

Ross of Mull

HISTORICAL CENTRE



AUTUMN NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2015



KILVICKEON - SINGING IN THE RAIN!

Jan Sutch Pickard writes

A wet day couldn't dampen the enthusiasm with which folk gathered to celebrate the stabilising of the ruined church at Kilvickeon, with the Mariota Stone being restored to the place where Mariota was buried within the walls. This iconic grave-slab is housed in a protective chest now; there is no longer danger of stones falling from the walls to damage it – or visitors to the site.

On 28 July there were about 50 present for the annual Gaelic/English service. This was led by the Revd Sean Ankers, from North Mull. Some worshippers, including members of the Gaelic Choir, arrived in style on a trailer, which had been organised by Nigel Burgess, who has had a hands-on involvement in the whole Kilvickeon project. He is seen here next to a very informative all-weather display about the history of the old Parish Church.

The building was once again used for worship, with readings, prayer, relevant preaching by Sean Ankers, singing of psalms and Làrach Eaglais, Sorley MacLean's poem about this ruined church, set to music by Iain Thomson, the 'Singing Shepherd'. There was then a bring-and-share picnic, with plenty to talk about!



THE ANNIVERSARIES OF TWO BATTLES

Valerie Fielding, both Volunteer and Director at the Historical Centre, is also our 'war correspondent'. Last year she began a painstaking documentation of the stories behind the names on our war memorials at Bunessan and Creich. This has suggested various other lines to follow, like the stories of the regimental pipers from Mull – ongoing work. But then came another challenge: this summer saw the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo and the 100th anniversary of the World War 1 Battle at Gallipoli. **Valerie writes:**

Waterloo

My discovery of a list drawn up by Alexander MacLean of Pennycross, of officers from the Isle of Mull who served in the Army or Navy between the years 1800 and 1815, led me to wonder if many men from this island were actually present at this historic and decisive battle.

It has not been possible to find evidence to prove which men were there but there is documentation of which regiments were and which definitely were not at Waterloo, thus narrowing the field.

The names of these officers, their addresses and their regiments made me want to find out more about them where possible. I was able to discover a little about several of them and the houses where they lived and to find just a few illustrations of one or two people and places mentioned on the list.

Unfortunately Alexander MacLean's list details only the officers who served and there are no records of the rank and file soldiers from Mull, of whom there must have been several hundred who served with these officers. However, I believe we can safely say that there were men from the Isle of Mull who played their part in bringing about the defeat of Napoleon in 1815.

Gallipoli

Nineteen year old Donald McCallum from Kintra was one of the casualties of Gallipoli. He was one of the five sons of John McCallum a mason/builder and his wife Mary. A former pupil of the school at Creich, he became an apprentice carpenter at Greenock and joined the 5th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Greenock Territorials). He went into training at the outbreak of war. On 3 July the next year he arrived at the front and in little over a week he was killed in action in the Dardanelles, on 12 July 1915.

His death was reported in the Oban Times on 28 August, along with a picture of him in his military uniform. This picture was taken when he was granted leave to visit his parents, just before leaving for the front.

His name is recorded on the Helles Memorial, Canakkale, Turkey and also on the War memorial here at Creich.



Private Donald McCallum (Oban Times)

CARING FOR KILVICKEON OLD PARISH CHURCH

In 2013 Historic Scotland committed £39,000 to the work of enabling emergency repairs at Kilvickeon. An application was put in at this time for a much larger sum - to continue to stabilize the building, while also funding improvement of the site, and supporting community and educational activities.



A second amount of £87,871 (conditional on the balance of funding by others) to

Kilvickeon Arch repointed

complete the second phase of the consolidation was approved by Historic Scotland in November 2014. Our thanks go to Historic Scotland and also to the Pilgrim Trust for their contribution of £10,000 and for a further donation of £1,000 from The Alan Evans Memorial Trust.

The Directors are very grateful to Krystyna Pytasz of Addison Conservation and Design for guidance, to John Raven of Historic Scotland, and to Rosie Burgess for all her work in applying for grants from a variety of trusts and keeping open channels of communication on this exciting project.

