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New undergraduate Scottish Studies Scholarship announced

The Department of History and the Centre for Scottish Studies at the University of Guelph have announced the establishment of a scholarship to recognize the accomplishments of Professor Elizabeth Ewan who retired from the Department of History at the end of 2020.

Named *The Elizabeth Ewan Scottish Studies Scholarship*, and awarded on the basis of academic merit, it will support an undergraduate Scottish Studies student with \$2,000 annually for the first five years and with \$1,000 annually for several years after. Its goal will be to nurture and support scholars as they progress through their degrees and encourage them to embrace Scottish history with the rigor and the energy that Elizabeth Ewan has always evinced. The University of Guelph has expressed its sincere gratitude to all Foundation members who contributed to this initiative.

As professor of Medieval and Early Modern Scottish History at the University of



Professor Elizabeth Ewan speaking on TV Ontario in 2011

Guelph, Elizabeth Ewan is a trailblazer in the history of medieval and early modern Scotland. A scholar of international repute who is an authority on Scottish gender and women's history, co-editor of the groundbreaking *The New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*, and mentor to countless scholars, including many who have established themselves as stars in the academic firmament, Elizabeth Ewan has contributed mightily to the University of Guelph's reputation as a leader in the field of Scottish history. The glowing testimonials from some of her graduates reflect the esteem in which she is held, and the influence she had over their learning and their lives.

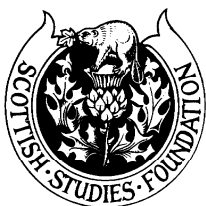
She is the author of several books, including *Town Life in 14th-Century Scotland* (1990) and *Finding the Family in Medieval and Early Modern Scotland* (2008), and over 20 papers published as book chapters or articles in academic journals. She has also developed an extensive scholarly website called *Women in Scottish History* (with the charming acronym WISH).

Her research has received major funding support, including seven grants from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada. She has been a visiting fellow at Cambridge University, the National University of Australia, and the University of Edinburgh (twice). As well as being the recipient of two University of Guelph teaching awards, she has been named

distinguished professor at the University of Guelph three times.

After graduating with a BA from Queen's University (Kingston, Ontario) in 1979, Elizabeth moved to Edinburgh to complete her PhD on social life in fourteenth-century Scottish towns. Writing about her career, she explained that... "My journey towards the history of Scottish women began shortly after I had left Edinburgh University for Canada in 1985, having completed my PhD. Some women featured in my research but it did not occur to me to give them more than a passing mention. Interest in the history of women was only beginning to develop at the time in Scotland and had not made much impact on the academy, despite the efforts of some early pioneers.

"It was my first academic position, at the University of Western Ontario, in London, Ontario, which opened my eyes to women's history. In the next office was a colleague who worked on the history of women, a field which was considerably more developed in North America than it was in Scotland. Suddenly I became aware of a whole new field of historical enquiry. I organized conferences on the history of medieval women at both Western and in my next position at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. When I moved to the University of Guelph in 1988, I was able to bring together my twin interests in Scottish history and women's history.



THE SCOTTISH STUDIES FOUNDATION

P.O. Box 45069
2482 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M4P 3E3

Charitable registration
No. 119253490 RR0001
www.scottishstudies.com

Membership Secretary:
Catherine McKenzie
admin@scottishstudies.com

Newsletter Editor:
David Hunter
davidhunter@scottishstudies.com

“Working at Guelph has provided opportunities which I was unlikely to find elsewhere in North America. The graduate program has included Scottish history among its fields of emphasis since first being established in the mid 1960s by the Scottish historian, William Stanford Reid. Since 2004 with the appointment of the first endowed Scottish Studies Foundation Chair, Professor Graeme Morton, (followed by Professor James Fraser in 2015 and in 2020 by Professor Kevin James), there has been a Centre for Scottish Studies.

“As a result, Guelph has always included a lively cohort of Master’s and Doctoral students working on Scottish topics, including several from outside Canada, with many of them studying the medieval and early modern periods.

“This has provided an ongoing vibrant intellectual atmosphere from which I (and I hope the students!) have benefited greatly. The History Department itself includes many staff with interests in gender history and this

has been very valuable in providing a comparative context for those who work on Scottish history. Since the 1990s, the Guelph graduate program has been part of the Tri-University Graduate Program with the nearby Universities of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier, giving graduate students access to the expertise of over 50 historians during their studies.

