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Irish Content and Contributors in Ruaraidh Erskine's Scottish Magazines

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The article provides a detailed overview of Irish content in the Scottish periodicals founded and run by the author and activist Ruaraidh Erskine of Mar (1869–1960) in the 1900s–1920s, especially in the monthly *Am Bàrd* (1901–1902), the quarterlies *Guth na Bliadhna* (1904–1925) and *The Scottish Review* (1914–1920), and the weekly *Alba* (1908–1909; 1920–1921). It identifies several contributors for the first time and discusses the involvement of influential figures such as Douglas Hyde, Peter Toner McGinley, and Patrick Eric MacFhinn. Furthermore, it presents a survey of Irish topics covered by the editor himself and other Scottish writers. In terms of Erskine's personal engagement with Ireland, the article goes beyond the magazines, combining information from periodical press, from Erskine's correspondence, and from his publications in English that testify to his lasting interest in Ireland.

Keywords: Ruaraidh Erskine of Mar; Scottish Gaelic magazines; *Am Bàrd*; *Guth na Bliadhna*; *Alba*; Irish contributors

The general importance of Irish contacts for the Scottish author, editor, and cultural and political activist Ruaraidh Erskine of Mar (1869–1960) has been noted by scholars, mostly in studies of political history.[1] This article focuses on Erskine's engagement with Ireland in the Gaelic periodicals he founded and ran from the 1900s to the 1920s and which connected, in different degrees, the promotion of Gaelic, Scottish political independence, and Catholic faith. Looking

1. Especially Gerard Cairns' biography *No Language! No Nation! The Life and Times of the Honourable Ruaraidh Erskine of Marr* (Perth, 2021), and his article 'Principles and Curses: The Honourable Ruaraidh Erskine of Mar and Some Irish Connections,' *Litteraria Pragensia*, 33:65 (2023), https://doi.org/10.14712/2571452X.2023.65.2; and Patrick Witt's 'Connections across the North Channel: Ruaraidh Erskine and Irish Influence in Scottish Discontent, 1906–1920,' *The Irish Story*, 17 March 2013.

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over the Irish Sea proved formative to Erskine in all those respects. The article seeks to lay ground for future detailed discussion of the networks of cooperation and the ideas circulated by providing the first focused overview of the Irish content and contributors.[2]

The man who became known as Ruaraidh Erskine of Mar (Ruaraidh Arascain is Mhàirr) was born 'Stuart Richard Erskine' into an aristocratic family in Brighton; his father was the fifth Baron Erskine of Restmorel. Erskine gradually adopted a Scottish identity based on his family roots, got involved in Scottish nationalist politics, learnt Gaelic to fluency, and became one of the first prominent new users of the language who chose it as the medium for their own creative work. Baptised in the Church of England, he converted to Catholicism, a trajectory not uncommon among Gaelic learners.

The interest in Ireland manifested itself even in the earliest journalistic venture Erskine was involved in: *The Whirlwind*, which he co-edited in 1890–1891 with Herbert Vivian (1865–1940).[3] In November 1890, the magazine featured Erskine's article 'Home Rule for Scotland' where he asserts:

> till Home Rule for Scotland and Ireland is established and the repeals of the several acts of Union have been followed by a period of national rejoicing we must be content to occasionally emphasise our opinion of Scottish Home Rule, and to give prominence to our opinions with reference to the methods that should be employed with a view to accomplish that most desirable end.[4]

At this early stage of his career, Erskine was still thinking within the Home Rule framework and was using the more advanced example of Ireland to make a case for Scotland. Vivian, according to his 1923 memoir *Myself Not Least*, had already become involved in Irish politics in the 1880s through the influence of his then friend and mentor, poet and writer Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, having travelled to Ireland and spent time with influential political figures including Michael Davitt, John Dillon, T. D. Sullivan, and Charles Stewart Parnell.[5] It is

2. For commentary on the importance of the Irish model for Erskine, see: H. J. Hanham, *Scottish Nationalism* (London, 1969); Jack Brand, *The National Movement in Scotland* (London, 1978); Richard Finlay, *Scottish Nationalism: History, Ideology and the Question of Independence* (London, 2022). I provide a more detailed and contextual examination of Erskine's political and religious thought in the forthcoming monograph *Ruaraidh Erskine's Scottish Magazines and the Gaelic Revival* (Edinburgh, 2027). For an interactive database, see https://erskine.glasgow.ac.uk.

3. Alex Murray discusses *The Whirlwind* in 'Unionism, Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism: Ruaraidh Erskine of Marr at the Fin de Siècle,' *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 48:1 (2022), https://doi.org/10.51221/sc.ssl.2022.48.1.7.

4. Stuart Erskine, 'Home Rule for Scotland,' *The Whirlwind*, 1 November 1890, 66–67.

5. Herbert Vivian, 'Ireland,' *Myself Not Least* (New York, 1923), 47–67.

likely that Erskine started to cultivate his own Irish networks through Vivian,[6] and the London scene, where the Irish and Scottish expatriate circles of political and cultural activists overlapped, remained important throughout his life. *The Whirlwind*'s engagement with Ireland is also evident in the extensive reprints of responses to the newspaper from other periodicals, which include a number of Irish publications. These exchanges with Irish periodicals remained important for Erskine beyond *The Whirlwind*—they provided a platform for his own writing, and he took over content from them for his own magazines.

Almost fifty years later, Erskine published a volume of biographical essays, *King Edward VII and Some Other Figures* (1936). Two of them reveal his personal acquaintance with Irish politicians: one is devoted to John Redmond, who later became the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and another to Parnell. Concerning the latter, Erskine writes:

> I first met Parnell after the divorce, when but a few of his former political friends and associates were fled […] It happened on the way to Roscommon; and the train was black with his yelling supporters […] Thus I did not make Parnell's acquaintance, or come to know him, till towards the close of his political career and life […][7]

The account Erskine presents of Parnell's personality gives the impression he spent substantial time in his company. He mentions Parnell's approachability, writing that 'he was very friendly to me, and gave me whilst I was with him and his colleagues, on the occasion mentioned, many opportunities of observing him, of studying his character, of forming just notions as to the qualities of his mind and heart,' and relates particular incidents from the tour of the country, but does not explain how he came to join the party in the first place.[8] He recalls that Parnell made 'no secret of the fact that the "constitutional" agitation for Home Rule in which the parliamentary party of Ireland was engaged was but a pretence, in the sense that the true design of the whole national movement was absolute independence.'[9] Erskine observes that while in 1936, nobody was going to be amazed by this revelation, in 1890, this privately expressed opinion had

6. Another possible connection is through Erskine's own family: his father, while serving in the British army, was stationed in Ireland, and Erskine's older sister Margaret was born in 1866 in Athlone, Westmeath, suggesting the family continued to visit and likely even live there. They are also absent from the 1871 census in both England and Scotland, which might suggest another stay. However, as the Irish records for 1861 and 1871 were destroyed shortly after the censuses were taken, this manner of establishing their whereabouts is not available.

7. Ruaraidh Erskine of Marr, 'Charles Stewart Parnell,' *King Edward VII & Some Other Figures* (London, 1936), 97.

8. Ibid., 107.

9. Ibid., 101.

a powerful impact. The essay further highlights Parnell's awareness that 'the obligation […] lies, as it has ever lain, on the Anglo-Irish—just as, in similar case, it continues to lie on the Anglo-Scot and the Anglo-Welshman,' mentioning him being 'ever particularly *searbh* [bitter] on his Anglicized countrymen,' a topic which Erskine himself came to comment on extensively in his journalism.[10]

In the essay on Redmond, Erskine mentions that he met him in Ireland during Parnell's last campaign and that he was 'introduced to him, and his brother, Willie, by the Irish leader,' and relates exchanges of opinion with John Redmond about the importance of language for the national movement and listening to Redmond's speeches at the parliament in London.[11] Both essays devote most space to general observations about character and politics and are quite vague as to historical detail, a tendency characteristic of Erskine's writing in general, in this case amplified by the texts being written so long after the actual events.

