

News 2013

Spring Newsletter 2013

We have had such a cold start to this Spring, so unlike last year when we were basking in the sunshine. Apart from the snow drops which were spectacular we have very little happening in the garden, no blossom on the trees, the daffodils have still to come out along with the primroses and there is certainly no sign of a tulip. Last April the Spring flowers were stunning and even the Rhododendron and Azalea buds were bursting into life. I think everything will be late and will come all at once.

Along with the very cold snap, we have had blue skies and hardly any rain which is wonderful for walking the hills. The ground under foot is dry and gives the rambler ideal conditions, although it has also meant we've experienced a spate of wild fires in some areas. The local fire services are certainly being worked hard - who'd have thought it, in one of the most notoriously 'lush' (wet!) areas of Scotland!

On the downside the grass isn't growing and the ewes are finding it difficult to produce milk to feed their newly born lambs. Parts of Argyll have seen huge falls of snow and the poor farmers have suffered so many losses. We have been so lucky with the weather although I do wish we had experienced a nice snow fall during the winter months. There is nothing quite like walking with MacDuff on the virgin snow and hearing the crunch underfoot.

Murphy our latest addition to Roineabhal (a five month old chocolate Burmese) is keeping us all entertained. He is up to so many tricks. Yesterday saw him climb out of an upstairs Velux and get stuck on the roof. An adventure he will, I think, not be so quick to repeat...his heart was racing when he was finally rescued!

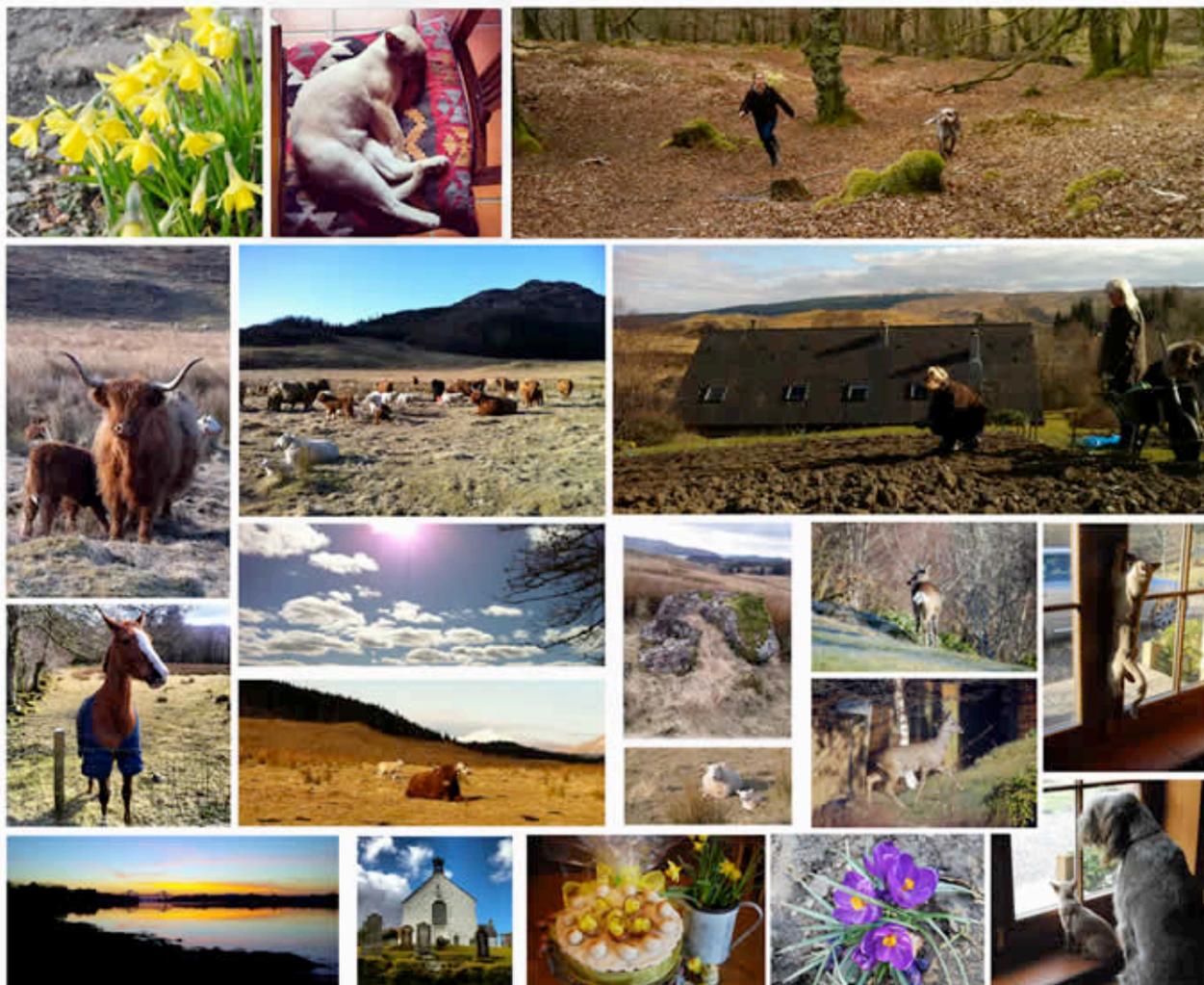
In March we had the Scottish Opera perform Verdi's La Traviata. It was exceptional, an amazing modern production which worked so well in our modest Corran Halls in Oban. We do manage to appreciate a little culture from time to time. Just the other week we also managed to take mum along to a poetry evening which also proved highly entertaining for all.

