



APPLECROSS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Comunn Eachdraidh na Comraich

Web : www.applecrossheritage.org.uk

Scottish Charity No. SC030267

NEWSLETTER - JULY, 2010 Issue No. 22

GENERAL :

We opened at Easter which this year occurred in early April and, although we did not have quite the high numbers of last year, activity has been satisfactory. The country's financial situation has obviously not helped, although the increased cost of holidaying abroad does help us. We confidently look forward to a reasonably good year.

We are always grateful to those who give us items to add to our display. We were recently given a spinning wheel and grain sieve which once belonged to Mrs. Martin, Coilleghillie who was, we believe, the last Applecross crofter to produce wool for sale and she was also a weaver.

These items were given to us by Maggie Ferguson, great granddaughter of Mrs. Martin and delivered to the heritage centre by Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson. This spinning wheel was inherited by Maggie and in recent years has been to various parts of the world including New Zealand. It was generally in excellent condition but had some minor damage. As we have the necessary skills available, it has been completely restored and is now a very fine exhibit in full working order. It has an eighteen spokes wheel which experts say is a superior quality example.

Older members of our Society remember Mrs. Martin, known locally, respectfully, as Cailleach Martin who lived in Coilleghillie with two of her younger children, Betsy and Kenny until some little time after World War II when Betsy sadly died at the age of 45, and Mrs. Martin and Kenny, who was a local fisherman, abandoned the isolation of Coilleghillie (Arbain was at the same time being abandoned) and moved to Ard Dhuhb. Mrs. Martin died shortly afterwards and Kenny subsequently married. Our chairman has particular fond memories of the Martins when he, as a student, was relief postman and visited Coilleghillie daily and had many welcome cups of tea from Betsy.

We are grateful to Maggie Ferguson for giving us these two items. She has obviously been an adventurous spirit and compared with us experiences in various areas in Africa, the Middle and Far East, and has guarded the spinning wheel with commendable care.

We look forward to the Fergusons' future visits to the heritage centre.

THE APPLECROSS LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME (ALPS) :

The Applecross Landscape Partnership Scheme is an exciting project focusing on the built and cultural heritage of Applecross funded by a range of partners including the Heritage Lottery Fund and Leader Plus. Applecross Historical Society has benefited from a share in these grants and funding for the six projects reported in our last newsletter has now been confirmed. These are :

1. A package to employ a curator/researcher for an initial period of three years.
2. Equipment to enable us to digitise our records and make these available in a user-friendly manner.
3. A project to produce a map of the burial ground and records of tombstone inscriptions.

4. A project to complete the research and recording of local place names for the Applecross Peninsula and to produce a map showing these, together with a CD and computer programme.
5. A project to tidy up the Holy Well (Stroupan a bhile) to make it accessible and provide interpretation details.
6. A small project to identify the site of the Four Trees of Applecross.

The ALPS project officer and administrator posts are in process of being appointed and we will work with them in implementing our projects. These are particularly important for us at this time when local authority grants to museums are being cut or reduced. We do not have a local authority grant but we feel for those who do, like the very successful Gairloch Museum.

VISITORS :

Ann Bishop : We were very pleased to see Ann on her annual visit. She carries on her copying of census records and identifying related items of particular interest and, as usual, handed over the latest tranch of meticulously recorded material.

Maggie Ferguson : who visited with her husband Ian as already reported.

Murdo MacLeod and Denise Officer from Applecross, Western Australia.

Elizabeth and Peter Mackenzie Victoria, Australia. Peter wrote in the visitors' book that he had waited 70 years for this visit and provided us with some genealogical information showing that he was descended from Applecross Mackenzies.

THE LATE FINLAY MACLEAN :

At a ceremony on 4th June, Finlay's ashes were interred at Clachan burial ground and the family entertained their guests to lunch afterwards at the community hall. This was a moving and beautifully handled ceremony with an address in Gaelic and English by Finlay's son Roddy and a particularly appropriate contribution from Roddy's daughter Kirsty, a delightful young lady now at Edinburgh University.

VOLUNTEERS :

Volunteers who currently man our heritage centre and to whom the historical society is very grateful include Isabel Cross, Jackie Liuba, Eileen MacRae, Liz Wright, Sue Grocock, Janet Mackay, Ruairidh Cameron and Alistair McCowan. We also had the services of Sue Cornish for one day.

Margaret Beaton's spinning demonstrations and lessons have become a regular and popular feature at the heritage centre. Her enthusiasm and her ability to engage with everyone make an excellent feature.

John McKeown continues to provide much valued computer expertise and assistance, and Margaret McCowan produces our bi-annual newsletters.

We are grateful to Kate Cameron for looking after the garden adjacent to the heritage centre. Her attention to it and her expertise are appreciated.

'APPLECROSS AND ITS HINTERLAND, AN HISTORICAL MISCELLANY' BY IAIN MACLENNAN :

Iain, with characteristic energy, has substantially revised his very successful work and his sister Alice has arranged for a print run of the revised edition. This book is very popular and its sales form a serious part of our income, thanks to Iain's generosity.

