



## APPLECROSS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Comunn Eachdraidh na Comraich

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

NEWSLETTER - JUNE, 2000 Issue No. 2

### APPLECROSS HERITAGE CENTRE

#### Progress

The first Newsletter was issued last November. Since that time, membership of the Society has increased to 50 and a further 35 items have been added to the archives. Monthly meetings have been well supported with highlights including a talk by the Highland Council Archivist, Mr. R. Stewart, who was kind enough to provide additional items for our own archives. With these came a gem in the shape of a copy of the minutes of the first School Board in 1873.

There was a well attended visit to the community hall by Dr. Karen Hardy of the Edinburgh University Department of Archaeology on 12th May. This was followed by an Open Day with tours of the excavation site at Sand.

Planning for the Heritage Centre is progressing well. Fundraising has been relatively successful thanks mainly to Leader II, RACE and Highland Council but increasingly we have to demonstrate a degree of self-help. At this time, our planning application is being considered and a satisfactory tender has been received for construction work. We expect to have the building weatherproof by early autumn.

Further detail of our activities follows.

#### Fundraising

We have made application to a total of 30 grant-giving organisations. The society prepared a comprehensive Fundraising Prospectus and gave copies to those organisations showing interest. This time-consuming exercise was compounded by a sort of Murphy's Law which ensured that no matter how thoughtfully our prospectus was set up, individual bodies had their own format for claiming assistance! Many, of course, did not want to know us but those who have responded positively include, in addition to those mentioned in the opening section, The Scottish Executive who accepted our bid under the Rural Challenge Fund, Scottish Natural Heritage whose field officer at Kinlochewe has been supportive and will meet with us this month to examine and advise on our plans, and the Gaelic Language Promotion Trust who have promised support with the funding of Gaelic signage. Incidentally, it was very refreshing to hear their contact, Dr. Hugh Dan MacIannan, suggest that when we had firm figures, we should apply 'on one sheet of paper'!

Sabhal Mor Ostaig through their Iomairt Chaluum Chille have been helpful with advice on Irish contacts to supplement those already established.

Much remains to be done on fundraising and it is important to state that most of the organisations offering help look for matching funding so there has to be an element of self-help. The rationale for this is understandable. The project needs to be supported in tangible form by the community.

Fortunately, we are being assisted by Applecross Estate Trust who have provided the site and existing structure. They have undertaken to clear the surrounding area and been helpful on the provision of services. They have a project which will create pathways in the vicinity of the Centre and link it with access from the planned car park. They have also agreed in principle to the temporary removal of a number of ancient maps by the Highland Council archivist from Applecross House for professional copying for his own and the Society's use.

Their most valuable contribution to the community at large was to remove the conifers planted over the site of Maelrubha's monastery, in a sympathetic manner. The Highland Council Archaeologist, Mr. John Wood, is taking an interest in this project as is Historic Scotland. The Estate, through Mr. Richard Wills, have also promised assistance in the shape of a share of his sponsorship money on the London/Peking rally. The trip in his vintage Rolls-Royce received publicity in Applecross when he came up on a trial run in April and his progress has been monitored via the Internet. Richard's generous gesture is greatly appreciated.

While we are grateful to Applecross Estate Trust, we also hope to get financial assistance from businesses in the area and the community at large. Formal approach will be made shortly. Now that we have enough money to get the project started, it is important not to lose impetus and we look for your support.

## **Early settlers**

As mentioned in Newsletter 1 and above, Edinburgh University Department of Field Archaeology have been active in Applecross and we hope to have their co-operation in mounting a display when the Centre is ready. May's 'An Carrannach' carried a front page on their work and we have made contact with their enthusiastic leaders. Work for the First Settlers' Project set up in 1998 was centred round the Applecross peninsula this year and it was fine to feel the buzz of activity at the old Estate Manager's office and to see the sorting work being done in the Poly tunnel with material being examined and selected for further study. In time, the results of the dig will be published but it is already clear that the initiative has been hugely successful with 45 new Mesolithic sites now discovered round the Inner Sound, doubling the known sites in western Scotland. Drs. Bill Finlayson, Caroline Wickham Jones and Karen Hardy have taken pains to keep the community aware of their activities. The friendly presence of the team and their encouragement of local helpers has been widely appreciated.

## **Reminiscences**

The Society has been aware of the amount of 'living memory' available within the community and, indeed, among the office bearers of the Society. As reported in Issue No. 1, this is being harnessed in the collection of Place Names.

A further opportunity to tap into such memories commenced with the December 1999 meeting when our chairman invited those present to sit round a tape recorder and allowed them to reminisce. This is what we are good at and to do so with the chairman's encouragement was not an opportunity to miss! The subsequent transfer into hard copy provided a basis for consultation, amendment and addition. The process continues and the eventual end product should be a valuable document.