Kim joined us for Easter weekend but is now back in London along with Ben. They are still sharing a town house at Kew Bridge. Kim is due to visit Paris and afterwards visit Jenny in Stockholm. Ben has just got back from the States after touring the east coast with a Scottish band and spending time at South by South West.

Jenny plans to fly home from Stockholm for a week and a half in May, combining her visit with some live illustration work in Glasgow. Sweden seems to be working out well for her. She'll soon be starting a residency as 'Artist in Residence' at a prestigious music and arts venue in Stockholm, while still managing time to attend Swedish classes. I'm sure we'll get a taste of the latest when she's here.

My new Workawayers, Christina from Spain and Dorina from Germany have been great at helping me organise myself for the rest of the season, cleaning cupboards and planting the early crops. We have planted several rows of onions and have planned to dig the furrows ready for the potatoes this afternoon.

Managed to take a rundown Glen Lonan with Nana while Kim was still with us to photograph the new born lambs and calves. The local nature has been stoic in rolling forward despite the coolness in the air, and we've had some real treats with deer in the garden (driving Murphy a little bit nuts!) and Oban even had a resident Sperm Whale for a week. That was exciting, but we're all glad it found its way out of the bay again. Here's to the warmth and colour of a fashionably late Spring!



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Summer Newsletter 2013

Summer has rolled around once more and after the long cold spring, this warm summer season has brought the most abundant and vibrant coloured blooms on almost everything. My pink Hawthorn, all the rhododendrons, azaleas and even the bluebells have been the showiest I have ever seen.

Cristina from Spain and Dorina from Germany were here at Roineabhal since April and left me by June. What a wonderful help they were and so much fun. They were here to improve their English and that they both certainly succeeded in doing. Playing scrabble with Nana too helped them with their vocabulary, and Dorina in particular became a fast contender! I now have Mirta from Italy and Marta from Catalonia helping out. They have been quick at learning the routine and like nearly all my students great with MacDuff and Murphy. Birta who helped me last summer is returning with her family for a visit too this summer, which will be lovely. (As you can imagine, I'm sure there are going to be some name mixups!)

Before Dorina left Scotland we managed to visit the much improved Dunollie House together with Nana. Apart from the ruined castle, the small museum has been extended housing more of the MacDougall collection, while in the grounds you can find the newly constructed willow garden designed by Grune Kathedralen. Outside the house there is also the addition of The Kettle supplying lovely home baking and refreshments. The team at Dunollie have certainly worked hard on this project and were rewarded with a visit from the Princess Royal on June 27th, albeit with umbrellas in tow. (You can see some of our pictures of this great little visitor centre on a beautiful summers day!)

Apart from the Highland Gathering held annually each August, there are Highland Games happening all over the local area including the Lorne Oban Games held at Moss Park this past Sunday 23rd June. Put the dates in your diary for next year for a try out at caber tossing or welly wanging 😊 In a couple of weeks we're looking forward to a village wedding here in Kilchrenan, where the bride who's from here has expertly arranged it so that all her guests can enjoy the next day (working off their hangovers) at the nearby Taynuilt Highland Games which should be a great cultural treat!

