



• DORNOCH •  
HERITAGE • SOCIETY



*'125 years of Curling'*  
*talk by*  
*Ian MacKay*

*16<sup>th</sup> February 2006*

Right, well, 125 years of the curling club it was going to be until last night!

I had a phone call from Chris Murray who's in Stornoway but belongs to Dornoch and he told me that his father had been given a pair of curling stones many years ago in Dornoch and Chris took them over to Stornoway. Nobody's ever really had any great interest in them but he'd heard that I was interested in this sort of thing so he gave me a ring and the emailed photos of the stones which I'll pass around. The interesting thing is that these stones are probably 1800 or earlier so there was curling in Dornoch from a very early stage. Although it was going to be 125 years it's actually an awful lot longer.

I thought I would just start off with a bit of the basics of the game. It's played on ice between teams of four players playing two stones each. Of course everybody knows now because they'll be sitting watching it on television every day. Scoring is done by counting how many stones one team has nearer the centre of the circles than the other team. The circles are 12 feet in diameter, the rink is 146 feet in length.

It's now mainly played indoors on man-made ice but used to be played on natural ice on ponds and then later on level concrete surfaces, as the Meadows was for a very short time, albeit it was never very level. It was known as a roaring game from the sound that the stones make, the echo coming off the bottom of the pond. You still get a bit of an echo off an indoor surface. When I was in Canada three years ago the last game we had was in the Granite Club in Toronto which is a massive sports club. The changing room was on the second floor and I heard this noise as we were getting changed for the game, a constant roaring above. I thought we were nowhere near the airport so why were their flights going so close to this place? It turned out that the ice rink was actually on the third floor. The third floor of five so that was the noise of the stones.

For the ice in a pond to be playable it needs to be about five to seven inches deep so we need a week of good hard frost for the ice to be safe. However with a concrete surface you could spray it on a frosty late afternoon at four o'clock and play on it at seven o'clock. It just needs a film of ice on the top but finding a surface that's level enough these days is not possible around here, we haven't got any.

A stone weighs about 44 pounds but basically you never lift it. If you watch them on the Olympics they slide it back. I'm left-handed so I'm just going to use my left hand to slide it back on the ice and then slide forward. I do not actually lift it off the ice. The stones in good condition require very little effort to get them to the other end.



Historylinks Cat No. 2006\_200



Stones sitting on doorsteps are virtually useless for outdoor play because they're pitted and they just don't work. The ice surface needs to be clean. Even when the stone is going fast the sweepers are just in front to gently remove even a hair which has to be kept out of the way. Plus the sweeping keeps it going further and straighter.

Historylinks Cat No. 2006\_119

The stone is given its curl by turning the handle one way or the other as you're releasing it. You've really got to put a curl on it. There's no point in trying to play it straight because it'll pick up a curl of its own and because there are imperfections in the ice which will affect it. Once it starts to turn then it's away and no use. If you put your curl on it, it will tend to stay on the line you want. So it's got to have a bit of handle to make it travel the way you want it and it also means you can curl it around stones that are sitting at the front of the house. You can get in behind it and it's very difficult for somebody to hit it with a bit more weight. It's a game of skill.

Ice surfaces even indoors can vary greatly with weather conditions or the way the ice has been made. If you play on an ice rink that has ice hockey or skating as well, the surface is a softer and it's not so good for curling. That is why you find a lot of curling rinks are purely for curling. Outdoor ice affected by temperature prevailing conditions when the ice was forming and if it's windy then you get ripples. If snow is falling as it's forming then again it's not good ice. The best ice we've ever had outdoors was at Skibo five years ago. It was absolutely perfect ice and we had been asked to go out and play there because they had a party of Americans coming for the weekend and could we show them how to play. Photographs ended up in the Scottish Curler magazine and Skibo's own magazine of the time. It got a lot of publicity but, of course, Skibo wanted as much publicity as they could get.

A curling brush these days is not actually a brush it's a pad which keeps the ice cleaner. A brush can lose hairs and a hair in the ice and the stone just doesn't go as intended. The brush has a sort of swivel head now so that when you go to put it down it goes flat straight away, whereas with the old, fixed head ones you had to make sure you had it right. Whereas these ones now, whatever angle you're coming from it turns to it. Additionally they seem to last quite a long time and keep the ice an awful lot cleaner.

