

# Life at the end of the road

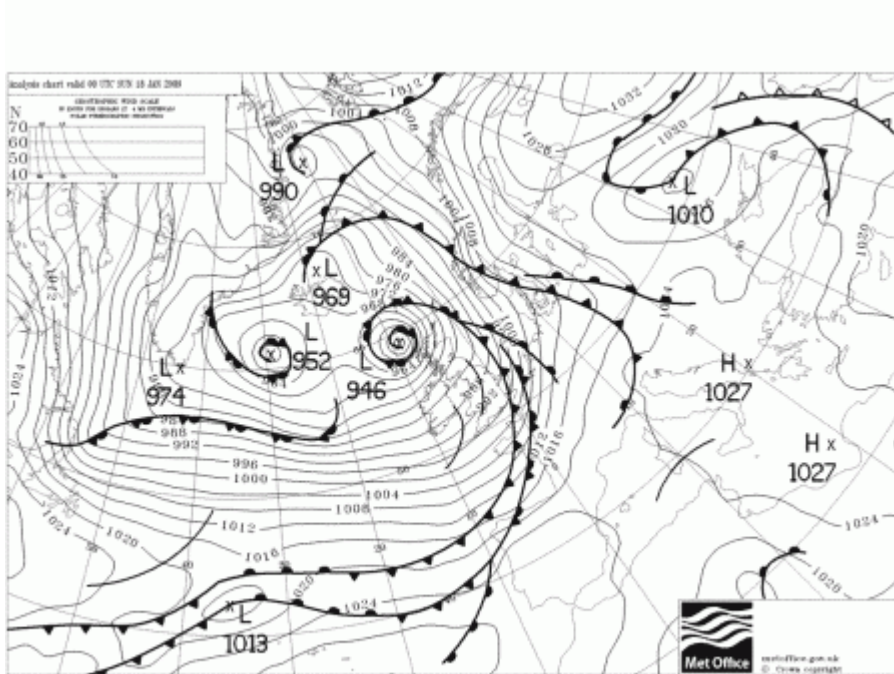
the trials and tribulations of an accidental crofter

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[A very quiet Monday](#) »

## Raasay House is ablaze

By lifeattheendoftheroad

That's what my skipper said when he awoke me from a deep sleep at 2:00am this morning. This was the last thing I had been expecting, a shout in the teeth of a gale. However the depression was now well to the north of Lewis so the wind had gone to the west and moderated somewhat.



synoptic chart for midnight on 17/1/09

Though when he phoned I had my doubts, especially when I opened the front door to be confronted by hailstones that were lying thick on the ground. Nevertheless I jumped in the Land Rover with my overalls covering my wacky Skye Batik trousers and rushed southwards down a VERY slippery 'Calum's road'. Although I had to lock the center diff to get up a couple of hills and had to drive on the verge whilst descending one I made it. Taking the low road to avoid any fallen trees I almost hit a large wooden pallet that had been blown into the road at Osaig, all the while the glow from the sky to the south was getting brighter. As I drove past the rear of the house the flames were already through the roof and it did not look good. The rest of the crew had the Loch Striven already warmed up and we let go the ropes and headed for a very dark Sconser, the weather had obviously taken it's toll as there was no power on there! Which was a

bizarre contrast to the now raging inferno that was Raasay house and all the floodlights at the new ferry terminal. Whilst on the way over the Portree lifeboat came speeding south with additional personnel and landed them at the pier. Despite a tricky landing in the dark with squalls racing down loch Sligachan we berthed safely and took on board two fire appliances and an ambulance, as no one knew for certain if it was unoccupied at the time as I think the alarm had been raised by somebody from the new harbour works. After discharging our traffic and tying up I took a drive along to take some photo's and it really was quite depressing. The last time I'd seen any kind of fire at Raasay House was 8 years ago tomorrow and that was from the fire eater, bonfire and fireworks from my wedding there. I stayed just long enough to get a few pictures then left as it really was quite sad to see all that work go up in flames.

### **Sunday 18th**

Didn't get much in the way of sleep last night as I was half expecting to be called out again so stayed on board. The Portree lifeboat arrived alongside the ferry and I get the feeling it was around 5:30am though I couldn't swear to it. The wind over here had died away but Davie Urquhart the coxswain reported it as being pretty gusty at Sconser. The 'Corinne Whiteley' which is not the regular Portree boat dropped off more fire hoses and crew though by now it was clear that the hoses would not be needed and at 6:00am the lifeboat headed for home.

