

The Corncrake, November 2014

Flooding at An Déabhaidh



Recent heavy rain raised the level of Loch Fada and eventually the water was 15" deep over the road as it passes An Déabhaidh ("the shallow channel between parts of the same loch"). In consequence the road had to be closed for three days, something of a rarity these days. Some twenty five years ago, Ronnie Gillies and his merry men set out to cure the problem, which up until that time was a regular occurrence. He noted that the road was unsupported at that point (having been constructed in a hurry and under contract in 1910), and that it passed over a body of peat that was no less than 30ft thick. Even after the road was first built, David Clark of the hotel had a contract to carry the schoolchildren across the flood in a horse and cart, and in pre-road days the biggest boy in the school used to carry the schoolmaster across on his back! (The schoolmaster lived in Laonary, "the fank", and you can still see his compass-work scribed into the plaster.)

No amount of infill could solve the problem; in ancient days a road such as this would have been supported on a hurdle (like a peep-proof fence panel) made of osiers, as for example was used at Dublin (Baile Atha Cliath "town of the hurdle-ford"), so Ronnie used the modern equivalent – he laid his new road upon a lengthy stretch of rot-proof modern membrane and it was a huge success. During the construction period, all traffic was diverted by way of "the old road", through Colonsay House policies.



A few years later, the outflowing burn was deeply dredged (both sides and bottom) all the way to the sea, which obviously affected the status of the loch as a Site of Special Scientific Interest as it threatened the water level in the loch. To mitigate the problem a sluice was created (see picture), so that timbers could be inserted in summer to maintain an adequate water level, and be removed in winter to prevent flooding. Unfortunately, the timbers were seldom (or never?) inserted and in the summer months the water fell to very low levels so that the peat below the road dried out and

was compressed. The road could not sit in mid-air, so it slumped, rather unevenly, resulting in an ever-increasing camber towards the west (see picture).

The end result is that we now have a dangerously sloping road surface on a compressed layer of peat and we are back where we were 25 years ago. Sadly, the genie cannot go back into the bottle – the peat cannot be decompressed. On the other hand, increased deepening of the burn would have horrific implications for the flora and fauna dependent upon one of the very few water-courses in the island, and in any case would merely lead to a future replication of the current problem. It is essential that steps are taken to maintain a reasonable water level during the summer months and one can only wonder why this has not been done. Scottish Natural History should be protecting the status of the SSI and Argyll & Bute should be protecting the integrity of the road – if either body had fulfilled its responsibilities all would have been well.

Hallowe'en Party



The party was held at the Backpackers' Lodge and attended by all the children, including a very welcome visitor from Italy, Lily. There were outrageous costumes worn by children and adults alike, and lots of treats. Very fine hot-dogs, a superb range of cakes (many prepared by the children themselves) and delicious drinks, set upon a beautifully decorated table with magnificent pumpkin. The traditional party games involved one and all – many thanks to all who helped, especially Sarah, Jodi and Pauline.



Colonsay & Oronsay Heritage Trust



The Heritage annual cheese and wine event was held on Saturday 25th October within the modest confines of The Old Generator Shed. Despite lashing rain it was, as ever, a highly successful event – more than 40 people attended for this, the final event of the year.

Throughout 2014 COHT hosted an exhibition of Colonsay WWI material prepared by local military historian and author Alan Davis; this exhibition will now be demounted but is to be scanned and made available for future reference on the COHT website.

The Committee is most grateful for the enthusiasm and support that has been received and invites you to visit the website at <http://www.spanglefish.com/ColonsayandOransayHeritageTrust/>



Connect with Colonsay

More commonly known as OctoberFest, this has become an established event and runs through the first few weeks of the month, covering the tatty-howkin' school holidays. It is a slightly informal version of our Spring Festival and has enabled us to add a little extra choice and variety to the autumn calendar. Just a random selection of events included a Viking Walk to Oransay led by Andrew McMorrine, Jewellery Making for Kids with Morag Halligan, a Nature Walk with Jane Howard, a Beach Litter Clean with Kevin Byrne or a Cooking Demo with David Kinnear.... there were games, there was baking, there was cheese and wine – lots of things to do in an unpressured way. Once again we must thank all those who participated, whether as leaders or followers, and especial thanks to the amazing Sarah Hobhouse who arranged and orchestrated this intricate timetable of events.

