

CALMAC POSSIBLE DISRUPTIONS

There is a danger of disruption to our ferry services due to the necessity to offer the operation for competitive tendering; it is understood that SERCO is likely to bid against the existing operator and there are aspects of the situation which give concern to existing staff. The same ships, terminals, fare structures and timetables would remain, as would the majority of existing seagoing and shore staff. Unsurprisingly, staff would like a little more reassurance as to their job-security and pension arrangements in the event of a change of employer – this is a very vexed and sensitive issue which confronts both management and staff. We know that representatives of both sides are genuinely trying to avoid confrontation and the affected communities are deeply sympathetic.

Intending travellers should ensure that they hold confirmed reservations, so as to minimise any difficulty in obtaining compensation for any additional costs or cancellation fees that could arise. In addition to any compensation from CalMac itself, travellers should pay by credit card and also check that their own Travel Insurance is up to date. Booked travellers who have supplied contact details will be advised of any problems and the latest details appear at:

<https://www.calmac.co.uk/service-changes/industrial-action>

“ARANDORA STAR” 75th ANNIVERSARY



On the morning of July 2nd, flowers were placed at the memorial at Leum a' Bhriair on behalf of all Colonsay residents and in remembrance of over 800 souls whose lives were cut short by the tragic loss of that ship. It was a moment of solidarity with friends throughout UK, Germany and Italy, particularly with the good folk of Borgo val di Taro, who so kindly granted honorary citizenship to all residents of Colonsay to cement our relationship.

The ship sank 75 miles offshore at 07.20hrs and at 09.30hrs a Short Sunderland dropped limited emergency equipment. The sea was bitterly cold and was covered in a thick layer of heavy engine oil, yet 868 persons managed to survive until 13.00hrs when HMCS *St. Laurent* arrived to begin a rescue operation.



The wreath was placed by Sheena Nisbet as Chair of Colonsay Community Council and we were fortunate in that piper Lewis Nisbet was able to be present and played the lament. Brief prayers included the *De Profundis* and the company remembered all those, worldwide, who are affected by random acts of disaster, terrorism or plain misfortune.

A DIARY DATE IN CHELSEA

The work of Oransay artist Innes MacDougall is to be featured in the international exhibition at Parallax Art Fair, Chelsea Town Hall, King's Road on 25th and 26th July 2015. One can preview his work (mostly in watercolour) at numerous websites including http://www.artgallery.co.uk/artist/innes_mcdougall and one can get tickets and more information from <http://www.parallaxaf.co/>

This is a prestigious exhibition featuring acclaimed workers in the field of fine, decorative and applied arts. Admission is free, all prices are free of any additional commission and the public have an opportunity to relate directly to the artists themselves.

THE BIG LUNCH

The island's second Big Lunch was held on Sunday 7th June in the Village Hall and was a huge success with many people attending. Posters advertising the event were distributed around the island in the weeks leading up to the big day and islanders and visitors were asked to bring along a dish to share.

The organisers were delighted with the wonderful response and with the variety of food which was both plentiful and delicious. Many thanks to all those who contributed a dish. Thanks also to the ladies and guys behind the scenes for setting up tables, washing up and tidying the hall after the event. We look forward to this being an annual fixture on the island calendar. Moira & Fran

Those who attended were also delighted – a splendid feast and a tribute to the organisers as well as to all their dedicated helpers. A brilliant event and a credit to all involved - Editor

ISLE OF COLONSAY GOLF CLUB

The club visited the Machrie GC in Islay on 12 June 2015

A group of golfers (Dr Dave , Judge Derek , Prof Neil , Donald Roofless Ross , Steven Dunblane , Davie Blue , caddy Scott and WAGS Dilly and Moira all travelled by ferry and plane to Islay for the second annual Machrie event.

Pre competition drinks were had in the Lochside on Thursday evening where attempts were made to have clear heads for the 18 holes on Friday.

The competition on Friday was blessed with fine weather as the golfers got to grips with the new layout of the course which had been subject to major alterations.

Many balls were hit, lost or floated away in the burns but eventually after four exhausting hours a victor emerged. The winner of the Stableford competition after a recount was Steven, with Derek runner up and Neil third.

