

## **Corncrake February 2015**

### **Festival of Spring April 27th to May 17th 2015**

For the fifth successive year the island will open its shores to welcome in the lighter & brighter days of the year with its three week Festival of Spring.

There will be the usual eclectic mix of nature, art, foraging, craft, heritage and baking events, with rspb guided walks, textile workshops, bread making, island history lectures & local music, to name but a few.

New topics for this year include 'the Vikings on Oronsay', Basket Making & Drystone Walling. With over 60 individual events planned and with an array of different experts & contributors, 2015 promises to be another great event.

The full 3 week programme can be viewed at [www.colonsayevents.co.uk](http://www.colonsayevents.co.uk)



### **LINE-UP REVEALED FOR COLONSAY BOOK FESTIVAL 2015**

Organisers of the Colonsay Book Festival today announced the line-up of authors for the fourth annual Hebridean literary celebration, for 25 and 26 April 2015. This year's programme stars celebrated Scottish crime writer and screenwriter Lin Anderson, roofer-turned-poet William Letford, cookery writer Mary Contini, novelist Sara Maitland, nature writer and poet Jim Crumley and award-winning author James Buchan, grandson of *The 39 Steps* writer John Buchan.

In addition, acclaimed composer and musician Mike Vass will provide entertainment of a musical and literary flavour on Saturday 25 April, in the Colonsay Village Hall. Joined by some of Scotland's finest musicians, his [In the Wake of Neil Gunn](#) suite celebrates Scotland's coastal communities, the inspirational joy of sailing, and Neil Gunn's outstanding contribution to Scottish literature. The supporters of Mike Vass have included CalMac and House of Lochar – publishers of Neil Gunn's "*Off in a Boat*", now on sale at the bookshop.

Dilly Emslie, Director of the Colonsay Book Festival, said: "With less than three months to go, excitement is building ahead of the fourth instalment of the Colonsay Book Festival. Yet again, we've lined up a fantastic programme with something for everyone to enjoy. On behalf of all the organisers, we can't wait to welcome our visitors and authors to Colonsay in April. Tickets are on

sale now, with a special early bird rate available until 14 February. You can keep up to date with all our news on our website and via Twitter and Facebook.”

Conceived and produced entirely by the island’s residents, the Colonsay Book Festival has carved its own niche in Scotland’s busy book festival calendar since launching in 2012. Many of Scotland’s best loved writers and poets have now made the journey by ferry to experience Colonsay’s literary celebrations, with audiences flocking from all over the world to join them.

Ian Rankin, whose Colonsay Book Festival appearance in 2013 coincided with his birthday, summed up the event’s appeal. He said: 'It is no mystery - take a wonderful island, add readers and writers, sprinkle the whole with outstandingly good organisation ... and a magical festival results!!’ Last year’s event featured Val McDermid, Jackie Kay, Andrew Greig, Christopher Brookmyre, Lesley Glaister and Patrick Richardson.

2015 Colonsay Book Festival tickets are on sale from [www.colonsaybookfestival.org.uk](http://www.colonsaybookfestival.org.uk)

**Lin Anderson:** Tartan Noir crime writer, Lin is the acclaimed author of nine Rhona MacLeod novels, her protagonist being a Glasgow forensic scientist. The latest is *Paths of the Dead* (2014), and the books are currently being developed for TV. She has also begun a series set in Cannes featuring the private detective Patrick de Courvoisier. Lin is also a screenwriter, of *Small Love* and *River Child*, which won a BAFTA Scotland award in 2008. Her passion for the film *Braveheart* led her to publish a non-fiction work on the Braveheart phenomenon in 2005. When not writing, Lin is chair of the Society of Authors in Scotland, the co-founder – with Alex Gray – of Bloody Scotland, Scotland’s first annual crime-writing festival, and a member of the Femmes Fatales crime-writing trio with Alex Gray and Alanna Knight.

**James Buchan:** James Buchan, the grandson of the Scottish novelist and diplomat John Buchan, began his writing career as a journalist, covering the Middle East, Germany and the United States. His first novel, *A Parish of Rich Women* (1984), won the Whitbread Book of the Year Award and the Betty Trask Award, and *Heart’s Journey in Winter* (1995) won the Guardian Fiction Prize. He has published eight novels, and several works of non-fiction, including *Frozen Desire: An Inquiry into the Meaning of Money* (1997), *Capital of the Mind: How Edinburgh Changed the World* (2003), *Adam Smith and the Pursuit of Liberty* (2006). His most recent book, *Days of God: the Revolution in Iran and its Consequences*, was published in 2012. James will be discussing the 18<sup>th</sup> century Scots financier, John Law.

