

Atholl
Estates
Newsletter



Summer 2020

Welcome

It is almost pointless to say circumstances are far from normal, but in pulling this newsletter together I have tried hard to remember that this edition covers the four months prior to lockdown and find a balance in articles between then and now.

Although times are far from easy, keeping a thriving tourism business shut is tough on the estate and on the many wonderful people who normally make everything come to life for our visitors, but we are thankful for living in such a beautiful place, with much more freedom to get out than our urban friends enjoy. It is times like this that having a very diversified business is a blessing, agriculture goes on as usual, forestry after a minor pause is back up and running, keepers are starting to return to their summer tasks and the hydro schemes are subject to the vagaries of the weather rather than Covid.

On that last point, it has been one of the most lovely late springs, early summers on record as some of the photos in this edition show. I hope you have had a chance to enjoy it amidst the inevitable strains and stresses, keep well and we look forward to seeing everyone as soon as it is possible.

Sarah Troughton

New Faces



Johan Bruce
- joined the Caravan
Park reception team
in May 2019



Robert Campbell
- joined George
Campbell (no
relation) as Shepherd
at Balachallan Farm,
April 2020

We say farewell to...

The estate is sad to say goodbye to David and Carol Ferguson, beat keeper at Forest Lodge and free-lance cook, who will shortly take up a position at Camusrory Estate on the West Coast. as estate manager and housekeeper.



The castle lit blue in support of the wonderful NHS and care home staff

Front cover: A swan on the pond in Hercules Garden

News in Brief

Guide dog

Deidre McVean from Guide Dogs for the Blind Association visited the seasonal staff induction day with Atholl a new recruit sponsored by a donation from the castle's charity day.



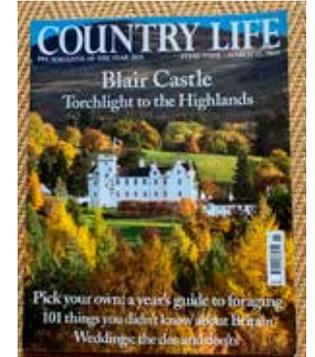
Litter pick

Julia Duncan seen organising the annual 'High Viz' litter pick, gloves and litter pickers also essential.



Country Life

The March 19th edition of Country Life magazine printed two excellent articles about the castle. Mary Miers ran through the history relating it to the architecture and David Jones wrote a fascinating article about the castle's furniture. David has kept a watchful eye on the furniture for many years and Mary has frequently visited the castle, we were extremely fortunate to have such knowledgeable authors.



Inverack Farm

After the passing of Joyce Macdonald of Inverack, in September 2019, discussions have been ongoing with her executors over the future of the holding. The Macdonald's first came to Inverack in 1897, and have been farming there ever since. Well known in the Highland Pony world, they farmed the holding of just over 500 hectares until Joyce's death in 2019. We have agreed that the executors are relinquishing the tenancy, and in the short term, the majority of the land will be offered to existing neighbours on seasonal grazing agreements. Atholl MacDonald seen with one of his ponies and a recent photograph of Joyce.



A man for all Seasons

Robert Troughton interviews Keith Todhunter

In March 1994 Keith Todhunter came to work as Butler and driver for my uncle Iain, the 10th Duke of Atholl (1931 to 1996). As Iain's health declined Keith became his carer and improved the last years of his life immeasurably and for that Iain's family and friends will forever be grateful. Now after 26 years of working on the estate in his many roles he is retiring.

I sat down with Keith to collect some of his thoughts about the various roles he has undertaken, starting with how he was first recruited from the Bute family. "The Dowager had died, Jonny had kept me on for six months and young Lady Bute asked me to help out with a shoot at Mount Stuart, she asked me to pick up the Duke of Atholl from the ferry, well he had a big nose and proud of it and that's how I recognised him and took him to Mount Stuart, then Lady Bute phoned downstairs and said 'have you got your CV?' Noooooo, (the Carlisle accent has not been touched by a quarter of a century in The Highlands) so we got it all sent and the next thing I heard was Andrew Gordon on the phone asking if he could land a helicopter to come and interview me."

