

STRATHARD NEWS

Serving the communities of
Aberfoyle, Kinlochard, Stronachlachar & Inversnaid

ISSUE 69

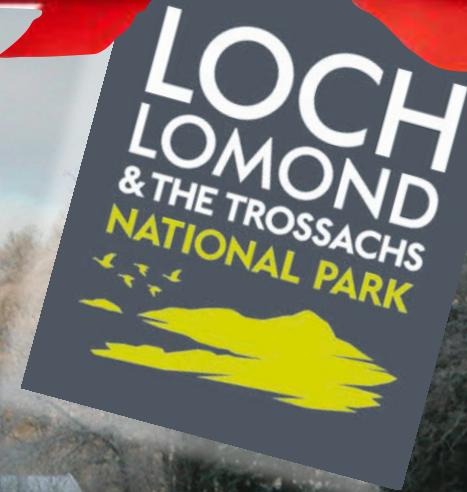
XMAS

2011

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Christmas Services

Christmas Eve:

7 pm Port of Menteith Village Hall
Service of Carols and Readings

23.30pm Midnight Service
St Mary's Aberfoyle

Christmas Day Service:

10.30am Christmas Day Service
Aberfoyle Parish Church

11.15am Christmas Family Service
St Mary's Aberfoyle

Christmas Fayre

Aberfoyle Memorial Hall
Sat 3rd December 1 - 3 pm

Unwrap a National Park pressie this Christmas!

Fill up your Christmas stockings with some very special souvenirs from our online shop. Our official National Park calendar 2012 is now available to buy for £6.99 + P&P.

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www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/eshop.html

Merry Christmas!



It's been another jam packed year for us all across the Park, with exciting projects being delivered in each community, many of which we have been delighted to have been involved in. There have been great strides made in managing our many visitors to the area, working on conservation initiatives across the Park and in encouraging rural development. This year I made a determined effort to get out and about in the Park to hear your views and meet with various community and interest groups.

We welcomed record numbers of visitors to the Park this summer and our ranger patrols spanned longer hours into the evening and across the weekends making sure they were available at key locations across the Park. This year, I was excited to welcome 25 volunteer rangers who have been a great complement to our teams. The feedback from everyone was very positive and I'm pleased to say we have recruited more volunteer rangers to join us next summer. I took the opportunity to join our rangers on a couple of outings and patrolled some of our most popular loch shores. Each year thousands of people enjoy the spectacular scenery Loch Lomond and The Trossachs has to offer but as we all know, this interest also brings its own challenges.

These challenges had been particularly evident in East Loch Lomond, so as you may know, we introduced the East Loch Lomond camping byelaws in June, alongside a number of other visitor management solutions for the area. I am extremely pleased to report that the success of this joint work with the community and other partners has been very apparent and now this beautiful place has transformed back into a family friendly visitor destination.

However, this is just one area of the Park and we are well aware there are other similar visitor hot spots which need focus and attention. Our Draft Park Plan, which was out for consultation between August and November, highlights our intentions in other areas across the Park. For example, we intend to introduce a '5 Lochs Management Plan' that will look at visitor management solutions to not only combat antisocial behaviour but also improve the visitor experience to this stunning part of the Trossachs. Having witnessed firsthand some of the behaviour our communities and our rangers come across, I can assure you that my team are determined to address ongoing issues and work with landowners and partners to make sure this is a National Park that everyone can enjoy.



Conservation underpins all that we do. It is why we love being in this scenic natural wonderland. This year we have funded projects that help our wading birds by improving landscapes, worked with farmers to get extra money for black grouse conservation and our rangers continue to support red squirrel work and help with our volunteers at a number of wildlife sites. Glimpsing a red squirrel through the trees is a simple yet beautiful reminder of the wonderful place we work in and I'm very privileged to play a part in looking after it.

Thriving towns and villages in the Park is very important to us all. We help support and encourage sustainable local businesses in a number of ways, one of which is our online Business in the Park toolkit which was launched in April and designed to provide information on the National Park, stunning photos, a series of top 10 things to see and do, downloadable maps, events and weather forecasts. We have 170 businesses now signed up.

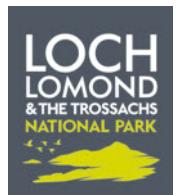
One of the things most people ask me about is affordable housing. "Can our young people afford to live in the Park? Is there the right mix of housing for local needs?" This is major issue within our communities and one which we're keen to address so we funded a Rural Housing Enabler initiative earlier this year to look at developing smaller-scale affordable housing solutions.

We continue to support the good work of the National Park Community Partnership. The group is now a membership organisation providing a range of services to communities including training workshops and networking. They also run a number of Park-wide projects such as the National Park Apprentice Scheme for small businesses in construction and Community Futures Goes Green for communities tackling energy efficiency in homes and community buildings.

Approving the recent planning application for a goldmine in Tyndrum was a great example of what the National Park planning service can achieve. The local community were passionate about the project and we are working with ScotGold to get the mine up and running next year. Making sure we have development in the right locations across the Park is essential whilst still protecting the landscape and character of the National Park. It has also been my pleasure to have welcomed our new Convener, Linda McKay, who comes to us with a wealth of experience and enthusiasm for this wonderful place.

All the best for a very happy and prosperous 2012.
Fiona

Fiona Logan, Chief Executive



A Thank You

There is no doubt we are all currently living in a period of uncertainty. Still, there are comforting constants to be found: The Strathard News, for example. A vital link with the communities, the Committee spends an inordinate amount of their personal time in producing the newsletter throughout each year for the greater benefit.

I am sure you will all agree the quality has come on by leaps and bounds of late, which is down in no small part to increased sponsorship and advertising levels. This ongoing commitment from the local traders is essential to ensure its existence. This also applies to the multitude that reach into their pockets to put a few coins into the donation boxes on a regular basis. For all these contributions, we cannot thank you enough.

On a personal level, the many kind comments towards the Rangers Ramblings column over the season have only served to extend my sense of loyalty to the cause.

Finally, I am sure I speak for the rest of the group in wishing all our readers an extremely pleasurable and rewarding festive period, and we look forward to your continued support in 2012.

David

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www.benviewgardencentre.co.uk

Free expert gardening advice

I have just noticed that in my piece for the last issue of the Strathard News I wrote "*I sit here typing this, with the rain and wind beating against the window*". Well, I clearly don't need to be typing that again, because the wind and rain are still there at the window! It's hard to know what to wish for. Some would rather have snow than all this rain, other would rather have anything than last years big freeze, while optimists like me would rather like it *mild and dry*. Please.

One thing is for sure, we'll take the weather we get and although fear of poor weather conditions may have deterred a lot of couples from planning their weddings at this time of year, it didn't deter all. Congratulations to Gordon Steel and fiancée Christine Catto from Huntly, who were married at Forest Hills Hotel in November.

Again I find myself writing of bereavement and know that many people locally will have known Margaret Rose, lately of Manse Road. Margaret was born and raised her family in this area, working well past retirement, always with a ready smile at the Aberfoyle Butcher shop, alongside her daughter Annette. She will be sadly missed and we, at the Registration Office, would like to join with so many others in offering our condolences to her family and friends upon their loss.

On a happier note, I can report that there have been three new babies registered in our area, since I last wrote. First of all October brought a baby daughter Abigail Meredith Warrington to Aberfoyle parents Lynn and Brian. Just over a week later, Kinlochard parents Rachel and Simon Miller welcomed first the birth of their daughter Harriet Cameron Miller to be followed just fifty-three minutes later by her twin brother Gregory Keir Miller. Now ten babies registered this year, that nursery class of the future is steadily growing, but in the here and now, welcome to all three new babies, and congratulations to their families.

All that remains, this year, is for me to wish everyone in the area a Merry Christmas and to say I do hope you have a lovely time however you choose to spend the holiday season. The office is open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9 am until 12 noon throughout December and January, with the exceptions of Monday 26th December and Monday 2nd January when it will be closed. Appointments can be made by telephone 01877 382 986, by email regaberfoyle@stirling.gov.uk, or by dropping in to the office during opening hours and John and I will look forward to helping you in any way that we can.

Sharon Johnston Registrar



Stirling Council's
Aberfoyle Local Office



Central Scotland Police
Together for safer communities

Anyone with information can contact Central Scotland Police on 01786 456000 or information can be given anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555111

PACT Priorities October - December 2011

- Speeding and Indiscriminate parking in Aberfoyle.
- Targetting travelling Criminals.
- Targetting the dealers.

Stolen Car, Aberfoyle

16th November 2011

A car was stolen from a driveway on Lochard Road, Aberfoyle, on Saturday 12 November between 1400 and 1535. The car stolen was a green, 'V' registration Toyota Corolla. It is suspected that the car has been dragged onto a low loader type vehicle and driven away from the village. With such a small time window, during daylight on a Saturday afternoon, it is likely that this may have been witnessed by someone.

Anyone with any information regarding the theft of this car should contact the police locally at Aberfoyle or Callander, or anonymously via Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111

hours of darkness outnumber the hours of daylight. We should give consideration to what measures we can take ourselves to help protect our property during this period, such as motion sensitive security lights.

Seasonal travelling criminals traditionally target metals, heating oil and uninhabited properties. As a community, we should make an effort to keep watch over our properties and civic amenities to detect and deter those wishing injure our interests.

As always, any suspicious activity should be reported to the police.

Is your vehicle ready for winter?

4th October 2011

It is a good idea to make preparations for the harsher weather in advance. Particularly as we all belong to a rural area, it is most important that we ensure our vehicles are in a good, roadworthy condition, capable of dealing with slippery road conditions.

Tyres – Have a good inspection of all the tyres (including the spare tyre) making sure there are no signs of wear and tear. Ensure there is a good amount of tread depth on each tyre. The legal minimum tread depth remains 1.6mm, but the more tread on the tyre, the better it will cope with adverse conditions. Be mindful of what roads are gritted around you and give consideration to snow tyres or snow chains.

Lights – Have a good inspection on all the lights around the vehicle to make sure they are all operational. If you have no one to assist, use a wall or a garage door to check your rear lights are all working.

Food & Drink – Many of you will remember the news reports from last year when a plethora of motorists became stranded on the M8 motorway for up to twenty hours. It is a good idea to keep small items of food and drink in the car to keep you going for any occasion you might get stuck.

Clothing – It is essential to carry additional warm, dry clothing in the car in case you get stuck. Waterproof clothing is also advisable. Perhaps give consideration to carrying a sleeping bag for occasions where extra warmth may be required. High visibility or reflective clothing should be carried for safety during the winter.

Equipment – There are two basic pieces of equipment to carry in the car over the winter months. A torch is essential should you come into difficulty in the dark. A shovel is essential should you need to dig your way out. But the best way to ensure safety during extreme weather is the same as it is every year: If a journey doesn't need to be made, don't make it.



Liam can be contacted via Aberfoyle or Callander Police Offices. Tel. 01877 330222
You can also follow Central Scotland Police on Twitter and Facebook.
Emergency Calls only dial 999

Letters to the Editor

Post to Editor, Schoolhouse, Inversnaid FK8 3TU.
Or email editor@strathardnews.com or hand in to Aberfoyle Post Office

Dear Editor,
Scotland's worst road

If there were a booby prize for the worst road in Scotland it would surely go to the B829 Aberfoyle to Inversnaid road (particularly the three-mile stretch ending at the Stronachlachar junction).

The road is in its worst state in living memory. It is so bad, the surrounding Forestry Commission roads look like pristine highways in comparison. It's not the surface that makes this single-track road so treacherous to drive on – it's the deep ruts either side of it.

The ruts, up to two feet deep and more than a metre wide in some places, have been caused by heavy plant operating in the area.

I walked the three-mile stretch from Stronachlachar junction to French Farm on October 21 to take photographs of the rapidly deteriorating road. They clearly show the scars left by tractors, low-loaders and other heavy plant and the poorly maintained passing places. The road is starting to break up in some places as the ruts get worse.

It is now incredibly difficult for vehicles to pull in along this stretch of road (particularly the one-mile stretch bordering Lock Arklet) to allow oncoming vehicles to pass. Motorists risk going off road (and plunging into deep, water-filled trenches) every time they drive along here. You only have to read the visitor books in holiday cottages in this area to understand the fear felt by many holidaymakers travelling along the B829.

While we have to put up with an increasingly inadequate road (the only route to our home in Stronachlachar), enormous sums are being spent on new pathways in this area.

We are now in the ridiculous position that people wishing to use those paths may not be able to do so – because the B829 is in such a parlous state.

With winter almost upon us, the ruts will disappear under blankets of snow, posing new hazards for motorists.

A few miles away (between Altskeith and Aberfoyle) work is being carried out on resurfacing the B829. That is good news – but the problems here are far worse. Our road is a disgrace and I hope you agree that doing nothing is not an option.

I have started a campaign to get the road repaired. This involves setting up a Facebook page called Scotland's Worst Road and including some of the pictures I have taken. The link to this page is: <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100001642757103#!/pages/Scotlands-worst-road/311191382229443>

I have written to Stirling's roads manager, the local MSP, local MP and Scotland's Transport Minister in the hope that something can be done as a matter of urgency.

Hopefully your readers can get behind the campaign by logging their support on the Facebook page and also by writing to those mentioned above.

Paul Roberts
Stronachlachar
FK8 3TY

ARDSTOVE
Open Fire & Stove Installers
Chimney Sweeping

David Monaghan
01877 387 205
mob. 07732 266231
e-mail: dmonaghan998@btinternet.com

HETAS APPROVED

Anne McGuire MP

A Christmas Message



As we come to the end of another year, no doubt many of us will be hoping that the economic weather will not get any worse. However, perhaps that would be wishful thinking on our part. The faltering economy has taken its toll on many and, as a consequence, the outlook for struggling families and small businesses is bleak. Indeed, recent figures from the

House of Commons showed that the Stirling constituency had the highest increase in youth unemployment in the UK, with youth unemployment figures rising by over 200% in the past 18 months.

We cannot afford for the next generation of young people to feel that they have been abandoned; neither can we be complacent that we have endured the worst. It is a responsibility that governments cannot shirk from taking on board.

However, I am sure that the Christmas and the New Year will bring great joy to many, visiting friends and family and taking heart from the comfort that they bring. There is nothing more delightful than seeing the excitement on a child's face once Santa has been, even when they open even the smallest gift on Christmas morning!

I hope that we will all enjoy the break from our usual routine and take time to remember those who are less fortunate than ourselves and also those at home and abroad who give up their Christmas and New Year so that we may enjoy ours safely and securely.

I wish all readers of the Strathard News a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

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reception@ForthInn.com

Check us out on
facebook.

600 others have!

Merry Christmas from all the Staff at
The Forth Inn.... have a good one,
thank you for your support this year



Festive evening Menu

6th - 24th December 2011

Starters

(v) Cullen Skink
in Scottish Soup with Smoked Haddock and Potatoes £4.50
(v) Baked Field Mushroom filled with Goats Cheese
and served with Cranberry Chutney £4.50

Smoked and Poached
With

Duck
Served with Onion

Chestnut
With

Roasted
Served with

Baked Fillet
Wrapped in

Local Fillet Steak
On

Group Christmas Lunch Menu 2011

6th - 24th December 2011

ay served with Crusty Bread
ed Salmon Salad

Cranberry Chutney Salad
uts and Mushrooms
t with Ciabatta

all the Trimmings

ed Salmon
ly Butter

onion Stuffing
Gravy

Festive Lunch Menu

6th - 24th December 2011

Soup of the Day
Served with Crusty Bread £3.25

Smoked Salmon Salad
With Potato Salad £5.25

Game Terrine
and Cranberry Chutney Salad £4.75

(v) Sauteed Chestnuts and Mushrooms
in a Herb Sauce with Ciabatta

Roasted Brie/Goat's Cheese
With Almond Cracker

THE
FORTH
INN
ABERFOYLE

Mashed Goats Cheese Tartlet with
Mushroom Risotto and Roast Duck

Christmas Pudding with Brandy Sauce £4.50
Mixed Berry Cheesecake

Santa
Please
INN
STOP
ABERFOYLE
Here
we look forward to seeing you..

