

The Pack Inquiry

THE SCF RESPONSE to the interim report from the Inquiry into Future Agricultural Support in Scotland, chaired by Brian Pack, was published in the last issue of The Crofter.

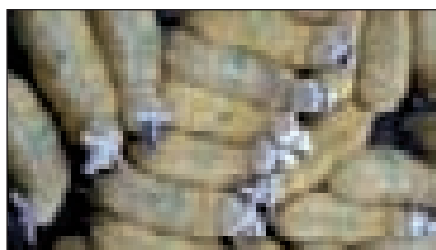
SCF met with Mr Pack and had a very constructive discussion with him. We reiterated what we said in our response, that we felt that the stated drivers of rural development outlined in the interim report such as population retention, environmental protection, climate change mitigation and provision of public goods such as landscape management were not being addressed sufficiently. We also emphasised that the current system does not help new entrants, the very life-blood of agriculture and crofting.

We went on to explain how crofting delivers on these issues as well as contributing significantly to food security, and how crofting consistently loses out in the current and proposed models of agricultural support. The term used was 'one size does not fit all'.

A significant line of the conversation was on retention of grazing stock in crofting areas. We suggested the need for support to create, rejuvenate and maintain stock-clubs as a means of increasing stock numbers in a practical way. The SCF is investigating this in our Crofting Resources Programme and will report on the findings soon.

Some of the issues we raised have been reflected in the short-term recommendations (see page 3). It was agreed that we should produce a paper and have another meeting on some of the issues discussed for his team's consideration before finalising the report in October.

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Claire Nicolson

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Crofting law reformed

AFTER ALMOST 10 years of consultation and discussion, the Crofting Reform (Scotland) Bill was passed at Holyrood on 1st July 2010. It heralded a new era for crofting and brought reform to an end for the foreseeable future.

In moving the bill, Minister for the Environment Roseanna Cunningham (SNP) said, "The government is clear that what it wants is driven by the purpose of creating sustainable economic growth and strong communities. In relation to crofting, we believe that that is best achieved by having people living on and using the land."

The bill, which is expected to come into force early in August as the Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, contains major changes. These include placing certain duties on crofters (a term now to be used to describe owner-occupiers as well as tenants), a proper legal register and a democratically accountable Commission with powers to take crofting forward through this century and beyond.

The Crofters Commission is to be reorganised as the Crofting Commission, emphasizing a stronger protection for the

crofting way of life through communities, rather than favouring individuals who have previously enjoyed the benefits of regulation.

To enable the Commission to reflect the wishes of and respond to those it will now regulate, a majority of its members are to be elected by crofting constituencies, the details of which are still to be decided. However, the new commissioners will have to take decisive action along set lines to address absenteeism, neglect and misuse. This is in recognition of the fact that the Crofters Commission, in the past, has simply not had the right tools, never having the armoury to tackle the core problems. The Commission will now be in a position to ensure that crofts once again provide people with the opportunity to live on and work the land.

In the past, the Commission has not been required to hold maps of crofts. The new crofting register will be map-based and will be developed as one of the national Registers of Scotland, providing a comprehensive record of land held in crofting tenure, giving certainty over boundaries and safeguarding crofting

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SCF success at Highland Show



© Susy Macaulay

SCF chair Eleanor Arthur with chef Murdo Alex Macritchie and CRP project co-ordinator Donald Murdie

A SUCCESS!

That was the verdict on the Scottish Crofting Federation's presence at this year's Royal Highland Show at Ingliston. Glorious sunshine brought out the crowds and there was much interest in the SCF stand, with its mouth-watering display of crofting produce from the Western Isles and Shetland Isles.

The Federation invited Stornoway chef Murdo Alex Macritchie to prepare a menu based on crofting foods grown or reared under

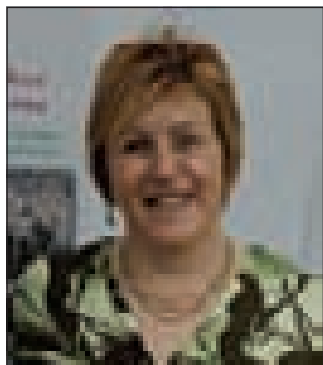
the Scottish Crofting Produce (SCP) Mark. This has been introduced as a hallmark of quality, sustainability and total traceability in croft produce.

The culinary aromas must have wafted on the waves of warm, summer air to the parliament building down the road, as MSPs momentarily laid down their sharpened quills and sniffed the air like the eponymous Bisto Kids then rushed to the SCF stand at Ingliston at the speed of a precision-built guided missile.

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Message from the chair...

Eleanor Arthur



FIRST OF ALL I have to say hello to all the members whom I haven't met.

This is a great honour for me to follow in the footsteps of a lot of wiser and more knowledgeable people (mostly men!) before me. As someone said after the AGM, "It is good to see a woman in a man's world", but I don't feel it is unusual at all. As crofter women we work in a man's world every day, don't we? They don't always do the ironing though!

I would like to thank Patrick, Neil, Marina, Norman and the board and council for the position I find myself in now. I sincerely hope that with their support throughout my term as chair we

can look back on a job well done, with a positive outcome on a lot of the huge issues facing crofting. I have to thank our staff for all their work and for keeping me on a relatively straight path.

We need a solid membership base with one voice to be heard and listened to in Edinburgh, south of the border and in Europe. As reported at the AGM the membership is up so a thank you has to go to the working group for all the hard work they have done to get these latest figures.

After the Highland Show I felt that it was a very forward-thinking and positive show for the SCF, with many visitors to our stand including members, prospective members and other VIPs. The emphasis on Scottish Crofting Produce was very well received. Hopefully at the next few agricultural shows during the summer more members will attend the stand, where new ideas are formed, friendships and businesses are picked up and we can do justice at all levels to publicising the company, the Scottish Crofting Produce Mark and in general get more areas involved.

With the Crofting Reform Bill

having gone through parliament, it will become law and will be implemented, so we need as much feed-back from our members as possible.

Hopefully, if I can get away to the Black Isle Show I may meet more of our members there.

I'm pleased to report that SCF's bid for SRDP Skills Development Scheme funding has been conditionally approved.

This is the long-awaited funding toward the implementation of the Highlands and Islands Crofters and Small Landholders Training Programme, initially set as an 18-month, pan-Highlands and Islands pilot project enabling both entry level (induction) and a range of practical skills courses to be delivered.

Further details of the programme will appear in next issue of *The Crofter* but suffice to say at this early stage that we are greatly relieved at receiving this funding after a very lengthy and turbulent period of consultation.

Summer here in Shetland had a fine start to the month of June with the wind still from the north – chill, but dry. We have been extremely lucky with a good lambing too and the lambs

are all thriving well with very few fatalities. Husband Danny is not too bad either after all the sleep deprivation he's had.

We moved off the Island of Whalsay to Brae in the Easter holidays, so our boys could start with a full term at their new school before the summer. So far so good, they have settled well and it's proving to be the right move for them. However something has had to give – and with me working full time, unfortunately I sold my bull in March to a friend who has started his own herd and who used him last year. I am now without cattle and miss them; however I have seen the first four calves of the next generation and hasten to add they are very fine too, but women are always slightly biased when it comes to their babies.

The weather here in Shetland just now is horizontal rain and wind – which I think has been all over the Highlands and Islands. The sheep clipping has come to an abrupt halt and the leaves on the tattie shaws are all but clinging to the stems. I was looking at our raspberries and the fruit is all there – it's just the sunshine which isn't.

But it will come.

Director's blog

I'M HAPPY TO SAY that this summer, at least for me, has been rather quiet with respect to crofting issues. (Maybe I shouldn't admit to it!)

Head office has been, as usual, up to the eyes with various projects but I haven't been directly involved. This hasn't always been the case. When the Shucksmith report came out I was certainly kept on the go responding to letters in the press and doing interviews on both radio and television – in Gaelic that is. There have been a few pieces in the local press lately, but this time I've been ignored – thank goodness for small mercies!

Some people, at least in the west of Sutherland, were up in arms about losing the Crofters' Commission to a body with elected members. Now that it will happen, there hasn't been a peep about it. Is it because the powers that be chose to keep the apparently cuddly word commission, and call it a Crofting Commission? Even though elected bodies aren't commissioned....

Too bad the government is adamant about making us, sooner or later, pay to register our boundaries. It will serve no

purpose to go over the arguments here, but I do have a suggestion for the new Crofting Board, woops, Commission. Why don't they recommend a rethink on the issue? Could the government then also ignore the very body set up to advise them on crofting matters? That would be interesting!

On another topic, at our last AGM I raised an issue about the lack of Gaelic, or in fact involvement in wider cultural issues, within the Federation. It really gave me a boost to see how well the ideas were accepted, particularly from a Shetland director. So, for the sake of interested members who were not present, I'd like to present the general thread of my thinking here.

We say that crofting is a way of life which maintains local culture, but do we do anything about it? (cf our website: [Our mission is to safeguard and promote the rights, livelihoods and culture of crofters and their communities.](#)) Everyone involved spends an enormous amount of time with respect to rights and livelihood, ie subsidies, legislation, and marketing but, important as all of this is, it doesn't address culture directly. For example, a look at our web-site gives no indication

of the strength of Gaelic culture or Northern Isles culture among our membership. Also, perhaps more importantly, we have popular and well-received crofting courses, but I wonder about the input of local knowledge; and none are in Gaelic.

I have been made aware though my work at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig that the web has an enormous influence on the younger generations. For the perspective of my students, any group without a web-site is hardly worth bothering about and the effort to produce a Gaelic web-site is an expectation. Given the Federation's recent emphasis on youth, it would appear that the addition of Gaelic elements to our site would be a step forward. Cost will be an issue, but perhaps we could prioritise suitable sections. In fact, could we consider an additional step and highlight the Northern Isles as well?

With regard to the crofting courses, I suggest at least two aspects that might be considered. Firstly, in appropriate areas, a Gaelic version could engage young speakers to link the generations in a practical way. Secondly, to introduce local speakers and to prioritise certain aspects of local

knowledge would be a great step in giving our respective cultures the respect they deserve, as well as reviving and renewing local knowledge. Something as simple as terminology would be a good first step.

In a broader sense, for generations we have been brainwashed by schools to think that worthwhile knowledge comes from outside, while our own knowledge acquired over centuries has been dying out through neglect. Creating a culturally responsible curriculum would be an interesting project – in which I'd be delighted to be involved. In fact, it may not require much more than some additional emphasis here and there on the already excellent syllabus.

Aside from our own benefit, an active emphasis on culture may open doors at European level and help with finance. The EU is well aware of the existence of minority cultures throughout Europe and their need for support. At present it is just a thought, but it may be worth looking into.

Finally, I'd like to thank the people at head office, directors and other members for all their effort in creating such a vital and dynamic SCF.

*Alasdair MacMhàoinn,
SCF director, East Sutherland.*

Crofting law reformed

Continued from page 1

interests for the future.

Much debate has focused on the question of maps required for registration. After lobbying by the SCF, the government has decided to encourage the mapping of crofting townships as a community process. If these community mapping proposals are successful, the requirement for individuals to register maps will be delayed until at least 2014, giving time for crofters to prepare for registration. Meanwhile, the mapping of common grazings is to be undertaken by the government itself.

There is a widely-held belief that crofting has been under threat for some time from those whose concern is not the welfare of crofting or crofting communities and whose motives are sometimes driven solely by personal interest or gain. Steps have therefore been taken to address speculation by removing the Whitbread loophole and extending the clawback period to ten years.

Steps have also been taken to recognise the changes that have taken place since 1976 by equalising the responsibilities and the rewards that are open to tenant and owner-occupier crofters. In future they will have similar duties not to misuse or neglect their land and to be ordinarily resident on or within 32km of their crofts (unless they obtain the consent of the Commission).

Everyone with a croft will have to respond

to an annual notice from the Commission reminding them of the duties. Failure will result in the duties being enforced or the tenancy or occupancy rights will be lost. There is a right of appeal to the Land Court. Grazing committees will have to report every five years on the condition of their common grazings and of the croft of every shareholder. They will also be expected to report any breach of duty by an individual for action by the commission.

Scottish ministers themselves will have to report to the Scottish Parliament every four years on the economic condition of crofting and measures taken to support crofting by them and by the new Commission.

The terms of the Crofters (Scotland) Act 1993 have been drastically altered by the new bill. In addition to the foregoing changes there are many smaller amendments, to which have to be added those introduced by the Crofting Reform etc Act 2007. It is earnestly hoped that a fresh consolidation of crofting law will be undertaken in the next session of parliament.

Meanwhile the SCF will seek to ensure that its members are kept informed on the implementation and progress of the new provisions. We encourage our readers to write in with comments.

We will be holding a series of meetings across the crofting areas this autumn to explain the act.

Crofting matters – but not the views of crofters

THE CROFTERS Commission's recent publication *Crofting Matters* notified us of a number of changes to the Commission's regulatory processes.

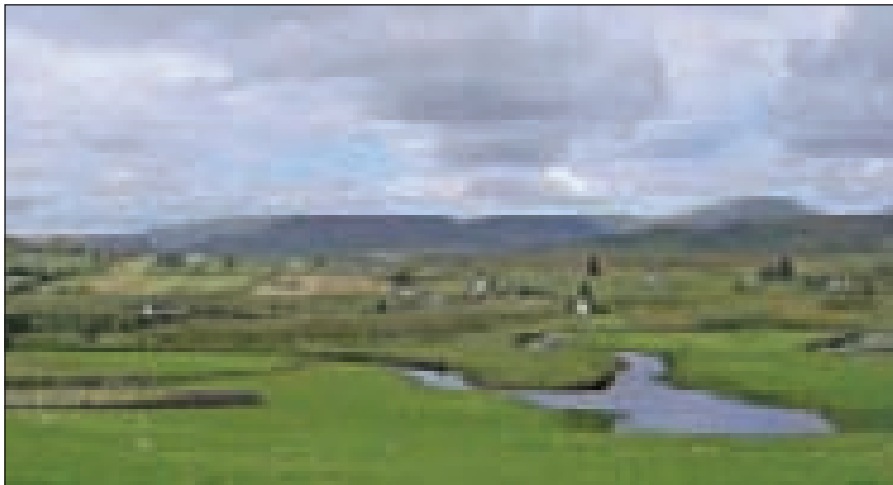
This has led to some concern among our members, in particular with regard to the changes made to the way the Commission consults grazings clerks when a proposed change is made to the occupancy of a croft.

The newsletter states "They (grazing clerks) will not be consulted as a matter of course about proposed changes in occupancy of crofts, including rights in the common grazing".

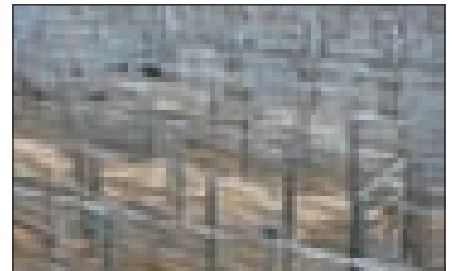
It is the view of the SCF that grazings clerks should be consulted as a matter of course about all proposed changes in occupancy of crofts and if this transfer includes rights in the common grazing then it is essential that the views of the grazings committee should be sought in all cases.

We wrote to the Commission on 14th July asking that they reconsider this decision, as it is surely in the best interests of the crofting community if the views of the crofters in the township are considered at an early stage.

As we went to press we were awaiting their reply.



Crofting communities to operate under new legal framework from August 2010



A thought on legacies

"Aaagh, that old chestnut again," I hear you say!

I was listening to a programme on the radio the other day about charity giving – you may have heard it too. They were saying that legacy funding is by far the most important funding that charities get and accounts for the highest proportion of charities' income.

Well it doesn't for the SCF, so why not?

Many would say that they don't have much to leave and what they have will go to their family. This is fair comment of course, but I would say that anyone who believes in crofting and what it stands for is leaving something very significant to their family by supporting crofting.

A donation in your will to the SCF is giving us a chance to protect something to pass on to the next generation. It is the legacy of crofting that is important to our children.

