



The Isle of Colonsay's online community newsletter

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The Corncrake welcomes readers letters – contact details at the end.

Affordable housing "will be built" - CDDC convener

Development company convener Gavin Clark says he is confident they will be able to build affordable housing on the Hotel Brae – which would be the culmination of 10 years of trying by successive volunteer directors of the CCDC.

Gavin said that whilst negotiations over the land price are continuing they were bound by confidentiality and he could not reveal the figures involved. However he said the island would get a chance to see the sums and would have a final say on any purchase from Colonsay Estate proprietor Alex Howard.

Gavin said they have already had a meeting with Alex to discuss the valuation: “We are obviously at a very early stage with it. We had a meeting with Alex and he didn’t chuck us out of the room and so it is a negotiation. He is not saying “no” definitely not. The valuation has fallen short of what he wanted.”

In his valuation the DV, David Heriot, said he would be prepared to listen to representations that may result in the figure he put on the land being raised or lowered.



CCDC convener Gavin Clark

The CCDC has a plan to build 4 two bedroom houses on the site and two workshops. Many in the island community were surprised by the laird in a recent article in The Corncrake when he said he thought the land capable of supporting 50 houses – leading to speculation he was looking for a seven figure sum for the site.

However Gavin says: “What we are looking at is to say “right the value is X according to the DV – it’s a scenario we have to look into and its fair for all.

“If we manage to get an agreement with Alex we will have a public meeting to let everyone know what’s happening and if there is funding available. If there was a shortfall in what we can get and what Alex wants we will have to put that to the community and see what their thoughts are.”

He also stressed that all CCDC meetings are open to the public and he invited people interested to come along.

“We are looking at getting funding for an engineer and manager to run the project, to get the funding sorted out – it’s a very big project that we will need outside help on.

“I feel very confident this current project will work. We all have to work together to make sure it works – the whole island needs to get behind this and support it.”

Island laird Alex Howard told the Corncrake: “We are presently working together with the CCDC and public bodies on a workable plan using the land at Scalasaig to bring to fruition a long held ambition to facilitate the provision of more affordable and social housing for our community.

“As you are aware, the CCDC has had a *draft* report from the District Valuer which we have been told is a confidential document. Therefore it is not appropriate to comment on a confidential draft document in public at this stage. I can say however say that the Estate and the CCDC remain supportive of the housing project and that both parties remain confident that something positive will come from our continuing discussions.

“As you know, we continue to work closely with all members and organisations in our community. I hope it goes without saying that we are wholly committed to ensuring that Colonsay remains a vibrant and thriving community.”

The Corncrake asked the laird about houses formerly in residential use currently lying empty. He said: “Three Estate houses have become vacant, in 2 cases following the recent deaths of their long term tenants. We are currently raising finance in order to refurbish the houses, as well as issuing tender documents to building firms, with a view to starting extensive work on them in the near future. During their refurbishment, we will be considering all options for their future use.”

Volunteers needed for island wind project

An appeal has gone out for volunteers to take on an island renewable generation project that could see the community benefit to the tune of £40,000 a year.

The Local development officers have started a bid to win funding for a community wind turbine. LDO Hannah MacAllister said: “This could be a transformational project for the island giving the community a real income stream for many years. We need volunteers to form a small steering group to help bring this to fruition.”

Hannah said that initial research had suggested there were two suitable sites on the island, one on estate owned land near the island dump at Bonaveh, the second a slightly more challenging site on the community owned croft land at Lower Kilchattan.

“We are not looking for experts in wind generation for this group, just people who would be keen to push the project forward for the good of the whole island.”

Hannah is asking anyone who may be interested to contact her by email at:

colonsayldohannah@gmail.com

Colonsay may benefit from land reform proposals.

Scottish environment minister Paul Wheelhouse has told people on Colonsay that they are in a position to benefit from new proposals aimed at speeding up the SNP's land reform agenda.

The minister says an extension of the Land Fund to 2020 will allow communities like Colonsay time to consider their future options carefully.

