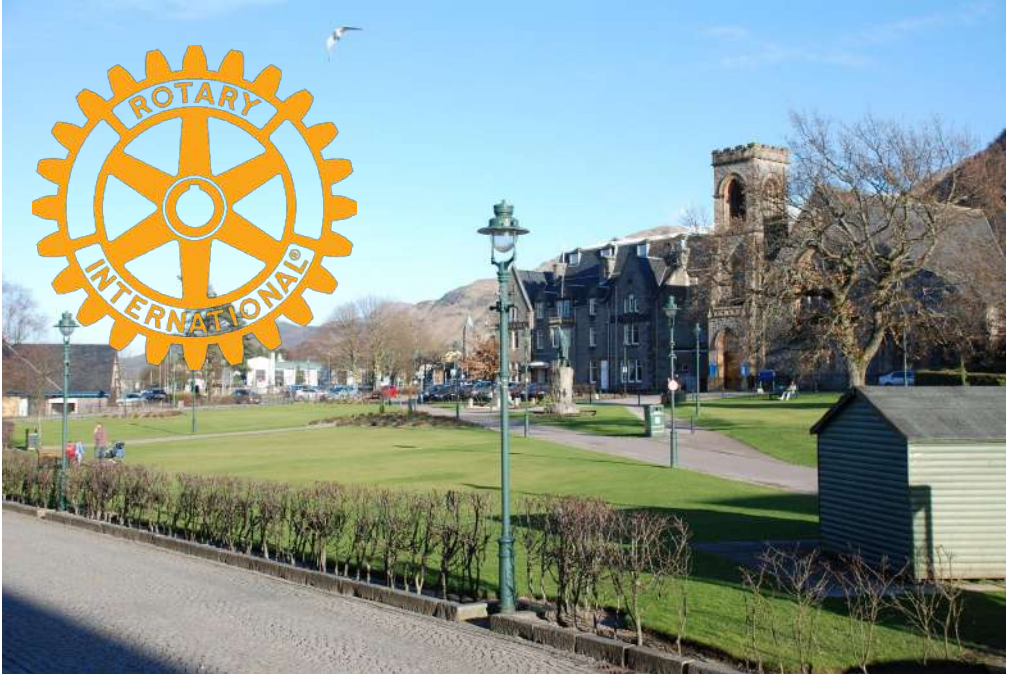


Rotary Club of Lochaber



“Service Above Self”

Seventy-fifth Anniversary
1950 - 2025



Donald Reid



John Stafford



Finlay Finlayson



Back: John Harvey, Robbie Robertson, John Rosie, Paul Brian, John Goodall and Donald Young.
Middle: John Hutchison, Mike MacGruer, George Bruce, David Mee and Anthony Jones.
Front: Sheena Fraser, Simon Hardiman, Iain Johnston, Malcolm MacRaild, Flora McKie and Ron Gretton.



Ken Johnston



Douglas Cairns



Donald
McCorkindale



Alan Kirk

Rotary Club of Lochaber – May 2025

Message from the President

When I look through the names of my predecessors, I recognise many and some would have been known to my parents and grandparents too. It is my privilege to have served as President in this anniversary year.

The professions of our past presidents are many and varied, though none have a railway connection, which is surprising given its importance to the development of Lochaber. That privilege falls to me since the railway has permeated through my family since its earliest days. With the Mallaig line running through the foot of the family croft, I never imagined that a wee boy born on Locheilside would become president of the Rotary Club, yet here I am!

While thanking and commending my predecessors, I wish my successors good fortune in the future.



Malcolm MacRaild

Seventy-fifth President

CONTENTS

Message from the President	1	Past-Presidents – Pen Portraits	14
Historical Update	2	Current Members	23
Our Charter 1950	11	Honorary Members	23
Inaugural Dinner 1949	12	Paul Harris Fellows	23
Founders Link – Faye Steel Letter	13	Roll of Secretaries	23
Silver Box	13	Roll of Club Presidents	24

Compiled by Rotarian John Hutchison with help and support from colleagues.

The History of Lochaber Rotary Club – continued...

“Rotary came fairly late to Lochaber. Before the war, Fort William was a smallish town and, in spite of the railway, was still remote from the larger centres of population...

The war brought an influx of population and, with it, increased prosperity to the town and this tended to continue after the hostilities ended. At the same time, the fairly rigid pre-war class structure was breaking up. The shared hardships had made people more aware of and concerned about the welfare of their neighbours, not only in a local but also in a wider sense...

In this climate of benevolence and international altruism, coupled with material prosperity, it was really only to be expected that Rotary would become increasingly appealing...

On July 1st 1949, sixteen good men and true met together in the Grand Hotel and decided that they would try to form a Rotary Club.”

Thus started Bruce Tulloch’s excellent, ‘History of the Rotary Club of Lochaber, 1949 – 1996’.

In early 2025, Club Council decided to update that first history of the Club and also the impressive 50th Anniversary booklet from 2000, which contained several documents relating to our founding. This booklet is the result.

Perhaps the most visible change in the Club in the past 25 years has been the move to the Alexandra Hotel. Most unfortunately, the building adjacent to our former home, the Grand Hotel, namely MacTavish's Kitchens, caught fire in June 2006 which spread westwards to the Hotel and eastwards to the West Coast Leisure premises. The Grand Hotel finally closed in 2007 and was eventually demolished in 2011. Built in 1937, The Grand hosted senior officers of 'HMS Saint Christopher', the training base for motor torpedo boats in Loch Linnhe during the Second World War, earning its place in history.