**Jim Crumley:** A nature writer and poet, Jim has over 20 books to his name, mostly on the landscape and wildlife of Scotland. He is also a presenter of radio programmes and a journalist, publishing a weekly column in *The Courier* and a monthly feature in *The Scots Magazine*. Among his many books are *The Winter Whale* (2008), on the true story of the hump-backed whale made famous by William McGonigall, *The Last Wolf* (2010) and *The Great Wood* (2011), which examines whether the ancient forest of Caledon might be recreated as a national forest. Jim will be reading from and discussing *The Eagle’s Way* (2014), which looks at the reintroduction of sea eagles and their interaction both with golden eagles and the Scottish landscape, and two monographs from his new *Encounters in the Wild* series, *Barn Owl* and *Fox* (both 2014).

**Sara Maitland:** In her long and varied writing career, Sara has written works of fiction and non-fiction, her favourite genre being short stories. Her deeply held religious beliefs inform much of her work; she writes about women and ‘the entangled emotions of terror and beauty’, and draws greatly on the old traditions of fairy stories, myths and folk tales. Her first novel, *Daughter of Jerusalem*, won the Somerset Maugham award in 1978. Her short story collections include *On Becoming a Fairy Godmother* (2003) and *Far North and Other Dark Tales* (2008). Her non-fiction titles include *Very Heaven: women’s lives in the 1960s* (1988), *Gardens of Illusion* (2000), *A Book of Silence* (2009) and *Gossip from the Forest* (2012), which explores the idea that fairy stories come out of forests, and rewrites twelve traditional tales collected by the Grimm brothers. Sara will be discussing her latest collection, *Moss Witch and other stories* (2013), hybrid tales which fuse elements of scientific theory with ancient myth, folklore and contemporary story-telling. Each story, inspired by cutting-edge research, arose out of conversations with scientists, and each is accompanied by an after-word specially written by these consulting scientists.

**Mary Contini:** A director of Valvona and Crolla, the renowned Edinburgh restaurant, delicatessen and cookery school, Mary is the best-selling author of several books about Italian life and cooking, including *Dear Francesca*, *Dear Olivia* and *Valvona and Crolla: A Year at an Italian Table* (2009). She has written three cookery books for children: *Easy Peasy* (with Pru Irvine), *Easy Peasy Baking* and *Easy Peasy Sweetie Pie*. Her latest publication is *The Italian Sausage Bible* (2012), which describes the range of different regional sausages; as she says, the sausage is as important to Italians as the haggis is to Scots! *Dear Francesca* and *Dear Olivia* were labours of love: written for her daughters to explain the history of their families and how they came from the mountains of Italy to Edinburgh and East Lothian, they were also an opportunity to pass on family recipes. She is working on a new book which will look at the women in her family, and their belief in the importance and power of food.

**William Letford:** William Letford is a new voice on the poetry scene. He took an MLitt in Creative Writing at the University of Glasgow, and was subsequently awarded a Scottish Book Trust New Writer’s Award, and an Edwin Morgan Travel Bursary, which enabled him to spend three months in the mountains of Northern Italy in 2008, helping to restore a medieval village. A roofer by trade, since the age of 15, his work gives him a particular perspective of life at ground level: “Be prepared: pay attention to the moment and know which way to fall”. His first collection of poems, *Bevel*, was published by Carcanet Press in 2012, and some of his work was also included that year in *New Poetries V* (Carcanet). A brilliant performer of his own pieces, William ‘makes poems from the rhythms of speech and stuff of daily life: work and love, seasons and cities. His writing is alive with the wonder and comedy of the mundane’.

### **The new COLONSAY APP**

Hannah, our LDO, has secured funding for an all-singing, all-dancing Colonsay App which is being designed by BlueMungus. Some of us are a bit unfamiliar with such things but apparently it will have an interactive map and the user can select symbols according to taste – beauty spots, places of interest, shop, church, pantry etc. If, for example, you select The Pantry you will get contact details, hours of opening, possibly a menu and (who knows?) a glimpse of the Dish of the Day. Obviously the final thing will be as good as the information supplied but there will be a facility to suit the more proactive provider.

