

Western Isles Lieutenancy Newsletter - Number 20

January to June 2025

The Western Isles Lieutenancy@50 (1975–2025)

It is fifty years since the establishment in 1975 of the Western Isles Lieutenancy and to commemorate this significant milestone it is planned that a magazine style booklet will be ready for release in the Autumn.

The “in house” Working Group, and Donald Martin in particular, have been working extremely hard to bring together a record of some of the key events that has taken place since then. This publication will provide a historical record of the past 50 years and we look forward to seeing the book taking shape as it enters into the design and layout phase.

At the moment, we are aiming to arrange a book launch event sometime in the late autumn.

Western Isles Honours 2025 - King's New Year and Birthday Honours List

I was delighted that three Western Isles citizens were named in HM The King's New Year Honours list and that a further four were named in HM The King's Birthday Honours list in June.

HM New Year Honours (January)

Mrs Elizabeth McAtear OBE, volunteer, Castlebay, Isle of Barra, for services to the Western Isles.

Mr William Macfarlane Lawson BEM, genealogist, Northton, Isle of Harris, for services to the community in the Western Isles.

Mr Charles Bruce Nicolson BEM, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, for Voluntary and Charitable Service in the Western Isles.

HM Birthday Honours (June)

Mr Angus Campbell OBE, Ludag, South Uist - For services to the Scottish Fishing Industry

Mrs Lorna Norgrove OBE, Uig, Isle of Lewis - Linda Norgrove Foundation. For services to Women and Children Abroad and in Scotland.

Mr John Norgrove OBE, Uig, Isle of Lewis - Linda Norgrove Foundation. For services to Women and Children Abroad and in Scotland.

Mr Donald John MacSween OBE, Point, Isle of Lewis - For services to the community of the Western Isles.

The awards reflect the rich talent of our islands and we take pride in seven of our citizens being recognised for their exceptional contributions to our community and much further afield, over many years.

In awarding this national honour, The King is recognising their achievements by acknowledging the work they have done and the legacy they have created. For this newsletter, we have photos from two of the Medal presentations.



Betty McAtear OBE



Bill Lawson BEM

Of course, all of this would not be possible without people making the effort to submit nominations and I also thank them for taking the time to do so. We all know of people who we think should be given an award for some outstanding work in our community but always assume that someone else will make the nomination.

Anyone can receive an award if they reach the required standard of merit or service and it is open to anyone to nominate a person for an award. The process is very simple and straightforward. Full information and guidance notes are available on www.gov.uk/honours and lieutenancy colleagues are always available to give advice and guidance on the procedure for making a nomination.

Iolaire Remembered

The annual commemoration and wreath-laying service took place at the Iolaire Memorial at Holm on New Year's Day 2025.

The service was attended by relatives of those lost, members of the public, Lord-Lieutenant, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Convener, along with representatives of the local branch of the Royal British Legion and a number of other local organisations.

The weather was initially favourable as people gathered but turned wintry and cold throughout the service.

Two hundred and one lives were lost out of the 280 men on board when HMY Iolaire hit rocks and sank at the Beasts of Holm, about a mile from Stornoway Harbour, making it the UK's worst peacetime maritime disaster.



Rev Gordon Macleod leading the service

100th Birthday presentation



On 5th February I had the honour of presenting Mr Leslie Eller with the King's 100th birthday card and message as he celebrated his special day with his family, some of whom had travelled from the mainland for the occasion.

In addition, Comhairle Convener Cllr Kenny Macleod presented Leslie with a gift on behalf of the communities of the Western Isles.

We then enjoyed some delicious birthday cake and hearing from Leslie about his life experiences. A remarkable gentleman. He is presently living in Linshader with his daughter Lorna and son in law, Tony Pendle.

Betty McAtear OBE Investiture Ceremony at the Palace of Holyrood February 2025

Our retired Vice- Lord- Lieutenant Betty McAtear OBE attended her Investiture Ceremony at the Palace of Holyroodhouse in February to receive her OBE Award from HRH The Princess Royal.

A proud day for the McAtear family, Barra and the wider Western Isles community.



Left to Right - Lorna, Danny, Betty and Lynsay

Youth Organisations Webinar

I attended this online Association webinar held on 6th March which included a number of interesting presentations on the importance of improving outcomes for young people. This included a presentation on the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, an organisation that makes a huge and significant contribution in the Western Isles through the local Awards Committee and supported by the Comhairle's Community & Development Service.

Sergeant Lee Harkness of 1st Battalion The Highlanders Army Cadet Force

Alasdair MacEachen DL attended an event to mark Lee Harkness's departure from the Comhairle Planning Service in Uist on 27 March 2025.

In the course of his seven years in Uist, (Sgt) Lee Harkness played an important role in the Army Cadet Force, Western Isles Company.

