



Lean gu dlùth ri cliù do shinnsear

An
Teachdaire
Gaidhealach

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Bhon chomataidh

The big news for this issue is the notice of the 2008 *Sgoil Gheamhraidh*. An information sheet and registration form is enclosed. This time, the *Sgoil* returns to the Collaroy Centre, and due to logistical difficulties experienced by the Irish Language School Sydney we will not be having a combined event this year. Your committee and teaching volunteers have been working hard to ensure that the coming *Sgoil* is a successful and rewarding one for all involved. Bran MacEachaidh and I have been working on a lesson structure that will hopefully give everyone the best possible learning experience with the resources we have available. Our Gaelic Editor, Ceiti Greum, will be joining us as a teacher, and we hope also to have Joan Mitchell-Willis from Melbourne as a teacher. Because we won't be working in with the Irish timetable, we have scheduled more hours of learning into each day, and hope to send our learners away feeling stimulated and encouraged.

Our annual general meeting will be held during the *Sgoil*, and I urge all members to start thinking now about whether you might be able to take a position on the committee. At the moment we are two committee members short, which places a heavy workload on those we do have, and limits our ability to deliver quality services to members - you will have noticed, for instance, how most of the pieces in *An Teachdaire Gaidhealach* lately have been written by the same few people!

Tha mi an dòchas gum faic mi sibh aig an Sgoil!

Pamaladh Uí Néill

Breac à linne, slat à coille is fiadh
à fireach - trì mèirle às nach do
ghabh Gàidheal riamh nàire.

A trout from the river, a staff from
the wood and a deer from the hill
- three thefts no Gael was ever
ashamed of.

Comunn Gàidhlig Astràilia

The Gaelic Association of Australia (Comunn Gàidhlig Astràilia) is a non-profit organisation which supports the language and culture of Scottish Gaels in Australia. Members include both native speakers and learners. We welcome contact from anyone with an interest in these subjects. A' Ghàidhlig gu bràth !!

Enquiries should be directed to the Secretary at PO Box A2259, Sydney South NSW 1235, or at fios@ozgaelic.org. Membership of the Gaelic Association of Australia costs \$30 per year, and includes subscription to this journal, which is sent to all members.

Cuairt Ghàidhlig gu Albainn

All ATG readers probably harbour a great desire to travel to Scotland at some point (or preferably many points!) in our lives. Ruairaidh MacAonghais makes some suggestions about how you might make this voyage so as to better reach the culture of Scotland that you already know so well through your interests.

Cearcaill na Gàidhlig

In our busy times, there is a danger, says Aonghas Pàdraig Caimbeul in a recent short book of the above title (“The Gaelic Rings”), that we might see our journey in mundane practical terms of arrivals and departures, of accommodation and fares. He says, rather, that twenty-first-century voyaging, because its motivation comes from deep within the human psyche, need be no different from “an t-seann nadur” - the primeval need to travel, search, discover and make connections that has always been. Moreover, he says, “Gheibh thu an rud leis an tàinig thu” - “you will discover the thing you brought with you” - you will normally discover what you are open to in your hopes and will generally not discover what you hope to avoid. This little book attempts to prepare the voyager to Scotland with “rudan Gàidhlig”, some Gaelic things that may add to the Scottish hopes you are taking with you, to make your voyage one of true joy and discovery.

