

The Newsletter of the Applecross Historical Society

February 2016

2015 Season

During the 2015 season we saw many new and returning visitors. Amongst our returning visitors were Mrs Hermione Wynn, the daughter of Lord Middleton who owned Applecross Estate until 1929. Mrs Wynn, who is now 91 years young was delighted to see a photograph of herself and her father on display. Ann Bishop, who has done so much work on transcribing the Census records, paid her usual early, pre-midge visit. Her massive work put us in the forefront of Heritage Centres, in being able to provide this information to visitors before it became available on-line.

As always, the manning of the Centre to visitors, is provided by volunteers. Our sincere thanks go to them all. Without their freely given services, we would not be able to function. During the winter we will be working to update some of our displays to provide more information for our visitors.

Curator

As you are aware, our Curator's post was funded through the Applecross Landscape Partnership Lottery grant. Since January 2015, the Society has funded his post through our own monies. However, we are not in a position to make this a permanent appointment and we are pleased to say, for Gordon's sake, that he has now taken up a research project with Sabhal Mor Ostaig in Skye. His work will take him around Skye and the outer isles investigating the status of Gaidhlig in these places. We wish him every success, and will miss his input to our Society. However, he has agreed to maintain consultative links with us which we appreciate greatly.

Museum Accreditation

An application has been submitted for our accreditation as a museum rather than as a Heritage Centre. If successful, this will open doors for us to apply for a wider range of grant funding. The drawing up of the application which necessitated a huge range of various paperwork, was completed in the main by Gordon.

New Director

We were delighted to appoint Fiona MacKenzie, daughter of Ian MacKenzie, Toscaig, as a new Director. Ian was one of our Founding Directors and our Archivist for many years. Fiona has always shared his love of Applecross and its history. Her recent retirement from her post as Chief Executive of NHS Forth Valley provided the opportunity for her to join us and give us the benefit of her wide-ranging abilities. Just as her father gave unstintingly of his time and talents, so Fiona has shown herself willing to do.

New Information

During the year we have been gathering information in two main areas. They have been the History of Health Care in Applecross, in particular the doctors and nurses who have served us; and the second focus has been on the men and women who have served in both World Wars and also those who completed National Service.

Doctors and Nurses:

The following are excerpts from the booklet printed and on display in the Heritage Centre.

NURSES

The first record we could find was SARAH MACRAE who is recorded in the 1851 census as a midwife. There is no information as to where her remuneration came from. However, from 1863, when the Middleton family bought Applecross Estate, they provided funds for a district nurse to be employed.

After the First World War money was raised by public subscription to pay for a district nurse. At one time, John (Andy) Ferguson had the task of going round each house to collect the monies which were all recorded in the nurse's book". This was probably in the 1920's/30's /40's. Unfortunately, we do not have the record book. We would love to hear from anyone who has any recollections or stories from friends or family regarding this system.

NURSE GREEN was the first nurse paid by this scheme. She was given No. 6 Shore Street for accommodation by the Wills family.

She was followed by NURSE CAMPBELL. Alistair McCowan recalls that she was a friend of their family and places her time in Applecross as being in the early 30's. The next nurse was

PEGGY MACRAE from Reaulay on the Applecross north coast. She married Donnie Sutherland, so may be more familiar to some people as Peggy Sutherland. She was followed by KATE MACARTHUR from Banchory Devenick in Aberdeenshire. Then it was ISA GOLLAN from Plockton who also married a local man, Kenneth MacLeod.

After the second World War the National Health Service was set up, so the funding of a District Nurse through public subscription ceased. In the early 1950's the Ross & Cromarty Council built two council houses in Milton; one for the policeman and the other for the District Nurse. The policeman's post was removed from Applecross before he could use the house, and it was occupied as a regular council house. The nurse's house, however was occupied by district nurses until the late 1990's, when the then nurse, Pat Tyrell and her husband bought the old schoolhouse and moved there. Since then, the Milton house has provided accommodation for locum doctors. The first nurse to live in the Milton house was PEGGY NICHOLSON from Skye. She married Roddy MacRae from Milton She had two sons with him, but sadly died of cancer in her 40's. She was followed in 1955 by Nurse Scott, who moved from Lanarkshire with her two girls. The nurses had to attend patients round the north coast and transport was either by motorbike or by boat. Nurse Scott also died prematurely whilst still serving in Applecross. Subsequent nurses were DIANE STUART, FREDA BIMSON, JILL SMITH, NURSE KERR, PAT TYRELL, LESLEY MACKEWEN and MACKENZIE. Pat Tyrell was the last nurse serving only Applecross. At present Applecross' nursing needs are catered for from a pool of nurses serving Applecross, Shieldaig, Lochcarron and Torridon. Relief nurses have also served the community from time to time.