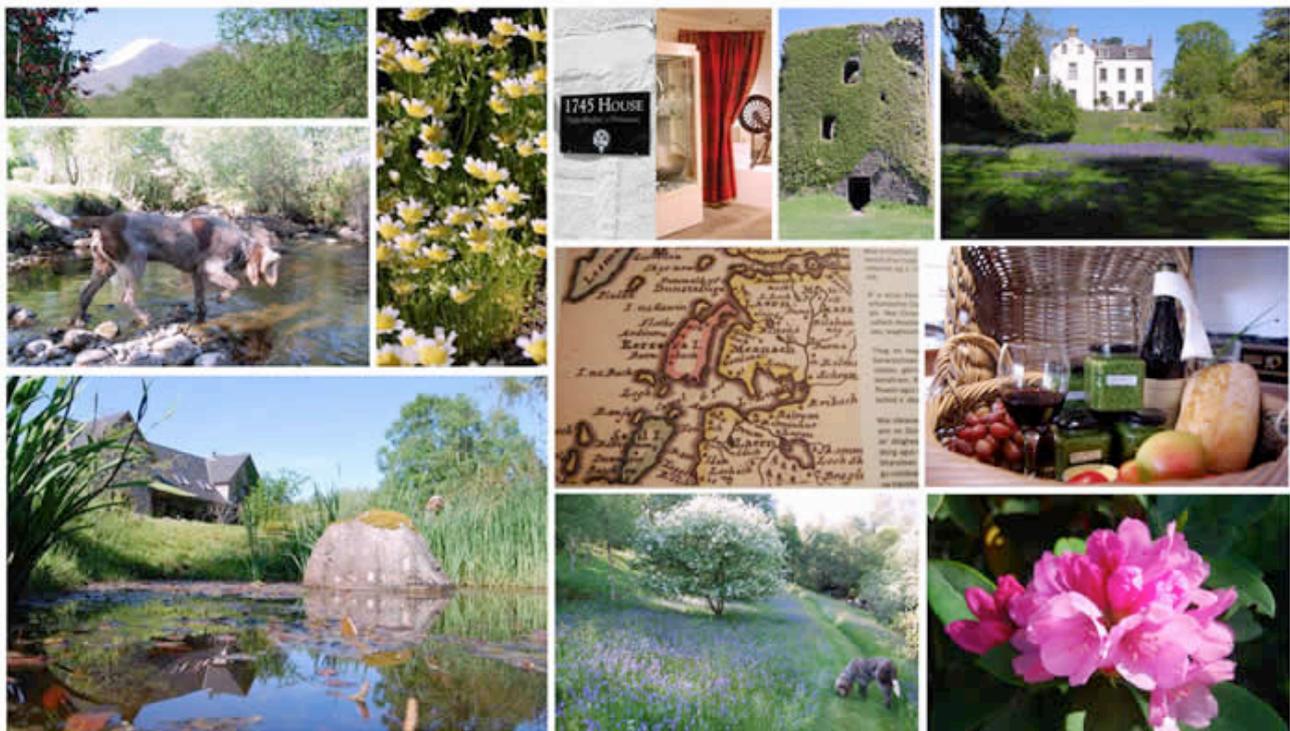
Murphy our new Burmese kitten has grown into such a handsome chap and is loved by everyone. He and MacDuff are the best of friends now and get up to all sorts of mischief together.

The children are all fine. Kim continues to manage the Lemongrove Gallery in London. Jenny was last home in May and has a residency in Glasgow at the end of July. She has been asked back for the 4th year to illustrate at The Polar Music Prize in Stockholm, and is currently in talks with some TV people on creating some sort of small animated film featuring her drawing. Ben is still based in London and still managing Washington Irving who seem to be doing so well now. They have been personally asked to back Runrig's Inverness gig in August and will also be backing Capercaillie in July along with Skerryvore next month.

Roger continues with his fitness work out each week which is improving his squash game, and I am managing to keep up my yoga once a week.

We have had a successful start to the season and the bookings are coming in every day for the rest of the summer. I do hope that the warm and sunny days will continue and apart from our visitors we manage to produce lots of home grown fruit and veggies this year. I managed to make some jars of wild garlic pesto recently along with 10 jars of rhubarb and ginger jam. The wild garlic was picked locally and the rhubarb came from a kind neighbours garden. Recipe for the pesto is on the blog.

All the best, from all at Roineabhal



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Autumn Newsletter 2013

What a turbulent, traumatic and busy autumn we have had at Roineabhal this year.

September saw us harvesting the onions, carrots and the potatoes which we had left in the garden. What a fantastic crop we had this year. Jenny wasn't at home unfortunately to plait the former but Roger managed to step in and do a great job.

The wild mushrooms have been in abundance too, so walking MacDuff has always included setting off with knife and basket in tow.

