

THE CORNCRAKE

The Isle of Colonsay's online community newsletter

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Table of Contents

Page	Content
1	Spring festival best yet
4	Land reform report published at last
6	Community ownership brings real gain – says report
7	A letter from the community owners of Gigha
9	WW1 exhibition tells of Colonsay's contribution
11	Conference to mark centenary of Colonsay professor
12	Island fire crew beefed up
13	Seabird tracking underway – you can follow online
15	Strange visitor to Kiloran Bay
17	The story of the golf course stone
18	Hair today – gone tomorrow – in memory of Wee Davy
19	“First person” – a new feature profiling Colonsay folk
23	MSP Michael Russell writes for the Corncrake
24-25	Puppies/recipe/photograph of the month
25	Piershed tales

Spring Festival wakes up the island with a bang

The annual Colonsay Spring Festival, which finished Mid May – saw large numbers of locals and visitors alike getting up close and personal with the Island flora and fauna, and much more.

Walks, talks and rambles saw a host of experts showing off Colonsay's Hebridean highlights to appreciative audiences. Many people new to Colonsay expressed amazement at the huge range of plant and animal life waiting to be discovered.

In addition to nature there were classes in baking, cooking, foraging for wild food, history talks and archaeology.

Spring Festival Organiser Sarah Hobhouse said: “This year’s event has been another great success thanks to the huge support we have had from a host of local and visiting speakers and session leaders who enthralled with their knowledge and passion for their subjects.

“Even the sun came on board for a lot of the three weeks and there was a chance to see the island at its very best, coming to life after the winter with the corncrakes, cuckoos and other birds returning to our shores, and the wildflowers creating their beguiling patchwork across so much of our landscape.

“I want to give most sincere thanks to all who made this unique event possible and we hope to see as many of you as possible back next year.”

The festival is run by Sarah with help from members of the Colonsay Tourism Marketing Group – which also puts on the late autumn Connect with Colonsay event which this year runs from October 11-31



Artist Andrew McMorris briefs a party on what to expect as he leads them on an exploration of Oronsay –an island he knows better than most.

Full details of Colonsay's Spring and Autumn events can be found on

<http://www.colonsayevents.co.uk/>



Artworks on display at the Old Waiting Room Gallery



Laird's wife Jane Howard points out some of the features in the big house's spectacular woodland garden



Tips for perfect baking were also available at the Spring Festival

Scottish Government review on land reform backs more community ownership.

The long awaited final report of the Scottish Government Land Reform Review Group is recommending ways of helping the country's communities, rural and urban, achieve the First Ministers Target of having 1,000,000 acres of land in community ownership by 2020.

The report is of great interest to the people of Colonsay, already proprietors of land on the island through the Colonsay Community Development Company – with aspirations to purchase more.

The report is short on details as to how this target may be achieved – but the Scottish Environment Minister Paul Wheelhouse has pledged to set up a working party to explore ways of achieving the 1M acre aim.

He said: ““I am pleased to read the recommendations on improving the availability of land, both rural and urban, and the need to increase access to rural housing, these are issues that will have a direct impact on many people’s lives. The Group have also highlighted the need to address transparency of land ownership in Scotland which I believe is crucial to taking forward this agenda.

“I also welcome that the benefits of community ownership have been highlighted within the report. We have always said that community ownership empowers communities, sparks regeneration and drives renewal which is why we have an ambitious target to get one million acres of land into community ownership by 2020.

“I am pleased to announce that I agree with the Review Group’s recommendation for a working group to develop the strategy for achieving the million acre target and I will shortly be forming a working group to achieve just that.

“Land Reform not just about land ownership but how that land is used and managed and the benefits it can bring to the people of Scotland. I look forward to considering how the recommendations in this report can further benefit the people in Scotland through the relationship with our land.”

