

## 2008 Durness Highland Gathering



With spectacular weather and in a natural setting that could not have been improved if specifically designed the 2008 games drew a substantial crowd and provided a traditional and entertaining day. The field is sheltered on one side by a natural hillock that in good weather provides excellent seating and view of the whole field. This year the crowd filled the hillside and remained all afternoon. To stage such an event many new hurdles had to be overcome to fulfil the necessary criteria for the entertainments licence, risk assessments, importing port a loos and ensuring the sports ground was a safe environment meant the local voluntary committee had added administration. All was completed for the day and the events ran their course like clockwork. David Morrison was this year's course announcer a native Durness Gaelic speaker and during the afternoon gave a bilingual commentary to some of the events. In 2007 it was David's brother Willie that was the games Chieftain.

As tradition has dictated the formal arrangements begin at midday when the president Iain Anderson escorts the Chieftain this year local lass Catherine Jackson accompanied by lone piper James Mather to the village square where 10 former chieftains, the pipe band and the crowd has gathered. After introductions and presentation of the cromach to Chieftain

Cate by chairperson of the Games Iris Mackay the Ullapool and district and Thurso Pipe band lead the procession to Shore Park. Nobody present could fail to be impressed with this is the most northerly games on mainland Scotland and as these events gather momentum and popularity across the world Durness can claim its position as an all encompassing experience welcoming professionals and amateurs alike providing a category where everyone can enter with a chance of a win.

On arrival in the games field the chair person welcomed everyone to the Durness Highland gathering and thanked all those that made the event possible. Without a dedicated and envied community spirit such an event could not be staged. President Iain Anderson was asked say a few words before introducing the chieftain for the day

Cate is the oldest daughter of Lillian Mackay, brought up on the croft in the Durine and although she has been away from Durness since 16 years old she returns annually to participate in the games and since 1970 when they were resurrected she has attended every one. Cate in her natural enjoyable and sociable manner kept her speech short and compared this to being – “Like a miniskirt- Short enough to be interesting and long enough to cover the essential points.” Cate recollected sitting in the crowd with her granny and taking part in various events the egg and spoon being quite demanding! The Durness Highland Games means different things to different people for Cate “it’s an opportunity for friends and family to get together every year to enjoy a wee social” She welcomed people in several different languages and delighted to the crowd as a popular chieftain.

Cate has distinguished herself during her 30 years career in the West Yorkshire police reaching the rank of detective sergeant. But she still announced that she is carrying out the duties today with pride and a wee bit of in trepidation. She encouraged all to take part saying the prize money is only secondary to the exhilaration of winning – participating, running, jumping, chucking, laughing, eating, drinking and being merry the central plan is to enjoy yourselves.

Along with her 3 sisters and brother and their siblings mother Lillian had declared that Cate being chosen for the chieftain had made her more proud that her receiving the Queens medal. After the official opening Cate brought her own brand of chieftainship ensuring that she mingled with the crowd discovering where they came from and this proved from all over the world and she was ensuring they had a friendly and personal welcome.

The sunny afternoon air was filled with piping, colourful dancers, athletic events on the field and track but it was the good contingency of Heavies that performed with great skill and shows of strength. Among the local and international heavy delegation was Highland games world champion Shaun Petts and American Champion Larry Brock. Several course records were set in early years and remain in place especially true of the open events.

Along with the hew haw donkeys giving children rides Bubbles the clown kept the children entertained with his antics, turning up all around the field juggling and undertaking conjuring tricks. The stalls around the park included the bow tent reconstructed from the Mackay Country enactment of the travelling families of the north. Demonstrations of tin smithing were on throughout the afternoon as this and peal fishing was the skills of the travelling families, and people were offered the opportunity to have ago. The northwest Sutherland Geopark were handing out information and holding stone painting sessions for the children. All afternoon and on such a clear day unparallel ariel views of Durness were available with helicopter rides. Early afternoon 2 tornado bombers flew over the games field as recognition of the relationship Durness hols with the military. In the first instance the planes flew fast and retuned with a slow low pass.

The latter events ran a little over schedule but still tilt the bucket and the tug o war remains popular events to draw the proceedings to a close. With the raffle, 200 club draws and the presentation of trophies to those winners still in the park Cate drew the 2008 Durness Highland Games to close. She thanked all for coming and hoped they would all return with friends in future. The games night dance starting at 11pm was well attended and completed the midsummer festivities.

### McCartney COMMISSION FOR HIGHLAND PHOTOGRAPHER

Durness resident Kevin Arrowsmith has been commissioned by highly acclaimed photographer Mike McCartney to prepare mount and frame thirty photographic prints for exhibition later in the year.

