

Atholl
Estates
Newsletter

Winter 2009/10



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Welcome

Summer seemed to come and go very quickly this year. Culminating in the horse trials, the team, ably assisted by their farm colleagues, over came very challenging conditions. It makes a good read on page 11.

We are now well into the winter; at the castle the focus is on maintenance, guided by a comprehensive plan we had written with the aid of Ralph Ogg & Partners and grant funded by Historic Scotland. The castle also commissioned a tourism review with the help of Scottish Enterprise. It was conducted by Rob Robinson of Heritage Consulting and made various suggestions that will be considered over the winter months.

A wide variety of things have gone on during the last six months, I hope this issue gives you a snap shot of the broad range of activities, the staff changes and achievements, developments and events on the estate. As we go to press we received news of the arrival of our daughter Jane and Alex's second child, Hope Violet Bonsor. We all wish you well for the forth coming festive season.

Sarah Troughton

Winter Developments in the Gardens



Some of the more sharp eyed of our visitors may have noticed that the castle grounds have some fine drifts of snowdrops, many of them in rather inaccessible places. Over the early part of the winter Jim Hodge is going to create two new paths that will give everyone a much better opportunity to admire Hercules Wilderness at its best in winter.

Another development within the gardens is building on the collection of carved stones.

In 2008 the castle charity day was in aid of The Memorial Arts Charity and through this organization we have an exciting chance to house some of the Art & Memory Collection, which was shown this summer at West Dean in Sussex. Subsequently it has been divided and sent to various venues throughout Britain, including Canterbury Cathedral and Grimsthorpe. Blair was chosen as the home in Scotland, where many of the artists work.

Eight pieces will be placed in the gardens over the winter months, with a small explanatory display in the Apple House. It is hoped that the experience of seeing these works may encourage others to commission memorial or commemorative works, which can be done through the related organization Memorials by Artists.



New Wildlife Hides on Atholl Estates



We are delighted to announce the creation of two new wildlife hides constructed by soldiers of the 23rd Engineer Regiment (Air Assault) during a light training exercise based in Blair Atholl.

When not building, the soldiers enjoyed some well earned time off using estate woods and tracks as their base. Once the hides were completed, the soldiers departed for a tour of duty in Afghanistan.

One hide has been carefully positioned at the edge of the Whim plantation, primarily to view the castle grounds, surrounding landscape and roe deer. The second hide is sited in the tree margin at the start of the Glen Tilt track allowing

visitors to view roe deer, red squirrels and other wildlife from a dry and sheltered location.

The estate ranger service will be making full use of these new structures in 2010 incorporating them into the busy timetable of events and school visits based around the varied wildlife on Atholl Estates. They will also be a stopping point on some of our Land Rover tours.

Front Gate Fright



Hopefully bad luck doesn't run in threes as the Blair Castle front gates have now been hit twice in relatively quick succession.

In fact, repairs to the first impact damage still had not started when they got hit again, the more recent one happening during the horse trials clear up this August.

Works manager, Angus MacDonald was more than a little concerned when he inspected the gates after getting a tip off that they had received

a knock. Stopping by a few minutes before the castle opened for coaches, he realised that the whole structure had been pushed forward and the heavy, wrought iron lintel was balancing on the edge of the pillar head.

In typical style, the works team thought on their feet and by mid afternoon, with the help of farm staff and various other volunteers, the masonry had been re-compacted and temporarily held in place by a gigantic belt.

However, the damage is severe and virtually the whole structure needs to be dismantled and rebuilt. We have scheduled this project to start in January 2010 and it will probably last about 10 weeks.

Pure Skill

Blair Castle was delighted to welcome back a team of 6 pupils from Pitlochry High School in September as part of their on-going SQA Rural Skills Course. The pupils joined veteran gardeners Brian Thomson and Jim Hodge in the castle grounds and helped with a range of seasonal tasks including tree pruning, hedge-cutting and maintenance of the landscaped areas.



The skills acquired will contribute to the students' achievement of the Soft Landscaping element on the Rural Skills course. Atholl Estates is a formal partner with the school in delivery of the Intermediate 1 certificated course. The young people, now in S4, have also worked alongside the Ranger Service on path maintenance and fencing repair.

