



THE HEBRIDEAN TRUST

Newsletter - Summer 2002

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Issue 05

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Origins



The Hebridean Trust was formed in 1982 on Tiree in order to help regenerate the island's economy whilst preserving its traditional way of life. The problems facing Tiree are typical of the Hebrides. Depopulation is leading to depletion of services and human resources and schools are often under threat of closure. The cultural heritage is in danger of vanishing and the community is suffering as a result. The Hebridean Trust had a vision to regenerate the island economies and promote the survival of a vibrant Hebridean culture.



The Hynish Centre on the Isle of Tiree

Events at Hynish

Hynish, Isle of Tiree, has been the focus of regeneration work by The Hebridean Trust for the past 20 years. Today it is home to a small community and one of the main visitor accommodation facilities on the island. Many visitors pass through Hynish every year and it is playing an ever more important role in island life through involvement with local events.



The windy conditions make Tiree a windsurfers paradise

Tiree art exhibition went ahead at Morton Boyd House for the second year in July and August and by all accounts was a great success. Hynish is now looking forward to welcoming competitors to the Tiree Wave Classic. Organizer Andy Groom has created a fascinating website at www.tireewaveclassic.com which gives an insight into the long history of this world-class event and how it has been revived. We wish them every success and plenty of strong Tiree wind for the October event.

For more information on Tiree and the [Hynish Centre](#) please send us your address for a copy of our full colour Tiree Brochure.

Survey Visits Ross of Mull Quarries

At the end of May members of The Hebridean Trust Council of Management began a 10-day survey trip including visits to our projects on Canna, Tiree and the Treshnish Isles and a visit to The Ross of Mull. We managed to cram in a lot of activity including meetings with NTS representatives and the building surveyor on Canna.

We also met with people from Heritage Engineering, Bob Reekie a retired curator from National Museum of Scotland and Chairman of the Lead mining museum and Richard Gillanders of The British Geological Survey to discuss future projects at Hynish. We agreed the format for the forthcoming season with Andy Spink from Hebridean Pursuits.

On the Treshnish Isles we carried out further studies at Lunga but were prevented from landing on The Dutchman by a heavy swell.

We also visited the old Northern Lighthouse Board quarries at Camus Tuath on the Ross of Mull. This was the source of the pink granite that was worked at Hynish to build the Skerryvore Lighthouse. We were greeted by a friendly group from The Iona Community who were using the quarry for abseiling practice. The industrial archaeology is fascinating when viewed in conjunction with Hynish. The quarrymen's barracks are naturally of a similar design to Hynish but they have not been restored and the religious community lives in the retreat without the modern conveniences of electricity and running water.

Focus on Canna - looking to the future



View of Canna Harbour and Compass Hill

Canna has a remarkably varied heritage as diverse as nesting golden eagles, puffins and corncrakes, early Christian archaeology and John and Margaret Campbell's dedication to the study of the Gaelic oral tradition. The Hebridean Trust has been working with the community on Canna and The National Trust of Scotland for the last eight years to help increase investment in the island.

While critical of the lack of a clear plan for the island, an interim report commissioned by Highlands and Islands Enterprise recognizes that few remote communities benefit from the level of stability that National Trust for Scotland ownership has given to Canna.

The report noted that Canna faces the apparent Catch 22 of declining island populations: The lack of investment has speeded the fall in population and without reinvestment the island will lack the infrastructure needed to support any increase in the population. While we commend this report for highlighting the need for well-planned investment in Canna, it has not fully recognised the potential of the St Edward's Centre to provide income from visitors.

St Edward's has the capacity to generate 1200 bed nights of accommodation based on our seasonal occupancy at The Hynish Centre, which should generate an income of £25,000 - £30,000 full board based on a cost of £21 to £25 per night. This is enough to employ a full time warden and make a substantial contribution to the maintenance costs of the building.

In the case of any historic building maintenance costs are relatively high but should be offset against indirect benefits such as the preservation of the island's heritage and the morale boost of a landmark renovation project. Income from the heritage value of historic buildings should be maximized and currently there are no grants available for their maintenance. The St Edward's Centre and Canna have a fascinating history and any plan for economic development of the island should look at how this can be used to provide income.

The HIE report also looks at the need for investment in key infrastructure, which islanders have identified as including 2 more homes and a road and road bridge for Sanday. The challenge for funding organisations is to find a place for these works within their remit. In the case of Canna it requires imagination to realize that while homes and roads may not have the natural appeal of historic buildings for capital grants, they form a necessary part of the fabric of Canna's heritage.

