



Coigach Heritage

NEWSLETTER

November 2023

Coigach Heritage became a charity in 2022. Our first AGM was held in September followed by the now traditional Coigach Heritage Tea. Thanks to everyone who joined us for an interesting and busy afternoon. The trustees reported on:

- **The new heritage displays** designed for the old hall which will show Coigach history through crofting, fishing, the schools, church, emigration and much more. These are possible thanks to a substantial grant from Inspiring Scotland and will be installed over the winter.
- **Working with local organisations** to explore ways of getting a cafe up and running. After a workshop in January and a maildrop to all local households, a small group from Coigach Heritage, Visit Coigach and Coigach Community Development Group has continued to work on this difficult challenge, acutely aware of its importance to the community.
- **The launch of the Lorg na Còigich project**, the public sculpture to commemorate the Coigach struggles of the 1850s, designed by Will Maclean RSA and Marian Leven RSA. More information at <https://www.coigach-heritage.org/lorg-na-coigich>
- **Improvements to the hall** to comply with public liability requirements, also temporary heritage exhibitions and exterior repainting, all thanks to volunteers.



The Old Drill Hall re-painted 2022



A model showing 'The Story of Coigach', a series of panels due to be installed in the Old Drill Hall.

Looking forward, the heritage priorities are:

- Continuing to work with other community groups to get the cafe up and running - and we are hopeful this will open for 2024.
- To raise the funds and other support necessary for the Lorg na Còigich sculpture.
- Developing the hall as a heritage centre with the new displays, interpretation and a series of events.
- Continue to develop a rich heritage archive both physically and on-line telling The Story of Coigach

If you would like to get involved in any of these projects please get in touch.

Email: coigach.heritage@gmail.com or contact one of the trustees, Abigail Anne Campbell, David Green, Veronica Vossen Wood, Lynn Fraser, Mairi Thornton, Sheila Young. You can follow us on Facebook and Instagram where you will see twice weekly photos and stories.

Have a look at the new website: www.coigach-heritage.org It is gradually being populated with new articles and photos.

If you are not already a member of Coigach Heritage and would like to join, you can download a form from the website.

£10 a year helps develop the Coigach Archive.



Lorg na Còigich Marian Leven, watercolour

Lorg na Còigich Memorial Sculpture

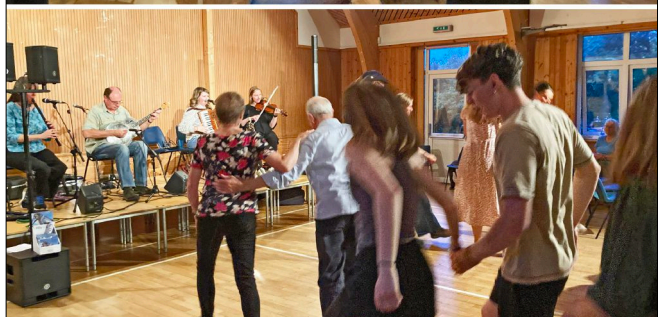
Fundraising for Lorg na Còigich got underway with a wonderful ceilidh at the end of July. Designed by internationally renowned artists and designers Will Maclean and Marian Leven, this will be a magnificent sculpture to commemorate the successful stand against evictions in the 1850s.

It will be one of the very few monuments in the country to mark the role of women and has attracted the attention of broadcaster Sally Magnusson. Her book 'Music in the Dark' describes the notorious Greenyards clearances where the women, who had been inspired by the success of the Coigach rebellion, were violently beaten. Sally gives a voice to the Coigach women leaders by reading out their names at her book events: Katie Macleod Campbell, Mary Macleod, Anna Bhan Mackenzie, Margaret Macleod and Catherine Stewart.

You can find out more about this amazing story and how to support the fundraising at

www.coigach-heritage.org/lorg-na-coigich.

An Lorg Ceilidh at the Village Hall



Did you know ...

In 1912 there was a Crofters and Fishermen's Appeal to the authorities about the condition of Badentarbet Pier. They complained it was unsafe for steamers and ships of any size, putting food supplies for people and stock at risk. Every householder and business from Rhegreanoch to Culnacraig signed the appeal, a pristine copy of which is in the Cromartie Estate records at the National Records of Scotland.

Snapshots of Coigach Past



'Coigach Rock' Photo: Jim Barton

The North Star & Farmers' Chronicle

21st April 1910

Highland Doctor's Adventure

Mr Gunn, medical officer of the Parish of Lochbroom, in response to a call to a keeper's house, some 25 miles distance, left, cycling, in the early morning.

He had not gone far when a strong wind blowing increased into a gale. Rain fell in the valleys; on the mountain tops snow fell, melting into sheets of cutting cold sleet. The keeper's house was reached after a trying enough journey.

