

STAFFIN NEWSLETTER

IRIS AN TAOBH SEAR
FOGHAR 2024



Fèis tutors and youngsters outside Columba 1400.

Fèis Thròndairnis / Trotternish Fèis

THE COLUMBA 1400 Centre was the venue for the annual Fèis Thròndairnis in July and it proved to be another successful event, *writes Margaret Nicolson, the fèis chairwoman.*

Numbers were the same as last year, with 50 participants. The tutors were Ian Ruari Finlayson, chanter and pipes; Andrew MacPherson, drumming, percussion and whistle; Murdo Cameron, guitar and whistle; Sileas Sinclair, accordion and keyboards; Kathleen Macdonald, fiddle and keyboards; Anna Nicolson, clàrsach; Catherine Tinney, Gàidhlig song and arts & crafts; Ruby MacLeod and Kevin Munsie shared shinty tuition. Catherine, Anna and Kathleen taught the fèis song.

Transport was organised and ran from and to Bun-sgoil Phort Rìgh and Bun-sgoil Mhicdhiarmaid. Where transport was over-subscribed alternative arrangements were made. The tutors' cèilidh held in Talla Stafainn was well attended as

was the children's concert on the final afternoon.

In August, the fèis received a generous donation towards funds from the proceeds of the fishing competition at Staffin Harbour. Thanks to Lachie Gillies for the nomination. The committee wishes to thank everyone who in whatever capacity helped make the fèis a success, especially all the volunteers without whom the event would not happen.

Urras Ionad Thròndairnis / Trotternish Centre

Although we have been a bit quiet in recent months we are still working on our plans for Ionad Thròndairnis. For a variety of reasons, the plans to purchase the Dùn Flodigarry Hostel have, unfortunately, been shelved. Although we do not yet have a venue of our own we are able to use Columba 1400, Talla Stafainn and occasionally Talla Chille Mhoire for our planned events.

This year we hosted two school groups from Gàidhlig Medium education - Greenfaulds High School in Cumbernauld whom we welcomed back and Calder Glen High School in East Kilbride who were here for the first time. The group from Dublin was unable to be with us this year.

The trust also held its usual Gàidhlig course, in August. It too was well attended and supported locally. We plan to have the winter activities of whist, and the Knit and Natter group running again this winter. The monetary donations from the last knitting group were donated to the Crossroads Care office in Portree. There will also be other activities

planned throughout the winter. In the spring, Bekah, our development officer, organised two well attended



Maoilios and Margaret at his 80th birthday.

dried flower wreath making workshops, at Columba 1400. These were led by Flùrag Floral Design. Notification of further events will be posted in the Post Office and the local shops as well as on social media.

In September, in collaboration with the Blas Festival, the trust organised two events, both on September 13. The earlier event, held at Columba 1400, was to celebrate the literary works of Maoilios Caimbeul, who lives in Flodigarry.

Each year Blas marks the life and works of someone within the literary or music world. This is usually when a person reaches a significant age, and this year Maoilios, celebrated his 80th birthday. This was a very pleasant afternoon where we were joined by other Gàidhlig bards; Niall O' Gallagher and Rody Gorman. Meg Bateman was scheduled to be with us but had to cancel her plans. Shona Cormack, stepped in to read poems selected by Meg. Mark Wringe, from Sabhal Mòr Ostaig,

was our *Fear an Taighe* for the afternoon.

Along with the bards we had Gàidhlig psalm presentment from Sgoil Stafainn pupils (thanks are due to Amy Cruickshank, who worked with the group), piping from Brodie Ferguson, Sgoil Stafainn and Calum Alasdair Munro, now a Portree High School pupil. Calum Alasdair played a pipe tune - *Bàrd Bhoillteir* - composed by Ian Ruari Finlayson for the occasion. Maya Kennedy, Sgoil Chille Mhoire entertained on fiddle and Jonathan MacDonald, Portree High School, sang *Òran Stafainn*, composed by Maoilios a number of years ago.

