



Digital Newsletter of An Iodhlann's members

Welcome to another edition of the newsletter. This issue is dedicated to an important part of Tiree's artistic history and to a survivor of a Tiree wreck.

Travels with a Paintbrush

The Life and Work of Duncan MacGregor Whyte

With his kilt peppered with holes, broad-brimmed Australian bush hat and Gaelic zeal he cut a striking figure on Tiree between the wars. Duncan MacGregor Whyte, a professional painter who had worked around the world, had strong Tiree connections. He built a studio in Balephuill and painted the landscapes and people of Tiree in the first half of the twentieth century. While never becoming a household name in life, his reputation for fine portrait painting and later landscapes has grown steadily since his death.



Duncan MacGregor Whyte, Balephuill and Oban (1864-1953).

Duncan MacGregor Whyte's connection to Tiree was on his mother's side. His maternal grandfather was the Rev Archibald Farquharson, a man who left a considerable legacy on the island. Farquharson had been born into a large family on a farm at Straloch in Strathardle, Perthshire in 1801. One story told about him as a young man gives a glimpse of his character. An old visitor was sitting by the family's fire, recounting one boastful story after another.

In telling these he had the objectionable habit of backing it up with an oath, his special formula being, "May the evil one take the bonnet off me if it not true." On a certain evening Archy took the tackling of a fishing rod with its sharp salmon hook, and going up to the vent on the outside of the roof, he let down his hook, spider-like, on to the top of the bonnet which the man always kept on his head. Archy listened through the vent, and waited his opportunity, and when he heard the 'formula' uttered he gave a jerk to the line and up and out went the bonnet, to the dread of all!

His brother became a Church of Scotland minister and Farquharson had his own conversion experience when he was 17.

He left the farm to become a gamekeeper in Cavers, Roxburgh and there married local girl Mary MacDonald in 1825. In 1829 the call of the ministry became too strong and he entered the Glasgow Theological College. At a church meeting he asked a fellow delegate, "Where is the most destitute place you know in the Highlands?" "Tiree," came the reply. The potato blight had yet to strike the island, but overcrowding, the collapse of the kelp boom and a series of poor harvests had hit the island badly. Accordingly he went there for the summer of 1831 and moved to Tiree full time the next year with his family, as the minister of the new independent Congregational Church. The Congregationalists believed that every congregation should run its own affairs, in contrast to the landlord-controlled Church of Scotland. Riding a wave of dissatisfaction with authority, they and the Baptists made considerable inroads into the established church's following on Tiree in that period.

Farquharson, Mary and their two young daughters, Isabella and Eliza, arrived on an island with no Congregational manse, no Congregational church and no Congregational congregation. An islander remembered Mary. "She was the most beautiful stranger lady that ever landed on this island." Tragedy, however, was to strike within days as Mary died (it is said from seasickness during the voyage) and her husband returned to Glenlyon with her body just seven weeks after the family's arrival on the island. Farquharson was determined to continue his ministry, however, and stayed on Tiree for the rest of his life. He lived at a manse near Whitehouse until his death in 1878, and built a sizeable following and two churches, one in Cornaig (now roofless) and another in Ruaig (now a private house).

He composed a large number of Gaelic hymns, often set to popular tunes, and was an enthusiast for the language, something that he was to pass on to his grandson, MacGregor Whyte. As he wrote, "*I would say to Highlanders, rally round your Gaelic...A region where nothing but pure English was spoken would be too cold for my nature.*"

We don't know how long Eliza Farquharson stayed on Tiree. She was not in Tiree for the 1841 Census. Schooling was an issue: at the time there were two Parochial Schools at Heylipol and Kirkapol supported by the estate, a Church of Scotland school in Balevullin and a private school at Clachan, Cornaigmore. But the quality of the teaching was variable and less than half of the island's children went to school. However, it is likely that she grew up on Tiree and was a fluent Gaelic speaker.

Duncan MacGregor Whyte's father was another Congregational Church minister, Charles Whyte. Charles Whyte came from Inishail on Loch Awe, his father being the postmaster William Whyte and his mother Catherine Campbell. After leaving school he worked with his brother in Oban as a watchmaker. After theological college he worked as the minister in Appin and Lismore from 1847 to 1855, and then moved to head the Congregational Church in Oban. He was also a Gaelic speaker. He reported, "*We also had one [prayer] meeting on the evenings of Tuesday and Friday – the latter for the Gaelic speaking population, at which I invariably presided.*"

Charles Whyte was described as being, "*genial, sympathetic and obliging, he was greatly beloved, not only by his own flock but by the whole community. Naturally nervous, the great strain to which he was subjected to...ultimately broke him and he resigned in 1877 [after 22 years].*"

Charles' brother Henry was a teacher-missionary in Appin. Henry's son, another Henry, emigrated to Australia, a fact which established the family's roots in that country.