After that tragedy, we were welcomed to the Alexandra Hotel, owned by the Milton Hotel Group at that time, from which Ian and Alan Milton were members of the Club. Latterly, the 'Alex' has been owned by Strathmore Hotels.

Our Rotary District number 123, eventually 1230, was easily remembered but 2023 saw the merger of Districts 1230 and 1010 to form South of Scotland District 1320. Being on the geographical fringe of each of these districts, this change had little practical effect on the Lochaber Club since travelling to meetings has always proven a barrier to our engagement. North of Scotland District 1020 remained unchanged.

Various initiatives have supported fellowship within the Club. Innovations such as the annual 'President's outing' to places like Inverie and Rum, and walking and cycling trips have taken place, though 10-pin bowling at the Nevis Centre seems to have become the most sustainable of these, where the Club has entered two teams to a local league. Apart from ongoing inter-team rivalry and banter within the Club, no league success has so far been reported, though Rotarian Ron Gretton boasts the highest score over one season!

Much fun was had at 'safari suppers' where Rotarians and partners enjoyed dinner and hospitality at three different houses for starter, main course and pudding, sitting down with a different group each time, often ending at the president's house for a good hòro-gheallaidh! Drams were partaken. One year, Angus Nicolson and his host lamented the clash of the safari supper with the Six-Nations rugby tournament but you can imagine Angus' delight on learning that the group would sit with their main course on a tray to watch the game on the television! John and Sheila Goodall were the safari supper organisers but recently Club numbers haven't been sufficient to sustain a rota, more's the pity.

Notwithstanding having had fun, we try to ensure that the Rotary motto of 'Service Above Self' remains strong and central to our endeavours.

One enjoyable and effective service project had to stop following the closure of Glencoe Hospital and the opening of the MacKintosh Centre in Mallaig. When relatives living in the Mallaig and Arisaig areas wanted to visit those in Glencoe Hospital, they would travel by train to Fort William where, by rota, a Rotarian drove them to Glencoe: good, practical assistance.

An equally visible change in the Club over the past 25 years has been the reduction in members which, with the increasing average age, has meant that the Club has become less active. This has caused serious difficulty in organising certain community events but, more recently, Club Council has endeavoured to support other organisations' activities as a means of making the Club more visible in the community, with the hope of some reciprocal benefit.

Bruce Tulloch's 1996 history reported on various discussions regarding inviting women members, his conclusion being a vote when the idea was 'soundly rejected *nem con*'. Leading up to the vote, Bruce sparred with Hector Maclean, each presenting the arguments, for and against. Every few years thereafter, votes were taken, culminating in 2007, during Ron Gretton's presidency, when women were finally to be admitted. Two members remained against, not contesting the principle of women members *per se* but believing that the opportunity for men to meet together was valuable and should be retained. The first woman, Colleen Barker, was admitted in 2008 and, as they say, the rest is history! The traditional Ladies Lunch, arranged on the Wednesday closest to Valentine's Day, was changed to 'Partners' Lunch' in 2010.

As mentioned in the first history, from time-to-time Rotary District has tried to generate interest in Inner Wheel but there have been no takers here, though there are now 21 such clubs in our new District. Perhaps as an alternative, some Rotarians' wives started to meet monthly when we were based in the Grand Hotel, rapidly coining the name, 'The Grand Ladies' and, on transferring to the Alexandra Hotel with the Club, morphed into the 'Alex Angels'. Although to reflect the admission of women to Rotary, the 'Angels' could be open to their partners, that bold step has not yet been taken by any of the men! Their recent move to the Larder Café in the Highland Soap Factory Visitor Centre has led, given their propensity for alliteration, to the name 'Larder Ladies'!

Recruitment has become progressively challenging in Rotary with a reduction in members. At one time, a gentle approach was made to foster a club in Mallaig/Arisaig but the prime movers in that area who would naturally have been interested in Rotary seemed committed with other community activities. Perhaps the recent concept of satellite clubs may offer possibilities. Consequently, the number in the Club has reduced steadily, from 48 at the time of the 1996 History to 37 before Covid, dropping to 24 today.

The traditional 'lunch break' in workplaces has all but disappeared which has made it very difficult for prospective members, mostly senior in their businesses or organisations, to take an hour and a half off in the middle of the day. One unfortunate result has been that Lochaber Rotary no longer spans across the business community as it once did. Challenging the Club at its charter night in 2009, speaker Lesley Riddoch said; "You are the people who can change Fort William High Street, so what are you going to do about it?" That degree of direct influence seems no longer possible.

By contrast, while it was reported that the Club was active in civic issues in its early days, complaining about the traffic in the High Street and the like, such eagerness to become involved seems to have tailed off, leaving only moans and groans at table.

To be more attractive to potential new members, around 2008 the Club started evening meetings on the first Wednesday of each month, eventually combining these with meetings of the Club Council, saving office bearers a second evening away from home. However, because numbers attending evening meetings reduced, in May 2025 a vote was taken to revert to solely lunchtime meetings.

Speakers have been traditional in Rotary and while Ian Abernethy served us well as speakers' secretary for many years, nowadays, on three weeks a month by rota, members are obliged either to speak, or to find a speaker. External speakers are accommodated as necessary.

Anyone following through the earlier Club histories will note a reference to Jimmy Savile who had links with Lochaber at one time and had been made a Paul Harris Fellow in view of his assistance with fund-raising for the Belford Hospital and the Highland Games. In the interest of historical accuracy, it should be emphasised that when horrific information emerged soon after his death in 2011, the Club expunged that link immediately.

