

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS



AND HAPPY 15th BIRTHDAY TO THE CORNCRAKE, WHICH FIRST APPEARED IN JANUARY 2000
(what larks! Do you remember the Millenium Bug Y2K? The River of Fire? The Dome? The Wobbly Bridge? Tee hee!)

School Christmas Dinner

Kilchattan Primary School hosted a magnificent Christmas Dinner on Thursday 18th, which earned a huge vote of thanks from all concerned for the good offices of Sarah Moss, school-cook and widely famed for her baking skills. The children and staff kindly invited all parents to attend, together with members of the School Council and others who participate in the life of the school. The children were excellent and thoughtful hosts and a great time was had by all – thank you.

Nativity Play 18th December

A triumph! Without exception, the children were absolutely brilliant; Mary (Eve) brought forth the baby as readily as a rabbit from a hat, whilst Joseph (Seamus) was nothing if not supportive. The way in which the Shepherds (Ella, Rosie and Felix) showed their excitement was most impressive and the angelic nature of Gabriel (Emma) was a foil to the more earthy character of the Innkeeper (Jamie). Some people played more than one role (e.g. the Three Kings), but they drew the line at a pantomime horse for the Flight into Egypt and had a beautifully made model donkey instead.

The truly remarkable aspect was the quality of the singing – the choral harmony was excellent, Ella and Eve both sang splendid solos and everyone is to be congratulated on strong, confident diction and voice projection.

Grateful thanks to head-teacher Gill McKenzie and her team, Jodi, Sue and Shona. This was the first Nativity Play in the church for some years, and it attracted a large attendance. A collection was taken in aid of Mary's Meals and generously supported.

The Christmas Tree

There was a party for young and old in the Village Hall on Tuesday 23rd, with plenty of games and sumptuous refreshments. The youngsters at Kilchattan were augmented by their elder fellow students from the mainland and when Santa quite suddenly appeared it turned out that **everyone** had been good. It was a splendid event and everyone was most grateful to those who did the work, not least the elves from Colonsay Fire Brigade who had erected the tree and decked the hall.



On Christmas Eve there was a large turnout for the popular and significant Watchnight Service of Carols and Readings, conducted by Alastair Scouller, followed afterwards by refreshments and fellowship through the generous hospitality of The Colonsay Hotel.

Colonsay Community Development Company

The Directors of CCDC recently circulated island households, advising them of the next scheduled Board Meeting, 8th January, which is as usual open to all shareholders (and apparently to members of the public also). In their message they pointed out that the Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary and two directors had recently resigned, together with one half of the job-sharing Local Development Officer. As things stand, the remaining four directors constitute a bare quorum; shareholders are invited to attend the next meeting and offer themselves as potential directors, so as to strengthen the Board.

No explanation was offered as to why the rest of the Board had resigned, or as to why this crisis has arisen so suddenly. As far as is known, CCDC has been vibrant and proactive over a lengthy and successful period and shareholders may rightly wonder exactly what circumstances arose in which all the key members of the Board felt obliged to resign, yet which apparently caused less concern to that minority which remains in office. This matter lies at the crux of the issue and is the subject of local speculation and anxiety. One feels uncomfortable to point it out, but in the words of the remaining directors themselves “Even issues that are difficult should not be a barrier” to an “open and transparent working ethos for the company”. Presumably there will be clarification on this

issue, since any newly appointed directors will be adopting those joint and individual legal responsibilities which accompany the role of a company directorship.

The full text of the circulated document is given in the Magazine section, below. Although five bullet points for priorities are given, these do not include the project to obtain sites for affordable housing, which was the subject of a specific mandate recently sought from and provided by the community. The only glancing reference to that subject appears as an “also ran” near the bottom of the quite lengthy communication.

JESSIE McNEILL 1940 - 2014

Islanders and friends from far and wide were saddened to learn of the death of Jessie McNeill on Friday 12th December at Lorn and the Islands Hospital, peacefully after some months of illness. Some 1,300 persons registered her passing on Friends of Colonsay FaceBook site alone, and many people paid fulsome tributes. Jessie’s funeral took place on Tuesday 16th at the parish church, despite her reservations as to whether she would manage the steps. The church was filled with mourners, including many from a distance, and there were many flowers. Jessie had chosen her own hymns (Be Thou My Vision and Here I am Lord), had chosen to leave to Highland Cathedral and surprised us all by choosing to preface the service with a lively version of “Grandma’s Feather Bed”, accompanied by the banjo. Reference in the eulogy was made to the film made by Rachel Hendry; to see Rachel’s film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXvZTuyyoel> , go to YouTube and search on “Colonsay My Friend My Hero”.

