

a' cunntadh
an

uspag

Calum MacKinnon Ferguson

a' cunntadh
an

uspag

calumferg@yahoo.com
@calum.my.friend

foreword

Tro na mòr-mheadhanan, tha òigridh gu math mothachail air cuspairean leithid atharrachadh na gnàth-shìde, ach an urrainn do sheanfhaclan agus seann chleachdaidhean nan Gàidheal tuigse a bharrachd a thoirt seachad air a' chuspair seo?

Tha Calum air sealltainn dhuinn, tron obair ealanta, dhealasaich a rinn e air mhuinntireas còmhla rinn, gu bheil luach ann a bhith ag èisteachd ri Tobar an Dualchais agus eòlas a chur air beul-aithris ceangailte ris an aimsir.

Tha e na adhbhar toileachais faicinn mar a tha na beachdan aig Calum air tighinn gu buil agus tha mi an dòchas gum fan an t-eòlas seo le Calum tro na bliadhnaichean dùbhlanaich a tha air thoiseach oirnn.

FLÒRAIDH FORREST
Stiùiriche, Tobar an Dualchais

On first hearing how Calum was approaching the residency I was reminded in some way of being wee and how when passing my friend's Grandad out on the hill he would gently let you know what the weather would be doing... and sure enough it would!

This time however it is Calum, paying attention, finding ways of understanding, listening, looking out and through the making of new art works somehow bringing us away and back again to these other ways of knowing.

I am going to miss our catch ups, it was always with real excitement I looked forward to hearing and seeing what Calum was thinking on or going to show up with. Wondering who must have stopped by to ask questions as he built the "listening chamber" on the shore.

ATLAS is so grateful for the amazing conversations this opportunity brought and the chance to know more about the Tobar an Dualchais collection and Calum's brilliant practice. Mòran taing.

KATHARINE BARRINGTON
Programme & Administrative Assistant,
Atlas Arts

**“Cùm do shùil
air an fhaoileag
a’ sgiathalaich
gu h-àrd, ’s ma
chì thu an droch
shìde a’ tighinn
tha an fhaoileag
gu h-àrd a’ sgia-
thalaich agus le a
sgiathan fosgailte
a’ seòladh, chan
ann mar a chì thu
i (a’ diminich?) gu
h-ìseal man is àb-
haist dhi a bhith.”**

"Keep your eyes on the gull fluttering above, and if you see bad weather coming, the gull is up high with its wings open, sailing, not like you see it down low as it would normally be doing."

Contributors
MacIver, Iain, ?-1998 (10436)
Interviewers
MacKenzie, Katie Anne (1592)
Original Tape ID
DealanDe 1986.12.05

Track ID
33051



Tidal Chair
2022

Flotsam, Timber,
Acrylic Paint

Tràigh Iar
N.Uist



"A' cunntadh an fhèath agus an uspag, cò b' fhaide, is mas e an uspag a b' fhaide cha robh a' ghaoth aig a h-àirde, ach mas e am fèath a b' fhaide bha i a' dol na bu lugha."



"Counting the gusts and the calm between, if the gust was longer, the wind had not peaked, but if the calm was longer, the wind was dying."

Contributors
MacIver, Iain, ?-1998 (10436)
Interviewers
MacKenzie, Katie Anne (1592)
Original Tape ID
DealánDe 1986.12.02
Track ID
33275





“Sgòth bheag mar eun, mar sgiath an eòin, ag èirigh anns an àird an ear-thuath ... gur e sin comharra air sìde cho dona 's a bh' ann.”

"A small cloud like a bird ... rising high in the north-east ... that would be a sign for the worst weather there would ever be."

"Chuala mi m' athair ag ràdh, nuair a bha bàthadh mòr Nis ann, gun robh bodach ann am Bhaltos agus gun tàinig e a-nuas chun a' chidhe, is nach robh ach aon sgòth bheag ri fhaicinn air an adhar anns an àird an ear-thuath, gun tuirt e: 'Cha tèid sibh a-mach an-diugh.' ... Dh'fhalbh iad madainn bhrèagha le reothadh ann. 'S e glè bheag aca a fhuair air ais chun a' chladaich."

