



INTERPRETATION

Appendix B: audit of Applecross on-site features

Based on visits to places of interest featured in the current Scenic Walks leaflet - includes some suggestions for its revision



A. Gateways to the Peninsula

Shieldaig/Kinloch junction off A896.

Tornapress junction off A896.

Initial observations

At present signage from these junctions to Applecross indicates 'Applecross X miles'. In reality the Applecross Peninsula begins where the two roads for Applecross leaves the A896. Drivers are already in Applecross as they drive towards the coast, but there is no reinforcement of this.

Signage at these two key junction points focuses purely on driving conditions and potential road closures, a very negative gateway. The signpost towards the coastal road at Tornapress is so badly weathered that it is almost invisible. A plain sign (potentially hand-carved) saying 'Applecross Peninsula' in Gaelic and in English at each entry point, a little way beyond the road signage, would be desirable, as it would begin from the outset to establish Applecross as a distinct peninsula and a community of townships rather than a single village named Applecross which seems to be the source of some friction locally. The style of this sign could be similar to that used for the community filling station. The use of Gaelic on this gateway signage would set the context for the significance of Gaelic within the peninsula, and notably within its placenames.

The current roofed noticeboard at Ardheslaig looks better with its back to the hill than its fellow at the Head of the Bay does against the sea. It could carry a footpaths panel (see also section at the Heritage Centre) which would encourage people to look out for the paths heading off from the Coast Road.

Suggestions for consideration:

- Two hand-carved wooden signs could be installed saying 'The Applecross Peninsula', one at the Tornapress junction and one at the Shieldaig/Kinloch junction or failing that, at the beginning of Applecross Trust lands on the Coast Road
- A new footpaths panel could be installed on existing noticeboard structure at Ardheslaig

B. North Coast Standing stones

Observations:

On the map these are located between Kenmore and Fearnbeg, and at Fearnmore. There may be others too. The 'Druid Stone' has a helpful and freshly-painted sign saying 'That's the Druid Stone' thanks to a local champion. Without it, no-one would know. It's not a very large stone (more of a sitting stone than a standing stone)?

The second stone featured at Fearnmore is in someone's garden and hard to find - so a clear decision of whether or not to feature this in the next leaflet needs to be made.

Even the expertise of the Heritage Centre has so far not managed to come up with chapter and verse on the standing stones of the peninsula, so this is an exciting future research project.

A little more information about standing stones (including perhaps alignments and ley lines?) generally could be carried in the leaflet (these may be many visitors' first experience of standing stones), but the hand-painted sign is still great. Good interpretation does not have to be neat and printed and the more local in feel, the better.

It could be helpful to provide better fencing around the stone with a decent path up to it, and even a composting toilet in the vicinity (see also comments in the main plan, section 9.2).

Suggestions for consideration:

- Encourage further research into the standing stones of the peninsula (via Heritage Centre/Archaeology team), including their deliberate damage/destruction, and produce a downloadable online A4 information sheet (DOIS) about it
- Consider the prehistory of the peninsula as a focus for a future temporary exhibition in the Heritage Centre
- Include only the Druid's Stone on the revised ASW leaflet
- Look at improvement to the presentation of the Druid's Stone, with steps up the bank from the car lay-by and new fencing around the stone allowing a better view
- Include brief details of standing stones and their significance (and mystery) in revised ASW leaflet

Could be included in following itinerary:

- *Who first called Applecross home?*

C. Loch Fada

Observations:

Not currently on ASW leaflet, but someone was fishing there as I drove past and we had a chat. Loch Fada is an easily-accessible loch where people do not need a permit to fish. Campsite staff say it's often asked about.

If people can only fish in the River Applecross by permit or in Milton Loch by agreement with the Angling Society, Loch Fada might be worth marking?

Suggestions for consideration:

- Include in Applecross Fishing DOIS.
- Mark on revised ASW leaflet by name and with a fish symbol

Could be included in the following itineraries:

- *Where can we go to experience wild Applecross?*
- *Where can we get a taste of Applecross?*

D. Lonbain Thatched House and township

This is a very poignant but thoroughly confusing site to visit at present. It is not signed off the main road and even the Lonbain township sign is small and not easy to read. The road drops steeply and crosses a cattle grid, giving a feel of being on private property. We could see Lonbain Thatched House through a closed metal gate to our right alongside a row of ruined crofts.

There was a small noticeboard alongside the gate with some fascinating information on local birdlife – but nothing at all on Lonbain Thatched House. We walked along to the nearest house and asked if we could visit – we would not have felt comfortable doing so otherwise. The friendly inhabitant, a former local stalker, volunteered some interesting information about the last resident, who he told me had died only 20 years previously, adamantly sleeping on a straw mattress to the last. He told me we could visit but asked if I could close the gate after me – this may be an issue with visitors and the reason for so little signage?

The ruins are accessible through a latched gate. Grass around them is grazed by sheep. The house is in a bad way, heather thatch crumbling through age and a window broken.

The National Trust for Scotland now owns this building and needs to develop a management plan for its future conservation/use in consultation with the Applecross Trust and residents of Lonbain (and may already be doing so). Visiting arrangements should be part of this, with the possibility of a lay-by parking on the coast road and a dedicated footpath from there which passes through fields rather than along the Lonbain access road. If this proves

impossible, then clear signage from the road and through the deer gate would be highly desirable, along with a little more interpretation, ideally on the existing noticeboard carrying the bird information, in the leaflet and as a downloadable online information sheet (DOIS).

The interpretation should cover who lived there, how they lived and why the houses fell into disrepair and could be used as a focus for the broader story of crofting in Applecross. Large onsite interpretive panels would spoil the poignancy of this site and should be avoided.

The deer gate could however carry a small panel about the house with a polite request to close the gate to avoid deer getting into residents' gardens.

The house has deteriorated significantly since the current leaflet photograph was taken. It would be advisable to replace it to avoid raising expectations, and an image which included the other ruins would be of interest.