So you started off as driver? "I came up as butler/driver and sort of looked after the private wing... but it was only after your uncle Iain said one day 'what will you be planting in your garden next year Keith' that I knew I had been kept on past my probation... He was a very quiet person, but sitting in the pantry he reflects "I always used to think Old Lady Bute was watching over me and now Iain is."

Given how many roles Keith has taken on from maintenance across the lodges, to gardening to more indoor based work I asked him if he had any particular highlights "I've served the Queen, I've met Prince Charles at Dumfries House, you'll remember Princess Anne at the horse trials, there's been quite a few, I can't even think of a low one...98 per cent good days I would have said, I remember when you crashed your van and me and Charlie Bell had to pull you out, but I don't think there's been a bad bad day."

Given Keith's twelve and a half years in the army it was inevitable that he would rise up the ranks of the Atholl Highlanders. He rapidly became the RQMS (Regimental Quarter Master Sergeant) which includes organising all the uniforms and helping the officers get dressed after lunch before the parade, as I need a lot of help in this area I thanked him for his efforts at making me presentable for the Atholl Parade; "it's not just you Robert, lots of officers don't have a clue." And with these wise words we wish Keith and Jackie a very happy and long retirement in Fife, their cheerful presence and can-do attitude will be missed throughout the estate.



24.3.2020.....An Usual Time - some reflections

While Jamie and Sarah found themselves at Ardchattan in March when lock down was announced, Robert was at Blair. He notes, although Blair Castle was the last castle in Great Britain to undergo a siege in the run up to Culloden in 1746, the Corona lockdown in 2020 feels very different, as instead of cannon balls being hurled at the castle, an eerie silence surrounds it.

Like offices around the country, the zoom screen became an integral part of Estate office life. Weekly cash flow meetings had regular appearances from the finance director's toddler either showing off her potty training skills or demanding another viewing of Frozen. A very welcome relief to some hard choices relating to the closure of the castle, caravan park and more generally to furloughing staff.

The severity of the virus across the country was evident to all and everyone on the estate realised that although no one wanted to be furloughed it had to be done. The estate is fortunate in that it has a diversity of businesses from tourism, to forestry, to farming to hydro power and this year more than ever we will be grateful for those diverse income streams. It is going to be really tough but with some big cuts we will survive.



Spring is one of the most beautiful times at Blair and it felt strange for it to be so quiet and empty of visitors. Nature seemed to swoop in and sing louder than ever in one of the driest Aprils on record. A gardener and the farm team continued their work and the estate has rarely looked more like a heavenly picture of pastoral bliss. Let's hope that at least some of what Atholl Estates can offer will be open soon - we will open what we can as and when government guidance lets us.

Julia, the ranger, echoes some similar thoughts, "being a ranger is about connecting people and nature - so what happens when the people cannot visit? It has been sad to see the walkers' car park empty and so few people around. Living on the estate, I am fortunate to be able to continue my daily walks around the paths and trails, and it feels at times humbling to think at that moment I may well be the only walker out. Warblers have returned from Africa and their varied songs seem louder than ever. Wildflowers such as Lesser Celandine, Wood Anemone and Dog Violets bring cheer and colour, and trees begin to burst into leaf. I seldom have a walk where I do not encounter roe deer or red squirrels - perhaps they are less timid with fewer people around or perhaps I am just noticing them more. As the pace of life has slowed I feel I have developed a deeper connection with the landscape and wildlife - a connection I very much look forward to sharing with others once we are again able to do so."

The estate is very sad to have had to cancel our two main events, the Atholl Highlanders' parade and gathering as well as the horse trials. It leaves a big hole in the heart of the estate, as these are two events when everyone has a chance to catch up with each other, as well as with many friends from all over Scotland and further afield. Shutting down our entire tourism business was hard, and we are eternally grateful to the forbearance of our many loyal and new visitors.

Johan from the caravan park observed, "On answering calls at all times everyone asks firstly on the health and well-being of all on the Park and the Estate before asking of their bookings. Residents of North Park and Seasonal Lets that I have spoken with cannot wait until they can return. As far as replies regarding Park closure are concerned, many are hanging on in hope that circumstances with lock-down will lift. I am glad I have been able to work from home and been able to help the Estate through this surreal crisis we are finding ourselves in, and looking forward to being back on the Park as soon as possible."

