

YESTERDAY'S NEWS.7

TIREE'S ROADS (2)

As now, there was a feeling that other islands got a better deal: 'It is somewhat puzzling to understand how it is that so many roads are made in Mull with the Congested District Board's money why Tiree is left out in the cold' (*Oban Times and Argyllshire Advertiser*, 20 December 1902, 6).

'Mr MacBain, road surveyor, was here last week in connection with the construction of new roads and the repair of old ones. The Ruaig Road is being improved, and another new road is being made at Kennovay, which will be a great boon' (*Oban Times and Argyllshire Advertiser*, 12 December 1903).

'Mr MacQuarrie, interim road surveyor, was here lately looking after the construction of the new road between the Post Office and the main road to Cornaig and Balephetrish districts. All the people are glad to know that Mr MacBain, the genial road surveyor, is now able to be about his usual work' (*Oban Times and Argyllshire Advertiser*, 23 June 1906, 6).

The Council employed a roadman: 'Under Mr Cattanach's surveyorship, the roads are kept in a condition that satisfies pedestrian and equestrian alike, great credit also being due to Mr MacKinnon the roadman, Heanish, who is most faithful in the discharge of his duties' (*Oban Times and Argyllshire Advertiser*, 23 September 1911, 6). The house beside the Baugh phone box is still known as 'Roadman's Cottage'.

In 1901, Edgar Hooley, a surveyor in Nottinghamshire was out walking when he noticed a particularly smooth section of road beside an ironworks. He was told that a barrel of tar had spilled on the road and waste slag from the furnace had been used to cover up the sticky mess. Within a year, Hooley had patented the mixture of hot tar, slag and gravel, and a five-mile stretch of road in Nottingham became the first 'tar macadamed' road in the world

In 1913 this report appeared: 'Tiree Roads: During the week Mr Cattanach, road surveyor, Tobormory, paid a visit to the island to make a tour of inspection of the public roads.

Mr Cattanach expressed himself as satisfied with the good state of repair in which he found the roads following the wet and stormy nature of the past winter. The policy of the Mull District Committee in expending money on metal, thereby dispensing with the customary free use of shingle, is one that needs no justification. The initial cost of a free supply of metal is undoubtedly greater, but in the long run there will be a considerable saving of money. Under Mr Cattanach's surveyorship, the roads are becoming more and more perfect, and if he continues to receive from his committee the financial assistance for the end in view, the Tiree roads will compare favourably with those of more highly favoured places (*Oban Times and Argyllshire Advertiser*, 15 February 1913, 6).

This satisfaction was not to last. With the intention of making roads self-financing, vehicle excise duties went to the Road Boards. 'Sir,—In the opinion of most of the visitors who spent this summer in Tiree, the roads in the island, with the exception of the stretch from Scarinish to Island House, are about the worst they have ever experienced. It is strange that two systems of road contract should exist on one small island ; the one system [adopted roads] provides for a roadman in constant employment and results in a fairly good bit of road; the other system [unadopted, mainly croft access tracks] seems to provide for occasional patching by means of turf at some bits and very rough road material at others. Perhaps the present Parish Councillors will meet the electors before the November election. I do not recollect ever having read a public report of a Tiree Parish Council meeting. I am, etc., Road Taxpayer' (*Oban Times and Argyllshire Advertiser*, 22 September 1928, 3).