



THE HEBRIDEAN TRUST

Newsletter - Spring 2003

[Back to Home Page](#)

Issue 06

[Back to Archive](#)

Editor: Ian Rees

Email: info@hebrideantrust.org

Click on the headings below to read an article of your choice
or use the scroll bar to see the complete newsletter



See our new web site for the Hynish Centre <http://www.hynishcentre.co.uk>

[Myths of Cairn na Burgh](#)
[Treshnish Isles Visitor Safety](#)
[A Growing Community at Hynish](#)
[Plans to Restore Stevenson's Harbour](#)
[Hynish Centre News](#)

[Bob Reekie Appointed Curatorial Advisor](#)
[A New Roof for the Sandaig Museum](#)
[Additional Work for St. Edward's Centre](#)
[Pen Friends](#)
[Join the Friends of the Hebridean Trust](#)

Myths of Cairn na Burgh



The medieval castle on Cairn na Burgh More is of considerable national importance and may be scheduled as an ancient monument in the near future

Now recognised as gems for their natural heritage, rumour and myth have long held that the [Treshnish Isles](#) are hiding other treasures. Legend has it that sacred relics and manuscripts were secreted on one of the Cairn na Burgh islands at the northern extreme of the [Treshnish Isles](#)

by monks from Iona Abbey. Standing guard over the inner sound between Coll and Tiree and the Isle of Mull, the steep-sided plateaux once served as an impregnable fortress, surrounded as they are today by dangerous tidal streams.

Occupants including the Lord of the Isles, the clan MacLean and government forces have fortified their natural parapets. The fortifications now visible probably date from the time of the Civil War (17th Century). Certainly the long and colourful history of these islands suggests it would be worthwhile conducting further archaeological studies. The [Hebridean Trust](#) aims to carry out a standing building survey and detailed assessment of the archaeological potential and survival of deposits as recommended by Robin Turner, chief archaeologist of The National Trust for Scotland, following his visit in June 2000.

Treshnish Isles Visitor Safety

Following increasing concerns about the dangers of uninhabited islands such as Lunga The [Hebridean Trust](#) will implement safety signs this year.

We hope these signs will encourage people to be careful and not take unnecessary risks.



Some of the birds of Lunga

The bird colonies on Lunga, which include burrowing puffins and large numbers of guillemots and razorbills, are a great attraction during the nesting season between May and July.

A number of local boat operators run trips to the islands, which are often combined with a visit to the world famous site of Fingal's Cave on the nearby island of Staffa.

See further details of the work on the [Treshnish Isles](#) in our main [Hebridean Trust web site](#).

A Growing Community at Hynish



The restored lightkeeper's cottages at Upper Square, Hynish, provide homes for island families

Restoration work to the old Lighthouse Keepers' Cottages funded with assistance from The Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Scotland, Argyll and Bute Council and grant making trusts was completed in September 2002 and families moved in to the four cottages on 1st October. Hynish now represents a significant and growing community on Tiree. The two new babies that arrived just a few months after the new tenants moved in, including the first home birth in Hynish for over 50 years, are a symbol of hope for the future of the island. A consultation meeting with the tenants in November was a forum for residents of Hynish to express their ideas and an opportunity for us to present proposals for further development of the historic shorestation.

Many visitors are attracted to Hynish by the remarkable story of the construction of Skerryvore Lighthouse told in the Signal Tower museum. For 17 years this spiral staircased tower has claimed the title of "smallest museum in the world". Display panels and exhibits, including the ¼ ton bronze fog bell from the lighthouse, give visitors a sense of the enormous task faced by the lighthouse builders.

Far from seeing tourists as a nuisance, people living at Hynish welcomed The Hebridean Trust proposals to provide better facilities for visitors. These include a renewed exhibition (accessible to all at ground level), a heritage trail, disabled toilets and parking facilities.

