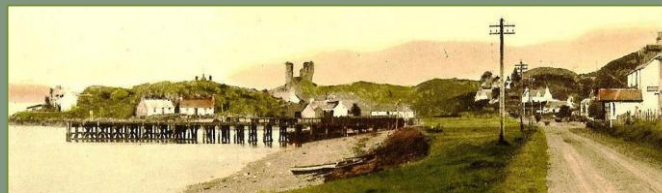


Kyleakin Local History Society



Website: www.kyleakinlocalhistorysociety.co.uk

Email: kyleakinlocalhistorysociety@gmail.com

Spring 2014 Issue 9

Diary Dates:

An evening with artist Nicky Bird on Tuesday 10th June at 7.30 pm in Kyleakin Community Hall

The 2014 Annual General Meeting will take place on Monday 22nd September 2014 starting at 7.30 pm in Kyleakin Village Hall

If any of you have any suggestions for talks for the winter 2014/2015 season, please contact any of the committee members.

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
Hector Grant
Sue Lyons
Calum Macaskill
Margaret Macrae
Roddy Morrison
Anna Belle Robertson
John Robertson
Karren Smith

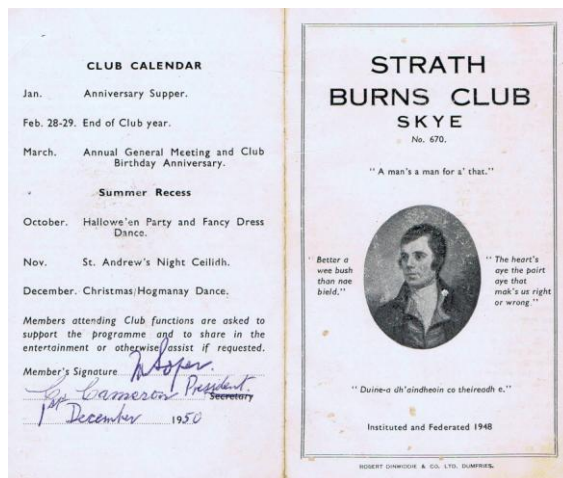
Welcome to the Spring 2014 newsletter

STRATH BURNS CLUB

The Strath Burns Club was affiliated with the Burns Federation, Kilmarnock on 20th March 1948 and was Registered No. 670 on the Roll of the Federated Societies.

Officials and members included residents mainly from Kyleakin, Broadford and the surrounding areas including: Alistair and George Sutherland (Broadford), Annie MacDonald, Morag MacRae Charlie Cameron, Mr Claude Douglas Hamilton, Iain MacRae, Marcus Soper, Willie Shaw (Lighthouse Keeper), Roddy MacDonald (Bank Manager, Broadford), Annie Nicolson (Broadford) and Duncan Fletcher to name a few.

The Annual Burns Suppers were formal evenings which were followed by a dance and held in the Kings Arms and Heathmount hotels until the late 1950's early 1960's when the Burns Club ceased to function.



A framed Alexander Nasmyth portrait of the Bard donated by Mrs Seton-Watson, Kyle House in 1954 and the framed certificate of registration are kept in 'Seabank' by Caroline Clouston, having been in the care of her father Marcus Soper when the Burns Club ceased in the late 1950's early 1960's.

In the late 1970's early 1980's the Strath Gaelic Choir revived the Burns Suppers in the village hall with members providing the meal. The Kyleakin SWRI then took over hosting the evenings in the hall, then the Crofters Kitchen and finally the Kings Arms Hotel.

After a lapse of a few years, in 2011 the Kyleakin Local History Society held a successful Burns Supper in the community hall followed by two more in 2012 and 2014. These have proved popular and have been made possible with the commitment from the committee and community members who provide the catering and serve meals to 100 members and guests.

Caroline

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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 2012?

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?

Kyleakin during World War II

Published in SkyeViews June 1995

The village changed completely with the advent of the Second World War in September 1939. The previous July or August young men of a certain age group were called up. My fiancé's brother who was 20 - 21 years of age had to depart for the Navy – a fisherman and well used to travel by sea he had never been on a train before so his mother accompanied him from Kyle to Inverness and put him into a carriage there with what she termed "other greenhorns" all on their way to Chatham. He spent most of the war years at the boom defence in Rosyth attaining the rank of Petty Officer. My fiancé volunteered for the Navy as well. We were married in Inverness the day before he had to depart for Lowestoft and the mine-sweeping service. The trains were packed with young men going to serve their country. I shall never forget those brave fellows singing "Roll out the Barrel" and feigning a jollity that I'm sure they did not really feel. That was January 1940. There was a night of snow and it was extremely cold. After a few days visiting relatives I came back to Kyle House and my job as a housekeeper to Father Webster - a Benedictine Monk.



