

THE COLONSAY BUGLE

Issue No. 1

July 2023

What's the idea?

Back in the year 2000 we started a small and informal publication, *The Corncrake*, which ran for a number of years and which was quite popular. It was suggested by Dominic Cornford, and the first 100 issues were produced by the present writer, Kevin Byrne. It was continued by the late Georgina Hobhouse, followed by Keith Johnson, Scott Weatherstone, Hannah McAllister and her father David Johnstone, and finally Richard Buttrick.

In the early days, *The Corncrake* had a 'Magazine Section', a lofty title for a cornucopia of articles, poetry and general contributions, many of which covered interesting historic or genealogical topics. It was thought that those editions were lost when they were unfortunately wiped from a server, but it transpires that many issues had been preserved as hard copy by the late Angela Skrimshire and so a start is to be made to reissue them on a weekly basis in a *Phoenix* edition. [www.colonsay.info]

The Corncrake has had its day because nowadays people are so well-served by 'social media', but it is just possible that the concept of the 'Magazine Section' has ongoing merit. Genealogical interest and research is, perhaps, even more popular today than it was; there are also quite a few people who are interested in Natural History, the Environment and ecological matters. Only time will tell, but just possibly the 'phoenix' republication of *The Corncrake* will encourage readers to participate – perhaps to report the first cuckoo, an interesting sighting, or to seek to identify an unusual plant or insect? Of

course, enquiries and contributions concerning Colonsay emigration and genealogy will be especially welcome ... it is hoped that we might develop an international readership once again. The Colonsay diaspora is truly remarkable – there are many more than a million inhabitants of Canada alone who have at least one ancestral link with Colonsay.

Anyway, it costs nothing to try and so you are cordially invited to contact *The Bugle* if you have news, views, suggestions, questions or anything else that might be relevant to the Colonsay community. To avoid doubt, you are part of that community if you live here, visit here, have a house here, were born here or are descended from anybody in those categories. Naturally you are asked to follow the normal conventions, we are hoping for fun and illumination rather than groans or heat. *The Bugle* should appear monthly if there is any interest and there will be an attempt to include a basic "News" section with snippets of information about life in Colonsay including rumours and nonsense.

Email: Bugle[at]Colonsay.eu

BTW, the title of "*The Bugle*" is a salute to *Ajuga pyramidalis*, Colonsay's Pyramidal Bugle. Although it seems to be in good heart locally it is classified as a Priority Species due to national decline. Too late for a picture so here is *Epipactis palustris*, Marsh Helleborine instead.



Colonsay General Store

As of July 5 2023, “the shop” is now owned by Finlay and Eileen Geekie, famed for their Gin Lovers’ Retreat and for their award-winning products at Wild Thyme Spirits. We gather that they have various plans to enhance the business and with immediate effect they have been able to reinstate arrangements for advance orders to be pre-delivered to holiday cottages (minimum £50 order). It is also possible to order fresh fish, place the order on Wednesday morning and collect it on Saturday morning.

Houses for Sale in Colonsay

An extraordinary number of houses in Colonsay are for sale just now. There are five being advertised at prices from £110k to £360k and thought to be up to three more on the market more discreetly.



Smiddy Cottage

Houses being Built in Colonsay

Meanwhile at least four new houses are being built privately, with nine affordable houses nearing completion at Scalasaig and a further five affordable houses to be built shortly at Port Mór. Eighteen new households in Colonsay will provide a welcome boost to the quality and variety of community activities, and more cars will make a difference in other ways. Incidentally, rumour (probably in jest) suggests that additional water, power and drainage connections are soon to become problematical due to technical considerations. Eight affordable houses were built in more recent phases, and eight were purchased from Colonsay Estate, refurbished and made available in the 1980s when water and electricity were introduced.



The new clachan, Scalasaig

Two new workshop units are also under construction at Scalasaig, budget cost £500k, to be available for rent; it is intended that each one will create up to four additional jobs. Unusually, an existing industrial/retail property is on the market, advertised for sale.

Church Services by Zoom

The weekly service in the parish church takes place at 10.30 each Sunday and may be joined by Zoom from anywhere in the world. There are regular attendees from both Hong Kong and Singapore, and from various locations in UK – including Colonsay itself. The service is not recorded or placed on any public platform, and most people join a few minutes ahead of time to catch up on weather and general chat. The congregation is ecumenical and attendance is open to all – for an invitation see the notice at the foot of the church brae or email [bugle\[AT\]Colonsay.eu](mailto:bugle[AT]Colonsay.eu) to receive contact details. Or just Google Colonsay Parish Church.