Thanks and all good wishes to you and yours.

Patrick Krause

SCF comment on crofting reform

THERE IS NO doubt that this is a milestone in the history of crofting.

As mentioned in the accompanying article this is the culmination of ten years of discussion, consultation and not a little wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Everyone is suffering from bill fatigue and whilst there are many things that this bill does to tidy up legislation, it is inescapable that there is a feeling of disappointment and that an opportunity has been missed. Perhaps this is driven by the bill writers' clear lack of empathy with crofting, demonstrated by measures that had to be removed from the bill. Perhaps it is because of the government position of taking no prisoners over some very good amendments put forward in the bill's

progress. Perhaps it is because the bill comes across as too much stick and not enough carrot, as argued forcibly by the SCF.

But, despite this, there is great merit in the fact that the bill has gone through, warts and all. If the bill had fallen no future government would have touched crofting reform for decades; and there is no doubt that the status quo was not acceptable. At least, with the bill through, it keeps the door of opportunity open. We can help to make the act work and where it doesn't work we can press for changes – and we have the government's word that suggestions for change will be listened to.

We must all now work together for the benefit of crofting.

Crofting community mapping

THE SCF has always advocated that the register of crofts held by the Crofters Commission should be completed and upgraded to include accurate maps of the crofts registered.

This would help crofters immeasurably to resolve disputes over boundaries without incurring huge legal fees. There has been no sound reason put forward by the Scottish Government for creating a second register of crofts to be compiled and held by Registers of Scotland, but the Crofting Reform Bill and this proposal have passed through parliament and will be implemented.

We firmly believe that a community mapping approach to populating the register of crofts would be far more effective and acceptable than the trigger point concept proposed by the Scottish Government (whereby individual crofters will have to provide maps of their crofts should they need any administrative action taken by the Crofters Commission). Whilst we acknowledge that the map has to be of an acceptable standard we think that the proposed method will cause problems.

- It will likely cause disputes that could only be resolved in the Scottish Land Court – a costly and uncertain means of trying to resolve matters.
- Substantial costs could be met by the public under the legal aid system.
- The mapping itself will need to be done by 'experts' for each

individual and so will be costly.

- It is likely to take several generations to get the register completed.
- It will cause resentment and crofters are likely to develop avoidance strategies.

A far more effective method would be for the mapping to be done as community mapping (or asset mapping as it is also known), a participative exercise which could be part of a crofting community development plan. In essence, the community gathers and are helped by trained facilitators to generate the maps of their community assets. Existing documentation and maps are used – together with oral records, physically walking the boundaries, discussion and negotiation. Gradually boundaries can be drawn on maps. There will be different types of maps generated, for example free-hand sketch maps may be suitable for mapping a development idea, or for showing annotation added to explain the relationships, the rights and the responsibilities that exist. Accurate marking of an OS map using GPS would be appropriate for marking legal land boundaries and for providing title.

This is a well-practiced development methodology that has proven benefits.

- It gets people together and turns the mapping into a communal exercise that can strengthen the community.
- Individuals and the community

take ownership of the mapping and the subsequent agreed maps.

- Disputes will still arise but can be more easily resolved at the time using trained mediators in the exercise.
- The community creates a collective map and/or a series of individual maps that could be submitted to the register together.
- The mapping itself can be cheaper as there is less dependence on judicial expertise.
- Maps are created and registered in a matter of months.
- Depending on how well resourced this is, the whole crofting area could be mapped in a few years rather than generations.

We believe that the cost of this initial exercise should be borne by the Scottish Government as part of the intended creation of an accurate map of Scotland's land resource. However, the SCF is already trialling ideas and preparing a project proposal. We will be seeking funding and support for this from other sources as well as the government and its agencies.

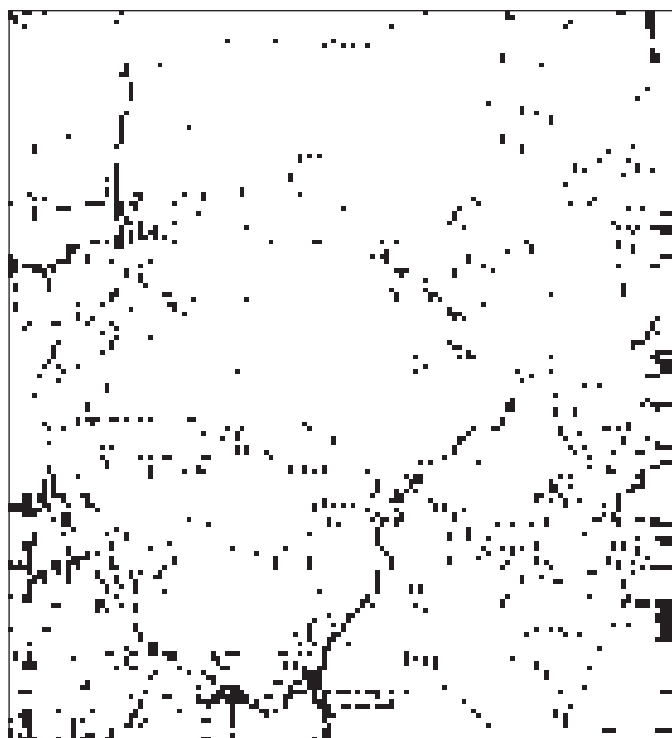
We appreciate the minister's suggested period of amnesty whereby the cost of registration could be waived. We suggest that five years fee amnesty should be granted and that no trigger point compulsory registration should be instigated in this period. The community mapping initiative can then be reviewed after five years – or at the start of the second

term of the Crofting Commission. For future amendment to the register we think that the registration fee quoted – £130 per croft – is excessive. There is no conveyancing involved so Registers of Scotland actually incur very little cost in comparison to the registration of other properties.

There has been little mention of the landlord's responsibility in mapping croft land. We think that under HMRC rules they have a duty to define the asset from which they derive income. We therefore suggest that landlords should map the outer boundary of townships on their estates and the community will map individual croft boundaries. It is essential that landlords lodge any existing maps and documents recording croft land on their estates and that a limit is made to retrospective claims of boundaries (to avoid dispute over accepted usage and 'lost' maps resurfacing).

As the largest crofting landlord, does the Scottish Government have maps of the croft land on its estates?

Common grazings have not been well defined but we believe that it is essential that they are. Apportionment maps should already be in the possession of the government and it is claimed that all common grazings are now digitally recorded – though this has not been confirmed.



Community mapping

THERE ARE generally two maps that are of interest to crofters.

One gives the physical characteristics of the land – where the water courses are, what the shape is, where the roads are – a flat two dimensional description of a place. It might indicate man-made structures and man-made influences on the land – buildings, roads, ditches, fences.

The other attempts to describe relationships affecting that land. Who owns it? What can it be used for? Who manages it? Who has power – and what sort of power – over it? When considering how people can develop their livelihoods from the land, these two aspects (the physical and the relational) are equally important.

The first is to a great extent static and there is probably little contention about it – a ditch is a ditch after all. However, the second often carries conflict and controversy, and may not be accurately represented anywhere. Some of the detail might be written down in ancient land deeds, some might not; some of these relationships are formal others informal – arrangements passed down over generations and lifetimes through families and communities. Each boundary has a rich history of compromise and negotiation. When community

rights apply to an area of land these issues can be very difficult to articulate and over time aspects of those rights and responsibilities might drift away or change.

For those dependent for their livelihoods on the land and natural resources both maps are significant. When critical decisions are to be made about land it is often the information about relationships that is the most essential and the most likely to be absent or disputed. This has been played out all over the world – and in many areas where this information is not formally held in legal documents then, very often, what seems to be a lack of legal rights leads those most dependent on the land to lose out. Over the last few decades, land and natural resource managers have been developing tools to help assist these people articulating and representing these rights and relationships in a way which helps them develop more secure and sustainable livelihoods.

For example, mapping may be used by pastoralists negotiating rights to graze their livestock; by hunter gatherers negotiating rights to access and harvest plants and animals in the desert or forest; and by slum dwellers negotiating more formal settlement rights and development of services. They use mapping as the basis of the negotiations necessary to clarify

where resources are, where they feel they have rights to access, rights to gather, rights to cultivate and to graze. These maps can start off as drawings in the sand or on paper, drawn by people walking the boundaries, negotiating relationships as they do this, until at the end of the process they are able to clearly describe where rights and responsibilities lie. If they then need to have a legal formal representation of this, GPS systems and digital mapping can help to draw up accurate representations. Often, agreed lines on an official existing map are all that are needed.

This process is referred to as community or participatory mapping. The essential components are that the maps are drawn by those whose knowledge needs to be represented in them, and the final maps express negotiated agreements that can be used to enable those involved to further develop their interests. These maps can be used to express assets that are community owned or individually owned. They are an essential baseline from which to work when planning, as clarity around asset ownership is critical.

*Charlotte Flower
Independent consultant
specialising in participatory
community development*

Drawing young people home

VILLAGES SHOULD be able to buy up empty homes in their townships and rent them out to young local people.

Opening the eighth Point Show journalist Torcuil Crichton, from Swordale in Point, Isle of Lewis, said that new ideas and serious thought had to be put into attracting young people back to the district after they had finished their college and university education.

He said: "After living in their own place for three of four years they want independence from the family home. We have to encourage young people to come home on their own terms. That means encouraging them to set up their own home, with their own rules, in our own villages"

Evidence of the lack of young adults being part of the island community was everywhere, said Mr Crichton. "I look at my own village, Swordale, being diminished each season with the passing of the generations. And I hear the uncertainty that creates – when older people do not know who their next neighbours will be,

after living their whole lives up to now with the same neighbours.

"And that makes me wonder if we do enough to make sure young adults, who leave to be educated, return to carry our community forwards. I wince when students tell me their parents have bought them a flat in Govan or in Aberdeen. Not because it's wrong, it's a sensible idea, but I know after college is over that is where they will carry on living and they won't come back.

"And meanwhile the houses in our own villages are emptying quickly. They are good houses, reasonable houses, and if they belonged to the community, or to a small housing trust with community involvement, they could be looked after and rented out to young, local people."

The proposal is not the answer to depopulation, just one idea, he said.

Mr Crichton continued: "Young people need work too. But again I look at my own village and see the expertise there – sea captains, master engineers, health experts, educationalists, craftsmen who

have run their own companies for 20 years.

"These are people who have a wealth of experience of taking responsibility, of managing other people, delivering projects and creating solutions in the workplace.

"For me they are the ideal people to have as directors of small businesses or agencies to help young people explore their own ideas for living here".

He added: "A big problem like depopulation does not have a big answer. It has a million small answers – from hiring a graduate to put the Rubhach photo archive online to finding a village that has the courage to become its own landlord – and to buy up and refurbish the empty houses and rent them out to young people from the village.

"These are not small things, especially when they rely on volunteer effort and community spirit, like this show itself.

"I don't underestimate them. But big challenges need big communities to take them on, and Point is a place like that."

Accurate maps

An asset for crofting communities, as Archie Stewart of Landmaps explains

MAPS are tools that have always been important but increasingly so as the internet and satellite navigation devices have brought maps into mainstream and frequent use.

For land management, maps are essential. With IACS maps, land registry maps and now the Crofting Reform Bill, accurate maps are going to become even more important to crofters.

The crofting register requires that croft land be identified on ordnance survey map in a manner that is acceptable to the land registry. The nature of crofting townships and communities where croft land is dispersed over a wide area makes first registration of land on an individual basis fraught with the dangers of disputes and escalating expense.

When land needs to be registered, life could be much easier if communities and townships can work together on the boundaries that are put forward for registration. This will ensure that neighbours agree on the extents of crofts before cash is spent on any mapping or surveying. When the maps are presented for registration, it will help to speed the passage of paperwork and the final maps will reflect the area as a whole and have the buy-in of neighbours.

There are various ways to obtain accurate maps. One of the best ways is to use desktop mapping which takes ordnance survey as the base map and adds accurate surveys using GPS to provide verification of the features on the ground if necessary. Once accurate up-to-date maps are available they can be used for various purposes: to show land use and perhaps for community development projects around renewable energy or to aid tourism.

Maps are still an invaluable insight into the crofter's major tangible asset: the land.

For more information:

**archie@landmaps.co.uk
www.landmaps.co.uk
07789 220 469**

RENEWABLE ENERGY AND CROFTING

An opportunity for crofters Wind turbines on inbye croft land

IN JUNE the SCF held a seminar on renewable energy exploring what it represents as an opportunity to crofters and crofting communities.

Crofters have access to a vast, valuable resource – land. Land that is in some the most agriculturally marginalised areas of Scotland, but areas that have great potential for generating renewable energy from the elements. In fact the very features that have made food production difficult in the crofting areas are what make energy production from dynamic generators attractive – high, consistent wind speeds, high rainfall, high, steep slopes.

At first sight the government policy on renewable energy production and the incentives offered, especially the Feed-In-

Tariff, seem very attractive to land managers. And there is no doubt that the government intention is good. However, there are obstacles to negotiate as a crofter, some of which that are raised in the following articles, such as uncertain crofting law, predatory developers, obstructive landlords, poor agency support, difficulties in raising capital and so on. But this is a resource that crofters have a right to benefit from, is sustainable and has the potential to help keep people in the crofting areas. So we must find our way through the obstacles.

Thanks to all who made the seminar so successful. We intend to have coverage of renewable energy in every issue of *The Crofter* for a while so if anyone wants to contribute please feel welcome.

Eilidh I M Ross, a solicitor in Inverness, comments

The information which is given here must not be construed as legal advice. It is simply my own view of the current legal provision and does not take in to account the various factors pertaining to an individual's case which would colour the advice given.

IN DETERMINING whether a crofter is permitted to erect a wind turbine on his or her inbye croft land (which is not to be removed from the scope of the crofting legislation by either decrofting or resumption), we must first look to section 5 (7) of the Crofters (Scotland) Act 1993, which provides that a crofter must seek the consent of his/her landlord before putting the croft to a purposeful use other than agriculture and, if consent is forthcoming, any such use is subject to any conditions specified. Failing consent from the landlord within 28 days, the crofter can apply to the Commission for consent.

To consider what purposeful use means, we must look to Schedule 2 of the 1993 Act, which lists the statutory conditions of tenure. Condition 3 provides that the crofter shall cultivate the croft, or else put it to some other purposeful use. Cultivation includes the use of a croft for horticulture or for any purpose of husbandry including the keeping or breeding of livestock, poultry or bees, the growing of fruit, vegetables and the like and the planting of trees and the use of land as woodlands. The schedule does not categorically stipulate the production of energy as a form of cultivation.

Purposeful use is any planned and managed use, being a use which does not adversely affect the croft, the public interest, the interests of the landlord or the use of adjacent land.

On the basis of a simple interpretation then, using a croft for the production of energy may well be considered to be a purposeful use, but could a wind turbine negatively affect the croft? Or the public interest? The good of the croft is a difficult concept to analyse. The Land Court, in considering the good of the croft in resumption applications under Section 20 of the act, has in the past held that

if the compensation awarded for an area was used to benefit the remainder of the croft, the application could be said to be for the good of the croft.

In terms of the public interest the Land Court has, again in the context of resumption applications under Section 20, held that this can mean benefit to a class or community, or the provision of employment, for example a distillery or other progressive industry.

Condition 11 of Schedule 2 provides for the rights of landlords. Land ownership extends from the centre of the earth to the highest heavens and crofting legislation has long allowed landlords the right to take minerals from the croft.



Eilidh Ross

The question may therefore be posed whether the air above the croft land itself (and therefore any value attached to it) is also the landlord's by right. Landlords are also permitted by this condition the lesser rights to take peat and water if not required for the cultivation of the croft; and it may be that wind would be construed to be in the same category as those other elements, rather than grouped together with minerals.

If a crofter purchases his/her croft, becoming the often-quoted landlord of a vacant croft, does s/he also purchase the air above it? Minerals are dealt with in section 12 (3) of the act, which excludes them from the definition of croft land for the purposes of purchase, but the air above a croft is not dealt with specifically.

