

## CURATOR'S REPORT

The museum exhibit moved smoothly and successfully into the new season. We have had several interesting visitors, but often they ask questions at the desk with answers that take some finding but all express their appreciation. Two ladies came asking if we had the cradle donated by Mrs MacFadyen of Gribun. Iain Campbell was on the desk and between us we managed to satisfy their request to see it, where they took photographs. The cradle had a number only and to confirm that it was the correct item we had to search the very early records of acquisitions, a photocopy of our record was sent and a thank you letter received from the two ladies.

We are still trying to create a new exhibition of items found on Mull but currently owned by other museums, but this plan is not moving forward very quickly or very smoothly. The quest to "wrench" the pectoral crucifix from the Glasgow Museums Resource Centre at Nitshill on loan is still with their artefacts manager. And as yet there is no news from Alison Sheridan or Sharon Webb re the NMS artefacts. I feel that if we can't get a sufficiently interesting collection on loan, we should buy some bespoke replicas. However, a loan may be arranged with the West Highland Museum in Fort William for their small collection of Armada relics. The spindle whorl which I took to Kelvingrove for assessment by Treasure Trove is I know not where!

## LIBRARY ACQUISITIONS

Current work in the Library continues in up-dating the catalogue cards to match the revised stack and shelf numbers, making it easier to find a book or pamphlet. The previous card and shelf references for any book remain in place until each book is re-referenced, so that all library items can be found at any time in the process.

Requests for information have been received from Toronto regarding Captain Alexander MacLean, and the source book *The MacLeans of Boreray*. Mull Genealogy, through Ian Phillips, traced and provided information, and warm thanks have been received.

A gift of books has been received from Elizabeth MacDonald in Nova Scotia in gratitude for archival information provided by Jean Whittaker.

A Register of new books entering the Library is being prepared so that it matches and become part of the Accession Register used in the Museum.

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL - due in April each year

Annual Subscription £5 single, £10 family  
5-year membership £25, 5-year family £50  
Payable at desk in Museum or to Membership Secretary  
Mull Museum, Columba Buildings, Tobermory,  
Isle of Mull, PA75 6NY

email [membership@mullmuseum.org.uk](mailto:membership@mullmuseum.org.uk)  
or pay with PayPal on the website [www.mullmuseum.org.uk](http://www.mullmuseum.org.uk)

## OFFICE-BEARERS 2010-11

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## MULL MUSEUM AWARDED FULL ACCREDITATION



Accredited  
Museum

We have earned this new logo by becoming an Accredited Museum. It is a great achievement and demonstrates that our museum has met nationally agreed standards on how to care for and document collections, and how to govern and manage the museum and the provision of information and services to users. The MLA's Accreditation Scheme sets nationally agreed standards for UK museums and to meet the requirements of the scheme, museums must demonstrate that they achieve these clearly defined standards. There are currently over 1800 museums (from the largest to the smallest) participating in the Scheme, demonstrating their commitment to managing collections effectively for the enjoyment of all communities. None of this could have been achieved without the dedication of our team of volunteers. A remarkable museum is right on your doorstep. Come and visit us! Soon!

## EUROPEAN YEAR OF VOLUNTEERING 2011

Although in the big wide world of museums, there seems to be an attitude of division between professionals and volunteers (and not just because volunteers don't get paid), the Mull Museum couldn't function without our volunteers who man the desk, document the collection, answer enquiries, work on the exhibits.....and put out the bins. Volunteering comes at all levels!

But we have another volunteer who has helped us from afar. Karen Turner emailed us with an offer of \$1500 which she had been awarded for her work on the Ancestry World Archives Project. Ancestry.com said "*Karen has been a consistent and dedicated participant since Jan 2009. In the winter of 2010 we had a World Record Challenge and Karen was one of our top five contributors, she herself contributing over 104,000 records in two months. The top five contributors of this challenge each chose a genealogical/historical society, library, archive or museum to receive a donation from Ancestry.com. Karen chose the Mull Museum to receive these funds as a way of saying thank you for the dedication of your volunteers and efforts to preserve history and helping people learn more of their heritage. Karen hopes these funds will help the Museum in your efforts to preserve the stories of those on the Isle of Mull.*"

Volunteering does indeed happen in all sorts of ways. We are most grateful to Karen for this generous donation, which is being put towards the first phase of the Baliscate Chapel Project.

## BALISCATE - WE NEED YOUR MEMORIES

Mull Museum are now applying for grants to take the archaeological work at the Baliscate Chapel site further. Once work begins, probably in 2012, there will be opportunities for volunteers to work at the site, under supervision. But meantime we need the help of everyone in finding out more about the site. Why is there so little written about it? Why does it not feature on early maps? We would like anyone whose forebears lived on Mull to try to remember - did your grandparents ever mention "an old church up on the hill" or say "no one goes up there now because...."? We hope some of the answers might be in your family's memories and stories. *Please help.*

## Archive and Library Report

With one of our committee members a granddaughter of someone who once worked for the Allans at Aros House, it is of great interest to hear of new research into the family. Maureen Borland's forthcoming book tells their story.

