

Western Isles Lieutenancy Newsletter - Number 17

August 2023 to December 2023

INTRODUCTION

It has been another historic year as we celebrated The King and Queen's Coronation. I was extremely honoured to have represented the Western Isles at the Coronation Service in Westminster Abbey on the 6th of May. This was followed by the Scottish National Service of Thanksgiving and Dedication at St Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh on the 5th of July, attending alongside Comhairle Convener Cllr. Kenny Macleod, Mrs Gloria MacKillop from Berneray and her nephew Alasdair MacKillop Humphery. We were privileged to hear Joy Dunlop sing a Gaelic psalm written especially for the service by Paul Mealor, in recognition of Scotland's linguistic heritage.

Over 20 events to mark this memorable Coronation occasion were organised locally across the Western Isles and I'm extremely grateful to everyone who helped in so many different ways to celebrate this important event in our history.

It is always important to recognise people and organisations in our community that do things for others. This year we have three people who received honours from The King, we have two Coronation Champions and two voluntary community groups receiving The King Award's for Voluntary Service. Also, we had representation at the Coronation Windsor Concert and over 40 people attended the Garden Party at the Palace of Holyrood as well as five people who attended The Princess Wales Carol service at Westminster Abbey.

Congratulations to Annie MacSween DL and Ronald John Maclean on their MBE awards in the Birthday Honours list. Many congratulations; so well deserved.



We also congratulate retired Lord-Lieutenant Donald Martin DL for his CVO which was awarded by the King at The Palace of Holyrood in the summer.

Further, congratulations to retired Lord-Lieutenant Sandy Matheson CVO OBE DL who was granted the Freedom of the Western Isles by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar at a packed ceremony in the Town Hall on 31st July.



Former and current Lord-Lieutenants at Sandy Matheson's Freedom of the Western Isles ceremony

I take this opportunity, at the close of 2023, to thank the many outstanding statutory, voluntary and community organisations that did so much good work throughout the year to support the Western Isles Lieutenancy in so many different ways.

CORONATION CHAMPIONS

We were delighted that two esteemed volunteers from the Western Isles were recognised for their dedicated community work and awarded Coronation Champion status. Mary Duff, from Ness, was recognised for her work with Taigh Dhonnchaidh Music and Arts Centre and Charlie Nicolson, from Stornoway, rewarded for his work with a number of organisations including Blythswood Lewis and Harris, Scottish Emergency Rescue Association and the Eilean Siar Foodbank.

Around 5,000 volunteers aged from 14 to 103 from all over the UK and supporting a range of causes were nominated. From these nominations, 500 volunteers were hand-picked by a judging panel, presided over by the Queen Consort, and crowned Coronation Champions.

Charlie Nicolson and Mary Duff were included amongst the 500 chosen for this prestigious national award in recognition of their high commitment to volunteering. In total, there were 55 awardees from Scotland.



The Coronation Champions received an official Coronation Champions pin badge, a signed certificate from Their Majesties, and an invite to a Royal Garden Party at The Palace of Holyrood.

More than 60 people gathered in the Territorial Army Drill Hall in Church Street, Stornoway on the 7th of August for Charlie Nicolson's Coronation Champion Award Presentation and by coincidence, there were five visitors from Moldova present as they spent a week in Lewis as part of their UK visit for the Moldova Support Group.



UHI OUTER HEBRIDES GRADUATION CEREMONY

On the 23rd of August, I was honoured to attend the 2023 UHI Outer Hebrides graduation ceremony of its students, together with their friends, family, and staff. In her role as UHI Chancellor, HRH The Princess Royal, wrote in her message to students *"As a new member of our growing alumni community, you will always be part of the UHI family. Congratulations and good luck"*

The ceremony was even more special this year, as it marked the last as UHI Outer Hebrides, as the college now looks to the future as UHI North, West and Hebrides. Guest speaker at the event was Malcolm Burr, Chief Executive of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and an independent member of UHI Court.

ARCTIC RUSSIAN CONVOYS WW2 – NAAFI

On the 25th of August, I had the privilege of visiting "Bertie", the NAAFI van, at Musuem & Tasglann nan Eilean in Stornoway as it toured Lewis to invite stories from the many families of the Russian Arctic convoy sailors from the Hebrides who bravely sailed on these missions during World War Two.



Bertie is pictured at Comunn Eachdraidh Nis and being visited by Peter Avis, Secretary of RAFA Stornoway.



"Bertie" is now 84 years of age and is used by the Russian Arctic Convoy Museum at Aultbea to raise awareness of the museum and its vital work of preserving the memory of the convoys which sailed from the nearby village of Poolewe.

