

Unveiling of Glen Bard Translation Plaque

The unveiling of a bronze plaque, which provides a translation of the Gaelic inscription on the gravestone of the Bard John (Iain) Maclean, into English, took place on October 16, 2010. The event took place at the Glen Bard Cemetery where the Bard is buried. The cemetery is located in the area of Nova Scotia called Glen Bard in his honour. The weather was rather dreary but was certainly enlivened by the festivities. The ceremony began with the piping in of representatives of the Clan Maclean Heritage Trust, Clan Maclean Atlantic Canada, and descendants of the Bard by Dr. Michael Linkletter, a Professor of Celtic Studies at St Francis Xavier University. President Murray MacLean (CMAC) conducted the event. Dr. Kenneth Nilsen, Professor and Chairman of the Celtic Studies Department, reminded those in attendance of the importance of the Bard, not only to Macleans, but also to the larger world of Gaelic Studies. He also read some excerpts from the writings of the Bard in both the Gaelic and in English. Professor Michael Newton sang some of the Bard's work, also in Gaelic and English. One of the highlights of the day was a reading of one of the Bard's poems in Gaelic by Karen MacKinnon, an exchange student in the Celtic Studies Department. Karen is from the Bard's home in Tiree. The readings and singing, - plus the weather, gave the participants all a real feel for the pioneer experience(s) that the Bard wrote about, - and the trials and joys they experienced.

Because of the illness of Ian MacLean, the Trustee who had been involved in the project, George MacLean, a "Friend" of the Trust and the incoming President of CMAC represented the Trust. He, with Murray, and John Sinclair (representing the many descendants of the Bard) did the actual unveiling. John added more personal comments about the Bard from his family's store of knowledge. George passed on Sir Lachlan Maclean's congratulations on the unveiling. He also asked descendants of the Bard to identify themselves, and be recognized.

While it seems a shame that we had to translate the headstone, - which is written in Gaelic, nonetheless this needed to be done if the majority of visitors are to be able to understand the words. The original idea was John Sinclair's, and it came to fruition with the support of the Trust and Clan Maclean Atlantic Canada.

The Bard was born in Tiree in 1787, and before he came to new Scotland was the Bard to the Laird of Coll (Chieftain of the Macleans of Coll), and so assured of a home and income for life. However the lure of free land and the excitement of emigrating overcame his reservations, and he and his family moved to Nova Scotia. Initially he was NOT happy! In fact one of his most famous poems was an expression of his displeasure, entitled "The Gloomy Forest." However he persevered, and although he never became a great farmer, he and his family survived, and in fact, he eventually came to love his new land. So much so, that he turned down an offer by the Laird of Coll, to pay for his return to Scotland. He was a devotee of the Gaelic language, and argued strenuously for its maintenance. This led to his gravestone being in Gaelic, and thus not understandable by most of us. One of his great, great, grandsons, the above mentioned John Sinclair (a member of CMAC) solved this problem by putting a plasticized translation beside the gravestone. He felt this was not an acceptable permanent solution, so John asked the Clan Maclean Heritage Trust, and Clan Maclean Atlantic to erect a bronze plaque, which would provide the translation for the foreseeable future. The unveiling is the culmination of this project.