Sam, who handles all the larger lodge enquiries had a similar story to tell "Whilst keeping the guests and staff safe from Covid 19 was uppermost in my mind, the prospect of cancelling people's hard-earned holidays was not one I relished. To my surprise, without exception, every guest asked after the welfare of us all here and even if they had to cancel they impressed on me how keen they were to visit when the current situation is over, indeed more than half of the bookings have rolled over to next year. Far from the depressing experience I thought it would be, I feel that this situation has allowed us to get to know our lodge guests, both old and new, much better. I hope that this will allow us, as a team, to enhance guests' experience when we are allowed to welcome them once again."



Julian Clarke, head of rural, commented "as I left the Estate Office on the 23rd March, I don't believe any of us thought that we would still be working remotely in Mid-May with no clear end in sight to the current pandemic.

I was perhaps one of the fortunate ones who wasn't furloughed by the estate and was able to work remotely (once I had managed to set up the IT correctly!), but this format of working remotely has thrown up its own challenges. Much of the initial time spent working remotely was spent dealing with staff matters, as part of the rural team are classed as essential workers – so we had some logistical issues to sort. We also had to communicate with all of the tenants on the estate – some hadn't heard of email at the start of the pandemic.

During the initial three week period since the shutdown I spent a lot more time on site, following the guidelines on interaction with other people, it was noticeable how quiet the roads were, and how quiet it was around Blair Castle. In the peak of lambing, it was noticeable how few people we had walking through the lambing fields, so there were some unforeseen benefits.

Early April, involved a lot of unseen lobbying with the Scottish Government and industry bodies to get crucial work undertaken on the estate – using various digital conference call facilities, which have shown how it is possible to work remotely. Once the tasks were approved it was possible to get a small number of the team back to work, which freed up time to start on the IACS farm subsidy forms. The IACS forms are the declaration of all land used by farms to qualify for subsidy, and both Home Farms had been re-mapped recently (mainly as a result of aerial photography) which has resulted in a raft of changes to individual field boundaries. A job that usually takes two days per farm, took over two weeks – but fortunately they have now been submitted to Scottish Government.

May should begin to see a phasing of some other rural teams return to work, concentrating on safety and following the guidelines. It doesn't seem that it was over seven weeks since we moved to working remotely – days seem to merge into each other at the moment, and I am sure we all look forward to getting back to some form of normality, whatever that may be." This only gives a small snapshot of these strange times, more than anything, enormous thanks are due to Andrew, the CEO, and Stuart, the finance director, for their tireless work in keeping everything afloat.



Woodland on Atholl

Today there are more trees on Atholl Estates than there have been for centuries. Since 1990, Atholl Estates have planted 2,500 hectares of native non-commercial species such as Scots pine, rowan, beech, aspen and birch – the equivalent of an additional 4 million trees, taking the total number of trees on the estate up to roughly 15 million.

Woodland has always been a crucial strand in the history of Atholl Estates. Not only are there magnificent specimen trees at Blair Castle – some of the tallest in the kingdom – but the estate has been at the cutting edge of commercial forestry in Britain. In 1740, the 2nd Duke (1690–1764) was responsible for one of the first tree plantations in Scotland, with a crop of European larch for harvest. Forestry gathered pace with the 3rd Duke (1729–1774) and particularly with the 4th Duke (1755–1830), known as “Planter John”, who planted no fewer than 10,000 acres of larch – “for profit and beauty” – between 1774 and 1830, the majority on the Dunkeld Estate.

Planter John used 15 million young larch trees, nearly all of which were raised from seed in his nurseries, and popularised the species across Britain with his 1807 treatise, *Observations on Larch*. He pioneered the use of larch in shipbuilding, and planted it extensively on hill pastures, where sweet grasses could flourish beneath its light shade. (Relics of his schemes can be found at altitudes as high as 1,800 feet.)