Places of Interest are being “populated” (note the early-adoption of the lingo) as we speak; there is to be a bit of background about each place and a picture... it is envisaged that users will be able to submit possible additions to the initial offering, and also to submit improved pictures (not too difficult, since the originals are being taken in mid-winter conditions).

Beauty spots are less of a problem, since good pictures of such places are to hand. There will of course be information on tide times, sun and moon rise and setting, links to weather and transport and particular attention is to be paid to the “What’s On” aspect, with the full annual timetable of festivals and events to be updated as often as required. This area should include Notice Board and Hot News. It is envisaged that there will be a rolling calendar of (say) three weeks, so that one can know exactly what is happening during the course of a visit. Hopefully there will also be a link to a page giving details of any late-availability, cancellations or special offers on accommodation within that same 3 – 4 weeks rolling period.

Timing is all – we hope that the App will be available for download in time for Easter, maybe even St. Patrick’s Day. Details will appear on Friends of Colonsay and other FaceBook pages, Twitter and all the usual places.



### **Satellite Broadband**

Our Local Development Officer is working to arrange satellite Broadband for Colonsay within the next 18 months or so, which is very encouraging. As it happens, one local business is struggling very badly – with no less than five Broadband connections and BT bills of over £3,800 p.a. the connections are frequently either down or so far below 0.5kb as to actually be unmeasurable. It has become impossible to operate a business on this basis, so whilst maintaining the BT contracts the owners have arranged to install satellite broadband through an independent supplier. They have selected Satellite Internet from BeyonDSL and have signed up for one year on a basic package; George Leppard has kindly agreed to install the equipment and full details will be published here as to the progress and success of the plan.

To put this in context, readers will be shocked to know that even the Service Point in Colonsay has had no effective Broadband since September 2014, almost totally crippling the office. In fact, even the telephones were out for weeks on end (still out at time of writing), so that the staff could not even have the satisfaction of continuing to complain to the IT department of Argyll & Bute Council, who are the commissioning agents and thereby responsible for the services. Other people affected by the appalling situation include those who are concerned with lifeline services, not least our doctors out on call and vulnerable persons at home.

### **Cnoc an Ardrigh**

Readers might remember the Christmas competition, which aimed to identify a tiny holding on the 1808 Estate Map; purely by chance, it has now been noticed that the area in question has a proper name and is clearly shewn on the modern O.S. map – it is Cnoc an Ardrigh. As many people will

know, Symington Grieve had been told that this was some sort of “pleasure ground” associated with Dun Eibhinn and he took the name to mean “Hill of the High King”. Allowing for the fact that his informants had stories from two hundred years ago, we can at least accept this as evidence that it was still remembered as a defined location. Loder challenges the spelling and prefers Cnoc an Ardrugh “High Slope Hill”, whereas a dictionary gives *ruighe* as “outstretched base of a mountain, shieling ground”. Evidently it was not a shieling, but it does look like the “prominent hillock of a mountain base”. One wonders if anything more will ever come to light? Maybe Grieve had the right name after all, perhaps it had been given to the place in jest, as being like a tiny kingdom? Or perhaps it was to give a local touch to some traditional tale (like The Piper’s Cave etc.)?



### **The new CHURCH WINDOWS**

The Parish Church was recently the subject of a professional inspection and it was noted that BOTH the western windows are in a very poor state; one of them is actually so fragile that it has had to be strengthened as a temporary measure, to minimise any risk of implosion in high winds. This is a Listed Building, it plays an important part in island life and it is available to all, not just for worship but for baptisms, weddings, funerals and also for cultural purposes – lectures, recitals and study groups are all welcome.

The new windows must be in hardwood and it is clear that the other windows must also be subjected to serious conservation treatment as regards treatment of bare wood and putty, prior to normal protective and decorative paintwork for all of them. One or two minor repairs of a long-standing nature will also be addressed; the roof was stripped, felted and re-slatted about thirty years ago, and if use of a cherry-picker can be arranged this will be a good opportunity to secure or replace any loose or missing slates.