This is the pupils' second year with the gardening team at Blair Castle and the visits have proved a great success in teaching them more about the range of skills required to manage an extensive historic landscape and garden..

Long and Faithful Service

During his annual visit to Blair the Duke always finds time to visit Sophie (Tottie) McLeod. Sophie, now in her nineties, and a resident of Balhousie Care Home in Pitlochry enjoys telling His Grace about life on Atholl during the last century and before, as both her father and grandfather were stalkers on the estate. She is seen here presenting him with a salver that had been given to her father, Alexander Mcleod in 1951 for " long and faithful service on Atholl Estates 1907 - 1951".



Woodland Lodges



The Woodland Lodges were opened in July and have performed very well so far, with 91% occupancy recorded over the first three months. Future bookings are also very strong.

New Arrivals

Birgit Blyth has taken over from Christine McNicoll as Works / Rural Administrator. She was born in Duisburg, Germany and in 1985 married her husband, Calum. They have lived in various places in the UK and overseas due to Calum's career with the Armed Forces during which time Birgit worked in different departments within the military such as Education, Regimental Headquarters and Works Services. In 2003 they moved to Kinloch Rannoch where Birgit worked with a timeshare company in their finance section before joining us in July.



Colette Black joins the Blair Castle team as Functions Manager. Her previous career has included account management for an incentive travel and conference company in South Africa and prior to joining us, she held the position of Corporate Events & Sales Executive and later Operations Manager at Dundas Castle, where she has been contracting for the past six months since immigrating back to Scotland. Colette spent the formative years of her career in business travel here in Scotland, and in student travel in South Africa.

Website Launch

Following a lot of hard work behind the scenes, the new Atholl Estates website was launched in early November.

The site has a fresh appearance and is full of eye-catching photography showcasing the breadth and variety of what Atholl Estates has to offer. There have also been significant changes to the organisation of the site with the various Estate Tourism businesses organised into "Visit Atholl Estates" and "Stay on Atholl Estates" categories. It is hoped that these changes will make the site easier for visitors to navigate and offer an opportunity to plan their personal itineraries before they travel.

Customer feedback is also an important part of the new site. There are many online opportunities for customers to comment on their experience of Atholl Estates whether they have stayed in a new Woodland Lodge or gone on a pony trek. It is hoped that the comments we receive will direct future developments and activities on the estate and help us ensure we achieve the very best customer satisfaction possible.

The new website has also been heavily optimised, a marketing term which essentially means that it will appear in the top 10 of all the major search engines eg. Google, Yahoo etc when certain key phrases are entered. These 50 key phrases range from "Weddings in Scottish Castles" to "salmon fishing in Scotland", a reflection of the rich variety of activity on Atholl Estates.

You are warmly invited to take a look at the site in progress on www.atholl-estates.co.uk and let us know what you think.

An Important Day in Edinburgh for the Atholl Highlanders

Saturday 25th July 2009, in the year of “Homecoming Scotland.”



The above photograph shows the contingent of Atholl Highlanders proudly stepping off from the Forecourt of the Palace of Holyroodhouse at 7.40 pm on the bright sunny evening of Saturday 25 July, at the head of literally thousands of clan members who had gathered in Edinburgh, from all over the world. Big crowds, if they are on your side and in good humour, create an inspiring and exciting atmosphere and it was exhilarating for the regiment to lead this great ‘army’ of Scots all the way up the Royal Mile to Edinburgh Castle, with only just enough clear space for marching in the middle of the road, between the dense and enthusiastic crowds on either side (20,000 was the *Scotland on Sunday* estimate). The Pipers and Drummers had never played better, the Highlanders had never marched more smartly and the two ensigns carrying the Colours marched to attention all the way, elbows held high, forearms horizontal, without once changing arms.

Earlier in the day the contingent of Atholl Highlanders had the undoubted honour and privilege to welcome their Royal



Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Rothesay into the main arena, with a "Royal Salute Present Arms", Colours lowered and the salute played by our own Pipe Major, alone, from the ranks of the massed bands. After the speeches a second Royal Salute was accorded and a lip reader avows that he noticed the Prince ribbing the Duke of Argyll because he hasn't "got a smart private army like that!"

