’ cluinn teil seo bha iad a’ tighinn a-nuas bho na boitaichan a’ feithreamh air a’ ghlaodh a bha seo far na faigeag agus nuair a bhiodh beothach a’ dol seachad orra, bha iad a’ caith lân an dùrn dhen úr mun chliathach na mun a’ cheann air a’ bheothach ’s bha ’m beothach sen a’ seasamh far a’ roh e. ’S doch gu faigheadh iad a dhà na tri an oidheche sen agus gheibhheadh iad a leithid eile rithist fhad ’s a bhiodh an uine bh’ ann, uin araith, mar gum biodh, a’ ruith, a bhithheadh iad a’ tighinn go tir—mar gum biodh sëusan—agus as a dheaghaidh sen sguireadh iad go na h-ath-bhliadhna a-rithist. Agus sen a’ rud às an tânaig a’ rann a bha siud:

1 Normally coltach ‘likely, probably’; here reflects pronunciation.
Donnach, Tromach, Sgiathan, Liathan!
Thigeabh a chrodh-laoigh
Thigeadh na dh'fhàin na buachaillean.

Nan tigeadh an crodh uileag, an àireann a chaidh go tir, bha 'n gnothach gu math, ach bhathar coma—b’ thurasda buachaillean-fhaighinn … Bha na seann daoine bh’ ann an uair ud, well, tha … canaidh mi gu bheil còrr is tri fichead bliadhna bhuaiththe seo, on a bha mise ’g éisteachd nan gnothaichean sen, agus faoidh mi ràdha … gu robh feadhainn aca ’creidsinn gu robh pàirt a dh’a bhruidh-mhara air feadh nan duthchannan againn chon a latha ’n diugh. Bha iad a’ creidsinn … gu robh iad aithnichte … agus ’s ann maol a bha iad ri bhith … ’s ann maol a bha iad. D.A. MacDonald: Robh aite sa’ bith sònraichte as an dúthaich far a robh iad a’ ràdha ’m biodh an crodh-mara seo a’ tighinn air tir?

P. Morrison: Machaire ’n Taobh an Iar … agaibh fhèin, bha e air a shònrachadh air a shon, agus machaire Bheinne Fadhla.

I’ve heard them time and again talking about sea cattle, and the people in those days quite believed in them, when I was young and we would listen to them, and our ears as long as donkeys’ ears so as not to lose a word. They quite believed that sea cattle existed. I think I can see some of them speaking amongst themselves, someone would come in with a question: “Now how do you think … How long … would they have been ashore, or what plants were they after?”—and they had a name, for the plant and it’s on the machair still … gortan or something …

Well, now, this plant on the machair, apparently these were the plants that the sea cattle used to come and graze upon. And the moon had to be in a particular phase so that it and the tide worked together that night. And it was when the tide was almost out, full ebb, that was when the sea cattle came onto land, so they said. There would be herdsmen with them, and they would be ashore until the tide turned. And when the tide turned, then whoever was in charge, or whatever herdsman there was out at sea, he would come in close to the shore and cry:

Donnach, Tromach, Sgiathan, Liathan!
Let the milch cows come
Whether the herdsman come or stay.

And that wasn’t the end of it. That was the moment the people who were in a hide—as they called it—on the machair were waiting for, holding handfuls of earth, and when they heard this they would come down from the dunes [where they had been] waiting
for this shout out at sea, and when one of the cattle passed them they would throw
a handful of earth at the side or at the head of the animal, and that animal would
stop in its tracks. They might well get two or three that night, and they could get as
many more again as long as the period, as it were a set period, lasted, during which
they came ashore—a season, as it were—and after that they were finished till the
next year again. And that’s the origin of that rhyme:

Donnach, Tromach, Sgiathan, Liathan,
Come milch cows
Let the herdsmen come or stay.

If all the cattle came back, the number that had gone ashore, all was well, but they
didn’t care—it was easy to get herdsmen … The old people at that time, well … I’d say
that’s more than sixty years ago, since I heard about these matters, and I can say …
that some of them believed that there was some of the stock of the sea cattle in our
part of the country till the present day … They believed … that you could recognise
them … and they were supposed to be hornless … they were polled.
D.A. MacDonald: Was there any special place hereabouts where they said the sea
cattle used to come ashore?
P. Morrison: The machair on the West Side [of North Uist] … over your way, it was
noted for that, and the machair in Benbecula.

Solais is Taibhsean
Ghostly Light

Morvern (Argyll), Map No.: 5 (notes p. 72) S-0005/MF(G)

Bha m’athair ag radhainn, direach beagan man do chaochail e—b’ àbhaist
be—bha e ann an taigh beag, ’s na Druimeanan an sin; nuair a bha e deas
de bhith ’g obair an Cill Fhionntainn, fhuair e cottage beag, ’s bha e fanachd an sin.
Bha e an oidhche seo, bhiodh e daonnann dol a-mach dh’fhaicinn an saoghal—cha
rohb wireless ann ’s na lìithean sin—’s cha chluinneadh tu dè an seòrsa side bha dol
a bhith ann a-màireach. Bhiodh e daonnann a’ dol a-mach, m’athair, ’s an oidhche.
’O, tha an t-uisge dol a bhith ann a-màireach’. Latha math a-màireach’, ’s mar
sin. ’S an oidhche seo chaidh e mach—beagan man do chaochail e, mìos no sin
man do chaochail e—chaidh e mach don dorast, ’s thuirt e ri m’ mhàthair, a-staigh.
’Tig a-mach a seo, a Sheasaidh’—cha bhruidhneadh i Ghàidhlig ach bhiodh esan
a’ bruidhinn rithe sa Ghàidhlig, ach fhreagradh ise sa Bheurla mar as bitheanta.
‘What are you seeing now?’ ‘I see this. Thig a-mach a seo. Bheil thu faicinn an t-solais sin a-mach aig a’ bhùidh?’ ‘Chan eil’. Oidhche feàtha breagha. Cha robh bàta air an t-saoghal a thigeadh taobh staigh a’ bhùidh. Sin far a robh am bàta a’ tighinn, an Lochinvar, leis na litríchean ‘s an stòras a bhiodh a’ tighinn ‘s na làithean sin. An Lochinvar. Chaidh i fodha an äiteigin a-mach a-sin. Chitheadh sibh anns a’ phàipèar.


Mìos an-dèidh sin thàinig an corp aig fhèin air tìr an sin. Chitheadh esan—chitheadh e rudan mar sin, m’ athair. Chunnaic e sin.

**John MacInnes:** Dè chanadh iad ri duine aig a robh a leithid sin, a chluinneadh ‘s a chitheadh rudan?

**Jessie Cameron:** Well, cha chreid mise nach e gisreagan a theireadh a’ chuid as motha dhiu ris. Gisreagan.

**JMcI:** Agus an canadh iad gu robh sealladh aig duine no ...

**JC:** O ... 

**JMcI:** Dè bha sin a-nis? Dè bha’s an t-sealladh?

**JC:** Well, chitheadh iad rudan agus—feadhainn a chitheadh iad muinnìr tiodhlaic-eadh no rudeigin mar sin.

**D.A. MacDonald:** Bha daoine ann an chunnaic tiodhlaiceadh, mar gum bitheadh?

**JC:** Bha feadhainn ann a chluinneadh sin, agus bha feadhainn ann—chuala mi e, ach chan fhaca mi iad riamh—ach chuala mi iad ag radhainn gu robh feadhainn ann a theireadh, ‘Thig, thig, thig a-staigh às an rathad. Thig a-staigh às an rathad gus a faigh sin seachad’.

*My father* said, just a while before he died—he used to be—he was in a wee house in Drimnan there; after he had finished working in Killundine he got this wee cottage, and he was living there. This night he was—he always went outside to view the world; there was no wireless in those days and you didn’t hear what tomorrow’s weather was going to be like. He always went outside, my father, at night. ‘Oh, it’s going to rain tomorrow’. ‘A good day tomorrow’, and things like that. And this night he went outside—a while before he died, a month or so before he died—he went out to the doorway and he said to my mother inside, ‘Come out here, Jessie’—she didn’t speak Gaelic, but he used to speak to her in Gaelic, but she would usually reply in English.
'What are you seeing now?' 'I see this. Come out here. Do you see that light out by the buoy?' 'No'. A lovely calm night. No boat in the world would come in inside of the buoy. That was where the boat came in, the Lochinvar, with letters and stores that came in those days. The Lochinvar. It sank somewhere out there. You would see it in the paper.

'Och! How do you not see that? It's just—look at it! Look at it! It's just down below the house, coming in from the buoy. Do you not see that?' 'No', she said, 'there's no light there'. 'There is a light there', he said. 'Do you not see it?' 'No'. 'Put your foot on top of my foot'. 'I will not put my foot on top of your foot', my mother told him. 'Well, you won't see it if you don't. There it is coming in by the pier'—a small pier where the small boat came in. It went out then.

