

The Clyne Chronicle

The Magazine of Clyne Heritage Society

Volume 22



**Brora Salt Pans excavation 2009: Brora Primary School pupils, with former school janitor and excavation volunteer, George MacBeath (right of centre), around the trench over the Salt man's House
See Page 63 inside for news on new Salt Pans work.**

Included in this edition:

Born in Brora - 30 years of Rotary Service Celebrated

Brora Pupils Trip to Glasgow by Bicycle

How I came to Work at Brora Heritage Centre

Duke of Edinburgh's Visit to Brora Coal Mine

Brora and the Poor Law



Price £3.00

(Free to members on joining)

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The Editor welcomes all contributions for future editions and feedback from readers. Many thanks to CHS member, Tim Griffiths, for much appreciated technical assistance with the Chronicle and also to all contributors.

Comment From the Chair

This time last year, I began by commenting on the first 20 years of our existence and about how significant a year it had been. Well, this year sees our coming of age and it will surpass last year as the most important in the history of the Society. We're hopeful next year will similarly outstrip this year.

Of course, I am talking about our long-held dream of the Old Clyne School, currently derelict and looking forlorn, having been neglected for over 40 years, being refurbished into our own, purpose-redesigned community heritage hub. For what has happened in detail since the last edition of 'The Clyne Chronicle', see page 17.

The more I and your Board think about and discuss the project, the more it excites us. I have no doubt in my own mind that both the refurbishment itself and the business operation which we will then operate from there will be sustainable in the long term. Possibly like many of you, I have had an occasional doubt about how we would a) raise the massive amount of money needed to restore the building to its former glory and to alter it so that it fulfils our business needs and b) keep the business afloat, what with year-round overheads and staff wages, to name but two hefty expenditures. I am now convinced that both strands will be successful.

With £1,000,000 capital already earning interest in our project bank account, we are in a very strong position to lever the match funding required. We have appointed a practice of extremely capable, Inverness-based architects to guide us through the pre-refurbishment phase and whose experience we will be able to call upon in selecting our chosen lead contractor for the construction phase.

Our heritage business operation will be similarly successful for three main reasons. Firstly, our heritage 'product' is perhaps the best in the Highlands (it is certainly the most unique) and we have heritage resources equal to, if not better than, most other similar establishments in the north. Secondly, we have a keen and enthusiastic Board and a very supportive membership who have a real appetite for our exceptional history and heritage. I know that because last year membership reached an all-time high and attendance at our events was maintained at extraordinarily high levels.

Thirdly, and equally as important, is the building's location, being on the busy A9 and on the now-established, worldwide destination tourist route of the NC500. With a 2.3 billion global reach, we will be in the eyes of the world!

I am not saying that at any stage we can afford to sit back and rest on our laurels, absolutely not! All I am saying is that I am confident in our ability to deliver what the Society, the membership and the visitor to Brora needs, that is a first-class, conveniently located, community heritage hub, from which to deliver all of our projects, activities and displays. I, for one, cannot wait!

Brora and the Poor Law

By Iain Laing

Iain visited Brora Heritage Centre in October 2017 and, in doing so, he became our 3,192nd 'walk-in' visitor that season, eclipsing the previous year's total. Iain was duly presented with an 'About Scotland' guide book, by our on-duty Heritage Centre volunteer, Dorothy Thorpe, to mark the occasion. From Glasgow, he has since become a member of the Society. Below is an account of his ancestors and their dealings with the Poor Law.

The Poor Law Act was enacted in 1845 to regulate assistance to people who were unable to work because of age or infirmity. Before then, poor relief was administered by local churches and was funded by church collections, and payments from heritors (landowners). Parochial Boards were set up under the Act to administer funds collected from local taxation, though several years passed before all of Scotland's parishes operated "The New Poor Law".

England had its own regulations, and workhouses were set up to provide employment (often tedious, pointless tasks) for unemployed people, and in Scotland, poorhouses were instituted for people without means who were unable to live independently because of age or illness. Poorhouses were stigmatised and regarded as places of last resort.

The Brora poorhouse, located at Mosshill, was built in 1846, and also a large combination poorhouse was built near Bonar Bridge to serve several parishes, including Clyne, with effect from 1865.

There are references in the Clyne Parochial Board registers, held at the Highland Archive Centre in Inverness, to applications for poor relief being submitted by my Sutherland ancestors. To distinguish them from the several other Sutherland families in the parish, they were also known as the McKanes or McLans.

From the mid-1850's, payments were made to my 3xgreat-grandfather, William Sutherland, who was in his eighties, and two of his sons, Robert (my great-great-grandfather) and Alexander, who was unmarried. Both Robert and Alexander suffered from epilepsy, and were often unable to work.

According to family tradition, Robert, as a boy, was a stone mason at the building of the statue to the Duke of Sutherland on Ben Bhraggie, although in later years he worked as a rope maker and labourer. Alexander was a farm worker as a young man, but when he was older, he was a letter carrier or postman to Gordonbush and Balnacoil. At times, both Robert and Alexander were "ordered" to the poorhouse. Robert received payments from 20th April 1855 until his death in 1867 at the age of 48.

Initially, the payments were of 1 shilling per week, though the payments were increased until he was receiving 3 shillings per week from the poor funds. Alexander lived with his father William, until William's death in 1858, when he moved in with his brother, Robert who lived in London Street.

After Robert's death, his widow Chirsty/Christina looked after Alexander, although in 1873 he went to the poorhouse for a time. Chirsty made a living by crofting and doing lace work for the Duchess of Sutherland. Although she can never have earned much money, she did not apply for poor relief, even after she became blind. I assume that her family helped to support her. She died of cancer aged 58 having been nursed by her youngest daughter, Mina. After her death, Alexander was looked after by Mina, although subsequently, he was an inmate in the poorhouse in 1884, being described in the records as "eccentric". Alexander died in 1887 aged 70. William Sutherland of Badnellan, an older brother of Robert and Alexander, received poor relief when he was in his late seventies.

The last of the family to receive poor relief was Roderick Sutherland, the youngest child of Robert and Chirsty. Roderick worked on a farm, but contracted TB and became unable to work, dying aged 22 in 1887. The attached rather faded photo, taken about 1877, shows Roderick with his sisters Kate and Mina. Kate, my great-grandmother, was employed as a table maid at Dunrobin Castle. She told her family she was selected for this position as she spoke good English, in addition to Gaelic. Both Kate and Mina moved to Edinburgh and married, and Kate has a number of descendants in Scotland, England and Japan. Mina's children pre-deceased her without issue.



Interesting Chance Find in Strath Brora

By Nick Lindsay

You just never know what you might find when out walking!

Clyne Heritage Society member, Fiona Ross, while walking her dog, Kyra, at the south end of Loch Brora one May Saturday morning in 2017, came across a large stone with a hole in. In fact, she stepped in the hole, which alerted her that this was something different! She took photos of it (you can see her boot print on the stone in her photo, which has the grass overlying one side) and contacted me on her return home.



Fiona's boot print on the edge of the millstone, with the hole in the middle.

Excitedly, I arranged to meet Fiona at the site and, sure enough, it was a big slab of fine grained, red sandstone, with a perfectly cylindrical and smooth 10cm (4") diameter hole, which was filled with mud.



Fiona and Kyra with the millstone in situ.

Cleaning out the mud from the hole with a trowel, the thickness of the stone could be seen to be about 15cm and then, clearing a mat of grass from around the stone, it was clear to see that it was a roughly hewn and unfinished millstone, about 1.2m in diameter.

The central millstone hole had clearly already been perfectly formed, but the edges and the flat surfaces had not been worked to its intended finished circular and flat shape. The millstone, however, was incomplete, with around a quarter missing, being fractured straight across one side and this explains why it was lying where Fiona and Kyra found it: it had been abandoned as useless when the split occurred. How and why this happened, we don't know.

There is no known mill located anywhere near to where Fiona made her discovery, so, speculating about how it got there, maybe 200 years or so before, it may have been in the process of being transported from the quarry where it was hewn to the mason's workshop in a cart and was somehow damaged in transit. It then being useless for its intended purpose, it may have been dumped where it happened or where it was noticed.

I rallied a few friends, including Society member Jim Gunn, of Heartland Home Services, who has a fork-lift truck, handy to help retrieve the stone and we assembled at the spot for a rescue mission.

We began digging away at the mud which encased the millstone and, once the face of the split was revealed, we could see the scale of the stone; and wondered about its weight. It was calculated by Stan Holroyd as being around ¼ ton. This is where Jim's fork-lift would pay off!



Jim Gunn, Stan Holroyd and Robert Bell clearing away the front of the face of the split millstone

Once the central hole was clear, we managed, with muddy arms, to get a rope through and around the stone. We attached the rope to Jim's fork-lift and Jim gently began to pull the stone from where it had lain for maybe a couple of centuries.

Eventually, it came away quite easily and was dragged through the boggy reeds to a dry spot, where it could be lifted onto a pallet for safe transportation by Jim's fork-lift back to the Brora Heritage Centre, where it has been safely kept since.

All in all, a great discovery by Fiona and great teamwork by the volunteers: Robert Bell, John Alderson, Stan Holroyd and Jim Gunn.



Stan with a guide rope and Jim dragging the millstone with his fork-lift.



The millstone is lifted by the fork-lift for the journey to the Heritage Centre



The Strath Brora millstone safely back at Brora Heritage Centre.

Bizarrely and coincidentally, lightning was soon about to strike twice. Not long after, Anthony Urquhart, who likes nothing better than a ramble in the hills, reported to me that he too had found an abandoned millstone beside Loch Brora and 'was I interested?'

Coming so quickly on the heels of Fiona's discovery, this was quite a surprise. Suddenly, it's raining millstones in Strath Brora! In the fullness of time, we will transport this one back to the Heritage Centre too, but just for now, it remains where it was found.

Those readers who have visited or read about the Kilfeddermore township, where we had a small rescue excavation a few years ago, may also recall seeing many pieces of millstones, which had been broken either during manufacture or use. Strath Brora has previous!

Roll the calendar forward a year and a bit and Fiona messaged me again. Although she didn't want to push her luck, she thought she had stumbled on another millstone! She described it as being smaller in diameter but deeper and the central hole only about 3 - 4 cm deep and not all the way through. I wasn't entirely sure why she then went on to doubt herself, as she said she'd been back to see it several times and after these visits, she had become convinced that it wasn't 'natural'. She ended her message with an excited 'This is a great wee place isn't it?'

Knowing that Fiona had 'form', I wanted to go and see her latest discovery and I arranged to meet her at Killen in Strath Brora. She led me to the spot on the Common Grazings, where her and her partner's cattle were being kept at the time. Amazingly, it did look that the new millstone magnet had indeed found another. This one was much thicker at around 30cm, but with a smaller diameter, at around 80cm, and, as Fiona had earlier observed, the central hole had only been made to a depth of around 4cm.

There was a clear reason why the hole had not been persevered with – the rock type was a really hard metamorphic rock known as a schist and it would have taken ages to work down to the 4cm already completed. It was a natural boulder, a glacial erratic, deposited by the melting glacier in Strath Brora at the end of the last Ice Age around 10,000 years ago.

So, was it a bad choice of rock to begin with to try to fashion into a millstone? Yes, I think it was, especially as it the piece was so thick. It would have taken an age to finish the whole, so I suspect it was just abandoned as a bad job.



Fiona proudly standing by her second millstone discovery in Strath Brora!

That was two millstones just abandoned in Strath Brora. Surely there couldn't be another, could there?

So, while out walking in the countryside, keep your eyes peeled, as you just never know what is waiting to be found.....

Born in Brora - 30 years of Rotary Service Celebrated **By Alistair Risk, Member & Past President, Rotary Club of East Sutherland**

This year the Rotary Club of East Sutherland marks the 30th Anniversary of its first charter dinner, which was held in the Burghfield Hotel, in Dornoch, in March 1989. However, Rotary in Sutherland was an idea hatched in Brora, and is something that has impacted upon the Brora / Clyne Community for 3 decades or more.

When, in 1985, I was tempted North to refurbish the Royal Marine and to introduce the Far North to Competitive Curling, I was a member of the Rotary Club of Dundee, a very big club with 120 members in those days, that did a huge amount for the local community.

And I well remember giving Alister Munro, the Clynesh Distillery Manager, a curling lesson and then retiring to the bar where I mentioned Rotary and his face lit up, as he was a member of the Tranent Rotary Club, when he had run the Glenkinchie Distillery, near Pencaitland, in East Lothian.

Soon, we were in regular huddles as we plotted how a new Rotary Club could be established in Brora and District. Names were suggested, processes investigated and the need considered.

However, by August 1986, I had moved to North Berwick and it took 3 years before the Brora 5: Alister Munro (Distillery Manager), Geoff Smyth (Customs and VAT man), Mike Small (Owner of Capaldi's Ice Cream & sweetie shop), Eric Potter (a retired Colonial man from BP) and John Macdonald (the Brora school headmaster), with the help of others, like Hugh Johnston (the Garage owner) from Golspie, David Whyte (Golspie High School headmaster and ex Scotland rugby internationalist) and Alex Hermiston (Golspie Post Office) had all their ducks in a row and the Rotary Club of East Sutherland was born!

By then, I was the President of the North Berwick Rotary Club and, with Alister's friends from Tranent, I made the trek north to join them in the Sutherland Arms in Golspie for a grand masculine affair, with black tie and penguin suits or kilt to the fore. District Governor, Robert Clarkson, officiated at the superb dinner for 20 members, and loads of Rotarians from Dingwall, Inverness, Thurso and Wick packed into the function room.

Again, a few months later, the first charter dinner was held in the Burghfield (see photo, below), with a similar cast there, to launch the club into the worldwide organisation that is Rotary - still sporting penguin suits and serious faces. It was a wonderful affair, with a proud President, who sadly died suddenly at the end of his year in charge.



The original members at the inaugural dinner at the Burghfield in 1989.