APPLECROSS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY :

The archaeological society arranged a further dig at the broch site which has been very

successful and they have reported new and interesting finds. They have also been awarded a grant under the Heritage Lottery Fund to ALPS and we look forward to celebrating with them success emanating from this grant. We enjoy good relations with our sister organisation, and its current energetic chairman, Owen KilBride, and we continue to support them and look forward to our continuing good relationship with them.

HERITAGE CENTRE SHOP :

At the heritage centre shop this year, we have on sale, items produced locally by Dot Mackenzie, Marie-Claude Joly, Terri McCowan, Muirne Buchanan and Tracey Phillips, together with cards of Applecross photographs by Louise Pond, and coloured postcards of our own production. These are in addition to 'Applecross, A Glimpse of History' by Ian Mackenzie and 'Applecross and Its Hinterland' by Iain McLennan, books by two of our members. We also now sell, on DVD, the film 'Laxdale Hall' which was filmed on location in Applecross in the early Fifties (recently released for home viewing).

MRS. D.A.D MACLEOD - FAMILY BULLETINS :

Rev. Donald MacLeod and his family came to Applecross in November 1929. He was to minister in that Parish until 1945 when he retired to the family home in Torrin. His sojourn in Applecross coincided with the Second World War and also during that time his family, Mona, Ian, Helen and Christine left home. Mrs MacLeod kept in touch with her step-family, writing what she called 'Family Bulletins' and using carbon paper to produce four copies and a file copy.

Recently the Society had an opportunity, courtesy of Iona, the minister's granddaughter, to examine these file copies. It will be appreciated that the passage of time and the efficiency of multiple carbon papers has meant that not all are clear but the point that strikes the reader is that Mrs MacLeod's letters are a reflection of times now vanished and a good record of wartime Applecross.

Mrs MacLeod was a well travelled and educated lady who took on a widower Highland minister and his growing family, setting up home in one of the most remote areas on mainland Scotland with three brands of Scottish Presbyterian churches of varying severity and a predominantly Gaelic-speaking population. Travel depended mainly on MacBrayne's vessel that plied between Kyle of Lochalsh and Stornoway. Motor transport was scarce and roads were single track and gravel surfaced, the famous Bealach Nam Bó included. The well-populated North Coast had no road other than a narrow track that wound its way high above Cruary, to give the landlord access to the grouse moor and red deer, it is said. People used motor cycles, bicycles or their feet to travel here.

One would think that any well-bred lady would turn and dash back to Edinburgh when the full challenge of the peninsula and its people became apparent. Mrs Manse, as she was called by Applecross people, was made of sterner stuff and soon made herself indispensable to the place. In a time when few women drove, she mastered the often recalcitrant Morris car to the amazement of all who saw her distinctive motoring style. At a time and place where no woman would attempt to lead the Church singing she did so, when necessary, with some flair. A natural extrovert, she became involved in the Guild (naturally!), WRI and other committees. She accompanied her husband on his parish visits and took on such visits herself. She even accompanied him on his motor launch, 'Good Tidings,' despite its stubbornness to start and also accompanied him on his summer attendance at English fishing ports where he preached to the fishermen and herring gutting-girls there.

As war approached they took in two Jewish boys whose parents arranged for them to get out of Vienna where they were under threat. The experience was a learning one both for Felix and Hans and for us. Many years later when Hans, now Hal, returned to Applecross with his wife and was surprised to meet two of us at the heritage centre, he said of the Macleods "they saved our lives and, indirectly, because our parents, free of us, were able to make their own arrangements to get out, theirs too"

Her writing to the family reflects the woman, forthright with a strong sense of humour

and of the ridiculous. Some of her accurate observations will not be repeated as we still have long family memories but there is a sense that she herself would not hesitate to repeat them to the people concerned! Among the expressions used by the Gaelic speakers when they broke into unfamiliar English in conversation with Mrs MacLeod is 'Dear Mise', attributed accurately to my grandmother!!

Rev. Donald, no doubt encouraged by his wife, had a positive approach to ecumenism. When the persuasions referred to in the Bulletin as FPs (Free Presbyterians) and Wee Frees (Free Church) held their Sunday Communion service, he arranged to be in another place so that his presence would not embarrass them and on another occasion he is reported as "Daddy, to show his goodwill went to a Wee Free pre Communion service!" One wonders whether his example was noted by his son-in-law, the late Rev. Dr. Roderick Smith who worked so well in the wider ecumenical field.

We hope that the family will approve of our quarrying in the Bulletins and providing extracts which will be of great interest to those of us who lived through the days they cover but also to our wider membership.

MARY GILLANDERS :

Local members will be aware that Mary Gillanders, Arrina, has been unwell recently and readers will join with us in sending our sincere wishes for better health. We have her 'Light-Hearted Memories' ready for production.

AMcC

July, 2010

If you are already a member of the Historical Society who receives the Newsletter by post but would prefer to receive it by email, please let us know via our website. Also, would members please remember to notify the society of any change of postal address and email address.

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 impose upon us strict controls on our activities. We employ professional accountants and auditors and in all respects comply with requirements of the regulatory bodies.