Am Bàrd

These existing Irish contacts grew with Erskine's involvement in pan-Celtic activities. It was at the pan-Celtic congress in Cardiff, held as part of the Eisteddfod in 1899, that Erskine likely met Patrick Pearse and Arthur Griffith, as well as Breton and Welsh writers with whom he later cooperated.[12] Two years after this formative event, Erskine established his first Gaelic magazine, where interest in fellow Celtic countries, especially in Ireland, and input from Irish contributors featured prominently, a trend which characterises four of Erskine's Gaelic periodicals out of five.[13] *Am Bàrd* (The Poet) was a monthly which first appeared in May 1901 and ran until September 1902. As in all the other magazines discussed, many of the contributors published under different versions of their names, pseudonyms, initials and even anonymously, and part of the content will likely never be attributed with certainty.

10. Ibid., 104–105.

11. Erskine, 'John Redmond,' *King Edward VII & Some Other Figures*, 52, 62–63. In the spring of 1918, immediately after his death, he wrote a short dismissive obituary for John Redmond, criticising him for 'an obvious want of "vision"' and estrangement from contemporary Irish political thought. Erskine, 'The Late Mr. John Redmond,' *The Scottish Review* (Spring 1918), 145.

12. Witt, 'Connections across the North Channel,' online article without page numbering.

13. *An Sgeulaiche* (The Storyteller, 1909–10 monthly, 1910–11 quarterly) was the only periodical which did not feature any content by Irish writers or related to Ireland, unless some of the anonymous and, so far, unidentified contributors were Irish, which is possible but unlikely. The only exceptions are two extracts from Old Irish literature originally published by Kuno Meyer and translated into modern Scottish Gaelic by Malcolm MacFarlane (Calum MacPhàrlain), which appeared in Spring and Summer 1910, respectively.

Interest in Ireland was marked even in the first issue of *Am Bàrd*, which published the anonymous article 'The Gaelic Language and the Anglo-Celtic Writers,' most likely supplied by Erskine himself, given his later preoccupation with the topic, and it mentions the literary successes of 'Dr. Hyde and others.'[14] The letter section published a short message from James Bryce (1838–1922), Belfast-born liberal politician, scholar, and historian, later UK's influential ambassador to the USA, who studied in Glasgow and had strong familial links to Scotland. In the letter, Bryce says he would with much pleasure submit an article 'on the importance of maintaining the Gaelic tongue in its Scottish and Irish forms,' seeing it as a 'valuable element in the intellectual life and the intellectual fertility of a people,' and expresses hope that Erskine's new magazine will attract support from those who know Gaelic and from 'patriotic men generally,' admitting regret that he himself has 'unfortunately forgotten the little I once learnt.'[15] The short note reveals not only the reach of Erskine's networks, even at this early stage, but also an intriguing hint that an influential figure in British politics had, at one point, command of either Gaelic or Irish, and retained an interest in the languages and in the links between the two countries, which provides an important context to Bryce's involvement in negotiating the Irish Home Rule.[16] The same issue published the article 'Gaedhilge na h-Éireann' (Irish Gaelic) by a contributor credited as 'Mac Albann,' in Irish without translation, setting a trend regularly followed in Erskine's other magazines.[17]

Another contribution was 'The Celtic Movement' by Bernard FitzPatrick, second Baron Castletown (1848–1937), an Anglo-Irish soldier and Conservative MP.[18] In the article, Castletown first provides a survey of cultural and linguistic initiatives in Scotland, Wales, the Isle of Man, Ireland, and Brittany, with reference to the activities of the diasporic communities in America and Australia. It summarizes basic information about the Gaelic revival in Ireland and stresses the importance of the link between Ireland and Scotland and the two languages. In August 1901, Castletown and Edmund Edward Fournier d'Albe (1868–1933), a scientist and Celtic activist, organised a Pan-Celtic congress in Dublin.[19] The

14. 'The Gaelic Language and the Anglo-Celtic Writers,' *Am Bàrd* (May 1901), 5.

15. James Bryce, [letter addressed to the editor], *Am Bàrd* (May 1901), 15.

16. James Quinn, 'Bryce, James,' *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (November 2013), https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.001089.v1.

17. Untranslated content in Irish was the most prominent but not the only multilingual feature of Erskine's magazines beyond Gaelic and English—*Guth na Bliadhna* also included untranslated content in Breton, French, Latin, Manx, and Welsh. In the Irish titles and extracts quoted here, the use of vowel length markers has been unified.

18. Paul Rouse, 'Fitzpatrick, Sir Bernard Edward Barnaby,' *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (October 2009), https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.003233.v1.

19. Linde Lunney, 'Fournier d'Albe, Edmund Edward,' *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (October 2009), https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.009268.v1.

programme of the event announces the congress as organised 'under the auspices of the Celtic Association,' and in the list of officers, Castletown is mentioned as president, Fournier d'Albe as one of the two honorary secretaries, and Erskine as one of the five vice-presidents, indicating close contact between the three as part of the association's business.[20] Erskine also features in the list of donors to the congress fund. Several names of later contributors to Erskine's magazines appear in the programme, including philosopher John Stuart-Glennie (1841–1910), Celtic scholar Malcolm MacFarlane (1853–1931), Breton poet François Jaffrennou (1879–1956), and Patrick Pearse.[21]

The non-attributed article in the third issue of *Am Bàrd* that reflects on the congress is certainly Erskine's own work, with regard to tone and style. It congratulates the two organisers on their success, achieved despite obstacles such as the reluctance of the Gaelic League to be involved, and ends in an exhortation to the Irish activists:

> We call on Ireland, therefore, which is head of the Celtic nations, to suppress at once the dangerous inclination to which some of her sons have lately manifested to sow dissension where no dissension should be sown [...] Let us, therefore, casting tradition and inherited tendency to the winds, *not* quarrel among ourselves. Let us sink jealousies and bury mutual misunderstandings in a common endeavour to rescue ourselves and our countries from the hostile forces and tendencies which threaten them. It will be time enough to take one another by the ears when we have re-established our hold upon the respect and consideration of the world.[22]

This appeal, together with the praise for the congress and the fact that *Am Bàrd* published a contribution by Castletown in its first issue, provoked some discussion in the letter section. In Issue 4, a letter entitled 'The Pan Celtic Congress' appeared, signed by 'Peadar MacFhionnlaoich.' This was Peter Toner McGinley (1856–1942), author, playwright, and activist deeply involved in the Gaelic

20. *Pan-Celtic Congress (20–23 August 1901, Dublin): Official Programme*, pages not numbered, publisher not mentioned. A copy is available in collections of the National Library of Ireland, https://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtlsooo176861 [Last accessed 24 June 2025].

21. The list of the Scottish delegates includes some of Erskine's later contributors and well-known figures in the Gaelic movement, Henry 'Fionn' Whyte (Eanraig MacIlleBhàin) and Neil Munro, and it also mentions Patrick Geddes, whose quarterly *The Ever-Green* constitutes an important precedent especially for Erskine's annual *An Ròsarnach*. Available in digital form from the National Library of Ireland: https://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtlsooo510979 [Last accessed 24 June 2025].

