

STAFFIN NEWSLETTER

IRIS AN TAOBH SEAR

AN T-SULTAIN / SEPTEMBER
2023

THE very first Staffin Triathlon was a resounding success, with competitors from our own community, the rest of Skye and further afield taking part. A triathlon is an endurance sport which sees competitors tackling a swim - often in the sea - a cycle and run. It is effectively a three-stage race and originated in the late 1970s in California.

A soggy and damp Saturday morning in Staffin bore little resemblance to that US state but the hardy and spirited entrants shrugged off the weather conditions. The main event kicked off with the swimming race at the slipway, before the competitors



Making a splash at the Slip.

mounted their bikes and headed up the main road all the way to Lealt gorge. They turned round at Lealt and cycled back to Staffin Hall. Once off their saddles the final leg was a run to the slipway and back to the hall. Portree's Paul Milne was the winner in a time of 1:17:20 with Swiss competitor Kira Samide the first

woman home in 1:24:56, and fourth overall. Several Staffin runners competed in the separate 10k race up



Runners in the 10k on the slip road.

to Sartle from the slip including Eilidh MacKinnon, Emma Gillies, Norman Shanks, Josie MacLeod, Joseph Lewa, Marina Gordon and Hannah Gillies. Dunvegan's Ben Nicolson won the 10k home in 37:47 while Uig teenager Cailean Dunkel won the Super Sprint & Novice Triathlon competition, with compatriot Ross Evans runner up. The triathlon was organised by Skye Events, which successfully runs the island's half marathon each year and the popular Santa Dash. Skye Events donates money to good causes during the year, once all the events' running costs are paid and any surplus from the triathlon will go towards the Staffin Hall.

The first Staffin Triathlon would not have been possible without the support of local volunteers from the Staffin Hall Committee, Staffin Community Council and the Youth Club including Sylvia Porter, Helen Atkins, Fiona Cruickshank, Duncan Mallet and a host of others.

At night a ceilidh was held with food provided by Sonia Suman of MacKenzie Stores, with strong support on the day also from the Hungry Gull. Skye Events will run the triathlon again in August 2024.

Buth Stafainn / Staffin Stores

Staffin Stores has had a very busy season so far with our extended opening hours, *writes manager Eilidh Morrison*. You will have noticed there are a few new faces in the shop, including Sean, Jamie, Annie and William, who along with Alec and Declan have all been a huge help in making the new hours work.

We've seen plenty people making use of the shop between 6pm and 8pm and we wanted to remind you all that the shop is currently open from 8:30am onwards. We would love to stay open till 8pm year-round, but the demand for this has to match. From around October, the shop will go back to the winter opening hours of 9am - 6pm. We would like to try extending the hours to remain open until 8pm on Friday and Saturday nights through the winter to find out if this is something the locals of Staffin would like to see. The exact date of any change in hours will be announced nearer the time, so keep an eye on the Staffin Stores Facebook page and drop us a line to let us know what you think!

Fèis Thròndairnis / Trotternish Fèis

Fèis Thròndairnis took place a week earlier than usual due to an unexpected change of plans for the usual venue, Sgoil Stafainn, between July 17 to 21.

Columba 1400, which was able to accommodate the fèis, proved to be a successful change.

Participant numbers were up slightly with 50 children attending. The tutors this year were Angus MacKenzie,

piping and chanter; 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, arts and crafts; Allan Macleod, shinty, with the fèis song taught by Kathleen and Anna.

Transport was organised and ran from/to Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Rìgh and Bun-sgoil Mhicdhiarmaid. The



Young fiddle players in tuition.

tutors' cèilidh held in Talla Stafainn was well attended as was the children's concert on the final afternoon. The committee wishes to thank everyone who helped make the fèis a success.

Margaret Nicolson, chairwoman, Fèis Thròndairnis

Bun Sgoil Stafainn / Staffin Primary School

We had a busy end of term with Sports Day, Prizegiving, Transitions and events, *writes headteacher Chrisma MacFarlane*.

