

The Isle of Colonsay's online community newsletter

Issue 265, December 2013.

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NATIONAL NEWS

INDEPENDENCE WHITE PAPER



Our MSP, Mike Russell, has sent us details of the release of the White Paper on an Independent Scotland; whatever your views on the issue, it is a document of great historical importance. Here, Mr Russell introduces the Paper and tells us how we can obtain a copy....

“Tuesday, 26th November 2013, has seen the launch by the Scottish Government of the “White Paper” on Scottish Independence which is the most detailed guide to Independence ever issued in our country.

Indeed it may well be the most detailed and comprehensive prospectus for a new nation ever issued.

I know from my own work in the Argyll & Bute constituency that a large number of people want more information on Independence before they make their mind up on how to vote in the referendum which is now just 10 months away. The Scottish Government promised that it would produce a comprehensive document that answers people’s questions and made it clear what choices independence will bring.

The document does all that but it does more too. It clearly differentiates between what independence will allow us to do and what the SNP would use those powers to do. Other political parties would clearly make other choices – but only independence, for example, will give Scotland the right to change our taxation and welfare policies, abolish things like the bedroom tax, secure a fair deal from Europe for our farmers and fishermen and end the nonsense of immigration policies that drive away well qualified people who could help our economy to flourish.

Devolution has proved that decisions made in Scotland by those who live here are best for Scotland. Our health service has not been privatised in the way that has happened south of the border. Our education services have not been monetarised so that only those who can afford to go to

university actually get there. In all the areas where the Scottish Parliament has had the power to act we have developed distinctive policies suitable for our country and focussed on serving the people who live here. We now need to do that in all areas of our national life.

Over the next 10 months I will be in every part of this large and diverse constituency holding public meetings and seeking to discuss with constituents the issues around independence. I would be happy to respond to individual questions as well by letter or email. You could also make an appointment to see me at one of my many local surgeries to discuss issues that concerns you.

However the White Paper itself should also give you the answers you are seeking and I would urge you to get a copy and read it.

You can secure one online at www.scotreferendum.com or you can ring 0300 012 1809 to ask for a copy which will be sent to you free of charge. The White Paper is also downloadable as an eBook.

I do hope you will find the document interesting and informative. It is, in my view, the plan for a better future for Scotland.

Yours aye

Michael.

GLASGOW HELICOPTER ACCIDENT.

The Colonsay Corncraek would like to pay tribute to the unfortunate people affected by the police helicopter crash in Glasgow on Friday evening, 29th November.

COMMUNITY NEWS

THE FUTURE OF TOURISM ON COLONSAY

Carron Tobin of Argyle & The Isles Tourism Co-operative got a great local response when she recently called a meeting on Colonsay to ask us how her organisation could help to develop tourism on the island. Sheena Nisbet kindly offered her and Chris' beautiful new home as a venue and there wasn't a spare seat at the table, with Penny Gill, Annie Lawson, Donald MacNeill, Hannah Johnston, Kevin Byrne, Carol MacNeill, Christa Byrne and Roger Meiklejohn in attendance.



Caroline Tobin elicits information and ideas from local residents

Caroline explained that 2014 would be an extremely busy tourism year for the country, with the Scottish Homecoming celebrations, the Ryder Cup golf at Gleneagles and the vital Independence Referendum. Scotland had also recently received a huge boost by being voted the third best country in the World to visit in a recent Lonely Planet poll.



Having showed us some of the publicity leaflets that the Co-operative had produced, Caroline invited suggestions from those attending; these included:

- adding a Colonsay link to the Co-operative's website, www.exploreargyll.co.uk
- Colonsay could participate in the "Explore With A Local" programme.
- extend our appeal by developing a campsite and small caravan park.
- improve signposting on the island.
- develop golf tourism.
- add a Facebook link to the Corncrake.
- appeal to the Haggis Backpackers-type tour organisers.
- start a taxi service to e.g. pick visitors up from the airstrip.

A few days after this meeting, Caroline contacted all the participants, to say: *“Firstly, thank you very much for taking the time to meet with me yesterday – I found it very worthwhile and really enjoyed the discussions we had. I got a lot of good info that will help us move forward and ensure we better represent Colonsay and all you have to offer..... Thanks again for your time – I am really looking forward to working with you in the future.”*

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY



Organiser Davie Sutherland was delighted with the huge crowd that attended the ceremony at the War Memorial on Sunday, 10th November.

There was also a ceremony within a ceremony, as Colonsay thanked Rev Brian Wilkinson and his wife Jan for their ministering work on the island over the last 5 years.



