Winds of Change

An exhibition about the history of Tiree's weather station and early flights to the island.

Tiree and Coll Gaelic Partnership, Summer 2004

The Modern Magic carpet over Tiree

The first flight to land on Tiree was at two o'clock on Thursday 18th July 1929, the day of the Tiree Association Sports on the Reef.

The first plane lands in Tiree.

The Glasgow *Evening Times* takes up the story:

Newspaper Plane For Tiree

Residents of the remote little island of Tiree…today will see for the first time at close quarters the modern magic carpet – an aeroplane.

The machine, an Avro, which leaves Moorpark Aerodrome, Renfrew, early this afternoon is expected to arrive at the island while a sports programme is being carried out on the Reef…
It has on board a supply of…The Glasgow Herald, The Bulletin, and today's edition of the Evening Times which contains a message in Gaelic from the editor…

Credit for the enterprise goes to Glasgow Tiree Association, one of the most energetic of the many Highland associations in the city. Members seized the opportunity afforded by the annual games on the island to introduce an added attraction to the day's events and arranged the aerial visit through their president, Hugh Alexander Low…

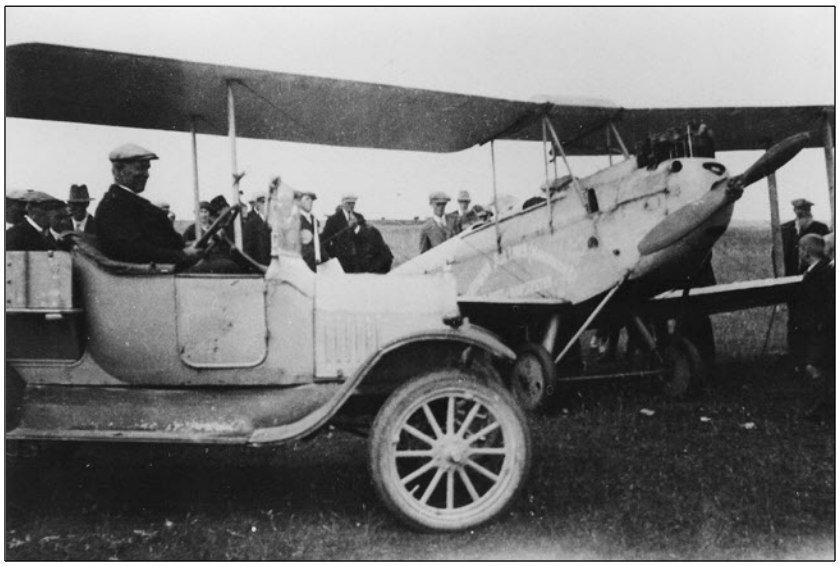
The Evening Times' plane's trip, indeed, suggests possibilities for an aerial service covering all the "golden isles of the West" and while this may not be practicable in the immediate future owing to financial considerations, the journey at least shows that the islands may be reached, if necessary, in a short two hours from such a busy centre as Glasgow.

T

he editor's message to the people of Tiree was in Gaelic:

> *Tha Fear-Deasachaidh nan EVENING TIMES ann an Glaschu, 'cur failte agus furan air muinntir Thiriodh, agus orra-san a tha air fèile anns an eilean, agus tha e ann an dochas gum bi iad daonnan toil-inntineach, cairdeil, aoibheil.*
>
> (The editor of the Evening Times in Glasgow sends a welcome to the people of Tiree and to those visiting the island, and he hopes that they will always be happy, friendly and hospitable.)

The plane, a two-seater *Moth* G-EBZU, had the logo of *Manchester Airlines* painted on its side. Islanders gathered on the top of *Cnoc nan Deilgeanan* in Crossapol just north of the Camp to witness the landing.



Hugh MacKinnon at the Tiree Association Sports.

"We always came in July, Glasgow Fair, and the Tiree Sports were on…we had the slow cycle race, we had races right enough, piping competitions, dancing, eightsome reels and the Highland Fling, and I could tell you who was always the winner, Flora Smith [mother of Iain MacDonald, Balevullin] *who was on holiday in Balevullin…Just up the road from us* [in Glasgow] *was Renfrew Airport, I remember airships in the first World War, these things weren't new to me* [but] *to the Tiree people a plane was something wonderful…the plane came in. Oh! Great rejoicing! It was a Moth type of aeroplane, and it took people up, I think it was half a crown, they called it a "flip". My cousin Hector, where Broadhurst stays, Hector hid under a horse or a cow...there were things to look forward to in these days!"* **Janet Wilson, Cornaigbeg.**

Hugh MacKinnon (*Eòghann Dhòmhnaill,* the 'Contractor') owned one of the few cars on the island, and took the pilot, Captain A. N. Kingwill, to his house for lunch. The captains's first passengers on a short trip over the island included the 'Contractor' himself and John MacLean, Kilkenneth (*Iain a' Ghaffer*). Kingwill later did a short display of aerial manoeuvres. He went on to fly with Sir Alan Copburn's flying circus, and made the first scheduled landing at a municipal airport, when he piloted a Moth into Wythenshawe Airport, Manchester later that year.

Over the next few years, the Tiree Association brought out a number of small planes for the sports. In 1930, another *Moth*, G-EBST, came to the island piloted by Captain Ledley.

"The pilot had to get out and lift the tail round to change direction [while it was on the ground]*"* **Hugh MacLean, Barrapol**.

And around 1932 a twin engine five-seater captained by J. Glyn-Roberts was the star attraction at the Reef.

The first commercial flights from Renfrew (now Glasgow) Airport began to Campbeltown and Islay in 1933. The next year, a 29 year old businessman called George Nicholson, from County Durham, set up Northern and Scottish Airways to take over these routes and develop others. The new daily flight to Islay cost passengers £1 10s., landing on a field at Duich Farm, using a de Havilland DH 84 *Dragon* in the company colours of silver finish with blue lettering.

De Havilland *Dragon Rapide* over Sandaig.

Survey flight to Tiree

On the 4th October 1935, Nicholson was flown by his chief pilot, David Barclay, on a reconnaissance trip to Tiree in a *Dragon*. Islanders were woken early as he flew for some time low over the island, landing at 6 a.m. on *An Tràigh Mhòr*, the beach on Gott Bay. They were met, probably by Johnny Brown who ran the Scarinish Hotel at the time, and showed round the island by car, looking for possible landing sites.

In May 1936, Colin MacPhail (*Cailean Lachainn Chailein*), originally from Baugh but then living in Crossapol as a shepherd, was appointed Northern and Scottish Airways local manager. On 1st July 1936 David Barclay flew the first commercial flight to Tiree via Islay in a DH 89 *Dragon Rapide*, a fabric-covered twin engine biplane that could carry eight passengers, landing on the Reef.

"The airport in those days was on the Reef. Coming down from the bridge past the doctor's surgery half way down on the right…was a little wooden hut. That was the Airport building because the plane then landed on the machair…no runways, nothing. There were scales in there… the day we cycled round the island…we all weighed ourselves on the scales." **Meena Knapman**.