CHRISTMAS FAIRE 3RD DECEMBER 1-3PM ABERFOYLE MEMORIAL HALL

Festive fun to raise funds for Aberfoyle parent council & the hall



Please call Janet Stewart 01877 382736 for tables or to help with donations or advance raffle ticket sales.

KINLOCHARD VILLAGE HALL SERVICE OF CAROLS AND READINGS SUNDAY 11th DECEMBER AT 3PM

All welcome.

Come and sing your heart out and enjoy mince pies and mulled wine afterwards.

For further information contact:
Rev Linda Stewart (01877) 382391



ABERFOYLE MEMORIAL HALL FAMILY HOGMANAY BASH

8 'TIL LATE

Tickets

£5 per adult

£2 per child

£10 per family (2 adults and 3 children)

Call Janet 382736

Please bring your own drinks and snacks and a small donation for the buffet table.

Music is a playlist so the DJ can enjoy himself so please let us know in advance if you have any requests!

NE'ER DAY CEILIDH

Kinlochard Village Hall

Sunday 1st January 2012

8 pm till late

Family Fun - All Welcome

Featuring Kinlochard Ceilidh Band

Tickets available from

Katy Lamb 01877 387264

Ledard Farm 01877 387219

Post Office

B.Y.O.B.

Council Invests In Snow Ploughs

Stirling Council has invested £100,000 to combat severe winter weather, with nearly half of that being spent on twenty new snow ploughs that can be fitted to farm tractors.

The tractors and ploughs will assist Stirling Council to clear roads during severe winter weather conditions.

The new snowploughs were issued to local farmers last week. The farmers are all members of the Tayforth Machinery Ring, an organisation that the Council has used for many years during periods of heavy snowfall.

In June, the decision was made to order the additional ploughs for the coming winter.

During any adverse weather, the farmers will be contacted by the Council's Roads Maintenance Service, and used to assist less busy trafficked routes. Due to the vagaries of the winter weather, this may mean some farmers are called into action and others are not.

As well as these ploughs, investment has been made in fourteen new snow blowers, footway snow clearing machines and five hundred new shovels that will be available for the community to use, through community councils.

Councillor Jim Thomson, Portfolio holder for Environment comments; "With 20 additional snowploughs the Council is better prepared than in previous years to deal with the worst of the winter weather. Involving local farmers means that we have assistance available where we need it".



Photo shows: Councillor Jim Thomson, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Councillor Tony Ffitch and Bruce Hamilton from Tayforth machinery ring are pictured with some of the farmers and the new machinery.

Search for a Stirling Motto

What words sum up the Stirling area and its people? The Stirling Coat of Arms doesn't currently have a motto, and Provost Fergus Wood is leading the drive to find one.

"One of my proudest duties is to welcome visitors from around the world to Stirling, and that often includes showing people around our Council Chambers at Viewforth where the Civic Coat of Arms is on display on the wall," said Provost Wood. "There's a great story behind why we have a wolf on our crest that everyone enjoys, but visitors often ask if there's a Stirling motto, too."

The Provost's Panel invited a group of eminent local historians, writers, constitutional experts and friends of Stirling to help us find one. It was agreed that the motto should be in either English or Auld Scots, although on occasion it might be appropriate to use a Gaelic translation. Guidance was also provided from Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum Director, Dr Elspeth King.

People are being asked to choose between two options:

Option 1

STEADFAST AS THE ROCK

Like their Castle perched on a rock, the people of the Stirling area have stood proud and steadfast through the ages: rock solid, loyal and resolute – like so many characters from our past, and like the troops who have fought for freedom all over the world over the years from their Castle home.

Option 2

HEID HIGH AND GANG FORRIT

There's always been something determined, positive and forward-looking in the Stirling spirit, and here's a rallying cry in Old Scots that captures it. In good times and bad, Stirling people simply keep going forward, with heads held high. A motto that speaks of our past and looks to our future.

Voting slips are being included in the winter issue of Stirling magazine for people to return to The Civic Office. Or people can simply email their preferred Option to communications@stirling.gov.uk. Stirling's Civic Coat of Arms is decorated with two caltrops (iron spikes) and two rowels (spiked wheels on a horse's spurs), representing the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. The Scottish Lion Rampant on the shield indicates the former close association of the Royal Stewarts with the Stirling area. The supporters are a goshawk, representing the Drummonds, who were for centuries the principal family of southern Perthshire and were founders of Callander in 1739, and a wolf, representing the former Royal Burgh of Stirling. The wolf comes from the 9th century legend when a howling wolf saved the town from a Viking attack.



Community Council



**Wishing you a
Very Merry Christmas &
A Happy New Year
from
Strathard Community Council**

**Annual Christmas Dinner
Monday 5th December**

Forest Hills Hotel

Invitations to this popular event for seniors have been distributed now, so if for any reason you think you have been missed do please contact Ros Dingwall in Aberfoyle Post Office (telephone 382231) as soon as possible. Anyone over the official pension age, currently 60 for women, 65 for men, is eligible and couples are invited once one partner qualifies. Donations to the evening's raffle can be left at Aberfoyle Post Office.



Trossachs Area Community Transport Update



With the busy summer season now over, we've started to get ready for the various upgrades which are required at the site. These will allow it to offer new services, as well as improving the condition and appearance of the building. Our thanks to Rural Stirling Housing Association, which as part of its Wider Action remit is kindly assisting us in this task by providing professional input to the tendering process, which we are required by our funders to follow.

Fuel continues to be sold at realistic prices for the local area, and we charge a fair price based on what we pay for each weekly fuel delivery. Diesel prices have unfortunately been increasing recently though, which is because of the worldwide market rising.

We continue to gradually expand the scope of what is on offer in the shop, and now have a full range of winter fuels in stock, including Calor gas, coal and various types of logs/wood. Opening hours are currently:

Weekdays: 7am to 7pm

Saturday: 8am to 7pm

Sunday: 8.30 to 7pm

Many local people and members of TACT now choose to buy all their fuel from the community garage to ensure its survival – thank you for your continuing support! Do please consider using us regularly even if we cannot match supermarket prices, so that we can offer this much-needed local service.

Strathard Community Council meets at 7.30pm on the first Thursday of every month, alternating between Aberfoyle Memorial Hall, Kinlochard and Inversnaid. The next meetings will be held in Aberfoyle on 6th January and Kinlochard on 3rd February. Half an hour prior to our meetings a local Stirling Councillor (Tony Ffitch, Paul Owens or Fergus Wood) normally will hold a surgery for residents who wish to raise issues or concerns. If you are planning to come to one of these surgeries we suggest you check noticeboards or our website in advance, since there are sometimes dates when Councillors cannot attend.

Community Councillors by Ward

Aberfoyle

John Clow
Ros Dingwall
Jimmy Quinn
Geraint Short

Inversnaid

Andre Goulancourt
Ralph Wolfe
1 vacancy

Kinlochard

Maureen Campbell
Fiona McEwan
Alex Murray-Brown
1 vacancy

Contact details: Tel 01877 387200 cc@strathard.org.uk www.strathard.org.uk

New nature grants system launched

Organisations and community groups across Scotland, who are running projects to do with managing and enjoying nature, are to benefit from a new online grants service.

The service, launched this week, is available on the Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) website where customers can apply for a grant and access grant information and advice.

Projects will be given priority if they help engage people with nature, improve the management of nature and landscape, or create better places in the Central Scotland Green Network area.

Another priority is to improve the management of wildlife; for example, tackling problems of invasive non-native species before they get established will help Scotland to save money in the long-term.

Andrew Bachell, director of operations at SNH, said: "The natural environment is Scotland's most valuable asset. We need to look after it so that it helps to improve our health and quality of life as well as our economic prosperity. "Supporting projects that help deliver as many of these opportunities as we can is an essential part of this work. We're keen to back projects that are innovative, targeted at key groups, such as young people, people with poor health and people on low incomes, and which address barriers to participation, such as poor health, age and lack of confidence."

Environment Minister, Stewart Stevenson, welcomed the new service. He said:

"Scotland's nature and landscapes make a significant contribution to people's livelihoods, as well as their health and education. We are very keen to encourage more people and communities to become actively involved in looking after it. I very much welcome this new service which will make it easier for groups to apply for SNH funding, with a clear understanding of what the priorities are."

There are two types of grants available. Natural Project Grants are aimed at larger scale, longer term projects, of £10,000 and over. The deadline for these is 30 November 2011, with decisions by end of February 2012. Community Action Grants will open for applications early in 2012. These grants are aimed at projects of 12 months or less, and between £1,000 and £20,000, that help get more people and communities involved in outdoor recreation, volunteering, outdoor learning, recording nature and biodiversity work. There will be no deadline for these applications as they can be received at any time.

The SNH grants service web page can be found at <http://www.snh.gov.uk/funding/our-grants/>

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9 Baille Nicol Jarvie Court, Aberfoyle

Craigievern (Ard-Ghoath) Windfarm Proposal

An Objection

We wish to convey our concerns to readers of the Strathard News who may already be aware of the proposals of Banks Renewables ("Development with Care") to construct a large windfarm, involving the erection of 20 turbines, each 100 metres in height, on raised ground between Drymen and Gartmore, adjacent to the ancient road which connects the two villages. The Company has stated that it intends to submit its proposals for planning approval soon, perhaps by December 2011. The area for this development lies within yards of the south-east corner of the National Park and access to the site will require the construction of a new road: its route is not yet decided but will come off either the A81 or A811. Several public exhibitions and consultations have been held by the Company to advertise its intentions, and discussions have taken place with local representatives about possible "spin-off" benefits that could accrue if the development goes ahead.

Space limits the arguments, now familiar enough, in respect of land-based windfarms, but it seems increasingly clear that they are one of the least effective ways of generating clean electricity, a fact recognised by back-pedalling on such projects on mainland Europe. Turbine efficiency is low, suitable wind velocity is often lacking, generation of power is unpredictable, and back-up conventionally-generated power is required at all times. Their production demands large subsidies provided by Government through taxation and by consumers through their bills. For all these reasons, generation costs are significantly greater than with conventional power stations, probably by at least 25%. Britain produces about 2% of global carbon dioxide, and given the above, the contribution made by British wind farms to the alleviation of total global warming must be vanishingly small, particularly when measured against emissions from developing economies in India, China and South America. In short, the argument that the proposed Craigievern windfarm, large as it is, will contribute anything at all to ameliorate global climate change seems to us an idea without merit.

In our view, these 20 enormous turbines – 320 feet high, remember, and almost as high as the cantilevered spans on the Forth railway bridge, will have a hugely destructive effect on the landscape. They will be virtually inescapable over large distances, including from the nearby National Park, all approaches from Stirling and Glasgow including the Queen's View, are close to several settled communities, with noise as a real consideration, will risk harming wildlife including migrating geese, and will cause intense disruption during construction. At a stroke, the whole notion of wild, unspoiled countryside close to large urban areas, surely one of the virtually unique miracles of West Stirlingshire, is wiped out. It seems to us that our area remains outstandingly beautiful, and as such, is part of the heritage of us all. Living in Gartmore as we do, we feel this very keenly – just look west the next time you cross Flanders Moss on the A81 and picture the future sky-line! There are already disfiguring power installations in the Fintry area, and notoriously on the Braes of Doune. Our area is heavily dependent on tourism, both from within and outside Scotland. Who wants to visit an industrialised countryside disfigured by turbines and pylons? This monstrous development will blight the landscape of which we are the custodians, and will be without lasting benefit to our locality or to Scotland. In addition to inflicting a massive eyesore, it is bound to affect adversely our numerous small businesses, including B&Bs, camping sites, hotels, walking and cycling.

It would be comforting to think that the now ubiquitous proliferation of windfarm applications owed everything to high-minded concerns over global warming and little to the profit motive. In our view, the contrary is true, and the involvement of money has distorted rational analysis of the advantages and drawbacks of such proposals. Huge returns are to be made by multinational power companies and their subsidiaries, underwritten by the tax-payer (ironically, we pay for the destruction of our own surroundings), and landowners large and small. Inducements, financial and otherwise, are regularly offered as counters to local opposition, and as such, are clearly an attempt to subvert the planning process ahead of any enquiry. The offering of such inducements is of course an admission that any such developments are significantly destructive of local amenity.

It is our conclusion that these plans constitute an act of vandalism and folly, and that there will be no equivalence between the damage done and any benefit to be derived locally, nationally or internationally. Ranged against big money, can those who object to these deeply exploitative proposals, and who have no bribes to offer, do anything? We recommend that everyone who is concerned about the impact of these proposals be in contact with the Endrick Valley Action Group (EVAG) which has a great record of success in co-ordinating local objections to developments such as this.

(www.evag.co.uk for updates, contact the group at support@evag.co.uk to receive updates by email, or telephone 01360 441068)

John Dagg, Brian Rix, Mary Louise Kerr, James Kerr.

Inversnaid Reserve



Lately it seems that we have been talking a lot in the office about two of the most enigmatic but elusive species that we find on the reserve, the golden eagle

and the pine marten. There have been quite a few sightings of golden eagle on the reserve recently, this is probably due to young birds literally flying the nest. The young birds will head out from mum and dad's territory to explore the surrounding areas, maybe for a couple of hours and maybe for a couple of weeks. It will be another three or four years before these young birds finally set up a territory of their own which gives them plenty of time for exploration.

The pine marten has been present in our minds thanks to some great footage of foraging pine marten captured using a stealth cam deployed on the reserve. We know that these secretive little mustelids live and breed on the reserve but it's great to actually see them in their natural environment doing their thing. It wasn't just the pine marten that was caught on camera either, we also got great footage of badger foraging, a red deer stag sauntering through the wood at night, a tawny owl stopping off for a quick preen and of course a nice group of goats feeding on whatever they can find.

Of course, you don't need to have such spectacular species in your garden or the latest technology to enjoy watching wildlife and it is that time of year again when the RSPB asks you to make a cup of tea and watch the birds in your garden for an hour. The 'Big Garden Birdwatch' will take place over the weekend of January 28th and 29th and it couldn't be easier for you to take part, just have a look on the RSPB website (www.rspb.org.uk) and you'll find all the info you'll need. Over the last thirty years this annual 'snap shot' of garden bird populations across the country has allowed us to see what has been happening to them and it's not all good. We have lost more than half of our house sparrows and three quarters of our sparrows so it really is important that you make that cup of tea and tell us what you see. Finally, congratulations to Fraser and his wife Tabby on the birth of their daughter Robyn on November 12th. Mum, baby and the rest of the family are all doing well and we wish them all the best and not too many sleepless nights!

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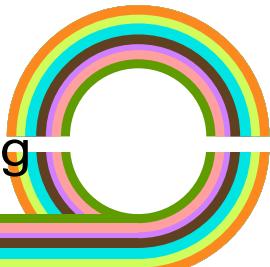
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Pet Profile(s)

Rannoch

Hi, we have just moved into Aberfoyle with our naughty little beagle, Rannoch.

Rannoch is 3 years old and in his element in his new home. This is the first time he has had a garden of his own and he can be seen patrolling the perimeters and barking at any potential intruders. We tried not to laugh last Sunday when he was trying to be a brave guard dog and a group of ladies on their way to church could be heard saying, "Oh look at him, isn't he cute?"

Rannoch is very sociable and really enjoys a good run around with another dog. Sometimes we suspect he particularly enjoys it if one of us is also running around, looking extremely embarrassed and trying frantically to get him back on his lead!!! In fact passers-by often comment, "A beagle - you are brave letting him off the lead". However, Rannoch has one characteristic which is a blessing in disguise - he's extremely greedy!! As long as you have a bonio (or can make him think you have a bonio) you can get him to come back.... or play dead... or fetch the ball... or do a high five.