The 20 members, with big ambitions, started to host stalls at all the Highland Games and community events, and held 'Scotland the What' variety shows in Golspie to raise cash and entertain the public.

The young Rotary club made its mark very quickly when they decided to run a Sunflower Growing Competition, involving every school in Sutherland. Each pupil was given 10 sunflower seeds and a sponsorship form and they were challenged to grow the tallest sunflower in the County and to get them sponsored by the inch! This seemed to catch the public's imagination, none more so than the kids from Brora, who may be amongst our readers now and a few may have children at that school today?

The result was that £5,000 plus was raised, which was enough cash to buy a refurbished Land Rover and do it up to make it into a special ambulance for India, where it did good service for over 10 years. A pleasing spin-off was that our fledgling Rotary club won an award for the best International initiative in Scotland that year, and a proud Mike Small accepted the award when he attended the National Conference.

The club became active across the County, but Brora was always at its heart. The Brora Harbour Fetes always featured the Rotary stalls with Nails in the Bales and Tombola, with Brora's Geoff Smythe and John Metcalfe always touting for sales and helping make it a success. Then there were the Burns Suppers in Brora Golf Club and the innovative and thoroughly enjoyable 'White Heather Club Tribute Nights', supported by Diane Mackay

with Strathair, Angela Metcalfe's dancers, and the inimitable Jim and Ian to encourage young local talent too. They were all great nights and great fun! The club was friendly and fun, but because it was tradition, and perhaps because Eric Potter liked it that way, it was a male-only haven or retreat. Gradually, however, that began to change, and Christine Henderson, from Golspie, joined and Eric was apoplectic! He eventually got over it!



Rotary Presidents original and present – Clyne Heritage Society member, Geoff Smyth (L) & Eric Potter (R), July 1995

Then our local Highland Councillor, Rita Finlayson, from Helmsdale, joined, along with Brora school's new headmistress, Pat May, from Dornoch, and, in time, another Brora resident, Fiona Gordon (who later became my wife), came as a guest speaker and never left! All of them went on to be Presidents of the club. Were those tears of joy on Eric's cheek, as Girl-power came to the Rotary club?

When I eventually fulfilled a 50-year ambition and retired to Brora, change was in the air. The club moved to the Sutherland Arms, in Brora, where we flourished for some time, until the dining room became too small for our expanding numbers. The club was growing rapidly and the increased membership had new ideas and the confidence to take on bigger challenges and fund-raising targets.

The Annual Polio Eradication Swim is almost 10 years old, with Brora Primary School Head Teacher, Dawn MacKenzie, and P7 teacher, Beth Christie, star

performers, along with about 100 kids each year. With the help of many Brora residents, the swim has raised over £50,000 in this time. The Rotary Club has held its charity Duck Race from Brora Bridge for 10 years and this has raised over £18,000 for youth projects too.

Rotary members conceived the idea of the Brora Queen's Jubilee Street Party in 2016 and were helped by Jim and Kathleen Cunningham, Nick and Ellen Lindsay and Tony Harris, resulting in a fantastic day of music, pipe bands, dancers, singers and charity stalls, culminating in the biggest 'Strip the Willow' in Sutherland history and a huge contribution to local good causes.



Rotary President, former Brora High School Headmaster, John MacDonald (L) & past President, former owner of Capaldi's, Mike Small (R), June 1992

The club installed the Rotary Bench at the harbour, to mark 100 years of Rotary service worldwide. Dunrobin Castle saw Brora's young talent perform and entertain in a fabulous location, when the Rotary club held 3 hugely popular Midsummer Garden Parties, with pipe bands, dances, falconry, Gina's Dance and Theatre, hog roasts, strawberries and cream and wine, culminating in a marquee jazz band performance – Absolutely Fabulous! Five hundred locals attended each one and their contributions helped charities for Tykes Young Carers, for the ARCHIE Foundation, mental health, the deaf, combat stress and many more.

The superb Classic Charity Coast-to-Coast Car Tour, run every May/June for 6 years, has already raised around £100,000 for the RNLI and local charities such as Brora Fireworks, the Brora Tern Project, the Brora Learning Zone, the Sutherland Care Forum and Support in Mind at Golspie, and Highland wide charities like Macmillan Cancer Support, Playlist for Life, and the Highland Hospice. And, of course, we have just kitted out the Brora Rangers Ladies Football team too!

A brand-new entertainment initiative in Brora, Window on the World - the East Sutherland Live Entertainment and Arts group, has been recently set up by the Rotary in Brora Primary School's theatre hall. The project is under the guidance of Dawn MacKenzie and Beth Christie, in partnership with the Brora & District Action Group and with financial assistance from Kilbraur Windfarm. This project will benefit all Brora residents, as well as those in the rest of East Sutherland, who have an interest in the performing arts.

Rotary really is still proud of its Brora origins and determined to serve that community.

These events and donations have brought good PR, thanks to the Northern Times, and this has shown what the club can do and how Rotary makes a difference, thus encouraging new members. Recent changes to the number of meetings people must attend have also helped, as everyone in our modern world has many other commitments and time constraints. As a result, these days, the club meets alternate weeks in Golspie and Royal Dornoch Golf Club to suit members from all over the county.

Youth has become a prime focus and life in our club has changed because of it. We support Interact Clubs in the secondary schools and Rotakids in 7 Primary schools and that is growing fast. The Primary School Quiz has up to 12 schools taking part, as does the Writing Competition.

Every student in Sutherland gets 2 opportunities to experience Mock Interviews, in preparation for 'the real world' and the opportunity to apply for the wonderful Rotary Youth Leadership Awards weeks in the Highlands. Many a Brora lad or lassie has blossomed after a week of outward bound and inspirational team building, thanks to the club.

Our Youth commitment has brought us to the attention of many families, as Rotary is a dinner table conversation now and we have recruited parents and teachers to the club. The club is now almost 50% boys and girls, which is a seismic change from Eric Potter's days and vision! Meetings are more relaxed in style and dress code; there are great and informative speakers and a friendship that makes you happy to be there and it combines a super social life too.

Our numbers are just short of 40 and the average age has fallen dramatically from 74 to 56 in just 8 years. The club has won awards every year for service, for youth projects, for fundraising and for all aspects of Rotary life.



Eric Potter's award for long service, April 2010.

Brora can be justifiably proud that its baby is entering its 30th year as a happy, vibrant, forward-looking and successful club and ready to welcome new members.

For details about the Rotary Club of East Sutherland visit:
<http://www.rotary-ribi.org/clubs/homepage.php?ClubID=1668>

But first, there was the publicity; SSE organised a photo-shoot on site of Gordonbush Wind Farm Project Manager, Rod Crawford handing over the keys to the Chairman and John Alderson and Kendra Ballantyne of the Society's Old Clyne School Project Team. BBC Alba's nightly news programme, An Là, who had got wind of the handover, got in touch and interviewed the Chairman at the school.



Old Clyne School Project Team Members, Nick Lindsay, Kendra Ballantyne and John Alderson receiving the keys to the building from Rod Crawford.

We were able to take advantage of some professional advice from the Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust (KoSDT), under the Project Inspire scheme and they also gave us a lead to the Scottish Government's annual Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (RCGF). This stream supports locally developed regeneration projects that involve local communities and applications to which are submitted through local authorities, in our case, Highland Council.

One of the points of the KoSDT advice was to get a cost estimate for the project, which would then guide us in what approximate total funding we would require to complete our aim. We were recommended WSD of Inverness, who worked on the existing plans which had been drawn up in 2015, with a few alterations we had made since.

We then contacted Alan Webster, Regeneration and Employment Team Leader at Highland Council, through whom all applications to the RCGF are made. After initial positive discussion over the phone, he came up to meet some members of the Project Team at the end of May and he was also shown around the site and the current Brora Heritage Centre, where we discussed the way forward.

Alan, who has overseen many successful funding bids for Highland projects to the RCGF over the years, was very impressed with the potential in our project. Delighted to hear this, he said that it ticked all of the RCGF boxes, in that it was regenerating a derelict C-listed building, which is one of only two buildings in Brora on the national Buildings at Risk register, for use by the community, with all of the social and economic benefits that it could bring to Brora.

Alan was very keen for us to submit to the fund, which was a two-round process, as he thought we stood a good chance of gaining funding from the total pot of c£20M.

When we received the cost estimate from WSD, which was a daunting c£2.4M, we passed this information on to Alan. He recommended we apply for £1.2M to the RCGF and, if successful, combined with the £1M we already had, it would leave a 'small' shortfall of £200k, which he was confident we could secure from smaller funders.

We submitted our stage one application form at the end of June and crossed our fingers. We were thrilled to hear from Alan in mid-September that we had been successful and had been invited to apply for stage two.

John Alderson and Nick Lindsay met with Alan at Highland Council's HQ in Inverness soon after to discuss the next stage. Then began the gradual completion of the lengthy stage two application form, with assistance on the economic implications from Alan and it was submitted in mid-November. Alan believed it was a strong application and that because we already had the £1M 'kick-start', it would be looked upon favourably, but we are far from counting our chickens. We will know the result of this application at the end of March 2019.

Part of the RCGF application form required evidence of need for the project from the community. We have always had the support of the membership and the Brora public. After all, who wouldn't want to see the derelict Old Clyne School eyesore at the northern edge of the village refurbished and brought back to life? However, the funders required to see this desire quantified in some form of tangible evidence, so we engaged a heritage consultant, Helen Avenall, to help us. She assessed our needs, in terms of the funding bid and organised a community consultation afternoon at the Heritage Centre at the end of October.

The day was a comprehensive success. Around 60 people attended and the project was explained to everyone. Helen had prepared questionnaires and more had to be printed out due to the larger than expected turnout. They were completed and she was able to compile a report using this and other, previously collected supportive information.

Part of this extra information had come from Brora Primary School's P7s, who had attended a Climate Change Week event at the centre earlier in the month. Nick Lindsay 'piggy-backed' onto the event and explained the project to the pupils, including the £2.4M cost which had to be raised, at which point one pupil, Chloe Bannerman, piped up and suggested that they, the pupils and the school, should be doing some fund-raising for the project, which was taken on board by the class teacher, Beth Christie. It was an incredible, unprovoked gesture, one which really moved the Chairman!

The main part of the exercise was for them to take a Post-it pad and pencil and write down those things they liked in the centre and those they didn't. The results were really interesting, and so valuable for the application form. There were 106 'likes' and the top 5 (in order) were the Coal Mine, Military, Archaeology, Gift Shop and, surprisingly, Jackie MacLennan's old typewriter! There were only 9 'dislikes', with the Mannequins attracting 5 votes, the Cross-cut saw 2 votes and, strangely, Archaeology and the Gift Shop one vote each.



Brora Primary School P7 pupils with their post-it notes at the Heritage Centre.

In the meantime, Rhionna MacKay, Brora resident and Citizen's Advice Bureau Manager, had joined the Project Team, and her input was invaluable in completing the RCGF application form, as she had good experience on the other side of the fence in assessing funding applications.

The Project Team had been working on our Architect's brief since SSE handed over the keys and the cash. CHS member, Mark French, who is an Architect in Chester, ran his critical eye over the draft document and then we were ready to go. In mid-October, it was sent out to a dozen carefully selected architectural practices in the north. They would use the brief to cost for their input and that of other key consultants, such as Quantity Surveyors, Structural Engineers etc, who together make up the Design Team, to lead the pre-construction phase of the project. Six of the invitees submitted their tender by the closing date of November 26th.

The following week, the Project Team met for the exciting task of critically evaluating the tenders and selecting a short-list of two, who were subsequently invited to show them a relevant example of their work of their choice. A very interesting day out followed, when the Project Team were shown around the beautifully restored buildings by the short-listed architects.

The Project Team then made their unanimous recommendation to the Board that they should accept the tender submitted by Maxwell & Co, Inverness, who had used both Links House and the Carnegie Courthouse in Dornoch as their examples of relevant work. Maxwell & Co were duly appointed and the Project Team met them in their office on December 17th to hear their proposals, timescales and see what they had been busy with as preliminary design.



CHS member, Jim Cunningham, who helped erect the BaDAG community artwork at the Old Clyne School.

In June, Brora & District Action Group (BaDAG) organised a community art workshop at the Heritage Centre, with follow-up sessions at other locations in the village. This was to brighten up various places in the village, such as the southern A9 entrance, Cunningham's Lane and also the Herras Fencing

at the Old Clyne School, with pieces of artwork. On the evening they were unveiled, Nick Lindsay, who had been invited by BaDAG, led a guided walk through the history of the village from Dudgeon Park to the Old Clyne School and to see the installations.

Two months later, members of the Society were invited to come along to the site to take part in a vegetation clearance to make the grounds look much tidier. A passing journalist from Caithness stopped by because he was interested in what was going on and a subsequent article about the exploits appeared in the Northern Times.



CHS members who took part in the site tidy in August.

In December, the Society appointed Maxwell & Co, Inverness as the architects to lead the professional design team. Since then, Maxwells have been liaising with the Society to crystallise the final the design which will be submitted for planning in March 2019.

The draft final design was revealed to a packed Community Centre on February 21st by the Society and by James Maxwell, Maxwell's Managing Director. The 80-strong audience were wowed by the boldness of the design, after the rationale for why we are doing what we want to do was explained precisely by John Alderson. The final cost estimate was also later explained.

We were disappointed to learn on March 7th that we had been unsuccessful In our £1.2M bid to the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund, thereby pushing the project back by around 9 months. However, we aim to submit to the same fund in 2019/20, when we will actually be in a much stronger position with the necessary planning consents in place, a Feasibility Study in our possession and a more accurate and detailed project costing.

Chronicle News

CHS Christmas Pop-up Shop

The Brora Shopkeepers' Christmas Night was held on the night of Friday, 30th November. For the previous 2 years, the Society was fortunate to be able to have the use of the former Post Office premises in Rosslyn Street to set up a 'Christmas Pop-up Shop'. This year, however, it was unavailable, so an alternative solution had to be found.

