NEWSLETTER – AUGUST 2022.

MEMORIES of ISLAY.

In 1954 my brother, John, & I went for a holiday with Aunt Helen & Uncle Will, who was a gamekeeper on an estate on Islay. John was 12 at the time & I was 20. We went by train to Glasgow then by boat to Islay, bus to Bowmore and by road for 2 plus miles to Keeper’s Cottage. We both remember well a “duck” experience en route – Aunt Helen had ducks & wanted to change her breeder, so we had to take a drake from the farm for this purpose. My Mum packed it carefully in a cardboard box & we stowed it on the overhead luggage rack in the train & sat back to enjoy the scenery. Unfortunately we had overlooked the fact that ducks pee too & by the time we got to Glasgow & took the box down the bottom gave way & the drake spent the rest of our journey under John’s oxter. The cottage was next to the blacksmith’s & John spent his days there & evenings out with Uncle Will hunting for the next day’ dinner. Aunt Helen was a wonderful cook so I learned a lot of new recipes from her. I remember one night they took us fishing on Loch Gruinart & the lines they gave us had a bar at the end with 4 or 5 hooks , I think, plus a lead weight. We fed the line over the side, gently lowered the baited hooks until we felt the lead touch bottom, lifted it a little & waited for a bite. If you were super lucky you got a fish on each hook! Islay Show took place just before we left, & as the cattle sale took place on Friday they started “ driving them” on Thursday at 5am as no transport was available. Major Morrison invited us into his house on Show Day, and his mother died that night, so they sent for our aunt to help dress her. Local connection? My uncle was brought up at Maidenswell Brow (the Toll House), jumped a train at work & went to WW1 while underage & won a medal. He married Aunt Helen, a widow with 2 sons, housekeeper at Lawhead House to the 2 brothers McEwan, one of whom was Director of Education for Lanarkshire.

Grace & John.