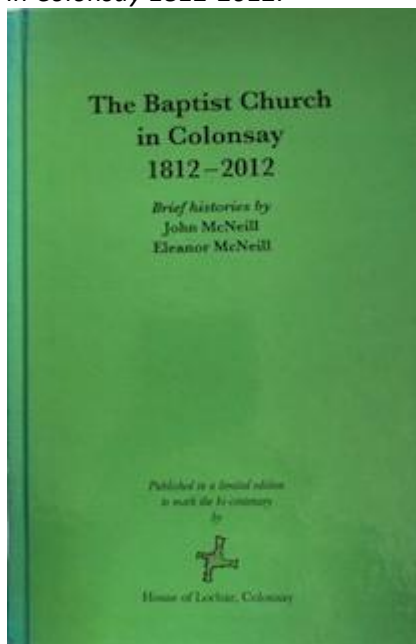
Registration of Self-Catering Properties

Under current legislation, anybody wishing to offer self-catering accommodation for the first time must register in advance with the local authority, and all existing operators have been given leeway until October 1st. The process is very time-consuming and quite expensive (all told it costs about £1,500 per property), and the local authority is under pressure – it certainly is taking more than three months for an existing property to be processed. Fortunately, if an application has been received and acknowledged, the existing

operator will be allowed to continue to trade even beyond October 1st, currently *sine die*. However, **unless** the application has been made and acknowledged by that date, no operator within Argyll & Bute can accept or honour reservations as of October 1st 2023. This is an important point because it also means that no reservations can be accepted for 2024 or 2025.

Bookshop news

Di Alexander's book *The Potter's Tale* is back in print, available at The Book Shop, and David Webster's book on **Colonsay Geology** is selling well. The new **Colonsay Flora** shows every sign of being published in 2024 and should be a best-seller, a great companion to *The Birds of Colonsay & Oronsay* by David Jardine, Mike Peacock and Ian Fisher. The map of A' Choille Mhór was a deliberately niche affair, but one or two copies remain, also the last few copies of *The Baptist Church in Colonsay 1812-2012*.



Snippets:

Apparently the petrol/diesel pump may be upgraded to accept payment by card, possibly on a 24/7 basis. The Colonsay Tourism Marketing Group has everything in place for the **October Festival of Food and Drink**, just google *Colonsay Festivals* for details (7-21

October). CTMG is currently engaged in providing kissing-gates to improve coastal access and eventually facilitate a route along our entire coastline. **The Music Festival** runs 14 – 17 September, details on the website <https://ceolcholas.co.uk>. Sarah Hobhouse is running **The Seapink Sessions: Artists and Makers**, a series of events (details are posted up locally). Richard Irvine has a great following at **The Colonsay Smokery**, in the restored steading at Scalasaig Farm and on August 1st the **Colonsay Hotel** will celebrate its first full year under new ownership. The ferry timetable for 16 – 22 October has not yet been revealed, keep an eye on the **CalMac website**. The bridge on the track to **Baile lochdracht** is a little tired, suggested weight limit 7.5 tonnes. The 11th annual **marine-litter** coastal clearance went well but the remaining section from Sloc nan Sgarbh to Rubh' a' Geodha is on tricky terrain across slippery rocks so awaits a decent dry spell. Dr. Richard Gulliver's twenty-year study of Colonsay's *Spiranthes romanzoffiana* **Irish Ladies Tresses Orchid** continues and it is gathered that conclusions and publication are likely in 2024.



Spiranthes romanzoffiana 01.07.23

THE COLONSAY BUGLE MAGAZINE

The Lifting Power of Seaweed



Big weed, little anchor

Older readers will remember that in our schooldays the theory of Tectonic Plate Movement was unknown. We could all see, in our Phillips Atlas, how Africa could abut America and that the land masses formed a giant jigsaw, but nobody knew why. Our unfortunate geography teacher (often the gym master under another hat) could only talk unconvincingly about "Continental Drift"! A regular visitor to Colonsay from the 1880s onwards, Symington Grieve, had come up with a theory that was published by a learned society in Edinburgh, in a paper entitled "On the Lifting Power of Seaweed". Walking across the strand to Oronsay, he had noticed tiny trails in the sand and realised that they had been left by stones upon which seaweed had been growing. Following Darwin and others, the scientific community had recently accepted that world was more than about 6,000 years old, and so Grieve was able to think in terms of millions of years. He carried out various measurements and suggested that, given enough time, stones that had been lifted by seaweed could drift out to sea, carried by currents and tides, until such time as the weed died and the stone sank. In this way, he mused, it might be possible for the continents to have moved in relation to one

another. His publication is now quite rare, although Pauline and Chris have an original copy. The beauty of his suggestion is that, at the time, he just might have been right! Symington Grieve is best remembered for his two-volume work *The Book of Colonsay & Oronsay* (1925).