Brora's development trust, BaDAG, had invited local crafters and charities to occupy a space in the former shop owned by Graham Begg in Fountain Square. They had rented it for use as a local collective Christmas Pop-up Shop, not just for the Christmas shopping night, but for the entire period from then until Sunday, 23rd December.

The week before opening, the excited temporary shopkeepers dressed up the previously unenticing, cold, empty shop, into a welcoming, warm, bright and attractive emporium, full of beautiful local objects, with our range of c200 book titles.

The opening night was a real success, trebling last year's sales and the whole 3-week venture exceeded everyone's expectations. It brightened up a neglected part of the village for a short time and was appreciated by the community. It was a fantastic experience for the keen crafters and ourselves and it showed what can be done in a short space of time by keen, clever and co-operative folk.

Plans are being made to seek a more permanent venue for the crafters' collective so, until we are able to move into our new premises at the Old Clyne School, we will have a presence in the village as a sales outlet for our extensive range of book titles.

Gordonbush Estate Papers

In September 2018, the Society made a bid, jointly with the Centre for History (part of the University of the Highlands & Islands) in Dornoch and the University of Dundee, to the Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities for a PhD student to catalogue and research our large collection of Gordonbush Estate Papers.

Ourselves, Dr Iain Robertson (UHI) and Dr Patricia Whatley (Dundee) were to be supervising Duncan Simpson, an ex- UHI student, who has an MLitt, who had been identified as a perfect choice.

Unfortunately, we received the bad news in October, that we had been unsuccessful, however, we were encouraged by the feedback we received and we will make another bid to them next year.

From 'Chickens of Stone' to 'Chicks at Easter': How I came to Work at Brora Heritage Centre

By Caroline Seymour

For some time, I had been looking for interesting work that would draw me into the local community, but with no success. Then one day my cell phone buzzed, as a text arrived from my youngest daughter: *Mam, I've found a job for you. It's perfect. It's in Brora; a Heritage Officer at the Heritage Centre. You'd be looking after old things. You like old things and you know what it was like in the olden days – you'd be at home among the fossils! I'll send you the link.* 😄😂😂😂

Such insubordination! I had to admit, though, it did look interesting, and I had recently swapped emails with the named contact, a Dr Nick Lindsay, in connection with an Airbnb guest of mine. The lady had booked for a short stay at my home with her husband and daughter in early April and was hoping to trace her ancestors in Strath Brora, who had emigrated to Nova Scotia during the Clearances.

I sat down to make the application and, after some humming and hawing and cutting and pasting, duly sent it in. Some while later I was called for interview and, to cut a long story short, to my amazement and delight, I learned that I had landed the job. Following an informal lunch and training session, where I was introduced to most of my new colleagues – staff and volunteers – I felt enthusiastic and eager to begin.



Getting to grips – revamping the displays with Lorna before opening

Those of you familiar with the Heritage Centre will know what I mean about the special, easy going and welcoming atmosphere there, in which one immediately feels at ease. Lorna, the already installed, experienced and highly knowledgeable Heritage Officer, and the exceptionally friendly gang of dedicated volunteers – each with their own often detailed knowledge of the area – are just wonderful to work with, and it surely helps that a large proportion of the visitors, from all over the globe, are on holiday – carefree and under little or no pressure. It also adds to the excitement when the friendly boss's wife, Ellen, is an experienced and friendly genealogist, who can press a few buttons on the computer and uncover fascinating facts and photos and figures about your family tree that you thought had been lost forever!

It is certainly true for me, at least that the older one grows, the more one realises how very much more there is to learn. Each time I walk into the Centre, I see something that I had not spotted before, learn something fresh about the locality or the people, or meet someone new from the area or outwith – and most have their own, interesting story to share and the time to share it.



With Lorna and the Easter Bonnet prize-winners

From April to October, I generally spent two days each week working at the Heritage Centre, meeting and greeting people, talking about the exhibits, selling items in the shop and dispensing refreshments. I was also present on

occasions when the Centre hosted groups from a troop of Scouts to Over-Sixties groups and the University of the Third Age.

With Easter came my first experience of the many public events spread throughout the season, devised and run by the highly capable Lorna. I was pitched in at the deep end on the first Sunday of the season, only three days after we opened! It was Easter bonnet-making and egg painting and rolling and turned out to be well attended and great fun for all. Both the mock archaeology dig and the visit to Glen Loth in July also attracted good numbers. Though equally well prepared and interesting, the turnout for the other events which followed was disappointingly low, and all the effort put in by Lorna was not appreciated as widely as had been hoped and deserved. However, on each occasion those who were present, myself included, had a great time and we learned much from Lorna – as witnessed by the very positive comments on Facebook each time.



The outing to Glen Loth – the group at the Clach Mic Mhios standing stone

Early on in April, I had the good fortune to join Nick Lindsay and the family from Canada, then staying with me, on an expedition to visit the location of the settlement where their ancestors had lived in Strath Brora. It was a moving experience, I think for us all, as Cathy stood inside the clearly visible remains of the houses and stepped across the very thresholds of the homes where her forbears had trod. I felt highly privileged to have witnessed it and to have had it brought to life so vividly by our knowledgeable guide.

Then there was the thrill of a phone call one quiet Monday morning in June, which was to set in motion an exciting chain of events. An animal carcass had been uncovered by a digger machine whilst excavating peat approximately a metre and a half down in a peat bank in Golspie Parish. At that depth, the crofter guessed it must be ancient and called the Centre to seek advice and to find out if anyone might be interested. The following day, Nick visited the site and carefully excavated the remains and the rest, as they say, is history. Examination of the skull, bones, teeth, claws and thick fur coat, all beautifully preserved by the acidic peat, suggested that they were those of a hunting dog or wolf and could be hundreds of years old. We still await the verdict from experts in the field but, whatever the outcome, it is a day and an excitement I shall not readily forget.

Another experience that has made a deep impression upon me during my time at the Centre has been witnessing the commemoration and marking by Clyne Heritage Society, The Heritage Centre, BaDAG, and the wider community, of the end of the First World War. The poppies, sown throughout the village and by the Cubs at the Centre, the Folders in the Centre commemorating each of the Fallen of Clyne with a biography, the regular Facebook posts: Clyne War Memorial Centenary Tributes, culminating in formal ceremonies and the projections on the War Memorial in November, have all served to focus our attention; to help us to remember and to not forget.

Then there has been the pleasure of walking down my own personal Memory Lane in the course of working at the Heritage Centre. Morag Sutherland's thoroughly researched display with information detailing the history of Capaldi's ice cream took me straight back to my own childhood days when, after long sunny days on the beach north of Brora, my family would return by car of an evening along the 'back roads' to our holiday spot in Little Rogart. But we would first stop off in Brora to savour the Capaldi welcome and the delights of their special ice creams, which always tasted better than any others. There has been, too, the pleasant, gentle nostalgia of reminiscing with those who happen to call into the Centre and who still remember some of the characters I recall from those distant days.

Imagine, also, my delight when I discovered in a chance conversation with a local visitor to the Heritage Centre, that Megan Boyd – the colourful local character and world-famous fly-tier - had actually grown up with her family in my house in the Doll! It was such a coincidence as I had already become increasingly interested in Megan, having recognised from my childhood days her cottage in a photo, in the spot opposite the place where we would go down to the beach. If you have any memories to share, or stories to tell about Megan, do get in touch. I'd love to hear them so that we can build a display from the local stories and anecdotes that are not told in the published works or in the film, Kiss the Water; stories that touch the real Megan, do her justice, and so bring her to life in our imaginations once more.

Rounding off the season was the annual Halloween Spooky Walk event on October 30th. Nearly 70 adults and children were spell-bound by the Halloween Witch (Lorna) and it was a thrill to go round and hear the spooky stories and see how excited she was able to make the children. Perhaps the parents were less thrilled!



With Lorna, the Spooky Walk Halloween Witch and friend!

I will not drone on further, but suffice it to say it has been a pleasure and a privilege to work at Brora Heritage Centre throughout its third season; to make new friends amongst staff, volunteers and local visitors; to witness the delight of those who uncover long-forgotten memories of their families; to rub shoulders and swap stories with visitors from distant shores; and to master – or almost master – the workings of what we used to call in the “olden days”, the cash register. (Thank you for your patience, Catriona!)

Finally, I must express my gratitude to my daughter for sending me the link to the advert for the Heritage Officer vacancy last year – had it not been for her care and concern, I should probably have remained unaware of the post and so would have missed out on a whole world of experiences that have definitely enriched my life. I could not resist reminding her, however, as I thanked her one time, of her own interest in ‘old things’ when, as a five-year-old slip of a thing, she gazed thoughtfully from the car window across the wide expanse of the Salisbury Plain to the imposing standing stones on the skyline and piped up, “They don’t look much like stone hens, do they?”

Brora to Glasgow by Bicycle: Clyne Junior Secondary School Headmaster, Jack MacLeod and his Pupils' Incredible Road Trip

By Nick Lindsay

The legendary headmaster did so much to raise the profile of Brora's school. He became much loved and admired, even though he could administer the strap with aplomb, and to his own schoolgirl daughter too!

From what I know of Jack, one of the amazing series of feats that stand out for me were his school trips to Glasgow – by BICYCLE! It seems beyond belief, especially looking back with a 21st Century perspective, that a teacher and a dozen or so of his male pupils could just set off on their bikes for the near 300-mile trip to Glasgow. Clearly, there wasn't the amount of traffic that we have today and car speeds were lower then, but the roads were not as good as they are now and clothing not as efficient too.



L to R: Back – Jack MacLeod, Leslie 'Lel' Cranston, Alastair MacLean, Peter Sutherland, Donald MacLeod, Robert 'Pobbles' MacKenzie, George Dunn, Billy Innes, Billy MacLean, Iain MacLeod, Alex Dalrymple; Front - Kenny Baillie, Jim Cunningham, Archie Fraser, Roger Griffiths and Alister Baillie.

Born in Helmsdale in 1909, Jack was dux of his school in 1922-23 and was clearly a star pupil as he attended Glasgow University at the tender age of 16½. He graduated 4 years later and began a teaching career at Springburn Academy and remained there until during the war, when he moved to Hutchinson's Grammar School for Boys. During the war, his teaching spread to the evenings, as he also taught RAF navigators and was

also an ARP (Air Raid Precautions) warden. During his time in Glasgow, he made many friends and contacts, including his great friend Stewart Mackintosh, originally from Helmsdale, who was Director of Education in Glasgow, which would later prove useful for his school trips.

It was on Saturday, 23rd July 1955, when the 14 pupils and Jack, supported by the Education Authority bus, driven by Alex Dalrymple, the PE Master, set off from Brora on their first adventure. All of the bikes were pretty standard, with Jim Cunningham calling them '3 speed luxury'!

It was planned that each day, two boys would board the bus to prepare food while travelling, so that the evening meal would be ready for the arrival of the pack. Jim recalls that peeling potatoes on bumpy roads wasn't very easy or pleasurable, but it saved a great deal of time and would be very welcome for the arriving cycle party.

The route to the first night's destination of Inverness was via the Meikle Ferry, the Invergordon Ferry, across the Black Isle and the Kessock Ferry. Jim recounts that crossing the Dornoch Firth on the Meikle Ferry was a bit precarious. His memories are of crossing on a small ferry boat, locally known as a 'coble', loaded with boys and bikes. Probably overloaded, it became momentarily grounded on a sandbank as the tide was racing. There wasn't a life-jacket to be seen!

If the first day had been exhausting, the next day was a real challenge, with the gradual climb up to their camp site at Dalwhinnie in really hot weather. It is pleasing to note that liberal quantities of sun lotion were applied to the boys' arms and legs! After pitching their tents and dining, the boys took to their sleeping bags and the leaders went for some well-earned evening refreshments in a village hostelry. Boys being boys, and all alone in their tents, Jim recalls that a baked bean fight broke out, which was a great deal of fun, however, the consequences of cleaning the under-canvas battlefields were less fun, as they desperately tried to get things rectified before their guardians returned!

The next day they made for their site on a farm just south of Perth. The farmers, a Mr & Mrs Main, who were regular holiday-makers in Dornoch, grew an extensive crop of peas, and the boys were given a guided tour of what the Northern Times described as the 'pea vinery' and the factory which automatically shelled the pods. Most of the crop was sent to Smedley's canning factory, but those that didn't go into tins, seemed all to be fed to the boys that night!

The final day of travel to Glasgow, Tuesday, was the easiest, but also the most dangerous, with no by-passes around busy towns and cities. Narrow, congested streets had to be negotiated but fortunately, there were no mishaps, thanks, to some degree, to the boys' knowledge of the Highway Code and road safety training. Testimony to their successful route-finding

and riding skills, the party arrived at their Glasgow West End base at Hillhead High School, a full hour and a half ahead of schedule.

One of the boys, Kenny Baillie recalls an incident on this final leg of the trip south. 'On the way to Glasgow, possibly going through one of the Perthshire towns (Dunblane?), a police car came out of a side street and nearly ploughed into us. Jack was furious: "And him a bobby, too", he said. When the said bobby got out of his car and came up to us, it transpired that he was from Brora! As I can't be definite, I'll not mention any names here. Anyway, all was patched up in a very amicable fashion but Jack did have the last word: "Mind you", he said, "you did give us a bit of fright back there".

At Hillhead, they were comfortably accommodated in beds and on mattresses in 3 classrooms and ate hearty meals in the school canteen. Jim Cunningham recalls that one boy (who will remain nameless), on requiring an early morning call of nature, was too lazy to trek to the toilets. He decided to use a handy waste bin, which, unfortunately was full of holes! You can just imagine the consequences of the flood!

The boys then went exploring the huge city. Can you imagine their delight and fascination with such a busy, built up, noisy, smelly, vibrant place, and with people talking in such an alien dialect? It must have been an awesome, eye-opening experience. Kenny comments that he remembers Hillhead High School as a huge, red-brick building, 'on a different planet from the Clyne Junior Secondary of the time.'

