

**MEMORIES**  
**of**  
**KYLEAKIN**

by

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PERTH  
MUNRO & SCOTT LTD SKINNERGATE  
1950

## FOREWORD

These memories were written at the request of one of our WRI members. Since then I have been asked by several to publish them. If they serve to re-live the former days for some and give others a glimpse of those days in my dear native village my wish will be realised.

MM'P

I was born in Kyleakin on Christmas Day of a rather auspicious year for Skye: the year of the Battle of the Braes. I wonder how many know the date 1882? My intimate friends know that I am imbued more with the spirit of that year than the spirit of the day of my birth. I do not know whether a turbulent spirit moved all over Skye that year or not but Kyleakin has a more notable connection with that disturbance than my birth.

It was a Kyleakin young lady who, in Portree Post Office, refused to allow Sheriff Ivory to read the telegrams handed in there that day. She held her ground until the arrival of the Postmaster who informed the Sheriff that Miss MacKenzie was carrying out her duty and obeying a very strict rule. On hearing of Miss MacKenzie's stand against the Sheriff the people of Portree carried her in a Post Office chair shoulder high to her lodgings. I am glad to say Miss MacKenzie's memory is perpetuated. There are two cots in the Broadford Hospital endowed by her brother in memory of this lady, Mary Jane MacKenzie, and her sister and brother. The donor of the cots was Kenneth D MacKenzie, Managing Director of Braby & Co Glasgow,

and for many years the highly-honoured President of the Skye Association in Glasgow.

There were two daughters and three sons in the MacKenzie family. They were pupils of the Kyleakin School and were proud of their Kyleakin connection. The youngest son died suddenly in India. Had he lived, I understand, it was his desire to return to Kyleakin. Another connection with the Braes Battle was a couple, Mr and Mrs Finlayson, who came from Braes to Kyleakin and who, I believe, took an active part in the fight.

I suppose that everyone knows that Kyle means Narrows. Akin is said by some to come from Haco who, as King Haco of Norway, called at Kyleakin on his way to the Battle of Largs in 1263. Others say Akin comes from the giant Aachan as Kylerhea from the giant Rhea. Some of you may know that at one time it was proposed to change the name Kyleakin to New Liverpool. It was to become a seaport town. The late Major MacKinnon, Dunningell, had a framed copy of the plan of this seaport town of New Liverpool. The names of the only thoroughfares I remember in this would-be

famous town are Mews Lane and King Street and where the school stands is part of Mews Lane and Sunnybank stands in King Street. This project evidently died a natural death. Its claim to become a seaport was well justified in those days. It was quite an important port of call. The father of the MacKenzie family already referred to was Customs Officer in Kyleakin and that in itself shows its importance. People from the mainland and from other parts of Skye came to Kyleakin to get the boats for the South. There was a bi-weekly passenger and cargo service by MacBrayne's boats to and from Glasgow. In my early days the best known of the fleet were the 'Claymore' and 'Clansman'. I did not do the journey on those boats but many are the tales I heard of the passage. Compare the accommodation with the 'Loch Seaforth' and you wonder how the passengers survived two days and sometimes more under such conditions. Cattle and sheep mixed with the passengers and the third-class passengers carried and prepared their own meals as best they could in the steerage. In those days the steamers were often delayed for hours and passengers

going south were kept waiting at Kyleakin. Sometimes stress of weather, sometimes mist and heavy cargoes were the cause of the delay. The ferryman was advised from Tobermory the approximate hour of arrival from the south; and from Stornoway of arrival from the north. Imagine the ferryman being kept waiting perhaps all night, without shelter, for the boat's arrival while the passengers were made as comfortable as possible in the village houses. An amusing incident, one of many that enlivened the weary hours of waiting, may be recalled. The steamer from the south was, as usual, late. A minister who had been stationed in Kyleakin some time previously and had got settled further north was paying his Kyleakin friends a visit and along with the ferryman was at the wooden pier awaiting the steamer's arrival to take him home. Weary of waiting he had taken a walk to himself. The steamer's whistle was heard from Balmacara which was the signal for the Kyleakin boat to get going. The boat was at the landing alongside the wooden pier but the minister had vanished. On hearing the whistle one of the ferrymen said to the other "There's the

steamer, where now is that —— of a minister?" "Here he is" came the voice from above on the pier and all three had a good laugh.

Previous to this incident the people who acted as ferrymen also owned the local smithy. As a family they were known for their ready wit and humour. One of the sons, a most obliging fellow, detested smithy work and usually found an excuse to avoid it. On one occasion no excuse could be found so he had to take his turn at blowing the bellows. He was also the local barber. After a spell at the bellows he suddenly said "Dash it all, I quite forgot, I promised to give so-and-so a haircut." To keep his promise he made off and was well beyond recall when his friends remembered that the party referred to required no haircut —— he wore a wig!

This young man's father now bedridden, and knowing his son was in the kitchen, called him by name to come to him. The son was evidently better engaged, and thinking he would deceive his father, replied "He is not in." "If not, come yourself" was the father's retort, knowing well who had replied.

On one occasion a tinker family was passing

some days in the village. They had a white horse which roamed the place. The boys got the horse took it to the smithy and blackened it. The tinker came looking for the animal and enquired of my uncle if he had seen its whereabouts. Well aware of the prank my uncle said, "Is that not it feeding on the green?" "No" said the poor man, "my horse was white". Not until the rain came and began to wash off the soot did the man recognise his lost animal.

Kyleakin was an anchorage for sailing ships. I remember several vessels owned by Kyleakin men. There were the 'Catherine', 'Mary', 'Caroline', 'Snipe', 'Glengyle', 'Danish Rose', 'Syren' and the 'Ada'. The village of Plockton produced a big fleet of schooners (two-masted sailing ships) which sailed the high seas. These schooners and many more from the south of Scotland, England, Ireland, Wales and the Isle of Man anchored in the bay sometimes from stress of weather and often waiting a suitable tide to get through the Narrows at Kylerhea.

When steamships replaced the sailing boats and until the 1914-18 war there used to be an almost constant stream of steamships of sorts

passing through the Kyle. The Naval fleet of those days often passed and occasionally a large battleship anchored in the bay or in the vicinity and visitors were allowed on board. The boats of two shipping lines, the Langlands of Liverpool now incorporated in the Coast Line and the Park Line of Greenock, regularly passed. The manager of the Langland Line was with his family an annual summer visitor over many years. He realised what a boon it would be to the firm if the passing of their boats was reported to headquarters. He consulted my brother, Donald, who in 1900 succeeded my uncle as Postmaster and general merchant, with the result that an arrangement was made that the passing of the boats was to be telegraphed to Liverpool and sometimes direct to their destination. Two long toots meant a Park Line and three short toots a Langland. All the members of our household were supposed, on hearing these signals in the night, to get up and see in which direction the boat was going. In the morning notes were compared. This arrangement often saved the owners a considerable sum in dockers' wages.

The Manx and Irish fishing fleet passed us on their way to the Shetland fishing. At that time we had several fishing boats and vessels of our own. There were four curing stations at one time in the village. Until about 1892 the main livelihood of the inhabitants was fishing and its attendant occupations. It was a lovely sight to see, especially on a summer morning, the silver darlings being shaken out of the nets, shovelled with wooden shovels into baskets, and carried ashore by men in oilskins glittering with scales. Women and men were waiting at the curing stations on and near the ferry slip to gut and salt the sparkling herring. The cured herring were shipped, sometimes by MacBrayne's boats the 'Claymore' and the 'Clansman', and other times by a special boat which called to ship the barrels to the Glasgow markets. All this added to our enjoyment and education when we were children. We did not value money but a penny for rolling empty barrels was ever welcome as something with which to buy Scotch mixtures and biscuits coated with pink and white carraway seeds.

