



APPLECROSS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Comunn Eachdraidh na Comraich

Web : www.applecrossheritage.org.uk

NEWSLETTER – JUNE, 2002 Issue No. 6

Heritage Centre Progress :

The last Newsletter talked about the drive to open at Easter 2002. It was already appreciated that it was a tight target but by the early part of this year, it became apparent that it was unachievable and a decision was taken to aim for June.

In order to attempt to expedite the production of the wall panels, Ian Mackenzie visited Steve Tomlinson in North Yorkshire for two days during February. They examined the raw material to hand and in particular the photographs available for reproduction, identifying 85 items for further attention. These ranged from the simple decisions on what photographs were still needed to the complex matter of disparity between the folklore, the writings of 19th Century historians and those of the present day. An ongoing problem is the difficulty of maintaining the originality of text which may need to be reduced to fit available space on the panel.

Central to the delay has been the fact that the amount of research required to complete the work has proved to be much more than anticipated.

Feedback to meetings of the Society has ensured that all were made aware of what was required. Nevertheless, ongoing review of progress revealed that the revised target date was itself ambitious. The question 'What will be ready in June?' revealed that completion of less than 40% of the panels would be a realistic target. By the time this Newsletter is ready for issue, 11 panels will have been delivered to the Centre where Alistair McCowan and Kenny MacLean have been working hard on setting up the interior with MDF backing for the display, shelving for the reception/shop area and display stands.

The intention is to open the partly completed exhibition informally on 1st July, asking for donations only at this time, with a formal opening in the autumn. Mairi Summers, who has undertaken to provide a painting of an 'Early Settlers' scene, has been employed as an attendant.

Disappointment at the delay has masked the impressive amount already achieved by the small group. On the site, external works, including wheelchair access, have been completed. Graham Newton has finalised the electrical works, including the installation of night storage heaters, Tom and Sean Kilbride's topographical model has been finished and both it and Steve Tomlinson's monastery model have been admired.

Visitors :

Visitors have already sought out the Centre, attracted by the sounds of activity. Clachan has become Alistair's second home and he is interrupted so frequently that the donations box prepared for the opening has been pressed into service. The signs are, as some of us have never doubted, that the Centre will be a meaningful attraction to visitors and that both the historical significance of the site and its situation beside the busy tourist route will ensure success.

It is delightful to welcome a steady stream of people who come from distant places to seek out the home of their ancestors. One of these is Lee MacInnes, originally from Applecross, Perth, Australia whose relative was a piper to the last Mackenzie Laird, Thomas (Tomas an t-Salainn) in 1830.

Also welcomed there was Ann MacDonald of Illinois and Culduie, whose mother, Martha, has provided welcome material and information for our archives.

Our life member, Ann Bishop, visited in May and as usual brought us further material. She is also in contact with Bob MacRae, mentioned below.

Contributions :

Iain MacLennan, of Glasgow and Shieldaig, grandson of John MacDonald, Camustiel has contacted us. Readers will have seen Iain's erudite contributions on the 1881 census in *An Carrannach*. He has provided the Society with a most interesting 'Applecross Miscellany' which includes copies of paintings by his grandfather and of a letter dated 1875 from Mary Mackenzie of Lonbain to her son. The miscellany also has a comprehensive analysis of information from census and old parish records. It is a most valuable acquisition.

Alan Gillies continues to be a tower of strength. In addition to thoughtfully researched material as a basis for text on a range of subjects, he has traced the Mackenzies of Applecross coat-of-arms, officially recorded in 1756, and provided us with both a reproduction and detailed notes. He has also dug up references to the Applecross tartan, first drawn to our attention by his cousin, Dr. Alan Wright. There is a mention of the tartan which states that it is to be found in Messrs. W. Anderson's collection in 1947. Unfortunately, Kinloch Anderson, while sympathetic, have been unable to add further information. The search goes on via the Scottish Tartans Society.

Alan has done much of this work while moving house, so thanks Barbara! You join the widening club of wives who have to compete with the Heritage Centre.

Gordon Cameron, who has moved to a new post within Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, has provided text for both the Gaelic language and Education. He has also undertaken to provide help with illustrations for these subjects. He writes with fluency and flair, a fact that, paradoxically, causes difficulty when our expert, with an eye to economy of space, seeks to précis!