An unofficial part of the proceedings saw a large body of islanders attend the farewell party for Ivan and Irena, who have managed the hotel in recent years but will now be joining their daughter as she enters school in the UK. A presentation on behalf of the entire community marked the esteem in which they are both held and the regret that we feel in losing them – they are both going to be missed, but we wish them every success in pastures new, and hope that they will be back often to renew old friendships.

Ferry Services

It seems that the ferry timetable for Summer 2015 will be very much the same as in 2014, commencing on 3 April 2015.

The winter timetable is now in operation, and readily available from www.calmac.co.uk There is a useful facility to obtain a print-out for our route. Travellers should note that the present service runs until 28 November and a slightly different service runs from 29 November until 2 April. This is to facilitate the expressed wish of the community to be served by MV "Lord of the Isles" throughout the worst of the winter period; she is currently undergoing annual maintenance and will serve Colonsay as soon as she is restored to service.

The recent mild and rather warm weather has unfortunately been accompanied by some quite windy conditions, resulting in cancellations of the ferry. In particular, it seems that the Saturday sailings are a bit vulnerable – there is not much anybody can do about it, but intending travellers should consider downloading the CalMac App, which is free and really helpful. It gives the status of every sailing, and includes a tab for the timetable, just in case you need a reminder. As for weather, quite a lot of people rely on a free service by Windfinder – search for and select "Colonsay Airfield", rather than plain "Colonsay". At least one person got a dreadful shock with a forecast of 6ft snow and minus 20 temperature, then realised he was looking at Colonsay Saskatchewan.

Local Development Officers

Grace and Hannah, two unsung heroes who are achieving truly amazing things. Trying to make things easy for oneself, your temporary editor asked them for an update:

'Recycle for Colonsay' is an ambitious project which aims to change the community's attitude towards waste, recycling and minimising our carbon footprint as an island. We are seeking financial support from the Climate Challenge Fund over a 12 month period to help us educate and encourage the community to reduce CO2 emissions in a number of ways. Initiatives will include a community allotment, composting courses, a cycling challenge and a recycling depot.

A recent feasibility study showed that the current recycling facilities on Colonsay are inadequate and a local survey demonstrated that 89% would recycle more regularly if a community recycling depot was created. A recycling depot will allow us to process glass, paper & card locally. A small income will be generated from the sale of fuel briquettes and aggregate, and a part-time job will be available.

The 'Colonsay Cycling Challenge' aims to significantly reduce CO2 emissions and promote a healthy lifestyle by challenging 15 people to swap one 8 mile car journey for a cycled journey every week for a year. Participants will have their progress monitored regularly and incentives and rewards will be offered!

The future of this project largely depends on our funding application being successful. If we are successful in securing the necessary funding then the project will commence in April 2015. If you'd like to get involved (we're always looking for volunteers!), or just need some more information, please don't hesitate to contact Grace - colonsayldo3@yahoo.co.uk

Litter-free Colonsay

On a related mission, one should say that we are about to enter Year 3 of a campaign to render Colonsay and Oronsay completely free of litter and junk in any public place. Roadsides, paths, lochsides and carparks are already virtually pristine – many people are helping informally, and the schoolchildren are ready to stop the bus and collect anything that has been overlooked.

In addition, volunteers have been scouring the entire coastline, with incredible success. At present there is a very large quantity of bagged rubbish to be removed from the point of Balnahard and there is a report of a gully at Uragraig (below the fort) which was overlooked. Apart from that, a list of about thirty "eyesores" was compiled and is being addressed in a methodical manner.

Volunteer beach-cleaning sessions of about 90 minutes will resume twice weekly in April; please do come and help – it makes the work very simple and fast and it is particularly helpful to wildlife if each section can be cleared quickly and efficiently. As ever, participate at your own risk.

Bonfire Night

Join us for a Bonfire, BBQ & Fireworks

Saturday 8th November

6.30pm

Colonsay Community Garden

Remembrance Day Service



Rev. E. Gibson will lead the community in a service of Thanksgiving and Remembrance commencing at 10.30 sharp on Sunday 9th November. Please gather in good time within the CalMac building; following the wreath-laying, those present are warmly invited to repair to The Colonsay Hotel where tea and coffee will be available.

