

EILEAN EISDEAL NEWSLETTER No.3 - AUGUST 1997

To all Easdale islanders, members and friends

Eilean Eisdeal is a charitable company limited by guarantee.

Its objects are to conserve and preserve the character and natural beauty of Easdale Island for the benefit of the public, to foster and encourage appreciation and interest in the island for those wishing to visit the island for recreation or study, and to promote the advancement of education and social welfare of the inhabitants by providing facilities for recreation and leisure time occupation.

There are initially five Directors, the positions of which will be periodically up for election. Islanders are invited to become members of the company and as such they will have equal voting rights to the Directors. People not resident or not owning property on the Island are invited to become Friends of Eilean Eisdeal, which will entitle them to receive newsletters, preferential concessions on functions, etc.

The Drill Hall will be leased to the trust in order that it may be used by the Islanders for its original purpose, as a community hall. An immediate aim of the trust is to restore the Drill Hall to a useable state and in the meantime to host functions such as this festival.

THE DRILL HALL

The hall is a unique building. It was built in 1871 as a drill hall for the volunteer force of the island population, which at that time numbered over 450. Being the only building on the island large enough to accommodate more than a few dozen people, it was customarily used for all social gatherings, meetings, ceilidhs, and weddings. As the population dwindled almost to nothing during the 1950's, the hall ceased to be used as a meeting place and community hall. Its slate roof was stripped and it was turned into a storage shed for fishing nets. In the 1980's fish processing equipment was installed and for a decade it was the basis of a small but thriving fish processing industry. Many people on the island today still know it as the fish hall. When the fish factory moved to Balvicar in 1993 the hall became derelict. It needs a new roof and floor, although the main structure is sound. It was bought in 1996 with the intention of restoring it for the use of the islanders, whose population by this time was increasing again to over 50 permanent people and about the same number who own property on the island and visit regularly.

The main building is 12 metres square in plan, with a 7 m high central column supporting a pyramidal roof. The column is formed from a ship's mast, salvaged from the 630 ton sailing ship *Norval* which went down at the southern tip of Inish Island in December 1870. The ship was carrying timber from Montreal to Glasgow, and it is likely that the massive rafters and supporting struts came from the same wreck.

To enter the empty hall today is a humbling experience. The instant impression of this intricate timberwork is one of eternal harmony with the island and its history. Eilean Eisdeal is aiming to ensure that the drill hall continues to be a focal point of the living community, and more than just a monument to the hundreds who lived and worked here in the past.

Be a friend of Eilean Eisdeal !

£5 a year (join now and 1998 comes free) will keep you up to date with news of the Island and its events. You will also be among the first to know about the next concert, art exhibition or ceilidh.

Just put your name, address, and phone number on an envelope with a fiver and slip it in the box.

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