We did the regular run at 10:00am taking back the ambulance ( which wasn't fortunately needed ) and the Portree fire crew who were 'stood down'. At Sconser we picked up the Kyle crew and a crew from Inverness that would relieve the Broadford crew that were still on site. We also brought back police and a contractors representative. Doing an extra run at around 10:50 to take back the Broadford crew and pick up a lucky car that was waiting for the 16:30 ferry!

### **Home at last**

Finally made back home despite the snow and as promised here's some pic's



Rear of Raasay house 2:30am

That was taken on my way to the ferry and as you can see the fire is well established



Raasay house fire 2:30am

This was taken a few moments earlier.



Ambulance and first appliance 3:08am

Here's the emergency vehicles boarding the ferry at a very dark Sconser.



Raasay house at 4:10am

This was taken after we'd tied up and the fire appliances were on scene



Water from the sea!

There wasn't enough water so they took it from the sea!



Portree Lifeboat

The Portree relief lifeboat 'Corinne Whiteley' arrived for the second time around 5:30am with more men and hoses.



Coxswain Davy Urquhart

Skillfully berthed alongside by a rather cold looking David Urquhart on the flying bridge.

### **The aftermath**

After 'Corinne Whiteley' departed I'd an attempt at sleep and all too soon it was time for the 10:00am sailing, arriving at Sconser to find that Raasay House was not the only casualty of the night.



Parked upside down!

With the extra run out of the way and the Loch Striven once again fastened to Scotland I went to look at the smouldering ruins.



What can I say

It was a sad sight indeed, summed up better by all the comments left on here by visitors, workers, former employee's, contractors and even total strangers from the other side of the world than anything I could say. A controvertial building at the best of times in it's 200 odd year history it has in some way touched all who have a connection with Raasay. I for one will be shedding a tear for it and everyone who put so much effort into it of late. I didn't stay long and headed back to the Loch Striven for a well earned sleep.

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Job done

At 4:00pm the Portree and Broadford tenders left along with the Kyle and Inverness crews, leaving the Raasay crew to watch the ruins.



Going home


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## 49 Responses to “Raasay House is ablaze”

1.  *Neil Duncan* Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 10:34 am](#)

Hi, obviously we are gutted to hear the news about Raasay House this morning. I am interested in seeing your pictures of the fire. Would it be possible for you to get in touch.

Regards


Neil

2.  *lifeattheendoftheroad* Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 10:47 am](#)


Hi Neil,

I'll be on the ferry all day and I can't download them here but I'll get some off to you ASAP.


Cheers, Paul

3.  *Simon* Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 10:47 am](#)

That is incredibly sad news about Raasay House. I hope it isn't too bad, I am sure a lot of local jobs depend on the old place.

4.  *jo ben, junno and reuben* Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 11:14 am](#)

What terrible news it's difficult to know what to say... we're feeling shocked and sad. It is an awful loss for the whole island especially the team at Raasay house who worked so hard to get the refurbishment off the ground. We're thinking of you all.

5.  *barrydornoch* Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 12:54 pm](#)


Hi Paul,

What terrible news, don't know what to say. I just hope it can be repaired.


Barry.

6.  *Carole & Finn* Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 2:01 pm](#)


What a terrible loss, so sad to hear the news. We were looking forward to the cafe being open again. Surely it will be rebuilt, we really hope so.

7.  *C Says:*  
[January 18, 2009 at 2:14 pm](#)


Hope they had good insurance, I know it's never enough, but its better than starting over from scratch.

8.  *Phil Says:*  
[January 18, 2009 at 2:50 pm](#)

A sad loss of a historic building. I was looking forward to seeing returned to its former glory.


9.  *Eleanor and Dave (Bury) Says:*  
[January 18, 2009 at 3:00 pm](#)

We were really sorry to hear about Raasay House. A real loss for all of you on the island. We were looking forward to seeing it restored when we visit again this year but hopefully it won't be too long till it is rebuilt - once again.

10.  *Zak Says:*  
[January 18, 2009 at 5:58 pm](#)

I'll be interested in seeing the pics too, sounds like you had quite a night!

btw, why not get yourself a card reader, it saves having to keep plugging the camera in!


11.  *Jackie Mac Says:*  
[January 18, 2009 at 6:49 pm](#)

Desperately sad news

A little bit of Raasay House stayed with all who ever lived and worked there.