When you're ordering a pair of curling shoes you want a pair of left-handed or right-handed shoes because there is one shoe with a sticky sole and the other one has a cover on it which is sticky but when you're playing you take that off and it's got a Teflon sole. So that's what they slide on when you see them sliding out effortlessly. Once they've played they tend to put the cover back on.

In Dornoch curling was not allowed on a Sunday until 1969 when Alistair Barber raised the question with the council as to whether they could play on a Sunday because the previous two Sundays when the ice had been ideal they just couldn't play. Eventually the council agreed so it's as recently as 1969 when there could be play on a Sunday.

The Dornoch club was formed in 1880. The original minute book which has survived goes from 1880 up to 1927 and within the front cover a secretary at the time has stuck a certificate of admission to the Royal Caledonian Curling Club. Now virtually no other club has got such a Certificate because they've all gone missing, whereas a thoughtful Dornoch Secretary at one time stuck it in the Minute book. It is probably the most rare item we've got in the club. It was going to be one of my retirement tasks to type all the minutes out but I was greatly relieved to find that not many years ago Dr John had actually done it or he's done the first one up in 1927. Historylinks links has a copy and I got a copy.

It's an awful lot easier to go through the typed copy. The first meeting was in 1880 and the subscriptions were fixed at five shillings. Robert Clarke of Achinchanter offered the use of St Michael's Pond for a curling pond but two months later Sullivan Bay Estates offered the use of Loch an Treel and the forester at Loch an Treel offered the use of a shed or the purchase of a shed for 15 shillings which they accepted. At the same time a summer ice curling table and stones made by the Skibo craftsmen were purchased also for 15 shillings. I'd love to see that. I wonder whatever happened to it. The first year's accounts showed income of two pounds five and six and expenditure of two pounds five and ten pounds.

Loch an Treel is still our traditional home but we haven't played there for about 10 years. We could have played at the time we played at Skibo but as we often find the ice can be or the frost can be good for about seven days until you're all geared up to go. We got that one day in Skibo the next day the temperature had risen just slightly and there was a film of water on the top. But we often get to the stage of about four or five days of good frost and everybody's moaning and I'm saying, 'Oh well another two or three days of this'. Like about three weeks ago when it was frosty all week someday we might just make it.



Loch an Treel Historylinks Cat No. 2004\_279

In 1913 the Loch an Treel artificial pond or rink was constructed on meadow land leased from the Duke of Sutherland. Work on the surface commenced in 1913 and they incurred quite a bit of expenditure. At that time of course a lot of the players went off to the war so there was no income for years after that and in 1924 they still had an overdraft of four pounds nine and a penny for the construction of the rink. They had lots of things like dinner dances to try and recoup the money but it took them a long time. The meadows rink was always a problem right from the start because it's low lying and at high tides and poor drainage the surface was always cracking and the weeds were coming through. They were spending more money on it and having meetings to decide whether to give it up or not. They kept repairing it until the 1960s or maybe it was the early 1970s. I'm not sure when the last time it was played on but we scraped it partly clear in the early 1990s and realised that it just wasn't worth it. We'd got a rough costing to do it up and it was £20,000. Although there were grants available we thought it was £20,000 of public money which could be wasted because we weren't going to get enough weather to make it playable very often.

Until 1951 all the club's games were played outdoors dependant on weather conditions. In March 1951 the club was invited to send a team, one of six, representing the north, to play against the south of Scotland at Perth.

The construction of the ice rinks in Aviemore in 1966, long since gone, and Inverness in 1968 marked the end of the reliance on the weather for play so leagues could be organised and curling in the north really took off.

Until the rink in Brora was opened in 1985 the Dornoch club was the only active club in the county. We played with Rothschild at that time but once Brora opened, some clubs that had long since been dormant, got going again. They were basically starting from scratch and were being coached and were soon an awful lot better than we were.

Of course this was a bit annoying. Anybody who's played outdoors just longs for the chance to play outdoors again because playing indoors is routine because you've got your league matches fixed, you go along and you play. Whereas playing outdoors is such an occasion because it happens so rarely. The best chance we have now of ice

is probably in Rogart because it's a bit further away from the sea. It doesn't get the sun for so long and one of the curlers has fields there that tends to have water lying just big enough for a couple of sheets of ice. So we've had a few games there. I've been there once. It's up behind the hotel but it was a day where the temperature was just starting to rise and it wasn't a good, it was just getting damp on the surface.



