

LOCHGOILHEAD

It was while sailing to Lochgoilhead that the crew of the *Vital Spark* first heard news of the Old Age Pensions and the opportunities offered by Pension Farms: "Wan pensioner maybe wouldna pay ye, but if ye have a herd, like my frien' in Mull, there's money in it." [27]

LOCH LONG

The ancient home of the Macfarlanes - and a possible birth place for Para Handy, Peter Macfarlane. "It's no the way we are brocht up on Loch Long: us Arrochar folk when we're Captains believe in a bit o' compromise wi' the crews. If they don't do a thing when we ask them civilly, we do't oorsel's, and that's the way to vex them." [32]

MULL

Largest of the Inner Hebrides and home to two quite remarkable phenomena - the Mull Macleans: "who never die until they are centurions" [27] and the Dervaig midge: "that has aal the points of a Poltalloch terrier, even to the black nose and the cocked lugs and sits up and barks at you." [66]

TARBERT

A port on Loch Fyne - famed for the high spirits and energy of its local herring fishermen: "Wi' a barrel o' nets and a skiff and a handy wife at the guttin', a man of the least agility could make enough in a month to build a land o' hooses." [45]

TIGNABRUAICH

A Kyles of Bute village which is sadly afflicted by the dreaded midges: "They're that bad there, they'll bite through corrugated iron roofs to get at ye!" [66]

TOBERMORY

Mull's capital and the setting for Para's exploitation of a stranded whale - "The Tobermory Treasure" - which proves to be, at least until the whale starts to smell, a great tourist attraction. Possibly because, as Sunny Jim noted: "I'll bate you there's no much fun in Tobermory in the summer-time unless it's a Band o' Hope soiree." [29]



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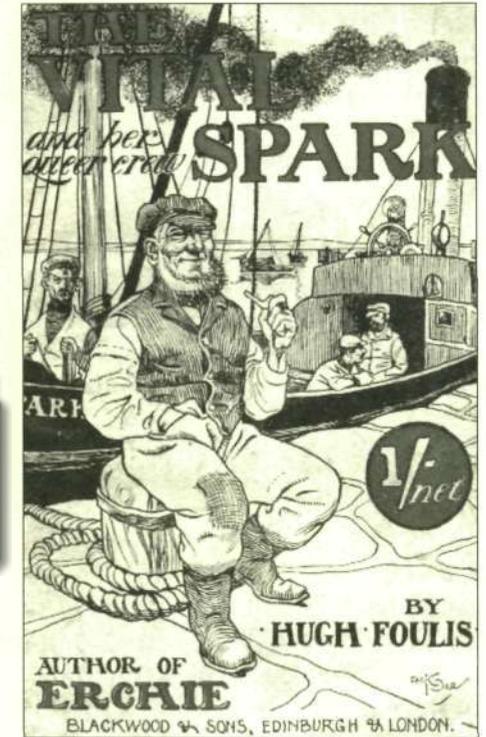
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THE PARA HANDY TRAIL



*Celebrating
100 Years of
Neil Munro's
Para Handy*

In January 1905 readers of the *Glasgow Evening News* first met "Para Handy, Master Mariner." Since then Neil Munro's immortal skipper and the *Vital Spark* - "the smertest boat in the coastin' tred" - have won a very special place in the hearts of those who love the West of Scotland. First published in book form under the pen-name of Hugh Foulis, Munro's stories have been continuously in print for the last 100 years and Para and the *Vital Spark* sail into the 21st Century as fresh and as funny as when they first appeared in the *News*.

This leaflet celebrates Para's first century by listing some of the places associated with the stories and giving a flavour of the references to these locations.

Why not follow in his wake?

ARRAN

A regular port of call for the *Vital Spark*. The Glaswegian Sunny Jim once doubted whether there really were places here with names like Shiskine but was told in no uncertain manner by his skipper: "It's easy seen you were a' your days on the Clutha steamers ... I'll assure you that there's Slidderys and Shiskines oot in Arran!" (32)

ARROCHAR

Loch Long village widely famed for its ferocious midges whom Para considered

to be so aggressive and determined that the paraffin oil which perhaps deterred Rothesay's "mudges" would be useless: "I'm thinkin' the Arrochar mudges would maybe consider paraffine a trate." (66)

CAIRNDOW

A small Loch Fyne village, well known to Para Handy, where famously: "they keep the two New Years." [9]

CAMPBELTOWN

The main town of Kintyre - home to Mary Crawford whom Para Handy marries. The celebrations were epic: "I'll wudger there wasna another weddin' like it in Kintyre for chenerations. The herrin' trawlers iss not back at their work yet and herrin's up ten shullin's a box in Gleska." [25]

FURNACE

A Loch Fyne village noted for its active social life: "You don't need tickets for a Furnace baal as long as ye ken the man at the door and talk the Gaelic at him." [9]

GLASGOW

The *Vital Spark's* home port and home to most of her crew. The excitement of the great city and its harbour appealed to the skipper: "There is more life in wan day in the Broomielaw of Gleska than there iss in a fortnight in Loch Fyne." [19]

INVERARAY

The Loch Fyne birthplace (in 1863) of Neil Munro and perhaps also that of his famous creation Para Handy, who once claimed in a particularly expansive moment: "I wass born aal along this loch-side." [13]

KINLOCHALINE

A small Morvern village - home to the redoubtable Hurricane Jack - who: "came from Kinlochaline and that wass ass good as a Board of Tred certuficate." [34]

LOCH FYNE

The centre of Para Handy's world and home to that most mysterious fish the Loch Fyne Herring. The once-famous herring fishery created what Para Handy described as "high jeenks and big hauls" because, as he noted: "it wass the herrin's of Loch Fyne had the reputation." Truly: "Loch Fyne was the place for Life in them days." [45]

LOCHGILPHEAD

Now the administrative centre of Argyll and Bute; in an earlier age its attractions were, as Para Handy tried unconvincingly to convince the Widow Maclachlan: "the road to Kilmartin, and Argyll Street, full o' splendid shops." Later he recants and describes it as "the last place on God's earth - next to London" and advises her that as she could now draw her pension she should go home to Crarae. [43]