



**APPLECROSS HERITAGE CENTRE  
GENERAL**

At the time of our last Newsletter, early indications were that our second full season of trading would be as successful as the first and so it proved. While the weather failed to match the idyllic conditions enjoyed then, both numbers and takings compared well. There is a school of thought that wet weather ensures good attendances, as families dash for shelter and the theory appears to have held for us. The policy of manning the Centre by volunteers would have been stretched unacceptably had it not been for the help of Susan Grocock, Alison and Malcolm MacLean, Lesley KilBride and Fena Scott in addition to the available directors of the Society and Margaret McCowan. Grateful thanks are due to all.

This Newsletter is being issued in January both to avoid the Christmas rush and to align it with membership renewal.

**PHASE 11 :**

The work to be done by the visiting Army unit, anticipated in the last newsletter, is now complete. We provided materials at a total cost of £7,302.99. The car park, access path and the concrete floor in the area beyond the west gable of the Centre are all in place. Thanks to the watchful eye of our Chairman, the floor has been laid so that the water that tended formerly to gather in the area adjacent to the old building is no longer a problem. Repair of the stone walls in the remainder of the old building has been completed. The tidy effect of the work now done will be enhanced in the spring when the Applecross Trust's generous gift of one thousand crocus and one thousand daffodil bulbs will be in evidence. For these and for the Trust's help in fencing the area against the predatory activities of the ubiquitous red deer we are grateful.

Discussions continue on the best use to be made of the additional area now provided. If it is possible to raise funds to extend the present structure, we hope to provide a reading room where the material in our archives, or a selection of it, can be copied and made available to those visitors who wish to supplement the information on our display panels by further reading. One of the comments most frequently heard is that there is a lot of information in the panels and a broader base would enable our customers to specialise. Our Chairman is in touch with the appropriate grant-giving bodies but success, as always, is dependent on our own ability to match any grants that may be made.

We have been fortunate in having discussion with a number of specialists including Gordon Urquhart from the museums of Cromarty, where our own Jean MacBeath was the prime mover in setting up the Court House Museum, the Curator of Gairloch Museum which has its own plans for further development, representatives from Lismore Heritage Society which is going through the 'growing pains' of grant resourcing and, as always, from our good friends John and Patricia Kerr who had hoped to visit in October. Feedback encourages our ambitions. The only consistent criticism of our work, amid many compliments about the professionalism of the display, is that we ought to avoid, as one expert said, 'Cluttering up the place with too many artefacts, particularly those without strict relevance'. This is a sentiment which finds much support from our consultant Steve Tomlinson and, while we await a more formal inspection and specialist's report on our progress, it is one which we ignore at our peril.

**KENNETH MACRAE, FSA :**

Further to the report in the last Newsletter, we include here an extract from an article by Alistair McCowan in October's *An Carrannach* regarding the presentation of an oak seat to the Society by

daughters, Nana and Sandra, in memory of their parents. It is placed part way along the access path, overlooking Applecross Bay.

‘In handing over the seat, Sandra (MacDonald) referred to her father’s love of Applecross and its history and suggested that the description of Applecross by Sir Colin MacKenzie of Coul when petitioning the Court of Exchequer for a gift of the vacant stipends of the newly erected parish of Applecross for the years 1727 – 1730 could relate perfectly to the site chosen for the new seat. It reads:

*“The place is singular. ‘Tis surrounded by almost impervious Mountains for 3 parts of 4. The 4<sup>th</sup> is an Open Bay which Applecross is absolutely master of and can see from his Window every Thing that passes on it for 14 miles in Length.”*

Surely a doubly appropriate choice of wording.

