

CAP winners and losers

DURING THE CAP negotiations there is often reference to winners and losers.

The Scottish Government tries to minimise losers and to limit winners. It doesn't help the industry to create wind-fall recipients any more than it benefits it by having too many losers dropping out of production. This could be seen as attempting to keep a balance or as bowing to a lobby for keeping business as usual. The pertinent question is, does it help in becoming a Good Food Nation?

The term winners and losers paints with too broad a brush. In the statistical sense there may well be crofters who fall into a bracket classed as winners, but there will be great variance in that bracket – some will do better; some will fare worse. There will be crofters who are winning who may well have started off with a pittance anyway, so to increase by a small percentage, making them winners on paper, doesn't really amount to very much.

Pillar 1, basic payments, tends to be dominated by larger producers. There will be many still receiving their very large cheques in years to come. But statistically this money has moved a bit from the south east of Scotland to the north west. Under the direction of the European Commission, CAP support payments have to move to the smaller producer and to the more environmentally sensitive areas, despite efforts by the industrial producers to thwart this. So it looks like the crofting areas, as a whole, could benefit from the pillar 1 reforms, they say.

Continued on page 4

The importance of small producers

DURING THE REFORM of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) in 2003/2004, SCF fought hard for, and won, a beef calf scheme that paid out an enhanced rate on the first ten calves.

This front-loading mechanism is designed to help the small producer and so, not surprisingly, was resisted by the lobby groups representing the bigger producers. But we got it.

The new CAP regime has further coupling of payments to production and there are several mechanisms to help the beef industry. The front-loading has been ditched though, replaced with a flat rate to all producers of any size. This will not bother the larger producers, indeed some may well rejoice, but it is a bitter blow to crofters and small-holders.

In the 1960s The Mansholt Plan, as it was known, was an idea promoted by Dr Sicco Mansholt, European Commissioner for Agriculture, which sought to remove small farmers from the land and to consolidate farming into a larger, more efficient industry.

The UK embraced this plan, probably more so than any other European country, and we still stand out in Europe as the odd one out regarding the large average size of our farms. Indeed, the Crofters Commission which was set up in 1955, was tasked with amalgamating crofts; and there are still a fair few of these very large crofts to be found in the crofting counties.

Where does this come from? There are some myths that need dispelling such as "Large scale

industrial farming is more efficient"; actually, industrial agriculture puts in ten times more energy than it produces; small-holder agriculture produces ten times more energy than it puts in. The efficiency myth is about putting more money into less pockets, a concentration of wealth.

Another myth is that large-scale farming feeds the world. Actually 70% of the world's food is produced by small-scale farming.

The present round of CAP reform has focused on support to the small producer, driven by member states in central and eastern Europe particularly, that are characterised by a prominence of small farms.

Most, if not all, European member states define a small farm as a unit above one hectare. Scotland defines it as above three hectares and the rest of the UK as above five hectares, so Scotland is somewhat more small-producer friendly, in this regard, than the rest of the UK at least.

Funding in the last Scotland Rural Development Plan (SRDP) was dominated by the larger businesses that could afford to pay agricultural consultants to prepare their applications. The design of the new SRDP reflects the need to make it more accessible to smaller businesses and it also has, after strong SCF lobbying, a new version of a capital grants scheme for crofters.

Scotland is famous for its iconic crofting system, but are we looking after our small producers as well as other European countries are?

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- New Commission census
- Crofting Connections
- Rare breeds feature
- Members' survey
- Credit union
- Land reform
- On the croft
- Training

and much more...



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Message from the chair...

Derek Flyn



WRITE THIS whilst the debate on independence is entering its final phase.

Like many others, I have tended to keep most of my thoughts on this to myself, though I am happy to discuss them with one and all.

Meanwhile, I am fortunate to have been able to attend both the Glasgow Commonwealth Games and the Edinburgh International Festival. Last week, whilst still in the

capital, I climbed Arthur's Seat with my grand-daughter. She is 4½ and the ascent was a joint celebration; she having just completed her first week of school whilst I survived into my seventieth year. For young and old, it has been a notable summer, whatever the result of the vote.

These things are on my mind as I am pressed to provide our editor with a relevant message. For inspiration I pick up one of (professor emeritus) Jim Hunter's books. This time it is *Last of the Free* on Highlands and Islands history. I am reminded by him that when the parliaments of Scotland and England were united in 1707, the Highlands and Islands had not yet been subjugated. Indeed it was not until the last battle on British soil had been fought and lost in 1746 that the ancient way of life was lost, destroyed by the victorious army of occupation. Soon after, parliament,

then united, "passed laws to punish Highlands and Islands people". Even their mode of dress was outlawed. Traditional lands were declared forfeit and expropriated; and this led to those people being cleared or removed.

The stories of manifold distress are now common knowledge. They are not part of my message, other than the fact that they did lead to a change of policy whereby "the Highlands and Islands began to be recognised, in 1886, as an area where conditions were such as to merit its being treated differently from the rest of Britain". It was then that the crofting counties were provided, in the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act 1886, with their own land law, now known as crofting law.

As I have written elsewhere, "In many ways crofting law is like the law of a different land. This is hardly surprising, for it is intended

to serve the needs of inhabitants of inaccessible and distant places". But recent changes have made parts of that law difficult to decipher, even by those working with it daily. It is widely felt that it is the law itself which has become distant and inaccessible. This cannot continue.

The Scottish Crofting Federation believes we must treasure this law of a different land and use it and adapt it to protect our people and their communities. The urge for change cannot be left to politicians, exercising power from afar. Nor should it be left to lawyers to make their case from their own desks. Highlands and Islands people, especially those who live on and take care of their crofts, must learn how to make their thoughts known.

The Federation exists for that purpose.

Click your croft competition winner

Registers of Scotland (RoS) photography competition winners

HEATHER GRAY of Shetland won with her photo 'Hentin Totties', which shows a family of all ages working the land.

The competition, run in association with the Scottish Crofting Federation and the Crofting Commission, set out to explore what the crofting way of life means to crofters in 2014.

Heather said: "I suppose my main inspiration for the photo is family. Seeing the extended family from grannies to toddlers coming together and helping out with the yearly crop – it just makes you smile."

John King, business development director at RoS and one of the panel of judges, said: "One of the key aims of the Crofting Register is to protect and secure croft land for future generations. The entries we have received for this competition have highlighted just how important that is to crofters."

"We received a large number of fantastic photos taken by people of all ages from across Scotland's crofting regions. What really comes across in these images is how much crofters love what they do and how central family still is to this traditional way of life. 'Hentin Totties' stood out for its depiction of everyone mucking in and having a great time doing so."

Second prize was awarded to 'Checking the Sheep with Grandad', submitted by Ria Macdonald. Taken on the Isle of Lewis, it shows Cormac Sandison with Mac the dog checking the sheep waiting to lamb on his grandad's croft.

In third place was Fiona MacKay's photo of haymaking in the Lewis sun, entitled 'Summer Bales'.

Heather won a Canon EOS 700D digital SLR camera with lenses and accessories, while the two runners up received a framed print of their image.



Hentin Totties



Checking the sheep with Grandad



Summer Bales

The Land Reform Review Group final report

THE LAND REFORM Review Group (LRRG), appointed by Scottish Ministers to identify how land reform will radically change the way land is owned and used in Scotland, published its final report recently.

The title *The Land of Scotland and the Common Good* conveys the clear message of where the results of the group's deliberations lie. One of the stated purposes of the Scottish Government's land use strategy for Scotland is to promote the wellbeing of the nation.

The report reflects this very competently and its sixty-odd recommendations, if taken up by Scottish Government, would see historic land reform "ensuring it reflects Scotland's needs for the 21st century and beyond" as minister for environment Paul Wheelhouse MSP envisioned.

But there will, naturally, be those who are resistant to anything that moves Scotland away from the most concentrated land ownership model in the world.

At the beginning of the parliamentary committee session taking evidence on the report from stakeholders, it was apparent that some groups had complained that they did not get consulted sufficiently. The president of National Farmers Union Scotland (NFUS) said during, and again after the meeting to the press, that "NFUS had concerns that farming interests did not have the desired

level of input into the report." Of the many stakeholder organisations represented at the session, only two, Scottish Land and Estates and the NFUS had any complaint of the consultation process.

It is not hard to see where their concerns lie if one reads the LRRG final report. For example the group's comments on CAP: "There has been no cap or upper limit on the total amount of agricultural subsidy that can be paid to a single business and the inequality in the distribution of the subsidies amongst farm businesses has increased. In 2008, for example, the top fifty recipients

were paid £22 million and that had risen to £35 million by 2011, with the top 10% of farm businesses receiving 48.6% of the total amount of agricultural support of £710.4 million that year."

There's a lot of money at stake here.

They go on to recommend, "The review group considers that there should be limits on the payments to the largest beneficiaries. The agricultural subsidies are ... capitalised into higher land prices and contribute to an increasing concentration in the ownership of farms on Scotland's better

agricultural land.

"The group also considers that the value for money in terms of public benefits from public funds for aspects of the CAP agricultural subsidy schemes should be much clearer than is the case at present."

It is no great surprise that some don't like the report, but to question its competence? Andy Wightman, probably Scotland's foremost expert on land reform, pointed out that, "Those who find the report difficult to deal with – mainly the landed interest – are attempting to undermine its credibility ..."

A point well made.



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The Bunchrew Land Declaration

This declaration was adopted following a meeting at Bunchrew House, by Inverness on 19 and 20 March 2014 involving land policy and reform interests from Scotland, the rest of the UK and internationally and which explored land reform in Scotland within an international context and with particular reference to the achievement of greater social justice and the realisation of human rights.

Community Land Scotland:

having shared the experience of land ownership in Scotland, the effects of that ownership being in the hands of so few people, and its impact in contributing to the decline of communities historically and today, and in denying opportunity for more people and communities to take responsibility for and share in the bounty of the land;

having explored the parallels with land reform internationally and the solidarity felt with peoples facing dispossession of and clearance from their lands today;

knowing Scotland lags behind land reform interventions which in Europe delivered greater land justice in past centuries;

understanding the impacts on bio-diversity and on the degradation of land caused by land uses favoured by many current owners in Scotland;

desiring to achieve more people-centred local land governance arrangements;

recognising the relevance and legitimacy of international legal frameworks, obligations and guidance to Scotland for change in land governance arrangements to help tackle land injustice and secure more sustainable futures for its people;

aware of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure 2012;

conscious of the possibilities flowing from the Scottish National Action Plan for Human Rights to contributing to deliver change;

mindful of the consideration and scrutiny of the Scottish land reform question within the Land Reform Review Group within Scotland, and the Scottish Affairs Committee of the UK Parliament, and the development of the Community Empowerment Bill;

whereas calling for established land ownership interests to recognise the manifest unfairness of current land ownership patterns;

Community Land Scotland:

re-affirms with renewed strength its commitment to pursue the just cause of establishing new land ownership patterns in Scotland;

cites international and inter-governmental

agreements in helping give legitimacy to nation states intervening in land ownership arrangements to create greater fairness and land justice;

anticipates thus empowering more people and communities to negotiate with current land-owners to take ownership and responsibility for land and associated assets, such as housing, bringing a people-centred approach to land governance in support of the common good;

associates itself with terms of the Antigua Declaration adopted by the International Land Coalition in 2013;

pledges to work in collaboration with others active in Scotland, the rest of the UK, and internationally, in pursuing policies to secure greater land ownership justice;

undertakes to learn from others what it is appropriate to learn and apply in Scotland;

offers to contribute to wider land reform movements and nations the Scottish experience in seeking to establish new land ownership patterns to serve the public interest, in combatting decline, expanding opportunity, developing stronger, more resilient, empowered and sustainable local communities and economies, and to achieve greater social justice.

www.communitylandscotland.org.uk

CAP reform

Continued from page 1

It was poor that the opportunity to move support from pillar 1 to pillar 2 was not used to a higher degree. It is perhaps not surprising that getting money from the industry-dominated pillar 1 to pillar 2, where schemes for small businesses, communities and the environment lie, is like pulling teeth. However, given the limited funding available, there has been a genuine revamping of the schemes under the SRDP, with the aim to target funds better and to make them more accessible to crofts and small farms in the High Nature Value areas.