Charles Whyte married Eliza Farquharson in 1851. Duncan MacGregor Whyte (his full name on the birth certificate) was born in 1866 at Cawdor Place, Oban, the youngest of five brothers. The family moved to Glen Lyon Lodge on the Corran Esplanade (later the Royal Highland Yacht Club, an RAF officers' mess in WW2, and now the Lancaster Hotel) which became, for a while, the manse for the Oban Congregational Church. Interestingly, the previous owner of this building was called Duncan MacGregor. MacGregor Whyte went to school in Oban and trained at first as a joiner.

Duncan MacGregor Whyte served his time as a carpenter. Hector MacPhail.

This is borne out by his 1891 Census entry: *1891 Census: 66 Houston Street, Kinning Park, Govan; Duncan McG Whyte, born Oban, **joiner**, lodger; with Alexandrina MacLeod, 60 and her sister Catherine Elder.*

He may have travelled before settling down to study art. As Hector MacPhail wrote, "*He visited many parts of the world by signing on a ship with a Tiree captain, persuading him to pay him off, perhaps in New York, spend some months there and then searching the docks until he found another ship with a Tiree captain willing to sign him on for another trip until the next exotic port. In this way he travelled round the world for some years before studying in Antwerp and Paris.*"

He is remembered as speaking "seven languages". Other accounts suggest that his artistic training began young. A short biography by Ena MacGregor Whyte, his daughter in law, stated, "*He went at an early age to Glasgow to study art.*"

From Glasgow he went to Antwerp to study with Pieter van Havermaet (1834-1897) in the State School in that city and then to Paris where he studied with Paul Delance (1848-1924), a landscape and portrait painter who taught at *Academie Colarossi*; a painter variously named as Callot, Caillot, Caliot or Gallat; and at *Academie Delecluse* in Montparnasse. We don't know how he supported himself during this period.

By 1901 MacGregor Whyte was back in Glasgow. *1901 Census: 645 Shields Road, Tradeston, Pollockshields, Duncan MacGregor Whyte, visitor, single, occupation **artist**; staying with a Maran MacGregor and her family.*

Another student at Academie Delecluse was Mary Baylis Barnard, who had also been drawn to Paris like so many of her generation of artists. Mary had been born in 1870 in Holt, a village in Wiltshire between Bath and Devizes. Her father, Edward, was described as a civil servant, and her mother's name was Elizabeth Norton. Mary was a talented artist in her own right, winning the gold medal at *Academie Delecluse*, where it is highly likely that she met MacGregor Whyte.

She is described in the Dictionary of Scottish Art and Architecture. *"Marjorie (Mary) Baylis Barnard. Flower painter in oil...Moved from London to Glasgow in 1900. Highly competent still-life flower painter with a fine colour sense, delicately portraying flowers, generally in vases on tables."*

In June 1901 they were married in the Congregational Chapel in Basingstoke, which still stands today. The following twenty years saw MacGregor Whyte travel widely in search of painting commissions. Whether he made a number of short trips or one long trip, we don't yet know. *The Dictionary of Scottish Art and Architecture* again: *"MacGregor Whyte first became known for his portrait painting for which he travelled widely when undertaking commissions. During his overseas visits he often portrayed figures enjoying sunlit beaches."* His obituary in the Oban Times stated, *"Shortly after the turn of the century he travelled to Canada, where he had received several commissions to paint portraits."*

In 1904 the family was in Overdale Street, Langside, Glasgow, and MacGregor Whyte was described as a 'portrait painter', but by 1909 the whole family was in Oban.

1911 Census: Elmbank, Oban: Duncan MacGregor Whyte, head, 44, artist, speaking Gaelic and English; Mary Baylis Whyte, 40, artist; Tearlach MacGregor Whyte, 6, Gaelic and English; John Barnard Norton Whyte, 1.

He certainly made one long trip in 1911. That year he travelled from Liverpool to the USA on the SS Caledonia. He was described on the Passenger List as married, occupation artist and with a final destination of Toronto. He was present in Brock, Canada, for the town's centenary celebrations in 1912. A book on the centenary records: *AT QUEENSTON HEIGHTS: Others present were: D. Macgregor Whyte, artist, Oban, Scotland.*

From Canada, MacGregor Whyte continued to Australia, where several of his brothers and a cousin were living. He arrived in Sydney in April or May 1913 on the *RMS Marama* from New York. His obituary described this period of his life: *"From [Canada] he continued his travels to Australia where several of his brothers were living. It was while he was in Australia that the First World War broke out and, unable to return to this country, he joined one of his brothers up country on his sheep ranch."* He was 48 at the start of this war and beyond the draft.