Kevin Byrne, Rev Brian Wilkinson, Andrew MacGregor, Mrs Jan Wilkinson, Kate Bowman.

SHOCKING HOUSE-FIRE IN UPPER KILCHATTAN.

All of our sympathies go to Yasmin Milburn and Trevor Crowe. Their house, Col na Sithe, caught fire during the night of Sunday, 8th December. Mercifully, Yasmin and Trevor managed to escape before the fire took hold, taking their dogs with them and rescuing their vehicles from the path of the fire. However, despite the extraordinary efforts of Colonsay's firefighters, led by Donald MacAllister, the fire, fanned by a constant breeze, destroyed the building altogether.



URAGAIG MEN SALVAGE VALUABLE JETSAM FROM OCEAN

On Saturday, 7th December, whilst looking for driftwood at Port nam Fliochan in Uragaig, John Bridges stumbled upon a massive object which had been deposited in the bay by the recent gale. The object was identified as a nautical fender: a shock-absorbent “cushion” that floats between two large vessels to prevent any damaging contact. Sensing that it would be of great value to the vessel from which it had become detached, he enlisted the help of neighbours Danny Hamilton and Roger Meiklejohn. Together, they hauled the huge object to the shore and secured it, using a large anchor.



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The following day, the intrepid trio returned with an Argocat to haul the object up the pebbly beach, to a spot where it could be secured, above the highest point reached by the tides. There was a brief Sisyphus moment when, the men having nearly succeeded in towing the object up the stony slope, a hook on the Argocat broke, and the object rolled once more back to the bottom of the slope and back into the sea. Undaunted, Roger plunged into the foaming brine and heroically prevented the ocean from reclaiming the bounty!



Codes and markings on the fender were the only clues that John needed to work out the Norwegian shipping company from whose tanker the fender had been lost. He soon found himself speaking on the phone to the Managing Director. The company was extremely grateful to him, saying, *“This is truly a fascinating story, considering the journey this fender has done the last week. Our vessel was sailing north from Liverpool when she lost her fender. She had done a delivery to a vessel working the windfarms west of Liverpool and was sailing back to Denmark, when the storm hit”*.

Initial research has suggested that the fender is worth circa £10,000; John is still in contact with the Scandinavian companies, with a view to them arranging to uplift it (if it turns out that his own trailer is not big enough!).

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

A big THANK YOU to the Stewart family of Field and Lawn in East Lothian for their generous donation of Christmas lights for our Community Garden. They will add extra atmosphere to the Christmas Tree Party and the New Year Ceilidh, so many thanks to Cameron, Lisa, Georgia, Imogen and Honor.

Sheena Nisbet.

HISTORY AND HERITAGE NEWS

DIGGING UP COLONSAY'S PAST.

The Irish archaeologists from the “Integrating Archaeology and Sustainable Communities” team recently returned to Colonsay to show us what they had found during their digs in the Summer. They had braved the Irish Sea in a Rigid Inflatable Boat and their luggage included not only valuable artefacts, but also sixteen litres of wine, for the post-presentation social; they were, therefore, doubly welcome.



Professor Breen holds a rapt audience in the palm of his hand

Professor Colin Breen set the scene by explaining that, five hundred years ago, Argyll and the eastern part of Northern Ireland formed one connected community. Up to the early seventeenth Century, Clan Donnell commanded the area from its base at Dunluce Castle. His colleagues then spoke in detail about what had been found at the three sites that were explored:

Beinn Bheag

Roddy Regan of Kilmartine Museum was the leader of this dig, on the hill between Carnan Eoin and the ocean at the North end of Kiloran Bay. Two enclosures had been found, each containing Iron Age pottery shards and hammer-stones. Eight cultivated areas had been identified, each with a dun or hut-circle. The discovery of elements of warfare, such as gunshot and flints, at the doorways indicated that this was a society living under stress, where money was earned by the menfolk selling their services as warriors.

Ardskenis/Port Mor

Professor Audrey Hornig explained that her dig at Ardskenish had revealed kelp-kilns, animal bones and a pipe-stem dating from 1650-80. The Port Mor dig had thrown up ceramics, glassware and a beautiful hair-clasp made of horn.



Several other interesting details had also emerged from the archaeologists' work:

- the first human beings arrived on Colonsay between eight and nine thousand years ago.
- there are nine forts/duns/hut-circles on the island.
- a 1598 report showed that there were one hundred fighting men on the island (even more than is currently the case); this indicates that there was a maximum population of seven hundred at the time.
- research into the "Limpet Stones" in front of Seaview indicates that this was an important assembly area, or even a quasi-parliament.



