



## THE ARDTORNISH NEWSLETTER, SUMMER 2014

### Hello from Ardtornish

Please allow us a moment to distract you from the Commonwealth Games and independence vote. We've had an excellent summer so far – warm, sunny, with just enough rain to keep grass green and rivers roiling. We've seen many old friends and some new. Plentiful smiles reassure us they're having fun.

This is our first newsletter since Kathryn joined us fully. She and Isobel are a great team and whirlwind of energy. She introduces herself below.

There was a lot of mud about in the spring. As you'd expect, Angus has not been idle. Building projects - big ones - have been the theme. Our first biomass boiler is now gloriously burning beside the Rannoch river. You'll notice a transformed back drive, and on the large boilerhouse decorative outriggers are being chiselled, barge boards painted as I write. The house at last is reliably, renewably warm, satisfying our guests with plentiful hot baths and cosy rooms, and us with a low-carbon solution, excellent use for estate-grown timber, and a pleasing cheque under the renewable heat incentive from time to time.

Up the glen, as we hear below from Alan, another hydro power plant is being built. The 800w Uileann scheme started construction in January, and progresses well with a new road through the plantation and penstock beside the burn. Works in the watercourses we're catching is in full swing - during those few months of each year when minimal fish activity allow us to work on the stream bed. Three streams or small rivers will be funnelled into one pipeline, with a turbine shed behind Alan and Jayne's Uileann house. They're very



Loch Aline in the late Spring



The Boat House in the distance

tolerant to put up with the disturbance - and we send them our thanks, as we do to the entire continuing hydro construction team of Hydroplan, D A MacDonald, and our own Angus and Robin.

Faith, below, tells us about the garden, and Jane about her great food.

Before I go, some sad words about people. Chris and Laiza left Ardtornish in June, to a new life and challenges in Fife, back to near from where they came. They made a huge contribution in their seven years here. We miss them, and we wish them well. In late March we had a terrible loss, with the death of Iain Cameron. Iain was a big figure - and, we're proud to say, an important part of this community. We've put an appreciation of his life here on our [website](#). We are still coming to terms with his loss.

## Hugh Raven

### Some words from Kathryn

I've received a very warm welcome from the estate team, the wider community and indeed from all those Faithful Friends of Ardtornish who have already visited us this year and who I've met personally. I share your love for this hidden gem, I think it's pretty special!

### The McLaughlin clan

Hugh introduced me in the last newsletter so I have but one thing to add. While christened Kathryn I ask that you call me Kat, as my friends all do. Kenny my husband is the new General Manager at the Nevis Centre and commutes daily to Fort William. Jack Daniels and Bo Jangles are the four legged feline members of our family. The large white bundle of slobber, drool and fur is more fondly referred to as Sweep, a two-year-old Clumber spaniel with no qualms about sharing these qualities with all he encounters - so apologies in advance if you come upon him around the estate.

### Meeting our visitors

I'm committed to learning our visitor business at Ardtornish throughout, as a great believer that you cannot manage a business until you fully understand it. So you'll see me involved in a whole host of activities across the estate.

We've had a great start to the summer - many of our properties fully occupied. I've been busy bringing our social media pages up to date, and you can check all availability on the go via our [Facebook](#) page. I'd encourage you to follow us on [Facebook](#) if you don't already do so, as competitions and special offers will feature regularly through the year.

We've bought smart new uniforms and name badges for our Housekeeping team, and reconfigured the Information Centre. In addition to the excellent farm and estate meat, we stock a variety of pictures, jewellery, textiles and glassware lovingly crafted by local makers and artists. We're still providing the same service as before and welcome visitors to drop by for fishing permits, bike hire and general information or advice about the local area.

### Events

I was certainly busy during my first few weeks here - with two weddings back to back, the annual Andrew Raven Trust weekend [www.andrewraventrust.org.uk](http://www.andrewraventrust.org.uk) and then the full set of talented students from the Herriot Watt School of music.



Bracket fungus



Castle Cottage garden



Loch Arianas - perfect for an evening dip



Weddings in stunning surroundings

I'm pleased to report that our majestic gardens have been the centre of much attention in recent months. Tour operators of both land and sea hope to incorporate us in their 2015/16 itineraries, and guests aboard the small luxury cruiser the Hebridean Princess will receive refreshments in the house after self-exploring the 25 garden acres.

We've our first wedding confirmed for next year, and with the flurry of enquiries we're confident that the House and Estate will see more Ardtornish brides and celebrations throughout 2015.

If you're planning an Ardtornish visit, I'd stress the need for you to check our availability. Please book online or contact us at [stay@ardtornish.co.uk](mailto:stay@ardtornish.co.uk) or telephone **01967 421288** to avoid disappointment. As usual, we ask a 50% deposit, payable within two weeks of placing the booking.

Looking forward to seeing you. Thanks.

**Kat McLaughlin**

### **Aren't birds resilient!**

As the hydro contractor's heavy machinery arrived at Uileann I wondered what impact it would have on the birds that breed every year alongside the Allt Buidhe Mor. Would the common sandpipers from Africa abandon their territory for a quieter spot?