Unfortunately, this important work will be expensive. The new windows will cost £5,200 and the total costs including freight, preparation, installation, glazing, ancillary works plus transport and accommodation of the contractors means that parishioners must try to raise £10,000 in all. This is a huge sum for a tiny congregation, although it is in reality not so big if considered in context – for example, by comparison with the funding to create a new App or for training the new Directors of CCDC. The Congregational Board is submitting information to the relevant authorities and will hope to be authorised to approach possible funding bodies for assistance – but for the moment, they are on their own. *See details below.*

Incidentally, as most people know the Parish Church and the Baptist Church work very closely together and joint services are held for nearly every week in the year – see

<http://www.colonsay.info/text/Church%20Services.htm> or follow the link from [www.colonsay.org.uk](http://www.colonsay.org.uk)



### **The Parish Church Appeal**

How very dreary, the begging bowl again; this is regrettable but maintenance is vital. As described above, the Parish Church needs to raise £10,000 by May 2015. It is very encouraging that already one islander has contributed £100 before the appeal had even started, and we know that others will come forward shortly – will there be another ninety-nine? Please note that Gift Aid will boost any contribution by 25% if the mathematics is correct (assuming 20% tax rate) provided it is submitted by a current taxpayer. This is of huge significance, any family contributions are dramatically increased in value if they can be pooled and submitted by the relevant person. To make a contribution or to discuss, please contact Hon. Treasurer Andrew MacGregor on 01951 200276 or email [macgandrew\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:macgandrew[at]gmail.com). Contributions (nationally or internationally) can also be made by credit or debit card, or by PayPal via Session Clerk Kevin Byrne 01951 200320 email [byrne\[at\]colonsay.org.uk](mailto:byrne[at]colonsay.org.uk) but please contact Andrew first so he can keep his books straight and so that he can send the GiftAid Declaration form where relevant. Please do consider if you can help with this appeal – if we cannot maintain the building, there is no guarantee that we can keep it!

The Church of Scotland parish of **Colonsay and Oronsay** (No. 211300) is a registered Scottish Charity  
**No: SC031271**



*Detail of the glazing bars – which must bear the brunt of winds up to 100mph*

### **Twenty is Plenty (near pedestrians)**

Most people in Colonsay will normally drive at between 25mph and 40mph and all will be wearing a seatbelt; and most people do slow down considerably when passing pedestrians (who should have stepped off the road and be standing still whilst the vehicle passes). It is well worthwhile to slow down like that, just in case the pedestrian stumbles. Even at a low speed, accidents happen - in the 1880s a local man in his mid 50s was killed when struck by a cart whilst walking on the roadside at

Achadh Tarsuinn. The official figures suggest that one should slow to 20mph or less when passing a pedestrian standing clear of the road.

RoSPA says: The most recent analysis of the role of vehicle speed in pedestrian fatalities in Great Britain found that 85% of pedestrians killed when struck by cars died in collisions that occurred at impact speeds below 40mph, 45% at less than 30 mph and 5% at speeds below 20 mph.

The risk of a pedestrian who is hit by a car being killed increases slowly until impact speeds of around 30 mph. Above this speed, the risk increases rapidly, so that a pedestrian who is hit by a car travelling at between 30 mph and 40 mph is between 3.5 and 5.5 times more likely to be killed than if hit by a car travelling at below 30 mph. However, about half of pedestrian fatalities occur at impact speeds of 30 mph or below. Elderly pedestrians have a much greater risk of suffering fatal injuries than other age groups.

### **The Storms**

Fortunately, there is nothing much to say. Despite the appalling conditions elsewhere, Colonsay was fairly fortunate – there was very little damage. The wind did not often gust much over 70 knots, and for most people the damage caused by lightning was the worst, with widespread damage to telephone and broadband services. It was the longest unbroken spell of high winds for over twenty years, about ten days in all, making it very hard to move around and for many people it was difficult to sleep at night. Ferry and air services held up very well, with the majority in operation but causing unavoidable loss and inconvenience to some unfortunate travellers. There was no snow or ice to speak of, but plenty of hail and a great deal of rain – the Dèabhaidh was impassable for three or four days. Our picture shows a steady wind in excess of 40 knots blowing straight into Kiloran Bay on 31 January, a very unusual direction; the photographer was on top of Beinn Bheag and at that height the wind was much stronger, making it impossible to stand up.



### **CCDC Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> January**

This meeting had been heralded by both a two-page letter from the remaining four Directors and a subsequent newsletter, with a view to encouraging members of the community to adopt a more proactive attitude to this vital community organisation. The meeting was held at the Service Point in challenging weather, with driving rain and winds already gusting to over 40 knots and which were later to exceed 75 knots. Despite these conditions the four directors and the remaining job-sharing half of the Local Development Officer were joined by 12 members of the public. That majority of the Directors who had resigned in recent months did not attend.