His enterprises were the largest of their kind in Scotland, and helped make Perthshire the cradle of Scottish forestry. Such was Planter John’s fame that Robert Burns addressed to him a poem, in the voice of a stream begging for tree cover, entitled *The Humble Petition of Bruar Water to His Grace the Duke of Atholl*. It runs:

“Would then my noble master please
grant my highest wishes,
He’ll shade my banks w’ tow’ring trees
And bonny spreading bushes.”

Planter John did as he asked, and the woodland inspired by Burns can still be seen at Bruar Falls.



In 1884, the 7th Duke (1840–1917), after a trip to Japan, brought home seeds of the Japanese larch, which he raised, and 11 were introduced to Dunkeld the following year. A decade later in those woods, a new form of larch was spotted, quick growing but strange in appearance. It turned out to be a self-pollinating hybrid between the European and Japanese larches, which combined the best of its parents’ qualities, growing well in cramped plantation conditions and tolerating poor soil. In 1904, seedlings of the newly christened Dunkeld Hybrid larch were planted over the Atholl lands, and soon throughout Britain. At their prime, estates with the Dunkeld hybrid larch were capable of yielding 154 cubic feet of timber per acre per year – an exceptional crop for larch. In recent years, much of these historic larch plantations have been infected with *Phytophthora*

ramourum, and are being replaced with a diverse mixture of birch, oak, beech, aspen, willow, rowan, Norway spruce, Douglas fir and sitka spruce.

The First World War brought great change to the wooded landscape. Great areas of woodland were felled to meet the acute demand for timber. It was not until after the Second World War and entry into the Forestry Commission Dedication Scheme that the estate planting approached its former capacity. Working with agencies such as Scottish Natural Heritage, Cairngorms National Park, Scottish Forestry (formally known as the Forestry Commission), SEPA and RSPB, Atholl Estates plans to continue its planting of trees. In 2020 alone, Atholl Estates aims to create a new woodland of 400,000 trees at Struan Point.



The 4th Duke

Great importance is given to the design of woodlands to make them biodiverse, and a good habitat for threatened species, such as the capercaillie and the red squirrel. The woodland tracks are marked by the Atholl Ranger Service in a series of walks for visitors and local residents, linking woodland through farmland, alongside rivers and onto moorland. The Ranger’s Information Centre in Blair Atholl has displays about the area and a centre for children’s activities.

At Blair Castle, you will be able to learn more about our trees and the stories that lie behind them. Some of the finest trees, not only on Atholl Estates but in the country, are in the grounds of the castle in Diana’s Grove, named after the Roman goddess of hunting. Comprising two acres of tranquil woodland, Diana’s Grove (seen below) hosts a nationally important collection of exotic conifers and many champion specimens, including the tallest Japanese larch and red fir in Britain. We hope you can come and visit and enjoy our beautiful woodlands.



Stranded in New Zealand - by Carol Ferguson

David and I set off on our long-awaited dream honeymoon to New Zealand. By week three we had made it to the South Island travelling by our hire car and a tent. We were very aware that the Covid19 crisis was developing Worldwide and then, suddenly without notice, our flights home were cancelled. Airlines were quickly being grounded and countries borders were being shut. It was looking like we were stranded. No flights from Christchurch, and as Level 3 and then Level 4 Lockdown were quickly announced by the NZ Government, meaning no movement in the country at all, we suddenly became in need of somewhere to stay.

We remembered that the Gordon's from Lude had put us in touch with James Murray who had a sheep station a few hours South of Christchurch near Timaru. James had worked for Atholl Estates 20 years ago, initially for the Horse Trials and then latterly he went to Fealar Estate to help with the Hind Cull. We are glad to say that James, his wife Georgie and three children welcomed us generously and enthusiastically and provided us with a small bothy on their farm in which to stay; it was our first experience of social distancing. We had no idea how long we would be there for and they made us very welcome indeed. Eventually after our 14 day isolation we could mix with the family, be in their 'bubble', eat together and David even helped them muster their sheep on the hill on horseback. James' memories of Atholl and Fealar were very precious to him and one night we had a great time reminiscing going through his photo albums. The hills still looking exactly the same and the people looking slightly younger! We were delighted to see a great picture of Willie McLauchlan, who was kindly housesitting at Clachghlas for us whilst we were away. This Atholl connection made everything seem so familiar and less distant from home for us.