A major win for crofters, and for SCF, is the retention of a capital grants scheme for crofters (remember the Scottish Government's suggestion in their consultation to open it to all small farms in Scotland). Details of what will be in the Crofting Support Scheme (replacing CCAGS) are still being worked on but we should be able to provide information soon.

The Less Favoured Area Support Scheme, also under pillar 2, will be reviewed with the intention that it will develop into the Areas of Natural Constraint, its criteria seeing support going to where it should.

But losses too. NFUS suggested that Scotland be split into three regions – the majority of recipients in the consultation agreeing with the Scottish Government suggestion of two regions – based on rough grazing being sub-divided into two regions, with very low payments (10 Euros per ha) going to the extensive areas (region 3). This was tested and rejected by the Scottish Government.

But, to the great dismay of many (not including NFUS presumably) cabinet secretary for rural affairs Richard Lochhead announced how CAP support would be divided up; and rough grazing will indeed be split into region 2 and region 3. Not an easy decision for Mr Lochhead, but there is a shed-load of money going to agri-businesses on high-yielding region 1 land (£220 per ha) and an astonishingly low amount of support going to the crofters and farmers in the extensive, fragile areas (£10 per ha).

Those on the £10 are assured that they can make it up by claiming coupled support – headage payments. There is a sheep scheme proposed and a higher rate for beef on the islands, but the uplift for the first ten calves in the beef scheme, which SCF fought hard to win for crofters in the last CAP reform, has been sacrificed to get this.

So you win some, you lose some. There is still a great deal of unknown in the detail of how the new CAP era will work. Our overall conclusion at this point is that the reforms have fallen far short of the opportunity presented to help the smaller producer, rural communities and the environment. Some crofters will pack it in, but many will carry on despite the CAP rather than because of it.

Patrick Krause

Cap pillar 1 catch 22 over voluntary coupled sheep support for region 3 payment areas

RACHEL AND KEITH Jackson of Orbst Farm on the Isle of Skye have contacted the cabinet secretary for rural affairs Richard Lochhead MSP expressing their concerns on the new proposed Voluntary Coupled Support (VCS) scheme.

The Jacksons believe that the proposed VCS scheme will be unlikely to be accessible or suitable for any farm or croft which suffers sea eagle predation on its sheep, lambs and hoggs. No-one who has predatory sea eagles on their land, they state, will be able to apply for a sheep-coupled support programme, when they have no guarantee from gather to gather how many sheep/lambs/hoggs might be missing. The inspection penalty risks would prohibit applying, because three resident breeding pairs of eagles on the estate, plus up to 15 transient sub-adults, will kill a significant percentage of their flock across all ages each year.

Twelve years' of documentation and evidence of sea eagle predation on sheep, lambs and hoggs on the farm and the surrounding units in north-west Skye, demonstrating losses of sheep of all ages, was provided by the couple to inform the discussions of the crofting cross-party group at the Scottish Parliament.

Rachel and Keith have been working closely with RSPB and SNH to try to find a balance between the significant predation levels at Orbst and protecting the important ecological balance the eagles require to remain and thrive there.

They have serious concerns on how the proposed CAP model will negatively affect

some of the more fragile, particularly island, agricultural areas in Scotland. Taking north-west Skye as an example – within the new system, the parish average pillar 1 payment will reduce from around 30 euros/Ha to 8-10 euros/Ha for rough grazing areas, which is a significant portion of the ground in the region. They believe the VCS scheme, developed to mitigate some of the differences in these pillar 1 payment reductions, will be effectively inaccessible to the very businesses it is designed to support, as predation losses would prohibit being able to submit robust numbers. This will be the case in any area where sea eagle predation exists – for example Mull, Ardnarmuchan and Wester Ross.

In the Jackson's case, the 8-10 euro scenario will represent a significant increase in pillar 1 receipts as they missed the last CAP round, but as they do not believe they would be able to apply to a VCS scheme for the reasons stated above, they would still not be competing on a fair, level playing field.

The minister has been urged to re-examine plans for the VCS scheme, suggesting that he should consider building in an allowance or alternative scheme for those in areas which are suffering sea eagle predation of their stock. This would create a fair system, the Jacksons suggest, accessible to all eligible businesses and removing the chance of discrimination against those already disadvantaged because of predation.

The letter was sent on 19th August. As we went to press, a response was awaited from the minister.



"The sheep was euthanised and post mortem performed. The conclusion was that the injuries were consistent with an attack by a large bird of prey. You can see the talon scratch marks all around the injury site where the eagle was pinning the sheep down. I have the pm report. We have multiple cases of injuries just like these, to a more or lesser extent."

The Crofting Census – making your contribution count

THE CROFTING COMMISSION is carrying out an unprecedented data-gathering exercise across the crofting community.

Following the implementation of the Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, the Crofting Commission has a duty to issue the Crofting Census and Common Grazings Census, which are known legislatively as the annual notice and the duty to report. The Crofting Census is a legal requirement and all crofters must complete and return it.

In October 2014 over 18,000 crofting census forms will be sent out and we hope to be able to issue over 600 Grazing Census forms at the same time. This is a new and complex task and preparations for it are well underway within the Commission.

Crofters and grazing committees are legally obliged to complete the census forms and return them to the Commission. There is a three-month completion deadline for the crofting census and they must be returned to the Commission by mid-January 2015.

The Crofting Commission is asking for information on what you do with your croft and any common grazing share. This will help to establish a clear picture of the current state of crofting and enable the Commission to use the information to advise Scottish ministers, the Scottish Parliament and other agencies of the value of crofting and its contribution to life in Scotland. With the information provided, the Commission will be able to better understand and raise issues facing the future of crofting.

The Commission is promoting self-regulation and the census will allow crofters to better understand their responsibilities in fulfilling their duties. Self-regulation provides more control and management over your croft and your community. Susan Walker, convener for the Crofting Commission commented: "Crofting is a form of land tenure unique to Scotland and one we should be proud of, with the potential to be a major driver for economic, social and cultural growth. Regulation is there to protect this precious asset for present and future generations. The census will highlight various options available to crofters in complying with their duties; and the Commission will be on hand to advise on the opportunities you may wish to consider."

The annual crofting census will allow the Commission to gather an evidence base which will grow year on year, helping to develop the case for crofting and creating persuasive arguments for issues such as the Common Agricultural Policy reform over the coming years. The census allows you to contribute to shaping the future of your crofting community.

Crofters are urged by the Commission to make their contribution count by ensuring that they complete and return the census forms.

The Commission also requires the updated information on crofts and common grazings to be able to process future regulatory applications. As Catriona MacLean, chief executive of the Crofting Commission explains: "The crofting and common grazings census will increase information gathered from crofters, owner-occupier crofters

and grazing committees, enabling us to work together. The census will allow the Commission to show the value of crofting not only to the Scottish economy, but also in building sustainable communities and contribute to population retention. The census forms are quick and easy to complete and they'll come with comprehensive guidance notes."

For further information visit www.crofting.scotland.gov.uk.

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CONTRIBUTION TO THE FUTURE OF CROFTING



Image courtesy of Heather Gray, 'Hentin Totties'
Winner of the 'Click Your Croft' Competition

The Crofting Commission is working to create a successful crofting system and we need the help of crofters!

In October 2014 the Crofting Commission will be sending out Crofting Census forms to all crofters. The Census, which is a legal requirement, provides crofters with the opportunity to shape the future of crofting.

For more information visit www.crofting.scotland.gov.uk/croftingcensus

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- Completion of Assignations, Decrofting and Sublet applications
- GPS croft maps for Crofting Commission or SGRPID
- Operational Needs Assessment to support planning applications
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- Grassland and crop advice including soil analysis, fertiliser and reseed
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What kind of crofter are you?

I G Macdonald, elected crofting commissioner, poses an important question.

Perhaps the first question should be: are you a crofter?

In 2012 at the time of the first elections for the Crofting Commission, I heard from several people who, thinking they were crofters, had not received ballot papers. On enquiry, they discovered that in spite of having smallholdings in the crofting counties, these had not been registered as crofts in 1955 or subsequently, and were therefore not subject to the Crofting Acts nor under the regulation of the Crofting Commission. Another crofter was surprised to be told that she was, in fact, a landlord of a vacant croft and that the Commission could, in certain circumstances, insist that she let the croft to a tenant.

There are two categories of crofter.

A tenant crofter pays rent to, and is under certain obligations to, a landlord. In so doing s/he has security of tenure and can bequeath the tenancy to a person or persons of her/his choice. It is important that the legatee gives notice of the bequest to the landlord and the Crofting Commission within 12 months of the crofter's death or the bequest is null and void and the tenancy would be treated as intestate estate. After 24 months the Commission may declare the croft vacant and require the landlord to submit letting proposals. There are currently several crofts on the Commission's records as "tenanted by deceased crofter".

An owner-occupier crofter is the owner of a croft which has not been let to any person since it was acquired from the landlord by the former tenant, or the tenant's nominee, or their successors in title.

It was the intention of the Scottish Parliament, in passing the Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, that as far as possible both categories of crofter be treated in the same manner.

Privileges and responsibilities

Crofters are very privileged people. These privileges were won for us by stalwart men and often more stalwart women, in the second half of the 19th century. Along with these privileges we have responsibilities. The responsibilities which apply to ALL crofters are referred to as statutory duties – of which there are three.

1. **Residency duty – a crofter must be ordinarily resident on, or within 32km of, that crofter's croft.**
2. **Duty not to misuse or neglect the croft.**
3. **Duty to cultivate and maintain the croft or put it to an agreed purposeful use.**

Crofting Census

From the autumn of this year, each crofter will be expected to complete an annual return or census to reassure the Crofting Commission that each of these duties is being complied with for each croft. Information will be given to help non-compliant crofters to understand some of the possible remedies they can take to comply with their responsibilities. This softly-softly approach will help the individual crofter to self-regulate and avoid possible enforcement action by the Commission.

The census information that we receive from crofters, owner-occupier crofters (and grazings committees who complete the common grazings census) will be of great value, enabling us to highlight crofting issues to ministers and the Scottish Parliament, backed up by evidence, helping us to make the case for crofting.

Below is IG's entry in the Crofting Commission's Register of Crofts.

On page 8 you will see an excerpt of IG's entry in Registers of Scotland's new crofting register.



**CROFTING COMMISSION
COIMISEAN NA CROITEARACHD**

REGISTER OF CROFTS COPY ENTRY REPORT

Date Executed: 03-Sep-2014 08:03

Holding Details

Name: 1/2 1 Nether Ollach

Register Number: I3200

Township: Nether Ollach, Portree

Parish: Portree

Total Area (ha): 0

Tenant Name: Ian George MacDonald

Address: GRIANAN, 1 LOWER OLLACH, THE BRAES,

PORTREE

Postcode: IV51 9LJ

Rent: 10.85

Landlord, Estates & Agents

Landlord: 1

Name: Mrs Catriona Bridget Leslie

Address: REDCLIFF, SCORRYBREAC ROAD, PORTREE

Postcode: IV51 9DH

Landlord: 2

Name: Mr Alan Alexander John Mackinnon

Address: 18 Ashchurch Grove, London

Postcode: W12 9BT

Note: The information in the register is supplied from various sources. Changes can and do occur without our knowledge. Accuracy of every detail cannot be guaranteed.



Scottish Crofting Federation

Our mission is to safeguard and promote the rights, livelihoods and culture of crofters and their communities.

The Register of Crofts

SOME CROFTERS ARE getting confused between the Commission's Register of Crofts — which has been held by the Commission since 1955 — and a new requirement for crofters to have their crofts placed on the map-based Crofting Register which is held by Registers of Scotland.

This is resulting in delays to other applications they make to the Crofting Commission, as without the crofts being put on the new Crofting Register, the Commission cannot take decisions on regulatory applications. This confusion is quite understandable as both registers have very similar names.