During the fishing season in particular the village children spent a great part of their

time fishing at the pier and on the rocks in the vicinity. Shoals of small saithe came alongside, also codlings and flounders. Four small hooks could be purchased for a penny but often a bent pin served the purpose. If a rod was not available a broken hoop was readily found. With a piece of string, a bent pin, and a straightened hoop many a meal was caught. The keenness of those small fishers exceeded that of their elders.

When fishing was in full swing we had lots of boats from Loch Fyne, Lewis, Applecross, Ullapool, different parts of Skye and the West Coast of Ross. They anchored in the Obbe, and at times the schoolboys amused themselves walking from boat to boat almost the full breadth of the Obbe. Another example of the ready wit of the ferrymen already referred to was shown in connection with the herring barrels. They, at a fishing season, lined the pier and on the end of each barrel was the owner-curer's initials. One of the curers, whose initials were DMD, was on occasions rather irritable. The ferryman was an even tempered fellow but on one occasion the curer roused his temper. The ferryman was walking along the pier, I suppose nursing

his grievance, and noticed the curer's initials. More to himself but yet loud enough for those near at hand to hear he repeated, "DMD Domnhuill mhac an Diabhull, Diabhull mar a tu!" [in Gaelic that sound here resembles "d"] (Donald, son of the Devil. Devil of Devils!). My uncle, whose initials were DMP, was within hearing and was so tickled with the interpretation that he said "If you interpret my initials I will stand you a pint." "Drama mhath agus pint" —— (A good glass and a pint!) —— came the quick reply and of course my uncle rose to the occasion.

As already noted we had a Customs Officer and we also had with us Excise Officers and their preventative men. Their chief duties in those days were the prevention of illicit distilling of whisky and the supervision of dog, gun, and game licences. They scoured the hills and were often from home for days. They hired a boat and visited the outlying islands. If they found a still they were supposed to destroy it. Anyone giving information which was helpful was usually handsomely rewarded. Many were the tales of the excisemen being duped. Sometimes the culprits informed the officers of the

whereabouts of an old still and got paid for doing so, while at the same time they had fixed up a new still in another place, gaining both ways. A big sensation was once caused in Kyleakin in connection with the bringing home of a still by the excisemen. The still is a large iron vessel resembling a boiler; from it a neck projects. The liquid for distillation is placed in the boiler and the vapour is conducted through the neck to the condenser, or worm, where it is cooled and again forms liquid.

At the time I am referring to the Post Office and shop were in the building now known as Benmore. The house at the back, known as the Long House, was used as a store by my uncle who was then postmaster and general merchant. The Excise Officer lived in the dwelling-house above the shop. The still was housed in the store and during the night disappeared. It was presumed that some people who knew of its whereabouts got a boat and the tide being high, came up the Obbe, took the still by boat and dumped it in the sea. When the loss was discovered there was a big commotion. Several from Kyleakin and the mainland had to attend a

court in Inverness. I understand the whole thing was done as a huge joke but it was considered a serious offence to interfere with Crown property, and like a lot of other happenings, I don't know if the true story was ever made public. It caused a lot of ill-feeling which, I am afraid, did not die out until the death of some of those involved. I remember when any reference to the case of the Poit Dubh (Black Pot) was spoken of almost in whispers.

In my early days there was only one licensed hotel in the village. It was called the Kyleakin Hotel and was part of the present King's Arms. It extended from the two windows beyond the bar porch and to the east end and the wing at the back towards the garage. The Kyleakin Hotel was tenanted by Mrs Turner assisted by her niece Miss Leitch. Mrs Turner was a sister of Captain Archibald Baxter well-known captain of the 'Clansman' and other MacBrayne steamers. The other part of the building was a shooting lodge and the proprietor was a Mr Ryrie. Previous to my day there were two public houses; one in the King's Arms building and one in Iolaire. It was called the Eagle Inn and the remains of

the stone image of an eagle still stands above the porch. There was once a shop in that building too. About 1898 the shooting lodge was converted into a licensed hotel once again called the King's Arms Hotel. In 1900 the two hotels, Kyleakin Hotel and King's Arms Hotel, were made one under the name King's Arms Hotel. It was tenanted by Mr and Mrs Donald MacInnes. From then until after the outbreak of the 1939-40 war this was the only licensed hotel in the village. During the war years the Marine Hotel was granted a licence and once again Kyleakin has two licensed hotels.

The parish doctor lives at Broadford 8 miles distant. In my youth there was no district nurse and no hospital. The doctor went his rounds either by bicycle or horse-drawn trap. There was no telephone. If the doctor was urgently required a horse and trap had to be sent for him. Previous to this the one doctor served Strath and Sleat and lived in Sleat. At this time there was an epidemic of scarlet fever. The doctor, under the circumstances, was most attentive but several infants succumbed. Maternity cases were attended to by local women. My mother, without any

training and without her seeking, acted as midwife for several years. She always sent for the doctor but as often as not he arrived too late. I am pleased to be able to relate that my mother never lost a case.

In those days and until the 1914 war many yachts anchored in the bay and what a lovely sight it was to see those floating palaces lit up on a summer night. Ryrie of Kyleakin had the 'Euphrosyne'; Sir Donald Currie then of Scalpay the 'Iolaire'; Sir William MacKinnon of Strathaird with the 'Cornelia'; Wood of Raasay the 'Rona'; Bullough of Rhum the 'Maria'; Rudd of Ardnamurchan the 'Mingarry'; Scott of Harris the 'Golden Eagle'. The Coats of Paisley with almost a fleet of their own including the 'Gleniffer', 'Queen of Scots', the 'Hecate'; the first Lord Inverclyde the 'Capercaillie'; the father of the present Lord Inverclyde with the 'Beryl'; 'Shiela' of the Donaldsons of the Donaldson Line; the 'Gretas' of the Scots of Greenock; the 'Cutty Sark' of the Duke of Westminster; the 'Sunbeam' of Lady Brassey; and many more. King Edward VII while recuperating at Glenquoich Lodge with Lord and Lady Burton, from the effects of his operation for

appendicitis, passed through the Kyle on Lord Middleton's yacht which took him on board at Loch Duich. He was heard to say why did people go abroad to see scenery when there was such scenery at home? The yachts referred to were, I think, all steam-yachts with the exception of the 'Gleniffer'. The 'Gleniffer', owned by James Coats, was a schooner yacht, and to see several sailing yachts including our famous racing yachts passing through under sail was a sight to remember. James Coats referred to was the donor of the libraries to schools and public libraries.

I had rather an unpleasant experience of yachts when I was about twelve years of age. As already noted my uncle was then postmaster with my brother assisting. About this time the Morse instrument was installed and my uncle was too old to learn its workings. Our family lived at Sunnybank in those days and to give my brother time for meals I was taken into the Post Office after school to learn the Morse. Lord Furness' yacht, the 'Tunstall', was chartered and among those on board was a Frenchman. The yacht was in the bay and a party came

ashore while I was on duty. The Frenchman had an interpreter and asked for a telegram form for France. In my excitement I handed him an Inland Form and when he had almost finished writing I discovered my mistake and produced the correct form. It was good for me that my knowledge of French was non-existent as from his look and volume of words I was being torn to pieces. By good luck I remembered I could gum the used form to the Foreign Form and so save the Frenchman the extra exertion of rewriting the telegram. The interpreter looked on with an amused look.

