



There was however something not sitting quite with me as the back of the house did not seem right with my memory and luckily just shortly after we had cycled away from the house we met the local postman Alasdair (Billy MacLean). He agreed that we had in deed found the house in the 1969 photos but that it had not belonged to Mrs Chicken but that he did not know who it would have belonged to back then. He told us how to find her house. We cycled there and got speaking to a woman from Coll who happened to be renting the house. On seeing the back of Mrs Chicken's house I remembered it's layout and the field behind it where Mrs Chicken kept her cows. This however created a mystery. Whose house had we photographed at back in 1969 and why?

The postman also helped point us in the direction of the beach at Cornaig and we rediscovered the lovely sands and the little rock pool where sea water was captured when the tide went out leaving a small pool for 2 wee boys to play in as it was warmed by the sun. We had also played in the sea back then and despite the cold sea temperature in late August 2018, I persuaded Paul that he and I should have a quick swim which we did brrrr!

Our return flight to Glasgow was delayed from Sunday to Monday due to low cloud on Tiree that prevented the Sunday flight taking off from Glasgow. On the Monday while waiting on the flight we walked to a large building near the airport that turned out to be the local Tiree business centre, run by Norma Omand. We explained to Norma that we had thought the business centre was another Tiree museum but we got chatting to her and told her of the

mystery of the house and showed her our photos. She helped by saying that she knew the current owners of the house as Mairi and Bill McFarlane who lived on the mainland. Our flight took off with us not having solved the mystery but having another thread of information that ultimately proved invaluable as one evening back home in Glasgow I checked a phone directory of all those with the surname of McFarlane and sure enough I got speaking with Mairi and then the mystery was solved.

I learned from Mairi McFarlane that in 1969 when Paul and I had been on holiday with our mum and dad and Bruno our pet labrador, the person owning the house then that we had been photographed outside was her auntie Janet McLean. I let her know that we had holidayed at Mrs Chicken's for 2 weeks then had had a 3rd week in Tiree staying at what we believed was the house of the local head mistress. It seemed that I was still not to understand why we had been photographed outside her aunties house when a good time later in the conversation Mairi just happened to mention that her auntie had been the matron of the old folks home. Something clicked with me that over the 49 years since our holiday, our memory somehow had swapped the title of matron to headmistress. I was pretty sure that was it but one thing that would make it a certainty for me was to be the trump card. I asked if back in 1969 was it possible that there was a piano in the house. "Oh yes" was Mairi's reply and there the mystery was solved! Her auntie often lived over at the old folks home and Mrs Chicken must have known and arranged with Mrs McLean for us to stay there.

When I think about it while we had a lovely 2 weeks in one half of Mrs Chicken's house and played at that lovely beach that Mairi said was her favourite on the island, we had Mrs McLean's house all to ourselves. At that time our family of 5, including Bruno, lived 2 up in a tenement house and to cap a super 3 weeks of holiday on Tiree we had a detached house all to ourselves and it had a piano, wow! The following year my mum and dad moved us to a sandstone house in Bishopbriggs with a garden and while they had to scrimp and scrape to pay the mortgage it was a wonderful home to live in and perhaps Mrs McLean's house had been the catalyst that drove them to a house of their own.