Colin was a well-known figure on the island through most of the last century. His father had been a shepherd on Luing who had moved to Baugh. Colin was a lay preacher and special constable. As one of his contemporaries said of him, *"He had bracelets in one pocket, and the Bible in the other!"*

Colin worked in a hut on the Reef which contained a table and a few chairs, and a pair of scales. Beside it were fuel tanks and a windsock. He was enormously proud of his uniform. Part of Colin's duties was to make sure cattle were kept away from the landing strip at plane times.

He also had to raise a flag as windsock. The pilot David Barclay was always looking for an opportunity to play practical jokes on Colin and would often fly in as low as he could, hiding his presence behind the dunes of *Tràigh Bhàigh* until the last moment. One day Colin slept in and he was late for the flight. A tall man, he had a huge bicycle with a 30 inch frame from Stornoway. He was pedalling furiously towards the Reef when David Barclay flew up behind him. Colin took out his handkerchief and held it up as a windsock!

Planes were re-fuelled from a petrol bowser on wheels with a Shell logo on its side.

For the rest of the summer of 1936 there was a daily service, except Sundays. Passengers in Glasgow were told to "arrive at the airport at least 15 minutes before departure to enable weighing and other formalities" (passengers as well as luggage were weighed). The fare to Tiree was £2 12/6 single and £4 15/- return, an enormous sum for many people at the time (the salary of a young teacher at the time was £150 a year), and the numbers of passengers could not justify the service continuing that winter.

Airport Manager Colin MacPhail.

In 1937 another round of mergers meant that Northern and Scottish became Scottish Airways, partly owned by MacBraynes' ferry interests. The new company planned to build an airport on Tiree but the disappointing numbers of passengers meant that there was no service to the island in the summer of that year. The airline started a Funeral Charter service in 1937 which allowed families to bring remains back to the island by air.

In 1938, David Barclay flew some officials from the Air Ministry to the island to see the aerodrome and the next year the government started to subsidise the Glasgow-Tiree route.

In April 1938, Scottish Airways recommenced a service to Tiree. A direct flight from Renfrew left on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings, and connected with the ferries to the Outer Isles. The other days of the week the flight to Barra and the Uists would call in on Tiree on demand on the way back. In many ways, travel between the islands was easier sixty years ago than it is today!

The Second World War

On 3rd September 1939 at the start of the War, all flights were suspended and all planes placed at the service of the Air Ministry. Eight days later, when it became obvious that northern Scotland was not going to be in the frontline of the "phoney war", commercial flights to Tiree restarted. However, flights were suspended again in May 1940 as all planes were ordered south for a month to help in the evacuation at Dunkirk.

Tiree aerodrome in 1942.

Apart from these interruptions, commercial flights to the island continued with Scottish Airways throughout the war with a daily service continuing on to the Uists and Stornoway. Passengers now required Travel Permits which were only issued for those with island connections or with a valid reason for travel. The Ministry had requisitioned the Reef Aerodrome in 1940, and turned it into an important RAF base which opened in November 1941 and Tiree had been designated a Restricted Area. Scottish Airways also delivered the RAF Mail Service to the island. The civilian flights, however, continued to use the grass strip at the Reef as the RAF base was off limits.

Mary Munn from Heanish, Colin's cousin and sister of Iain Munn, was taken on as Colin MacPhail's assistant in August 1946. She eventually took over as station superintendent, one of only two women superintendents in the entire BEA network. As the Oban Times reported at her death:

"Her trim appearance and courteous manner reflected so well the genuine tradition of the Highland Welcome…It was a matter of regret to many that illness prevented her from attending a 'Women of Scotland' luncheon in Glasgow."

The same daily service, still using *Rapides*, continued in the summer of 1946, reducing to three times a week in the winter. Fares to Tiree in 1946 had risen to £3 single and £5 5/- return.

"The Rapide was fabric-covered…The official escape route from the aircraft was through a circular opening about a foot diameter in the roof opened by a rip cord…My flight for Tiree in 1947 cost £6 6/- return. I met the other passengers and crew in a wooden hut on the concourse of St. Enoch's railway station and we went to Renfrew in a shooting brake. There was a smaller wooden hut in a large hanger and a Rapide biplane. So much for the Air Terminal!
"Planes used to land in very windy weather and had to be held down during unloading and loading. One day one of the holders-down was thrown off a wing and broke an arm. At least he was well-placed for an ambulance flight to Glasgow!" **Alasdair Sinclair.**

In 1947, Scottish Airways was taken over by the new British European Airways (BEA) which merged with BOAC to form British Airways in 1972.

"Before taking over the BEA service, Loganair flew in competition with BEA Glasgow-Connel-Glen Forsa-Tiree using an Islander…I recall landing on Glen Forsa in Mull. The pilot revved the engines to frighten off any animals before we landed on a fairly bumpy field with very long grass." **Alasdair Sinclair.**

Loganair, set up in 1962 by the Logan Construction Company, took over the Glasgow-Tiree-Barra route in 1974 from BEA, using amongst others *Trislanders*, *Islanders* and *Skyvans*, and from 1977 *Twin Otters*.

Archie BEA

Archie MacArthur, Archie BEA as he was universally known, came as Mary Munn's assistant at the airport in December 1960 on the retirement of Colin MacPhail. He had been in the RAF (when he had been posted to Tiree, it was thought by accident, as it was rare to be allowed to serve near your home), the Crossapol power station and then for 14 years in the Stirling and Clackmananshire Police. Archie was a larger than life figure.

"He greeted everybody, welcomed everybody when the passengers would be arriving…a different greeting to every person."
Margaret Campbell talking to Angus MacKechnie and Alec MacArthur

"He knew everyone that came whether they were visitors or whatever…and he would remember their names…He was so loyal to the company [BEA and Loganair], *if the plane didn't start up he would turn his back to the plane and he was so upset, and if there was people complaining to him about the plane being late…Archie always took the company's side."* **Alec MacArthur.**
"He was very strict as far as regulations were concerned. He had to get his figures right for [the weight] *in the front hold, so many kilos in it, rear hold so many kilos…the documentation had to be spot on. As Archie would always say 'If the aircraft unfortunately got to crash and people were killed, as far as he was concerned they were going to be <u>legally</u> dead!"* **Angus MacKechnie.**

"Archie was strict about the regulations but sometimes he could stretch them a bit. One day I was booked to Glasgow with my sister and three of her family. We had tickets alright but someone in BEA had cancelled two of the bookings by mistake. Archie was faced with a plane fully booked and two passengers too many. When the plane came in it had one pilot only so on the return journey one of the passengers sat in the co-pilot's seat. Alasdair Sinclair, Grianal, who had with him his daughter and a grandchild, took the baby on his knee." **Alasdair Sinclair.**

Airport Manager Archie MacArthur.

"He was a very soft-hearted person. If some woman came in and a relative [of hers] *had died in Glasgow…and she was crying, Archie would cry with her, literally cry with her."*
Alec MacArthur.

"Many a child left Tiree with a handful of notes from Archie for spending money in Glasgow."
Angus MacKechnie.

