

Foreword

THE volume you are now holding contains a selection of papers given at two separate conferences arranged by the Scottish Society for Northern Studies. The first conference took place in Castlebay, Barra, in April 2002, and the second conference was arranged at Sabhal Mór Ostaig, Teangue on the Isle of Skye in April 2003.

These nine papers, five about aspects of Barra and four concerning Skye, are not meant to offer anything like a consolidated line of history of the two islands. They do, however, bring together facets of research from highly respected authorities within their own specialities, concerning the islands' past and present times. The compilation of articles reflects the very multi-disciplinary approach taken by the Scottish Society for Northern Studies.

This book would of course never have happened were it not for the Scottish Society for Northern Studies and the Society's programme of annual conferences in Scotland and beyond. Over the years this series of conferences has brought together local historians and academic experts and has activated interest and pride in many aspects of the history of regions and local communities. A string of publications has resulted from many of the conferences, of which the current volume is one.

The spelling of place-names in the articles is mostly left to the individual authors but most have followed the principle that since this volume is in the English language English spelling will be used when there is an established tradition for it. In practice this means that Gaelic spelling is used for smaller places and English for larger locations like towns and islands.

Some people have contributed substantially to this book, and both their support and practical help need to be acknowledged. Alasdair Ross was in charge of the Skye section until the final stages of the editing process and has, in practice, functioned as a co-editor of the book. In addition to having written one of the articles, Ian R. Macneil of Barra has helped out with the process of turning Calum MacNeil's talk into a readable format. He arranged for the

recording of the talk, aided with the editing and proofreading of the text and, finally, he has written a useful comment on Calum's contribution. The Macneil's knowledge of the history and people of Barra is extremely valuable, and he has shared it generously. Anke Beate Stahl also contributed with an article in addition to having transcribed Calum MacNeil's talk. These three, more than any others, have helped to bring this book into existence. We believe that it makes a significant contribution towards a better understanding of an exciting part of the world.

*Arne Kruse
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