Without exception, the happiest days of my life were spent working and indeed playing round Raasay House.

Try and keep positive seem woefully inadequate

12.  *Robin and Liz Millar Says:*  
[January 18, 2009 at 6:55 pm](#)

Desperately sad news for everyone. Hope it can be rebuilt.


13.  *Helen Millward Says:*  
[January 18, 2009 at 7:14 pm](#)

Have been glued to your site since Matthew rang me at 10.00am Really sorry to read about the fire, and have been thinking of everyone all day. Have also seen John A Gillies pictures and am glad to catch up with yours. Have spoken to one or two people and can tell how sad they all are, Helen

14.  *Rienza Says:*

[January 18, 2009 at 7:26 pm](#)

Everyone before me has said it all. My goodness what a tragedy to all concerned. Hope and pray that it can and will be rebuilt.


15.  [barrydornoch](#) Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 7:30 pm](#)

Hi again Paul,


Just seen your pictures, it looks as bad as it could possibly be. As I think I told you I am writing a book about Dr Green, so I've unearthed 1000's documents about Raasay House over the last six months and I feel really close to the house. Its ironic that 19 years of neglect by Dr Green never got near to the devastation of last night.

I've spent months digging into what happened during Dr Green's ownership, it really feels a little strange to think that at the worst he was responsible for some wet rot and a bit of damage!

Barry.


16.  [rab and james](#) Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 7:36 pm](#)

such sad news been working there over a year with macleod roofing a beautiful building wasted


17.  [Mick Womersley](#) Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 7:46 pm](#)

Just miserable to hear about the house. I was looking forward to coming back again for a visit someday soon with some of my students.

Isn't the place still owned by HIE? if so, it should be well insured. I hope so, for everyone's sake.

18.  [Ian & Madge Mackenzie](#) Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 8:11 pm](#)

Sorry to hear of this tragedy. Our family have been phoning each other to pass on the news. Hope it can be rebuilt.

19.  [puddlemonster](#) Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 8:14 pm](#)

Hi Paul, you must be knackered after a busy 24 hours. Thanks for keeping everyone informed, your blog is really important to those of us who don't make it to the island as often as we'd like. Our thoughts are with everyone. Such a lovely building. Mhairi Mackenzie

20.  [yestosh](#) Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 8:21 pm](#)

Hello Paul

Can't believe what has happened. Thank goodness no-one was hurt. Our thoughts are with everyone there. Many thanks for keeping us all informed.

Callum

21.  *iain Macleod* Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 8:50 pm](#)

Hi Paul,  
What devastating news and so terribly sad for all concerned. Our thoughts are with Lyn, the team and naturally all at home. We are returning home in Feb and were so looking forward to seeing the new 'House'.

Best wishes

Iain

22.  *claire & Dick palmer* Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 9:01 pm](#)

Hi Paul

Thanks for the bad news, we just hope it can all be rebuilt again.  
One request, can you take some more pics for everyone when you have time??

Dick

23.  *Sarah Watts* Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 9:16 pm](#)

Just lost for words.

I own a holiday cottage on Inverarish Terrace and my neighbours called me this am. My heart goes out to everybody on Raasay as I know the house meant so much to so many people.

I was due to take a music course at the house at the end of march and we have people all over the UK coming up.

I hope that Raasay House will one day be rebuilt to how it should be.

Sarah

24.  *Trusty* Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 9:31 pm](#)

Really really sad news, having only visited the house a few times its made me feel incredibly sad so I can't imagine how everyone on the island is feeling. Lets hope it can be rebuilt in the future

Helen


25.  *James & Fiona (oscaig)* Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 9:38 pm](#)

Hi Paul,

Thanks for keeping everyone posted.

What a sad day right enough, can't believe how bad it looks. We were so looking forward to seeing the finished building when we come up at easter. Hope it can be saved.

James & Fiona

26.  *Nick at Braes* Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 11:09 pm](#)

A sad sad sight from over here. Guttled like the House. Hoping for a happy future for the building and the Centre.

27.  *Kyla* Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 11:15 pm](#)


Ooooooohhhhhh - could anything else possibly happen? Thanks for pics and hope to still see you very soon. love to all, Kyla

28.  *Margaret Maclean* Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 11:27 pm](#)

Paul,


what sad sad news - it was so hard to look at the photos of her burning, this is a terrible tragedy for the island and my heart goes out to Lynn and all the raasay house people there. I hope the house was heavily insured and it can be rebuilt and she can restored to her former splendour.