Over the period of their 7-night stay, the boys visited a whole host of the city's wondrous attractions. Amongst other places, they visited Glasgow Zoo, the Botanic Gardens, art galleries, boating ponds, theatres, amusement stalls and shops. The Pond-master at the private Western Baths even allowed them the privilege of using the baths in the continuing searing heat, when the masses had to queue at public baths.

On the Friday, the party visited Prestwick, where the morning was spent in the open-air swimming pool. In the afternoon a visit had been arranged to Prestwick Airport, and the boys were thoroughly absorbed with its then constant stream of landings and take-offs. They were given a VIP tour of the airport, including the Met Office and the airport fire station. It was while they were at the latter venue that a plane which was about to land was having trouble with an over-heating engine and the boys witnessed the fire brigade being scrambled for a real-life emergency. As it happened, all was well and the plane landed safely.

After the excitement of the emergency, there was even more! Incredibly, Jack had organised a flight for the boys aboard a twin engine de Havilland Dragon Rapide biplane. Their eyes must have popped out of their heads as they flew high above the Ayrshire coastline.

On the Saturday, the party took a trip 'doon the watter' on the Queen Mary II. They sailed from the Broomielaw, on Glasgow's quayside, all the way to Rothesay, where they disembarked and spent a couple of hours before sailing back to Glasgow, gaining a sea-level view of the same coast they'd flown over the previous day.



Jack, with Billy MacLean, George Dunn, Ken Baillie & Billy Innes at Rothesay.

Further excitement, if their rations hadn't already run out, arrived in the shape of a party of schoolgirls from Coventry, who were also billeted at Hillhead on a school trip of their own. For an interesting take on mid 1950s gender stereotyping, I will reproduce the Northern Times report of the interactions verbatim!

'The Coventry schoolgirls were very friendly and helpful, especially on washing days. On the first occasion, the boys washed some shirts and hung them out to dry. The shirts disappeared! But, within a very short time, they were duly returned by the girls – beautifully ironed.' Washing appeared to be a favourite leisure activity after that! I wonder if the boys replaced any light bulbs or re-fused any plugs?

The girls did get something in return, however, when the boys showed their prowess for Scottish Country dancing, and gave them some lessons at a party on their final evening in Glasgow. The boys had been taught the dances by Mr Dalrymple for occasions at Christmas time, and the lessons

must surely have paid off as they impressed their English friends with their talents!

If the ironing had been one of the highlights up till then, what happened on the Sunday was probably the true highlight. After attending the morning service at Glasgow Cathedral, Jack had arranged a real treat of a visit to Celtic Park (apologies to supporters of other teams in Glasgow!), where the boys met the manager, former player legend, Jimmy McGrory and the Celtic team, which included a player who was to become the most famous man in the club's history, Jock Stein. I just cannot imagine the thrill which the boys must have felt, and am envious of their experience, over 60 years ago – and I don't even support Celtic!

They were shown around the whole massive stadium, which had seen a capacity crowd of 83,500 in 1938, including the baths and dressing rooms, recreation rooms, the trainer's room, the board room and the press box. They were then allowed to go onto the hallowed turf, where they watched the players go through a 2-hour training session. The boys, of whatever footballing persuasion, must have been in absolute awe!

One of the boys on the trip, Alister Baillie, recalls 'My memories of Celtic Park are that Bobby Collins was maybe injured and not in full training and that he had just got back from Hungary after an International; he was very small and very bronzed. I also remember that in the training match a cross came in from the left and Charlie Tully (an Irish International) swept his cap off, nodded the ball into the net, then replaced it, to great amusement.'

Alister's twin brother, Kenny recollects that on the way to Celtic Park. the party fell in with a small dark-haired man in a raincoat, carrying a pair of football boots in a brown paper bag under his arm. This turned out to be Bertie Peacock, a Northern Ireland international, who played 318 times for Celtic between 1949 and 1961, winning one league title, two Scottish Cup medals and two Scottish League Cup medals. He was Celtic captain from 1957-1961. He also played in the Northern Ireland team that eliminated Italy from the 1958 World Cup and went on to reach the quarter-finals. A far cry from how players arrive at grounds these days!

Kenny continued 'We watched a training session and I remember thinking how fast and strong the players were - and how confident. Jimmy McGrory was manager at the time, but I particularly remember Bobby Collins, perhaps because he was so small, and Bobby Evans, who had a shock of ginger hair. Bertie Peacock played for a Great Britain team against Northern Ireland in August 1955, and I seem to remember that some of the training session had something to do with that game, but my memory may be playing tricks here.'

The boys then got a chance to collect the autographs of their heroes. The Manager fondly reminisced with them of the time he played for Celtic

against a Sutherland Select XI at Dudgeon Park, Brora, on the occasion of officially opening the ground in May 1935.

Kenny also remembered another eye-opening visit, to the Sunday Mail offices: 'We went to the Sunday Mail and met Rex Kingsley, probably the leading football writer of the time. He was writing in the popular, tabloid style, long before anyone else in Scotland and had a huge following. I remember Jack telling us that Rex was a well-known and important man, the implication being that he was also rather full of himself. He told us to make sure we laughed at any of his jokes.'

'Rex was a larger than life character, but not at all condescending to the Highland headmaster, who had, of course, taught in Glasgow himself and was a big enough character to cope with anybody or anything. I've found a copy of a photo that appeared in the Sunday Mail featuring our visit. The picture behind him is of a Scotland-England international at Hampden. As I remember it, he told us he'd had some English visitors who weren't all that impressed with the picture. "Well, no wonder", he said, "look where the ball is". It was in the English net and we all had to make sure that we laughed suitably at that.'

HEARD THIS ONE ?

"WE want to see the Den!" That was the plea of these eleven laddies all the way from Brora, to their school-master Jack McLeod (partly obscured in the right-hand corner of the picture).

He came to see me. I said, "Bring 'em along, and I'll be honoured." **THESE LADDIES (AGES 13-15) HAD CYCLED ALL THE 290 MILES OF THE JOURNEY, AS PART OF THEIR HOLIDAY.**

A trek-bus went on in front and had meals ready at the stopping points, Inverness, Ballinluig and Stirling . . . then out came the tents for the night.

Operation "Education Awheel" has developed their legs, lungs and knowledge.

Their "Head," Jack McLeod, has taken them to places they'd only read about.

Maybe I'll get around to travelling as far north as Brora some day. If so, I know I'll meet a lot of friends. The boys cycle back via Loch Lomond and the Great Glen.

Safe journey, chaps . . . and thanks for looking me up.

Kenny Baillie's newspaper clipping of the boys with Rex Kingsley.

At the end of a thrilling, hectic and thoroughly enjoyable week, the party set off on the long trip home on Tuesday, August 2nd. The intended destination for the first night camp was Rannoch Moor, after cycling past Loch Lomond and through Crianlarich and Tyntrum. However, on reaching their selected site, it soon became clear that it would be too tortuous to remain there due to the clouds of vicious biting midges. It was thus decided that they would cycle on through the evening to Ballachuilish, which meant that they cycled around 95 miles in the whole day; no mean feat for a group of excited, but already tired lads.

It was also decided that, now they had exceeded their Day 1 target and that their pocket money was running low, they would condense their planned 4-day return trip into three and they headed for Dingwall as their second night camp. At the end of this 90-mile leg, the boys spent the last of their dwindling pocket money at the pictures.

The final day's ride was a comparatively leisurely 55 miles and they all arrived back in Brora at 4pm on Thursday August 4th. It was reported that all the boys deemed the entire trip "Smashing!" and Jack complimented them as being a 'grand bunch of lads' and that 'much of the enjoyment and success of the whole enterprise was due to their exemplary conduct and behaviour' and being made of the 'right stuff'! You can sense both a relief and a fierce pride in his charges over the fortnight.



Jack MacLeod at Buckingham Palace for his OBE, with wife Jean and daughter Sheena, March 1964.

Glimpses of Sutherland

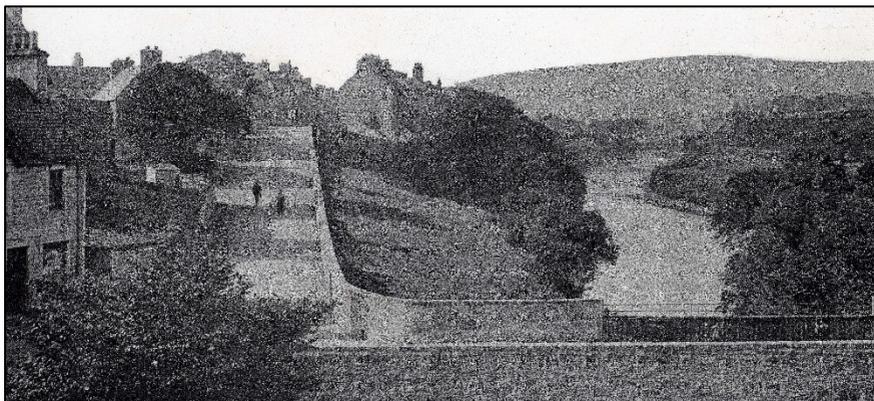
By James T Calder, Canisbay

This is an extract from an article which appeared in the John O’Groat Journal – 12th November, 1847.

Set out for Golspie. The road passes through Brora – a small indifferent-looking village, apparently on its last legs. The only manufacture it has, at present, we believe, is that of wheel-barrows! It was, at one time, however, the most important place in all Sutherland, from its saltpans and coalworks. The former ceased when the duty was taken off the salt, and the working of the latter was discontinued on account of the inferior quality of the coal.

There is some talk, however, of resuscitating Brora, by the erection of a splendid new harbour, for which it seems to be admirably adapted by nature, and which is to serve two purposes:- first, as a harbour of refuge; and secondly, as a shipping port for the steamer which is expected to ply between it and Burghead, when the branch of the Great North of Scotland Railway is extended to the latter place.

The bridge of Brora, at the end next to the village, forms a very acute angle with the road; and, at this particular spot, the view is exceedingly dark and deep, with high precipitous rocks a short way below and above the bridge. These are completely destitute of all shrubbery, with the exception of a few wild roses, whose blossoms in the flowering season hang over the black abyss, and remind one of the fine figure of “Beauty in the lap of Horror”. Before the parapets were heightened several accidents are said to have happened here. One of the most melancholy was that of a Captain Clunas, who, riding home one dark night, on a splendid horse, went sheer over the precipice, with the animal, into the river. The body of the unfortunate gentleman was not found till some days later.



Brora Bridge

Brora's Armistice Celebrations

By Nick Lindsay

It is quite a surprise to find that the Northern Times has scant direct reference to the end of the Great War celebrations in Sutherland.

The only reference is under the sub-headline 'Peace Rejoicings in Sutherland', which stated that the news of the Armistice was received 'with manifestations of relief, gratitude and rejoicing, tempered with due reverence for the many who have aching hearts and desolate homes...'

The report went on 'Throughout the county, a number of thanksgiving services were held, conducted by the ministers and office-bearers of the various congregations. Bonfires were lit and processions were taken part in by the pupils of the schools who were given a holiday (November 11th 1918 was a Monday) in honour of the occasion.'

In the only specific reference to Brora, the Raggie reported that 'some unauthorised bonfires were lit. A stack of hay belonging to a local merchant was set on fire and totally destroyed. This thoughtless act of a youthful patriot, was an unfortunate incident in otherwise innocent enjoyment.'

The Brora Police Occurrence Book for 1918 (held in the Highland Archive Centre in Inverness; reference R91-5-5-3-26) sheds a little more light on the Brora celebrations and a lot more on the haystack incident.



Contemporary picture of Gower Street, Brora

PC Kenneth McKay reported that the 'news of Peace came and there was great rejoicing. In the evening, there was a Torch Light procession and

Pipers paraded the village, then there was a Concert in the Drill Hall. There was a great turnout of people, on the whole it passed off orderly' And he retired at 1am.

The following day, at 9am, the PC wrote out a report to the Chief Constable re the procession and at 3pm he heard that a small hay stack of about 120 stones [762 kilos] was set on fire to the west of Gower Street. He proceeded there at once and tried to put it out, but it had too great a hold and there was no water about. He took a complaint about the fire from Robert MacKay, a 57-year-old owner of a Grocery and Drapery business of Bridge House, Brora and also from 34-year-old Car Driver and former Stone Quarryman, Benjamin Baillie, from Gower Street.



Robert MacKay's Grocery and Drapery shop in Bridge House (left).

The PC carried out some enquiries and learned that 10-year-old John Sutherland of Salt Street, son of 49-year-old Fisherman, John Sutherland 'Shorach' had set the haystack on fire. He proceeded to Lower Brora and took a statement from young John, along with his 'accomplices' William Sutherland (aged 10), son of John Sutherland, 2 Market Street, Christina Dempster (10), daughter of John Dempster, Market Street and Alexander Urquhart (9), son of William Urquhart, Elder Street.

PC MacKay charged John Sutherland with Malicious Mischief by setting fire to the haystack and he admitted it was done by a lighted tar rope.

The Clyne Public School Log Book (also held in the Highland Archive Centre in Inverness; reference CS-5-5-8a), written by the Headmaster, Angus M Gunn, records that the school had been closed the previous week, by order of the Medical Officer of Health to prevent the possible spread of the influenza epidemic. The school reopened on Wednesday November 13th, as 'Tuesday had been given as a holiday throughout the country on account of the good news from the seat of war – the signing of the Armistice on Monday the 11th.'

The Duke of Edinburgh's Visit to Brora Coal Mine in 1963

By Jim Gunn, West Clynelish

Born and bred in West Clyne, Brora, CHS Member, Jim Gunn recounts an episode of his schooldays. Jim has been a CHS member since 2009.

The Duke of Edinburgh came to visit the coal mine back in 1963 and flew in by helicopter, which landed close-by to the mine. The helicopter came in over the school playing fields while us pupils were on our lunch break and landed out of view from the playing fields.