We had a Gaelic culture day in June with drama, sports, Reading with Linda, stories and arts and crafts. Thanks to Arthur Donald, Morag Stewart, Leigh le Linda, Eilidh NicFhraing, Shannon MacLeod, Shona Paterson and Calum Rothach. Thanks

also to Bòrd na Gàidhlig for their support through Taic Freumhan Coimhearsnachd.



Sgoil Stafann pupils at Storr Lochs.

We also enjoyed activities with Spors Gàidhlig, which was supported by CnaG (Sine G), Urras an Taobh Sear and The Highland Council Gaelic Team. The P4-7 pupils enjoyed paddleboarding in Storr Lochs very much.

Urras an Taobh Sear / Staffin Community Trust

SKYE ECOMUSEUM:

Sùil nam Bràth (Crofters' Monument)

The new monument to the resolute band of Staffin crofters who led the Land Agitations of the 1880s will finally be completed this autumn. The site for Sùil na Bràthan was cleared earlier this year thanks to Highland Council's sub-contractor Eyre Plant Ltd at the Kilt Rock. Since then, local tradesman Charlie Elder and Micky MacLeod have worked to build the concrete base and blockwork, respectively, for the structure that has been designed to look like a cottar's cottage. The project has now moved to the final stage as Sconser stonemason Hector Nicolson has started the stonework for the exterior. Sculptor Henry Castle, who designed the cottage, is currently working on

concrete casts with Joel Franklin at his Breakish base.

They are pouring concrete to form an initial sample of the interior which will include formed indentations from castings taken of the historic quernstone quarry at Rubha nam



Hector Nicolson at Kilt Rock.

Bràthairean. It has been a long-held ambition of Staffin Community Trust to properly commemorate the crofters who fought the oppressive landlords given other communities in Skye, such as Bares and Glendale, have always had a permanent memorial.

The impact of the Staffin crofters, led by among others Norman 'Parnell' Stewart in Valtos, is felt to this day with families able to live securely on croftland without the fear of eviction, and their living descendants are rightly proud of their actions and achievements.

Hector will also tutor skills around stonework to both the Gaelic and English upper primary classes of Bùn Sgoil Stafainn.

The school will ask pupils to bring in a stone from every crofting township they are connected to. The plan is to ensure that every township in Staffin is represented by contributions of stone to the final build. The school sessions are planned for late September and there may be opportunities for volunteers to get involved and learn more about building with drystone. Dates will be advertised in the coming weeks.

SCT indebted to Aird's Peter Reitisma for his kind donation of the majority of the stone. Thanks also to Ian MacDonald for transporting the stone to site. There will be a formal opening for the community.

Fèis na Fairge

THE resurrected Staffin Angling Competition returned for the first time in four years in July. Around 30 children attended Hebridean Whale Trail activities led by Caroline Wills who provided entertainment and games on the types of whales and dolphins which can be seen around in our waters. Choppy conditions at sea restricted fishing to the three boats that were large enough to handle the swell. The big winners of the day were the Gillies family from Glasphein with two of the four prizes on offer for the biggest catch and junior prize. Trotternish Boat Tours were also busy throughout the day with locals getting the chance



Angling competition winners.

to see the coast of Staffin from the sea. Grateful thanks to the many volunteers, in particular Sonia Gill and Charlie Elder, who supported the annual event, as well as our kind sponsors, the Staffin Campsite, which provided the trophies.

Lios Chill Mhàrtainn

Plans are advancing for the proposed community garden by the Church of Scotland. Shrubs have been planted by the entrance to the church and an order has been placed for fruit trees to create a mini orchard. Later in September we are hoping Staffin Youth Club will plant the discounted apples trees that are being provided by Skye Shrubs. Landscape gardener James Sutton, Brogaig, will assist with



costing up the design worked on by

James Sutton with Helen Atkins of the youth club

Natalie MacLeod, Stenscholl, and look at alternative options including the potential for areas of the garden to be used as allotments. James recently designed and worked on a similar community garden in Edinbane.