The winners were presented with their prizes at the evening meal in the Bowmore Hotel and the festivities ended in the bar where the cheapest malts were consumed. Same time next year so book now to avoid disappointment.

P S The WAGS shopped and enjoyed the sights of Islay.

P P S Colonsay Open 15 August 2015

THE ISLAY CONNECTION

At a recent meeting with CalMac, some islanders expressed concern about the reliability of the connection with Islay, which is scheduled for both Wednesdays and Saturdays. Not to beat about the bush, it seems to be unreliable, to the extent that contractors and suppliers from Islay hesitate to use the service in case they get marooned in Colonsay, and Colonsay folk hesitate to use it on a round trip to Oban or for travel from Oban in case it does not run, is late or they get marooned in Islay. Already, holiday accommodation operators have had to abandon plans for a Saturday changeover option.

Information at the meeting was not very detailed, but subsequent enquiries produced interesting results. The acting editor cannot claim credit for this information, but having received it is happy to share, since it does put the issue in perspective. It concerns the period between 7 February and 15 April 2015, when we can safely ignore 37 occasions when the vessel on a Colonsay leg was up to 15 minutes late in arriving. There were 23 occasions when it was late by between 15 minutes and an hour, a delay which is more noticeable, and 10 occasions when the delay was greater than one hour. More to the point, there were 32 cancelled sailings, 4 diverted sailings, and 2 returned to port. Attempts to mitigate the problems did however give rise to 6 unmetabled additional sailings.

Of course, this was a particularly bad period and it was exacerbated in part by mechanical problems. Yet it does highlight the fact that with no standby vessel any breakdown must cause serious disruption and, sadly, it does seem to confirm local opinion that at times of difficulty the island whose service is least highly prioritised is Colonsay. To be fair, a service provision for hundreds of people does provide a greater good than a service for a mere handful; conversely, the expense, inconvenience and distress caused to each individual is no less in respect of our route than any other. Because of its location, Colonsay is always prone to disruptions due to bad weather, so it is to

be hoped that in the case of technical disruptions the fleet management will bear this in mind. The Colonsay service is already fragile; it must be tempting in a time of difficulty to reallocate craft to appease the influential folk in Mull or Islay but the terms of the EC funding provision insist that the service provision be evenhanded.

OBAN FIDDLERS' VISIT TO COLONSAY

A weekend in the middle of May was a very memorable occasion for the Oban & Lorne Strathspey & Reel Society. Having visited the island on two previous occasions the Fiddlers' were looking forward to a weekend of music and visits to places of interest and they were not disappointed. Our complement was 32 in total, a record turnout for our annual trip.

Taking the ferry from Oban the fun started with a ceilidh on the Calmac ferry to the delight of fellow travellers, most of whom were visitors. On arrival at Scalasaig we were transported to our accommodation at Colonsay House and Backpackers. Everyone was delighted with the quality of both properties.

The main reason for our visit was to stage a concert and dance in the Hall on the Saturday night. Firstly though, with our own transport and that kindly lent to us by Sarah and David Hobhouse, we managed to get everyone including the less ambulant up to Balanard Bay where a picnic was enjoyed by all. Following our return and after a short practice we were treated to a delightful buffet, supplied by the local ladies (and the odd gent).

The evening got off to a great start with the Concert of traditional Scots fiddle music. Our soloist was Maurice Duncan, the Honorary Leader of the orchestra, who gave an outstanding performance of virtuoso fiddle playing. Following the concert a dance continued until later in the evening. The group then repaired to Backpackers for a ceilidh which went on into the wee small hours.

On the Sunday the group was transported to Oronsay with the help of RSPB and a second picnic was enjoyed.

Whilst waiting for the ferry we were treated to a sumptuous meal prepared by Gavin and his ladies. Gavin also provided the excellent picnic lunches on our two outings.

Returning to Oban, passengers were again treated to an on-board ceilidh.

This was a most memorable weekend and thanks go to all the locals who made our visit so perfect. The weather even held out for us! Special thanks goes to Calmac who provided free transport for our minibus without which our elderly members could not have had the access to the Colonsay beauty spots. Thanks also goes to John MacLachlan Ltd. and The West Highland Housing Association who kindly sponsored us.

