



## Newsletter of An Iodhlann's members

*There is a Chinese curse, which says: 'May he live in interesting times.' Like it or not, we live in interesting times. They are times of danger and uncertainty; but they are also more open to the creative energy of men than any other time in history.* ROBERT KENNEDY, 1966

The saying "May he live in interesting times" is often assumed to have been a traditional Chinese proverb. In fact, it seems to have been created by Sir Austen Chamberlain in 1936. Be that as it may, we are certainly living in interesting times in the archive. First, we take a look at Lady Victoria Campbell's legacy on Tiree, before we describe all the projects that are threatening to take the 'secret' out of our 'Secret Island'.

### THE LADY AND THE BUCKBOARD

Lady Victoria Campbell was born in 1854, the eighth child of the eighth Duke of Argyll. Her childhood was spent at the heart of the British establishment. The family's London residence was the magnificent 'Argyll Lodge' in Kensington, set in four acres of land between Hyde Park and Holland Park. Her father, George Campbell, was, for a time, one of the most influential men in a Britain at the height of its imperial power. He became Postmaster-General and served as Secretary of State for India.

Lady Victoria's mother, Elizabeth the Duchess of Argyll, was a prominent supporter of the anti-slavery letter *An Affectionate and Christian Address of Many Thousands of Women of Great Britain and Ireland to Their Sisters, the Women of the United States of America*, which attracted half a million signatures. The Duchess of Argyll was also the granddaughter of Elizabeth Leveson-Gower, Duchess of Sutherland, whose name will always be linked with the Highland Clearances. This roused Karl Marx to write: *[The] philanthropy of the British Aristocracy – a philanthropy which chooses its objects as far distant from home as possible, and rather on that, than on this, side of the ocean... The enemy of British Wage-Slavery has a right to condemn Negro-Slavery; a Duchess of Sutherland, a Duke of Atholl, a Manchester Cotton-lord – never!* Prime Minister William Gladstone used to dine with the family occasionally. Lady Victoria's mother had been the Mistress of Robes to Queen Victoria and remained close to the royal family. Indeed the Queen had asked for Lady Victoria to be named after her.



*Lady Victoria Campbell at the age of thirty-one in 1885, the year before she started visiting Tiree.*

Lady Victoria had been a healthy child, but the defining episode of her life came when she contracted polio at the age of five. This left one of her legs weak. Thus began a nine year round of visits to various experts, and she was given a gruelling regime of exercises along with calipers and two walking sticks. She learned to walk independently again, but could only manage short distances. She remained easily fatigued. When her journey later took her to Tiree, her sister recalled regular "visits to the sick, to the officials, and to the people who must be 'looked up' and organised. Baiting [rest during a journey] took place in some friendly crofter's house. There the coffee was made hot, the sandwich was eaten, the hot bottle refilled, and the few minutes taken of deep slumber, and then John and the carriage were once more in readiness."

The Victorian period was a time of public philanthropy. The young Victoria Campbell, with the backing of one of the most influential families in the nation, stirred by her strong Christian conscience and sensitised by two decades of disability, responded to the call. Her first charitable visit, at the age of twenty-four, was to the Home for Crippled Boys in Kensington. In 1882, while sitting in Iona Abbey, she had an epiphany, leading her to concentrate her efforts on the Ross of Mull, Iona and Tiree. In 1885, she began to learn Gaelic seriously.

She first came to the island in 1886, just after the Greenhill land raid had been quashed by the marines. Her visits at first were short. She soon learned that summer was a busy time on the island, and it was difficult to attract people to her groups. Within a few years, she became gripped by the idea to spend the whole winter on the island.



*A 1930s postcard of 'The Lodge' on the shores of Gott Bay. This was rebuilt in 1897 from a former school and then gamekeeper's house. The Census taken in March 1901 finds Lady Victoria Campbell (recorded as a speaker of Gaelic and English) in residence with five servants in a building with thirteen rooms. The building is now a hotel with extensions to the front.*

Her first winter lodgings were with Mrs Sinclair in Manna, known as *Bean a' Sgiobair* 'the wife of the skipper'. By 1895, her winter quarters had settled on a building in the middle of the magnificent Gott Bay, which became known as 'The Lodge'. This former school and gamekeeper's house had been bought and enlarged as a holiday home by Kenneth William MacKenzie, a retired merchant who had married a sister of the Tiree minister John Gregorson Campbell. The Duke reacquired and greatly extended it for his daughter. In 1897 she moved in.

Travel around Tiree was by horse-drawn buckboard, a form of cart in which the driver sat behind the passenger. Her horseman was her neighbour John MacKinnon (whom she christened *Iain Dileas* 'Faithful John'), and she named his croft 'Lodge Farm'.