Between the morning and evening events the members of the Atholl Highlander contingent enjoyed a visit to the Royal Yacht *Britannia* in Leith Harbour, in uniform, with the Pipes and Drums giving a short display on the quayside, before the tour of the ship.



Ensigns with the Regimental Colour (left) and Queen's Colour (Right)

Sir Blair Stewart-Wilson, Lieutenant Colonel Commanding

50 Years at Clunes

2009 marks the Barnett family's 50 years since first taking Clunes. Willie McGregor was the keeper in 1959, followed by Philip Cairney and then Sandy and Colin Reid for 35 years between them. Ronnie Hepburn has now been at Clunes for 10 years and has continued the fine tradition of combining being an expert in his job with a great sense of humour. In our first year we shot



The late Cedric Barnett and son, David

230 brace of Grouse and 25 stags were killed. Last year the ratio was 70 brace of Grouse to 70 stags, with records in between of 650 brace (1968) and 100 stags (1995). We still love walking up grouse, although we did have some days' driving in the 70's. The real sporting magic is to have the chance of shooting, stalking and fishing, where we have not been that successful, in these stunning surroundings. We even used to have 3 sets of tennis after a day on the hill, and play bridge after dinner. We rely heavily on Liz Reid to help in the lodge and she forms a great partnership with our cook from Australia. Over the years we have seen changes which include electricity instead of the original generator, carpeting and central heating throughout, and the "new" A9 instead of the old road solid with traffic in front of the lodge. The relationship with the Estate was started by my parents with the Duke and Angela and Bobby and we look forward to continuing into the future with Sarah and Jamie at this special place.

David Barnett

News from the Castle

New Faces

Head of Visitor Services, Scott McCauley, took over the management of the castle in July following the retirement of Peter Jarvis at the end of June.

The castle management team has experienced wide change this year with the appointment of a new Duty Manager, Helen Webb, in April and, following the departure of Lyndsey Dolliver in August, a new functions manager, Colette Black, joined the team in November.

This means we approach the future with a new castle management team, combining an excellent blend of experience and resourcefulness to meet the challenges the economy and the tourism market will surely provide.

As always the castle teams have taken the changes in their stride, continuing to provide excellent service and experiences for our many and varied customers.

Castle Business Plan

Over the past few months, Blair Castle has been undergoing a business review to help chart the way forward for the castle for the next 10 years.

The review looked in detail at all aspects of the castle and gardens operation and although the strong message was that we already do many things very well, the consultant came up with a number of recommendations and areas for improvement. We have just started the process of prioritising the recommendations and will be working with the castle teams over the winter to implement an action plan.

The report has highlighted ways in which we can improve our visitors' experiences, from arriving at the castle, to their journey through the history of the castle and the family members who have lived here. We will also consider how to develop the profile of the gardens and an expansion of smaller scale events to support the castle's daily opening.

The castle review comes at a critical time during the recession and its effect on the tourism and corporate functions sectors. The report provides a definitive road map for developing our business and enables clear understanding between the new castle management and our castle staff, inviting a full team effort to make it a reality.

Star Service

Building on their special team effort award from last year, Leigh Crichton and Robin Ozog from Prestige Scotland have won the Sodexo award for service excellence in catering. This award covers all the different Sodexo companies in Scotland and it comprises both the daytime restaurant and the evening functions at Blair Castle. They are now nominated for the national award which will be decided at Sodexo's award ceremony in November. This has been a great year for both; Leigh having received a 100% satisfaction report from a mystery guest visit during the season and for Robin having fantastic testimonials for the weddings over the summer.

Winter Magic



The Festive Season starts at Blair Castle on 3 November with the annual Christmas dressing of the castle. There will be decorated trees in the entrance hall, Banvie Hall and the Ballroom as well as the historic decoration of the State Dining Room set for a Victorian Festive Banquet. New, this year, is a Christmas Elf theme which will run throughout the castle and visitors are invited to explore the castle through the story of the 7th Duke's family preparing for Christmas.