Our information about this picture is simply "Mary & Mary". If anyone can give us more information we would be very grateful.

DOCTORS

The first doctor we have record of is a Dr HAIMES. He is recorded in the 1871 census as "doctor", but we do not know if he was actually serving here or simply staying. He died at Hartfield, so it would seem as if he resided here for some reasonable time. In the 1871 census there is also recorded a Dr. CHARLES STEWART. In 1876 a Dr RONALD is recorded. By 1891 the census records show Dr MURDO ROSE from Daviot as the doctor here. He lived in the then Temperance Hotel run by Alasdair MacRae (Ali Taillear).

In the early 1900's Dr MACGREGOR was in post. His son, Alasdair Alpine MacGregor writes about his early years in Applecross in his book "Vanished waters".



At that time the doctor's house and surgery were at "Sgeir Mhor" in Milton.

By 1910 Dr CRAWFORD BLAIR LUCAS was the practitioner. He was remembered as being very kind to his poorer patients.

Dr JOHN MACLEOD (known as Saddock) was here from around 1927 till the early 1930's. He was from North Uist and returned there for the rest of his working life. He is recognised as being the pioneer of a form of free health care in Uist, which was the precursor of the National

Health Service. His son followed in his footsteps as doctor in North Uist.

Dr MacLeod was followed by Dr MACLEAN from Lewis, then Dr CHRISTY MACDONALD from Strome Ferry. He was succeeded by Dr FRANK DAVIDSON who left Applecross in 1953. Then came Dr HENRY MARTIN who remained as doctor in Applecross until his death in 1967/8. He was followed briefly by a Dr MACLEOD and then by Dr LITTLER who came in January 1968. He was the doctor until 1973. Dr RAYMOND CHRISTIE came next and stayed until the early 1980's. During his time a new surgery was built in Camusterrach and Dr Christie bought a house in Culduie, so the old surgery and doctor's residence in Milton were no longer required and reverted to the Applecross Estate.

When he left, Dr ALEXANDER GILLIES came. Dr Gillies' family were from Culduie and Alexander had spent holidays in Culduie throughout his life, so coming to work in Applecross was very much a home from home. His successor was Dr CATHERINE MACLEOD. She gave up the practice in 1993, having been joined in 1991 by Dr JANICE CARGILL as Associate doctor. She took over the practice when Dr MacLeod left and continued as our doctor until her retirement in 2011. During Dr Cargill's time she had the support of various Associates – Dr Juliette Fleming, Dr Donald Jardine, Dr Sheila Carbarns, Dr Victor Barber. In 2009 Dr Mark Darbyshire joined the practice as Job Share Partner. He left in 2011. After a time of short term supply doctors, a permanent replacement was found. Dr KIRSTEEN DUFFY came in 2014 and is now very much part of the community.

WAR RECORDS

As there are so many in this record, the simplest way to present it here is to give a list of all the names collected so far. If you have any information collected. The record held at the Heritage Centre has more stories and some photos. If you have any information of anyone mentioned, or anyone who has not been recorded, please get in touch with us so that our records can be as full as possible.

