



GIGHA NEWS



Welcome to the March 2021 Gigha News

Dear Member,

Please find enclosed this month's newsletter, a copy of February 2021 Board minutes and a Calling Notice for an on-line Members meeting in April.

Regards,

Ian Wilson

Chair

For and behalf of The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust

Gigha Day March 15th

The Gigha flag was raised on Gigha Day by Maggie Wilkieson, Queen's Nurse who has written the following piece for the newsletter:

Thank you. I was asked to raise the Gigha flag because of my links to the NHS, following the year that we've had, and what a year it has been! 2020 was the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife and never have I been so proud to be a Nurse, or be so proud to work with such a group of dedicated colleagues. The early days of the pandemic were truly a scary time for the NHS, and for us locally, and preparations for what may be ahead was frightening. But together we planned and mobilised forces. We recruited retired staff, set up bed capacity for the potential amount of patients suffering from COVID locally, for staff to stay in the hospital if needed and identified those who would be there permanently, for the long haul. It was a frightening time. But it wasn't only scary for us; everyone was gripped by fear and anxiety. Support for the NHS was fantastic but it was soon recognised that for us all to cope with this global pandemic, we needed each other. There were all sorts of 'front line' workers, not only NHS workers, doing their best to keep everything moving, working, meeting demands... And the bigger picture was what has been happening in communities, supporting each other, our neighbours, those vulnerable, those in need. Everyone was working hard, but the most important thing that I could see was the impact of communities coming together with acts of solidarity and community spirit. The thing that struck me most was kindness; random acts, feelings, those going beyond, those just getting us through.

And Gigha was here; for me and for all of us. It saved me, and wherever I went, I spoke to people here who were truly grateful for Gigha at that time particularly, and since.

The beauty, the peacefulness, the ability to find strength and solidarity from Gigha the place and Gigha the people.

Because that is what we are; Gigha is here, it grounds us and it connects us all, whether we like it or not, agree with it or not, the fact is we are all connected through this beautiful place. And it will always be here and that will always be. I for one see this with fresh eyes, am truly thankful for Gigha, which is our constant, and I raise a glass to all of us, whilst I raise this flag, to Gigha, and to a positive future.

Maggie Wilkieson, Queen's Nurse

Thank you also to Joe Teale for playing the pipes while the Gigha flag was raised by Maggie.

GREL and GGPL Director John Martin is also pictured toasting Gigha Day. (Unfortunately there was no wind for the occasion to see the flag flying.)



Achamore Gardens update from Bryony White

It hard to believe, but it's been a year since I arrived at Achamore! I'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone for the friendly and warm welcome that you've given Graham and myself, and for all the help you've given me in the gardens. From finding lost plants to volunteering to weed or dig ditches, the support from islanders has been tremendous and made my job that bit easier. Spring has well and truly sprung this month, with new flowers opening and appearing daily, and the buds on the deciduous trees and shrubs rapidly swelling – soon they will be covered in that haze of spring green that truly lifts the soul after the dark winter months. But even before they open there's plenty to gladden the heart; drifts of golden daffodils, primroses and hellebores dotted here and there throughout the woods and the first Rhododendrons and Camellias of the season catch the eye from great distances.



The clearance work of the gardens team around the Summerhouse and South East Garden, along with Tim and Jim's work to improve the drainage throughout the woods has opened new vistas and allowed me to get close to Rhododendrons that I didn't even know existed last year or could only glimpse from afar. One of my favourite discoveries this year has been the Rhododendron montroseanum near the summerhouse, which I was told about last year but couldn't even see because of the impenetrable thicket of brambles and Rh ponticum that had grown up around it.

There's another huge Rh montroseanum below the house that we are going to try and cut a path to this month – watch out for photos in the April newsletter! Another lost plant is a giant Rhododendron grande which was saved by the drainage work – last year it was in the middle of a huge swamp so I couldn't get anywhere near it, but this year, possibly for the first time in many years, the ground around it has dried out enough for Morgan and I to get up close and discover that it was planted in 1945, so one of the earliest plants that Horlick put into Achamore.



And finally in the Rhododendron roundup, one plant in the garden has caused a bit of a fuss amongst the rhododendron experts. This is a massive, red flowered rhodie growing up on Springbank, which seems to glow even on the dullest day. Having had a good look at some photos of it, the experts now believe this plant is Rhododendron albotomentosum which is very rare in cultivation and has only been found on one mountain in Burma. Not only is it rare, but the same experts also think that ours is probably one of the largest examples to be found in Britain! Despite its size it's quite difficult to get a good photo of it, so here it is with Rh "Bo Peep" in the foreground.