Not to be outdone and hoping to get a glimpse of the Duke, myself, Victor Sutherland (Cairns) and three girls all climbed over the fence at the corner close to the Police Station, crossed the A9 and into Inverbrora Field, which overlooks the mine, only to find it was a dummy run and the Duke was not on board at that time.

Unfortunately, on our return to the corner of the school fence, we were met by a couple of prefects, who duly informed us that the depute head, Mr MacKay MacKay, would be awaiting us in the history room with a leather tawse over his shoulder. It was a painful lesson learnt and I felt particularly sorry for the girls, whom I don't think should have been given the same severe treatment as us two boys, but that seemed to be quite acceptable in those days!



The Duke of Edinburgh (light coat) greeted on his arrival by helicopter in Brora by John Rollo (in kilt), Chairman of the Highland Fund, which had invested money into the Brora Coal Mine to help keep it afloat.

Brora: My Ancestral Home

By Marie Hodgkinson, Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia

Marie is an Australian who, on her maternal side, has 100% Scottish ancestry and she is a 6th generation Australian Sutherland. Her Sutherland ancestry stems from John Angus Sutherland, from Lothbeg, who, in 1852, decided to re-locate his extended family of 15 to Australia. Marie joined CHS in 2014.

Others of my family who immigrated were Elizabeth Robson (nee Sutherland), in 1839, daughter of John Angus's sister, Elizabeth, his sister, Betsy, in 1854, his nephew, Thomas, in 1861 and his cousin, William, in 1854. So, descendants in Australia are many. A pilgrimage to Brora is an essential for members of this family. What better opportunity to introduce close family to Brora, its surrounds and the Highlands of Scotland, than attending the mid-year International Gathering of Clan Sutherland Scotland held every fourth year?

Having experienced the ambience of the Sutherland Inn, and knowing this was the site of many past Sutherland celebrations, we decided it would be our base. Apart from feeling most welcome by hotel staff and the splendid meals, I enjoyed sitting out the front amongst the hanging baskets and watching the endless stream of traffic, walking though the village and looking at the shop fronts, looking for Sutherland tartan in the haberdashery shop, Kingcraig Fabrics, buying food in the local co-op, visiting the Thrift shop, using the local ATMS and, of course, visiting Brora Heritage Centre.



The Sutherland Inn, Brora.

A visit to the home from which John Angus left the Highlands, known to us as Old Square House (OSH), was a must. The house is 4 miles north of Brora,

and has been renovated many times since 1852. Today, it is a rental property with the same tenant as the two previous times we have visited. He has become accustomed to complete strangers with strange accents peering over his fence and always comes to talk with us. Of interest to us is the date of 1816, with what we believe is the Sutherland Coat of Arms on the front gable.

Opposite OSH, the 21st century has caught up, with the installation of huge water pipes as part of the Glen Loth hydro-electric scheme. It had to happen, but I loved the rustic look of the countryside.

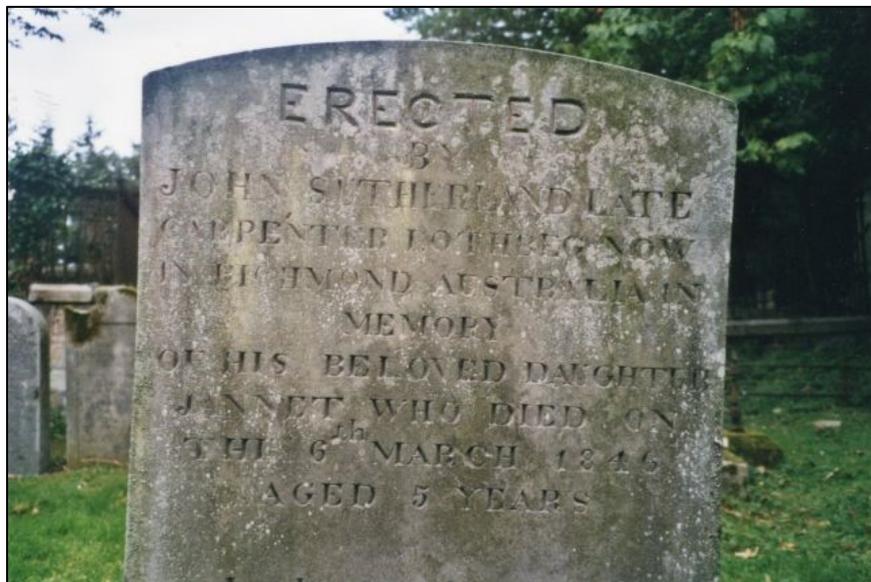


'Old Square House', Lothbeg.

Having visited Old Square House, we headed out for Clynekirkton Cemetery, but first dropped in to the Distillery for a tour, which was time and money well spent. When in Brora, we all make an effort to visit and clean the memorial stone of our Great-Great Aunt, Janet Sutherland, who died in Brora as a 5-year-old in 1846. Even to this day, she is spoken of within the family.

During a previous visit, our cousin and his late wife took us on a full day road trip around Brora and, of course, we found it necessary to re-visit the same places on this visit. Having seen the name Gordonbush, and knowing that Betsy came from there, we explored the area and then drove on to the ford and the swing bridge and saw the spectacular scenery. On the way we

saw a sign to Backies, the name recorded on John Angus's father, William Sutherland's death record in 1823.



Jannet Sutherland's headstone at Clynekirkton.

We were aware that the family had left Brora from Littleferry and had travelled south to a port in England, before boarding the Wanata for Australia. We located what we thought was Littleferry, walked along the foreshore, saw the birdlife but, later on, seeing a photo we were not sure we had been at the right place.

We were aware that in Scotland, religion played a major role in our ancestors' lives and we believe they worshipped in Loth. The church that we believe they worshipped in had been de-commissioned and, last time we visited, was used as an art gallery, but now seems sadly to have been left to deteriorate.

Further afield, we discovered the church at Kildonan, which now incorporates a museum and has information on the immigrants from this area who migrated earlier, mainly to Canada. For us this was an emotional time, as George Sutherland's wife, Mary Bannerman, my Great-Great Grandmother, died as the result of childbirth in Australia, 17 years after leaving her family in Lothmore, leaving 8 children motherless. She was only 40 years of age.

This trip, along with those made previously, re-visiting special Sutherland places and my growing knowledge of this area, has enabled me to connect with my ancestry, making the history related in family stories so real.

Nurse MacLeod's Incredible 153 Babies!

Nurse Mary MacLeod was appointed District Nurse in Brora on 5th August, 1939. She worked in Brora through the war years, leaving on 24th June, 1946 to get married. During this time, she delivered 153 babies and this story was celebrated at a private exhibition launch at Brora Community Centre on 21st June, 2018, when a huge turnout of over 80 people, including 20 of the babies themselves, attended a memorable evening.



The Nurse MacLeod Babies who attended the launch of the exhibition in her honour, along with Morag Sutherland and Rona MacAlister (right).

Nurse MacLeod's daughter, Rona MacAlister, who lives part of the year in her late parents' house in Brora, had approached Clyne Heritage Society with the story of her mother's time in Brora and also some of her memorabilia, with a view to it being told and displayed at Brora Heritage Centre. The project snowballed into an exhibition of photographs of the babies and, with the essential assistance of Society member, Morag Sutherland, whose tireless and painstaking tracking down of all but around 30 of the babies or their families, led to this unique exhibition being staged.

Through these contacts, the Society was able to gather individual photos of 72 of the babies and, from school photos a further 47 more, leaving only 34 babies without photographs. As there was a war on, several of the latter category actually lived for any length of time in Brora, with their mother's

coming home to have them, before returning to their usual place of residence.

At the launch, Society Chairman, Nick Lindsay, welcomed the audience before handing over to Morag Sutherland, who paid tribute to Nurse MacLeod and the incredible story of her and her babies. Rona then spoke about her mother and the affection she had for the community and the community had for her. She then opened the exhibition and the guests of honour – the babies – were invited to view the exhibition first, followed by friends, relatives and Society members.

Mary was born at 3 Clachan, on the Isle of Raasay, on the West Coast of Scotland, near Skye. on 18th February, 1906. She was the 9th of 11 children born to Alexander MacLeod and Julia MacLennan, who were married on 9th December, 1886, on Raasay.

She was educated at Raasay Primary School and then she went on to Inverness Academy. In 1925, after leaving school, she became a nanny at the age of 18 to two young children, which took her for a time to Switzerland. After that, she pursued a career in nursing.



Mary MacLeod in Switzerland when she was a Nanny in 1925.

She underwent Fever Nurse training at Ruchill Hospital, Glasgow, then General Nurse training at Glasgow Royal Infirmary, before becoming Ward

Sister there in 1935. In 1938, she trained for 6 months as a Midwife at the Elsie Inglis Memorial Maternity Hospital, Edinburgh and her first job after that was in Brora. The terms and conditions of her employment, when she was appointed District Nurse in Clyne, were £170 per annum, rising on 31st May, 1940, to £175 per annum and by £5 per annum thereafter, until the maximum of £185 per annum was reached, plus £5 holiday allowance.

Nurse MacLeod's rounds would take her all over the parish of Clyne, as far as Gordonbush and Point, East and West Clyne, Kintradwell, Doll and the village of Brora. Apart from delivering babies, she also worked closely with Dr Johnstone in caring for the whole community.

Being the only nurse in this area and, with only a bicycle to hand, it must have been a hard struggle, especially in winter. She did learn to drive and was later given a car, which must have been a real blessing.



Nurse MacLeod driving her car in Loth.

Nurse MacLeod's daily routine would include consultation with Dr Johnstone on patients requiring home visits, eg diabetics, post-operative care, wound dressings, physiological and psychological support, especially during these war years, ante-natal and post-natal care - giving advice on all aspects of childbirth and how to prepare the family home for the new arrival.

Her main role, however, was the delivery of babies, day and night. It was her responsibility to conduct the births and to provide care for the new born. Only in difficult circumstances would the doctor be asked to attend. She also conducted school visits, to check on the welfare of the children (she would have been known as the nit nurse!), but primarily to check up on many other aspects of development.

Both her first baby, Mary Victoria MacLeod MacRae (now Glen) and her last baby, Mary MacLeod Thom (now Matheson) were named after Nurse MacLeod.

As was the practice then, Nurse MacLeod had to give up her job to marry. So, on 24th June, 1946 she left her nursing career to marry James Hamilton MacLeod (Greenkeeper and Golf Professional), of 4 Old School, Brora, on 20th July, 1946 at Old High Church, Inverness.

As a wedding gift, Nurse MacLeod was presented with a Grandmother clock by grateful patients and friends in the Parish of Clyne. Fittingly, seven-year old Mary MacRae, who was the first baby she delivered, made the presentation at Mrs Wilson's garden fete at Sunrise, Golf Road, Brora.

James and Mary received 172 other wedding gifts, including £87 in cash, and 86 congratulatory telegrams, which goes a long way to show the high regard she was held in the parish.

The newlyweds settled in Newtonmore, where James was the Golf Professional and Greenkeeper. With their new-born daughter Rona, they moved to Cullen, Banffshire and then to Dunblane when, on James's retirement, Mary insisted that they both return to Brora to family and friends. So it was that, along with Cleo (the poodle) and Peppi (the cat), James and Mary settled in Greenbank, Riverside, to live out the rest of their lives back in Brora, where Mary rekindled her friendship with mothers and babies alike.

Mary would always ask everybody she met of a certain age if they were one of her babies, as she was so proud of them all. "I never lost a baby" she would say and "I had a privileged job".

Mary immersed herself in many activities within the village and, at the age of 70, won a ladies golf competition, which thrilled her. Although she had left the village for nearly 30 years, she was still affectionately known by all as Nurse MacLeod!

Mary died at home on Sunday, 17th March, 1985 (Mother's Day) at the age of 79 and was buried at Clyne Cemetery. Her love of nature and her belief in people stemmed from her upbringing on her beloved Island of Raasay. She was a gentle, caring and loving person, who saw the good in everybody. Her husband, James, died on 19th December, 1992 and was laid to rest in the same lair.

The exhibition launch was a great evening, full of nostalgia and stories. All of the Babies signed the guest book, so that there is a permanent record of the evening.

The exhibition is now on display at the Brora Heritage Centre, which is open 10.30 to 4.30 every day from Good Friday, until it closes at the end of October.



Nurse MacLeod in her retirement playing whist with Megan Boyd.



Rona MacAlister setting up the exhibition about her mother at the Brora Heritage Centre.

Brora Heritage Centre 2018

Our third season of operation of Brora Heritage Centre at Fascally, on behalf of Highlife Highland was our longest season yet, due to Easter falling in March. We put our new signs up (Centre Management Group member, Andrew Bridges, pictured beside our new sign below the centre on Coal Pit Road) opened on Good Friday, March 30th and were open for 215 days in total, closing on Sunday October 30th, 16 days longer than the previous year.



It was a good year, but a little strange, because our visitor numbers were down by nearly 5% on the previous year's record levels of 4146 and donations were significantly down by 25%, however sales were 3% up. This meant, however, that our visitor spend per head showed a healthy increase of 8% on 2017.

The reasons for these anomalies are unclear; it is not an exact science! We suspect that part of it, ironically, is down to the incredibly sunny and hot summer we had, when visitors, perhaps, chose to do outdoor pursuits in the good weather, rather than spend time indoors.

We also think that the visitor spend increased due to the better selection of lines available for sale at the centre, especially the range of books we stocked. We must have the best selection of historical and leisure pursuit books in the north, with over 200 different titles on offer. As for the dramatic fall in donations, we have absolutely no idea!

So, that was the bottom line in the account books, but it is our heritage and our staff and volunteers that continue to make our heritage centre the hidden gem that it is, punching above its weight and just waiting to be discovered by folk who think there is nothing to our wee Highland village.

