

Ross of Mull Historical Centre

Newsletter

Tigh na Rois

Visitor Centre
Bunessan, Isle of Mull

October 2014

MAINTENANCE DAY

A Maintenance Day was held in early September, which was cheerful and productive. The sun shone sufficiently in the days beforehand for us to be able to cut the wildflower meadow, and good weather on the day saw a variety of tasks completed, with necessary external painting done on the cottage, including the chimney stack, and on the bridge handrails.



Overgrown hedges were cut back and the resultant brushwood pile should have found a good home by the time of the AGM, on the afternoon of Saturday 25 October, when we hope to roll up our sleeves again that morning, maybe matching the day in September – when collectively we put in 45 volunteer hours!

Anne Baxter

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Welcome to our October news letter with a round up of some of the things we've been up to over the summer months. One of the main events which has not been reported on however is the yacht race dance, one of our main fund raisers, which was very succesful this year with the yachties having great sailing weather and so all in a happy and generous mood, unfortunately I was on the way back from the mainland so missed the festivities. I have reluctantly decided, due to all my other commitments, to stand down from my directorship at the next AGM and give someone else the chance, as always new members of the board are very welcome and I wish the new board all the best.

David Greenhalgh

PORTRAITS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

As the 100th Anniversary of the outbreak of WW1 approached we were pleased to launch the first phase of our War Memorial display - "Portraits of the First World War" in time for our opening at Easter. As the project is ongoing more names from the Bunessan and Creich memorials were added by the date of the anniversary in August.

These "portraits" (some of them only word portraits) give us a picture of the different types of men and boys who volunteered and then lost their lives. Some of them were officer class but most were ordinary fishermen and sailors, farmworkers, the son of a tailor, shoemaker, shepherd, baker and shopkeeper from all around the Ross of Mull.

13 of the 14 names on the Creich memorial have been identified so far and 27 of the 43 on the Bunessan one. Sadly there are a few, possibly 10 or so I think whose families may never be identified. These were "boarded out" boys from Glasgow orphanages sent to live and work with families in Mull in return for their keep and schooling. Two of these were awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for bravery. (I wonder if there were any relatives still alive who were entitled and cared enough to claim and treasure these medals after the war ended. We will never know)

The pupils of Bunessan Primary School have also been working on their own War Memorial Project and thanks to their wonderful fundraising effort the memorial at Bunessan has now been cleaned and renovated. We are proud to have been given a folder of their work to display now and later to be kept in our archives.

The Remembrance Sunday Service will, I think, be a little different and more meaningful this year. As people gather round the memorials the names carved there may well conjure up pictures of real people who lived and worked around the Ross.

Valerie Fielding

KILVICKEON BURIAL GROUND

Following the initial painstaking work of Sue Reed and Anita Tunstall in mapping the monuments and recording the inscriptions at Kilvickeon burial ground, remaining information is to be gathered this autumn with a view to producing



a new booklet that will not only contain details of burials, as do the existing publications for Fionnphort, Suidhe and Kilpatrick, but also historical details about the site and the surrounding area. It is hoped to gain financial support for the publication, which would then be sold at the Centre next year with profits

helping to fund future projects and maintenance at Kilvickeon.

John Clare

Anyone with information that they think might be of interest for inclusion in the booklet should contact John Clare on 01681 700022 or mail@johnclare.plus.com

OPEN THE BOX!

Among the many visitors to the Historical Centre this season (1084 to the end of September) a heartening number – after studying the panel about Kilvickeon and the poster of the Mariota Stone – make their way up to the churchyard, to see this beautiful and haunting place for themselves.



One couple called on their way back, full of enthusiasm. The volunteer on duty asked, 'What did you think of the restored Mariota Stone?'

'But where was it?'

'Didn't you notice the big box near the gate?'

'Oh yes, but we didn't like to look in: we thought it might be waiting for a funeral.'

There is now a plaque on the box, and instructions on how to open it.

SCOOR CAVE

This season I have shared leadership of two walks with Emily, the NTS Ranger, who has her office in the Historical Centre. One destination was Scoor Cave, a remarkable place on the Ross, which doesn't feature in our popular Walks series, because it would be a dangerous place to send a solitary walker.