She set up classes for girls, mixing the learning of practical skills and religious instruction: *She started, first of all, the mothers' meeting and the clothing club. Her great aim was to draw all those capable of helping her into the work of organisation, and of influencing the women of the place.*

Her classes proved very successful, as she recorded in her diary: *Such a full class again, from three townships, and I felt with renewed force, while the sewing-class lasts we must get them any help we can. I could have heard a pin drop during the Bible lesson, and I left them being led so prettily in 'I hear thy welcome voice.'* She later started woodcarving classes for boys. Their crowning glory was the creation of three panels for the Heylipol Church pulpit. Donald MacLean, Barrapol, remembered: *I was in her carving class at the Lodge, as a boy at school. A very nice lady. The only thing I objected to, when I turned out to be a young man, and coming home on holidays, my father used to stand in the door of the church, you know, to receive the congregation. She would come in her buckboard, and she wouldn't come in until I took her arm, put her onto her seat. I used to hate it, people looking on all over the church! I was very near telling father one day I wouldn't go to church when I was on holiday! A nice lady. I've a snuffbox somewhere the Argylls gave to my father. I never used it.*



*A staged photograph taken around 1895 on An Tràigh Mhòr. Lady Victoria is in her buckboard in conversation with the island's Church of Scotland ministers, Rev Dugald MacLean and Rev Thomas MacPherson. John MacKinnon from Lodge Farm, known to Lady Victoria as Iain Dileas 'Faithful John' holds the blinkered horse.*

She also set up soup and milk kitchens. As well as trying to help the children of poor families, she was instrumental in establishing parties, called 'treats', in the summer and at Christmas. One boy later remembered: *[The school sports day] was organised between the headmasters of the schools, the factor and Lady Victoria Campbell. A date was mentioned. We all gathered at the schoolhouse in our Sunday best. A piper would be at hand. At a certain time the headmaster would say 'Girls and boys, Fall in!' and we all fell in. The piper put his pipes on his shoulder, and started playing [and] we all marched after the piper to Island House. On arrival there, on a hillock in the park, which is next to the main gate, there was a flag at the top. Sometimes we'd be the first to arrive, other times we'd be second or third. When all the schools had assembled in that park, the pipers led us down to the marquee, where we got tea and cookies. When that was over, the games started: running, jumping, throwing the hammer, putting the stone. All kinds of games. And when everybody was tired, and was getting on to about three or four in the evening, we all gathered down outside the factor's office in a queue. There was always a hamper of gooseberries or plums or some fruit, everybody got so much of that. And of course everybody let out their voices singing 'God Save the King!'*

She set up the Tìree branch of the Women's Guild, which had been proposed by the Church of Scotland in 1887, and a branch of the Young Women's Christian Association. This began life in London in 1855 to look after the large numbers of young country girls moving to cities in a search for work. In 1902, she was asked to lay the foundation stone for the new Heylipol Church.

An entry from her diary in 1891 shows how busy she was on Tiree: *Met at Island House for tea and consultation with some of the working members of the YWCA. We agreed to open sewing classes at Island House, Cornaig [school] Mannal, Baugh and Kirkapol. This, with my Bible class on Friday, makes six classes. Fine for clothing club and Foreign Mission works. I have, since that meeting, spoken to seventy-nine girls, all keen and eager to join ... [A great advantage is] the willingness of the four ministers - two Established, Baptist and Free Church - to help and cooperate.*

Being a frequent winter traveller to Tiree, and having to be manhandled in and out of boats, made the lack of a pier for the mailboat an early target of Lady Victoria's campaigning. Eventually this was successful and the first sod for Gott Bay pier was cut in 1909, the year before she left the island for the last time.

*Lady Victoria Campbell in the door of the annexe to The Lodge, known in the family as 'The Crystal Palace'. Probably photographed around 1900.*



Having had so much contact with the medical profession herself, she played a leading part in the Argyll Nursing Association's efforts to employ a nurse on Tiree. A nurse appears in estate records in 1889, but in 1892 Lady Victoria wrote in her diary: *Visited doctor's wife, [Colina Buchanan]. Spoke of nurse. I feel this is a subject we must get settled. It is disgraceful, such a large island [population 2,451] should be without a sick-nurse.* The Fever Hospital in Heanish was erected in 1904 by the Mull District Committee of Argyll County Council. Lady Victoria is credited in the oral tradition of the island for getting it built.

She left Tiree for the last time in March 1910. In July of that year, she contracted pneumonia and died in London at the age of fifty-six. She was buried in Liberton churchyard on the south side of Edinburgh.

