



APPLECROSS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Comunn Eachdraidh na Comraich

Web : www.applecrossheritage.org.uk

NEWSLETTER - JULY, 2007 Issue No. 16

GENERAL :

We are once again well into another year of trading. Our finances are on a sound footing with a healthy balance at 30th April. The Society benefited from a contribution of £300 from the Applecross Games Committee and we record our thanks.

We are indebted to our Chairman for his astute management of our expenditure and to John McKeown for his advice on the office equipment acquired. At the end of the successful tenure of our French student, Elodie, last year, we worried about the coverage at the Heritage Centre but were blessed with volunteers Ruairidh Cameron, Alistair McCowan, Sue Grocock, Eileen MacRae, Isabel Cross and Liz Wright. Roger and Lyn Evans have also volunteered to cover on occasion. We are indeed fortunate in having a quality team and grateful to them.

This year John and Elsie McKeown have excelled themselves in looking after our computer interests. The new NEC computer began to stutter and John was quick both to diagnose the trouble and ensure that the NEC engineer attended promptly to effect a repair. Following Elodie's departure, John and Elsie took over the hands-on responsibility for processing of archive material to computer and securing it against interference. We now can access over 100 items of varying sizes and are fine tuning them while ensuring that copyright authority has been sought where appropriate. The importance of the McKeown's role, and their attention to detail, cannot be overemphasised. John has coped with illness and a broken arm. Elsie has had to act as both nurse and chauffeuse at a time when their house was also undergoing repairs. We acknowledge their dedicated work in difficult circumstances, with thanks.

The preparation of hard copy for the reading room continues and our Chairman has taken over some of this work.

PHASE II :

The Reading Room and Store are now a reality. The building is a credit to Alan Cross and his men, blending in well with the original Centre and the overall impression is pleasing. We are indebted to Roger and Lyn Evans for the gift of two filing cabinets and some furniture and to Ruairidh and Kate Cameron for an easy chair and other items.

ANN BISHOP :

Our life member made her customary welcome visit in May and, with her usual energy, visited all her haunts and even, after a false start, located the Holy Well. She has now completed her extracts from the 1901 census and passed them to Margaret McCowan who has processed them. Both ladies are to be congratulated for their efforts, and Ann's determination to complete this onerous task is an encouragement to the rest of us. While the census

particulars are of interest to all, they come alive for those of us who are old enough to remember many of the people who appear there.

PLACE NAMES :

This exercise was unavoidably delayed following the untimely passing of Dr David Gorst who had a holiday house in Camustiel and volunteered his expertise. We express our sympathy to Mrs Gorst.

The work will be resumed as time permits and a fresh set of 6" to 1 mile maps has been requisitioned with the intention of inscribing one set with the place names gathered so far, for display in the reading room. It is to be hoped that, in addition to those who have already contributed, others will feel encouraged to add their own recollections. We should be pleased to hear from you.

We are indebted to John and Patricia Kerr who have kindly donated a copy of the first issue of the Ordnance Survey (Sheet 81) which is now on show.

ACQUISITIONS :

The Roll of Honour for the 1914-18 war is now on the reading room wall. Claused 'Subscribed to by the pupils of Applecross Public School,' it has been loaned to the Society by Catriona McCowan. It has prompted us to consider that there is no such Roll for the 1939-45 war and we propose, as a first step, to set up a list of names. To that end we invite members to advise us of names of those who lost their lives in that conflict. It would be appropriate to consider extending any Roll of Honour to include the North Coast.

We are also aware that Applecross, unlike other communities of its size, has no memorial stone to mark the sacrifices of these wars. This matter has been raised by Dr Alexander Gillies of Culduie, who has been most supportive of our activities, and again we should be grateful for members' observations. There is much to consider if we are to progress such a project but it is a worthy one.

We have been approached by the Clerk to the local Church of Scotland Congregational Board with an offer to present the Society with some church silver from Lochcarron Church. This was the subject of informal discussion while the late Ian MacGregor was Session clerk there and the silver is reputed to have an Applecross connection. We are considering the implications of this generous offer.

Margaret Beaton has provided various items from her library and stock of interesting papers and historical bits and pieces – too numerous to list. Her support is much appreciated.

As this Newsletter was being prepared, we received Iain MacLennan's History of Applecross in draft form. Iain has already contributed material for us and we are aware of his precise and painstaking research. This work, 63 pages of A4 typescript, is invaluable.

Iain MacLean has also come up with his memories of holidays spent in Arrina and Ardheslaig between the '30s and '50s. Last year Iain provided us with a copy of his late father's 'Letter from Loch Torridon' and both papers are in our archives for processing into the reading room. We are most grateful to Iain for his contributions.