Comments that a number of visitors seemed to wander around forlornly looking for the museum reinforced the case for better signs as well as the need to explain the role of Hynish in the construction of the lighthouse on a reef, sometimes barely visible, 10½ nautical miles out to sea. Ideas for further improvements include a children's play area and picnic area to be provided as part of general improvements to the public areas.

These ideas will be taken on board in the next phase of development at Hynish. The idea of consultation is not just limited to meetings and we welcome comments or ideas on current and future projects at any time.



The Signal Tower museum at the opening in 1984

Plans to Restore Stevenson's Harbour

When the Duke of Argyll transferred the buildings at Hynish to The Hebridean Trust, he made possible the changes that have taken place over the last 20 years. At the heart of these buildings lies a unique piece of industrial heritage, disused for many years.

A harbour, with a unique fresh water flushing system provided by a reservoir, sluices and double stop-boom gates, was designed to provide a safe haven for the lighthouse tender from the full force of the Atlantic Ocean.

Hebridean Trust proposals to restore the harbour, which is now disused and heavily silted, have attracted interest from Historic Scotland and other organisations. We are currently producing a document to demonstrate the value of regenerating the harbour and secure the necessary funding.

Works will include repairs to the reservoir sluice mechanism, installation of a crane and new stop-booms as well as iron and masonry work on the harbour and pier. Operation of the sluices to maintain the harbour clear of sand and communication with incoming vessels will require the creation of a permanent post of Harbour Master.



The unique 19th century harbour at Hynish was built to help construct and service the Skerryvore Lighthouse

Tiree is an island with poor facilities for visiting boats and the business plan will include a measure of the level of interest from the yachting and leisure boating community. The local fishing fleet will also be consulted.

The spectacle of the working harbour will attract more visitors to Hynish and the plan will include details of how economic benefit will be derived from this. Whilst we prepare our proposals we would welcome any thoughts or suggestions you may have on the future use of the harbour at Hynish.

Hynish Centre News

Last year over 200 disadvantaged children from the inner cities of England and Scotland enjoyed holidays on Tiree. We are aiming to surpass that this year. To help us subsidise holidays for these groups we need the support of visitors throughout the year.



The Hynish Centre

The key to marketing Tiree as a tourist destination has always been to try to extend the season. We are very pleased to report that this year The Hynish Centre has many bookings for April and October, usually quiet months.

Bookings are looking very healthy throughout the summer but if you want to check for yourselves or are thinking of doing a last minute booking, then you should look no further than our new online booking pages at www.hynishcentre.co.uk.

After a year of development, the system went live in March and has already produced a shower of online booking requests. Visitors to the [web site](#) can view days that have been reserved and confirmed and can make automated reservations on unreserved dates. We are also happy to speak to you in person about your holiday group needs on 01879 220726 or 01865 311468. Tiree also enjoys many sunny days during the winter, and the peace and quiet on the island at this time is so relaxing, so why not start thinking about your Christmas and New Year break on Tiree?



Both Morton Boyd House, above, and Alan Stevenson House offer comfortable and relaxing accommodation for a memorable stay on Tiree

For more information on Tiree and the Hynish Centre please send us your address - we will send you a copy of our full colour Tiree Brochure.

Bob Reekie Appointed Curatorial Advisor to the Hebridean Trust



Bob Reekie, Curatorial Advisor to the Hebridean Trust

Bob Reekie has been appointed Curatorial Adviser to the Hebridean Trust

His extensive museum experience, including many years working at the National Museum of Scotland, and particularly his interest in geology, will help us to develop interpretation at Hynish Shorestation as well as providing curatorial input to help with the presentation and conservation of exhibits at The Sandaig Island Life Museum.

Bob has already been helping out with the Hynish story and in recent days is likely to be found somewhere between the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland and the National Library, frantically tracking down source materials relating to the building of Skerryvore Lighthouse.

We understand that considerable progress has been made and look forward to bringing you further news of our proposed interpretation project at Hynish.

