

Aristocrat, adventurer, naturalist, conservationist, secret agent, shark hunter, racing driver, painter and social renegade: Gavin Maxwell (1914 - 1969) was not only a most remarkable Scotsman, but also one of the most popular authors of wildlife books of the last century, with "The Ring of Bright Water" being his most famous work, having sold over a million copies worldwide.

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Maxwell bought the Eilean Bàn cottages in 1963, 3 years after they had been put up for sale by The Northern Lighthouse Board, following the [automation of the lighthouse](#) . However it was not until January 1968 that he came to live on Eilean Bàn full-time, after fire destroyed his cottage at Sandaig (a place known in his books by the name Camusfearna). He remained on Eilean Bàn until his death in September 1969.

"I felt drawn to Kyleakin as I had to few places in my life... I felt as if I were coming home."
Gavin Maxwell - 'Raven Seek Thy Brother'

Staying true to the diversity that characterised his life, Maxwell planned a number of different enterprises while living on Eilean Bàn. These included encouraging Eider Ducks to breed on Eilean Dudh (the neighbouring, smaller island) so that the down from their nests could be harvested, and establishing a collection of wild animals indigenous to Scotland to create a private zoo. He was considering allowing small groups of people to visit the island by boat departing from the shores of Skye, where a visitor centre and shop would welcome them, just like the Bright Water Visitor Centre that we have today.

Before Maxwell bought the islands cottages they had been home to the lighthouse keepers and their families. The living space was therefore naturally divided in two. It was Richard Frere who removed the dividing wall between the 2 living rooms, creating a dramatic 40ft space for Maxwell that became known as the [Long Room](#) . The Long Room is now a museum to Maxwell's life, recreated after much research by [Virginia McKenna](#)

. A room of sophistication and elegance, it gives an impression of the complex creative man who lived there. A man who through his writing was able to open the eyes of many to the wild beauty of the Highlands, and captivate still more with the stories of the life he shared with his

otters.