



Lochs Show Opening Speech 2014

This is an extended version of the opening address given on Saturday 26th July 2014 by the author, broadcaster and academic, Alastair McIntosh

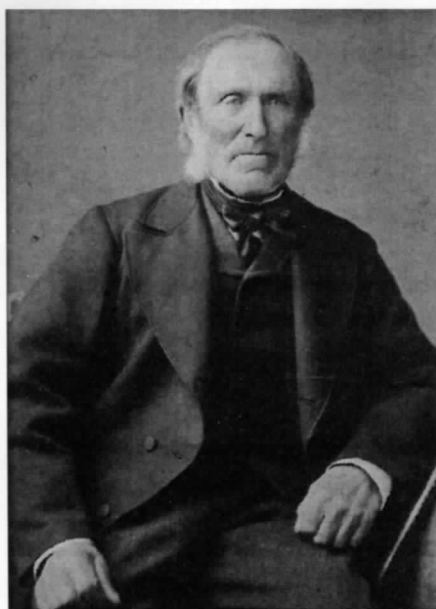
When Iain Maciver contacted me to open this year's Lochs Show he explained the Committee's thinking. They wanted to have me while there were still plenty of people around who could remember my father, Dr Ian Kenneth McIntosh, who was the North Lochs doctor until his passing in 1986. Some of you here today will have been the babies delivered under his care and that of the district nurses, trainee assistants, the practice manager and surgery support staff of the time. Others of you, as he put it in his retirement speech, "will be my babies' babies."

When my father graduated in medicine from Edinburgh University after the war he took a job in the Royal Infirmary of the Yorkshire coalmining town, Doncaster. There he met my mother, Jean Patricia Hancox, who was the nursing sister responsible for the children's ward. Dad was desperate to get back to Scotland. With my mother's full encouragement he took up a position in the North Lochs medical practice in 1960 with Dr Hector Macdonald. I was then four and my sister, Isobel, was three.

We had an interesting island connection because Dad's uncle, James Ewart Purves, had been the superintendent of the Lewis Hospital in the 1920s where he established the surgical ward. To this day one of his patients, Mary Mackenzie, the widow of Sligo, is alive and of bright spirit in Upper Bayble. She told me how, in 1924 when she was two years old, my great uncle had operated on the kitchen table in Callanish on an infection in her neck (probably quinsy) and saved her life. She could even show me the scar all these years later.

Another island connection is that Sandy Matheson tells me his mother always maintained that we are distantly related through Dad's mother. Her grandfather, my great great grandfather, was Murdo MacIannan, seen below, the Free Church precentor at Contin whose old style of Gaelic Psalm singing was written down and appears in the collection published by the German musicologist, Joseph Mainzer. According to Murdo's obituary from 1899, it has been his duty to carry the Bible out of the established church on the Sunday of the Disruption in 1843. His father, whose parents had been evicted from Urray in the notorious Balfour clearances, was said to have been one of "na daoine".

Living in Doncaster Dad had been desperate to return to Scotland because he loved salmon fishing and wanted, as he put it, "to practice real medicine - medicine as both an art and a science." He came to love his patients and they loved him. That is



how I came to be raised within the parish of North Lochs and educated at both Leurbost J.S. School and the Nicolson Institute.

Dad deplored the idea of "a pill for every ill" and prided himself on having a low rate of prescribing drugs. Instead, he'd spend time listening to his patients. With some of the old cailleachs he'd simply drop in once a week and sit awhile and hold their hands. It was probably the best medicine going!

What a privilege it is for me to stand here today! Dad in his time also opened this show. It was forty-three years ago, on 28 August 1971. Here in my hand is a yellowed press cutting of the event taken from the Stornoway Gazette. In those days the big issue was not the Scottish independence Referendum as it is today, but joining Europe. His speech warned of, "Seas emptied and scoured of herring, salmon and white fish; withdrawal of subsidies for cattle, sheep, pasture improvement and homes." On the positive side of the balance sheet he saw hope for the seaweed factory at Keose and the Harris Tweed industry.

In those days the Lochs Show was held at the old Balallan School and I remember it as one of the most exciting days of the summer. There'd be the displays of animals, the sheepdog trials, the judging of vegetables, jam and home baking, and a salmon to guess the weight. For us kids, we'd maybe get a bag of crisps, a bottle of lemonade and best of all, a scoop of Capaldi's ice cream sent down on the bus from Stornoway in a huge silver thermos flask.

Today I'm glad to see that not too much has changed. This time, as an adult, I'm very aware of the huge amount of work put in behind the scenes. There's the year-round work of the committee who are standing with me on this trailer, and I'm also very aware of a whole army of others helping out on the day and serving with generosity and magnificent efficiency

In such ways the Lochs Show has always been an event that brought the whole community together. I've even met an old friend here today who came back from the mainland



specially for this weekend. That's the living heart of the Lochs Show – the spirit of community.

There's a saying, "It takes a whole community to raise a child," and when I think about it, such was the wealth that we were given growing up in this community. Even though our family were incomers who had come to serve in a professional capacity we came to be made to feel profoundly adopted into the community. No matter where I go in the world I take with me a sense that this is home and I love it when people in the villages ask me, "When did you come home?"