Diary Dates:

The Colonsay Gathering is to be held at Crianlarich Hotel on the weekend of 7th February 2015 – this is a great chance for friends old and new to gather off-island and let their hair down, whilst raising vital funds for the work of the Colonsay Community Development Company. Please make a wee note in your diary now – full details from CCDC or Christa Byrne.

Climbing the MacPhees: a splendid chance to see the whole island in one connected walk, starting and finishing below the highwater mark and including the summits of all 22 hills in excess of 300ft. The total distance is about 21 miles, but you do not have to do more than you wish – just get people to sponsor you for (say) £1 per MacPhee that you bag, all proceeds towards the Kilchattan Primary School Fund for Educational Travel. Revised date is Monday May 4th 2015, a holiday – do make a note and do join in, it is great fun to look back on and an excellent cause. Meet at An Crosan at 9.00am, hope to finish at the Strand about 6.00pm.

Church News

Rev. Liz Gibson will be here for two weeks from Wednesday 5th and will be delighted to meet parishioners (of any persuasion or none); please do not hesitate to get in touch. A Board of Management meeting will be held, to which all are welcome – items to be discussed will be the need to replace the two western windows in the parish church and the financial implications (the windows are large and will be very expensive). Those present will also address plans to erect a modest windmill on the hill above the glebe; it is hoped that the initiative would be financially viable and it is intended to support responsible “stewardship” of the environment. On the same front, we are about to enter Year 4 of the Glebe Environmental Project – the bracken has come under some form of control and the fencing seems to be adequate at last so three Highland Cattle will be purchased (and retained) as part of the Management Plan. We are most grateful to Joe and to other local farmers who have generously offered to assist, particularly as regards over-wintering. Anybody wishing to volunteer with fencing, bracken-cutting, hazel coppicing or any aspect of species recording is invited to contact Kevin Byrne

Kilchattan Primary School

The students were industriously at work in the kitchen of Colonsay House this week, making special cakes for Hallowe’en. Rumour has it that they may be planning to surprise us all with a Nativity Play, the first for many years – casting should be fun. The school is very “green” – in addition to directing litter-picking operations on the schoolbus, they recycle regularly, have a compost-bin and kitchen garden and even eat eggs from their own smallholding. Unhappily one of the hens has gone missing, so one of the children will presumably go hungry...



The Community Garden – Planning for 2015

The Community Garden has gone from strength to strength with the grass now resembling a respectable lawn and the flower beds establishing themselves. With the threat of westerly storms just round the corner, the garden is now bedded down for the winter with only an extra layer of seaweed mulch as a final task.

Looking forward to the next growing season and following the great success of this summer’s Big Tea there are plans to hold a similar event this coming summer. The date is chosen Sunday 19th July 2015..... so hopefully the sun will again shine for us. So, if any of you gardeners are taking cuttings or propagating or planning your seed purchases for next year, do put a couple of plants aside for the Community Garden and bring them along when you come to the Big Tea in July where they will be gratefully received. (J.B.)



RSPB wildlife notes – October 2014

Early October saw the return of the **Greenland barnacle geese** to Colonsay and Oronsay. The highest count on Oronsay mid-way through the month was an amazing 2396 geese, which in one flock were quite the spectacle, on the ground and in the air.

The barnacle geese that winter here breed in Greenland. They make their nests on cliffs and stacks to avoid predators such as **Arctic foxes**.

Life Story BBC1 featured the incredible first steps of newly hatched barnacle geese, making giant leaps from their cliff top nests to the ground, falling over 400ft! Following some gentle encouragement from their parents, the goslings free-fall to the scree slopes below, quite a feat at only a few hours old. It is amazing, after the tremendous trials and tribulations involved in their first steps, that we have thousands of barnacle geese arriving to winter here every year. Wow!

The elegant **whooper swans** have also been passing through. 62 were counted on the strand last week during one of the 'Connect with Colonsay' RSPB walks to the island. They looked brilliantly white against the backdrop of a grey and drizzly day. The swans typically travel in their family groups, with the parents guiding their cygnets on the migration route.

A pair of **brent geese** were found on Oronsay this month. These long distance migrants will have already travelled thousands of miles on their migration towards their wintering grounds in Ireland.



