

Kyleakin Local History Society NEWSLETTER

Issue 15

Autumn/Winter 2017



Society News

Annual General Meeting: The Society's 2017 AGM took place on Monday 11th September in the community hall.

Caroline, our chairperson, reported on another successful year for the group which included a varied and well-received programme of talks by invited guest speakers.

Treasurer Anna Belle gave an update on the membership and finances – very healthy in both respects – and was thanked for her ongoing fundraising efforts on behalf of the Society.

The election of a new committee took place, with the outcome as follows:

Chairperson – Caroline Clouston;

Vice-chairperson – John Robertson;

Treasurer – Anna Belle Robertson;

Secretary – Stuart Taylor;

Committee Members:

Margaret Macrae, Angus MacLennan, Hugh Davies, Peter Rawling, Calum MacAskill, Roddy Morrison.

At the AGM, Hector Grant stood down as a committee member but he will continue to play an active role in supporting the Society going forward.

- See inside for Caroline's chairperson's report to the AGM.

Guest speakers lined up for KLHS winter talks

SKYE author Liz MacRae Shaw will be the Society's first guest speaker in our programme of monthly talks during winter 2017-18.

Liz studied History at Oxford University and her passion is the turbulent 19th century. She finds inspiration for her historical fiction from Highland culture, family history and the striking landscape of Skye.

In 2013 Liz published *Love and Music Will Endure*, a novel based on the life of 19th century Skye bard and political campaigner, Màiri Mhòr nan Oran (Great Mary of the Songs). Liz (pictured, below) will speak about her research for this book and her newly-released second title, *No Safe Anchorage*, which tells the story of Tom Masters, a 19th century naval officer and "a round peg in a square hole". A tantalising glimpse of a stranger leads him to jump ship on a quest to find her. His adventures, interwoven with the life of a young Robert Louis Stevenson, take Tom from Skye to Canada.

The talk takes place on **Monday 6th November 2017 in the Kyleakin Connections at 7.30pm.**

Members and non-members are welcome and refreshments will be provided at the conclusion of the talk. The KLHS committee look forward to welcoming you on the night.



Liz MacRae Shaw



Murdo Beaton

OUR second guest speaker, on **Monday 4th December 2017**, will be Skye historian and retired Portree High School teacher Murdo Beaton.

Murdo (pictured, above) will give a talk and slide show on the visits he has led to the Western Front, including the village of Festubert, the site of the catastrophic battle in May 1915 that had such a profound effect on the people of Skye as well as Kingussie. Murdo's presentation is entitled "*Walking in the Footsteps of Heroes*".

We very much hope you will be able to join us for this talk which will take place in Kyleakin Connections at 7.30pm.

Future dates for the diary are: **Monday 8th January 2018** – Gordon Brown of Skyak Adventures on "Kayaking in Greenland"; **Monday 5th February 2018** (guest speaker to be confirmed); **Monday 5th March 2018** – Angus Peter Campbell and Cailean MacLean on "Skye – Taking a Line for a Walk". Please check our [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page for regular updates.

Visit our website: www.kyleakinlocalhistorysociety.co.uk

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

- ❖ Churches
- ❖ Hotels
- ❖ Fishing
- ❖ Schools
- ❖ Shops & Cafes
- ❖ Tourism
- ❖ Organisations (e.g. 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 today? 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?

You can get in touch with us by [email](#) or via our [Facebook](#) page.



Volunteering award presented to Society

In recognition of Kyleakin Local History Society's key role in organising and hosting the hugely-successful *Joan Wilcock/Travelling the Archive* exhibition last year, Skye-based Atlas Arts nominated the Society's committee for a Volunteering Award from the Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations.

KLHS website photos

A fresh batch of brilliant archive photographs was recently added to the picture gallery on our [website](#) – and many more still are being processed for the site.

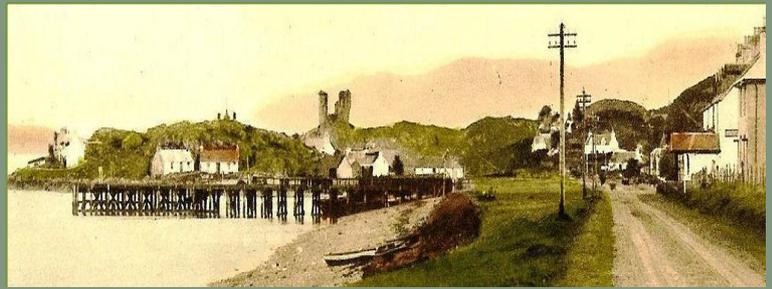
The gallery has also been updated to reflect the various categories of village life the photographs represent. These are: Business, Ferries, Fishing, Groups, People, School, Sport and 'General Photos'.

