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**The Isle of Eigg:  
Land Reform, People, and Power.**

**By**

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## Abstract

An historiographical analysis of the present political debates regarding land reform in Scotland provides the point of departure for a case study of the Isle of Eigg and the 1997 purchase of the island by the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust. The case study details the island community's historical development and researches the building pressures that culminated in two successive campaigns for community ownership in 1992 and 1996-7. Through interviews, focus groups, and 3 years of regular visits to the island a comprehensive social history of Eigg is consequently compiled and analysed, within which, particular attention is given to the role of island proprietors and their problematic relationships with the resident community. Using a highly participative methodology of research, the author took an active role in the facilitation and promotion of the islanders' ideas for community ownership. This is detailed together with the participative management plan that resulted from planning workshops and exhaustive interviews with island households. The process of community empowerment is traced through the workshops, the drafting of the management plan and the unique partnership that was eventually formed between the islanders, the Highland Council, and the Scottish Wildlife Trust. This is followed by an 'insider's view' of the Isle of Eigg Appeal, which had as much impact on the island as it did in the national media. The most successful public appeal in the Highlands and Islands to date is also examined from a marketing perspective, that explains how indeed, 64 islanders managed to raise £1.6 m in just 8 months without mains electricity nor Lottery backing. Finally, the central lessons of the community's success are used to highlight the importance of community development in any future policies of land reform in Scotland. The conclusion thereby emphasises the importance of integrated planning, community participation, and appropriate packages of support in establishing similar community trust models of ownership.

To the islanders of Eigg, to my parents

Philip and Eileen Morgan, and to Claire.

# THE ISLE OF EIGG : LAND REFORM, PEOPLE AND POWER

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>CAF</b>	Charities Aid Foundation
<b>CAP</b>	Common Agricultural Policy
<b>CC</b>	Crofters Commission
<b>CCS</b>	Countryside Commission for Scotland
<b>CDB</b>	Congested Districts Board
<b>CTAS</b>	Crofters Trust Advisory Service
<b>EDM</b>	Early Day Motion
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FC</b>	Forestry Commission
<b>FCU</b>	Federation of Crofters Union
<b>FoE</b>	Friends of the Earth
<b>FoES</b>	Friends of the Earth Scotland
<b>HC</b>	Highland Council
<b>HIDB</b>	Highlands and Islands Development Board
<b>HIE</b>	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
<b>HIF</b>	Highlands and Islands Forum
<b>HLLRA</b>	Highland Land Law Reform Association
<b>HRC</b>	Highland Regional Council
<b>IEA</b>	Isle of Eigg Archive
<b>IEHT</b>	Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust
<b>IERA</b>	Isle of Eigg Residents Association
<b>IET</b>	Isle of Eigg Trust
<b>JMT</b>	John Muir Trust
<b>LEC</b>	Local Enterprise Company
<b>NCC</b>	Nature Conservancy Council
<b>NCCS</b>	Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland
<b>NDPB</b>	Non Departmental Public Body
<b>NFU</b>	National Farmers Union
<b>NGO</b>	Non Governmental Organisation
<b>NHMF</b>	National Heritage Memorial Fund
<b>NTS</b>	National Trust for Scotland
<b>RSPB</b>	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
<b>SCU</b>	Scottish Crofters Union
<b>SCVO</b>	Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
<b>SLF</b>	Scottish Landowners Federation
<b>SLP</b>	Scottish Labour Party
<b>SNH</b>	Scottish Natural Heritage
<b>SNP</b>	Scottish National Party
<b>SO</b>	Scottish Office
<b>SOAFD</b>	Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department
<b>SSSI</b>	Site of Special Scientific Interest
<b>SWT</b>	Scottish Wildlife Trust
<b>WWF</b>	World Wide Fund for Nature



## **Introduction**

Though Eigg is but a small island off the West Coast of Scotland, it has certainly achieved a distinct notoriety over the past few years. Thumbing through the numerous media cuttings some might remember the bob-sledding owner whose Rolls Royce burst into flames, or the mystical German artist with his dubious academic titles, or even the operatic star who proposed to import 3000 Italian musicians. The eccentric cast of characters that have turned up to ponder or assume its lairdship have been colourful to say the least, and their erratic behaviour towards the island and its people have become infamous throughout Scotland. Public unease towards the situation was exemplified by the success of the appeal launched in 1996 by the 64 island residents to gain ownership of the island themselves. Forming a unique partnership with conservation and local government interests, the residents' appeal raised 1.6 million pounds in just over eight months. After much behind the scenes work, bids and counter-bids, threatened bankruptcy, and at last a forced sale, the partnership finally succeeded in purchasing the island on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 1997. All the major national media covered the jubilation on the island, and an exuberant Maggie Fyffe, Secretary to the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust (IEHT), was repeatedly quoted in affirming the importance of their success, not only for Eigg, but for the rest of Scotland:

**“This is a great day not only for Eigg but for all communities who live under a landlord’s whim. It shows that people in the Highlands and Islands are no longer prepared to be bought and sold like cutlery for their master’s table. Over the past few months we have had everything thrown into this plot from opera stars to international companies promising the earth. Nobody would have believed the script if Alastair Maclean had written it. But we all stood firm together and won through. We now have security of tenure and can control our own destinies”.**<sup>1</sup>

For the uninitiated it would appear that such publicly sponsored rural revolt is a tale worthy of Hollywood proportions; or at least for those with a fondness for the old Ealing comedies, a script worthy of Compton McKenzie merits. Here were an archetypal bunch of wily islanders, succeeding in the defeat of their traditional and financial superiors, with cunning, tenacity, and a large helping of Hebridean conviviality. There is also what American producers and British tabloid editors alike would label – *the Braveheart angle*. For not only did the Eigg victory somehow

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<sup>1</sup> Dutter, Barbie. “Islanders Triumph in Battle to Buy Eigg”, The Daily Telegraph. April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1997. p.9

symbolise a new resurgence of confidence amongst Scotland's rural communities, but as such, it exemplified a national cultural and political renaissance as well. After years of turmoil and publicity, the islanders finally succeeded in their appeal just 4 weeks before the landslide Labour victory in the 1997 General Election, and just a few months away from a sweeping Devolution Referendum. They were consequently very much associated with the overturning of Conservative opinion and patronage in Scotland. Of course, in particular the Eigg story highlighted the age-old highland debate of landownership, with the islanders providing a very human and articulate face to an often dour and archaic political cause. Indeed, without doubt, this is what made the Eigg appeal so attractive to the media and public in general, for here was the wonderful sight of stereotypical caricatures battling out the politics of what most believe to be a bygone era. It was a bit of the forgotten soldier mentality, not quite understanding the war is over, but renewed and revamped with heated issues such as social justice, nationalism, and Scottish identity; all of which were liberally doused with 'Whisky Galore'. A concoction, which as Keith Schellenberg, the Eigg community's previous owner and arch nemesis, would point out is highly incendiary to be sure.

In trying to handle and distil this volatile mixture into an academic framework, one must first understand the enormous significance land itself has played in the Highlands and Islands. Not only that, but the degree to which the Highlands and Islands themselves have figured in the make-up and understanding of Scottish identity itself. This is amply demonstrated by the preponderance of feelings for land in Scots and Gaelic songs, stories, and poetry.<sup>2</sup> It is also embodied in the manner in which highland images and culture, and the emotive Gaelic feelings towards land have been popularised since the Victorian era into a veritable industry of heritage and culture.<sup>3</sup> The aspiring needs of lowland Scotland for a sense of national identity, especially in relation to the powerful southern neighbour, has encouraged a veneration of highland scenery and an adoption of its more colourful aspects of culture. Anglified and

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<sup>2</sup> Shaw, M.F. Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist. University Press, Aberdeen. 1986; Meek, D.E. ed. Tuath is Tighearna: Tenants and Landlords: An Anthology of Gaelic Poetry of Social and Political Protest From the Clearances to the Land Agitation (1800-1990). Gaelic Texts Society, Scottish Academic Press. 1995; Heany, S. The God in the Tree: Early Irish Nature Poetry. Faber & Faber, London. 1980. pp.181-189.

<sup>3</sup> McCrone, David & Morris, Angela. "Lords & Heritages: the Transformation of the Great Lairds of Scotland", in: Devine, T.M. ed. Scottish Elites, John Donald, Edinburgh. 1994.

sanitised to varying degrees, the eulogising of the Highlands and Islands has nevertheless taken the region to the centre of Scotland's cultural cannon.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, though Eigg remains the remotest of islands, in a region that historically has been one of the most marginalised in Europe, its story has touched the most urban and modern of Scottish people.

Of course, the heated issue of land ownership and its management in the Highlands and Islands has also been fanned by constant and very deep feelings of unfinished business. Not only do the historical grievances of the Clearances loom large on the horizon, but the continued practice of feudal land law and estate ownership rings resoundingly out of place in the modern world. Unbelievably, Scotland still retains a feudal land law based on precedents set in the Eleventh Century. This has resulted in the maintenance of the most concentrated pattern of land ownership in the Western world. Presently 1411 owners hold 11,015,405 acres, and just 608 of these own over 50% of the Scottish land mass alone.<sup>5</sup> Obviously, individual properties have changed hands over time, and different historical circumstances have favoured differing types of owner, but the basic pattern of ownership has remained constant for centuries. Fewer than 1500 private estates have owned the majority of Scotland's land for over nine hundred years.<sup>6</sup> With the effect being most pronounced in rural areas, the legacy of such concentrated forms of ownership has had many detrimental affects upon local communities and their surrounding environments. This is especially marked when realising the power of feudal law in protecting the interests of proprietors over tenants. Aptly described by one commentator as "lucrative legalised blackmail", Feudal Superiors continue to exercise enormous influence over local communities and tenants with various powers of pre-emption and the ability to veto proposed developments and economic activity.<sup>7</sup> This has both engendered a general highhandedness amongst the land-owning elite, as well as seen to the steady and continued bouts of controversy between landlords, tenants, and other interested parties. Problems, which have been notably highlighted by the increasing preponderance of absentee and foreign owners who have taken

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<sup>4</sup> Macrone, David. Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation, Routledge, London. 1992. p.17

<sup>5</sup> Wightman, Andy. Who Owns Scotland, Cannongate, Edinburgh. 1996. p.142

<sup>6</sup> Callander, Robin. A Pattern of Land Ownership in Scotland, Haughend Publications, Finzean. 1887. p. 10

advantage of Scotland's free market in large chunks of land. The bottom of line of which leaves little if any considerations for the resident communities, culture, or economy.

The ingrained indifference towards the cultural and social heritage historically shown by the Highland land market has been augmented by a corresponding lack of concern for the region's natural heritage. Not only has the market been unregulated in terms of what land one can buy in Scotland, but planning laws and statutory concerns are markedly lax in controlling what one can do with the land once purchased. Hence forestry and agricultural development are left to the discretion of the owner, whose priorities and motivations for ownership can often be far removed from wider public interests of preserving and protecting the natural heritage. This has been perhaps the most prevailing cause for concern regarding landownership in the Highlands and Islands in recent times. More specifically, the growing global awareness of environmental issues has led the British public to focus concern on their own backdoor. Most invariably attention has come to bare upon the 'traditional' sporting estates, where raptor persecution remains a continued problem, and where deer numbers have continued to increase and ravage the region's last vestiges of native Caledonian pine. Sheep farming and commercial forestry have hardly escaped criticism either, since both are heavily subsidised by the State, and often have even more disastrous impacts upon the region's native flora and fauna.<sup>8</sup>

Combined with the importance of land to Scottish culture in general, the rise in environmental concern for the Highlands and Islands has precipitated a rejuvenated interest in land reform; an interest that has been accentuated by the realisation that "our common inheritance is not common at all, but is in fact privately owned".<sup>9</sup> Whenever a new foreign owner or insurance company acquires property, or public access is denied to a particular piece of land, or a community such as Assynt or Eigg makes a forceful stand, the call for reform of Scotland's present land laws is

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<sup>7</sup> Nicoll. *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Cramb, Auslan. *Who Owns Scotland Now?*, Mainstream, Publishing. 1996. 11-25; More detailed review and citations in Chapter 2.

<sup>9</sup> Wightman. p.1

demanding by indignant politicians and critical editorials alike.<sup>10</sup> This has manifested the remarkable situation of land reform, a topic that one generally associates with developing countries, being high on the political agenda of all major Scottish parties. A fact, which especially in the lead up to a new Scottish Parliament encourages most leading commentators to conclude that some measure of reform is near at hand. Unfortunately, it does not also mean that everyone understands exactly what land reform entails, nor what the most appropriate package of reform could be for Scotland. Indeed, just like the attractiveness of the Eigg story itself, the popularity of Scottish land reform lies in its ability to be almost all things to all people. The topic has a certain prism-like quality which allows people to view exactly what they want to see, and above all allows a variety of competing interests to declare that land reform *per se* can both answer their own particular concerns, as well solve the age old “Highland problem”.<sup>11</sup>

As will be discussed in Chapter 2, however, despite the fervour of contrasting opinions and the various packages of land reform presently being discussed, three pivotal elements of reform do have a consensus of support. Firstly, that a proper register of land ownership needs to be compiled, so that anyone can look at a map and know exactly who owns what. Secondly, that Feudal Land Law itself must be abolished, if only for reasons of simplifying the legal complexities of land ownership and management. And thirdly, that future land ownership in Scotland, and in the Highlands and Islands in particular, must be more overtly controlled in terms of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of land use and land ownership decisions. Obviously, of the three points, this last one is by far the most complex, not only in terms of how far the State should actually intervene, but also what exact interests and requirements should be deemed the most pressing. Nevertheless, as Chapter 2 reviews, recent events and political discussion have provided one essential element to precipitating a consensus. That is the growing belief in community trust management of Highland resources, and the devolving of land management down to a local level. A process that could be achieved through a variety of mechanisms, not

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<sup>10</sup> There are numerous examples: “Need for Land Reform”, The Herald, February 24<sup>th</sup> 1997; “Scotland’s Property Laws”, The Herald, February 27<sup>th</sup> 1997; Nicoll, Ruardh. “Villains in an Arcane Game”, Scotland on Sunday, July 9<sup>th</sup> 1995; or in relation to Eigg, “Eigg’s victory against the odds”, The Scotsman, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 1997; “Eigg Celebrations: Masters of their own destiny”, The Herald, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 1997.

only involving the redistribution of direct ownership, but also including more diffuse devices such as partnerships, management agreements, and the revamping and strengthening of local planning laws. In essence, the land reform agenda has moved on from the simple public vs. private ownership debates of the 1970's and moderated its rhetoric into line with the wider democratic principles of Scottish devolution.

As an example of how local residents have taken over the management of their local resources, Eigg has therefore provided a perfect contemporary example of how well this can work; how a community can readily turn over a history of bad management and inappropriate owners, and take control of the very environment their culture and economy is predicated upon. Unlike the other precedents of community ownership set by Assynt and other crofting communities, the Eigg buy-out has also demonstrated the strength of a partnership in purchasing and managing an estate. Teaming up with the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) and the Highland Council (HC), the Eigg islanders have shown how a partnership of interest has secured the island's long term economic future as well as protecting and promoting the island's natural heritage. Understandably, as the heavy media coverage attests, the resulting Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust (IEHT) has elicited profound interest and comment, and provided a sound indication of how a modernised land reform programme in Scotland could be manifested on the ground.

Of course media attention and public concern hardly mean a clear comprehension of what exactly happened on Eigg, nor why of all places, such a small Hebridean island should provide a possible lead in the land reform debate. In true fashion, media coverage has both popularised the island saga, as well as simplified the social, economic, and environmental conditions that initiated the island's problems and the eventual buy-out. As many articles and commentators have shown, it is all too easy to be caught up with personalities and stereotypes, especially when the characters involved are so lively and unique as those associated with Eigg. Consequently, this study has sought to uncover an accurate history of how and why events were precipitated on Eigg, and from that to decide what policy lessons can be properly drawn on a national level. This has involved a highly participative

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<sup>11</sup> Wightman. 216-7

methodology of research on the island, and one that has stridently attempted to map out the complexities and reality of community development and management at ground level. Four years of constant visits and work on the island have entailed a deep and personal involvement in the planning, implementation, and promotion of the IEHT. The results of which have produced an inside view of how the community organised itself, formed the partnership, and then sold their plans for the future to the general public.

In undertaking this course of study, I freely admit to having had a personal bias during the course of my research. From the very beginning of my involvement on the island in March 1995, I took a highly active role in assisting and facilitating the islanders' ideas of community management. As such my studies were indeed a form of action research, that involved a clearly stated objective of assisting the community in their plans of alternative ownership. At times this entailed myself actively encouraging activity when there was notable apathy, and other times my involvement represented little more than being a glorified secretary. However, as detailed in Chapter 4, throughout my research and activities on the island, I conducted myself within a methodological framework that was bound within precedents of established participative development theory. Nevertheless, in the strictest terms of academic objectivity my close association and connections with the islanders and the IEHT project leave the resulting research open to criticisms of subjectivity; especially in terms detailing the recent history and political context of the community and buy-out. Admittedly during the course of my studies I formed close friendships on the island, and my level of involvement in the campaign for ownership was in many ways unrelated to my academic objectives. Yet this level of personal association with the island and the IEHT, I believe actually strengthens the point of the research, and that was always to detail what community management and ownership actually involve at local level – i.e. the sharp end of any future land reform policy. To gain the required insights, this could only be done through a hands-on and participatory manner, and above all by demonstrating a personal commitment to the community and the partnership's eventual buy-out. As for researching the island's social history, the friendships I gained on the island proved more than invaluable in understanding the historical situation. In particular, the confidence the islanders placed in me over the course of my activities allowed me to interview them with candour about the more



sensitive aspects of the recent past. Most notably this related to the community's development under the proprietorship of Keith Schellenberg, which considering his fondness for litigation would have proved impossible to uncover otherwise.

Another essential aspect of the research is that it is specifically interdisciplinary in nature. As Frank Fraser Darling amply demonstrated in his West Highland Survey in 1954, one cannot fully understand the region's varied and related problems within a strict disciplinary approach.<sup>12</sup> Subtitled *an Essay in Human Ecology*, his survey of the Highlands and Islands became renowned as the first analysis to identify and examine the region's crisis in upland ecology. Simultaneously, however, he also provided a succinct historical, social, and economic dissection of how that crisis was created and related to the region's problems over the preceding 200 years. A masterly work, it clearly identified what in modern parlance is termed a *problematique*; a series of related issues and problems that could only be understood and tackled through an amalgamation of disciplines – not through just one. Though very different in nature, the region some half century later can still be identified as possessing a *problematique* in terms of its land ownership, land use, and rural policy. A situation that any land reform package would hopefully attempt to resolve in its implementation, and one that can still be only understood and tackled through an interdisciplinary approach. Obviously, this study does not attempt to produce an examination of the scale of Darling's – time and resources have been more than limited. Also the nature of the analysis at hand has induced a more fundamental leaning towards the social sciences of history, politics, and anthropology than Darling's preference and training in the physical sciences. Nonetheless, this examination of Eigg as a case study of community development in the Highlands and Islands has sought to utilise a similar interdisciplinary approach and methodology.

Darling's West Highland Survey begins with a thorough grounding in the historical and political development of Highland landownership and rural policy. This study likewise begins with the specific setting of the case study in its social and historical perspective, by focusing on the development of landholding and land management practice on the island, and the wider Highland region. This is then

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<sup>12</sup> Darling, Frank Fraser. West Highland Survey; An Essay in Human Ecology, Oxford University Press, London. 1955.

followed by a breakdown of land reform historiography in Scotland, which examines how indeed the notion of community trusts have become so compelling a vehicle that they are presently being favoured by all political shades. Chapter 3 then assesses the particular relationship that developed and then so spectacularly broke down between the island community and Keith Schellenberg; a process that involved the drastic reshaping of the island's population with a large influx of newcomers brought in to work on the island. The importance of Schellenberg in shaping the future events on Eigg is considered as being the primary reason for the strong media publicity that was to surround the island, as well as to precipitate the involvement of the initial Isle of Eigg Trust (IET) in 1992. As previously mentioned much of this research was dependent on the close relationships that I established on the island through working with the community in preparing plans for a partnership buy-out. The resulting Eigg Development Study that I compiled is detailed and discussed in Chapter 4, which analyses the strength of participative planning in the formation of the community's objectives and the eventual partnership of the IEHT. Chapter 5 then seeks to understand how those plans and the partnership itself were successfully marketed to the general public in the Eigg Appeal. A publicity campaign that proved to have as much impact on the island as it did in the media. Finally, the study concludes with an examination of how the Eigg story can contribute to a successful land reform policy for Scotland, and one that hopefully comes to terms with the practical realities of community ownership and management of resources.

## **Chapter 1**

### **From the Lord of the Isles to the Laird of Eigg: Ownership of a Scottish Island**

## 1.1 Introduction: Setting the Case Study

The Isle of Eigg's prominence in the land ownership debate has only been a relatively recent phenomenon. It was not until the arrival of the Schellenbergs in the mid 1970's that the island gained any national media attention. A highly self-publicising and eccentric 'laird' however, combined with a re-awakening awareness of land ownership in the 1970's provided sound material, and a fond media attachment was born. From then on the relationship with the media blossomed, with Keith Schellenberg and the island's residents becoming a regular feature in the Sunday papers and Scottish media throughout the late 1980's and early 1990's. After the burning of Mr Schellenberg's Rolls Royce in 1992, this was indeed amplified to such an extent that both residents and owner were taken as personifying the Scottish land debate.<sup>1</sup>

Although it is easy to criticise the tendency of media to condense long and complicated issues into caricature, their use of Eigg as a prime example of the Scottish land debate was very successful in widening its popularity. People were able to put a face and a voice to an otherwise far removed issue. The fact that the owner's manner was very much of the English aristocracy, and the islanders appeared the archetypal bunch of hardy misfits, made the debate just that little more accessible. However, accessible story lines and caricatures hardly encourage a detailed knowledge of the story at hand, and certainly only the briefest of understandings for the historical relevance. Chapters One and Two therefore seek to provide a thorough review of landownership and land reform in Scotland, and in particular to set the case study of Eigg in its social and political perspective. In doing this, the broad question faced, is just how exactly does Eigg's historical experience relate to the rest of Scotland or the Highlands and Islands region? Does the island's history really provide an exemplum of the problems associated with landownership in Scotland?

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<sup>1</sup> Hennessey, Stewart. "Schellenberg gets his Eigg", Scotland on Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> July, 1992.

Certainly Eigg's comparatively small size corresponds to a modest amount of academic research on the island's history. There are only four principle works that focus on the island, of which Camille Dressler's Eigg: The Story of an Island stands out by far, as a superior revision of previous accounts.<sup>2</sup> An inhabitant of Eigg for some 15 years, Dressler represents part of the present islanders' reclaiming of culture and history. As such her work historiographically leans towards a community emphasis, and in opposition to the other more touristic appraisals and their mostly sympathetic approach to the island's owners, Dressler provides a far more critical and academic line. Her detailed social history therefore forms much of the narrative for this Chapter; a chapter that reviews why the Highlands and Islands have remained historically distinct from the rest of Britain, and how Eigg indeed provides a relatively common example of a Scottish West Coast estate.

Lying on the western most fringes of Britain, Eigg's ecology and history have been shaped by the physical and cultural boundaries that have separated it from the mainland. These boundaries, however, have not only consisted of its natural isolation as an island, but more significantly, have been determined by the island's part in a wider regional separateness from the rest of Britain. Beginning with a review of the island's geography, climate and ecology, the Chapter outlines how the social history of the Highlands and Islands, and Eigg in particular, have been shaped by regional distinctions of culture and economy. Most importantly, emphasis is placed upon the idiosyncratic forms of landholding and ownership that developed in the area, and how over the course of time they were assimilated into the laws and traditions of the mainland British State. A process that had profound social consequences as first the introduction of feudal land law, and then the commercialisation of property broke the historical independence of the region.

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<sup>2</sup> Banks, Noel. Six Inner Hebrides. David & Charles, London, 1977; Dressler, Camille. Eigg: The Story of an Island, Polygon, Edinburgh. 1998; Urqhart, J. & Ellington, E. Eigg. Cannongate, Edinburgh, 1987; Wade Martins, Susanna. Eigg – An Island Landscape, Countryside Publishing, Scotland, 1987

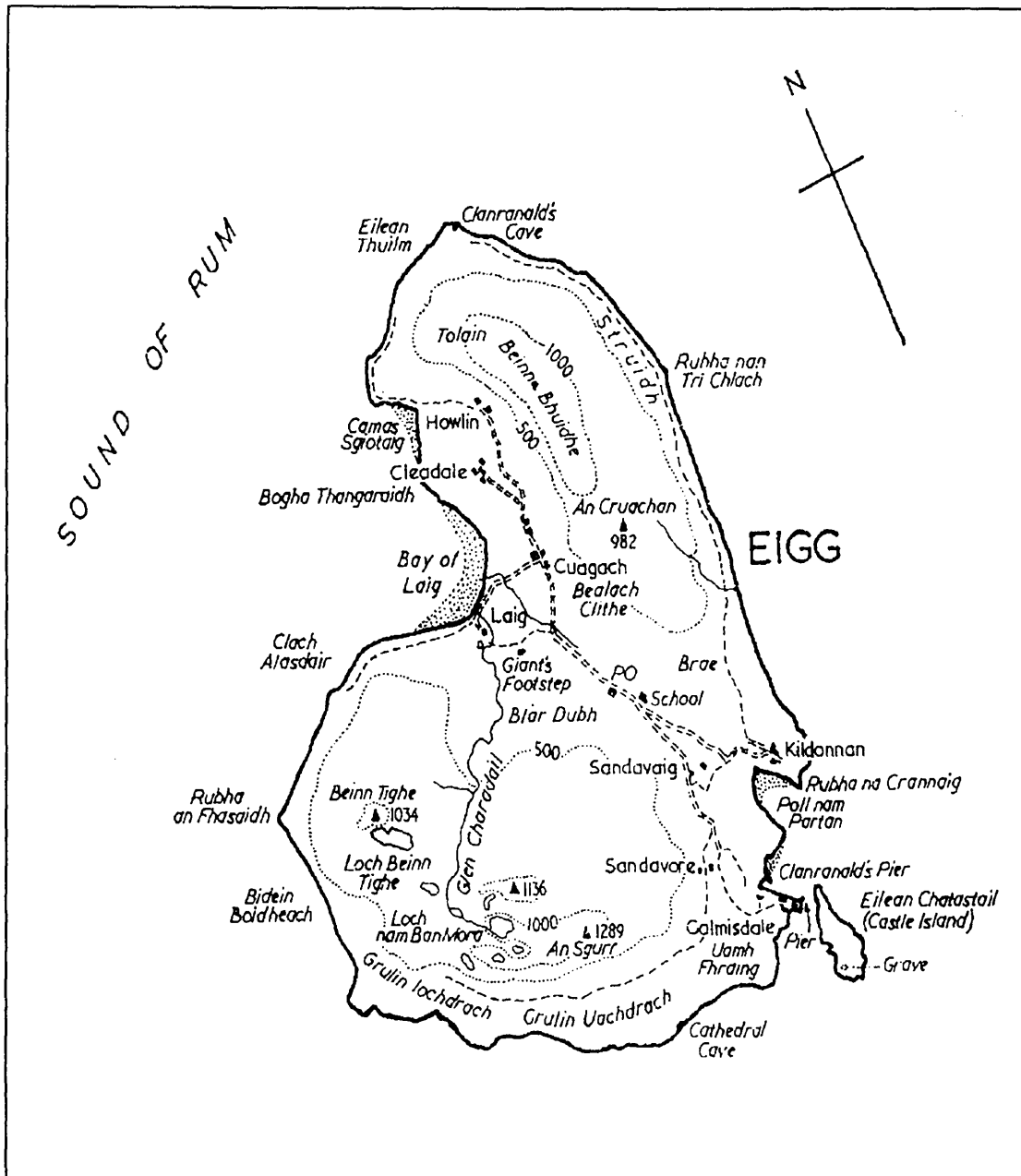


Fig: 1.1 The Isle of Eigg<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Line drawing from: Banks. p.14

## 1.2 Geography



*Fig 2.1 The Small Isles.<sup>4</sup>*

Eigg (pronounced Egg) is a kidney shaped island approximately 5 miles by 3, laying some 7 miles from Rhu point Arisaig and some 15 miles from the fishing port of Mallaig. One of a group of four islands known as the Small Isles, Eigg is also included with the Small Isles in a larger chain of islands known as the Inner Hebrides. Over 400 miles north of London, and yet still westward of Lands End, it remains one of the most geographically isolated islands in Europe. Closer to the Faroes than London, Eigg's geographical isolation is compounded by the geological features that make up the Western Highlands. Intense volcanic activity, combined with plate tectonic movements and glaciation, carved a legacy of physical barriers across the Northwest half of Scotland. Rugged landscapes of mountain and sea loch have ensured that though geologically connected to mainland Europe, the region has developed in a unique and very separate manner.

In geological terms the islands of the Inner Hebrides are relative newcomers to the region. Over sixty million years after the creation of the Outer Hebrides, molten

<sup>4</sup> No.2635 *Scotland – The West Coast*. Admiralty Charts and Publications. 1995

lava spilled over the Hebridean region and solidified. Contracting and contorting with earthquakes and shifts in the earth's crust, great gaps were forged in the solidified lava and then filled with seawater. Once the islands had formed, a final series of volcanic surges then deluged the islands with first a layer of basalt lava, and secondly with a layer of pitchstone. Erosion by weather, sea, and glaciation finally reduced and contoured the islands into the shapes now recognised.<sup>5</sup> The contrasting rock formations and exemplary geological features produced make the region a veritable Mecca for geological studies.<sup>6</sup> The area has consequently been of distinct interest to palaeontologists, with the famed Hugh Miller making some of his most historic finds on the island itself in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup>



*Fig 1.2 Ann Sgurr viewed from Galmisdale*

Possessing the “most memorable landmark in the Hebridean Seas”, Eigg’s profile and very name are testament to the significance of geology in the region.<sup>8</sup> A mile long ridge of black pitchstone, overlaying a conglomerate layer of basalt abruptly ends at a 391-m cliff face known as *An Sgurr*. With a central moorland depression separating the *Sgurr* from the northern plateau of *Beinne Bhuidhe*, the island has a characteristic “V” shaped notch when viewed from sea. This has given the island its

<sup>5</sup> Banks. pp.25-43

<sup>6</sup> Examples include: Bowes D.R. “Geological Framework of the Inner Hebrides”, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*. 83 B, 1983. Pp.25-29; Craig G.Y. ed. *Geology of Scotland*. Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh, 1983.

<sup>7</sup> Bray E. *The Discovery of the Hebrides*. Collins, London.1986. pp.222-238

<sup>8</sup> Boyd J.M.& Boyd I.L. *The Hebrides*. Collins, London. 1990. p.13



name, *Eilean Eige*, Island of the Notch, with recorded references dating back to the early 7th Century.<sup>9</sup>

The 304m northerly plateau of *Beinne Bhuidhe* and wet southern moorland is structurally of basalt. Combined with shell-sand, the basalt-derived soils form a very fertile mixture, especially around the harbour and Kildonnan. Sedimentary rocks underlie the basalt layers, and the northerly and easterly rising cliffs expose rich fossil-bearing Lower Estuarine shales. The sedimentary layer also gives rise to the sandy beaches at either side of the central depression.<sup>10</sup>

### 1.3 Climate and Ecology

The Hebrides lay on a formidable storm shelf that stretches along the western coast of Ireland and Scotland and reaches up into Scandinavia. Caught between the dry continental air to the east and the moist oceanic air to the west, this storm belt is fed by continuous interaction between the two air masses. Anyone who has lived or ventured into the region will have tales of experiencing such weather, and indeed the renowned regional climate must be considered a profound characteristic in the divide between the islands and the mainland, and the Western Highlands and the Lowlands.

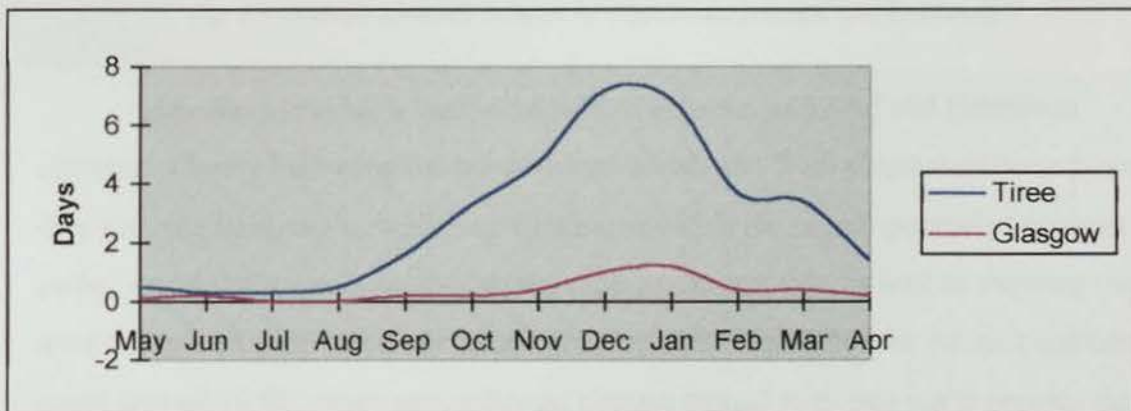


Fig 1.3 Monthly average of the number of days with gale force winds and over<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> For more involved discussion of Eigg's Geology see: Boyd. pp. 25-43; Banks. pp.12-20; Urqhart. pp. 6-12.

<sup>11</sup> Boyd & Boyd. p.58; taken from Meteorological Office, *Scotland's Climate – Some Facts and Figures*. Meteorological Office, Edinburgh. 1989.

There can often be warm bright periods in the Hebrides when continental fronts bring almost Mediterranean-like weather during the summer, and dry, frosty periods during the winter. The bright and clear spells from these eastern weather patterns, however, are not what generally characterise the region. Due to the swiftness of low-pressure systems moving in from the Atlantic, the region is perhaps best known for the speed at which conditions can change, and the severity of storms the damp oceanic fronts bring. With a low depression passing to north, the general pattern of weather brings high winds, or gales sweeping in from the Atlantic. The often-severe winds are initially southerly or south-westerly as the warm front approaches, then south-westerly in the warm sector, and lastly westerly or north-westerly behind the cold front.<sup>12</sup> Hard, driving rain combining with the gale force winds produces formidable conditions on land and treacherous conditions at sea.

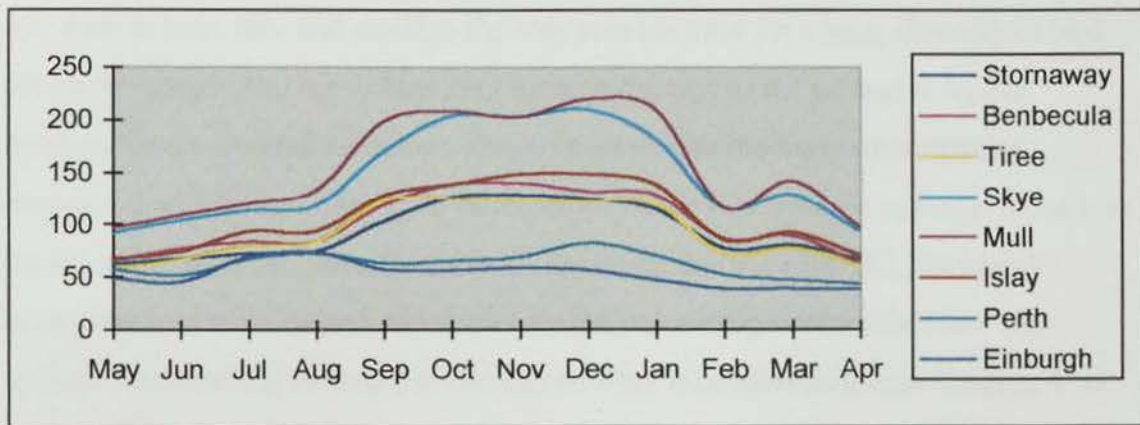


Fig 1.4 Average monthly rainfall in Highlands, Islands, and Lowlands.<sup>13</sup>

The charts provide a basic comparison between mainland and Hebridean climates. Clearly indicating the harshness of island, and West Coast weather patterns, they also emphasis the variability of conditions within the region generally. Analysis of pollen sampled from peat bogs from the region confirms this, as well as showing that there has been a succession of climatic changes over time. After the Arctic conditions eased around 10,000 years ago, a Boreal climate ensued with two warm periods that took place around 5,000 and 1,000 BC. Since then a cooler wetter Sub Atlantic pattern has prevailed, which itself has had minor fluctuations. Between 1,000 and

<sup>12</sup> Boyd & Boyd, pp. 44-45

<sup>13</sup> *ibid* p. 54; also taken from, Scotland's Climate

1,200 AD the climate was 2 degrees Centigrade warmer, bringing considerably clement weather to the Viking occupation of the region. For the past 1000 years, however, the Sub-Atlantic conditions have remained relatively constant.<sup>14</sup>

The cool damp conditions, as well as the gale force winds and salt spray, have obviously played a fundamental role in shaping the island's ecology. Plants and animals have had not only to colonise the island first, but then also adapt to the extremes of weather conditions. The mean monthly temperature is relatively mild at 9°C, yet the combined effect of the elements on the island makes conditions severe on plant and animal growth.<sup>15</sup> Tree growth is limited to all but the most sheltered of areas, and though soils are reasonably fertile general vegetation is hampered by the slow drying out of soils and the summer's relatively short growing season. In the waters around the island however, the extremes of weather make little impact on the abundant marine life. Rich in kelp, fish, and shellfish the seas provide food for a large diversity of bird life on the island. Bird life, which until the introduction of the rat had complete freedom from terrestrial predators. Rats of course, like the many other species introduced with human settlement profoundly changed the island's ecology. Indeed, as human occupation became permanent on the island around 3500 BC, the island's ecosystem was to be shaped and altered by the succeeding waves of settlers who arrived. The resulting present day ecology of Eigg is detailed further in Chapter 4, as well as in the Appendix.

#### **1.4 The Rise of Clan Society on Eigg : 1600 BC – 1600 AD**

The geological and climatic features that separate the Western Highlands and Islands from Lowland Scotland, have been compounded upon by human history to establish definitive social and economic characteristics in the region. Beginning with the colonisation of the area by Celtic settlers from 1600 BC onwards, the Highlands and Islands have been very much identified by Celtic language and culture. Bearers of what is known in archaeological terms as *La Tene* culture, the Celts established firm social and economic foundations in the area, that were to evolve under Norse

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid.* p.59

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.* p.46

occupation into the complex and very distinctive clan society of the Western Highlands. In contrast to Lowland Scotland, which experienced much Anglo-Saxon and Norman influence, the region retained this vigorous kin-based society until the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, which indeed proved to be the last such kin-based society in Europe. Typical of the region, Eigg was occupied by a single clan for over 400 years, the Clanranalds of Macdonald. A clan, who not only held a considerable territory, but were also very much at the centre of attempts to maintain regional independence.

The Celts' culture and language came to dominate the Highlands and Islands.<sup>16</sup> Coming in two distinct waves, the Picts and then the Scots, the successful colonisation of the Inner and Outer Hebrides demonstrated the Celts were firstly a very notable maritime people.<sup>17</sup> These technological skills of navigation and boat building were also matched by a very resilient and powerful kin-based society. Though little is known in detail of their society, archaeological evidence shows that their semi-nomadic pattern of cattle production was predicated upon a distinctly flexible form of land holding.<sup>18</sup> Levying tributes for membership of the group, rather than for the changing patterns of occupied territory; chiefs governed a society that was dependent on the communal working and defence of land. The kinship system was particularly efficient in holding only as much land as could readily be worked and defended, as well as being able to carry allegiances over difficult and hostile terrain.<sup>19</sup> Eigg like most places in the Highlands and Islands, probably changed hands many times as different chiefdoms rose and fell, but by the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries however, the island came under the influence of the Scots' kingdom of Dariadia, and was firmly influenced by the coming of Christianity to the region.

From religious centres in Whithorn and Iona, adventurous missionaries travelled throughout the Western Highlands and Islands converting both Scots and Picts to a uniquely Celtic form of Christianity. The resulting Celtic Church provided a

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<sup>16</sup> Dodgshon R.A. "Modelling chiefdoms in the Scottish Highlands and Islands prior to the '45'", Arnold B. & Blair Gibson D. eds. Celtic chiefdom, Celtic state: The evolution of complex social systems in prehistoric Europe. Cambridge Press, Cambridge. 1995 pp.99-109. p.100

<sup>17</sup> Ritchie A. Viking Scotland. Bratsford Ltd/ Historic Scotland, London 1993. p.24

<sup>18</sup> Dodgson R.A. "Strategies of farming in the western highlands and islands prior to crofting and the clearances", Economic History Review 46: pp.679-701. p.680

<sup>19</sup> Dodgshon. "Modelling chiefdoms" pp.100-101

focus for an out-pouring of Celtic art and culture, as well as producing some of the earliest written records of the region's history and people. Eigg is well documented in surviving religious annals principally because it was the scene of one of the worst martyrdoms in the Christian mission to Pictland. On April the 17<sup>th</sup> 617 AD, a monk by the name of Donnan was killed together with 52 of his followers. In naming a Pictish Queen of Moirdart as the chief who ordered his demise, the annals provide the first indication of how the island was held and farmed. Ruled by a matriarchal tribe of Picts from the mainland, the island was apparently kept as a pasture for sheep and cattle. On hearing that Donnan was converting the islanders, the Queen is said to have shouted "I am keeping herdsmen to herd my milking cattle on the face of Corraveine, not to be herded themselves by a monk".<sup>20</sup> When the herdsmen refused her command to remove Donnan and his monks, the annals record she sent a troop of warrior women, of Amazonian proportions, to rid her of the troublesome priest.<sup>21</sup>

The Pictish Queen's murder of Donnan actually intensified the Christian interest in the island itself. Canonised as a martyr St. Donnan soon initiated more interest in Eigg with his death than he did in his life. The island became an important site of pilgrimage, as Kildonnan - the church of Donnan - contained the holy relics of the Saint's ashes and bones. A monastery was swiftly re-established, and records have preserved a list of Eigg Abbots throughout the 7th and early 8th centuries. Judging by the recovered remains and numerous Celtic crosses that are scattered around the island, the monastery was obviously quite wealthy.<sup>22</sup> As part of the flowering Celtic Church, this ensured Eigg a relatively cosmopolitan life with a steady flow of people and tradable goods passing through the island. By the 8<sup>th</sup> century, however the Celtic Church and the flowering of Celtic culture and society were assailed on two fronts. Firstly, appalled at the lack of religious control and organisation in Britain, the Roman Church forced the Celtic Church to conform to Catholic doctrines. Secondly and much

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<sup>20</sup> Urquart. p.15

<sup>21</sup> The story does not end there, however, for the legend continues: ". . . .at midnight, lights appeared where the bodies had lain, and unearthly voices were heard chanting Donnan's death croon, bewitching the warrior women. Finding themselves compelled to follow the lights, they were each led up to the loch below the Sgurr, where one by one they entered the dark water. . . . From then on the islanders would use the name Eilean nam Ban Mora, the Island of the Big Women as their sea-kenning for the island". Dressler. p.7

<sup>22</sup> Dressler. p.8: Urquhart p.16

more dramatically, by 794 raiders from Scandinavia had begun to attack the coasts of Britain, initiating a period of some 400 years of Viking rule in the Western Highlands and Islands.<sup>23</sup>

Population pressures that found little out-let in Scandinavia precipitated first a series of raids, and then a slow and steady expansion of Norse colonies along the British coasts. The Hebrides came under Norse rule from 850 to 1263, and though technically governed by Norway, the Norse colonies soon functioned as an independent territory.<sup>24</sup> Norse culture and society obviously permeated the region, and on Eigg, the linguistic signs of influence abound in the numerous Viking place names.<sup>25</sup> Since over two thirds of the island's place names are of Norse origin, it is safe to assume that the colonists dominated the resident Celtic population. They certainly took over the existing settlements on the island at Laig and Kildonnan, leaving ample archaeological evidence of their occupation. They also imposed their own form of land tenure, a system in which each homestead (or farm) paid a 'penny' levy to the Norse overlords for protection and the right of occupation.<sup>26</sup> Surviving or resident Celts often adapted to the new levies, and as incoming chieftains and warriors tended to marry freely with the local Celtic aristocracy, a reverse process of gaelicisation of the Norse began to take place mid way through the Viking domination.<sup>27</sup> This produced a mixed race of Celto-Norse, the *Gall Gaigheal* (foreign gales), who combined a heady mixture of both the Norse appreciation for independence and the Celtic aspirations to regain the kingdom of Dalriada. Somerled was one such chief, who in 1156 led a successful challenge against Norse rule and defeated Godred King of Man. From the 12th century onwards Eigg found itself included in the land of Gamoran, territory held by Somerled's sons. A century later and the Battle of Largs in 1263, saw Norse rule finally ended in Scotland. The removal of one external ruler, however, was soon replaced by the growing interests of another closer to home: the Scottish Crown. Eigg

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<sup>23</sup> The first recorded Viking raid on the Northwest coast was on Skye in 794, though there is little doubt there had already been many unrecorded raids along the coast well before.

<sup>24</sup> Ritchie. pp.26-35; Urquhart. p.25

<sup>25</sup> Examples include: *Laig* - the bay of the surf; *Sandavore* - the sandy place; *Galmisdale* - the pasture of the roaring surf; *Grulin* -the rocky place. For more see, Dressler. p.8.

<sup>26</sup> The crofters' common grazing on Eigg is still called *Cuig Peighinean*, Five Pennies.

<sup>27</sup> Ritchie. p.38

passed into Macleod hands in 1282, with the politics of mainland Scotland increasingly effecting the island's history.<sup>28</sup>

Strongly influenced by the Norman experiences of land holding and its exercise of power, the early Scottish kings had successfully applied Feudal law to most of mainland Scotland by the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>29</sup> With the Norse defeated, it was therefore slowly introduced into the Highlands and Islands by applying the same ties of feudal vassalage to the region's chiefdoms. Embroiled in the wars for Scottish independence, Robert the Bruce made much use of the feudal system in solidifying his kingdom, especially in regards to his "dangerously capable allies" from the Western Isles.<sup>30</sup> For their loyalty and support at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, the Bruce granted the Clan Macdonald the first feudal charters for Eigg and Rhum.<sup>31</sup> Charters that though meshing with the Celtic and Norse traditions of landholding, officially cited the clan chief as the occupier of the land – and not the clan itself. This was a profound break from traditional practice. For although the clan chief gave an oath of loyalty on behalf of his kinsmen, and he still collected levies for membership of clan, over the course of time the prestige and power of the chief gradually came to be determined more by his direct relationship to the land, than to his kinsfolk. Nevertheless, the independent nature of chiefs, and their need to maintain a loyal kinsfolk ensured that Highland feudalism often did not pay much attention to the wishes of the Crown.<sup>32</sup>

Combined with the rest of the Macdonald territories in Gamoran, the Uists, Harris, and Lewis, the islands of Eigg and Rhum were included in a sizeable territory. So much so, that by 1354 the Clan Chief, John Macdonald was able to declare himself *Dominus Insularum*, Lord of the Isles. Profoundly Scots Gaelic in culture and society, the Lordship of the Isles was in many ways a reborn Dalriadan kingdom. Though bound by feudal charter to the Scottish Crown, it mostly operated as an autonomous state. One in which laws and new feudal charters were freely issued, and regular

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<sup>28</sup> Dressler. p.10

<sup>29</sup> Callander R. A Pattern of Landownership in Scotland. Haughend Publications, Finzean. 1987. p.16

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>31</sup> Dressler. p.12; Urquart. p.30; Wade Martins. p.16

<sup>32</sup> Callander. pp.14-16

trading was undertaken with England, Ireland and France.<sup>33</sup> Eigg became of central importance to the Lordship due to its geographical convenience of being between the Macdonald properties on the mainland and the islands. Kildonnan was chosen as the place for the naming and celebrating of new lords, and in 1386 when John Macdonald died, his eldest son Ranald (himself an ageing man), gathered the “gentlemen of the isles and his brothers” to Kildonnan for the inauguration. Deciding to pass over the title, Ranald gave “the wand of Lordship” to his younger brother Donald, “with the consent of his brethren and nobles of the islands”.<sup>34</sup> Thus Donald became the new Lord of the Isles, with Ranald and the others pledging their support. Since Ranald still retained his mother’s possessions, which included the Isle of Eigg, the ownership of the island remained within his own side of the family. In so doing, he established a new clan, the Clanranalds of Macdonald who were to remain the legal occupiers of Eigg for the next 400 years.<sup>35</sup>

The system of landholding that Donald, the 2nd Lord of the Isles presided over was a fusion of Celtic and Norse tradition that had become steadily codified by feudal land law.<sup>36</sup> Like the Celtic high king of the 8th century he was at the top of the social structure. He was *Buachaille nam Eilean*, the herdsman of the isles, the protector of the people. Below him were the chiefs and senior members of the clans, like his brother Ranald, who already had, or were given “a feu” of land. A form of permanent land tenure, the feu consisted of a territory that required the paying of yearly feu duties in kind and military service to the superior, in this case the Lord of the Isles. The chiefs then subdivided these feus into different portions known as “tacks” which they then sublet to their kinsmen. These tenants, or “tacksmen” were the equivalent middle class in the system, normally renowned for their loyalty and military achievements. They would retain a portion of the tack for themselves, which they would have worked for them, and then in turn sublet or “subfeu” the remaining land to subtenants. The subtenants would work these patches of land themselves, and at times also sublet parcels of land to cottars in exchange for labour. The cottars, or landless labourers, were the poorest and lowest in the clan society and would normally work for the

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<sup>33</sup> Urquhart. pp.30-42

<sup>34</sup> Wade Martins. p.16

<sup>35</sup> *ibid*; Dressler. p.11



tacksmen either seasonally or permanently. Obviously, duties would be collected at every level of the system, and these would represent approximately 20 to 30 percent of the tenants' produce.<sup>37</sup> Payment was nearly always in kind, very occasionally in cash, and always in the promise of military service. The feu duties for Eigg for example included the provision of a 26 man boat if the Crown was in need.<sup>38</sup>

Since the Scottish Crown was developing feudalism in Scotland when it was already on the decline elsewhere, the Scots practice of feudalism became notably idiosyncratic.<sup>39</sup> This was readily apparent in the Highlands and Islands where several key aspects of Celtic culture characterised the system with its own regional flavour. Most prominent of these was the persistence of the Celtic traditions for communal land holding. Most of the smaller holdings, or tacks, were in effect held by a collection of kinsfolk who held the land in common and collectively paid duties direct to the chief. Just like the tacksmen's farms they divided the land into rough grazings on the hills, and into outfields and infields on land closer to their homes. Cattle were reared on the rough grazings during the summer, and the outfields and infields were used for the production of cereals and a few vegetables. To ensure the equitable distribution of land within these divisions, each tenant was allocated strips from the various fields to work for a season. After which they were then rotated to make certain that everyone had an equal chance at good quality soil. Known as the run-rig system, this provided a very sound and sustainable method of allocation.<sup>40</sup>

Another key characteristic of the social structure unique to the Highlands and Islands was the practice known as *sorning*.<sup>41</sup> At all levels of the feudal hierarchy, duties were also paid for by hospitality to the superior. In the case of chiefs, they would be expected at anytime to provide food, lodging and entertainment to the Lord of the Isles and his retinue. The code of hospitality was not restricted to upper hierarchy only, for in such a harsh and often unforgiving climate, it was part of the

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<sup>36</sup> Dogshon. p.102; Dressler. pp.19-20

<sup>37</sup> Dogshon. "Modelling Chiefdoms" p.104

<sup>38</sup> Urquhart. p.32

<sup>39</sup> Dogshon. p.103; Callander. p.3

<sup>40</sup> Dressler. p.20

<sup>41</sup> *ibid*; Smout, T.C. A History of the Scottish People, 1560-1830, Fontana, London. 1985. pp.312-1315

social code to automatically provide a meal or a bed for anyone who called at the door. In wider terms this not only incorporated the chief and superiors looking after their kinsfolk in times of bad harvests and famine, but also involved superiors maintaining a large retinue of followers such as servants, poets, and entertainers.<sup>42</sup>

There was little redundancy in the clan system, which incorporated both a social structure of land holding and governance with a formidable fighting machine. The ties of kinship entailed a large military force that could be called upon at any time, bonded together by a chain of command that stretched from the chief downwards.<sup>43</sup> Considering what was happening politically, this was an asset that was very much needed. Especially since the power of the Lordship of the Isles, and rising ambitions of its ruling elite were marked by an unfortunate lack of political acumen. Involved in a series of unprofitable raids and failed insurrections, the Clan Donald had severely antagonised the Scottish Crown. This reached a head in 1493 when the last Lord of the Isles was forced to resign all of his titles as well as those of his chiefs.

New feudal overlords were then swiftly appointed by James IV to properly administer the region, but these were flatly rejected by the Isles. A period of bitter internecine feuds then began amongst the clans, as the Crown continued to try to assert some form of control over the region. In real terms, however, the Crown could not afford to administer the region overtly for the simple reasons, that it was far too rugged, and there was too little money to be made from the territory in any case.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Crown fell into allowing, and at times encouraging the clan feuds in order to distract the chiefs from any aspirations of regional independence. Eigg suffered particularly harsh experiences during the successive raids and reprisals that characterised the period, with the feud between Clan Donald and Clan Leod proving to be one of the longest and most bloodthirsty. It resulted in the entire population of Eigg being all but wiped-out on two separate occasions.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Hunter J. *The Making of the Crofting Community*, John Donald Publishers Ltd. Edinburgh. 1976. pp.6-7; Dodgshon. "Modeling chiefdoms" p.104

<sup>44</sup> Smout. p.315

<sup>45</sup> Dressler. pp.18-19; Urquhart. p.34; Wade Martins. p.16

The first and most famous of the massacres involved all but one of the islanders being suffocated to death in a cave on the south shore in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. The massacre of *Uamh Fhraing*, as it became known as, was then followed some 40 years later by another slaughter of the island's population in 1588. Since the attacking clan also included a hundred shipwrecked Spaniards from the Armada, more detailed reports confirmed the massacre.<sup>46</sup> The register of the Privy Council recorded that, "The like barbarous and shameful cruelty has seldom been seen among Christians of any kingdom or age".<sup>47</sup> Repopulated once more, the minefield of 16th century life hardly afforded the island a peaceable or stable existence. When there was not raiding or retribution there was the occasional face of hunger appearing. During the second half of the 16th century, 24 years out of 50 were marked by high food prices in the Highlands and Islands, a notable sign of scarcity.<sup>48</sup>

### 1.5 The Fall of Clan Society on Eigg : 1600-1827

The continued feuding amongst the clans certainly restricted any regional solidarity, but then this instability also restricted the Crown from extending any of the profitable aspects of governance. Consequently, James VI took a more proactive role in 1609 with the enforced the signing of all highland chiefs to the Statutes of Iona. Contrived in rather a devious form, the signing of the Statutes represented a landmark in Highland history that marked the beginning of the taming of the clans.<sup>49</sup> The taking of hostages and the swearing of oaths of loyalty forced clan chiefs into a program of demilitarisation, Anglicisation and religious orthodoxy. New feu duties were drawn up, which together with stiff financial penalties for the breaking of Statutes anchored the independently minded chiefs with a sizeable monetary burden. As the screw of centralised authority was applied to the chiefs, their relationship with their clans began to be determined more by economic considerations than the previous ties of kinship. The Jacobite Rebellions were partly the final insurrection against the new feudal order,

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<sup>46</sup> Dressler. pp.13-18; Urqhart p.39; Wade Martins. p.19

<sup>47</sup> Wade Martins. p.19.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Dressler. p.18-21

and their defeats were swiftly followed by the complete subjugation of the region to the mainland Scottish economy and society. On the ground in places such as Eigg these changes were reflected in a total revision of the land holding system, with “improvement” and the new management of “estates” replicating the same centralisation that was occurring politically.

Strongly influenced by the Reformation, the Statutes of 1609 not only enforced a military and financial subservience to the State, but tried to remove the aspects of clan life that were most at odds with mainstream Lowland society.<sup>50</sup> Hosts of wide sweeping social reforms were initiated to undermine the independence of the Highland clans. Beginning with tight restrictions on alcohol, the banning of all imported liquors was combined with an abolition of the practice of *sorning*. The enforced education of chief’s sons in Lowland English - speaking schools also represented another determining break between the clan chiefs and their kinsmen, not surprisingly resentment towards the Statutes led to another attempt at resurrecting the Lordship of the Isles. In 1615 Sir James MacDonald raised an army, including 60 men from Eigg, and began plotting rebellion over disputes with the Crown and the much-despised Argylls.<sup>51</sup> The enterprise eventually proved disastrous with a large defeat in Kintyre scuttling the revolt, and the leading chiefs escaping into exile. The enforced peace, together with a tactical marriage between the chief of Clanranald and the daughter of Rory MacLeod, finally brought an end to the feuding and attempts at reinstating the ancient Celtic kingdom. The consequent stability, which ensued, brought an era of relative prosperity and growth in the region. The beginnings of a market economy soon emerged with cattle increasingly being produced in surplus. Traders began to visit the islands, appearing at regular intervals to trade with corn, meal, and assorted luxuries.<sup>52</sup> Due to the ban on imported liquor, the other native produce whiskey had also soared in production. Considering that average consumption was now estimated at a quarter of a pint per person per day, this must have represented a highly valued industry.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *ibid*; Urquhart. pp.42-43

<sup>51</sup> Dressler. p.19; Urquhart. p.44-45; Wade Martins. pp.16-17

<sup>52</sup> Dressler. pp.12-28; Urquhart. pp.42-50

<sup>53</sup> Dressler. pp.19-22

Although the Reformation had enormous impacts on the South and East of Scotland, the Western Highlands and Islands remained predominantly Catholic.<sup>54</sup> The Statutes of Iona had therefore taken specific action to rectify this and bring the region into line with the Protestant beliefs of mainland Scotland. Combined with the commitment to educate their sons in English speaking Protestant schools, the clan chiefs were also pledged to bring the Reformation to their far-flung territories and peoples. The difficulties of terrain, and the obstinence of the chiefs still allowed their predominantly Catholic kinsfolk to practice their religion freely. Well known as a “popish island”, the chief of Clanranald was often held to account for Eigg’s persistence in retaining Catholicism.<sup>55</sup> Providing yet another bone of contention with the Scottish Crown, Clanranald’s stern defence of his islander’s beliefs was in part out of protection, but also out of political opportunism. In 1626, he sent a letter to Pope Urban VIII proposing that Clan Donald could readily return the whole of Scotland to Catholicism if they were properly equipped and supported: they only needed 4 ships and enough weapons for their 7000 kinsmen. Stressing “his clan’s warlike spirit”, he declared that “. . . all the Gaelic speaking Scots and the greater part of the Irish chieftains were ready to begin war each in their district for the glory of God”.<sup>56</sup> Even though the letter would have sent quivers down the collective spines of Scottish Protestants, the Pope was not won over to supporting this Gaelic crusade. Instead, Clanranald was forced into becoming a nominal Protestant with a third of the island’s teinds being handed over to the presbytery. Catholic priests still moved freely around the Clanranald territories, however, and on Eigg clandestine services would be held in a large cave on the south side of the island, known as *Uamh na Chrabhaidh*, the Cave of Worship (re-named Cathedral Cave by Victorian visitors).<sup>57</sup>

Just as the chiefs were caught between competing religious codes of Catholicism and Protestantism, they were similarly caught between the differing codes of Highland and mainland of landholding. Though feudalism had successfully been adapted to the kin-based chiefdoms in legal terms, the clan chiefs still operated within a society that was profoundly shaped by Celtic traditions. Wealth and power were still

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<sup>54</sup> Smout. History of the Scottish People. p.312; Dressler. pp.22-24; Urquhart. pp.42-27

<sup>55</sup> Dressler. p.22; Urquhart. p.42

<sup>56</sup> Dressler. pp.23-24

constituted in terms of control over land and people, and not in the surplus production that could be generated by the economy. The consequent effects of this social system entailed the maintenance of a high population, which although was beginning to produce a small surplus, was fundamentally structured on a subsistence basis.<sup>58</sup> The imposition of taxes, or stiff financial burdens upon the chiefs, put clan leaders in an impossible situation. The burgeoning market economy had over the course of a hundred years extended well into the furthest reaches of the Western Highlands and Islands, with the expanding trade in black cattle and whiskey bringing new levels of prosperity. Still there was very little in the way of actual money circulating, since principally this trade was carried out through barter and bills of exchange between drovers and merchants. This gave the clan chiefs more than ample problems when paying the heavy dues to Scottish Crown: the dues were expected in cash, yet the chiefs received their own payments principally in kind. They were soon to find themselves in serious debt, and very much out of favour with the mainland government.<sup>59</sup>

Combined with this were the warrior ethic and the codes of military honour that were fundamental to the clan society. Unable to demonstrate their prowess in the traditional practice of raiding, clan chiefs, as well as their loyal and trusted tacksmen were increasingly frustrated with the restrictions placed upon them by the Scottish Crown. The political upheavals of the English Revolution and Glorious Revolution hardly eased matters either, especially since the Clanranalds supported the defeated sides on all occasions and encumbered even further financial penalties and debts in the process. The Union of Parliaments in 1707 was perhaps the final straw, and the building resentment towards the power of Lowland elite and the mainland government erupted into two rebellions, in 1715 and 1745. Both of which were doomed to failure since a much more powerful and coercive British State was now reinforcing their traditional Lowland opposition, the Scottish Crown.

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<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Hunter. *The Making*. p.9

<sup>59</sup> Dressler. pp.28-29

The Clanranalds were highly active in both campaigns, and their kinsmen proved more than capable allies in both revolts.<sup>60</sup> In the '45, it was the young Clanranald (i.e. son of the chief) who raised the standard at Glenfinnan, and was Prince Charlie's right hand man throughout the campaign. Under the leadership of the Laig tacksman, a force of 40 islanders supported him. Surprisingly few were to perish in the rebellion, and most of them were to return to the island after Culloden. Indeed, even the young Clanranald was to end up hiding on the island for a while, with a cave being named after him in the process. Like the rest of the Highlands, however, it was the reprisals after Culloden that had the most impact on the island. When the English naval ships visited the island in search of both Clanranald and Prince Charlie they took 38 prisoners, including all the principle tacksmen and tenants. Transported first to London, and then Jamaica none were to return.<sup>61</sup> Part of a program of suppression, the removal of the island's middle class of tenantry was combined with a careful eradication of clan independence. Together with the banning of tartans and bagpipes, the goal of 'civilising' the Highlands involved the systematic dismantling of the clan structure, and the comprehensive subjection of the region's culture and economy to mainstream British society.<sup>62</sup> Unlike the other Jacobite strongholds, however, the Isle of Eigg escaped from direct forfeiture due to a fortunate legal mistake. It was therefore saved from the immediate excesses of clearance and eviction that occurred in the estates which the Government had removed from clan ownership. Nonetheless, the massive debts incurred by Clanranald during the revolt still led to the island being heavily mortgaged to Rory MacLeod of Talisker, with the forces of the economy soon having a dramatic an effect on the island's social and economic order.

Like the other surviving clan chiefs, although Clanranald was to retain possession of property he had been removed of all his military and traditional powers of inheritable jurisdiction. He was now a simple landowner, and the Lowland codes of civil society allowed only one avenue of demonstrating social prestige, conspicuous consumption, and that required considerable revenue from a landholding system still predicated on subsistence. A 1718 survey of Eigg reveals the degree to which

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<sup>60</sup> Dressler. pp.28-34; Urquhart. pp.50-51; Wade Martins. pp.20-24

<sup>61</sup> Dressler. *ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Hunter. *The Making*. p.11

landholding on the island had remained relatively unchanged for nearly 400 years. There were eight tacks registered: Grulin, Galmisdale, Kildonnan, Laig, Cleadale, and Howlin, with one independent farm at Knockeiltach. Of these eight tacks, only Kildonnan, Laig, Cleadale and Grulin were held by tacksmen, the rest were held in joint tenancies and run as collective farms. A certain degree of change had occurred, since feu duties that had traditionally been paid in kind and military service had been partially converted into rents paid for in cash - which in 1718 constituted an annual total of 1155 merks.<sup>63</sup> This was far from enough for the chief, especially with the costs of rebellion, and between the wars there was a recorded doubling of rents. Considering that the island had not increased its production of cattle during this period, and was to lose all its principal tenants and tacksmen as well, the impact on the ground must have been substantial.

In association with the renting of tacks on more commercial lines, the Clanranalds also attempted various schemes of agricultural improvement. Subsistence farming was unprofitable to say the least, and although some cattle were being produced for sale and the raising of much needed cash, the basic agricultural practices were hardly comparable to the modernised farms of the south. Dressler provides a very detailed overview of the lengths to which islanders were forced, in order to escape the seasonal fluctuations of weather and produce. With famine often knocking on the door, everything that was at all edible was included on the meal table, from wild plants and shellfish, to seaweed and nesting birds.<sup>64</sup> The first and most dramatic improvement on this situation was the introduction of the potato. The 15th chief of Clanranald is credited with planting the first potato in the Hebrides in 1739, and its success precipitated the swift application of cultivation growing throughout the region.<sup>65</sup> Whilst this had the immediate effect of stabilising farming practice, it also encouraged the expansion of population on more than marginal soils. Where beforehand there was a tacit balance between population levels and ecological diversity, there was now an increasing population based on a single produce; an imbalance that was soon to have disastrous effects.

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<sup>63</sup> Dressler. p.28

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.* pp.28-30

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*



With the enforced exile after Culloden, the chief of Clanranald became an “absentee landlord” and in 1749 he handed over the control of his territories to a paid factor, David Bruce. This was an absolute turn around in clan society, not only in regards to the position of its chief, but in the intrinsic relationship of the clan to its land. Obviously the seeds of this transformation had been sown with the imposition of feudal law and slowly germinated by the steady and continued influence of the market economies of the south. Nevertheless, the employment of an external and ‘improving’ factor necessitated a psychological turn around in the view of land: rather than an integral aspect of clan identity to be defended at all costs, it was now an asset that needed to be managed to its maximum profit. With this crucial break in clan society came strains on all levels of the clan structure eventually leading to the complete disintegration of the kin-based society.<sup>66</sup>

As the Clanranald estates were now being organised along more aggressively commercial lines, the tenantry soon felt the changes of David Bruce’s management. He was particularly hostile towards the tacksmen, whom he felt were a severe hindrance to progress as “tied to their caste, they were usually more concerned to keep up a host of unproductive servants and retainers than to cultivate habits of husbandry and thrift”.<sup>67</sup> The reorganisation of leases naturally removed the now redundant ties of military service, and translated them into higher rents. Leases beginning in 1765 were also drawn on short terms, allowing for the swift and easy increase of rents as well as the ability to quickly remove any troublesome tenants who challenged the factor's methods. This proved often to be the case, especially with the tacksmen who believing they had an inheritable right to their land, fiercely resented the intrusions of the factor. This related not only to the drawing of leases, but perhaps more importantly to the growing interference of the factor in the day to day running of their farms. Proud and independent, the tacksmen had run their farms along traditional lines without ever having the clan chief walking around the property telling them what to do. In order to improve the productivity of the farms, however, and so increase the value of rental income, the factor was doing just this; and his ideas of improvement almost always

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<sup>66</sup> Hunter. The Making. pp.11-12

cost the tenant, whilst increasing the power and returns to the estate. A prime example of this was the new corn mill enterprise begun in 1763, which involved the enforced milling of all corn by the estate's mill. Until all the island's home querns were destroyed by the factor, it was common practice for each tenant to collect and mill his own corn, with the communal farms grinding their corn together. With the "improvement", however, this now changed, and the estate was soon earning a substantial income for the charges levied on milling the tenant's corn.<sup>68</sup>

Other improvements were also brought about with the new leases of 1765, which again caused resentment. To begin with the leases named only the principal tenants and a few of the subtenants, with the vast majority of the population being left out of the legal documentation.<sup>69</sup> The vast retinue of minor subtenants, cottars and landless labourers were therefore defined as having no legal entitlement to inhabiting the island. In immediate terms this was only a minor point compared to the inconveniences that were involved in the application of the new leases. To begin with, the reorganisation of landholding in commercial terms obviously found payments of rent in kind anathema, but nevertheless since tenants were always cash poor other arrangements had to be made. Using this as an opportunity to gain greater involvement in farm management, the factor took labour in kind as a form of payment and organised the building of dykes and drainage channels.<sup>70</sup> The construction of these was not only to bring greater areas under production, but was also fundamental to the greater rationalisation of the landholding and agricultural production. With cattle now restricted in their movements, less labour was required for their upkeep and greater emphasis could be placed on other cash crops like flax, as well as more effort directed towards the production of vegetables and cereals. Again like the middle class tacksmen, tenants and subtenants found themselves under much greater direction than they had ever experienced before; traditional practices and methods were being swiftly set aside for the expediencies of greater cash crop production, and greater financial returns for the estate.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Dressler. p.37

<sup>68</sup> Dressler. p.37; Urquhart. P.55

<sup>69</sup> Dressler. p.38

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*

Unsurprisingly, and much to the factors delight, there were many who could not take the onslaught of changes wrought by the new system. Emigration overseas seemed a much more attractive situation, especially since the wide availability of land in the Americas was so stark a contrast to the situation at home. The growing dependence on the potato had encouraged a rapid rise in population, and with over 500 now living on Eigg fields and farms were becoming increasingly subdivided and crowded. It was easy therefore for John MacDonald IV of Laig, the principal Clanranald tacksman, to organise a large group of followers in 1765 to accompany him across the waters to Nova Scotia.<sup>72</sup>

By the 1770's the introduction of alternative tacksmen and tenants were increasing the pace of change on the island. Unencumbered by close relationships with their subtenants, they were much more willing to adapt to new systems of production and new structures of landholding. Ironically, it was a traditional Eigg tacksman Angus MacDonald of Laig, however, who initiated the most dramatic change on the island to date. In order to provide a modern productive farm for his newly wedded daughter, in 1788 he decided to clear the township and joint farm of Cleadale. Since the joint tenants paid their dues to him, rather than directly to the factor, he was well within his rights to force their eviction. Loaded on to a boat at Kildonnan, they therefore became the island's first victims of clearance. Although Angus MacDonald's motives were not monetary, he probably would not have contemplated the move if conditions had not so readily have changed under the new style of management. Nevertheless, he was despised and cursed by his departing kinsmen. Curses, which if believed, came true since his son-in-law refused the new farm, his brother-in-law was soon poisoned, his sister went mad, and he ended up shooting himself.<sup>73</sup>

For chiefs still in debt and desperate for greater returns from their estates, the harvesting of kelp was a cash crop godsend. If there was one thing that the wind-swept and rains-soaked islands afforded, it was vast amounts of seaweed. Consequently when cheap supplies of alkali from the continent began to be hindered by hostilities with

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<sup>72</sup> *ibid.* pp.39

France, their factors were quick to take up the demand by producing an alkali from burnt kelp. In fact the process had been underway by the 1765 leases, with tacksmen organising production and the estate taking a hefty percentage; ten shillings for every ton produced, and ten shillings for the transport of each ton. As demand and prices increased in the 1790's, however, the manufacture of alkali was written into the leases with the effect of trebling rents.<sup>74</sup> Obviously proving a little unpopular among tacksmen and tenants, the rent increases were hardly welcomed, neither was the work being offered. Extremely arduous, cold, and often dangerous, tenants much preferred their life on the farms to the long hours spent in waist high water.