The Gaelic Rings website

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the homepage of 'The Gaelic Rings'. The browser is Microsoft Internet Explorer. The page features a logo on the left with the text 'the gaelic rings' and 'cearcaill na gaidhlig' below it. A search bar is present. A navigation menu lists: Gaelic Rings, Gaelic Journeys, History of Gaelic, Gaelic Language, Events, Businesses, Our Partners, Travel, and Contact Us. The main content area has a large image of a loch and mountains. Below the image, the text reads: 'Fàilte! Welcome to The Gaelic Rings or Cearcaill na Gàidhlig. Here you can experience and plan a Gaelic-rich journey around Scotland's Hebridean Islands and West Highland mainland, witnessing history, discovering the landscape and embracing the richness of Gaelic language and culture.' To the right of the image, there is a paragraph: 'Launched in 2007 with one Ring, The Gaelic Rings now comprises six, all of which are based on Caledonian MacBrayne's Island Hopscootch@ routes, making it simple to purchase the ferry tickets required to experience the Gaelic Rings. And to give you a taste of what you can expect when you get there, we have commissioned a number of highly respected Scots, with strong Gaelic connections, to take us on their own personal journey around the Rings. So why not take some time to search through the site and plan your own journey through The Gaelic Rings. Move your cursor over the image above to begin. Enjoy!' The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows several open applications: 'stark', 'gmail - an teachdaire...', 'gaelic rings - mic...', 'adobe indesign cs2', and 'arcegal - cuairt ghàidhlig...'. The system clock shows '12:25 pm'.

Cearcaill - Rings

Cearcall means a hoop, ring or circle. Many of you would know the popular Scottish group Runrig's song, Cearcall a' Chuain [circle of the ocean], which gives voyaging as a metaphor for the passage of life. Therefore the title of this little book immediately evokes the depth of its ambition.

The book provides at one level a guide to the interlocking rings, voyaging the circle of the Hebrides, and the circle of each island in the Hebrides, in a journey to the West Highlands and Isles. But it aims to enrich this voyage by providing a Gaelic perspective on the Gaelic heart of the Gaidhealtachd.

Gaidhealtachd is a word in Gaelic for the Highlands, but it literally means the land of the Gael. To a Gael then, a voyage to the Highlands without Gaelic, is to have missed the Highlands altogether.

Thus, Angus Peter Campbell, a prominent Gaelic writer tells in English (and Gaelic) of his personal voyage from Oban to Mallaig via the Hebrides, giving the reader a glimpse of Gaelic seanfhacal (sayings), bardachd (poetry), writing, and “a dhùthcha” his passion for his country.

Roy Pedersen follows this with a “tourist” guide to the area in English, but with a Gaelic sensibility, showing the reader not just the names of the destinations in the native language, but how the Gaels see their own country.

A blas or taste of the Gaelic language

The book also invites the voyager not just to be a passive viewer of the culture, but to participate by providing a few basic expressions and words with phonetics and translation. So the voyager could try “Feasgar math” [pron. “fegsir mar”] as an afternoon greeting, or recognise that “Ciamar a tha thu?” is the opening inquiry of any conversation.

Australian voyagers should first look at the website <http://www.gaelic-rings.com/>.

We’ve been in contact with Joe MacPhee, who is Development Manager for Economic Development at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar in Stornoway. Joe impressed on us that the new campaign and website (just launched in March 2008) contains a wider range of “voyagers” and their stories than that contained in the booklet (discussed above). These include the personal journeys of Mairi Macarthur, Brian Wilson, mother and daughter Margaret and Iseabail Mactaggart, Donald Meek, and the husband and wife team of Hugh and Jane Cheape, “all of whom are highly respected within the Gaelic

community and have a vast knowledge of the areas they travel through”.