If you have an interesting Kyleakin image or a collection of photographs you would like to share with the Society, please do get in touch with any KLHS committee member.



FLASHBACK: Pictured circa 1937 are, back row: Mary Ann Robertson (Nan), Mairi MacIver and Nina MacIver. Middle row: Ethel Iley, Ann Grigor, Mary Iley and Ethel Robertson. Front row: John MacLean (kneeling), John Robertson (sitting). Picture: KLHS Archive

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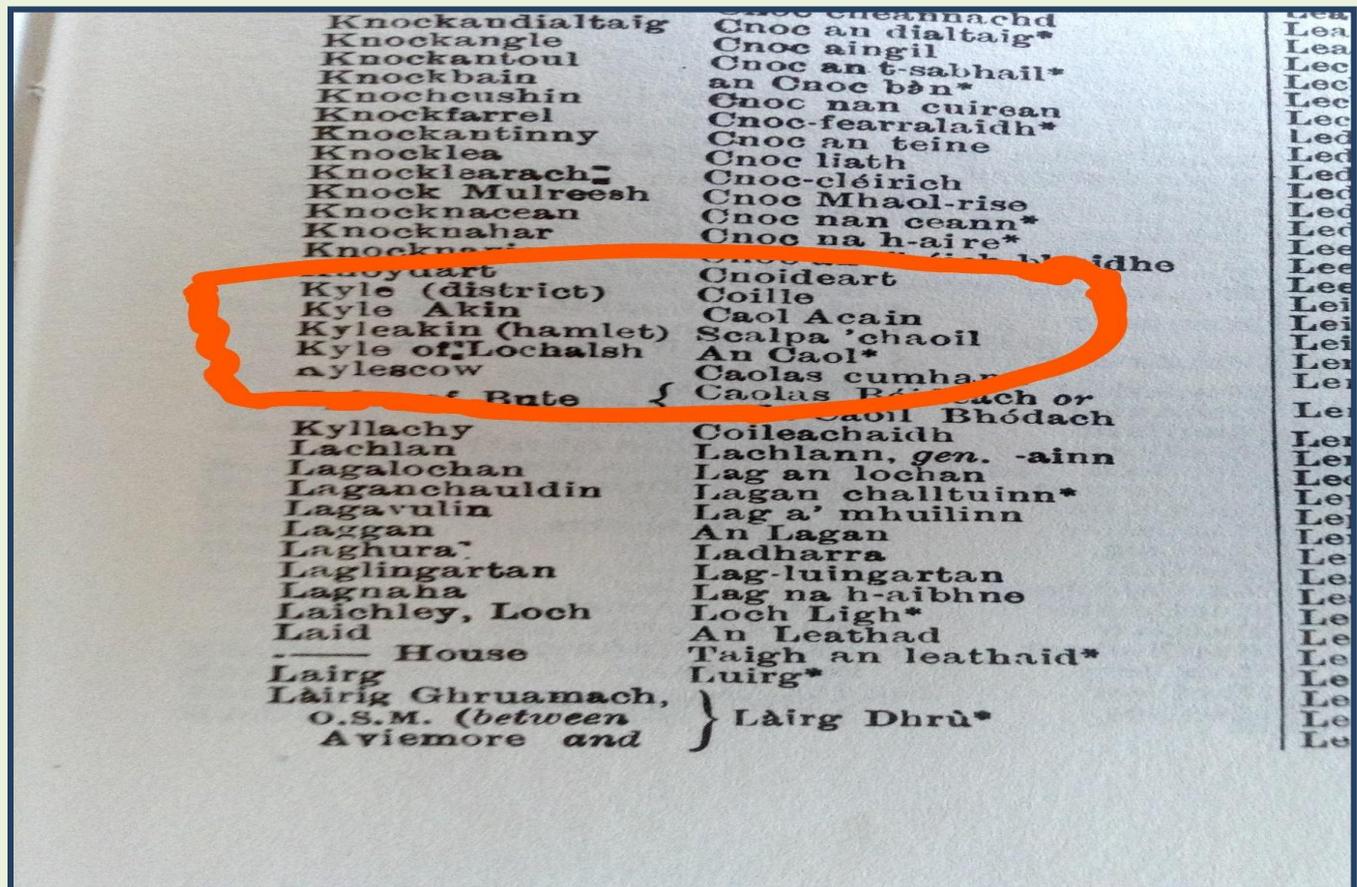


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What's in a name?

Kyleakin, Caol Àcainn, Kyle; familiar names for Kyleakin.