The minister told the Corncrake: "By bringing forward a Land Reform Bill, before the end of the current term of the Scottish Parliament, we will take forward the direction of travel laid out in the report. The Bill will be another significant step forward in ensuring our land is used in the public interest and to the benefit of the people of Scotland.



"My vision, and that of my colleagues, for Scotland is for a fairer, wider and more equitable,

distribution of land across our nation, where communities like Colonsay and individuals have access to land and the Land Reform Bill will enable much of this to happen."

Land reform minister Paul Wheelhouse

News from our MSP – Michael Russell – land reform offer to the island.

MSP Michael Russell writes for the Corncrake: "Land Reform is back in the news again. Paul Wheelhouse, the Environment Minister, told the Community Land Scotland Conference in early June that the Scottish Government was committed to continuing to expand the resource and the opportunity for communities to buy where they live and the Land Reform Group proposals, made to the Scottish Government in May, are likely to be influential in setting a future direction of travel for this most important of issues.

I used to hold Paul's Ministerial job and I have had a strong involvement in the issue of land reform. For example in 2009 was glad to be able to be helpful to the community of the Island of Rum who had faced an unreal and difficult situation for many years in that they were both employees and tenants of the SNH and its predecessors. Creating the circumstances in which parts of the island could be sold to this diverse group of individuals and a wider mix of land usage created was a challenge but it was one that was successfully met.

But much more remains to do and as the MSP for Argyll & Bute I am more than aware of places within my constituency where traditional landownership has failed and contributed to either continuing depopulation or a bad set of relationships between tenants and owners which has resulted in stagnation or stand off. I hope that the recommendations of the LRG and the Tenant Farming Review Group will inform legislative changes that can open up the possibility of more individual and collective purchase which will lead to greater investment, more relevant local decision making and the injection of an element of democracy into something which - in the words of that unlikely land reformer Winston Churchill in 1909 - "*differs from all other forms of property, and (therefore) the immemorial customs of nearly every modern state have placed the tenure, transfer, and obligations of land in a wholly different category from other classes of property*".

Interestingly Churchill went on to say something even more relevant for Scotland today - namely that "*It is not the man who is blameworthy for doing what the law allows and what other men do; it is the State which would be blameworthy if it were not to endeavor to reform the law and correct the practice*"

It is time for more reform of the law and practice of land ownership - and stewardship - in Scotland and there will be lessons and opportunities for Colonsay in that. As the local MSP I would be happy to discuss them on a future visit to the island for that purpose. "

Road plea from island emergency service volunteers

Island emergency service volunteers are asking members of the public, especially visitors, to pull into passing places and allow overtaking on Colonsay's single track roads.

Twice in recent weeks 999 staff responding to emergency call outs have suffered serious delays being stuck behind visitors who were unwilling to pull over.

In one case the driver actually stopped blocking the road to ask why the driver kept flashing his lights at him and was very apologetic when he discovered he was slowing down an emergency response.

A spokesman for the island's emergency volunteers said: "The fire service and coastguards have had a busy year so far and in a couple of instances our response times have been severely compromised by thoughtless driving.

"If you see someone in your rear view mirror obviously desperate to pass the chances are it's not a boy racer but someone on a serious mission – please let them past – delays can ultimately cost lives."

In with the new out with the old at the piershed

Island residents gathered in force to say hello to the new look piershed and goodbye to the old piermaster.

After 16 years presiding over the comings and goings of ferries with their diverse loads Piermaster Kevin Byrne is retiring.

Kevin's retirement coincided with the opening, by Lord Strathcona, of the much revamped ferry terminal.

The new look to the building has generally created a more comfortable space for staff and travellers alike with a real counter for the sale of tickets and a waiting area for those occasional shabby days.

The double glass doors that have replaced the roller shutter will provide welcome shelter to those who enjoy standing watching the comings and goings during inclement weather.

The Corncrake however very much hopes that the new arrangements do not hinder the exchange of vital island information, much of which ends up in our Piershed Tales Column.



Lord Strathcona cracks a joke as he cuts the ribbon to officially open the upgraded terminal, looking on is Seamus McNeill.