He went to St. George in Queensland, returning to Sydney in September 1916. In November that year he moved to Perth, Western Australia. His obituary continued: *"In between times, however, he continued his painting, and among the noted portraits which he executed while in Australia was one of the Archbishop of Western Australia and that of the first VC of the Great War."* *An Australian account of his life continues, "He was involved with the West Australian Society of Arts and was its President from 1920 to 1921. While in Perth he completed several commissioned portraits, the most notable being that of Captain H. V. Throssell, Australia's first VC winner in the Great War. In 1920, he painted Dr Riley, the Archbishop of Perth."*

It seems that MacGregor Whyte did not hurry back to Scotland. The first time we pick him up on the Passenger Lists is in 1921, when he was recorded travelling from Brisbane to London on the SS Ormonde, occupation artist and on his own, marking Scotland as his permanent future residence. It is, of course, possible that he came back to Britain as soon as the war ended in 1918 and then went out to Australia again.

Whatever his exact movements, he moved back to a house at *Bealach an Rìgh (or Ruighe)*, Oban in 1921.

Even before his marriage in 1911, MacGregor Whyte had made an annual summer pilgrimage to Tìree, buying a ruin, *Taigh Bhaldaidh*, at *Ceann na Creige* overlooking Balephuìl's *Tràigh Bhi*. One of the later bequests to the Cornaig School was a portrait of 'Kate', who, it was said, had brought him to the island.

On the site of this ruin he built a prefabricated wooden studio which he brought to the island in sections. He built an identical studio in the garden of his Oban house. While digging the foundations he found two skeletons and two gold rings. Around the new building he planted marram grass to stabilise the sand.



Portrait by Duncan MacGregor Whyte, believed to be of his wife.

had to be heated). He was wearing trousers and Alasdair started laughing, having never seen him before dressed like that." He was not a tall man, but good-looking with a beard and quite a 'presence'. He often also wore a wide-brimmed Australian hat.

The *Bail' Ùr* was a busy place between the wars, and MacGregor Whyte liked to ceilidh.

He went round the houses, as everyone did, to ceilidh. He talked about Oban and Australia and so on. At the same time he would compose a song now and again. Donald Archie MacPhail.

Nan McClounnan, Balephuill, remembers, "He was always ceiliding with Ceit Chailein and MacGregor-Whyte bought her this gramophone and one record, 'Bonnie Oban Bay'. The doors were always open in the summer and you could hear this music coming out of her house. After a while she would say to me, "Tha mi sgìth de'n ceòl sin!" [I'm sick of that music]."

Like his father and grandfather, he was a Gaelic speaker, and developed a reputation as a crusader for the language.

MacGregor Whyte was very pro-Gaelic and he would tell you off if you spoke English in his presence. One evening he was ceilidhing in Taigh a' Ghreusaiche (where Nan McClounnan is today). Whenever someone used an English word he would tell them off. He was telling a story with the phrase "ghabh i cupa ti" in it [she took a cup of tea]. Niall Eachainn MacDonald from the Sliabh, Balephuill, said, quick as a flash, "Bu choir dhuit 'sugh duilleagan Insinneach' ag radh" [you should say the 'juice of the leaves of India']. That kept him quiet for a while! John MacPhail, Balephuill.

The children [foster children] came from Glasgow and at the same time the war was on. As you know there were people in the Army and Air Force. There were lots of people here and a lot of English spoken, English from a variety of places. MacGregor Whyte was listening to them and he wasn't at all happy that the islanders, especially the children, were speaking English. I think this bothered him. You have to remember that when I went to school that I was amongst the other kids, playing football...they wouldn't have a word of Gaelic and we couldn't speak much English either. So we were playing there and you had to learn English pretty smartly so we could play together happily. Anyway, MacGregor Whyte was listening to them and composed the song. Donald Archie MacPhail.

The structure had a large north window to allow him to paint inside, and he would raise a flag to send the signal to Neil MacNeill's family at The Land that he needed help taking the large shutter off in the spring. Before he left Tiree in 1911, possibly knowing he would be away some time, he tied the roof down with steel hawsers pegged into the ground. Living conditions were, like all the houses in the township, basic, with no toilet or running water. He built a stone extension on the south side on his return from Australia.

Every summer after 1921 he spent his summers painting on the island, becoming a well-known figure in the landscape. Nan McClounnan describes him as always wearing a kilt, which was peppered with holes from his pipe. He had another good kilt for Sundays with a sporran containing half a crown.

Nan McClounnan, Balephuill remembers, "He had two kilts – one was full of holes, it was as though someone had taken a shotgun to it. The other he wore when ceilidhing, with a sporran. The only time he wore trousers was when he was up tarring his roof." Seonaid Brown, Balephuill, agrees. "MacGregor-Whyte always wore a kilt. One day he came up to the house wanting something for tarring his roof (in those days the tar

Here are three verses from that song, the full version of which can be found in our new song book *Òrain an Èrna*.