In Dwelly's Illustrated Gaelic to English Dictionary, first published 1901-1911, in the Proper Names (Place names) section he lists:



But where is "Scalpa 'Chaoil"? Is it the post-Clearances township at Scalpay Bay, outside Kyle, of which only ruins remain? There are pictures on the Am Baile website. Scalpa/Scalpaidh is the Old Norse for 'ship island'.

Or could it be another name for Kyleakin collected by Dwelly from local sources?

Ruth MacDougall

- Can you help solve the Scalpa 'Chaoil mystery? If so, please email any information to enquiries@kyleakinlocalhistorysociety.co.uk

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A Tartan for Kyleakin

A tartan inspired by its creator's childhood years in Kyleakin has been granted an official certificate of registration. The Kyleakin Tartan, designed by Neil Montgomery, has been certified by the Scottish Register of Tartans after Neil sought and gained the blessing of the village via Kyleakin and Kylerhea Community Council and Kyleakin Local History Society to do so.

Neil said a great deal of thought went into the significance of the choice of colours and pattern of the tartan (pictured, below). It has two tones of blue: a deep Pacific Blue represents the Kyle of Lochalsh and Anderson Blue Grey is of a spent storm sky. Bands of earthy Holly Green represent the hills surrounding Kyleakin while Scarlet Red lines are a reminder of the blood nurtured and sacrificed through fishing.

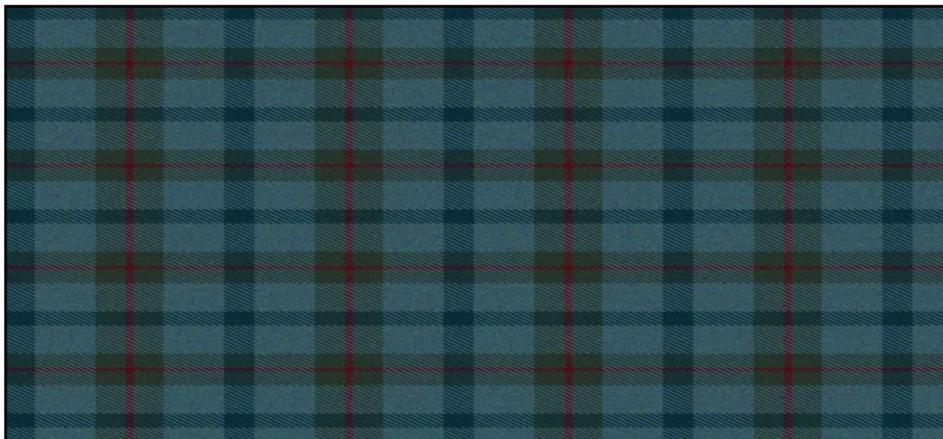
He explained: "My childhood years in Kyleakin inspired the design. The sky colour had to be the base, the green hills taking second place, with the Kyle running through them. The red is narrow, for the fishing line. It represents the landscape of life in Kyleakin.

Neil, who is based in St Andrew's in Fife, added: "Kyleakin is my father's village. This is an emotional connection for me that is life-long and profound. My father did not spend his life in Kyleakin and nor did his father, but we are related through cousins; those being Munro. My great aunts were Tini and Katie Munro; my great uncle, the inimitable Johnny Munro. My middle name is Munro.

"Until the age of 16 I spent every summer of my life in Kyleakin, it became my second home and the place that provides me with most of my beautiful childhood memories. We stayed for many years at the Cliffe, then latterly in a caravan by the Obbe."

Neil has no specific plans for the Kyleakin Tartan's use beyond promoting it to designers around the globe so that the village may be drawn to people's attention. "My reasoning in the design is not financial but emotional," he said. "However, should I receive any income from its use I would share that with the village."

A woven sample of the Kyleakin tartan has been received by the Scottish Register of Tartans for permanent preservation in the National Records of Scotland. The official Certificate of Registration is now held by KLHS.



*The
Kyleakin
Tartan*

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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, from Anna Belle or on our [website](#)

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

Please send any ideas, pictures or queries for future items/articles in the newsletter to any of the committee members or send us an [email](#)



BIRD'S EYE VIEW: An aerial photograph of the village in 1971 taken by Kenneth Graham from a helicopter when he was in the Royal Air Force. Note the land in the right foreground which would later become the 'top' of Olaf Road (Nos 21-34), Achmore Road, Achmore Court and the new Kyleakin Primary School. Thanks to Kenneth for allowing us to publish this fantastic image.