Environmentally friendly economically beneficial

CROFTERS and crofting communities in Scotland have a valuable role to play in championing micro-renewable energy technologies and helping the Scottish Government to reach its ambitious renewable energy targets.

With 50% of overall energy to be produced by renewable sources 2020 the rural areas of Scotland, such as Shetland which boasts the highest wind speed in the UK, have the greatest potential for wind, solar and ground-harnessed energy.

Given its untapped renewable resources, Scotland has the potential to become the world's green energy leader.

However, the renewable energy revolution does more than being environmentally friendly and combatting detrimental carbon emissions, it gives investors a financial return on investment. The Scottish Government, in order to encourage the growth of micro-renewables among crofters and crofting communities, has enacted economic incentives to benefit those who help it reach its green energy targets.

As of April 2010, Feed-In Tariffs, schemes have required energy suppliers to pay alternative energy producers for every kilowatt per hour produced by renewable means sold to the national grid.

This means crofters and crofting communities can generate additional income via their micro-renewable investments.

Economic benefits of small-scale renewables for crofters and crofting communities also include substantial reductions in electrical and heating bills. By producing energy and power independently, crofters and crofting communities would no longer draw from the national grid, but be paid to supply to it.

Micro wind turbines, solar thermal and PV panels, heat pumps, biomass technologies and other micro-renewables work with the environmental forces to produce sustainable and eco-friendly energy for electricity and heat. These small-scale renewables are becoming more affordable as the green energy market grows and the government continues to recognise the potential they play in the larger picture.

Micro-renewables are the future of sustainable energy in Scotland. They are environmentally friendly and are proving increasingly economically beneficial to crofters and crofting communities who have the advantage of unlimited natural resources on their doorstep.

Iain Sloan, Managing Director of Icon Energy (Scotland) Ltd.

www.iconenergy.co.uk

RENEWABLE ENERGY AND CROFTING

Renewable opportunities for crofters

David Wake, energy development officer with the North Harris Trust, outlines recent developments

IN APRIL this year, generating your own electricity became a whole lot more attractive.

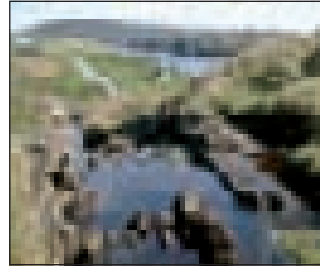
Previously the domain of mad inventors and eccentrics, electricity generation has gone mainstream. The Feed-in-Tariff (FIT) – sometimes called the clean energy cashback – is now live. This is a means of incentivising people to generate green electricity, with the weighting being in favour of small, croft-scale developments. A number of different technologies are applicable, including solarPV, hydro and wind generation. All are eligible for a payment for every unit of electricity generated, regardless of how it's used. On top of this payment, there is also an export tariff. If you can't use the electricity in your home or on the croft, then the electricity supply companies will buy spare units from you at a guaranteed three pence per unit. Most of us, if we were to look at our electricity bills, would be paying well over ten pence a unit, so it makes a lot of sense to utilise your electricity on site.

The North Harris Trust was quick to see the possibilities for income generation from renewable energy. The 62,000 acre North Harris estate is now managed by the trust – a community-led, charitable organisation. The estate has historically been a hunting and fishing destination. It is primarily moorland, stretching from the shore to the Harris hills. The one thing we do have in abundance is wind and rain.

Like many crofters, the trust is always looking for new ways to earn money, in the trust's case to fund much-needed community regeneration projects. Some time ago, consultants (people with a track record of developing hydro schemes) were engaged to carry out a feasibility study into hydro-electric generation on a number of burns. The key areas examined were: water resource, head, land ownership, site access and grid proximity. With this information the experts could come up with a budgetary cost to develop the scheme and some idea of the earnings the scheme could create. In Skye and the Western Isles one of the biggest issues is grid connection. There is little spare capacity in the aged infrastructure. However in recent months, smaller croft-scale generators have been allowed to connect to their local distribution lines with no delay.

Following the feasibility study, North Harris Trust is now progressing two micro-hydro schemes. The first at Kyles Scalpay has been sized as a 12.7kW turbine. There is a 17m drop from a weir location to the turbine site. Water would be piped 150m between these locations. The overhead power lines are within 50m. The estimated cost of the development is around £100,000. The estimated output is 68.8MWh each year which equates to nearly £16,000 earnings a year. That's a 6.3 year payback! The great benefit of hydro-electric generation is that it's tried and tested technology

and it's relatively low-tech. We've been advised that a 50-year lifespan is not unheard of on these small schemes. On top of that, once you're receiving your FIT the rates are guaranteed for 20 years – just what the bank manager wants to hear.



A second burn at Govig has an interesting history. One local crofter has spent many years trying to generate his own electricity with little success. He even fabricated his own waterwheel from scrap. This scheme consists of a small loch and a seven meter drop to

the shore. The study has specified a 6.2kW turbine that will generate 23.5MWh each year, equating to £5,500 earnings in a year. The estimated cost of development is around £56,000, giving a payback of around 10 years.

To finance these projects, the trust always searches for grant funding first. The number of grants available to both communities and crofters is drying up though, following the introduction of the Feed-in-Tariff. There are still some interest-free loans available and the first port of call should always be the Energy Saving Trust.

FITs were designed to offer payback within 10-12 years, so this is definitely not a quick-win prospect. After the scheme has paid for itself though, you have a long-term income stream, as reliable as the wind and rain in the north and west of Scotland!

<http://www.north-harris-trading.com>
<http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/scotland/>



Tilting at windmills

SINCE THE NEW payments to encourage the home generation scheme came in I see quite a lot of articles

and adverts in *The Crofter* and elsewhere concerning renewable energy.

I attach a photo of my windmill

which are most unlikely to attract any grants at all although it has been producing power for more than 10 years. Several windmills in Scorraig produce over 4Kw. None get any grant or payment.

The Scorraig windmills were made before there were any such financial schemes to be had and they weren't made by an officially recognised maker nor installed by an officially recognised installer. They were all but a very few built and designed by people (mainly one person) in Scorraig. There are half a dozen AWP windmills but they were designed in Scorraig too. Some of them were needfully modified in Scorraig and I have rewound several of them myself.

As none of us are officially

recognised by the possession of funny bits of paper issued by persons in suits in Edinburgh or London we qualify for nothing but the pleasure of admiring the houses on the other side of the loch when the grid fails now and then. I haven't resorted to working out how much I could get if somebody were to pay me 30p a unit for what my 4kw windmill makes.

Of course now and then some of our windmills fail. Some people have backup generators and others not. We can borrow electricity from our daughter-in-law's windmill if need be and she from ours.

Alan Bush



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EHS Energy Savers slash heating bills for crofts in the Western Highlands

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Units have been installed for housing associations, private houses, offices and retail stores in Oban, Fort William, Isle of Skye and many other locations. Specifically, Hugh MacLean of Tarbert, Roger Evans of Applecross, and Ali MacLeod also of Applecross now enjoy the benefits of the Energy Saver – all since our launch in *The Crofter* three months ago.

EHS was invited by both West Highland and Lochaber Housing Associations for long-term tests starting in typical two-storey three-bedroom tenant properties in the summer of 2009. The results are that tenants' energy bills have been slashed by more than £1,000 per year. The total consumption for the year was proven to be less than 2,000 kWh, which only costs £120 for THTC consumers.

The EHS Energy Saver was also proven to work without interruption during the coldest winter 2009/10 for 30 years with temperatures as low as minus 20° C.

The Energy Saver uses heat pump technology but does not need large ground works as it relies on the air. Installed in a day, it causes minimum disruption to your property. The total cost including installation is less than £3,000.

Please contact Bill Hall on bill.hall@eheatgroup.com or **01470 422000** for further information. We also have a web site www.eheatgroup.com with lots of additional information.

We would be happy to survey your property at no cost. We can also offer to demonstrate the Energy Saver at our show site on the Isle of Skye or alternatively at other locations closer to you.



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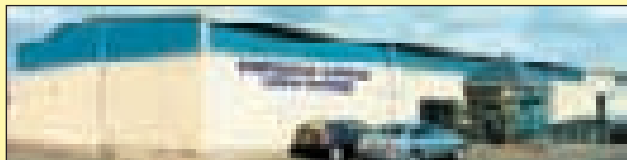
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RENEWABLE ENERGY AND CROFTING

Plenty of wind – insufficient support

AT THE AGM and renewables conference in Balmacara, Norman Leask spoke of the relevance of timing and opportunity.

Having walked into the SCF office 24 hours previously, just at the point when Patrick, Carole Anne and Norman were discussing finding a replacement for the no-show SRDP expert, they demonstrated this admirably and installed me as the new speaker.

I am by no means an expert on financing renewable energy projects. However I have for some time been attempting to install a 6kw household-size wind turbine on my Shetland croft. When I started researching potential funding sources, a £10,000 grant and interest free loan were available through the Energy Saving Trust. This, combined with

the prospect of an income stream through Feed In Tariffs (FIT), made the whole proposal very appealing. One website I came across even encouraged readers by saying "it sounds too good to be true, but isn't".

Unfortunately, of course it was. After the introduction of the FIT scheme, grant funding appears to have been declared incompatible. Although we await a definitive decision, it ain't looking good and in the meantime funding is evaporating. If the FIT income isn't a priority for you then there is still the possibility of obtaining an SRDP grant for 50% of the cost. An installation of this size would typically cost in the region of £20,000 to £30,000. However, one must of course first decide whether the cost of the

application might not be more wisely used for the purchase of lottery tickets.

I am being somewhat flippant about what is a serious subject, no doubt brought about by a wonderful day spent fossil hunting on Skye with my wife and seven-year-old son. Fossil fuel is what this subject is all about. A substance which has taken 50 million years to form will be consumed by the human race within 250 years, with potentially devastating consequences for our planet.

Why is it then so difficult to fund such a planet-friendly project? An overdraft facility from our banking sector – and remember these are now our banks – would appear to be restricted to 10% of business turnover, no matter how sound the business plan: nowhere near enough for most crofters to fund this kind of development. Even the Co-operative, supposedly the bank of choice for renewable projects, is prioritising funds to those above 500kw.

With the kind of wind resource we possess in Shetland the financial projections look excellent, with a 25% per annum return on capital invested and a payback period of 4-5 years. We in Shetland are luckier than most in having a relatively wealthy local authority and a development trust which I am attempting to persuade to offer flexible commercial loans for projects such as mine. Indeed, I would suggest it would be somewhat

ironic if our local council, sitting on a pot of "oil money" were to reject such a proposal.

Similarly it is a perverse situation that those in fuel poverty are likely to see their bills increase in order to allow electricity companies to fund the FIT scheme, while having little or no opportunity to benefit from renewables themselves. I believe Norman is correct and there is an opportunity at present, but we may miss out unless our government better supports crofters in their desire to be part of the solution to both climate change and fuel poverty.

Perhaps the SCF should be lobbying for a loan scheme to provide funding for this kind of development.

David Smith, Shetland



Plenty of wind at Burra, Shetland



Sunbin solar crop drier

THE SUNBIN uses conventional crop drying technology but also captures solar heat.

It has been developed by retired engineer Gordon MacBean and is proposed for crofts or upland farms where high quality dried hay is desired regardless of weather conditions.

The drier's advantages are its simple construction, low capital costs, high solar energy input, small sectional construction for easy transport between sites and a low drying costs estimated at 50p/ton.

The drier's principal component is a re-usable inner and outer plastic enclosure formed from a single translucent sheet. The inner enclosure tightly wraps the crop to be

dried and the outer forms an inflatable air chamber to capture solar heat above the bales.

A drier is now available for field testing by any interested manufacturer or farmer. The photo shows the fan unit and a single round bale support section. The complete drier extends to four bale support sections and is 10m in length.

Test site requirements: 16x 4ft round bales or 156 small rectangular bales, one 13A power socket, an open flat area 40ft x 8ft with access for loading bales and three days drying time to produce high-quality hay regardless of weather conditions.

Gordon's retiral hobby has been to take the project to an operational stage. He is now unable to take the project further



and seeks an interested farmer and manufacturer in the north of Scotland to test, manufacture and sell Sunbin driers as a business opportunity within the low-carbon farming sector.

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CROFTING CONNECTIONS

Planting the tatties

Moir Webster, class teacher, reports

THE CHILDREN here at Dalwhinnie Primary School had a very special experience in May when they went to the Highland Folk Park in Newtonmore to help with planting potatoes.

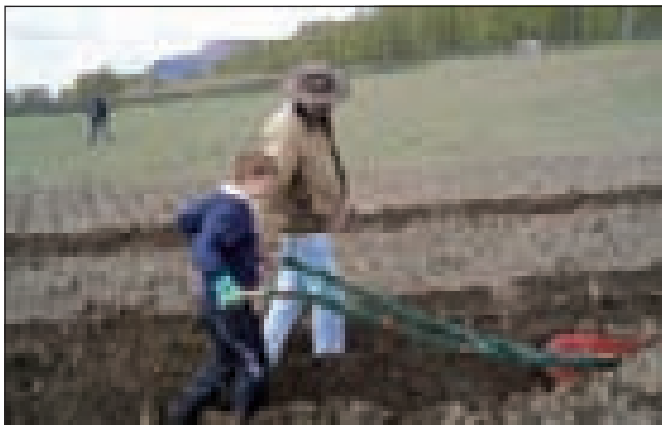
The children had previously planted five varieties of potatoes that had come as part of the Crofting Connections project at school. These they had planted in bags alongside the variety that they received as part of the RHET Grow and Count project.

At the folk park all the boys were met by Bob Powell and Eric Stewart at the field where they were going to plant. Bob demonstrated how to plough behind a tractor then each of the children had a couple of turns with varied support depending on size. Eric then demonstrated how to place the potatoes before they were all given a bucket of Kerr's

Pinks and directed to the drills that they were going to plant.

The children were all totally focused and took this very seriously. The potatoes were then earthed over using the tractor and plough and the pupils retired for a well-earned lunch. In the afternoon the pupils were taken round the croft by Bob to look at the machinery that has been used for planting and harvesting potatoes in the past.

The children will be returning in October to help with harvesting the potatoes that they planted. In the meantime they continue to look after the potatoes, carrots, courgettes and herbs that they have planted at school. These (hopefully) will be available to the local community for a small donation – although some will be kept, as the plan is that we join with Gergask Primary, our nearest Crofting Connections school in Laggan and the folk park to celebrate our harvest later in the year.



Shetland wool

As part of the Crofting Connections project, pupils at Burravoe primary school visited Jamieson and Smith wool brokers in Lerwick. James Robertson, P6, reports.

THERE ARE lots of different colours of wool.

There's moorit, black, white, katmoget and gulmoget. Shetland wool is very soft so you get soft jumpers, but most Shetland wool comes from Australia and it's a denser fleece. You can do lots of different things with wool like knit a jumper, scarves, make rugs, blankets, knit hats and felt.

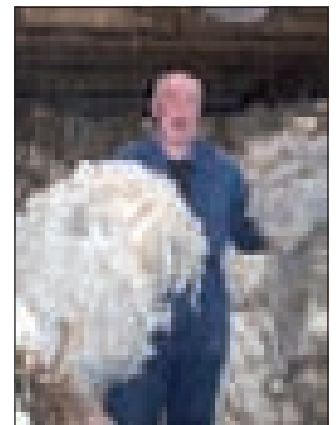
To get wool you need to clip the sheep's wool. The crofters take their fleeces to the wool brokers in Lerwick, Jamieson and Smith. They weigh the wool; most fleeces are around one or two kilos. Shetland sheep are small so they're not very good for farmers except for their wool which is very soft. But farmers cross Shetland sheep with Suffolks or Cheviots so they can get bigger sheep, which makes denser wool so Shetland sheep are getting rare.

