

## **THE HISTORY OF TIREE IN 100 OBJECTS - no. 11**

### **TIREE KNITWEAR**

In 1969, partly due to the efforts of Robert Beck, the island's vet, the Highlands and Islands Development Board supported the opening of knitwear operations on Tiree and North Uist under the banner 'Hebridean Knitwear Ltd.' At first production was in the then-empty United Free Church in Kirkapol, and the manager was Hugh MacKay, Vaul. Six island women - Hughina MacCallum, Ann Burns, Ann Munn, Jean MacKay, Flora Brown and June Weston - were sent to a factory in Coatbridge for six months' training.

Before long HIDB had funded a huge purpose-built factory in Crossapol managed by Neil MacLean, Kenovay. This jersey in our collection is one of the few surviving from that period. Sadly, in 1982 Highlands and Islands Enterprise reported, 'Hebridean Knitwear closed their operations on Tiree - the last survivor of their three production units in the Western Isles - but we succeeded in attracting a new knitwear group based in the west of Scotland to take over the factory and re-commence production.' However, the chill economic winds that closed many British clothing manufacturers did not blow over, and by 1984 the factory closed for good. The 'knitwear factory' is now the Business Centre and is in community ownership.

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