



GIGHA NEWS



Welcome to the February 2021 Gigha News

Dear Member,

Please find enclosed this month's newsletter and a copy of January 2021 Board minutes.

Regards,

Ian Wilson
Chair

For and behalf of The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust

Gigha Day March 15th

Sadly we are unable to hold our annual Gigha Day celebrations on March 15th due to the on-going COVID-19 lockdown. The Gigha flag will be raised but there shall be no gathering of directors, staff or members in line with Scottish Government restrictions.

Achamore Gardens - This month's update is brought to you by Morgan, Achamore Garden's new apprentice

Progress in Achamore Gardens has taken many forms in the last month. Tim Lister has now expertly finished the entrance path and continues to speedily prep the site for the new Coach park. Our Green Team 'bramble bash' their way to a steady victory across the Gardens and as wild overgrowth is tamed, we begin to see what lies beneath.



As Spring nears, fresh growth emerges. The clearing of thick briars in the South East Garden is well under way and green shoots promise healthy young plants. Elsewhere, snowdrops have already popped up in a sprinkling of places. We plan to carefully divide some of the fuller clusters, so we will see more next year. The daffodils are teasing us, and it surely won't be too long before cheeky yellow trumpets present themselves.



The word of the month is unquestionably 'sowing'! Bryony has masterfully amassed a seed collection of nearly 250 species of flora. Exciting, slightly rarer plant seeds have also been sourced from horticultural societies when they are not available at local sellers. Many of these seeds will help to regrow some of the Garden's absent Rhododendrons but others will be planted out in years to come to insert blazes of colour into beds that need a little lift. The greenhouse has also had a spring clean with new shade netting installed. Prepping for seed sowing has been a welcomed break from more destructive weeding practices although there is a huge amount of sowing it to be done. The robins are becoming increasingly confident in their approach to our Green Team (our red-breasted fellows are not yet familiar with social distancing) but other fauna sneaks into view while work goes on. A glimpse of regal sapphire during tractor driving lessons revealed the (somehow inconspicuous) peacocks that share residency with the nearby farm. During the chaotic unknitting of the Kiwi plant and its neighbours in the South-walled garden, a woodpecker was spotted weaving its way to nearby trees.

Achamore Gardens continued

As the newly appointed apprentice it has been a treat to work with such a hardworking, friendly bunch. The Gardens have a fantastic history and I feel very fortunate to be involved in their restoration. As part of my training, I've been tasked with revitalising the Malcolm Allan Memorial Gardens which celebrate the ex-head gardener's 52 years of service to Achamore Gardens. Starting up a line of communication with Malcolm Allan's son, Islay Allan, has already given me a brilliant wee insight into the gardener's past. If you have any stories or memories of the Gardens, I'd love to record them.
Email: morgan@gigha.org.uk

Gateway to Gigha – Update from Project Manager Craig Whyte

It's been a surprisingly busy month for the Gateway Project, despite lockdown. I cancelled my January visit to the island, but in the meantime began work with our Evaluation Consultant, Shirley Muir, and Paths Designer, Scott Murdoch. Some breaking news is that I have just appointed Lateral North and Lucidity Media as our Heritage Interpretation consultants. They, in consultation with the community, will develop and help deliver a strategy and plan for interpretation of the island's heritage – this together with improving access are the cornerstones of the project. I very much look forward to working with all our project partners to push the Project forward during the course of the coming year. I made the decision to visit Gigha last week, as it was becoming difficult to keep the project on its time trajectory without showing Scott our planned priority routes. He needs to survey the ground in order to draw up specifications and costings which will allow us to put path-building work out to tender. He stayed in his small campervan and I at Ferry Croft and he, Casey-Jo and I met, socially distanced, 'on the trail', to assess the challenges and define best routes. The terrain of Gigha is challenging and there some concerns regarding weather and cattle damage to paths, but we are committed to working with land managers and islanders to accommodate visiting (and resident) walkers and cyclists while safeguarding and promoting the interests of land managers. Paths from the Boathouse to Port a'Chinn Mhoir (Johnny's Shore), from opposite the Fire Station through the woods to the Village Hall, from below Springbank to the Bodach & Cailleach and onwards to the Leim track, and the path to Eilean Garbh are priorities and will form the first phase of development.

The Gateway Project is multi-faceted and I will report on other exciting strands – e-bikes, a new website, public events, training for young people, a community heritage project and a Dark Skies initiative – in future issues. In the meantime, please do get in touch with me (craig@gigha.org.uk or 07554 692799) if you have any comments, concerns or contributions.

Gigha Primary School

We are finally all back in the school building and are enjoying the process of getting used to being together. Over lockdown the children have been well supported at home, with many parents working from home themselves. Thank you to our community for all the assistance you have given us during a very challenging and quite stressful time for some of our families. Morven Beagan has been our school clerical assistant for the last 8 years or so and we feel very thankful for every contribution she has made to the operational running of the school. As well as being a great friend and support to the children and their families, she has been a constant source of encouragement, inspiration and fun for all our staff. We are sad to be losing her on 5th March, but really glad that she has an opportunity to pursue her own interests and business supporting the health and wellbeing of others. We wish her well in all her new adventures and know that she will be back to visit us often to help out with school activities. If you would like to be part of our farewell celebrations and share your thanks for a job very well done, please speak with Mari Sheriff at the school to find out more about opportunities for this.