Overall programme leader Professor Max Hope reminded us that the team would produce a book covering their research; they would gift this to the Colonsay community, who could generate income from its sale. He also confirmed that Colonsay had an "extraordinarily rich architecture" and that, funding permitting, his team wished to continue working with the Colonsay community to build up a fuller picture of her history.

WARTIME MEMORIES



Philip Pfaff with his wife Angela and their dog Patch outside the Manse at Scalasaig

Many thanks to Kevin Byrne and Alan Davis for producing this fascinating memoir by Philip Pfaff, an airman who was based on Colonsay during the Second World War.

Alan Davies explains:

"I have located all the correspondence from Mr Pfaff who served at the base at Machrins between 1941 and 1942. When he left Colonsay he went on to be a Technical Signals Officer and ended up as Organiser and Administrator for the Signals Command Force for D-Day. He mentioned that there were about 10-12 men based on Colonsay but only remembered 2 names - Darryl Underhill and Paul West who sadly after joining the Royal Airforce Volunteer Reserve 203 Squadron as a Sergeant, was shot down and killed on the final day of the War in the Pacific on 13 August 1945, aged just 24. Paul was from Boston in Lincolnshire and he is commemorated on the war memorial in Singapore. "

An extract from the memoirs of Mr Philip Pfaff, RAF Machrins 1941-42. [Sent 2006]

After enlisting in 1940, I was trained as a wireless operator [ground] at Blackpool and Compton Bassett and then did a special course in direction finding. It was now the spring of 1941. I think we were given a week's leave and then told to report to Oban. There were two other airmen with me, Paul West and Darryl Underhill. Angela, my wife, had the choice of returning to my parents in Ripon or taking a chance by coming with me, which she decided to do.

We arrived in Glasgow on a Saturday night. It was after dark and there seemed to be a lot of people about, some the worse for drink, but we were collected by a very pleasant woman belonging to some voluntary organisation who found us a bed and breakfast in someone's house. After breakfast we caught the train for Oban and wound our way through some really breath-taking scenery including Loch Awe where the cliffs came sheer down into the water, and eventually got

out at Oban Station on the quayside of Oban Bay, which was also spectacular. Here we reported to a large house being used as the RAF HQ to be interviewed and told that in fact we were being posted to the island of Colonsay to man the equipment there. We were taken in separately to the Flight Sergeant and one of the other two boys came out and had overheard the Corporal telling him that a flat had become vacant just behind the house. Angela nipped out and secured it immediately – a stroke of luck.

Meanwhile I made enquiries as to whether I could take my wife with me onto the island but was at first told that this was not possible as it was a restricted area. She reluctantly decided that she would have to return to Ripon, but then I discovered that the Sergeant in charge of the small unit on Colonsay had his wife with him and after pressing the point, it was decided that Angela could go with me. To digress for a moment I must mention that Angela had been given a Singer hand sewing machine in a mottled grey wooden case as a wedding present from her aunt. It cost £5 and was a very handsome present, the equivalent of perhaps £150 or £200 at today's values. Wherever we went the machine went with us packed with smalls, as well as our suitcases. Now we can hardly lift it, let alone carry it around. It is still going strong after sixty years and we are told that they don't make them like that now.

To return to my story – we were faced with several days in Oban until a boat arrived to take us to out to Colonsay. The Dunara Castle plied between Glasgow and Oban calling at various islands coming and/or going and took about 10 or 14 days to make the round trip. It was a fair sized passenger and cargo vessel with a loading hatch which opened in the side. In due course it steamed into the harbour and moored and we went aboard with all our luggage [machine included] and were told that it would not be sailing until after midnight, so we might as well go to the pictures [cinema] right on the quayside to pass the time away. This we did and on emerging at 10pm we discovered that the boat had gone. Why it was the others got back on board we never knew. What we did know was that we had been left behind with only the clothes we stood up in. At that moment a 'jolly-boat' arrived from a corvette in the bay to take back on board members of the crew who had been given shore leave. We explained our predicament to the officer in charge and he said to jump on board and they would try to find our vessel.