Margaret Maclean ( of Osaig)  
California.

29.  *Nic B-C* Says:  
[January 18, 2009 at 11:38 pm](#)

Having only just connected up with Dave Croy after 22 years of being on Expedition with him to NZ with Operation raleigh i came home to this news tonight. Such devastating loss for the community at the minute. Im sure like the Phoenix it will rise from the ashes and flourish once more. Timing just couldnt be worse with it being handed over tomorrow!

Chin up all involved my thought s are with you

30.  *anniehorse* Says:  
[January 19, 2009 at 12:52 am](#)

Oh Paul, I am in tears sitting here looking at your photos of this amazing old building up in flames, Bradan rang me this morning to tell me, ....sentimental yes, I am but one of so many with such wonderful memories of Raasay House, good times, tough times, learning times, and maybe, just maybe, a few bevvy's tucked away there too... my heart feels sad, a loss of a chunk of history, generations of history, MY memories of a couple of fabulous summers with a bunch of wonderful people, both my fellow instructors and the clients who, as I did, fell in love with the house and the Island. I am just so so sad...and yes I KNOW no one was hurt, but am very aware of all the hard work which has taken years of alot of folks time to ge the place to the condition it was in. only to see it in ashes. It can be rebuilt, of course, but it cannot be the same..guess change comes to us all in different guises. I am so sorry for everyone closely involved with the house, my thoughts love and hugs go out to

everyone particularly Lyn, David and Freya. No I haven't changed, still a soft dope, AnnieXXXXXX

31.  *Stonehead* Says:  
[January 19, 2009 at 7:07 am](#)

That's terrible news. I had a feeling that if I popped over to your blog I'd find something had happened as we had our own incident here yesterday and you know what our synchronicity is like. We didn't have a fire, we had a passing horse rider thrown onto one of our gates and suffer spinal injuries. As with you, all the neighbours turn out and do what they can, so good does come from the bad. Keep us informed, won't you.

32.  *Phil* Says:  
[January 19, 2009 at 8:41 am](#)

such sad news. We watched the work progress on our visits over the past year and the house was so beautiful.  
phil sarah ailsa & roisin

33.  *chrisb* Says:  
[January 19, 2009 at 9:19 am](#)

Paul we were really sorry to hear the News about Raasay House. Although we haven't seen the house we did walk past the grounds last year, seeing the pics and especially reading the messages it brought tears and a lump to the throat.

The pictures on the Raasay House website show what a fantastic job had been done of the Renovation.

Thanks for keeping the World informed via your Blog of Life on Raasay. You're a Living Legend.

34.  *Sarah, Phil Ailsa and Roisin* Says:  
[January 19, 2009 at 11:03 am](#)

Hi, I was heartbroken to hear about Raasay House from Christine yesterday morning. I know what hard work has been put in to making this project a success.  
Sarah,


35.  *andybleaden* Says:  
[January 19, 2009 at 11:16 am](#)

devastating news. ...and after so much work as well.

36.  *Ishbel Kerr* Says:  
[January 19, 2009 at 11:31 am](#)

As a former headteacher at Raasay school who holidayed with my children for many happy years this is dreadful news. So many happy memories, dances, fun days, get togethers etc. At the school where we had such limited space and facilities we looked forward to what a refurbished Raasay house would mean for all the children. Let this not be an end to that dream. Kind regards and sincere sympathy to all those who worked so hard to achieve what has been tragically lost.

Ishbel Kerr- Madeira /Carbost

37.  *Neil and Joy Osaig* Says:  
[January 19, 2009 at 12:00 pm](#)

What devastating and terrible news regarding fire at Raasay House. So many people have worked so hard to maintain and improve this building over the past few years. We can only hope that finance will be found somehow to rebuild as the Centre has become such an important part of the island community - to say nothing of the service it offered to the many hundreds of young people who have visited over the years. Thank you for your pictures Paul as we are away at the moment and therefore have no access to the local press.

38.  *lifeattheendoftheroad* Says:  
[January 19, 2009 at 12:06 pm](#)

Thank's guys for all your comments and support. I know the management and contractors that have put so much effort into the project over the years really appreciate them. Sorry I've not been replying to your comments individually but I don't want to clutter up the blog with my witterings when you people do it so much better. Whilst the enormity of this calamity has finally sunk in I do sense a positive mood emerging from the staff that worked so hard and not the 'green shoots of recovery' that the politicians talk about but the phoenix rising from the ashes that the Greeks and Egyptians talked about.