Restoration of a building need not preclude a practical use for it (c.f. the National Trust for Scotland's own highly successful Little Houses Scheme). Romantic ruins do have an appeal but there is a great need for affordable housing in Applecross. Services have already been supplied to adjacent housing and so this would not be as difficult as on a plot of land without neighbouring houses. The future of this little run of ruined crofts could be thought through more broadly than simply as a restoration project – see also comments on Hebridean Barns in K.

Suggestions for consideration:

- Mend glass in LTH window
- Develop a management plan for the future use of Lonbain's ruined crofts which includes the possibility of sympathetic practical restoration for community and/or visitor use
- Assess potential for possible new parking area on coast road and waymarked footpath down to Lonbain
- If this proves non-viable, improve signage to Lonbain Thatched House from coast road and deer gate
- Give parking advice for access in revised ASW leaflet
- Develop a DOIS on Lonbain Township

Could be included in these itineraries:

- *Who first called Applecross home?*
- *What's it like to live and work in Applecross?*

E. The Rock Shelter at Sand Bay

Observations:

Located to the side and above the car park for Sand Bay, this rock shelter gives a vivid feeling of what it would have been like to live by the sea in the times of the first settlers (sea level would have been much higher). A nice understated piece of interpretive design (stone and horizontal organic-shaped panels) is sited to the rear of the car park, the only disadvantage being that a single car parked in the wrong place can obscure it. The path to the Rock Shelter goes through a deceptively squidgy bit of bog which could do with some boarding or (preferably) flat-topped stepping stones.

The Rock Shelter is also a really good way to tell the story of the geomorphologic story of the area – what caused this long ridge of overhanging rock? Part of the 'wild Applecross story'?

In the future, any on-site interpretive structure should carry details of the Applecross website (for DOIS) and the Heritage Centre (for the complete story).

The rock shelter picture in the leaflet fails to do it justice and should be replaced with something more dramatic. The title should also be 'Rock Shelter' rather than 'Rockshelter'.

Adjacent to the Rock Shelter lies and MOD station which controls naval and submarine activities in the MOD range beneath the waves of the Inner Sound. This invisible range plays a significant yet accidental role in the conservation of local fish and seafood stocks and a DOIS exploring this side of Applecross would be of interest to many. Not least because the film crew rendered the MOD station completely invisible when Monty Hall's year-long stay in Applecross was broadcast and this still frequently causes confusion!

The new track back towards the Head of Applecross Bay area begins/ends here and should be clearly indicated, with the path signed from the car park not just from the head of the track.

Suggestions for consideration:

- Revise spelling on ASW leaflet to Rock Shelter
- When interpretive feature requires replacement, ensure it connects to other early Applecross history features and hubs in peninsula (e.g. standing stones, Applecross Heritage Centre)
- Improve path from car park area to Rock Shelter – need stepping stones or board walk across a boggy section
- Include MOD range role in fish stock conservation in Applecross Fishing DOIS
- Include Rock Shelter in DOIS on First Settlers and the Rocks Beneath

- Make clear in revised ASW leaflet that Sand Bay is a wonderful place for young children and families
- Sign new path from car park

Could be included in the following itineraries:

- *Who first called Applecross home?*
- *Where's the best places to explore the sea and shore?*
- *What's it like to live and work here?*

F. Applecross Heritage Centre

Observations:

General

Local people are proud of their Heritage Centre and rightly so as it is an extraordinary achievement for a small community and compares favourably to many Highland heritage centres and small museums. Well-established and respected, it can offer the 'complete story' of many aspects of Applecross Heritage and its collections of oral history recordings, for example, ensure that modern-day heritage is documented for the future. . . Its volunteers were friendly and well-informed.

A Gaelic-speaking Curator has recently been appointed to manage the Heritage Centre and building works have been carried out to provide him with office space, a wise move.

The Heritage Centre's supporters have worked hard to create and run it, and those who were part of that will feel strongly that their efforts should now pay off in terms of visitors through the door

Some simple things will help with this: greater preparation of visitors for their heritage centre visit from the car park onwards, so that they gain a taste of what is to come on the way in would be worth considering. An entrance desk immediately opposite the door can feel unintentionally confrontational, but less so at an angle or off to one side. Many museums in the Highlands are free, and if people comment on the entry charge, it might be good to have a couple of agreed positive responses ready, such as 'do you know our heating bills alone last year were...' or 'we get no (or very little?) council funding...'

Inside

While the Centre's exhibition panels may be a little text-heavy, the writing and content is very high-quality. These panels are a tremendous resource for Applecross, as through them people can find out the detail of almost every Applecross story. The Heritage Centre should be viewed in that way by all - as a terrific library and archive for Applecross stories. The key is making sure that every visitor knows this.

When the time comes for these existing panels to be replaced, an approach which selects the images to illustrate the panels first and only then writes complementary text could pay dividends. This method avoids saying in words what is already portrayed pictorially and does not require additional comment (this also gets round any linguistic barriers). Any interpretive exhibition is also best edited down by someone other than the person who has written the text.

The panels are not currently very child-friendly (hierarchical text is advisable with a short narrative for children going on in parallel to the text for adults would be worth looking at, possibly using a cartoon-style approach).

Some additional entertainment for children (while older people read the interesting panels) would also be highly desirable. For example, a humpback bridge kit in lightweight materials with a keystone (which you can put together then walk over!) would be particularly good for primary-school aged children as they will have driven over several similar bridges during their visit. Externally, perhaps a boat structure or a 'mini-Bealach' trail for children to follow could also attract more visitors and encourage a longer stay time among adults with children, but health and safety regulations would need to be carefully observed.

Outside

The new Heritage Centre Car Park is at present fairly bare, with the Heritage Centre indicated by a small sign up a grassy path. There is no way of telling from the car park whether the Centre is open or closed. With opening hours only from midday, there must be a fair few disappointed journeys up the path and back. An 'open' or 'closed' sign at the path-head would be good in both Gaelic and English.

