



Unable to read this newsletter?  
please [click here](#)

## THE ARDTORNISH NEWSLETTER, SUMMER 2015

### Hello from Ardtornish...

**... where things have never been better – though perhaps that would be an exaggeration regarding the weather.**

As a community and business, we're having a good year. A great deal is going on. Our third hydro scheme is up and running, the new settlement of Achabeag progresses apace (six houses now occupied), work is almost complete in the Ardtornish House lower garden, and plans are hatching for important improvements around the estate square at Achranich. New people, new investment, projects, opportunities. Some of these we reprise below.

First you must meet Tony - Tony McInnes, our new Chief Executive. He joins us from the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, where he was head of commercial operations. Prior to that his career was in growing and managing small businesses, mainly in Glasgow. He brings great experience of finance and accounting, business strategy and administration, project and construction management. I know I speak for the whole team when I say we're delighted to welcome both Tony and his wife Susan.

We're a maritime community, and for perhaps the first time ever we've had good news about marine policy in our home waters.

It's almost fifteen years since Morvern Community Council wrote to



Welcome back ...

the fisheries minister asking for controls on dredging in the Sound. Scallop dredging drags heavy metal teeth to scour the seabed and catch scallops shallow-buried in the sediment. As our many local divers will attest, it causes untold damage.

Despite this destruction, progress has been slow. Habitats have been destroyed, historic artefacts dragged around the seabed, and local waters further depleted of what impoverished fish stocks remain.

Under pressure internationally, the government has declared a number of Marine Protected Areas round Scotland's coasts. Our home waters have two. Lochs Sunart and Teacuis are chosen for delicate bottom-dwelling creatures, which delight with the most picturesque of names: flame shell beds, northern feather stars, and organ-pipe worms. The proposal for protection – out to consultation until the middle of next month – is to prevent damage by mobile fishing gear and other seafloor impacts in both lochs.

If all goes according to plan, Loch Sunart will be designated twice. It's also part of a much larger marine protected area, stretching from the head of Loch Sunart to some distance down the Sound of Jura. Common Skate are the species in question here – but please don't be misled by the name. Formerly common throughout most UK waters, they are now – officially – critically endangered. This is their top remaining refuge. The government's plan would offer them some protection by closing part of these waters to damaging bottom-contact gear. Unfortunately if these proposals go through, the northern part of the Sound of Mull would still be open to dredging – which is surprising, as by-catch in trawls and dredges is known to be a serious threat to skate.

A local marine group has been formed to represent local communities in these matters. You can see its [Facebook page here](#). Please sign up if you would like know more. The Scottish Government's announcement on its proposals can be [seen here](#).

We hope to see you this summer. Til then

**Hugh Raven**

### News from Kat

A big hello from the visitor team.

Despite the unseasonable weather we remain optimistic that summer is just around the corner. With this in mind we have treated the gardens of all our holiday cottages to new picnic benches, and local dry stone dyker Willy Lamont is building BBQs for those balmy, midge-free nights.

As always we've been busy and have much to report. A newly tarmacked driveway awaits guests and visitors to Ardtornish House – with passing spaces widened and another added near the top. Work continues around the biomass house, and the new car park and path between office and gardens will soon be complete.

You may recall that reliable wifi connectivity to the cottages has historically been poor. Our digger driver has been hard at work running cables to them all so BT can hardwire them and provide a reliable connection.

Recruiting housekeepers has always been a challenge for the visitor department, and despite recruitment efforts our team has failed to grow. With this in mind we have had to make the difficult decision to switch the changeover days, for our holiday cottages only, to Fridays.

If you have booked your 2016/17 dates we will be in touch soon to



**Tony McInnes our new Chief Executive**



**A quick dip in Loch Aline**



**Protection of the Common Skate**



**Beautiful evening on the Loch side**

discuss these changes. We are extremely sorry if this causes inconvenience.

This year's weddings have seen people with strong local connections tie the knot. In April we helped Catrina Bell, daughter of the home-grown Marion Sorley marry in a traditional ceremony at our lovely Kiel church. Their guests brought the house to life and partied into the wee small hours.

Our second was a grand organic festival in a vintage style tent elevated on the hill behind Claggan school house. Local wildlife expert Matt Wilson and his bride Rhian threw an after party that locals will recall for many years to come.

Once again Ardtornish House became home to guests of our longstanding annual events. The 9th Andrew Raven Trust weekend saw them explore the topic 'Water as Community Resource'. Members of the Inchcolm music ensemble and students of Heriot Watt University spent a week practicing their new musical arrangements, before kindly giving locals a preview performance ahead of scheduled concerts at Iona Abbey and Edinburgh's St Giles Cathedral.