Even though there were high profits to be made for the estate, therefore, the factor found that labour was in short supply. Indeed not only was it in short supply, but as whiff of better lives overseas came back to the island, the labour pool was dropping with every ship bound for Nova Scotia. Swift action was needed, and clan chiefs lobbied hard in London to restrain their clansmen from emigrating. After the Passenger Vessels Act was passed in 1803 to prevent their workforce leaving, the chiefs and factors then set about the drastic restructuring of the farms to enforce tenants into waged labour.<sup>75</sup> Of course in order to structure things in the most appropriate manner, there needed to be a careful taking of stock and a sound evaluation of the agricultural resources at hand. Proper management needed proper maps.

Mapping was a fast growing industry in the Highlands, and strongly reflected the impetus for control and knowledge of the region. Developed first by the military in their defeats of the Jacobite rebellions, it was then later amplified in the occupation of forfeited estates. As they scoured the islands in pursuit of Prince Charlie after Culloden, the British military machine had been more than hampered by the lack of detailed information of the region, and swiftly learnt the need for accurate maps. In an area renowned for its complex marine and geological hazards this proved a formidable undertaking, but new methods of triangulation and dedicated cartographers began to tame the region's geography. In the process they set notable precedents in the practice

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<sup>73</sup> *ibid.* pp.54-56

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.* p.63

<sup>75</sup> Hunter. *The Making*. p.25

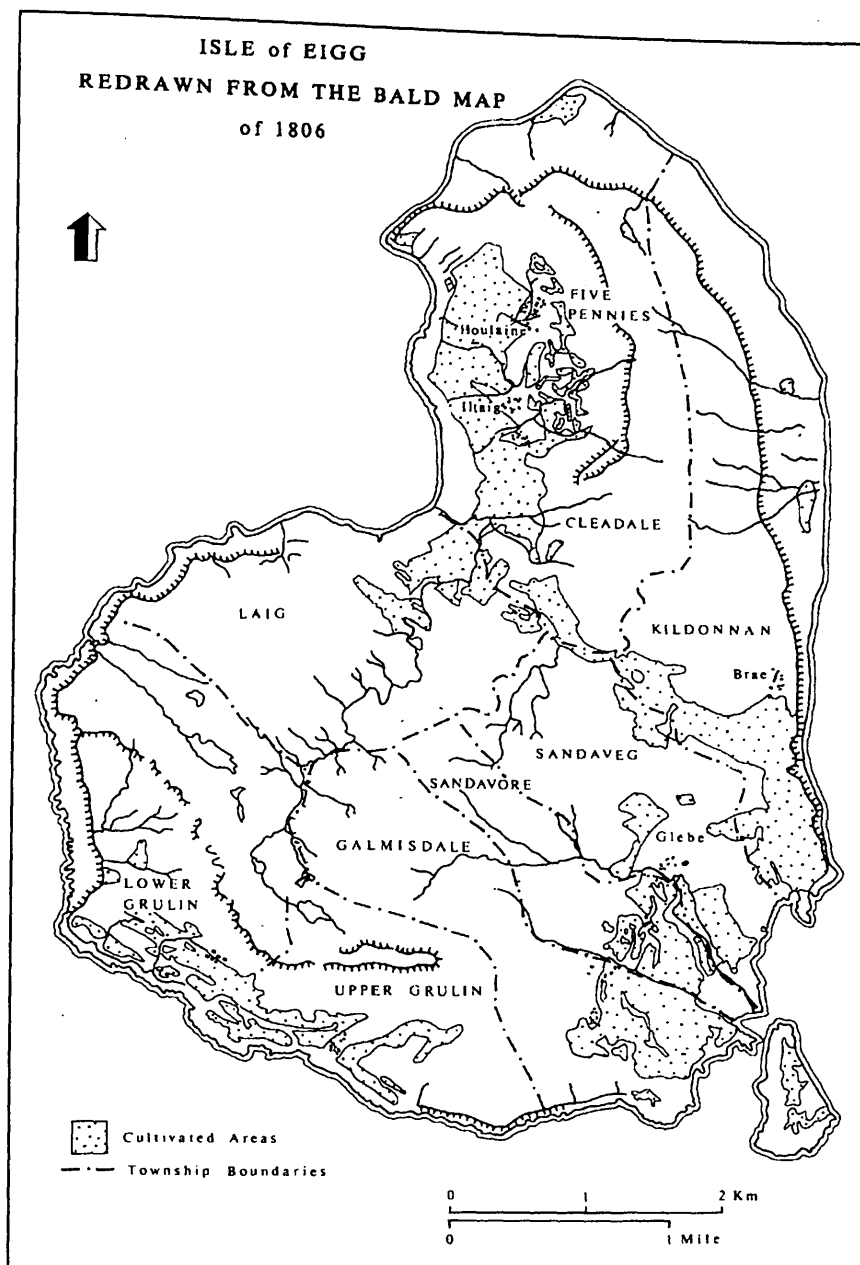
of cartography, as well as beginning the now famous Ordnance Survey of Great Britain.<sup>76</sup>

The first surveys of Eigg were in fact carried out when the Clanranald estates were occupied in 1715, and again in 1746. But at the turn of the 19th century these were considered rather crude and far from useful for the factor's purpose. So in 1806, a skilled surveyor by the name of William Bald was employed to produce a detailed survey of the island's landholding and relevant acreage. Measuring 1.5m x 1.2m, the map was drawn to a very high standard, showing each individual building on the island as well as the intricate and idiosyncratic strips which constituted the run-rig system.

Townships	Acreage of Arable	Acreage of Pasture	Acreage of Lochs	Acreage of Moor
Upper Grulin	59	16	6	402
Lower Grulin	54	3	14	601
Galmisdale	128	42		407
Sandavore	69	23		165
Sandaveg	23			359
Glebe	27			
Kildonnan	197	369		406
Laig	79	100		806
Cleadale	194	209		397
Five Pennies	66	103		
Howlin	67	200		102
Total	1013	1002	20	3649

*Fig: 1.5 Townships recorded in 1806*

<sup>76</sup> Bray, E. *The Discovery of the Hebrides*, Collins, Glasgow. 1986. pp.60-65

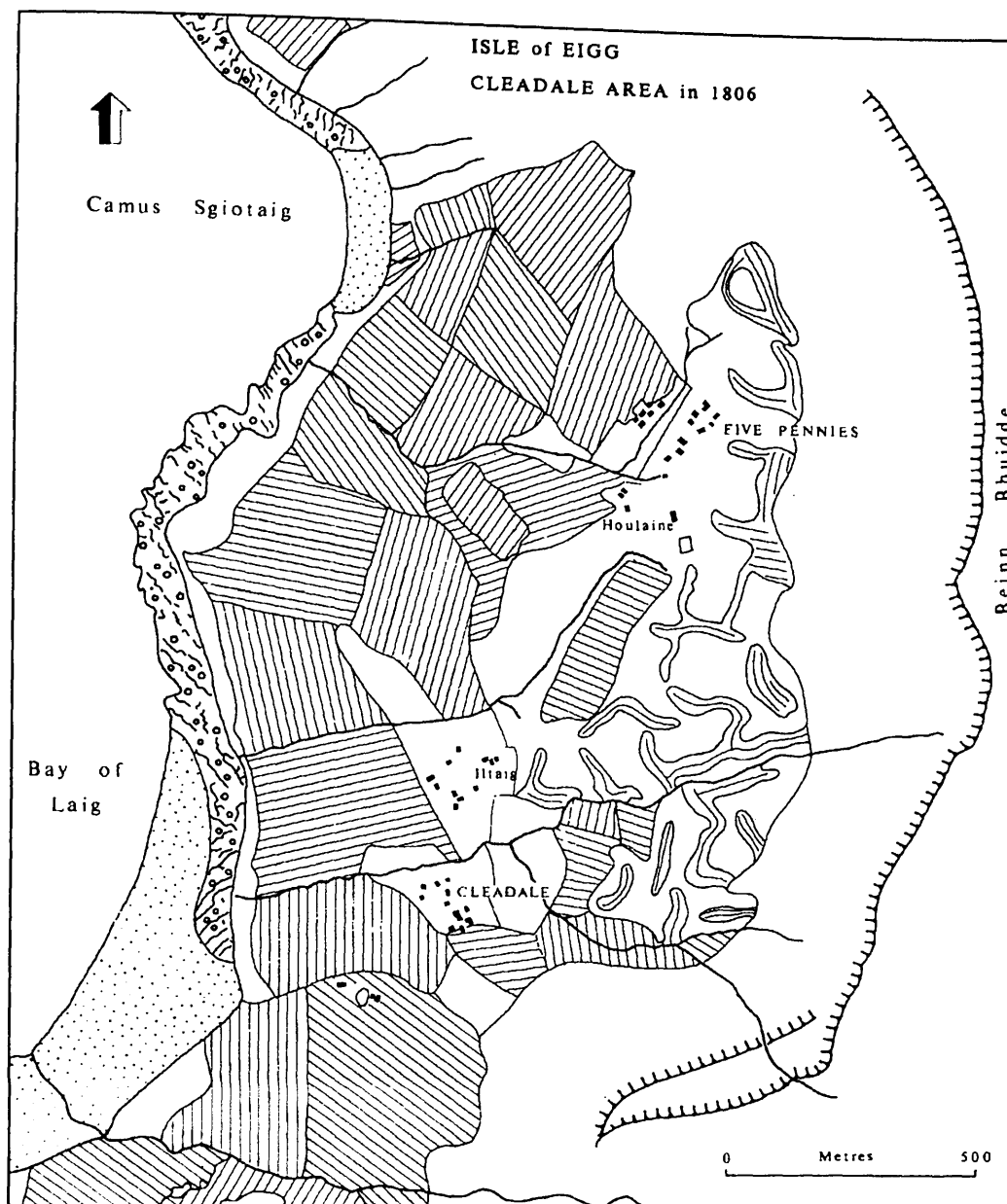


*Fig 2.6 Townships and cultivated areas in 1806.<sup>77</sup>*

There is more than a distinct amount of irony in the fact that the map, which was drawn up to oversee the eradication of the communal farms, has provided the best account of their layout and existence. Confirming how densely populated the island was, the map shows almost every available part of the island, including Castle Island, used for agricultural production, with over 1000 acres in cultivation, another 1000 under pasture, and a further 3600 used for moorland grazing. Ten townships are depicted, each consisting of 10 to 15 houses and surrounded by their run-rig strips.

<sup>77</sup> Wade Martins. p.27

Predominantly planted with potatoes they were all dug and tended by hand, with those closest to the buildings used and fertilised each year, whilst the others located further afield were reverted to pasture for several years between each crop.<sup>78</sup>



*Fig 2.7 The townships of Five Pennies, Howlin, Iltraig, and Cleadale before reorganisation*<sup>79</sup>

Unfortunately the buildings are not indicated as residences or byres, but nevertheless it is easy to see how they were grouped together constituted a township. They were closely knit communities, which in the very layout and structure of their farms required communal working practices to tend and harvest their crops. Each

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.* p.28

settlement was very similar in nature, with only Kildonnan standing out as different: one house stood on the peninsula, with the mill located close by near the shore. Farmed by the minister's son, Donald Macaskill, it was the most substantial farm on the island, and instead of a township of people surrounding the house, labour was drafted in from the township of Brae. Since Macaskill was both highly educated, a doctor by training, and not a traditional Clanranald tacksman, it was he that the 20th chief of Clanranald chose to reorganise the communal townships.<sup>80</sup>

The system chosen to replace the communal townships had successfully been tried on Muck, an island the 19th chief of Clanranald had acquired in lieu of debts owed to him by Lachlean MacLean. Although Muck exported reasonable amounts of barley and oats, the higher returns from kelp ensured that the island's 24 tacks were subdivided into 47 individual plots for kelping families. In 1810, a year later, Donald Macaskill repeated the same process in Cleadale, replacing the townships of Cleadale and Knockeiltach with 28 crofts.<sup>81</sup> Each croft was carefully drawn to provide only partial support for the occupying tenants, thereby forcing them into the waged labour of the kelp beds. The same process was repeated on the communal farms of Galmisdale and Grulin, though the rigid lines of the crofts in Cleadale could not be replicated due to the awkward terrain. It was a complete change of landscape, tenure, and economy, which certainly assisted in generating large profits for Clanranald who cleared some £42,000 from the kelp production between 1808-1810 alone.<sup>82</sup> For his kinsfolk, however, the complete subjugation to market economy was to bring little reward. They saw none of the princely profits; and instead, as one contemporary Hebridean traveller noted, their conditions had now become attuned more to a state of slavery.<sup>83</sup>

By 1815 cheaper supplies of alkali became available again, and so the vast kelping estates were soon plunged into massive recession. Though Eigg was still producing 17 tons of alkali a year, the price had dropped so dramatically that

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<sup>79</sup> *ibid.* p.50

<sup>80</sup> Dressler. p.65

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.* p.65

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.* p.66

<sup>83</sup> Hunter. *The Making*. p.15



Clanranald soon found himself subsidising the island rather than profiting.<sup>84</sup> The crofters were thrown into immense poverty and all were far behind in their rents. As a follower of the Royal Court, and a personal friend of the Prince Regent, Clanranald's lifestyle could hardly afford to pay for starving tenants. Selling off his estates was the only option left; and so in 1824 Eigg was advertised for sale as perfect pasture for the new cash crop of wool:

**There is no spot in the west better adapted to the rearing of stock. Black cattle and sheep might be reared under peculiar advantages, and by the introduction of Cheviot sheep and some consequent slight alterations in the management of the farms on Eigg, the value of the land might be greatly increased. The pasture of the island is of the best quality while the arable land is not only of an extent sufficient to support the inhabitants of the island, but well adapted for the produce of turnip crops for the feeding of stock. Part of the island is of a limestone bottom of superior quality and the grouse shooting upon the moorish part of the island is of the best kind.... A good deal of kelp is manufactured on the island of Eigg and Canna and is of superior quality and there is good reason to suppose that the quality might be considerably increased, and in the last place, it may be observed that the occupiers of the land have had such employment and considerable profits from the herring and other fishing and which consequently may thus be assumed as a local advantage adding considerably to the value of the farm.<sup>85</sup>**

As the saying goes – “never trust a sales brochure” – for this was a highly optimistic survey of the island at best. With severe rental arrears, appalling levels of poverty and a booming population this was hardly a self-supporting island. Indeed, even the basic sales pitch for sheep rearing was misinformed since there had only been minimal experience of sheep on the island, all of which had been disastrous. The alterations in management that were needed were obviously far from “slight”, and could only entail one thing – the mass eviction of unwanted tenants. As the impacts of kelp recession hit home, clearances were taking place all over the Highland region in order to accommodate the production of wool and mutton. In 1826 Rhum was cleared

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.* p.66

<sup>85</sup> Clanranald Papers, 201/5/1235/1, Scottish Record Office.

of most of its inhabitants, with the same happening on Canna in 1827. Although Eigg was initially saved from this by its sale in 1827, it was only a matter of time before the island was eventually to succumb to the same fate.

As for the islanders' ancestral leader, the 20<sup>th</sup> chief ended the 400 years of Clanranald proprietorship and parted from his kinsmen and property for the sum of £15,000. Like most of the clan chiefs he was shedding the expenses of his inheritance and leading a thoroughly Anglophile life, far removed from the traditions of his kinsmen's society. Feudalism had achieved its final victory of establishing centralised authority and control over the region. In the process, the kin-based patterns of land holding had been replaced by a comprehensive legal structure, and land ownership had become defined in the commercial terms of British society. What remained however, was the basic division of the Highlands and Islands into large parcels of land. The estates of the clan chiefs remained relatively intact, and though many were to be broken up like Clanranalds in the sales, the basic pattern of ownership was far more concentrated than in the rest of Britain. Indeed, the general trend in Scotland during the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was a reduction of the number of landowners as more and more land became consolidated into vast estates. When Eigg was thrown onto the Highland land market for the first time, the vast majority of Scotland was divided into approximately 1,500 estates and the total number of landowners just 7,500.<sup>86</sup>

## 1.6 A Sporting Estate with Private Owners 1827- 1925

Hugh MacPhearson, Professor of Hebrew and Greek at Kings College Aberdeen had purchased the island just as the emerging Highland land market was beginning a notable rise in transactions. Not only had the end of the Napoleonic wars knocked the bottom out of kelp prices, but the agricultural depression which followed had caused severe declines in the profits from cattle and sheep.<sup>87</sup> Clan chiefs throughout the Highlands and Islands were selling their land at an awesome pace in favour of the more immediate returns of hard cash. The class of proprietors that

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<sup>86</sup> Callander. pp.10-11

<sup>87</sup> Hunter. The Making. p.37

followed in their wake were obviously in possession of the cash, but were lacking the prestige and position that came with ownership of land. In Scotland this prestige was amplified by the feudal powers that conveyed ownership and by a distinctly romanticised image of the Highland landowner. Whilst a new agricultural boom in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century provided handsome returns on sheep farming, sport and recreation were to become the chief pursuits of the new owners. Land was now fundamentally concerned with the private interests of the new owners whose pursuits had little connection with the large populations that still remained on the ground. Eigg, like estates throughout the region was to see immense changes as the island's now redundant inhabitants were shipped to North America.

Considering the state of the island's population it is more than surprising that MacPhearson did not start clearing them immediately. As the 1831 Statistical Account emphasises the island was in rough shape. With a population of 452, and a structure of landholding that only barely supported them, the islanders were suffering horrendous levels of poverty. Cleadale was the most congested with 24 households residing on just 18 crofts, and Upper and Lower Grulin with their 9 crofts each had practically doubled in size over two generations. Those who were not contained within the island's 41 crofts were strictly landless, and dependent upon the tacksmen of Laig, Howlin, Kildonnan and the new factor who now held Sandaveg as his own farm.<sup>88</sup> The degree to which the surviving tacksmen still retained a large list of dependants is illustrated in the household of John MacDonald who had replaced Macaskill as the tacksmen of Kildonnan. Married with 6 children, his family also included his mother, an old aunt, two granddaughters and an orphan boy. Also living in the house, and employed by him, were a teacher, two local nurses, two house servants, a cook, a poultry woman, a spinner, two herdsmen, a dairy maid, a farm servant, and on top of that, he also took in the odd lodger ! On the 143 acre farm he employed at least another dozen labourers as well to work land. At the other end of the scale overcrowding was possibly even worse, since the two room blackhouses had to contend with at the very least half a dozen inhabitants not to mention the over-wintering animals that were also kept in the

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<sup>88</sup> Maclean, Rev D. in The Statistical Account of Scotland, 1794-5. Vol.xx. p.231

house.<sup>89</sup> MacPhearson and his factor did not act on remedying these problems of overpopulation and instead took their aim at the island's wildlife. To improve the game all hooded crows, ravens, and Eagles were shot, with islanders compelled to destroy their dogs.<sup>90</sup>

Whilst the island's bird life was swiftly reducing in numbers, the number of people was rapidly increasing. The predominance of the potato had allowed islanders to eke out a miserable but nevertheless sustaining existence and by 1841 the population had grown to 546.<sup>91</sup> The productivity of the magical potato was to prove short-lived, though, since following on from Ireland and southern Scotland, potato blight hit the West Coast in 1846 and ruined all but the entire crop.<sup>92</sup> Just like Ireland the impact was devastating and severe famines were experienced throughout the Highlands and Islands. Eigg was relatively fortunate at first because the blight did not have too bad an impact, and unlike most other landlords, MacPhearson was initially speedy and compassionate by supplying food on credit and waiving the smaller tenants' rents. The Free Church also handed out supplies, and where the factor was negligent in supplying MacPhearson's subsidised meal, they quickly circumvented starvation. Thereby ensuring strong support both on Eigg and around the region. Nevertheless, the impacts of the famine weakened the islanders, and although relatively few were to succumb to its direct effects, they were easy victims for the wave of typhoid that soon followed. Whole families perished in the overcrowded households, and many of the island's children were to end up as orphans on the steadily increasing paupers' role.<sup>93</sup>

Dismay at conditions in the Highlands and Islands had forced the British Government into action. Having already had direct experience of famine relief in Ireland, meal depots were first established in Tobermory and Portree. Unlike Ireland however, the famine relief was administered not directly from London but rather through Scottish agencies and administrations. For instance incentives were made to encourage reluctant landlords into employing their starving tenants on agricultural and

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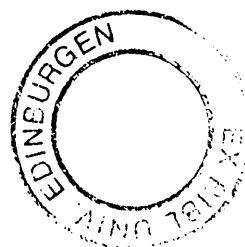
<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Dressler. p.68; Urquhart p.82

<sup>91</sup> Banks. p.68

<sup>92</sup> Hunter. *The Making*. p.54

<sup>93</sup> Dressler. p.81



civic improvements.<sup>94</sup> On Eigg MacPhearson grudgingly accepted these funds and organised the building of a road across the island, together with drainage schemes and the construction of a new pier. Since poor-relief work was to be made as unpalatable as possible, the islanders were only paid the lowest of wages. Though this provided for basic subsistence, it hardly alleviated matters since their fields were left unattended and the improvement schemes only benefited the landlord.<sup>95</sup> Unsurprisingly conditions remained severe, and by 1851 the universal conclusion to the “Highland problem” was taken to be mass emigration.<sup>96</sup> With the legal restrictions on emigration not only lifted but also now sponsored, MacPhearson evicted the tenants of Upper and Lower Grulin, dispatching them on a ship bound for Nova Scotia in 1853. The land was then turned over to an incoming shepherd whose sheep found the well tilled pasture so fertile that they all produced twins, with over 500 lambs recorded in the first year.<sup>97</sup>

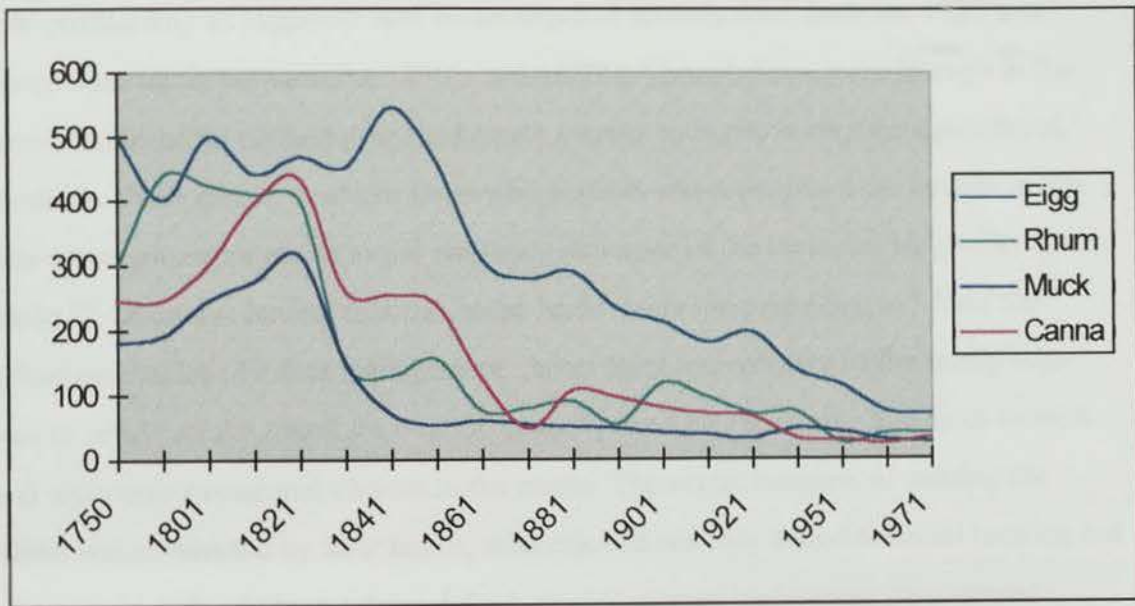


Fig 1.8 Population levels on the Small Isles.<sup>98</sup>

The forced evictions also went hand in hand with more pervasive voluntary emigration and the continued recruitment for the navy and Highland regiments, which had begun back in the 1770's. Migratory workers also left the island to seek

<sup>94</sup> Hunter, *The Making*, p.57

<sup>95</sup> Dressler, p.81

<sup>96</sup> Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community*, p.73

<sup>97</sup> Dressler, pp.83-85

<sup>98</sup> Banks, p.68

employment in the Lowland urban centres, as well as working in the fishing industry on the East Coast. More than often they left never to return. In just ten years, therefore, the 1861 census showed that the island's population had been reduced by a fifth. The townships of Brae, Five Pennies, and Howlin had gradually disappeared, and the farms at Laig and Kildonnan had lost most of their traditional host of servants. This was only the beginning a pattern of depopulation that was to continue for over a hundred years. Considering that MacPhearson, was interested only in the production of sheep and the shooting of game, this was a decided advantage. It was an advantage he was to see little of, however, since illness had prevented him from visiting the island from 1841 onwards, and in 1854 he died leaving the island to his family.<sup>99</sup>

The push for removing redundant tenants and improving the agricultural returns from estates was impelled by another rise in the agricultural sector in Britain. The profitability of Highland land ownership had steadily risen from the 1820's to boom once again between the 1850's and 1870's. Though there were hiccups in the trend, the financial climate propelled estate owners to improve on their agricultural methods. Since money could be borrowed at 6.5% and recouped from tenants at 8%, it was a rare owner indeed who did not take advantage of the considerable profits to be made.<sup>100</sup> Of course having said this, most landowners were far removed from the actual mechanics of estate management. Apart from one member of the family who was to reside on the island for over 50 years,<sup>101</sup> the MacPhearsons like most owners and were only occasional visitors to the estate. The actual business of running the island was conducted by their factor, who enjoyed not only sound financial backing but an excess supply of cheap labour. Like typical Victorian landowners they instead enjoyed the simple prestige of land, and following in the fashions set by the Royal family, the seasonal joys of shooting the abundant wildlife.

The fashionable appeal of owning land in the Highlands was encouraged by the relatively cheap prices for land in the region, and the ability to own vast stretches of rugged real estate that was unheard of in the rest of mainland Britain. Combined with

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<sup>99</sup> Dressler. p.86

<sup>100</sup> Callander. pp.63

<sup>101</sup> Urquhart. p.94

this was also the exceptional power that came with owning land under feudal law. Landlords not only had the absolute power of forfeiture, but were still actively encouraged and sponsored by the State to remodel and “civilise” the region’s backward society. In most circumstances this entailed the complete assault upon the indigenous language, culture, and religion; either by coercive education and forced compliance to Protestant, Lowland society, or by the more common wholesale removal of populations.

By the 1880’s Britain’s agricultural boom had been broken by cheaper imports from the New World. Wool prices collapsed, and throughout the Highlands the vast sheep runs were swiftly changed over to deer forests, which were seen as the only viable economy left. A new wave of evictions ensued, whose severity and brutality initiated a co-ordinated movement among the Highland communities. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, this led to the Napier Commission of enquiry, and eventually the Crofters Act of 1896. Since conditions on Eigg were comparatively better than most, the Royal Commission did not actually visit the island, and instead the inhabitants let their newly elected crofting MP, Fraser MacIntosh, represent their grievances.<sup>102</sup> Though 28 crofts were registered on the island, shared between Cleadale and Galmisdale, land hunger was still very much an issue, and the 1881 census showed that hardly anyone under the age of 40 held a croft.<sup>103</sup>

The 1886 Crofters Act did not aim at regaining land that had already been lost, but instead focussed on the needs of consolidating and enlarging the existing holdings.<sup>104</sup> Consequently, in order to break the rampant congestion, security of tenure was only given to the larger crofts. Nevertheless, due to the enthused scholarship of Skene and Carmichael, the Napier Commission and subsequent Crofters Act did look towards re-establishing the old system of communal farms. Rights were therefore given to crofters to acquire neighbouring land for enlargement of common grazings, if at least 5 crofters applied and the landlord consented.<sup>105</sup> Unlike other more intransigent landowners, the MacPhearsons did allow this to take place, and the crofters at

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<sup>102</sup> Fraser Mackintosh, C. *Antiquarian Notes*, Second Series, Inverness, 1897. p.261

<sup>103</sup> Dressler. p.109

<sup>104</sup> Hunter. *The Making*, p.162

Cleadale gained a little more land at the expense of Kildonnan and Howlin farms with two more crofts being created in the process;<sup>106</sup> a small, but nonetheless significant victory that must have been greatly enjoyed by the island's remaining tenantry.

Though the Crofters Act finally halted the most coercive aspects of landlords' power over crofters, their influence was still very strong over resident populations and regional policy.<sup>107</sup> This was notably so on a small island where the owner and factor had enormous control over the local economy. Those tenants who were not fortunate enough to have gained the rights of crofters were still at the mercy of summary eviction. Notwithstanding their legal protection, the crofters were also considerably under the whim of the landlord since their crofts were very small by comparison, and like most crofters they were still dependent upon waged labour to support themselves. On an island with limited opportunities, this meant that members of the family were continually forced into finding work on the mainland, which obviously continued the steady trickle of depopulation.<sup>108</sup>

With lacking interests and profits in the island the MacPhearson family sold Eigg in 1896 to an eccentric arms dealer by the name of Robert Lawrence Thompson MacEwen. Far from being a now traditional absentee landlord, he not only lived on the island full time, but actively took an integral part in its management. His reasons for doing so are unclear to say the least, and rumours abounded on the island that his change of name (he dropped his first and last names) and bizarre habits were to avoid assassins from previous exploits in the Far East.<sup>109</sup> Nevertheless, Thompson's proprietorship brought some welcome improvements to the island including regular post, a telegraph, a new pier and a motorised launch. Perhaps most important of all, his sizeable wealth brought the first stable and well-paid employment on the island. Establishing a precedent of the benign landlord, he gave loans and assistance for housing and provided funds for a resident doctor and improvements to the school.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Dressler. p.112

<sup>107</sup> Cameron E."The Political Influence of Highland Landowners: A Reassessment", Northern Scotland, vol 14, 1994, pp.27-47.p.27

<sup>108</sup> Dressler. p.97

<sup>109</sup> Urquhart. pp.128-129

<sup>110</sup> Dressler. p.101; Urquhart. p.129



The new crofting laws, however, had in part conditioned his magnanimity, for originally he had intended to clear the island completely and move the people to his neighbouring properties of Muck and Strathaird. Thereby leaving the island as his own private residence.<sup>111</sup> Since this action was now forbidden under law, he was only able to clear an area around Galmisdale if he was able to gain the crofters' acceptance. This was achieved by establishing new and larger crofts at Chuagach (south of Cleadale) and constructing new houses upon them. In doing so he was responsible for the last clearance on the island, albeit a quite peaceable affair, and for the collection of all the crofters into one location. In the cleared area at Galmisdale a fancy new lodge was constructed, with its boundary walls being built from the stones of the deserted crofts. From this building, as a sick old man in 1913, he supervised the construction of his own mausoleum on Castle Island, in which he was buried the same year.<sup>112</sup>

Eigg then passed to his brother John MacEwen who had little interest in the island and simply let the shooting to a Danish shipping magnate, William Peterson, who was to later buy the island at the height of the First World War. The war of course had large impacts on the island, with 20 men enlisting into the ranks of Highland regiments and heading off to the trenches. As Dressler notes it was more than curious that, considering the island's population of 160 was evenly split between Catholic and Protestant, all of the servicemen were Catholic. Tradition has it that the Protestant factor played a significant hand in choosing who went by allocating agricultural jobs only to Protestants.<sup>113</sup> Whatever the case, only ten were to survive and return. Although this loss represented a significant portion of the island's working males, a greater impact was felt from the Asian flu epidemic, which reached the island at the end of the war.<sup>114</sup>

Apart from depleting the Highlands and Islands of yet more people, the war and its aftermath heralded significant impacts upon land holding in the region. Both shortly before and after the war, many of the great sporting estates were sold off and

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<sup>111</sup> Dressler. p.101

<sup>112</sup> *ibid.* p.115; Urquhart. p.136

<sup>113</sup> Dressler. p.126

like Thompson's, broken up in their sale. Actively encouraged by the Land Settlement Act of 1919, this process led to a general shrinkage in the average size of estates, and a proportional rise in the number of small owner-occupier farms.<sup>115</sup> On Eigg the returning ex-servicemen used the Act's provisions not to purchase land, but like other crofters, to extend their common grazings. They made applications as early as 1919, but the new proprietor was a forceful character who had little interest in their requests. Extremely wealthy, Peterson was an archetypal absentee landlord, who owned the island, like his luxury yacht, for reasons of simple ostentation and social standing. Tenants, rents, and the estate meant little to him, since the island was only a holiday home for the pleasures of shooting and the hosting of lavish parties. It therefore took the crofters over three years to acquire the 100 acre extension.<sup>116</sup> Unfortunately, the extra land did little to alleviate matters when the depression of the 1920's and early 30's hit; cattle prices plummeted, and both crofters and small farmers throughout the Highlands began to struggle in the nation-wide slump. Soon emigration was being advertised again, and strong media campaigns tempted many to give up their hard-won holdings. On the island the population fell from 150 in 1921, and to 138 in 1931.<sup>117</sup> Since many estates were like Eigg, and run in a loss-making fashion, landowners felt the pinch too, with the sales of estates rising significantly as many wealthy families began liquidating their assets. Following the trend Peterson ended up selling the island in 1925 to Sir Walter Runciman, a wealthy and successful politician.

### 1.7 Runciman Family Values : 1925-1975

Though WW1 and its subsequent economic depression precipitated a wave of estate sales and an increase in the number of landowners, there was still enough wealth around to maintain the underlying pattern of large-scale estate ownership in the Highlands and Islands. This was boosted not only by the economic up-swing of the 1930's, but was forcefully shored-up by the growing presence of the Government as a principle land owner.<sup>118</sup> With crofting seen as increasingly uneconomic and backward,

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<sup>114</sup> *ibid.* p.116

<sup>115</sup> Callander. pp.80-85

<sup>116</sup> Dressler. p.120

<sup>117</sup> Banks. p.68

<sup>118</sup> Callander. p.84

this pattern of ownership remained predicated upon an economy of sporting estates, large hill farms, and forestry. The corresponding ideology was of course highly paternalistic, and surviving local communities grew strongly dependent on the notions of the benign landlord for their survival. On Eigg this was amply reinforced by the arrival of the Runcimans, a family who were to own the island for over 40 years. Although their active and personal management was to in many ways cushion the island's inhabitants from the region's general economic decline, they continued a tradition of land ownership that was not only uneconomic, but that continued to marginalise the position of the resident community.

If you ask the older generation of islanders today about the Runcimans, you will often hear their proprietorship described as the "Golden Age". Not only did they heavily invest in the island, but they were also a kind and considerate family who often assisted and helped the island's dwindling community. Taking a direct interest in the estate's management, they initiated a vigorous period of improving the island's infrastructure. Holding self-sufficiency as the abiding ethic, they planted large sections of mixed forestry, undertook drainage schemes and built a state of the art dairy. Constructed at Sandavore, the dairy was part of model farm that encompassed the holdings of Galmisdale and was run by Lady Runciman herself. On the sporting side, the lochs were stocked with trout and gamekeepers were employed to raise and tend the birds through the year. Other improvements included new buildings at the pier that matched an elaborate new lodge. Although not exactly appropriate for the climate, the lodge was designed by Balfour Paul and had a distinct Mediterranean flair with a flat Italianate roof and, rather unbelievably a palm tree lined drive. A new hydroelectric scheme was also constructed, which brought the first electricity to the island, and powered both the lodge and surrounding buildings. One of which was a new community hall.<sup>119</sup>

With all this construction and activity, the Runcimans brought steady and stable employment to most of the island's households. As remarkably benevolent landlords this included the notable perks of free milk, wood, and coal for all estate workers.

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<sup>119</sup> Dressler. p.122

Living conditions naturally rose as more money circulated on the island, and during the 1930's especially, house improvements were matched by a healthy social and cultural life. This has been particularly well recorded by Dressler, who provides much detail of the crofting community's daily life.<sup>120</sup> Tightly bound in its organisation, the crofters did much of their farming in common and directed themselves through a strong Grazings Committee of crofting elders. A hard but nevertheless productive life, the whole community was involved in the seasonal activities of tending cattle, cutting peat, and the gathering-in of harvests. This was combined with regular social events and the traditional celidhs which were held in people's houses and the community hall.<sup>121</sup>

The Runcimans generosity certainly proffered some protection on the community from the effects of the depression, and indeed induced an era of unprecedented prosperity during the 1930's. Nevertheless, the general pattern of regional decline and depopulation had impacts on the island, and after the Second World War this was to drastically increase. Outward migration of the young had always been a problem, but it was especially so for women on the island. Unable to find employment in anything but domestic service and the dairy farm, there was a distinct trend of girls leaving the island and settling where they found work. With children being educated in mainland schools from 1950's onwards, this was only increased as more islanders became educated in the luxuries of the mainland, and increasingly far removed from the character of crofting life. Gaelic was in precipitous decline, and from the 1940's onwards so was the crofting community.<sup>122</sup> By the early 1960's the island's population had halved in a matter of 20 years.<sup>123</sup>

As will be further discussed in Chapter 2, the post-war decline in crofting was precipitated by the limited size of tenancies and by the lack of external work to subsidise a land holding system that never was designed in the first place to be agriculturally viable. Whilst on estates such as Eigg, wealthy owners provided basic employment and sustained the crofting system, in other areas there was a complete lack of opportunity to find alternative forms of income. Central to this was the degree

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<sup>120</sup> *ibid.* pp.121-130

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.* p.129

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.* p.152

of power that landowners had over the available resources and the course of their development. Even though crofters had security of tenure, they were still relatively cash poor and always tightly bound by crofting law and feudal restrictions in what they could do on, and with their land. Combined with this, and in many ways because of it, there was a profound apathy and lack of self-confidence within Highland communities in general. The systematic repression and denigration of Gaelic culture had had its impacts over the centuries, and the resulting communities of the Highlands and Islands were washed by a now common deference to land owners. Due to its natural isolation, and the degree to which the Runcimans directly controlled the estate's management and available employment this was no doubt more strongly felt on Eigg than in some mainland estates. Though they were benevolent, the Runcimans still maintained their hobby farm and holiday retreat primarily for its peace and tranquillity. In managing this they retained the foremost control over the island's economy. All of the island's farms were now combined into one operation, with islanders either living on crofts and dependent on part-time estate work for additional income, or living in tied houses and employed full time. It was a management style, which hardly gave the islanders much opportunity to advance or become independent, nor to enjoy the higher standards of living now afforded in the mainland urban centres.

The post-war declines of population and the region's ailing economy attracted gradual interest in the plight of the ailing crofting communities. In terms of Government policy, the Taylor Commission and subsequent Crofter's Commission attempted to redefine the crofters as full time agriculturists by looking at the amalgamation of small holdings into to more economic units. This only encouraged a defensive reaction from the crofters, which redirected the search for structural solutions into the more diffuse supports of the Crofters Agricultural Grant Scheme.<sup>124</sup> It did nevertheless show an interest in preserving the communities on the land, and this was echoed by a group of writers who moved into the region in search of a lifestyle that many believed to be on the way to extinction. Like Alastair Maclean and Gavin Maxwell, George Scott Moncrief was one of a growing number of people who not

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<sup>123</sup> Banks. p.105

<sup>124</sup> Hunter. The Making. pp.207-215; see also Hunter, J. The Claim of Crofting, Mainstream, Edinburgh, 1991.

only saw benefits in the crofting way of life, but even valued it above the prevailing trends of modern society. Spending much time on Eigg he was very much struck by characters who lived there and the contemplative nature of their world: “Islesfolk may not be a pack of saints, they share the universal ills, but remoteness and the inevitability of being often alone and quiet, do give them a chance, too rare in the predominantly urban population to live with their eyes beyond the world. They may seldom be able to put to words what they see, but it is immanent in their capacity to act intuitively”.<sup>125</sup>

Of course the appeal of the island’s contemplative merits had also been the reason for Sir Walter Runciman’s purchase of the island in the first place, but in financial terms it was far too much for his children to afford by the mid 1960’s. Advertised as the “perfectly secluded island of the Old World”, the “very beautiful Isle of Eigg” was put up for sale in 1966. “It had provided the family a holiday home” they said, “but there is no reason it might not be made a profitable thing. If somebody was prepared to live there full time they could probably do quite alright”.<sup>126</sup> This prospect particularly excited an island relative of Moncrieff’s, by the name of Neil Usher, as well as an hotelier Angus MacDonald, who also had relations on Eigg. Usher began the first of three attempts in the next decade to launch some alternative to the now traditional sporting estate model of ownership and management on the island.<sup>127</sup> The Isle of Eigg had certainly kindled an interest in its visitors, in part by its natural beauty but in the main by its enigmatic inhabitants. Particular among these was Hugh MacKinnon, Clerk of the crofters Grazing Committee for 40 years, and the last of the island’s famed storytellers and poets. Recounting his tales and songs, MacKinnon had not only enamoured Moncrieff and Usher, but was recorded by Edinburgh University’s School of Scottish studies, which preserved much of the island’s rich oral history. Working with Hugh and other crofters, Usher drew up plans for a new stock club to work a sheep run and rejuvenate the crofting community. By dividing the island back into separate farms they sought to devolve the island’s management into three smallholder farms at Kildonnan, Laig, and Galmisdale. With Mallaig being served by a regular train service by 1960, they also thought of capitalising on the small stream of tourists

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<sup>125</sup> Scott Moncrieff, George. Scottish Islands, London, 1952. pp.188-189

<sup>126</sup> Dressler. p.151

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*

who were beginning to make their way up the coast by turning the lodge into a hotel. Unfortunately the co-operative bid of £56,000, financed by Usher and Moncrief, was beaten by one of £71,000 from a Welsh farmer, Captain Robert Evans.<sup>128</sup>

An old man when he bought the island, Evans attempted to turn the ailing sporting estate into a principally agricultural enterprise. Employing an energetic factor who imported a large number of Hereford cattle swelling the island's herd he looked towards a predominantly cattle-based enterprise. Unfortunately with rail services ending their stock transport services, access to markets produced severe economic burdens on the farms' management. More of an impact however came when the new cattle succumbed to red water fever, caused from bracken and damp conditions. Having bought the island on notion of making a profit from farming, Evans decided to sell after just five years.<sup>129</sup> On hearing the island was up for sale again, Neil Usher and George's nephew Gavin decided to mount another bid. A development plan, which encapsulated all the ideas Hugh MacKinnon and Usher had worked on before, was again prepared, but this time apart from Hugh, there was little interest expressed by the other crofters. "They had grown too used to doing things on their own", recalls his son Angus MacKinnon, and "they were never that interested in sheep in any case".<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless, the partners went ahead with their plans of trying to turn the loss-making estate into something that could generate better employment and opportunity. The main problem they faced, however, was finding enough funds to purchase and invest in a seemingly over-valued property. Gaining the support of the highly active resident Small Isles GP, Hector MacLean, and District Councillor, Fergus Gowans, they decided to send their proposals to the newly established Highlands and Islands Development Board (HIDB) in the hope of finding backing.<sup>131</sup>

The HIDB had been discussing the merits of the public purchase of estates since its inception, principally as method for tackling the region's underlying economic problems in a structural manner. The hopes for it taking a lead in challenging the problems of land holding and the stagnant economy of sporting estates were, however,

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<sup>128</sup> *ibid.* p.152

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> *ibid.* p.151

limited by its lack of political will and an artificially inflated value of land.<sup>132</sup> With the State steadily increasing its direct ownership of land through the Forestry Commission, the economic decline in sporting estates had not led to corresponding decline in their market value. Indeed, the market had attracted new types of owners from foreign and corporate backgrounds who were to maintain a strong, and over the next two decades increasing demand for estates.<sup>133</sup> This meant their prices remained buoyant, and as Evan's sale of the island was to demonstrate there were considerable profits to be made on the simple speculation in the market. Consequently, there was little chance of the HIDB being able to match the price of market conditions if was to merely offer an economic value for the island. In any case, shying away from setting a precedent so early in their commission, the HIDB reportedly ignored Usher and Moncrieff's proposals and repeatedly misplaced the paperwork. Highly frustrated the partners could only table a bid that was rejected as too low, and instead the island was sold to an English charity, the Anglyn Trust for £120,000. Netting Evans a substantial profit of some £49,000.<sup>134</sup>

Although Eigg had had a relatively common experience as an estate, it was notably different in that it had attracted two bids for ownership outside the circles of the wealthy elite and speculative investors that were purchasing estates in the early 1970's. Moncrieff and Usher had actually worked with the crofters and devised mechanisms to break down the centralised nature of the island's management. What they believed to be essential if the estate was to find alternative incomes and generate employment.<sup>135</sup> The chief problem that they encountered, however, was that the centralised nature of the estate was directly what was so attractive to other buyers. No matter the degenerated condition, it nonetheless allowed a complete reign over what was in essence a small kingdom.<sup>136</sup> The perceptions of which were only magnified by the fact that the estate was enclosed upon a particularly beautiful and historic island. To purchase Eigg was to acquire the legal status of a feudal laird, and have command over an estate and sitting tenants that was unparalleled in the Western world. It was

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<sup>131</sup> Conversation with Gavin Scott Moncrieff, 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 1996.

<sup>132</sup> Hunter. *The Making*. p.211

<sup>133</sup> Wightman. p.211

<sup>134</sup> Scott Moncrieff, Gavin; Dressler. p.153

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.*



the kind of property that was always going to catch someone's imagination, and it was just a question of who would appear with the money. In regards to The Anglyn Trust, a registered charity for the care and education of handicapped children, it was a "Commander" Bernard Farnham Smith.

Very much the self-made man with a thick cockney accent, Farnham Smith was certainly one of the more interesting characters to have a go at turning the estate around.<sup>137</sup> Although he had little knowledge of farming or island life, he certainly had a charisma about him, and with an open door at the lodge he charmed the islanders with an easy manner and countless stories from his navy days in China. Declaring his wish to develop the island, and encourage people to return, his first move was to appoint Angus MacKinnon as farm manager. After his five year plan had been approved, Angus began to oversee the acquisition of cattle. Ideas of pony trekking, tearooms, and workshops were discussed to accelerate the increasing number tourists now visiting the island. Galmisdale House was let to a new arrival who turned it into a B&B, which with a table license swiftly returned the house to its former use as an inn and island pub. Since the school role was now down to one child, islanders greatly welcomed the prospect of new, younger people being enticed onto the island. A variety of people appeared, and stayed for a while, but mostly they didn't settle. Like the rest of the islanders, however, the few that did stay, soon saw that like many speculative investors in the Highland land market, Farnham Smith's management was under-financed and badly planned. The purchase of a highly inappropriate 75ft schooner as a ferry boat highlighted his lack of practical understanding of the island's circumstances; especially when it dragged its anchor in the first southerly gale of the season and ended up on the rocks. The lack of funds was also made apparent when Angus MacKinnon's cattle purchases were soon halted. Likewise the traditional perks of free coal and milk for estate workers were similarly ended.<sup>138</sup>

Considering the growing problems of organisation and money, it was hardly surprising that Farnham Smith was unable to gain any support from the HIDB. The

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<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Dressler. p.153

<sup>138</sup> *ibid.* p.152

school for mentally handicapped, which was supposed to be the mainstay of the island's new enterprise seemed flawed from his very arrival, especially when none of the boys who appeared seemed to have any handicap whatsoever. After a while it was understood that the school was to be for wayward sons of the upper class who had been thrown out of boarding schools. Few if any appeared, and those who did received no education whatsoever, and talked of cold dips in the lodge dam and canings with a broom handle at night. Other misrepresentations soon became apparent as well, most notably his self-styled title was in fact only related to a position in the voluntary fire-brigade, and that he had never been in the navy at all. Finally when the islanders were feeding hungry boys, and the Campbell family was evicted to make way for an elderly retiree, Dr MacLean forcibly challenged the proprietor with the islanders' misgivings. A veteran of Normandy and Africa campaigns, the Doctor was an incomer to Eigg, and one of the few who felt comfortable actually confronting the landlord. Farnham Smith's response was to put the island on the market once more. This time at an asking price of £200,000, almost double the amount he had paid for it.<sup>139</sup>

The severe decline of the island finally precipitated the HIDB into action. This time however there were few participants from Eigg involved in the bid. Indeed, apart from Dr MacLean and Peggy Kirk the HIDB's interest in the island elicited a notable apathy amongst the remaining population. Not only did Farnham Smith refuse to accept the notion of Eigg going into public ownership, but residents themselves had distinct misgivings of direct government ownership. Apart from minor grants for caravans and a new shop, the HIDB like all preceding government bodies before, had showed little constructive support for the islanders. Most importantly there had been no recognition by the HIDB of the problems caused by mounting freight costs. Renovation of the pier and new ferries had been at the top of the region's list of priorities since the early 1950's, but nothing had ever happened. With a population now down to just 39, and an estate in severe decline, the return of a benevolent and wealthy private owner in the style of the Runcimans was perceived by the vast majority of islanders to be the only viable solution.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> *ibid.* pp.153-155

Another firmly against the notion of public ownership was Keith Schellenberg, a wealthy entrepreneur from Whitby in Yorkshire. Thinking Eigg was “a prime challenge for his middle years”,<sup>141</sup> he and his wife Margaret decided to put in an offer for the island. Finding himself locked in his aristocratic wife’s castle at Udney, however, the story goes that the sports-obsessed Schellenberg had to absail down from the turrets in order to table his bid in time. However, the bid itself was lower than that already tabled by the HIDB, and Schellenberg finally had to top his bid up to £250,000.<sup>142</sup> How he exactly found this out is unknown, though either Farnham-Smith or the agents must have surely tipped him off. Nevertheless, once re-tabled Schellenberg’s amended offer was accepted in August of 1976, giving the Voluntary Fire Commander a handsome profit of over £120,000, and thereby scuppering the HIDB’s attempt at rectifying the island’s pattern of decay.

Eigg had started to elicit some minor public attention because of the island’s dire economic circumstance and because of Farnham Smith’s multifarious activities. This was relatively minor, for albeit a pretty island estate it remained just one of many estates in the 1970’s suffering from inappropriate owners and a decaying infrastructure. The arrival of Keith Schellenberg, however, made it somewhat different. Hailing the spirit of free enterprise, he was a grand self-publicist who propelled the island into the spotlight of media attention. An absolute apologist for private ownership, he held up the merits of free enterprise as the solution for crumbling estates like Eigg. This included the marked development of the tourist trade and a reinvigorated farming economy. Recruiting more people to live and work on the island’s craft shops, holiday cottages, and assorted tourist ventures Schellenberg attracted notable funding from the HIDB. He was a new type of owner that seemed to combine the old traditions of a benevolent estate owner with the new Thatcherite ideals of the market economy. Naturally flamboyant and mildly eccentric, he took the title of laird to heart and gloried in the joys of the 1920’s era with vintage sports cars and antique motor launches. Yet, nevertheless he still professed the ethic of self-sufficiency and the abiding need for the island to support itself economically. In his

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<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> Urquhart. p.152

<sup>142</sup> Bryden, John. Comments on PhD Thesis March 1999

drive to pursue these ideas, Mr Schellenberg utilised the structure of management he inherited, and with a hands on approach he firmly controlled the entire island enterprise.

## 1.8 Conclusions

In many ways therefore Schellenberg marked a return to the processes of commercialisation that had begun back in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Though he owned an estate, and enjoyed the social – veritably Victorian – privilege that that entailed, he nevertheless intended to run the island as a business enterprise, and take the region forward into the new and overtly Thatcherite market economy. By the turn of the 1980's therefore Eigg stood out from other estates and was increasingly in the media's lens. Though it had a new and self-styled owner who was leading the way in catering to the rising tourist economy, the island was still nonetheless firmly placed in the traditions of Highland landownership. As part of the prevailing pattern of estates, it retained strong and centralised methods of management that marginalised the resident community.

The result of a steady process of enclosure that occurred throughout the Highlands and Islands, the island's inhabitants remained utterly dependent on the whims and motivations of the owner. When this entailed the complete dedication to profit in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the islanders were tightly restricted and compelled into crofts and the waged labour of the kelp beds. When the profits were to come from wool and mutton, they were then replaced by sheep runs and either actively evicted or encouraged to leave through lack of opportunity. And finally when sport and pleasure directed the motivations of ownership, the few islanders that were left became a mere feature of the estate's character. Part of a quaint and contemplative charm, which coloured the scenery and added a certain melancholy to the atmosphere. Indeed under Schellenberg you could even say they were marketed as a tourist attraction. At each stage of this process of enclosure, the grip upon the resident community and its livelihood had strengthened. Slowly one by one, each of the independent farms of Kildonnan, Galmisdale, and Sandavore fell into direct estate management. Independent traders and craftsmen soon became a rarity, and finally by the 20<sup>th</sup> century, apart from

a scant few posts funded by the State, 'estate' work became the only possible employment on the island.

This was a common process throughout the Highlands and Islands, as a once fiercely independent region became subsumed into the mainland British State. Land management and ownership patterns simply reflected the political processes at hand, which sought first to remove any potential threat, and then to seek greater economic returns from the region's economy. Just as the chiefs and political leaders of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century were finally brought under control, so were the kin-based communal occupations of land brought into line with direct ownership and the market economy. Though an island, which tended to exacerbate aspects of isolation and the degree of change felt, Eigg nonetheless shared the experience of most estates in the Western Highlands and Islands. Only the beauty of its island location and the number of owners perhaps gave it any historical distinction as an estate.

As Chapter 3 examines, however, what did mark the Eigg estate out as different was primarily the proprietorship of Keith Schellenberg. He arrived bringing three key components of change with him. Firstly he brought an invigorated approach to the new market in tourism, and secondly he brought the attention of the popular press. More importantly, however, he also brought the key agent of change, new incoming residents that were to catalyse the surviving community and profoundly clash with the established powers and rights of the presiding landowner. Little did he know it, but in his own unique fashion, Schellenberg laid the seeds for radical change and the over turning of centuries of centralised power on the island. His style of ownership and high profile nature also brought him face to face with the contemporary flowering of critique and challenge to the Highland structure of estate ownership. Rediscovering and calling upon a long history of opposition, academics and political activists in the 1970's picked up the banner of land reform. A banner, that as Chapter 2 will examine, was coloured by ideological perspectives, and over the course of the 1980's and 1990's, increasingly waved at estates like Eigg by the wider British public.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Historiographical Outlines of Scottish Land Reform**

## 2.1 Introduction

The laws, traditions, and practices governing land ownership are no small matter. Indeed, they are not only fundamental determinants of how and where we live, but as such, they effect how are our very economy, society, and environment are structured. Which is why, considering the present popularity and political will for reforming landownership, it is remarkable that the subject remains so poorly understood in Scotland.<sup>1</sup> Land reform is an immense undertaking, and yet present commentary and knowledge of the topic often remains blatantly ignorant of Scotland's precedents of reform and the social history that generated them. Due to the massive historical restructuring of landholding and landownership styles, the Highlands and Islands have notably been the traditional focus of controversy and agitation for reform, and because of the political responses to this, the region has become legislatively different from the rest of the country. The region has both unique forms of landholding, as well as specialised bodies and practices for their governance. Having previously contextualised the Isle of Eigg in terms of landownership history, therefore, this chapter will repeat the exercise in terms of land reform history. This is undertaken with particular reference to the Highlands and Islands, and with the expressed intention of providing an ideological background to present day debates.

The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century commercial assault on rural life and landholding in the Highlands and Islands certainly did not go unchallenged. Indeed, the 18<sup>th</sup> century saw two rebellions, precipitated by clan leaders who sought to overturn the impositions of the British State. After the clan chiefs had themselves been assimilated into the dominant commercial economy, it was their kinsfolk who continued the challenge with revolts against the waves of clearances that swept the region in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their need for more land and protection for existing holdings saw the continued agitation and calls for land reform begin to characterise the region. In answer to the civil unrest, and in trying to solve the Highlands and Islands problems of landholding and economic uncertainty, the British Government therefore undertook a series of land reform measures over the 40-year period from 1880-1920. These land

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<sup>1</sup> Wightman. p.1

reform policies were firmly bound within three competing ideological perspectives, which were to evolve over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Tracing out these three basic ideological strands of land reform is the central focus for this Chapter. All three were established during the forty year period between 1880 to 1920, and all three have led to specific attempts at resolving the varied regional problems of the Highlands and Islands. Beginning with the impetus of civil unrest, land raids, and calls for social justice, what I have termed the social reformers were the first to espouse radical ideas of tenure reform in Scotland. Their demands for the redistribution of land to the Highland's impoverished communities were met with more moderate approaches from liberal and conservative traditions. Though the combination of liberal and conservative policies of reform eased the social unrest in the Highlands and Islands, economic and social problems typified the region for most of this century. The continued decline, coupled with a rising awareness of the countryside in general continued interest in the Highlands as a region for specific concern. This was invigorated by the post war demands for the establishment of National Parks, as well as government attempts at the amalgamation of small holdings. Concern for the Highland's social and environmental heritage was also greatly intensified by a form of Scottish cultural revival in the 1970's, which together with a dramatic rise in environmental awareness, succeeded in rejuvenating the debates of the 1880's.

## **2.2 1880 - 1920: Three Stands of Reform**

Throughout Europe and the rest of the world, land reform has always been associated with agrarian unrest, revolution, and the shaping of political systems. Ideas of equality and birthright in land were generated by the Enlightenment figures such as Rousseau, Locke, and the Scottish economist Adam Smith. In countries such as France, Russia, Spain, and closer to home Ireland, these notions of land and land reform have historically shaped the political map. In Scotland however, there was no such revolution and though the agrarian unrest represented by the 19<sup>th</sup> century "Crofters War" considerably echoed what was happening in the rest of the world, there was no overturning of the political system. The only significant gain that arose from



the populist campaigns between 1880 and 1920 was the 1886 Crofters Act and the subsequent parliamentary concessions and adjustments of 1887, 1906, 1911, and 1919. Though in many ways a form of compromise, the 1886 Crofters Act did represent a significant victory for the crofting communities of the Highlands and Islands. Indeed the political movement had claim to being the first mass party in Britain, since the populist campaign had channeled itself directly into parliamentary representation and reform.<sup>2</sup> For these impoverished and marginalised communities, who by the 1880's had already succumbed to several bouts of famine, clearance, and eviction this achievement was nothing short of remarkable. It required not only an immense degree of organisation over a wide and often inaccessible terrain, but more importantly necessitated a psychological turn around in attitude and behaviour. This was facilitated and assisted by an intellectual vanguard of activists who traveled the region, visiting communities and preaching what became known as the “gospel of land reform”.<sup>3</sup> Predicating their demands for reform very much upon the social needs of the Highland communities, and the traditional nature of land holding in the region, these campaigners developed a vigorous critique and campaign against the contemporary patterns of land ownership and land use.

The most notable of the early land reformers was John Murdoch, a radical campaigner for reform who sought the emancipation of the Highland communities from what he termed “the rapacious activities of landlords”.<sup>4</sup> Campaigning through personal visits, lay preaching, and the publishing of a dedicated regional newspaper *The Highlander* he attacked the system of proprietorship that had cleared “whole townships and parishes from the glens for sheep and deer, and forced the population to dismal rocks and barren bogs”. Emphasising how the kelp boom of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had simply “afforded the landlords a grounds for extracting more than the land was capable of yielding”, he blamed the pattern of land ownership for the wide social disasters induced by potato dependence, unfair wages, and extortionate rents. “Landlords had begun by exploiting the Highlanders”, he declared in 1852, “. . . and

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<sup>2</sup> Hunter. *The Making*. p.154

<sup>3</sup> Morgan, Daniel. Land Reform in the Highlands: The Political Roots of Green Consciousness, MSc. Dissertation unpublished, University of Edinburgh. 1993. pp. 13-28

now they had embarked on their destruction. First apply them to a degrading and ruinous system; and then make their degradation and ruin an excuse for their extermination. This is the true statement of the case”, he asserted, “Knock the poor man down and then kick him for falling”.<sup>5</sup>

Strong stuff to be sure, but Murdoch’s critique was far from the simple case of ‘laird-bashing’. Closely supportive of the Highland communities, he not only had a firm understanding of their experience and their desperate need for more land, but also a strong ethical motivation determined by Gaelic cultural beliefs in land holding. Like the communities he supported, his view of land ownership was based upon the strong social and religious beliefs of Gaelic society that there could be no “absolute property”. In one of his many attacks upon landlords in *The Highlander*, Murdoch asserted the widely held notion that land was “not the creation of man” and should not be treated in the same way as “houses or furniture or ships or manufactures”. Land was held to be a trust, and appealing to Gaelic tradition he emphasised that there “was found to be a distinct recognition of the fact that land in the Highlands communally belonged to the clan as such and not to the chiefs”. A chieftain was “head of the clan or family, but not the owner of the great tract of land the clan occupied”. Consequently, “the landlord class in the Highlands have been but the usurpers of the right which the people once possessed in the soil.”<sup>6</sup> The Gaelic tradition was also infused with profound theological convictions towards land, and in 1883 Murdoch published a pamphlet entitled “The Land Question Answered from the Bible” in which he compiled all the Biblical precedents into one damning polemic against landowners. The degree to which theological and Gaelic perspectives of landholding underpinned these radical calls for reform, were as Hunter points out very much recognised in the formation of the Highland Land League Reform Association (HLLRA). The membership card for the new organisation dedicated to reform carried two quotations: “The profit of the

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<sup>4</sup> Murdoch, John. *Argyleshire Herald*, March, 1852; Hunter, J. ed. *For the People’s Cause: From the Writings of John Murdoch*, HMSO, Edinburgh. 1986. p.20; see also, Hunter. *The Making*. pp.129-130

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Murdoch. *Argyleshire Herald*, July 1852; *Highlander*, Mar 4<sup>th</sup>, 1876; *For the People’s Cause*. p.21

earth is for all" (Eccl.5:9), followed by the Gaelic motto "*Is treise tuath na tighearna*" (a tenantry is mightier than a lord).<sup>7</sup>

The HLLRA, later to be known as the Highland Land League, was founded by several Scottish Liberal MP's and Gaelic academics with the intention of organising the mounting civil unrest in the 1880's Highlands and Islands into a coordinated movement. This they did with the help of radicals like Murdoch and Alexander MacKenzie by channeling unrest into depositions to the Napier Commission, a body of inquiry set up on the urging of Liberal MPs by Gladstone. After hearing thousands of crofters give testimony, the Commission eventually put forward a report that led to the Crofters Act, and together with the coordinated election of four crofting MPs the movement reached its peak with the 1886 Act being passed. Very much modeled on the Irish Land League, the HLLRA demanded "fair rents, durability of tenure, and compensation for improvements", and going a step further than their counterparts they also called for "such an apportionment of the land as to promote the welfare of the people throughout the Highlands".<sup>8</sup> Whilst the Crofters Act did much for security of tenure, it did not however grant the reformers their request for more land. Consequently, though the HLLRA boasted over 5000 paid up members in 1884, and held large conferences in 1885 and 1886, it dissipated into factions when the 1886 Act did not grant room for new crofts. Urged on by the success of tying home rule to land redistribution in Ireland, Murdoch and other radicals pushed for home rule in Scotland to be the next objective. This caused the division of the organisation, and the 1886 conference saw Fraser MacIntosh lead a split of the liberal faction from the group.<sup>9</sup>

Although one cannot take John Murdoch as entirely representative of the wider crofting movement, he was present at almost every key event and was very much part of the coordinated effort to establish land reform in the Highlands. He is certainly indicative of the radical style of socially inspired land reform that sought immense changes in the pattern and style of land ownership. Heavily influenced by the radical American economist Henry George the social reformers looked at plans for land

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<sup>7</sup> Hunter. *For the People's Cause*. p.48

<sup>8</sup> Cameron, Ewen. *Land For The People ? : The British Government and the Scottish Highlands, c. 1880-1925*, Tuckwell Press, East Lothian. 1996. p.83; Hunter. *The Making*. p.143

nationalisation, and the more academic towards George's ideas of Land Value Taxation. Hosted by the Glasgow based Land Restoration League, George gave a very popular lecture tour in 1884. This had effect not only upon the land reform movement, but also provided significant inspirations for the formation of Keir Hardie's Scottish Labour Party. Indeed, at the inaugural meeting of the party in 1888, it was John Murdoch who chaired the affair, and the second item on their resulting manifesto was the nationalisation and redistribution of land.<sup>10</sup> As the socialists began to turn to more urban agendas, however, these ideas of land nationalisation were to slowly fade into the background. Nevertheless, the legacy of the socially inspired radical land reformers proved to be very resilient, and their focus on the impact of land ownership upon social cohesion, stability, and cultural independence was to be picked up by later generations.

The Liberals produced the first alternative to these radical land reforms advocated by Murdoch and the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century crofters movement, and indeed by their eventual treatment of the issue in a purely regional form defined the crofting counties by their legislation. Both the 1881 Irish Land Bill and 1886 Crofters Act were products of the Liberal ideological solution to land reform. An agenda commonly known as dual ownership, it was defined by increasing the rights of tenants and the securing of their position in relation to landowners. Involving not only the allocation of security of tenure and the fair adjudication of rents, the Liberal policies also recognised the tenants ownership of buildings and improvements; hence the term dual ownership.<sup>11</sup> This certainly did not go near the radical calls for redistribution that the social land reformers had in mind, and was much more a form of parliamentary inspired concession than any sense of overhaul. But in comparison to prevailing attitudes among the land owning classes, the Liberal propositions of reform entailed in the 1886 Act were still taken to be radical for the time. Their acknowledgement of the region as needing special attention was notably attacked, and it was only because of the impetus

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid.* p.77

<sup>10</sup> Stewart, W.J. Keir Hardy. Eyre & Spottiswood, London. 1921. pp.37-55. For further discussions of the significance of the HLLRA and the Labour party; Crowely, D.H. "The Crofter's Party 1885-1892", Scottish Historical Review, xxxv, 1956. p.281; Kellas, J.G. "Highland Migration to Glasgow and the Origins of the Scottish Labour Movement", Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin, xii, 1966. pp.9-11.

<sup>11</sup> Cameron. p.193

of agitation and campaigners like Murdoch that it was eventually accepted. Once acknowledged, however, the precedent was set, and the Liberals greatest legacy in terms of land reform and the wider aspects of rural development was the realisation of the Highlands and Islands as legislatively different from the rest of Scotland.<sup>12</sup>

The ideological thrust of Liberal proposals and legislation obviously had distinct social motivations as well. Very much concerned with the plight of highland communities in desperate conditions, their 1886 Act was an attempt to once and for all, end congestion and rationalise land holding patterns in a more egalitarian manner.<sup>13</sup> The emphasis upon tenants rights and legal control of the worst excesses of landowners was expanded to cover the whole of Scotland in the 1911 Small Landholders Act. All tenant farmers were handed out rights of security of tenure and compensation for improvements. This was part of an over-arching plan to remodel rural life throughout Britain, and in many ways the Highlands and Islands provided a significant point of departure for the wider application of these policies. Dual ownership was certainly taken as the universal panacea for the “Highland Problem”, and consequently had many merits to be considered in its expansion to the lowlands and beyond.<sup>14</sup> The 1911 Act proved very contentious, however, and like the 1886 Act was particularly unpopular with the conservative landowning aristocracy who were not comfortable with more rights being given to yet more small holders. The Scottish Landowners Federation (SLF) was set up in 1906 precisely to lobby against the promotion of the Small Landholders Bill, and considering that some of the landowners represented were also in the Liberal Party itself, the thrust of dual ownership was to reach a peak in 1911 from which it was never to return.<sup>15</sup> In terms of quelling the calls for radical reform, however, and at least in diffusing the organised aspects of civil unrest that typified the period between 1880 and 1920 the Liberal land reforms were relatively successful. Sporadic unrest in the shape of land raids continued to occur, still motivated by congestion and the demand for more small holdings, but nonetheless crofters themselves began to feel more inclined towards the provisions and securities of the Crofters Act than in radical overhauls of the entire landowning system. By the

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<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* p.204

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.* p.145

turn of the century, the social land reformers had essentially been defeated, and the next seventy years saw the establishment of a more moderate approach to land reform.<sup>16</sup>

The Liberals did not produce the only moderate approach to land reform, since the Conservative Party too had its own ideological solution to the region's problems. Civil unrest and radical demands were to be met with an extension of the principle of peasant proprietorship; an approach and policy that naturally did not question private ownership *per se*, but that sought to simply extend private ownership to more people. Again typified by minor concession rather than radical reform, this model was very much the only option the landowning classes within the Conservative Party could tolerate by way of reform.<sup>17</sup> This consisted essentially of establishing crofters and landless farmers not as tenants but as owner-occupiers. Landowners much preferred to see land set aside for the peasant proprietor, than to see further restrictions placed upon their estate management and activities with resident cottars and crofters. Notable interest in the rural affairs of Germany and Switzerland gave successful examples of how the promotion of small-scale owner occupation had developed a healthy and robust agricultural economy.<sup>18</sup> This was naturally backed up by the ideas of the enchantment of ownership; as one commentator noted "The magic of property turns sand to gold .... Give a man the secure possession of a bleak rock and he will turn it into a garden".<sup>19</sup> There was also the ideological pull towards establishing a bourgeois class of owner-occupiers. As the Duke of Argyll aptly put it in 1895: "A measure which could provide facilities for the purchase of estates at low prices to be broken up might create a very desirable conservative middle class of proprietors".<sup>20</sup> The body that the Conservative administration in 1897 created to do this was the Congested Districts Board (CDB).

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid.* p.161

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* p.199

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.* p.194

<sup>18</sup> Collings, Jesse. Land Reform: Occupying Ownership, Peasant Propriety and Rural Education. Longmans, London. 1908. p.263

<sup>19</sup> Young, Arthur. Cited in Collings. p.2

<sup>20</sup> Oban Times, 26<sup>th</sup> June, 1897. Cameron. p.83

The conservative approach was also very much connected to the technocratic solutions of development and investment in infrastructure. Another reason for the disintegration of the radical crofter's demands at the turn of the century was the success of the road building programs and construction of new communication services instigated by the Conservative government of 1897. The comparatively large capital investment in the region gave many communities hope in economic terms as the State began to employ labour around the region in their infrastructural projects. The CDB on the other, hampered by lack of finance and legal power, had only marginal success in persuading crofters to become owners. Not only were there limited funds to procure the estates in the first place, but the CDB was also unable to assist crofters in the purchasing of stock. Consequently, considering that most of the crofters had little if any capital, and that they preferred the securities of tenure to the exposures of ownership, the policy of furthering owner-occupation was doomed to have little effect.<sup>21</sup> As a single solution, the policy was abandoned in 1908, not to be revived for another sixty years.