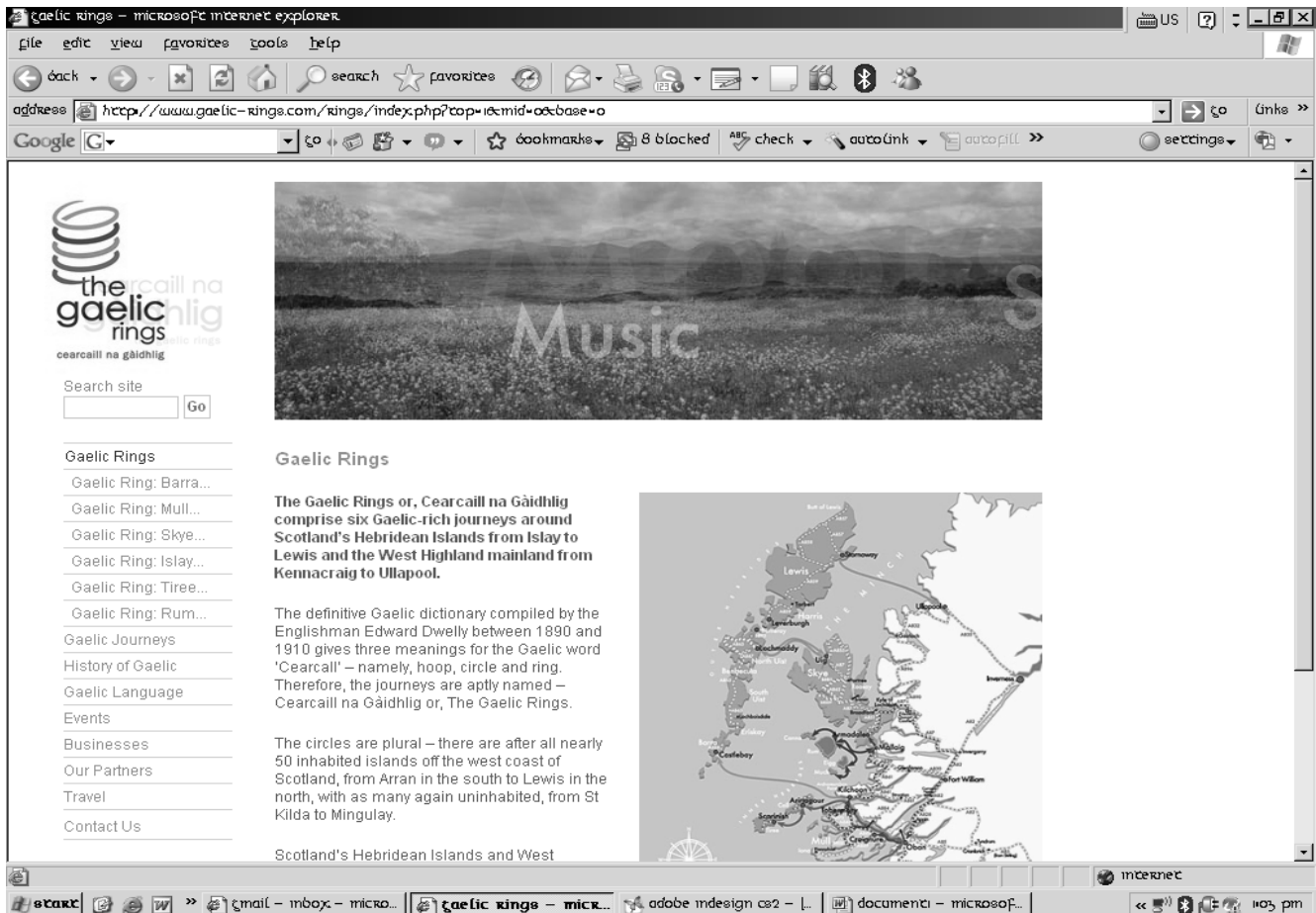
Just to give a *blas* of the new website, the first of these voyagers, Mairi Macarthur, takes us from Oban to Mull, Ardnamurchan and Skye. She is from Iona on her mother’s side, so she naturally has more to say about Mull and environs, including this poem:

“O Shèamais glac do mhisneach
'S ann air a' chuan tha sgil agad;
O chionn 's chan eil thall ach cruaidh-chàs
San drèin th'ann an Gleann Seiliseir.”

Or *anns a' Bheurla* ...

“James, keep your courage,
your skill lies on the sea;
There’s only hardship
digging drains in the glen.”

The poem is “spoken” by a shadowy stump of hazel, which went by the name of Bodach Còir Ghleann Seiliseir (kindly old man of the glen of the iris), which bard James Robertson addressed in song while labouring to make ends meet. Mairi uses the poem to illustrate the colourful anecdotes that in the imagination populate the road from Craignure to Tobermory on the island of Mull.



Another page on the Gaelic Rings website - note the helpful map

Further information

If you want to read more, the journeys can be viewed on the site in both English and Gaelic.