David Cameron of Community Land Scotland also welcomed the report saying they wanted time to study it in detail before coming to any firm conclusions. However he did offer up this: ““In particular we welcome recognition of the need to provide for more compulsory interventions in land matters to secure more diversity in ownership and we welcome support for the principle of our idea of a Land Agency to assist secure more community ownership. The recommendations to control land holdings size, to have greater transparency of who owns what, and a stop to offshoring the ownership of Scottish land are all welcome, as are many other recommendations.

Douglas McAdam – the chief executive of Scottish Land and Estates, the organisation that speaks for many estate proprietors, said: “The Land Reform Review Report issued today has missed the opportunity to deliver constructive land reform and fails to address the real challenges facing rural Scotland.

Instead, the report appears based on a bias against private landownership and makes a series of unfounded recommendations that will create more publicly funded bodies, increase bureaucracy and place an even heavier burden on the public purse.”

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Community land ownership survey finds real economic benefit

Community Land Scotland, the representative body of Scotland's community land owners has published economic indicators data of community ownership.

The report demonstrates remarkable results showing that community ownership can out-perform the past private ownership of the land in question.

Among the key results for 12 communities operating in some of Scotland's most remote areas is:

- Over 300 new or refurbished housing units and house plots delivered
- Owners direct employment up 368% to over 100 jobs
- Business turnover up 254% to over £6 m annually
- Number of private enterprises operating up over 100% with over 100 new enterprises
- Contracts and local staff value to local economy up 434% to £2.5m annually
- 7MW renewable energy capacity installed
- £34m new investment delivered
- £25m further investment already planned
- Value of assets rising to £59M
- Population growth occurring

David Cameron, Chair of Community Land Scotland, said,

"These results are hugely encouraging and demonstrate that community land ownership can economically out-perform the past private ownership of the land in question.

Investment is up, jobs numbers are up, housing development is up, business turnover is up, private enterprises numbers are up, and the population trends are very encouraging.

"The study completely destroys a myth that communities can only survive by the supposed largesse of private landowners with deep pockets and shows the further economic potential for rural communities if more community ownership can be delivered.

"Community land owners are not only delivering at their own hand, this study shows that they are also facilitating other community enterprises and private businesses to invest and deliver more jobs too.

"The total value of the assets in community ownership is growing, delivering a positive public investment dividend, supporting further community led investment, and showing the great public value community land ownership can yield."

Minister for Environment and Climate Change Paul Wheelhouse said:

"This report shows the significant economic and social benefits that community ownership has to offer rural Scotland, including local employment, affordable housing, investment in infrastructure and reversing population decline in some of our most remote and fragile

communities.



David Cameron of CLS

“It demonstrates the immense value of the Scottish Government’s £9 million Scottish Land Fund, which has so far supported 18 community buy-outs across Scotland since 2012. By improving the relationship between our land and people, we can empower rural communities, sparking regeneration and driving renewal to deliver the economic growth and fairer society that the people of Scotland quite rightly expect.

“It is local people who are best-placed to decide on the future of our land, which is why the First Minister announced an ambitious target to place one million acres of land across Scotland into local ownership by 2020.”

The Corncrake asked for comments from the Colonsay Community Development Company and the Isle of Colonsay estate – none were forthcoming – hopefully they may wish to contribute to the debate next month.

A letter from our community owner neighbours of the Isle of Gigha.

Following on the Community Land Scotland report the Corncrake asked the convener of the Gigha Heritage Trust, community owners of the island just to the North of the Kintyre peninsula how they are getting on.

Gigha was purchased from the Horlicks Family in 2002 for nearly £4M from public funds and community loans.

Convener of the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust Margaret McSporran takes up the story:

Charting Gighas' Progress

Gighas' oxygen; our first wind farm, Gighas' dancing ladies, Faith Hope and Charity continue to serve us well; this year it has been a pleasure to celebrate that Harmony has now joined the troupe and is spinning to her own tune!

God's Island has had the benefit of almost a decade of dancers and the pennies and pounds they contribute.



Faith Hope and Charity turning in the cash for Gigha – now joined by Harmony

As an island, we are now at a population of around 156 residents including 12 Primary School pupils and 18 High School pupils.

