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Session Clerk – Bill Scott Tel: 830304
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Lochranza & Pirnmill Church Elders

Wren Gentleman Tel: 830313, Kitty Milne, Chris Knox Tel: 830618
Bill Scott Tel: 830304, Anne Coulter Tel: 830219, Louise Minter Tel: 850263
Peter Emsley Tel: 850232, Neil Robertson Tel: 850224,
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Congregational Board Members

Rev. Angus Adamson, Christine Black (Clerk), Richard Wright (Property Manager),
Fiona Henderson, Lizzie Adam, Archie Cumming

Pastoral Care Group

Group Leader - Anne Coulter Tel: 830219
Aileen Wright Tel: 830353, Lizzie Adam Tel: 850230,
Christine Black Tel: 850263, Robert Cumming Tel: 830302

F.O.L.K.

(Friends Of Lochranza Kirk)

Chair – Shared by the Elders – **Treasurer** – Anne Coulter

PIRMILL GUILD

(see note on back page)

Sunday Services

Lochranza 9.30am, Pirnmill 10.45am

Tea & coffee served after the services

All are welcome

Printed @ Ormsay, Lochranza

Lochranza & Pirnmill

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Church & Community Newsletter MAY 2018



www.lochranzachurch.org.uk



The Manse, Brodick

Last November whilst on a visit to Northern Ireland outside Lisburn Town Hall I came across the statue of Professor James Francis 'Frank' Pantridge CBE, MC, MD. Who you might well ask? As indeed did I at the time. On being informed that he was the inventor of the defibrillator with raised interest I was moved to go inside to view the display of Pantridge artefacts and read further information on his life – a truly remarkable life.

Born in Hillsborough, County Down, Frank Pantridge was educated at Friends' School Lisburn and Queen's University Belfast graduating in medicine in 1939.

With the outbreak of World War II that same year, he was commissioned into the Royal Army Medical Corps and posted to the Far East, where heroically at the fall of Singapore, he won the Military Cross for his bravery in the face of the most hellish adversity. Taken prisoner by the Japanese he endured slave labour on the notorious Burma Railway, which resulted in him contracting cardiac beriberi and suffering related heart disease and illness for the rest of his life.

Spurred on by this after the war he decided to dedicate his life in the field of cardiology. Winning a scholarship to the University of Michigan, he studied under Dr F.N. Wilson, a cardiologist and vitally important for Pantridge's future work also an authority on electrocardiography.

Returning to Ulster Pantridge was appointed cardiac consultant to the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, where along with his colleague, Dr John Geddes he introduced the modern system of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Further study in this field led to the invention of the portable defibrillator, which has since saved many countless tens of thousands of lives.

That first defibrillator, which can be seen in Lisburn, weighed 70 kg and operated from car batteries and wasn't really very portable at all. Fortunately, by 1968 Pantridge had designed an instrument weighing only 3 kg, incorporating a miniature capacitor manufactured for NASA.

I'm sure our wonderful island First Responders are grateful for that development and nowadays don't have to lug around 70 kg pieces of

CHURCH DUTIES

	DOOR	READERS	COFFEE	DUTY ELDER	FLOWERS
06-May	Richard Wright	Richard Wright	Hellen Thorburn	Anne Coulter	Aileen Wright
13-May	P/Mill 10.15am	Communion			
20-May	Hazel Gardiner	Hazel Gardiner	Hazel Gardiner	Bill Scott	Hazel Gardiner
27-May	Marion Gentleman	Marion Gentleman	Marion Gentleman	Wren Gentleman	Marion Gentleman
03-Jun	Maureen Cumming	Archie Cumming	Maureen Cumming	Anne Coulter	Maureen Cumming
10-Jun	Fiona Henderson	Fiona Henderson	Fiona Henderson	Chris Knox	Lorna Hallyburton
17-Jun	Chris Siddle	Pip Siddle	Anita Ford	Bill Scott	Eileen McAllister
24-Jun	Gail Scott	Douglas Coulter	Aileen Wright	Wren Gentleman	Gail Scott
01-Jul	Sinclair MacLeod	Janette MacLeod	Hellen Thorburn	Anne Coulter	Janette MacLeod
08-Jul	Isobel Kerr	Robert Cumming	Gail Scott	Chris Knox	Ethne Cumming
15-Jul	Richard Wright	Richard Wright	Aileen Wright	Bill Scott	Aileen Wright
22-Jul	Marion Gentleman	Marion Gentleman	Marion Gentleman	Wren Gentleman	Marion Gentleman
29-Jul	Douglas Coulter	Douglas Coulter	Maureen Cumming	Anne Coulter	Maureen Cumming
05-Aug	Gail Scott	Bill Scott	Gail Scott	Bill Scott	Gail Scott
*12 Aug	Fiona Henderson	Robert Cumming	Fiona Henderson	Chris Knox	Hellen Thorburn

