



# RECOLLECTIONS



A TRIP DOWN  
MEMORY LANE  
IN AND AROUND  
TIGHNABRVAICH  
WITH KYLES  
ELDERLY FORUM







## Foreword

The Kyles of Bute like most places has seen many changes over the years. The memories which people possess are often all that remains of times gone by.

It can be difficult for one who has no long term memory of a place to know or understand what has gone before and therefore it may be hard for them to appreciate what has been.

Although history records in its own way the significant events of times past and present, it is the memories of the individuals who lived in those times which give us a real insight into past life in human terms. The memories of the older person can be thought provoking and educational to the younger members of society.

Over a relatively small length of time (ten weeks) the reminiscence group have tapped into a sprinkling of memories. Throughout, we have done our best to avoid poetic licence in the telling of these memories.

We hope that anyone who recalls these same memories will remember them in a similar light.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in any way (right through from the lending and sharing of books and photographs, to the final production) enabling the group to recollect and produce their memories. I would like to extend my thanks to the members of the group for the giving of their time and effort, and to say it has been a privilege to share in your memories.

**Catherine Adams**

The timing of this splendid publication is particularly appropriate as Community Learning rises to the top of national and Local Authority agendas. If ever you needed evidence that “It’s Never Too Late to Learn” or ever wondered what was the meaning of the expression “Life Long Learning For All”, then surely this project provides both.

In Cowal, as in the UK as a whole, older people form an increasingly substantial and active proportion of the population. The test for Adult Education providers, such as Argyll and Bute Council’s Community Education Service, is to develop programmes that involve older people from the beginning, encourage participation and promote older people as an asset not a burden to the community.

The participants in this project not only worked extremely hard to write and collate their work but also produced a publication that will interest and inform many generations to come, demonstrating what a valuable resource older people’s experiences and memories can be. Congratulations to all involved and we hope you will not only enjoy ‘Recollections’ but perhaps be inspired to try some Adult Learning yourself!

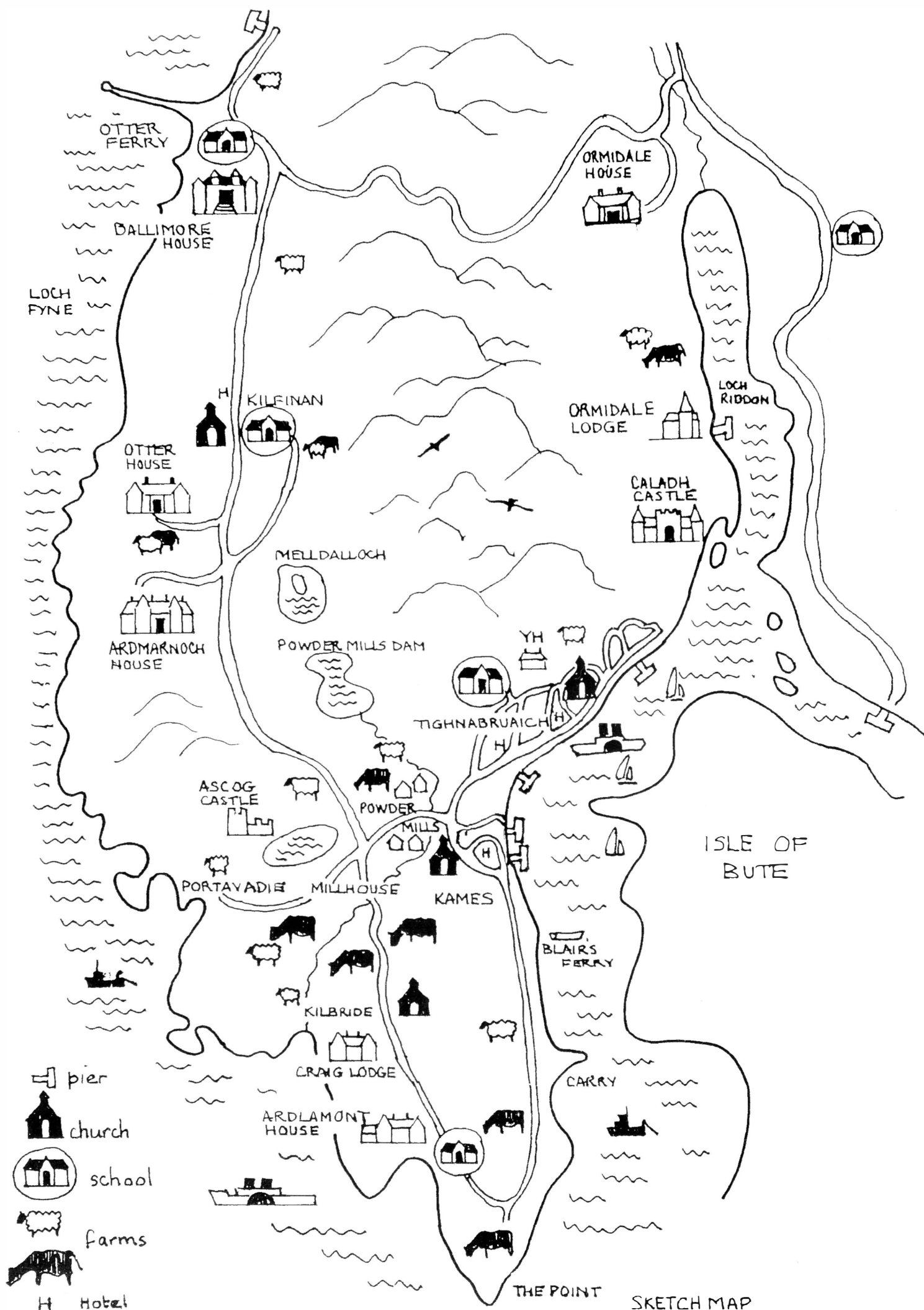
**Martin Turnbull**  
**Area Community Education Officer**

*[Editor’s notes: Catherine Adams acted as facilitator to the reminiscence group on behalf of the Community Education Service. That is to say she cajoled the group to put pen to paper, pre-edited the results with the help of the group, and committed them to computer diskette - thus making my task much lighter.]*

●*bituary: sadly six contributors have died since sharing their memories: Bessie Black, Irene Hunter, Archie Cameron, Chester Currie, Ronnie MacFarlane, and Mary Crowe.*

*Spelling: a lot of our place-names come from Gaelic and have alternative local spellings. Where maps disagree I have used the spelling found in postal addresses. These failing, I have left the decision to the writer, at the expense of some inconsistency from item to item. The same applies to the spelling of names beginning with Mac or Mc.*

**Christine Thorburn]**



SKETCH MAP



**Otter Spit to Ormidale - a trip down memory lane via Kilfinan,  
Portavadie, Millhouse, Kilbride, Ardlamont, Kames, Auchenlochan,  
Tighnabruaich, Rhubaan, and Caladh.**

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Some of our contributors

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## I Kilfinan, Portavadie, Millhouse, Kilbride, Ardlamont.

*[The western side of the peninsula, bounded by Loch Fyne, is the cradle of its human population, and the villages there retain their distinct identities. And despite the growth of Tighnabruaich and Kames on the eastern, Kyles-side, shore, we all live in the Parish of Kilfinan.]*



### **Farming Before The Great War** by Betty Allison.

Dougie Crawford, late of Mid Innens Farm, told me that his father farmed at Auchnaskeoch, and when Dougie was a youth, before the Great War, he was told one day to drive some cattle over to Colintrave, his father having sold them to a farmer there.

It was summertime with long light, so he started out at daybreak, having been given a good breakfast. He drove the cattle by Kilfinan and the road to Otter Ferry, the six miles over the Beallochandrain and the eight miles past Ardachuple to Colintrave.

When he got there, there was no-one at the farm. He knew better than to open a gate and put the cattle in with the resident beasts; he could find no-one to ask advice; there were no telephones between farms in those days. He decided he'd just have to drive the cattle back to Auchnaskeoch. This he did and got home in the dark after ten o' clock at night. He had driven the cattle more than twenty miles each way; he was tired and hungry; his father was not very pleased with him; and he didn't even get any supper.



Otter Ferry School, 1966

### **Schools in the Parish** by John G. MacColl

The schools at Otter Ferry, Kilfinan, Millhouse and Ardlamont each consisted of one classroom with house provided; and each had one female teacher.

In 1943-44, military preparation for the Normandy landings meant that all the people living in Ardlamont and Millhouse were moved out of their houses. Their schools were closed, and did not re-open when the training period was over and people returned home. Children were conveyed to Tighnabruaich.

Kilfinan was next to close, around 1950, and Otter Ferry was the last to go. By that time school leaving age had been raised to 15, and it was not possible to meet the more advanced level of education this demanded. When the leaving age was 14, the qualifying exam at 11-12 was a looked-for achievement, and failure a big disappointment. With the closure of Otter Ferry it meant all children of the parish were conveyed on a daily basis to Tighnabruaich by contract bus or car, which continues to this day. Tighnabruaich had senior level to school leaving age until the retiral of head master Neil McLeod. It was then decided after 11+ all children had to go to Dunoon, hostel accommodation being provided. Transport left on Monday mornings, with a Friday return

home for the week-end. More recently (in addition) there has been provided a daily service to Dunoon, for those who are unwilling to have their children away from home for so much of the week.

Pre-1945, to obtain a higher level of education was not easy. Bursaries were available, which went some way to meeting the cost, but parents had considerable contributions to make. I would say that prior to the Dunoon link, for most it was a case of leaving school at the earliest opportunity!



Ardlamont School, 1935-36

### **Holidays at Portavadie** by Eileen Graham

I first came to Portavadie on holiday in 1938; my mother's side of the family had been coming since the Great War. That first visit was notable for my grandfather's porridge and treacle, and the fact that I got sunstroke. During the war visits were few, but as soon as possible we were back to 'Cuid Oidche' doing repairs (my uncles putting on a new roof) and building a small cabin that held another person. I loved sleeping there. We had an old black boat, tarred every year, which we used a great deal. The cottage had of course no water, so we carried buckets from the bum. We used oil lamps and candles, and everything was cooked on the wood fire which had proper built up sides and iron bars across the top.

The day often started with a bath in the bum, and after wood collecting and a large lunch, we would row up to the Bay of Islands (Black Harbour) or the Vitrified Fort or down to Low Stillaig or just to the further side of Glenan Bay to swim and picnic. Or we would walk - no forestry then - sometimes as far as Meldalloch, crossing to the island on the underwater causeway, and sometimes by Loch Ascog to Millhouse to buy food. In the evening we fished. One evening just as it was getting dark - the hills black silhouettes, sky and water a shining grey - the Boys' Brigade held a firework display which we watched from the boat, and as the last rockets went up I realised we had a wake like the milky way and the oars were dripping sparks. We caught nothing but it was an evening to remember. Just as we were coming in the last post was sounded (midnight) and we sat still till the last echo died away.

Another memorable visit was in August 1956 by which time we had a sailing dinghy called 'Dooker'. I went to bed about 11pm, heavy steady rain and wind, pitch black. Fiona was camping down by the shore. About 2.30am she turned up, in oilskins, worried about 'Dooker' anchored offshore. She talked till five, then went off again into the pouring rain. I followed soon after. The bum was bigger than I'd ever seen it, and the tide, ebbing, was still right up to the grass at Fiona's tent. By seven the tide had gone down considerably and we saw the bum had carved two separate channels, in one of which swung the black boat on its old rotten bit of rope. I went to bail it and saw Fiona's arm waving wildly through one corner of the tent. As she clutched the tear I let down the guys till we had the billowing, flapping canvas flat over her things and held down by stones. We sat on the rocks and watched 'Dooker', riding more heavily, not recovering so fast from each wave. One broke over her bows and she turned a little sideways and then heeled slowly over. We went down to the sea's edge and, fighting wind and spray, collected everything as it washed ashore, even the bailing bowl - I nearly got blown away with the oars.



The worst having happened we went up to the cottage to have a late breakfast. It was August the 13th - a rough day, and it wasn't till six the next day that we were able to bring 'Dooker' ashore. Then there was the evening that we were surrounded by basking sharks near Yellow Isle, great big forms much too close for comfort. We often saw these when we were up the hills but much more rarely from the boat.

### **Memories of our Village** by Winnie Muirden, Maimie Spearman, and Mima Salisbury

We were brought up in the village of Millhouse, which was an ordinary village consisting of a school, a post office, a church, a smiddy, a joiner's workshop, four farms and six crofts, and a number of houses owned by holiday makers - mainly from Greenock.

I (Winnie Muirden) was brought up on one of the crofts. Our house was a solid stone building with 3 bedrooms, a sitting room known as the parlour, used only on special days when we had visitors, a kitchen with a 'set-in' bed (which we thought was wonderful) and a scullery. We had running water but no inside toilet. The toilet was outside in the garden. In the kitchen there were two shelves the length of the wall. Precious dishes adorned the shelves: beautiful jugs and china tea-sets, tea-pots and decanters and glass bells. It was a day's work when they were taken down, washed and polished and returned to their places. This operation usually took place the day the chimney was swept.

Maimie and Mima, who are sisters, lived in a house above the shop. Their house had two bed-rooms, a parlour and a kitchen with a set-in bed. They also had running water - a small sink at the top of the stair in their porch - but their 'water-toilet' was in one of the sheds at the back of the shop. Their mother had shelves and dishes in her kitchen too.

Having no electricity we had paraffin stoves for cooking and ovens for baking, or we used the oven in the open grate in the kitchen. We had girdle scones and pancakes and fresh butter daily. All the children had a dumpling made specially on their birthday. Birthday cakes were unheard of in our young days, and bread was a treat.

The grates had to be cleaned out every morning and the ash pan emptied. The grate was black leaded and the steel parts polished with emery paper and the hearth done over with pipe-clay. The fender too was polished and the board scrubbed. There were plenty of pieces of brass e.g. candle-sticks, brass rods above the fire, and all kinds of knick knacks to be polished. This was a job for Saturday.

Houses were lit by paraffin lamps or candles, and later on we used Tilley Lamps which provided a much brighter light and also gave off some heat. Electricity didn't come into the district until approximately 1948/49.

Millhouse School in our time had between 20 and 30 pupils (until the evacuees arrived) all in different classes from primary 1 to the Qualifying class. We also had tinker children or travelling people attending school from time to time. Our teacher was a Miss Elizabeth MacIntosh, who, apart from our everyday lessons taught us knitting and sewing, baking and gardening (boys included). We were also members of the Junior Red Cross and one of our vivid memories is having to gather sphagnum moss which was used as dressings by the medical corps.

We remember using slates for the lessons early on. Ink wells and jotters came later. The fire was lit every day (in winter) by one of the local ladies.

Miss Helen MacIntosh (Miss Elizabeth's sister) was our Sunday School teacher. She was assisted by a Miss Morag Whyte, who was also our church organist. Our Sunday School was held in the school. We attended Sunday School in the forenoon and then walked down to Kilbride Church to the service, a distance of about 2 miles (no cars or buses in our day !). Before the Sunday School closed for the summer we always had a 'swaree'. We enjoyed singing or acting sketches, but the highlight of the evening was when we were given a bag of eats to have with our drink of milk. The bag contained a London bun and maybe an Empire biscuit or a cake. We always had our Sunday School picnic to Ostal Bay. We all enjoyed playing games, running races, and of course our bag of goodies to have with our milk (no fancy drinks of juice).

In our free time we played rounders, peeevers, skipping ropes, wee houses, shops. We were never bored. In the winter we used to go sledging.



While at school I had to deliver milk to one of our elderly neighbours who lived on her own, take in a pail of water, empty her ashes, and run to the shop for messages. I had a younger sister, so we shared all the 'wee jobs'. Saturday was a busy day for us all helping with the household chores.

When I was about 12 years of age I worked during the summer months for Miss MacIntosh in her home in Kames. She had 'paying guests' and I did light housework. After leaving school my first job was in Auchoirk Farm, then I went to work in Tighnabruaich in a boarding house which is now the manse. When I was seventeen years of age I went off to train as a nurse - but that is another story!

Maimie's first job was working in Ardlamont House where one of her sisters was the cook. This was a temporary appointment lasting a few months. Then she went to work in the shop in Millhouse and transferred to Tighnabruaich when Mr MacNeill, the grocer, closed the Millhouse shop. She worked there until she got married.

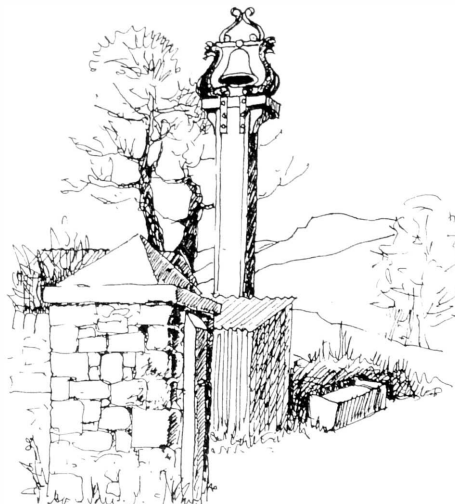
Mima's first job was with the Free Presbyterian Church minister and his wife in the manse at Kames. The family consisted of four boys and during Mima's time of service another boy arrived. After the manse, Mima worked in the Co-Op until she got married.

Maimie and Mima had to cycle to and from their work - rain, hail or shine!

Having no electricity most homes possessed a gramophone or a wireless run on accumulators. When the people came on holiday from Glasgow and Greenock we always enjoyed dances outside. The Boys' Brigade from Dundee always camped at Auchgoyle Farm. On the night before they left for home they had a camp fire concert and we were always invited.

At New Year there was a concert and dance held in the school and we children were allowed to attend. We were taken home after the tea break half way through the dance.

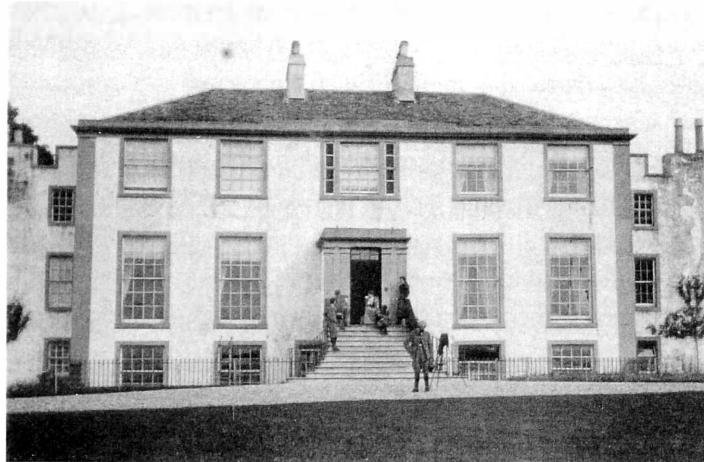
We had a very happy childhood and we feel the reason for this was that everyone in the village was in the same situation. We all helped one another and no-one tried to be better than his neighbour.





