



APPLECROSS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Comunn Eachdraidh na Comraich

Web : www.applecrossheritage.org.uk

Scottish Charity No. SC030267

NEWSLETTER - JANUARY, 2009 Issue No. 19

GENERAL :

We are pleased to report another good year as far as the Heritage Centre is concerned. Visitor numbers, when compared with 2007, were up 33.3% in May, 53.9% in June, 13.2% in July, more or less the same in August, up 16% in September and up 3.5% in October. We are particularly pleased with these results against the background of reports that tourist numbers visiting Applecross were down this year. The mix of tourists was obviously different, with more people being interested in heritage, museums, etc.

As reported in our last newsletter, opening much earlier at Easter this year was not a success, as the holiday coincided with bad weather and experience tells us that our season really begins at the Bank Holiday in May.

VISITORS :

Ann Bishop visited in the early part of the year and, among other things, showed us her ongoing project to copy out all of the 1851 census material. We apologise to Ann for suggesting in the last newsletter that we eagerly awaited the completed task. We realise the considerable amount of work entailed and we are hugely indebted to Ann.

This year has seen visits from the MacLeays of Australia, New Zealand, Chile and Argentina. Those from Australia arrived unannounced and out-of-the-blue as it were, only a few days after the Argentinians' visit organised via Iain MacLennan who also organised the visit of those from Chile who were accompanied to Applecross by Alice MacLennan, Iain's sister.

We also had a visit from our very good friend, Bobbie Aymes and her husband Brian (accompanied by Iain and Mary MacLennan). Bobbie, from New Zealand, is also descended from the MacLeays of Applecross. Bobbie is a bundle of energy and we are very grateful to her for giving us an updated version of her work *The MacLeays of Applecross* with which she co-operated with Iain, together with additional census materials she has collected. A highlight of her visit was that Donald Cameron provided her with some interesting material on the descendants of John Kennedy and Ann MacQueen on which she is currently working.

We were pleased, indeed, to welcome Mrs. Wynn to the Heritage Centre again. She is a daughter of Lord Middleton who sold the Applecross Estate in 1929 and has a great love of Applecross. This time she was accompanied by members of her family including her son, an enthusiastic brown trout angler. It was good to see her on several visits to the centre and to have discussion.

We also had visits from other friends including Roddy and Kerry MacLean. Roddy was press-ganged into promising to give us a lecture next season.

CULTURAL AUDIT :

The Cultural Audit prepared by Ian Mackenzie and Alan Gillies is now being published by the Historical Society with the permission of Applecross Trust which commissioned the work. It will be available for sale at the Heritage Centre.

HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND :

The application to the Heritage Lottery Fund by Applecross Landscape Partnership, which is led by Applecross Trust, has been successful and is now in the development phase which lasts a year until October, 2009. In this development phase, our interests will be progressed and they comprise a curator/researcher on a three year package, equipment for digitisation of our records and specific projects (place names, mapping of the burial ground and identifying sites of the Holy Well and the four trees of Applecross.) We look forward to active and serious involvement in working up those projects in which we are directly interested.

Other projects in which the Historical Society has a keen interest include reinstatement of dry stone walls on the peninsula and refurbishment of Clachan Church.

IAIN MacLENNAN'S BOOK :

Iain MacLennan's book *Applecross and its Hinterland* is selling very well. In addition to what is sold in the Heritage Centre shop, Iain donates to us in their entirety all proceeds from his private sales and sales from other outlets (which are generally managed by Alice MacLennan.) His book has been expertly printed and bound for us in Shildaig all at minimum cost to our funds. We are grateful to those who have co-operated in this work including Iain himself, his sister Alice and Stephanie Ash who has charged us only for materials, despite the considerable time involved.

Iain has also given us a copy of *A Family History of the MacLeays of Sand* which he has recently prepared. This is of topical interest because of the filming of a programme by the BBC at Sand featuring Monty Hall. This programme will be broadcast early in 2009.

SHILDAIG CHURCH SILVER :

Further to earlier reports, preparations have been made for the securing and display of the church silver originally donated by the Mackenzie Lairds to Shildaig Church on its completion in 1827. Alan Gillies has researched the background in his customary thorough manner, assisted by information supplied by John (Balgy) MacDonald and Norman Cameron, Shildaig, and Iain MacLennan to Alistair McCowan. Additionally, Mr. David Robertson, Secretary and Clerk to the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland and his staff have supplied further material including a sketch of the site. We are grateful to all concerned.

MARY GILLANDERS, ARRINA :

Mary Gillanders, Arrina, has sent us a typed copy of her 'Light-hearted Memories'. Some readers will be familiar with her contributions to *An Carrannach* and will know her talent for presenting informative material in an eminently readable format. The memories are of family life with the Clyde Lighthouse Trust and we hope to have copies available in the Heritage Centre soon.

