

An Iodhlann The Stackyard

25 years of an island archive

An Iodhlann, Tiree's historical centre, is celebrating its first quarter century.

We started life in 1994 as *Co-Roinn Ghàidhlig Thiriodh 's Cholla* / The Tiree and Coll Gaelic Partnership. Our original focus was the Gaelic language. But in a rapidly changing world, there was also a strong feeling that the traditions and memories of an older way of life were disappearing and needed preserving.



UPPER Captain Hugh MacKinnon of Gott. He served in Haslar, Gosport during 1853-1915. LOWER Milking outside a croft house in Balevullin. Note the whale vertebra and the cnotag or pounding stone.

what the matter was [and] desired that Two or Three of their Leaders shou[l]d come [and] talk w[ith] me. Accordingly Three of them came I asked what was the reason why so many of them convened. Replied to put a stop to my naming any more Militia in that Island ... The only capitulation I cou[l]d get was to leave the Island with the first fair wind, and as the Hour did not answer I was Wind bound for seven days thereafter. All that time I had the half of the few men I had on guard being in all but Ten in number who did not strip off a thread cloaths all that time.' Argyll papers PFV65/04. Transcribed by Jean L McLean, Friends of the Argyll Papers

In addition, field workers from the School of Scottish Studies made hundreds of recordings on the island between 1950 and 1986: '[When they were carrying the coffin] *the nearest relation at the head and the next nearest at the feet, four men carrying, two on each side, being relieved every so many yards. They had a man specially set apart measuring so many yards to put the men out ... He would say "Seasamh a-rithist [stand again]" ... He didn't have a special name, but he was what they called cuir a-mach na daoine 'putting the men out' ...*

There was one maybe special man that did it on most occasions. When I remember it was a man in Cornaigmore who did it, Donald Lamont, Dòmhnall Eachainn Mhòir ... They always had refreshment at the cemetery. After they had carried the coffin several miles, they were badly needing some refreshment on a cold wet stormy day, maybe wet to the skin, maybe with snow on the ground. Sometimes they were getting more refreshments than was good for them!' Hugh MacEachern talking to Dr Margaret MacKay in 1974

So, we started. From a pile of papers on a Crossapol office table, our collection has grown at an average of ten accessions a week to over 11,000 items: 4500 photographs, 1100 books, 800 artefacts, 480 sound recordings and 260 maps.

Tiree has been dubbed the 'Secret Island' because it has been so little studied. But that is changing.

Firstly, the island's owner the Duke of Argyll has one of Scotland's finest private archives at Inveraray Castle. We have been fortunate to work on a number of projects with Alison Diamond, the Inveraray archivist, helping to open up this collection.

Archibald Campbell of Barnacarie was the island's factor in 1745. He was ordered to go to Tiree to raise a militia to fight Bonnie Prince Charlie. He encountered a hostile reception and was forced to flee: '*After severall arguments they agreed I shou[l]d begin and go through [and] name those I thought proper for that purpose. The day following I entered upon nameing of them, made out that day [and] the next about 20 men. The third day came to the West End of the Island and as I was comeing to Kilchenich saw a number of men about 60 at a little distance. I sent two of my men to know*



Funeral procession on its way to Sorobaidh graveyard.