

Community Newsletter

Reiss - Killimster - Sibster - Keiss - Nybster - Lyth - Ackergill - Papigoe - Staxigoe - Noss

APRIL-SEPTEMBER 2022 | ISSUE TWO

SINCLAIR'S BAY TRUST

Improving and developing Sinclair's Bay as a place to live, work & visit.

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Find us on Facebook & Instagram



Photo Credit: Paul Steven

Hello and a warm welcome to the second edition of our newsletter. I am delighted to report that our first edition was very well received, near and far. I hope you find this edition just as informative. We have completed our first year as a Trust and successfully gained charitable status through OSCR. I would like to take time to reflect a little on our achievements so far. We have successfully branded our Trust with a locally designed logo featuring a common visitor to Sinclair's Bay - the arctic tern. Last Summer we delivered our #keepsinclairsbaybeautiful signage which stood up to the weather test last Winter! We've gained a sizable membership following and would encourage people to join as members (there is no obligation, but enables us to evidence our community support the Trust and we'll keep you up to date). We have also collaborated with other organisations/individuals to launch some larger projects: Wick Development Trust on our Caithness at War project (page 3) and Lyth Arts Centre and local artist Shelagh Swanson on our CAIR project (page 2). We continue to work closely with Sinclair's Bay Community Council and have offered them a corner in this newsletter to keep you up to date with the work they are doing. Another update worthy of note is that earlier this year two of our Board members were invited to an event with the then Prince Charles in the Carnegie Building to showcase some of our work and achievements. These are worrying times for us all with the cost-of-living crisis. As a Trust we are responding to that crisis and if there is anything you feel we can assist with please do get in touch. In the meantime, grab a cuppa sit back and enjoy our newsletter. Don't forget to check out our What's On section and follow us on social media to keep up to date. Take care and speak soon - Maysie Calder, Chair

Sinclair's Bay Trust Board Members are: Maysie Calder (Chair), Andrew Mackay (Treasurer), Maria Aitken (Secretary), Ian Ross, Pat Ramsay, Grant Ramsay, Christina Calder & Emma Fraser. The Trust is supported for two days per week by development trust officer, Alistair Jack, employed by Caithness Voluntary Group.

SHELAGH SWANSON



Sinclair's Bay Connections Project - CAIR

You might remember in our last newsletter, we announced that we would be working alongside Lyth Arts Centre (LAC) on phase 2 of their CAIR (Caithness Artists in Residence) initiative inviting an artist/creative practitioner to work alongside us for a few months to explore community identity, foster new connections & support wellbeing. Shelagh Swanson was awarded this residency as her Safe Harbour proposal struck a cord!

Safety Net

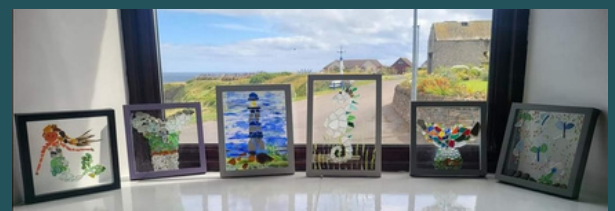
Shelagh kicked off her residency with project, Safety Net, a collaborative community art piece which aimed to explore community wellbeing and the things that made people living or spending time in Sinclair's Bay feel safe - be that a place in Sinclair's Bay, a hobby, a person or even a furry friend. People decorated recycled plastic shaped into a diamond with their own personal safety nets. Shelagh held "pop ups" for the community in local halls and got groups such as Killimster SWI, Reiss Youth Club, Staxigoe Selkies and Keiss Nursery involved. She also created "at home" packs for anyone who wished to take part who could not make it along to an event. We also invited many of the local organisations which serve as a "safety net" for the community to take part, creating their own diamonds about their services. Caithness Food Bank, Caithness KLICS (Young Carers), Caithness Home-Start, CASWA (Caithness & Sutherland Women's Aid), Listening Ear and Vitality all got involved. The safety net has been a core part of Shelagh's residency and over 100 diamonds were created by the community. The diamonds were joined together to form the net. Shelagh has put the final touches to the net and photographed the net at various key sites in Sinclair's Bay. Photographs of the net and the net itself were on display at the concluding event of her residency - a family ceilidh at Keiss Hall on Saturday, 22nd of October - look out for photos on our website.