They were very decent to us and took us down into the ward room for a sherry, but could find no trace of the Dunara Castle. Back on shore I reported what had happened to the guard room but received little sympathy and the threat of being put on a charge. We just didn't know what to do but as luck would have it we were hailed by a sailor in a small rowing boat who wanted to know whether we had come across his mate, probably the worse for wear, but we had seen nothing of him. However, we explained our problem to him and he said he would be able to find the ship as he knew the harbour like the back of his hand. So we climbed into his tiny dingy and off we rowed – after quite a time he said that there was only one possible place left and if she wasn't there she must have sailed. We eventually saw a dark shape loom up [it was a really inky night] and on hailing her, a ladder was let down and we quickly climbed aboard. I've forgotten what we did to reward the sailor but remain everlastingly grateful to him.

This was only the beginning of one of the most horrible 24 hours of my life. In the early hours of the morning the ship got underway and our first port of call was Mull, where we arrived in the early morning. We were all most intrigued by a large cloud of dust which seemed to be travelling along the hill top, but it descended and turned out to be the factor arriving in his car to supervise unloading and the loading of a number of cattle destined for Islay.

We then set off for Colonsay in what rapidly became horrendous seas with waves 10 or 12 feet high. The ship was pitching and tossing in all directions and we were all horribly seasick, just lying on the deck feeling terrible. After several hours we approached the northern tip of Colonsay where there was a kind of harbour but no jetty or breakwater. I received a sharp lesson in the difference between theory and practice. An airman came down and started flashing a message to the ship by lantern. We had done a course on semaphore and light signalling but I couldn't make anything of his signals.



It turned out that the message was that it was too rough for the ferry boat to come out to us to take us and our luggage ashore and we were to proceed to Islay to offload the cattle and return later if the weather calmed down. So off we set for Islay, offloaded the cattle and got back to Colonsay at about 7pm. We had taken about 13 hours so far to do a journey which normally took 3.

This time Sandy the ferryman came out to us. The seas were still running very high and the ferry boat was lifting up and down about six feet on each wave. As it swung into the side you had to jump – so jump we did – and eventually everything was transferred and we headed for shore. Angela was very upset because she was sick again in the cabin but the ferryman was very good about it and said not to worry. Then we all walked up the road for about a quarter of a mile to the Colonsay Hotel and so to bed. Colonsay is only a small island, longer from north to south and attached to it [at low tide] a still smaller island, Oronsay. At the time it was owned by Lord

Strathcona who was private secretary to Anthony Eden and he had a small mansion at Kiloran. The island was completely unsophisticated, no mechanical transport allowed, and limited sources of food such as rabbits, milk when the cow had calved, and agricultural produce.

There was a village store down by the harbour and also a post office with, I think, a telephone to the mainland. This was run by an old lady on strictly 'Head Office' lines. It opened and shut precisely on time and no liberties were allowed. The D/F station we had come to man was several miles from the hotel on the west shore looking out into the Atlantic. There were two small huts quite some way apart and joined by a land line. The nearer one was a maintenance hut where batteries were charged etc. and the other one was the receiving and transmitting hut complete with its Marconi/Adcock aerial and a black paraffin stove [calibrated] to provide some warmth, and after several hours sufficient to boil a kettle and brew up in the night watches. Of course we felt rather important as we were the first trained D/F operators sent to relieve comparatively old hands. We were soon deflated – on my first supervised session I was sitting quite happily waiting for a call when the operator sitting outside said “wake up, why aren't you answering?”



To be technical for a moment - our call sign was ...- .- ---- [FA7]. What I was hearing was ..- ..- ---- [UU7] a slight rhythmic corruption, but it often came through like that and we got used to it. There were only about ten men on the island and Paul, Darryl and I had the job of maintaining watch, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week and this we did for over a year. I think the roster ran something like – Day 1; 4pm to midnight: Day 2; midnight to 8am: Day 3; 8am to 4pm then 24 hours off. Life was really rather uneventful as we rarely had visitors. It was interesting that although to begin with

buttons were green and trousers un-pressed etc. after a few weeks we seemed to return to parade ground standards with buttons and boots polished and trousers pressed under the mattress.

Our job was to give a homing course to the Catalinas flying on Atlantic patrol from Oban and so, up to a point, the safety of the crews depended on the information provided. The aircraft would triangulate the bearings from us and other D/F stations on other islands and this would enable them to pin point their position pretty accurately as well as giving them a course for home. Flying above water with no land marks must have been nerve wracking.

One notable event happened very early one morning when I picked up a very faint signal which when decoded [there was a different decode sheet for each day] informed me that they were shadowing one of the German pocket battleships. No-one else seemed to have picked this message up, and I had to recode and send it to HQ in Liverpool.