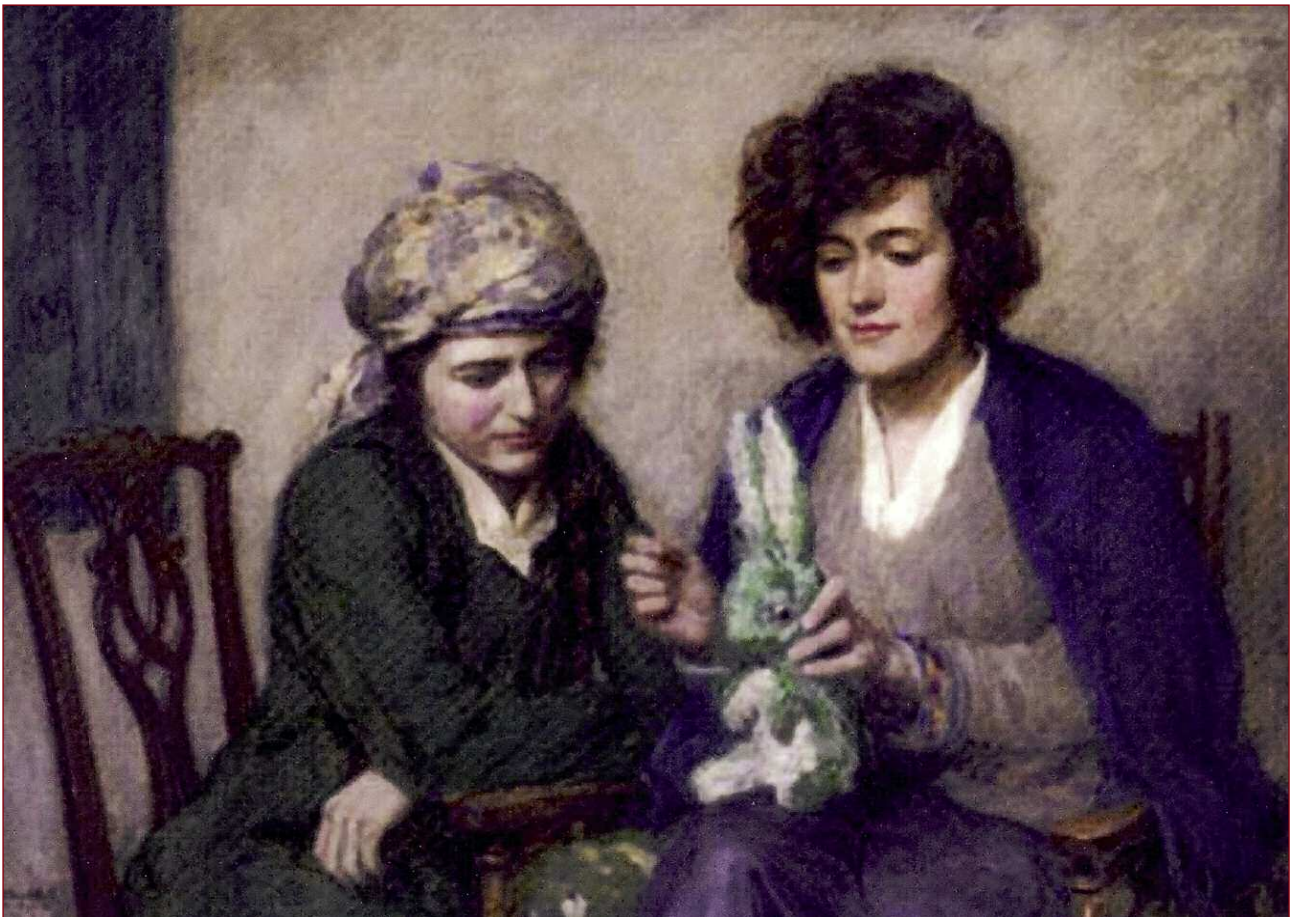
Mnathan a' Bhail' Againn
The women of our township

*If you go for a wander up to this township (Balephuìl)
You will hear sounds that your father would not have heard there
You will hear youngsters chattering ceaselessly
In a language that does not belong in this place.*

*It is so fine, elegant and fashionable
To speak the language of the English airmen.
You will hear one of them calling of a morning,
"Come home to your porridge, my darling!"*

*The Township of the Bards is the name given to our township,
Township of the Tinkers is the name which will endure
Unless they seek grace and desist from their foolishness
And return to giving respect to the Gaelic language.*

MacGregor Whyte embraced island life, no doubt hardened by his years of travel and his life in the Australian bush. He collected sea bird eggs on Kenavara to eat, and would ask David McClounnan when they were laying and where was the best place for them. One account reported, *"He was adept at handling small craft and would set his lugsail so that he could sketch on the water."*



Two women by Duncan MacGregor Whyte. The figure on the right is believed to be that of his wife.

But the painting always came first, no doubt partly because he had a living to make.

