

Kyleakin Local History Society



Website: www.kyleakinlocalhistorysociety.co.uk

Email: kyleakinlocalhistorysociety@gmail.com

Spring 2015 Issue 11

Diary Dates:

Tuesday 9th June
4 pm – 7.30 pm
Wednesday 10th June
10 am – 3 pm
WW1 Centenary Exhibition
Kyle Hall

Dates of other events taking place in the village can also be included in this section – please send the details to Sue.

Committee:

Caroline Clouston
Hugh Davies
Hector Grant
Calum Macaskill
Margaret Macrae
Roddy Morrison
Anna Belle Robertson
John Robertson
Karren Smith

Non-Committee

Member –

Website & Newsletter

Sue Lyons

Membership application forms are available at the Bright Water Centre, where a selection of our archives is on display.

Welcome to the Spring 2015 newsletter

THE JOAN WILCOCK PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION

ATLAS ARTS were formed when An Tuirean closed in Portree, their purpose is to offer artists and audiences in Skye and Lochalsh opportunities to experience contemporary art in the area responding to the unique qualities of this region, its landscapes, its heritage and its people, aiming to inspire audiences by initiating contemporary art projects of local, national and international experiences.

We were delighted when they contacted us in June 2014 stating that artist Nikki Bird had been very taken with the Joan Wilcock collection of photographs now stored in the Archive Centre in Portree especially the many photos taken of people in Kyleakin in the 1960's and early 1970's. She then indicated she would be interested in working on a project involving the photos and the people of the village who were familiar with Joan Wilcock, providing funding could be sourced.

Nicky Bird is an artist who is based in Glasgow and whose work investigates the relevance of old and interesting photographs and the hidden histories of specific sites. She has previously created publications and exhibitions on the theme 'Hidden Histories' incorporating new photography with oral histories, genealogy and collaborating with people who have a significant connection to the original sites.

Joan Wilcock lived in Cheshire and was a regular visitor to Kyleakin in the 1960's; she was well known to the local people, visiting the village every year and staying in the Heathmount and Marine Hotels for two weeks always in May. One of these weeks being the 'Skye Week' which heralded the start of the tourist season with a week of events throughout the island.

Miss Wilcock as she was known to us was a familiar figure in her cape and hat as she went round the village snapping photos of the locals going about their daily lives or at their homes.

The main Kyleakin 'Skye Week' event was a concert in the village hall where 'Miss Wilcock' would recite the poem 'The Poodle and the Pug' and this was the highlight for the children watching as she was very amusing with her words and actions, having been a drama and elocution teacher.

After Joan passed away her 'Skye' collection of photographs was donated to the Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre in Portree where artist Nicky Bird first came across the collection and became interested in possibly creating some sort of project. Atlas Arts were keen to support the idea subject to funding being available.

Atlas Arts have recently managed to secure a modest budget to enable the project to go ahead and Nicky will have several visits to Kyleakin over the coming months working with KLHS and gain information for the project working up to an evening outdoor 'Event' in early December.

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We are still trying to identify how the village developed in relation to:

- ❖ Churches
- ❖ Hotels
- ❖ Fishing
- ❖ Schools
- ❖ Shops & Cafes
- ❖ Tourism
- ❖ Organisations i.e. SWRI
- ❖ Kyleakin Highland Games
- ❖ Gala Days
- ❖ Sport
- ❖ Military
- ❖ Families
- ❖ Ferries

If you have a particular interest in any of these sections, or you think that there is something missing, please get in touch.

Now and Then:

Do you have old pictures of your house and do you know roughly when they were taken? Can you take a picture of your house now – i.e. in 2015/2016?

If so, can you let us have copies so that we can form a display of what the village used to be like and what it is like now?

The majority of the houses in the village have undergone some form of extensions/ alterations, have you found anything unexpected that you think would be of interest to the Society?

The Society is delighted to be involved in what looks like a very exciting project for the village.

Further information, when available will be able to be viewed on the website and in future newsletters.

If any of you have any more information on Joan Wilcock, please do share it with the society.

Wishing you a lovely summer (when it arrives)!

Caroline

Updates from previous newsletters and new contacts:

In the last newsletter we reported on an enquiry from Cinders McLeod in Canada in the hope that we could point her in the right direction for her genealogy hunt to trace her Granny, Chirsty MacLennan from Lochalsh.

Thanks to Anna Belle's knowledge of the area we were able to put Cinders in touch with Ishbel Cameron from Drumbuie, who it transpired, was a long lost relative.

In an update, Cinders visited for 4 – 5 days in the summer of 2014 and received great Highland hospitality from her relatives in Drumbuie. Many hours were spent talking and "filling in the blanks" in their family tree.