A Fine New Walk

Work has been undertaken to create a new circular walking route through the quiet woodlands surrounding the Balvenie Pillar. Volunteers have played a vital part in the work with groups such as Dunkeld School Primary 7's, who volunteered as part of a John Muir conservation award, and the Pitlochry Girl Guides, clearing rhododendron and removing old fencing. The route follows an historic road which leads to the pillar. The pillar was erected in 1755 and



marks the spot of the hangman's knoll and the last hanging in Atholl which took place in 1639. Despite the somewhat grisly history, the site affords excellent views and the woodland is a sanctuary for red squirrels, roe deer, hares and badgers. Thanks go to the Basil Death Trust, whose grant funding enabled the path project to happen and to all those who have volunteered and contributed to the practical conservation work.

Balaloan Home Farm, by Hugh Chamberlain the farm manager

I have been at the estate 18 months now, having moved up from the Scottish Borders and what an interesting time it has been so far! When I joined the Farm Team, 'Brexit' was the big topic in farming, and indeed every industry, and now as I write there is the Covid -19 outbreak to factor into the everyday running of the farm. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the farm team for their professionalism and hard work in managing the risk of spread of the virus during a very busy lambing and calving season. Thank you!

Brexit brought a lot of uncertainty within the agricultural sector by changing how subsidies will be issued and the import/export of products produced. Adapting to this and changing the way we look at farming is key to driving a profitable business.

Improvements to grassland and soil quality is paramount to running a farm profitably. Improving soil PH, increasing soil fertility, varying cultivation techniques and incorporating clover into grass swards all helps to do so.

Being a mixed farm, we rely on the grass to perform all year-round producing grass for sheep, cows and calves as well as silage harvested for winter feed thus showing why we need to look after and manage our grassland sustainably. To be able to fatten the large quantity of lambs we have from grass alone requires quality and longevity of the lays to be good. You can only get out what you put in!

In other news, we have introduced Aberdeen Angus bulls back into the herd, an iconic Scottish breed, to produce high quality store cattle that can be reared on a low input system.

We have also installed a new cattle handling system beside the cattle shed to improve stockman safety, animal welfare and time efficiency whilst we are working closely with the cattle such as weighing, treating and calving.

Calves are now being tagged with electronic tags so we can record and monitor growth rates at key stages to identify performing breeds and individual animals, allowing us to use this data to select breeding females as herd replacements.

We have made some changes to our sheep flock too. We are trying a breed of ram called an Aberfield, crossing it with Scottish blackface ewes at Kinraigie to

produce a breeding mule ewe. We are going to compare to see how they perform as a breed against the Llyen cross blackface which is the current breed we use to produce finished prime lambs. I await, with interest, to review the data for this project.

Growing seasons and breeding cycles are month long periods and as a result changes in agriculture can take time. Farming can be unpredictable, but a lot of work is being done at Home Farm to collect our own data, to be innovative and more efficient to help in our future planning and making the farm the best it can be with the resources available.



It's Good to Talk

Managing your mental health has been a popular topic in the media over the last few years and with good reason. Too long something ignored or hidden, stress, anxiety and depression erodes our emotional resilience and even our physical health if left to fester for too long.

Picking up on this momentum, we decided to theme our annual management training day in December 2019 on mental health with speakers from organisations ahead of us in this area. The day was enlightening, inspiring a unanimous view to develop awareness and support for good mental health within the estate business.

Since then, the management and supervisor groups have worked together to develop policies and guidance which have led to the emergence of a mental health first aid team, a staff assistance programme and a commitment to create a working culture where it's completely normal to speak about how you're feeling. Stress, anxiety and sometimes depression are part of life and work, we can't avoid that, but we can help create a working environment that helps 'smooth the curve' and hasten recovery. We have a long way to go but we are now well on our way to becoming mental health aware on Atholl Estates.