Since 1955 the Commission has been required to hold details such as the name and age of the crofter, whether the land is tenanted or owned and any areas that have been decrofted. They hold this information on the Register of Crofts. However, this is simply a list of information and not a map-based record.

When the 2010 Crofting Reform Act came into force it introduced a new Crofting Register which is held, not by the Commission, but by the Keeper of the Registers of Scotland. This register is map-based and shows the extent of crofts and common grazings or land held runrig. It also provides details of tenants, landlords and other parties with an interest in the land or the grazings. However this change did not replace the need for the Commission to keep its Register of Crofts. Again, it's easy to see how confusion could arise.

The act also introduced a clause which prevents the Commission from taking decisions on regulatory applications, such as assignments or decrofting, unless the crofter applies to have his or her croft recorded on the new map-based Crofting Register at the same time. This can result in regulatory applications being held up and, understandably, unhappy customers. So, to avoid delays, regulatory applications should be



accompanied by an application to place the croft on the new Crofting Register.

Over 300 crofts now appear on the Crofting Register. Any application to have a croft placed on that register must be made by the crofter, to the Crofting Commission along with a map and the £90 registration fee. This fee is set by Registers of Scotland. The Commission will then check the details against the information held on its Register of Crofts and send the application, map and fee to Registers of Scotland for recording. While Registers of Scotland ultimately receive the fee, cheques should be made payable to the Crofting Commission.

For further information on the triggers for registration and information on the registration process visit www.ros.gov.uk or www.crofting.scotland.gov.uk



The Crofting Register

ON 30 NOVEMBER 2013, the Crofting Register extended from only accepting voluntary applications for registration to include applications that must be submitted when certain trigger events occur.

These trigger events mainly relate to actions requiring an application to the Crofting Commission for approval to change some aspect of the croft land, such as assigning or dividing a croft or the sale of a croft by an owner-occupier crofter. It is still possible to submit applications for voluntary registration and crofters are being urged to continue taking a collective approach towards croft registrations.

Indeed, earlier this year environment and climate change minister Paul Wheelhouse announced that efforts to encourage community applications to the Crofting Register were being stepped up. The minister announced

that Registers of Scotland (RoS) would lead a project, jointly funded by RoS and the Scottish Government, to support community registrations.

RoS has appointed a community mapping liaison officer who will manage the project to facilitate and encourage group registrations of crofts. The liaison officer is following up expressions of interest from a number of communities and is keen to hear from other communities who are interested in submitting group applications. RoS will provide support by offering workshops and meetings in crofting communities. The project will also provide email and telephone support and will supply Ordnance Survey extracts that can be used as the basis for a community map.

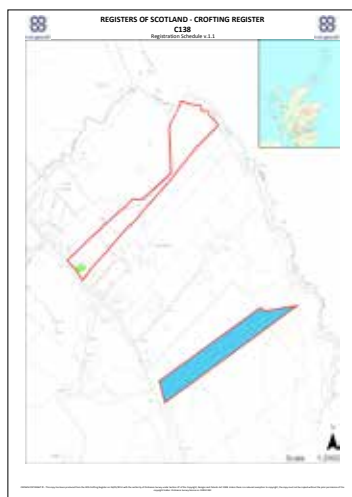
There are many benefits to group registrations, including bringing communities together around a common purpose and ensuring that all croft

land is captured and protected. Once on the register it will remain croft land unless it is formally decrofted or resumed. Group registrations also provide an organised approach for agreeing boundaries, minimising the risk that a challenge to the extent of a registered croft will be raised in the Scottish Land Court.

RoS, together with the Crofting Commission and SCF, undertook significant stakeholder engagement in the crofting counties during 2013. This has enabled RoS to build a rapport with key stakeholders and to work with crofters and local communities to deliver a number of prospective community applications. RoS will continue to work collaboratively with the Crofting Commission, SCF and other key stakeholders to maximise the benefit to crofting communities through the mapping of their croft land.

www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home

The Crofting Register contains registration schedules that have both map-based and textual information. The following is a condensed excerpt for ½ 1 Lower Ollach.



This Crofting Register Registration Schedule is challengeable for 9 months from the date that the Crofting Commission notifies interested parties - see subsection 12(5) in Part 2 Section 12 of the Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010.

Crofting Register Croft Number: C138
Commission Number: 13200
Date of First Registration: 05/05/2014
Date Registration Schedule Updated To: 05/05/2014

Croft Description: Officially ½ 1 Nether Ollach, Portree also known as ½ of 1 Nether Ollach (South), Nether (Lower) Ollach, Portree

Registration Schedule Map Details: edged red

Landlord Name: Mrs Catriona Bridget Leslie

Designation: c/o George Street Law LLP, 4 George Street, Dingwall IV15 9SA

Landlord Name: Mr Alan Alexander John Mackinnon
Designation: c/o George Street Law LLP, 4 George Street, Dingwall IV15 9SA

Owner Name: <None>

Designation: <None>

Owner Occupier Name: <None>

Designation: <None>

Tenant Name: Mr Ian George MacDonald

Designation: Grianan, 1 Lower Ollach, Braes, Portree, Isle of Skye IV51 9LJ

Associated Common Grazing/Runrig

Description: Lower Ollach Common Grazing in the Parish of Portree

Crofting Register Number: CG39

Description: Achnahaid Upper Ollach Etc General Common Grazing in the Parish of Portree
 Crofting register Number: CG30

Notes

A person who suffers loss as a result of a matter mentioned in Part 2 Section 18 (2) of the Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 is to be indemnified by the Keeper in respect of that loss.

The area tinted green on the plan has been decrofted. If the terms of Part 2 Section 15 of the Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 are complied with this entry will be removed 20 years from the making of the direction. The date for removal is 27 May 2033.

Permanent Apportionment - The area tinted blue on the plan has been permanently apportioned.

CROFTING CONNECTIONS and RARE BREEDS

Young crofters are no longer a rare breed

TRADITIONAL LIVESTOCK breeds are important in today's crofting counties for many reasons.

There is a huge interest in a return to the distinctive flavour of traditional breeds. They have a lower impact on land and resources, so have a lower carbon footprint; and they are iconic to the landscape in the crofting counties.

Traditional breeds offer a rich source of learning for the young crofters in our schools.

Several Crofting Connections schools are on islands which are the place of origin of primitive North Atlantic short-tailed sheep breeds – small, nimble, horned sheep with very ancient histories and beautiful coloured fleeces. These include the two best-known: Hebridean and Shetland sheep – and the rare Soay and North Ronaldsay sheep.

Pupils are able to share their studies of native breeds across the project areas in various ways.

In 2012, pupils in North Ronaldsay Primary produced a display of their work on North Ronaldsay sheep. They learned from the island's crofters about the ancient system of keeping the sheep behind a wall built in 1832, on the shore where they forage on seaweed for most of the year. They looked at meat production and wool craft from this unique breed which is now getting the recognition it deserves as far afield as London.

Their display was part of a Crofting Connections event in Kirkwall where

pupils and teachers from all over Orkney had the opportunity to taste North Ronaldsay mutton cooked by leading Orkney chef, Paul Doull. The exhibition from the event has toured the outer isles through the Orkney library service.

Crofter-teacher Kim MacLennan of Lochcarron Primary has a very small herd of Soay sheep, the primitive breed from the St Kilda archipelago, where numbers of the sheep still lead a feral existence on the islands of St Kilda, Soay and Boreray. Pupils at Lochcarron have a long-term involvement with Kim's Soay sheep, getting to know the rhythms of the shepherd's year through observing this generally shy breed at lambing and helping to look after last year's caddie lamb, Oliver.

Soay sheep do not need shearing in the usual way, so pupils help with 'rooing' the fleece by hand. They have learnt the skills of rolling, carding and spinning the fleeces, comparing the quality of the wool with that of other sheep breeds. They were able to share their learning at the launch of Crofting Connections Phase 2 at Plockton High in January 2013.

There is always going to be a place for traditional breeds in crofting counties. Seeing children and young people develop an understanding and love for the sheep which are part of the culture of their communities, passed down by older generations of crofters, is key to ensuring their survival.



Lochcarron pet lamb



Rooing Soay sheep at Lochcarron



North Ronaldsay sheep display which toured the Orkney Isles



Kim MacLennan and twin Soay lambs



St Kilda sheep on St Kilda



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Inksters can provide you with specialist advice on all aspects of crofting law throughout the Crofting Counties from our offices in Inverness and Glasgow.



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RARE BREEDS

Minority breeds on the croft

SCF member Bridie Pursey keeps some less common breeds on her croft at Elphin in Sutherland.

AT ONE TIME we exhibited over 30 breeds, including poultry, Scottish cattle and sheep, pigs and goats; but we have a few that suit our present lifestyle.

Boreray sheep are a small breed that came from crossing the earlier Scottish Dunface and only a few were taken off the remote St Kildan island in the 1950s. They do not benefit from handling or penning at lambing time, but are excellent mothers. Milk is sometimes short after a hard winter. The wool can be fine but is often coarse.

Shetland sheep are a minority breed in Scotland, though in Shetland they pre-dominate the pastures. We chose to keep them for our main flock for several reasons: their shades and quality of wool, hardiness, size, friendliness; and the ewes' ease of lambing, milkiness and good mothering. We keep the wethers for 18 months.

Hebridean sheep come a close second. They have a smaller carcass and long, black fleece, and do well on the hill.

Three old Soays (a breed previously isolated on St Kilda) inhabit our hill, enjoying little handling, and they graze and live out their days here. You can roo their short, soft fleece. I remember midgey summer evenings rounding up tiny lambs that push through rylock! Trees must be fenced out of high browse reach. They are long-legged and dark, horned, goat-like.

Small and wild North Ronaldsays eventually adjusted in their second generation to a park diet here, having been used to seaweed. They often escaped. Keep all tups behind a strong, high fence, or risk a fall out with neighbours!

We have kept various breeds of cattle, but the outdoor Highlander proved the best on rough grazings and not too heavy for wet moor. They can overheat inside.

Rare Golden Guernsey goats are gentle and well-clad with hair. Reasonable milkers, they need around 2kg of cereal a day, yielding four to five pints in summer and one pint in mid-winter with hay supplement. They graze the mix of grass and rough and rarely jump a sheep fence. They do need a dry shelter, occasional grooming and well-trimmed hooves.

We enjoyed rearing many rare breed pigs, eg Saddlebacks and Gloucester Old Spots. Stony soils provide better conditions than peaty/grassy ground (or an insulated floor with access to fresh air pens works), as pigs are prone to arthritis. We had lamps for piglets over winter farrowing. The meat is tasty; and Tamworths – pure or crossed with wild boar – are not fatty. Bedding and feed costs mean you did little more than break even.

On to poultry – it seems that birds need 14 hours of daylight to trigger laying. Modern breeds have been selected to lay for about 300 days in their first year. Rare breeds are more seasonal in their efforts. The beautiful, speckled, tall Scot's Grey and the stumpy Scot's Dumpy chickens are two very rare breeds that lay during the summer only and are difficult to source. Others, like Wyandotte and Cochin, are large birds that amazed us in their parenting capacities, even taking on sparrow-hawks.

We still have a few hens and bantams on the croft, mainly the crow-like Araucana hens and Pekin bantams. The former lay a lovely blue egg; the latter, with furry feet effective on wet ground, are prone to broodiness but parent well. Incidentally, the moulted feathers of poultry are of some value to fly-fishers. An egg collection around Easter-time is very colourful, too.

Rare-breed ducks, like the Shetland, are attractive. The small call ducks are my favourite. Watch out with white birds, as foxes pick on them first. Geese make noisy,

effective guards, but leave a slippery mess around gates! The young grow very fast and make a midwinter feast, once fattened up. I would recommend the Muscovy duck, not very common in the Highlands these days: almost a goose, which sits well, hatches a big clutch of a dozen eggs and makes good eating... with a tendency to perch, graze grass and shovel out slugs and snails in your vegetable patch! Unlike many ducks, they are as happy with a puddle as a pond and safe shut away from predators.



Golden Guernsey goats are easy to handle and contain



The close mothering bond of Shetlands



Soay sheep

RARE BREEDS

Luining - The ideal crofter's cow

SCF's agriculture working group chair Joyce Wilkinson praises the Luining.

