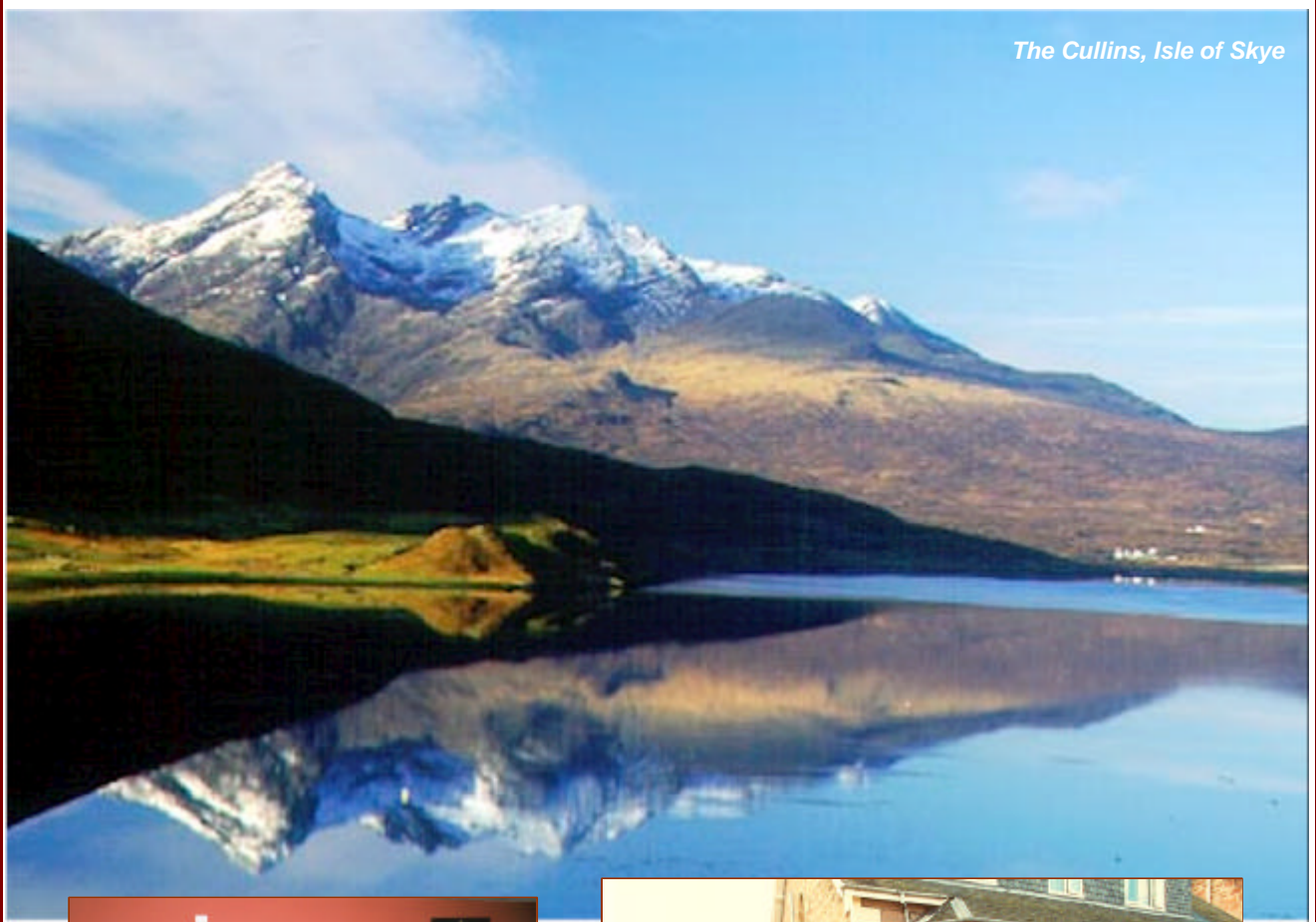


REPORT

FROM STUDY TOUR TO

SCOTLAND

SEPTEMBER 2000



THE COUNTY GOVERNOR IN SOGN OG FJORDANE

Preface

The County Governor of Sogn og Fjordane has since 1996 participated in a project of co-operation with Scotland . The initiative came from Scottish Natural Heritage, inviting us to be a network participant related to an EU project called *Coastal, Mountain and Forest Area Sustainability Strategies*. A delegation from Scotland visited Sogn og Fjordane in the fall of 1996.

Later on, the project was restructured and obtained funding under the EU-programme LIFE. In 1998, the project was reorganised with the main secretariat located in Inverness and named *Dúthchas – Our place in the Future*.

Duthchas is chiefly concerned with economic development in the countryside. Three areas in the *Highlands and Islands* are selected as participants in the project: *North Sutherland* on the mainland, *Trottenish* on the Island of Skye, and *North Uist* in the Outer Hebrides. Detailed information on *Dúthchas* may be looked up at Internet: <http://www.duthchas.org.uk>

The procedures used in *Dúthchas* are similar to our approach in the *Rural Development Programme* in Sogn og Fjordane. For this reason we could easily identify problems and challenges shared by our own local communities and remote areas in Scotland. Relative to *Dúthchas* and the relations between Sogn og Fjordane and the *Highlands and Islands*, we have tried to emphasise direct contact between communities. Delegates from our countryside Development Programme thus participated in a study tour to the Highlands in the summer of 1997, and later – April 1999 - in the international conference *Looking after the Future – Community approach to sustainable rural development*. This conference was organised by the *Dúthchas*-project, and took place in Tongue in North Sutherland, i.e. one of the project areas of *Dúthchas*. The participants represented 7 European countries and the USA.

During the fall of 1999 a group of 15 persons from the *Dúthchas*-project participated in a study tour to Sogn og Fjordane. Selje was the point of departure. Following that, the Scots got to visit all the regions of our county, seeing different landscapes and learning about economic activities in the coastal area, the innermost districts of Nordfjord and Sunnfjord, as well as the fruit-growing region of Sogn. Local development groups were in charge of hosting the visitors and setting up local programmes each place.

Our own trip to Scotland in the fall of 2000 was a return visit following the visit of the Scots the previous year. The study tour was chosen as an alternative to a semi-annual conference or *local forum* for the communities which participate in the *Rural Development Programme*. Each of the six communities was allowed to send three delegates, and had to pay a local share of the cost of the tour. A special invitation had been extended to Rasmus Felde, the chairman of the District Council committee for regional development. *Terje Eggum*, a journalist in *Sogn Avis* was invited to join us on the tour as well.

The principal purpose of the tour was to follow up contacts that had been established between local groups in the two countries, exchange experiences and provide mutual inspiration. There are many similarities between Sogn og Fjordane and the Highlands & Islands. The problems and challenges in the Scottish countryside have many parallels to Sogn og Fjordane: population decline, increasing portion of old age persons, and a shortage of young females. In addition, it is very difficult to create new alternative jobs in addition to traditional employment in agriculture.

The tour, including excursions and local contacts showed clearly that we may learn quite a few things as to the way the Scots take on their problems and challenges, even though the frame conditions are different from ours own. We also had the pleasure of experiencing different forms of traditional Gaelic culture still in existence in some of the places we visited. On the other hand, this tour as well as previous visits to us of the Scots showed that insight in our experiences and way of life may be valuable to the Scots as well.

The Project Group

Contents

Preface

Contents

Study Tour to Scotland

bus from Aberdeen to Inverness
the Castle County and the Whiskey Trail
arrival and introduction in Inverness

Trottenish – Isle of Skye

Staffin and Columba 1400
Staffin Slipway/Sgoil Stafainn/the potato man, Terry Prichard
Kilwaxter Souterrain/White Wave Activities/Borve
Ceilidh at Columba 1400
Aros Centre/St.Columba's Island
Uig Community Development/farewell party at Columba 1400

North Uist at the Outer Hebrides

Lochmaddy/local produce market/Stepping Stones
Mac Lean's bakery/West Minch Salmon/Carinish& District Hall/the Hebridean Woolhouse
traditional Grimsay boats/Kallin Harbour/house of culture Urachad Uibhist
Taigh Sgire Sholais/Carnish Church/Marie MacPhail's garden/Hut of the Shadows
Taigh Chearsabhagh

North Sutherland

Farr School/Armadale housing project, Margaret Mackay/Skerray crofting community
Borgie Forest/Forest Day
ceilidh, Armadale Hall/Erribol Pier Site/ Durness Village
church ruins in Balnakeil/return to Inverness
evening gathering and concert in Balnain House

Summary

the local school, a cultural centre/ multiple activities at the crofts nature protection spurring local
economic development/ cultural heritage interpreting history and creating activities/
mobilising for local communities/ agricultural co-operation in crofting communities
multipurpose house/ ceilidh – gatherings/favourable appreciation from a District Council member

Appendix

list of participants
re-print of articles in Sogn Avis (local newspaper)



Study Tour to Scotland

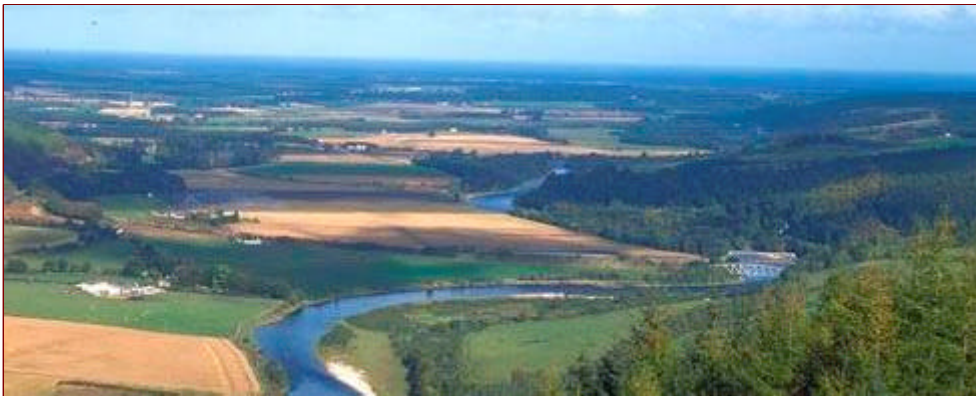
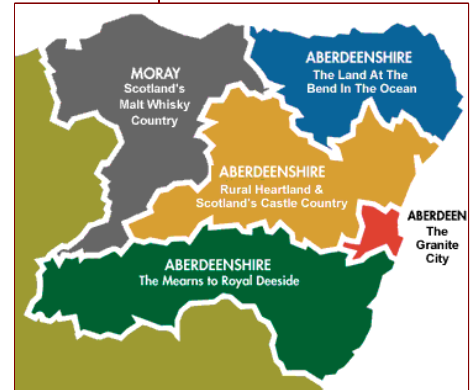
The point of departure was Flesland International Airport. Most of the delegates from the six local communities arrived the day before departure, and stayed at Bergen Airport Hotel, where Oddleif had made arrangements for inexpensive accommodations.

Thursday 31. August

After an early flight departing from Bergen, we landed in *Aberdeen*, and drove on towards *Inverness* in a chartered bus. We enjoyed observing the scenery, and used the opportunity to inform the participants about our plans for the following days

Bussing from Aberdeen to Inverness

The area northward from Aberdeen is called *Grampian*. The scenery is reminiscent of the central parts of Eastern Norway – heights rising above the low-lying river valleys. But the area rises further and turns into heather-covered hills and mountains. The lowlands constitute continuous rich agricultural lands; variable crops, grain fields and pastures.



The lower parts of the Strathspey River Valley has scenic qualities rather similar to Ringerike and Hadeland. A nice heritage scenery with large farms along the river and surrounded by low forest-clad hills

Scotland's Castle County and the Whiskey Trail

The first part of the route connecting Aberdeen and Inverness traverses parts of *Aberdeenshire*, claiming to be *Scotland's Castle County*. Scattered about in the countryside and villages are many well preserved country houses and castles.