After the more formal eulogy (which can be seen in the Magazine section, below), Seamus McNeill paid a fine personal tribute on behalf of the family:

“My first memories of Jessie are when, as a small boy, I would walk the 100 yards from our house to the farmhouse along with Donald McMillan, our neighbour, as he went to collect his milk. Jessie lived in the farmhouse with my Granny and grandfather or “sheanair” as we called him. She spent most of her day working on the farm with my Dad. She could be seen out in the fields tending the sheep, in the byre milking the cows or in the henhouse, gathering the eggs.

“When I left high school and returned home was when I joined the group of young folk going to Jessie’s on a Sunday night for a game of cards and a pancake or two. I have seen as many as 50 people crammed into the dorrán house at Machrins on a Sunday night in the summer.

“Jessie used to win her fair share - or maybe more than her fair share - of card games but I think this was probably more down to cheating than skill! Some of Jessie’s longest serving, card-playing friends, including the Binnie family and Alastair and Jane Robertson, continued to visit Jessie to play cards up until quite recently.

“If Jessie’s card nights were famous, her pancakes were infamous. Although I have a different description for them but I cannot use words like that in church. Actually maybe now is the time to confess that I actually enjoyed a pancake or two on a Sunday night.

“Jessie was also famous for some of the wonderful phrases and statements she came out with and I would like to share them with you. While discussing her funeral arrangements she said “I want the

funeral to be in the Church of Scotland...och no what am I talking about, I can't get into that church!!"

"I think one of Jessie's greatest qualities was that everyone she met, from the youngest to the oldest, was made to feel like a friend and I think it's safe to say that hundreds of friends have passed through Jessie's door during her lifetime.

"Not everyone just passed in and out of Jessie's house. When her cousin, Ross Moodie, decided to stay on Colonsay he shared a house with Jessie. Although Jessie was at pains to point out that they were sharing a house and NOT living together!

"The most eagerly awaited visits to her house were, of course, those made by her sister, Mary. Sometimes Mary would arrive unannounced and sometimes she would come for "a few days" and end up staying for a few weeks. I don't know how many times I had to change her ferry ticket!

"As a family we feel the deepest heartache at her passing but we also have the fondest memories of all. I am pretty sure that Jessie is up there smiling down on us today as we say our goodbyes and I know that after the initial grief is over we, her family and friends, will remember Jessie with a smile on our faces because that is how she made you feel.

"I would like to finish with a phrase, probably in colloquial Gaelic, that I know my mum and, I am sure, Auntie Mary used when speaking to Jessie:

"Tioraidh a dh'aithghearr, a' Sheonaid." Simply: "Goodbye for now, Jessie.""

BETTY PATON d. December 2014

It was with great sadness that all who knew Betty Paton heard of her passing, 17th December. Betty and Ian made their home at Maggie Thomson's Cottage in the 1990s and played a very active part in the life of the community; even after they moved away they remained in touch with friends and neighbours and they retained a link with the island through the family property, Glebe Cottage. Betty had been pre-deceased by Ian, but still visited Colonsay when she could and will be sadly missed by her wide circle of friends. Her funeral is to be on January 2nd and a wreath is to be laid on behalf of her old friends in Colonsay.

CAN YOU HELP?

Capt. MacKinnon

John MacArthur of Uragaig was related to Dougie MacKinnon, working as a gamekeeper in Dumfries, and encouraged him to move to Colonsay in the late 1940s or so; the exact relationship is uncertain, possibly going back to a connection in the Ross of Mull. Dougie MacKinnon had a brother who had emigrated to Canada and was a sea captain (Master Mariner). He visited Dougie in Colonsay in the 1950s but died soon afterwards on his return to Canada. John MacArthur's grandson would be very glad to know of any further details as he will be visiting Ontario and would like to connect with any extended family there.