World War 1

From the Applecross section of the Ross Mountain Battery. Photograph

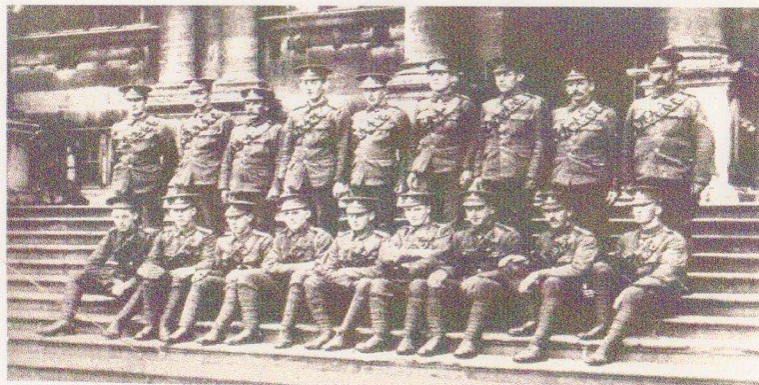
Taken at Wollaton Hall, Yorkshire in September 1914.

Back row left to right:

Murdo MacDonald (Murdo Never), Jimmy Anderson, Finlay MacLeod, Willie MacKinnon, Thomas MacKenzie (Tommy Keppoch), Duncan MacRae, Alick MacKenzie (the "Sausage"), George MacDonald (Graham), Allan MacLennan.

Front row left to right:

George MacDonald (Ardubh), John MacKenzie, Kenneth Murchison, Roderick Kennedy, William MacKenzie (Willie Rufus), Kenneth MacRae, Donald MacKenzie (Donald Brodie), Murdo MacKenzie (Murdo Keppoch), John Murchison.



Also served in World War 1

John McCowan, MacKinnon (son of John MacKinnon), Gillies – two sons of John and Ann Gillies from Callekille (one called Donald Norman the other we don't have a name for, both killed) MacDonald (son of Free Church Minister, Kenneth MacDonald, John MacRae (Jack a' Bhulcan), Roderick MacDonald, Milton, served in the Seaforth Highlanders.

Navy

Royal Navy – Duncan MacPherson

Merchant Navy – John Gillanders, John MacDonald

World War II

Duncan MacBeath (Straight), Ian MacLeod (Ian a' mhinistear), Farquhar Gillanders, Alistair Ross, Alistair MacDonald (Seonan), Angus Finlayson, Murdo Finlayson, Donnie Sutherland, Duncan MacBeath (Doochie Doochan), Roddie MacBeath, John Beaton (Lordan), Donald Ferguson (Sheiram), Donnie MacKenzie (Russel), Alexander Gillies, Alasdair MacRae (Ali Mhorty Ali),

Roddy MacRae (Ruairaidh Mhorty Ali), Murdo MacRae (Murdo Noochie), John MacKinnon (Sheonachan), Kenny MacDonald (Kenny An Dungan), Alexander Fraser, Alistair McCowan, Christopher MacBeath, Alasdair MacDonald (Alasdair Og), William MacKenzie (Willie Rufus), ? MacBeath (brother of Ronald), Charlie Sutherland, Johan Sutherland (nee MacIver), Annie Fraser (nee Finlayson), Jean Finlayson, Duncan Campbell.

National Service

Dan McCowan, Murdo Duncan MacRae, Ian MacKenzie (Ian Cruary), Donnie MacKenzie (Donnie Cruary), Eoin MacKenzie, Donald Ferguson, Hector Gillies,

The following article, by Iona MacLeod gives more insight into the personal impact of the war years. APPLECROSS IN THE WAR YEARS – A GLIMPSE

My father was Ian MacLeod, born of Skye and Lewis parentage in Scarinish in 1916. From about 1929, he was living in the Church of Scotland Manse, whilst his father was the Applecross minister. Later he married my mother, Mairi MacLean, who was brought up in the Church of Scotland Manse in Broadford. Dad died in 1996, and my mother eighteen years to the day later, in November 2014. It was only then, that I started to examine his papers and, with all the letters, photos and other items, began to realise that I have therein a wonderful glimpse into Highland and Applecross life around the war years. There is a lot of

information to digest in his full papers, but here is just a small extract about his was experience.

Having completed his medical studies, he joined the Royal Navy in 1942 as Surgeon Lieutenant. Initially he was sent on Arctic convoy duties to Spitzbergen on HMS Cowdray. His first letter home tells them that the ship knows how to roll, with a motion quite different from that of the “Glad Tidings!” (This was the Manse boat of that time.) His letters tell that he went up the Inner Sound in the destroyer with a heavy heart, seeing the Manse disappear into the distance. There were 65 ships in the convoy, which gathered at Loch Ewe. Not all returned. The ships were dreadfully cold with ice on the handrails.