FRASER DARLING wrote a chapter describing the ideal crofter's cow in his acclaimed 1945 work *Crofting Agriculture*.

The croft land of the west, windswept and acidic, required a type of shorthorn/ highland cross that could "trim her sails to the wind and cover herself first in hard times, but still have plenty left for the calf and who would not run dry in six months." She would need to be docile enough to come into the byre when needed but hardy enough to feed off the hill most of the growing season. Her conformation would have to be correct and uniform.

He continues to dwell on the difficulties associated with creating a breed: "with first crosses being profitable but the problems coming when you start breeding these first crosses, ending up not with uniformity but a bunch of odd-looking mongrels."

20 years later Darling would have been happy to witness the work that went into creating the Luining. As most will know the breed was developed by the Cadzow brothers, aided by Bob Church, a professor in genetics; but the will and thinking of the government of the time helped implement the plan. Support for agriculture and production was to the forefront, recognising the need for a breed that could produce out of the natural constraints in the Highlands and send uniform calves off to fatten easily on grass and cereals. In every way this cow was the perfect crofter's cow – and remains so today.

Luining cattle have been bred with attributes that you can only be sure of when you buy a pure-bred, as opposed to the first cross from a shorthorn/ highland. The careful selection and research of genetics in developing the Luining cow means you can guarantee you are going to breed true to type, if your herd base is pure-bred Luining. These merits are applicable in today's market and have stood the test of time.

The usual good traits of calving ease, hardiness and conformation are all there in the Luining, with the certainty of inherent good traits from a breed designed for the Highlands. In every way life as a crofter is easier with Luining cattle.

Temperament

So important in crofting situations where each crofter in a township

may only have three or four cattle and shares facilities or uses makeshift facilities; and when cattle belonging to different individuals share grazings and the bull.

Teats

Many crofters have cows that stay with them into old age. To stay profitable and keep producing and feeding a calf well into their teens they need good springy udders and teats, not the fat teats too often associated with Highlanders. Smaller teats are easier when new calves are trying to feed for the first time.

Feet

If you are keeping a cow for a long time, as many crofters do, you need good feet that don't need attention. It will save money, time and hassle. Luining are bred with tidy feet, a great attribute.

Polled Luings

Naturally-polled Luining cows will save more time and money.

Movement

There is nothing worse than having a poor-walking cow out on the hill. The Luining has a free walk and will always come down off the hill first.

Pure breeding

There are seven families in the breed and it is wise to study the genetics before embarking on a breeding programme of pure Luining. Bulls are all tested and scored on maternal traits and semen is available through the Luining society or genus.

Cross-breeding

Luining naturally cross well with the Sim and heifers from this are in high demand. A streamlined red Sim bull suits the Luining well and crosses finish, fatten and grow on with plenty marbling through the meat. Crossing with the Lim works well too with uniform shape and colour good for batching.

Finding stock

The Luining Society has a sales and breeders register. West coast buyers should look for breeders in their own area so the cattle are tick-acclimatised. Most herds are high health. Dingwall has a Luining sale in May and UA Stirling and Castle Douglas have theirs in October and February respectively.



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RARE BREEDS

Shetland cheese from Lewis?

SCF director Paddy Zakaria from Ardgay reports

ON THE MORNING of 27th June this year a number of crofters from far-flung quarters of the north were up very early connecting up livestock boxes for the long trip to Dingwall auction mart.

One of them rose at 4am to be on the ferry from Stornoway. Another was up at daybreak to travel from Skye, while others set off from Caithness, Flichity and Ardgay.

The purpose of this journey was to meet a lorry which had travelled up from east Yorkshire overnight, carrying cattle. But not ordinary cattle. These were pedigreed Shetlands from the disbandment of the only commercial Shetland cattle dairy herd in the UK, used for producing cheese.

The dairy was part of Epicure's Larder, established in 2005 by Jacqueline Broadhead high up in the wolds of east Yorkshire. A farmer's daughter, Jacquie acquired 111 acres of wold and embarked on a plan to make specialty cheeses from the milk of the rare Shetland cattle, having experimented making cheese in the kitchen and identifying that there was a gap in her local market.

Jacquie's choice of cow was not accidental. Knowing how important a diverse genetic base is for all realms of life, and deliberating long on animal hardiness, milk properties and breed rarity, she decided on the Shetland. Tamworth pigs, to utilise the whey from the cheese-making, and Kerry Hill sheep to tidy up the grassland after grazing by the cattle completed the livestock plan.

Epicure's Larder was a one-person operation. Jacquie's dairy began in a converted container adapted to take two cows at a time, milked by a small machine. The cheese-making took place in a second container, suitably modified. Later a large shed was built over the top of the whole so that the activities took place under cover and milkers and

calves could be accommodated inside.

Doggedness, hard work and know-how paid off; and while the first cow was only purchased in 2005, cheese from Epicure's Larder won its first prize at the British cheese awards in 2008. In the following years the cheeses went on to win many further awards both nationally and internationally – due, Jacquie says, to the quality and distinctiveness of the Shetland milk. She could not make enough cheese to meet the demand.

Then suddenly in May this year, Jacquie contacted me to say that she was selling up and moving to New Zealand. Knowing that her cows were well-bred, strong, milky and quiet and

represented the best attributes of the Shetland breed, I rang around and in no time had found croft homes for twenty beasts.

Back to that June morning at Dingwall Mart. Cows, calves and a bull were eventually loaded into assorted trailers and set off for new homes and new possibilities. The bull and two senior foundation cows went over the water to Lewis to join SCF member Paul Rowston's existing Shetland herd at Tolsta and the milking machine will be following within a few weeks.

I, for one, can hardly wait for the new product from the west with the Scottish Crofting Produce Mark – Shetland cheese from Lewis!



Iain Keith (l) and Paul Rowston loading the Shetland Bull

Happy ending

Morag MacKenzie, an SCF stalwart from Duirinish in Lochalsh, tells a wee tale with a happy ending.

HAVE A SMALL fold of Highland cattle – eight cows, eight calves, four bulling heifers and a bull.

We bought our first two Highland heifers in 1992 and have only kept Highlanders since then. All our cows are descendants of the original two cows. Ian and I like working with them as they are very easy to work round.

In March last year one of the cows calved a bull calf at around 6am on a bitterly cold morning. We had a very cold north-easterly wind blowing for a few days, leaving the ground rock hard and when you were out in it the wind cut through you. This little calf got chilled

through and would not stand, although we got to him as soon as he was born.

I moved the calf out of the wind to a sheltered place behind a wall and rubbed and rubbed at him, without interfering too much so as not to annoy his mother – but I am sure she knew I was trying to help.

I knew if I didn't take the calf in and get him warmed up I would lose him and that was a risk I was not going to take. I phoned Alex Townsend from Plockton and he came over with a heat lamp. We took the calf home to the house and put him against a radiator, wrapped in blankets, hanging the heat lamp off the radiator above him to get as much heat as possible into him.

Alex came down the field with me with a bucket of suckler cow nuts and we give this to the cow as

I milked her. She had never been milked before and she stood as good as gold for me. We then went back to the house and got some good warm milk into the calf. He soon recovered and within three hours was back with his mother.

Once we latched him on to his mother and he was able to do for himself, the mother was having no more of our interference.

Alex went on to buy this bull calf from me so he is alive and well in Plockton.



Young crofter Lucy Matheson checks the calf

ON THE CROFT

Why use Aberdeen Angus?

The answer is easy, writes Gayle Bersey, Aberdeen Angus youth development coordinator.

LOW MAINTENANCE + premium product = maximum profit and sustainability, with the Aberdeen Angus Society's commitment to encouraging young people into the breed.

Low maintenance Angus cattle are great converters of forage and can produce the highest quality beef naturally. The hardiness and will to live of the Aberdeen-Angus cross calf makes the breed ideal for crossing. The smaller Aberdeen Angus calf (the breed has a shorter gestation period than continental breeds) leads to fewer calving difficulties which in return has a major economic impact on the herd, with less wear and tear on the cow – giving her a longer breeding life.

Aberdeen-Angus cross calves grow quickly and efficiently on the minimum of supplementary feed into highly-acceptable quality cattle which meet the modern demand for medium-sized carcasses and quality beef. Females make ideal suckler cows which are easily maintained, can calf at two years old, produce a calf every year and give plenty of milk to rear fast-growing calves. Not to mention the fact that they are naturally polled which can save a lot of time and stress on both the farmer and the calf.



Aberdeen Angus Society Youth Group

Premium product A world-renowned product, most people have heard the name Aberdeen Angus and associate it with quality beef. Our society has even managed to get the name and quality out to those people that prefer Burger King to the local quality butcher. With leading high street retailers actively promoting Aberdeen-Angus as the beef of superior eating quality, it has created great demand for Aberdeen Angus-sired store and prime cattle and with the quality of the beef it's ideal for farm shops or boxed beef.

Commitment to the future The society's youth development programme is designed to raise the skill level and confidence of young people aged 8-24, encouraging them to work

towards an industry-recognised specialist award as well as having a lot of fun along the way. The programme centres round workshops held throughout the UK and Ireland where some of the best stock-people in the business give tips for success. Whilst the workshops focus on preparing for showing, they can also give young people confidence in handling cattle; stock judging, which helps with picking cattle and a bit of public speaking; and lots of other seminars to help them become great beef producers in the future.

www.aberdeen-angus.co.uk

FSA policy on home slaughter of livestock

IN DECEMBER last year the Food Standards Agency (FSA) consulted on a proposed change to the current policy on home slaughter of livestock and the potential impacts of the changes.

The proposal had been brought about by enquiries from parties who felt that the current policy was too restrictive and also took into account changes to animal welfare rules that came into effect in January 2013. New EU regulation on animal welfare recognises that slaughter for the purpose of private domestic consumption may be undertaken by a person other than the owner, provided that the individual has the appropriate level of competence and works under the responsibility and supervision of the owner.

The Scottish Crofting Federation responded tentatively, welcoming the basis of the proposal. However the devil is in the detail with this proposal. Our response stated that the wording should be in line with the EU regulations rather than what had been proposed, which may not have been as advantageous to crofters.

A further point brought up in the consultation document was the inclusion of a request in the guidance from the FSA that, prior to home slaughter being carried out, the individual voluntarily advise the relevant local authority. The purpose of this would be to ensure that advice can be provided. SCF questioned the purpose of this and believes that advice can be sought, or disseminated, at any time.

Following our response submission, the FSA requested to meet with SCF and other stakeholders on an individual basis to discuss the potential impacts of the proposal on our members. The meeting took place in May and gave us the opportunity to discuss our comments and concerns about the possible amendments as well as discussing the current policy in place.

The next step of the consultation process is for the FSA to conduct an impact assessment followed by a further consultation with more specific details on the new proposals, taking into consideration the points brought up in the stakeholder meetings.

Skye and Lochalsh abattoir update

FOLLOWING THE generous granting of support by two of Skye's community wind farm funds, Struan and Edinbane, as well as the backing of Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Highland Council, Rachael Jackson of Orbest Farm has been appointed as project officer for the Skye and Lochalsh abattoir.

Rachael has hit the ground running. She has already conducted surveys of potential consumers of locally-produced meat, both businesses and households, and this has revealed an overwhelming

level of support for the project, confirming the positive conclusions of the SAC report.

Discussions with landowners are now under way with a view to acquisition of a site. The requirements are a central location, good access and ground conditions, mains water and preferably drainage – and power supply.

We hope to be in a position very soon to apply for outline planning permission. After this there will be a meeting of the prospective users, then the serious work of funding the project will get underway.



ON THE CROFT

Donald's horti-blog

WELL, IT'S BEEN an extraordinary season for the crofting horticulturist.

We've had the lot – a cold, wet spring; a promising early summer; the hottest July we can remember followed by the coldest and wettest August. Here in the north of Skye, outdoor crops have enjoyed the conditions, thanks in the main to our very freely draining soil. Growers on peaty soils will not have been so lucky.

