

# AN COMUNN

who are we ?

why are we ?

AN COMUNN GAIDHEALACH

Languages are the pedigree of nations - Dr. Johnson.

Gaelic is the pedigree of Scotland, the language of the first Scots from whom the country took its name, the language of the Scottish Highlanders whose distinctive dress and music and heroic history have given Scotland most of its colour. Scot and Gael were once synonymous terms; Gael and Scot still are. Gaelic identifies the Gael more surely than any tartan, if only through a Gaelic surname no matter how corrupt and anglicised its form may be. Gaelic distinguishes Scotland.

After three centuries of an official policy designed that Gaelic should be "abolished and removed" followed by decades of neglect particularly in Highland schools, the language and its splendid culture of poetry and music have been endangered. Not long ago everybody in the Highlands and Islands spoke Gaelic; today this is not so.

During the last century societies were formed to fight these evil policies and to achieve reform. Prominent among them was AN COMUNN GAIDHEALACH, today the oldest lay body consistently working for the "better" teaching and use of the Gaelic "language" to quote the first of its objects.

It was founded in Oban in 1891. The following year, again in Oban, it held the first of its annual national musical festivals, a one day affair, modelled on the Welsh National Eisteddfod. From this has come the National Mod, a festival of Gaelic song, music and literary competition now lasting more than a week and attracting competitors from all over. It is held in a different town or village every year and involves hundreds of people in practising and preparing for it. Above all it gives pleasure and benefit to thousands and an opportunity to use the language and to enjoy its music. In addition to the National Mod, An Comunn promotes a series of local Mods throughout the country.

Educational reform was always an important aim of AN COMUNN GAIDHEALACH. The inclusion of "the Gaelic clause" in the 1918 Education Act was largely due to efforts and pressure by it. Where there is still need for improvement in Gaelic formal education An Comunn continues to act. Apart from formal teaching there is a growing demand for better adult informal education and as a contribution towards it An Comunn has recently commissioned a Gaelic correspondence learning course. AN COMUNN GAIDHEALACH has been a prolific publisher of Gaelic material and still continues to produce some where there is an unfulfilled need.

AN COMUNN GAIDHEALACH operates through its members and branches and is served by a small professional staff based in Glasgow, Stornoway and Inverness where it has its head office.

AN COMUNN today is no longer alone as it was for long. Since the last war other agencies specialising in some aspect of Gaelic activity have grown up. In the Western Isles since regionalisation, there have been developments which if successful, could save the language there with concurrent benefits to the rest of Scotland.

There remain, however, large areas unattended in which AN COMUNN GAIDHEALACH must continue its work for the teaching and use of the Gaelic language.

Until quite recently it obtained no official help. Now it receives moderate grant aid from the Scottish Education Department as well as some help from Scottish Local Authorities and public bodies such as the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Scottish Arts Council.

AN COMUNN GAIDHEALACH is not an aloof academic society. It is not "anti-English" but rather pro-Gaelic. It is a non-party political, non-sectarian fellowship striving for the renewal of Scotland's oldest language, Scotland's pedigree - GAELIC.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

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