A month after that his own body came ashore there. He could see—he could see things like that, my father. He saw that.

John MacInnes: What did they call someone who had that sort of thing, who could hear and see things?

Jessie Cameron: Well, I think most people called it gisreagán⁴ Gisreagan.

JMcI: And would they say that a person had the sealladh⁵ or…

JC: Oh …

JMcI: What was that now? What was the sealladh?

JC: Well, they would see things and—some would see a funeral procession, or something like that.

D.A. MacDonald: There were people who saw funerals, as it were.

JC: There were people who could hear that, and there were people—I heard it, but I never saw them—but I heard them say that there were folk who would say, 'Come, come, come in out of the way. Come in out of the way until that gets by'.

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⁴ Elsewhere giseagan, 'charms or spells' (editor's note, Tocher 57, 37).
⁵ Word used for 'second sight'.
Would you like me to tell you about the Brig *Exmouth* ... it was from Derry that she was supposed to have set sail and she foundered in that bay—it’s nearer Braigo than Saligo—and it was said that if they hadn’t panicked that they would all have been saved, but they jumped overboard. Now my mother’s people lived in Saligo, and my mother’s grandmother saw the bodies of these people that were drowned and she said beautiful Irish girls, and you know there were families as well, with children, and she told me about this little girl who was down on the shore with her mother and she found a doll, you see, and she took the doll home. And that night she [the mother] dreamt about this little girl that was crying and crying for her doll, so they took the doll back and buried it.

*Fig. 13:* Calum Iain Maclean (Calum Iain Mac Gilleathain, 1915–1960) recording Angus (Barrach) MacMillan (1874–1954), Griminish, Benbecula.
Stòiridh a’ Titanic

Story of the Titanic

Grimsay (Western Isles), Map No.: 7 (notes p. 73) S-0007/MM(G)

Peter Morrison

Stòiridh bheag ghoirid mu dheidhinn iongnadh a ghabh mi a’ latha làinseadh a’ Titanic. Aig an âm a bh’ ann a shin, bha mi air tè bhàtaichean Ghlaschu—a’ Redbreast an t-aìnn a bh’ oirre—tè bhàtaichean Bhruns, a’ ruth eadar Glaschu agus Belfast. Bha sinn a’ fàgail Ghlaschu feasgar suas mu leth-uair an dèidh a seachd is a’ tadhal air Prince’s Pier ’s a’ toir air bòrd rudan ann a shin; bhiodh iasg gle thric—bogsàichean ëisg. Agus an dèidh tuilleadh dàlach a dhèanamh air Prince’s Pier an Guraig, bha sinn a’ falbh gu muir. Bhiomaid thall ann am Belfast a’ dol a-steach gun a’ chidhe, mu shoilleireachadh a’ latha.

A’ latha bha seo bha trilleach mòr ann ann aig a’ làinseadh ... na Titanic; am bát’ iongantach a bh’ ann a’ seo. Chitheamaid bhuainn i ’s i mar gum biodh tür mòr na caisteal.

’Suidheachadh air a robh sinne ’g obrachadh air a’ bhàta: nuair a bha sinn ’sa nighe sios sa mhadaimm, bha sinn an uair sin a’ gabhail biadh, sinn finn, ’s bha ’n còrr dhen lath’ againn gu ceithir uairean feasgar. Nuair bha e ceithir uairean ... Dh’haodamaid a dhol a chadal na dhol gu tir. Nuair a bha ceithir uairean feasgar a’ tighinn bha sinn a’ tionndadh a dh’obair a-rithist a’ cur suas bùird—dealachadh—ann a’ stàillicheachan, airson bha mòran de chròdha againn ga thoir a-nall a Ghlaschu à Eirinn. Agus bhiomaid ann a shin gus an tigeadh an crodhd air bòrd; ’s bha againn rin ceangal—dual air choireigin do ròp a chur mu na h-adhaircean na mu na h-amhaichean ’s na sròn an acus gus nach fhaìghheadh iad a bhith ’sabaid ri chèile: feadhainn air a rohb adhaircean ’s feadhainn nach rohb.

Ach a’ latha seo—latha làinseadh na Titanic—cha deach duine a leabaidh na gu tir. Bha sluagh a’ bhail’ uileag a’ tionndadh sios gu bruaich na h-àibhneadh. B’ e sin an taobh air a rohb sinne dhen abhainn cuiheadch: ’s ann air an taobh mu ar coinneamh a bha ’n gàrradh-irainn far an deach ise thogail agus bha ladsan gu bhith [g]a slide-adh a-mach gu ’n tè bha gu bhith na màthair dhi—an cuan mòr. Bha iad cho tiugh ’s a thoilleadh iad mu choinneamh a’ ghàrraigh ’s a’ bhàta, sios taobh na h-àibhneadh. Bha sinne, chuíle duine bh’ air bòrd, sios ann a shuid cuid-eachd—feadhainn againn a dhà na trii triu ’s a dhà na trii triu ann a’it’ eile. Bhathar a’ feithemh gun fhacal airson greis mhath do dh’uine—cluinneir glogadhach taobh eile na h-àibhneadh agus a’ faicinn gluasad sluaigh agus mòran do sluagh air gach taobh den gàrradh a bharrachd air na bha ’staigh ann; gheibh duine sam bith a-staigh a dh’faicinn bòta ’ga cur dhan mhuir. Ma tha caraid agad ag obair a-staigh anns a’ ghàrradh co-dhìù, fear-ciùird sam bith, gheibh e a-staigh a bhean
A short little story about something that shocked me on the day of the launching of the Titanic. At the time I was on one of the Glasgow boats, it was called the Redbreast, one of the Burns boats running between Glasgow and Belfast. We were leaving Glasgow late in the evening at about half past seven and heading for Prince’s Pier to load things on there. It was very often fish—boxes of fish. And after more delay on Prince’s Pier in Gourock we were heading out to sea. We would be over in Belfast going into the pier around daybreak.

On this day there was a big commotion at the launch of the Titanic, which was an amazing boat. We would see it out there as if it were a large tower or castle. As to our own situation working on the boat, we washed her down in the morning, had some food then, and we had the rest of the day until four o’clock in the afternoon. When it was four o’clock we could go and sleep or go ashore. When four o’clock was approaching we returned to work again putting up fencing partitions for stalls, because we were taking a lot of cattle over to Glasgow from Ireland. And we would wait there until the cattle came on board, and we had to tie them—to put some type of rope link around the horns, or around the necks and noses so that they would not be able to fight with each other; those that had horns and those that hadn’t.

But this day—the day of the launching of the Titanic—nobody went ashore or to sleep. All the townspeople were heading down to the riverbank. That was the same
side of the river as we were on as well, opposite us was the iron-works where she was built. And they were going to slide her out to what was her natural mother—the open sea. People were as densely packed as could be around the boat-yard and the boat down by the river bank. All of us on board, we were down there as well: two or three of us here and two or three of us there. Everyone waited for as a good while. We could hear a clanging on the other side of the river and could see a movement in the crowd, with many of them all around the yard as well as those who were inside it, anybody can get in to see a boat being launched. If you have a friend working in the yard however, a tradesman of any type, he can get his wife and his children in. I had my family with me watching the launch in Stephens’ yard while I was working there.

And we heard in English “There she goes! There she goes!” it was her first motion out to sea, going into service for those who had built her. There were two older Irishmen—one who was almost touching my right shoulder, his companion was right beside him on his right. Each of them had a short clay pipe in his mouth and a double-billed cap. I can’t remember what type of tweed was in the jackets they were wearing or what was in the trousers.

The boat then left as easily and as gracefully as anything the crew or myself could see. She went into the sea. The weights stopped her, they stopped her when she was afloat. But the small chap who was nearest to me turned to his companion and took his pipe out of his mouth. He said: “Mark my word Pat,” says he, “she’ll be an unlucky ship.” And that was the Titanic, and that was the day she was launched. We discussed it amongst ourselves over and over when we got back to the place. That was the topic of conversation for days: what had the old fellow seen, you would think that he had prior knowledge, if there was any sense in what he said to his friend, “Mark my word Pat, she’ll be an unlucky ship.”

And unlucky she was.⁶

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⁶ Donald Archie MacDonald also supplied a transcription of the story currently held at the School of Scottish Studies Archives, University of Edinburgh; the translation above was made by the project team.
Fig. 14: Nan MacKinnon and Jonathan MacLeod
(Photographer: James Ross, November 1958).
Each Mara Mhàiri Iain Mhicheal

Màiri Iain Mìcheal’s Sea-horse

Vatersay (Western Isles), Map No.: 8 (notes p. 73) S-0008/MF(G)

Nan MacKinnon

James Ross: Did you ever hear an account from anybody about the sea-horse?

