

EILEAN EISDEAL NEWSLETTER No.25 - MARCH 2004

To all Easdale islanders, members and friends

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2004. Early spring is a time for growth and renewal and the exciting and challenging work we all have before us will hopefully ride on this wave of energy.

AGM

At the AGM on 30th December, Sandra Melville presented her last report as Chair of the Trust, which summarised the progress made over what has certainly been the busiest year yet. The many achievements include the completion of the building phase of the hall under budget; the welcoming of Geoff Heslop in the role of hall manager; the securing of £10,000 funding towards interim improvements to the harbour; the setting up of The Easdale Island Trading Company and last but by no means least, the opening weekend of the hall and its ongoing success both as a venue for events and as a gathering place for the community. Substantial progress towards acquiring the harbour was also reported.

Sandra retired after five years tremendous work as a director, the final three years of which she served the Trust as Chairperson. Many grateful thanks were expressed to her. She is now part of the newly formed Harbour Steering Group together with Mike MacKenzie, John Merrilees and Fiona Blakey. This group has been formed to take forward the harbour project within the parameters set down by the Trust directors.

Thanks are also expressed to Brenda Heslop, who stood down as a director during the year and also to Phillippa Bull who had taken on the role of Secretary and stood down at the end of the year. We are grateful to them all for the hard work, long hours, insight and support they brought with them as Directors.

Bert Baker, Jess Hill and Donald Melville were appointed as directors. At the first meeting of the new board the Office Bearers were decided. Donald will take on the role of Chair, Jess will be the Secretary and Annabel will remain as Treasurer. Denise Whyatt was co-opted as a Director. Mike MacKenzie has recently been co-opted as a Director.

Hall

The Hall Stewards are meeting every Monday afternoon, helping to keep the hall open and their tea and coffee enterprise is a terrific fundraiser for the hall, enjoyed and appreciated by all.

Woodwork projects are appearing in the hall thanks to Colin Davies, Henry and Geoff. The Coastal Navigation Course, also being presented by Colin, on Sundays at 2 pm in aid of Trust funds is nearing completion and has proved interesting and informative. If you are interested in finding out more about this course or want to improve your body with Peter and Denise's Get Fit on Tuesday and Thursdays at 6.30 pm - please come along or see Geoff.

During the break in the Arts Programme presentations we have held our first Christmas dinner, which turned out to be a great community event. Lynn Noble cooked us a wonderful meal and Stephen Gore gave us some amusing recitations in his inimitable manner. The New Year gave us the Island Ceilidh, which was well attended and a great showcase for the island musical talent; the film show and fancy dress competition for the showing of "Pirates of the Caribbean" gave us a Hall full of pirates! And of course the 7th Easdale Island Pantomime production of "Beauty and the Beast" played to a large audience of adults and children, who faced some dangerous moments thanks to Mellon and Peter's song and dance routine. The self-written and very funny script presented by a select group of island dramatic talent made the front page of The Oban Times with a picture of Phillippa Bull and Sandra

Melville. The first Burns Night Supper to be held in the Hall saw the room in candlelight, full of islanders and guests from near and far including Cllrs. Elaine Robertson and Duncan MacIntyre. Fiona and Stephen were our hosts, with Mike MacKenzie as Master of Ceremonies deftly weaving the many contributions of music, song, verse and recitation through to the wee hours.

We have had a number of suggestions for the new Arts Programme, which is now coming together, but if anyone has any last minute ideas, please contact Geoff.

Thank you to all the many people who have and are giving freely of their time, energy and ideas to really get the hall off to a flying start.

Harbour

We announced at the opening of the hall that the next big challenge facing the Trust and the community is the harbour project. The challenge before us is to arrest the decline of the harbour, fully renovate and turn it into a community asset. It took us several years to achieve the hall funding and it is thanks to the experience gained in carrying out this project successfully that the progress with the harbour has been much more rapid.

We are delighted to announce that the Harbour Steering Group has been successful in achieving a substantial package of funding for a range of improvements to the harbour. A public meeting will be held to discuss these improvements. These improvements will go hand in hand with a buy out of the harbour and an agreement for purchase has now been signed with the island's owner, Clive Feigenbaum. Funding in principle has been agreed for this buy out. This is an exciting and necessary first step down the road towards eventual full restoration of the harbour and in the shorter term will bring about a range of benefits for all harbour users.

Open Consultation Meeting

An open consultation meeting will be held on Easter Sunday, 11th April 2004, at 3pm in the hall.

Thank you all for all your help and support.

Jess Hill
Secretary