



## APPLECROSS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Comunn Eachdraidh na Comraich

Web : [www.applecrossheritage.org.uk](http://www.applecrossheritage.org.uk)

Scottish Charity No. SC030267

### NEWSLETTER - JULY, 2008 Issue No. 18

#### GENERAL :

We are into a new year of trading. We opened at Easter which this year was unusually early and it also coincided with unfriendly weather, so the start to the season was not an auspicious one. Nevertheless, at the present time, our finances are healthy thanks largely to donations of £1,500 each from Ian Mackenzie and Alan Gillies.

Alan Gillies has agreed to take over the work of archivist and is gradually receiving the relevant files from Ian. He is well qualified for the role, being a professional librarian, and, with his family base in Culduie and keen interest in Applecross history, has already done sterling work. Older members will remember, with affection, his late father, Duncan John, son of Alister Gillies, merchant in Applecross for many years and brother of our director Janet Mackay.

#### ANN BISHOP :

Ann made her usual visit in early May, bringing with her a large proportion of the 1871 census copied from the documents in Inverness Library. She hoped to copy out the remainder on her return through Inverness and we look forward to the complete work which will be a useful addition to the other census material (also provided by her) that we have on computer. Margaret McCowan will type up the latest material and we hope to have it available soon.

#### HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND :

Applecross Trust has led the preparation of an application for a major grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. We have been represented on the steering committee and we have indentified areas in which parts of the grant, if the application is successful, could be used to enhance our work. This includes a package to employ a curator/researcher for a couple of years, equipment to enable us to digitise all our records, funds to allow specific projects to proceed (place names, mapping of the burial ground, identifying the Holy well and the site of the Four Trees of Applecross.) If the grant application is successful and we obtain serious funds in due course, there should be an obvious increase in our activity.

Other projects which could benefit from this major grant include repair/reinstatement of dry stone walls on the peninsula and repairs to Clachan Church, both seriously supported by the Historical Society.

#### CULTURAL AUDIT :

Applecross Trust commissioned Ian Mackenzie and Alan Gillies to produce a Cultural Audit to support the grant application. Their work has been well received and they have donated their combined fee of £3,000 in total to the Society. This is very much appreciated.

#### LOCAL POETRY AND SONGS :

We had a request from the enthusiastic Fiona Mackenzie, Mod medallist and Mairi Mhor Song Fellow at Highland Council, for information on Applecross poetry and bards in preparation for her working visit to Applecross School. *Bealach's* recent DVD was an obvious source with the late Duncan Mackenzie, Toscaig, singing his composition *Gog Gog*. The remaining works of the village bards and *Coille Muiridh* by Donald MacRae,

together with Donald MacColl's *Balachan Beag a' Chuailean Bhàin* gave Fiona a lot to work on. (Donald composed the song while in Applecross as head stalker and the 'Balachan' was born in Applecross.) The folklore that associates the fine poet William Ross and his first meeting with Mòr Ros at Applecross House was thrown in, too. She was duly grateful.

### **PLACE NAMES :**

The place names project is proceeding, albeit slowly. Such projects require a great deal of input and their completion inevitably takes time.

### **MAP OF BURIAL GROUND :**

We hope to complete this project, originally started as a manual chain survey by the late Hugh Small. We are in contact with Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments, Scotland (RCAHMS) who are photographing the whole of the country from the air, primarily to identify archaeological features which may have been obscured by agricultural and other activity and they have offered assistance with aerial photography of Clachan Burial Ground which we hope can form the basis for a map. Our own volunteers will provide transcripts of all the tomb inscriptions.

### **ARCHIVES :**

We recently acquired two interesting items belonging to the MacLeod family. The first is a copy of the sermon preached on Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> August, 1978 by the late Rev. Roderick Smith D.D., husband of Mona, to commemorate the landing of Maelrubha of Applecross at Ashaig in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. It is appropriate that Dr. Smith, that most ecumenical of Church of Scotland ministers, was preaching on the date most closely identified as St. Maelrubha's day (Adam King's Calendar). His scholarly work makes interesting reading.

The other is a manuscript copy of a short article written by Mrs. D. A. D. MacLeod, wife of the Rev. Donald MacLeod of Applecross, referring to the passing of Mrs. MacRae of the Temperance Hotel. It may have been prepared as an obituary for a local paper and paints a picture of a very devout lady. Iona MacLeod, Rev. Donald's grand-daughter, confirms that the paper in our possession is not in D. A. D. MacLeod's distinctive hand and it was obviously copied by someone else, possibly from the paper in which it was published.

Both papers are in our archives.

### **CAVES OF APPLECROSS :**

Grampian Speleological Group have surveyed all the limestone caves in Applecross and the results are included in a published booklet entitled, *Caves of Applecross & Kishorn*. Although older members knew of these caves, their size and significance was not always appreciated and it came as a surprise to learn that one of the caves, Uamh a' Bhreigadair, extends some 1700 ft and is said to be one of Scotland's most important caves. Unfortunately damage has already been done to the magnificent calcite formations in one of Scotland's finest decorated grottos. The Society hopes that published detail of access will not lead to further irreparable damage. We sell the booklet, *Caves of Applecross & Kishorn* by arrangement with the Grampian Speleological Group. (The price is £6.)