By the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War, however, the battle between the two moderate approaches to land reform had merged into a cross party consensus of policy manifested in the 1919 Land Settlement Act. The promises of land for returning ex-servicemen, together with the guidance of a Lloyd George coalition government, formed an initiative that essentially combined both aspects of the conservative and liberal strategies. Part I of the act gave increased powers and finances for land purchases, and the breaking up of estates. Part II gave greater powers for the compulsory establishment of small holdings on privately owned estates. The new aspect in the reform package to allow the fusion to take place was the acceptance of the state as an owner and proprietor of any new crofting lands.<sup>22</sup> This appeased conservatives by removing the danger of any further concessions being granted to existing tenants, as well as providing a greater scope for the liberal factions to continue the establishment of small holding tenants. This the Land Settlement Act did with the creation of over fifteen hundred new small holdings and the extension of over a

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<sup>21</sup> Cameron. p.193

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.* p.194

thousand existing holdings.<sup>23</sup> It also set the foundations for the state becoming the largest private landowner in Scotland, resulting in the present administration of over two million acres in crofts and assorted other holdings.<sup>24</sup> Forestry was also incorporated into the state ownership structure in the same year, with the establishment of the Forestry Commission. This was partially due to anxieties over timber supplies, but also as a technocratic solution to problems of employment and economy. The 1919 Act therefore finally ended an era of wide-spread unrest and demands for land from the crofting communities. Together with years of emigration to the urban centers in the lowlands, and abroad, the First World War also had traumatic impacts upon the population structures of Highland communities. Consequently, the popular civil protest that had encouraged reform dwindled, and those lucky enough to be granted securities of tenure stuck to the concessions that had gained.

### 2.3 1920 - 1970: Regional Problems

The land reform precedents that had culminated in the 1919 Act did little to encourage the region economically, and indeed by establishing so many crofting small holders left the area highly susceptible to the economic problems of the 1930's. A seemingly catastrophic decline of the region's economy was precipitated by downswings in sheep farming; the evaporation of herring markets in Eastern Europe; general industrial depression; as well as the decline in fish gutting, all of which knocked the bottom out of the migrant labour market where young highlanders had traditionally found employment.<sup>25</sup> Rather than civil unrest, therefore, it was depression, depopulation, and agricultural stagnation that were to characterise the Highlands and Islands for the next 50 years. Not at all liked by the civil servants who had to administer the system, crofting was seen by many over this period to generate more problems than it solved.<sup>26</sup> Especially if it was viewed as purely an agricultural enterprise, which was typical of most of the boards of inquiry that examined the region's problems from the 1930's onwards. The call for land reform was consequently

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<sup>23</sup> *ibid.* p.188

<sup>24</sup> Wightman. p.157

<sup>25</sup> Smout, T.C. pp.250-251; Leneman, Leah. Fit For Heroes ? Land Settlement in Scotland After World War I. Aberdeen. 1989.



more pervasive during this period from bodies like the Hilleary Committee (1938), the Advisory Panel on the Highlands and Islands (1946), the Taylor Commission (1954), and the Crofters Commission (1955). All faced with tenancies that were too small to be agriculturally viable in their own right, the rationalisation and amalgamation of crofts seemed the only viable solution. Whilst the establishment of the hydro-electricity, excavation of minerals, and the expansion of coniferous afforestation had all been initiated as palliatives to the region's problems, the need to address agricultural modernisation was all persuasive.

Crofting was a system totally at odds with the prevailing inter and post war mentalities of highly productive intensive farming. Anxieties over self-sufficiency in food supplies generated distinct political interests and state intervention in agricultural policy for the most part of the mid to late Twentieth Century.<sup>27</sup> In relation to the Highlands and Islands, the desire for increased yields and economic returns from the region's agricultural sector continued to be faced with uneconomical forms of tenancy and land holding. The Crofters Commission (CC) eventually took the lead in the late 1950's by coming out against the continuance of part-time farms and economically nonviable farming units. Seeking a stern and ruthless reexamination of the amalgamation of small holdings, the CC proposed a series of measures to drastically rationalise land holding into agriculturally profitable units. Faced with the basic abolition of crofting itself, the crofting community organised itself into action once more and constituted the Federation of Crofters Unions (FCU) in 1962.<sup>28</sup> Far from the radical demands for redistribution of land prevalent in the 1880's, however, the crofters' campaign this time stuck to the issues of tenure on existing crofts. The campaign against the CC's proposals, mounted by various crofting MP's and the FCU, vociferously argued for the protection of the rights of tenure enshrined in the Crofters Act. This they succeeded in achieving in the following year when the CC was refused the extra powers of compulsion needed to implement the reforms.<sup>29</sup> Due to failures of economic development, however, the momentum for land tenure change was still being

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<sup>26</sup> Hunter. Making of the Crofting Community. p.16

<sup>27</sup> MacKay, Donald. Scotland's Rural Land Use Agencies. Scottish Cultural Press, Aberdeen. 1995. p.5

<sup>28</sup> Hunter. The Claim of Crofting. Mainstream, Edinburgh. pp.99-115

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* pp.143-148

generated by administrations desperate for a turn around in the regions financial fortunes. The formation of the Highlands and Islands Development Board (HIDB) in 1965 was a long awaited result of the perceived need to tackle both development and tenurial reform together. Unfortunately, too preoccupied with the promotion of capital-intensive agriculture and growth point theories of industrial development, the HIDB had great difficulties in creating economic prosperity and was severely hampered in terms of land reform. Consultation papers were drafted and proposals accepted, but hamstrung and unsupported the HIDB's efforts were to amount to nothing.<sup>30</sup> The next legislative attempt at reform was the Crofting Reform Act of 1976 that sought to pass on the benefits of land development to crofting communities. This was to be achieved through the resurrected conservative policies of peasant proprietorship, by allowing crofters to purchase their crofts for 15 times the annual rent. Filled with various loopholes and contradictions, the policy failed to inspire enthusiasm amongst the crofting community. The years from 1920 to the mid 1970's therefore did not show any significant improvements to the Highland characteristics of unemployment, depopulation, and general decline. Although Highland communities were obviously in better material condition than their predecessors a century before, the region was still designated very much a problem area. In terms of the debates over land reform, if anything there had become a hardened intransigence between the crofters who refused to give up their rights of security, and an establishment that was predicated upon the progression of modernised agriculture.<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps the most significant development in this era was not generated by economic criteria, however, but by a slow and gradual appreciation of the area's 'wilderness' value. Obviously, appreciation of the Highlands for scenic and wildlife value dates back in both Gaelic and English literature. Although Gaelic poetry and song predates all of the English literature on the subject, it was the Victorian era that brought the aesthetic appreciation of both the region and nature in general into popular British culture.<sup>32</sup> Interestingly though, unlike other countries such as the United States,

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<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Cameron. pp.202-204;

<sup>32</sup> Smout, T.C. pp.243-247

the interest in countryside matters in Britain emerged in two distinct channels.<sup>33</sup> Firstly, the turn of the century saw the establishment of various organisations aimed at fostering this awareness of nature through the protection and study of endangered flora and fauna. The year 1891 for example, saw the “baby of a few nineteenth century women”, the Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) being formed.<sup>34</sup> Focussed upon protection of specific species and particular aspects of the countryside’s wildlife, the RSPB was certainly a more popular form of the many small scientifically based societies that grew out of 19<sup>th</sup> century amateur interests in botany, biology, and zoology. These organisations were typically of upper class orientation and support, and tended towards specific interests in individual plants and animals, and furthering their particular knowledge and protection. By the 1930’s, however, the second channel of interest in rural areas was developing, and spawned by alternative middle class suburban aspirations of escaping industrial life, it had much more encompassing concerns.<sup>35</sup>

Desire for greater rights of entry to rural areas had already been represented in 1843 by the establishment of the Scottish Rights of Way Society, and in 1884 had led James Bryce MP to propose (a total of twelve times) free access to all uncultivated hill ground with his Access to the Mountains Bill (Scotland).<sup>36</sup> These concerns for access were much more broad based than the narrow interests of the small nature societies, and with the assertion that the countryside belonged to everyone, the 1920’s and 1930’s marked a significant change in popular attitude towards rural areas.<sup>37</sup> The Youth Hostels Association began in 1930. Likewise the Ramblers Association was formed in 1935, and spurred on by the successes of National Parks in the United States they both began a determined campaign for the establishment of similar designations in Britain. Urged on by the post-war reconstruction era, the two channels of interest in the countryside also came together into a coordinated movement for the creation of

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<sup>33</sup> MacKay. pp.90-92; Evans.pp.1-11.

<sup>34</sup> Darling, Frank Fraser. *Wilderness and Plenty: The Reith Lectures 1969*, Balentine, London, 1971. Cited in, Evans, David. *A History of Conservation in Britain*, Routledge, London. 1992. p.44

<sup>35</sup> MacKay. p.143

<sup>36</sup> Evans. p.41

<sup>37</sup> MacKay. p.143

National Parks.<sup>38</sup> In England and Wales the campaign succeeded in establishing 10 National Parks, and together with the rising awareness of the importance of rural land as a resource in its own right, the post war era generated the three pillars of British rural policy (with their Scottish equivalents): The Agriculture Act 1947, The Town and Country Planning Act 1947, and The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

Due to landowner influence, and the lack of a sizable supporting lobby for amenity and access, National Parks were rejected in Scotland. Partially this was due to the lack of any significant access problems at the time, but also because of the sheer expanse of Scotland's rural areas there was less of a perception of threat to the general environment and landscape.<sup>39</sup> The National Park campaigns, and mass trespasses such as the infamous one on Kinder Scout in the Peak district, were certainly focussed on areas south of the border. This was also reflected in the predominating English memberships of the voluntary organisations for both countryside recreation and scientific nature studies.<sup>40</sup> Correspondingly, though by 1948 the rest of Britain was to have a National Parks Commission to guard against damaging development, it was not until 1967 that an official countryside watchdog was created in the shape of the Countryside Commission for Scotland (CCS). Until then, only a handful of voluntary bodies with relatively small membership did anything to either champion the cause of conservation in Scotland, or directly protect land of particular concern.<sup>41</sup> The National Trust for Scotland established 1931 was such an example, and through the generosity of Percy Unna, a mountaineer and president of the Scottish Mountaineering Club, it acquired Glencoe, Kintail, Morvich and Ben Lawers during the 1940's and 1950's.<sup>42</sup> Although significant in themselves, however, these were only small acquisitions, and the interest generated by the aesthetic and scientific appreciation of the Highlands and

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<sup>38</sup> Accounts of the National Park Movement are widely discussed in, Cherry, G.E. Environmental Planning 1939-1969: Vol. II National Parks and Recreation in the Countryside. HMSO, London. 1975; Smout, T.C. "The Highlands and the Roots of Green Consciousness 1750-1990". Proceedings of the British Academy, 76, 1990. PP. 237-263; Sheail, J. Nature Reserves, National Parks and Post-War Reconstruction in Britain". Environmental Conservation, 11 No 1, 1984. pp.29-34.

<sup>39</sup> MacKay. p.144; further detailed in, Blunden, J and Curry, N. eds. A People's Charter?: Forty Years of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. HMSO, London. 1990.

<sup>40</sup> Smout, T.C. p.45

<sup>41</sup> Evans. p.120

<sup>42</sup> Wightman. p.182

Islands was characteristically fragmented and parochial for most of the post-war period. It was not until later developments in scientific understanding of the region that conservationist and recreational bodies were to have a pivotal role in the Scottish land debate. It was another change in the perception of the Highlands, however, that was soon to alter the situation and dramatically revise the debates over crofting, development, and land tenure.

#### 2.4 1970-1980 : Cultural Revival and Environmental Concerns

The 1970's were certainly a watershed for many things in Scotland, and especially for the perception of the Highlands and the resident crofting communities. Although the 1976 Act perhaps threatened the crofting tradition in many ways, other activities proved to inspire a new generation to take on the radical ideas of Murdoch and the socially inspired land reformers. This time the impetus for debate drew upon a form of cultural renewal inspired by revisionist histories of the "Crofters War" together with a rising awareness of contemporary ownership in the Highlands. Picking up the historiographically marginalised crofter, a group of academics led by James Hunter began to revise the understudied area of social history in the Highlands and Islands. Contrary to the established views of the crofting communities as backward and insignificant, the radical traditions of the 19th Century land reform movement were highlighted, as were the Gaelic cultural connections with the land. In particular, by examining the affiliations of the Irish land reform movement to highland history a renewed picture of communities in radical opposition to clearance was produced. Above all, the academic revisionists emphasised that these communities had a cultural and ethical right to exist, even in the face of a contradicting anglophile establishment.<sup>43</sup>

This picture was also combined with a modern understanding of land ownership highlighted by the increasing foreign acquisitions of highland estates. John McEwen's Who Owns Scotland provided the concrete information of exactly how the Highlands and Islands were owned and controlled, and press attention to the issue of land reform was significantly raised on its publication in 1977. A contemporary milestone in the land debate in Scotland, McEwen's work was the first of its kind since

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<sup>43</sup> Hunter. The Making. p.206

Tom Johnson's studies to examine the precise pattern of land ownership in Scotland. It gained particular attention especially because coupled with his revealing statistics was reaffirmation of the arguments for land nationalisation. Since the dominating political ideology of the Labour Party was also supportive of nationalisation in general, the land reform debate was coming full circle and retracing the radical traditions of the previous century. Indeed the HIDB was actively, if not successfully, trying to acquire estates such as Eigg for models of development during this period, and in the same year as McEwen published his book the Northfield Committee was also set up to investigate agricultural land purchase and re-population.

The 1970's mood of Scottish cultural resurgence and interest in the land debate was perhaps best represented by the 7:84 Theater Company and its performances of John McGrath's play, *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black Black Oil*. The name of the company was taken from McEwen's notable statistic of 0.07% of the population owning 84% of the land, and the play not only made much of the modern crofting community's debt to previous generations of activists, but accentuated the need to continue their battle anew. The emphasis upon the oil highlighted another facet of the 1970's revival in the shape of the Scottish National Party (SNP). The newfound wealth provided an impetus for Scottish nationalists to again find hope in the possibilities of home rule. By 1978, 13 of the Scottish parliamentary seats were in the hands of the SNP, and with the promise of a Scottish Parliament looming in 1979 the potential for radical reform was strong. This was also reflected in the breakaway faction of the Labour Party in Scotland, the Scottish Labour Party (1975-1979), who not only called for home rule, but also broke new ground in the land debate by rejecting the traditional socialist appeals for outright nationalisation. Opting for more liberal ideas of reform, they advocated the establishment of a Land Use Commission to oversee the development of a more pluralist approach to land ownership together with enhanced roles for public and community ownership.<sup>44</sup> Although McEwen and many others were strongly advocating nationalisation, by the end of the 1970's these less statist approaches of devolved ownership and more responsible public ownership were

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<sup>44</sup> "A Question of Politics . . .", Landowning in Scotland, Issue No.247, Autumn 1996. pp.13-15.p14

favoured by radical opinion.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, the combination of academic examination, together with a rising public awareness of land ownership, and the legislative enthusiasm for constitutional restructuring instigated another peak in the notoriety of land reform. Murdoch's calls for the substantial overhauling of land ownership had been updated and modernised, and the abolition of Feudal land law practice was forcefully argued. Even the nationalist appeals for some form of self-governance were being accommodated. The restructuring of established land ownership patterns therefore became a subject of great interest, and just as land owners in general began to feel more than a little uncomfortable, the debate began to incorporate a widening criticism of not only land ownership, but land use as well.

The cultural renaissance in Scotland was paralleled by another significant change in modern perception of the Highlands during the 1970's. Rising global awareness of environmental issues during the decade began to focus popular attention upon the Highlands for their natural and scenic heritage. Instead of issues of amenity and access, however, it was the scientific strand of environmental awareness that began to cause concern. In Scotland, the scientific studies of nature had always had a distinctive approach even from their origins in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Founding fathers such Patrick Geddes, D'Arcy Thompson, and J.A. Harvie Brown ensured that nature studies were underpinned by a realisation of the complete cycle of ecology - making particular note of the role of human impact on natural environments.<sup>46</sup> The study of ecology had consequently strong and powerful traditions in Scotland, and this was made particularly evident in the 1970's by the popularisation of work by Frank Fraser Darling. The attention upon the precarious nature of upland ecology in general had been recognised long before 1970, when the Department of Agriculture for Scotland had commissioned Darling's West Highland Survey. A pivotal work in the study of the human ecology of the area, it brushed aside the picture postcard images of the Highlands as a rugged wilderness and painted a devastating picture of the region's immense environmental damage:

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<sup>45</sup> Wightman. pp.193-194

<sup>46</sup> Smout. pp.246-248

**The Highlands as a geologic and geographic region are unable to withstand deforestation and maintain productiveness and fertility. Their history has been one of steadily accelerating deforestation until the great mass of the forest was gone, and thereafter of forms of land usage which prevented regeneration of tree growth and reduced the land to the crude values and expressions of its solid geological composition. In short the Highlands are a devastated countryside and that is the plain, primary reason why there are now few people and why there is a constant economic problem. Devastation has not quite reached its uttermost lengths, but it is quite certain that present trends in land use and ownership will lead to it, and then the country will be rather less productive than Baffin Land.<sup>47</sup>**

Written in 1955, the Department of Agriculture did not publish the work for several years, and it was not until the late 1960's and 1970's that studies such as Darling's began to ring alarm bells.<sup>48</sup> Increasingly attention became focussed on the overstocking of deer forests, the management of shooting estates and the abuse of what little protective legislation there was. In 1969 Darling gave the Reith Lecture, and together with other publications was instrumental in popularising a view of the Highland's natural heritage as being very much under threat.<sup>49</sup>

The awareness generated by ecologists studying the region propelled some action within the government to alleviate matters. The creation of the CCS in 1967 was the first attempt to specifically address the issues of environmental degradation and access to the countryside in Scotland. This, in conjunction with the nationally focussed NCC, provided planning powers and designations for the protection of areas under threat. Combined with the failures of encouraging economic development in the Highlands, the perceived environmental decline clearly underlined the fact that basic questions of sustainability of the land economy and ecology had to be addressed. This was done through the 1971-72 House of Commons Select Committee on Land Resource Use, in which most of the leading ecologists (including Darling), land economists, and upland specialists were asked to report. Viewing rural areas more as resources for productive use, rather than having intrinsic value in their own right, however the Committee refused to endorse the idea of any form of crisis in upland and

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<sup>47</sup> Darling, Frank Fraser. West Highland Survey p.192

<sup>48</sup> MacKay. p.192



Highland ecology.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, though they proposed several recommendations for targeted grant aid and the development of multiple land use management, it was left up to voluntary bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGO's) to fill the gap in the demand for action. Enthused by the formation and activities of the new conservationists like Greenpeace (1971) and Friends of the Earth (1969, FoE Scotland 1979), the established groups such as RSPB and the NT/NTS experienced enormous growth. During the 1970's the RSPB gained over 300,000 new members, and with the corresponding increase in funds doubled its ownership of reserves.<sup>51</sup> This pattern of growth was also experienced in other newly formed organisations like The Woodland Trust (1971), and by the 1980's the development of "Not For Profit Ownership" became an established factor in the Highland land market. With media interest trebling over the period, and the slow accumulation of scientific studies revealing a very much damaged environment, by the turn of the decade the Highlands and Islands were popularised as an area whose natural heritage was increasingly under threat.<sup>52</sup> Combined with the social and political initiatives of land reform in Scotland, the problems with land use and environmental damage maintained a highly critical lobby against established patterns of land ownership and use. As the decade turned, however, and the Conservatives won the 1979 election, a new and very different political climate came to influence the land debate; one in which the State was to have a greatly reduced role to play.

## 2.5 1980-1992 : Conservation Values and Regional Growth

Considering that the growth of public awareness in the environment, which began in the 1970's, was to flower in the 1980's and 1990's, it is no surprise that in Britain the 'conservative' side of conservation was accentuated. The Conservative ideological agenda has historically never liked the idea of compulsion being applied to land use issues. The individual's rights over private property are held as almost sacrosanct, with the opposition to the 1886 Crofter's Act being a prime example of the

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<sup>49</sup> Darling, Frank Fraser. "The Ecology of Land Use", in: Thomson, D.S. and Grimble, I. eds. *The Future of the Highlands*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London. 1968. pp.29-55; MacKay. p.192

<sup>50</sup> MacKay. p.193

<sup>51</sup> Evans. p.136

desire to maintain land use decisions on a landowners level. The growth of environmental awareness, however, necessitated a distinct degree of attention, which together with rising demands on rural areas in general, emphasised the public expectations of action being taken. Tourism was now rapidly expanding as an industry, and the growing surpluses of the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) by the early 1980's also provided another source of momentum for change in rural policy; this time the goals of intensification being replaced by aims of extensification.<sup>53</sup>

The 1981 Countryside Act (Scotland) recognised the problems involved with the changing requirements of agriculture and conservation, but firmly adhering to conservative ideology ensured that the mechanism for reforming land use patterns was set upon the voluntary rather than compulsory cooperation of land owners. The resulting *voluntary principle* provided a succession of grants and compensation packages to encourage landowners to manage areas under designation in environmentally friendly ways. The emphasis on stewardship, and acceptance of landowners as appropriate stewards, obviously provided landowning interests with a new self-confidence during the 1980's and early 1990's, especially after their fears of state intervention during the late 1970's. The SLF made much of the new role of stewardship in its promotion of Scottish landowners, and highlighting the general aims of sporting estate management emphasised the importance of conservation in protecting not only game, but wildlife as well.<sup>54</sup>

The enthronement of the voluntary principle was also related to a retraction of the State from as much direct involvement with land use issues as possible. In part this was typical of the general process of policy development from the post-war era onwards, with Governments of differing hues much preferring NDPB's and agencies to actual departmental control. A study of the three pivotal 1940's countryside acts provides a clear demonstration of how machinery outside government itself continued

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<sup>52</sup> *ibid.* p.126

<sup>53</sup> Mather, A.S., Thompson, K.J. "The Effects of Afforestation on Agriculture in Scotland", *Journal of Rural Studies*. Vol.11, No.2. pp.187-202

<sup>54</sup> MacKay. p.9

to be sought for the application and monitoring of land use policy.<sup>55</sup> Not only did Ministers tend to prefer agencies to take over work from their departments for reasons of efficiency, but also because of the contentious issues involved; agencies provided good mechanisms for diverting criticism and unwanted attention from Ministers themselves.<sup>56</sup> The Conservative Government's approach, however, greatly intensified the process especially in the private non-governmental sector. Never liking the scale of State ownership of land, both the Thatcher and Major administrations looked at privatising the FC, and though no overall privatisation was agreed, the government began the sale of FC land from 1981 onwards. FC holdings were consequently reduced in size, with the Government in 1989 setting a target of 250,000 acres to be disposed of by the turn of the century.<sup>57</sup> Together with lucrative tax breaks and grant packages private forestry was also encouraged in general, and the success of these programs in encouraging private afforestation became one of the most significant features of the changing patterns of landownership in Scotland in the 1980's and 1990's.<sup>58</sup>

With regards to matters of conservation, a similar emphasis upon the private non-governmental sector saw the voluntary sector increasing its acreage of reserves by some 146% between 1980-1995.<sup>59</sup> The encouragement of NGO's and voluntary organisations in promoting the interests of conservation also witnessed the development of partnership agreements. Since they could not feasibly own all the threatened land of conservation value, groups such as the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) became active in leasing reserves and entering into partnership agreements with land owners. By 1995, for instance the largest group, the RSPB not only owned 87,491 acres, but leased 14,396 acres, and had management agreements over a further 4393 acres.<sup>60</sup> The escalation of NGO's and voluntary organisations involved in conservation certainly increased the acreage of ground under conservation orientated

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<sup>55</sup> *ibid.* p.5-9

<sup>56</sup> O'Riordan, T. "Institutions Affecting Environmental Policy", Flowerdew, R. ed. Institutions and Geographical Patterns, Croom Helm, London. 1982. pp,103-139; MacKay pp.5-9; Hood, C.C. "Government Bodies and Government Growth", Barker, A. ed. Quango's in Britain, Macmillan, Basingstoke. 1982. pp.44-68.

<sup>57</sup> Wightman. p.174

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.* p.182

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*

management. Together with the many instances of small scale conservation measures encouraged by grants associated with the voluntary principle, this represented a distinct degree of success for Government policy. Conservation had risen in prominence, and due to the rising power of the voluntary sector, many groups like the RSPB, NTS, and SWT achieved notable representation in policy decisions. The Highland and Islands region also began to turn the corner in the decade, with tourism playing a large part in rejuvenating the economy. Rural enterprise schemes championed by the EC and belatedly by the SO also did much to contribute to non-agricultural employment, and together with the CAP's variable premiums for sheep production the region experienced both economic expansion and population growth; the first instances of regional resurgence for centuries.<sup>61</sup>

The increase in conservation ownership and representation, however, did not coincide with an overall improvement of the region's environment. The 1980's saw increased pressures placed upon the Highland's fragile upland ecology from an 18% increase in both sheep and deer numbers,<sup>62</sup> to an escalation of forestry initiatives and the promotion of tourism; all of which highlighted large problems with the Government's *laissez faire* approach to land use and ownership. The succession of agencies, NDPB's, and NGO's did represent a rise in awareness over countryside matters, yet the *ad hoc* development of these various boards and organisations revealed the lack of an overriding strategy of development. Combined with a uniquely British approach to the setting up of agencies, the lack of guiding strategy was also associated with severe problems of accountability and representation.<sup>63</sup> If problems were evident in the NDPB's such as NCC and CCS, then the plethora of private individuals and investment firms that had entered the flourishing land market during the 1980's produced even greater problems of accountability for land use decisions. The dramatic increase in foreign ownership, and particularly the off-shore investment companies, pension funds, and insurance companies created many problems with regards to local communities, environmental designations, and access. Forestry and sporting estates came in for special criticism due to the lack of any planning

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<sup>61</sup> MacKay p.7

<sup>62</sup> MacGegor & Stockdale. p.302

restrictions on agricultural or afforestation projects. The Forest and Woodland Grant schemes had indeed promoted private conifer plantations, but often at the expense of local interests and ecological considerations.<sup>64</sup>

Similarly, whilst the SLF and various sporting estate owners prided themselves on benign stewardship of the land, the Highlands continued to be the scene of raptor persecution and the decline of indigenous flora and fauna. Consequently, though the conservation organisations had ridden the wave of public concern and built up strong influence and property portfolios, the Government's adherence to the principles of the free market in land, and the rights of ownership, had fostered contradicting effects of land speculation, absentee ownership, and ecological damage. As the debates over Skiing development in the Cairngorms also demonstrated, the Government's agencies refused to take assertive decisions, and often problems were complicated by agencies with contradicting agendas and ideas.<sup>65</sup> The basic questions, therefore, of sustainable land use in the Highlands that had arisen in the 1970's had remained unanswered, and an almost complete vacuum had developed on the issue of an overview or guiding framework for natural resource management.<sup>66</sup>

By the end of the 1980's the contradictions in government policy had promoted strong critical debate and begun another slow rise in the attention to land ownership reform. The social reform tradition reexamined in the 1970's, found increasing problems at community level with the domination of external control over Highland resources and land use. Although crofting townships and local communities had received some input from local enterprise initiatives, they were still bound by complex feudal bonds and entanglements that ensured landowners had a large control over the direction of economic development. Feudal restrictions still maintained that trees planted on a croft were the property of the landlord not the tenant, and so crofters were unable to take advantage of the lucrative 1980's grants for forestry. Similarly, when a tenant sought to diversify their holding into aspects of tourism or local small

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<sup>63</sup> Johnson, N. "Accountability, Control, and Compexity: Moving beyond Ministerial Responsibility", Barker, A. ed. pp.206-208; MacKay. pp.7-9.

<sup>64</sup> Mather & Thompson. p.200

<sup>65</sup> MacKay. pp.8-9

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.* p.193

scale manufacture, the landlord could expect a percentage of income, or a flat payment for the granting of permission. Considering that the motivations for owning a sporting estate are essentially recreational, traditional estate owners were therefore often criticised by communities for their use of feudal powers to restrain local development.

The management styles of absentee owners also tended to become more authoritarian as well, especially as traditional resident factors were often replaced by land management companies based in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and London.<sup>67</sup> Consequently, communities seemed to be increasingly enclosed by outside interests and opinion, as a new management styles were combined with feudal privileges. The role of the conservation NGOs was hardly viewed as successful either, for they too were liable to increasing a managerial, or scientific, ethos that ignored both local issues and local knowledge. Since the NGO's were mostly based on middle class English aspirations of conservation, they were occasionally subjected to criticisms as harsh as foreign absentee owners.<sup>68</sup> The degree to which the landed aristocracy had infiltrated the conservation movement also gave great cause for concern, as the natural reserves that replaced sporting estates seemed to embody a similar disdain for local community concerns. The crofting communities continued to be left out of the key land use decisions that affected their lives the most, and as conservation appeared to overtake the prominence of agricultural production there seemed to be little difference in the manner to which they were treated.

The combination of successive groups taking interest in the Highlands and Islands had given little benefits to resident communities, and the need for an effective lobby to support crofting communities in this new era had become as important as it had in the 1880's and 1960's. On the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the 1886 Crofter's Act, therefore, the Scottish Crofters Union was launched to promote the interests of crofters and rural communities in the region. Swiftly acknowledging the importance of local communities in managing a healthy environment, the first president of the SCU Frank Rennie (himself an environmental scientist), took great pains to show that the "great variety of wildlife in crofting areas was due in large part, to the small scale, low

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<sup>67</sup> Evans. p.78

input style of agriculture in which crofters had habitually engaged”.<sup>69</sup> Whilst the desires of increased agricultural production and the policies of CAP had driven both people and wildlife from the countryside, the SCU emphasised that the crofting communities had managed to maintain a high level of both. Marion Shoard had also noticed the growing public dissatisfaction of countryside matters in a variety of publications, and especially on the impacts of intensive production upon wildlife and access.<sup>70</sup> In 1989 she addressed the SCU conference and declared that, “crofters need to develop a long term strategy for ensuring that their fellow citizens in the rest of Britain continue to believe that crofting is a good thing”.<sup>71</sup> It was a declaration the SCU was to take to heart, and over the next decade was to impress successfully upon a wide variety of individuals and organisations. The crofting communities had a coordinated voice once more, and the traditions of social land reform were soon to play a large part in the resurgence of local communities in the Highlands.

The liberal approach to land use problems was also invigorated by criticism of government rural policy in the Highlands and Islands. Particular attention was focussed on the lack of planning permission for agricultural and forestry production. Outrageous abuses of the forest grant schemes provided concrete examples of how the rights of local and public interests played a subordinate role to the financial returns of investment companies. Whilst the designations of areas of conservation and scenic value were generally welcomed, the effectiveness of their monitoring and enforcement was woefully lacking. The lack of accountability and representation in the NCC, CCS, and other NDPB’s encouraged further criticism of how competing rights and interests were actually handled in land management decisions. The secrecy that surrounded many of the NCC’s and CC’s activities seemed to highlight the need to reevaluate the mechanisms by which these decisions were made.<sup>72</sup> The same was true for the protection and promotion of public access, and the Ramblers Association began new campaigns of trespassing and lobbying for greater rights of recreational access. Taken together with the debates over the Cairngorms, the increasing absentee ownership of

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<sup>68</sup> Hunter. *The Claim*. pp.209-212

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.* p.211

<sup>70</sup> Shoard, Marion. *This Land is Our Land*, Grafton, London. 1987.

<sup>71</sup> *The Crofter*. June 1989; Hunter. *The Claim*. p.210

<sup>72</sup> Evans. p.178

estates, and the increasing demands placed upon the countryside, the reevaluation of multiple use management was deemed essential. Indeed the call for National Parks once more began a familiar cry when rights of access or environmentally sensitive areas were put at risk by negligent landowners. By 1992, the appeal of National Parks was so popular, that a SO survey showed that 90% of respondents wanted the establishment of National Parks in Scotland.<sup>73</sup>

## 2.6 1992-1997 : Partnerships and Community

1992 marked a profound change in not only Scottish rural policy and the bureaucracy that administered it, but also in the attention given to issues surrounding the Highlands' local communities. The building criticism of both the NCC and the CCS, and government policy in general had hastened a reexamination of the agency structure in 1990. A process that was also related to the signing of the World Conservation Strategy and the publishing of the White Paper This Common Inheritance in the same year. Returning from their 1992 election victory, therefore, the Conservative Government implemented a massive restructuring of the land use agencies. The reorganisation saw the formation of an agency responsible for almost all aspects of land use policy relating to Scotland: Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). This was the first integrated agency to be directly involved with nature conservation issues specific to Scotland, and in its structure it looked towards answering many of the questions generated by land suffering multiple uses and demands.

Concerning the criticisms of rural policy strategy, a new initiative was also launched to promote better communication between agencies and government, and to set an overriding rural agenda. Fundamental to agency restructuring and the 1992 publication of Rural Framework was "the realisation that tackling rural issues in a sectoral manner does not work".<sup>74</sup> After decades of critique from boards of inquiry, select committees, and proponents of reform like Frank Fraser Darling, the SO began setting up mechanisms of planning integrated policy. Chaired by the SO, the 1992 Rural Focus Group brought together for the first time all the main Government

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<sup>73</sup> Scottish Office Public Attitudes to the Environment in Scotland, Central Research Unit; Edinburgh. 1991. p.3

<sup>74</sup> Scottish Office. People Prosperity and Partnership, HMSO, Edinburgh. December 1995. p.2



agencies, Local Authorities, and the private and voluntary sectors involved in land use management and rural affairs in Scotland.<sup>75</sup> Guided by themes which tried to avoid the established sectoral approaches of policy, the Rural Focus Group explored issues of diversity, quality, local added value, effective service delivery, networks and communication, Europe, sustainability, and top of the list community involvement.<sup>76</sup> The emphasis upon community participation in land use management finally resulted in the 1995 policy statement People Prosperity and Partnership, which firmly established the Government's commitment to implementing policy for the direct benefit of local rural communities.

These structural and policy readjustments, however, did not alter the prevailing Government favouritism towards the conservative landowning constituency. In the early 1990's the prominence of landowners was still a noticeable facet of rural policy, management, and land use decisions. Strongly represented in Government, landowners displayed enormous influence especially when sensitive topics like red deer or salmon came up for debate.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, landowners were also very conspicuous in the conservation movement in general. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), SWT, RSPB, John Muir Trust (JMT), and NTS all had large representations of landowning interests.<sup>78</sup> This influence often caused strained relationships with both Government policy and conservation interests. The most notable example being the case of Mar Lodge, where a consortium of JMT, WWF, and RSPB sought to purchase a principle Cairngorm estate in 1992.<sup>79</sup> Supported by senior SO staff, and visited by Ian Laing (the then Secretary of State), the consortium applied for funding from the Lottery-financed National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF). Another creation of the Major administration, the NHMF was swiftly becoming a gold-mine for conservation bodies in funding their land purchase, and so the consortium approached with confidence.

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<sup>75</sup> Rural Focus Group Members: Central Scotland Countryside Trust, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, Forestry Commission, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Rural Forum (voluntary and private sector), Scottish Agricultural College, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Homes, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Tourist Board, and SO in the chair.

<sup>76</sup> SO. People Prosperity and Partnership. p.2

<sup>77</sup> For a particularly critical view see Cramb. pp.11-26

<sup>78</sup> Wightman. p.183

<sup>79</sup> This example is taken from Wightman. pp,184-185

However, landowning interests were firmly against the consortium's campaign that the estate was at risk from further private ownership, and through influence on the NHMF and other informal avenues lobbied hard against the proposed consortium's purchase. The newly created SNH was given particular attention, and through the Chairman Magnus Magnusson persuaded to back off from supporting the venture. Eventually the bid collapsed, and after only two years, and much behind the scenes work, the NTS received funding from the NHMF to acquire the estate instead. Bound by feudal obligations, as well as a commitment to maintain the estate as a deer forest, the NTS was obviously felt to be the only compromise landowning interests could tolerate. The "Mar Lodge debacle", as conservation groups labeled the case, clearly exemplified the continued contradictions implicit in the Government's approach to sensitive land use and ownership issues. Whilst conservation was taken to be a principle aim in rural policy, the adherence to the free market and influence of established landowners in policy and practice still produced profound contradictions.<sup>80</sup>

The Mar Lodge case also emphasised the need to develop strategies which accommodated the prevailing political climate, and this was a key aspect of the success of the Assynt crofters in purchasing their Sutherland estate in 1993. Supported by strong media interest and a fundraising campaign that targeted not only other Highland crofting communities, but overseas interests as well the Assynt crofters eventually took control of a 21,000 acre estate that had been subject to most of the uncertainties and problems of private ownership. Side stepping the public versus private debate, the crofters opted for a community trust structure, that although constituted the estate as being privately owned, produced a far more accountable and responsible form of ownership and management. Perhaps most important of all, it allowed them to not only own the property themselves, but also to become their own feudal superiors. Land management and local enterprise initiatives were thereby unhindered by the feudal entanglements that dogged so many other crofting estates. Championed by the SCU, the community trust ownership could also be held up as victory for the crofting movement and the social reform tradition in general; finally shaking off the burdens of external ownership and domination the Assynt crofters had eventually won the historic

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<sup>80</sup> Wightman. p.185

struggle to become controllers of their own land and destiny. It was a point aptly made by one of the crofters' leaders Alan MacRae on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February when they received formal ownership: "It seems we have won our land. Certainly, it is a moment to savour, but my immediate thoughts are that some of our forebears should have been here to share it. It is an historic blow for people on the land throughout the Highlands and Islands".<sup>81</sup>

The significance of the Assynt purchase was marked because the initiative for the campaign had not been driven by Government policy or the interventions of a benign landlord, but had come from the crofters themselves.<sup>82</sup> Together with the support of media interest and lobbying from the SCU, the success of the Assynt community had catalysed a resurgence of interest in crofting. The community of Borve in Skye was soon to follow suit and instigate a similar trust venture in ownership and management. This confidence in crofting communities was amplified with the growing acceptance of the environmental benefits of crofting on the region's wildlife. Conservation bodies who had had a tendency to come into conflict with crofting communities, especially in regards to environmental designations, began to explore joint ventures and partnerships with local communities. In 1992 the SCU and RSPB published Crofting and the Environment: A New Approach, and together launched an integrated program for Corncrake protection through management agreements and compensation packages. This avenue of approach was also firmly supported by changing attitudes in the CAP, which began to look at the financing of smaller scale, less intensive forms of agriculture. In short after a century of marginalisation, the crofting community was beginning to be recognised as being rather than a hindrance, a major benefit to the region's social and environmental health.

The new found position of crofting brought with it a renewed attention to the system of land tenure in Scotland, and the land debate in general. From 1992 onwards there was a new increased and concerted attempt by all three traditions of land reform to tackle the issues surrounding land ownership and use. Continuously impelled by examples of bad estate management, and the ongoing sagas of Mar Lodge, Knoydart,

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<sup>81</sup> Ross, David. "The Assynt Crofters", Scottish Affairs. No.3, Spring, 1993. pp.32-33. p.32

and the Isle of Eigg the press fuelled debate with detailed attention. In the process the liberal approach to the land debate maintained a steady interest in rights and legal reform.<sup>83</sup> Rights of access by the general public remained a key issue, which although most voluntary bodies generally encouraged, remained highly problematic with sporting estate owners. Foreign owners were frequently highlighted for restricting rightful access; one notorious French owner in Calgary Bay on Mull for instance, received wide publicity for a putting up a sign declaring hill walkers will receive “rough justice”, even though there was a legal right of access to his property.<sup>84</sup> Combined with a weak enforcement of environmental designations, and other protective measures, the liberal tradition took these issues of rights into an analysis of the feudal land law. Where a century before moderate inclinations prevented any re-evaluation of the feudal land law in its entirety, the contemporary problems of controlling land use and protecting the rights of local communities propelled a much more critical consensus.<sup>85</sup> Abolition of feudal law was taken to be a prerequisite for the establishment of a much more active approach to the control of land use decisions. Since the Scottish Law Commission published its Discussion Paper 93: Property Law: The Abolition of the Feudal System in 1991, the proposals for abolition consolidated into an approach that gained popular backing from not only the opposition parties, but the media, community groups, and the “new” conservationists such as FoES and Greenpeace.<sup>86</sup>

The social traditions of land reform were of course greatly empowered by the Assynt success, but also firmly redirected. Whilst the Assynt campaign drew upon much of the precedents of the social land reform movement, the development of the community trust model soundly placed the ideas of land nationalisation in the past, and encouraged a much more flexible approach to alternative ownership structures. Assynt certainly gave a concrete example for both the SNP and the Labour Party in Scotland (by the mid 1990’s renamed the Scottish Labour Party – SLP) to work with in forming potential land reform policies. The SNP instigated its own Scottish Land Committee in

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<sup>82</sup> Wightman. p.179

<sup>83</sup> Ross, John. “Land Reform: Communities Urged to Join Rights Debate”, The Scotsman, 10<sup>th</sup> November. 1995

<sup>84</sup> Cramb, Auslan. p.19

<sup>85</sup> Ross, J.

1995 to investigate landownership reform, which through a series of public hearings and dispositions made the theme of access central to its analysis. Access to ownership, control, management, finance and information, were all found to be woefully lacking to rural communities.<sup>87</sup> The consequent proposals of feudal abolition, the creation of a land registers, and the active promotions of community trusts through a Land Commission were implemented into party policy. The SLP made steps in the same direction, and especially attacked the privatisation of FC land, which was felt to be more appropriately devolved to communities rather than private individuals. The degree to which the radical traditions of social reform had obviously adjusted to the political climate was also amply demonstrated in the McEwen Memorial Lecture series. Created to honour the late statesman of land reform, McEwen's radical ideas for land nationalisation were swiftly superceded by more subtle arguments for the devolution of land management and ownership. Both James Hunter and Bryan MacGregor provided critiques of land ownership patterns and tenure that stressed the importance and practical benefits of removing feudal land law, and expanding the role of community trusts.<sup>88</sup> Hunter who from the 1970's has been closely associated with the crofting movement, particularly associated this procedure with the creation of a Scots Parliament and the wider aspects of Scottish devolution. Land reform he asserted in 1995, can provide a distinctly tangible and real outcome of home rule; and one that could do much in shaping the character of a new Scots legislature.<sup>89</sup> This politically astute assertion not only took into account the strong possibilities for a Scots Parliament in the near future, but also its probable desire to generate radical new policies with potentially limited powers. Land reform could provide such a policy that would both answer public expectations of uniquely Scottish legislation, but also refrain from taxing the assembly's powers or finances too far.

Sensing the importance and resilience of the land debate in Scottish politics, another politically astute figure in the shape of Michael Forsyth, the then new Secretary of State for Scotland, decided to contribute to the building discourse on land

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<sup>86</sup> FoES. Towards a Sustainable Scotland., Edinburgh. 1996. p.125

<sup>87</sup> Scottish Land Commission. Consultative Report: Public Policy Towards land In Scotland. 1996

<sup>88</sup> Hunter, James. Towards a Land Reform Agenda For a Scots Parliament, The 2<sup>nd</sup> John McEwen Memorial Lecture. Rural Forum: Perth. 1995; Bryden, John. Land Tenure and Rural Development in Scotland, The 3<sup>rd</sup> John McEwen Memorial Lecture, Rural Forum, Perth. 1996

reform. Directly replicating one of Hunter's specific proposals, Forsyth announced the proposed handing over of the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department's (SOAFD) crofting estates to community trust management.<sup>90</sup> Combined with his personal support of a community forestry initiative in Laggan and a much-publicised visit to Assynt, this represented a profound change of government policy. Firmly breaking from the Scottish conservative traditions of favouring the landed aristocracy, Forsyth clearly supported the devolution of estate management to community groups. Occasionally criticised as crude electioneering, Forsyth's avocation of community trust ownership nevertheless blended well with the established conservative traditions of encouraging owner-occupation. Indeed, the Assynt and SOAFD estates' restructuring into community trust holdings were often likened to privatisation.<sup>91</sup> Obviously, the SCU did not agree with this interpretation, and instead welcomed the handing over of SOAFD estates to crofters as a validation of their role in deciding the region's future. The 1995 SCU annual conference exhibited an enormous degree of confidence and optimism in the crofting movement. Frank Rennie, the former president of the SCU, emphasised the need to not only take advantage of Forsyth's offer, but for the first time in over a century to look towards a greater expansion of crofting.<sup>92</sup> This was further enhanced by the concluding remarks of the present president Alastair MacIver:

**We have, I believe, an opportunity unlikely to be repeated, to seize the initiative, to take responsibility for our future and perhaps, more importantly, the future of those who come after us. They will not thank us if we fail to take advantage of the tide of support which is flowing for crofters and crofting . . . . Be assured that if we are seen to be unable or unwilling to utilise this tide of support, it will quickly ebb and our chance will be lost - perhaps forever. The challenge is there. Lets take it up !**<sup>93</sup>

As will be detailed in the following chapters, MacIver's remarks were to be applied not only to crofting communities, but to Highland communities in general. For just as the success of the Assynt story was to subside, and the hand-over of SOAFD

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<sup>89</sup> Hunter. Towards a Land Reform Agenda. pp.20-22

<sup>90</sup> Breen, S. "Forsyth Offers Land Deal to Highland Crofters", The Scotsman, 20<sup>th</sup> October 1995.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*; Ross, John. "Land Reform: Communities Urged to Join Rights Debate", The Scotsman, 10<sup>th</sup> November. 1995.

<sup>92</sup> Rennie, F. "Expansion of a Crofting Community: What does it involve?". SCU Conference Papers, SCU: Broadford, Isle of Skye. 1995. p.2

<sup>93</sup> MacIver, Alastair. "Presidential Address to the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the SCU". *ibid.* p.4

estates was to become reality, events on Eigg were soon to propel the public and media interest in Highland community issues one step further. By the summer of 1996 incidents on the small island off the coast of Arisaig had thrown the problems associated with foreign and absentee ownership into the spotlight of public attention. The SOAFD had actually been a very good landlord in comparison to many private owners, and especially owners like the mysterious “Professor Maruma” who had purchased Eigg in 1995 for the simple reasons of land speculation. Having changed hands nine times since 1838, Eigg provided an extreme case of how the vagaries of the land market, absentee owners, and Feudal land law had benefited everyone except the island’s community and natural environment. Since the crofting community on the island represented only about half of the island’s residents, and only 20% of the land mass, attention therefore became fixed upon the tenants and land that did not receive the protection of crofting tenure.

The plight of the Eigg community was followed with intense media attention, and the late summer and autumn of 1996 saw a series of articles in the Scottish media analysing the land debate. This was added to by the publication of Auslan Cramb’s Who Owns Scotland Now, which was serialised in The Herald, and also in a sequel to McEwen’s investigations, Andy Wightman published an updated version of Who Owns Scotland. Wightman in particular provided a very straightforward and revealing breakdown of ownership patterns, which not only affirmed the fears of increasing foreign and absentee ownership, but critiqued dominance of landowners over issues of policy development and conservation. This was combined with an outlined policy of land reform, which unlike his predecessor’s pleas for nationalisation, reflected the substantial support for community trust initiatives. Beginning with an abolition of Feudal Law and the development of a cadastral map-based register of landownership, he advocated the now growing consensus for the creation of a Land Commission to oversee policies to control the misuse of land, and end the *laissez faire* market of land speculation. In maintaining a radical stance, and echoing the traditions of the social reformers of the Nineteenth Century, he also proposed an implementation of Henry George’s ideas of Land Value Taxation.<sup>94</sup> Much like McEwen, Wightman’s revealing

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<sup>94</sup> Wightman. pp.204-215

statistics and adherence to a program of land reform, provided staunch academic backing as well as maintaining a high profile for the issues surrounding land in the popular media.

## 2.7 Conclusions

The radical demands of Murdoch and the socially inspired land reformers at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, therefore, had in many ways become the leading edge of contemporary thought on Highland land issues. After a century, that had seen the predominant marginalisation of crofting and Highland communities in favour of continued external control and ownership, this was without doubt a significant development. The rising public awareness for issues regarding conservation and access certainly played a key part in fostering a keen interest in the Highlands' natural heritage. Although this had often led to clashes over the years between conservation and local community interests, initiatives in the early 1990's by the SO and bodies like the RSPB and SWT encouraged a partnership approach that was inclusive, rather than exclusive, of local issues and interests. The importance of reclaiming the cultural as well as the natural heritage was also a marked development in this process. Demonstrated in a resurgence of the region's local communities, and the large public support for community trust initiatives in Assynt, Borve, and Laggan, the importance of local communities to the region's social, environmental and economical health was now recognised as fundamental. Widely seen as the most appropriate stewards of the Highlands' prestigious heritage, the calls for land reform were consequently coming not from the radical extreme, but from all the leading political parties. On the eve of the 1997 General Election, that was characterised by the seeming political similarity of the contesting parties, it was hardly surprising that a broad consensus was reached over the need for land reform in Scotland. Obviously, the issues of devolution and independence remained a defining factor, and each approached the land issue from their own ideological perspective, but the four main Scottish parties all vigorously waived the flag of land reform at problematic estates like Eigg.

Beginning with the SNP, they had of course maintained a steadfast approach that complemented their program of independence. In many ways therefore, they



replicated the 19<sup>th</sup> century social reform traditions more closely with their program for land reform being integrated into direct national sovereignty. However, in being the first of the left wing parties to reject land nationalisation *per se*, they led the way for other parties to investigate alternatives which favoured mechanisms like community trusts. The importance of actually knowing who owned Scotland was emphasised with their proposals for the creation of a land register, and a moratorium on FC land sales to prevent further abuses of land speculation. Just like the other opposition parties, they also advocated the creation of a Land Commission to oversee the abolition of Feudalism, the handing over of State-owned land to local communities, and the strengthening of environmental designations. Firmly supporting the role of crofting, they wished to develop a Crofting Development Body as well, to extend crofting style tenancies throughout Scotland and promote a sustainable integrated economy.<sup>95</sup>

The importance for land reform in the foundation of future rural development in Scotland was also central to both the Labour and Liberal 1997 rural manifestoes. Both parties aimed to again establish a Land Commission to oversee the abolition of Feudalism, and the devolution of State-owned land to local community and partnership groups. Emphasising the role of a new Scottish Parliament to draft and implement legislation to carry out this process, they too echoed the connection between independence and land reform. Since they were actually preparing for government, however, Labour was more tentative in describing the exact path reform would take, and instead committed themselves to only instigating a formal investigation of land ownership reform rather than any precise details.<sup>96</sup> Nevertheless, they did give wholehearted support to the community trust initiatives, and pledged an integrated approach to environmental management and rural development that would favour the interest of local communities.<sup>97</sup>

The Liberals were more forthright in their declarations of support for land reform, and pulling on their previous traditions of dual ownership reform expressly

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<sup>95</sup> Gibson, Rob. "A Question of Politics". pp.13-15; Scottish National Party. Programme for Government, 1997. pp.37-39

<sup>96</sup> MacLeod, Catherine. "Labour Plan for Radical Land Reform", The Herald, 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 1997. p.8

<sup>97</sup> Scottish Labour Party Manifesto: new Labour because Scotland deserves better, 1997. p.28-30

committed themselves to a similar extension of crofting like the SNP. As well as pruning the powers of the Crown Estate Commission, they pledged to give crofting tenants on both Crown and private land the first option of purchase in the event of sale. This was to be facilitated and partially funded by Local Enterprise Companies (LECs). Like the Labour Party, the Liberals also accentuated the rights of access to open ground by the public, which again drew on previous precedents in the land debate. Although not expressly acknowledging the end of the voluntary principle, they likewise indicated a much more proactive state in controlling land management decisions.<sup>98</sup>

With the Scottish Law Commission announcing that it would draft legislation to abolish Feudal Law by the year 2000, the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party surprised critics when they cautiously welcomed the proposals.<sup>99</sup> As part of the process of reviewing rural policy begun by Michael Forsyth, this represented a further indication of the changes in Conservative focus. Far from defending the *status quo* in landownership and land use, the Conservative Party indicated sweeping changes in ownership policy. Not only was the bill for the handing over of SOAFD crofting estates rushed through Parliament, but Forsyth at the last Scottish Grand Committee asked Jim Hunter to investigate methods by which badly managed private crofting estates could be transferred to community trust holdings. This was particularly revealing since any future progress on this front would include substantial State intervention in the private concerns of ownership. Something that the conservative traditions in the land debate had firmly and historically rejected. Indeed, it was also highly significant that the voluntary principle was markedly absent from the Party's manifestos. With the SO providing consultative support for community trust ventures through the Crofting Trust Advisory Service (CTAS), and the Rural Partnership program supporting similar ventures in other aspects of rural development, the

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<sup>98</sup> Wallace, Jim. "A Question of Politics". pp.13-15; Scottish Liberal Democrat Manifesto: Make The Difference, 1997. pp.29-31; Chisholm, Malcolm. "A Question of Politics". pp.13-15; Scottish Labour Party Manifesto. pp.28-30.

<sup>99</sup> Robertson, Rob. "Archaic feudal law to be axed", The Herald, February 27<sup>th</sup>, 1997.

groundswell of political support for local communities in the Highlands and Islands was securely reflected in Conservative Party Policy.<sup>100</sup>

At the very time the party manifestoes were being written the Isle of Eigg was hardly out of the headlines, and as later detailed their campaign for community trust ownership received support from all the leading political parties. As such the island's story was very much associated with the formation and debate of land reform policy in the long and drawn out build up to the 1997 Election. Consequently, their eventual success just one month before ballot day, proved to be an affirmation of the new found consensus regarding community trusts. Eigg, like Assynt, seemed to many observers to be a spontaneous outpouring of community empowerment, and had the effect of implying that all communities in the Highlands and Islands were in a similar position. Unfortunately, as experience on the SOAFD estates preparing for hand-over began to show, this was certainly misleading. In the North Sutherland Estates around Armadale and Strathy, splits had already emerged in the communities over the feasibility studies being undertaken by CTAS. In a process that was notably top-down in its approach, consultants had placed their plans for estate devolution in front of the communities only to be rejected and to encourage notable animosity amongst the crofters.<sup>101</sup> These estates were apparently not like Eigg.

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<sup>100</sup> Earl of Lindsay. "A Question of Politics . . ." pp.13-15; The Scottish Conservative and Unionist Manifesto: Fighting for Scotland, 1997. pp.23-25

<sup>101</sup> "Misgivings over moves towards crofting buy-out", The Caithness Courier, 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1997.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Schellenberg Years : Laird, Community, and Trust**

### 3.1 Introduction

Turning from the previous regional and contextual examinations, this chapter will now come to focus on the specifics of the case study at hand. It will examine the Schellenberg proprietorship of Eigg, and in so doing, document the evolution of relations between the owner and residents on the island. This remains a highly contentious and legally precipitous area of Scottish social history, for although Keith Schellenberg relinquished ownership of the island in March 1995, to this day he remains ever vigilant in protecting his own side of the island story. Not only does he own most of the island's estate records from the sale in 1826 onwards, including the William Bald map of 1806, but he has repeatedly resorted to legal action to defend his own versions of events and opinion. The documentary team from Granada's *Man Alive* were the first to feel the wrath of his litigation when they broadcast an investigation into his employment practices on the island in 1977. Since then Schellenberg has hardly flinched from issuing writs and lawyers letters against all forms of media, broadcasters and journalists. His propensity for legal action was made particularly apparent when the media covered the hand-over celebrations on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1997. A series of articles tackled the history of troubles between the Eigg residents and Schellenberg, and gave brief summaries of the islanders' success in gaining ownership. Incensed, Schellenberg responded by issuing writs for libel against *The Guardian*, *The London Evening Standard*, Professor Aubrey Manning, former Chairman of the SWT, and the journalist Leslie Riddoch.

**“A fundamental, and I say deliberate part of their campaign, conducted by advertisement and through the media, was to claim that due to the irresponsible neglect of previous owners, including myself, towards both the inhabitants and wildlife, the estate must never again be allowed to fall into the hands of private ownership. . . . in their desire to succeed, truth became a casualty and I am taking legal action to clear my name and to ensure the public are made aware of the falsehoods. . . . At my stage of life, I have no wish to embark on a long and expensive exercise. But the truth is a prerequisite of democracy and freedom and the ‘thin red line’ of the rule of law is ultimately its only guardian”.<sup>1</sup>**

Although most of these actions are being contested at the time of writing, in seeking to clear his name through legal action, Schellenberg has like most libel

litigants succeeded in the immediate dampening down of further reporting about himself. Both journalists and islanders now prefer not to comment on anything to do with Keith Schellenberg and his 20 year period of ownership. A man who will even take legal action against an innocuous Radio 4 holiday program such as *Breakaway*, is a man to be generally avoided.<sup>2</sup> If people do disagree with his versions of past events, they are naturally cautious about confronting him even some twenty years later. Schellenberg has had a long experience of civil litigation, and his casual ease for referring both business and personal matters alike to ‘the thin red line’ of law has made one islander quip, “He’s the poor man’s Bob Maxwell”.



*Figure 3.1: Keith Schellenberg launches his legal writs in 1997<sup>3</sup>*

The problem of Mr Schellenberg’s pursuit of the truth within the legal framework is that it greatly inhibits those who can participate in the evaluation of his legacy on Eigg. Certainly the media has resources to fight lengthy legal battles, if the story is worth it, but the islanders themselves do not and are naturally wary of him. As spokespersons have repeatedly stated on the Trust’s behalf, the IEHT has no intention of going over the past history of events, and instead wishes to now focus on the future.<sup>4</sup> This is perhaps understandable since Schellenberg appears to be legally protective of both the island’s future as well as its past. He still retains two properties on the island, and has already used them to object through the planning process to

<sup>1</sup> Citygate Scotland. *Schellenberg Takes Legal Action*. Press Release. 1997 p.1

<sup>2</sup> Broadcast 19<sup>th</sup> April 1997. Schellenberg initiated legal action 21<sup>st</sup> August 1997.

<sup>3</sup> Morgan, Daniel.

<sup>4</sup> Dalton, Alastair. “Schellenberg sues over claims about Eigg lairds,” *The Scotsman*. 1997

initial developments on the island. Though the Trust may have ownership of the island, Mr Schellenberg still has a foot in the door and is not intending to leave quietly.

This Chapter therefore seeks to revise this history and answer the key questions of how and why the relationship between owner and residents eventually broke down to such a dramatic degree on Eigg. Unfortunately Mr Schellenberg has declined to be interviewed for this study, and denied any access to his estate records.<sup>5</sup> It has therefore been difficult to accumulate documentary evidence, especially anything to do with employment records, estate turnovers, or perhaps more importantly, his direct intentions or motivations regarding estate management. Nevertheless, despite this and his frequent legal proceedings, Schellenberg has always remained exceptionally talkative to the press. Consequently there is manifold secondary source material regarding his opinions and feelings over the course of his 20-year proprietorship. There is also Camille Dressler's social history of the island, which although hampered by the same problems of research, as well as legal constraints in publishing, provides a sound narrative to events. I have also conducted 18 formal and numerous informal interviews with islanders throughout my two and a half years of fieldwork, and these provide a sound account from the residents' perspective.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that whilst this study examines the roles of Schellenberg, the Eigg residents, and the Isle of Eigg Trust in shaping events on the island, this is somewhat different to Mr Schellenberg's search for "the truth". This is because the truth is not that simple to unpack from so many competing perspectives. Especially when the truth being sought is so profoundly wrapped in soured relationships, bad feeling, and personal emotion. It is not that events did not happen, but that crucial to understanding how these events impacted is how the individuals and groups involved interpreted them. This applies particularly to understanding the changing social dynamics on Eigg regarding the role of 'incomers'. As Charles Jedrej and Mark Nuttall's study White Settlers eloquently affirms, one must approach the

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<sup>5</sup> I have written to Keith Schellenberg twice: June 20<sup>th</sup> 1995; August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1995. Both letters were neither acknowledged nor answered. I telephoned him on November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1995, and I was told that it would be "inappropriate for [me] to view any of the estate records". This was because he had already heard I was involved with Isle of Eigg Trust, and that "anything [he] said would be turned and manipulated".

analysis of events like these with an appropriate understanding of the language and labels being used:

**“...Recognise that while representations such as ‘locals’, ‘incomers’, ‘lairds’, ‘crofters’, ‘white settlers’, ‘the English’, ‘absentee property holders’, ‘Highland culture’, and so on, are agreed upon, the reality to which they refer to is elusive and contested. Everyone agrees that there are ‘locals’ and ‘incomers’, but it is not easy to find a consensus about who they are or what is ‘Highland culture’, and the ‘ancient way of life’ that incomers threaten. There are some relatively stable points, but crude reality alone cannot underwrite the significance of the representations. There are sociological and cultural processes at work which amplify some features and mute others, thereby endowing what may be called ‘key concepts’ with a salient and compelling quality”.**<sup>6</sup>

Suffice to say, being neither anthropologist nor sociologist by training, it is not my intention to delve too much deeper into social theory. But the point is taken that the purpose of this Chapter is to document the clashes of perspective and feeling between the island’s owner, residents, and other interested parties. In doing so, it will make much use of terms such as “laird”, “incomer”, “islander” and “community”, but only with firm the acknowledgement that they are the crudest of labels.

### 3.2 A Changing Island Community

Until the arrival of the Schellenbergs in 1975, it is not surprising to find that the islanders on Eigg represented a small and fragile, yet cohesive community. They were an integrated group with a distinct sense of continuity and a powerful shared history and identity.<sup>7</sup> With the majority of the 39 islanders situated in the remaining adjoining townships of Cuagach and Cleadale, crofting played an integral part in structuring the community’s life. As well as providing the formal aspects of the Grazings Committee to organise agricultural matters, crofting also engendered a relatively common outlook on the world amongst the islanders.<sup>8</sup> Since the successful running of crofts often entailed islanders working together day after day, this notably emphasised the

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Perhaps this is somewhat understandable since he knows me only through my active work for the IEHT and its public campaigning. In hindsight, I obviously should have talked to him first.

<sup>6</sup>Jedrej, Charles and Nuttall, Mark. White Settlers: The Impact of Rural Repopulation in Scotland. Harwood, Luxembourg. 1996. p.4

<sup>7</sup> This is amply documented in Dressler. pp.131-147; also corroborative evidence from: Kirk, Peggy. Interview 14<sup>th</sup> Aug 1995, Campbell, Anne. Interview 12<sup>th</sup> Aug 1995



collective nature of life. A certain degree of homogenisation amongst the island's residents had also occurred over the last 200 years as the decreasing population went hand in hand with decreasing opportunities and variety of work on the island. As described in Chapter 1, the independent trades had steadily been removed from the island over the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Apart from the occasional fisherman and resident doctor, therefore men either worked on the croft or the estate, and women had just the flat choice between domestic service at home or in the lodge (if it were available).<sup>9</sup> This meant that by 1975, there was a resoundingly common experience shared by the community, and one that was fundamentally bound more tightly than most by the natural isolation of island life.

Having said this, the islanders were hardly all identical nor all from the same 'pure and indigenous' island stock. Several such as Peggy Kirk and Dolly Ferguson had moved on to the island to marry and settle down. Like the preceding centuries, although the main trend was one of depopulation and the loss of people from Eigg, there had still remained a steady trickle of incomers onto the island. Similarly, when describing the islanders in 1975 as a community this is not denying there were different sub-groups or overlapping forms of identity present as well. For instance, religious divides had contributed greatly to the island's history, and although the resident ministers and priests had departed long ago, there remained two distinct congregations within the townships.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the two congregations, like the assimilated incomers, were bound together in a community of common interest and shared perspective. Under the watchful eye of community leaders like the Small Isles GP Dr MacLean (himself an incomer), the Grazings Clerk Angus MacKinnon, and a tradition of powerful island women, they worked together to survive the winters, and the congregations came together to celebrate the island's christenings, weddings, and funerals.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> MacKinnon.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Originally a Catholic island, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century saw the steady growth of a Protestant religion facilitated by island proprietors. From the post-war period onwards the island was roughly ½ Church of Scotland, ½ Catholic. See Dressler. pp. 131-147

<sup>11</sup> Carlton, Ian. "Life on Eigg under the shadow of Schellenberg". *West Highland Free Press*, Feb 23, 1994.

With the arrival of the Schellenbergs and their new approach to estate management, however, there came a profound break in the traditional demography and community life on the island. Indeed, Mr Schellenberg's arrival on the island was as sensational and eventful as his final departure was to be some twenty years later. Flying himself to the island in a small light aircraft, he landed the plane on Laig beach and left it in charge of a rather bewildered islander. Only one instruction was given: "Do not press this button". Inevitably, the button was pushed and the plane was a write-off.<sup>12</sup> Far from letting this dampen his enthusiasm, the new proprietor immediately set to work rejuvenating the island's economy with a direct hands-on approach. Though little was proffered in traditional estate work, he employed many islanders in renovating the estate's 12 houses and setting up the various components of a tourist economy. He also gained support from the HIDB in restructuring the farm, and introducing East Coast cattle (preferred by mainland buyers) which were to be raised on Eigg and then finished on his wife's Udney estate in Aberdeenshire. Similarly 800 cheviot sheep were introduced to change over from the less profitable black face herd. Together with extensive drainage and fencing, this represented a massive turn-around in the island's fortunes and the first genuine improvement since the days of the Runcimans.<sup>13</sup>

More significant than the infrastructural projects, however, was the introduction of new people onto the island. For the first time in over two hundred years the island's population actually increased in size, with the Schellenbergs actively recruiting "independent, self reliant people to join our island venture".<sup>14</sup> In just a few short years they had succeeded in doubling the island's population, from 39 in 1975 to over 80 by 1980.<sup>15</sup> Although Eigg was a relatively extreme case, this introduction of new residents to the island echoed the changing pattern of population of the Highlands and Islands in general during the 1970's. Between 1971 and 1981 almost all of Scotland's rural districts witnessed a rapid reversal in the decline of population. Numbers started not only to level out, but actually increase, with the growth in rural populations continuing to the present day.<sup>16</sup> On Eigg the impact of

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<sup>12</sup> Dressler. p.154

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.* p.155

<sup>14</sup> Helliwell, Simon. Interview, 13<sup>th</sup> November 1997.

<sup>15</sup> Citygate.p.3; Dressler p.156

<sup>16</sup> Scottish Office. Scottish Rural Life. Scottish Office, Edinburgh. 1992. p.23

new people was enormous, and as will be detailed further proved fundamental in determining the island's future relationship between owners and residents.

Interviewing present day islanders shows that although "incomer issues" came to be latterly prominent in media coverage of the 1990's, the initial arrival of new residents in the mid 1970's did not generate any significant clashes or social splits on the island. In fact much the reverse, it was generally felt on all sides that they were positively salvaging an ageing community. Peggy Kirk herself an incomer from the Uists, married into the Kirk family in the 1950's and at the time of Schellenberg's arrival was raising the principal young family on the island. She remembers the new estate workers being openly welcomed by the community: "We were all delighted to see more people. Things were getting pretty grim on the island with so few young folk around. Marie was the only one in school at one point".<sup>17</sup> For those coming to the island for the first time, this feeling of welcome was readily apparent. John Cormack, now the island's post-man recalls his early days on Eigg in 1979: the "older generation definitely welcomed us . . . it was all great fun, and people were enthusiastic and friendly".<sup>18</sup> Asking any of those incomers now resident what they felt when they first arrived and you get the same basic response; that they felt warmly invited and part of the island's escalating social life. Ask any of elder generation of already resident islanders, and again you get a reciprocal reply that the community needed more people if it were to survive.<sup>19</sup>

The most obvious expression of how much new blood was needed on the island is demonstrated in the number of marriages that occurred between islanders and incomers in the first few years. For example, all of Peggy and Donnie Kirk's five children eventually married incoming residents on the island. As Angus MacKinnon says, "It was either that or they had to marry each other!"<sup>20</sup> Or perhaps more to the point leave the island, which is what he describes happened to most of his generation: "Just nothing left to do and no one left to marry, so we all went off the island. You

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<sup>17</sup> Kirk, Peggy.

<sup>18</sup> Cormack, John. Interview 12<sup>th</sup> November 1997

<sup>19</sup> Good examples include interviews with: MacKinnon, Kirk, Peggy, Cormack, Carr, Marie 20<sup>th</sup> March 1996, and Greene, Brian, 10<sup>th</sup> November 1997.

<sup>20</sup> MacKinnon.

had to leave the island if you wanted to get somewhere”.<sup>21</sup> With new young people around, and new levels of employment this situation had changed for the better. There were three island weddings in 1980 alone, and in the end a total of seven islanders were to marry incoming residents over the course of Schellenbergs first ten years of ownership.<sup>22</sup> Their continued residence on the island, together with their healthy rates of reproduction was to ensure an invigorated school role and an expanding island community.

The combination of population increase and a new expanding economy were powerful forces to be unleashed, and were reflected in a buoyant feeling on the island. This was especially felt amongst the younger islanders, for as Angus Kirk remarks: “It was brilliant, something was happening at last on the island, and it was a breath of fresh air. There was plenty of new machinery, lots of work to do. You didn’t care how many hours you worked, if it was overtime or not, you were giving it your best because you felt you were part of something new and exciting.” By the summer of 1979 everything was in full swing with Kildonnan being run as a guesthouse and various estate properties and caravans being let as holiday houses. Moped, dingy, and bike rentals provided activities for the holiday makers together with courses in the new craft centre at Kildonnan that was opened by no less than the Chairman of the HIDB himself. “The crofters are delighted” reported the Press and Journal, “that after years of decline, new capital is being pumped into their island by the new laird”.<sup>23</sup>

At the Lodge, Schellenberg would spend a significant part of the summer with his family enjoying the life of a paternalistic land owner and indulging the number of tourists and visiting friends on the island in his love for sport. Constantly roping friends, islanders, and tourists into games of cricket and hockey on the beach, he extended his passions into the weeklong Eigg Games that he organised each summer. A kind of mini Highland games, it included all sorts of sporting events ending with a marathon, and sometimes a rather eccentric war game involving teams like the Hanoverians and Jacobites. The latter team being led one time by the members of the

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid*

<sup>22</sup> The 7 couples being: Duncan and Eileen Fergusson, Donald and Morag MacKinnon, Charlie and Katherine MacKinnon, Marie and Collin Carr, Angus and Mairi Kirk, Mark and Fiona Cherry, and Sue and Alastair Kirk. The three weddings in 1980: Donald and Morag MacKinnon, Angus and Mairi Kirk, and John and Nat Cormack.