### THE ALLAN FAMILY

Alexander Allan was born in Liverpool in 1845, the only son of Janet Blair and Bryce Allan, one of the 'famous five' sons, who were among the most successful of the pioneer ship owners. Bryce had bought the Aros Estate in 1874, hoping to spend his retirement years as 'Laird of Aros'. Unfortunately he died within weeks of the purchase. Alexander, perhaps a reluctant ship owner, decided that he would take his father's place and for almost five decades, he and his wife Juliana Elizabeth McEwan devoted themselves to Aros and the people of Tobermory.

The story of the Allan family did not, though, begin with the wealth of Aros, but in a small estate cottage on the Fairlie Estate in Dundonald Ayrshire. In 1776 James Allan, an estate carpenter married Jean Brown. She was the half-sister of Agnes, who married William Burns, the father of Robert Burns. The Allan family can therefore rightly claim Robert Burns, Scotland's national poet, as a forebear.

In 1790, James died leaving Jean to bring up seven children, four boys and three girls, all under the age of fourteen. A daunting task in these days. In 1790 the future must have looked bleak for the young widow and her children. She and her children moved into Old Rome, a small hamlet near Kilmarnock; she had only one wish for her children, that the boys should have a trade and the girls should have husbands. If she could have peeped into the future she would not have believed that her third son, Alexander, [Old Alex] more than fulfilled her dreams and desires.

The great Allan Line began when Old Alex moved to Saltcoats, Ayrshire, where he bought a small cargo boat. He married Jean Crawford, who gave birth to five sons, James, Hugh, Bryce, Andrew and Alexander.

James and Alexander would run the Glasgow office, Hugh and Andrew would go to Montreal, and Bryce would go to Liverpool. All five sons would marry into wealthy merchant families, such as Smith, Gilkison, Blair and McFie. They would live, not in small stone cottages, but in palatial mansions, Hugh in Ravenscrag, named after a rocky outcrop in his native Ardrossan. Hafton in Dunoon would be the summer retreat for the Glasgow family.

The grandsons of Old Alex would continue the trend of marrying into wealthy manufacturing families, but now they would broaden their horizons, with collateral links to the Baronets of Houstoun-Boswall and Stewart Clark, and the military family of General Sir Charles Gough. The Stewart Clark connection is particularly fascinating as it links to Lord Clark [Kenneth Clark] the outstanding art historian and presenter of the classic television series *Civilisation*. And, of course to the late, flamboyant, witty, passionate man, Alan Clark of Saltwood.

It is a pity that Old Alex's great-grandson Robert Alexander was not in the House of Commons at the same time as Alan. They missed each other by a couple of years; they could well have enjoyed hours of 'friendly' arguments on the merits of animal welfare, of which Clark was fervent supporter. As he was ardent campaigner against hunting, shooting fishing, whereas Robert and his cousins enjoyed many days of grouse shooting over Scotland's rugged moors.

In political terms the five Allan boys were liberal in their views;

they were devout in their Presbyterian religious beliefs. They were staunch and active members of the Temperance Movement. Philanthropy played an important part in their lives, and, even today some of the Trust Funds they set up still help to alleviate the suffering of the poor.

But, as in all families, times change and the old order collapses. In the early 1900, social and political unrest was rampant; the Suffragette Movement saw Allan grand-daughters take centre stage. Adherence to the Presbyterian faith was tested when members joined the Church of Christian Science. Yet if Jean Brown could have looked down upon her flock, she would have seen them as guests at the wedding of a President's daughter in the White House. In a little over two centuries they had strode across the world and there cannot be a more fitting epitaph to the family than: 'They left the world a better place.'

*Maureen Borland.*

The full story of the Allan family will be published in August 2013. [Email:sales@maureenborland.co.uk](mailto:sales@maureenborland.co.uk)

### ACQUISITIONS

In the re-organisation of the Museum a little dark green "Post Card Album" came to light. It was presented to Jocky Noble as "award prize for loyal support during summer 1926" In it, 22 photographs record the activities of the Swimming Club in 1925 and 1926. There are group photographs of dashing young men arranged in pyramids on the rocks and there are action shots of divers, blurred in outline as they flash through the air - "Neath Port-a-Choit's shady bowers." Port-a-Choit, although it was "Head Quarters" was not the only venue. Alexander Allan must have given his blessing to the club to meet for swimming at Aros Pier. This was a popular venue to judge by the number of photographs taken there, probably because it was just that little distance from Tobermory and boys could be boys. Poised on the rocks behind the pier and holding his bathing costume modestly in front of him one bather is described in the caption as "Adam after the Fall". Other captions are also jokey or cryptic but the real interest of the captions is that so many of the bathers are named. As well as those in the photograph below, members of the club named in other photographs are Danny Robertson, Alasdair Yule, John Smith, Donald Bell, Andrew Noble, Jocky Noble and Donald Cattanach



*Capaldi, Alastair Brown, John Noble, Alastair Simpson*

*David Riddoch, John Gray, Calum Robertson, Duncan McDonald*

*Charlie Noble, Davie McColl, Calum Robertson*

*The dogs are not named but seemed to have been important mascots for the club.*