80 Years Ago: A tea party on the Corran to celebrate the coronation of King George VI in May 1937. Ladies seated left to right, from the group with pram, are: Mary Finlayson, Annie MacInnes (with hat), Agnes Cameron (Soper), Morag Robertson, Bella Robertson, Annie MacInnes. The man standing on the right holding the tray is MacLean the Butcher. (Picture: KLHS Archive)

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KLHS Chairperson's report to the 2017 Annual General Meeting

This has been a somewhat quieter year for the Society after a busy two years being involved with the very successful Atlas Arts project, *'Travelling The Archive'*.

The banners from this project are again on display on the Pier and South Obbe railings (see pictures, below), one which was damaged last year has been replaced and new information banners for both locations have been purchased. All have been backed with fibreglass to make them more durable.

The series of winter talks were once again very interesting and well attended. We were delighted to have been presented with *'The Great Book of Skye'* volumes 1 and 2 by the authors, Cailean MacLean and Norman MacDonald. These are currently on display in our exhibition at the Bright Water Centre.

We said goodbye to Sue Lyons who has relocated to Harrogate, Sue was invaluable in the setting up of the Society, her skills included scanning hundreds of photos, setting up the website, compiling the newsletter and much more.

We now have a Facebook page and welcome photos relating to the village and its people, past and present.

We have recently received the Certificate of registration for the Kyleakin Tartan. The tartan has been designed for the village by Neil Montgomery who spent all his childhood holidays here with his family - his father Hamish was a relative of the Munro family who lived on the Pier. Neil has many happy memories of Kyleakin and this is clearly reflected in the colours. The Community Council has agreed that the society should be holders of the certificate which will be stored in our archives.

Thanks to the following:

1. Stuart, for his role as secretary and setting up the Facebook page and compiling the newsletter.
2. Anna Belle, our treasurer, for her fundraising quiz donation and keeping the membership and bank balance healthy.
3. Hugh, for updating the website etc.
4. Margaret, for updating the membership list, and Margaret and Anna Belle for the research undertaken regarding recent enquiries.
5. The Eilean Ban Trust for accommodating our display and the committee members and non committee members Ruth, and Mary who volunteered to man the centre each Friday
6. Hector and John for setting up for the talks and banners.
7. Kyleakin Connections for the use of the building and the Church of Scotland for the use of the car park.

Thanks to you all for your support without which the Society could not continue.

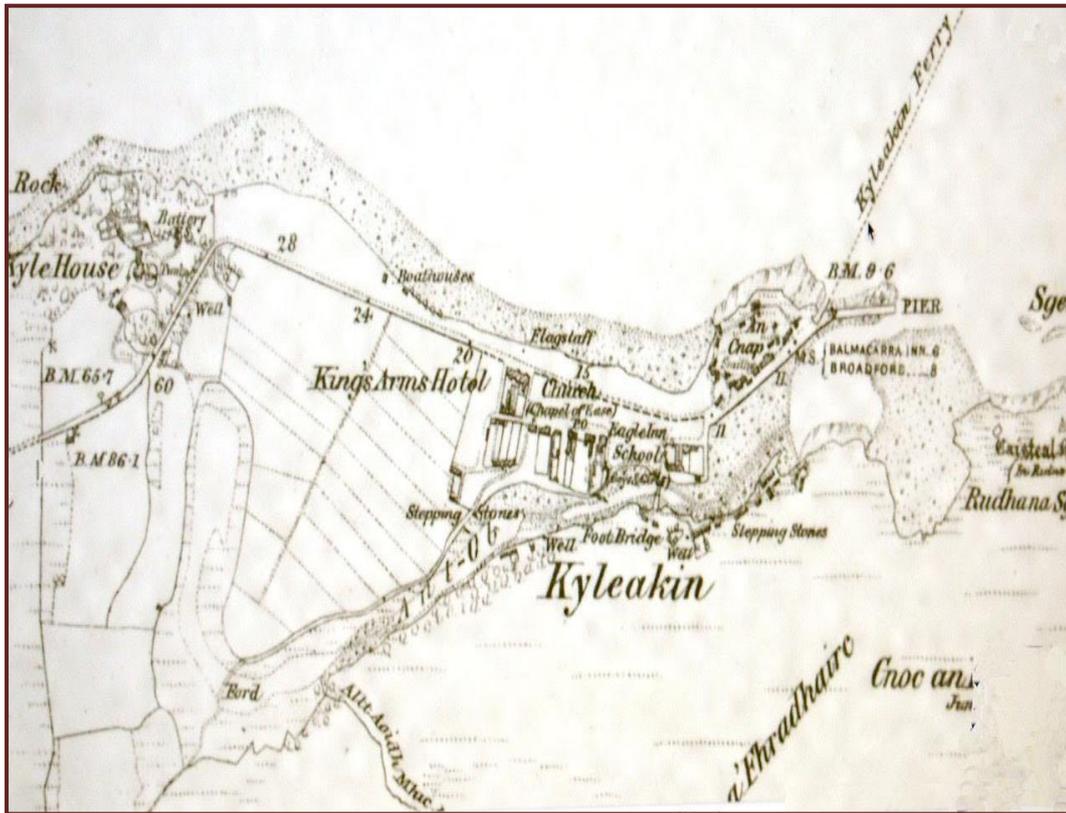
Caroline Clouston



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HERE is a fascinating glimpse of Kyleakin in the late 19th Century, courtesy of Will Maclean.