Some of you will know from my books and Thought for the Day broadcasts on Radio Scotland that community has been a major theme in my life's work. It is woven through my engagement with land reform, climate change, environmental protection, indigenous people's rights and urban poverty. This community was where I got my original training. Here the word community is not just another term for society. It is an attitude of mind that courses through the social lifeblood.

To press that point further, this is a corner of the world that carries values as profound as any I've encountered elsewhere on earth. I think that most of us here can intuit the depth from which those values derive. While it is true that our churches today are of many scattered denominations, underlying them all

in their various struggles re-mains a lifeline to the Bible's three most important words: "God is love." It means that community here touches on a sense of being "members one of another."

My father once said to me: "The most important thing is kindness." Kindness was the currency of the community in which I grew up. Even to this day I see its vaults refilling from within. That is beauty to behold; an amazing reality to experience.

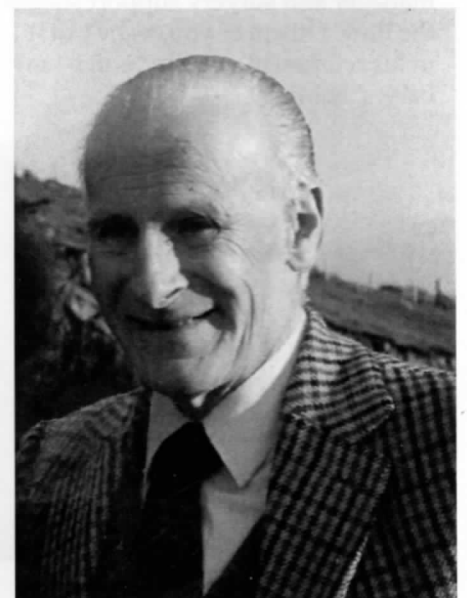
When Dad lay dying from lung cancer in 1986 he wrote a letter to one of his patients, Joan Macdonald, (*our Vice Chairperson*) the daughter of Mary Macdonald of Balallan, who was one of his District Nurses. With her kind permission I quote from it: "As far as I am concerned, however long or short a time is left to me is in His Hands. His loving-kindness to me in this world has been extreme and I have no fears but that it continues from Everlasting to Everlasting, I look to my future with total confidence."

Some of the last words I remember from my father were that he had finally come to understand the expression, "to rest upon a bed of prayer." He said: "I feel as if my patients are supporting me upon a bed of prayer." There we glimpse the inner depths of this community. Such are the values that each one of us is invited to carry out into a wider and fragmented world. An

agricultural show like this is about much more than just its outer face - the display of rural skills and produce. At an inner level, its spiritual level, we experience here an honouring and appreciation of the earth "and all that it contains."

The community itself rests upon a bed of prayer that finds expression in "the works of creation and providence." It calls on us to live not just any old life, but promised "life more abundantly."

After all these years that is what I have learned from having been raised in the parish of Lochs. Such is the message that I will carry from today, from so many of these people today, out into the wider world.



Chairperson's Foreword

As we come to the end of another year it gives us the opportunity to reflect on a very busy year. A year in which much has been achieved, new opportunities and challenges have arisen and as always much remains to be done. None of this would be achieved without the support and contribution of the Kinloch community and the volunteers who gave of their time and talents throughout the year so willingly. To you all we say a heartfelt thank you.

I would like to mention some of the highlights through the year. Firstly for me it was a joy to see young people involved in the activities whether employed in the cafe, updating and sharing new information on Facebook or visiting the World War One exhibition.

On a more personal note the chance to revisit Bhalamus after so many years, brought back many happy memories and it was great to see others, especially the Mackenzie family, enjoying a similar experience.

On the heritage side a variety of different projects are ongoing,

but the fruits of many months' research and work came to fruition with the opening of the WW1 exhibition at the end of August.

The exhibition has been greatly enhanced by the private collection of Ken Earle Mitchell, to whom we are indebted for kindly lending us his collection of military uniforms and memorabilia to go along side our own research and collection.

The many positive comments and the number of visitors were a testimony to the interest and quality of the exhibition and we look forward to building on that with another exhibition dedicated to those who came back from the war. Although this exhibition is two years away the research has already started, and we would welcome any information on and military memorabilia relating to service personnel who survived the war.

In conclusion I would encourage anyone with any thoughts on future projects or exhibitions to get in touch. We would also be keen to support school or student projects that could be of mutual benefit.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

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BALALLAN CHARITY SHOP

SHOP HOURS

From 3 December 2014 the opening hours for the charity shop are changing to:

WEDNESDAY 1-3pm

THURSDAY 1-3pm

SATURDAY 11am - 3pm

We hope that this will be of help to some of our visitors and regret any inconvenience caused to others. We look forward to welcoming new and returning customers.

FESTIVE BREAK

Shop closes for the festive break on Thursday 18th December and reopens on Wednesday 7th January 2015. We take this opportunity to thank our local communities for the continuing support you have given this venture and wish you all a happy, safe and restful season.

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