Potentially coming from as far away as Svalbard, the pair pictured were on the island for a week during bad weather – A well deserved break on their epic yearly journey!

October is a fantastic time to see an array of bird species making their way South. A **short-toed lark** put in an appearance (record submitted the rarities committee). This is a rare bird to see in Argyll and only the third record. Typically, short-toed larks can be found breeding as far away as Mongolia. Two **snow buntings** were seen on Oronsay, a passage migrant we usually expect to see at this time of

year.

I enjoyed incredibly close views of [bottlenose dolphins](#) last weekend off the west coast of Oronsay. A pod of five dolphins were in close to shore feeding and I was able to watch them for half an hour, working their way round the coast.

The **grey seal** pupping season is now in full swing. 148 pups were counted on Oronsay last week. Autumn and early winter is when grey seals haul out on the beaches around our coast in order to have their pups.

Several [merlin](#) have also been seen in the past month. These birds will likely be from the Icelandic breeding population which migrate southwards for the winter to make the most of the milder climate. Our native merlin will move off their breeding territories. The merlin is a compact falcon which will often be seen dashing past providing only a brief glimpse. Look out for broad based, pointed wings which will appear shorter than those of a typical falcon. It is the smallest bird of prey you will find in the UK. Female merlin are larger than males. They feed on small birds and will often hunt co-operatively in their bonded pairs.

What to look out for in the next month

Thrushes such as [redwing](#) and [fieldfare](#) will be leaving their breeding grounds in Iceland and Scandinavia and coming through on mass. They are often seen in large flocks when coming into feed during poor weather. Look out for them feeding, especially in areas where there could be berries and in grassland pastures. We will also have song thrushes and black birds from these breeding grounds. Look out for [blackbirds](#) with black bills. It might be a year for [waxwings](#), so keep your eyes peeled for their striking plumage.

Look out for wintering [Greenland white-fronted geese](#) and barnacle geese. Whooper swans will be passing through on their way to Ireland, Strangford Loch. And look out for waxwings!



Feel free to email or call with any wildlife observations or questions,

Morgan, Assistant warden Oronsay Reserve

morgan.vaughan@rspb.org.uk

RSPB office – 01951 200 3

Books of Colonsay Interest

There has been an amazing flowering of literary talent in the recent past, and it would be too much to list everything. Some works are by people with strong local connections, such as “Allan Ramsay: Portraits of the Enlightenment” by Mungo Campbell, Deputy Director of the Hunterian; “Dr. Lachlan Grant of Ballachulish: His life and Times” by Dr. Roderick Macleod and Dilly Emslie; “Cry at Midnight: Witchbane Trilogy Book 1” by Mavis Gulliver, former headmistress at Kilchattan – a thrilling novel for children and set in the Hebrides (also “Slate Voices: Cwmorthin and the Islands of Netherlorn”); and coming soon there will be “Whispering Oats: Island Voices of Colonsay and Oronsay” by Mary C. Carmichael (whose earlier work is “The Land Where I Belong”, celebrating photographer Duncan Macpherson 1882-1966).

Quite extraordinary, and doubtless there will be omissions in this brief list. In addition, there have been publications which deal specifically with Colonsay, such as:

“Growing Wild” is by John Clarke, the naturalist who (with Pamela) did so much in Colonsay during the 1990s and who has left us a lasting legacy in the detailed records of his observations. Copies of his book are available in Colonsay bookshop.

“Changing Times” by Nigel Grant was published earlier this year, and is also available locally. It is to be the first in a trilogy, and covers the period up until he moved into Colonsay as Farm Manager from 1979.

“Dileab Cholbhasach” (A Colonsay Legacy) is a wonderful collection of the writings of Barbara Satchel, edited and accompanied by the inspired translations of her daughter, Morag Law. This splendid work had a very successful local launch in the springtime, and is available in Colonsay bookshop. This is crucial to any Colonsay library, since very little authentic Colonsay Gaelic remains in print.