The car park is also a place where visitors could get a taste of what was to come, or a brief 'potted history' of Applecross to read before a walk at the Head of the Bay. Given that the car parking area feels new and raw, a small series of interpretive panels here around the periphery would be permissible.

Likewise, a Heritage Centre 'timeline' trail along the path towards the heritage centre, asking questions to which there are answers within the Centre ('why did St Maelrubha land here?' or 'what was the impact of the Viking raids on Applecross?'), would set the scene for the visit right from the moment of arrival. These could be carved into rails along the path. These should be appetisers only: the only place where you can get the complete story of any of the strands of Applecross natural and human history should be inside.

The car park itself would be a particularly good place to give a verbal outline of the story of St Maelrubha and Early Christian Applecross, removing pressure on the natural beauty of the Head of the Bay area which has particular issues of visitor pressure (see also Applecross Bay comments below) and also a beautifully-illustrated footpaths map highlighting where people can walk (NB this needs to be more detailed than the current leaflet map base).

The Heritage Centre team and its new Curator will now be busy with their own planning process. Now that the Centre is well-established it may be time to consider a broader role for its team and resources, as a hub from which dispersed activities such as heritage outreach can be developed throughout the community, making new partnership links as a result. The Heritage Centre connects everything and is connected to everything in

Applecross. If the Centre team sends visitors out to sites, the sites and new itineraries planned can also send visitors back to the Heritage Centre.

On the revised ASW Leaflet an internal photograph of the Heritage Centre showing visitors of all ages inside the centre (perhaps shown listening to audio?) would be advantageous. It appears rather small end-on when seen in reality from the car park and this may adversely affect visitor numbers. This might be more appealing than the current photograph of the Clachan Church, which is clearly visible from the road anyway.

Suggestions for consideration:

- Include Heritage Centre curator in all discussions regarding implementation of interpretation in the peninsula
- Create more of an obvious entrance to the Heritage Centre (with opening times) in the new car park area
- This entrance area could have the story of St Maelrubha built into its design, allowing those who come when the Centre is closed (i.e. any morning) some information about this key figure in Applecross history
- This would also be a very good place to show the footpath network – visitors might walk in the morning and return to visit the Centre when it opens at 12
- Develop a question-based timeline trail (wooden carved railings) starting in early times and leading up to the present day as the visitor walks along the path towards the Heritage Centre
- Connect the Heritage Centre more obviously to the Head of the Bay area and all the other sites of interest in the peninsula in any way possible, and notably through use of audio and new online information available through the new Applecross Gateway website
- Encourage the development of temporary interpretive exhibitions on areas of interest highlighted in the plan, notably living and working in Applecross and Applecross prehistory
- Use Heritage Centre expertise to check accuracy of all DOIS
- Archive any long-cut audio recorded for interpretation purposes and images with the Heritage Centre

Consider including in the following itineraries:

- *Who first called Applecross home?*
- *Where can we get a taste of Applecross?*
- *Where's the best places to explore the sea and shore?*
- *What's it like to live and work here?*

- *Who was Maelrubha of Applecross?*
- *Where can we go to experience wild Applecross?*

G. Applecross Bay

Observations:

A road sign proclaims 'Applecross' on the approach to the bay, but more accurately it should say 'Applecross Bay' – see comments in main plan at 10.6.

This area feels like the heart of Applecross to someone who has never seen it before. It is so green after the rocks of the coast road and the heather of the Bealach. Earliest habitation in the area is likely to have been here, where the great productive salmon river reached the cockle-rich sands of the bay (see also comments on Applecross House Policies at Section I).

For many, there is also a feeling of spiritual significance about the Head of the Bay, some inspired purely by the contrast of its sheltered location and natural beauty against the wild rocky hills and shores elsewhere, others by the idea of St Maelrubha having landed there – effectively rendering the green turf of the head of the bay area sacred for many of those interested in the early Church.

These feelings of respect and tradition jar with some modern visitor usage of the Head of the Bay area. Visitors have always camped here and there is no desire to erect barriers to prevent them from doing so. Some local people maintain that there are issues with litter and hygiene surrounding 'wild camping' at the head of the bay, others claim this is an exaggeration and would oppose any limitations imposed. There can of course be no outright prevention as this would contravene SOAC (Scottish Open Access Code). The existing polite yet (we would guess) ineffective sign should be removed and a more tactical approach taken.

Looking at it as an outsider, there is currently more explanation of the road-building programme in the 1970s on site than there is explanation of the Head of the Bay's significance. An ugly wooden noticeboard with little useful function and some unsightly, albeit temporary dumping of materials, does not engender respectful use of the area among others - as it makes it look rather like an area no-one cares about. Nothing could be further from the truth. Some simple remedial work is all it would take to change this: remove the notice-board/seat and do not dump building materials here. Replace this noticeboard/seat (and existing bog-standard wooden picnic tables) by commissioning some really beautiful locally-carved wooden benches which portray pictorially various aspects of the history of the Head of the Bay: early settlers cockle-fishing, St Maelrubha, Viking landings, local families playing, local fishermen putting out a fleet of creels, visitors camping. Site these benches carefully so as to encourage wild camping in a more restricted area of the bay, making sure there is always a broad area of green turf kept clear.

A practical 'wild camping in Applecross' DOIS should be developed which starts by giving visitors directions to the existing campsite (e.g. campsite 1 mile sign on the approach from the Coast Road) and encouraging them to use it (visitors arriving by the coast road may set

up a wild camp without realising there is a well-equipped campsite only a stone's throw away). Areas of the Applecross Peninsula where wild camping is acceptable should be listed, with wild camping best practice highlighted.

Other DOIS and MP3 audio downloads could tell different 'stories from the head of the bay' in brief with encouragement to visit the Heritage Centre for the complete story.