"He was very, very clever. He was a genius really…We used to have these very tense political discussions at the Reef…we would have awful rows about politics, but we were good friends just immediately afterwards…Archie could have gone far if he had wanted to…

"And another thing too. The plane, when it was linked to Barra, away back in the olden days, the Barra cailleachan *would come into the ladies' toilet, they had half bottles* [of whisky]. *They were terrible for drinking, the Barra* cailleachan*, and maybe they were afraid of travelling as well. Archie would come and say, 'There's another one today!' because* [he implied] *the ladies of Tiree are so sedate, they would never think of having a half bottle!"* **Alec MacArthur.**

"I can remember too when Archie got the new tie on one day, and it had BEA on, and someone said, 'What's BEA stand for?' 'It's called Big Èairdsidh's Airways,' replied Archie [using the Gaelic spelling of Archie]. *That was right enough when you come to think of it. You always associated Archie with the airline."* **Angus MacKechnie.**

Archie retired in 1988, a well-known figure to all those who passed through Tiree's airport. When he died, his funeral was one of the largest in living memory.

"When they [the Loganair party] *were leaving to go back to Glasgow* [after the funeral] *... they took off from the Reef, they flew right over Archie's house in Barrapol…we were pleased to see them, they had done this as a mark of respect for Archie."* **Alec MacArthur.**

"And they went right over the graveyard too." **Margaret Campbell.**

"We'll remember him all our days, you couldn't forget Archie – Èairdsidh Mòr Thèonaidh."
Alec MacArthur.

Air Ambulance

The first air ambulance transfer in Scotland was in May 1933, when an Islay fisherman, John McDermid, developed a perforated stomach ulcer. The local doctor sent a telegram to the ambulance headquarters in Glasgow. They contacted John Sword whose company Midland and Scottish Air Ferries sent out a *Dragon* which had been delivered the previous day fitted out for just this eventuality. Within three hours the patient had been admitted to the Western and had immediate surgery.

The first call to Tiree was made by Dr. Hunter in 1934. John Sword sent his chief pilot, Charles Almond, in a *Dragon* landing "in a field near Hynish Bay" to pick up Alasdair Kennedy, Moss.

In 1935, George Nicholson's Northern and Scottish Airways took over the service. In 1936 Captain David Barclay flew two missions to Tiree, and there followed one in 1939, two in 1941, two in 1943, one in 1944, two in 1945, and three in 1946.

An article in the Scottish Daily Express in 1939, gives a flavour of a call-out at the time:

"Hullo, Hullo, Hullo! Is that Renfrew 230 [the phone number of the airport]*?"*

"This is Renfrew 230. Scottish Airways speaking"

"This is Dr. M [actually Dr. Hunter] *of Tiree. I have a very urgent case for hospital. When can you let me have the Air Ambulance?"*

"Right away. Can you get your patient comfortably to the Reef Airport? Good. Western Infirmary Glasgow. Righto, doctor! Expect the plane in one hour's time and have your patient ready."

And within three hours that so far nameless patient in Tiree will be in an operating theatre in a highly-equipped Glasgow Infirmary, safe in the care of a specialist surgeon.

Six years ago, the doctor will reflect, that life would almost certainly have been lost…

In 1935, however the Argyll County Council entered into a regular arrangement with Northern and Scottish Airways in connection with the Highland Medical Service under the aegis of the Health Department for Scotland…

Power to call the Air Ambulance is vested in certain doctors in the Highlands and Islands Medical Service…The costs of a flight - which work out at about £10 an hour - are divided between the department and the county council concerned in cases where the patient is unable to contribute.

In the early days, it was usually a case of bringing the district nurse back with the patient. This took those invaluable public servants away from their areas, and now the practice is to send a nurse with the Air Ambulance [from the Southern General].

A relief fireman from Renfrew was killed when a rotten hanger door fell on him while manoeuvring a Heron air ambulance into the hanger on a stormy night.

The first live mid-air birth in an Air Ambulance was over Scarba, just north of Jura, on 28th February 1950 when Chrissie MacFarlane, Hynish delivered her son Lachie in a *Rapide* diverted from a scheduled flight flown by Stanley Brown, with Tiree's district nurse Edith Read attending.

Today there are around 35 air ambulance calls to Tiree each year.

David Barclay, MBE

The best-known pilot flying to Tiree was David Barclay, the Chief Pilot of Northern and Scottish Airways from 1935 until 1946. He was born in 1905, and won his licence to carry passengers in 1928 after only 32 hours of flying time. From 1929 to 1934 he served with the RAF in India.

Often when he was about take off from Tiree, he would turn round to his passengers and shout above the roar of the engine, *"Hold onto your eggs !"* knowing that most travellers would be returning to the mainland with a box or two.

Colin MacPhail and Captain David Barclay.

"The much loved captain of the plane was David Barclay. Any old person on Tiree will remember David Barclay with much affection, and he, strangely enough, lived in our village in Bishopton, and I knew him as neighbour, and was quite proud that he piloted the Tiree plane." **Meena Knapman.**

He is particularly remembered for his air ambulance work, flying almost 1300 missions, a record that stands to this day.

"I was in the briefing room [at Renfrew Airport] *and David Barclay came in and got the weather* [report] *and such. I don't know if he was bad-tempere, but on the way out he said to me, 'I could have told them that!'. There was a wee monument to him in Renfrew. He was quite a boy, Barclay. You knew you were safe with Barclay."* **Janet Wilson**.

In 1935, he pioneered the use of radio in the aircraft.

"David regularly did the Tiree-Barra run…He would call in at the shops on his way to the airport and pick up the messages for the people at the airport for loaves of bread, bacon…and he would just deliver them, drop them off, and perhaps at Barra he would pick up a lobster from Kitty MacPherson, and this sort of bartering thing went on. This day, David had done his shopping and went in to the airport, and the operations man says, 'Captain Barclay, we don't have any passengers in or out of Tiree today, so you can just fly direct to Barra.' And he said 'But I've got the shopping.' What [was he] to do? So of course he flew over Tiree on the way to Barra and he called up Tiree and said, 'I've got the shopping. I'll just come in and drop it past the tower'...Now this coincided with starting to record [pilot's] *radio in Scotland. Prior to that it was free for all, none of it was recorded. Nowadays everything you say on the radio is recorded. About a fortnight later a transcript…arrived at Renfrew airport…David's radio transmissions…'I'll be heaving the loaves out on the left hand side!'"*

"He was a brilliant seat-of-the-pants pilot, and he knew every rock and every island, and almost every wave around the Hebrides. His criterion for landing at Barra was so long as the seagulls were walking about, the water was shallow enough for the plane to land. If the seagulls were swimming, forget it!" **Bill Innes, a retired British Airways pilot from South Uist who flew with Captain Barclay.**

"My uncle John worked at the airport and one day he fell out of the roof of a hangar and broke a leg and wrist. There had always been much banter between him and David Barclay. The ambulance plane arrived with Barclay and when he saw his passenger on a stretcher he said, 'If I get any snash [cheek] *from you today you will get a rough ride!' John recalled it was the smoothest flight and landing he ever had."* **Alasdair Sinclair.**

A serious accident in 1940 in the Orkneys put him in hospital for over two months with numerous fractures but his determination saw him walking and then flying again. However, his right foot never regained full power and he was confined to smaller, less powerful aircraft thereafter.

