

Hie mee dys Balley yn Cheylllys ayns Lochabar y vee shoh chaie son feailley as cuirrey-kiaullee er Shenn Laa Boaldyn. Va shoh reaghít liorish yn er-kiaullee Griogair Labhruidh er y chroit echey hene. Chammah as goaill shenn arraneyn as cloie yn peeb, she Griogair yn ynrycan rapper Gaelgagh ayns Nalbin, as eh ny aynrñ jeh'n Afro-Celt Sound System. Va mooinjer ayr Ghriogair ass ny hardjyn shoh as ren eh hene gynsagh Gaelg y voayl voish paart jeh'n çhenn sleih s'jerree va loayrt ee.

Cha Leah as raink shin dys y ghlione bwaagh glass, cruinnit mygeayrt lesh sleityn as creggyn ardey, va naightyn groamagh ec Griogair dooin dy chur shin ayns cooinaghtyn dy vel ny shillaghyn aalin er fud *Gàidhealtachd* Nalbin keiltyn skeeal dy hoyt-mow kynney as dolley ass cultoor. Keead blein er dy henney va Gaelg ec dy chooilley unnane ayns Balley yn Cheylllys. Cha nee eirinnys ny eeastagh va cummal seose y balley: va'n chooid smoo jeh ny deiney gobbragh ayns quarral-sclate.

Chaghlaa cooishyn dy mooar tra yeigh yn quarral, as phaart yn peiagh s'jerree as Gaelg y voayl echey three mee er-dy-henney. Ta jees elley er-mayrn ayns thieyn-boandyrys ayns jiass Hostyn, as ta lane-duirn dy henn loayrtee ayns buill elley faggys dy laue, lheid as Ard nam Murchan. Agh cha voddey dys vees ny Gaeil s'jerree er çheer vooar Nalbin harrish y cheim.

Cha vel scoill Ghaelgagh ny brastylyn son sleih aasit ayns y valley, ny monney Gaelg er cowraghyn. Ta Griogair treishteil dy vod eh skeayley fys mastey'n phobble mysh y Ghaelg, as dy jarroo haink shin quail peiagh aeg ny ghaa ass y valley va gynsagh.

Va brastylyn peeberaght, fiddyl as arraneyn fud y laa. Lurg shen va'n ollagh er nyn mannaghey er aght yn çhenn earish as ad goll er imman eddyr daa aile, as Griogair shooyl rhyrboo cloie yn peeb. V'eh orrin ooilley shassoo ayns daa strane er dagh çheu jeh'n vayr as ny booaghyn mollagh eairkagh gimmeeaght eddyr shin. Hug shen aggle dy liooar er peiagh ny ghaa! Lhaih Griogair shenn vannaght Gaelgagh, as lurg shen va bonnag er ny ghreddal er yn aile, as begin da'n pheigh hooar yn pheesh s'doo lheim harrish yn aile.

Lurg shen va cuirrey-kiaullee dys anmagh er yn oie. Ta Griogair kiarail jannoo y lheid shoh keayrt elley as aigh vie lesh – veagh eh mie dy akin aa-vioghey ny shenn chliaghtaghyn as yn çhenn ghlare er fud ny çheeraghyn Gaelgagh.

I went to Ballachulish in Lochaber last month for a festival and concert to mark Old May Day. This was organized by the musician Griogair Labhruidh on his own croft. As well as being a traditional singer and piper, Griogair is the only Gaelic rapper in Scotland and part of the Afro-Celt Sound System. Griogair's father's people were from the area and he himself learnt the local Gaelic dialect from some of the last native speakers.

As soon as we arrived the stunning glen, surrounded by looming mountains and crags, Griogair had sad news for us, which reminded us that the magnificent views throughout the Highlands mask a story of ethnic cleansing and erasure of culture. A hundred years ago everyone in Ballachulish spoke Gaelic. It was not a farming or fishing community but an industrial one supported by a slate quarry where most of the men worked.

Things changed greatly when the quarry closed in 1955, and the last local native Gaelic speaker died three months ago. Two more remain in nursing homes in the south of England, and there are a handful of elderly Gaelic speakers in other nearby districts, such as Ardnamurchan. But it will not be long until Gaelic vanishes completely from the Scottish mainland.

There is no Gaelic-medium education or adult classes in the village, or much Gaelic to be seen on signs. Griogair hopes to spread awareness of the language among local people, and indeed we met one or two young people from the area who were learning.

There were piping, fiddle and song classes during the day. After that, the cattle were blessed in the traditional manner by being driven between two fires, with Griogair preceding them playing the pipes. We all had to stand in two rows on either side of the track as the shaggy horned Highland cows trotted between us. This was a bit frightening for some! Griogair read a traditional Gaelic blessing, and then a bannock was toasted on the fire, and the person who got the blackest piece had to jump over the fire.

In the evening there was a concert until late. Griogair hopes to do similar events in the future and good luck to him – it would be good to see the revival of old traditions and the old language throughout the Gaelic lands.