



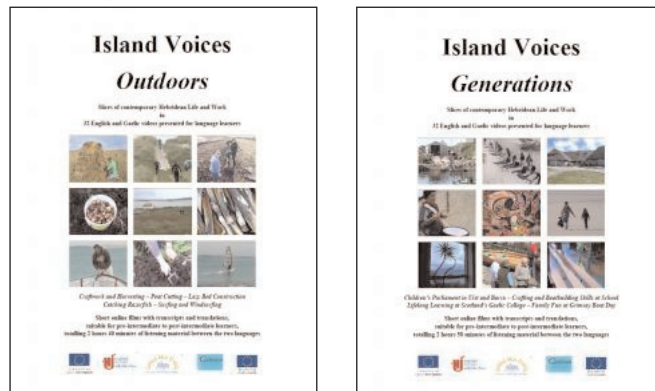
A ton and a half of Island Voices videos (so far...)

by Gordon Wells

THE end of 2010 sees the completion of the second series of Guthan nan Eilean (Island Voices) – video slices of Hebridean life and work aimed at learners of English and Gaelic. And now they're all going on YouTube, to make them even easier to see.

Readers of *Am Pàipear* will remember that the first series of 40 clips was completed in 2007, winning a European Award for Languages that year, and appearing in various guises online and around the Highlands and Islands, including the Am Baile website and at Nunton Steadings during our own Art on the Map season. Sabhal Mòr Ostaig also brought out a DVD/CD-Rom package.

Two catalogue covers from the larger second series of Island Voices



Following that success (in which The Hebridean Smokehouse, Ceòlas, Taigh Chearsabhagh and other Uist events or places figured prominently) a second, and larger, series was started in 2008, this time with support from the European Social Fund. As this phase now finishes, the total video archive will have grown substantially, to reach a grand total of 150 short films by the end of this year.

To help everyone keep track of progress a website and blog were set up for Series Two. If you go to <http://guthan.wordpress.com> you can trace the growth of the project over the past couple of years, and read the comments and suggestions that have come in from around the world. What's more, you can also

follow links from this site to all the videos so far published online (including all of Series One) on YouTube.

Because of its bigger size Series Two (below left) is published in three sections – Outdoors, Generations, and Enterprise. The first two are already complete, and include a wide range of topics – from the Children's Parliament to Windsurfing. The third will be finished by the end of December, and will look at enterprising local responses to 21st Century challenges...

The geographical spread is also wider in Series Two, in which I travelled north, south, east and west (yes, west!) of Uist to do some of the filming in neighbouring islands.

But the project isn't just about film-making. A series of training sessions for tutors was held early on to help them use more technology in the classroom. And in the past year English and Gaelic classes have been running in various island locations from Barra to Berneray, in which learners themselves have had an opportunity to make recordings.

So where do we go from here? Well, plans are afoot for a third phase which would see more people, be they learners or

fluent speakers, producing their own pieces, whether it's "traditional" writing, or video or audio recordings of speech.

And with the help of Cothrom and *Am Pàipear* the opportunity will be there to see your piece of work right the way through to publication, either in print or online! Watch this space for more information when it's available, or get in touch with me to find out the latest or make a suggestion. Phone me on 07879 644984 or e-mail info@gordonwells.co.uk.

Research Work

Cothrom has just received the good news that their bid to do some small scale research work for the Soillse initiative has been successful. Soillse is a major inter-university project looking at Gaelic revitalisation.

The Cothrom work will investigate "Island Perspectives on Learning and Bilingualism". Through a series of interviews with learners, teachers, and other community members, it is hoped to throw some new light on attitudes to literacy, bilingualism, and other related issues.

There are few (if any) places in the country where levels of bilingualism are as high as they are here. What lessons can be learned from our experience?