Lady Victoria Campbell left a significant legacy on the island to which she had dedicated much of her adult life. Over twenty-four years of repeated visits to Tiree, she showed a commitment to the people and their language that few of her family demonstrated before or since, and for this, her memory lives on in what she called her 'sandbank'.

## OUR COMMITTEE

We are sorry to report the death of two of our leading committee members, Mairi Campbell, Corrairigh, and Bernie Smith, West Hynish. Both gave an enormous amount of time and help to building up An Iodhlann, and are sorely missed.

## DUNCAN GRANT

While Duncan has not retired from his position as our chief and most expert genealogist, he is no longer able to come into the archive on a regular basis. While we have done our best to equip him at home with the wherewithal to continue his research, he does not have full access to his library and his beloved microfilm tapes, from which he wrings so much information. He is, however, still able to come in to An Iodhlann on special occasions.

Duncan is one of the founding members from our 1996 days in a back room in the Crossapol Business Centre, and has built up his genealogy service from scratch. While the internet has allowed many of us non-experts to get further into our family trees than we could have believed twenty years ago, there are risks that 'mis-information' can intrude, particularly for those who don't know every township and name spelling. Duncan's advice is still sought after, and he is happy to be contacted.

## WRITTEN IN THE LANDSCAPE

This £247,000 project to catalogue and digitise the most important papers belonging to Argyll and Bute Council Archives and the Argyll Estate at Inveraray Castle has finally started, following a successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. Starting this month with the hiring of two archivists, the project runs until December 2018. Some of the more fragile papers and maps will need to be conserved before they can be scanned. The project will also include open days at the Inveraray archive, visits of the team to Tiree, and training for the staff of An Iodhlann. The Tiree Windfall Fund has given £10,000, and An Iodhlann is contributing another £10,000; we see this as our most important project since we set up twenty-five years ago. The team will copy documents selected by An Iodhlann, so it is important that you let us know which are your 'crown jewels'.

Other funders of *Written in the Landscape* are Argyll and Bute Council Archives, Argyll Estates, Inveraray Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme, Clan Campbell Education Foundation, and the National Manuscript Conservation Trust.

In addition, *Written in the Landscape* is keen to recruit volunteers. You can work in Inveraray, Lochgilphead or at home. Catriona Smyth has been for her first session and her report is below. The eighteen months of the project will be gone in a flash, so it is important we hit the ground running. Contact Alison Diamond at [archives@inveraray-castle.com](mailto:archives@inveraray-castle.com) if you want to help. A group called *Friends of the Argyll Papers* has been established to keep this project going after the HLF grant. If you want to support their work, contact them at [www.friendsoftheargyllpapers.org.uk](http://www.friendsoftheargyllpapers.org.uk).

## WHAT I DID ON MY HOLIDAYS by Catriona Smyth

Reading about the past, delving into historical documents or wandering around graveyards has always given me a thrill. So when I read about the *Written in the Landscape* project last year, I was very excited. Helping out in An Iodhlann is not always physically possible when you live on the mainland, so I got in touch with Inveraray Archive to let them know I was available when they needed volunteers. Last summer I read of the setting up of the organisation *Friends of the Argyll Papers* at Inveraray.

It was something I was interested in and could support, plus I would be able to volunteer for much longer than the *Written in the Landscape* project, which only runs to December 2018. So at the start of my Easter holiday, I headed up to Inveraray for a few days at the Archive.



Cherry Park – home of the Argyll Papers.

The Archive is now housed in old farm steadings a short distance from the castle. It consists of two archive storage rooms and a small reading room. The archivist, Alison Diamond, put me to work on a transcription of the 1776 *Inhabitants of Tiry* list, comparing it to the original document. It is an amazing feeling reading a document that is so old and seeing all the little things that you just don't get to see with a transcription: the feel and weight of the paper, the watermark on the paper when you hold it up to day light, the beautiful handwriting, the colour of the ink. Then you remember it is over 240 years old, and it just takes your breath away. How can you not be excited about being there? The Archive is stuffed full of thousands of documents just like this one.

Many of the papers held in the archive are in bundles, which are stored in boxes. From one I took a lovely neat bundle of papers tied up with tape. The index indicated that in this bundle was a list of knitters employed in Tiree, Iona and the Ross of Mull. But I never got as far as reading that document, as there were so many. The bundles are full of such amazing papers, some of which were too difficult to read quickly. I could have spent a lot more time than I had just reading. Shipping lists, lists of emigrants, estate letters and bills: it was just so exciting.

While working on the 1776 list of inhabitants, a discussion about how the crofts were laid out led to a peek at one of the Tiree rent books. The 1830 rent book is a beautifully neat ledger, set out alphabetically in townships. Each entry gives the rent due in 1829, and the new rent of 1830 along with what was outstanding. This was followed by how the rent was paid: kelp, oats, bere, barley or cash. The Argyll Estates rent books are numerous, and one could get lost in all the information contained in just one of them, never mind the whole collection.