"I heard my father say, when the great Ness drowning happened, that there was an old man in Valtos and that he came up to the pier, and that there was not but a single small cloud to be seen in the sky in the high north-east, and he said, 'You wouldn't go out to sea today.' ... They left on that beautiful frosty morning. Very few of them made it back to shore."

Contributors

MacIver, Iain, ?-1998 (10436)

Interviewers

MacKenzie, Katie Anne (1592)

Original Tape ID

DealanDe 1986.12.02

Track ID

33275



Cloud Reader

2022

Glass Mirror,
Galvanised Steel Poles

Àird an Fhraoich
N.Uist





Contributors
Moncrieff, Tom (6684)
Fieldworkers
Bruford, Alan J., 1937-1995 (14)
Date
26 September 1974
Track ID
76864



"East and west was rain within perhaps twelve hours. North and south was a sudden change. If it was a gale, you'd expect it calmer and vice versa. North-west and south-east was for rain and wind from either of the two directions. North-east and south-west was steady weather, usually dry breezy weather, anti-cyclonic. A crooked weather hied was no good if the wind was blowing out of the short end."

"An ear agus an iar: bhiodh an t-uisge ann taobh a-staigh is dòcha dusan uair an uaireadair. B' e atharrachadh obann a bh' ann an tuath is deas. Nam b' e gèile a bhiodh ann bhiodh dùil agad gum biodh e na bu shocair. Bha an iar-thuath agus an ear-dheas airson uisge is gaoth bho thè seach tè dhen dà àirde. B' e aimsir sheasmhach a bh' anns an ear-thuath agus an iar-dheas, mar as trice tioram agus oiteagach, an aghaidh cyclonic. Bha droch shìde ann ma bha a' ghaith a' sèideadh às a' cheann ghoirid."

HM "They were experts at telling the weather the old folk themselves. They could tell by the sky and by the sea what kind of weather they were going to have."

MAM "Do you remember any particular forecasts they could make?"

HM "No, but I remember some parts of the shore that would be making a noise, you know the way the shores make a noise ... this booming noise. Well, they would tell you that would be south-east wind, and another part of it was roaring and they would say that would be south-west wind and rain. And they knew that, and even to the present day I sometimes listen to the shores and when such a part is roaring like that, that's a south-east wind, and the south-east wind comes. You see, they hadn't wireless or anything to tell them the weather and they were making a study of that. They were mostly fishermen and they depended on the weather."

Contributors
MacEachern, Hugh, 1911-1981 (7338)
Fieldworkers
MacKay, Dr Margaret Ann, 1945- (7218)
Date
05 July 1974
Track ID
72936

HM "Bha iad eòlach air an t-sìde, na seann daoine. Dh'innseadh coltas nan speuran agus coltas na mara dhaibh dè seòrsa sìde a bha gus a bhith ann."

MAM "A bheil cuimhne agad air ro-innsean sònraichte sam bith a dhèanadh iad?"

HM "Chan eil, ach tha cuimhne agam air cuid dhen chladach a bhiodh a' dèanamh fuaim, tha fhios agad mar a tha an cladach a' dèanamh fuaim, am fuaim borb seo. Uill chanadh iad riut gur e gaoth an ear-dheas a bhiodh ann, agus bhiodh pairt eile dheth a' beucaich agus bhiodh iad a' cantail gur e sin gaoth is uisge an iar-dheas. Agus bha fios aca air sin. Chun an latha an-diugh bidh mi uaireannan ag èisteachd ris na cladaichean agus nuair a tha pàirt sònraichte a' beucaich mar sin, canaidh mi gu bheil gaoth an ear-dheas oirre, agus thig gaoth an ear-dheas. Fhios agad, cha robh uèirleas aca no dad a dh'innseadh dhaibh an t-sìde agus bhiodh iad fhèin ga sgrùdadh. 'S e iasgairean a bu mhotha a bh' annta agus bha iad an urra ris an t-sìde."



Listening Chamber
2022

Kelp, Steel Frame,
Driftwood

Rubha Port Sgolpaig
N.Uist



ERC "What word would you use for the sound of the waves beating on the shore and the sea roaring?"

DS "Fuaim nan tonn. Fuaim nan tonn air clad-ach rèidh. That's a beach, 'clad-ach rèidh'. That's a place without rocks or stones."