Historylinks Cat No. 2000\_100

There's a board here of photographs of Bonspiel and Grantown on Spey in I think 1991. The top two are Loch an Treel in 91 and the rest there are December 92 when it was minus 14 but a beautiful day, no wind. Always a bit ashamed of the picnic down there where you can see the bottle of whiskey sticking out of a bag. I'm not in the picture of course because I took it. There is a competition

called the Grand Match which is played outdoors between the north of Scotland and the south of Scotland. 300 teams on each side. So there's a total of 2400 players. So you've really got to have strong ice for that. But it hasn't been played since 1979 and it may never be played again now because of health and safety rules and I think everybody's supposed to wear life jackets. We've started playing the Grand Match indoors now and we've played it in 2000 and in 2005. I think that's the way it's going to continue every five years. In all the ice rinks in Scotland on the same day and it is the biggest team competition in Europe. It's quite an event. We've played in Pitlochry in 2000 and in Elgin in 2005.



Historylinks Cat No. 2003\_254\_002

Going back to 1880 to the beginning, well apart from these stones which mean it probably wasn't the beginning, but the beginning of the club. The club didn't get playable ice for a year after setting themselves up when Golspie were victorious at Loch an Treel and indeed the club didn't actually win a match until 1885, partly due to mild weather. What they did when the ice was playable notices were put up around the town. '*Curling today at 12 o'clock, Loch an Treel*'. Business were closed down. Everybody went out there. In 1886 there's a report of a match being played for a bowl of meal to be given to the poor of parish. Quoting from the minutes, the winter of 1886-87 was all that could be desired for curling and for nearly three months the game was played with much enthusiasm. It must have been a terrible winter if you weren't a curler. So when the notices were up and the curling was going on, food was brought



Historylinks Cat No. 2007\_272

the Sutherland Arms Hotel.

out on a cart specially constructed for the purpose from the Sutherland Arms Hotel at the end of the Dornoch Square. This cart was pulled out by hand. It really was quite an occasion. This carried on right up to the time when Tom Sutherland, who used to take the cart out opened his shop in Castle Street. I think the Historylinks has a piece of china from Loch an Treel with the motif of I've seen it years ago but not heard of it for a long time.

Somebody found it out on the edge of Loch an Treel and that's where it would have come from. It could be 20 years since I heard of this bit of china.

We were lucky enough to have some excellent secretaries over the years who didn't limit themselves to the sort of basic minutes you get now of meetings of most organisations. They just wrote what they felt and reports of matches, extremely biased most of the time! In 1889-90 there was a match for a medal presented to each club by the Royal Caledonian Curling Club to mark its half centenary.

As a pencil note in the minutes, the Jubilee Medal was taken possession of by Mr Kidd, a skip of the winning rink, but although repeatedly requested to return the medal, he has not done it. In January 1894, Golspie club failed to put in an appearance at Loch an Treel to play for the district medal awarded for competition between Dornoch and Golspie clubs. The excuse given by the Golspie club was on account of an annual meeting and dinner taking place on that evening. The Dornoch club declined to claim the medal given the non-appearance of the Golspie club, but desired an expression of opinion of the umpire, whether the excuse offered was satisfactory to him in terms of rule 5 chapter 6 of the RCCC annual. Whereupon the umpire announced that the excuse was not satisfactory and fixed Wednesday next at 12 o'clock for the match to be played at Loch an Treel. A report of the match showed Dornoch lost badly. A mild thaw set in and the Dornoch curlers had very dull stones and were unable to play them the whole length of the rink. The umpire from Lairg, had the rink shortened but not enough. It was not a test of skill between the two clubs, as the opposition had keen stones, by the RCCC rules, the match ought to have been stopped by the umpire. See the rules, chapter 5, section 20. There were regular mentions of umpires. I've never seen an umpire in action, so we must be a bit more honest about things these days.

In 1907 it was noted that there developed during the past season a pleasant and what is believed to be an entirely new feature in the history of our curling club, namely certain Dornoch ladies taking part in the curling and Loch an Treel. The ladies being Mrs. Hackan, Oversteps, Mrs. Barkley, Skelbo, Mrs. Arthur, the Bank House, Miss Robertson, Sutherland Arms Hotel, Miss Davidson and Miss McCallum, two of Dornoch's school teachers, with the addition of Mrs. Menzies Blairich from Rogart. The ladies played wonderfully well and expressed themselves delighted with the game. The ladies don't get much of a mention until about 1923, so they were kept pretty well out of it.