Running in under the cliffs at Scoor, and reached via a gully and a stony beach, it has been carved by the waves in an outcrop of quartz-feldspar, so the almost vertical slabs which form its walls glimmer in daylight. On almost every surface it is possible to see carvings. Many of these are cup-marks such as can be found at prehistoric sites such as Kilmartin. In one place a small carving looks like a simplified labyrinth. There is another like a trident, leister or fish spear – of which we have examples in the Centre.

And there are at least eighteen crosses carved there. They have various styles – simple, ringed in the Celtic style, equal-armed in Greek and Latin style. Some probably date back to the 6th-9th centuries. This mysterious place (close to Kilvickeon) seems to have been a sacred site to people from early Christian times – and much earlier. Why did people make cup-and-ring marks on rocks? Explanations vary from boundary markers to religious symbols, from graffiti to star maps. And our Christian ancestors will have had their own reasons for carving crosses in this secluded place (a hermitage, a burial place, a chapel?)



Today, sadly, we still leave marks on the landscape, of a different kind – plastic flotsam and jetsam. The folk who joined the walk in September kindly gave some time to beach cleaning down at Scoor, filling ten bin-bags.

Jan Sutch Pickard

BECOMING A VOLUNTEER

I moved to Mull in January. Although I was positive about living here the move was quite daunting. Having reached the end of professional career of 37 years within social work I had finally accepted “early” retirement. I was seeking new interests and opportunities and have always enjoyed engaging and communicating with people.

I joined my first social activity in Bunessan in February where I received a very warm welcome and after this I was asked if I would like to become a volunteer for the Community Cafe,



accepted and through this became a volunteer with the Ross of Mull Historical Centre. I thought what better way could there be to get to know about the Ross of Mull. I feel it’s an excellent way of continuing to utilise your skills (including bridge painting!) and be active in “retirement” or rather “next phase of life”. I think it can provide the opportunity for retaining a sense of purpose in life when formal employment ends and it is a lot of fun!

Becoming a volunteer has a particular significance for me because I used to work a lot with the voluntary sector in my professional capacity. I am enjoying being involved with the community and got to know so many lovely people! Volunteering has made me feel a real part of this beautiful place. Thank you - Looking forward to my continued experiences as a volunteer.

Catriona Joss

A BIG THANK YOU

to all the volunteers who have put in so much time and effort to keeping the Centre open all summer.

We close for the winter on Friday 31st October, however it will still be possible to visit the Centre by appointment.

D. Greenhalgh

This year’s **AGM** will be held on Saturday 25th October at 2pm in Tigh na Rois

BOOK LAUNCH AND CELEBRATION

That evening it was standing room only in the Museum. On 25 April, just after the start of our season at the Historical Centre, we launched **A History of the Ross of Mull**. Stewart Cameron, the author, was present that afternoon, as visitors came and went, some buying copies which he signed. In the evening he gave a lecture, which was very well attended by both local people and holidaymakers. It was illustrated with slides from the book, and there was lively discussion about our rich and surprising heritage here and the challenge of recording and preserving it.

Complimentary copies have been given to the Iona Heritage Centre, Pennyghael in the Past and Mull Museum, where we hope it will be well used. The book is still selling steadily, and it is encouraging to think of copies open in homes on Mull as well as much further afield.

Do you have your own copy?

A History of the Ross of Mull by Dr Stewart Cameron (RoMHC) £30 (+ p&p £6)

Jan Sutch Pickard

THE LIBRARY

Our library may only consist of one bookcase but it is full of interest. ‘Views From The Manse’ doesn’t look as if it contains any Mull history, but it does! Have you ever wondered why our slide presentation shows a Scottish soldier on a camel? Read ‘The Scottish Horse 1900 – 1956’ and you’ll find out. There are fiction and children’s book scattered around, not yet sorted, but books on Mull and Iona are now on the second shelf and archaeology is on the bottom. When the sorting is complete, an inventory will be produced so we know exactly what we’ve got and where to find it. Do borrow a book and enjoy it, but remember to bring it back please!

Tessa Howell



The Ross of Mull Historical Centre
Millbrae Cottage, Bunessan,
Isle of Mull PA67 6DG
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