On Friday 20 November, the RAMSA Car Rally roars into Blair Castle. The castle will act as a service park where visitors can soak up the atmosphere in the final round of the prestigious Intercontinental Rally Challenge.

As Christmas draws nearer a festive Choral & Carol concert will be held on Sunday the 13 December at 6.30pm featuring the voices of Pitlochry District Choral Society and Logierait and Pitlochry Primary Schools in Blair Castle's magnificent ballroom.

As the festive lights go out, the New Year brings the seasonal delight of snowdrops in bloom. Blair Castle will be participating in the annual Snowdrop Festival which commences on the 1 February and runs until the 14 March 2010. A special route around the castle grounds includes access to two new paths (only open to the public during snowdrop time). The outdoor flowers will be complimented by the indoor bowls of scented daffodils, hyacinths and tulips filling the castle's entrance hall, Banvie Hall and restaurant.

In February, the Blair Castle will stage two performances as part of Pitlochry Festival Theatre's annual Winter Words Festival. Please visit www.blair-castle.co.uk/events for updates.

On Saturdays in March, the castle ballroom will be available for the enjoyment of Twinings fine teas, coffees, cakes, soup, sandwiches and light lunches between 9.30am and 2pm. Also open on Mothering Sunday (14 March) Blair Castle offers the perfect opportunity to pamper your mother in the style she deserves.

Visitors will also be able to get out and experience the landscape on Atholl Estates on one of our weekly 2.5 hour Land Rover tours which run on Saturdays throughout the winter. Tours pick up and drop off at Blair Castle and will include a stop off for hot refreshments at a bothy or out on the hill.



Blair Castle and grounds are open through the winter every Tuesday and Saturday, from 3 November 2009 to 23 March 2010, 9.30am to 2.30pm.

In the Hot Seat at Home Farm



Balanloan Home Farm has been a Monitor Farm since March 2007. The Monitor Farms project was set up by Quality Meat Scotland to highlight all the aspects that go into producing high quality beef and lamb efficiently and profitably. Balanloan was brought in to focus specifically on organic livestock production. The project brings together a group of like minded farmers from similar holdings and is chaired by a professional facilitator with input from consultants.

The process and meeting format is very much a soul bearing exercise and the Monitor Farm Group leave no stone unturned when they look into the reasons behind our management decisions. They were refreshingly frank in their assessment of the physical and economic impacts of those decisions and are never shy of giving their own recommendations.

Fortunately we are generally good at what we do and after a little initial trepidation the Home Farm team took a very positive approach to the exercise. Each of the team had their moment in the hot seat at Monitor Farm meetings. Although there were varying opinions on how enjoyable the experience was, there was agreement that it was useful to have your opinions challenged and a number of changes have been made to the farm operations as a result.

More importantly the farmers who attended and contributed to the meetings will hopefully also have benefited from the opportunity to participate in the discussions; get the first-hand opinion of experts in the field and witness the outcome of the new practices adopted at Home Farm.

Home Fire Safety Visits

The Estate is collaborating with Tayside Fire and Rescue in their launch of a new, free survey and advice service.

On a national level, domestic fires account for over 500 deaths and 14,000 injuries every year. Many of these could be prevented if people had early warning and were able to get out of their home in time.

Under the Tayside initiative, home visits would be carried out by a retained fire-fighter, normally from the local station, who will assess any hazards that they might find. During the visit, they will give advice on how to make homes safer, what to do in the event of a fire and what to do if trapped by a fire. They will also check smoke detector provision and fit extra ones if required with advice on how to maintain them.

On a rolling programme over the winter 2009 and spring 2010, all residential tenants and staff in tied houses on the estate will be contacted by Tayside Fire and Rescue personnel with the offer of a visit.

The scheme is optional, entirely free of charge and we wholeheartedly recommend that everyone takes up the opportunity of a safety visit.

Olympians Flock to Blair Castle International Horse Trials

The August event boasted record numbers of competitors in the International classes and all the big names were here. No less than 5 Olympic medallists competed, a fantastic turnout of the world's best equestrians. We take a look at the achievements of this remarkable group.