He retired from BEA in 1965 having flown 17,349 hours and one and a half million miles in his civilian career. He died in 1981.

Captain Welford

Another legendary pilot who joined Scottish Airways in 1946 was Captain Welford. Many stories about the practical jokes he played are still told.

*"The famous...notorious captain, was John Welford…In the days of the Rapide, which only had one pilot and a radio operator…his favourite trick was to climb in the back of the aeroplane with a civilian overcoat on and as the time of departure approached, start to moan about the airline. 'B**** airline, always goes late, terrible, terrible.'*

All the passengers, being good philosophical Gaels, used to ignore this guy muttering away. 'Do you know, if this damned man doesn't come soon, I'm going to fly this aeroplane myself.' Passengers, you know, [would say to themselves] *'Idiot!' 'Right!* [Welford would say eventually] *That does it!' and he would storm up the front, start up the engines, and off he would go…There were several incidents of this kind…until one day, there was a big island lad down the back who listened to this man's ravings and didn't take any notice until the aeroplane actually started to move. And then he thought to himself, 'Well, I don't mind a joke but this is going a bit far' and he decided to get off. He tried to open the door of the* Rapide*, and couldn't manage it. So he put his fist through the side of the aeroplane and tried to open it from the other side as we did with train doors in those days. This naturally brought the flight to a premature conclusion. BEA totally failed to see the joke!"*

"The other trick he had, of course, was when he was flying the Dakota...the toilet was down the back. Halfway between Aberdeen and Shetland, the door to the cockpit opens, and out comes Welford, walking backwards, unrolling two balls of string. And he gets to a little old lady who is sitting there, minding her own business, and he says, 'Excuse me Madam. Would you mind helping me out here?Hold these! If the right wing drops, will you pull on the left string, and if the left wing drops, pull on the right string.' And off he went, leaving this terrified lady clutching these balls of string while the co-pilot has been instructed to keep her busy, you know, the aeroplane is oscillating through the sky."

Tiree airport before the new terminus was built in 1988.

"There's a nice story when he was down in London. In those days passengers very rarely were allowed into the cockpit. Nowadays it often happens for PR purposes…so it was a surprise for passengers to find Welford standing at the bottom of the steps as they're filing onto the aeroplane at London saying, 'Morning, Lovely to see you! [I'm the] *Captain. Do feel free to see me at any time during the flight.' 'Oh, Thanks very much! Really look forward to that, Captain!' They all got on to the aeroplane and John walked along to his aeroplane which was five up the row!*

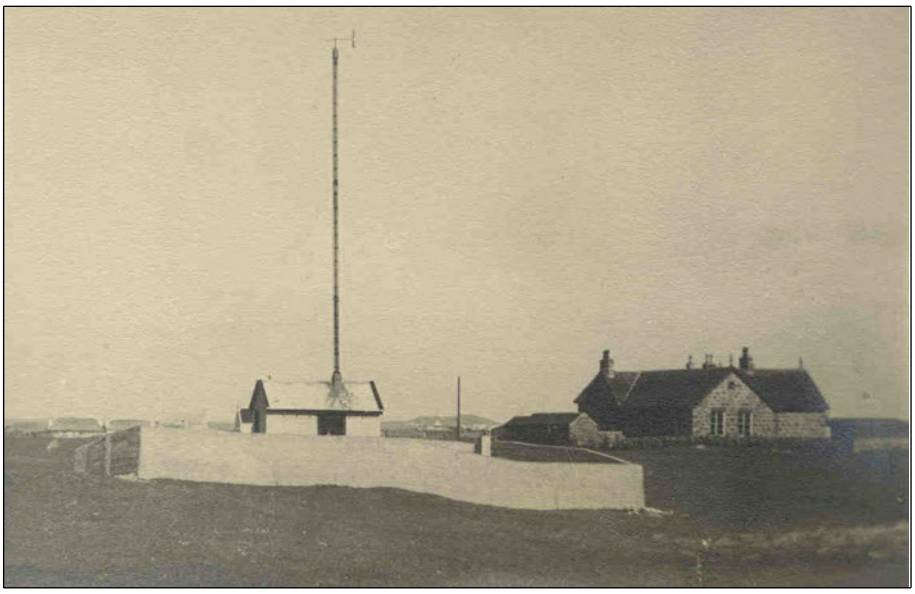
"I heard another one quite recently which happened at Aberdeen. John had just landed from Wick or somewhere and the Vanguard for London was just about to leave. And the passengers, as they're filing out John had been struck by one of his brilliant ideas, so he picks up an aspidistra which was sitting in the lounge at Aberdeen Airport, walks out to where these [passengers were walking off] and stops this city businessman… in the suit and overcoat. 'Good afternoon, sir! On behalf of British European Airways, allow me to congratulate you on being the 100,000th passenger we have carried on this service since its inception. On behalf of our company, allow me to present you with a small token of our esteem' and presses this aspidistra into this man's hand!'" **Bill Innes.**

"And now the Reports from Coastal Stations…"

"Everyone talks about the weather, but no-one seems to do anything about it." **Mark Twain.**

Tiree is famous for a number of reasons – its beaches, the number of seamen it has produced over the years and its thatched houses. But the principal reason people all over Britain have heard of this little island is its weather and, in particular, its reputation as the sunniest place in the country.

This reputation was established in1933 in an article by J. Crichton in the *Meteorological Magazine*. Looking at the records of the newly established weather station on Tiree, he found that the island "*enjoys, during at least the months of April, May and June, as much sunshine as any part of the British Isles…and that in a somewhat unexpected region."*



The Met Station at Cornaig School in 1935.

The headmaster of the Cornaig School, Mr. Ross, had been recording rainfall figures for some years when in 1924 the Meteorological Office proposed to establish an official weather reporting station on Tiree. However, they first needed to bring the telegraph line to the old Cornaig post office next to MacPhail's shop. The GPO would only do this if it was guaranteed an income of £60 per year. The Treasury offered to pay more than half of this and the line was installed when five local people put up a guarantee of £5 a year each themselves. The five who did so were William MacPhail of Croish, Murdoch Cameron of Balevullin, Hector Campbell of Kenovay, John MacPhail of Cornaigmore and John Campbell of Cornaigbeg.

Mr. Ross left to become rector of Dunoon Grammar School in 1925 and was replaced as headmaster of Cornaig school by Donald O. ('D.O') MacLean. An energetic man, he was also a Parish Councillor and, after leaving Tiree, became the Provost of Crieff. He agreed to become the Meteorological Office Observer on Tiree for the sum of £52 a year and John MacPhail (*Teònaidh Iain*) of Cornaigmore, was appointed Deputy Observer.

In December 1925 the weather station was set up in the south side of the school playground behind a turf wall. The anemometer for measuring wind speed was placed on a mast above a small hut in an enclosure on the *machair* north of the school and the barometer on the landing in the schoolhouse.

The first report was filed on 16 September 1926. Readings were taken at 7 am, 1pm and 6 pm. A phone was put into the school house and telegrams were sent from the post office, although it was said that "there were difficulties rousing the postmistress early in the morning."