We seemed to manage to be happy leading such a primitive existence. The island had become partly depopulated and this had meant that one of the two schools had been closed. This building was opposite the hotel run by Mary Clarke and consisted of a house for the teacher attached to two school rooms with a small room sandwiched in between them probably used as the Head-teacher's study. This had been used as an overflow for summer visitors but now the house part was occupied by an elderly Miss Morag Macphee, the aunt of the hotel owner, and the school section was empty. Discussing accommodation the morning after our arrival we were offered the premises for a rent of ten shillings [50p] a week including potatoes. I don't remember what furniture was there but there was certainly a bed for us, and we set off to scrounge whatever we could. I fitted up an oven from an old valor stove over a primus stove and by putting a metal plate over the primus we could also toast. There was a washbasin and wc in the small room and a fire in the living room. The minister lent us a hanging oil lamp from the church hall and chairs of some sort appeared. We had plenty of fuel as there were many pit props thrown up on the shore from wrecks and I was able to strap one along the cross bar of my bike when coming off watch and then saw it up for logs.

There were several affairs worth recording about our life during this year. The first was my decision to give the villagers a carol service. A quartet was formed consisting of Angela, the Minister's housekeeper, an airman who had been in a choir and myself, and we sang about five or six carols and I played some organ music on the harmonium. The chapel was only a few yards from the cottage so it was quite convenient – I don't think they had ever heard an unaccompanied quartet before.

Another incident at the chapel was a wedding. The bride came right across the island on a cart preceded by a piper who was audible from a mile or so away and this was something we had never seen [or heard] before.

We used to cycle across the island on and off watch along narrow roads with a deep ditch on either side. In the summer it was still light at midnight and there were some spectacular displays of the Northern Lights, but in winter no lights were allowed and sometimes a bike would fly past in the opposite direction with no previous warning. One night there was another hazard as a large white bull had somehow got onto the road.

The bicycles were kept in an outhouse at the hotel and were responsible for a plague of fleas which got into the seams of clothes. We could not make out where they were coming from until I noticed that the storage room was shimmering for about two feet off the floor with millions of insects jumping! The hotel dogs lived in this room and were probably responsible.

The island was a hotbed of gossip with rumours of affairs between girls and airmen etc. and we unknowingly contributed our share. We had somehow acquired a small battery receiver and airmen would come in to listen to news etc. Also Angela acted as barber for some of them and kept their hair tidy. The Minister who was a pleasant young man in his 30's used to come in quite often to hear the news when I was on watch and when Angela became pregnant with our eldest Malcolm, he discovered that it was being rumoured that he was the father, so the poor man had to stop his visits.

In due course we heard that we were to have a visit from the trade board which would give us the chance to rise from AC1 to LCA with a consequent rise in pay. On the day in question I was on the morning watch and as I passed Paul coming back, he shouted "Shunt wound motor" so over lunch I was able to do a thorough check up on the circuit and in due course my LAC came through. [At some time during that year I spent a week in military hospital in Edinburgh having my tonsils removed. I can't remember when it was but I found that after the operation I could no longer sing falsetto successfully.]

It was now early 1942 and by now an RAF pinnace was bringing down rations and stores every fortnight and they were very good as long-life milk was sent down for my wife [there was often no fresh milk available] and she was cared for by the island doctor, an elderly woman who some years before had announced that she was no longer going to deliver babies, but expectant mothers had to go across to a nursing home in Islay.

We made the necessary arrangements but for about a month before the birth was due we were told that the nursing home was closing and we would have to make other arrangements.

This led to a ghastly journey for Angela which she had to make on her own as I was refused leave to accompany her. First of all there was the trip back to Oban in a rough sea with a crew of young airmen, then a climb up an iron ladder on the quayside at Oban where she was put on the train – the airmen looked after her well. Then followed a long and very trying rail trip to Glasgow and then Leeds. Here she had to change onto a train for Ripon where my father picked her up at about 6.30am the following morning – completely exhausted and feeling terrible. She had only managed

to get a seat on the main journey because a soldier gave up his seat for her. Our son Malcolm was eventually born on May 16th in a nursing home in Ripon.

Meanwhile things had been on the move for me. Some months earlier I had been sent for by the Commanding Officer at Oban because I happened to be there when he had a complaint that we had been shooting pheasants on the island. I knew that airmen went out ostensibly to shoot rabbits, but told him that I had no knowledge of shooting rather higher up. This amused him and he began asking about life on the island and so I was emboldened to raise the subject of my commission. When he discovered that I was a double graduate of Cambridge he promised to push the matter and in due course I was called for interview to be commissioned as a Technical Signals Officer. There was still trouble over colour blindness but after sorting out a bunch of coloured wires they decided that I would be suitable.

