



## Newsletter of An Iodhlann's members

Dear Member,

I am sorry this edition of the newsletter is so late. There are two reasons. We wanted to give you some up to date information about our new Archive Manager, and we decided to send it out with the new membership subscription.

### **Our Summer**

We had a very busy summer. We had been a little nervous of how our new display would be received, but numbers of visitors were up substantially – by 21% on last year. Our busiest day was our Open Day when 67 people came in. Our next busiest was 37 visitors. Comments were universally and strongly positive:

***“Very inspiring place, thanks for all the help and kindness”*** - visitor from Germany

***“It is brilliant. I like it a lot, Thank you!”*** - visitor aged 7

***“Another fascinating exhibition, very well put together. It brings a lump to the throat!”***

***“A beautiful museum, lovingly displayed.”***

Unfortunately, it has been difficult to recruit enough volunteers to keep the exhibition open as often as we would like. We were only able to open in the afternoon from Tuesday to Friday. We talked to some visitors from the new Lismore museum who keep their exhibition open seven days a week, morning and afternoon, which made us more determined than ever to recruit more helpers next year. A million thanks to our own volunteers.

### **A New Employee**

As you know, Catriona McLeod left An Iodhlann in the spring. We were fortunate to have Iona Brown from Crossapol over the summer working in the archive during her university holidays. We are now pleased to announce that Janet Bowler, from Balephuil, has started work as our new Archive Manager. Janet's background is in field ecology and she brings an extensive academic background to the post. She will be working on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings. Please keep your correspondence coming in at [aniodhlann@tireebroadband.com](mailto:aniodhlann@tireebroadband.com)

### **Winter Projects**

We have digitised our microfilm copy of the 1841 census onto a DVD. This means a lot less winding for Duncan! We may do the same for the other Census material we hold. We are also going to reformat our ten most interesting videos to DVD over the winter. These can then be shown in An Iodhlann next summer on our big screen.

I talked recently to our genealogy expert Duncan Grant.

Duncan was born in Springburn, Glasgow. His father's family were Gaelic-speaking crofters from Glenelg while his mother, Mairi Flora MacLeod, came from Brock in Tiree. Her father, *Dòmhnall Ruadh* had left Tiree to work on the Clyde boats. Duncan's introduction to Tiree was as a babe in arms. His great uncle had rowed across the bay to Gott pier and took the new baby home by boat, landing at Tromsamul, below Brock. Every summer the family came back to Taigh Eardsaidh Nèill in Brock. When war broke out in 1939 the six year old boy was sent to the island to stay with his aunt Maggie (also a MacLeod). There he stayed until 1944. Duncan retired to his present house in Ruaig in 1989.



*Duncan Grant, our Genealogist.*

You're known around the world for your knowledge of Tiree family history which you've absorbed over many years. Can you tell me how you started in this field?

I started well over a decade ago when my daughter, who was working in a restaurant on the island, had an elderly visitor from Wolverhampton. "Dad," she said, "There's a lady here searching for the MacLeods of Tiree. You know how your mother was Mary Flora MacLeod." At that time I had never done any research. There were no facilities [here] to do so. It was very interesting for me to see all that she had done. She thought she was a relative but [it transpired] she wasn't. When I visited Glasgow I went to the famous Mitchell library which had all the censuses and Old Parish Records. This was how I rolled into researching the families. Eventually we set up An Iodhlann...we obtained the first nominal Census from 1841 and then every 10 years to 1901, that being the limit for confidentiality. We widened it out to obtain material for Iona, Coll and Mull etc.

What other facilities have we got here? What are the main tools of your trade?

There's the famous International Genealogical Index [IGI], the Mormons' work from Salt Lake City which we use greatly. But we have to augment it with the local knowledge we have...The Mormons have done a huge amount of work. You get a great deal of information which can be a great kick-off. There are [however] quite a number of omissions [in the IGI] and in the OPR itself. It may be that families have become Baptists and have not therefore registered with the established Church of Scotland. All in all it's a wonderful facility. The sloinneadh, or patronymic, is also a very useful where you find several people of the same name in the same township in the very same year. It gets a little complex!

Could you give me your own sloinneadh in Gaelic?

It's on my mother's side – Donnchadh mac Mairi 'ic Dhòmhnail 'ic Neill 'ic Dhòmhnail 'Iain 'ic Dòmhnail Glas na Dreinidh.. Duncan son of Mary, son of Donald, son of Neil, son of Donald, son of John, son of Grey Donald from Skye. I heard this when I was a boy from my grand uncle. When we had a visit from Dr John MacInnes from the School of Scottish Studies, he gave a little smile and said we were probably related... Domhnall Glas had gone across to the Uists from Skye in the 1600s. These wisps of information are in many of the Tiree families, probably known only to themselves.

You talk about what the late, lamented Hector MacPhail called 'disinformation'.

Oh yes! It's understandable. People get information handed down from a hundred years ago and probably by the re-telling, the memory of what great grandfather said as he got older, there's a distortion or misunderstanding. One of the great things in this work is the satisfaction you are able to give to people – it causes great interest and excitement.

And you do this completely voluntarily [Duncan works in An Iodhlann four days a week]?

Oh, yes! And I would like to mention particularly the people on the island like Mairi Corrairigh and Angus MacLean who have given me so much information.

I am sure hundreds of people around the world would like to thank you for all your hard work over the years. You're welcome.

A fascinating collection of the letters of one of Tiree's most famous sons, Sir Donald MacLean, who became a minister in the New Zealand government, is now available at [mp.natlib.govt.nz](http://mp.natlib.govt.nz)

We have decided to collect all our membership subscriptions at the beginning of January every year. The Management Committee has decided to put the annual fee up to £8 a year. I hope you don't find this too much, but we were encouraged to put it up by a number of members!



Carved whalebone tool found at Vaul.



Given by Flora MacKinnon (Balevullin). Does anyone know what this was used for?