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- 12 Aug 10.15am - Communion - Lochranza
- 01 July 3 pm - Songs of Praise - Lamlash Green

AUGUST NEWSLETTER!

Please could I have articles for this by **22nd July** at the latest!

bg.ornsay@btinternet.com

Many thanks. Ed.

Pirnmill Guild

Pirnmill Guild has disbanded. We found it increasingly difficult to continue with only 7 members.

We took this decision with regret, as we greatly value the fellowship we have built up over the years. We would like to continue this in some other form, open to all villagers, not just church members.

Ideas of what form this might take would be welcomed. Anyone interested please contact Chris Black at christineblack.arran@gmail.com.

F.O.L.K. (*Friends Of Lochranza Kirk*)

FOLK have had an interesting year. Our Speakers subjects have varied from Passchendale, Fair Trade, Trinidad & Tobago, Mercy Ships and the history of North Arran. We are very grateful to all our Speakers for taking the time to visit us.

We have made donations this year to ARCO, Mercy Ships and the Arran Film Trust. We will sadly miss our Treasurer, Elisabeth Mobbs who served us so efficiently for many years.

Our annual **Fete** will take place on **Wednesday 18th July** in Lochranza & Catacol Village Hall and a **Concert** in the church will take place on **Tuesday 7th August**. Both these events will raise much needed funds for our church and we hope both events will be well supported by the village.

The HMS/M Vandal memorial service

is on **12th May** around 11am ish.

This year is the 75th anniversary of the loss of the submarine. A good 'turnout' of local residents would be much appreciated by the veterans attending.

TAKE NOTE OF DEFIBRILLATOR LOCATIONS

Distillery - on front wall of the visitor centre

Cal Mac building - on the outside wall

Catacol Bay Hotel - on front wall below the kitchen window

Pirnmill Shop - in red telephone box



All cabinets are unlocked and open to anyone who requires to take the defib. No prior experience of using one is required make sure you've called 999 to get an Ambulance & the **First Responders** on the way

May 8,22
June 5,19
Jul 3,17,31
Aug 14,28



May 1,15,29
June 12,26
Jul 10,24
Aug 7,21



equipment. A further refinement of the automated external defibrillator by Pantridge allowed it to be used by members of the public and today there are many of these vital pieces of life saving equipment located all around the island in shops, village halls and other central locations in each of our communities.

As Scotland has one of the highest percentages of heart related illnesses in the world, indeed recent studies have shown Scots are most likely to be killed by heart disease, having such life saving pieces of equipment easily and readily available to everyone is hugely important. As of course, is making sure we stay healthy and do all we can to look after our hearts by keeping our stress levels down.

The heart is indeed a vital organ pumping life sustaining blood around our bodies. It is more than that though. It is also considered to be the emotional centre of our being and connected to our souls. We are said to 'love someone with all our hearts'. We can be moved to 'heart-wrenching pity' and sometimes have to tackle situations in life with 'heavy hearts'. Besides good diet and exercise surely therefore our hearts need to be looked after in other ways too in order to lead full and healthy lives. As Burns says so well 'the heart aye's the part aye that makes us right or wrang.' ('Epistle to Davie'). And there is one who knows our hearts better than we do. Burns understood that too when in the 'Address to the Unco Guid' he wrote:

'Who made the heart, 'tis he alone

Decidedly can try us

He knows each chord its various tone,

Each spring its various bias:

Jesus said: 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden light.' (Matthew 11: 28-30).

