

IT IS not uncommon for couples return to a favourite holiday destination year after year but 40 years ago one Lancashire couple fell so much in love with one Ardbrecknish guesthouse, they have just returned home from their 80th visit.

Rockhill Country House, owned by Brian and Helen Whalley is practically a second home to Milton and Jeanne Eccles who visit Ardbrecknish an average of two times a year.

But for those who believe in fate, it will come as no surprise they chose Rockhill to visit for the first time in 1966.

Milton and Brian, who is also from Lancashire, worked at the same Blackburn depot for the electricity board in 1949.

Brian's sister also worked alongside Jeanne for 15 years.

When the Eccles' booked a holiday at Rockhill they didn't realise the history of the two families until it came up in conversation.

It was in their first visit they also realised the size of Loch Awe.

Helen said: 'After dinner on one of their first days, they decided to go for a drive around Loch Awe. We told them it was a long loch but they left anyway.'

'At about 11.30pm that night we got a phone call from them saying they were in Kilchrenan and we were not to lock them out!'

And so 40 years since that first visit the Eccles' arrive every May and September and stay for weeks

80th visit to Lorn guesthouse



Brian and Helen Whalley, left, with Milton and Jeanne Eccles and the Whalley's dog, Mickey at Rockhill Guesthouse.

at a time in Ardbrecknish.

'We are very attached to the place,' Milton told *Lorn Life* with a chuckle.

'It is beautiful and we don't get kicked out in the mornings, we can relax a bit more.'

'Originally we would come up to water ski which, over the years, has had to go but we have made a lot of friends in the area.'

'Our family have come here to visit too but we have also been around Scotland to the likes of Shetland, Orkney, Skye and Islay.'

On having the Eccles visiting twice a year, Helen remarked: 'It is a bit like having an extended family.'

Helen met Brian when he was a guest at Rockhill and they married three years later in 1964. The house had

been bought by Helen's father, Ralf Hodge in 1954 as a farm but in 1956 the family took in their first guests after the old Ardbrecknish House Hotel overbooked.

Since then Brian and Helen have also bred top class Hanoverian horses and there are around 600 of them across the world today.

Helen had been introduced to Lorn while holidaying with her grandfather, Captain T E Hodge in Appin.

He had bought Creagan Farm on his retirement and built Cnoc Lodge, then known as Hodge's Castle. Captain Hodge was in charge of the minesweeping fleet based in Oban during World War I and his accuracy with a gun gave him the nickname 'One shot Hodge'.