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Thanks to Angus McLeod for the booklet on which this is based. The article was first published in the Australasian Highlander in Summer edition 2008.



**Is fheàrr an teine beag a gharas
na an teine mòr a loisgeas.**

The little fire that warms is better
than the big fire that burns.

**Cha do bhrist fear riamh a
bhogha nach fheumadh fear
eile 'n t-sreang.**

No man ever broke his bow
but another man found a use
for the string.



Gaelic Rings: Ardnamurchan peninsula from Kilchoan ferry wharf (photo: P O'Neill)



Gaelic Rings: Great Cumbrae Island from Kingarth, Bute (photo: P O'Neill)



Gaelic Rings: Kilmory, Rum, seen from the ferry (photo: P O'Neill)

A Little Book of Gaelic Proverbs

A Little Book of Gaelic Proverbs:

Gaelic and English

compiled by WA and HR Ross, illustrated by Brian Fitzgerald: Appletree Press, 1996
(reviewed by Pamela O'Neill)

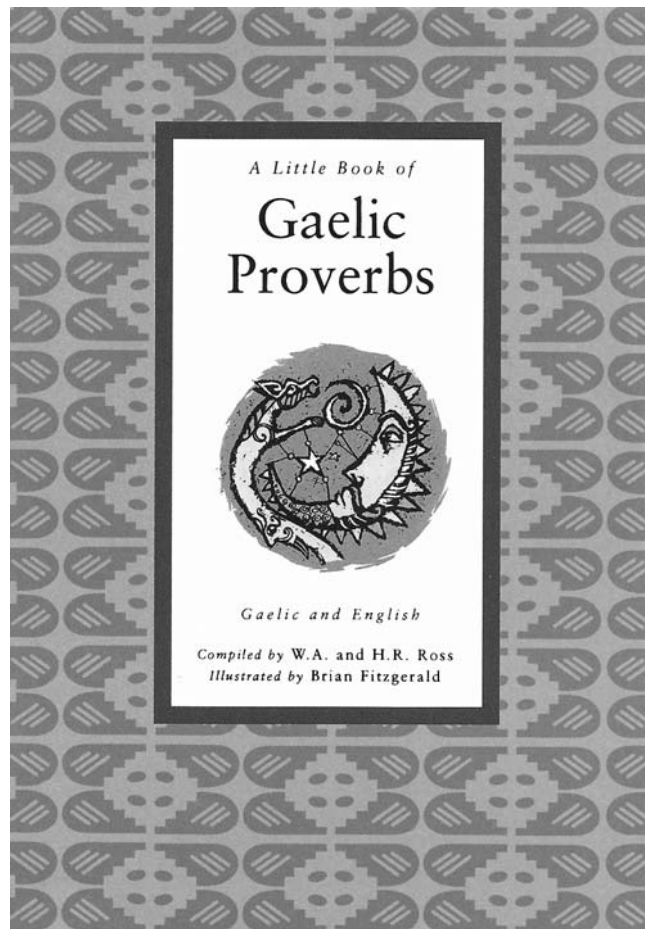
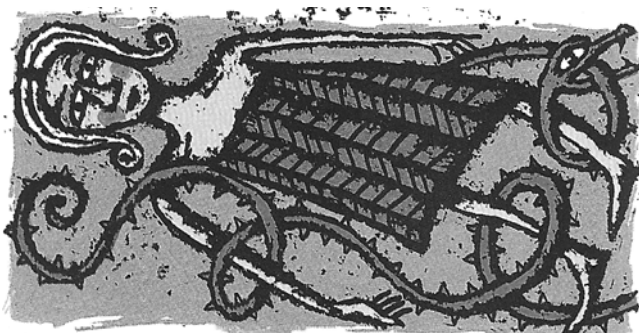
This pretty little book brings together some of the best-known *Seanfhacail Ghàidhlig* with English translations and quirky illustrations. It is a truly pocket-sized book, almost small enough to fit into a man's shirt-pocket, with an eye-catching hard cover, and a mere 60 pages of generously spaced content. Belfast's Appletree Press are to be congratulated on this series of 'little books', which are beautifully crafted and perfect for the tourist market. Others in the series include *A Little Scottish Songbook*, Charles MacLean's *A Little Book of Scottish Toasts* and *A Little Book of Scottish Castles*, David Ross's *A Little Book of Scottish Verse* and *A Little History of Scotland*. Appletree are particularly to be congratulated on including a specifically Gaelic book in the collection.