A small team of committed volunteers are working hard to create a multi-site museum around the shores of Loch Ewe dedicated to the Arctic Convoys. It was a pleasure to spend time with Bruce Hudson, one of the volunteer committee members, and hear about their plans and aspirations to develop this worthwhile project.

MERCHANT NAVY DAY



A short service was held at the Stornoway Ferry Terminal on Saturday 2 September to commemorate Merchant Navy Day. Wreaths were laid by the Lord-Lieutenant, Merchant Navy Association and the Stornoway Branch of the Royal British Legion. Rev Gordon Macleod of the Stornoway High Church, himself a former officer in the Merchant Navy, conducted the service

BATTLE OF BRITAIN WEEK – RAFA LOCAL CELEBRATIONS

On 11th September, along with Comhairle Convener Cllr. Kenneth Macleod, and accompanied by the Standards of the RAF Association (RAFA) and Merchant Navy, I attended the flag raising ceremony in Perceval Square of the 'RAFA Ensign' at the start of 'Battle of Britain Week'.



A well-attended Battle of Britain Thanksgiving Service was held on Sunday 17 September at St Columba's Parish Church, conducted by Rev William Heenan.

The following day, Monday 18th, a lowering of the flag ceremony brought the Battle of Britain celebrations for 2023 to an end. The previous evening, Anne and I enjoyed being guests at a RAFA hosted "Battle of Britain" dinner, in the Retirement Centre in Stornoway.

OCTOBER 10TH LIEUTENANCY AGM – SOUTH UIST 2023

This year's AGM was held in Cnoc Soilleir, Daliburgh, with dinner afterwards in the Borrodale Hotel.



Frustratingly, due to ferry breakdown cancellations on the day from Leverburgh and Barra, eleven colleagues and partners from Lewis, Harris and Barra were unable to be present in person for the occasion.

As has been the practice over the years, we took the opportunity of being in South Uist to visit some volunteer-led community organisations. DLs Angus MacIntyre, Alasdair MacEachen and Kenny MacLennan and I enjoyed three inspiring and impressive community visits to Comann Eachdraidh Eirisgeidh, SHARE and Cnoc Soillier. Afterwards, I wrote to them all and thanked them for their time and hospitality and wish to them well for the future.



Visit to Eriskay War Memorial

I also wrote to the Borrodale Hotel for providing nine of us with a fantastic dinner in the evening and for their patience and understanding for late meal and bedroom cancellations as a consequence of the ferry breakdowns earlier that day.

All serving DLs were able to be present at the AGM, those unable to travel joining on line through the excellent IT facilities at Cnoc Soillier.

Another busy, extraordinary and productive year for the Western Isles Lieutenancy which took part in over 80 engagements in the 12 months since the 2022 AGM.

Thanks to Maggie, Angus and Alasdair for local arrangements and planning. Next year's AGM will be held in Barra in September 2024.

HRFCA – NORTHERN MEETING, NAIRN 18 OCTOBER

Highland RFCA's Northern Area Committee members gathered in Nairn for its annual Area Meeting. The Committees typically meet in the autumn for updates on challenges, developments, achievements and future plans.

This was the new Area Chair Major (Retired) Alec Rose's first official Area Meeting since being appointed in the role. Speakers included Mr George Asher, Lord-Lieutenant of Nairnshire, who gave a brief introduction about the Nairn lieutenancy and Mrs Joanie Whiteford, Lord-Lieutenant of Ross and Cromarty, who paid tribute to the role of Lord-Lieutenant's Cadets.

Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Andrew Macnaughton retired from Highland RFCA on 30 November following seven years as Deputy Chief Executive and Chief of Staff. I had the pleasure of meeting Andrew during a Cadet exercise in Uist in 2022. We wish Andrew a long and healthy retirement and thank him for the support he provided to the Western Isles while in post.

EDUCATION WEBINAR 25 OCTOBER

Margaret Doig DL attended (virtually) this Association Zoom webinar held on 25 October where Robert Voss (Hertfordshire) and Diane Hawkins (Greater Manchester) spoke about the innovative work in their Lieutenancies on education and engagement of young people.

Among other things, they talked about the education presentations they have been giving in schools, and an honours project which has been rated "Outstanding" by Ofsted.

LEST WE FORGET – REMEMBRANCE 2023

“Aig dol fodha na grèine agus aig àm dhith èirigh, bidh sinn a’ cuimhneachadh orra”.
“At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them”

The Lieutenancy was represented at 17 wreath-laying ceremonies from Cross to Barra during Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 November, one more than in previous years. For the first time, we were invited to attend the service at the Eriskay War Memorial, where Angus MacIntyre DL laid the Lord-Lieutenant wreath.