Over 60 people attended the event and community council convener Sheena Nisbet presented Kevin with a bottle of Glenlivet and a gift of Amazon Vouchers on behalf of island residents and visitors alike.



Community council convener Sheena Nisbet makes a presentation to Kevin – looking on is Calmac area manager Finlay MacRae

Kevin thanked the large turnout of islanders for their generosity and kind wishes and said how much he had enjoyed his Calmac role over the years – particularly helping latecomers to make sure they managed to board the ferry even if there were just seconds to spare before it's departure.

Scalasaig sessions bring a summer of music to the island

Island impresario Donald "Pedie" MacNeill has put together a series of concerts to get the feet tapping during those long hot summer nights.

A recent visitor survey clearly showed music was a big part of a trip to Colonsay for many tourists and this year's programme should not disappoint.

Amongst the acts is island born singer/songwriter Caitlin McNeill who is making a first appearance on Colonsay with her new band, Canach.

All the concerts start at 8.30 and admissions is £8 - £3 for concessions – on the door.

Tuesday 8th July	The Machrins McNeills
Wednesday 16 th July	Ian Thompson & Marc Duff
Thursday 24th July	Corran Raa
Wednesday 30th July	Mary Anne Kennedy 'Aiseag' (The Ferryboat)
Wednesday 6 th August	The Alastair McCulloch Trio
Tuesday 12th August	Keir Johnston
Wednesday 20th August	Canach
Tuesday 26 th August	Donald MacNeill

Tickets are also still available for the Colonsay Music Festival in September.

Heritage Trust in membership drive

Colonsay and Oronsay Heritage Trust is launching a drive to recruit new supporters to help fund its vital work protecting the islands' heritage.

Trust convener Dave Binnie is asking people who love the islands to join as associate members, if they live off the island.

The COHT has ambitious plans, as reported in the Corncrake, to create a new heritage centre on land they are trying to buy at Port Mhor.

The form for membership is available at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/op5hgrcjyf1a6rv/Associate%20membership%20for%202014%20%282%29.pdf>

which can be copied and pasted into your browser.

Meanwhile St Andrews' University student Stephanie Kirby is busy helping collate the collection of artefacts and other materials the heritage trust has gathered so far. She took time off from her work to attend the uni leavers ball – but was back bright and cheery on the Sunday night.

A great deal of work has been going into the COHT website – which has a large collection of very interesting photographs – and much more besides.

<http://www.spanglefish.com/ColonsayandOransayHeritageTrust/>

School news – new pupils add up to an expanding roll.

Two new starts next term mean Kilchattan Primary School will boast a total of nine pupils when the academic year starts in August.

Headteacher Gill MacKenzie has kindly given the Corncrake her end of term newsletter to bring the successes of the island's youngsters to a wider audience – thanks Gill.

“On the last day of term, Kilchattan School pupils impressed members of the community with a fun Sports Day and picnic lunch, followed by speeches, a prize-giving ceremony and music by Kilchattan School Band!

The following awards were presented:

Gillian McClure recently visited the school to share her stories that were set on Colonsay and to show us some of her original illustrations. Welcome to our new pupils who have settled in beautifully and who each receive a copy of Gillian McClure's books – 'How To Build A Dam' and 'Selkie'.

Throughout the year there have been two children who have worked hard towards improving the school grounds: planting and watering strawberries and carrots, collecting seeds, weeding, composting, learning about Scottish wildflowers and the importance of Colonsay orchids.

Oransay Award for Excellence in Eco work goes to Felix.

Oransay Award for Excellence in Eco work goes to Rosie.

There are pupils who stand out for their natural talent in certain areas however this year there has been much achievement from pupils who have a determination to succeed in other areas of the curriculum.

Kiloran Bay Creative Arts Award this year goes to a pupil who has worked hard on her self-confidence, who is now the quietly confident back bone to both musical and dramatic performances, has demonstrated leadership skills through helping to organise younger children and through modeling how 'practice makes perfect' when it comes to playing music instruments. Congratulations Emma!