We'll move on to 1969. Arrangements for the match with Golspie at Aviemore were discussed. The secretary intimated that the Golspie club preferred to have a practice match first, with the actual match to count a fortnight later. Also, that before agreeing to travel by bus, they wanted an assurance from the Dornoch club that the bus would leave Aviemore on the return journey, not later than 8.30 p.m. The meeting resolved that they could not agree to these requests, and the secretary was instructed to inform the Golspie club. The outcome of that was that they took separate buses. It was a very snowy day, and in those days the A9 went south via Bonar Bridge and the Golspie bus broke down there. The Dornoch bus came along afterwards, found them and gave them a lift to Aviemore, and they did not leave by 8.30!

The club's minutes give us a lot of details about the members, and at some stages we get their occupations. The first member to pay his annual sub was the Reverend

Donald Grant. John Sutherland, of golf club fame, and practically everyone else in Dornoch was a member by 1884. The first patron and patronesses were Mr and Mrs Sutherland Walker of Skibo, the first president, Provost Fraser, the vice president, Bailey Leslie, and the chaplain was the Reverend Grant. Everybody wanted to be involved in those days. The tradition of having a chaplain only fell away in the 1990s, maybe 1980s, 90s.

Some clubs have bards, and we've never had, but I always reckoned it was a good idea, because the bard does a poem for a particular occasion, and you've got this record then of who was there and their characteristics, summing up the occasion. I just wish we had, but it's always difficult to find somebody who can do that sort of thing. The club we play with in Ross-shire these days celebrated their 150th last year, and they've always had a bard. They still actually have a bard, so they've kept it going for 150 years.



1881, among the new Members were John Grant Flesher, and in 1883 they had 43 members. The Honorary Members by 1885 included J.J. Barrow of Holmeswood Colonel Rennie, V.C., Mr. Gilchrist of Ospisdale and W.J. Sutherland of Skibo.

Colonel William Rennie VC aged 74 b Elgin 1821

Does anybody know if Holmeswood changed its name to Northfield and then to Butterfield? I don't know. Unless he moved from Holmeswood, but it's not a name I've heard, nobody knows. In 1885 he was at Holmeswood, but by 1899 he was at Northfield.

They were very keen on having patrons in those days, but the patrons never seemed to actually put any money into it. The first mention of a lady Patron was Mrs. Sullivan Walker in 1892. Shortly after Mrs. Gilchrist became a patroness in 1894 and His Grace the Duke of Sunderland became a patron, with new Members in 1895 including Arthur Ryle, who was the well known artist and Donald J. Ross, the golf course architect. I hadn't noticed his name before until the other night when I was going through it. He was a member for a few years at the end of the 1890s before he went off to the States. 1897 is the first mention of J. H. Arthur of Arthur and Carmichael Solicitors fame. He became secretary in 1903 and lasted until 1944, secretary and I think even treasurer. In fact, a lot of the minutes were due to him. The file I am passing around has invoices all folded up with a pink ribbon. He did that for every year. All the invoices were folded up and on the outside they were numbered with all relevant detail. All so neat. He was also secretary of Sutherland Curling Association, so whenever there was a joint competition, he did the accounts for that and then he split it out to everybody else, so all the records are still there.

They had lots of games in those days. When the weather was right, they just played game after game and they tried to change the format. They would have councillors against non-town councillors and the losing players had to pay for lunch. The match between the over 35s and the under 35s, included in the under 35s J.H. Arthur, T Currie, who was the golf professional, and A.S. Weir, who would have been of Weir's shop.

1906, the death of the Reverend Donald Grant was recorded. 1907, Dr. Bentick became a member and also chaplain of the club. There were a lot of lady players and lady members in 1923-24, Mrs. Arthur, Mrs. Brenner, Mrs. Forbes, Mrs. McCrone, Mrs. Rubishaw, Mrs. Rose, Mrs. Watson, Mrs. Moyer; a lot of ladies interested. Although he would never have been here in the winter, Andrew Carnegie was a Patron but his death was not recorded. They were usually pretty good at recording deaths, but maybe he'd never been very helpful, so they just didn't bother.