I was posted to Cranwell to be one of the first course using officer cadets who became full Pilot Officers if successful whereas previously they had taken the course as acting Pilot Officers.

So ended the first part of our service life in Scotland but not, as it turned out, the last. The climate on Colonsay was surprisingly mild because of the gulf-stream. They seldom had snow and the sea was reasonably warm in the summers. We left the island in May 1942 with a feeling of affection which, after many years, led us to return there for a holiday. Meanwhile a further phase of my military service began.

THE GEOLOGY OF COLONSAY

During the Autumn, Martin McEnery and his wife Helen Evans, now resident in London, revisited Colonsay after a gap of some thirty years. His renewed enthusiasm for the island led him to share some interesting information about the island's geology:

“I am sure a few mentions in the Corncrake could help visitors and maybe locals appreciate the wonderful geological heritage on the island. A really useful detailed study is the 1911 Colonsay Memoir of the Geological Survey.



Obviously dated, and it doesn't of course cover the more recent understanding of tectonic plates and continent mobility, but it does have much sound observation about the geology of the island. This book is quite hard to get hold of but amazingly enough you can read it and even print it off as a facsimile complete with some photos all

free of charge from the Cornell University website. The link is

<https://archive.org/details/cu31924003892639>.

Make sure you get the 1911 version, there is also available the facsimile of the earlier edition in 1907. A fair number of pages so you will need a supply of ink, but it could be a useful resource to have a copy available. I am also sending the link to Christa Byrne as she expressed interest.

It was great to visit Colonsay again this autumn and to be hosted by Liz and Mike McNicholl who have been very good friends of ours for very many years.

We will now be avid readers of the Corncrake (and indeed drinkers of Colonsay beer)".

SCRITTI POLITTI



MICHAEL RUSSELL

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EMPOWERMENT BILL A MAJOR DEVELOPMENT FOR LOCAL SELF-DETERMINATION

The launch of the consultation of the Community Empowerment Bill has been described as a major development for local self-determination.

The bill proposes to build upon Scotland's world-leading community right to buy legislation by making it fit for all communities in Scotland and making it more straightforward for communities to take on public sector lands and buildings.

It will also provide a new statutory role for community councils when it comes to the Common Good, while giving communities a greater voice in the services the public sector delivers, and proposes to update Scotland's land reform legislation by extending the community right to buy to urban areas.

Commenting, SNP MSP Michael Russell said:

"The people who know best what needs to be done to improve life in a local community are the people who live and work there.

“This bill is an opportunity to give people in Scotland’s communities the tools they need to shape the future of their local areas.

“The launch of this bill is a significant step towards greater local self-determination, and I would encourage as many people as possible to make their views known in the consultation on what is being proposed.

“Just as the SNP believe that it is the people of Scotland who are best placed to make decision affecting Scotland, it is also true that the people best place to make decisions about local communities are the people who live and work in them.

“This is a major opportunity to build upon Scotland’s world-leading community right to buy legislation and empower communities across Scotland.”

The Community Empowerment Bill consultation can be found at
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/11/5740/0>

SOCIAL NEWS

MRS ELEANOR McNEILL

“A LOVELY CHRISTIAN LADY”

Born 20th April 1937, died 7th November 2013



We are very sad to announce the recent passing of Mrs Eleanor McNeill. She passed away peacefully in her home at Hazel Cottage. She leaves behind her a record of service to the island (and to the Baptist Church in particular) which is second to none. The island, on which she lived almost her entire life, will be a much poorer place for her passing.

HOGMANAY CEILIDH

David Johnston has supplied details, including the website from which you can buy tickets....

Ceilidh with buffet and live music. All profits to charitable causes.

At Colonsay Village Hall, Isle of Colonsay on Tuesday 31 December 2013

Doors Open at 8:00PM

Starts at 8:30PM

Ticket Price: £7.50 - £10.00*

*booking fee applies

Box Office: 01951200157

<http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/date/86181>

ACCOMMODATION REQUIRED

The new community nurse and her husband would like to appeal to those who have property on Colonsay. We would be delighted to speak to anyone who may be interested in a long term lease of their property as we will vacate our winter let in March 2014. We will consider any agreement, including vacating the property during owners holidays here!