Our 50th Anniversary booklet mentioned that the Club planned to build a piece of public art to commemorate the Millennium. While plans were being finalised, siting and consents proved difficult and so, as the months went by, Club Council decided to terminate the project.

One of our biggest events over the years was in May 1995 when jointly with Oban Rotary, we booked 'Scotland the What?' Although not a sell-out, there was a very good crowd at the Nevis Centre and the venture enhanced the Club's visibility locally. The much smaller Corran Halls venue was full.

Rotarian David Anderson ran a Club newsletter, 'The Wee Roaty' from 2012, voted the best newsletter in District 1230 for four years in a row. (Reflecting the pronunciation of 'Rotary' in David's native Forfar, a glottal stop replaces the 'r'!) The Club has a bound edition of the first five years' editions. David's writing skills also produced 'Children's Bedtime Stories' in 2017, which proved a significant fundraiser. When David left the Club, Ken Johnston continued to edit a newsletter.

Causing some controversy in 2013, Rotary International changed its emblem. The blue and gold gearwheel was replaced by a gold wheel with 'Rotary' in blue alongside. It's fair to say that Lochaber Rotary moved slowly with the change. Our badges haven't changed, solely the corporate brand.

Lochaber Rotary has played a strong part in hosting exchanges over many decades, whether youth exchanges from across Europe, ambassadorial scholars (Brazil) or Group Study Exchanges (Australia, New Zealand, USA and India). We also sponsored a candidate for GSE to Gujarat, India, albeit unsuccessfully. One of our members, John Hutchison, had been active in hosting over many years and, after retiring, applied unsuccessfully to lead a GSE Team to Canada but was successful in 2012, leading the District 1230 GSE to Ibaraki, Japan, describing it as an utterly unique experience.

Rotary Fellowship Exchange followed GSE, though its intent was quite different, being for Rotarians. Over the years we hosted incoming groups from Calgary (Canada), Gujarat (India) and Wipperfurth-Lindlar/Romerike Berge Rotary Club (Germany). Plans by another group from France collapsed during Covid.

Covid 19 struck Lochaber in early 2020 and face to face meetings were suspended. While the option of online meetings proved insurmountable for

some, around half continued to meet weekly. President Clive Talbot proposed a regular newsletter and Ken Johnston embraced the idea, producing a weekly 'Covid Bulletin', starting on 25th March 2020. Although meeting restrictions were lifted intermittently, the Bulletin reached edition 75, with the last published on 9th September 2021. Retained on the website, the Bulletins offer a valuable insight on members thoughts and activities during Covid.

One benefit of Covid across all areas of community and business life was the familiarity with online meetings allowing a stronger involvement in Rotary District meetings and, specifically, regular connection with honorary member, Faye Steel, widow of one of our founding members, Charlie Steel. Although in the Eastern Time Zone of Canada, nonagenarian Faye connected with us regularly. During her visit in 2022, Faye re-presented the Club with a silver cigarette box which had first been given to Charlie when he left at Christmas 1957, rather grandly engraved with the signatures of members at the time.

Online meetings cannot be mentioned without noting the emergence of social media over the past 20 years. Email, Facebook and the development of the website has changed the way we do business. Rather than following the RI website style we have built our own and it is interesting to note that we have received commendations from District for being different!

Bruce's first history focussed on membership fees and the cost of meals, so the comparable figures at our 75th Anniversary should be recorded. Membership cost £60 in 1995 but is now almost double that. With the £40 cost of Charter Night now engrossed in the annual fee, membership is £155 for single members and £195 for those with partners. Weekly lunch is £10.50 for a main course with tea or coffee, which increases to £15 when a pudding or starter is provided, the former for Partner's Lunch and the latter for haggis, neeps and tatties at Burns Lunch. Occasionally we have a 'Spartan Lunch' of sandwiches when half the charge is returned for Club funds; never a popular arrangement but we hope physiques of Spartan athletes might emerge soon...

Charter Night format has changed over the years from a formal dinner-dance with speaker, settling in the 2020's to a seven-course dinner with sommelier, allowing certain members such as Paul Brian to reveal their knowledge of wine, laced with humour!

Similarly, Burns' Lunch format has altered, from replicating a full supper with, toasts, poems and songs to a simpler format with poems and songs to mark the Immortal Memory.

Questioned several times over the years was the Loyal Toast, traditionally given at the end of the meal. A vote in June 2024 settled the matter and the Toast was discontinued. Similarly controversial was the requirement for duty members to give a Grace before the meal, which practice had earlier been changed to offering a 'thought for the day'; sometimes the thought for the day does indeed end with a Grace.

As with every other part of society, bureaucracy has increased in Rotary. It is now necessary to sign an annual Compliance Statement, confirming that we recognise and apply RIBI's constitution and policies. UK legislation requires us to appoint a protection officer to meet our obligation to safeguard vulnerable groups during our events.

Our biggest event has become the Christmas Festival and Craft Fair, held in late November. While this has a sizeable fund-raising component, it gathers a significant number of the community, with musical entertainment, children's fun, reindeer and Santa's Grotto, giving the opportunity to inspect and purchase Christmas craft gifts. There are around 60 stalls retailing a wide range of food and craft produce. The winners of a children's colouring competition join Santa on his sleigh on the journey from Cameron Square to the Nevis Centre. We have been grateful for handsome donations from our most distant honorary member to bring cheer to the children. Ferguson Transport & Shipping has regularly supported the reindeer and Santa's sleigh, generously broadening their transport interests! All able members take part in the Festival and the professionalism of the day has been underpinned over the years with clear duties for members, partners and helpers; exhausting but great fun. The lead up to Christmas continues with carol-singing in care homes, delivering gifts to residents, and carols in the Belford Hospital.

