

EILEAN EISDEAL NEWSLETTER No.34 - JANUARY 2006

To all Easdale islanders, members and friends

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL

I'd like to take this opportunity to extend the Trust's warmest wishes to everyone and we sincerely hope that you all had as wonderful a time as we did here on Easdale. It was a great time to be celebrating and there were many opportunities for us all to enjoy ourselves; from the thoroughly enjoyable joint '160th' birthday party of Kay Carmichael and David Donnison's which kicked off the festivities, through the over-energetic antics of the footballers and hardy first footers and over-the-top madness of this year's panto, The Wizard of Ozdale. In the last newsletter I mentioned just how dark it had become but I am glad to say now, that "the nights are fair drawin' out!"

AGM

The Trust's AGM was held on Friday 30th December 2005 at 7.30pm in the Hall which received a great turnout despite the fact that the weather was not at its best. Once again the overall feeling from the floor was one of support and encouragement and given that this is a particularly busy time of the year the Directors would like to pass on their appreciation to those who did attend and show their support.

During the Chairman's report, I touched on the main areas of activity that the Trust has been involved with throughout the course of another busy year. There were many challenges in the last 12 months and they have brought the team of incumbent Directors closer together as they worked their way through them whilst still keeping a close eye on the financial situation. Two main groups have been of enormous help; namely the Hall Sub-Committee, comprising Fiona Blakey, Stephen 'Wee' Brown, Phil Bull, Colin Blakey, Lynn Noble, Wendy Blakey and Annabel Gregory and the Projects Development Sub-Committee involving Jan Fraser, Mike MacKenzie and Sandra Melville. Both groups ran through an outline of the work that they have carried out and their help with keeping things like the diverse Arts Programme going from strength to strength and the progress with the Harbour and Museum Projects are hugely appreciated.

None of this of course would happen without the assistance from a wider group of people who almost always go un-thanked. There are too many to mention all of them but they do take a pride in helping at events in various shapes and guises; bar staff, door people, glass collectors, glass washers, post-event cleaners,..... the list is pretty endless but our sincere thanks goes to them.

On the matter of the Hall, a great deal of work has been done to alleviate some of the problems arising from the as yet unresolved snagging list. Mike and his boys have done a lot of work in the Hall, mainly on draft-proofing the main hall area, the roof leaks and the resultant damage to the floor in the foyer. We have also had a local heating engineer over to look at the heating system and he is beginning to get to grips with it. I think you'll agree that the Hall is much warmer now and we thank Mike, John and Jamie for their help.

One of the most pleasing things this year has been the huge turnaround in the Trust's financial position. Annabel gave her Treasurer's Report and explained how the strategy that we had implemented in April of last year has taken us round the corner and we are now sitting in a much more comfortable position. We cannot become complacent yet but we are delighted by this and would again like to say a thank you to members and supporters for bearing with us and showing their support.

Bert Baker resigned as Director earlier in the year in preparation for him and Jean heading off to start their new lives in Sri Lanka helping with the disastrous situation left behind by the tsunami. Bert's time and devotion to Trust duties is much appreciated and we wish both he and Jean all the best in their

new adventure in Sri Lanka. In the annual rotation process, Wendy Blakey decided to stand down. Wendy brought with her years of experience in various public duties and we are sad to see her go. Our warmest wishes go to her and we hope that she and Ron both continue to make good progress following their recent operations. This left two Directors places to be filled and we had 3 nominees come forward. The nominees were Jan Fraser, Mike MacKenzie and Henry Tarbatt who all stood in the resultant ballot. The results were as follows; Mike MacKenzie 60 votes, Jan Fraser 56 votes, Henry Tarbatt 13 votes, I can therefore announce that Jan and Mike were the two successful nominees and both are now the two new duly elected Directors. I'd like to thank those of you who took the time and trouble to cast your votes and also to the nominees for standing. There was a particularly good turnout with 73% of members returning votes.

EASDALE ISLAND MUSEUM

The funding application has been largely completed and the Trust is having a dialogue with the funding agency with a view to fine tuning some technical aspects of the application. The museum is a mainstay of the economy of the Island and has a positive effect on the tourist economy in the surrounding area and consequently we are making a major effort to try and save it. We have had an enormous amount of support for this project both from within the community and from further afield and we hope to be able to report more positively on progress in the near future.

RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECT

We are due to meet with a representative of ALI Energy soon to discuss how we progress with this and we will be in touch with members and the wider community in connection with this in the near future.

HALL EVENTS

The main use of the Hall since the last newsletter continues to be on the fitness front. Twice a week the Ladies are round at their keep fit session and I am sure are feeling the benefit of it. We could probably all do with losing some of the extra pounds that we almost undoubtedly put on over the festive period, so why not go along ladies and gents, and make use of the running machine or set up a small circuit of floor exercises for yourself?

The New Year DIY Ceilidh, now an eagerly anticipated evening, hosted, this year, by pub stalwart, Stephen McNally went down a storm. The usual combination of dances, tunes, songs and poems, all provided by islanders and visitors, made for a very entertaining evening. It is amazing just how much talent there is within such a small community as Easdale Island, it really was special to be part of it, no matter how small a part you played.