Cinders and Ishbel Cameron are direct descendants of two MacLennan brothers (their great, great, grandfathers). Cinders great, great, grandfather, along with other relatives emigrated to Canada around 1847 whilst Ishbel's remained in the area.

Prior to their leaving, they chiselled "MACLENNAN" ON A BOULDER. Charlene (Ishbel's daughter) and her husband David Macleod took Cinders to COIRE DOMHAN (deep corrie) – this is a 4 mile walk up the glen from Killilan to where their forefathers lived. They searched for the boulder and ruins of their houses, but unfortunately there is no trace left of the area ever having been inhabited. Charlene and David also showed Cinders the MacLennan family home in Duirinish; Plockton Primary School – where their relatives would have been educated and the open air amphitheatre in Plockton where church services were held.

Charlene, David and Cinders visited the Archive Centre in Portree where Cinders was most impressed with the service she received there, stating that it was possibly the best archive centre she had ever visited.

Cinders told Ishbel that her mannerisms – voice and the way she held her hands reminded her so much of her Aunt Elsa. When she returned to Canada, Cinders, without any comment, showed photographs she had taken of Ishbel and they were all amazed at how much she resembled her Canadian relatives.

oOo

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In the picture Gallery, there is a picture "**Circa 1900 - Donkey and trap on the Pier**" which has prompted the following from Ken MacPherson:

Ken was reading through the pages on the website when he found that we had updated some photographs to the gallery. The one that he found really interesting was the picture of the donkey.

Apart from the donkey, he noted that his grandparent's house is in the background. This has to be the earliest photograph of "The Cliffe" as he has a copy of the Feu Charter between Lord MacDonald and his grandpa - Angus MacPherson dated 2nd March 1903. Assuming that it would have taken a good few months to build the house, Ken feels that the picture is likely to date from around the end of 1903 to early 1904.



oOo



In the September 2011 Newsletter (Issue 4) we mentioned that we had received (from Mary Forbes, Cumbernauld, nee MacPherson, West End House, Kyleakin) a print depicting a rescue near the lighthouse island by two sisters who were the lighthouse keepers daughters named as the 'Binnie Sisters' who in the early 1900's received an award for rescuing two local boys (as mentioned in Mary MacPherson's booklet 'Memories of Kyleakin').

In order to gain more information we contacted the Royal Humane society who had no record of such an award. At that stage we were unable to proceed further with the enquiry. We did, however, find out that their name was in fact 'Birnie' from the roll of lighthouse keepers and that their father James Birnie was lighthouse keeper from 1893 until 1904 we were then able to trace the children Rose, Mary Jane and Robert, a third sister Georgina and a younger brother Alexander from the school roll of that period.

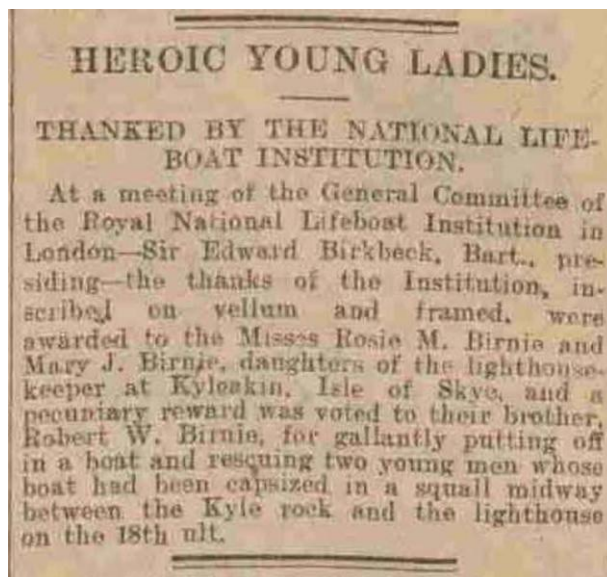
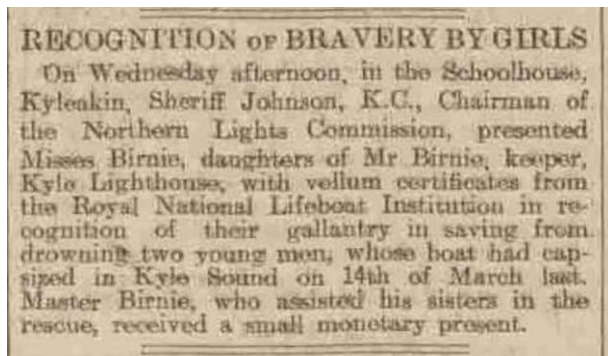
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We were delighted to receive an email in December 2014 from Robbie Birnie whose great, great uncle was in fact James Birnie the lighthouse keeper and father of the girls in the picture, also attached were two newspaper articles from the Dundee Evening Post dated 14th April 1902.