The sheep's wool is graded: grade 1 is the really good wool and grade 5 is the horrible stuff. All the ones in the middle get better each time. First there were about 30 different wool brokers but now there's about three. There's lots of sheep going rare like the Shetland sheep and Herdwicks because people don't breed the Shetland sheep with one another, just the same with the Herdwicks. People in Yorkshire use the coarse wool to make carpets so that all the fleeces

can be used and the crofter can get a better price from the wool broker.

You can use wool for lots of different types of things like smucks. You need to felt the wool for that. Jamieson and Smith send the wool to be washed and then spun then it's ready to knit. You can use wool for blankets, teddies, socks, hats, scarves, jumpers and gloves. You can use lots of things to help you knit like a knitting belt, gloves boards and jumper boards. You can make a pin cushion out of wool to hold your pins. To get people to buy the wool the shop puts a pattern, the right amount of wool and needles in a pack.

They have started to make carpets from Shetland wool. They're going to make rugs and runners in Jamieson and Smiths to use up all the wool from the fleeces so they use more of the fleece wool so they aren't wasteful and it is all useful. They and the farmers will get more profit.



Litir Bhon Cheathramh

AM B' URRAINN dhut còrr is US \$500,000,000 ('S dòcha gu bheil an àireamh nas àirde.) a dhiùltadh nuair a chaidh a thairgsinn dhut? An urrainn dhut a dhèanamh, is tu cho bochd ris na faoileagan, a' fuireachd ann an lùid dhe carabhan gun teas is uisge? Bhoil 's e sin a rinn na Lakotah, nuair a chaidh an suim sin a thairgsinn dhaibh airson Paha Sapa (The Black Hills), agus tha e na phàirt dhe stòraidh suarach anns an do thuit Alba bho chionn ghoirid.

Air làrach-lìn a BhBC, chunnaic mi colbh mu pròiseact fo sgèith Historic Scotland agus Sgoil Ealain na h-Alba, far a bheil iad an sàs a' dèanamh iomhaighean 3D dhe Mount Rushmore,

anns na Stàitean. Chaidh Mount Rushmore ainmeachadh mar "international heritage landmark", agus, an internationally recognisable and emblematic site." Chunnacas am pròiseact mar chothrom, "to showcase expertise" air beulaibh an t-saoghail. Dè tha ceàrr? Bhoil...

Tha Mount Rushmore, na phàirt dhe Paha Sapa, an t-àite as naomhe a th' ann dha na Lakotah, agus àite a chaidh a goid bhuapa calg-dhireach an-aghaidh aonta leis an riaghaltas – aonta an dèidh dha Red Cloud làmh an uachdair fhaighinn a' sabaid an aghaidh saighdearan riaghaltais. A dh'aindeoin cho cudromach sa tha an t-àite, agus gun deach a ghoid, chaidh aodainnean dhe Cinn-suidhe nan Stàitean

a shnaidheadh ann eadar 1920 -40. Bhiodh e col'ach ri swastika a chur air Balla a' Chaoineidh ann an Ierusalem. Chan eil ann ach iomhaigh dhe brùideileachd, fòirneart, agus feallsanachd chlaon mar Manifest Destiny. 'S e cruth fiosaigeach dhe na facail, " 's leamsa". Ma bhios e a' riochdachadh dad, 's e mar chaidh Tùsanaich an àite a stampadh fo bròig nuair a chaidh òr a lorg ann. Gus gnothaichean a dhèanamh nas miosa, chan eil muinntir Ameireagaidh a' faicinn dad ceàrr air agus, a rèir col'ais, chan eil no an riaghaltas nàiseanta againne a thug airgead dhan phròiseact 3D, agus a mhol e.

Nuair a chunnaic mi an stòraidh, sgriobh mi dhan riaghaltas agus

fhuair mi freagairt bàigheil bho Rob Gibson, agus bho chuideigin à oifig Fiona Hyslop. Chì sinn dè thig às. Dhomhsa bhiodh e iomchaidh a bhith a' tarraing às bhon phàirt dhen phròiseact a tha a' dèiligeadh le Mount Rushmore. Tha na Lakotah a' strì ri bhith beò air an fhearann aca fhèin, a' chànan aca a chumail beò, fèin-measadh a chumail ri chèile, agus stiùireadh fhaighinn air an dòigh beatha aca fhèin. 'S iad na h-aon amasan a th' aig muinntir na h-Alba, gu h-àraidh na Gàidheal. Bu chòir dhuinn a bhith nar seasamh rin taobh!

Thàinig an colbh seo le Alasdair MacMhaoirín a-mach an toiseach anns a' Bratach.

CROFTING RESOURCES PROGRAMME

Achieving its aims across a range of initiatives

THE CROFTING Resources Programme (CRP) has now been in operation for a year.

We are funded by SRDP (Food Processing, Marketing and Co-operation Grant), Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to deliver the following outputs: -

- awareness raising of qualities of croft-based production;
- formation of and support for new producer groups;
- support for existing producer groups;
- development of standards relevant to croft-based production;
- advice and mentoring for new producers;
- assistance in food-chain issues affecting croft produce;
- promoting best use of township assets;
- publishing a horticultural handbook for crofters;
- providing generic advice on SRDP.

This report covers work we have been involved in during the first half of this year.

Formation of new producer groups – Sue White has facilitated formation of a crofter horticultural producer group in Shetland. We are assisting formation of, and providing training for, a local food producer group in Stronsay, Orkney. Alan Boulton is working with a group of producers in Argyll. Yvonne Richardson is doing a feasibility study on a local meat supply group for Galson (a community-owned estate) in Lewis.

Support for existing producer groups – A successful LEADER application was made on behalf of Shetland Cattle Breeders. We are continuing to work on a SRDP application for Skye and Lochalsh Meat Supply Group. We have provided training for horticultural producer groups in Skye and Lochalsh, Lewis and Harris and north west Sutherland. The following training events, courses

and seminars have taken place: -

- SRDP for horticulture businesses, Skye;
- horticulture for crofters, Harris;
- pig health and husbandry, Lewis (repeated due to demand);
- marketing meat from the croft conference, Inverness;
- food hygiene course, Lewis;
- shelter planting and woodfuel workshops, Portree and Stornoway;
- horticultural workshop, Stronsay, Orkney;
- soft fruit study tour (reported elsewhere in this issue);
- renewable energy seminar, Balmacara.

Please let us know of any training or development needs and we will try to assist.

Development of standards – The standards working group has now had two meetings to develop the criteria for Scottish Crofting Produce (SCP). An e-newsletter will be produced for SCP members to keep them informed and the first issue will be out in August. The standards working group consists of Eleanor Arthur, Norman Leask, Kathy Coull, Neil MacLeod, Joyce Wilkinson, Robin Calvert, Alan Boulton, Patrick Krause, Carol Anne Stewart and Donald Murdie. Calum MacLeod will be invited to join.

Township assets – Nine townships and one general grazings have come forward to take part in our pilot project on asset-based township development. These represent a wide variety of crofting situations from Shetland to Argyll. At the time of writing, our fieldworkers

are making initial contact with these townships.

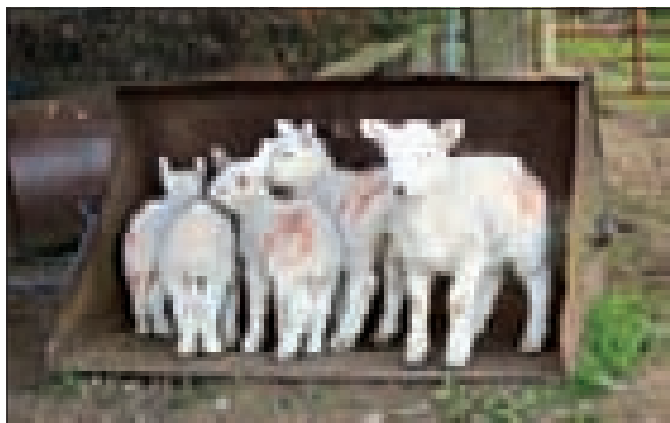
Horticultural handbook for crofters – A working group, consisting of Audrey Litterick, Calina MacDonald, John Bannister, Siobhan Macdonald and Donald Murdie, has met to take forward this project which aims to produce a definitive publication for growers, taking account of the challenging conditions in the north and west.

Awareness raising – Susy Macaulay, freelance agricultural journalist based in North Uist, has been providing media support and producing promotional and publicity material. Susy has already created considerable impact, issuing a steady stream of material to the farming and Highlands and Islands press. A major promotional effort (reported elsewhere in this issue) took place at the Royal Highland Show. We will also be attending the Black Isle, Grantown, and Dalmally shows this year.

The crofters' native seed varieties project continues, as our researcher Maria Scholten reports elsewhere in this issue. The research on stock clubs 'taking stock' is ongoing. Information has been gathered on a number of stock clubs in Skye and we are looking for a couple of stock clubs in Sutherland to take part.

Russell Smith has taken over as fieldworker for the north mainland area.

Please contact SCF head office with any enquiries on the Crofting Resources Programme, or email donald@crofting.org.



And QMS says we should fence off machinery!

Interested in marketing your home-produced meat?

QUANTITY MEAT Scotland will be running a series of workshops in October that will cover all you need to know about direct sales of your home-produced meat. A total of four workshops will be held, two in the Inverness area and two in the central belt of Scotland.

The workshops will be split into two sessions in each area:

- The first series will be a hands-on boning-out workshop where master trainer Gordon Gibb will take you through the method of de-boning a lamb carcass before you then have the opportunity to hone your skills on the lamb that you have brought along.

- In the second series of

workshops Gordon Gibb will give delegates insight into the various requirements for setting up a direct sales red meat business, from the legislative aspects of setting up a cutting room through to selling red meat, incorporating equipment, packaging, product transportation and mark ups.

All the sessions are of one day duration and will commence at 9am and finish at 5pm. This series of workshops is free of charge provided you bring along your own lamb carcass for the boning-out sessions and lunch for both the boning sessions and business set-up workshops.

Places will be allocated on a first come basis and to register,

or for further details of both workshops, please contact either Kathy Peebles or Margaret

Stewart at Quality Meat Scotland on **0131 472 4040** or e mail info@qmscotland.co.uk

Cutting skills

6th October
Inverness College
9.00am - 5.00pm

7th October
Edinburgh School of Food
and Wine, Kirkliston
9.00pm - 5.00pm

Business set up

26th October
Inverness Caley Thistle
Boardroom
9.00am - 5.00pm

27th October
McDiarmid Park, Perth
9.00am - 5.00pm

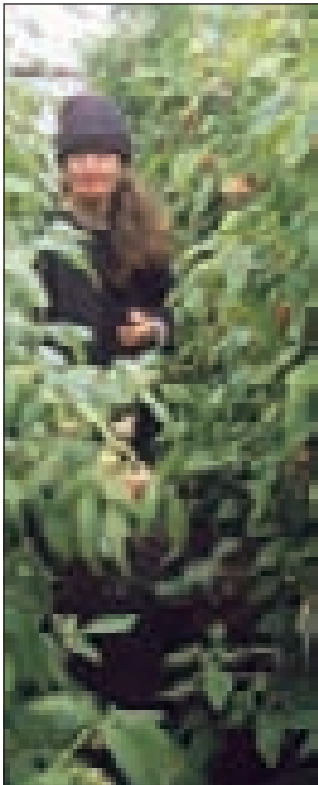


CROFTING RESOURCES PROGRAMME

Soft fruit tour

THE SCOTTISH soft fruit industry is a great success story.

The quality of Scottish berries has long been recognised and growers have responded to the demand for this healthy product by increasing production and extending the season. Is there a role for crofting in this sector and can crofters gain worthwhile income from growing any of the wide variety of berries that come under the 'soft fruit' heading?



Traditionally, crofters often had a few blackcurrant bushes around the house for jam making. More recently new methods of production and the popularity of polytunnels on the croft makes it possible to grow most types of soft fruit even in some very exposed locations – and croft-grown strawberries, raspberries and even blueberries can be found in the local produce markets in, for example, Stornoway, Portree and Ullapool.

With this in mind, fifteen crofters from Skye, Lochalsh, Sutherland and Wester Ross took part in a study tour of Highland soft fruit growers which took place at the beginning of June as part of the Crofting Resources Programme. Tour leader was horticultural and environmental consultant Audrey Litterick. The four farms visited, in the Moray coast and Black Isle area, were

vividly contrasting in scale and production methods.

At Wester Lawrenceton, near Forres, Pam and Nick Rodway have a highly productive orchard and soft fruit growing area, very well sheltered and on a scale relevant to a crofting enterprise. Their farm is organic and the rich biodiversity they have created provides its own pest control.

The nearby Earthshare community-supported fruit and vegetable enterprise was the next visit – and this, at one and a half acres, was also on a crofting scale. Again, organic methods are used and everything is grown outside.

The following day's visit to Wester Hardmuir fruit farm was a complete contrast. This huge and very intensive operation is mainly under plastic, either permanent or moveable polytunnels with 'fertigation' (watering and feeding) supplied from a central source. This extends the season at both ends and allows picking in wet weather. Finally, at Balvraid, we saw traditional, field-scale growing of raspberries and strawberries on the fertile, flat lands near Muir of Ord, selling mainly through 'pick-your-own'.

What were the conclusions of the tour? Clearly we could see that soft fruit is a serious option for those crofters who enjoy the benign climate and good soils of the east highlands, but what about the west coast and islands? There are very sheltered and mild locations on the west coast where outdoor soft fruit growing would be an option. The main drawback would be levels of rainfall which could cause loss of crop in particularly wet years. There are marginal areas which could be given sufficient protection by planting fast-growing shelter belts. In more exposed areas of the mainland, and in the islands, polytunnels would generally be needed and the methods we saw at Wester Hardmuir could be scaled down to a crofting level.

One thing is certain. There is a known demand for locally-grown soft fruit, especially in more remote areas, and a good price to be had.

We would like to thank the growers who very kindly took the time, at a very busy stage of the year, to show us around their farms.

North European cereals for the north of Scotland

ORKNEY'S CLIMATE, like that of many parts of the north of Scotland, makes it a challenge to grow cereals for malting and milling.

Winter cereals do not usually over-winter well, so that spring varieties have to be relied upon and the main constraint for these is the short and cool growing season. Planting is seldom managed before the middle of April and harvesting after mid-September risks difficult harvesting conditions because of rain, lodged crops and costly grain drying.

Orkney's cool growing season is reflected by its average temperature from April to September (10.2oC) which is 0.6oC less than that for Aberdeen. In spite of these constraints, since 2004 the Agronomy Institute (AI) at Orkney College (UHI) has successfully grown both wheat and oats for local milling. This success has been based upon the use of early-maturing Finnish varieties of wheat (Anniina) and oats (Fiia) which are both normally harvested before mid-September. In contrast, most UK milling varieties would require about another two weeks to be harvested in Orkney.

Recently, both varieties have started to be grown in Orkney for a range of end-uses and Fiia has been grown – and harvested! – in Shetland. Early maturity is, of course, not new to cereals grown in the north

of Scotland. This is one of the major advantages of the very old traditional variety, bere.

The development of Anniina and Fiia in Orkney has come about as a result of collaboration between the AI, the Orkney seed merchant Richard Shearer and end users, Barony Mills and local bakery companies. In spite of the success of these two varieties, it is recognised that they are only two of a much wider range of varieties which are currently grown in northern Europe, many of which are marketed by the Swedish company SW Seeds.

As a result of collaboration between the AI, Richard Shearer and SW Seeds and with funding from a HIE Business Innovation grant, field trials were started at Orkney College with a wider range of north European varieties in April 2010. These trials include six varieties of barley, four of wheat and four of oats which are being compared with Anniina, Fiia and standard UK varieties. If the trials are successful and identify potentially useful early cereal varieties, then funds will be sought to allow trials/demonstrations in other parts of the north of Scotland in 2011 so that more growers have the opportunity of seeing these varieties.

Results from the trial will be presented in the next issue of *The Crofter*.