This is a second commission for Kevin who prepared photographs for a public exhibition of McCartney's Live8 photographs for the Durness Northern Lights Festival in 2007. The exhibition attracted worldwide interest. The highly acclaimed photographer Mike McCartney - brother of ex-Beatle Sir Paul returned to the Highlands in June 2008 photographing it's people and it's landscape for a major exhibition and book.

As a photographer himself, Kevin has an affinity for preparing other artist's work for exhibition. "I enjoyed working on Mike's exhibition last year and I'm delighted to have received this commission. I am looking forward to giving this project the same attention to detail"

Kevin was born in Middlesbrough in the North East of England. An established career in telecoms and electronics has always been supplemented by a love of photography and of the local landscape. His passion for the remotest parts of North West Scotland led to a decision to relocate to Durness in Sutherland where he has lived with his family since November 2006.

## LOTTE GLOB

Picture attached Lotte Glob at home on her sculpture Croft in laid

Lotte Glob will be present at the Watermill Gallery Aberfeldy for the Opening Afternoon of her exhibition *Fragments*, on Saturday 2 August between 2-4pm, when she will also be signing copies of her book *Floating Stones*.

One of Scotland's most contemporary and innovative art galleries, the Watermill Gallery in Aberfeldy, is holding a solo exhibition by the iconic environmental artist Lotte Glob, opening this coming Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> August. This year marks Lotte Glob's 50<sup>th</sup> year of working in ceramics. In April, The Watermill celebrated this remarkable milestone by publishing the book *Floating Stones*. The Gallery is following this with a major exhibition of new work by Lotte Glob.

Well suited to the Watermill Gallery, Lotte Glob's work involves an intimate and continuing relationship with the wilderness of the Scottish Highlands. Having exhibited nationally and internationally since 1964, Lotte Glob is renowned for her long hikes into the mountains, from which she brings back rocks and sediments to work with in her studio. Combining these materials with different clays, she creates sculptural forms in a direct response to the physical nature of the materials with which she works. Fired in a kiln at 1300 C white heat, physical alterations occur, reflecting the landscape's volcanic origins.

Heating rocks, glass, clay and sediment to temperatures at which they melt holds very real dangers, and despite Lotte's experiments over years of artistic investigation, the power of nature is ever-present, and ever threatening.

"The landscape is my studio", Glob explains. "I've spent so much time out there, you just get absorbed in it. The more you are in the landscape the more you see and I find a lot of things echoing each other – like the shape of a rock and a shape in the sky, or a shape of a snow pattern in the roadside, so many things like that."

**Lotte Glob** was born in Denmark in 1944 and has studied under some of Denmark and Scotland's most acclaimed artists, including Gutte Eriksen, Knut Jensen and David Illingworth. Collections of Glob's work are exhibited at the Museum of Fine Art, Copenhagen, the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, the Dundee Art Gallery and Museum, the Maclaurin Gallery, Ayr and the Victoria & Albert Library Collection in London as well as private collections worldwide.

Glob has undertaken a number of commissions during the last fifteen years, and her work has been written about in various publications, including the Art Review, the Edinburgh Review, MAP Magazine, Scotsman and The Times, to name but a few.

### New Books

Local writers Mandy Haggith and Sharon Blackie were signing copies of their books at Loch Croispol Bookshop, Restaurant & Gallery last Thursday, 24th July. Mandy, who lives in Achmelvich, has so far had four books published: two collections of poems "Letting Light In" and "Castings", an historical novel set on the north coast "The Last Bear" and her latest work "Paper Trails" which looks at how our increasing dependence on paper is damaging the environment.

Two of her titles have been published by Ullapool based Two Ravens Press which is run by David Knowle and Sharon Blackie. Sharon, as well as being a publisher, is also an accomplished writer and editor, and she was signing copies of her recent novel "The Long Delirious Burning Blue". This was one of a number of planned events for the late summer. On 4th August, at 2.30pm, world renowned potter and ceramic artist Lotte Glob will be signing copies of her book "Floating Stones" And on 3rd September, north coast writer Mary Beith and illustrator Sally Orr will be launching a new Gaelic children's book,

published by Stornoway based Acair Press. Kevin Crowe from Loch Croispol said: "These events just demonstrate the amazing amount of talent in the north west Highlands, and we are pleased to do our best to encourage and promote such talent."

Durness gets a good write-up in a recent book 'From the Mull to the Cape' (published by Summersdale), the author Richard Guise stayed in Durness while cycling through researching the book.