

EDITOR'S EDIFICATION

Frequently my thoughts turn to how our Clan Society functions. We have a considerable proportion of members who are linked by correspondence because of their isolation, age and circumstance. Others are keen to socialize. Somewhere in between is another function of clan fellowship, and that is hospitality.

For some it is offered easily, while others may be more reserved or find it impractical. Friendship, generosity and hospitality can be expressed in many forms. From sharing company, a cuppa, or our 'castle' we can rediscover an important ingredient in the make-up of our local and world wide Clan Society. Like the woven threads and colours of a tartan, the bond and relationship of the people portrays what its character is.

It is useful to think about, because I believe hospitality and generosity to one another are qualities that strengthen the bonds in a Clan (or family) and stimulates the dynamics of its purpose.

Hospitality is something we all could think more about; like;- what does one offer? What kind of hospitality or generosity, and to whom, when, and how is it offered ?

It has no particular convention, so one can make up what suits at any particular opportunity., but I think once someone embarks on such a course, life is much richer and the clan is stronger.

There are Organisations which function for hospitality and are structured and operated in ways to maximise the experience and minimise the difficulties.

Listening to Alexa describe the blessings of hospitality shared through Friendship Force International (Building Global Goodwill through personal friendships), has encouraged me to express this theme.

How has hospitality changed? Has it become organized into scheduled occasions? Are we too busy to receive visitors? Why do we email instead of telephone ? How much are we at home anyway?

I have been enjoying reading Calum's Road –by Roger Hutcheson, Wakefield Press, South Aust. 2007



Calum MacLeod built a 2km road from Brochel to Arnish on the Isle of Raasay to serve the northern families. It took him half a lifetime with pick, shovel and wheelbarrow. He and his wife were the last residents of the community of Arnish.

One of the background themes in his story (which reveals a lot about small isolated communities and families in the Outer Hebrides) is the old tradition of Visiting. No electricity, Radio, TV entertained the folk through the years, but it was the neighbours, near and far who walked the countryside to visit. Here is an excerpt.



.. "Calum learned, chiefly by word of mouth, chiefly in Gaelic, the recent and ancient histories of his people...His cinema, theatre and television were the legends told by other people at night, in their house or in his . 'This was how time was spent in the winter time', a neighbour and contemporary recalled. 'People going visiting. We used to call it "tighinn a cheilidh a nochd a dh'Arnais" (Coming to visit tonight in Arnish).

'When we were young we looked on the ceilidh as just going visiting and talking and telling stories. Today you look on a ceilidh as singing and playing and whatever you like. But in those days it was a "visiting" that we called it'...

. 'There were competitions amongst boys as to who could make knots, mend nets, and next night perhaps we would go to another house where there would be an old soldier from the First World War and he would entertain us telling how he bayoneted (the enemy), being left-handed, and whatnot. There was a storyteller in each village, if not more'.



Isle of Rona Schoolhouse

Most of us as children probably were thrilled in the experience of going visiting, and especially getting visitors. These were sometimes rarely seen kids who said they were our cousins. Most recognizable likenesses to our family ended with Aunts or Uncles. The kids broke our toys. We, or they, didn't have any sense in the strange house and broke furniture, spilled stuff and got scolded by a glowering, towering, prosecutor of an Aunty, who even knew one's middle name, and would emphasise it in a most punishing, twisted way, as if the public declaration of it would shame one's behaviour.

Perhaps there were other odd adult visitors who were more weird, than our parents. (An important check and balance for kids). Here was another behaviour moderator "Aren't you lucky to have us as parents now ? Hmmm?"



Calum's Road, Isle of Raasay

People who grew up in the country in our generation will remember traveling the cold, vast darkness, except the nearing faint single light that was our welcome; and how the world shrunk into a room's soft light and smells of the Tilley or Hurricane Lamp, and the radiant warmth of the fire.

I wish I could have gone with Calum as a boy and sat in the dim glow by the warm peat fire on a winter's evening, embracing a cup of warmth while my heart pounded at the drama of the stories being told, and have my spirit soaring with the songs and poems of the legends.

'The Visiting' was a mutual hospitality, a generosity among folk in the room. These were proudly independent people but reliant on each other for their humanity. It had a richness so much more than my turning the sausages on the BBQ on a Autumn afternoon. -Alex