Just after this, HMS Cowdray was escorting the Queen Mary in the Western Approaches to the Clyde with thousands of service personnel on board. The Queen Mary sliced through her own cruiser, HMS Curacao, leaving a high death toll in her wake. HMS Cowdray picked up those that they could and Dad always remembered the trauma of that terrible day. Some of those who perished came ashore on Skye and were buried there in Ashaig by his future father-in-law, Rev Dr Hector MacLean. Others he managed to treat on board, including, he recalled, some Gaelic speakers from Lewis.

Only a month after this, the Cowdray herself was involved in the invasion of North Africa. Dad’s ship was bombed, with some fatalities, and he, asleep in the sick bay after a night assisting with signals, was thrown against the ceiling and his femur badly smashed. His letters show the dilemma he was in, about what to do to manage his injury before the ship was rescued. He ended up lying on a beach in Algiers, being treated by a doctor he had known at university and eventually getting back for proper treatment in Cherbourg, then Plymouth, in a French ship. At the time though, things were chaotic and news not so easily sent to families.

Amongst his papers from this time, is a Christmas card from the Applecross Women’s Guild enclosing a PO for 5/- which must have been a heartening message to all those in service from the Parish.

Word had got back to Applecross that Dad was missing in action, then seriously wounded. My Grandfather had taken to his bed with the news. John MacKenzie, Toscaig, Fiona’s grandfather, went to visit him and to console him. Clearly, in retrospect, these messages were sent until such time as the whereabouts and the health status of injured servicemen were established. But it was a worrying time. There are a number of wonderful letters around the end of 1942 and early 1943, which capture the emotion of these events. From the Manse, a letter tells of the wonderful community support during the time of worry and the great celebration of the better news as it came through. From Dad, there is an account of what happened in North Africa and sincere regret for the worry he caused his family. He describes himself as “wild with worry” on their behalf when he realised they had feared the

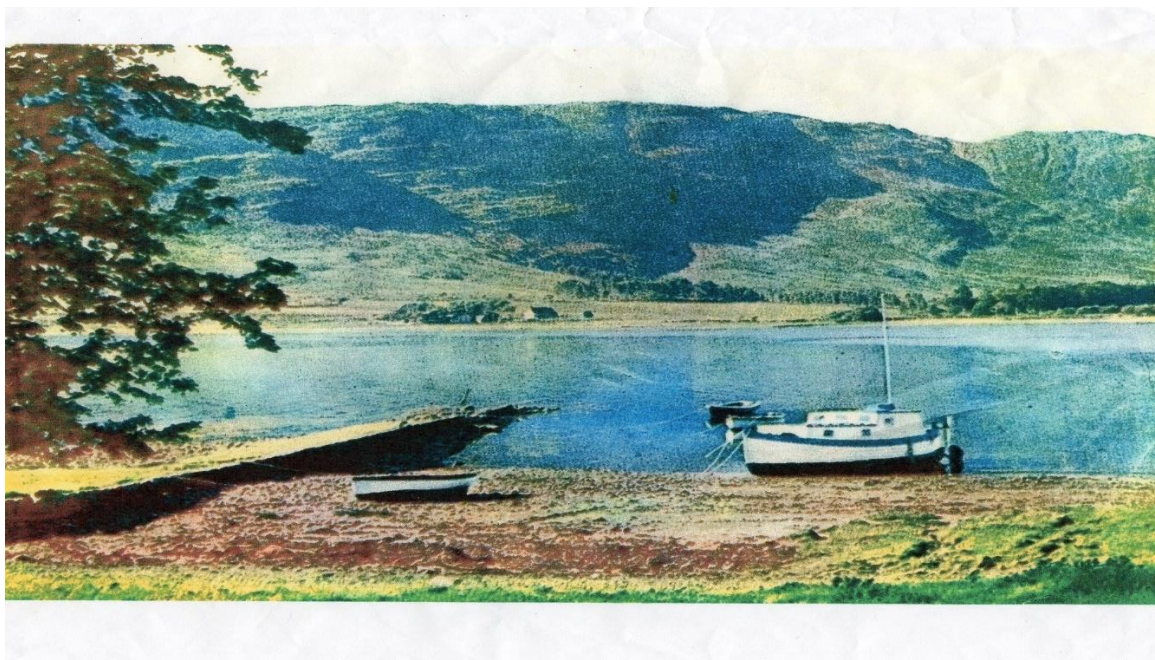
worst. He has also been getting news of how other Applecross lads are faring, some of the news being very sadly received.

