

Dear Member,

Please find enclosed this month's newsletter and a copy of October and November 2020 Board minutes. This will be the last newsletter for 2020. We would like to wish the community a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Regards,

Ian Wilson
Chair

For and behalf of The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust

IGHT Finance Update

Cash position for the Trust is considered healthy with voted up donations from the subsidiaries all expected to be moved into IGH's account before the end of 2020. The Loan debt outstanding with the Trust as at 30.11.2020 was £698,640 and is expected to be reduced further by the end of the financial year to around £686,500. The net debt position (cash available less debt repayable) of the Trust and its subsidiaries as at 30.11.2020 is £486,202.

Gigha Community Fund

The next submission deadline for the Gigha Community Fund is Friday 29th January 2021. If you have a project which will benefit the community, please contact the Trust office or visit www.gigha.org.uk to download an application form and guidance notes on how to apply.

GTL

The Directors of Gigha Trading Limited welcome Graham White who has been co-opted on to the GTL Board.

John Wood memorial plaque

John Wood, who passed away in 2018 was a long time friend of many islanders and a great supporter of the Trust. His close friend, John Martin, has made a plaque to commemorate John, which has been placed onto the small island on the south of Garbh Eilean where John's ashes have been buried. John Martin has received a letter from John's family saying how moved they are by this gesture and that they wish everyone on the island well.



Christmas Raffle

Gigha Primary School are having a Christmas Raffle with tickets being sold at Ardmish Stores for £1 a ticket / £5 a strip. The raffle will be drawn on Friday 18th December. If you would like to donate a raffle prize, please leave them in a box at Gigha Primary School Front Gate. All proceeds will go to Gigha Primary and Pre-5 Parent Council.

Christmas Windows

Thank you for all everyone taking part in our Christmas Advent this year, if you would like to visit the windows, please find the map at the front of Gigha Primary School.

Achamore Gardens Christmas Trail

The Parent Council, Village Hall Committee and Achamore Gardens have come together to organise a Winter Wonderland Walk through Achamore Gardens on Saturday 19th December with funding from the Gigha Community Fund. The trail will have hidden clues which will lead you around the Gardens to a Secret Santa's Grotto. Families will have their own start time on the Saturday. Weather permitting, all decorations will be left up, so locals can experience this trail at their leisure on Sunday 20th December. We would like to ask everyone taking part to remember current government guidelines and keep 2m apart. Don't forget your wellies and torches!

A poem and prayer from John Martin "Gigha Remembers the Poppies"

*In our minds we picture the harvest fields of barley and of corn,
Beside them see the cottages where boys and girls were born,
Amidst the golden harvest we see the poppies dance,
Too soon the young were poppies, some gave their lives in France,
They fought to give us freedom, this nobody can deny,
One hundred years have come and gone and still we wonder why?
The poppies left us in their prime, some faced the firing line,
Again! We are to think of them. Time! And time after them,
Some of them were nineteen and some only sixteen,
Amidst cannons, rifles and bagpipes some of them did fall,
Today! We remember the poppies who danced in the Village Hall.*

Amen



Our Island Project – Creative Communities

The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust is delighted to announce it has been awarded £21,596 from Inspiring Scotland's Creative Communities Programme. Gigha's "Our Island Project" is 1 of the 27 projects that were successful in a competitive process of over 180 applications across Scotland. The project has been developed by Ellie Logan. Over to Ellie:

"Everyone has a story to tell and we all have places on the island we love and love to explore. This project will unlock the stories of people living on Gigha today and link this into the unique history of the island using lots of different methods – photography, visual art, song, music but importantly stories. We have a long winter ahead and lots of restrictions, but we are allowed to have a blether and we can still explore the island. Please get involved!"

Coming up after Christmas will be sessions on storytelling and sharing, photography and hopefully other art forms as people come forward with ideas. We hope to involve everyone on Gigha in some shape or form – even if it is just a chat with Ellie. We also plan to use what we are sharing to create a new Gaelic song for Gigha. As well as the song, the project will result in short film.