Brassica crops (cabbage, broccoli and sprouts) have produced strong and healthy leaf growth and rooted firmly enough to resist the gale-force winds of an early autumn and the tail ends of Caribbean hurricanes. The heat of July seems to have protected us from potato blight, but friends in Lewis report that they have suffered that problem.

Inside the polytunnels, conditions have been challenging. All the usual summer crops were well established, then we had the July heat wave. Daytime temperatures in the tunnels reached 50°C making work

impossible. Precious salad crops ran to seed and the tomatoes, one of our most important crops, rushed into nitrogen-fuelled top growth, quickly exhausting the capability of our soil to supply the other essential nutrients, especially magnesium.

The nutritional stress, followed by the plunge in temperatures and high humidity of August, caused the worst attack of botrytis (grey mould) that we have seen in twenty-odd years. This fungal attack is usually inevitable in the cool, damp conditions of the north-west, but in most years can be managed by removing affected parts of the plant, leaves, flowers and fruits, as soon as they are seen. The result of this year's exceptional conditions is that the tomato crop, which was OK as far as it went, came to a halt around the end of August, a month earlier than usual.

So we're looking now at autumn tasks. We stopped cropping the asparagus at the solstice and mulched the bed with well-rotted manure. The tall ferns

have developed and will be left to die back until the turn of the year. Once the summer crops are cleared from the polytunnels we will prepare ground for the garlic crop which will be planted in late October/early November.

If it's too late to source stock from the seed companies, supermarket garlic bulbs can be split into cloves and planted. Onions can be grown similarly from sets of the Japanese varieties.

Then it's a case of clear up and

protect the soil from leaching and erosion by the winter rains. A good layer of seaweed applied to any vacant ground is the first step towards good, healthy crops next year.

Donald@crofting.org

*Aspiring growers – if you haven't yet got a copy of **Horticulture – a handbook for crofters**, copies can be purchased from SCF HQ.*



© Donald Murdie

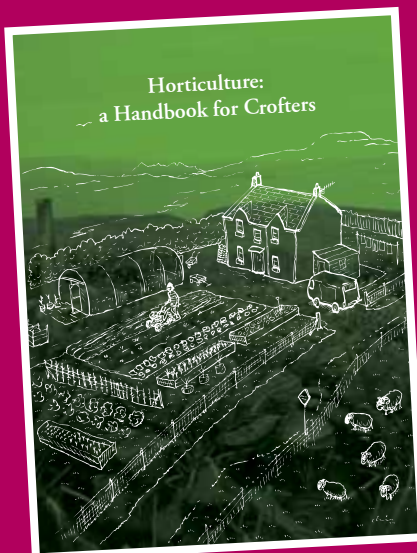
Healthy vegetables crops - Shetland

Horticulture: a Handbook for Crofters

Lots of useful information for new and experienced growers in the crofting areas. Beautifully illustrated, the book comes in a convenient loose-leaf style in a ring binder with space for you to add your own pages of notes, cropping plans etc.

Available to SCF members for £10 and non-members for £15, plus postage if necessary.

Please contact SCF HQ to order your copy.



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Protected and outdoor cropping on a croft market garden on Skye



© Donald Murdie

Use of coarse compost to improve peat-based soil, Lewis

ON THE CROFT

Dealing with Johne's disease

JOHNE'S DISEASE is a fatal infectious intestinal disease that is responsible for significant financial losses to the livestock industries and is a significant welfare concern.

The disease predominantly affects ruminants and is caused by a bacterium called *Mycobacterium avium subspecies paratuberculosis* (Map).

Johne's disease usually has a long incubation period of two to four years during which time the animal shows no clinical symptoms but may shed Map intermittently. Animals in this stage of the disease are said to be subclinically infected and act as carriers of the disease.

The first indication an animal has

Johne's disease may be reduced productivity, eg a lower milk yield, fertility problems or increased susceptibility to other diseases. As the disease progresses, the animal loses body condition and becomes severely emaciated. Cattle develop profuse diarrhoea, but diarrhoea is less common in sheep and goats (although faeces can be softer).

Infected ruminants shed Map in their faeces and milk and the primary route of infection is through the ingestion of contaminated feed and drink. Young animals are more susceptible to infection than adults and can contract infection by ingesting faeces from contaminated teats and udders of their dams and via contaminated colostrums or milk.

Map can also cross the placenta to unborn animals. The organism can be found in the semen of infected bulls, but it is thought that this is of negligible importance in the spread of the disease.

The prolonged period of subclinical infection makes Johne's disease very difficult to diagnose and there is no single diagnostic test that can detect all stages of the disease. It may therefore be necessary to undertake repeated testing, use multiple complementary diagnostic tests and/or make use of post-mortem examinations.

For crofts and farms that do not have Johne's disease, the main goal is to maintain that status by implementing good biosecurity measures to prevent the introduction

of disease through the purchase of subclinically infected animals.

For those with the disease, the goal will be to reduce the spread of disease and the number of new infections. Control measures should be tailored to your individual situation and should be discussed with your vet. Inevitably, they will involve a combination of both testing and approved management practices.

This article is based on a twelve-page news-sheet produced by Moredun. If you would like a free copy of this news-sheet or are interested in becoming a member of Moredun, please phone 0131 445 5111 or log onto their website www.moredun.org.uk.

The size of a cow

SAC PORTREE recently held a successful meeting funded by Scottish Government and Quality Meat Scotland on bull and cow management.

The host croft was the home of very new pedigree Aberdeen Angus herd, Kilmaluag. The foundation stock of Kilmaluag herd had a very successful inaugural year in the show ring, including wins at Fife Show, Three Counties Show and the Royal Highland Show.

The bull, Retties JFK, is away at a Devon stud farm where straws are being collected for sale. So far there has been steady interest from as far afield as Ireland and Denmark.

Donald Rankin of Kilmaluag feels that native breeds have a lot to offer including longevity, fewer calving problems and reduced feed costs. This is why he has moved away from producing Charolais cross store calves.

We had a demonstration of a weighing crate for cattle by Bob Ritchie of Ritchie's.

A lively guess the weight of the cow competition was held and although the winner and several people were not too far away, in general it was agreed that our cows are often much heavier than we realise.

Why does this matter?

The practical implications of cow weight on the croft

Scenario 1 – Dosing your cattle

If a cow is heavier or lighter by 50kg than your estimation, the amount of closamectin dose product needed can vary by 5ml. That 5ml costs 50p, which soon adds up if you are overdosing. However, if you under-dose you may not have effective control of parasites which can lead to underperformance and welfare issues.

Scenario 2 – Bulling heifers

As you know, the decision to bull heifers should be based on weight rather than age. Therefore if the heifer's expected mature weight is 600kg:

at **bulling**
65% mature weight
390kg
second bulling
85% mature weight
510kg
third bulling
95% mature weight
570kg

This has a strong implication on rations when you see the growth required by both in-calf heifers and first-calved heifers. Managing the weight at bulling should prevent many of the fertility problems we encounter with heifers. A common

issue is heifers being empty in their second year as a result of diet not providing enough energy to produce milk and meet the animal's growth targets. In this case the animal will prioritise milk production over future pregnancies. Having a tight calving pattern for your heifers should also help the herd have a tight calving period in the future.

Scenario 3 – Winter feeding rations

If you have two cows that are managed by being indoors at night and out in the daytime the energy requirements of their diets eight weeks before calving are:

A cow that weighs 650kg requires 82MJ of energy. A cow that weighs 550kg requires 75 MJ of energy. This energy difference equates to 1.5kg of cow cobs per cow per day:

Cow weight and growth rates have so many implications for efficient cattle systems. Should we be thinking of buying weighing equipment to share between groups, for example townships? This should be eligible for CCAGS assistance.

*Janette Sutherland
SAC Portree*



Bob Ritchie (l) of Ritchie's and Gavin Hill, SRUC



ON THE CROFT

GOOD GRASS, GOOD FEEDING, GOOD WOOL

GRASS IS THE most important agricultural resource in the west of Scotland.

As Frank Fraser Darling said, we should be able to grow grass as good, or better than, most parts of the country because grass likes plenty of rain and a mild climate. But what can we do to get the highest nutritional value for feeding our livestock? This question was taken up during September on Grimsay, North Uist, through a partnership between the Blackland Centre and Uist Wool.

Much of the recent work of the Blackland Centre has been to address the question: is it rough grazing or could it be grassland? As aerial photos prove, most blackland crofts had hayfields and some arable. The centre is beginning to show that much of this could be restored to productivity – so with the new payments under the CAP reform, bringing the fields back could pay in cash as well as in feed and better nutrition.

Good feeding is essential for good wool and valuable finished products, as Uist Wool is now demonstrating. Yarns spun from local fleece – blackface, Cheviot, Hebridean and others – are the basis for new designs in fashion and home-wares being created by Western Isles makers in the *Snàth* exhibition as part of the CnES Hebridean programme. Included in *Snàth* is the first tweed from Uist Wool yarn to receive the orb, as well as many other innovative products.

GOOD GRASS, GOOD FEEDING, GOOD WOOL was launched at the Michaelmas open day in September on the croft at Kenary, Grimsay. The grassland conference on the agricultural aspects was followed by the opening of the *Snàth* exhibition and tours of the working heritage machinery and fleece grading at Uist Wool.



Reclaimed blackland field at Kenary, Grimsay

Parliamentary committee responds to SCF petition on wild geese

THE MANAGEMENT OF Scotland's wild goose population is a national problem which needs to be urgently addressed, according to the Scottish Government's rural affairs, climate change and environment committee.

In a letter to the Scottish Government, MSPs call for the current approach and methods for controlling geese to be reviewed. This is

to ensure that goose populations and their impact on agriculture and the environment are effectively managed.

Although some funding might be available through the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP), the committee believes that this may not be the correct vehicle to deliver additional support.

The committee therefore recommends that the

Scottish Government reconsider its approach to the funding of goose management programmes and allocates additional resources to crop protection and adaptive management plans, ensuring that these programmes follow best practice in terms of stakeholder involvement, management, design, implementation and monitoring.

Rob Gibson MSP, convener of the committee, said: "It has become clear from our evidence that the current level of wild geese in Scotland is causing significant difficulties for crofters and farmers in certain areas. The current approach isn't working and funding for the management of goose numbers needs to be reviewed as a matter of urgency.

"The committee is aware that the problems faced by crofters and farmers differ from area to area and while the issue of damage caused by goose populations is a national problem, there is no one size fits all solution; local solutions, using people with local knowledge, are required."

The committee was considering this issue after a petition on the control of geese numbers was raised by the Scottish Crofting Federation.



© Martin Benson

ON THE CROFT

An tarbh

TARBH, SIN AGAIBH beothach riatanach ma tha laoigh gu bhith agad.

Agus, sin agaibh duilgheadas mòr mura bheil agad ach màrt no dhà. Bhiodh e furasta gu leòr nan robh na bailtean croitearachd mar a bha agus crodh aig mòran chroitearan. Bhiodh e an uair sin ciallach gu leòr tarbh fhaighinn don bhaile bho Chnoc nan Gàidheal – furasta nan robh a h-uile duine ag aontachadh air dè seòrsa! Ach an-diugh tha pris nan tarbh sin air dol cho àrd 's gu bheil e gun tìr do bhaile far nach eil ach leth-dùsan màrt.

Dè an roghainn a th' ann ma-tà? Uel dh'fhaodadh tu dol gu an ath bhaile, ach chan eil taghadh sam bith agad air dè seòrsa tarbh a bhios ann, cha bhi an tarbh sin ri làimh nuair a tha thu ga iarraidh agus ma tha thu fàgail nam mart agad ann, tha iad air falbh bhon bhaile aca fhèin airson beagan sheachdainean 's doirbh sùil a chumail orra. Ma tha an tarbh a tha thu ag iarraidh beagan nas fhaide air falbh, feumaidh tu an uair sin dòigh a lorg airson na màirt a thoirt ann – 's dòcha trèilear fhaighinn air iasad – agus carbad a thairgneas e.

