

Applecross Historical Society Newsletter

Cuairt- litir

October 2016

Once again a busy season has flown past with visitors from many places in the UK and from around the world. Amongst our visitors were some with close connections, albeit in past years.

Mrs. Ann Pope from Inverness, who as the oldest of Murdo Campbell's 14 children was brought up at Coille Mhuiridh house, as her father was the Head Stalker until just after the start of WWII. Mrs Pope, her brother John and Alistair & Dan McCowan began their schooling together in a "side school" at Hartfield House. A few weeks before Ann Pope's visit, her sister, Margaret, one of the youngest of the Campbell family, also visited the Heritage Centre. Margaret has been a presenter for many years in Grampian television.

We were again delighted to see the delightful 92 years young, Mrs Hermione Wynn, daughter of Lord Middleton, the owner of Applecross Estate after the Duke and Duchess of Leeds until 1929.

For some, the visit will be a once in a lifetime experience; for others, it is a return to roots, to seek out information on past generations. For these, our census records, as well as some individual research done for particular families, are an invaluable resource. We are always keen to add to our gathered information, so if you see anything which triggers memories of information you have heard or if you know of some papers which your family holds, we would be delighted to be able to share it. Any paper or photographic records would be copied and returned to you.

As you can see from the following article some folk have been inspired to engage in extensive family research beginning from the records held in our Heritage Centre, and as they acknowledge, researching one family inevitably leads in other directions!

Genealogical Research (by Bobbie Amyes)

For those of you who are interested in finding out more about your ancestors, the Heritage Centre has been slowly building up its genealogical Applecross resources. Ann Bishop provided an excellent example in her patient research and hand printed Applecross Census results long before they became easily accessible by computer. In the foreword to "The McLeas of Applecross & Related Families" we acknowledged the important information provided by Murdo Livingstone of Sandwich, Lewis which formed the starting point for much of the reported work. This, in turn, was based on data forwarded to Murdo by the late Kenneth Macrae of Camusteel. One of the original researchers for the McLea book, Iain MacLennan, probably best known for his "Applecross & Its Hinterland" has continued to contribute a variety of information to the Heritage Centre. Kenn Livingstone from Vancouver helped add new information for the 2012 edition of the McLea book.

While "The McLeas of Applecross and Related Families" centred round sorting out the various McLea/ Livingstone families of the Peninsula, it has become a reference for many other family names on the Peninsula. When Donald Cameron handed over the 11 pages on the family of John

Kennedy and Ann McQueen, none of us realised it would expand into the 138 paged “Kennedy Kin” covering descendants in many countries. Updated copies of these works should be available later in 2017 from the Heritage Centre. The excellent work on the Clachan graveyard and new data from Scotland’s People mean that more information can be added to both texts.

Valuation Rolls While most people are aware of the importance of census data in helping track your family back through time, Scotland’s People site has been providing another useful tool, the Valuation Roll. These provide an excellent midpoint vehicle to locate our families between censuses. The Heritage Centre holds specialised indexes to help researchers locate their Applecross ancestors and point people in the right direction for gaining copies from Scotland’s People. At present the Heritage Centre holds 1865, 1875, 1885 & 1895 valuation indexes, but the 1855, 1905, 1915, 1920, 1925 & 1930 ones are underway, just waiting for the final matching of place names, location and index references. Because of Applecross having several individuals with the same name, the index and the location should help identifying the correct individual. If your ancestor paid a lesser rent, i.e. less than £4, then tenants are not named but lumped together e.g. 3 tenants of Badcaul.

DNA, atDNA, Y-DNA, & mtDNA

Though perhaps not seen as important to present day Applecross inhabitants, whose families have remained on the peninsula for centuries, the increased interest and availability of DNA testing has meant those from the Applecross Diaspora are now able to locate connections back to the Peninsula. Until the late 18th Century, Applecross men were generally referred to as the son of or grandson of and so Y-DNA tests [for the patrilineal line] have proved an interesting point of debate. Matrilineal testing [mtDNA], the mother’s line has been a lot less complicated. However, it is the recent ease of undertaking at DNA or autosomal testing means that one has, is able to locate one’s cousins with relative confidence up to five generations back. While we know Applecross families left the Peninsula and immigrated to Nova Scotia and then New Zealand, it is interesting to see Applecross connections showing up as matching distant cousins even though our ancestors came in different times and by different routes to New Zealand. I imagine that Applecross may well benefit from this form of ancestral tourism.

As mentioned at start, the Heritage Centre is slowly building up its Applecross genealogical resources and is appreciative of any genealogical treasure you would love to forward on. One set of 11 pages on the Kennedys resulted in a massive research project producing 138 paged “Kennedy Kin, The Descendants of John Kennedy and Ann McQueen”. Hand-drawn genealogical charts from the past have also helped us delve back into the period before the start of the 1797 parish records. In this day of global communication, the documents do not even need to leave your possession.