J. R. Morrison took over as headmaster in 1929 and acted as Observer until he left in 1938. John MacPhail then took over and on his death his wife, *Mòr Bheag*, succeeded him.

In 1935 the school was enlarged and the instruments had to be moved. The enclosure around the anemometer hut was enlarged to receive them. This work was done by Hugh MacKinnon (*Eòghann Dhòmhnaill*), 'the Contractor', of Crossapol. In 1936 an extra observation was added at 10pm.

The Met Station at the airport during World War II.

In October 1942 the Air Ministry took over the running of the station, moving most of the equipment to the RAF camp in Crossapol. The new office was sited in the Operations Block where Skinner's shop is today with the instruments to the north-east in what is now the 'Camp' and staffed by RAF personnel. When instruments are moved they give slightly different readings. The anemometer, therefore, remained at Cornaig and was read by the MacPhails until 1956.

During the war years, Tiree's important place in the world of meteorology was further strengthened by the arrival of 518 Squadron which specialised in weather observations. As the *Belfast Telegraph* reported in 1945:

"*Two trips are made* [by long-range Halifaxes] *every 24 hours, one at midnight and the other at mid-day, and from the time the airmen pass over the Foyle* [the Minch] *until they reach land again they travel about 1,600 miles - half the way to Newfoundland and back.*

"In the extreme western position the aircraft climbs to about 18,000 feet (approximately 3½ miles), and then follows the hazardous descent to sea level, where at times the breakers reach a height of 100 feet. Violent turbulence makes aircraft control an exhausting struggle and only very experienced pilots are engaged on the expeditions, which provide a ten-hour endurance test. Observations are transmitted at intervals and picked up by ground stations."

Halifax crew from 518 Squadron during World War II.

The weather station was civilianised again in June 1946, and moved to the old Control Tower at the airport. Several islanders were employed, the first of whom was Lachlan MacLean, Druimfraoich. Some of these went on to work for the Met Office elsewhere in Scotland and overseas.

The daily work of the Met Office observers was described by Ray Sharp, the last head of the Tiree station:

"For rainfall, there's a tilting siphon rain gauge which I particularly like where the rain falls into a container in which there's a float with a pen connected to it…and then when it reaches the top of the chart it tips a balance which siphons the water out and restarts the chart at the bottom. The idea that the rain gauge is powered by rain has always made me smile.

"The [station] *rain gauge was a brass funnel with a bottle underneath which we empted into a measuring cylinder at nine in the morning and nine at night…The computer now measures this by using a balance which contains two very small buckets, and the rain falls into one and then when 0.2 ml. has been measured the balance tips and trips a micro-switch which registers on the computer.*

"The sun is currently measured using a glass sphere around which is held a card…which is scorched by the sunshine…it actually measures 'bright sunshine' but this isn't very easy to use scientifically…The replacement measures the watts of energy and can be much more easily used in calculations.

"The Stevenson screen is the most recognisable part of most Met. Office compounds. It's a wooden box with louvered sides…the box holds…mercury and glass thermometers and their electrical equivalents. There's a dry bulb which is just a thermometer by itself, and then there's a wet bulb thermometer which has a wick wrapped around the bulb which is kept moistened. The rate at which water evaporates from the wick gives an indication of how dry the air is, so we can measure from the amount of heat that's taken from the thermometer, by its lower temperature [what the humidity is]. *For instance, today we have a dry bulb of 12.8°C, that's 2.4 degrees of a difference, which gives a humidity of 72%, which means the atmosphere is holding 72% of the water that it could. So it's a good washing day!*

Ray Sharp checking the rainfall gauge in 2000.

"Outwith the screen on the grass there are other thermometers…one that is just nestling in amongst the grass and this gives an indication of the temperature around the plants…the air [amongst the grass]*…and is 3-4°C colder than the air in the screen. There's another thermometer on a flagstone which represents the concrete minimum which is a good indicator of road icing. There are others at different depths through the soil* [1 and 4 ins. and 1 m.].

"*Up until recently we've measured visibility using Vis.* [Visibility] *Points. For instance from here we can see Ben Môr on Mull, and it's 53 km away…I can see Rum to the north…our furthest Vis. Point is Ben Nevis which is 119 km. away.* [The new machine] *shines a light downwards towards the soil at an angle about 30°. There's a sensor that can detect light, but it's angled in such a way that if the air was clear and all the light shone straight at the ground none of the light would reach* [it]. *Light only reaches that sensor if it's deflected by particles in the air, and therefore the machine can work out how many particles there are in the air.*

"We have got a searchlight, the cloud base recorder…in daytime they used to fill balloons with hydrogen and later helium. You knew a 10 gm. balloon would ascend at 400 ft. per minute and therefore if it took 2 minutes to disappear into cloud you knew that the height of the cloud was 800 ft. This method wasn't particularly good on Tiree. With high winds…it meant that the balloon was just going horizontal, in fact it was going down half the time! The [new] *cloud base recorder shines a laser beam up at the cloud and it reflects an amount of that back. The time it takes…gives the height of the cloud…it shows layers of cloud one on top of another."*

Ray Sharp talking to Maggie Campbell in 2001.

The most recent weather station was built NE of the airport buildings and the enclosure of instruments moved for the fourth time on April 7 1995. At midnight, on the last day of July 2000 the station became automatic with the loss of five jobs.

MC: *"You must have mixed feelings about the station going automatic."*
RS: *"Yes. I enjoy Tiree, and it means the fact that I no longer will be employed to work here has caused some problems personally. But it's progress. It's the advances in technology creating this difficulty for people in all walks of life. It just so happens that it has reached mine.*
"The biggest contrast, I think, working here [compared] *to an inland station is the speed at which things change. The actual movement of weather systems is slowed down by the surface structures – hills, trees, buildings…So your wind tends to be double what you would get at a station that was 100 miles inland.*
"The wind's something you get used to, I think. It gets to the stage when you walk out some days and you think there's something strange. What's happening? And then you realise it's calm."
Ray Sharp talking to Maggie Campbell.

The interior of Tiree Met Office.

Tiree's important part in the Met Office network has been due to its extreme westerly position. Since most of Britain's weather comes from the Atlantic, we often experience it first here before it reaches the mainland.

Tiree's weather differs from much of the west coast. The island's unremittingly flat landscape produces no shelter from any wind direction. The lack of hills means there is less rain than on, for example, neighbouring Mull. And the lack of shade means that the sun can shine (and often does) from dawn to dusk.

As the Rev Dr John Walker wrote in the 18th century:
"Tirey, by being so champaign [flat], *is much less subject to Rains than the mountainous islands, and is remarkable for the mildness of its Climate, which feels no disturbance but from the South West wind."* ***Report on the Hebrides*****, editor Margaret MacKay. John Donald Publishers.**

Home forecasting

Before we became so used to the professional weather forecast on radio and television, people's livelihoods and very often their lives, depended on their ability to look around them and read their surroundings for signs of changing weather.

