

Ross of Mull

HISTORICAL CENTRE



AUTUMN NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2016



'I REMEMBER MULL'

Midway through the year the Centre was delighted to welcome **Archie and Ann Graham**, on a visit from their home in Ayr. Archie grew up in Ardtun, as a lively observant child in the 1940s. His extended family included members in Millbrae Cottage ('This is where we met', said Ann, walking in to the Museum and remembering it as a home) as well as the cottage and workshop behind Bunessan Parish Church.

On leaving Mull, Archie studied at Glasgow School of Art, and since then has been using his considerable creative gifts to draw and paint remembered landscapes, community life, local characters. From scores of pictures his grandson David has produced a DVD, over an hour long, with a quirky commentary by Archie, recordings of local music and fragments of conversation in Gaelic, the lowing of cattle and birdsong.



A showing of this film in Bunessan Hall on 3 September drew a large audience, who also enjoyed looking at a display of some of his pictures and meeting Archie and family. The evening was memorable for many reasons, including the chance to hear Anda Campbell, Alasdair Lamont, a Graham grandson and Archie himself, playing familiar airs as though the years had rolled away.

The DVD 'I remember Mull' can be bought from the Historical Centre for £15.

A POET WHO 'RAN AWAY TO SCOTLAND'

In July 1818 John Keats and a companion walked across Mull because they wanted to visit Staffa and Fingal's Cave and couldn't afford the longer boat journey. It was the wettest summer in living memory (yet again!) and they were soaked by the rain and wading through burns in spate, as they walked about 20 miles a day. A local guide sang Gaelic songs to keep their spirits up. They slept one night in a shepherd's hut and walked six miles through Glen More before having a 'hearty breakfast' at Derrynacullen, above Kinloch. This July a small group of us retraced some of their steps on a Ranger-led walk, in better weather, and ate our (hearty) packed lunches at the ruined farmhouse in a forestry clearing.

That evening we gathered again, with others, including Ross of Mull poets, in the Ross of Mull Historical Centre, where about 20 folk listened to author Dr Stewart Cameron talking about this challenging walking tour undertaken by the young Keats, as he dedicated his (tragically short) life to poetry. After toasting his memory, we sat in a circle and read some of his poems to each other. It was a good way to end a memorable day – for which many thanks to Stewart, also Emily and Daniel from the Ranger Service.

John Keats in Mull by Stewart Cameron is available from the Historical Centre in Bunessan (enquiries@romhc.org.uk) for £5.50 or £6.50 with p&p.

CONTINUITY & COMMUNITY

The annual open air Gaelic-English Service at Kilvickeon Church was held on Tuesday 26 July at noon followed by a bring-and-share picnic.

The ruined mediaeval Parish Church nestles among the hills between Loch Assapol and the sea. Within its walls is an iconic grave-slab, the 'Mariota Stone' – and its graveyard is the last resting place of generations of folk from the Ross. But it is also a place for the living. Skilled craftsmen have been busy stabilising the walls. Local schoolchildren visit and study its history and present-day ecology. It is the subject of a poem 'Làrach Eaglais' by Sorley MacLean – and has inspired other poets and artists. Walkers find it a place to rest and reflect. The Mull Gaelic Choir enjoy singing here!

Once a year the Gaelic/English celebration gives an opportunity to gather and to hear the 'language of heaven' spoken under the open sky. This year's service was led by local Gaelic scholar Eleanor MacDougall, taking the theme of Community and Continuity.

The message was Fàilte oirbh uile! (All welcome) and in spite of unpromising weather more than 30 people turned up. Their faith was rewarded as the rain stopped and when the singing stopped we were able to share a picnic laid out on the chest housing the Mariota Stone.



Stewart Cameron at Derrynacullen



A PLACE IN HISTORY

Horatio McCulloch and images of the Highlands.

Early in the season, on 20 April, it was standing room only in the Centre for a talk by Eleanor MacDougall on Horatio McCulloch and images of the Highlands. The purpose of the short illustrated lecture, based on some of Eleanor's PhD research, was to consider the work of this nineteenth century landscape painter and to define his place in Gàidhealtachd art history.