In early 1943, there is a full letter from Ina Murchison. She reports that Murdo Never (MacDonald) had been able to take the good news about Dad round the Parish, having taken the latest letter to the Manse. She reports on the wellbeing of other Applecross servicemen, and the terrible fire at Lonbain, which had burnt the Finlayson house to the ground, with all their possessions. More upbeat information is imparted about possible local romances, including Donnie Ross and Barbara Finlayson. Snow, she reports, was covering the Cuillins. The weather was very cold indeed and there had been terrible storms. She tells that for weeks the fishermen had caught nothing but dogfish, which they had to skin to sell, their hands being in a terrible state. Chief amongst her positive news was that “we had a Christmas baby and a Christmas calf- a Cameron baby (Donald) and a MacRae calf”. The calf she reports has caused a lot of interest since there was at last the hope of some milk!

After my father’s long recovery, he was fortunate and was allocated duties in the hospital where he had been treated, which occupied him safely until the end of the war. Amongst his papers is another little printed card to say :- “Welcome Home, with the grateful thanks and good wishes of the people of Applecross” and he writes it was accompanied by £5, which was “a very nice thought” (and a lot of money in those days).

This short account shows how much the whole community was wrapped up in the war effort, and I know that Dad appreciated the kindness and thoughtfulness of all who lived in the area, which he and his family appreciated over this difficult time. His war service may have been short, but it was full of incident, though like many other service men and women, he did not speak much of it till later in life.

Iona MacLeod January 2016



Ceann na h-Athann Pier

In Autumn 2015 Applecross Trust made funds available for work to be done to this lovely, old pier which had completely fallen into disrepair, suffering especially from the 2005 storm. It has now been rebuilt and the surrounding area tidied up. The stonework was done by Jeff Walker, who has done a great deal of dry stone work around the Estate. Digger work was provided by Duncan Fraser of Toscaig. Until the early 1970's the estate launch the 'Tin Tack' and other local launches and dinghies were moored on the sheltered, easterly side of the pier. The area was accessible to larger vessels at high tide, including the estate packet boat the 'Passing Cloud' which would come in for maintenance, and Puffers which would come in with loads of coal. The puffers were flat bottomed so that they could lie on the sand when the tide went out. Their loads of coal were discharged into horse drawn carts which then took the coal up to the adjacent coal shed (which is now a gift shop). From there it was delivered to individual homes. In earlier times, Irish boats came into the bay for consignments of stone. They apparently had top soil as ballast when they travelled to



Applecross, and it is said that several gardens in Applecross are made from this good quality soil.

Sailors used the well, near to the coal shed, shown on the 6" to 1 mile maps issued around 1900. The well is clearly shown,

including the path to it.

BONES!

In September of this year Daniel McCowan and Stuart Matthews were engaged in the renovations of the old Estate Office when they uncovered some bones. These were clearly human as a human skull was amongst them. The police were notified and the bones were removed for dating. If they were shown to be less than 80 years old, it would be necessary for the police to conduct an investigation. During this waiting period there were many theories suggested locally about whose bones they might be. In due course, the age of the bones was announced. Much to everyone's surprise, and confounding all the theories that had been bounced around, the bones were dated as being 1,850 years old! Definitely outwith the bounds of a modern day police investigation. The bones are now undergoing some more detailed investigation to trace their provenance. We await the results with interest.

Talk by Roddy MacLean

In October we were treated to a most interesting talk, accompanied by excellent power point illustrations, about the many fascinating stories behind place names around, not only Scotland and Ireland, but also Australia, especially Tasmania. As always, Roddy kept the large audience captivated and eager for more. He is a true fund of well-researched information.