“In the last decade especially, interest in medieval and early modern Scottish women’s and gender history has increased among the graduate students at Guelph. PhD and MA thesis topics have ranged from women and crime in medieval Scotland and in early modern towns, to servants’ lives, the making of marriage in early modern Scotland, medieval marriage contracts, early modern women’s economic roles, the role of speech in the witchhunt, women’s ambition, masculinity in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, aristocratic women and queens.

“One of the joys has been working with the students on publications. As well as the

annual open-access journal *International Review of Scottish Studies* the Centre for Scottish Studies produces a series of volumes, *Guelph Studies in Scottish History*, which are co-edited by staff and current or recent graduate students. These will shortly be available as open-access publications. *Shaping Scottish Identities* (2011) co-edited with Jodi Campbell and Heather Parker included several articles on gender topics, and *Gender and Mobility* co-edited with Sierra Dye and Alice Glaze is due to appear this year.

“Several Guelph students have contributed entries to *The Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women* (2006) and also to the new expanded edition (2018). I have also benefited from the work of many students over the last decade in compiling and updating the online bibliography and resource WISH (*Women in Scottish History*). Many of our students have gone on to teach Scottish history elsewhere, including in the UK, Australia, and many of the different provinces in Canada. Through this new generation of scholars, many more students than ever before are being introduced to this field of research outside Scotland.

“In the age of the internet, being based in Canada no longer means relative isolation from the academic community in Scotland (and indeed the rest of the world). Our students have access to scholars and resources in Scotland, both online and through research visits.

“Much of my own work has been focused on bringing together both new and established scholars from around the globe to produce co-edited collections on new fields in Scottish history including volumes on medieval and early modern women (1999), the family (2008), children and youth (2015), and most recently masculinities in Scottish history medieval to modern (2017).

“I have also been able to work with Women’s History Scotland on collaborative projects such as *The Biographical Dictionary* and with other groups. One of my favourite projects was working with the developers of The Real Mary King’s Close on Edinburgh’s Royal Mile in 2003 to bring to public attention the story of Alison Rough (c.1480-1535), a middling-class Edinburgh woman whose unusually-well documented life came to a tragic end. Since then Alison has been portrayed in processions of Edinburgh notable historic characters, an advent calendar projected on Edinburgh City Chambers, and even a tea towel and a coffee mug! For me, Alison Rough is my own Black Agnes, brought back from historical oblivion, creating a stir, and always at the gate.” ■



The Scottish Studies Foundation is pleased to announce its first Chapbook Competition which is open to everyone worldwide. Writers are invited to submit a manuscript of about 2,000 to 5,000 words on a topic with some Scottish connection. The winner will have their work published in the form of a chapbook and will receive \$500 plus 20 copies of the book.

This initiative was triggered due to all of our usual in-person events being cancelled because of the virus. In trying to think of alternatives—in particular, some kind of activity that might broaden our reach but not be in conflict with what other groups are doing. And so we came up with this idea which was inspired by the University of Guelph’s collection of historic chapbooks, many of which have been digitized and placed online.

Chapbooks have a long history spanning several centuries. Sold by street criers, travelling “chapmen” and by “balladeers” at markets and fairs, they were the main reading material of a majority of the population, carrying news and popular culture of the day. We are hoping that this competition will generate an enthusiastic response from all with a keen interest in Scottish history, culture, genealogy and literature and as you don’t have to be a member to enter please feel free to pass this information on to your friends and associates.

Details on how to enter are on our website: www.scottishstudies.com

Navigating the Extraordinary Challenges of 2020

Scottish Studies Foundation Chair Dr. Kevin James looks back on the most unprecedented year in the University of Guelph's history

Three faculty members have ably served in the position of Acting Scottish Studies Foundation Chair and Director of the Centre for Scottish Studies (CSS) in the months before my appointment on June 1, 2020. James Fraser expanded the scope of our research activities during his tenure as Scottish Studies Foundation Chair, and Elizabeth Ewan and Linda Mahood have granted their priceless support and leadership as I took on this new and exciting role. Since January 2020, our postdoctoral scholar, Dr. Sierra Dye as well as Lisa Baer-Tsarfaty and Mariah Hudec in the Scottish Studies office have contributed a tremendous wealth of knowledge and assistance as I moved into your prestigious Chair position.

