

**Life and Death on St Kilda Islands:
a Lost Civilisation on the Edge of the World.**

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The tiny volcanic archipelago of St Kilda is the most remote island group in the British Isles, situated in the North Atlantic 100 miles from mainland Scotland, 50 miles west of the Outer Hebridean islands. With its spectacular landscapes, rich cultural diversity following 2000 years of human occupation, it is one of 24 global locations to be awarded World Heritage Status for its natural and cultural significance. It has the world's largest colony of gannets and the largest colony of fulmars in the British Isles, both were important food sources for the inhabitants. With remoteness of the islands and the extreme conditions, survival over centuries is testimony to the adaptability of man. Following fluctuations in population numbers due to smallpox in the 1720s, the devastating effects of neonatal tetanus in the mid 1800s and emigration, a viable community could no longer be maintained and in 1930 the remaining inhabitants were evacuated. The mystique and intrigue surrounding life on the islands has stimulated the writing of more than 700 books, articles and maps. It has stimulated research into factors leading to the decline in the population, diseases affecting the community, the cultural traditions that have disappeared and the unique wildlife. In 2014, I had the privilege of visiting St Kilda and was captivated by its remoteness, beauty and fascinating history.

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