

## **FREAK STORMS CLAIM 42 LIVES**

42 people are now known to have died in the hurricane conditions which lashed north and west Scotland for three days last week. Most were inhabitants of the Western Isles where Hurricane Morag raged its fiercest.

Amongst the most recently identified dead are Martin Cowper (21) and Graeme Downie (20), both geology students from Dundee University who were doing fieldwork on Rhum. Initially their campsite was found wrecked, with no sign of the students. A large section of cliff had collapsed near the area where they were working, and mountain rescue teams recovered their bodies from the rockslide late yesterday.

The unfortunate students were not the only casualties on Rhum. Five Scottish Natural Heritage staff were killed when a tree was hurled into the side of the hostel at Kinloch Castle, and four crofters were killed in separate incidents involving stampeding animals. Two people from Rhum's tiny population of 22 are still missing and little hope remains for their safety.

On the mainland a group of holidaymakers in Oban were killed when their caravan was torn from its moorings and blown across a field. There were also several deaths due to traffic accidents, mainly caused by falling branches, although the police and RAC stated several pile-ups could have been prevented if people had been driving sensibly in the atrocious conditions.

Most lives were lost in a train derailment just east of Corpach on the Fort William to Mallaig line. Eighteen people, including the driver, died when rainwater triggered a landslide across the tracks. A spokesperson for the Scotrail accident investigation team stated that such heavy rain in such a short space of time was unprecedented, even for the west of Scotland. The entire hillside turned to mud and slid down on top of the train. Rescue teams took three days to dig out all the bodies.

It is estimated the storms have caused over 14 million pounds worth of damage.