

The Corncrake March 2015

Mr. and Mrs Keir and Grace Johnston

Keir and Grace were married in a humanist ceremony at Colonsay Hotel on Saturday 21st February, in a very moving rite conducted by Annie Loughlin, celebrant. The bride was given away by her father, Angus MacPhee, and was accompanied by a plentiful and very lovely band of maids of honour. Your correspondent is unskilled in these matters, but the bridal gown was jolly nice and had a (fishtail?) train, and the maids were in very fetching blue dresses. The room had been decorated with white silken hangings and discreet chains of starlight, and was entered through a decorated archway of interlaced hazel.



The reception was in the Village Hall, opening with champagne toasts and brief but well-delivered speeches. Angus was as humorous as ever, but made a particular point of paying tribute to Keith and Shirley for all their support to the young family; Keir was very good to remember all those he should be thanking, and did not forget his parents, and Best Man Donald MacAllister had a tale of daring-do that must have startled the Groom both at the time and again on the night.



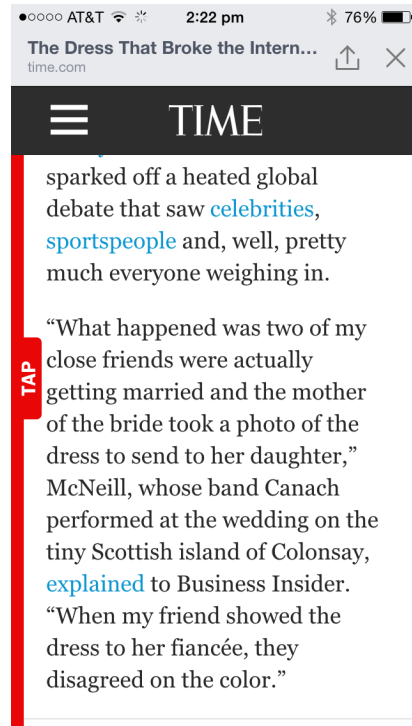
Speeches were followed by a sumptuous wedding breakfast prepared by Sarah Moss and with refreshments organised by Gavin Clark. **Caitlin McNeill** and her band, **Canach**, provided live music and were indefatigable - the range and quality of their repertoire was simply splendid. A great time was had by all, included those who partied on beyond the wee sma' hours. Sunday was only a little quieter, and the festivities were slightly extended by the cancellation of Monday's ferry. Nobody minded and all who needed to go were able to leave on Tuesday when Hebridean Airways laid on additional flights.



That Dress

An incredible story arose after the wedding. Seemingly Grace's mother had been wondering about a dress that she thought of wearing, so she sent a picture to Grace for an opinion. Due to some optical illusion (apparently due to individual "settings" of the visual spectrum) Keir saw the original photo as blue and black and Grace saw white and gold. To settle the debate Grace put the pic on Facebook and it was debated among family and friends. Caitlin McNeill thought this was interesting and mentioned it on Tumblr and it quite suddenly went viral. By the end of the week it was in the national papers as well

and by Friday morning it had become the biggest “story” in the world. By the time the editor of *The Corncrake* had heard about it, more than 22,000,000 people had already engaged with the debate about the colours, and the numbers were still rising, eventually passing 55 million. If only each one had sent a pound to Caitlin to thank her for telling them about it....



COLONSAY BOOK FESTIVAL - 25 & 26 April 2015 <http://www.colonsaybookfestival.org.uk/>

Grateful thanks to our generous sponsors, especially Marine Harvest, CalMac Ferries, Hebridean Airways, Colonsay Brewery, Colonsay Bookshop, Lord & Lady Strathcona and Colonsay Estate.

C.C.D.C. Extraordinary General Meeting

Colonsay Community Development Company had called an E.G.M. because the majority of Board members had resigned, leaving a bare quorum and an administrative problem which could not be resolved. The EGM was held in the village Hall on Tuesday 25th February and in advance of the meeting a substantial number of shareholders had been enrolled, bringing the total to something more than forty persons. The meeting was well-attended, almost fifty people were present, the majority of whom were shareholders.

Keith Rutherford chaired the meeting, having made it clear that all four remaining directors were standing down, to whit himself plus Chris Nisbet, Andrew MacGregor and

Donald MacAllister Jr. The resolution before the meeting was read out and shareholders were invited to accept the role of directorship. There was a good response, and the following were appointed: Caitlin McNeill, Sue Dance, Alex Howard, Andrew Abrahams, William Joll, Trevor Patrick, David Hobhouse and Morag Grant. There being only eight positions to be filled, the appointments were ratified by acclamation.