Scotland’s People website has undergone a major overhaul. Once you had to pay to search the indexes, but they are now free and it is so much easier to access census and valuation data, as well as the usual births, deaths and marriages. If you haven’t been on the site for a while it is worth a visit.

Bobbie Amyes Sept 2016

Natural Plant Dyeing Day

In October Lesley and Thomas Kilbride from Ri-Aulaidh on the north coast supported us by holding a natural plant dyeing day outside the Heritage Centre. Using only locally obtained plants and lichens, such as Crotal (parmelia omphaladeas), Tansy and Cudbear lichen (ocraleachia tartaria) Lesley produced beautiful shades of traditional brown, yellow, green and purple colours by boiling these up in a great cauldron! Lesley has very extensive knowledge gathered over many years of experience of the different plants and how to use them to obtain the best colours. From their store at Ri-Aulaidh, they brought along other samples of skeins of wool and lovely pieces of cloth woven by Thomas. Lengths of cloth, skeins of wool and garments are available for sale at their shop which is beside the road just past Cuaig.



Fishing

A new display focusing on fishing in the past in Applecross has been an addition to our information this season. Here is some of that information which was collected.

Evidence of a type of fishing which has been carried out here and in most west coastal areas is seen in the fish traps or Cairidhean to be seen in Applecross bay and in several of the villages around the coast. Basically, a wall was constructed and when the tide came in, fish were brought in with the water. When the tide went out fish were left in the shallows and were easily caught. Fish have been caught this way since prehistoric times, but we have no means of dating the remains of the cairidhean here in Applecross. Word of mouth suggests that they were in use into the early 20th century, but there is no clue as to when they were originally constructed. Tradition also suggests that the poor of the parish were allowed to use them to provide themselves with food, as they would not have been able to afford a boat.

Until the early 20th century all boats would have been sail and oar powered. Petrol/paraffin engines such as Kelvins became available in the 19 teens, and just prior to World War II diesel engines came into use. This was a tremendous help as sailing boats have no reverse gear! Berthing beside a harbour for loading and unloading was an extremely skilled job.

All these boats were using ground nets for white fish fishing in the winter, and drift nets for herring at other times. Ring nets were also used. Boats needed to work in pairs to operate ring nets. Boats were usually away from Monday till Saturday. They fished much further away than the present day boats, going to the Outer Isles, north to Gairloch and Ullapool and south to Oban and even some boats from Plockton reaching the Clyde fishing. Diabeg on Loch Torridon was a thriving trading post for salted herring to Russia and other Baltic countries. You can still see the salting sheds and offices down by the pier in Diabeg. The Dingwall and Skye Railway (as it was then) built a line as far as Strome on Loch Carran in 1870, but then ran out of money. Strome increased greatly in size as all the

fishing boats as well as other commercial goods and passengers used the line. However, in 1897 then line was completed through to Kyle, which then became the main port and Strome correspondingly declined.

In the late 1960's and 70's herring stocks virtually disappeared. White fishing was also on the decline and more and more boats turned to fishing for prawns. Initially, they were fished by netting, but today, in Applecross, they are all caught in prawn creels. There are now only three boats fishing from Applecross and they all fish locally, so are home each night. The hardships of previous years are much mitigated, but it is still a cold, and at times, dangerous job.

ACCIDENTS

As mentioned, fishing is a dangerous occupation and over the years there have been various incidents. Some life threatening, others less serious, but painful such as the time Kennan MacLean lost the joint of one of his fingers in one of the pulling chains on board the "Seonaid". Also onboard the "Seonaid" was the potentially more serious case of a perforated ulcer which Danny (Bhachal) MacRae developed. This was during the time of WWII so he was taken to Ullapool and from there to Aultbea where there was a Military Hospital to care for the servicemen preparing for the Arctic convoys.

As well as illnesses, there were sailing accidents.

A fatal accident occurred in October 1936 when Kenny Livingstone fell overboard from the Clan MacLean during the night near Kylerae and drowned.

In October, 1923, the Fleetwood steam trawler "**Scomber**" ran aground on rocks at the north end of the Crowlin lighthouse at 4.30 a.m., one hour before high water. The vessel was badly damaged. Six of the crew got off in their small boat and were picked up by the "Pioneer" which was en route from Kyle to Harris. This left the skipper and four crew to stand by their ship. The engine room and cabin were flooded and she was listing heavily to port. The "Scomber" was in a bad position with a rock through her hull, and salvage did not seem possible. The men standing by left by 3.00p.m. Despite her seemingly hopeless situation, the vessel was subsequently refloated, repaired and returned to service. During the salvage operations her bunkers were cleared of coal, which was dumped into small nearby villages. As they say, "every cloud has a silver lining" – or a coal black one!

