

## **Morvern Heritage Society**

### **Chairman's Report to AGM, 20<sup>th</sup> September 2012**

It has been another entertaining year at the Morvern Heritage Society. Sometimes it seems as if we are just pottering along and not achieving very much but when we look back at the past year, it is apparent that a lot has happened. Many interesting talks, walks and outings have taken place and been enjoyed by a large number of people, both local residents and visitors.

Membership numbers are holding up well – we have 50 paid up members this year (compared to 47 last year) and probably a few more who have forgotten to renew. It is worth noting that while many of these are local residents, there are several from further afield including Sheffield, Wolverhampton, Hereford, Gloucestershire and Shetland, while for the past two years we have been delighted to welcome two members from Calgary, Alberta. Subscriptions remain at £6 for individuals and £10 for families.

At the AGM last year, Mary Barnes, Kate Cruickshank, Alan Kennedy, Robert Laurie, Colin and Paula Martin, Jennie Robertson, Alistair Scoular and Douglas and Helen Watt were re-elected onto the Committee and were joined by Alda Grace. At the following business meeting, Jennie Robertson and Alistair Scoular were re-elected as Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively and Paula Martin and Alan Kennedy were re-elected as Secretary and Treasurer/Minutes Secretary respectively. Robert Laurie was elected to the post of Website Manager.

#### **Talks and Outings.**

We have enjoyed some outstanding talks and interesting walks and outings this year.

##### **17<sup>th</sup> November 2011:**

Norrie Maclaren treated us to a most interesting overview of his life in films and gardening, entitled "**A Green Fingered Journey from Television to Highland Hillside**". Using a multi-media presentation, Norrie showed samples of his innovative gardening programmes for television as well as showing pictures of his beautiful garden at Ard Daraich, Ardgour. Originally a croft under an oak tree, the garden was created by Constance Spry and developed by Norrie and his parents into an 8-acre hill garden with an important collection of rhododendrons, acers and other rare trees and shrubs.

##### **15<sup>th</sup> December 2011:**

Isla Robertson, in the midst of her final year studying History at the University of Edinburgh, gave us a talk on one of her chosen topics: Scottish Witchcraft. In a fascinating round-up of witchcraft in the Early Modern period, Isla described various explanations for witch-hunts ranging from the effects of a patriarchal society to political manoeuvring. She finished with the events in the reign of James VI, including the persecution of the North Berwick witches. The evening was rounded off with a festive offering of mulled wine and mince pies.

**January 2012:** The January meeting was cancelled when the speaker became unavailable.

**16<sup>th</sup> February 2012:**

Seventeen members enjoyed a delicious festive dinner at the Lochaline Hotel. The great turnout repeated our experience last year when the postponement of the Christmas Dinner from the busy festive season to a quieter time in the New Year increased participation. However, the delay to mid-February was perhaps slightly longer than necessary.

**15<sup>th</sup> March 2012:**

Annabel Laurence from the Lochaline Dive Centre introduced the Sound of Mull Artificial Reef Project. In a fascinating presentation, Annabel described the proposal to sink a decommissioned British Naval Destroyer in the Sound of Mull to create an artificial reef. This would provide habitats for marine life as well as a safe diving environment. Annabel described the very complicated (and expensive) process involved in buying, decontaminating and modifying a destroyer. A feasibility study on the project is underway.

**26<sup>th</sup> April 2012:**

Adrian Davis of the Wildcat Haven Project gave a most interesting talk on the efforts to protect and conserve genetically pure Scottish wildcats. It has been estimated that only 400 wildcats are left in Scotland. Over the next two to five years, in the area covering Ardnamurchan, Sunart, Moidart, Morvern and Ardgour, the team aims to collect blood samples from cats captured by cage trapping, in order to gather genetic information and assess the wildcat population.

**23<sup>rd</sup> May 2012:**



Kate Cruickshank and Jennie Robertson represented Morvern Heritage Society at a function to welcome HRH the Earl of Wessex to Morvern. The first Royal visit to Morvern 35 years focussed on the Lochaline Dive Centre and the newly restored Drimnin Chapel. However, local community organisations also assembled in a marquee on the Old Pier and the MHS photo panels were on display. Kate and Jennie presented HRH with a copy of Exploring Morvern Books 1 and 2.

**6<sup>th</sup> July 2012:**

A small but appreciative group (of 7) made the biennial visit to the Mull Historical and Archaeological Society. The planned visit to Kildavie, the old burial and settlement site which the MH&AS has been investigating under the Scotland's Rural Past project was postponed when the tracks were found to be impassible. However, Bill Patterson and Kevin Luscombe, at very short notice, came up with a fascinating alternative, all based around their home territory of Croig, all enjoyed in brilliant sunshine. After coffee in Dervaig Church Hall, we headed for the peninsula of Aird, looking at newly discovered, possibly prehistoric, burial cairns, a well-preserved sheepfold and a corn drying kiln, which has been cleared of stone. After a picnic in Bill and Suzanne's garden at Leacann, where Bill also demonstrated his prowess with dousing rods, we visited a circular feature which had been partially excavated, another house of the Aird township and finally the beautiful beach at Port na Ba.