A far cry from the population of 90 with 6 in the primary school 12 years ago.

The island, our people and, indirectly, our 30 + businesses continue to develop through the support of the islands assets.

- We have internationally renowned gardens – providing a 4 star destination for tourists
- Our Marine tourism facilities are expanding with the benefit of investment from Coastal Communities Fund and work with Crown Estates;
- The Community Garden is providing plots for families who want to minimise food miles and maximise home grown.
- The islands housing stock has been improved with 30 of the original 42 Estate, now Trust properties refurbished to habitable standard.
- Further housing of 18 properties has been developed by Fyne Homes through working with the Trust;
 - these additional properties, together with the improved housing stock on the estate are enabling a reduction in multi generational households and allowing scope for additional families and individuals with their valuable skills and contribution to the islands economy to make their homes here.

This growth is enabled - Through a healthy dose of will power on the part of this community, its supporters, advisers, and with the funds generated from, what with Harmony now dancing, is now our dancing troupe.

There has been much achieved in 12 years, however there remains much to be done. Not least ensuring that we continue to create the conditions which enable people to be entrepreneurial and contribute to the economy of the island, through provision of housing and infrastructure which encourages individuals to stay and use their skills to participate in the ongoing maintenance and well being of the community and the island.

Maggie McSporran
Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust
May 2014

Heritage trust WW1 exhibition

An exhibition featuring the stories of the men who left Colonsay to fight in the First World War never to return is underway on the island.

Entitled 'Colonsay Remembers' the exhibition features photographs and biographical details of the dead.

The stories behind the names recorded on the island war memorial in Scalasaig are told in a book by Alan Davis called Colonsay's Fallen – available in the bookshop.



Also on show is the remains of a huge shell believed to have been fired from a battleship under the watchful eye of Winston Churchill in 1913.

Naval gunnery trials were underway with HMS Formidable and HMS Liverpool test firing 4 and 6 inch shells. Fragments of these are found from time to time around the south of Oronsay.

Churchill was First Lord of the Admiralty at the time and watched some of the proceedings from a warship and then climbed Ben Oronsay for a better view.



A WW1 shell found by Keith Rutherford

The exhibition is being held in the old generator shed at Port Mhor and will be open until the autumn and is organised by the Colonsay and Oronsay Heritage Trust.

The trust is currently in the process of buying their home and surrounding site from the Colonsay Estate.

A history student, Stephanie Kirby, is shortly to start work with the trust helping to set up an archive system and collate the photographic collection and work on the website.

Trust secretary Carol McNeill said: "If anyone has anything relating to Colonsay and Oronsay that they would like to loan or give to the trust we'd love to hear from them. Space is a

problem for us at the moment but if we know what artefacts and photographs may be available to us it will help us plan what space is needed in the future.”

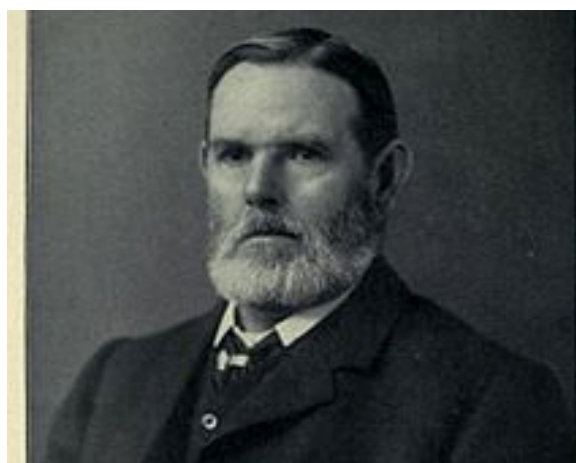
If you have anything to offer the COHT they can be contacted at COHT@btinternet.com

The trust held it's AGM recently and the following board members were elected: Convener David Binnie, David Hobhouse (depute), Keith Rutherford, treasurer, Carol McNeill, secretary, and committee members Katie Joll, Chris and Sheena Nisbet, and Esme Marshall.