“The 1806 Voyage of The Spencer” by Hector John Munn (Ex Libris 9781493151387) is a concise and very useful account of the background and results of this pioneer clearance to Prince Edward Island. It includes a detailed passenger list and it marks the first “successful” mass movement – earlier clearances had been ill-conceived and essentially disastrous, but this one was arranged by John McNeill as one of his first initiatives in his own right. He had been responsible for the earlier ones, but only on behalf of Archibald McNeill, so it is hard to ascribe blame for them. The author gives generous acknowledgement to numerous local sources. It should be in stock at Colonsay Bookshop quite soon.

“The Baptist Church in Colonsay 1812 – 2012” by John McNeill and Eleanor McNeill was published in an edition of 200 copies (for obvious reasons), sponsored by advance subscriptions. It will be of interest to anybody whose forefathers of that faith emigrated in the 19th century and some copies are still available.

“Atomic Gold” by Cameron Jacks is published under a nom de plume; if his name appeared here it would be discovered by Search Engines so think Tigh Uirig. It is a thrilling full-length fast-action contemporary adventure story involving deserts, minerals and high drama. Available locally.

“Colonsay’s Fallen” by Alan Davis was published in a limited edition some years ago, supported by advance subscribers; it gives an account of everyone listed on the Colonsay War Memorial, and also of those whose mortal remains came to rest on Colonsay’s shores. It is mentioned now because of the 1914 centenary – not many copies remain, so anyone with a relation memorialised in Colonsay may wish to secure a copy whilst they can.

Colonsay Community Council

The most recent meeting was on October 7th and the main topic was the cost of freight. Various residents had kindly provided information on charges levied and it was noted that, as usual, none of our freight forwarders had responded to requests for tariff sheets. Contact was to be made with our public representatives and consideration was given to holding a Public Meeting, inviting Cllr. Robin Currie and an Oban Times representative to attend. It was agreed that ours is a particularly vulnerable community and that our isolated position, geographically and politically, was doing us no favours. It is believed that one customer is intending to challenge unilaterally imposed charges; there appears to be no other aspect of any industry which is completely unregulated – as was

subsequently demonstrated when the EC imposed a tax of £1.7 billion in respect of UK's thriving trade in prostitution and illicit drugs.

The CalMac timetables were reviewed and it was noted that the company has done all that it can to meet our stated needs; but it was pointed out that the Royal Mail will miss the Wednesday connection to Glasgow as transport will have departed during the operation of the later timetable. This means post will be delayed by a day, and this will be brought to the attention of CalMac.

William Joll had visited Coll on behalf of CCC, and had been highly impressed by their recycling and environmental projects. Work towards such enhancements for Colonsay is being undertaken by our LDOs, with the enthusiastic support of CCC. It was noted that there is no facility in Colonsay for the disposal of oil-waste; allowing for the number of tractors, diggers, boats and locally-serviced cars on the island, a very considerable quantity of oil must be being disposed of in an informal manner.

There is, in any case, a legal obligation to provide waste-oil facilities at every harbour in the land so CCC intends to pursue the matter with the relevant authority (the harbour is owned by CFL but operated by CalMac with devolved responsibilities).

Colonsay Community Development Company

As a member of the public one attended part of the most recent meeting of CCDC. As a novice one may have missed or misunderstood part of the proceedings, but it was certainly impressive to see about sixteen people were sufficiently interested to attend, whether as mere observers or as part of the Board and its team. Perhaps 15% of the adult population, sadly something of a contrast with the average church attendance but doubtless a sign of the times.

Finances seemed to be in reasonable fettle, but the Board has decided that it is important to actually employ a qualified book-keeper, so that fiduciary control by the relevant director is made more manageable. There was a seriously exciting contribution by the LDOs in regards to re-cycling; they have applied for funding which, if successful, should put our efforts onto a sensible and rewarding plane. On a related subject, good progress is being made as regards "renewables" (i.e. one or more windmills) and a specific individual was appointed to work with the Board and the LDOs in driving this forward.