Queen's Bay Technology Award – Our interdisciplinary learning has really taken off this year where pupils have opportunities to apply their core skills to other things, such as building chicken feeders, coracles, and researching information on iPADS. Congratulations Jamie!

Balnahard Reading Award goes to a pupil who has made excellent progress this year. He started with gently reading road signs and labels with confidence, to reading texts aloud to the class and progressing to chapter books – all within a school year. This was due to sheer hard work and determination. Congratulations Seamus!

Machrins Sport Award for wider skills involved in sport: team work, developing skill, developing good sportsmanship particularly when losing can be difficult; competing against own times to achieve a personal best; learning to ride a bike and then cycling around the whole island in the same week to raise money for the Philippines–this award goes to Rona!

Cable Bay Mathematics Award goes to a boy who has learned his numbers, can count accurately, can remember days of the week, months of the year, can add and is beginning to take away. Well done, Sam!

Dun Cholla Award for All Round Excellence is awarded to a young person who has learned to bounce back from situations; has developed extremely positive relationships with classmates; by thinking of others – suggesting that we invite those less fortunate for Christmas dinner; helping another child, who was not from our school group, during the raft building activity at Centre Parcs; adjusting her attitude to learning so that she can achieve even greater things. She is a fast learner and is determined to succeed. Congratulations Rona!

Someone else in our midst has achieved well this year – our already qualified secondary teacher Ms Dance has worked hard to meet the competencies for primary education as laid out by the General Teaching Council for Scotland. Following many hours of study, planning and practice I am proud to announce that Ms Dance has now converted her teaching qualification to that of Qualified Primary Teacher status. Congratulations!

I wish to thank the Parent Council for their continued support of the school – particularly Kevin, Keith and Pauline.

I wish also to thank Jim MacLoughlin for volunteering at PE sessions and educating both children and adults in athletics skills. I was thrilled for Jim when it was announced that he has been chosen to carry the Queen's baton for the Commonwealth Games. If you wish to support him, the baton will be traveling through Kilmartin, around 11:45am on Sunday 13th July!

I also wish to thank all staff for their loyalty, commitment and hard work. In our small setting it is not so easy to delegate responsibility and so every member of staff has more work to do than in larger schools within the same time frame. Your hard work has paid off as was demonstrated in this year's inspection. We have a commitment to continuing to improve the quality of our work so that we achieve the best outcomes for our young people."

Mike McNicholl – a word from the family

The family would like to thank everyone for the exceptional care, concern and kindness shown throughout Mike's illness and over the last few weeks. Through the very generous donations made both in Edinburgh and here on Colonsay we have been able to give over £1000 to MacMillan Cancer Care in Mike's memory. Thank you very much.

Royal Navy just can't keep away from Colonsay

Rescue crews from HMS Gannet at Prestwick made three emergency trips to Colonsay in June – up two on their previous month's total.

The most serious was to airlift a fisherman to safety after his boat capsized leaving him stranded on a rock off the west side of the island near Port Mhor.

The alarm was raised by George Leppard who saw the stranded fisherman waving for help and the Sea King Helicopter and Port Askaig RNLI lifeboat were both on scene within the hour. The man was examined by paramedics and allowed home.

Earlier in the month the chopper had carried out a medical evacuation and also gone to the aid of a visitor who had suffered quite serious injuries in a fall.

Conference remembers Colonsay pioneer

A fascinating conference took place mid June organised by the Island's Book Trust to celebrate the life of Donald Mackinnon – first professor of Celtic Studies at Edinburgh University. As well as exploring the professor's life and work it was a celebration of Colonsay, its culture, heritage and natural beauty.

This conference marked 100 years since Donald Mackinnon's death. A Colonsay man, born in 1839, raised in Kilchattan and schooled on the island, he bore witness to famine, emigration and the depopulation of his birthplace during a pivotal era of change. From his crofting background Donald Mackinnon emerged as an excellent student, an able teacher and an outstanding scholar of Gaelic language and culture. His academic rise led to his election in 1882 to the newly-founded Chair of Celtic at Edinburgh University. That he also maintained a range of voluntary positions, took on numerous administrative and official roles, continued to advocate Colonsay's interests and supported his brother Malcolm's family in addition to his own, is testament not only to his intellect and scholarly attention to detail, but indicative of his stamina, his dedication to family and community and his social conscience.