Lichen of the Machair

In 1983 the Royal Society of Edinburgh published a paper by Francis Rose and Brian Coppins in *Natural Environment of the Hebrides* (pp. 403-413), entitled *Lichens of Colonsay*. A total of 342 taxa were recorded and a further 49 were listed anticipated but 'not so far found'. Five areas of machair were included in the study and there were just ten species that were common to all five:

<i>Anaptychia runcinata</i>
<i>Cladonia furcata</i>
<i>Cladonia pocillum</i>
<i>Cladonia rangiformis</i>
<i>Collema auriforme</i>
<i>Lecanora atra</i> var. <i>atra</i>
<i>Parmelia saxatilis</i>
<i>Ramalina siliquosa</i>
<i>Rhizocarpon geographicum</i>
<i>Xanthoria parietina</i>

Lord Strathcona's Yacht

The following details are not easily attributable in detail, but may be of interest:

Members' Yachts and Their Use in the Second World War (from Ian Dear, *The Royal Yacht Squadron 1815–1985*, pages 159-172). The following details are taken from the 'Special Secret Branch Acquaint' and 'Special Military Branch Acquaint' files, and from the 'Pink Lists', retained by the Admiralty's Naval Historical Branch, as well as from the Admiralty's official War Diary and from various special reports compiled by the Naval Historical Branch on certain individual vessels.

.... **Kiloran** Owned by Lord Strathcona,

Kiloran was a 277-ton diesel yacht built in 1930. She was requisitioned in November 1939 and employed as an examination vessel. In March 1940 the Admiralty War Diary noted that she was used as a patrol vessel off the Lizard with orders to escort all neutral vessels into a British port. On 5 August 1940 the War Diary noted the following: 'Coastguard Teignmouth reports at 0900 watcher at Labrador Cove sighted sub which surfaced and showed periscope and part of conning tower one mile from shore and immediately submerged again. **Kiloran** is proceeding to investigate.' However, as there is no further note in the War Diary, it must be assumed that Kiloran did not find the submarine. In February 1942 she was allocated 'for special service' and given a civilian crew and in December 1944 was employed by the US Navy at Dartmouth. At the end of the war she was sold back to her owner.

Kiloran was in service as a pleasure craft operated by the Devon Cruising Co. from Torquay in the 1950s and is depicted in picture postcards readily available on Ebay.

Genealogy Query

We have our first new query, with a researcher looking for information on two couples or hoping to contact other people interested in the same folk. Neil McNeill 1761-1850 and Mary Brown 1775 – 1861 or 1879 had a daughter Flora (1796-1891) who married Hugh McNeill in Colonsay Aug. 25 1820 and went to Canada. I was able to lend the researcher a copy of Mary McKay's "*I Think We'll Go Too*" (a copy given to me by Andrew and Flora). The other couple is Charles McGilvary born 1795 who married Dorothy McCaldred 1795-1871. Can you help? Please send any information to [bugle\[AT\]Colonsay.eu](mailto:bugle[AT]Colonsay.eu) or contact Kevin Byrne

direct, so that he can put you in touch with the researcher.

The Book of Colonsay & Oronsay, reprint

Readers might like to know that at least one volume of Symington Grieve's important book is available in facsimile, distributed by Gyan Books. The publisher has a website www.facsimilepublisher.com and I purchased a copy of Volume I some years ago (\$27.00), currently £19.04; I noticed that they did not offer Volume II so I obtained a copy and offered it to them as a gift but got no reply, I must try again. Anyway, I can vouch for the fact that Volume I is a good facsimile, clearly printed and ideal for reference work.

Colonsay Parish Church



The church was built in 1802 and will have been very familiar to the ancestors of all Colonsay descendants. It is possible to join a service and to get some feel of the building by means of Zoom. Fuller details are given in the "News" section of this publication – you are most welcome to join the congregation any Sunday. We know that for many people it is not possible to visit Colonsay in person and this might strengthen their link.

Please note: readers are invited to submit non-copyright material on any topic relevant to Colonsay, including genealogy, history, natural history etc. Without such submissions *The Bugle* will probably wither on its figurative vine. Email [bugle\[AT\]Colonsay.eu](mailto:bugle[AT]Colonsay.eu)