## **Powder Mill At Millhouse** by Eileen Graham

In February, 1982, I talked to post mistress Mary McTaggart about the powder mill at Millhouse. She told me that the ruins up the burn towards Kilfinan were part of the works, and bogies used to run from the mill up towards the dams to the workings below Millhouse. What is now the graveyard was the packing area where the girls worked. They employed barrel makers and engineers as well as those directly involved with the manufacture of the powder. The post office was the clocking-in area; across the road the offices. The powder store was near the golf course. Once some boys set the hill alight near Kames and it came towards the store. Someone was tarring the roof, so it would catch easily. There was no water and everyone was out beating the fire as the store was full and it was enough to blow everything up as far as Tighnabruaich. After the works had closed, when the machinery was being taken out of the store they used a chisel and a spark set off an explosion. Boys were thrown off their feet but one man died before he reached hospital. He was a cooper and did not even work with the powder, but that was the way he had to go.



Ardlamont House

## **Through The Years At Ardlamont** by Pamela Watson

Early in 1940 my fiance, Bill Watson, took me to meet his three maiden aunts who were on one of their frequent visits to Ardlamont, his family having owned the estate since the Lamonts sold it after the famous 'not proven' murder there at the end of the last century.

Even though I knew nothing of this, I found the big, three-storied grey house rather forbidding. He showed me how two small existing houses, not quite parallel, had been joined by a central structure to form one large house, of which they still form the wings. In spite of many additions and alterations through the centuries it had retained its Georgian front which faced the sea; but trees planted to shelter it limited the beautiful view of Arran and Kintyre.

In those days the estate was about ten times its present size. It included many tenanted farms and the house Craig Lodge, a little further up Loch Fyne, which Bill's parents used for holidays. He walked me along the shore to see it, through an enchanting wood full of small, gnarled, lichen-covered trees, mossy stones and primroses, and at once I understood why he had loved the whole place since boyhood. A wooded hill rose steeply behind the house. A retaining wall separated the lawn in front of it from the beach, which had plenty of sand at low tide. Beside it stretched the wide, wonderful sandy stretch of Ostel Bay, and the view from the house was magnificent.

There were garages which had once been stables, outbuildings and small cottages which housed permanent staff. Lockhart was the game-keeper, his white-haired, rosy-cheeked wife coming in to cook for the family when needed. Archie Galbraith, a delightful man whom I got to know well in later years, and Peter McCallum, born and brought up in one of the many cottages which had sadly fallen into ruin at Lower Stillaig, were the gardeners, their wives doing all the necessary housework.



Though at that time Ardlamont too was only used as a holiday house, it also had permanent estate employees. In 'The Square', a little way from the house, where stables had also become garages, families lived in flats on the first floor. A sawmill, workshops and kennels are still there. Woodend was the head gardener's house and there was a community hall where whist drives and other social gatherings were held.

The school, which was attended by employees' children from five to fourteen, is now my studio, much used and loved. Many children learnt in that one room, with high windows to prevent them from being distracted by looking outside. Placed on the north and east walls, they are ideal for me. There is a small cottage beside it where the teacher lived. Our younger son stayed there for several years, but now it is let. There used to be no indoor sanitation but there was an outdoor toilet shed. Water drained off the teacher's roof into a big water butt. Both buildings now have modern conveniences.

Bill's maiden aunts made me very welcome at Ardlamont, telling me that, as he was the only boy in his generation - with two sisters and five girl cousins - they very much hoped that we would live there one day. On that brief visit I did not discover how thoroughly impractical all the internal arrangements of the house were, but it was still difficult to know what to answer except that it was very nice of them to feel like that. The main rooms that I saw were the big drawing room and the dining room, both bright, sunny and full of flowers. But the main hall, the big staircase and the passages were dark and gloomy, with much chocolate-coloured paint and dark-stained woodwork. It would have been difficult even to read a postcard by daylight. Stained glass, depicting Scots in battle, stole most of the light from the three big windows half way up the stairs and on the front door. Only when my husband and I removed them some thirty years later did we discover the beautiful mouldings round the top of the walls.

In those days all the estate electricity was home made. Charged on Fridays, the lighting was quite bright at weekends, becoming gradually dimmer through the week. Ardlamont and Craig Lodge had also their independent water supplies. It was much better than the water we have today, but if the weather was good in summer then it usually had to be rationed, just when each house had the maximum number of guests.

Bill and I were given rooms on each side of the long, narrow passages in one of the old wings, with a shared bathroom at the end. Mine had a fireplace with a window on each side of it, with twin beds opposite these, and seemed to have such an unhappy atmosphere that I didn't sleep well, as I told Bill in the morning.

'Oh, I believe that is meant to be one of the haunted rooms!' he explained casually, and then told me about the murder for the first time. I was glad we were only staying one night. In fact for many years I was aware of an uncomfortable feeling at Ardlamont and felt that I would never be willing to live there. Then on one visit I found that this had disappeared entirely, and learned later that Monson, the 'not proven' murderer, had died. Now it seems a very tranquil house where I never mind being alone.

The bottom semi-basement floor, as I discovered later, was firmly divided into 'family' and 'staff' halves. A three foot thick wall had to be cut through to connect them when we eventually altered the house. From the back door stone stairs led down, as if to a dungeon, to the cook's bedroom, the scullery and the laundry.

Before refrigerators were invented food was kept cool on stone shelves in small cold rooms halfway down these stairs. The laundry had traditional equipment including mangles and flat irons, and to save water the washing was trundled down by cart to the beach and done in a wash-house beside the burn. This small building was recently converted into a much needed boathouse.



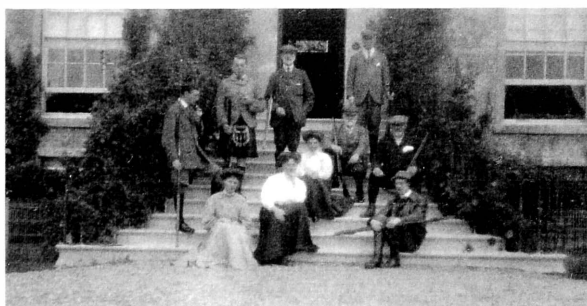
All the kitchen washing up had to be done in a low stone sink in the scullery, as there was no water in the kitchen. This was a bright room underneath the dining room, to which it was a major operation to transport the food. A small lift, operated by a rope pulley, took it up from the scullery to the china pantry, whence the table maid carried it through two doors to the dining room hotplate, which was heated by two methylated spirit burners.

Coal was sent from the family paper mill in Renfrewshire by puffer, carted up to the coal-shed near the house, from where a portion was distributed amongst the various estate dwellings. Most of the bedrooms had a fireplace and the kitchen had a big coal range, making it a cosy place for the maids to gather for their tea, and enjoy bread with plenty of jam from the wonderful strawberries and raspberries grown in the walled garden. Although their wages were fairly low, most of the estate workers received plenty of fruit and vegetables. In those days there were six gardeners. It took them all Saturday to rake the gravel on the front drive. We no longer use this entrance, keeping it as a grassed walk between the azaleas and rhododendrons.

Neither the back nor the front door offered any shelter to anyone waiting to enter the house until we made the old back door our front door, building the present steps up to it and the sheltering portico above. Nor was there any direct door from the house to the walled garden. One of the gardeners came in every day to discover the cook's needs, and if she so much as ran out of parsley she sent one of the scullery maids upstairs and across to the walled garden to ask for some.

The maids slept in the attic bedrooms in one of the old wings; each had a skylight but no window. These rooms were a real fire hazard, as they could only be reached by a small winding staircase, being cut off from the main house by a solid wall. We later cut through this and gave the rooms dormer windows, and they make excellent rooms for children.

It is sad that there is no longer the excellent steamer service which existed when my husband's great uncle and grandfather, Robert and William Watson, bought Ardlamont. By connecting with the Gourock train and using horse-drawn transport at each end, they could commute and do a day's work at their paper mill in Renfrewshire, or visit their main house near it. People living in Millhouse, Kames and Tighnabruaich could happily go up for a day's shopping in Glasgow, have a good breakfast on the steamer and return on another one in time for their evening meal.



There exist many photographs from that period up until the present day of the Watson family and their friends gathered on the steps of Ardlamont. After their mother had died and the other brothers married, the three sisters, Annie, Jean and Nellie, kept house for the two old men, who lived to a great age, vigorous to the end. My husband and I were lucky enough to be able to spend our brief honeymoon at Craig Lodge before it was commandeered by the Army to practise for the Normandy landings in Ostel Bay, which they left full of barbed wire and other hazards.

All civilians had been banished, including Nellie, the last surviving sister, who returned after the war to live alone at Ardlamont with a band of faithful retainers. Much of the estate had to be sold in the 1950s, and in January 1968 a freak storm changed it so completely that I was thankful that, bedridden, she was unable to see the devastation. Most of the shelter was taken from the house, but its wonderful view was restored.

The happiest day I remember was when our younger daughter was married in May 1975 from Tighnabruaich Church. The sun shone, the reception was held at Ardlamont and the bride and groom returned for a dance that evening. The house was painted white again then, as it had been in the Lamonts' time. For practical reasons it is now grey once more.

After my husband's death in 1979 our elder son and his wife joined me in the big house, so happily their three sons have been able to grow up in it and I have been free to travel for my work as a portrait painter, returning gratefully to them and my 'Schoolhouse' studio.

When a series of films based on six famous 'not proven' murders was made for television, they shot much of the Ardlamont one on the actual estate. This was in 1983 and Andrew, our grandson, aged 6, played Monson's small son.

### **Childhood Years At Kildavaig and Kilbride** by Flora MacLeod (Galbraith)



I was born at Kildavaig Farm, Ardlamont where my father was ploughman. We lived in a cottage. The water had to be taken in from a tap outside, which also filled the trough for the horses. No electricity - oil lamps. The cooking was done on a range which had an oven at the side. Scones and pancakes were baked on the girdle on top. We were bathed in a zinc bath in front of the fire. The water had to be heated in a big pot on the fire but there were always plenty of sticks to burn which saved the coal. I remember when the coal boat came in to the ferry at Ardlamont. The horses and cart had to go into the water when the tide was out, and the coal had to be taken to all the houses. I don't know who paid for the load but everyone paid for what they got. We used to pick up pieces of coal that had fallen off the cart and give it to Granny who lived there in the row of cottages. There was also a wee shop there that sold sweets among other things, and if we were good we got a penny, which bought a lot then.

There was a school at Ardlamont where you stayed till you were fourteen; just one teacher for all the classes, some with only two in each. They were happy days. The Misses Watson who lived in Ardlamont House gave a party at Christmas and Santa always came with a present for everyone. Then at Hallowe'en they sent a basket of apples and nuts to be shared. We had a Sunday School picnic in the summer. We made our own entertainment and we were happy. We sat the Qualifying Exams aged eleven, I think, on a Saturday when the school was closed. We were sent work, from Dunoon, which we had to do in a fortnight. Then it was sent to be corrected and a new lot of books arrived. We were always anxious to see how well we had done, and get good marks.

When I was ten my father became a gardener and we moved to Kilbride where we thought it was great, as we had a bigger house - with a bathroom - and hot water as well as cold coming from a tap. We still went to Ardlamont school although Millhouse was nearer. We cycled every day, three miles, until the teacher got married and a new teacher, who lived in Tighnabruaich, came. She had a car and picked us up in the morning and took us home at night, which was great.

I remember hearing on the radio (worked with a battery) on a Sunday morning that Britain was at war. I was too young to realise how serious it was, but things changed, food was rationed and the windows had to have heavy curtains so that no light showed. The towns were bombed but we did not realise what it was like until one night, a beautiful moonlit night, we heard wave after wave of planes going over and the next morning heard that Clydebank and Greenock had been bombed. Children were evacuated from the towns and quite a lot came to Ardlamont. Anyone who had room had to take an evacuee. The school was then full but gradually most of them went back home as it was 'too quiet' for them.

We realised then what war meant. I can't remember just when, but the soldiers arrived and Osta Bay was used for a lot of army manoeuvres and there was a lot of gun fire. As our house was near we were in turn 'evacuated'. As the war progressed all of Ardlamont was evacuated. The farm animals all had to go too and they were put to the farms in Kilfinan. There were quite a few there. The farmers were allowed back at certain times to work the ground but nobody stayed. The school children were all sent to Tighnabruaich school, and Ardlamont was closed for good. All these things made us realise what the war was about. Although we were lucky in a way.

## II War, Sport, and Communications.

*[None of the group has first-hand memories of the First World War, although it claimed its share of casualties from the district. But memories of the Second World War remain fresh, perhaps because it had a tangible presence in the district. Fortunately our invaders were friendly. And the war had its lighter moments - in hindsight, at least.]*



### **During The War - Ostal Bay** by Flora MacLeod (Galbraith)

We lived at Kilbride which was on the road to Ostal Bay. About 1943 troops began to arrive by barge etc, for manoeuvres, landing on the shore from landing craft and finding their way to given points on land, always passing our house at night. As the war progressed the activities became more frequent and at last we were 'evacuated' to Ardlamont, where more soldiers were stationed, but their training wasn't so dangerous. After a few months we were again moved and my father got work in St. Catherine's, where we stayed until all the training was finished. We heard a lot of men lost their lives there when things went wrong in training. One instance - the guns were firing short and quite a few fatalities occurred, probably more than was ever heard of. Ostal Bay was made to represent the Normandy beaches. Some of the men said when they did land there they thought they were back in Ostal Bay.

When we were eventually allowed home the lovely shore had completely changed with barbed wire and sand bags representing the cliffs. That was all later cleared, but a lot of unexploded shells and mines turned up, and the bomb disposal squad had to return, often years later, as odd shells were found. Now Ostal Bay is such a tranquil spot it is hard to believe that it played such an important part in eventually bringing the war to an end.

### **The Home Guard**

The home guard was formed and all the men had to take turns on guard duty at nights. There was a look-out hut at the top of the brae above Corra Farm where they had a good view of the sea. There was another hut at Kilfinan and my future husband, who was six years older than me, had a motor bike so he was a despatch rider. He told me of one occasion when he was on duty at 11 o'clock at night, they heard a loud noise and were sure it was an enemy tank. They took their rifles (for which they had no ammunition) and went to investigate, no doubt feeling a bit nervous - only to discover it was a couple returning to Balliemore Estate pushing the baby in a pram with no tyres on the wheels. What a relief!

During the war 3 bombs were dropped on the hill above Kilfinan Farm. A German plane was being chased by Spitfires and dropped the bombs to lighten the load. Luckily they landed on hill ground well away from Kilfinan village and the only casualties were some sheep. They left huge craters, which eventually filled with water.





**You Laughed as Well as Wept** by Mary Crowe  
(from a taped interview with Wilma Weir)

I was born in 1909 and I came to Kames first on holiday when I was 18. That would be in 1927. After that my people came every year for a month. Then I got married in 1939 and came to Kames to stay - Bertie was a postman in Caladh. I was just married a year when Norman was born, and that was the beginning of my family. There was quite a bit of excitement because of the war, with the army being here. We stayed down the shore in 'Beechwood'. The tanks were parked right along the shore to Flora Cameron's, and up the back it was bren gun carriers. Activity went on all night. You got quite used to it, and you were quite friendly with them all, all the soldiers. The Poles were there and they lived in the Royal Hall. Mrs Edgar was a great one in the canteen in Kames and Dot MacDougall (Cath Nicolson) worked there too. My family was young at the time and I was never there.

By this time Bertie was working for Simpson, driving the tilly - a utility truck that did everything. The Poles were officers, mostly, and Bertie got to know them quite well. I remember General Sikorski coming. He was the head of the Polish Army. He told us how they had come here and how they had fought against the Germans and the Russians. It opened your eyes.

The Poles were very artistic. They had the Royal Hall all decorated and it was left like that for quite a long time. And they had some beautiful singers.

Then the Italians came and that was a disaster. Kames wasn't left with a bird because they killed them all and ate them.

Our own men used to come in at the tank landing and march up to Millhouse. And if Dougie MacCallum the baker was there with his van there would be nothing left for anybody else in the place.

I remember being frightened of submarines when I was going along the shore. We lived in 'Beechwood' and Grandma MacDougall was in 'Rosewood' beside the hotel. Spearman kept pigs in the field at the side of the hotel. One night I was going along to 'Rosewood' in the dark and keeping so well clear of the shore in case there was a submarine that I landed up beside the pigs.

During the war you laughed as well as wept.

I remember the night of the blitz over Greenock and Clydebank. The planes came over and you could actually see the lights - it was bright moonlight, and I could see all my white nappies on the washing line and ran out to bring them all in. By this time Bertie was working for my father [*Abernethy*], who had a blacksmith's business in Hillington, and was doing war work all the time. Bertie had a double-barrelled shotgun and a rifle and we were determined I should learn to use them. I don't know whether we thought the Germans were going to come up our road. You didn't know at the time, so I had a fear.

At the outbreak of war there was a big round-up of Territorials. Grandma said, 'What do you think of Robert' - that was Robert MacDougall - 'joining the terriers?' I said, 'Get him out.' He wasn't the age - he was only seventeen. But he joined, and that day there were Robert MacDougall, Robert Dunsmore, Peter Kent, and another one, and they were only seventeen. It was terrible, you know.



**The War Years at the Kyles** by Elizabeth Edgar

I was just sitting admiring my house after a good spring clean when I heard a noise on the stair. (This was in Airy Cottage). I went to the door and found five young soldiers. I asked what they were doing there and they told me they had come to take Kames. They were on manoeuvres and had come from Dunoon. I told them that was all right with me and asked, 'Could you eat a plate of soup?' They were glad to, for they were very hungry. Well, this was May, 1939, and it let me know that the war was nearer than I thought.

On September the 3rd we were at war. It made you shudder just to think of it.

As time went on the evacuees started to arrive from Clydebank and Glasgow, and later came the bombing of both places and Greenock. The sky at night was bright red, and with shrapnel falling it was very scary to go out. Everyone connected to me was in Greenock and I couldn't get through to anyone. Then a girl I knew came to see if I could tell her where she and her aunt and two children could get somewhere to stay, so I said if you would like to stay with me, we will make room, and it turned out to be a very happy time. We did our best for the folk who needed help.

The first evacuees who came started to go home and others came but most were home birds and the place here was too quiet for them.