If we are to live a healthy life in all its fullness we need to make sure we also look after our spiritual well-being. One place concerned with that kind of soul restoring 'heart care' is the local parish church and the good news is, there is and has been for a very long time a branch very near to you, like the defibrillators centrally located at the heart of every one of our island communities, including at Lochranza and Pirnmill.

Both Lochranza and Pirnmill churches specialise in their own brand of 'heart health care' and each Sunday at 9.30 and 10.45 a.m. respectively all are welcome to come in and experience that for themselves.

Angus

Community Council Information

The Community Council meet the last Tues of the month at the **Ormidale Pavillion @ 6pm** with the exception of December. The public can attend.

The minutes of the meetings are available to read in the Lochranza and Catacol Village Hall, the Lochranza Hotel, the Catacol Hotel and the Pirnmill Shop. If you have any concerns you would like taken forward, could you contact me (Lochranza and Catacol) or Liz Evans (Pirnmill). Thank you.

Contact Addresses:-

Julie Graham - The Old Exchange, Lochranza, KA27 8HL. Tel 01770 830 247 Email:- acc.lochranza.julieg@gmail.com

Liz Evans - Shore Cottage, Pirnmill, KA27 8HP. Tel 01770 850 267
Email:- acc.pirnmill.liz@gmail.com

Patient and Service User Group Meeting (PSUG)

The next PSUG meeting is on **Monday 21st May 2018**. It is being held in Lochranza Village Hall at 7pm

This meeting is open to the wider community. Fred, Mark and I would like to encourage as many people from Lochranza, Catacol and Pirnmill to attend. Please support us! We will ensure all residents are aware of the topics for discussion as and when we receive agenda.

This is your opportunity to hear about developments and have your say. Thank you

Julie Graham. Tel 830 247. email julia74@btinternet.com

Fred Shortland. Tel 830 610 email fshortland@hotmail.com

Mark Harwood Tel 850 577 doctor.ju

Lochranza & Catacol Community Association Report

The most recent meeting of the Lochranza and Catacol Community Association (LCCA)took place in the Lochranza village hall on the evening of Wednesday 18th April

At the above meeting it was agreed that the AGM of the association and the open meeting would take place on **Wednesday 23rd May at 7pm in the Village Hall**.

It was also agreed that a letter would be sent to the Sergeant of the Island police force drawing his attention to a number of matters. Among them being, speeding through the village, removal of abandoned cars, yellow lines etc

The meeting also agreed to hold a beach clean on Friday 18th May, Details to follow
The new waiting room at the Lochranza ferry terminal was discussed and it is anticipated that this will be completed as promised by CMAL by the 26th April, the start of the summer timetable .

It was noted that a start has been made by NAC to address the pot hole problem on the Newton Shore.

K B Thorburn - Chairman

Lochranza Gentlemen's Philosophical Society.(L.G.P.S.)

(aka, The Philo Pastries or The L-p D-nc-rs Club!)

Weekly Programme

February, March and April's weekly meetings were full of interesting and diverse topics, with guest speakers Brian Miller talking on "The Nature of Reality", David Underdown on "Trekking in Nepal" and Kate Sampson on the "Regeneration of Glen Rosa" all of which held our attention for the best part of our allotted hour and a half. Our members also spoke on "Friendship" by Paul Padfield, Ken Thorburn on "The Dutch Royal Family", Rob Stevens on "What's in a Pot", Robert Cumming on "Ageing", Fred Shortland on "The Business of Music- Then and Now", John Ford on "The Jacobites" and Archie Cumming on "Future of Mankind", and if all of that is not diverse I do not know what is !!!!

The summer months? (wishful thinking) from May through to end of August are informal with no pre-arranged speakers or programme, as we are all hoping to enjoy summer weather by taking to the hills, sailing, golf etc, however we will meet for an informal pint on a Thursday at the Lochranza Hotel between 5.30 and 7.00 pm as usual.

