

YESTERDAY'S NEWS.13

THE TIREE WAR MEMORIAL

1919: 'At the annual business meeting of the Glasgow Tiree Association [in June 1919], it was unanimously decided to take steps immediately to inaugurate a Tiree War Memorial Fund. When the blasts of war were sounded, the sons of "Tir an eorna" responded, not only from the sandy machairs of their native isle, but from the four corners of the earth. Nobly they did their bit for King and Country by land and sea. But today, alas, when Peace once more holds sway, many of these, till the last great trumpet calls them, lie on Flanders' fields or far beneath the sounding waves. It is to honour these that the Tiree War Memorial Fund is being raised.

'When it was decided to raise the fund, the Ladies' Committee of the Association set about the matter at once. This committee of ladies during the years of war did their bit by sending from time to time parcels of comforts to the men on service, and they received Mr [Tom] Barr's kind permission to hold a picnic on the Reef.

[The convenor of the Ladies' Committee was Mary A. MacKinnon. *Màiri Anna Theònaidh* was the daughter of John MacKinnon, the ground officer. A teacher, she was also a published playwright. This committee also assembled the Roll of Honour at the same time.]

'To the Reef, therefore, on Wednesday 23rd July, flocked old and young to the blast of the pipes, the singing of birds in the blue above, with the sun shining brightly on the scene. After arrival, the vast crowd sat down on the grass to partake of refreshments handed round by willing assistants. It was extremely difficult to do justice to such a large crowd, and the committee desire to express their gratitude to everybody assembled for their geniality and courtesy.

'Lady Frances Balfour [the sister of the eighth Duke of Argyll], who honoured the gathering with her presence, gave an eloquent speech. This lady [a leading light of the Suffragette movement], who is well known as one of the most eloquent lady speakers in Britain, welcomed natives and visitors alike to the fete. She had come to Tiree straight after having attended a fete at Buckingham Palace, where, she said, the gathering was perhaps more fashionable, but certainly not more enthusiastic nor more patriotic, and where certainly the fete was not held in more beautiful surroundings. She likewise outlined the object of the

gathering, and hoped that whatever monument the people of Tiree put up, it would be one well worthy of our gallant dead.

‘Mr Gunnis, who is also a regular visitor to Tiree [he rented the shooting rights of the island], also spoke concerning the object of the gathering that day. This gentleman, who himself lost a gallant son—the youngest officer in the Guards’ Brigade—said that these, our sons and brothers who had died, had won the victory for us, and although by their sacrifice they had erected for themselves a monument that would last for aye, it was up to us to raise to them a material monument where ages yet unborn might see their names enrolled.

‘... When the [sports] programme was finished, the crowd gathered together, and Mrs McDiarmid, Island House [the wife of the factor] ... took the opportunity of intimating to all concerned that the Tiree branch of the Red Cross, of which she was convenor, were about to make a gift of their surplus fund of £21 to the Memorial Fund.’ (*Oban Times and Argyllshire Advertiser*, 9 August 1919, p. 3)

‘It appears that £500 [£18,000 today] is required for the memorial proposed to be erected.’ (*Oban Times and Argyllshire Advertiser*, 1 November 1919, p. 2)

1920: ‘The third concert and dance in aid of the Fund was held in the Schoolhouse, Scarinish, on Christmas Eve. Mr Malcolm MacLean, West of Scotland Agricultural College Experimental Farm, Kirkapoll [Malcolm became the first person to be evacuated from Tiree by air ambulance. The plane landed on the beach in 1934. Another name for his croft was ‘Demonstration Farm’.] He [hoped] that the Memorial would take the form, not merely of a granite or marble erection, but of a building which would combine utility with elegance ... he hoped that the Memorial would take the form of a commodious Resting Room at the [Gott Bay] pier [which opened in 1915].’ (*Oban Times and Argyllshire Advertiser*, 14 February 1920, p. 6)

1921: ‘Tiree War Memorial. Unveiling ceremony will take place at Gott, on Friday, July 22. The Memorial will be Unveiled by the Rev. Charles Lamont, M.A., Saltcoats, President of the Tiree Association. All interested invited. Hugh Cameron, Hon. Secy.’ (*Oban Times and Argyllshire Advertiser*, 16 July 1921, p. 1)

1948: ‘Tiree War Memorial. From Mr Hugh Cameron, president of the Tiree Association, I hear that the two panels to commemorate the island’s dead in the last war are to be unveiled at a ceremony there on July 24. Panels have been added to the Memorial of the 1914-18 War, and Rev. Dr. Alex. MacKinnon of Kilmonivaig will conduct the unveiling ceremony.’ (*Oban Times and Argyllshire*, 12 June 1948, p. 2)

Image:

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The first Remembrance Day Service in 1921. The minister was Hugh Cameron with two pipers, Hugh MacArthur of Tullymet and Hugh Campbell of Port Glasgow. Photograph courtesy of Mrs Jean Lindsay, the great-granddaughter of Lady Frances Balfour.

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