Suggestions for consideration:

- Upgrade Applecross Bay from a sea name to a placename
- Replace road signage on Coast Road from Applecross to Applecross Bay
- Remove any road signage which says just 'Applecross' within the peninsula
- Put in new sign which says 'campsite 1 mile' on Coast Road
- Remove existing noticeboard, benches and signs in Bay area
- Remove any waste building materials dumped there and make good
- Hold bench design workshops with local children and a professional interpretive design facilitator
- Commission series of nine simple wooden interpretive benches (from local craftsmen) on the following topics: first settlers gathering cockles, Viking raiders, St Maelrubha (arrival and burial) x 2, salmon fishing, wildlife and plant life by the sea, Viking raiders, the Applecross/A'Chomraich placename
- Commission DOIS and MP3 audio downloads which match the bench topics
- Commission a 'Wild Camping at Applecross' DOIS which explains the special nature of the Head of the Bay area and offers alternative wild camping sites and good practice in terms of wild camping.
- Install the nine benches in such a way as to limit the potential for camping at the Head of the Bay to specific areas, aiming to keep green turf closest to the sea free of tents/camper vans right the way around the Head of the Bay

Consider including in the following itineraries:

- *Who first called Applecross home?*
- *Where can we get a taste of Applecross?*
- *Where's the best places to explore the sea and shore?*
- *What's it like to live and work here?*
- *Who was Maelrubha of Applecross?*

- *Where can we go to experience wild Applecross?*

H. Clachan Church, Churchyard, Mediaeval Chapel and Holy Well

Observations:

Given its proximity to the Heritage Centre, any interpretive planning for the church and churchyard area should be closely linked to the centre. The Church is currently interpreted by an unobtrusive little interpretive panel in Gaelic and English which is however badly worn. This could be replaced within the context of the Head of the Bay and Heritage Centre Car Park interpretation.

Any future interpretation inside the church should take into account that this is a place of worship, used ecumenically by all churches in the area for burial services for example. All interpretation should be portable (traditional printed bats work well - they can be easily removed for services). The Churchyard is the link between church and community and any connections are worth interpreting: some oral history from older members of the community telling the stories of those families buried in the churchyard would be well worth capturing as an MP3 download (and will doubtless feature within the Heritage Centre team's own planning).

The Mediaeval Chapel is only a fragment of what may have been a larger building, but is the strongest visible connection to St Maelrubha and early Christianity. It does require excavation and interpretation of this process within the sanctity of the churchyard would be advisable. There should be no permanent fixed interpretation in the churchyard other than, if wished by the congregation, a carved interpretive bench. These can be a great practical comfort to the bereaved when visiting the grave of a relative, but could also tell the story of the chapel and St Maelrubha pictorially.

Suggestions for consideration:

- Remove existing interpretive panel
- Interpret the church from the outside with an interpretive bench based on how the church/chapel would have looked here in St Maelrubha's time – include water-gathering at the well. Bench should be located in the graveyard or if this is not acceptable could be placed on the site of the interpretive panel.
- Interpret the church inside using traditional wooden bats with the story of the early church in Applecross up to the present day simply told
- Holy Well once fully restored should be marked on the revised ASW leaflet.
- Audio recordings should be made about the key families interred in the graveyard, available in edited format online and in full archive format from the Heritage Centre.

Consider including in the following itineraries:

- *Who first called Applecross home?*
- *What's it like to live and work here?*
- *Who was Maelrubha of Applecross?*

I. Applecross House Policies

Observations:

Applecross House sits like a pearl in the centre of an emerald green oyster. From the Bealach it catches the eye especially quickly, and may well draw visitors to seek it out. There may be some disappointment that it is not open to the public (the 'Blair Castle' effect), but the wide variety of attractive walks around its policies (lovely Scots word but which will require interpreting for English visitors) makes up for this.

Currently the walks are each seen as an attractive stroll in their own right. With a little more connection between them, they can interpret the Applecross Estate by tying together all its elements both historically and today. It has everything: interesting stories of owner families, salmon river, walled garden, sawmill, kennels, icehouse, reservoir, lime kilns, arboretum, home farm. The reworked Scenic Walks leaflet could first set estate walks within the context of the estate's history and present, then describe them walk by walk. Expanded step-by-step walk route downloads would also be highly desirable.

The Walled Garden with its Potting Shed restaurant is a strong attraction for visitors and local people alike and could be featured in the 'Taste of Applecross' and 'What's it like to Live and Work in Applecross' itineraries.

See also specific comments on Milton Loch, section O.

Suggestions for consideration:

- Promote the Applecross House Policy Walks via the revised ASW leaflet
- Revise the walk routes and content to interpret the Estate and its history as a whole, using the story of the families who owned Applecross as the means of connecting river, hills, walled garden, sawmill, kennels, icehouse, reservoir, lime kilns, arboretum, home farm
- Include the walks online not just as sections of the ASW map but as step by step walking guides (turn left, turn right – the house is not open to the public etc) so that they are clearer and can be more interpretive
- The walks could be woven into the itineraries below so that people are encouraged to leave their cars and stretch their legs
- Develop some form of interpretive seating, possibly involving poetry, within the Walled Garden

Could be included in the following itineraries:

- *Who first called Applecross home?*
- *Where can we get a taste of Applecross?*

- *Where can we go to experience wild Applecross?*

J. Applecross Broch, Campsite and Visitor Centre

Observations:

The broch is on a hillock above the campsite and is hard to find unless you know where to go. It needs to be located on the Scenic Walks map and parking, ideally separate from the campsite car park, established. It may be that this becomes part of a 'broch walk' from the large car park extension to the Inn on Shore Street. This solution would be acceptable for all but less mobile visitors who would in any case struggle to walk up the steepish slope to the broch from the car park. Realistically encouraging parking solely for broch visitors on site is to be discouraged.

The Broch shows well-excavated foundations of a sizable structure. Unusually it has enclosed an earlier souterrain. Much of the stone from the missing upper storeys would have been removed and used to make agricultural buildings nearby.