During this transition, the entire world has been challenged by a global pandemic. Present circumstances have circumscribed travel and event planning, but we remain committed to maintaining an active roster of activities, teaching, and research programs. Working with our colleagues and partners at the University of Guelph and the wider community we continue our plans for a complete resumption of activities even as we pivot within the fluid safety parameters of pandemic conditions.

New student application for the 2021–22 cohort indicate that there will be a record number of students enrolling, with student interest much higher than in previous years thanks to increased recruitment activity and the Covid pandemic leading people to engage in one or two more years of education.

The Scottish Studies Foundation support, its exhaustive fundraising, and constant inspiration live at the heart of our successes; in our ability to offer continued excellence; in the inspiration that stems from your confidence in our faculty, students, staff, and facilities; and in the 'can-do' example that is borne of your perseverance and hard work.

The pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges to every walk of life and academia is no exception. Beyond the serious and widespread issues brought forward by Covid-19, it is noteworthy that the pandemic has intensified the impact of several strategic contributions. For example, support from important donors like the Scottish Studies Foundation has been instrumental in sustaining our programs. One stellar example of our ability to maintain internationally acclaimed excellence in the study of all things Scottish, is found in the Scottish



A throwback to pre-covid times: Dr. Kevin James and his fiancée Monica Rieck on the Foundation's Tall Ship Cruise in 2001

Studies Foundation Digitization Room. Students, researchers, and faculty at the University of Guelph and around the world have been able to maintain a connection to our remarkable Scottish Studies collections and archives, despite the multiple levels of pandemic-related closures and moratoriums. The SSF Digitization Room is just one of many areas of support and collaboration, in this case with leadership of the University Library and its Archival and Special Collections unit, which have been stalwarts in our partnerships with you over many years, and for which we are grateful.

Scholarships and student support are another critical area in which the Foundation has provided leadership. Scholarships remain a priority for Scottish Studies, particularly in the current economic climate. Our gratitude to you for always placing students and scholarship opportunities at the forefront of your commitments is as deep and broad as it is heartfelt.

Outreach is a core mission of our program and despite the circumstances surrounding the 2020 global pandemic, we maintained an active roster of speakers and roundtables.

Both faculty and students involved in Scottish Studies at the U of G have hosted a busy schedule of outreach activities and their impacts have resonated widely. For example, Prof. Elizabeth Ewan spoke at the Glasgow Women's Library and was interviewed on BBC Radio Scotland. On a separate occasion, our postdoctoral scholar Dr. Sierra Dye, was also a guest of BBC Radio Scotland and I served as a consultant on a PBS KIDS series called *Let's Go Luna* for episodes exploring Scottish history and culture. My research into Scottish tourism and travel history continues as I draw on our collections, and the unique opportunities they provide for promoting intersecting teaching and research at all levels of study.

Research output from CSS was impressive. The *International Review of Scottish Studies* was issued with extensive publications recorded by faculty, students,

and alumni. Our students also distinguished themselves in other important ways: In spring 2020, Persephone Seale successfully defended her MA thesis, titled *Narrative Ambiguity, Bodily Uncertainty, and Community Involvement: Infanticide in Seventeenth-Century Scotland* and Katie Comper completed her MA when she successfully defended her thesis titled *The Life of Lady Anna Mackenzie: Noblewomen, Kinship Networks and Power in Seventeenth-Century Scotland*. Congratulations to Persephone and Katie!

Several other achievements of note included PhD student Lisa Baer-Tsarfaty and postdoctoral scholar Dr. Sierra Dye on receiving College of Arts Teaching Awards—well deserved!; with the tireless support of staff and librarians, students actively engaged in experiential learning using our exceptional Archival and Special Collections; two undergraduate classes explored our outstanding travel ephemera collections in the autumn; and in March 2020, Dr. Sierra Dye presented research and collaborated with Professor Susannah Ferreira and Special Collections Librarian Melissa McAfee and other staff to launch *From Parchment to Pixels: A Celebration of Medieval Manuscripts* exhibit.