MRS. D. A. D. MacLEOD :

Iona MacLeod has given us an opportunity to examine her step-grandmother's 'Family Bulletins' written between the years of 1933 and 1944. Some copies are difficult to decipher, being carbon copies of material sent to the manse family. She has also provided a number of family photographs. Members will be aware of Mrs. D. A. D. MacLeod's 'The Celtic Saint of The Sanctuary', the booklet that first drew Applecross attention to St. Maelrubha, now on computer in our reading room. That is an objective and scholarly contribution but the 'Bulletins' are a better example of Mrs. MacLeod's eye for the humorous, the odd and the heart-warming as well as the sad aspects of life as seen by this wise lady in her role as minister's wife in the remote parish. We are grateful to the family for the opportunity to see this work.

CAPTAIN MURDO ROSS :

One of the many queries fielded by John McKeown was recently passed to us for some local knowledge. Patricia Hunter wrote that while on holiday in France, she met a lady who had grown up in Picardy. Her father had been a member of the resistance and she remembered an airman who stayed with them. He was Murdo Ross from Applecross and she wondered if he had ever got home. Some of us knew the late Murdo Ross well but as an army officer. Patricia had said that she had a photograph which she forwarded to us and we were able to confirm that this was 'our' Murdo. The 'Navity' address penned beside it was further proof! The tale of an Applecross man remembered in Picardy after all the years is a poignant one.

JOHN MacDONALD, ALLIGIN :

Our good friends, the MacDonalds of Alligin, have been in touch. Mary tells, in her Christmas card, that son John is now studying for his Ph.D. at Liverpool. His subject is the Lewisian Rocks of the N.W. Highlands. We wish him well.

JEAN AND RODDY MacBEATH :

Jean MacBeath who, with her husband Roddy, was a great help to us with the North Coast data while we were collecting place names, has recovered from recent surgery and we wish her a continuing good health.

VOLUNTEERS :

We now have a band of dedicated volunteers who expertly man the Centre and to whom we are immensely grateful. These include Isabel Cross, Sue Grocock, Jackie Liuba, Eileen MacRae and Liz Wright. Directors who also help to man the Heritage Centre are Ruairidh Cameron, Janet Mackay and Alistair McCowan.

We are grateful also to Kate Cameron who set up the garden at the Heritage Centre and now maintains it, to Margaret Beaton whose spinning sessions at the Heritage Centre are very popular and to Margaret McCowan for her input in producing our twice-yearly newsletters.

ANCIENT TOILET :

An interesting piece of Victorian toilet engineering which came from a hospital once located in Lochcarron has been donated to us by Jean MacDowall, Lochcarron.

HOMECOMING SCOTLAND :

The year 2009 will mark the 250th anniversary of our National Bard's birth, and Homecoming Scotland, a Scottish Government initiative, plans a year of homecoming for descendants of Scottish emigrants. Although Robert Burns did not visit Applecross on his Highland tour, there is a connection to the area in his Address of Beelzebub in which he castigates the Highland Society which met in Covent Garden to discuss the plan of 500 Highlanders from the lands of MacDonald of Glengarry to 'attempt an escape from their lawful lords and masters whose property they were ... by emigrating'. The information was given to the Society by 'Mr. M'Kenzie of Applecross'. Burns writes with heavy sarcasm to the President of the Society :

'... Faith, you and Applecross were right
To keep the Highland hounds in sight:
I doubt na! they wad bid nae better,
Than lat them ance out owre the water,
Then up amang thae lakes and seas
They'll mak what rules and laws they place.'

The 'Applecross' referred to was Thomas, the 6th Laird who had a reputation for generosity.. We plan to welcome 'homecomers' with a display similar to that extended to the Mackenzies who visited us during the 2005 Mackenzie Gathering.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY :

Our sister organisation, Applecross Archaeological Society, continues to investigate the broch site. Some interesting finds from recent digs have been evaluated and catalogued by professional archaeologists and have been sent to us for storage. In the meantime, some interesting large stone fragments were already on display in the Heritage Centre. We joined with the Archaeological Society in providing a stand at Applecross Games where many of the finds from the last dig were expertly displayed and we were grateful to archaeologists Cait McCullagh and John Wood and others who were with us.

The finds from the various digs at the broch are being stored with the Historical Society at the Heritage Centre after processing and recording by the professionals on behalf of the Archaeological Society. In due course, all material will have to be evaluated by the Treasure Trove authorities and then we will be permitted to bid for their future custody in Applecross. To bid, we will have to be suitably registered with appropriate authorities including The Museums Council. We are currently looking into these requirements.

NEW MEMBERS :

As always, we welcome with pleasure those who have joined as new members recently and we express our gratitude to those who have been loyal members. We hope they will renew their membership annually.

The Society would like to wish all our members the very best for 2009.

AMcC; IMcK
January, 2009

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