[MacGregor-Whyte] was ...a great man, a very clever man. You wouldn't dare go near him, or look over his shoulder, when he was painting. He was quite a grumpy man. Nan McClounnan, Balephuìl

Dr Margaret Mackay from the School of Scottish Studies recorded an interview in 1974 with Ellen MacDonald, who had grown up in Balephuill and then moved to Canada.

MMcK: *You were telling me that the painter Duncan MacGregor Whyte painted your picture when you were a girl.*

EMcD: *Yes. Very, very well, I remember that. It was very exciting when he would come. It was so wonderful.*

MMcK: *You liked him?*

EMcD: *Yes. He was so nice himself. We were so young and anyone that talked nice to you in these days. And of course we liked the way he was dressed, you know. It was new to us – kilts. He looked so clean. He looked very nice – nice looking.*

MMcK: *It was unusual to see a kilt on Tiree at that time?*

EMcD: *Yes, very.*

MMcK: *And did he come just in the summer?*

EMcD: *Only in the summer. It was quite an event when the news would go round all the other kids. "Do you know MacGregor Whyte's here?"...He painted me. You've seen that shore [Balephuill beach]...one of those sandy banks, just sitting, plain simple, facing the sea. The lady, his wife (they painted me twice), that was the day she took the cookies along. At half time – I guess she be thinking it pretty tiresome, me sitting still all that time! The cookies were good! Maybe she'd have some too and then she would walk around a little bit...sitting very still, looking at her all the time and she was looking straight at me....She was pretty too, very tall, very sweet, nice to us, you know. I was certainly not afraid of her. I thought it a wonderful thing to go with a lady to get your picture taken....Another day in the studio, and this time I was standing against a wall or a board. That time it didn't take very long. It might have been a drawing, an outline...[Another time] Duncan MacGregor Whyte painted me. This time we were down on the rocks, Ceann na Creige - we used to play house down there a lot. One of those rugged rocks, he sat me up on a rock...The main thing, it took a long time hunting around the Bail 'Ùr and Balephuill to get a shawl. He told my mother he wanted a shawl with blue stripes in...and this was to match my blue eyes...[he got it eventually from] Mrs Sinclair [in West Hynish]...a little bit, raggedy bit of shawl.*

Nan McLouannan, Balephuill, remembers: *David saved his life once [during the Second World War]. David was a shepherd on Kenavara for nine years and MacGregor-Whyte was painting [on the rocks there]. David said, "You'd better get out of here, there's a mine out there." MacGregor-Whyte said, "I've just got to finish this painting." David said, "If you don't move you'll no be painting at all!" and helped him home with his easel. The mine was detonated by another 'character', Squadron-Leader Preston Potts, and the explosion was felt inside the houses of West Hynish.*

Donald John Kennedy, West Hynish, tells this story. One day MacGregor Whyte met a crofter going to the sale. "You'll get a good price for that beast," he said. "Why's that?" asked the crofter. "Because its markings are symmetrical on both sides." The artist could see that.

At the other end of Balephuill beach lived another well-known artist. Henry Alison was a younger man, having been born in 1889. He trained at the Glasgow School of Art, leaving in 1912. During the First World War he was captured and, while a prisoner of war, he lost the sight of one eye. He joined the staff at the School of Art in 1927 and became Interim Director from 1945-6. Between the wars he spent a lot of time on Tiree and built a hut at the bottom of Kenavara, where he painted the island landscapes. He was also a noted portrait painter. He was a member of Tiree's Home Guard. Every Sunday he or his brother would walk to Rock Villa in West Hynish to ceilidh with Mary Flora MacLean, whose son in law he knew in Glasgow. He would also bicycle across the beach to go to the shops in the Bail 'Ùr and the two artists would often spend time together.

MacGregor Whyte realised one of the boys in the township had exceptional artistic talent. Joe Gladwell, Balephuill, remembers, *"MacGregor Whyte wanted Duncan MacKinnon from the shop in the Bail' Ùr to go to art school [because of his artistic promise] but Duncan would not leave his twin brother."*

MacGregor Whyte's wife, Mary Barnard, was a considerable artist herself. She was particularly well known for her pastel portraits of children and her watercolour landscapes. She exhibited at the Royal Academy, Royal Scottish Academy, Royal Glasgow Institute and the Paris Salon.

She also started the Bunny Shop in Oban during World War One. This soft toy shop was on the Esplanade, next to the current Gem Box. It was so successful that she was invited to have a stall at the 'Women of the Empire' Pavilion at the Glasgow Exhibition of 1938, where her 'bunnies' were bought by the Royal family. She died in 1946.