VISITORS AND OTHER CONTACTS :

Among the many interesting people who came to see us were a number with Applecross

connections.

Alec MacBeath, who had visited last year, sent John McKeown a photograph of his grand uncle, William MacBeath of Callakille, who died in 1917. Jill MacBeath Riley also corresponded with us and thought that their relative had preached at Clachan Church. Donald Cameron was able to supply information and to give us a note of the MacBeath genealogy. It transpires that William was an elder in the Free Church and joined the Free Presbyterian Church at the Secession in 1893. That good man would have been appalled to have been mistaken for a preacher in the Established Church of the time!

Douglas Richardson visited from Melrose and subsequently corresponded with John, recalling that he had attended the West Highland School of Adventure 33 years ago. Following contact from John, Douglas forwarded information about the members of the time, including photographs, a badge, names of participants and a route instruction. We are grateful and look forward to seeing him in Applecross soon.

Lewis MacDonald has sent John two photographs of the Loch Seaforth with the Applecross ferry boat alongside. They were taken in 1955 when he was on his way to Stornoway on his holidays. The quality is poor but the ferrymen appear to be Duncan MacDonald and Jack MacRae which would fit with the date.

We learned with regret of the death of Captain Philip Murchison, a member of the Society and a regular visitor to his relatives in Applecross in our youth. His sister, Deirdre Bett, responded to our expression of sympathy to the family with an upbeat letter. She and her husband are also members and she tells me that she still has her maternal grandmother's spinning wheel. Her son, Neil, has visited the Heritage Centre. The Murchison contact with us is also maintained by Malcolm and Heather who made it from Tasmania again this year.

We regularly welcome Americans with Applecross connections and it may not be invidious to mention some.

Isobel Macgillivray MacGregor is a descendant of Thomas Gollan, the innkeeper shown in the 'Seaforth' census recorded in 1797.

Three generations of the Chappel family, Val and John, daughter Barbara, grandsons David, Hayden and Gage, arrived with their relatives, the Camerons. This was Val's fifth visit to Applecross. She is a granddaughter of Johnny Righ who was the son of Roderick MacDonald, known as Righ Chrolig. (King of Crowlin). Roderick appears in Crowlin, aged 18, in the 1841 census and is still there in 1881. By 1891 he was living in Toscaig.

RETURN OF THE *ISA* :

Those of you who watched that fine fishing boat, owned by two generations of Camerons, mouldering away in Avoch harbour once she had passed out of their hands, will be thrilled to know that she has been purchased by one of the Venture Trust staff who has sailed her to Applecross with Ruairidh Cameron's help. She now lies at Camusterrach again. This will particularly delight our member, Marion MacBeath, who suggested that the Society should bring her back, a nice idea but impractical! Marion's CD about the *Isa* is in our archives.

ARCHAEOLOGY :

As stated in the last Newsletter, the Archaeological Society has been active. Recent finds are being evaluated. Report is awaited.

WAIPU HERITAGE CENTRE :

Our contact with New Zealand continues and was strengthened this year when Dr. and Mrs. Chris Ward from Shore Street, on their retirement trip, visited the Museum. Their presence was duly reported in the Waipu Friends' Newsletter and they have provided the following report for which we are grateful :

'In January 1990 we purchased 11 and 12 Shore Street as a holiday home, in July 2006 it became our permanent address, and in February 2007 we discovered a photograph of it displayed on the other side of the world. This was not simply a chance encounter, as we were intending to "drop in" on the museum in Waipu whilst in New Zealand.

It is not difficult to imagine why the early Applecross migrants eventually settled in Waipu, with its miles of empty beach meeting the Pacific Ocean, its pastures, forests and hills, its spectacular coastal scenery and the warm sunshine of its sub-tropical climate.

In common with many New Zealand townships and, indeed, many West Highland coastal villages, Waipu is linear, and the museum sits in the middle. Visitors to the town are greeted with a Gaelic welcome sign and are enticed into the museum to view select New Zealand gifts and crafts.

Stepping through into the museum itself takes you into a fascinating world of history which feels strangely familiar. A video describing early settlement shows various West Highland views, including the Bealach and the Applecross hills. Photographic portraits of those who arrived and established the township bear the names McRae, McLeod and McKenzie. There are pictures of, and articles from, the ships which brought these people, and accounts of their times in Nova Scotia and Australia. There are items of clothing, early implements, and modelled, woven and manufactured goods; there are vast records and descriptions of the life and times, including the harsh punishments dealt out to those few who strayed from the straight and narrow.