Safe Harbour



Throughout July, Shelagh continued her residency with a series of community-based workshops in printmaking, expressive painting techniques and seaglass mosaics across Reiss, Keiss & Staxigoe Halls. She also undertook an in-situ workshop at Keiss Beach plaster casting (in extremely rainy conditions)! 113 participants attended the workshops in total and we've been delighted with the anecdotal feedback from the people who have taken part - ranging from enjoying the sessions, to people gaining confidence in their creative abilities, feeling proud and good about their creations, building connections, reducing isolation and opportunity to participate and try out something new.



CREATE

Sinclair's Bay Trust would like to thank Lyth Arts Centre and its CAIR initiative for providing our Trust with the opportunity to work with a local, experienced artist. We would also like to say a huge thank you to our artist in residence, Shelagh Swanson. She brought so much experience and enthusiasm to her residency, has been incredibly proactive, while working well and in close collaboration with a subgroup of our board. We were really impressed with her concept of Safe Harbour - incredibly relevant concept as we emerge from a pandemic, the effects of which we heard about from our community during her residency. As a relatively new Trust, the residency has given us the opportunity to work with an experienced artist and the community in a new way and explore different creative opportunities. We are very keen to explore more creative, art-based projects for our community and welcome collaborations with other artists. Please get in touch if you'd be interested.

CAITHNESS AT WAR

With regret, we missed our target to have the Caithness At War trail in place by this summer, and this was primarily down to the amount of work involved in integrating the Sinclair's Bay section of the trail with the Wick section of the trail, however, work on this massive project is ongoing and we hope to have the trail up and running by Easter 2023.

All work on the layout and content of the panels has now been completed and we are in the process of securing all the landowner permissions required and applying to the Highland Council for planning permission for the information panels to be erected.

Work is also progressing in Norway on our Augmented Reality App (AR) which is looking amazing and will really help to bring the trail to life. We had originally planned to go with a GPS activated AR Experience but have now shifted to having the experiences activated simply by pointing your phone's camera at a special target on the panel. This will allow us to demonstrate the AR Experiences in schools and village halls in the future.



Vickers Wellington like those flown from RAF Skitten

Our Caithness At War Facebook page now has followers from across the world who are amazed at the amount of war time activity in Caithness and the truly fascinating stories about what happened at RAF Wick, RAF Skitten, and RAF Castletown. To follow this page type the link below into your browser or use the QR code below.



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/354073943195726>



Early next year we will be arranging some WW2 evenings in the village halls where you will be able to hear all about Sinclair's Bay during the war from our local World War 2 experts, as well as asking them any questions you might have on the topic. These exciting evening events will also have WW2 artifacts on display for you to look at and handle, and we will be serving teas and coffee's along with various cakes made to 1940's recipes. Keep an eye out for these upcoming dates on our facebook page and website.

Community Consultation

You might recall that within our last newsletter we included a community consultation. We were keen to understand what you thought Sinclair's Bay needs, what do you want to see and if we had a magic wand (which sadly we don't!) what would be your three wishes for the area?

We had a great response to our consultation and would like to thank everyone who took the time to complete a consultation. Our Board sat around the table back in May to review all the feedback received. You'll see us already actioning some of the feedback - e.g. we're in the process of arranging some social events over summer and we're putting a call out for village volunteers in this newsletter to address the TLC of community spaces in Sinclair's Bay. We hope some of you will get involved. Some feedback received fit best with the community council (CC) for actioning. Examples included signage, pavements, pot holes, speed limits, disabled parking and public transport and provided the feedback from the community to the CC.