We thank Lee for his tremendous voluntary contribution to the Army Cadet Force and wish him all the best as he moves back to the mainland to take up a Planning post with the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)



Lord Lieutenants' AGM 20 May

I attended the AGM at St James's Palace on 20th May with the majority of Lord-Lieutenants from throughout the UK able to be present. In addition to dealing with the usual finance and administrative business, The Lord Chamberlain, The Rt Honourable Lord Benyon GCVO addressed the Association, after which Mrs Johanna Roper, North Yorkshire, gave an update on the King's Award for Voluntary Service. This was followed by senior figures from HM The King and the Royal Household who spoke about the work of His Majesty and the Household. A most helpful and informative meeting with an opportunity to ask questions and network with Lieutenancy colleagues and Royal Household staff.

Death of Pope Francis - 2 April 2025

The world was sad to learn of the death of Pope Francis on the 2nd of April 2025, a spiritual leader whose papacy not only reshaped the Catholic Church but was also a worldwide influence defined by compassion, humility, and a relentless pursuit of justice for the marginalised. The Prince of Wales represented The King at Pope Francis's funeral on 26th April 2025.

King Charles sent the following message to the Vatican at the time of the Pope's passing, stating His Holiness will be remembered for his compassion, his concern for the unity of the Church and for his tireless commitment to the common causes of all people of faith.

"My wife and I were most deeply saddened to learn of the death of Pope Francis. Our heavy hearts have been somewhat eased, however, to know that His Holiness was able to share an Easter Greeting with the Church and the world he served with such devotion throughout his life and ministry."

His Holiness will be remembered for his compassion, his concern for the unity of the Church and for his tireless commitment to the common causes of all people of faith, and to those of goodwill who work for the benefit of others. His belief that care for Creation is an existential expression of faith in God resounded with so many across the world. Through his work and care for both people and planet, he profoundly touched the lives of so many.

The Queen and I remember with particular affection our meetings with His Holiness over the years and we were greatly moved to have been able to visit him earlier in the month. We send our most heartfelt condolences and profound sympathy to the Church he served with such resolve and to the countless people around the world who, inspired by his life, will be mourning the devastating loss of this faithful follower of Jesus Christ.

Charles R''

Memorial Service for the 35th Anniversary of the Shackleton Crash on Harris

On 30th April 1990, a RAF Shackleton of No 8 Squadron, WR965, tragically crashed on the Maodal Hill in Harris, killing all ten people on board.

On 30th April 2025, in partnership with the 8 Squadron Association and members of No 8 squadron, South Harris Community Council organised a non-denominational Memorial Service at the South Harris Free Church in Leverburgh. It was a privilege to be present, with Katie Ann MacKinnon DL, amongst the large number who attended the service.

The service was led by Rev Mark Macleod with addresses from Wing Commander (retired) Nick Byatt and James Vinales, Incident Commander of the Maodal crash.

Prayers were said by Dr Andrew Naylor, local GP, who was present at the scene on that tragic day, and Church of Scotland Minister Rev Iain Murdo Macdonald.

Following a minute's silence, hospitality was provided at Leverburgh Village Hall and thereafter there was a wreath laying ceremony at the Memorial Plaque now located at Seallam Car Park.

Buckingham Palace Garden Party on 14th May

King Charles hosted a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace to recognise those working in the education and skills sector and those who have dedicated their time to furthering the development of education and skills to benefit all areas of society.

Two invites were allocated to the Western Isles Lieutenancy and we were delighted to nominate Angus and Lena MacLennan from Gress in Lewis to represent our area.

They have both given a considerable and highly regarded service to education in the Western Isles.



Angus and Lena MacLennan

Comhairle@50 – Events held to mark 50 years of Comhairle nan Eilean

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar marked its 50th anniversary with an event in Stornoway Town Hall on Friday 16th of May, including the launch of a book “50 years of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.”

Speeches were delivered by Convener Cllr Kenny Macleod, Donald Martin CVO, former Leader Angus Campbell and current Leader Cllr Paul Steele.



Five Lieutenancy colleagues attended the Town Hall event.

L-R: Donald Martin CVO, Annie MacSween MBE, Sandy Matheson CVO OBE, Alasdair MacEachen DL and L-L Iain Macaulay

This was followed by a further commemorative evening led by Alasdair MacEachen at the Barra Heritage Centre on 11th June and at Sgoil Lionacleit on Thursday 12th June, featuring Alasdair MacEachen, Roddy ‘Poker’ Macdonald and L-L Iain Macaulay.

Much progress has been achieved by the Comhairle over the past 50 years and it was good to catch up with past Members and colleagues.

The Palace of Holyroodhouse Garden Party on 1st July 2025

Around 30 guests from the Western Isles will be attending this year’s Royal Garden Party at the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh next month. Offering a Garden party invite to some of our deserving community citizens and volunteers is a real pleasure and we look forward to sharing some photos of the day in the next newsletter.