It was startling to learn that our company has only 21 shareholders, and that therefore perhaps the majority of the shareholders were actually in attendance. Colonsay and Oronsay has a population of approximately 130 persons and one can understand that many people would have been unable to attend in such weather conditions, but membership of the company is open to all persons on the Electoral Roll, at a cost of £1 per year, and such a low level of commitment is surely quite

remarkable. The company arranges the supply and sale of petrol, diesel, coal and gas, is involved in the provision and servicing of the service Point, appoints and manages the increasingly-vital post of Local Development Officer, purchased community land and created five new crofts, is negotiating to provide opportunities for low-cost housing, was responsible for the construction of the existing industrial units and publicly-owned housing, is working to develop a wind-turbine project with its associated income stream and is engaged in numerous other projects... for example the Community Website, which is vital to so many businesses, and it is the ultimate owner of this publication, The Corncrake. An apathy score of 85% of any island's population must be some sort of record.

The meeting turned to the matter of strengthening the Board, which is currently operating with a bare quorum and under intolerable strain in view of all its commitments. The resultant discussion was detailed, informative and constructive – a number of hard truths had to be addressed and, in the view of your correspondent, these were aired and considered in a very open way. It was agreed that a General Meeting will be held – probably in February – when members of the existing Board will have an opportunity to retire and when it is to be hoped that a new Board can be elected by democratic process, to join any member or members of the existing Board who are prepared to provide continuity. It was also to be hoped that the experience of recent months would be turned to full advantage. This being so, former Directors whose principles had led to their resignation in recent months might allow their names to be put forward for re-election. It was pointed out that a small community does not have an unlimited pool of available talent and it is to everyone's advantage that we have a strong and united Board.

The issue of the purchase of land for affordable housing was addressed and clarified. The potential vendor has made proposals and awaits a response, and the current Board is reviewing its options; the negotiations are ongoing and both parties are hopeful of a mutually-satisfactory conclusion. Some individuals currently concerned with the workings of the company indicated that they felt they needed more support and guidance; one member of the community is a member of the Institute of Directors and another is a qualified Management Trainer – both of these individuals were present and offered to assist in any way. In addition, funds have been obtained which will provide the help of an outside specialist, working two days per month for 9 months at a fee of £15,000. This should make the responsibilities of the new Directors less daunting. One or two people sought and received reassurance as to the financial standing of the company, which in that department is demonstrably in good heart.

This is not a full account of the meeting, which went on to address normal company business; it is understood that the Board will in future issue a monthly newsletter locally (to be circulated by email) and it will also recommence the process of posting the Minutes online. All meetings are open to the public, Minutes of all meetings and all company correspondence are available for consultation at the Service Point (except where matters of specific commercial or individual confidentiality might be involved). It is understood that requests have been lodged by an anonymous third-party under the Freedom of Information legislation and are being processed, although one might wonder why the enquirer does not just come into the office and look at the files for him- or herself. It is an obvious example of one way to waste time which could be more productively employed.

### **Oban Times March 8, 1879**

COLONSAY Ploughing Match: Competitions for ploughing supremacy were commenced on this island twenty-four years ago, and, with the exception of a few years' break, have been continued to this day. The last was held on the 14<sup>th</sup> ult. , on Kiloran farm, tenanted by Mr. William Stroyan. The morning opened wet and unpromising, but as the day advanced the weather cleared up, with a sharp east wind, which, however bracing to the nerves of the competitors, nearly killed the onlookers, notwithstanding that they unceasingly poked away at their internal fires with bannocks



and barley bree. The judges were Mr Angus Campbell, Baleracrain [sic], and Mr. Alex MacNeill, Scalasaig. Work commenced punctually to time, and was performed throughout with such skill, taste, and regularity that the judges had difficulty in deciding the destinations of two or three of the prizes. The awards were as follows: 1. Alex. Weir Jur., Balnahard 15s.; 2 Donald Ban Macneill, Machrins, 12s 6d.; 3 Alex. Macneill jun., Kiloran 10s.; 4 Dugald McLellan, Scallasaig, 7s 6d.; 5 Alex. Meikle, Machrins. Several minor prizes were given for extras.

Weather: February, according to adage, came in with a serpent's head, and went out with a peacock's tail.