Our Trip Advisor ratings are almost perfect. We are the No 3 attraction in Brora, behind the Beach and the Distillery and overtook the Golf Club earlier this year. We are so proud to be able to report that out of our 53 ratings, only 3 are 4-star, all of the rest being the top mark of 5-star. Our Visitor Book is full of truly complimentary remarks about the heritage and the welcome.

We welcomed a new member of staff this year, Caroline Seymour (see her article on being the newbie on page 25), as Mary Stewart, who had been with us for the past 2 seasons, reluctantly left us as she was offered a full-time post, which we couldn't offer her and which she couldn't turn down.



Heritage Officer, Lorna Jappy, unpacking a consignment of our popular books, which brought our number of titles to over 200.

We had acquired two large, beautiful, flat-bed display cases from Strathnaver Museum at Bettyhill during the close season and placed one in the Crofting/Archaeology Room, to expand the Archaeology exhibits and the other in the Main Room to show off more Military artefacts. Other displays were revamped, including mounting the crofting tools on the wall in the Crofting Room, and adding new displays, such as the Capaldi Story in the Main Room.

We had a pre-opening training day for the staff, Lorna Jappy and Caroline, and our wonderful volunteers, who were boosted this year with the addition of Ruwan Uduwera-Perera, Jill and Dom Turner (*pictured on their first day as volunteers*) and Catherine MacKay, to raise the number to 15. There were new things to learn: we invested in a credit



card reader system and this proved to be invaluable, with it taking nearly £1500 in sales over the season



A steady start on the Good Friday was followed by our Easter Festival on the Sunday, when 62 parents and children came for the egg-painting and rolling and Easter Bonnet making activities. A lull for the long month of April allowed Caroline and Lorna to attend to labelling and presentation of the new exhibits, however, we did host a Creative Artwork

workshop on behalf of BaDAG, Brora's development trust. Under the guidance of BaDAG's post-graduate student intern, Anna Spencer (*top right in photo*), 20 people used their creative talents to design and paint a series of panels reflecting Brora's history, which were later hung at our Old Clyne School, to brighten up the site.

Occasionally, groups contact us and request to come and be shown around the Centre. Our first visit was a group from the Golspie-based charity TYKES (The Young Karers East Sutherland), who came in May, as did members of the University of the 3rd Age (U3A).

Also in May, the Brora Cubs paid us a visit and planted up some planters outside the centre with poppy seeds, which really flourished later in the season. Brora Primary School P6/7 and P3/4 classes visited separately in May and June and the new P7 class attended a Climate Change workshop in September.



In June, young Xanthe Ballantyne (pictured) played her bagpipes for our visitors over several days, as a way of getting some practise over the summer holidays and the ever-popular Brora 10k was held at our venue on Sunday, July 22nd. Always one of our busiest days of the year, a hot sunny day was great for the spectators, but less so for the 82 runners from all over the north.

July saw us host our Mock Archaeological Dig at the centre for the 3rd year since we took over the running of the centre, as part of Brora Carnival Week. Another really glorious day in our glorious summer of 2018, saw 30 children and their parents excavate for buried artefacts in our sand boxes, which had been liberally seeded with great treasures beforehand!



In October, we welcomed our newest volunteer, local young man, Conor O'Neil, who had contacted us offering his services, while he was seeking employment. He was getting into the swing of things whilst receiving on the job training, when he found a job and had to leave us, but he will be welcomed back any time he's free!

We ran a monthly programme of Car Boot Sales at the Centre, which failed to attract both large numbers of stall-holders and buyers, however those who did attend did shift some possessions and most of the buyers came into the centre too, so not all was lost!

As Caroline alluded to in her article on page 25, some of our monthly events for children were also not well attended, despite the hard work of organising by Lorna Jappy, our other Heritage Officer, however, the book-end events of the Easter Festival and the Spooky Walk in October, were major successes.

Seventy children and parents came for the walk on the night before Halloween and all were suitably scared by our resident witch, Lorna (did that come out right?). It was a moonless, starry night, which added to the effect, as Lorna told scary tales of times gone by, accompanied by spine-tingling screams and howls from werewolves in the trees.

So, the season drew to a close as November neared, but we will be starting all over again when we open on Good Friday, April 19th, welcoming new and familiar faces to our centre, which will have some new displays for the 2019 summer season.

More Chronicle News

A Successful Appeal!

The Society put out an appeal for contributions to the Chronicle at the start of the year and we are very happy to report we received several articles, all of which are reproduced here. So, a huge thank you to those who contributed and let's hope that even more people can be encouraged to contribute next year.

History Scotland Magazine

The editor of the History Scotland Magazine, Rachel Bellerby, contacted the Society in September, with a view to whether we might be interested in being featured in their 'society spotlight' column of the magazine.

Naturally, we jumped at the chance to spread our message further and she was supplied with enough information and pictures for her to put a small piece together. The article was published in the January/February edition and was brought to our attention by CHS member Robin Sutherland in Turriff.

Thesis by Tom McIver

Norman Gibson, former Society committee member and husband of our 2nd Chairman, the late Morag Gibson, contacted us in September about his uncle Tom McIvor, in Edinburgh, who sadly has advanced dementia. Tom graduated in 1950 with a degree in Geography from Edinburgh University and Norman had been approached by Tom's wife, Margaret, who was kindly offering the Society his thesis entitled '*The Regional Geography of East Sutherland*'. Along with Tom's thesis, which she sent to Norman, she very generously enclosed a donation of £20 for the Society.

Whilst thanking Margaret for her kind thoughts and deeds, we decided to make her a member of the Society and on receiving the Chronicle and membership card, she wrote back to say that she was thrilled with our response and was eagerly awaiting this edition of the Chronicle. Everybody was a winner and we think that it'll be a pleasant surprise for her to see this!

The thesis is a beautifully written and illustrated, very readable piece of work and makes a welcome addition to our library in Brora Heritage Centre.

20-Year Anniversary Ceilidh

To mark our significant landmark, the Society held a Ceilidh in the Golf Club on Saturday March 24th. Recognising the support of the membership over the years, the Board took the decision to set very low ticket prices, which included a buffet supper and music by the Rogart Ceilidh Band.

The night was launched by a traditional dance demonstration by pupils from Brora Primary School, followed by the rest of the members and friends, for what turned out to be a very memorable night.

The Bog Beast Mystery!

Rogart Crofter, Duncan MacKay, contacted the Society by phoning Brora Heritage Centre on Monday, 11th June, with news of an interesting discovery. His digger driver, Witold Dedys, whilst excavating peat from Duncan's peat bank, had unearthed a number of bones and golden red hair from a depth of around 1.5m.

Caroline Seymour, who was on duty at the time and who fielded the call, informed Society Chairman, Nick Lindsay, and the next day, along with member, Peter Wilson, who was present when Duncan phoned, went up to the peat bank to meet him and see the discovery. Duncan had thought it might be a fox, and was looking for guidance about what to do, as he thought it might be important. It was very fortunate that he did, because it may turn out to be a very exciting discovery indeed.

Sure enough, the part-mangled remains of an animal was lying undisturbed on the exposed surface of the peat, where eagle-eyed Witold had uncovered it with the bucket of his digger the previous day. The bones and teeth were pitch black, having been tanned over the length of time it had been buried by the slowly accumulating peat. The hair, however, had not taken on the colour and remained as golden as the day the animal died, which at the moment still remains a mystery.



Duncan MacKay at his peat bank with CHS member, Peter Wilson.

Carefully excavating the disarticulated remains, Nick collected all of the disturbed bits, including the perfectly preserved skull, that lay around and put them into plastic bags. These were then placed into a plastic box, into which a little water was poured to keep the remains in a moist environment, and the lid was sealed.



The skull of the peat bog animal – note the enormous fangs.

On the Thursday, Nick took the box to the Inverness Museum, where it was left for Conservation Officer, Jeanette Pearson (who unfortunately was out) to look. They later spoke on the phone and, at first glance, she ruled out it being a fox, and thought it could be a large dog or a young wolf, sex as yet undetermined.

The photos of the animal remains were put on the Brora Heritage Facebook site and the post was reached by an astounding 110,000 people, stimulating a great deal of interest and discussion. Everybody wanted to know exactly what it was and how old it could be! The discovery also was of great interest to the press and Duncan, Nick and Jeanette were all contacted for their bit of the engaging story, which appeared in all of the Scottish national newspapers.

In August, Jeanette contacted Professor Greger Larson, who she thought might be interested in Witold and Duncan's find. Prof Larsen is the Director of Palaeogenomics & Bio-Archaeology, in the School of Archaeology at the

University of Oxford, who is interested in ancient DNA of canines, amongst other things. Jeanette carefully selected a tooth of the mystery animal and sent it to him for DNA and carbon dating analysis, the results of which we still await. We are grateful



Jeanette Pearson's photo comparing the skull with an adult wolf (left) and an adult fox (right).

Scientifically, our objectives are its identification, dating and conservation, with any determination regarding cause of death, if possible. We would then like it to be returned for permanent display in our new Brora Heritage Centre at the Old Clyne School, where it can be suitably displayed in a climatically controlled environment.

For the scientific work to progress, we have been kindly granted half of the radio-carbon dating fee by a wind farm micro-grant from Brora Community Council and the DNA analysis is being financed by Professor Larsen's lab.

We have been in touch with Golspie Heritage Society, on whose 'patch' Duncan's peat bank is located and they are happy for us to proceed with our proposals. When the scientific results are known, whether it be a large dog or even, hopefully, a wolf, we expect another upsurge of interest.

This could be a really significant find for Sutherland, and Witold and Duncan must be heartily thanked for spotting the remains and bringing it to our attention and not just ignoring it and carrying on.

More Chronicle News

Brora Remembers 1918-2018

As part of Brora's commemorations of the centenary anniversary of the end of World War 1, the Society held an exhibition in Brora Golf Club over the Armistice weekend. The location was selected due to the fact that the community was invited to have a light lunch there following the Remembrance Day services at the parish war memorial and Church of Scotland on Sunday, November 11th.

Over 100 people took advantage of the refreshments, organised by the Brora Remembers group, who had come together from many of the community groups in the village and who had co-ordinated all of the beautifully crafted and poignant centenary commemorations.



Greeanan Excavation

Following the success of the Wilkhuse excavation in 2107, the Society is planning another for May 2019. As we go to press, the Society has funding applications in for a proposed excavation at Greeanan in Strath Brora.

Above the former Gordonbush School (now the Scout Hut), the site of an old dwelling house has been identified. It has had an interesting existence, having been the summer home for perhaps the most colourful minister in the parish, the Rev Walter Ross, from 1776 to his death in 1825 and also to newlyweds, 79-year-old John Mathieson and 27-year-old Isabella Baillie in 1841. We will keep everyone informed of progress.

Cyclocross event at BHC

Just before Christmas 2017, the Society was approached by East Sutherland Wheelers to see if they could hold a Cyclocross event at Brora Heritage Centre. We had no objection, nor did the Council, so the day-long event took place on Sunday January 28th 2018.

In hosting the event in the close season, we managed to raise close to £200 with sales and donations and the day was a great success for all.

Following this, this year's event was held in the grounds on Sunday, February 3rd and again, the weather was kind and there was a larger turnout. The event and venue appear to be very popular with the organisers and the cyclists themselves and is set to become a regular fixture in the ESW calendar, with an extra event planned for the summer.



Betty Faassen de Heer, CHS Archivist

Founding committee member and Society Archivist for the past 15 or so years, Betty Faassen de Heer, has decided to take a step away from this role. Betty has transformed the archives with great loving care and we now have an organised collection of all of our objects.

Having done this with a passion over the years, she is passing on her knowledge and skills to Caroline Seymour and Dom Turner, who have volunteered to gradually take over from Betty and let her life return to some sort of normality! The Society will be making her an Honorary CHS Life Member in recognition of her sterling efforts, not only in the Archives, but also in her role over many years as the annual exhibition co-ordinator.

The Wilkhouse Excavations, 2017; the Follow-up

By Nick Lindsay

In May 2017, in partnership with the University of Glasgow and Guard Archaeology Ltd, Clyne Heritage Society hosted an archaeological excavation of the 18th Century inn and other building remains at Wilkhouse, Kintradwell, around 3 miles to the north of Brora. The whole excavation was funded by CHS member, Donald Adamson, of Edinburgh, as a follow-up study to his University of Glasgow PhD on the movement of cattle and grain out of the Scottish Highlands in the period before and during Improvement, which can be viewed online at <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/5461/>

The site focused on the old Wilkhouse Inn and associated buildings and enclosures, situated close to the beach, on the old road from Brora to Caithness and well below the present A9. The inn would have been well-used by-passing travellers, including drovers herding cattle from Caithness and North Sutherland to southern markets at Crieff and Falkirk.

The dig was an incredibly enjoyable and rich experience for the 50 volunteer diggers who spent 261-person days on site over the 12 days, helped in no small part by the glorious, sunny weather.

After it all closed down and the professionals, students and volunteers all went their separate ways, with cherished memories of a fortnight in Brora fresh in their minds, the post-excavation specialists got to work.

Separate specialists were engaged to study the ceramics, glass, metal, coins, clay pipes, archaeobotanics (seeds and pollen etc) and bones/shells, and their work would all feed into the final report, which is in final draft form as we go to press.

A little sneak preview shows us that the bottle glass dated to between the early 18th and early 19th centuries and the window glass around the middle of the 18th century. The pottery is of a similar age, as are the clay pipe fragments and the metalwork, including two military buttons of the Sutherland Fencibles, c.1793-1801.

The coins, however, whilst the majority also fall into the above timescale, show four examples of earlier dates. The oldest is a 1588 billon hardhead or twopence Scots of James VI. This appears to show that the Wilkhouse site had an existence, earlier than our building and its finds, so there may well have been an inn of an earlier date on the same site.

When the report is finally produced, it will be available to read online at <http://www.archaeologyreportsonline.com/> and we are grateful to Brora Community Council, who assisted with the funding for the post-excavation analysis, in the form of a wind farm micro-grant.