But this was not all. Behind him in Ullapool Dr Gunn left a patient in a critical condition – so critical, indeed, that it was imperative that he should return that night. The patient's life hung on it, and this fact Dr Gunn never once lost sight of. To cycle back was impossible and to walk back by the road might be effort wasted. Time was everything in such a case.

But to return to the relief of his patient somehow Dr Gunn determined. Securing a reliable guide, he walked into the late evenings, and, in order to shorten the distance, took to the hills, and through the darkest night and wildest, he walked over the hillside known as the Coigach Rock. The rock rises sheer out of the sea, and is part of one of the precipitous spurs of Benmore Coigeach. There is no path and so dangerous was the route taken by Dr Gunn that night that only men of nerve would dare take it in day-light.

Only a few years ago a south-country man, attempted to cross this way during the day. He fell over a precipice and nearly lost his life. This heroic effort on behalf of a suffering fellow had called forth the heartiest appreciation of the community.



The remains of the old shop at Badenscallie

Old Shops of Coigach

Back in the days when the sea was the highway, there were many little shops around Coigach, supplied by steamers from Glasgow, Orkney and elsewhere which landed at Badentarbet. Kenneth Mackenzie had this shop at Badenscallie from the 1880s onwards. The Campbell family had a bigger shop at Dornie until the late 1950s and a weekly grocery van. The shop at 106 Achiltibuie was run by Rory Fraser and there was another small shop at Bella's Bothy, Achavraie.

We are keen to hear stories about these and other shops from past days. If you have any photos, postcards, documents, memories and stories about the shops of Coigach to contribute to our archive, please get in touch with Coigach Heritage at:

Email: coigach.heritage@gmail.com

A Little 'civil war' in the West

Extract from proceedings of Wick Chamber of Commerce August 1853

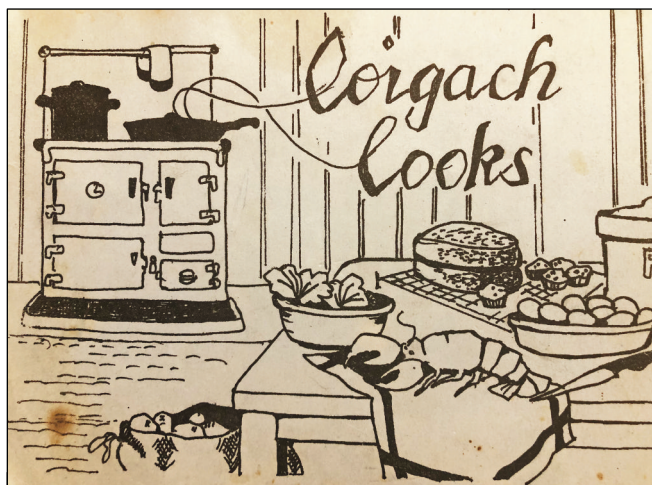
'As our fishing could not be carried on without an ample supply of hired men from the West Highlands, and as the supply had this season fallen far short of the demand, and many boat crews being at this moment short manned, it was natural that we should feel an interest in the welfare of a population whose assistance was indispensable to our own prosperity, and who spent a great proportion of their hard won earnings in this town.

It would appear that a little civil war was at present going on on the west coast of Ross-shire, betwixt the Marquis and Marchioness of Stafford and a portion of their tenantry. The civil force had been obstructed, military had been solicited from the government, and our quiet town was on the point of being involved in the fray, by an attempt made by the Fiscal of Ross-shire to arrest some of the Coigach men here while engaged at our fishing, and whilst surrounded by thousands of their comrades who feel keenly on the subject of clearance.

A scene of riot and outrage was only prevented by the judicious advice of our local authorities, who recommended the Fiscal to pocket the affront, until the men should return to their own homes.'

Coigach Cookbook

Packed with favourite recipes from Coigach residents the cookbook was published in 1991 in aid of the new village hall fund. Gordon Dunn's sense of fun is an ingredient in this recipe. If you have a spare copy of Coigach Cooks we'd love it for the Heritage archive.



Bachelor's Savoury Pie

Slice a small onion and fry it in $\frac{1}{4}$ tbsp. veg. oil until it is slightly golden brown and al dente. Slice a medium sized potato thinly and 2 tomatoes likewise. Place the onions in the bottom of a small oven-proof dish and layer the potato and tomato alternately on top of it, seasoning each layer in turn. Pulverise one slice of bread into crumbs in your grinder and mix thoroughly with $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. grated cheese. Sprinkle on top of dish and cook for $\frac{1}{2}$ hour at 180°C and finish off under the grill to brown the topping.

This smells delicious while it is cooking, but it is the most awful dish I have ever tasted! Almost raw potato swimming in half a cup of grease with a lump of something very nasty in the middle of it.

Comment from a young lady on this dish: "You don't need caring for, you need locking up!"