Later on, the highway passes through Moray, an old Pict province, today referred to as Scotland's Malt Whiskey County. There are a lot of malt whiskey distilleries all over



Fyvie Castle from around 1300 is just one of 70 castles and manor houses in the Grampian Highlands

The Malt Whiskey Trail

More than half of the Scottish malt whiskey distilleries are found in the Grampian Highlands. Eight of the most well known distilleries are located near the famous Malt Whiskey Trail. Here they are, like Glenfiddich, Glen Giant, Glenlivet, et al.



Tour start in Inverness

Upon arrival in Inverness, Vanessa Halhead, the head of the project, extended a welcome to the group. The Dúthchas office is located in the same building as Highlands & Islands Enterprise in the middle of the city. Here we were briefed about the Dúthchas projects as well as our respective itineraries. Vanessa and her staff had prepared a lot of background information. Each participant was given a portfolio covering the different areas we were about to visit, as well as detailed maps of the recommended highway connections.

Following this briefing and a light lunch, we boarded the vans lined up in front of the Highland Council: three vehicles bound for The Hebrides travelling westerly along Loch Ness, and one van heading for North Sutherland.



Vanessa Halhead is the head of the Dúthchas project. She is a real friend of Norway and knows our county very well, having made several official and private visits to Sogn og Fjordane



Bagpiper posing in front of the Eilean Donan Castle

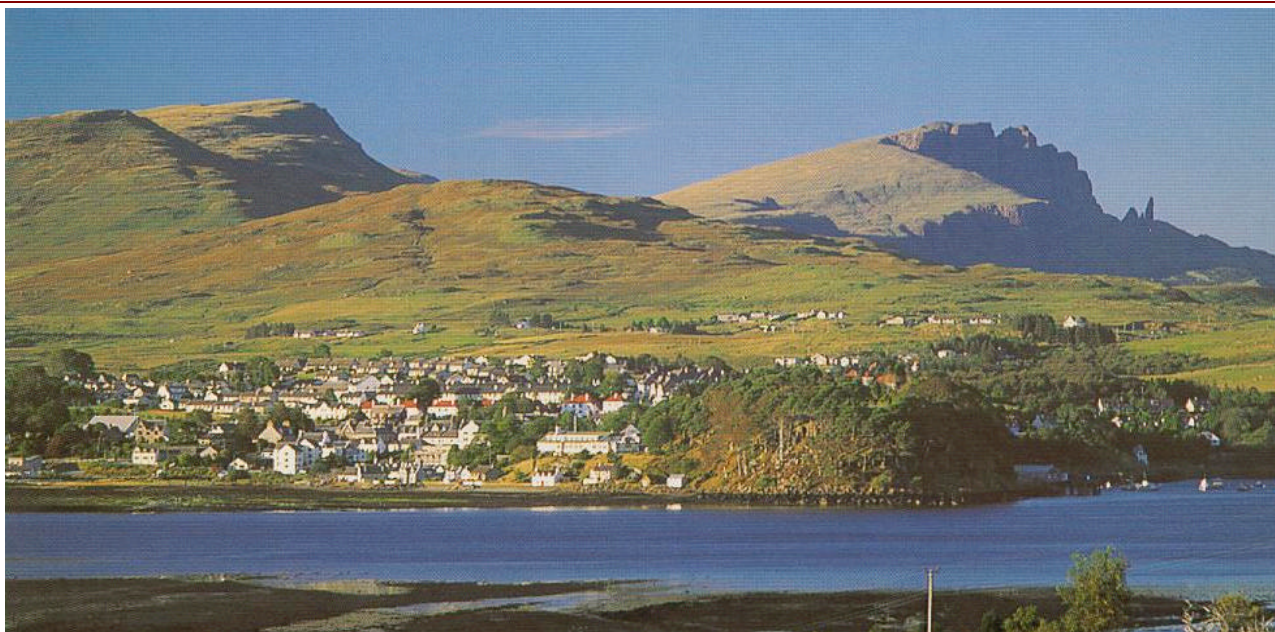
Trotternish

- Isle of Skye

The Isle of Skye is the largest one of the Inner Hebrides. The island is more than 30 km long and 5-15 km wide, comprising an area of approx. 1400 km². Archaeological findings dating back more than 6500 years and indicate early settlements. Within historical times the island has been commented on by Ptolemy, who drew a map of it. He named the island Skitis, but it is assumed that the name derives from Nordic term sky and ey – *skyøya*, or sky island. This corresponds nicely with the Gaelic name *Eilean a' Cheo* – *the misty island*.

Irish monks arrived as early as 550 AD and brought Christianity to Skye and Scotland. Later on came the Norwegian Vikings, in the beginning as raiders. However, even before 800 AD some of them became settlers. Little by little they assumed full control of the island, and for more than 400 years, Skye and the Hebrides were ruled by a Norwegian king, or kings of Nordic origin. A great number of geographical names of Nordic origin bear witness of this period.

Trottenish, deriving from the Nordic Trondarnes, is the northeastern part of Skye. This peninsula has barely 2000 inhabitants, and constitutes the project area participating in Dúthchas. The scenery is in part rather dramatic, with tall cliffs, ravines and steep precipices. Until 200-300 years ago, the island was partly forested, but the forest cover disappeared when the land owners in the early 1800s started raising sheep on a large scale. In recent years there has been some forest plantings, but popular opinion is divided on the wisdom of expanded forestry.



Portree with Trotternish Range and The Old Man

Dúthchas at Trotternish

The Project Group at Trotternish has under the Dúthchas Project been concentrating on the following main topics:

1. *Renewable energy sources*
2. *Local food production – multiple markets*
3. *Trekking routes, associated with history and cultural heritage*
4. *Minimising refuse – composting*
5. *Transportation and infrastructure*

Staffin and Columba 1400

Overnight stay at Columba 1400

Both the group destined for Skye and those who were to go on to North Uist were lodged at Columba 1400. This is a brand new multi-purpose centre, serving as community hall, seminar centre, restaurant and guest house.

Sine Gillespie came to the our communal dinner, wished us welcome to Skye, and briefed us on the program during our stay at Skye and Trottenish.



Friday 1.september

Initially, a walk to the *Trottenish Ridge* had been planned. This ridge runs for 30 km along the peninsula, featuring peaks nearly 700 m high. Due to low-lying cloud cover in the morning, there was a shorter walk in the area around Staffin with *Sine and Donald MacDonald* as guides. Trottenish Ridge will become the principal attraction for *Trottenish Trails and Interpretation*, a network of trails across grand scenic landscapes with remarkable geological features. The trails will pass by sites of cultural and historic significance.

Staffin

Staffin is a typical *crofting community*, including 14 hamlets. The state is the landlord, which is common in the northern part of Skye. Protests and demonstrations among crofters against high land rents and limitation on rights in the 1880s originated on Skye. The protestations eventually led to the *Crofting Act* in 1886, which secured the rights of the crofters to land and pastures. In the years to come, the State purchased several large sheep estates to acquire land for more crofters.

Sine and Donald thought that the crofting system was functioning rather well in the area. There would be little to gain by purchasing the crofts, as has been done in some places. The landowner (the State) had previously done a lot to improve the crofts, although less so lately, partly due to low surplus deriving from the land rent. Total revenues from land rent, salmon catch, power line right-of-way etc constitute approx. £ 30 000 per annum. That is not enough to make the crofters interested in taking over. However, if the State would sell it they were interested.

Some people are operating several crofts on a rental basis, but outright purchase and consolidation of crofting land is not permitted. Compared to Western Norwegian standards the properties are not small, perhaps 80 to 100 hectares, and at least that much acreage in shared outfields and pastureland. For most crofts the farming is very extensive, mostly sheep, but also some cattle breeding for meat production. The majority of the land is used for grazing, but some people also harvest fodder as ensilage. Field drying of hay has almost come to an end. If shelters are needed for the animals, very simple sheds will suffice.

There is neither a slaughterhouse nor a creamery at the Isle of Skye. For this reason, the regular practice for the farmers is to sell lambs and young cattle to buyers for further fattening on the mainland. Most of the lambs are sent to the region between Inverness and Aberdeen, but also to the south and Glasgow, or even to England or Spain. The main auction takes place in Portree early September, but some buyers also purchase locally. The price level in the fall of 2000 was expected to be £ 15-20 per lamb.



Sine Gillespie believes that the crofting system is very important in order to maintain the population in the countryside. However, very few people actually make a living from crofting, most people have some additional occupation or trade. Being a crofter is more of a life style than a way of making a living.

Staffin Slipway

The difference between high and low tide at Skye is considerable, normally 4.5 m but often as much as 6 m. This makes landing and anchorage difficult for small craft. Staffin Trust, headed by Donald, has both before and after the start of Dúthchas been working for the construction of a slipway enabling small craft to land whenever they wish. The slipway and molo have a total cost of £ 300 000, where 80 000 is grant-in-aid from the EU and the balance local money and work.

Their hope is that local fishermen will land their catch in Staffin, thereby spurring new economic activities. There are plans for additional improvements, including a service facility for small craft. While constructing an access road connecting to the slipway, a 6500- year old cave was discovered, where remains of fireplace indicated human habitation during three different historical periods.

Sgoil Staffainn – Staffin primary school

The school accommodates 47 pupils and 4 teachers. In addition there is a nursery for children 2 – 4 years. The school district covers an area 6 – 7 km south and north of Staffin. The head master, *Norma Macleod*, is very keen on making the pupils conscious of their local history and cultural heritage, including Gaelic. Staffin is a core area for Gaelic language at Skye, and the school children may select either Gaelic or English to be their major language.

This year the school is a participant in *Féis Thròndairnis*, an art project initiated by Dúthchas. Its main purpose is to provide better instruction and thus better understanding of Gaelic art and culture. At the school, we were shown drawings and poems created by the pupils as a result of this project. In the context of focusing on minority cultures the school has established contacts with Finnmark. There are project links to a school in Kongsvinger as well.

The Potato Man, Terry Pritchard

Terry has a croft in Erlais at the west side of Trottenish, which he took over after having retired from his teaching position. The area is 7-8 hectares, and in addition 10 hectares of common pasture land. Most of the land is used for pasture and winter fodder for approx. 30 sheep, but gardening is his main interest. He is the head of the *Skye and Lochalsh Garden Society*, as well as a member of a Dúthchas group promoting greater agricultural diversification. The garden society wants to promote gardening practices to include more cultivation of traditional berry and vegetables crops, as well as growing of flowers and new garden plants. The society also organises marketing, such as a market day once a week in local community centres.

Terry's nickname, the *Potato Man*, arises from his interest in potatoes, both the cultivation of different sorts and his use of various methods of cultivation. One of these was cultivation on the surface of the soil and under sheets of black plastics. This is similar to a traditional technique, using seaweed as cover. He planted onion in a plastic greenhouse in November, which could be harvested in April.

Thereafter he planted seedlings of tomatoes, pumpkin and squash. Terry was also trying to start a composting project aiming at recycling and minimising of refuse.

During our visit at Terry's croft we met *Catriona Maclean*, who works as an advisor in *Skye and Lochals Enterprise*. Catriona is a «resource person» for Dúthchas, and she has a special interest in promoting old methods of cultivation in order to improve the output of arable land.

Terry Pritchard demonstrates cultivation of potatoes under plastic cover

Along the coast of Staffin there used to be good salmon fishing. This has now come to an end. Neither are many of the coastal fishermen landing their catch at Staffin any longer.