BUNESSAN BIODIVERSITY **Emily Wilkins** writes

This year Mull and Iona ranger service has tried out some events in the 'drop-in' format also known as 'pop-up rangering' – you might come across us in a wildlife viewing hide, on the clifftops of Staffa or in a visitor centre.

As I am based at ROMHC and always enjoy the walk up the path to the office, greeted by sunbathing slow-worms, scented honeysuckle or the music of birdsong and the burn in full flow, I thought it would be great to try a few 'drop-in' events in the grounds here. We have plenty of old walls, bushes and a mini wildflower meadow to investigate, so on two sunny days I gathered together some ID



Emily welcomes young visitors to RoMHC

books, bug collecting equipment, tick-lists and colouring sheets and set up a table near the front door, everything weighed down with stones against the wind!

Although the events were not specifically aimed at children we had several younger visitors tackling the various Bunessan Biodiversity challenges such as the Big Butterfly Count, collecting as many different grass heads as possible on a sticky strip or scooping up and identifying

bugs falling from shaken branches. An element of competition certainly helped them to engage and meanwhile damselflies flitted past and John Clare and I were busy updating the list of wild plants found in the grounds and offering tips on identification to anyone who was interested – although some of the mystery bugs had us stumped!

It's great to be able to show people the variety of sometimes weird and wonderful creatures which could be hiding in their own back gardens if they take the time to look. If you look, there'll always be something new to surprise you!



John with wren's nest - fledglings had flown

PLACE NAMES AND POETRY

At the October AGM, **Jane Brunton** has agreed to give a talk on **Gaelic Place-names** on the Ross of Mull. Earlier this year, for the 'Practical Plants' day at Creich, she took an Ordinance Survey map and highlighted the way that many of our Gaelic place-names are to do with growing things. (This map can now be seen at the Centre). Did you know that **Beach (Beitheach)** means 'Birch tree place', or **Salachran (Seileachan)** means 'Place where willows grow'?

Meanwhile **Eleanor MacDougall**, who will, we hope, also be giving a talk this winter, based on her PhD research, was involved in a project in Iona with Oban High School students. A starting point for that was also a map – one form of **Gaelic poetry** being simply a metrical recitation of place-names. This is the poem that Eleanor herself wrote.

A' cur Eilean Idhe air a' mhapa

*Cho luath 's a chunnaic sinn am mapa
bha fhios againn gun robh sinn air
rudeigin fhaighinn agus rudeigin
a chall.*

*An sin bha àiteachan an eilein
's iad a' coimhead grinn finealta ann an
loidhnichean agus litreachadh nach robh sinn a' tuigsinn,
air diagram den dùthaich nach fhaca sinn riamh roimhe.*

*Ach ged a their iad gun do chuir an obair-ealain seo
bacadh air call is falbhachd eòlais,
stèidhich i an sgaradh eadarainn gu bràth.*

*Nuair a thionndaidh cùisean mun cuairt mar sin
– mar a thionndaidh iad mu dheireadh thall –
cha b' urrainn do dh'ainmeannan an àite
atharrachadh.*

Mapping Iona

*As soon as we saw the map,
we knew that we had both gained and lost.*

*For there were the island's places looking elegant
and fine
in lines and lettering that we didn't understand,
on a diagram of our land which we'd never seen
before.*

*And while they say this work of art did something
to stem
the loss of our experiences,
yet it fixed our separation forever.*

*And so, when things began to turn again
– as at last they did –
the names of our places remained unchanging.*

Eleanor MacDougall

STOP PRESS

As this issue was being prepared for printing, the Centre had a visit from Fionna Carothers (Fionna Eden-Bushell) and her husband, donating a copy of *A Grass Bank Beyond*, sequel to *Four Ducks on a Pond*, the story of family life at Achaban in the 1950s. It makes fascinating reading. This copy is now in our library at the Centre, but both books can also be bought from the Ferry Shop.

STILL WELCOME

Postcards or photographs (could be digital) of the Ross of Mull in the past, for our archives and for use in displays. Ownership will be acknowledged and recorded and originals returned with care. Please send to the address opposite.

IONAD EACHDRAIDH
an Rois Mhuilich



Ross of Mull
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