

IONAD EACHDRAIDH an Rois Mhuilich



Ross of Mull HISTORICAL CENTRE

Newsletter - Autumn 2019

Upcoming events ...

Tuesday 22nd October – 11am - Archivist Training Day

Thursday 31st October – RoMHC End of Season Closure

Saturday 2nd November – 2pm - RoMHC AGM with guest speaker Siobhan Moran from HWDT

Good News! RoMHC becomes a SCIO

If you find these initials confusing, be reassured that this is good news. Read on for an explanation from **Anne Baxter**, retiring Chair of the Trustees ...

The Trustees of the Ross of Mull Historical Centre are delighted to announce that the Centre's application for conversion into a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation has been accepted by The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) from 25th June 2019.

A Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation is a legal structure which has been purpose built for the charity sector in Scotland. It provides limited liability and a separate legal identity to organisations that want to become charities but do not want or need the complex structure of company law. This means that even the smallest charity can access the benefits of incorporation – including limited liability and legal capacity. It is only available to charities with a principal office in Scotland and is regulated by OSCR and subject to the Charities and Trustee Investment Act (Scotland) 2005.

A SCIO can hold property, enter into leases and employ people in its own right. Title to land and buildings will be held in the name of the SCIO (an advantage in terms of succession). Members' and trustees' liability is limited in most cases, and they are not liable to contribute if the SCIO is wound up.

Members are subject to some of the same duties as charity trustees, specifically, they must act in the interests of the SCIO, and seek, in good faith, to ensure the SCIO acts in a manner which is consistent with its charitable purposes.

Our number is SC030873

Our Annual Easter Duck Race

While being a serious local history centre, we have our moments of fun. One of these is the Duck Race in the burn that passes the old mill. It is part of the Easter Day community celebrations in Bunessan. This all-age event, which raises funds for our work, has for years been ably run by the MacCallum family, whose hard work and good humour are much appreciated.

Christine MacCallum reports on this year's event ...

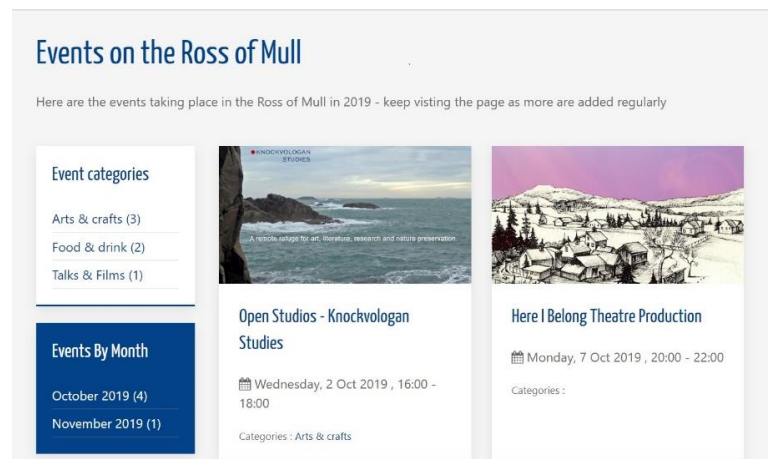


Having weathered well during the winter months the ducks were itching to get back in the water again and stretch their wings. 141 ducks took to the water on a fine day. The going was hazardous with many obstacles in the way and not all made it to the finish line. All but one were recovered, so many thanks to all the helpers (Shuggie almost fully immersed at one point!) for the recovery operation. The winners were Roy Owen, Murdo MacLean and Finlay Palmer. Best name prize went to Cat Bainbridge for 'Count Duckula'.

Our New Website

The new [RoMHC website](#) went live just over a year ago, highlighting the work of the Centre in greater detail, as well as providing new features. Information on all of the projects undertaken by the Centre can now be accessed online, as can previous newsletters.

Upcoming events can be promoted in good time and reports of events are published on the news pages, which are interactive, allowing comments to be posted. An [events listing page](#) has been recently added, not just to advertise Centre events, but to fill the gap for an online listing, providing the facility for a detailed promotion of all events on the Ross of Mull.



The website is easy to update in-house, therefore information can be added and kept up to date at any time and at no cost. Around 400 new users access the website each month, half of which are from the UK, and the rest from 17 different countries.

The website has great potential to carry much more information and attract many more visitors world-wide, so we are inviting [feedback](#) on how the website could further promote the work of the Centre and what additional content could be added.

Margaret Matthew

Written in the Landscape – an archives workshop

At the beginning of the year, volunteers at the Historical Centre were excited to receive an invitation to a workshop with the title 'Written in the Landscape'. The message came from **Alison Diamond**, Archivist for the Argyll Estates. It read:

“As part of the HLF funded Written in the Landscape project, LiveArgyll Archives and the Argyll Papers at Inveraray Castle are delivering a local history workshop with a focus on Mull records on Tuesday 12 March, in Mull Museum, Tobermory. Archivists will introduce both collections and the types of records held in them, focusing on the documents we hold which contain evidence about the history of Mull, allowing plenty of time for questions and for getting 'hands on' with the original records that we will bring with us.”

Interest was so great that the planning had to be adapted to set up two workshops, simultaneously, at two ends of the island. The lists filled again. And then the weather intervened. The event was rescheduled for 21st

and 22nd May, with the same team from the mainland delivering it at the Mull Museum in Tobermory and then Bunessan. The fourteen participants at the Historical Centre included colleagues from Pennyghael in the Past and the Iona Heritage Centre.

A presentation from Rory Cruchfield about the LiveArgyll Archives made us aware of just what a variety of sources there are to explore: legal records, including court proceedings, financial records like rent books, maps, correspondence formal and informal – including glimpses of family scandals!