CIDHE STAFAINN / STAFFIN HARBOUR:

A rock blasting and extraction contract will get underway this autumn at Lealt Quarry. SCT has planning permission for the works which will be carried out by G.F Job Ltd, a well-known Highland contractor which has been working in Kingsburgh Quarry of late. This will enable SCT to secure a significant amount of the armour rock required for the new breakwater at the harbour. No material will be transported from Lealt to the current slipway in this phase of the works.

More information will be announced later to the time once an exact date is confirmed. The contractor is looking to keep disruption to a minimum but during the blasting the main A855 road will be shut for a short time. The contract to lay the new electricity line from Columba 1400 to the Staffin Harbour area via Garafad common grazing is also scheduled for the autumn. Local contractor Craik & MacRae is delivering this contract.

The community-run Trotternish Boat Tours have been operating since May and proved popular with visitors and locals, with a number of school children also enjoying the experience. A new gearbox was fitted last month with grateful thanks to Alex MacKinnon, Garafad, after the boat caught a rope on the sea. The boat, called the *Skye Explorer II*, is owned by Andi Dunkel who has been skippering the tours supported by Jock Gordon. Income from the tours will be used by SCT to develop the Staffin Harbour. SCT secured a Scottish Land Fund grant earlier this year to purchase the harbour area from Highland Council and the Department, and employ a harbour manager on a full-time two-year contract.

NURSE'S COTTAGE: SCT is looking to formally purchase the property from NHS Highland once the sale is formally approved by its Asset Management Group in Inverness. SCT looking into prospective funders to carry out feasibility work on the potential of affordable housing on site and has contacted local businesses and services regarding their current accommodation needs with questionnaires completed. SCT's

board of directors inspected the cottage in June.

Tobair na Slàinte / Staffin Health

Centre: The GP clinic runs every Thursday by Portree Medical Centre, on behalf of NHS Highland. The new facility has also been used by podiatry clinic and the Portree pharmacist and other staff.

If any other health related organisation or practitioner is looking to book the centre, please email nhsh.Portreehospitaladmin@nhs.scot

Lealt Gorge: August marked five years since the viewing platform at Lealt opened to the public. It was a key part of SCT's ecomuseum project capital works and was built by MacDonald Contracting Ltd, with Staffin Groundworks also involved in the project creating a new path and an upper parking area well hidden from the main road, which included conserving the floor of the old diatomite building. The view from the



Estate factor Ewen MacPherson and clerk of works Peter MacDonald of SGRPID.

platform takes in two waterfalls, the Trotternish Ridge and across to Wester Ross.

The platform has proven popular with visitor, especially during or after heavy rain. An estimated 300,000 people have visited the platform since it opened.

Earlier this year the upper car park was tarred by the Department, following surfacing works at the new Kil Rock car park.. SCT is grateful to the Department for their support for the project.

2023-2033: FUTURE WORK

SCT is holding a community consultation event next month scheduled to help shape the Staffin Community Plan for the next decade. SCT will be summarising what has been achieved in the last decade – after the previous Growth Plan was approved by the community – and setting out the medium to long-term aims.



Staffin Community Trust's board of directors.

SCT views regeneration projects like the harbour, Taighean a' Chaiseil and Nurses' Cottage site, as crucial for Staffin in terms of creating and supporting job and businesses and ensuring the Sgoil Stafainn roll remains healthy for years to come. If people cannot attend in person there will be opportunities to fill in surveys and comment via the local shops or online. More details will follow. SCT's Office, within the Church of Scotland, is open between Monday and Friday and anybody who wants to learn more about any of the projects or has any questions is encouraged to visit our staff Hugh Ross and Angus

Murray, phone 562 464 or e-mail staffin.lido@gmail.com / skyeecomuseum@gmail.com

Croitearachd / Crofting

Staffin crofters were among the leading prices at the two recent lamb sales in Portree run by Dingwall Mart. Around 7,000 lambs were sold ringside with store stock from the Staffin townships performing well, albeit the average prices were down on the corresponding sales last year. Buyers will purchase lambs from Skye to fatten and finish for market on the mainland.

On Monday (4.9) 2,812 lambs were sold and averaged £47.95 with feeding sheep (280) selling to a top of £105 gross for a pen of Blackface gimmers from 7 Brogaig.