A new roof for Sandaig Museum

Our new thatcher, Neil MacKinnon, has now completed work to the barn at [Sandaig Island Life Museum](#), well in time for the opening of the museum this Easter holiday. I met with Neil in March and we discussed the inherent problems with thatching the restored cottage including the shortage of suitable marram grass on Tiree. Traditional thatching skills are dying out on the island and recently people have gone to the extent of bringing over teams from the mainland and other parts of the Hebrides to maintain the dozen or so surviving thatched cottages.

We are very fortunate to have found Neil, who was born and bred on Tiree and has learned expert knowledge from his predecessors. In just a few minutes speaking to him I



With a newly thatched roof, volunteers at Sandaig Museum including Aneen Black, Mairi Davis, Jan Hunter and Charlie MacLeish are looking forward to another busy season in 2003

The [Sandaig Island Life Museum](#) is home to an eclectic collection of artefacts from Tiree's past and, with the

gained an insight into traditional thatching, including the need to use heather turfs to line the roof timbers, the correct positioning of the stones which strengthen the roof against strong winds, and the almost domed shape which is the ideal for a Tìree thatched roof.

help of local interpretation from our museum volunteers, the museum gives a taste of the hardship, resourcefulness and resilience of the people of Tìree over the years.

Additional Work for the St. Edward's Centre



Many of the original features of St Edward's have been preserved

The St Edward's Centre, created from the converted Bute family chapel on the Isle of Sanday, Canna, includes a wonderfully redesigned interior, preserving the original features of the grade B listed building and providing workspace and accommodation for up to 12 students or other visiting groups. Building works began in June 1999, set back by the lightning strike, which tore the roof off the tower in January of that year. Following completion of the majority of the works, the building had another surprise in store for us when defects in the fabric of the external walls led to serious flooding and internal damage.

Finding a resolution to this problem has been a long journey and the Trust's resources have been very heavily stretched. We are now close to an agreement with the architects and contractors to resolve the problem this summer. The proposal is to carry out additional deep pointing works and implement a moisture management plan. A clerk of works with extensive experience in lime pointing will ensure the quality of work on this difficult site and advice is being sought from The Scottish Lime Centre.



Bill Revie from CMC Ltd checks the pointing at the St Edward's Centre

Penfriends

Thanks to our website we are able to bring news of The Hebridean Trust's work to people all over the world.

An increasing number of people are writing to us from the United States and Australia and we now have a number of overseas members of the Friends of The Hebridean Trust.

It goes to show that where there is a link to a particular Hebridean island, there is a community of people in the outside world with a great interest in the Hebrides. We have had requests from ladies in mainland Australia and Tasmania who would like to strengthen their link to the Hebridean islands by corresponding with residents or anyone who is involved in the islands.

Jennifer Hemsley, who loves the Hebrides, wrote to us recently telling of how she uprooted from a mining village in Nottinghamshire to the distant island of Tasmania in 1962, looking for a better lifestyle.

She described how her view of Tasmania has changed over the years as it has become developed and lost its uniqueness. A recent drought has parched the island and she is missing the green land of her birth.

Margarite is an Australian with paternal forebears from the Inner (and possibly outer) Hebrides. Her family emigrated in the early 1900s and, inspired by two visits more than 20 years ago, she has taken an interest in the history, wildlife and customs of the Islands.

If you are interested in sharing your experiences of island life with a pen friend from the other side of the world please contact us initially with email or postal address details which we will pass on for you. If you have a friend overseas to whom you would like to gift membership of Friends of The Hebridean Trust, please get in touch with us. Overseas memberships are £19 annual or £150 life membership to take account of the additional postage costs.

This new sletter includes photographs courtesy of Michael Stanfield, ARP Lorimer and Associates, Ian Rees, Neil MacKinnon and JLM CDR

For more information on [Tìree](#) and the [Hynish Centre](#) please send us your address - we will send you a copy of our full colour Tìree 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](#).

The Hebridean Trust
North Parade Chambers
75a Banbury Road
Oxford
OX2 6PE

Email: info@hebrideantrust.org

Tel/Fax: 01865 311468