Clanranald family themselves, mounting a come back in their traditional territory. As the numerous Sunday magazine articles were to report, his family and friends spent halcyon summer days on the island: “Days which were raised from ordinary to magical because of the extraordinary generosity and eccentricity of the island’s laird”.<sup>24</sup> In a setting “which would look entirely in place in a Somerset Maugham novel”, they lived an idyllic life whilst islanders were seen busily employed in catering to the large number of paying tourists.<sup>25</sup>

Strangely enough, Schellenberg’s love for sport did not extend to the traditional landowning sport of shooting. Indeed, a devout vegetarian he stopped all shooting on the estate, and stood out as landowner that openly welcomed the attentions of the conservation movement. In the late 1970’s this was quite remarkable, and the newly created SWT was delighted to be asked to consult on the management of three SSSI reserves that had been created on the island in 1964. With an agreement signed in 1978, he was one of a few estate owners to recognise the merits of what has later been termed “green tourism”.<sup>26</sup> This entailed striking a balance between attracting enough tourists to generate income, whilst not endangering the island’s wildlife and very character that attracted them in the first place. Unlike several landowners who were to rapidly over-develop islands, such as Iona, with extensive tourist facilities, Schellenberg had certainly struck an appropriate course of development on Eigg. He gloried in the success, and happily reflected in the new enthusiasm that had been unleashed in the community. After 3 or 4 years of ownership, he was not only glad to be identified as one who had successfully turned round a declining sporting estate, but he positively promoted it at every opportunity.<sup>27</sup>

Of course not all newly arriving workers for Schellenberg’s tourist enterprises married islanders, and neither did many of them eventually stay for very long. There was a high turn-over of seasonal workers, and resident islanders obviously tended to differentiate between those who were transitory and those who were permanent and

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<sup>23</sup> Nickson, John. “Balanced plan to rejuvenate Eigg, *Press & Journal*, 7<sup>th</sup> August 1976.

<sup>24</sup> Barrowclough, A. “The Laird and the Rebel Isle”, *Country Matters*, *The Mail on Sunday*. 1995

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Wilcox, Neil. (SWT Reserves Manager) Conversation 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1997.

<sup>27</sup> A prime example being his island tourist brochure of 1979. The first two pages are a grand apology for free enterprise, and his own unique approach to estate management.

full time.<sup>28</sup> Except for a London couple who took over an abandoned croft, and two working fishing boats, all the people who came to the island were directly recruited by Schellenberg and employed on the estate. Mostly on short term contracts, informal business arrangements, or voluntary conservation work, the majority spent their summers renovating properties and catering to the large numbers of tourists.<sup>29</sup> As such, almost all of them lived on the opposite side of the island from the crofting land and most of the island community. This obviously constituted a form of divide or partition between the islanders and the new estate workers.<sup>30</sup> However, as the young islanders gradually married and took over crofts, this pattern began to break as incomer spouses started to live in the crofting townships and become more integrated into the resident community. It also worked in the opposite manner, when islanders married and became resident in estate properties on the south-east side of the island. Marie, Peggy's eldest daughter for instance married a young shepherd named Colin Carr who was working for Schellenberg on the estate farm. Moving into Sandavore Farm House, Marie became heavily involved in both the tourist work for the estate and in facilitating the lively social life. "We must have had 25 Celidhs that first summer", she remembers, "I would phone Annabel and say to her: should we have a dance tonight ? And she'd say yes, why not ? And we would have a great time".<sup>31</sup>

Certainly there was a basic grouping then, of the short-term workers, the full-time workers, and those who had married into the community, but still island life ensured a relative degree of integration. Both estate workers and crofters alike were always dependent on help and assistance at the pier when off-loading heavy supplies. In order to cater for the primary items of life like coal, bottled gas, and food supplies, you needed to work as a group to manage things and survive. The "island factor always engendered a sense of camaraderie",<sup>32</sup> and combined with plenty of employment and a bustling social life of Celidhs and weddings, it is hardly surprising that islanders have fond memories of the period. It represented a significant turnaround for them and the island's fortunes. The only problem being the slight feeling of over exposure to tourism that was felt amongst the older islanders. Both

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<sup>28</sup> Cormack.

<sup>29</sup> Helliwell, Simon.

<sup>30</sup> Cormack.

<sup>31</sup> Dressler. p.156

<sup>32</sup> Helliwell, Simon.

Angus MacKinnon and Peggy Kirk felt that there were too many tourists and activities on the island for comfort. Schellenberg had slightly overdone things they felt, and “had tourists staying in every possible property and running all over the island on bicycles and mopeds”.<sup>33</sup> He also had a large number of personal guests over the summer at the lodge, who could nearly always be counted on for boisterous behaviour. It was a far cry from the island of Angus’s childhood, and the quiet seasonal life of the Runciman proprietorship and the 1930’s crofting community. Before Schellenberg and the new arrivals on the island, Peggy and her young family spoke Gaelic at home. But with the children going to school and an ever-increasing number of English speakers coming to the island they eventually stopped.<sup>34</sup> With just over a dozen Gaelic speakers left on the island, it is fair to say that whilst new people and new jobs had encouraged a social and numerical turnaround, the island’s linguistic heritage and culture remained in decline.



*Figure 3.2: The island factor, the Loch Mor Ferry pulls up towards Eigg.<sup>35</sup>*

### 3.3 Divisions on Eigg

<sup>33</sup> Kirk, Peggy; MacKinnon.

<sup>34</sup> Kirk, Peggy.

<sup>35</sup> Morgan, Daniel.

By 1981 the great Eigg success story had started to experience a few problems. To begin with, the first six years of ownership revealed a very high turnover of staff in both seasonal and full-time employees. Obviously considering the variety of things he was doing on the estate, and the very casual styles of employment he preferred it is not surprising in itself that Schellenberg went through a number of staff. What was surprising however, was the number of people who either actively fell out with him, or he actively dismissed. There is a long history of people coming to odds with Keith Schellenberg and his business dealings on Eigg. However, it is hard to provide an authoritative list of these cases, since estate records are inaccessible, and most people did not feel the need to go public with their disagreements at the time. Unfortunately therefore, one is left with only anecdotal evidence of the various disputes and problems encountered on Schellenberg's Eigg estate. I will therefore provide just a few examples of how people fell into disagreement with their employer.

The Devlin family were the first to experience trouble in their dealings with Schellenberg, and they were also the first to end up fighting legal battles over their employment and housing on the island.<sup>36</sup> Duncan Devlin was originally invited by Schellenberg, to give up his teaching job at Fraser Academy and move his young family to the island. There it was agreed he would set up a new craft centre, and run Kildonnan House as a guesthouse. He was promised £2,000 by Schellenberg to help start things up, and was assured with architectural plans of how the house would be renovated for him. After two weeks on the island, he was eventually told that cash was short and he would not be getting the money for start up costs. Worse still, Schellenberg informed him that the renovations on the house were also on hold. The winter weather soon set in, and the Devlins were increasingly feeling the cold. "I felt like I was going to be one of the team", he said in a newspaper article in 1992. "Team was one of Schellenberg's favourite words but he was always the captain. Maybe it is because I'm a Glaswegian that I took a stand. The locals are used to generations of lairds". Making a stand was an uncomfortable thing to do on your own, however, especially on an island where the proprietor was so popular:

**"His people intimidated us. He was a great guy so you must be a rat for turning against him. That was the poison put about; when he needed**

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<sup>36</sup> Lindsay, Stuart. "Eigg's new laird runs into trouble", *Glasgow Herald*. June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1976.



**someone you jumped. You felt like you weren't your own person. It seems dramatic but you felt defiled. On an island of 60 people, passing someone on the road without them saying hello, as if you weren't there, it was horrible and tense".<sup>37</sup>**

After a couple of lengthy legal battles and 13 months in a house with polythene for windows, the Devlins finally gave up and left the island. When questioned in 1992 about the break down with the Devlins, Schellenberg could hardly remember them, and despite documented evidence, was sure he had never lost a court action against them. "He [Duncan Devlin] simply occupied somewhere which was needed for someone else. That's as far as it goes. Maybe because he was from Glasgow he couldn't cope with the life. He simply wasn't up to the job".<sup>38</sup>

Obviously it is problematic, as well as legally quite dangerous, to deduce too much from simply one story of a business deal gone wrong. As mentioned before, running an estate with as varied activities as Eigg did during the early years of Schellenberg's ownership, there were bound to be upsets and disagreements. The problem was however that the Devlins were not an isolated case. Schellenberg fell into disagreement with a succession builders and assorted staff. Simon and Karen Helliwell experienced perhaps one of the typical and less flagrant falling outs with Schellenberg. Arriving in 1976, they too were directly recruited by him to work on the tourist side of the island operation. In return for work refitting cottages and running a ferry from the island during the summer, they were to be sold some land for a house and have the winters off to pursue their own crafts.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, working 80 hour weeks almost all year round, there was little time for the crafts even in winter, and during the summer Simon had several altercations regarding the safety of the ferry service. Only licensed to carry 12 people, the boat Simon operated was often asked to take 15 to 20 people at a time. "Schellenberg would be sitting in his Aberdeen office, telling me that it was only a Force 3 on the weather forecast and the *Sunart* could easily get across but I knew it was a Force 6 on the forecast and could see it with my own eyes and I would refuse to go. That's how I blotted my copy book I suppose".<sup>40</sup> After 18 months, they had still not received any offer of land, and worse still, when

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<sup>37</sup> Hennessey, Stewart. "Schellenberg gets his Eigg", Scotland on Sunday. June 12<sup>th</sup> 1992.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid*

<sup>39</sup> Helliwell, Simon.

<sup>40</sup> Dressler. p.160

they had completed renovating the house they were living in, Brae Cottage, Schellenberg suggested they move into another derelict cottage and do that up for him. “He obviously thought it was a good idea for us to move from house to house until we had done them all up one by one. So we thought it would be better if we moved to the crofter’s side and be independent. Dodie Campbell offered us an old croft house to rent and we decided to try the woodwork, but from then on, we were traitors to the cause”.<sup>41</sup>

Even presuming no malice on his behalf, it is more than fair to say that Schellenberg had severe difficulties in managing people. He had a manner and a bearing that could rub people the wrong way, and a casualness in tense situations that could easily be interpreted as cavalier. As Angus MacKinnon describes, “He loved playing the laird, and he showed it whenever he was around”. He “would spend all his time with his fancy cars and his sports”, and yet at the same time “everything had to be done in a rush” on the estate.<sup>42</sup> “Nothing was done the easy way”, and projects and activities on the island invariably ended up with “arguments and [Schellenberg] changing his mind”.<sup>43</sup> Whether he intended it or not, Schellenberg obviously encouraged a vehemence in those he fell out with, and this was amplified by his outspoken views and his love of “playing the laird”. He fell out particularly badly with an ‘Island Manager’ he hired in 1978 by the name of Ian Carlton. Working on the island for a year, Carlton developed a particularly disdainful view of the estate management on Eigg:

**“Mr Schellenberg did not regard a laird’s role as constituting a job at all, with work to be done with proper diligence, and sense of duty. Rather the laird was there to have fun, to enjoy his ego-trip whether driving vintage Bentleys, buying Victorian steam yachts, travelling the Orient express or bob-sleighting in Switzerland . . . .Very rapidly, I am afraid, I became aware of tens of thousands of pounds being frittered away on self indulgences, while development money was being sought from the HIDB, and we still had tenants in houses with rotten floors, no inside sanitation or adequate water supply. The Lodge with its almost cost free hydro-electric system was in stark contrast to every other house on the island. We had drainage to do, fences to**

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<sup>41</sup> *ibid*

<sup>42</sup> MacKinnon.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid*

**build, lime to spread, but not apparently the resources to pay a decent wage or improve the saw mill”.<sup>44</sup>**

Like many subsequent grieves and managers on the island, Carlton did not last long on the job. Unlike most, however, he did make a stand in the press against what he saw and subsequently levelled harsh criticism against his former employer. In his 1992 article for the West Highland Free Press, he concluded that “Eigg to Mr Schellenberg, was a plaything, a Meccano set or another vintage toy.” He did not understand that he was playing with “flesh and bone, and peoples lives and families and homes”.<sup>45</sup> Although these criticisms were being aired in Highland small talk and the minor regional press, the employment problems and falling-outs on Eigg were nevertheless seen as negligible and gossip at best. It certainly was not a community issue to speak of on the island, since Schellenberg remained a generous employer. “The wages were not exceptional, but they were not the worst either and they still allowed people to stay on the island”.<sup>46</sup>

Whilst Schellenberg’s personnel problems on the island had only a minor impact within the community, his personal problems with his marriage to Margaret, on the other hand, were to precipitate enormous change. Trouble began in 1978 when Margaret became involved with a publisher by the name of Bill Williams. Separation soon followed, together with various revelations from Margaret’s Udney estate manager, Mr Bruce. Since Mr Bruce had also “looked after Eigg” as well, he had a good idea of how the island was being run. As Bill Williams describes, one day Mr Bruce came to Maggie and said “Do you know what’s happening ? Schellenberg is ripping you off”.<sup>47</sup> The island had originally been purchased with her money, that much she knew, but what she did not know was that “nearly all the payments for setting up enterprises on Eigg” had also “come from Udney”. There were allegedly hundreds of Udney Estate cheque stubs for frivolous expenditures such as night clubs in London, and the purchasing of boats, cars, and even the running of an aeroplane. And these were then written up with a little “creative accounting” as “improvements on Eigg”.<sup>48</sup> Precipitating even further acrimony in the ensuing divorce in 1981, the

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<sup>44</sup> Carlton

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*

<sup>46</sup> Helliwell, Simon

<sup>47</sup> Williams, Bill. Interview 16<sup>th</sup> January 1998

<sup>48</sup> *ibid*

financial irregularities ensured that Margaret wanted as little to do with Eigg as possible. However, since the island was held in a limited partnership between the two, it was not divided or sold during the divorce. Instead, Eigg was to remain jointly owned and under the management of Schellenberg. Understandably, Margaret immediately closed off all connections and affiliations between her estate at Udney and the Eigg estate. This proved to be a serious blow for the island both materially and financially.<sup>49</sup> In terms of the cattle enterprise, which involved the fattening of stock on the East Coast, this simply finished off the business. The Udney office had been crucial in organising the transport and sale of stock.<sup>50</sup> On top of this the HIDB, which had ploughed some £120,000 into Schellenberg's projects on Eigg, now wanted to see some returns on the money spent. In more precise terms, they wanted to see some payments on the loan that the estate had been given to buy the cattle in the first place. Faced with a farm that was completely unprofitable, Schellenberg sold the cattle and decided to move solely into sheep.<sup>51</sup> A decision that, since sheep needed far less tending, meant he could also cut the wage bill by laying-off five farm workers.

Unfortunately, since the five workers laid off included four young islanders this decision was not taken well in the community.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, the redundancies are cited by elder islanders as a crucial break in the community's relationship with Schellenberg.<sup>53</sup> Especially by those who looked towards a Runciman style estate that provided security and a job for life. As Peggy Kirk recalls, "That meant a lot that did, a steady and secure job, [and] five of them going on an island this small. There were some very upset people I can tell you".<sup>54</sup> One of the young workers, Donald MacKinnon, was so incensed that after a few remorseful drams he shouted at Schellenberg and took a swing at him down by the pier. Well versed in boxing at public school, Schellenberg neatly side-stepped the islander and knocked him down.<sup>55</sup> It was not a good situation, nonetheless and after the redundancies, the vast majority of the island's residents no longer gave Schellenberg the benefit of doubt. Without the comparable personal wealth, nor the grand success story of private enterprise,

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<sup>49</sup> Carlton.

<sup>50</sup> Dressler. p 162

<sup>51</sup> *ibid* p. 163

<sup>52</sup> The five workers being: Duncan Fergusson, Angus Kirk, Alastair Kirk, Donald MacKinnon, and Wes Fyffe (an 'incomer').

<sup>53</sup> MacKinnon; Kirk, Peggy

<sup>54</sup> Kirk, Peggy

Schellenberg's position as a Runciman-style employer was shot through. From the summer of 1981 onwards islanders and the remaining estate workers alike, had the firm belief the estate was being managed on a shoestring budget.<sup>56</sup>

A division therefore began to develop on island from the early 1980's onwards, which ran firmly along the lines of those who supported Schellenberg and those who were against him. People's position in this split was generated by whether they were either housed and employed by the estate, or were independent of the estate and living on the crofting land. If they were like Colin and Marie Carr, and were both employed and housed by the estate then they certainly supported Schellenberg. Schellenberg had the capacity for considerable charm and with Colin and Marie he rewarded their loyalty with friendship, confidence, and opportunity.<sup>57</sup> Colin became farm grieve in 1981 and working with the old Runciman shepherd Neil Macdonald, he was given new responsibilities and an enhanced position in the estate's management. The few remaining estate workers like Donald 'Craigard' (Campbell) the gardener, Anne Campbell, and three other full time employees were in the same boat as the Carr family. They lived in tied houses as part of their employment and were consequently dependent on remaining in good favour if they wished to keep their job and live on the island: "Of course you defended him", says Anne Campbell, "he owned the whole place, and he owned your house. You daren't say anything wrong about *Schelle*, or he'd get to hear about it and you'd be out on your ear. I never had a lease from him, not the whole time I've lived on Eigg. That's the way he had a hold of you".<sup>58</sup> For those who lived in the crofting townships of Cleadale and Cuagach, however, this power of eviction did not hold. Schellenberg had little if any control over who lived on croft land, and this allowed much more critical opinions to be held about his ownership and management of the island. This was particularly so for those residents who were former employees of the estate, and though hostility was rarely ever shown towards Schellenberg himself, "people made sure he didn't feel too comfortable when he came over to the crofters' side of the island".<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> MacKinnon.

<sup>56</sup> MacKinnon, Greene; Dressler. pp.162-165

<sup>57</sup> Carr.

<sup>58</sup> Campbell.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid*

Unfortunately for Schellenberg, ‘the crofter’s side of the island’ was not only “generally against him”, but was numerically expanding as well.<sup>60</sup> Rather alarmingly the townships were now being predominantly settled with his ex-employees; the very independently minded and resourceful people he had recruited himself and then fallen out with. People like the Helliwells, who had fallen foul of his promise to provide land for a house, or the offer of an old estate house to buy or lease, instead started settling into Cleadale and Cuagach from the late 1970’s onwards. They either took over abandoned crofts like Wes and Maggie Fyffe, or land was de-crofted and sold to them for housing like Simon and Karen Helliwell. Brian Greene and Camille Dressler were some of few who simply lived in caravans that were located on croft land. Whatever the case between 1978 and 1992 – eight new couples moved into Cleadale and Cuagach; all of them apart from one couple had first worked on the estate, and all of them apart from another couple were incomers to the community.<sup>61</sup> Their numerical impact was very significant. In 1975 the crofting population on Eigg accounted for 21 people out of an island population of 39 [53%]. In 1992, the population resident on the crofting land had almost doubled to 41, out of an island 64 [64%].<sup>62</sup> New people brought new housing, and the crofting townships saw the steady renovation of old croft houses and the building of new homes. This was obviously increased and enhanced when Cleadale and Cuagach were designated as a Housing Action Area in 1988. The grants produced not only new homes, but circulated more money on the island, as well as providing employment independent of the estate.

The steady infusion of disgruntled ex-estate employees over the course of the 1980’s into the crofting townships hardly alleviated the basic division on the island regarding Schellenberg. Indeed, for Schellenberg the crofting land was now increasingly a hot house of discontentment, and most frustrating of all, it was beyond his powers to directly control. With the Social Security system providing a safety net for people determined on staying, Schellenberg found it infuriating that the local council would be interested in helping people to build homes on the island. Objecting against the proposal of the Housing Action Area on Eigg in 1987, he was most

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<sup>60</sup> MacKinnon,

<sup>61</sup> These couples were: Maggie & Wes Fyffe, Brian Greene & Camille Dressler, Trevor & Sue, John Cormack & Nat, Karen & Simon Helliwell, Mick & Jacki, Davy & Amber Robertson, Angus & Mairi Kirk.

<sup>62</sup> Numbers compiled in conversation with Marie Carr.

concerned with where it would all end if housing grants were given out. "If you get several hundred people moving into caravans in Cleadale will you feel obliged to provide them all with houses even though they may have come from Birmingham, Ireland or France?"<sup>63</sup> The first of his many references to particular incomers (in this case Maggie & Wes Fyffe and Camille Dressler), Schellenberg was notably resentful of his ex-employees gaining independence on the island. He was also no doubt highly frustrated by the fact that the crofters on Eigg had given out security of tenure to the very people he had refused.<sup>64</sup> He was against the Housing Action Area because in his view the wrong people would be gaining state aid. As he pointed out in his letter of objection: "I do not quite understand why my own house and quite a lot of the other holiday houses which are let out are not included in the housing Action Area".<sup>65</sup>



*Figure 3.3: The crofting area of Eigg<sup>66</sup>  
(In the photo the road passes through Cleadale – nearest- and then  
Cuagach before passing over the hill towards  
the middle of the island)*

<sup>63</sup> Schellenberg, Keith. Proposed Isle of Eigg Housing Action Area Letter from Isle of Eigg Estate, to Andrew Jackson, Lochaber District Council. 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1987. IEA

<sup>64</sup> Examples of those promised land for sale or a lease on a property when they were employed by Schellenberg - Simon & Karen Helliwell; Brian Greene & Camille Dressler; Maggie & Wes Fyffe; John & Nat Cormack.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Morgan, Daniel.

As for the resident islander's perception of the new families in Cleadale and Cuagach, it is clear that there were some perceived social differences. Angus MacKinnon, who was principal in securing many of the new residents places to live called them "the hippie lot".<sup>67</sup> Brian and Camille, Maggie and Wes, Sue and Trevor, and John and Nat were all associated together as a clique in the community. They generally fitted the stereotype of "hippie" since they mostly had long hair, and with their copies self-sufficiency manuals in hand, they were prime examples of the new types of settlers in the Highlands and Islands.<sup>68</sup> Like many in the 1970's and 80's they were seeking an alternative lifestyle, and when they settled in Cleadale and Cuagach they believed they had found it. Arriving on the island at approximately the same time, the four couples naturally fitted together as a group. They developed a close friendship, which as all of them describe was bound together by each of them raising children of approximately the same age.<sup>69</sup>

Though this subgroup, or "social group" as John Cormack calls it, represented a form of division within the resident community, it was very much tempered by the closeness of island life. As Angus MacKinnon describes, "You have to be a part of things on Eigg, and if you don't get along with people, or you don't know how things really work, then you can die of loneliness".<sup>70</sup> The everyday communal activities of getting fuel and supplies from the mainland always encouraged a form of bonding amongst the island's inhabitants. This was very much the same in terms of the social life on the island. "You couldn't just stay in a wee little group", recalls Brian, "You lived in a place of just 60 odd people, and everyone got together for the celidhs and parties. It was a group necessity".<sup>71</sup> The new couples were also very active, and particularly John and Nat Cormack were quickly involved in all aspects of island life. John became the ferryman in 1981, and in 1988 the island's postman as well, and this ensured a closeness with all the island's inhabitants. Likewise, as Peggy Kirk notes, others were accepted by the islanders for their tenacity and spirit: "They livened things up. And they were good at getting along, the ones that stayed. Worked hard too. Maggie and Wes were very good. They took up the croft, and Wes was out there

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<sup>67</sup> MacKinnon.

<sup>68</sup> Dressler. p.164

<sup>69</sup> Cormack; Greene; Kirk, Sue Interview 12<sup>th</sup> November 1997.

<sup>70</sup> MacKinnon.

<sup>71</sup> Greene.



on it every day, [and] apart from us [at Laig Farm] and Katie, they were the only ones left doing milk and cheese”.<sup>72</sup> As Camille Dressler describes, the slow assimilation of newcomers into island life was also amply assisted by the “natural rounding of edges” that happens in small and isolated communities.<sup>73</sup> It is a process well documented in Anthony Cohen’s study of Whalsay, whereby the inclination of folk in close communities is to allow a certain leeway in social relations. Very much the product of a social life from which escape and retreat are well nigh impossible, islanders tended to avoid open conflict and ensure a certain consistency and peace to island life.<sup>74</sup> In so doing newcomers were given chances to adjust and fit in to established ways of doing things, and as Angus says “if they didn’t learn . . . they were gone”.<sup>75</sup>

### 3.4 Organising the Community

Many visitors to the island over the years commentated upon the fact that compared to mainland communities there was so little actively organised on Eigg. In part this was because of the convenience of small numbers, but mainly it was due to the historical dominance of the proprietor upon the island’s economic and social life.<sup>76</sup> The Crofters’ Grazings Committee had of course some function in co-ordinating the agricultural life in the crofting townships. But by the 1980’s, this was of little consequence, for though numbers of people living on the crofts had increased, there was little land actually being worked. Resident ministers and priests had also traditionally filled many aspects of social organisation on the island, yet with no full-time resident clergy, the church too proved of little merit in the 1980’s. The only body which islanders could use to co-ordinate and express their grievances was the Small Isles Community Council. Established in 1977, the Community Council primarily focussed on issues common to all four Small Isles. Whilst this had its functions, it met but only once a year and considering each island was so different, Eigg residents found it highly limited in scope and effect.<sup>77</sup> This was especially felt amongst the new

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<sup>72</sup> Kirk, Peggy.

<sup>73</sup> Dressler. p.168

<sup>74</sup> Cohen, Anthony P. *Whalsay : Symbol, segment and boundary in a Shetland island community*. Manchester University Press, Manchester. 1987. pp.27-37

<sup>75</sup> MacKinnon.

<sup>76</sup> Dressler. p.168

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*

residents, who believed “the shambles of the Community Council needed replacing with something that was more specific to the island’s needs”.<sup>78</sup> It was therefore decided in 1983 to establish an independent representative body: The Isle of Eigg Residents Association (IERA).

Although Dressler declares that “the creation of the association was to mark a turning point in island life”, the IERA was far from radical or revolutionary in its early years.<sup>79</sup> Reviewing the early hand written minutes shows very modest beginnings and activities in the fledgling organisation. A fairly typical example of one of the 2000 or so voluntary bodies in the Highlands and Islands, its initial meetings covered very menial issues such as co-ordinating fuel runs to the mainland, running a film club, and organising celidhs.<sup>80</sup> In short, it was a very basic event that remained mostly annual, at which around a third of the community would turn up to sort out communal necessities and social events. Some of the older islanders like Angus MacKinnon found it a bit of a “talking shop”, and to be the plaything of the newcomers to Eigg.<sup>81</sup> This is somewhat confirmed by the dominance of the new young settlers in the IERA’s minutes and elected positions. Nat Cormack, Colin Carr and Simon Helliwell all took notable prominence as chairpersons and secretaries. Similarly those who contributed to meetings, and were recorded in the minutes, such as Marie Carr and Camille Dressler also tended to be from the younger and newcomer elements of the community.

Reflecting a stereotypical characteristic of incomers to rural areas, it is clear that the newcomers to Eigg certainly felt more comfortable with speaking out and being involved in committees, meetings, and such like. As Jedrej and Nuttall note from their studies of other highland communities, however, this dominance of incomers in committees and positions of authority was not because they were simply more used to the procedure and formality. Neither was it indicative of their successful integration into local life and society.<sup>82</sup> It was a much more complex situation. One that obviously began with the desire of new arrivals to gain acceptance and position within

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<sup>78</sup> Helliwell, Karen. Interview 6<sup>th</sup> February 1998

<sup>79</sup> Dressler. p.165

<sup>80</sup> IERA Minutes. February 26 1983. IEA.

<sup>81</sup> MacKinnon.

<sup>82</sup> Jedrej & Nuttall. pp.99-100

‘the community’, but which also was determined by a certain conservatism and exclusivity amongst the established residents. Firstly locals, or islanders, preferred to allow those less settled in the community to be the ones to try out anything new. Incomers had the least to lose, and consequently were the most expendable. In much the same vein, since incomers could also be judged as being both resident but not fully integrated into the community, they had a certain value in being almost objective in their concerns. Consequently in matters of common interest such as water, roads, and public services, incomers were often promoted into positions of authority precisely because they were not ‘part of the community’.<sup>83</sup>

Since the IERA did not directly replace or overrule any established or ‘traditional’ forms of communal organisation, there was little if any controversy regarding its initial role on the island. “It was filling a void of sorts”,<sup>84</sup> and with issues such as hostel provision for the island’s school children on the mainland, and campaigning for the replacement of a resident doctor, the IERA began to establish a certain amount of credibility.<sup>85</sup> By the mid to late 1980’s, things had noticeably picked up with not only a greater range of topics being covered in meetings, but a much more confident approach being taken with the local council and outside bodies.<sup>86</sup> This was propelled in part by the developing confidence and knowledge of the IERA, but also by the growing intransigence of Schellenberg towards thecrofting townships and the residents’ wishes. The IERA began to investigate expanding the provision of services on the island, especially in terms of housing, caring for the elderly, and refuse disposal. Rubbish had long been a problem on the island, and one that was compounded by an ever-expanding rat population. Since Schellenberg rarely took the IERA seriously, their requests for a landfill site were frivolously answered with the suggestion of a plot in the middle of Cleadale.<sup>87</sup> Like the islanders, the Health and Safety Department of HRC refused to allow the site so close to residential housing.<sup>88</sup> Although the refuse issue was never to be resolved, the problems of care for the elderly were somewhat answered by the setting up of a lunch club, sponsored by Shelter, and run on a voluntary basis by the island’s women. These activities of the

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<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Kirk, Peggy.

<sup>85</sup> *IERA Minutes*. May 24<sup>th</sup> 1984.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.* March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1985.

<sup>87</sup> Dressler, p.166

IERA caught the attention of the Social Work Department, who in turn recognised the lack of provision for the island's elderly. A home-help service was soon established, and it was not long before they donated an old mini-bus for transporting the elderly to and from the shop and their lunch club.<sup>89</sup>

The summer of 1986 saw the drafting of a new constitution and the registration of the association as a charitable body. This had been initiated by the ambitious plans to raise funds for a new community hall in Cleadale. Over the years problems had arisen with the community's use of the existing hall next to the Lodge. Although Schellenberg allowed access, there was no provision for repairs or electricity, and without any form of lease the IERA could not take advantage of financial assistance from outside agencies. Consequently the residents took aim at raising £15,000 themselves and securing £87,000 of grants from the HRC, Scottish Education Department, and the HIDB.<sup>90</sup> Schellenberg was noticeably keen on this project, and not only contributed some money himself, but his new wife Suki suggested using the entrance fees to that year's Eigg Games.<sup>91</sup> A Steering Group was elected to co-ordinate the venture, and a year of raffles, ceilidhs and sponsored events followed in which almost every member of the community contributed. As Nat Cormack describes, "We found out the following Easter that we had made nearly £2,000, when the most we'd ever had was a hundred pounds or so for the children's Christmas party and the New Year whiskey, and this gave us all a tremendous feeling of achievement".<sup>92</sup>

### 3.5 Brewing Opposition to Schellenberg

New people arriving onto Eigg had brought new demands for opportunity and development independent of the estate. In doing so, they also brought new methods and confidence to the relationships between the island's residents and owner. Whilst the IERA had gained in strength and assurance, however, significant problems remained. Chief amongst these, was the continued lack of activity on the estate and on the behalf of Mr Schellenberg. Throughout the 1980's the estate remained on a

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<sup>88</sup> IERA Minutes. Feb 26<sup>th</sup> 1983 and 12<sup>th</sup> Feb 1988

<sup>89</sup> Dressler. pp.168-169

<sup>90</sup> IERA Minutes. July 4<sup>th</sup> 1986.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *ibid*; Dressler. p.169

shoestring budget with Colin Carr undergoing ridiculous shortages in running the farm. Cash was so short at one time, that there was not even enough diesel: “I’d be in the middle of a feeding round and the tractor would run out of diesel. I’d have to walk back from Grulin or wherever I was to the pier, fill up a five gallon drum from the Ban Mora tanks and walk all the way back again because the estate manager would not allow me to buy any fuel”.<sup>93</sup> The tourist trade was likewise suffering from a lack of investment and running repairs, with houses each year deteriorating and each year getting harder and harder to prepare for the coming season.<sup>94</sup> The only significant investment being made on the island was that of the 218.7 hectares of forestry plantation carried out in 1982 and 1983. This was planted under the Woodland Grant Scheme, and managed by Scottish Woodlands was a lucrative tax break for Schellenberg and his partners.

Not only were the island’s residents experiencing a noticeable decline in the estate’s activities during the 1980’s, but Schellenberg’s ex-wife Margaret Williams had failed to receive any accounts or income from the property during the entire period since her divorce. The forestry plantation was a case in point, for although Schellenberg had assured Margaret that her share would be paid into their children’s trust fund, “he never did, and he and his partner pocketed the lot”.<sup>95</sup> Indeed on top of the lack of income, with the island held in a limited partnership Margaret was “still bound in an open ended agreement and was very exposed”. When she decided therefore to have a look at the island for herself in the summer of 1987, Schellenberg prevented her from entering the house. As Bill Williams remarks, “When you are a full partner in a property and you are actually prevented from entering the building by your other partner – then things must be badly wrong”.<sup>96</sup> Consequently on July 13<sup>th</sup> 1988 she sued him for “mismanaging the island” and “devaluing” her half share. In so doing she demanded that the island be put up for sale immediately.<sup>97</sup> Denying the claims of mismanagement, Schellenberg contested and began a series of legal proceedings that were to keep the decision in court for the next three and a half years. During this time, the island was left in limbo with Schellenberg unable to sign or

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<sup>93</sup> Dressler. p.163

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Williams.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> “Laird’s former wife asks court for Eigg sale order”, *The Scotsman*, 14<sup>th</sup> July 1988

agree to any development on the island because of the contested nature of his proprietorship. On top of the generally stagnant nature of the estate anyway, this meant that there was absolutely no chance of the situation changing on the island. Schellenberg's general relationship with the island's residents therefore continued to decline. It was a decline that was only enhanced by the 1988 Eigg Games and his characteristically boisterous behaviour.

The 1988 Eigg Games were the most ambitious to date and included teams flying in from the States and from St. Moritz. Various celebrities and socialites such as the Clanranalds and the German playboy Gunter Sachs were also to make appearances. Continuing from the Jacobite and Hanovarian theme of preceding years, Schellenberg based the games upon the Axis vs. the Allied powers. Islanders began to feel uncomfortable when Nazi flags were seen flying over the Lodge, and especially when Gunter Sachs arrived by helicopter in full Prussian military dress and flanked by attendants in flowing capes.



*Figure 3.4 : Gunter Sachs (far left) inspects his Troops on the Lodge lawn for the 1988 Eigg Games.<sup>98</sup>*

<sup>98</sup> IEA

This caused much distaste amongst the islanders, especially the elder generation some of whom had fought during the war. The island was enveloped in an atmosphere of tension that was to eventually explode at the evening's celidh. Following suggestions from the last IERA meeting, islanders had decided to charge admission to the evening's dance.<sup>99</sup> They were providing the "local colour" and since the island band was unpaid, the IERA felt it only fair to charge a small entrance fee to raise funds for the hall. Although guests paid, some were a little unsure, and eventually a furious Schellenberg arrived and demanded the money back. The band walked off the stage followed by most of the islanders:

**"A furious Captain of Clanranald pursued them outside, shouting insults in the dark: 'Scum of the earth, half baked socialists' whilst trying to box 'the peasants ears'. Schellenberg was trotting behind him to point out that 'these people were not the real islanders, some of them were even foreigners !'<sup>100</sup>**

Although the clash amounted to little more than a bit of shouting and bad taste, it was nevertheless precipitous in colouring the deteriorating relationship between Schellenberg and the island's residents. He had clashed with not just isolated members of the community this time, but instead had come up against the residents' own representative body, and in a particularly ugly and outlandish way as well. The two hundred odd pounds that he confiscated was never returned in the end, and his "over-the-top reaction" embarrassed his own guests to the point that some of them secretly gave the IERA money.<sup>101</sup> Considering that many of the residents involved had already experienced soured relations with Schellenberg, it is not surprising that the clash "made those disaffected with Schellenberg completely give up on ever trying to deal with him again".<sup>102</sup>

Disaffection with Schellenberg was by the late 1980's far from restricted to just the island's residents. From mid 1980's onwards, the IERA had continued to liaise with HRC departments and other outside agencies over the issues of housing, sanitation, and refuse. In so doing, various authorities had been exposed to the

<sup>99</sup> IERA Minutes. February 12<sup>th</sup> 1988

<sup>100</sup> Dressler. p.175

<sup>101</sup> Dressler. Interview. 10<sup>th</sup> November 1997

<sup>102</sup> Greene.

situation on the island, and almost invariably run foul of Schellenberg. The essential problem being, that whilst the HRC was obliged to look after the health, welfare, and development of those resident on Eigg, Schellenberg was in disagreement over who exactly was entitled to live on the island, and what the course of development should be. Consequently whilst he would provide rent free accommodation and tied houses to what staff and favourites he had left on the island, he remained more than wary of giving people leases and security of tenure. This caused significant problems for local council services, for without any form of security of tenure a large number of residents were unable to take advantage of the various grants and loans available for home and civic improvements. Living in substandard housing, several elderly residents such as Dolly Ferguson were causing substantial anguish to council officials. Though she lived by grace and favour, Dolly's cottage for example, leaked so badly that she was reduced to living in one room; sleeping on a sofa, and occasionally being bitten by rats at night. Purpose built sheltered housing was the only real answer, yet with Schellenberg's legal actions over the management and sale of Eigg this was impossible to further. Consequently, as the Housing Action Area debate demonstrated, a stalemate had occurred whereby Schellenberg took any council involvement on the island as merely interference. For Dr Michael Foxley the local Small Isles Councillor, the situation was untenable especially considering the possible sale of Eigg and HRC's planned investments on the island. As well as the plans for some £200,000 to be spent on sheltered housing, the HRC was also preparing to spend £750,000 on an extension to the island jetty, and a further £200,000 on a new water supply for Cleadale. As he stated in 1990: "Over £1.2 million of public funds are about to be spent on the island. I don't feel like putting that kind of money into the place so some offshore clown has a more valuable asset at the end of the day".<sup>103</sup>

Security of tenure also proved a significant bone of contention for others involved with Eigg, namely the SWT. The original agreements with Schellenberg had been highly productive with not only three SWT reserves being established, but a ranger by the name of John Chester being housed by the estate from 1986 onwards. However, tensions between the SWT and Schellenberg had already begun with the Sitka Spruce

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<sup>103</sup> Crichton, Torcuil. "Weighing up the odds of taking Eigg into public ownership". West Highland Free Press. 14<sup>th</sup> December. 1990



and Lodgepole Pine plantations in the early 1980's.<sup>104</sup> Unfortunately Schellenberg did not consult the SWT over the environmental impacts of the afforestation project, which in the end was to prove highly destructive to the *Blar Dubh* bog above Laig. "Easily the richest area of bogland on Eigg for its plant and insect diversity", the mass plantations drained and acidified the SSSI bog into ordinary wet moorland.<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless the resident warden was very successful in managing the designated reserves, and worked well with the island's crofters and the estate farm in co-ordinating various environmental projects. It was a quiet and low key approach that was only hindered by the fact that Schellenberg refused to provide any form of lease for the warden's residence. The SWT would have happily paid a rent or bought a property to ensure their continued involvement on the island, but Schellenberg again preferred the casual arrangement. This was very problematic for the SWT, especially since the properties used to house the warden were only barely habitable. More importantly, however, with the potential sale of the island, it also meant that they had no foot hold on the island whatsoever.<sup>106</sup> Like various islanders in other estate properties, they were only present on the island by grace and favour alone. Over a decade of work and involvement accounted for very little without security of tenure.

The prospect of the island's sale came ever more closer in July of 1989 when the Edinburgh Court of Session determined that Schellenberg must sell the island. A year previously, he had attempted to circumvent the sale by transferring his share of the island to his family firm, Cleveland and Island Holdings Ltd. In fact this transaction was the central cause for Schellenberg losing the case, since Lord Prosser decided that in so doing he had forfeited his property rights over the island.<sup>107</sup> In characteristic fashion, Schellenberg immediately launched a flamboyant appeal. He told reporters outside the courthouse:

**"The effects of this judgement, would if implemented, be that I would be evicted from my own home of 15 years and thrown out of my job. I use these emotive words deliberately because they describe the reality. The 12 people and 10 households who currently work with me,\* earning their living and paying their taxes from the island farm's assets, as well as**

<sup>104</sup> Wilcox. Conversation.

<sup>105</sup> Dressler. p.160

<sup>106</sup> Wilcox. Conversation.

<sup>107</sup> Robertson, Jim. "Ex-wife wins court battle sell off Eigg". *The Scotsman*. 15<sup>th</sup> July 1989.

\* At the time, Schellenberg actually employed only 6 people

**many others who are connected or associated with us in one way or another, are even more vulnerable to a forced change of ownership”.**<sup>108</sup>

The irony of his remarks was no doubt hardly lost on the many employees who had already suffered a similar fate under his management of the island. Neither was it lost on Margaret, who had been “horrified at how Schellenberg was bullying people on the island”.<sup>109</sup> Coming from traditional land owning aristocracy, where estate ownership incorporated much responsibility, Margaret was acutely uncomfortable with the way the island had become “a rich man’s playground”. “The Eigg Games were a complete embarrassment, . . .and sent such an appalling message”. In trying to rectify the damage done, therefore, during the final legal wrangling over the appeal and the sale of the island, Margaret worked with Schellenberg to provide some security for loyal islanders like Collin and Marie Carr. A limited partnership was drawn up between the Carrs and the estate to manage Kildonnán, and when Colin and Marie added their names to the transactions they were glad to see that their loyalty and hard work had been finally recognised.<sup>110</sup>



*Figure 3.5 :Kildonnán Farmhouse*<sup>111</sup>

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Williams.

<sup>110</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Morgan, Daniel.

This small piece of co-operation between Schellenberg and his former 2<sup>nd</sup> wife over the farms was quite remarkable considering that their fights in the courts and media continued in pace and vitriol. Both were well connected with media types and both had funds to pay for expensive legal actions. Of the two, however, Schellenberg was clearly the more adept at finding writers and journalists to provide glowing renditions of his side of the story. Henry Porter was one such writer, who penned a particularly enthusiastic depiction of Schellenberg in the glossy society magazine Harpers and Queen.<sup>112</sup> Making much of his benevolence, Porter described Schellenberg's sterling efforts towards the island's inhabitants and wildlife: "You know," Schellenberg is quoted as saying, "I simply wanted the people who have struggled to make a life there to have some security". Apparently, however, he had been "outwitted" and "thoroughly trounced" by "the two sections of Scottish society that he likes the least – the disapproving Calvinist lawyers and the straight-laced dogmatists of the left". This was pointedly made apparent by various quips against Bill Williams, "who Schellenberg claims is as left wing as his friend Brian Wilson MP". Indeed Brian Wilson, editor of the West Highland Free Press, was quoted as vehemently resenting Schellenberg's "improvements" on Eigg: "He set up this private kingdom on his second wife's money and has generally used the island as a vehicle for self-publicity and self-aggrandisement . . . He is an arsehole".<sup>113</sup>

Though making Schellenberg out to be a little "sad", the article nevertheless pitted him in a heroic light battling against a co-ordinated conspiracy of "local socialists". "My ideas went against the grain" he explained, "You see a hell of a lot of islands are occupied by hippies, people who have no inner resources. These people expect and get hand-outs of various sorts. . . But I wanted it to be a profitable business, so that instead of using taxpayers money, the islanders paid tax from their incomes".<sup>114</sup> Unfortunately, Schellenberg had not only forgot the extensive subsidies, grants, and loans he had himself gained from the state, but Henry Porter had also conveniently forgot to interview the Williams about the story. They consequently took action against the article and in December 1991 the Press Complaints Commission

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<sup>112</sup> Porter, Henry. "Scrambled Eigg", Harpers and Queen, October 1991.

<sup>113</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*

upheld their protest against Harpers and Queen.<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, Schellenberg had been able to get his side across, and despite the end result had managed to put one over on the Williams. It was a tenacious and belligerent approach that hardly endeared him to his former wife, the island's residents, or perhaps more importantly to the media.

### 3.6 The Isle of Eigg Trust

Though Schellenberg may have once stood as a Liberal Parliamentary candidate, he had obviously taken the Thatcherite ideology of the 1980's to heart. Private enterprise and above all private ownership were at the centre of his political beliefs and he rarely avoided plugging his own views on the matter. For others however, his views and his high profile activities on Eigg represented everything that was wrong with private land ownership in the Highlands and Islands. Tom Forsyth was one such individual, who after several visits to Eigg became increasingly frustrated by the unfulfilled potential of the island. Having formerly worked for the Iona Community, as well as initiating a highly successful resettlement of the Scoraig peninsular, Tom was very much aware of the possibilities for social and economic development on the island. Liz Lyon was another who had become disillusioned with Schellenberg's style of ownership, although her dissatisfaction came from more direct exposure to conditions on Eigg and the Schellenberg family. Not only a school friend of both Suki Schellenberg and Margaret Williams, Liz was also the former wife of Bill Williams. These remarkably close connections had led to her invitation to the island several times by Schellenberg. However, after taking time to befriend some of the islanders she found it "impossible to live the high life up at the Lodge, when elderly ladies like Dolly were rotting in derelict housing".<sup>116</sup> Teaming up with Tom in the spring of 1991, the two decided to try to do something about the situation and seconded the help of two community activists Bob Harris and Alastair MacIntosh. With the island lurching towards an eventual sale, their solution was to establish a charitable trust and begin fundraising for a community buy-out. With Tom and Liz

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<sup>115</sup> Wilson, Brian. "Brian Wilson Writes", West Highland Free Press. 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1991.

<sup>116</sup> Lyon, Elizabeth. Interview 12<sup>th</sup> May 1997

forking out the £1700 for legal fees,<sup>117</sup> the Isle of Eigg Trust was registered as a formal charitable body on July 18<sup>th</sup> 1991.<sup>118</sup>

The four trustees had very different motivations in creating the IET. For Tom and Liz there were deeply personal and spiritual reasons for becoming involved. The island elicited something special, both in its beauty, history, and people. For Bob and Alastair, however, there was a more practical and political edge to their concerns. Both had recently become aware of the problems of land ownership in the Highlands and Islands, and for Alastair in particular Eigg represented a perfect launching point for publicising the issues on a national scale. “Schellenberg had already created press interest in the island with all his antics, and the creation of the Trust was to simply pour a little more fuel on the fire. Basically, it was the ideal scenario for launching something different. Something that would make folk pay attention to the problems of land ownership in Scotland”.<sup>119</sup> Hence, the decision was made to launch the IET in Edinburgh in the plush setting of the Balmoral Hotel.

This was done on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1991, and to guarantee media attendance they invited Schellenberg along as well. Making their bid for raising £3 million, the Trustees appealed for public donations and support for their plans. Plans which although rather sparse, included a “Life Centre” at the Lodge catering for “burned out businessmen” together with ideas of revitalising island’s agricultural economy. They also looked towards the greater participation of islanders in the management of the estate, and the steady expansion of the island’s population up to around 200.<sup>120</sup> Schellenberg, “the beleaguered owner” provided a counter to their idealism, and the media keenly reported on the minor clashes involved. Generally, the IET was successful in gaining widespread attention. However, almost all papers initially took the IET as being a little off the wall, and the right wing broad-sheets were more than often hostile. The Daily Telegraph was notably antagonistic and carried the story under the by-line of “Urban dropouts’ seek £3 million to buy Eigg”. There was a distinct amount of shock

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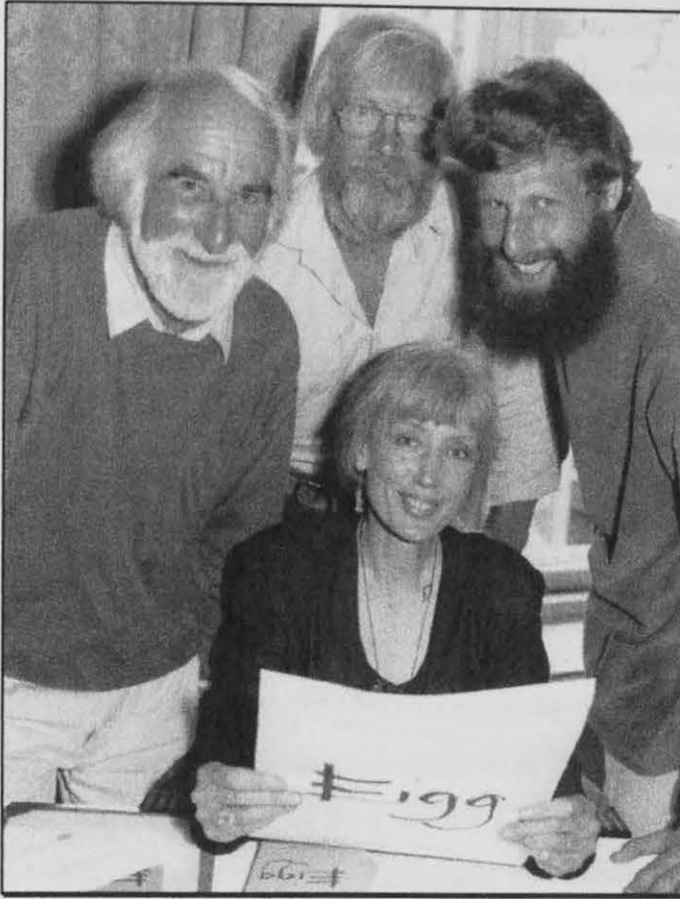
<sup>117</sup> *ibid*

<sup>118</sup> Registers of Scotland. Books of Council and Session, Edinburgh. 18<sup>th</sup> July 1991. [SCO17951]

<sup>119</sup> MacIntosh, Alastair. Interview. 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1998

<sup>120</sup> Hetherington, Peter. “Battle is joined on island heaven”, The Guardian. 24<sup>th</sup> July 1991.

expressed at the fact that “the four initial trustees admit they would like to see the law on land ownership changed and the concept of landlords abolished”.<sup>121</sup>



*Fig.3.6: The Isle of Eigg Trust  
(From left to right: Bob Harris, Tom Forsyth, Liz Lyon, and  
Alastair MacIntosh)*

The battle for credibility was to be a defining feature of the IET’s campaign for ownership over the next twelve months. Apart from the essential unlikelihood of raising the prescribed £3 million, credibility was chiefly sought because the IET’s ideas of ownership and management appeared so far fetched. Firstly, their plans for development were sketchy to say the least. The ‘life centre’ attracted much attention, especially with the IET’s notions that “bank managers would enrol to learn dry stone dyking, ad men would shear sheep, and lawyers to muck out the byre”.<sup>122</sup> Secondly, the idea of expanding the island’s population up to two hundred people was also questioned. Indeed, this point notably facilitated Schellenberg into comment: “All you

<sup>121</sup> Reid, Robert. “Urban dropouts’ seek £3 million to buy Eigg”, *Daily Telegraph*, 24<sup>th</sup> July 1991.

<sup>122</sup> Duncan, Raymond. “Trust aims to Raise £3m to buy Eigg”, *The Herald*, 24<sup>th</sup> July 1991.

will end up with”, he said at the press launch, “would be a huge number of people living on social security”.<sup>123</sup> Thirdly, and most crucially considering their plans of community involvement and talk of “community ownership”, was the fact that the IET had only the slightest of connections to the island. Apart from Liz Lyon, Tom Forsyth was the only Trustee with contacts on the island, and he had only talked to a few people about the IET’s ideas. There had been no proper consultation undertaken, and certainly no mandate from the IERA. In fact, worse still Alastair MacIntosh, who had already begun to dominate press coverage of the Trust, had never even set foot on the island. It was a problematic situation, to say the least, and the Trust had to begin gaining credibility the hard way - by presenting their proposals to the islanders. This they did by first sending a pamphlet to each islander in early October,<sup>124</sup> and then scheduling a meeting at the end of the month.

The booklet, like Alastair’s eventual address to the 40 or so islanders on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October was full of hope and belief, but still very lacking in practical direction and content.<sup>125</sup> Essentially his presentation hammered home the simple point: that “the inhabitants of Eigg today, like those of so much of Scotland, have a legal status akin to only nuisance value in matters of ‘real’ estate. . .” Whereas “. . . should the Trust acquire ownership of Eigg, . . . *security of tenure* would be offered to those who lack it”.<sup>126</sup> In trying to put some meat on the bones of how the island would be managed, he also made clear that the Trustees would work in tandem with a “management committee representative of the community”.<sup>127</sup> The meeting lasted three hours, and though the Trustees were hospitably welcomed and politely questioned, there were enormous doubts in most islanders’ minds. To start with, as Kenneth Kean recalls, the main thought was: “Where did these people come from, and how did they get to this position without talking to any of us?”.<sup>128</sup> Some were even “pissed off”, because the Trust had not only “formed themselves and arrived on the scene without a word to the Residents Association”, but in the process they had

<sup>123</sup> Hetherington. 24<sup>th</sup> July 1991.

<sup>124</sup> The Isle of Eigg Trust, *Eigg*, October 1991. IEA.

<sup>125</sup> MacIntosh, Alastair. “‘A collector’s item’ or community ownership – the Isle of Eigg debate”, *Edinburgh Review*, vol.88, 1992, pp.158-162.

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.*p.159

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*p.161

<sup>128</sup> Kean, Kenneth. Interview. 13<sup>th</sup> November 1997

also “hijacked the name”.<sup>129</sup> The “hippie” and “new age” aspects of the Trustees struck most islanders: even those branded as hippies themselves. As Brian Greene describes, his first impressions of the Trustees were that they were “very hairy” and “too far out for this place”.<sup>130</sup> For John Cormack they appeared to be “just a bunch of old hippies chasing a pipe dream”.<sup>131</sup> Nevertheless a Residents Association meeting was arranged for the following week on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November in order to consider the Trust’s proposals.

A notably high turn out of residents appeared for the meeting, and significant debate was held over the exact nature of the IERA’s relationship to the proposed Trust. People wanted more formalised acknowledgement of the community’s rights in any new ownership scheme. Consequently, in the end it was agreed that any ‘yes’ vote would be on condition that the Trust’s constitution was amended on two points. Firstly that the IERA should have at least 2 of its members elected as Trustees of the IET. Secondly that the IERA “should have the right to discuss and if necessary veto any policy decisions that are felt to have serious affect on the island or community”.<sup>132</sup> There was also considerable debate regarding who was “resident” on the island, and who had the right to vote on the issue. Though solved by the IERA constitutional definition of “ordinarily resident”, as living on the island for six months or more, it was still felt that relatives should contact non-resident islanders and ascertain their wishes. With the constitutional provisos written on each ballot paper, the vote was held on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November.

A hundred percent turnout of the island’s 48 eligible voters produced 35 votes in favour of the Trust proposals.<sup>133</sup> For the Trustees this was the confirmation they needed, and from now on they would continue to flourish their 73% backing from the island’s residents. For Alastair it was “definitely a huge relief” and “the vote certainly changed the whole temper of the campaign”. It turned what for him “was a big theatrical spectacle” into something “that was slowly becoming real – very real

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<sup>129</sup> Helliwell, Simon.

<sup>130</sup> Greene.

<sup>131</sup> Cormack.

<sup>132</sup> IERA Minutes, 8<sup>th</sup> November

<sup>133</sup> MacIntosh, Edinburgh Review, p.162; “Vote of Confidence for Eigg community ownership plan”, West Highland Free Press, 15<sup>th</sup> November, 1992.



indeed”.<sup>134</sup> For the islanders however, there remained enormous caution. Obviously the vast majority had voted in favour, yet they had done so, only because they felt there was little other option. As both Sue Kirk and Simon Helliwell recall, “the vote showed just how desperate we were”.<sup>135</sup> Apart from the IET’s ideas for expanding population numbers, and their notable lack of money, the main cause for concern on the island was the IET’s campaigning on the wider front of land reform. This left many with the feeling that “there was a hidden agenda”, and that “Eigg was just a platform for them”.<sup>136</sup> Nevertheless, with the ‘islanders vote of confidence’, the IET had suddenly gained more attention for the island. The land reform angle being precisely what the news media needed; it gave a strong political edge to an otherwise minor human-interest feature. In particular IET’s stand on land issues fired up the West Highland Free Press into actively supporting their bid for “community ownership”. By the end of November the radical local paper was eagerly asking, “Will Schellenberg be the last emperor of Eigg?”<sup>137</sup>

Though the IET had finally elicited a tacit acceptance from the island’s residents, they still lacked credibility in their plans for the island’s economy. In fact in response to the escalating attention, Schellenberg had begun to firm up his criticism of the IET on precisely this front. He described their sketchy plans of development, as “romantic gobbledegook and a recipe for total chaos”. Eigg he suggested could only support 3,000 ewes and only justified three working shepherds. The Trustees therefore had “no understanding of agri-economics”, and he declared “I can’t see anyone with a sense of responsibility putting substantial sums of money into the hands of this quartet”.<sup>138</sup> It was a fair point, and the IET were in desperate need of a feasibility study to outline their proposals credibly. Approaching the Local Enterprise Company Lochaber Ltd., they were lucky enough to find support in the shape of £7,000 for a survey and study of the island’s economy. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, however, the resulting Eigg Feasibility Study did not really provide the confident backing they required.<sup>139</sup> Instead it prompted more questions than it asked,

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<sup>134</sup> MacIntosh. Interview.

<sup>135</sup> Kirk, Sue; Helliwell, Simon.

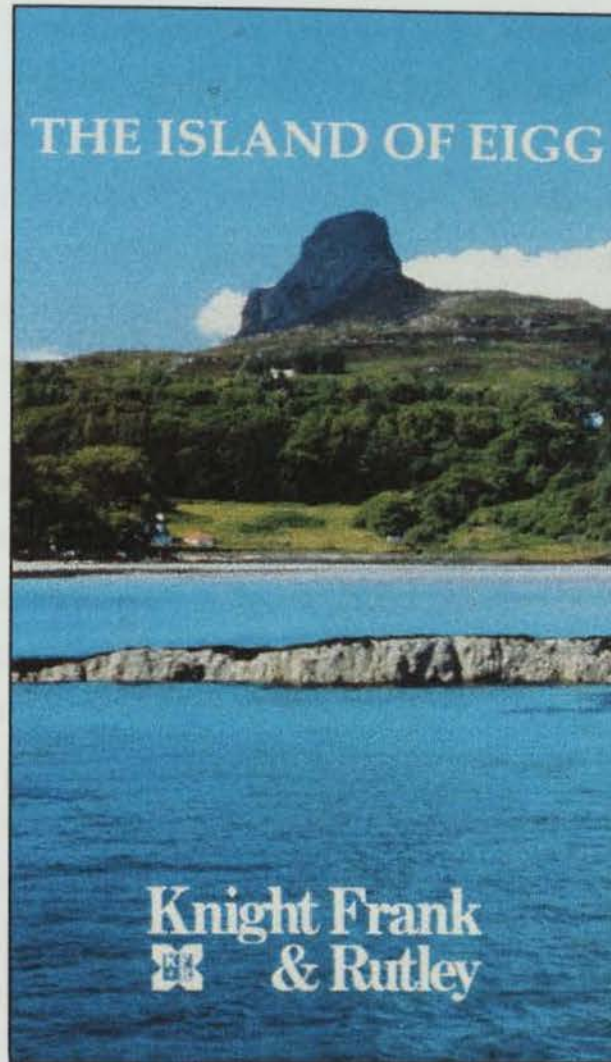
<sup>136</sup> Helliwell, Simon.

<sup>137</sup> Allardyce, Jason. “Will Schellenberg be the last emperor of Eigg?” West Highland Free Press. 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1991.

<sup>138</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Williams, Robert et al. Eigg Feasibility Study. The Isle of Eigg Trust. 1992. IEA.

and its figures and five year projections appeared to most people, especially islanders to be “picked out of the air”.<sup>140</sup> It was still better than nothing, and considering that Schellenberg finally put the island up for sale on the 14<sup>th</sup> May 1992, they were forced to release the study just 6 days later.



*Figure 3.7: Cover of the Sales Brochure for Eigg Issued on 14th May 1992<sup>141</sup>*

Whilst the IET were apparently scaring away potential buyers from Eigg,<sup>142</sup> others were also engaged in trying to mount some form of alternative bid for ownership of the island. Michael Foxley, the local Small Isles Councillor who had recently brought Ardnamuchan Point into public ownership, had been openly

<sup>140</sup> Helliwell, Simon

<sup>141</sup> Knight, Frank & Rutly. *The Isle of Eigg*. May 1992. IEA.

<sup>142</sup> MacIntosh. Interview.

contemplating some form of public ownership for Eigg since 1990.<sup>143</sup> Although generally supportive of the IET's motivations, he found their plans too ambitious and unrealistic. He therefore began to explore other avenues, and in early June circulated his basic outline for a public purchase of the island. He argued that protection of the Council's investment in the island and support for the local community demanded action on behalf of all the affiliated public agencies involved in the region. He also mapped out the basics of a management system that could integrate the islanders wishes with the interests of outside agencies; agencies which could include conservation bodies such as the SWT and the John Muir Trust who could naturally look after the wildlife aspects of the island. The purchase would chiefly be financed by the National heritage memorial Fund (NHMF), and start-up funding for projects on the island could come from extraordinary Grant Aid.<sup>144</sup>

Considering that the closing date for the sale was the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, it was more than ambitious to begin such a complicated scheme. Especially, since the IET had embarked on an alternative bid for 'community ownership' already. Also nothing like it had ever been attempted before, and to persuade the regional council to back the idea, Foxely had to put in enormous time lobbying council members rather than focusing on the media. The consequent result being a large amount of confusion, as there were now two competing but complimentary proposals for buying the island. It was not surprising therefore that the NHMF decided to reject applications from both schemes just four days before the deadline.<sup>145</sup> Foxely had viewed the "NHMF financial input as essential" and in a classic understatement described the decision as "a major setback". Alastair MacIntosh asserted that the NHMF's decision demonstrated how, "the establishment is under pressure from the landed interests not to encourage things which alter the pattern of land ownership in Scotland".<sup>146</sup> In any event time had run out and July 1<sup>st</sup> saw the unlikely event of Schellenberg himself having put the highest bid on the table. The West Highland Free Press led with the banner headline: "Paradise Lost: Eigg back in the hands of Emperor Schellenberg".<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Crichton.

<sup>144</sup> Foxely, Michael. Purchase of the Isle of Eigg Estate. 10<sup>th</sup> June 1992. IEA.

<sup>145</sup> Sinclair, Keith. "Anger as fund refuses to back bid for Eigg", The Herald. 27<sup>th</sup> June, 1992.

<sup>146</sup> McKenzie, Eric. "£1 million blow to community bid for Eigg", The Scotsman. 27<sup>th</sup> June 1992.

Paying just under £1 million for the island, Schellenberg's family company Cleveland and Island Holdings Ltd had beaten off four other offers. Since the IET had apparently scared off most bidders from putting an offer down, it could even be said that their activities had assisted Schellenberg in getting the island at a knockdown price. Whatever the case, he was naturally jubilant, and the IET was left only to declare themselves a "trust-in-waiting" and to publish an "Open Letter to Keith Schellenberg". Widely reported, the letter asked "Are you aware of what you have done ? Through wealth you may have re-won title to a little Scottish island. But you can never own an island's soul or that of the people who live there".<sup>148</sup> As for the people who lived there, the islanders themselves were ironically attending a funeral at the time the news was made public. They were unsurprisingly cautious in their public statements to the press. With Schellenberg back in charge it was "absolutely stupid to say anything against him".<sup>149</sup>

### 3.7 The Returning Laird

Considering the large-scale press interest in his purchase, Schellenberg made an uncharacteristically low-key return to Eigg. He arrived late one evening with only his dog for company. Since the lodge was in bad shape, he then spent his first night as the new owner reading by candlelight.<sup>150</sup> It was hardly triumphal, and contrasted heavily with his persona and presence in the media coverage that same week. "I could have made some cash from the sale and paid my lawyers" he had said. "But I couldn't sit back and watch Eigg become a sporting estate or worse still an example of collectivism". As he told the Scotsman journalist, "having survived a hellish 6 years" he was "pleased to get the chance to fight back".<sup>151</sup> Precisely how this fight back was to take shape worried people on the island, especially since it was widely believed he had spent most of his money in buying the island back. Marie Carr recalls that she felt more than a little anxious that same week when Schellenberg sat in her kitchen at

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<sup>147</sup> "Paradise Lost: Eigg back in the hands of Emperor Schellenberg", West Highland Free Press. 3<sup>rd</sup> July. 1992.

<sup>148</sup> Isle of Eigg Trust, "An Open Letter to Keith Schellenberg", 1<sup>st</sup> July 1992. IEA; Harris, Gillian. "Eigg is sold for £1m to last owner", The Scotsman. 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1992.

<sup>149</sup> Kirk, Peggy.

<sup>150</sup> Harris, Gillian. "Deep-rooted doubts as the laird returns", The Scotsman. 10<sup>th</sup> July 1992.

<sup>151</sup> *ibid*.

Kildonnan and said “there are going to be a lot of changes around here and some people are not going to like them”.<sup>152</sup> Although she and Colin were safe with the limited partnership over Kildonnan, she worried for the security and jobs of others on the island. Nevertheless, there was soon a community gathering up at the lodge, and Schellenberg was happily declaring that bygones were bygones and that a new start was needed by all. That Christmas, as Dressler notes, even “the old enemies” were presented with seasonal hampers, which coming from him was very much a gesture of goodwill.<sup>153</sup>

After an initial surge of enthusiasm, however, Schellenberg rarely came up to the island and had little directly to do with its management. As far as the estate was concerned a new factor was appointed, Angus Cheap, and all estate business was conducted through him.<sup>154</sup> On the agricultural side Colin not only ran the new Kildonnan farm himself, but also the estate farm at Galmisdale through which he employed two of his brother-in-laws as shepherds.<sup>155</sup> On the tourist side, Sheena Kean, a former housekeeper at the Lodge, was appointed to run things and told to “make the best of what she could” from the stock of holiday homes. Considering that these were all now in grim repair, it was often impossible to provide people with the standards they were expecting.<sup>156</sup> In terms of leases, Schellenberg did prove a little more flexible, and he gave leases to both Kenneth and Sheena Kean for Pier Cottage, and Fiona Cherry (Marie’s sister) to run the shop. Though the island was still showing signs of neglect, and Schellenberg was still being awkward to particular people, there was a slight feeling of things sorting themselves out. Just as in the mid 1980’s those who were willing to work things ponderously through were able to get along with Schellenberg. Most of the islanders, however, tried as much as possible to avoid him and the old divide between those who were dependent on the estate and those who were independent remained in force.<sup>157</sup>

The resumption of Schellenberg’s ownership on Eigg was a far cry from events occurring late in 1992 on the Sutherland estate of North Lochinver. Having

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<sup>152</sup> Carr.

<sup>153</sup> Dressler. p.174

<sup>154</sup> Carr.

<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> Kean, Sheena. Conversation. 14<sup>th</sup> November 1997.

picked up on the IET's model of trust ownership, the Assynt crofters had adapted the same idea into another public appeal for community ownership, and this was launched during the height of the Eigg campaign in June.<sup>158</sup> Unlike the islanders of Eigg however, the Assynt crofters had two decided advantages. To begin with they were crofters, and though they were subject to the landlord's whim over many things they still all had security of tenure. Also, because they were crofters they had an extra angle in spoiling the market price of the estate. By threatening to all buy out their crofts if another private owner bought the estate, they dramatically reduced the interest in the estate.<sup>159</sup> This threat was highly successful in both scaring away potential buyers and in reducing the final price they had to pay. Indeed as Brian Wilson commented, their successful purchase indicated that "the free market in Highland land has been broken".<sup>160</sup> For Trustees of the IET and the islanders of Eigg, however, there was certainly a mixture of emotions. "It was so great to see them win, and it meant so much", describes Alastair MacIntosh. "But then you just kept thinking why couldn't it have been us ? Why was it Schellenberg who had to win, and not the Eigg community ?".<sup>161</sup>

By 1994 the "uneasy truce" between Schellenberg and the community had begun to subside.<sup>162</sup> The slide began first with an IERA meeting where he proposed the idea of cutting the SWT from the island and setting up his own Eigg Wildlife Trust on Eigg. This he thought would be able to take the 30% funding the SWT gained from SNH each year and channel it directly on to the island. Naturally John Chester the resident warden immediately opposed the move in the meeting, pointing out that if he removed SWT from the island the other 70% of funds would be lost from the wildlife management of the island.<sup>163</sup> Although little was to be heard about this idea again, it began to make people question his motives and plans for the future management of the island. John Chester had worked on the island now for 8 years,

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<sup>157</sup> Kirk, Peggy.

<sup>158</sup> MacIntosh, A., Wightman, A., Morgan, D. "The Scottish Highlands in Colonial and Psychodynamic Perspective", *Interculture*. Vol. XXVII, No.3, Issue ~124, Summer 1994. p.33

<sup>159</sup> Crofters can buy their own crofts at 15 times the annual rent. The "Kinlochewe judgement" at the Court of Session in July 1992 extended this concept to the point where crofters could buy their crofts out, and then move ownership into a joint trust – without compensation being paid to the landlord.

<sup>160</sup> Wilson, Brian. "Who would play the laird now?", *The Scotsman*. 9<sup>th</sup> December 1992.

<sup>161</sup> MacIntosh. Interview.

<sup>162</sup> Campbell.

<sup>163</sup> *IERA Minutes*. 11<sup>th</sup> June 1993

and he had gained much respect from the islanders. People did not like the way Schellenberg was treating him and his organisation. Shortly afterwards, the cat was set amongst the pigeons as a whole new level of disagreement occurred between Schellenberg and, of all people, the loyal estate workers Colin and Marie Carr.

In July Colin and Marie received a lawyers letter offering them a short-term lease on Kildonnan. They were shocked to say the least, “we had signed the limited partnership on the farm already”, which “even had Maggie Williams’ signature on as well”.<sup>164</sup> Unfortunately, Schellenberg had apparently not signed the papers as well and was now demanding that they accept a simple short-term lease. For Colin and Marie this was totally unacceptable, especially when a rather embarrassed factor added that the lease would give them just enough time to get Laig farm up and running.<sup>165</sup> This was apparently what Schellenberg was planning to do, to move them out of Kildonnan and into Marie’s mother’s house at Laig. Peggy, her mother, had always had disagreements with Schellenberg over the lease for Laig, which he declared never existed. Schellenberg was now exploiting that and hoping to force her into retirement, and the Carr family into Laig. The Carrs decided to make a stand, and fight their case not only for themselves but for Peggy as well. As Fiona, Marie’s sister remembers:

**“It was if our mother never existed, as if Laig was not her home at all after 36 years there. It was typical of Schellenberg though, he was pulling all these strings to see which way people danced. He was playing his little power games, just like chess, moving people about when he felt like it”.**<sup>166</sup>

“We honestly don’t know why he turned on us”, says Marie, “we had always worked hard for him, and we really believed we had a sound relationship with him”.<sup>167</sup> Nevertheless, the relationship worsened when Colin and Marie returned from a holiday in October to discover Schellenberg had sent people over to collect all of the estate lambs that had been reared that year. This was catastrophic for Colin because under their original agreement he was to pay the shepherds’ wages out of half of the income from the lamb sales. Unfortunately, Colin never received the money and

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<sup>164</sup> Carr.

