

The Tiree part of the estate archive at Inveraray Castle includes over 50 old maps and plans, and a huge collection of papers about the day-to-day running of the island from the mid-17th to the 20th century. It is estimated that 10% of the total Argyll estate archive relates to Tiree. These records include accounts of the island in the days of runrig farms and the creation of today's crofts, reports of emigration, rent arrears and relief work schemes (including the names of people employed knitting, draining and road-building), lists of ministers and schoolmasters and the Dewar manuscripts, one of Scotland's most important collections of Gaelic tales.

Detail of the Heanish area
from Argyll Estates'
Turnbull map of 1768.



The new project, called **Written in the Landscape**, will unlock the estate's records for the first time. The first job will be to catalogue the collection so that we know what it contains. Then any damaged papers have to be restored. Thirdly An Iodhlann will be asked which papers it wants to digitise - high on the list will be the 1792 estate census. Because of the archive's huge size, only about 5% of the papers will be scanned during the three year project. But we hope that, over the years, we can keep the process going and delve deeper into this wonderful treasure trove.

Another partner in **Written in the Landscape** will be Argyll and Bute Council, which itself holds extensive papers about Tiree, for example Poor Law records. Other history societies in Argyll are also involved.

All this technical work will be done by two professional archivists based in Inveraray. Once selected records are accessible local volunteers around the world can start to transcribe and analyse the results, presenting them in the most helpful way.

The whole **Written in the Landscape** project is set to cost £324,000. Some funding has already been secured, but the main application has been sent to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a decision in June. Keep your fingers crossed!

Happily, the Tiree part of the project will go ahead anyway. A grant of £10,000 from Tiree's Windfall Fund has opened the door, with *An Iodhlann* itself pledging £5,000. To complete the funding package we need another £5,000 and *An Iodhlann* is launching an appeal to its supporters to seal the deal. If you can, please send a small donation to the Treasurer, *An Iodhlann*, Scarinish, Tiree, PA77 6UH (marked 'WIL') or go to the donations page on the website. And then watch the door swing open to reveal Aladdin's cave!

THE EARLY INNS AND ALEHOUSES OF TIREE

Today Tiree has two hotels. The Lodge Hotel on Gott Bay was opened around 1960; the Scarinish Hotel possibly dates from around 1810. But the history of inns on Tiree goes back much further than that.

Back to 1609, in fact. The Statutes of Iona were negotiated on the orders of King James VI and signed by nine Highland chiefs, including Lauchlan MacLean of Coll and Tiree's owner at the time, Hector MacLean of Duart in Mull. These Statutes have been seen as an attempt to break the power of Highland clan leaders. Their first section dealt with the then common practice of 'sorning', which forced tenants in the Highlands and islands to provide accommodation for their chief's followers if required to do so. The Statutes of Iona laid down that, '*oistclairis to be set down in the maist convenient placeis within every ile*' [hostelries (or inns) to be built in the most convenient places in every island].

This agreement was not enforced rigidly all over the Highlands. And the Campbells of Argyll, who went on to take over Tiree seventy years later, had not even signed up to it. But it did push Highland hospitality in a more commercial direction, so that travellers could begin to navigate the roads and ferries of the country independently of the landlords. The new inns, however, were often not purpose-built. Thomas Kirke reported in 1669 that, 'the Scots have not inns but change-houses as they call them, poor small cottages where you must be content to take what you find.'

One difficulty in interpreting the Tiree records in this field is that they include a variety of terms: ale-house, public house, spirit dealer, inn and hotel. Another is change-house (in Gaelic *taigh-seinnse*). 'The Scots [used] the word 'change' or 'change-house' to mean an alehouse...[in the] sense [of] a changing place for coach horses.' It is often not clear whether these were simply licensed places to drink, or buildings where a traveller could stay the night.

When Skyeman Martin Martin visited Tiree around 1695 he found that there were three 'ale-houses' on the island and at least one 'inn'. There is no indication where these were. However, the beer he was served was not to his liking.

'The ale that I had in the inn being too weak, I told my host of it, who promised to make it better; for this end he took a hectic-stone [from the Gaelic word *éiteag*, this was a pebble which was heated in the fire and then put into a drink for a patient with tuberculosis or diarrhoea], and having made it red hot in the fire, he quenched it in the ale.'

One hundred years later the 1791 *Old Statistical Account* of Coll and Tiree reported, 'There are only...four public houses at the ferries and harbours in both isles.'

At the time one ferry ran between Tiree and Coll across the Sound of Gunna, and another sailed from Arinagour to Mull. 'There is a stated ferry between Tiree and Coll, often very dangerous owing to a heavy swell from the Atlantic, to rapid currents and amazing breakers...There is [another] stated ferry between Coll and Mull.'

Tiree at the time had no direct regular, or 'stated', ferry to Mull or the mainland, but it did have one harbour with a pier. 'Scarinish, the common harbour [one used by all the islanders], admits of [would benefit from] considerable improvements.' The Scarinish 'change house' is recorded in the 1776 estate census of the island, run by Farquhar MacArthur.