In 1910, they listed all the members and all their occupations, including R.R. Johnson, chemist, H.M. Mackay, solicitor, John Bell Sadler, John Sutherland, accountant, T.D. Currie, golf professional, G.R. Kennedy, Links House, William Grant, carpenter, Reverend Bentick, extending to others including the occupations of road surveyor, butcher, painter, labourer, sheriff clerk, bank agent. It's interesting because it was part of the social history of Dornoch. 1921, At this time T.D. Currie, the golf professional, was leaving Dornoch and he gave the club his best wishes for the future. R.R. Johnson died in 1931 and in 1932 new members included A.J. Macrae, Archibald Andrew, J.A. Wickham, E.W. Bannon and William Skinner (the present William Skinner's father). In 1934, the secretary was asked to convey to the Reverend Bentick an expression of regret on behalf of the members of the club on his compulsory retirement from the Cathedral. So they must all have been quite upset that he was being pushed out. The Reverend Levack became a member a couple of years later so they were always getting their chaplains; the new minister had to be a curler. There was little to report from 1936 up to 1940 and then a gap to 1944 when a number of deaths were recorded, including John Sutherland, Alexander Thomson, John McIntosh (who I think is probably the current John McIntosh's father), and Captain Booker Milburn. J.H. Arthur stepped down as secretary and treasurer that year. He'd first been involved in 1898, so that's 46 years he was involved with the club. Two years later, Mr. Carmichael is mentioned as a member for the first time. So once Mr. Arthur was dropped out he then got his partner in. That was the first time the subscription was raised from the original five shillings to seven and six, so it took them more than 60 years to put it up before the days of inflation. John Grant of Bellevue Castle Street became president in 1948, but he died two years later.

In 1951, players in a match between Dornoch and Lairg included Simon Bain, Robbie Grant, William Grant and Walter Ross. Dr. Alford was playing for Lairg. There are no minutes from 1953 to 1963, at which time the club was activated by W. Grant, Puff Grant, and Ali McKenzie. Ali was the person responsible for the rebirth of the club really, and he kept it going up to 1980, when another surge of enthusiasm took it into the broader ice rink era. Other new members in the mid-1960s were Jack Tawes, Alan McKenzie (Russell's father) and Dr. John. In 1965, Mr. McLean of High Street offered to gift the club three brooms which were to be stamped with his firm's name, an early attempt at sports sponsorship.

In 1968, the Bonspiel held to mark the opening of the Inverness Ice Rink. The club was represented by Ewan Currie, John McKinley, Alan McLeod, and Puff Grant. They were runners-up that day, and their reward was a match against the Scottish champions the following day, who had just come back from finishing runners-up in the World Championships. So they had a tough day the next day. The club became a member of the Ross Province at that time and played in the Ross-shire competitions in Inverness and Aviemore throughout the 70s and up to 1986, when Sutherland

formed their own province. At that stage, then, we became members of the Sutherland Province, but because we'd played in Ross-shire for so long, one of the Ross-shire clubs asked us if we would like to become occasional members of their club. That was 1986, and 20 years on, we're still playing there as occasional members and still in Brora.

In 1980, we held a meeting to see what interest there was in keeping the club going. That's the first time that my name crops up. I'd just come to Dornoch about a year before that, so it just fitted in fine for me. I'd started playing in Inverness in 1975, when we lived there, and amongst those who attended that meeting were Russell McKenzie, John Gunn, Donald Munro, John McIntosh and Jimmy Stephen. Russell became president in 1984, and is still (2006) the president, president for life, I think.

So we currently have one team playing in the Ross Province Top League, and two teams playing in the Sutherland B League, and a number of our older players play in the Ross-shire Seniors. But we also play in other rinks, in Perth and Pitlochry, but Pitlochry's future is very much in doubt, as is Brora's, Elgin's. Next weekend, there's four of us playing in Aberdeen; we don't just play locally.