Sandra MacDonald has also given us a CD full of her father’s work and with a section, Kenneth MacRae, Aspects of the Man, in which she has captured the multifaceted talents of this remarkable person. The material includes a facsimile of his own original typing of the draft Applecross history, some material about the Home Guard, a section on people of old Applecross, Applecross in 1914 and a list of place names in Applecross. Additionally, Sandra has given us some printed sheets on place names in Applecross which are based on notes typewritten from memory by Kenneth, possibly in the 1970s, after he had lost his sight. It would appear that these were intended for inclusion in the draft history, in which he had mentioned a chapter on place names. There is a wealth of information in these notes. They and the place names given in the CD will be of great value as we work on the project which we report on below.

We are deeply indebted to the MacRae family.

#### **BROOCH :**

The brooch found by Kenneth MacRae and donated by him to the Royal Museum has now been produced for our inspection. A photograph is now in the Centre and there is agreement in principle that the brooch will be loaned to us for display subject to conditions, which are being negotiated. It is hoped that the item will be in our possession in time for the Easter re-opening.

#### **ANN BISHOP AND BOBBIE AMYES :**

Ann has continued her research into the Middleton papers and the file is now substantial. As we develop Phase 11, it will be one of the first items to appear on the list of documents available in the reading room. She and Bobbie Amyes continue to progress papers on Lonbain, assisted by Catriona McCowan. Iain MacLennan, Shieldaig is also in touch with Bobbie and in this connection has prepared some details on the Macleay families. As part of her work in connection with the Scotland Free census, Bobbie has kindly provided us with the full census information for the 1841 Applecross Parish. Our records otherwise finish at Arrina.

#### **PLACE NAMES :**

The work on this project, which has been ongoing since the inception of the Society, was given a boost when David Gorst offered his assistance and introduced Chris Beacock who is a cartographer. Chris is examining our partly annotated map and the collection of Gaelic place names with a view to progressing the matter. It is expected that progress will be discussed with the directors of the Society.

Meantime, as noted above, the raw material continues to come in. Recently, material in a tape recorded some time ago by Roddy and Jean MacBeath, in which Roddy takes us on a tour of the area from Cuaig to Kenmore, has been set out in hard copy and they have been kind enough to correct any errors. It has been added to the material for the project.

#### **RECORDINGS :**

In addition to material mentioned in earlier Newsletters, we have recently translated Gaelic interviews carried out with the late Mrs. Mary McCowan, Danie Beaton on his ninety-fifth birthday and Kenny

MacDonald. The programme was transmitted in 1986 and we are grateful to Dr. Alexander Gillies for giving us the tape.

An even older tape in our possession was made by the late Alick John MacBeath, Sanachan, when he interviewed the late John MacKenzie, Kishorn, and MacKenzie recited the defamatory verse written by Rev. Mgr. Lachlann (1754 to 1819), Minister of Lochcarron, about two backsliders of his flock. When Ronald Black, former senior lecturer at Edinburgh University, compiled his anthology of Gaelic Verse, *An Lasair*, he translated an English version of the verse into Gaelic which, excellent as it was, differed from Mackenzie's rendering. The Society drew this to his attention and he duly thanked us. He is now writing *The Gaelic Otherworld* and will use, and credit, John MacKenzie's version. As he is also acknowledging Alick John, we have contacted his widow to let her know. One side effect of that is that Mrs MacBeath had lost the original tape and we have undertaken to make her a copy from the one that came to us from an unknown source.

The BBC has recently made a short video recording on place names with Gaelic commentary at the Heritage Centre. The programme will be broadcast in the spring.

#### **WEST HIGHLAND SURVEY. DR. F. FRASER DARLING. PUB. 1955**

We are indebted to Jock Cameron for presenting the Society with a copy of this outstanding work. When called on to lead a study on depopulation and economic decline in the Highlands, Dr Darling had behind him the practical experience of reclaiming derelict land on the island of Tannera and had worked closely with crofters, so came to the work with more credibility than the 'fixers' who bring to such projects more enthusiasm than realism. His statement that 'The problem is so intricate that no single step can be expected to achieve more than a slight or temporary amelioration' still rings true!