Hillwalking

Hillwalking over the past three months has been severely curtailed due to the poor weather, low cloud base and member availability, restricting us to low level walks, eg around the Cock of Arran etc. At the time of writing we hope to do a high level walk up to Coirein Lochain along the summits to Beinn Bharrain, before eight of our intrepid members tackle The Cobbler (Ben Arthur), on the 2/3rd May in celebration of our senior walker coming of age on his 75th Birthday.

Social Events.

We had a very pleasant informal social evening at the Catacol Hotel on Friday 13th April with more than twenty members and wives enjoying good pub grub, refreshments and patter.

A more formal summer dinner is to be held at Stags on Friday 10th August, therefore a date for the diary.

A summer excursion is under discussion to venture to the Corryvreckan Whirlpool off Jura, with an autumn visit to the new V & A Museum in Dundee during September/October 18.

Having missed the opportunity this year, the Melrose Sevens may well be the Spring Outing in 2019.

As intimated previously all new members will be most welcome to join us in the Lochranza Hotel on Thursdays (the summer evening) between 5.30 and 7pm.

Richard B Wright - Chairman

Lochranza & Catacol Village Hall Report

Great plans are underway for our **Gala Weekend starting on Thursday 19th July** with another **Feis Latharna Argyll Ceilidh Trail** with a licensed bar and raffle. We are so delighted these talented young musicians are back for the third year in a row.

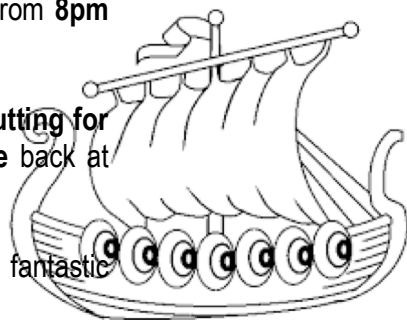
On **Friday 20th July** we are planning another **BYOB & Quiz night** which was great fun last year when everyone's wits were tested.

Then on **Saturday 21st July** the theme of the day this year is **Vikings**, the **Bogie Race** will again take place on the Castle Green with the **Isle of Arran Pipe Band** piping the procession to the hall. The **kids races** and **games** are on the green as is the **Dog Show, Craft Fayre**. A **Licensed Bar, BBQ and kids juice bar** are available while live music is playing through the afternoon and lots more beside. In the evening the bar will be open again and we are fortunate to have **Sound Cradle** from the mainland playing in the hall from **8pm** once more so plan to **dance** the night away.

On **Sunday** there is a **Texas Scramble** with **putting for the kids, Duck Derby** and a **Sausage sizzle** back at the hall.

Please keep your diary free to enjoy this fantastic weekend.

Our **website** has been resurrected and you can find it on www.lochranzahall.org.uk all plans for the weekend will be updated regularly on the website and you will find nearer the time we will step up all our advertising .



I have started a music club at the Lochranza hotel **every Friday from 8.30ish** everyone is welcome to join in or sing / play a solo. Also welcome people to come and listen.

Musically almost anything goes as long as it does not need a P.A. etc

Tony Spencer

A little bit of 'what's going on at Lochranza Centre'

Due to popular demand we will be running our Fryday's Fish & Chip Shop nights over a 5 week period: 20th & 27th April & 4th, 11th, 18th May. Added to our menu this year is a full fillet of white fish with chips in an Arran Blonde Beer Batter. Rather tasty & only £7.50.

We hope to be opening our new Geology & Landscape focused Visitors Room in time for the School Summer Holidays at the end of June. There will be exhibits / displays / audio visual presentation / things to do for the kids & hopefully a Tea/Coffee corner. We are just having the Mobility Impaired bathroom fitted over the next couple of weeks before turning our attention to the car park.

In advance of the of the Visitors Room we have just introduced three new things for people to do in the village.

There is a Short Introduction to Orienteering Course which uses part of the Narachan Track going as far as the last house. Clues provided / map / compass / basic instruction & off you go!