Colonsay professor remembered

A major event to mark the centenary of the death of the first professor of Celtic studies at Edinburgh University, Colonsay born Donald MacKinnon, is taking place on the island this month.

The aim of the conference is to mark the 100th anniversary of Donald MacKinnon's death by looking at aspects of his illustrious life and work, and shining a spotlight on the outstanding human and natural heritage of his native island. It is hoped that, by celebrating Colonsay's past, the event will promote the island's economic and cultural future.



*Colonsay man – Professor Donald MacKinnon
Of Edinburgh University*

A spokesman for the trust said: “Like all Island Book Trust events, this will be much more than an ‘academic’ occasion. We pride ourselves on bringing people together from a range of different backgrounds on the principle that we can all learn from each other’s perspectives, and that a mixture of backgrounds adds to the enjoyment of the occasion. We also believe there are great advantages in holding conferences in a community setting, with active participation by local people. So most sessions will take place in the Colonsay Village Hall, and there will be a community ceilidh and an opportunity to visit places of historic interest in

Colonsay and Oransay.”

The conference begins on Friday June 6 – more details: [Google Islands Book Trust](#) and follow the link.

New fire volunteers start their training

Three new faces will be at Monday evening training sessions at the fire station as Fire Scotland increases it's team on the island.



The new Colonsay recruits on day 1 of their training in Oban

Phil “on the hill” Jones, Matthew “Cammy” Cameron and Scott “Del” Liddell are spending three successive weekends doing basic training on various aspects of fire fighting and rescue services.

A spokesman for the island station said the new recruits will eventually be able to take a full part in fire fighting duties on the island and in time will ease pressure on the existing volunteers.

Crew commander Donald MacAllister said: “We are always on the lookout for new recruits and are delighted to welcome Phil, Cammy and Del to the station.”

Phil said: “So far the training has been very good and quite challenging. It has been great fun using such high tech equipment – I am sure we have all learnt a lot.”

Donald MacAllister reminded the population of the island that Fire Scotland is delighted to carryout safety checks on island properties – and it is a free service.

Seabird Tracking

For the fifth year running the RSPB Seabird Tracking and Research (STAR) team has returned to Colonsay for the summer months. This year the team consists of Tessa Cole, who is well known to many residents after four seasons on the island and Ruth Brown, who is new to the project but has previously worked on seabird tracking studies in both Antarctica and Hawaii. Tessa and Ruth will be working at the seabird cliffs on the west coast of the island throughout the summer, at various sites between Kiloran Bay and Port Mor. The project involves attaching tiny GPS tracking devices to individual birds in order to learn more about where they are feeding when they go to sea.



The UK, and Scotland in particular, is home to globally important colonies of seabird species. In recent years many of our iconic seabirds have experienced declines, and the purpose of the RSPB STAR project is to help reverse this trend. By tracking birds while they are at sea we can identify the important areas where birds are feeding during their breeding season. This information will then help to decide the best sites to locate Marine Protected Areas, which will safeguard the feeding grounds of seabirds as well as providing a haven for other marine life. STAR follows on from the European FAME project (Future of the Atlantic Marine Environment). More information, including tracks of seabirds from Colonsay, can be found at www.fameproject.eu.



In 2014, data is being collected for the STAR project at sites across Scotland. As well as Tessa and Ruth on Colonsay we also have two-man teams working on Orkney and Fair Isle, and an additional team scouring the west coast of Scotland for new sites that are suitable for tracking studies. On Colonsay we are focusing on tracking four species – shags, razorbills, guillemots and kittewakes. Birds can only be tracked once they are incubating eggs, and the season has got off to a slow start this year since many of the birds have not started laying yet. This may be due to the particularly severe weather conditions of this winter, which caused very high mortality among seabirds and left surviving birds in poor condition. However, the seabird cliffs on Colonsay are now packed with birds and there are signs that laying is about to get underway, so it should not be long before Tessa and Ruth start to get some results for STAR Colonsay 2014.