THE BAPTIST MANSE

The very unusual 1930s roof of the Baptist Manse (architect Balfour "Baffy" Paul) began to give serious problems so has been stripped and recovered in a heavy-duty sort of Onduline. It was

decided that the very odd profile should be normalised, but the roofers managed to go some way to maintain the illusion with vertically-hung slates at each corner. A very happy solution.



THE MARINE-LITTER CAMPAIGN

This campaign is now entering its third year and has been incredibly successful. The initial task was almost overwhelming, but it was much easier in the second year and it is hoped that 2015 will be easier again, so that more time can be devoted to specific problem areas. The project is based upon a five-year plan, aimed at ensuring recognition for Colonsay as being environmentally outstanding.

The initial list of “problems” is being steadily whittled away. Obviously the wind-blown detritus of generations had to be removed from the machair, bracken and bog that fringes the coast, a task that was accomplished in the first year. Subsequently large and awkward items were identified and removed, ranging from lorry wheels through mooring ropes and fishing nets to domestic waste from pre-binlorry days (corrugated iron, cookers, fireplaces etc). During December 2014, a huge quantity of plastic was removed from the bed of Abhuinn a’ Mhuillinn at Kiloran Bay, also a giant tar-encrusted mooring rope from beside the Dog-pool and an enormous fishing net from Rubha an Dearg Sgeir, Garvard.

In 2015, it might be good to undertake one of the biggest projects of all, if there is any support. The idea is to gather up all the scattered but fairly manageable old machinery parts from Rubha Aird Alanais and add that material to the much larger assemblage in the gully below the Coastguard Lookout hut (which contains asbestos sheeting, old brake linings etc.). It should then be possible to cover the entire thing with a layer of sand (and maybe some dung) so that it can become grassed over. If this were to happen, it would need the help of some competent person with a tractor and bucket to volunteer – one good day’s work would do for the heavy work, then the sand could be added later. Maybe it could be a joint enterprise by the Young Farmers?

Such dumps as these arose from necessity, not because anybody wanted to trash the island but because at the time it was by far the best solution available. Nowadays we have the facilities and ability to revisit them and make them safe for children and wildlife, without inhibiting any future archaeologists. It is all a matter of environmental stewardship – if you are happy to help, please contact Kevin, who is co-ordinating the effort with the support of the Community Council.



The gully that might be filled in and grassed over



The more manageable deposit near the point which might be removed

CHRISTMAS COMPETITION RESULT

Our illustration is from David Wilson's Colonsay Map of 1808. Good copies were available at the Post Office and Pantry and readers were challenged to locate and describe any trace of the building in the enclosure, which obviously lies somewhere between The Black Gate and Machrins Farm.



The temporary editor launched an expedition so as to be able to judge the results; after much scrambling about it was confirmed that the initial suspicion was correct – the very distinctive kink in the middle of the north-western boundary wall is readily identifiable on the left-hand side of the road about 150 metres west of The Quarry (recycling depôt). The mapped boundary is about 1000 yards in length, and essentially contains one large rocky summit and a wedge of “arable” land closer to the road. The only trace of a house seemed to be a rectangular footing, the remnant of a building that took advantage of a former sguid site for shelter.



One wonders why such a tiny if coherent holding came to be acknowledged by the map-maker; a possible suggestion is that it was provided for the Catechist, a local person who acted as a Lay-minister on behalf of the Jura-based Minister. The official glebe was very close at hand and very possibly the Catechist was able to rent it from the Minister to supplement his holding.



The outline of the building is in the left foreground.

The challenge ran as follows: *A “D” shaped enclosure is shewn to the south of the road and midway between the east and west coasts, on “Machry Beg”, and within that enclosure a building is marked. Can you find any trace of that building? A photograph and accurate GPS reference would be good, together with a description. We offer a £10 Book Token redeemable at Colonsay Bookshop for the best submission, which we hope to publish in the January edition. As far as is known, no previous attempt has been made to locate this site.*

There was only one response, so the prize goes to Alastair Scouller. He entered from elsewhere, so did not check it out on the ground: "Re your 'poser' in the new Corncrake: this must be very near the present road, at the Machrins S-bends. I think this is certainly the chapel of Cille Bhríde (Loder, p.76 and map), presumably with its burial ground. Loder says: 'The last traces were removed by the farmer in 1881', and also states (p.164) that the shaft of a cross taken from the cemetery (aha!) is the stone known as the Ballan Stiallach near Machrins Farmhouse."