The gardens are busier than ever. We've had several visits from passengers aboard the Hebridean Princess, the luxury Scottish cruise liner – exploring the garden before afternoon tea in the drawing room.

We're planning a brand new website for launch in September. I'm asking friends of Ardtornish to send in their favourite high resolution images of the estate and surrounding area. All images used will be credited. Let's have 'em please....

**Kathryn McLaughlin**

### Energy update

I'd like to say welcome to the energy department summer news review - but don't want to mislead you, as it's hard to see this as summer. It's been wet almost continuously since our last report. Wet.

Monthly rainfall exceeded our 30-year average in each of the last three months: April (+29%) May (+235%) and June (+21%). Fortunately energy output has been equally high.

The new Uileann hydro scheme was commissioned in mid-May on part load. Initial teething problems are behind us, and it looks like it will work well. We're completing the final intakes and expect by autumn to be fully operational.

Planning works continue on the Achranich Archimedean 100 kW Screw Turbine. We visited the two factories in Holland quoting for the turbine supply. Holland is the home of screw turbines. The Dutch have used them successfully for decades - in reverse, as electric pumps. Without them Holland would be under water. More news to come on this fascinating project as we make progress.

**Angus Robertson**

### Dunlin on Tearnait

A walk around Loch Tearnait is one of my favourite outings on Ardtornish. Spring in to summer is particularly good for the migrant waders. Greenshank, common sandpiper and ringed plover are present, but it's the confiding dunlin that's easiest to see close up. I'm very familiar with wintering dunlin on the coast in Uist, so it's nice to see them on the hill in full summer plumage.

They're best seen on the sandy east shore feeding in the shallows.



**Fishing at Ardtornish**



**Loch Arienas in the summer**



**Castle Cottage sitting room**



**Warm summer walks ...**

Some are off duty, while others in small groups are probably failed breeders. The trick is to approach them slowly, sit down quietly and let them get used to your presence. Before long they'll come right past you and behave as if you're not there. The displaying bird here was photographed last year, the other taken in June just gone. Sitting at the water's edge on a beautiful day with dunlin burbling close by is rather special.

**Alan Kennedy**

### The Ardtornish Garden in summer

The bluebells are long gone, though gave a fine display this year. We have to allow the leaves to die down before cutting the grass, to encourage them to spread. We also look out for special so-called weeds, like common valerian.

After the bluebells, we have good beds of primula. This is when we look out for the bright orange-red of the *Embothrium*, their flowers a shock of colour amid the green. The matching colour coming on now is the petals of *Tropaeolum* - the Scottish Flame Flower, pushing through Camellia Donation leaves on the veranda.

Climbing roses are coming out all over the house, planted by my parents to cover the pillars and some of the walls. We find other July flowering species roses as we explore further, and must not miss the hoheria on the Front Drive.

The Andrew Raven Trust held its meeting in Ardtornish House in mid-June on the subject of 'water' - of which the Ardtornish Garden had experienced more than enough. The Trust timetable gave time for participants to wander and enjoy the garden as the weather was mainly dry. Now during the children's school holidays the youngsters can explore many of the secret paths that Allan Davidson and Ian Lamb have kept open for us.

**Faith Raven**

### News from the Whitehouse

The Whitehouse is in the finest fettle this season with Mike and Lee back again. So far this year we have been shortlisted for three major awards - a great boost to all in the team. We are also waiting for the Sustainable Restaurant Association to rate us. We were 1% off three stars last time - the highest rating they give.

Jane is trying to get to grips with Twitter, but to be honest is not much good at it. We want to send tantalising pictures of our latest langoustine catch. If she succeeds, please follow her.

We have a few more tables outside, and despite the poor weather so far this "summer", we've been able to accommodate more visitors while the hotel was shut. (It's now open for food again, which is good for everyone). Lee has perfected his outstanding terrine - like the ham hock dish pictured here.

Hope to see you soon

**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 ...

[The natural beauty of the loch and the surrounding area were immediately clear to see](#) ●● [Drimnin to Tobermory water taxi timetable](#) ●● [Self Catering Holidays at Ardtornish: Read our latest](#)



Dunlin on Ternait



Dunlin courtship display



Flame Flower



Common Valerian

reviews ••• Weddings & Events: Perfectly Remote and Utterly Romantic ••• Fabulous Activities: from traditional pursuits like deer stalking to exploring our delightful gardens you'll find something to suit all tastes

We regularly post news from Ardtornish on the [website](#) and our [Facebook page](#) - so please remember to drop by or follow the links above.



Roses adorn Ardtornish House



Pillar Rose



Ham hock terrine



[Join us on Facebook](#)

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



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)

Photography © Copyright 2015 Ardtornish and Chris Simmons. All rights reserved and acknowledged.