The project will run from December 2020 – July 2021 and activities will be planned around restrictions. We will begin to commission artists in coming weeks and we will seek to involve as many local people with something creative to share as possible. Therefore, if you have something to share let Ellie know by emailing shesingsalways@gmail.com

Sessions will begin in the new year so keep your eyes peeled for updates and start having a think about what stories you have to share!

Church News

It is unlikely that the Church will open in the foreseeable future for normal worship. Short services from the joint parishes can be viewed online on our website: westkintyreandgighachurchofscotland.org. Because we have been unable to have services in the church or to have any fundraising events, the finances of the church are in a sorry state. Thanks to our congregation for continuing to give their offering at intervals since lockdown started.

Raffle - The original idea was to have one large prize of a goodie filled hamper but because of the generosity of the people of Gigha we were able to have a second smaller hamper and 14 other prizes. The draw took place online on the Gigha Noticeboard Facebook page on 30th November. The main prize drawn went to Anne Shaw.

Many thanks to everyone who gave and all who bought tickets. The £500 raised will help to keep the Church solvent for this year!

Thank you all so much. Susan Allan, Church Treasurer.

Gigha Primary School

Rag Bag Collecting Bin – The Rag Bag collecting bin used to be within the school grounds but has now been moved over to the carpark at Tayinloan ferry slip. Money raised from the bin have amounted to £241.20 over the last few months and this goes directly to the children at the school to buy games and play equipment, gardening and nature resources as well as to fund special visitors to Gigha like theatre companies etc. We hope that everyone on Gigha will continue to fill up the bin as much as possible as all the 'rags' are put to good use in a way that is beneficial to the environment, as well as earning the children some funds to spend on recreational things they love. Please have a Christmas sort out and use the Rag Bag bin where possible.

Book Day Videos - Thank you to all the lovely volunteers who were videoed for our Scottish Book Day Favourite Books from Childhood event. We learned about some classic stories that we will be reading in school and it was very interesting to find out more about some of our Gigha residents and the things they liked when they were younger. We are still collecting videos. Please speak to Kenny Wilson if you would like to talk on video-cam about your own favourite book from childhood.

Family Nature Club – We hope to run a Family Nature Club DIY event between Christmas and New Year. Look out for details of how to sign up, receive a pack of resources and go exploring on a Christmas Nature Adventure. Families of all ages, shapes and sizes are welcome to join in. Posters with contacts and more details will be at the shop and up on Facebook.

We worked together to make a wreath for our Remembrance Day commemoration based on our learning about the role of the Navy in the wars and lives lost at sea. The wreath was made from driftwood and scallop shells, each painted with a picture of a poppy. We wanted to create something to especially remember the World War 2 sailors who died on SS Aska when she was bombed and sank between the islands of Gigha and Cara 80 years ago. We laid the wreath under a special window outside Gigha and Cara Parish Church and we all observed a socially distanced two-minute silence on Remembrance Day.



Gigha Primary School

Christmas Performance – Sadly, this year we will miss our annual Village Hall event which the children and staff really enjoy. We are working together to create a virtual performance with the title Gigha's Cosmic Comedy Christmas. The children are keen to impress you with their comedy skills and wanted to do something to cheer everyone up and give them a bit of a laugh. So, please look out for details of how to access our online Christmas performance from 23rd December onwards. We hope you will very much enjoy it. Donations for watching the performance will go towards the children's choice of charity: The Scottish Wildlife Trust.

Road Safety – At this time of year the children are travelling to and from school in the semi-dark. We have worked hard to improve our understanding of road safety, especially when walking or cycling. The children have asked if the community could also get a reminder to please watch out for pedestrians, dog walkers and cyclists, especially when they are driving in the dark.

