



## **NEWSLETTER November 2011**

### **ROMHC at Bunessan Show**

One of the highlights of the summer was sharing a stall with the local church at the annual Bunessan Show and taking along a display board with a selection of old photographs, as well as some of our own publications for sale. Jan and I had a great time getting the photos together and displaying them but this was as nothing to our pleasure in the response that we had from show goers.



Sometimes people were vying for space to get a closer look at the pictures and were competing to see who could recognise the vaguely familiar faces! We got lots of information from people living all over the world and just thoroughly enjoyed meeting up with old friends and making new ones, many of whom were relations of people we've known for years!

We acquired valuable information to enhance our records, sold some books and calendars and came away feeling very pleased with ourselves and already planning what to do next year. Above all we helped raise the profile of the historical centre, which can all too often be seen as somewhere for tourists to go on wet days rather than as a valuable local resource that belongs to us all.



AND – if you're looking for calendars – don't forget that we have ROMHC ones available for sale at £3.50 each. They were produced by Sandy MacCallum, have a much improved quality and are sealed in cellophane wrappers.

**Brik Halcrow**

### **Remembering the Ross**

Our monthly get-togethers have continued over the summer, with at least ten folk who grew up on Mull taking part, and others from the same age group joining in, bringing insights from childhoods maybe several hundred miles away, but with shared memories – such as rationing. No such austerity when Jenny Wright and Brik Halcrow provide cake to go with our tea!

Topics in the last few months have included School-days, Shops, Cafes and pubs, Mull in wartime, Church-going in the past and Mods & ceilidhs.

The meetings have a relaxed atmosphere, and take place either in the library of Tigh na Rois, or the exhibition space, where we can use projected pictures to jog memories or to open up new information. The images on the Centres CDs are fairly random – which is both interesting and frustrating. It would be time-consuming to organise them into categories or periods, though there are now more scanned in images with a known provenance which could be added.



At the same time it's exciting to be present when a person or place is identified with the authority of someone who really knows, because they remember.

Cathy Adam is sorely missed. She was the life and soul of this group, with a great recall, some very funny stories, wit and wisdom. Her illness and death has been a blow to the whole community. We remember her full life with gratitude.

**Jan Sutch Pickard**

## **Volunteers Update**

This has been the centre's first year of functioning without paid employees and the commitment displayed by our cheerful band of volunteers has been impressive. Some have been able to offer time on a regular basis and others have just managed the occasional day when their 'normal' jobs allow it but all have brought many talents and their offering of hospitality has meant that we have only needed to close for very few days during the season. They all keep the centre clean and welcoming, make teas and coffees as required and do all they can to help people enjoy their visits, including assisting people in their enthusiastic searches for their ancestors.

We have been helped by a donation from the Sea Eagle Fund, which enabled us to purchase a projector that works away all day in the museum showing an endless parade of historical photos from our extensive collection. This, in itself, makes the centre feel more welcoming and we have had some very complimentary write ups in the visitor book about both the centre and the volunteers.

This season ends on the 28<sup>th</sup> October and will then close to casual visitors although we will open on request, where possible, and plan to have some open days to encourage locals to come and have a good look around. Meanwhile there are always people in the building as Morven Gibson (the Ross of Mull and Iona Development Officer) and Emily Wilkins (Ranger for the Ross of Mull, Iona, Staffa and Burg) will continue using our office space.

We are hoping to gather volunteers together early in the winter to discuss possible projects to enhance what we already have. We would like to make our existing records more accessible and work on acquiring fresh material, as well as working out better ways of making a visit more rewarding for casual visitors.

We need to welcome Seth Crook, who has been a great addition to the team over the summer, and a big thank you goes to all the volunteers who have kept the centre going this year, not forgetting those who have helped with gardening and maintenance.

## **Volunteers needed**

And don't forget that we are always looking for new volunteers, if anyone is at all interested then please contact Brik Halcrow for a conversation, on 01681 700620 or [enquiries@romhc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@romhc.org.uk).

## **The Mariota Stone coming Home**

In 2008 the warden for the area's Ancient Monuments, Sheila Clark, discovered that the face of the Mariota Graveslab, an ornately carved late medieval stone which lay within Kilvickeon Chapel walls, had been fractured and damaged. It was recommended that the stone be sent to Edinburgh to be repaired but before this could happen a significant central section was stolen from the site. The Stone Conservation Unit succeeded in repairing and inserting a replica of the missing section and following discussions with RoMHC, it is now ready to be returned to as near its original site as possible.

*Continued overleaf*

Historic Scotland stipulated that it be housed in a protective shelter and have agreed a 75% grant towards the total estimate of £1300 to build a suitable structure to house it. RoMHC agreed to fund the balance through donations and work-in-kind and are ready to start when the weather allows. If you would like to contribute in any way, let us know!

**Rosie Burgess**

## Adopt a Monument?

The Adopt a Monument Scheme run through Archaeology Scotland has been reinstated with funding for five years. The scheme aims to help local community groups preserve and enhance Scheduled Monuments which might otherwise be neglected or deteriorate without attention. With this in mind some of us arranged a meeting with Project Officer Phil Richardson and his colleague Cara at Kilvickeon Old Parish Church to consider the



best approach to tackle the badly overgrown vegetation which has started to smother grave-stones old and new. There is also concern over the condition of the south wall of the chapel and arched entrance which have crumbled further since last winter's frosts. Close to this entrance is the "sheela-na-gig" carving, one of three in the UK. The bond of the masonry is very similar to the bond found in the early 13th-century nunnery on nearby Iona. Around the church can be discerned the remains of an older sub-circular enclosure fitting within the present rectangular enclosure. Following a visit in the summer, the new Historic Scotland Inspector for the Northwest, Martin Brann, confirmed the site has considerable historical merit.

Volunteers Anita Tunstall and Sue Reed have meticulously mapped every standing and recumbent stone within the boundary walls, so far numbering 195. They were able to demonstrate how rapidly some of the stones were disappearing because the grass had not been cut since the Spring. With the co-operation of Argyll & Bute Council, Phil outlined practical ways in which they might help, including bringing a workparty to clear the buildup of vegetation, and requesting an inspection from Historic Scotland's Architect to assess the condition of the building. They would also advise about keeping other hardwood under- and overgrowth under control in certain of the walled areas.

Phil and his team may also be able to examine the site with geophysical survey equipment to detect the whereabouts of older walls and could help train volunteers how to uncover, record and reinstate areas where the stones are hidden from view.

It was decided to investigate future management of the vegetation with Argyll & Bute Council and Historic Scotland and enquire as to possible controlled grazing being used to maintain sward over the summer months if acceptable to families of those buried there.

If you are interested and would like to help in any way with either the descriptive recording of each stone or tidying and preserving the site, please get in touch through the Centre.

**Rosie Burgess**

### ROMHC Contact List

Contact:	About:
David Greenhalgh	Newsletter
Brik Halcrow	Administration, Volunteering
Jenny Wright	Membership
Anne Baxter	Archive and Family Searches
Sandy MacCallum	Photo Collections
Jan Sutch Pickard	Reminiscing, Oral History
Rosie Burgess	Project ideas, Promotion
Stewart MacDougall	Anything and Everything Else!

**Telephone no. at the Centre: 01681 700659**