Air neo 's e an dòigh eile, sìolachadh fuadain – mas e sin a' Ghàidhlig a th'air A.I. Ach leis an dòigh sin, feumaidh tu sùil gheur a chumail air a' chrodh gus am faic thu cuin a tha beathach air dàir. 'S fheàirde iad sùil dà thuras sa latha, agus chan eil sin furasta ma tha rudan eile a dh'fheumas tu dèanamh nad bheatha. Tha dòigh mun cuairt air sin cuideachd ge-tà. 'S e

sin sioncronachadh an dàir le bhith cleachdadh bhrodagan (hormones); progesterone gus stad a chur air a' chuairt oestrus agus an uair sin oestrogen gus a chur a' dol a rithist.

Leis an dòigh seo tha fhios agad cuin a dh'fheumas tu èigheach air an neach-sìolachaidh, 's mar sin cha chaill thu an t-àm ceart, ach an aghaidh sin feumaidh tu na beathaichean a thoirt a-staigh trì tursan airson

an ullachaidh agus an uair sin airson an sìolachaidh fhèin. Tha obair gu leòr ann agus cosgais car àrd na lùib.

Dè nì thu ma-tà? Tha mise ag obair leis gach dòigh, agus chan eil gin dhiubh furasta. Dè an fhreagairt? 'S e a bhith brosnachadh chroitearan eile gu crodh a chumail gus am bi gu leòr sa bhaile airson tarbh fhaighinn dhuinn fhìn!

Gabhan Mac a'Phearsain



Paddy Zakaria's Shetland bull Gillarunna Innes, selected for semen collection, admiring himself in the glass.

HUNGRY FOR RIGHTS

Exchange visit to France

THE HUNGRY FOR RIGHTS project will offer an exchange visit to Picardy, just north of Paris, on 14-16 November 2014.

Intended for trainees of SCF training programs, there are still places available for SCF members involved or interested in local, organic or community food initiatives.

The visit is a chance to meet small producers and food activists from project partner countries France, Cyprus, Italy and Lithuania; to share experiences in local and community food and discuss wider food policy issues. A technical visit to an organic farm will be included.

The French project partner is URGENCI, the worldwide network for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). URGENCI will join with several representatives, among them Rupert Dunn from the UK CSA Network, which has recently drafted a charter on CSA. CSA, sometimes called a community supported

agriculture programme, is a programme with the goal to bring together people who use farm-grown products and the farmers who grow them. This system works on a subscription basis. Subscribers can purchase a subscription to the produce service for either a growing season or for the whole year.

Trust and ownership have been defined as key elements of CSA in the UK charter, with people care, earth care and fair share as core values. Common working practices of CSAs include direct distribution, shared risk and connection to farms. For more information on how CSA works in practice, see Rupert Dunn's blog on www.coca-csa.org/blog. The UK charter can be read at www.soilassociation.org.

During a preparatory meeting for this event, Lithuanian farmers had expressed an interest in knowing more about the motivation behind community food initiatives such as CSA, as

these are difficult to grasp in a country where forced collective agriculture still lingers in people's memory. The Lithuanian delegation will represent small and medium-sized farmers' organisations. One of the activities of these organisations is organising farmers' markets in different parts of Lithuania.

The Cypriot project partner is Friends of the Earth Cyprus. Themes that came up during meetings were organic production and agricultural biodiversity conservation, such as the carob tree and derived products, regional vines etc. The Cypriot delegation will include people with an interest in both of these.

The Italian delegation will see delegates of urban consumer organisations and NGOs.

Travel costs and accommodation during the visit will be covered. To apply for a place, please email maria@crofting.org or phone 07720634343.

www.crofting.org

TRAINING

Dressing fleece for the occasion

Lucy Beattie, SCF training manager, on how to make your sheep look their best

FOR THOSE WHO actively show their sheep or cattle, the summer months can be very busy.

The usual rounds of local agricultural shows and the more specialised national and rare breeds shows can provide many rewards for time spent breeding and selecting your best beast – and of course dressing the animal in question.

In mid-September George MacLeod ran a one day sheep dressing training event in Sutherland with SCF Training. The day focussed on using a clipping machine and hand-piece to dress, crutch and belly clip. Aptly timed, as the tup sales were just around the corner. This one day event imparted essential hands-on training for crofters who focus on commercial production as well as rare breed sales.

Dressing a sheep prior to sale can mean a difference in price to most sellers, although the more experienced buyer should be able to determine a beast's worth whether it has been dressed or not. However, a well-presented animal will usually indicate that



Champion of champions at the Tiree Show in July was a Belter ram lamb from Alasdair MacLean, Heylipol. Alex MacArthur was the judge.

the breeder has pride and care for the beasts which he or she had bred and will inspire buyers with confidence to buy.

Store sales

For breeding sales of hill sheep, generally washing of the face and legs and a brush of the fleece may be all that is needed.

What are the top tips?

Backing down and bloom with show ewes and tups for sale, the breeder may wish to trim the fleece (backing down) to accentuate the meaty conformation of the

body and apply a bloom. This bloom can range from a product from agricultural wholesalers to home-made preparations such as watered-down coffee which is sprayed on the fleece to finish its look. Other fleece characteristics can be enhanced – for example a highland mule gimmer lamb will often be belly clipped to accentuate her height and trimmed at the neck to give her a less juvenile look.

Check with your breed society

Certain pedigree and rare breed shows will stipulate when sheep can be clipped and how. The

Hebridean Sheep Society rules state "Animals should not be backed down, trimmed or excessively brushed." However, neat dagging and crutching is accepted.

Meat

Selling lambs fat to the butcher or even taking your own for slaughter: generally belly and neck clipping is now essential for all prime lambs sold at mart – abattoirs insist on animals being clean.

To register your interest in training courses contact training@crofting.org.

Practical crofting skills courses

Price £40 or £36 for SCF members

Orkney

Drystone dyking: Sat 4th October

Introduction to hen keeping: Sat 11th October

Land management: Sun 12th October

Contact Edwina LLOYD on edwina.lloyd@vaorkney.org.uk or 01856 872 897

Sutherland

Sheep dog training: Sat 18th October

Butchery: November 2014

Contact Cara Cameron on caracrofting@gmail.com or 07867 590454

Argyll

Drystone walling: Sat 11th-Sun 12th October

Willow coppicing and hurdle making: Sat 22th November

Contact Julia or Sally to register your interest on 01546 510278 or email: education@kilmartin.org

Newtonmore

Introduction to drystone dyking: Sat 25th-Sun 26th October

Contact graham.cross@highlifefhighland.com or joann.hopkins@highlifefhighland.com or 01540 673 551

Entry level induction to crofting courses

Price £60 (£120 if employer paying) £50 for SCF members/concessions, free to under 18s and those on certain benefits

Inverness

2-day intensive course: 17th-18th October

Register your interest with Toni Clark on 01463 871544 or email toniclarck2@gmail.com

Lochaber/Argyll

2-day intensive course: 25th-26 October

Contact Liz Paul on liz.paul100@gmail.com

Sutherland

2-day intensive course: 31st October-1st November

Register your interest with Cara on caracrofting@gmail.com or 07867 590454

Shetland

2-day intensive course: 1st-2nd November

Register your interest with David on david@crofting.org

Check www.crofting.org to see more courses

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Scottish Crofting Federation AGM, June 2014

Company secretary John Bannister reports

A BUSY DAY for SCF's board of directors and area representatives council attending their own meeting, followed almost immediately by the federation's AGM.

The Federation was guest of the Highland Folk Museum in Newtonmore, whose staff were most attentive to our needs and made us welcome at their modern conference facility lying beside the river Spey betwixt the Monadhliath Mountains and the Cairngorm National Park.

The board attempts to seek venues for its meetings which are reasonably accessible to members who would otherwise not be able, or find it too difficult, to attend such events, albeit this one occurs once a year and is for the most part a routine event from an admin point of view.

Nonetheless, it provided a homely atmosphere in which to greet our new and older fellow members – an opportunity to renew acquaintances and create new ones.

The business of an AGM is a serious affair where the spotlight is firmly fixed on the important issues, where we try to show how prudently we're managing an efficient, value-for-money organisation like the SCF. The chair's opening address was upbeat and emphasised the workload and travel of the board members and chief executive during the past year. Training courses also demand a presence and give an opportunity for both members and potential members to meet SCF's managing personalities.

The function of an AGM is also to consider tabled motions and this year not only standard motions: approving minutes of the previous AGM; appointing accountants; ratifying the appointment to the board of Yvonne White, all of which passed scrutiny and were approved; but also tweaking our articles of association. The articles of any organisation should be examined from time to time to ensure they are fit for purpose and this year the meeting unanimously approved the changes listed.



SCF Directors Finlay Matheson and Paddy Zakaria



John Bannister, Derek Flynn and Patrick Krause



Archie MacNab and Maria Scholten

Article 2.3 –

age of membership reduced to 16 years of age, in line with legislation.

Article 2.7 –

sets out a more workable procedure for accepting applications for membership.

Article 2.13 –

rationalising classes of membership.

Article 5.1 –

reduces the number of members required to be present for a meeting to be quorate to 15 members.

Article 10.6(b) –

reduces the period of notice to 14/21 clear days and reduces the number of members required to propose another for company directorship, being now just five members.

Article 10.7 –

reduces the period of notice to 14/21 (in line with A 10.6(b), above) for proposing self for company directorship.

Thus ended a pleasant and successful annual meeting, gauged by the show of smiling faces that wrapped-up the occasion.

Is SCF doing the right things?

IN THIS ISSUE we have included a survey of members, since it is vital to the Federation that we know what our members are like and what they want.

As a member-led organisation we need to be sure that we are doing the right things and representing the interests of our members as best we can. So please fill in the enclosed survey and return it in the FREEPOST envelope (no stamp required). Or you can fill it in on-line using the link on www.crofting.org. If there is more than one member in the household then feel free to copy the form and send them all back in the FREEPOST envelope; or you can use the on-line survey as many times as required.

You can fill it in completely anonymously if you want, but we do ask for email addresses and mobile numbers so we can add them to the SCF database. We can then contact you occasionally with notices of meetings in your area or with useful updates and news items. Personal information will not be passed on to any other

organisation or used for any other purpose.

This survey follows on from one carried out four years ago which concluded that lobbying on agricultural support and grants was the most important activity and that members wanted to see more local activity. Your board has tried to develop these areas in the past few years and it will be good to see what you now think. We have also increased the number and range of individual member benefits and, again, it will be good to know which of these you use and value.

The results of the survey will be reported in the next edition of *The Crofter*.

It will take less than five minutes to complete the form and put it in the envelope, so please do it now before it gets lost in all the other things on your long list of jobs needing done. Last time we had a response rate of 20%. Can we beat that this time?

After all, it is your organisation.

Thank you in advance.

SCF gathering postponed

Crofting 2020: a Gathering of Young Crofters will be postponed until March 2015.

WE HAVE MADE the decision to move it to the spring due to a series of situations that would make holding it in October too rushed.

It is better to give ourselves more time to do it really well. Not least of these situations was the devastating flash floods in Ullapool. Our sympathy goes out to Lucy, one of our training managers, whose farm has been badly damaged.

The gathering will still be held in Glenanisp Lodge, Lochinver, the staff of which have been very understanding. It will be an exceptional gathering, the first for the young folk of crofting, so be involved!

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

New faces on the board

We welcome two new SCF board members. Below they introduce themselves.



Joyce Wilkinson

LIVE ON THE family croft in Arisaig, Lochaber where I run Luings and Simmental/Luings sucklers and also keep a number of highland bullocks that I take over to Mull Abbatoir for processing.

These go down well with the tourists that stay on my caravan site and I also deliver the meat locally through the winter. I have bred Highland ponies for many years now and enjoy getting away to the show ring when I can.

I think that crofting should be a productive activity that runs hand in hand with looking after the environment. Both are for public benefit and should be rewarded not discouraged.

I am also the local grazing clerk and an assessor for the Crofting Commission.



Joyce's Luings



Yvonne White

ALONG WITH MY husband I manage the family croft at Kingsburgh on the Isle of Skye where we have a small fold of pedigree, Highland cattle, some cheviot sheep and a poly-tunnel.