Contributors
Sinclair, Donald, 1885-1975 (829)

Fieldworkers
Cregeen, Eric R., 1921-1983 (849)

Date

21 May 1970

Track ID

65645

Contributors
Sinclair, Donald, 1885-1975 (829)
Fieldworkers
Cregeen, Eric R., 1921-1983 (849)
Date
21 May 1970
Track ID
65645



DS "The old people knew by the clouds and by the stars and the moon what was going to come."
"They knew by the moon if there was a gale was near."
"And by looking at the stars at night they would say: 'The rain is not very far off.'"

"The sound of the sea, yes, what was going to come, I've heard that often ... Oh I'm an old guy you know ... They were accustomed to it, and if the sea had

such and such a sound, they would tell you rain is coming on, and other times according to the sound of the sea they would say there's a gale not very far off. I've heard that often when I was a boy. Oh, they were very sensible."

"There was no weather forecast at the time but what they would guess themselves. They were taught by older men than themselves."





Contributors
Sinclair, Donald, 1885-1975 (829)
Fieldworkers
Cregeen, Eric R., 1921-1983 (849)
Date
21 May 1970
Track ID
65645



“This day they were out fishing there ... and it came on very dark with fog. Well they couldn’t see shore, and there was one man in the boat ... and he looked at the sea and he said to the steersman: ‘Do you know where we are?’ ‘No,’ he says. ‘Well, you’re at Cràiginis - that’s at the north-west corner of Tìree ... I can make it out by the way the stream is going here, and I would advise you to turn about, because I know the stream well.’
And he altered course ... Wasn’t he a sensible man, the man that knew the current?”

Current Drifter
2022

Found Objects,
Timber, Rope, Steel
Wire, Pebble

Loch Eubhal
N.Uist





ERC "What would you use in Gaelic for the word for a current in the sea like that?"
DS "Sruth.S.R.U.T.H"

ERC "Dè chleachdadh tu ann an Gàidhlig airson an fhacail airson sruth sa mhuir mar sin?"
DS "Sruth. S.R.U.T.H"

DM "Dh'innseadh e dhut dè bha an latha a' dol a dhèanamh, co-dhiù seachdain no fichead latha air thoiseach ... bha second sight aige."

DAM "Dh'innseadh e dhut ron àm, cho fad ri fichead latha no seachdain?"

DM "Dh'innseadh e dhut fichead latha roimhe sin."

DAM "Agus chan eil fhios agaibh ciamar a bha e ag obrachadh, cò air a bha e a' togail nan comharraidhean a bha sin?"

DM "Chan fhaca e riamh broadcast ... ach bha e math air aimsir."

DM "He told you what the day was going to do a week or twenty days before ... he had second-sight."

DAM "He would tell you twenty days beforehand?"

DM "He could tell you twenty days ahead."

DAM "But you don't know how it worked, how he managed to pick up those signs?"

DM "He'd never seen a broadcast ... but he was good at it."