Cheers, Paul

39.  *Gordon Willoughby* Says:  
[January 19, 2009 at 5:34 pm](#)


I am so sorry to hear this terrible news. I hope like everyone else the building can rise again from the ashes. My thoughts are with all the staff and everyone who worked there. This must be totally devastating for them.

40.  *Donald Cameron (Tasmania)* Says:  
[January 19, 2009 at 7:02 pm](#)

What a tragic loss of a wonderful old house.  
 My mother couldn't believe it had burnt down, especially after spending 4m pounds. Thanks for keeping everyone informed, especially the foto's.  
 I'm pleased to read you took over Calums croft.

41.  *webideir* Says:  
[January 19, 2009 at 8:16 pm](#)

Hi Paul (& all connected with Raasay Hse) - heard about your website/photos from AnnieHorse and was really saddened by the news of the fire. Can't claim to know the folk at the house well but when we HAVE met they were always wonderfully hospitable. My first time on Raasay was for a daytrip when my son was in nappies - we arrived early morning, planning to go back on the last ferry but then the fog rolled in and suddenly we were stranded. The folks at the house offered us a place to stay and then went one better by organising a fishing boat which bravely inched through the fog (accompanied by curious seals) and got us back home. Its one of my favourite memories of kindness from strangers and I really hope Raasay house will be able to rise again, even better than before. So, so glad no one was hurt!  
 Debi

42.  *Julie - Maurizio's mum* Says:  
[January 19, 2009 at 9:54 pm](#)

It is so sad that this could happen to the beautiful, magical place that I remember when visiting Maurizio when he worked there. I can't begin to imagine how Dave, Freya and Lynn must be feeling as well as all the other people who are connected to the house.


Julie Bonifacino

43.  *Gemma Stuart* Says:  
[January 19, 2009 at 11:13 pm](#)

I feel numb. As an ex-Portobello high school member I spent a few brilliant weeks here over the years..including a few special birthdays...with magical memories...


44.  *Alan* Says:  
[January 20, 2009 at 1:13 am](#)

Linked on to your site from a friends Isles of Scilly site. I know from my experience how difficult life in a remote location can be. Just sending my heartfelt best wishes to all those affected by this sad occurrence. Your island borne resilience will doubtlessly allow you to forge ahead.  
 All the very best from Boscastle - North Cornwall

45.  *Roger Stewart* Says:  
[January 20, 2009 at 6:02 am](#)


I am sure that many of us who have connections with the island (and others who don't) will be able to give support. Raasay without the Outdoor Centre would be a far poorer less diverse place. Fewer people would go there; fewer types of people will go; fewer children will have the opportunity to experience a completely different environment to what they know.

The most difficult thing will, I think, be energy - and maintaining hope. We can help with this - by letting everyone know of our support - and by maintaining interest and encouragement. It is not much but it is something.

46.  *David, Freya, Lyn and all the team* Says:  
[January 20, 2009 at 9:17 am](#)

We are overwhelmed by the generosity of support that has been shown, from all over the world, to our little setback. We are still in a bit of shock, as you are, but, we have every intention of overcoming this and in due course will be back welcoming people to the house and island.

David, Freya, Lyn and the team.

47.  *John H* Says:  
[January 20, 2009 at 11:04 am](#)

I am thinking of all my friends and memories from that wonderful place right now- gone, but definitely not forgotten.

Take care, and best wishes to everyone on the island,

John Highmore

48.  *GISS* Says:  
[January 20, 2009 at 1:59 pm](#)

Dear Lyn and everyone

We were devastated to hear the news about Raasay House on the BBC Scotland news. It was indeed a tragedy and we are thinking of you. However, we are in no doubt that, with Raasay's indomitable spirit of optimism, that the house will be restored to it's former glory before too long. KBO (ask James)

JENNY AND JAMES



49. *Magnus Lassila* Says:

[January 20, 2009 at 1:59 pm](#)

Jesus H F\*\*\*\*\* i'm speechless, I heard yesterday what happend and I just had to sit down for a while. Some of the best days of my life were spent on raasay and this just breakes my heart. I hope everyone is holding out and doing ok. And of course lots of love and support to everyone involved with raasay house.

Depressing...

Kindest regards from Magnus lassila (sweden)

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