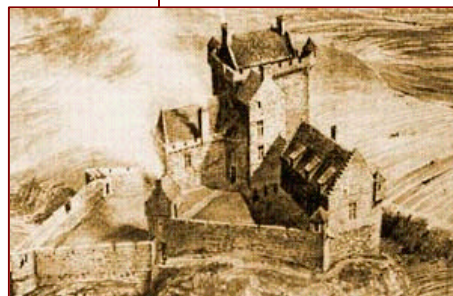


In the evening there was an dinner at Duntulm Castle Hotel, located 17 km to the north of Staffin, almost at the northern tip of Trottenish. The hotel is a popular place and well known for the view of fine sunsets over the Outer Hebrides. Here we met – among others – Ian MacDonald and Alistair Nicholson, both of them participants on the trip to Norway last fall.

Saturday 2. September

Duntulm Castle

The first item on the agenda was a visit to the ruins of Duntulm Castle, built during the 1400s by the clans MacLeod and later on reconstructed and expanded. The castle has been the main residence for both the clans MacLeod and MacDonald, for the latter clan until 1730 when MacDonald moved to Armadale Castle at the south end of Skye. Many legends and ghost stories are associated with the castle, which is rumored to be one reason for MacDonald moving to another residence.



The castle is nearly in shambles. However, as a part of the Dúthchas project, a foundation has been established for the purpose of taking care of the remnants as a historical monument.

Skye Museum of Island Life

This museum near *Kilmuir* is a cluster of brick houses with a straw-covered roof intended to demonstrate what a crofting village looked like, and showing the social and material conditions of the crofters at Skye in the second half of the 19th century. . The museum has been established by *Jonathan MacDonald*, one of the foremost experts on Gaelic culture.



The first building was finished in 1965, and Jonathan is still in charge of the museum. Later on, more structures have been added, and the cluster now include a cottage, barn, smithy, weaving-cottage and even a ceilidh-hall, where the families gathered in the evening. Many artefacts, tools and old photos with explanations make the museum well suited for self-study. Souvenirs and handicraft articles may be purchased in a kiosk located in one of the buildings.

Flora MacDonald

In connection with the visit to the museum we also went to the grave yard in Kilmuir, and saw the grave of Flora MacDonald. Flora became a Scottish heroin after having helped Charles Edward Stuart, («Bonnie Prince Charlie») to flee from Uist to Skye, and later on to France following the defeat of the Scots at Culloden.



The memorial of Flora MacDonald at the graveyard near Kilmuir

Kilvaxter Souterrain

This is an archaeological discovery of great significance, uncovered just a few months ago. Diggings have been started under the direction of the archaeologist Roger Miket, using local people as active partners. This far, a number of subterranean alleys and room have been found, with masonry walls covered by large stone slabs with earth and clay on top. A few pieces of potsherds have been found, and stone forms that may have been working tools.

This type of construction has been found several places on Skye and in Scotland, Ireland and France, but only at one place in England. The period has been determined to be Early Iron Age, at the time the Picts inhabited Scotland. There are different theories about the use of these constructions, but according to Roger the most likely use is food storage facilities.



White Wave Activities, Kilmuir

We had luncheon at *White Wave*, which is a bed-and-breakfast facility serving other meals as well. However, the main interest of *John White* and his wife *Ann Martin* is nature and local culture. John is offering adventure tours and «*school camp*» making use of the surrounding countryside, and not the least Gaelic folklore and heritage. He hopes that outdoor activities will engage *feelings, body and soul*. Ann Martin quit her job as local co-ordinator of vocational training 2 years ago in order to become a fulltime professional Gaelic singer. Recently, she completed her second CD of Gaelic folk songs, and was now in the middle of a concert tour with partner *Ingrid Henderson*, who plays *clàrsach* – Gaelic harp.

Roger Miket is explaining about the diggings and discoveries at Kilvaxter Souterrain

Borve

Here, we paid a visit to the croft of *Alaistar Nicolson*, employed in *Skye & Lochals Enterprises*. *Borve* is a relatively new crofting hamlet, even though the name indicates old Nordic settlement. Remnants of a standing stones point even further back in time. Alaistar has a croft of approx. 10 hectares. He is one of the prime movers to *Borve & Anishader Community Trust*, which has purchased this estate comprising 1860 ha. Even though the crofters now own the estate, they remain crofters. The fact that they now own the land provides more liberty as to how they use it, and strive to bring about more versatile cultivation the way it was done in former times. They have planted a variety of forest trees, and have plans for a housing subdivision and sell building lots.



Standing stones at Borve

Alaistar takes part in the planning of Trottenish Trails as a local Dúthchas representative, and works in particular to develop the necessary digital maps and data. Through his work at Skye & Lochals Enterprise Alaistar also has become involved in the *Croft Entrant Scheme*, a programme intended to assist young people in the process of taking over crofts. This programme also maintains a register of abandoned or little used crofts, and attempts to persuade the owners to transfer such crofts to other and younger people. Both seller and buyer of crofts may receive grants, and in addition monetary support is available for training and croft management schemes.

Ceilidh at Columba 1400

The Gaelic term *ceilidh* means festive gathering with friends and relatives. Before the advent of radio and television, it was customary for neighbours and friends to assemble in the evening to sing, tell stories and discuss various topics. Thus ceilidh is the Gaelic counterpart to our own *kveldsete*. Nowadays, the term generally refers to a festive gathering with entertainment and often dancing.

In connection with the publication of Ann Martins new CD featuring traditional Gaelic music, she has been on a concert tour with Ingrid Henderson. The concluding event took place at Columba 1400, and gave us a chance to become more familiar with Gaelic song and music. Ann and Ingrid have been musical partners for several years, thus touring and offering recitals in many European countries, that is Sweden, as well as the USA and Canada.



Sunday 3. September

A pietistic tradition still survives in the Hebrides and the western parts of Scotland. This is also the case in Skye, and for that reason no activities were planned for the tour group on Sunday. Instead, the group divided in two – some going for a walk in *Quiraing*, while the other one travelled to the *Aros Centre* in Portree.



Erik, Åse og Ole hiking in the Trotternish Ridge



Aros Centre

This centre combines the twin functions of being a tourist information centre, as well as a heritage information centre for Skye, with particular emphasis of the diverse and turbulent history of the island. The story of the sea eagle was of particular interest to us. This bird of prey had become extinct in Scotland, but it had been reintroduced by transferring birds from Norway. This very summer they had for the first time registered that the sea eagle again is nesting at the Scottish west coast.

At the Aros-centre we also met with Gavin Parson, who is a guide at the Gaelic college *Shabal Mor Orstaig* at Skye. In addition, Gavin is a crofter, and has been working in Norway as an agricultural substitute worker in Trøndelag and Nordmøre. He has brought back some agricultural practices from Norway, among those drying hay on wires – *hesjing*. In 1999 he spent some time in Norway in order to locate a suitable borough for a research project investigating the impact of different agricultural and rural development policies on local communities. Askvoll commune may become a partner in this project.

St. Columba's Island

Everyone in the Skye-group joined for lunch at the *Skeabost House Hotel*, along with Gavin Parson and his family. Skeabost is but one of many geographical names on the island of obvious Nordic origin. Bost is naturally bustad, the identical suffix e.g. found in Myklebust. Skea is assumed to derive from the Nordic male name *Skidi*, namely *Skidi's homestead*.

The Skeabost River boasts one of the best salmon runs on Skye. Directly upstream from the mouth of the river there is an island. This island is named *St. Columba's Island*, where remnants of a small chapel may be observed. Locally it is said that St. Columba had the chapel constructed when Christianity was introduced to Skye. However, there is some uncertainty about this story. But the island formerly had considerable religious significance. This used to be the principal sanctuary for the Hebrides until it was moved to *Iona* in 1498.

It is also said that 27 chieftains of the Nicolson clan have been buried on the island. *Nicolson* is the eldest clan on Skye, and the lineage goes back to Nordic chieftains. A carved stone tells about this Nordic link. In 1223 *Gudrød*, the son of the Nordic king ruling over Man and *Suderøyane*, was caught by surprise by his uncle *Olav Svarte*. Gudrød was blinded and tortured, but even so he survived. The bishop of the Hebrides, Rognald (Reginald), was involved in this family feud as well.



The remains of an old chapel at St. Columba's Island

Uig Community Development

Although Uig is a ferry terminal, the place has problems associated with remote rural communities. Lately, the petrol station, local store and the hotel have closed their doors. In February 1999 the local inhabitants founded a community development association due to the possible moving of the ferry terminal to another site. So far the ferry terminal has been saved. However, if it is to remain there, the pier needs improvements. The cost will be approx. 50 mill. NOK. Further development of the local community of Uig is part of the strategy for the Dúthchas project at Trottenish.



*Uig with the ferry terminal
(The name Uig or Uige in
gaelic, has its root in
norse Vik meaning bay)*

Farewell dinner at Columba 1400

Our visit to Skye was concluded with an informal dinner at Columba 1400. The group from North Uist joined us as well following their return the same evening.



North Uist at the Outer Hebrides

The Western Isles, also called the Outer Hebrides, is a chain of 12 large and smaller inhabited island communities. *North Uist* is located in the middle of this archipelago, and has during the last few years been connected with the two islands to the south – Benbecula and South Uist – by a new road. To the north a car ferry is connecting to *Harris Island*, and another ferry run from Lochmaddy provides a link to *Uig* at the *Isle of Skye*.



North Uist is a flat island, 27 km long and 21 km wide. More than half of the area is covered with small tarns and lakes, and the middle part is rather marshy. The countryside is open and nude, featuring white sandy beaches to the West, while the east side has boulders and rock cliffs, and is split up by inlets and bays. The island has an abundant population of birds and varied living areas featuring many rare species. Much of the island and the surrounding seas are subject to national nature conservation regulations. The tidal water fluctuates 4 to 5 m, but here are many small bridges and causeways tying the archipelago together in a satisfactory manner.

1500 inhabitants at North Uist

The total population of the Outer Hebrides is approx. 30 000. The majority live at the northernmost island of Lewis, where the provincial capital Stonoway is located. North Uist accommodates approx. 1500 inhabitants. One landowner owns the better part of the island. Most of the employment is combined with crofting, fishing or marine resources, for the most part fish farming, lobster and shellfish. The major fish resources just outside the shoreline are for the most part exploited by industrial scale fishing vessels from other parts of Great Britain, the other EU countries, and some from Norway. Tourism has been increasing the last few years, and the islanders intend to make the most out of their natural heritage and potential in this field.

Traditional culture and heritage is well preserved in North Uist, and the island is a core area as to preservation of the Gaelic language. Gaelic is the principal language and is seen as a basic cultural resource. The school puts much emphasis on their traditional language.

Dúthchas at North Uist

The project group at North Uist has selected 4 principal activities under the Dúthchas project:

1. *Renewable energy*
2. *Local processing of raw materials*
3. *Sustainable use of marine resources*
4. *To develop tourism based on the local culture and natural qualities*



Friday 1. September

After breakfast at Columba 1400 we drove to Uig and boarded the ferry to North Uist. Thick fog covered the narrow passage through Trottenish Ridge. As we approached Uig, we marveled at a splendid view of the bay and the sea.

Due to large tidal fluctuations, the ferry landing is a long pier, and the cars had to pass over a long narrow road before driving aboard. The voyage across the sea was very nice.

The expensive ferry fares were a surprise to us. £250 for a mini bus with 9 persons and £700 for a trailer, even if the crossing only lasted only 2 hours. There were only two round trips scheduled each day, and advance booking was required. We had not done that and had to leave the minibus behind.

Lochmaddy

When we arrived in Lochmaddy, we were met by representatives from the Dùthchas project at North Uist, as well as some of the visitors to Sogn og Fjordane 1999.