This year I attended the Remembrance service at Martin’s Memorial, followed by the normal parade and salute by the Lord-Lieutenant at Carn Gardens in Stornoway, prior to the service at the Lews War Memorial, where there was a large turnout.

I am most grateful to the DLs and the Clerk who attended these services throughout the Western Isles to lay the Lord-Lieutenant’s wreaths. I also want to thank Eilidh Carr for representing me at the Berneray War Memorial.



Parade at Tarbert



Clachan, North Uist War Memorial



Berneray, North Uist War Memorial



Back Remembrance Service



Angus MacIntyre DL lays a Lieutenancy wreath at Eriskay War memorial for the first time.



Crossbost War Memorial



Griminish Benbecula



Bornish, South Uist

DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARD CEREMONY

The annual Awards Ceremony for the Duke of Edinburgh Award took place in The Nicolson Institute, Stornoway on 30 November and I thank Annie MacSween DL for representing me on the day.



Over 100 young people were presented with Duke of Edinburgh Certificates, which is a significant achievement. The excellent presentations given by the participants demonstrated the tremendous effort and hard work which the young people, their leaders and supervisors are committed to in achieving their awards.

DIVERSITY IN THE LIEUTENANCY

Virtual Meeting 7 December with Lord Lyon, Scottish Government & James Hind (Scottish Government's Head of Cabinet, Parliament and Governance)

Most Scottish areas were represented at this helpful and informative meeting arranged to discuss what steps could be taken to broaden the range of candidates being considered for appointment to Lieutenancies, so that each County reflects the communities they serve. Maggie Mackay attended a separate meeting with Lieutenancy Clerks on the same issue earlier in the day.

WESTERN ISLES CADET COMPANY ACF DINNER & AWARDS

DLs Angus MacIntyre and Alasdair MacEachen attended the Western Isles Cadet Company ACF Festive Dinner and Awards Presentation at Congreve House, Balivanich, on Saturday 2nd December.



Angus and Alasdair are pictured along with Major Norman MacLeod MBE and fellow Company instructors.

THE SHED CAFÉ – MARTIN’S MEMORIAL CHURCH, STORNOWAY



It was a privilege to attend the opening of the Shed Café by NHS Western Isles Chief Executive, Gordon Jamieson, on the 5th of December.

Based in the ‘Shed Project’ building on Francis St, Martin’s Memorial Church, this café initiative provides a social space that allows customers to engage with individuals whose lives have been affected by alcohol or drug addiction, helping them on their recovery journey.

NEW YEAR HONOURS LIST 2024

We extend our warmest congratulations to Norman “Dokus” Macdonald, Uig, Lewis on his award of the OBE in the New Year Honours List announced on 30 December. Norman’s long and distinguished service to the communities of Uig and the Western Isles has been justly recognised by this award.

It was equally pleasing to see Malina Macleod, Lochportain, North Uist receiving the award of the MBE for her outstanding service in social care and health to the North Uist community. Malina, dedicated herself to a career in nursing and social care for over 60 years.

Both Norman and Malina have provided an outstanding service to our communities, in their various roles, for a considerable length of time and we are delighted that their contribution has been recognised with this prestigious honour.

80TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE LIBERATOR USA AF B24, NORTH LEE, LOCHMADDY

The USA AF B24 Liberator crashed on North Lee, Lochmaddy on the 15th September 1943 with the loss of 10 US airmen. A service took place on Friday 15th September 2023 at the Clachan War Memorial to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the crash. The service was led by Rev Alen McCulloch, followed by a two-minute silence and the laying of a wreath by the Lord-Lieutenant.



Among the community representation present was Norman Johnson from Lochmaddy. He was 10 years of age at the time and he spoke on Gaelic radio of his knowledge about the crash

KING'S AWARD FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE

We were delighted that two Western Isles voluntary organisations, SHARE based in South Uist and Lewis based Long Term Conditions Hebrides were awarded The King's Award for Voluntary Service. This is the highest award a local voluntary group can receive in the UK and is equivalent to an MBE.

The two charities are amongst the 262 winners from across the UK and 20 from Scotland, who received the prestigious award this year. It's particularly noteworthy that the representation of the Western Isles in the list of winners demonstrates just how well the area is represented within a national context.

The King's Award for Voluntary Service recognises outstanding work by local volunteer groups that benefit their communities. It was created in 2002 to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee and, following his accession, His Majesty The King emphasised his desire to continue the Award.

SHARE operates a thrift shop and café in Daliburgh, South Uist and reaches out to older people in the community, some of whom are lonely and isolated. It stands out for being a complete volunteer-led organisation that provides services which fill a gap in local service provision. It also reduces household expenditure on books and clothes and reduces the community's carbon footprint. Incredibly, SHARE has distributed over £80,000 to other worthy local causes. This is an amazing contribution and all achieved through an extraordinary successful and well operated volunteer group.