Note by KB: *Angus Campbell in 1871 and 1881 was the farmer at Baleromindubh, so "Baleacrain" is a typesetter's error or possibly an unrecorded name; it could conceivably be a jest.*

### **On the grapevine:**

Gavin was away again! This time he was in the Canaries but he seemed to be making the best of it; Anne and Jim were on the High Seas once again; Dave and Jan are in Oz; Helen and Dell took Eve and Ella to Fuerteventura, they must be keen on islands; work on Hazel Cottage is going ahead well, the annexe found is in place and a new porch went up this week; two of the Housing Association properties had been made available and have now been re-allocated; the Planners at A&B do not relish a proposed rather modest wind-generator at the Glebe but the income stream would be very helpful and the application will be pressed; Ivan is said to be returning to The Colonsay for the season; the Scottish Dancing classes each Wednesday at the Hall (7.30pm) are good fun, and open to all – grateful thanks to Seamus; meanwhile Christine and Shirley are on a boat somewhere in the Bahamas and missing the lessons; the Hall Committee has been very busy, the floor has been revarnished and the Upper Room has been much-improved; and **The Corncrake** is still short of a new editor – maybe after the CCDC EGM someone will come forward?

### **RSPB wildlife notes December/January**

Despite the persistent extreme weather over the last two months we've had some really spectacular wildlife sightings and encounters.



We have had brilliant views of a pair of **golden eagles** over Benn Oronsay in the last month. We enjoyed watching them from the farm yard several times between the hail storms. Even some blue sky!

The colder conditions we've been experiencing across Scotland have led to an influx of **golden plovers**. 230 were counted on Oronsay this week. We suspect many will have come over from the mainland in search of food as the freezing conditions on the there will have made it more difficult for the birds to forage.

The **little egret** on The Strand has proved to enjoy the feeding there... it was still present well into January.



**Snow buntings** have featured again on the island with a flock on four feeding on the spilt grain left over from feeding the cattle silage. A wonderful sight at this time of year.



The strand lines on the beaches have also provided some very interesting finds. In December Mike and Val found a triggerfish washed up on the Long Loch. We've managed to identify the species as a grey triggerfish. This species is more commonly found on in the Western Atlantic and can be seen in shallow waters from Nova Scotia all the way down to Argentina. Populations of grey trigger fish can also be found in the Mediterranean and also off the West of Africa, which maybe where this specimen originated. This isn't the first record of a triggerfish washing up on Oronsay but they are unusual to see. One of our colleagues on Tiree has also found a couple washed up after the storms.

Another exciting find came in the form of a 'sea-bean'. Whenever I walk the beaches on Oronsay, I keep my eye out for sea-beans. Also known as drift-seeds, sea-beans are seeds or fruits that have been carried out to sea after falling from trees or vines which grow along tropical shores. I love imagining where this one could have come across the ocean from. Somewhere a lot warmer that's for sure. Jamaica perhaps? Sea-beans often float due to an internal air pocket within the seed. I am so pleased to finally find one!



I had a fantastic view of an otter last weekend while out walking. Three choughs were busy mobbing it from one of the dry stone walls. It was a real treat to see one up so close. I managed to get a quick, albeit blurry, photo as it ran past – Trying to avoid the chough.



We've had a flock of twenty **chaffinch** around the yard for much of the winter. They are often seen busy feeding around the silage bales for any spilt seeds. **Reed buntings** have also been around in small flocks of up to seventeen, also looking for an easy meal. The twite flock has also been roving around the fields in search of seed, we've had counts of forty individuals which is brilliant to see at this time of year.

A **kestrel** has featured around the yard consistently over the last two months. It's quite often on the wall by the farm house. The hooded crows often give its position away by mobbing it as they fly past.



### **What to look out for in the next month**

Please do continue to keep your eyes peeled for any ringed **herring gulls**. We've had three ringed gulls on Oronsay the last few weeks. The gull in the photo below was ringed on Oronsay last summer and was spotted in again here December.



Especially with cold weather on the mainland an increase in wading birds such as lapwing and golden plover is highly likely so look out for flocks feeding in fields over the next month. Also to remember, if you have a bird feeder or table – Keep it topped up in this poor weather. This will really give the birds in your garden a boost!