Achamore Gardens continued



Last month Morgan introduced you to our seed sowing plans which are now bearing fruit. By the time you read this we will have sown over 200 different species and varieties of plants, as well as potted up a range of bulbs for summer colour in the walled garden. The seeds we've sown range from annuals (plants that grow, flower, set seed and die all within one year) to bring pops of colour to the garden this year, through to trees, shrubs and rhododendrons, some of which won't be ready to go into the garden for 5 years and may take 10, or even 20 years to flower! Seed sowing is my number one favourite garden task – I must have sown tens of thousands of seeds over the years but never cease to be amazed by the fact that you can take a pinch of dried brown dust (and in the case of rhododendrons, the seeds really are dust like), sprinkle it on some compost or soil, keep it moist and, seemingly miraculously, baby plants appear. It really is magical!

Community Hub

IGHT is delighted to have been awarded £2,000 from the CalMac Community Fund to support the delivery of the community hub project. This funding will allow us to purchase equipment and furniture for the portacabin to turn it into a meeting space as well as providing a small gym area. The younger generation on island have identified the equipment they would like to see in the hub, and this will be purchased in due course. The management of the hub is yet to be decided, however we imagine a small membership fee will be required to cover the running costs of the hub and maintenance of the equipment.



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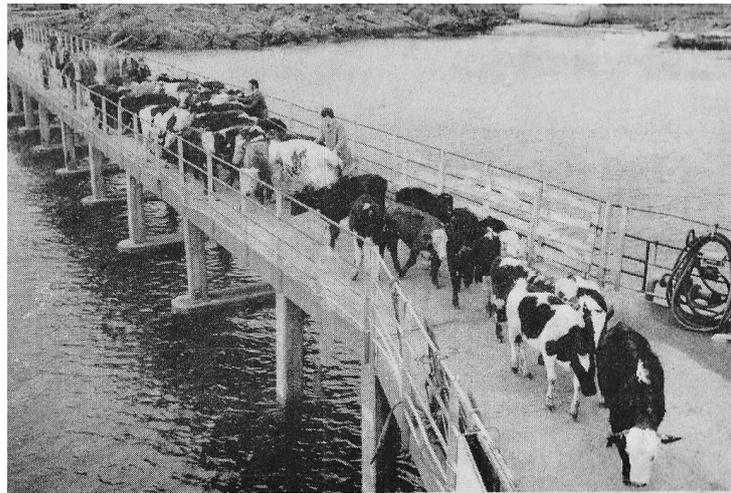
Old Photographs of Gigha

Keith and Ellie are still welcoming any contributions of photographs which capture past times on the island. You can hand them in to the Trust Office, to Keith at Heatherlea or Ellie at the Lodge. Keith returns them very promptly.

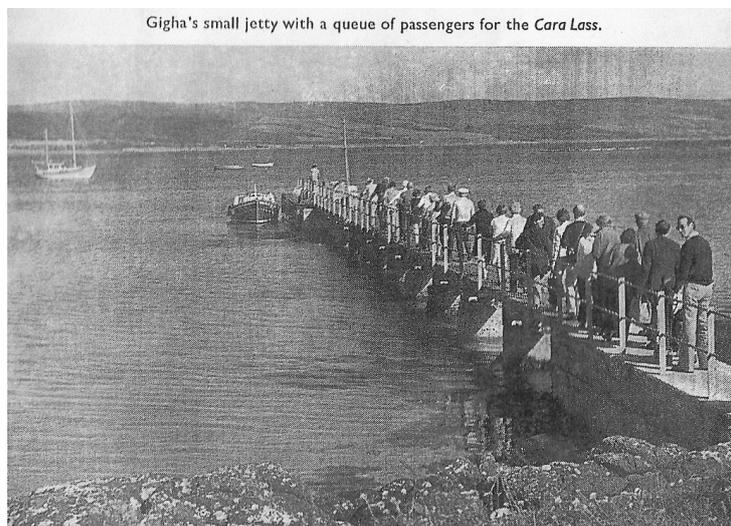
Thanks to Gordon Watson for sharing his personal collection of postcards.

Going forward we intend to produce a booklet of these and all households will hopefully get a copy free of charge. We would also like to have spare available for purchase. Ellie is looking into funding for this.