At this time Portree was our head office; Broadford our transmitting office. Afterwards Stromeferry became transmitting office, then Balmacara, then Kyle. Our mails left by horse and trap at 6 am for Broadford, thence by steamer to Stromeferry. The postman waited at Broadford until the return of the steamer from Strome for Portree and our incoming mails arrived in Kyleakin about 7 pm; and had to be called for. Previous to this time the Skye mails came by horse-drawn carriage from Portree to Kyleakin and were ferried to Balmacara and thence by road

to Inverness. Commercial travellers, in my youth, often stayed overnight in the hotel. If they were going to Portree in the afternoon from Broadford they sometimes went by foot to Broadford and made some calls on the way. They usually sent their luggage by mail gig in advance. One such traveller packed his bag at night and the postman took it in the morning. When the traveller leisurely got up and the mountain dew of the previous night had vaporised and the rising sun had dispersed the mists of Tallisker imagine his horror when he discovered that something had gone amissing. It was not his ration book — there were no restrictions then. It was not his purse. Had it been so he could easily raise the wind. He was well-known to the villagers. The proprietrix of the hotel was a widow and her niece, who assisted her, much-sought-after but unclaimed treasure. They both were renowned for their hospitality and obliging disposition but on this occasion they could not oblige. The poor traveller had packed his trousers in the bag that preceded him to Broadford. All he could do was to send an SOS to the village tailor who came, took his measurements, and made

him a pair of trousers while he remained in bed.

Previous to the mails being brought by steamer from Stromeferry to Portree they were carried by a horse-drawn coach from Kyleakin. They were ferried from Balmacara to Kyleakin. On one occasion a passenger on the mail coach forgot to carry his pipe. He was longing for a smoke and evidently did not like the idea of a smoke from the driver's clay pipe. The longing became unbearable and he asked for the pipe. This was readily given. The passenger took his silk handkerchief and wiped the mouthpiece until he considered it sufficiently clean. He had a long smoke and returned the pipe. The owner had a look at it in full view of the passenger. He broke a length off the mouthpiece, which he threw overboard, and returned the pipe to his pocket. It was the driver's turn to do the disinfecting.

In 1901 my brother built Heathmount. The shop and Post Office were opened there in the Spring of 1902. It was in our possession until after my brother's death in 1934. After my uncle's death in 1908 my brother was appointed a Justice of the Peace for

Inverness-shire in succession to my uncle.

Messrs Langland's cruising steamers, on a ten days' cruise from Liverpool, made Kyleakin a port of call. They anchored in the bay overnight and landed their passengers. One such evening, a glorious summer evening, several of the passengers were in the shop. Among them was a handsome couple whom I served. On leaving, the gentleman turned round and addressing me, said "The blessings of an Irish Clergyman be upon you. You live on the most heavenly spot on earth".

These cruises proved a good advertisement for Skye; many seeing it for the first time and coming back again for a further stay. We had some well-known and renowned visitors in our village in the early days. Thomas Carlyle stayed at the King's Arms Hotel. He thought the front rooms too noisy so was given a room at the back. On his first morning in his new surroundings a pig was being killed. This proved too much for poor Mr. Carlyle. One incident in his stay may be of interest. Lady Ashburton was also a guest at the King's Arms at the same time. One day Carlyle and her ladyship were crossing the stepping-stones which have recently been

improved by Miss Matheson our WRI President. Carlyle noticed that her ladyship's shoe lace was undone. He asked one of the village girls who was playing nearby to fasten the shoe lace. For this he gave her a penny. Had she known how famous her benefactor was to become I expect she would have treasured the coin. Another gentleman who spent part of his honeymoon here was HM Stanley the explorer. We had among us our own 'Dr Livingstone', one of the villagers being so nicknamed, and he had the honour of conversing with HM Stanley who found his famous namesake.

Mrs Stanley was interested in the herring gutting and on seeing one of the girls engaged on this work wearing gloves enquired if she was preserving her hands. The young girl replied that her hands had got badly cut and she was taking precautions.

One of Mr Ryrie's yearly guests was Sir Joseph Fayrer. He continued coming until he was over eighty. He was the great authority on snake bites. He was an army surgeon and was a veteran of the Indian Mutiny. A sepoy killed one of Sir Joseph's infant children while sitting in his mother's lap during the

Black Hole of Calcutta episode. His son, also Sir Joseph, was for a number of years Superintendent of Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. The first Sir Joseph was a great deep-sea fisherman and spent a great part of his stay in the small boat. He lost a favourite daughter at the birth of her first child and this was a great sorrow to him. I was only about nine years old when I first remember meeting him and wondered why he always stopped to speak to me. His boatman afterwards told me that my eyes reminded Sir Joseph of his daughter, Mary, whom he had lost so tragically. One of my treasured possessions is a letter received from him after he had ceased coming to Kyleakin.

Another visitor of those days who rose to fame in the musical world was Henry Wood, afterwards Sir Henry Wood, the great conductor. He and his mother made a lengthy stay at the King's Arms. They both, he with his violin and she at the piano, took part in a village concert.

One of our village men Dugald Matheson, a brother of Miss Matheson already referred to, was a violinist and made violins as a hobby. Mr Wood was much interested and was

shown the violins. Imagine Mr Matheson's delight when Mr Wood played on his home-made instrument. Mr Matheson was a great-grandson of John MacKay the noted piper and pupil of the MacCrimmon school of pipers. John MacKay belonged to Raasay and eventually settled in Kyleakin. He was piper at Drummond Castle and the pipes he played there were made by himself. His great-granddaughter, Miss Matheson in Kyleakin, has a pair of black ebony candlesticks replicas of a chanter made by her great-grandfather. John MacKay had four sons who were their father's pupils and became distinguished pipers. Roderick was piper to Moray of Abercairny Perthshire. In this mansion is a corridor for the use of the piper. John was piper to Lord Girydys and died in Kyleakin. Angus was born in Kyleakin about 1812. After being piper to Highland families he was appointed piper to Queen Victoria. He was the first piper to hold this position in the household of Queen Victoria — the highest position in the piping world. He collected and preserved the MacCrimmon Piobaireachd. He wrote Piobaireachd as the MacCrimmons created

them and gave them to the world in staff-notation for the first time. Angus MacKay was a composer of Piobaireachd as well as marches and was the finest performer of the classical music of the Highland bagpipe that ever lived. He died in 1859. The fourth son, Donald, became piper to HRH The Duke of Sussex. Donald's daughter became Mrs Matheson Kyleakin. His son, Donald, was piper to the Prince of Wales afterwards King Edward VII.

Another piper of note, who lived and died in Kyleakin at the age of 95, was Donald MacRae. He was piper in the Seaforth Highlanders. At the age of 80 he walked from Inverness to Edinburgh to take part in a piping competition. He felt amply rewarded when he won the coveted medal. Lady MacKenzie of Seaforth, for this feat and honour, presented Piper MacRae with the oldest article in Brahan Castle. It is a metal box of St Columba's day depicting religious scenes and was found in Brahan Church. The medal and box are now in the possession of Piper MacRae's grandson, the Rev Martin MacRae Trossachs Parish.