Nan MacKinnon:

I did. My grandmother saw the sea-horse, Màiri Iain Mhicheal they called her. She was on the shore collecting seaweed—it was seaweed that they used to put on the potatoes in Mingulay—there was no fertilizer there, you see, the shore was so wild, they used to have to go to the islands collecting seaweed when the yearly bounty of it came in. And anyway, the vessel went away to other places and left my grandmother collecting tangles with a sickle. And she then heard this noise on the other side, and she raised her head, and the horse was after jumping out of the sea, directly behind her, and she said that she saw its back and that it was grey; she saw its back—not that it was grey and there was carragheen on its back just as you would see on the rocks—on the rocks on the shore, and with the fright that she took she nearly cut her finger off with the sickle. And it was said that the people of Pabbay saw it after that.
Stories about Mermaids

Jonathan MacLeod & Nan MacKinnon

James Ross: Bhithinn a’ cluinntinn daoine a’ bruidhinn air a’ mhaighdean mhara, Eòin. An cuala sibh naidheachd riaghm mu dheidhinn?

Jonathan MacLeod:

Chuala, agus tha mi a’ smaoineach’ gura h-i a chunna mi—a’ mhaighdean mhara. Nuair a bha mi nam bhalach bhithemaid a’ dol a coimhead nan caorach aig am breith nan uan agus bha mi fhin ’s gille eile air cliathach Beinn Bhatarsaigh. Bha latha breaigh ’s gun deò gaoithe ann, agus an grunnid cho clior. Agus chunna sinn beathach, agus shaoil sinn ann tòiseach gun ròn a bh’ ann, ach nuair a thàinnig e bàrr na fairge, dh’aithnich sinn air an t-shape aige nach e ròn a bh’ ann idir. Agus cha do thuig sinn gu dè rud a bh’ ann. Ach bha gualainn a’ seo aige, mar gum biodh boireannach no duine a bh’ ann, agus an córr dhe na iasg, agus gruag air mar gum biodh air boireannach, na air fireannach air am biodh gruag fhada, agus thug sinn aon chaiteal na h-uairach ga coimhead, agus chaidh e fodha an uair sin, agus chan fhaca sinne tuilleadh e.

JR: Dè a bha e a’ dèanamh fhad ’s a bha sibh a’ coimhead air?

JML: Cha robh e ach a’ snàmh—bha e a’ snàmh fon uisge ’s air uachdar an uisg’. Ach tha seansa a-rithist gun fhaca boireannach e agus fireannach, a mhuinntir a’ bhaile a-rithist.

JR: Agus dè bhiodh iad a’ cantainn mun a’ mhaighdean mhara—an e comharradh na ...?

Nan MacKinnon:

S’e droch—chuala mise co-dhiù gur e droch-comharr a bh’ ann a faicinn, agus chuala mi bodach a bh’ ann am Miughalaigh uaireigin dhen t-saoghal, ris an canadh iad Iain mac Ruairidh, agus tha ’n ùine cho fada bhuaidhe ’s gur e cóta mòr a bhiodh orra a’ dol dhan chuan agus èileadh—èileadh clò. Ach co-dhiù dh’halbh iad latha a bha seo dhan a’ chuan ’s Chunnaic Iain mac Ruairidh a bha seo, Chunnaic e a’ mhaighdean mhara. Agus bha iad ag ràdh a gun do dhèibh i dha: “Iain ’ic Ruairidh, an fhaic thu mise?”

“A Leabhra, ma chi,” ars’ Iain Mac Ruairidh, “ ’s droch bhàrr déis’ thu.”

“An deach thu riamh” arsa ise, a’ mhaighdean mhara, “an deach thu riamh” arsa ise, “na leithid a chumnaist reihimid?”

“Chaidh,” arsa esan, “nuair a bha mi eadar an eilid’ s an iomairt (?)”.
“Latha mhic do mhàthar,” ors’ ise, “gun robh fuasgladh facail agad dhomhsa.”
Cha robh ach dhi’àgh iad na lin is thug iad an taigh orra, ’s cha robh sgath ann ach direach gun tug iad a-mach a’ chreag leis a’ stoirm.

JR: ’S bhiodh iad ag ràdh cuideachd gur comharradh droch-thìde a bh’ ann.
JMcL: ’S e, ’s e sin a bh’ ann. Cha robh cumntais riadh aca air a’ mhaighdean mhara fhaicinn, nuair a bha iad aig a’ mhuir. Bha iad daonann a’ dèanamh air tir nuair a chitheadh iad i.

James Ross: I used to hear people talking about the mermaid, Eòin. Did you ever hear an account of her?
Jonathan MacLeod: Yes, and I think it was her that I saw—the mermaid. When I was a boy we used to go to watch the sheep at lambing time and I and another young boy were on the side of Ben Vatersay. It was a fine day and there wasn’t a breath of wind and the seabed was so clear. And we saw a creature, and we thought at first that it was a seal but when it came to the surface of the sea, we realized from the shape of it that it wasn’t a seal at all. And we couldn’t understand what it was. But it had shoulders, as if it were a woman or a man, and the rest of it was like a fish, and it had hair like a woman’s, or like a man with long hair and we spent all of a quarter of an hour watching it; and it went underwater then, and we saw no more of it.
JR: What was it doing when you were watching it?
JMcL: It was just swimming—it was swimming underwater and on the surface of the water. But there is a chance that a man and a woman saw her again, local people.
JR: And what did they used to say about the mermaid—was it a sign or ...?

Nan MacKinnon:
It’s a bad... I heard anyway that it’s a bad sign to see her, and I heard of an old man one time in Mingulay, who they called Iain mac Ruairidh and it is such a long time ago that they used to go to sea with long coats and a kilt—a kilt of tweed. Anyway they set out to sea one day, and this same Iain mac Ruairidh saw a mermaid. And it was said that she called to him: “Iain Mac Ruairidh, do you see me?”
“I swear if I do,” said Iain Mac Ruairidh, “that you are a bad sign (?)”.
“Have you ever been,” said she, the mermaid, “have you ever been,” said she, “in such danger before?”
“Yes,” he said, “When I was between danger and the hind (?)”.
“A good day for your mother’s son,” she said, “that you could solve a riddle for me.”
They just abandoned the nets and headed for home, and barely reached the cliff with the storm.

JR: It used to be said as well that it was a sign of bad weather.

JMcL: That’s it indeed. There was never an account of seeing a mermaid out at sea. They were always heading back to land when they would see her.
The next three stories presented in this section were collected by Donald Macdonald on Eriskay (Western Isles) in the 1930s. Subsequently, the manuscripts were presented to the Director of the Irish Folklore Commission, James Delargy.

**Manadh an Sgadain**

*Premonition about Herring*

**Eriskay (Western Isles), Map No.: 11 (notes p. 74)**  
*Ronald Johnston*

Bliadhna a bha siud bha mi agus Dòmhnall Ruadh Mac Nèill, taibhsear na h-Acarsaid, anns an aon bhàta’s sinn ri iasgach a’ sgadain ann an lochanan an Eilein Sgitheanach. Dè thàinig oirrn ach stoirm aon latha’s thàinig oirrn ruith le soirbheas làidir on deas a-staigh do bhàgh beag a tha air taobh a tuath Loch Bhàradail. Dh’acraich sinne beagan a-mach on chladach ach chaidh bàta eile a dh’headhainn a thàinig a-staigh còmhla rinn a-staigh gu taobh a’ chladaich agus laigh e an sin an cois na laimrig.

A-nis a’ bhliadhna a bha seo rinn sinne agus a h-uile tè eile do bhàtaichen Èirisgeigh sàr iasgach ach cha do rinn an tè àraidh a bha seo a thàinig a-staigh còmhla rinn na phàigheadh a’ chosgais. Agus bha na daoine bochda a bha innte gu math tùrsach ri linn seo.

Ach co-dhiù nuair a dh’ith mi fhèin ‘s Dhòmhnall ar biadh dh’fhalbh suas agus shuidh sinn gu h-àrd air a bord-uachdair. Las sinn ar pioban’s thòisich sinn air bruidhinn a-null’s a-null mu iasgach’s mu rudan eile. Cha b’fhada gus an tug mi fhéin an aire dha-san a’ coimhead gu geur air a’ bheinn a bha’s eirigh car suas os ar cionn, agus aig an aon am rinn e greim dùth air làimhm orm.