This event emerged from a conversation with Professor Rob Dunbar at the Islands Book Trust conference in Tiree last year. The Trust, from its base in Lewis, organises regular

conferences, excursions, talks and guided walks and produces a range of publications on Scotland's islands. Rob Dunbar had just been appointed to the Chair of Celtic at Edinburgh University when Mary Carmichael approached him with the question, 'So, what are we going to do to mark the centenary of Professor Mackinnon's death next year?' A conversation ensued with John Randall, then chairman of the Trust, followed by an exchange of emails involving the University, Colonsay and Oransay Heritage Trust, academics, islanders and former residents who might be willing to make a contribution. The idea was not just to focus on Professor Mackinnon's life and work, but to look at 'his island' from different perspectives, covering a range of topics, historical and contemporary.

With support from Awards for All, the three organising groups combined to celebrate and promote the island in the first such conference held on Colonsay. About 30 delegates, many of them first-time visitors, attended over four days staying in local accommodation. Others came along to selected talks on a drop-in basis, local residents being charged only £3 per session. The papers given were wide-ranging and in all 12 speakers gave presentations while Local Development Officers, Hannah MacAllister and Grace MacPhee, and Sheena Nisbet, representing the Community Council, joined a panel discussion on the final afternoon. Sadly, two keynote speakers, Professor Rob Dunbar and Donald Meek were obliged to cancel unexpectedly, but their intended contributions will appear in the publication of the conference papers due out next summer. It was a great pleasure to welcome Donald Mackinnon's great-great-grand-daughter, Catriona Davis, two of her children and several of her grandchildren to the conference and to hear her personal recollections and family reminiscences of Colonsay and the Professor.

The earlier historical period was encompassed in Ronnie Black's meticulous presentation on Colonsay in the Dewar Manuscripts, Kevin Byrne's breath-taking exploits of Colkitto and Alasdair mac Cholla Chiotach, and Early Travellers to Colonsay with particular emphasis on Martin Martin's intriguing early 18th century observations, delivered by Domhnall Uilleam Stiubhart.

Di Alexander introduced the work he did here in the 1970s to collect and map the Gaelic place-names of Colonsay and Oransay, a theme which occupied Donald Mackinnon, Murdoch MacNeill (1910) and Loder (1935). Di combined and compared these published lists with maps, oral sources and local knowledge in order to plot the names while they were still (just) in current use. His exemplary work represents an invaluable contribution to our knowledge in this field and it would be good to hear the place-names being re-introduced into daily conversation, perhaps through a series of workshops, so that future generations may continue to use and understand them.

In the absence of John and Pamela Clarke, Donald MacNeill presented their paper on Traditional Farming in Colonsay and its Legacy for Wildlife; both were then able to join the conference by skype to answer questions about the sterling botanical and ornithological survey and recording work they did in the 1980s and the research they have continued to pursue.

Alastair Scouller's presentation on Colonsay Gaelic was an eye-opener, or perhaps an ear-opener, for many, Gaelic speakers included, as he traced a path through some of Colonsay Gaelic's key features, showing where it differs in so many respects from other dialects, but also where similarities exist with Islay Gaelic, for example. Some people were heard to exclaim afterwards, 'Now I understand!'

Morag Law followed with a delightful selection of readings from 'The Gaelic Writings of Barbara Satchel', her mother, who is affectionately remembered locally as Barbara Cholla. Particularly charming and of great interest were her childhood memories of Riasg Buidhe, the now-abandoned village where she was born. A precious legacy indeed.

Following Saturday's conference dinner David Binnie gave an illustrated overview of the current work of Colonsay and Oransay Heritage Trust and of its aspirations for the future.