Other visitors I may mention were well-

known artists among them Hook, Young, Sir DY Cameron and Colin Hunter. It was while staying at the King's Arms that Colin Hunter painted his famous picture 'Goodnight to Skye'. Another visitor, who cannot be classed with these illustrious gentlemen and to-day would be labelled one of the New Rich, came annually for a number of years. He was of a rather interfering nature. Why I refer to him is to let you see that in those far-off days we could hold our own with those who thought we were inferior. One day this gentleman was walking towards the pier. A cartload of tinkers passed. Coming towards the visitor was a workman from Kyle who was in the habit of doing a lot of work in Kyleakin. Our nosey-parker visitor, to use a commonplace, thought he would pull the other man's leg. The visitor approached our friend and asked "Was that a cartload of monkeys that passed?" Quite casually came the reply "I don't know. Did you fall out?" Another instance of quick retort came from one of our young women. Crossing the bridge with her cattle she was met by two young gentlemen who asked "What do you call these animals?" "We call them

quadrupeds in this part of Her Majesty's realm" came the quick retort.

In passing I would like to relate that, ever since I remember, we have had in our little village worthies who were known for their ready wit and humour. They were of an independent nature and rightly considered themselves as good as their neighbours. Here is one instance of this which I have often heard recalled with evident pleasure by some who took part in it. A young man, who had taken up residence only a short time previous, got married and invited to the wedding dance only those who were considered the Upper Class. Dances in those days were few and far between and a wedding dance was something to look forward to. Not to be outdone, the young men and women who were overlooked, got together and ran what they called an opposition dance. The local violinist was captured and kept in custody by the opposition till the hour of the dance. Doubtful maids, who might join the Upper Ten if seen out on errands were taken to safe keeping, and the dance was claimed a huge success. Mr MacKinnon, Kyle House, was

not aware of the ongoings till afterwards. He was so tickled with the affair that he said "Had they come for my daughters, I would have consented gladly."

Kyleakin did not benefit under the Crofters' Act. All the land in the village is feuing ground and the holders of land are cottars. The cottars formed a committee with a secretary and treasurer to look after their affairs. I remember twenty milking cows in the village. There were fences to be seen to, a herd-boy to be engaged, and a bull chosen. The herd-boy's duties were to drive the cattle in the early morning, week about, to the head of the Obbe and from the boatshed to the turn at Kyle House. He took them home between 8 and 9 am for milking and after milking drove them to the hill where they remained till evening when he brought them home. He had to watch that no cattle strayed on to the cultivated ground and any cattle not housed at night were put into an enclosed patch of ground which lay between the dairy and Mo Dhachaidh. The Committee met to discuss the affairs of the cottars and at the end of the season all accounts and payments were supposed to be settled and the office-bearers

had to give an account of their stewardship. This final meeting (correct name mod) for the year was sometimes quite a lively affair.

On one such occasion the secretary was a go-ahead chap nicknamed 'The Cock'. When we knew him in Kyleakin he was a good shot but in his youth he lost a thumb through careless handling of a gun. A spinster in the cottar group and this secretary did not always see eye to eye. At the beginning of the season referred to the secretary engaged a bull which had only a stump of a tail. The payment of this nondescript bull must have been in dispute and, as usual, the secretary and the spinster exchanged words. She, in protest, rose to leave the meeting and as a parting sally said in Gaelic, "Three things are unheard of — a cock without a comb, a clerk without a thumb, and a bull without a tail".

In those days there was, I understand, a spinning wheel in every house. In the winter my mother carded and spun. There were weavers resident in the village before my time one of them being my grand-uncle who afterwards went to Portree and opened the wool mill there. A great event in those days

was a Luadh or Waulking the Cloth. I have seen several and jolly affairs they were. The cloth was laid on a wooden bench and an even number of women, with their sleeves rolled up, sat at each side. There was also a woman at each end and these were the overseers who took charge of the proceedings. They waulked the cloth to the accompaniment of Gaelic songs and choruses. Besides the spinning wheel there were many other articles in use in the preparation of wool for blankets and yarn. I have in my possession what were called winding needles and they are about 300 years old. There was also an egg-shaped basket with a square opening on the side, into which the rolls of carded wool were put ready for the spinning wheel.

My earliest recollection of a public nature is of a village wedding. I was then between three and four years of age. The wedding took place in Lussa Inn. Lussa at that time boasted of an inn at the roadside. The wedding guests walked in couples there and back and danced till morning. At another wedding the party went by waggonettes to Broadford. The horses were gaily decorated

for the occasion.

To get back to Kyleakin. Our pretty village has a unique position. It has been rightly named the doorstep of Skye. Visitors when crossing the ferry from Kyle see the far Coolins now brought near their serrated peaks standing clear against the sky. This view of the Coolins is considered by many the finest that can be got. The view from the War Memorial is also a splendid one. If one climbs the hill behind the village, aptly named Cnoc-a-fradhero (sighthill), the climber is rewarded with a panorama of mountains, islands and sea. In honour of King George V's Coronation, a bonfire was lit on this hill. A local lady of over 100 years of age set a match to the pile. For her effort she was presented with a bottle of whisky. In thanking the committee the old lady laughingly remarked she would do the climb every day for the same reward. A gentleman, who had a short time previously come to stay in Kyleakin, remarked that the lady's grand effort said a lot for Highland fare — and no orange juice! What is now known as the village was not inhabited in the early days. The houses were on the hillside opposite the

farm and on the sea side of the road at Kyle House. Some ruins are still to be seen there. The first school I heard of was beside the burn on the hillside opposite the farm. The burn is called after one of its teachers — M'Laurin. One of his pupils, who if he were living to-day would be about 130 years old, often told of her doings in that school. On special occasions, such as New Year's Day, the pupils asked permission to make an Ullach or Give Cheers. The teacher, no longer in his first youth, objected. The pupils continued to plead and eventually were allowed to make a small Ullach. Of course it became a deafening roar and the old man covered his ears. The children were not allowed to speak Gaelic until they had crossed the Obbe from the school.

After a time the schoolroom was in the building known now as Kyleview. The present school was built in 1876. While I am writing about the school I will tell you about my schoolmasters. Neither of the four teachers who served in the Kyleakin School in my day could speak Gaelic. Gaelic was my mother tongue and we were not allowed to converse with our parents in English. I

learned to read Gaelic from hearing my father read the Gaelic Bible aloud and hearing it read in Church Services. To this I owe my knowledge of Gaelic. My first teacher was a Mr Howieson from Dunfermline. He was past his best before I came under his charge. He was a queer mixture. During school hours he frequently went outside for a smoke and then pandemonium prevailed. There was not a classroom in those days and there were several windows to the back. Often the first warning of his presence was a wreath of smoke rising up at the windows. Before order could be restored, and by this time the master's hat often adorned a pupil's head, his face appeared at the window and a rush was made for the seats but not before the culprits were spotted.

In spite of his peculiar ways he seemed to be fond of his pupils. On his return from the summer holidays he usually bought us a huge bag of sweets which he threw in handfuls on the green and we children scrambled for them. After Mr Howieson came Mr Waddell from Wishaw. He stayed for about three years and he must have had a hard time

getting us into order. Then came Mr Curr a Fifeshire man. His people were in the linen trade and after about two years with us he went back to Fifeshire. Then came Mr Gunn with whom my schooldays in Kyleakin ended. He found us in a deplorable state but after a year's hard work he was able to put some of us forward for the

Leaving Certificate Examination. I finished with two classmates one of whom claimed descent from the Wild Macraes and the other from the Vikings. Strange to say both chose peaceable professions one being the present minister of the Trossachs and the other a Harley Street eye specialist. Another classmate in the Kyleakin School became Captain Murdo MacInnes. At the time of his death he was in charge of one of the fishery cruisers. His son, Donald an honours graduate of Edinburgh University, is now English master in one of Edinburgh's Secondary Schools. Gaelic was not spoken at school as several families in the village were not natives and could not speak Gaelic. I owe my knowledge of Gaelic chiefly to its being the language spoken at home.