Details of the next competition will be found in the Magazine Section (below).

COME TO COLONSAY IN 2015

The island website lists all available accommodation and includes up-to-date vacancy charts either on that site or via a link to individual websites – go to www.colonsay.org.uk CalMac are keen to improve our ferry services as much as possible, with the result that various timings have been tweaked. A summary here would be too confusing – the simplest thing is to simply check online at www.calmac.co.uk You will find that there is a neat pdf. file so you can easily print a copy of the Colonsay timetable for ready reference.

The **Book Festival** is the weekend of 24th April. For the **Festival of Spring** come for all or any of the first three weeks in May. **MacPhee-Bagging** is on May 4th. **The Music Festival** – Ceol Colbhasa – is on 17th – 20th September; and the **October Festival** is in the first half of October.

COLONSAY GATHERING CANCELLED

The Gathering is a chance for folk who love Colonsay to get together for a dinner and ceilidh on the mainland every second year, and is normally an opportunity to raise funds for CCDC. The next one had been planned for February at Crianlarich but prevailing circumstances are not encouraging; it has therefore been CANCELLED. The organisers apologise to all who had expressed their support and hope that the event can be re-scheduled to a more auspicious time.

COLONSAY & ORONSAY HERITAGE TRUST

The restoration of the Scalasaig minor light is making good progress and we expect the completed light chamber to be returned to the island in March 2015. The Trust plan to re-erect the light as a feature in Scalasaig with information panels giving some background history to the light which was originally erected in 1903 by David A Stevenson. We also plan to create a "lighthouse trail" with directions to the optic which is a central feature in the walled garden at Colonsay House and originally came from the Rubh a'Mhail lighthouse on the sound of Islay. The other lighthouse to feature which is visible from the Heritage centre at Port Mor is Dubh Artach some 16 miles west of Colonsay.



NATURE NOTES FROM RSPB

This very popular feature was delayed due to ongoing broadband difficulties, but it is hoped that it can appear later. If so, it will be in the “bells and whistles” version, but probably not in the pdf version which some people prefer on tablets etc. When it does appear, there will be mention on Friends of Colonsay, Facebook. Incidentally, this seems a good opportunity to express our thanks to Izzy Baker for producing such a valuable and enjoyable column each month – it is much appreciated.

HOLIDAY LETTINGS

The phenomenal success of AirBnB is apparently distorting property values in many places; seemingly people purchase residential property and then rent it out for short lets without seeking change of use or meeting the relevant legal constraints. Things have got so bad in Paris that they now have a law (widely flouted) whereby anybody converting a residential property to short-term holiday letting must either build and provide a replacement or purchase a commercial property and convert it to residential use.

It does seem strange that in the UK one can convert a residential property to commercial use without any constraint, provided that the commercial use is of no obvious benefit to the wider community (such as by becoming a corner shop, hairdresser, manufacturing or repair business, consultancy, cafe etc.). In fact, the practice is actually encouraged in most areas, by a reduced level of Council Tax payable on “second homes”.

The BBC ran something on this at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-30580295>

“THE CORNCRAKE”

The editor’s chair is vacant still – the position is unpaid, but it is rewarding in other ways. The main purpose of the magazine is to maintain links with the island’s extended community – friends, relations, regular visitors, occasional visitors or people whose roots or hearts are in the island. If you live in Colonsay please contact any Director of Colonsay Community Development Company to let them know you might be interested.

POLITICS

In the “bad old days”, members of the House of Lords inherited their position because of some ancient ancestral merit. As time went by, the descendants of the great and the good developed into a motley crew – some were rich, some poor; some gifted, some dull; some honest, some less honest etc. In fact, by natural progression, the House of Lords came to reflect society at large, able to represent the population in a fairly random way but without the stigma of political placement. Nowadays, the hereditary peerage has been swept away and been replaced by unelected political appointees, persons whose slavish dedication to the party line or lavish donations to its coffers have earned them this reward from their cronies, being paid handsomely and undeservedly at OUR expense. Is this really an improvement? The old way was at least a genuine lottery, whereas the present game is surely rigged.