Virtue Stone
2023

Lewisian Gneiss, Rope,
Galvanised Steel Tube

Dùn Mhic Raghnaill
N.Uist



**"Ag
obair
le
rionnagan,
's a' ghrian
is
a' ghealach"**

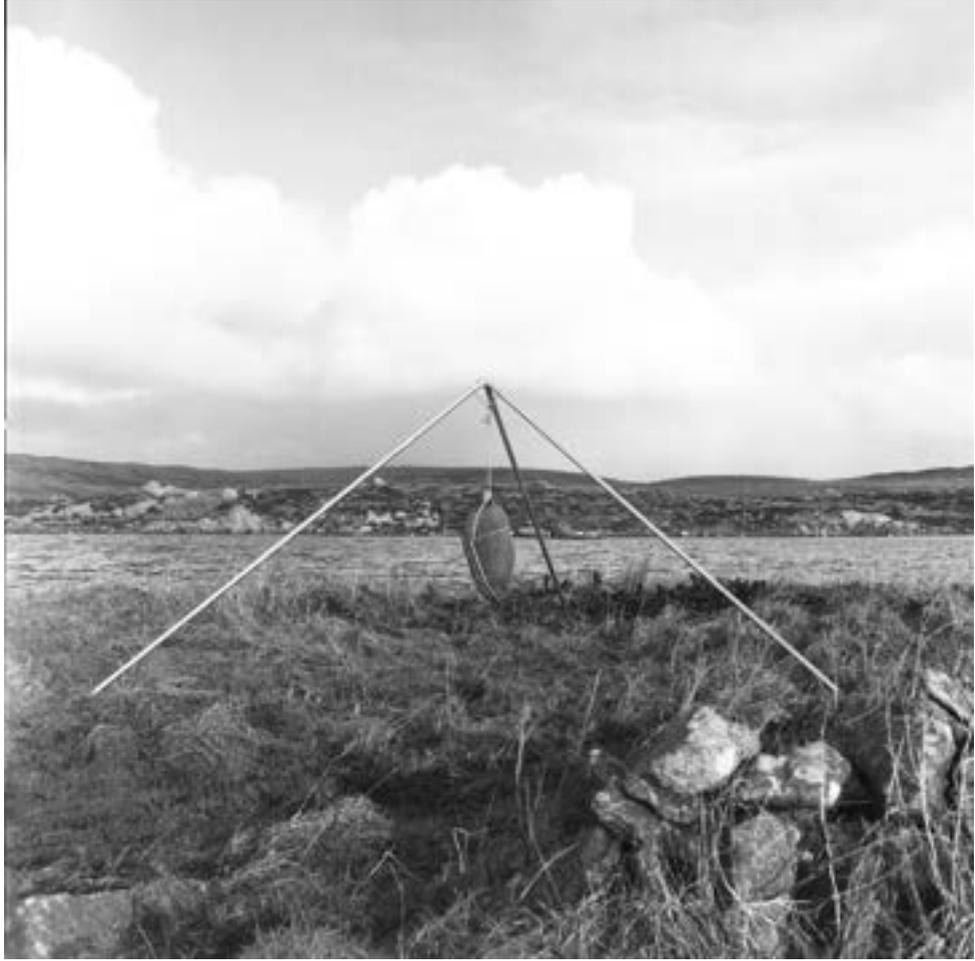
**"Leughadh
e
an
uair
air
a' ghrian,
bheireadh
e
dhut
i
gus
a' mhionaid"**

Contributors
MacKay, Donald, 1911-1988 (7432)
Fieldworkers
MacDonald, Donald Archie, 1929-1999 (15)
Fraser, Ian, 1941- (1511)
Date
March 1977
Track ID
73740



*"He'd read the time by the
sun, he'd give it to you to the
minute."*

*"Working with stars, sun and
moon."*



"There's a bird, the red throated diver. You've heard of her? Well we call her the 'rain goose'... what she says when there is going to be good weather is "Droughtowerall, droughtowerall, droughtowerall," and what she says when it is going to change and be wet weather: "Waarweatherandwaarweet, waarweatheranwaarweet, ". Well if you pay attention to her properly you'll swear that's what she's saying, and they said:

"When the rain goose gings tae tha hill,
Let aa man put doon his boats an fill.
When da rain goose gings tae da sea,
Let aa man pull up his boats an flee."

"Tha eun ann, an learg-dhearg. Tha thu air cluinntinn mu deidhinn? Uill, 's e an 'rain goose' a chanas sinn rithe ... 's e na tha i ag ràdh nuair a bhios deagh shìde ann: 'Droughtowerall, Droughtowerall, Droughtowerall.' Agus 's e na tha i ag ràdh nuair a tha an aimsir gu bhith ag atharrachadh agus a bhith fliuch: 'Waarweatherandwaarweet, waarweatheranwaarweet.' Uill ma bheir thu an aire cheart dhi, bheir thu mionnan gur e sin a tha i ag ràdh, agus thuirt iad:



Contributors
Henderson, Bruce, 1891-1977 (4532)
Fieldworkers
Bruford, Alan J., 1937-1995 (14)
Date
21 September 1970
Track ID
66840

