

## **Interview with Fraser McRobert, An Lòchran, Glasgow ([www.anlochran.com](http://www.anlochran.com))**

**3 June 2024**

**Wilson McLeod**

Madainn mhath. I'm here today with Fraser McRobert from An Lòchran in Glasgow, who's going to tell us about their experience in Glasgow and how things are going and how things look for the future. So ceud taing, a Fhriseil, airson bruidhinn rinn an-diugh. Could you start maybe by just giving us some background to An Lòchran? I think it's actually been in place in one way or another for quite a long time now, is that right?

**Friseal MacRaibeirt**

Yes, so it was established in 2001, under the name of Ionad Gàidhlig Ghlaschu, so Gaelic Glasgow Centre. And since then it's sort of, it's fulfilled a variety of of purposes in Glasgow. So it was an office for quite a few years, with various organisations using the the office, and also an arts organisation. So over the years, it's been a charity that has supported Gaelic arts and concerts and various things. And more recently, we've sort of started to try to provide spaces in Glasgow, social spaces for the Gaelic language, and places where people can come and use Gaelic informally in the community.

**Wilson McLeod**

And where in Glasgow is it that you're located?

**Friseal MacRaibeirt**

So An Lòchran is in Partick, in the West End of Glasgow.

**Wilson McLeod**

And it's sort of attached to where the Gaelic Books Council is essentially?

**Friseal MacRaibeirt**

Yeah. So it's next door to the Gaelic Books Council. And also we have another Gaelic neighbour which is Theatar Gu Leòr. They're also next to us in Glasgow.

**Wilson McLeod**

And so what sorts of things are you offering just now?

**Friseal MacRaibeirt**

So just now, so our weekly schedule has two conversation circles, which are open to all. So they are opportunities to come and speak Gaelic, socially, to other people. And also we have hot desking every week, which happens all day, and as an opportunity for Gaelic professionals and just people with Gaelic who want to speak Gaelic, to come and do some work especially in this era of working from distance, home working, so it's an

opportunity for them to come and work together and to use Gaelic socially. And also we have other organisations that use the space on a weekly basis. So we have, for example, Highland dancing classes for school-age children, and we also have occasional events, so events that happen less frequently. For example, we have a games night in Gaelic every month, so at the end of the month we provide the space. We provide opportunities to play board games in Gaelic, and again, get to know people, use Gaelic socially there. And we also have special one-off events as well. So, for example, last year we had a collaboration with Tobar an Dualchais, where we invited Hammy Sgith, the Gaelic rapper to come along and to give a presentation on his work. and to speak about how he uses archival recordings in his work. So we had that collaboration. And this year we've had a a viewing event of the documentary on German Gaels [*Na Gaidhealaileamailtich*]. So we had that, and we had a Q&A after with some of the people involved in that documentary. And also, this week we have a an event where we'll be watching the football, the Scotland-Germany game. So we have an event, and we have other things happening at that event such as a raffle. And you know, it'll be an opportunity to to use Gaelic again socially at An Lòchran.

**Wilson McLeod**

Could you describe, just give us an idea what the physical space is like?

**Friseal MacRaibeirt**

Yep. So it's one single room. And it's sort of like, it used to be a commercial space, like a shop, basically. So one single room, it has a small kitchen at the back. It did used to be an office, so a traditional office space with desks and so on. But since 2021 has been a more open space where things like, you know, the Highland dancing class can take place. We have chairs and tables that can be brought out when need be, when people want a space to work, or when they want to have board games, and so on. But yes, it's a multi-purpose space, quite open, and it can be used for many different things.

**Wilson McLeod**

What kind of capacity would it have? How many people?

**Friseal MacRaibeirt**

So it's fairly small. So I would say, maybe 30 maximum capacity.

**Wilson McLeod**

And do you have a big screen for the the football, and so on?

**Friseal MacRaibeirt**

Well, we don't have a big screen, but we have a projector, so we have a projector in a nice white wall, so we can project that onto the onto the wall.

**Wilson McLeod**

Very good, very good. Now. I think in the past you've had a development officer or staff officer working for you. But that's not the case just now, is that right?

**Friseal MacRaibeirt**

No, no. So currently, we are a volunteer organisation. So we're run by volunteers on the board and also additional volunteers that help out.

**Wilson McLeod**

And is that difficult to manage?

**Friseal MacRaibeirt**

So it can be quite difficult to manage. Just because obviously, people have many, many different priorities. And sometimes things change, you know. Now and again they're busier, and they don't have the time to give to the organisation, but it is quite uplifting to see, though, to see how much people are willing to give to Gaelic in Glasgow, and how much of their own time that they're willing to give to make the place successful, and to try and provide opportunities to provide, you know, a social space, a third space for Gaelic in Glasgow.

**Wilson McLeod**

So what is the sort of management or governance structure you have for the organisation?

**Friseal MacRaibeirt**

So we have a a board of trustees which manages the organisation, and we currently have around ten members on the board. And we have the various positions, we have the chair and vice-chair and secretary. And we all work together. We meet monthly, so slightly more frequently than perhaps other organisations do officially, but just because of the nature of the organisation being volunteer-run just now, so monthly meetings, where we discuss both governance and operations as well.

**Wilson McLeod**

And the premises are rented, I think. Where does the funding for the rent come from?

**Friseal MacRaibeirt**

Yep. So our funding comes from Bòrd na Gàidhlig for the rent and the building is owned by Partick Works in Glasgow.

**Wilson McLeod**

And really, just to think in the big picture, what are your plans or aspirations for the future of An Lòchran?

### **Friseal MacRaibeirt**

So, yeah, our plans, our biggest goal would just be a bigger space, really. You know, we've seen things happening in Inverness, and we have always been quite inspired by how things are going in Ireland, and have been. You know how things have been for quite a long time and we're also acutely aware that Glasgow has the biggest mass of Gaelic speakers in Scotland, and so anywhere in the world. So we'd really like to be able to expand - the demand is there. We have lots of groups coming to use the space. And sometimes it's a real challenge for the volunteers to facilitate that use of the space as well. So I think that's the biggest aim, and it is ambitious. But I think, you know, personally I recognise a movement in Scotland just now towards that, with Inverness, of course, and with yourselves in Edinburgh. We're definitely not alone in those aspirations.

### **Wilson McLeod**

Yeah, yeah. And would you have any advice for us in Edinburgh trying to get things off the ground?

### **Friseal MacRaibeirt**

So I think it would be just to make sure that things like governance that might not appear obvious at the beginning are rock solid, and that you look at things from all angles. Look at the official advice, and governance for third sector organisations. To make sure that, you know, the foundation is solid for achieving those aims of finding a physical premises and expanding and recruiting staff, and so on. So I think, yeah, so I would say that that's the most important thing.

### **Wilson McLeod**

Ceud taing, a Fhriseil, tha sin anabarrach inntinneach. Thank you so much for all of that. That really gives a really helpful overview. And I really hope that you can take things to the next stage.

### **Friseal MacRaibeirt**

Mòran taing.

### **Wilson McLeod**

Taing mhòr.