Lochmaddy is a harbour and point of entry to North Uist from the mainland and Isle of Skye

From there we were driven to Taigh

Chearsabhagh, a multipurpose centre which included museum, art centre, workshops cafeteria, kiosk et al.

There, a short dias presentation introduced us to the Hebrides and North Uist, as well as the places we were scheduled to visit. In addition, we were given brochures dealing with all the projects in which Dùthchas is involved.

Local Produce Market

Further on we paid a visit to a local produce market. Driving across the island we experienced the marshlands and small lakes to be found all across North Uist. At the market local vegetables, fruit and plants offered, as well as live lobster, crayfish, crabs and shellfish. The sanitary conditions at the market were in accordance with the regulations imposed by the EU.

Local Produce Market is a result of the project *Uist 2000* and takes place every second Friday. One reason for this initiative was the fact that less people now were growing their own produce. The start was in May, and the initiative has been met with very positive response from the public.

Luncheon at Stepping Stones

This facility turned out to be a pastry shop recently started by the owners of McLean's bakery. There was considerable interest in such a meeting place, one important reason for the initiative. The interior decoration – by local artists - was very neat indeed.

It was a delicious meal, and while we were eating, a briefing was given about *Western Isle Enterprise*, a development society similar to SND in Norway. They maintained a small branch office at North Uist.



Caitriona MacCuish is a project co-ordinator for Dùthchas at North Uist. She was born and raised at a croft, and has recently returned home after completing studies in Glasgow. She has a strong interest in Gaelic language and history

MacLean's bakery

started up some time in the 1990s. Before that, Uist had to purchase bakery goods from Inverness. Transportation might take three days. The local people were most happy when the bakery started up. At long last they could by fresh bread. Altogether, the bakery employs 14 people, some of them part-time. Ewan MacLean told us that their production is sold locally only, and they adjust their output to demand. The only export consists of dry products like biscuits et al.

West Minch Salmon

Here we met Angus MacMillan who is running the business. The firm was started 8 years ago and now has joined the project Uist 2000. The business enterprises include sea farms, slaughter facility for salmon, and additional processing such as smoking. They also operate a shop, selling their own products directly, as well as fish and shellfish obtained from local fishermen.

Total employment is 60 and the annual production approx. 2000 tons of salmon. They deliberately avoid adding medicine and artificial chemicals to the fodder. Future plans include ecological salmon products and halibut farming.



Carnish District Hall

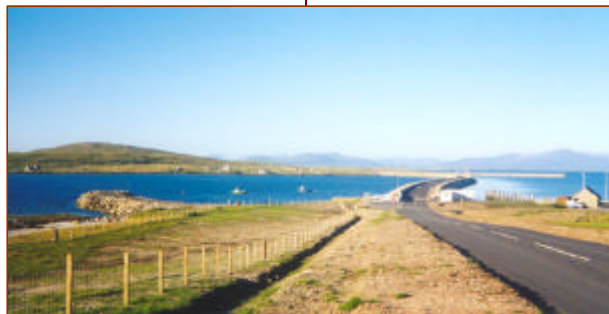
Angus and Maire MacPhail welcomed us to this community hall with a serving of tea, coffee and cookies. This building, dating from the 1960s, was scheduled to be reconstructed and expanded during the next 6 months in order to accommodate gymnasium, wardrobe facilities, stage, institutional size kitchen and meeting rooms.

Temple View Hotel

We dined at this little hotel in Carinish, and met several local people involved in a variety of activities on the island. They told us about various enterprises, and we swapped experiences relating to such projects here as well as in Sogn og Fjordane.

After dinner we drove to Berneray, an island to the north of Uist, where we attended a real country dance – a ceilidh. There were lots of people and we felt very much at home. Returning home afterwards, we had to use a causeway between the islands. Here, rabbit traps had been set up. Rabbits constitute a big problem at Uist, and they were trying to prevent spreading of the nuisance to Berneray.

West Minch Salmon intends to compete with the huge Norwegian salmon concerns by going for ecological salmon and niche products.



Saturday 2. September

We had a good start with a real Hebridean breakfast, very well prepared by our local hosts.

The Hebridean Woolhouse

We went on to Grimsay in order to look at woollen knit ware products. Two ladies have started a business based on the use of real Hebridean wool. This wool has a natural brown colour, and the brown-coloured knit-ware has been well received by the Northern Europeans. The Woolhouse ties in with another and larger enterprise on the mainland.

Here, they receive assistance in developing new products, and this firm also processes some of their final products. Theona Morrison said that marketing is a very important activity. Approximately 25 000 persons drop in each year, and the annual sales is £ 20 000.

Real Hebridean breakfast includes oatmeal mush, kippers, coarse oat biscuits and blood pudding, among other things.



Traditional Grimsay Boats

In *Kallin Old Schoolhouse* traditional *Grimsay* boats were on display. We met a boat builder who told us how they intend to maintain this tradition. *Mary Norton* added that systematic collection of old boats got started in 1998 on a voluntary basis. They made their interest known to the local people, and they started courses of study and were attempting to introduce boat building as an optional subject in the school.



Kallin Harbour

This small harbour was built 1985, and located in relation to tidal conditions and the necessity of constructing a sheltered site. We visited a large storage facility. *Nick Ingledew* demonstrated how shrimp, crab, lobster, snails etc ought to be stored. The shellfish may be kept in storage for several months, and are sold when the price level is high, e.g. during the Christmas season.

Multipurpose Hall Urachadh Uibhist

Six ladies have been the prime movers for this facility. *Ada Campbell* is one of them. These women have in various ways obtained funds that made realisation of the project possible. This «house of culture» was being used for a variety of purposes like day nursery, exhibitions, courses in traditional crafts like knitting, weaving, spinning, baking et al. There was also a restaurant and an internetcafé.

Crofting at North Uist

Many of the 1500 inhabitants on North Uist still work as crofters in combination with fishing activities. As a rule, however, most crofters now earn additional cash income outside the croft.

We met the crofter Peter Murray, who told us about crofting in general and the problems associated with this life style. Also, he shared his views as to the future of agriculture.



RSPB Nature Reserve

This area was declared a nature reserve in 1966. The reason, we understood, was that near 5000 persons annually visit the island solely to study the bird life. Near 170 bird species have been registered, and 64 species are breeding there each year. The island has a variety of flora and fauna in general.

At the entrance of the reserve there is a service and information hut, always open, but no staff or electricity available. Even so, damage or theft has never been observed.

Twice a week there are guided walks, and there is a lot of voluntary work in connection with the reserve. Regretfully, no food and lodging is available for the visitors to the area.

Taigh Sgìre Sholais

This is one of several day nurseries at North Uist. The state is paying for three hours daily child care for all children of a certain age. The building was previously used as residence for a teacher. Today, it is a pre-school or play facility. Children 2,5 to 5 years were learning Gaelic language and songs. The activities included drawing, painting and learning to use data equipment. There was space sufficient for 12 kids, but right now only 7 were signed up.

Here we also met Donnie Johnson, a contractor. He is in charge of a large forest planting project – The Millennium Forest Project. The intention is to find out if the forest will survive on the island.

Later in the evening we enjoyed a dinner at Carinish Inn, a nice little hotel run by a 22 years old boy. A fine place with a good kitchen, cosy atmosphere and pleasant music.



RSPB – Royal Society for the Protection of Birds – is the largest society for nature protection in Europe, counting more than million members.



Sunday 3. September

Teampull na Trionaid (Trinity Temple)

Uisdean Robertson, the head of Dúthchas in North Uist, was our guide to the remnants of buildings originally serving as a university during the Middle Ages. Later on, the building complex was used as a monastery and a church. The oldest parts date from the 1200s, but the complex has been ravaged, reconstructed and expanded several times during the following centuries.



Carinish Church

Alasdair Banks introduced us to the history of the church. This old stone church from ca. 1830 was very plain and had few decorative elements. Instead of an altar the church had a so called centre table, a table for the Lord's supper with chairs on both sides. Previously, people used to sit face-to-face all through the divine service. Now, people prefer to sit at the regular benches. We got to hear a recital and song in Gaelic.

Maire MacPhail's garden

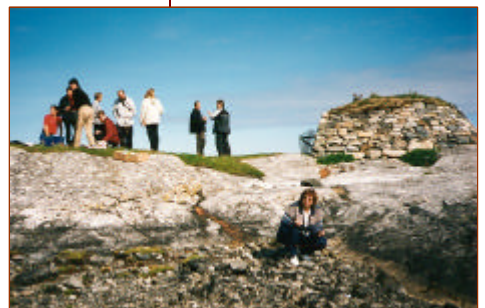
Her husband, Angus MacPhail, welcomed us with rousing bagpipe tunes. We were invited inside into their home and offered refreshments in the kitchen. Afterwards, Maire guided us through the attractive garden she had managed to establish in this exposed and marginal area. Maire is a member of the Uist Horticultural Association, and is growing vegetables and herbs which she offers for sale at the local market and elsewhere. Her garden also included many beautiful flowers. We really appreciated their hospitality!



Maire MacPhail's garden

The Hut of the Shadows

This is a round little hut constructed in three weeks only by artists associated with the arts centre Taigh Chearsabhagh. The cost was £3500. The dark passage to the centre is fashioned like a shell, and leads into a little room. A lens has been incorporated in the outer wall, and directly opposite it the wall has been plastered and painted white. The light from the outside is projected through the lens onto the white wall. This enables us to observe whatever is stirring outside, and for instance detect the movements of birds. Outside the hut we were served lunch prepared by Maire MacPhail.



Hut of the Shadows

Taigh Chearsabhagh

This is a combined centre for photography and modern art. The museum has 2500 photos which present the history of the island. The pictures are of high quality, and the collection has been registered and 400 are stored on CD. Many of the visitors arrive there hoping to locate photos and information about relatives.

On the second floor there is a little café where young artists may display their art. Such temporary exhibitions are changed several times each year. According to their plans the area of the café and the kitchen will be expanded, thus providing more space for the artists to work at the place and display their art output.



Taigh Chearsabhagh

A brief summary

In the Hebrides we experienced a nice mixture of beautiful scenery, culture, historical heritage and commercial enterprises. Dùthchas North Uist had organised our activities in an excellent way, in co-operation with the other sponsoring organisations. The end result was very satisfactory.



The North Uist group



North Sutherland



Smoo Cave is said to be the biggest cave in Great Britain

Dúthchas in North Sutherland

The project group in North Sutherland had set up the following principal goals for their involvement in the Dúthchas project:

- 1. Protecting the natural and cultural heritage*
- 2. Return of young people to the area*
- 3. Sustainable land use and renewable energy*
- 4. Local (food)production and marketing*
- 5. Secure basic public services*

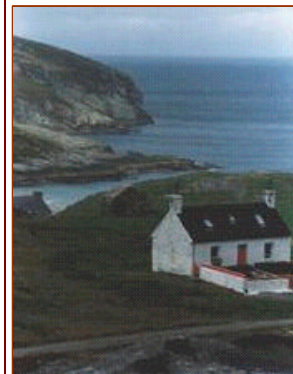


Northward from Inverness

Our rental vans were ready for departure after lunch. The itinerary went northward by way of Lairg, traversing areas that seemed to be very scarcely populated, with scenic qualities comparable to Norwegian high mountain terrain, then through the Strathnaver valley and to our final destination Bettyhill at the North Coast.

Bettyhill

At the Bettyhill Hotel Meg and Kerry from the local branch of Dúthchas wished us welcome. We also were introduced to some other people involved in the North Sutherland pilot projects: Anna MacConnell (Case & Initiative @ the Edge). Sandra Munro (culture and tradition, and Jim Johnston – board chairman and head of the advisory group as well as Young Returners. Following that – mutual introduction and informal gathering before retiring to our rooms.