“Dè idir a tha ceàrr ort, a Dhòmhnaill?” arsa mi fhèin. Cha tuirt Dòmhnall aon diog às a bheul ‘s nuair a chunnaic mise sin leig mi leis. Bha e an impis an dà shùil fhàgail ann an taobh na beinne. Choimheadadh e an toiseach air a fior bharr ‘s chumadh e air a’ coimhead mar sin a-nuas gus an ruigeadh e am bàta a bha fo a bonn. Ged nach roh bhith mise a’ leigeil sion orm bha mi ag ràdh ‘nam inntinn fhéin gun roh bh an duine air a dhol thar a chin, ach mar a thuirt mi roimhe leig mi leis.

An ceann ùine mhòr thug Dòmhnall an crathadh ùr air fhéin agus thionndaich e a shùilean an rathad a bha mise.


Rinn e gàire agus sheall e orm. “A bheil thu faicinn a’ bhàta ud thall an siud?” arsa’ esan.
“Tha,” arsa mise, “chan ann fad air falbh tha i.”
“Tha fios agad,” ars’ esan, “nach do rinn am bàta do dh’iasgach am bliadhna na chumadh aon duine ann am biadh fad seachdain.”
“Tha,” arsa mise a-rithist.
“On là an-diugh a-mach matà,” ars esan, “tha am bàta ud a’ dol a dheanamh iasgach nach do rinneadh a leithid riamh cho math ann an lochanan an Eilein Sgitheanaich.”
“Nach bu tusa am fàidh,” arsa mise, “ciamar a fhuair thu sin a-mach?”
“Inmsidh mise sin dhut,” ars’ esan, “ma gheallas tu nach fosgail thu do bheul air ní de na chanas mi ri duine gu bràth.”
“Tha mi g a ghealttaim sin,” arsa mi fhèin’s mi nis ar bhogadan feuch dè bha mi a’ dol a chluinntinn.
“Bha mise,” ars’ esan, “matà a’ coimhead air fior mhullach na beinne sin mur coinneamh nuair a chunnaic mi baraillte sgadain a’ nochdadh bhàrr a’ bhuinnean às àirde dhi agus thòisich e rì roladh a-nuas cliathach na beinne riamh gus an do ràinig e am bàta agus nuair a ráinig, a-staigh înnte gun do ghabh e. Thàinig iad an uair sin nan sruth fear as dèidh fir gun stad gun sgur gus an robh mise a’ smaointinn gun tàinig leis a’ bheinn na lìonadh an long mhòr a dh’halbh leis na h-eilthirich. Bha a h-uile baraillte mar a bha tighinn a’ gabhail a-staigh na broinn ach chan aithnicheadh tu air a’ bhàta gun deach cudthrom ith clachairain înnte. Nuair a dh’holaích am fear mu dheireadh a-staigh troimh cliathach bha h-uile sion mar a bha e roimhe ’s chan fhaca mise an còrr.”
“Agus tha thu a’ deanamh a-mach bhuaithe sin,” arsa mise, “gu bheil am bàta sin a’ dol a dheanamh deagh iasgach as a dhèidh seo, rud nach do rinn i am bliadhna fhathast.”
“ ’S e sin a’ seadh a tha mise a’ toirt às na chunnaic mi co-dhiù,” arsa Dòmhnall Ruadh, “agus foaaidh tusa chluas dheas a ghearradh dhiom ma tha mi breugach.”
“Chan eil fios agam-sa,” arsa mise, “ach mar a thuirt an duine dall, chi sinn.”
Agus gun teagramh sam bith sinn a chunnaic. Cha robh aon oidhche as a dhèidh seo nach robh am bàta ud làn sgadain agus rud a bu neònachd uile ged a b’ ann anns an lòn-shítig a chuireadh iad na lín cha bhiodh iad oidhche sam bith falamh.

One year myself and Dòmhnall Ruadh Mac Nèill, the seer of Acarsaid, were on the same boat, going to fish for herring in the sea-lochs of the Isle of Skye. What came over us one day but a storm and we ended up being carried by a strong southerly breeze into a small bay which is north of Loch Bracadale. We anchored a little distance out from the shore but another boat of men who came in with us went to the edge of the shore and it lay there next to the landing point.

Now that year our boat and all the other Erriskay boats had great fishing, but this
particular boat that came in with us did not make enough to pay its costs. And the poor men on her were very upset about this.

But anyway when Domhnall Ruadh and myself had eaten our food we left and we sat up high on the upper deck. We lit our pipes and we started to talk back and forth about fishing and other things. It wasn’t long before I noticed him looking sharply at the mountain that was rising high above us, and at the same time he firmly grabbed my hand.

“What on earth is wrong with you, Domhnall?” I said. Domhnall didn’t utter a word out of his mouth and when I saw this I let him be. His two eyes were fixed intently on the side of the mountain. He would look first to the very top of the mountain and he would keep looking like that, his gaze descending, until it would reach the boat which was at its base. Even though I wasn’t saying anything I was saying in my own mind that the man had gone off his head, but as I said before, I let him be.

After a long while, Domhnall stirred again and he looked towards me.

“That’s over,” he said.

“I know of only one thing that is over,” I said, “and that is the moment of madness that came over you there.”

He laughed and he looked at me. “Do you see that boat over there?” said he.

“I do,” I said, “It’s not too far away.”

“You know,” said he, “that that boat did not do enough fishing this year to keep one person in food for a week.”

“Yes,” I said again.

“From today onwards however,” he said “that boat is going to do fishing the likes of which has never been done before in the lochs of the Isle of Skye.”

“Aren’t you the prophet!” I said, “How did you find that out?”

“I will tell you this,” he said, “if you promise that you will never open your mouth about anything I say to anyone else.”

“I promise that,” I said and now excited by what I was going to hear.

“I was,” he said, “looking at the very top of that mountain there above us when I saw a barrel of herring coming out of the highest peak and it began to roll down the side of the mountain on and on until it reached the boat, and when it did it went straight in. They then started coming in a stream, one after the other without stopping until I thought that what came down the mountain could fill up a big boat that left with the emigrants. Every barrel that was coming was going into the boat, but you couldn’t tell from looking at it that as much as the weight of a stonechat’s feather had gone into her. When the last of them went into her through the side, everything was as it was before, and I saw no more.

“And you make out from that,” I said, “that the boat is going to do great fishing from now on, something which she hasn’t done yet this year.”
“That is exactly what I am taking from all that I saw anyway,” said Dòmhnall Ruadh, “and you can cut off my right ear if I am wrong.”

“I don’t know,” I said, “but as the blind man said, we’ll see.”

And without a doubt we did. There was not one night after this that the boat was not full of herring. And strangest of all, though they were to set their nets out on the dung-meadow, that night they would still not be empty.

Am Faireachadh

The Inkling

Eriskay (Western Isles), Map No.: 12 (notes p. 74) S-0012/MM(G)

Archibald MacInnes

D’fhalbh mi fhèin agus triùir eile a-null a dh’Uibhist air oidhche dhorcha obho chionn suas ri dà fhìchead bliadhna. Bha gnòthach againn do Pholl a’ Charra agus bha e gu math annoch mun d’ fhuair sinn Taigh Ìosta Pholl a’ Charra fhàgail. Aig an àm sin cha robh aon teaghlaich fhèin a’ cómhnhuidh air taobh a’ Chaolais agus leis sin bha rathad gu math fada uaigneach againn ri coseachd mun ruigeamaid an Lùdag far an d’ fhàg sinn an sgoth.

Ach co-dhiù bha sinn a’ dol ar n-aghaidh ceum air cheum ach cha robh sinn ach a’ falbh gu math mall nuair bu luaithe a bhithéamaid. Mar a thuigeas a h-uile duine bha gloine no dhà a bharradh aig barradh is aon fhear againn. Bha sinn a’ falbh mar sin a’ cuideachadh a chèile gus an d’ ràinig sinn àite ris an abrar Mol Dhòmhnall Iain Bharraich, ri taobh Loch a’ Bhruiga. Bha e anabarrach doirbh coiseachd luath a dhèamadh anns a’ mhol ach fhuir sinn gu h-aigneach a dh’ionnsaigh a’ chinne a-muigh dheth. Ach direach nuair a bha am fear a bh’ aird deireadh air a chasan a thoirit às a’ mhol thainig a’ mholag a bha siud às na speuran agus bhuaill i nar teis-meadhain. Thainig tè eile agus tè eile agus mu dheireadh an robh fras do mholgan ’s do dhòr nagan a’ tuiteam mu na cluasan againn. A-mach a bha a h-uile fear riamh cho luath agus a dheireadh do chasan e aca a dh’aindeoin cho luath ’s gun ruiteamaid chan faigheamaid air toiseach air an fhrios chlachan a bha ’s ar déidh gu mu dheireadh an do ràinig sinn an sgoth. Leum sinn innte agus bha sinn gu math air tarraing a-mach on Lùdaig mun do rinn a’ chlach mu dheireadh gearradh fodha aig a deireadh.