We do need help identifying people, places and events from these. A photocopied booklet is available for anyone to add in their contributions. Call Ellie on 505099 and she will drop it off. Thanks to all who have taken a set so far. The photos are on the Gigha website www.gigha.org.uk > Our Island > Old Gigha Photos and also on Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/.../15183.../albums/72157718413435883>.



Heifers being herded along the pier to the ferry after the sale.



Gigha's small jetty with a queue of passengers for the Cara Lass.

'Our Island: Creatively Exploring Gigha'

The Our Island (creatively exploring Gigha) project is well underway. Hannah is organising a Storyblanket and would welcome contributions from anyone 'crafty'. We are looking for people to make a pocket for the blanket. This can be done in any way you wish - knitted, crochet, sewn, embroidered, etc. Hannah has information on this at the shop if you are interested. Once the blanket is made we will be able to put stories and objects in the pocket and this will be an evolving piece of art for the island. We just need to find somewhere to display it!

The children in the school have been busy writing an epic tale of Gigha in the future along with learning a sea shanty dedicated to our very own Ferry. More to follow on this!

After Easter the children will be working on an animation of their story.

In coming weeks Ellie and Kenny Wilson would welcome conversations with islanders - to capture thoughts on what it means to be an islander, your experiences of living here and hopes for the future. These will be used to craft a narrative for the film of the project and also potentially provide an archive for the future. We hope that you will get involved with this. You do not need to be filmed, but we would like to record the conversations, which can be anonymous if you wish.

There will be more to follow on the Gaelic song but we hope to write this, right here, on Gigha!

Thanks to everyone who is making this happen. Ellie Logan

Please contact Ellie if you want to get involved in any way: shesingsalways@gmail.com or message via Facebook: Our Island - Creatively Exploring Gigha | Facebook

Airstrip

The boards of the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust and Gigha Trading Limited have deliberated on the use of the Gigha Airstrip and a decision has been made to close it to visitor aircraft for the 2021 season although it will still be used for helicopters to land for medical evacuations. The directors have been contacted by other airfields since this decision was made and the future of the airstrip will be reviewed again in due course.

STV Production

Sophia Thompson, Senior Producer at STV, has written a letter to all island residents to detail their filming protocol and COVID-19 testing programme. As well as being included with this newsletter, copies of this letter will also be available on local noticeboards and at Ardmish Stores.

Countryside Ranger

What a month this has been! Move over snowdrops, it's time for the sunshine filled blossoms of celandines, daffodils and marigolds to make an appearance. Beyond the botanicals, this month signals the start of a variety of new life that requires us to observe and awe from afar. While the countryside provides us with endless benefits from improving our wellbeing to offering us the chance to escape the everyday hustle and bustle, in order to enjoy these benefits we need to protect our natural spaces, and the species that inhabit them.



Photo of the month: sunshine over Leim

We have more seals in Scotland than anywhere else in the whole of Europe! And a number of seals have been spotted at the north of the island, making for a great morning of cetacean watching. However, seals are very sensitive to human disturbance. They have poor vision and can smell us before they see us, usually raising their heads to investigate what has entered their environment. This is the first sign of warning, and can lead to more rapid movements, which can cause injury when hauling themselves from the rocks into the water in blind panic. With the warmer weather coming, we are expecting to see more seals around our shores. It's important that we do not approach seals in or out of the water, as they can be just as dangerous to us, as we can to them. Keep a safe distance, remain quiet and enjoy watching these curious creatures sunning themselves over the rocks or playing among the waves.

Hopefully all of our hard work installing our nest boxes last month will pay off this spring, as many birds start searching for their nest sites in March. These include our familiar blue tits and blackbirds. In March our conspicuous blue tits set out to be in the best condition they can, marking the beginning of the breeding season. We can help our feathered friends by supplying as much food as possible, providing them with valuable energy and nutrients so females can produce eggs, all 14 of them!

Countryside Ranger continued

The lambing and calving season is upon us, so we need to take extra care in the countryside and be aware when walking our four-legged friends. This is an important time for farmers and a vulnerable time for mother and young. Pregnant ewes and new-born lambs are exceptionally vulnerable, and dogs can cause extreme distress which can lead to miscarriage, injury, as well as separation and the abandonment of lambs. Having an awareness of our presence near livestock, avoiding occupied fields, and keeping our furry companions on leads in farmed areas, means we can all enjoy a stress-free spring, and reap the benefits that nature has to offer.

Get out and enjoy the beautiful sights of Gigha, and lets work together to protects its wonderful wildlife.