It would be desirable to have an artist's impression nearby showing the broch in use, possibly linking it to a Viking raid if it connects to the same period. Given the variety of nationalities at the campsite this would get round linguistic obstacles in a highly visual way. One way in which this image could be developed would be in conjunction with children from the local primary school or feeder secondary at Plockton, with them talking to the excavating team and coming up with outline ideas and sketches, then using these to brief a professional artist.

The panel should be located near to but not beside the Broch, placed on the walk approach route (this could connect to the Milton Loch walk).

The Campsite and Flower Tunnel restaurant are often people's destination within Applecross and should be clearly marked on the revised ASW leaflet.

The Visitor Centre (below the Campsite on the main road and managed by the same team) is well located to act as a new hub for visitors to Applecross. It needs to consolidate this role with a supply of maps, leaflets and hard copies of website downloads, as well as becoming the central point for accommodation queries within the peninsula.

One interpretive website for Applecross which is not selling a product or service or linked to any one organisation would be a useful link to all Applecross websites currently in existence or to be developed in the future. It could save a lot of 'reinvention of the wheel', which can be costly, to have high-quality interpretive material such as downloads developed and hosted neutrally for use freely by all. It is likely that the ALPS website could evolve into this role.

Suggestions for consideration:

- Commission a pictorial interpretive panel (mounted on a reveted stone plinth) to locate above the Broch which gives a good idea of how the Broch may have been used. Use a big well-drawn image with labels rather than masses of text with a smaller picture.

- Sign the broch from the campsite and the Milton Loch walk
- Commission a DOIS on the Broch
- Work with Visitor Centre team on development of community interpretive website possibly out of ALPS website

Consider including in the following itineraries:

- *Who first called Applecross home?*
- *Where can we get a taste of Applecross?*
- *What's it like to live and work here?*

K. Hebridean Barns

Observations:

At a guess, much of the Broch stone would have been reworked for use in these two impressive structures which would once have been thatched. One contains a silage pit (silage is no longer made using the pit method). This is now understandably used as a handy place to dry washing on a wet day in spite of the 'danger no access' sign on the outside wall. The other is roofless but has a hard floor which many remember fondly as a dancing venue.

Local people have shared some interesting views on the restoration of these barns, best summed up by 'we should be forward-looking as well as backwards looking.' No-one wished to see the barns restored as a dancing venue, as the community hall has firmly taken its place and is a great deal larger and warmer.

Are ancient methods of making silage really sufficiently interesting to justify complete restoration of the Hebridean Barns to a useable condition as a farm building? Or would it be feasible to consider one or both these barns as a possible restoration project for interpretation purposes, affordable housing – or even as a dormitory-style extension to the campsite accommodation?

They had heather roofs and maintaining those on an empty building open to the elements is a hard job, as can be seen at Lonbain. Original features could be maintained as part of the restoration. The barns' past could be interpreted through an interpretive bench nearby on the walking route, while a present reincarnation as much-needed accommodation could also be celebrated.

See also comments on Lonbain Thatched House in D. and Carnoch Roundhouse below in M.

Suggestions for consideration:

- Consider a practical restoration of the Hebridean Barns as an interpretation hub, community use buildings, ensuring that roof supports and roof are still clearly visible

- Commission a Hebridean barn interpretive bench on the Milton Loch walk to interpret their past

Consider including in the following itineraries:

- *Who first called Applecross home?*
- *What's it like to live and work here?*

L. Carnoch Wood

Observations:

Local primary school children cited Carnoch Wood as one of their favourite places and here and there you can see evidence of their dens in these lovely woods where primarily hazel trees grow, with a few other native hardwoods such as hawthorn, oak and ash. So many children elsewhere have had the right to play in the woods stolen from them by fear, and it is good to see this.

This wood has a cushioned feel with deep moss carpeting the trees which are in turn festooned with lungwort. There is a rich wood-floor spring flora which includes bluebells, primroses and stitchwort, and deer are often seen here.

This blissful spot needs no interpretation at all, unless an interpretive bench (on the many uses of hazel) were desirable at the junction between Torgarve Wood and Carnoch Wood (some may find the pull up the slope tiring and be grateful for somewhere to sit down).

The Milton Walk could follow this track route until it joins the Torgarve Wood plantation but something has gone amiss with the signage here and the sign points through the campsite rather than up the track through the gate above the campsite: the two routes (one through the campsite, one through Torgarve) can cause confusion. If the route is to go this way (and many walkers will welcome a cuppa in the Flower Tunnel) it will need better definition, leading them up the slope to the Broch and then back on to the track above it through the woods.

Suggestions for consideration:

- Commission an interpretive bench (themed on the uses of hazel) for the junction between Torgarve Wood and Carnoch Wood
- Reassess route of Milton Loch Walk through camp site and wood in the light of broch restoration
- Commission DOIS on the history and science of Carnoch Wood

Consider including in the following itineraries:

- *Who first called Applecross home?*
- *Where can we get a taste of Applecross?*
- *Where can we go to experience wild Applecross?*

M. Carnoch Roundhouse Project

Observations:

It is not just the children who like to build 'housies' in the woods, thank goodness. The small round earthen base of the roundhouse just on the corner of Carnoch Woods above the Broch is a local experimental archaeology project by the local Crafts and Walks Group. The reconstruction of the hut will be fascinating for those involved and it will look in keeping with the background environment.

While its construction will be an enjoyable challenge, a practical management plan for the roundhouse needs to be worked out, ideally prior to its construction. Local children will enjoy going there as part of a local studies class or for storytelling sessions I am sure, but the number of days when they can do this will be limited. It is not on the doorstep of the school either and so transport would be required. The distances involved would rule out its easy or frequent use by other schools.

If schools come there and a fire is lit as has been discussed, there is a strong likelihood that children might return in their own time and want to do the same thing. Access when unused needs thinking through, and while a padlocked hut would be undesirable, a hazel hurdle fence around the hut with one hurdle which could be lifted in and out of the ground to allow access when in use might limit any (often unintentional) damage.

General access to the hut should be considered within the management plan, including whether or not the hut is to be linked into the other elements of the Milton Walk.

