

The Traveller's Companion

Martin Petrie

In last year's magazine I wrote about a poem "Angel Hill" written on the S.S. Buenos Ayrean in 1904 and its connection to Kilninver. I was recently made aware and bought the book containing this poem and others by Duncan McIntosh originally from Clachan Seil. These poems, all of a deeply Christian nature, many being written whilst he was tossed around on the high seas, were for family, neighbours and places dear to him around Seil and Kilninver.

Duncan who became chief steward on the S.S. Sicilian and S.S. Metagama with the Canadian Pacific Steamships Ltd had been encouraged by his friends to publish his poetry. Many of the poems are acrostics, one or two to royalty, some to public figures, as well as many to friends and relatives. Some poignant: "Tragedy on the Delaware"; "The Little Girls whose Mother Died at Sea"; and "Pro Patria et le Roy", in remembrance of a young soldier Allan McInnes killed at Loos in September 1915. (His name appears on the Balvicar War Memorial.) It appears there were poems for every occasion. "To a Shepherd of Nether Lorn" was written in 1913, for a prize at the Nether Lorn Cattle Show.

Duncan McIntosh was obviously a deeply religious man who had attended Kilninver Free Church as a youngster and continued to do so on his return visits to Clachan Seil. Little remains of his family home; a small tree grows in among the rubble and brambles very close to the east side of Clachan Bridge. Every poem has been dated and is very often with explanatory notes. The people and places in the 342 pages of poetry range from the Seil and Oban area, to Edinburgh and Glasgow and further to America and Canada. If anyone is interested in tracing a copy of The Traveller's Companion, Pickering and Inglis published this hardback edition in 1924.