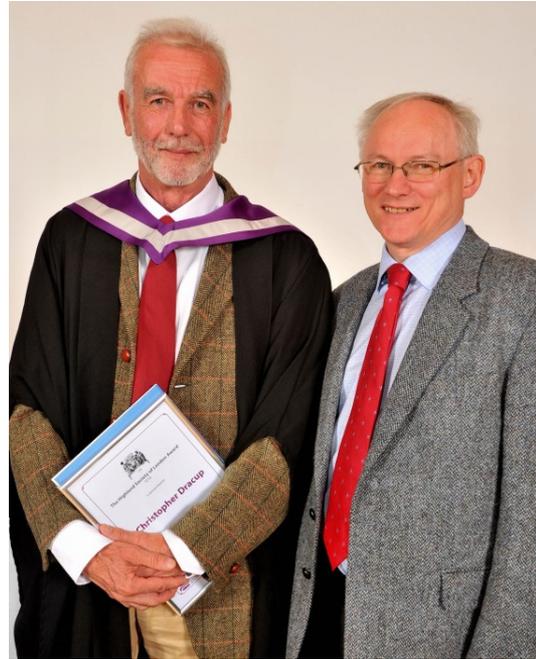


WINNER OF THE HIGHLAND SOCIETY OF LONDON'S PRIZE FOR THE BEST UNDERGRADUATE DISSERTATION ON A HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS THEME

This year, the prize for the best undergraduate dissertation awarded through the University of the Highlands and Islands was won by Christopher Dacup, a BA (Hons) Gaelic Language and Culture student, studying at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig on the Isle of Skye.

The title of the dissertation (written originally in Gaelic) can be translated as “The origins of the valedictory form in John Carswell’s poem *Adhmad Beag*”, and Christopher is shown here receiving his prize from Dr Brian Boag, Subject Network Leader, Humanities and Gaelic.

A summary of the dissertation is given below, and copies of the original (only in Gaelic) are available from the Society.



“*Foirm na n-Urrnuidheadh*, John Carswell’s translation into Gaelic of the Reformed Church’s *Book of Common Order*, was published in Edinburgh in 1567. It was the first book to be printed in Gaelic anywhere in the British Isles. Carswell’s was not a literal translation and he added much original material of his own. This project looked in detail at the poem Carswell wrote to send his book on its way. It appeared at the end of his *Epistle to the Reader*. The poem, *Adhmad Beag*, starts with the line *Gluais romhad, a leabhráin bhig – Go little book*. McLeod and Bateman (2007) suggested that Carswell might have come across this valedictory style in some of the *dánta grádha* – Gaelic love poems in the *amour courtois* tradition.

“The present research investigated the origins of the *Go little book* motif and found it went back to classical Roman times, being particularly associated with Ovid. Later, it was to be found in such works as *Troilus and Criseyde* by Chaucer, *The Kingis Quair* by James I, and *Schir William Wallace* by Henry the Minstrel. The *Go little book* motif has been closely associated with a number other motifs since classical times, for example, authors’ claims that they was ill-equipped to undertake the work and only did so under pressure from someone in authority, and authors’ fears about their book’s reception. These other motifs are not found in the *dánta grádha* but are to be found in Carswell’s epistles and epilogue. Carswell was highly literate in Latin and English/Scots as well as Gaelic. It is argued that it is more likely that he came across the *Go little book* motif (and at the same time the other motifs associated with it) in the work of Latin and/or English/Scottish poets rather than in the Gaelic love poems.”

Reference: McLeod, W. & Bateman, M., (eds.) (2007), *Duanair na Sracaire: Songbook of the Pillagers*. Edinburgh: Birlinn.