We were coming to 1942 and things were looking very black. Suddenly there was a knock at the door and it was Mr Somerville our minister. He said 'Mrs Edgar, the YMCA are going to open a canteen and there is a lady who would like to see you. Can you come now?' So I went with him to meet her and she told me there were 250 Polish soldiers coming and could I give her a hand to prepare for them.



So that began a very busy time. She showed me how to cook the food they liked, and I was on my way. I must say I thoroughly enjoyed working for them. Their manners were a delight, and their singing a treat to listen to, so I asked them if they would come to the church choir, and they did.

The next lot of men who came were the French Canadians, who were up at Auchenlochan Farm. The morning tea started at 10am. I got four local ladies to come to help. They sat at the kitchen table and buttered the rolls, so I needed help to do the dishes. I spoke to a sergeant and he sent two men. One was black with the happiest face and one of the ladies fell for him. He could do no wrong.

After Dunkirk, as one lot of soldiers came the others moved on. I was terribly sorry for this lot. They were so young and having been there, having to go back was not funny. But you always had to be cheerful no matter how you felt. It was getting time for our boys to go. I noticed one boy sitting by himself and I went to speak to him. He put his head on my shoulder and started to weep. I held him till he felt better and he told me his twin had been killed that day.

I felt so sorry for him; he had to go home to tell his mother and he felt so bad about it.

The soldiers were stationed in what is now our playing field. One night after the canteen closed I had gone to my friend's house where we had a quiet talk and a cup of tea. I left her to go home and as I went to cross the road I heard voices. I waited, and three soldiers came and asked me where the canteen was. I said, 'It closes at ten o'clock. You're a bit late for it.' It was nearly two a.m. They said they had just arrived and were starving. I invited them up with me and I told them it needed to be very quiet. So up they came and I made them some sandwiches. This was all in the dark for there was no black-out up. Afterwards, I told them my name, and they said they were very grateful and would see me in daylight.

I had entertained the Major, Captain, and Staff Sergeant. We had a good laugh about it the next day.

Next we had a new crowd - the REME (engineers). Their work shop was on our back road and made MacBrides' brae very busy.

Then came the Americans, who were very nice boys. They were the ones who were killed by their own men. I wrote to twelve of their mothers and I got twelve answers back.

They were hardly here till another lot came to the tank slip with amphibious tanks, so now the place was very busy. All hotels, the hostel, and all holiday houses were full. All round Ardlamont were troops, and at Caladh there were sailors.

We also had Italian prisoners who were a quiet crowd, very nice to the children. One man made a lovely mosaic step at the front door of the Royal Hotel (and has since been back to see it). Before they left we had a dance in the Royal hall, and the prisoners decorated it beautifully with flowers.

The canteen had a big billiard table, dart board, and books, which were all well used. One day as I was going over there with a friend, some Canadians were having an argument and suddenly a body flew past us and landed at our feet. He seemed knocked out. My friend ran to the post office for a glass of water and I got the boy round. Quite a crowd had gathered by this time. I got up and started to put my sleeves up and walked over to the lad who had done this and said, 'Have you ever had your ears rung by a woman?' and he turned and ran away - straight into an M.P [Military Policeman]. It caused quite a laugh but the boy must have been sore, and he seemed so young to me.

The canteen manageress was Miss MacLeod and she was a delight to work for. One of the boys said, 'If that lady would smile at me I would ask her out.' I told her and she said, 'I was brought up with seven brothers and I went right off men, he is out of luck.'

One Sunday night the rain never stopped and outside was a quagmire. When I was locking up, one of the boys said, 'I'll lift you over', and with me in his arms he fell on his knees, but two other boys came to our rescue and all was well.

I did not like one sergeant who had a dreadful tongue, so one day I went to him and told him what I thought of him and his tongue. He apologised and I never heard him swear again. Then another one who was with the REME came, and he was worse. My friend Peggy (an evacuee) and I were disgusted at the way he treated the lads when they went for their dinner. He had a load of mail, which he held in his hand while he made the boys run at the double up and down the road. We hated this but he seemed to enjoy it. So we waited, and one day we got him. In the village we bought some long-handled brushes. As we came along the road, there he was drilling the lads, so Peggy and I joined them and marched with them - and suddenly his hat blew into the water. It was hilarious, but we each got a letter telling us to stop interfering with the troops while they were on duty. I never found out what we were to do when they were not !

After the war, three Americans came back and a few of us were asked to have tea with them at the Royal Hotel. Then one day about two years ago two Americans and their wives came to see me. It was a grand reunion. They were touring Scotland to let their wives see where they had been.



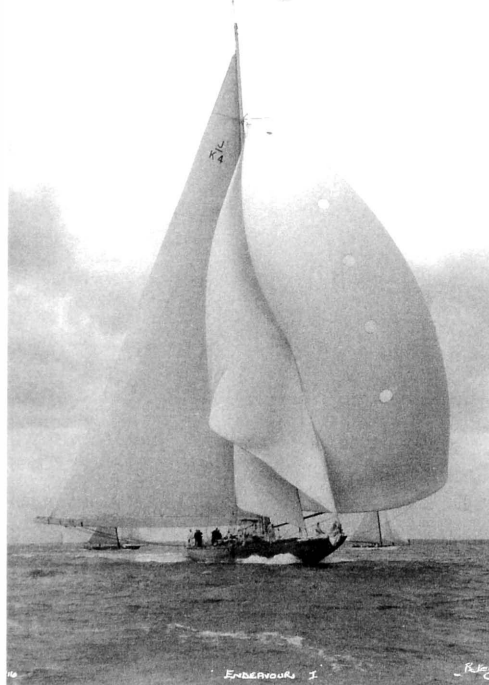
VE Night Dance

*[War interrupted one of the district's great preoccupations - sport, represented here by sailing, shinty, and golf.]*

### **Sailing Memories** by Chester Currie (interviewed by Alan Millar)

Chester grew up as a seafarer. He remembers Smith's Yard in the village in its heyday when a clinker built dinghy would be constructed each week, built upside down, in the long shed on the site of the modern Life Boat Station. Boat handling and early sailing experience were gained in such a dinghy. An old sack for a sail meant rowing to windward and coming back downwind. Later, as a fisherman, he learned to sail and successfully race a fishing smack.

Between the two World Wars Chester was much involved with boats and with the sea. He remembers how at that time up to a hundred men would leave the village every season to work as paid hands on various yachts. In those days many yachts were much bigger than anything there is today, and the owner relied entirely on professional crew.



*Endeavour I* with Chester at the bow

Chester, for his part, sailed in the 1930s on boats in the biggest racing class: J Class yachts. In 'Valsheda' there were 26 of a crew and he was the only Scot aboard. There were no winches, so the huge sails had to be sweated to the top of the mast and, of course, trimmed, by muscle strength alone; hence the need for so many men. Another huge difference was in the materials. Whereas modern sails are made of terylene or other synthetic fibre it was cotton for all pre-war sails. This meant that they had to be carefully dried before being put away. Always there was the risk of mildew, both on the sails and on the sail covers. Nowadays, sails hold their shape but natural fabric had to be treated with much greater care. A new sail had to be 'run in' and very slowly stretched. There was a class of about eight J Class yachts, of which the King's 'Britannia' was one. The season ran from April to September with early races out of Harwich. From there they progressed along the English south coast, with the highlight naturally Cowes Week in the Solent. From Falmouth, these huge yachts would go round to south Wales, over the Irish Sea to Cork, to Dun Laoghaire outside Dublin, up to Belfast Lough and then to the Clyde. After that it was back south, but to France.

But even then the J Class was proving beyond the means even of the wealthiest, and the smaller 12 metres began to supplant them. Chester skippered 'Trivia' for the last three seasons before the war, and his highlight was six firsts in Cowes Week. These were wonderful boats but smaller, of course, than the big Js. Crew consisted of four professionals supplemented by one or two amateurs. Amongst the amateurs Chester had crewing for him was Peter Scott, the ornithologist.

Whereas today all yachts have a dual role, as racers and cruisers, in those days 12 metres had no engines so that there was a premium on seamanship for all manoeuvres. And there were few concessions to comfort. All spare equipment was taken ashore before racing to keep down weight. Chester well remembers meeting the legendary, outspoken, Uffa Fox, renowned designer of so many fast yachts, and later sailing companion for Prince Philip. He had the privilege of racing Uffa's own Flying Fifteen.

Throughout the war Chester served in the Merchant Navy as skipper on the Clyde of a Thames Barge: a big, broad beamed shallow draught boat of which a few remain today. These boats, stripped of their sails, worked as tenders to the myriad ships using the Clyde at that time. Chester was based in Greenock and would take out all manner of goods to the Tail of the Bank and beyond. He recalls how once ammunition and cordite off a warship was to come ashore at the Albert Dock but the harbourmaster on learning the nature of the cargo ordered him off to sea and far away. His manifest had to be transferred to a special vessel and taken to Ardeer in Ayrshire.

On another occasion it was a cargo of gold bullion which he took aboard at Greenock and out to the battleship 'Rodney'. It was at the very worst time, when British assets were being shipped across the Atlantic for safe keeping in Canada or to meet the costs of the war effort. Security was naturally tight and Chester remembers coming back to his ship alongside the dock in Greenock when, just as he was about to go down the vertical ladder, he had a pistol poked into the back of his neck. Only when his identity had been clarified was he allowed to carry on.

In the post war years yachting returned to the Clyde but the boats were much smaller. Dinghies had never been popular pre-war, but Chester was among the pioneers of dinghy racing here, and he led the way with his own Albacore and Wayfarer, a precursor of the fleets of small boats so much a part of the summer scene in the Kyles today.

## **Regatta Day** by Deirdre MacIntyre

Glasgow Fair Monday, regatta day! Rain or shine there was always a good turn out of spectators - many locals and a large number of friends who would have arrived on the Friday steamers for their annual 'fair fortnight'. It was a beautiful sight on a clear morning with a light wind blowing to watch each class of yacht line up for the gun.

The rowing races started later: girls' singles, boys' singles, girls' pairs, boys' pairs, and mixed doubles. My father had a 12 foot clinker dinghy which was quite a heavy row, but I was used to it. However, an elderly gent who hired boats from a hut on the foreshore at Arden Craig, by name of Currie Mhor, was my supporter and always gave me the use of a nearly new 10 foot dinghy which was a dream to row. Light as a feather!

Although Dad had put me through my paces at rounding a buoy at top speed it wasn't really needed then, as what we all rowed around was a luxury motor vessel, the 'Iolaire'. She, to me, was beautiful! Had her uses too: on one occasion when in the mixed doubles with Sandy Malcolm, we changed places when we got on her off side. Sandy had hurt a wrist, but we were both strong rowers and aye out on the water. We got away with it until we had to go out to the commodore yacht to be given our prizes, and were met by the late Dr G.L. Thomson who enquired why we had changed places.

The greasy boom usually came last, and no wonder. If you weren't wet before entering, you were pretty well sure to be soaked afterwards. Many entered, especially our macho boys. Very, very few were successful but we all enjoyed it and the crowd loved it. Many memories of very happy days and lovely people.





## **Shinty Memories** by Dugie Thomson

My first recollection of shinty was at the end of hostilities in 1945 when I was at Kilfinan school - when I heard the older men of the village say, 'Now we'll get the shinty started again'. So it wasn't long before we were all at this 'shinty' in the school. Some weird shaped 'camans' were on display - anything that had a hook at the end. By some strange coincidence I had managed to get a real 'hickory stick' (it must have been put away in some corner of a shed in 1939) and after each game I used to hide it - in case some-one else got a hold of my 'real stick'.

The first organised game I saw was between Millhouse and Glendaruel. I remember we all went over to Glendaruel on the back of a lorry. The result is unimportant but I thought it was a wonderful occasion as I had never seen a proper game with players wearing strips, a referee, linesmen, goal judges and even goal posts! And so I was hooked.

From then on I began to listen to the tales of the old days and the great games that had been played so long ago. The first local trophy I heard about was the MacPherson Cup (its origin I am not clear about). It was played at 'Annfield', Kilfinan, between Ballimore and Kilfinan. I still have the photograph of the winning Kilfinan team. I believe this game took place about 1902 or 1903.

Before the war all the villages had teams - Tighnabruaich, Kilfinan, Kames, and Millhouse (and also Ballimore and Ardlamont for a short time).

By the time I remember the shinty there was no longer a team at Kilfinan. But Tighnabruaich, Kames and Millhouse were still very active. So by the time I came to, say, 15 - 16 years anyone who lived in Kilfinan would play for Millhouse. However, before I go on from there I must recall the games in Kilfinan school. On Monday morning we picked teams which were kept for the whole week. So every morning break, dinner time and afternoon break we did battle in the playground behind the school. The playground became like a ploughed field but that did not deter us. The score would be something like 64 goals to 61, as the score was carried on from the previous day, right through to the break up of the school on Friday. On one occasion at the last break on Friday, the team I was in were one goal behind, and at the very end we got a penalty (I'll never know how this came about as there was no referee). I was just about to take the penalty when the bell rang to return to class. The opposing team walked off to return to school. Well! the row that got up then - should I have been given the time to take the penalty and so on. We had a very diplomatic teacher in Kilfinan at the time and, as the argument was still raging when we returned to class, she intervened and decided that, as the scores were so even, I would be allowed to take the penalty after school and she would come and see fair play. Not much attention was paid to school work that afternoon and the great moment at last arrived.

The whole school (14 of us) and the teacher all there, up I stepped and blasted the ball about 3 feet over the bar. Talk about wishing the ground would open up! However, we all went home knowing justice had been done. Anyway, eventually I became old enough to play for Millhouse and had many great moments with them over the years, also many disappointments as there were many good players in opposition who sent us homeward to think again. It would be unfair to mention any individual players who were my team mates or my opponents. But I met many fine wielders of the caman who went on to great things with senior teams and I made many friends who remain so even today.

Now there was much rivalry between the villages and none more so than Tighnabruaich and Kames and some fierce 'battles' took place. But as far as I can gather, over the years neither could claim supremacy for any length of time. Of course these village teams were playing junior shinty and we all dreamt that one day we would be picked to play for Kyles Juniors (selected from all junior players) and ultimately qualify for the senior team, Kyles Athletic, and as Kyles have just recently celebrated 100 years they are known and respected throughout the shinty world.

I never quite made the grade for the seniors but played for a number of years for Kyles Juniors and also have many happy memories of my time with them.

When the village teams were still going we not only played against the local villages but also Strachur, Inveraray, Bute, and Col Glen - all had fine teams. The Buteman, Smith and MacQuiston were all cups in which we played all these teams.

However, as the years passed and the population fell it became harder to field a village team. I have been told that at Kames on the green patch in front of 'Bowen Craig' as many as 40 young men would be practising on the clear nights - their biggest difficulty at that time would be who to leave out of the team. The last team to survive as a village team was Millhouse and unfortunately they folded in the mid fifties.

So, these are a few of my memories and observations over the last 50 years. Now we only have Kyles and Kyles Juniors, and unfortunately they are having quite a hard time to field two teams. It is sad that the old village teams have gone and although I only saw the latter years I will always cherish these memories and be proud to have been part of this tradition. And who knows the future? Maybe again some old men will recall some game they remember and tell a young man, as I was told so long ago.



Shinty hopefuls in the 30s

## **Shinty** by Alistair Chambers

The games between the three junior teams were very hard fought, as each player tried to do his best for his team and his village; for shinty is a village sport, and at one time whole villages took part - 30 or more players on each side. My own theory is that this is why Kyles did so well against other teams: the grounding the players got playing for their local team and against each other.

Travelling to away games could be a problem: going to play on Bute, for instance, meant a journey by motor boat (before the New Road). Once, coming back from a game against Rothesay in the dark, the engine caught fire. Only quick thinking by some on board taking their coats off and dipping them in the sea, then over the engine compartment, prevented what could have been a tragedy.

At one time there were so many players in Kames, two teams could have played on match day. If you did not turn up on time someone else would take your place. Shinty sticks were mostly home-made from ash or birch and made to your own requirements, or from bits and pieces of old hickory sticks we got from Donald Kent, who looked after and repaired the shinty sticks of the players of Kyles Athletic for years. Now we have a shinty stick maker on our doorstep. Neil Blair's father, Jack, also a joiner, played shinty. He was not supposed to as his back was bad.

He played using another name, so that his family, especially his mother, would not know. They found out when his name appeared in the paper (his real name). He had scored a goal in the game the week before. He played too well. The Kyles Junior team was a natural progression from the three junior teams. If you were good enough and played a few games at that level you would get your chance when there was a vacancy in the senior team. The first set of jerseys the Kyles played in, in competitions, were donated by Glasgow Rangers Football Club in 1900.

The field all the teams played on before the Moss, was at Kames Farm, and called America. It's the field on the right going into the golf course. Why it was called America I don't know. Morris McCallum who played for Kames and whose father owned the farm does not know either. The Kames team just walked to the field, played the game and walked back down to Albion House, my mother's house. She would have a boiler of hot water and tubs in the washhouse beside the back door of her draper's shop and her workshop where she made suits, etc. The workshop was the first recreation club in Kames before the first purpose built club and this was where teams came to tidy up after playing - including visiting teams.

High Kames and Low Kames were school teams, not picked by the school, just depending who turned up and which part of Kames they were from - as the title of the teams suggests, high road or low road. Again we had to rely on the kindness of the farmers to allow us to play on their fields. Usually it was Kames Farm, or High Kames, as it was known.

We must also remember the shinty ball, and John McKellar the shoemaker from Tighnabruaich, who made shinty balls for the local teams and for Scottish cup finals.

### **Golf can soothe..... by Irene Hunter**

I came to Tighnabruaich with my husband and small Jack Russell from Edinburgh in 1966, to live, we thought, a fairly quiet life - only to be very quickly disillusioned firstly by 'Concorde' doing trial flights breaking the sound barrier and our little dog's nerve. The first time it happened, I was talking to my sister in Australia on the telephone and she heard it, which must be some kind of record.

Next, blasting started behind and above our house during the last two years' work on the New Road, which was opened by Dr Dickson Mabon MP in 1969. In his speech he told us that the next stage to be tackled was to Colintrave - including a bridge to Bute!

Then came Portavadie, and an invasion of workmen who took over almost all holiday accommodation, and to my mind changed the character of the area for ever.

Before we came here we had heard that there was a 9 hole golf course, and were very disappointed to find that it no longer existed. It had been used by the army as practice ground for D-Day, and the first thing my husband found was a live shell.

Soon afterwards a group of local men plus my husband started to restore the golf course and eventually it was playable; a wooden hut was erected for a club house, and many a good game took place there. Since then the Club has gone from strength to strength, and we have a very posh club house now.