William Fox-Pitt on Cool Mountain

British flair rose to the top in the most prestigious class, the CCI***, with William Fox-Pitt taking the title on Cool Mountain. William made a long journey from Dorset worthwhile, also taking second place in the CCI**. A regular member of British teams, William has a team Olympic silver medal to his name from the Athens Olympics in 2004 and a bronze from Beijing last year. Add to this an impressive six team gold medals at European Championships, plus 8 wins at CCI**** level, the highest level of international competition, and it is easy to see why William is currently ranked number 1 in the world.

Andrew Hoy and Andrew Nicholson are often to be found battling each other for top honours on the eventing circuit but at Blair they shared the spoils, winning one CCI* section each. Australian Hoy won three consecutive Olympic team gold medals between 1992 and 2000, and took the individual silver in Sydney as well. He was based in England for many years, but recently moved to Germany. A four week trip back to the UK culminated in a win here at Blair

with Cheeky Calimbo, a young horse Andrew describes as "a star talent, it was a wonderful win".

Nicholson has made six Olympic team appearances for his native New Zealand, winning team silver in 1992 and team bronze in 1996. A determined competitor renowned for his cross country riding, his win at Blair came with Qwanza, a mare that is just 6 years old and definitely "one to watch" for London 2012!

Holder of three Olympic gold medals, Australia's Matt Ryan is based in South Wales. The 1992 individual Olympic champion took 7th in the new CIC*** international class. The CIC, a shorter version of the standard CCI classes, is less intense and acts as a qualifier for the full length versions to give horses a smoother rise through the ranks. This class was won by Britain's Nicola Wilson on Opposition Buzz – one month later, the pair made their Senior team debut at the European Championships, helping the team to gold!

The fifth Olympian competing at Blair was the legendary Kiwi Mark Todd. Winner of back to back individual gold medals in Los Angeles in 1984 and Seoul in 1988, "Toddy" has ridden at 6 Olympics. His 6th appearance came at Beijing last year, Toddy having come out of retirement after 8 years at the start of the 2008 season. Now determined to carry on to London 2012, his Blair ride NZB Grass Valley could well be the horse to take him there.

Not content with this haul of Olympic greats, Blair actually boasted two more – the "Flying Scot" Ian Stark, in his role as TV commentator, and judge Gill Rolton, who helped the Australian team to gold in Atlanta. Work has already started for the 2010 event, and the Horse Trials team are looking forward to a winter spent reviewing and updating plans to create a fresh, vibrant event!

Stalkers Breakfast



If only all stalkers' breakfasts were as substantial as that prepared by chef Tom Lewis of Monachyle Mhor Hotel to mark the launch of Scotland's Eat Venison Day at Atholl Estates on 4 September.

The launch was coupled with the creation of a new website (www.scottish-venison.info) and is part of an ongoing 3 year initiative by the Scottish Venison Working Group to promote venison as a healthy, nutritious and accessible food.

All venison produced on the estate meets the standards set by the Scottish Quality Wild Venison scheme. Although most of the production goes direct to Highland Game, improvements to the Kennels deer larder will see venison becoming available locally this year.

Stephen Gibbs Chair of the Venison Working Group and chef, Tom Lewis under the envious gaze of Ben Philips, Forest Lodge ghillie.

Burning Issues in the Forestry Dept

The old adage that you get double the heat from firewood – once when you cut it and again when you burn it, is set to be disproved by the Forestry Department.

With the purchase of a firewood processing machine this year they hope to add value to timber grown on the estate; make a local contribution to the drive for renewable energy and meet a growing market demand.

There are many blocks of predominantly hardwood trees that are too small to be viable for intensive mechanical harvesting but nevertheless require thinning and periodic felling for landscape and habitat management.

The demand for firewood and logs has increased significantly over the past few winters as oil, gas and coal prices have risen and more people realise the benefits of efficient wood burning stoves as a secondary heat source.