The *Little Book of Gaelic Proverbs* features a one-page introduction which alludes to the "distinctive wit and pithiness" of the Celtic mind, and suggests that the proverbs can give a "special insight" into the minds of Celtic peoples today, as well as their ancestors.

For a taste of that pithiness, try this one, with its delightful illustration: *Gabhaidh fear na sròine mòire a h-uile rud ga ionnsaigh fhèin*: The man with a big nose thinks everyone talks of it.



Or for those of a more practical bent: *Am fear a thèid san dris, feumaidh e tighinn aiste mar a dh'fhaodas e*: He that goes among the briars must get out as best he can.



This last one has a particularly clever illustration, with its modern take on the interlace in early Celtic manuscripts, and the beautiful herringbone kilt worn by the briars' captive.

But I think my favourite illustration accompanies that sentiment we have all felt at one time or another: *Furain an t-aoigh a thig, greas an t-aoigh tha falbh*: Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest. The superbly witty drawing harks back to early Celtic civilisation, with the boar helmet and bronze horn prominent.



Personally, I was a little disappointed not to find my favourite *seanfhal* here: *Thig crìoch air an t-saoghal ach mairidh ceòl is gaol*: The world will end, but music and love will endure. I would have loved to have seen what Brian Fitzgerald might have done to illustrate that!

Puball Ghàidhlig at Hyde Park

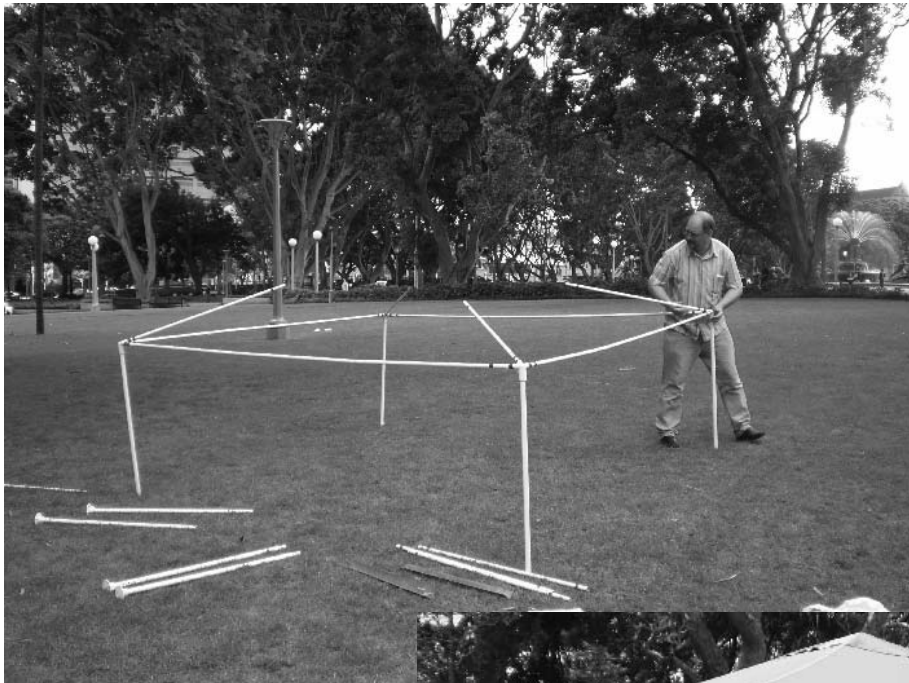
On 23 November, Comunn Gàidhlig Astràilia joined forces with Còisir Ghàidhlig Astràilianach to bring a 'Gaelic Tent' to the Hyde Park festivities in Scottish Week. Pamela O'Neill reports.