Strange find – hopefully a one off

A hedgehog was found on Kiloran beach last month by local development officer Hannah MacAllister.

The seemingly innocuous discovery could have wider implications – depending on how it got there.

Scottish Natural Heritage and other bodies have been working on a hedgehog eradication programme in the Uists after the creatures were introduced there and cause havoc with the ground nesting bird population.

Hannah said the Kiloran creature did not appear to have been washed up raising the possibility it was carried by a bird of prey demonstrating the potential for a live pregnant hedgehog to arrive on Colonsay – which could be disastrous.



The Kiloran hedgehog – hopefully a one off.

Stone me what a find

There is, just to the west side of the 18th green of the Isle of Colonsay Golf Course, a large stone lying between many a golfer and a satisfactory finish on the last hole of one of the world's great machair courses.

How to describe it – a nuisance? Out of place?

It is neither. It seems the stone is a relic of Gaelic culture – a lifting stone no less, or Clach Togalaich that has lain there, or thereabouts, since 1780.

Last Month the son of the man who first chronicled it, Peter Martin, came to visit. Also called Peter Martin our recent visitor told the Corncrake: "The Clach Togalaich on Colonsay is unusual and the first thing that is striking is that most of its written history states that it was brought to its present location in 1780. From the many other lifting stones in Scotland, their histories predate this as Clan system to deteriorate was a massive Anglicisation, within the Presbyterian day. In culture and being with a more just why the should make at this time is a mystery.



appear to by 1780, the was beginning and there push to especially powers of the Church of the essence, Gaelic ritual was supplanted British view so Colonsay stone an appearance bit of a

Lifting stone expert Peter Martin

"My own thoughts are that the stone, the present one, is a "replacement" for a long lost or discarded stone and this is where the location of the present stone is important.

"Now the hard part is to get an interest in the stone and have it visited. My late father's book "Of stones and strength" was in essence a book for the strength enthusiast and short on history and culture, it basically stated here is a stone, now lift it. The book contained information on about 6 or so known traditional stones which I have now through my own research increased to just under one hundred with about a third still extant. My aim is to complete a book on the stones as well as the culture surrounding the lifting of them and this is taking a bit longer than I had anticipated. There are parallels with Irish Gaelic culture and on the Aran islands, predominately Gaelic speaking, stone lifting was still an active past time

until the 1980's. There are references to other lifting stones on the Irish mainland and I do intend to visit soon to complete my research.

“Once done, a website will be created that details all the known lifting stones in Scotland, Ireland and Wales which will hopefully encourage visits to far off places such as Colonsay, to tick off a list similar to the "Munros". There has been an interest in this and I am constantly asked about stone locations by a number of people who want to get ahead of the game so to speak.”

Perhaps there is scope for a Colonsay Lifting Stone Festival – if we can find a free date in our festival calendar.

As a footnote we should say that Mr Martin also took the opportunity whilst on Colonsay of visiting John Bridges, who is, we learn, the proud owner of a famous Aberdeenshire Lifting stone

Supreme sacrifice in memory of a dear friend

Rangers-mad man about town Angus MacPhee is to make the ultimate sacrifice to raise money for the favourite cause of his recently departed friend Davy Sutherland.

Wee Davy organised the Poppy Ceilidh on Colonsay for many years raising thousands of pounds for the Earl Haig Fund – and Angus is determined this year’s ceilidh will raise more than ever.

“I have pledged to spend the whole of ceilidh day in July wearing a Celtic top – and to add insult to injury I’m going to dye my beard green and then loose it and the flowing locks in the hall on the night – if enough cash is pledged to the fund – sponsor forms available in the shop.



*Angus MacPhee
How much would you pay to loose
those locks?*

FIRST PERSON – Each month the Corncrake is going to invite someone with Colonsay connections to give us an insight into who they are and why they're here. First up, after a bit of persuasion, is Angela Skrimshire.