Another worthwhile seasonal fundraiser has been bag-packing at Morrisons supermarket, certainly lucrative, though difficult to sustain over the many checkouts at our one-time level of three days. Covid stopped bag-packing for a couple of years though this was restored and has become essential part of our fundraising though, at the time of writing, several more self-service

checkouts have been installed, so that valuable fund-raising opportunity is likely to reduce substantially. An AM-AM Golf event in May has been another regular fundraiser, supported generously by sponsors and the golfers. On average, each AM-AM has raised £2,750 and over the 22 years has made available around £62,500 for the local community.

Our fundraising activities take place under our charitable arm, 'The Rotary Club of Lochaber Benevolent Fund', Scottish Charity SC007767.

While Rotarians themselves distributed Christmas parcels at one time, thanks to support from the North British Hotels Trust, these are now financed by the Club but packed and distributed by senior pupils at Lochaber High School. Such links with the high schools are crucial to support our other youth activities.

Over many years the Club has promoted and run the Rotary competitions of Young Writer, Musician, Chef, Photographer and Artist. Local heats have been organised with winners at junior, intermediate and senior level going forward to District and occasionally UK finals. These youth competitions have allowed young folk to build confidence and Lochaber Rotary's efforts have been recognised by commendations from District 1230 and the new District 1320.

Around 2015, the remaining trustees of the 'Kenneth J Macpherson Memorial Trust for Young Musicians of Lochaber', vested the Trust in Rotary for the purpose of administration, and this has proven to be a very useful means of giving benefit to young people in the Lochaber High School catchment area to undergo tuition or training, to advance their skills.

Our first Club history gave exhaustive explanation of the sort of causes and projects supported and that trend has continued. We have also supported individual endeavour, often linked with sport or music. Annual awards have been made to Voluntary Action Lochaber's VOSCARS and the Lochaber Music Festival. Rotary Foundation's Polio Campaign and Shelter Box have also become regular causes for our support. Through District we supported Ukrainian refugees in 2022. In 2014 we attempted to take forward a palliative care centre project in Lilongwe, Malawi, District 9210, in conjunction with one of our members and his wife who had left Lochaber to work there. The challenge of gaining a Rotary Global Grant through District proved unduly protracted, which was a severe disappointment, though we nevertheless supported the project from our own resources.

More successful was our support to Kirriemuir Rotary Club in 2017, towards a project in conjunction with the Rotary Club Himalayan Ghurkas (Kathmandu) to rebuild rural schools following a major earthquake. Lochaber funded the purchase of reusable sanitary packs which were produced by a local charity, employing Nepalese women.

In Fort William we have supported gardening on The Parade and contributed to work on the Peace Monument. Ken Johnston's presidential year (2009/10) focussed on civic works, with a contribution to the A82 Underpass refurbishment, to an improved end of the West Highland Way and welcoming signs at the West End Car Park. We donated a Lochaber Rotary Cup to the National Mòd in 2007 for the winner of the Men's Traditional Gold Medal heat.

Each of our community activities has required a strong team effort, supported by trust, built through years of working together. Individuals have led and come to be associated with specific projects but reliance on the team remains crucial. While historical focus remains on the presidents, our treasurers and secretaries have played pivotal roles and certainly merit our thanks here.

A conservative estimate of the sum raised for charitable causes over our seventy-five-year life might be £400,000, though the actual amount isn't critical since much of our involvement has been in kind and through encouraging others. Lochaber Rotary has always tried to stay close to the heart of the community and to be sensitive to its changing needs.

As we prepare to commemorate the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of our Charter, the silver cake knife, presented to us by the Milton Hotel on our 50th will be pressed into service and we might even break open one of the bottles of Ben Nevis, from a special bottling in Angus Nicolson's year for our 60th – *"Slàinte!"*

As Lochaber Rotary looks to the future, we are aware of different Rotary models emerging; e-Clubs, satellite clubs and direct membership of Rotary. Some of these new models no longer involve face-to-face gatherings but perhaps are more attuned to modern life and its ways of doing business. Online fellowship is now possible with Rotarians anywhere in the World.

We wish our future colleagues well!



This Certifies that the Rotary Club of
Lochaber, Inverness, Scotland

having been duly organized and having agreed, through its officers and members, to be bound by the Constitution and By-Laws of Rotary International, which agreement is evidenced by the acceptance of this certificate, is now a duly admitted member of

Rotary International

Club No. 7557

and is entitled to all the rights and privileges of such membership.

In witness whereof the seal of Rotary International is hereto affixed and the signatures of its officers, duly authorized, are subscribed hereto this ninth day of June Anno Domini 1950.



James H. H. H. H.
President, Rotary International

W. H. H. H.
Secretary, Rotary International

W. H. H. H.
Secretary, Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland

W. H. H. H.
President

W. H. H. H.
Secretary





LOCHABER ROTARY CLUB

INAUGURATION DINNER, 9th. DECEMBER, 1949.

