

THE (TWO) BEGINNINGS OF THE TIREE AGRICULTURAL SHOW

The first record of a Tiree Agricultural Show comes from 1877, 147 years ago. Shows such as these were increasingly common in the Scottish countryside, following in the footsteps of the Highland Show, which dated back to 1822. They were celebrations of country life, and presented a rare chance for a district to come together. But the organisers also hoped that the element of competition would drive up standards. The report below indicates that the eighth Duke's son gave the factor £10 (worth around £1,000 today) for prizes in 1876, and records from Inveraray show that the Duke himself gave a subscription to the 'Tiree Cattle Show' the following year.

'A show of cattle, horses, &c. was held on the Market Stance [opposite today's post office] at Scarinish on Monday 17th [September 1877]. The day was all that could be desired, the sun was shining out bright and warm the whole day. The attendance of spectators was very large ... The show was a very successful one, there being a large exhibition of stock. The entries were for cattle: 108; horses: 97; pigs: 8. The horses were an excellent show, many of animals being much admired, and in many cases the judges had a difficult task giving their award. At 2 o'clock pm the judges, committee, and others were entertained to luncheon, which was served in one of the rooms in the new schoolhouse at Scarinish. The judges were: For Highland cattle: Mr H. A. Campbell, Ardfenaig, and John McNiven, Fidden, Mull. For Ayrshire cattle and pigs: Mr W. Weir, Gallanach, Coll; and Donald McLean, Arileod, Coll. For horses: Mr H. A. Campbell, Ardfenaig, Mull; John McNiven, Fidden, Mull; and Mr W. Weir, Gallanach, Coll [the Coll Agricultural Show started two years later in 1879]: who, after very careful examination, awarded the prizes as follows [only first prize winners have been listed for reasons of space]:

'Highland Cattle.

Bulls any age: Prizes given by the Marquis of Lorne 1. Caolas Tenants

Cows: 1. Mrs Neil Munn, Kilmoluaig

Three-year-old Heifers: 1. Hugh McLean, Caolas

Two-year-old Heifers: 1. Donald McCallum, Caolas

One-year-old Heifers: 1. Lachlan McLean, Kenovay

'Horses Class I

Mare, with Foal at foot: 1. Thomas Barr, Balephetrish

Yield Mare or Gelding: 1. Dr Buchanan, Baugh

Two-year-old Colt or Filly: 1. Thomas Barr, Balephetrish

One-year-old Colt or Filly: 1. Thomas Barr, Balephetrish

'Horses Class II

Mare, with Foal at foot: 1. John McDonald, Kenovay
Yield Mare or Gelding: 1. Hugh MacKinnon, Heanish
Two-year-old Colt or Filly: 1. Hugh McLean, Caolas
One-year-old Colt or Filly: Alexander McLean, Scarinish

'Ayrshire Cattle

Cow: 1. Thomas Barr, Balephetrish

'Pigs

Breeding Sow: 1. Lachlan McLean, Greenhill

Boar: 1. Thomas Barr, Balephetrish

'Extra prizes

Pair of one-year-old Highland Stots [castrated male calf]: 1. Thomas Barr, Balephetrish

'The Marquis of Lorne, when visiting the island of Tiree in August last, took a great interest in the agriculture of the island, and handed Mr MacDiarmid, the factor, £10 to be given as prizes to the Tiree Agricultural Show.' (*Oban Times and Argyllshire Advertiser*, 29 September 1877, p. 5)

The Tiree show continued in Scarinish for seven years, when it moved to Bunessan under the banner of the Mull, Coll and Tiree Agricultural Societies.

It re-started on home soil in 1911: 'An exceedingly interesting exhibition of livestock and home industries was held at Scarinish at the end of last week [i.e. the first week of August, later than today's Shows and outside Glasgow Fair Fortnight]. The competition was restricted to crofters and cottars paying £30 of rent and under. This is the first show held in Tiree during the past 28 years and naturally it created great interest throughout the island. The necessary funds for carrying out the show were raised by local subscriptions, which were greatly helped by a generous donation from his Grace the Duke of Argyll and by a grant from the Congested Districts Board. The local committee, consisting of Mr Hugh McDiarmid; Mr Barr, Balephetrish; Mr Colin Brown [the tenant of scarinishn Farm and the Temperance Hotel]; and Mr Barr junior, secretary, who were leading spirits, deserve great credit. In addition to eight classes for Clydesdale horses, there were four classes for Highland garrons [smaller horses] not exceeding 14 hands high, and also classes for Highland, Ayrshire and cross cattle, pigs, poultry and dairy produce and a section for home industries.' (*The Scotsman*, 9 August 1911)