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ISSUE : [Issue 57](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1991/6/1

From John Lorne Campbell's 1937 Visit to Cape Breton We visited several families of Mucanaich (people originally from the Isle of Muck) near Whycocamagh and Lake Ainslie, all MacKinnons, and were given a warm welcome everywhere and asked many questions about the Old Country and the West- em Isles. Here I may say that the Gaels in Cape Breton have preserved the best traditions of Highland hospitality. There can be few places where a stranger is received with so much kindness, especially if he has a knowledge of Gaelic. We asked the people for songs that had been composed in Scotland, in particular traditional songs such as the old waulking songs that often embody local history and folk-lore, the authors usually being unknown and the airs very old. Such songs were sung during the process of waulking or fulling tweed by hand. They are rapidly becoming forgotten, and the archaic style of their language, together with the many interesting allusions contained in them (many date back to the seventeenth century) and with the great beauty of many of the airs, as sung unaccompanied under natural conditions, renders them of peculiar interest. We knew many of the old waulking songs that are sung in Barra and South Uist. Were such things remembered in Cape Breton after a separation of over a hundred years? We were told that some of the descendants of the Barra and Uist settlers living around the Bras d'Or lake (in Gaelic called Loch Mor nam Barrach, 'the Big Loch of the Barramen,' from this fact) knew old waulking songs that were unknown around Lake Ainslie or Whycocamagh. We were also told that there was to be a 'milling frolic,' which is the Cape Breton term for a waulking party or luadhadh, at North River near St. Ann's Bay, a district populated largely by people of Lewis and Harris origin. The chance of attending was too good to be missed, and we accepted an invitation with alacrity.... It was dark when we reached the hall at North River where the milling frolic was to take place. It was crowded, and we were reminded instantly of similar gatherings anywhere in the West- em Isles. In feature, manner and speech the people present, at any rate those over twenty-five or thirty years of age, were practically identical with such an audience as one might see in any town in the Outer Isles. The meeting opened with some speeches. There were solo songs and a humorous Gaelic anecdote or two told by a Mr. Kenneth MacLeod in excellent Harris Gaelic, which won an instant response. Then began the milling. In the Outer Isles, where waulkings are still kept up, either spontaneously or as part of an arranged concert, the newly-woven cloth, or a blanket taking its place, is dampened and taken by a number of women who sit around a table (called the cleith luadiaidh) and pound and push the cloth to the rhythm of the song, which usually starts in slow time and accelerates towards the end. One person sings the verses, while the others take the chorus. In Scotland (so far as I have seen) waulking is considered women's work, and the great majority of persons who know the waulking songs are women. But at North River it was the men who sat down round the cleith luadiaidh and took up the blanket and started to sing. A great many of the audience stood around the men at the



cleitii luadiiaidii, and, taking hands, swung their arms back and forth in time to the music while singing the chorus • a thing I had never seen at home. A strangely incongruous feature to our eyes was provided by some of the younger folk, who leaned back against the wall of the hall chewing gum while the luadii was in progress. We recognised some of the songs, one of which was Biodh an deocii SO an laimh mo ruin • *Let this drink be in my love's hand' • but there was so much conversation to be done that we could not pay very much attention to the singing. Everyone wanted to hear about the islands from which their grandparents or great-grandparents had emigrated. Many had heard such viv? id descriptions of these places in their childhood from the old people that they could discuss them as something they had ac? tually seen.... North Sydney & Sydney Mines If We're Working Together to Create the Best Place in Cape Breton to Visit, Live and Woric'' Sydney Mines and North Sydney Share: The Gateway to Newfoundland Marine Atlantic Ferry Terminal Mayor Michael White Waterfront Boauty Golf Courses Excellent Beach Mayor Hector DiPersio The Cape Breton Exhibition A Working Shipyard Yacht Club and Marina Facilities & a School System Committed to a Combination of Quality Vocational and Academic Education The Northside provides an ideal environment for new industrial groups to join with established local business. Sydney Mines and North Sydney jointly own the NORTHSIDE INDUSTRIAL PARK, with incubator mall and serviced lots. MOST IMPORTANT: Our strength is the people of the Northside. We're a community that welcomes the visitor and encourages those who want to productively establish here. 794-4818 Contact: Norm Smith, Executive Director NORTHSIDE INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION p. O. BOX 276, NORTH SYDNEY, NOVA SCOTIA B2A 3M3 794-5818 The Northslde's Active Core of Business and Community Welcomes the Visitor and the New Citizen Alike!