Sunday morning's ecumenical service in the Church of Scotland included Gaelic readings from Professor Mackinnon's family Bible which had been gifted to the church after his death. In the afternoon a bus and walking tour led by Kevin Byrne took about 20 people to Riasg Buidhe, Kiloran, the cemetery at Kilchattan, Port Mòr and other locations with input on local history, poetry, place-names and landscape features provided by a range of contributors.

On the final morning Mary Carmichael and Di Alexander addressed the history of education in Colonsay during which Di read his translation of Mackinnon's much loved Gaelic essay 'Sean Sgoil' about the old school which he attended as a boy in Kilchattan. This was followed by Mary's richly illustrated selection of oral history recordings made in Colonsay between 1953 and 2012 in both Gaelic and English, some from the Sound Archives of the School of Scottish Studies and others from personal collections. The hall echoed with voices from the past and poignant references to that other centenary being commemorated this year, the First World War. There were also affectionate laughter and reminders of the typical island humour which expressed itself so creatively, perpetuating the memory of events and people in anecdote and song.

Monday also saw the furthest-travelled of contributors, keynote speaker Professor John Sheets of the University of Central Missouri, talk about 'The Life of Donald Mackinnon' in which he elegantly traced the interwoven strands of Mackinnon's family, career and character, a subject which has engrossed him since his early visits to Colonsay in the 1980s. It was a revealing and insightful presentation which confirmed that Sheets's beautifully-written published (and unpublished) work on Mackinnon and his family deserve greater exposure and recognition.

The same was said of Mackinnon's own work, so much of which remains to be explored. At the close of proceedings Mary Carmichael suggested that an annual Professor Donald Mackinnon Lecture could provide a vehicle and incentive for further research and publication, an idea that will be aired with the University of Edinburgh's department of Celtic and Scottish Studies.

The conference catering deserves special mention and a word of thanks to all who provided such delicious evening meals and buffets, lunches, teas, coffees and baking – Dave Kinnear and his team at Colonsay Hotel, Gavin Clark and his team at the Pantry, Sarah Moss and Carol MacNeill. The standard was uniformly excellent and greatly appreciated. Thanks also to those who provided music for the ceilidh and to Donnie Morrison for his technical advice and support.

As well as attracting new visitors to Colonsay, the conference attracted publicity from BBC Alba and Radio nan Gàidheal. Delegates enjoyed the event and the opportunity to see the island while learning so much about the place and several have vowed to make return visits.

We might speculate that Professor Donald Mackinnon would share the community's current optimism about the future of his island.

Proceedings of the Colonsay conference will be published by
Urras Leabhraichean nan Eilean/The Islands Book Trust in the summer of 2015

Useful websites:

www.theislandsbooktrust.com

www.tobarandualchais.co.uk

One of Professor Mackinnon's great interests was the study of Gaelic proverbs and sayings. The one quoted below was chosen by Morag Law to begin her talk about her mother's Gaelic writings which she collated and published in 'Dileabh Cholasach'. But the saying could just as appropriately be applied to all those who have recognised the importance of passing on their traditions, knowledge, skills and wisdom to the following generation. It is up to us now to do the same.

*Is luachmhor an dìleab
a dh' fhàg na ginealach
a chaidh thairis againne
a thàinig nan dèidh*

Precious is the legacy
that the preceding generations have left
us who came after them.

Kilroan Hedgehog – latest news

Despite being fantastic animals with an essential function in the right environment, hedgehogs are not a native species to Colonsay and Oronsay. By Scottish law they should remain that way. No new information on how the creature ended up at Kiloran has come to light.

The introduction of hedgehogs has had severe consequences on other West coast islands. Hedgehogs are ground predators for many ground nesting birds such as lapwing, dunlin and redshank. These birds have suffered declines due to egg predation by introduced hedgehogs.

There are huge environmental and financial costs involved in the control and translocation of introduced animals. And these projects take many years to be effective.

Introduction of non-native species can be a serious problem. SNH provide guidance and outline the associated laws. To summarise: “The new legislation makes it an offence to release animals or to plant plants in the wild outwith their native range, whether intentionally or otherwise. **The clear message is – if in doubt, don’t release and don’t plant.**” This includes artificially moving locally native wildlife (like hedgehogs) to parts of the UK that are not their native range e.g. offshore islands (no matter how long ago the move was made). Find out more about [identifying and recording non-native species](#) on the SNH website and about what you can do about such sightings.