R. Morrison	C. Shaw	W. Walker	A. MacLennan	H. Leishman	J. Cooper	W. Nimmo	R. Wellington	R. Keen	D. Sydes
H. Brimacombe	J. McBean	H. (Edinburgh)	R. Stewart	J. Bollen	W. Proctor	(Glasgow)	(Oban)	(Oban)	J. Dick
J. Spurr	J. Hay	G. Jackson	F. Crichton	A. Macdonald	B. French	C. Carmichael	N. (Oban)	S. Doherty	(Buckingham)
J. Gray	W. Taylor	E. MacKinnon	R. McAllister	D. Jolly	N. Simpson	D. Trench	R. Dow	F. Kitchin	C. Macpherson
(Liverpool)	(Oban)	(Oban)	(Oban)	(Oban)	(Edinburgh)	E. MacGill	A. Blackie	J. Binnie	R. McKeay
						(Buckingham)	(Buckingham)		(Liverpool)
									W. Oulbart

Honorary Member, Faye Steel, is the link to our Founders

Elliot Lake, Ontario

Canada

March 6, 2025

Dear Rotary Club of Lochaber,

Why am I writing to you? Many memories spring to my mind.

The Rotary Club of Lochaber was initiated by two gentlemen; no doubt during an evening spent in the Alexandra Hotel lounge sipping a beer. They were Charlie Steel and George MacPherson. The former was my late husband and the latter his best friend. Community service was instilled into them both and so the Rotary Club was formed, along with 47 other gentlemen. When Charlie and I emigrated to Canada, he carried on in Rotary and attended the initial meeting of the Club here in Elliot Lake. Eventually ladies were able to join Rotary too. I am honoured to be an honorary member of Lochaber and regular member of Elliot Lake. My heart is with Lochaber and I live in Elliot Lake. Now you know why.

Congratulations on your 75th anniversary and my sincere hope that you will go from strength to strength.

Sincerely,



F Steel

Faye Steel



Our Roll of Past Presidents

To gain a complete picture, these pen-portraits of our Past-Presidents must be read in conjunction with the 1949 – 1996 Club History prepared by Bruce Tulloch.

While the identity of other members is less well known, the pen portraits of the presidents offer a glimpse of the Club's broad links into community life over many years. Some held public office, others led the business community and others were better known furth of Lochaber. We honour their contribution to the Club.

We have continued the policy chosen by Bruce Tulloch in that earlier history, namely "to limit these entries to those who have died or have left the Club."

Past-presidents amongst our current members, therefore, happily, do not appear!

ROBERT MICHIE 1967/68

An Aberdeenshire chiel, Bob was manager of the Highland Lime Quarry at Torlundy and owner of the only Bentley in the Club. Inherited from his father, the car was his pride and joy, latterly having an annual outing to keep it ticking over! Unlike many of his generation, Bob embraced computers and was an early devotee of the BBC Micro, developing a stock control system for the Quarry. Although trilby-wearing, waistcoated, Bob could look suitably severe when sitting as an honorary sheriff, he was entertaining company and great fun. Wife Margaret and himself were frequently the dancing stars at Charter Night.

HUGH MACKENZIE 1968/69

Affectionately known as 'Hughie Highland Homespun', given his ownership of a shop of that name at 42 High Street. Hugh was a kindly, generous, kenspeckle character and tended to be the 'ringmaster' of social groups, often centring on the West End Hotel. Hugh was always open for a bit of fun and willingly lent makeshift plaids and bonnets to act out 'Willie Brewed a Peck O' Malt' at the Burns Club. Coincidentally, Hugh was a cousin of our current president, Malcolm MacRaid, who remembers him fondly.

IAN WYNNE 1973/74

Part of a well-established local family, with wife Marion, jocular Ian was the best-known butcher in Fort William High Street, at one time with branches in Oban, Caol and a factory on the Blàr Mòr. Ian ventured into fish at one point when he took advice from your editor's fishmonger mother! Wynne's steak pies, immortalised by Charles Kennedy MP in the House of Commons, formed the centrepiece of many a Ne'er Day Dinner. White and black puddings came from family recipes and Wynne's haggis travelled far and wide. As a young man, Ian won many Highland Dancing medals, competing nationally, which all came to a stop when he joined the Fleet Air Arm in the War. Ian returned from the War with WREN Marion, no doubt having put his skills to good use on the ballroom floor! Ian was father-in-law to Duncan MacPhee, hereinafter, and his son, Tom Wynne, was also a member.

MICK SUTTON 1974/75

Mick's first local business was Caledonian Warehouse in Corpach, a shop with sub post-office. He simultaneously sited a few caravans to the west of the Old Mill at Annat, south of the Icehouse, which land was owned by his mother and eventually bought by Wiggins Teape. In 1963 he and Sheila started and expanded Loch Linnhe Caravan Park at Annat, which is still in the family's ownership. The site at Annat had been established during the Second World War, mainly to house civilian support trades for the motor torpedo boat training base, 'HMS St Christopher'. Mick had been a despatch rider during the War and passed on his love of motorcycles to his son, Chris, who was also an active Club member for many years

ALEX DUNCAN 1977/78

Alex Duncan came to Lochaber to be accountant at SPPM, the Scottish Pulp and Paper Mill at Corpach, later branching out on his own as owner of the Lochailort Inn. Alex was at home in the licensing trade, whereas his wife Phyllis was a much-loved infant mistress at Banavie Primary School. Very much a Macallan man, he ended up in hospital after taking a tumble down the Grand Hotel steps after a Charter Night. Visitors to the Belford left him an impressive collection of miniatures which he displayed on a service duct that acted as a shelf at the head of his bed!