For me, many happy memories.

*[With the possible exception of oil lamps, communication with the outside world is the most common theme of this collection. The group's memories take us from telegraph to internet, and paddle steamer to jumbo jet.*

*Compared to some my association with Tighnabruaich is recent but I can still share the nostalgia for an era of more stylish travel. In the sixties I remember timing the journey to the Kyles in the 'Loch Fyne' on a Saturday morning not in hours, but in courses of the delicious breakfast, complete with silver service and white-jacketed steward.]*

## **Communications Over The Years In Tighnabruaich And District** by T.Lushington.

The telegraph cable linking Tighnabruaich with Rothesay was laid from the north end of Bute to Rhubaan field prior to World War I. During the war urgent news was transmitted by telegraph in Morse code to Tighnabruaich post office. It was then decoded and put in the post office window for public information.

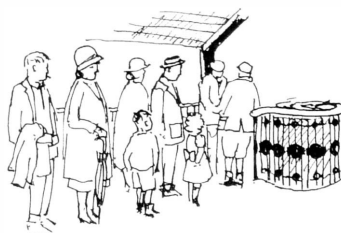
In the early 1920s when the post office was in the present day Spar building, the telephone exchange was installed in the postmaster's home in the flat above the shop. This was the beginning of telephonic communications in Tighnabruaich and the Parish of Kilfinan. In the early thirties the post office and telephone exchange moved to its present site, the latter being situated on the first floor above the post office which was the residence of the postmaster and his wife, Mr and Mrs Donald Mackechnie. The telephone exchange had provision for 80 subscribers. It was manually operated 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks in the year including holidays. Mr and Mrs MacKechnie were never free of the telephone in these days. As the demand from private residences and businesses grew the work load of the telephone exchange increased.

During World War II, with naval personnel stationed at Caladh (1940-44), and the British Army at Ardlamont training for the D-Day Landings (1943-1944) with Italian P.O.W. mopping up after them, the work in the telephone exchange increased 100%.

From the introduction of telephones in the early 1920s until automation in the late 1940s, there was no direct link with Glasgow. The trunk telephone route was always through the Rothesay telephone exchange. It would connect Tighnabruaich to Greenock, on to Glasgow and beyond.

Towards the end of the 1940s the manual telephone exchange was replaced by the first automatic exchange in the district, which was built on the high road at the top of the Butcher's Wood. The Kilfinan telephone exchange had been built pre-war and was ready for automation. This was the beginning of a separate exchange for Kilfinan and Otter Ferry - up until this time the Tighnabruaich exchange served the entire Parish of Kilfinan from Otter Ferry to Glen Caladh.

In the 1960s the original automatic telephone exchange on the high road in Auchenlochan moved to its present site in Kames. It was one of the most advanced technological exchanges in the whole of the U.K., but it suffered a set-back when it was badly damaged by a thunderbolt in March 1987. But since the early 1990s it has advanced to being one of the most up to date exchanges again.



## **Travel** by Maggie Paterson

For nine years we lived in London and rented a house in Tighnabruaich. As well as spending our holidays in that house we travelled up every second weekend. We caught the 11 o'clock sleeper at Euston and arrived at Central Station at 6.30 am. After a light breakfast at the buffet, we caught the train for Gourock, where we boarded a steamer which arrived at Tighnabruaich about 10 am. On Sunday night about 5.30 we caught the last steamer for Gourock and the train for Glasgow, where we had a meal and caught the 9.30 sleeper for London. My husband slept very well on the train - and walked straight to his office on arrival in London.

During the weekend the last steamer on Saturday moored at Ormidale. The crew - who must have been very thirsty - either walked to the pub at Glendaruel, or over a goat track from the pier to Caladh and on to the pub at Tighnabruaich in the dark. The track was very difficult to follow and they often had to shout for help, and any dinghies fishing off the Split Rock would usually rescue them. The steamer left at 6.30 on Monday morning and picked up people from Tighnabruaich, Auchenlochan, Kames, Colintraive, Rothesay, Innellan, Dunoon, and so to Gourock and a train to Glasgow for about 9 am. Several boats called at Tighnabruaich pier daily and Bertie Lyle was on hand to collect pier dues - 1d. Often while passengers were fumbling for the correct amount they would drop a coin or two which would maybe fall through the space between the sleepers, much to the delight of local kids who would find them down on the beach.

Our three children were married in Tighnabruaich Church, and in those days whenever there was a wedding all the shops dressed their windows accordingly - Jamieson's Bakery, wedding cake; Whyte and MacKenzie, bottles, bells and cartons; Ironmongery, pots and pans etc.

If there were to be guests coming by steamer it could be arranged that a local bus would be on hand to take them to, say, Kames Hotel for coffee and a freshen up. Then a run round Ardlamont and back to the church in time for the wedding.

The day Helen and Charles were married the weather was perfect. After the service we all walked to Tighnabruaich Hotel - Charles throwing money to all the kids who had gathered to watch. All the food was on tables in the garden - even the cake. We were served by the Aitkens' three daughters and three friends, all in brightly checked aprons. It was a beautiful buffet. Drinks were dispensed by Gordon Aitken. Some guests had to leave for the 5.30 steamer and those staying for the weekend left for their accommodation - just as well, for at 6 o'clock there was a violent thunderstorm. After that had passed, the couple departed for their honeymoon, driven by Colin Simpson to Kilchattan Bay, and we all gathered at 'Tighanduinn' for a party. Great days!

## **Transport In The Kyles** by A.M. Lushington

A very early childhood memory shows how everything was focused on the sea and the pier: the steamers came and went and kept us, in our almost island existence, in touch with civilization. My earliest memory of national significance was being told that there was no butter for breakfast, because the cargo boat wasn't sailing, because nobody was working (the General Strike of 1926)!

The 1920s were still a time when there was a first class transport system on the Clyde, with steamers plying to all places with a pier.

You could leave Tighnabruaich in the summer months at 7am, and going via Wemyss Bay you could be in Glasgow at 8.55 am. In the evening you could catch the train at Glasgow Central and come off the steamer at Tighnabruaich Pier at 7pm, after a day's work, business, or shopping in town! This service was maintained by the Railway paddle steamers, usually the 'Duchess of Fife' or the 'Duchess of Rothesay' and would continue until the outbreak of the war in 1939. It was always important to be able to identify which 'Duchess' was coming into the pier and you could do that by looking for the lifeboat at the stern port side of the 'Duchess of Fife'. Where the 'Duchess of Rothesay' kept her lifeboat, I no longer remember!

In mid-morning anybody who had nothing better to do, and on high days and holidays absolutely everybody would make their way to the pier, 'supervised' by the local policeman of the time, to watch the competition between the steamers to reach the pier first. But the final selection was in the hands of the piermaster, George Olding, who controlled the three black and white bull's eye signals mounted on the 'Penny Box' mid-way down the pier.

There would be the white-funnelled 'King Edward' and later the 'King George V', or the 'Queen Alexandra', later to sail in David MacBrayne's fleet as the 'Saint Columba' with the addition of an extra red and black funnel. One of these white and black funnelled turbine steamers would be making her way all the way up Loch Fyne to Inveraray. Then came the Arran boat, the 'Glen Sannox' or the 'Duchess of Argyll' - replaced during the 1930s by the stately 'Duchesses' of Hamilton and Montrose. These sister ships could be identified by the



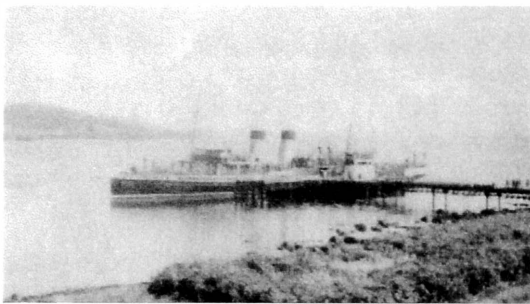
number of portholes (although they looked more like windows) on their sides. And the exciting places they were heading for: 'Corrie, Brodick, Lamlash and Whiting Bay'!

Then, of course, there was the mail steamer: in the 1920s still the majestic paddle steamers, the 'Iona' in winter and the 'Columba' in summer. These were the 'Pride of the Clyde' following the 'Royal Route' to 'Tarbert, Ardrishaig, Oban and The North'. They were to be replaced in the 1930s by the 'Loch Fyne' which gave such yeoman service in the Second World War on this side of the boom at the Tail of The Bank.

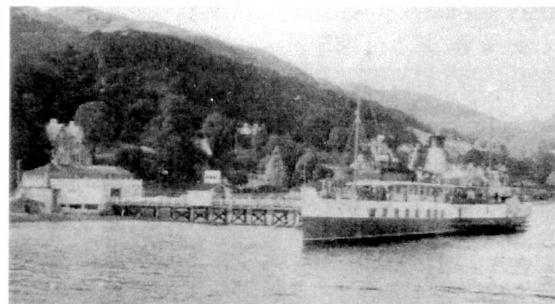
The 'Loch Fyne' maintained the daily service to Ardrishaig until 30th September, 1969, after which the mails came via Dunoon over the New Road, and David MacBrayne (1928 Ltd) ceased to ply on the Clyde.

At lunchtime a Railway boat, such as the 'Duchesses' of Fife and Rothesay, occasionally the 'Eagle III', and immediately before the war perhaps the 'Mercury' or the 'Caledonia', would arrive, waiting for an hour at Auchenlochan Pier before beginning the return journey. This allowed people to spend the afternoon in Rothesay, from where they could return on the evening steamer with the commuters from Glasgow, and those who had taken the Arran sail and disembarked at Rothesay.

Next to arrive would be the 'all the way' steamer from the Broomielaw, always a popular cruise. The 'Queen Mary', renamed the 'Queen Mary II' after the giant Cunarder of that name was launched in 1934, usually did this run. At about the same time the LNER steamer from Craigendoran would come round Rhuban Point and make for the pier. The steamers on this run were all called after novels by Sir Walter Scott and 'Marmion', 'Talisman' and 'Jeanie Deans' were all well known and well loved in the Kyles!



*Jeanie Deans at Auchenlochan*



*Talisman at Tighnabruaich*

Usually the evening steamer would lie at Auchenlochan Pier, but on occasion at Kames Pier, and at weekends it would go up to Ormidale. It was there on Sunday, 3rd September, 1939. When the steamer arrived at Tighnabruaich for the Monday morning run, the crew, not having a radio on board, must have been the only people in the country not to know that Britain was at war with Germany!

There were two cargo boats, the 'Ardyne' and the 'Minard' which gave a regular service to the Kyles, bringing provisions and goods as well as barrels of petrol, oil and paraffin. They would discharge their cargo at the pier, to be transferred on to George Olding's lorry, 'Tin Lizzie', for delivery. Then there were the puffers which regularly arrived to unload coal on the beach at Portdrishaig, or at Auchenlochan or Kames Piers.

Coming off the steamer, at the end of Tighnabruaich Pier you would find MacBride's and Simpson's taxis waiting to whisk you to your destination, and both these families operated buses locally. Simpson also had a demure navy blue estate wagon which did the daily mail run to Kilfinan and Otter Ferry and also, when necessary, did duty as the hearse! Mail was delivered on foot on all the beats except for the Millhouse/ Ardlamont and the Glen Caladh runs, for which the Post Office supplied bicycles.

Most of the shops which sold perishable goods had message boys who delivered locally on bicycles, but for up-country delivery vans were necessary, and in the outlying areas they were always a lifeline which offered vital human contact to many living in isolated corners of the parish.



*Jupiter at Kames*

## **Memories** by Archie MacBride.

In the early thirties there were two buses in the district - Simpson's at Auchenlochan Pier and Royal Cottage Garage, and MacBride's at Fairfield, Kames. Simpson's bus was blue, and MacBride's red.

About 1936 both bus owners formed The Kyles of Bute Bus Company and a new bus was purchased, a Bedford - coloured blue and red. Willie Simpson ran the bus from the Royal Garage. At this time the company also purchased a Ford estate vehicle which was used to take the mails to Otter Ferry. It was also used as the hearse in the district and at times it was used as an ambulance taking patients to hospital. Prior to this patients had to go by boat.

The first Wednesday of each month was the shopkeepers' whole holiday and on this day the bus went to Glasgow, departing at 6am and returning at 8pm. The pick-up point in Glasgow was at Renfrew Street, and the route, of course, via Otter Ferry. Drivers over the years were : Willie Simpson, Malcolm John Currie, Jackie Henderson, Alex Turner and Bertie Crowe.

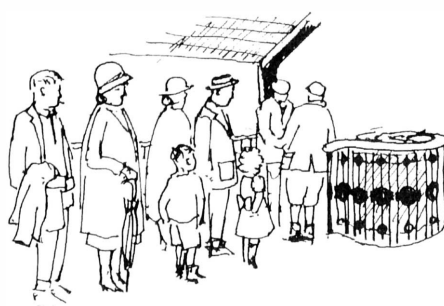
In the thirties Jessie, Annie and Bessie MacBride were the only women in Scotland to hold licences to drive buses.

Mr Colin Simpson operated a coal business and taxi service and the cargo boat called at Auchenlochan Pier. He employed as workmen: Mr J. Turner, Mr Aitken, Mr Donald, Archie MacLauchlan, and Lawrence Davidson. At one time Simpson also collected household ashes, which were put on the Moss.

Norman Jamieson also had a coal business - behind Port Drishaig, and he also had a spell on the ash cart.

From about 1936 to the early sixties, MacBride operated a regular lorry service to Glasgow. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday they left for Glasgow at 6am, arriving back between 8 and 10pm. Their drivers were Jock MacNeill, Donald MacLellan and J. Kennedy, assisted by Alex Baxter, Caley Salisbury, Joe Edgar, Pat Duffy, Lawrence Davidson, Donnie Whyte, and Peter MacBride.

Spearman also ran a coal merchant's business and lorries. Their drivers were Geoff, Basil, and George Spearman; Robert Baxter, and Jimmie MacDonald.



## **Travel** by Eileen Graham

When I was a child we came down to Portavadie from the Broomielaw on the 'Queen Mary' or from Wemyss Bay on one of the other steamers; very occasionally in a friend's car by the 'Rest' and Otter Ferry, or when all else failed, on a Friday evening by Rothesay and the 'Countess of Breadalbane' to Tighnabruaich. However in the seventies and early eighties, when my parents were living in Millhouse and the New Road had been opened, Gorman's Tours ran a bus that came up to Glasgow early on Friday morning, returning around 6.00pm in the evening. For someone working in Glasgow with family in the Tighnabruaich area these buses were a real lifeline.

I usually caught the bus in Great Western Road and there was sometimes a worry about whether we would get on, but I don't ever remember being left behind, though occasionally we had to sit on our rucksacks till the first passengers got off (no standing was allowed). In winter the journeys could be exciting but Donny Whyte was an extremely good and safe driver. I remember once a long queue of vehicles on the road down to Glen Kinglas while we waited for gritters to come. The road was covered in black ice, and even after gritting was tricky, especially when the car in front suddenly stopped and Donny was only just able to avoid it. The Tighnabruaich road used to be gritted just before the bus came along. Once around New Year the road was blocked with snow for several days; when we did get away it was extraordinarily beautiful, everything white and every twig in the trees coated in frost and sparkling in the early morning sun. Perhaps I was more impressed because I was used to doing the journey in the dark. In spring and summer it was always beautiful, especially the first view of the Kyles, or the views of the Arrochar hills on the way up.

## **The Opening Of The New Road** by Betty Allison

The 'New' road, officially opened in June 1969, was planned, with projects in other areas, to open up the West Highland coast for tourism. For this reason its eight mile climb up onto the moors above Caladh, affording scenic views of the Kyles Narrows, Bute and distant Arran was chosen rather than the utilitarian route, linking Caladh with Ormidale - a gap of only half a mile.

Argyll County Council felt they were on to a winner, as the road was to attract 100% grant. Unfortunately the government reneged on this and the Council was to get only 75% and could ill afford the unforeseen cost. Hurried retrenchment meant the planned two track road was reduced to single track with passing places and resulted in some dangerous blind bends.

The contractors, with a workforce of some six men, heavily mechanised with earth moving machinery and explosives, began in the spring of 1967 to blast their way through some solid rock outcrops as well as peat bog. One of the first outcrops they encountered was the old quarry 75 yards across the Allt Mor from Highgate Cottage, which suffered a series of window breakages, roof damage, and a subsequent house-jolt which broke all the pipe clay drains.

The contractors moved remorselessly on, breaking house windows and slates, eventually sending a large chunk of rock soaring from Scarinish, the highest point on the new track, down through the roof of one of the Caladh houses. Up till then no warning of blasting had been given, and it was only when the workforce and machinery scarpered from the scene that the public hurriedly lay low and waited for the big bang. However, after a serious episode - when yet another blasting took place at the Allt Mor quarry, a jagged piece of rock flew some 200 yards into the school playground, grazed a little girl, and broke her collar bone - only then did people complain to the police. And only then did the foreman start blowing a whistle to warn that blasting was imminent. A charge of negligence took a year to reach the Sheriff Court, by which time the children and most of the adults had forgotten the details. There was only a nominal fine but the contractors are no longer blasting anyone anywhere.

Eventually the single track road was completed and in June 1969 the formal opening took place. With Dr. Dickson Mabon, Secretary of State for Scotland, representatives from Kilmory and other VIPs assembled at the Waukmill end - where there was no sign of life other than two holiday cottages.

We, who had lived so dangerously for two years and suffered almost in silence, apart from the blasting, thought it more suitable to have an opening ceremony at the populated end of the new road. And so with our oldest inhabitant, Duncan Ure, officiating, the white ribbon was cut at the junction of the Shore Road and the Royal Brae, synchronising with officialdom eight miles away. Thus did we celebrate the birth of the new road. We can now drive to Glendaruel and Colntraive in half the distance (but we can still get there more quickly by sea). The event inspired a local bard, the late Elspeth MacNeill, to verse:

**The New Road**  
by Elspeth MacNeill

Up high o'er craggy hillsides  
Then down into the glen,  
The new road in meandering way  
Climbs up and dips again,  
A wound across the Scarinish face,  
The new red earth its blood,  
It cuts its way through wooded slopes  
O'er crag and mountain flood.

The moss-grown boulders, peaceful once  
And nestling near the rills,  
Are shattered by the deafening blasts  
That echo in the hills  
And scatter down the mountainside  
A cascade rough and grey,  
Proclaiming to the travelling world  
That Baxter passed that way.

And in the lovely Ruel's glen,  
So fertile, lush and green,  
No more do cows graze near the road,  
All peaceful and serene.  
'Twould seem a battleground were here  
Of some far-eastern war,  
With traffic struggling fearfully  
O'er surfaces of glaur.