### **VISITORS AND FRIENDS :**

The Society was honoured by a visit by John and Patricia Kerr who came to see us in June. John and Patricia have supported us since, or indeed before, the Society was set up and contribute both material and sound advice and their visits are regarded as something special. For 45 years years, John has been researching information on Atholl and the results of that dedicated work painstakingly transcribed and scanned into computer by Patricia are now available at Perth & Kinross Council Archive. The Atholl experience, John tells us, contains 42 volumes held in 93 boxes, together with 2,700

photographs. By any standards, the work is breathtaking in its scope and volume and we congratulate John and Patricia on their industry and stamina.

We had the pleasure of welcoming Iain MacLennan's relatives from Argentina, escorted by Iain and Mary. They were Pablo Nicotra and his wife currently living in Norway and Leo and her husband from Buenos Aires.

Our good friend, Jean MacBeath, Cromarty, has recently been in hospital and we understand from her son, John, one of our trenchant contributors, that she is now home and making a good recovery. We send our best wishes to Jean and Roddy (Fisher). Jean and Roddy have made a valuable contribution to our place names project and they celebrate their diamond wedding in September.

### **APPLECROSS HISTORY BOOK :**

Iain MacLennan's excellent book *Applecross and its Interland – A Historical Miscellany* is now available for sale with us (at £7). Our own efforts at having it printed were less than brilliant but Iain stepped in and, with his usual efficiency, produced a batch which he donated to the Society.

### **ARCHAEOLOGY :**

The Archaeological Society has been active in cleaning, processing and preparing finds from the broch excavations and these are now with the Historical Society for storage. When all the finds have been 'processed', they will be given to the Treasure Trove authority and after their assessment, we hope to be able to bid for the right to have them for permanent storage and display. To be in a position to bid, we have to be accredited to Museums and Galleries Scotland. This is currently being investigated and will be seriously considered.

### **ABSENT FRIENDS :**

We send our sympathy to Janet Mackay, one of our directors, whose husband, Calum, passed away recently. Calum was a good friend and supporter who was always seen at our lectures.

We also mention Graham Newton, who provided the complete electrical installation for the first phase of the Heritage Centre, giving all of his labour at no cost to the Society. We offer sympathy to his partner, Lesley.

Chris Lowe whose book, *Torridon, the Nature of the Place* we sell, also passed away recently. Chris was well liked and respected by all who knew him and we also offer our sympathy to his family.

### **PUBLICITY :**

John McKeown has updated and improved our website which is extremely popular and elicits much praise. John is a perfectionist which is why our website receives commendations from Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions (ASVA) and we are most grateful for his work on our behalf. We are also conscious of the fact that we are fortunate to have his expertise as, being a small organisation, we cannot afford to contract out our web design to a firm of professional designers, as many organisations do.

### **TORRIDON MEMORIES :**

Mary Gillanders, Arrina, whose interesting articles about her youth have appeared in *An Carrannach*, has drawn to our attention the splendid CD, *Torridon Memories*, recently recorded at Torridon Primary School where locals spoke of their youth in the area, as Mary puts it, "readily and unselfconsciously." The CD contains much that is of interest. We are endeavouring to obtain a stock of this CD for our Heritage Centre.

## **ENQUIRIES :**

We continue to deal with a steady stream of enquiries, some well detailed, others less so. All are welcome and bring home to us how useful the work of the AHS is. The following excerpt from an email sent by Kenny Stewart, son of Dr. Ken and Sally Stewart, epitomises what the work is about. Kenny came over from Sydney with one of his young sons recently to a family wedding and travelled to Applecross with his parents and visited Cruary where Sally was born, as well as the Heritage Centre. (Sally is Ian Mackenzie's sister). An excerpt from the email is :

'The Applecross trip could not have been better. I was really looking forward to it and probably a bit 'rose-tinted' about it all but I was truly impressed with how things were. The peninsula looks really prosperous, and what you've all done with the heritage centre is professional and very special. Visitors have every opportunity to get a real insight into what life was like in the last couple of centuries and how the community evolved beyond that. I'd imagine it being a really memorable experience for the many who must come from overseas with Highland ancestry. I certainly felt so. Seeing familiar names on the roll of honour, recognising the photo you've just sent as well as the proximity of the grave yard and the family headstones were all very poignant for me. Even Gregor appreciated a connection once we'd explained what was under his feet.'

## **VOLUNTEERS :**

We are grateful to our volunteers who, with the directors, act as attendants at the Heritage Centre. These include Isobel Cross, Sue Grocock, Jackie Liube, Eileen MacRae, and Liz Wright. (Alan Wright has also stood in as attendant at short notice on one occasion.) We are also grateful to Margaret Beaton whose attendance and spinning demonstrations are popular. Directors involved are Janet Mackay, Ruairidh Cameron and Alistair McCowan.

AMcC/IMcK

July, 2008

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Applecross Historical Society is a company limited by guarantee and a registered Scottish Charity. Our directors are subject to the normal legal directives which govern the behaviour of company directors, and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator imposes upon us strict controls on our activities. We employ professional accountants and auditors and in all respects comply with requirements of the regulatory bodies.