OBITUARIES

ANTHONY ARIS: 1946 – 2015: Anthony was a member of the Historical Society from 2008. His twin brother, Michael, was married to the leader of Myanmar (Burma), Aung San Suu Kyi. She spent many holidays in Arrina and through that family connection Anthony came to know and love Applecross. When he died his ashes were scattered at a low key ceremony in Arrina. Ann Fetcher (daughter of Norman and Margaret Beaton, Camusterrach) played a lament on the pipes.

Anthony was a publisher who specialised in books about Tibet and Bhutan.

JOHN KERR: John Kerr died in July, 2015. John and his wife, Patricia had a keen interest in Applecross and its history before the Historical Society was formed. He collected many documents and papers which he very kindly passed on to us when the Society started. He gave us a great deal of support, encouragement and advice over many years. Each year he and his wife Patricia would visit to show their interest in a personal way. We extend our sympathy to his widow.

DONALD DAVID MACDONALD: David MacDonald (DD) and his wife, Sandra, were also extremely supportive of our Society and very active historians. David had a 1st class History honours degree, with distinction, from Edinburgh University. Both David and Sandra spent a great deal of time and expertise on historical research, especially in their retirement. David was Depute Rector of Dingwall Academy for many years. His widow Sandra ran the late Charles Kennedy MP's office in Dingwall. Sandra is the daughter of Nina MacNair and Kenneth MacRae F.S.A. (the Bridean) an outstanding local historian whose enquiries provided us with much information and even artefacts such as our bronze brooch. He also saved documents recorded by James Collie, an Estate Factor in the 19th century, from disintegration. Sandra recently gave a fascinating and meticulous talk explaining these papers. Although living in Dingwall, David and Sandra maintained close and frequent ties to Applecross as Sandra's sister, Nana, is married to an Applecross man. David was the Session Clerk for St Clements Church of Scotland in Dingwall and was extremely well respected by all. He will be greatly missed.

ELEANOR ASHBY: Eleanor Ashby, who died on 29th July 2015, lived in Florida. However, she came to Applecross every year for more than twenty years and has been a member since our inception. Along with her late husband, Garnett, and her special friend, Nancy Macdonald, she would spend a month each year here in Applecross and become part of our extended community. Back home in Florida, Eleanor was a prominent civic leader who was recognised for her commitment to providing opportunities for all. In particular, she helped found and run an organisation called 'Leadership Jacksonville' that helped train young people for the challenges ahead of them. We hope that her daughters Baba and Stuart and her son Linden will continue the connection.

BRIAN BETT: Brian Bett died recently in Edinburgh. He and his wife Deirdre were members of our Society since its inception. Deirdre is the daughter of Kenneth Murchison, one of the five well-known Murchison brothers from Toscaig, and Isobel Ross the policeman's daughter from Shore Street. Brian was a retired lecturer from Glasgow University.

SYBIL MACKENZIE: Sybil MacKenzie died in December 2015. She was the widow of Robert MacKenzie who was Schoolmaster in Applecross for many years, some of our members being former pupils of his. Sybil was the daughter of Finlay MacLeod of Crowlin and Toscaig.

IAN MACKENZIE: We are very sad to report the death of Ian MacKenzie in January. He was a founding member of the Historical society and a main driving force in bringing the Heritage Centre to fruition. After his retiral from his post with Customs and Excise, Ian devoted a huge amount of his time to the good of the Historical Society. He was a most meticulous Archivist for the Society. Ian has had declining health for some time and the death of his wife in April 2015 was a great blow from which he didn't really recover. He was delighted to know that his daughter, Fiona was to continue his good work in sharing the fascinating history of his beloved Applecross with visitors and local people alike. Ian had a great love of life and was a most entertaining raconteur. The information he has left with us of his early days in Applecross is truly invaluable.

MEMBERSHIP FEES

The time has come round again to renew membership fees. This income is extremely important to our efforts to keep the Heritage Centre open. We have reluctantly increased our fees to **£10** per person.

Please send cheques to "Applecross Historical Society" addressed to

Ruaraidh Cameron, 2 Camusterrach Place, Applecross, IV54 8LU.

Membership fees can be paid in cash at the Heritage Centre when open.