Upper Circle
2023

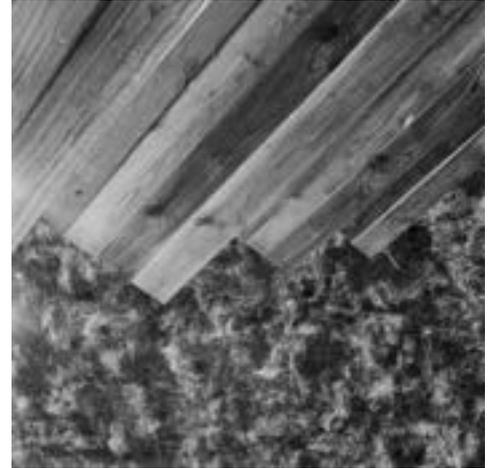
Timber,
Galvanised Steel Tube

Hogha Ghearraidh
N.Uist

**"When the rain
goose gings
tae tha hill,
Let aa man
put doon his
boats an fill.**



**When da rain
goose gings
tae da sea,
Let aa man pull up
his boats an flee."**





Background

'A' Cunntadh an Uspag' is a collection of images of works created during the duration of the Tobar an Dualchais x Atlas Arts Summer Residency by North Uist based Artist Calum MacKinnon Ferguson. The Residency took place over the Summer of 2022.

"This residency aims to foster meaningful engagement with Gaelic culture and heritage, and to build critical and imaginative responses to the complexities of Gaelic history and cultural identity." (TAD website) The work was inspired by stories and proverbs of weather-lore found on the Tobar an Dualchais (TAD) website. The many excerpts found here give context to the work as a whole. The juxtaposition that the sayings and proverbs have between sure fastness and ambiguity along with the trust that was held in these proverbs was a key influence throughout. Some of the images are more literal representations of the recordings from the TAD archive while others are more esoteric and merge the feelings created by the ambiguity of the proverbs

with the modern day alternatives of highly accurate weather forecasting, somewhat inspired by the implements and scientific instruments used. Whether based in proven scientific rhetoric, blind luck or otherworldly powers, the weather-lore of the Highlands and Islands once held the same certainty as the online tables and charts which now often take their place. The work aims to create a dialogue between the human and the non-human and place the viewer within the context of the proverbs, re-strengthening the feelings of connectedness to nature, which is often lost in the immediacy and mechanical means by which information from our surrounding environment is now so often gathered.

'S e cruinneachadh de dhealbhan de dh'obraichean a rinn an neach-ealain Calum MacFhionghain Feargasdan a th' ann an 'A' Cunntadh an Uspag'. Chaidh an obair a chruthachadh tro mhuintireas an t-samhraidh aig Tobar an Dualchais (TAD) x Atlas Arts ann an 2022. "Tha am muinntireas seo ag amas air com-pàirteachadh brìoghmhor ann an cultar na Gàidhlig a bhrosnachadh, agus fuasglaidhean cruthachail agus sgrùdail a chur mu choinneimh ghnothaichean iomadh-fhillte co-cheangailte ri eachdraidh na Gàidhlig agus fèin-aithne chultarail.." (làrach-lìn TAD) Chaidh an obair a bhrosnachadh le sgeulachdan agus seanfhaclan mu dheidhinn na h-aimsir a lorgar air làrach-lìn Tobar an Dualchais. Tha na h-iomadh earrann a gheibhear an seo a' toirt co-theacs don obair. Bha an t-eadar-dhealachadh de chinnt agus mì-chinnt, còmhla ris an earbsa a chaidh a chur anns na seanfhaclan na ioghnadh mòr air an obair. Tha cuid dhe na dealbhan a' riochdachadh nan clàraidhean bho TAD gu litireil. Tha feadhainn

eile nas dìomhair, a' toirt còmhla nam faireachaidhean a thàinig bhon mhì-chinnt a tha an lùib nan seanfhaclan agus bhon chinnt a tha an lùib goireasan adhartach an latha an-diugh airson tu-airmse a dhèanamh air an t-sìde. Ge bith an robh iad stèidhichte ann an reul-eòlas saidheansail, deagh fhortan no cumhachdan os-nàdarra, bha daoine a cheart cho cinnteach às a bheul-aithris seo 's tha iad a-nis às na clàran a' nochdas air-loidhne (XE Weather, BBC Weather, etc). Tha mi a' feuchainn leis an ceangail eadar daoine agus nàdar a neartachadh, rud a tha nis gu tric air a chall leis gu bheil sinn a' cruinneachadh dàta na sìde ann an dòighean meacanaigeach agus didseatach.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to:

KATHARINE BARRINGTON
Programme & Administrative Assistant, Atlas Arts

FLÒRAIDH FORREST
Project Director, Tobar an Dualchais

CAILEAN GORDON
Data Editor & Transcriber, Tobar an Dualchais

Special thanks to:

TARA DRUMMIE
Photographic Direction