Other than the danger to humans, fire could cause irreparable damage to the hazel wood during a dry spell and so some kind of code of conduct might be advisable within the management plan for fire-lighting.

Given its proximity to the campsite and the close links of the campsite team to archaeology in Applecross, requests to stay overnight in the roundhouse will soon start to come in. Again, this needs to be addressed in detail in the management plan, with a DOIS available.

Suggestions for consideration:

- Involve as many people within the community as possible in the creation and presentation of the roundhouse
- Assess need for protective enclosure before construction is complete (hurdles?)
- Develop a management plan for future usage of the roundhouse
- Document its construction and use in a DOIS

Consider including in the following itineraries:

- *Who first called Applecross home?*
- *Where can we get a taste of Applecross?*

N. The Street (Shore Street), the Applecross Inn and the Visitor Centre

Observations:

Many visitors and some more recent incomers think that 'The Street (also latterly called Shore Street, mainly by visitors) is Applecross and refer to it as such. This will have built up, quite understandably, around the prestige of the Applecross Inn, one of the most famous pub-restaurants in Scotland (see also comments on Applecross and eating and Applecross and seafood in the man plan) which would ideally be marked on the revised ASW leaflet.

The bulk of people who were either brought up here or who are long-term residents however appear to feel strongly that they live on the Applecross Peninsula – and that there is no such place as Applecross village.

You can take two views of this: that the 'village' tag is an acceptable evolution in the light of the focus of facilities in and around Shore Street, or that 'Applecross Village' is one step too far from the origins of Applecross. I would tend to support the latter purely because it spreads the benefits of being part of Applecross evenly across all the townships.

The Street, although not officially a township, is perceived as the 'centre' of Applecross by many visitors and some local people. It is the location of the community-owned petrol pumps. Until recently The Street was also the location of the only shop on the peninsula. Now this building has become a 'Visitor Centre' managed by the campsite and while it has not yet quite found its feet it could play a very useful role in a more itinerary-based approach to visiting within the peninsula (see recommendations for itinerary-based visiting main plan section 6).

With the shop in Camusteel, visitors are more encouraged to visit the south of the peninsula and as they continue will see the school, the village hall and playground on the road to

Toscaig, from where a hike to Uags or Airigh Drishaig can be enjoyed. Meanwhile, the community needs to support the new Visitor Centre and explore its potential as a visitor hub.

While some may choose to see The Street as Applecross with the Head of the Bay its village green, this presents a very un-Highland view of a very Highland area of townships. The new Scenic Walks leaflet should show 'Applecross Peninsula' across the centre of the map. The word Applecross should be removed from immediately above Shore Street on the map.

To cover any risk of visitor confusion, all three Applecross eateries: the Potting Shed, Flower Tunnel and the Applecross Inn should be clearly marked and named on the map and should feature in the first three itineraries listed below. Applecross Bay should also be marked as a placename (rather than in blue as at present) on the main map and the inset box map as 'the head of the bay' is referred to frequently in terms of land as well as sea. This is only a slight re-emphasis but will please many and will do much to communicate Applecross as a community of townships - rather than presenting Applecross as a 'tranquil village', as the Spring 2011 local Holiday Guide to Wester Ross puts it. Even the Applecross Walks website (www.applecrosswalks.org.uk) has an image captioned 'Applecross Village from Milton'. There needs to be some consistency in this.

See also comments on gateways to the peninsula in A.

Suggestions for consideration:

- Ensure revised ASW leaflet shows Applecross Bay and the Applecross peninsula as names but does not refer to Shore Street as Applecross
- Ensure revised ASW leaflet clearly marks the locations of the three Applecross 'eateries': the Applecross Inn, the Flower Tunnel and the Potting Shed
- Encourage Visitor Centre team to offer itineraries and hard copies of all DOIS to visitors who need them

Consider including in the following itineraries:

- *Who first called Applecross home?*
- *Where can we get a taste of Applecross?*
- *Where's the best places to explore the sea and shore?*
- *What's it like to live and work here?*

O. Milton Loch (Loch a' Mhuilinn)

Observations:

This beautiful loch situated on the road south beyond Shore Street is either glimpsed from the car windscreen (but lack of parking makes it tricky to stop without using a passing place) or is better explored on foot.

A small basic wooden bird hide allows good viewing of any birds on the loch. The forthcoming species lists and management plan will be a great asset to future interpretation of the Loch. The environment of the loch is particularly interesting on with a good range and balance of fish, pondlife and plantlife, including very beautiful waterlilies.

Interpretation could be done subtly, carving the rails and slats of the walk down towards the birdhide with some of the species to be found in and around the Loch.

DOIS can be written on the life cycle of Milton Loch, focussing especially on species to look out for in spring and autumn. Audio recordings of birdsong and other natural sounds associated with Milton Loch could be of interest, plus birdwatcher observations.

The nearest hamlet is called Milltown, although many call it Milton. The loch's name in Gaelic is Loch a' Mhuilinn, a lovely and useful link straight into other Indo-European languages (French *moulin*, Italian *molino*) showing that although Gaelic spelling is often challenging, many of its linguistic roots are identical to those of other countries.

Suggestions for consideration:

- Give the loch name in Gaelic first and English second on the ASW leaflet and wherever else possible
- Call the walk the Loch a'Mhuilinn Walk rather than the Milton Loch walk
- Change waymarking to lower, chunkier roundwood markers with an image rather than words, or to rough stone waymarkers (see also section T)
- Encourage local children involved in pond-dipping, monitoring and sampling exercises at the loch to post them as DOIS on the new gateway website
- Audio recordings on site available as downloads

Consider including in the following itinerary

- *Where can we go to experience wild Applecross?*

P. Camusteel

Observations:

The relocated shop and the GP surgery are both located in Camusteel and the community hall is nearby. The shop/PO is a very good local store, based in small premises but jam-packed with useful things. Buying things in the peninsula is one way in which visitors can help the local economy and this should be spelled out for visitors. For this reason the Shop/PO/Community Hall (for craft markets etc) should link to the itineraries below.