I need not have worried. Very much business as usual. It's late July, and the endless piping of the adult sandpipers as they chaperone their young is starting to subside. I've been watching them quietly from the car as they pick their way among the pipes and other hydro paraphernalia stacked at roadside below my house. The grey wagtails also managed a large brood just up from the powerhouse, seemingly impervious to weeks of monotonous 'thumping' of breaker on rock as the site was cleared.

Wonderful news too about terns in the Sound of Mull. Decimated by mink in the '90s, the colonies on Glas Eileanan and Eilean Rubha an Ridire (Inninmore Island) disappeared. Breeding common terns are back in numbers on both islands again this year.

**Alan Kennedy**

### **The Ardtornish Garden**

2014 has been a very early year in gardens all over Britain. The lack of winter frost has encouraged plants to burst into growth and flower earlier than normal in most years. We may fear for the continuity of bloom and wonder what there will be to enjoy in August, but in the Ardtornish garden there is such a variety of planting that there will always be special treasures to be revealed.

Ian Lamb planted a corner of the Rockery on the north-east side of the main lawn with some special plants he chose as a present for my eightieth birthday. These have flourished and looked their best in June. The trillium had evidently enjoyed the winter's rain. The daphne in the raised beds also thrived in the warm wet of the early months and will make a fine scented display next March.

By June many rhododendrons have dropped their flowers, but I plunged round a bed of some with larger leaves to find the later-flowering 'Swamp Honeysuckle' from Eastern North America, *Rhododendron viscosum*, with its strong spicy scent. I picked a piece for the kitchen table. Three or four weeks later Rhododendron Polar



**Uileann sandpiper**



**Uileann sandpiper fledgling**



**Tern on the wing**



***Trillium luteum***

Bear came into early flower, again very sweet scented. It has been an especially good year for scent.

Allan Davidson has kept the grass in good order with a new mower. Ian has returned from his semi-retirement to help with some other important tasks. He spent a whole dry day killing brambles and then noticed a small patch of bracken, which had escaped his attention on previous years. The bracken is always waiting outside the garden fence to sweep in with its invading force, so a constant look-out is needed - and usually achieved.

The eucryphia may come into flower in early rather than late August, or even later this month. It will be interesting to see if the leaves of deciduous shrubs colour up early, or if the usual pattern is restored.



*Trillium chloropetalum giganteum*

**Faith Raven**

### News from the Whitehouse

Mike and Lee returned from India – bags stuffed with saffron - tanned and ready to cook. 2014 is going very well. It started strongly – with a Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence awarded early on – and a number of weddings with Ardtornish, musical gatherings and general jollifications at the estate which have gone exceedingly well. The feedback is heart-warming - this being a good example: *"Katie and I would like to thank everyone at Ardtornish and The Whitehouse for their kindness and help over the weekend. The happy, relaxed 'well wishing' demeanour of everyone involved was tangible and undoubtedly contributed to the experience."*

We have also helped visitors celebrate significant dates at the Whitehouse. Emma wrote recently: *"I just wanted to pass on my thanks to Mike and the team for such a special lunch. We loved it - such simple but elegant cooking. Mike has a way of letting wonderful ingredients really speak for themselves. As you may have gathered, we are gourmands, not gourmets, but we do eat out a lot and the Whitehouse is a true stand out"*.

We love arranging ready-made meals, parties and picnics – like the hamper delivered just last week to a bothy for a surprise wedding anniversary party. Please do ask us if we can help when you are at Ardtornish.



*Rhododendron Polar Bear*



*Nomocharis aperta*

**Jane Stuart-Smith**

We hope to see you at Ardtornish soon.

**From all the team at Ardtornish**

### News Flashes

Recent news items on the website which you may have missed ...

Iain Cameron, 1958 – 2014 ●● Tree clearance in Ardtornish Gardens  
 ●● Local group bids to buy Achnaha woods ●● Humpback whale stranding on Sound of Mull ●● Jenni Fagan – on being at Ardtornish  
 ●● Having fun in the Highlands... ●● Community Hydro at Achaforse? ●● Water taxi links Morvern with Tobermory ●● Ghost fishing ●● 'A Hidden Gem' – and that's official ●● De tha Dol? Quite a lot, thank you ●● Jess Richards Awarded Ardtornish writer's Retreat 2014

We regularly post news from Ardtornish on the [website](#) and our



Whitehouse dessert



**Join us on Facebook**

Sign-up for the Ardtornish newsletter [here](#)

[Facebook page](#) - so please remember to drop by or follow the links above.



Ardtornish Estate Office, Morvern, by Oban, Argyll, Scotland, PA80 5UZ  
Tel: +44 (0) 1967 421 288 | Fax: +44 (0) 1967 421 221  
Email: [stay@ardtornish.co.uk](mailto:stay@ardtornish.co.uk) Web: [www.ardtornish.co.uk](http://www.ardtornish.co.uk)