There has been a long-standing ambition to provide "affordable housing" in Colonsay, which is really just another way of saying "inexpensive sites close to services". The options appear to be to build upon land that the community already owns (i.e. beside Port Mor) or to obtain land at as low a price as possible elsewhere, from a crofter or from Colonsay Estate. If one understood correctly, there is some sort of minimum number of sites required for such a development, perhaps six or nine close together rather than individual sites dotted all over the island. This being the case, the options are in realistic terms to use the existing community land (in a remote and un-serviced area of outstanding scenic and amenity value) or to purchase land from Colonsay Estate in an identified site close to services and amenities in an area of scenic sensitivity but of no specific or unique characteristics. As we all know, a community consultation authorised CCDC to pursue the second option, but it has stalled. In a nutshell (and one may have misunderstood), CCDC offered a purchase price based upon the District Valuator's advice (which is the most that they are allowed to offer) but this offer was not acceptable to the vendor. Thus we have a willing purchaser and a willing vendor but a slight mismatch; in Ireland one would engage the services of a "tangler" and it was encouraging to learn that such a person has offered his services here, to wit Mike Russell, Member of the Scottish Parliament (and, one is told, a member of the Scottish National Party). In addition, CCDC will also proceed with an outline planning application in respect of the possible site at Port Mor.

One noticed that representatives were present from Highlands and Islands Development Board, with a view to helping CCDC in certain technical matters. There was a bit more on the agenda, since CCDC look after coal, gas, petrol and diesel supplies, are responsible for the transfer of tenancies in the new crofts and are working on numerous new projects. Unhappily your correspondent found

that it was already 9.30pm and his dog was waiting in the car, anxious for a walk as far as the hotel....

What happened to the October Edition?

Many of our readers will have noticed that the October edition appeared as usual and on time – and then it disappeared! The background to the situation is that when *The Corncrake* was first started (the name being inspired by Dominic Cornford) it was hosted on the Colonsay Community Website and, by chance, that site belonged to the then incarnation of Colonsay Community Development Company. It was a private initiative and the editor was left to his own devices, as has always been the case; but the site was owned by CCDC and it was agreed that in the event of any significant complaint the relevant issue could be withdrawn or modified without further ado. Such a situation did arise from time to time and was readily addressed without anybody really noticing.

As it happened, something in the October issue did seem to hit the wrong note with some readers and unfortunately the original simple remedy was no longer to hand – in the past, *The Corncrake* was produced in html (in the early days, it was actually keyed in entirely by hand, in fact by one finger, truly digital technology), but recent issues had moved to pdf format. It had been noted that this would lead to a lower profile on the search-engines but nobody had noticed that the entire thing would be set in stone! What happened next is best described by reference to Deuteronomy Ch.9 v.17 * – very unfortunate, and maladroit to boot. Unsurprisingly the editor was far from pleased and CCDC is also heavily discomfited. Under the circumstances, one understands that CCDC extends apologies to all concerned – to the editor for having had to act in such an apparently robust way, and to those readers who could not understand the lengthy delay involved.

The editor, unsurprisingly, has stepped aside in view of these events and the present issue is a poor stopgap for which one can only apologise. The underlying technological difficulty has not yet been fully resolved as the basic pdf may still be based upon text which resides on the pc of the editor, who may happen to be unavailable or unable to access it remotely. So, in the immediate future, a copy of the original text will be accessible and on the island and meanwhile suitable software is being obtained to permit normal editing of any future pdf.

The emergency editor joins CCDC and our readers in expressing sincere thanks to David Johnston and Hannah Macallister for all their work in producing such valuable and comprehensive editions in recent months, and in an expression of great regret that this most unhappy situation has caused so much grief.

*"I seized the two tablets and with my two hands threw them down and broke them before your eyes." NJV

Politics

Sadly, no time or space for a proper contribution this month, but as a member of the public (and in the spirit of *The Skibbereen Eagle*) your correspondent did notice a suggestion by Ms. Sturgeon, prospective leader of the SNP, that any decision by the UK government to leave the EC should be predicated upon the prior assent of the electorates of the constituent components of that United Kingdom. In other words, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales should all vote, and any final decision would be based upon the result.

That seems fair enough, but why should that same principle not apply to decisions of the UK London government to drag us all into future military adventures? It seemed easy enough for London to commit the country to war in Iraq and Afghanistan and Syria – but, on a representative basis, how many of those “decision-makers” are affected? Surely each country in the Union should be consulted in advance of these expensive undertakings of doubtful merit?

Whilst one is at it, we are told that Ebola is a grave threat to the whole world, which does seem entirely credible. So why are we relying on the begging-bowl to address that threat? If an asteroid was hurtling towards the earth, would “they” have a charitable whip-round to fund the response?

