

Young Gaels demonstrate their talents in honour of Sorley MacLean's centenary

Young Gaelic poets from across Scotland have been putting pen to paper composing new poems as part of a competition intended to help celebrate the centenary of the birth of noted Gaelic Bard Sorley MacLean.

The competition was run by Urras Shomhairle (The Sorley MacLean Trust) in association with Comunn na Gàidhlig, and was open to secondary school pupils from throughout Scotland.

Trust Chairman, Rev. Archie Black said the volume of entries had been a pleasant surprise, and that the calibre of the work gave grounds for optimism for the continuation of the Gaelic literary tradition in which Sorley MacLean played such a key role: "We received a total of 70 entries from across Scotland, from Stornoway to Edinburgh and from Aberdeen to Glasgow.

"Of course everyone cannot be a winner, and on behalf of the Trust I'd very much like to praise all those who took part and all the teachers who supported them. Thanks are also due to our three person judging panel for a task well done."

The winning poem, "Beul an Latha" (*Dawn*) was written by Owen Sutcliffe from Wallace High School in Stirling; second prize went to Mikaela Carmichael at St George's School for Girls in Edinburgh for "Colabhasaidh agus Pamplona" (*Colonsay and Pamplona*); and third prize goes to Donald John MacDonald, from Lionacleit School in Benbecula for his poem "Òran na Gaoithe" (*Song of the Wind*). The prizes are vouchers for £100; £80; and £60.

Three other poems were highly commended by the judges. These were "Orainsearan" (*Oranges*) by Catriona Morrison of Millburn Academy, Inverness; "Airgead" (*Money*) by Robbie MacLeod from James Gillespie's High School, Edinburgh; and "An teine chaidh às" (*The fire that went out*) by Mabel MacLennan from the Nicolson Institute, Stornoway.

Chairman of the Judging panel, writer and poet Myles Campbell said: "As judges we were very pleased with the number of entries, and from the whole secondary school age range. We received them as numbered anonymous works, with no information on the author or where they were from and independently selected our own individual short leets.

"We were particularly pleased that the top three entries had appeared independently on each of these short leets, and then to find out that they had come from different parts of Scotland.

"A lot of good work was submitted from several schools, and the work of those who won is very promising. We hope they, and those who didn't win this time, will continue to write strong poetry." The other judges were lecturer and poet, Meg Bateman and Mairi Kidd, formerly Director of Stòrlann.

Each young poet who entered the competition will receive a copy of the Christopher Whyte edition of 'Dàin do Èimhir' – one of Sorley MacLean's most acclaimed collections. These will be distributed to schools shortly. Urras Shomhairle gratefully acknowledges a generous discount in respect of this order from the publisher Birlinn.

It is anticipated that the winning three entries, and three other poems the judges considered 'highly commendable' will be published in a forthcoming edition of literary magazine

Northwords Now and will be posted on the “News and Events” section of the Trust’s own website (www.sorleymaclean.org). BBC Radio nan Gàidheal are also considering using the winning poems and a selection of others as part of a special week of programming later in the year to commemorate the centenary of Sorley MacLean’s birth.

Ends

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