

COMMUNITY NEWS

SPRING 2024

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



At Mount Stuart Trust we're often asked what we do and who we are so here's a quick overview!

Mount Stuart is a registered charitable trust managed by a board of independent trustees, working to facilitate public interest, understanding and appreciation of the arts, architecture and the rural environment. We manage and maintain a series of assets across Bute, including Mount Stuart House and gardens, 36 farms, 100 residential properties, a Sawmill, 1447 hectares acres of woodland and fishing and gaming leases.

Our objectives are rooted in creating prosperity for the Isle of Bute as a whole; the charity owns 87% of the island, however only 16% of this is directly managed by us, the remainder represents partnerships with individuals and businesses helping our rural community to continue to grow and thrive.

In the next issue we'll share the Trust's updated Strategic Aims.

ISLAND BASED TRUSTEES JOIN THE TRUST

Following the retirement of Peter Timms from the board of trustees of Mount Stuart Trust, applications were welcomed at the start of the year for an island based trustee to join the board. The response was very positive with a varied profile of applicants from which two were selected to bring their experience and skill base to Mount Stuart.

John Dickson

John has a long-standing relationship with the Mount Stuart Trust as a tenant farmer, now retired. John was Bute's representative on the Argyll Regional Board of the NFUS for many years and in 2016 was elected chairman. John serves on the board of the Scottish Tenant Farmers Association and was previously President of Bute Agricultural Society.



Julie Christie

Julie brings significant experience of supporting Scottish charities, receiving the Institute of Fundraising's Scottish Excellence Award for her contributions to fundraising in Scotland. She developed a keen interest in the natural environment from an early age and now works as the Scotland Coordinator for the Environmental Funders Network to grow the amount of funding for environmental causes across Scotland.



The Mount Sturt Trust is managed by a board of 11 trustees, with over 50% appointed as experts in the arts, rural land management, finance, farming, and the local community.

FUTURE NEWS

If you have any feedback on the newsletter or anything you would like to see included, please reach out to us at contactus@mountstuart.com

KERRYCROY BUS TURNING SPACE

Our full open season begins on May 1 after a busy Easter when the sun shone of the daffodils.

Our friends at West Coast Motors have asked us to remind visitors that their service buses - and soon the Open Top bus - need full access at the Kerrycroy road junction to be able to safely pull out to head in both directions. Please don't park in the marked area as this driver had done.



MOUNT STUART WILDLIFE

On Bute, we have a wealth of wildlife, and it's hugely important we work together to protect it. While going about our work and leisure activities, we encourage everyone to ensure their behaviour doesn't prevent the animals that call Bute home from living according to their choosing.

Here are two examples of animals doing just that – a red squirrel ascending a huge lime tree and a young buzzard enjoying the morning sunshine, both within Mount Stuart's policies.



ORGANIC SHEEP FARMING

The land at New Farm, just above Mount Stuart House, is progressing through the two-year registration process to become organic. The Mount Stuart flock lives there, and we are confident this new approach will give new arrivals like this one a healthy start in life.



NEWS

BOOK CLEANING PROJECT

Our Librarian, Elizabeth, has headed up a book cleaning project since 2022 in the Red Library at Mount Stuart, welcoming a group of book enthusiasts for preventative conservation sessions with the rare books of the Bute Collection. The sessions aim to keep the books in good physical condition, minimising potential future deterioration or loss, and the meetings have allowed volunteers to meet other islanders, use newly learned skills, and, for some develop their language skills.

The group is relaunching in May 2024, and we'd be delighted to welcome new volunteers to join our community of bibliophiles. If interested please email elizabeth@mountstuart.com for more information.



COMMUNITY PROJECTS

As part of our Community Engagement discussion opportunities we were introduced to an ambitious project to install a water wheel at Colintraive.

The water wheel would replicate a previous installation and in addition to being a visual feature would also provide the village hall with hydroelectricity. Engineering drawings and a project plan had been developed by the team in Colintraive and the location of the wheel would be beneath Mount Stuart's existing hydro scheme at Colintraive.

Fate intervened, and a suitably sized redundant waterwheel was found at Mid Ascog farm. Here, it is being lifted ahead of its move for restoration work. We're all looking forward to the next steps in this project, which will benefit the community of Colintraive.

Our Community Engagement discussion opportunities are monthly – please contact fiona@mountstuart.com if you'd like to make an appointment.



Next Community Discussion Session 8th May!

TRAMWAY DITCH CLEARING



Our Countryside Ranger Mark recently worked on clearing the ditch alongside the Tramway, adjacent to East Colmac, to help reduce flooding into fields and the roadway alongside. Below are the before and after images. During this spring's wet weather we've seen more flooding of rural ground than usual.



POTATO PLANTING

You know it's spring when the seed potatoes are planted!

Our Gardens team has ploughed and planted an area of the Kitchen Garden using the traditional method of tractor and plough – here we have Sarah and Garden volunteer Jimmy working to hopefully produce lots of potatoes for sale at our stall in upcoming Bute Yard markets.



REPLANTING JUBILEE GARDEN AT ETTRICK BAY

In March, Mount Stuart's Countryside Ranger and Woodland team assisted the Bute Conservation Trust in the replanting of trees at their Jubilee Garden

The team replaced trees which hadn't survived the unusually dry spring following their November 2022 planting. The use of hardier species is hoped to help their longevity in this exposed location.



ROTHESAY PRIMARY CAREERS DAY

As part of our Grow a Gardener initiative, our gardener Jude supported the recent Careers Day at Rothesay Primary, explaining what her job involves and why she chose horticulture as her career.

Jude joined Mount Stuart in 2021 on a two-year horticultural apprenticeship through Argyll College. After that, she joined the team on a permanent basis, with a key focus on the restoration of Calvary Walk, its replanting, and its ponds.

Will one of these students become a future keen gardener?



RURAL OPERATIONS DIRECTOR

Harry Bowman has left Mount Stuart after four years in the role of Rural Operations Director.

During that time Harry successfully filled several MLDT leases, transferred milk memberships and oversaw the project of voluntary land registration. Before he left Bute Harry completed his 100th Parkrun at Mount Stuart. He and his family have moved to Derbyshire with all our good wishes.

News of Harry's successor will be communicated shortly.



L-R - Chris Pescod, Head of Buildings & Facilities, Harry Bowman, Former Head of Rural Operations & Kerr Dickson, Gardener

WELCOME TO OUR NEW SEASONAL STAFF

This year we've welcomed returning seasonal staff and some new faces to join us in providing the best visitor experience at Mount Stuart.

From Easter to October 20 we're employing 17 visitor guides, 6 visitor welcome assistants and 8 in the catering team; some are old hands and some are stepping into their first jobs during the school breaks and weekends. All are great ambassadors for Mount Stuart – come and say hello