Most of my life before Colonsay was spent in the south of England. I've lived here only in retirement, and never had to make a living on the island. As the late Findlay MacFadyen once wisely told me (though not in these exact words), "you can learn the language but you won't ever truly understand the way people here think and live because they have had a whole other way of life." That has to be true for anyone not born into the culture of the Gàidhealtachd. I'm writing as an English incomer.

How long have you lived on Colonsay?

Since January 1996. So it's eighteen years now.

What brought you here in the first place?

I came on holiday with friends for a week in the 1980s, loved it, and came again in summer 1995 when approaching retirement. I stayed at Seaview and Annie's wee studio was available at very reasonable rates and so on impulse I decided to take it from January to June, just because it's such a beautiful island, and 'why not?'. I am grateful to Annie and Bill, and so lucky to have had the freedom to come.

Why have you stayed here?

After a few months of walking and cycling all over the island and getting to know so many special people and places, I didn't want to leave. Alex Howard leased me Sgreadan Cottage before it was renovated, for four years at acceptable rates, for which again I was grateful and fortunate. So I went south for the summer, let the house and returned in the autumn.

I loved Sgreadan Cottage, it is a house with a significant history and a peaceful and generous feeling. At that time it still had a small piece of fertile garden that had been worked for generations, within the remains of its original dyke. I adopted a cat and a dog, and found

kind and helpful neighbours in Kilchattan, some of whom have now moved or sadly passed away, but others have come.

After a few years I was able, thanks to Duncan, to buy a plot on his croft, build here, sell the house in England, and commit to becoming a permanent resident with no mainland bolt-hole and no easy way back. There had been time to learn about island life, and take the decision with open eyes.

Colonsay is regarded by many of its residents and visitors as a very special place. What makes the island special to you?

For me it's "special" both as a physical place, and as a community of people: As a place, it is so much more than a succession of beautiful landscapes and seascapes for happy seaside holidays, though all that is good too, of course. More unusually, it contains in a small space a multiplicity of habitats, both natural and man-made, that by a mixture of design and neglect have survived relatively undamaged.

It's miraculous to see from one's own window harriers, ravens and choughs, Greenland white-fronted geese, or red throated divers, or to be dogged by the squawk of a corncrake! And it's not just about species declining elsewhere, but the abundance of more common ones, and the wide variety of easily accessible habitats. It's the same for plants – being shown or just finding, rare ones, and the delight of the displays of meadow, marsh and moorland plants that were once common and here still are.

Not only does this natural profusion still exist, but you can see it in clear unpolluted air, and a dramatic variety of weather conditions, while you can walk nearly everywhere on the island, apart from the in-by land, on unmade tracks and sheep paths, uncluttered by intrusive "tourist trails".

Every road and the view from nearly every hilltop leads to the sea, with all its lights and movements, smells and sounds, and another whole population of plants and living creatures.

Above all you can usually enjoy it in quietness and natural sound. I deeply value the stillness and peace of Colonsay at all times, but particularly on windless summer evenings. The other rare phenomenon here is the absence of light pollution in less populous parts of the island. Places like Coll have made a marketing feature of their "dark skies". Here it is yet another precious and perhaps underrated asset – the brilliance of the stars, the good opportunities to see noctilucent clouds and the northern lights, or simply a full moon reflected in Loch Fada, in stillness of water and air.

But though the island has wild places, it has been lived on and worked for millennia, and never yet entirely depopulated. The community is an integral part of Colonsay's "specialness".

I have met such special people: clever, cultured, multi-skilled and resilient, full of humour, but deeply intuitive, generous and kind. Their friendship has been a great privilege.

There is an unusual quality of maturity and courtesy in the old island culture, people have been extraordinarily accepting, they have helped me feel comfortable staying here.