The Hebridean Trust is now in talks with the directorate at The National Trust for Scotland to find a way forward for investment in the island.

St. Edward's Centre Survey

Following on from Newsletter 4, I can report that the scaffolding was erected on the tower at St Edward's Centre in April following a full thermographic survey of the

The contractor now has a team back on site and they have begun these works. It is hoped to prevent any further damage to the interior finishes of the building.

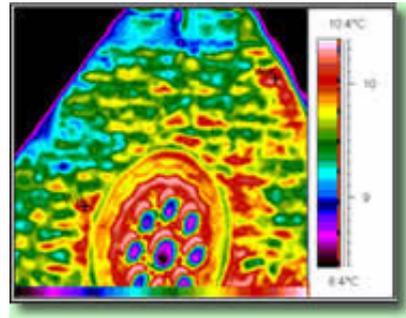
building.



Canna and back in a day - Seafari Adventures high Speed RIB helped us make the best use of consultants' time during the survey work

This is a technique using infrared light to produce thermal images and see inside the fabric of a building and has allowed us to see the exact areas where water is penetrating giving the architects the information they require to specify remedial works.

Tackling this problem has stretched The Hebridean Trust's resources and it has certainly been a time where we have been thankful for the support of our friends.



The west gable of St. Edward's showing water penetration at coping stones

Searching for the lost history of Hynish - can you help

News from Tiree, May 1890 something... (Please note that this article is a product of my imagination and was written to try to give a sense of how someone writing at the turn of the last century might view the past achievements and future prospects for Hynish - Ed.)

After 50 years of use, The Northern Lighthouse Board Shorestation at Hynish, Isle of Tiree has been abandoned in favour of Erraid on Mull. A lighthouse commissioners' representative cited the unceasing march of technology as the primary cause for the station's demise. "When we began working at Hynish steam power was only just coming into general use. The development of the marine steam engine has revolutionised travel at sea and will allow us to operate more efficiently from a centralised base on the Ross of Mull." The representative denied suggestions that the constant silting of the harbour at Hynish had been a factor. "The sluice mechanism at Hynish has proved more than adequate in maintaining a clear harbour that can be accessed at any time from 3/4 full tide" he assured us.

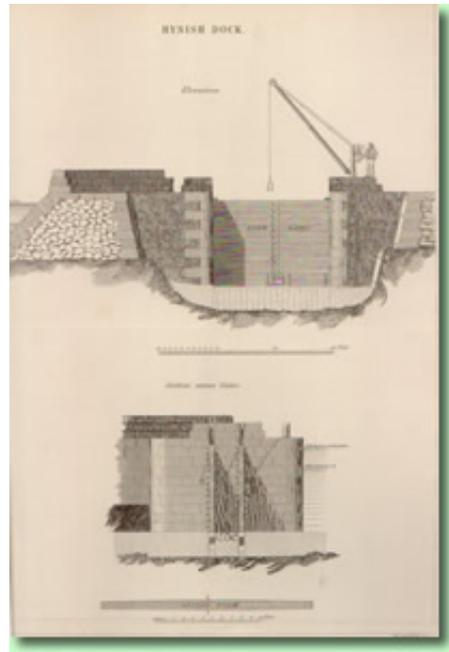
He also denied suggestions that the rise of steam power meant that the Skerryvore rocks no longer presented a hazard to navigation and that the lighthouse would soon be abandoned. "The Northern Lighthouse Board will still maintain the signal tower at Hynish to facilitate communication with the lighthouse crew but the remaining buildings will revert to The Duke of Argyll". The extensive legacy NLB leave to the Duchy and the crofters of Tiree include buildings that represent the best in modern architectural science, in sharp contrast to the smoke filled thatched dwellings that have been used traditionally on the island. It is hoped that these sturdy buildings will provide good quality homes for many years to come....

We need your help...

The Hebridean Trust is looking for any stories about life at Hynish over the years to include in a small interpretation centre. Occupation of the village since the 1890s forms as much a part of its history as the original lighthouse construction. Does anyone know anything about work at the signal tower- we understand that it was manned for many years until radio became a trustworthy form of communication? Who lived at Upper Square? Who used the harbour? - There is evidence that the original crane was replaced. Recently we had a letter from a former resident at Upper Square (see below), which is just the kind of information we are looking for so we would love to hear from you. Please write to Ian Rees at the address at the end of this newsletter.