**Gateway to Gigha - update from Project Manager Craig Whyte**

As spring gradually unveils its colours - Gigha is a couple of weeks ahead of my hometown, Dunblane, on that score - the Gateway to Gigha project will begin to make its mark on the island. Our Paths Designer, Scott, has visited twice – you might have seen his small white camper van - and has completed surveys of priority, or Phase 1, routes..

These are Eilean Garbh, Boathouse to Port a'Chinn Mhoir (Johnny's Shore), Fire Station to Village Hall, and the long shared-use path from just below Springbank, past the Bodach & Cailleach, and onwards to the Leim Track. He has provided us with maps, drawings and the other documents we need to invite path construction contractors to tender and, as soon as I have written this piece, I start pulling these together for issue. Scott, meanwhile, will return to Gigha during April to begin detailed surveys of Phase 2 routes.

Our heritage consultants, Lateral North and Lucidity Media, have been working with me to develop a heritage interpretation strategy to accompany the paths network, and we are looking to draw together a small Heritage Working Group, including members of the community with a strong interest in the island's built or cultural heritage. If you would like to be involved, please do get in touch. Another component of our project is the provision of a small fleet of e-bikes, which will be available for hire at the Activity Centre. As anyone who has tried to purchase a bike during lockdown will know, demand has gone through the roof and manufacturers and suppliers simply cannot keep up – 9 month waiting times are not uncommon. Coupled with the demand has been a severe hike in prices. As a result of these challenges, we are now looking to have our e-bikes ready for the road, and track, by spring 2022. This gives us ample time to research the right models and combination of bikes for our island. Robust bikes are needed, and maintenance requirements considered, and training will be provided accordingly. One of the likely impacts of the Gateway to Gigha's drive to encourage visitors to enjoy the island on foot and bike, leaving their cars behind, is that pressure is likely to build on car parking at Tayinloan Ferry Terminal. I am engaged in discussions with Argyll and Bute Council and West Kintyre Community Council as to how best to prepare for this outcome. Currently, one of the limits on Tayinloan car park capacity is the use of several bays to store caravans, boats and trailers - on 17th February, eight bays were occupied or part-occupied by such items. Clearly the storage of these at Tayinloan might be deemed essential in some cases, perhaps for a variety of good reasons. On the other end, if any of the users of these bays would be willing to discuss how their caravans, boats or other goods might be better accommodated, I would be very pleased to hear from them. At a recent meeting I attended, members of the West Kintyre CC did not know who the owners were, or how long each bay had been or would be occupied, so if any such information were forthcoming

Gateway to Gigha continued

from the Gigha community, it would greatly assist me in my discussions with A&B Council and others. Many thanks for any input!

Other aspects of the project are in development, too – a website designer will soon be sought, and Gigha and the Gateway Project, along with elements of our heritage interpretation, will thereafter have a solid and hopefully attractive platform on which to present itself as a destination for responsible visitors.

I look forward to updating you further next month.

craig@gigha.org.uk Tel: 07554 692799

Gigha Primary School

Thank you to everyone that sent in entries for the Gigha Community Nature Reserve design a logo competition. Any last entries can be sent to GCNR2021@gmail.com as soon as possible. We hope to announce the winner after the Easter holidays.

A plea to all dog walkers from the children of Gigha: A dog came through our school gate and went to the toilet in the nursery garden. One of our children did not see it and stood in it. We are very cross about this because dogs are not allowed on school property and also dog owners should pick up after their dogs. There is a big fine (up to £1000) for people that do not clear up after their dog. We will ask the Council to give the fine to people who are not looking after our island and are letting their dogs go to the toilet everywhere. They can DNA test dog poo so they can find out who is leaving it on the ground. Please can all dog owners be very careful about picking up after their dogs. Thank you.