In order to stop Rannoch from turning into a round little pudding from all the good-behaviour-inducing-bonios he eats, he can often be seen with us running in the woods. He loves to taunt us by doing a leisurely "trot" as we huff and puff up a steep hill. However the boot is on the other foot if we take him cycling - he gets very angry on the downhills!!!

After a hard day's beagling about Rannoch loves a cuddle on the sofa in front of the fire. He is also partial to having an evening snack of either a piece of kindling or a lump of coal, so you have to keep a close eye on him!!!

If you happen to see Rannoch out and about in Aberfoyle, please say hello - just mind your pockets if you have any dog treats on your person!!!



Craig, Catherine and Rannoch

Betsy and Togbe



I would like you to meet Betsy and her brother Togbe. They are both one year old Border Terriers. In doggie years they are seven. Betsy is a lovely dog who is normally quite full of energy, but sometimes is quiet and calm. Her brother Togbe likes carrying big sticks in his mouth, and they love playing together. Betsy can jump through a hoop, and Togbe can count. They are two of the best dogs.

Beth Dunlop

Drawing by Megan Dunlop



Do you have you a pet with funny habits, or just something that makes you enjoy them? Please let us know and send your contribution in to us at editor@strathardnews.com or leave in Aberfoyle Post Office.

The Aberfoyle Osprey Project

The Aberfoyle Osprey Project is a partnership between RSPB Scotland and Forestry Commission Scotland.

As the autumn colours are coming to an end and the weather is turning colder it's a time of reflection on the past season here at David Marshall Lodge. With yet another unsuccessful osprey season many of us are wondering what 2012 is going to bring.

Although the ospreys have migrated to West Africa, Wildlife Watch is still open and bringing you images from around the forest of the daily lives of many of the creatures that call the Queen Elizabeth Forest Park home. One of the latest additions is the state of the art HD technology. This allows many of our camera images to be of a much higher quality than previously.

As the winter draws in why not join us on the 4th December to find out how you can help the birds in your garden during this cold period. The event, Winter Birds Day, will be held at the David Marshall Lodge from 12pm – 4pm. There will be displays and craft activities, something for all the family!

For more information, volunteering opportunities or a school or group talk contact Robert Fraser-Binns on 01786 229252 or robert.fraser-binns@forestry.gsi.gov.uk



The staff at the Post Office would like to thank everyone for digging deep and the total collected for Children in Need came to £125.36.
Many thanks, Kerry

Thank You

I would like to thank all my neighbours at Old Kirk Loan who have given me stuff and supported me a lot since I came back to Aberfoyle. Thank you for all your help.

Mathew Dallimore

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Lochan Sping

Lochan Sping, just over a mile from the centre of Aberfoyle, should be a popular walking and cycling destination but it's surprising how quiet and peaceful it is: well worth a visit to enjoy the very individual sculptures that merge into the landscape and to rest and appreciate the surroundings.

For a 6km/3.5mile round trip walk or cycle take the hump-backed bridge over the Forth then turn right up the hill past the old Covenanters Inn. The forest road through the trees comes to a crossroads where you turn right and soon reach the lochan and a bench looking out onto the first of the sculptures, the outline of a pike sitting on the water. Last time I was there I saw lots of small dragonflies at the water's edge but by now they've gone to wherever dragonflies go in the winter. On the right of the track there's a higher loop giving elevated views. If you're on your bike it's better to start at the far end and push your bike up the big steps for an exhilarating swoop down the other side.

At the far end of the loch is another sculpture, a huge dragonfly appearing to hover on the water. From there climb a bit then go downhill to the junction where it's worth turning left for a look at the wire Osprey (I'm guessing), particularly impressive when viewed with Craig More in the background. Retrace your steps and go straight across the junction which changes from forestry road to track through woods to a delightful bridge over the Duchray Water. The track arrives at the car park where you turn right at the crossroads and cycle down to the main road at Milton. From there it's a straightforward cycle along the road back to Aberfoyle. This route is suitable for fairly young children on bikes and there are educational notices on the way round to make it more interesting for them.

To add a bit of distance and height to your outing, when you come to the crossroad, go straight on until you reach Drumore Cottage (the only building) where you turn left up the hill: great views across to Craig More, particularly just now with the larch having dropped their golden needles. From the high point there's a really fun blast down to reward you for the slog up. Shortly after you start your plummet, there's a wee section of singletrack going off to your left (between two posts marked blue) which joins up with your outward road. This is straightforward singletrack and good fun – just needs a bit of confidence on steeper ground and a bit of care on the slippery winter grass. If you've chosen to stay on the road for your plummet down the hill, turn left when you reach a junction, ignore the track joining on the right and you soon arrive back at the crossroads where you go straight over to join the original route. This adds 5km/3miles to the route giving you an 11km/7 miles outing with plenty of fun options. All the routes are shown clearly on the Forestry Commission's leaflet Queen Elizabeth Forest Park.

Grab your bike and helmet and get out there, before winter strikes in earnest!

Sandy Slater

Wild Biking Scotland



More Good News from your Mobile Library Service



Last year we were able to offer online access to our catalogues for the first time. The number of readers who have used this option has delighted us. This facility is about to become even better with our new library system with many new features for you to enjoy.

And there's more good news! Every time you visit the Mobile Library we will give you a booklet with all new fiction and non-fiction books that are on order for the Library Service. All you have to do is tell us which books you would like to read and we'll do the rest. This year we have more options available on our website:

lib.stirling.gov.uk

As well as browsing the catalogue and ordering books online you can access the following online resources free!

- *Transparent Language Line*. 95 languages available in an interactive format
- *The Driving Theory Test* contains the entire official test question bank, hazard perception video clips and an online version of the Highway Code.
- *Know UK* is a unique online service developed to provide libraries with a complete collection of current, useful and UK-specific reference information from over 100 of the most widely used reference publications in the UK
- *Encyclopaedia Britannica* available in junior, student and adult formats
- *Go Citizen* is an online study resource for candidates preparing for the Life in the UK test or British citizenship test. It includes an online version of the latest official study materials from the Home Office, plus hundreds of practice test questions in the same format as the official test.

People who are Housebound

If you know of someone in your community who would like library books/tapes/cds Outreach Services caters for those who are housebound.

If, due to age, location or disability you are unable to get to your local library, these services are available for you. If you are unable to access the library temporarily due to illness, or following a stay in hospital, we can also help until you are back on your feet! All you have to do is speak to the Mobile Library staff and they will arrange everything for you.

As well as books, books on compact discs, books on tape, quarterly book lists and a quarterly magazine, "Chatterbox", are delivered. Reading aids such as book rests and magnifying sheets are provided, subject to availability.

For more details telephone 01786 432383 or email busbyn@stirling.gov.uk.

MOBILE LIBRARY

Thursday Fortnightly

Aberfoyle

				6pm - 7pm	
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
5,19	2,16	1,15,29	12,26	10,24	7,21
Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
5,19	2,16,30	13,27	11,25	8,22	6,20

Friday Fortnightly

School	10.55 - 11.50
Car Park	11.55 - 12.35
Limecraig	1.45 - 2.05
Queens Crescent	2.10 - 2.35

Gartmore

Bottom of Hill	2.45 - 3.10
Black Bull	3.15 - 3.50

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
13,27	10,24	9,23	6,20	4,18	1,15,29
Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
13,27	10,24	7,21	5,19	2,16,30	14,28

Wednesday Fortnightly

Braeval	10.55 - 11.15
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Kinlochard

Shop	11.35 - 12.00
Forestry Houses	12.05 - 12.35

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
11,25	8,22	7,21	4,18	2,16,30	13,27
Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
11,25	8,22	5,19	3,17,31	14,28	12

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CULINARY CAPERS



Researched and compiled by Margaret Leppard-Owens

It's all in the chemistry!

Jonathan Honeyman, Aberfoyle Butcher

Jonathan describes himself as a butcher. He works closely with food scientists and chefs who are as excited as he is about food. Jonathan's passions are work, cooking, cultivating vegetables ... for cooking; his dog (Flint) and leading the local fire and rescue service. Jonathan has trained Flint to detect accelerants – highly flammable compounds used to accelerate fire growth. He speaks equally enthusiastically about muscle characteristics, natural seasoning, cooking temperature, coagulation of the protein and moisture content of the meat and also about accelerants and a new fire fighting foam which he hopes will one day be deployed as a resource with Central Scotland Fire and Rescue Service. This is applied chemistry at its most exciting. Asked about food and community in times of recession, Jonathan said, 'You don't need to always spend money on premium cuts of meat like steaks to have a fantastic food experience. Buy a quality raw product, whatever cut, and apply proper cooking techniques that are sympathetic to the characteristics of that particular product and you will realize that product for its full potential. We hope that this recipe, a special one for the festive season, will introduce you to what we are aiming to achieve in our new business partnership with John Webber, Umami Culinaire. Umami is Japanese for 'savoriness' or 'delicious taste', one of the five basic taste senses along with sweet, sour, bitter, and salty.'



BEEF WELLINGTON

Not the classic method but a better and lighter version. The mousse helps keep the meat moist and adds flavour. Less pastry is used to keep down the bulk.

INGREDIENTS:

700g Centre cut fillet steak,
not too large in diameter in one piece and well trimmed.
25g Unsalted Butter

The Mousse

1 Shallot (finely chopped)
25g Unsalted Butter
2 cloves Garlic

½ tspn Lemon juice

350g Large button mushrooms (cut into 5mm dice)

150g Trimmed chicken breast
200ml Double cream

1 Egg white

1tbspn Chopped flat leaf parsley
300g Thinly sliced pork back fat

500g Butter puff pastry

1 Egg yolk (mixed with 1tbspn water to form a glaze)

Serves 4-6

METHOD:

Pre-heat your oven to 200c Gas mark 6

Take a good-sized frying pan and place it onto the heat. When hot, add the 25g of butter closely followed by the beef. Brown the meat on all sides then place the pan in the oven for about 12 minutes, or more if you like your meat well done. When the meat is ready remove it from the pan and place it on a cooling wire over a tray to cool completely.

While the meat is cooling, roll out the puff pastry to form a rectangle only just large enough to wrap the meat and its filling and about 3mm thick. Place this onto a tray lined with greaseproof paper and refrigerate to firm up the pastry

Heat a second frying pan and add the other 25g of butter along with the shallots.

Gently cook the shallots in the butter without colour then briefly wash and drain the mushrooms and add to the pan. Increase the heat to the pan and add the garlic. As the mushrooms cook, the water from the mushrooms will be given off. Cook the mushrooms on a rapid boil until the liquid has all but evaporated then tip the contents of the pan into a bowl to cool.

Now make the mousse to flavour and keep the meat moist. Dice up the chicken and puree in a food processor with the egg white and a pinch of salt. Using the pulse control on the machine (if you don't have a pulse control turn the machine on in five second bursts checking after each mix) add the double cream in four or five batches and mix carefully until the mixture is smooth and then season with more salt, if needed, and mill pepper. If the mousse is over beaten in the machine the cream will turn to butter and be ruined. Transfer the mousse to a bowl and fold in the cooked mushrooms and parsley. Add ½ teaspoon of lemon juice. Refrigerate the mousse to firm it slightly.

Lay a sheet of greaseproof paper slightly longer than the meat on the table. Lay sheets of the sliced back fat on the paper large enough to roll the meat in. Spread the chicken mousse on the back fat 6mm deep. Place the cooled meat on the mousse and using the paper to help roll the back fat over the meat tucking in the ends. Roll the wrapped meat onto a tray lined with cling film and refrigerate to firm up the coating.

Using a trellis cutter rolled over the pastry make a web of pastry and pull it open until it is long enough to enclose the roll of meat, mousse and back fat.

Wrap the roll of meat, mousse and back fat in the pastry tucking the ends underneath the joint and sealing the joints with the beaten egg and water mix. Carefully transfer the pastry covered roll to a baking sheet and glaze with beaten egg all over.

Cook the finished wellington in a 180 c to 200c oven for around 20 to 25 minutes (aim for a 45°c core temperature if using a probe thermometer) then remove from the oven and allow to stand for 10 minutes. Serve the wellington cut in 1 ½ cm slices with a warm red wine sauce poured around and garnish with boiled or roast celeriac. Roast parsnips also go well and make an excellent winter dish.

© Umami Culinaire Ltd

Cooking time

Preparation	1 hour 10 minutes
Refrigerate mousse	30 minutes
Prepare the roll	5 minutes
Refrigerate the roll	40 minutes
Apply lattice and glaze	5 minutes
Cooking	25 minutes
Standing time	10 minutes



Margaret's hints:

If you don't have an oven proof frying pan (or two frying pans), transfer the joint to a warmed and lightly greased roasting tray before placing it in the oven. I used a small onion instead of a shallot. I don't have a fancy mixer, I used a simple handheld blender to puree the chicken and egg. Nor do I have a lattice cutter, I used a knife to cut 2.5 cm long slashes into the rolled out pastry in a pattern. Refrigerating the joint wrapped in mousse, back fat and grease proof paper means that it did not collapse when I applied the lattice pastry. I found that keeping both the roll and the pastry on their respective greaseproof sheets as long as possible enabled me to fully cover the roll without breaking the lattice and then, with the help of a fish slice, easily slide the lattice covered roll onto the baking sheet. Red wine sauce recipe (or the cheat's substitute) available if you contact me. No waste! We used the two left over ends (pastry and mousse) cold with green salad and pureed with vegetable stock for soup. Next month a recipe from the staff at the Aberfoyle Surgery.

If you would like to contribute a favourite recipe contact Margaret Leppard-Owens at mjleppard@btinternet.com or call 01877382389.

The Scribe's Apprentice!?

Well, I'll bet you thought that you'd heard the last from me; but not sorry to disappoint you, that's not the case as here I am big as life and twice as ugly. The twice as ugly bit isn't true by the way; well not much!

So what do you think of all the rain we've been having of late? Great eh!

Ah now, you're thinking "This beilin' heid has finally lost it! Rain & Great in the same sentence! Crazy!" Ah, but you are not thinking my not so on-the-ball friend! You do not comprehend the larger picture! I will therefore explain in words of many syllables so you are completely bamboozled and put this rag down with a slightly glazed expression on your fizzog. Listen up and pay attention! For this is important!

Hardly a day goes by but you'll see on the idiot box something or other about the effects of global warming. If it's true, and I don't doubt that it is, it means that everywhere is going to get hotter and drier particularly our larger neighbour to the south. No, further south than that, over the border. In Englandshire!

What does Scotland have in abundance, apart from ba'heads and numpies? Water and the potential to generate electricity. What will they need down south when global warming really starts to bite in the next 50 years? Water and Electricity!

We're really lucky here in Scotland that the way weather systems cross the British Isles means we get a lot of very wet water dumped on us such that we have a tremendous potential to supply what will one day become quite a precious commodity.

It might interest you to know that back in the 80's there was a feasibility study carried out with just this scenario in mind. It never got off the ground but I'd be willing to bet that though the idea was shelved it survives somewhere just waiting for the day when it becomes economically, or politically, viable. Never under estimate the lengths politicians will go to to get re-elected!

Same with electricity. I know the wind power pylons are a bit of a blight on the landscape but what would you rather have? A big wind farm,

a nuclear reactor or the type of squalor that it's taken us 200 years to climb out of?

'Cos that's the options my friends and, happily, enlightened self-interest and a desire to make barrow loads, lorry trailer loads, of money means that in the waters off Scotland new methods of extracting power from the ocean currents and tides are already being tested. It's all do-able, indeed it will need to be done if the climate changes the way it's predicted to, and please don't tell me that climate change is nonsense and a conspiracy; that view point is what's nonsensical.

The science is pretty clear and compelling - the world is warming; whether it is down to humans or natural causes is totally irrelevant. When your house is burning down it doesn't matter how it started, you still need to call the fire brigade!

So when the temperature in London reaches 35 centigrade degrees in June the water we sell south to drink and the electricity we sell south to cool the homes will probably make the difference between people dying of heat stroke or not, and will give Scotland's economy something more substantial, and longer lasting, than the Black Gold from the North Sea.

