

# Kyleakin Local History Society



Website: [www.kyleakinlocalhistorysociety.co.uk](http://www.kyleakinlocalhistorysociety.co.uk)

Email: [kyleakinlocalhistorysociety@gmail.com](mailto:kyleakinlocalhistorysociety@gmail.com)

## Autumn 2014

### Issue 10

#### Diary Dates:

Monday 3rd Nov 2014 –  
'Great Book of Skye'

Monday 1st Dec 2014 -  
'The Great War and Skye'

Monday 5th Jan 2015 -  
Review of photographs and  
memorabilia given to KLHS

Monday 2nd Feb 2015 -  
'Herring Fishing'

Monday 2nd Mar 2015 -  
'Scottish Story Telling'

Dates of other events taking  
place in the village can also  
be included in this section –  
please send the details to  
Sue.

#### Committee:

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

#### Non-Committee

#### Member –

#### Website & Newsletter

Sue Lyons

## Welcome to the Autumn 2014 newsletter

I am pleased to report that we had another successful and well attended programme of talks in 2013/2014 at our new venue, Kyleakin Connections.

This proved to be an ideal location and I would like to thank Kyleakin Connections for the use of the building and also for the use of their projector. I would also like to thank the Church of Scotland Kirk Session for the use of their car park next door.

Many thanks too, to Margaret and Hugh Scott for letting us use their projector screen when it was needed.

In January we held a very successful Burns Supper; and I'd like to thank the committee and members of the community who helped, for all their hard work and support as well as extending thanks to all those who attended, this once again was a very successful event.

This year we welcomed several visitors from far afield to Kyleakin, who were tracing relatives as a result of queries to our website. The artist Nikki Bird also visited and her visit was organised by Atlas Arts. She indicated that she would like to work on a project using Joan Wilcock's photographs of people in the village from the 1950's & 60's, providing funding from Atlas Arts becomes available.

In early June, Anna Belle, Margaret and I visited the Norwegian former trawler Nybakk a floating museum berthed at Dunvegan pier. The visit was followed by a talk in the village hall about the 'Thing Trail 2014' which told us about Viking Parliaments and where they may have been sited in and around the North of Scotland.

Thanks are extended to those committee members plus Janette and Ruth who volunteered to work one day a week over the season in the Bright Water Visitor Centre where once again we held a small exhibition, which was well received by visitors to the centre. This was made possible thanks to Margaret and Hector who loaned pictures and memorabilia belonging to their relatives who served in The Great War. I would like to thank the Eilean Bán Trust for accommodating us within their exhibition.

I would like to thank Anna Belle for organising a Quiz and Quiz night and also for her support with the Burns Supper, all were excellent fund raisers and contributors to ensuring we keep a healthy bank balance.

With the funds available, this year we have been able to purchase a projector and screen and some IT equipment.

Thank you to Margaret, who as well as being Minute Secretary has also carried out many other extra duties over the year.

Many thanks also to Sue for updating the website, producing the Newsletter and managing to fit this in around her busy work schedule.

The last year has been a busy one and I would like to thank everyone for their team work, dedication and support throughout the year and I hope we can keep up the good work in the future.

Caroline Clouston

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

- ❖ Churches
- ❖ Hotels
- ❖ Fishing
- ❖ Schools
- ❖ Shops & Cafes
- ❖ Tourism
- ❖ Organisations i.e. SWRI
- ❖ Kyleakin Highland Games
- ❖ Gala Days
- ❖ Sport
- ❖ Military
- ❖ Families
- ❖ Ferries

If you have a particular interest in any of these sections, or you think that there is something missing, please get in touch.

## Now and Then:

Do you have old pictures of your house and do you know roughly when they were taken? Can you take a picture of your house now – i.e. in 2014/2015?

If so, can you let us have copies so that we can form a display of what the village used to be like and what it is like now?

The majority of the houses in the village have undergone some form of extensions/ alterations, have you found anything unexpected that you think would be of interest to the Society?

