

# An-diugh Tìre Today

*With the past at our shoulder and the future in our hands, how does the island stand today?*

## Who are we now?

From the 2001 Census the population of Tìre was 770. It seems amazing that there are half as many people on Tìre today as there were in 1707. However the population is now growing again after 170 years of decline.

The island has a relatively elderly population. 31% of the island's population is sixty years old or more. Only 24% of islanders are between 20 and 44 years old, compared to 36% in Scotland generally. This is because many school leavers go to the mainland for training or university and often do not return until they retire.

85% of the islanders were born in Scotland, 11% in England and 2% abroad. In comparison 32% of those living on Coll were born in England. On average there are 12 deaths and 5 births a year. The population is also 'turning over' much more quickly than it used to. The doctor's surgery registered 48 new patients in 2007. At that rate a third of the island's population will change in five years.

Tìre is changing fast. Its once dominant Gaelic culture, while still at the centre of island life, now sits alongside an increasingly global culture dominated by English. The island, however, retains a strong Gaelic identity. Over half the pupils in the island's primary school are being taught through the medium of Gaelic, while 55% of islanders told the 2001 census takers that they had Gaelic.

## How do we make a living?

The economy continues to be dominated by agriculture. Crofting and farming accounts for 31% of the money generated by the island, while Argyll and Bute Council, which includes the school, accounts for 24%. Tourism represents 14%, with 13% being attributable to fishing, 6% to transport, and 5% to health. Unemployment is 3%.



*Bagpipe class at Tìre High School in 2000. Left to right: David Hunter, John Campbell, Martin Gillespie, Kenneth MacKinnon, Ben Williams and Daniel Gillespie, with their tutor Robert Beck*



*The drummers of the Tìre pipe band in 2002 waiting to greet the sponsored cycle race from Glasgow to raise funds for the new hall. Left to right: Sophie Macdonald, Andrew Firdatuz, Michael Holiday and Gordon Connell*



*Playing golf at Vaul in the 1920s*

## Tourism

Tourism has been present in Tìre since the mid 19th century and has been growing strongly in recent years with around 18,000 visitors a year now coming to the island.

## Fishing

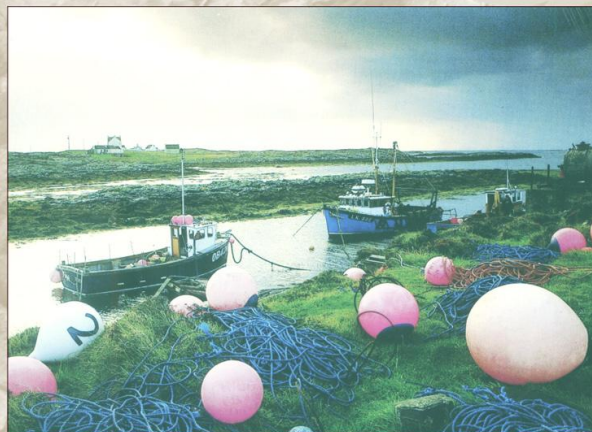
There are 6 boats fishing out of Tìre, mainly based at the harbour in Milton. Lobsters are, to a large extent, a 'by-catch' now and the main catch is velvet and brown crabs. These are collected live every week by refrigerated lorry and taken to Spain. The value of the catch is £750,000 a year.

## Housing

About a third of the houses on Tìre are now holiday houses. House prices on Tìre have increased above average and are edging towards the £500,000 mark at the top end. There is now a serious problem with housing for young islanders. There is also pressure on croft land with the high value of house sites.

## The school

There are currently 40 children in the primary and 55 in the secondary school at Cornaig. Before 1980 children had to go to a hostel in Oban if they wanted to stay at school after the age of 14. Today the Tìre school goes up to sixth year.



*Milton harbour in the 1960s*

*This panel has been sponsored by the Tìre Scarinish Hotel*