These four 'public houses' mentioned by the Statistical Account in 1791 are therefore likely to have been in Arinagour, Coll; Caolas, Coll; Caolas, Tiree; and Scarinish.

The Caolas 'inn' on Tiree was on the site of the house now known as 'Ferry House'. It is recorded in the first Census of 1841 ('Malcolm McArthur, 30, sp[irit] dealer'). This inn served passengers waiting for the ferry to Coll. Indeed, in 1851 the innkeeper's brother-in-law was the ferryman - 'Malcolm McArthur, 39 son, innkeeper, Donald McDonald, 30, son-in-law, boatman.' Travel across the Sound of Gunna in a small boat was an unpredictable affair, depending as it did on the meeting of tides, wind and the brutal Atlantic swell.



Postcard of the
Scarinish Hotel
pre-1910.

The Caolas ferry continued into the 20th century. The archaeologist Beveridge recorded from Arinagour, 'Friday 5 June 1896: Two gentlemen arrived about ten last night having walked with their bags from Caolas [Coll] whither they had been ferried from Tiree.'

More recently the Gunna Sound ferryman was Malcolm MacDonald, *Calum a' Ghobhainn*, 'Malcolm son of the blacksmith', who kept his boat at *Port an t-Sruthain*, 'inlet of the Sound', in Caolas, Tiree. Landfall on Coll was usually at *An Tunga*, also known as 'The Tombs of Coll'. This is the enclosed MacLean graveyard on the east side of Crossapol Bay. The beach here is more steeply shelving than the Coll beaches facing Gunna, allowing a small boat to get closer to the shore. From here to Caolas, Tiree, is a distance of five statute miles. At a rowing speed of 3 knots, this journey takes about ninety minutes; under sail at 4-5 knots, a little less. Because of the strong tides, the most favourable time to set off from Tiree is just after high water. There was no guarantee the ferrymen could return straight away, as a following tide or wind in one direction meant a correspondingly hard return trip.

There was also a short-lived licensed drinking house in Mannaal, on the seaward side of the building now known as *Taigh Mòr Mhanail* 'the big house of Mannaal'. It was presumably set up to tempt the skilled workers of Hynish, who had been hired to work on the Skerryvore lighthouse in 1837. By 1842 there were up to 84 masons from Aberdeen labouring in Hynish. Some brought their families. Alan Stevenson, the leader of the project, wrote afterwards,

'The workyard at Hynish presented a very busy scene during the summer and winter of 1840...The regular meals and comfortable lodgings, the clean and energetic habits of the Lowland workmen, whose days were spent in toil and their evenings, most generally, in the sober recreations of reading and singing, formed a cheering contrast to the listless, dispirited and squalid look of the poor Celts, who have none of the comforts of civilised life and are equally ignorant of the value of time and the pleasures of activity.'



Ferry House at Caoles
(courtesy of M & R Jarvis).

But not all those billeted in Hynish were satisfied with 'the sober recreations of reading and singing.' In 1845 the *New Statistical Account* reported, 'Low, illicit tippling-houses have been springing up of late in this island, especially on the farms contiguous to the [Hynish] lighthouse works, as if intended chiefly for the persons employed, who generally have some money at command and might be expected to be profitable customers.'

One of these 'tippling-houses' belonged to William MacLean, Mannal, recorded in the 1841 Census as a 'spirit dealer', and presumably neither 'squalid' nor 'dispirited'. Skerryvore lighthouse first shone on 1st February 1844. Shortly after this most of the masons moved on to their next contracts, and the drinking house seems to have closed. By 1851 William MacLean is no longer living in Mannal and the licensed drinking house had gone.

By the 19th century another inn had appeared in *Crois*, Kilmoluaig. As far back as 1789 MacLean, the tacksman of Kilmoluaig or *Fear Chill Moluag*, owned one of the two stills on the island licensed to produce whisky. 'Mr McLean, Kilmoluaig has one of the stills on his farm.' It is likely that the same family were selling spirits in 1841.

A recording from *Tobar an Dualchais* reported, 'There had been five crofts [in Croish]...As far as I know they were all MacLeans. They were all given to this man Lachlan MacLean, and the rest were put out of their crofts. Some of them emigrated, others had to build houses elsewhere. Lachlan MacLean got the five to himself... He left when the sand started to blow...He got a place in Greenhill.'

Another Kilmoluaig crofter recalled, 'That's where the first public house on the island was, up at Croish. After that it moved over to Scarinish. It was in some of the building that's there today [Croish House] but it was improved...Yon time, it was on the north side of the house the kitchen was, where the barn was in the olden times. My grandmother's father and another man down at the loch, John MacKinnon, they would be going over there for a drink. Perhaps it was the following day they would come home! I heard that from my grandmother, many a time...And they would get a glass of whisky for tuppence or thruppence.'