Information from the website of SNH (Scottish Natural Heritage); [Info about introducing non-native species](#), provides details about the law in these situations.

Sources: <http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/B1113471.pdf>

<http://www.snh.gov.uk/land-and-sea/managing-wildlife/uist-wader-research/aims-of-the-project/>



Dead hedgehog © Hannah MacAllister

Great island turnout for the first “big lunch”

On June 1st Colonsay held its first ‘Big Lunch’ - it is a very simple idea from the Eden Project aimed at getting as many people as possible across the whole of the UK to have lunch with their neighbours annually on the first Sunday in June in a simple act of community, friendship and fun.

There was a fantastic turnout, approximately 80 people. The range of food was absolutely amazing, everyone made a real effort.



The plan was to hold the lunch in the community garden but due to the bad weather everyone retreated inside the hall, however not before we were treated to some music in the garden by Liam Mcneill and Lewis Nisbet.

A brilliant afternoon was had by all, Local development officer Hannah MacAllister said "Grace and I would like to thank everyone who brought food along and joined in; we're looking forward to next year already!"

On the back of the 'Big Lunch' The community Gardeners are organising a 'Big Tea Party' on the 20th of July to make the most of the beautiful garden. If you are on the island come along between 3 and 5pm for tea and some delicious cakes with donations going towards the upkeep of the garden.



Lewis and Liam entertain the lunch crowd

Nature Notes – from the RSPB

So far summer on Colonsay and Oronsay has been full of sightings both expected and unexpected. We have two new breeding species for the reserve- a pair of **sparrowhawks** and **great skuas**. Izzy had a great sighting of two **storm petrels** off the southern coast while fishing, and a few days ago I spotted a **swift** flying over our silage fields.

We have managed to do some moth trapping here and were pleasantly surprised to find a **small elephant hawkmoth** as well the larger and more frequently found (larger) elephant hawkmoth. This was the first record for both islands which is very exciting.

**Elephant Hawkmoth (top left)
and Small Elephant Hawkmoth**



Other first confirmed sightings for Colonsay are gem (a rare Scottish migrant) and silver hook moths found by David Jardine and Ian Fisher on Colonsay.



Gem © Ian Fisher



Silver hook © Ian Fisher

On the breeding species front, our pair of **gadwall** have had 8 ducklings, while we have counted over 80 **arctic tern** nests between Ghaoideamal and Eilean nan Ròn. While this is a fantastic number by itself, there is also a pair of the rarer **little terns** nesting here as well. **Marsh fritillary** butterflies have emerged in large numbers and have been seen all over Oronsay and on Colonsay. They will have laid their eggs for next year's generation.

The **machair** is displaying a beautiful and extensive range of flowering plants. With a constant buzzing from insects and wonderful bird song. In particular, **orchids** such as lesser butterfly, northern marsh, early marsh have been flowering in great abundance. It has been lovely to see 4 spikes of the pyramidal orchid in a fenced off shell midden.



Chough chicks have begun to fledge and can be seen flying in family groups. **Corncrake** surveys so far have indicated that are numbers have increased from 2013. With early arrival **Juvenile corncrake Izzy Baker** cover for them they are likely to do well. The other day I was lucky enough to see a chick- all black fluff and thick bill hiding in the grass just 1 meter away! Izzy got a great view of a juvenile corncrake feeding in the grass – see picture.



As mentioned in the wildlife notes in a previous edition, a **hawfinch** was seen on Colonsay in Phil and Carrie's garden. It was great for us to see such a striking photograph. I thought it was definitely worth putting in this month's article for all to see!