Visitors to Clyne

Each year, the Society welcomes several people from various parts of the world, who are visiting our parish to trace their family roots. As a result, they usually all join the Society.

Last year, our first visitor was Cathy Baillie and her family from Ontario, Canada, in April, who, coincidentally had booked Airbnb accommodation with our new Heritage Officer, Caroline Seymour on the Doll. She had been in contact with the Society before their visit and they attended the Easter Festival event at Brora Heritage Centre with their 3-year-old daughter, Lillian.

Cathy's ancestors were Alexander 'Spain' Baillie and his wife, Janet Baillie, who resided at the township of Torseiller in Strath Brora, before it was cleared, along with many other townships in the strath by the Sutherland Estate in May 1820.



As described in Caroline's article on Page 25, Nick Lindsay showed Cathy and her husband, Cameron, with Caroline, around Torseiller on a damp day in the strath.

As often happens, Cathy became quite emotional while wandering around the house ruins (pictured, above), imagining Alexander and Janet and their children in the same place almost 200 years earlier, before they emigrated to Canada after they, like dozens of other families, had been evicted from their homes.

Later in April, long-standing CHS member, Brian Evans, from Leeds, visited the centre with his wife, Norma and daughter, Tracy. Brian's step-father was Charles McNeill, from Upper Doll and he brought Brian up from the age of 5.



Charles had a sister, Winnie, and a brother, Johnny, who lived in Golspie and there were three other sisters. The family moved from Upper Doll to the old Doll School House before moving on to Fascally. Brian spent all of his summer holidays in Brora and never misses an opportunity to come back with his family to Brora.



In May, Ian Johnston, from Chatham, Kent arrived in Brora to investigate the roots of his grandfather, John Sutherland, born in April 1887 at Heatherbell, Ladiesloch.

Some quick research was done and Ian was met by Nick Lindsay at the Heritage Centre, then taken to Clyne Cemetery, where he was moved to find his great-grandparents, Alexander Sutherland and Margaret Ross, interred there.

Nick then took Ian to Clynekirkton Graveyard to show him the stone which commemorates Alexander's parents, Ian's great-great-grandparents, (pictured) Hector Sutherland and Lexie Graham. Also

commemorated on the headstone are Hector's parents, William and Christy and Lexie's mother, Elspet (Eppie) MacPherson, Ian's 3 x great-grandparents.

Needless to say, it was an emotional experience and Ian later contacted the Society to say *'It really was quite an amazing experience for me and I can't express my gratitude to you sufficiently.'*

In June, Donal & Michelle MacKay from Queensland, Australia, arrived at the Centre, inquiring about Donal's great-grandfather, Alexander MacKay, who was born at Ascoilebeg in Strath Brora in 1815.



Donal & Michelle MacKay chatting with local contractor Edward MacKay, who has a croft in East Clyne, where Donal's ancestors lived.

Along with 94 other families in Strath Brora, Alexander's family were evicted in 1820 and they resettled on a new 'lot' at East Clyne, which they had to cultivate from scratch and build a house on.

In 1839, aged 23, Alexander emigrated as a single man to New South Wales, Australia, before moving on to Auckland, New Zealand in 1840, where he set up in business as a Bootmaker.

By 1843, Alexander had married Rachel Menary and their first child, Robert (Donal's grand-father), was born in Queen Street, Auckland in 1844. In 1849 he purchased land in North Shore, Auckland, and named it Reay Farm and the family moved there in 1851. In December 1851, Alexander's younger brother, Donald, and more remarkably, his 70-year-old mother, Janet, left Brora together to join him in Auckland.

Nick took Donal and Michele to see the croft, now occupied by Mark and Kate Keith in East Clyne and also to Ascoilebeg, from where his ancestors were cleared in 1820. Whilst at East Clyne, Edward MacKay drove by and stopped for a chat when he saw 'tourists' outside the croft. The MacKays had a great old discussion about families and life in Brora and Clyne.

Brora Salt Pans Research Project

By Jacquie Aitken, Penny Paterson, Nick Lindsay and Jo Hambly (SCAPE)

The highly successful and award-winning community research and excavation project is back in action and we're excited to share our research and plans. The community archaeology project is a partnership between Clyne Heritage Society and the SCAPE Trust, a charitable organisation whose aims are to research, conserve and promote the archaeology of Scotland's coast.

The recording of Brora's early salt and coal industries began in 2004, when Society member, Jacquie Aitken completed a monitoring report on the condition of the eroding archaeology, including the remains of large stone walls, coal and ash middens and a waggonway, which promoted further action. In 2006, a survey on the coastal links area, below the raised beach, between Lower Brora and Inverbrora Farm identified over forty industrial sites. The most fragile sites on the beach were being eroded by the sea and under threat of destruction and loss.

This alarming discovery prompted the Society to form a long-lasting collaboration with the SCAPE Trust team. Between 2006 and 2012, SCAPE accessed funding for a dedicated programme of excavation, to record the archaeology and preserve its history and material culture. The excavations, led by the SCAPE team, were staffed almost entirely by volunteers from Brora, the local area and members of the North of Scotland Archaeological Society (NOSAS). Community participation and support has always been at the heart of the project's aspirations.

The excavations uncovered industrial buildings and other remains connected to the two earliest phases of salt production at Brora, i.e. 1598-1617, led by Lady Jean Gordon, Countess of Sutherland and 1767-1777, initiated by William, the 18th Earl of Sutherland. The excavations have revealed many interesting features and finds.

1598-1617 Excavation Highlights

The site included the remains of a large stone walled pan house on the beach and a slightly elevated salt store in the sand dunes above. Both buildings were connected by a trackway, made of compacted coal and ash.

We were very surprised to find inscribed letters and symbols on the fireplace lintel and surround and on the door jambs of the salt store. They are most similar to merchants' marks, sometimes found on possessions and documents of the 16th and 17th centuries. However, other possibilities include masons' marks or, maybe, so-called apotropaic symbols to ward off witches. This may seem far-fetched, but it was a common belief at the time that witches could gain access to buildings down chimneys.

Other surprising finds included a metal harpoon arrowhead and several fragments of window glass. Glass wasn't made in Scotland until after the salt pans went out of use, so it probably came from the continent, as chemical analysis indicates that its composition differs from English glass of the period. We also recovered rare local pottery, fragments of iron, animal bone (including worked whale bone) and thousands of fish bones, oysters, mussels and crustacean shells.



Aerial view of the 1598 salt store.

1767-1777 Excavation Highlights

The later saltworks were located approximately 100m further south along the coast, from the 1598 site. The excavations uncovered a pan house, with a brick-built furnace and frame for supporting an iron pan. Another building depicted on an 1813 map annotated "Ruins of Salt man's House" was also excavated. The finds included a wide variety of pottery, including industrial red wares, pearl wares and a fine sherd of Bow porcelain English teacup!

Within the National Archives of Scotland, in Edinburgh, are a collection of 'Vouchers for Scottish Salt' (NAS E536). These relate to the duty paid on the salt delivered to a selection of Scottish ports from 1713 to 1798.

From these vouchers, we can see that the the peak of production at Brora was during the tax year 1775/76, when salt deliveries received at Inverness amounted to 14,059 bushels (1 bushel = 50lb salt or 22½kg), while the vouchers for the final three years of this phase show that over 10,000 bushels

were delivered each year. These figures indicate that of the 36 salt works in operation in Scotland at this time, Brora was ranked a quite amazing tenth.



2008 excavation open day at the 1767-1777 salt pan house.

A third phase of salt-making began in 1814 at a new site in Lower Brora, just to the south of where Salt Street is today and lasted till 1828.

Over the last few years, we have been monitoring the sites and focusing on these early 19th century saltworks and we have also undertaken further desk-based research. The works were established as part of the Sutherland landowners' wider 'improvements' during the Highland Clearances.

A contemporary account was published in 1824, by John MacCulloch, a geologist: *'the long trailing smoke of the Brora salt-pans, streaming over the sea and widening till it disappears, reminds us of Preston Pans and Borrowstowness, giving an air of life and civilization to a coast, not long ago among the most solitary and deserted throughout the whole country.'*

Appeal for information

In order to build up an understanding of the changing landscape of Lower Brora and in particular the site of the Salt Pans, we would be interested in hearing from anyone who remembers the houses that occupied the site of the Salt House, which were demolished in the early 1950's.

We would like to find out if the stone was reused and whether the foundations remained visible after demolition? It may be that you had family who lived in the houses that occupied the Salt Pans site or lived nearby. Maybe as a child you played down there and remember ruins or old buildings, circular constructions, the railway line or pipes.

The area of the salt pans and later housing would have changed at various times, including when the Radio Station was built in 1939 and when the landscaping improvements were made in the 1990s. So, if you have any memories or know of plans in existence or, even better, photos, we would be delighted if you could get in touch.

Saltworks Stone Shifters

In January 2019, the stonework from the fireplace, door jambs and reused window sill, retrieved and stored in 2010 from the old salt store, were moved to their new home at Brora Heritage Centre. The stone shifters included the SCAPE team and CHS volunteers and even torrents of rain didn't deter the team's determination, on the day of the move.

The team would like to thank George MacBeath for looking after the stones at his croft for the last eight years. The move will ensure their continued protection and the preservation of the soft, hand chiselled, "Sputie" sandstone blocks. There are plans to develop a new display at the centre, where these special, monumental survivors from the earliest phase of Brora's salt industry will take pride of place.

We are also planning to celebrate Brora's place in coastal salt-making history in 2020, the Year of Scotland's Coasts and Waters, by bringing salty experts from across the UK to Brora for a Salt Symposium – so watch this space.

It is great that Brora's Salt Pans will be coming to life again after a break of a few years. What we uncover this time will complete the final chapter on the Brora Salt Pans story, putting Brora's industries back in the spotlight.

Brora Salt Pans Research Group - Facebook Page (Like and Follow)

We've created a new Facebook page to share information, photos, stories and histories. The research group is dedicated to documenting Brora's early salt and coal industries and encouraging involvement through events and activities. The research will include other relevant industries, histories and archaeology. We already have over 500 followers and we encourage you to like and follow the Brora Salt Pans Research Group page. By doing so, you will receive notifications of posts and events.

www.facebook.com/BroraSaltPans/
www.shorewatch/brora
www.scapetrust.org

Duncan Gunn and his Gaelic Recording: a Footnote

By Rosemary Power

A recent issue of The Clyne Chronicle contains an article in which Morag Sutherland relates how, while a prisoner of war in 1916, Duncan Gunn, from Brora, was recorded speaking Gaelic, and reciting the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-32) (See 'Duncan W. Gunn: a Brora Prisoner of War in WW1', The Clyne Chronicle 19 (2016), 3-9).



Mainly Scots prisoners of war at Döberitz, northwest of Potsdam, Germany, some 25km SW of Berlin, where Duncan Gunn was first interned.

It is suggested that he was reciting it by heart, which is possible, but from what we know of the work of the phonologist in charge, it is likely that he was reading it aloud, from his own copy of the Gaelic Bible or from one provided by the project run by Professor Wilhelm Dögan (1877-1967, also written Doegan).

In the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries, many German scholars engaged with the new discipline of Celtic Studies. The name of the Prussian Professor Dögan rang a bell when I read this article. I had come across his work previously, in the context of his phonological recordings in Ireland in 1928-32, when working with Dr Ciarán Ó Duibhín of Queen's University, Belfast, in 1989. This led to a brief correspondence with Dr Martin Rockel, of the Humboldt University, in what was then East Berlin. He obligingly went into his institution's cellars and found that some of the recordings made on wax cylinders from that time had survived

undamaged, and they were thus able to supplement incomplete sets kept in Ireland. The Royal Irish Academy now holds a combination of the surviving recordings, and a description of the work can be found on a dedicated website, www.doegan.ie.

Dögan's practice in County Kerry, in September 1928, was the focus of my exchange. As with Duncan Gunn and his colleagues, questionnaires were kept about the informants' backgrounds to accompany the recordings. Of those selected to be recorded in the Kerry Gaeltacht, all, as was common custom of the time, were male, and most were of retirement age. Perhaps the experience of Dögan and his colleagues with camps full of young men over a decade previously had led him to focus on male pronunciation.

Dögan's final exercise for each of the Kerry men was one which he regularly used to provide uniformity, but which in this case he abandoned. His plan was that each informant would read the parable of the Prodigal Son, which he reckoned would be familiar to them all, and he provided an Irish New Testament in advance for them to use. The parable was indeed familiar; each of them read a line or two and then began to recount it in their own words. Perhaps this was, in part, because the printed text was somewhat different to their own dialect of Irish, but probably more because of the strong Irish tradition of oral storytelling. Our Duncan Gunn, as a Protestant, may have been more accustomed to moving between his own dialect and his Gaelic Bible, and in sticking to the written word.