We are active shareholders in Kingsburgh sheep-stock club. I am a member of the Kingsburgh common grazing committee and a director of Kingsburgh Forest Trust (a community owned forest). I am a Crofting Commission assessor and chair of the Skye and Lochalsh branch of the SCF. In a previous life I was employed by the BBC and BBC Worldwide for 25 years where I held various senior management roles within the rights, business and legal affairs divisions.

It is vital that crofters have adequate support and representation in order to continue to raise quality livestock and produce. I strongly support the view that young and new entrants to crofting are to be encouraged. We need to retain crofters' wide and invaluable skills base and keep people actively employed in crofting and working the land.

Over 100 years ago the Napier Commission laid the foundation of our present day crofting communities. It is important that we ensure we pass onto future generations a viable and vibrant crofting culture. As an SCF director I will endeavour to utilise my lifelong involvement, commitment and interest in crofting, combined with expertise gained in past employment, to successfully represent and deliver in this role on behalf of SCF members.



Yvonne's Highlanders

Disappearing acres

21 Tobson
Great Bernera
Isle of Lewis

Dear editor

Every time that the department – or SGRPID as it is now – has anything to do with me or my croft, it gets smaller and smaller.

In actuality, it is really the same size as one hundred years ago, but strangely, bits become invisible, or become something other than I thought they were. The crux of the matter is that the payments get less! Now there's a surprise.

Grumbling to Willie Wilson of Whitebridge, a farmer friend with considerable nous, always gets an innovative response. He exceeded my expectations this time. "Well," says he, "your croft is very hilly as well as rocky. Why don't you ask the department to take into account the cliff and hill ground and flatten it out to get the actual size. The sheep and goats graze on the sloping hill as well as the flat bits and you're losing a lot of land and LFASS."

Anyone got any ideas?

It feels to me that those with more rocks and bog on their poor land should surely get more aid than those with better land, yet every year we receive less to help feed our stock and the animals still have little to graze on, not more.

Sallie Tysko



The rise and fall and rise of a farmers' market

SCF's Russell Smith shares the experiences of his local group.

IN THE BEGINNING the SCF kicked off a local producers group in Sutherland and there were lots of people who were full of enthusiasm.

We had a business model which was self-sustaining after the award of initial grants for stalls and a trailer to store them in (thanks to Albyn Housing Association and the local ward discretionary budget). And the market thrived with a mix of local food producers and a few craft producers.

Then came recession, competition and a hefty dose of reality. Post 2008, there were less people willing to pay more for local, artisan food – despite its provenance. And Asda and Tesco opened less than 10 miles away.

So reality kicked in – there is a lot of work for not much reward. Like Dave who could make more as a jobbing gardener than growing vegetables to sell; or James who couldn't sell a whole animal per market or Annie who had just too much to do in the run up to market when baking bread in a domestic kitchen. And, of course, soaring fuel prices ate up any profit.

So fewer producers came to the market which meant fewer customers; so there were fewer stalls so fewer customers came... And The Highland Council demanded rent for the car parking area used as the market venue. And the few original members still persevering were running out of steam.

Now, what was the farmers' market has been rebranded as community market so it is open to a wider range of stalls with more craft than food stalls plus some retailers with bought-in goods. The market has moved off-road – but is still outdoors in the historic village centre, so there is no council rent demand. Timing has changed from Saturday to Wednesday so there is no competition with gala days or agricultural shows and it is not a changeover day for holidaymakers, or for producers with cottages to clean. New organisers with new enthusiasm and new ideas have invigorated the old timers. And stall holders and customers have turned out

in force. Success!

To conclude from our experience – farmers' markets need a big catchment area to get enough local food producers to draw in enough customers to keep the producers profitable. So for most of the Highlands and Islands a purely farmers' market isn't on and you need a broad spectrum of stalls. And this means more crafts, fewer food producers and not all locally produced. Plus you can't afford to employ people to set up stalls and you must have a good site where tourists are going anyway, outside and visible.

Then the market shall rise again.



Two Hundred Years of Farming in Sutherland: The Story of my Family by Reay DG Clarke

RURAL SCOTLAND, sustainable land management practices, diversity, community control: all buzz words in Scottish politics – however the history and voice of sheep farmers has long been ignored, to the potential peril of current and future rural development.

Two hundred years of farming in Sutherland: The Story of my Family, by long-standing SCF member Reay Clarke, describes the beginnings of sheep farming in the north and takes the reader through decades of social change and upheaval, from the north of Scotland to Tasmania, through the unifying lens of one extraordinary family.

Reay Clarke is one of the Clarkes of Eriboll, in north-west Sutherland, a dynasty of sheep-farmers who have been living and working in Sutherland since the 1820s and whose farm at Eriboll only passed out of their hands in the 1920s.

This book makes an enormous contribution to our understanding of a long-neglected facet of Highland history. The book represents decades of farming experience and involvement in the questions of land, ecology and environment. This is an important book with many lessons – historical and contemporary – for academics, policy makers and the people who live on the land in the north of Scotland today.

The book, priced £9.99, is available to



Reay Clarke



purchase online from the Islands Book Trust — www.theislandsbooktrust.com/store — and in bookshops across Scotland.

Jim Hunter, emeritus professor of history at the University of the Highlands and Islands and founder of the Scottish Crofters Union, said: "Two things about this book particularly impressed me. First, by drawing on the experiences of Reay's own family over several generations, it tells the story of Highland sheep farming in a way that's never been done before. Second, it highlights the urgent need for key debates about land use and conservation in the Highlands to be better informed about what's gone before. For instance, much of the Highlands and Islands is nowadays said to consist of what's called wild land – land that's thought to be in some sense natural or unspoiled.

"That's not how Reay Clarke views Highland landscapes. To him, large-scale sheep farming that became dominant in the north during the Clearances has done immense damage to land that was once, or so Reay argues, far more productive agriculturally, and far more diverse ecologically, than it is today. If that's right, we shouldn't just be looking to protect and safeguard the Highland countryside. We should be trying to make good the immense damage done to it over the last 200 years."

Credit unions – a credible alternative to the banks?

CREDIT UNIONS are financial co-operatives owned and controlled by their members.

They offer savings and great value loans, plus they are local, ethical and know what their members want. Each credit union has a common bond which determines who can join it. In the case of HI-Scot Credit Union, the common bond covers everyone who lives or works in the Highlands and Islands.

How do credit unions work?

Members of a credit union pool their savings together; these savings then provide a pool of funds from which loans can be made. From the interest it gets from loans, it must pay its operating expenses and make a profit so it can put some money into reserves and pay a dividend to its savers. All profits from a credit union go towards developing the business or are returned to members; the only shareholders in a credit union are the members who use its services.

Who runs the credit union?

The credit union is managed and controlled by a volunteer board of directors. All officers of the credit union are members of the credit union, who are elected by the membership at the annual general meeting. All members of the credit union have one vote; regardless of the size of their savings. Whilst credit unions employ staff to manage the credit union on a day to day basis, control lays firmly within the hands of the members – through their elected representatives – the board of directors.



How safe are credit unions?

All savings are protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. The FSCS is a safety net for customers of financial firms – all savers with credit unions have 100% protection from the FSCS for the first £85,000 of their savings. This is the same level of protection that customers of banks and building societies enjoy.

Where is my local credit union?

HI-Scot Credit Union has been operating since December 2006 and is available to everyone who lives or works in the Highlands and Islands. Every one of the 2,500 members has a savings

account with over £2,400,000 collectively saved. Any member can apply to borrow up to £10,000, and more than £4,600,000 has been lent since the credit union opened its doors.

HI-Scot differentiates itself from the banks by offering a personal service to its members and each loan application is looked at by a person not by a computer.

Want to know more?

You can contact HI-Scot Credit Union by phone on 01851 701865 or by email on info@hi-scot.com. One of the team will be delighted to help.

Mucking in: social crofting

FOR PEOPLE who suffer from mental health problems, addiction or learning difficulty, finding a social service in a remote and rural area which offers structure, routine and meaningful work can be challenging.

However a panacea known as social crofting may offer a solution, by combining the care of the land and livestock with the care of people.

Social crofting is an underdeveloped resource in Scotland. Its bigger cousin, care farming, has developed slowly in Scotland and now there are around 15 farms providing services to disadvantaged adults and children. Care farming or green care is not new; mental health hospitals traditionally ran a farm close to hospital buildings so patients could undertake work as well as receive physical exercise – it was all part of the treatment plan.

With new developments in medicine and technology, farm work was no longer seen as an acceptable form of treatment and hospital farms closed. Medical research into mental health now recognises the benefits of outdoor physical activity in improving mood. Physical work is seen to be good for health and well-being as it gives a purpose and the opportunity for team work and social interaction with others.

Care farming is well developed in mainland Europe, especially in the Netherlands and Norway. It has also grown rapidly in England over the past five years. Research has shown that service users can benefit from working on the land in a supportive environment and it is a cost-effective service model. Some small-holdings in England run care farms on very few acres and manage to

offer hundreds of day placements to clients every year. One of these care farms is Wild Goose Training near Worcester, based on a couple of acres and packed with activities ranging from rearing livestock and plants to processing fruit and vegetables in the farm kitchen. Another social enterprise is Growing Well in Cumbria, where clients are taught horticulture skills on a six-acre small-holding. There are many other examples of what can be achieved on very few acres.

In Ireland the SoFab Project (Social farming across Borders) has recruited farmers in remote areas such as Donegal to become social farmers. This model is one which may be of interest to both crofters and commissioners of social services in remote regions of Scotland. The results of this three-year project will be delivered at a conference in Belfast in September.

What does it take to become a social crofter? A sociable disposition and a crofting background would be advantageous. But more than that – patience, empathy and a motivational approach to helping others is essential – as well as having a non-judgemental attitude. As for facilities: toilets and somewhere to dry off and warm up on cold, wet days is necessary. There are also some basic quality standards to be met such as disclosure checks, health and safety requirements and public liability insurance.

In return crofters can be paid for providing a service by commissioning bodies such as the NHS or local authority. Self-directed support, whereby a client in receipt of social care can purchase his or her own service, is being rolled out across Scotland and gives crofters the

opportunity to contract directly with individual clients, setting their own aims and objectives on what they want from a crofting experience. Fees for a day placement on a care farm vary from £30 per day to £100 per day for intensive one-to-one support.

Bob Bull from Glachbeg Croft, North Kessock on the Black Isle has a 12-acre croft and uses the land and a purpose-built classroom to provide a rural skills programme to children and adults with special needs. Activities include care of sheep, cattle, poultry and small animals as well as growing vegetables and learning about nature. Bob has a steady demand for his service and his business continues to flourish.

Social crofting is an ideal diversification for crofting people with a background in health, social care, education or criminal justice and taps into social capital which may be waiting to be rediscovered. Social crofting is presently a small acorn with the potential to grow into a mainstream social service.

Care Farming Scotland, the registered charity set up to support and promote the movement in Scotland, hopes to work closely with SCF. If we can convince MSPs and commissioners that social crofting is worth exploring it may become a remedy for cash-strapped commissioners who are at a loss on how to deliver cost effective social services in sparsely populated communities up and down the country – so watch this space!

For more information contact Caroline Matheson, Development Consultant, Care Farming Scotland on 07874915559 or ballicherry@btinternet.com

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Famine to food sovereignty

SCF member Elizabeth Seary reports on a famine walk in Connemara.

IN A WORLD of plenty, famine doesn't kill people – policies do.

The famine walk highlighted the correlations between the laissez-faire policies of the British Government in the 1840s and the current global food market model, with the expansion of monocultures driven by trade policies. In both instances food has been reduced to a mere commodity and means of profit, rather than a human right.

International guests including Luis Jalandoni, former political prisoner and current peace panel chairman, Paul Nicholson, founder of la via Campesina and Gary White Deer of the First Nations people led the 20km walk. The journey was moving and the weather challenging, yet it was a joy to share the experience with committed and passionate like-minded souls.

In the 1840s, the UK government's approach to food production in Ireland saw vast quantities of produce pass by more than one million dead and dying during the famine years. To shed light on a single export: an average of 95,000 gallons of butter left Irish ports each month – a product requiring vast inputs of land, water, animal feed, energy, fertilizer and man-power.

