

an t-side Tiree's Weather

Bathed by the sun and buffeted by the wind, Tiree has plenty of weather.

Our sunshine and wind bring many people to Tiree. The island has more sunshine than most parts of the country - 1,400 hours a year. The sunniest day on record was July 9th 1936 when there were 16.8 hours of sunshine. The hottest day, 26°C, was on July 6th 1991.

Tiree is surrounded by the warm waters of the Gulf Stream and the island is mild in winter and cool in summer. Sea temperatures are at their lowest, 7°C, in March and highest, 13°C, in September. It does snow here every few years but it rarely lies for long. The coldest temperature on record, -7°C, was on December 12th 1985. Loch Bhasapol was frozen over so that boys could play football on it in 1928 and 1963.



Scottish schoolhouse during a rare heavy snowfall in December 2000



Tiree is one of the best windsurfing centres in the world because of the number of beaches facing different directions and strong winds. © JH/CC-BY

The island, however, has no shelter from the Atlantic weather systems. There are gales here 34 days a year compared with 4 in Glasgow. The strongest wind on record, 118 miles per hour, was on January 15th 1968.

During the big gale in 1953 there was a man in Kilmoluig, Alasdair Eachainn, who was another man who was good at telling stories... He was struggling home from Balevullin in the dark... and a corn stack went past him. A lot of corn stacks were knocked over that night... He said, 'I was asking around the next day who'd lost a corn stack?' Nobody had lost one. 'I reckon it came down from Barra'. HECTOR MACPHAIL

But the wind gives as well as takes. Tiree has some of the best beaches for windsurfing in Europe, hosting the 2007 Professional Windsurfing Association World Championship.

Tiree's first weather report was filed in 1926 by the headmaster at Cornaig school, D. O. Maclean. The barometer was on his staircase. This station was further developed by the RAF during World War II and Tiree has gone on to become one of the most important weather stations in the UK, its name familiar to insomniacs who listen to the Shipping Forecast.

The station became automatic on the last day of July 2000 with the sad loss of five Met Office jobs. *'You must have mixed feelings about the station going automatic.'* *'Yes, I enjoy Tiree, and it means the fact that I no longer will be employed to work here has caused some problems personally. But it's progress, it's the advances in technology creating this difficulty for people in all walks of life. It just so happens that it has reached mine'*. RAY SHARP TALKING TO MAGGIE CAMPBELL.



Airmen struggling against the wind on Tiree during the Second World War



Casan fon grèin which are a sign of stormy weather to come

Before the days of the professional weather forecast islanders 'read' the weather themselves.

Casan fon grèin, literally legs under the sun, are a sign of bad weather to come. Rocks gleaming on the side of Ben Hynish are a sign of rain and, if you can see the flashing of a far away lighthouse like Heisgeir, it will soon be stormy.

The old people use to remark on the formation of the clouds from the horizon and spreading upwards in the evening. Their alignment indicated the wind direction the following day. It was called An Craobh [the Tree]. ALASDAIR SINCLAIR, BROCK.

If the new moon is lying on its back it's a bad sign. Starlings gathering on power lines or a flock of birds wheeling in the air ahead of a weather front are sure pointers to rain.

One of the first household gadgets to measure the weather on the island was in Kilkenneth. *And that's another thing the tailor [Lachie MacKinnon, Kilkenneth] had, since I remember - a Swiss Cottage - and it was on the mantelpiece in the workshop at the end of the house - a man and a woman. When it was going to rain the man would come out with an umbrella, and when it was going to be dry, the woman would come out... and the old people in these days were, especially at harvest time, to see how the ones that was in the Swiss Cottage, who was out. They would get hold of Lachie anywhere [and ask] 'Who's out today?'* HECTOR KENNEDY, HEYLIPOL.

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