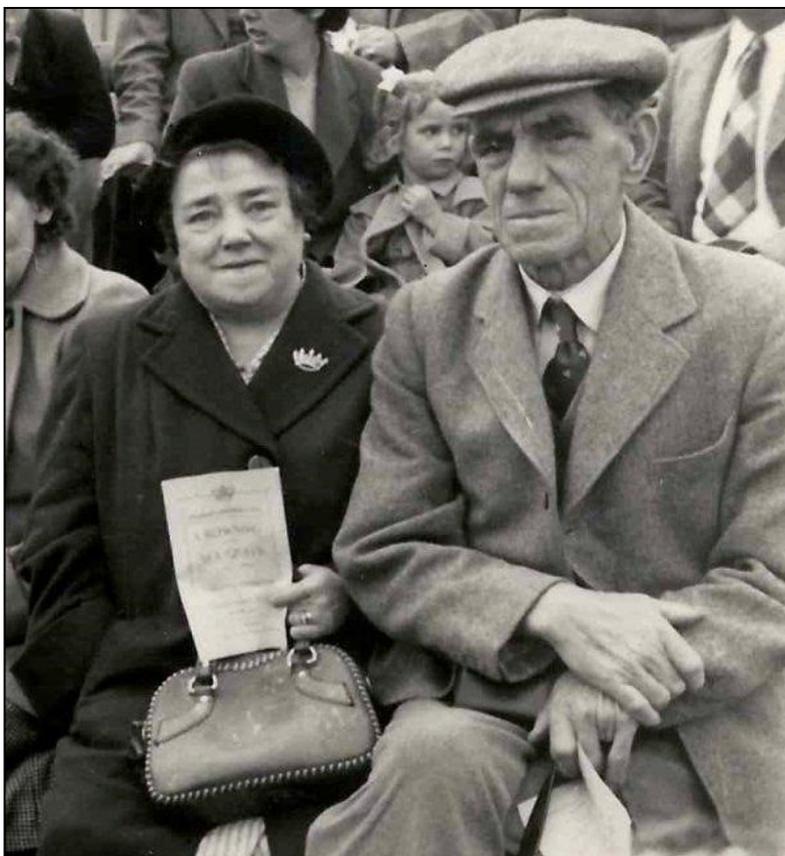
While the Kerry informants were driven to and from the recording centre in a motor car and given a small amount of money for their pains, it is unlikely that Duncan and his colleagues got any material benefit from their contributions, though it may well have given them an interest amid the restrictions and boredom of a prisoner-of-war camp.

Fortunately, in Duncan's case, the recordings and accompanying paperwork have survived. He is heard on the recording reading fluently and rapidly from the Gaelic Bible. The paperwork includes some phonetic rendering of parts of the tale by one of Dögan's team, and a word-for-word transcription in Duncan's own hand, in which he follows the printed version. In another hand someone has attempted to record the sounds of Duncan's Gaelic. This is not in the formal phonetic script; it seems possible that it was by one of Duncan's fellow prisoners, who had some knowledge of spoken but not written Gaelic. Unfortunately, we do not know who he was and whether he was also a Brora man.

Curiously, the material sent to Morag also includes in yet another hand an additional page. Headed '2', and perhaps misplaced with Duncan's contribution, it contains the end of the Prodigal Son parable in Scots, from verse 21 onwards. At that time, the only translation available into Scots was the sixteenth-century one by Murdoch Nisbet, which was not published until it appeared in the Scottish Texts Society in 1901-1905. It is not been possible

to compare the text, but such a volume was too bulky to be taken to war in the usual way; the breast-pocket bible was the norm for soldiers, and there are many tales of how a soldier was saved by it from a bullet aimed at his heart. It is possible that Dögan lent a copy of this academic work for the purpose of recording, but the vernacular and contemporary nature of the wording suggests that someone confident in Scots made his own translation. Whether he was also from Brora, we do not know.

Current methods of collecting data place a much greater emphasis on context, a matter which Dögan may have dismissed as unscientific. At some stage, somebody may go through all the surviving Scottish recordings, paperwork and transcriptions by Dögan and his team, from an otherwise bloody period of our common European history. His persistence and commitment have benefited us, for he recorded some Gaelic dialects that are no longer alive, and gives us, in Duncan's voice, and the writings of his colleagues a glimpse into the past.



Duncan Gunn, with his wife, Mary Jane Walls, whom he married in Glasgow in 1921, pictured in 1953 at a Coronation parade

In Memoriam

It is with sadness that that we remember the passing of the following members or former members:

Liz Sutherland (nee Thom), 12th March 2018, member 2005 to 2018.

Campbell Port, 30th August, 2018, member 2006 to 2016.

Janet Landles, 1st February, 2019 – member 2009 to 2014.

Liz (pictured here on her 1st birthday, at No 3, The Old School) was born in Inverness in 1942, though her parents, George and Mary Thom, lived in Brora. She married Iain Sutherland in Brora in 1961. When she married, she was already working in Iain's family firm, William Sutherland's Draper, affectionately known as 'the Steps', opposite Station Square in Brora. With Iain, she later owned and ran the business.



Raised in Brora, she had a keen interest in our Old Clyne School project, as one of the flats in the building was the family home and she lived there until she was married, and was always very supportive of the project. It is just so sad that she was taken away from her family and friends so soon and that she didn't get to see her former home being re-used as our new, vibrant centre.



It is also with great sadness that we have lost Alison Searl, wife of member, Tim Griffiths, who lost her battle with cancer on 29th September, 2018. She attended many of the Society's events since she and Tim moved to Backies and came to Muriel Murray's talk on the Caithness Flagstone industry in September 2015.

In fact, only weeks before her premature death, she was busy helping with the Old Clyne School site tidy up (pictured, left), hacking away at vegetation, seemingly without a care in the world. Our sympathies go out to Tim and his family.

Clyne Heritage Society Board 2019-20

The new Board begins after the AGM on Thursday 21st March, 2019. Members have already been served with the AGM papers.

During the last year, we were very sorry to lose Wendy Armstrong (*front right in photo*), who stepped down from the Board in September, 2018. Wendy, who came with a real pedigree, as her late mother, Morag Gibson, was founder treasurer in 1998 and went on to become the Society's 2nd Chair the following year, was co-opted onto the Committee (when we were a committee!) in September 2016. Increasing family and work commitments mean that she has had to leave us. We wish her well.

It is also with regret that our Secretary, Andrew Bridges (*rear, in photo*), is leaving the Board at the AGM. Andrew joined the committee in 2015, succeeding Jenny Wilson as Secretary two years later. His heart has been captured by a Belfast girl and the happy couple will be forging a new joint enterprise together in Lisa's home city. We wish them both the very best of luck in their new venture.



The remaining Board have indicated a willingness to serve again if nominated and may be re-elected *en bloc* at the AGM.

The provisional Board for 2019-20 (if elected) will consist of:			
Position	Name	Position	Name
Chairman	Nick Lindsay	Webmaster	Denise Ferne
Vice Chairman	John Alderson	Director	Joan Baxter
Secretary	Vacant	Director	Alex Campbell
Treasurer	Catriona Sinclair	Director	Vacant

Veteran Remembers

Continuing the series of articles by Samuel Grant, born in November 1879, the eldest of 7 children to George Grant, Saddler and Ironmonger and Catherine Murray, in Commerce Street (now Rosslyn Street) in Brora, which appeared in The Northern Times in 1958/59.

Samuel Grant's working life started in 1898 as a clerk with the late Mr Archibald Argo, County Clerk of Sutherland. But he stayed there only a few months when the urge to seek his fortune in the south saw him on the road to London, where he began as a clerk with the city's School Board. He finished up in the same service with London County Council. In between, Mr Grant was with the Royal Naval Air Service in the First World War.

Brora's Free Church Minister Had Great Prestige

(Northern Times - 26th December, 1958)

The Highlander traditionally 'has' religion, and years ago Brora was no exception. There were two churches, the Church of Scotland (the Established Church) and the Free Church. The former was situated in a remote part of Clyne and was attended by many of the aristocratic and county families. The minister, the Reverend John Spark, also had a glebe, a large manse and garden and helped the community in many ways. The original church became dilapidated and a new one was built near the village. The old Clyne churchyard adjoined the church precincts, and was in continuous use until the cemetery nearer the village was provided.

The Free Church minister was the Reverend John Murray, a preacher of outstanding dignity and independence. He was a robust Christian.

Mr Murray preached in both Gaelic and English and had great prestige in the parish. He travelled in a pony and trap driven by a coachman, and often preached as far away as Gordonbush.

So well was Sabbath observed in those days, that long country walks were taboo. If people walking to Gordonbush heard the minister's gig in the distance they hid in the bushes until he passed.

Mr Murray did a good deal of useful secular work for the parish. He was liberal in contributing to our schoolboys' football club, and respected by us accordingly!

It may be interesting to add that the Church's present pitch-pine seating was carried out when I was a schoolboy, and at the present day everything about the building, except the lights, seems exactly as it was then, including the lower pulpit for the precentor.

In many respects, Sunday was observed as a whole day religious festival, as it is still in some remoter parts of the Western Highlands. Sunday morning devotion for a band of earnest Christians began with a 'meeting' for prayer and praise in the vestry at 10 am, an hour before the English service.

In the afternoon there was Sunday School under Mr Janetus Mackay, a keen worker in Christian projects. A devoted band of young ladies took the classes. From a small boy's point of view, it served to pass the time, and we could look forward to an annual prize-giving and a soiree in the vestry, where a choir, under the leadership of the precentor, entertained us; and we were supplied with tea and a 'baggie' of cakes and prizes.

For adults there was a meeting of the YMCA in the upper room of the Institute, now serving as a county library (*above what is now Cornucopia, on the corner of Gower Street and Rosslyn Street, Ed.*). Then there was a religious meeting of prayer and praise in the Temperance Hall which had just been built.

It may be of interest to recall the economic position in the last decade of last century of the average citizen, and its bearing on the general ambition for his family to acquire a sound education. To make a living and bring up a family was often a struggle, and there was an inborn urge, at whatever sacrifice, to give the children an opportunity to 'rise' in the world. The experience of even harder times in the childhood of the parents intensified this urge.

Money did not circulate freely, and shopkeepers, depending in the main on agricultural prosperity, did not see much actual cash until the May or November term days.

In many homes with large families, provision for a basic ration was made by purchasing in the autumn a half barrel of salted herring, about half a ton of potatoes, and a sack of oatmeal. The butcher was visited for a bit of meat for Sunday's broth.

Despite this hard living, there was always generosity for any good cause.

A clay pipe and tobacco at 3d per ounce was usually the only luxury for many, except at New Year time, when non-tee-totalers had saved up a little for 'a dram'.

There was no Welfare State. Now the standard of living has increased immensely, and the educational ladder can be climbed by the lad or lass o'pairs without much financial difficulty. It was different then. The student from a humble home got his university education the hard way, but he usually made good in the end.

Winter Series of Lectures – 2019-20

The Society is always very grateful to the speakers, who all come and give us the benefit of their knowledge of their own free will. Attendances were again very healthy during the last full year (2017-18), averaging 46 and peaking at 65 in November 2107 for Drs Warren Baillie & Donald Adamson (Archaeologists, GUARD) for their talk on the Wilkhouse Excavations.

This season, we have also had a tremendous attendance of 88 for Local Historian, Robert Foden, who came to talk to us from Orkney on the Jellicoe Express and also 80 for James Maxwell's talk on the rationale for the design of the Old Clyne School.

Next winter's provisional talks are below:

Date	Name	Title
Oct 17th	Bruce Keith <i>(Surveyor and Environmentalist, Peterborough - originally Dores, Inverness-shire)</i>	Bridgescapes: A personal journey through history, celebrating Scotland's Bridge building heritage
Nov 21st	Katherine De Jonckheere <i>(Retired Head Teacher, Dornoch)</i>	The First World War in 100 Items: Almost!
Feb 20th	Alison Boyle <i>(Curator and Manager, Highland Museum of Childhood, Strathpeffer)</i>	Childhood Memories: the Highland Museum of Childhood and its Collections
March 19th	Morag Sutherland & Ellen Lindsay <i>(Clyne Heritage Society)</i>	The Brora Beach Huts and Their Owners
April 16th	Dr Jim Mackay <i>(Chairman, Kirkmichael Trust, Black Isle)</i>	Kirkmichael Church: Back from the Brink of Destruction
May 21st	Nick Lindsay <i>(Clyne Heritage Society)</i>	Characters who made Brora: a Selection
June 18th	Open Night	A Selection of the Society's New Archives on Display

Remainder of Winter Series of Lectures – 2018-19

Date	Speaker	Subject
Mar 21st	Nick Lindsay <i>(Chairman, Clyne Heritage Society)</i>	Clyne Heritage Society's Coming of Age: What We Have Done and What We Will Do
April 18 th	Dr Tom Greenshields <i>(Military Historian & Author, London)</i>	The History of Hospitals of the Highlands
May 16 th	Dr Annie Tindley <i>(Senior Lecturer in History, University of Newcastle)</i>	The Iron Duke: land reclamations and aristocratic decline in Sutherland, c.1869-1884
June 20 th	Film Night, with Jimmy Yuill <i>(Actor and Director, Golspie)</i>	'Geoff' – a short, brilliant, comedy dram film, set in Golspie. Followed by a Q & A session

All talks take place on Thursdays at 7.30pm in the Brora Community Centre. Admission is free and refreshments are provided, also free of charge.

The Society is also very appreciative of the members who attend and frequently donate very generously to the raffle.

Publications

The Society's most recent publication, Wendy Sutherland's '*Unfolding Land: Impressions of Strath Brora*' is available at £5 (plus £3 P&P).

Norman Gibson's '*BRORA – time and change in a Highland village*' (£5, plus £3 P&P) is a beautifully illustrated publication, re-creating photographs of the village which had appeared in a previous publication of the 1920s or 30s. The result is a fascinating selection of colour images of modern-day Brora, alongside its original black and white counterpart from the old publication.

We also have a limited number of copies of the late John Owen's '*Coal Mining at Brora 1529-1974*', priced at £7.50 (plus £3 P&P); the definitive history of our unique, now disappeared industry.

The '*Clyne Heritage Society Journal*', is a timeless collection of papers on the talks presented during the 2004-05 lecture series. This illuminating and interesting research publication is available from the above address at £1 (plus £3 P&P).

Please make cheques payable to Clyne Heritage Society and post to the address below or contact by email and pay by BACS.

The Clyne Chronicle is the magazine of Clyne Heritage Society. It is compiled and contributed to by volunteers; usually, but not exclusively, from the Society.

The Editor welcomes all contributions for future editions and feedback from readers, with the purposes of informing and entertaining readers and recording aspects of the life and the people of Clyne and around. However, the Editor would remind readers that the articles are the views of many different people, and readers' views on those articles should take into account the stated sources for all articles and comments.

Please support *The Chronicle*! Thank you.

Please contact the Editor at nicklindsay@btinternet.com or at Sunnybrae, West Clyne, Brora, Sutherland, KW9 6NH.

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