"The weather is frequently so variable as to be almost proverbial, and baffle the most sagacious prognosis. In general, however, persons who are in the habit of attentively studying it will be able, from the appearance of the sky and other circumstances, to predict with tolerable accuracy how the ensuing day will turn out." ***New Statistical Account*, 1845.**

This traditional knowledge about the weather is a mixture of acute observations of the sky and the natural world, and superstition. Below are a number of sayings about the weather collected on Tiree:

- *"The evening red and the morning grey is a well-known observation."* ***New Statistical Account*, 1845.**
- *"Cordage* [rope] *is well known to contract on the approach of moist weather."* ***New Statistical Account*, 1845.**
- *Chan uisg' e ach bhon tuath, 's cha turadh bhuan e bhon deas* (lasting rain from the north, lasting dry spell from the south). **Neil Brownlie.**
- *Tri làithean den Iuchar san Fhaoilleach, tri làithean den Fhaoilleach san Iuchar* (three days of July in January and three days of January in July). **Neil Brownlie.**
- *A' tighinn a-staigh le ceann na nathrach, is a' dol a-mach le earball na peucaig* ([If March] comes in like the head of the snake [a lion] it will go out like the tail of a peacock [lamb]). **Neil Brownlie.**
- *Dubh turaidh* (dark clouds with a south-east wind signifying a dry but cloudy spell). **Neil Brownlie.**
- *Là eadar dà theinn* (a good day between two stormy ones - a 'pet' day). **Neil Brownlie**
- *Tri làithean na boin ruaidhe* (three days of the brown cow [occurs in February]). **Neil Brownlie**
- A haze over *Na Gilean* [at the end of *Tràigh na Gilean* in Barrapol] means rain. **Nancy MacKinnon, Sandaig.**
- *Gaoth an ear-dheas.* The south east wind used to bring dirt and, it was thought, illness from the pollution of Scotland's central belt. Washing on the line and sheep would be left a grimy grey colour and a few days later coughs and colds would start.

- *"My aunt, Anna Bheag, in Brock used to say that in a south-east wind washing on the line collected smuts from Glasgow."* **Alasdair Sinclair, Brock.**

- If the neighbouring islands look close it's a sign of rain.

- At Garraphail, if you could hear a car going over the old cattle grid between Crossapol and Kenovay it signified settled weather. **Lachie Campbell, Crossapol.**

- If you can see the lights of far-off lighthouses like *Dubh Artach* and Heisgeir it is a sign of bad weather coming. **Willie MacLean, Balinoe.**

- If he can see the lights of Skerryvore on his bedroom window it is a bad sign. **Willie MacLean.**

- *"Under certain cloud conditions the orange street lights of Glasgow can be seen from Brock."* **Alasdair Sinclair.**

- MC: *"What way is the worst gale?"*
  HM: "*From the west. Old houses were built with doors facing the east. There isn't the same weather coming from the east. When the wind is coming from the west it funnels through Bealach na Beinne* [the gap on the ridge of Ben Hough down to Kilmoluaig]*."* **Hugh MacLeod talking to Maggie Campbell.**

- *"These big gales always start in the south, south-west, and eventually burn out in the north-west."* **Hector MacPhail.**

- *Sglèatan,* rocks shining on Ben Hynish, are a sign of rain. **Willie MacLean.**

- *Là spliùgainean ruadh nan uinneag* (the day of the red, jowly faces at the window is the time in spring when there was little to eat). **David McClounnan, Balephuil.**

- Lachie MacKinnon, Balephuil, was blind, yet he could smell the wind and tell you if it was going to rain.

- If the evening sky clears to the west it will be fine tomorrow and the wind will be from the west. **Alasdair MacArthur, Balemartine.**

- *"The old people used to remark on the formation of the clouds from the horizon and spreading upwards in the evening. Their alignment indicated the wind direction on the following day. This was called An Craobh* [the Tree]*."* **Alasdair Sinclair.**

- *Bailc na Bealltain*, a cold week with strong north winds at the start of May *a rusgadh a h-uile rud* [clipping everything], leaving the fields *sgalach* [bare]. **Angus MacLean.**

- *"In a storm of thunder and lightning, iron, for instance the poker and tongs, put in the fire, averts all danger from the house."* **John Gregorson Campbell, *Superstitions of the Scottish Highlands*, 1900, p.235.**

- If there is lightning about, cover up all the mirrors in the house as these attract a lightning strike. **Catriona MacLean, Ardbeg.**

- *"Some years ago, during a particularly violent* [thunderstorm] *lightning struck a house* [on Tiree] *and ripped the toe off a native's boot leaving the wearer unscathed. It played havoc with the pendulum clock standing on his mantelshelf, churning its works into the strangest contortions."* **Alasdair Alpin MacGregor *Skye and the Inner Hebrides*. Robert Hale, 1953.**

Sun, moon and the stars

- If the wind swings round against the direction of the sun it means bad weather.

- *Casan fon grèin* (feet under the sun). These are bars of light radiating from the sun and signify wind to come.

***Casan fon grèin* (feet under the sun) – a sign of windy weather.**

- *Cuilean (Cu') grèine* (puppies of the sun). These are small incomplete rainbows either side of the sun and signify rain. **Willie MacLean.**

- *A' ghealach air a druim*. If the moon is lying on its back 'collecting bad weather' in such a way that *dh' fhaodadh tu crochadh do sheacaid oirre* (you could hang your jacket on it), it is a bad sign. **Robert Gray.**

- *Gealach Shathuirne san fhoghair* (a full moon on a Saturday in autumn means a month of bad weather). **Donald MacNeill (*Dòmhnall an Tailleir*).**

- *A' ghealach làn.* The full moon was a sign of a complete change in the weather. *Eachann Dubh* (Hector MacKinnon, a fisherman) used to say, in English, "full and change". **Hugh MacLeod.**

- *Na rionnagan a' briogadh*. Stars twinkling are a sign of frost. **Hugh MacLeod.**

- The position of the constellation *An Crann*, the Plough, relative to the Pole star could be used to predict the direction of the wind. At a *cèilidh* an old man would sometimes ask, "Where was the Plough tonight?" to which some joker might reply "Next to the byre." **Willie MacLean and Seonaid Brown.**

- *Na Fir-Chlis* (the Northern Lights) were a sign of bad weather.

- Alasdair MacArthur, Balemartine, once saw the flickering of *teine-sìth* (fairy fire), or will o' the wisp, playing on the top of a layer of mist over *Loch an Eilein.*

Birds and animals

- *Fìor chomharra na side, eòin na mara a' tighinn air tìr* (a true sign of bad weather is seabirds coming ashore). **Wille MacLean.**

- With herons it works the other way. If they go to the shore it is a sign of bad weather. **Willie MacLean.**

- *'Aquatic fowls…are seen to preen and arrange their plumage for approaching foul weather.'* ***New Statistical Account for Tiree,*** **1845.**

- *Sguirbh* (cormorants) on *Rubha nan Damh* on the south side of Loch Bhasapol, stretching their wings 'looking for wind' is a sign of a storm coming. **Iain Chaluim MacKinnon, Kilmoluaig.**

- Cormorants returning to their nests on *Ceann a' Bharra* mean stormy weather is coming. **Maggie Campbell.**

- *Ealaichean a' glaodhach air an loch* (swans honking clearly on the loch) are a sign of frost.

- Swans moving from loch to loch are a sign of bad weather.

- *Druideagan* (starlings) gathering on power lines are a sign of rain.