22. 'The Pan-Celtic Congress,' *Am Bàrd* (July 1901), 36.

League, later its President, who sought to rectify Erskine's assumptions.[23] In the letter, McGinley assures the editor of the Irish support for the pan-Celtic idea, and explains that the Gaelic League abstained from the Congress 'because it believed the ground had not been sufficiently prepared, and because it declined to follow the lead of […] "Lord Castletown's organisation."'[24] McGinley also suggests the initiative may have an anglicising and centralising attitude, as the organisers lack a sufficient command of Irish to conduct the event in the language itself. Despite this bristly initial exchange, McGinley later contributed several articles to *Guth na Bliadhna* and *Alba* using his established pseudonym 'Cú Uladh' (the Hound of Ulster), and he and Erskine would find much common ground, as Erskine later came to criticise the tendency in Scotland to conduct the business of Gaelic initiatives in English, and they also shared an interest in the promotion of drama and in the topic of the national dress, at which McGinley hints in this early letter.

A response from Fournier d'Albe followed in the next issue. He included his name in Irish first, as 'Eadhmonn MacAlbainn,' and signed off with 'Is mise le meas mór' (I am with great respect), performatively refuting McGinley's accusation of insufficient engagement with the Irish language. The letter claims that 'Mr. McGinley's lengthy apology for the attitude of the Gaelic League towards the Pan-Celtic Congress was hardly necessary,' as 'it would have been quite sufficient to state the official view that a Pan-Celtic Movement is beyond the scope of the Gaelic League.'[25] These articles and responses reveal similar tensions between the main umbrella organisation and individual initiatives concerning Irish language and culture which also mark the twentieth-century Gaelic movement in Scotland where progressive ventures centred around influential editors and activists both cooperated and clashed with An Comunn Gàidhealach (The Highland Association).

These articles and letters from *Am Bàrd* prove that even Erskine's first and short-lived venture into Gaelic periodical press came to serve as a platform for important exchanges involving major players on the Irish cultural and political scene, and the link between Scotland and Ireland was thematized as especially important to both, a trend which was fully developed in his next publishing project.

23. Vincent Morley, 'Mac Fhionnlaoich, Peadar Toner (McGinley, Peter Toner; 'Cú Uladh'),' *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (October 2009), https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.005671.v1.

24. Peadar MacFhionnlaoich, 'The Pan-Celtic Congress,' *Am Bàrd* (August 1901), 60.

25. Edmund Edward Fournier d'Albe, 'The Pan-Celtic Congress and the Gaelic League,' *Am Bàrd* (September 1901), 70.

Guth na Bliadhna

Am Bàrd did not last long, but in 1904, Erskine started what proved to be his most viable and most influential venture in the field of Gaelic journalism—the quarterly *Guth na Bliadhna* (The Voice of the Year). Initially bilingual, the periodical focused especially on long essays on a wide range of topics, and it also published new literature, including short stories and plays, Catholic content, folklore material, and literary reviews. The second issue of the first volume featured the anonymous article 'Ireland and Scotland,' where the author, certainly Erskine himself, calls for a systematic study of the links between the two countries, asserting that:

> A very interesting chapter in the history of international relations would be the narrative of those anciently subsisting between Ireland and Scotland. There exists an abundant material for such a compilation; and we are inclined to marvel that no one has yet undertaken it, at least in a formal and connected way.[26]

He comments on the scarcity of coverage of Irish affairs in Scottish press, argues that periodicals could and should do much more to cultivate mutual positive relations claims that the Irish national movement is much more advanced than its Scottish equivalent—both in general and also in terms of integrating linguistic and cultural influences within political initiatives—and proposes Ireland as a model for Scottish efforts. In the twenty-one years of *Guth na Bliadhna* (*GnB*), he endeavoured to bring these proposals into practice.

The general interest in Ireland was often connected with other preoccupations of the magazine. The quarterly's religious commitment was prominent from the outset: it promoted an interpretation of Scottish history in which the Reformation and its aftermath was perceived as culturally and politically damaging, as it contributed to the severance of strong links between Scotland and its main international points of orientation, especially Ireland and France. The periodical published original Catholic content, including new Gaelic prayers and essays on saints, and sought to make older translations of Catholic literature into Gaelic available to new audiences.

The furtherance of Catholicism and commitment to the relationship between Ireland and Scotland converged in the figure of St Columba. A special issue devoted to the saint came out in the spring of 1905 and opened with an unattributed full-page illustration depicting the arrival of St Columba in Scotland as a frontispiece, and two essays: 'Naomh Colum Cille' (Saint Columba) published

26. 'Ireland and Scotland,' *Guth na Bliadhna* (Spring 1904), 197.

without attribution, and 'St Columba,' signed by 'Sagart Albannach' (A Scottish Priest). Erskine was also in touch with the Irish League of St Columba and discussed the promotion of Catholic literature in Gaelic with its representatives.[27]

In the same year, the quarterly included 'A Few Press Notices.' The first item on the list of endorsements from a range of Scottish and international periodicals, including *Dundee Advertiser* and *Montreal Gazette*, comes from *An Claidheamh Soluis* (*ACS*) and hails the quarterly as 'singularly interesting' and one that 'maintains its high reputation for learning and scholarship.'[28] While the quote is not attributed, it was most likely provided by Patrick Pearse (1879–1916). Philip O'Leary has noted that 'under Pearse and then Mac Giollarnáth, *An Claidheamh Soluis* established a close relationship with the Scots Gaelic Catholic monthly [sic] *Guth na Bliadhna*,' and he mentions shared sentiments on part of the editors regarding the close links between Scotland and Ireland and the importance of strengthening them.[29] Erskine himself contributed a number of articles to *An Claidheamh Soluis*, on topics concerning Gaelic literature and the situation of Gaelic in Scotland and Canada.[30] Pearse supplied the essay '"Education" in the West of Ireland' for Erskine's quarterly (Autumn 1905). This would have corresponded with Erskine's own interest in Gaelic in Scottish education, which found expression especially in *GnB* and which was also reflected in the decision to include content for children and materials for learners across his Gaelic periodicals.

Although Pearse's one-off article is often mentioned as an example of Irish contributions to Erskine's magazines, he was not the first prominent Irish intellectual whose work appeared in *GnB.* The very first issue of the quarterly (Winter 1904) featured 'A Connaght Love-song' (Da mbeith 'aitreabh agam féin), with English translation by 'An Craoibhín Aoibhinn' (the pleasant little branch), which was the established *nom-de-plume* of Douglas Hyde (1860–1949). Over the years, Hyde made several other contributions, in all cases but one Irish poems and songs presented with his translations into English: 'Mallachd,' the transcription of a curse composed by an anonymous Irish poet in Co. Kerry (Spring 1904), a selection of Irish religious poetry 'Dàin Naomha Èireannaich' (Irish Religious Poems) (Spring 1905), and 'A Mhuire nan Gras,' transcribed from the oral recita-

27. 'The League of St Columba,' *Guth na Bliadhna* (Winter 1905), 85.

28. 'A Few Press Notices,' *Guth na Bliadhna* (Summer 1905), 96.

29. O'Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival*, 387. In Footnote 150, he quotes McGinley's letter to *Sinn Féin* (15 July 1911) which calls for keeping in touch with developments on each side of the strait.