## Contributors

The redoubtable Ann Bishop visited Applecross last month and presented the chairman with her manuscript extractions from the 1841, 1881 and 1891 censuses. These, as with all her work, are most diligently and beautifully copied. We continue to be indebted to her for the provision of maps and of documents relating to the Duke of Leeds and the Middleton family during their ownership of Applecross. Already she has provided us with a fine basis for our planned displays.

Alan Gillies continues to delight with his regular submission of items of interest. Among these most recently was 'The Genealogie of the Surname of McKenzie..' collected by John Mackenzie of Applecross. (Iain Moloch, the 2nd Laird of Applecross who built the original part of Applecross House in 1675).

Alan is also examining a possible Applecross link with Flora Macdonald and other links aspects of Jacobite activity. With his customary professionalism, he will only pass his information to us when he has checked the facts minutely.

Gordon Cameron, too, continues his valuable offerings and these all add to what is now an impressive collection of paperwork.

Recently our friends from the other side of Loch Torridon, Mary and Murdoch Macdonald, have been in touch. Mary has noted a reference in Canmore to the presence at Cannich in 1935 of a cross-slab allegedly brought from Applecross by Mr. A. M. Chisholm whose initials appeared on the stone.

Where that stone is now is anyone's guess but there were marriages between Mackenzies and the Chisholms of the Cannich area from the time of Alexander, son of Colin Cam so its presence underlines that link.

Murdoch expressed interest in the song Coille Mhourie which he remembers his father's cousin, Finlay Maclean from Fasaig, singing. He was also kind enough to express the hope that we maintain and increase the enthusiasm for our project.

From Lewis, Murdo Livingstone who also has connections with Plockton has made contact. Murdo shared his enthusiasm for genealogy with the late Alick John Macbeath, Kishorn and is looking for further information on Duncan and Murdoch Mackenzie, born in 1808 and 1812 Sons of John Mackenzie (smuggler). The family apparently went to Prince Edward Island before 1808 and returned to Applecross about 1814. Subsequently they went to Cape Breton in the 1930s. The two sons mentioned had a prominent role in the famous 'Pilgrimage' made by Rev. Norman Macleod and his people from there to Australia in 1852 and, finally, Waipu, New Zealand in 1856.

John Ferguson, Raasay, has also been in touch. He provided a contact for Dr. Una Maclean, daughter of the late Rev. Malcolm Maclean who was minister in Applecross before the last war. She has expressed support for the Society's aim of marking the work of Maetrubha. John has a wide knowledge of genealogy and is specifically interested in one Janet Macdonald from Toscaig who married an ancestor of his and lived on Eilean na Ba at the turn of the 19th Century.

We also have correspondence with Sheila Craig from Christchurch, New Zealand, who has visited 'that lovely little pub with the great seafood menu' in Applecross. Her grandfather, Christopher Macdonald married Mary Mackenzie, born 22nd July, 1842, from Shieldaig and they settled in New Zealand. Mary, daughter of Roderick, was thought to have been from a

family of some standing. When she emigrated, she took with her a riding gown, boots and a side saddle, hardly the trappings of an impoverished crofting family.

The Society would appreciate any pointers from readers on the items above.

Recently, Mrs. Manson from Currie in Edinburgh has been in touch. She is the daughter of the late Rev. John Mackenzie of Camustiel and remembers childhood holidays there at her step-grandmother's home. All of these people and many others have expressed interest in, and support for, the activities of the Society. Their support is a huge encouragement.

We had a visit from the Venerable Dr. Robert D. MacRae from Victoria B.C. whose ancestor, Evander MacRae, was from Lonbain and sailed from Portree to Canada in the 'Polly' in 1803.

Margaret Beaton has traced to Australia a descendant of Rev. John MacQueen who contributed the Applecross section of the 'Old' Statistical Account in 1792. The Society has written to him.

## **Booklet**

Interest in the booklet continues and during the summer, we shall be widening the scope of our outlets. Clive Goldthorp sold his initial allocation in record time at the Campsite as did the Macraes in the Post Office. Plenty more where these came from!

## **Support**

**We need your support** and you can help in a number of ways. Joining the Applecross Historical Society is a start. We also need assistance with fundraising and the loan, or gift, of material suitable for display in the Heritage Centre. This is a community project which should be of long-term benefit to the peninsula.

Membership of the Applecross Historical Society is £5.00 per year. To join, please send a cheque to Catriona McCowan, Director/Secretary, Keppoch, Applecross, Strathcarron, Wester Ross, IV54 8ND.