## Visits to Kyleakin resulting from queries to our website:

Back in February we received a tentative enquiry by email from the Czech Republic entitled *Scotus Viator*. Kristina Vanova, the Director of a Memorial to Karel Capek, wondered if our village had a house, memorial or museum connected to the publicist Robert William Seton-Watson.

We let her know that we were aware that Professor Seton-Watson had leased Kyle House c1919 – c1951 and used it mainly in the summer months while residing at Wimbledon in London for the rest of the year. The Professor died in 1951 and his widow and family then returned to London permanently. His three children (Hugh, Christopher and Mary-Rose) all became Professors in their own right in similar fields to their father and continued to visit Skye more or less annually for the rest of their lives. Christopher the last survivor died about five years ago. Helen Macrae (whose compositions have featured in previous newsletters) first came to Kyleakin as a member of the Seton-Watson's household staff in 1934 and for several years worked for them at both Kyleakin and Wimbledon. She often recounted with pride how she had to announce the arrival at the Wimbledon residence of such Czechoslovakian personalities as President Benes and Jan Masaryk during the dark days preceding World War Two (they were of course close friends with R W Seton-Watson). Many years later in 1983 she visited Prague and the guide on request pointed out the window from which Jan Masaryk had met his untimely death. We also made them aware that other websites would give more academic information on the Professor who was descended from a Scottish noble family called Seton.

After this initial correspondence it turned out that a young couple representing the Karel Capek Memorial were planning to relive a journey that the Czechoslovakian playwright and his wife had made in the UK back in 1924 in the actual veteran 1924 Skoda used on the original journey and a visit to Kyle House was an essential part of the revived tour. With gracious permission and hospitality from the present owner of Kyle House, Kirstie Phipps, we met with Zdenek and Petra Vacek (pictured below) at the end of May and shared with them some of Helen's memorabilia of her time with the Seton-Watsons and their ongoing friendship including letters, books and photographs. Unfortunately Kirstie couldn't be on Skye at the time but her friend Berta prepared afternoon tea and led us all on a delightful tour of the house. Our guests we think were more than satisfied with their visit as we were too. Mr Vacek is a journalist and means to write magazine articles and possibly a book concerning Mr Capek's travels in Great Britain in 1924 and their own in 2014.



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In early July we received an email from Petra and Vdenek saying that their tour in the pre-war Skoda car was a full success and they had covered about 2800 miles in 26 days. They had managed to complete the full scheduled programme and had visited several interesting places not only concerned with Karel Capek's visit in 1924. They thanked us again for our generous hospitality, nice chat in lovely Kyle House and information related to their subject of interest. They also sent a couple of photographs which hopefully illustrate this article.



Professor Robert William Seton-Watson specialised in East Europe in the early twentieth century and held seats at the School of Slavonic Studies in London and at Oxford University. He was deeply involved in the reforming of nations in east Europe following World War One and was treated as a hero in countries such as the newly formed Czechoslovakia and Romania hence the grand title *Scotus Viator*. There is so much more to know about him and his family before and after so we urge you to search the web via your browser to find out more about this illustrious Kyleakin resident.

Two coincidences worth bringing to your attention; Karel Capek is listed as a famous visitor to Kyleakin in Mary Macpherson's *Memories of Kyleakin* recently added to the Home Page of this website and Helen Macrae's photograph features in this Newsletter as part of the article requesting information on *Edradour* - she sits in her garden over the Obbe at Moyle Cottage stealing a few moments in the sunshine with a cup of coffee while in the background her husband Evander's ring-net fishing boats *Fortitude*, *Misty Isle* and *Acorn* lie at the pier (the fact that all three are present dates the photograph to 1962 before the *Acorn* was sold to Bridlington soon after the arrival of the *Fortitude*). **(I bet this last comment will spur many old fishermen into disagreeing with my assumptions! MFM).**

oOo

In April 2014 Robert Muir from Gargunnoch visited the village looking for the site where the Bakery stood as his Grandfather was a Baker in Kyleakin around the 1890 – 1900's. Fortunately due to what we had been told while gathering information for the Village Shops article last year Caroline was able to show him where the Bakery was situated behind the former Marine Hotel, now Housing Association flats, next to the Free Church. Robert's Grandfather David Livingstone left Kyleakin around 1900 when he moved south to central Scotland. Could he have been the village's own 'Dr Livingstone' referred to in 'Memories of Kyleakin,' which is now available to read on our website, I wonder?

