

**HERITAGE CENTRE PROGRESS :**

Those of you who have visited the Heritage Centre building and found it relatively empty at this stage may not realise just how much effort is going into the drive to open at Easter 2002.

On the structural side, drainage is being improved and a water supply has been secured. Graham Newton has finalised the installation of lighting, and power points are being arranged in a manner that is sympathetic to the planned interpretive panels.

Alistair McCowan has installed the sink, toilet and wash basin, and arrangements are in hand to complete the sewerage system. The new septic tank is in the process of being installed.

By the time this is in print, the model monastery will have been delivered to Applecross. A great deal of research has gone into our attempts to establish what a settlement of this sort might have looked like and we are grateful to John Wood, Senior Archaeologist at Highland Council, Dr. Sally Foster of Historic Scotland, Aidan Macdonald, recently retired from University College, Cork, and many others for their advice and assistance. In the end, we decided to aim for a model that would show a variety of buildings that might have been in use at some time during the life of the monastery over the hundred years and more of its thriving life.

During September Steve Tomlinson, our adviser, made a second visit and the directors of our Trust, together with other interested parties, held meetings with him at which we finalised a schedule of items required for display. Since then, he has been supplied with a lot of the material and we hope to have most of it with him by the end of the year. We are in touch with a number of businesses and individuals who are willing to help further. Foremost is the Applecross Trust and the list includes The Venture Trust, Butec, Kinloch Damp Ltd. in addition to Willie Lindsay from Kinlochewe, Viv Rollo, Kate MacLennan who will supply photographs, Alasdair Macleod of Toscaig Shellfish, Murdo Duncan Macrae, Donald Cameron and Dan McCowan. The latter has produced a paper on Red Deer with hardly any prompting and we also await a contribution by Ken Griffin covering his involvement with the deer forest here over many years. Donald Cameron and Annbell Phimister are researching the churchyard records. Fena Scott has volunteered to assist with checking the transfer of census returns to the computer. Murdo Ferguson has found an old press cutting of a Wills' wedding. Both Aidan Macdonald of University College Cork and our own Kenny Macdonald, late of the Department of Celtic at Glasgow University, are helping. In October, Ian Mackenzie visited Jean and Roddy Macbeth at their home in Cromarty, remarkably, next door to Aidan Macdonald's Scottish home. He found them in sparkling health and most interested in our project. As most of our members will know, Jean was the leading light in setting up the award-winning Cromarty Court House where another friend of Applecross, Dr. David Alston, is now curator. Jean and Roddy have roots in the peninsula. He was born in Fernamore and Jean's grandmother was from Toscaig. She herself went to school in Applecross for a time.

A number of others too numerous to mention have agreed to become involved, sometimes under pressure, and we are grateful to all of them.

We have always known that our problem would not be in acquiring material for display but rather in finding space for the material we had or had been promised. This is particularly so with written work, some voluminous, which accounts for most of the over two hundred items in our Archivist's List. We have to be selective but, as has been pointed out by several people, our structure as a Historical Society is such that none of the material will be lost.

The work continues. An important contributor continues to be Richard Wills who has recently supplied a number of useful papers and photographs. Included is a list of Estate employees drawn up in 1930 by the manager of the time, James Simpson. It shows names, ages, time in employment and wages and makes fascinating reading. He has also given us an interesting account of a trip on the *Passing Cloud* and old photographs of the Wills' family and staff.

### **USE OF THE HERITAGE CENTRE BUILDINGS :**

The last Newsletter mentioned a proposed visit by Bob Pegg. He and Bill Taylor visited in July with their 'Waking the Beast' show and this highly successful evening was reported in August's *An Carrannach*. Attendance was high for our small community with seventy people attending and we discovered an added bonus in that the acoustics of the building proved to be excellent.

Later in the year, Bob returned with his recording equipment and recorded conversation with Mrs. Nan Macrae in her home. Mrs. Macrae is one of our faithful supporters who rarely misses a meeting and she has an excellent memory of life in pre-war Applecross where the blacksmiths and bakers of her family were a mainstay of artisan life. Her hour-long animated and interesting contribution will be a highlight of our archives and we are grateful to her for agreeing, with no fuss, to go on record. She has also given the Centre a copy of Norman Nichol's book *Life in Scotland*, an overview of history from the Stone Age to the Twentieth Century.