The "**SS Sheila**" went aground at Ri-Aulaidh, north of Cuaig in the early hours of New Year's day 1927 while making for Applecross Bay. She was the regular steamer making the run from Kyle to Stornoway, carrying people and goods. No lives were lost, but the vessel was a total loss. Many people had items "recovered" from her as she was pulled up onto the banks of Cuaig river below Ri-Aulaidh.

The "**Viscount**", an ex-steam drifter belonging to the Stewart family of Kyle hit Murchadh Breac off Rhubh na Fearna in February 1924 and was beached in Cuaig Bay. Her steam capstan and boiler were still to be seen on the shore in 1998. She had been used to deliver goods to isolated communities along the west coast.

The herring trawler "**Fertile**" ran aground on Sgeir Ghoblach, Poll Creadha, Culduie in December 1975. There is still some of her hull to be seen on the shore.

The steam trawler “Drucilla” ran aground on Rubha na Guailne on the north side of Applecross Bay in 1940. Again, her coal bunkers were emptied into small local boats before she was refloated.

The next incident involves wildlife rather than mariners. Sometime between 1860 – 70 Alex Gordon and crew were returning home to Ardubh in the herring boat the “Ripple” when they came on a sea eagle and a big skate on the surface of the water. The eagle had caught the skate, but was not strong enough to lift it clear of the water. However, its claws were now stuck in the skate and it could not free itself and fly away! The crew caught the skate with a gaff and brought it on board the boat. They were then able to free the eagle which flew away unharmed. The skate became a tasty meal for the crew rather than the eagle!

Clachan Church

In the 1799 Statistical Account it was noted that Clachan Parish Church was condemned as unsafe in 1788 but was still standing in 1792. The present church was built in 1817. At least part of the present building is built over the site of the old chapel, which in turn would have been built over part of the monastic settlement established by St. Maelrubha from 673 A.D.. This settlement was almost certainly completely destroyed by Norse raids around 800 A.D. At the time of the 1799 Statistical Account Applecross Parish included Lochcarron, Torridon and Kishorn as well as Applecross.

The minister of the parish lived in Clachan manse and had a substantial glebe (shown on the 1905 Ordnance Survey map 6” to 1 mile scale). The agricultural buildings belonging to the manse (the cow byre, stable, barns and possibly pig sty) are what has now been restored into our present Heritage Centre. We know that a Rev. Dewar was the incumbent possibly from the end of the 19th century into the early part of the 20th C. He was followed by the Rev. Malcolm Laing, who left in 1923 to take up a post in the Outer Hebrides. His replacement was the Rev. MacLean whose daughter, Una, was born here in Applecross in 1923. Una had a remarkable career, which we will explore in the next newsletter.

In 1929 the Established church and the United Free church joined together to become the Church of Scotland. The minister for the new church then lived in the manse at Camusterrach and the church which had been built there as a Free Church following the Disruption, now served the new joint congregation.

From 1948 Clachan church was allowed to deteriorate until it was leased in the 1960’s to the then School of Adventure, when it was substantially refurbished as a place of worship for the young people attending the School. (We understand the cost of this work was personally undertaken by Major John Wills).

Clachan manse had also fallen into disrepair by the 1950’s. At that time the estate joiner was Duncan MacGregor from Sheildaig. He lived in Cruary as the previous estate joiner had done (viz. Ian Cruary MacKenzie our late founder member and archivist). Duncan MacGregor had a large family and it was agreed that if he refurbished Clachan Manse he could then make that his home. He diligently worked away in his spare time and eventually finished renovating the manse until it was fit to house himself and his family. Tragically, he was only to enjoy the comforts of his new home for a short time before suffering a fatal heart attack. His widow and children then returned to Sheildaig.

Clachan Church had a further much needed overhaul in 2014 when a Lottery Grant enabled major structural renovations.

Clachan manse has also had several further improvements over the years and is now one of Applecross Estate letting properties.

Mediaeval Chapel



In the burial ground at Clachan, to the east of the church, is a ruined chapel. It is believed to be mediaeval in date. It presumably had some religious functions and was also used to hold coffins before interment. Lottery funding also enabled this building to be cleared of the ivy which was completely entangled around it and for the stonework to be stabilised, hopefully ensuring that it continues to stand for many years to come.

BONES

As reported in our previous newsletter, the human bones which were excavated from the foundations of the old Estate House & Office were dated as being 1850 years old. They are now undergoing sophisticated investigative work at Bradford University and it is hoped that they will then be transferred to Harvard University where even more sophisticated tests can be run. It is hoped that these tests will eventually be able to tell us about where these people may have come from originally. In the longer term, we would hope that their story will be displayed at the Heritage Centre.

MEMBERSHIP FEES

If you forgot to renew your membership fees for 2016 in January, please send the payment in now. This income is extremely important to our efforts to keep the Heritage Centre open. Our fees are now **£10** per person.

Please:

1) send cheques to "Applecross Historical Society" addressed to

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

2) send payment direct to our bank account sort code 80-08-84; account number 00276354

(please remember to state the reason for the deposit and your name)