The couple had two children. Tearlach MacGregor Whyte was born in 1904. He served as a Major in the Royal Engineers during the war and then became a civil engineer, working on the 'new' road through Glencoe. He later had a private engineering and surveying consultancy in Oban. Like his great grandfather and grandfather before him, he was a member of the Congregational Church in Oban, becoming deacon, and had a, *"fond familiarity with the Gaelic language"*. He married Ena, the daughter of the Rev Neil MacKinnon, the Barrapol born minister of Acharacle.

Their second son, John Barnard Norton Whyte (but known as 'Bunty'), was born in 1909. He studied at the Glasgow School of Art. Tragically, while serving as an Ordinary Seaman on the *HMS Sir William Hilary* as part of the Royal Navy Patrol Service in the English Channel he was lost in action in April 1942. As the *Oban Times* reported, "[MacGregor Whyte's] younger son Bunty was killed during the last war while serving with the Navy...the young man had inherited his father's and mother's artistic gifts."

Mary Barnard died in 1946 and MacGregor Whyte died in December 1953 at 2 Battery Terrace, Oban, where he had moved after the death of his wife. The whole family share the same gravestone in Pennyfuir graveyard, Oban. As the *Oban Times* reported, "Mr MacGregor Whyte exhibited many times at the Royal Academy, Royal Scottish Academy, the Paris Salon and the Glasgow Institute of Fine arts where his picture 'The Last Rays of Day' was awarded the James Torrance Memorial prize in 1947...Several of his pictures have been bought by the Corporations of Greenock (An Traigh Shiar), Glasgow and Newport (An Sgeir Bheag). Although he first made his name as a portrait painter, in latter years MacGregor Whyte devoted more and more of his time to landscapes and seascapes."

When I was in Glasgow [in the 1950s] there was a Barra girl working near me and we went out on Sundays. When you went into MacLellan's Gallery, right at the door was a MacGregor-Whyte painting. There's a spot over there beyond the Port Mòr, where the boats are. A big lump of cheese came in during the war and they called it Sloc a' Chaise. Between the two there's a sort of an island, there's wild flowers and it's just lovely. The MacGregor-Whyte picture is of that place – it was just inside the door, a very good painting... Nan McLouannan, Balephuil.

As the *Dictionary of Scottish Art and Architecture* has it, "Although largely overlooked during his life, these warm airy scenes have become increasingly popular since the contents of his two studios, at Oban and Tiree, appeared in the Glasgow salerooms in the 1970s." 19 paintings depicting country life, by MacGregor Whyte, Mary Barnard and their son Bunty were left to the School of Scottish Studies, part of Edinburgh University.

MacGregor Whyte was a prolific painter. Commissioned portraits are now in public and private collections in Scotland, Canada and Australia. 'The Shinty Boy', a painting of his son Bunty, is owned by Argyll and Bute Council. Many of his landscapes were sold after his death in a big sale in Oban. Several hang in houses on the island, and Ena made the MacGregor Whyte Bequest in 1982 to the Cornaig School: a sum of money to buy books and equipment and two paintings by Duncan MacGregor Whyte – 'Kate' and a self-portrait.

HMS Sturdy Survivor says 'Thank You' to Island - after 72 Years

October saw the successful launch of the book *Tiree: War among the Barley and Brine*, which was published by the Islands Book Trust. A number of veterans and their families were here to give moving accounts of their time on Tiree. One of these was Albert Gallier, a stoker on *HMS Sturdy*, the warship that ran onto the rocks off Sandaig in October 1940. Here he talks to Dr John Holliday about that day.

AG: *I was born on the 23 September 1919...This is the first time I've been [back to stay] to the island...I was born in Shropshire. I left home quite young, 17, and I went down the pits [his father worked at the pit head]...I joined the Navy in 1939, in June actually, before the war started, but I didn't get called in till the November. Did all the training on Hayling Island and was drafted out to Malta to pick up the Sturdy. In 1940 I was 21 – I was coming round the Bay of Biscay on my 21st birthday. We went out on a cargo-passenger [ship- his first ever sea voyage]... Things were pretty quiet then - we left before the attack on Malta started. She was an oldish boat – she was having a refit. What they were putting on it, I don't know. They were [just] preparing for war.*

JH: *What was it like on board?*

AG: *You get a routine. You have your duties, which mine was down the stokehold. Four hours on, four off then you have a 24 hour break, then you start again, round the clock. [The engines were powered by] Jarrow oil-fired boilers. Say, there was 11 sprayers on a boiler, you maybe had six of them on, according to the speed you were doing, but if you went up to top speed you could have them all on. But if you had a crash stop, your arms were flying, trying to get these valves turned off!...It was hot, it wouldn't say too noisy, only when you got full sprayers on. Of course you had a Petty Officer in charge, he was sitting there smoking! Until he was called for to turn a few valves off, which the Stoker couldn't do on his own.*

The stoke room wasn't much bigger than this [the office at An Iodhlann]. Up and down and rolling. I was never seasick [though]. When we came back from Malta [on his second voyage] I felt dizzy and I was off watch. I had a couple of hours sleep and I was alright after that. We were based at Portsmouth, we weren't based at Londonderry. We went out to off Newfoundland to pick up a convoy in the middle of September. From that convoy we lost eleven [boats]. You could see them just being blown up. Then we went out to pick this other one up. It was like that [a table]. You could see the birds swimming, that's how calm it was. But during the night it blew up a force 10. With the other boat steaming alongside [HMS Shakari], one minute you could see the keel, the next minute, you couldn't see the top of the mast – that's about eighty foot. I've been all over the world [he was at sea for twelve years] and I've never seen it as rough as that.