OPERATION FRESHMAN



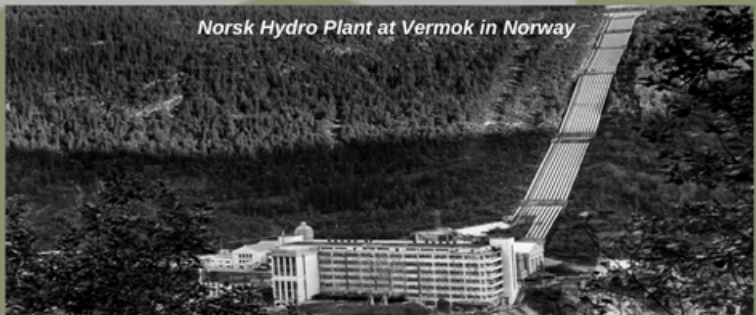
Airspeed AS.51 Horsa assault glider as used during Operation Freshman

80 years ago this year, on the 19th November 1942, thirty Engineer Commandos onboard two assault gliders towed by Halifax bombers took off from RAF Skitten into the dark wintery Caithness skies headed for Norway. Their mission was to destroy the Norsk Hydro Plant at Vermok which was producing Deuterium Oxide for the Nazi atomic bomb programme.

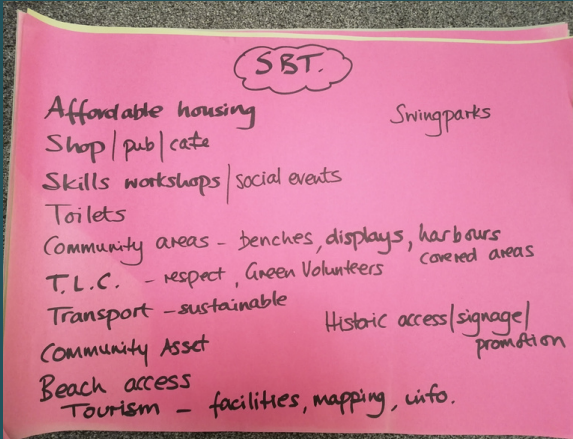
Upon reaching the area the pilots were unable to locate the landing zone so the mission had to be aborted. The bomber/glider combinations turned round and headed back towards Skitten some 450 miles away, however over south-western Norway the iced up tow ropes snapped causing the first glider to crash into the mountainside, killing eight of the seventeen men onboard.

The second glider managed to make a controlled crash landing, but sadly the two pilots and one of the engineers were killed in the crash. After the tow rope had broken the Halifax circled back to try to locate the downed glider but flew into a mountain killing the entire crew of seven. The Germans soon captured the survivors from both gliders, but due to the infamous 'Commando Order' that had been issued by Hitler in October 1942, the 23 survivors were all executed. Only the 1st Halifax and its seven man crew made it safely back to Caithness.

The 41 brave young men killed during Operation Freshman will be remembered at a special ceremony at Skitten on the 19th November this year to mark the 80th anniversary of that tragic mission.



Norsk Hydro Plant at Vermok in Norway



Points of Interest: St. Tears Chapel



You'll find this monument showing the location of the Chapel of St Tears, or St Tayre, roughly halfway between Castle Sinclair Girnigoe & Ackergill Tower. The foundations are still roughly visible, although overgrown. It's dedication comes from the tears shed by the mothers at Bethlehem over their children that were slain by Herod, referenced in the Gospel of Matthew. Traditionally it was

customary for people to visit the chapel on the morning of the Feast of the Holy Innocents' day, the 28th of December. They would say prayers and leave bread and cheese in the chapel as an offering to the souls of the children slain by Herod. However, it's famous locally, not for its religious qualities, but for a much more devious act. Following a long time of quarrelling between the Clans Keith and Gunn, most likely in 1464, the chiefs of the clans decided to meet once and for all to settle their differences at St. Tears Chapel. Each clan was to take men on 12 horses. The Gunns were first to arrive & the 12 men took their place. Shortly after, the Keiths arrived but they had, rather sneakily, mounted 2 men on each horse, greatly outnumbering the Gunns. A fierce and bloody struggle ensued but even with astonishing courage the sheer numbers against them saw the defeat of the Gunns. It was said that the blood of the combatants could be seen on the walls of the Chapel 150 years on. In 1978, after over 500 years, the clans finally signed a treaty of friendship, ending the feud! If you know about any points of interest in Sinclair's Bay, please get in touch. Photo credit: Carol Gunn.

