

MONDAY 16TH SEPTEMBER

St Kilda is one of the most remote parts of the UK, a tiny **archipelago** 40 miles west of the Outer Hebrides. It is thought the islands were inhabited for more than 2000 years but never by more than 200 people. St Kildans main food was sea birds and eggs harvested from the cliffs, supplemented by some grain and other foods delivered once a year from the mainland.

On 16th September 1885 a terrible storm destroyed the islanders' food stores and they faced certain starvation over the coming winter. A 14-year-old boy named Alexander Ferguson made 5 small wooden mailboats and sealed in letters asking for help inside with wax. He wrote 'PLEASE OPEN' on the boats and launched them into the Atlantic. One of the boats washed up onto a beach on the Hebridean Isle of Lewis and money was raised for food and a boat was chartered to save the islanders.

Numbers of people on the island later dwindled and the last 36 islanders were evacuated in 1930. Although the islands now have no permanent residents, there is a small military base, a few research scientists and tourists ([short video](#)) can visit the island if weather is good.

- Would you like to live on a remote island?
- How do you think life is different for remote island communities?
- What would you do if you found a boat on a beach labelled 'PLEASE OPEN'?