- Birds wheeling (*a' sgiathalaich*) in the sky are a bad sign. **Lachie Campbell.**

- *Na caoraich a' truiseadh* (sheep gathering together) is a sign of bad weather. **Maggie Campbell.**

- Sheep collecting on higher, drier ground is a bad sign. **Alec Hector MacDonald.**

- Sheep going to the top of Ben Hynish is a good sign and when they come down the weather is going to break. **Alasdair Brown, Balephuil.**

- One night there was a strong south wind and Alec Hector's cattle were gathered on the south side of *An Cnoc Mòr* in Hynish in the full force of the wind. He tried to herd them round to the sheltered north side, but however hard he tried they just slipped past him to the original spot. Eventually he gave up, and later on that night a freezing northerly gale blew up. The cattle knew the weather was going to change. **Alec Hector MacDonald.**

Rainbows

- A full rainbow meant that any showers would stop soon. **Nancy MacKinnon.**

- *Am fadadh cruaidh* or *am bun coin* (the short tail of a rainbow low down on the horizon) is a sure sign of bad weather. Fishermen at sea seeing this would come in straight away.

Wind

The direction of the wind on the last day of the year would predict the weather for the next year:

- *Dè a' ghaoth a dh' fhàg a' Challainn?*
  Gaoth deas, teas is toradh;
  Gaoth tuath, fuachd 's gaillean / feannadh,
  Gaoth 'n iar, iasg is bainne;
  Gaoth 'n ear, meas air chrannan.

  What was the wind direction at New Year?
  From the south it means heat and a good harvest [in the coming year]
  From the north, cold and gales,
  From the west, plenty of fish and milk,
  From the east, fruit on branches.
  Neil Brownlie.

- *Nuair a bhitheas a' ghaoth air chall iarr a deas i* (when the wind is lost [has died away] look for it in the south). **Neil Brownlie.**

- *"When on Tiree I have often tested the Gaelic saying, 'When the wind is lost you may look for it again in the south'…and have found it almost always correct. Often after a fierce storm from the north the winter's dawn breaks without a breath of wind…Towards midday, or maybe earlier, a puff of air comes from the south. Within half an hour a fresh breeze is blowing, and before the afternoon is old a whole gale of southerly wind is sweeping up from Islay…For this reason it is held that the first day of the south wind, and the third day of the north wind, is the best time for crossing the dangerous and tide-swept Sound of Gunna."* **Seton Gordon. Cassell, *The Land of the Hills and Glens*, 1920, p.165.**

- *'Little whirlwinds were known as oiteag sluaigh (the people's breeze) and were thought to be fairies travelling in a group. Their movement was described as falbh air chuiseagan treòrach (going on tall grass stems) and they could be made to drop whatever they were carrying away by throwing one's left shoe at them.'* **John Gregorson Campbell, *Superstitions of the Scottish Highlands*, 1900.**

- *"I have heard random* oiteagan *(gusts of wind) described as wind looking for a direction in which to blow."* **Alasdair Sinclair**

The shore

A big swell often precedes bad weather. One can tell from the sounds of the waves breaking heavily on the shore which way the weather is going to come from, depending on where one lives. The shore is said to be *a' glaodhach* (shouting).

- *"Tha Lag na Luaithre ag èirigh* (the Hollow of the Ash - a small hollow above Balephetrish Beach - is rising)*."* If the people of Cornaigbeg could hear the surf breaking there, it was a sign of bad weather to come. **Hector Campbell, Cornaigbeg.**

- From Sandaig, if *Tràigh Ghrianail* (Greenhill Beach) is 'shouting' it is a sign of good weather. **Nancy MacKinnon.**

Spring sunshine in Kilmoluaig.

- If *Cladach Chòrnaig* (Cornaig Beach) is 'shouting' it means a north-east wind, and if *Cladach Bhail' a' Mhuilinn* (Balevullin Beach) is, it means rain. **Hugh MacLeod.**

- From Hynish, if *Tràigh Balbhaig* at the end of Happy Valley is 'shouting' in the autumn, it is a sign of good weather. **Alec Hector MacDonald.**

- From Garraphail, if *Tràigh Bhàigh* is 'shouting' in the autumn it is a good sign. **Lachie Campbell.**

- From Balinoe, if you can hear *Tràigh nan Gilean,* Barrapol, or *Ceann na Creige* at the south end of *Tràigh Bhì* 'shouting' it is a bad sign, and if you can hear *Bogha nan Ròin* in front of the old cattle market in Crossapol or *Am Bogha Ruadh* at the north end of *Tràigh Bhì*, it is a good sign. **Willie MacLean.**

- From Hillcrest, *Cladach a' Chrogain* 'shouting' is a bad sign, whereas if one can hear the next beach to the east, *An Tràigh Bheag*, it is a good sign. **Iain MacKinnon, Balephetrish.**

Neil MacDonald, Balevullin, was asked how the old people could forecast the weather. He said that it was like the Red Indian who, when asked the same question, replied, "I listen to the radio." The old men on Tiree used to look at the sky and the birds and then tell you it was going to rain. They were usually wrong!

Maggie Campbell: *"In the days of old, people here in Tiree used to judge the weather a lot by movement of birds and change on the lochs, change of colour in the sky and even looking at other islands."*
Ray Sharp: *"The Met Office obviously uses science…some of these* [beliefs] *have a scientific basis, and some it's less clear how they would affect the weather…In a place like Tiree where a large proportion of the population actually earns its living and spends its time out in the climate…it's very important people pay attention to the weather…This is less so on the mainland".*

Swiss Cottage

One of the first household gadgets to measure the weather was in Kilkenneth.

"And that's another thing the tailor [Lachie MacKinnon, Kilkenneth, where the late Angus and Flora MacDonald lived] *had, since I remember – a Swiss Cottage - and it was on the mantelpiece in the workshop at the end of the house – a man and a woman. When it was going to rain the man would come out with an umbrella and when it was going to be dry, the woman would come out… and the old people in these days were, especially at harvest time, to see how the ones that was in the Swiss Cottage, who was out. They would get hold of Lachie anywhere* [and ask]*, 'Who's out today ?'"* **Hector Kennedy, Heylipol talking to Eric Cregeen from the School of Scottish Studies in 1974.**

"My grand uncles Uilleam, Dòmhnall and Niall mic Iain in Brock, when asked for a weather forecast would go outside one at a time and study the elements. They would discuss the situation back in the house and then deliver their forecast. It was often quite accurate! About 1947 I decided to give them a barometer but I was afraid that, at the level at which the Rapide would fly, it would be off the bottom of its range and be wrecked. However the makers assured me it would survive. It did. The bodaich [old men] *were most pleased. They had now entered the scientific age! The bodaich are now gone but the barometer still survives."* **Alasdair Sinclair.**

Weather Extremes

- **Hottest day: 6 July 1991 – 26.3° (79.3°F)**

"The very sheep at times are driven seaward, in order to escape the heat when a brilliant sun pours from his zenith upon this unusual isle. A flock of sheep, sharing with the cattle at ebb tide the cooler reaches of sand *is no uncommon sight. At Gott Bay under such conditions one may even see the sheep standing with the brine well over their trotters, their nostrils turned seaward to inhale the cooling winds wafted inshore from the lofty mountains of Mull."* **Alasdair Alpin MacGregor, *Skye and the Inner Hebrides*. Robert Hale, 1953, p.72.**