Hawfinch

Feel free to email or call with any wildlife

observations or questions,

Raphaelle, Assistant warden Oronsay Reserve

raphaelle.flint@rspb.org.uk

RSPB office – 01951 200 367

Sports News – Golf

In the month of June, an eighteen-strong raiding party left the shores of Cholbhasa, bound for Eileann Ila, *writes our Golf Correspondent Scott Weatherstone*. Their challenge was to play The Machrie, one of the finest but trickiest golf courses in Scotland; it has a lot more long rough than our course; it's 1,000 yards longer and has deep bunkers; there isn't an easy hole in the whole course. The date chosen? Friday the thirteenth; what could possibly go wrong?

The eleven elite athletes and seven WAGs travelled by RIB, by Hebridean Air and by ferry. The trip had been devised by David Binnie, reviving an old tradition of Colonsay/Islay golfing links.

The raiders were surprised, on arriving at the course, to see that the hotel and chalets appeared to have been closed for several years. Ian Brown, the golf shop Manager, explained that a wealthy couple had bought the place three years ago, but that their redevelopment plans had been stymied by the lack of a clean water supply.

In stark contrast, the course itself was resplendent: "Golfing Heaven"! The humps, hollows, ridges and slopes give the subtly-contoured land a real aesthetic beauty; the greens are 100% true and the course tests every department of the player's game. In 1890, when some Ilachs wanted to build a course and consulted prominent golf champion Willie

Campbell of Bridge of Weir, his response, having surveyed the machair along the Eastern shore of Laggan Bay, was: "This place was made for Gowf".

Only one of the eleven golfers can be said to have mastered the course: Mr Liam McNeill, The Pocket Rocket! To score 85 (against a par of 71) was a great achievement, both mentally and physically. He'd already won the Winter League trophy; he could make it a 2014 hat-trick (the Colonsay Grand Slam) by bagging the Open in August. The older players are reacting with great good humour to being beaten on a regular basis by a seventeen-year-old and denied any knowledge of rumours that plans were afoot somehow to nobble their youthful vanquisher. *If you now feel that you have enough information about Liam's performance, please do not, under any circumstances, so much as make eye-contact with him, at least until October.*

THE ISLAY TROPHY 2014
RESULTS (Stableford scoring system).

1 st	Liam McNeill	36 points
2 nd	Derek Emslie	27 points
3 rd	David Binnie	24 points
	Most Enthusiastic	Donald MacAllister Jnr

The other players were Donald MacAllisters Senior and Junior, Davie Bell, Neil Hutton, Matthew "Cammie" Cameron and Scott Weatherstone. The WAGS were Kirsty and Hannah MacAllister, Jan Binnie, Michelle Cameron, Alison Johnston and Moira Bell.



The people of Islay were extremely hospitable, Ian Brown at the Machrie and the staff of the Bowmore Inn and the Lochside Hotel in particular. The trip was an unqualified success (if you don't count the lost balls and the shattered egos). Islay distilleries' profits were hugely

boosted and the Club is in the process of re-booking for next year, probably for Friday, 12th June.

Photograph of the month

Sue Taylor has a wonderful way of making the island fauna, domesticated and wild, perform for her camera. How about this great portrait of a seal





A new look for the Colonsay Pantry

There has been a makeover at the Pantry with Gavin gearing up for the season. First to arrive was the island's first barrista style coffee machine, , and then a new design of mug to go with it.

Gavin says: "2014 is going to see a lot of changes to the business; I am very proud to have such a unique business on such a small island; I want everyone to appreciate the small space we have and enjoy their experience to the full".

Gavin added: "I felt it was time for a change and now felt like a good time to update and bring the business forward for not only myself but for the island and all our customers. We have a new look and a new Team, but this is not all that's happening this year; I look forward to keeping everyone up to date with our progress."

Piershed Tales

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

A commercial diver found a very rich scallop bed yards from the island shore at (withheld)
A yacht dragged its anchor and was only stopped half a mile from the pier when it went through a patch of thick kelp*Sports day in July is going to be bigger and better with a Commonwealth Games grant to help*Jim is gearing up to do his Queen's Baton run shortly*The police are still investigating the van theft*The rugby festival looks like being the biggest yet*Colonsay Brewery had atrial porter ale on sale in the hotel*This month's "first person* held over for lack of space*



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