<sup>165</sup> Dressler. p.175

<sup>166</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> Carr.

worse still just before Christmas he saw his job as the estate farm manager advertised in the local paper. Shortly afterwards, a letter dated Christmas Eve informed him not to go near any estate property, farm equipment, or stock. Colin was in an awful position since this meant he had to lay off the two shepherds, both of whom were close family members: “How do you tell that to your brothers-in-law, especially just after Christmas ? Fiona was away having her new baby and Mark was with her, and Sue and Alastair had just taken a loan to do up their B&B on the strength of Alastair’s job. I felt terrible, it was the worst Hogmanay ever”.<sup>168</sup>

Events a few days later, however, were soon to compound Colin’s problems and dramatically increase the level of tension on the island. On the evening of the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 1994, the orange glow in the sky above the pier was unfortunately not from just another glorious West Coast sunset. It was from the flames of Schellenberg’s burning storage barn; containing his 1927 Rolls Royce Phantom, a 1925 Merryweather firepump, as well as a few old dinghies and bicycles. All of which in typical fashion were uninsured. The burning of the Rolls Royce was the incident that above all others made Schellenberg’s ownership of Eigg infamous. The event that put Eigg on the map of notoriety, and transformed the problems between landlord and residents from the mundane to the sensational. The press clearly viewed the burnt-out car as “the stark symbol of a war that has broken out between people living on a tiny Scottish island and their absentee landlord”.<sup>169</sup> Both tabloids and broadsheets alike descended upon the island for almost two weeks and conducted a minor feeding frenzy over the story. Continually punning on the island’s name and covering Schellenberg’s verbal onslaughts upon the “drunken hippies and dropouts”,<sup>170</sup> the story captured their imagination and ran for weeks.

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<sup>168</sup> Dressler. p.182

<sup>169</sup> Muir, Alan. “Fried Eigg”, The Sun. 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1994.



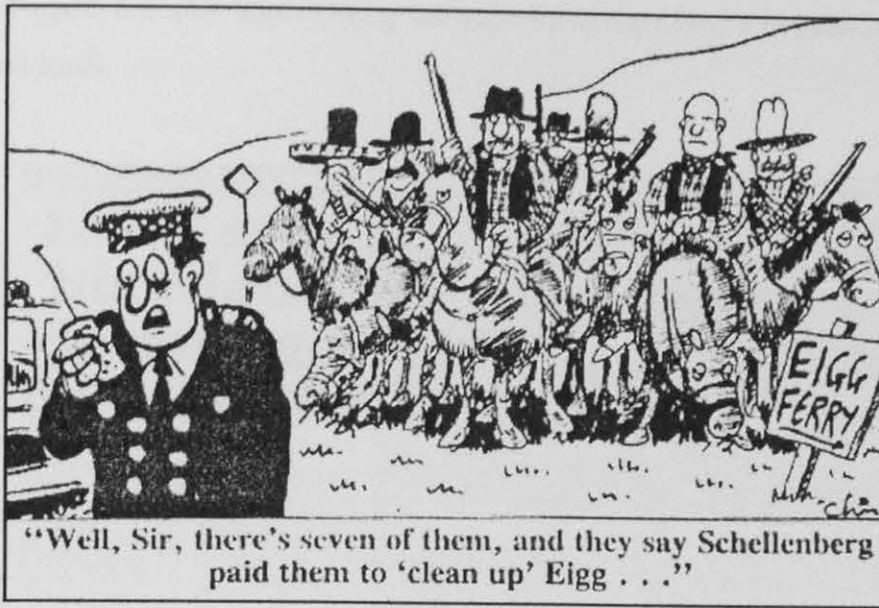


Fig 3.7: The press enjoy the “island rebellion”.<sup>171</sup>

In the aftermath of the fire Schellenberg banned the use of the hall, offered a £500 reward, and then began a series of attacks upon the “lawlessness” on the island.<sup>172</sup> This was covered with some glee, especially as he spoke of not only “mob rule, cannabis growing and endemic drunkenness”,<sup>173</sup> but also indicated a co-ordinated conspiracy against him. As *The Independent* reported:

**“One month earlier the tyres of his car were slashed, his boat drained of fuel the night before he was due to sail, and his dead mother’s home burgled. Mr Schellenberg says he fears for his safety. “It is a very worrying climate. It was once the laird’s factor who went about burning people out. Now it seems OK to burn out the laird himself”.**<sup>174</sup>

For the islanders themselves, as Brian Greene remembers “everyone was terrified of what he’d do next”. At the same time however, “you could see that he was wining in the press war, because we were all so paranoid about saying anything.”<sup>175</sup> To this day people are still very wary of discussing the fire at all and will continue to affirm the belief that someone from off the island actually set the barn alight. The police

<sup>170</sup> Arlidge, John. “‘Barmy’ inhabitants force laird from Scottish isle”, *The Independent*. 28<sup>th</sup> January 1994.

<sup>171</sup> *West Highland Free Press*. 30<sup>th</sup> January, 1994.

<sup>172</sup> Brown, Derek. “Lawless Eigg is Cracking Up”, *The Sun*. 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1994.

<sup>173</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> Arlidge.

<sup>175</sup> Greene.



island and leave us alone. We want him out".<sup>180</sup> The younger and incomer set of residents focussed on the issue of leases, with Camille Dressler describing how "His policy of short term leases is not giving people a chance to make a go of things". Following on, she declared "We're now challenging his authority. We don't see why we should have to ask for permission for every act of our lives, which is maybe what he resents".<sup>181</sup> When Sue Kirk was asked what she felt, she replied "I would like to see community ownership. "I think it would be hard to have a good relationship with any landlord at the moment".<sup>182</sup>

Schellenberg responded in late January with the announcement that he had had enough and was intending to sell. "People had over reacted", he said "to moves that only affected a handful of people".<sup>183</sup> Reluctantly deciding it was no longer "worth the effort" to hang on to the island he indicated that he might first sell off individual properties on the island first. Combined with this announcement was another broadside against the incomers on Eigg who he believed had caused all the problems. They were all "hippies who lived off state funding" and were more interested in "acid-rock parties" than they were with traditional island life.<sup>184</sup> This latest news was met with some trepidation and fair amount of annoyance on the island. Schellenberg's comments demanded that co-ordinated action was needed, and so on the 27<sup>th</sup> January an IERA meeting was called. Since the community hall was locked, 23 people crowded into Sue and Alastair's kitchen to resolve what action they would take. It was an effective and swift moving meeting, and one that showed a new confidence in both the IERA and the community's capabilities. First they discussed their relationship with Schellenberg and quickly concluded that communications had completely broken down and passed beyond the point of no return. Next they considered how to answer Schellenberg's allegations in the press, and decided upon a spokesperson and a co-ordinated response, which if need be would include their own press statement. Then they began to consider the future sale of the island and requests were made to chase up Michael Foxley and his proposals for community ownership. This was accompanied with a firm understanding that no one wished the IET to lead

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<sup>180</sup> Arlidge.

<sup>181</sup> Muir.

<sup>182</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> Arlidge.

any campaign again. Instead it was expressed that they could take control themselves, and that the IET could simply act in an advisory capacity. Finally, Dr Tiarks pointed out that the burnt out barn represented a health hazard with its bits of asbestos flying around and the meeting ended with demands for the Environmental Health Department to do something about the mess.<sup>185</sup> It was in short a dramatic difference from the residents' meetings just 12 months before, when the vote on the IET was discussed.

In terms of the image presented to the press, it was also a world of difference having a co-ordinated voice for the community. Instead of various and disparate comments regarding Schellenberg, there was now a spokesperson who made statements with force and authority. This was made apparent from the end of January onwards as nearly all press commentary regarding the island now included quotes from a "community spokesperson". The January 21<sup>st</sup> edition of the West Highland Free Press was the first example of the new procedure working well, as a sympathetic paper was able to maximise the response to Schellenberg's comments regarding the potential sale:

**"A spokesperson for the Eigg Residents Association was delighted at the prospect of Schellenberg selling, suggesting: 'If that was to happen I think there would be non-stop ceilidhs!' The spokesperson believed there would be '100 per cent approval' for a buy-out by agencies, trusts, and the council that is already being discussed".<sup>186</sup>**

Although it was highly unlikely that there was a 100% approval rating for a trust or community ownership at the time, it nevertheless sounded good. The fact that there was 'the community', and the fact that it had a 'Spokesperson' naturally enhanced the appearance of the islanders being united and well organised.

In the same article there was also a riposte to Schellenberg's multifarious comments regarding incomers on the island. Although this was organised outside of the formal residents' meeting it was still a milestone of sorts in the coming together of

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<sup>184</sup> Allardyce, Jason. "Eigg's 'I'm a liability' laird set to relinquish his grip?", West Highland Free Press. 21<sup>st</sup> January.

<sup>185</sup> IEA Minutes. 17<sup>th</sup> January 1994. IEA.

<sup>186</sup> Allardyce. "Eigg's 'I'm a liability' laird"

the community on Eigg. It was a formal letter from the indigenous islanders of Eigg answering Schellenberg's accusations. Drafted by the younger islanders, it was signed by all the indigenous island households resident at the time and fully supported the involvement of incomers in the community's daily life. Considering the politics of incomers in general in West Coast communities it is a phenomenal document that clearly indicates the degree to which the island's community had integrated over the past 20 years of Schellenberg's ownership. As such it also indicated the degree to which Schellenberg had over-stepped the mark in his reactions to the burning of the Rolls Royce.

### A message from the people of Eigg<sup>187</sup>

We, who have been born and brought up on the Isle of Eigg would like to refute utterly the ludicrous allegations about the community here, made by Mr Keith Schellenberg.

The island has a tiny but united population of local families and incomers who are between them struggling to develop a community with a long-term future against the apparent wishes of an owner who seems to want us to live in primitive conditions to satisfy his nostalgia of the 1920's. If the nature of the island has changed it could be said to have something to do with the fact that all the local men working for the estate during Mr Schellenberg's first years of ownership have left, taking their indigenous way of life with them. They and their families have found good jobs across the water.

The incoming islanders have tried hard to adapt and continue a culture that was not their own. Contrary to Mr Schellenberg's accusations island celidh's are a family affair attended by everyone from senior citizens to babes in arms, where traditional music is played by local musicians, many of whom are incomers. 'Acid rock parties' whatever they are, are a figment of Mr Schellenberg's imagination.

The incoming islanders play an active, caring part in the community. They help run the senior citizens' lunch club and meals on wheels, they drive the community minibus to enable those without transport to get to the shop or attend church, and have organised a Gaelic playgroup so that their children have a chance of learning Gaelic in order to preserve the traditional culture of the island.

It is hard to see what could be, can be, gained by painting such an inaccurate picture of an island community and we write to you to set the record straight.

A.J. MacKinnon  
A Macdonald  
D.H. MacKinnon  
Marie Carr  
Hector MacLean

K.A. MacKinnon  
Mary J. MacDonald  
Margaret Kirk  
Fiona Cherry  
L.C. MacLean

Dugald MacKinnon  
D.M. Ferguson  
Alastair Kirk  
Morag MacKinnon  
Donald Kirk

### 3.8 Conclusions

In reviewing Schellenberg's impact on Eigg and his 20-year relationship with the evolving community, it is hard not to be flippant and describe his whole time on the island as a highly successful experiment in community development. This is because not only did he select the perfect people to strengthen the island's ageing population, but then he also provided the ideal stimuli to foster their interdependence and communal working with the established community. First of all he whipped up enormous enthusiasm and built up the island's economy and population. Then as the island's enterprises began to founder, he slowly fell out with people one by one, and just as those people were beginning to settle into the crofting side of the island he aided their integration by becoming intransigent with all crofting tenants alike. On top of this, the poor housing and service provision, together with his stifling of development on the island simply had the effect of ensuring that the community started working together in order to foster development themselves. Of course, there were many other variables involved in the process, and many other personalities that were significant, but the point is sound, for in answering the question why did all this happen on Eigg? The answer invariably remains, "because of Schellenberg".

Having described how that process occurred, however, and how the incoming residents adapted to and strengthened the island's community, one is still left with the question of what exactly motivated Schellenberg's actions on Eigg. Obviously he was not an experimental social scientist with far-reaching ambitions, but then neither on the other-hand was he myopically stupid. When asked himself, Schellenberg invariably comes up with his vision of proving that the estate could "stand on it's own two feet" or some such allusion to private enterprise. Yet under close examination this appears to be nothing less than a smoke screen, since he originally purchased the estate with his 2<sup>nd</sup> wife's money, financed it through her estate, and then over the succeeding years reportedly gained some £230,000 in state aided funding:<sup>188</sup> hardly the successful example of private enterprise. Dressler, interestingly enough, reads Schellenberg's continuous appeals to free market ideology as simply part and parcel of his love for sport. Through this she also explains most of his motivations regarding

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<sup>187</sup> Allardyce. "Eigg's 'I'm a liability' laird"

<sup>188</sup> Allardyce. "Will Schellenberg be the last emperor of Eigg "

Eigg, for as Dressler believes his hatred of losing was his underlying motivating factor.<sup>189</sup> As he said to Harpers and Queen, “All you can do is play life as hard as you can. I’m not worried if I don’t win. I just don’t want to lose”.<sup>190</sup> This is why he bought the island back, and why he flaunted his victories so heavily in the press. Bill Williams backs this idea up because he believes Schellenberg’s jealousy of him and Margaret was a prime motivator.<sup>191</sup> It is also why he fought so hard against the inevitable defeats in court and why “until the final court decision, Maggie was sure he would win in the end”. It was because, Williams describes, “He always won – as you ask anyone who has played a game with him – if ever he looks like losing, he literally does move the goal posts”.<sup>192</sup>

The sporting analogy only goes so far, however, and does not tackle the more basic questions such as why did Schellenberg turn against Colin and Marie Carr: his most loyal employees: people whom he had slowly, groomed, promoted, and befriended over the years ? What was the victory in not signing their lease ? Or as later described in Chapter 4 sending them notices to quit ? Perhaps it could have been simply money, for it appeared he had clearly overextended himself in the purchase of the estate in 1992. If that is so and he only ever intended to re-sell the island when he bought it, then his motivations are clear. By declaring Colin and Marie had a lease before the sale in 1992 he was able to significantly reduce the price he had to pay for it. By then not honouring the lease afterwards, he essentially increased the estate’s resale value. However, this again does not cover all the questions, for if money was the underlying cause, then he would have at least given more leases out on the derelict estate houses in order to benefit from the lucrative 90% grants for home improvements.

No the answer is of course more complex, and no doubt involves a little of each explanation, but most overriding of all, is the most common owner motivation of all: power. West Coast estates are predominantly sporting estates, and though Schellenberg did not allow shooting on the island he nonetheless shared the same cause for owning a vast chunk of land. It was the prestige, social position, and

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<sup>189</sup> Dressler. pp.162-165

<sup>190</sup> Porter.

<sup>191</sup> Williams.

unparalleled exercise of power that was his primary motivation. The fact that it was an island merely intensified the feeling and application of that power, and the fact that he became so infamous is part circumstance and part personal character. He was the self-proclaimed Laird of Eigg and he maintained his position and authority by ensuring that no one on the island felt safe to challenge him. Hence as soon as he felt Colin and Marie became too comfortable in their position, or began to expect independence, he then pulled the rug out from underneath them. Like the many casual employees who had fallen foul of him before, the Carrs were just another example of Schellenberg demonstrating who was the boss, who was the Laird.

The chief problem, however, was as Karen Helliwell aptly describes, Schellenberg recruited exactly the wrong type of people for this exercise of power. “If you had the type of personality he was looking for, then you were not likely to be at his beck and call as he demanded, you were inclined to either slam the door and leave, or dig your heels in stay”.<sup>193</sup> This is what happened although on a personal, and then communal scale. If the estate had remained only peopled by the few remaining crofters from the 1960’s then no doubt a very different story would have evolved. Instead, the incomers brought different expectations and greater degrees of confidence in handling the community’s relationship with Schellenberg. The IET also brought new ideas and new exposure to the outside world of politics, campaigning, and civil action. This was all to prove formative in shaping the community’s reactions to Schellenberg’s increasingly outlandish displays of power. The fact that he brought the media onto the island as well meant he added just another uncertainty into the equation. Where once in the early years he could happily control the stories emulating from Eigg, by the end he had facilitated independent community spokespersons campaigning against him. The media were soon not coming to him for the story, but as we will see in the following chapters they were heading down the road to Cleadale to gain the next exclusive.

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<sup>192</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> Dressler, p.164





*Figure 3.10: The "Finger of God" points above Cleadale*

## **Chapter 4**

### **Participation, Planning and the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust**

## 4.1 Introduction

As detailed in Chapters One and Two, the residents and owner of Eigg were not unusual in falling into dispute. The development of feudal ownership and historical practice of estate management in the Highlands and Islands had engendered numerous contemporary conflicts between tenants and owners throughout the region. What was different with Eigg however, and what gave the islanders greater impetus in their dispute was firstly Keith Schellenberg and his inappropriate management, and secondly the degree of unity that this facilitated amongst the island's various residents. Bar two of the elder islanders, who still felt dependent on Schellenberg's good favour, by January of 1994 the entire adult population was in opposition to his continued ownership. As said before, this was a remarkable sociological feat, especially considering that most of the unity and self-development within the community was instigated by Schellenberg unintentionally. By 1994 however, the island's renown had begun to attract not just press interest, but the attention of groups and individuals expressly intending to foster increased activity and confidence within the community. People who were not just finding "a challenge for their middle years",<sup>1</sup> but who had specific theoretical methods, and above all particular social and political outcomes in mind. With new and revised practices of development and community empowerment, therefore activists were to have a fundamental impact on the island's community throughout 1994.

Of course, the IET had much the same impulses in their original pitch for alternative ownership in 1992. They too were seeking a new form of community development with their involvement on Eigg, and in particular a new vision of community ownership and management of the Highlands' natural resources.<sup>2</sup> However, the IET's approach and methods were very much determined by the political situation at the time. The Trust had sought to change conditions on Eigg by taking on the entire land ownership question in general. This, as Alastair MacIntosh describes was precisely because "the case for community ownership or control had just not been heard of publicly, not alone accepted in Britain. . . . Our aim was to get the idea started. We therefore did not want to fall at the initial hurdle by not being

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<sup>1</sup> Urquhart. p.153

<sup>2</sup> IET. *Eigg*,

able to convince the islanders in the first place”.<sup>3</sup> The IET’s campaign was consequently directed much more towards the wider political implications of community ownership, than it was focussed on the island itself. There was little, if any proper consultation with the islanders before they launched their campaign and only one vote was ever held on the Trust’s proposals for owning and managing the island. It is not surprising that this caused a little resentment and a distinct amount of scepticism amongst the weary islanders at the time. By 1994, however, the Assynt crofters buyout had already set a precedent, and though the political campaign for greater community ownership was still being battled, there was now greater room for activists to begin working within the island’s community itself.

The principle organisation involved with facilitating events on Eigg during 1994 was a small Scottish NGO, Highlands and Islands Forum (HIF). Originally begun as a one year project by Vanessa Halhead and Frank Rennie, HIF had been generated by the acknowledgement of three key principles that were lacking in rural policy in the Highlands during the 1980’s.<sup>4</sup> Firstly that conservation and development must be integrated, sustainable, and above all participative. Secondly, that participation is not intuitive or innate but needs training, skills, and confidence. And thirdly, that the projects embarked upon be should ones that are orientated towards the community and above all generated by the community. These central pillars of HIF were hardly unique on an international stage where development practice had utilised participative theory since the 1970’s. For Scotland in the late 80’s and early 90’s, however, they were taken to be revolutionary.<sup>5</sup>

Combined with the activities of HIF, the Eigg residents were also to attract the assistance of numerous individuals who found sympathy with their plight. In part these people were attracted by the notoriety of the island and the resident’s situation, but mostly their support was generated from the welcoming nature of the islanders themselves. I am a prime example of this process as will be detailed further, for although my initial approach to the islanders was made on a formal academic level, I was swiftly to gain close friendships and an enthusiastic drive to assist their efforts of

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<sup>3</sup> MacIntosh. Interview

<sup>4</sup> Holbourn, Isobel. “Introduction: In the Beginning”, pp. 2-3. Highlands and Islands Forum. Highlands and Islands Forum Report 1986-1994. p.3

community ownership. This was derived not from a reformist's zeal, but from the sheer personable and open nature of the people I had encountered. This was not uncommon, and many reporters, activists, and people involved over the campaign were to make extraordinary efforts on behalf of the islanders for the simple reason that they found something intensely welcoming in the island's day-to-day life and people. Something that demanded that you should help if you could, and most of all ensured that you always kept in touch and returned.

This Chapter will detail the role of these individuals and organisations that became involved in supporting and training the Eigg islanders. In so doing the Chapter focuses upon exactly how the islanders managed to move from their simple residents meetings to the complexities of planning and the negotiation of a partnership with the HRC and SWT. A process within which long and complicated decisions had to be made by a community, that although bound in opposition to Schellenberg was comprised of markedly different individuals. Not only were social, linguistic, and political boundaries needed to be overcome, but most important of all a common belief in their ability to manage had to be facilitated.

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<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

## 4.2 Community Development on Eigg

For external commentators and observers the burning of the Rolls Royce was the symbolic turn in events that separated Eigg from the many other rural squabbles between owners and tenants in the Highlands and Islands.<sup>6</sup> On the island, however, it was not taken as such an important landmark in the course of events. What was of more importance was the fact that Marie and Colin Carr had come on side with the rest of the disaffected on the island. For the first time, there was an almost united front against Schellenberg, and as Maggie Fyffe described, “the fact that Schellenberg could no longer play one person off against another was incredibly liberating”.<sup>7</sup> Where once he was a figure who constantly incited disagreement and controversy on the island, from 1994 onwards Schellenberg became the pole for everyone to react against. This was simply intensified over the succeeding year with almost every statement he made to the press, and with the absolute lack of activity on the island and estate. Confidence and a new feeling of solidarity within the community were strong forces to be sure, but they were easily frustrated by the fact that Schellenberg still remained the owner. “I suppose we all felt that things just couldn’t go on the way they were”, recalls Maggie, “but then we also knew how belligerent and stubborn he could be”.<sup>8</sup> The trick was to begin preparing an alternative and to start channelling the community’s frustration and anxiety into planning and organisation.

This was conveniently spurred into life within weeks of the fire when Neil Wilcox from the SWT formerly met the IERA in the beginning of February. Like the residents, the SWT had been more than alarmed by Schellenberg’s proposals in January to sell the island off in parcels. After 15 years of trying to work with Schellenberg in protecting the island’s wildlife, this was the last straw. They had now decided to investigate the level of support amongst the residents for an SWT attempt at purchasing the island. The meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February naturally received a large turnout of residents at the School to hear the SWT representative and his ideas. Firmly stating that SWT wished to be the only conservation body involved in any purchase of the island, Wilcox made clear that the SWT did not want to be an archetypal landlord.

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<sup>6</sup> Muir, Allan. “Fried Eigg!”, *The Sun*. January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1994.

<sup>7</sup> Fyffe, Maggie. Interview, 8<sup>th</sup> February 1998

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*

Although they would be the owners in name, they were primarily concerned with the wildlife aspects of the island. The management of the built environment, he proposed could be devolved down to the residents themselves. There was “general disbelief” shown amongst the residents that the SWT could “provide such a promising future, and the IERA requested a written statement of aims and objectives”.<sup>9</sup> A week or so later the SWT provided the document, and confirmed their ideas in writing.<sup>10</sup> The proposals also pointed out that further negotiations needed a smaller forum within which to discuss the various issues at hand. A management committee of some sort was needed to represent the Eigg community in its dealings with the SWT. This was acted upon almost immediately,<sup>11</sup> for within a week five people were sitting down as elected members of a Steering Committee. Though, they did provide a strong cross-section of island opinion that included not only Colin Carr but John Chester (the SWT resident warden) as well, the Committee still revealed the unease and caution of indigenous islanders. The five members were all of incomer origin.<sup>12</sup>

The initial spurt of organisation and debate induced by SWT’s approach was highlighted by the return of Leslie Riddoch and her Radio Scotland show “*Speaking Out*”.<sup>13</sup> One of the many who had already started forming close friendships on the island, Leslie had visited the year before with the show to cover the events surrounding the IET’s bid for ownership. “The first time we did the program” recalls Leslie “not a soul felt comfortable talking about the situation. Apart from the old Doc [Hector MacLean] that is, everyone just clamed up – which is pretty ridiculous

BBC RADIO SCOTLAND  
presents  
*Speaking Out*  
with Lesley Riddoch  
**The Future  
for Eigg?**  
Have your say.  
**Friday 25th February 1994**  
Eigg Primary School  
Doors open 7.15pm—audience to be seated by 7.30pm  
**For more details, please call:**  
Lindsay Cadden or Gary Chippington  
on 041 330 2768 or 041 330 2326

*Fig 4.1 Poster on Shop Door*

<sup>9</sup> IERA Minutes, 8<sup>th</sup> February 1994

<sup>10</sup> Wilcox, Neil. *SWT Draft Proposals*. Isle of Eigg Archive. 16<sup>th</sup> February 1994. IEA

<sup>11</sup> IERA Minutes 17<sup>th</sup> February 1994

<sup>12</sup> Steering Committee members were: Maggie Fyffe, Colin Carr, John Cormack, John Chester, and Donald MacLean.

when you considered what was going on”.<sup>14</sup> The second visit showed how far things had progressed, however, and how much more confident the islanders were in speaking their minds. Accompanying Leslie was Allan McRae, the charismatic crofter from Assynt, who as soon as he stepped off the boat, was immediately hugged by one of the old island crofters for fully a minute.<sup>15</sup> This scene was to be followed by intense conversations and a “program that for the first time had the islanders expressing what they really felt”.<sup>16</sup> For the residents this was a memorable and confidence building exercise, and for Leslie the successful program was a sign of just how far things were beginning to move on the island. She could “sense change in the air”, and “after years behind a microphone tracking the constant decline of democracy, hope, and spirit, particularly among rural communities. This was an inspiring moment”.<sup>17</sup>

The encouragement of directly speaking out against Keith Schellenberg was to be swiftly followed by members of the Steering Committee attending the 1994 HIF Conference, *The People and The Land*. In typical Eigg fashion, the weather set in the day before the conference and the Eigg delegates were only able to reach Inverness for the evening Celidh.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, they took full advantage, and the contacts they made with other communities and delegates proved to be very eye-opening. As one of the Eigg delegates remarked, “those who had attended the HIF conference wished that all members of the community had been able to share the experience, and to see that ordinary people can have an influence on their environment and future”.<sup>19</sup> With Schellenberg still repeatedly declaring his wish to sell the island, the conference highlighted the fact that the residents needed to start taking the initiative. Obviously the same thoughts had been occurring to the SWT, who on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April publicly announced that they intended to join the residents in seeking to purchase the island from Schellenberg.<sup>20</sup> Clearly defining the proposal as a partnership, Neil Wilcox took

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<sup>13</sup> BBC Radio Scotland. *Speaking Out*. Recorded February 25<sup>th</sup>. Broadcast March 1<sup>st</sup> 7PM.

<sup>14</sup> Riddoch, Leslie. Interview, 7<sup>th</sup> November, 1997

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.* “Unity in the air as wind of change sweeps Eigg”, *The Scotsman*. March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1994. p.11

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* Interview.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.* “Unity in the air...”

<sup>18</sup> Helliwell, Karen. “HIF and the Isle of Eigg – a case history”, *Highlands and Islands Forum Report 1986-1994*. pp.50-51

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> “SWT working with islanders to put together Eigg buy-out”, *West Highland Free Press*, 1<sup>st</sup> April 1994



pains to emphasise, “Anything that even remotely taints us with the landlord title would be unacceptable to us. Management of the island would be in the hands of the people who live on the island, as long as we can have influence on the nature of the island”.<sup>21</sup>

“It felt like things were moving pretty fast by the spring and early summer”, recalls Maggie, “especially when we started to take on control of the Trust as well”.<sup>22</sup> Like the SWT, the Trustees of the IET had recognised the importance of involving the residents as much as possible in any future buy-out attempt. According to Alastair MacIntosh, “Handing over the Trust was the most logical thing to do at the time. The islanders had gained enormous confidence over the preceding year. They needed some form of independent vehicle, and it was clearly time for them to take control of the whole thing themselves”.<sup>23</sup> The existing Trustees therefore resigned their posts and elections were held on the island for new Trustees to replace them. Significantly the voting revealed the residents’ wishes for continued external involvement; of the eight Trustees elected, not only was Alastair MacIntosh included, but so was Leslie Riddoch as well. On the 28th of April, therefore Tom Forsyth symbolically handed over the Trust to the new Trustees.

Schellenberg who also attended the ceremony on the pier was notably subdued, most likely because he was working on plans himself. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May he instructed an estate agent to put the Old Manse and Galmisdale House up for sale. In a press release that was widely reported, he declared his intention to find some new blood for the island, in order to break up the “conspiracy against him”. Although he now asserted he would not sell the island, especially to the Trust, he would canvass previous holiday makers regarding the sale of other houses. “The soured atmosphere should not put people off”, he insisted, “Since the crofting township is at the other end of the island, and they are far enough away not to be a nuisance”. Islanders were naturally opposed to the sales and Colin Carr, now the spokesperson for the IERA emphasised that it was just another case of “asset stripping”: “I doubt there is one person here who thinks that selling off parts of the estate is the right thing to do. There

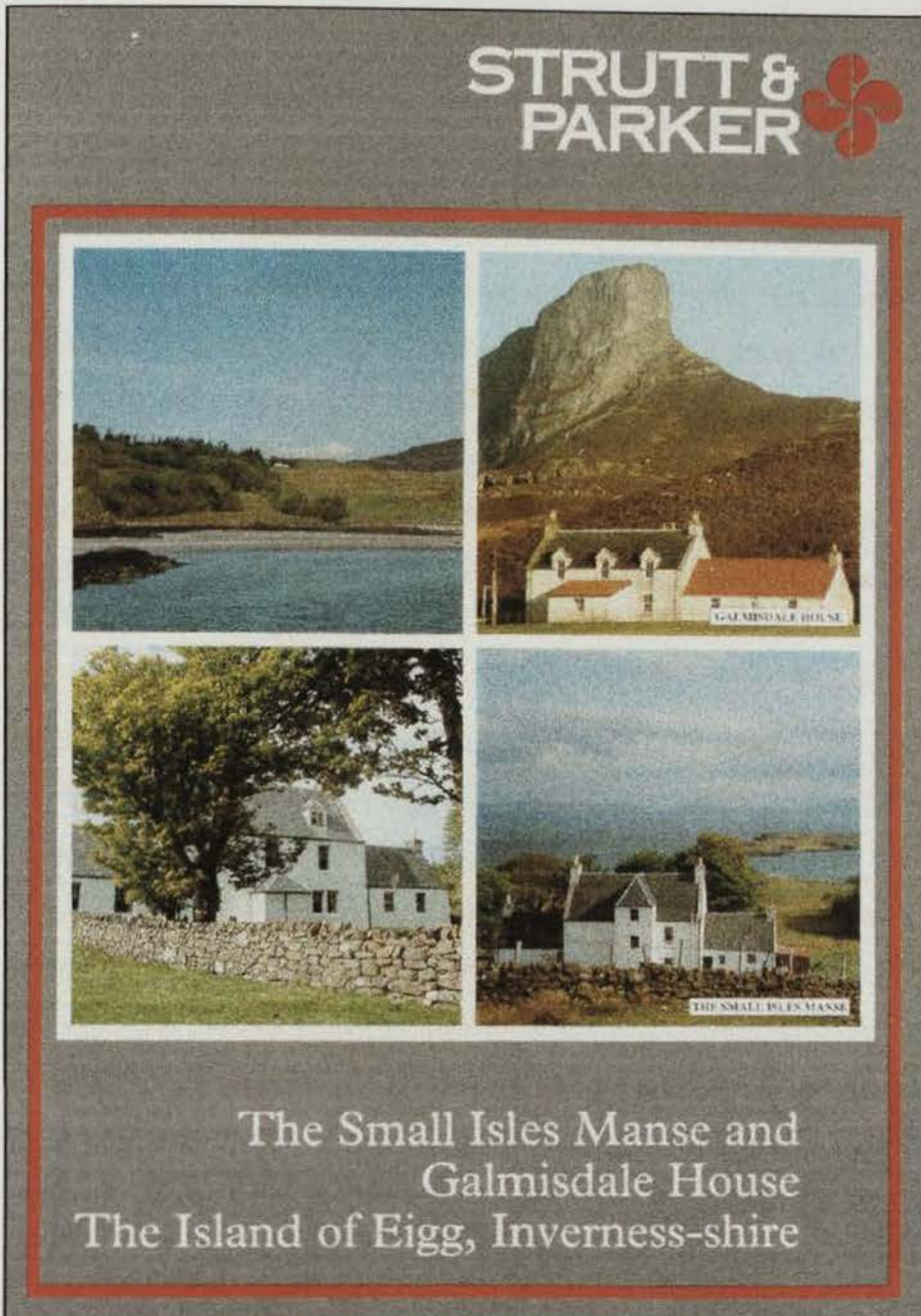
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<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Fyffe.

<sup>23</sup> MacIntosh. Interview

is a long tradition of it being an entity".<sup>24</sup> Thankfully, there did not appear to be any immediate inquiries to Schellenberg's advertisements, and in the end his antics merely accentuated how he had "just backed himself into a corner, with the whole community against him".<sup>25</sup>



*Fig: 4.2 Another brochure, another attempt at sale.<sup>26</sup>*

<sup>24</sup> Rowland, Tom. "The Laird of Eigg's marketing Tactics upset island folk", The Daily Telegraph, May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1994.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*

Having the support of the SWT, and now having control of a registered charitable body were formidable tools for eventually building an alternative form of ownership and management. But on the ground this was all still very premature, for although the Steering Committee had launched themselves into the mechanics of dealing with conservation bodies and charitable law, there was still distinct uncertainty amongst the majority of residents. Community management was an ideal, and as Camille Dressler points out “most people were jumping at anything other than Schellenberg. When it came to actually talking about what would happen, people degenerated into their own ideas and squabbles”.<sup>27</sup> What the residents needed was not the grand plans of Trusts and partnerships and so forth but the smaller and infinitely more difficult mechanisms of how to properly function as a group; how to make meetings work; and how to reach decisions based on consensus. Obviously they had come significantly far down the road of group decision making already, but circumstance and precedent had directed it all. There had been no real planning or open discussion of how to do things, or what community management really meant anyway.<sup>28</sup>

This is exactly why the timing and activities of HIF were so crucial in directing the residents’ energies and frustrations. Three directors from HIF visited the island in late June to conduct a basic series of workshops on “Eigg and the future – What do you Think?”. The impact of their visit was enormous, and almost everyone I interviewed regarded the workshops as a key turning point in the community’s development.<sup>29</sup> At the first gathering, the three introduced themselves as having all lived in similar communities and having experienced equivalent, though not exactly identical problems within their own communities. Two golden rules were established: 1) everyone had to be positive and constructive, and 2) everyone had an equal say. With these formalities established the 20 odd residents were given basic instructions on “making meetings work” and “making your case”.<sup>30</sup> As Maggie describes, “It was all quite simple and common sense stuff, such as organising agendas, the proper

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<sup>26</sup> Strutt & Parker. Sales Brochure for “Small Isles Manse and Galmisdale House, The Island of Eigg”, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1994.

<sup>27</sup> Dressler, Camille. Interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1998

<sup>28</sup> Fyffe.

<sup>29</sup> See Summarised interview results, Appendix 4.1

<sup>30</sup> Holbourn, Isobel. “Eigg and the Future – What do you think?”, Highlands and Islands Forum, June 1994. p.3

structuring of meetings, and encouraging people to talk”. Some people took it as a little boring, but for the Steering Committee members it was “very practical indeed, because until then we were just flying in the dark about those kind of things”.<sup>31</sup> The next day’s workshops, however, were to have a universal impact on the island.

This was because they were directed at not only trying to gather consensus within a group, but specifically to ensure that everyone’s voice was heard in the process. This was achieved by gathering everyone together and randomly splitting them into four discussion groups, each with a HIF facilitator, and each in a room of their own. The groups then worked through a basic structure of an island management plan – forestry, agriculture, management structure, etc - generating ideas and voicing their concerns. The HIF facilitators recorded the points made on a flipchart, and at the end of the session each group prioritised the points they had made into an order. Whilst a coffee break ensued, the HIF members pinned up all the flipcharts from each group, and collated the priority lists. People were then invited to cast an extra ten votes each to the collated points, and eventually a final list was produced.<sup>32</sup> Although when written up this sounds a tedious enterprise, the physical effect of the process was to ensure that everyone had equal say in the results. Results, that as many people, such as Mark and Fiona Cherry recalled “were amazing, because everyone had pretty similar ideas”.<sup>33</sup>

The HIF workshops were a major turning point for not only did they give a point of departure from which to begin a management plan, but most of all they gave the community a method for dealing with complex and difficult issues. As Camille Dressler notes, “the workshops provided us with our first policy document, as well as a great mechanism for encouraging everyone to speak their mind. Especially those who never spoke in a large, crowded residents meeting”.<sup>34</sup> This was to prove essential to the success of the next set of workshops that the residents organised themselves in late September. “We had a method that people were comfortable with, and we needed to expand the range of topics”.<sup>35</sup> A separate evening was used to tackle each subject,

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<sup>31</sup> Fyffe.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Mark and Fiona Cherry. Interview, 4<sup>th</sup> February 1998.

<sup>34</sup> Dressler. Interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1998

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

and the Steering Committee members acted as the facilitators for the individual groups. “The one thing you always knew when you went to those meetings”, remarked Kenneth Kean, “was that at least your point would be heard, which is far more than can be said for the average residents meeting”.<sup>36</sup> Even with the expansion of subject areas, the process also continued to amplify the basic issue that far more connected people in their ideas for the island than separated them.<sup>37</sup> As Maggie remarked, this was a “very empowering and confidence building notion, especially when you had been elected to represent everyone”.<sup>38</sup>

In between the two sets of workshops, the new IET had decided to launch their own appeal for funds in August. It is a common precept in fund raising: in order to raise money you have to first spend money. If they were to properly pursue a buyout attempt, it was necessary to spend a fair amount of money in preparing the ground for public appeals, applications, surveys and so on. This consequently induced the launch of Fighting Fund Appeal on the 15<sup>th</sup> August in Glasgow, aiming to raise the sum of £15,000. (symbolically the amount the island was first sold for by Clanranald in 1872). The campaign was to prove only a minor success with around £3,000 actually being raised, but nevertheless it was the first stab for the islanders and their elected representatives at press relations, publicity, and fundraising. As such it could be garnered as a significant success, simply because it increased the press interest in the story. To be sure the press revelled in the story with punning by-lines galore; “Eigg feud boils over”,<sup>39</sup> “Protesters Eigged on in island battle”,<sup>40</sup> and so on. Schellenberg himself even helpfully assisted the story by immediately parrying their appeal with claims that “islanders will never get rid of me”.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, he continued his bombast against the residents calling them “childish and pathetic for even contemplating community ownership”. Anyway he declared, he was “a stubborn old mule, and the more they shouted the more I will dig my heels in”.<sup>42</sup> The press loved it.

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<sup>36</sup> Kean, Kenneth. Interview 4<sup>th</sup> February 1998

<sup>37</sup> Kirk, Sue. Interview, 7<sup>th</sup> February 1998.

<sup>38</sup> Fyffe.

<sup>39</sup> The Independent, 16<sup>th</sup> August, 1994. p.2

<sup>40</sup> The Sun, 16<sup>th</sup> August, 1994. p.5

<sup>41</sup> Mallon, Margaret. “Islanders will never get rid of me!” Daily Record, 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1994.

<sup>42</sup> “Eigg Laird digs in as islanders raise fighting fund”, The Scottish Farmer, 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 1994.

Behind the scenes things were a little more complex, and indeed much the reverse of what Schellenberg was saying in public. To begin with from early in the summer he had been pressing the SWT to purchase the north end of the island, essentially the crofting area and *Beinn Bhuidhe*. This had caused significant strains in the burgeoning relationship between the SWT and the IERA, mainly because the IERA refused to back any deal that would divide the ownership of the island.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand the SWT were unable to publicly back the fundraising campaign launched by the IET, since this put them in an awkward situation with Schellenberg. During a five hour meeting with David Hughes Hallett, Schellenberg had made it amply clear that “he would not contemplate negotiating with any organisation that was going to involve the community in future management of the island”.<sup>44</sup> A stalemate had therefore ensued: one in which Schellenberg was asking for an offer, yet the SWT was unable to provide one. The situation was particularly frustrating because in private, Schellenberg admitted his position as owner was untenable, and this made everyone feel he had to sell at some point.<sup>45</sup> The big question was when, and to whom. Only several years after the event was it made clear that during the very same month as he was boldly announcing “islanders will never get rid of me”, Schellenberg was actually meeting with Farhed Vladdi and the next owner of Eigg, “Professor Maruma”. According to the infamous island broker and estate agent, Vladdi, over an August weekend on Eigg, Schellenberg signed a sale agreement on the back of a serviette – selling the island to Maruma for £1.5 Million.<sup>46</sup>

If this was to have been a quick sale it was swiftly thrown on hold as Schellenberg lurched again into yet another divorce proceeding, this time with his third wife Suki. With an embargo placed on all his assets in early October, Schellenberg had once more to resign himself to waiting for the Court’s decision. It did not however, prevent him from issuing notices to quit to John Chester and the Carr family.<sup>47</sup> Informing a family of seven to vacate their property by New Years’ Eve was in everyone’s eyes “the last straw”, particularly for indigeneous islanders since Marie herself was an island girl. To penalise the SWT as well in the same stroke

<sup>43</sup> IERA Steering Committee Minutes. 19<sup>th</sup> October, 1994

<sup>44</sup> ibid. 31<sup>st</sup> March 1994.

<sup>45</sup> ibid

<sup>46</sup> BBC Scotland, Euorpa, Broadcast 7<sup>th</sup> February 1998

<sup>47</sup> “Storm over owner’s move to evict islanders”, The Herald, 17<sup>th</sup> October 1994.

was as powerful an action as could be imagined. Again the press featured the story, and again Schellenberg's actions and comments only intensified the islanders' feelings against him. This was particularly apparent when HRC Councillors arrived on the island to hold their own version of participative planning called "Planning for Real". A large scale map was placed in the hall and residents were invited to place cards on it indicating what developments they would like to see on the island. As part of gathering information for Subject Area Plans the process had been very successful in other highland locations. On Eigg, "the exercise was arguably the most lively to date". Amongst the numerous constructive cards asking for greater social services, refuse collection, and new housing, there were also a large number of comments aimed at Schellenberg, such as "No Bullying", "Security of Tenure", and "Remove the Present Owner".<sup>48</sup> Schellenberg placed his own suggesting "A policeman", which was a little ironic since he had threatened the island's only acting constable, Colin Carr with eviction.



Fig 4.3: "Planning for Real Eigg Style".<sup>49</sup>

As such the cards and the planning process highlighted how just impotent the residents and their elected authorities like the HRC were in dealing with situations such as Eigg. It was easy for the islanders to express their needs for a new pier,

<sup>48</sup> "Planning for Real – Eigg style", *West Highland Free Press*, 4<sup>th</sup> November 1994.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*

sheltered housing, a community hall, and such like, but it was another thing to actually deliver them. Hence the demands for a “Schellenberg Free Zone”. Shelter had assessed the need for new housing over ten years ago, but still elderly ladies lived in “grace and favour” cottages patching up holes in the roof and fighting off the rats at night. Similarly the community had been trying to gain a site for a community hall for the same length of time, and got nowhere. The same with rubbish disposal and the site for an island refuse dump. Schellenberg always justified his delaying tactics with reasons such as the divorce case, the island’s sale, and “law and order difficulties”, but in essence despite the residents’ and Council’s wishes he had been able to maintain the last word on just about everything. In many ways therefore, the “Planning for Real Exercise” despite being a success in participation, clearly demonstrated that participation without any genuine power meant absolutely nothing.

Nevertheless, by the end of the year it was not hard to look back at a decisive 12 months on the island. Although it is all too easy to imply a false linearity when detailing processes and events, for most of 1994 things had developed in a relatively straight line. Since the fire in January, the community’s relationship with Schellenberg had gone from appalling to irreparable. He had begun the year by lambasting the entire island population as “rotten, dangerous, and totally barmy”, and he had ended it by issuing notices to quit to eight of them, including his once-loyal staff and the SWT warden. Over the same period, the community had finally found the confidence to speak out against Schellenberg and to begin forging alliances, outside contacts, and a burgeoning relationship with the press. Together with the assistance of HIF the islanders had also moved on from simple residents meetings to participative workshops, Steering Committees, and the formation of basic policy documents. As for Schellenberg and the threats of eviction, it appeared he was simply dumbfounded by the attention they had received and as New Year came and went he argued that they were simply a “marker”, and nothing else. He had “not been serious”.<sup>50</sup>

This steady development, however, was to come to a dramatic halt in 1995 with events emphasising that despite their progress the residents were very much the

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<sup>50</sup> Ross, David. Hebridean community voices anger after laird’s eviction threat”, *The Herald*, 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1994.



hostages to fortune and the market place. By the early spring of 1995 rumours began circulating of the island's possible sale. By March 17<sup>th</sup> the rumours had taken the slow and rotund form of a strange German man wearing a beret. The man with the beret was Marlin Eckhart, (a.k.a. "Professor Maruma") a mysterious artist/financier, whose eighteen months of ownership were to clearly demonstrate that events on Eigg were far from occurring in a linear fashion, but were to repeat themselves all over again.

Schellenberg's sale of the island to Maruma clearly exemplified everything that was and remains wrong with land sales in Scotland. Here you had a 7 ½ thousand acre estate with a population of over sixty being privately sold between two shady characters; and no one able to lift a hand – not the Government, not the Local Council, and certainly not the islanders. Indeed, not only was the vendor in open conflict with the residents, but he had openly promised to never sell the island to any of its inhabitants.<sup>51</sup> This was the end of just a twenty-year period of ownership, during which time he had made himself and the island so infamous that the only person he could sell it to was an unsuspecting and utterly unknown mystic from Germany. A man who,



*Fig 4.4. Schellenberg departs.*<sup>52</sup>

himself was to simply continue the downward spiral of under-investment and unfortunate management that had been established over the past 30 years. Just like all the previous owners, Schellenberg was to also make a considerable sum on the sale of the island, and indeed not only did he receive the largest profit to date, but he also took the most with him as well. The furniture, light fittings, wall plugs, and yes even the kitchen sink from the lodge were all removed when he quit the island in April. He had also intended to remove the William Bald map of 1805, but the residents reacted to this last piece of asset

<sup>51</sup> Close, Ajay. "Eigg on his face", Scotland on Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 1994.

<sup>52</sup> Fraser, Douglas. "Former Laird sent packing", *The Scotsman*, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1995

stripping by barricading the map in the craft shop where he had stored it.<sup>53</sup> Furious, he left the map for a future legal victory and he finally sailed off on his barge of assorted junk. Some said that as the craft pulled away he mournfully called back “I only wanted to be one of you”. Others are convinced he just said, “Sod you”.<sup>54</sup>

## 4.2 The Maruma Diversion

As Camille Dressler describes, the departure of Schellenberg and the arrival of the new owner openly demonstrated how “the community front and our decision making processes were actually very fragile”.<sup>55</sup> To begin with, in his capacity as a new Eigg Trustee, Alastair MacIntosh had made several statements to the press regarding how unwelcome the new owner would be made on the island. Understandably, the last thing the residents wanted was to get off to a bad start. Hence Chris Tiarks – the IET’s secretary - swiftly reversed this to “We are all prepared to work with the new owner for the benefit of the community”.<sup>56</sup> On Maruma’s side when he did eventually arrive on Eigg on April 8<sup>th</sup>, he immediately rented Colin’s van and toured the entire island, meeting people individually in their homes. No other landlord had ever done this before, and it certainly went down very well, especially with the elder members of the community. Not only did he take the time to visit everyone, but as Karen Helliwell also remembers, “He was either exceptionally well primed, or absolutely genuine because he had all the right answers, and showed a real feeling for the place”.<sup>57</sup> This was all very much unexpected, and hence Maruma’s promises of leases, development and fairness caught people off guard. Despite a few lingering doubts, even the sceptical Leslie Riddoch hailed him as the new saviour of Eigg.<sup>58</sup>

One thing Maruma insisted upon however was that he wanted no dealings with the IET. He said it was because it was too political, but what it amounted to was a preference for dealing with people individually. This point was repeatedly made in broken English at the meeting he had with the IERA on April 10<sup>th</sup>. Maggie requested several times how the IERA could assist Maruma with his “concepts” by undertaking

<sup>53</sup> Fraser, Douglas. “Former Laird sent packing”, The Scotsman, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1995.

<sup>54</sup> MacLeod, Maxwell. Conversation. 6<sup>th</sup> March 1995.

<sup>55</sup> Dressler. Interview 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1998

<sup>56</sup> Watson, Craig. “Former Laird makes break from Eigg”, The Herald, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1995.

<sup>57</sup> Helliwell, Karen. Interview 6<sup>th</sup> February 1998

skills surveys and business audits, but Maruma consistently affirmed that he wanted to deal with islanders on a one to one basis.<sup>59</sup> This approach was to continue for the next three or four months, where what little contact he had with the island was not through any of the established organisations, but on an individual level. “It was the perfect way to break apart the processes and confidence we had developed under Schellenberg” describes Camille. “He didn’t want us working together, but just working for him when he needed it”.<sup>60</sup> Others like Sue Kirk also noticed this tendency as slightly worrying, especially since Sue and her husband Alastair were away when Maruma first visited the island. “When we returned we couldn’t quite believe how everyone’s attitude had changed. One moment all the talk was for community ownership, making a stand and so on, and then the next Maruma’s turned up and convinced everyone he’s the best thing since sliced bread. . . . It really showed you how quickly things could fall apart”.<sup>61</sup>

Just like his predecessor Maruma was also full of grand schemes, or “concepts” he preferred to call them, for the redevelopment of Eigg. Kenneth Kean describes him as “almost a carbon copy of the early Schellenberg with lots of big ideas and brochures. He was even talking about buying a catamaran that cost over a million pounds. It was ludicrous”.<sup>62</sup> The money aspect was certainly a key issue, for when he was initially challenged over his credentials and intentions for Eigg he responded. “You don’t buy a Rolls Royce unless you have the money to run it”.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, a few days after the first meeting on Eigg he even talked of investing £15 millions in the island. Crofters were not quite discussing the respective merits of Ferraris and Maseratis, but there was still a sharp collective intake of breath on the island. What could it mean? Luxury pools and sauna’s, indoor tennis courts? With limited hard evidence, wild theories were quickly circulating, with one card on the island quipping – “it’s very hard to separate fact from Maruma”.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Riddoch, Leslie. Interview.

<sup>59</sup> IERA Minutes. 10<sup>th</sup> April 1995.

<sup>60</sup> Dressler. Interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1998

<sup>61</sup> Kirk, Sue. Interview 7<sup>th</sup> February, 1998

<sup>62</sup> Kean. Interview 4<sup>th</sup> February, 1998

<sup>63</sup> Wilson, Sarah. “Maruma promises long-term leases to Eigg islanders”, The Scotsman, 13<sup>th</sup> April 1995.

<sup>64</sup> Cormack.

With hindsight it is perhaps difficult to believe how gullible people initially were. It was not as though the islanders fell for Maruma hook line and sinker, but they did nevertheless warm to him.<sup>65</sup> It was part desperation, part hope, and part Maruma's approach. Considering what they had undergone with their last landlord it was also hardly surprising to have been a little beguiled; as one islander also noted, "anything would have been better than Schellenberg, even Lucifer himself".<sup>66</sup> However, Maruma's honeymoon period was to prove relatively short, as doubts over his background and sincerity arose just days after his first visit to the island. Maruma's title of Professor had been discovered as bogus, and this merely intensified the press interest in the mystic German. It was then three months before Maruma's next visit to the island, during which time there was no movement on the leases, or any of the promises he had previously made. There was also only the most intermittent of contacts.



Fig 4.5: *The Press enjoy Maruma.*<sup>67</sup>

In the meantime the community was working up to its first *feis* – a Gaelic music, arts and language festival held on the weekend of July 1<sup>st</sup>. Although very moderate in size, maybe 40 or so pupils for classes, and around a hundred visitors, the event required much organising – with every household on the island being heavily involved. Despite having been warned about how busy people would be over the weekend, however, Maruma decided to make this the time for his next visit. Arriving

<sup>65</sup> Fyffe, Maggie.

<sup>66</sup> Kean. Interview 4<sup>th</sup> February, 1998

<sup>67</sup> West Highland Free Press, 31<sup>st</sup> March 1995

in the middle of the weekend he held court in the teashop eating whole cakes, chain-smoking and talking to islanders when they had a chance.

An IERA meeting was called for the next evening, where once again Maruma gave out all the right answers, and presenting a new “island manager”, emphasised his desire to work with the islanders.<sup>68</sup> Yet despite all the reassurances and promises, for many this visit was to be the beginning of Maruma’s downfall. This was due to firstly strong clashes over residents concerning the community hall, and his apathy in actually signing a lease.<sup>69</sup> Secondly, just as revelations of Maruma’s phoney title followed his previous visit to the island, more disturbing revelations began to follow on from his second. Stern magazine had conducted an investigation into Maruma’s claims of selling his art work for upwards of \$500,000 to collectors like Jean Paul Sartre, Marlon Brando, and Indira Ghandi.<sup>70</sup> None of them, nor their representatives had ever heard of him, just as no one in the art world had ever heard of his work. Similarly, no one knew of the architectural firm supposedly in charge of renovating the buildings on Eigg. Indeed, once one started digging, so numerous were the falsifications floating around Maruma, that it was soon impossible to find anything credible about the man. Unsurprisingly, this concerned his financial situation as well - investigations showed that not only did he have an appalling credit history, but at the time of purchasing Eigg he also had several debt collection agencies after him.<sup>71</sup> This immediately led to questions of how did he raise the £1.6 millions for Eigg ? No doubt even Schellenberg had wondered about that, especially since it appeared his deposit of £150,000 on the sale was paid in numerous small bank transactions from assorted different countries around the world.<sup>72</sup> By November, the various rumours, inconsistencies, and accusations regarding Maruma had solidified into formal investigations by the German Public Prosecutor for fraud. In particular for a £1.6 million loan he had taken out on the island in August 1995.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> IERA Minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 1995.

<sup>69</sup> Kirk, Sue. Interview, 7<sup>th</sup> February, 1998

<sup>70</sup> “Maruma the Fog Maker”, Stern, 31<sup>st</sup> July 1995. pp.116-7. Translated by Robert Melohn, Shore Cottage, Eigg.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid*

<sup>72</sup> *ibid*

<sup>73</sup> Edwards, Rob. “German Prosecutors step up inquiry into Eigg’s owner”, Scotland on Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1995.

For the islanders used to even the absurd extremes of Schellenberg's legal floundering, this was too much. Especially since Maruma was almost impossible to get in touch with, and extremely evasive if ever reached. After numerous calls, faxes, and answer machine messages if you did manage to get in touch, he usually ended each conversation with the phrase "I am coming there in two weeks time, and we'll sort out everything then". Of course he never did, and in fact was never to return to the island at all. If he had actually held to his promises of signing for a hall site and granting a few leases, then no doubt he could have bought a significant amount of time. Indeed this was even noted by many residents, who repeatedly wondered why he did not just sign for the hall site. That would have appeased the majority of folk on the island, because all the grant money for the hall's construction had been agreed, and all that was needed was a secure site for the project to be underway. As such the building would have then employed the majority of the island's unemployed for a year, and certainly used up most of the community's time and energy. People were also extremely cautious about launching into yet another battle with their landlord, and any small token of sincerity from Maruma would have stopped the situation from deteriorating too far. "Everyone was just so worn out after Schellenberg, that nobody wanted to go through that nightmare again. If trouble could have been avoided", commented Karen, "we were ironically the lot he could have appeased the easiest".<sup>74</sup>

The fact that Maruma did not sign for the hall site, nor a few months later for a lucrative Millennium Forest Application, tended to indicate something more sinister than simple intransigence; especially when you combined this with the fraud investigation being undertaken in Germany. It began to appear that he was yet another fraudulent con-artist at loose in the Highland land market. Either that or just one more individual playing the lucrative speculation game. For Eigg this was not an unusual situation since the island had had a disproportionate experience of frauds and eccentrics owning it, and all of them profiting handsomely from buying and selling the place. As such, Maruma was unquestionably the worst absentee owner to appear yet, and certainly the most eccentric. He was even more inappropriate and problematic than Schellenberg, who at least took an active interest in the island. Maruma on the other hand only appeared on the island twice, promised everything,

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<sup>74</sup> Helliwell, Karen. Interview, 6<sup>th</sup> February, 1998

and then did absolutely nothing. And a form of nothing that was positively neglectful as he let buildings go to rot, fields become infested with bracken, and grant applications slip by because of inaction.

Having said all this, it must also be clearly understood that Maruma's ownership of Eigg was vital for the eventual success of the partnership buy-out. Just as Schellenberg's proprietorship was central to unifying the residents into a co-ordinated body, so Maruma's ownership was integral to the formation of the partnership. As Mark and Fiona Cherry acknowledge, his very inactivity was perfect for focussing people's minds and galvanising opinion both on and off the island. "He was a diversion, but a very handy wee diversion, because he made everyone think why are we tolerating this?".<sup>75</sup> Maggie clarifies the point by emphasising just how useful the Maruma period was for the community; "Since he wasn't here, and wasn't doing anything we started to run things on the island ourselves". The residents took over the running of the hall by default, and the tea and craft shops were simply continued by individuals totally independent of the estate. "It made us think why do we need a landlord anyway?" In other words, "It was an essential period because it gave people confidence and brought people together". Above all, "It also gave us the time to organise, consolidate and think more seriously about things than in 1992".<sup>76</sup>

In terms of those off the island the Maruma diversion was equally as important in co-ordinating opinion, especially in the press. Where Schellenberg continued to fight his corner like a terrier, Maruma had no such tenacity of spirit. Indeed, he retreated with horror when faced with the full might of the tabloid press, consequently giving them free reign. Also since he was a foreigner, and a German to boot, he provided the perfect example of the inappropriate landowner. Indeed he represented everything that was wrong with land laws in Scotland; laws which could allow anyone to come along and purchase large chunks of the natural heritage without any checks or references to their character, finances, or intentions. This point amongst many others in the land debate was exemplified by the Eigg situation. As a poll conducted by Scotland on Sunday in October also demonstrated, the groundswell of public opinion was clearly in favour of changing the status quo: two out of three Scots interviewed believed

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<sup>75</sup> Cherry.

<sup>76</sup> Fyffe.

restrictions were needed in the Scottish land market. Highlighting the nationalist aspects of the debate as well, 45 % believed that Scottish land should only be owned by Scottish nationals.

On Eigg these feelings were somewhat stronger as the end of 1995 saw Maruma failing to pay his staff's wages on the island – all two of them. By the beginning of January 1996 the situation on Eigg had come full circle, with islanders finally losing all faith in Maruma. On 30<sup>th</sup> of January a public ultimatum was issued by the IERA demanding that he fulfilled his promises for at least a hall site and a few leases by the end of the day. He failed to deliver, and on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January the IERA declared:

**“The community has now totally lost confidence in Maruma. He has failed to fulfil any of his initial promises and there has been a complete lack of response to any attempts at communication. It is intolerable in a small community like this that people’s livelihoods can be put in jeopardy by a third party based in Edinburgh or Stuttgart. It is now clear that the only way forward is through a community-led buy-out”.**<sup>77</sup>

#### 4.4 Bridging the gap – a Participative Management Plan

In finally proclaiming their public desire for a community-led buy-out the islanders had reached a significant watershed. They had crossed into a new realm of publicity, planning, and organisation that was far beyond anything they had previously encountered. More worryingly, they were now also moving far beyond the support and assistance of their empowering facilitators like HIF. It was the classic example of a missing link in the chain of participatory development;<sup>78</sup> for whilst both HIF and “Planning for Real” had empowered the community with various tools and ideas, at the end of it all the islanders were left with very little they could do. Despite all his problems, and all their ideas, Maruma still owned the island, and in the contemporary political climate there was no chance of any Government intervention on the islanders’ behalf. Maruma had also demonstrated that even in the most

<sup>77</sup> Outterside. Nic. “Eigg Ultimatum to Maruma”, *The Scotsman*, 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1998.

<sup>78</sup> For a good survey of this issue: Lane, Jaqueline. “Non-governmental organisations and participatory development: the concept in theory versus the concept in practice”, Nelson, Nici and Wright, Susan eds. *Power and Participatory Development*, Intermediate Technology Publications, London. 1995. pp.181-201



ludicrous situation there was apparently always some one prepared to pay the full market value. Except for the islanders' frustrations, a few moral arguments and little over £4,000 in the IET's account, there was not much to justify the islanders' claim to be better landlords themselves. Indeed there was a good 300 years of history that enforced the claim for external landlords to be the best proprietors: external landlords had traditionally been the "improvers" of West Highland estates, and they were nearly always the only ones with enough cash who could afford to buy them.

Certainly they were now "empowered" and barring a few exceptions they were a united front as well. Through the various planning and participation exercises, the community had also shown their capabilities for running workshops and developing their own ideas. Yet unfortunately, there is a world of difference between the loose results of planning workshops, and the properly documented and credible proposals of the policy world. If they were to convince people that they could feasibly run the island, as well as justify their claim for financial support, then they needed to produce material on a whole new level. As many islanders pointed out, it was more than ironic that of all the people needed to justify their knowledge, capabilities, and financial responsibility for running the island, they were the ones who had to produce the most. Nevertheless credibility was once more the crucial issue, and they therefore needed to bridge the gap between empowerment and real power; between the "wish list" of their workshop results and a cogent and strategically viable feasibility study.

The previous feasibility study initiated by the IET in 1992 was the perfect example of how things should not be done. Although the author, Bob Harris was a competent consultant the methodology and end product were far removed from the community on Eigg. First and foremost, the author only spent a limited time on the island and the whole pitch of the study was made, organised, and developed from outside the island. Sure there was consultation with residents, but there was little if any consensus achieved with the final result. The projects detailed, such as the "Life Centre", were also totally inaccessible to the islanders, and the figures produced highly unrealistic. Indeed, not only was most of the study beyond the grasp of the community themselves, but it was also not backed nor accredited by any third parties. Hence, the entire procedure caused more damage than good for the Trust's cause, and considering the consultant charged over £4,000, it turned out to be a very expensive

own goal. What was needed this time round was obviously a study of much more relevance and accuracy; it needed to sell the idea of community ownership not only to outside world but most importantly to the residents themselves. Although the idea of community ownership was attractive in principle, and they had publicly declared their wish to pursue it, the idea was very much the last resort. Circumstances had pushed them into the situation, and for most people on the island the financial merits of the community ownership were far from clear. Like all West Coast estates, surrounding Eigg was the common notion that the estate could only be run and afforded as a rich mans toy; i.e. it could never sustain itself, and would always need financial input.

In early 1995 my then assistant supervisor Alastair MacIntosh asked me if I would be interested in drafting a new development study for the IERA and IET. Having studied participatory development and countryside management extensively within the Centre for Human Ecology in Edinburgh University, it was felt I would be a good and cheap alternative to another consultancy firm. With more than a little trepidation, I consequently approached the IERA and made the basic proposal of co-ordinating a new feasibility study for them in exchange for lodgings on the island, and the permission to use Eigg as a case study for a PhD. I carefully pointed out that this would be a study utterly unlike the previous one, and would be founded on their involvement and their needs. What I wanted was an insight into the realities of community trust ownership and management. I had little idea what I was in store for when they accepted my offer. What began as a simple three month exercise resulted in a three year saga !

Although I could not find an exact methodology to follow, the feasibility study or Eigg Development Study as it became known as, was firmly rooted in participative development theory. The methodology was generated from various works of Robert Chambers and in particular his ground breaking Rural Development: Putting the Last First.<sup>79</sup> A seminal writer in the field of participatory theory, Chambers has developed the core theory for ‘farmer-first’ or ‘people-first’ development. Broadly speaking this entails a bottom-up approach to rural development issues that HIF has engendered in its work in Highland communities. The key to success depends on the outsider’s (or

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<sup>79</sup> Chambers, Robert. Rural Development: Putting the Last First, Longman, Harlow. 1989.

facilitator's) ability to avoid playing the expert, and to put aside personal ideas and training in favour of "handing over the stick".<sup>80</sup> Obviously my own training and expertise would come into the drafting of the development study, but to begin with my first priorities were to listen and understand the islanders' ideas. Fortunately the timing of my arrival on the island was to play a significant part in shaping this process since I first began my studies in March of 1995; i.e. just before Maruma was to appear on the scene.

Obviously with the initial developments, Maruma distracted me like everyone else, and at least for the first part of the summer I believed my job and research had been made redundant. Nonetheless, I spent most of 1995 on the island, staying with different islanders in their homes and starting the process of listening and gathering information. Since I was to use Eigg as my principle study I also began researching the island's social and ecological history as well. This no doubt proved vital in slowly gaining people's confidence, especially elder indigenous folk as they soon began to realise I was not just a typical outsider and consultant. I did have genuine interests in the island and in what they had to say. By talking about the past it also proved very useful in gathering peoples' opinions on present-day ideas of development. Initially older folk might defer from saying anything about Eigg's future, but would instead be more than happy discussing the market gardens, dairies, and such like of their childhood. After a while it was then not difficult to move onto to present-day possibilities and their own thoughts.

Without the pressure of an impending deadline, I was therefore able to spend significant time in exploring almost everyone's opinion on the future development of the island. Obviously, the interviewing was a highly qualitative procedure, since I would either spend the night or have a meal with the family or individual I was questioning. Slowly as the evening progressed I directed conversation towards what they thought of the planning workshops, and then on to the particular areas of organisational structure, agriculture, forestry, tourism, and private enterprise. Because I wanted to hear what people really thought, I would also make it clear from the beginning that these conversations were in the strictest of confidence. I did not want

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<sup>80</sup> Chambers, Robert. "Paradigm Shifts and the Practice of Participatory Research and Development", *Power and Participatory Development*. pp.30-42. p.32

to associate particular people with particular notions, but I was far more interested in areas of consensus and division. As tape machines invariably put people at unease, I quickly developed a practice of taking notes on paper, and then letting the interviewees read and correct them afterwards.

Talking to people at home naturally produced a much-relaxed atmosphere where even the quietest of individuals would openly talk about their own ideas for the island. It was also of course a two-way process, as soon everyone on the island knew me, and had taken the measure of who I was and what I was up to. Because of how long I stayed and how often I visited, I also became heavily involved in the community's events, such as the summer *feis*, the common *Celidhs*, and general social gatherings. By the end of the summer I was taken as being firmly "on-side", and although possessing the university background and training, I was nevertheless taken as being one who "understood the situation better than any consultant"<sup>81</sup>. It also exemplified that I was not maintaining a neutral, nor objective course of study. In order to produce a Development Study that was accepted, I needed to clearly enter into the daily life of the island and show where my loyalties lay. I needed to be accepted, not as "one of them" but as some one who could be trusted and some one who had a sound grasp of the community and island's potential.

By October of 1995, people were openly beginning to question the longevity of Maruma's ownership – especially when he was indicted for fraud. I was consequently asked by the Steering Committee to begin work "properly", and to start the formal drafting of the Development Study. After my numerous conversations during the summer it was also clearly apparent to me that the degree of doubt that islanders had over community ownership was considerable. Indeed, as I tabulated my various interviews into a crude summary of points and numbers I was highly alarmed to discover that only 35% of the adult population felt the community was capable of managing the estate.<sup>82</sup> Obviously, these results were just a snapshot in time, yet nevertheless there was distinct scepticism regarding community ownership and management. The two main causes of this were that firstly over half the residents felt the estate could only be run at loss, and secondly over two thirds of the residents

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<sup>81</sup> Mentioned several times during private conversations, and in Steering Committee meetings.

<sup>82</sup> Appendix. A.2

believed the community lacked the appropriate skills to manage the island.<sup>83</sup> If I was to have any success therefore, it was soundly imperative that the Development Study accommodated and answered these doubts.

Central to Chambers' view of participative theory is the need for facilitators to reverse the standard assumptions of rural development. Since, this above all entails listening to people, and encouraging their own ideas for development, there could be a certain contradiction in what I was undertaking. That being drafting a business plan or feasibility study for them, which in effect was telling them what to do. This would have been a contradiction, if the study had been approached in such a manner. Instead, what I was producing was only to be a "first draft", and everything was to pass before the Steering Committee and residents before any final decisions were made. It was also made adamantly clear at a IERA meeting in November, that I was merely a glorified secretary who was following their wishes and instructions. My degrees and background were simply being used to present and cost the community's ideas in the best manner possible. Even the final Development Study itself, once discussed, vetted, and corrected by the community was simply a stepping stone in the process. It was not to be a fixed entity, but more a sales pitch to potential partners, funding agencies, and the outside world. My job was to prove that the island could be financially viable and that the community's ideas of development were sound.

Nevertheless, in the very construction of the draft I would be naturally making judgements over which development projects to include in an overall study. My criteria for this were again generated from Chambers together with my own ideas gathered from interviews. These were as follows:

- 1 **Financially viable** – The island had to be seen to pay for itself.
- 2 **Consensus orientated** – Projects had to be able to satisfy the largest majority.
- 3 **Practical** – Projects had to be appropriate for island conditions and skills.
- 4 **Simple** – Everyone needed to understand the projects and the pitch.
- 5 **Maximum Community control** – Control over resources and decisions.

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<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*

The main aim was obviously to show that the island could at least break even. Essential to this was uncovering what is known in estate circles as “the factoring cost” – i.e. the overheads of running an estate. Most islanders had no idea whatsoever as what this amounted to, and for many it represented the largest unknown aspect of community management or ownership. Having said this, financial concerns were not the overriding criterion since consensus was crucial. Hence projects such as a pub were to be put aside, not for financial reasons, as a pub would be a proverbial gold mine on Eigg, but simply because interview results showed that it was a highly contentious issue. Practicality and simplicity are obvious criteria for projects on an island where resources and access to support are scarce. They also represented another aspect of the study’s accessibility for the islanders, for whatever developments were proposed needed to be easily understood, and comfortably managed by the islanders themselves. Finally and by no means least, was the criterion of community control. Control over daily life and surrounding resources had precipitated events up until this point, so it was essential to have this as a deciding criterion. Especially since inappropriate management, structure, or enterprise could easily still hand control over to other people.

#### **4.5 The Eigg Development Study**

In any feasibility study the necessity for itemising the assets, condition, and situation of the property in question is obvious. With Eigg, however, there was also a political edge, since there was an absolute need to show how bad conditions were under Maruma’s proprietorship. In some circumstances this might have led to understandable exaggerations, yet the island was in such bad decline that there was little danger of misrepresentation. Indeed, there was much the reverse problem, since it was necessary not to demoralise residents and potential supporters by painting a completely bleak picture. The Appendix contains much of this first section of the Development Study, which was completed in February 1996, and then updated through the year up to October 1996. It includes all the relevant information on the island’s population, services, ecology, Estate, and enterprises. In compiling this information enormous assistance and advice was gained from the residents, to the extent that it was very much a communal effort. The second section of the Study is reviewed below, but only in summarised form, since greater attention is paid here to

the deciding criteria and methodology of the final proposed scenario of development. As with all studies of this nature, there were many subsequent drafts and amendments, especially as this became the basis of an application for the NHMF. I have consequently stuck to the initial February 1996 draft that was first reviewed by the Steering Committee, and then passed on to the SWT the HC, and the Crofters' Trust Advisory Service.