Suggestions for consideration:

- Mark the shop location, medical practice and community hall on revised ASW leaflet

- Include the shop in any information circulated to other hubs regarding interpretation
- Encourage visitors to visit the shop and other outlets within the peninsula where they can buy necessities or crafts

Consider including in the following itineraries:

- *Where can we go for a taste of Applecross?*
- *What's it like to live and work here?*

Q. Ard Dhubh, Coilegille and Ardban

Observations:

From the outskirts of the township of Ard Dhubh a path winds down towards the coast and the tiny inhabited townships of Coilegille and Ardban. These are not accessible by car so residents get in and out on foot or by boat. These are medium-length and difficulty footpaths with some steeper sections but the paths are always well defined. The only need for signage is at the junction point where the path splits to the left for Coilegille and to the right for Ardban and an interpretive bench could potentially be located here to allow older visitors (and residents) to pause and reflect on the wildlife or history of this beautiful spot. The path passes ancient hazel woods and field boundaries. The 'coral beach' is marked as being at Ardban but is in fact better seen at Coilegille, where final waymarking northwards could do with some improvement. This might be adjusted in the revised ASW leaflet.

Parking is a headache for these walks as residents park at the trailhead and visitors tend to park there too, or in nearby passing places. Itineraries can encourage visitors to park in the broader parking area on the south Applecross road before the Culduie-Ard Dhubh junction, but this needs resurfacing with some local gravel as it gets very boggy in the wet.

Suggestions for consideration:

- Improve car parking area adjacent to junction for Ard Dhubh
- Commission and install interpretive bench at path junction between Ardban and Coilegille
- Sign Coilegille/Ardban parking area on South Applecross Road to encourage people to use it
- Audio record local people on their recollections and knowledge of the story of the townships and the Hunger Road

Consider including in the following itineraries:

- *Where's the best places to explore the sea and shore?*
- *What's it like to live and work here?*
- *Where can we go to experience wild Applecross?*

R. Toscaig

Observations:

Once Toscaig was a major transport link for Applecross and the ferry used to come in there, but once the road was completed the ferry route ceased. Battleships were secreted in this inlet during the First World War.

The old ferry pier is a large expanse of concrete with a couple of bog-standard FCS picnic tables available. These would be better replaced by something more interpretive, perhaps a carved picnic table shaped like the ferry or a warship?

Pork from Toscaig pigs is now being sold across the Highlands.

From Toscaig two footpaths lead off towards Uags and Airigh Drishaig. A bothy is available at Uags and can be booked free by those hardy enough to brave the path. These are two of the roughest paths in the peninsula and need to be graded accordingly in any literature. Benches are not advised on this kind of route as they would detract from their wildness. Anyone fit enough to tackle them is unlikely to want a bench to sit on.

The parking area for these paths at Toscaig is unclear and a small sign deterring parking is unwelcoming but understandable. Perhaps there needs to be a parking area on the road up towards Toscaig from which people walk?

Suggestions for consideration:

- Replace picnic tables with two interpretive benches (which could be designed in a picnic table format), one of which could interpret the ferry route, the other the red deer and sea eagles seen at Toscaig
- Improve pathhead signage to Uags and Airigh-Drishaig

Consider including in the following itinerary:

- *Where can we go for a taste of Applecross?*
- *Where's the best places to explore the sea and shore?*
- *What's it like to live and work here?*
- *Where can we go to experience wild Applecross?*

S. Bealach na Ba

Observations:

Until 1976, when Princess Margaret unveiled the final section of the Shieldaig to Applecross coastal road (see U), the Bealach had been the primary way in and out of Applecross by land since the construction of the Bealach road in 1822 with the exception of southern coastal routes via Uags. Doubtless people had been walking it as a rough track for centuries

before, but prior to the road construction, the sea would have represented the easiest route in and out of Applecross.

The Bealach is a narrow mountain pass, often compared to an alpine *col*, with a steeper climb on the east side between Fear Bogha and Meall Gorm than on the west side descending into Applecross - but not by much.

Some drivers love it and come to test themselves against its challenges: it is often the focus for formal and informal rallies of motor-cyclists, cars and cyclists, see a classic example at http://www.streetfire.net/video/topgears-greatest-roads-applecross-pass-scotland_689006.htm.

Other less gung-ho drivers arrive in Applecross pale and shaky, staying longer than they had at first intended to recover from their 'ordeal'. It is not a road for the nervous or inexperienced.

Local people sometimes need to drive it twice or even four times daily, weather permitting, and can become frustrated by anti-social driving behaviour of visitors whether through ignorance, nerves or a simple inclination to hog the road. Certainly a DOIS on driving in Applecross is desirable.

Love the drive or hate it, the Bealach na Ba or Pass of the Cattle (formerly known as Bealach nam Bo, cow in the singular) is an unforgettable climb to over 2000' up a series of hairpin bends. In the droving past, cattle fattened on the sweeter lands below would be driven up and through the Bealach and down again to market further south. Those drovers who escorted them were tough men, ready and willing to defend their community's cattle against the elements and predators both human and animal. They survived on their wits, a thick paid, a dram and a supply of oatmeal.

The story of droving is an interesting one but it is not unique to Applecross. What is unique about the Bealach is its construction in the first place and subsequent maintenance. Its narrow bends are defined by highly skilled stonework (known as revetment) which gives a flat faced, often undulating unmortared dry-stone reinforcement to the bends which are susceptible to the frequent adverse weather conditions. Less visible are the culverts leading off the road at an angle, designed to take away the run-off and vulnerable to inexperienced road resurfacing measures. Here and there are even small stone hut-like structures, presumably shelters.

Due to the hair-raising nature of the Bealach drive, few people have the opportunity to admire the handiwork of the revetments and culverts close at hand.