Three years ago, I was lucky enough to go on a tour of Canada with a Scottish team, which was split into two tours. Half did the east coast of Canada, and I was on the one that did the western half. Our tour started in Winnipeg, which is virtually the middle, and I reckon it must be the place that's furthest from the sea anywhere in the world. Then went through the prairies by bus. That was January, so the temperature was very low, minus 40, and occasionally you would get the wind as well, which made it even worse. But we were on the prairies for about six days and the bus driver couldn't switch the engine off, because if he did, he wouldn't get the engine going again. So the engine ran for six days, and he had to go out during the night just to make sure it was still running. It was nice in the morning when you got onto a warm bus. When we the prairies in Saskatoon it was minus 42, and I flew from there to Vancouver. We got to Vancouver a couple of hours later, when it was plus eight. So a 50-degree difference, and it was like a summer's day, taking off everything then, because it's so warm. The tour involved Vancouver, Vancouver Island, back to Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, then to Thunder Bay, which is away at the top of the lakes. Who's been there? It is the edge of nowhere but it was the most friendly place of the lot, because they were so pleased that we actually took the trouble to go there. It was like coming to this part of the world. You get a great welcome. We had a wonderful time there. We actually had a Burns supper there, and the chef brought in the haggis above his head. Of course it rolled off. Nobody had the camera ready at the time.

So from Thunder Bay down to Toronto and all around that area then and seeing Niagara Falls in January when it's virtually frozen over. Well it was frozen but the water is still flowing underneath it and then frozen for about half a mile down beneath it. We visited 30 ice rinks in 21 days, with 11 flights, 14 different beds, two ferries, seven different buses, and I was quite tired after it - still am! It was a centenary tour.

The first one had been in 1903, and was led by a Reverend Kerr, and when he came back this book was what he produced of his tour. I tried to find a copy of this for about six years, and everywhere I went, no you couldn't get it, and I asked in Leakey's in Inverness, the bookshop there, the second-hand bookshop, and he just laughed. He

said he'd only seen it once in 20 years. But then somebody mentioned a website. I looked, found this one, signed by the author, at a price less than I was expecting to pay for it. So that's where that came from. So that was of the first tour, and this is my one, the centenary one. I don't know how he found time to produce that in less than a year. I think it was about two years later when I finished this one. But I'll give you an indication of what the schedule was like.

*'At this point we'd had 20 games in 12 and a half days so far. One or two people had to sit out games but nothing serious. The schedule for the last day and a half.*

*Up at 4.45am, bus at 5.30, six o'clock check-in at Vancouver airport, seven o'clock flight to Edmonton, 9.30am, after an hour change, arrive in Edmonton, ten o'clock, bus to the hotel, 10.40, arrive at the hotel, 11 o'clock, leave the hotel, 11.30, tour of the Oilers Ice Hockey Stadium, 12.45, leave for Thistle Curling Club, one o'clock, arrive at the club for official reception, 1.15, lunch, two o'clock, official greeting, which is usually being piped onto the ice, various Mounties there saluting us, 2.15, curling, 4.20, off the ice, change into, well, they had outfits for it, the jacket and the tartan trousers and everything, which Canadians called your number ones, because that was your best outfit, so change into number ones, five o'clock, sit down for dinner and reception, a few drinks until the head table are all ready, that took them an hour, six o'clock, ready for food and eat until 7.15, 7.15, change to go back on the ice, some more piping onto the ice, 7.45, on the ice, 10 o'clock, off the ice, change shoes, etc, a few drinks and on the bus about 11.30, 12 o'clock, bed.*

*7.10am, long lie in today, 7.30, morning class, which is having a drink like that, but being about half vodka, no gin, sorry, gin and the rest lemon juice, which just, but it certainly gets you going in the morning, 7.50, breakfast, nine o'clock, off to the rink, 9.30, curling, 11.45, off the ice, change into number ones, 12.45, lunch, 1.45, on the bus to Calgary, 5.00, arrive in Calgary, into the hotel, a quick change and out at 5.20, 5.45, arrive at Glencoe Curling Club, tour of the premises, it's a family sports club, it costs 15,000 Canadian dollars to go on the waiting list, which is 15 years long and now closed, the annual sub is two and a half thousand Canadian dollars plus extra for taking part in competitions, there are six badminton courts, four indoor tennis courts, seven squash courts, a skating rink, an exercise room with about 50 bikes, endless step machines etc, a ballroom, art rooms, eight sheet curling rink, 320 bars, 320 members, bars, lounges, two golf courses elsewhere in Calgary, changing rooms were extremely plush, so that was a day and a half, they weren't all quite as bad as that but you just never stop.*