Croft at Betty Hill

Friday 1. September

Farr Secondary School – pre-school, primary and secondary level

Headmaster *Jim Johnston* conducted a tour of the school premises, and we met several of the teachers. We gained the impression of a n amiable atmosphere at the school, which also seemed to be characterised by a high professional level on the part of the staff, and a spirit of mutual respect and co-operation. We visited a swimming pool built as an addition to the school. This facility is administered separately as private company, and may be used by all inhabitants of the area.



The North Sutherland group with their hosts outside Farr School

Armadale housing project, Margaret Mackay

The entire district along the north coast is facing further population decline. However, whenever somebody wishes to settle down here, it is difficult to secure housing or buy a building lot – not the least due to the land ownership situation and sewage disposal regulations. Under this project lots have been secured for building two rental units. Private ownership entails the risk of such houses being sold to outsiders, who are always on the outlook for holiday houses. Absentee ownership of this type is not desirable.

Halladale, Sandy Murray

Sandy is a crofter managing four crofts (average acreage is 4 ha). He owns 500 sheep and some livestock. At the moment the average price for sheep sold for slaughter is £15-30 per head, while you might get £80 a few years ago. Other farming activities include production of fodder, tillage crops, tree planting and Christmas tree plantation. A new legal act permits crofters to plant trees on their property. Grant-in-aid for planting 10 ha of conifers is £600.

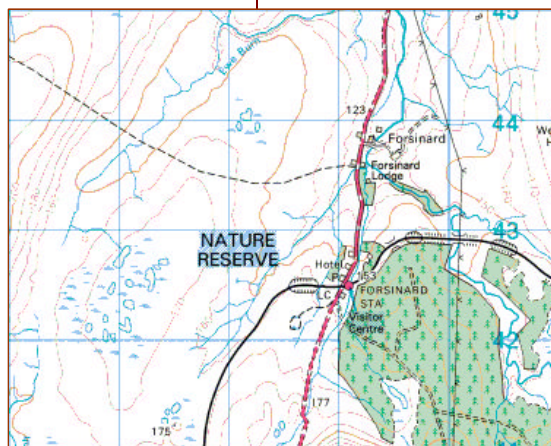
Sandy takes an interest in organic agriculture. He is working as a *Crofting Development Officer* for the *Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise*. He also holds several volunteer appointments and works a consultant to other crofters. Adjacent to his cottage he has constructed a pool, taking advantage of a special public grant scheme favouring «cultural landscape» improvements. It is necessary to submit applications for such grants separately case by case.



RSPB Forsinard

Forsinard is a railway station with a hotel, a petrol pump and little else. The place is adjacent to an enormous area of *blanket bog*, known as *The Flow Country*. Various attempts in the past to drain and cultivate the land, e.g. forest plantations – have failed. In 1995 the RSPB (*Royal Society for the Protection of Birds*) took charge of this unique natural area, which is now managed as a nature reserve. RSPB has purchased the now abandoned railway station building and adapted it to use as a nature interpretation centre, now staffed by two interpretation officers. *Norrie Russell* gave us a briefing about the nature reserve and the activities of the centre - guided bird watching hikes, observation platforms, et al. Annual number of visitors is 5500, and many of these use the railway, an environmentally low impact mode of travel, and much favoured by the RSPB.

A nearby hotel has acquired fishing rights to some lakes and offers their guests the opportunity to go fishing. Altogether, the activities associated with nature protection and outdoor activities contribute approx. £185 000 annually to the local economy.



The Forsinard Nature Reserve comprises nearly 8400 ha of blanket bog

Rossal - remains of a pre-clearance village

Approximately 200 years ago the northern part of Strathnaver accommodated 49 hamlets whose inhabitants were making a living from the land and its resources. This practice also included the use of shielings. Rossal was one of the larger settlements in the area. Access to the site is obtained by driving a short distance off the highway to a small parking space at the end of the road. Sturdy interpretive boards scattered in different parts of the site tell the story of daily life in these pre-clearance hamlets. Our special interpreters on this excursion were Marilyn Price and Ann Mackay from Forest Enterprise.

We were told a fascinating story about villages where 2000 people had earned their livelihood before the clearances. After they had been forced to leave, the only people left there were 19 shepherds with their families employed by the landlord, altogether perhaps 100 persons.



Marilyn Price and Ann Mackay tell about daily life in Rossal before the Clearance.

Invernaver – Lorna Mackay

On our way back to our hotel we made a stop at a horse stable where commercial trekking in the hills had become a speciality. Lorna had made the decision to stay on in the area and make a living there. Such people were referred to as young remainers, in contrast to young returners. Her keen interest in horses had led to the establishment of a horse trekking business catering to tourists. Her alternative would have been to move out for further education and perhaps stay away for good. Young women like her are indeed popular in Sutherland!

In the evening we were taken to dinner in the attractive Ben Loyal Hotel, enjoying the meal in the pleasant company of a number of persons somehow involved in the Dúthchas North Sutherland project.

Saturday 2. September

Skerry crofting community

During the morning our group paid a visit to different crofts. Billy Macintosh and Frances Macleod had moved from South England and settled at a croft where they engaged in diversified agricultural practices, mostly based on organic gardening. They are experimenting with windbreak plantings and raised beds. Earnings from the croft have to be supplemented by doing gardening jobs for others.

Many local people are rather conservative in this respect, believing that sheep ought to be the basic farming activity. Even so, many of their neighbours are positively interested in their experimental undertakings.

Keith and Ilona Lawrence at Clasheven Croft are newcomers as well. They are busy restoring an old croft cottage, and do experiments in organic agriculture and production.

The farmers of Skerray are trying to diversify their farm activities beyond merely keeping sheep

Pat Rodlin in Sgeiread Dubh showed us a building used for co-operatively owned farm machinery and feed storage, built by local crofters. Individual crofts are too small to afford private ownership of heavy farm equipment. Pat's farming activities include sheep and *Black Highland Cattle*, as well as some forestry.

Skerray Community Centre is located in old crofters' cottages having been restored in accordance with traditional methods and materials. Included in the facility are an office, a local store and a museum, mostly geared to the needs of tourists. Another building is being restored and will contain a café and a small hall for educational activities, such as art courses.



We also met *Celia Wallace* who owns a house with her husband in the same cluster, apparently newcomers to the community as well. Securing satisfactory domestic water supply and sewage disposal appeared to be a problem in this hamlet.

Borgie Forest Open Day/North Sutherland Forest Trust

Open Forest Day was a first-time-ever event, and everybody in the area had been invited. There was an air of excitement among those involved – would people show up? – Yes, they did indeed, approximately 500 visitors when counting old and young, a substantial percentage of the total population, and many more people assembled in one spot than our local guides had ever seen before. Officers from the *Forestry Commission* (similar to our Statskog) had erected two large tents, and were conducting guided minibus tours in the forest throughout the day. Volunteers and local craftsmen carried on many types of activities for children and grownups. The weather was nice and balmy, and a festive market day-atmosphere appeared to make everybody happy, not the least our local friends from the Dúthchas project.

Forest Day

A spiral path leads to a stone wall – the whole setup filled with Gaelic symbolism. All visitors were given the opportunity to plant a tree of their choosing in order to mark the beginning of a new mixed forest (which a long time ago was a predominant natural feature in the Highlands). More symbolism: The Gaelic alphabet is based on names of trees.



But the affair had a significance far beyond a pleasant market event in the woods. The *North Sutherland Forestry Commission Trust* represents an initiative scheduled to take over and develop *Borgie Forest* (more than 1800 ha) for the benefit of the local people and communities. The underlying idea is to enhance the general welfare and well-being of the local people, but also to bring forth new jobs in connection with sustainable forestry, tourism etc. And in addition the symbolic aspect – that the local communities can decide how to make use of their own natural resources. This helps to strengthen the local identity and sense of belonging, so strong when seen in historical perspective.

Anders is planting his tree of the "Forest of Future"



Ceilidh at Armadale Hall

Ceilidh is a Gaelic expression for a social and festive gathering. We were invited to a community hall to a dinner in the company of our local hosts and other people associated with Dúthchas. Little by little other local people showed up. A variety of food and beverages was served, the atmosphere was warm and friendly, and there were no formal speeches. After the meal, there was live music, song and dancing. We Norwegians were quite impressed by the straightforward way a number of people contributed to the fun with solo singing and duets.

Sunday 3. September

This day we moved on to the west, but still remaining within the borders of the parish of *Tongue and Farr*. Total population is 1660 scattered about in an area of 1375 km². This supposedly is the lowest population density in all of Great Britain. The scenery is very impressive, as if it were a mixture of the high mountain landscape in Southern Norway and North Norwegian coastal areas, featuring exposed mountain ridges and magnificent sandy beaches. Everywhere we observe geographical names most likely deriving from the Viking era, often modified to Gaelic spelling. Our highway rounded the *Kyle of Tongue* (Norwegian: *Tungaffjorden*), and *Durness* was our final destination for the day. Kerry and Meg served as our guides.

Erribol Pier Site

Kyle of Tongue is a beautiful fjord as seen with the eyes of a visitor. However, boat landing is difficult. An initiative is underway to construct a pier and a new breakwater near an existing fish farm, and adapt the site to the needs of pleasure crafts. *Kenny Macrae* briefed us about these plans, which are controversial because the pier construction may make a large-scale stone quarry operation possible, in a beautiful hillside to the west of the pier. Many people hold the opinion that quarry operation on this scale will become an obstacle to further development of tourism in the area, which is believed to have a considerable potential.

Durness Village

Upon arrival in Durness we were lodged in *Lazy Crofter's Bunkhouse*, a kind of youth hostel established by Kerry's sister *Fiona Mackay* and her husband. Both sisters live in Durness, and have returned to their home area after completing their education in far-away cities. *Young Returners* are most welcome whenever they return to their home area here as elsewhere, and Dúthchas has a special committee to follow up such young people.

Durness Village

Durness has a spectacular location on cliffs facing the open ocean, and there have been and still are defence works nearby. Some older military buildings have been disposed of by the military and are now used for civilian purposes, as is the case with the *Craft Village*. We met again *Marty Mackay*, one of the musicians playing in *Armadale Hall* the night before. Her own mechanical shop, and boat building is his speciality. There is a ceramic shop as well. Lunch was served at *Croispol Bookshop*, a delightful combination of a bookshop, café and pub.



The church ruins at Balnakeil

Graham Bruce, the headmaster of the primary school in Durness, was an inspiring guide to the church ruins at *Balnakeil*, including Viking burial site. Later on, we stopped at a nearby large farm and had a quick chat with the estate manager.

A large mansion in poor repair also belonged to this estate. During the Middle Ages it had served as a summer palace for the bishop in *Caithness*, and later on it belonged to the chief of the clan Mackay. The building was somewhat reminiscent of *Hakonshallen* in Bergen. There must be considerable potential for using such a fine structure in tourism, if all good forces are able to agree on a scheme for rehabilitation and future use.

Durness is a local community with big ideas, and tourism is thought to be the way to prosperity. The splendid scenic qualities of the area is the backdrop only. In order to entice large number of tourists to such a remote place, you need to offer cultural attractions and activities. Trekking routes will be established for the outdoor people. A music festival is being planned, and a good-sized concert hall is being planned.

According to the plans this building will be situated some distance away from the central areas. This is being disputed, since some people rather would like to renovate the existing community hall in the centre of the village. – The whole area offers splendid sand beaches and «high mountain scenery at the sea level». *Smoo Cave* is the largest sea cave in the British Isles.

In the evening our group had a pleasant farewell dinner with Kerry and Meg, enjoying lively discussions of professional and somewhat less professional character.