Former resident of Upper Square, Alistair MacNeill, wrote to us in July saying how he admired the restoration work at Hynish. Mr MacNeill commented that he had not visited the island for 16 years and that he was fascinated to see the transformation of the village. "It was like stepping back in time in more than one way and very pleasing to see the

excellent work of restoration being carried out by people who included a former classmate, John Fletcher from Balemartin." Mr MacNeill grew up in Upper Square from 1941 and returned on holidays until 1986. He remembers helping his father reslate the store rooms where the Duke of Argyll's coaches used to be kept - now Alan Stevenson House providing high quality hostel accommodation and venue for Monica's famous Sunday Teas.



A plan taken from Alan Stevenson's account of the construction of Skerryvore lighthouse showing the elevation and section of the dock at Hynish

Lunga House Mice

Lunga is the largest of The Treshnish Isles, purchased in April 2000 by The Hebridean Trust with the aim of providing for their management as an important natural habitat for diverse species including thousands of breeding seabirds, grey seals and a wide variety of flora and fauna. Lunga is visited by large numbers of people who are interested in its natural history. As well as putting together a management plan for the islands The Hebridean Trust is encouraging and actively participating in their use as a scientific resource.

Professor Ian Boyd, scientist and member of The Hebridean Trust Council of Management has recently established that house mice still thrive in large numbers on Lunga - despite the fact that it has been well over a century since anybody lived there. Experience elsewhere suggests that house mice normally do not survive without the presence of human habitation.

On St Kilda, the house mouse died out when the population left. However this appears not to be the case on Lunga. One theory explaining this is that, unlike St. Kilda, Lunga has no field mice.



The ruins of the abandoned village on Lunga provide important nesting habitat

It is possible that the house mice cannot compete with field mice unless there is human habitation. Physically the two species are very similar but this summer we were able to make a positive identification of a Lunga house mouse. Further study of the population is required to understand its adaptation to life on Lunga including the possibility that it has developed a seasonal breeding cycle.

Upper Square nearing completion

We are now coming to the end of the Upper Square project and tenants will soon be moving into the four cottages. Perhaps this is a good time to take a look at where this project fits into the wider scheme of things.....

The Economy of the region is characterised by a large primary sector related to fishing and farming, and a large tourist sector. Employment tends to be seasonal and there is a high proportion of temporary jobs.

The economy of the area is not performing well in comparison with the Scottish economy as a whole. The problems of seasonality and low pay are deep



High quality housing at Council pegged rents at Upper Square will help towards the revival of the Tiree economy

The renovation of the Lightkeepers Cottages at Upper Square will provide very high quality accommodation at rents pegged to the council's own housing stock. But this is not a stand-alone project. Rather it forms an intrinsic part of a strategy for Hynish, with wider implications. Before beginning the project we studied the overall strategy adopted by Argyll and Bute Council for the region. This identified several key issues:

The need to provide a sound foundation for economic growth. The region is made up of many distinctive local centres with no one dominant town. Tiree is a classic example of this with its spread of townships.

rooted. Cost of living is high in remote rural and island communities. There are however areas of opportunity. The investment in further education provided by Argyll College, with its link to Tiree Business Centre and the growth of the tourist sector have good potential. Hynish was nearly uninhabitable 20 years ago and will now increase from 14 to 26 residents with the completion of Upper Square, including a family moving in from the mainland. All the rents have been set to Argyll and Bute Council levels to increase the stock of low cost affordable housing on the island.

We have also created capacity for up to 32 tourist visitors at The Hynish Centre, providing local employment (1 full time, 1 part time and 1 seasonal post) and supporting other local businesses.

Restoring heritage improves the status of the island as a tourist attraction and provides a morale boost for the local economy. Landmark investments such as this help encourage further interest in the island from investors and government funding agencies, showing that serious investment can be achieved, providing far reaching benefits.

This newsletter includes photographs courtesy of Michael Stanfield, Bill Revie, ARP Lorimer and Associates, Ian Rees, Gavin Shaw and Heather Green

For more information on Tiree and the [Hynish Centre](#) please send us your address for a copy of our full colour Tiree Brochure.

Join the Friends of the Hebridean Trust



We need your support! We invite you to join the Friends of The Hebridean Trust where you will be helping us to conserve the unique Hebridean way of life and environment. Your [membership](#) or [donation](#) can help develop new projects, to ensure future generations will continue to enjoy a rich and varied experience of life in the Hebrides.

See our pages on [membership](#) and learn more about the other ways you can [help the Hebridean Trust](#).

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