### III Kames, Auchenlochan, Tighnabruaich, Rhubaan, Caladh.

*[The whole district is now generally known as Tighnabruaich, but for many people, including our contributors, they are still the separate communities described by Alan Millar.]*

#### **Personal and Family Memories of Kames Shore** by M. Cameron, A. Cameron, E. Tarbet, and D. Nicolson.

None of us remembers Kames shore when there were no houses, but 'Oaklea' was built by Mrs Tarbet's grandfather, and 'Ardencraig' was built by the Camerons' great grandmother. Mrs Tarbet remembers being sent to the shop at Ardencraig (then called 'Kennedy's Land') by her aunt who lived at 'Oaklea'. As children, the Camerons went there to spend Saturday pennies. Our father didn't approve of chewing gum so we couldn't buy that as the shop was run by our Aunt Flora, but there were sherbet dabs, dolly mixtures, aromatics, snowballs and big caramels.

As well as the shops at the shore and elsewhere, there were vans on the road. I remember going out with a jug or a can to buy the milk, but Mrs Tarbet remembers an earlier time when there was a cow kept at 'Beechwood' and she was sent there for milk. She remembers that the children used to sing 'Katie Beardy had a cow'. When we were young there were two bakers, Jamieson and McCallum and our mother bought from both vans; plain bread and French bread for a treat. These vans had a lovely smell of new bread.

There were two busy piers, the Gunpowder Pier dealing with the Gunpowder works at Millhouse and the Kames Pier handling passengers, coal and cargo of all kinds. Mrs Tarbet remembers that there was a shed on the pier for storing cargo until it was collected, and that it was blown off the pier one stormy day and never replaced. One of the cargo boats was called the 'Lapwing' and Mrs Nicolson says that when it came into the pier the 'Boar' (a local man who worked on the pier) used to sing:

'The Lapwing came into the pier

On deck there stood the Boar,

Shouting to the skipper to take off his coat

For it ain't gonna rain no more, no more,

It ain't gonna rain no more'.



“Marchioness of Lorne” at the Pier

Kames. Kyles of Bute

Kames Pier in olden days

There was a field beside the pier called the Fank, and Mrs Tarbet thinks she remembers sheep being shipped from there, but we all remember the excitement of watching the sheep and cattle penned in the field at Auchenlochan being sent away.

Mrs Tarbet and Mrs Nicolson remember the herring drifters called 'Klondykers'. They landed their catches at a special extension built onto Kames Pier for this purpose.

On shore, teams of women gutted the fish before packing them into barrels with salt. Their fingers were wrapped in rags and they worked very fast.



As well as the regular steamers there were excursion boats, and Mrs Nicolson remembers that sometimes the band from the boat would come ashore and play in the field beside the pier. One of my very early memories was seeing coloured balloons float into the shore. For me it was like Fairyland but they came from a cruise boat.

Mrs Nicolson remembers that the pier master had a charabanc and children went on it for Sunday School picnics. She says that the shore between the piers was called the 'Black Shore' and that as children they weren't allowed to play on it.

There was a tall chimney at the Gunpowder Pier and Mrs Tarbet remembers black ash falling onto the shore. Saltpetre for the gunpowder works was landed and processed here.

Mrs Nicolson says that the shore to the south of Kames Pier was called the 'White Shore' and that was where the children played. At different times we all paddled, played at skipping stones, had 'shops' on the big stones or played 'King of the Castle'. Mrs Tarbet says the girls built houses in the wood and the boys built wigwams. We played hide and seek and kick the can there and also gathered nuts in the wood.

There was a lot of fishing from the shore, and Mrs Tarbet remembers the boats going out, and says that basking sharks, porpoises and even whales were common sights. We all remember the porpoises in later years, and I remember being trapped by a basking shark while fishing in Kilmichael Bay. Local fishermen cleared parts of the beach to form 'ports' like the one at 'Ardencraig' cleared by the Cameron boys. Mrs Tarbet says that there was a boiler for tanning the nets at the head of the beach near where the Donalds' boathouse now stands. She remembers the nets spread to dry on frames on the beach in front of 'Oaklea' and at Rhumore. When Archie and I were young, these frames could still be seen at Rhumore and further along at Blair's Ferry.

Mrs Tarbet remembers the big yachts anchored in the Kyles in the summer. Her brothers and the Camerons sailed in them as skipper or crew, and Duncan Currie (Mrs Tarbet's cousin) crewed on a yacht which competed in the famous America's Cup race.

Our Granny had pictures of the 'Dorus' and the 'North Star' on the parlour wall. Some of our family worked as seamen generally and we liked to listen to stories of those times, especially about our great grandfather who jumped ship to go to the gold-digging in Australia. We treasure the gold nuggets and pieces of jewellery handed down to us as mementos of that time.

During the Great War there were soldiers stationed around the piers and Mrs Tarbet remembers that people were forbidden to go onto the beach at the Gunpowder Pier. Our father said that there was also an observation post on Spion Kop.

After the war fishing gradually declined and we remember the fishing boats laid up at the top of the shore. If we could escape detection, we climbed onto them but were soon chased by any men who saw us.

By the early 1920s there were rowing boats for hire from the 'Wee'en Box' at Camerons' port. This small concrete building took its name from the old weighing station where coal wagons were weighed before and after they brought coal ashore from a puffer lying aground at low water. There were other such stations at different places around the bay. Mrs Tarbet remembers our uncle Johnie as the boat hirer, but after he died our father ran the boat-hiring until we left Kames in 1936. Rowing boats were hired by the hour, the day, the week, or the month. Clients could also hire fishing lines, and those unskilled in the art of shelling bait could buy shelled bait at 3d or 6d a tin. There was a mussel bed kept on the beach beside the port to provide a constant supply of mussels. As well as line-fishing for haddock, whiting, codling and flounders, there was the excitement of spinning for mackerel when a shoal was spotted, or spearing flounders on a calm early morning in late summer. Father knew the best places for the different fish and we enjoyed going out with him when we came back to Kames on holiday. When we were quite young, we were allowed to fish by ourselves from a boat tied to the moorings. It was a disgrace to lose a hook, but if a dog fish was caught the order was to cut the line unless father was there to deal with it. Another ploy was to gather whelks which could be boiled and eaten with a pin, but I didn't like them so was never interested in helping with the gathering. You could only do this at the right season.

Boats were usually kept at the moorings but if they had to be carried up the beach it was expected that anyone on the beach would help. As children we thought this was good fun, but no doubt there were times when we were as much a hindrance as a help. When we had a rowing boat after our father retired and came back to Kames, we used rollers as there were fewer people about to help with lifting. Another source of fun was the wooden gangway which was used when the motor boat came into the beach. When it was not being used, we could run along it and jump off the end.

Our father had a motor boat called the 'Devina' which was used to take picnic parties to Bute, to Inchmarnock to gather brambles, to Ettrick Bay, and to Tarbert Fair, as well as for evening fishing cruises and for private hires.

We were too young for most of those sails, but an outing to Ettrick Bay was a treat. The beach was too shallow and sandy for the motor boat to land passengers, so the first excitement was to reach the shore over the rocks a little distance away. There was the Pavilion with its ice-cream booths, sweet stalls and gift shops as well as a machine that could punch out your name on a metal strip for a penny (or a ha'penny). There were ponies to ride and my brothers went on them at different times, but all I can remember was a trip on a pony and trap. Mrs Tarbet says that she remembers there being aeroplane rides at five shillings a time.



Mrs Tarbet remembers the 'Wee'en Box' as a gathering place for the older men, and that continued through our childhood and until the shed was pulled down. This gathering was known as the 'Parliament' for it was there that the world was put to rights. There was a fixed seat on the seaward side but I remember another seat which was moved according to the wind. As far as I remember, boys were tolerated on the fringe of this gathering, but not girls.

When we lived in 'Creggan' as children, I remember the boys playing shinty on the road. They would stop for traffic or adults, but not for a little girl, so going from home to the shop was like an obstacle race.

In summer the shore was a busy place as many houses were rented to visitors. The families moved out to summer houses or into a small part of the house. We left 'Creggan' for the 'Wee House' behind 'Arden Craig'. This was a one-room building with a porch. There was a fire at one end where there was a cupboard and a table and chairs. At the other end there was a double bed and bunk beds and I think there was a curtain which could be pulled across. We used one of the outdoor toilets and water had to be carried from the wash-house to the porch where it was kept in white enamel pails. Lighting was by oil lamps and cooking was done on a Primus stove. This was no different from the main houses, except that in the winter a lot of the cooking was done on the kitchen fire or in the oven.

Because of the boat hiring, there was a telephone in a small store room beside the porch, and behind the 'Wee House' was the old coal ree which had been roofed over and was used to store boats in the winter. Our grandfather had been a coal merchant so there was also a stable within 'Arden Craig' grounds and this too was used as a boat store when we were young. These were empty in the summer and were great play places on a wet day where we could play tig and chases and jump across the wooden beams which supported the boats in winter. Because our grandfather kept a horse to pull the coal cart, he also had a trap and would take our granny to visit her mother at Ardlamont Ferry where she lived and kept shop, but that was long before we were born.

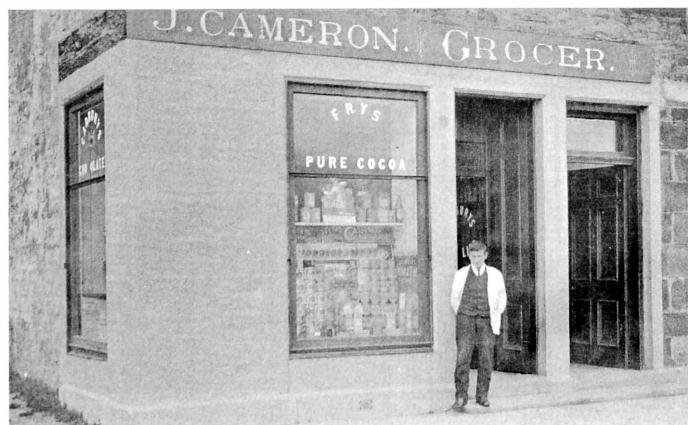
A temptation to leave the shore was the fair which came annually to Spearmans' field. I best remember the swingboats which held two and were made to move by pulling on a rope.

As small children we seldom left the shore except to go to Sunday School in Kames Church and to school at Tighnabruaich. We walked to school and carried sandwiches for mid-day as well as a tin with cocoa powder and sugar. This was supposed to give us a nice hot drink with the sandwiches but I remember that we used to eat the sugary mixture by dipping our fingers into the tins and then had very weak cocoa to drink. It was good fun walking to school in the autumn and scuffling feet through the fallen leaves on the Smiddy Brae, but less fun during snowball fights in winter when you were one of the little ones.

Apart from these excursions, we were happy to stay near the shore even when we were older and returned on holiday. I can remember walking to Blair's Ferry with my mother to visit our great-aunt Mary, but we seldom went past 'Gate Cottage' where the road went out of sight of 'Ardencraig' and where there was a gate which could be closed once a year to preserve the private status of the road beyond, which belonged to Ardlamont Estate.

Nearer home was 'Altafeam' where Tom Barr grew early flowers for the market, but especially we all remember the white heather which grew in the field beside the house. It was quite a sight in the early morning to see a masked figure crouching among the bushes and defying the midges as he cut heather for the market. I remember sitting in his shed watching as he bunched the heather and packed it in long cardboard boxes for transport to the market. The outbreak of war in 1939 reduced, or perhaps even closed this outlet, but heather could still be bought from a hut by the roadside in bunches costing sixpence or a shilling. Another delight at 'Altafeam' was the fruit, especially large red and yellow dessert gooseberries which grew inside an enclosure. Archie remembers being with the boys who tried to climb the tar-coated wall to reach these delights, but if you were lucky you might be allowed to pick some legitimately. Another challenge for boys was the monkey-puzzle tree in 'Alderwood' garden which defied all attempts to climb it. Now a bungalow stands in the white heather field, and houses where the flowers were grown. I don't remember thinking much about the garden in front of the house, but Mrs Tarbet says there was a bed of begonias there growing among white stones, and it was beautiful.

By the time we were travelling to Kames on holiday, the pier there was closed to passenger steamers. But Mrs Tarbet remembers coming ashore there when weekend visitors and local people working in Glasgow could arrive by the late boat on Saturday, and return by the same boat early on Monday morning. She was given permission to arrive late for work as it was impossible to be there at the usual starting time. The return fare at that time was seven shillings and sixpence, but there was a special weekend rate of five shillings. When we were coming on holiday, the excitement mounted once we were aboard the steamer. On the train we had to sit in one place most of the time, but on the steamer we were free to roam as long as we returned to our parents at reasonable intervals. A sail on a turbine like the 'Columba' wasn't complete without going to watch the engines. They were a bit frightening but fascinating.



When we were on holiday I liked to help in the shop, and worked there later during some of my college holidays. Many of the goods came in bulk, and as a teenager I was allowed to weigh sugar and put it in the sugar bags which had to be turned in a special way so that they stayed closed without string. When the butter was weighed it had to be patted into a neat shape with two wooden pats which were kept in cold water. The art was to do it without making a mess of the paper! On no account was I allowed to cut tobacco or slice bacon with the

big ham knife. Paraffin was kept in barrels in a shed at the back, and sold by the gallon. Of more interest were the sweets which came in bottles, as some still do to-day, and they were weighed out in small brass scales with a scoop. Two ounce bars of chocolate like Fry's Cream or Cadbury's cost tuppence. Some biscuits came in packets, but most were loose and often there were several broken in the box and they had to be sold as broken biscuits or taken into the house for family use.

The tinkers who camped at the Tinkers' Well beyond Blair's Ferry used to come into the shop asking for a pinch of tea, a wee tate sugar, or ham scraps, but Aunt Flora drew the line when asked for a scrape of tobacco.

Kames shore now lacks much of the bustle of earlier times as many of the houses are holiday homes and there are only a handful of children going to school, though they go by bus where we walked. Visitors still come, drawn by the good sailing and peaceful surroundings, but the sun no longer shines all summer as it did when we were young!

### **Childhood Holidays in the '30s** by Maisie Airey

Our holiday began in the bustle and steam of Euston Station, where we caught the overnight sleeper for the North. There were four-berth compartments, with a pillow and two rough grey-brown blankets for each berth, cost : 7/6.

The guard awoke us at Beattock and we were at last in Scotland.

We caught the morning boat from Gourock and were at Tighnabruaich pier about 11am. Taxis were waiting, driven by the three MacBride girls, and also two buses, one red the other blue, belonging to the MacBrides and Simpsons.

Luggage had preceded us by 'passenger luggage in advance' - either a large trunk or wicker hamper. Most houses on Kames shore were let by the month, and being at English schools and having later holidays we were able to stay one or two weeks into September.

There was usually a box bed in the kitchen, and of course oil lamps - not to be touched, as the mantles were brittle. The wicks had to be trimmed each morning. The owners of the houses and their families had moved out, either into a 'side end' or a small building in the garden. We were not allowed to visit unless invited, although all the children played together.



Dinghies were hired from Mr Cameron for the month - clinker built, usually by Smith's boatyard. Each evening we carried, not dragged, it up the beach beyond the high water mark.

We met the same families each summer and spent our time boating, fishing with hand lines, and sometimes at low tide spearing flounders. But I do not recollect fishing for mackerel. They were considered a dirty fish, and few would eat them. Of course there were no fridges then.

There were swimming lessons before breakfast organised by Mr Purdie, whose daughters used to swim to Bute accompanied by a rowing boat.

Then of course there was the golf course. The club house was a pretty, red-roofed building with a verandah, tucked under the hill where the 7th tee is now.

The path up to the golf course started at a stile at 'Woodlea'. It was a pretty stiff climb and the trick was to arrive early and when your opponent puffed up the hill, to say, 'Are you ready to tee off now?' Alistair Gemmel was the pro and the green fee was 6d for 18 holes.

Most mornings we went to Tighnabruaich Pier to see the three steamers in. We either rowed or walked over, or maybe caught one of the two buses.

Occasionally my father hired Mr Cameron's motor boat for picnics on Bute (Ettrick bay), or a trip round the Narrows. He was a keen walker and a favourite jaunt was by the mail car to Otter Ferry, and, followed by a gaggle of children and hardy adults, over the Bealloch, and down Loch Ridden to Ormidale, where we were met by Mr Cameron and his motor boat. Another favourite walk was to Glen Caladh.

The path kept to the shore past West Glen, and woe betide us children if we as much as glanced towards the house - it was a case of 'eyes right' as we passed by.

There was a nine hole golf course on Bute opposite the Castle for the use of guests.

We used to walk over to the Salen at Portavadie for picnics. I do not remember how we returned - surely we didn't walk! Another favourite walk was round Ardlamont. There was a gate across the road at Kames into the Ardlamont estate. It was closed once a year to keep their rights of way, and this being a private road, no cars were allowed. We used to walk out to Corra to see the basking sharks in the Sound.

There was a small market garden next to 'Oaklea', which offered delicious strawberries and of course Tom Barr's White Heather Farm, with its dozens of varieties. He sent the heather all over the world. The garden in front of his house was a picture. I particularly remember the white quartz rockery, planted with begonias and lobelia - very striking.

There was a weekly film show at The Manor, Tighnabruaich and, I think, sandcastle competitions on the shore. I remember a fair coming each year to Kames in the field at Highfield lit by naphthalene flares.

We all attended the Rothesay Illuminations. The steamers were packed, and I am sure it would not be allowed nowadays, as the paddle box was often very low in the water when the passengers rushed to one side to get a good view.

The Sabbath was strictly observed. No boating or golf. We had friends staying in 'The Neuk' one year. They were not allowed back because they had taken their car out on a Sunday!



### **Striking Oil** by Mary Crowe (extracts from a taped interview by Wilma Weir)

I came to Kames to stay in 1939, when Bertie and I were married, and I felt quite lost at first - even although I had been coming for a month every summer for more than ten years. For one thing, there was no electricity. I remember the Aladdin lamp in particular. One of the Douglasses came in for some reason, over from Millhouse, and we were sitting talking as it got dark, and I said, 'Can you light that lamp?'

'Oh, I don't know if I could,' she said. 'Well,' I said, 'I can't, and if you don't we'll just have to sit like this until Bertie comes in' - which I had to do many a night.



We had an Aladdin and a Tilley which gave a wee bit of heat as well as light. And we had a range. I had never seen one except on holiday, and Bertie said it had to be cleaned once a week to get the soot out. I did this, and got hardly any soot, and I used to say to Bertie and Mrs MacDougall, my mother-in-law, 'It's an awful clean stove that, because there's no soot off it.'