As with most hard data concerning Eigg there was considerable difficulty when it first came to approximating the estate's operating balance under Maruma's management. Understandably, none of the estate's accounts were allowed to be viewed, and at first this proved to be somewhat daunting. However, it turned out to be very useful in ensuring that the residents began to investigate the 'factoring costs' of the estate themselves. The two estate workers, Neil Robertson (the gardener) and Donald MacFadyen (the estate shepherd) both provided detailed information on the basic maintenance costs of the Lodge, and the estate farm. Combined with insurance quotes, a list of Council Tax liabilities, and an approximation of legal and accountancy costs we were therefore able to piece together the final summary. As was pointed out in the Study, this was still only an approximation and presumed that Maruma would collect rents from at least 2 out of the 6 occupied estate houses. It also presumed that rents would be collected from the occupied farms (Kildonnan, Laig, and Howlin), and that the Estate would properly manage what was left of the Estate farm (Galmisdale). However, Maruma was not to collect rents in any form, either commercial or residential.<sup>84</sup> As for running the farm, he was to not pay a wage from December 1995 onwards, and in February 1996 he simply sold all the livestock to pay for his outstanding legal fees.<sup>85</sup>

The Estimated Financial Summary provided the first important step towards convincing people that the Estate could be viable. True, the final balance showed at least an £18,000 annual loss, but this was achieved from absolutely ridiculous

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<sup>84</sup> The most plausible reason for this was Maruma's intention to minimise the amount of people who had any security of tenure. Paying a rent implies certain rights of occupation, and occupied property is worth less than unoccupied property.

<sup>85</sup> Hannan, Martin. MacLeod, Maxwell. "Last of Eigg livestock to go to market", The Scotsman, 26<sup>th</sup> February 1996.

management of the Estate's assets.<sup>86</sup> This estimate, even if £20,000 out was still minimal when considering the Estate's properties, farmland, and potential. It also clearly demonstrated that factoring costs were not the evil ogre people imagined, and that if the Estate was actually run appropriately and not just into the ground, there were certainly opportunities for developing a highly sustainable portfolio of Estate enterprises. The other fortunate aspect of the Financial Summary was that it did not involve particularly large sums of money. Irrespective of the profit or loss, the numbers were not in the millions or hundreds of thousands of pounds, but well within reasonable conception and understanding of all people concerned. The Estate represented a sizeable enterprise, but an enterprise that could be comprehended nonetheless. As ever, however, the key questions were, how could the community go about managing it, and what could they do? Initially, I had said that I would not be dealing with exact structures of management, but when it came to drafting the study I needed to provide a crude framework upon which to hang the various projects.

### (i) Management Structure

Fortunately the interviews and workshops provided a sound basis from which to organise a management structure. The workshop on "The relationship between the IERA and the new Isle of Eigg Trust", had proposed the formation of a Working Development Group composed of the 5 Steering Committee members from the IERA and 3 members of the IET. This new Working Development Group would assume the role of the Steering Committee and lead the negotiations over any future sale or buyout of the island. Enshrined in this structure was the proviso that whatever happened, the IERA must have at least a 51% controlling interest over any future structure and decisions. It was also decided that the residents' representatives on this body would be elected and stand for three years, and then stand down for a minimum of two years on a rotational basis. Although the new body would deal with the details of negotiations and planning, crucial decisions would always be deferred back to the IERA for a ballot.<sup>87</sup> Although seemingly a little complex, over 90% of the residents

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<sup>86</sup> Appendix. A.6.7

<sup>87</sup> Workshop Results, "The workshop on the relationship between the IERA and the IET", 9<sup>th</sup> September. 1994. IEA



were comfortable with the Working Development Group and as such this provided the perfect basic mechanism for a future management committee.<sup>88</sup>

The Development Study therefore proposed the island be owned by the IET, a charitable body, and then managed by a separate Management Committee (like The Working Development Group). If necessary this committee could constitute a holding company limited by guarantee which would prevent any trading losses being held against the actual ownership of the island. Like the Working Development Group, the Committee (or company) would also consist of at least 51% elected residents (on a rotational basis) and whatever outside parties were to be affiliated to the Trust. The Committee would then be responsible for the management strategy of the Estate and would meet at regular intervals throughout the year to decide business management.

One essential point to this structure was not having a ‘factor’ involved in the day to day management of the Estate. The traditional idea of having one single person in charge of running the Estate was anathema to many islanders, and in private conversations many people had pointed out that this would have been an impossible position for any islander (or especially non-islander) to undertake. There was also the issue of parcelling out employment as much as possible and not concentrating funds into one high paid job. Consequently the Study proposed no single “island manager” as such, but that the Committee would employ different personnel (part-time where applicable) to manage each of the separate components of the Estate’s portfolio. As detailed below, there were three separate enterprises proposed for the island’s development: a new invigorated Estate farm, a holiday accommodation business, and a forestry scheme. All three were envisaged as stand-alone projects, which, if necessary could also be constituted as limited companies as well. A separate individual would then manage each project and be responsible for its running and accounts. Obviously the day to day management of the other aspects of the Estate, such as collecting rents, organising deliveries, processing grants, organising Committee meetings, and so forth also needed staff. Again to parcel out employment, the Study proposed two part-time secretarial helpers.

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<sup>88</sup> [Appendix A.2](#)

The division of labour not only had democratic motives, but was also proposed to cover the issue of skills. No one on the island believed they had the ability to manage the whole enterprise of the Estate single-handedly, let alone the desire; hence the proposal of dividing the various duties into different aspects. There were several people on the island who would be willing to work as a secretary for the Estate or its enterprises, and several others who were prepared to take on one of the individual projects. In dividing jobs up, however, there would of course be smaller wages and predominantly part time employment. Yet this too was an advantage since in private conversations most people, especially crofting families, preferred the idea of part time work.

**(ii) Immediate matters of Estate**

On acquisition of the island, the first consideration of the Committee would be to conduct a full survey of the island, its properties, and financial situation. The Study proposed that this would be conducted by an appointed surveyor and accountant, who acting independently would also review the Estate's rents and leases of properties. Though a delicate situation, the setting of rents and leases would closely follow the previous rental values and if any disputes arose between surveyors and tenants, the Management Committee would act as final arbiter. Leases would of course be long term and renewable, and the farmhouses would remain fixed to the farm tenancies. As several people had expressed a wish to purchase their houses, all tenants of Estate houses would also be offered the right to buy their houses from the Estate. The value being set by the independent assessors. Included in any sale, however, would also be the right of the Estate to make the first offer on any resale of properties purchased.

Since the vast majority of residents found the workshops a useful tool in planning, the Study also proposed another series of workshops to be held on the future of the Estate after the survey was completed. However, as several commented on the independence of Committee members as facilitators, it was suggested that HIF were called in to host them. From the combination of workshops and the survey a final strategy could be then properly developed by the Committee and implemented.

### (iii) Capital Projects

In terms of particular projects the Management Committee could implement, the Development Study costed two new capital projects for consideration, and incorporated an existing project already under consideration. The latter was an application for the Millennium Forest Scheme being run by the National Lotteries Board. Originally suggested by a visitor to the island, Steve Sankey, the full application had been drafted by himself and the SWT in late 1995 under consultation with the then Steering Committee.<sup>89</sup> The project sought to create a native West Coast forest encompassing approximately 15% of the island. Notably the project encompassed the creation of four full time jobs, including a manager, and was specifically aimed at making the island self-sufficient in its timber supplies. Already in the application stage by December of 1995, the project like the community hall, had stalled upon the agreement and signature of Maruma.<sup>90</sup>

The two new projects proposed by the Development Study were set within a framework that struck a balance between private and community enterprise. In private conversations it was evident that there was considerable differences of opinion on the island over how that balance should be wrought. Some believed that the easiest and simplest scenario was to lease out as much enterprise and resources as possible to the private sector, whilst others felt the entire Estate should be run as a community business. The proposed scenario took a median position that was guided by the criterion for maintaining control over the island's resources, but which still provided ample opportunity for the private sector. In terms of funding for these two capital projects, the Study chose conservative approaches to development on the presumption that they would have to be financed by bank loans rather than grants. This was perhaps a little over-cautious since there were numerous grant-giving agencies such as Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) that would assist with start-up costs. Nevertheless, it was essential to keep proposals practical, and so the combined capital expenditure of the two new projects totalled £134,345 – details in the Appendix.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>89</sup> IERA Steering Committee Minutes. 27<sup>th</sup> November, 1995.

<sup>90</sup> ibid. 14<sup>th</sup> December 1995, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1998, 15<sup>th</sup> January, 29<sup>th</sup> January, 5<sup>th</sup> February.

<sup>91</sup> Development Study financial summary. Appendix, A.7

Property expenses in terms of rates and insurance on selected liable buildings represented at least £8,000 per annum in Estate expenditure. It was consequently necessary to begin covering those costs by utilising the vacant properties for at least a holiday letting business. Principle among these properties was of course the Lodge, and many debates had ensued as to its most appropriate development.<sup>92</sup> The Development Study proposed a high-class self-catering hostel to initiate the Lodge's use for tourist accommodation. The main reason for not choosing to develop it as an upmarket hotel was chiefly to minimise capital outlay, but also to prevent major competition with the established B&B's on the island. Significant market research went into the proposal together with careful costing for its renovations and furnishing – all amply assisted by islanders. Two part time staff were proposed to manage the business and maintain the property, running an annual season of 32 weeks. The rates of occupancy and prices were garnered from a successful hostel based in Mallaig that many islanders used when travelling to the mainland.

Combined with the hostel was the proposed running of self-catering holiday cottages. Of the nine other unoccupied Estate properties only three were economically viable for refurbishment and the holiday letting market. Even with a £7,000 budget for cosmetic refurbishing, they were nevertheless at the bottom end of the market and could not expect to generate significant profits. Nonetheless, as previous Estate management had shown if you left any property on the island unused it quickly deteriorates. Therefore profit or no profit, the simple use of the properties at least ensured they were heated for part of the year and at worst prevented from falling into greater disrepair. There was again a case for leasing them out to individuals to run as enterprises themselves, or perhaps the Committee borrowing more money to invest in their full refurbishment. Financial prudence, practicality, and the undercapitalised nature of the island population, however, indicated it was best to retain control, and at least defer the decision or debt to a future date. As such the cottages were to be incorporated into the hostel business and managed by its staff. The financial summary in the appendix provides details.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Appendix. A.1.11

<sup>93</sup> Appendix. A.7.1

The farm was the other obvious capital project to be considered. Again there was some debate as to whether it should just be leased out as a normal agricultural tenancy.<sup>94</sup> However, this was rejected since no one on the island would be able to take on the initial financial burdens. Especially since quotas as well as stock would need to be purchased, and most of the agricultural machinery was in need of replacement. The other option of course, was to break the farm up into two or three smallholdings, but whilst people were happy to suggest the idea, there were few who said they would take up the offer themselves.<sup>95</sup> Hence the study proposed that the farm should initially be run as a business under the Committee, at least for the short term anyway, with a farm manager responsible for its running, together with one part-time labourer. The financial projections were calculated from the 1996 Scottish Agricultural Handbook,<sup>96</sup> and from the extensive assistance of Collin Carr and Donald MacFadyen.

#### **(iv) Remaining Estate Management**

In enclosing the three projects within a development scenario, the remainder of the Estate management left a large amount of issues still open. In particular the private enterprises detailed in the Appendix such as the shops, B&B's, and assorted other potential businesses. Obviously the study proposed that all commercial tenants would be offered a full lease if immediately required, mediated by the independent surveyor and accountant. However, beyond the properties already occupied no proposals were made. This was because of the lack of both capital and skills (or perhaps more accurately confidence) on the island emphasised the need for the estate to provide training courses for the residents beforehand. A budget of £1,000 a year from the Estate was proposed, which could at least be doubled, most likely trebled, with grant assistance, especially if the training provided was related to small business management. The importance of this training could not be over-estimated since it would provide the confidence and knowledge of grants, services, and strategy that was vital for anyone intending to take on a commercial enterprise on the island. The Study also pointed out, that if people were struggling to find the necessary capital to

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<sup>94</sup> Appendix. A.7.2

<sup>95</sup> Crude estimations worked outcome the agricultural income from each of the small-holdings would be approximately £6,000

rebuild premises such as the Shop, then there was also the potential of limited partnerships and the assistance of the Committee in channelling funds that could not be accessed otherwise.

It was hoped that those already occupying commercial property would take the time to attend the training programs before any drastic decisions were taken. Above all it was believed that things should not be rushed into – and that everyone on the island was given a level playing field of information, skills, and time. The issue of phasing development projects, both Estate and private, also needed to be firmly recognised, for it was logical to ensure the maximum island benefit from all the employment generated by refurbishment and building. Indeed, if all three capital investment projects were launched in year one that would immediately halve the unemployment rate with the creation of 4 new full time and 3 new part time jobs. That left only 5 or so people remaining to actually work on the refurbishment of Estate properties, which with their selling or leasing would release substantial grants and grant-aid for their rebuilding, not to mention any other private developments or enterprises as well. Without appropriate scheduling it would be therefore impossible to achieve everything at once without importing labour on to the island. This is not to say that residents were hostile to any new arrivals, but especially in short term, it would be foolish to give away employment that the islanders had fought so hard to gain themselves.

All that is left to summarise is the Estate's other financial considerations which were the provision of funds for consultancy work and the costs of miscellaneous Estate issues. A total of £18,000 was allocated for the first year's legal and survey work, which then dropped down to £4,000 per annum for general auditing and legal work. This simply covered the Estate's direct accounts since each of the capital projects contained their own operating and accountancy provisions. The Estate also remained liable for all unoccupied properties which totalling around £4,600 was considerable but nevertheless manageable. The same was true of finally dealing with the refuse disposal on the island, and though no site for the landfill was proposed, its operating expenses were calculated at £2,000 per annum, which represented a minor

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<sup>96</sup> Scottish Agricultural College, The Scottish Agricultural Handbook 1996, SAC, Edinburgh. 1996

part time contract for a islander. As for the expenses of the two part time Estate staff, their wages were costed into the budgets of the three capital projects, with primarily the Millennium Forestry scheme contributing the most. Obviously an Estate Office would be a logical proposition, and could easily be accommodated in the Lodge – paying a rent to the hostel if necessary.

#### **(v) Consultation and eliciting support**

I had only provided the costing for a particular scenario of development. Admittedly, it had been generated from the workshop results and interviews, and constantly referred back to various islanders regarding particular points. However, the product was nevertheless my construction and needed due consideration, comments, and corrections by the IERA and Steering Committee. In late January 1996 draft copies were provided to each member of the Working Development Group, together with several copies being provided for circulation around the island. I also sent copies to Neil Wilcox at the SWT, and Michael Foxely the HRC Councillor. Feedback was quick and initially from all parties consisted of the corrections of minor errors and omissions. To my amazement, however, there were no significant criticisms of the basic structure of development. Certainly people had different viewpoints over the Lodge, and a few over the management structure (i.e. not having a factor) as was expected, but in terms of flat rejections or contradictions to any assertions within the document there was a remarkable absence. I had fully intended at the time to do another round of interviews and to exact a detailed review of people's feelings over the draft. However, by the middle of February 1996, time had swiftly become a valuable commodity, and I was soon put to work on drafting subsequent versions that updated the full involvement of the HC and the SWT in the potential buy-out. This very much emphasised how much my research had become fully integrated with the on-going situation, and rather than sacrifice its utility I was forced to drop the second round of interviews I had planned.

The main consideration that the Steering Committee did express was to have the Development Study approved by outside agencies. The Crofters' Trust Advisory Service (CTAS) was one such body that provided the ideal opportunity since it had recently been set up by the SOAFD to deal with the devolution of SO estates to

community trusts. Collin Carr, Leslie Riddoch, and myself met the Chairman and representatives on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, and essentially asked for the Study to be reviewed. Unfortunately, since the proposal was not a purely crofting issue, they were unable to directly assist with money. However, they did provide contacts with the consultants who had been previously employed by Assynt – and by channelling a grant from the Highland Fund it was possible for them to review the Study.

#### **4.6 Brokering a partnership**

As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, the partnership's eventual campaign success was very much related to the personalities involved and the genuine friendliness of the islanders. To visit Eigg means taking an often eventful boat ride from the mainland, staying the night with a family, and whatever your reason for going, getting to know people on the island directly. Of course the odd dram of whiskey would be involved, and soon you would feel very much at ease and at home. For the people representing HRC and SWT, not to mention the press and others involved with the island this was invariably an enjoyable exercise. It was also fundamental in facilitating the final partnership, for it encouraged all those involved to genuinely trust one another and feel confident in their undertakings.

The Unofficial Friends of Eigg was a prime example of how the relationships individuals had built up on the island boiled over into practical and applied action. By December of 1995 there had already developed a group of "Eigg friends" in Edinburgh determined to facilitate the potential partnership between the SWT, HRC, and the IERA. Robustly chaired by Leslie Riddoch, the group consisted of Alastair MacIntosh, Sir Maxwell MacLeod (the son of George MacLeod of Iona and journalist), Andy Wightman (land reform activist and author), Andrew Raven (Vice Chairman of JMT), Neil Wilcox (SWT), and myself. Originally it began in early December 1995 as a spontaneous grouping of island friends and interested associates, and throughout the 12 months or so of meetings it remained firmly informal. It did however, provide a neutral forum within which the examination and brokering of the future partnership could be fostered and encouraged. The group also provided advice, connections, and above all confidence to the individual partners concerned. This was achieved firstly through the vetting, debating, and redrafting of the Development



Study and secondly through lobbying the NHMF. As such it also provided a debating ground for the sounding of potential ideas and strategies, as well as the oiling out of any possible conflicts between the three partners.



*Fig 4.6: Maxwell MacLeod and Andy Wightman Talking with Collin Carr on Eigg Pier.<sup>97</sup>*

When the Development Study was first discussed in a meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> of January, Neil Wilcox was “amazed to see how the islanders had come on by leaps and bounds”.<sup>98</sup> Both Andrew and Andy were also pleased with the initial strategy, and together with Alastair were to assist in revising figures, approaches, and providing encouragement to SWT in pursuing the partnership. From then on each revision was vetted and contributed to by Neil as well as debated within the group. Similarly with Alastair, Leslie, and visiting islanders representing Eigg, various issues were thrashed out such as the notion of not having a factor in charge of the Estate. Neil was at first very sceptical of the idea, citing that all SWT reserves or estates had a manager or factor in charge. Yet Alastair and I described the situation at Assynt where no factor was employed, and where instead a committee and “helper” organised the estate’s management.<sup>99</sup> Like several other reservations, in the end Neil was convinced of the possible alternatives, and had the confidence to support the idea within SWT. The process worked both ways, as well, for another important issue that arose was the actual division of the Committee of Trustees. The residents had asserted their position of 51% controlling interest in any potential management structure, yet Neil (and Andrew) rightfully pointed out it could not be a true partnership if that was the

<sup>97</sup> Daniel Morgan.

<sup>98</sup> *The Unofficial Friends of Eigg Minutes*, 31<sup>st</sup> January 1996. IEA

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*

case. Also if the NHMF was the principle form of funding, then they would require a guarantee that the natural heritage would be protected. 51% community control would not satisfy that requirement. Intense discussions were resolved by the suggestion of equal representation, but with an independent chairman who had strong community interests, such as Bill Ritchie from the Assynt Crofters' Trust (who was also an SNH representative).<sup>100</sup> As with all meetings this was minuted back to Eigg for the Working Development Group to assess. Eventually a crofting lawyer who was a school friend of Alastair's, Simon Fraser was given the brief to work out a potential compromise, together with the exact legal structure needed to own and operate the island. The SWT and the IET divided the costs.<sup>101</sup>

In terms of the NHMF, the group very quickly began facilitating contacts with people on the board. Andrew had several Scottish contacts, and so did Leslie who one December evening found herself invited to a meal with a few other journalists and of all people, Lord Rothschild the NHMF Chairman. He had invited them to discuss how the Lottery could get a better reputation in the press, and much to everyone's astonishment asked what projects they thought the NHMF should support. There was a slightly bemused silence, before Leslie launched into a full Eigg promotion exercise. To her amazement Rothschild liked the idea enormously, and ended up giving his informal support to a partnership buy-out. Of course, Rothschild's approach to the press, and Leslie's apparent success in persuading him of Eigg's merits, epitomised how the "old -boy" network as such continued to operate. For it was only by fortune that Leslie had become involved with the campaign, and it was only through her connections that she had been able to lobby the head of the NHMF directly. Much like Schellenberg and his predecessors, it could easily be said that the Eigg Partnership were using an unfair advantage to pursue their own interests. Before any formal application had been made, it suddenly appeared there was already a green light from the top of the primary funding agency for support of their project. The irony of the situation was hardly lost on any of the participants, yet nevertheless there was little unease with the situation; for once it appeared as if processes of inside knowledge and advantage were going to provide the right results.

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<sup>100</sup> *ibid*; Unofficial Friends of Eigg Minutes, 21<sup>st</sup> January 1996. IEA

<sup>101</sup> Simon Fraser did the legal work for Assynt Crofters' Trust, and the proposed take over of crofting estates belonging to DAFS on Skye in the early 1990's.

Naturally, as the news of Leslie's encounter with Rothschild spread within the partnership, everyone was extremely enthused, and following his advice an initial NHMF application was swiftly filled out in order to get a case number registered, and a case officer to assist with the full application and business plan. This was done under the name of the IET, not because any formal decisions had yet been made, but because a charitable body was needed to lodge the application.<sup>102</sup>

The SWT were the first to officially commit themselves to a partnership buy-out with the IERA back in December, just after the Friend's first meeting. This was a relatively simple exercise since, as Neil remarked at the time "Like everyone else we had given up on achieving anything with Maruma, and after getting our fingers burnt with Schellenberg the SWT knew that a buy-out in conjunction with the community was the only real solution. What we hadn't realised, was just how prepared people were on the island".<sup>103</sup> An SWT directors' meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December gave permission to proceed with formal consultations.



*Fig 4.7: The First stage of application to the NHMF.<sup>104</sup>*

HRC on other hand were very much aware of what was happening on the island, but were much more limited with what they could officially do. Dr. Michael

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Wilcox, Neil. Conversation. 19<sup>th</sup> December 1995.

<sup>104</sup> Daniel Morgan

Foxley the Local Councillor since 1986, had retained strong contacts on the island, and since the previous attempt at a buy-out had been officiously been preparing the ground for the next opportunity. In 1994 he had begun a consultation exercise within Council departments and agencies to formulate a potential strategy for community purchase of the island. Within this he proposed the establishment of a common trust model to be applied to Eigg, and similar estates, when community purchase became an option. Essentially this would consist of 50% local residents, elected and rotated, with the other half being constituted by the main public and voluntary agencies wishing to be involved.<sup>105</sup> It was very much the structure the SWT and IERA were working towards in their discussions, with all parties understanding the need to fulfil NHMF criteria for charitable status, and guarantees to protect the natural heritage.

One problem facing the HRC in 1996, however, was both to delay and in fact allow formal preparation to go-ahead. This was the massive Scottish Local Government reorganisation and hand over to unitary authorities on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1996. For Council employees it was a nerve-wracking process of firing and re-hiring that obviously caused enormous upheaval, distraction, and delays within the council organisations. Indeed Michael Foxley even saw the boundary changes remove Eigg and the Small Isles from his constituency. Nevertheless, Charlie King the Councillor to replace him as the islands' representative was equally minded and keen to promote a potential partnership and buy-out on Eigg. Crucially the new centralised authorities were also to work under a quasi-parliamentary structure that consisted of powerful Select Committees responsible for formulating and vetting Highland Council (HC) policy. These had been set up before the official hand over to unitary authorities, and the new Land and Environment Select Committee chaired by Michael was to prove an essential vehicle for co-ordinating and promoting the HC's eventual support for the partnership. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February the Select Committee considered the Development Study and a request for assistance from the IERA. It proved to be a momentous meeting as the Committee agreed to help the islanders in promoting their partnership.<sup>106</sup> Within a month of investigations and visits by Councillors and officials the formal partnership proposal was put before the full Council and approved on the

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<sup>105</sup> Foxley, Michael. "1992 Highland Land Sales – The Lessons for Community Purchase of the Isle of Eigg 1994", Private correspondence. 21<sup>st</sup> July 1994. IEA

29<sup>th</sup> March. Before it had even officially taken over as a unitary authority, the new HC was now a committed member of the partnership and ready to back a £1 million appeal to purchase the island. The outspoken Councillor Christina Cunningham was quoted as saying they had to back the islanders: “It was a culture shock to me to visit Eigg. They should be able to enjoy the same rights as the rest of us, without a landlord treating them like scum. We should certainly not allow this in the Highlands and Islands”.<sup>107</sup>

With all three partners now in broad agreement, it was then a case of tying the various strands together into a sealed package ready for the island’s presumed eventual sale. By April, the consultants arranged by CTAS finally produced their report concerning the updated Development Study, which essentially stated that the plan was well balanced and provided a perfect point of departure for an NHMF application. It did however, need to be formalised and specifically tailored to the application procedure, a process that required further work and professional advice.<sup>108</sup> After due consideration by all partners it was agreed to let the consultants (Graeme Scott and Steve Westbrook) proceed with the work, providing that I was used to liaise and assist with the research and drafting.<sup>109</sup> For the residents this meant that they had the assurance that I would be involved in the drafting, and would provide a knowledgeable check to any external pressures and ideas. For the consultants I also provided a mechanism to thoroughly investigate residents opinions to particular revisions and ideas. This I did through constantly visiting the island and discussing issues with residents informally, and through regular formal briefings with the Steering Committee, whose meetings I often attended when on the island. The process was to continue throughout the next 7 months during which time the same essential projects proposed in the Development Study were incorporated into a business plan that exactly fulfilled the NHMF criteria for funding. This entailed a greater emphasis on protecting and providing access to the natural heritage, together with detailed proposals of partnership funding from other agencies. A specific requirement that was

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<sup>106</sup> Ross, John. “Council considers fund for buy-outs”, *The Scotsman*, 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 1996; Ross, David. “Council cash pledge on Eigg buy-out”, *The Herald*, 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 1996.

<sup>107</sup> Ross, John. “Eigg Appeal approved”, *The Scotsman*, 30<sup>th</sup> March 1996.

<sup>108</sup> Scott, Graeme. *Response to the Isle of Eigg Development Study*, 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1996. IEA

<sup>109</sup> Scott, Graeme. *Production of Isle of Eigg Business Plan*, 10<sup>th</sup> May, 1996. IEA

needed since the NHMF would only consider 80% funding of the purchase and start-up costs for the projects entailed.

Of course the remaining 20% of funding for the purchase and development of the island was to come from an orchestrated public campaign. This was sketched out when a formal meeting was held on Eigg between HC representatives and the Working Development Group in early May.<sup>110</sup> The campaign, which will be detailed in Chapter 5, was to be assisted by extensive HC support, and at the meeting the representatives were brimming with ideas, enthusiasm, and encouragement. Indeed, for the island representatives and those of us present, the meeting emphasised how much effort and weight the HC was planning to put behind the venture, as well as how much of a political risk they were taking. Several other plans were made such as finding a fundraising specialist, as well as securing European Leader funds and LEC grants for the final business plan and legal study. Whilst interest was also expressed over the actual longevity of Maruma's ownership, it was unanimously agreed to have the full partnership, business plan, and NHMF application prepared before any formal weight was put on him to sell.<sup>111</sup>

Even after four months of extensive work and preparations there was still absolute alarm when a helicopter was seen hovering around the island in early July with a photographer hanging out the side. Sure enough before the end of the month, the estate agents Knight Frank and Rutly, in conjunction with Vladdi Island Enterprises finally put the island on the market on July 25<sup>th</sup> 1996. The business plan and lottery application were still to be completed, and although the Steering Committee had negotiated this far in the partnership, they had yet to get a final and formal backing from the IERA. "Leading up to the Residents' Meeting", Maggie Fyffe confirmed "I had slight misgivings because we knew we had a few dissenters".<sup>112</sup> These were a small minority of indigenous islanders, and absentee crofters living on the mainland, who were still uncertain of the IET's plans and future;

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<sup>110</sup> Those present: John Hutchison (Area Manager HC), Dr Michael Foxley (Chair of Land & Environment Committee), Gavin Scott-Moncrief (Vice Chairman), Nick Reiter (Head of Policy), Dot Ferguson (Economic Development Manager), Margaret Paterson (Councillor), and Charlie King (Councillor).

<sup>111</sup> IERA Steering Committee Minutes of Meeting with Highland Council Members, 4<sup>th</sup> May, 1996.

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<sup>112</sup> Fyffe.

two of whom had declined from participating in the formation of the Development Study, and who had continued to oppose the idea of a buy-out from the very beginning.<sup>113</sup> At the IERA meeting that was called on the night of the island's announced sale, Karen Helliwell described the structure for the partnership that had finally been negotiated. A new trust body would be set up to own and manage the island, in which 4 of the directors would be elected from the island (on a rotational basis), 2 would be nominated by the SWT, and 2 from the HC. "This should give the Residents an equal representation" she affirmed, and in order to appease any worries it would also "ensure no particular clique on the island has an undue say in the running of the island". When a vote was finally called, it registered 21 for a partnership buy-out and 3 against: the motion was carried with an 86% majority.<sup>114</sup> The islanders were now members of a unique partnership between local residents, the SWT, and the HC, and they were now on course for a momentous campaign.



Fig 4.8: West Highland Free Press<sup>115</sup>

## 4.7 Conclusions

The eventual partnership struck to form the IEHT set a groundbreaking precedent in local politics and land ownership in Scotland. It represented the first time ever that these three groups of interest, often at conflict throughout the Highlands and Islands, had come together and formed a grass roots alliance to further the aims of

<sup>113</sup> this is discussed further in Chapter 5

<sup>114</sup> Turnout was just under 50% - which appears low, but must be understood as quite normal since usually only one member of each household attends the meetings.

sustainable development. All three partners wished to see a new course of development on the island, but one that integrated the wishes of the local community, the need for economic regeneration, and the necessities of protecting the national heritage. Since traditional forms of private ownership had quite spectacularly prevented this from happening, a new strategy had to be developed. One that still by definition was private, but was also democratic in structure and conducive to the wishes and restraints of the wider public in general. However many people later tried to interpret the IEHT model of proprietorship as a form of public ownership, it was not. It was a new and enlightened course for private ownership, and a possible answer to many of the problems three hundred years of private estate ownership in Scotland had created.

Of course Eigg had provided the fertile ground for the partnership because of its extreme situation and condition. Representing the worst that could happen under private ownership, the partnership had been engendered by the very lack of regulations and accountability that the Highland land market required. For the community in particular it brought notoriety and assistance from activists, NGO's, and supporters. People and organisations that warmed to the genuine nature of the islanders themselves, and who sought to promote the community's development and empowerment in the face of its disregard by owners and central government alike. These friends and facilitators were to provide the much-needed skills and training for island's residents, and in so doing enabled them to organise, plan, and promote their desire for the island's development.

The Development Study that was produced from the workshops, planning exercises and consultation was both a consensus-building document for the island community as well as crucial policy document in the brokering of the partnership. The central items for debate in the negotiations between the three partners principally covered the just the structure of the future Trust. There were only minor discussions and alterations over the course of development scenario envisaged. This is because the Development Study answered any fears that the external partners had about the residents' notions of development. Perhaps more importantly however, it also assured

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<sup>115</sup> 28<sup>th</sup> July 1996



the residents themselves that they had direct control over the future partnerships' decisions on the ground. It was their Development Study, their business plan, and the IERA Steering Committee was the body strictly in charge of its production and organisation. Though I had played a significant part in its research and drafting there was no doubt who was responsible for its final presentation; even within the partnership, it was the IERA who was directing physical realities of the Trust's development projects. It was the IERA who took the Development Study to CTAS for accreditation, and it was the IERA who organised the consultants to begin drafting the NHMF application. (Incidentally, it was also the IERA and IET who first paid for the consultants until money eventually appeared from other sources).

As such this control gave them significant bargaining power, especially over related issues such as whether or not to have a factor or island manager. Both SWT and HC would have much preferred the traditional structure of hierarchical management on the island. Yet this approach to estate management was part and parcel of what the community was reacting against. The Development Study therefore appeased their cautions, and demonstrated that a factor was not essential to proper management. Above all the IERA control over the Development Study and business plan gave them the firm and assured confidence to answer any criticisms within the press. A prime example being just days after the announcement on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July 1996, when unsurprisingly Schellenberg threw criticism into the ring. Seeing "nothing but disaster if the islanders prevailed", he declared their success "would only lead to more squabbling":

**"But Maggie Fyffe, secretary to the Isle of Eigg Trust, said the islanders were well placed to take over. A business plan aimed at revitalising the island's infrastructure and endorsed by a number of potential backers, had been carefully formulated over a year, she added: "The question of whether we can manage our own island is apt to make me a little angry considering we have already been doing that for years".<sup>116</sup>**

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<sup>116</sup> McCann, Annette. "Former Laird criticises Eigg buy-out plan", The Scotsman, 30<sup>th</sup> July, 1998.



*Fig 4.9: Press arrive for the launch of the Eigg Campaign.<sup>117</sup>*

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<sup>117</sup> Daniel Morgan.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Selling Eigg: The Campaign for Ownership**

## 5.1 Introduction

The most obvious and most often raised question regarding the Eigg Appeal is just how exactly did 64 Hebridean islanders raise £1.6 m in 8 months, the most successful public appeal in the Highlands and Islands to date? None of the islanders were professional fundraisers, few had any significant educational backgrounds, and the island they lived upon had only the scantiest of resources – which did not even include mains electricity. The Assynt Crofters appeal, which inspired so many, had over the same period only managed to raise £300,000, and that was with the support of two prominent Government Ministers.<sup>1</sup> The Eigg Appeal, however, was in a totally different league and looking at an asking price of some £2 m, with unfortunately a corresponding lack of such open Government support.

The first and foremost answer lies in the preceding chapters and the fact that the islanders were certainly not alone. The IERA had worked upon the short-comings of the IET's previous bid for ownership in 1992 and brokered a partnership with the HC and SWT. This not only gave credibility and coherence to their plans for managing the island, but also as this chapter details provided immediate support and expertise in launching the appeal. Secondly the islanders were hardly new to the game themselves. The past five years of public exposure had provided a significant foretaste of what the appeal would be like. As such Schellenberg, the IET, and Maruma had all provided a superb training program for the islanders' final and successful attempt at press relations and fundraising. Again as covered in preceding chapters, part and parcel of this process was obviously the gradual development of the islanders' own organisation of their community. Thirdly and most importantly in regards to the fundraising campaign, they had the weight of public opinion behind them. The plight of Eigg coalesced with a national political upheaval and a public mood swing that was to erupt in the success of the Labour Party in the 1997 General Election, and the trouncing of Tory representation in Scotland. Eigg became a symbol of the new confidence within the Highlands and Islands, and as an example of the traditional Scottish underdog their cause was adopted by the bastions of the Scottish Press. Both the Herald and Scotsman took the Eigg campaign to heart and assisted in the vigorous

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<sup>1</sup> Ross, David. "The Assynt Crofters". p.38

pursuit of the island story on a national level. Where once the islanders were simply the focus of the tabloids and the relatively minor West Highland Free Press – they were now supported by most of the national media. With only a few conservative papers holding out against the IEHT, the Eigg Appeal enjoyed an exceptional breadth of media support that spread far beyond Britain into Europe, Canada, and United States. Indeed the partnership's eventual victory even made the front page of the Sydney Herald, in Australia.

Finally many would also point out that the donation of £1m by a single mystery benefactor answers almost two thirds of the question of how the IEHT managed to raise such a significant sum. Yet as detailed below, this donation was very much created from the campaign's unique character, pitch, and enthusiasm. Dwelling too much upon this single principle donation also tends to negate the significance of the other £600,000 that was raised. Especially when that sum in itself seemed such an impossible figure to the islanders and their partners in the IEHT when the campaign was initially launched. This Chapter therefore seeks to explain how the combination of experience, enthusiasm, and planning were combined into a highly successful campaign. One that sought to sell the idea of community trust ownership to the public and the establishment. And one that succeeded in selling the islanders as rightful partners in the ownership and management of their own destinies.

Since I became centrally involved in the campaign itself, much of what is discussed was gained from first hand experience. Originally, this was not intended to be part of my research, but simply evolved from my original work on the island, and my own commitment to the success of the project. At the time it seemed the next logical step from my studies of the island, and my assistance with the community's management plans and the formation of the partnership. In the end it turned out to be the most invigorating and entertaining aspect of my research, and one that assisted in my understanding of the island and its people immeasurably.

## 5.2 Launching the Eigg Appeal

The escalating public exposure of the island and media coverage of Maruma's ownership obviously provided a sound base from which to launch the Eigg Appeal. Indeed, Maruma's outlandish mismanagement was so bad that even the Scottish Landowners Federation (SLF) came out in support of the partnership's bid for ownership. An absolute first in the SLF's history, they both named and criticised Maruma as a bad owner, as then asserted that "In Scotland's outlying areas community ownership can often be the best and most appropriate option".<sup>2</sup> Though highly indicative of the broad background of support for the IEHT's bid, however, the SLF's statement also injected distinct caution. Not only did they believe that the islanders would be unable to raise the necessary funds, but that "Even if they did get the asking price together, it is likely that the estate will lose money from year to year".<sup>3</sup> Very much echoing the criticisms associated with the previous attempt at purchase by the IET, this emphasised the two essential points that had to be hammered home throughout the Eigg Appeal. Firstly, that the IEHT had to demonstrate a profound belief and confidence in the realistic success of the fundraising campaign. And secondly, that the IEHT still had to justify the credibility of their potential ownership and their ability to manage the island successfully. Over the period of campaigning this was successfully achieved through careful and strategic co-ordination between the three partners. It was not however, accomplished in the manner initially envisaged.

Discussions and preliminary planning of the campaign began months before the actual announcement of the sale by Knight Frank & Rutly in July 1996. On May 4<sup>th</sup> the HC had its first formal meeting with the IERA Steering Committee and IET Trustees, at which a basic outline was prepared. Pivotal to this was the establishment of a central co-ordinator, or project officer, for running the campaign and liaising with funding bodies and the NHMF. All parties felt this a necessity especially considering that with three separate partners involved, problems could all too easily arise if there

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<sup>2</sup> Privately Duncan Thomas (legal advisor to the SLF) even went so far as to send the IEHT legal advice on the powers for compulsory purchase of the Secretary of State for Scotland over landlords who neglect their estates. IERA Steering Committee Minutes, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Thorpe, Nick and Burke, Gerard. "Eigg Appeal collects its first donation", The Scotsman, 27<sup>th</sup> July 1996.

was not one person in charge. Various possibilities for funding the post were suggested, and Nick Reider (Head of Policy for HC) agreed to assemble a task force of HC staff suitable for assisting the nominated co-ordinator.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, by the time of the sale's announcement, funding options for the co-ordinator were not so forthcoming as previously envisaged, and more worryingly disagreements had broken out between the partners as to who was exactly suitable for such a post. Indeed, the more one thought about it, the more difficult the assignment seemed to be.<sup>5</sup>

Essentially, the primary concern in choosing a project officer was in presenting the best image possible to the press and potential funding agencies. Certainly the wily bunch of maverick crofters appealed to the public and press, but the image hardly suited potential corporate sponsors nor the large grant-giving agencies that also needed to be approached. Consequently, the post holder would have to be of very high calibre, with notable fundraising experience and with an admirable list of contacts to boot. Conversely, they would also have to be down to earth enough to liaise with the islanders and deal with the more mundane aspects of the campaign. Not to mention having strong Scottish roots in order to sympathise with the '*Braveheart*' image so much of the press was using to cover the island story. In short though discussions were to continue for most of the 8 month campaign the post was never created nor filled, partially because of disagreements between the partners, but mostly because no one was able nor willing to fulfil the requirements of the job. Instead the campaign fell into being run just as the island would be run in the future, and that was by a partnership between the three organisations.

Through a *de facto* process, two to three people from each partnering group began to control the campaign within their own organisations, and jointly within the IEHT itself. These were:

HC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nick Reider</li> <li>• Gordon Fyfe</li> </ul>	General co-ordination, lobbying and liaising with grant-giving agencies.
		Publicity Officer and lead press relations co-ordinator for the appeal.

<sup>4</sup> IERA Steering Committee Minutes. 4<sup>th</sup> May 1996.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* 1<sup>st</sup> August 1996.

SWT	• Lorna Ede	Organising the preparation of supporting grant application material, and SWT input to the campaign.
	• Christine Thornton	Processing SWT correspondence, fundraising, and accounts.
	• Stan Blackley	Publicity Officer for SWT appeal to the British Wildlife Trusts, and additional press relations for the IEHT.
IERA	• Maggie Fyffe	Trust spokesperson, mail & accounts co-ordination, and general liaison.
	• Karen Helliwell	IERA spokesperson, mail & accounts, and liaison with agencies and fundraisers.
	• Colin Carr	Trust spokesperson and general liaison with Outside agencies.

These are only very crude approximations of peoples' roles within the campaign, and taken as such deny much of the interaction and shared responsibility that inevitably took place. This also of course, does not include the degree to which others were involved in management, especially the numerous members of staff in the HC and SWT who participated, together with islanders, friends and the other members of the IERA Steering Committee who were also involved.

As the debates over the project officer clearly exemplified, it would be misleading to say that any clear marketing strategy had been fully developed by the launch date of the Eigg Appeal. In fact, just like its management, the campaign's strategy was to have distinctly organic characteristics, evolving as circumstances, people, and time dictated. Nevertheless, from May 1996 onwards, discussions between the prospective IEHT partners had laid out the bare bones of a campaign strategy, and a meeting on August 2<sup>nd</sup> between the HC, SWT, and IERA Steering Committee was to firm these up into a basic plan. It was a meeting that was also to demonstrate the heartening enthusiasm and commitment of the HC in general. For not only did they bring along Bill Ritchie from the Assynt Crofters, who provided the only real experience of a similar campaign, but perhaps more importantly they also brought along much needed financial and organisational support. This included



seconded staff such as Nick Reider and Gordon Fyfe (HC Head of Publicity), as well as the promise of financial support for the initial launch and production of campaign material.

Considering the appeal's initial lack of funds and the uncertainty over a closing date for the sale, this support was more than needed. By early August, there had still been no mention of a closing date by Knight Frank & Rutley, and the uncertainty over how long the campaign would have to raise funds meant that the appeal needed to be launched as soon as possible. In terms of strategy Bill Ritchie discussed how Assynt had based their campaign on preventing the sale of their estate to anyone else. This had been done through various market spoiling activities, as well as by their threats of buying out all the crofts. Eigg was a different story, however, and did not have such a large percentage of crofting land on the island. Therefore it was generally assumed that despite the ample opportunities for market spoiling, the IEHT must simply focus on being in a position to make a fair market bid for the island. This meant both a detailed application to the NHMF, and a massive public appeal – both of which had to achieve at least £800,000 each. Very daunting and formidable totals, to be sure, but ones that were buoyed up by a strong enthusiasm, and above all by a common belief in the success of the lottery application. Most people felt that the application was very strong, and though a little behind schedule it would nevertheless be perfect for approval. This in turn gave the planning of the public appeal an added sparkle, simply because of the belief that it was not the first £800,000 being raised but it was the last £800,000.

By the end of their August 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting the IEHT had formed a core program and pitch to their publicity campaign, that was going to emphasise the potential strength of the Lottery application, as well as generate financial support from a public appeal. Essential to this was emphasising the element of public access and concern for the island that was now under potential threat from the unpredictable Scottish land market. Insecurity of tenure was the underlying motivator for the islanders and the partnership, and insecurity of tenure in a wider sense was to be the motivator for public concern. The success of the appeal did not just mean security for the islanders and the local economy, but security for island's wildlife, heritage, and culture as well. As such the Eigg campaign was to be sold very much as a symbol of what could

happen in the Highlands and Islands if the local people were just given enough support. Consequently, though it represented severe logistical problems in transportation and press coverage, the launch for campaign had to be made on Eigg. The island and the people were going to sell this story and the press had to be given a first hand opportunity to publicise them. A date at the end of August was provisionally set, the HC given the lead role, and a list of tasks was drawn up to be accomplished before the launch-day. A list that clearly revealed how much groundwork still had to be covered:

1. Name the interim directors of the Trust
2. Name the target amount and the account name for donations; until the new company has charitable status IET and SWT accounts will have to be used
3. The formal agreement and formation of the Legal Partnership.
4. Valuation of the island – HC district valuer
5. Finalising of the Development plan for NHMF – HC and LEC to make comments.
6. A professional guarantor to be recruited to underwrite the pledges.
7. Design and print leaflets; other supporting material; press packs; hats; T-shirts; bumper stickers.
8. Liase with the press
9. Spokesperson to be chosen
10. Phone lines to be set up
11. Likely questions and answers to be studied
12. Catering to be arranged
13. Boat charter with Shearwater to be agreed.
14. Select right day of the week – Monday or Tuesday to catch the local and national press.
15. Give at least two weeks notice of the launch
16. Time the appeal to coincide with release of the sales brochure.<sup>6</sup>

Gordon Fyfe and Nick Reider proved good choices for publicity and strategy within HC, and through constant contact with the IERA and SWT they swiftly produced the first appeal leaflet. Printed on recycled paper and very modest in its design, it provided a succinct summation of the campaign for ownership, together with a cut-out section for donating to the appeal. The bold outline of saving the island “once and for all from the vagaries of the landlord system”, was matched with an affirmation of how the IEHT would “protect and enhance the natural heritage of the

<sup>6</sup> IERA Steering Committee Minutes. 1<sup>st</sup> August 1996.

island and facilitate public access”. These claims being backed up by description of the partnership’s application to the NHMF, and reference to a management plan that included the “regeneration of the natural woodlands as part of a Millennium Forest Project”.<sup>7</sup> Combined with the 20,000 leaflets printed, were also campaign T-shirts and bumper stickers bearing the logo “lets crack it”. For the press launch itself, which was set for 27<sup>th</sup> of August, Gordon Fyfe prepared detailed press packs of information on the island, and combined with support from Stan Blackley, the SWT Publicity Officer, gave two weeks notice to all the press contacts possible. On the island, preparations for the launch included arranging transport to and around the island for the 50 or so expected press, and preparing the hall and more importantly Steering Committee members for the actual press conference itself.

Please use the form below, without delay. Together, we can write a new and visionary chapter in the history of the Isle of Eigg.

**I / WE WOULD LIKE TO HELP THE ISLE OF EIGG HERITAGE TRUST:**

By enclosing a cheque/Postal Order for  
 £10    £25    £50  
 £..... (please state amount)  
 or  
 By PLEDGING to send to the Trust as soon as I am / we are notified of a successful bid the sum of :  
 £.....

All cheques or postal orders should be made payable to The Isle of Eigg Trust (a registered charity no. 24157). Credit card donations can be given by phoning 0131 2263 242.

My/Our Name(s): .....

Address: .....

Postcode: .....

Please return to :  
**Margaret Fyffe, Trust Secretary,  
 Cuagach, Isle of Eigg PH42 4RL**

how you can help

**W**e and our partners are making an application to the National Lottery Heritage Memorial Fund. Whether or not that bid is successful, more money will be needed to purchase the island and to develop it sustainably.


So we are appealing for help from anyone who shares our vision for the island. A target of £800,000 has been set for the public appeal. And this sum is needed quickly. We must be ready to submit our bid to purchase the island in whatever timetable the current owner decides to set.

Of course major corporations and institutions will be approached for funding. But contributions - however small - from members of the public are just as important. Not only because every penny is needed; but also because it is the support of people from around Scotland, the U.K. and beyond which gives heart to this venture.

If you want to make a contribution straight away, you can send money (cheques or postal orders) made payable to "The Isle of Eigg Trust".

For larger sums, we would encourage you to make a pledge. We will only ask you for the sum you pledge if and when the community offer to buy the island is successful.

The name and address of everyone who contributes will be entered in the "Book of Eigg", a permanent record to be kept on the island for public inspection (unless you request not to be named). And all contributions and pledges will be acknowledged, together with a car sticker to help spread the message.



LAUNCH  
OF  
PUBLIC  
APPEAL

Fig 5.1: The HC designed appeal leaflet.<sup>8</sup>


<sup>7</sup> IEHT, Launch of Public Appeal, Isle of Eigg Archive, 27<sup>th</sup> August, 1996.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

### an opportunity too good to miss

**E**gg is a small Hebridean island 10 miles offshore, south of the Isle of Skye. It's 7,400 acres of heather moorland, wooded glens, fertile fields and spectacular heathes are dominated by the massive basalt ridge of An Sgurr. Geologically fascinating, it has a unique environment which supports many rare and threatened species of wildlife and an active and close knit community of 60 people. It sounds idyllic doesn't it?

Unfortunately, these very qualities have led to Egg being owned by a succession of absentee landlords, seduced by the image but with no real interest in the future of the island, its population, or its heritage. The island has changed hands for ever more inflated sums, often in secret, leaving residents to guess what the next unknown owner will do, never even knowing whether we will be able to stay in our homes or continue to make a livelihood. Under these circumstances, the island has become progressively run down with estate properties decaying, land unused and overrun with bracken and both the community and wildlife under threat.



Now the island is once more on the market, 15 months after the present owner bought and then ignored it. This time, however, we are ready. We are determined to ensure a viable long term future for the island and to remove it once and for all from the vagaries of the private landlord system.

### the isle of egg heritage trust

**T**o this end we have formed a partnership with the Scottish Wildlife Trust and The Highland Council and together we intend to realise the vision of an island community securing a viable future livelihood whilst sustaining its unique environmental and cultural heritage. This is much more than a bid for a community buy out. It will, we hope, be a symbol of how communities and conservation interests can work together with mutual benefit for the long term good of all.

Together we have drawn up an application for funding from the National Lottery Heritage Memorial Fund to protect and enhance the natural heritage of the island and facilitate public access to it. Our management plan for the island is undergoing its final revision and plans for regenerating the natural woodlands as part of the Millennium Forest Project are ready for submission.

To secure the long term future of Egg a new company is being formed which will own and manage the island on behalf of the partners. A huge amount has already been achieved but we now face the challenge of gaining control of the island's destiny against the financial muscle of anyone who fancies owning an island they may never even have seen.

**We need your help, urgently. Not sometime. Not soon. But now - today. This is THE opportunity to secure the future of the Isle of Egg; to build a sustainable future for the community and conserve the environment for the benefit of future generations. Please don't miss this chance; it might never happen again. This leaflet explains how you can help and by doing so become part of a better future for the new millennium.**

**The appeal funding will be raised through the Isle of Egg Trust, founded in 1991, which has charitable status. The new partnership body, which will own and run the island, will be called the Isle of Egg Heritage Trust. The first eight trustees have been nominated. They are:**

<b>Residents of Egg</b> Colin Carr John Curmack Margaret Fyffe Karen Helliwell	<b>Highland Councillors</b> Michael Foxley Charles King SWT David Hughes Hallett Aubrey Manning
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The Isle of Egg Heritage Trust's main objectives are to:

- ☒ Maintain and develop the Isle of Egg as an area of outstanding natural heritage quality;
- ☒ Promote opportunities for sustainable development without detriment to the natural and cultural heritage of the island;
- ☒ Relieve poverty and provide help for the aged, handicapped and infirm, and to advance education and other charitable purposes beneficial to the community;
- ☒ Advance education in and development of sustainable agriculture, woodland management, arts and crafts and other economic activities not in conflict with the above;
- ☒ Improve communications throughout the island;
- ☒ Conserve and protect wild areas in their natural splendour.

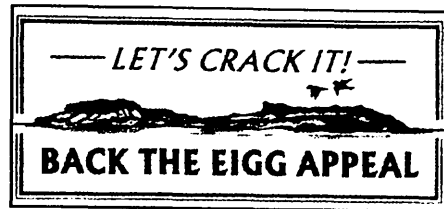
The night before the launch was very tense on the island partially because of worries over how the press conference would go, but mostly because residents had a fair idea of what they in for. "Over the years we had all experienced what the media could do", recalls Karen Helliwell:

**"We knew that once we opened everything up, the press would just not leave us alone. Constant attention was obviously what we needed for the appeal, but it also meant cameras, press, and questions for however long the campaign would last. And on island like Egg, that means feeling like you're in a goldfish bowl with the whole world looking at you – warts and all".<sup>9</sup>**

However, whilst a certain lull before storm was being felt on the island, in the Arisaig pub on the mainland the majority of the press were already happily swaying in support of the appeal. Most of them had journeyed from Inverness, Glasgow and Edinburgh, and were staying in Arisaig for the night enjoying familiar West Coast hospitality. Colin Carr, a formidable islander in any bar, was sent over to keep them entertained and briefed, and more importantly to make sure they were all on the chartered boat the next morning. It was certainly a jolly evening, and apart from a few

<sup>9</sup> Helliwell, Karen. Interview, 6<sup>th</sup> February 1998.

suffering souls at the back of the boat the next day, the majority of the press were in a jocular mood when they arrived. As David Ross (the Herald correspondent) commented on the day, this was because most of them viewed Eigg as a good story to cover. “The Eigg appeal is just perfect for us because it’s a positive story from the Highlands – which is just so rare – and it involves great people, and great place. What other stories involve a dram or two, a wee holiday, and some catching up with your friends ?”



*Fig 5.2: Campaign bumper sticker and logo*

The Eigg factor certainly played its part well for the launch day. A perfect Hebridean summer shone down upon the proceedings, and the island and residents were illuminated with a clear and pristine light. Their photogenic nature only bringing into sharper relief the obvious decay of the island’s infrastructure, and the massive pile of scrap iron that Maruma had asked to be collected, and then never paid to be removed. An island wag had labelled it with a notice “The Maruma Centre”, which the press enjoyed thoroughly. They also enjoyed the mixed collection of tractors, trailers, and assorted MOT-less vehicles that were used to give them a whistle-stop tour of the island. In each vehicle an islander or representative of the IEHT gave an account of the problems that Eigg faced and the reasons for public support in the appeal. After the island tour, the press were then taken to the community hall for a formal press conference with the IEHT trustees. Like the coverage the story was to receive that evening and the following day, this session reflected an immense support from the media in general. Despite the previous night’s fears, their questions were neither difficult nor misleading, and the IEHT came across as very knowledgeable and above all confident. The confidence was astutely pitched to dispel the only area of criticism explored, that being a general disbelief in the IEHT’s ability to raise the money.



*Fig 5.3: Press Conference of August 27<sup>th</sup> (from left to right: Karen Helliwell, Maggie Fyffe, John Chester, Colin Carr, John Cormack, Michael Foxley, Kenny Taylor, and Nick Reider).<sup>10</sup>*

### 5.3 Targeting the Appeal

Of course raising £800,000 in a public appeal takes more than simply a few drams in the Arisaig pub and a good day out for the press. It requires immense orchestration and specific targeting of market groups that would be interested in supporting and furthering the IEHT project. As already indicated, in an ideal world this would have been carefully choreographed long before the launch, but time and money had prevented much of this from taking place. Instead strategy began to be set in place for the various market segments as each became identified and considered. This took about a month or so of planning and implementation by the loosely structured campaign team, during which time 4 basic target groups emerged. Although these were to overlap in many ways, they nevertheless were to have their own particular pitch for supporting the appeal, and each were to be approached through their own appropriate methods.

### 5.3.1 National and International Public

This first and widest target group was principally the only one considered during the planning for the launch day. This was because all aspects of the appeal were utterly dependent upon media coverage in general, and as such all effort was put into gaining the widest possible publicity from the very start. As mentioned before, the islanders themselves were the central focus here, simply to take advantage of previous media coverage and to provide the public and media with an historical link and perspective to the campaign. Consequently, as the appeal leaflet exemplified, feudal land law and the practices of the highland land market were very much pitched as threatening the community and public access to the island. Within this general theme, the story of the Carr family was significantly covered as being an exemplar of how hard working, honest folk had been harshly treated by proprietors and the landownership system in general.

The media strategy naturally did not simply entail the launch, and both Gordon Fyfe and Stan Blackley took considerable effort to plan and slowly release information to the press in order to keep the Eigg story bubbling. Everything of any potential merit that would enhance the image of the campaign or add to the story was written up into a standardised press release and faxed to all news centres. This continued throughout the 8 months of the appeal, with subjects ranging from fundraising totals and sponsored events, to particular rebuttals and details of the IEHT's management plans. In many ways this was hardly needed because as the islanders feared the press interest in the campaign was unrelenting, especially in terms of the human angle with both Maggie Fyffe and Karen Helliwell being notably represented as secretaries of the IERA and IEHT respectively.

The national exposure of the campaign was also notably enhanced by sponsored events and charity auctions throughout the country. In the main these were organised by the many friends of Eigg, with music and the arts especially being a focus for fundraising. At least half a dozen benefit concerts and Celidhs were held throughout Scotland as well as Ireland, with one in Edinburgh being notably

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<sup>10</sup> Morgan, Daniel.

successful. This was organised by my partner Claire Bachellerie, who like myself had become subsumed within the fundraising drive. Named *Not the Landowners Ball*, the Edinburgh concert featured several renowned Scottish artists and groups such as Dick Gaughan, Michael Marra, Capercaillie, and Shooglenifty. All of whom like the venue, technicians, and staff generously donated their time and effort to the concert, which in the end raised some £4,000.

On the political front the campaign team had decided not to openly court such popular support. This was primarily because of advice from Bill Ritchie and Nick Reider who had both pointed out that it would be foolish to side with any one party, especially in the heated lead up to a general election. Consequently the appeal stridently asserted an apolitical stance whilst simultaneously giving behind scenes assistance to politicians and parties who tried to further support within the House. Indeed, Eigg was raised repeatedly in Parliament over the course of the appeal and as will be discussed further was subject to an Early Day Motion and the feature of an Adjournment Debate on the Land Reform. Not surprisingly whilst Brian Wilson MP at the West Highland Free Press was the most vociferous in individual support for the campaign, although it was the SNP who were the most adept at making political mileage from the Eigg story. They were also the most accurate and well briefed in their comments as well. In terms of the Government, no one in the campaign team felt there was any hope of positive comment. However, Michael Forsyth had already demonstrated himself to be rather a loose cannon, and in relation to the NHMF application, it was felt that any support at all from him would be beneficial. Consequently, it is more than ironic Michael Forsyth was the only politician actually received on the island by the IEHT during the course of the campaign.

Of course in true Eigg fashion this was not done through open channels, but by classic Hebridean initiative and cunning. Completely by chance Maggie Fyffe happened to telephone friends on Rhum and found out that he was making a secret over-night trip that evening to discuss issues with SNH staff. A few more calls and a fax was lying on his pillow when he went to bed, inviting him to breakfast the next morning on Eigg. To absolute surprise around 1 am his Personal Private Secretary telephoned Maggie to say that the Secretary of State would land at Kildonnan and would have around 15 minutes to meet island representatives. This was to be at 7.40



am. The occupants of Kildonnan, however, Marie and Collin Carr, were already asleep after returning from a Celidh, and did not hear the phone ringing to alert them of their early morning guest. But fortunately their 11 year old daughter did, who not only cleaned the kitchen, but also left a note on her parents bed-side table: "A man called Michael Forsyth is coming for breakfast at 7.40". To say they were slightly shocked when they awoke is an understatement, even more so when they bolted downstairs to find a spotless kitchen and a beaming child. In the end Forsyth stayed for over half an hour, and though more than amiable in conversation, he only gave the most moderate of supporting statements to the press. It was nevertheless a memorable occasion, and certainly a morale booster when his comments were covered quite positively in the Daily Telegraph. Peter Peacock the HC convener was quoted as saying: "The success of the residents in getting Mr Forsyth on to Eigg is commendable. It clearly demonstrates their determination to succeed in this bid to own the island".<sup>11</sup>

Whilst publicity was working well on a national level, in terms of expanding the appeal on an international basis significant effort was put in by Gordon Fyfe to encourage foreign correspondents on to the island. This achieved some notable successes in coverage, particularly from French and North American correspondents.<sup>12</sup> However, the intention of fundraising from expatriate Scots did not bring in any major donations. Instead it was therefore decided to elicit potential international support through more direct avenues such as the many international clan and Gaelic societies. This was done by contacting their Scottish bases and asking for coverage and advertisements of the appeal to be placed within their newsmagazines and circulars. As with all attempts at courting national coverage, these advertisements and appeal stories included information on the campaign's credit card hot line (run by SWT) and a newly established island web-site. A web-site that not only included detailed information about the island and appeal, but that also contained the first dedicated Internet donation system. This was provided by *Pipex-Dial*, an Internet

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<sup>11</sup> "Forsyth lends moral support to Eigg", The Daily Telegraph, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1996.

<sup>12</sup> Pogatchnik, Shawn. "Let the buyer beware", Hong Kong Standard, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1996; Pogatchnik, Shawn. "Tiny Scottish Isle on the Block, But millionaires should beware", San Francisco Chronicle, 29<sup>th</sup> August, 1996; Glauber, Bill. "Foggy future for sheltered isle", Baltimore Sun, 15<sup>th</sup> September, 1996.

service provider, who approached the IEHT soon after the campaign was launched and offered to set up and run the system for free.<sup>13</sup>

### 5.3.2 Highlands and Islands & friends and family of Eigg

Just before and after the campaign had been launched the only other specific attention paid to target groups was that of supporters from the neighbouring Highlands and Islands and friends and family of Eigg. As Bill Ritchie had pointed out in relation to the Assynt campaign, this immediate market segment had in fact proved to be their most profitable source of funds. They had set fundraising targets for each family to achieve, and through the slight competition this invoked remarkable funds had been accumulated. The exact method however, did not really appeal to the Steering Committee members at the time, and instead a more communal effort was decided upon. Several ideas were thrown around, and one of nominally selling square meters of the island was distinctly considered.<sup>14</sup> In the end, time and organisational constraints prevented this idea from taking off and instead all effort went into the distribution of the 20,000 leaflets that had been printed by the HC.

To begin with Nick Reider and Gordon Fyfe utilised the HC organisation to ensure that leaflets were placed in every HC building, office, and local service provider, such as libraries, information centres and so forth. In terms of the friends and family of Eigg, the IERA collected names and addresses from each island household. These were combined with every visitor that had left an address with B&B's on the island and in the old estate records, and compiled into a mailing database. After three weeks, just under a thousand names were gathered, and each was sent an HC leaflet, together with a letter from the IERA detailing a more personal appeal for support to the campaign. Again this focussed on the plight of the community and its democratic wishes to provide security of tenure to those at risk, as well as a long-term future for the island. The mailing costs were borne by funds from the old IET, which still had a few thousand pounds left in its account from the previous fundraising drive in 1995.

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<sup>13</sup> MacPhail, Neil. "Eigg surfs the Net in £800,000 appeal", *Daily Mail*, 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1996.

<sup>14</sup> *IERA Steering Committee Minutes*, Isle of Eigg Archive, 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1996

### 5.3.3 Conservation and wildlife supporters.

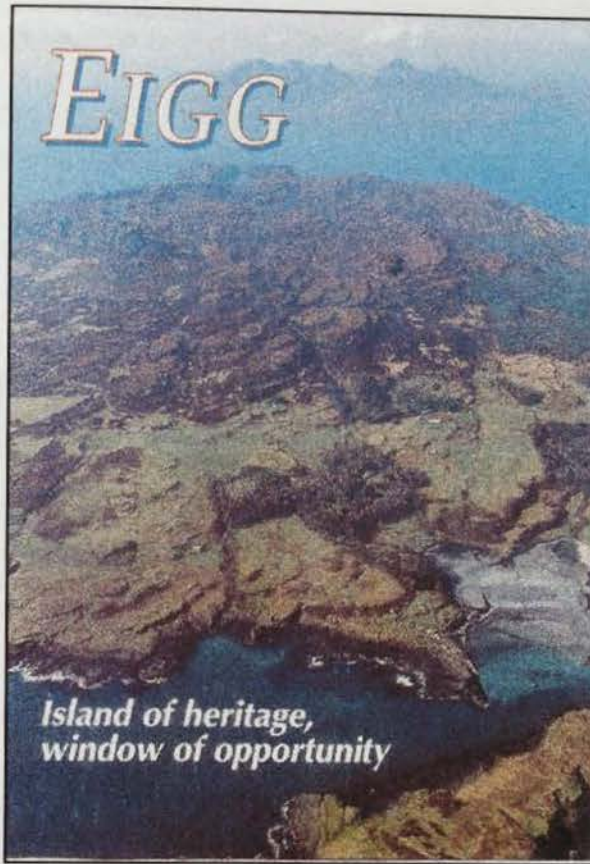
Whilst the HC and IERA members of the partnership were heavily occupied with organising the HC leaflets and mailing, the SWT began to focus upon the conservation and wildlife angle of the public appeal. All of the management team felt this had to be the potentially most profitable aspect of the campaign, especially considering that the SWT not only had its own membership to elicit support from, but had the potential for fundraising from all their affiliated 47 other wildlife trusts and 50 urban trusts around Britain. Of course, this required a very different tack in fundraising strategy, and instead of focussing upon the human aspects of the appeal, conservation support required a detailed pitch for the wildlife merits of the island. This was not particularly hard to do, since SWT had fifteen years of experience on the island, and the island itself boasted a significant diversity of habitats, with numerous endangered flora and fauna. As part of a unique partnership, the SWT also stood out as a conservation body that was prepared to work together with resident communities, rather than in opposition. And as such, they provided a unique alternative to the bastions of traditional conservation like the RSPB and NTS, who had over the years suffered several well-publicised altercations with rural communities in Scotland.<sup>15</sup>

Experience from previous appeals had engendered SWT staff with the necessities for carefully worked and attractive presentation of appeal literature. Consequently, though “The HC designed leaflet was great for the launch and the general public”, as Kenny Taylor SWT District Officer noted, “For the conservation side of the appeal, a much more slick and glossy approach was needed”.<sup>16</sup> The new leaflet then clearly had to be in colour, and a few dramatic aerial photographs of the island provided much of the of the leaflet’s backdrop. These were combined with shots of a Golden Eagle, an orchid, and members of the partnership on the back cover; all of which, were integrated with a copy that emphasised the island’s rich

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<sup>15</sup> The prime example with respect to the RSPB was its handling of local families on the Isle of Martin; also for other contemporary examples see Wightman, Andy. “Do we want Scotland’s finest landscape controlled by a benign dictatorship?”, *Scotland on Sunday*, Feb 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1997.

biodiversity and natural heritage. Following on from the overriding appeal strategy, the island's "storehouse of natural variety" was underlined with the perceived threats of the Highland land market. This meant that donating to the appeal would work towards protecting the island's 480 species of flowering plants and 186 species of birds.



*Fig 5.4: SWT Leaflet.<sup>17</sup>*

It also meant however, protecting the community as well. For as Kenny Taylor acknowledged, "though we wished to sell the wildlife as cause enough for the island's purchase, we had a greater opportunity for emphasising the project as something dramatically new and different in conservation ownership and management. In short the wildlife was there because of generations of low-impact farming, and the wildlife was as dependent on the community, as the community was on the security of tenure".<sup>18</sup> Therefore, whilst the appeal leaflet had all the trademarks of a typical conservation appeal, it also detailed the problems induced by the historical "exclusion

<sup>16</sup> Taylor, Kenny. Conversation, 30<sup>th</sup> September 1996

<sup>17</sup> SWT, *Eigg: Island of heritage: Window of opportunity*, 5<sup>th</sup> November, 1996. IEA

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

of the community from forward planning". The appeal for funds, therefore, directly played on the potential for the partnership to "rescue the island" from the dangers of another inappropriate owner, and to build upon the existing understanding of wildlife in the island community and the SWT:

**"Never before in Britain has there been such an alliance. It has a fertile local seedbed. For to the Isle of Eigg community, wildlife and wider heritage is not a quaint add-on, to take or leave. It is part of the very fabric of life and part of the islander's hope for the new millennium. But to realise this vision, people from the Eigg community, the Highland Council and the Scottish Wildlife Trust must gain control of the island's destiny".<sup>19</sup>**

**A storehouse of natural variety**

One of the islands of the Inner Hebrides, near the Scottish Highland coastland, Eigg has a variety and abundance of wildlife-rich places more than to match elsewhere. From a kelp within an outer territory, through its many meadows, pine (Silver Birch) forested burnwoods, insect heathery moors, bog with marshes to crags where eagles ride the updrafts – that is just one of the journeys which could be made on Eigg in a single morning. Part of that richness stems from generations of low-impact human use of the island's natural resources. It could be threatened if that pattern was broken.

**Rare delights . . .**

Set within a National Scenic Area, with three Sites of Special Scientific Interest, three Scottish Wildlife Trust Reserves and a listing in the Geological Conservation Review, the exceptional natural qualities of Eigg are widely recognised.

Among its abundant seabirds, eagles, divers, seals, alpine flowers and ground hermits are some of its resident stars. An island race of large-tailed fieldmouse – a living link to Viking occupation – and a hardness of moose, hares and leopards on a pot with temperate rainforest are some of its other gems.

**Everyday splendours**

For a small place, only eight kilometres long by five and a half wide in its broadest spread, Eigg is big on wildlife. Close to five hundred species of flowering plants and two hundred kinds of birds (including more than twenty forest birds) have been recorded, plus many insects, butterflies, dragonflies and water tiny creatures. From orchids to the cranberries in black gullies in the coasts and white shales of Eigg, Eigg has beautiful biodiversity – being proof that small can be very, very beautiful.

**Saints, Vikings, clansfolk and crofters**

People have lived on Eigg for thousands of years. The legacy of this occupation is rich indeed. Ancient workings and forts, heath brambles, antler hinds and ornate stone huts are some of its artifacts. Murals and memories colour its cultural history. An expanding tradition of Gaelic music, song, music and song is an important element of its current flowering. So too are the island landscapes whose valleys, heathery and wildlife habitats have been loved by generations of crofters and farmers.

Under recent owners, exclusion of the community from forward planning has put all this at risk. But it need not be like that in the future.

*Schola cross shaft at Kilnness*

**Hard rock and singing sands**

The largest phacopid ridge in Britain – the outcrop of an extinct volcano – filled over various tree remains; fossil columns and geometric rock shapes in real Fairy's Cave and the Giant's Cavernary; fossil sea creatures such as plesiosaurs from the time of the dinosaurs; white sands which sing underfoot. These are all part of Eigg's geological story. It will surely continue to give inspiration, being background pattern to spectacular other views and providing a rare foundation to boost understanding of the planet's evolution.