Or would they use their mandate and authority to respond timeously to the threat, and fund it from subsequent taxation in the normal way?

Beached Whale

A whale beached at Port Lohb recently and it seemed possible that it was an accidental stranding. A very large number of people gave of their time to help keep it moist and as calm as possible; obviously expert advice was sought and followed throughout. Because of tidal conditions the only hope of survival meant that it would have to be moved, a more difficult task than one might guess. Joe used the Kiloran equipment with extraordinary dexterity and sensitivity whilst volunteers supported the length of the spine – the whale was successfully refloated but during the night it beached itself again and the decision had to be made to put an end to its suffering. The whole affair was extraordinarily distressing but we have established useful contacts and hope to obtain suitable slings to be available for any such future event.



Absent Friends – and others!

It is quite extraordinary to know that more than one million people in Canada alone have an ancestral link with Colonsay. If you have a connection with the island, be it ever so distant, please know that it is appreciated and understood – you too are part of our community, even if you have to participate from a distance. There are also many, many dear friends, regular visitors or true Colbhasaichs, who can only visit from time to time or maybe only in spirit – they too are a part of our living, growing community. It is for everyone that we try to produce The Corncrake, to keep you in touch with whatever is going on... but there is more.

Our Community Website at www.colonsay.org.uk includes heaps of information about Births, Marriages and Deaths, all the census returns, lots of shipping lists etc., to help you identify your extended family. It also includes lots of other information, not least the list of all known accommodation should you choose to visit – everything from Hotel or B&B through Backpackers Lodge and a very wide range of self-catering accommodation.

There is a “Friends of Colonsay” page on FaceBook; not great as the chap involved is bit of an amateur, but sometimes there is something interesting. If you are interested in history, you might like to explore www.colonsayhistory.info or www.colonsay.info both of which lead you to monthly newsletters, dealing with either local history or genealogy. There is also a site provided by Colonsay and Oronsay Heritage Trust (featured above). Please do not be shy – your response, interaction or contribution is what we crave; a letter to The Corncrake is currently a rare bird, so if you feel inclined please communicate.

SCAM ALERT

At least one local business has been targeted – punter makes a booking from overseas, agrees the price and sends advance payment which covers the full rental plus an additional amount “to cover holiday spending”. The payment is cleared into the victim’s account, who is then asked to forward the balance to a third party (hire-car, bank, whatever). If he does so, he will find that the entire original sum has retrospectively disappeared. Too good to be true? Yes indeed. Incidentally, the police were informed and mentioned that this is quite a common fraud, they had one recent case involving the theft of £7,000.

Odds and Ends:

Rumour has it that there is the possibility of a newly-arriving family for Colonsay; Seamus is finding it hard to run both the farm and the port, so is standing aside for a replacement recruited from within CalMac (applications have now closed); Colonsay Estate has plans to develop a new “woodlands policy” which will aim to protect existing ancient woodland, rejuvenate where necessary and explore additional opportunities (maybe Biomass?) – there is even the possibility of work for a wood-ranger; Marine Harvest are to meet the community shortly in connection with the new fishfarm, for which they have been recruiting (work due to commence in April 2015, operational within the year); planning is to be renewed for a site at Uragaig, a site is for sale at Glassard, a house is for sale at Glassard, another site at Kilchattan, and negotiations continue towards the creation of “affordable housing”; there is some disquiet locally as to whether or not A&B Planning Department is up to the job, it is wondered if strange things seem to be being approved or going through “on the nod”; Colonsay Harbour Users met with CalMac and are committed to further proactive development; Seamus and Christine launched Highland Dancing sessions last week, very well attended, and cakes too; Kevin and Christa had a week’s holiday in a motor-home touring Northumberland; Gavin seems to be in New York for his birthday with Jim and Anne, on the point of departure for a cruise; Bill and Annie are away to visit Australia.

In Conclusion

If you have got this far, you deserve to know that any comments concerning the current edition should be addressed to byrne@colonsay.org.uk If you live locally and got this far, it might suggest that you are interested in this kind of thing - there is a vacancy at present for the unpaid and thankless role of editor, just drop a word in the ear of any CCDC Board member.

Letters to the Editor:

There aren’t any. Pity.