oOo

In May we received an enquiry from Peter Slimon from Dorset whose father served as Paymaster on HMS Menestheus based at HMS Trelawney (Kyle) during World War II. He emailed photos asking if we could identify the cottage and garden where his mother and other officer's wives stayed during this period. We were able to identify the house as the Gardeners Cottage in the gardens of Dunningell (now The MacKinnon Country House Hotel). As a result and in order to gather more information Peter and his wife Tessa came to Kyleakin where they visited our exhibition at The Bright Water Visitor Centre and then The MacKinnon Hotel where they were delighted to have their photo taken in the same spot where his mother had stood for photographs in the 1940's. This proved to be a very worthwhile trip for the couple who presented us with a photo of Captain Crawford of HMS Menestheus along with memorabilia and information relating to the ship for our collection.

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In June Ruth Macdougall was on duty at the Bright Water Visitor Centre when she had a visit from Derek M Crae and his son Ryan who's Grandfather and Great Grandfather was William Thomson Forsyth (Bill or Willie) and lived with his wife and daughter Jane in Winkle Hall. Bill owned the Skye Marble Quarry in Torrin and Kyle Croft and Dairy with a herd of cattle in Kyleakin along with several other enterprises in the area.

oOo



Also in June we received a query from Trevor and Trish McColm from Queensland, Australia who were coming to the area in July to gather more information on Trevor's Great Grandfather – Robert Hamilton McColm who was Lighthouse Keeper here from 1890 – 1897. We were able to produce copies of birth certificates for two of the children born here and the school roll showing the names of three of the children who attended Kyleakin School which we gave to them when we met up at the Bright Water Visitor Centre. At the Bright Water Centre they could see Robert McColm's name on the register of all the serving Lighthouse Keepers. This was followed by a visit to the Lighthouse, all part of a tour of Lighthouses around the coast where Robert McColm and his family had lived and worked.



**From left to right: Hugh Davies (Chair of the Eilean Bán Trust), Trevor and Trish McColm and Caroline Clouston (Chair of KLHS)**

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## Can you help

We have a large number of old photographs of various views in the village; do you have the time to take photographs of the same views now?

We would also like photographs of the harbour, fisheries pier and the boats. Whilst not considered historical now, in years to come, your grandchildren may be asking what it was like when Kyleakin had a working harbour!

**Membership application forms are available from in Camerons old shop/Post Office, or from Anna Belle.**

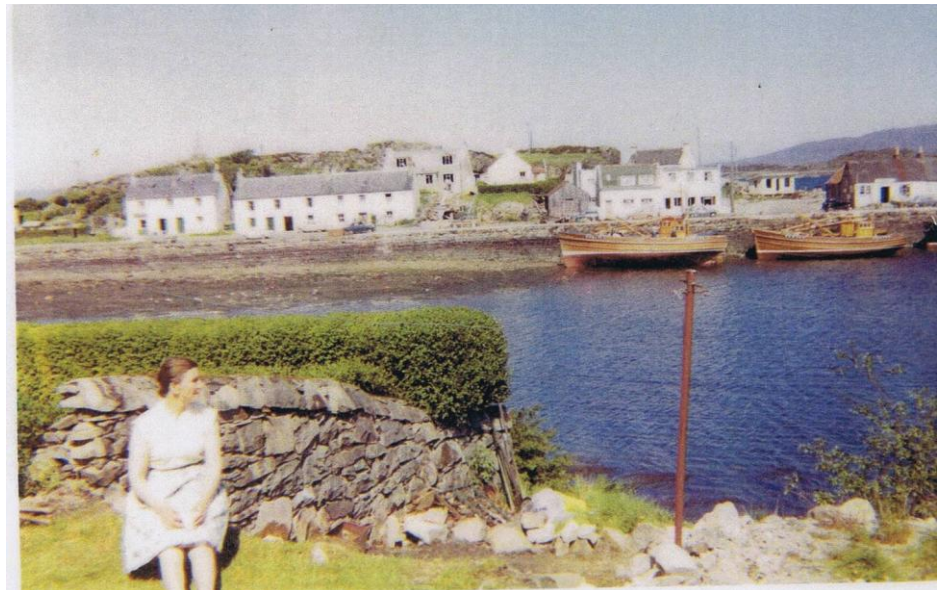
***If you have any photos and documents of interest to the Society, they can be scanned and returned quickly.***