Fig 5.5: Inner spread of the SWT leaflet.<sup>20</sup>

As Neil Wilcox, reserves Manager at SWT also described, "The involvement of the community in the partnership buyout gave us a moral backbone to the appeal". The protection of wildlife was obviously the SWT's main concern on the island, but with the inclusion of the community they had yet further justification in asking for public

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

support. "It was not just some reserve that was being bought or leased, it was a whole cultural package as well, and SWT were desperate to make it work because it was just so groundbreaking and new".<sup>21</sup>

Once draft copies of the leaflets had been vetted and produced, in mid October the SWT contacted all the associated wildlife and urban trusts, asking for support and assistance in the IEHT appeal. Apart from a few exceptions and queries, this elicited a very positive response, and within a few weeks the Eigg appeal became the first national project to be supported by all the independent trusts together. As such it was also to be the largest appeal run by the SWT with over 200,000 leaflets and letters produced to cover all the members of the national wildlife trusts.<sup>22</sup> Extra staff such as Christine Thornton were hired to administer the appeal, and almost everyone within Cramond House (SWT headquarters) were rapidly involved in the campaign. Utilising the structure of the independent trusts, leaflets were mailed out directly by SWT to their own members, and packages of leaflets were then also sent to the individual



trusts around the country to distribute themselves. All mailing costs being covered by the income already generated from the existing campaign funds. The winter issue of Natural World, the Wildlife Trusts magazine, also made a feature of the Eigg Appeal. Notably this used all the tricks of conservationist marketing, and made particular use of what is called in the trade charismatic megafauna; that is the large and dramatic animals that appeal to the public the most. Hence there were particularly attractive photographs of Golden Eagles, Corncrakes, and Red Throated Divers and a distinctly sweet

<sup>21</sup> Wilcox, Neil. Conversation, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1997

<sup>22</sup> "Wildlife trust extend Eigg appeal", West Highland Free Press, 8<sup>th</sup> November, 1996.

*Fig 5.6: The otter photo from the Natural World.*<sup>23</sup> picture of an otter. Kenny Taylor again combined this overtly wildlife appeal with a script that accentuated the island's cultural heritage, and the importance of the IEHT partnership in fostering a new and integrated approach to conservation management.<sup>24</sup>

#### 5.3.4 Private donations and grant giving trusts

Whilst the potential revenue from the conservation side of the campaign was felt to be the most lucrative side of the public appeal, there was also notable interest in finding support from wealthy private individuals, businesses, and grant giving trusts. Indeed, this had been one of the main motivations for employing a professional fundraiser or project administrator; someone who would already have knowledge of potential donors and grant aiding bodies and who would ensure that the most appropriate image of the IEHT was put forward. However, as debates over whom would be the most appropriate candidate for the post continued over the course of the campaign, anxiety soon began to initiate action being taken by the appeal co-ordinators themselves.

First and foremost in consideration was the fact that if there was not going to be a smooth-talking fundraiser presenting the project to potential donors, then the presentation was very much dependent on the image of the partnership and islanders themselves. This meant, therefore, that the maverick side of the islanders' characters had to be curtailed, and the more acceptable side of the IEHT needed to be emphasised through the respective roles of the HC and SWT. Nick Reider took particular pains to accentuate to the IERA Steering Committee the necessities of toning down the drinking and partying on the island.<sup>25</sup> This was not because the Eigg islanders were any different to other communities in the Highlands and Islands, but that with the degree of press exposure, bad publicity and stereotypes could all too easily destroy the IEHT's credibility. In the same line of ensuring the right image, David Hughes Hallett (the SWT Chair) was chosen to be the most prominent figure in approaching and liaising with potential corporate and grant-giving bodies. As

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Taylor, Kenny. "Saving Eigg – Let's crack it!", *Natural World*, Winter, 1996. pp.14-17

<sup>25</sup> *IERA Steering Committee Minutes*. 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1996.

discussed later, he also played the central role in the IEHT's negotiations with the NHMF.

In terms of actually establishing contacts with wealthy donors and charities, this was done through brainstorming, personal contacts, and the SCVO database of grant-giving charities. The latter being clearly the most useful resource imaginable for identifying the many small and unknown charitable bodies who would be interested in supporting the IEHT. Each body that had any possibility of donating funds was identified and individually written to, with leaflets and supporting material included where necessary. With regards to individual private donors, this proved to be considerably harder – not so much in terms of identifying particular people – but in trying to actually make contact with them. Several came easily like Sir Paul McCartney and Phil Collins because they already owned property in the Highlands and Islands, and their addresses were held by the HC. Others however, had to be tracked down through more cunning means such as contacting various entertainment agents and managing to convince them to supply addresses. Press coverage of the appeal to wealthy donors also assisted, and Gordon Fyfe again made this into yet another press release to keep the Eigg story continuing in the press.<sup>26</sup>

#### **5.4 Reactions to the Appeal**

It is all too easy to paint a rosy picture of eager press coverage, especially when one is researching or focussed upon a single story. A certain myopia can readily prevent you from comprehending the actual context and proportion of coverage. Nevertheless, without doubt the large amount of coverage safely attests that the press had a definite affection for the Eigg story, and the Scottish media in general made a point of supporting the IEHT appeal. This was not just because journalists simply enjoyed their visits to the island, but that Eigg was very easily adopted as a symbol for the strong Scottish resurgence in culture and politics that was prefiguring the 1997 general election. In particular the Eigg saga of the preceding 20 years exemplified the problems associated with Scottish rural policy and landownership, and notably

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<sup>26</sup> Illingworth, Lynne. "Rich are targeted by Eigg residents", *Press and Journal*, 18<sup>th</sup> November 1996.



highlighted all that was wrong with the Conservative presumption of the voluntary principle. This combined with the island's historical significance and the strong and idiosyncratic character of the Eigg residents made the campaign story all the more appealing. Of course the strength of a symbol lies in its semi-translucent nature, and the fact that the same features and qualities can mean different things to different people. Consequently whilst the SNP, Brian Wilson MP, and the majority of the Scottish press took the Eigg campaign as being a positive symbol of the new confidence in rural Scotland, for others the campaign and Eigg itself symbolised a much more sinister situation. The initial positive wash of press exposure was to be followed by a very definite right wing backlash.

Unsurprisingly Keith Schellenberg made the first negative comments about the public appeal. Labelling the islanders as “just a bunch of chancers and communists”, he lambasted: “I could not think of a less worthy cause. Asking for money to buy the island will be like an extension of social security”.<sup>27</sup> This was a point that was equally made by Alan Clark in his prestigious News of World column, who questioned why the islanders should get “a fat cheque to acquire their freehold”.<sup>28</sup> Though both having history of absentee landownership in Scotland, Clark and Schellenberg each profoundly questioned the suitability of the residents in owning the island, and particularly laid into the fact that many of the islanders were not ‘native’. Clark, “Britain’s wittiest and grittiest columnist” pointed out that none of the “complainants had a Scottish accent. In fact they looked, and sounded like a bunch of refugees from the Socialist Workers Party in Walsall”.<sup>29</sup> Schellenberg of course went one stage further and declared that “I brought those people there and none of them is a true Hebridean. They are squashing the true Hebridean out like the grey squirrel is getting rid of the native red”.<sup>30</sup> It was an analogy that neatly forgot that unlike red and grey squirrels, the newcomers to Eigg had over successive decades successfully bred with indigenous folk.

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<sup>27</sup> English, Shirley. “Old laird lays into “chancers” in £2m chicken or Eigg row”, The Times, 29<sup>th</sup> August 1996.

<sup>28</sup> Clark, Alan. “Eigg on their faces”, News of the World, 8<sup>th</sup> September, 1996

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> English, Shirley.

The IEHT responded to these accusations with basic rebuttals, and asserted that “Schellenberg is totally irrelevant. He is part of the unhappy past, and we are not looking at the past, we are looking at the future”.<sup>31</sup> Considering that neither Schellenberg nor Clark made any mention of the other partners in the IEHT, Nick Reider also made a point of saying “Is he [Schellenberg] suggesting that Highland Council and the Scottish Wildlife Trust are chancers as well?”<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, the initial questions about incomers and “true Hebrideans” began to plague press coverage, and journalists who were looking for the flip side of the happy island story began to dig a little deeper. The *Times* correspondent Allan Brown took a notably critical line and followed on from the “chancers” comments to paint a portrait of “indulgent dropouts, crazed on bathtub gin, and jazz cigarettes”.<sup>33</sup> Picking up on the incomer element as taking over the island with an “unrepentant hedonist hippyism”, he concluded, “Eigg’s problems, in reality, lie with its people”. This he backed up with one of the three islanders who voted against the community buy-out:

**“Katie Mckinnon, 78, is a life-long resident of the island and argues it is now overrun by ideological bullies: ‘I wouldn’t mind community ownership but not the community that is here at the moment’, she says. “The original islanders didn’t want to sit on the dole so they left, unlike the present lot. Now the incomers are starting to interfere with the original islanders. One proper islander wanted to site a few caravans on his own land but the incomers organised a petition.**

**Reporters come here but they only hear the side of the incomers, who try to stop the originals from getting their say. They claim there are only three dissenters, but it’s more like ten and that doesn’t include their offspring who no longer live here”.<sup>34</sup>**

It would be convenient to say that the incomer criticisms just came from people like Schellenberg or Clark, with a particular axe to grind, and were simply utilising a language and argument of convenience. However, as Katie’s comments belie the situation was far more complex. To begin with her remarks over the “one proper islander” were generated from an individual who was making the most of out the archetypal divide for personal reasons. Ian Campbell, the islander in question had recently fallen into dispute over plans for a caravan park in Cleadale. Several

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<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Brown, Allan. “Siren Song”, *The Sunday Times Ecosse*, 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1996.

neighbouring crofters and residents had made objections to his planning application because they felt the substantial development was both inappropriate and threatening to the water supply for surrounding houses. Unfortunately, with planning permission being turned down, Ian Campbell took the objections as a personal affront and developed a notable resentment to those who had opposed his plans. Only one of the protesting families was actually comprised of incomers, but this nonetheless provided a language and focus for his resentment which was only fuelled by resident crofters criticising his 20 years of absentee crofting. In reality it was a relatively minor dispute, but with such large issues at stake during the campaign and a hungry press eager to pounce, the bickering became overblown and coloured by unrelated issues.

Katie's criticisms of the modern day community, however, derived from much deeper anxieties over the changes in social mores and behaviour she had witnessed over the course of her life on Eigg. Like any elderly person she looked back in fondness to days gone by, and on Eigg that meant the halcyon days of the benevolent Runcimans, when every croft was worked, every household attended church and not a dram was allowed inside the Celidh Hall. Those who left the island were also generally seen as going off to better themselves, and there was a natural suspicion of laziness towards anyone who stayed on the island, especially if they did not have a steady estate job. This was a far cry from the Eigg of the 1990's, and understandably she was critical of the modern generation both islander and incomer alike.<sup>35</sup> Conversely she had also signed the open letter of support for the non-indigenous islanders not two years previously, become an Isle of Eigg Trustee in 1994, and like her husband had openly welcomed the newcomers in the 1970's before that. The fact that she combined all of this into an incomer vs. islander divide simply highlighted how easily complex situations can be reduced into black and white, especially when one is being secretly recorded by a journalist looking for a sensational angle.<sup>36</sup>

With regards to her remarks over the level of dissension on the island, these were certainly exaggerated simply because all the full-time residents who did oppose

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<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Conversation with Katie and Dugold McKinnon 10<sup>th</sup> October 1996. (Neither wished to be directly quoted regarding the 'incomer debate').

the partnership and buy-out voted against the motion at the IERA meeting in August. As Donald McKinnon, one of the three, declared this was because they preferred “to see a landlord take over, a landlord who would not treat the island as a toy but return it to what it was”.<sup>37</sup> However, as Katie emphasised, there were several islanders now resident on the mainland who did oppose the IEHT, and certainly did not agree with the IERA’s definition of full-time resident.<sup>38</sup> Of these Ian Campbell was by far the most vociferous, and made the most of the incomer label to discredit the democratic process. Indeed, his opposition to the IEHT quickly extended to letters to Maruma asking him not to sell the island to the partnership, to courting the press with stories of an island split, and to establishing a group called the “Hebridean People of Eigg”.<sup>39</sup> This incensed Duncan Ferguson, himself an indigenous islander, who like Ian had also been forced to move to the mainland some 20 years previously, but who also supported the IEHT. Writing a letter to the West Highland Free Press he declared, “I deplore the term *incomers*, it is an insult to the many people who have chosen to make their lives on many a Scottish island, and offer a valuable contribution to the continuity of island communities”.<sup>40</sup> Similarly the Helliwell family who Ian Campbell had particularly focussed upon due to their objections to his planning application wrote their own letter to the Sunday Times, making two fundamental points: “Firstly, the community has from the outset sought to do nothing without the majority view. Secondly, to make the distinction between ‘incomers’ and ‘Hebridean persons’ is dangerously close to being racist”.<sup>41</sup> Ian’s replies to both letters ensured a minor debate continued in the press, and above all heightened tensions on the island itself.

“We had decided the Trust [IEHT] should not get involved in the incomer debate”, recalls Maggie Fyffe, “simply because if it did, it would give the incomer

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<sup>36</sup> Both Katie and Dougal assured me that Brown did not tape-record their interview. Whether this was the case or not, he did surreptitiously record me, and reported an “off the record” conversation that I had with him, *verbatim*.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>38</sup> The IERA definition of ordinarily resident at the time of voting was “anyone living on the island for more than six months for two consecutive years”; exceptions being made for any returning islander, where only one period of six months validated their voting rights.

<sup>39</sup> Swanson, Brian. “The Eigg dream is cracking up”, Daily Express, 5<sup>th</sup> September, 1996. pp.20-21

<sup>40</sup> Ferguson, Duncan. “Eigg: One ‘True’ local who is right behind the Buyout”, West Highland Free Press, 18<sup>th</sup> October 1996.

<sup>41</sup> Helliwell, Simon and Karen. “Dangerous distinction between Hebrideans and Incomers”, Sunday Times, 21<sup>st</sup> October 1996.

criticisms credibility. But then on the other hand Ian, Schellenberg, and the rest were making things really uncomfortable on the island, and we all knew that something had to be done to try and alleviate the tension”.<sup>42</sup> This was certainly true, not so much because of Ian’s personal campaign *per se*, but combined with the community’s continuing exposure to the press and lack of any certainty in the future, it was all becoming distinctly overwhelming. As Marie Carr remarked at the time, “Everything is happening on paper, on the news, and in countless meetings, but nothing has happened on the ground for years. We have been waiting for some form of security for almost three years now, and things just seem to be getting worse and worse”.<sup>43</sup> There was also criticism of the Steering Committee slowly brewing in the background of being too secretive and withholding information from the rest of the island. Mostly this was generated by the IEHT’s desire to keep a tight reign on publicity and control of what information was passed on to the press at what time. Both Gordon Fyfe and Nick Reider had instilled a necessary caution within the Steering Committee to be more than careful in their statements to press, and to avoid any unnecessary leaks. However, the caution had the appearance of unneeded secrecy, and was also combined with a feeling amongst islanders that the Steering Committee was taking on more than they could actually handle. In particular, concern was expressed over the two key women involved Maggie Fyffe and Karen Helliwell. “Anyone who knew Maggie of old”, remembers Camille, “knew she was overdoing herself at the time, and like Karen beginning to crack under strain of trying to do everything at once and on her own”.<sup>44</sup>

It was decided that the consequent solution to these developing problems was to ask HIF to come in once more and conduct a new series of workshops to tackle the incomer issues, the management of the campaign, and the IEHT itself. Organised by Isabel Holden, HIF Convener, the workshops were specifically targeted at giving those who were sceptical and cautious of the IEHT a forum to not only air their grievances, but to work towards possible solutions. The actual format was to be the same as the previous HIF workshops, which everyone felt to be successful and above all conducive to those nervous about talking in large groups. Ian Campbell, Katie

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<sup>42</sup> Fyffe, Maggie. Interview. 8<sup>th</sup> February, 1998.

<sup>43</sup> Carr, Marie. Conversation. 20<sup>th</sup> September 1996

<sup>44</sup> Dressler, Camille. Interview. 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1998.

McKinnon, and the few others who had expressed their problems were invited by Isabel, first by letter, then phone, and finally with a house call to those resident on the island. Overtly she made clear that the workshops were to be chaired by independent HIF personnel, and that they would be entirely open in structure to allow the maximum input from those who were uncomfortable with the IEHT. Unfortunately, however, none of the disaffected appeared at the workshops on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, and despite being asked again the next day, none appeared on the 24<sup>th</sup> either. For most people this answered any real doubts they had about the incomer debate in the press, and as Marie Carr said over the weekend, “I think it’s pretty clear how constructive their comments really are when they can’t even turn up to talk about them”.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, though disappointing for the HIF facilitators, the offer of an open hand had been made, and in front of the whole community – incomer and islander alike – it had been flatly turned down.

Nonetheless, the workshops were far from a failure, since significant discussions were held over the role of the Steering Committee and its relationship to the residents. Those who had problems with the secrecy of the campaign management aired their views, and avenues were explored of exactly how to alleviate the tensions this provoked. One important issue was that of managing the enormous amount of mail that was appearing at Maggie’s door each ferry day. Up to then Maggie, her daughter, John Cormack and Karen had been the only ones to sort through the pledges and donations. During which time they had gained significant support and feedback from the letters and notes of encouragement that often accompanied the donations. However, the sheer scale of the mail and campaign had prevented both Maggie and Karen from passing on this feedback and really being able to talk to people about how the fundraising was going. The solution therefore, very much depended on devolving down the workload of the mail sorting, together with setting up minor steering groups to tackle different aspects of the campaign that Maggie, Karen, and the rest of the Steering Committee did not have time to organise themselves.<sup>46</sup> “The workshops were very useful and allayed peoples worries a lot”, remarked Sue Kirk, “and when you think about the amount mail that had to be dealt with over the next few months they

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<sup>45</sup> Carr, Marie. Conversation. 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1996

<sup>46</sup> Eigg Workshop Results, Highlands and Islands Forum, September. 1996. IEA

were an absolute necessity. There was no way it could have been managed the way it had been. We all had to work together".<sup>47</sup>

Whilst there still remained a certain scepticism about exactly how necessary the secrecy over press relations really was, the devolution of the mail sorting was crucial in dispersing the feedback from the public around the island. Mail would arrive on the ferry and be carted over to Maggie's where a variety of people would then sort the donations and pledges into different piles of value and origin. These would then be distributed to half a dozen people around the island who would then record and list the donations and pledges into an order that could then be passed on to those compiling the computer database. Thank you letters would then be organised for the donors who wished acknowledgement, and donors who gave over £250 were also sent a Gift Aid form, to fill out for charitable tax relief. In all, over 20 islanders became involved in the processing of the mail, and stories would swiftly circulate around the island regarding different notes of encouragement or support, and any notably large donation that was received that day. It was above all an enthusing and exciting feeling to be part of mail sorting, and even those who did not have time to take part would put their head around Maggie's door just to see how the daily total was doing. Indeed, even the ever-present press were often seconded into the processing, and there is many a journalist who has tales of opening campaign mail in Cleadale.

The large influx of mail was more than reassuring considering that in mid October Knight Frank and Rutly had finally decided on a closing date for the island's sale – the 28<sup>th</sup> of November. This severely limited the time funds necessary to raise the targeted funds.<sup>48</sup> Especially when the total raised by the end October was just £75,000 in donations and pledges; a significant sum in itself, but nonetheless certainly well short of the £500,000 probably needed, and definitely far from the £800,000 target originally set for the public appeal. However, the £75,000 did not include the SWT leaflets and other Wildlife Trusts donations, which began to arrive from first week of November onwards. And when they did arrive they absolutely poured in, with the last two and half weeks of November showing just over £200,000 arriving in

<sup>47</sup> Kirk, Sue. Interview. 7<sup>th</sup> February, 1998.

<sup>48</sup> Helliwell, Karen. Interview. 6<sup>th</sup> February, 1998.

pledges and donations. The last week before the deadline, an average of £30,000 a day was being processed on Maggie's kitchen table, making the combined total just before the November 28<sup>th</sup> deadline around £270,000. (Of which £130,000 was in cash and a further £140,000 was in pledges.)<sup>49</sup> As many commentators were to point out this was still somewhat short, even if the NHMF were to support the project. Yet nevertheless the IEHT spokespersons remained confident, and emphasised that the appeal would remain open until the very end.

The confidence expressed by IEHT spokespersons was not simply bravado and high hopes. Indeed, events early on in the campaign had injected a profound conviction of success when a solicitor telephoned Maggie in the beginning of August expressing the wishes of an anonymous client to donate a large sum of money to the appeal. The benefactor had not been contacted directly by campaign organisers, and neither had they been attracted through the drive to recruit sponsorship from wealthy individuals or corporate bodies. Ironically, their interest had been generated from very much the reverse, and from an image painted of the island by the Guardian that had profoundly worried the campaign organisers at the time of publication. Ruaridh Nicoll's article was one of several that gave in reality a fair depiction of the community and the campaign. Since he was late for the initial press launch, he did not get the choreographed performance put on for the other journalists, and instead arrived a few days later when most of the island was on its way to Muck for a funeral. Now funerals in the Hebrides are usually not the glum affairs one expects, and can easily turn into quite lively Celidhs, which is exactly what happened on the trip to Muck. Hence whilst, Nicoll provided a sound account of the island's problems of landowners, he also described a lively evening and a Celidh that continued until 9 am the next morning when the boat returned to Eigg. The article memorably concluded, "A fiddler played on the back of a truck and Fyffe, lay in the middle of the road, asleep with a can of Export beside her head".<sup>50</sup>

When the article came out Nick Reider was immediately on the phone to Maggie, "I just couldn't believe they'd do that in front of a journalist", Nick remarked, "after all we said about trying to keep a good image of the island in the press. They have a

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<sup>49</sup> IEHT Financial Records.

<sup>50</sup> Nicoll, Ruaridh. "Scrambled Eigg", The Guardian, July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1996.



big party and invite the press along – to be honest I thought it was about as self-destructive as you can get, because it absolutely clashed with the image we were trying to maintain”.<sup>51</sup> Maggie herself was particularly sheepish, if not a little hung-over, and maintained a very low profile. Until of course the solicitor phoned expressing his client’s interest in donating, as well as off-handedly mentioning that the donor had been attracted by the very same article in the Guardian. “That was more than ironic”, says Maggie, “and certainly showed that all the best laid plans can be misplaced, because the donor liked the fact that we were not just squeaky clean and perfect, but real, with warts and everything”.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, for some time there was considerable doubts over how serious the donor was, but after several conversations with Maggie and the IEHT’s solicitor, Simon Fraser, it all appeared to be serious and above board. They wished to contribute some £500,000, which including tax relief meant somewhere near £750,000. Even when this was established, knowledge of the donation was kept tightly within the co-ordinating group, and apart from the Steering Committee no one else on the island knew. In part this was to protect the identity of the donor (in the end only Maggie and Simon Fraser ever knew), but mainly to ensure the maximum could be gained from the public appeal and above all the NHMF application. In essence, “we viewed the anonymous donation as funds for topping up what we achieved in the appeal and to allow us some money towards renovating the island once it was purchased”.<sup>53</sup>

## 5.5 The Politics of the NHMF

The confidence gained from the anonymous donation was combined with a growing belief in the success of Lottery support. Whilst the campaign was being launched and run, Graham Scott, Steve Westbrook, SWT staff and myself had been busily compiling and drafting the NHMF application. Consisting of a basic examination of the island’s potential running costs and profitability, our business plans clearly showed the island estate was capable of sustaining itself without major investment. Yet in the hope of achieving extra support for development costs, several proposals were generated from the Eigg Development Study – such as an estate farm

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<sup>51</sup> Reider, Nick. Conversation. 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1997.

<sup>52</sup> Fyffe, Maggie. Conversation. 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1996.

<sup>53</sup> Reider, Nick. *ibid*.

and a hostel enterprise at the lodge – which were also included within the application.<sup>54</sup> Combined with all the work on visitor access, conservation, forestry, and sustainable agriculture that SWT added to the application, all of us felt that we had more than fulfilled the criteria expected for Lottery support. Indeed, the inside word from other successful agencies led us to believe it was almost an ideal application.

What the IEHT partners were unsure of however, was the amount of political will within the NHMF to support the project. Consequently, it was decided to make the decision as easy as possible for the NHMF, with SWT being chosen to be the lead in talking to NHMF staff, and David Hughes Hallett in particular spending enormous time and effort in lobbying on the IEHT's behalf. The worries over the IEHT's image were of course mostly generated from wishing to put the best face forward to the NHMF, and the co-ordinated lobbying behind the scenes and within the press, was designed to provide Lottery board members with every justification possible to support the application for funds. Hence, from the very beginning of his press campaign, Gordon Fyfe had clearly indicated the IEHT's need for Lottery support on almost all press statements. This was then followed up with various stories that emphasised the credibility and strength of the IEHT's proposals, such as detailing the 5 year plan being put forward to the NHMF, or how the IEHT's management schemes were being vetted and checked by the HC, or how associated bodies such as HIE and Lochaber Ltd were giving support.<sup>55</sup> Once the full application was handed in on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October, and all potential publicity angles had been covered, the only other aspect to cover was to try and limit the interest of the island to other bidders. In part this had been achieved somewhat by the continuous publicity surrounding the island and the IEHT's public appeal. Indeed, on the international front this had been the principle angle covered by correspondents with papers in North America and even Hong Kong declaring "let the buyer beware".<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, despite not wishing to go fully down the road of open market spoiling, the HC chief Peter Peacock made a

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<sup>54</sup> IEHT. NHMF Application. November. 1996

<sup>55</sup> Ross, John. "Eigg buy-out group draws up five-year renewal plan", The Scotsman, 30<sup>th</sup> October 1996; "Eigg residents launch blueprint for island's future", Press and Journal, 30<sup>th</sup> October 1996.

<sup>56</sup> Pogatchnik, Shawn. "Let the buyer beware", Hong Kong Standard, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1996; Pogatchnik, Shawn. "Tiny Scottish Isle on the Block, But millionaires should beware", San Francisco Chronicle, 29<sup>th</sup> August, 1996; Glauber, Bill. "Foggy future for sheltered isle", Baltimore Sun, 15<sup>th</sup> September, 1996.

final plea for bidders to step aside a few days before the sale's closing date: "The partnership of residents, the council and the wildlife trust is a finger tip away from presenting a bid for the island. If there is anyone in the wings ready to make a bid I would therefore urge them seriously to consider stepping aside".<sup>57</sup>

The decision day for the NHMF board to decide the IEHT's application was on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November, and therefore nail-bitingly close to the closing date for bids on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Consequently whilst the island was being inundated at the same time with the SWT appeal returns, the Steering Committee was dealing with mounting tensions over the mechanics and amounts that they would bid once Lottery support was secured. Not only was there the 'simple' question over how much to bid, but there was also considerable questioning over whether the lottery would contribute enough money for an open market bid, or just give 75% of the District Valuer's £1.2 m assessment. Tough questions to be sure, and certainly not helped by the sudden and particularly unhelpful contribution to the appeal by the island's local Liberal MP Russell Johnston. After months of inaction, he tabled an Early Day Motion (EDM) in the House, demanding that the Government buy the island and give it to the National Trust. This was completely out of the blue for the IEHT, who although having kept Johnston informed, had not been consulted in any manner over his decision to table the EDM. Neither had the NTS been informed of his ideas either, and their spokesperson denied any knowledge of the EDM as well. In short it was a highly uninformed, and distinctly problematic offering, which only had the affect of confusing the careful lobbying of the Lottery of past several months.<sup>58</sup>

Johnston's reference to the NTS taking over Eigg, however, was soon to have more direct relevance when the NHMF finally faxed its verdict to the eagerly awaiting IEHT. Essentially they gave an amber light to funding the buy-out providing certain changes were made to the structure of the IEHT. Primarily they were concerned about the presence of the community in the ownership and management of the island, and "about the possible conflicts of interest the acquisition could raise between the private benefits of the residents of Eigg and the wider public benefits".<sup>59</sup> The bottom line

<sup>57</sup> Ross, John. "Plea for bidders to step aside", *The Scotsman*, 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 1996.

<sup>58</sup> "Confusion surrounds Eigg support motion", *Press and Journal*, 26<sup>th</sup> November, 1996.

<sup>59</sup> NHMF statement to the IEHT, 20<sup>th</sup> November, 1996. IEA

being; the NHMF wanted to see the community's presence in the IEHT reduced to the barest minimum, and the conservation component respectively increased to dominate the partnership. In private discussions with IEHT co-ordinators, NHMF personnel suggested that even another conservation body become involved such the NTS. This particularly raised hackles when it was heard from inside sources that a board member from the NTS had even been invited along to the NHMF meeting to discuss the Eigg application.

Consequently with just days to go, the IEHT directors met to discuss not only the amount to be bid, but the very existence and make-up of the IEHT itself. For the islanders part the Steering Committee concluded in a midnight meeting that the NHMF terms were untenable, especially considering that the money already raised was on the back of a community partnership; a partnership that by definition gave equal control to the community and outside interests. Also the Steering Committee itself had a mandate from the IERA only to further a partnership buy-out, and certainly not to hand over the island and their financial support to conservation ownership. The HC were equally minded, and did not consider the suggestion of the NTS involvement as particularly constructive at all. As for the SWT, in a stand that clearly showed their loyalty to the IEHT and to the island community, they refused to be tempted with the offer of control over the island. As Neil Wilcox also pointed out, "Even if everybody agreed to the idea of SWT ownership and management, we wouldn't, simply because we have never wanted to take on that level of responsibility – either financially or morally".<sup>60</sup>

Despite the absolute refusal to succumb to the NHMF conditions, there was also a profound need to tactically manage the bid and further negotiations with the NHMF. As Nick Reider pointed out, "On top of the worries over the Lottery decision, we also had to think about our tactics of bidding, and ensuring that as many people as possible felt we were serious contenders, if not the most serious. We still didn't know how many others were interested, and whether they believed the island was worth the £2 million being asked".<sup>61</sup> Also whilst the NHMF's communication to the IEHT had detailed their conditions to the IEHT, the general press release which they circulated

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<sup>60</sup> Wilcox. Conversation. 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 1997.

<sup>61</sup> Reider. *ibid*.

had not, and the press viewed the amber light as being far more positive than it really was. The NHMF spokesperson had also made clear that whilst there were conditions on the Lottery support, “the Trustees would not still be involved in discussions if they thought the issues were insurmountable”.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, most people saw the decision as being profoundly in favour of support for the buy-out, and though confirmation was not complete before the deadline, there was a general assumption that the Lottery would pull through in the end.<sup>63</sup>

“I suppose we thought there could be some way round appeasing their conditions as well”, recalls Nick, “and the suggestions of an independent chairman and more carefully stated objectives would bring them on-side. But in the end they stuck to their guns and we stuck to ours, which just before the deadline boiled down to us realising that we probably did not have Lottery support and were on our own”.<sup>64</sup> Of course this was certainly not communicated to the press, who were eagerly trying to establish how much was being bid by the IEHT.<sup>65</sup>

In the end the IEHT bid £1.2 m for the island, a bid that was based upon the District Valuer’s assessment. It was not however what the IEHT had in the bank, and even combined with the anonymous donation of £750,000 – the IEHT’s appeal fund was notably short. It was therefore more than an anxious wait for the estate agent’s announcement, which finally came on the evening of December 2<sup>nd</sup>: “None of the offers have proved acceptable to the owner of the island. However, Mr Maruma has agreed to leave the island on the market to enable those who offered, the time to raise the necessary funds to meet the asking price of £2 million”. The island was back on the market once more, and the IEHT was still very much in the fundraising game. A hopeful Colin Carr said to waiting journalist, “It is a disappointment, but at least no one else has come up with the £2 million and it does give us a bit more time. It gives the partnership the time they would have wanted to examine the wide range of funding options”.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Ross, John. “Lottery backing boosts Eigg buy-out hopes”, *The Scotsman*, 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1996.

<sup>63</sup> Ross, David. “Fund pledges support to Eigg”, *The Herald*, 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1996.

<sup>64</sup> Reider. *ibid*.

<sup>65</sup> Walker, Gynis. “All quiet over Eigg purchase proposals”, *Oban Times*, 28<sup>th</sup> November, 1996.

<sup>66</sup> Jones, Ken. “Eigg laird snubs offer- he wants £2 million”, *Press and Journal*, 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1996.

‘The wide range of funding options’ however, was notably reduced when news broke the next day of the IEHT’s clashes with the Lottery’s conditions for support. Going public with their dissatisfaction of the NHMF’s requirements, all three partners pushed the same point of not wishing to dilute the community’s representation in the consortium. David Hughes Hallett was particularly outspoken:

**“Our aim is to get the best possible deal for wildlife conservation on the island. We think the best way to do that is with the community and to spread the burden of power and responsibility. In the end the wildlife’s future will be determined by the people that live and work there . . . We have got this far without support from the lottery. We hope to persuade them that what we have sorted out is the best way forward. If they do not accept that we will just have to look for alternative funding”.**<sup>67</sup>

Leslie Riddoch was less polite in her condemnation of the Lottery conditions in her weekly opinion column. Detailing her private conversations with NHMF Chair, Lord Rothschild, she questioned what was wrong about such a straightforward bid for Lottery assistance: “The cynical will imagine that the Heritage Board would feel happier if its recipients had double-barrelled names and had run a charity, a quango, or a government department. Sadly for them, happily for everyone else, the people of Eigg have no track record in trying to persuade quango’s to release cash. Their cause is pure and simple. They want security of tenure”.<sup>68</sup>

Brian Wilson MP was also full of comment regarding the failure of the IEHT’s bid. However, his opinion was directed more towards instigating compulsory purchase orders rather than the merits of the Lottery’s backing. Likening the situation on Eigg to that of Raasay some twenty years previously, he urged that “HIE and Highland Council should now look closely and urgently at the case for initiating compulsory purchase proceedings. It is the only language that walking horror shows like Dr Green and Mr Maruma understand and Eigg, like Raasay before it, has waited too long for the gloves to be taken off”.<sup>69</sup> This was picked up by Michael Foxely, who pondered upon the merits of compulsorily purchasing, if not the whole island, just selective parts of it to deter any other buyers. However, HIE were very quick to deny

<sup>67</sup> Bradshaw, Andy. “Eigg mistrust of lottery cash condition backed”, *Press and Journal*, 10<sup>th</sup> December 1996.

<sup>68</sup> Riddoch, Leslie. “Lack of faith in islander’s fight for justice”, *The Scotsman*, 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1996.

any possibility of this happening, asserting that their powers only extended to small sites for specific economic reasons, not for any wider merits.<sup>70</sup>

With all the publicity surrounding the Eigg bid, and the negative comments regarding the Lottery's conditions for support, it was hoped that the NHMF board would be steered into accepting the IEHT's partnership as it stood. So on the 21<sup>st</sup> of January when the NHMF met once more to decide the Eigg application, hopes were still quite high. However, they were to be profoundly dashed again when the NHMF decided that after further consideration, it would not back the IEHT's bid. This was because they felt there were still "conflicts of interest" between the community's representation in the partnership and "the wider public benefits". Since news had already started to leak of a wealthy anonymous backer to the IEHT's last bid, they went on to say: "Furthermore the trustees noted that the amount already raised by the IEHT's appeal is sufficient to allow it to make an offer to purchase Eigg at around the amount which the district valuer suggests is the open market value of the isle".<sup>71</sup>

The rejection was taken by the IEHT bitterly, especially considering that the partnership had already put in an offer based on the District Valuer's assessment, only to have it flatly turned down by Maruma. If there was no hope of compulsory purchase, and no intervention from the State, then what was needed was at least support from the NHMF. When that too was turned down, it was not surprising that Peter Peacock remarked: "You get the impression the lottery are under huge pressure behind the scenes from certain establishment figures not to give money as it might set a dangerous precedent in landownership patterns in Scotland".<sup>72</sup> Amongst the IEHT partners this seemed the only apparent reason, for as David Hughes Hallett commented the application seemed "absolutely ideal" for Lottery funding: "To buy back a Scottish island from its absentee owner and generate and protect it for future generations to come would seem to me a perfect heritage project".<sup>73</sup> The only problem being of course, that unlike the 16 other estate purchases funded by the NHMF since

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<sup>69</sup> Wilson, Brian. "Brian Wilson Writes", *West Highland Free Press*, 6<sup>th</sup> December 1996.

<sup>70</sup> MacDonald, Angus. "Forced purchase of Eigg ruled out", *The Scotsman*, 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1996. "Eigg may be split up to put off private buyers", *Press and Journal*, 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1996.

<sup>71</sup> Ross, John. "Anger as Eigg fails to win lottery cash", *The Scotsman*, 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 1997.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.* Also *Scotsman*'s "quote of the week"

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*

1982, this one actually included the community resident upon the estate.<sup>74</sup> Maggie Fyffe wryly noted, “If the little guy asks for something, it’s a hand-out, but when it’s the big guy, it’s a subsidy, a set-aside, or a tax exemption. We’ll just have to battle on with the fundraising”.<sup>75</sup>

## 5.6 Final Bids and Appeal Results

The appeal remained open and with knowledge of a mystery donor stepping in to replace the NHMF, both islanders and public alike were assured that at least another reasonable bid could be tendered when necessary. This was an immense relief for the islanders, who had not learnt of the mystery backer until the Lottery’s decision. In many ways it confirmed that the Steering Committee had been keeping things very secret indeed, and on a small island secrets are rare and often viewed with suspicion. Nevertheless, the doubts over why such secrets were being held from the community were alleviated somewhat when people found out the scale of the donation kept under wraps. “I suppose it just showed what kind of level we were playing on”, said Camille Dressler, “and though there were distinct problems with things being kept from the rest of the island, the Steering Committee were walking a very delicate line. They were playing a game that involved all our futures, and when it came down to it, we just had to trust them and their judgement”.<sup>76</sup>

In terms of keeping the publicity still going after the anti-climax of the failed bid and NHMF application, the IEHT were assured of one final bizarre twist. In January a German consultant, Dr Kals approached the HC with ideas of setting up a musical centre of excellence on Eigg under the tutelage of none other than the great Pavarotti himself. Kals’s plans for the development involved bringing in some 3,000 classical and operatic students, leading to what one paper noted would be 5000% increase in the island’s population. For a few unnerving days it appeared that Maruma was backing out of the sale, and meeting with his financial backers and Pavarotti as well to discuss the details. Dr Kals even had formal meetings with the HC, who swiftly pointed out that Eigg did not have anywhere near the facilities to cope with

<sup>74</sup> Foxley. “1992 Highland Land Sales”

<sup>75</sup> Dressler. *Eigg*. p.190

<sup>76</sup> Dressler. Interview. 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1998.



such a development, not to mention that they were also involved with a community buy-out themselves. Unsurprisingly, the proposals collapsed with more than a hint of a swindle being mustered, especially when it appeared that Pavarotti had not even heard of Eigg, Maruma, nor the proposals for a Pavarotti Foundation.<sup>77</sup>

Nonetheless, the controversies over the Pavarotti Foundation and the NHMF's assurance that the island was not worth more than £1.2m finally triggered one of Maruma's backers to call a halt to the farce, and demand repayment of his £300,000 loan. The IEHT had kept Maruma's main financial backer, Hong Kong based Hans Rainer Erhardt, informed throughout the campaign of their intentions and the prevailing problems of Maruma's proprietorship on the island. They had even been tempted to acquire Maruma's loan itself, for as Andy Wightman had pointed out "that's they way the big boys do it, they buy the loans then foreclose on them, and sell the island to themselves".<sup>78</sup> It was a great idea, but far too much of a gamble for the IEHT, and especially with someone as slippery as Maruma. Instead they tabled a renewed bid of £1.5m on March 6<sup>th</sup>, and waited for events to proceed themselves, which they did as one week later, when Erhardt finally took Maruma's holding company, Eigg Island Ltd, to Court in Fort William for default on the loan. Since the loan constituted a first ranking Standard Security on the island, the court declared that unless Maruma could pay off his debt in 28 days the island would have to be sold to appease his creditors. Fortunately, Maruma was unable to raise the funds, and therefore Erdhardt took over control of the island's sale. "This was the hardest moment of all", recalled Maggie. "We knew that Erhardt had expressed an interest in our bid, but there was always the risk of a higher bid or that Maruma would pay off his loan! I think it was my three-year old grandson who kept me sane during the last stage of the negotiations. The phone never stopped ringing, but whenever it would get too much, we'd send him to answer it".<sup>79</sup>

On April 4<sup>th</sup>, after immense anticipation and anxiety within the IEHT campaign staff, Erhardt's solicitors at last accepted their bid. News spread quickly throughout the island and a young Ruiridh Kirk's birthday party soon turned into a

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<sup>77</sup> Ross, David. "Pavarotti link 'out of tune with Eigg'", The Scotsman, 24<sup>th</sup> January, 1997.

<sup>78</sup> Conversation between Leslie Riddoch and Andy Wightman. March 10<sup>th</sup> 1997.

<sup>79</sup> Dressler. Eigg. p.191

very emotional affair with islanders embracing one another in disbelief. Katie McKinnon said “Well done”, and her husband Dougald declared “I want a golden crown”.<sup>80</sup> Nearly all the nationals gave front-page coverage, with a photograph of Nick Reider, Colin Carr, and Simon Fraser drinking Champagne in Edinburgh being prominent in most. Leslie Riddoch’s feature in the *Scotsman* began, “So, this is what success feels like. Bright and full of possibilities. Just as 17 years of ownership by absentee landlords was dull and full of limitations”. The Eigg story was ending in success, and as she rightly pointed out the attraction of story and the delight in its success was generated by the euphoria of seeing the ‘small guys’ win:

**“The IEHT was not a partnership of famous people, superheroes, millionaires, landed gentry, or the great and the good. It is a partnership between completely ordinary islanders, a perfectly straightforward council, and an entirely normal wildlife group. All of whom are feeling their way with this project and all of whom have risked criticism and failure to do together what they knew could they could not do alone”.**<sup>81</sup>

Looking at the fundraising for March 1997, however, the celebrations were also a distinct case of counting chickens before eggs had hatched since the IEHT’s account had only some £307,000 to its credit at the time of making the bid. The anonymous donor had offered to increase her\* donation when the Lottery decision was announced, yet there was still no actual deposit. Similarly there was also over £150,000 to be collected from pledges, as well as a final sum to be agreed and given by HIE. In many ways therefore the fundraising remained in its infancy, and an enormous amount of work had yet to be done before the island was officially handed over. To begin with, Maggie contacted the anonymous donor and confirmed the exact amount and mechanics of the tax relief, and together with a team of islanders began chasing the pledges that had been made. The next 2 months were to prove frantic as the partnership began to rapidly amass the funds necessary for purchase.

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<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Riddoch, Leslie. “New dawn breaks for Eigg”, *The Scotsman*, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 1997.

<b>Total Funds Raised by the Public Appeal as of March 1997</b>		
<u>Incomes</u>	£'s Subtotals	£'s Total
<b>Miscellaneous</b>		
Eigg Trust Account balance b/f	3,813.01	
Grants	2,000.00	
Sponsored Events	14,101.00	
Tshirt Sales	2,756.45	
Gift Aid Claims	17,837.42	40,507.88
<b>Cash &amp; Cheque Donations</b>		
Donations via SWT	220,241.63	
Donations via IET	63,221.10	283,462.73
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>323,970.61</b>
<b><u>Expenditure</u></b>		
Campaign Costs to date	16786.57	16786.57
<b>Total Cash Funds</b>		<b>307,184.04</b>
<b>Pledges</b>		
Pledges via SWT	76,761.00	
Pledges via IET	76,260.00	153,021.00
<b>Total Appeal Funds</b>		<b>460,205.04</b>

*Fig 5.7: The Fundraising balance at the time of making the bid<sup>82</sup>*

The actual mechanics of IEHT ownership similarly had to be put in place as well. This entailed not only establishing new bank accounts and formalised accounting procedures, but actually electing the members of the IEHT's committee. Until April members of the Steering Committee had acted as IEHT directors, but with the bid being accepted these people stood down for a secret ballot to elect the proper island representatives. On April 20<sup>th</sup> the result of the elections showed the confidence the islanders had in the Steering Committee remained steadfast, as three of four elected were familiar faces: Colin Carr, Maggie Fyffe, and Karen Helliwell. The other was Donald MacLean, the son of the island's old Doctor Hector, who had been brought up on the island, and after serving in the military, had returned to raise his family. Though the SWT and HC representatives were already nominated, the other

\* Maggie let slip only one identifying remark about the donor, which was that the benefactor was female.

<sup>82</sup> IEHT Financial Accounts

issue at hand was to decide upon an independent chairperson for the IEHT. The new board of trustees did this on May 14<sup>th</sup>, when a unanimous decision elected Simon Fraser as Chairman. Not only had Simon shown his commitment to the project with countless hours of unpaid work in setting up the IEHT, but as a crofting lawyer born and raised on Lewis, he had gained the respect of the community in his many visits to the island.

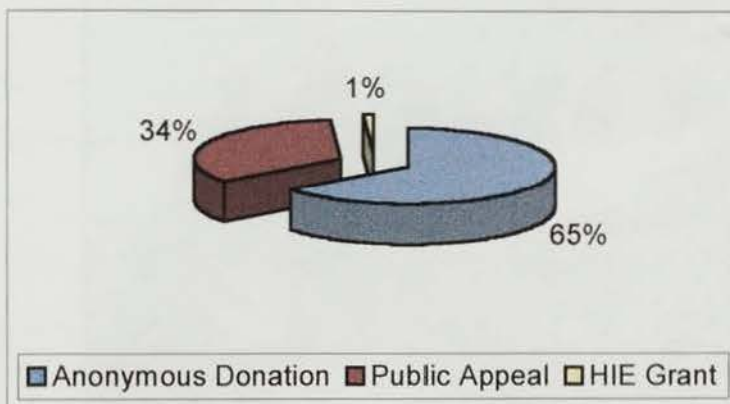
As the elections and nominations were being undertaken, pledge returns and donations were swamping the campaign co-ordinators. With Christine Thornton compiling and collecting donations at SWT headquarters, Nick Reider and Simon Fraser undertaking the legal work and negotiations with HIE, and the team of islanders hard at work on Eigg there was little time to savour any feelings of elation. In fact there were more than a few anxieties over how many people would actually honour their pledges, but Bill Ritchie gave assurances that with Assynt the pledges had actually increased when eventually called upon. This was indeed the case with the Eigg appeal as well, with the income from returned pledges bringing in over £23,000 more than originally pledged.<sup>83</sup> As for the final results of campaign these were as follows:<sup>84</sup>

<b>Fundraising Totals for the Eigg Appeal as of July 1st 1997</b>		
	<b>£'s Subtotals</b>	<b>£'s Totals</b>
<b>Anonymous Donation</b>	1,000,000.00	<b>1,000,000.00</b>
<b>Public Appeal</b>		
Wildlife & Conservation Donors		
SWT Leaflets	362,805.90	
Natural World Feature	50,406.61	
Newspaper Advertisement	16,448.45	
HC Leaflet & Eigg Friends and Family	95,628.26	
International Donations	5,306.68	
<b>Total Public Appeal</b>		<b>530,595.90</b>
<b>HIE Grant</b>		<b>17,500.17</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,548,096.00</b>

<sup>83</sup> See Appendix

<sup>84</sup> IEHT Financial Accounts

In the end there was a total 8,806 donations to the public appeal, that ranged from a child sending in 50p of pocket money, to a grant-giving trust giving £20,000. There was also of course the £1m from the mystery donor, which in effect had replaced the capital sum expected from the lottery. Nevertheless, by early May there was still a shortfall in the total sum required, and this proved a substantial stumbling block especially when Erhardt's solicitors offered a discount if the payment was settled earlier than June 12<sup>th</sup>. Consequently HIE fulfilled their promise of a last brick in the wall of funding by giving £17,500.17, and allowing the partnership to acquire the island one month earlier than expected. By mid May, Eigg was in the hands of the IEHT with a final payment of £1,482,540 being made to Erhardt. This was one last secret that the Steering Committee, now IEHT Committee, had to keep quite from the press and the islanders, as they did not want the victory celebrations to be overshadowed by the premature leaking of the story.



*Fig 5.8 : Percentage breakdown of appeal funds*

## 5.7 Victory and Celebration

Two MacAskill brothers from Eigg had established the Talisker whiskey distillery on Skye, and in honour of this and the victory, the company generously donated ninety bottles of 25-year-old malt to lubricate the celebrations. These were planned with feverish excitement on the island and with some distinct trepidation as well. For it would no doubt be the largest and certainly the most important event on the island for centuries, and there was notable pride at stake to ensure the festivities went well. The island was now theirs and its appearance was all the more important. Consequently the community hall, craft shop, and tearoom were all cleaned and given

fresh coats of paint. In order to physically mark the occasion, Dougald MacKinnon remembered a 10 ft stone pillar which had been neglected in the bracken beside Sandavore Farm. Originally cut some 5,000 years previously, the stone seemed the perfect symbol to connect the island's history with its new and exciting future. A group of island men therefore happily carted the stone down to a plateau beside the pier and erected it together with a small plaque to commemorate the victory. A marquee was erected beside the hall, on of all things Schellenberg's much neglected tennis court. And to wash the Talisker down a bar was organised for the night, and delivered a few days beforehand on the Shearwater. Ronnie, the boat's skipper, quipped at the time that it was the most important delivery he had ever made to the island. It was certainly one of the largest.



*Fig 5.9: Unloading the bar from the M.V. Shearwater.*<sup>85</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Morgan, Daniel.

After the final minutes of June 11<sup>th</sup> passed, a beacon was lit on the island to signal the historic change of ownership. The following day saw hundreds of people arrive to mark the occasion, including MP's, councillors, wildlife staff, friends, and of course journalists. Climbing up to the stone, they all watched as Dolly Ferguson and Dougald MacKinnon – the island's two eldest inhabitants – unveiled the plaque. Afterwards a piper led the assembled congregation up to the marquee to hear speeches from Brian Wilson (the now Minister for the Highlands and Islands), and members of the IEHT. Wilson was notably in jovial form, and after years of personally battling against Schellenberg in the West Highland Free Press, he declared that it was certainly “Game, set, and match to the islanders”. He also made the occasion an opportunity to further the role of community trusts in the region, and “instructed HIE to establish a support unit to assist initiatives aimed at achieving community ownership of the land”.<sup>86</sup> Colin Carr then gave an emotional vote of thanks to the thousands of people who had supported the campaign. A strong and sturdy man, he was moved to tears in explaining what the buy-out meant to the people of Eigg, and in the process moved most of the assembled to tears with his heartfelt thanks. Maggie followed, and in turn paid tribute to the staff of both SWT and HC, and the many friends and islanders who had assisted in campaign. Finally, proceedings were closed with a short hymn and a blessing, and as the VIP's ate their sandwiches and left for the boat, the rest began to dance the night away. It was a Celidh to end all Celidhs, which not surprisingly lasted more than just one night.



*Fig 5.10: The 5,000 year standing stone resurrected to commemorate the island buy-out.*<sup>87</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Rodd, David. “Island buy-out leads way”, The Herald, 13<sup>th</sup> June, 1997.

## 5.8 Conclusions

Much has been made of Eigg's mystery benefactor, and whilst the donation represented the largest single financial contribution to the appeal, it did not represent the most important aspect. By far the most significant characteristic of the campaign was the enthusiasm and hope generated by the islanders and IEHT partners themselves. Indeed, without their drive and character the campaign would have no doubt faltered at the first hurdle, and certainly without their idiosyncratic appeal, the £1 million donation would never have been made in the first place. If anything the story of the campaign emphasises the point that when given the democratic chance, and the appropriate training and facilitation local communities can move mountains – or in the case of Eigg save islands.

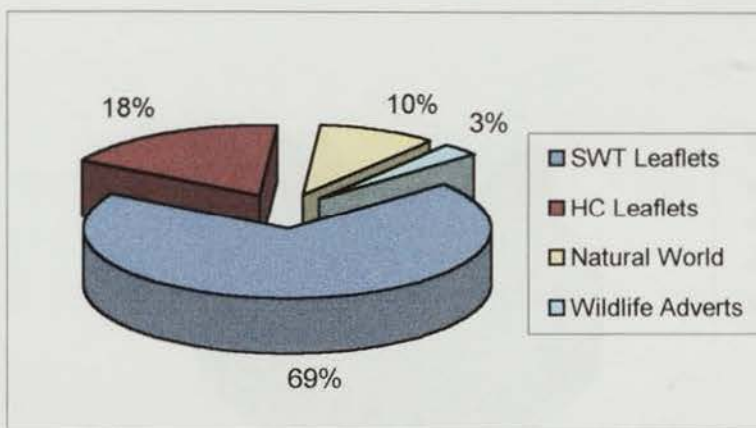
As Leslie Riddoch's remarks on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April demonstrated, the success of the appeal was founded upon a partnership of interest between perfectly normal people. Like many townships in the Highlands and Islands, the Isle of Eigg community was made up of a mixture of nationalities and language, and was not by any standards remarkable in terms of its education nor resources. But as with the other partners of the IEHT, the community had been forced into a situation of no return. They had suffered the extremes of change induced by the highland land market, and had encountered a series of owners that had ensured notable instability in the island's long-term future. Twenty years of Schellenberg ownership, eighteen months of Maruma, and five years of campaigning for the island and community's self-determination, had given them the experience for the final assault on its history of absentee ownership. For the SWT and HC it had been a similar path towards success, with failed attempts at working with the island's notorious owners steering them into an alliance with the community. For all the rhetoric of land reform surrounding the campaign, in the end the solution was not public ownership, nor conservation ownership, but an enlightened form of private ownership that gave control to the people who had the greatest interests in the island's future.

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<sup>87</sup> Morgan, Daniel.



In terms of the fundraising campaign itself, the success was hardly a fluke, but was won through immense hard work and organisation. As this chapter shows, however, much of the planning was made on the run, with the ideas of central co-ordination and professional expertise remaining mostly that, simply ideas. In the final analysis, the campaign remained firmly the responsibility of those who were planning to take over control of the island's future. With regards to understanding the origins of the public appeal's financial support, it was only one year later, at the time of writing, that a database of donors was finally compiled. This clearly revealed that as expected conservation and wildlife donors had provided the monetary backbone to the public appeal. Indeed of the 8,806 donations, some 7221 had come from people responding to either the SWT leaflets, the Natural World article, or an advert placed in the Guardian.



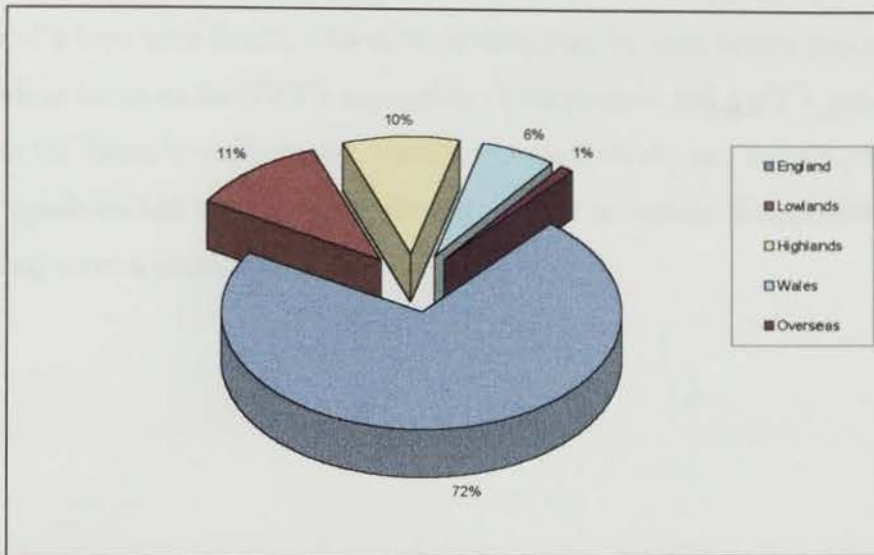
*Fig 5.11 : Public Appeal by donor motivation (excluding the £1m donation).<sup>88</sup>*

Hence in terms of public concern and attention to the Eigg campaign, it appears that the publicity surrounding the insecurity of tenure for the island's wildlife elicited the most donations. Having said this of course, one cannot simply presume that the threat to wildlife itself was the sole motivation for these people to donate to the campaign. As the SWT literature emphasised, the Eigg Appeal was unique in its attempt to involve the local community in the conservation and reclamation of the island's natural heritage. As such, Eigg was not just another wildlife appeal being mounted by a conservation body. The SWT were a partner in the IEHT, and the purchase of the island had moral and democratic objectives that fundamentally

<sup>88</sup> IEHT Donor Database

informed the conservation appeal. Also it must be noted that whilst the HRC leaflets were distributed amongst the wider public, through libraries and friends and associates of the island, the SWT leaflets were only sent out to people already on their databases and hence proven donators to worthy causes. Consequently, it is hardly surprising that they made up the vast majority of the accounted donations.

Obviously, without questioning all the donors individually, it is problematic to make general assumptions regarding their specific motivations for supporting Eigg. However, it is nonetheless very revealing that so much support came from England. Despite the Scottish nationalist angle played upon in the media with countless *Braveheart* references, the island's plight primarily attracted the traditional middle class conservation supporters of the Home Counties.



*Fig 5.12 : Public Appeal by donor origin (excluding the £1m donation).<sup>89</sup>*

Almost three quarters of the donors came from in and around the South of England, and considering that these people generally represent a large proportion of the conservation support in general throughout the UK, then it is safe to assume that their interest in Eigg was primarily focussed upon the wildlife appeal of the island. If so one could conclude that there might be a conflict of opinion between the SWT's actual supporters of the campaign and the SWT's practical role within IEHT; especially considering that the SWT only represent 2 people out of 8 on the managing

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*

board of the IEHT. However, whatever conflict there may be must be weighed against the practical impossibility of the SWT having taken over the island on their own, and also as mentioned in Chapter 2 the increasing practice of conservation bodies undertaking management agreements over land at risk rather than outright ownership. Since the charter of the IEHT was drawn up with the understanding of preserving and reclaiming the island's natural heritage, there is always the assurance that whatever happens in the future, the successful management of the island's wildlife will remain in the forefront of decision making. It is also worth noting that on a purely monetary sense, that the tourist economy is vital to the sustainable development of the island and both the IERA and the HRC are more than aware of the importance maintaining Eigg's wildlife merits. This is underlined as well by the fact that much of the funding options available to the IEHT are to be gained from the practice of appropriate conservation management, and from the successful application of the SWT's interests in the island's long term future. Therefore, if there may be have been a gap of understanding between the SWT's supporters of the project, and SWT's actual direct role within the island's management, there are enough checks and balances to ensure that the English middle class conservationists will not be unduly disappointed by the island's long term administration.

## **Conclusion**

One year on from the success of the 1997 Eigg appeal, momentous changes have occurred both on and off the island. Firstly on the island, the estate farm has been divided into three smallholdings with new leases in the process of being organised for all estate tenants. Conservation and reclamation plans are also under consideration, and a new pier centre has been built. Funded by the local LEC, the pier building comprises of a shop, post office, tourist information resource, and a licensed restaurant. Built by the islanders themselves, it is the first palpable sign of an invigorated local economy, and one that has already seen the return of three young islanders and an indigenous Eigg family. Intense negotiations are also underway regarding a new pier and ferry provision for the island, which although being strongly criticised by the IEHT, is still being discussed with the islanders directly, instead of just through the absentee owner. Financially the Trust are also in a healthy financial situation with no debts or outstanding mortgages to pay, and as of June 12<sup>th</sup> this year, income being generated from the new residential leases and farm lets. Another application is being drafted for NHMF funding, to help finance various conservation and heritage projects on the island, together with numerous other applications to European and domestic grant-giving agencies. This is being done by a newly employed Project Development Officer and through the IEHT Committee liaising with the three partnering bodies. In short therefore, it has been a momentous and productive year on the island, with the first steps being made in the IEHT's consolidation of ownership.

Off the island, changes have been no less dramatic, with the new Labour Government firmly setting land reform as a central policy objective for the forthcoming Scottish Parliament. In October 1997, Lord Sewel, the SO Minister for Agriculture, the Environment and Fisheries, announced the formation of a Land Reform Policy Group (LRFG). Under his chair, this group has swiftly begun the consultative processes of policy formation, with the desired goal of having a land reform agenda ready for the year 2000. March 1998 saw the LRPG publish its first consultative paper,<sup>1</sup> which was both loudly applauded and notably criticised at a land reform conference held two weeks later by the Unit for the Study of Government in

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<sup>1</sup> Land Reform Policy Group, *Identifying the Problems*, Scottish Office, Edinburgh, 1998.

Scotland at Edinburgh University.<sup>2</sup> Lord Sewel and the LRPG were warmly congratulated by all speakers for so swiftly and decisively embarking upon the formation of a land reform agenda. For many present it was the culmination of a lifetime's work and campaigning, and to physically have a Government Minister present, openly discussing what had mostly been unmentionable in policy circles for so long, emphasised just how tangible reform had become. However, the speed at which the consultation had been commenced, and the style in which it was being carried out led several speakers to criticise the direction of policy formation. Chief amongst these was Andy Wightman, who highlighted the fact that unlike other policy areas such as housing, health, and transport, land reform is a relatively unknown commodity for the general public. Hence, whilst the LRPG's tenacity was laudable, its speed and methods of consultation were highly problematic:

**“As one of the commentators whose work appears to have been drawn upon, I am seriously concerned at how the arguments have been presented. . . . To selectively pick out things which “some commentators” have argued and to use this as the basis for a government consultation paper . . . . is very unsophisticated and I would go so far as to say an irresponsible way of going about things.**

**Most government papers are backed up by fairly extensive research and evidence. This one dives in at the deep end with directly lifted quotes from work which certainly in my case has been poorly resourced, inadequately researched and which was intended to stimulate and provoke further research, analysis and debate not to form the basis of hard proposals”.**<sup>3</sup>

In defence of the LRPG, their first consultation paper was, as titled, simply “Identifying the Problems”. Therefore one can understand a certain limited nature in the paper's proposals and questions. Nevertheless the language and the leading way in which the problems and questions were framed, promotes more than a little anxiety over the potential reforms that will be manifested. Perhaps more importantly, the style of the consultation also raises questions as to how those reforms will be actually implemented. For as the case study of Eigg attests, the success of instigating real reform on the ground is a very complex process that relies upon both new methodologies of development as well as new vehicles of ownership.

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<sup>2</sup> Callander, R. & Wightman, A. Understanding Land Reform in Scotland – Report of the Conference of 6 March 1998, Edinburgh, 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Wightman, A. “The Wider Land Reform Agenda”, Understanding Land Reform, pp.15-26. p.21

Eigg was far from a simple and spontaneous out-pouring of confidence and empowerment. Indeed, the motivations for change on Eigg, like the Scottish land debate in general, were deep rooted and born out of a long historical experience. Indeed, the contemporary will and ideas for community management itself took over a twenty-year period to develop, during which time the island community was forced into little other option. As many islanders pointed out – even after the horrors of Schellenberg and the campaign of the first IET – if Maruma had even been partially acceptable, the islanders would have much preferred to continue with a landlord than jump into the exposure of community ownership and management.<sup>4</sup> As described in the early Chapters, the reasons for this reluctance and conservatism, were the ingrained effects of a tenurial system that from its outset in 13<sup>th</sup> Century sought to enclose the Highlands and Islands’ natural resources from resident populations. Combined with the development of the market economy, this process saw the promotion of the individual’s rights over landownership being asserted at the expense of the collective rights of local communities and the wider public interest.<sup>5</sup> Though by the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries crofting had at least preserved some collective rights and maintained people on the land, communities like Eigg were still firmly enclosed from the land and resources that were not held under crofting tenure. As such, the pre-buyout Eigg community was like most crofting townships shielded from the responsibilities that come from the exercise of real power and involvement in management decisions. That is not to say that Grazings Committees and the communal nature of crofting life did not encourage any form of self-determination, for they clearly did. But to move from the parochial nature of the crofting and local community world, into the wider and much more uncertain and complex realms of estate ownership and resource management was an enormous step. With the case of Eigg, however, the dramatic influx of incomers notably changed the social dynamics on the island and the community’s eventual relationship with the island’s absentee owners. This proved to be a fundamental determinant in reversing the lack of confidence within the community, and together with the extreme problems associated

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<sup>4</sup> Helliwell, Karen. Interview.

<sup>5</sup> Hunter, J. “The Defining Issue: Land Reform And Rural Betterment in the Highlands and Islands”, *Understanding Land Reform*. pp.33-44. p.35

with Schellenberg and Maruma, very much pushed the community into taking the initiative.

Of course what was true for the island's residents was also true for the HC and SWT. Having tried unsuccessfully throughout the 1980's and 1990's to work through traditional channels with the island's owners, both organisations were forced into the position of siding with the Eigg community. It was hardly the ideal situation, and like many islanders at the time, the HC and SWT felt they were treading on unknown and notably treacherous ground. For elected Councillors like Michael Foxley, it was a bold and politically risky commitment, especially considering the political climate of the early 1990's. However, exceptional circumstances had propelled the situation, and combined with the proactive involvement of the IET, HIF and others, the two organisations provided essential support for the Eigg islanders. Immense effort went into encouraging and fostering the community's discontent into practical avenues and alternatives. As described in Chapters 3 and 4, the careful facilitation and preparation of the community was achieved through specific workshop activities and the concerted assistance of political and social activists. In terms of my own involvement this entailed the production of a highly participative management plan. Any 'regular' land use consultant would have no doubt constructed a far more profitable course of development for the island, but that would have merely continued the processes of external control and management policy. Instead the exhaustive drafting and research of the Eigg Development Study relied upon the active participation of the community at all stages, and above all the firm belief in the development opportunities being generated from the islanders' own ideas and abilities.

Having said that of course, my own involvement was also highly active in shaping the direction of the eventual development plan. This was done, however, with the expressed objective of bridging the gap between the world of community empowerment, and the outside world of policy development and management consultancy. The islanders' ideas were sound, and indeed the most appropriate for their own management of Eigg, but what they lacked were the language, style, and presentation of those ideas in a form that was credible to both potential partners and supporters. This was achieved with the Eigg Development Study, and then later the NHMF application. Both of which the islanders felt to be their own construction,



despite being actually drafted and written by myself and outside consultants. In essence, therefore, the strength of confidence that the islanders and the IEHT exhibited by 1996/1997 was carefully crafted over a long period of time. It was far from being spontaneous, but was the result of long drawn out events, the support of partnering bodies, and the overtly participatory approach of external facilitators.

The confidence generated by HIF workshops, management plans, and the formation of the IEHT partnership was also central to the fundraising campaign; a campaign that again continued to foster increased organisation and development within the community itself. The expertise of the HC and especially the SWT in managing to sell the idea of community trust ownership was crucial. Without the likes of Gordon Fyfe, Nick Reider, Christine Thornton, Alastair Somerville and the many others who assisted in the campaign it is highly doubtful that the appeal would have succeeded. Proactive finance was also similarly essential for both the development of the community itself, and the success of the fundraising campaign. The many small grants gained by the islanders through the 1990's, for events like the annual *Feis*, to business training courses and consultancy work, were necessary components in the fostering of the community's skills and self-confidence. In terms of the public appeal, it took over £18,000 of investment from the IEHT partners to actually raise the final sum.<sup>6</sup> A small amount in comparison to the £1.5m total, but still a frightening figure to the islanders at the time of launching the campaign. Beyond finance and expertise, however, the HC, SWT, and various "friends of Eigg" gave support and advice to the islanders during their times of need, and especially during the latter stages of the campaign when lobbying, negotiating, and bidding were producing notable anxieties.

The success of the appeal also highlighted the fact that despite the social and nationalist rhetoric of land reform surrounding the island in the media, the most evident motivation for donors was the protection of the island's wildlife. Obviously, the way in which the campaign was pitched emphasised that the threat to island's wildlife came from the highland land market, and that its protection lay in simultaneously securing the future of both the local community and the natural heritage. Nonetheless commentators and policy makers alike cannot take Eigg as

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<sup>6</sup> IEHT Financial Accounts

simply an example of the desire for the Scottish people to see land reform. Indeed, if one just measured the desire for land reform in monetary terms, English conservationists from the Home Counties actually provided the most important backing. They are the ones who provided the majority of financial support for the Eigg appeal, and who have continued to fund the expanding portfolio of conservation-owned estates throughout the past decade. It is a fact that emphasises just how important the issues of conservation and sustainable development are in the formation of Scottish land reform policy. If not only in terms of public desires for natural heritage protection, but for economic reasons as well, for recreation and tourism are cornerstones of the modern rural economy. The Highlands and Islands region alone attracts over half a million climbers and walkers each year, who generate over £34m in income and support some 4,000 jobs.<sup>7</sup> In the case of Eigg, like most remote areas of the Highlands and Islands, this economy is swiftly overtaking the traditional industries of agriculture and fishing.

In returning to the point of departure for this study, and what specifically Eigg can contribute to future land reform policy, it is best to begin with these issues of sustainable development and environmental reclamation in mind. This is because, as many commentators have pointed out, Eigg like the rest of the Highlands and Islands region is an ideal location to further a pioneering model of sustainability. Unlike the rest of the Britain, there is a very tangible history of pre-clearance and pre-industrialised society. This is both reflected in the old lazy bed rows and run-rig patterns on the hillsides, as well as in the continued survival of the crofting system. The region also has an abundant natural heritage, which despite being deeply scarred by exploitation and inappropriate management, is still one of the most scenic and ecologically diverse areas of Europe. Crofting has played a significant part in maintaining that diversity of the flora and fauna, and especially in the more remote areas such as Eigg, has allowed a notable population to remain on the land. This in turn has assisted in the remarkable economic and demographic improvements to the region over the past 20 years, which have also been accompanied by the rise in public concern for the Highlands and Islands environmental protection and appreciation. In essence, therefore, the region has both the natural resources for development and

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<sup>7</sup> *ibid.* p.43

reclamation, as well as an expanding population and economic base. Combined with the model of small-scale, community based crofting tenure, and the political will for facilitating its development, there is enormous potential for establishing a leading example of sustainable rural development. This applies not just to the inhabited areas of the Highlands and Islands, but also to the vast tracts of land that have been cleared of their populations. For only by the active resettlement of communities on deserted estates can the social, economic, and ecological improvements be successfully spread throughout the region. As such a model of sustainability, Eigg is now obviously a precedent in the search for alternative development scenarios in the Highlands and Islands. Based upon a partnership of interest in its structure and management, the IEHT has integrated the social and economic development of the island with the protection, reclamation, and improved accessibility of the island's natural heritage.

The IEHT was achieved by successfully combining external financial and political support with local enterprise, knowledge, and participation. It is this, which is the most significant and pertinent lesson to be learnt from Eigg. For the IEHT's creation and development was underpinned by a fundamental devolution of power to the local community. Within the new ownership structure, local residents gained both greater collective rights over the development and management of the island as well as greater individual rights over security of tenure and employment. This does not represent complete control over the island, of course, as the HC and SWT represent the wider public interests in the IEHT, which together with the regulatory planning framework and legislation governing land management, provide a conditional counterbalance to the residents' empowerment. Nevertheless, the rights gained by the local community are substantial, and on Eigg this required a revolutionary overthrow of the traditional estate model. It also required an overthrow of the traditional top-down approach of development planning and policy, for like Assynt before it, the initial momentum for action on Eigg came not from government bodies or development agencies, but from the community itself. This was obviously guided and assisted by external support and encouragement, but nonetheless it was a situation in which the islanders had the upper hand in all stages of policy development, planning, and implementation. Eigg succeeded, therefore, because the community took hold of the reigns of power.