Using the North Newton Track, passing the Stoneman's Shop, down to Fairy Dell Cottage & back along the coast we have An Introduction to Geocaching. This is something which is becoming increasing popular in lots of places. There are hidden boxes to be found on the route with letters which spell out a couple of winning words.

We have a Mystery Trail with cryptic questions & things to find through the village from the Pier back to the Centre or it could be done the other way around.

In all cases people come along to the Centre, pick up a sheet with instructions & we will give them an idea of what to do. When they come back they get a certificate & a prize. Sheets cost £5 for a family group or all 3 events for £10. We hope it will encourage more people to come to Lochranza but also perhaps to stay in the village a little bit longer. It also encourages them to walk along fairly accessible routes & appreciate a bit more of this fantastic place. Leaflets advertising these activities will be out shortly.

Chris Traill - Director, Lochranza Centre

Pirnmill War Memorial

There has been a lot of progress on the Pirnmill WW1 memorial. The constituent parts of the memorial have been cut from the admiralty brass and are now in Pirnmill. A lot of work still requires to be done to form these parts into the correct shapes so that they go together to form the memorial and there is no timescale for this to be done yet. It is however expected that it will be in place ready for a dedication ceremony around September this, year in plenty of time to mark the 100 anniversary of the end of the war.

Fiona Laing

Greetings from the islands of Barra and South Uist!

It is rare to find one's parish mentioned in another church's newsletter and delight was mingled with just a tiny little bit of dismay also. Of course, we appreciate that a week's stay on South Uist can only ever give a first impression of life on this particular Hebridean island, especially if it is during the busy, stimulating and absorbing time of a Ceolas event.

We would like to take the opportunity to share some good news with you regarding our situation, following the report you received on us last November.

Despite concerns and anxieties – for both congregations as well as their minister – the arrangements for Sunday worship on Barra and South Uist are such that only very rarely is the minister unable to cross over the Sound of Barra (or back) on a Sunday to lead worship. She must be one of the few kirk ministers who can call two manse her home. Whichever island she might be left on after CalMac has stopped sailings for the day: she won't go without a roof over her head and a bed for the night! And if she really cannot make it because of the weather, then a highly competent team of elders and members steps into the breach.

We can also report that relations between catholic and protestant people both on Barra and South Uist are cordial. There is continued opportunity to develop formal relations between the congregations – but where is that not the case? – though we do appreciate that individual families may have particular issues to address, but they are the exception, not the norm.

We also would like to share that relations with our fellow Church of Scotland congregations further to the north are good and that the Rev Isabel (Ishie) Macdonald, auxiliary minister in Uist Presbytery, would be surprised to learn that women are not welcomed in the pulpits there. There was a time when that was the case, but we are glad to report it is no longer so.

Why did we close Lochdair church ten years ago? It was surplus to our requirements – population movement, its less than central location as well as decline in church attendance made it so. Now that we have been able to sell it, we are in receipt a substantial sum of money which will allow us to effect the much needed repairs on our remaining two church complexes.

And why did we leave Uist Presbytery? Geography and distance required that South

represented. A leading role was taken by a Presbyterian, James Mein. He had led the settlers in worship on the Coramandel and he continued to lead as a chatechist or possibly as an elder.

By 1808 the community felt a need to formalise their society. A meeting was held and it was agreed to covenant to build a church and a school and set up the logistics for that. At the next meeting on 21st January 1809 rules and regulations for the guidance of the society were read and adopted. Although the building of a church and school was challenging for a small congregation of limited financial resources – the little church was ready for worship in 1809. It was a plain, unadorned building divided by a cedar partition into two rooms, one room used as a church the other as a classroom.

For the first twenty years of the settlement, the pioneers of Portlandhead were not aligned in their worship to any one denomination but in 1824 Ebenezer Church became the first Presbyterian Church in the colony.

The name of the church was chosen from 1 Samuel 7:12: : *'Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mispah and Jeshanah, and called its name Ebenezer; for he said , "Hitherto the Lord has helped us"*.

It was an amazing peaceful place to visit on the banks of the Hawksbury River. The church is still an active church open for worship each Sunday with many weddings taking place there. The classroom is now a museum though where they serve lovely afternoon teas with scones, jam and cream which we very much enjoyed.