30. Regina Uí Chollatáin, '*An Claidheamh Soluis* (agus *Fáinne an Lae*) 1899–1932: Anailís agus Clárú ar phríomhnuachtán Ré na hAthbheochana; Dhá Imleabhar—Imleabhar a Dó,' National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2002, 619. As Cairns has noted, Erskine contributing to a series on Ireland and Scotland in 1907 to the newspaper *Sinn Féin* (*No Language, No Nation!*, 43).

tion of a shepherd in the Aran Islands (Autumn 1916).[31] The selection of Irish religious poetry specifically identifies Hyde by name; the others were signed by the pseudonym.

These contributions reflect Hyde's works as a Gaelic scholar rather than his political and public presence. The only exception is the article 'Comhairle an Athar Ceannt' (Father Kent's Advice) (Winter 1911), where Hyde refers to the author and activist F. William Henry Kent (Uilleam Eanraig Ceannt, 1857–1935) and his opinions about links between Scottish Gaelic and Irish. Hyde mentions the presence of Old and Modern Irish and Breton in Irish higher education and points out the lack of equivalent provisions for Scottish Gaelic, which could hinder teaching and research at higher levels, and calls for the appointment of a lecturer who would focus on the subject, noting that much is being done for Irish in Edinburgh and relatively little yet for Gaelic in Dublin.

This article is a response to a previously published essay 'The Greater Gàidhealtachd: A Plea for Literary Confederation' (Autumn 1910) by Kent where he argues for more pronounced cooperation between Celtic countries and the furthering of pan-Celticism.[32] To make his point, he discusses other 'pan' movements that bring distinct regional and national identities into greater units. In general, the content published in *GnB* reveals this dynamic between supporting national political and cultural emancipation and the idea of connecting these sovereign and confident units into broader networks that would foster mutual enrichment and equal partnership. The essay was followed by an editorial notice: 'In the next number of *Guth na Bliadhna*, which will begin a new volume, we hope to do something to carry out the excellent suggestion advanced by Father Kent. In future, we shall deal with current Irish political and literary questions, as well in Irish Gaelic as in English.'[33] The promise was certainly kept.

Another early appearance of a prominent Irish name in the quarterly is the author and lexicographer Patrick S. Dinneen (Pádraig Ua Duinnín, 1860–1934), who published three essays in Irish: 'Éire agus Alba' (Ireland and Scotland) (Summer 1905), one of the general comparative articles calling for more cooperation between the two countries, 'Saothrughadh na Teangan' (The Cultivation of the Language) (Autumn 1911), where he comments on the linguistic situation

31. Two poems in Irish which mention 'An Craoibhín Aoibhinn,' but in a way which indicates a title, rather than an author (that seems to be 'Cecinit'), appeared in *GnB* (Spring 1918) and in the annual *An Ròsarnach* (1918). In each case, it is a different poem. So far, I have been unable to shed more light on these two items.

32. Apart from the essay, Kent contributed two poems to *GnB*: the nationalist composition 'Bratach na h-Éireann' (The Flag of Ireland) (Winter 1916) and a short poem praising the poet Margaret MacKinnon (Mairghread NicFhionghainn), 'Do Bhan-Ùghdar "Imrich a' Chait"' (To the Authoress of 'The Cat's Travels') (Summer 1917).

33. 'Editorial note,' 'The Greater Gàidhealtachd: A Plea for Literary Confederation,' *Guth na Bliadhna* (Autumn 1910), 347.

in Ireland and Scotland and stresses the importance of making the languages viable for the present and the future, rather than looking into their past, and 'Breacadh Lae an Chreidimh ar Éirinn' (The Dawn of Belief in Ireland) (Autumn 1912), in which he discusses Ossianic folklore and the arrival of Christianity.[34]

GnB also provides valuable insights into the writing of less well-known Irish revivalists active in the period. Patrick J. O'Shea (1855–1928?),[35] who used the pseudonym 'Conán Maol,' published two pieces in *GnB*: a short article about Ireland and Scotland, 'Focailín' (Vocabulary) (Autumn 1905), and 'Draoithe na h-Éireann' (The Druids of Ireland) (Spring 1911), about religious customs in Ireland before the arrival of Christianity. Author and educator Dermot Foley (1864–1908), using his established penname 'Feargus Finnbheil,' contributed a prose piece, 'Guth ó Thír nan Óg' (A Voice from the Land of Youth), in Autumn 1905.[36] Thomas P. Kane (1849–1918), a Jesuit priest and scholar born in Dublin, expanded the quarterly's engagement not with Ireland but with Wales, where he spent most of his career, by the essay 'The Ancient Faith of the Welsh' (Winter 1911).

The year 1912 marked the return of Peter Toner McGinley, writing as 'Cú Uladh.' In the eleven years that elapsed since the first issues of *Am Bàrd*, he must have forgiven Erskine his exhortations about the lack of cooperation within the Irish movement. In the article 'An t-Albanach in Éirinn' (The Scot in Ireland) (Summer 1912), McGinley discusses Scottish presence in and interaction with Ireland since the Middle Ages and does not shrink from violent and problematic episodes in the shared history of the two countries, such as the Plantation of Ulster, the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, and the resulting presence of Ulster Scots.

The First World War did not disrupt the regularity of *GnB*, and the quarterly reflected extensively on European and global politics and on the impact of the conflict. In its wake, the magazine exhibits a similar pan-Celtic focus which characterised the beginnings of *Am Bàrd*, and the strong presence of Irish contributions are part of this trend, which also reflects the build-up after the Easter Rising towards the declaration of independence and the ensuing war. In Winter 1917 and Spring 1918, *GnB* brought out a group of articles about the pan-Celtic movement and the proposal for a Celtic federation, with reports on initiatives

34. O'Leary translated the following quote from the essay in Footnote 112: 'We don't know, and we don't care, when Oisin lived, nor whether his like ever existed. […] But whether Oisin existed or not, the ancient storyteller who conceived him did a fine job.' Here, Dinneen comes remarkably close to sentiments expressed, with regard to the Ossian controversy and James Macpherson, by the Rev. Donald MacNicoll in his *Remarks on Dr. Samuel Johnson's Journey to the Hebrides* (London, 1779).

35. 'Conán Maol,' *An Chartlann*, https://cartlann.org/authors/conan-maol/ [Last accessed 24 June 2025]; O'Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival*, 201.

36. Lachlan MacBean (ed.), 'Foley, Dermot,' *The Celtic Who's Who* (Kirkcaldy, 1921), 47.

in individual countries supplied in the respective Celtic languages. Ireland was represented by scholars and activists Pól Breathnach (1885–1941) and Liam Ó Briain (1888–1974).[37].