The records held by the Argyll Archives also include charters and writs, royal letters, maps and plans, estate papers, family papers, in English, Gaelic and Latin. The space needed for such an archive in Inveraray is huge. It was exciting to make a hands-on acquaintance with just some of this material.

Thank you, Alison and colleagues for the opportunity. The Mill at Bunessan was built by the Factor for a past Duke of Argyll and that family still own much of the Ross of Mull. We're grateful for insights received in this workshop and the possibility of following them up.

The Argyll Papers form one of the most important collections in the UK. Their relevance ranges from the minutiae which are so interesting to us for our local history studies, to matters of state. At one point the Dukes of Argyll were virtual rulers in Scotland – for instance exerting major influence over the Deed of Union. The wealth of historical evidence includes not just the history of a powerful family, but of a huge area of the West of Scotland and the people who lived there.

People who live there today still have lively interest in our local history and in the rich resources that can help us to understand it. That's what brought us together for a day in May.

Jan SP

A Gift of Maps

'Do we know where we are going?' was the witty title of a talk by Tom Aitchison, of Kintra and Hamilton, a long-standing supporter of RoMHC.

He showed a series of old maps featuring the Ross of Mull, pointing out how growing accuracy of cartography went alongside the growth and naming (and clearance) of communities. He has given us laminated A3 copies of eight of these, which will be displayed, or available for study, in the Historical Centre. We are very grateful for the talk and this ongoing resource.



The evening of 10 September was dreich, but there was a good turn-out – approximately 40 people. They were rewarded, after the talk, by a stylish silent film, a MacBrayne's travelogue advertising the voyage of the King George around Mull.

And then there was a premiere – the first public showing of **The Fisherman's Daughter**. This film of a selkie tale was made by Tom Chick at the start of his career and was set in Iona and the Ross of Mull. Starring Mark Jardine, with supporting parts played by Euphie Wood, Maimie Brunton and Cathy Adam of Bunessan, it is just seven minutes long – and we enjoyed all of them.

After light refreshments (and very generous donations) the gathering settled down to watch a film, a golden oldie, which (maybe) answered the opening question: 'I know where I'm going.'

Jan SP

The Buinessan Show 2019

“Some folk were good at weaving work and they kept the thing going” (Attie MacKechnie)

As usual the Historical Centre had a presence at the show, somewhere between the cattle and sheep and ponies and dogs, with their keenly competing owners, and the Industrial tent with its splendid vegetables and flowers, baking and pots of jam, knitting and other handicrafts.

With a stand in a marquee full of community organisations like the Rangers and the WRI and Mull Safe and Sound, we decided that this year we’d feature the strong tradition on the Ross of **working with wool**. The inspiration came from the donation of a simply made, beautifully balanced yarn-winder, from Harbour croft. Seeing yarn still being wound by hand at the Weaving Mill at Ardanish was a reminder that sometimes simple technology is most effective. So, we put together an exhibition of ‘then and now’ pictures, from clipping to carding to spinning to winding to weaving to waulking the tweed *.

Sue Clare, a Trustee and one of our small band of hard-working volunteers, also spins. So, she brought her wheel and set it up, amid samples of cloth and dyed yarn from Ardanish. She was joined by a young woman from the Netherlands, who was visiting relatives in Mull – and who happened to have brought along her wheel! There were many lively conversations, as well as hands-on opportunities.



We were glad to welcome Stewart Cameron, who is such a great supporter of the Centre. The new edition of his **History of the Ross of Mull** is selling well.

* **Obair a’luadhadh – the work of waulking** (*text from the display at the Show – which can now be seen at the Historical Centre*)

This was a communal task to finish the home-woven tweed, with traditional songs to help the work along.

“They had the songs for the waulking of the tweed. That was for getting the tweed into the right width, depth...they’d a big table, right round, kind of kneading it, singing songs at the same time. That’s before my time. Then that was rolled up, washed and rolled up again... 7 yards for a gentleman’s suit. They were measuring as they were going along, you know. It was shrinking, not stretching it.”

(Chrissie MacGillivray of Burg)

“It is not so long since the work of waulking the tweed stopped in the Ross of Mull...the women would come round and the young girls and they would sing the waulking songs...some folk were good at weaving work and they kept the thing going.”

(Attie MacKechnie, 1992)



“I went with my mother to the *luadh* and they sang and of course I was a wee girl, but I got sitting beside my mother and kidding on I was helping them! ... and that was wonderful. Inside the house there would be about twelve that day...they all sang together, Gaelic songs, they went with the work...they were in blouses and skirts, to be nice and cool, oh yes it would be hard work because of the thumping onto the board...Tea and scones, fresh butter and all that...quite a celebration after they got it finished...just women: oh no, no man was allowed, women only!”

Janet Faulds (born in Fionnphort 1904, interviewed by Marie MacArthur in 1994)

2019 Highlights

April	Centre opens The Annual Duck Race
May	'Written in the Landscape' with Argyll Archivists
June	Centre becomes a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO)
August	Stand at the Bunessan Show – 'Working with Wool'
September	'Mull Maps & Films' evening by Tom Aitchison at Creich Hall
October	Archivist Training Day at the Centre Centre closes
November	AGM at the Centre with guest speaker Siobhan Moran from HWDT

And between these dates, opening every weekday to visitors from all over the world!

Still Welcome ...

As always, we welcome your [feedback](#) and any postcards or images of the Ross of Mull in the past for our archives and use in displays. Ownership will be acknowledged recorded and originals returned with care. Please either post to the address below or email digital copies to enquiries@romhc.org.uk

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And last but not least ... why not become a volunteer for the RoMHC?

Learn more about this special place and its story and welcome visitors to the Ross!