SANDY MACFARLANE 1978/79

A long-serving Rotarian, Sandy was at least a third-generation pharmacist in Fort William High Street, the business being established in 1852. He was the inheritor of the formula and guardian of the patent for 'MIDGIC – works like magic' a product later stolen by a pharmaceutical company which Sandy's forbears sued and won! Sandy became thoroughly involved as a constructive critic of local causes and recognised the service of others in October 2007. Sandy had earlier bought and had bottled a cask of 18-yo Macallan, quietly and generously gifting these as he saw fit. Your editor of this Club history is the privileged owner of bottle 72/258, still intact! Sandy was a one-time resident in the Barn, now part of the West Highland Museum, of which he was an enthusiastic supporter.

JIM McWILLIAM OBE 1979/80

Teaching staff at Lochaber High School spoke fondly of Jim as a far-sighted and fair Rector. Along with Principal Teacher of English, Bob Dick, Jim did much to encourage the debating skills of MP's Fiona O'Donnell and Charles Kennedy. An enthusiastic speaker himself, Jim led many debates with Hector MacLean and Bruce Tulloch, who follow here. Latterly, Jim contributed on the national stage, chairing the Highland Health Board and serving on education-related committees furth of Lochaber and was awarded an OBE for services to education and health. A sociable man and enthusiastic curler he retired to the Portsoy area, from whence he came.

HECTOR MACLEAN 1982/83

Born in Campbeltown, Hector joined the Hydro Electric Board from school and came to Lochaber via Islay and Fort Augustus, to be District Engineer during a period of expansion. Gregarious in the extreme and very good company, Hector was the session clerk in the MacIntosh Memorial Church and active in the Burns Club. 'Raconteur' describes Hector best, someone who could tell a story at the drop of a hat, often drawing from his time on the Bench as JP and Honorary Sheriff. Hector worked at various community projects, particularly championing the development of CCTV, for which he saw the need given his experience on the Bench. He also chaired MS Society Lochaber and the 'Reinstate the Puggy Line' Committee.

BRUCE TULLOCH 1983/84

More a Highland 'Dominie' than long-term headteacher at Inverlochry Primary School, Bruce was a kindly man who knew successive generations and could tease a child about the scholastic achievements and foibles of their mother or father! Bruce tended to see the best in people and was respected as a fair yet firm JP and Honorary Sheriff who could deliver a schoolmasterly homily from the Bench. Often sparring with Jim and Hector above, Bruce was instrumental in founding the Thursday Club, which encouraged aspiring speakers. Bruce was an office bearer in the Duncansburgh Church, which provided another useful 'rivalry' with Hector. Bruce wrote the first history of the Club, 1949 – 1996, setting the style for this booklet.

WILL ADAM 1985/86

Will became senior solicitor with Cuthbert & Hogg in Fort William, two names that appear in the founding annals of the Club. An engaging conversationalist, Will acted regularly for clients on planning issues. Apart from work and family, Will's main contribution to Lochaber was in mountain rescue where he was an active member of the Team for many years. Will left Fort William for Castle Douglas where he continued to practice, becoming active in community and arts issues on retirement.

DAVID DINGWALL 1986/87

Hailing from Kilconquhar in Fife, David took delight in teaching folk the correct pronunciation! David was an accountant by profession and a senior member of the management team at the aluminium smelter. He had a dapper appearance, always well turned out and also held court as the master of ceremonies at boxing club contests in the Croit Anna Hotel. Another curler and full of stories. Along with several other Rotarians, David was an enthusiastic participant in the Thursday Club and encouraging to new members.

RUSS MORGAN 1988/89

Welshman Russ and local Lily Morgan bought and developed the Croit Anna Hotel at Drumarbin and lived at Heron Bay, Coruanan, a couple of miles south. Lily particularly was active in tourism development through the one-time Fort William and Lochaber Tourist Board. In 1985 when a young hump-backed whale became washed up in Loch Linnhe, Russ acted in cahoots with Dr Chris Robinson to facilitate its burial; "I've always fancied a whale at the bottom of the garden!" When the president of the time gave the loyal toast to "The Queen", Russ's *sotto voce*, "God bless her!" could be heard in response. A very long serving Rotarian, Russ eventually went to stay with one of his sons in Badenoch.

DAVID BLAIR 1989/90

A very enthusiastic Rotarian, originally from Perth, David became chief executive of Lochaber District Council and was in office when the District Council supported the development of Nevis Range in which David played a pivotal part. David provided the District Council with strong leadership in challenging times before moving to work at the Rowatt Institute which became part of the University of Aberdeen. David was a keen hill walker and strong swimmer. When he was president we found that he had an extensive list of contacts from which he would invite speakers to the Club.

DAVID ANDERSON 1990/91

From Forfar, David was optometrist in Fort William along with his wife Maureen as dispensing optician. A guitarist and singer, David always played a strong part in entertaining visiting groups whether from overseas or during our link with the Cambuslang Club and he still entertains regularly at Abbeyfield. David edited the Club magazine and website for several years, both of which were highly commended by District. Active in the MacIntosh Memorial Church, David was ordained as auxiliary minister in the Church of Scotland in 1984. David's leaving was a big loss to the Club.

IAN MILTON 1991/92

Ian, with brother and one-time Rotarian Alan, built up and ran a Scottish group of six substantial hotels. Their shoemaker father and tearoom-owner mother initially bought the West End Hotel which they sold to finance the building of the Milton Hotel on North Road, now the Ben Nevis Hotel. The group once owned the Alexandra Hotel and expanded to Oban, Inverness, Stirling and Glasgow. Ian left the area to live in Bridge of Allan but remains chairman of Milton Hotels Limited.