All of these accomplishments are made possible through the Scottish Studies Foundation—your tireless fundraising and support have immediate impacts that affect current faculty and students to be sure, but your validation and encouragement are part of a broad influence that has raised our profile, brought philanthropy and goodwill to decades of our cohorts, and supported the advanced research, extensive collections, and exceptional Scottish Studies curricula. You remain at the core of our excellence.

With sincere gratitude and best wishes for your good health, thank you for your steadfast, broad, and meaningful contributions to our students, faculty, and community. ■

Deciphering the Past: Learning through the Medieval Land Charters of Scotland

By Dr. Susannah Ferreira

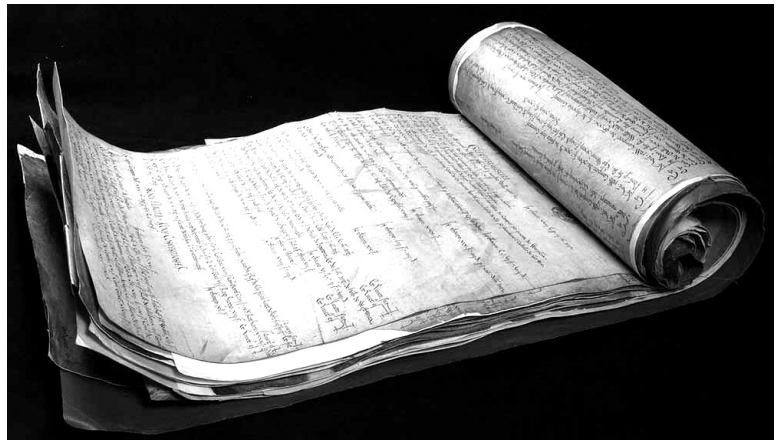
A year ago, I participated in what was (at least for me) an extraordinary teaching experiment. Melissa McAfee, a Special Collections librarian at the University of Guelph, had secured a spot in a unique program, “Manuscripts in the Curriculum,” sponsored by a rare book and manuscript dealer in Chicago, aimed to expose university students to the joys and challenges of working with original medieval manuscripts.

Thus, nine original medieval manuscripts were loaned to Archival and Special Collections and over the course of the semester, I witnessed the power that physical manuscripts had to inspire young adults to learn about medieval history.

In March, after our semester was curtailed by the pandemic and the treasures were packed away, Melissa and I began to feverishly discuss how we could recreate this exhilarating experience in future semesters.

As an historian of the late middle ages, I was vaguely aware that the McLaughlin Library housed a collection of medieval Scottish land charters. My colleague, Elizabeth Ewan, had regularly used them to teach her graduate students the rudiments of medieval paleography and familiarize them with the handwriting and cryptic abbreviations.

But as a specialist in fifteenth century Portuguese history, I knew little of the



Medieval Land Charter documents circa 1420

Scottish collections and was unaware of the extent of Guelph’s holdings and its potential for both teaching and research. But I soon learned that the twelve land charters found in the Campbell of Monzie collection and which date from 1332 to 1585 are perfectly suited for teaching at the undergraduate level. They have thus become the focus of a new course: “The Land Charters of Scotland.”

Ironically, the mission to have students connect with physical manuscripts has been hampered by the global pandemic. And yet remote teaching has brought some new opportunities. Over the summer, staff from Archival and Special Collections digitized a number of the land charters so that students can access them from home.

Although working with digital copies is far less satisfying than handling the ‘real thing’, digital transcription tools allow students to transcribe directly onto the image that they are working with—which is something like writing directly on top of a precious manuscript with a magic pencil.

Digital copies also allow for enlargement and image enhancement which can help with the process of deciphering the handwriting, especially where the ink has faded or where the parchment has been damaged.

Online dictionaries that can help students to translate the Latin and Scots are also only a click away. Additionally, the ability for guest speakers to ‘zoom’ into the class, will allow Professor Cynthia Neville, a leading authority on medieval Scottish land charters, to walk the students through the sections of the Campbell of Monzie charters in detail.

An exciting feature of our Scottish land charter project is that it marks the University of Guelph’s entry into the emerging field of biocodicology (the biological analysis of manuscripts).

Using non-destructive techniques, developed at the University of North Carolina State, we plan to analyze the DNA of the parchment in hopes of learning more

about the cows or sheep who roamed the medieval Scottish countryside, and whose skins were used to make the parchment.