Well, that went on for three months or so until old Alec MacCallum came to do the chimney. The soot had gathered up at the back of the grate till it was level with the top of the range. Then I had a paraffin lamp, and it had a wee oven with it, and I did quite a lot of baking with that, because I liked to bake. But I missed the electricity.

When we went to Cowal Terrace [in the early fifties] there was a Baby Belling electric cooker. Bertie was working as a watchman on the 'Wolfe', a former liner then troopship which had been laid up in the Kyles, and with him was 'Red Willie' from Glasgow. He brought me flour and yeast to make bread. So I got my recipe and started mixing it up when Bertie was going out to the boat. Willie asked how much I was using and Bertie said, all of it, and Willie sent him straight back home. 'It'll be comin' oot the door,' he said. And it nearly was. I had 3lb of flour and 2oz of yeast, I think. And the dough woudn't stop rising.

I made bread for a long time after that, twice a week, with flour I got from the bakehouse through Martin Salisbury. But that was my first effort.

'Auntie Maud', stayed upstairs from me in 'Beechwood'. She had come over from Limerick with her son, Duncan - she had married a MacNeill from Millhouse there, and he had been lost at sea. Mobeck was her name. During the war she brought over, first of all, Peter, to work in the mines. then Ned came and joined the RAF, then Mary, and then Sidney, who married Millie Whyte.

Maud knew her father and mother had been murdered on Easter Island, and that she and her two brothers had been sent back to her grandmother in Ireland.

Jessie MacBride said Maud was due a pension from the New Zealand government, and she wrote to them. She got an answer the day the news came that the warship, 'Prince Edward', newly launched, had been sunk. It turned out her father had been born in Hamburg. And I remember Maud out at the breast wall in Kames shouting, 'Oh, they'll be putting me in jail.'

Her father had been quite well off in Easter Island - he had a store. Maud and her brothers had had a doctor and nurse with them on the voyage to Ireland. But by the time they got there the money was all used up.

But she did get a pension. Easter Island was one of New Zealand's territories.

Quite a lot of families came here to work in the powderworks - Bertie's mother's family, MacLeans from Currie, the Salisburys from Shrewsbury, and the Stalkers, whose father was a clerk there. And Grandma MacDougall used to tell me how the road was solid when the works came out, and along at Kames Farm there were a few wee old houses - I think they're all down now, but I remember the remnants of it - the original Kames.

I remember them coming to blow up the big chimneys. When we used to come here at first my mother was a great one for fishing and we used the chimneys to get our bearings.

### **Life at the Kyles 1921-1935** by H.R. MacFarlane.

*(extracts from a document written for his family, 'the junior White dynasty')*

Memories? I suppose the most obvious place to start is at the very beginning - when I first saw the light of day. This momentous event took place in the 'wee sma' hours' of the 11th day of March in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and twenty one. The location was the back bedroom of the ground floor flat of Druid House, Kames (kitchen, two bedrooms, bathroom and 'parlour'). I was the first and only child of Andrew and Lizzie MacFarlane (nee Connor).

A word or two about my parents: my father was a time-served joiner working with my grandfather - Hugh MacFarlane - in the Gunpowder Mill. Unfortunately, while attending a works in Glasgow in order to extend his knowledge of 'modern' machinery, he lost three fingers of his right hand in a circular saw, leaving him with only a thumb and forefinger. Obviously, this accident put paid to his future in the trade so he returned to the

Kyles and started work with Andrew Irvine & Son, drapers. George Irvine was his brother-in law and their business extended throughout Argyll, including the islands of Mull, Islay, Jura, Gigha and Iona. My father's job was to travel round this area on a bicycle selling the firm's goods. Over the years he graduated to a motor van, via several motor-bikes with sidecars attached to carry his wares.

He was a devout churchgoer, and served his Kirk first as a deacon, then as an elder, and finally as session clerk. He was one of a family of eleven, reared in a cottage in Millhouse, the property of the company who ran the powderworks. His father, Hugh, was a foreman cooper there.

Memories of my father? Teaching me to ride a bike by running along holding the saddle; teaching me to play golf at the tender age of eight; the inherent strength of a two-fingered hand on my nether regions when I (all too frequently) strayed from the path laid down; his patient encouragement when I rebelled against the daily one-hour piano practice; his general availability in moments of crisis.

My father's sudden death - from a heart attack in his beloved garden - was a devastating blow. He was laid to rest in the new cemetery called in Gaelic 'Cladh-a-Mhuilinn' ('the Burial Ground by the Mill'), within walking distance of the cottage where he was brought up. I was just into my eighteenth year, completing a first year in Law at Glasgow University. Suffice it to say, for obvious financial reasons, my university career was at an end.

My mother was an excellent homemaker, being a first-class cook and baker, and had the ability to create sheer magic with a needle - whether knitting or sewing. My parents, though opposites in temperament, made a first class team and provided an ideal home for a growing boy. She, too, played an active role in the life of the Kirk - in the Women's Guild, with all that entailed in a country parish in the 20s and 30s in rural Scotland.

What of the 'ancestral home' which sheltered me during my formative years? The kitchen, with attached scullery, was dominated by a highly polished range whose cheery fire provided not only warmth for the room but was the main provider for baking and cooking. And never did toast taste better than when toasted on the end of a specially designed toasting fork at an open fire. At the window was the solid kitchen sink whilst on the adjoining wall was the box bed - set into the wall - and a substantial dresser.

The route to the bathroom was a dark unlighted corridor leading into a room entirely devoid of any heating - which made bathing, especially in the dead of winter, a decidedly chilly operation. At the rear of the house was the main bedroom, known as 'the back bedroom' - the sleeping quarters of my parents. The hall, leading to the front door, boasted an elaborate hallstand complete with mirrors - ideal for a quick check-up of one's appearance before setting out for the kirk. In addition, a deep cupboard or 'press' provided an ideal location for the storage of bed linen and blankets, not to mention such items as sweeping brushes and carpet sweepers. Its shelves were usually laden with a varied assortment of jams and preserves, all meticulously dated, the products of my mother's annual blitz on all the soft fruits grown in my father's garden.

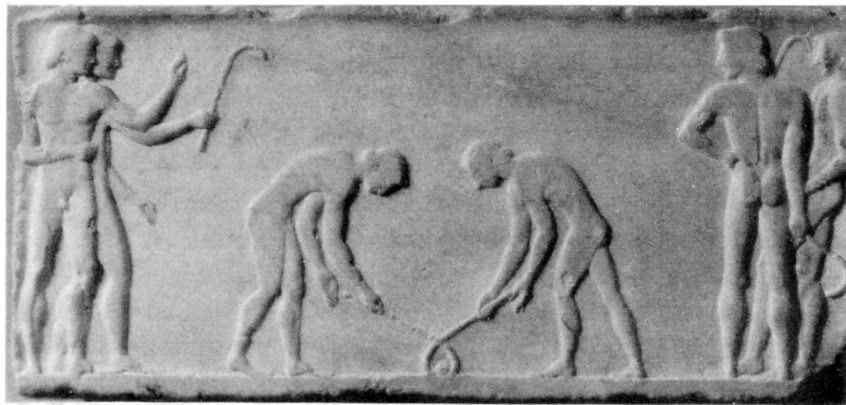
The door on the left of the hall led into the second bedroom, known as 'the front bedroom' - my sleeping quarters - whilst the door on the right led into the best room - 'the parlour'. It contained a tiled fireplace surmounted by a wooden mantelpiece supporting a carved oak wooden-framed mirror, the whole arrangement virtually filling one wall of the room. On the opposite wall a dark rosewood piano (the scene of many a childish tantrum over the duration of practice required) held pride of place. On the third wall was a truly magnificent oak sideboard, lavishly be-mirrored, complete with elaborately carved drawers and cupboards. The remaining wall was filled by a large bow window looking out towards the church in one direction and the cross-roads in the other. Little wonder that, to this day, I still regard Druid House as home.

What then can I say of that period of my life from birth until I left to go to boarding school at the age of 13? Perhaps a few highlights will suffice. There was my first public appearance in a solo capacity on a concert platform. This took place at the Annual Christmas Sunday School Treat and involved reciting a poem - 'A Britisher Indeed' (obviously the SNP had yet to gain a foothold in the Kyles in these far off days). As far as I am aware, the poem has never been heard of since. In retrospect, I am of the opinion that my parents suffered much more of stage fright on this occasion than did their son and heir!

A year or two later came the infamous episode at the Band of Hope (held in the church hall every Thursday night) again with the seemingly inevitable retribution. In the course of one such meeting, while the Rev. James Somerville was lecturing us on the evils of strong drink, I released a small phial of H<sub>2</sub>S (known to the junior members of the community as 'a stink bomb'). As the smell arose, the minister and his wife discussed its possible source - concluding that it must emanate from a blocked drain. We were accordingly dismissed early and I was the hero of the hour. Alas! Nemesis was at hand. I hadn't been long in the house when the front door bell rang. It was the minister calling to advise his session clerk - my father - of the 'choked drain' problem in the church hall. With a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach I watched my father put on his boots, pick up his torch and disappear into the night. On his return he once again demonstrated the efficacy of a hand - minus three fingers - as a weapon of chastisement.

Gifts? In the era when a child's Christmas stocking contained an apple, an orange, and a threepenny bit plus one toy, I was given a manufactured shinty stick (cost price 7/6) which was, to me, the equivalent of receiving the Order of the Garter. A year or two later, a new bike put in an appearance - a Ridge Whitworth no less - a make now extinct, I believe. To coin an old phrase common in those days - 'I wouldn't have called the King my cousin'.

My sporting life was well and truly catered for in the Kyles. Winter months were spent almost exclusively on shinty - going to and from school, during school breaks, after school and every Saturday. It was little wonder that in the 20s and 30s Kyles Athletic was a force to be reckoned with throughout the shinty world - the whole male population of the area lived and breathed the ancient game.



49. Aθήναι - ΑΡΧ. ΜΟΥΣΕΙΟΝ - 3477 - ΑΝΔΡΑΤΩΝ ΜΕ ΠΑΡΕΤΑΞΕΙΣ ΑΓΩΝΩΝ (5ος α.μ.κ.)  
ATHÈNES - MUSÉE ARCHÉOL. SCÈNE DE PALESTRE (5th c.BC.)

The Greeks had a word for it....

Summer months presented quite a different scenario. Golf, swimming, boating (my father owned a rowing boat) sea-fishing, bum-fishing, and the occasional steamer cruise to the big city - Rothesay. In those days, the Kyles could boast three piers - Kames, Auchenlochan and Tighnabruaich and they served the arrival and departure of some ten steamers per day. In the 20s and 30s, the Clyde Coast was the Mecca for all holiday-makers from the industrial belt of Scotland, until 'Glesga' discovered Majorca with its unmatched charms of permanent sunshine, cheap booze, and equally cheap accommodation. The Clyde Coast, including the Kyles, went into terminal decline as a holiday centre for the mass market.

Whilst nostalgia undoubtedly colours one's view of the past, I find it difficult to pinpoint any particular episode reflecting the downside - with one major exception which I will simply refer to as 'The Minuet in G' composed by, I understand, Beethoven. The subsequent horror scene was devised by our French teacher - Miss MacIntyre - known to all who came under her jurisdiction as 'Powder' (female make-up was outwith our powers of comprehension). The substance of her musical inspiration involved six boys and six girls, attired in Elizabethan costume, dancing the said Minuet at the Annual Shinty Concert and Dance - the highlight of the local season, held every year on the 1st of January. The actual performance itself is a merciful blur in my memory but I can never hear that tune - even today - without experiencing a cold shudder running down my spine.

Perhaps a word about our seat of learning here at the Kyles, rejoicing as it did in the rather distinguished title of Tighnabruaich Public School - but here the similarity with Eton or Harrow ends. Compared with the pampering enjoyed by the children in today's education system, our school must have rivalled Dotheboys Hall for its spartan facilities. For instance, to get there I had to walk some four miles per day - wot? No transport? No chance! And woe betide any poor pupil who arrived a minute or two late. Retribution took the form of a few lusty blows with the leather strap - on the hand - by the class teacher. A good start to any day! (I am surprised that, to my knowledge, the school never produced any distance runners of note).

The classrooms were heated by one stove in the middle of the floor at one end of the room, with a long pipe going up through the ceiling. Since (a) all the teachers seemed to be substantially built, and (b) they liked to keep their rear ends warm, they taught from in front of the stove - so we pupils invariably had to shiver our way through lessons. Yet, despite the privations endured, the school produced a truly remarkable number of boys and girls who subsequently made their mark in the Big World outside. This was due in no small measure to the dedication of the small band of teachers who all ruled with a rod of iron (perhaps I should say a strap of leather) yet still managed to instil the rudiments of education in the minds of their charges.



I severed my connection with the local school after I was awarded a bursary (amounting to £80 per annum for three years) for Keil School, Dumbarton - a boarding school founded to provide education for boys from the West Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Here I completed my education and passed the Preliminary Examinations for entry to Glasgow University. Perhaps more important than mere (?) educational qualifications, at Keil I was introduced to the games of rugby and cricket. The former I took to with great enthusiasm whilst my performance 'on the square' left much to be desired.

After the spartan existence which prevailed at Tighnabruaich School, I found that at Keil I had exchanged the frying pan for the fire, particularly since in the latter situation I was unable to seek the solace of home to indulge my main occupation outside sport, viz eating. At Keil in 1935 we were fed (?) on tenpence (old money) per day. Fortunately, tuck parcels from home were the order of the day and what parcels emanated from Druid House! Let me list a sample of what HM Post Office conveyed between Kames and Dumbarton: tins of beans, sultana cakes, tablet, scones, pancakes, jars of jam - all home made of course - not to mention biscuits and sweets. These parcels arrived every second week, so malnutrition was kept at bay!

One other comical aspect of school life vis-a-vis home: when I came home on holiday - via train and boat of course - and stepped off the gangway onto Tighnabruaich Pier I was invariably greeted with the same two stock questions: 'Are you down again?' and 'When are you going back?'. Since I was only allowed home three times a year - Christmas, Easter and the Summer - I used to wonder if perhaps the locals were trying to tell me something!

The other highlight of school holidays concerned my arrival at Druid House. There in the kitchen stood a silver cake stand loaded with home baking - not to be touched until I had dispatched the two boiled eggs which preceded these goodies - and all this as a prelude to a substantial lunch some two hours later. No wonder Keil School had a reputation amongst Scottish schools for producing hefty forwards!

How then can I sum up life at the Kyles in the 20s and 30s? Whilst there were, no doubt, bad apples in the barrel, my impression of the place - first formed all these years ago - is that it was populated by a veritable host of genuinely good and kindly folk. I am pleased to be able to report that I see no need to temper these first impressions from my present vantage point some sixty years plus later.

The Kirk was the focal point of the community (incidentally, in these days there were four churches in the Kyles - two at Tighnabruaich and two at Kames) and directly or indirectly, was largely responsible for the truly remarkable standards of behaviour throughout the area. In retrospect, respect seems to have been the keynote. Children for parents, teachers and authority in general and also, conversely, parents, teachers and authority for those for whom they were responsible.

This is a place on the West Coast of Scotland whose scenery is nothing short of breathtaking - a location whose influence on its sons is undiminished with the passage of time. The pull of the Kyles is a force which is irresistible.

Looking back over the past seventy plus years I never cease to marvel at just how lucky I have been and I can only hope that Andrew and Lizzie - sitting in that 'Druid House' in the sky will be experiencing at least some satisfaction at the end product they produced - if so, no man can ask for more.

### **Gaelic** by Betty Allison.

There are few if any fluent Gaelic speakers among the elderly in our community, yet the place names are all Gaelic, and up to the middle of last century ministers appointed to the established church had to be bilingual in Gaelic and English.

To explain this rapid change of language an old lady, long dead, told me of her experience when she went to school here. It was Miss Barbara Stalker. The Stalkers, father, mother, one young son and four small sisters, had come here round about the 1900s from Claonaig in Kintyre - they called their house here 'Claonaig'. They were native Gaelic speakers but all had English too. The two oldest sisters, Mary aged 8 and Barbara aged 6, were sent to Tighnabruaich School. After a few days the schoolmaster called the other children together. He told them to let him know if they heard the two little Stalker girls talking to each other in Gaelic, and they would be punished.

After eighty years Barbara Stalker said to me, and I could still hear the hurt in her voice, 'We were made to feel ashamed of our Gaelic'.

A few years on, the third little Stalker sister, Donalda, followed her two older sisters on to Tighnabruaich School. She later trained as a teacher and taught there for many years. I never asked her, nor did she tell me, if she had had the same experience as her two older sisters of being made to feel ashamed of her native tongue.

### **'Dunara' (Auchenlochan)** by Iris G. Sampson (ex hostel warden)

This house was built in 1873 by Duncan Ure who was a steward on the ship 'Dunara Castle'. This was one of the vessels used to evacuate the people and livestock from the island of St. Kilda in the Atlantic ocean off Scotland in 1930. He also owned a shop in the village of Tighnabruaich. On his death, the house passed to his son Kenneth. It was eventually sold to the Scottish Youth Hostels Association in 1938 and became a popular youth hostel.

During the 1939-1945 war the government commandeered the property for military use. It was used to accommodate Polish soldiers and later on Italian prisoners of war. The latter helped to build the tank-landing strip down Ardlamont Peninsula. This was used for rehearsals of the Normandy invasion which took place in 1944. After the war the hostellers started to return and over the years came from many parts of the world.

As the popularity of the sailing school began to rise so the hostel became a home from home for the sailors. It was also popular with cyclists, walkers, and people wanting to study the varied bird and wildlife in this area. In 1988 we celebrated the golden jubilee of the hostel and ended the season with a ceilidh which was attended by hostellers and local people alike. A downward trend in tourism caused a decline in the use of the hostel until in October 1998 the SYHA decided to close it, so ending 60 years of hostelling. It has recently been sold and I look forward to seeing it enjoy a new lease of life as a family home.

### **Cinema Entertainment** by John G MacColl

‘The Manor Kinema’ was an extension of the Manor guest house. Having a separate projection room, it was, I suppose, in every way a small but proper cinema. It was an adaptable building: with the seating removed the cinema served as a function hall for weddings etc. And its sprung floor was ideal for dancing.

My earliest recollection of a cinema visit dates from either 1935 or ’37. It was a celebration of the Silver Jubilee in ’35, or the Coronation of King George VI, in ’37, and was no doubt a school outing.