The peaceful fields – which had been carved into allotments for the village people generations earlier - were now taken over and fenced in to accommodate huts which soon filled up with RAF men. Over the hill above Loch na Beiste the Army had their quarters. Those young soldiers used to come down to the village and leave their rubber boots in my Mother-in-Law's shed. Occasionally she would tramp over the hill with a dumpling – to their grateful satisfaction. At a concert in the Village Hall when the Army boys marched in I realised with surprise that I knew their Sergeant - he had been in my class at Bonar Bridge Higher Grade School.

Kyle was an extremely important Naval Base and the Navy also had quarters at the turn leading to Kyle House. Some of the brick buildings they used are still there.

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Often when I was wending my way home I was stopped by a sailor with a fixed bayonet shouting "Halt - who goes there?" I supplied the required information and was allowed to pass on.

The village hall became a Church of Scotland canteen which was run by our missionary Mr Munro and his very cheerful Welsh wife and many volunteer helpers. A permit man stayed in the Marine Hotel - this was a restricted area and not all who wished to do so were allowed to visit.

The village houses quickly filled up – mostly with Navy personnel and their wives. Those people were billeted on you whether you wanted them or not. Soon English voices predominated over West-Highland ones. Balloon barrages were much in evidence over the Kyle as there were many ships there and liberty boats plied back and forth all day. Had I written any of this in a letter in those far off days it would have been cut out and returned by the Censor.

The sirens at Kyle went off from time to time and they were very frightening – we were very lucky in that respect as no bombs fell. We were spared the air raids that caused such terror and devastation in the cities. Of course we had the blackouts and the gas masks but I don't know how a baby could have survived in the contraption it had to go into and be hand pumped!

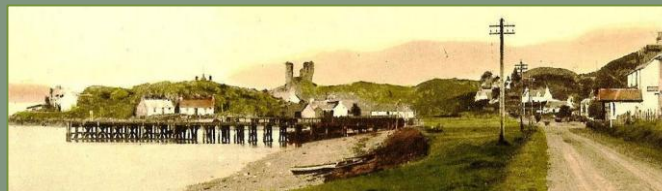
In 1941 when HMS Port Napier with 500 mines on board caught fire at Kyle she headed for Loch Na Beiste where she burned down and was completely destroyed. Ironically Kyleakin had not been warned of the danger yet Broadford eight miles away had been. The crew jumped overboard and swam ashore – some appearing from the hills the following day. We were not told if there was any loss of life. The wreck has been visited by divers many times over the following years.

The Church of Scotland held services according to what time of day a blackout was not required. This was then a Mission Station – the Parish Church and Minister being at Broadford. Mr Munro stayed with us throughout the War consoling those whose men made the Supreme Sacrifice and receiving the same consolation when his own elder son was killed on active service.

We had more shops in those days. Donald MacPherson who owned the Heathmount Hotel also had a grocer's shop and Post Office combined. John Munro – where the coffee shop is now – had a small grocery store. Mrs Cameron had a good going business further down the pier. She it was who advised me to drink Nescafe which was available in small tins to spin out the scarce tea. We also had a butcher's shop – so we eked out our rations and managed quite well. Clothes were a problem – it was a question of make do and mend. Some people had lovely warm coats made from Army blankets.

As there was no electricity here until 1947 our radios were worked by big acid batteries which we had to take to Kyle to be charged at an electrician's shop. Often after going to all that bother you found that your battery had been given to someone else!

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The railings round the War Memorial were taken away – also all the spare aluminium pots and pans - to be melted down to help the war effort. Before the war it was quite usual for couples to walk out as the saying goes sometimes for nearly 20 years. The few shillings servicemen got enabled them to marry sooner and there was quite a spate of weddings in this village as elsewhere.



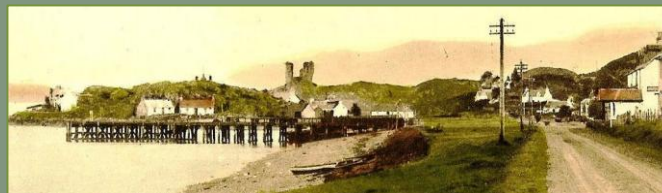
Young women were called up as well. My husband's sister Barbara – a Nursing Sister – joined the Queen Alexandra's Army Nursing Service and administered to the troops in North Africa, Italy and Kashmir in India. Her sister Janet joined the WAAF and became a Sergeant serving in Italy and Egypt. My own sister became a Sergeant-Major in the ATS.