On the Grapevine:

The most exciting news appeared on FaceBook – Colonsay is expecting a baby, hopefully about mid-summer, and we wish every happiness to the prospective parents and grandparents; Roz and Chris are hoping to move permanently into the island; the Argyll & Bute PC in the Service Point has been offline for three months, which means that it is unavailable for the registration of births, marriages or deaths; the editor had a fault on his BT telephone and broadband from November 24th until it was (fingers crossed) fixed on 27th December; Richard and Tanis are keen to mark the 80th anniversary of the publication of *Colonsay and Oronsay* by John de Vere Loder – is a reprint of the 2nd edition a possibility? John Bridges is planning to grow a crop of wheat and is apparently slaving away on the restoration of an old binder; a plague of mice in Kilchattan seems to be thrilled by the humane trap

and delighted by portions of Tunnock's wafer, but it is costing a fortune in fuel to keep crossing to Oransay to release them;

MAGAZINE SECTION

NEW YEAR RESOLUTION – AND A QUIZ!

The recent successes by such persons as the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury are a reminder that ours is nominally at least a Christian society, and that there are aspects of our great Christian tradition of which we can be proud. Many people no longer choose to participate in "organised" religion, but a passing acquaintance with the basics of a 1,500 year old tradition is not to be sneezed at. References occur in daily life - in literature, music, art and of course the ubiquitous pub quiz. Almost everyone has vaguely intended to catch up on the bible, so here is your chance.

As an entirely intellectual exercise (no religious agenda) *The Corncrake* is starting an experimental series. Each month, a book of the bible is to be mentioned, readers then have a whole month to dig it out and refresh their memory and at the end of the month there is to be a simple quiz. Competitors are trusted NOT to go online for the answers but can, of course, refer to the original text. The two winners will be selected in a random way; if resident in Colonsay the adult prize will be a bottle of wine from the shop, and if resident elsewhere it will be a book about Colonsay. For under 16s there will be a £5.00 voucher of the folding variety.

Logically enough, the title chosen for January is **Genesis**, describing the "origins" of the world as conceived about 500 B.C. There is a good Wikipedia introduction under "Book of Genesis" for background reference (but be specific or you will get the band instead). To enter the competition, just read the actual text in January (it is not very long) and be ready for the quiz in our February edition! Details of how to enter will appear then.

FROM THE "OBAN TIMES" 12th September 1868

COLONSAY & ORONSAY. Boat Races—These annual races came off to-day at Scallasaig. There was a large number of the male population mustered to view the sight, but as it was a fine harvest as well as sailing day a large proportion the "beauty and fashion" of the island had to remain at home. We observed among the spectators A. Macneill. Esq.; John Macneill Esq.; Mrs and Misses Macneill, Kiloran; Colonel Macneill. ; Miss Campbell, North Knapdale, etc. The prizes were liberal and the competition keen. There was this year observable a marked improvement in the outfit and handling of the sailing boats, while the rowing, which does not seem popular, barely attained the standard of former years. Particulars of the races, together with the names of the owners of the winning boats, follow :

For Sailing Boats, lugger-rigged. Nine boats started at 1.40 p.m., and passed the winning buoy

1. Maid of Oransay. Colonel Macneill 2.10 pm.
2. Rebecca. John Macneill Esq. 2.48 pm.
3. Gypsy. Mr. Campbell, Kilchattan 2.49 pm.
4. Lively. Mr Maclean, Riskbuie

For Jolly Boats, 4 Oars, under 20 feet

1. Barge. A.Macneill Esq.
2. Hornet. John Maclellan, Scallasaig
3. Albert. Neil Macmillan, Scallasaig

FULL TEXT OF COLONSAY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMPANY CIRCULAR

Update on recent developments.

The Directors of Colonsay Community Development Company (CCDC) which includes Colonsay Trading Company (CTC) is making an urgent appeal to all local people to come forward and help run this vital community organisation. The company is, as many charities often do, going through a period of turmoil and it is at this time more than any other that we require support to bring some stability and assist with the delivery of projects vital to the island and its residents.

The Chair, Treasurer, Company Secretary and two Directors have recently resigned from the board for various reasons and these roles are critical to our governance and continued financial support from HIE. There are periods when being a Director can be quite time consuming, which poses challenges for those already working in demanding jobs and we hope to work towards a balance of ensuring that the Board roles are not too onerous and that we can better support one another for the greater good and continued survival of our island.

