

## YESTERDAYS NEWS

### 1885. STRANDING OF A LARGE WHALE NEAR TIREE

'Mr James Gush (son of Mr Charles Gush, submarine diver, Boyd Street, Greenock), who is at present employed at the wreck of the steamer at Kilkenneth, near Tiree, [the *Cairnsmuir*] states (in a letter received from his father yesterday) that a whale came ashore in the vicinity of the sunken steamer [Hough or Greenhill] on Wednesday morning, which for dimensions exceeds anything ever seen in that quarter. Mr Gush took a tape line and found the whale to measure, from the tip of the tail to the point of the nose, 105 feet. It was 18 feet in breadth, and each fin was 12 feet long, the tail being 16 feet wide. The jawbone was found to be 2 feet thick. He offered £50 for it, no doubt thinking that if he could bring this enormous fish to Greenock, he would make something by it. The islanders, however, refused the offer, and commenced to cut up the whale, extracting something like 30 tons of blubber out of it. He calculated the weight of the whale altogether to be about 60 tons. Mr Gush states that, notwithstanding the severity of the storm experienced there lately, he had been able to salvage considerable portion of the steamer's cargo, which consists of valuable box and bale goods, wines, brandies, etc. When the letter was despatched, the steamer was breaking very fast.' (*Greenock Telegraph and Clyde Shipping Gazette*, 17 September 1885, p. 2)

It should be noted that large whales were the property of the Duke of Argyll, and were not 'the islanders to sell. But these were revolutionary times!

### 1887. FINDING OF A MONSTER WHALE NEAR BARRA

On Friday morning, the steamer *Hebridean* on passage from Barra to Tiree, a large object in the water was sighted, which at first sight appeared to be a vessel, floating bottom upwards. Approaching nearer, it was found to be a dead whale of an unusually large size. A boat was lowered, and a rope having been attached, the whale was towed into the harbour of Arinagour in the island of Coll, where it was grounded and left. On examination, it was found to be 90 feet in length, 45 feet round the thickest part and 21 feet near the tail. The tail measured from tip to tip 18 feet. The lateral flippers extend 6 feet from either side. It is supposed that the fish had been speared, but escaping, had afterwards died of the wound and drifted to where found.' (*The Scotsman*, 14 June 1887, p. 7)

The replica jawbone near the pier at Arinagour comes from a fin whale that came ashore there in 2004.

## 1934. ANOTHER MONSTER OF THE SEA

### LATVIAN BOAT'S ENCOUNTER

#### IS IT THE LOCH NESS DANDY?

'Copenhagen. The Latvian motor schooner *Elsa Croy* of Riga, which put in at Aarhus, Jutland, this morning, reports, according to a local paper, a remarkable encounter with a sea monster off the coast of the little Scotch island Tiree, in the south of the Gulf of the Hebrides. This incident has been duly recorded in the ship's logbook. The creature is described as about 15 metres long, with a tremendously long neck and an immense mouth, a long tail, with fish fins both underneath and on top, and a body as thick as that of a dray horse. It was like a giant lizard, and turned round and round in the water holding its head well above the surface. It slashed the water with its tail in one direction and then another as it swam and raised quite a foam. When it observed the ship was following it, it turned and charged at full speed. As soon as it was near enough, a harpoon was thrown, and apparently it struck, for the dragging was so hard that part of the railing to which the harpoon rope was attached was torn away. When the harpoon was recovered, it was found to have been bent, and a piece of flesh was hanging from it. The monster disappeared. The captain declared it was neither whale, shark nor walrus. He was able to take some photographs, which will possibly enable it to be identified.' (*Belfast Telegraph*, 19 July 1934, p. 8)

Picture An Iodhlann 2003.161.2

Caption: Two women at a stranded whale near Vaul in the 1920s.