#### **APPLECROSS WALKS AND DYEING EXHIBITION :**

The Society benefited by £232 from donations made during walks conducted by Lesley KilBride and Gill Fairweather. Lesley reports that there were 12 walks during the summer and a total of 101 people took part. Wester Ross Alliance and RACE fund this worthwhile exercise to which the two ladies bring their expertise and enthusiasm.

Lesley reports:

'The walks took the form of a gentle two hour stroll around the paths of Applecross looking at the uses and history of our local plants. Wild food snacks, soups, herbal teas and activities were offered during the walk.

Activities included: Rush wick making, nettle string making, fire lighting from a spark with natural tinder and finding natural 'soap' in plants.

A display of items made from some of the plants we had seen was set up in the woods in a traditional travellers' bender and this is where the walk ended. This was a place for the participants to ask questions about how things were made, more about what they had seen and to look at a selection of books we made available for further reference. They were also asked at this time to make comments and suggestions in a feedback book and we told them about our funding'.

In addition, Lesley and Tom Kilbride ran a dyeing exhibition beside the Heritage Centre for the second year and Society funds again benefited. We are grateful to Lesley and Tom and to Gill for their continuing support.

#### **'BEALACH' INITIATIVE IN APPLECROSS :**

October's *An Carrannach* reported that an Applecross Gaelic Group, appropriately named 'Bealach,' had been constituted to promote interest in the Gaelic language. This organisation already has a Gaelic Learning Group and will help parties interested in setting up music, drama, ball coise, demonstrations in traditional cooking, peat cutting, etc. The group's constitution is ambitious and it merits the support of Society members. The Chairman is Derek MacIennan, the Secretary is Lenore Small and the Vice-chairman is our own Secretary, Catriona McCowan. We have offered our support and given Derek

a list of the items we hold. A selection of these is now copied to him. His telephone number is 01520 744 447.

### **SOCIETY LECTURES :**

We had been looking forward to welcoming Dr Isabel Henderson at the Heritage Centre in August and were greatly saddened to hear of her illness. She and her husband are in our thoughts as they meet this challenge.

Cathy Dagg, archaeologist, came to a well-attended meeting and gave a lecture based on her work in Applecross. This was greatly appreciated.

At the close of the season, our good friend Aidan MacDonald revisited Applecross and gave his customarily well structured lecture, this time on Lay Abbots, those hereditary laymen who, from the eighth Century, both became abbots and were succeeded by their sons. As always, we were given food for thought.

Among those present was Ian Fisher of RCAHMS who is no stranger to us and it was fine to see Malcolm and Heather Murchison, Sandra and David MacDonald and Alan Gillies in the well attended Centre. The evening's proceedings were further cheered by Sarah Wright's catering. The sense of continuity and support provided by the appearance of new generations of Applecross people is most rewarding to those of us who hope that the modest work now being done will be secured for the future.

### **ACTIVITIES AND CONTACTS :**

Murdoch MacDonald's Torridon walk, mentioned in the last Newsletter, had to be cancelled because of excessively wet weather on the day selected. We are grateful that he volunteered so willingly and trust that there will be an opportunity to arrange an outing in 2005. Mary MacDonald continues to be a valued contributor.

Recently we received an interesting paper, part of a series dealing with communities that were predominantly Gaelic-speaking at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The paper draws on census data and covers Applecross, Lochcarron and Lochalsh. It was written by Dr. Kurt C. Duwe who, despite his name and background, is more comfortable in our native language than many. The lengthy work is full of interesting facts and figures relevant to the changing language scene. We have made our comments to the author who will advise when the website is created. He intends to give more information on our volume then. Meantime his paper is a valuable addition to our archives.