Sod the oil, says !! When it has been gone for generations it will still be chuckin' it doon from the heavens over Aberfoyle, filling the lochs and the reservoirs with clear, cold and utterly renewable water, millions of litres of it flowing south to feed the people who need it and millions of pounds flowing north to feed the economy of the country that produces it. It really will be the Water of Life and ye wullnae hae tae pay ony tax oan it!

So, nae mair moanin' aboot the rain! I dinna want tae hear it! Send it doon, oh Lord! Send it Doon!

And as for you lot just remember where you heard it first.

This is the Apprentice to the Scribe's Apprentice AKA the Apprentice to the Prophet of Doom signing off!



Loch Ard Local History Group



Monday December 12th at 7.30pm
Kinlochard Village Hall

"Some Very Local History" by Marjory Brown

A DVD recording of the hit of the 2006/7 season will be played after a brief AGM followed by a little seasonal socializing.

Monday January 9th 2012

"Strathard Houses; the built environment"
Louis Stott



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Inversnaid Tent Protest

Residents of Inversnaid, have reacted angrily to the latest twist in a long-running battle over the construction of the cycle path which follows the line of the old military road between Stronachlachar and Inversnaid.

Pitching a tent and sitting in the path of the excavators, they hope to gain time for further negotiation with the National Park Planning Officers and Forest Enterprise over re-routing a short section of the path, away from the home of Jeff & Maxine Barwick.

Elsewhere, during construction of this 6-mile path, re-routings have been made for engineering reasons and to lessen the impact on people's homes. Following years of 'consultation' and planning discussions, construction work has been ongoing throughout the past year. During this time, the patience of the local community has been sorely tested due to the detrimental effect on their lives. Problems have included constant construction activity, higher than expected scarring of the landscape and damage to the area's only road, including 3 days when they were cut off completely due to road closure caused by the project.



National Park News

By Owen McKee

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR
THE SURGERY WILL BE CLOSED ON THE FOLLOWING DAYS

MONDAY 26TH DECEMBER
TUESDAY 27TH DECEMBER
AND
MONDAY 2ND JANUARY
TUESDAY 3RD JANUARY

IF YOU REQUIRE URGENT MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PLEASE TELEPHONE
NHS 24: 08454 24 24 24

BOOK OR CANCEL

Your Next Appointment On Line

You can now book or cancel your appointments via our website,

www.aberfoyle-buchlyviesurgeries.co.uk

Whether you are at home or work, you can quickly log on to view, book and cancel appointments. Available 24 hours a day, it's especially useful when the practice is closed or telephone lines are busy. Please ask at reception for a registration form.

REMEMBER YOU CAN ALSO USE THE WEBSITE TO ORDER YOUR REPEAT PRESCRIPTIONS.

Mobile Phone Numbers

In the future we are hoping to send patients reminders about their appointments by using mobile phone text messaging.

We would be grateful if you could please inform the surgery of your mobile phone number. Many Thanks

Rural Access Service

Provides support for people aged 18 – 65 years of age living in rural Stirlingshire who are experiencing or recovering from mental ill health. The service assists people to improve their own mental health and well being through identifying and working towards achieving personal goals such as developing coping strategies, increasing self-confidence, reducing isolation and accessing local resources.

People wishing to access this support can be referred to the Service by their GP Practice, Community Psychiatric Services or Stirling Council Social Care.

For more information contact Action in Mind
Telephone: 01786 451203
Email: info@actioninmind.org.uk
Website: www.actioninmind.org.uk



supporting positive mental health across Stirling

Warm Home Discount Scheme

A lot of readers may be unaware that if you get certain low income benefits or are disabled, you may be able to claim a £120 rebate from your power company. If you think you qualify but have not been notified, there is more information available at www.directgov.uk/warmhome or call the helpline on 0845 606 0285

Plans and consultations seem to be a permanent feature of life in the Park. The two major Plans affecting the Park are the Park Plan and The Local (Development) Plan. Since the latter has just finished its process and is now a fully functioning document I'll deal with it first.

The Local Plan is the document which details the National Park Authority's policies for any development in the Park requiring Planning Permission. The Local Plan has been a long time in the making with community workshops and consultations leading eventually to a draft plan being examined by the Reporter's Unit who in turn suggested a few amendments before the Park Board submitted the Final Draft Plan to Scottish Government. Thankfully the Scottish Government accepted the Final Draft without requiring any amendments and consequently we now have a fully fledged Local Plan.

While on the subject of the Local Plan I would like to clarify a point which frequently causes confusion. I am often asked why the planners did not alter an application to take into account objections that have been raised. Planners can only grant or refuse permission for what is proposed by the applicant, not for what someone else would like. In pre-application discussions advice is given on what is likely to comply with the policies of the Local Plan.

The Park Plan looks at the bigger picture and embraces a wider range of issues including land management, conservation and visitor management and brings together in its preparation all the local and national agencies which operate in the Park. The consultation period has now ended and the Park Authority will now examine all the

submissions with a view to amending the plan where necessary. That work should be completed by April 2012 when the revised Plan will be forwarded to Scottish Government for approval.

Mid November saw Callander benefit from an intense planning exercise involving all the agencies providing services to the town. The Scottish Government is funding consultants to help communities look at the services available and how these can be improved for the benefit of the community. Known as a charrette, applications were invited from communities throughout Scotland. Callander Partnership aided by the National Park Authority were one of only three successful applications. I look forward with interest to see what results are achieved and whether this process could improve how the Park Authority deals with plans and consultations in the future.

The early signs are that the East Loch Lomond Byelaws have been very effective with evidence of a return to a much more family based visitor group. Aligned to that is the survey being carried out to see to what extent there has been displacement of the anti-social elements to other parts of the Park. Unfortunately the weather has been such this year that it would be unwise to come to a definitive answer and so we will continue to monitor the position next year.

As always I can be contacted as follows:

Post : Taigh Na Bhuth,

Lochearnhead

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Inversnaid in the 1940s - Part 3

By Duncan McDiarmid

POST WAR in INVERSNAID

By Primary 7 I had graduated to the high desks at the back of the classroom with my two other classmates and felt rather superior to the likes of my younger sister sitting in one of the smaller desks at the front of the classroom. Every month or so large boxes filled with books would appear at the back of the classroom and, occasionally, the door would open and some adult would enter, look through the books, select a few, and then quickly disappear. This was part of the community library service provided by Stirling County Council. One other much more unwelcome event, which was not looked forward to, was the visit of the school dentist. The entire school would be sent outside to the playground - the large area of grass in front of the school - with each pupil being summoned in turn 'to have their teeth polished'. Seeing the dentist setting up his foot-pedal driven drill before we exited the classroom soon disabused us of that fairy tale! Those were the days of D.B.S.T. (Double British Summer Time) and, although we youngsters revelled in playing out late in the evening it was, at the same time, extremely difficult to get to sleep in the evening and even more difficult to get up in time for school in the morning. Still, the last year at Primary School was treated with gay abandon whether digging for peanuts in the old graveyard behind the school, or simply getting our feet wet trying to cross the burn. Then came the dreaded examinations at the end of the school year - the Intelligence Test, followed by the Control Examination, then by the Qualifying Exam. I can still see the teacher's face after we had undergone an oral test and she checked my paper to discover that the word 'cauliflower' did not occur in my vocabulary, but that 'collieflower' certainly did! Then prizing when all three of us in Primary 7 were announced as equal first!

Normally pupils moving on to Secondary School went to McLaren High School in Callander. Because the road round Loch Katrine had not been completed budding pupils were taken by early morning boat on a Monday from Stronachlachar to a point on the eastern shore of Loch Katrine where the existing road stopped. There they joined a bus for Callander where they stayed in a hostel until returning home on Friday evening.

The exception to this arrangement was myself. It had been the custom during the previous summer or two for two groups of senior pupils from Allan Glens and Albert Secondary Schools to spend some time learning the rudiments of cutting bracken, using a scythe, on the steep hillside around Loch Arklet and Loch Katrine. The boys from Allan Glens School were billeted in the bothy behind our house and, lo and behold, I was pointed in the direction of Glasgow to attend secondary school there, staying with my maiden aunts in the Croftfoot district of the city.

By this time the Home and Forces programmes broadcast by the B.B.C. had given way to the Home and Light programmes. Reception in these mountainous areas depended on the situation of the wireless receiver - our trusty old Murphy wireless only let us down when my father forgot to take the wet battery (what lasted only a few days) to Stronachlachar to be charged up. The larger dry battery, on which the receiver also relied, lasted several weeks longer. Provided these batteries were in place when I was home from secondary school for the weekend to receive the football results, followed by the McFlannels and then Henry Hall's guest night on a Saturday, then peace reigned in the McDiarmid household.

On occasion, getting home at weekends from secondary school could be quite an adventure. Every fortnight my father would collect the wages for the staff at Stronachlachar and at Inversnaid from the offices at John Street in Glasgow. Then it was a simple task of walking down from school in Montrose Street to meet him at the Water Department offices. Sometimes, on alternate Friday afternoons, it was a case of waiting after school in Cathedral Street, like a forlorn waif, waiting for a lift from the Corporation lorry which had been in Glasgow to pick up stores and being taken home by that method. Were neither of these modes of transport available it was a case then of walking to the bus station in Killermont Street and boarding a bus for Aberfoyle to be met there, or by taking the 4.15 pm bus to Oban which, in those days, travelled the entire length of Loch Lomondside to eventually reach its destination. Then it was a case of getting off the bus at the jetty opposite Inversnaid Hotel and hoping that John McKinnon, the ferryman, had been briefed about my expected arrival

on the opposite shore of the Loch. From the Hotel it was a good one and a half miles hump up the steeply winding road to Arklet House. If the winter of 1940-41 was cold and snowy then that of 1946-1947 equalled it in ferocity. Deep snow and bitterly cold days posed problems for the inhabitants of the scattered community. Efforts were made to clear the road between Loch Arklet and Stronachlachar by using a wooden snow plough attached to the Corporation lorry. Unfortunately, as the snowplough was dragged behind the lorry, it meant that men had to clear a path in front of the lorry to allow it, and the snowplough, to progress further. Staff and workers went unpaid for weeks as the furthest the lorry got, on its way into Glasgow to collect the wages, was to Loch Dhu, and that after four hours of digging. Loch Arklet was frozen solid for weeks on end but, when the ice gradually began to break up, massive sheets of ice toppled over the dam's overspill and created a huge stationary 'ice floe' at the foot of the overspill - a unique sight.

By contrast, the summer of 1948 was hot and, for weeks on end, without a drop of rain. The water supply for the houses at Loch Arklet came from a reservoir tank built into the hillside to collect water from a burn. When that burn ran dry it was a case of trying to coax pools of water further up the hillside into the tank. Somewhat ironic, with a loch full of water for Glasgow's use only, a few yards away!

Inversnaid Hotel was now open for business after the war. My recollection is that it was sold by the Blair family to a family from Edinburgh - the Schofields, who then sold it on to the Neish family - Mr. Neish, a pilot in the First World War, Mrs. Neish, a formidable lady and excellent card player and their red-haired daughter, Lucy, who soon attracted the attention of one young gentleman from the local area.

Although steamer services had continued for some time after the war, mainly via the paddlers, Prince Edward and Princess Mary, the breakwater at the side of the pier where the ferry boat lay, was in a poor state and an effort was made to improve the breakwater by building it up and strengthening it.

To this end a disused quarry, just above the entrance gate to the lodge, was opened up and rock blasted to use for the breakwater. A large digger crane was brought by road from Glasgow to use in this construction. The result was the breakwater as it now appears today. The hotel also boasted the only petrol pump for the area, the next nearest being fourteen miles away at Aberfoyle. This served to supply the needs of the local populace, although serving the petrol was a back-breaking business. The pump was hand-driven with sixteen strokes up and down to fill the glass bowel at the top with one gallon, which then drained slowly into the car's tank. All went well until one day when an American, driving a large Buick, arrived at the hotel and asked for the car to be 'filled up' with 37 gallons of petrol. As a later Depute Director of Education for Strathclyde, then serving as a student porter at Inversnaid relates 'my inability to pump 37 gallons into this car, and thus depriving the hotel of a sizeable profit, having been witnessed by daughter, Lucy, I was immediately dismissed from service the next day.

By this time cooking by Calor Gas had appeared in our household making life so much easier for my mother. Holidays from secondary school were especially looked forward to, especially in summer when sheep clippings were a source of pleasure, particularly when assisting with filling large bags of wool with the fleeces from the sheep. It was a case of into the huge bag, first with the wool piled on top, and your job was to tramp it down firmly into the bottom of the bag. Unfortunately, with the wool, came certain undesirables - especially ticks, which had the nasty habit of attaching themselves to all parts of the body and did prove extremely difficult to remove without leaving the head firmly embedded in the skin.

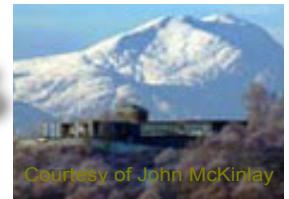
One particular episode remains in my mind. Along with Alex Buchan the two of us had been exploring the bed of the burn which runs past the school house. On spotting a large black stone we carefully unearthed it to discover a large cannonball, no doubt fired from the Garrison Farm up on the hill - but at whom? The last time I recall seeing this cannonball was on the occasion of the sports held at Stronachlachar on the day of the Queen's Coronation in 1953 when it served as the shot in putting the shot!

So it was goodbye Inversnaid to a house much nearer to the Estate Office where my father held court, and the beginning of another chapter in my life.



Ranger's Ramblings

A View from the Lodge!



Contributions welcome. Contact David Wilkie on 01877 382258 or email reporter@strathardnews.com

Harnessing Halloween

This helter-skelter of an event was in danger of bordering on the surreal from the outset; the moment darkness set in. Many months of planning, with safety issues well to the fore, are standard requirements considering the amount of interest in this most spectacular of happenings.

There is a tendency, however, for the majority wishing to take part, to book tickets at the last minute, which increases the level of intensity for our preparations, most of which are realised within a similar time-scale.

This has proved to be a time-honoured challenge for the staff. In previous seasons, it also must be said, we have been fortunate indeed to avoid adverse weather conditions on a regular basis. It was with no little degree of discomfort, therefore, that we learned that this year's extravaganza was to run in tandem with forecasted heavy rain-showers, which thankfully pattered out the more the night wore on.

Still...the people came, and in huge numbers, testament to it's everlasting appeal. Over four hundred 'souls' milked the beauty of what was on display. And it WAS special.

I have always felt one of the most endearing aspects of our Halloween habit is the sense of loyalty attached on the part of our customers. Time and again we responded to calls in the lead up, stating a strong desire to take part, regardless of what was on offer.

For those of us fortunate enough to be employed at the David Marshall Lodge, this is like a 'red rag to the bull', and there is no doubting we are proud to say we responded in kind, producing an occurrence of some magnitude.

I feel the degree of commitment by so few to so many should not, however, go unrecorded, so I hope you will bear with me as I pay credit to all those who made it possible, through their work behind the scenes.

To Anne Gilchrist, Susan Nash, Craig Walker, David Cowan and Sarah Cullen, who gainfully managed the ticket desks... a thankless task, it must be said, as they are always the last to join the party, after settling everyone in.

To Trish Roberts, from the District Office, by now considered to be a veteran supporter of the cause, and who was this time around ably backed up by Angela Ballard, an RSPB volunteer, in the children's craft area. In the background, Angela's husband, Lee, was offering a menacing presence, hovering ominously in a boiler suit, and carrying an axe of sorts. Angela and Lee also earned fully deserved extra credits by way of producing a stupendous creative display of pumpkin carving.

Margaret Moffat, whose underlying contribution to the event simply cannot be underestimated, turned up as a witch, and manned the apple dooking and doughnuts-on-a-string 'hedgerow' on the outside veranda, together with Louise Mutch.