Bha sinn uile cho mòr air ar cur mun cuairt ’s nach deach againn air facal a ràdh gus an do ràinig sinn na Haun. Thóiseachadh an uair sin ri bruìdhinn mun t-sàbhaladh a chaidh oirnn mun d’fhuir sinn don gsotha dh, agus ’s e an rud a b’iongantaiche den ghnothach ar fad nach do bhuaill eadhoin aon clach air aon duine againn. Ach fhad ’s a bha sinn a’ bruìdhinn mar sin thug mi fhèin an aire gu
Myself and three others headed over to Uist one dark night up to forty years ago. We had business in Pollachar and it was late enough before we got to leave the Pollachar hotel. At that time there was no family actually living beside the Sound and because of this we had a long and lonely road to walk before we would reach Ludag, where we left the vessel.

But anyway we were going along step by step, but we were going quite slow when we would normally be faster. As everyone will understand more than one of us had had a drink or two too many. We were progressing that way, helping each other until we reached the place that they call Mol Dhòmhnall Iain Bharraich, by the side of Loch a’ Bhuruga. It was very difficult to walk fast on the shingly beach but we reached the end of it in good spirits. But just as the last man was about to step off the shingly beach this shingle came out of the skies and landed in our very midst. Another one and another one came, until in the end there was a shower of shingles and stones falling about our ears. Every man took off as fast as his feet could take him, but in spite of how fast we would run we could not get ahead of the shower of stones coming behind us, until at last we reached the vessel. We jumped into it and we pulled away a good bit from Ludag before the last stone came down at her stern.

We were all so disorientated that we could not say a word until we reached Haun. The talk then started about how we were saved before we reached the vessel, and the strangest thing about the affair was that not even one stone hit any of us. But as we were talking like this I noticed that the wind was rising and rising until it was becoming a full storm.

“Wasn’t it God that brought us here,” I said, “before this arrived.”

The oldest man in the company turned to me and said: “It is God indeed that has brought us home before this came, Gilleasbuig,” he said, “and another thing that you need not be amazed by is the stones that were thrown at us, because it was a warning from God for us to hurry up before the storm came down about our heads.”
Na Ròin a bha a’ Tilgeadh nan Clach
Seals throwing Stones
Eriskay (Western Isles), Map No.: 13 (notes p. 75) S-0013/MM(G)
Archibald MacInnes

À ’s mi fhèin is Iain Mac Mhurchaidh air an Oitir, smaointich sinn gun rach-amaid air tir am Fùideigh gus an togamaid na line chaola. Bha toil againn laighe gu leòr thoirt dhaibh agus chàirich sinn oirre e leis a sin a-null gu Fùideigh ’s dailadh math gaoithe ann. Ràinig sinn Fùideigh ’s chaidh sinn air tir. Cheangail mi fhèin an ròpa agus ghabh sinn suas ceum às a’ chladasach feuch am faigheanmaid sinn fhèin a bhlàthachadh ’s an latha ged ’s e samhradh fhèin a bh’ ann anabarrach fuar.

Nuair a thug sinn greis mhath nar sìneadh air chùl gaoithe ’s ri aodann grêine, thill sinn sios chon a’ chladaich feuch a faigheanmaid greim no dhà arain a bh’ agam ithe. Nuair a nochd sinn sios chunnaic sinn sealladh a bhiodh ri shaolttinn iongantach gu leòr an-diugh ged nach roh annas mòr dhe an uair sin. Bha, tha mi creidsinn aon dà fhichead ròn nan laigh air a’ mhol bheag a bha an taobh a-bhus dhen bhàta againn. Thug iad an aire dhuinn ach cha do ghluais gin dhaibh. Thòisich sinne air ithe ar bìdh ’s cha robh an aire againn air dad ach air sin fhèin.

Ach cha robh sinn mòran is dhen cheàird sin nuair a thàinig a’ mholag a bha siud ’s fhuar Iain anns a’ chluas i. Sheall e gu feargach orm-sa feuch am mi a thilg air i ach mun d’ fhuar mise mo bheul fhosgladh a ràdh ris nach mi, thàinig an tè bha sud ugam fhèin mun cheann. Chualas a’ ràna a bha siud air ar cùtaobh’ agus nuair a choinheadh sinn bha fedhaimh do na ròin gan rolladh fhèin air a’ mhol mar gum biodh iad a’ dol as an cídhean leis a’ ghàireachdaich, agus fedhaimh eile ’s clachan aca deiseil gus an tilgeadh oirnn. Thàinig molag ’s thàinig a dhà agus a tri gus mu dheireadh air roh fras dhiubh a’ sileadh mu na cluasan agam. Dh’èitch sinne nar seasamh mum bidheanmaid air murt agus thug sinn an sgoth oirnn cho luath ’s a bheireadh ar casan Sinn. Gheàrr sinn inntse agus tharraing sinn a-mach on cladasach agus gu dearbh bha sinn na àm. Cha robh cothrom aig na ròin air na clachan a chur fada ’s bha sin fhèin cho math. Bha iad a’ bualadh faisg [dhan] sgothaidh ach cha robh iad gu crón sam bith. Ach guis an dh’halbh sinne às an sealladh bha ’n aon ràn gràinnd nan beul ’s gun e sgur idir.

Thionndaich Iain rium fhèin ’s thuirt e: “Nam bithinn,” ars’ esan, “a’ creidsinn gu bhail a leithid a rud ri geasan ann chanaann gum b’ e daoine fo gheasaibh a bh’ anns na ròin ud leis cho glic ’s a bha iad.”

“Glic no air a chaochladh,” arsa mise, “cha tèid mise cho dàna tuilleadh orra.”

7 Normally air ar cúlaibh ’behind us’; here reflects pronunciation.
One day when myself and Iain Mac Mhurchaidh were on the Oitir, we decided that we would land on Fuday so that we could take in the thin lines. We liked to give them enough time to lie, and with that we fixed them over to Fuday whilst there was a vigorous wind. We reached Fuday and we went ashore. I tied the rope and we went up a small bit from the shore, to see could we get ourselves warmed up on a day that was very cold even though it was summer.

When we had spent a good while stretched out with the wind at our back and the sun to our fronts, we returned back down to the shore to see if we would have a bite or two to eat of the bread that I had brought with me. When we appeared down there we saw a sight that would be thought of as amazing these days even though it was not a novelty at that time. There was, I think, forty seals lying on the beach that was on this side of our boat. They noticed us but not one of them moved. We began to eat our food and we didn’t pay attention to anything except that.

But we were not long at that when this stone came over and got Iain in the ear. He looked angrily at me to see if it was me that threw it at him but before I could open my mouth to tell him that it was not me, another stone came over and hit me in the head. This great roar was to be heard behind us and when we looked down there was a group of these seals rolling around on the beach as if they were going mad with laughter, and others with stones ready to throw at us. First one stone came, then two, then three until at last there was a shower of them falling around my ears. We stood up lest we were killed and headed for the vessel as fast as our feet could take us. We piled into it and we pulled away from the shore and we were definitely in time. The seals were not able to throw the stones as far as our boat, which was just as well.

They were landing near the boat but they were harmless. And until we got out of their sight they had the same horrible shout and it didn’t stop at all.

Iain turned to me and he said: “If I was,” he said, “to believe that such a thing as spells existed I would say that those seals are people that are under a spell, being as clever as they were.”

“Smart or or not,” I said, “I will no longer approach them so boldly.”
The last three stories presented in this section were collected by various individuals working at the end of the nineteenth century for the Folklore Society and are currently kept at the School of Scottish Studies MacLagan collection.

Escape from Water-Horse
Berneray (Western Isles), Map No.: 14 (notes p.75) S-0014/MF(E)
Peter Sinclair

The reciter, who is a native of the island of Berneray, on the south west of Barra related the following incident, illustrating the belief in the existence of water horses. He said:

"My mother’s brother, John McNeill, was a great boatman. There was not the like of him in all Barra. He had a boat and would be trading among the islands. One time he was in the sound between the islands of Minglay and Pabbay, and they saw the appearance of a horse rising in the sea some distance from them. One of the crew remarked that it was N.C.’s, that it must have fallen over the rocks (this N.C. was a man that was living on the island of Minglay at that time, and he had a horse that was very poor, and the man thought that it was that horse). But my uncle said, ‘Cha chreid mi gur e each N.C. tha ann fathast ach co dhiubh, tha cho mhath dhuibh fantuinn bhuarthe’ (‘I do not believe that it is N.C.’s horse yet, but however, it is as well for you to keep away from it’).