This research has the potential to tell us something about livestock diversity, disease and the environmental history of Scotland in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In February, Dr. Timothy Stinson and Dr. Kelly Meiklejohn from the University of North Carolina State will speak to our students about their biocodicological research.

Later in the semester, we will send samples from eight charters to North Carolina State University for analysis. Partnering with faculty in the Ontario Agricultural College and other departments and centres on campus, we hope to be soon joining a handful of other universities involved in this line of research.

Though DNA analysis is an alluring part of the project, the results will only be meaningful if matched with standard historical research into the agricultural history of Scotland and the parchment-making industry.

Thanks to the ongoing generosity of the St. Andrew’s Society of Toronto and the St. Andrew’s Society of Montreal, the Centre for Scottish Studies has been able to offer internships and scholarships to seven different students engaged directly in this research.

It is anticipated that their findings will be shared at the annual Scottish Studies Colloquium in the fall of 2021, where we hope to have the medieval land charters on display. Although we will have by then completed a digital online exhibit, it is our sincerest hope that members of the Scottish Studies Foundation and other enthusiasts will be able to see these veritable treasures in real life. ■



Dr. Susannah Ferreira
Associate Professor,
University of Guelph

Searching for Coulter's Candy

By Margaret Wilson

Last year, having been restricted to staying at home because of the pandemic, I recently embarked on a long overdue cleanup of my basement and in doing so came across a box of my late father's favourite books. At the bottom of the pile I noticed something I hadn't seen for years—the cover of his favourite LP: *Scottish Choice* with folk singers Robin Hall and Jimmie Macgregor. As a child I heard him playing this LP over and over again. My father was born in Falkirk, Scotland and came to Canada in the 1960s and my fondest childhood memory was of him singing my favourite song to me every night before I went to sleep. That song was on his LP and the chorus went like this:

*Ally bally, ally bally bee,
Sittin' on yer mammy's knee,
Greetin for a wee bawbee,
Tae buy some Coulter's candy.*

I remember my dad telling me that a “bawbee” was an old Scots coin worth about half a cent and that “greetin” meant crying. As to “Ally bally bee,” well that remained a mystery.

It must have been at least 30 years since I had last heard that song played, and on pulling the record from its cover, I was immediately overcome with nostalgia and an overwhelming desire to hear it again and I wished so much that I had a record player upon which to play it. Later that day, it suddenly dawned on me that it might have been posted it on the internet and sure enough, a quick search took me to a pristine recording. It was truly wonderful to once more hear these songs that were so much a



Robin Hall and Jimmie Macgregor. Sadly, Robin passed away in 1998 aged 62.



Sculptor Angela Hunter and folk singer Jimmie Macgregor

part of my childhood, but also a bit odd to hear them without the scratches, pops and crackles that had increasingly become such a feature of my dad's well-worn old record. And yes, my favourite song was there, listed as *Coulter's Candy* on the LP track list.

Well I'm sure you all know what happens when you get on the internet—one thing leads to another; and so in no time I was hot on a search to find out the origins of the song and it was with some surprise that I found out that thanks to a Japanese film crew, recent research into its origins had been initiated. And yes, it turns out that there was indeed a man who made and sold Coulter's Candy—the very man who penned the words of the *Ally Bally Bee* children's rhyme and to whom a statue was erected in his honour as recently as 2019.

I found out that the song originated in the late 1800s as an early advertising jingle for the homemade candy of Robert Coltart (the “Coulter” of the song) who sold candy in his travels around all the country fairs and markets of the Scottish Borders.

Correspondents described his arrival in a town with his “big lum hat, bags of candy, and his song.” But after Coltart's death in 1880 the song remained almost forgotten until schoolteacher, politician and Scots folk music enthusiast Robert Buchan included it in his book *101 Scottish Songs* published in 1962.

By that time, folk singers Robin Hall and Jimmie Macgregor had already teamed up and had become hugely successful after winning a contract to perform live on weekday evenings on the highly popular BBC current affairs television program *Tonight* which attracted an audience of seven million viewers. After their performance of *Coulter's Candy* on the show, the song exploded in popularity across the world and has remained popular ever since.

But its origins remained obscure until 1998, when Scottish author and songwriter Ewan McVicar was contacted by a Japanese TV crew working on a film about lullabies asking him to set up an interview with “Mr.