Plots of north European barley varieties under trial at Orkney College (UHI) in July 2010

CROFTING RESOURCES PROGRAMME

SCF success at Highland Show

Continued from page 1

Environment minister Roseanna Cunningham eyed the salvers of culinary delights with enthusiastic expectation. First of all, she tucked into a perfectly-portioned Lewis lamb and marjoram pie with a summer pea puree encased in an all-butter, crumbly pastry. "Delicious! Absolutely wonderful!"

She then proceeded to the carpaccio of Shetland beef in a tarragon emulsion with beetroot crisps. After much praising of the quality of the produce so far, she was offered a confit of spiced shoulder of Sutherland hogget with a peat-smoked red pepper chutney. This was followed by Scotch eggs made from Lewis pork and quails eggs. Finishing off this mouth-watering menu was a salver of strawberry and basil cheesecake tartlets.

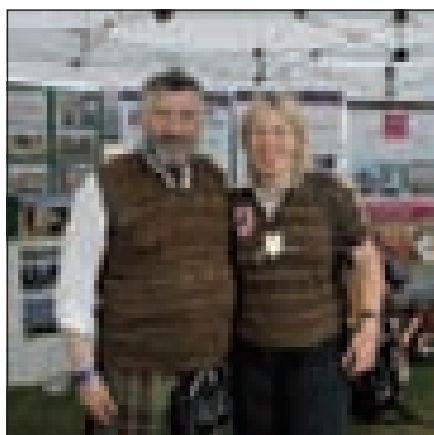
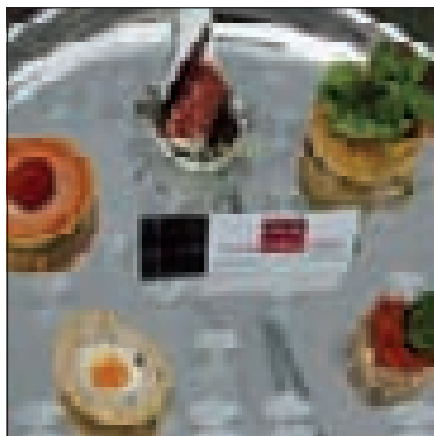
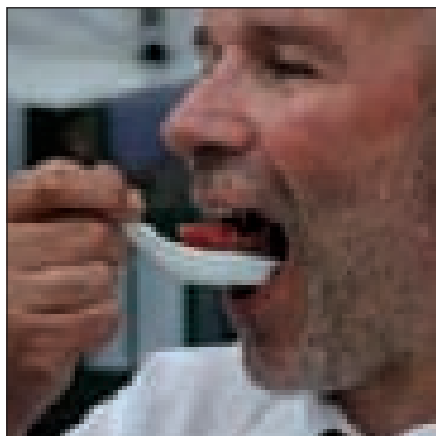
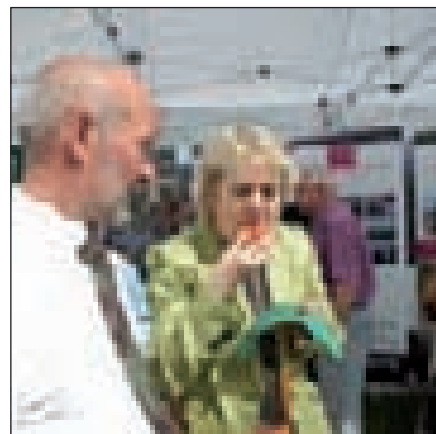
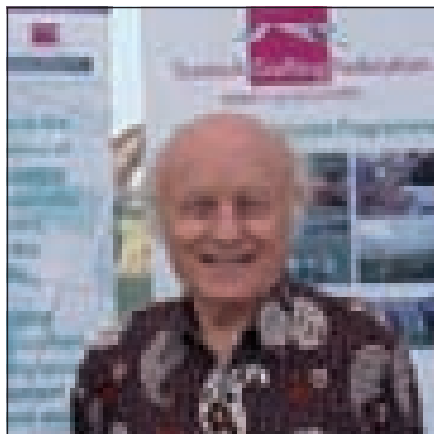
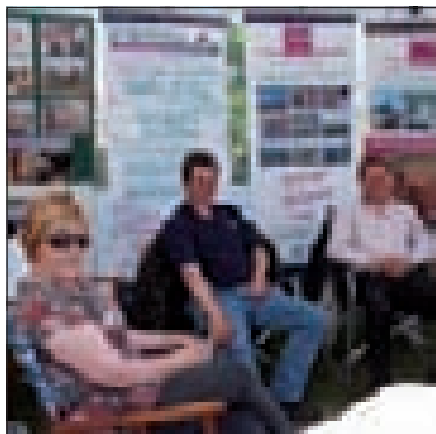
The minister was obviously impressed as she had to be almost dragged away from the stand by her staff. Other MSPs were suitably impressed.

Murdo Alex of the Sulair Restaurant is an army-trained chef who had worked at several fine-dining restaurants throughout the UK before deciding to open his own restaurant in Stornoway. He uses mostly croft produce and says, "I think it is a great idea for producers to have the SCP Mark because you know that the meat you are getting from them is great quality meat, well looked-after and not rushed through the system like you find at most commercial outlets." He continued: "The care that crofters put into their animals shines through in the meat that I receive. We, as restaurateurs, should support our local crofters as much as possible".

The SCP Mark does not just cover livestock but also fruit, vegetables, eggs etc. Donald Murdie, Crofting Resources Programme project manager would like to encourage more crofters to apply for the mark to enable them to sell their produce through catering establishments and elsewhere. He explained: "When people see the SCP Mark on local produce they can be confident of its quality, total traceability and that it has been produced with care for the environment".

Particularly welcome at the stand was Professor Bob Orskov, a world-renowned and respected authority on animal nutrition and sustainable farming. He is a good friend and enthusiastic supporter of the SCF.

For further details of the SCP Mark contact donald@crofting.org.



CROFTING RESOURCES PROGRAMME

The care crofters put in to their animals shines through

THE SCOTTISH Crofting Produce (SCP) mark has enjoyed a boost from media coverage over the last few months.

Freelance agricultural journalist Susy Macaulay, based in North Uist, has been working since May on SCP and has ensured a steady stream of articles in the local, national and agricultural press and radio. The highlight was undoubtedly the gourmet buffet of crofting produce, featuring the now-famous pie, created for the Royal Highland by Lewis chef Murdo Alex MacRitchie and eagerly sampled by visitors to the SCF stand on the Friday of the show.

Murdo Alex said, "I find the

quality of croft-reared produce is far superior compared to more commercial produce. The care crofters put into their animals shines through in the meat that I receive. We as restaurateurs should support our local crofters as much possible to ensure the future of such top-quality raw materials." The publicity generated has resulted in a number of applications to join the Scottish Crofting Produce mark and this promotional effort will continue during the show season and into the autumn, along with work to create crofting produce pages on the SCF website.

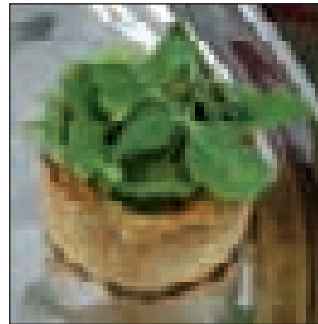
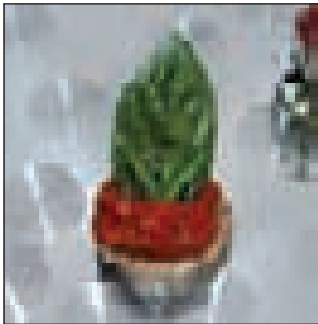
The annual dinner at the SCF gathering will be made entirely

from crofting produce; McSorley's pub in Glasgow will have a crofting produce menu during Scottish food and drink fortnight; and a reception at the parliament in November for Crofting Connections will, of course, feature croft-produced food. Susy MacAulay has already been in touch with a number of SCP members and aims to contact all within the next few weeks to gather material for further media promotion.

So what next for the famous pie? Taste tests will be carried out to gauge consumer reaction to different recipes. SCF chief executive Patrick Krause said, "If the recipe works, then who knows where it could go. We would certainly be looking at marketing it

under our crofting produce brand as the crofters' pie. What better a food product could you get made with free-range, hill-grown, grass-fed sheep meat." Patrick said the SCF was also hoping to take advantage of Europe's protected food-name legislation for the existing Scottish Crofting Produce Mark.

Finally, thanks are due to the suppliers of the superb produce featured at the Royal Highland – lamb, pork, salads and soft fruit from Lewis, beef from Shetland and mutton from Sutherland; also to our fieldworker Yvonne Richardson and that good friend to crofting, Jo Durno, for serving up the buffet at the show.



All images © Susy Macaulay

Expanding mutton market would help preserve environment, say island crofters

THE SCOTTISH Crofting Federation has backed calls by island crofters for an expansion in the market for mutton.

Western Isles crofters say the hills and moors on the islands are suffering from lack of grazing and this situation could be turned round if there was a greater emphasis on mutton for the mainstream market.

Richard MacLennan, who has a small blackface flock in Borge, Isle of Harris, says ageing crofters find it hard to gather sheep from the hills.

He said: "Less people work with dogs now. It's hard work to keep a hill flock. There is also a lack of hefted ewes to make good mutton after breeding."

Mr MacLennan is a member of SCF's Scottish Crofting Produce (SCP) mark, a hallmark in quality produce from crofts.

Sandy and Ali Granville, from Tolsta Chaolais, Isle of Lewis also rear beef, lamb and mutton under the SCP quality mark, and are convinced there is a latent market for more mutton.

Mrs Granville said: "Our mutton comes from two-year-old wedders, although we also supply some

older meat for connoisseurs. They live on beautiful hills and islands, eating heather. It is no wonder they taste so good. We sell to private customers all over the country and they can't get enough of it."

SCF's Donald Murdie said: "If the hills and moors are not grazed, the environmental implications

are serious for the islands. The landscape will change irrevocably to scrub and coarse vegetation which is difficult to get back. It also poses a serious fire risk with devastating consequences for ground-nesting birds. Fire would also unleash carbon locked up in the vegetation into the atmosphere."

He added: "More needs to be done to improve the image of mutton, including recognition of its qualities from our national meat industry."

"We need to show people that it comes from a mature prime animal, naturally reared. It's not just any old sheep."



Not just any old sheep

Martin Benson

CROFTING RESOURCES PROGRAMME

Benbecula oat trial and bere work

THE BENBECULA oat trial at Lionacleit studies oat diversity.

Comparing different Scottish small oats – coirce beag from Uists, Tiree and Lewis; aets from Shetland and traditional black oat from Orkney; small oat from former European growing areas Finland, Denmark, Germany, Ireland and Wales; as well as current growing areas further away (South America) – it is part

of an SAC-based PhD project about Scottish local varieties.

The scientific name of small oat is *Avena strigosa*, meaning slender oat and it is a different botanical species from common oat, *Avena sativa*. Although in Europe largely a historical crop of the poorest soils, in Southern Brazil small oat is widely grown in no-till agriculture and in recent years small oat is increasingly used by tulip bulb growers in

Holland, as green manure and eelworm suppressant.

Comparison studies at genebanks are usually done in an average, controlled environment. However, by conducting the study on the machair, two extra factors could be addressed: studying the performance of different oats in the extreme machair environment with its difficult soils and secondly, interacting with crofters, to raise awareness about the plight of local varieties and to look for ways of supporting them.

Agricultural trials for the machair have become very rare and this was flagged up by including big oat varieties as potentially suitable varieties for the highly alkaline machair. Oat breeding for alkaline soils is done in Canada at the crop development centre in Saskatoon and five varieties are included in the trial.

Dry cold and a hard northerly wind characterised the early 2010 season. Sowing was done on 2nd and 3rd May. Seaweed had been applied but no further treatment was given. Soon after, emergence stress became visible in all South American, most European small oat and four out of five Canadian common oats. The Uist small oat

did not show stress and some Shetland aits had only mild symptoms. The Murkle oat, a traditional common oat from the Caithness area, also kept up.

Very striking in the early season was the prostrate growing of the Hebridean small oat which was lying and almost clinging to the sand. This indicates cold hardiness, another potentially useful trait of small oat for plant breeders.

Plant tissue was sent for analysis to SAC analytical services in Penicuik. Results showed that Uist small oat had almost five times more manganese in the leaves than a South American small oat and six times more than a Canadian big oat with stress symptoms. The tissue analysis will be repeated at silage stage.

The first ear appeared on 3d July on the Shetland aits from Trondra, within a couple of days followed by the next Shetland aits, and in another three days by Yell aits, Orkney black and the first Uist small oat. Most Hebridean small oat emerged at least 10 days later. These results makes Shetland aits the earliest of all small oat studied, earlier than the Finnish and Danish small oat.



Ness gala display of eorma

An aithnich thu blas an aran eòrna?

DO YOU KNOW the taste of barley bread? This is the motto to explore opportunities for bere on the Western isles.

Beremeal is successfully marketed on Orkney but hardly available in the Western Isles. Through the Crofting Resources Programme opportunities for a comeback of aran eòrna – the barley bread unique to the Western Isles – are currently being looked at. The work on bere is not restricted to the Western Isles but will also include Shetland, looking into the potential of bere and beremeal. More information can be obtained from CRP fieldworker for Shetland Sue White, sue@uradale.com

'An coirce beag' was the title of a special workshop held at the Uist Ceòlas summer school on 8th July. Seeds from oats, bere and rye were displayed and current uses and growing areas explained. The unique local seed

production was highlighted. This was followed by an exciting and very enjoyable baking session with beremeal, sourced from Barony Mills, Orkney. Experienced baking ladies from Berneray, Eriskay, Barra and South Uist started baking bere scone and bannock. The secret of aran eòrna, the traditional barley bread, was discussed – but not quite solved yet.

The seed display, now accompanied by a bere bannock, was also shown at the Ness Gala on 10th of July and will be repeated at agricultural shows on the Uists, South Harris and Barvas.

Several people spontaneously recollected mothers and grandmothers baking aran eòrna. However, none could remember a recipe. Readers of *The Crofter* are invited to collect and send in recipes for aran eòrna.

Maria Scholten 153
Howmore HS8 5SH South Uist
07746671984.

Island oats visit

A personal report by Maria Scholten

ON HIS 90th birthday my uncle, Gerhard Scholten, from Holland, expressed the wish to see "the Scottish island farmers and the oats of the islands".

The fact that he had never in his life set a foot on an airplane did not seem to deter him the least bit. His GP declared that if he could walk 50 meters he was fit for flying: and so we started organising a crofting trip to the Uists.

My uncle is a former smallholder, heir to the small mixed farm of my grandfather in the east of Holland.

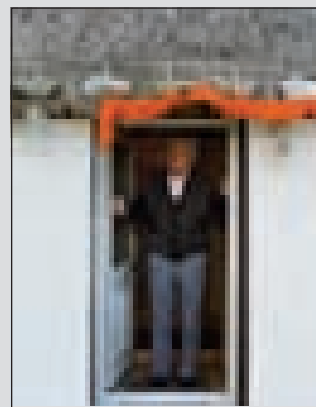
The three-day visit in late June consisted of an introduction to machair agriculture with explanation about seaweed, field systems, the crops, inspections of corn and tattie fields and peat banks.

The visit to the Kildonan Museum brought out recollections of flails, chaff mills, sieves and even peat cutting. He explained how in Holland (bread) corn has for

a long time been largely replaced by maize, but that recently farmers are being encouraged through subsidies to grow corn again.

He was impressed with the many challenges facing crofters. Where did the big boulders come from? Was there winter rye grown here? How much does it cost to tag lambs with chips?

If only Holland were closer by and if only he could speak English, my uncle would be back for the agricultural shows and harvesting.