When there is a real need for help the community rallies to provide it. The local medical and caring staff are dedicated and very professional, as are the impressive volunteer fire crew and coastguards. Our faithful, honourable postman and our capable young shopkeeper constantly go the extra mile for us all. And many in the incoming community from the mainland bring significant resources and skills to the island, and have made very generous efforts to support island life, while respecting community traditions.

Then there is the rich traditional culture of language, music and song. Though Gàidhlig is dying out here, the musical and literary culture is still very much alive.

Overall, living here has been a stimulating and profitable experience, there is so much to learn and do: “Being able to see new places and learn new things every day”, as Liam said in his moving contribution last month.

Is there anything that you feel needs changed on the island?

As in any community there are of course serious difficulties, but it is doubtful that many of them can be changed.

Structurally, there is the almost total dependence for infrastructure and public welfare on mainland institutions and resources, both of government and of national, even global, private enterprises. In this it is probably little different from any other modern rural community. But there is also the fact of having been and partly still being an island estate, with the sometimes bitter historical legacy that that entails.

As in any community there are subterranean manoeuvres to promote business, family or individual interests, together with all the ordinary difficulties and dissensions among people everywhere. Naturally newer and more traditional ways and cultures diverge. Even the survival of the intense and supportive family loyalty of an older society, integral to the identity of those born into it, has a dark side.

But such things are not going to be fundamentally changed – “community” is a cosy buzzword that can be used in many ways. “Community” schemes and “community” ownerships often become channels for handling ongoing shifts in local power and influence among existing business and individual interests, both used by them and used to mitigate their effects.

It would be good if the Council could afford to have all the roads re-surfaced ... And current plans for improved broadband speeds, if provided reliably, might encourage small business.

But the big challenge is to maintain the population size and workable age distribution. On the one hand, changes which imperil the essential “specialness” of the island would undermine its value in the tourist market, as well as destroying something of inestimable

intrinsic worth. Yet there needs to be some way of making life possible for the kind of younger people who would both value that “specialness” and have the skills and resources to be able to make a living here.

Existing job or business opportunities might be filled or retained if there were a few more affordable housing units, as are now being considered. But otherwise as we all know it is hard to fund and sustain new job opportunities in professions and businesses that would not change the island in unwanted ways

It seems that the speculative building of holiday accommodation for letting or sporadic “second home” occupation has long over-stretched the island’s capacity to support and benefit from it, and needs to be reconsidered. It becomes a strain on the infrastructure, and for years now has used mainland companies to provide most of the skills and labour.

I once wondered whether with the cooperation of some of the conservation organisations and the SFSA it might be possible to set up a Field Studies Centre, staffed long term by skilled field workers and teachers with backgrounds in the natural sciences, with additional full- and part-time support staff. I can only hope that one day someone younger and more enterprising could take up the idea and run with it.

Is there anything that you think needs special protection?

Yes. An off-the-cuff list might include: the machair, the flowering roadside verges (sorry!), the woodlands, both the ‘old’ woods on the east coast, with their populations of rare plants and insects, and the ageing gale-battered policy woods whose shelter belts of larch and conifer are succumbing and not replanted, the lochs, the aquatic plants and the fish, the birds, lizards, slow worms, bats, shrews, as well as the otters and seals, and the marine environment that surrounds and sustains the island. Hopefully the funding of existing protective schemes will be maintained.

It is important that whole habitats and ecosystems are protected, not just the rare species. Colonsay people on the whole care about and for their environment. Yet a belief persists that because these “special” assets of Colonsay have always been here, they always will be, even though elsewhere it is clear how fragile such environments are and how quickly they disappear.

What is your favourite place on the island?

No answer supplied

Share a special Colonsay memory with the Corncrake.

No answer supplied

If you were the absolute ruler of Colonsay what one law would you pass above all others?

No answer supplied

Thanks Angela – who is next – send us a suggestion – or make an offer – we want to hear from you – contact details at the end

A word from our local MSP Michael Russell

Politics is show business for ugly people opined Texas Political consultant Bill Miller in 1991. He was, I am sure, merely echoing the distaste for organised politics that exists across the world and which sees politicians as noisy combatants in someone else's war.

