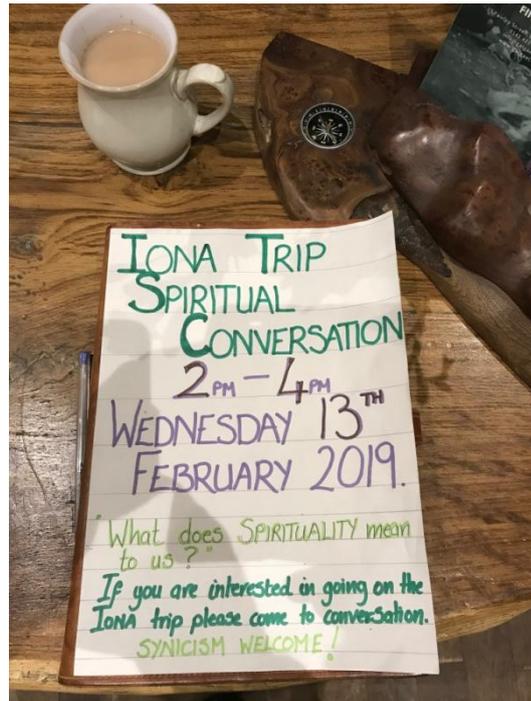


Report on the GalGael Trust's Iona Weekend, 2019

For the fourth year running, the GalGael Trust was enabled to take many of its core people, staff and especially the volunteers on whom we so heavily rely these days, for a weekend to explore the general theme of spirituality – what it may or may not mean to each of us.

A lot of work goes into these visits. They are open to our staff (of whom we currently have only 4, three of whom were able to come), to our volunteers and to our training course participants. They sign up after Christmas. Our initial list was 50% over-subscribed. We thinned it down partly by prioritising people who had not been before, and partly by emphasising that people needed to attend the pre-meetings. We had a couple of meetings in Glasgow before going to make sure that they all know what they're letting themselves in for, and that everything is optional. We have to be sensitive to issues such as mental health. There was one year when it was only as the boat started to leave the pier at Oban that we realised that one of our lassies suffers from agrophobia, and had never been on a boat before. There are also the dietary issues, medication issues, the procuring of a minibus permit, rooming lists, food shopping list, and so on.



I had wondered if we would do another trip this year, but the staff were very clear: "We need it more than ever this year." They feel that it sets a note for the rest of the year. We reinforce that at Christmas time when, around 28 January, Vèrène and I invite those who've been to Iona for a dinner and reflection on where the experience left them.

The pattern that we followed was similar to previous years. We set off early on the Friday morning, 8th March. Thankfully Gillian checked the oil on the hire vehicles and found that one was off the dipstick. We had a meal on the boat and Blair our cook fixed up a meal when we arrived at Iona hostel. John Maclean, the hostel owner, had again made a very special rate available to us, and quite spontaneously some of our people who'd been before

brought along a GalGael carving to thank him, with the inscription, “May you be happy and healthy.”

On the Saturday we went down to see the ancient stones in the museum at Iona Abbey, and people sung in the Oran Chapel. That afternoon most of us walked down to St Columba’s bay. On the way at the loch I told the story of the water horse. That night, we decided to make our own spiritual sharing in the Oran Chapel. Heinz Toller, the Iona Community’s anchor person gave us permission to do so, lamenting that the resident group could probably not join us as they had to offer a set service in the Chapter House for visitors to the island. However, as nobody turned up, they all came in with us. It was an amazing experience and astonishing what some of our folks were able to offer. We had Gaelic incantations, folk songs, the beatitudes, Taize chant, and even the Creed sung in Latin! All from GalGael folks. At our invitation the Iona Community folks recited the Iona prayer, appropriately for GalGael, commencing, “O Christ the master carpenter, who at the last through wood and nails...” It was deeply spiritual but not in any heavy religious way. Oh, and for “The Sermon”, David read out a story he’d written inspired by the water horse tale.

On the Sunday morning we had a closing sharing round the table, but instead of climbing Dun I we had to leave earlier than planned as a storm was coming in, and we were lucky to get off the island. When we got across one of the Calmac sailors escorted us. “You left the lights on one of your buses,” he said, “And I’ve got jump leads here to get you started.” Such islander kindness.

What were the distinguishing themes this year? There were 22 of us, and the the appreciation of stillness was very marked. Here are some of the comments from sessions around the table:

- It’s always noisy in the city – music, adverts, neon lights. Here there is silence and nature.
- You can wish for kindness, not flash stuff.
- I’ve seen so many things I never see in the city. Like feeding the sheep.
- In the sound of silence one of the greatest things is that you can sit back, and think where you want to be.
- Iona is my sweet soul sanctuary.
- We’d love to see this happening on a year on year basis, I hope.
- How can we create a type of enjoyment that we can take back?
- I liked getting to know each other in a perfect spot, people reading, chatting, playing cards.
- The courage of getting to know each other in a non-judgemental and understanding way.
- There was a good balance of time on your own and the guided parts.

- It gave us space within ourselves to tolerate and find each other – stepping outside of the comfort zones and to celebrate the future of GalGael.
- Last night in the Michael Chapel was fantastic. St Oran’s was so special. There were all those wee moments, and the noise of the wind.
- It’s like jumping off the cliff [into the sea] to hit the bottom. Then you come up, and your imagination is unchained.
- I’ll never forget how I got to know everyone, the people and the island and how committed to GalGael [I now feel]. I’ll not stop talking about it.
- It’s hard to get into being a human being, but coming here we got into being human in a very deep way. A human becoming.
- We’ve been on a journey together. It’s been a tribal experience.

	A	B	C	D
1	GalGael Iona 2019			
2	Donor Stornoway	250.00	Gift aid component of annual donation	
3	Donor Sturrock	750.00	Allocate £187.50 Gift Aid to overhead	
4	Donor John Wigham Enjoyment Trust	1000.00		
5	Donor Glasgow Quaker collection	0.00	Collection for GGael in July	
6	Participant food contributions	180.00		
7				
8		2180.00		
9				
10	Expenses			
11	Hostel & Bothy 2 nights	300.00		
12	Ferry Tickets Mull/Iona 2 buses	301.92		
13	Vehicle fuel	80.00	About E40 on card and E40 cash	
14	Vehicle hire	485.00		
15	Notebooks/pens/books/inks	100.95		
16	Food for hostel	290.92	ASDA receipt and shop	
17	Meals on ferries	470.20		
18	Afternoon teas Craignuir Inn (ferry wait)	60.00		
19				
20	Total direct costs of trip	2088.99		
21	Balance	91.01	Contribution to GalGael overheads	
22	Gift Aid on Sturrock donation	187.50	incurred in organising (3 staff attended)	
24	Total overhead contribution of trip	278.51		
25				
26				

Lastly, on the finances, the trip costs just over £2,000, about £100 per head, and it’s always a worry knowing if we’re going to get the money given that this has to be self-funding, separate from normal GalGael revenues. We were very fortunate to have increased support this year from the Quakers through the John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust. Also, a family in Edinburgh who have long given GalGael a helping hand came to our assistance, as did a supporter in Stornoway. The

slight surplus and gift aid on one of the donations is allocated to GalGael overheads to help keep the wider show on the road. We missed the Glasgow Quaker collection in January, but we’ve been allocated one in July, and will earmark that money for next year if we repeat the trip again.

Below are some pictures. Thank you to all who helped to make this happen. It was special.

Alastair McIntosh
GalGael Board Member
14 May 2019





I AM THE sacred sun
Reflected deep within ~~me~~
Still in eternal peace from
eternity I began

The universe is not
punishing you it is responding
to