When the gardener at Kyle House went off to war work I was glad to move into his cottage. It may be of interest to tell here, that he been a fisherman but was most thankful when he got the gardener's job – at four pounds a week, a cottage rent free and an added bonus of two tons of coal annually – and having to caretake the big house when it was vacant. The cottage had been a stable when first built. A hayloft up above was a fine home for bats which used to fly in the bedroom window and round my bed. As I had no racquet I used to keep a shovel handy and had to rise during the night and try to give them a wallop. During the day they used to cling under the old-fashioned bedsprings. Bat noises are not supposed to be audible to the human ear but I could always hear them squeaking.

In February 1941 my first son was born and my second in August 1944. That was when the newspapers told of the Jewish death camps being discovered. We knew that the same thing could happen to us if the Germans won and the outcome was still in the balance.

I knew every inch of Kyle house and its grounds. I used to go through the Kitchen garden to the look-out where during the First World War a battery had been erected to guard the ships arriving and leaving Kyle. At that time fifty Marines and their officers were stationed there and occupied Kyle House.

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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 from in Camerons old shop/Post Office, or from AnnaBelle.

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.

My husband Evander MacRae was away for over six years getting home on leave from time to time. I have kept his Certificate of Service. While he was still a Seaman he was given a Mention-in-Dispatches and his name published in the Supplement to the London Gazette on 1st July 1941. He got his Certificate of Competency as Skipper (full) at Belfast on 22nd September 1942. He had a most dangerous job on Minesweepers especially before they discovered that the mines were magnetic. He won the Silver Badge specially designed for the Anti-Submarine and Minesweeping Service. Having survived years of service in British waters he sailed in convoy on his way to the Japanese conflict getting as far as Cochin in India. The Atom Bomb was dropped and finished that terrible affair. The war was over. I have kept lots of papers referring to his voyage to India all these years. My husband received Ninety-Four Pounds and Four Shillings as war gratuity and Post War Credits. With his medals he received the Oak Leaf representing his Mention-in-Dispatches of which I am justifiably proud. He died in 1976 at the early age of 61 years.

The young men and women were demobbed – some Kyleakin men had been Prisoners-of-War in Germany for years. One had been a Prisoner-of-War with the Japs and had a skeletal look for a long time. Then there were those who would never come home – whose names were added to the War Memorial – and live on in the hearts of their families.

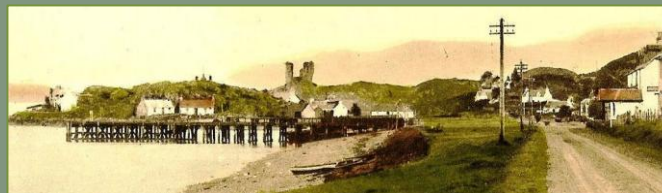
What a lot of adjusting there had to be done. Children did not know their fathers – those strange men in their demob suits – but there was rejoicing. The owner of the King's Arms gave a Welcome Home dinner for all Servicemen and their wives. By 1947 electricity came to Kyleakin and homes were being built. The Swedish ones were ready by January 1950 and families moved in from cramped quarters elsewhere.

My husband returned to fishing – but that as they say is another story.

Helen MacRae, Rowan Cottage, Kyleakin, Skye

Kindly given to KLHS to include in the newsletter by Margaret MacRae

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Diary Dates:

KLHS will be hosting an evening with artist Nicky Bird on Tuesday 10th June at 7.30 pm in Kyleakin Community Hall when Nicky will discuss her interest in the Joan Wilcock collection of photographs (which are housed in the Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre in Portree) and how they could be used in a project featuring people from the village who are in the photographs taken when Joan visited Kyleakin each spring in the 1960's.

The 2014 Annual General Meeting will take place on Monday 22nd September 2014 starting at 7.30 pm in Kyleakin Village Hall – please do come along with ideas of how you would like the society to progress.

WW1 and WW2

Have you any information or memorabilia about how WW1 affected Kyleakin and the people living here at the time?

Do you know of anyone from this area who was involved in WW2 and especially Dunkirk?

This is the basis of the exhibition in the Bright Water Centre in 2014.

Volunteer Request

KLHS are once again providing volunteers to work in the Bright Water Centre, over spring/summer and autumn 2014.

If we are to be able to continue to house our exhibitions in the centre, volunteers will, once again be needed to work in the centre.

Please contact Caroline if you are able to help or if you need further information before deciding.

KLHS Website

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.

I haven't received any information yet on the six houses from "Seawinds" to "Hillview" so you now have more time to send me this information, which will be included in the Autumn 2014 newsletter.



If you would like the history of your house included in a future newsletter, please send the information to Sue.