The volume of 1919 included most Irish content in the quarterly's history. During this year, *GnB* published three more pieces by McGinley: 'An t-Athrú Mór in Éirinn' (The Great Change in Ireland) (Spring 1919) on recent Irish politics, 'Dáil Éireann agus an Ghaedhilig' (The Irish Parliament and the Irish Language) (Summer 1919), and the survey 'Na Cinidheacha Ceilteacha' (The Celtic Races) (Winter 1919).[38] In the same year, the quarterly featured a one-off contribution by the author and translator Liam Ó Rinn (1886–1943), 'Éire agus Sasana' (Ireland and England) (Autumn 1919). Ó Rinn also wrote about Scottish topics for *An Claidheamh Soluis*.[39] Erskine mentions his *Leabhar na Polainne*, a translation of Adam Mickiewicz, in the article 'Leabhraichean Nodha' (New Books) (Winter 1920). As O'Leary notes, Ó Rinn remarked on the lack of interest on part of the Irish in Scottish Gaelic and the Gaels in Scotland, which should be of benefit to both in matters of both culture and politics, proposing the two are a single people and the two languages but variants of one.[40]

The frequency of content supplied by Irish contributors continued in 1920 and 1921, with an essay about the Irish script, 'Cló Rómhánach an Éirinn' (The Roman Script in Ireland) (Summer 1920), by Colm Ó Murchú (1889–1939),[41] an influential civil servant who played a major part in adapting Irish to the needs of the new state administration after 1919, and the three-part essay series 'Lámh an Ghaedhil i Leabhragan an Vatican' (The Hand of the Gael in Vatican Books) (Winter 1921; Winter 1923; Spring 1924) by author, educator, and priest Patrick Eric MacFhinn (1895–1987).[42] MacFhinn studied for his doctorate in Rome and

37. Nollaig Ó Muraíle, 'Breathnach, Pól,' *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (October 2009), https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.008893.v1; Paul Rouse, 'Ó Briain, Liam,' *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (January 2024), https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.006277.v1.

38. The 1919 volume also published a poem by Anthony Raftery (Antaine Raiftearaí) translated into Gaelic (Summer 1919). The author of the translation is not mentioned, suggesting it might be Erskine's own work. Other pieces that appeared in the quarterly over the years, which indicate the diversity and frequency of Irish-related content, include the obituary for the Celtic scholar Whitley Stokes, written by George Calder (Summer 1909), Gaelic scholar and lecturer at the University of Glasgow, and extracts from Kuno Meyer's anthology *Ancient Irish Poetry* translated into modern Gaelic (Autumn 1920).

39. Uí Chollatáin, '*An Claidheamh Soluis*,' 805.

40. O'Leary refers to Ó Rinn's review of Erskine's *An Ròsarnach* where he criticises the spread of Anglicisms in Scottish Gaelic. The review appeared in *An Claidheamh Soluis* in 1917, i.e. very shortly after the first volume of the annual came out, indicating Ó Rinn was following the developments quite closely. *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival*, 495.

41. Diarmuid Breathnach & Máire Ní Mhurchú, 'Ó Murchú, Colm (1889–1939),' https://www.ainm.ie/Bio.aspx?ID=216 [Last accessed 24 June 2025]. I am grateful to Dr Tòmas MacAilpein for his help with identifying Ó Murchú's contribution.

42. Diarmuid Breathnach & Máire Ní Mhurchú, 'Mac Fhinn, Eric (1895–1987),' https://www.ainm.ie/Bio.aspx?ID=1575 [Last accessed 24 June 2025].

was ordained there in 1919, and conducted research on Irish martyrs in the Vatican archives. As many contributions to *GnB* appeared under abbreviations and pseudonyms, some Irish contributors may yet be identified.[43]

Apart from publishing articles by Irish contributors which were predominantly in Irish, the quarterly also discussed Irish affairs in Gaelic and English. H. C. Mac Neacail, in 'Connradh na Gaedhilge agus Sluagh-Iùl' (The Gaelic League and Politics) (Spring 1918), presented a polemic about the Gaelic League and its political dimension. Most of the other pieces were written by Erskine himself, as the opinions and style indicate, although they were frequently published without attribution. These include 'The Irish (and Scottish) University Question' (Winter 1905); 'Èirinn is Albainn' (Ireland and Scotland) (Winter 1911); 'Glas-làmh na h-Èireann' (The Manacle of Ireland) (Spring 1912), which discusses the then-new Third Home Rule Bill, introduced on 11 April 1912 by Asquith; and 'Èire, Albainn, and Mgr. Lloyd George' (Ireland, Scotland, and Mr. Lloyd George) (Autumn 1919). As part of the already-mentioned pan-Celtic surge after the First World War, Erskine, this time under his name, discussed the political situation of Celtic countries in 'Cùisean Poilitigeach: Èire, Albann, A' Chuimrigh, is An Fhraing, Ceilteachd III' (Political Issues: Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and France, Celtdom III) (Winter 1921).

Irish politics and culture featured frequently, either as the main subject or a as a reference point, in short articles Erskine published under the heading 'Analaidhean nan Ràithean' (The Airs of the Seasons), a format which allowed him to address any topic which took his interest. One of these was the unusually substantial article 'New Method of Teaching Gaelic' (Winter 1916) where Erskine provides a detailed account of the ideas of F. Donal Toal of Belfast who designed an innovative approach to teaching Irish focused primarily on hearing and repetition, rather than on book-based study, imitating the manner in which children learn languages when growing up. The depth of coverage is not surprising, as the topic brings together Erskine's preoccupation with Ireland, education, and support for learners.

Erskine had a lifelong interest in fine arts, design, fashion, and social etiquette. For *GnB*, he wrote an extensive essay series concerned with the Scottish national dress and the appropriate manner of attire for different social occasions, based on his booklet *The Kilt and How to Wear It* (1901). In the concluding piece, 'Of the Irish National Dress,' he turned his attention to Ireland. He notes that although 'time was when the revival of the National Dress amongst our Irish kinfolk took to itself forms and shapes which laid their advocates open to the charge of being somewhat bizarre and extravagant,' 'the Irish national dress is

43. So far, I have been unable to obtain more information about Frainnc Dáithí Mac Seaghan Ua Broin, whose patriotic song 'Fiorlíonadh Fáil' appeared in the quarterly in the summer of 1921.

now practically the same with that of the sister Celtic country, Scotland.'[44] He observes there is still space for improvement in this respect and points out that 'to my best of belief the Irish, as a whole, have not yet addressed much consideration to the subject of Court or Gala Dress.'[45] Unfortunately, no response from the 'Hound of Ulster' towards this challenge to the Irish state of affairs appeared in the letter section this time.

Not all coverage of Irish topics in *GnB* was thus entirely complimentary, and some phenomena were presented as a warning, rather than an inspiration. One of these was the Anglo-Irish literary tradition. In the essay 'Gaelic Movement and the Anglo-Celtic School' (Winter 1912), Erskine turned attention to the recent tour of the Abbey Theatre in the United States and to the upheaval surrounding J.M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*. He describes the tension between the Abbey and the Gaelic League, represented by Douglas Hyde, which distanced themselves from the venture, and quotes at length the opinions on the Abbey of F. Michael O'Flanagan, the Gaelic League envoy in America.

Using this controversy as an example, Erskine comments on 'considerable amount of friction between the literary exponents of the Gaelic Movement, and the purveyors of English literature in a so-called "Celtic" garb.'[46] He recognises Synge's literary merits, but his purpose is admittedly not to discuss the play and its author but to 'drive a spoke into the gun of a singularly vain and mischievous "school,"' suggesting the artists involved were, in selfish focus on worldly success, diverting attention and resources from the true cause and creating a misleading middle ground of national literature in English, rather than adopting Irish.[47] He compares W. B. Yeats to the Scottish poet and author William Sharp (1855–1905), known by his pseudonym 'Fiona MacLeod,' calling both 'not men of genuine Celtic letters' but 'literary parasites who have exploited the Gaelic Movement in the interest of a "school" which is neither Gaelic nor English – which is, to adopt homely phraseology, neither good fresh fish nor salted herring.'[48] Leaving aside Erskine's penchant for food metaphors when discussing national literature, the article reflects the conviction that a political and cultural revival is lacking and may not be lasting without a thorough adoption of a linguistic agenda, as opposed to what he perceived as tokenistic support of Irish by the Abbey.