Leading prices (Staffin crofters)

TexelX: £75, 8 Maligar

Cheviot: 2 Flodigarry, £61.50, 10

Stenscholl, £60, 5 Marrishadder, £60,

11 Clachan.

SuffolkX - 1/2 of 7 Brogaig, £91, 8

Garafad, £69

Blackface: 8 Maligar, £59; 3

Marrishadder, £54; 9 Clachan, £51

Cross: 3 Marrishadder, Culnacnoc,



Neil Nicolson, Flodigarry, with a ring of Cheviots.

£55, 10 Stenscholl, £55

On August 21 the mart sold 3,379 store lambs. Lambs averaged £52.71

and sold to £105 gross. Feeding sheep (403) sold to £96 gross for a Cheviot ewe from 3 Ellishadder.

Leading prices (Staffin crofters) -
 TexelX: 8 Digg, £86, 10 Digg, £80; 4 Sartle £80
 SuffolkX: ½ of 1 Marrishadder, £75; 28 Stenscholl, £72;
 Cheviot: 4 Flodigarry, £90.50; 13 Flodigarry, £82; 2 Ellishadder, £81 17 Garafad, £80; 11 Clachan, £78.50; 3 Glasphein, £72, 5/8 Ellishadder, £71; 1 Ellishadder, £70
 Cross lambs: 8 Flodigarry, £75
 Blackface: 11 Clachan, £73

Columba 1400 Centre

We've been incredibly busy at Columba 1400, writes *Stacey Campbell, Centre Manager*. During the last academic year, we welcomed 376 young people from 27 schools in 15 local authorities around Scotland.

Our core purpose is helping young people, and the key adults in their lives, to discover their potential. Their residential at our leadership centre in Staffin gives them the time and space to explore their values and transform their sense of identity, their confidence, and their ambition so they can make a lasting difference to themselves and in their communities.

From every room in our centre, the young people can see the scenery surrounding them and we make use of our landscape to take walks where they can talk about their values and take part in activities that wouldn't always be possible in their local area. This year we received funds that have enabled us to carry out work on our centre – updating some of the rooms and furniture – so that the young

people arrive to a warm and welcoming place where they can find space to reflect and discover their core values.

In July we were excited to welcome back a group of our young graduates to share their experience with us and consult them on how we can continue to improve our academies – keeping young people at the heart of everything we do. Whilst they were with us, a film crew visited to learn about our work, as part of an episode they are filming about Skye. They walked up the Quiraing, whilst talking to the young people about the impact of their experience with us and took beautiful footage of the area using a drone. The episode is due to be broadcast in the autumn, so keep an eye out on our social channels for more news on this. Over the summer break we've continued to make good use of our centre for local events and activities. We held a farewell to Sgoil Stafainn's P7s who headed off to the 'big school' after the holidays. They had lots of fun in our courtyard with a water fight – which created lots of giggles and hilarity.

We also welcomed 50 young people



Columba 1400 Centre.

from local primary schools taking part in Feis Thorndairnis. They had the opportunity to learn several different instruments under expert tuition. We look forward to welcoming them all again next year!

Additionally, this summer we have enjoyed hosting two weddings and a piano recital – both in our Moffat Hall which is a perfect space for small gatherings. Rebekah Dickinson’s piano recital raised more than £60 for the Hawaii Community Foundation, in response to the fires in Maui.

We hope that we can encourage more musical talent over the winter months so keep a look out for future events! If you require a meeting space or want to hold an event, please do get in touch with Stacey on 01478 611400.

Organic Sea Harvest

It is now just over three years since Organic Sea Farms (OSH) placed their first organic salmon juveniles into the waters off Staffin during the spring of 2020, writes founding director Alex MacInnes.

It came seven years after OSH had first met with Staffin Community Trust in Columba 1400 to discuss our plans. To date we have stocked our Invertote and Culnacnoc farms with smolts twice and have recently successfully harvested both sites.