Everyone agreed – we'll be back!

Note from Editor: We take the chance to add very special thanks from all of us here in Colonsay, for a great concert and dance; Donald Harrison is a long-standing friend of the island and we are most grateful to him for organising this splendid event, and of course we echo his thanks to CalMac and all the sponsors.

BREWERY NEWS

It is very good to see a local business go from strength to strength and The Corncrake is delighted to convey the message straight from the heart of the operation:

Boost for brewery with new packaging and distribution deals

Colonsay Brewery is undergoing a major investment programme with a complete redesign of its packaging and new UK wide distribution deals in place.

Colonsay Lager will also be disappearing from the shelves shortly and is being replaced with Pig's Paradise Blonde – the same refreshing recipe but a completely new look bottle.



Brewery director David Johnston said: “The original labeling, featuring one of Jean McAllister’s Kiloran collages has served us well but we felt we needed a fresher image.

“We’ve been working over the past few months with one of Scotland’s foremost new design agencies and have come up with a label that neatly encapsulates what we are all about - and we’re currently rolling out a range of point of sale support products and new merchandise to support it.”

The brewery was started in 2007 and has grown steadily ever since. From later this month (July) Colonsay beers will be available to outlets throughout the UK, with two new distribution deals in place.

Brewer/director Chris Nisbet said they expected changing the name of the lager should be a major boost to sales.

“We worked out rather late in the day that craft beer drinkers don’t drink lager and lager drinkers don’t drink craft beer.

“We have had to work hard to overcome this but are confident Pig’s Paradise Blonde will encourage all to give it a go.

“It’s been our experience since we started that once we persuaded folk to put their prejudices aside they love the great taste and refreshing nature of the product.”

Chris revealed that production of beer on Colonsay has been steadily increasing this year with tanks being transported to Alloa for bottling.

“Like everyone else in business on the islands freight charges are a massive barrier to progress for us and we have to look at ways of reducing our costs as much as possible if we are to succeed further in the highly competitive beer market,” said Chris.

The labeling of the beers draws heavily on the location and challenges of brewing on Colonsay and the beers all carry the slogan: “Something’s brewing in the Hebrides”

A new range of clothing and glassware will shortly be available from the brewery shop.

MARINE HARVEST



Our new fish-farm is taking shape – the command unit came on site a few weeks ago and by great good fortune your acting editor got a chance to visit it; it was so interesting that a special page was created at <http://www.colonsay.info/text/Marine%20Harvest.htm> At present, the cages are being installed, planning permission is awaited for the shore facility (a modest structure near The Pantry) and moorings are being finalised for the support craft. A total of 4 Colonsay folk have now been engaged, subject of course to a period of assessment – all of them are extremely enthusiastic, and the entire community wishes well to this exciting new enterprise. Apparently everything will be up and running by September and The Corncrake will run a fuller report at that time.

MacDougall / Pirie of Colonsay

Peter MacDougall married Mary Pirie on 28th March 1780 in Colonsay and their son, Archibald MacDougall was born 14 January 1787, in Colonsay; he died 28 April 1860 in Port Ellen. He had married Mary McEwen of North Knapdale (1785 – 1847) apparently in 1803, at the surprisingly early age of 16 years if correct. The Pirie name can be seen on gravestones in Oransay, although the name is not well known today.

Their descendant, Alastair H. MacDougall, will be visiting Colonsay in September or so, and would be delighted to meet anyone connected with this family, by descent or otherwise.

RSPB WILDLIFE NOTES

The month of June has not felt particularly like summer, with strong Northerly winds and rain producing an almost autumnal feel to life. However, this has been interspersed with some calm and sunny days to remind us all that it is indeed summer.



Butterflies including small tortoiseshell, red admiral, small heath, small copper and the stunning marsh fritillary have been adding a splash of colour to life as they flutter by on warm sunny days. On the 23rd we made the most of a rare calm warm evening and put the moth trap out.



A total of 66 moths were caught, with 22 species being recorded. The most striking of these species included 2 puss moth, 2 clouded drab and 2 true lovers knot.