The new directors had been assured that no issues of liability or major difficulty are known to exist, the company is in good financial heart, more than forty persons have offered to undertake the advertised mentoring role for the new board, the outgoing board members will assist in a transitional period and there are hopes to secure the services of a book-keeper and a secretary to assist the new board. Some people puzzlingly expressed a wish for better communications - minutes are currently distributed by email, posted online and available in printed form at the Service Point, but it seems that there are those who would wish them to be printed out and distributed to every shareholder after every meeting. Meetings are, of course, open to the public and the Service point is open each weekday morning.

There being no further business, Pedie McNeill took the opportunity to propose a well-deserved and popular vote of thanks to all those who had served the company so faithfully in the past, including mention of both Andrew Abrahams and Christa Byrne who had both been there since its very inception.

S.S. “Arandora Star”

The 75th anniversary of the tragic loss of the Arandora Star arises on 2nd July 2015, an event in which over 800 individuals perished. The people of Colonsay were profoundly touched, since a number of the bodies were recovered locally. The sinking was never forgotten locally and the thoughtful compassion of the Colbhasachs of that time was recently marked by the townspeople of Borgo Val di Taro when they granted honorary citizenship to the entire population of Colonsay.

Military historian Alan Davis has helped to keep the story alive and provided an excellent resource which is hosted on our community website at <http://www.colonsay.org.uk/About/Arandora-Star> . To mark the anniversary he is working with Colonsay and Oronsay Heritage Trust to mount an exhibition this spring - it will open on Saturday 25th April, in time for both the Book Festival and the Festival of Spring. There will also be an organised visit to the Colonsay cliff-top memorial for those who might be interested - further details will follow, and there will doubtless be a further commemorative event on 2nd July itself.

COLONSAY FESTIVAL OF SPRING April 27 - May 17

<http://www.colonsay.org.uk/Events/Festival-of-Spring>

The festival is organised by the **Colonsay Tourism Marketing Group**, and kindly supported by **CalMac Ferries, Hebridean Air**, and our **amazing experts, contributors, and walk and workshop leaders** who all give of their time for nothing. These include a number of individual islanders who run events & conduct walks & talks year after year. There are also many businesses on the island that provide accommodation, venues, ingredients, coffee mornings and transport at a reduced or even complimentary rate. Without all of this generous sponsorship it would not have been possible to grow the festival in to the great success that it has become. A huge thanks to you all!!

Marine Harvest

Representatives of the company visited Colonsay and gave an update on the situation - the farm should be installed in July 2015 and there should be “fish in the water” during August. The team includes David MacGillivray, Area Manager of a large area in the West of Scotland and responsible for about 30,000 tonnes of salmon per year, assisted by Karen Lumley-Holmes who works on Planning matters and Chris Reid, the Environmental Manager. A meeting was held with the Community Council and the new CCDC Board members.

An interesting change in employment plans was described - it had been planned to employ 6 people locally but, in the light of experience at Muck, it is now intended that 10 people will be employed on the basis of 2 weeks on / 2 weeks off. This has fascinating implications - such a pattern could suit many local people e.g. crofters, fishermen etc., but it also could suit persons based on the mainland. In the case of Muck it did attract at least one family to take up residence locally - the flexibility involved is very welcome.

Accommodation needs were also discussed, although these are non-specific until recruitment is completed. At present there are believed to be no Colonsay applications pending, but the positions are to be advertised and there may well be information in the current Corncrake. Short term accommodation will also be needed, for support services such as auditors, divers and specialist individuals - this might make for B&B opportunities, although it would be hard to beat the excellent lodges beside the hotel.



Hazel Cottage and Annexe undergoing renovation

A shore facility is to be built for showers, wet-gear, refreshment etc., in the rough ground near the Pantry which was occupied by the team who built the linkspan (or some other recent project). There will be no industrial activity - all feedstuffs and stock movements will take place at the farm itself, where there is to be a permanent barge facility. The harbour may become a bit busier, to accommodate an 18m landing-craft, plus a 10m. RIB and two wee 6m RIBs.



Proposed hut-site, behind buoys

As promised, MH will be contributing £10k p.a. to the local community to support selected projects; the fund will be channelled through a representative body to be convened by the Community Council and there will be total transparency. There are no strict guidelines - in one case elsewhere, the funding was used to match grant and loans to build a wind-generator, thus creating a sustainable new revenue stream and gaining an environmental dividend.

Church Windows Appeal Update

Readers will remember that the Parish Church has two dangerous windows and has launched an appeal at <http://www.colonsay.info/text/Church%20Appeal.htm> The progress of the appeal is being regularly updated at that site, and Hazel Smith has kindly submitted applications to a couple of potential grant-givers on behalf of the parish. Amongst other things, a permanent page on JustGiving is being arranged, courtesy of our local publishing business House of Lochar, which has agreed to pay the monthly subscription fee.