Hardwood logs are suitable for open fires as they tend not to spark. Softwood is a cheaper option but only recommended for enclosed stoves

A choice of either seasoned hardwood or softwood logs in convenient ¼ cubic metre tote bags (around the size of a large wheelie bin) will be available for local delivery. Alternatively larger quantities may be collected from the Blair Atholl Sawmill yard. Orders can be made to the Estate Office or by email to enquiries@atholl-estates.co.uk



Alasdair Cameron & Sean Marsh

The Game Department's Young Scholar



The game department has always prided itself on helping to train future gamekeepers and stalkers by providing college and work experience placements for student 'keepers.

One such young keeper is Andrew Buchan who is in his second placement year at Dalnamein and studying for his HNC in Gamekeeping and Wildlife Management at Thurso college.

Andrew is to be congratulated for coming runner up in the Scottish Gamekeepers' Association Young Gamekeeper of the Year Competition. This is a particularly noteworthy achievement considering that the competition is open to graduate keepers and those already in full time employment.

Andrew is pictured on the left with another home-reared success. Clover is an Atholl-bred pony trained by Vicki Bogan and Hamish Cruickshank starting her first full season as a working hill pony on the Dalnamein beat.

Trekking News

This season has been a busy one for the ponies, with July being our busiest ever month. We had visitors from all around the world, even a bell ringing group from Charlotte, USA and a marriage proposal on horseback!

The trekking team introduced some new ponies; Clover, Chim and Clova who all proved to be a big hit with regulars and new visitors to the centre. On a more subdued note we gave early retirement to Maydew this year and she

will be having some foals in the future who will hopefully carry on her fantastic nature.

Early on in the season we were very proud to be awarded a 3 star Visit Scotland Activity Centre Grading which we will be able to proudly display on our new website. Also, on our homepage, trekkers are able to join Blair Castle Trekking Centre Facebook page. Visitors can post any pictures and any comments or questions they might like to ask.

Highlander Golf

The annual golf competition between the Atholl and Lonach Highlanders took place in Braemar on the 21 June. As always it was played in great spirit with the Atholl Highlanders coming out the winners!

The team (from left to right) were Gordon Learmonth, Rory Crearar, Ronnie Hepburn, Jock Crichton, Graham Jack and Kevin Simpson.



Maintaining a Castle

Being custodians of a historic building as significant as Blair Castle means taking maintenance very seriously. Work has to be carried out in a professional and timely manner. The estate does have an advantage over public bodies and large national charities in that we have a short and decisive chain of command but we still have to ensure that a proper schedule of preventative maintenance is in place and that damage or defects are identified quickly along with a prompt repair service.

Understanding the importance of this, the Historic Houses Association for Scotland, of which our head trustee Sarah Troughton was chairman until recently, worked with Historic Scotland on a new grant which supports the preparation of professional long term maintenance plans. Seizing this opportunity we immediately commissioned Ralph Ogg and Partners of Perth, quantity surveyors, to prepare a comprehensive maintenance plan for Blair Castle which was completed and introduced this spring.



Andrew Jackson repairing a forecourt service duct cover

The plan prepared survey schedules which are repeated monthly, the results of which prioritise identified defects which feed into our estate work programme. It also provides a schedule of longer term maintenance work to encourage the ethos of prevention rather than cure. The theory was daunting both in the workload of monthly inspections and the obvious amount of work they would generate, at least initially.

So starting this May, members of our estate works team combined with the castle caretakers to carry out the cycle of systematic checks and inspections outlined in the plan and to our initial surprise, over 50 previously unidentified separate orders fed down to our works programme for action. Different elements of the building are inspected by relevant staff: outside roof, walls and windows, inside roof, attics, basements, fire hydrants, security lights for the main castle, staff flats and the south end.

How does the practice compare with the aspiration? Just observing the building more intensively brings a better understanding. One achievement is having a set of castle plans easily accessible so everyone knows they are referring to the same bit of roof! Another big improvement is the better communication between castle staff and the estate maintenance team which in the past has tended to rely on some rather ad hoc arrangements.

The process still has some way to go. Monthly surveys need to be completed more tightly and clearer, faster communication about what identified work will be addressed and when is important. However a strong commitment has been made to the initiative and significant benefits are already apparent. We seem well on the way to better achieving our ambition of delivering the level of care Blair Castle deserves.

