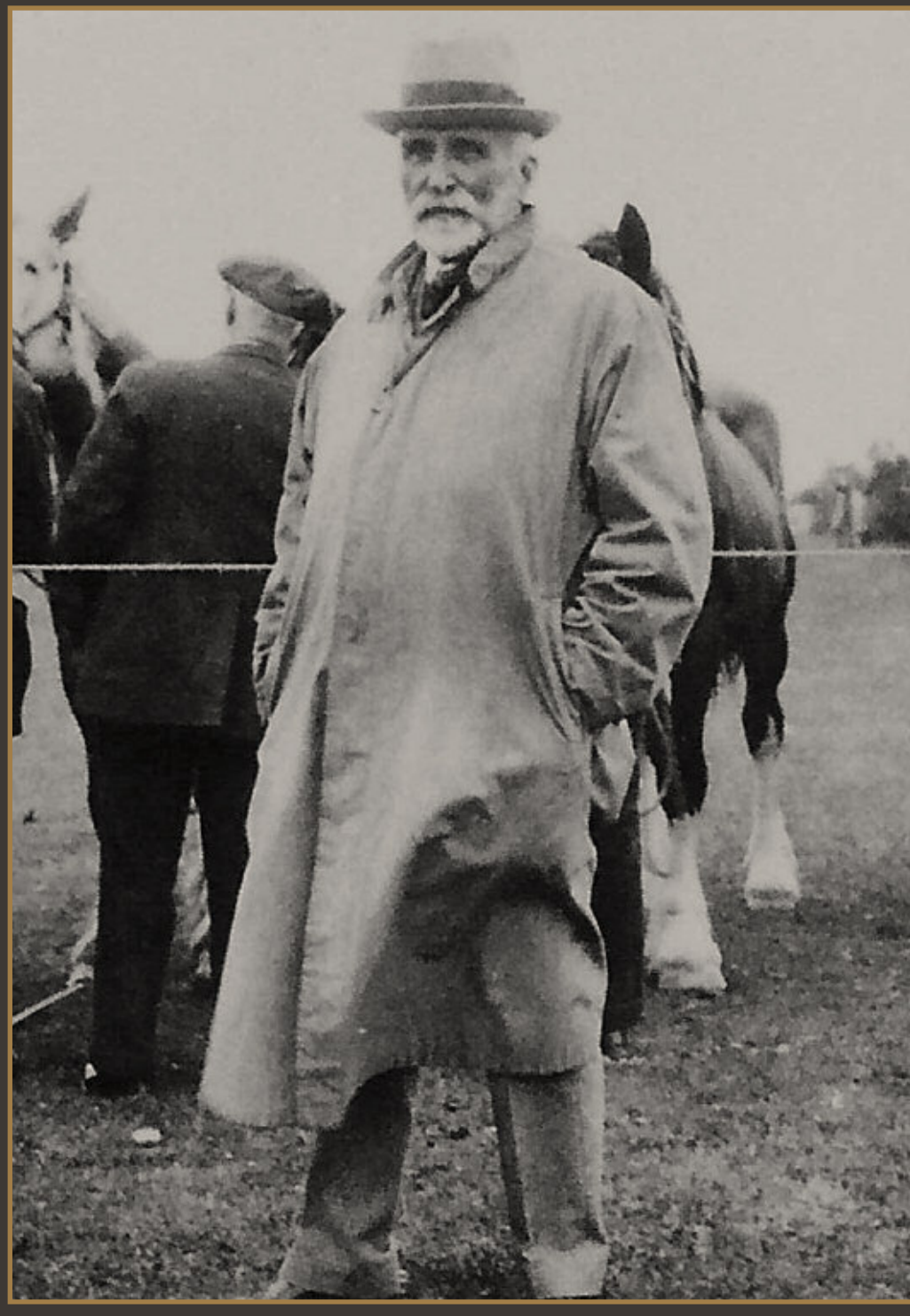


A detailed oil painting of an elderly man with a full white beard and mustache, wearing a dark suit jacket and a bow tie. He is looking slightly to the right of the viewer with a serious expression.

Am Bàillidh Dubh: the Black Factor

Thirty-year-old Hugh MacDiarmid, the son of a farmer in Blair Atholl, Perthshire, came to Island House, Heylipol in 1876 to take up the post as the island's factor. Seven years later he found himself in front of Lord Napier at the commission's hearing in Kirkapoll Church. Asked to assure witnesses that they would not be victimised by the landlord because of their evidence, MacDiarmid replied: 'I cannot give any such assurance ... [although] I would say the Duke of Argyle won't do anything against any man who will tell the truth.'

In 1886, he played a crucial role in provoking the 'land war' by giving the tenancy of Greenhill Farm to the brother of the president of the Land League, an organisation that was fighting on behalf of small crofters and cottars to break up the large island farms. This led to an occupation of Greenhill, the garrisoning of 250 marines on the island, and eight men appearing High Court Edinburgh, where they received prison sentences of six months.



The imposing figure of Hugh MacDiarmid at the 1921 Tiree Show horse judging, held behind Scarinish School

A Gaelic speaker, he held many positions on the island, including Justice of the Peace and Trustee of Gott Bay Pier. The painting's inscription reads:

Hugh MacDiarmid, Factor, Island House. Presented by the Inhabitants of Tiree for Public Services for over 45 Years. 1922.

He married Mary Sproat, the daughter of the Tobermory Procurator Fiscal, and the couple went on to have five children; their household in 1901 included a governess, a groom and gardener, a cook, a housemaid and a nurse. Mary became a close friend of Lady Victoria Campbell, the daughter of the eighth Duke of Argyll.

In addition to his estate position, he tenanted 800 acres, forming a lucrative partnership with Tom Barr in Balephetrish to buy cattle at advantageous prices. He died in 1928 aged 82, after an extraordinarily long career, during which he had brought stability to the estate and seen the island through one of its most turbulent periods. He left £46,281 in his will, a sum worth over £2 million today, and was succeeded by his son, William George.

Duncan MacGregor Whyte

1866 - 1953

The artist was Duncan MacGregor Whyte, whose connection to Tiree was through his grandfather, the popular Cornaigmore Congregationalist minister Archibald Farquharson. MacGregor Whyte was born in Oban in 1886. Initially a joiner, he trained at the Glasgow School of Art, and in Antwerp and Paris, gaining a reputation as a talented portrait painter. In a bid to seek new commissions from wealthy patrons, he set off for Canada in 1911, eventually joining his brothers in Australia and settling in Perth. While there, he painted the Archbishop of Perth and Captain Throssell, Australia's first Victoria Cross winner of the First World War.



Duncan MacGregor Whyte

On returning to Scotland, he built a studio above the beach at Balephuill, standing out as a striking figure every summer in kilt and broad-brimmed hat. He was an expert sailor, and, like his grandfather, a passionate advocate for Gaelic. He painted several pictures of islanders and many Tiree seascapes. He died in 1953 at the age of 86.