The Abbey Theatre recurs in 'Gaelic Drama [II]' (1914), which concludes Erskine's series of programmatic essays on the potential of Gaelic drama. In the essay, Erskine shows awareness of the Abbey Theatre's activities, including references to individual plays, playwrights, and actors. Synge's talents are

44. Erskine, 'Of the Irish National Dress,' *Guth na Bliadhna* (Winter 1912), 103, 107.
45. Ibid., 110.
46. Erskine, 'Gaelic Movement and the Anglo-Celtic School,' *Guth na Bliadhna* (Winter 1912), 89.
47. Ibid., 93.
48. Ibid., 95.

again admitted, but Erskine maintains the artistic and political value and the actual success of the venture would have been far greater, were it conducted in Irish, and criticises Yeats and Lady Gregory for this lack of commitment: 'The latter knows some Gaelic, it is true; but not near enough to write in. Mr. Yeats knows no Gaelic, and, apparently has never felt himself sufficiently inspired by its claims to try to remedy that defect in his education.'[49] Finally, he comes to the same conclusion about the futility and cultural danger involved in the very notion of an Anglo-Irish school, observing with relief the situation in Scotland is different, with no 'red herring of Anglo-Scottish dramatists,' and that the path is clear for a National Theatre 'throughout as Gaelic as the peats.'[50]

It seems that Erskine might have had a chance to meet Yeats in person and discuss his opinion on the Anglo-Irish school and the Abbey *vis-à-vis*. As reports in Scottish periodical press indicate, Erskine was invited to attend the Tailteann Games in Dublin as an official guest of the Irish Free State two times: in 1924 and 1928.[51] In the article 'Aonach Tailteann' (Tailteann Games) from *GnB* (Summer 1924), he focuses on the origins and history of the games and the importance of their modern resurrection but mentions nothing about being present on site.

A more detailed record of the 1928 visit is provided in Alan Bold's biography of the poet and editor Christopher Murray Grieve (Hugh MacDiarmid, 1892–1978), with whom Erskine collaborated on a number of projects.[52] Bold mentions many prominent people Grieve socialised with, including Yeats, but there is no reference to Erskine and his participation in these convivial events.[53] Writing to Compton Mackenzie on 28 August 1928, Grieve mentions that 'incidentally Erskine of Marr and I were, I think, able to make certain arrangements which will help the Scots National Party to the Irish vote at the General Election.'[54] In a letter to Neil Gunn on 27 August 1928, he provides an itinerary of the trip, including 'interview (Erskine of Marr and I) with De Valera and his chief henchmen.'[55] However, Erskine himself apparently left no account of these negotiations and their impact.

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49. Erskine, 'Gaelic Drama [II],' *Guth na Bliadhna* (Summer 1914), 217.

50. Erskine, 'Gaelic Drama [II],' 219.

51. 'Tailteann Games Plans: Invitation to the Hon. R. Erskine of Marr,' *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 23 July 1924, 4; 'Tailteann Games Plans: Invitation to the Hon. R. Erskine of Marr,' *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 23 July 1924, 11. The articles, basically identical in content, mention Erskine is invited in his capacity as the president of the Scots National League.

52. I discuss Erskine's connections to Grieve and Derick Thomson in the forthcoming chapter 'MacDiarmid and the Gaelic World: C. M. Grieve, Ruaraidh Erskine, and Derick Thomson' in Camille Manfredi et al. (eds), *Hugh MacDiarmid 1923–2023: Visions & Revisions* (Amsterdam, 2026).

53. Bold, *MacDiarmid*, 233.

54. Dorian Grieve, Owen Dudley Edwards, and Alan Riach (eds), *Hugh MacDiarmid: New Selected Letters* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2001), 34.

55. Alan Bold (ed), *The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid* (London, 1984), 225.

Erskine was the chief force behind *GnB*, but the quarterly was also shaped by the involvement of other writers, and many of them maintained their own interests in Ireland and cultivated contacts with Irish artists and activists. Donald Sinclair (Dòmhnall Mac na Ceàrdaich, 1885–1932) made a major contribution to the development of modern Gaelic drama but was also a poet, prose writer, and essayist, and one of Erskine's most prolific contributors across the magazines. Aonghas Mac Leòid has noted Sinclair's interest in Ireland and Irish literature,[56] evidenced by reviews of three Irish-language publications for *GnB*: *Dánta Grádha* (Spring 1917), an anthology of Irish poetry edited by Thomas O'Rahilly and introduced by the scholar Robin Flower, and two collections of new Irish poetry published by Cló-nan-Coinneal (Summer 1919), *An Chaise Gharbh* by Peadar Ó hAnnracháin and *Maidean i mBéarra* by Osborn Bergin. When reviewing the latter, Sinclair pointed out that 'gur maith is airidh an dìoghlaim so de nuadhfhìleachd na h-Èireann air aire agus beachd Ghàidheal na h-Albann' (this gathering of new Irish poetry is well worthy of the attention and consideration of the Scottish Gaels).[57] Sinclair also wrote the poem 'Èire' (Ireland) which appeared in *Alba* (20 March 1920).

William Gillies (Liam MacGillÌosa, 1865–1932) was a fellow Gaelic learner and one of Erskine's most important associates. Together, they co-founded the Scots National League in 1920, one of the bodies that merged to create the National Party of Scotland in 1928, one of the predecessors of the current SNP.[58] Gillies was actively involved in the London Gaelic scene, organised Gaelic classes, and wrote Gaelic plays. Scholar William Gillies, Gillies' grandson, highlights his grandfather's wide-ranging interest in Irish language, culture, and politics, both historical and contemporary, and points out that when the Gaelic League decided to establish a London branch in 1869, Gillies was 'closely involved, contributing from his own wealth of organizing experience to the process of forming communication networks in the Metropolis, whereby Irish people, especially young people, could be brought into contact with one another.'[59] In the article, he mentions Gillies' contacts with Hyde, Pearse, and Ó Rinn, all of whom contributed to *GnB*, and his friendship with Art O'Brien, who became the envoy of the Irish Republic in London in 1919–21 and with whom Erskine likewise corresponded.[60]

56. Aonghas Mac Leòid, *Innis-na-Fìrinne: Dòmhnull Mac-na-Ceàrdaich (1885–1932) agus a obair fhoillsichte*, University of Glasgow, 2012, 142–43.

57. D. M. N. C., 'Leabhraichean Ùra Bàrdachd,' *Guth na Bliadhna* (Summer 1919), 449.

58. As Brand notes, the SNL was strongly influenced by Irish models: based on the links between the activities of the Gaelic League and other cultural bodies and Sinn Féin, there was to be a similar connection between land reform, Gaelic cultural movement, and the effort to obtain self-government. *The National Movement in Scotland*, 182–184.

59. William Gillies, 'Liam MacGill'Iosa: A Friend of the Gael,' *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* LVI (1990), 519–520.

