



## LORNA AHLQUIST

### **An Inspiration To All.**

Lorna Ahlquist's world turned upside down last March after a riding accident in Toward, near Dunoon, left her facing life as a paraplegic, but the 69-year-old artist is most definitely not resting on her laurels.

Incredibly Lorna, who has just spent five months in hospital, is planning on showing off her ceramic creations as part of the open studios weekend (Sept 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>) organised by the Cowal Open Studios network.

Adjusting to her new reality has, as you'd expect, been far from easy for Lorna but her feisty, 'can do' attitude is helping to pull her through the testing times and provide inspiration for friends and family alike.

"I still cannot believe that I'll be like this for the rest of my life," explained Lorna who was born in Washington state in the US to a Scottish mother and American father. She moved to Cowal at the age of 13, attending Dunoon Grammar School and embracing Scottish life with her trademark zest.

She continued “I was extremely lucky to be fit and very active when the accident happened as that has allowed me to adapt a wee bit better than most and every day I’m discovering new things that I can do.

“I’m slowly getting used to life in a wheelchair and have enough upper body strength to do wheelies and flicks. This helped when I wheeled a mile to the pub recently with my wheelchair skills trainer!

“I will have to adapt to a new way of making pottery but I’m working on it. I was also learning the fiddle prior the fall and that is something I’ll have to figure out how to continue.

“I have good friendships with other Cowal Open Studios artists like ceramicists Pauline Beautyman and Michaela Goan. they started me off into pottery around a decade ago. So many COS artists have helped me to take part in this year’s open studios weekend!

“Whilst in hospital I got the chance to paint and work with different textiles through the programs put on by the wonderful Horatio’s Gardens. I’ll be showing off my recent artworks and creations as part of the open studios weekend in my Innellan studio, supported by my husband Neil.

Memories of that fateful day back in the Spring when her pony bolted are hazy: “I recall falling but have no recollection of being taken by helicopter to Queen Elizabeth University Hospital Spinal Unit. I just recall waking up in a hospital bed surrounded by tubes.

“You hope something will change but gradually, over time, you learn to accept your situation and adapt. The nurses and consultants, as well as the amazing people from Spinal Injuries Scotland, Back Up and Wheelpower charities have helped me immensely both physically and psychologically.

“I want to help people try to regain as much normality as I can and opening up my studio to the public is a vital first step in that process,” concluded Lorna.

Lorna’s gutsy spirit really is an inspiration to all and you get the feeling that it won’t be long before she’s throwing down the clay once again to create her truly special pottery.