

## **Book reviews by Bookworm**

Charles Hunter, Oban

For books of historical and local interest one need look no further than Waterstone's, whose Oban store is setting new records for sales under manager Ian Craig and his enthusiastic staff; a special mention for Colin.

Publishers Birlinn, under the imprint of John Donald, continue to churn out new editions of such classics as *'The Kingdom of the Isles – Scotland's Western Seaboard, c. 1100 - c. 1336'* by R Andrew McDonald, and *'Somered and the Emergence of Gaelic Scotland'* by John Marsden. Both were published in 2008 at £16.99. There is also - already - a new and expanded 2008 edition of *'The Kingdom of MacBrayne'* at £20.

Local publishers have been active too. The *'Birds of Argyll'* published by the Argyll Bird Club from a Minard address at £45, has a goodly list of editors and its beauty rivals that of the *'Birds of Scotland'* at £75. At the other end of the scale, each at £4.95, there is *'Seil Island- a Portrait'* by Michael Shaw (2007) and *'The Isle of Ulva'* self-published by residents J Howard and A Jones in 2004 and now tracked down by Waterstone's. Michael Shaw's 2009 book *'In Search of Time Wasted'* (£12.99), has the apt subtitle 'Peregrinations from Seil Island' and his love for his home island is again evident.

Looking wider, three books deserve special mention. *'From Burma to Barra'* by Sandy Ferguson, published in 2008 by Ardmish Press, Gigha at £10.99. The heartening story of a deep sea ship's captain who spent his last twenty years with McBrayne, mainly on the Islay run from Kennacraig, but with the Isle of Mull from its construction in 1987 to 1990. He retired about ten years ago as Marine Superintendent. Anecdotes abound! *'The Kerracher Man'* by Eric MacLeod, is published by Sandstone Press, Dingwall at £10.99. Eric MacLeod gave up a career as accountant down south to bring his wife and two very young daughters to his derelict and remote, ancestral home in northwest Scotland. They survived there for sixteen years, with many intelligent ventures in self-sufficiency, such as crofting and fish-farming on a small scale. The discomforts of storm, rain, midgies, darkness,

problems arising from private water supply, and the absence of electricity, telephone or even road access are factually recorded in this bleak but inspiring progression back, with his heroic wife and grown-up daughters, to the real world of business. *'The Life & Legacy of Alexander Carmichael'* Edited by Domhnall Uilleam Stiubhart; published in 2008 by The Island Book Trust, Isle of Lewis HS2 OXA at £15 is the edited proceedings of a Conference held in July 2006.

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