In the evening at Staffin Hall, Màiri Callan, Alice MacMillan and Ruairidh Gray presented a programme of songs arranged by Màiri. The concert was followed by a dance with music provided by Robert and Alan Nairn.



Staffin pupils performing at the event.

Earlier this year the trust was gifted the minibus which was previously used by the shoppers' group and other voluntary organisations. It is available for use under the same terms and conditions as previously. If any voluntary group wishes to book the minibus, please contact Margaret Nicolson at the trust either

by e-mail mairead@trotternish.org
or phone 01470 552248.

Columba 1400 Centre

IT'S BEEN an incredibly busy and fulfilling year, *writes Stacey Campbell, centre manager*, as we prepare for our 25th anniversary celebrations next year.

Young People's Leadership

Academies: This year, we've had the privilege of hosting 350 young people from 22 schools and 15 local authorities as part of our values-based leadership academies. It's always a joy to welcome young people from across Scotland to our residential programmes, where they can experience the unique and beautiful landscape of Skye which is so different from where many of them live. Our centre is a warm, nurturing space where these young leaders can relax, explore their potential and take part in transformative experiences.

Events and Special Occasions: Our centre is not just a place for learning—it's also a vibrant venue for special occasions, conferences, and events. We take great pride in making every event memorable, with our team going above and beyond to create a welcoming atmosphere.

Community Engagement: Being an integral part of the local community is important to us, and this year, we've loved hosting a range of community events. Our monthly senior citizen lunches and lunch club continue to be a great success, providing a space for locals to come together and enjoy good food and company.

One of our biggest highlights this year was welcoming Niall Iain Macdonald from BBC Radio nan Gàidheal, who broadcast his show live from our café!



Staffin Senior Citizens' monthly meal.

Memorable Events Throughout the

Year: We kicked off 2024 with our annual Burns Supper in January, followed by a romantic Valentine's Dinner in February. In March, we held our first-ever Swish event, where locals had the chance to swap clothes and accessories. Summer saw the centre buzzing with creativity, as Ionad Thròndairnis and Flurag Floral Design hosted flower wreath-making workshops in both Gaelic and English. The centre was filled with beautiful creations and delightful floral scents!

Our Summer Craft Fairs were another major highlight. We held five fairs, which offered local makers the chance to showcase and sell their crafts. A huge thank you to all our talented crafters and to everyone who supported them by shopping at the fairs. If you missed out, don't worry—our Christmas Craft Fair is just around the corner on Saturday,

December 7. We can't wait to see you there for some festive shopping.

Fèis Thròndairnis and Fundraising Events:

We were thrilled to host the fèis for five days of music, dancing, shinty and Gaelic culture.

September brought more excitement as we held the annual Tractor/Car Run to raise funds for Cancer Research UK. We also took part in The Big Scottish Breakfast for STV's Children's Appeal by hosting a 'Big Scottish Breakfast For Dinner' event, helping to raise money for children at risk of hunger across Scotland.



Columba 1400 facilitators in training.

Funding award: In September, we were absolutely delighted to receive a £25,000 award from the Highland Council's Community Regeneration Funding. This funding will enable us to make significant improvements to our all-weather pitch, ensuring it becomes even more accessible for both the local community and the young people who stay with us. We are incredibly grateful for this support, and we look forward to creating a more inclusive space where everyone can enjoy outdoor activities, regardless of the weather.

Looking Ahead: What's Next?

As we move into the final months of the year, we're looking forward to

the return of our popular Afternoon Teas in November and, of course, our Christmas Craft Fair in December, also to return will be our popular Steak Night and our Swish Event evening,

Keep an eye out for dates and times. Next year will be especially exciting, as we'll be celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the opening of our centre. We've got lots of plans in store to mark this milestone, so please check our social media for announcements as we get closer to the celebrations!

Thank you to everyone in the community who has supported us throughout this incredible year. We couldn't do it without you, and we look forward to welcoming you back to the centre for more events, workshops, and celebrations in the months ahead.

Talla Stafainn / Staffin Hall

A SOLD-OUT show is being held next month with Radio Clyde DJ Cassi coming to Staffin Hall.

