

Memorial on the island of Torrinch

Thanks to John McCulloch for these photos of the memorial on the island of Torrinch on Loch Lomond to four young men who were drowned on the Loch during the night of May 24th 1908.



The inscription on the stone reads:

“In Memory of

Douglas Bryce Wylie

Thomas Robertson Carter Clough

Ronald Alexander Young

David Robert Gilmore

Lost off Boturich Shore During Night
Of 24th May 1908

Erected By

Their Engine Works Associates and Other Friends
In the Employment of John Brown & Co Clydebank



Douglas Bryce was only 23 years old while the other three were even younger at 21. Wylie and Gilmore belonged to Glasgow, one of the others came from London originally and the other was from Sheffield. Thomas Clough lodged at Balloch.

Originally there had been five young men in the party and they had hired a boat from the Lynns yard, which at that time was on the west bank of the Leven above Balloch Bridge, on Saturday evening 23rd May. Their intention was to spend the weekend on Torrinch, which is the island immediately to the south-west of the burial island, Inchcailloch and is about one mile from Balmaha. The group had been hiring a boat regularly from Lynns for the previous two months and being on the Loch and its islands had become their major recreation.

Spending a Saturday night on Torrinch was natural enough, but how come they could spend Sunday night there as well? Surely they would have had work to go to first thing on Monday morning? The reason is quite simple: the owners of the shipyards on the rivers Clyde and Tyne had locked out their work-forces in a dispute over pay, so shipyard workers couldn't go to work. In the event, the dispute was resolved the week-end after the 4 young men drowned.

The five young men on Torrinch ran out of provisions on the Sunday and had come back to Balloch late on Sunday afternoon to replenish their supplies. When they got to Balloch one of them called Gardner decided to go home to his lodgings at Charles Terrance, Dalvair Road, Balloch because he had hurt his finger and it needed a dressing. So he did not go back to Torrinch with the four others and that was a very lucky escape for him.

The other four set out from Balloch to return to Torrinch between 10 and 11 o'clock at night, starting off by rowing, although the boat also had a mast. Somewhere off Inchmurrin disaster struck. It isn't known why they were lost, although the obvious possibilities such as being swamped by a squall or overturning the boat when some of them were changing seats were considered the most likely causes at the time.

It wasn't until the next morning that the alarm was raised when a gamekeeper at Boturich found their boat washed onto the Boturich shore. He contacted Tommy Lynn who took his motor launch to the scene and after checking both the boat and the campsite on Torrinch it was apparent that the four lads had been drowned. All of their bodies were not immediately recovered although a major search was mounted on the following weekends.

The site of the memorial was well chosen by their friends and colleagues - looking north to Ben Lomond and the mountains beyond and over to Luss hills on the western shore above Rosdhu Estate.

By a sad coincidence three shipyard workers from Greenock had been drowned on the Clyde that same Sunday afternoon between Gourock and Kilcreggan when the yacht which they had built themselves overturned in a squall. That is the headline reference below this first report on the Loch tragedy in the Glasgow Herald of Tuesday 27th May 1908.

LOCHLOMOND BOATING ACCIDENT

FEARED LOSS OF FOUR LIVES.

Following closely upon the distressing accident on the Clyde comes the news of a painful boating accident, resulting in the drowning of four young men in Lochlomond, between Sunday evening and yesterday morning. From reliable information received by our Vale of Leven correspondent it appears that a party of five left Balloch on Saturday evening to spend the week-end by camping out on Torr Inch, one of the Lochlomond islands about a mile beyond Balmaha. The party passed Sunday pleasantly, but towards evening they ran short of provisions. They accordingly rowed back to Balloch for a supply, and when this was obtained four of the party set out again between ten and eleven o'clock. The fifth member of the party, a young man named Gardner, did not return with his companions, but went to his lodgings in Charles Terrace, Balloch. Nothing further was heard of his friends until yesterday afternoon, when the Messrs Lynn of Balloch, boat hirers, got a message from the gamekeeper at Boturich that a boat upset was being lashed on the shore by the waves. Mr Lynn at once set out in his motor launch and found the boat as described. On traversing the shore he found two caps and an overcoat belonging to the missing party. As the mast of the boat and sail were tied together and lying in the boat, the accident, it is presumed, must have been caused by the changing of seas or the shipping of water. The young fellows were apprentices learning their trades as engineers in Messrs John Brown and Co. (Limited), Clydebank. They have for two months past engaged a boat from the Messrs Lynn, and very frequently were spending their spare time on the loch. The names of the four have not yet been ascertained, but it is stated they belong to the Midlands of England. It was late last night before the sad news became known in the Vale of Leven.

THE CLYDE YACHTING CALAMITY.