After months of planning and preparation by the children we held our first annual pet show. Under socially distanced arrangements, the children brought their pets into the outdoor classroom to show the rest of the class. Each pet was judged by retired British Army soldier, Alistair McNeil, who served as an experienced and decorated dog handler and trainer with the Royal Army Veterinary Corps. Pets entered into the show included dogs, ponies, a cat, a hamster and even a sheep. Prizes were awarded for the best behaved pet, the best turned out and best presentation and were sponsored by the Gigha Hotel, Gigha Craft Unit and Gigha Trading Limited after written requests of support from the children. The final class of best in show was sponsored by the Scottish Salmon Company with Brogan Bannatyne and her Shetland pony, Gizmo, winning the class. The reserve champion was awarded to Mark Dennis and his Cheviot cross sheep, Buster. Many thanks to the children and to Mrs Vipurs for all their hard work in organising the show and to all the sponsors for making it an unforgettable experience.



Achamore Gardens update from Bryony

The nights may be drawing in rapidly, and the weather has turned much colder, but restoration works at Achamore continue apace as we take advantage of a time when the garden is quieter. Last month I introduced you to the work we are doing in Horlick's First Garden, around the Summerhouse, and we've been continuing work here this month. I'm eternally grateful that Colonel Horlick decided to edge many of his paths with large stones as this has allowed us to trace and clear one of the principle paths through this area, which had been lost for many years. We had to remove a huge amount of Rhododendron ponticum, brambles and weed trees that had taken root on the path and we were all amazed (and a tiny bit intimidated!) when Maggie starting pulling out entire trees by the roots, like some modern day Hercules! We've also started peeling back the layers of overgrowth in the area between the Summerhouse and the Pond, and are slowly uncovering the old network of ditches, islands and sleeper bridges that were such a feature of this area. Ellie has been doing a huge amount of the clearance in this part of the First Garden and has already re-discovered lots of lost Rhododendrons – we are all excited to see how they grow on now that they have much more light and air.



Achamore Gardens update by Bryony cont.

Drainage is a major issue across the whole garden, as it is relatively low lying and has numerous springs that pop up all over the place. As he developed the garden, Colonel Horlick installed an extensive drainage system of open ditches and land drains, but these have fallen into disrepair over the years and many have been blocked or damaged. Unfortunately, the plans of this drainage system were burnt many years ago, so we don't know exactly what existed, but several islanders have already given us a lot of information about where to start looking. If you've spent any time working in the gardens and could help us build up a better picture of what was where, please get in touch!

Talking of drainage, Tim Lister has now made a start on tackling the most urgent drainage problems on the main drive, around the pond and around the Rhododendron "Lady Horlicks" that we uncovered a few months ago – she was standing in a swamp and rapidly succumbing to waterlogging, and we were in real danger of losing her. Inevitably this drainage work is creating quite a lot of mess, so please bear with us and be aware that paths may be closed for periods of time, or even muddier and uneven than you are used to. Drainage works are likely to have to continue for at least a couple of years as Tim traces back along the system and repairs and replaces it, but hopefully we will start to see the benefits in drier paths and healthier plants soon.

And finally, I am delighted to share two bits of good news with you! This month we successfully applied for funds from Highlands and Islands Enterprise's Tourism Capital Resilience Fund, and have been awarded funding to extend the car park, create a small coach park and improve and widen the entrance path from the car park to the Visitor Cabin. We also got some funding towards a contactless card reader, some new signage and garden furniture. These works are due to take place in the early part of next year, so we should have a fabulous new entrance in time for next year's tourism season.

We are also pleased to announce that we have successfully recruited Achamore's first apprentice of the new era! Morgan Russell will be moving to the island and joining the team in mid-January, and working with us for two years whilst also studying at Argyll College (UHI) to achieve a level 6 Modern Apprenticeship in Horticulture. I am sure you will make her as welcome as you did me when I moved here.