Jean Hunter

***** Woodside Arran CIC

A non for profit local food network for the Isle of Arran specialising in local and organic food. The Real Food Shop is an **online** and **mobile food shop** delivering the best local and organic produce around the Island. So if you live here or are just visiting we will be happy to get the best, most delicious food to you to enjoy.
<https://woodsidearran.com>

LOCHRANZA HALL CAR PARK FROM 11am ON FRIDAYS



'The Church is wherever God's people are praising' (CH3 Hy 522)

Ebenezer Church, NSW Australia

I was on holiday recently in Richmond, Australia an area that is of great historical interest. It is a Lachlan Macquarie town beside the Hawkesbury River. I attended St Andrews Uniting Church to worship in my time there. Myself and my granddaughter stayed with my friend Ann in Richmond and she took us touring around the area. We visited towns like Windsor, Wilberforce and Penrith which I found strange all names I knew. One of the places we visited was Ebenezer Church which is the oldest church in Australia opened for worship in 1809. Not so old as some of our churches though especially in Lochranza where you have celebrated your Tercentenary.

Ebenezer Church had its beginning in London. In 1801 seven couples and two single men, many of whom worshipped at the Crown Street Court, Church of Scotland in London, agreed to migrate to New South Wales, Australia. Most of them came from the border region of Scotland and England but were working and living in London. One of their number, George Hall had shared with them a Government offer in response to a letter written in January 1798:

'We whose names are undersigned acknowledge that, at our own request, we offer ourselves as settlers to go to N.S.W. with our families under agreed terms'

These families, mainly of Scottish background, were motivated to emigrate by a desire for freedom of worship and independence.

The settlers set sail from Deptford on 12th February 1802 on the Coromandel, an East India sailing ship. Also on board were 136 male convicts and much needed supplies for the colony. On this historic voyage the Coromandel was not to lose a single convict life. However the voyage was not without its discomforts. A diary by George Hall recorded the discomforts and concerns. Upon arrival in Sydney the Coromandellers were directed by Governor King to settle on the Government Farm at Toongabbie for the remainder of 1802, so that they could plant wheat, maize and potatoes without delay.

In 1803 these pioneers were settled on 100 acre grants of land along the Hawksbury River in the area known as Portland Head (now Ebenezer). They settled along both banks, the river becoming the community's life line, providing the pioneers with water for daily living, fish for eating and a usually reliable safe means of transport.

The religious faith of the eight Coromandel families and their desire for communal worship was shared by seven other families in the district. Initially they joined together in worship in the open under a tree. That tree still remains today although probably only half the size it was and a bit black and withered. There is also a fence around it for protection.

The worshippers came from no one denomination. Members of the Church of England and the Catholic Church, Congregationalists and Calvinists were all

Uist and Barra needed a minister of their own. That was a near impossible feat to achieve with the figures Uist Presbytery had received from Edinburgh in terms of ministerial posts allocated to them. But then, lo and behold, it transpired that if South Uist and Barra moved into Argyll Presbytery, not only would Argyll gain an additional ministry post, but so would Uist Presbytery! None of us understand the mathematics of it, but we gratefully accept the result. Argyll Presbytery has warmly embraced its new island churches and we stay in touch with Uist Presbytery also. The best of both worlds maybe?

With warm greetings from one of the more windswept parts of God's creation.

**Rev Dr Lindsay Schluter,
Minister of South Uist linked with Barra**

Ed: *I did not know our Newsletter travelled so far!*

*This letter arrived in my mail in March and was in reply to Angus's article in the **November 2017 Newsletter**. If you no longer have that copy you can read it by going into the church web site - www.lochranzachurch.org.uk*



**FIDDLERS CONCERT
IN
LOCHRANZA
CHURCH**

Following last years' very successful concert **ARCO** and **'friends'** have agreed to play again. The proposed date is **Tuesday 7th August** final details will follow on posters and in the Banner.

All proceeds will go towards church funds

From Bangkok to Lochranza!