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

*Morgan, Assistant warden Oronsay Reserve*

[morgan.vaughan@rspb.org.uk](mailto:morgan.vaughan@rspb.org.uk)

**RSPB office – 01951 200 367**

## COMPETITION TIME

The competition is based upon the fact that the Bible has a significance in our culture which goes beyond religion. It is probably true to say that it is nowadays a closed book to many people, since it is no longer mentioned in most schools. On purely cultural grounds this seems to be a pity, so competitors were invited to read over Genesis in preparation for our competition.... please do not cheat (the answers are readily available on line), although you can of course refer to the Bible itself. Send your answers to byrne[at]Colonsay.org.uk or leave them at the Post Office. Our questions are courtesy of BiblePath.com and there are prizes. Adult: bottle of wine from the shop if local, otherwise a book about Colonsay. Under 16yrs – a fiver. Entries close on 21<sup>st</sup> February and the correct ones will be numbered, and then a random number generator will be used to select the winners. To prepare for our March competition, read through the Book of Exodus.

The two winners will be selected in a random way; if resident in Colonsay the adult prize will be a bottle of wine from the shop, and if resident elsewhere it will be a book about Colonsay. For under 16s there will be a £5.00 voucher of the folding variety.

- 1) How many days did it take for God to create the heavens and the earth?**  
Choose between 7, 3, 6 and 12
- 2) Who is the son of Abraham through whom the Jewish people descend?**  
Choose between Isaac, Gideon, Ishmael, Samson
- 3) Who wrote the book of Genesis?**  
Choose between Caleb, Joshua, Moses, David
- 4) What type of tree was Adam forbidden to eat from?**  
Choose between Fig, Pear, Apple, Unknown
- 5) What became the maximum lifetime allowed to man?**  
Choose between 40yrs, 70yrs, 100yrs, 120yrs
- 6) Who is the grandson of Abraham through whom the twelve tribes of Israel descend?**  
Choose between Jacob, Paul, Simeon, Cain
- 7) Through whom do the people groups of the world descend?**  
Choose Shem, Ham, Japheth, All of the above
- 8) What was mankind permitted to do after Noah's flood that was not permitted beforehand?**  
Choose: Eat meat, Eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Return to the Garden of Eden, None of the above
- 9) Who was Adam's wife?**  
Choose: Elizabeth, Tabitha, Eve, Mary
- 10) Adam and Eve had both sons and daughters.**  
Choose: True or False

## LETTERS

It was with deep sadness that we learned of Jessie's passing last month. Memories of Colonsay in the late fifties of student days and summer time at Machrins Farm come flooding back. Sunday night at Machrins was the place to be. Warm hospitality with Jessie, Alasdair and Mary and their parents Roger and Grace along with their many friends; the hiss of the Tilley lamps, the home baking, the music and the fun. Bonds of friendship forged then

have lasted a lifetime. What a privilege to have enjoyed that little bit of Colonsay history never to be forgotten – just like Jessie.

*Colin and Mairi Brown, Aberdeenshire*

### **NON LETTERS**

There was a certain amount of feedback on the piece flagging up the January meeting of CCDC and the associated circular letter. In that piece, it was suggested that the fact that all three office-holders (Secretary, Treasurer and Chairman), as well as two other Directors and one half of the job-sharing LDO had resigned, was a matter that required explanation. It was also suggested that the specific issue of negotiation to purchase land for affordable housing, as mandated by the shareholders, seemed to have slipped from being a priority. The piece was accompanied by the full text of the circular letter from the remaining Directors.

Although no actual letters were received for publication, it is fair to report the reaction. One person felt that the issue had been ducked and that in fairness to readers the piece should have explained exactly what lay behind the situation – *Response*: sadly, without specific knowledge in advance of the meeting that was impossible, so all one could do was to raise the questions.

Another person felt that the piece was unhelpful because the Directors work hard and without reward - *Response*: certainly we are heavily indebted to the Directors and everybody else involved in the work of the company, but unfortunately the questions that were raised simply had to be addressed, uncomfortable though they might be. Another person felt that to re-publish the Directors' circular was a strange thing to do – *Response*: in fact the decision was based upon a number of factors: it would have been wrong to raise the questions without publishing the underlying text, the document had been randomly circulated so was clearly in the public demesne, but a number of shareholders had not, in fact, had sight of it. A further seven persons were kind enough to express satisfaction, in recognition of the fact that although the subject was sensitive, one had attempted to reflect opinion and to ensure that the vital issues would be tackled.

### **In Conclusion**

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