The Harley Street specialist referred to is Mr

Andrew Rugg Gunn; Mr Gunn's eldest son. The second son, a promising lad, chose the sea as his career. When the 1914-18 war broke out he had his first officer's certificate. He joined the Navy and served as a first lieutenant on a submarine which was lost with all hands at the mouth of the Elbe shortly after the Battle of Jutland. A grandson of Mr Gunn, Surgeon-Commander Mark R Gunn, was Surgeon-Commander at Gosport Barracks during the 1939-45 war and there met some of the naval men serving from this district. Another grandson, Donald Macrae, is Lecturer in Economics at Oxford University. A granddaughter, Miss Joyce Gunn, is a magistrate to the Supreme Court in Kenya; the only woman magistrate in the Colonial Service. A third grandson, Douglas Smith, has recently graduated in medicine at Glasgow University.

The present village is a sandbank formed by the action of the sea currents. Kyleakin is built on the sand. I remember when there was a wide stretch of grass between the road and the beach beyond the King's Arms Hotel. The tide began to make breaches there and before the authorities were persuaded to build

a protecting wall the sea had eaten away a lot of ground. The beach at the Marine Garage was chiefly shingle and now we find quite a stretch of grass which, unfortunately, is being cut up by car traffic. At the head of the Obbe, under Dunningell, there was a stretch of dark clayey soil which, I am glad to see, has disappeared considerably and in its place a lovely green sward has formed which in early summer is a mass of sea-pinks; the delight of the villagers and visitors alike. It is the narrow piece of land there and leading to the beach at Kyle house that prevents Kyleakin being an island. The rocky headland on which Kyle House stands is called Creag an Doctor — from Dr Farquhar MacKinnon who built the house. His son, John MacKinnon, whom I remember, tenanted the Kyle Farm after his father. The farm house in the early days was at the head of Glean-na-beiste. The ruins are still there and what a lovely situation for a mansion house! The view down the glen and loch towards the mountains of Lochalsh and Kintail is magnificent. The right-hand side of the loch is thickly wooded. I have a faint recollection of wood-cutters being there

falling wood. One of my day-dreams was to build a road or path from Altanavaig along the riverside to the head of the glen. Could it have carried on by the left side of the loch and round to the side near Castle Moile it would have been a walk difficult to beat. Sir William Harcourt, the great Liberal leader, wanted to build his mansion near Castle Moile but was refused a site. This must have been a big loss to our little village.

Before I leave Kyle House I would like to say that a brother of John MacKinnon of Kyle was an officer in the Indian Army and took part in the quelling of the Mutiny. Lord Roberts served as a subaltern under him. Miss Annie MacKinnon of Kyle, when in India, lunched at the Vice-regal Lodge and met Lord Roberts. They got into conversation and he told her he had served under her uncle.

A gentleman who lives in Skye, and should know it better than most, asked me one day if I knew where the finest view in Skye was. I, of course, said "in Kyleakin." "Yes" he said "the view from Kyle House front door has it. Its natural situation is unsurpassed and many have been its prospective buyers." I

remember Sir Donald Currie, then of Scalpay, going round the village in a horse-drawn trap. Had the MacKinnons sold him Kyle House he would have bought Kyleakin. There is a knoll there called Cnoc-an-Fheudarain — the songster's knoll. To this knoll, an old maid-servant once told me, a bird came at a certain time each year and sang its beautiful song. Strange to say, about 20 years ago, a gentleman who came to live in the village asked me if the nightingale was ever heard at Kyle House. I gave him the story of this strange bird. He said he heard a bird sing there on that day and other days and had never heard a songster like it.

Kyle House is at present tenanted by Professor Seton Watson who holds the Czechoslovakian Chair at Oxford University where his two sons are lecturers also. The daughter who, at nineteen, was in the Press Department of the British Embassy in Moscow is taking her degree in Russian at Oxford. The three are distinguished linguists. The two sons were Majors in the 1939-45 war. The second son holds an Oxford Gold Medal, the only one in existence, being issued in the reign of

Edward VIII. During Professor Seton Watson's tenancy we had Mrs Seton Watson's sister-in-law and niece, Mrs and Miss Stack, the founders of the League of Health and Beauty. Miss Stack became Lady David Douglas Hamilton and she and Lord David spent part of their honeymoon at Kyle House. John MacKinnon of Kyle stood 6ft and on his twenty-first birthday weighed twenty-one stones. In spite of this he was one of the best dancers in the North.

Farquhar MacKinnon, eldest son of John MacKinnon Kyle House, was engaged in the Indigo trade in India. Mr MacKinnon and his family came home from India on a visit and stayed at Kyle House for about two years. With them came an Indian servant and an Ayah. The Ayah stayed only a short time but Boolakee, as the male servant was called, remained until the family's return to India. He was a Mohammedan and faithfully carried out his religious rites while in Skye. He soon made friends with the natives and was loath to leave.

After a lapse of some years Mr and Mrs Hoole and Father Hoole tenanted Kyle House. I still have happy memories of the

entertainments arranged by them. One outstanding evening was a children's one. The children were taught their different parts by Mrs Hoole and Mrs Drummond Fish who then resided in Kyleakin. The programme consisted chiefly of tableaux and the whole affair was a credit to the organisers and the children.

Back to the village. We have at the opposite end from Kyle House the well-known landmark, Castle Moile, the correct name of which is Dun Achain. Major MacKinnon's brother, Charles, called his home in Kent Dun-a-Kyune. On the charts in the old days Kyleakin was Castle Moyle and I have seen letters for ships addressed 'Castle Moyle', This landmark has been painted as often, if not oftener, than any on the West Coast. How many homesick natives have been cheered on their way by its picture in City Galleries and Exhibitions? In my brother's home there is a painting with Castle Moile in the background and the ferry slip with the garboard alongside taking in cattle as was the custom in those days. The cattle market was held on the Sleat road a short distance from the crossroads at Scullamus. The cattle were

driven on foot to the ferries at Kyleakin and Kylerhea. The cattle ferry was a large boat driven by four oars. Market day was a red-letter day. The Kyleakin Hotel had a stall there at which drink was sold and there were toy and haberdashery stalls. I was once there. The picture I refer to was most realistic of a market day. Strange to relate a copy of it was bought in far-away China by a homesick Kyleakin lady who went out with her little daughter to join her husband, a Marine Engineer. When she arrived in Shanghai her husband's boat was at sea. Walking along a street with her daughter and feeling, I suppose, far from home she noticed this picture of her home village in a shop window and, needless to relate, went in and bought it. Castle Moile is no prefab! It has stood the storms of centuries and is evidently held together by clay found at the foot. Who has not heard of 'Saucy Mary' who tenanted the Castle? 'Saucy Mary' saw to it that no boat passed through the Narrows that did not pay toll. Graves, supposed to be of ship-wrecked mariners, have been found at the castle foot. As a child I remember our excitement when a ship struck the castle rock which in these

days often happened. The castle rock was not the only cause of a shipwreck. The first diver I saw at work was on a ship that struck a reef behind the lighthouse island. She was floated with empty barrels and taken into the bay. We children loved to watch the diver getting into his suit and going down and up at his work. Need you wonder that our first thought when a ship struck a rock was the state of the tide as an ebb meant a wreck. Our partly-submerged rocks were not so well marked with buoys as they now are.

