

Seamus not-radio-tracking shaggy dog/cat story.

January 2024

We moved to 5 Dunhallin in autumn 1977 and there was a note on the kitchen table "Please look after the cat, he is called Seamus".

We co-existed, he slept in the porch. I cut a hole in the corrugated iron so he could come and go, we fed him when we saw him and he sometimes came in the house.



Asking to be let in

He prowled around and sunbathed.





I was working at Gaeltec and learning some electronics. We made medical and engineering pressure sensing devices, but also in about 1980, a swallowable radio telemetry pressure pill for human gastroenterology studies for London Hospital Medical School. It involved soldering small bits under a microscope, testing it and potting in resin, very like making radio telemetry tags for wildlife tracking.

Tim was born in 1985 and Seamus carried on fitting in with us.



Me, Tim and Seamus asleep one afternoon

I got interested in finding out where Seamus went when we were not at home. We had coexisted at 5 Dunhallin for eight years by then. We went sailing in the summer and visiting family in the winter for a week or two and he just looked after himself when we were away.

I found out about radio tracking. It looked possible to make a tag but would have been a busman's holiday and then I would have had to follow Seamus with a radio aerial. I don't think he would have liked that.



We had often tracked him visually going down the fence. He had one eye and so he was not very good at seeing things, the fence must have helped.

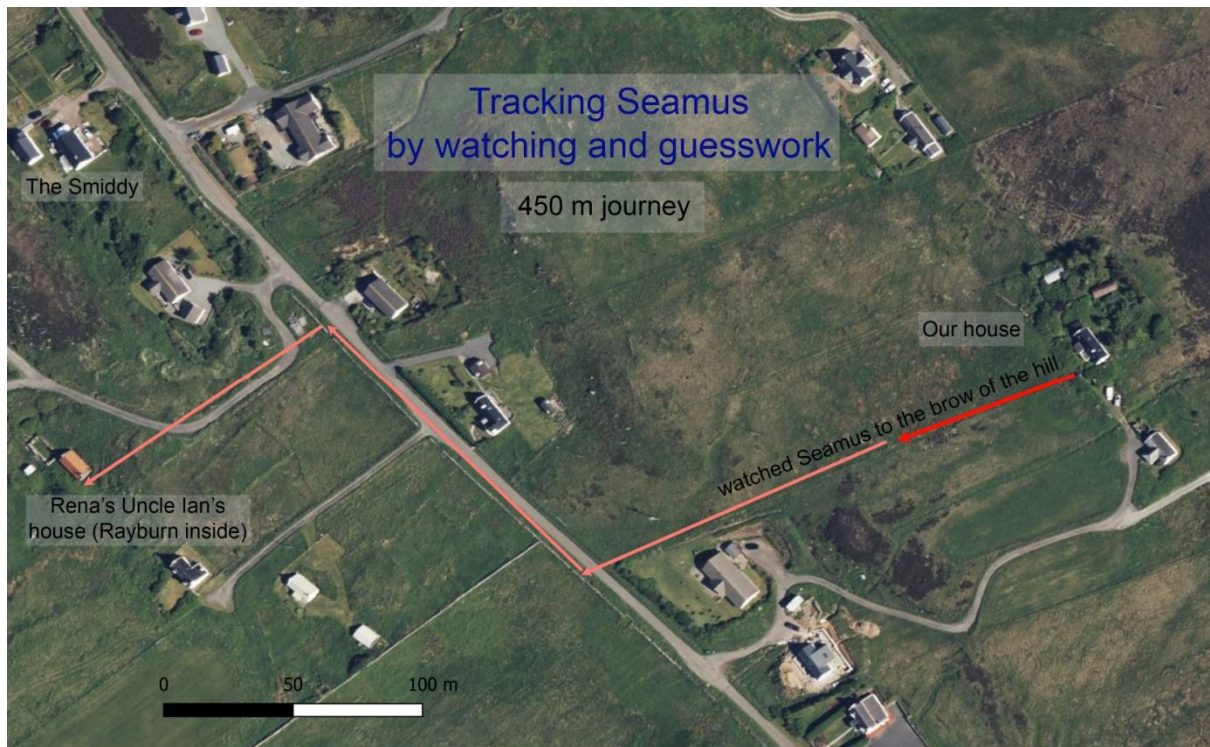


I did nothing about it for a while but one day we were walking down the hill near the Smiddy and passed Rena's Uncle Ian's house and saw Seamus asleep stretched out in front of the Rayburn range.



Rena's Uncle Ian at the Smiddy with Ian MacKinnon's peat stack behind

I think we had tracked Seamus without a radio tag, anyway near enough for me. He had two fairly comfortable places to live separated by a 450 metre walk along an easily followed route with only one awkward bit, crossing the road.



It explained his long absences and eventually he disappeared altogether in 1985 or 86 after eight or nine years with us.



Iona MacDonald had been working at Gaeltec at the same time as me but left to do more Gaelic oriented things and an OU degree in history. In 1991 she did the assignment about Waternish Corncrakes. (1991 is also the publication year of the Stowe and Hudson paper describing radio tracking Corncrakes in North Uist, done in 1984-87).

We used to hear one or more Corncrakes in the pairc, from outside the house on calm summer nights from time to time most years in the 70s and 80s.

I finally bought a book in 1991 about radio tracking.