There is an entire section devoted to the specific areas the settlers originated from where large collections of photographs and written articles are displayed, and in amongst all this we fell upon the photograph of Shore Street and our house.

We spoke at some length with Betty Powell, a lady who is incredibly energetic in her enthusiasm, knowledge and desire to discover more. She is very keen to maintain and strengthen the Waipu links with Applecross, and was interested to speak in person with two new Applecross settlers. Without doubt Betty and the Waipu museum would welcome further visits from Applecross residents, particularly if they were to bear the name McRae, McLeod or McKenzie.

These two new settlers have discovered that you can travel half way round the world, but you cannot leave Applecross behind.'

ABSENT FRIENDS :

The Society has lost some good support in the last six months. Mention has been made of Captain Philip Murchison and Dr David Gorst. We add Murdo Ferguson who was supportive of our work and to whom we are indebted for a number of items in the Heritage Centre.

We send our sympathy to Janet Mackay, one of our directors, whose twin sister, Jean, (Mrs MacKenzie, Lochcarron) passed away recently and also wish Janet's husband, Calum, better health as he recovers from surgery.

Mona Smith, who has died at the grand age of ninety-three, was one of the 'Manse Girls' of the youth of your older directors. Her father was a respected minister in Applecross before and after the war years and the family are remembered with affection. Mona enjoyed vigorous health until shortly before her passing and, from her Edinburgh home, took a keen interest in our work. She it was who pushed for the National Museum to release, on loan, the brooch found in Clachan by the late Kenneth MacRae FSA. and now in our Heritage Centre. Those of us who were at her funeral in Edinburgh were conscious that we were attending a celebration of a full life. It was well supported by a good representation of prominent Scots and friends of all ages, for Mona, it seemed, knew everyone. The Minister of St Giles, the Reverend Gilleasbuig MacMillan, captured, in a few well crafted words, Mona's life and influence.

We express condolences to Mona's family, and remember her sister, Christine Mackenzie, now, sadly, the only Manse Girl.

We also acknowledge the generous donation of £250 in memory of the late Rodney Babcock, received from his daughter. Rodney loved Applecross and was loved in return.

BEALACH :

We gave a full report on Bealach in our last Newsletter. Activities have continued apace in this year of celebration of Highland culture. The preparation of the DVD is progressing with filming of scenery, youth activities, the Post Office and a modern version of the waulking scene at Ardubh. Independently, Kenneth MacDonald is filming a piece about the Fernaig Manuscript on which he gave us a splendid lecture last year.

On 16th June, Strath Gaelic Choir and Bealach members commemorated the life of St. Maelrubha in the Applecross Hall. Both were well received. The choir of monks included Ruairidh Cameron, Derek MacLennan, Mike Summers and Sam Easson.

PUBLICITY :

The ubiquitous John is again fine-tuning his website and, early in the year, set about producing a revised leaflet publicising the Heritage Centre. The finished article is an excellent and professional looking one, as we have come to expect of John's work, and, properly circulated, will widen the publicity that our activities receive.

Radio programme *Highland Café* did an item on Maelrubha on 23rd May and invited us to participate. Owing to a failure of communication, we found ourselves without a contributor on the day before the programme was due to go out. Fortunately, Catriona McCowan agreed to step in at short notice and gave an outstanding performance on the day. We are truly grateful to her.

One of our principal aims as a Society is that of education and from time to time we respond to requests for information in addition to providing the material available in the Heritage Centre. Ellie Beaton last year interviewed a number of Applecross people in connection with her studies. We were subsequently pleased to react to a query from her during her preparation of an onomastics essay and to contribute to what will be a successful paper. It is a delight to note that this young lady is comfortable with her father's native Gaelic, both in conversation and writing, even if the latter sends your scribe rushing to Dwelly's dictionary!

LECTURES :

Our Secretary is arranging another interesting programme for the autumn. It is not yet

finalised but approaches are being made to Sandra MacDonald, Bridget MacKenzie, Kenneth MacDonald, Willie MacRobbie and Richard Wills. In addition, we hope that Dan McCowan will be persuaded to lecture on red deer. Recently Dan was interviewed by the West Highland Free Press on the same subject.

Keep an eye on *An Carrannach* for dates!

OTHER MATTERS :

We have to apologise to those members who had to wait for the January newsletters that went out by postal delivery. Additionally several members claim that they have not been billed for their membership subscriptions and, with a new database, this should not happen.

Alan Gillies, Culduie, has given us great support since the Society was set up and has agreed that he will assist on projects as time permits. We look forward to working with him.

IMcK

July, 2007

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