A crofting tourist, aged 90

TRACTOR RESTORATION

Harry Ferguson's legacy to farming and crofting

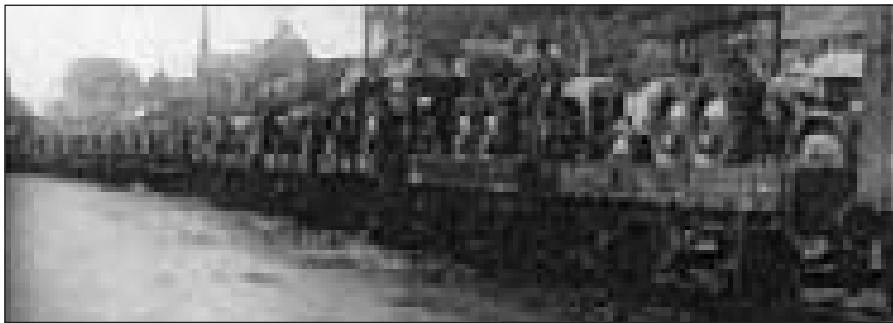
My friend the late Donald Macleod of Castleton, by Lochgilphead, was convinced that the inspired Northern Irish engineer and salesman Harry Ferguson was responsible for some of the most important contributions of all time to world farming – and particularly the efficiency of smaller agricultural units.

Donald was of course referring to the development and the marketing of the Ferguson System and specifically the iconic TE20 (the grey Fergie) which was central to the growth of the brand. The fact that hundreds, perhaps thousands, of these tractors are still in regular daily use across the world is irrefutable evidence of the quality of engineering and its unique suitability for small units.

Apparently 80% of tractors world-wide now feature elements of the Ferguson System hydraulics. While this has extended to the monster machines that seem increasingly ubiquitous, it all started and happily it continues



Willie Matheson Balblair with Ford Ferguson and 30 Cwt Ferguson trailer



New Fergies arrive in Dingwall - approximately 1951 (photo courtesy of Mackays of Dingwall)



Donald MacLeod on his Ford Ferguson

in the very special "little" machines so beloved of, and so particularly appropriate to, crofters and small farmers everywhere.

Donald Macleod's passion for tractors probably started in Mull in the late 1940s when an early Ferguson TE20 from the Banner Lane factory in Coventry, together with a substantial selection of Ferguson implements, arrived at Tiroran Farm where his father Alasdair was manager.

Years later Donald's tractor collection, although not exclusively Ferguson, reflected his interest and admiration for the diminutive Irish entrepreneur who took on the world and won so much for the smaller people. Harry Ferguson's handshake agreement with Henry Ford – which led to the production of

thousands of the Ford Ferguson tractors – is unique in the annals of world business. So too is the famous court case in which Harry sued Ford for its infringement of his Ferguson System patent in the Ford tractor which was launched in the late 1940s.

It was Donald Macleod's idea to produce a television documentary on Harry Ferguson's life to acknowledge this man's genius, courage and tenacity in pursuing his dream for world farming. A rapid onset of illness prevented Donald from participating in the programme with his own tractors and tragically he did not live to see the final product. I was privileged to be involved in the production and my colleagues and I are grateful to so many who gave willingly of their time and knowledge to honour Harry Ferguson's legacy to farming. Am Fergie Beag Glas (The Little Grey Fergie) is also a tribute to Donald Macleod – a dedicated crofter, farmer, tractor enthusiast and a Highland gentleman.

One of my lasting early childhood memories in the early 1950s is the screaming of seagulls following the plough and the smell of paraffin on the breeze, as one of the early TE20s operated by the Department of Agriculture – and available on hire to crofters – ploughed in Colbost.

It is wonderfully apt in so many ways that a fine example of the Ford Ferguson (product of the "handshake agreement") is to be auctioned in aid of The Highland

Hospice at the Strathnairn Farmers Association Working Vintage Rally and Display on Saturday 18th September at Daviot Estate. This extraordinarily generous gift is being made by retired farmer and tractor enthusiast Willie Matheson of Mid Ferryton, Balblair, Black Isle – who couldn't think of a better way of sharing his pleasure in vintage equipment. Also being auctioned is a rare 30 cwt Ferguson trailer. In the photo Willie Matheson is seen at the wheel of the Ford Ferguson which has the Ferguson trailer attached.

Bearing in mind John MacLeod's observation that "the cheapest restored tractor is one that someone else has completed", this is a unique opportunity to acquire something special! Be at Daviot Estate on Saturday 18th September between 10.00 and 4.00 and bring your family and friends! You are guaranteed an enjoyable experience and your support will aid others.

Allan Campbell
allancampbell@madasafish.com



Work started on another David Brown

There will be more on tractor restoration in the next issue

TRACTOR RESTORATION

A sense of history – and plenty of space

Former SCF director John MacLeod of Daviot introduces his passion

THERE IS a very special excitement in finding and commencing restoring a piece of vintage equipment. The sound of an old engine bursting into life again is a wonderfully satisfying experience!

Restoration of this kind does require a particular interest as well as time commitment and expense! But for the dedicated enthusiast there is virtually limitless pleasure to be gained from sourcing and carefully rebuilding a tractor or an item of farming machinery.

You also require space. Work on a project might take a considerable length of time; indeed part of the unique pleasure is the ability to come and go from the task as the mood and circumstances permit. So it is important to have a dedicated working area that can be left safe and secure until the job is complete. The finished product is a pleasure to be enjoyed and shared, so there is a continuing need for insurance cover to protect your investment

and secure storage to maintain the equipment in exhibition condition. There is also a need for transport to shows and rallies.

Committed to restoration and encouraged by results, you can soon become a collector – as people who are aware of your interest bring acquisition opportunities to your attention and you find the products irresistible. The “family” can grow quite quickly and if you’re not careful housing it can become a serious challenge. Most importantly, an enthusiast must create and maintain the interest and support of his/her partner to ensure the project never gets between them!

There’s a maxim that says that the amount of junk you accumulate grows in direct proportion to the amount of space you make available for it. While serious collectors – in their view – never accumulate junk, restoration work by its nature implies sourcing old equipment for spare parts and that takes space. I confess to now having three sheds dedicated to my collection of vintage farming equipment.



Vintage grain fanning machine with the unusually spelt agent’s name

So what have I got and why is it so special to me?

At present there are four David Brown tractors: a Fordson, three Ferguson TE20s, a TEF diesel and a Massey Ferguson. Four of these have been completely restored and show regularly. Most of the others are work in various stages of progress. It is not a low-cost hobby however – and without doubt the cheapest restored tractor is the one which someone else has completed! One example of increasing cost is the requirement for a temperature-controlled environment for modern paint application; essential if you are seeking a show-room gloss finish to your project. If you are a real enthusiast there is no substitute for perfection.

My collection is mixed and I have to say that despite my enthusiasm for tractors, my particular pride and joy are much older items of farm machinery. Chief among these is a Tanga open crank petrol/paraffin engine, known as a hot-bulb system, which once drove a large threshing mill at a Kirkhill farm. Over 100 years old and weighing one and a half tons, we had to dismantle it and then demolish part of the shed in which it was housed in order to get it out! But we rebuilt it and it runs like a dream!

I also have two 1940s vintage threshing machines: a Garvie barn-mill and an Allan of Aberdeen threshing mill. Particularly unusual, and a special favourite, is a small pedal-mill which is 80 to 100 years old. Among a collection of small fanners up to 150 years old, used for winnowing seed after milling, there is a

particularly interesting machine which carries a professionally painted logo Maactavish & Maackintosh Agents Inverness. The spelling of the names is certainly unusual and I would be fascinated to hear from any reader who has any information about this company. Finally, I must mention a wooden-wheeled turnip-hasher built in Berwick-on-Tweed over a century ago and the Mackenzie Evanton 1923 turnip cutter rescued from a scrap yard and restored this year!

Yes, I’m hooked on collecting and restoration and I commend it to anyone who is really interested. The process can be as modest as circumstances permit, but for me one of the special pleasures is the powerful sense of history which I get from handling and operating these vintage machines. My Fordson and Cockshut plough can be seen working on the croft every year and there is nothing to compare with the smell of the paraffin in the wind when the old Fordson is in action!

johnmacleod339@btinternet.com



John shows his David Brown and binder



John’s TE20 almost ready to show



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TRACTOR RESTORATION

Restoring to their former glory

IT ALL STARTED in the year my father retired.

Having worked hard all his life from doing his day-to-day job and raising a family and running a small croft, he was not about to hang up his wellies. I was a very young boy when the Massey Ferguson 35 three cylinder came home to the croft. Bought by my grandfather, it started its long hardy life on the croft making lighter work of ploughing, sowing, rolling, binding, the thrashing mill and many more jobs.

On retirement my father said, "Son, we are going to restore the MF35 to its former glory." After all its years of hard work on the croft and a good few round about, it had just a few battle scars – the usual things with a tractor of that age: fuel leaks, oil leaks, water leaks, broken headlamp, faded paint and bald tyres – standard issue for a crofting tractor.

So into the shed we went, stripped the old girl down to the bare bones, taking years of grease, oil, muck and rust off. We cleaned out the rear brakes, renewing all the seals as we went round the tractor. The paint we took off with old-fashioned paint stripper and

a wire brush, leading to the usual scuffed knuckles and cut fingers – no pain no gain, they say.

The wheels were next, the old tyres stripped off and disposed of. We got the wheels shot-blasted and taken home to the croft for a general coating of grey primer, along with all the other metal parts like the front axle, steering rods, rear three-point linkage – they all got a coating of that grey primer. We went through tins of that aerosol grey primer, having painted everything in grey primer that didn't move.

We then set about rebuilding all the grey bits back on, ready for some shiny grey gloss paint to be applied – and then it was back to Dingwall with the wheels to get new tyres put on. We now had a rolling tractor.

Next it was time for the red tinwork to get some attention, which included some straightening of the lower front panel and then on with some lovely red paint and a fresh set of transfers. It was at this time my electrician friend came back with a new wiring loom all ready to be refitted.

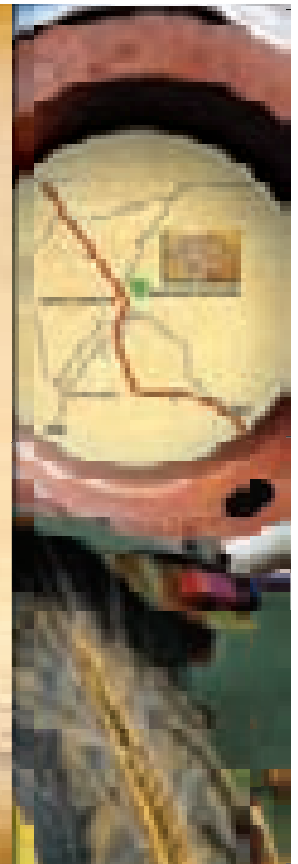
We were now nearly finished. Just a good polish and a new set

a great family day down on the farm!



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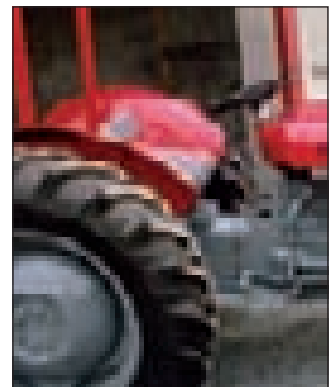
of die-pressed number plates and she was ready for taking along to various shows throughout the north and northeast of Scotland, including the Alness, Black Isle, Tain, Nairn and Forres shows and even as far afield as Fraserburgh.

Recently we have taken her along to our local working day event organised by the Strathnairn farmers of Daviot and with the kind permission of Mr and Mrs D Mackenzie of Daviot Estate, held every year in September.

We have since added a few of Harry Ferguson's finest implements to our collection and we have just recently added a Ransomer MG 2 crawler tractor which, on my first time of starting the said tractor, the starting handle came loose from its starting position on the front of the engine and proceeded to hit me square in the face – leaving me lying in the middle of a field looking up at some stars. The latest addition to the collection is a grey Fergie TE 20 with the P3 conversion lying in the shed in mid-restoration.

If you have the time why don't you come along to Daviot Estate on September 18th and see some other fine working examples of times gone past.

Donald John Macleod



TRACTOR RESTORATION

All things mechanical

Ray Smith outlines how his passion has grown over the years

I HAVE BEEN around tractors, particularly David Browns and Fordsons, most of my life and have had an interest in all things mechanical for many years.

As a twelve-year-old, I assisted my father, a DIY enthusiast, overhaul a Cropmaster engine. Several years later I salvaged and rebuilt a Lister D, then reconditioned the engine of my 1954 Fordson Major.

At agricultural shows, ploughing matches and similar events I admired the skills and workmanship shown by restorers and wondered "Could I do that?"

Early in 2007, members of Strathnairn Farmers Association made arrangements for their first annual working vintage rally and display to be held at Daviot in September. I owned two derelict David Browns, a 1949 Cropmaster which had belonged to my late father-in-law, Andy Maben and a 1957 25D.

My wife declared how nice it would be to restore the Cropmaster for display at Daviot where, co-incidentally, her grandparents had farmed pre-war. So it was, armed with the required impetus, I rose to the challenge.

But where to begin? First an attempt was made to start the engine which, without too much effort, spluttered into life, firing on two cylinders. Some tappet adjustment had it running on all four. Thereafter the head was removed for repair, out came a hammer and angle grinder and gradually all metalwork and wheels were removed. Plenty of photographs and sketches were taken.

After much work the tractor was re-assembled, sealed up, shot-blasted and painted. The metalwork was repaired and straightened, de-rusted and painted. I made new seats and backrest then repaired the single headlamp. Work

progressed nightly, with completion at 2.30am the day of the rally, after I made the registration plates and affixed the decals.

Come daylight and despite only a brief test run, the tractor was driven onto a trailer for transportation to Daviot. How thrilled I was, job done, showing alongside other enthusiasts. A great day was enjoyed by all.

In spring 2008 I decided to prepare the 25D for the next rally. Four months later, after a complete rebuild, this virtual wreck was transformed into a nicely-restored tractor which, on the morning of the rally, I drove to Daviot and displayed alongside the Cropmaster. It is registered with its original number LST643.

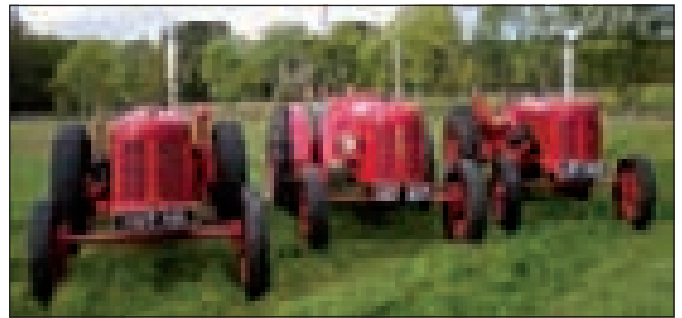
Not content with two tractors, in October 2008 I purchased a 1954 25D. This literally was the proverbial hedgerow find, taken home on pallets in kit form.

Assembly of the front axle, tombstone, engine chassis, back axle etc took place in spring 2009. I rebuilt the engine, hydraulic pump, brakes and so on. The bonnet came from Skye, the grill courtesy of John MacLeod, Daviot. Eventually this kit was a runner and became David Brown number 3 at Daviot in September 2009.

Recently I purchased a 1960 David Brown 850 and son Andrew, my apprentice, labourer, sometimes adviser, purchased an 880 Implematic with loader and pick-up hitch. Both require total restoration.

All five tractors are local to this area with known history.

My tractors are not immaculate showpieces, they still require some finishing, but thanks to the rallies organised by Strathnairn Farmers Association and with help and advice from others, including John MacLeod and Andrew, they are preserved for the enjoyment of others and I now know I can do that!