Island Voices – Guthan nan Eilean
Video and Audio – News, Comments, Suggestions

Topics covered in Series One and Two of Guthan nan Eilean - Island Voices

Home > Uncategorized > Hebridean Surfing

Hebridean Surfing
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Re-Store Project
Hebridean Food: Smokehouse
Hebridean Food: Cookery Demonstration
Ceòlas
Taigh Chearsabhagh
Bi Beò Songwriters

Crofting and Harvesting
Peatcutting
Lazybeds
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Surfing
Windsurfing
Children's Parliament in Barra and Benbecula
Crofting and Boatbuilding Skills
Scotland's Gaelic College
Grimsay Boatday
Seatrek to St Kilda
Greenspace Research
Galson Estate Trust
Seallam Genealogy Centre
Tobar an Dualchais Digitisation Centre
Am Pàipear Community Newspaper

Bi Beò: moving on - popular local band moves base to mainland



Bi Beò performing at a recent gig in Bath.

Photo: Bi Beò

Band member, Kevin de las Casas explains the decision to move the popular contemporary Gaelic band's base to England.

BI BEÒ have moved on to playing to wider audiences with past gigs in Wales and South West England and an upcoming first at the Green Note in

Camden, London on January 28th 2011.

The summer was good for the band with performances in Skye and on our home ground in Sollas for the MacKerracher Trust, as well as a series of regular acoustic performances at Langass Lodge which went down very well.

In general we as a band have watched how there is a wonderful acceptance and reaction to what we are doing when we are away from our own territory and we are ambitious to carry our music out to a wider audience than we are able to reach locally.

This acceptance is backed up

with worldwide album sales and our promotional presence on internet sites such as facebook and myspace. James [MacLetchie] keeps the facebook pages current and interesting with photographs and news and our followers are able to feel connected to the progress of the band and their stories as well as being kept in touch with upcoming events. There is a genuine interest in the band and our music as well as the Gaelic language and the Hebrides as a place, which continues to be the inspiration and the basis of the songs.

In the new year we will look to recording our third album which is already written, with this material presently included in our live sets.

This album will contain a mix of songs as before, some up tempo and dance songs as well as some tender and soulful moments. We have one piece which has strong and unequivocal reference to social issues that affect in some way all of island life.

In terms of our live sound, the band has gone on a long way, with developed harmonies in the vocal parts and increased confidence in the way we play backed by a no compromise attitude. We do believe in what

we are doing and we always have done. We are aware that in the Hebrides we have not had the support that we had hoped for and this is something that we understand full well. From a traditional point of view we are no doubt considered radical. We are writing new songs in Gaelic and the subjects of these songs is island life and people and the overall mood is one of celebration. In some sense this is the same as it always was. Our melodies are strong and our musicality is interesting. We have choruses that are catchy and simple enough for non Gaelic speakers to join in and this works really well. All that we are doing is to some extent using a more modern medium which we have noticed is well received and accessible to a younger demographic.

Further to this we would consider ourselves a high energy band and when it comes to live performance our priority, up until now at least, has always been to get everyone up and dancing and actively involved with the occasion rather than being passive in a listening environment. Our situation and abilities have changed sufficiently to a point where, we believe, we are able to fulfill the requirements of both dancing

and listening audiences, although our hearts will always lie with the wildness. We believe that within our own limited capabilities we have tried to represent the language and place in a positive way. Our critics have been fast to draw attention to our failings but in reply let it be said that any young band takes time to get their sound together and perhaps they have been fast in their judgement. We have continued to be firm in our intention not to include English language songs in our repertoire, which is something we are well capable of doing, and from time to time we have been able to bring some moments of genuine enjoyment into some peoples lives through our recorded music as well as in live situations.

Another point of interest when considered from a wider view is that the music of Bi Beò is considered in the 'World Music' category and has ready acceptance as such. Recently one of our new songs was played at the Indigenous Forum in Australia to 300 delegates accompanied by a slide show of pictures of the Hebrides. This was received with great acclaim and appreciation. So the view from the bandstand is to keep going and boldly go into the as yet unknown.