

Fetlar2013

Traditional Labour



Peat Flittin

Until the 1950s, peat was the main form of fuel on the island, and most of the peat cutting took place on Lamb Hoga. Residents of Fetlar have described how families would stay in the peat hoose of Lamb Hoga during the summer months to assist with cutting.

Since the main settlements were a fair distance from Lamb Hoga, the peat all had to be transported home – and this process was known as “flittin”. Traditionally, ponies or boats were used in this task. Using a set of bends – special straw baskets (“kishies”) held by ropes on either side of the pony’s back – the dried peats were transported to the crofts on both the west and east sides of the island.



Above: John & Jeanie Gardner loading peats into kishies on a pony's back.

Below: A straw kishie.

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More details about peat flittin can be found in the booklet *Flittin Peats*, available from the centre, as well as a display showing some of the equipment that was used during the process.

Crafts and Knitting

Before industrialisation, Fetlar women would knit whenever and wherever they could – they knitted clothes for their families, and also produced large quantities of lace that could be sold for an additional income. Traditional weaving and basket weaving also featured heavily in Fetlar life.

Fetlar Interpretive Centre has a collection of crafts and knitwear, including some of the instruments that were used in craftwork, and photographs of award-winning knitwear complement said collection.

The Interpretive Centre now houses a craft shop, which sells handmade items made by Fetlar residents with many locally sourced materials.

Crofting

Crofting in Fetlar remains as a product of the Clearances that took place on the island between the 1820s and 1870s. This was a time in history when tenants were evicted to make way for sheep grazing, and it wasn't until the Crofters' Holdings Act of 1886 that the crofters were granted some security. The effects of the Clearances can still be seen today in the large number of ruined crofting houses across Fetlar.

Crofting provided tenants with a source of income and employment, but it was not enough to live on. Nearly all crofters worked at the croft part time and undertook other work to provide for their families.

Today, many islanders continue to croft, and the Interpretive Centre holds many photographs and written reminiscences of people who remember crofting as it was in the first half of the 20th Century.

Contact

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