



Hebrideans help success of US TV series

By Katie Macleod

On screen and off, Hebrideans have been leaving their mark on Outlander, the Golden Globe-nominated, award-winning, £50 million TV series that has taken the USA by storm – but still flies under the radar in Scotland, where it is set, filmed, and produced.

The series, based on the bestselling books by US author Diane Gabaldon, follows the story of Claire, an English combat nurse who in 1945 visits a Callanish-style standing stone circle in Inverness while on her second honeymoon. Thanks to the stones, she finds herself transported through time to 18th century Scotland, where she falls in love with Jamie, the handsome head of the Fraser clan, and tries to stop the Jacobite rebellion she knows is coming.

It's been billed as a 'feminist Game of Thrones' and has garnered legions of devoted fans. Although it only aired in the UK on Amazon Prime for the first time last year, islanders have been working behind the scenes and in front of the camera on Outlander since 2013, in everything from production and set design to location scouting and singing.

Marc Macleod from Point, who has worked as a Runner and a Painter's Labourer on Seasons 1 and 2 respectively, got involved with Outlander after hearing about the show through his work on BBC Alba's Bannan and Katie Morag. For the most recent series he was part of the construction department, assisting painters as they decorated the sets, painted scenery and designed period pieces "to bring the world to life."

"I hear it's hugely successful, but I can't feel it, if that makes sense," he says of Outlander's reputation. "Here, I haven't met many people who have heard of it." Marina Campbell, also from Point, and a Writer's Assistant for the show, agrees. While she admits it feels "completely unexpected" to work on such a hugely successful programme, she says the crew are "protected from it on this side of the water,

as the majority of the success is outside of the UK."

Despite the show's low-key reputation in the UK, they all had an inkling that Outlander was going to be something out of the ordinary. Many mention the presence of Ronald D. Moore as the show's writer and producer – his CV boasts credits as showrunner and writer for Star Trek and Battlestar Galactica – as a sign Outlander was set for stardom. For others, the obvious investment in production was another hint at what was to come.

Cristin Mackenzie, from Uig, worked as the Assistant Script Supervisor for Season 1, after getting involved through his work on Katie Morag. "You could see from the quality of the production, everything from the writing to the costumes, that this was a show with the investment, resources, and skill to become a major success," he says. "I remember walking through the studio complex and seeing what looked like the Callanish Stones just standing in the middle of a flat concrete floor. It was quite a sight!"

Gillebride Macmillan, a Mod Gold Medalist and Gaelic singer from Milton in South Uist, had a similar experience when he arrived on set in Cumbernauld to film his role as Gwyllyn the Bard. "Before the audition I had never heard of Outlander, and I had no idea what to expect – although when I saw the set that they had, I did have an inkling that it was going to be big, since the set I was performing on was spectacular."

The island cast and crew all agree the show has been a boost for Scotland's tourism and TV industries – and the facts and figures back them up. Some Historic Scotland sites that appear in the show saw an almost 50 per cent increase in visitors last summer, and the trend is expected to continue.

Shona Mackenzie, also from Uig, worked as the Locations Coordinator on Season 2, and saw it all first hand. "Given that we have filmed all over the country, it's inevitable that people gain an interest, especially when they see the scale of the production," she notes.

"The locations are obviously beautiful – a lovely way for our wonderful Scottish scenery to reach a worldwide audience... I'm sure there must also be a boost to tourism. Many of the locations which have featured in the show have reported an increase in visitors since the show aired,

especially people from the US."

Another side effect of the show's success has been an increased interest in Gaelic. The Highland characters speak Gaelic often throughout the series, and as Shona says,

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Marina's dog Jasper with lead actor Sam Heughan

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"It's great to hear Gaelic on any big screen."

Gillebride has even taught Gaelic to *Outlander* fans as a result of his role. "The show's producers had the foresight in not putting subtitles on the Gaelic... as it gave the audience an idea of what the main character, Claire, was going through, being surrounded by a language she didn't understand," he explains. "This shows that Gaelic can be used in mainstream shows, and rather than diminish the quality and enjoyment, it actually enhances both of these."

As if all that wasn't enough, even a dog with Point connections – Marina's Spaniel, Jasper – has found his way into the hearts of the cast, crew, and die-hard fans of *Outlander*, in his role as the show's unofficial mascot. (*Outlander*'s costume designer, Terry Dresbach, was so enamoured with Jasper that she bought a cocker spaniel of her own – and incorporated the dogs' likeness into one of the



Outlander Tough Mudder team 2014 - Marc MacLeod in centre with crew and Sam Heughan

costumes, which was recently on display in the iconic Manhattan department store, Saks Fifth Avenue.)