It is worth recording that all three hundred doughnuts and all two hundred and fifty apples were either feverishly consumed, or absconded, as the debris the following morning revealed only a spattering of sodden crumbs.

On the subject of food, the hardy individuals from the Bluebell Cafe detailed to attend encountered heavy demand for snacks and drinks over the piece. Considering the extra hours came on the back of a busy day shift, it is fair to say there were more than a few weary looking individuals departing the scene, upon the wind-up.

The main focus of attention on the night was of course directed towards the Waterfall Trail, whereby certain 'scare points' were mapped out for our participants to 'enjoy'.

Lit up, as it was, through a simply astonishing display of lighting techniques supplied by Northern Lights Productions, the journey would offer a hazy and suspense laden backdrop. This was especially effective around Rob Mulholland's celebrated 'mirror people'



As the Ghastly Ghouls from Go Ape, Tom Panton, Annie Stuart and Steve Broatch, travelling on the zip-line, screamed to the high heavens, underneath, Jenny Tweedie and Mairi MacDonald were offering tainted anecdotes at the Witches Grotto, next to the waterfall.

Meanwhile, the gravedigger, David Wilkie, and the Corpse Bride, Sylvie Aspden, were causing havoc along the way with their scare antics. Never one to be upstaged, though, Robert Fraser-Binns, in his role as a troll, excelled once again, as he settled into 'type' with vigorous enthusiasm.

In the midst of all this chaos, The Walking Theatre Company were holding court, during the course of the evening, with two very popular, yet sinister, guided walks on a 'Pied Piper' scale. Liz Shortall, who judged and awarded the prizes for the best costumes, eventually brought the proceedings to a close.

Credits should also go to John Donald McLellan, and his merry band of helpers, for marshalling the event with some degree of aplomb.

Finally, I reserve a special mention for our two 'old staggers', Charlie Stewart and Jim Scott, responsible for setting up and lighting all the candles, and who, despite well into their careers with the Commission, descended upon us on the night in full 'Zombie' regalia. In point of fact, this was Jim's last (unofficial) duty before retiring. A strange way to bow out, perhaps, but the man leaves behind him a legacy few would do well to equal.



It's hard to believe it is THAT time again. As a result, our events for this season are now simmering to a close.

WINTER BIRDS DAY

SUNDAY 4TH DECEMBER. 12 P.M. – 4 P.M.

This is an exceptional opportunity to learn all the different things you can do to help birds large and small during the harsh winter months. I feel certain that Robert and his pixies will have plenty of displays and advice on offer, together with activities and crafts for the children to enjoy.

No booking is required, but a small charge will be applicable.

CHRISTMAS FUN WEEKEND

SAT 10th DECEMBER AND SUN 11th DECEMBER. 11 P.M. – 4 P.M.

On Saturday, there will be a chance for the younger element to put their craft skills to the test in the Exhibition Wing.

The main focus of attention will fall on the Sunday, as we look forward to the annual appearance of our old friends from the Lomond Mountain Rescue Team. Besides the obligatory tombola, mince pies and mulled wine on offer, it presents a unique chance to learn of the workings of this most essential of organisations. David Brough, erstwhile resident woodcarver at The Lodge, will also be making a special appearance, through a signing session of his children's book ' Elves of the Little Fawn'.

If you were seeking some old-fashioned Christmas spirit and congenial conversation, you would do well not to miss out on this very special day.

Meanwhile, the very popular 'Robin' Christmas Treasure Hunt will be available throughout the month, as will the opportunity to place a star on our iconic 'Wishing Tree'. A prize hamper is also up for grabs through an ongoing raffle.

Of course, there is the not altogether too small a matter of being able to purchase a real Christmas Tree in the duration. This year, the trees will be on sale from Saturday the 3rd of December. Please check with The Lodge regarding prices.

CLOSURE AND OPENING TIMES.

It is important to note that the final day of business at the Visitor Centre this year will be on Friday the 23rd of December.

At time of writing, the anticipated re-opening in 2012 is the 11th of February.

Due to major redevelopment plans for The Lodge in the coming year, this may be subject to change. Again, please contact the staff for particulars.

The HOTLINE number is 01877 382 258.

RangersCorner



Sorely Missed

I still recall the day I met him as he breezed into town
Introducing himself as one David Cowan.

The first thing that struck me, I would have to say
Is that he had a head of hair to compare with Brian May
(The guitarist from the band Queen)

Eventually, his locks would be seen to be shorn
As he elevated his standing to 'the manor born'
Even at this early stage, though, by way of an extraordinarily calm face
He displayed an exceptional demeanour with all due grace

As he settled casually into place
Within the David Marshall Lodge 'space'
In time, his overall contribution to the cause
Would prove boundless and limitless of pause

Ever accommodating, ever eager
He set about his duties like a demented beaver
From the outset, however, it was clear that this was a man
Destined for a greater plan

But we nurtured him, just the same, to the point of excess
All the while hoping he would settle for something 'less'
Now he is gone, to pastures new, I cannot help but realise
We have, collectively, not been entirely wise

To do enough to contain this very special 'prize'

Our loss is someone else's gain

But the DML staff will still forever remember his name.



School News

Aberfoyle primary and Nursery

The past few weeks have been very busy and interesting with lots of different activities going on in the school and nursery. The following articles will give an insight into some of them.

Poppy Appeal

This year the school/nursery raised £67.30 for this worthwhile cause. Thank you for your support.

Christmas Fayre

This year the Christmas Fayre will be held on Saturday 3rd December in **Aberfoyle Memorial Hall**. The fayre will run from 1-3pm in conjunction with the village Christmas Fayre. The school choir will entertain you and P6/7 will be running enterprise stalls selling items, some of which they have made themselves.

P1 Teddy Bears Picnic

In November P1/2 had a trip to the David Marshall Lodge where they learned about the countryside and the birds which live there. They also had activities which linked into their topic which is toys. Everyone had great fun. The trip finished with a Teddy Bears Picnic lunch before the class returned to school.

Nursery

The children have been learning about their eyes and have been experimenting with a variety of spectacles and view finders. This has been a very interesting and popular topic.

Hopetoun House

Our trip was at Hopetoun House on Monday 14th November. The house was called Hopetoun House because Lord and lady Hopetoun lived there for many years during the Victorian times.

We got to dress up as servants and butlers. We made butter which took forever to make but finally Miss Brown our teacher made it into butter.

The lady that showed us around was called Mrs Ward. After lunch we went down through the servants passages under the ground. Under the ground we did lots of servant jobs such as polishing shoes and silver, making a fire and doing the ironing and the washing up. We made the floor shiny and clean!



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McLaren High

Advanced Higher Biology Visit to Vane Farm

On Thursday 8 and Wednesday 14 September we went to visit Vane Farm RSPB Reserve at Loch Leven near Kinross. During our visit we investigated the biodiversity of the loch and surrounding area in relation to what we are currently studying in our Advanced Higher Biology course. This included pond-dipping, sampling for invertebrates and using open quadrats for sampling plant species in a given area. On Vane Hill we studied plant succession by visiting different areas, each demonstrating specific developments in a forest ecosystem.



While there we worked with biology students from other schools and RSPB staff from the farm who helped us in our investigations and gave us a unique insight into the history of the reserve. From this experience we gained an understanding of real 'hands on' fieldwork which related to our studies.

David MacAskill and Emma Buchanan S6

Charity Events

McLaren High School Charities Committee would like to thank all staff and pupils for their donations and help on stalls during the charity event on Friday 5 October. With everyone's help we raised £1,140.95. Half of this money will go to MacMillan Cancer Research. The other half will help to fund former pupils Sean, Neil and Darren Ferrier's trek across the Sahara Desert, which they are undertaking to raise money for the Cardiomyopathy Association in memory of their brother Callum. Bracklinn secured some more house points by winning the bake off. A big thanks to everyone who took part in the 'Keepy Uppie' Challenge – the winner was Callum Wyllie S5.



On Friday 12 October pupils were invited to pay £1 to come to school wearing jeans and/or something pink instead of their normal school uniform. During the day we raised the sum of £604.46 which will be split between 2 charities, Jeans for Genes and Breast Cancer Research. Thanks to all who took part.

Europoean Day of Languages

McLaren High celebrated the European day of Languages with a series of events. Thanks to the following pupils who read the daily announcements over the tannoy system: Laura MacDougall (Spanish), Maya Campbell (Japanese), Marina MacLaren (Ukrainian).



Thanks also to the following pupils who helped to teach the teachers a foreign language: Laura MacDougall, Hannah Williams, Aimee MacLeod, Beccy McKay and Marina MacLaren.

All S1 classes participated in a cultural quiz on Europe. The quiz was won by the team consisting of: Callum Convoy, Callum Hall, Emme Knowles, Iona Halliday, Cameron Lally and Alan Chodynieski. Well done! Thanks also to Mrs Lorna Leckie and all her team in the cafeteria who prepared a range of snacks from different European countries.

McLaren High School PTA

The PTA would like to thank all the parents and staff who donated bottles and baking to our bottle stall and supported us by buying raffle tickets for our fabulous Kindle. We managed to raise the fabulous sum of £660.00! A big thank you also to the members of the PTA and their families who kindly gave up their Sunday (in the rain) to help on the stall!!

Senior Health Conference

We recently held our Senior Health Conference. This was a very worthwhile experience as we learned important 'skills for life' on topics such as relationships, the consequences of alcohol or drug-taking, and mental health and wellbeing. Guest speakers were informative, approachable and happy to share their own personal experiences. These certainly are lessons which will help us in our lives beyond school.

Nathan O'Donnell, Abshire Farah and Zoe Steel S6



October Inter-House Event

On Monday 3 October pupils from all years were involved in Inter-house activities. Outdoor sports, hockey for girls and football for boys, dodged the showers and managed to produce lots of excitement and goals in what were once again hotly contested encounters.



In hockey it was Dochart who finished the victors taking maximum points in the S2 and S3 events. Bracklinn finished 2nd and Leny 3rd.



In football Bracklinn and Leny dominated overall with Leny just edging out Bracklinn for first place. This doesn't give the full picture however, as Dochart came very close in several games but always drawing or losing by the odd goal.



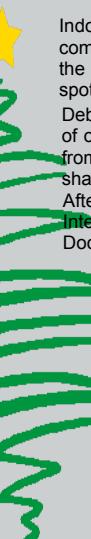
Caricature drawing was again a very popular event. Our budding artists used photos of members of staff teasing out their prominent features. As ever Mr Carroll (Physics), Mr McMillan (IT) and Mr Williamson were popular targets singled out for specialist treatment. At the end of the day the judges fell in favour of Bracklinn, with contributions from Dochart putting them in 2nd place and Leny 3rd. The very high standard of art work was superb throughout. One of the highlights of this competition is the 'hanging of the pictures' in the public gallery. As ever this drew large crowds as well as plenty of smiles in the realistic way our artists had interpreted their subjects!



Indoors excitement was provided in the Inter-house Chess competition and, despite the closeness and intensity of several of the matches, it was the players from Dochart who claimed top spot. Bracklinn 2nd and Leny 3rd.

Debating saw motions presented, argued and justified by some of our confident speakers. Most houses had several to choose from! At the conclusion Leny won with Dochart and Bracklinn sharing second spot.

After all the points were totalled the scores after this very first Inter-house event of the session are:- Bracklinn 83, Leny 77 and Dochart 57.



Visit of Commonwealth Track Cyclist – Charline Joiner

A first for the Trossachs McLaren Community 3G MUSP

After years of negotiations with Stirling Council and other partners, plans for the first 3G full size synthetic pitch at McLaren are making progress. Following a series of consultations and meetings between interested groups, McLaren PTA/PC (MCMWG) is leading the fundraising campaign to enable our communities to have an accessible full size synthetic pitch. It is hoped the pitch will be built on the area of ground, which currently has a small all weather pitch and grass pitch at McLaren. By building this, we will enable sport, including hockey, athletics, football and non-contact rugby practice to be played no matter the weather – no more worries about water logged pitches. The pitch will comply with governing body regulations including FIFA, and FIH (Federation of International Hockey). There will also be a grass pitch suitable for school rugby and football. Unfortunately and regrettably the pitch will not be suitable for tennis or netball.

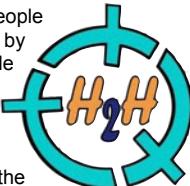
The total project cost is in the region of £500,000 - £550,000. The PTA/PC (MCMWG) has been given a target figure of approximately 90% to be secured by mid December. We are hopeful of successful bids to Sportscotland (£152,000) Cashback for Communities (£150,000) and have currently secured £90,463. There is a shortfall of approximately £80,000. The Working Group is working on other funding applications and is launching a series of community fundraisers, including Lucky Sods!

We are keen to see this project succeed and we are sure you want this project and will appreciate the benefits of this facility to all living and visiting the area. If you are in a position to help, or if you would like to make a contribution or comment on the project, we would love to hear from you. You can contact either McLaren High School - Yvonne King 01877 330156, Pam Campbell 01786 841542/ pamcampbellcin@hotmail.co.uk or Janet Al-Asadi (joe@blairhill.fsnet.co.uk)



Illustration by Cara Fraser

Rural H2H is a brand new support service dedicated to young people (11-18years) who live in the McLaren catchment area affected by parental divorce or separation. It has been designed by young people for young people and offers you the opportunity to meet with another young person (a Lifeguide) who has been through the same thing. The Lifeguide is there to help make sense of what's happened and support you in a group or individually.



Rural H2H is being part financed by the Scottish Government and the European Community, Forth Valley and Lomond LEADER 2007-2013 programme, also Stirling Council and The Parish Development Fund and is the youth arm of Heart to Heart.

If you would like more info about H2H or are interested in volunteering with us please contact: Ruth Kennedy, Rural Lifeguide Coordinator, rurallife@hearttoheart.org.uk, 01877-339966, 07790437713

The Hornet's Nest



THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE SHOWBUSINESS

For Cheryl Cole, read Marilyn Monroe

For Jedward, read The Walker Brothers

For Will Young, read Bob Dylan

For Beyoncé, read Dusty Springfield

For Justin Timberlake, read Gene Kelly

For Ross Kemp, read Al Pacino

For the Spice Girls, read The Rolling Stones

For JLS, read The Byrds

For Martin Shaw, read Humphrey Bogart

For Katy Perry, read Joni Mitchell

For John Barrowman, read Robert de Niro

For the Saturdays, read Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young

For Graham Norton, read David Letterman

For Russell Brand, read Lenny Bruce

For Big Brother, read The Sopranos

For The 'X' Factor, read 'Woodstock'

For Lady Gaga, read a Cheese Grater

For Jonathon Ross, read a Cow Pat

For Jordan, read a Barbie Doll on Drugs

For Peter Andre, read anything you flush down the toilet

For 'Chatty Man', read a departure from reality

For 'I'm a Celebrity....Get me out of here' read the demise

of entertainment as we know it.

Get the picture?



The Garden in winter

Writing this on 20th November with the temperature still in double figures most days, and some nights, it's easy to forget that winter really should be on us any day now. I've long since given up planning according to the long or even medium-term weather forecast; a couple of days ahead seems to be as much as can be relied upon. So even more reason to be well prepared for whatever the elements may throw at us.

Make sure you and your garden are prepared for the cold:

Remember to put lagging around any outside taps and water pipes, though you should all have learned this after last winter!

Birds: when the berries on plants have gone and natural food is in short supply the birds need a hand in these cold months. Check that your feeders are regularly cleaned out to prevent a build up of damp, mouldy seed, and then keep them full of fresh nuts or seed. They also need a supply of water both to drink and to bathe in. Remember that a thriving bird population in your garden is not only attractive but will help to keep the garden pests at bay.

Less-hardy plants may need a bit of protection, especially in their first winter after planting, so check that you've got a supply of horticultural fleece for taller plants (and for in the greenhouse) and straw or garden compost for perennials (eg *Gunnera manicata*).