The only wreck with loss of life which I remember here happened near Kyle House about 50 years ago. A Welsh schooner coming in from the north in a howling gale on a dark night, and the crew afraid to risk the Narrows, launched a boat to get an anchor ashore. The boat was evidently swamped and, with the exception of a young cabin boy left on board the schooner, all were lost. In the morning, the lighthouse-keeper, on seeing the schooner, went out to her in a small boat and found the boy more distressed at the thought of being, as he imagined, among cannibals than at the loss of his mates. I do not know when the Kyleakin Lighthouse

was built but I remember the building of the Crowlin Lighthouse. A villager working at the building was fatally injured. In my younger days the lighthouse was lit by paraffin. There were two keepers stationed on the island and each watch was four hours on and four hours off. There was a connecting bell between the tower and the light-keepers' bedroom which was rung at the end of a watch or in an emergency. The man on duty was not allowed to leave the tower until his relief arrived. At one time it was a crime to read on duty and every keeper had to have a trade to employ himself and so keep awake.

During my school years a severe thunderstorm occurred. The lightning hit the lighthouse lamp, putting it out, and the keeper on duty was rendered unconscious. Before he lost consciousness he had the presence of mind to press the bell which warned the other keeper that something was amiss. On reaching the tower this keeper found his mate in a state of collapse. He recovered but the shock undermined his health.

The light-keepers' children were ferried by

boat to Kyleakin school and often were a big addition. In my day there were eight or nine children coming from the lighthouse. The school was left open for their use at the dinner hour to have their lunch which they carried.

This open door was sometimes put to another use. One winter there was a dancing class which the children at the lighthouse could not attend. The boatman, a cheery obliging person who remembered his own lively youth, went early in the morning and brought them across. Those from the village who attended the dancing class arrived early at school and for about half-an-hour we went through the dances of the previous night. The boys whistled the tune and the girls hummed or sang. At the lunch hour there was a rush back to the school and the performance was repeated. Thus those who weren't at the class became as proficient, perhaps, as those who were.

We often visited the lighthouse island in those days and a visit to the tower was the climax. The Lighthouse Board steamer brought paraffin oil and the stores to the island and came at intervals. The visit of the

Commissioners, which I think was an annual one, was a red-letter day on the island. Although always spotlessly clean it got an extra dressing-down for this visit. The Commissioners were members of the Northern Lighthouse Board and included one or more Scottish Sheriffs. At our local lighthouse we had our own Grace Darlings. Two village youths, learning to manipulate a boat under sail, were one afternoon enjoying themselves in the Kyle. A breeze sprang up, the sail got into the water, and the boys were thrown overboard. They were watched from the lighthouse. On seeing their plight, two of the girls of about the same age as the boys, launched their boat and rowed to their assistance. They rescued the boys, much to the boys' chagrin, and I expect the 'dooking' was nothing compared to the teasing they got for being rescued by the girls. For their plucky deed the girls were presented with the Royal Humane Society's parchment.

The hills behind the village were in olden times thickly wooded many stumps of these trees being still found in the peat moss. This wood is said to have been burned down by the Danes. A vessel of sorts was found

buried in the moss, and I understand, is now in the Museum in Edinburgh. I also heard of keg of fat being unearthed there. Beinn-na-Cailleach, about 2400 feet high, is well worth climbing. The view from the summit on a clear day is magnificent reaching as far as Ireland. Legend has it that Beinn-na-Cailleach, which is the Gaelic for 'old woman's mountain', was so named because the remains of the Norwegian Princess who lived in Castle Moile were at her express wish buried on the top so that the winds of Norway would blow over her grave. By the seashore, about two-and-a-half miles beyond Kyle House, is St. Maelrubha's Well. He ferried from Applecross to Ashaig and preached in the church at Kilbride. He was one of St Columba's disciples.

I have already referred to the artist Colin Hunter. Besides him many artists visited us including Hook, Young, Sir DY Cameron, Muirhead Bone and Stephen Bone. Mrs Muirhead Bone presented me with a copy of her book 'Off the Western Isles' with etchings by her son Stephen. Among modern writers we have had DK Broster, Carel Kapek, Mrs MacGregor Phillips, Ruth

Munro, Annie S Swan, Dr Ratcliffe Barnett, Dr MacLean Watt and still with us is Professor Seton Watson. I may give here an anecdote of Dr MacLean Watt passed on to me by Dr Ratcliffe Barnett. We all know what splendid work Dr MacLean Watt did among the troops in the 1914-18 war. This time he was stationed at Boulogne and he knew a Highland Regiment was to arrive there. They were passing along the street where he was billeted, at about 2 am Dr MacLean Watt on hearing their tramp, got up to the window and played a tune on the bagpipes; next morning he visited the troops and in conversation asked what they thought of the French people. They said they thought they were a hospitable people. The Doctor asked how. They said that when they were passing through in the morning a little Frenchman got up at a window and played a tune on the bagpipes! Sir Murdoch Macdonald, by that time the famous engineer of the Assuan Dam, on several occasions spent a holiday with his family in Kyleakin. Two other gentlemen who distinguished themselves in the 1939-45 war and who spent several school holidays with their parents in

our village are Major Charles MacKenzie DSO Seaforth Highlanders and his brother Commander Hugh MacKenzie DSO. Major MacKenzie was decorated for his bravery in crossing the Rhine at the battle of Arnhem. Commander MacKenzie was the dare-devil commander of the submarine 'Thrasher' and for his outstanding deeds of daring received the double DSO.

I have already mentioned the fishing industry and along with it I might speak of the trade in shellfish. My uncle dealt in this and sent them to the Billingsgate Market. Boats came with shellfish from Breakish, Kylerhea, Crowlin and Applecross and many in the village gathered them also. They were washed in wire baskets in the seawater before being despatched. Sometimes they were delayed on the way and, if the weather was warm, they arrived unfit for human consumption.

In those days gold sovereigns were common currency. One day one of the men engaged in cleaning the shellfish had three sovereigns in his waistcoat pocket. In those days a man who carried a purse was considered mean. One of the sovereigns was seen to fall into

the water. Instead of bemoaning the loss the man said to the others working with him "Come up to the hotel and we'll make the other two follow that one!" meaning, I suppose, that they would disappear in a different kind of water.

About 1893 the extension of the Highland Railway from Stromeferry to Kyle was begun and this formed a new source of employment. Sir Murdoch Macdonald MP for Inverness-shire was in the Civil Engineer's Office of the Highland Railway in Inverness at that time. Until then, and for a good many years after, the ferry was operated by a rowing boat. The MacDonald Estates, rightly or wrongly, claimed the ferry rights. The minimum charge was 6d and 3d per passenger if more than one passenger. Weather permitting you could get a ferry at any hour of the day or night and it rarely happened that the ferry could not cross. When the Railway was completed the ferry rights were sold to the Railway Company, it was said for a nominal sum, and the Railway feued a piece of ground on either side of the wooden pier on the frontage. Many years after, when the pier was no longer in use, The Skye Transport

Company wanted a site for their garage; the Railway Company contemplated giving them this site. Can you imagine our pretty frontage decorated with a corrugated iron building? The wooden pier at its best was an eyesore but a corrugated iron garage; never! I got to know of this project and wrote to the Society for the Preservation of Rural Scotland. The chairman, I think he was Lord Trent, wrote thanking me for informing them. He had been to Kyleakin and could not bear to think of such a disfigurement. A petition of protest was drawn up and signed by the villagers. I happened to know other gentlemen in the Society and they supported our appeal with the result that the garage was not allowed there.