Coulter” whom they assumed was still alive. He had to disappoint them but went on to research the topic and published his findings in *Doh Ray Me, When Ah Wis Wee*, his reference book on Scottish children's songs and rhymes.

He discovered that Robert Coltart was born in 1833 and was a Galashiels weaver remembered, not for his work with textiles, but as a flamboyant character dressed in a variety of colourful clothes, singing his much loved lullaby song to help advertise his “Coulter's Candy” at fairs and festivals in all the Border towns.

Borders genealogist Ronald Morrison notes: “no occupation is given for his wife, Mary Rankine, in the census records but it is perhaps reasonable to assume that she was the one that manufactured the sweets which her husband sold on market days as he went round giving full vent to his jingles.”

A surviving contemporary record describes Robert's sales attire: “He wore a tall black hat and a shiny black bag slung over his shoulder held stock of the famous candy.”

In September 2019, a ceremony took place in Galashiels which saw a statue dedicated to Robert Coltart revealed by its sculptor Angela Hunter. After months of work to complete the statue, Angela, who is originally from Galashiels, was delighted to finally see Coltart returned to his hometown and is looking forward to adding two sculptures of a boy and girl to complete the piece.

Hundreds of people attended the ceremony including Jimmie Macgregor and more than 30 of Coltart's descendants from all over the UK.

It was wonderful for me to have uncovered such a treasure trove of information as a result of my search, and although “Ally Bally Bee” is just a string of nonsense words, they are words that will aye be dear tae me, as my Scottish father might have put it. ■

Our Childhood on St Kilda

by Mary Cameron

Nowadays when most teenagers carry transistor radios around, and, by turning a knob on a little box, one cannot only hear distant voices but open a window on the world, it may be difficult to picture what life was like, minus these and other now commonplace amenities, on the loneliest inhabited outpost of the British Isles, St Kilda, before the evacuation of its native population in 1930.

My sister and I are among the few, apart from those of the original inhabitants surviving, who are in a position to reminisce. We spent seven years of our childhood there, just after the First World War; our father ministering to the spiritual needs of the people, our mother seeking to instill into the island children and ourselves a knowledge of the three Rs.

St Kilda, about fifty-four miles west of the Sound of Harris, in the Outer Hebrides, is probably better known nowadays, thanks to the National Trust for Scotland, the Nature Conservancy, and the Army (who are using it as a missile tracking station in connection with the South Uist rocket range) than ever it was while occupied by its native population. The cruises and the working parties organized by the National Trust have familiarized with its fabulous cliffs and teeming bird life hundreds of people who might otherwise scarcely have known of the island's existence.

Many of them must wonder what life was like in winter on Hirta, the only inhabited island of the group, cut off from regular communication with the outside world, the mighty Atlantic storms raging against its forbidding coastline. (The Glasgow steamers called only during the months of May to August twice each month in May, June and July, and once in August.)

Childish memories must suffice for this account, memories which include cozy evenings spent by the fire, the wind often thundering in the chimneys, sometimes a dash of spray against the windows, the ceaseless billows on the nearby shore making their own somber music, as we wrestled with spellings and sums; and, that finished, brought out favourite books, jig-saw puzzles, or tiddlywinks, which we played on the thick tablecover beneath the white glow of the Aladdin incandescent paraffin lamp. Or it might be games of hunt-the-thimble or happy hours spent listening to gramophone records.

About eight o'clock, the sitting-room lamp having been turned low, my sister and I would be banished to the kitchen, where a lamp hung high on the wall, well beyond our reach; and our parents would go out to the byre to milk the cow and bed her down for the night—the one carrying a bucket of warm water with oatmeal in it, the other, the hurricane lantern and the milking jug and pail.

In bed, we children used to pretend that we were on board ship—no difficult feat of imagination with the endless sound of the sea in our ears—and very pleasant it was to drift into dreamland thus. From the next room came the murmur of our father's voice as he often read aloud, our mother's busy hands engaged meanwhile in the sewing or knitting for which she had no time during the day, occupied as she was with teaching, cooking and housework.

Often, in rough weather, trawlers sheltered in the bay. It was pleasant to see their twinkling lights when one looked out at night. I remember lovely, starry nights, too; the moon making a silver pathway across the waters; the dark bulk of Stac Levanish and the wonderful, unforgettable outline of the island of Dun looming in the distance.