The church ruins at Balnakeil



Balnakeil house

Monday 4. September

Return to Inverness

In order to see even more of the countryside of *Sutherland*, we used a different route when returning to Inverness: A38 by way of *Laxford Bridge* and *Archfary* to Lairg. Once again, splendid scenery and areas nearly void of human habitation. It was strange to drive along *Loch Shinn*, a beautiful lake at least as long as *Jølstravatnet* (a large lake in Sunnfjord, Sogn og Fjordane), and hardly observe any houses, farms or other types of activity. The exception was a fish farming operation. Otherwise, we used the opportunity en route to discuss and summarise what we had experienced on the tour so far.

Our quarters in Inverness were several B&B facilities all located in the same street. After lunch, all groups gathered in the offices of the Highlands & Islands Enterprise. Each group presented a short report of the findings and results of their visits. This was discussed as far as time permitted. Another important topic of discussion was the possibility of creating permanent links between different local communities on both sides of the North Sea following the conclusion of the main project.



Evening Session in Balnain House

Balnain House, referred to as the *Home of Highland Music*, is a heritage centre of traditional music, dancing and culture, located in the middle of Inverness. The four floors accommodate a library and archive, a music store, cafeteria/pub, museum and reception/meeting rooms. It is an ideal foundation. There is a variety of seminars and musical activities most days. It appears to be a unique institution of living folklore in an international context.

At the evening reception we met several of the Dúthchas-delegates visiting Sogn og Fjordane 1999, as well as other people some of us had met on previous occasions. After enjoying a good meal, there were speeches and mutual exchanges of gifts and compliments – including a greeting from Sogn og Fjordane Folk Music Association, expressing a wish of co-operation and exchanges.

Finally, there was a recital of traditional music and dancing, featuring a number of fine artists – bagpipes, fiddles and guitar. This was indeed a fine conclusion of our tour programme.

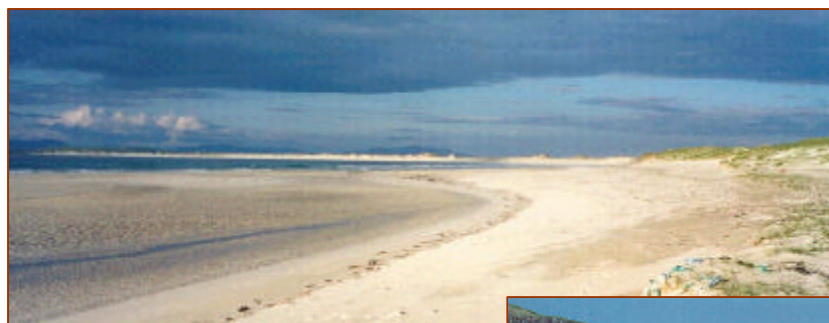


Summary

Evaluation – what did we see, what did we learn?

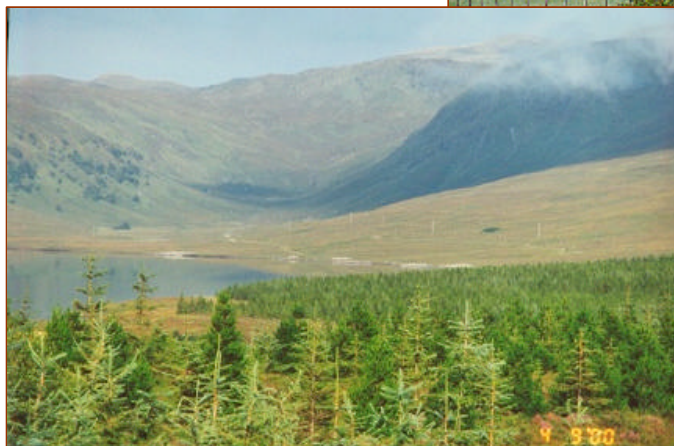
Before departing for Scotland we had listed some elements that would be useful when we were about to report our findings later on, such as:

- ? *What is similar or different in compared to Sogn og Fjordane?*
- ? *What aspects are relevant in regard to the situation in our community and our own project?*
- ? *What have we learned from the Scots, and what may be adapted to Norwegian conditions?*



***North Uist - flat island
- special cultural heritage
- friendly people***

***Isle of Skye – impressive scenery
- crofting as a way of life***



***Sutherland
- a lot of nature - few people***

The school as a social and cultural centre of the community

Many remote communities in Sogn og Fjordane are struggling in order to keep and improve their school. This is also a problem well known to the Scots. Farr Secondary School in North Sutherland had all levels from kindergarten and up. This facility was the nearest thing to a real community centre to be found in the area. The teachers seemed to be very competent and dedicated, as well as being proud of their profession. Is there a high status connected with the teaching profession in Scotland? We noticed how much pride the teacher of handicraft took in stimulating the creativity of his pupils, e.g. by encouraging them to make regular pieces of furniture which they later on could display in their homes. (This is a far cry from making bird cages and carving boards!)

In Staffin at the Isle of Skye there was another case of combining school and kindergarten. Much emphasis was put on keeping a close contact with everyday life in the local community, not the least in making the pupils appreciate local language, culture and history.

Internet and e-mail were important tools to collect data and information from different parts of the world, and to maintain contact with the outside world. The Staffin School had project relations with another school in Norway. Maybe Internet could be a useful channel for contact e.g. between the Farr School and the school in Guddal? This might be one way to establish lasting links between North Sutherland and Sogn og Fjordane?

The swimming pool and gymnasium in Farr was built and operated as a separate community enterprise. This might be relevant in smaller communities in Norway as well. In this manner the school may concentrate on its primary teaching function, without being in charge of running another community facility as well.

Diversified employment at the crofts

Sandy Murray in Halladale, North Sutherland and his many activities reminded us of the challenges facing Norwegian small-time farmers when traditional farming no longer yields sufficient income. Several of the grant schemes were similar to what we have in Norway. Sandy had gained so much insight with such mechanisms and through his participation in organisations that he also offered his services to other crofters as a *private consultant*. In Norway we suppose similar services would be performed by an agricultural officer. However, under the conditions prevailing in the Highlands, such officers often would be located so far away that there would be more need for local advisors.

Terry Prichard in Erlais, Trottenish had a similar dedication to the thought that the crofters had to employ their time and effort in a variety of ways. In his capacity as the leader of Skye and Lochalsh Garden Society he also was spreading his know-how to others through demonstrations and as an advisor.

Maire and Angus MacPhail at North Uist represent a third example. Cultural activities were combined with crofting, where vegetables and herbs were important niche products. Maire headed the local garden club, and was working for better marketing through a local market place. The modest start had been successful.

The schools in the Highlands often are modest in size, may be only 5 – 6 pupils in each class level. But e-mail and Internet add an important dimension as to communicating with others. «e-learning» is a new concept for this type of teaching. The Highland Council will in 2001 experiment with the use of video for teaching and communication in smaller schools.



Sandy Murray tells about his farm



Maire and Angus MacPhail

Nature Protection spearheading community development

Converting the old railway station in Forsinard, North Sutherland into a centre for the nature protection society RSPB was a fine example of sensible re-use. The teeming bird life at the extensive bogs bring thousands of bird watchers there each year, resulting in a relatively large input into the local economy. In contrast to this – a number of attempts have been made by private interests for exploiting parts of the area for commercial forest plantations – without success.

RSPB's nature reserve *Balranald*, North Uist, has resulted in similar invasion of birdwatchers. 5000 people pass through the area each year. Visitor facilities include an unmanned service hut/visitor centre and guided walks twice a week. But the economic development potential would be much greater if overnight accommodations and food were available in the area.

Maybe some local communities in Norway ought to re-think their ingrown negative attitudes to nature protected areas? The idea of regular guided walks ought to inspire to similar venues – e.g. along the *Foss-i-Foss* trails in Eldalsdalen.

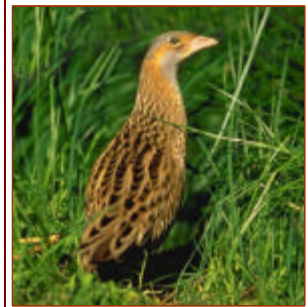
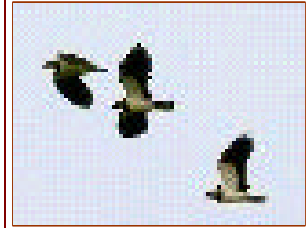
In Sogn og Fjordane we have invested heavily in expensive interpretation centres in Fjærland, Oppstryn, Jostedal and Lærdal. Millions have gone into grand buildings, but little money is left to run these centres staffed with guides of professional competency. *Forsinard* and *Balranald* are two examples which show that there are different ways to go. This we should ponder when we develop further our own local tourism. Maybe strong emphasis on interpretation of natural and cultural heritage will provide a qualitative boost to local tourism? – In this field we have a lot to learn in Scotland and elsewhere in Great Britain.

Cultural heritage interprets history and leads to economic upturn

Rosal, North Sutherland: Here the tragic story of the Clearances 150-200 years ago was told. All over the Highlands and Islands the tenant farmers were cleared away from the land and their homes destroyed in order to make room for the sheep, which would lead to larger income for the landlords. Norway has experienced somewhat similar happenings in its history. The *Black Plague* laid waste large areas of the countryside from about 1350, a setback having repercussions for several centuries. Many geographical names like *Øygard* etc. bear witness to this. Finnmark was literally burned down in 1944 as the German armies were retreating to the south. But this province was rebuilt. Now, political and economic changes may cause virtual depopulation in remote communities in many parts of Norway, another type of *Clearances*.

At Skye and Trottenish Dúthchas is helping to provide access to heritage areas through the project *Trottenish Trail* – trekking routes with signs leading to mighty scenery, and dotted with historical spots and other elements of cultural heritage (*St. Columba Island, Duntulm Castle, Kilvaxter Souterrain*)

Teampull na Trionaid at North Uist is used in a similar manner. The local s are well acquainted with these ruins, originally a Medieval university, and later on an abbey.



Lapwing and corncrake are common at North Uist

You may find a lot of information about the Clearances on Internet, e.g.:

<http://www.macgowan.org/highclear.html>



When walking along the Trottenish Ridge you may see a lot of weird rock formations

Ruins and heritage sites like *Rosal* in North Sutherland are most helpful in putting local history in the right perspective. In Norway we tend to put more emphasis on *objects* which are on display indoors in museums.

The Scots point at an alternative method. Information boards combined with similar practical measures function rather well in terms of passive interpretation. Guided walks, however, may add an extra dimension, and provide entrepreneurial opportunities in the context of local economy. This type of interpretive programs might be feasible in Fjordane/Balestrand if tied to the historical and current problems associated with the exposure to snow slide conditions. Similar examples may be interpretive walks to the rock carving areas in Ausevika and at Staveneset. An all along the coast we find many installations from the not so distant past – World War II. Such places may perhaps bring to mind painful - and yet momentous - memories from our common past.



Design of interpretation board at Rosal

Mobilising for the sake of our local communities – parallels to Norway

Through contact with the Highlanders we may find stimuli to mobilise for the sake of our own local communities, and to call to arms against centralising forces which take out resources from remote areas without providing reasonable compensation. Today, such trends are very apparent when regarded from the point of view of the Norwegian countryside.

The open forest day in *Borgie Forest*, North Sutherland, was a significant event serving to strengthen the community feeling in the area of *Farr*, also demonstrating how communal action such as this one will promote a spirit of co-operation. But the most important aspect was the fact that the local community was scheduled to take over responsibility for the forest and make use of it for its own benefit. The main thing is the mobilisation of community spirit by defining common goals, and engaging in communal work parties and similar initiatives.

Our county can point to a number of parallels. In Stad, we have seen how the community got together to erect a new school. The borough of Hyen has pooled their local resources to arrange the annual *outdoor recreation festival*, and so on.