Planted containers should be raised off the ground to aid drainage, and may need protection from the frosts; move them into a sheltered spot if you can.

Give your **alpine plants** a bit of extra attention; their crowns are susceptible to rotting so ensure they are free from fallen leaves to allow good air circulation.

Keep raking off fallen leaves from the lawn and make leaf mould for use in years to come, and dispose of any diseased leaves in your brown bin or by burning – don't recycle the diseases by composting them.

Planting/pruning. If you have any large, overgrown deciduous shrubs that need renovation pruning now is a good time to do it. The rules of thumb for pruning are to remove the **3 Ds**: Dead, Diseased and Damaged wood, cutting back into live wood; and remove no more than a third of the shrub each year.

Also prune roses now to avoid wind rock.

Bare-root hedging plants are now in stock, so to save yourself money and for ease of planting, now is the time to plant your new hedge.

Spring-flowering bulbs are still available and can still be planted up in containers now for a great display in spring. **Tip:** if you need a new container and want to be fairly sure it will be frost proof, try the salt-glazed, British-made **Errington Reay** pots, guaranteed for 10 years.

Indoors: Move prepared Hyacinths and Paperwhite Narcissi into the light and warmth for flowers at Christmas.

Orchids come into their own at this time of year. For some fantastic colour in the house for yourself or as a gift, an orchid will provide a great display; buy one in December and you'll still be enjoying the flowers in February if you treat it well (just don't be tempted to over-water it). **Tip:** to keep the flowers going for as long as possible keep them relatively cool; don't be fooled into thinking that because they come from the tropics that they need it as hot as possible!

Winter flowering shrubs: If you feel your garden lacks a bit of colour over winter, take some inspiration from what's in flower in other gardens. A few ideas include *Mahonia*, *Viburnum* (several varieties), *Lonicera fragrantissima* and one of my favourites *Sarcococca* – the Winter box – with its sweetly scented white flowers.

Reminders:

Rock salt and snow shovels were in very short supply last year; don't leave it too late to stock up this year.

Similarly make sure you don't run out of firewood, peat or coal.

Benview Garden Centre

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Trossachs Search and Rescue



When Aiyala qualified as a water rescue dog with Trossachs Search and Rescue Team she looked forward to providing safety cover for team members working beside water and even rescuing people from rivers, lochs and the mighty sea. She was desperate to wear a dress uniform coat when attending fire station open days and other events, just like her Urban Search & Rescue Dog pals - who have attended incidents such as the Stockline factory blast in Glasgow.

Unfortunately, even the largest dog coat made by the Team's usual supplier was like a small saddle on Aiyala's back. So, the hunt was on for a much larger coat.

Trossachs Search and Rescue Team approached their human members' outdoor clothing supplier - Keela from Glenrothes, Fife in the hope they might help, knowing they make high visibility clothing for the emergency services.

Sam Fernando, a Director at Keela, immediately said, "Yes. I've asked the girls in the factory and they would love to help. When can Aiyala come to visit? Make it as soon as possible please as we can't wait to meet her." Aiyala is a three year old Newfoundland which the team has spent the past year training to enter water, swim to a person then tow them back to shore. She can also operate from the team's boat. Her only operational deployment to date was providing safety cover at the Kirkintilloch Canal Festival in August, during which the team's boat crew rescued three separate capsized canoeists.

Unfortunately, no rescues for Aiyala but Grace and she were able to provide comfort and reassurance to a 14 yr old canoeist rescued by the team's boat crew.

Grace Campbell - Aiyala's handler, and her boyfriend John Pllu - also a team member, travelled through to Keela at Glenrothes with Aiyala. Also accompanying them were Urban SAR dog Mitch and his handler Stuart Ballantyne.

The visiting party were met at Keela by Sam, who took them through to the factory to meet the women who were going to make the coat. Mitch is a Border Collie and his role was to display his dress uniform coat so the girls could see what was required - albeit in a size to fit a Newfoundland.

The women set about measuring Aiyala - the length of her back 36", her girth 34" and instead of having a single chest strap like the collies had on their coats, they decided that an underbelly strap would be needed to stop the coat slipping sideways - as Aiyala is conscious about her figure we'll keep her belly measurement a secret....

Badges were sent to Keela by the dog team sponsors WAGG Foods and Strathclyde Fire & Rescue to be sewn on the coat.

So, a week later Aiyala, Grace and John returned to the factory. They were met by Sam and her merry band of dressmakers - who presented them with a beautifully made dress uniform coat and a special fleece blanket to warm her up

when she comes out of the water.

Clearly chuffed that she had a dress coat just like her search dog colleagues she offered to repay the women by rescuing them from the loch at nearby Lochore Meadows Country Park.

So, the Keela factory emptied and everyone toddled off to see two employees get dressed up in drysuits and go for a dip on a November's day.

Wearing her operational float coat Aiyala plunged into the water, swam out to them and brought them each back to shore. She also demonstrated that she can even tow up to three people at a time.

According to Sam Fernando: "We should have paid Trossachs Search and Rescue as well as gifting them the coat and blanket as it was one of the best team building sessions we've ever done. The women thoroughly enjoyed meeting Aiyala, measuring her and making her coat and blanket - there was a real buzz around the factory. We've booked a return visit for next summer when hopefully the water will be much warmer."

Laura Brassington, Sponsorship Officer at WAGG Foods said: "We've sponsored the dogs from Trossachs Search and Rescue Team for eleven years by way of providing them with food every month and the handlers with fleeces and polo shirts. In a visit to them in October I was amazed at how effective the search dogs were at locating people in undergrowth and in confined spaces at fire service training centres. Aiyala 'rescued' me from the River Forth at Aberfoyle, surprising me how she could pull me through the fast flowing water. My boyfriend fell in love with her and has even named his new car after her."

Stuart Ballantyne, Chairman of Trossachs Search and Rescue Team said: "Aiyala's ability to quickly enter water to rescue someone will both improve the safety of our members when working next to water but provides an additional resource when we are assisting the emergency services in search and rescue incidents.

Our Urban Search Dogs now operate for four of Scotland's eight fire and rescue services through sponsorship by Strathclyde Fire and Rescue.

Given we are a charity staffed by volunteers and receive no government funding, unlike mountain rescue teams, the goodwill and sponsorship of companies such as Keela, WAGG Foods and organisations such as Strathclyde and Central Scotland Fire & Rescue is very welcome and vital to our survival."

Here's a link to a website with film of Aiyala in action: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-oFqjhVZrQ&feature=youtube_gdata_player

Stuart Ballantyne
07796 240 023

Notes:

Aiyala lives with her handler Grace and her boyfriend in Girvan, Ayrshire but are regular visitors to the Trossachs on their days off. She has participated in joint training exercise with the RNLI, being deployed from a lifeboat at sea. Aiyala has been training all summer to jump from the team's boat in order to access areas of water the boat cannot get into quickly enough to rescue a casualty because of overhanging trees, for example. The team's USAR dogs have attended numerous incidents including the Stockline factory blast in Glasgow, searches for murder victims Joanne Nelson and Suzanne Pilley in Hull and Arrochar respectively. They have attended incidents including searching for people trapped in other collapsed building/ landslide/ wall incidents. The team operates from bases at MOD Forthside, Stirling and the Fire Station, Aberfoyle courtesy of the Royal Regt of Scotland and Central Scotland Fire & Rescue respectively. The team also has an Accelerant Detection Dog in training. The team's new website at www.trossachsrescue.org.uk and older site at www.trossachssar.btck.co.uk provide additional information about the team.



Callouts

Trossachs SAR USAR dogs were called out by Central Scotland Fire & Rescue at 4.50pm on Wednesday, 2nd November to assist with a search of rubble from a large wall that had collapsed onto a graveyard close to the town centre of Alloa. Whilst there was no report of anyone trapped or missing, given the size of the task to hand search the rubble, the dogs were requested to ensure no-one was under the rubble or, if they were, to pinpoint the location. Search dogs Glen and Mitch attended along with their handlers and a safety buddy. Both dogs searched the pile but gave no indication. The pile was however covered by a considerable amount of earth and so another couple of feet were removed and the dogs conducted another two searches. Neither dog gave any indication that someone was trapped. Once all the rubble had been hand searched it was confirmed by the Fire & Rescue Service that no-one was there.

Thankfully there hadn't been a recent burial in a grave under the rubble.....

The photo shows dogs Mitch and Glen with safety buddy Nigel and handler Iain at the end of the incident.



Welcome to the news from *Glendrick Roost*

Autumn is now speedily heading towards winter and the wet weather continues leaving fields and rivers full of excess water. This makes conditions very difficult.

Most of our animals have fared well over the summer months as, though wet, it has not been too cold or windy - a bad combination. We have rescued a couple of buns: one being an ENORMOUS giant rabbit easily the size of a West Highland terrier!! Being so large and a reddy fawn colour we have named her Redwood. After three weeks in our care she produced offspring and her two babies are now seven weeks old and are called Poplar and Cedar. They are two beautiful buns and a hit at each fundraiser they have been to. The other rabbit is also female and albino - she is called Bindweed. We took in a rather appealing

Maximillian parrot who now has the name Hogwort. He is a 'feather plucker' which is just what it says - he plucks his own feathers out. This is a stress symptom but then may become a habit. Hogwort doesn't wear any trousers he keeps plucking them off!! He does look a little strange. He has settled well and is living next to Bahni and Orinoco our other two parrots.

We have rescued yet another donkey and a mule! Donkeys are struggling just now and the recession is being blamed as one more mouth to feed is unwanted! Our new boy is a very dark brown three year old whom we have called Chocolate Pudding. He was rescued from Ireland originally and though we are not sure of his history he is once more a very trusting chap regardless. He has already been on a fundraising event when he attended an Open Day at Balgair Castle Caravan Park in Fintry. His next fundraiser

was on Saturday November 19th when he welcomed Santa to Stirling Dobbies then he trotted off for Sunday November 20th when Santa visited Dobbies at Braehead. At the beginning of December he will again go to see Santa only this time at Perth Dobbies, date dependant on the weather. Please make a date and come and meet him AND Santa. Please check our website for details nearer the time: www.glendrickroost.org.uk

Our little mule Donut is Chocolate Pudding's mistake. Before we took him on he visited a

pretty welsh Pony called Angel and Donut is the result. A beautiful 6 month old, at present she is a chocolate mule though she may change to grey as she has flecks of grey through her coat. Her mum is grey. Muffin, our last rescued donkey took up residence with Justin our original donkey, Echo and

Wispa, two of our Standard Shetland ponies and Chocolate Pudding and spent the summer at Briarlands near Stirling. They will all be coming back to Fintry for the winter within the next couple of weeks.

Unfortunately Biscuit, our beautiful brain damaged greyhound, had some sort of a turn and started to go downhill till eventually we had to let her go. She died in October as did one of our beautiful feral cats, Marmaduke. Early in November one of our lovely donkeys, Patches, ate a poisonous plant - privet. Normally this gives them a sore tum but in her case she took a severe allergic reaction and had to be put down. Such a sorry time.

There have been several visits to Hessilhead the wildlife hospital with animals and birds that have been rescued. One such rescue was two baby wood pigeons that had been nesting in an old tree that council workers chopped down. The workmen found the

babies still in the nest and sent the whole lot to Hessilhead via us - NEST and all. There are some very compassionate people out there. Thank you all.

A cygnet was found stuck in some sheep netting on the West Highland Way near Duntreath; this too made its way to Hessilhead followed two days later by a huge hedgehog that had been caught in a rat trap and dislocated his front leg.

Our winter programme has been worked out and Dobbies garden centres play an enormous part. We have had visits to Dundee, Edinburgh, Ayr, Stirling and Milngavie and still have visits to Stirling, Perth and Braehead Dobbies before Christmas. We were also at Ikea in Braehead on 19th and 20th November [Chocolate Pudding was at Dobbies there on the same weekend!!!] Our Fancy Dress Wild West Ho-down in September was enjoyed by all and a handsome profit was gained for our funds. Our winter fundraiser 'Guess the Whisky' hopes to realise £1000 if we can sell all the names. Please try £1 a name on a list of 100 per whisky with ten whiskys to be won please contact me 07748 351287.

Please contact me if you would like details of the where or when of any of the above events. Carol, one of our volunteers, and Andy, her husband, have had a beautiful baby daughter they have named Ailsa Joyce. Our congratulations go to the happy [tired] family. The wee furries look forward to Carol's return once she is able to tear herself away from the baby!!!

Volunteers are always needed to help care for the many animals at the rescue. Please consider spending a little time looking after those creatures less fortunate than yourselves.

You can contact me on 07748 351287

Thank you
Mione Morrison,
Centre Manager



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Some tips for staying safe this Christmas

Fairy Lights

- Ⓐ Check the fuses are the right type (see the box for the maximum size of fuse you should use).
- Ⓑ If bulbs blow, replace them.
- Ⓒ Don't leave fairy lights on when you go out or when you go to sleep.
- Ⓓ Don't let the bulbs touch anything that can burn easily, like paper.
- Ⓔ Don't overload sockets.

Decorations

Decorations
Decorations made of light tissue paper or cardboard burn easily.

- ⓘ Cardboard burn easily.
 - ⓘ Don't attach them to lights or heaters.
 - ⓘ Don't put them immediately above or around the fireplace.
 - ⓘ **Keep them away from candles.**

Caring for Your Tree

During the winter months, do not place your tree close to a heat source, including a fireplace or heat vent. The heat will dry out the tree, causing it to be more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks. Be careful not to drop or flick cigarette ashes near a tree. Do not put your live tree up too early or leave it up for longer than two weeks. Keep the tree stand filled with water at all times.



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Central Scotland Fire and Rescue Service
Protecting the heart of Scotland

Trossachs Search & Rescue



On Sunday 6 November six First Responders with 3 4x4s and trailer were deployed from Aberfoyle to assist Scottish Ambulance Service (Balfron) with a male with a serious leg injury at Mugdock Country Park. Personnel who attended were Jim Wilson, Iain Ballantyne, Steven Ballantyne, Elaine Bruce, Graham Gregory and Nigel Campbell.

St Mary's Episcopal Church

Richard Grosse, Rector of St Mary's



The theme of this column for the past months will now be familiar. A wireless programme about Aberfoyle was made in 1939 by the BBC. Since the last edition of the 'News' some have been in touch with memories of the programme and the voices heard. Today the scene changes from the farms of the lowlands around the village to the hills beyond, and particularly the Dukes Pass.

Tourists have been flocking to Aberfoyle ever since Sir Walter Scott first penned 'The Lady of the Lake' in 1810. At the time the horse and carriage was the only means of reaching this area. This though was the age of 'Railway Mania', and by the 1st October 1882, travellers had the option of reaching Aberfoyle by steam train. Travellers to Callander had enjoyed the locomotive since the opening of the station there on the 1st June 1870. Indeed Callander station was, by 1882, being extended to cope with increasing demand. Thus the road was for some half a century eclipsed as a means of travel. Notwithstanding the horse for the time being still held a trump card. Tourists wishing to go Stronachlachar, Inversnaid or indeed rejoin the railway at Callander could only proceed by road. The stage coach drawn by four horses (the four-in-hand) remained a common sight in the area, even though becoming rapidly outmoded elsewhere. Finlay McColl worked as a coachman in the latter part of that era. 'I started as a brake-boy when I was twelve years old in 1886. There was one four in hand and a good many brakes' A brake was an open cart with longitudinal seats behind the driver. By contrast the four in hand was enclosed and marginally more comfortable. 'I never got on to the four in hand until 1900. Gregor McGregor and Peter McAlpine drove the four in hand and after that Duncan McLaren and I drove it practically up to their sale in 1931. It was a busy life in the summer time. I've known as many as sixty horses – just before the Great War that is. What we called Irish heavy vanners were the best type of horse, and – believe me – they needed to be good beasts for the Duke's Pass.' He described the journey over The Pass. 'You pass the Grey Mare's Tail and McGregor's Leap – and you look down on Loch Drunkie... there's a queer name for a loch: they say it's half filled with whisky and half with water, though I never tasted any whisky in it. But they say in the old days there was an illicit still on the shores of the loch, and one night when the watchers saw the excise men coming, they tipped the whole quantity of whisky in the loch, and that's how it got its name. Many is the time that I have been over the Duke's Pass and many is the story I could tell about it. Maybe some of the stories weren't the gospel truth, mind. I remember pointing out to a party of Americans a huge boulder that stands at the side of the road and telling them it was Rob Roy's writing desk where he wrote his love letters to Flora Macdonald. That boulder might be eight foot high and I don't suppose Rob Roy could have reached the top of it. But those Americans were thrilled at the thought of it. Aye well everything changes, and the motorists didn't understand the horses or the brakes and in the end they had to go'. When the horses were sold off in the yard at the Billie Nicol Jarvie Hotel in 1931, it was said that McColl and his colleagues openly wept. The internal combustion engine had been progressively improved and by the early 1930s Morris, Ford and Austin were all offering a car at about £100.00. This was still a considerable sum of money, but these cars brought motoring within the reach of many for the first time. Within twenty years the road would have fully regained the upper hand and had signed the death warrant of Aberfoyle Railway station by 1951.