The very best 80s, 90s and Noughties beats will be played at the club night, which is a fundraiser for the hall. The keenly anticipated show gig was a sell out within days. Everybody arriving at the event will receive a 90s themed drink and party accessory with revellers expected from all over Skye and further afield. The hall has hosted a range of regular and one-off events this year. Angie the Barber is now cutting hair twice a week on Thursday and Fridays in the small hall; The Hungry Gull is going from strength to strength in the restaurant and Staffin Stores has been a busy and

revamped shop this season catering for local and visiting customers. Skye Dance is hosting a weekly dance class for Staffin children every Thursday while the newly formed playgroup meets every Wednesday, check the Facebook page for more details.

Ceilidh and concerts for the Staffin Triathlon, Portree Gaelic Choir and a special sixth year prom - for the Portree High School leavers back in June - are among some of the highlights so far.

The Staffin Hall Committee is currently seeking new members, to join, in particular people who have skills in administrative and secretarial work, contract management, legal expertise, building management, funding, IT, publicity and events. If you would like more information, please email tallastafainn@gmail.com

Urras an Taobh Sear / Staffin Community Trust

Cidhe Stafainn: The last few months have seen a radical transformation of Staffin Harbour with the new hardstanding area emerging to the east after rock was extracted and hauled from Lealt between March and June.

This will provide the base for new onshore facilities including the construction of seven new business units / workshops, a main harbour facilities building with toilets and showers, and boat and container storage space.

Staffin Community Trust has now completed the purchase of the harbour for £30,000, with grant support from the Scottish Land

Fund. SCT would like to thank the council and Scottish Ministers (The Department) for being supportive and willing sellers, with the role of Highlands and Islands Enterprise being particularly crucial, via its support of its development officer post via the Community Capacity Programme.



Boats heading out during the July angling contest.

SCT has now secured fresh investment with £409,000 awarded from the Scottish Government's Islands Programme. It will help SCT build the main harbour building, fund the groundworks cost for the construction of the new business units next month and allow the purchase of a telehandler to support the community boat-lifting and storage service.

The new units - which will likely be ready for tenants by spring 2025 - will be advertised to the community shortly with the full specification of each unit and the monthly rent cost. It is not a first come, first served basis and SCT would encourage anybody with an interest in the units to get in touch if they have any questions or require information. staffinharbourmanager@gmail.com

The slipway area was being slowly strangled and stagnating in recent years as an unofficial parking area for motorhomes. SCT has been heartened by the positive impact the

infrastructure investment has already had since 2022 when it started construction work with the full upgrading of the slip road. Seeing local men and women leaving the slipway every morning to head out to sea for their work – and the noise, buzz and activity of a working harbour is very encouraging. SCT is eagerly anticipating the increased economic activity once the units and harbour building are fully occupied. As the harbour is



now community owned it is crucial that SCT can generate an income to manage and maintain the facility for decades to come.

Staffin Harbour manager Lachie Gillies, *pictured*, said: “We're delighted to have received the Islands Programme grant as it allows us to take another step closer to reaching our goal of having a community harbour which will eventually be self-sufficient, creating jobs and facilities to enable our youngsters to stay and flourish in Staffin.”

SCT director Angus Ross added: “The Islands Programme grant allows SCT to push on with the construction of harbour buildings and the effective operation of important harbour facilities.”

It has been a hectic first nine months for Lachie who became the

harbour's first manager at the start of the year ... *“We have in the last few weeks moved the harbour office and containers onto the hardstanding and The Chieftain and Organic Sea Harvest staff all park there now. We have also started on the seven new business unit foundations, getting most of the bases concreted in August with just some small additional bits still to do before the contractor MH Steel arrives in November. The shed kits will be delivered in October.*

“Pressure washing the pier is a regular process and our new washer is performing well. I have also been working to get the water supply up and running and currently have connected water to the office and toilet and also down the edge of the breakwater path.

“This will make a big difference for



Aerial photo from September shows extent of new hardstanding area built at the harbour.

