

Royal National Mod returns to Stornoway

AM MÒD Nàiseanta Rìoghail (The Royal National Mod), Scotland's premier festival celebrating the Gaelic linguistic and cultural heritage, will this year travel to the Western Isles for the fifth time in its 120-year history, last visiting the Islands in 2005.

The 8-day celebration of Gaelic music, dance, drama, arts and literature, running from Friday 14 until Saturday October 22, is set to attract thousands of participants and embrace the entire community of the islands including Lewis, Harris, Benbecula, Barra and the Uists.

John Morrison, chief executive of An Comunn Gàidhealach, said: "We are delighted to be taking The Mod back to the Western Isles this year; an area which has a strong history of delivering a fantastic event for participants and spectators alike. The local organising committee has worked tirelessly to ensure this year's event is a great success and has a spectacular array of fringe activities; I'd urge people to come along and see what the Mod has to offer."

"We have already had a fantastic response from people of all ages signing up to take part in the competitions this year and have had entries from as far a field as Canada, United Arab Emirates, California and Virginia." The fringe activities offer an annual opportunity for Gaels and non-Gaels to gather and renew old friendships as well as forging new ones. Activity for this year includes ceilidhs, open stage music evenings, road dances each evening, historical exhibitions, "come and try" musical workshops, and the annual Angus Macleod memorial lecture.

The festival kicks off on Friday October 14 with a grand opening ceremony taking place in the early evening followed by a ceilidh at night to get visitors in the mood for the week-long competitive festival.

Competitions begin on Monday October 17, kicking off a week filled with Gaelic music, song, dance, drama, sport and literature.

Children's competitions take place at the start of the week and nearly 1,700 children from across the country will take part. The Traditional and Gold Medal qualifying rounds take place on Wednesday October 19 with the finals on Thursday October 20.

The Lovat & Tullibardine and Margrat Duncan titles will be awarded on Friday October 21 before the final concert takes place. The grand finale of the 2011 Royal National Mod will take place on Saturday 22 October when the Massed Choirs will gather and parade in Ceàrnag Phearsabhail (Perceval Square), led by local pipe bands.

2010 saw the Mod come to Caithness for the first time; the successful event saw HRH The Duke of Rothesay visit and present the two winners of the Mod Gold Medal competition, Joy Dunlop and Iain MacLean, with their prizes. Over 2,000 competitors took part in the 2010 Royal National Mod and with thousands of visitors travelling to Caithness during the event.

Alex MacDonald, convener of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and of the Mod organising committee, said: "There is no more appropriate setting for this week-long celebration of Gaelic language and culture than the Gaelic heartland of the Western Isles."

For the full Mod programme and other details, visit www.acgmod.org.





*A' cruthachadh
chothroman dhan
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C

othroman obrach
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àidhlig sa
Chòimhearsnachd

Tuilleadh fiosrachaidh aig: www.cnag.org.uk

Around the shows

WE BEGIN with the photo on this page of a very special dog (and his pretty special owner, Catherine Macdonald).

Five-year-old "Jimmy" is a bearded collie dog owned by Catherine of Cnocbreac, Torrible, Lairg, whom we caught up with at the Lairg Crofters Show.

When we say Jimmy is special it is worth mentioning that he was covered in medals. "He's got first prize two years in a row," explained Catherine. "He got second this year as a sheepdog and he got reserve local champion, a first for "scruffiest" dog, first for work dog and second for "wagiest" tail, third for pedigree and the rest were just special prizes."

Catherine is the daughter, granddaughter and great-granddaughter of crofters.

As well as showing Jimmy at the show, we also found her in charge of her granny, Marion Macdonald's, calving Limousin heifer, "Nancy". Nancy topped not just the cattle section but was also pronounced overall livestock champion.

As we write, 17-year-old Catherine has left home for Benbecula to study traditional music. One of her instruments is the bagpipes.

On the opposite page, the top photo is of four cyclists fresh from competing at the **Invercharron Traditional Highland Games**.

In the junior 800 metres race Ross Gollan from Edderton (right) and Alasdair Coupar from Rogart took first and second places respectively.

In the seniors, Scottish champion Tim Allen from Glenrothes (right) came in ahead of Wim Chalmers of Dornoch.

Note that Alasdair and Wim's sports shirts display the initials "ESW". This stands for East Sutherland Wheelers, a cyclists' club which got underway last year.

"The club was founded in November 2010," Wim told us, "and we currently have over seventy members."

"Whoever owns a bike and goes out with it is more than welcome to join us. There's only a couple of racers, but there are also mountain bikers, there's a touring group and there are spinning sessions next month."

Contact them on their website at www.eastsutherlandwheelers.org.uk.

Below the cyclists is a group photograph featuring important guests of the **Invercharron Games** committee.

Superstar athletes Jeremy Campbell (left) and Bryan Clay joined the boys and girls of Fèis a Chaolais for our photo after listening to the youngsters' playing and Gaelic singing at a special performance earlier in the afternoon. The talented group were fresh from performing at Lochinver and Ardgay as part of the Blas Festival.

They may not have known, however, that although Bryan Clay is known as the world's greatest athlete, the talent he'd most like to have is to sing or play an instrument.

Joining the reigning Olympic champion for the decathlon was fellow American athlete, Jeremy Campbell. At the 2008 Summer Paralympics in Beijing, China, he won a gold medal and set a world record in the men's pentathlon P44 event, won a gold medal in the men's discus throw F44 event and the men's long jump in the F42/44 event.