Three Farewells

Three significant retirements coincided last July with Peter Jarvis, Christine McNicoll and Alan McNicoll. To celebrate and recognise this collective commitment to the estate, a combined leaving party was held at the castle's Banvie Hall on 30 July which turned out to be a perfect summer evening.

The phrase "man and boy" can legitimately be applied to Alan McNicoll's employment with our forestry department. He worked for the estate as a schoolboy on holidays from his father's farm at Meadows of Tulliemet cutting bracken at Killiechangie. His adult employment began in 1967 and ran until 1973. He left for a short period, returning in 1974 and working through until his retirement in 2009.



Alan McNicoll

In his early days he worked with horses to extract timber and subsequently witnessed forestry operations moving with the times, finally doing the same work with a 125 horse power Valmet tractor / forwarder. He initially worked in the nursery and sawmill squads at Dunkeld before moving to become foreman of the combined estate squad in 1992. We will sorely miss his knowledge of the estate woodlands and his particular competence with machinery.



Christine McNicoll and Sarah Troughton

Christine, Alan's other half, joined the estate in 1976 as forestry clerk in the Dunkeld office with woods manager, Jimmy Hendry (JB) when we ran our main woodland operations from Cally Sawmill. At that time the estate employed over 45 foresters who operated a busy sawmill, produced our own young trees from two nurseries and harvested much of our own timber. From 1977 Christine worked with JB's successor, Chris Langton and then in 1992, following market forced dramatic downscaling in the forestry department, moved her desk to the estate office in Blair Atholl. When Chris retired in 1999, Christine worked for Andrew Barbour, woods manager and then adapted to further change in 2005 when her support role was split between forestry and property maintenance with David Greer and Angus MacDonald as her final managers.

Fortunately Alan and Christine aren't far away at Inver and their knowledge of Atholl will most likely be called upon in the future.



Peter Jarvis and Sarah Troughton

Peter Jarvis joined us in 2002 as castle manager, previously holding the same post at Thirlestane. His quiet, methodical and considered approach to management enabled day visitor trade and private functions, the fundamental pillars of our business at the castle, to consolidate and develop. Peter retires knowing that he leaves behind a highly competent and confident team, fit for today's challenges. Peter's appreciation of all that the castle represents and his considerable curatorial knowledge were greatly appreciated.

Forthcoming Events

Land Rover Hill Tours

Saturdays 31 October to 27 March 2010

Rally of Scotland, Blair Castle

20 November 2009

Choral and Carol Concert, Blair Castle

13 December 2009

Snowdrop Festival, Blair Castle

Selected dates 1 February to 14 March 2010

Winter Words, literary series, Blair Castle

February 2010, dates to be confirmed

Refreshments in Blair Castle Ballroom

Saturday 6, 13, 20 March and Mothering

Sunday 14 March

Blair Castle summer season starts

Sunday 28 March 2010

Atholl Highlanders Parade

Saturday 29 May 2010

Atholl Gathering

Sunday 30 May 2010

Staff News

Births

Grace McGregor, granddaughter of Julie and Ewan McGregor, born 23 December 2008.

Robert Douglas Grant, son of Jeannie and Kevin Grant born on 21 May 2009.

Chloe Thomson, grand daughter of Susan and Brian Thomson, born on 26 July 2009.

Catriona Fernie, granddaughter of Claire and George Scott born on 22 August 2009.

Marriages

Amanda and Scott Davies married on 25 July 2009, daughter of Liz and Ronnie Hepburn.

Deaths

We were very sorry to hear about the deaths of:

Molly Munro who passed away on 27 May 2009. Wife of Maj A J Munro, retired Assistant Factor and Castle Administrator.

Dyte Mitchell who passed away on 14 July 2009. Retired forester.

Elizabeth Brand who passed away on 2 September 2009. Widow of retired forester Bill Brand.

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Websites

www.atholl-estates.co.uk

www.blair-castle.co.uk

www.blaircastlecaravanpark.co.uk

www.athollestaterangerservice.co.uk

www.athollestateslodges.co.uk

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www.blaircastletrekking.co.uk

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