RAY SUTHERLAND 1992/93

As son of a Helmsdale crofter, Ray took a great interest in Highland affairs. Originally a plumber, his business added central heating and eventually, building. For a time Ray ran a branch in Inverness. Along with Sheena he founded Heathercroft Care Home and took a leading part in various community projects, notably memorial benches on the Parade, as a founding director of Nevis Radio and leading the Fort William CCTV scheme with Hector Maclean. Before Rotary, Ray was an enthusiastic member of Round Table.

DUNCAN MACPHEE 1993/ 94

A local man who, on qualifying, joined Cuthbert & Hogg, lawyers in Fort William, in time founding MacPhee and Partners. Mr Cuthbert told Duncan at his interview that if he was found in any drinking establishment in the Fort William area, it would mean instant dismissal. Luckily Duncan played for Lochaber Rugby Club and was able to imbibe while on away match days! Duncan became President of the Rugby Club and, as all his sons were excellent shinty players, was later President of Fort William Shinty Club. Duncan and wife Rosemary were responsible for setting up "Fraser's Field", originally near the Rural Complex, then down at the Fort William Shinty Club pitch at An Aird, in memory of their son Fraser.

ALISTAIR GRANT 1996/97

A well-liked Belford Hospital Manager for 23 years, best described as a gentleman, Alistair had a well-developed knack in asking fellow Rotarians to do things when he was President! Initially planning to become a quantity surveyor on leaving school, he played professional football with Inverness Thistle, then Ross County. At home at inside or outside right, Alistair was versatile in most positions eventually gaining a trial for Cardiff City in the English First Division. He started with the finance side of the Northern Region Hospital Board becoming auditor across the region, arriving at the Belford Hospital in 1975. Alistair and Margaret retired to Culbokie in the Black Isle.

DAVID ROBERTSON 1998/99

David came to Lochaber to manage the Prudential and its staff across the West Highland Area, probably from where he developed his precision. David was disciplined, a well-organised and tidy person. (Your editor avoided parking his car alongside David's!) David and Liz were very good neighbours and had known each other from an early age, growing up on Bute where David learned his sailing and Liz taught dancing. David retired early and kept very fit, with gym, cycling and swimming, skipping Alan Milton's yacht "Pepsi" for a few seasons. David and Liz retired to their native Bute and were a big loss to the Club.

DAVID MACFARLANE 2001/2

One-time Round Tabler, David was a third-generation shop keeper in Spean Bridge. He owned the SPAR shop there and remains the fount of all knowledge about the village, Lochaber Camanachd and the like. He was a distant relative of Sandy MacFarlane, above and his uncle, Donald MacFarlane, was also a Rotarian and chairman of Lochaber District Council. David had an early career serving four years in the Royal Navy, with a claim to fame as stoker on the HMS Ark Royal, before returning home to run the family business. Interested in history and archaeology, David remains a regular volunteer at the West Highland Museum and has been credited for finding the location of the decoy aluminium smelter that was located a couple of miles north of the real factory during the Second World War.

DAVID THOMSON 2004/5

An ocean-going captain in the merchant navy, David attended Hyndland Secondary School in Glasgow, a year apart from Angus Nicolson, below. David was well-respected in the Club because he was dependable and became a friend because he would respect a confidence. He loved music and national culture and was an accomplished fiddler in the Strathspey and Reel Society. When his talented daughter Helen took up the harp, David said, “well I’m never going to be able to have a wee car now!” A district chairman in the Scouts, David was also a trustee of Abbeyfield Home in Ballachulish. David and Ann left the area to live closer to family, retiring to Bridge of Allan.

DUNCAN GILLIES 2007/8

Family man and former Round Tabler, Duncan built up and ran a sizeable paint and decorating business, Duncan Gillies Décor Ltd. As Station Officer, he led the local retained fire service, having been a firefighter for 30 years. Duncan was a champion 10-pin bowler and curler. Always generous with his advice on other projects, Duncan’s ability to move around became severely restricted following a stroke, and his business closed soon after. Although Duncan has left the Club, we are pleased that he remains an honorary member and joins us at events whenever possible.

ANGUS NICOLSON 2010/11

Angus spent his youth in Whiteinch (Glasgow) and in Raasay. A quantity surveyor, he came to Lochaber in the mid-seventies to work for Watson & McGregor and, over the years for B&M Modern Builders, J&F Sweeney and John MacKinnon. Angus was late in joining Rotary but was nevertheless a very active member, working his way through many committees eventually reaching the giddy heights, in his own words, as “El Presidente”. Angus had a brilliant sense of humour. If you were at his table at lunch you were guaranteed to have sore sides laughing. A staunch member and Past-President of Lochaber Rugby Football Club where both of his sons, Ally and Donnie played. His late wife, Donalda, was his strength and when she passed away Angus lost his sparkle for quite some time.

TERRY LEE 2015/16

A multi-linguist, Terry's skills proved invaluable with visitors to the Club. An industrial surveyor by profession, Terry retired from a Scottish Government position covering buildings and associated plant over the Highlands and Islands. An affable character, it was Terry's regular offending that introduced the fine for phones interrupting lunch! Terry and Marilyn retired to Barnstable where is entering his second year as Rotary President.

PAULA ROSS 2016/17

With degrees in marine biology and in coastal management, Paula joined us as manager of the Highland Hotel, moving to the Smelter then Jahama Highland Estates. Joining as Paula Dale, it was lovely to have a wedding in the Club, marrying farrier Ewan Ross. Paula's forte was sourcing children's gifts for the Grotto at the Christmas Festival. We are pleased that she is still linked with us and will assist when she can, particularly with the Grotto.