One of our elderly villagers was at the construction of the railway pier at Kyle. A large boat, something of the puffer type, was used for carrying sand. One day when discharging the cargo this workman evidently was not doing his work to the satisfaction of the contractor. He swore at the man saying "Go to H——!" "Will I take the shovel with me?" came the answer.

When the construction of the Railway began

there were only four houses in Kyle. The workmen in Kyleakin and in neighbouring villages on the mainland were ferried across in large boats and returned at night. I suppose the population was about doubled at that time. There was no school, church or post office in Kyle. The real navvies were housed in huts at Kyle and on Pay Saturday many crossed to Kyleakin chiefly to quench their thirst. There was only one public house in Kyle. A motley crowd these men were. The Highland Railway Company was given £25000 to build a pier at Kyleakin. The pier, a wooden one, was built on the beach with the result that steamers could get alongside only at floodtide. The pier was of little use and was always an eyesore and was gradually allowed to go into disrepair so £25000 was wasted. Had it been built at the rock half the length of the pier would have sufficed and boats could get in at all tides.

About this time Kyleakin was surveyed for a light railway through Skye but the project fell through. On the opening day of the Highland Railway — November 1898 the steamers from Stornoway and Portree came in beflagged and crowded with

passengers. I viewed the opening from a distance. To allow my brother see the opening ceremony I went the previous evening to see an engine coming into Kyle.

The previous year, which was Queen Victoria's Jubilee year, the railway officials presented a Gold Medal to Kyleakin and Erbusaig schools. It had to be competed for each year and the pupil who won it for three consecutive years became the owner. I was the lucky one in Kyleakin. What became of the Erbusaig medal I do not know.

Many of the Kyle people crossed to Kyleakin to church and the senior pupils came to our school. At this time the Free Church held the Gaelic Communion Service on the hump which, on a fine day, made an ideal site. I remember a service, at which Christopher M'Rae Plockton was precentor, and the singing that day was heard at Erbusaig on the mainland. The Free Church was built in 1897 and the foundation stone was laid by the Earl of Moray. Some of our most distinguished preachers honoured us including Dr Alex Whyte, Henry Drummond, Marcus Dodds, Murdo MacKenzie of Inverness, Professor Kennedy Cameron and

Professor Donald Maclean. The Church of Scotland was built long before. I remember once seeing Dr Donald MacKinnon of Strath, father of Major MacKinnon, who was a distant connection of our family. I have an heirloom of the MacKinnon family. It was placed on my grand-aunt's finger at her christening by an aunt of Dr Donald MacKinnon. In the Church of Scotland I listened to Dr MacLean Watt, Dr Norman Maclean, Dr Ratcliffe Barnett, Dr Warr of St. Giles', Dr Kenneth MacLeod of 'The Road to the Isles' fame and the MacEcherns of Inverness. The Rev Dugald MacEchern was with us for several years and gave us the benefit of his musical talents. The need of a reading and recreation room was felt. There were only about three daily papers coming to the village. A room was procured for reading and a splendid library, given to the village many years before by a Mr Houth and housed in the School, was removed to this room. A caretaker was appointed. Daily papers, magazines and periodicals were also provided. Soon a fund for the erection of a small hall was started. A personal friend of Hew Morrison Edinburgh, Carnegie's

librarian, now lived in Kyleakin. Hew Morrison was approached and through him Mr Carnegie. A committee of villagers, with my late brother Donald as secretary and treasurer, was formed. This was about 1898 and my brother remained in office till 1934. An estimate from Spiers Glasgow was accepted and a nice wood-lined corrugated iron building was erected. Carnegie paid half the cost which was about £30 and had it been £300 I expect he would have done likewise. This building was considered large enough at that time. Transport was difficult and we had to depend for an audience on Kyleakin and Kyle. This hall served until 1929 when the new hall was built. It was about the year 1927 that the idea of a new hall arose at a WRI meeting. The WRI was started by Mrs MacKinnon Dunningell about 1925 or 1926. We had a WRI Rally, a most successful one, and strange to say we did not know what to do with the proceeds. Money must have been plentiful then. I, as secretary of the WRI, approached the National Council of Social Services for a loan. They readily agreed and congratulated me on being the first in Scotland to apply. The neighbouring

villages then followed suit and halls were built at Broadford, Kyle and Plockton. Had the villagers shown as much interest in the erection of the hall as they did in the choosing of the site we might have had a much better hall. I am sorry to have to say the meeting at which the site was chosen was the only representative meeting in connection with the building and I still think they made a poor choice of site. The hall cost over £1000. In addition to the loan from the National Council of Social Services we got a grant from the Carnegie Trustees. The late Mrs Farquhar Graham Kyle Farm, the late Major MacKinnon Dunningell and my late brother, Donald, went security for the remainder. Within six years we were able to pay back the loan and so saved payment of interest. Since the erection of the hall the youth of the village have been able to spend their evenings pleasantly. There is a badminton court. A Dramatic Club was formed and also a Gaelic Choir. The Gaelic Choir has won the Targe, presented by Miss Macdonald Viewfield Portree, on two consecutive occasions at the Provincial Mod at Portree. This year the Amateur Dramatic team took

second place at the Portree Dramatic Festival. Since the WRI came into being it has done a tremendous lot of good work in the village. It helped considerably with the erection of the hall by concerts, dances and sales of work. During the war years it kept the service men and women from the village supplied with comforts etc. To show their appreciation of the kindness and thoughtfulness of WRI members the ex-service men on their return got up a concert and dance, the proceeds of which they handed over to the WRI. With this money six garden seats were purchased and placed on the sea front. The railing on the landing pier was put there after many requests by the WRI from the County Council; but not until there was a drowning accident was it erected. Before the erection of the reading room our village concerts and entertainments were held in the school. Kyleakin seems to have had a bigger connection with Portree than now. One of the MacKinnons of Kyle was married to Mr Harry M'Donald Viewfield. The MacKinnon ladies were renowned for their pianoforte playing of highland airs. No concert in Skye was complete without a

pianoforte duet by the Misses MacKinnon and to hear them at the piano, and Mr MacRae, late postmaster of Kyle, at the violin which usually was the opening item at our concerts was a treat in itself. The MacKinnons went to the Portree concerts and in return the Portree artistes came to us. Well do I remember my first Christie Minstrel show. They all, except Mr. Biles, came down from Portree and I imagined they were from Darkest Africa. To-day I can only recall three of these artistes. Messrs Biles, Jimmy M'Kenzie and Roddie M'Kenzie but we often had Major Alex D MacKinnon, Misses Mary Skene and Maggie Skene at our concerts.

In pre-railway days shinty was the outdoor game for boys and men. New Year's Day was celebrated with a shinty match — Married v Single men. The first football match I saw played was between the Railway and Portree. It was played on the village green and was won by the Railway. I was in the Post Office and had to give a running commentary on the game to a Portree clerk who was then in Broadford Post Office.