But the reality of Scotland today is that our political discourse has come alive and is including for more than just politicians. I am in the process of holding village meetings right across Argyll & Bute to present the facts - as I see them of course- of Independence and offering the opportunity for anyone to grill, toast or fry me about the detail of the Scottish Government's White Paper on Independence, Scotland's Future.



I hope to hold one of those meetings on Colonsay before the vote on the 18th of September but the island was of course the venue for an early debate on the issue which involved Jamie McGrigor, the Tory MSP and myself back in early April 2013.

Much has changed since then. The full economic, social, cultural and governmental case has been outlined by the Scottish Government in great detail. Figures have been bandied about by both sides but all sides now appear to accept that Scotland could be an independent country. Even David Cameron has said as much. The question presently being fought over is whether Scotland should make that choice.

The second American President John Adams wrote in 1776 that he was living in a time in which, uniquely, his fellow citizens had the “*opportunity of beginning government anew from the foundation and building as they choose.*” That is, amazingly, the opportunity that has been given to this generation too. That, I believe, is too good an opportunity to miss.

Golf News

The Isle of Colonsay Golf Club would like to announce that, contrary to information imparted in an earlier edition, the Open Championship will now take place on Saturday, 16th August. The Golf Club ceilidh will take place on Saturday, 19th July.

Puppies of the month



Chris and Pauline Baker are looking for good homes for their litter of springer spaniel puppies.

Five boys and two girls are available

Photograph of the month



Barry McMichael from Largs captured this stunning view of Loch Fada earlier this month

Letters to the Corncrake

No letters received this month

Connect with Colonsay – October 11-31 – www.Colonsay.org

Ceol Cholasas – the Colonsay music Festival September 11-14

<http://www.ceolcholasas.co.uk/>

A recipe shared:

Bob and Alison liked this so much they thought they would share it with Corncrake readers. If you have a recipe you think deserves to be shared please email colonsayldohannah@gmail.com

SPRING LUNCH for two

This is what we had today, 27th May, making use of our new flush of homegrown salad greens and herbs, and eaten in the garden of course, on such a gorgeous day!

Mussels and Chorizo in Garlic Butter
Salad with sunflower and pumpkin seeds
Home-baked Wholemeal loaf

Rough measurements:

4-6oz previously cooked and shelled local mussels.

2-3oz chorizo finely chopped

1oz butter, melted over gentle heat

Couple of cloves of garlic crushed and added to butter, then chorizo and mussels added and gently sizzled for a few minutes.

Salad

Ours was made up of home-grown rocket, mustard greens and some other unlabelled green crinkly leaf, plus rosemary, sage, oregano and chives finely chopped.

Also added some chopped celery, some sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, chopped yellow and red pepper and quartered tomatoes. (Hopefully most of these will also be available in the garden before long.)

All tossed in vinaigrette of olive oil and balsamic.

Hand-made home-made bread - half and half strong wholemeal and strong white flour.

(Sorry we haven't managed to grow wheat yet, so this was shop-bought)

Ideally this might be washed down on a non-working day with a glass of dry white – we just had iced Colonsay water (passed by Donald and Cammie!)

Piershed Tales

The piershed at ferry time is the place to find out what's going on – sometimes the stories are even true!

The piershed is the tale – its refurbishment is the most talked about thing on the island – nearly * two weddings have taken place on the island, we believe it was one of the couples first ever visit to Colonsay *a helicopter arrived on the island on Friday morning to collect the ballot box for the European election*Kevin is retiring from the pier*Marine Harvest is renting cottages from the estate for fish farm workers*Two yachts and plenty of visitors had a stunning dolphin show on Tuesday at Kiloran*Funding has been secured for a bigger than usual sports day in July*The Golf Club is having an away day later this month*An epidemic of new kitchens has broken out in Glassard*The primary school trip to Center Parcs was a great success and enjoyed by all

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