During the first years of this

decade more than 250,000 people died of starvation in Somalia, while the continent exported millions of tonnes of produce. In two neighbouring countries over this period, exports of cut flowers averaged 40 million euros (per month) – produced using vast inputs of energy, man power, water, land or greenhouses and fertiliser, flown over the heads and bodies of the dead and dying to appear at a garage forecourt near us.

The memory of these famines, 160 years apart, needs to appear among other international historical testimonies – lest we forget that food is a human right, guaranteed under international law and treaties and not a tool of GDP growth, a futures-traded commodity and source of profit.

Our current food systems are broken, efficient only for maxing agribusiness profits, with the greatest deficit in the food economy being a democratic one; with dominant corporations exercising veto power in national and international trade policies. Bottom-up approaches, including the unique system of crofting here in the Highlands of Scotland, provide an opportunity to practice the principle of food sovereignty and demonstrate an intercultural programme based on high-quality, nutritious food, using geographically-appropriate cultivars, grown organically to serve the needs of local consumers.



Safe arrival



Book Now!

Images: 1 © Arpita Shah, 2 & 3 © Clementine Sandison

OUR COMMON WEALTH OF FOOD

How can we play our part to make food fair for all?

Can we use a Common Wealth approach to food? There is enough food for everyone, but people go hungry in Scotland as well as in poorer Commonwealth countries. With increasing inequality, food poverty and diet-related diseases are escalating. Meanwhile, family farmers across the world are being squeezed off the land, and the food system is harming biodiversity and driving climate change, which in turn makes farming dangerously unpredictable.

At this year's conference we'll be sharing experiences and ideas with farmers and policymakers from India, Malawi and the Caribbean countries. What would it take for everyone to eat well without messing up the planet? And how should Scotland play its part?

Nourish Conference 2014

Royal Concert Hall & The Old Fruitmarket, Glasgow
October 16th & 17th

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

- ✦ **Olivier de Schutter** (UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food) on the gravity of the situation and avenues for change
- ✦ **Rucha Chitnis** (Women's Earth Alliance) on the intersection of gender inequality, food security and climate change
- ✦ **Pete Smith** (University of Aberdeen & IPCC author) explaining the critical relationships between the food system and climate change

BOOKINGS:

www.OurCommonWealthOfFood.eventbrite.co.uk

ENQUIRIES: 0131 226 1497 or
conference2014@nourishscotland.org.uk

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www.nourishscotland.org



Successful crofting student plans for the future

GEMMA NICOLSON from Torrion Skye was selected as student of the year on the West Highland College UHI's Rural Skills course in Broadford, due to the excellent standard of her course work and great enthusiasm.

Gemma works on her father's croft in Torrion and she wanted to learn new skills to be able to diversify the croft and identify other means of generating income. Gemma successfully completed the course and also gained all seven industry awards which were the main draw for her as she knew how useful they would be for her own work on the croft and for future employment.

Gemma achieved ATV handling and ATV with loads and trailers, chainsaw maintenance and cross cutting, wood chipper operation, tree surveying, dry stone walling and outdoor first aid – all during the course at Broadford.

As a result of this award, Gemma will be one of the nominees for the overall Further Education Student of the Year for the college which will be announced at the graduation ceremony in September, after we go to press.

If you want the chance to join any of these courses and work towards achieving your dream, then contact us: 01397 874246



Gemma Nicolson (l) with college lecturer Heather McNeill.

Vintage tractor auctioned for Cancer Research

AS WE WENT to press, a 1936 Ferguson Brown Series A tractor, and a Ferguson Brown two furrow plough, was to be auctioned at a Strathnairn Farmers Vintage Rally vintage ploughing and farming equipment rally on Saturday 27th September.

Proceeds from the sale of the vintage equipment will be donated to Cancer Research UK. "Because," said 90-year-old retired Black Isle farmer Will Matheson, "my family has lost many friends to cancer and we've been thinking about making this donation for some time!"

The tractor is one of the first models (number 244) developed under an agreement between Harry Ferguson and David Brown and Sons, after the successful construction of the famous black tractor prototype. Powered by a Coventry Climax petrol engine this tractor is readily identifiable as a Type A by the grouped plugs which were a feature of the Coventry Climax E engine. Aluminium alloys were used extensively in its construction to keep its weight down to about 840 kilograms, a lightweight and manoeuvrable addition to

mechanised farming evolution.

"I was about 12 years old when this one was built," says Will Matheson. "I inherited it from my late brother who acquired it around 1973 and it has done very little work since it was restored."

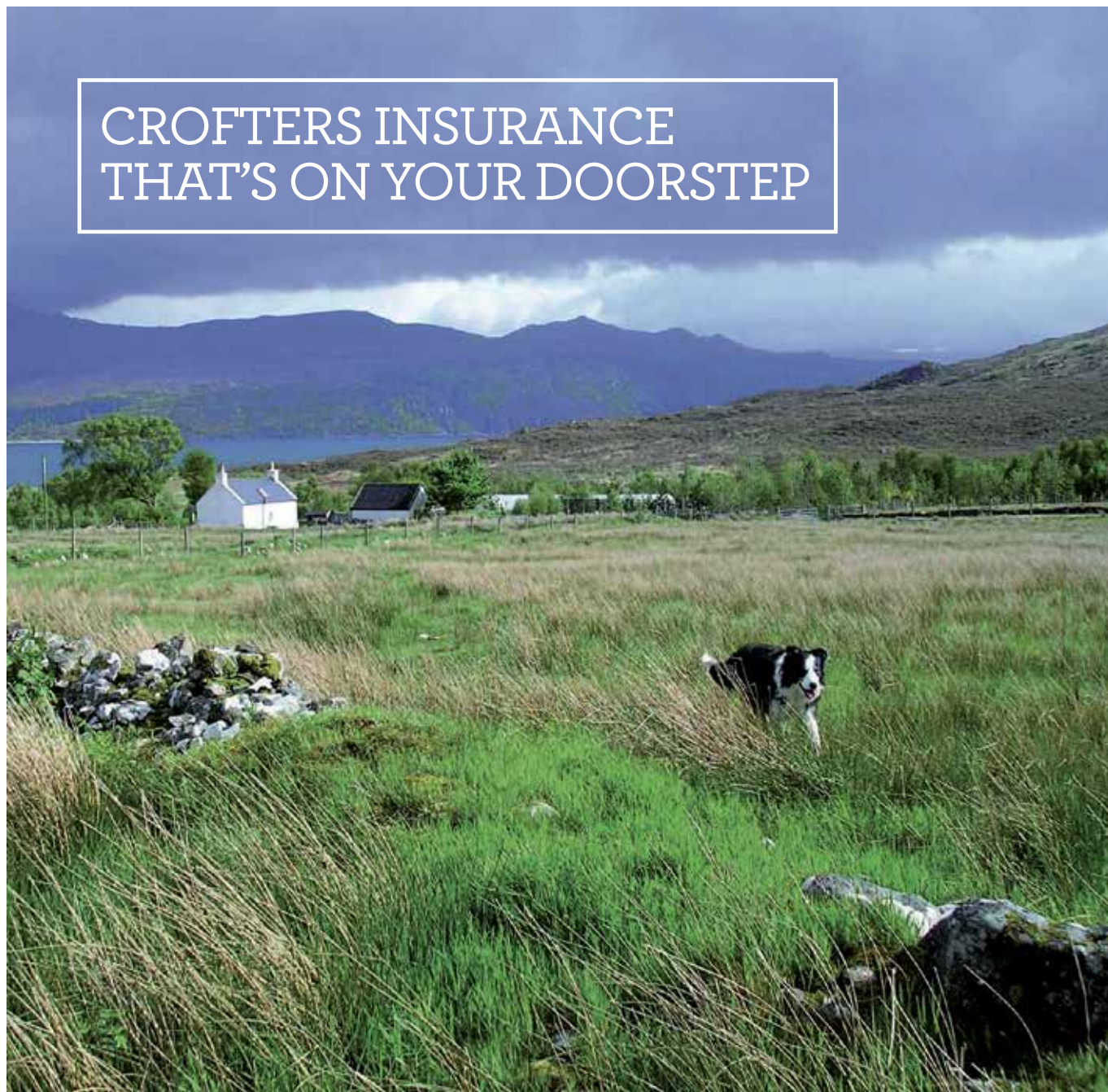
Ferguson Brown Series A tractor number 244 is in remarkable working order and experts have suggested the tractor and plough are worth £20,000. The sale was conducted by retired auctioneer Kenneth MacKenzie MBE, whose grandfather was an agricultural equipment supplier based at Evanton and is believed to have sold this tractor new in 1936.

Strathnairn Farmers Vintage Rally committee chairman Ray Smith said: "This is a very generous and unique charitable donation by the Matheson family and Strathnairn Farmers Vintage Rally is proud to facilitate the auction of such well-preserved and presented iconic vintage equipment. We very much hope that the auction will be brisk and productive on the day, and that Cancer Research UK will benefit significantly from this gift!"



Will Matheson

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Staff changes at HQ

OUR ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF, Karen MacRae and Sarah Macrae, are moving on to pastures new, coincidentally at the same time.

This is very sad for us as their skills, knowledge and presence were greatly appreciated. Karen has moved to the NFU Mutual office in Portree and Sarah is starting a graphic design college course in Edinburgh. We send with them our very good wishes for their new adventures.

We are replacing their part-time posts with one full-time administrator and it is a pleasure to introduce **Marion Shaw**:

"I was born in Portree and have lived on Skye all my life. I was brought up in Staffin, a Gaelic-speaking crofting community in the north-east of Skye. I am a fluent Gaelic speaker – tha mi fìleanta a bhruidheann, a leughadh agus a sgrìobhadh anns a chanan.

I grew up on the family croft, the youngest of four children, where we all worked on making hay, growing corn and potatoes, digging peats and looking after the stock.

On leaving school I worked in a solicitors' office in Portree until I left to raise a family. In 1993 I took over the running of the family croft. I was elected grazings clerk for Marrisadder and the Corries common grazings and remained in this position for several years. My husband and I then built a house on the croft and we brought our family up there.

I continue to keep sheep for breeding on my croft and tend to a small woodland of 3200 broadleaf trees which I planted in 2006. My daughter helps on the croft as she is keen to keep the family tradition of crofting going and in time will take over the running of it as I did.

I look forward to working as part of the Scottish Crofting Federation team and talking to many of you in the near future."

Welcome Marion, we look forward very much to working with you.



Marion Shaw

Mary MacKinnon, Tiree

MARY MACKINNON was born in 1929 on a croft in the township of Balephetrish on the island of Tìree.

As she grew up, her main interest was feeding and bringing water from the well for the Clydesdale horses. After leaving school she worked at local branch of the National Commercial Bank, now RBS. Mary remained with the bank for the next 40 years, taking early retirement, and for the next 25 years worked part-time in the island's medical centre.

Mary also served as a local development officer with the HIDB and its successor HIE. Her help and advice to islanders at that time was evident by the number of letters of appreciation the family received from the many who had benefitted from her wise counsel.

With the formation of a branch of the Scottish Crofters Union in Tìree in 1985, Mary became its first secretary and remained in that post for the next 25 years. The chairman of the newly-formed branch, and current holder, Alasdair MacInnes said that Mary could always be relied on to undertake whatever task she was asked to do and did so diligently.

Apart from croft work, another of Mary's hobbies was golf. She won many prizes at the island's nine-hole course at Vaul. Active in many spheres of life, she was instrumental in setting up, with others, the Tìree Agricultural Show in the early 1950s. The show continues every July.

Mary was a devout Christian, coming to faith during a time of revival on Tìree in 1954. The esteem with which she was held on the island

she loved was evidenced by the large number present at her funeral service, held at her home in May of this year.

A true Tìrisdeach, Mary's passing has left a great void on the island. The thoughts and prayers of the community are with her and her brother Lachie and family and sister Catriona.

*Air bilean an neach thuigsich thàinig gliocas.
(Prov 10.13)*

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