The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust Ltd is a company registered in Scotland (registered number: 334141) and a Registered Scottish Charity (charity number: SCO 32302).

Mink Eradication

Mink pose a serious threat to wildlife and domestic animals as their population increases on the island without intervention. It is estimated that 120 traps will be required to effectively address the mink population. If you wish to be part of a team to monitor and eradicate mink on the island, please contact the IGHM office. The more volunteers that are involved, the more effective the programme of eradication will be. Please note that you will not be required to dispose of the mink as a procedure will be put in place.

Countryside Ranger update from Casey-Jo

I have only been in post for four weeks now, but one thing is very clear – I am incredibly fortunate to have been chosen to undertake the position as Countryside Ranger on such a beautiful island. Already I have spotted some "red-conservation" species such as the Lapwing (Peewit) at Eun Eilean and Curlews at the Twin Beaches! Being a Ranger can be a varied role, so I will spend a moment to explain what my role will entail and how it can benefit the island and its residents. A large part of the position is related to the "Gateway to Gigha" project, within which I'll be working on a number of areas: nature & wildlife; community engagement; promotion & interpretation of cultural, natural and historical heritage; creating 8km of pathways & signage; and improving visitor experience.

Aside from this, I am incredibly keen to involve Gigha's residents as much as possible, and I would like the ranger service to be a resource for the community. Unfortunately, due COVID, I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting many residents, and therefore, I do not yet fully understand how the community would like me to be involved - but I am hopeful that the new year will bring safer times! That said, each month I will aim to write a piece for the newsletter with sightings and news from my rambles on the island, and I do have some small ambitions and would love your feedback:

- Set-up a walking group that can be tailored to all abilities and timescales. These can be conducted in a COVID-safe way, and is an opportunity to socialise, take a relaxing ramble and get outside! It would be a great opportunity for me to meet you, and for you guys to suss me out!
- Provide resources for D.I.Y nature watches, nature activities that can be done at home, as well as walking routes aimed at all abilities.
- Set-up some citizen science programmes, so residents can make nature observations and have them officially submitted to regional and national databases.

Countryside Ranger update from Casey-Jo cont.

Please reach out! If you are a keen birder, have an interest in nature, or if you have any ideas/initiatives that you think I may be able to help get off the ground. As part of the interpretation side of the project, I am incredibly eager to discover and promote the wonderful social history and stories of the residents (past and present) of Gigha and played such a huge part in its cultural heritage. You can reach me at ranger@gigha.org.uk - I would love to hear from you!

Seeing as it is the festive season, here are some D.I.Y Christmas crafts! Painted pinecones, shell gift tags, and a pine and orange garland – all made from materials found around the island!

Nollaig Chridheil!



COVID-19

Should you or someone you know need support during this on-going difficult time, support is available from: Shopper Aide - 01586 551 600 – Providing support to those ages 60+.

Ardminish Stores - 01583 505 251 – A home delivery service for your groceries and supplies.

Kintyre Community Resilience Group - eric@skdt.org - source of accurate and up-to-date advice and information about all aspects of the impact of the outbreak in Kintyre. NHS free COVID helpline - 0800 028 2816

Christmas and New Year break

The Trust office will be closed from Friday 18th December, reopening on Tuesday 5th January 2021.

If a Trust tenant has a maintenance emergency during this time, please call **07570086545**. Please leave a message if your call is unanswered and someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

Main Contacts

IGHT enquiries: 01583 505 390

GTL enquiries: 01583 427 300

For general enquiries:

shona@gigha.org.uk

For development enquiries:

jane@gigha.org.uk

For housing and estate enquiries:

office@gigha.org.uk

For all GTL enquiries:

trading@gigha.org.uk

For accounts/finance enquiries:

ightcentralaccounts@gigha.org.uk

For Gardens enquiries/volunteer opportunities:

gardens@gigha.org.uk

For Ranger enquiries:

ranger@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.