They had a fair breeze, but never mind, they saw that the thing that was in it was coming nearer, and at last it came so close that it lifted its two fore feet on the gunwale of the boat. They said it was just like a horse, only it had not so much hair about its head. My uncle made a spring and got one of the stones they had in the boat for ballast, and threw it out in the sea with a plunge, and just as he wanted, away the each uisge went after it, and by the time it rose to the surface again, the boat had got a good distance away. But they were making out that had it not been for a favourable wind, and that my uncle cheated the beast with the stone, it might have cost them their life.'
Anonymous

Yolk Love of the West Highlands

Water horse may tell some him quite plainly rising up out of the sea, and immediately plunging back again.

From Mr. Peter Sinclair, Bemera, Barra.

The reader, who is a native of the island of Bemera, on the south east of Barra relates the following incident, illustrating the belief in the existence of water horses. He said, 'My mother’s brother, John McVeal, was a great boatman. There was not the like of him in all Barra. He had a boat and would be trading among the islands. Once when he was in the sound between the islands of Mingay and Kiblay, and they saw the appearance of a horse rising in the sea some distance from them. One of the crew remarked that it was Mr. C——, that it must have fallen over the rockest. But Mr. C was a man that was living on the island of Mingay at that time, and he had a horse that was very poor, and the man thought that it was that horse, but my uncle said, 'One chanced we gave a cash to Mr. C. the more fastest, ask to shudder, the one which shuddered, foremost drowned!' (I do not believe that it is Mr. C—— I know yet, but however, it is as well for you to keep away from it). They had a few things, but never mind, Mrs. She saw that the thing that was in it was coming nearer, and at last it came so near that it lifted its two fore feet on the gunwale of the boat. Then said it was just like a horse only it had not such hair about its head. My uncle made a slying and got one of the stones they had in the boat for ballast, and threw it out in the sea with a plowing, and just as he vanished away the sack horse went after it; and in the turn it came to the surface again. The boat had got a good distance away. But they were meaning out that had it not been for the foresaid wind and they very much cheated the head with the stone, it might have cost them their life.'
Mermaid or Doppelgänger

Lochcarron (Highlands), Map No.: 15 (notes p. 75) S-0015/MF(E)

Mrs Macnair

A Lochcarron woman, on the subject of mermaids said:

When we were living in Glendale [Skye] Donald [her son] and another lad were one day catching rabbits. They were on the side of a brae, above rocky shore, and there was another lad down below them. He was at the shore. He came up to them in a great fright, crying that he had seen something. He could not say whether it was a man or a woman, on a rock in the sea. They all went down, but there was nothing to be seen, and when the thing came to be known in the district, from the lad’s description, it was believed that what he had seen must have been a mermaid. But some time after that, this same lad who had seen the mermaid, as was supposed, was down at the same place, and when he was climbing the face of a high rock, he fell, and was so severely hurt that he died shortly after. When this happened some began to think that it might have been his own ghost he had seen there on the former occasion, and not the mermaid at all.

Kidnapped by Water-Spirit

Barra (Western Isles), Map No.: 16 (notes p. 76) S-0016/LL(E)

Mrs Maclean

There are several variants of the above. Mrs Mac L. who is also a native of Barra gave the following version:

I heard of some girls that were sitting one Sabbath day at the outside of a house in Baile Thang-as-dale, and a man whom none of them knew came forward, and sat down beside a girl that was in the company, and laid his head on her knees. The other girls fled into the house, leaving her there, and she noticed something in his head like the weeds that grow in locks. She happened to have a pair of scissors in her pocket, and she cut away the part of her petticoat on which his head lay, and leaving him there, she made her escape into the house, and in a little while he went away.

But on the next Sabbath after that, the same girls were sitting outside where they had been sitting the Sabbath before, and this time he came on them in the shape of a horse, and having caught this girl, he carried her away into the loch, and they never saw anything more of her, except pieces of her liver and heart that came ashore.
Map 3: Location of all Stories

Black Symbols: Stories in English
White Symbols: Stories in Irish or Scottish Gaelic
### Abbreviations

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I-0001/MM(G)

An Bád Sí – Fairy Boat Vision

Lang.: Irish. Loc.: Ireland, Kerry, Great Blasket (Ir. An Blascaod Mór).
Inf.: Pádraig (Peats Tom) Ó Cearnaigh. Coll.: Seosamh Ó Dálaigh. Year: 1940.
Motif: ST F242.2 Fairy boat; ST D863 Magic object, ST D867 Magic object mysteriously disappears; ST D1982.5 Boat made invisible, ST E535.3.2 Phantom boat.
Abstract: Informant sees a three-man boat heading towards his own boat which is not visible to his fellow crew member. The three-man boat passes behind the sail of the informant’s boat, but does not re-appear.
Transl.: Críostóir Mac Cárthaigh.

I-0002/MM(G)

An Bá agus an Sampla – The Drowning and The Vision

Lang.: Irish. Loc.: Ireland, Kerry, Dingle (Ir. Corca Dhuibhne).
Genre: Memorate. Category: I.2.a (Drownings); II.2.d (Doppelgängers).
Abstract: Informant speaks of a series of premonitions and events that preceded the drowning of a man called Kelly and his companions, among them her acquaintance, Peaidí Mhuiris. Kelly’s mother, while on a visit to another son, has a vision of her drowned son the night before the drowning occurred. Local children coming from school talked to Kelly’s doppelgänger the night after the drowning; it is also said that another boat saw an apparition at sea that night.
Transl.: Séamus Mac Mathúna.

I-0003/MF(G)

Coinín Sí agus Úir Bheannaithe Thoraigh

The Fairy Rabbit and the Blessed Earth of Tory

Lang.: Irish. Loc.: Ireland, Donegal, Tory Island (Ir. Oileán Thoraigh).
Genre: Fabulate. Category: I.2.c (Near escapes); I.3.b (Fishermen’s taboos); II.1.a (Sea fairies).
Informant’s grandfather goes fishing at the eastern point of Tory island with a local fisherman. While the sea is calm, they see a rabbit sitting on a cliff above them looking at them. When they try to frighten the rabbit away with the help of the paddle, a storm breaks. The informant’s grandfather swims back in the direction of Tory, pulling the boat and his companion with him. They land on a flat rock and manage to rescue the fishing gear and paddles they left behind. They believed it was the soil of Tory that saved them from drowning.

Transl.: Máire Mac Néill, addenda et corrigenda by S. Mac Mathúna and M. Fomin.

I-0004/MM(G)
Colann gan ceann – The Headless Ghost
Genre: Memorate. Category: II.2.b (Ghosts).
Ref.: NFC SOC 0006.1.175–180; Ó Catháin 1983: 46–7 (text and translation).
Abstract: Informant goes fishing with three others at dusk on Saturday night. When one of them lights his pipe in a cove north-east of Portacloy called An Poll Dorcha (‘The Black Hole’) near Toghercloheen (Ir. Barr na Spince), the man at the rudder urges them to row as fast as they can. At these words, the informant turns around and sees a headless ghost. Scared, they make for home.
Transl.: Séamas Ó Catháin.

I-0005/MF(E)
Baling Water
Lang.: English. Loc.: Ireland, Antrim, Rathlin Island.
Genre: Fabulate. Category: I.4.b (Big fish); II.3.a (Sea-beasts); I.2.c (Near escapes).
Motif: ST G 308. Sea monster; SJ R 501. Sea monster.
Ref.: Murphy 1987: 68.
Further reading: Ó Súilleabháin 1942: 505.
Abstract: Informant relates a story of his uncle’s encounter with a sea monster.

I-0006/MM(E)
Paddy Downey’s Phantom Boat
Genre: Memorate. Category: II.4.a (Phantom boats); I.2.b (Shipwreck).
Abstract: Fishermen see a weak light by the shore when fishing. Within a week, a schooner from Youghal is lost in the storm, the same one referred to in I-0007/8 below.

I-0007/MM(E)
Mikie Lynch’s Phantom Boat
Genre: Memorate. Category: II.4.a (Phantom boats); I.2.b (Shipwreck).
Abstract: Fishing crew see a big ship coming very close to them. Having retreated to the pier, they consider it to have been a phantom-boat and an omen of bad luck to come. A few days later, a great storm arises and the Nellie Fleming goes down.

I-0008/MM(E)
Jimmy Rooney’s Phantom Boat
Genre: Memorate. Category: II.4.a (Phantom boats); I.2.b (Shipwreck).
Ref.: Quain 1991: 5.
Further reading: Ó Súilleabháin 1942: 514; Mac Cóirthigh 1999; for special terms relating to various aspects of navigation, see Mac Cóirthigh 2008.
Abstract: Phantom-boat seen twice by fishermen while fishing during the night. They put out the nets and pull them back in again when they see a big ship approaching. After a while, they decide to put out the nets again and are terrified by the big ship coming their way. Having put one of the crew members ashore, the ship was not seen again and a week later a boat from the area went down in the big storm.