Keep Sinclair's Bay Beautiful: Village Volunteers

Something that comes up time and time again in community consultations is TLC of the villages, so we're keen to set up village volunteer groups. We don't mind how much or little time you can commit, whether you're a dab hand or just fancy lending a hand. If you're keen to spend a wee bit of time outdoors and help us to maintain and tidy up the area, we would love to hear from you - e-mail us, send us a message on FB/Instagram or speak to your village representative. If this isn't your cup of tea, but you're still keen to help, there's lots you can get involved in - everything from folding and delivering newsletters to helping out at community events.

Village representatives & key contacts: Ian Ross (Reiss/Killimster); Maria Aitken (Keiss); Pat Ramsay (Staxigoe/Papigoe/Noss).

Other areas - we aren't forgetting about you, but sadly we don't have key contacts in these areas, if you're keen let us know and we can help you link up with others!

Photo Credit: @alba_sunrise_bnb (Instagram)



What's On in Sinclair's Bay

It is going to be a long autumn and winter. With this in mind we've been working away behind the scenes to arrange some events over the next few months - some have already taken place and some are still to come. All events are free to attend and there will always be a warm welcome, a cuppa and a biscuit or cake awaiting! We regularly update our social media with events, will have information on our website and in posters so please keep an eye out and let your neighbours know about our events!

A Sinclair's Bay Family Ceilidh

To close her residency with Sinclair's Bay Trust, Shelagh Swanson (our artist in residence) arranged a free family ceilidh in Keiss Hall on Saturday, 22nd October. The night was a great success, featuring music from Addie Harper and local young musicians, readings from George Gunn, a licensed bar by Lyth Arts Centre and children's activities (including a colouring in sheet created by Shelagh and a design a Sinclair's Bay tartan competition). There was an exhibition of photographs of our safety net at key Sinclair's Bay sites as well as the safety net itself on display. a raffle with proceeds being split between Sinclair's Bay Trust and Shelagh's charity of choice Listening Ear (a Caithness-based mental health charity). Thank you to everyone who joined in!

The Annual Sinclair's Bay Hallowe'en Hunt

Our annual hunt was back this year over the weekend leading up to Hallowe'en! We hope everyone enjoyed taking part! We also brought back the carved neep this year, inviting people to share photos of their carved neeps for Hallowe'en!

Family First Aid Awareness Sessions

We're working with local trained first aider, Gregg Binns of First Aid Solutions Caithness to bring some family first aid to residents of Sinclair's Bay. Please note these sessions are not accredited trainings, but informal awareness sessions only. 12 spaces are available on each session with dates to be confirmed. If you are interested, please keep an eye out on our social media pages and/or e-mail admin@sinclairsbay.co.uk

Working with Caithness Citizens Advice Bureau

We're all feeling the pinch, worrying about the increased living costs this Winter, that's why we're going to be working with Caithness Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and bringing them to Sinclair's Bay.

We're in the process of arranging a few coffee mornings / afternoons / evenings!

Please keep an eye out for further information on social media, our website & posters in the villages.



Community Council Corner

Community Councils act as the voice for their community with the council, meeting on a regular basis to identify, discuss and raise issues in their local area. We work closely with, and some of our board are also involved in, SBCC (Sinclair's Bay Community Council). The image opposite details some of the recent work of SBCC..

- ✓ Secured funding for defibrillators in Reiss, Staxigoe & Ackergill.
- ✓ Installed speed calming measures in Reiss, Staxigoe & Papigoe.
- ✓ Secured funding for and installed life rings at Reiss beach and Keiss beach.
- ✓ Secured funding & supported delivery of a wellbeing project (painting lessons with Haven House Art).
- ✓ Provided financial support via a microgrant scheme (including funds towards upkeep of local playparks).
- ✓ Secured funding to purchase community sheds, strimmers and mowers for Reiss, Keiss & Staxigoe.
- ✓ Used the community council village officer grant to support upkeep of outdoor community spaces.
- ✓ Planted trees in Sinclair's Bay for the Queen's Green Canopy Project to mark the platinum jubilee.
- ✓ Continued to advocate for Sinclair's Bay & be the link between the community & the Council.
- ✓ Worked closely with Sinclair's Bay Trust to improve the area for the community.

SBCC meet monthly, usually on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, rotating meetings between the village halls of Sinclair's Bay. All community members are most welcome to attend. SBCC can be contacted and any issues can be raised via the contact details below or their Facebook page.

E-mail: sinclairbaycc@hotmail.co.uk