In a classic case of bad timing, I flew back from Melbourne on the morning of the Hyde Park event. At 6 am, while I was strolling onto a plane with my Krispy Kreme breakfast clutched in my hot little hand, Bran from the choir was squeezing the last piece of equipment into his car and heading into the city, accompanied by Catherine. When they arrived at Hyde Park, they were joined by friend Tony, who gave Catherine a hand with the tent while Bran took the car away to park it.

By the time I reached the park with my kids, the tent was looking very cosy and I was able to lend a hand with the finishing touches. It looked quite eye-catching, flying the two banners of the choir and Comunn Gàidhlig. It also looked quite inviting, offering shady relief from the heat and a place to sit. This may have been one reason for our steady stream of visitors throughout the day. Rod and Orin came with Finlay and Hannah, and lent a hand for a few hours. We also had a visit from a holidaying couple from Barra, who had happened upon the Hyde Park gathering quite by chance. When Angus stopped by, they chatted in Gaelic with him for a while and sang a few songs with us. Graham, Beatrice, Marion and Jane from the choir also dropped in at various times.

We ran Gaelic singing and language workshops, alternating the two every half-hour. These proved very popular, particularly the singing. People had a lot of fun having a go at puirt-a-beul like *'S ann an Ile*, but I think the big winners were the soulful *Taladh* and *Maighdeanan na h-Airigh*.

We closed down the tent for a short time in the middle of the day to carry the choir banner in the march. There weren't enough of us to carry the Comunn Gàidhlig banner as well - maybe next year!



Help from our Celtic cousins: Tony Earls from the Irish Language School Sydney braved the early morning to help put the tent together ...



... and the finished product - a tiny Gaidhealtachd in the midst of Hyde Park!





Choir leader Bran MacEachaidh and Comunn convenor Pamela O'Neill with Pamela's children at Hyde Park

Participants in one of the very popular Gaelic singing workshops led by Bran throughout the day



Bran and Pamela carry the choir's banner in the march

Bran and Pamela lead a workshop in Gaelic language (photos: Catherine MacEwan)



Cairn ceremony at Mosman



On Friday 28 November, the annual inspection of the Scottish-Australian cairn at Mosman was held. Lord Jamie Semphill, on behalf of the Scottish people, conducted a formal inspection of the Cairn, which was a bicentennial gift from the people of Scotland to the people of Australia. The cairn bears what may well be the longest inscription in Gaelic in Australia. It is fitting, then, that this year the inspection ceremony included Gaelic songs performed by Còisir Ghàidhlig Astràilianach: Athchuinge and Cearcall a' Chuain. The moving music added immeasurably to the occasion, complementing beautifully the moody weather and solemn speeches.



Pamaladh Uí Néill

In this issue, our committee profile is of Neach-cathrach (convenor), Pamela O'Neill.

I was recently asked how I came to be involved with Gaelic, and it wasn't until I tried to answer that question that I realised just what a strange path I followed to get here! When I left school, I set out to do a university degree in music and drama, and did Old English as a fill-in subject. I found the language, and the early medieval period in which it was used, so enthralling that music and drama rapidly disappeared from my plans.

After finishing my undergraduate degree, I took a few years off to take care of my eldest daughter, Mairi-Ceit, before deciding to enrol in a Masters degree in Celtic Studies at the University of Sydney, in order to pursue my early medieval interest. Because I didn't have an undergraduate degree in Celtic Studies, my supervisor suggested that it would be a good idea to learn a Celtic language. I knew someone who was attending Duncan MacLeod's classes, so I went along. Once again, I was enthralled! Not long afterwards, I joined the Gaelic choir. At the Mod in Oban in 1992, I met Angus MacKenzie, and when I returned to Australia, I resumed my Gaelic lessons with him. When Comunn Gàidhlig was formed, I was one of the first to join, and took my turn as secretary and newsletter editor in the 1990s.