I-0009/UL(E)
Crocs in the Quarry

Ref.: NFCUFP000308.7.


Abstract: Informant tells a story of a person from the travelling community who was frightened by a water creature one morning in a quarry. He believes this was a crocodile that was released by a local farmer when it got too big for his farm.

I-0010/MF(G)
Bá ag Ceathrú na gCloch – Drowning at Ceathrú na gCloch

Lang.: Irish. Loc.: Ireland, Mayo, Portacloy (Ir. Port a’ Chlóidh)


Genre: Fabulate. Category: I.2.a (Drownings); I.2.c (Near escapes).

Motif: ST E 379.1. Return from dead to rescue from drowning; ST E 414. Drowned person cannot rest in peace.

Ref.: NFC T 0047, 40.00–44.22.


Abstract: Informant relates about the drowning of three fishermen from Ceathrú na gCloch in Co. Mayo. When the three men and a companion went fishing, a fellow fisherman at the quay recognised two of them, but could not identify the other two. When the sea got rough, a Scottish fisherman warned the fishermen to go home. They disregarded his advice and when they did return, three were drowned and only one survived. The Scotsman believed the three had been abducted.

Transl.: Séamus Mac Mathúna and Maxim Fomin.

I-0011/LL(G)
Taibhsí ón Trá – Ghosts from the Beach

Lang.: Irish. Loc.: Ireland, Mayo, Portacloy (Ir. Port a’ Chlóidh).


Genre: Local legend. Category: I.2.a (Drownings); II.2.c (The dead).

Motif: ST E 545.17. The dead foretell the future; ST E 341.2. Dead grateful for food.

Tale type: Cf. ML 5080. Food from the fairies.

Ref.: NFC T 0047, 45:16–46.21.

Further reading: Ó Súilleabháin 1942: 481, 488.

Abstract: Informant tells a story which he heard in New York about the drowning of four fishermen. On the night in question, doppelgängers of the fishermen enter a particular house, share a meal with the hosts, and warn them not to touch any bodies if these land on the beach. Next morning, people rush to the beach, but can only see pieces of old rope on the sand.

Transl.: Séamus Mac Mathúna and Maxim Fomin.
I-0012/MM(G)
Na Daoine Maithe ã Oileán Draíochta – The Good Folk and a Magical Island
Lang.: Irish. Loc.: Ireland, Galway, Ballinakill (Ir. Baile na Cille).
Genre: Memorate. Category: II.5.a (Mystical islands); I.3.a (Seasonal work).
Motif: ST D 2135.1.1. Island created by magic.
Ref.: NFC M 786, 92–95 [transcription of the Wax Cylinder Recording 2108 (b) - 2109 (a)].
Further reading: Ó Súilleabháin 1942: 505; Ó hÓgáin 1999; MacCárthaigh 2012.
Abstract: The informant tells the story of a vision of a magical island west of Aran Islands, Connemara. When he saw it, he was collecting kelp. He drew attention of his companions and they could all see the island for a long period of time. Rushing to finish their business before the tide, they returned to work and the island was not seen again.
Transl.: Séamus Mac Mathúna and Maxim Fomin.

I-0013/LL(E)
Cill Stuithín – Kilstiffin Island
Lang.: English. Loc.: Ireland, Kerry, Curraghatoosane (Ir. Currach an tSuasáin)
Inf.: Seán Ó Cearmuda. Rec./Transcr.: Seosamh Ó Dálaigh. Year: 1939.
Genre: Local legend. Category: II.5.a (Mystical islands); II.5.b (Liminal places); I.2.b (Ship-wreck).
Motif: ST A 955. Origin of islands; ST B 155.4. Neighing of horse indicates important spot; ST B 184.1.3. Magic horse from water world; ST D 934.1. Magic sod; ST F 735.0.3. Island appears only at certain times.
Ref.: NFC M 658, 470–73, a transcription of Tape 2259 (a).
Further reading: Ó Súilleabháin 1942: 505; Ó hÓgáin 1999; Mac Cárthaigh 2012.
Abstract: Story of various incidents connected with the magical island of Kilstiffin. Starts with a legend of the drowning of a mare and a foal beside a cliff where the entrance to the island is believed to be, continues with an incident concerning the sinking of a four-masted ship and finishes off with a popular etymology of the name of the Isle of Man.

I-0014/LL(E)
St. Martin’s Night / City of Bannow
Lang.: English. Loc.: Ireland, Wexford, Duncormick
Genre: Local legend. Category: (1) I.2.a (Drownings); (2) II.4.b (Submerged towns).
Motif: (1) ST C 631. Tabu: breaking the Sabbath; ST F 931.4. Extraordinary behavior of waves. (2) ST F 944. City sinks in the sea.
Ref.: NFC M 107, 245–46.
Further reading: Ó Súilleabháin 1942: 347, 506; Ó hÓgáin 1999.
Abstract: Story illustrating (1) a prohibition to fish on St. Martin’s Day and (2) an accompanying legend of the drowning of the town of Bannow.
I-0015/LL(G)
Pat John Eoghain’s Sea-Horse
Lang.: Irish. Loc.: Ireland, Donegal, Teelin (Ir. Teileann)
Genre: Local legend. Category: II.3.c (Sea-horses); I.3.a (Fishing).
Tale type: Cf. ML 4085. The Sea-horse and the Sea-serpent.
Ref.: NFCM 990, 399–400.
Abstract: A sea-horse is caught and brought ashore by a crew of fishermen where the creature is released and set free.
Transl.: Maxim Fomin and Séamus Mac Mathúna.

Stories from Scotland

S-0001/LL(G)
Bàthadh na Dubhsgeir – The Drowning at Black Rock
Lang.: Scottish Gaelic. Loc.: Scotland, Highlands, Glenelg.
Genre: Local legend. Category: I.2.a (Drownings).
Abstract: Informant tells a story about the drowning of people after a big ship capsized when it struck a rock. He recalls the howling of dogs prior to the event as a bad omen; he also tells of dreams that local women had seen after the accident. In one of the dreams, the exact location of the bodies of the drowned passengers had been revealed.
Transl.: Donald Archie MacDonald and Morag MacLeod.

S-0002/OM(G)
Soitheach bho a cùrs aig Eilean nan Uan
Boat off-course at Eilean nan Uan
Genre: Oral memoir. Category: I.1.b. (Boats); I.1.c (Passenger travel).
Ref.: Dòmhnallach 1978: 15 (text).
Abstract: Account of a sea trip from Minch to Stornoway; the vessel was guided by the Miled light and landed on Rubha instead.
Transl.: John Shaw assisted by Séamus Mac Floinn.
S-0003/OM(G)
Feadhainn a Chaidh a Chanada – *The People that Went to Canada*

**Lang.:** Scottish Gaelic. **Loc.:** Scotland, Western Isles, Barra.
**Inf.:** Ealasaid Chaimbeul. **Rec.:** Ealasaid Chaimbeul. **Year:** 1923.
**Genre:** Oral memoir. **Category:** I.1.a (Migration).
**Ref.:** Chaimbeul 1982: 12 (text).
**Abstract:** Account of informant’s uncle leaving for Canada with many others.
**Transl.:** Séamus Mac Floinn.

S-0004/LL(G)
An Crodh-Mara – *Sea-cattle*

**Lang.:** Scottish Gaelic. **Loc.:** Scotland, Western Isles, Grimsay.
**Inf.:** Peter Morrison. **Rec./Transcr.:** Donald Archie MacDonald. **Year:** 1974.
**Genre:** Local legend. **Category:** II.3.b (Sea-cattle).
**Motif:** ST B 72. *Sea-cow*; SJL 301 *Water-cows—Fat, beautiful cows come ashore to pasture*; cf. BaK F92. *Steel thrown over water cow*.
**Tale type:** MLSIT 4086. *The Water Horse as Work-Horse*; cf. ML 6055. *Fairy-cows*.
**Ref.:** Published in *Tocher. Tales, Songs, Traditions* 16 (1973–4) 308–311; School of Scottish Studies Archives, SA 1974.156.A2.
**Further reading:** McKay 1931: 143; Almqvist 1991a; MacDonald 1994–5: 50 (F94); cf. Ó Súilleabháin 1942: 503; Almqvist 1991b: 236, 272.
**Abstract:** It was believed that the sea cattle used to be driven by sea herdsmen and would come at a particular phase of the moon when the tide was almost out. Throwing a handful of earth at the side or at the head of the animal would stop it. Machaire on the West Side of North Uist and Machaire on Benbecula were noted for sea cattle coming ashore.
**Transl.:** Donald Archie MacDonald.