***Please send ideas for items/articles in the newsletter to any of the committee members.***

The most recent enquiry was from Cinders McLeod in Canada in the hope that we could point her in the right direction for her genealogy hunt to trace her Granny, Chirsty MacLennan from Lochalsh. Thanks to Anna Belle's knowledge of the area we were able to put Cinders in touch with Isabel Cameron from Drumbuie, who it transpired, was a long lost relative and I believe they spent several days and nights catching up with the family history.

## History of Houses in Kyleakin

According to the deeds, Edradour was first registered/built in 1891. Phil and Sue Lyons are the latest owners, moving there in 2006. But what is the history of the house? We know that the previous owners – Mr & Mrs Wright changed the name from Edradour to Tigh na Cala (apparently because they were tea total and didn't want their house linked to the name of a whisky distillery)! Christine McLeod and her family lived here prior to the Wrights – how long did they live there and who lived there before them; who raised the roof to give the house "an upstairs" and when?



Anna Belle's Uncle Lachie (Lachlan Robertson) lived at Edradour whilst he built Mo Dhachaidh next door – do you know when that was and what 'Edradour' was called then?

Sue would like to do a time line on the house from 1891 to date which will serve as a template for future investigations on other houses in the village.

Who knows about your house? Will the history be lost to future generations if you moved away from the area?

In the Spring 2015 newsletter, as well as reporting back on the history of the house now known as 'Edradour', we will try and record the history of the bungalows on the right hand side after you pass the Village Hall – do you live in one of them, if so, you have all winter to search through your paperwork and photographs!

If you have any information on Edradour or the bungalows or if you want to tell us about the history of your house please contact Sue.

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## Diary Dates:

### 2014/2015 Programme of winter talks

Monday 3rd November 2014 - Norman MacDonald and Cailean MacLean will give a presentation on the 'Great Book of Skye'

Monday 1st December 2014 - Graham Ross - 'The Great War and Skye'

Monday 5th January 2015 - A review of the collection of photographs and memorabilia given to KLHS

Monday 2nd February 2015 - Ian Grimmer - 'Herring Fishing'

Monday 2nd March 2015 - Ewen MacLeod - 'Scottish Story Telling'

All talks will take place in Kyleakin Connections and start at 7.30 pm

Although a request was put out in the last two newsletters, we haven't received any information on the six houses from "Seawinds" to "Hillview" so this is now on the back burner whilst we try and find out about other houses in the area. If you would like the history of your house included in a future newsletter, please send the information to Sue.



## KLHS Website

You can print off your own copy of "*Memories of Kyleakin*" by Mary Macpherson by clicking the image and depending on the settings on your computer; the newsletter will automatically open or will be in your download box.

The **News & Events** page has been updated to include a dropdown page "**Newsletters**" which will give you access to all the newsletters issued by KLHS - just click on the newsletter image and depending on the settings on your computer, the newsletter will automatically open or will be in your download box.

The "Important Dates" page has changed to "**Historical Time Line**" and new information has recently been added.

The website also provides information on the society's current programme of talks and activities as well as other events in the district.