We were in our hammocks, asleep [when the Sturdy hit the rocks]. [It was] 4.30 in the morning. You wouldn't feel [the impact] being in the hammock. You don't feel the roll of the ship. In cases like that you are warned to be clothed and have you lifebelt on, you sleep in your lifebelt. You never have your boots laced up when you're working. Saves you having to buy laces!



Albert Gallier visits An Iodhlann.

As much as I remember, you don't feel [the cold and wet]. The first thing I remember getting on deck was seeing the stern go round. It had already broken in two, the ship had. I can't remember being frightened. Just concerned. We got organised. Someone got a rope off the bows onto the rocks. First one down would hold the rope for the next one come down. That's how we carried on. As soon as you got to the bottom, he was gone! You're up the shore! I remember running up the grassy bank, and I remember seeing the bloke before me going over the top. Then there were some houses. I don't actually remember going in, but I can remember sitting at a table and looking up the corner there and there was a woman making bread on a flat [griddle].

I think it was a trawler. We were taken to Oban and we were billeted in the Caledonian Hotel. We slept on the restaurant floor until next morning. I can remember coming out of the hotel and running across to the train, still wearing the same clothes. Course, we lost everything. You hadn't got time to open your locker and get your belongings out. I could play a mouth organ from when I was about eight year old...my brother threw it away and in a short time I was playing the 'Grenadiers' March'. I bought this chromatic [mouth organ] and I could play it after a fashion. After the Sturdy I never bothered, although I suppose I could pick one up and play it now.

JH: It's as though the mouth organ is associated with that accident?

AG: Yeah, yeah.

JH: Do you remember any of the crew of the Sturdy?

AG: Yes. I remember one – Wally Hill. Where I lived, we used to get four days leave, see. Well, I couldn't go, and Wally said come with me. And we went up to London. We never slept in a bed. We slept in a camp bed in a church. After that, I don't know, I never got in touch with Wally. I know I should have done but I didn't. I'm sure he'd probably want to get in touch with me. But we were drafted all over the place. I went to Canada.

JH: You said [after the Sturdy] you had two weeks Survivors' Leave, and that was it.

AG: Yes, that was it. As soon as I got back in barracks, we were drafted up to Tilbury, got on a cargo-passenger and were out to Canada. We were there two or three days and I was [coming back] when an aircraft came over and dropped its bombs on a U-boat waiting for us to come in line. It must have been shadowing us. There must have been two thousand sailors [on board].

JH: They saved your life?

AG: Yes! I wish I got the aircraft people here today to thank them.

JH: How do you think the war changed your life?

AG: I don't know. I suppose you pick things up you wouldn't pick up normally. The worst of it was when we was in Malta. I was in a strange land. You couldn't pick up their lingo properly.

JH: You were saying you thought the war made you a stronger person.

AG: I believe it did. I'd had four ships by 1942.... I got married [in 1943]. My skipper was a good skipper. He sent me on a course. Got married at 10.30 on a Saturday morning. I was going up to Scotland at 11.30.

JH: What are your feelings coming back to Tìree 72 years later?

AG: Something I've always wanted to do. To thank these people for what they did on that night. It's something you don't forget. I'm sure if there is any of us alive today they will remember it.

Albert was transferred to the destroyer HMS York, and then to an American coast guard cutter, operating from Londonderry on convoy protection from Canada to West Africa, and finally mine sweeping in the English Channel. He was 'promoted' from the stoke hold to the engine room and became a Petty Officer. He left the Royal Navy after the war but was recalled in 1950. After the war he settled in Willenhall in the English Midlands, where he worked in the Yale lock factory. He now lives in Bridgenorth.



Barbara Weatherill with Dr John Holliday, donating a Winged Bullet, the brevet of aerial gunners until 1939, to An Iodhlann. Barbara's husband, Stan 'Lofty' Weatherill, flew out of RAF Tìree on Leonard Revilliod's crew.