On my last afternoon of a thoroughly wonderful week, the archivist allowed me to open some of the very large bound volumes of carved stone rubbings that Lord Archibald, the eighth Duke's second son, made, or commissioned. Having spent so many hours in graveyards, this was a wonderful end to a most memorable week.

So, for those of you reading this who think this could be interesting, get volunteering for the *Written in the Landscape* project. The next eighteen months will just fly past as you will have so much fun.

## ARCHAEOLOGY BUSES

You wait for ages for an archaeology bus, and then a whole string of them come along together! The Association of Certificated Field Archaeologists made their third trip to Tiree last month. The group has been working their way across the slopes of Ben Hynish, Balephetrish, Gott and Hough.

Their collection of some two hundred detailed drawings of prehistoric and medieval cairns, shielings, houses and pens is growing into an important collection, which will be published eventually.

Strat Halliday is one of Scotland's leading field archaeologists, and worked for the Royal Commission for many years. He is a particular expert on the rigged fields that are so common on Tiree. Strat is visiting in May and will be able to give us an expert view on all the sites we have been discovering. June sees a week's visit from members of the North of Scotland Archaeological Society. This group is surveying other monuments on the island, including *Dùn nan Gall* on the Kenavara headland.

Also in June, Professor Steven Mithen and Dr Karen Wicks from the University of Reading are making a flying visit to see if a research project on the island could be suitable. And in September, Dr Darko Maricevic is coming to the island to investigate some circular markings he has found on aerial photographs. He is also finishing a book on Tiree archaeology, following up on his 2009 research on the island.



*A probable hut site on the hillside above Dùn Shiadair, West Hynish, this has also been proposed as a Viking boat memorial.*

*A small collapsed rock shelter below cliffs in West Hynish. These are also common on Colonsay, where they are called sgùid. This word may come from the Norse word skúta 'cave'. These shelters, usually built against a large rock or cliff face, were either used as shelters for herdboys or twinning pens for sheep.*



## CÀTH

- **Eric Cregeen's notebooks**, used during his fieldwork on Tìree and other islands, are in the process of being digitised by *Grace Notes Scotland*, a charity based in Comrie, under the supervision of Professor Margaret Bennett. The £53,000 project will make some 2,000 pages from twenty-three books, as well as his slides, photographs and other manuscripts available to researchers and communities. *Grace Notes* will be visiting Tìree to talk about the project.
- **Joanna Rodgers**, a PhD researcher at the University of the Highlands & Islands, visited Tìree in April 2017. Her project is to find out more about last year's *A' Bhuain* Homecoming week. Joanna's PhD explores the interplay between ancestral tourism and heritage, and *A' Bhuain* makes an excellent case study as an example of a successful community-organised heritage event aimed at the island's diaspora. Joanna conducted two weeks of fieldwork, including interviews with the organising committee of *A' Bhuain* and members of the local community. Initial findings suggest that in addition to its positive economic impact, ancestral visitors can be valuable to communities by inspiring local people to engage with their own heritage and the history of the place where they live. These visitors may also provide new information about local heritage as they often bring objects, photographs or stories that would otherwise not be returned. The next stage of Joanna's research will involve contacting visitors who attended *A' Bhuain*, to find out more about their time on Tìree. She is also interested in continuing to hear about local experiences of *A' Bhuain*, so if you are a (permanent or seasonal) resident on Tìree and attended *A' Bhuain*, Joanna would be delighted to hear from you. You can contact her at [joanna.rodgers@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:joanna.rodgers@uhi.ac.uk)
- We have been very glad to welcome **Katie England**, who used to work at the school library, onto our staff over the winter.
- Two new exhibitions are planned for the summer: one on the postcards of Tìree, and another on Lady Victoria Campbell.
- The building is shortly to get a facelift with some much-needed exterior painting.
- **Lady Frances: Frances Balfour, Aristocrat Suffragist** by Joan Huffman is just about to be published. The daughter of the eighth Duke of Argyll, Balfour became a lobbyist for women's right to vote and several other feminist causes. She also wrote a biography of Lady Victoria Campbell that is now our principle source about her life.
- *Tìree Kirk Session Minutes 1807-1816*. The second volume of transcriptions of Tìree's Kirk Session Minutes by Archie Henderson is now available from *An Iodhlann*.
- Preparations are under way for a Coll Homecoming in the autumn of 2018. Keep your eyes peeled if you have an interest in that land far across the water

We do indeed live in interesting times.

Thank you for helping us to mine the rich seams of our heritage to build the future of our island.

Dr John Holliday