When I was living at Auchgoyle Farm in 1940 - 41, a visit to the cinema was the highlight of the week. We met the Saturday evening bus going round from Ardlamont to Millhouse then to Tighnabruaich. I’m not sure if shows continued throughout the war years. They ran until I had a car, (1948 or ’49 ) after which the Saturday evening shows became a regular habit. As TV became more popular, attendance began to drop.

The Manor business was sold by the Terrace family in the late 50s, but it did not survive for long in the new ownership, being more or less totally destroyed by fire.

For some years (50s - 60s) the mobile film unit run by the Highlands and Islands Film Guild had fortnightly shows in Millhouse Hall. Here again poor attendance figures made it uneconomic and it eventually ceased altogether.

### **Duin Burn** by Morag MacKechnie.

It is not generally known that the north side of the Duin Burn was the site of a medieval burial place, extending from ‘Burnside’ right back to ‘Oakburn Cottage’. A relic of this is a tombstone incorporated in the retaining wall of the burn, and it can be seen quite distinctly today.

### **Some Local Memories** by Alan Millar

I remember some days in and around Tighnabruaich from early childhood, but really most of my recollections are post war.

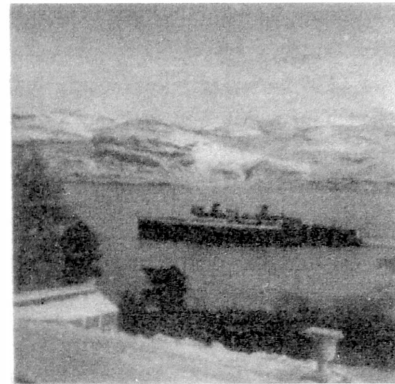
In ‘The Cottage’ beside the pier, which was our holiday home, the floors were made of soft asphalt and heavy items of furniture used to leave their mark and, in some cases, subside into the floor. There was, of course, no electricity; instead, we made our own gas for lighting the house from a petrol-driven gas plant which was in its own shed beside the front drive. Neil Angus’s shop, and it seemed very big, was almost opposite, at the shore end of the pier. I can remember being sent there for bananas and being told a couple of days after the outbreak of war that those would be the last ones I would see until the war was ended. I do remember where I was on the day war broke out: at 11 am on 3rd September 1939 I was playing on the beach at Ostal Bay.

From then until the summer of 1945 I hardly saw the Kyles of Bute. As the youngest of five children I was constantly reminded how in the perfect summers before the War the sun had always shone in Tighnabruaich; but there were apparently also midges! Overall, it seemed a Valhalla, denied me by the war years. I made a very few visits by the grey-painted ‘Loch Fyne’ - which sailed from 1939 until 1945 from Wemyss Bay instead of Gourock because of the anti-submarine boom across the firth. She arrived daily at Tighnabruaich about 11 am and left again around 3 pm on her return from Ardrishaig.

But it was not until 1945 that I returned. Our family boat had been launched from Smith's yard at Rhubaan where she had been laid up for the duration. 'The Cottage' had been sold, so visits were to my grandmother in Tighnabruaich House, which my father inherited on her death in 1948. For six years it was my other home: a beautiful house which had been a military hospital for British and American troops for much of the war. Because my grandmother had continued to live there while it was occupied it remained unscathed: lots of space, a marvellous aroma from the kauri pine panelling as soon as you went through the front door and, as in the pre-war 'Cottage', there was no electricity. Despite the arrival of the Hydro Board in 1948 my father did not have power installed and we continued to rely on gas light made from high octane fuel by machinery in a little building a prudent distance from the house. And how useful that was. For some time after the war, petrol for private motoring remained rationed and the addition to a car's tank of a couple of gallons of high octane gas fuel did truly dramatic things for the engine of an elderly Morris car!



Christmas, 1950. Tighnabruaich House.



*Loch Fyne* seen from the garden

In its heyday Tighnabruaich House had a fine Edwardian, or earlier, greenhouse filled with exotic plants kept warm by its own coke-fired boiler, a croquet lawn and tennis court.

They all remained, but in rather rundown condition. Once there had been servants both living-in and to tend the grounds. We did without, and it is a tribute to William Leiper, the house's architect, that my mother found it the easiest of homes to manage. In those days the policies, with once-tended paths through the pine trees, extended right up the hill to the back road: through the gate and then it was only a short climb to the top of the Duin. Still visible in the woods were the tracks of my father's childhood model railway. And prized, because of the peaty brown water that came from the reservoir, was a pipe which brought the clearest spring water to its own outside tap at the back door; it was reserved for drinking.

Certainly, Tighnabruaich was a busier place in the 1940s and 1950s than nowadays: the Mail Boat, generally Macbrayne's 'Loch Fyne', was supplemented in the summer by the full galaxy of Clyde steamers, then enjoying a brief swan song. The 'King Edward', the world's first turbine steamer continued to sail until 1952, almost as fast as in 1901, the year of her launching. I can remember leaving by her on the afternoon departure in 1951, en route to the Festival of Britain in London. The family washing was put ashore in Rothesay in a huge square wicker basket to go to the steam laundry. But then, before the New Road, so much of the business and commercial contact was with Rothesay rather than Dunoon. It was, after all, 'The Buteman' rather than 'The Dunoon Observer' which was the local paper.

In the years before mains power came the owners of some houses made their own from the wind. There was a series of lightweight poles in back gardens with propellers, presumably for generating 12 volt DC electricity, rather similar to those now seen on some larger yachts. But, of course, the biggest difference in the village of 50 years ago was the greater number of shops. And, before the days of wide car ownership the three villages of Auchenlochan, Kames and Tighnabruaich were much more separate communities than they are today.

Tighnabruaich had a bustling, thriving village street with additional shops at Portdrishaig and at Tighnabruaich Pier. And then, in addition to winter storage for yachts in the yard at Rhubaan - as it is today, save that they were



hauled ashore by a steam engine and then moved in alarming fashion sideways to their dry berth - there was a real boat building business in the village, on the site of the modern RNLi Station. The splendid half models on the walls of the office upstairs were testimony to what had once been constructed there; but in the 1950s beautiful clinker wooden dinghies continued to be built. Fibre glass had not arrived by then, nor had cheap air travel: holiday houses were taken by the month, as they had been for the previous fifty years, and children rowed and fished from the boats which went with the let houses.

There may not have been then quite so many yachts moored in Rhubaan in the summer and certainly there were fewer lying off Kames. And, regarding boats and sailing, in those years although there were permanent moorings they were regarded as being their owner's property so that one would not think of using another boat's buoy. To a much greater extent than today anchors were regularly dropped rather than moorings picked up. And it was not as if the Crown Estate Commissioners had by then begun to exact tolls for the privilege of letting a mooring anchor lie on the seabed! Altogether, life and boating in particular was much less regulated than it is today. It was the exception for yachts to be insured; if life jackets were to hand they were often ignored. And yet, I wonder if there were any more accidents at sea than today. In the early post war years Rhubaan Bay was filled with boats requisitioned by the Admiralty for war purposes, which were in process of being returned to their owners, or sold to new ones. Among them were some elderly steam yachts which had seen better days. Then, and for a few years, it was the custom for big ships, out of work, and in some cases awaiting their end in the breaker's yard, to be laid up in the Kyles. Always there was the background hum of machinery: generators running to maintain minimum power, heat and light for the caretaking crew. They were really no asset to the place and it is a good thing that our waters are no longer thus used.

One thing that has, unfortunately, not yet changed is the relatively polluted state of the Kyle. Then, as now, sewage outfalls discharged straight into the water and made swimming all along the foreshore inadvisable.

With the exception of the long hot summer of 1947 there was, I am sure, just as much wind and rain during these holidays, but something which has not happened for years was a series, or at least a couple, of very cold winters in the time of my school holidays. That meant ice along the shoreline and especially the freezing over of Melldalloch so that skating and curling were possible there for some time.

The field at Rhubaan was kept cut, and although now fenced and grazed, its secret lies still undisturbed. I was brought up on the legend of a Norse Ship Burial in the rising ground at the top of the field.

Is it just a raised beach or are there treasures there to be unearthed?



Stonemasons at Tighnabruaich House

## **Memories of the Kyles Of Bute 60 years ago and over** by Bessie Black.

Starting at Stroncarraig, home of the Smith family, famous for building varnished dinghies, I then think of two steam yachts - the 'Gael' and the 'Verve', moored in Rhubaan Bay, and painted black with yellow funnels. One I think was owned by Coats of Paisley; I don't remember the owner of the other, but Mr MacBride of 'Glenelg' looked after the boats.

Now we come to 'Sherbrooke' where Mrs Sharp's family the Munros lived, a lovely old house and garden. In 'Ravenswood' the name of the family was Crosbie, and I think they also had 'Craigard'.

Now to the Port Drishaig area where Miss Turner and her father had a coal business: they lived in 'Underheugh' and the coal ree was behind the Port Drishaig hotel. There was a weighing machine at the foot of the hill to weigh the coal which came in by puffer. The Port Drishaig hotel was run by the Wreston family at that time. And of course there was the lovely yacht the 'Iolaire' moored at Port Drishaig owned by Mr Birtwhistle who did not have a house here, but stayed on the yacht. The Captain of the ship, Captain Turner, who lived in 'Alma', looked after her. What a picture all the boats in the bay made!

The 'Iolaire', all bedecked with flags, provided the greasy boom on regatta day. This was a great day out for all the family. Captain Williamson of the Williamson shipping line lived in 'Edenkerry'. There was great rivalry among the Clyde steamers to get to the pier first - they were all due in around eleven o'clock. The Clyde steamers also ran torchlight cruises where there was dancing, and fun at the pierhead enjoyed by everyone.

Mr Paton of Paton's shoe laces lived at 'Wellpark'. He had a large conservatory in the grounds with grape vines, hence we called the hill up to the Chalet hotel, the Vinery Brae as it's still called to this day.

'Craigengower' was owned by the MacDonald family, who gifted the house to the Church of Scotland. It was used during the war as a rest home for ladies of the Church of Scotland who thoroughly enjoyed their stay, mixing among the local people and joining in all the activities.

There was also a thriving grocer's shop at the pier head, started by Mr Alf Olding, senior, who was pier master, then Neil Angus of 'Springbank' took over.

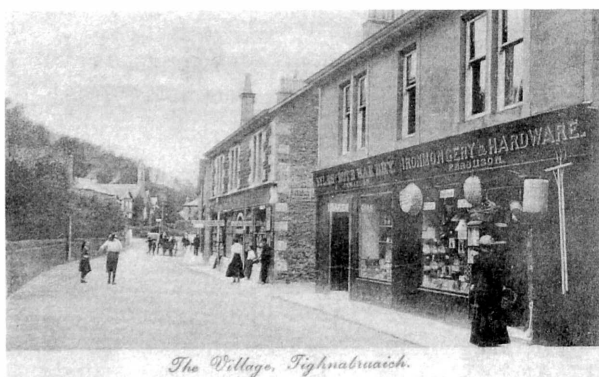
Miss Schoular who lived at 'The Cottage' was one benevolent lady who left money to our little Church, among many others such as Nurse Trainer, the Misses MacKellar of 'Rockbank' and Miss Stalker. Mrs Lushington did a lot of work with the young people of the village. She taught dancing and organised the Brownies, Guides and the Rangers. She lived in Tighnabruaich House with her parents Mr and Mrs S. Millar, and then latterly at 'The Square'. She also started a little tea-room at the car park which is now Susie's Tea-room.

We now come to the village shops and must remember Lena and her wonderful ice-cream. The first shop was Mr W. MacKellar and his daughter Ann who had the shoe shop. Next was MacLaren (grocer), then the Dewars' fruit and vegetable shop. Next the Misses MacKellar of 'Rockbank', (drapers), and then MacCallum, (baker). Next was MacCallum brothers of Kames, (butchers and grocers). Miss Mamie Olding had a lovely little tea-room, and was known as Aunt Mamie by all the local children; obviously they enjoyed the fruits of her trade. Next came Mr Symington the chemist, who lived in the top flat of the 'Croabh'. Next came Mr D. MacKechnie, senior, who lived in the flat above the shop. He had the Post Office. Next shop was Jamieson (baker) and then Mr John Ferguson's, where you could get any size of screws, nails, paraffin oil and all sorts of ironmongery. He lived in 'Tighanduin'. Next came the Misses Morrison who had a draper's shop. I always remember it being so dimly lit before we had electric light in the village. Then came Mr Alex Wood who had a sweet shop. Quite a character in the village, he lived at Ardlamont Ferry. The last shop in the row was a grocer's owned by Mr Duncan Ure who lived in Dunara House, then latterly above the shop, and who always had something humorous to tell. What is now Black's electric shop was run as a cafe by George Rossie, then a relative of his took over, Willie Guthrie. They came from Greenock.

Then we come to the Manor Boarding House where Mr Terrace lived, a very enterprising gentleman. There was a bowling green, tennis courts, and a cinema. He also organised sand castle competitions on the beach for the children during the summer months. Alas, it was burnt down and now the Manor Way houses are on the site.

Next came Irvine's shop, a long established business which served the village well. Mr and Mrs George Irvine lived in the flat above the shop at that time.

Then there was the Royal Hotel run by Mr Willie Duncan and his sisters, who lived at 'Glenfern'. Mr Duncan also had a cinema in the Royal Hall showing films of the Charlie Chaplin era which we thought were wonderful. \*Archie MacBride's list of shops a few years later, shows some changes from Miss Black's. Starting with Mrs Turner's grocery at Portdrishaig and Donald Beaton's market garden at 'Wellpark', it is the same as hers until MacCallum's bakery, from where it reads: The Misses MacKellar, drapers; Jamieson, bakers; Co-op/MacNeills, butchers and grocers; Olding's tearoom and confectionery; Alex Rothney, chemist and newsagent; MacNeill & Gordon, ironmongers; Donald MacKechnie, Post Office, gifts; Miss Peggy MacIntyre, baby clothes; Whyte & MacKenzie, butchers and grocers; Burnside, gift shop; J. Cooke, electrical; Irvine's, drapers, carpets and bedding. **Kames:** A. Brown, Post office and shop; Co-op, grocers and butchers; Jamieson, bakers; MacPherson, butcher and grocer; Whyte (Piermount), grocery, confection, newsagent; Flora Cameron, grocery; Archie Whyte, fish and fruit (van). **Millhouse:** J. MacNeill, butcher and grocer; M. MacTaggart, Post Office and confectionery. **Ardlamont:** J. Wood, sweet shop.



## Wish You Were Here.... by Maysie Milne

*[Maysie Milne of 'An Cala' has an interesting footnote to the tales of holidays 'doon the watter'. Far from being the type of Glaswegians who would 'steal the milk oot yer tea', the Watt family were so fastidious in their search for the perfect cuppa that they brought their own cow with them when they came on holiday from Cathcart. I would not dream of questioning Mrs Milne's sources (the horse's mouth?) especially when she has backed up her story with this historical document dated circa 1920....]*

c/o Watt,  
'Lisabuck',  
Tighnabruaich.

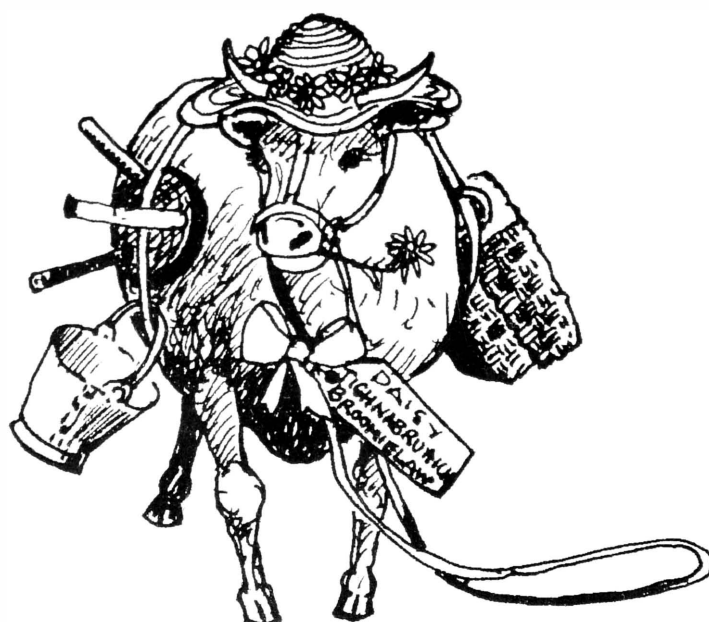
My dear Brownie,

This is a magical place. I am having a wonderful time. It is such a change from Glasgow. I only have to give my services twice a day. I came here last Tuesday on the steamer after being driven by the Watts down to the Broomielaw to get the boat that brings all the freight and livestock to the village. I was the only one to get off at the Tighnabruaich pier apart from some groceries for the pier shop.

I live in the most beautiful field - over the wall from 'Lisabuck' right on the shore road with a lovely view to Arran and Inchmamock. (That is when it's not raining.) The food is excellent, so fresh and green, and the entertainment is non-stop all day with the steamers bringing and taking away locals and visitors. Of course there are other piers but between you and me this is the snobs' pier. Near hand there are big fancy houses with grand gardens. It really is a great spot with beautiful yachts and folk fishing for mackerel from their dinghies. They say it's good. They also say my milk tastes even better down here - no wonder with the lovely fresh air and sunshine. It's almost paradise, but alas after a few weeks I'll be back on the boat and then face the long trek home to Cathcart.

I wish you were here to keep me company. We could have a good laugh at the antics of the humans and chat up some of the horses which come by.

Lots of love,  
Daisy.



## **Tighnabruaich Memories** by Susan Potter

My earliest memories of Tighnabruaich would be about 1950. After travelling overnight and then all the next day by car from Essex, well over 500 very trying miles for my parents, excitement would mount as we reached the perilous Loch Fyne road. Soon we would reach the road approaching Kames crossroads and suddenly before us lay the Kyles and Bute. Hopefully blue and sparkling. We were 'there'.

We would stay at Wellpark House, where my father had been billeted in the war, with 'Uncle Donald and Auntie Winnie'. 'Auntie Peggy', Winnie's sister, was also alive during these early years.

Mealtimes at 'Wellpark' were always heralded by the gong and you were expected to be prompt. Every lunchtime pudding was a delicious variety of milk pudding, always with a meringue on top. Afternoon tea was at 4pm with soft buns, still warm from the oven.

From a very young age, 5 or 6 years old, I would walk with my father to the lighthouse at Caladh Castle after lunch and before tea! It was quite a rush to keep going; we were able to walk along the shoreline then which was much easier than the present route up to the waterfall in West Glen. I remember the castle before it was demolished. My older brother and mother never seemed to come with us!