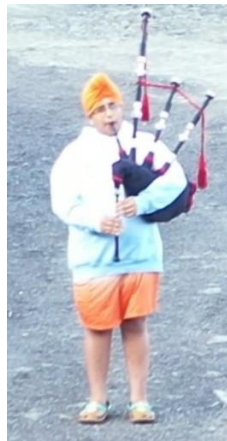
me and the other harbour users as I have had to trailer water in IBC containers and I use at least two every time (2,000) litres. The water is not suitable for drinking at present as we have to fit a spring chamber, filters and tanks and then get it tested for human consumption.

“At the end of September boats were hauled out of the water by SCT’s Roodberg trailer ashore for the winter months and we will be removing the buoys and dropping the mooring chains to the sea bed giving them a longer lifespan. We aim to make up some more moorings over the winter as we have two requests.”

The constituency MP Angus MacDonald is scheduled to visit the harbour in November to see the progress for himself.

Lachie has organised and run two angling competitions at the harbour with a dedicated band of helpers. The July event raised £329 for the Sgoil Stafainn Parent Council and in August £234 was donated to the fèis. Many thanks to all the participants and supporters of the competitions, including Staffin Stores, Columba 1400, Mackenzie Stores and The Hungry Gull.

Young Staffin piper Heav’n Gill, *pictured*, welcomed the flotilla of boats to the shore at the August event with an excellent performance at the harbour.



The competition had several entries and we must say congratulations to our winners for the following categories; Rob Gillies won heaviest fish (senior); Serkan Tuncay won heaviest fish (junior) and Jock

Gordon won the unusual catch competition with his entree of a garfish.

Sonia Gill and Charlie Elder provided tasty chips and mince, served by Meg Gillies, Maggie Ross and Kathy Elder

The whole event was captured on drone by Dave Gill.



July’s angling winners Alfie MacDonald and mum Kerry, Neilly Nicolson and Charlie Matheson.

Sùil nam Brà - The Crofters' Memorial

The official opening of the memorial to the Staffin crofters, who successfully protested against the heavy oppression from the landlords in the 1880s, will be now held in early 2025.

The finishing touches to the structure at the Kilt Rock will be completed later this year, including the installation of attractive and informative new interpretation detailing the story of the crofters including figures like Norman ‘Parnell’ Stewart. Sincere thanks to the range of funders for their support including SGRIPD, Highland Council, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Urras an Eilein, the Baxters Foundation and Wow Scotland.

Tobair na Slàinte / Staffin Health

Centre: The GP clinic runs every Thursday by doctors from Portree Medical Centre, on behalf of NHS Highland. If any other health-related organisation, charity or practitioner is looking to book the centre, please email

nhsh.Portreehospitaladmin@nhs.scot

SCT hosted two events in

September, firstly a visit by a group of friendly Welsh folk from the Llŷn Peninsula who came to research community development and visited our ecomuseum sites, Taighean a' Chaiseil and the harbour. We share a lot of the same challenges with our Celtic cousins in terms of language, landscape and infrastructure, including housing, and can learn a lot from each other.

Representatives from 11 development trusts from across Skye, Wester Ross and Lochaber also visited the Taobh Sear for the Development Trusts Association of Scotland's regional gathering.

Fire Brigade: The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is still advertising for new recruits for the Staffin station. At present there are three trained firefighters but Staffin requires at least one more if the appliance is to go back out on call and is able to attend incidents in the community. If you are interested phone Ian Nicolson at Portree Fire Station for a chat on 01478 612 793 or visit www.firescotland.gov.uk/careers/

Mod Gold: Congratulations to a son of Staffin who has won a coveted singing competition in Oban at the Royal National Mòd. Ruairidh Morrison was triumphant in the

Traditional Gold Medal. His mother Mary is from Digg and as a teenager Ruairidh played football for Staffin



Ruairidh Morrison of Digg (North Kessock branch).

AFC and his sister Eilidh recently managed Staffin Stores.

Ruairidh's success, watched on by his proud grandmother May and family in Digg, adds another chapter to our community's achievements in the singing competitions at the Mòd.


Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean

 **Bòrd na Gàidhlig**