

Beyond Return

“I often stood at the doorway of a ruin and wondered just what the women would regard as essential to their lives. When I asked elderly neighbours, the answer was the fire, vital for heat and light.”

Meg Douglas, *Lost Townships, Silent Voices; a field study of Mull*



Every year cattle and sheep were taken in boats to the islands to pasture on fresh growth. The women stayed behind to look after the homestead, the children, the livestock and the fire. My ancestors farmed this land; my mothers and fathers trod these hills and shores long before I arrived and they too would have taken cattle and sheep over to the islands, to Fladda, Lunga and the other smaller isles.

I think of my mothers, those who would have stayed onshore to tend the fire. I trace their footsteps – I wait with them and for them.