One of the Local Development Officers has also recently tendered her resignation. This leaves only 4 directors managing all CCDC responsibilities, two of whom are new in the role. It also leaves the remaining LDO in a challenging situation and may likely have an impact on CCDC's working relationship with the Service point staff – they do essential work on behalf of CCDC and CTC.

Being a Director is an important job and at times challenging. It does however offer opportunity for learning, professional development and most importantly, it ensures our island gets the critical support through HIE and Government that we need. CCDC is responsible for developing and managing our community assets and businesses through an approach which should be open and inclusive. Going forward, the remaining Directors are committed to ensuring CCDC and CTC be open and transparent and will, with the support of our partners and the community, strive to put systems in place (taking account of the need for confidentiality where appropriate) to help us achieve that. To support the Directors of CCDC in strengthening the Board, we are working with HIE to get funding for a business coach to advise and support the company through this difficult period. This will also help new Directors coming on board to be safe in the knowledge they are able to carry out their roles confidently and in line with best practice.

The core aims of CCDC remain as relevant today as they were when the company was established. However there are clear priorities which CCDC need to deal with in the short term:

- Recruit more Directors, a Company Secretary and appoint a new Chair.
- Recruit a Treasurer to work with the board on maintaining accounts and ensuring the supply of coal, gas and fuel.
- Finish the crofting project.
- Creation of a more open and transparent working ethos for the company. Even issues that are difficult should not be a barrier to this. Again taking account of Data Protection and confidentiality where appropriate. (Advice and Guidance from HIE and the dedicated Business Coach will support us in achieving that balance).

- Work with the community to establish strategic priorities for CCDC that are needed, wanted and achievable. It will be a case of getting back to basics and starting from there.

The most pressing issue for CCDC is delivering the final stage of the croft project in a manner that protects the community's ownership of the land and at the same time allows the croft tenants to realise their dreams of starting a new way of life on Colonsay. CCDC appreciate the difficulty of starting a new life on Colonsay so will endeavour to help as much as possible. However there are a number of issues to deal with at present to achieve a positive outcome for all concerned. Getting to the stage where the community, crofters and planning department are happy with the outcome must be our main priority. Being a community body CCDC are required to comply with relevant regulations and law and as such will require the community crofters to do the same.

The appointment of a new Company Secretary, Treasurer and book-keeper is important to CCDC and CTC. CTC also plays an important part in the lives of local people and along with Colonsay General Store this is mainly down to the hard work of our Directors. A great deal of backstage work goes on to ensure that we have fuel for our cars and coal on the fire. The accounting of CCDC is relatively straight forward but is vital if the company is to be able to maintain compliance with the charity regulator OSCR and most importantly continue to supply residents with coal gas and fuel.

The remaining Directors of CCDC see the challenges that have arisen as an opportunity to reset the company but we need more Directors to ensure we comply with our constitutional and community representation obligations. Ultimately we want to ensure that vital services for the island continue.

There are exciting new projects in the pipeline such as a community wind turbine to generate much needed revenue and a faster broadband project amongst others. CCDC have also been working hard to create some affordable housing on the island. So there are positives to look forward to but it needs people to be part of it to make them happen.

If you feel you have something to offer and are interested in having a conversation about joining the company, please contact Acting Chair, Keith Rutherford and come to the next open meeting, 8th January 2015 – where we can discuss the possibilities. It is vital that Colonsay has a vibrant and effective community body working for the future of the island. Are you one of the people that can help make this happen?

In addition to the meeting of the 8th January, a General Meeting of CCDC will be planned as soon as practicable to discuss the future of CCDC to which all will be urged to attend. It will give everyone a chance to have their say. Before the meeting is arranged CCDC would prefer that the business coach is in place. This would give much needed guidance at a difficult time and will give the chance to assess community feeling first hand.

Keith Rutherford / Andrew MacGregor / Chris Nisbet / Donald MacAllister Jnr

EULOGY FOR JESSIE McNEILL

“ Jessie was born on 4th March 1940, the elder daughter of Roger and Grace McNeill of Machrins Farm; she was, of course, a native Gaelic speaker and, like her brother Alasdair and her younger sister Mary, Jessie was raised on the farm, went to school at Kilchattan and dearly loved her native island. It seemed as if Jessie was never especially keen to roam very far, since her heart was in Machrins and there she remained until moving comparatively recently to her new house at Scalasaig. Yet, although Jessie seldom travelled even as far as Oransay or Balnahard, she was a fount of knowledge about places and traditions. Of course, much of this will have come naturally, since in

Jessie's youth, the school at Kilchattan had many more pupils, usually three dozen or so, latterly under the tutelage of schoolmaster Duncan Mitchell.