If you can help, please contact Michelle MacDonald on 077089 34577, or at

michellecmacdonald@yahoo.co.uk

COLONSAY DESCENDANTS

“Dear Colonsay Corncrake,

I am a Colonsay McNeill/McDougall descendant and I live in Queensland, Australia. I was looking through our Australian newspaper archives today, and came across this obituary that I thought might be of interest to your readers and anyone researching their Colonsay McNeill ancestry. Malcolm McNeill's 1927 Qld. death record lists his parents as Gilbert McNeill and Margaret McFarlane. Malcolm's brother Donald 'Gibbie' McNeill married Margaret 'Pegi Bhan' McNeil, my great great grandmother Annabella McNeill's sister.

My Colonsay 3rd great grandparents are Duncan 'Ban' McNeill & Catherine Currie and Archibald McLugash/McDougall & Margaret Darrach. Duncan's daughter Annabella McNeill married Archibald's son Roderick McLugash/McDougall. Records on Colonsay have them under the name of McLugash, but when they left the island they used their McDougall name. McLugash is a sept of McDougall. Roderick was a staunch Baptist and may have been forced to leave Colonsay in order to find work. He was one of the deacons instrumental in the building of the first Baptist church in Dunoon.

Regards, Roslyn Crane”

LATE MR. MALCOLM McNEILL

Mr. Malcolm McNeill died at the home of his daughter, Mrs. W.E. Zillmann, Roderick Street, Ipswich, yesterday morning at the age of 86. As a school teacher for 40 years, he was well known in many parts of Queensland, and was held in the highest esteem by a wide circle of friends. For some time his health had been failing. He suffered no illness, however, and passed away in his sleep.

The late Mr. McNeill was born on the island of Colonsay, Argyleshire, Scotland on June 1, 1839. When 21 years old he came to Queensland on the Clifton, leaving Scotland on November 17, 1861 and reaching Moreton Bay on April 12, 1862. He was a trained teacher, having served his apprenticeship for the profession in the Established Church Normal College, Edinburgh, in 1857 – 1859.

When he arrived in Queensland there were no openings in his profession. He was obliged to take any other work offering, and spent 18 months in Rockhampton. In the early 70s he secured an appointment as an assistant teacher in the South Brisbane School, under the board which, at that time, controlled education in Queensland. His next transfer was to Kangaroo Point, where he served under Mr. F.F. Swanick, afterwards a member for Albert in the State Parliament.

Later, he secured an appointment in charge of the school at Pimpana, on the South Coast. By this time the demand for competent teachers was keen, and the late Mr. McNeill had to instruct about 40 children at Pimpana without assistance. He was next transferred to the Freestone Creek Lower School near Warwick where he worked for six months until transferred to Tivoli in January, 1884. Until 1893 he remained in charge of the Tivoli school, leaving it just before the colliery disaster in the Tivoli district.

His next appointment was in the Normanby school. In January 1900, the late Mr. McNeill was appointed head teacher at Roadvale, where he remained until June 1911, then retiring from the service at the age of 70. After his retirement, he lived with his wife at Manly until the death of Mrs. McNeill, four years ago. He has since lived with his daughter Mrs. Zillmann, in Roderick Street.

The late Mr. McNeill was associated with many bodies at the centres in which he laboured. He was a staunch member of the Presbyterian Church, and was a Freemason for many years. He is survived by three sons, Messrs. Gilbert (of Williamstown, South Africa), Robert (Sherwood), and Nichol (Sandgate), and one daughter Mrs. W. E. Zillmann. One sister, Mrs. A. Blackstock, of Medicine Hat, Canada also survives. The funeral will take place from Gow's funeral parlour, Brisbane, at 2.30 p.m. today, for the Toowong Cemetery.”

SPORTS NEWS



McNEILL GALLOPS INTO EARLY LEAD IN WINTER LEAGUE.

Young Liam McNeill has raced to the top of The Isle of Colonsay's Winter League, having taken eleven points from a possible twelve after four rounds. All of us here at the Corncrake sincerely hope that this achievement will help to take his mind off the recent unfortunate 6-1 defeat suffered by his favourite football club, Glasgow Celtic, at the hands of Barcelona's second team.

On Sunday, 2nd December, all players observed a one-minute silence in tribute to those affected by the tragic Glasgow helicopter accident the previous Friday evening. However, things went quickly from the sombre to the absurd, the four contestants clocking up a total of thirty-five (35) shots at the notorious 7th hole (an average of 8.75 shots per player). Davie Bell also achieved the astonishing feat of hitting the same fence-post twice with successive shots.