However, it often looks as if it is easier to rally *against* some kind of a threat than in favour of something. All of us may gain better insight in such matters when we consider the way local people used to stick together in the old days.



Knut David and Rasmus doing their task of expanding Borgie Forest

Agricultural co-operation

Our round of visits to several crofts in the *Skerry Crofting Community* brought back to mind the life of smallholders and tenant farmers in former times in Norway. However, since it appears that the era of relative prosperity in Norwegian farm business is coming to an end, we are getting back to the same type challenges that many smallholdings may face in our country as well. In this community we observed a number of cases where the crofters were trying out alternative types of production, and were engaging in co-operative ventures such as operating a pool of farm machinery combined with fodder storage facilities.

At the Isle of Skye farm machinery pools were observed several places. *Borve & Anishader Community Trust* was engaged in co-operative schemes to make better use of their joint resources, such as forest plantings and subdividing land for new building lots. We could point to a number of similar schemes in Sogn og Fjordane as well, such as farm equipment pools, repair shop and storage of spare machine parts, local community service facilities, joint operation of barns and milk sheds, and so on.



Multipurpose community buildings

We observed interesting multipurpose houses in several communities. Columba 1400 in Staffin was the prime example. This brand new multipurpose centre served as a community hall, study centre, Internet-café, restaurant and guest house - a high-cost facility which would not be conceivable in many other places.

The multiple use house *Urachadh Uibhist* at North Uist was more like the standard we are used to in our county. Six women had by different means collected enough money to make the project possible. This house of culture was being used as a day nursery, exhibitions, courses in traditional handicrafts such as knitting, weaving, spinning, baking etc. In addition there was a restaurant and an Internet café.

These facilities were in many ways similar to the communal service bureaus which have been organised in several of our smaller communities. To some extent such places operate similarly to our own «houses of competency», accommodating a variety of service and business initiatives, which in turn provide mutual stimulation. It is interesting and inspiring to learn that remote communities in Scotland have worked out a similar solution to their practical needs.

Ceilidh – social gathering

All of us got acquainted – although in a somewhat different manner – with Scottish custom of *ceilidh*, a tradition which is still very much alive, not only in the countryside but in the cities as well. Most of us remember dances in our local community halls many years ago – do they still occur in Sogn og Fjordane? Anyway, we were reminded that communal work parties may lead to very charming dance events. Absolutely no commercial trappings as to music, catering and everything else. And not the least – live music without microphones and strong amplifiers, which otherwise oftentimes drown out the conversation and prevents an intimate atmosphere. And everybody making some contribution. And using local traditional music and songs. And young and old joining in. And so on – here Norwegians have a lot to learn!

The opinions of a politician in the District Council (interview in Sogn Avis 12.09.2000)

Considering the strong tendencies toward right-wing political thinking in the Norwegian opinion polls these days, we may be approaching the conditions predominant in the remote districts of Scotland, says Rasmus Felde, who had joined the tour group which had visited Scotland the preceding week.

He visited fringe districts which had much more serious problems than our own remote areas. - *The problems facing the remote communities are outrageous*, says the Center Party politician from Fjaler. He is particularly alarmed as to the circumstances prevailing in the transportation infrastructure in this part of Great Britain.

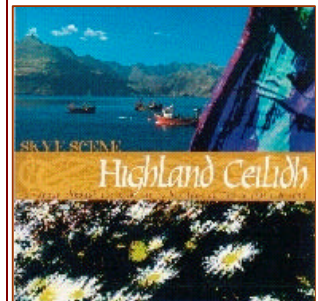
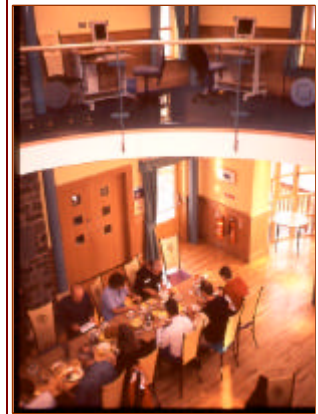
20 years of Tory rule

- *It seems nearly impossible to achieve any economic progress under such circumstances*, says Rasmus Felde, who had availed himself of the opportunity to inform Norwegian transportation minister Terje Moe Gustavsen about these matters just after returning home from Scotland.

- *It is quite clear that Scotland has a political system very different from ours*, says he, and makes the assumption that this is resulting from 20 years of Tory rule, most clearly demonstrated in the remote districts over there.

Ferries and economic progress

Rasmus Felde emphasises that it ought not be difficult to justify subsidised ferries. Western Norway is a most substantial contributor to the national economy. - All expenditures applied to maintain an efficient ferry service is money well spent for the nation at large, and this type of infrastructure is a precondition for an enormous economic activity, says the SP-politician, who serves as a chairman of the committee for economy and transportation in the District Council.



Many songs and melodies from the Ceilidh-tradition are recorded on CDs



Rasmus Felde

The Norwegian Delegation

Name	ZIP-code	Address	Telephone	
North Uist				
Ytre Stadlandet bygdeutviklingslag				
Marita Aarvik f	6750	Stadlandet	57 85 99 83	Mob. 996 27 989
Alvin Aarvik m	6750	Stadlandet	57 85 99 83	
Anita Honningsvåg f	6750	Stadlandet	57 85 98 05	
Knut Åland m	6711	Bryggja	57 85 33 52	
Ålfoten Grendautval				
Astrid Midthjell f	6737	Ålfoten	57 79 58 12	Mob. 906 29 730
Eldbjørg Myklebust f	6737	Ålfoten	57 79 58 94	
Rune Indrehus m	6723	Svelgen	57 79 55 07	
Roar Werner Vangsnes m	6863	Leikanger	57 65 50 00	
Terje Eggum m	6863	Leikanger	57 65 56 00	
North Sutherland				
Guddal Grendalag				
Oddleif Yndestad m	6968	Flekke	57 73 88 67	
Knut David Hustveit m	6968	Flekke	57 73 80 00	
Fjordane Grendalag				
Olav Kåre Rendedal m	6899	Balestrand	57 69 21 37	Mob 950 83 638
Jørgen Hundseth m	6899	Balestrand	57 69 47 00	
Leif Gunnar Dale m	6899	Balestrand	57 69 15 85	
Rasmus Felde m	6963	Dale i Sfj.	57 73 63 83	Mob. 945 67 130
Anders Anderssen m	6863	Leikanger	57 65 35 02	
Trotternish				
Hyen Utviklingslag				
Erik Hope m	6829	Hyen	57 86 98 36	Mob. 913 93 584
Aud Kari Solheim f	6829	Hyen	57 86 96 51	
Ola Arild Aa m	6829	Hyen	57 86 98 55	
Oldedalen				
Laila Melkevoll f	6791	Oldedalen	57 87 38 64	
Rune Myklebust m	6791	Oldedalen	57 87 38 68	
Åse Myklebust f	6791	Oldedalen	57 87 38 68	
Egil Nestande m	6800	Førde	57 72 32 11	



Articles in Sogn Avis

by journalist Terje Eggum

Monday September 11, 2000



THE HEBRIDES: The women of North Uist are involved in a brave fight to secure the future for the islanders. The numerous small communities in the fringes of the Hebrides need their enthusiasm. In Scotland, public agencies do not exactly queue up to offer their services to peripheral communities.

And neither do the large land owners. In Norway, the old feudal society came to an end 150 years ago, in Great Britain it is still alive and well. (The feudal system in Norway was not based upon nobility, as they had died out, nor was it extensive, as most Norwegian farms were farmer-owned and the farms were mostly quite small). Here, the landowner calls the tune, he or she who happens to have inherited the property.

The small tenant farmers, or crofters as they are called in Scotland, have lost all their rights except the right to remain on the property and work the land. They are not allowed to fish in the rivers or shoot red deer, such privileges are for the landlord to make a profit on or offer to friends in Glasgow and London. The four young women are each in her own manner endeavouring to bring about progress for the brittle settlements at Uist, located in the middle of the extensive archipelago west of Scotland called The Hebrides. Anne Shepherd, Caitriona MacCuish, Gwen Evans and Helen Forbes all have a strong desire to see a future based on sustainable development. Grants in aid from the national agencies have helped many small enterprises getting started. However, in London, the agencies do not communicate with another, and concerted action toward specified objectives is not the rule. On this island, the need is improved infrastructure to assist the local economy, new enterprises to create employment, attractions based on their cultural heritage, and to assemble important communal activities under a new, single roof.

Rigid property system

There are plenty of natural resources at North Uist. The problem is to get hold of these in a rational way. The rigid (land) property structure, along with the scant attention given to distant districts by central government, do not augur well for immediate success.

The barrier between the islanders and progress is, besides the land owner, represented by the impossibly high transportation costs and the regulation-happy bureaucrats of the European Union. The dear ferry fares and high fuel prices make profitable production nearly impossible. From Inverness to the Hebrides the price of diesel increased 1.60 kroner, one liter costs 12.35 at North Uist. For this reason, North Uist with nearly 50,000 sheep and much cattle is nearly cut off from creating values. And, as if the cost of transportation is not enough of an obstacle, Brussels has seen to that all slaughtering is centralised to the mainland.

-We are only permitted to slaughter for home consumption, says Caitriona MacCuish, who represents Duthchas, a publicly initiated programme intended to provide for new activities at North Uist.

The Duthchas Project

Caitriona Works cooperates closely with Helen Forbes and Morag Ferguson (not on the photo). They are all well educated young women who have lived in Glasgow and other places on the mainland. They are farsighted, patient and determined. The Duthchas project has developed strong links to Western Norway the last few years. Several visits to Sogn og Fjordane have made the Scots eager to obtain results. They have observed how the local communities function in distant districts, and have a strong desire to obtain similar basic frame conditions in their own home country.

-A system like the Norwegian one is a dream to us, says Vanessa Halhead, project manager for Duthchas in the provincial capital Inverness, she has seen that Norway has a strong local democratic level represented by the fine-meshed communal system.

Land reform on the way?

In the new Scottish parliament one is trying to put land reform on the political agenda. Lorna Campbell at the Community Land Unit in Highlands & Islands Enterprise in Inverness knows that this reform has a long way to go. She has her doubts that much will happen, for the land owners have a strong lobby at work in Edinburgh.

-I fear that the content of this initiative might lose its momentum on the way, she says, and points to the EC which makes it difficult to force the land owners to take up residence and work their farms themselves, like in Norway.

Such a directive would have eliminated the right of EC-citizens to buy and own land in Scotland, she says. Vanessa Halhead does not hesitate to call the Norwegian system the most favourable one in Europe for peripheral districts.

-It is good to see a country that retains a system aiming at developing the countryside. Take good care of this, don't let any government take it away, she says.

Birds attract many people

In the far north-west corner of North Uist Gwen Evans is observing the teeming bird life through her binoculars. She represents The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and co-operates closely with Ann Shepherd who works for Scottish Natural Heritage. In Balranald far to the west, culture and nature are part of one big mesh, one is the other, and vice versa. The attraction is the mile-long ocean shores and the nice little crofter's house called Visitor Centre.

-Many people come here from the mainland to observe birds, says Gwen Evans, who is a conservation officer. Each year 5000 visitors arrive. Gwen offers two guided tours a week. The local crofters assist her in taking care of the nature reserve.

-They look after the corncrakes and other rare birds, says Gwen, who must be observant against all possible threats to the enormous bird colony out here. One million RSPB members in the entire UK are behind her.

Money from the National Lottery

The North Uist-people are clever when it comes to obtaining public money from different national funds on the mainland. In that respect the British National Lottery is a rich source. The people of Uist seem to be most successful at writing applications, in three years they have obtained 2,5 million pounds.

