Morvern Heritage Society

Chairman’s Report to AGM, 19th September 2013

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

Membership numbers are rising – we have 19 family and 16 individual members, amounting to a total of 54, an increase from a total of 50 last year (itself an increase from 47 the year before). As in previous years, the membership consists of an amalgam of local residents and regular (or only occasional) visitors from further afield. Subscriptions remain at £6 for individuals and £10 for families.

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

Talks and Outings.

This year we have enjoyed some outstanding talks, interesting walks and outings as well as an innovation: film nights.

18th October 2012:

Angus Robertson entertained us with a detailed illustrated description of the newly opened hydro schemes on Ardtornish Estate. The two schemes on the River Rannoch took 3 years and £7 million to build and were finally operational in December 2012, though not officially opened until May 2013. Angus showed slides of the building process and of the new loch created, to be known as Lochan Lub an Arbhair, after an old place name on the 1st Edition OS map.

15th November 2012:

Our first film night was held at Ardtornish House. Sitting comfortably in the drawing room of Ardtornish House, we watched the 1945 film, “I Know Where I’m Going” by Powell and Pressburger, starring Wendy Hiller. Filmed on Mull, the audience spotted many familiar locations such as Moy Castle, Lochbuie and the Carsaig Jetty while some remembered the film being made.
13th December 2012:
The evening was devoted to a discussion of the Place-Names of Morvern, in an attempt to resurrect the Lost Place-Names of Garbh-Chriochan, initiated by Jim Kirby, Polloch. We examined the set of OS 1st edition maps, acquired by MHS as well as some earlier 19th century estate maps from Ardtornish and a huge, framed annotated map of Killundine, kindly loaned to us for the evening by Sandra Miller. The evening was rounded off with a festive offering of mulled wine and mince pies.

24th January 2013:
A large group of members enjoyed a delicious festive dinner in Lochaline Hotel, with thanks to Sally and Charles for a very enjoyable evening. Again, as last year, we felt that the delay of our Christmas Dinner until the quieter period in the New Year, increased turnout and enhanced our enjoyment.

21st March 2013:
Another Film Night was held, this time with a double bill: another Michael Powell film, “The Edge of the World”, about the evacuation of Foula, similar to the evacuation of St Kilda, and “The Last of the Scottish Wildcats” about the Wildcat Preservation project, which we heard about in a talk last year by Adrian Davis.

16th April 2013:

Derrick Warner from the Lochaber Local History Society gave a fascinating talk on the HMS St Christopher, the code name for Fort William in the Second World War. Derrick explained the origin of the name and the link with St Kitts in the Caribbean as well as pointing out some of the buildings still extant in Fort William connected with its wartime history and the story of the terrible explosion on a boat near Camusnaghael.

(Photo is of St Christopher plaque now in St Andrews Church, Fort William)

16th May 2013:
David Jones of St Andrews University gave a most interesting talk on the History of Ardtornish House. Funded through donations, David is researching and writing the history of the house for publication by the MHS and so much has come to light that he had to divide his lecture into two parts. Part One was on the construction of the first house, built by Octavius Smith between 1856 and 1866. David has tracked down a great array of old drawings and photos and brought the house to life, showing how it actually functioned. Part Two will follow in the programme for 2013/14.

1st June 2013:
After his talk to the MHS on the Ardtornish Hydro Schemes, Angus Robertson led a guided tour of the two schemes on the River Rannoch. Using a combination of walking and vehicles, a party of eight visited the lower power house, the new dam and Lochan Lub an Arbhair, the power house in Strath Shuardail and the upper dam
at Loch Tearnait. After a picnic lunch in the bothy at Loch Tearnait, some visited the crannog in Loch Tearnait and some walked out towards the upper intakes beyond.

**Inspecting the dam**

**5th July 2012:**

22 members of the Mull Archaeological and Historical Societies arrived for their biennial visit to Morvern. After coffee and cake in the village hall, we visited Acharn, looking at the prehistoric burial cairns and the mill, mill lade and millpond, depicted on the map of 1815. After a discussion of Cameron of Glendessary’s 18th century “wickerwork house”, Samuel Barham’s suspension bridge attracted quite a lot of interest. We returned to the hall for picnic lunches and then headed back up the White Glen to Muicrach cairn and farmstead with corn drying kiln, another corn drying kiln at Sron, though slightly swamped by bracken and finally a few remains of the old settlement of Clounlaid. As Morvern on the Move is not big enough (and had already been booked elsewhere) we had to hire a bus from Shiel buses. However, a whip round by the visitors made up half the cost of the bus hire. Thanks to everyone who provided baking and helped with the tea and coffee in the hall.

**15th July 2012:**

As part of Gala Week, MHS repeated the guided walk undertaken last year along the shore of Loch Aline and back to the village via Cadha Ruadh. A party of eight, looked at the Sand Mine, the new shore facility for the pontoons, the Three Sisters and the Three Brothers and the old Lime Kiln. After Barham’s Breist, a stone wall built by the Clerk of Works at Ardtornish, the group continued to Kinlochaline and its kerbed cairn en route to Cadha Ruadh quarry. After a picnic on the old road we continued along the forestry road back to the village.
Other Business.
Two business meetings were held, mostly concerned with planning future activities. Several other topics received attention:

1. Publications.
Exploring Morvern Books One and Two are selling well. A total of £730 was raised from the sale of our publications. We are very grateful to Kate for organising the distribution and to Lesley Jones and Ardtornish Estate for continuing to sell them without profit.

Newsletters: Unfortunately after the illustrated annual report last year, no further newsletters were produced. We still aim for four newsletters a year and will endeavour to do better.

Other publications:
As noted above, work continues on David Jones’ research into the history of Ardtornish House and its contents. MHS will publish the resulting book with help from donations. On the basis of David’s fascinating talk to the Society in May, this will be a most interesting publication.

2. The Lost Place-Names of Garbh Chriochan
Morvern Heritage Society has not had any more contact with this project this year but we have made a start on our own exploration of the place-names within Morvern. Further meetings and discussion is required.

After Robert Laurie set up a new website last year, Ian Lamb, formerly of Ardtornish Gardens, continued this work and awaits more contributions. So far some minutes and notices of meetings have been posted but more information and photos are required.
www.morvernheritagesociety.org.uk

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