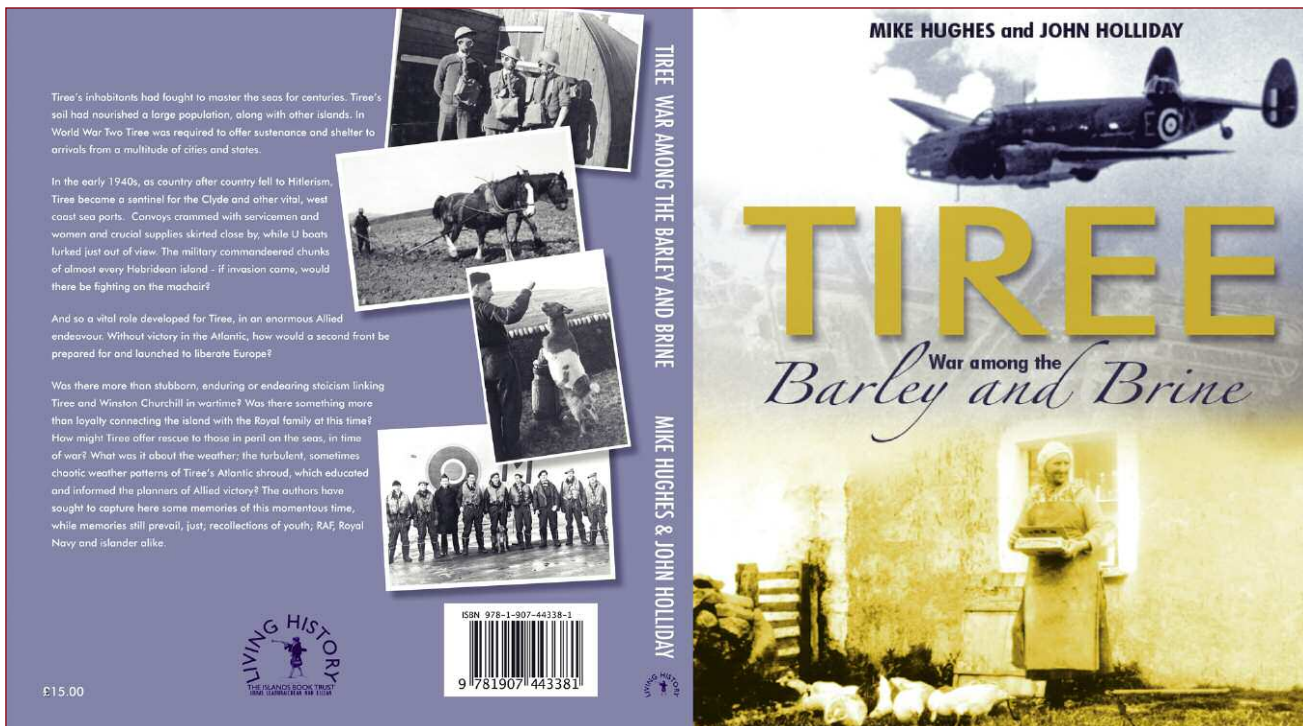
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- In May we had a very successful meeting, organised by Mary and Angus MacLean, Scarinish, on the subject of Donald MacLean, Heanish, captain of the Taeping. A lot of material was brought together and we hope that it will find its way to be published in the future.
- There are now 2,858 Tìree tracks on the Tobar an Dualchais website. Recommended listening if you have a computer!
- Tìree: War among the Barley and Brine, written by Mike Hughes and Dr John Holliday is available in shops on the island and beyond, and on our website. Only 1,000 have been printed, so they will not be available for much longer!
- The book of traditional Tìree songs, Òrain an Eòrna, was published in the summer in collaboration with the Fèis. It is also available on our website.
- Work to modernise our website continues and it should be ready in the spring. We aim to have most of our catalogue available online plus our sound archive (which has almost been digitised completely).

- Anyone passing Soroby graveyard this summer would have seen a crouched figure peering at the gravestones. Catriona Smyth, Milton, has been working over the last few months on a project to map, photograph and transcribe all the gravestones in the old cemetery there. The fruits of her labours, funded by the Tiree Trust's Windfall Fund, will be available on the new website in the spring.
- The old Reading Room is in need of some serious love and attention. The windows need replacing, the front would be better for a bit of landscaping, and we have – worryingly – found woodworm beetles in the (wooden) building, presumably brought into the archive on untreated artefacts. A building plan is being drawn up and we hope to make progress over the winter. We may be calling on some volunteers to move a 15,000 strong collection to a temporary store sometime!
- MacTV have just finished filming for a programme about the incredible richness of Tiree's traditional musical talent. It should go to air in January.
- We are starting work with the Islands Book Trust to organise a spring conference about the island. The provisional dates are 30 May to 2 June and the venue is An Talla, Crossapol - a once-in-a-lifetime chance to hear about Tiree's history.

Thanks again to all those who care about Tiree's history and culture.

Dr John Holliday



Tiree: War among the Barley and Brine, written by Mike Hughes and Dr John Holliday, is available in shops on the island and beyond, and on our website. Only 1000 have been printed, so they will not be available for much longer!