"It's a real feast for the senses," says Marina of *Outlander*. "Hopefully it will pick up more home grown viewers. Lots of shows take time to gain a following; we were just fortunate enough to have

a big fan base to begin with thanks to the books."

With whispers about *Outlander*'s potential at the 2016 Emmy Awards starting to emerge, the show's following looks set to increase even further – and these creative islanders have all played their role in its success.



News

Stornoway Shouts

Sunday, May 1st, saw the volunteer crew and RNLI lifeboat of Stornoway out on shout to assist a local creel boat ashore on the beach at No.1 pier in Stornoway harbour.

The Stornoway RNLI lifeboat 'Tom Sanderson' launched at 0318 hours on Sunday morning as the fishing boat's mooring ropes had parted in a strong southerly F7 wind.

A member of the lifeboat crew was put aboard the creel boat to secure a towline. Once the line was established, the stranded vessel was towed off the beach and round to the safety of the inner harbour.

The Stornoway RNLI lifeboat was back at her moorings and ready for the next service by 0416 hours.

The volunteer crew and lifeboat were launched again on Friday, May 6th, this time to reports of a person cut off by the tide on a reef near Holm Jetty, just outside of Stornoway.

The lifeboat launched at 1558 hours as the person attempted to wade to shore, in water around chest height.

On the lifeboat's arrival at the scene, the person had made it ashore.

They were very fortunate to get to dry land safely and the RNLI advice if someone finds themselves in a similar predicament is to immediately call the Coastguard for help and wait as the RNLI lifeboat will be asked to launch.

Always remember to carry a mobile phone with you when you go to sea or around the islands' cliffs and shorelines.

The Stornoway RNLI lifeboat returned to berth at Stornoway Harbour around 1650 hours.

Time to get Selfie-Writing!

Why not get involved with Stornoway RNLI's new Facebook fundraiser and get 'Selfie-Writing'!

Did you know that Stornoway RNLI's all-weather Severn class lifeboat the 'Tom Sanderson' is self-righting?

That means should she be knocked over in extreme weather, the lifeboat will automatically right herself within a few seconds.



Ian and Isabella Finlayson are Stornoway RNLI's first Facebook fundraiser Selfie-Writing profile picture

And to continue keeping the local lifesavers safe while they help others in trouble at sea, why not get 'Selfie-Writing' to Stornoway RNLI through its Facebook fundraiser.

It couldn't be simpler – 'Like' the Stornoway RNLI Facebook page; take an RNLI related selfie photograph; follow the JustGiving link

through the 'Donate Now' button on the Facebook page; make a minimum donation of £1; and then write a message, with your photograph and JustGiving receipt number, to Stornoway RNLI via Facebook.

Each week the Selfie-Writing photos will be uploaded to the Stornoway RNLI Facebook page – and the one which receives the most 'Likes' will be used as the Stornoway RNLI Profile Picture the following week.

Do please note – by sending your Selfie Writing photo to Stornoway RNLI, you are giving permission for the image to be published online via the Stornoway RNLI Facebook page.

Selfie-Writing photos will be published at the discretion of Stornoway RNLI.

And please do exercise commonsense and safety when taking your Selfie-Writing selfie!

Stornoway RNLI Shop Open for Summer

The Stornoway RNLI Shop on Cromwell Street, Stornoway, is now open for the summer.

With plenty on offer for all ages, why not pop in for a look around and grab yourself an RNLI bargain from the sale-shelf, or pick up a new bucket and spade and head to the beach!

The Stornoway RNLI Shop will be open every Thursday and Saturday, from 11am to 3pm, until September.

Thanks to Tesco shoppers!

The fantastic fundraisers of Stornoway Lifeboat Ladies Guild set up their Collection Day in the Tesco store on Shell Street, Stornoway, on Friday, May 20th – and were delighted to collect £544 for the local station and lifesaving crew.

A big thank you to Tesco's store and all the shoppers who donated during the Collection Day!

How to Help

To donate to the local lifesavers of Stornoway RNLI, or help raise funds through an event, contact Stornoway Lifeboat Ladies Guild Chair Ellen MacDonald on 01851 702154, or Guild Treasurer Maggie MacLeod on 01851 705407.

You can keep up to date with the RNLI charity at www.rnli.org.uk – or why not 'Like' the Stornoway RNLI Facebook page to keep up with the local lifeboat boys at www.facebook.com, search 'Stornoway RNLI'.