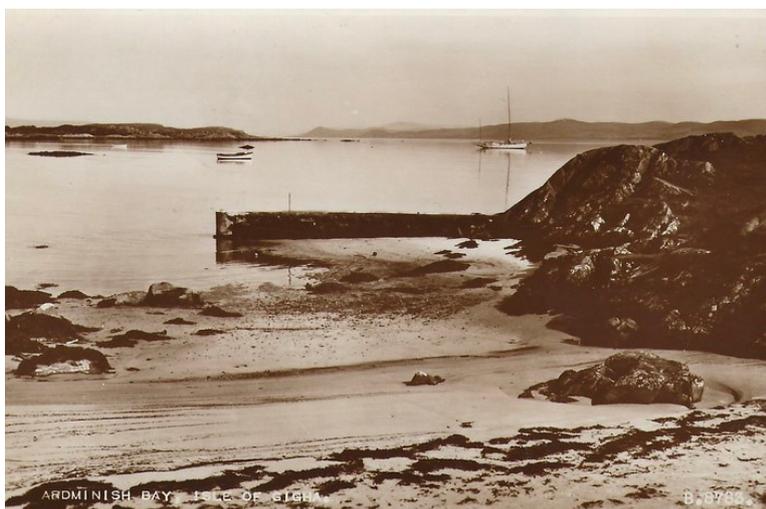
Our Community Climate Asset Fund grant money has all been spent and you will have seen lots of exciting stuff arriving, including our polycrub polytunnel, wood and soil for our raised beds, wheelbarrows and garden tools. The CCAF was given by Scottish Government and is managed by Keep Scotland Beautiful. We look forward to a lot of construction over the next month so that our polytunnel and raided beds are all ready for families and community friends to plant them up and help to grow our own fruit and vegetables. Look out for details of summer activities in the food growing garden which will help us learn more about food growing, biodiversity, climate change and making compost.



Grahame McCulloch with the Jamie Boy, ex-passenger ferry.



Before the roll on, roll off ferry, there was The Bruernish.



Port a' Chinn Mhoir (Johnny's Shore)

Dog Fouling

As mentioned by Gigha Primary School, we are highlighting the issue of dog fouling in our community. This piece is written by a member of our community.



Gigha is a beautiful place to live and to visit but unfortunately we have a problem, one that is down to those of us who live here rather than the visitors who arrive on the ferry. The problem is dog poo! Dog poo contains toxins that can cause Toxocariasis in humans which can lead to blindness. Unfortunately that's what happened to this poor toddler in the photo. Although nationwide figures show that 9 out of 10 dog owners are responsible and bag and bin their dog's poo, it just needs one or two who don't, to create a problem. On Gigha, dog poo is a problem in a few areas close to where most of the island's population live despite bins and free dog bags being available to dog walkers. These areas are:

- the grassy verges between the ferry slipway and the Boathouse
- the grassy verges between Ardminish Stores and the Fire Station
- the grassy areas around the Activity Centre, Minister's Beach and the CalMac shelter
- the path near the hotel to Port a' Chinn Mhoir (Johnny's Shore)

Is it ok to leave my dog's poo on the grass in these areas? NO! All these areas are public open spaces where it is illegal not to pick up your dog's poo. But that's not the point - if you don't clear up after your dog all of us on Gigha are affected, including the island's children who walk and play in these areas. It's unpleasant, it's unsightly, it's filthy, it's a nuisance when you step in it and worse of all it is a health hazard.

Are you an irresponsible dog walker, too lazy, or too posh to pick up your dog's poo? Please wise up and have your dog leave only paw prints on Gigha!

Thank you.



Main Contacts

For general IGHM enquiries:
shona@gigha.org.uk Tel: 015883 505390

For development enquiries:
jane@gigha.org.uk

For housing and estate enquiries:
office@gigha.org.uk

For all GTL enquiries:
trading@gigha.org.uk Tel: 01583 427300

For accounts/finance enquiries:
ightcentralaccounts@gigha.org.uk

For Gardens enquiries/volunteer opportunities:
gardens@gigha.org.uk

Trust Office Opening Hours: The office will be staffed but will be closed to the public during COVID-19. Please contact the office using the above details.

Camping on Gigha



Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust

There are no camping or motorhome facilities available on the Isle of Gigha so please consider your visit very carefully. Our roads are narrow single track roads with a few passing places and there are limited places for large vehicles, such as motorhomes, to park and turn. Livestock roam freely on parts of the island and for your own safety they must not be approached or disturbed.



Camp in a responsible location and park sensibly

Please do not camp in enclosed fields of crops or farm animals, or near buildings. Do not park in laybys, passing places, as you may be asked to move.

Lighting fires

Please use a stove rather than light an open fire. If an open fire is necessary, keep it small, under control and supervised. Never light an open fire during prolonged dry periods, in woodlands on peaty ground or near to buildings. Remove all traces of an open fire before you leave. You may be liable for uncontrolled fires.



Leave your surroundings as you found them and take your waste with you

Please take away all your rubbish, and do not leave any food scraps. Public toilets may not be open. There are also no campervan/motorhome waste disposal points. This may require you to take your waste off Gigha before disposing.



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BEFORE YOU GO**
SCOTTISH
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Please do not camp or park next to the Boathouse Restaurant as this area is closed to campers. A new campsite and motorhome site will be open in 2022.