John Milligan 1952 – 2020: Estate Accountant

John joined Atholl estates in 1999, moving with his wife, Myra, and two daughters from the Isle of Bute to live at Golden Grove, Old Blair. Retiring on the 1st March 2019 after exactly 20 years, a precision he claimed that appealed to his accountant's brain. John's arrival heralded a time of significant change.

The task that faced him was significant, with not a computer in the office. Through careful analysis he picked the correct software and the necessary hardware to take the estate into the 21st century. This was achieved in a timely fashion and gradually all estate departments were gathered into his web. He successfully took his accounts' team with him on this adventure. A profile on John's work around the Farmplan accounting package was given centre page coverage in the SLE magazine soon afterwards.

With an amusing and eclectic reading habit and an interest in all things technical from cars to aerospace, a difficult accounts session could always be lightened by a short divergence into these areas of interest. It was very rewarding to see his pride in our hydro electric revolution which concluded in 2015. He introduced a new level of organisation and professionalism in the running of the Atholl Gathering which grew from strength to strength. It is very tragic that John only had 13 months to enjoy his retirement in Perth before he died from a heart attack, our thoughts and sympathy go to Myra and their two daughters.



Forestry Restocks



Early-march signaled the arrival of nearly 300,000 young trees to go into various restock sites on the estate, to replant felled larch infected with *Phytophthora ramorum*. At the time of arrival there was no evident threat from Covid-19. The trees were put into the sawmill yard, ready for planting works to start in mid-march. On the 23rd March, when a complete lock-down was announced there were a significant number of trees in the yard, and no-planters available to plant them. A major issue as they would die if left in the yard, without significant water. Mounding operations and planting ceased on the 23rd March.

As soon as it became apparent that they would be in the yard for a while, a sprinkler system was set up with the assistance of the Works Team, and daily watering started. We were fortunate to be able to lobby with CONFOR (the forestry industry body) that it was a critical time of year for the forestry operations and planters were able to resume work in early April subject to social distancing guidance, so trees started to come out of the yard.

The replanting work has also coincided with an extremely dry period, so we have had to delay planting of some areas until we have had rain. In mid-April we were able to resume mounding operations as well as planting – so at the present time progress is encouraging, with the number of trees in the yard decreasing.

However coupled with the in-ability to get the trees in the ground, with the government's announcement of the complete lockdown on the country, deer control was not able to be carried out on these restocks as it was classed as non-essential. This has resulted in a period in late March / April when no deer control was carried out, which is likely to result in significant beat-up works in the Autumn of 2020. After a lot of virtual meetings / conference calls / industry lobbying it was possible to get deer control re-started in the woodlands in late April.



An update on estate activities

Balachallam Farm: in late March Robert Campbell joined the Balachallan team as Shepherd. Robert joins from a farm in the Ben Lawers area, and will stay at the Milton, replacing Walter who retired. A strange introduction for Robert when he started the country went into lockdown, he is yet to meet many of the team, but as we get out of the situation he will meet more people.

The Tulliemet Pheasant Shoot was closed down in early 2020 and Richard Fraser, the keeper, has been re-assigned to working with Douglas on woodland restock protection.

Barytes, with the announcement of the countrywide shut-down at the end of March, work stopped on the construction of the barytes mine haul road in Logierait Woods. There is no confirmed re-start for construction work in Scotland, but it is hoped that they may be able to continue work in June, pushing the project completion back by at least a couple of months. There is little to report on **the A9**, although both sections that involve the estate have had their public inquiry, its likely to be later in the year that the results of these will be published. On the Bankfoot section of the scheme, all work has stopped since mid-March, and has not re-started yet. This is likely to push the timescale for the whole scheme back significantly.

At the **Blair Atholl sawmill yard** industrial units the horse trials storage moved to the recently re-erected pole shed which was moved from Tigh-n-Coill, allowing the final piece of the yard's development jigsaw to fall into place last November. This move allowed the demolition of the old drying shed which had been their home for 30 years. We were therefore able to design two new units of 2200 sq. ft. to fit onto the old shed position and be submitted for planning permission in April. We had two very interested tenants who, we hope, will have the confidence to commit to occupation when the C19 virus restrictions are lifted. At **Cally Yard, Dunkeld** a 3000 sq. ft. unit started on site earlier in the year, but has been mothballed since the middle of March. We hope to restart soon with a probable 15 weeks to completion from a new abstract start date. We have three tenants waiting to occupy.