The winters, on the whole, were mild, wet, and stormy; and everyone who has lived on St Kilda will know how very rapidly the weather can change out there, even in summer—one moment peaceful, then in perhaps half an hour blowing a gale. The sea, in a storm, was awesome, yet strangely exhilarating to watch. I can recollect only one heavy snowfall. It lay on the ground for not more than a week.

The schoolroom was a cozy little place with a blazing coal fire, the dozen or so pupils sitting at old-fashioned, long desks, roughly carved in the manner of school desks the world over, with the initials of past scholars. We used slates, of course, and now and again had to take them home to be scrubbed. Perhaps they were less hygienic than jotters, but they had their advantages. Any illicit doodling was easily wiped off before it could catch the teacher's eye; and when you drew a wee house or a steamer (the St Kildan boys were adept at drawing ships), a few strokes of the slate pencil, judiciously blurred with a finger-tip, gave a perfect representation of smoke!

The schoolroom having no artificial



Children on St Kilda

lighting (in contrast to the church, which was well lit by central draught paraffin lamps), the fading light limited each day's session. During the dinner hour (shortened in winter we all partook of cocoa, each child bringing a "piece.") This, of course, was commonplace in the Highlands and Islands before the advent of school canteens. We each had our own enamel mug. Never did cocoa taste more delectable!

The swinging oil lantern, which was always carried to guide our steps along the rough village street of sixteen cottages, fifteen of which were occupied. An additional house was the home of the district nurse. We had no resident doctor.

Our arrival would be heralded by the barking of some of the many collie dogs kept by the islanders for work with their sheep. It was almost impossible to reach the houses undetected as the chorus was taken up from one end of the street to the other!

The St Kildans were very busy in winter, carrying out the many processes involved in the manufacture of their tweeds. The women at their spinning-wheels; the men, boys, and girls carding or teasing wool. The wool had to be carded at least twice before it was ready for spinning, and the first (or "big") carding, as it was called, was a communal affair, the workers gathering in each house in turn and sitting round the kitchen on every available chair, stool, and box. As each pad of wool left the cards (wooden brushes with steel teeth), it was tossed on to a large piece of cloth spread in the middle of the floor. Later the folk of the house would card it all again and fashion it into rolls, each about a foot long, for spinning.

After New Year the scene changed, and the dismantled handlooms, of which each family possessed one, were taken down from the lofts and the parts assembled in the kitchen. After the tweeds had been woven,

the looms were stowed away once more.

I remember watching a woman warping tweed preparatory to the weaving. She moved backwards and forwards, winding the thread round pegs in a large wooden frame set against the wall in the “ben end.” The huge balls of yarn she used intrigued my childish eyes. The man of the house, or a grown-up son, would set the warp up in the loom, patiently tying in each separate thread. Once the weaver started to wield the shuttle, somebody was busy filling bobbins on an old spinning-wheel, to keep pace with his demands. Short lengths of dried docken stems, which were conveniently hollow inside, were used as bobbins.

The waulking (or shrinking) of the tweed, if I remember rightly, was not done until the longer days of spring. In this connection, it may be of interest to mention that the women did not sing as they worked, like their sisters in the other Hebridean Islands, but hissed in time to the beat of the cloth on the table. I am told, however, although I myself never heard it done, that they sometimes used a kind of chant, bringing in the name of each woman engaged in the waulking.

The womenfolk also knitted socks, stockings, and gloves for home use and (in the case of the socks and gloves) for sale to tourists visiting the island in the summer. Girls were early taught to ply knitting needles.

Their religious (Presbyterian) faith had a very important place in the lives of the people. We did not weary on Sundays, with morning and evening services (entirely in Gaelic except when our district nurse was English-speaking, when part of the morning service was in English), and Sunday school in the afternoon. All went to church, even babies in arms.

The simple little church resounded to quite the heartiest singing I have ever heard, led, as in other parts of the Highlands and Islands, by a precentor. Reposing on the floor under the manse pew was a “ladle”—a box on a long pole, used long ago in Scottish churches to collect the offering during services. I wonder what happened to it? We never saw it used. In our time the offering was put into a “plate” on entering.

Incidentally, my sister and I were distressed to learn recently that the church building was being allowed to fall into disrepair. Can nothing be done to preserve it?

