



Progress 2019

Unlike last year this year seems to have breezed-by; busy, but not as manic as the previous few years have been. Business has been much more consistent rather than that gold rush feel we experienced during the peak periods of 2017 & '18. To me it certainly feels like it has been a lot easier to manage. That of course, may just be down to having such a great team in place and long may that continue to be the case.

Our amazing core team, with long standing members such as Gary, Chris, Gedes has steadily grown with committed new members such as Casey, Valentin, Bogdan, Emma-Fleur & Lara, to name but a few. With so many competent staff and good hosts around I have experienced a rather unfamiliar feeling from time to time this year; that I am surplus to requirements! I have had to get into the habit of taking days off, leaving the team to run service and motivate myself to do paperwork instead of being so hands on; none of which comes naturally to me. We managed a ten day family holiday to Tenerife in April which was fantastic; I even played nine holes of golf first time for many years! We were greeted at the airport in Tenerife by a wonderful couple, Lidia and Pedro who ran our housekeeping department for almost two years before returning home to Tenerife in December 2018. We still miss them dearly.

March 2019 saw us complete the refurbishing of the last two rooms. We stripped the walls back to the stonework (I say we; it was the local builder, Daryl Fraser Lee's crew, my D.I.Y skills are limited to hanging paintings) raised the ceilings back to their original height, revealed then removed a neglected chimney breast (that we did not know was there) relocated one of the bedroom doors, then rebuilt, rewired and re-plumbed, installed two new shower rooms and voila two newly refurbished bedrooms are ready to let; simple as that! Well at least that's my recollection nine months later. I have conveniently forgotten the shock of receiving the final invoice from the builder; I thought it was only governments that went over budget that much! I am still waiting for the bill from the plumber; he is as tardy with his invoices as he is at turning up! Although, to be fair, he's always here in an emergency....! Ah; it reminds me why I am happy being an hotelier and not a general contractor.

I am pleased to say that our family (including the dogs) are all fit and well. We now have three dogs, which I can't help but feel is a little eccentric, not to mention challenging at times. Bella gave birth to two pups on 1<sup>st</sup> May which involved an emergency mid-night C-section; not something we had planned for and rather more expensive than this Scot felt comfortable with, but being the most photographed dog in Ross-shire she's worth it! We kept one pup and gave the other one away locally; some of you will have met Molly our new pup already. She is a wee cracker and enjoys our daily runs with Alfie and Bella.

Aurora continues to enjoy living in Edinburgh and is doing well at college. Liah passed her driving test earlier this year and is now trying to claim our car as her own, studies make-up and hair in Inverness College, has been getting an occasional modelling photo shoots, and works here; when she can fit us in around her busy social life! It is lovely to see them happy, healthy and more independent each day.

So here is to 2020; a leap year; the Chinese year of the rat; they say it brings much prosperity, its Scotland's year of coasts and waters; the year the Tories take us out of Europe and America has a presidential election. If you are looking for a few days to get away from it all and bask in the relaxing atmosphere that is Coul House then give us a call; we will be there for you when you need us most.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sam & Susannah". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Proud owners