After that, I acquired my PhD in Celtic Studies and published a book and many articles on various subjects including early medieval stone sculpture in Scotland. I moved to Melbourne in 2001, where I worked for three years as a Research Fellow in History at the University of Melbourne, on a project on early medieval Scotland and Ireland. I also learnt Old Irish, the early medieval language that was the ancestor of Scottish Gaelic, and I now teach it, as well as using it in my research.

I returned to the committee of Comunn Gàidhlig as treasurer at a very difficult time, when the association was in danger of collapse. Fortunately, due to the hard work of Ruairaidh and others on the committee, we have made a great comeback, and continue to regain the ground we lost then. The best thing, from my point of view, is that we have reinstated the Sgoil Gheamhraidh in 2007, and are looking forward to the 2008 Sgoil.

In the second half of 2007 I returned to Sydney, and I now live in Revesby. My children Natalie and Patrick are in primary school. I work in the city, and am enjoying being back in Sydney: it has been a great joy for me to be able to rejoin the Gaelic choir, and I am looking forward to contributing to the work of the new Professor of Celtic Studies at Sydney University, who will start in 2008.



Pamela with Natalie and Patrick



On fieldwork at St Mullins monastic site, Ireland

Activities for Gaelic speakers and learners

Sgoil Gheamhraidh

The annual Gaelic language winter school will be held on the long weekend, Friday 6 to Monday 9 June 2008 at the Collaroy Centre. An information sheet and registration form is included with this issue of *An Teachdaire*, and is also available from our website, www.ozgaelic.org

This is a live-in weekend where you get a chance to learn more Gaelic, practice the Gaelic you have, and immerse yourself in the culture. An experienced team of teachers from Sydney and beyond have volunteered their time to teach during the weekend, and we will be joined by several native speakers of Gaelic. *Chi sinn sibh ann!*



Cearcall Còmhraidh

A Gaelic conversation circle is held in Sydney on the second Saturday of every month from February to November, from 2pm to 4pm. We have just entered into an arrangement with Scottish House to hold the *cearcall* at Scottish House, Corner Calliope and Military Roads Guildford - opposite the train station. We are very grateful to Scottish House for accommodating us.

Why not come along on a Saturday afternoon? Just show up at Scottish House any time from about a quarter to two onwards. If you're feeling a little shy, you could always email one of the committee members and arrange to meet up beforehand, so you can arrive together. Or feel free to phone Pamela on 0438 726 532 to get more information about the *cearcall* or organise to meet earlier. We'd love to see you there!



Coisir Ghàidhlig Astràilianach

The Australian Gaelic Singers are based in Sydney and meet every Thursday night for rehearsals. The group is small and very friendly - more like a family really. They always welcome new members. If you're a singer, you'll love the Gaelic music - there's nothing quite like it in the world. And if you're a Gaelic enthusiast (you probably are, if you're reading this!) then you'll enjoy the satisfaction of singing in our beautiful language.

More details of the choir's activities can be found on their excellent website, at www.gaelicsingers.org.au, or by contacting Judy on (02) 9498 8209 or Bran on 0422 218 461.



Gobaireachd

Bidh buidheann bheag againn a' tighinn cruinn uair 's a' mhios ann an Sydney airson beagan gobaireachd gu tur 's a' Ghàidhlig. Bidh sinn a' coinneachadh air an dara oidhche Chiadain den mhios aig an Taigh-Osda "Orient" 'sna Rocks - aig cuig uairean. Leanaibh fuaim na Gàidhlig agus lorgaidh sibh sinn! Bhiodh sinn toilichte ur faicinn uair sam bith. Airson a bhith cinnteach fònaibh gu Pòl air 0401 890 124.



Scottish Gaelic Society of Victoria

The SGSV hold regular events, including language classes on Wednesday nights at the Celtic Club, Melbourne, and the Scottish Gaelic Choir of Victoria is associated with the SGSV. More details are on their website at www.scottish-gaelic.org.au, or email sgsvic@vicnet.net.au.