S-0005/MF(G)
Solais is Taibhsean – *Ghostly Light*

**Lang.:** Scottish Gaelic. **Loc.:** Scotland, Argyll, Morvern.
**Inf.:** Jessie Cameron. **Recs.:** John Macllnnes and Donald Archie MacDonald.
**Transcr./Transl.:** Morag MacLeod. **Year:** 1967.
**Genre:** Fabulate. **Category:** I.3.c (Portents); II.2.c (The dead).
**Motif:** ST E 530.1.6. *Ghost light serves as death omen*; ST E 765.1. *Life bound up with light*; ST D 1812.0.1.2. *Foreknowledge of means of death.*
**Further reading:** Bennett 2009: 201–15; cf. Ó Súilleabháin 1942: 513.
**Abstract:** Informant tells the story of her father who saw a supernatural light by the pier—the place where his own body was to be found some time later.
**Transl.:** Morag MacLeod.
S-0006/LL(E)
Brig Exmouth
Lang.: English. Loc.: Scotland, Islay, Port Ellen.
Genre: Local legend. Category: I.2.b (Shipwreck), II.2.c (The dead).
Ref.: Published in Tocher. Tales, Songs, Traditions 9 (1973) 4; School of Scottish Studies Archives, SA 1969.28.A18, B1.
Abstract: A ship from Derry sank near Saligo. A local girl went with her mother to the shore, picked up a doll washed from the ship and took it home. That night, the mother had a dream about a girl crying for her doll. The mother and the daughter buried the doll on the shore.

S-0007/MM(G)
Stòiridh a’ Titanic – Story of the Titanic
Lang.: Scottish Gaelic. Loc.: Scotland, Western Isles, Grimsay.
Genre: Memorate. Category: I.1.b (Boats); I.3.c (Premonition).
Motif: ST M 358.1. Evil predictions concerning journeys; SJ A 141 Omen of accident, loss of home, shipwreck—being in human form; SJ A 331 Omen of accident, harm, shipwreck—a strange sight is seen.
Ref.: School of Scottish Studies Archives, SA 1967.120.A1.
Abstract: Peter Morrison was in Belfast on the day the Titanic was launched. He was working on a boat at the time, sailing between Glasgow and Belfast. On the day, Peter heard one Irishman say to his companion, "Mark my word, Pat, she’ll be an unlucky ship."
Transl.: John Shaw assisted by Séamus Mac Floinn and Séamus Mac Mathúna.

S-0008/MF(G)
Each Mara Mhàiri Iain Mhicheal – Màiri Iain Mìcheal’s Sea Horse
Inf.: Nan MacKinnon (NMcK). Rec./Coll.: James Ross (JR).
Genre: Fabulate. Category: II.3.c (Sea-horses); I.3.a (Seasonal work).
Ref.: School of Scottish Studies Archives, SA 1958.156.3.
Abstract: Informant’s grandmother saw a water-horse as she was cutting seaweed for potatoes. She turned around to see the horse disappear into the water—a grey coloured horse, with seaweed on its back just like rocks on the shore.
Transl.: John Shaw.
S-0009/MM(G) / S-00010/LL(G)
Cunntais air a’ Mhaighdean Mhara – Stories about Mermaids

Lang.: Scottish Gaelic. Loc.: Scotland, Western Isles, Vatersay.
Inf.: Nan MacKinnon (NMcK) and Jonathan MacLeod (JMcl). Rec./Coll.: James Ross (JR).
Category: II.1.b (Mermaids).
Tale type: ML 4060. The Mermaid’s Message.
Ref.: School of Scottish Studies Archives, SA 1958.156.4.

Abstract:
Jonathan MacLeod and friend saw a creature in water and first thought it was a seal, but it looked like a woman with a tail like that of a fish. They guessed it was a mermaid. It was supposed to be bad luck to see one, and also a sign of bad weather.
Nan MacKinnon tells of a man’s encounter with a mermaid who warned him by posing a riddle hinting at an approaching storm.
Transl.: John Shaw assisted by Séamus Mac Floinn.

S-0011/MM(G)
Manadh an Sgadain – Premonition about Herring

Lang.: Scottish Gaelic. Loc.: Scotland, Western Isles, Eriskay.
Ref.: Donald Macdonald Collection from Eriskay, Vol. 1, 43–7 (text).

Abstract: The informant and Dòmhnall Ruadh Mac Nèill are in a boat in a small bay north of Loch Bràcadail on the Isle of Skye having just gone through a storm. A boat arrives into the bay, and its crew is upset about a poor catch of fish. Dòmhnall has a vision about the boat that just arrived and predicts that its crew will not suffer any shortage of fish from then on.
Transl.: John Shaw.

S-0012/MM(G)
Am Faireachadh – The Inkling

Lang.: Scottish Gaelic. Loc.: Scotland, Western Isles, Eriskay.
Motif: ST F 962.8. Extraordinary showers; ST D 1841.5.1.1. Invulnerability from hurled stones; ST V 540. Intervention of Providence saves person’s life.
Ref.: Donald Macdonald Collection from Eriskay, Vol. 1, 10–14 (text).
Abstract: Four men go by boat on a business trip to Pollachar on Uist. Returning to the boat later at night a shower of pebbles falls around them. They reach the boat and sail home. On reaching the harbour, a storm starts. The shower of stones is taken as a warning of divine intervention.

Transl.: John Shaw.

S-0013/MM(G)
Na Ròin a bha a’ Tilgeadh nan Clach – Seals throwing Stones
Lang.: Scottish Gaelic. Loc.: Scotland, Western Isles, Eriskay.
Genre: Memorate. Category: I.4.a (Seals).
Abstract: Informant is attacked by seals that start throwing pebbles at him and his companion when they find shelter on a beach frequented by the sea-creatures.
Transl.: John Shaw.

S-0014/MF(E)
Escape from Water-horse
Lang.: English. Loc.: Scotland, Western Isles, Berneray (at Barra).
Genre: Fabulate. Category: II.3.c (Sea-horses); I.2.c (Near escapes).
Ref.: SSSA, MacLagan Manuscripts 8122.
Further reading: MacDonald 1994–5: 50–52. Abstract: Story of informant’s uncle who saw a water-horse whilst at sea and by throwing a ballast stone distracted the monster’s attention away from the boat which helped them to escape.

S-0015/MM(E)
Mermaid or Doppelgänger
Inf.: Mrs Macnair. Rec.: Anonymous. Year: Not recorded (c. late 19th—early 20th century).
Genre: Fabulate. Category: II.1.b (Mermaids); II.2.d (Doppelgängers).
Motif: ST D1812.5.1.9. Sight of mermaid as a bad omen; ST E723.2. Seeing one’s wraith a sign that person is to die shortly; ST B81.13.7. Mermaid appears as omen of catastrophe; SJ A51. Death omen – person’s doppelgänger is seen.
Ref.: SSSA, MacLagan Manuscripts, p. 9075.
Abstract: Informant’s son hears of seeing a mermaid from another person who dies shortly afterwards, having hurt himself at the place of the incident.
Kidnapped by Water-spirit

Lang.: English. Loc.: Scotland, Western Isles, Barra.
Inf.: Mrs Maclean. Rec.: Anonymous. Year: Not recorded (c. late 19th—early 20th century).
Genre: Local legend. Category: II.2.a (Solitary spirits); II.3.c (Sea-horses).
Motif: ST F 420.1.1. Water-spirit as man; ST F 420.1.3.3. Water-spirit as horse; ST F 420.5.2.2. Water-spirit kidnaps mortals and keeps them under water; cf. ST C 631. Tabu: breaking the Sabbath.
Ref.: SSSA, MacLagan Manuscripts, p. 8119.
Further reading: MacDonald 1994–5: 50 (F57, F58); cf. Ó Súilleabháin 1942: 503.
Abstract: A water spirit comes two Sabbaths in a row, first in the shape of a human, next in the shape of a horse. The spirit comes to a particular girl on the first occasion and puts its head on her knees; the girl escapes by cutting the part of her dress off where the head laid; second time it kidnaps her and she is never to be seen again.

Fig. 17: Skeleton of an Each Uisge Earballach, "Long-tailed Water Horse" kept at An t-Ord / Ord, Isle of Skye. The sign reads: "This is the only known example of this rare beast—a distant relative of the better known Monstra Nessium. This specimen was stranded at an exceptionally low tide in 1967."
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Beneath Loch nEchach I have my dwelling now; high above me is the once solid surface with troops of horses trod; under ships’ rounded hulls is my appointed place; the wave it is my roof, the shore my wall.

Aided Echach Meic Maíreda