Western Isles Cancer Care Initiative (WICCI) at Buckingham Palace Garden Party on 30th April 2025

On 30th April 2025, four representatives of the Western Isles Cancer Care Initiative (WICCI) attended a Royal Reception at Buckingham Palace hosted by The King and Queen in recognition of their exceptional work supporting individuals and families affected by cancer in the Western Isles.

The organisation provides vital financial support through its Social Fund, offering grants of up to £400 to help ease the burden for people affected by cancer. This practical support can help cover travel expenses for treatment, heating costs, and other essential needs that arise during a cancer journey.

The whole event was an amazing experience and a huge success, with WICCI Manager Caroline Maciver, CnES Macmillan Benefits Advisor Kay Mackinnon, dedicated WICCI Trustee and fundraiser Mairi Helen Macdonald, and WICCI Trustee, secretary and Vice Chair for the Hebridean Men’s Cancer Support Group, Don Maclean, attending.

In addition to attending the reception, WICCI was also selected as one of just five organisations to showcase their work at the event. This was a remarkable opportunity to share how their local efforts are making an impact. WICCI, a registered charity, presented the work they do to support people who are dealing with cancer, working in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support, the NHS and Local Authority to address needs and offer targeted assistance for the specific challenges faced by cancer patients and their families across the Western Isles.



Caroline Maciver (WICCI Manager) Mairi Helen Macdonald (WICCI Trustee) Don Maclean (WICCI Trustee and Hebridean Men's Cancer Support Group), Kay Mackinnon (Macmillian Benefits Advisor, CnES)



Caroline and Mairi Helen meet the King at the reception in Buckingham Palace

Bill Lawson's British Empire Medal Presentation 8th May

It was a great pleasure for me to present Bill Lawson with a British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to the community in the Western Isles.

Over 50 people gathered at Hebrides People Visitor Centre in Northton to see Bill receiving the well-deserved BEM Medal, after being named in HM The King's New Year Honours list. The BEM award recognises the important work Bill and his late wife Chris did to promote, record and preserve the genealogy of the Western Isles to people all over the world, as well as acknowledging the legacy created by the development of the Hebrides People Visitor Centre.

The evening was Chaired by Catriona MacLennan, Northern Heritage Trust Vice Chair. Katie Ann Mackinnon DL read the Citation, with speeches from Convener Cllr Kenny MacLeod, retired DL Annie MacSween MBE and Rebecca Hutton, Chair Northton Heritage Trust. In addition, Jayne Macdonald beautifully sang two of Bill's favourite Gaelic songs. This special evening concluded after everyone enjoyed a delicious buffet provided by Croft 36.



The British Empire Medal was first created in 1922 and, after being in abeyance between 1993 and 2012, the practice of awarding the Medal was resumed in June 2012 to coincide with the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. There were 1203 Medals awarded in the 2025 New Year's Honours list and of them, 317 were BEMs.

VE Day 80th Anniversary on 9th May

The 80th Anniversary of Victory in Europe Day was marked with flag raising ceremonies throughout the Western Isles, at Stornoway, Tarbert, Balivanich and Castlebay.

This year's commemoration, along with similar ceremonies and events across the country, marked the 80th anniversary of the end of World War Two. It was a great privilege for me to lay a wreath on behalf of HM The King at the Stornoway service, alongside Comhairle Convener, Cllr Kenny Macleod, who laid a wreath on behalf of the Western Isles community.

Cllr Kenny Macleod Convener of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar said: *"80 years on from the conclusion of the conflict it is important that we come together as a community to remember the service and sacrifice of members of the armed forces in World War II. As time passes, we cannot allow the memory of these individuals to become distant."*

Iain Macaulay, Western Isles Lord-Lieutenant added: *"It is only right that we remember the tremendous effort made by the Armed Forces and everyone involved on the home front through 5 years of fighting and hardship. Many lives were lost and many others were permanently injured. We gratefully remember the courage and sacrifice of everyone involved in the fight for our freedom. The 80th Anniversary of VE Day is a time for thankfulness, reflection and remembrance"*.

80th Anniversary of Victory in Europe Day



Lewis War Memorial



Stornoway, Perceval Square



Tarbert, Harris



Castlebay, Barra



Balivanich, Uists

Flag was raised by Derek Collins, representing the Royal British Legion Scotland (Uist Branch), to the Pipe Tune Celebratum, composed by Stuart Liddell to mark the 80th Anniversary of VE Day



Western Isles Cadet Company AFC with L-L at the VE Day 80th Anniversary on 9th May at Stornoway

Trooping the Colour in London on 14th June

Members of the Royal Family came together to mark The King's official birthday with the annual Trooping the Colour at The Horse Guards Parade, showcasing the best military pageantry and celebrating the Monarch's links to the Armed Forces.