60. Erskine's correspondence with Art O'Brien (1872–1949), a republican activist of Irish origin based in London, from 1919 and 1920, is held by the National Library of Ireland. The letters

The London émigré Highland networks, and its overlaps with the London Irish scene, was crucial for Erskine's own formation and for the magazines, as many contributors were part of this milieu. An example of Erskine's personal involvement is his participation in a demonstration in support of Daniel Mannix, Irish priest and then Archbishop of Melbourne, whom British government, wary of his support of Irish independence and related international activism and fearing his possible influence in Ireland, arrested at sea and prevented from landing in Cork in 1920.[61] The event was covered by the article 'A Sinn Féin day in Trafalgar Square' in *Liverpool Daily Post*:

> Green, white, and yellow, the colours of the Irish Republic, were much in evidence Trafalgar-square, London, yesterday, when nearly 20,000 of the London Irish, supported by sympathetic Labour elements, came to protest against what was described from the plinth of the Nelson monument as the 'kidnapping' of Archbishop Mannix. […] Among the speakers were Mr. P. J. Kelly; president the Irish Self-determination League Mrs. Despard; the Hon. Ruaraidh Erskine of Marr; Dr. O'Brien […] A resolution which condemned the action of the Government prohibiting r. Mannix from landing in Ireland and requested support for the Irish demand for self-determination was at the sound of a bugle moved simultaneously from three sides of the Nelson Monument to the waving of flags and walking-sticks. […] The Hon. Erskine, of Marr said Scotland would soon have a party as strong the Irish, and as keen in getting rid of the English Government, and Scotland would have its rights.[62]

The article thus shows Erskine in direct political action, participating in a public gathering and delivering a speech, not only as a politically engaged writer and editor.

Alba

The weekly *Alba* (Scotland) was launched in February 1908 and lasted for exactly a year. It frequently published content taken over from Irish periodicals, with due acknowledgements, such as the English article 'Dà-Theangachd' (Bilingualism) from *An Claidheamh Soluis*, which appeared in two instalments on 4 and 18 July

concern cooperation between Irish and Scottish initiatives and organisation of pan-Celtic congresses. I discuss them in more detail in *Ruaraidh Erskine's Scottish Magazines and the Gaelic Revival* (Edinburgh, 2027).

61. John Molony, 'Daniel Mannix,' *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (October 2009), https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.005439.v1.

62. 'A Sinn Féin day in Trafalgar Square,' *Liverpool Daily Post*, 16 August 1920, 8.

1908, and was followed, on 8 August 1908, by 'Dà-Theangachd air a Thoirt gu Buil' (Bilingualism Implemented), which commented on Pearse's abilities and running of a bilingual school, again taken over from *ACS*. *Alba* also republished articles in English from *Sinn Féin*: an untitled piece on the concerts and plays in Dublin (22 August 1908), 'Ireland United' (5 September 1908), and a discussion of the new National University of Ireland and the Irish language (5 December 1908).

Alba involved a number of articles which covered developments in other countries and were presented as dispatches from 'our own local correspondent' ('bho ar Fear-Ionaidh Fhèin'), who were however not named, which leaves open the question of the articles' provenance. One such piece, 'Cùisean Èireannach' (Irish Affairs), appeared on 29 February 1908. Further original content related to Ireland includes several articles in Gaelic which were all published without attribution: 'Na h-Èireannaich an Alba' (The Irish in Scotland) (12 September 1908), 'An Cath an Èirinn' (The Struggle in Ireland) (19 December 1908), and 'Glas-Làmh na h-Alba: Albainn agus Èirinn: Coimeas' (The Manacle of Scotland: Scotland and Ireland: A Comparison) (19 January 1909). These could have been the work of Erskine himself, the anonymous local correspondent based in Ireland, or some of the other writers involved in the weekly.[63]

Given its frequency as a weekly, *Alba* served as a platform for much lively exchange on various subjects in the letter section. Two letters to the editors (21 November & 26 December 1908), both in Gaelic, were sent by 'C. A. Cheabhasa.' This was one of the Gaelic versions of the name of Claude Chavasse (1886–1971), a scholar and activist born and educated in Oxford who later lived in Ireland and was involved in the promotion and teaching of Irish.[64] The letters show Chavasse was following Erskine's newspaper, at least in the given period. Another proof of his interest in the links between the two countries is the article 'Gaedhilg Alban' (Scottish Gaelic), which he published under the name 'Cluadh a Cheabhasa' in *An Claidheamh Soluis* (20 October 1917).[65] Chavasse also supplied a map of Gaelic Scotland for the Irish translation of Neil Munro's novel *John Splendid* by Seán Tóibín as *Iain Aluinn* (1932).[66]

63. For a discussion of *Alba*, see: Tòmas MacAilpein, 'Aonghas MacEanraig (1866–1937), à Àird nam Murchan: A Bheatha agus A Chuid Sgrìobhaidhean, '*AISTE: Rannsachadh air Litreachas Gàidhlig / Studies in Gaelic Literature* (forthcoming in 2025).

64. Diarmuid Breathnach & Máire Ní Mhurchú, 'Chavasse, Claude Albert (1886–1971),' https://www.ainm.ie/Bio.aspx?ID=242&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1 [Last accessed 24 June 2025], and 'Claude Chavasse,' *Cumann Staire Uíbh Laoire | Ballingeary and Inchigeela Historical Society*, https://ballingearyhs.com/an-sugan/colaiste-na-mumhan-the-college/daoine-people/claude-chavasse/ [Last accessed 24 June 2025].

65. Uí Chollatáin, '*An Claidheamh Soluis*,' 634.

66. 'Iain Aluinn,' *Scots Independent* 64 (February 1932), 62.

After more than ten years, *Alba* started another run in the early 1920s.[67] Notable content related to Ireland includes the regular feature 'Scéala ó Éirinn' (News from Ireland), which appeared first in Irish and later in Gaelic. Some of these columns were supplied by Peter Toner McGinley, signed as 'C.U.'[68] From July to December 1921, *Alba* published a column in Irish entitled 'Smaointe ón Róimh' (Thoughts from Rome) by 'Gaedhal Glas,' who reflected on various topics related to Rome and Italy. Given the intersection of language, time, and place, 'Gaedhal Glas' is most likely Patrick Eric MacFhinn.

An Ròsarnach

An Ròsarnach (The Rose Garden) was an annual which came out four times, in 1917, 1918, 1921, and 1930, and is remarkable for its lavish production and employment of original full-page illustrations by prominent Scottish artists of the period. It brought out two substantial pieces related to Ireland. The first was a lengthy essay by Hector MacDougal (Eachann MacDhùghaill, 1880–1954), one of Erskine's prolific contributors, on 'Cath-Chuairt Eideird Bhruis an Èirinn' (The Campaign of Edward Bruce in Ireland) (1918), discussing the role Robert Bruce's younger brother played in Irish history, accompanied by a commissioned illustration by the Celtic Revival painter Stewart Carmichael. The second was Patrick Eric MacFhinn's article 'Éire agus Alba I Measg Páipear Stáite na Róimhe' (Ireland and Scotland Amongst State Papers of Rome) (1921), which appeared around the same time as MacFhinn's aforementioned contributions to *GnB* and shortly after his study sojourn in Rome. These were published as new and fresh research before MacFhinn established himself as a major cultural figure in Ireland. In terms of Irish content, *An Ròsarnach* thus did not establish any new trends and followed the same formats that were previously introduced in Erskine's quarterly.

67. The first issue came out on 3 January 1920; it was running as a weekly until the end of March 1920, then continued as a monthly until December 1920, and it revived for the last period in May–December 1921. In 1948, T. M. Murchison and Malcolm MacLean co-edited *Alba: A Scottish Miscellany in Gaelic and English*, which only produced one issue but nonetheless forms an important link between Erskine's initiatives and *Gairm*. It featured an essay about Irish-language initiatives by Pádraig Ó Siochfhradha (1883–1964), published in Irish without translation. Lesa Ní Mhunghaile, 'Ó Siochfhradha, Pádraig ('An Seabhac'),' *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (October 2009), https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.006440.v1 [Last accessed 24 June 2025].