3 restored tractors Sept 2009



Restored Cropmaster Sept 2007



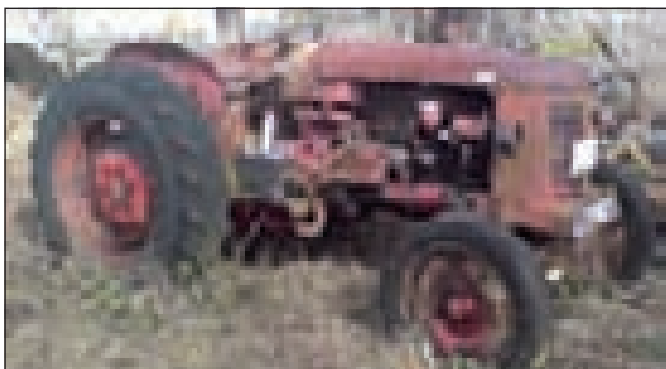
Lifting the Roosters 25D HST 421



Restored 25D LST 643 Sept 2008



Cropmaster pre-restoration



25D LST 643 pre-restoration



25D HS 421 pre-restoration

Crofter's wife column

I AM OFTEN ASKED how a city-born girl, with no family connections to the Highlands, ended up with an interest in crofting. The story begins thirty years ago...

With four growing children, my parents were finding that our annual caravan holiday in Crail was becoming more than a little cramped. A stay in Mallaig had introduced them to the west coast and made such an impression that when they saw an advert in The Sunday Post for a croft house in Arisaig they booked it for two weeks.

On that first trip, we arrived on a hot sunny July afternoon each of us wearing our welly boots and carrying our caghoules and rucksacks – the result of a previous holiday when Dad carried, amongst other things, six pairs of wellies in the suitcase and vowed, “never again!”

In the village we encountered an elderly man sitting on the bench outside the Post Office. Upon hearing that we were staying at Mr MacDonald's croft, Island View, he exclaimed, “Ah, the tin hoose!” – a name which subsequently, and affectionately, became our name for the house but which probably caused my parents a brief panic after such a long journey!

Both house and croft were run down but not to the extent that a seven year old really noticed. The house crouched halfway down the croft hidden from the road by a craggy hill. Behind it a field ran down to “our” sandy shore. It's little wonder we were to return year after year!

At the beginning of that first, and indeed every visit, my brother, sisters and I fought our way through the tall grass to the shore, finding planks of wood that carried us safely over the boggy parts, counting the numerous black slugs that clung to the boards as we stomped out a path that would last the fortnight. The space, sense of freedom, sounds and smells making us giddy and loud as we leapt down to the sand and raced towards the water, Eigg and Rhum shimmering on the horizon.

Outdoors, there were long sunny days – water fights in the garden, trips on Dick's bus into Mallaig, walks into the village for supplies or evenings strolls to Cnoc na Faire for phone calls to grandparents via the sweetie counter in the shop. Fry-up breakfasts Loch Morar-side, train rides to Lochailort and Glenfinnan, evening swims and adventures amongst rockpools.



Indoors, where various hats and caps were irreverently hung at jaunty angles on the antlers of the stag's head in the hallway, where 10p pieces were the hoarded treasure of parents who regularly dashed to stuff them into the meter before the lights went out/cooker went off, there were wet grey days spent searching for patches of blue sky, tattoos of falling rain on the tin hoose roof, puzzles and games round the kitchen table, ticking clocks on mantelpieces.

But most of all, there was My Hill – a rocky knoll with postcard-perfect view, it was the ideal spot for the young adventurer and I spent many hours up there with my binoculars, compass and whistle (well, you never knew...) cow-watching, slug-hunting, and tractor-spotting – all the while oblivious to the fact that crofting was biting me far deeper than the midgies.

Each visit brought something new: a family of rabbits living under the bathroom floor who appeared one by one until someone flushed the loo and sent them scarpering back to safety! One year, Mr MacDonald, who didn't appear to have a dog and guided his sheep from his beat-up van banging on the roof to move them along, actually came and cut the croft returning several dry days later to build prabachs and cochs which Mum made us stand in front of to have our pictures taken.

I sulked on going home days and couldn't wait for those two weeks in July to come around. I imagined living there, putting my own cows on it. I did, honestly, dream of being a crofter's wife! We grew up, ventured abroad, spread our wings but crofting had claimed me. Now, happily, it has me firmly in its grasp.



Can we help?

HERE IS a further selection of anonymous cases where members have asked SCF for assistance with crofting problems and disputes.

SCF will offer advice and support and can often make a difference. We are not qualified to give legal opinion, but can nearly always direct members to the best source of assistance.

- A member's landlord applied for planning permission to extract gravel from a site adjacent to our member's croft, which would involve access for vehicles and machinery over the croft, causing damage to the land and disrupting normal crofting activity. The proposed development was within a SSSI, but, strangely enough, there was no objection from SNH. Our member objected to the planning application and SCF wrote in support, also writing to the landlord protesting at the assumption of access over the member's croft. The local authority allowed the planning application, but imposed a Section 75 condition that access must be agreed before the development could go ahead. The landlord then offered our member compensation for access over his croft, but our member declined on the grounds of disruption to crofting activity and the implications for keeping the land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition, which could have threatened his Single Farm Payment.

- A major utility company had excavated a trench over a member's croft and had failed to reinstate the land in a proper manner. This had led to flooding and had reduced an area to mud, rendering it useless for grazing or any other purpose. The member's correspondence to the utility company had been ignored. Subsequent communication with the company's land surveyor and eventually with their solicitor failed to elicit any acknowledgement of liability. SCF took the case up with the company and also involved the media, which was sufficient to embarrass the company into offering adequate compensation to the member for the damage caused.

There is a cautionary message for crofters in both the above cases, which is to come to a written agreement with anyone carrying out works

on the croft regarding liability for reinstatement and repairs to any damage caused to the crofter's assets.

- A member had the grazing tenancy of an island which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Protection Area for its breeding bird colonies. SNH, in its management statement for the island, refers to the importance of maintaining grazing for the favourable conservation status of the site. Our member, despite producing store lambs of excellent quality, was finding that it was becoming financially unviable to maintain his sheep on the island and approached us for help with negotiating a management agreement with SNH which would compensate him for some of his additional costs. We arranged a meeting with the various parties involved, and SNH initially took the view that our member was adequately compensated by SFP and LFASS! We pointed out that without support to cover the costs imposed by his unique situation, the flock would have to be taken off the island and sold. This would be a great loss for a number of reasons. The hefted flock is of a blood line going back 200 years and is part of the island's heritage; the high quality, hardy, healthy lambs would be lost to the local market; and the land management at present provided free by our member would have to be provided by some other means at a cost. Sheep taken in from elsewhere would have an unacceptable death rate until they became hefted, which would take several generations. We argued that the best option for maintaining the conservation status would be for SNH to meet some of our member's costs by way of a management agreement. Some time later, SNH came up with an offer to our member which was not acceptable and he was forced to put the flock on a 'care and maintenance' basis with no tupping; and to put the sheep and the grazing tenancy up for sale. Fortunately, but no thanks to the SNH bureaucrats, a buyer was found who has so far been able to keep the hefted flock on the island.

Members seeking help with crofting problems should contact SCF head office **01599 566365** or email **hq@crofting.org**.

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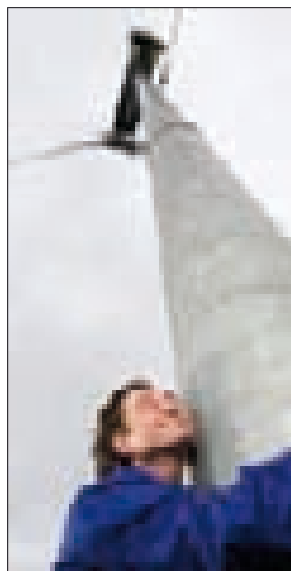
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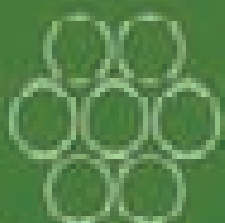
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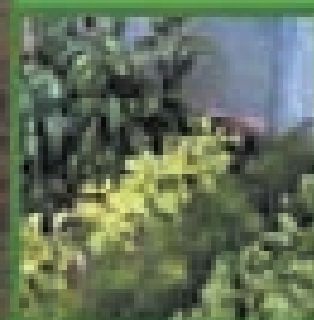
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Crofting Law Group to meet in Fort William

PLANs ARE well underway for the Crofting Law Group's popular annual conference, this year is to be held in the Lochaber Rural Complex at Torlundy, Fort William on Friday 3rd September. This is the third year that the event has been held in association with the WS Society (The Society of Writers to Her Majesty's Signet) and a large turnout is expected.

The morning agenda will concentrate on the Crofting Reform Act 2010, recently passed by the Scottish Parliament and will bring together views from the Scottish Government, the Crofters Commission and from a practising crofting lawyer, followed by an experts' panel session with opportunities to ask searching questions. The afternoon will be given over to talks on succession and mediation, closing with a look at recent case law. The group chairman, Sir Crispin Agnew QC and the secretary/treasurer, Glasgow solicitor Brian Inkster, will be amongst those speaking at the conference.

For those staying on after the day's business, there is a dinner and the next morning the group have organised several interesting visits close by including a tour of the complex, which belongs to a community co-operative with over 600 shareholders which was set up in 1999 following the closure of the Fort William

mart. Delegates will see the Crofting Learning and Visitor Centre, a small rural education establishment run by Lochaber Rural Education Trust for local primary school children, giving visitors an insight into crofting. Then a look at Highland Wood Energy, a rapidly-growing new bio-mass fuel company installing the latest types of solid fuel heating in rural premises, burning the gas extracted from waste woodchips. And finally, an informal talk over a cup of tea at Lochaber Farm Food, run by a crofter and his wife who set up a home-grown farm produce shop and café with a croft diversification grant. The views from the complex are fabulous and look straight over to Ben Nevis.

If you are interested, it is worth joining the group to enjoy the member's discounted rate of £150 for the whole event. For further information visit their website www.croftinglawgroup.org.

Formed in 1994, the group remains strong with a current membership of more than 80 lawyers and non-lawyers. The founders of the group, Keith Graham and Derek Flyn, have both now retired from legal practice but are together writing the next crofting law textbook incorporating the recent reforms.

Transporting animals

Advice from Ross MacKenzie, SAC

WITH THE LOCAL agricultural show season in full swing, and the big sales fast approaching, it is important that you are legal to transport your livestock to and from the various venues.

From January 2008 it has been a legal requirement to hold a certificate of competence to transport livestock more than 40 miles (65km). Although you may have many years of experience and are competent in working with livestock, it is very important to know the legal rules and regulations that have been put in place to ensure the best welfare of livestock in transit.

Common sense is important when moving and transporting animals and the experience you gain is invaluable. This helps you build your confidence and increase your skills. For example knowing what animals are fit for transport and those that are not and having the ability to load and unload livestock quietly and efficiently. This is important, as you are putting them under as little stress as possible, all essential skills for livestock keepers and hauliers. It is beneficial to have a combination of good practical skills and an understanding of the rules and regulations, as it helps you build on what you already know and in turn improve how you transport animals.

Obtaining the certificate is done by

successfully completing a short test. If you transport livestock for over 40 miles (65km) but for less than eight hours in a single journey, then you only need to take a multiple choice theory test.

Some examples of the sort of questions that may be asked are:

- How much space must cattle have when being transported?
- At what stage of pregnancy is it not legal to transport animals?
- Which one of the following does NOT form part of one of the five freedoms?

Livestock keepers or hauliers need to know the answers to these questions to obtain their certificate of competence. Many of you may have taken the test, though there will be some of you who maybe unaware of this requirement or are new to the movement of livestock.

Your local SAC office is able to offer the certificate of competence test, providing reading material and advice prior to the multiple choice theory test. Prior to the test, you will be talked through everything and the test will be carried out in relaxed conditions at your local SAC office.

Practical advice and training can also be arranged for anybody inexperienced or wishing to improve their skills in the movement of livestock.

The Pack Inquiry

Continued from page 1

Pack Inquiry delivers short-term recommendations.

The Inquiry into Future Agricultural Support in Scotland has delivered a set of recommendations on the short-term aspects of support measures:

Recommendation 1: No change should be made to the current basis of allocating Single Farm Payment prior to 2013.

Recommendation 2: In preparation for the post-2013 support regime, the Scottish Government should ensure that the resources are available so that RPID can start the development of new computer systems as soon as possible.

Recommendation 3: Paragraph 10.3 of the Common Agricultural Policy Schemes (Cross Compliance) (Scotland) Regulations 2004 should be amended to remove the statement that undergrazing is not a breach of GAEC if the land is capable of being brought back into good condition by the end of the following growing season and to include a stipulation that where undergrazing is identified, the farmer has 60 days to rectify the situation.

Recommendation 4: Appropriate guidance on undergrazing should be produced, including minimum stocking rates for permanent pasture and rough grazing. This guidance should include the stipulation that the minimum stocking rate required for permanent pasture and rough grazing should be 0.06 LU/ha over the main growing season, with land outside the less favoured area expected to achieve a higher minimum stocking of 1 LU/ha.

Recommendation 5: Given that there is no scope under the current CAP regulations for paying single farm payment to those starting business since 2004, it is recommended that the Scottish Government treat as a priority the introduction of regulations in the post-2013 CAP that puts new entrants on an equal footing with businesses established before 2004.

Recommendation 6: Scottish Government should extend its review of the rural priorities scoring system to investigate the possibility of changing it so that it favours those entering farming since 2004.

Recommendation 7: No use should be made of additional Article 68 measures before the post-2013 CAP regime is known.

Recommendation 8: In order to ensure that it continues in some form after 2012, Scottish Government and stakeholders should discuss the conversion of the SBCS from Article 69 to Article 68 measures for the 2012 scheme year ie agreement reached by August 2011. The inquiry believes that Scottish Government and stakeholders should seek to make the most of this opportunity and that they should give special consideration to the possibility of creating a more targeted scheme.

The full short-term recommendations can be found at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/915/0100597.pdf>



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Playing a key role in biodiversity protection

SCF REPRESENTATIVES attended the international conference "La Settimana della Biodiversità" held in Rome in May.

Farmers from across Europe came together to exchange their experiences with agricultural biodiversity. Organised by Bioversity International, the conference was designed to remind the public and the world's decision-makers how significant agricultural biodiversity is to people's health and nutrition.

Addressing the conference, Maria Scholten, advisory researcher for SCF, said: "The international treaty offers a legal framework for supporting local varieties such as small oat and bere and high nature value farming – and it should be implemented. This way, local maintainers will be acknowledged and local initiatives will be complimented by a national policy."

SCF is also participating in a three-year EU-funded project to raise awareness about the international treaty on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

The project, "Good Practices in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Sovereignty", is designed to develop the capacity of crofters and small farmers to participate as key stakeholders in the treaty.

The EC is currently revising legislation on the marketing of seeds to reduce administration in seed legislation and to standardise the regulations throughout Europe. Seed marketing is currently regulated by 12 EU directives which are implemented differently in each EU country. While no one will disagree with the view that reducing the amount of bureaucracy surrounding saving seeds would be advantageous, many groups representing small scale farmers across Europe are concerned that the discussions are being dominated by representatives of the



Regional varieties on display

seed industry. A previous directive by the EU in 2008 on conservation varieties for grain and potatoes, to regulate the marketing of old land races and most organic varieties, turned out to erect disproportionate bureaucratic barriers for their registration. As a result, many regionally adapted but small-scale seed varieties, which form an alternative to the industrial seed business, are in danger of literally becoming illegalised.

SCF chair Eleanor Arthur commented: "Crofters and small farmers across Europe play a key role in biodiversity protection. It is important to our members that the EU has coherent policies dealing with agriculture, trade and education and crofters should play a part in influencing these policies. Our food security and future ability to develop towards more sustainable ways of food production are at stake. Through this programme we will have the opportunity to work with other organisations dealing with rural development, research and training across the EU and Africa to increase the commitment of the member states to the implementation of this treaty".

Controlling chlamydial abortion in sheep

O**VINE ENZOOTIC** abortion (OEA or chlamydial abortion) is a major cause of lamb mortality across the world and accounts for 44% of diagnosed infectious abortions in UK sheep.

Scientists from the Moredun Research Institute have discovered that some ewes which had been vaccinated against chlamydial abortion still aborted as a result of OEA. After detailed investigation scientists concluded that the probable cause of these abortions was the vaccinal strain of Chlamydia.