Sometimes we would borrow a tea towel from Auntie Winnie, climb the Duin and wave to her from the top with it. She would stand outside the kitchen door, waving another tea towel, looking so tiny.

Other excursions were to Ostal Bay - carrying a primus stove and all the necessary tea making things. What a long way it seemed!

In this way we spent every summer holiday. Sometimes it rained every day of our 2 weeks.

My sister was born in 1954 and, for a couple of years after that, I travelled to Scotland on my own. My parents would put me on the night train at Euston and Uncle Donald would meet me at Glasgow Central. He was always late! I would wait under the clock at 7am and just stand there until he arrived. Then we would travel on the steamer to Tighnabruaich Pier and walk down the road to 'Wellpark', where I would always feel terribly homesick for the first couple of days.

I was always busy - helping Auntie Winnie make beds or walking on my own to the village or up to the Duin. Special days were those spent with Uncle Donald in his mobile shop; I loved stopping at the different houses and weighing out fruit and vegetables. Of course there were lots of cups of tea and cakes to enjoy too! This is how I first met Daisy and Archie White, who lived on the road to Ostal Bay.

It was always a big treat to go out with Uncle Donald in the fire engine. I remember well one trip to Portavadie, ringing the bell non-stop but I don't recall any kind of fire when we got to the end of the road!

Another day was spent walking to Loch Ascog with a Lady Robieson, who was staying at 'Wellpark'.

Eventually the day would come when Uncle Donald and I would journey back to Glasgow. It was always so sad to see the pier and then the village slip out of sight as the band played nostalgic tunes.

My sister grew to be a very easy and placid child so we were able to resume our family holidays. Now we would hire a rowing dinghy for our holidays from the boatyard and row over to Bute or to the island at Caladh. When the milk machine arrived in the village we would buy cartons of 'pink milk' to take with us. If it was raining we would go to the Misses Olding's tea-room and I would savour a Blue Riband biscuit, which you could not at that time buy in Essex.

We would gather bait in the form of mussels and go fishing in the boat. I hated fishing, I loathed feeling something tug the line, and I hated seeing the fish being killed and still moving - but I wasn't allowed to stay behind!

Sometimes we would go fishing with Mr Currie on his boat, 'Dayspring'.

In the late 1950s Uncle Donald retired from his market gardening and my father was able to purchase the gardener's cottage. Being a builder, he was able to convert this and we then spent many school holidays here.

The tomato greenhouses were pulled down and a bungalow built on the site.

On one memorable occasion Uncle Donald and Auntie Winnie travelled south to stay with us in Essex and, one evening during their stay, we went to see 'My Fair Lady' in London.

The years passed, and when I started my nurse training I would travel north on the train and steamer to spend my nights off in Tighnabruaich whenever I could, and, in 1975, I had just arrived at 'Wellpark Cottage' when Uncle Donald rushed over to say that there was a phone call.

Thus I heard that my father had died - and I then had to drive all the way back to Essex.



### **'Sherbrooke'** by Rosemary Sharp

My grandparents lived in Tighnabruaich, so as a child I spent most of my holidays with them. There was no electricity in those days but oil lamps in brackets on the walls, as well as table and standard lamps. Each morning they were all taken out to a back kitchen where they were refilled and the wicks trimmed. At the top of the stairs was a shelf on which stood a lamp and an array of candlesticks, one of which each of us lit and took to our bedroom. Also in a back kitchen was a machine for cleaning knives, which, of course, were not yet made in stainless steel.

In the garden we played 'kick the can' with two other families of grandchildren who came on holiday each year, and we were allowed to bowl provided we rolled the green afterwards.

We spent a lot of time in the rowing boat - either fishing for mackerel or going over to Bute for picnics and swimming. There were some beautiful big steam yachts in the bay, the 'Iolaire', the 'Gael' and the 'Verve'. I remember watching a whale spouting over by Bute and seeing lots of sharks and porpoises. We also used to enjoy watching the sheep-dipping up the back road. There was a ship's bell in 'Sherbrooke' and if we were out in the boat or up in the hills it would be rung outside to tell us to come home - a meal was ready.

On Sundays Grandpapa wore a frock coat and striped trousers, and we were supposed to wear dresses. One Sunday the dining room door opened - my sister, in shorts, was late for breakfast. She took one look at us and beat a hasty retreat exclaiming 'My God, it's Sunday'. Thankfully Grandpapa was a bit deaf.

I was always glad when the service was in the low Church - not so far to walk, and I must have spent a lot of time 'wandering of thought in thy service' and studying the stained glass window above the pulpit, because in my teens when lying in hospital, and at difficult times in my life, that window has been a great inspiration to me and has raised my spirits.



On Sunday afternoons we often walked around to Caladh Castle, stopping at the wooden bridge over the burn at West Glen for a game of 'Poo sticks'. We were fascinated by the gun house which was quite near the path, and by the peacocks on the grass. In later years I have taken my own children and grandchildren round to the lighthouse - it became a ritual to have a photo there each year. The castle is, of course, no longer there.

Children don't change. I remember once my cousin daring me to follow him - we were playing at the burn above 'Otterburn' and down he went with me trailing after him, through the duct, right under Smiths' boatyard, and on to the shore. About ten years ago my sister's grandchildren came in one bright sunny day soaked to the skin, but delighted with themselves. They had climbed upwards and over the new road, found a burn that went under the road, lain down in it and had been swept through as on a water chute. They'd spent hours doing this.

Every morning we went to the pier to see the boats coming in and to collect the papers. My brother used to help George Olding, the piermaster, catch the ropes. I can remember the Caladh boat too, there to collect provisions and sometimes shooting party guests for the castle. In those days no cars could get round the point - the only way to Caladh was on foot or by boat.

When I married, my husband and I came every year. He loved the peace. The children learned to swim, row and sail in Tighnabruaich. I came back to live here permanently fourteen years ago. I have travelled all over the world and I still think there is nowhere so beautiful. It is truly God's garden.

### **Glen Caladh 1930-40. Memories of a free, easy and happy childhood** by John G MacColl.

Upper Caladh, one mile from the castle and harbour, three miles from Rhubaan, was in those days only accessible by walking, cycling, or by boat.

My father managed the small estate farm - mainly hill sheep, with a small number of dairy cows, perhaps 3, to ensure the castle and the estate houses had milk available on a daily basis. Delivery of this milk, by pony and trap, was part of the duty of an estate handyman, Jack Carmichael.

When I was about 5, measles left me subject to frequent and severe bouts of bronchitis. Medication consisted of repeated application of 'Kaolin' poultice, as hot as one could bear! I was also given a teaspoonful of ipecacuanha, which had the most awful taste and made me immediately and violently sick. I can remember, perhaps it happened only once, Dr G.L. [Thomson] coming late in the night, and immediately asking for a poultice to be applied, much hotter than I would allow my mother to apply! Tears and howls aplenty!!

The frequency and severity of attacks became less as I grew older.

My earliest recollection of getting to school is with Cath McIntyre, the youngest daughter of an estate worker, who also lived at Upper Caladh. We went by pony and trap to the jetty at the harbour, where we joined the other estate children and were taken by the estate workboat to Tighnabruaich Pier, and thence by car to school. I think perhaps this daily trip by boat tied in with estate business - to collect goods etc. My recollection of the homeward journey is by the aforementioned car to Rhubaan from where we walked home. The estate workboat being ex RNLI was most seaworthy and safe. I have no idea how this came about, but it was known to us as the bumboat !

The pony and trap means of travel came to a sudden and what could have been a disastrous end. One very wintry day, it was decided Cath and I should not go to school. Jack was about to be married (no youngster!) and when he arrived at the castle with the milk, the staff girls decided to have some fun - throwing confetti etc. Result: the pony bolted and the trap was smashed against one of the two large trees on the castle lawn (chestnuts, I think).

Kent Brothers, Builders, Kames were at that time (1937-'38) building a very decorative wall at the small Clark burial site on the island Eilean Dubh. Hearing or seeing all this commotion and aware Cath and I should have been on that trap, they hurried ashore, fearing the worst. My little friend and I had a lucky escape, and I assume from then we just walked to the harbour.

I am not sure when the boat trips ended - maybe with the outbreak of war. So I think we all ended up cycling to school.

My first bike was a small, second hand one. When it became necessary for another estate child (Archie Blair) to get to school, his parents bought - new or nearly so - a cycle which proved to be much too big for him. (He was 2 - 3 years younger than I.)

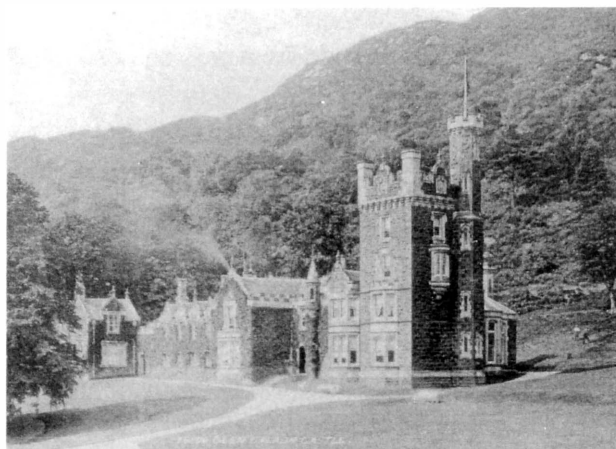
I did admire that bike !



After some time it was agreed Archie was to have mine in part exchange, with some payment. I think this was all of £1 10/- . I was most pleased to have that bike, which served me all my school days and well into my teenage years.

Where the road went through the castle grounds, there were gates at each end, about two hundred yards apart. The castle dogs - I see them somehow as three or four black spaniels - were normally in kennels. But if running free they were something to contend with. They would rush at me, barking furiously, and I would try to beat them to the gate. Failing this, I would dismount, stand against the sea wall, place the bike between me and the dogs, and wait for someone to appear to call them back. I think I saw this as a bit of a challenge: who would reach the gate first - me, or the dogs!

We left Glen Caladh in May, 1940.



Caladh Castle

**Caladh Castle** by Mary Crowe (interviewed by Wilma Weir)

The first time I saw Caladh was when I was 18. We had a motor boat and we were on our way to Kames. We'd always gone to Lochgoilhead on holiday and we thought we'd have a change. We came down through the Kyles and it was beginning to get dark and we decided to go into Caladh Harbour. When it came to night time the slip was all lit up, then a boat came alongside and six or seven people, got aboard - men and women, all in evening dress. I never forgot that.

Frank Clark owned Caladh Estate and his brother Bobby stayed at West Glen, and he used to mix with a lot of actors and actresses. Quite a few of them came to visit, famous people at the time like Anna May Wong and Matheson Lang. James Mason was a frequent visitor. They came by steamer and were picked up at Tighnabruaich Pier by what they called the bumboat, so unless you were at the pier you never saw them.

I can remember walking to Caladh many a time from Kames and on the way back having to take my shoes off coming up the Smiddy Brae because my feet were so sore. We used to go up through Rhubaan and up on the hill and follow the telegraph poles and through Hill Cottage. I went to Caladh a lot before the war to see Bertie and I knew a lot of the staff in the house. Not very many of them were locals, but I remember old Mr Chambers, who walked every day from Kames. He was a gardener. Until the outbreak of war the butler was a Donald MacDougall, from Skye, I think. He was Frank Clark's batman.

I remember, I think it was in 1938, the Clyde hosted what I think was called the World Regatta. Anyway the sailors came from all over the world. We walked from Kames to Caladh. The 'Iolaire' was the flagship, moored off Tighnabruaich. They sailed somewhere up the west, and when they came back at night they were invited to Caladh for dinner. The fruit salad was in two big galvanised baths - not that we were at the meal, or anything, we were just lookers-on. But anyway, between Caladh across to the end of Bute was solid with boats.

The war stopped that. The war stopped a lot of things.

I eventually got to see through the castle. This would be in the last days of it. What I remember in particular was the dining room, and it was Robinson Crusoe. The table, a great big oak table, was his island, all details of it, hand-carved, apparently by German craftsmen. All the chairs were Robinson Crusoe - you sat on his knees. In the hall, there were wee recesses or alcoves, and there it was all Robbie Burns characters, again hand-carved. It was because there was so much wood in it that the rot spread. They say that the dry rot came off one of the boats. The Navy were there and they didn't bother, just let it go, and I think it was terrible what happened to it.

I remember the sale after they decided it was to come down. Bertie was there with the boat, to take anything that was wanted to the village. Most of it was sold by telephone and went away to London. I remember one thing, a shop sign mentioned in Charles Dickens's 'The Old Curiosity Shop'. Bertie was asked to take this to the pier and there was such a carry-on about whether he would take it or not because by that time everybody local was frightened to have anything out of the house because of the woodworm.

### **Argyll in olden days by an 83 year old**

(Maggie Paterson brings our tour full circle.)

From the age of 12 until I was 17 my family and I spent our summer holidays at Shellfield Farm, Ormidale. Most days we walked a mile to the pier - in our bare feet - to see the steamer. On calm evenings when the tide was well out, we waded up the river with our flounder spears, and usually had a good catch. Then it was back to the farm, frying pan out, and a great supper.

When Rothesay illuminations were on we climbed the hill behind the farm and had a great view of the rockets. On the way back home we would see patches of glow-worms - very spectacular.

When I was 17 I rode my horse from Glasgow to the farm. It took 2 days. My friend Mrs Shephard was advertising her riding school. We spent a night in a field at the foot of the 'Rest and be Thankful'. The midges were so bad we got up about 3.30 and headed for the 'Rest' and beyond. We got to the farm late afternoon. Mrs Shephard stayed one night and then rode back to Glasgow.



Maggie when she relied on one horse power

I got married to Archie when I was 26 and we spent our honeymoon in Glendaruel Hotel, run by Mr Bradfield who had never heard about rationing - he said the farmers were very careless and threw away their razor blades on the hills, and the sheep were always getting their throats cut.

Five years later with two children and two bicycles with carrier seats, we spent two weeks with Mrs McLachlan at 'Loch-head', Ormidale. We visited Archie's sister Bella Smith in her little cottage. She had a novel way of stoking her fire - she brought in long logs and stuck one end up the chimney and the other in the fire. She also entertained us playing her melodeon.

Then for a few years we spent our holidays at 'Bellevue', Kilfinan, where with our three children and the children from Drum farm we had many a picnic at Kilfinan Bay. On wet days the children all piled into Dougie's post bus and he drove them to Ballimore and back - they had a great singsong with Dougie keeping time with the horn. We also spent one holiday at Drum farm. After a few years in Arran we returned to Maggie Duncan's house 'Euroa' in Tighnabruaich for several years and made many friends. We started looking for a house to rent by the year. We were lucky to meet Dr Margaret Ferguson, whose father John Ferguson used to run a hardware shop in the village. She was looking for someone to rent her house - so after a visit to 'Tighanduin' we struck a deal and that afternoon she left to go back to New York. So that was our holiday house for 20 years. When Archie was about to retire we tried to buy 'Tighanduin' but Dr Ferguson wouldn't sell. The adjacent piece of ground came up for sale so we bought that and built our bungalow 'Cuilbeag' 27 years ago. I have been a widow for 18 years and I hope to end my days here among friends.

## Acknowledgements

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Further reading.

History of the Parish:

'Kilfinan: walks, history, reminiscences', ed H.F. Torbet, Ardlamont Preservation Society, 1984.

Kilfinan Parish, by Ean Simpson, in 'The Kyles of Bute, Argyll', The Kyles of Bute Improvement Trust, c1972.

Gazetteer, by Iain Barclay, Recollections, by Henry MacKendrick, and Tighnabruaich and the Second World War, by Alan Millar in 'The Kyles, A Celebration', Argyll Publishing, Glendaruel.

# RULES TO BE OBSERVED AT SHORE COTTAGES.

**KAMES GUNPOWDER CO., Proprietors.**

N.B.—It is for the Comfort of all that the following Rules have been framed, and all Occupiers are particularly requested to have them adhered to.

1. That the Tenants in the lower flat shall take alternate weeks of **SWEEPING OUT EVERY DAY, AND WASHING TWICE A WEEK** (say Wednesday and Saturday), the Lobbies and Door Steps, and keeping the Ground about the Building clear of dirt and as tidy as possible.

2. The Tenants in the upper flat shall each take alternate weeks of **SWEEPING EVERY DAY, AND WASHING AT LEAST TWICE A WEEK** (say Wednesday and Saturday), their Stairs, and to clean their Staircase Windows at least every second week. No Mats or Carpets to be shaken over Staircase Windows.

3. That all Ashes carried to the Ashpit will be taken in the morning or evening, or when there are no Clothes on the Green, so that there may be no nuisance to neighbours—said Ashes to be put carefully in the Pit and not left outside.

4. That each Tenant will get the Washing House and Green in rotation, one day beginning with Monday, second Tuesday, and so on according to the list given below.

5. Clothes Ropes are not allowed to be tied to anything but the Green Posts provided for the purpose, and no Clothes to be hung outside elsewhere than on the Ropes.

6. Hot Clothes, or any Tin or Iron Watering Can, Tub or any Vessel, are on no account to be placed on the Grass, the rust soiling any Clothes—being bleached.

7. That each will **CAREFULLY CLEAN OUT THE WASHING HOUSE AND BOILER** when done, so that no complaint will be necessary from the following party.

8. That the Path to the Washing House and Green be always used when going or returning there, and the Gate of the latter always kept closed. **CHILDREN NOT TO BE ALLOWED INTO THE BLEACHING GREEN UPON ANY PRETENCE, OR TO CLIMB THE WALL ON FRONT OF HOUSES, OR ANY OTHER FENCES.**

9. That **PRIVIES SHALL BE THOROUGHLY CLEANED OUT REGULARLY ONCE A FORTNIGHT**, each Tenant in his turn seeing to this being done to the one used by his House. **NO PIGS OR POULTRY TO BE KEPT ABOUT THE GROUND.**

Underneath is a note of the Order in which the Washing House has been set apart for each House, viz:—

Monday,	-	-	-	-	for House No. 1.
Tuesday,	-	-	-	-	Do. " 2.
Wednesday,	-	-	-	-	Do. " 3.
Thursday,	-	-	-	-	Do. " 4.
Friday,	-	-	-	-	Do. " 5.
Saturday,	-	-	-	-	Do. " 6.
Monday,	-	-	-	-	Do. " 7.
Tuesday,	-	-	-	-	Do. " 8.
Wednesday,	-	-	-	-	Do. " 9.
Thursday,	-	-	-	-	Do. " 10.
Friday,	-	-	-	-	Do. " 11.
Saturday,	-	-	-	-	Do. " 12.





