

I was born at Calgary in 1949, and - although close to this area - for geographical reasons we did not habitually pass this way: our farm was at Antuim by Dervaig, shopping was done in Tobermory, and the quickest route to the boat in Salen was through Glenbellart.

However, this was my mother's preferred road – and the view down the loch to Ben More from the top of the Burg hill her favourite view, as it is now mine, so when we went on excursions to the south of the island we often came this way. Some of my earliest memories are of the Tostary hill: the road was not surfaced in those days and my mother was an appalling driver, so I used to sit, squashed and freezing, in the back of her open Mini Minor, my fingers tightly crossed, praying under my breath as we neared the dreaded hill. To this day the smell of burning clutch is indissolubly linked in my mind to the Tostary hill.

My father was close friend of Major Eddie Compton and my mother of his daughter, Mary Henderson, so when they were up in the summer we were often taken to Torloisk House to play with Mary's children, Alex and Clare (who now owns Dalmaclare). In those days, parents were not at the beck and call of their kids so to get to play with other children was a rare occurrence: we were taught by a series of governesses and later sent to boarding schools in England. We used to play in the rather creepy bedrooms, mostly furnished only with bare iron bedsteads and ropey mattresses, among the numerous buckets placed to catch the drips.

I also recall visiting Norman's Rhu when our first gardener, Lachie, retired there with his wife, Mrs Lachie (wives were called in this fashion in those days). I used to think what a sweet cottage it was, and how I would like to live there.

Calgary was sold in 1975 following the death of my father, but I continued to come to Mull most years until 1995, when I bought the plot at Lip na Cloiche, with a derelict bothy then called Burnside Cottage but known locally as Mary Oyster's cottage, or Mary Farrad's cottage, after the last inhabitant, who died around 1950. Katie Mary MacRae has many stories of her.

The cottage was built – with many difficulties – ‘over the phone’ from Italy’ during 1996 and 1997, and I finally came to live here permanently in 2005 when my daughter was independent. After carrying out work to enlarge it to permit me to run it as a B&B, I started my business as a nursery garden and B&B in 2006.

Lucy Mackenzie

Lip na Cloiche, Ballygown