CLIVE TALBOT 2019/20

An aquaculture research scientist, with international experience of fish biology and fish farming operations, Clive's university links and experience of Rotary elsewhere probably led to his enthusiasm to remove some of the formality of Rotary. He implemented the removal of the committee structure, encouraging project champions, with the expectation that others would step forward to help. Clive was president during the early period of Covid 19 and proposed the Bulletin, ably taken forward by Ken Johnston.

RICHARD BAXTER 2020/21

Richard was minister of Duncansburgh MacIntosh Church which united with Kilmallie to become Fort William Kilmallie. From Northern Ireland and a tax inspector before being ordained, Richard cited Biblical precedence through Apostle Matthew! Richard was a kindly man who played the guitar and participated well in our Burns Lunches. As president during Covid he famously held very few in-person Council meetings though became an expert at offering encouraging messages via Zoom! Richard left to become minister of the Wellington Church in Glasgow.

Current Members

President: Malcolm MacRaid

President-Elect: Iain Johnston

Secretary: Donald Young

Treasurer: Flora McKee

Paul Brian
Finlay Finlayson
Ron Gretton
John Hutchison
Alan Kirk
David Mee
John Rosie

George Bruce
Sheana Fraser
Simon Hardiman
Ken Johnston
Mike MacGruer
Donald Reid
John Stafford

Douglas Cairns
John Goodall
John Harvey
Anthony Jones
Donald McCorkindale
Robbie Robertson

Current Honorary Members

Faye Steel
Alasdair Ferguson

Val McIver
Duncan Gillies

Brian Hume
Ian Abernethy

Paul Harris Fellows

Current:

Sheana Fraser
John Hutchison MBE

Donald Young
Ian Abernethy

Ken Johnston
John Harvey

Past:

Alan Watson
Dr Su Sen MBE

Sandy MacFarlane
Hector Maclean

Bert Bissell MBE
David Maitland

Roll of Secretaries

1949 – 51 Charlie Steel
1951 – 57 William Cuthbert
1957 – 64 Bob Morrison
1964 – 70 William Slater
1970 – 75 Bill McKie

1975 – 77 Jimmy Brown
1977 – 79 Bertie McBride
1979 – 84 Harry MacKenzie
1984 – 86 Dennis Laws
1986 – 88 Bruce Simpson

1988 – 09 John Harvey
2009 – 15 Donald Young
2015 – 18 Geoff Heathcote
2018 – 24 John Harvey
2024 – 25 Donald Young

Roll of Club Presidents

1949 – 51 James MacBean	1975 – 76 Donald Currie	2000 – 01 Alan Kirk
1951 – 52 Farquhar Kitchen	1976 – 77 Charles Cochran	2001 – 02 David MacFarlane
1952 – 53 David Sydie	1977 – 78 Alex Duncan	2002 – 03 Mike MacGruer
1953 – 54 Charlie Steel	1978 – 79 Sandy MacFarlane	2003 – 04 Donald Young
1954 – 55 Charles Connachie	1979 – 80 Jim McWilliam	2004 – 05 David Thomson
1955 – 56 Alan Ribbeck	1980 – 81 Duncan Stewart	2005 – 06 David Mee
1956 – 57 Robert Kean	1981 – 82 Peter MacLennan	2006 – 07 Ron Gretton
1957 – 58 A. K. MacDonald	1982 – 83 Hector MacLean	2007 – 08 Duncan Gillies
1958 – 59 Murdo MacKenzie	1983 – 84 Bruce Tulloch	2008 – 09 John Goodall
1959 – 60 William Cuthbert	1984 – 85 Dan Ryan	2009 – 10 Ken Johnston
1960 – 61 Donald Reid Thomas	1985 – 86 Will Adam	2010 – 11 Angus Nicolson
1961 – 62 Robert Stuart	1986 – 87 David Dingwall	2011 – 12 Paul Brian
1962 – 63 Joe MacPherson	1987 – 88 Dennis Laws	2012 – 13 Sheana Fraser
1963 – 64 John MacLellan	1988 – 89 Russ Morgan	2013 – 14 John Rosie
1964 – 65 John Campbell	1989 – 90 David Blair	2014 – 15 John Harvey
1965 – 66 Andrew Honeyman	1990 – 91 David Anderson	2015 – 16 Terry Lee
1966 – 67 George MacPherson	1991 – 92 Ian Milton	2016 – 17 Paula Ross
1967 – 68 Robert Michie	1992 – 93 Ray Sutherland	2017 – 18 Donald McCorkindale
1968 – 69 Hugh MacKenzie	1993 – 94 Duncan MacPhee	2018 – 19 Iain Johnston
1969 – 70 James Hogg	1994 – 95 John Hutchison	2019 – 20 Clive Talbot
1970 – 71 William MacIntosh	1995 – 96 George Bruce	2020 – 21 Richard Baxter
1971 – 72 William Slater	1996 – 97 Alistair Grant	2021 – 22 Simon Hardiman
1972 – 73 Sandy Kinnear	1997 – 98 Finlay Finlayson	2022 – 23 Simon Hardiman
1973 – 74 Ian Wynne	1998 – 99 David Robertson	2023 – 24 Flora McKee
1974 – 75 Mick Sutton	1999 – 00 John Rosie	2024 – 25 Malcolm MacRaild



CHARTER NIGHT 1975



CHARTER NIGHT 2000

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Admitted 9th June 1950

Recognised for giving 75 years of service, your dedication to
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75
ANNIVERSARY
1950-2025

Eve Conway

RI Director Eve Conway,
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