



EDITOR'S WELCOME

The Appeal of Islands

Recently a friend of mine fell over and broke his leg while crossing a busy London street. A passer-by assisted by dragging him to a traffic island, propped him against a bollard and called for an ambulance. Some 20 minutes later he was on his way to hospital. However, in the meantime that island had been his haven.

We are accustomed, but often fail to acknowledge, how 'islands' can feature within urban areas. There are the parks, often largely free of traffic; churches, quiet places with relatively few people; hotels, where the owners are keen to establish a different brand; historic houses, where the past is preserved; neighbourhoods that serve specific functions such as finance or a trade.

Many people are drawn from an early age to the outline of islands. I recall being impressed by the contrasting features of the two Bristol Channel islands - Steep Holm and Flat Holm. They seemed to guard the waters that race into and retreat from Weston-super-Mare. About 20 years passed before I found myself on Steep Holm and I was not disappointed.

Island-watchers probably divide into three recognised groups. There are those for whom the topic has an appeal, those who develop an enthusiasm and those who feel driven to become authorities on the subject. This magazine endeavours to promote all manner of interests, but the crucial factors are that it needs to make its readers' eyes dilate and spirits delight.

Human beings range from gregarious and sociable personalities to withdrawn and isolated individuals. Observers of islands appreciate that within us there is an element, not necessarily dominant, which strives to stand apart and be as independent as possible. In many ways, islands symbolise this urge to be singular and secure within the flux and tides of life.

John Humphries



Guest Columnist, Lizzie Williams, looks forward to reporting about the next year on the Summer Isles

I grew up in Wiltshire, spent many family holidays in Scotland and was impressed by the wildness, the wildlife, and by the amount of fun to be had in those great open spaces. Even so, as a 16 year-old, my parents' decision to move from our dairy farm to Tanera Mòr in the Summer Isles (far from friends, school, and normality) seemed to me a little extreme.

However, Tanera was clearly the right place for my parents. They've had a wonderful (if at times gruelling) 15 years there: planting trees, renovating buildings and piers, and nurturing a small business. You can read more in the March/April '09 issue of this publication. For my brothers and me the island was a brilliant escape from our busy southern lives. Here was exhilaration and adventure on the sea or in the hills; or peace and quiet attained just by looking at them.

It was only when Richard (then my boyfriend, now my husband) and I found ourselves needing a change from our desk-bound urban existence that we considered making Tanera our home and a place to work. We suggested to my parents that we could give them a hand running the business.

It was a difficult decision – for we knew that life wouldn't be all sunny afternoons in sailing boats ... but it also seemed an amazing opportunity to do something practical, tangible and a little unusual. So one May morning in 2009 we packed up our comfortable Cambridge life and drove North. And we're still here.

Over the next year I'll be writing a little about our life on this lovely 800-acre rocky island with a population of four: the joys and frustrations of living in such a spectacularly beautiful but rather remote place; the comings and goings of people and wildlife; the practicalities of working towards our dream of building an environmentally sustainable business.

I'll try not to shatter the romantic notion of an island idyll by whingeing about the wind/rain/midges, but will endeavour to paint a realistic picture of a life that's a little different to that which we left behind. I hope you will enjoy it.

Lizzie Williams