John Kerr FSA and his wife Patricia, long-standing friends of Applecross, came up from Pitlochry in October for John to lecture on Queen Victoria's visits to Scotland. It was disappointing that, in the indifferent weather that was a feature of most of October, the lecture was not as well attended as it deserved to be. Those of us who were there enjoyed a well researched and professionally presented talk which featured a series of excellent photographic slides. John's book, *Queen Victoria's Scottish Diaries*, first published in 1992, and an ongoing success, was available for sale. We are grateful to the Kerrs for their continuing support.

### **OTHER VISITORS :**

Jack Stevenson and Ian Fisher of RCAHMS (The Royal Commission) visited Applecross in the summer and had a look at the site of the monastery. They were unable to find evidence of the vallum outlined by Professor Thomas in 1964. It was arranged that for the small dig proposed by John Wood, County Archaeologist, Applecross Trust would supply a digger and it emerged that early September would be suitable for John. It is to the Estate's credit that, although this was the middle of the stalking season and this is the most important of Dave Abram's duties, it was agreed in principle that he would be released to don his hard hat and operate the digger. In the event, two days of heavy rain made access impossible and the exercise was called off. However both John Wood and Dr. Noel Fojut of Historic Scotland came to Clachan and walked the area with Alistair McCowan and Ian Mackenzie. It was suggested that it might be possible to fund an

ongoing small exercise over three years, perhaps involving the schoolchildren, commencing in the spring of next year when the ground was dry. We look forward to this.

#### **FIND :**

It is on record that a stone font was found at Clachan in 1874. It is mentioned in the papers of Kenneth Macrae FSA as having been used as a drinking vessel by the incumbents of the Manse and there we, locally, lost track of it. However RCAHMS had photographed it in the chapel in the seventies and, having established this, Alan Gillies went searching there recently and found a stone which seemed to be that in the photograph. Exchange of photographs with RCAHMS and a view expressed by Dr. Fojut of Historic Scotland convince us that it is, indeed, that found in 1874. This is exciting news.

#### **OTHER MATTERS :**

We had a small display at the Applecross Sports Day and, as last year, there was much interest in our plans.

We were represented at the Pont (mapmaker) Conference in Edinburgh where new friends were made. Among old acquaintances was John Kerr. We were able to consult him on the old map of Scotland provided by Margaret Beaton.

Mrs. Wynn, daughter of the last Lord Middleton to own Applecross Estate, continues to support us and visited during the year. She has supplied a wealth of photographs and other material and we continue to be grateful for her interest.

Lesley Kilbride has provided Steve Tomlinson with details for a section on dyeing and we await the promised topographical model from the Kilbride family. Gill Fairweather has also done work on flora and fauna for the appropriate panel.

Steve Tomlinson is in contact with the leaders of the Early Settlers' Project in Edinburgh University Department of Archaeology and we are indebted to them for their interest and assistance. Dr. Karen Hardy and Dr. Caroline Wickham Jones visited in October and gave a lecture about the excavation works at Sand.

John and Elsie McKeown continue to make a massive contribution in the creation of our web site and the transmission of scanned photographs to Steve Tomlinson for selection.

Mary Macdonald tells us that the Chisholm cross slab, thought to have an Applecross connection, has been destroyed. In the light of the interest that Mary's original research engendered, as reported in the last Newsletter, this is indeed a pity. Neglect of history, it appears, is not just a fault of the uneducated past!

#### **FINALLY :**

Readers will understand that there is a lot of work to be done before we open at Easter. While we have had sterling assistance from Alan Gillies in the preparation of text, much remains to be done. Those who attended this month's meeting of the Society are well aware of this, and others who may have something to contribute by way of text, photographs or artefacts should get in touch with Alistair McCowan, Catriona McCowan or Ian Mackenzie.

We look forward to your support for a worthwhile and overdue project.