*So on these trips you're given lots of pins as the Canadians call them and you know we had our own to give to them, so that's mine put on there, there's one interesting one right at the top there. We were in Vancouver and it was you know after a day like that, quite late in the evening and this old chap came up to me and said do you know anything about the Empire and Commonwealth Games that were held in Vancouver in 1954, what was the highlight? I said it was a mile race between Bannister and Landy because before I was into curling I was into athletics, I gave him the full story and he said excellent. I said I've*

*asked a few people here and nobody knew and he said here's a pin for you and I looked at it and it says British Empire Games 1954 Vancouver Bonspiel. I said there's no curling in what's now the Commonwealth Games, he said there was that year, it was a demonstration sport and I was in the winning team. I was just taken aback. I didn't even get his name and I've not been able to find out since, I've looked in websites and found no mention of curling taking part in being part of that Games, so I'm still trying to find out about that one. We visited the world's first curling museum in a place called Weyburn in the prairies and they had 18,000 pins. Well they had 18,001 by the time I gave them a Dornoch one. But it was astonishing because there was a chap on the tour with me from the Black Isle and his club is Belmaduthy. It's only got about eight members, it's never been a very big club and we looked in the Scottish or the Highland pins section and here was a Belmaduthy badge and he has no idea how it got there.'*

So that was me branching out in 2003 and last year Russell and Kathleen went off to the Toronto area in October last year with a party of 28 curlers from Sutherland, Ross-shire and some from Caithness. They had a few games and had a wonderful time. So the curlers do get around a bit.

So the things I've got lying here, that's the original minute book which I probably won't let you have a look at because I'm holding that back. That's the first cash book, started in 1882. If you look it is so well written, the handwriting is excellent. There's one page there, I took a copy of it, it's got all the members paying their subs and the other side is the expenses and this was for a game in Tain. So they've paid A Morrison and Dornoch for carting the stones for the Tain and Golspie matches per account, 15 shillings and fourpence and then to George McIntosh for hires from Tain to Meikle Ferry and Golspie and R Finlayson and Tain for hires from Tain to Meikle Ferry. So they were coming and going over the Meikle Ferry and were getting the stones, having to take stones with them and getting somebody to do the carting.

So that file that was going around has just got a lot of invoices in it and the invoices, I kept some in the ribbon that Mr Arthur kept everything in.



Some of our medals are still in Historylinks on the wall there. I thought I'd lost them for about a couple of years, I couldn't think where I'd put them and then I saw them there.

Historylinks Cat No. 2009\_093\_04

The Ospisdale Cup turned up in 1992 when Tita Sutherland, John Sutherland's daughter died and all his trophies were put to the golf club. Ian Walker who was the secretary at the time phoned me up and said he had a cup which I might be interested in and so I went up and had a look at it and he said if you can prove it's yours it's yours. So I went back to the office, got this out because this cup was presented in 1893 so that was gone astray for 99 years. Looked up 1893, here it says Mr Gilchrist of Ospisdale had given the cup to the curling club. So I photocopied the page, faxed it to him and he said I'll be down in 10 minutes.

At the same time there was a couple of medals that John Sutherland had won. There's one here, what does it say on the back, Dornoch, I can't see what it says, won by J Sullivan, 1892. So there was two of these and played in pairs. They've actually been played for three times, 1892 when he won one, 1995 and 2000. So they've been played for three times in three different centuries. We're going to have to wait a long time before we play for them again!

Historylinks Cat No. 2001\_238

Now this wee quaich, which Maureen polished appeared on eBay about two years ago and I hadn't spotted it. I wasn't into eBay at the time and I got a phone call from a curler in Midlothian. There's an annual that's produced by the RCCC which lists all the clubs and their secretaries and the phone numbers and he had looked me up. He had seen it on eBay and phoned me. He was into buying silver so he told me what he reckoned it would go for. So I put in my maximum bid and got it. It says curling club Dornoch 1938-39 and the minutes at that time record that just before the war the President gave the best team of the year one each of these. It doesn't say who actually won them.. It was only about two years when these were given out because then the war came along and it stopped. It was interesting and good to actually get hold of that again. There' are a lot of photos there from the 60s, they're actually Dr John's photos so we should actually find out names and well Cliff was wanting some copies so we'll work out which ones to get copied.



A number of trophies belonging to the club went astray over the years and a lot of curling stones presented by presidents during their time of office. We've no record of where these are now but if anybody does know of the whereabouts I'd be delighted to find out.

I think that's about it . There is memorabilia coming every month. It's still interesting.