Many of us had never heard of McCulloch, and it was fascinating to hear his story compared with that of the well-known and over-rated Landseer. Eleanor painted a sympathetic word picture of this gifted Scot, who knew the scenes that he painted and the people who inhabited them. As well as the interplay of light and shade and changeful weather, she pointed out the tiny figures and traces of human activity which brought his paintings to life.

BUNESSAN SCHOOL SHIABA PROJECT

Earlier in the year students of P 5, 6 & 7 at Bunessan School took part in a wide-ranging project about the Clearances. They performed an excellent play based on a book by Kathleen Fidler, about the experiences of a community in the north-east of Scotland. But, much nearer home, some had visited the ruined townships of Tireregan and Shiaba.



They walked down to the Centre to see documents relating to the evictions of families there, and heard a letter of appeal to the Duke and his factor read out. A volunteer challenged them to use their five senses to imagine living in a black-house, and told stories of the clearances in Mull and Morvern.

For the rest of the season, the Centre was fortunate to have some of their craft-work and pamphlets on display. This has been very interesting for many of our visitors, some of whom had never heard of the Clearances.

We're looking forward to working with the school again soon.

STOP PRESS

The arrowhead found at Ardtun and featured in an earlier Newsletter has been to Edinburgh and back! The National Museum for Scotland showed great interest and declared it Treasure Trove. With welcome help from the Mull Museum, who have now become the owners, we will be able to display this small piece of our remote past at the Historical Centre, from when we open at Easter next year.

A FULL SEASON

Apologies that there has just been one Newsletter from the Centre this season. This has been due to production difficulties, but we hope that we now have the technology (and are acquiring the skills to overcome this.

In fact right now it means that we can share news of what has happened throughout the season. At the AGM we should be able to report on whether we have seen an increase in numbers. If that is the case, it could be due to RET – which is certainly putting more traffic on the road – whereas good weather often has an opposite effect (sometimes it seems that we are tourists' wet-weather option).

We've been trying to monitor the effect of advertising, since we don't want the Historical Centre to become one of Mull's well kept secrets. Bright banners on the fence and at the gate are working well!

2016 RoMHC programme of activities

March 17	Pre-opening event for local businesses
March 21	Open to the public
March 27	Duck race (Easter Sunday)
April 20	Eleanor MacDougall: talk on Horatio McCulloch
May 25	Legends of Mull and More (Creich Hall) with Bob Pegg
June 11	Maintenance Day at the Centre
July 2	Yacht Race Dance (Buinessan Hall)
July 20	Ranger-led walk 'In the footsteps of Keats' to Derrynaculen, followed by talk on Keats by Dr Stewart Cameron
July 26	Kilvickeon Celebration/service
August 2	Ranger-led Bat walk and talk at Centre
August 3	Ranger-led Biodiversity Day at Centre
August 5	RoMHC stand at the Buinessan Show
Sept 2	Film show 'I remember Mull' with Archie Graham and local musicians (Buinessan Hall)
Sept 17	Maintenance Day at Centre
Oct 21	Centre closes to the public 'Thank you' event for volunteers
Oct 22	Play 'Special delivery' (Buinessan Hall)
Oct 29	RoMHC AGM

Annual General Meeting to be held at Millbrae Cottage, Buinessan Saturday, 29th October, 2016 at 2.00 p.m. AGENDA

1. Present
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of the 2015 AGM
4. Convenor's Report
5. Approval of Financial Statements
6. Appointment of Auditors
2016/2017
7. Election of Directors
8. AOCB
9. Presentation by Christine Leach:
Tiroran's History before the Trees

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
HISTORICAL CENTRE

Ross of Mull Historical Centre,
Millbrae Cottage, Buinessan,
Eilean Mhuile, Argyll,
Scotland PA67 6DG
TEL: 01681 700659
EMAIL: enquiries@romhc.org.uk
www.romhc.org.uk

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