The latest edition of our Gigha Family Nature Club 'Greenhearts' bulletin is available online with news of all our outdoor and nature based projects over January and February. If you would like to read a copy please visit the blog <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/ab/isleofstoriesgigha/2021/02/24/gighas-greenhearts-newsletter/>. If you would like a paper copy please contact the school office. Tel: 01583 505259.



Gigha Primary School continued

You might notice that we have started our food growing garden so that we will be ready for planting in March. A polycrub poly tunnel is arriving quite soon and we are grateful to Morven Beagan, Tim Lister and Alex Vipurs for all their help and assistance with getting this project organised and completed.

Gigha Family Nature Club seed sowing and garden planning projects:

- Grow Your Own Potatoes Project
- Polytunnel and Raised Beds for food growing construction project
- Woodland Trust Fruit and Nut Hedgerow project
- Waste Week – working to reduce our paper waste at home and at school and to create products from shredder paper
- Red Nose Day Fancy Cake Make

We would welcome help with our food garden project, particularly with seeds, vegetable plants and small fruit bushes for planting later on in April/May.

Countryside Ranger

It would seem we are on the downward slide from winter – hooray! The sun has been glorious, the air is warmer (despite windier), and there are signs of spring all over the island.

This month the Ranger Service has been working with Gigha Primary School and the Gigha Family Nature Club (GFNC) to provide resources for environmental education.

February hosts National Nest Box Week, and to ensure families had access to materials and the opportunity to participate, the Ranger Service and GFNC provided nest box kits along with help sheets. These have been accompanied by “lockdown learning” activity sheets to encourage outdoor adventures in a variety of habitats – including our own gardens – during these tough times.



This month has also seen 300 trees planted in Achamore Gardens, with the help of one hardy, socially-distanced volunteer (to comply with government guidelines). The trees are all native species to Scotland and will help to improve the shelter belts across the gardens, as well as increase the biodiversity. Whilst most people may associate the image of newly planted trees with disposable plastic guards, we have been especially conscious to reduce plastic use as much as possible. We have only used guards on the trees in areas where future maintenance works will be carried out, such as strimming – this amounts to about 50 trees!



The initial phases of the Gateway to Gigha path project are underway with ground and route surveys being undertaken, and small areas of gorse and scrub being cut to ensure we create the most accessible paths possible, absorb the best aspects of the area, and guarantee minimal ecological and environmental damage. We’ve spotted some fabulous bird species this month including ringed plovers, woodcock and even a golden eagle, and have managed to collect 115.8kg of marine litter from our beaches!



Photo of the month: rainbow over the Sound of Gigha

IGHT staffing update

All Trust staff have been issued with uniforms and necessary PPE carrying the logos for IGH, Achamore Gardens, Countryside Ranger and GREL. Pictured are Morgan Russell, Apprentice Gardener, Bryony White, Head Gardener and Casey-Jo Zammit, Countryside Ranger.



IGHT has recently purchased a UTV which will primarily assist the Countryside Ranger Service as well as other aspects of land management. This purchase has been budgeted as part of the wider Gateway to Gigha project and will help deliver the required project outputs.



E33 Wind Turbine

The Enercon E33 wind turbine has been down since mid-November due to a fault picked up during the yearly service and grease schedule. The delay in getting this repaired was caused by COVID-19 restrictions and Brexit, as parts are sourced in Germany. Technicians attended on 6th February but unfortunately another fault was flagged up during the repair of the initial fault which has meant another wait for parts. Every effort is being made to have the E33 operational again as soon as possible.

'Our Island: Creatively Exploring Gigha'

The 'Our Island' project is really starting to take shape. As a reminder this is an opportunity for us to get involved with creative activities over the winter, whilst we are all in lockdown. Running through the project is the theme of being an islander and what this means.

This week Gigha Primary School will be starting a story crafting project which will result in a short digital animation. We have a story crafter working with them up until Easter and then after that will be bringing in a digital animator to help the children create their own piece of story art.

We will also be starting to work on a new Gaelic song for Gigha. More to follow but we will need input from Gaelic speakers on the island as well as anyone with ideas for themes it should include. Singers also welcome too! Some of us have been having a go at lino cutting. A huge thanks to Michelle Wool for creating beautiful taster packs with full instructions. Michelle has donated her time and skill to the project and the results can be seen on the Facebook page.

Thanks also to Keith Wilson who has been digitising old photos of Gigha. The photos are on the Gigha website www.gigha.org.uk > Our Island > Old Gigha Photos and also on Flickr:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/15183.../albums/72157718413435883>.

We hope in time to produce a small booklet of these which would be available to all who want one. In the meantime, we will be using them to help capture stories of living on Gigha in times past and present. And that brings me on nicely to stories. We have a writers group meeting via Zoom on a Monday night. It's a nice social space to share stories - old and new. All welcome to join!