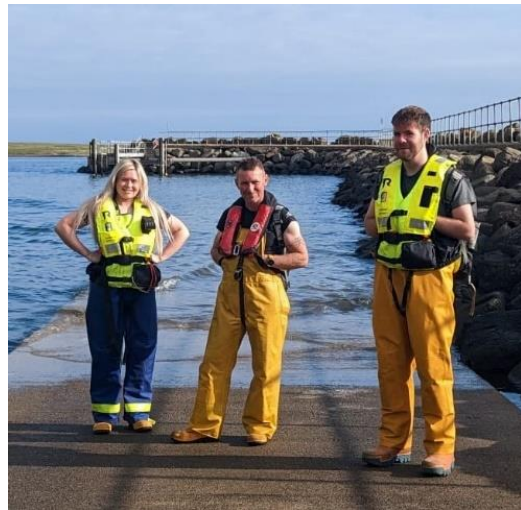
We now employ 18 people full-time and feel proud to be part of the community in Staffin, supporting local organisations and the economy.

OSH has accounts with both Staffin shops and we rent office and meeting space from the Church of Scotland and Columba 1400, respectively.

The Staffin Triathlon was in partnership with Staffin Community Hall and OSH was delighted to support the inaugural event.

Our new staff and management offices situated at Taighean a’ Chaiseil are being fitted out by the Edinbane joiner Richard Whatley and we are looking forward to moving in soon. We

intend to have our main office premises in 1 Taighean a’ Chaiseil (next door to the health centre) where our site managers and staff will be based. At 3 Taighean a’ Chaiseil we will have storage space and three or four computers and desks so our staff can feed the fish remotely in days



OSH staff Mairead Urquhart, Alex MacLeod and Steven McDiarmid at the slipway.

when we cannot get out to sea because of adverse weather conditions. We would be delighted to show the community around the premises when they are completed. Our Invertote farm will be restocked for the third time within the next month. This is a major milestone for OSH as our choice of high energy, high tidal flow locations are delivering quality organic salmon to customers in many different parts of the world. OSH will continue to farm its fish with stocking densities below conventional industry standards.

We have intentionally sought to operate our Staffin sites in exposed locations with strong tidal currents which has helped enormously in ensuring reduced sea lice settlement on our salmon.

OSH has always intended to operate across four sites and as intimated at

the recent Staffin Community Council meeting this is still our strategy which will allow the year-round supply and business continuity. Our production plans are designed to ensure fallow periods of 4-6 months (when the farm sites have no fish) between production cycles and an extended fallow in excess of a year for each site on every other production cycle. What is highly encouraging is that during the second production cycle of the Invertote Site, (October 2021 – August 2023), OSH has not undertaken any medicinal treatments. We have only used freshwater and new innovative technology which is hugely



Joiner Richard Whatley at the OSH units.

encouraging for all involved in the perusal of additional farming locations, as we have proven that our production strategy and values are being met.

OSH was delighted to receive two awards at the recent Aquaculture ceremony held in Inverness recognising our community fund which is now over £50,000 given to various community projects. OSH would also like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the community for their continued support as we strive to

develop the business further and with the approval of new farming locations, we will in turn be able to employ more staff.

Organic Sea Harvest is keen to get into a position where we can contribute more into the local economy and help fulfil the list of projects that will help the community in its desire to ensuring long-term sustainability and self-sufficiency.

Iomain / Shinty

Skye Camanachd's talented ladies clinched the coveted Valerie Fraser Camanachd Cup at the weekend, with Staffin well represented in the team. Brogaig's Christina MacDonald and Lexy MacLeod from Clachan were in the line-up who beat Glasgow Mid Argyll 3-0 at Newtonmore in the national event, which was televised by BBC Alba.

The Valerie Fraser is the blue riband competition for ladies shinty.



The victorious Skye Ladies.

The Player of the Match, Caitlin MacLean, has strong Staffin roots, through her mother Maureen, of Staffin House, while team mate Hollie MacLean is another player with Taobh Sear blood, as her mother Kathleen hails from Digg. Current Sgoil Stafainn pupil support assistant Ruby MacLeod was also a key member of the team.