68. One of the columns (8 May 1920) was signed by 'Tadhg Ó Cianáin.' So far, I have not been able to identify who chose the name of the chronicler of Flight of the Earls as their penname. Other content includes an article by William Gillies, 'Éire' (June 1921), and unattributed short articles on Ireland and England (7 February 1920) and on Ulster and Belfast (August 1921).

Erskine's Further Engagement with Ireland

As noted at the beginning, Erskine's engagement with Ireland went beyond his five Gaelic periodicals. He featured Irish content and contributors in two other periodicals which he edited, and which were predominantly Anglophone but likewise served as platforms for new writing in Gaelic, coverage of Gaelic affairs, and translations from Gaelic into English. *The Scottish Review* (1914–1920, quarterly), which ran in parallel with *GnB* and shared many of its thematic and visual features, attracted several Irish contributors, including scholars and high-ranking politicians George Sigerson (1836–1925) and Eoin MacNeill (1867–1945). Both contributed in their scholarly capacities, rather than as political figures: Sigerson on the representation of Ulster in song, and MacNeill on the Norse influence in the Hebrides. Author and activist Herbert Moore Pim (1883–1950) contributed a poem in English, 'Empire: Maker of War.' *The Pictish Review* (1927–1928), a monthly which Erskine edited with substantial input from C. M. Grieve, published a series on 'The Picts and Other Pre-Celtic People' by author, politician, and Irish-language enthusiast Maurice Moore (1854–1939), brother of George Moore, the novelist.

The Scottish Review brought out a rare response to the Easter Rising, an extensive unattributed essay 'Who Fears to Speak of Easter Week,' which discusses its military aspects and the question of justification for an armed rising in general, comments on Arthur Griffith's thought and his 1904 pamphlet *Resurrection of Hungary*, and compares the Easter Rising to the Scottish Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745.[69] Given the style and the opinions expressed, there can be little doubt it is Erskine's own work. He expressed a similar standpoint in a letter to Charles Loch, a close friend and fellow Gaelic learner and scholar: 'The Sinn Féin rising was a lamentable miscalculation of forces. It should never have been undertaken. They made the same mistakes as the Jacobites of 1715 & 45 did. Still, it was a brave attempt, & honourable to those who engaged in it, though I can't say much for their intelligence.'[70]

Another piece for *The Scottish Review* was 'Ireland and Scotland at the Peace Congress' (Winter 1917), and Erskine attempted to secure independent representation for Scotland at the Versailles Peace Conference, which, as Cairns notes, garnered praise in Irish newspapers and served as conduit to real contact with

69. 'Who Fears to Speak of Easter Week?' *Scottish Review*, 83 (Autumn 1916), 354–374. The essay was first brought to my attention by Gerard Cairns, who also provides more substantial commentary on the topic in 'Principles and Curses.'

70. Ruaraidh Erskine to Charles Loch, letter dated 6 June 1916, Charles Loch Papers, collections of the Department of Gaelic & Celtic, University of Glasgow. I am grateful to Dr Aonghas MacCoinnich for helping me to access the letter and to Dr Amy Wilcockson for assistance with the transcription.

Irish republicans.[71] Ireland was the subject of Erskine's articles for *Nottingham and Midland Catholic News*, such as 'Italia and Celtia: The Ancient Relations of Italy and Ireland' (28 December 1929) and 'Gaelic Politics and Greater Britain: Irish Gaels and European Civilisation' (22 December 1928).

After the last issue of *An Ròsarnach* appeared in 1930, Erskine gradually withdrew from the journalistic scene and from active involvement in Scottish politics, although he continued to publish treatises on different topics. During the period between 1934 and 1957, he was mostly based in France.[72] He comments on Irish politics in *Changing Scotland* (1930), which features the intriguingly titled section 'Why Kings Should Govern in Ireland.' Erskine suggests that given the division between the supporters of the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the Republicans, the restoration of monarchy would be beneficial, arguing that 'as a unifying force,' monarchy is 'superior to any other known form of rule,' but he does not suggest a specific house or figure.[73] While this proposition would most likely fail to convince Erskine's radical Irish contacts, it ties in with his lifelong preoccupation with the idea of kingship.

It was, however, not Erskine's last idea as to how to resolve the divisions in Ireland. Writing to C. M. Grieve on 24 September 1945 from Biarritz, Erskine comments on the plan to form a confederation of British nations proposed by Stanley Bruce, High Commissioner for Australia:

> This might well suit us, so I have written him a few lines, & thus hope to get in touch with him. […] My idea is (and I hope Bruce will agree to it) that there should be an inner British circle, consisting of all the nationalities of the British Isles—that is Scots, English, Irish & Welsh—besides this outer ring of the confederation of peoples, Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, etc. And I have pointed out to Bruce that his plan must break down unless he gets in the Irish. In this way, he might solve the Irish problem altogether: make good Eire's unity, and restore her to the circle of the British nations. If Bruce agrees to this I suppose you & I might go to Dublin & put the matter before de Valera.[74]

71. Cairns, *No Language! No Nation!*, 65–66.

72. In two undated letters to Grieve from France, likely from the late 1930s, Erskine was also considering publishing his writing in *Bonaventura*, a quarterly issued by the Irish Franciscans, or with Browne & Nolan in Dublin. Ruaraidh Erskine to C. M. Grieve, dated 10 June and 4 August with no year indicated, San Veremundo, Rue de la Fregate 24, Biarritz. The correspondence between Erskine and Grieve is held by the Edinburgh University Library, Coll-18, Handlist H:18. I am grateful to Dr Paul Barnaby for help with accessing the letters.

73. Ruaraidh Erskine of Marr, *Changing Scotland* (Montrose, 1931), 12–14.

74. Letter from Erskine to C. M. Grieve, dated 24 September 1945, Hotel Lefevre, Biarritz, Edinburgh University Library, Coll-18, Handlist H:18.

There is no evidence the mission to Dublin ever took place, but the letter rings a curious echo of the meeting with de Valera mentioned in Grieve's correspondence in 1928, and it testifies to Erskine's lasting interest in Irish politics, including readiness to take active steps.

Conclusion

A positive view of Ireland and support of its cultural and political emancipation was not to be taken for granted in Scotland during this period, not even in the Gaelic circles. As Wilson McLeod notes, attitudes to Ireland and the Irish among Scottish Gaels in the early twentieth century were 'coloured by anti-Catholic prejudice and distaste for Irish nationalism,' the majority of Gaelic speakers would adhere to Protestant denominations, and 'mainstream British opinion, including Highland opinion, was profoundly hostile to Irish nationalism, especially its "physical force" strain.'[75] In this respect, Erskine's magazines set up an important precedent. The engagement with Ireland was followed in the anthology *Alba* (1948) and in the quarterly *Gairm* (1952–2002), co-founded by the author and producer Finlay J. MacDonald (Fionnlagh Iain MacDhòmhnaill) and the poet and scholar Derick Thomson (Ruaraidh MacThòmais). Thomson in particular had a lifelong interest in Irish literature, culture, and politics, and he openly acknowledged inspiration by Erskine's Gaelic publishing ventures.[76] In this sense, their influence resonates in the contemporary Scottish Gaelic world, where Ireland remains in many ways the closest sister country, a point of comparison, a source of inspiration, and a partner in literary exchanges.

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75. Wilson McLeod, *Gaelic in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2020), 72.

76. I discuss the topic in more detail in 'Derick Thomson and Ireland,' *Litteraria Pragensia*, 33:65 (2023), https://doi.org/10.14712/2571452X.2023.65.3, and Thomson's engagement with Erskine in *Derick Thomson and the Gaelic Revival* (Edinburgh, 2024).