Progress at the estate housing by **Blair Atholl Watermill** came to an abrupt halt at the end of March as part of the Covid19 lockdown. The Watermill development main contractor, Osprey Construction had made good progress up to that point, having taken advantage of a relatively dry, snow free winter to get ahead of programme. Assuming the site is allowed to start again during early June, projected completion is now likely to be delayed until the autumn.



Since the end of March, most of the **estate's maintenance team** have been 'on furlough' with a core reactive service for emergencies and administration. Normally the office phone line for reporting property faults is busy from morning to night but since lock down and social distancing measures were introduced, even reports of critical faults have been few and far between, probably due to a reluctance by tenants to have tradesmen in their homes. Given the complexity of undertaking repairs to let housing while complying with strict social distancing, the hiatus in demand has been welcomed but there is an uncomfortable sense that when measures are relaxed, that phone line may become rather more busy than normal.

Xero implementation- the finance team recently upgraded the core financial system for the estate from 3 separate desktop based systems to one cloud based system, Xero. This provides a fantastic, modern, transparent and continually developing platform for us all to build on our financial understanding and performance of the estate. System transition, particularly on such large scale and with complex linked data, is never easy and the team all contributed tremendously to a successful switch to the new system. The challenge, however, only now begins as the training, adapting, learning and development of how we best use the system to help everyone across the estate starts in earnest.

Mid-March saw the usual induction day for all returning and new seasonal staff heading to work at the **castle and caravan park**. Kerry had put together a well-planned day, with a midday break for lunch when all were joined by Jamie and Sarah, Andrew and the senior management team.



The atmosphere was enthusiastic, if a little apprehensive as Covid 19 loomed. However the keenness, intelligence of the questions asked and spirit of the day gave the impression that the season was going to benefit from one of the best teams it had seen for a long time, which makes it all the more sad that so far both sites have had to remain closed. In March Keren put together the final touches to the Jacobite exhibition, a treat in store for visitors when the castle finally opens its doors again.

The Castle and Caravan Park

2020 season is subject to

Government guidelines.

The Park, Gardens and Castle

all hope to open soon,

please see the Website

for latest information:

www.atholl-estates.co.uk

www.blair-castle.co.uk

www.blair-castle.co.uk/caravan-estate/

www.blairhorsetrials.co.uk

Deaths

Bill Forsyth, November 2019, retired sawmillier at Dunkeld and tenant at Tullymully

Helen Hodge, 30th December 2019, mother of Jim Hodge

Mae Forrest, January 6th 2020, retired manageress of gift shop

Jim Kirk, January 2020, 2 Inver Cottage Inver

John Milligan, April 2020, retired estate accountant

Births

To Jules and Sam Onions a son Jack, born 7.30am on the 7th May weighing 8.4lbs.

lanthe, 19th Dec. 2019, a granddaughter for Douglas and June Bell and Kathleen Black.

Newsletter Team & Contributors

Andrew Bruce Wootton

Jamie Troughton

Sarah Troughton

Robert Troughton

Julia Duncan

Sam Ball

Johan Bruce

Julian Clarke

Carol Ferguson

Hugh Chamberlain

Chloe Thornton

Contact Details

Atholl Estates Office, Blair Atholl,

Pitlochry, Perthshire PH18 5TH

Tel: 01796 481355

Email: enquiries@atholl-estates.co.uk

Blair Castle: 01796 481207

Blair Castle Caravan Park: 01796 481263

Lodges: 01796 481355

Ranger Service: 01796 481355

Blair Castle Horse Trials: 01796 481543

Websites

www.atholl-estates.co.uk

www.blairhorsetrials.co.uk

www.blair-castle.co.uk

www.blaircastlecaravanpark.co.uk

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Blair_Castle



blaircastle



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