Our parents jointly ran the Sunday school, attended by all the young folk up to the late teens.

A prayer meeting was held on Wednesday evenings, and a monthly meeting on the first Monday of each month, commemorated the deliverance of the ship Porcupine in a fierce storm at St Kilda on the night of October 3, 1860. The islanders had spent the night in prayer for her safety. A baby girl born on St Kilda at that time was baptized Jemima

Otter, after the wife of the ship's captain. One of her relatives, living today, bears that name.

Our diet on St Kilda necessarily included a good deal of tinned food. We kept poultry, of course, but fresh meat was available only when someone slaughtered a sheep. Everyone, including ourselves, salted mutton for the winter. People usually shared fresh meat, when they had any, with others who happened to be without.

An amusing incident occurred when a husband and wife (each unknown to the other) dispatched a messenger to the manse with a fine leg of wether mutton! Our mother guessed what had happened when the second offering arrived and sent it back with an explanation. How they laughed when they compared notes!

The St Kildans' own staple diet consisted of sea birds, chock-full of vitamins, but, I am afraid, not very palatable to outsiders.

Christmas was a happy time for us children, and gifts, often hoarded for months, delighted us on Christmas morning. My sister and I hung up our stockings, like most children elsewhere in Britain, and our faith in Santa's ability to reach our lonely island was implicit.

Our parents saw to it that the island children had a share of the sweet things of which they were so fond. We had a tea party in the schoolroom and sang carols. I was sent round the village with a small gift for each home.

My sister and I were always in bed long before midnight on Hogmanay. Sometimes we awoke to the sound of rifle shots and the ringing of the church bell (a ship's bell, salvaged from a wrecked Greenock ship and bearing the inscription “Janet Cowan, 1861”), which always ushered in the New Year. The bell was rung by the precentor, who would then first-foot our parents; and, in the village, people moved from house to house, greeting their friends. Our parents, who had waited up, would come into the room to greet us with “Bliaidhna Mhath Ur!” (A Good New Year!)—a salutation repeated many times as the congregation “skailed” after the New Year's Day church service.

Tables were spread with food and drink on New Year's Day, and until well on in the night feasting continued, as the younger folk went from one house to another. Yet there was none of the insobriety commonly associated with the festive season in other places. Drunkenness was unknown.

St Kilda did not boast of any shops, so there was no incentive to squander one's pocket money. When we were old enough to write letters, my sister and I would pore over mail order catalogues, selecting Christmas and birthday presents for our parents and each other. Postal orders would be purchased at the little Post Office and the orders sent

off. Then followed a period of anxious anticipation. Would the parcels arrive in time? Daily we watched for a smudge of smoke on the horizon; nightly we scanned it for a light.

We were grateful to the English trawler skippers who so kindly conveyed mails to and from us when fishing in the neighbourhood. The arrival of mail was a red-letter occasion. The postman's visit is not nearly as thrilling as collecting your own mail and bringing it home in a sack!

Although one has nostalgic memories of a leisurely life, untroubled by present-day stress, there were dark spots such as the December night our father developed severe colic and we thought he was going to die. Our mother, having vainly tried all her remedies, called me, aged eight, out of bed, wrapped me up warmly, and, with myself and the lantern for company, went to rouse Nurse from her bed. That incident had a happy sequel, but it could so easily have been otherwise.

Or that dreadful time in May 1926, before the first of the Glasgow steamers' summer calls, when flu ravaged our little community, carrying away four of the older people in one week. The glorious weather seemed to mock our plight; not a ship appeared on the horizon for weeks because there was a general strike on, of which we knew nothing.

We would certainly have appreciated modern means of communication had they been available, even such as existed at that time. A wireless transmitter, placed on St Kilda before the First World War by a daily paper for the benefit of the people, was requisitioned by the Government on the outbreak of hostilities and used by them while St Kilda was a lookout post for the observation of enemy activity in the Atlantic. After the war it was removed, leaving the island absolutely without any direct means of communication with the rest of the country.

Had this installation been left on St Kilda, and had a regular call by a steamer, even every few weeks instead of only during the summer months, been provided, it is possible that the younger folk would not have been so anxious to leave, thus hastening evacuation of the island.

However, given good health and the necessities of life, ours was a contented existence, in our own little world, bounded by its great cliffs and by the constant, age-old surge of the Atlantic.

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