In connection with Ann Bishop's work on Lonbain, we contacted the Scottish Youth Hostels Association to confirm the dates between which the Callakille Schoolhouse had operated as a youth hostel. They kindly confirmed the dates of 1948 and 1960. Older members may remember the basic facilities provided there and presided over by the idiosyncratic Duncan MacKenzie. Others may be surprised to know that the notes provided by SYHA record 'Primitive facilities ('Bring own paraffin').'

We deal with a steady stream of genealogical enquiries. A lady in County Mayo gives much more than she gets, providing us with information gleaned, she says, as 'the fruits of general reading over the years and written in essay form from memory--'

James McLennan and his cousin Jackie Millar are descended from McLennans of Diabeg and are interested in the John McLennan who set up a business in Kyle that became known as the Marine Stores. Older Applecross people will remember this kindly gentleman in his old age.

There are many more who ensure that we have much to think about!

Notable among the visitors to the Centre was one from Peterhead who sought information about an ancestor named Maxwell who appears in the 1861 census at Camustiel. He was Lionel Greig.

### **COMING EVENTS :**

In August 2005 the Clan MacKenzie gathering takes place at Strathpeffer. As part of the week's celebrations, the organisers plan to run a bus to Applecross on three of the days. We have offered our

support and the Strathpeffer organiser, Philippa MacKenzie, is anxious to have our co-operation. There is much to offer on the MacKenzies who owned Applecross for a period of over three hundred years and left their mark throughout the peninsula. This is an exciting opportunity for the Society to meet with people from all over the world who are interested in the land of their ancestors. We shall be looking for helpers in due course.

#### **FINALLY :**

John McKeown continues to do stalwart work behind the scenes as he manages our website and fields initial contacts from all over the world. His collection of photographs, accessible on the Centre computer, is being modified and he has made provision for background notes to be included where possible, involving the two most age-challenged of the Society directors in the preliminary work. His professionalism and determination to uphold standards are an example to all.

A number of members ask for their Newsletters to be forwarded by e-mail and John is happy to arrange this. There were computer problems earlier in the year, so please advise if you have asked for this service but have not received your copy. Please also ensure that your e-mail address is quoted correctly. Our enthusiastic correspondent, Michael McDermott, tells us that he has moved to one of the first solar powered houses in North Minnesota and sold most of his stock. Michael, one of the many Canadian descendants of Applecross emigrant families, has made himself both fame and fortune breeding Highland cattle and assures us that, 'We are Clan and will drink from one cup' We should mention here that, unfortunately, while he asked for the Newsletter to be e-mailed, his Spam filter is too efficient for our material!

As this goes to press, Margaret and Norman Beaton are doing their world tour following Norman's retirement and we wish them well. Thanks to Margaret's enthusiasm, they travel with a list of some of our contacts in the countries they plan to visit.

It is fitting that we note with sadness the passing of that Applecross stalwart, Duncan John Gillies. He supported and encouraged the work of the Society and visited the Heritage Centre last year, despite failing health. His vivid recollections of herring fishing as a student are in the Centre as a permanent reminder of a fine athlete, a genial and kindly host and a loving and proud father and grandfather. His sister, Janet MacKay, a Director of the Society and his son Alan, one of our outstanding contributors, continue the family involvement with Applecross history and our sympathy goes out to Margaret and the whole family.

Bliadhna mhath ùr dhuibh uile.

IMK.

**MEMBERSHIP OF APPLECROSS HISTORICAL SOCIETY :**

Membership is open to anyone interested in the history of Applecross and annual membership fee is £5.

Please complete the renewal form below and return it with your annual membership fee of £5 to :

Mr. Rory Cameron,  
Treasurer,  
Applecross Historical Society,  
2 Camusterrach Place,  
Camusterrach,  
Applecross,  
Strathcarron,  
Ross-shire,  
Scotland,  
IV54 8LQ.

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**MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL**

Full Name : .....

Address : .....

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Post Code : .....

I wish to renew my membership of Applecross Historical Society and enclose my annual membership fee of £5.

Signed : ..... Date : .....