

## THE HISTORY OF TIREE IN 100 OBJECTS - no. 32

### THE TIREE ROLL OF HONOUR

'In Proud and loving Memory of the Tiree Men who Fought and Fell in the Great War, also in Honourable Recognition of the Services of all who helped to bring the Campaign to a Triumphant Conclusion.'

The First World War was the first conflict marked with the creation of Rolls of Honour. This wonderful effort was produced for the Tiree Association by Mary A MacKinnon working with the Ladies' War Guild. (Interestingly the rake and pitchfork on the Tiree Association crest are pictured upside down.)

'The island of Tiree measures only twelve miles at its greatest length, but when the Call of Empire sounded throughout our shores in the fateful August of 1914, no place responded more enthusiastically than the little island nestling so snugly on the bosom of the wide Atlantic. From their island home, from the cities where they had started to carve out a place and a name for themselves, and from any lands where they had departed to seek their fortunes, the sons of Tiree answered the call. With the Australians, New Zealanders and Canadians they came, but many will never more return to the countries of their adoption. In Flanders' mud, in Egypt's sand and on Africa's veldt they sleep. *Cha till iad tuilleadh* [they will never return] – but their work is done; and we hold them evermore in proud and grateful memory.'

In all, 208 men and women are listed in Tiree Roll of Honour for the First World War, including forty men who died, three who became prisoners of war, and four who won medals for gallantry. To take one entry at random, but one that illustrates the personal tragedy, heroism and youth of those involved:

'Seaman Donald A Brown, HMS *Halden*, was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for sinking a German submarine on 11th January 1917. He was only nineteen years of age at the time. He is a son of Mr George Brown, Balevullin, and his brother, Hector Cameron Brown, was lost at sea on 28th October 1916, through the sinking of the SS *Marina* by a German submarine.'

As well as men on the front line, the Roll includes those serving in the Merchant Navy, seventeen of whom drowned at sea in 1916 and 1917, six Chaplains to HM Forces, and Ladies on Service. The Roll also celebrated the efforts of those who remained at home. This included of a photograph of a Sopwith Pup biplane called *An*

*Tiristeach*, 'of which every Tiree man has a right to be proud', and which had been bought out of a fund of donations from islanders. The British war effort was estimated to be costing £5 million a day, and in 1916 a War Savings Campaign was set up by the government, with local committees given funding targets. £1 War Savings Certificates could be bought from post offices for 15 shillings and six pence. These could be redeemed five years later free of tax. War Savings Campaign 1916-1978 local savings weeks were held which were promoted with posters with titles such as "Lend to Defend the Right to be Free", "Save your way to Victory" and "War Savings are Warships". By the end of the war £207 million had been raised in this way.

The Ladies Guild of the Tiree Association provided 'comforts and parcels' to Tiree men on service, and entertained wounded soldiers in the Woodside and Oakbank Hospital in Glasgow.

'The daughters of Tiree responded not less nobly than their men folk, employing every spare moment, every talent and opportunity in collecting funds for the Red Cross, in knitting comforts for the men on service, and in keeping the home fires burning until the boys would come back. Several hundred pounds in money were collected at various times for the Red Cross, besides gifts of fresh eggs for the wounded; gifts of tea, milk butter, scones and cakes for the canteen at the Pier at Gott. Many a tired war-worn hero, home for much-needed leave to Tiree, or the Outer islands, blessed that canteen.'

Creating this Roll of Honour was a magnificent achievement, involving long and patient research at what must have been a time of great sadness. Attempts since then to update the Roll have shown how difficult it can be to be accurate and inclusive. We owe those who fought on our behalf, and those who recorded their sacrifices so beautifully, an enormous debt.

Dr John Holliday