The advertisement for Aberfoyle Roofing features a red liver bird logo at the top. Below it is a black rounded rectangle containing the text 'FLAT ROOF SPECIALISTS' in white. The main text 'ABERFOYLE ROOFING' is in large red letters. Below the company name is a red banner with the address '20 BAILIE NICOL JARVIE COURT, LOCHARD ROAD, STIRLING, FK8 3SZ'. A list of services is provided in yellow text: '• INSURANCE APPROVED CONTRACTOR •', '• EMERGENCY REPAIRS • GUTTERS REPAIRED/REPLACED •', '• SLATING & TILING • UPVC CLADDING • CEMENT WORK •', and 'EXTENSIVE LIST OF REFERENCES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST'. Below this is a grid of four smaller images: 'SLATING/TILING' (a roof with workers), 'FLAT ROOFS' (a grey flat roof), 'BEFORE' (a roof with a hole), and 'AFTER' (a roof with a new window). At the bottom, a large red banner contains the phone number '01877 382 645' and '24/7 EMERGENCY: 07739 690 196'. The bottom-most text reads 'SEE OUR ADVERT IN THE YELLOW PAGES, THE WEE BLUE BOOK AND LOCAL PRESS'.



Aberfoyle and Port of Menteith Parish Church

From the Manse.....



"I have endeavoured in this Ghostly little column to raise the Ghost of an Idea, which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me. May it haunt their houses pleasantly and no one wish to lay it".

With apologies to Charles Dickens, and to his fans:

A(nother) CHRISTMAS CAROL

Stanza 1: THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

Eleanora Goudge staggered home from the office party more than a little the worse for wear. The chiming of the church clock made her head want to burst. 'I hate Christmas – reindeer, robins, stupid Jingle Bells,' she thought as she flopped into bed, glad of the darkness of her room. Someone was there, she realized. A man – a woman – she wasn't sure. An androgynous figure – like those angels in Burn-Jones paintings, she thought. To her terror, it held out its hand. 'Come with me,' it said in a low soft voice. And to her surprise, she did.

They passed through the wall and stood upon an open road. It was cold and clear, and Eleanora looked up at the sky and thought how she had never seen so many stars. Some raggle-tangle shepherds-o were coming along the road and the Ghost took her hand and they followed them, into a stable behind a welcoming inn. There was a strange light there in the stable, a curious flutter in the air, and a woman and man smiled at a baby lying on a bed of straw. It seemed as if time itself held its breath. Like everyone else there she could not speak. There were no words. She just looked on. 'Your lip is trembling,' the Ghost commented. 'And what is that on your cheek?'

'Nothing. A pimple,' she replied in a strange voice. 'I forgot to take my make-up off properly.'

'Let's go on,' said the Ghost with a funny smile on its face.

Eleanora Goudge looked up. On a bare hill, three trees saddened the sky. She looked down and saw a tomb. The stone was rolled away. Her attention was caught by the fact that there was one set of footprints in the dew coming AWAY from the tomb. A gardener was tending the vines and he turned to her, smiling, hands outstretched.

'Bah. Rubbish,' she exclaimed. 'It must be the tequila. I have done away with childish things,' she added, with a touch of wit she felt rather proud of. The Ghost touched her hand. 'Let's go, then, shall we?'

They were on a road, and she recognized every tree, every bend in the river. 'I was born here,' she said, in wonder. They entered a small bare hall next to a church. A group of children sat, rapt, listening to a story about a kingdom where the first were last and the last first. She nudged the Ghost – as far as one can nudge a ghost – and said, 'That's me, there,' and she pointed at a sturdy little girl with red hair and freckles, who was listening intently to the story. 'Of course, I can't be doing with any of that now,' she added. 'Good stories, of course, but a baby in a manger, resurrection, church? What's the point in all that?'

'Poetry,' said the Ghost, rather too enigmatically for her taste. 'Take me home,' she said. 'I've had enough. And I am never drinking tequila again'. Overcome with exhaustion she fell into a deep sleep.

Stanza 2: THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Eleanora Goudge woke herself up with a prodigiously loud snore. She was glad no one was there to hear THAT. She looked at her bedside clock: 01:00, the ghostly green figures gleamed. She put on slippers and dressing gown and went to open the door to go and make a nice cup of tea. A strange voice bade her enter. She obeyed.

It was a room. In the corner a mighty Christmas tree groaned with baubles, lights and tinsel. Heaped up on the floor, as if to form a mighty throne, was a pile of presents wrapped in gaudy paper. The table was loaded with food, enough to feed 5,000 rugby players, not including women and children. Music played, or at least Rudolf

the Red Nosed Reindeer, which seemed to segue into someone's dream about a white Christmas. 'Come in, come in,' said her host, a Ghost. 'I am the Ghost of Christmas Present. Look at me.' She did, and she saw he was a jolly giant, not green like the sweetcorn variety, but red, with boots and a funny hat and a big bushy beard. He had a smiling, genial kind of face. He handed her some holly and some ivy, and the Christmas tree and all the lovely food and the presents and the room vanished. Now she was in a busy department store. Times were bleak, judging by people's dress, but there was plenty of activity at the tills. It was the click of plastic rather than the swish of notes, however.

Two women were chatting. 'Well, I've got my little Joe a Playstation for his present from Santa, and from us he's getting a quadbike. It's hard, but you want your kids to know the real meaning of Christmas and all that. I don't want him to go without.' They walked away. Eleanora blinked again and found herself in a church, late at night. A few chilled people listened to a reading and then waivered self-consciously through a Christmas carol. 'What's all this about?' she asked her genial host. 'Meaning,' he said. And with a merry ho-ho-ho, he disappeared.

Stanza 3: THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE

It was nearly one in the morning. Eleanora Goudge sat up in her bed. She was ready. Oh, she was ready this time. 'Things come in threes, don't they? The Three Wise Men. The Three Bears. The Three Tenors. Gin and tonic and a slice of lemon. The Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit Oops,' she thought, 'Where did that one come from ...?'

There was no Ghost. Not this time. No one to hold her hand. That was all just a manifestation of her subconscious, after all. Nevertheless, she unaccountably found herself in a lecture hall. A handsome, articulate man was giving very good reasons against believing in God. His audience nodded sagely, admiring his eloquence and clarity of thought and laughed at the idiocy of those who believed in something beyond that which one can see. To her horror she jumped to her feet. 'They aren't idiots. Faith in God is about something beyond ourselves. It's about poetry and meaning and truths that shimmer. It's about finding a meaningful way to live.' And everyone turned and looked at Eleanora Goudge, aghast at her temerity.

She blinked. She was at some school gates, now. The mothers and grannies there were talking about the school play. 'It's some old play, about a teenage unmarried mother who has a baby boy who turns out to be God,' said one. 'Have you ever heard anything so daft?' said another. 'We've always had a mini X Factor before. Why are they changing things?' 'A man who thinks he's God,' said yet another. 'What's new about that?' And they all laughed and decided that next year they would make sure they had the X Factor again.

They disappeared, and she found herself back in her home church. The minister was there, alone. He was packing up his robes and some books, muttering to himself. 'Consumers. I suppose that is what we all are these days. Consumers. They want a funeral, or a wedding – who will do it? The church. Do they support their church? No, but they expect it to be there when they need it. The church supports them – and always has done. Now there is no one left to keep this church going. I might as well try alchemy,' Eleanora Goudge watched as he turned at the door one last time. He looked back at the stained glass windows and the pews and the stones that must have heard a thousand thousand silent prayers. With tears in his eyes he turned off the lights for ever and went out... And as the church lights clicked off - A baby cried. Lovers got engaged. An old man died. But the church was no more for them. And the people discovered that there was a large and aching yearning in their hearts for the strange and ancient stories which had succoured and challenged their ancestors. And when the snows fell in December and the Feast of Plenty was celebrated, the people wondered where all the poetry and all the meaning had gone. 'Surely there is something more to life than this?' they told each other.

Tales frae the Squirrel Nut Family

Christmas with the Squirrel Nut Family by Hazel Nut

Christmas wi' my family's aye the same – it's me daein all the work, whilst Chester sits there wi' his Ochenshoogle Forest Times newspaper, and the wee bairns tell me their ever-expanding Christmas list. Honestly, Acorn told me he wants a bed made entirely out of nuts so that he doesn't have to get up for a snack every night! Then he realised he'd let slip that he's the one who's nibbling our nut stash every night and was aye quiet after that. But it's no' just the presents, it's the food as well. Ye' canna really pop oot noo tae get any extra ingredients fur dinner noo that the snows lying thick and freezing everywhere, so I have tae make do wi' what we've got. So we have roasted nuts, rowan berry pie, elderberry juice, and conkers and sloe berry soup – yum!

I'm busy mashin' the rowan berries fur the pie when Connie (short fur Conkerella) pipes up, "Ma, why are blue berries blue?"

I'm aboot tae reply, but Hawthorn buts in, "Because they're blue wi' the cold of course!" And we all have a chuckle. I look oot the wee kitchen windae at the white flurry of a blizzard blowing around outside and instantly feel so warm and cosy inside oor cosy wee home in one part of the hollowed out Great Oak Tree, right on the edge of Ochenshoogle forest.

It's Christmas Eve, and Chester, ma husband, if aff daein 'secret stuff' in the bedroom, and the wee bairns are arguein' over who's been the most well-behaved all year (they're only three months old, mind, so they havenae got much tae go by of being good), but it's their first Christmas, so they're all excited.

I finish mashin' the berries, and carefully pat it out onto the pastry I've already made.

"Ma, see when Squirrel Claus comes the nicht," Acorn says, bounding up to me and nearly flicking the pie off the bench wi' his tail, "How will he get in?"

"Through the chimney of course!" I laugh, and waft a paw in the direction of our wee fire place where a bright orange fire glows.

"What?" Acorn looks horrified. "But he'll burn his paws!"

"Well, he's got his heat-proof wellies on!" I smile, and Acorn's worried expression changes to glee. "Now," I say, looking at the clock on our carved oak wood wall after putting the pie in the aga to bake, "It's past yer bed time already noo! Time to hang up yer stockins!"

The wee bairns get awfy excited then, squealing and knocking into each other in a mad rush to get their wee stockins. I made them last week – red wool, with a big Squirrel Claus sewn on Acorn's, lots o' wee elves wi' presents on Rowan's, a Christmas tree dripping in decorations on Hawthorn's, and the nativity scene on Connie's. They were all awfy pleased wi' them when I showed them their stockings.

"Noo, careful that you put them where Squirrel Claus can see them, and dae ye' want tae gie him some cranberry juice an' an acorn pie? He'll be awfy tired and hungry after lugging all yer presents roond!"

So I help Connie get a glass down and fill it wi' tasty cranberry juice (saved over frae the summer) and Hawthorn picks the biggest, fattest acorn pie fae the plate. Then they carefully place them in front o' the fire place, and hang their wee stockins on the hearth. I eventually get them all tucked up in bed, after much excited squeals, and Rowan has to check several times that her stockins in the right place and Squirrel Claus will DEFINITELY see it.

Anyway, once they're all in bed, I can get on wi' the Christmas tree! It's no' a tree of course, because they trees are huge, so it's a wee, teeny bit off a branch (but it seems big tae us squirrels). I drag it oot fae the cupboard where Chester hid it yesterday when he got it home. Then I go into the big chest where all the Christmas decorations are, and set tae work – wee glass baubles and sparkling tinsel, glitter is sprinkled all over the tree's delicate branches, and wee angels are hung. Then, in prime position, is the lovely, brilliantly bright, glittering star right at the top of the now splendid tree.

Just as I'm finishing, Chester comes in. "Ooh, that's an awfy bonny lookin' tree!" He grins.

"Aye! Noo, are ye' gonna help me decorate the rest o' the room? Ooh, ye couldnae go an' hang the wreath oot and put on the lights oot side could ye?" I ask, digging out more tinsel and draping it around the room.

"Aye, leave me tae dae the cold work oot in the snaw!" Chester says wi' a laugh, and heads oot.

As I hang the last of the glittered nuts from the roof, Chester pokes his head through the door, and says, "Och, ye' have tae come and see this, Hazel!"

So, wrappin' ma tartan scarf tightly round my neck, I follow him out and into the absolutely FREEZING snow. It's falling thick and fast and it's so dark as well, so I can barely see anything.

"Look," Chester smiles, and I look. I look up at our own little house in the tree, which is glittering with multi coloured lights which make the snow glow, and a beautiful wreath on the small wooden door. I look around the forest, smothered in a thick layer of sparkling snow, like a big white duvet. I see other little houses in the trees with their Christmas lights on, and so the forest looks magical – little splodges o' colour here and there, lighting up the night. It looks magical.

We pop off to bed too then, and soon I'm fast asleep – it's hard work wi' them bairns ye' ken! And when I wake up the next morning tae the squeals o' the bairns dragging their full stockings into oor bedroom, they look so happy and glee-full, that I think what Christmas is about: being with your family. Even if you're a squirrel.

How to make an egg cosy

What you'll need:

A square of felt measuring 15 x 20cm (your choice what colour!)

20cm of lace (optional)

Thread the same colour as your felt

Scissors

Imagine the scene: it's another cold, dark morning at 7.03am. You've just made a nice hot egg in an egg cup and are about to dig in, when you realise you've not washed a fresh shirt for the day. So you have to get up, and start faffing about with the washing machine. When you finally get back to your egg, you find it unpleasantly cold. If only you had had an egg cosy to keep it warm...

Well now you can! Follow these simple, easy, and quick steps to making an egg cosy!

1. Take the felt, and fold it in half. Cut the corners out of the two upper corners of the felt, making an oval shape at one end of your felt, and a square shape at the other. Pin in place.
2. Sew up the oval sides but leave the bottom open.
3. Sew the lace along the hem of the cosy.

And there you have it! Your own egg cosy in a matter of minutes! Makes a brilliant gift too, and you can make a Christmas version of it too by making it green and red, and even sewing a Christmas tree on one side of it.



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Hello Children,
How busy life
is just now.
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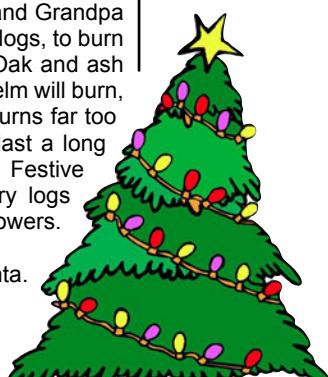
have we celebrated Saint Andrew's Day than it is time for Grandpa Otter to bring a Christmas tree into the holt and for the rest of us to start putting up the decorations. It really brightens up the whole place, and the twins get very excited. Duke and Katrine sent their letters off to Santa Claus ages ago, posting them up the chimney. The fire wasn't even lit at the time, the weather has been so mild, but both lists of Christmas wishes immediately vanished from sight. Mum said they were carried off to Santa by his special faerie helpers.

