

Newsletter - August 2018

The Nurse's Cottage has been open from 11am to 3pm, Monday to Friday, from 14th May. The Cottage will close on 31st August.

Entry is free

Members and non-members are welcome at open meetings and the AGM.

There will be an open meeting in the Nurse's Cottage on Monday 3rd September at 7pm.

The AGM will be in the Nurse's Cottage on Monday 29th October at 7pm.

Annual Membership

Annual membership, open to over 16s, is £10; or £5 for additional adults at the same address.

You can join or renew in the Cottage or email info@bernerayhistorical.com

The subscription supports the running costs of the Cottage and the work of the Society.

Hebridean Connections

There are now records of almost 4000 people linked to Berneray on the Hebridean Connections website www.hebrideanconnections.com

The site records people who once lived on Berneray, their spouses and their families. There is a lot of other information so the site is well worth visiting.

The 2018 season

Sixteen people volunteered to cover two hour sessions in the Cottage this season.

Thanks in part to an earlier start, this has been a record year for visitors to the Nurse's Cottage. By August 22nd, there had been 845 visitors compared to the 636 of 2017, itself a record.

Some comments from the Visitors Book:

"What a wonderful place",

"Fascinating history, brought to life by the very friendly volunteer",

"Brilliant presentation of the past and present",

"Amazing piece of social (and political) history".

The School Log

One hundred years ago, the Berneray school roll was 113 and for part of the session there were only two teachers. Daily attendance was affected by the weather, potato planting and lifting and peat cutting – all to the considerable annoyance of the headteacher.

The school could be closed for weeks at a time to avoid spreading illness in the community. In 1917, it closed for two weeks for mumps and later for another two weeks for measles. In early 1919, the school closed for six weeks for influenza. Six people died from flu in Berneray in March 1919.

Time Line

The time line in the Nurse's Cottage starts in 6000BC with Mesolithic hunter-gatherers and ends in 1998 with the construction of the causeway. Are there recent events that should be added or significant events that were missed out?

New Publication

The Society has produced a new edition of **The Island of Berneray and its History** by Alick Morrison.

Some people will have a copy of the original pink covered A4 booklet that came out in 1989. It was put together by Dr John Womersley from articles written by Alick Morrison for the Inverness Gaelic Society.

The new version is in A5 format and includes photographs and maps as well as biographical information about the author.

It is for sale in the Nurse's Cottage – price £5.

Some Other Publications

Berneray through the Ages –
Tro na Linntean £5

The Story of Emigration from
Berneray - £5

Berneray Historical Guide £2.50

The Places Names of Berneray £6

The Sea Names of Berneray £4

Berneray Walks £1

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The Iolaire Disaster

There is a very fine model of the Iolaire in the Nurse's Cottage. It was made by Donald MacQuarrie, North Kessock, and is on loan until next March. It is hard not to be moved by the events it recalls.

The First World War ended almost 100 years ago on the 11th of November, 1918. Eighteen men from Berneray died; others will have suffered the effects of the war for the rest of their lives.

On New Year's Day 1919 there was one final tragedy, particularly for the people of Lewis, when the Iolaire sank just outside Stornoway harbour. Over 200 returning servicemen drowned as the grossly overcrowded vessel crashed into the rocks known as the Beasts of Holm.

Large numbers of servicemen had been brought by train to Kyle of Lochalsh, many more than the regular mailboat could carry. The Iolaire, a luxury steam yacht converted for the Navy, was to carry the Lewis men from Kyle of Lochalsh to Stornoway, leaving late on 31st December. Another vessel, leaving the following day, was to take the men from Harris. Despite these plans, two Berneray men died on the Iolaire.

Donald Paterson, 5 Borve, and Norman MacKillop, 11 Borve, were both just 18.

There is no record of how they came to be on the Iolaire.

Neither young man is listed in Bill Lawson's Croft History for Borve, surprising omissions.

A third puzzle concerns the Iolaire itself. The wrecked ship was the second vessel with that name and many pictures show the wrong ship. There is a picture in the Nurse's Cottage showing a vessel called the Iolaire before its conversion to naval use; is it the same vessel as the model?

If you wish to see the model of the Iolaire, please visit the Cottage before the end of the season on Friday 31st August.