The 1884 map (pictured, left) of the village includes some familiar landmarks such as Kyle House and the King's Arms Hotel. But note the "Eagle Inn" in the centre.

Will states: "As a boy, before the inn and coachhouse was demolished, I remember a sculpture of an eagle on the porch roof of the house beside the Post Office.

"Also, West Haven was used as a navigation marker."

Thanks to Will for allowing us to publish this map in the newsletter.

If you have any more information you can share about the Eagle Inn and please do [get in touch](#) with the Society.

That was the year...

1857 – Kyleakin Lighthouse on Eilean Ban, built by David and Thomas Stevenson, was first lit 160 years ago

1897 – Kyleakin Free Church was built 120 years ago. The foundation stone was laid by the Earl of Moray.

1947 – The North of Scotland Hydro Board upgraded the small generators in Kyle to get a supply of electricity to Kyleakin via an underwater cable. On 6th May Kyleakin was host to the Board and dignitaries for the official switch-on by Tom Johnston, Secretary of State for Scotland. A good crowd of locals was on hand to witness the events.

1957 – A major remodelling of Kyleakin School got underway in 1957. This included removing the front entrance (since reinstated) and adding a canteen facility to the rear. Pupils and staff were temporarily housed at the village hall for the whole school session (1957-1958).

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Reflecting on our 2016-17 winter programme of talks

The society had another successful and well-supported programme of talks during the winter months of 2016-17 at our venue, Kyleakin Connections. The season began in early November when Judith Bullivant from the Eilean Ban Trust delivered *The Eilean Ban Story*, a fascinating illustrated talk which charted Eilean Ban's history, geology, wildlife and fauna – and the people, buildings, events and other developments which have had an impact on the island over the years. She also explained the role of the trust and the valuable work its volunteers and supporters do throughout the year to protect, enhance and promote Kyleakin's lighthouse island.

In December we were delighted to welcome back writers Cailean Maclean and Norman MacDonald as our guest speakers. True to form, the pair provided an excellent evening's entertainment as they spoke about their latest publication, *The Great Book of Skye 2*, which, like the first book, has a number of very interesting Kyleakin links.

The History of Sabhal Mor Ostaig was the topic for our January talk when the speaker was Professor Norman Gillies. From its humble beginnings in the 1970s to the bustling campus which attracts students and academics from all over the world, Sabhal Mor's success story was finely narrated and illustrated by Norman.

Ross Calderwood, of Lochalsh Pipes in Reraig, Balmacara, was our guest in February – and he delivered an enthralling talk on the history and development of the bagpipe. Music was on the menu, too, as Ross demonstrated sounds and tunes on a variety of pipes he had brought along with him.

Our final event in the programme featured the welcome return of Scottish storyteller Richard Smith and friends. A lively night of intriguing folk tales and foot-tapping live music was warmly received by all who attended – a fitting conclusion to another successful season.

Thank you to all of our speakers and to all of our members and non-members who made it along to the talks.



Kyleakin Primary School, Isle of Skye, in 1950. Submitted by James Urquhart, of Aberdeen
who is third from left in the back row

School days: This press cutting of a photograph of pupils and staff of Kyleakin Primary School in 1950 was submitted to KLHS via our [Facebook](#) page by Fiona Maclean. Fiona's mum was Katherine Barrie and she lived in Heatherlea.

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KYLEAKIN SPORT IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Left: A Kyleakin ladies football team on the Corran in the 1930s or 1940s.

The wonderful image was kindly supplied to the Society by Isobel Stewart whose mother, Marion Robertson, is pictured third from the left.

Can anyone help us to identify the other ladies, and put a more precise date to when the image was taken? What was the occasion?

Right: Sailors racing in Kyleakin Harbour.

What was the occasion? Can you help date the picture? Did you or someone you know take part in the event?

If you have any information, please do get in touch with a committee member or send an [email](#).



Visit our website: www.kyleakinlocalhistorysociety.co.uk or find us on [Facebook](#)