It seems as though the Duke was generous in his lease of land to the Tìree innkeepers: the 1851 Census shows the MacArthurs in Caolas were farming 32 acres; the MacLeans in Kilmoluaig had 40 acres; and the 1861 Census shows another MacLean family in Scarinish with 160 acres. The explanation could have been either that the estate wanted successful inns for the smooth running of the island (and the fact that crofters were put off their land at Croish to make way for the

innkeeper supports this view), or that innkeepers were running a successful business, and could so afford to pay a higher rent.

In the 18th century Tiree's rich barley fields supported a flourishing, unregulated and small-scale whisky-distilling industry - and, at times, a flourishing drinking culture. The Scottish authorities tried to regulate this national habit starting with a number of Acts to license the trade. Some time between 1851 and 1861 all drinks licences on Tiree were revoked following an incident at the public house in Croish, Kilmoluaig. The tradition on the island is that a woman from Balevullin died while being carried home from the inn. The Duke then put pressure on the local magistrates to remove all Tiree drinks licences and no alcohol was sold legally on the island for one hundred years.

In 1855 the Caolas innkeeper Malcolm MacArthur went to register his first child Alexander, and he described his occupation as simply 'farmer' to the new Registrar on Tiree. And the 1861 Census shows that Lachlan MacLean was living in a building having four rooms with one or more windows, presumably Croish Farmhouse. He is still described as the tenant of 30 acres but no mention is made of his being an innkeeper or spirit dealer. It is likely, therefore, that all the Tiree 'spirit dealers' had lost their drinks licences some time between 1851 and 1855.

This loss had far-reaching consequences, as the licensed sale of whisky and beer is likely to have been the most profitable part of an innkeeper's business. The inns at Caolas and Kilmoluaig seem to have closed within years. The Scarinish inn remained open as it had to do under the terms of its lease from the estate. Tiree's three inns had become one: the 'Temperance Hotel'. And that's another story!



Postcard of the Tiree Lodge Hotel in the early 20th century.

The Friends of the Argyll Papers

A Friends group has recently been established to support the development of The Argyll Papers at Inveraray Castle and promote its use and enjoyment by a wide audience.

The Argyll Papers is the family and estate archive of the Campbell Family, Dukes of Argyll, and is considered to be one of the most important private archives in Britain. It is a rich resource for Scottish and British history from the thirteenth to twenty-first centuries, and attracts visitors from all over the world, researching a wide range of subjects including family and local history, Gaelic and Celtic studies, military history, political history, economic and social history, agriculture and industry, architecture and more.

The Friends has charitable objectives, including:

- Promoting and encouraging volunteering;
- Promoting and delivering opportunities for engagement and education;
- Engaging in and co-ordinating conservation, cataloguing and publishing of the archives.

It was formed in December 2014 by a small group of archive researchers, with the support of Argyll Estates and the Argyll Papers Archivist. The founding committee includes personal and academic researchers, members of local heritage organisations, the Clan Campbell Society and the archive profession. It is hoped that the group will help to steer the future development of the archive to best meet the needs of the archive and its research community. Membership subscriptions will support conservation, cataloguing and engagement activities on a modest annual basis, and the group will also fundraise for specific purposes.

Membership benefits include a regular newsletter, an annual lecture, heritage visits, social events, and 20% discount on Inveraray Castle admissions, tea-room and shop. The inaugural Friends Annual Lecture will be given by distinguished historian and author, Professor Allan Macinnes, whose highly acclaimed book, 'The British Confederate: Archibald Campbell, Marquess of Argyll, c1607-1661' (2011) is based on a decade of privileged research access to the archive.

Further information about membership, volunteering opportunities and other activities is available on the Friends website www.friendsoftheargyllpapers.org.uk and facebook page www.facebook.com/friendsoftheargyllpapers.

The Friends will be officially launched over the summer and information about membership will be made available on the website closer to the time.

CÀTH 'chaff'

- Work has begun preparing for *A' Bhuain* - Tìree Homecoming 2016, which runs on Tìree from **Monday 23 to Friday 27 May**. This will be a great week for anyone interested in the history and culture of the island, and includes talks from Professor Donald Meek on what Tìree means to him, Dr John Holliday on Viking Tìree and Ishbel MacKinnon (the archivist at Inveraray Castle) on the secrets of her collection; tours of both graveyards; bird-watching with the island's expert; concerts and dances; and a chance to meet islanders, old and new friends at the daily cafe hosted by island groups. The week is designed around descendants of those who left Tìree, but everyone in the world is welcome - however, there's only room for 200! Put *A' Bhuain* and 2016 into your favourite search engine, or go to: www.tireehomecoming.com
- This winter has seen a major refurbishment of the fabric of *An Iodhlann's* building with new windows and door and well as exterior woodwork. A big thanks to the Tìree Trust's Windfall Fund and Bernie Smith for his work.
- *An Iodhlann* has linked with Keith Dash's brilliant website (www.keithdash.net) to collect stories from Tìree people around the world.
- Very many thanks to all our members to switched their method of receiving *Sil Eòlais* from post to email to save on printing costs, and to those who donated a bit extra to help in this regard.

Once again, it's your support around the world that keeps this flickering flame alive. Thank you

Dr John Holliday



Volunteers working at Argyll Estates' Archive at Inveraray Castle.