



# DUSGADH

Comann Eachdraidh Ceann A Tuath Nan Loch

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NORTH LOCHS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## Summer Days in Ranish



This photo was taken mid 1960s at 8 Ranish. *Back Row L-R: Mairi Allan, Mairi Macleod, Newton ex 17 Ranish; Mairi Iain Mhurchaidh, Mary Chapman, 8b Ranish; Murdag Iain Mhurchaidh, Murdina Skelly, Cameron Terrace*  
*Front L-R: Billy Downie on holiday at 8 Ranish; Seonag Dollaidh, Joan Healey, 5 Ranish; Domhnall Roddy Nicolson, 20 Ranish; Michael Skelly; Barbara Mary Macleod, 7 Ranish; Anne Calan John, Ann Macleod, 24 Ranish* Courtesy Anne Walker (née Downie)

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## Poit Dhubh Loch na Buaille Gharbha



This picture was taken at the Gleann Mor surgery in May 1978 by Steve, one of my father's trainee assistants. It shows the surgery cleaner Peggy Macleod, the practice manager Agnes Macleannan, my father Dr Ian Kenneth McIntosh and my mother Jean and sister Isobel. In those days my mother and father usually had coffee after the morning surgery with the staff. It was this tiny tight-knit team that ran the whole of the North Lochs practice.

It is the pot that contains the daffodils that I want to say something about. In January 2010 I received an email about it from out of the blue. It was from a Donald Morrison in Cross and said:



"You won't remember me but many years ago we both lived in Leurbost - I remember once 'Adala' and I helped you carry an old iron pot from the banks of the stream running along the back of where Macdonald Gardens are now to the main road - you wanted to take it home as a present to your mother - I believe the next time I saw it sat outside the front door of your fathers surgery splendidly painted and full of spring blooms. My late father was Roddy Morrison, who for a short period was headmaster of Leurbost school having previously been in Ranish and latterly in Laxdale."

Now, the story of that pot is as Donald said. I can't remember who was the fourth member of our team, but it may well have been Alasdair Roddy Maclean, known locally as Roger, long since passed away, as we were quite close. In the late 1960s which was roughly when this took place cast iron pots were still common on the island. They were used for cooking and kept by the side of streams for washing clothes, where a peat fire would be put under them. Being disused and no longer treasured they were rapidly being lost. The twin problems were antiques collectors looking for what they called "gypsy pots" and the fact that if they filled with water and it froze hard, the expansion of the ice caused them to crack. Normally this was prevented by keeping them turned upside down, but in that era when people were losing touch with their roots, they'd maybe get turned upright by people who didn't understand the dangers, and that was the writing on the wall for many a communal village washing pot.

With the Leurbost pot I asked permission from somebody nearby to take it to the surgery. I think that man was Donald Martin, the councillor whose house was in pebble dash beside where the stream that flows down from Loch na Buaille Gharbha. The pot used to be clearly visible from the road there. Four of us boys carried it down from above the road beside the loch and back to the surgery on iron rods through the handles. Those rods were for reinforcing concrete and were being used at the time for putting in a new sewage or water system, so that might help to date the event more closely.

Once back at Gleann Mòr I brushed off the rust and coated it with a special yellow zinc-based protective paint from Charlie Morrison's and finished it off with a coat of black. I also drilled a drainage hole in the bottom so that it would not be at risk of cracking and my mother, to whom I had given it, planted it with bulbs for the patients to enjoy. When my father retired through ill health that pot was taken to their croft at 31 Achmore where it is now in the care of my sister and her husband, and over those forty plus years the zinc paint has done an astonishingly good job of keeping it protected.

I have another pot – a small one – here at the house in Govan which was given to me by an old man near the start of Achmore. It bears the marking "Falkirk 14C" and probably came out of the famous Carron iron works there – famous also for making the "carronade" – a cast iron canon.

To me these pots are special because they hold the memory of bygone events, conversations, songs and laughter in the village. I like to look at them and imagine what memories they might contain if only their story could be fully told. It is good to know where they are kept. Good, too, that while so many have been broken or taken away from the island, this one that belongs to Leurbost is still being cared for within the parish of North Lochs.

*Alastair McIntosh*

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