I may mention that we were better served as a village then than now. We had two boat-

builders, a blacksmith, a cobbler, several masons, a joiner and, of course, a tailor. Now that we have electric light I may tell you that I remember seeing a cruise burning and I have seen tallow candles in the making. At the Autumn Mart a fat animal was usually bought and killed for winter use. The fat of this animal was rendered down and part of it made into candles. There were several moulds on a stand, a wick was inserted, and the hot fat poured in. Then came paraffin lamps, then petrol, and now electricity. In place of a torch I remember being guided by a live peat held in a tongs and that in spite of thatched roofs in the vicinity.

In the Spring of the year it was great fun for us children to be taken in boats filled with seaweed up the Obbe where the seaweed was landed for the crofts. Each croft had its own piece marked out for it on the shore and it was considered a crime to overstep the boundary. A certain villager of progressive views was on one occasion jokingly accused by another villager of cutting seaweed on MacKinnon of Kyle's portion. MacKinnon was present and nothing daunted the accused replied "Yes, and although it was growing

between your mouth and your nose, I would cut it!"

Although it has been said that we could have made more of our pretty village I think we are due some credit for our progressive spirit. Kyleakin, after Portree, was the first village in Skye to have a main water supply. It was made a special water district about 1900. Before the Second World War a Village Council was formed which did good work in looking after the amenities of the village. A second Village Council was formed in 1947 and they set about improving village affairs. The water supply was proving inadequate to meet the increased demand. The Council secretary, Mr. Coynham Greene Dunningell, took up the water question and after lengthy correspondence etc an increased supply was made available. Electric power from the Hydro Electric Scheme was by this time in use in the village. The new Council agitated for village lighting and, due to Mr. Greene's untiring efforts, their wishes were realised in the autumn of 1949 when Kyleakin became a lighted district. Kyleakin, after Portree, was the first village in Skye to be lit by electricity. To give an instance of our adaptability to

progress. A couple brought up a grandchild and this child became seriously ill so the grandfather was sent to the Post Office to telephone for the doctor. The doctor was evidently not able to come at the moment but gave my brother the message to pass on to the old man; that he would visit the sick child later on. On the old man's return home he gave his wife the message. She asked if my brother was talking to the doctor. The old man, unaware of the workings of the telephone, replied "Do you take me for an idiot to imagine that the doctor, speaking at Broadford, could be heard in the Kyleakin Post Office?" He, however, was persuaded to go and enquire and on his return quite calmly said "It seems you can hear the doctor speaking at Broadford in the Post Office at Kyleakin." And so the uses of the telephone became part of the everyday life.

When the 1914 War broke out Messrs David MacBrayne's steamers ceased calling at Kyleakin. The cargo boats landed Kyleakin goods at Kyle. There was only a passenger ferry operating at this time between Kyle and Kyleakin. My brother was forced to purchase a large rowing boat with which he

and another man from the village carried the village goods from Kyle. Out of a population of about 200 there were 33 serving their country. Of these 11 made the supreme sacrifice. A sum of over £300 was collected by public subscription and with this sum the Celtic Cross on the Lump was erected in memory of these brave villagers.

The situation of this Memorial is a splendid one. In the month of June, when the evening sun is setting, the Cross seen from the mainland is a veritable Fiery Cross. This and its reflection in the water of the Kyle is a sight never to be forgotten.

In the 1939-45 War, with much the same population, there were over 40 serving from Kyleakin. Of these 5 gave their lives. One of our naval men won the Croix de Guerre. Their names are now added to those of their comrades on the Celtic Cross. The Cross was dedicated in 1921 by the Rev Martin MacRae MA of Dervaig Parish, himself a native and an ex-soldier. The Cross was unveiled by Mrs MacInnes King's Arms Hotel whose son was one of the fallen. A village native, resident in Glasgow, placed an oak tablet on which was inscribed the names of the fallen

in the 1914-18 War in the Church of Scotland. Another oak tablet, this time the gift of a village lady, was placed in the Church of Scotland in memory of the five villagers who laid down their lives in the 1939-45 War. This tablet was dedicated by the Rev Mr MacRae now of Trossachs Parish who, twenty-seven years previously, dedicated the Cross to the fallen in the First World War. The second tablet was unveiled by Mrs Maclean Harbour House Inverness a sister of one of the fallen.

Towards the end of the First World War American naval men were stationed at Kyle of Lochalsh. A large part of the Railway pier at Kyle of Lochalsh was barricaded off and at this part unloaded bombs were landed from large ships. These shells were sent by train to Inverness where they were loaded. When off duty the Americans used to cross to Kyleakin. Kyle House, being at the time vacant, was a happy hunting ground for them and they carried away as mementoes anything they could lay their hands on. Kyleakin was soon put out of bounds for American naval men. To guard the ships arriving at and leaving Kyle from submarines

a battery was erected at Kyle House. A company of 50 Marines with a Major and Lieutenant were stationed there. Before the departure of the Marines the villagers entertained them in the King's Arms Hotel and, in return, the Marines gave a show at Kyle House.

During the 1939-45 War the RAF, the Army and the Navy were stationed in Kyleakin. The Village Hall was used as a Church of Scotland Canteen. When HMS Port Napier, with 500 mines on board was destroyed by fire in 1941, Kyleakin was not warned of the danger although Broadford, which was 8 miles distant, was warned.

A pleasant memory of olden days is the winnowing of the grain. Not long ago, a native recalling those happier times, remarked to me that one of the brightest memories of her youth was my mother, in her white mutch, fanning the grain on the village green. A large tarpaulin or sail was spread on the green. The grain was poured on this. The fans used were home-made. A well-seasoned sheepskin was nailed to a wooden hoop. One of the fans was closely perforated. The grain was first put into the

solid fan and held in a tilted position to catch the wind and allow the chaff to blow off. The grain, free of chaff, was then put into the perforated fan and shaken so as to free it from unwanted seeds. This fanning was quite an art in itself.

Seven specimens of semi-precious stones are to be found on the Kyleakin shore — mossagate, crystal, onyx, cornelian, amethyst, topaz and rose quartz. When the village hall was being built and ways and means of raising money had to be found I was initiated into the work of collecting the pebbles. I sent them south to be polished, cut and set. The proceeds of the sale of these during two seasons was given to the hall fund. Previous to 1939 there was a ready sale for the polished pebbles. It is difficult to get these pebbles polished now as the machinery is used for export purposes. A small selection was sent from Kyleakin WRI to the 1948 Highland Show at Inverness. A letter was received after the Show letting the WRI know how much the Skye pebbles were admired by everyone who saw them including the King and Queen.

It was on what might be called a perfect

afternoon, the 12th September 1933, that the Royal Landing took place in Kyleakin. Our King and Queen (then the Duke and Duchess of York) travelled by train to Kyle of Lochalsh. In attendance were Lady Helen Graham Lochiel and Lady Hermoine Cameron. The yacht 'Golden Hind', owned by Commander Kitson of Arnisdale, was anchored off the Kyle Pier. The yacht's launch took the Royal party on board where they had afternoon tea. After tea the launch took them to the Kyleakin jetty. Waiting their arrival were the Hon Alistair Macdonald of Sleat (now Lord Macdonald), Major AD MacKinnon Dunningell and Dr Hector Maclean Parish Minister of Strath. Major MacKinnon was a kinsman of the chief who had befriended Prince Charles Edward two hundred years before. A great crowd was waiting to welcome the Royal party and they were loudly cheered as they entered their cars and cheers followed them on their way to Dunvegan Castle where they spent two nights as the guests of Mrs Macleod of Macleod.