The newspaper reported that in recognition of their gallantry framed vellum certificates were presented to each of the girls from the 'Royal National Lifeboat Institution' while a small monetary award was presented to their brother Robert for his part in the rescue of two young men whose boat had capsized in a squall midway between the Kyle rock (Kyle House, Doctor's Rock?) and the lighthouse on 18th March 1902.

In Robbie Birnie's email, he wrote:

I have been researching my family tree over many years and have just seen your website page (<http://www.kyleakinlocalhistorysociety.co.uk/klhs-newsletter-4.pdf>). I note in your September 2011 newsletter (Issue 4) that it mentions that your society were attempting to obtain information from the Royal Humane Society regarding an award presented to the "Birnie sisters", daughters of the lighthouse keeper on Kyleakin.

The daughters were the daughters of my great, great uncle James Birnie. As you will probably already know, James was the principal lighthouse keeper at Kyleakin from 10 February 1893. He was later posted to Rhuvaal lighthouse on Islay from 26 October 1904 for the next 15 years before he retired from service with the Northern Lighthouse Board. Please see the attached two newspaper articles which may be of interest to you. The full names of James' daughters are Rose McKay Birnie and Mary Jane Birnie, while his son's full name was Robert Walker Birnie.

(Robert is referred to in the "Heroic Young Ladies" article in the Dundee Evening Post dated 14 April, 1902).

Robbie would be very interested to learn whether anyone has managed to obtain any information about the Royal Humane Society award referred to in the newsletter or whether anyone has any other information about his great, great uncle and his family.

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Can you help

We have a large number of old photographs of various views in the village; do you have the time to take photographs of the same views now?

We would also like photographs of the harbour, fisheries pier and the boats. Whilst not considered historical now, in years to come, your grandchildren may be asking what it was like when Kyleakin had a working harbour!

Membership application forms are available at Camerons old shop/Post Office, or from Anna Belle.

If you have any photos and documents of interest to the Society, they can be scanned and returned quickly.

Please send ideas for items/articles in the newsletter to any of the committee members.

History of Houses in Kyleakin

In the last newsletter we asked whether anyone could add to the history of Edradour (first registered/built in 1891).

We also asked for information on the bungalows on the right hand side after you pass the Village Hall.

Quite a bit of information has been received about Edradour; however, we haven't received any information about the bungalows or indeed from our previous request to include houses on South Obbe, from "Seawinds" to "Hillview".

If you would like the Society to compile a timeline of your house, please send any information and photographs to Sue, so that the information can be included in future Newsletters.



An Cogadh Mòr

Remembering the Great War
in Skye and Lochalsh



Exhibition

Kyle Hall

Main Street, Kyle of Lochalsh

Tues 9 June 2015, 4 pm – 7.30 pm

Wed 10 June 2015, 10 am – 3 pm

For more information, contact Skye & Lochalsh Archive Centre
Tel. 01478 614078

skyeandlochalsh.archives@highlifehighland.com



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Do you know which the oldest house in the village is? At least one house was built in 1891 (according to the deeds) – but was your house built earlier than this? Despite the possibility of numerous renovations, you may be living in what was the first house built in Kyleakin – or do you have any old maps - if so get in touch, we'd love to hear from you.

KLHS Website

You can print off your own copy of "**Memories of Kyleakin**" by Mary Macpherson by clicking the image and depending on the settings on your computer; the newsletter will automatically open or will be in your download box.

The **News & Events** page has been updated to include a dropdown page "**Newsletters**" which will give you access to all the newsletters issued by KLHS - just click on the newsletter image and depending on the settings on your computer, the newsletter will automatically open or will be in your download box.

The "Important Dates" page has changed to "**Historical Time Line**" and new information has recently been added.

The website also provides information on the society's current programme of talks and activities as well as other events in the district.

Kyleakin War Memorial

If you haven't visited the War Memorial recently, you may not be aware that Kyleakin & Kylerhea Community Council (KKCC) have had the war memorial cleaned and the lettering repainted/renovated.

Following a donation from Kirstie Phipps of Kyle House, KKCC had a new bench installed (by Hector and Neil Grant). The bench which faces west towards the Skye Bridge, is a commemorative bench for those who served in WW1, including Kirstie's father, Colin MacKenzie who lost a leg whilst serving in WW1.