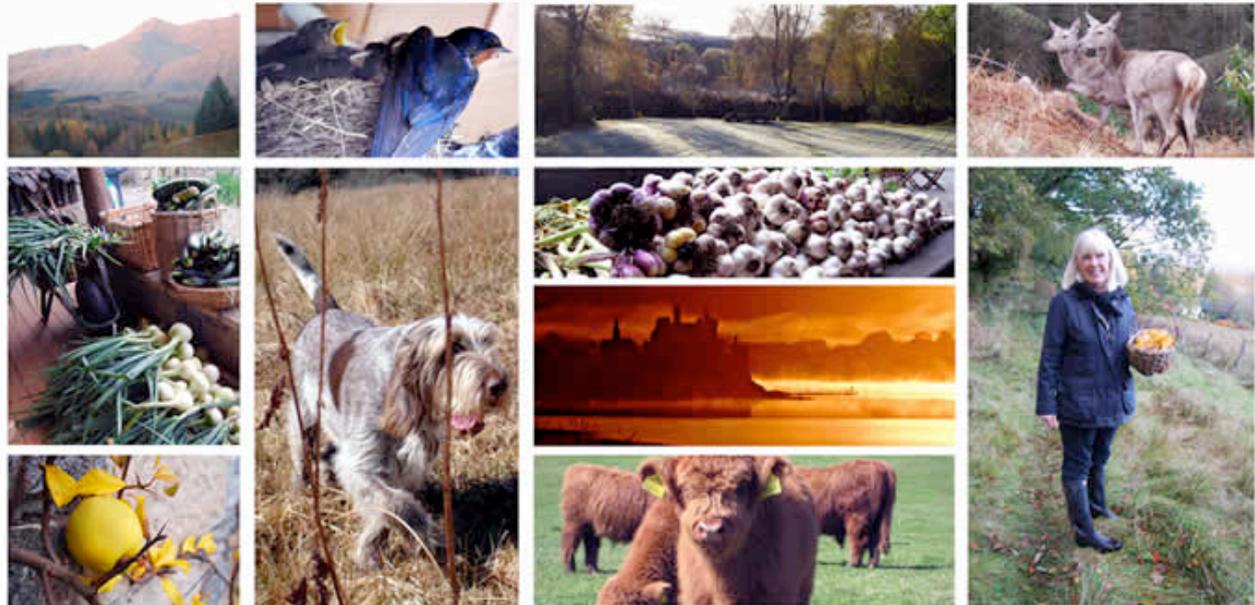
At the beginning of October I lost my sister to Cancer. It has been a hard few weeks but life continues. Kenlynn and Mike, my Workawayers from the U.S. managed to take care of Roineabhal and look after our house guests. They were a Godsend and took a lot of the stress away from what was a very traumatic time for us all.

Friends from far and wide have been visiting. This week we had old French friends from my Pyrenean times, and we managed to cram in so much in three days - visiting Glencoe, Oban and Kilmartin. We also fitted in a great bit of culture

one evening at Fasanta (the festival of Textile and Fashion). Hosted by Dunollie Museum and centred around the launch of the historic Heritage MacDougall Tartan, it took place at the Corran halls on Sunday evening along with dancers, weavers, spinners, singers and musicians. For anyone's first visit to Scotland it was a great taster. If you want to find out more about what went on, as well as the exciting story behind the discovery of the 200 year old tartan, then check out the website

<http://www.dunollie.org/>

We are now almost into November and Roineabhal is quieting down for winter. I now have the rest of the year to prepare for Christmas and perhaps get a spot of decorating in.



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Christmas Newsletter 2013

Writing a quick update to you all before Christmas Day descends!

The children will be with us over Christmas and New Year and there is talk of them throwing a party at some point. We are allowed to invite some friends.

Those of you who caught up with us in Autumn will already know that my sister died in early October. She had been fighting bone cancer for a long time and was incredibly stoic throughout – it's a relief to know that she is no longer in pain.

Jenny was home for much of October and Kim has been using home as a base, while she sets up her new business as an Arts Consultant. She is moving back to London in January. Ben is still working hard in the Music business but still manages to get home at least 4 times a year. Exciting things are beginning to happen for Jenny. She has a solo exhibition running till January in Stockholm and also illustrated an animated life story of Stig Anderson (the founder of Abba) at this year's Polar Music Prize. www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyp1j19u8bU. To top it off, she has just been included in the top 5 women of the year by TYCI www.tyqi.org.uk.

This spring, we became the proud owners of a new Burmese kitten called Murphy. He is great company for all of us especially MacDuff who missed the companionship of Conan.

We have on the whole had a good season. It was a little quieter in June and September but July and August made up for it when things never seemed to let up. Thank you to all of you that returned to see us in 2013!

A huge thank you to all my 'workawayers'! Without them I don't know if I'd be able to maintain the same standards. We learn so much from each and every one of our students and lots of fun has been had this year.

Roger and I haven't managed a holiday yet but have promised ourselves a few days away in the spring.

Mum celebrated her 93rd birthday last July and is still pretty independent. I travelled down to Harrogate with her at the end of November where she went to see Andreas Boccelli in Leeds. I managed some Christmas shopping at the same time.

My Christmas cake is being fed with brandy on a regular basis and I have achieved some Cranberry infused vinegar. I

have still lots of other projects pending which I hope to have ready for the festivities.

Wishing everyone a happy time with your families and loved ones.
Maria, Roger and Clan.



