



“Behold the Hebrides”

Mary Low

21ST April 2012 – The Macleod Centre

*Bless to me O God
Each thing my eye shall see*

Prayers and blessings from the Hebrides have become known all over the world, thanks in great measure to Alexander Carmichael, exciseman and folklore collector, who was laid to rest on his native island of Lismore, a hundred years ago, in June 1912. He left behind a unique collection of Gaelic prayers, blessings and other material which has become famous under the title *Carmina Gadelica*.

The *Carmina* has been quoted in the work of almost every writer on Celtic Christianity in recent years. Selections have been published as *The Sun Dances* and *New Moon of the Seasons*, to name but two. It is widely used as a model for new prayers in the Celtic style and has enriched the spirituality of all kinds of people both within and beyond the churches. But it has also caused controversy and confusion.

This week we will explore the *Carmina* and get to know it better. We will find out more about the community from which it came and ask what it is like to live in the Highlands and Islands today. If you use – or have tried to use - prayers like these at home or in your faith community, we would like to hear your experiences . There will be time for sharing, learning and discussion, but there will also be space to be quiet, enjoy the craft room or simply go out and about – to behold the Hebrides in this season of resurrection.



Expect to hear some Gaelic. Sessions will be in English but there will be opportunities to sing in Gaelic – the original living language of the Highlands and Islands - and for those who would like to go further, the chance to learn a few simple greetings. Gaels and locals are especially welcome.



Mary Low first encountered *Carmina Gadelica* while studying theology and church history at Edinburgh University in 1986. She taught in the Centre for Continuing Education there for many years, has led a number of weeks on Iona and has recently returned from a year in South Uist and Benbecula learning traditional music and Gaelic. She contributed to the 2011 conference on the Carmichael-Watson papers which include Carmichael's field notebooks. Her publications include *Celtic Christianity and Nature* and *St Cuthbert's Way*.