Long Term Conditions Hebrides (LTCH) provides support, advice and guidance to people living with Long Term Conditions in Lewis and Harris. This well managed group is volunteer-led in terms of direction and oversight and has been a "self-starter" organisation, providing support for people who suffer from anxiety, lack confidence, are socially isolated or who are dealing with mental well-being matters. It uses social media to promote its services, working hard to reach out to individuals who may benefit from the support available. Strong links with local GP practices is a significant factor in its success and strengthens the profile and reputation of Long Term Conditions Hebrides within our community.

PRINCESS OF WALES CAROL SERVICE IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY



Tom Clark and his wife Donna, from Point in Lewis, were among the five Western Isles attendees at the Carol Service.

We're very pleased that we are able to fill our allocation of invitations, particularly due to the time and cost of attending from the Western Isles.

The service was subsequently broadcast on Christmas Eve, and is becoming a regular feature of the UK's Christmas celebrations.

2024 ROYAL GARDEN PARTY

We expect to receive the official invitation for nominations for the 2024 Royal Garden Party at the Palace of Holyrood shortly. Offering a Garden Party invite to some of our deserving community volunteers is a real pleasure and we continue to fill our allocated spaces every year.

COMMISSION FOR CLERKS OF LIEUTENANCIES

As a mark of appreciation for the work done for the Lieutenancy by Clerks, a Commission was approved by the Association for use, as desired, to fit local circumstances in each County.

To mark our gratitude, I had the pleasure of presenting our own Lieutenancy Clerk, Maggie Mackay, with her Commission when I visited her at work in the offices of Anderson Macarthur on 18 December.

Maggie does an enormous amount of work on our behalf, all of it on a voluntary basis. Everything she does on behalf of the Lieutenancy is much appreciated.

CORONATION TREES

All Lord-Lieutenants, courtesy of The Queen's Green Canopy, received funding for a Coronation tree and plaque to be planted in each County, with a view that they would be planted before the end of March 2024. I'm grateful to the Stornoway Trust for their support and identifying a suitable location for the Coronation Tree to be situated within the community-owned Castle Grounds.

KNOWN LIEUTENANCY EVENTS AND ENGAGEMENTS JANUARY TO JUNE 2024

HMV Iolaire Remembrance Service and wreath laying: New Year's Day

St Columba's Parish Church Guild – Talk on my Lieutenancy experiences since my appointment as L-L, 12th February

KAVS Presentation Event for LTCH – 17 February

KAVS Presentation Event for SHARE – 23 February

TBC Planting of Coronation Tree, Castle Grounds, Stornoway – before end of March.

Coronation Champion Award Ceremony – Mary Duff, Taigh Dhonnchaidh, Ness tbc

Scottish Lord-Lieutenants' Association AGM Holyrood House Palace Edinburgh: 27 March

HFRCA AGM Dundee – 20 April

Ross Mountain Battery Drill Hall Memorial to commemorate those from the Western Isles who paid the ultimate sacrifice at Gallipoli 1915: 26 April tbc

King's Reception Buckingham Palace for new and retiring Lord-Lieutenants – 30th April tbc

St Valery & Dunkirk Memorial Service at Griminish War Memorial in Benbecula: 31 May tbc

Armed Forces Day Flag Raising in Perceval Square: 24 June tbc

Association of Lord-Lieutenants AGM & Seminar – London 25 & 26 June tbc

2024 Royal Garden Party, Holyrood Palace, Edinburgh; end June/early July tbc

WEBSITE

Any member of the public interested in the Western Isles Lieutenancy or enquiring about Honours Nominations, King's Award for Voluntary Service, King's Award for Enterprise etc can find links to these topics on the Lieutenancy's website at www.westernisleslieutenancy.org.uk

CONCLUSION AND THANKS

Reflecting on the last year, the Western Isles Lieutenancy can take pride in the success of local celebrations and events held to mark the historic Coronation of King Charles and Queen Camilla in May. As Lord-Lieutenant, I wrote to tender our sincerest best wishes on their Coronation as King and Queen, and to say that we are looking forward to welcoming our King and Queen and other members of the Royal family to the Western Isles in the coming years.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge my continued appreciation to the Vice-Lord Lieutenant, Clerk and staff at Anderson MacArthur, and all DLs for your support and assistance throughout the year and for deputising for me at various events throughout the year.

The Lieutenancy newsletter circulated to DLs by email and posted on our Lieutenancy website provides an overview of key matters and events taking place throughout the year. I wish to thank Donald "Sealgair" Macdonald for his helpful and generous support in maintaining the website.