- **Coldest day: 29 December 1985 – 7.0°C (19.4°F)**

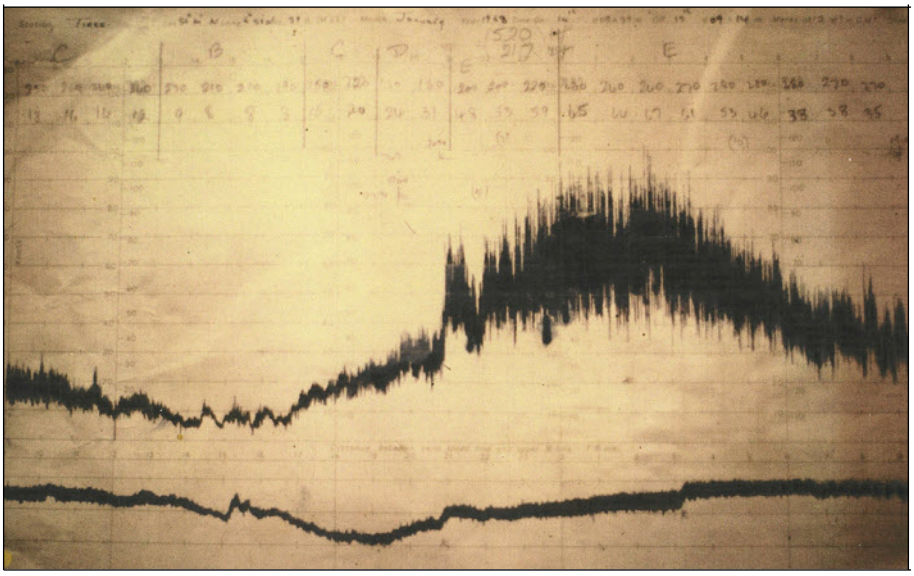
Loch Bhasapol was frozen over in 1928 and 1963. John Donald MacLean remembers playing football on it by moonlight. The children of *Iain Eàrdsaidh Mhòir* (John MacDonald, Greenbank, Kilmoluaig) 'skated' home from school over the ice.

"I had often visited the island in winter and never had I seen a fall [of snow] *as covered the island during those early days of March in the year 1943…John MacDonald* [Sandaig] *who has spent his life on the island, told me that he had seen heavier snowfalls, but had never seen a heavy snowfall accompanied by so heavy a wind – nor had he seen drifts of such depth as now covered parts of Tiree."* **Seton Gordon, *Afoot in the Hebrides*. Country Life, 1950.**

Snow at Balephuil in 2000.

- **Sunniest day: 9 July 1936 – 16.8. hours**
- **Wettest day: 15 September 1944 – 74.6 mm (2.94 in.)**
- **Wettest month: December 1999 – 259.6 mm. (10.22 in.)**
- **Driest month: August 1947 – 4.1 mm (0.16 in.)**
- **Strongest wind: 15 January 1968 – 118 mph.**

Seonaid and Alasdair Brown remember going to church in Balinoe at *An Eaglais Thin* on the night of this storm in 1968. The weather at first was fine and the door of the church was even left open to let in some fresh air. Afterwards they went to visit Seonaid's parents in Heylipol but the gale blew up so suddenly that they could not go home until the following morning. The wooden radio mast on *Beinn Hogh* blew down, but there was not much damage on Tiree because most of the storm was at night.



Met tracing of the 1968 storm.

Lachie Maclean, Druimfraoich, was on duty in the Tiree Met Office on the night of what was dubbed the 'Glasgow Hurricane'. The wind was from the south-west and, as he drove to the airport from his house in Kenovay, he was unable to get out of third gear due to the force of the wind.

Another sudden storm from the west on 16th September 1961 is remembered by Hugh Archie MacCallum, Whitehouse. It was unusual in that the harvest had not yet been completed. Corn that was green in the morning was ripe by the evening. The next field to his, belonging to John MacLean, contained ripe corn ready to cut. The next morning only straw was left. *"More than half the island was levelled,"* he remembers.

The storm on 28th December 1879 that caused the Tay Bridge Disaster also struck Tiree.

"There was a tin church [in Balinoe] *...it was blown down... Mary's grandfather and Iain's grandfather, they were at sea with the* Coll Castle [a Tiree schooner].*They were homeward bound from the Clyde with a load of coal, and they were caught in that gale, and everybody here was absolutely certain that the schooner would never have survived the savage ferocity. And Hector's eldest son, Calum, was born that night, and this added to the doom and gloom. Everyone was thinking that the new baby's father was lost at sea. But when all the stramash of weather quietened down they brought the* Coll Castle *into the Acairseid."* **Hector MacPhail.**

"My grand-uncle Archie MacLeod lived in Brock and in his old age I remember my aunt talking to him about the night of the Tay Bridge Disaster. Their house was very near to the shore, nearer the shore in Brock than any of the houses are today. And the tide reached the bottom of the ùtraid [lane] *that night, seemingly, and sometime during the storm they had to leave the house and come up to the house where we are, their own relations, MacLeods, there. Uncle Archie would be 10 years old then.*

" I remember them saying a strange thing - I never thought much of it because I heard this as a boy - a barrel flew over their heads…It was said to have come from the manse [in Gott]. *And the next day they went down to the house and the chimney stack and walls must have still been there and the cat had survived the night at the top of the chimney stack."* **Duncan Grant.**

"My mother grew up [in Ruaig] *terrified of storms, because every time the wind blew, my granny would wail and pray and gnash her teeth because of her son who'd been a sea-captain. And he could have been at China or Australia, but if there was a wind in Ruaig, it would be windy where he was!"* **Anneen Black.**

"Duncan Cameron up there in the post office, his people came from Craignish [Hough] *and the ruin of the house can be clearly seen there yet. And Duncan's grandfather was also Duncan. Well, his brother Hector who was a seaman, fisherman most of his days…he was a good man for telling stories. Somebody asked him, long after they moved to Caolas, 'What was it like out in Craignish Point in a big gale?' ' Ach, the only shelter we had was the little bit we were getting from Nova Scotia!"* **Hector MacPhail.**

"During the big gale in 1953, there was a man in Kilmoluaig, you'll remember him well, Alasdair Eachainn, who was another man who was good at telling stories…And I heard him telling this one myself. He was struggling home from Balevullin in the dark…and a corn stack went past him. A lot of corn stacks were knocked over that night…He said, 'I was asking around the next day who'd lost a corn stack?' Nobody had lost one. 'I reckon it came down from Barra!'" **Hector MacPhail.**

"I have seen a stack of hay in Brock that seemed to have come from the Glebe in Gott!" **Alasdair Sinclair.**

"It's only a matter of time before another [gale] *comes. I'm convinced when the next one hits here there's going to be total panic. They get a force 8, 9 nowadays and they all say, 'Terrible gale!' It's not a terrible gale at all."* **Hector MacPhail.**