All the details are on that page, but a number of people have asked how to contribute from overseas - once JustGiving is up and running it will be easier, but for now House of

Lochar will help. If you email byrne@colonsay.org.uk and suggest an amount and currency, you can be sent a request to pay by PayPal. Or, you could send credit card details by post to Kevin Byrne, Session Clerk, Isle of Colonsay, Argyll PA61 7YR. In either case, House of Lochar will process the payment, making no deductions of any kind, and forward the money to Andrew MacGregor, Hon. Treasurer together with an email to the donor and to Andrew specifying the name of the donor, the exact sterling sum and details of any In Memoriam message.

Over a million people have some contact with the Parish Church, by the baptism, marriage or funeral of some relation; persons contributing towards the Windows Appeal are invited to dedicate their gift (regardless of amount!) to any such person, to be recorded on the webpage and later to be transferred to the permanent website planned for summer 2015.

Hot news: Sara MacCulloch has been in touch - many people will remember her from the 1990s, working at the hotel in her student days. Sarah has offered us a water colour that she painted at that time, showing the western side of the church - we intend to offer it for auction and will be flagging it up on FaceBook and Twitter when everything is arranged. Many thanks to Sara, who we hope will come to see the completed work.



Colonsay Harbour Users Group

CHUG met recently with CalMac and looks forward to meeting with Marine Harvest as newcomers to the harbour later this year. Details were circulated to members who missed the meeting, and we publish here just a few salient points:

1. It was noted that an AIS mast has been fitted at Colonsay, so that the remote Harbour Master (and CHUG members) can monitor vessels in the Colonsay vicinity.
2. In the event of any problems, CHUG members should communicate with Colonsay Port staff, Matthew "Cammie" Cameron P.S., otherwise via Harbours Team at HQ, Gourock.

3. Any incidents are to be reported, for data not for blame - a Harbour Incident Report Form is available in the office. A dedicated website is in preparation and CHUG members will in future be able to access forms, directions, NTMs etc. on that site.
4. Arising from discussion, it was felt that two main hazards exist locally: a) craft often enter or leave the harbour, or pass the pier head, at an inappropriate speed causing potential personal danger to possible swimmers, risk of collision with unseen craft, and personal danger due to wash affecting small craft or children on the slipway. b) craft often choose to approach or leave the slipway whilst a ferry is approaching or departing the pier, despite the fact that ferries are scheduled and in any case can be seen from miles away.
5. In light of the points raised, a Notice to Mariners is to be issued, regulating speed and behaviour within the immediate harbour area; the harbour area extends to 1000 metres radius but the regulation will be restricted to the relevant zone.
6. Notices to Mariners of local interest are posted on the Notice Board at the terminal.
7. An entirely new lighting system is to be provided for the pier and linkspan.
8. CMAL are to be approached by Cameron MacPhail (CalMac) to explore possible improvements as a) provision of soft fendering and access ladders along the harbour wall; b) provision of (say) ten points for summer-time running moorings to permit small craft to be secured and accessed from the inner harbour shingle hard.



The mole (breakwater) used to be the berth for the packet, much the same size as the 18m. Marine Harvest landing-craft

The Colonsay App

Notice of a special App was given in our last issue. Since then over 60 “places of Interest” have been visited, described, photographed and mapped and committee members of the Colonsay & Oronsay Tourism Marketing Group are busily preparing details of local

businesses, details of beauty spots and other materials with which to “populate” the application.

Technical progress is very good and a mock-up version has been seen and approved. There was quite a debate as to a suitable title but eventually it was agreed to call it The Colonsay App. Most people will download the facility (which is to be free of charge) via a link from the website of some local business or from the community site, but there may be a few people who look for it via an online AppStore so the name might be important. It was noticed that some competitors have chosen rather obscure names, so perhaps Colonsay will gain some traction!



Dùn Meadhonach NR 365947

It is also worth noting that Colonsay is well-represented on Social Media - if you search for Colonsay you will find at least eight active sites; do have a look at **Friends of Colonsay**, which has almost 1,500 contacts and mostly consists of scraps of news, family history and photos old and new. Visitors to that page can post comments, queries and even photos of their own and, if the host notices in time he can repost them to the main page. Twitter is also worth a look - about six sites, with **Visit Colonsay** and **BookFest** being especially relevant. If you enjoy any of these sites do mention them to interested friends.

MacPhee Bagging on May 4th 2015

Please make a note to participate or sponsor someone... the idea is to climb all of the MacPhees (hills in excess of 300 ft), starting and finishing at a point below HWS. Get someone to sponsor you for (say) £1 a hill, and do just as many as you have the inclination for (Ho! Ho!). There are 22 hills and the total distance is about 20 miles, but it is not a race and to tackle even a few might be fun.