Finally, we will want to hear stories from all of you and as things start to get a little safer will start having conversations about your experiences of living on an island.

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

Archive photographs

Do you have any old photos of Gigha sitting in a box in your attic or in a cupboard?

The 'Our Island' project would love to see these and find out from you about the people, places and activities shown in the photographs. We would also like to make digital copies and restore the photos so that they can be preserved for the future and to allow us to share them with the Gigha community and beyond.

We will take very good care of your photos and will return them to you as soon as they are scanned. Contact Ellie at The Lodge (505099) or Keith at Heather Lea (505006). You will be helping us preserve Gigha's heritage for future generations.



Pre 1884 view of the 'Mansion House' before it was remodelled to become Achamore House.



Farming on Gigha in the 1950's. On the tractor Neil Bannatyne. On the trailer Hamish Beatie and Angus MacNeill. On the haystack Duncan MacNeill. The other man is unknown.



On the right is South Ardminish Farm, an 18th century farmhouse which is now Gigha Hotel. On the opposite side of the road is Gigha Parish Church. It was built on this site between 1707-12 but had fallen down by 1772. It was rebuilt on the same site in 1780.

Main Contacts

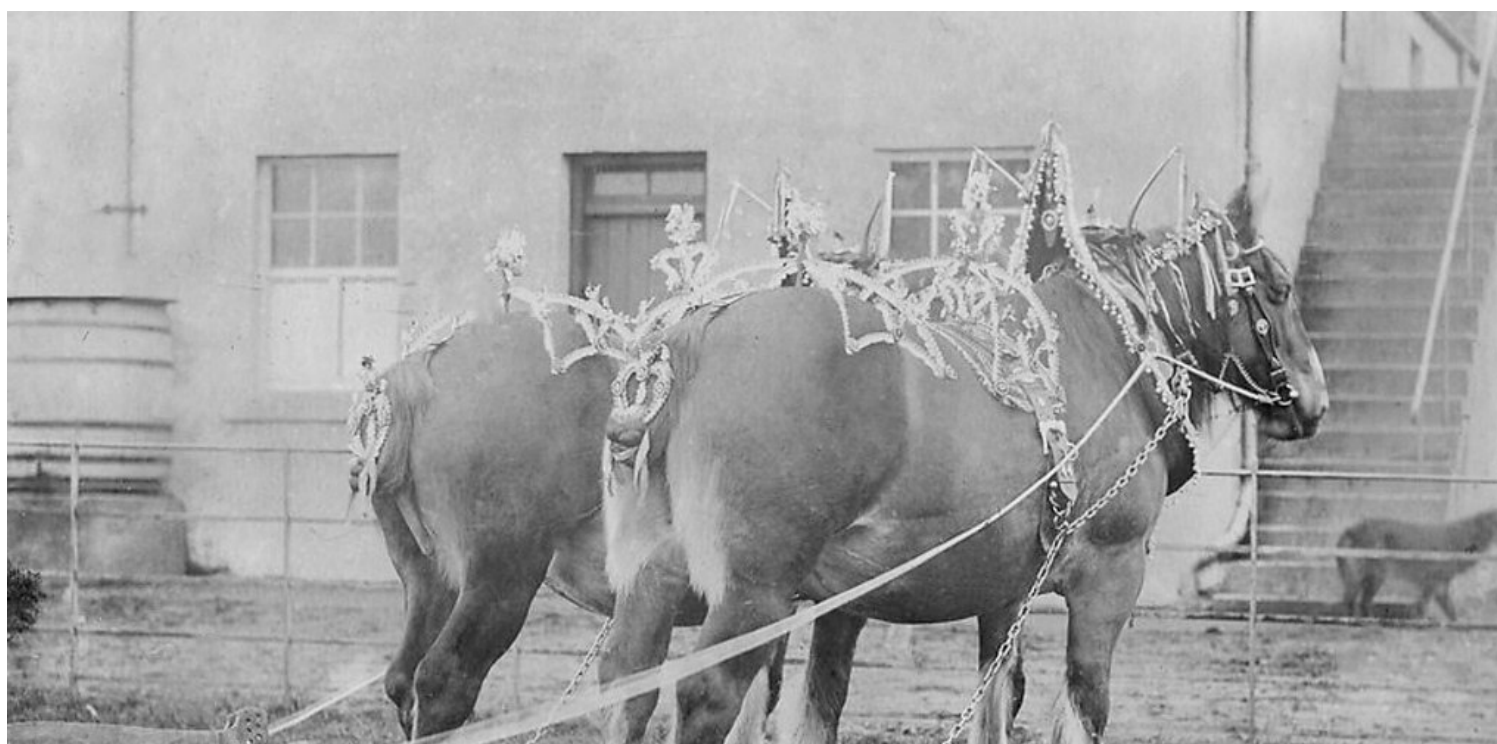
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- For Gardens enquiries/volunteer opportunities: gardens@gigha.org.uk

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.



Jubilee Tea party on Gigha in 1935.



Show day Achamore Farm circa 1913

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