The sheepfold at Aird Croig



The cleared corn drying kiln at Aird Croig

**16<sup>th</sup> July 2012:**

As part of Gala Week, MHS held a guided walk along the shore of Loch Aline and back to the village via Cadha Ruadh. Alistair led a group of nine, discussing the Sand Mine en route, looking at the new Lochaber Geopark noticeboard at the pontoon and pointing out the Three Sisters (sadly now two), three Sycamore trees which acted as a meeting point for the lads from Ardtornish and the girls from the village. Further on we saw the Three Brothers, where the girls from Ardtornish met the boys from Lochaline. The old Lime Kiln was examined and, after a stop at Barham's Breist, a stone wall built by the Clerk of Works at Ardtornish, a smaller group continued to Kinlochaline, locating, after a slight detour, the kerbed cairn above the cottages. The expedition continued to Cadha Ruadh quarry via the old road and on to the forestry road back to the village.



The walking group at the "two" sisters



The old Lime Kiln

**18<sup>th</sup> August 2012:**

On a visit to Killundine Farm three years ago, it was noted that there was plenty more to investigate and a group of seven duly made a return trip on a damp August day. After looking around the farm steading, we explored the site of the former Killundine House and walled garden, only traces of which are now visible. A visit to Keeper's Cottage up the hill sparked interest: formerly known as Townhead Cottage, this was the site of one of the few photographs of an eviction. Heading further uphill, Tim pointed out an earthwork which he has noticed on Allt a Mhuilinn (Mill Burn) and identified as a possible millpond. The team agreed that this probably was a millpond though no traces could be found of any mill building. A further trip will be necessary in bracken free conditions. Our visit ended with a very welcome coffee and biscuits provided by Judy Pickavance.



The walking party at Killundine



The millpond, distinguishable by bracken cover

**14<sup>th</sup> September 2012:**

Morvern Heritage Society, with the help of Veronique Walraven, was involved in an exhibition to celebrate the re-opening of Lochaline Sand Mine. Earlier in the year, Veronique had organised a film team to record the reminiscences of any people who had been involved in the earlier phases of the mine. Several members of the Society were recorded and a copy of the DVD will be made available for the MHS archives. The film was on show at the Grand Re-opening as well as a display mounted by members of MHS, using photos and objects from their own collections. The exhibition was greatly enjoyed by all those who attended and we are very grateful to Alistair Scoular, Robert Laurie, Kate Cruickshank, Creina Jackson and Alan Kennedy for providing material for the exhibition and for arranging the display.



Alistair and Creina at the display



Objects of interest associated with the mine

### **Other Business.**

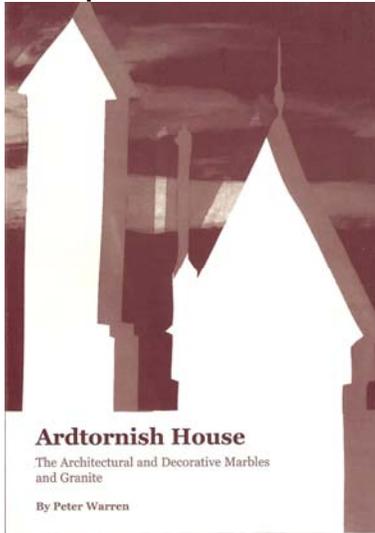
Four business meetings were held, mostly concerned with planning future activities. Some extra meetings were held in run-up to the Lochaline Sand Mine exhibition. Several other topics received attention:

#### **1. Publications.**

**Exploring Morvern Books One and Two** are selling well. We are very grateful to Kate for organising the distribution and to Lesley Jones and Ardtornish Estate for continuing to sell them without profit.

**Newsletters:** After a below-par performance last year with only two newsletters, unfortunately no newsletters have been produced at all this year. Paula is always most efficient in producing the newsletters but sadly the chairman has not managed to feed her the information required. We aim for four newsletters a year and will endeavour to do better. Hopefully this illustrated report will start the ball rolling.

#### **Other publications:**



With the help of a generous donation, MHS is sponsoring Dr. David Jones of St. Andrews University to write a history of Ardtornish House and its contents. This work is still in progress and the proceeds of the sale of the book will help fund future publications.

Another donation financed the publication of a book on The Architectural and Decorative Marbles and Granite in Ardtornish House by Prof. Peter Warren of the University of Bristol. This expands Prof. Warren's article on the subject, which appeared in Exploring Morvern Book 2, and includes colour photos of all the marbles. This attractive and interesting book is now available from Ardtornish Estate Office and Lochaline Stores.

#### **2. The Lost Place-Names of Garbh Chriochan**

No progress has been made on this project within Morvern, though the project has continued in Ardnamurchan and Sunart. Information is available on [www.garbhcriochananadeas.com](http://www.garbhcriochananadeas.com).

#### **3. Morvern Heritage Society website.**

Robert Laurie set up a new website though this is still a work in progress. [www.morvernheritagesociety.org.uk](http://www.morvernheritagesociety.org.uk)

#### **4. MHS Noticeboard.**

Paula's new map was put on display on the village noticeboard with photos linked to specific sites.

### **Thanks.**

Grateful thanks are expressed to all those who have contributed to the society over the past year, particularly Alan, who has most efficiently and promptly produced the minutes and the accounts and Robert, who has been working on the website. We are also most grateful to all those who have provided time and materials for displays and all those who have helped at meetings with teas and baking, which is always much appreciated. Here's to another eventful year.