Viewing The Trooping of the Colour from Dover House, Whitehall, was Margaret Ann MacLeod, CEO of Harris Tweed Hebrides and Torcuil Crichton, Western Isles MP, as guests of the Secretary of State for Scotland.



Cadet Presentations in Harris 26th May

I had the pleasure of joining Cadets and Adult Volunteers from the Western Isles Company ACF at a ceremony in Tarbert Community Hall on the 26th of May, when I presented Cadet Corporal Anna Chisholm with her Lord-Lieutenant's Cadet Certificate and badge. I look forward to having Anna in attendance at many engagements over the next year. Her first engagement was supporting Katie Ann Mackinnon DL at the Tarbert Armed Forces Day Flag raising event.

As the Lord-Lieutenant's cadet, Anna will assist the Lord-Lieutenant in carrying out official duties at various civic and ceremonial events in the Western Isles.

On the same evening, it was my honour to present Staff Sergeant Instructor Mairi Crate from the Harris Army Cadet unit with the Lord-Lieutenant's Certificate of Meritorious service. Although SSI Crate is living in Stornoway, she travels to Tarbert on a regular basis to undertake her Instructor duties with the local Detachment, highlighting her amazing level of commitment to her Unit.



Corporal Anna Chisholm receiving the Lord-Lieutenant's Cadet Certificate and Badge



Staff Sergeant Instructor Mairi Crate receiving the Lord-Lieutenant's Certificate of Meritorious Service

St Valery and Dunkirk Memorial Parade Service at Griminish War Memorial 12th June 2025



King's Coronation Medal Presentation to Western Isles Company ACF 12th June

The Kings Coronation Medals were presented by Deputy Lieutenant Angus Macintyre to five Volunteers from Western Isles Company ACF in Benbecula June 12th.



Photo taken after the annual St Valery and Dunkirk Memorial Parade Service on 12th June

L to R Cadet Corporal Anna Chisholm, Lord Lieutenant's Cadet, Angus Macintyre DL, Sergeant Instructor Connor Morrison, Stornoway Detachment, Company Sergeant Major Ian Moar, Benbecula Detachment, Staff Sergeant Instructor Peter Greenstock, Stornoway Detachment, Sergeant Instructor Alasdair Macleod, Stornoway Detachment

Armed Forces Day 23rd June

On 23rd June, Flag raising ceremonies were held in Stornoway, Tarbert, Balivanich and Castlebay to commemorate Armed Forces Day and was lowered at a ceremony on Monday 10th July. This annual event is a key occasion in our partnership diaries, showing our support for the men and women who make up the Armed Forces.

Representatives from the Lewis and Harris Youth Pipe Bands and the Lewis & Harris Youth Concert Band performed to support the Veteran Colour Party. Convener of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Cllr Kenny MacLeod said " *Armed Forces Day gives us an opportunity to recognise the service of current and past members of the Armed Forces*"



Stornoway

With Members of the Lewis & Harris Youth Pipe Band and Veteran Colour Party.



Balivanich

Alasdair MacEachen DL, Derek Collins & Pat Holtman representing the Royal British Legion Scotland (Uist Branch)



Barra Ruaraidh MacNeil, former RAF Corporal raising the Armed Forces flag, with his grandson in the foreground



Tarbert Katie Ann Mackinnon DL and L-L Cadet Anna Chisholm

Known Lieutenancy Events and Engagements July to December 2025.

Royal Garden Party, the Palace of Holyrood, Edinburgh; Tuesday 1st July.

BEM Presentation – Charlie Nicolson, Thursday 3rd July.

Armed Forces Flag Lowering service Monday 14th July.

VJ Day Anniversary Commemoration Events, Friday 15th August.

Merchant Navy Day Stornoway Harbour Saturday 6th September.

Raising RAFA Ensign Flag, Perceval Sq, Monday 8th September.

Battle of Britain Parade, St Columba's Church, Sunday 14th September.

Lower RAFA Ensign Flag, Perceval Sq, Monday 15th September.

Western Isles Lieutenancy AGM, Isle of Harris, Wednesday 24th September.

TBC Western Isles Lieutenancy 50th Anniversary Publication

Armistice Services across the Western Isles, Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th November.

TBC Christmas Carol service hosted by HRH Princess of Wales in Westminster Abbey; December.

Conclusion

As always, my grateful thanks to all my Lieutenancy colleagues, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, partner agencies and voluntary organisations for their support and encouragement over the past six months. The level of volunteering and commitment to community working in the Western Isles makes our Islands a truly special place to live and work in. Finally, many thanks to DL Maggie MacKay, Lieutenancy Clerk, for her dedication and hard work, often on a daily basis.



Iain Macaulay, Lord Lieutenant, Western Isles