Two parking areas have been cleared at the summit of the Bealach where people have pulled over to catch their breath and take photographs over time. Small clusters of cairns have formed, as everywhere, driven by a desire to mark the achievement of reaching the top. There is little else to mark it. A small poorly-sited toposcope presented by the AA in the 1970s and two concrete-ended urban benches do little to enhance the car parks which can be very full in summer.

A low stone wall, traditionally built and reflecting the techniques used in revetment, surrounding three sides of the car parking spaces would offer a little shelter to motorists

parked up there. In the wall facing the view, one each side, there could be a stone slab (revetted to the ground as a bench) allowing people to sit and look at the view. Facing south east there would be more stone slabs laid in the ground with toposcope features distances and placenames marked in both Gaelic and English, plus the name of the pass.

This is not the place for detailed interpretation: people need to know what they can see in the distance and come away with an understanding of why the road exists. A DOIS on the Bealach's history construction and maintenance could be desirable, which could then flag up the Heritage Centre for those wishing the complete story.

Suggestions for consideration:

- Remove 1970s toposcope and concrete end benches
- Commission design of two stone bench features set within a low retaining wall made of revetted stone, facing south out to sea.
- Install two stone bench features within a low retaining wall made of revetted stone enclosing three sides of each car parking area on the two sides of the road at the Bealach viewpoint

Consider including within these itineraries:

- *Who first called Applecross home?*
- *What's it like to live and work here?*
- *Where can we go to experience wild Applecross?*

S. Coast Road

Applecross people seem strangely ambivalent about the coast road. It allows them virtually year-round access to Lochcarron and beyond but there is still a tendency to express dislike. Some (especially those who live and have businesses along it) describe it as 'lovely and open' – presumably in contrast to the more claustrophobic qualities of the Bealach road. But many others say its undulations make their children feel ill and will do anything to avoid taking it. It is as though there is a tacit, lingering resentment at the intrusion of the coast road on the privacy of Applecross.

The Coast Road has affected the dynamic of visiting Applecross. Visitors are likely to either arrive by the Coast Road and leave by the Bealach, or vice versa. South Applecross may not be quite as visited as it was in the days of the ferry. Whether this is an advantage or a disadvantage depends on whether or not you are running a visitor-orientated business in South Applecross.

The Coast Road winds through or past the townships of Kinloch, Doire Aonar, Inverbain, Kenmore, Arrina, Fearnbeg, Fearnmore, Reaulay, Cuaig, Callakille, Lonbain, Salacher and Sand before reaching Applecross Bay. All these tiny communities have stories to tell, some

still visible in their buildings, like Lonbain Thatched House and the old schoolhouse at Arrina, one of many.

There are two formalised viewpoints and many more informal ones along the coast road. None of these would benefit from anything other than perhaps an interpretive bench giving some idea of what can be seen from there, if that.

The start/end points on the coast road of the Arrina Link path, Beechwood to Sand path and Old North Coast paths between Kenmore and Ardheslaig and Applecross could be better and consistently marked, with an unobtrusive carved wood sign giving an indication at each path-head of direction, length and grade of path.

Recommendations:

- At start/end point of all Coast Road-linked moderate – severe difficulty footpaths have simple carved wooden sign marking destination, distance and grade of path
- Give the Coast Road parity with the Bealach in terms of access to the peninsula

Consider including in the following itineraries:

- *Who first called Applecross home?*
- *Where's the best places to explore the sea and shore?*
- *What's it like to live and work here?*
- *Where can we go to experience wild Applecross?*

T. Footpaths in the peninsula

Observations:

A huge amount of effort is going into creating and improving footpaths in the peninsula as part of the ALPS project. This needs to be reflected in the interpretation for Applecross both in terms of advance/portable information and on-site.

These vary in length and grade from the rocky adventurous hikes from Toscaig to Uags to the gentle strolls around the Applecross House policies and the Head of the Bay area.

Portable/advance information needs to reflect the grade, distance, likely duration and equipment needs of each path.

Some (like the two paths from Toscaig) need waymarking as in places the path is indistinct but this should be done on a sightline basis (i.e. place a waymarker where you can see the next in reasonable visibility, not one rigidly every 20 yards). Others need little waymarking other than where for example a path forks.

Waymarking these paths does not have to be done with a squared wooden FCS style post. Lower, broader, round-topped posts with carved route symbols (see comments on Milton

Loch in O) may be advisable. It might also be possible to use natural rocks – chunks of limestone or sandstone local to the area for example – for waymarkers where it is just a question of following the route without words being required. This would feel less intrusive on the landscape and would encourage people to learn a little about ‘the Rocks Beneath’ in a subtle way. The rocks could be identified in the revised ASW leaflet.

Parking for each walk route would ideally be clearer and marked on the ASW leaflet, especially where it is necessary to walk a little way from the car park to the path head, as at Sand and Ard Dhubh.

Some on-site path panels would also be useful, located at:

- First path-head on Coast Road (Ardheslaig?)
- Heritage Centre Car Park
- Walled Garden Car Park
- Applecross Inn Car Park
- Visitor Centre
- Toscaig

These could all carry the same map and show all routes, but could focus in images and text on different areas of walking (with some overlap):

- First path-head on Coast Road (Ardheslaig?) – Coast Road walking routes
- Heritage Centre Car Park – Head of the Bay walking routes
- Walled Garden Car Park – Applecross House Policies walking routes
- Applecross Inn – Broch/Milton Loch walking route
- Visitor Centre – Central and South Applecross Walking Routes including Coillegille and Ard Ban
- Toscaig – Uags and Airigh-Drishaig walking routes

There should be a strong link to the revised ASW leaflet from these panels, with advice on where to pick on up.

Suggestions for consideration:

- Instal 6 walks panels as outlined above, wooden or reveted stone mounts
- Clarify parking areas which serve different walks and sign between the two where necessary (discreet wooden signage)
- Revise walks details within ASW leaflet and encourage people to drive, park and walk, or ideally to walk from pub/walled garden/B&B etc

Include paths in all relevant itineraries.