All of this high sporting drama leaves the table looking like this:

WINTER LEAGUE AFTER ROUND FOUR

PLAYER	POINTS
L. McNeill	11
D. Binnie	6
S. Weatherstone	6
D. Bell	1

NATURE NEWS



RSPB wildlife notes November

One perfect Friday this month, when the sea was mirror-still and the weather was crisp and clear, Mike, Izzy and I had an amazing trip up the east coast of Colonsay from Oronsay to Scalasaig to drop off a volunteer. The usually short trip started with a pod of at least seven **bottlenose dolphins** that appeared right in the boat's path, waiting for us it seemed, off seal cottage bay. The pod containing adults and two juveniles was slowly coasting along giving great views of their dorsal fins and backs. Two adults even jumped fully out of the sea really close to the boat

eliciting gasps of awe from everyone on board. Even while we moved further away, we could look back and watch them surfacing a few at a time.

This incredible start to an already great day got even better on the way back. We were doing a seabird count to take advantage of the day and were starting with eider counting when Mike saw a bird rarely seen off our shores- a [common scoter](#)- in fact there were two! This duck species is on the UK red list (it is rare due to recent declines in this breeding pairs in the UK), as there are only around 50 UK.

After this great start to the bird count nearly 100 eider with males in showing off vocally, 12 black red-breasted mergansers. We also 28 great northern divers, 13 of which Towards the end of the count, we [black-throated diver](#); highly gorgeous checkering on the back. Like is a rare breeder with under 250 pairs just 500-600 birds wintering here.



Common scoter (second from left and far right) with eiders. © Raphaele Flint

we saw 16 shags, breeding plumage and guillemots and some counted an astonishing were fishing together. came across a beautiful streamlined and with the scoter, this species breeding in the UK and



Black-throated diver © Raphaele Flint

This fabulous day was followed by another soon after, where we saw a female long-tailed duck while doing ecology work on Eilean Ghaoideamal. Together these two days showed us two species we hadn't seen here before, much to our delight.

Inland Colonsay has also been hosting interesting species. Earlier this month, east Loch Fada had a [slavonian grebe](#) in amongst tufted ducks, teal, wigeon and little grebes. Just recently, Mike saw his first Colonsay [common pochard](#) on Loch Fada. This striking duck has a red/brown head and grey back. It was last recorded on

these islands in 1997!

While gathering sheep on Oronsay, staff and our volunteer were lucky enough to spot a **merlin**. Other raptors seen this month include a peregrine falcon and just a few days ago two **white-tailed eagles**- a juvenile and adult in close proximity.

Barnacle geese numbers have stayed relatively constant over the last two months, around 2000 during the last survey. Many of them spend time between Oronsay and Colonsay where they might join around 70 greenland white-fronted geese in the latest count. The grey seal pups from last month have mostly left the beaches and are learning to hunt for themselves.

Two new volunteers have arrived and will be staying with us over the next 6 months. Morgan Vaughan and Kaye Thomas have both volunteered before and from a range of exotic locations including Iceland, Cyprus and Australia, so we are very pleased to welcome them here.

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

Raphaele, Assistant warden Oronsay Reserve

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FUNZONE

MINIATURE DOMESTIC LION RABBIT OF THE MONTH!

May we introduce you to Auley, one of Jasmin Brown's many pets. .



Jasmin has kindly provided some background information on her rabbitarian companion:

“Auley is a Miniature Lion Lop. He was born on 15th of March 2012 in Dunmore, Falkirk. However, he has a fancy European pedigree all the way from Germany as his mum is a champion show rabbit. But Auley was never interested in the glitz and glamour of show life; instead he prefers to spend his days sleeping on the sofa or sometimes his mummy's bed.

He loves mac and cheese, chocolate biscuits, his pink fluffy lamb teddy, watching telly, going on holiday, staying in fancy hotels, chilling to death metal and being his mummy's shadow.

He's not a massive fan of veg, having his mane brushed, being told off for chewing things he shouldn't or other bunnies because he likes to be the boss.”

Watch this space next edition for the Giant Continental Domestic Rabbit of the Month and a new feature: Tool of the Month

THE CORNCRAKE

Many thanks to all the following people for their kind contributions to this edition: Mike Russell MSP, John Bridges, Sheena Nisbet, Kevin Byrne, Alan Davies, Hughie and Seumas McNeill, David Johnston, Michelle MacDonald, Roslyn Crane, Raphaele Flint, Jasmin Brown.

Please send your contributions for the January edition to:

