

## **THE HISTORY OF TIREE IN 100 OBJECTS - no. 6**

### **THE NATIONAL REGISTRATION CARD**

This card was a common sight during the Second World War, and many families will have one tucked away in their 'history drawer'. National Registration Cards were made compulsory in September 1939, and citizens had to produce them on demand, or, failing that, at a police station within 48 hours. To register the entire population at the start of the war, 65,000 enumerators fanned out across the country to issue 40 million cards in people's own homes. In 1939 there was a flood of people leaving the cities, and this was one way to keep a handle on who was where. Cards were also part of the food rationing system and had to be shown regularly to shopkeepers. They also told the authorities where they might find a bricklayer or a telephone operator if they needed one. On Tiree they also allowed access to the ferry after the island became a Restricted Area in 1939, having to be shown at Oban's North Pier before embarkation. A central register was kept in Southport on Merseyside, which grew to 7,000 handwritten books. The original cards were brown and did not contain the date of birth, changing to blue in 1943. Government officials carried green cards like this one - these did contain the date of birth. Service personnel and merchant seamen had their own system. Fraudsters wanting extra rations or deserters hoping to evade the military police made use of a thriving black market in fake cards. The National Registration Card was abolished in 1952, those thirteen years being the only time the whole population of the UK has been forced to carry identity cards.

Christina MacKinnon from Balephuill, whose father was the shoemaker Donald MacKinnon, was forty when the war started. We do not know why she had an official card, but may have worked on RAF Tiree.

Dr John Holliday