Gordon Dunn

Coigach Heritage Calendar 2024

£7 for sale at the following outlets:

Achiltibuie Post Office

Fisk Gallery, Polbain

Achiltibuie Stores

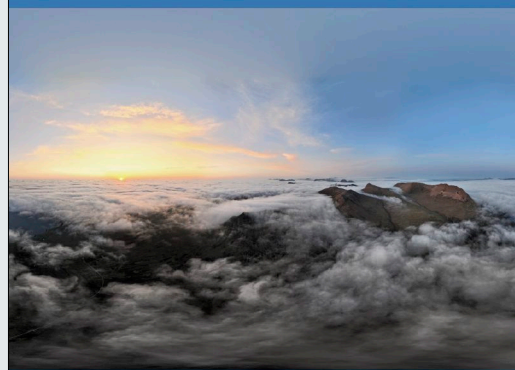
Ullapool Bookshop

For mail order contact:

Email: coigach.heritage@gmail.com

All publications raise funds for local heritage projects

Coigach Heritage Calendar 2024



Photos, stories and memories of
Coigach, Achiltibuie & the Summer Isles

Snapshots of Coigach Past



Coigach Gaelic Choir were third in the contest for the Coronation 1937 Trophy. They come from the farthest north-west corner of Ross and Cromarty.

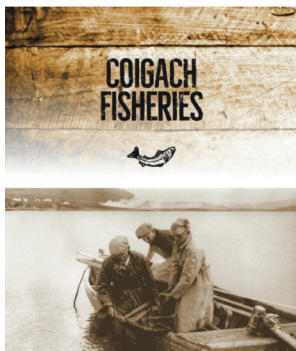
Coigach Gaelic Choir 1977

The smiles on the faces reflect the success of the day at the Ross-shire Music Festival in Dingwall. The children were required to sing two songs in Gaelic. The children, now adults, remarked on how the Coigach Choir always managed to feature in the local papers!

Angela Ducker was remembered for her beautiful voice and entered solo competitions, too. She lived on Tanera because her father ran an Outward Bound centre there.

Back L to R: David Mackenzie, Alison Sinclair, Dawn Macleod, Angela Ducker, Karen Mackenzie, Heather Macdonald, Richard Maclean and Simon Mackenzie.

Front L to R: Barbara Ross, Anne Muir, Joan Mackenzie, Kenny Mackenzie (Head Teacher), Iseabail Ross, Andrew Muir and Duncan Ross.



Publications for Sale

Coigach Fisheries £5

Available from Achiltibuie Stores, Achiltibuie Post Office

'Coigach - Who We Are' £30

Available from Achiltibuie Stores

For order by post (Price + P&P)

Contact Coigach Heritage at:

Email: coigach.heritage@gmail.com

Good Shot!

On the 17th of Sept 1900, George Macleod the gamekeeper at Culnacraig reports a daily game bag of 4 brace of grouse, 1 hare, 1 snipe, 1 partridge and 10 brown trout. On October 8th 1908 the monthly 'bag' was 135 grouse, 103 sea trout, 113 brown trout and 3 hares. In 1910 The Achiltibuie Inn (now the Summer Isles Hotel) was reporting 40 brace of grouse annually from Oscaig.

Source: Cromartie Estate papers NRS.

Coigach Past and Present

What has made Coigach the place it is today?

Professor Roderick Stirrat and Ms Tullia Aiazzi are researching the social and economic changes that have taken place over the past years.

They have been interviewing local residents and others who work or spend time in Coigach. In 38 interviews so far they have explored access to housing, the changing nature of crofting and fishing, tourism, mobility in and out of Coigach and local services.

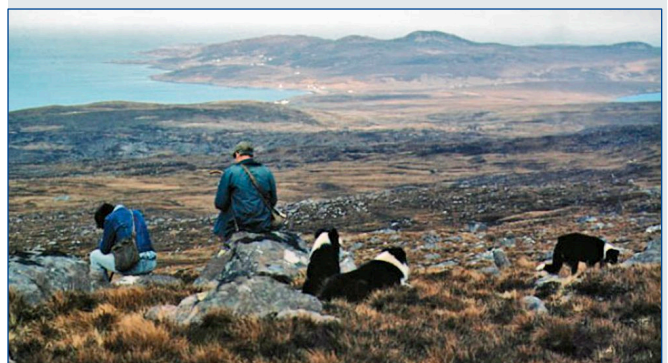
They would like to hear more views and experiences, so if you would like to contribute please get in touch. Tullia and Roderick will be back in Coigach early next year.

You can contact them by email at:

tullia.aiazzi@gmail.com or rlstirrat@gmail.com

They would also be happy to send you an update on their research findings so far.

Coigach Heritage supports the research project as it will provide valuable insights to community life for future historians and archivists.



In the photo are the late Kenny Stewart, Polglass, and his nephew, Jimmy (Scallie). Donald Tainsh who took this photo is Jimmy's brother-in-law. Sheep would be gathered in from the high hills (including Beinn Eoinn and Beinn Tarsuinn) about four times a year for lambing, clipping, sales and for the tup.