All funds raised go towards to Kilchattan P.S. Educational Travel fund, so it is an excellent cause. May 4th is a holiday, so perhaps the children will manage a few for themselves! For

further information, or to arrange a bit of practice, see <http://www.colonsay.org.uk/Things-to-Do/MacPhie-Bagging>

Bottled Water Campaign

With the help of GRAB, Colonsay Community Council has funded a small leaflet designed by Colonsay beach-litter artist Jane Rose <http://www.janerose.co.uk/> The leaflet is to discourage the use of bottled water, which is both expensive and environmentally damaging. Plastic bottles are the scourge of the seas - their harmful chemicals leach into the water and their tiny micro-particles have contaminated the seabed, quite literally worldwide. Other particles, which can contain PCBs, enter the food chain. As if all this was not enough, it takes approximately 3.5 litres of water to produce one litre in a bottle.

Incidentally, Colonsay and Oronsay remain unchallenged as being the only known Scottish islands to be virtually litter-free. Throughout the winter roadsides and paths have continued to be scoured and individual efforts have cleared beaches at Uragaig, Kiloran, Machrins, Garvard, Scalasaig, Glebe and Kilchattan. This work is also supported by Colonsay Community Council and the co-ordinated sweep along the entire 50 miles of coastline will recommence in March - notices will be posted and volunteers are vital.

Old Colonsay Photographs

A great deal of interesting material is coming to light, and it transpires that at least two old photographs from the album of Susan Carruthers McNeill appear in an album owned by the Richardson family in Canada. Another family that appears in the McNeill album has been found to feature in the collection of the late Jessie McNeill - sadly, unidentified. It is a very distinctive family so please have a look and get in touch if you can help with the identity.



The Coastguard Lookout

Would it be a good thing to restore this building? It would be a brilliant place for birdwatchers and photographers, especially during storms or for night sky photography and observation. Years ago, the famous war photographer Don McCullin used to come to Colonsay for R&R, to concentrate on photographing storm conditions. Now the world and his wife are claiming “dark skies” (even Coll, whose own light-pollution can be clearly seen from Colonsay!), but at least we have them - there are very few places polluting the night sky if you are looking from the CG Hut, not until you get to Canada.

It would also be a handy refuge for picnic parties on blustery or showery days - it would need seriously good windows, everything else should be within our local capabilities.



The Coastguard Lookout and a view from its window

Snippets: the honeymooners are thought to be heading for the south of France, via a week in Jamaica; the Homefield satellite broadband equipment is here and will soon be installed; the Colonsay Meteorological Observer (unpaid) is hoping to retire in the autumn after 25 years or more and would like to hear from anybody interested in the succession; Ivan is welcomed back again, to manage the hotel for the 2015 season; Colonsay House Gardens are to be open on Saturdays as well as Wednesdays this year; Dugie's croft (does anybody know its name?) has been transferred to Dave and Jan, who are very busy making it safe for horses whilst Walter is working to make the house wind and watertight; John and Diane Clark have moved to one of the "new" houses in Dell Odhran, and Marion Kennedy has moved away to be closer to her family - rumour has it that Marion's house will be leased to NHS for use by the island nurse; Lotta has been running a course in Polytunnel Gardening attended by 8 enthusiastic students; the pier and harbour are to be illuminated throughout the hours of darkness; Did you notice? - there is a little link to Last Minute Availability under Where to Stay on www.colonsay.org.uk

Letters etc.

No letters this time and not a lot of feedback from our last issue, but the few comments received were fortunately very positive. Nobody entered the "10 easy questions about Genesis" competition so there are no prizes and the competition is to be abandoned. An ongoing study of Bonaveh is nearing publication and if anybody has photographs or information they will be very welcome - details are still a bit light on the Galbraith period, the connection with Tobar Odhran and the days of Renee Hunter's tenancy. Anybody who is interested is welcome to read a draft copy of the essay in case they can add or correct any detail. When it is completed it will be published online, but it would be nice to have some good pictures and as few errors as possible. Contact byrne@colonsay.org.uk

In Conclusion

The Corncrake is published to keep all our friends in touch with life on the island and invites contributions. Brief genealogical and related queries are also welcome from Colbhasachs overseas, as are obituaries and family traditions relating to Colonsay emigrants. The current edition was produced Kevin Byrne, as a temporary editor, and any comments will be welcomed if addressed to byrne@colonsay.org.uk As usual, it is not intended to be completely anodyne, but any errors or omissions are regretted, and anything seriously annoying will if possible be suitably modified.

Please note that we are **still looking for a new editor** - any candidate should contact any member of the CCDC Board (which happens to own the publication and to be the ultimate governor).

Also - please keep an eye on both *Colonsay Kindred* and *Colonsay History*, two little newsletters run by Kevin Byrne; access them via www.colonsayhistory.info