A series of important projects on the island bear witness to this, but these are not sufficient for the sustainability of the community. A long-range, positive development of the Hebridean communities, counting 25,000 inhabitants from south to north, may only be accomplished when basic frame conditions have been improved.

-It doesn't make much difference what you establish at our islands when the transport costs stay at the same level we see today, says Uisdean Robertson, chairman of Duthchas at North Uist, regretting that this will be an obstacle in communities full of endeavour.

However, as long as a small car and a driver must pay one thousand kroner to cross the sound between the mainland and the islands, nothing will happen.

Norwegian revisit to Scotland last week

The cooperation between Sogn og Fjordane and Highlands & Islands in Western Scotland culminated in a week-long visit to Scotland last week. The Norwegian visitors represented six local communities: Fjordane in Balestrand, Guddal in Fjaler, Hyen in Gloppen, Ålfoten in Bremanger, Ytre Stadlandet in Selje, and Oldedalen in Stryn. Twenty participants were divided into three groups and travelled thereafter to three separate areas in Western Scotland. They were participants in the exchange through the Community Development Programme in Sogn og Fjordane, established 1991, and Scottish Duthchas, a 3-year old development programme supported by the EC. Sogn Avis was invited to come along, and will in a series of reports give an account of daily life in Western Scotland.



The Hebrides: In Western Scotland it will cost you dearly to drive your car onto a ferry. A crossing of less than two hours duration will cost you more than one thousand (Norwegian kroner, approx. lb 75) for a car and a driver. This brittle peripheral district in the western ocean is suffering under these high transportation costs.

All of the 25 000 people living on the Hebrides are depending on the ferry boats between the islands and the mainland. However, under the UK system the public subsidies to ferry connections have been cut to the bone. The hapless residents have to spend incredible sums of money in order to transport a car from one side to the other.



It takes less than two hours to cross the sea between Uig situated on the peninsula Skye to Lochmaddy at North Uist. As to duration, the crossing compares to the ferry run Kaupanger to Gudvangen. But the car charge is five time higher than here at home.

9000 kroner for a trailer

The same car with driver will cost 205 kroner transported between Gudvangen and Kaupanger. The rate for one person is 59 kroner aboard a FSF ferry covering a similar distance; when using one of the Caledonian MacBrayne-ferries one person must pay nearly 200 kroner, quite expensive in a country where the average income level is lower than in Norway.

But this is very low compared to the cost of moving a semi-trailer between the mainland and the islands. A long semi-trailer has to pay nearly lb 900 to get onboard. Counting in Norwegian kroner the cost is more than 9000. In comparison, the charge for moving the same trailer on a ferry-keel between Gudvangen and Kaupanger amounts to less than one thousand.

700 sheep on one semi-trailer

Since we are dealing with a connection between mainland and islands, the fares of CaledonianMacBraye (CalMac) are based on round trip transportation. Even so it is fearfully expensive. Consequently, it is not surprising to find out that one trailer is transporting 700 sheep in one trailerload. It is the vessel *Hebridean Isles* which cross between Uig and Lochmaddy. There is a crew of 24, and the captain is Colin Billimore. This ferry is one of six large ferries in these waters. In addition, CalMac has 17 smaller ferry boats in operation. *Hebridean Isles* has a tonnage of 3500. In November, a new and larger vessel will take over. Last August, the Queen came to Glasgow to baptise the ship.

Asking for higher subsidies

-Why is it necessary to maintain such high ferry rates?

- CalMac is responsible for the connections to a total of 23 islands west of Scotland, only three of these make a profit, and this is reflected in the level of fares.

-However, doesn't the company receive subsidies to take care of this transportation between the mainland and the islands, and between islands?

-Correct, but last year the subsidies amounted to 24 of a total expenditure of 60 mill pounds, not too much in view of the service we perform. We make shortcuts and savings wherever possible, but profits above a certain level are cut off, explains the skipper and shakes his head when thinking of the bureaucrats in Edinburgh.

-The subsidies ought to be substantially higher?

-Yes, says the captain, who does not disagree with the islanders that the costs are too high.

Whisky and salmon

In five large islands served by CalMac there are several big distilleries which produce the expensive malt whiskey in high demand. Their annual export amounts to two and one-half billion kroner. In addition to this, the sea farming output in the area, not the least on the Hebrides – are worth one and one-half billion kroner.

Consequently, out here, everyone thinks that this substantial contribution to the total economy of UK is more than sufficient to justify higher ferry subsidies. This situation is not unknown in Western Norway.

Even so, there is an ocean-wide gap of sea separating Norwegian and British policies as to such subsidies.



Took over from Hebridean Princess

Hebridean Isles took over this run in 1985. Before then, *Hebridean Princess* had served there, a ship which has become well known to people in Sogn og Fjordane the last few years. *Hebridean Princess*, converted from car ferry to a luxury type cruise ship, happens to be identical to *Colomba*, the same ferry that provided the connecting link between this part of the Hebrides and the Scottish mainland from its launching 1964.

In addition to CalMac, large ferry companies such as P&O and Stena handle parts of the traffic between the Scottish Highlands and the Islands. The latter companies share the run between the mainland and the Northern Isles.

In the near future, contracts for the connections between the Scottish east coast and the Northern Isles will be allocated in the same way that it is done in Norway, and CalMac will be one of the companies presenting a bid.



The Hebrides: He wishes to squeeze in between the Norwegian salmon giants by presenting ecological salmon as a niche-product. Angus MacMillan at North Uist intends to present the environmentally friendly salmon product already next year. The idea is to increase the value of salmon products sold from his own company by 50-60 per cent.

Angus MacMillan is a native of the isles. He wishes to make his own contribution for the Islands to obtain the place they rightly deserve in this expansive industry.

- So far, the salmon industry in Western Scotland is mostly a Norwegian thing.

The Norwegians have bought most of it, says Angus MacMillan, shrugging. It is a tragic fact for the Islanders that most of the concessions in the area are controlled by foreign interests.



Controversial offensive

For Angus MacMillan the organic salmon is mostly a challenge as to marketin the product. May it also be a way to obtain new concessions? Other sources indicate to Sogn Avis that the company tries to locate elsewhere in the Hebrides, on sites that perhaps will mean conflicts with RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds).

Added value compensation

In reality, Angus Macmillan has no choice. He *must* provide added value to his salmon export. Not the least since the the preconditions for production and marketing are quite unfavorable in the Hebrides. Transportation from the island costs him 17 lb, or 230 kroner, per ton.

-Here on these islands we have been about to lose our grip both as to sea farming and traditional ocean fisheries as well, he says, referring to the rich fishing banks west of the Hebrides which today are dominated by Norwegian and Mainland-Scottish interests. – On the Hebrides we lack the infrastructure for ocean fisheries, says Angus MacMillan.

100 jobs lost

Today, the Hebrides produce 30-40 000 tons of salmon, half of it on the northern islands Harris and Lewis, and the rest at North Ouisht. Angus MacMillan assumes that the industry employs 5-600 persons at the Hebrides. In comparison – Scotland has a total production of 120 000 tons of salmon in fish farms.

He employs 50-60 persons. He implies that the difficulties due to the infrastructure has cost 100 jobs in sea farming, and he blames the authorities in Edinburgh and the ferry company Caledonian MacBrayne, who in his opinion are far too stingy.

In the beginning he 8000 fry in the water, now he has 54 000, or 2000 tons. Angus MacMillan understands that the production of ecological salmon must be substantially reduced in relation to standard concessions. He indicates single units of 5-600 tons. In Norway the standard is 12 000.

Halibut and shrimp

The challenge is mainly the feed, but also medicine. If you want acceptance for the distinctive term ecological salmon, the use of medicines as we know it today must cease. Angus MacMillam also knows that the quality of the pens also must be improved.

-New demands will turn up all along, but we are prepared for that, and intend to present the first ecological salmon next year.

Thereafter, Angus MacMillam will start breeding of halibut. Today, they have started in modest way at Shetland and the Orkneys. He thinks the prospects for this species are good. He has already started exporting large shrimps to Spain and France. This export is based on a method which guarantees living shrimp on the receiving end.

Thus he expects to increase the present employment from 50-60 to 110. But there is another problem as well: qualifications.

-We are quite dependent on skilled workers, says Angus MacMillam.



The Hebrides: The six women combine work and intellectual playtime. Water-logged tweed passes through strong female hands while the hall is resounding with their singing. A few miles away, two other women are producing and marketing wool from the rare breed of Hebridean sheep.

Inside the large room, six women join in the refrain while they take turns to improvise the text.

In this manner, the women of the Hebrides have handled the tweed for hundreds of years. They sing in Gaelic about their every-day life, mainly about their menfolk and about love, while they handle the large, wet piece of cloth.

Physically, the work is demanding, but the singing is a good support. And the stanzas never come to an end, new lyrics are added all the time, while only the refrain is repeated.

Money from the National Lottery

In the new multipurpose community house Claddach Kirkibost, or *Urachadh Uibhist*, which is the Gaelic name, many of the islanders have daily errands. Here is a library and a computer room, coffee lounge and music room. And a recently opened kindergarten, with a department also for children with special needs. Twenty children have been accommodated here. To acquire a well-equipped multipurpose community hall in remote areas of Scotland is not an obvious thing. The honour for this achievement is due to six women unusually rich in initiative. All by themselves they have accumulated six million kroner to this purpose, and much of the money comes from the National Lottery.

- This house is a significant improvement in the community of North Uist, says Ada Campbell.

A gigantic mountain of wool

The Hebridean Wool house is located at Sandbank on Grimsay, or *An Taigh-Cloimhe* in Gaelic. The place is one-half hour drive from Claddach Kirkibost. Scotland has nine million sheep. The Hebrides have their own substantial part of this mountain of wool. But the two women at Grimsay do not use just any type of wool.

-The Hebridean sheep produce the best wool in the world, says Theona Morrison, as she is twirling a vest in her fingers. This is the original breed of sheep on the Hebrides, there are no more than 300-400 animals of this kind. The two women operate their store at a charming house on the flat and weather-beaten island, but not more exposed than it provides shelter for a lush garden at the back. They show us a selection of their products in the basement – not altogether inexpensive either.

Jobs for Women

The two-some provides a decent wage. Several local women are reasonably well paid for preparing the wool from the brown sheep, as well as knitting and weaving to provide finished products.

-There is quite a distance to cover from production to sales, says Theona, letting us know that invested capital takes one year before the return of the investment for The Hebridean Wool House. Both of the women have stayed for quite some time on the Scottish mainland. They have learned modern business practices being employed in marketing in large concerns. And why did they return to the Hebrides?

-We came here having a strong desire to convert the substantial resources of the islands into business, says Theona Morrison, and emphasizes that it is important for the two of them to bridge the gap between local traditional skill and the commercial market.

Why use this rare breed of sheep?

- The quality is superior to everything else, and fortunately we observe a small increase in this breed. This race is well adapted to the vulnerable Hebridean ecology. Today, our landscapes are on the verge of being ravaged by the large numbers of other breeds, says Theona Morrison. They got started in 1997. Now their annual sales of woollen products amount to 300.000 kroner – sweaters, coats, caps and mittens for 500 to 1000 kroner, as well as larger woven products. The wares are sold through mail order, a handful stores on the mainland, and aboard the cruise ship Hebridean Princess.

Gaelic upturn

- We have to increase our sales volume, and we hope to succeed by Internet sales, says Theona Morrison, while admitting that succeeding in business in remote areas of Scotland is far from easy. In the community hall at Claddach Kirkibost the Gaelic women fill the room with magic, the guests and the local people listen attentively. One woman explains in English what this is all about. There is a Gaelic blossom time in The Hebrides. The islands in the West, is the only area in Scotland where Scottish Gaelic is the principal language for more than half of the population.