The next event in the Hall is the Burns' Supper. This will be on Saturday 28th January at 7.30pm. Some of you will have been/are about to be approached to 'dae a turn' at this and we look forward to it being as good as in previous years. Anybody who would like to recite a poem, sing a song or contribute in any way, please let either Mike or myself know via the contact details at the end of this newsletter. Tickets are priced at £12 per adult and £6 per child {16 and under}, so please book, by phoning 01852 300579, to secure your place.

Anyone who is interested in helping out at events in the Hall is encouraged to contact the Hall Team through Fiona in the first instance. Her contact details are at the end of this newsletter. If you wish to book the Hall for something of your own this year, please do so as early as possible as Fiona tells me the diary is filling up already!

For details of the Hall and all forthcoming events, please look on the Hall website at www.easdale.org/hall . We hope to see you there!

And now for a detailed Hall Update from Fiona;

HALL UPDATE

The festive season saw the hall being used to its maximum with rehearsals, meetings, scenery painting, parties and the DIY ceilidh more than justifying keeping the heating on! It was a terrific new year and showed the hall off to its best as a multifunctional space. Big thanks to all who helped set stuff up, take stuff down, and tidy up...oh and wee Jan for washing the windae's. In general we have been able to calculate an upturn in 'footfalls' over the last year by keeping an exact record of usage. If we could ask everyone to carry on filling in the foyer diary when they have been in the hall, this is the best way of recording use. Please remember we have a beautiful space which belongs to everyone and can be used for all sorts of activities, so if you want to have a party, organise an event, or use the space to exercise yourself or family, please remember the hall is there.

There are many plans for events throughout the summer months with the arts programme coming together and applications being made for funding from the usual sources. We cannot confirm anything at this stage as we are waiting for the green light from the arts council but if all goes to plan we will have some treats for everyone. We are still planning on holding a retrospective evening of the last year and will let you know when this is to be. Our network of performers and new friends of the island is growing steadily and proving fruitful in terms of contacts for touring performances, and we are keen to maintain the excellent relationship we have with, for instance, the three main theatre companies who have visited regularly for years, Rapture, Traverse and Mull Theatre.

The Pantomime this year was appreciated by a bumper audience with the weather being perfect on the afternoon and the usual crowd of stalwarts making the trek from Seil, Oban and further afield. Some folk will do anything to see their son dress up in suspenders! There were also several visitors who delayed their departure from our bonnie shores, just to catch the smell of grease paint and laugh like they hadn't done for years. One visitor from Cape Cod reckoned the performance had surpassed all his expectations.....wonder what he THOUGHT was going to happen.... Anyway for the first time in years the majority of actors knew most of their lines and this combined with the costumes being up to their usual standard and a variety of colourful backdrops, lifted the show above the level we have come to expect (or dread). Well done to everyone for all their hard work and a special wee mention must go to Beth for carrying the lead role so professionally as to put her elders to shame! An actor who attended the performance stated afterwards that he felt she had 'real talent' and he wasn't joking! Also a wee mention for those from off the island who contributed at the last moment with interlude music from Joe and his accordion, a lovely performance of 'Over the Rainbow' from a hidden Caroline (just as well as the night before had been an exceptionally late one) and behind the scenes miracle working from Jessica, who was working with Jessica, just to confuse Fiona who had tried to construct devilishly difficult scene changes just to catch them out. Needless to say, the whole event flowed like a river through Munchkinland, which brings me to the last wee special mention which has to be for the Munchkins themselves. Kern, Eathan, Aonghas, Euan and Drew have firmly established themselves as budding performers and as long as we adults can still drum up the enthusiasm to continue the Easdale Island Panto, they will reap the benefit for years to come. Last but definitely first; a big thanks to Sandra who wrote the script and organised the rehearsals (the hard parts)! More power to your stamina Ms Melville.

MEMBERSHIP FEES

Finally, a reminder to members that their membership fees became due on January 1st. Thank you.

HARBOUR FEES

On the matter of fees, can I also take this opportunity to ask those of you who have not paid their harbour fees to do so. Most people have paid and it is important that all harbour users pay their fair share of meeting costs like insurance and our contribution to the improvements that have been made.

These funds, both Harbour and Membership, go a long way to helping the Trust in all its activities and are very gratefully and appreciatively received. They help enormously with Trust activities and go a long way to subsidising events. We have received some minor criticism that the fees are too high but we feel that they do represent value for money, after all, £25 per year works out at less than 50p per

week. This does not seem like a lot of money when you compare this to the hundreds of voluntary hours contributed in the course of each year and the considerable amount of money that the Trust has managed to secure for the island. The improvements that are being made through this funding will be of benefit to us all now and for our future generations.

Your continuing support is valued and very much appreciated. Thank you.

Kindest regards and our best wishes for 2006.

Donald Melville
Chairman.

Chairman Donald Melville
Secretary Jess Hill
Treasurer Annabel Gregory
Director Mike MacKenzie
Director Jan Fraser

For Hall bookings contact;
Fiona Blakey - Arts Program Co-ordinator

For Hall access contact any one of the above.