The puss moth acquires its name from the adult moths fluffy white cat-like appearance. As a caterpillar this species feeds on aspen, poplar and willow trees. The striking adult moth occurs from May to July and can often be found at rest by day on willow trees and sometimes even fence posts.

The month of June is typically associated with the arrival of newly fledged birds and this has been the case all over the reserve. There are lapwing, oystercatcher and redshank chicks being seen throughout the marshes, with meadow pipit, pied wagtail and wren fledglings being spotted around human dwellings, whilst on the 19th 12 Eider ducklings were spotted close in to shore. This year has been the first year on record that blue tits have bred on Oronsay, with 8 chicks hatching inside a nest box which was put in place during national nest box week (14th 21st February) this year. Furthermore, this is the first year on record where great skuas have been successful in hatching, with there being 1 chick and 1 egg present in the nest on the 29th June.



There has been a steady increase in the flora on show across the islands, with orchids including early marsh, northern marsh, common spotted and lesser butterfly now in full bloom. The orchids are accompanied by other flora such as red clover, red campion, yellow rattle, oxeye daisy and ragged robin. This has added a real beauty, colour and wonderful aroma to the floristically rich wild flower meadows which are an important resource for insects including bees, butterflies and moths.



What to look out for in July

Warmer temperatures will see the emergence of more butterflies, including species such as dark green fritillary, common blue and meadow brown. There are still more chicks to hatch and young to fledge, so keep your ears and eyes open as you never know what you may hear and see.

Luke, Assistant warden Oronsay Reserve

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RSPB office – 01951 200 367

ON THE GRAPEVINE



The schoolchildren gave Kevin a magnificent thank-you card when he retired as schoolbus contractor, and he also wishes to thank the parents and staff for the sumptuous leaving dinner at The Colonsay and a most generous gift; Harbour View is now fully-fettled for its new role as a holiday let, and the refurbishment of Hazel Cottage is almost finished (it took longer than the Large Hadron Collider and probably cost nearly as much); Angus Howard is about to celebrate his 21st birthday, and it is hoped that the ferries will oblige; it seems that Angela has left her house “to my Buddhist teacher, Pema Wangyal Rinpoche, who is a very understanding person and far wiser than myself... I know he will be able to use or dispose of it in some way which will benefit the island, if you talk to him about it”; the birdcliffs are thriving this year, they seem much busier than in recent seasons, and there seem to be more corncrakes as well; Keir & Grace are inviting offers for the Village Store, but rumours of their departure would appear to be completely unfounded; Phil the Hill has strimmed the Kiloran Bay parking area again, and it is now an established amenity area; the new owner of Mo Dhachaidh (Uragaig) is busily installing damp-proofing; annoyingly huge coils of rope are being discovered along the coastline by the litter hunters; the parish church belfry needs to be rebuilt and Historic Scotland are deaf to pleas for advice, but the new windows are properly installed

and the remaining work is on schedule for late August; the glebe is looking quite good, bracken getting weaker and Carrie's horse and pony improve the look of the place.

NOTE FROM THE ACTING EDITOR

Although I have "retired" from most things, I am actually overwhelmed trying to address all the things that were put onto the long-finger since October 1969. If I could once get our house straight, the office in order, my car and motorbike back on the road and a start made upon the various writing projects and websites with which I toy, life would be easier. We could then embark upon our intended round of the counties of the British Isles, which we hope to start to explore. We hope to be able to get away from time to time over the winter months in this and future years so it will be impossible to hold the fort with *The Corncrake* and I now, urgently, need to find a new editor.

Letters etc.

No letters received.

In Conclusion

The Corncrake is published to keep all our friends in touch with life on the island and invites contributions. Brief genealogical and related queries are also welcome from Colbhasachs overseas, as are obituaries and family traditions relating to Colonsay emigrants. The current edition was produced Kevin Byrne, as a temporary editor, and any comments will be welcomed if addressed to byrne@colonsay.org.uk As usual, it is not intended to be completely anodyne, but any errors or omissions are regretted, and anything seriously annoying will if possible be suitably modified. Please note that we are **still looking for a new editor** – any candidate should contact any member of the CCDC Board (which happens to own the publication and to be the ultimate governor).