

Newsletter - November 2022

Correction

Akram's van came from Tarbert and not Stornoway as was stated in the May 2022 Newsletter.

Membership

Membership subscriptions are an important part of our income. Annual membership, open to over 16s, is £10 (£5 for additional adults at the same address).

Payment can be by cash, cheque or standing order made out to Comunn Eachdraidh Bheàrnaraigh
sort code 80-05-60
account. 00108189

Membership, Standing Order and Gift Aid forms can be printed from our website. Please post or email to the Secretary, address below.

Gift Aid

If you pay income tax, then completing a Gift Aid form is an extra benefit to the Society at no extra cost to you.

We can claim £2.50 from HM Revenue and Customs making your membership worth £12.50.

Comhairle Grant

The Historical Society receives an annual grant of £350 from the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. This makes a big difference and we are most appreciative.

Berneray Historical Society

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The Summer Season in the Nurse's Cottage

The summer season of 2022 meant a welcome return to normality after not opening in 2020 and with a late start in 2021. We were able to open in May five days a week from 11am to 3pm until the season ended in late August.

We welcomed about 600 visitors to the cottage despite ferry problems, poor weather and some continuing Covid anxiety. Almost half of our visitors chose to sign the visitor's book. Their appreciative comments are very encouraging, letting us know how much they enjoyed their visit to Berneray Historical Society. Here is a brief selection:

"Really informative and with a warm welcome. Thank you." "Our 3rd visit to this wonderful place. Well done for all the hard work which has gone into the displays and information boards." "Came in from the rain. Came away with a history lesson." "Fascinating, and made all the more vivid by hearing it explained by the superb guide! Thank you." "Informative stop after a wet day on the Hebridean Way. Excellent exhibits and friendly volunteers."

The warm welcome provided by our sixteen volunteers was clearly appreciated and every season new volunteers are needed at the Cottage. Volunteers need to have a friendly manner but they don't need to have expert knowledge; the wall displays are self-explanatory and information is easily accessible.

Some visitors come because they have a family connection to Berneray, some are interested in local history, and some are looking for information about walks or wildlife. Many purchase a book or card as a souvenir of their visit and show their appreciation by making a donation.

This year most of our visitors came from the UK with roughly equal numbers from Scotland and England but people also came from Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand, several European countries and even Thailand. Meeting our visitors is a really interesting part of being a summer volunteer.

New additions to the historical archive of Berneray

Fading Footprints A highlight of the year was the publication of 'Fading Footprints' by Murdo Turner. The book records the life and times of his father Neil Turner, born in Islay and raised in Berneray. His life story includes his career as a teacher in Harris, Grimsay and North Uist and provides a fascinating description of life in the Hebrides in the early 20th century.

We would like to thank Murdo Turner who generously donated 60 copies for sale by Berneray Historical Society. The book has been in great demand with all copies sold. We have orders for more copies and the book is being re-printed.

Dùthchas Dùthchas|Home is an invaluable addition to Berneray's historical record. The film is about Berneray, then and now. Cine film from the sixties and seventies taken by Bill Scott, a regular visitor, is interspersed with interviews with people closely connected with Berneray today.

The film, directed by Andy Mackinnon and Kirsty MacDonald, is being shown to appreciative audiences throughout the UK.

The old cine film has become a valuable piece of history and so will the interviews with the people of Berneray today.

Berneray School Pupils' Trip to Pabbay, 1937

The coronation of King Charles III scheduled for Saturday 6th May 2023 will be marked by a Public Holiday and probably other celebrations too. Still remembered in Berneray is the celebration of another coronation recorded in this photograph.

Charles's grandfather, King George VI was crowned approximately 85 years ago on Wednesday 12th May 1937 and the coronation was celebrated by a school trip to Pabbay. The school roll then was 55 when school attendance was compulsory only until pupils were fourteen years old.

The school log notes merely: "School is closed today (Coronation Day) Open again on Monday" but Duncan MacKinnon, six years old at the time, was on that trip and must be one of the few people who can remember the day. He told us more about it.



This photo was donated to the Society by the late Donald MacKillop

Shortly before his seventh birthday, Duncan and his older brother and sisters joined the other children at the small jetty close to where the harbour now is. All the pupils boarded two Berneray boats: John Angus Paterson's 'Kelvin' and Alec MacLean's 'Ocean Pearl' which was steered by Donald Shaw on that day. Most of the pupils' mothers came too bringing picnics.

The head teacher Mr MacKay took a wireless so that they could hear the King's speech. The second teacher, Miss MacLeod (Bellag Choinnich Thormoid) from Harris, was there as well.

The weather was fine, and the children were landed by small tenders onto the beach, and warned to keep well away from the cattle that grazed Pabbay along with the sheep flock. Two shepherds were resident on the island then.

Duncan does not remember exactly what they did, but thinks that they probably ran about and perhaps played football.

With thanks to Duncan MacKinnon and Mary Harman. More information, recollections and photographs very welcome.

Back row L - R: Becca Ferguson (16 Borve), Kirsty Mary MacLeod (The Quarry), Ann MacKillop (2 Borve), Kirsty Maggie MacKillop (Cidhe), Kirsty Ann MacLeod (an Gliob), Mary MacKinnon (Port), the two heads behind Mary are John MacLean (Cuaraidh, Backhill) and Iain MacLeod (an Gliob), Roddie Shaw (32 Backhill), Heather Carruth (Sandhill), Mary Belle Morrison (F C Mission House), Ann MacKillop (8 Ruisgarry -Baile)

Second Row L - R: Jessie MacKillop (Baile), Morag Kate MacAskill (7 Borve), Mary Ann Morrison (F C Mission House), Katie Shaw (32 Backhill), Nellie Morrison (F C Mission House), Morag MacKillop (2 Borve, helper), Morag MacAskill (Rubha Mhanais, helper)

Third Row L - R: Peggy MacKillop (Cidhe), Donald John MacLeod (Trealigarry), Morag MacAskill (6 Borve), Norman Morrison (F C Mission House), Lena MacAskill (Tar-a-Loch), Angus MacAskill (Cidhe), Morag Ferguson (16 Borve)

Fourth Row L - R: Ann MacKillop (11 Borve), Morag MacLeod (an Gliob), Katie MacLeod (Pol-an-oir), Ruairaidh MacKinnon (Port), Donald MacLeod (12 Backhill), Alastair MacKillop (Pol-an-oir), John MacKillop (2 Borve), Norman MacKillop (Port)

Fifth Row L - R: James MacDonald (Swan Cottage), May MacKay (The Schoolhouse), Donald John Shaw (32 Backhill), Margaret Morrison (F C Mission House), Joan MacLean (Cuaraidh, Backhill), Donald MacKillop (Port), John Ferguson (16 Borve), Peter Wilson (Sandhill - legs only), Ruairaidh MacLeod (an Gliob), Calum MacKay (The Schoolhouse), Duncan B MacAskill (7 Borve), Duncan MacKinnon (Port), Peter MacAskill (Cidhe – in the white hat), Roddy MacLeod (behind Peter, 12 Backhill), Ronald Carruth (Sandhill), Donald MacLean (Ardmaree)