

Exhibition honours those from North Uist who lie silent and still

On Armistice Day, Comunn Eachdraidh Uibhist a Tuath (CEUT) opened its WWI exhibition with a poignant ceremony. Young and old joined together to honour and remember those from North Uist lost in the Great War...

148 men from North Uist, Berneray and Grimsay lost their lives in WWI. Earlier this year, which marks the centenary of the conflict, CEUT launched a long-running project to commemorate and lament the tragedy of those from the islands who fell defending their country.

'An fheadhainn tha laighe samhach' – They lie silent and still' borrows its name from a poem by North Uist bard Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna, himself a survivor of the war, whose work features heavily in the exhibition currently running at Taigh Chearsabhagh.

A 'Roll of Honour' visual installation – a moving and

powerful record of the islands' fallen created by Laura Donkers – lies at the heart of the display.

It is supported by a series of hanging panels featuring stories, newspaper cuttings, photographs and poetry connected to WWI and North Uist. The exhibition is the product of research conducted over several months.

Supported by Caraidean Uibhist, Tagas Uibhist and Guthan nan Eilean, CEUT hosted a series of lunchtime reminiscence ceilidhs at Taigh Chearsabhagh. Up to 50 people gathered on each occasion, sharing stories and local information about North Uist in wartime.

Interviews recorded during and after the ceilidhs form the basis of the current exhibition – which will expand next year – and an eventual publication.

Mairi Morrison, who has been leading on the project, explained: "As interviews continue to be processed, more banners will be produced in time for February. Interviews will be streamed on the Guthan nan Eilean website as they are processed.

"During the first half of next year, work will commence on the publication, together with associated bilingual, online curriculum materials for schools. "Work displayed currently



The exhibition features stories and recollections from the Great War.



Children from Carinish School singing at the exhibition opening.

represents just the first stage of our research and is designed to be an interactive forum for the gathering of a fuller picture of our islands' memories. Transcribing and translating the interviews is a time-consuming task and we recognise that it will take us until next summer to

process all the material for eventual streaming on Guthan nan Eilean and our final publications."

At the opening of the exhibition on 11th November, CEUT chair Chrissie MacCuish paid tribute to all those who have worked on the project to date.

Rev John Smith then led those gathered in prayer, before observing a two-minute silence at 11am.

Norman Johnson played 'Flowers of the Forest' on the pipes, before children from Carinish School sang a song written by Norman MacLean about his grandfather saying farewell to his daughter – Norman's mother – as he set sail for the war.

Lochmaddy School pupils, Penny Burgess and Duncan MacKinnon all sang songs inspired by the Great War, after which all the children present laid crosses with poppies – each representing a soldier from North Uist, Grimsay or Berneray – at the Wall of Remembrance that forms part of the exhibition.

'An fheadhainn tha laighe samhach...' runs at Taigh Chearsabhagh until the end of December. In February, the exhibition will be expanded and integrated with Pròiseact nan Ealan's wider 'Gairm nan Gaidheal' exhibition, which covers all the Western Isles. The combined exhibition will run in the museum until the end of 2015.

CEUT is grateful to Pròiseact nan Ealan for its considerable support with the exhibition, since it has been designed to integrate easily with the larger exhibition.

'An fheadhainn tha laighe samhach...' is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

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