This discovery has raised considerable concern in the sheep industry. Moredun's advice to sheep farmers who experience abortion in their flock remains the same:

- When abortion occurs, isolate the ewe, collect diagnostic samples and work with your vet and your local veterinary investigation or disease surveillance centre to establish the cause.
- If you have a chlamydial abortion problem on your farm, you must continue to vaccinate as this is still the most effective way to safeguard your sheep from this disease.

The disease

The bacteria *Chlamydia abortus* can lead to abortion and/or the production of weakly lambs. Also some ewes infected with *C. abortus* can produce what seen to be healthy lambs that carry a latent infection which will cause these female lambs to abort in their first pregnancy, irrespective of whether they are then vaccinated against chlamydial abortion. This is always a concern when buying in ewe lamb replacements as they may be carrying a latent infection of *C. abortus*.

The area around any aborted lambs may also become contaminated with *C. abortus*, which can then lead to other ewes becoming infected. This could either lead to abortions in those ewes in the current lambing period or in the following year. Again, this can be a concern

when buying in breeding ewes as, like the ewe lamb replacements above, they may also be carrying a latent infection of *C. abortus*.

Keeping your flock free of chlamydial abortion

Two possible ways of controlling the introduction of the disease into your flock are to either:

- obtain replacement ewes from EAE-free accredited sources or to
- keep a closed flock.

Your vet can take blood samples from your ewes and confirm the infection status of your flock. If your flock is clear of infection then it is important to buy in replacements that also test negative and are from a safe source. This is best achieved by entering your flock into the premium health scheme run by the SAC's veterinary services and only sourcing replacements from EAE accredited flocks.

Controlling chlamydial abortion through vaccination

The most effective way to control chlamydial abortion once in a sheep flock is through the use of vaccines. While uncontrolled, *C. abortus* in a flock can lead to abortion levels of between 5-10%, with abortion storms of up to 30%. Vaccination can bring chlamydial abortion down to 2% or less.

There are two vaccines available to control chlamydial abortion in the UK – *Enzovax*® produced by Intervet/Schering Plough Animal Health and *CEVAC Chlamydia*® produced by CEVA Animal Health, both based on the same vaccinal strain of *Chlamydia*.

No vaccine is ever 100% effective and sheep that have been vaccinated with either *Enzovax*® or *CEVAC Chlamydia*® can still abort at the next lambing. This may be because the ewe was already infected before she was vaccinated or because of the incorrect storage or administration of the vaccines. However Moredun scientists have now shown that the vaccinal strain of *Chlamydia* may also play a

part in these abortions.

We do not know the true incidence of potential abortions caused by the vaccinal strain of *C. abortus* in the UK and more research is urgently required to investigate the full extent of this situation in the UK. Moredun is trying to secure funding to look into issues relating to vaccine breakdown and hopes to work with both Intervet/Schering Plough Animal Health and CEVA Animal Health on this issue.

Treatment

Antibiotic treatment can reduce the severity of a known chlamydial infection in unvaccinated pregnant ewes. For best effect long-acting oxytetracycline (20 mg per kg body weight) should be given after 110 days of pregnancy, with a second injection two to three weeks later to further reduce losses. Some ewes will still abort and many may excrete infection at lambing time.

The risk of human infection

Chlamydia abortus can be very dangerous for pregnant women and their unborn babies. Pregnant women should avoid all involvement with lambing ewes and should not handle contaminated clothing from those working with lambing ewes or new-born lambs.

Dr Nick Wheelhouse and Dr David Longbottom are research scientists at the Moredun Research Institute in Edinburgh. Moredun runs a membership scheme which aims to keep farmers and their vets up to date with the latest developments in animal health research.

If you would like more information about the control of chlamydial abortion or are interested in becoming a member of Moredun, please contact Maggie Bennett at The Moredun Foundation, Pentlands Science Park, Bush Loan, Penicuik, EH26 0PZ or phone 0131 445 5111 or log onto their website www.moredun-foundation.org.uk

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MEMBERS' PAGES

What do members want?

Results from the membership survey

A SURVEY was sent out with The Crofter earlier this year.

The aim was to establish what members thought the priorities should be for the SCF. We are a member-led organisation and so our work should be driven by what the members think is important. This report describes the main results and hopes to prompt a discussion amongst members and in the letters page of *The Crofter*.

373 forms were received back which is around 20% of the forms sent out so it is a reasonably large sample from which we can draw conclusions.

Respondents were predominantly male (78%), 52% were over 60 and 40% between 41 and 60 and 75% have been members of the SCF/SCU for more than five years. 82% live on a croft and 87% work a croft: 11% work a croft but don't live on it. 5% were not members.

The main reasons for joining were "to support crofting", "keep informed" and to "have a voice and influence". Very few joined for the more tangible reasons of discounts and training.

The main benefit of membership is seen as advocacy and lobbying for crofting, crofters and the crofting way of life. Again the more concrete benefits are seen as less important.

The survey also asked about what is important for crofting today (not just for the SCF).

This suggests where we should be concentrating our efforts on lobbying in general and in particular on support (LFASS/SFP) and crofting grants. Next are local services (provision of marts, slaughterhouses etc) and supporting new entrants. Other topics were considered less important.

There was a marked degree of consistency across age groups. People not living on or

working a croft were less concerned about lobbying, support schemes and grants. Overall, SCF is actually working in the areas that members consider the most important.

The final question asked what we should do differently – this was designed to give respondents a chance to say what SCF should be doing that it isn't or what SCF should be doing more of.

"Local branches" is top of list, more than twice the percentage of the next highest topic. So we need to get the local branches more active, holding meetings, linking experienced crofters with new entrants and getting people involved in other activities.

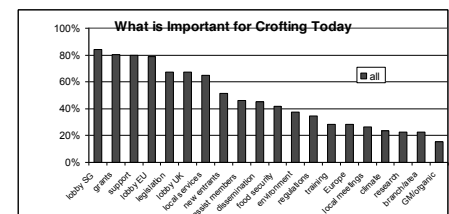
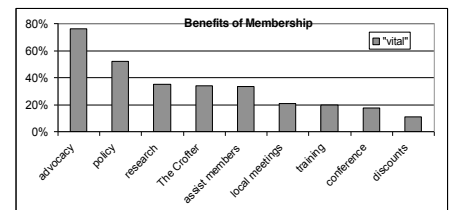
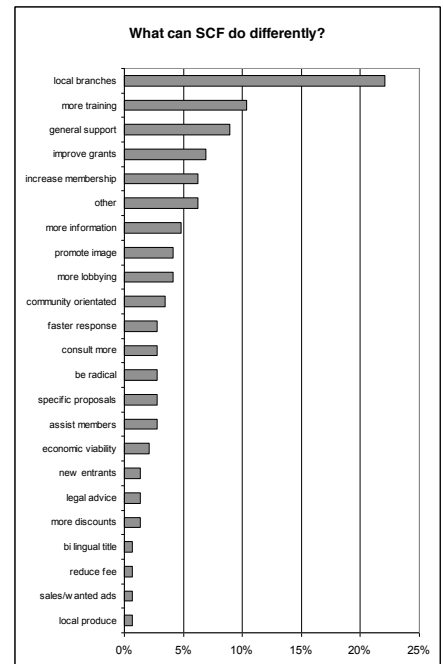
The crofters' bus run each year from Sutherland to the Royal Highland Show is a good example of what can be done. Some specific areas of the country were mentioned. This is not a task that directors or HQ can do but is up to members around the country to get organising, with whatever central support is required.

More training is the most important idea from the under 40s but is second for the older crofters. Nine per cent of replies were of the general "keep up the good work", "more of the same" sort of exhortations.

There were some interesting individual, specific ideas – eg run sales and wanted ads, have a bi-lingual title, reinstate AI service, use neglected land for housing – and these will be considered for building into the future SCF work plan.

Thanks to all of you for your responses – fuller analyses can be made available if there is anything you want to follow up on.

Russell Smith



Subscriptions

WE ARE IN the process of updating our membership categories.

Some of you may be signed up to a joint membership, charity or associate membership. These categories were reviewed at a recent board and council meeting and will be altering slightly.

Joint membership will be available to couple or family members who stay at the same residence. The cost from this will be at a reduced rate of £62.50, one and a half times the current individual rate. If you would like to benefit from this offer please get in touch with Karen.

Charity and associate membership categories will be amalgamated into one and the price for this is set at £135.00, three times the individual rate. We will be sending out letters to remind you about this when it comes to the time of your renewal.

If you have any questions regarding membership categories please get in touch with Karen on 01599 566 365 or on Karen@crofting.org.

SCF AGM 2010

THE SCF AGM was held on 5th June in the Balmacara Hotel on the side of Lochalsh.

The main company business on the agenda was the changes to the board of directors.

Neil Macleod stood down as chair, having completed his term. Warm thanks were given to him for having led the organisation through very challenging times. In his report Neil pointed out that the SCF only manages to attract national and international attention and support due the huge amount of voluntary time office bearers put in and he thanked his fellow directors for all their support.

Eleanor Arthur from Shetland takes up the role of chair and was welcomed by all. In her address she emphasised the need for input to the organisation from a strong membership. Growing the membership and facilitating activity in the areas will be a key mission in her tenure.

John MacLeod and Donald MacDonald

stood down from the board having completed their terms of office. They were thanked for their contribution to the organisation. Two new directors were welcomed on to the board, Donnie MacDonald from Lewis and John Gillies from Raasay.

It was noted that most areas had held their AGMs and the list of area representatives can be found on page 30 in this issue.

The meeting was opened to the floor for comments.

Donald MacDonald from Skye said he thought the need to have 10 supporters for nomination to the board was archaic. The chair responded that it is essential that directors have the mandate of the members.

John Bannister, training manager for SCF, asked that training be a standing item on board and council meetings agenda. It was agreed that this will be so.

That concluded the meeting.

SCF local contacts list

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Office blog

SINCE THE LAST edition of *The Crofter* we've been busy with preparations for the show season and our AGM and renewables seminar.

The seminar and AGM were both very successful. At the AGM we were pleased to welcome our new board members and chair Eleanor Arthur. It is nice to have new faces, but it's a shame to say goodbye to those who have spent the last three years on the board. We would like to say thanks to Neil MacLeod who stepped down as chair; though he's not fully retired yet. He and the other board members

will kindly still be active in the organisation.

In the run up the Royal Highland Show office staff were busy with the preparations. With the recent name change from foundation to federation, our banners, flags and leaflets had to be updated. New leaflets were produced for the CRP programme and also new membership application forms with the new membership categories outlined in this edition of *The Crofter*. If anyone had a query about this please get in touch with Karen.

As this was the first year we had showcased crofting produce we wanted to ensure that

everything would run smoothly on the day. Please see our show report to see how successful it was! Also if you have any photos of the SCF stand please do send them in.

Now we are preparing for the annual gathering which will take place in Oban this year. It is looking set to be a good conference with the organisation's 25th anniversary coming up soon.

The Scottish Parliament voting the Crofting Reform Bill through put us into full news release mode as well as having to take calls from reporters all wanting comments on the new bill.

In between preparations we have

been running business as usual, with daily activities including membership processing, keeping the website up to date and taking phone calls.

We often get members contacting us with issues they have in their area or on their croft. Over the last month some of these included questions over "the three caravan rule" and setting up a campsite area and the issue that you face with planning; issues with access rights to croft land and an enquiry into creating a new croft, to name a few. If you have any problems on your croft or in your area please do let us know.

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Calina calls it a day

CALINA MACDONALD – SCF's training co-ordinator for the past three years – is standing down to devote more time to her new business enterprise.

Many will know that Calina is renowned for her preserves, pickles and chutneys, a talent she is now turning into a business, not surprisingly called Calina's Conserves.

Calina made her announcement in her final report to the most recent board and area representatives council meeting at SCF HQ. SCF's training manager John Bannister, in presenting Calina's report to the meeting, said "Calina took over her role from me some three years ago, having also served as a local course director and latterly as a course tutor. In this role she has been a tremendous asset to both SCF and to me, making my particular role so much easier and ultimately the SCF's reputation so much the greater." He went on to say, "Calina's announcement, though regrettable, is quite understandable in the circumstances and I, for one, will miss her jolly humour, her competency as a very able organiser and as an administrator."

The crofters and small landholders training panel also met recently. Noting that Calina intended to stand down, members gave a vote of thanks to her for her energy and dedication to crofter training, which they said had been quite exceptional.



See you at the show!



The SCF will be at the following shows still to come this year:

**Thursday 12th August
Grantown Show**

**Saturday 14th August
Skye Agricultural Show**

**Saturday 28th August
Lochaber Show**

**Saturday 4th September
Dalmally Show**

SCF annual gathering

THIS YEAR the SCF annual gathering will be held in the Royal Hotel, Oban, on Monday 13th and Tuesday 14th September. The theme for the event is "One size doesn't fit all", emphasising the uniqueness of crofting.

The SCF annual gathering not only provides a forum for presentations from a variety of speakers but also facilitates interaction among crofters, government personnel, educators and policymakers.

The packed programme for the first day includes presentations from George Lyon MEP • a member of the EU committee on Agriculture and Rural Development • Brendan O'Malley from the Irish Farmers Association • Heika Schiebeck from European Coordination Via Campesina • Peter North from Liverpool University and author of "Local money – making it work in your community" • Graham Harvey, author of "The Carbon Fields – How our countryside can save Britain".

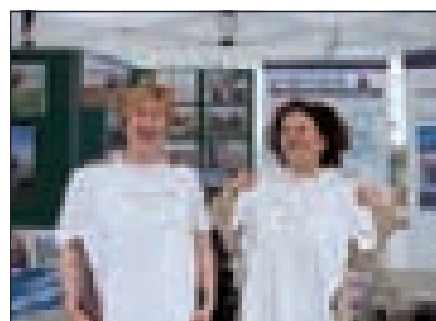
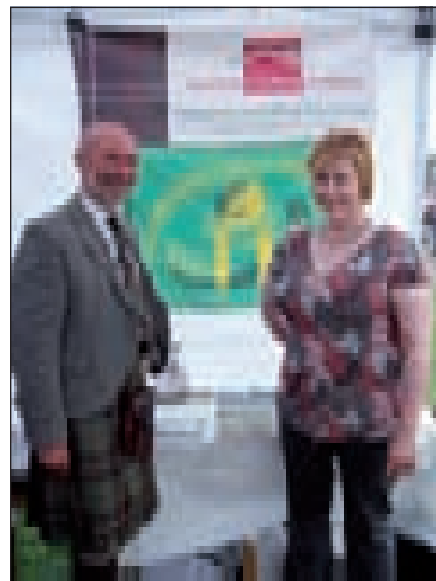
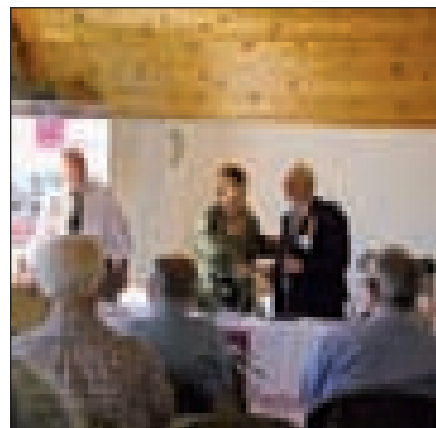
In addition we will have some time to discuss the recent crofting reform bill and the issues that this raises for our communities.

An equally packed programme on the second day includes a keynote address from • Minister for the Environment, Rosanna Cunningham MSP

- Eleanor Arthur, our recently elected chair
- Vicki Swales head of land use policy with RSPB
- Maria Scholten, SCF advisory researcher on the farmers' seed project
- an update from our newly formed young crofters group.

This will be followed by a series of participatory workshops.

We have over 60 delegates booked for this year's event, including representatives from each of the SCF crofting areas. Full details of the programme, how to book and up-to-date availability are available on the SCF website and also from SCF HQ.




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