Willie Lindsay, Kinlochewe, readily contributed items for our Geology panel and we are also grateful to Kenny Nelson of Scottish Natural Heritage for his assistance to Steve Tomlinson on the same subject.

Ray Burnett, Director, Dicuil Institute of Highland Studies, Benbecula kindly offered Catriona McCowan help with detail on Maelrubha and the Picts. After a number of false starts, mainly due to the inadequacy of our archivist's e-mailer, we are nearly there with an impressive range of information and illustration of a depth of detail that exceeded our expectation.

Our old friend Aidan MacDonald of Cork and Cromarty has provided an excellent set of papers on the Lay Abbots.

Esther Kilbride has designed mugs, tea towels and postcards for sale at the Centre. A design for T-shirts has been approved and Ford Shaw will have an initial supply printed.

Lochcarron Weavers has donated two pieces of tartan, each two metres in length.

Mrs. Mona Smith, Edinburgh, has sent useful material and, as reported by Alan Gillies, recalls seeing the Clachan font mentioned in the O.S. map as having been discovered in 1874.

All concerned are to be thanked and congratulated. Without the enthusiasm of the small group of workers, the project would not have been possible. Volunteers are still needed.

Website :

John and Elsie McKeown have continued to support the project with enthusiasm and expertise. John has acted throughout as a link with Steve Tomlinson, scanning hundreds of photographs and forwarding the disks for Steve's scrutiny then providing the originals when selected and finally returning the originals to their source. He has also, with great patience and good humour, acted as back-up when further photographs of local scenes are required. In addition to his transfer to computer of Census details from 1841 onwards, originally painstakingly collected in manuscript by Ann Bishop, he has finalised the website (www.applecrossheritage.org.uk) and advises that the number of visits to it has reached a pleasing level. Margaret McCowan worked with John to effect the transfer from manuscript to computer, and Fena Scott carried out the checking process.

Other Matters :

Applecross, Australia : John has also been in contact with the Heritage and Museum Services of Melville, Western Australia in connection with Applecross, Perth. His contact and the interest of Mrs. Wynn (Middleton), together with earlier research by Murdo Livingstone, should lead to a definitive answer on the link between the two places. Local folklore here is that the Mathiesons were cleared from Corrie Attadale and went to Australia. There is a Dougall Mathewson in the glen in 1718 and a John Matheson at Torgarve in 1797, both places subsequently cleared, but the other Applecross was not founded until the 1840s.

Pont the Mapmaker : In May, John Kerr, whose interesting talk on Queen Victoria was reported in our last newsletter, invited representatives of the Society to his presentation at Perth. Margaret and Ian Mackenzie went to the well-attended event. John used Pont's map of the Kerr's home area as a base for his presentation and delighted the audience with an authoritative historical and geographical exploration of the area around Blair Atholl, up Glen Tilt and Beinn a' Ghlo and on to the meeting of the three counties. John and Patricia plan to be in Applecross to see progress on the Heritage Centre and to be with us on opening day. They have kindly donated a visitors' book.

Bob MacRae from Victoria, Canada, who has Applecross ancestors, has sent Catriona McCowan a copy of a review of the book 'A Very Fine Class of Immigrants' by Dr. Lucille Campey. It covers Prince Edward Island's Scottish Pioneers 1770 – 1850 and paints a positive picture of the immigrants brought there by Lord Selkirk, as the title suggests. Unfortunately, the review does not give the International Standard Book Number for the publication. Anyone interested should contact Ian Mackenzie in the first instance. Although the review makes the point that the book is of particular interest to genealogists, it is also of value to the general reader. Selkirk was one of Canada's early colonisers and his efforts to attract Highlanders were strongly opposed by landlords who, to put it bluntly, were motivated by the fear of losing cheap labour at a time when their kelp trade was booming.

Finally :

The Newsletter compiler puts his hands up for an error in the item 'Find' in the last edition where he reported that the 1874 font had been rediscovered. What we have, and what has been confirmed by RCAHMS, is the font photographed by them in 1974. Mrs. Mona Smith, as reported above, remembers seeing the earlier font and the two are dissimilar. Pity!

Ian Mackenzie who compiled the Newsletter has been a tower of strength, and without his continuous work on the wall panels, the present situation would not have been achieved.