Bangkok is not quite the same as Lochranza. After 15 years in the former, we certainly noticed the change 7 years ago when we came back to Scotland. The first difference most people think of is the weather. As I write, it is 7 degrees here on Arran, but 26 in Bangkok, despite the fact that it is well after dark there - on, as it happens, Thai New Year's Day, which corresponds roughly with the start of the rainy season.

One of the aspects of Bangkok life which I miss most is a lot less obvious, and could come as a bit of a surprise for anyone who hasn't heard me talk about it. I miss the opera.

Thailand has absolutely no tradition of Western opera. It was, I think, 2002 when I heard the surprising news that a new organisation, Bangkok Opera, was auditioning singers I had been a keen singer in my school-days, and had taken up choral singing again in Bangkok. As opera has long been my chief interest among the arts, auditioning to sing in opera was not an opportunity to be ignored. I auditioned, was accepted, and duly took part in the company's first production, of Purcell's *Dido & Aeneas*.

I was tremendously struck by the differences between singing in a choir, and opera. For a start, in choirs, one is standing still and staring at the conductor. On the operatic stage, unless you are very careful, you find yourself pointing quite the wrong way at the critical moment, and missing a cue,

The moving about bit is a horror all its own. I had no idea before I started how difficult it would be initially to sing and act at the same time. For the inexperienced opera performer, either activity seemed to require full concentration. Either I moved about the stage doing what the director required, but forgot to sing, or sang as required by the conductor, but stood there like a stookie.

That was the most difficult part of the process of adapting to opera, but there were others. I have already indirectly mentioned one. The opera performer doesn't have the comfort of a score to read on stage. Everything has to be memorised - which is a challenge for those of us of more advanced years.

For the Thais in the cast, language could also be a major challenge. Even if we Europeans didn't actually speak Italian, say, we were familiar with odds and ends of it, and at least it is a language related to our own. Not so for the Thais, Thai being very different from the Indo-European languages in which almost all opera is written. Fortunately, the cast always included people who could help. I was the company's primary English and German coach, and we had native speakers of Italian and French always around.

What I admired most, though, about my Thai singing colleagues, was the way in which they coped with an utterly unfamiliar art-form. The first opera I saw was Puccini's *La bohème* at around the age of 8. By the time I sang in a production of it in Bangkok 50 years later, I had seen perhaps a dozen performances live, and as many on television. In Bangkok, though, every time I performed, I was surrounded by people who had never ever seen any production of any opera at all - except from the stage. That was a situation which I found it impossible to imagine. The typical Thai delight in dressing up and performing somehow carried them through. One of them was so entranced by the whole process that she now has a professional career in Europe as an opera singer.

In the end, after a few years, I managed to deal with singing and acting at the same time, and of course I loved what we were doing - despite the ridiculously small budgets we had to deal with. I sang in productions of operas by Massenet, Mozart, Salieri, Puccini, Bizet, Verdi, and Wagner over a period of almost 10 years. I even took part in a world premiere - of an opera written by our artistic director, a very odd Thai who was educated at Eton and Cambridge. (He is better known in the West as horror-story writer S. P. Somtow.)

As time went on, I was even allowed to step out of the chorus and take on small solo roles - really important ones like Third Monk, say. But the highlight of my operatic career was my one and only role as a principal. That, alas, was not in a public performance, but only at the dress rehearsal of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. The bass who sang the role of the Commendatore (who is killed in Scene One, but reappears later in the form of a moving, singing statue who finally drags Don Giovanni down to perdition) couldn't be there that night, so I got the nod. It was a fully staged performance, of course, with costumes, make-up and scenery. I was made up to look like not so much a statue as a Thai demon. After the performance, it would have been too much trouble to take the make-up off in the scruffy, crowded dressing room, so I stepped out and hailed a passing taxi. The driver couldn't have had a good view of me at the time, but after a while of general conversation in (in my case, broken) Thai, he turned round to say something, and this time, evidently saw me very plainly. He didn't dare say another word on the way home.



AIDA
COSTUME



THE 'DEMON'
COSTUME

**Richard
Henderson
The Anchorage,
Lochranza**