Hence, even if the devolution of land use and land management decisions are furthered in forthcoming land reform policy, they will not be successful unless they are accompanied by a similar devolution of policy formation itself. For only by involving resident communities in the initial stages of development will any real power be handed over, and more importantly accepted. The history of crofting and Scottish land reform over the past 100 years is littered with countless examples of failed policy initiatives that have foundered on the very lack of proper participation at ground level. They have correspondingly also been characterised by a fundamental lack of understanding for the immense amount of variety and difference within the Highlands and Islands region. Geography, climate, ecology, demography, and economy are all dependent on the individual nature of specific locations and communities. Hence no one panacea can solve all of the region's varied problems and demands, just as no one solution can be derived from a single case study in the Highlands and Islands and applied to the rest of Scotland. Rather than one Bill or policy initiative being handed down to answer the demand for reform, a much deeper change is required at the heart of government. Previous attempts at land reform, rural planning, and development have been far too paternalistic and even colonial in their formation and implementation. They have consequently denied the difference within the Highland region, restricted the participation of the local communities, and subsequently failed to tackle the *problematique* of landownership and land use that Frank Fraser Darling so clearly described in his West Highland Survey half a century ago. That is why land reform in Scotland has been so clearly linked with nationalism, devolution, and regional self-determination, for only by making a profound break with the centralised nature of governance in Scotland can any real reform be manifested. Indeed, it actually goes deeper still, for real power over decision making needs to be devolved not just to Edinburgh and a new Scottish Parliament, but to each individual township, community, and household in Scotland.

It sounds sweeping and radical, because land reform is precisely that – it is by nature revolutionary. Control over land is power, and if the collective rights demanded by the Eigg community and the general public over Scotland's natural heritage are to be fulfilled, then power must be transferred from the hands of the few to those of the many. As the case of Eigg demonstrates, however, if community trusts are to be one of the vehicles for that transfer, there needs to be substantial preparation

and education at the ground level beforehand. In more specific terms, the work of NGO's like HIF need to be fully recognised and funded in a far more vigorous fashion. They also need to be expanded to not only initiate the self-determination of local communities, but more importantly to bridge the gap between empowerment and the formation of appropriate management schemes and development scenarios. Participatory development has been accepted on the international stage as the most viable and cost-effective methodology for appropriate development. It has been studied, utilised, and funded by the British Government throughout the world. That knowledge now needs to be brought home and applied on our own shores, and in relation to land reform, must be recognised as the most pertinent methodology of policy implementation. For only then will general policy be dynamic enough to adapt to the varied topography and demands of specific locations and situations.

Tackling the land *problematique* in Scotland requires policy initiatives on all fronts' at the same time, only then can the vicious circle of external control, disempowerment, and inappropriate land use be broken. Participation at grass roots level is the essential component for the successful development and application of those policies. Hence, the criticisms directed at the LRPG by Andy Wightman and others in the March land reform conference were based upon the need for both local communities and the wider public to become radically more involved in the contemporary formation of land reform policy for the Scottish Parliament. At the time of writing, despite the anxieties of Wightman and others, there is notable hope of the corner being turned in rural policy and its development. Together with the LRPG's second consultation paper, we are awaiting 3 other reviews on the future of Scotland's designation of SSSI's, laws of public access, and the formation of National Parks. A root and branch reform of rural society, economy, and ecology is already underway, and the political will for its implementation is stronger and broader than ever before. It is above all, however, a process, and as Professor Donald Macleod from the Free Church of Scotland College aptly concluded at the land reform conference in March, it will not finish with the present deliberations over a land reform Act for the year 2000. Appealing to the ecclesiastical principle of *Sempe Reformanda* - that the church needs constant and ongoing reformation – he stressed:

**There can be no one-off solution. The campaign for land reform is driven by ideals: by a desire to curtail the powerful and to empower the disempowered; by a concern for stewardship and community; by a passion for freedom and justice. No one Bill is going to deliver on these ideals; and until the ideals are delivered the campaign will continue, if necessary through Bill after Bill, because we are driven by the most irresistible of all forces: the divine spark of discontent.<sup>8</sup>**

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<sup>8</sup> Macleod, Donald. "Land Reform and Human Values", Understanding Land Reform. pp.52-54. p.54

## Appendix

## A.1 Chronology

9000 BC	Ice sheets of the Pleistone Period retract from Scotland.
6500 BC	Earliest evidence of human settlement in the Small Isles
3000 BC	Arrow head, axe, and other remains found on Eigg
563	St Columba founds Iona Monastery
617	Donann and his Monks are massacred on Eigg
794-1263	Viking domination of the Highlands and Islands
1314	Eigg and Rhum feudal charters granted to the MacDonalds by Robert the Bruce
1354	John MacDonald names himself <i>Dominus Insularum</i> – Lord of the Isles
1498	Lordship of the Isles abolished
1545	The cave Massacre – Dressler’s date
1577	The cave Massacre – Urqhart and Wade Martins’ date
1588	Maclean of Duart massacres the island’s population
1609	The Statutes of Iona
1610	Captain of Clanranald receives a Royal Charter for his land (including Eigg) from James IV
1641	Kildonnan Chapel constructed
1692	Massacre of the MacDonalds at Glen Coe
1695-1699	Famine years on Eigg
1703	Martin Martin writes <u>Description of the Western Isles of Scotland</u>
1707	Union of the Crowns
1715-1716	First Jacobite Rebellion
1743	First recorded potato planted in the Hebrides
1745-1746	Second Jacobite Rebellion
1745	38 islanders deported in reprisals after Culloden
1749	Clanranald employs an “improving” factor
1765	New commercial leases drawn up for island tacksmen
1788	First evictions on Eigg as Cleadale tenants are cleared
1806	William Bald undertakes detailed map of Eigg



1810		17 Crofts established at Cleadale with the removal of Iltaig and Cleadale townships
1820		Kelp prices begin to collapse
1826		Rhum is cleared of its final 300 people for a sheep farm
1827		Reginald Macdonald sells Eigg to Hugh Macpherson for £15,000
1828		Eigg schoolhouse built
1841		Highest recorded population: 546
1846-1857		Potato blight hits Scotland
1853		Eviction of Lower and Upper Grulin, shipped to Nova Scotia
1860		Presbyterian Church built on Eigg
1881		Post Office established at Galmisdale
		Laig, Sandavore, and Kildonnan farms all tenanted by non-indigenous islander
1882		Napier Commission begins investigations into the regional unrest
1886		Crofters Holding Act
		Macpherson family sell Eigg to Robert Thompson
1891		Last forced eviction on Eigg, 49 people moved from Galmisdale to Cleadale
1913		Thompson dies, and Eigg is sold to William Peterson
1914-1918		10 Eigg men lost during the First World War
1919		Land Settlement Act
		Extension of the common Grazings for Chugach crofts
1925		Peterson sells Eigg to Sir Walter Runciman
1930		Eigg Lodge built
1956		Last resident clergyman leaves the island
1966		The Runciman family sells Eigg to Captain Robert Evans for £71,000
1971		Evans sells Eigg to the Anglyn Trust and ‘Commander’ Farnham Smith for £120,000
1975	July	HIDB Table their bid for Eigg
	Aug	Margaret and Keith Schellenberg purchase Eigg for £274,000

- Sept 3 Two resident Benedictine Monks evicted from Howlin, and the Devlin family face eviction from Kildonnan  
Small Isles Community Council established
- 1978** Sept Agreement signed between Schellenbergs and SWT to manage three reserves that overlap the SSSI's
- 1979** July HIBD Chairman opens a new craft centre at Kildonnan
- 1980** Three weddings on the island in one year
- 1981** Margaret and Keith Schellenberg are divorced  
Schellenberg makes five estate farm workers redundant
- 1982** IERA established  
Eigg estate extends its forestry, with grant aid financing 91.2 acres of conifer plantation
- 1986** July SWT employ part-time resident warden (John Chester)  
IERA initiate plans for a new community hall
- 1988** July 13 Schellenberg is sued for his mismanagement of Eigg by his former wife Margaret Williams  
Aug Residents clash with Schellenberg over the Eigg Games Celidh  
Sept Schellenberg transfers ownership to Cleveland and Island Holdings Ltd.
- 1989** July 14 Edinburgh Court of Session determines Schellenberg must sell the island. He appeals the ruling.  
Schellenberg pays for Marie and Colin Carr's eldest son Donny to attend Gordonstoun
- 1990** Dec SWT tentatively offer to buy out Mrs William's half share of the island
- 1991** July 18 IET formed By Liz Lyon, Tom Forsyth, Bob Harris, and Alastair McIntosh  
July 23 Launch of the IET – aiming to raise £3 Million  
Oct 25 IET Trustees address the IERA  
Nov 8 Eigg Residents vote with a majority of 78% to back the IET
- 1992** May 14 Schellenberg formerly puts Eigg up for sale  
May 20 Eigg Feasibility Study of Trust ownership completed for IET  
June 11 Assynt Crofters decide to launch a buy-out of Lochinver Estate.

	July 3	Schellenberg's bid is accepted for the island
	Dec 12	Assynt crofter's bid for North Lochinver estate accepted
1993	Feb 3	The Assynt Crofters take formal ownership of their estate
	Nov	Farm manager, Collin Carr sees his job advertised in the paper and is shortly afterwards by instructed by letter to not go near the livestock or farm machinery
1994	Jan 6	The Rolls Royce and barn burn down
	Jan 21	Schellenberg proposes to sell the island off in parcels
	Feb 8	SWT representative Niel Wilcox formerly meets the IERA
	Feb 24	IERA elect Steering Committee to represent Eigg community in its dealings with SWT and any potential purchase of the island
	Feb 25	" <i>Speaking Out</i> " with Leslie Riddoch
	Mar 11	IERA members attend 1994 HIF conference on land reform
	Apr 1	SWT announce desire to work with Eigg residents
	Apr 28	IET is formerly handed over to the island's residents, 2 non-islanders are included Alastair MacIntosh and Leslie Riddoch
	May 23	Manse and Galmisdale House put up for sale
	Jun 22/23	HIF/ERA run workshops on "Eigg and the Future – What do you Think ?"
	Aug 15	IET launches 15 K fighting fund in Glasgow
	Aug 20	"Islanders will never get rid of me" says Schellenberg – <i>Daily Record</i>
	Aug	Maruma visits the island for 48 hours, during which he signs a deal with Schellenberg on a serviette for the sale of Eigg
	Sept	IERA begins holding community workshops on future management of the island
	Oct	Schellenberg privately asks the SWT to make an offer for the north end of the island
	Oct 20	Evictions notices are issued to the Carr family and John Chester the SWT warden
	Oct 22	Schellenberg's 3 <sup>rd</sup> wife, Suki sues him for divorce and places an embargo on the sale of the island
	Nov 2	Planning for Real meeting on Eigg

	Nov	Stone Eagle visits
	Dec	Schellenberg sends out questionable Christmas cards
1995	Mar 14	Author first visits the island to discuss a new management plan
	Mar 17	Rumours of a £1.5 Million offer on the island, Schellenberg still denies the island is for sale
	Mar 20	Rumours solidifying into Professor Maruma
	Apr 3	Schellenberg is prevented from retrieving William Bald's Map of the island
	Apr 8	Professor Maruma visits the island for the first time as owner
	Apr 10	Maruma meets the IERA
	Apr 12	First questions raised about the new owner's credentials
	Apr 13	Maruma declares intention to invest £15m on the island
	July 1	First island <i>Feis</i>
	1-2	Maruma's second visit to the island and meeting with IERA Appointment of Peter Barz as island manager
	Aug 1	Maruma borrows £1.6m from Volksbank in Plochingen near Stuttgart
	Oct 29	<i>Scotland on Sunday</i> publishes a public poll that heavily backs land sale restrictions in Scotland.
	Nov 3	German Public Prosecutor launches formal investigation into Maruma's financial activities
	Dec 13	SWT Council meeting agrees to basic proposals of a partnership with the Eigg residents
	Dec 14	IERA send a statement of intent to purchase to Thompson, Maruma's solicitor. IERA decide to apply for a Millennium Forrest grant
1996	Jan 8	Millennium Forest Application is initially accepted – yet waiting for Maruma's signature.
	Jan 19	Deadline for Millennium Forest Application passes and without Maruma's support the grant is lost.
	Jan 31	IERA give ultimatum to Maruma for co-operation and resolution of outstanding differences.
	Feb 1	Local MP Russell Johnston proposes that the

- Scottish Office purchase the island
- Maruma fails to contact the community regarding their ultimatum.
- Feb 2 CTAS takes on the Eigg Development Study and channel funds form the Highland Fund for consultants to evaluate and edit Maruma cleared of fraud in Germany.
- Feb 5 IERA send letters to political parties to ask for support and assistance.
- Feb 7 Maruma's bailiffs unsuccessfully try to pay off the artist's debts with an auction of his artwork
- Feb 22 Highland Council's Land and the Environment Committee approves funds and assistance to Eigg residents in pursuing an island buyout.
- Feb 27 The last of the Estate's cattle are shipped off the island and sold to pay for the estate-workers wages.
- Mar 29 Highland Councillors agreed to help set up a public appeal for £1m in order to buy Eigg in partnership with the community.
- April 1 Local Government restructuring in Scotland and the official hand-over to the new Unitary Authorities.
- May 1 MP Sir Russell Johnston tables and Adjournment debate on Eigg. George Kynoch, Scottish Industry Minister, refuses to back Johnston's call for Government assistance for any purchase or intervention on Eigg.
- May 4 HC staff and Councillors hold official meeting with the IERA/IET on Eigg to begin planning the campaign and structure of the partnership.
- May 16 IERA, SWT, and HC announce their intention to apply for Lottery support in any future buy-out.
- July 12 Eigg *Feis*
- July 25 Knight Frank & Rutly and Vladdi Island Enterprises put Eigg up for sale at £2m – no closing date is announced.  
IERA meeting overwhelmingly votes for a buy-out.
- July 26 Public appeal announced
- July 27 Eigg appeal collects its first donation.

- SLF announce support for the Eigg buyout.
- July 31 Ruaridh Nicoll's article in the Guardian attracts the attention of the mystery donor.
- Aug 1 Disagreement between partners over a central co-ordinator for the campaign and grant application.
- Aug 2 Formation of a new Trust, limited by guarantee and consisting of 8 directors – the IEHT – is formerly agreed by the partners. Gordon Fyffe (head of HC public relations) is appointed press officer for the IEHT.
- Aug 12 A database of targeted donors is begun on the island, including friends, extended families and previous visitors to the island.
- Aug 18 Schellenberg goes to Court over the Channel 4 documentary *Filthy Rich : "An Honorary Scot"*.
- Aug 26 Knight Frank & Rutly announce that Eigg sales brochures will be sold at £10 each and profits donated to the Countryside Movement (A pro-hunting lobby)  
HIE reject possibility of compulsory purchase – but offer support and the “last brick in the funding wall”.
- Aug 27 IEHT launch £800,000 public appeal on Eigg.  
20,000 appeal leaflets designed and printed by HC are started to be distributed. Car stickers and appeal T-shirts also released.
- Aug 28 Schellenberg attacks the buy-out plans in the press – “islanders are just a bunch of chancers”
- Sept 5 Press begins to cover stories of splits on the island between indigenous islanders and incomers.
- Sept 9 The last Millennium Forest Application deadline is missed due to no signature from Maruma.
- Sept 17 Decision is made to apply for development costs over and above the simple purchase of the island in the NHMF application for grant aid.  
HC donate a computer for Maggie to use.
- Sept 23-24 HIF hold another series of workshops.
- Sept 25 Scottish Secretary Micheal Forsyth visits the island for 40 mins and gives sympathetic support.

- Sept 30 NHMF receives formal application for grant aid
- Oct 18 Ian Campbell, absentee crofter, forms the Hebridean People of Eigg Group and publicly asks Maruma not to sell the island to the IEHT
- Oct 30 Five-year business plan is submitted to the NHMF – briefly outlined for the press.
- Nov 2 Not the Landowners Ball held in Assembly Rooms Edinburgh.
- Nov 5 SWT launch appeal to the 47 other wildlife trusts
- Nov 6 SNP demand radical reform of feudal land laws in an adjournment debate.
- Nov 13 Donald McFadyen begins legal action against Maruma for unpaid wages (dating back to July 26)
- Nov 15 Sir Russell Johnston tables an Early Day Motion asking for the Government to buy Eigg and give it to the National Trust.
- Nov 19 NHMF meeting regarding the funding proposals for Eigg.
- Nov 20 NHMF announce support for the buy-out in principle, subject to conditions over the future management being met.
- Nov 22 Peter Peacock, HC Convener, publicly asks other bidders for Eigg to step aside.
- Nov 26 The District Valuer, valuing the island on behalf of the Lottery, reaches a value of £1.25 to £1.55 m.
- Nov 28 First deadline for island sale : Trustees table bid £1.2 m (without Lottery support).
- Dec 2 Maruma rejects all bids as too low.
- Dec 4 Press begins to circulate news of the IEHT's clashes with the NHMF – and the potential removal of Lottery support.
- Dec 6 After compulsory purchase had been ruled out once more by HIE and HC, Brian Wilson MP proposes the selective purchasing of parts of the island in order to deter any other buyers – “to make Eigg unmarketable”.
- Dec 10 SWT take the lead in announcing that the IEHT is not willing to change its constitution in order appease the NHMF.
- 1997 Jan 21 NHMF meet again to decide on Eigg application and reject the appeal for funds.

- Jan 22 The two remaining Eigg Estate staff are paid their back wages and dismissed.
- Jan 24 Luciano Pavarotti allegedly in talks with Maruma about establishing a college for 3,000 students on Eigg.
- Jan 28 Formal approach by Dr. Heinz Dieter Kals is made to HC to further the Pavarotti idea – HC refuse the offer of a partnership and the proposed development as inappropriate.
- Jan 30 Schellenberg wins court action over the William Bald Map due to Maruma failing to defend the case.
- Jan 31 IERA meeting unanimously rejects the Pavarotti development idea.
- Feb 28 Mary Scanlon, prospective Tory MP raises questions about HC's involvement with Eigg.
- Mar 5 Renewed bid of £1.5 m tabled by IEHT.
- Mar 13 Hong Kong based financier of Maruma, Hans Rainer Ehrhardt wins court order to enforce the sale of the island.
- Apr 4 Bid from IEHT is accepted.
- Apr 5 News breaks that a deal has been struck.
- Apr 15 IERA constitution is altered and voting rights are given to those “ordinarily resident” – i.e. six months residency per year over two consecutive years.
- Apr 20 4 island directors of the IEHT are elected by secret ballot: Collin Carr, Maggie Fyffe, Donald McLean, and Karen Helliwell.
- May 14 Simon Fraser appointed Chairman to IEHT.
- Jun 11 Hand over celebrations begin with a beacon lit at midnight.
- Jun 12 Official ceremony and celebrations



## A.2 Summarised interview results

The following data was gathered from 41 interviews conducted on the island between the 14<sup>th</sup> March to 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1995. These interviews were conducted primarily within peoples' own homes, and took the form of directed conversations with the following key questions being asked. Whilst discussing these points, references were also made to the workshop results to compare and contrast with individuals' answers. Interviewees were assured that their answers were to remain anonymous. Bar 2 people, all adults over the age of 18 were interviewed (although not all were interviewed separately as many households were interviewed together). The 2 people not covered declined to be interviewed because they felt it was unnecessary and or inappropriate to answer questions on a feasibility study concerning community ownership/ management. Especially when the island was already owned by a private landlord. I tried to approach them after relations had broken down with Maruma, yet by that stage they had firmly sided against the IEHT bid for ownership.

### A.2.1 What was thought of the management workshops run by the IERA ?

- Generally felt to be a good idea and process by everyone/ even those who didn't attend felt them to be useful
- 25 said they were better than residents' meetings
- All stated that they were impressed by the level of agreement
- 28 people believed the small group procedure should be used for all complex decisions
- 8 people expressed problems over the Steering Committee members "directing results too much"
- 4 people said they would not attend them again – i.e. they'd served their use

### A.2.2 What is thought of the present Steering Committee/ Working Development Group and their mandate ? (Their mandate being to "investigate the possibilities for community ownership, and to negotiate on behalf of the community with outside interests".)

- 4 people "had no idea what they were doing"
- 12 people were "unsure" of their mandate and needed it explaining to them

- 39 people, when asked specifically, believed that the Steering Committee/ Working Development Group was competent for negotiating with Maruma and other outside bodies.
- 6 people felt it should be done by all the residents together.
- 21 people emphasised the value of rotating the membership
- 14 people believed that the Steering Committee should be more open

### **A.2.3 How viable is community management on the island at present ?**

- 14 people said yes immediately
- 11 people said no immediately – “you need an owner”
- 16 people said no with reservations:
  - 23 people believed it was financially impossible to run the estate without making a loss
  - Other main reservation being the need for skills and outside assistance/ “we couldn’t do it alone”/ need outside bodies for mediating conflicts on the island
- 29 people believed an outside partner was needed, such as SWT and/or HRC / although distinctly more favouring of HRC than SWT
- Almost everyone expressed the need for entering into the process slowly/ had to be talked about more as a group/
- 24 people said more workshops were necessary to work out the mechanics

### **A.2.4 What position do you see for the IET ?**

- 26 people saw no future for the trust at present/ primarily because there was now a new owner/ should be kept on the back burner/ just in case
- 8 people suggested it needed to become more involved with the community / channelling grants etc./ i.e. should give the land reform/community ownership angle
- 13 thought it should be disbanded
- 5 “didn’t care”

### **A.2.5 What do you think about a community bank ?**

- 28 people very interested in the idea / 11 needed the idea explained
- Many suggested that this could be the new role for the IET

- Several of the older islanders described a credit union that was functioning under the Runcimans/ also said it would be a good idea for Maruma to provide start up funds as an act of good faith – like the Runcimans
- 7 dismissed the idea/ people would take advantage/ just create a new layer of debt.

#### **A.2.6 What do you think of the farming/crofting on the island ?**

- 36 people thought it was in a bad state/ or in decline
- All 8 indigenous pensioners described present farming/crofting in negative terms / many cited this as central problem of decline
- 16 people said this was inevitable / i.e. general decline everywhere
- Most people blamed Schellenberg for ruining the estate farms/ taking all the quotas etc.
- 12 people said too much of the croft land was under the control of just one crofter

#### **A.2.7 Presuming Community input in management: How would you organise farming/crofting ?**

- 26 people wanted to see the estate farm divided into small holding units/ or more crofts.
- 18 people wanted to see a community farm enterprise / wanting to generate more employment on the island
- 22 people wanted more cattle to replace the number of sheep
- Widespread opinion on the possibilities of a market garden/ and or organic food production – though 18 people very keen on organic production/ meat and veg
- Several mentioned fish farming/ shell-fish farming

#### **A.2.8 Presuming Community input in management: How should forestry be organised ?**

- general belief that there wasn't much opportunity in forestry on the island/ although older islanders tended to believe there was
- 28 people believed there should be more planting/ not conifers though !
- 23 people said they would sell wood to islanders and pay some one to cut / plant from the proceeds
- 14 people suggested a saw-mill & dipping tank for using cut timber for fencing/ building

- 9 people mentioned crofter forestry
- 11 people thought wood should be freely available

#### **A.2.9 What are your feelings about tourism on the island ?**

- 32 people believed it to be the primary industry for the island/ the majority did not want to see the levels of early Schellenberg era reached again – overexposed
- 19 believed there needed to be more for people to do on the island if you were going to attract them.
- 17 people emphasised “green tourism” and the need to balance development with what attracts people here in the first place.
- 8 people said they didn’t want any tourists/ “only a nuisance”
- New pier facilities/ shop absolutely vital
- All of those running B&B (official 3, unofficial 3) believed there should be a co-ordinated booking service.

#### **A.2.10 What alternatives for employment can you see apart from fishing, forestry, farming, and tourism ?**

- 22 people couldn’t see anything else apart from what was here already/ just expanded if possible
- 14 people said security of tenure would change everything/ business grants/ more building/ more money on the island etc
- 12 people mentioned computers/ internet access – although only 5 could adequately explain what that entailed
- 18 people suggested arts & crafts /
- Most people cited fuel/freight costs as the principle problem – anything produced on the island immediately had its price increased
- If the island had its own boat/ or Calmac reduced costs then it would encourage greater ingenuity

#### **A.2.11 Presuming Community input in management: What should happen to the lodge ?**

- 7 people said it should be knocked down !
- 16 people suggested a self-catering/ perhaps hostel accommodation for groups
- 13 people suggested high class hotel

- 4 people suggested selling it to the highest bidder/ maybe splitting it up to sell
- Assorted other ideas: Gaelic College, Music School, Outward Bound Centre, Pub/ Restaurant/ Games centre, Centre for Alternative Technology.

**A.2.12 What do you think about establishing a pub on the island ?**

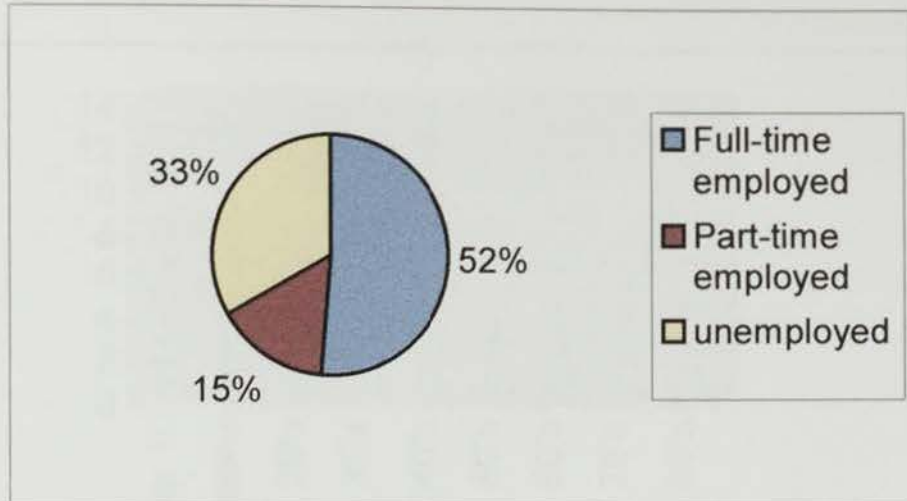
- 17 said no emphatically
- 13 said yes emphatically !
- 6 said yes with reservations (main one being it had to be run by some one off the island)
- 7 believed it would be impossible anyway because you needed a police presence (They still stuck to this even when it was pointed out that this was not the case.)

## A.3 Social economic profile

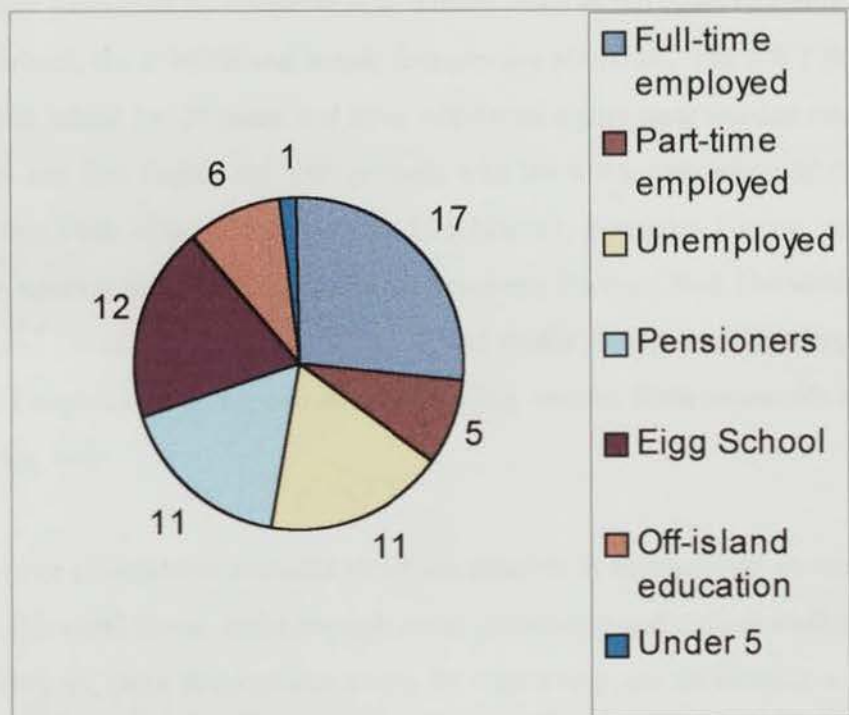
## A.3.1 Eigg population data as of October 1996

Surname	Forename	Age	Origin	Yrs on Eigg	Address	Tenancy	Occupation
Beer	Booby	80-89	London		Cleadale	Croft/Caravan	Pensioner
Campbell	Anne	50-59	Dundee	17	Smithy Cottage	Unsecure	Pensioner
Campbell	Catriona	70-79	Eigg		Cuagach	Croft	Pensioner
Campbell	Marianna	70-79	Eigg		Cuagach	Croft	Pensioner
Carr	Amy	10	Eigg		Kildonnan	Unsecure	Eigg School
Carr	Colin	30-39	Stirlingshire	20	Kildonnan	Unsecure	Tenant-Farmer
Carr	Francis	8	Eigg		Kildonnan	Unsecure	Eigg School
Carr	George	16	Eigg		Kildonnan	Unsecure	Off-Island Education
Carr	Greg	14	Eigg		Kildonnan	Unsecure	Off-Island Education
Carr	Marie	30-39	Eigg		Kildonnan	Unsecure	B&B Manager
Cherry	Cailean	6	Eigg		Hill Cottage	Unsecure	Eigg School
Cherry	Fiona	20-29	Eigg		Hill Cottage	Unsecure	Shop Keeper
Cherry	Mark	30-39	Glasgow	9	Hill Cottage	Unsecure	Shepherd
Cherry	Seanaidh	5	Eigg		Hill Cottage	Unsecure	Eigg School
Chester	John	40-49	Glasgow	10	Millers Cottage	Unsecure	SWT Warden
Cormack	John	40-49	Dingwall	19	Chapel Croft	Unsecure	Post Man
Dressler	Camille	30-39	France	19	Cuagach	De-crofted House	Unemployed
Ferguson	Dolly	80-89	Barra	80	Cleadale	Unsecure	Pensioner
Fyffe	Maggie	40-49	Bolton	20	Cuagach	Croft	Unemployed
Fyffe	Tasha	18	Eigg		Cuagach	Croft	Unemployed
Fyffe	Wes	50-59	Ireland	20	Cuagach	Croft	Unemployed
Greene	Brendan	6	Eigg		Cuagach	De-crofted House	Eigg School
Greene	Brian	40-49	Essex	19	Cuagach	De-crofted House	Unemployed
Greene	Felicia	12	Eigg		Cuagach	De-crofted House	Off-Island Education
Hellivell	Catriona	12	Eigg		Cleadale	De-crofted House	Off-Island Education
Hellivell	Damien	15	Eigg		Cleadale	De-crofted House	Off-Island Education
Hellivell	Karen	40-49	Home counties	22	Cleadale	De-crofted House	Housewife
Hellivell	Simon	40-49	Home counties	22	Cleadale	De-crofted House	Builder
Kean	Kenneth	40-49	Glasgow	8	Pier Cottage	Unsecure	Unemployed
Kean	Shaena	30-39	Forest	12	Pier Cottage	Unsecure	Home Help/ Part time
Kirk	Alastair	30-39	Eigg		Cleadale	Croft	Unemployed
Kirk	David	10	Eigg		Cleadale	Croft	Eigg School
Kirk	Eidh	10	Eigg		Cleadale	Croft	Eigg School
Kirk	Ewen	6	Eigg		Cleadale	Croft	Eigg School
Kirk	Joanne	13	Eigg		Cleadale	Croft	Off-Island Education
Kirk	Laclan	6 mths	Eigg		Cleadale	Croft	Toddler
Kirk	Maihi	40-49	Glasgow	19	Cleadale	Croft	Home Help/ Part time
Kirk	Peggy	60-69	Uist	37	Laig Farm	Unsecure	Pensioner
Kirk	Ruardh	7	Eigg		Cleadale	Croft	Eigg School
Kirk	Sue	40-49	Eigg	17	Cleadale	Croft	B&B Manager
MacFadyen	Donald	30-39	Mull	4	Gamekeepers Cottage	Unsecure	Estate Shepherd
McDonald	Alastair	40-49	Eigg		Cleadale	Croft	Unemployed
MacKinnon	Angus	60-69	Eigg		Cleadale	Croft	Pensioner
MacKinnon	Donald	40-49	Eigg		School House	Tenant	Crofter
MacKinnon	Dougie	80-89	Eigg		Cleadale	Croft	Pensioner
MacKinnon	Katie	70-79	Eigg		Cleadale	Croft	Pensioner
MacKinnon	Morag	40-49	Eigg		School House	Tenant	School Teacher
Mclean	Donald	50-59	Eigg		Cleadale	De-crofted House	Unemployed
Mclean	Hellen	5	Eigg		Cleadale	De-crofted House	Eigg School
Mclean	Teresa	40-49	Cambridge	16	Cleadale	De-crofted House	Unemployed
Melohn	Robert	20-29	Denmark	1	Shore Cottage	Private House	Self-Employed
Miller	Stewart	30-39	Glasgow	4	Cleadale	Caravan/ croft	Fisherman
Robertson	Amber	20-29	London		Cleadale	Croft	Home Help/ Part time
Robertson	Calumn	6	Eigg		Cleadale	Croft	Eigg School
Robertson	Davy	30-39	Glasgow	9	Cleadale	Croft	Crofter
Robertson	Jenny	40-49	South Africa	4	Garden Cottage	Unsecure	Part-Time Gardener
Robertson	Jodie	8	Eigg		Cleadale	Croft	Eigg School
Robertson	Neil	30-39	Edinburgh	4	Garden Cottage	Unsecure	Gardener
Tiarks	Chris	50-59	Home counties	6	Doctor's Residence	Tenant	Doctor
Tiarks	Lillian	50-59	Denmark	6	Doctor's Residence	Tenant	Practice Manager
Tiarks Melohn	Frank	20-29	Denmark	1	Shore Cottage	Private House	Self-Employed
Williams	Barry	70-79	Buckinghamshire	10	Foresters' Cottage	Private House	Pensioner
Williams	Joy	60-69	Buckinghamshire	10	Foresters' Cottage	Private House	Pensioner

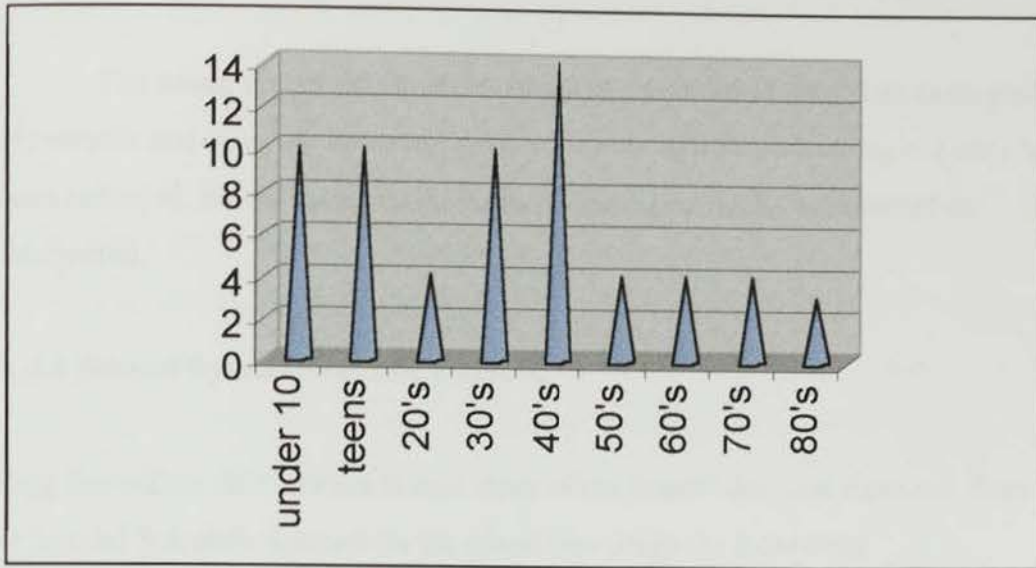
### A.3.2 Employment statistics



### A.3.3 Further Employment Statistics



### A.3.4 Residents' age distribution



### A.4 Wildlife, landscape and conservation interest

Strongly identified by residents and visitors alike as the chief resource and allure of the island, the wildlife and scenic features are abundant. The SWT have been involved on the island for 20 years and have employed a part-time warden since 1986. Golden eagles and Sea Eagles are both present, with the former breeding on the island, and other birds of prey including the Hen Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, and Merlin. Other nesting birds include Manx Shearwaters, Ravens, Red Throated Divers, Corncrakes, and Great Skuas. Marine Otters breed on the island, and a variety of Porpoise and Dolphin can be seen in the surrounding waters. Rare mammals include the unique Eigg Vole.

A number of residents casually assist the warden in maintaining an annual record of the flora and fauna, and although some pamphlets and guided walks are available to visitors, there is enormous scope for improving and facilitating a greater understanding of the island's scenic and conservation heritage. In particular greater information needs to be gathered and detailed regarding the island's wide diversity of rare and threatened habitats, which include: heather, woodlands, peat bog, grassland



and meadows, hay meadows, heathland, coastal habits, marsh and reedbed habitats, hazel and willow scrub, inland cliffs, lochans and the rich surrounding coastal waters.

The island is also rich in archaeological and cultural sites. The same problems of research and detailing however, persist for although 28 archaeological sites have been recorded, few of these structures have been specifically maintained or interpreted.

#### **A.4.1 Sites of Special Scientific Interest.**

Eigg lies within the National Scenic Area of the Small Isles, and there are three Sites of Special Scientific Interest on the island (see Maps for locations):

##### **(i) Cleadale SSSI**

Area: 93.2 hectares (230.3 acres)

First notified in 1964 as part of Eigg SSSI

The steep slopes above the Crofting Townships of Cleadale and Cuagach are designated, with the dominant interest being the Hazel Scrub Woodland below the cliff that also contains Wychelm, Rowan, Aspen, and Blackthorn. Manx Shearwaters nest on the upper slopes, and the grasslands on the lower slopes contain a wide variety of grasses herbs and numerous rare orchids in the pasture. There is also a separate patch below Howlin again containing orchids and rare flora.

##### **(ii) *An Sgurr & Gleann Charadail* SSSI**

Area: 968.1 hectares (2,392.1 acres)

First notified in 1964 as part of Eigg SSSI

This is a Geological Conservation Review Site of national importance, which includes a range of habitats from exposed rocky coasts and cliffs to an extensive upland area. The primary interest lies in the unique mass of columnar pitchstone that builds *An Sgurr*, the largest occurrence of this rock type in the British Isles. The site also contains the largest area of natural willow scrub in Locharber, which provides important habitat for native songbirds.

**(iii) Laig to Kildonnan SSSI**

Area: 377.1 hectares (931.8 acres)

Notified as part of Eigg SSSI in 1964, 1974 and 1981

Another Geological Conservation Review Site of national importance, this includes Hugh Miller's famous reptile bed: the best known British site for Middle Jurassic marine crustaceous fossils. Other features of interest are the scrub woodland, and the outstanding range of western crustacean epiphytic lichens that abound on the slopes of the coastal grasslands. There is also a small separate strip of cliff and gully to the west of Kildonnan.



## **A.5 Infrastructure and services**

### **A.5.1 Access and communication**

An all-year ferry service is operated by Caledonian MacBrayne from Mallaig, which services 5 runs per week and is the principal conveyor of people, cargo and goods. It is state-subsidised, and presently costs £7.10 per person return. A private ferry, the Shearwater is operated from Arisaig, and mainly carries tourists six times a week during the summer season. It presently cost £14-80 per person return. Both ferries are expected to continue for the foreseeable future, although there are plans for the Mallaig ferry to be upgraded to a roll-on/roll-off service in 1998, and the Shearwater will need to be replaced at some point.

For especially large cargoes, such as building materials and livestock, a landing craft called the Spanish John is hired from Knoydart Estate. The service continues to be in doubt as the Estate itself remains in uncertainty. In all cases freight costs are prohibitively high and impose considerable costs on island business and living costs. An island-run boat remains the only realistic solution.

The island has a telephone microwave relay station for telephone reception. This is serviced and maintained by an islander, and is powered by diesel generators.

### **A.5.2 Essential infrastructure**

The Highland Council owns the pier and roads, and an islander under contract maintains these in basic order. All water supply has been private and untreated, although a new supply will be incorporated into the Sheltered Housing development at Cleadale (see below). The previous water and sewage authority, HRC, twice removed septic tank waste from the island, yet it is unlikely that the new body responsible, the North of Scotland Water Authority will do this. The lack of a refuse dump on the island has long been a problem, and since there is no rubbish collection service residents have had to deal with their own wastes themselves. This has led to numerous small unofficial dumps of non-burnable items, and a severe rat problem. Recent campaigning, however, has led to a recycling program starting in which recyclable wastes are collected and shipped off the island on a contract basis.

There is no mains electricity or gas on the island. All gas is transported to the island in cylinders, and small household generators provide most of the electricity. There are also three small hydro generators (1.5 kW in total), and a 10 kW windmill which supplies the school.

### **A.5.3 Housing**

In the Spring and Summer of 1996, four new houses will be built and an existing property rehabilitated for local people, particularly the elderly, by Locharber Housing Association, together with a new day care centre. The project is supported by the Highland Council and Scottish Homes and represents a significant improvement in the island's rented accommodation.

A Housing Action Area covers Eigg and over the past nine years a total contract value of over £380,000 has been contributed through improvement grants. 14 homes have been renovated on the island over the past 20 years, and barring a few minor exceptions non-estate property is in generally sound condition.

### **A.5.4 Education**

Eigg has a primary school that presently has a roll of 12. The head teacher resides in the Schoolhouse, which is in very good condition and is well equipped. After the age of 12, children have to travel off the island to Portree, Mallaig, or Fort William for secondary education. There are no adult education facilities, although residents do organise self-help groups.

### **A.5.5 Health care**

A resident Doctor services the Small Isles from Eigg, where there is a well-equipped surgery. There are strong doubts as to how long this will be maintained.

## A.6 Estate Assets

### A.6.1 Summary of Estate properties

The Isle of Eigg Estate comprises:

Almost the entire Island, including Castle Island (7,400 acres in total)

Eigg Lodge, with outbuildings and sub-tropical garden

Estate Recreation Hall

Galmisdale Harbour, with buildings including restaurant/store and shop/office

14 houses and cottages

The island shop leased

Galmisdale Farm at Sandavore with associated buildings

Howlin Farm

Kildonnan Farm, House and Steading

Laig Farm, House and Steading

16 Registered Crofts at Cleadale and Cuagach

Miscellaneous lettings (Coastguard Station, Roman Catholic Presbytery and Church)

Forestry 465 acres

The following properties are owned independently of the Estate :

House site at No 3 Cuagach

House site at No 2 Cleadale

House site at No 3 Cleadale

House site at No 4 Cleadale

House site at No 5 Cleadale

House site at No 7 Cleadale

House site at No 9 Cleadale

House site at No 13 Cleadale

House site at No 14 Cleadale

House site at No 15 Cleadale

2 areas of ground at No 1 and No 14 Cleadale

2 areas of ground at No 4 Cuagach

Post Office exchange

Shore Cottage and adjoining ground

Th School and Schoolhouse

The jetty and two areas of ground at Galmisdale point

The Doctor's house and surgery

The Roman Catholic and adjoining Presbyterian burial ground

The lighthouse beacon on Castle Island

The former Presbyterian Manse, outbuildings, and ground

The Glebe House

The Presbyterian Church and adjoining ground

The area sold for widening at Cleadale

Grulin Bothy

## **A.6.2 Estate property – tenancy and conditions**

### **(i) The Lodge**

The Lodge was built in 1925 and designed as the feature property of the island. It comprises 10 bedrooms, 3 reception rooms, 4 bathrooms, and kitchen. It has a terrace that looks onto the surrounding gardens of rhododendrons, azaleas, and palm trees.

The Lodge has rarely been used in recent years and until recently was in acceptable condition, although requiring some general repair and painting. The building, however, is currently suffering from an outbreak of dry rot that will require urgent attention. This is compounded by the fact that a survey commissioned in July 1996 has uncovered asbestos lining to the heating conduits. The electrical wiring needs attention, as does the kitchen and a few of the bedrooms. It is unfurnished.

A salaried estate worker and part-time employee, both of whom have horticultural diplomas from Edinburgh Botanics, currently maintain the house and garden. The gardens could be extensively improved if more time was allocated; the employees provide most tools. Wages currently cost the Estate approximately £12,000 (including NI etc)

The house once boasted the most advanced hydroelectric scheme in the Highlands and Islands, however, this was allowed to fall into disrepair within the last 15 years and an aged 4.5 kW diesel generator provides the electricity. Replacing the hydro scheme will cost approximately £30,000, and could provide around 7 kW of power.

**(ii) Domestic properties**

The Estate has 18 other domestic properties, although two of these (Kildonnan and Laig Farmhouses) are rented in conjunction with agricultural holdings, and Kelpie Wood Bothies are just simple cedar cabins. Except for four of the houses, all properties require significant attention and refurbishment.

Two of these houses are tied to Estate jobs, and residents are presently occupying four properties. Two of the houses had rental agreements under Schellenberg, yet these leases do not appear to be active under the present landlord. The other two properties in appalling condition are occupied under grace and favour by an elderly lady and by the SWT warden. Maruma has offered to sell all these properties to their occupants, however no offers have been made. Pre-existing rents netted an approximate sum of £2,400 for the Estate.

Many of the houses have been used for holiday lets in the past but only the Crow's Nest, Brae Cottage and Craigard Cottage could be rented in the short term, following remedial repairs and furnishing.

**(ii) Domestic property condition**

The following summary was compiled by myself and the local builder assessing each of the houses on location. It is only an approximation and no repair costs of repairs could be properly generated without complete structural surveys. The Map reference relates to ? and the location of the property on the island.



Map 163 Properties			
A	Brae Cottage	Unoccupied	Fair
B	Craigard Cottage	Unoccupied	Fair
C	Crow's Nest	Unoccupied	Good
D	Galmisdale House	Unoccupied	Very Poor
E	Garden Cottage	Tied	Poor
F	Gamekeepers Cottage	Tied	Fair
G	Hill Cottage	Informal Let	Fair
H	Howlin Farm House	Unoccupied	Very Poor
I	Kelpie Wood Bothies (2)	Unoccupied	Very Poor
J	Kildonnan Farmhouse	Combined with farm let	Good
K	Laig Farm House	Combined with farm let	Fair
L	The Mill	Unoccupied	Very Poor
M	Millers Cottage	Informal Let	Poor
N	Pier Cottage	Informal Let	Excellent
O	Sandavore Bothy	Unoccupied	Very Poor
P	Sandavore Farmhouse	Unoccupied	Very Poor
Q	Snithy Bothy	Informal Let	Fair

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Excellent = no work,	Poor = substantial overhaul
Good = requiring some attention,	Very Poor = complete rebuilding
Fair = major repairs	

#### (iv) Commercial properties

There are only three commercial properties, The Shop, The Tea Shop, and The Craft Shop. They all fail Health and Safety guidelines, all in need of complete rebuilding, and all the businesses they contain struggling to survive. The Shop consists of a simple corrugated iron building, and the other two buildings were originally built as boat sheds by the pier. The Shop is the only premises which has had a formal lease, and when that was active the Estate saw £100 pounds in rent per annum.

#### A.6.3 Estate farms

There are four conventional farms on the island : Galmisdale at Sandavore, Kildonnan, Laig, and Howlin. The Estate runs Galmisdale Farm, and rents the other three to island residents. All farm lets remain in dispute since Mr Schellenberg's proprietorship and have not been resolved by the new owner. The combined rent per annum of let farms and steadings currently totals £10,900.

**(i) Galmisdale Farm at Sandavore – 3,260 acres**

The Estate farm has suffered particularly badly over the past few years. Buildings (comprising sheep-shed, barn, and assorted out-buildings) and agricultural machinery are to varying degrees in poor condition and require investment to be brought up to acceptable standards.

Bracken has spread extensively, fencing is in bad repair, and access tracks are in need of drainage. In terms of stock and quotas, the farm in the recent past has successfully worked 1000 ewes and 30-40 cattle, providing a good wage for 1-2 farm workers and a healthy profit of some £20,000 to £30,000 for the estate. The ownership transactions between Mr Schellenberg and Maruma, however, have led to the removal of all sheep and their quotas to Mr Schellenberg's new estate. In February 1996 Maruma also sold all the Estate's cattle and cattle quotas. There is one shepherd presently employed by the Estate, who resides in a tied house (Gamekeepers Cottage), although Sandavore Farmhouse has traditionally been the farm's residence. The shepherd's current wage is £11,000 (including NI etc) per annum.

**(ii) Kildonnan Farm - 1,870 acres**

The farm, farmhouse, and steadings are rented to Mr Collin Carr. It is stocked with 1000 ewes and 9 cattle, and Mrs Collin Carr runs the farmhouse as a successful B&B. The farm employs one full-time shepherd. The steadings are in fair condition, although could be considerably improved. The fencing is generally functional. Present rental income to the estate is £10,000 per annum.

**(iii) Laig Farm – 80 acres**

This is rented to Mrs Peggy Kirk, who lives in the farmhouse, and allows the land and steadings to be used by Mr Collin Carr. The land is currently stocked with 11 cattle, the fencing functional and the steadings in need of complete rebuilding. Present rental income to the estate is £900 per annum.

**(iv) Howlin Farm – 500 acres**

This consists of rough hill grazing and is presently rented in conjunction with Kildonnan Farm by Mr Collin Carr. Fencing and drainage is required.

#### **A.6.4 Crofting**

The crofting area on Eigg is confined to Cuagach and Cleadale at the Northwest end of the island. There are 16 registered crofts covering a total of 1,200 acres, including Common Grazings. Some 4 crofts owner occupied 4 officially sublet, and 4 absentee crofters. The Cleadale crofts have approximately 2-6 acres of arable ground, with 12 acres of outrun and a share in 110 acres of Common Grazings. The crofts at Cuagach are slightly larger at 7-16 acres of arable per croft, and a share each in 130 acres of Common Grazings. Only 7 of the 16 crofts are actively worked, and the majority of these by just one crofter. However, new crofters are beginning to take a much keener interest in working the land and plans are presently in progress for fencing the Common Grazings, and applying for a Crofter Forestry Grant. The total rental income for all the crofts is £80 per annum.

#### **A.6.5 Forestry**

Within living memory the island was self-sufficient in all its wood, for building, fencing, and fuel. However, inappropriate management and the complete decline of the processing of timber within the past thirty years has led to only wood being cut for fuel. As such the past three years has seen residents help themselves to a large pile of cut timber left over from previous harvesting. There is consequently significant scope for the development of forestry on the island.

The climate and soils provide a sound environment for tree growth, though inadequate fencing, salt spray, and most significantly, wind are potent constraints. An informal report by Bob Dunsmore of the Forestry Commission in 1992 detailed three types of woodland.

##### **(i) Policy Woodlands**

Established around the Lodge at the South-eastern end between last century and the first half of this century. They comprise very attractive mixed woodland containing a wide diversity of herb species and are fully open to the public. The Manse woods are mostly deciduous and are of great wildlife and amenity value.

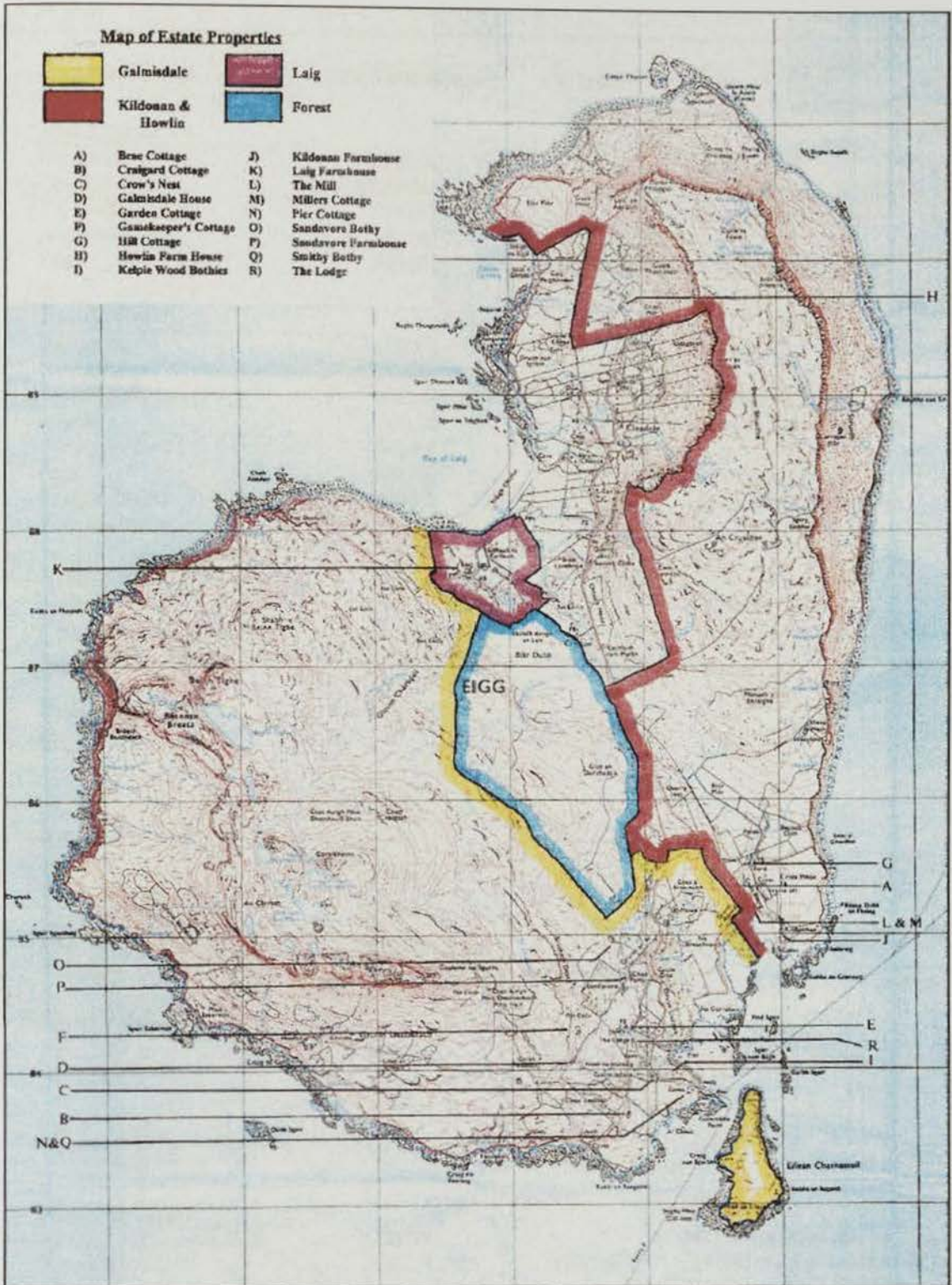
**(ii) Conifer Plantations**

A 456 acre block was planted under the Forestry Grant Scheme during 1981, principally with sitka spruce, lodgepole pine, and Japanese larch, together with some hardwoods and including an area of willow scrub and open ground for conservation purposes. There are also peripheral blocks, planted at the same time, which are suffering from windblow.

**(iii) Semi-Natural Woodland**

Several fragments of semi-natural woodland are included on the Ancient Woodland Inventory, of which a large portion is included within an SSSI. Such sites may well have been continuously wooded for the past 400 years or longer, and as such be classed as Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland.

### A.6.6 Map of Estate Properties



### A.6.7 Estimated financial summary of Eigg Estate management 1995-96

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>£'s Subtotals</b>	<b>£'s Totals</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>The Lodge</b>			
Insurance	1,000.00		Quoted
Council Tax	12,500.00		Including NI etc.
1.5 Staff	754.00		Including tied cottage
Administration	250.00		
Fuel	300.00	14,804.00	Including transport
<b>Estate Farm</b>			
Insurance	2,000.00		Quoted
Council Tax	700.00		
1 Staff & Dog	11,000.00		Including NI etc.
Feeds	5,000.00		Including transport
Vet Expenses	300.00		
Fuel	500.00		Including transport
Freight Costs	250.00		Taking cattle to market
Administration	300.00	20,050.00	
<b>Estate Expenses</b>			
Insurance on properties	2000.00		Estimated
Council Tax on properties	1672.00		5 properties not on C/T roll
Accountancy & Legal fees	2000.00	5672.00	
<b>Estimated Total Expenditures</b>		<b>40,526.00</b>	
<b>Incomes</b>			
<b>Commercial Rents</b>			
Kildonnán & Howlin	10,000.00		
Laig	900.00		
The Shop	100.00	11,000.00	
<b>House Rents</b>			
Pier Cottage	1,992.00		
Hill Cottage	400.00	2,392.00	
<b>Croft Rents</b>			
12 Crofts @ £6 each		72.00	
<b>Farm Incomes</b>			
24 Suckler Cows @ £350	8,400.00		Presumed 90% calving rate, at 1996 market value, with no premiums & no quotas
2 Cows @ £400	800.00	9,200.00	
<b>Estimated Total Income</b>		<b>22,564.00</b>	
<b>Estimated Balance</b>		<b>-17,962.00</b>	

### **A.6.8 Private enterprise**

The island contains minimal private enterprise since there has been little in the way of stability, and little security of tenure upon which to qualify for commercial loans or grants. Tourism obviously represents the island's largest potential for enterprise, but the past 15 years has seen a precipitous decline in the Estate's services and attractions. Even so, an estimated 5000 – 6000 visitors climb off the two ferries each year, and what few businesses there are provide accommodation for those who stay on the island. Whilst there are two B&B's on the island, there are also several informal lets of private houses and caravans.

#### **A.6.8.1 Bed and Breakfast**

Two B&B's are operated throughout the year by Mrs Carr at Kildonnan, and by Mrs Kirk who also rents out part of family croft house in Cuagach as a self catering cottage. They cater for approximately 12-14 people at maximum capacity and are almost completely booked up over the 4-5 months of the season. One part-time staff is employed by each enterprise during peak season (July and August).

#### **A.6.8.2 The Shop**

Run by Mrs Cherry and located in the centre of the island, the Shop provides an essential social service for islanders and tourists alike. Since it has no electricity or running water, has a leaking roof, and is infested with rats it is hardly surprising that the business is hampered by its current premises. High freight charges and the sporadic nature of supplies, which often wait on wet quaysides, also restrict its profitability.

#### **A.6.8.3 Tea Shop & Craft Shop**

The same applies for the Tea Shop and Craft Shop which cater for day trippers by the pier. Inappropriate facilities and lack of tenure have prevented islanders from taking advantage of a potentially lucrative location and trade. At present two islanders run the businesses on a seasonal and informal manner.

**A.6.8.4 Cleadale Arts & Crafts**

Teas and various arts and crafts are supplied in the crofthouse of Mr and Mrs Fyffe in Cleadale. Small and informal, it produces locally produced products for the craft shop as well.

**A.6.8.5 Simon Helliwell Building Contractor**

Mr Helliwell has been responsible for most of the private properties built and refurbished on the island for the past 20 years. As such he has provided a vital source of employment on the island and has ensured that whenever possible labour is locally sourced. He is finishing the rebuilding of one crofthouse, and will shortly begin work on another although he is currently employing no extra staff.



## A.7 Development Study Financial Summary

	Year 1		Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Notes
	£'s Subtotal	£'s Total	£'s Total	£'s Total	£'s Total	£'s Total	
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>							
Estate Farm	66,345						
Lodge	68,000						
Millenium Forest	179,620						
Community Hall	250,000						
Estate	0	563,965	60,000				
<b>Total Capital Expenditure</b>			<b>623,965</b>				
<b>Revenue Expenditures</b>							
							All treated @ 5% inflation
<b>Estate Farm</b>							
Stock costs	13,130						
Management costs	26,100	39,230	41,191	43,250	45,413	47,684	
<b>Lodge Hostel</b>							
Lodge expenses	5,000						
Holiday let expenses	2,300						
Staff	13,000	20,300	21,315	22,380	23,500	24,674	
<b>Millenium Forest</b>							
Averaged Management costs		55,530	55,530	55,530	55,530	55,530	
<b>Estate</b>							
Vacant Properties							
Administration costs	5,500	10,172	10,681	11,411	11,981	12,804	
Management overheads	4,000						
1st Year Legal Provision	18,000	22,000	4,200	4,410	4,630	4,861	
<b>Total Revenue Expenditure</b>		<b>147,232</b>	<b>132,917</b>	<b>136,981</b>	<b>141,054</b>	<b>145,553</b>	
<b>Incomes</b>							
							All treated @ 5% inflation
<b>Estate Farm</b>							
Stock Sales	23,050						
Cattle	7,760						
HLCA's & Premiums	25,256	56,066	58,714	61,716	64,657	67,750	
<b>Lodge</b>							
Hostel	17,740						
Holiday Lets	840	18,580	22,758	25,536	28,033	30,531	
<b>Millenium Forest</b>							
Averaged Grant Income		55,530	55,530	55,530	55,530	55,530	
<b>Estate</b>							
House Sales	35,000		35,000				
Rents	13,720	48,640	13,720	13,720	13,720	13,720	
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>178,816</b>	<b>185,722</b>	<b>156,502</b>	<b>161,940</b>	<b>167,531</b>	
<b>Balance</b>		<b>31,584</b>	<b>52,805</b>	<b>19,521</b>	<b>20,886</b>	<b>21,978</b>	

## A.7.1 Development Study Lodge Proposal

Capital Expenditure						
<b>Capital Expenditure</b>						
<u>Lodge</u>						
General Repairs	5,000					
Electrical Upgrade	2,000					
Fire Regulation Provision	12,000					
Kitchen Refurbishment	3,000					
Furnishings	4,000					
Office Equipment	2,000	28,000				
<u>Power Supply</u>						
7 kW Hydro Scheme	30,000					
Replacement Generator	3,000	33,000				
<u>Holiday Cottage Upgrades</u>						
Crow's Nest	1,000					
Brae Cottage	3,000					
Craigard Cottage	3,000	7,000				
<b>Total Capital Expenditure</b>		<b>68,000</b>				
<u>Revenue Expenditures</u>						
inflation @ 5%						
<u>Lodge</u>						
Insurance	2,000					
Rates	1,100					
Consumables	800					
Administration	300					
Advertising	400					
Fuel	400	5,000	5,250	5,512	5,788	6,077
<u>Holiday Cottages</u>						
Insurance	1,500					
Rates	800	2,300	2,415	2,536	2,663	2,796
<u>Staff</u>						
1 Part-time Groundsman	4,000					
1 Full-time for 8 months	7,000					
NI and Pension etc	2,000	13,000	13,650	14,332	15,049	15,801
<b>Total Revenue Expenditure</b>		<b>20,300</b>	<b>21,315</b>	<b>22,380</b>	<b>23,500</b>	<b>24,674</b>
<u>Income</u>						
Inflation @ 5%						
<u>Lodge</u>						
21 shared Units @ £8						
2 Double Units @ £15						
At Full Capacity generates £1386/wk						
Maximum Sales/ weeks		32	32	32	32	32
Rate of Sales		0	0	1	1	1
Total		17,740	19,958	22,176	24,393	26,611
<u>Holiday Cottages</u>						
Combined £350/ week						
Maximum Sales/ week		16				
Rate of Sales		0	1	1	1	1
Total		840	2,800	3,360	3,640	3,920
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>18,580</b>	<b>22,758</b>	<b>25,536</b>	<b>28,033</b>	<b>30,531</b>
<b>Balance</b>		<b>-1,720</b>	<b>1,443</b>	<b>3,156</b>	<b>4,533</b>	<b>5,857</b>

## A.7.2 Development Study Estate Farm Proposal

	Year 1		Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Notes
	£'s Subtotal	£'s Total	£'s Total	£'s Total	£'s Total	£'s Total	
<b>Capital Expenditure</b>							
<b>Quotas</b>							
1000 Sheep @ £25	25,000						
29 Beef @ £55	1,595	26,595					
<b>Stock</b>							
1000 Ewes @ £30	30,000						
25 Tups @ £170	4,250	34,250					
<b>Remedial Repairs</b>							
Machinery and Fencing	3,500						
Building repairs	1,500						
Office equipment	500	5,500					
<b>Total Capital Expenditure</b>		<b>66,345</b>					
<b>Revenue Expenditures</b>							
<b>Stock Costs</b>							
Sheep Feed	7,000						
Beef Feed	1,450						
Vetinary and Health Care	3,290						
Transport and Sundries	1,390	13,130	13,786	14,475	15,199	15,959	inflation @ 5%
<b>Management Costs</b>							
Contingency Repairs	2,000						
Fuel	800						
Administration	600						
Rates	700						
Insurance	3,000						
1.5 Staff & Dog expenses	15,000						
NI & Pension etc.	2,000						
Auditing & Financial Advice	2,000	26,100	27,405	28,775	30,214	31,725	inflation @ 5%
<b>Total Revenue Expenditure</b>		<b>39,230</b>	<b>41,191</b>	<b>43,250</b>	<b>45,413</b>	<b>47,684</b>	
<b>Incomes</b>							
<b>Sheep Sales (800 total sold)</b>							
Lambs 600 @ £28	16,800						80% lambing
Ewes 150 @ £20	3,000						
Ewes 50 @ £15	750	20,550	21,577	22,872	24,017	25,218	5% increase in stock quality
Wool Sales 25 bags @ £100	2,500						
Sheep Annual Premium	16,000						
Hill Compensatory Allowances	4,600	23,100	24,255	25,468	26,741	28,078	inflation @ 5%
<b>Beef Sales (26 sold)</b>							
24 Calves @ £290	6,960						
2 Cows @ £400	800	7,760	8,226	8,720	9,243	9,798	6% increase in stock quality
Suckler Cow Premium	3,432						
Hill Compensatory Allowance	1,224	4,656	4,656	4,656	4,656	4,656	
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>56,066</b>	<b>58,714</b>	<b>61,716</b>	<b>64,657</b>	<b>67,750</b>	
<b>Balance</b>		<b>16,836</b>	<b>17,523</b>	<b>18,466</b>	<b>19,244</b>	<b>20,066</b>	

### A.7.3 Development Study Remainder Estate Expenditures and Incomes

#### Capital Expenditure

New Storage Barn by Pier 60,000

**Total Capital Expenditure 60,000**

#### Revenue Expenditure

inflation @ 5%

##### Vacant Properties

Council Tax 1,672  
Insurance 3,000 4,672 4,906 5,347 5,614 6,119

##### Management Expenses

Administration & Telephone 1,500  
Legal Fees 1,000  
Auditing 3,000 5,500 5,775 6,064 6,367 6,685

Staff accounted for  
in other projects

##### Estate Management

Refuse Site 2,000  
Committee Expenses 1,000  
Training 1,000 4,000 4,200 4,410 4,630 4,861

##### First Year Provisions

Management Survey 8,000  
Legal Expenses 10,000

**Total Revenue Expenditure 32,172 14,881 15,821 16,611 17,665**

#### Incomes

House Sales 35,000 35,000 1 house sold for  
1st 2 years

##### Rental Incomes

Farm Lets 10,900  
House Rents 2,000  
Shop Rents 300  
Croft Rents 80  
Millenium Forest Lease 440 13,720 13,720 13,720 13,720 13,720 Assumed no  
increase in rent

**Total Income 48,640 48,640 13,720 13,720 13,720**

**Balance 16,468 33,759 -2,101 -2,891 -3,945**

**A.8 Fundraising totals for the Eigg Public Appeal from May 1997 – July 1997**

Pledge Returns and Donations from April to July 1997

Date	07/04/97	10/04/97	12/04/97	14/04/97	15/04/97	17/04/97	19/04/97	21/04/97	24/04/97	25/04/97	28/04/97
Donations	1,582.13	1,560.00	531.00	850.00		400.00	555.00		100.00	280.00	75.00
Donations by CAF	1,225.00	25.00	50.00								
Donations via SWT							250.00		60.00	60.00	
Sub-total Donations	2,807.13	1,585.00	581.00	850.00		400.00	805.00		160.00	340.00	75.00
Total Donations		4,392.13	4,973.13	5,823.13		6,223.13	7,028.13		7,188.13	7,528.13	7,603.13
Pledges Returned in cash/cheque	5,000.00	5,959.00	985.00	1,050.00		915.00	10,646.00	3,670.00	28,935.00	5,790.00	18,885.00
Pledges Returned by CAF		650.00		100.00			4,275.00	1,325.00	875.00		1,260.00
Pledges Returned via SWT							5,290.00	4,935.00	4,130.00	250.00	
Pledges Returned by Credit Card									7,020.80		489.05
Sub-total Pledges	5,000.00	6,608.00	985.00	5,150.00	2,025.00	915.00	20,211.00	9,930.00	41,960.80	6,040.00	20,634.05
Total Pledges Returned		11,609.00	12,594.00	17,744.00	19,769.00	20,684.00	40,895.00	50,825.00	92,785.80	98,825.80	119,459.85
Gift Aid Payments	5,620.88										1,894.74
Total Received	13,428.01	21,622.01	23,188.01	29,188.01	31,213.01	32,528.01	53,544.01	63,474.01	105,594.81	111,974.81	134,578.60
Date	01/05/97	06/05/97	09/05/97	12/05/97	16/05/97	19/05/97	22/05/97	30/05/97	09/06/97	02/07/97	
Donations	95.00	160.00	125.00	1,182.44	228.00	50.00	180.00	320.00	225.00	4,563.77	50.00
Donations by CAF								100.00			
Donations via SWT											
Sub-total Donations	95.00	160.00	125.00	1,182.44	228.00	50.00	180.00	420.00	225.00	4,613.77	
Total Donations	7,698.13	7,858.13	7,983.13	9,165.57	9,393.57	9,443.57	9,623.57	10,043.57	10,268.57	14,882.34	
Pledges Returned in cash/cheque	9,665.00	5,685.00	21,420.00	5,250.00	1,320.00	625.00	230.00	6,600.00	215.00		
Pledges Returned by CAF	75.00										
Pledges Returned via SWT	690.00										
Pledges Returned by Credit Card											
Sub-total Pledges	10,430.00	5,685.00	21,420.00	6,080.00	1,320.00	1,125.00	230.00	6,600.00	215.00		
Total Pledges Returned	129,889.85	135,574.85	156,994.85	163,074.85	164,394.85	165,519.85	166,839.85	173,439.85	173,654.85	173,654.85	
Gift Aid Payments			3,248.43			9,567.42	3,965.00		6,263.44	2,688.32	
T-shirt sales			123.40								
Total Received	145,103.60	150,948.60	175,865.43	183,957.87	185,505.87	186,257.29	200,532.65	207,552.65	214,256.09	221,658.18	

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