"After leaving school Jessie worked mainly on the farm for some years, whilst her aunts Jessie and Jeannie came to give a hand each summer in the household. As her mother's health declined, Jessie devoted more of her time to looking after her, until her passing in September 1968. In due course she worked with Peggy and Angus at the hotel, where she took charge of housekeeping.

"Most of us who are here today will have known Jessie in more recent years – my own family came to know her after we arrived at the hotel in 1978, knowing nothing of Colonsay or its special wee challenges. Jessie immediately and generously took us under her wing and guided us through many a tricky situation; her immense kindness and concern for our young children is a source of happy memories – a loving, uplifting influence. In those days there were quite a lot of youngsters working at the hotel, frequently from distant parts – Jessie generously mentored them all, helping to shape their maturity and self-esteem; many stayed in touch, and would have wished to be here to pay their respects today.

"Jessie was always at the centre of a devoted circle – her home was the venue for weekly card games, which were a great excuse for every sort of frivolity for the young folk. Her pancakes and clottie dumplings were the stuff of song and legend – when auctioned after the Annual Show they attracted fierce competition and sold for serious money. Jessie's Christmas card deliveries saw Keith bent almost double under the heavy load, and her home was also the first port of call for her wide circle of friends and relations back from the mainland. It was by far the best place to turn to for authentic news from far and wide. Mind you, although you got "the news", you would never get mere gossip – whatever the circumstances, Jessie would never wish a bad word to be said about anyone. It was this spirit of generosity and unfailing good nature that made her such a very special person, someone to whom we all could turn if in need of comfort or advice, whether we be young or old.

"Sadly, Jessie was struck by serious illness, a burthen that she accepted and conquered. Even in retirement, and with great problems of mobility, Jessie continued to play a very active part in the life of the island. She was consulted about the various social activities being planned, and supported all that she could, and she was a stalwart supporter of the "Tuesday Club", helping to maintain a bond between the primary schoolchildren and an older generation. Jessie even ran an almost daily one-woman car-sharing operation, ensuring that three or four friends could enjoy some quality time together at the Pantry, to be followed by a particularly sedate circuit of her beloved island, pausing to savour favourite views. In fact, this was recently the subject of an award-winning video made by Alison's daughter Rachel, and which enjoyed widespread acclaim.

"In recent months, Jessie's health deteriorated and she was hospitalised for a lengthy period. Her family were there for her throughout, and they wish to pay particular tribute to her sister Mary and her truly devoted care.

"Colonsay is diminished by Jessie's passing, but she has left us all a lasting legacy in happy memories and good example. On behalf of all friends and neighbours, I offer our deepest sympathy to her loving sister, Mary, to her many nieces, nephews and cousins and to all other members of the family."

Letters to the Editor:

There aren't any. Pity.

By The Way : If you are interested in either Colonsay History or Colonsay Family History, please see www.colonsayhistory.info where you will find links to two relevant occasional newsletters. They are a private ploy by Kevin Byrne and contributions are very welcome. There has been a flurry of interest in Bonaveh recently and an article seems to be in gestation – if anybody can add information, photographs or reminiscences please email [byrne\[at\]Colonsay.org.uk](mailto:byrne[at]Colonsay.org.uk)

In Conclusion

The Corncrake was started in January 2000 “Created and edited by Kevin Byrne”, who edited the first 100 editions. The first edition stated that it was “Published to keep all our friends in touch with life on the island” and invited contributions from the readership, noting that “Brief genealogical and related queries are also welcome from Colbhasachs overseas, as are obituaries and family traditions relating to Colonsay emigrants.”

Coincidentally, the current edition was also produced Kevin Byrne, as a temporary editor, and any comments will be welcomed if addressed to byrne@colonsay.org.uk As was always the case, the publication is not intended to be completely anodyne, but any errors or omissions are regretted, and anything seriously annoying will if possible be suitably modified.