I was playing in the oak woodland on the Doon Hill and met Chester Squirrel Nut looking very perplexed. Only a few weeks ago, when there were plenty of lovely ripe hazel nuts to gather, Chester had hidden a cache inside a dead, leafless, hollow tree. Now, since all the oak trees had lost their leaves, all the trees looked just the same, so here was a bit of a problem. Which tree was hiding the store of nuts? This was a time to call out the whole gang, a thorough search had to be made. George the Hare and the Otter family poked about at ground level, while the Squirrel Nut family clambered through the bare branches. This was one big nut hunt.

The young squirrels did very well indeed. Acorn found a pile of acorns, hidden by a forgetful jay. Rowan came across a heap of rowan berries, picked up and then left behind by a mouse. Conkerella spent her time rummaging amongst the big, brown leaves beneath a big chestnut tree and, you've guessed it, collected masses of conkers! Baby Hawthorn carefully and quietly gathered as many haws from prickly hawthorn bushes as she could carry. How well these squirrel children are named. It was Mrs Squirrel Nut, whose name is Hazel, who finally discovered the hidden hoard of hazel nuts, secreted inside the dead tree. There was so much food that a good deal of it had to be hidden away for another day. I wonder if they will remember exactly where it is!

Dad is also getting excited, not just by Christmas but by the prospect of a December lunar eclipse. If the sky is clear, on the afternoon of Saturday 10th, the day of the full moon, make sure you are gazing up to the heavens. The shadow of the earth will start to fall onto the disc of the moon at 12.45, finishing at 16.18. Full eclipse will be between 14.06 and 14.58. Fingers crossed. We have all been helping Dad and Grandpa Otter to bring in a good stock of logs, to burn through the rest of the winter. Oak and ash logs are the best, chestnut and elm will burn, but not at all well. Birch wood burns far too fast but hawthorn logs always last a long time. However, around the Festive Season, apple, pear and cherry logs scent the air like a room full of flowers. Lovely.

I am off to write my letter to Santa. Have a happy Christmas,
Milton.



A Reply to the Scribe's Apprentice

You probably know that sinking feeling. There you are, at the end of a long cycle run, just starting to feel a touch saddle sore and the legs are already a bit weary. Or perhaps you're just finishing a hard training run, those new running shoes are starting to rub, you're dying for a cup of tea and you had promised the missis that you would be back by six o'clock. Anyway, as you come round that final corner in the track – the one before the last stretch home and a welcoming hot shower.....there it is – a big 'Road Closed' sign or one of its many cousins 'Authorised Personnel Only' (authorised by whom I always wonder), 'No access beyond this point' (precisely which particular point or in which direction is normally left to the imagination) or 'Works Ahead' (always make me think of Full Steam Ahead).

What are you to do? Retrace your tracks? (an additional 20 miles....and grind up that long hill you've just zoomed down). Take a diversion? (an extra 10 miles but you didn't bring the map so it might be another 25). Or explore just a wee bit further along the way and try to find another option?

Bear in mind that the sign will mean one of three things:

1. The road/track was being worked on at some stage in the past. This might be yesterday - but as it was late when 'they' finished there was no time to take down the signs and get back to the yard for 4.30. Or it could be last week – but the signs will be needed again next month so there is no point in wasting precious time and energy by taking them back to the depot and then back out again. Or it could be last year – and insufficient geological time has elapsed for them to rot completely and/or become overgrown with vegetation.
2. Work on road/track is planned for some stage in the future. Perhaps tomorrow and 'they' are just being well organised and saving time in the morning. Perhaps next week – because although it was intended to do some work today the digger broke down this morning and spare parts have to be ordered from Taiwan. Or perhaps next year – an emergency adjustment to the budget means that today's plans have been deferred indefinitely.
3. Work is ongoing today, but not necessarily here - it might be 5 miles further on. Or perhaps 'work' today is a meeting at HQ, repairing the aforementioned digger or doing a stock-check on 'Road Closed' signs. And even if the work is happening nearby, there is always the chance that just round the corner there might be a more suitable way around the obstacle.

This is where your powers of observation and deduction start to come into play. First, examine the sign carefully.

Is it rusty, bent, dented, leaning at an odd angle or almost completely obscured by several engrained layers of muck? If so it is probably category 1. You might also like consider whether it would be charitable to return it to its owner.

Is it new and shiny, standing straight and with bits of packaging materials and tape on the back? This is normally an indication that all other available signage is already 'in use' and suggests a category 2 notice.

Is it somewhere between these two extremes? Multiple muddy tyre marks, chewed up verges and small puddles of oil will support the conclusion that this is a category 3 sign.

As you tell from the above in 2 cases out of 3, there shouldn't be a problem in proceeding, and even in the third case there is at least an even chance that you will get through unimpeded.....so for every sign encountered there is only a 1 in 6 chance of there being activity ahead. But it does have to be said, in all cases PROCEED WITH CAUTION, watch out for any of the dreaded yellow vehicles and, if one is found, then pause to observe it closely.

First – are there any mosses or lichens growing on the 'moving' parts. This normally suggests that it is the one that broke down last year and can normally be passed in comparative safety.

Second – is there any dirty black smoke coming out of the exhaust? If so is doesn't necessarily mean that the thing is about to do something – remember that the heater and air conditioning don't work when the engine has stopped. Continue to look for other signs of life.

Third – can a large pair of boots be seen above the steering wheel? In such cases there may also be some slight signs of activity behind an open newspaper while cigarette ash is idly flicked out of the window. Move cautiously, remembering that any sudden noise or movement could alarm the driver.

Fourth – is it actually moving? If so, before coming any closer, MAKE SURE THE DRIVER HAS SEEN YOU. Most of them are friendly lads.....and fortunately they have a good sense of humour as well!



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Simon says.....

Simon's Seasonal Tips This Winter

It pays to give your body the best chance of fighting off a pesky cough or cold, especially in the winter months. So, instead of huddling under the duvet as the days get shorter as the winter germs multiply, get yourself out and about. Regular exercise has been shown to help boost the immune system so aim to get outside for about 15-20 mins brisk walk each day and especially should you have a pet dog, he or she can help you!! It also helps you to maximise the chances of getting some natural light which helps your body produce Vitamin D which is important in helping avoid Seasonal Affective Disorder (or SAD).

As the colder and frostier days approach, do not be tempted by the short term satisfaction of stodgy comfort food which are higher in sugar, salts and fats and although you might find them tasty or temporarily appealing, it is important to try and enjoy a healthier and more balanced diet. Strive to get your 5 a day by making the most of seasonal fruits as available and so plenty of satsumas will help as it is a good source of Vitamin C. Also Zinc combined with Vitamin C can be very beneficial.

With longer winter nights we often sleep that bit more and this is natures way of healing, resting and recharging our body. Poor sleep patterns leave us vulnerable to lower immunity and leave us susceptible to winter ailments. Herbal preparations such as Valerian Formulas and Flower Essences are developed specifically to help natural sleep.

Finally, Echinacea has been used for centuries to protect against infection and so many people still use it today either as a preventative measure or at the first sign of a sneeze, sniffle or a cold.



Miscellaneous Issues

Ladies:

More and more these days you might well notice adverts in public / department store / shopping centre / car park toilets about ladies who are having to cope with regular hot flushes and suffer excessive night sweats. The herb sage is now available in tablet form and feedback suggests that it is a great success and so many ladies report that they cannot do without it now.

Gentlemen:

Lots of men suffer from not being able to empty their bladder fully at night time. Saw Palmetto can help with this annoying condition but only with products containing the oil from this plant as dried products seem to have less effect. A zinc or fish oil supplement can also help and pumpkin seeds should also be added to your diet.

Party Time:

The Festive Season will soon be upon us and parties are now likely to be in full swing. At this time please remember that Milk Thistle helps with liver metabolism and hangovers whilst artichoke leaves and dandelion root all aid digestion and flatulence.

Whatever you are all doing, and as the old saying suggests with everything in moderation, please be sure to enjoy this very special time of the year. With our very best wishes for Christmas and a very Healthy 2012 ahead.

Simon Robinson is the main qualified working partner at

Natures Corner, 2a Cross St, Callander

Tel/Fax: 01877 330200

e-mail: health@natures-corner.com

www.natures-corner.com

McLaren Rugby Football Club



www.mclarenrugby.co.uk

Masterful McLaren in seven try romp

William Robert Jones reporting
Dunblane High A9 Park.

A commanding display of open attacking rugby reaped its rewards as McLaren Rugby Club demolished Cumnock, scoring seven tries in a 45-10 victory. This was a game played in good spirit by two sides who sought to run the ball at every opportunity but McLaren's backs in particular showed greater poise and enterprise.

However the opening try was a full blooded agricultural charge by No 8 Adam Moore who stormed over to score in the 8th minute. Scott Drummond at stand off scored McLaren's second with a sharp break and, whilst Cumnock replied though a superb 60m yard darting and weaving run by their left wing, McLaren came back through centre Fraser Graham with a converted try leaving them with a comfortable half-time lead at 17 points to 5.

McLaren's backs turned on the style in the second half scoring four more tries as the home pack dominated the set pieces providing the perfect platform for sustained attacking rugby. Fraser Graham completed his hat trick with two tries full of incisive and muscular running. Forwards Gray and Creavry added one try apiece to complete the rout against plucky opponents who themselves sought to attack at every opportunity despite meagre possession and scored one try in reply. The only blemish was McLaren's full back David Miller's second half sin bin for a wild and dangerous use of his boot as he tried to hack though but this was more pantomime than malicious. Final score – McLaren 45 Cumnock 10.

Man of the match was McLaren outside half Drummond who showed such exquisite poise in his running, passing and command of his line that brought to mind that prince of stand offs, Barry John! Now that's what I call a compliment!



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WHAT'S IN A NAME

By Agnes Ford

*'Sticks and stanes may brack ma banes
But names will never hurt me.'*

In the 1930s that little chant could be heard in almost any Scottish school playground. Certainly, in the village I was brought up in, that was the case. Nicknames were the norm and anyone without one wasn't worth bothering about. On the first day I attended school I learned that my teacher, Miss Nicholson, was called (behind her back) Knickers. The Universal Dictionary defines 'nickname' as, "A name added to or replacing the actual name of a person, place or thing, often used humorously or affectionately and referring to some noticeable characteristic."

True perhaps in most cases but, in the village of Aberfoyle, ingenuity prevailed. Had the awarding of the Nobel Prize encompassed the skill of nicknaming then, without a doubt, that village would have won that honourable, prestigious accolade hands down. Sometime names just happened and, when they happened, they stuck.

Literary connections from the writings of Sir Walter Scott, William Wordsworth and Queen Victoria, plus the natural beauty of the Trossachs area, attracted many wealthy American visitors.

The owner, resplendent in highland dress, was standing at the entrance of his hotel one day. An American guest was studying the picture above the door which depicted the fray at the clachan when Baillie Nicol Jarvie singed the plaid of a highland gentleman with a red hot coulter.

The American looked from the picture to the hotelier and said, "I guess you're the ad for this place." A member of the hotel staff overheard the remark and, from that day onwards, Allister Cameron was known as 'The Ad'. So the story goes but, by coincidence, Allister Cameron's initials just happened to be AD. My father, also a Cameron, was known as Clootie. My elder brother, Ian, was Big Clootie; I was Wee Clootie and my younger brother, David, was known as Young Clootie. It was only in my adult life that I discovered Clootie was another name for the Devil. I also came to know about the Clootie Wells in Inverness-shire and, as my father was a Lochaber man, I prefer to think that there was some connection there: but who knows!

The local policeman by virtue of his name, James Hogg, was, of course, known as The Ettrick Shepherd. I asked his daughter, Christian, who now lives in the picturesque Perthshire village of Pitcairngreen, if her father ever objected to the name. "On the contrary," she told me, "He was

proud to be associated with the border poet." The name had even inspired him to pen a few verses of poetry.

A newcomer to the village, a tall man with an unusually long neck, was immediately christened Hyperion after a famous race horse of that time. I never actually knew that man's name.

Then there was the man with the nickname of The Stag who, after a few jars on a Saturday night, rather than go home to the wrath of his wife would spend the night with his drinking companion, Charlie the Miller. It was little wonder, when learning Scott's Lady of the Lake: Canto One,

*"The Stag at eve had drunk his fill,
Where danced the moon on Monan's rill",*

we would substitute these two lines for:

*"The Stag at eve had drunk his fill,
And spent the night in Charlie's mill."*

Giggles would be heard in class when someone was asked to come out and recite that particular verse.

The village plumber knew only one song, *Home on the Range*, and he sang it continuously as he worked. You've no doubt guessed what his nickname was – The Lone Ranger.

The Black Diamond was one woman's nickname and I'm sure it had nothing to do with precious stones. I fear the poor woman may have suffered from hydrophobia. Certainly the ritual use of soap and water was not part of her daily routine.

One very studious little boy who wore glasses was known as The Professor. Another boy with rather slanty eyes was known as The Jap. Then there was The Scullion. I think someone in his family had been a kitchen worker. The name was then abbreviated and became The Skull.

An elderly man, who was seldom seen during the week, would visit the public bar of the hotel on a Saturday night and after several whiskies would stagger home calling out, "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" No prize for guessing his nickname.

Two sisters who kept the newsagents shop were aptly named Gossip and Grumbles and one man, who had rather splayed feet, was known as Ten to Two.

There were names such as Podgie, Peenie, Tootsie, Moochie and Teenie Bash. I could go from one end of the village to the other and hardly find anyone who didn't have a nickname. I wonder if it's the same today.

The attitude to name calling then could be summed up in that old Scots saying, "I dinnae mind what you ca' me as long as ye dinnae ca' me o'er."

FEET Car Club for more than Fintry!

Fintry car club or Fintry Energy Efficient Transport (FEET) is not only for the Fintry community, and the Fintry Development Trust welcomes interest and memberships from citizens outwith the Fintry community! The Fintry community have had the benefit of a community car club since June and have been watching it go from strength to strength.

The Fintry car club has a wealth of benefits as well as helping the environment. If you are thinking about getting rid of that second car, reducing your living costs, etc. now is the perfect time! By disposing of that auxiliary vehicle you will no longer have to worry about expensive car maintenance, tax and insurance. The rising costs of fuel also become less of a daily concern as each car is equipped with a fuel card, and you only pay for the miles and the time that you have the car for. As an additional benefit, Fintry-based FEET members have reciprocal access to all the cars in the various MoorCar Car Club Cooperative fleet! If that weren't enough, CityCar offers a free year of membership to all our new members. That means you can sign up with them and access vehicles in Glasgow, Edinburgh, London, the list goes on!

Joining is easy, just go to www.moorcar.co.uk and sign up as a Fintry member! Membership only costs £60 per year, with a £100 pounds deposit which is returnable upon termination of the membership. You only have to pay a further £30 per additional household member! For this small fee you have access to book both cars when you want to, car club insurance, 24-hour road side assistance, support and access to a quick and easy online booking system. You can book weeks in advance, or just a few minutes' notice is all that is necessary (depending on availability).

You can hire by the hour or day, it's simple. The starting hourly rate is £2.50 per hour. After nine hours, the booking is charged at the reduced daily rate. For example a booking of approximately 9 or more hours in one day period will be charged at the day rate of £21.60. The mileage charge is 21p per mile. A day booking is based upon 07:30 until 07:29 the following day. The booking is done online. The minimum charge period is 1 hour. If you book a 1/2 hour slot you will be charged for 1 hour. You just pay as you go, each member will be invoiced for their usage at the end of each month. It really is trouble-free.

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WILD-LIFE NEWSLETTER

Bracken & The FC Team

Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) is a large fern which we all recognise and detest as we struggle to walk up local hills in late summer, through never ending large patches. It can grow to a height of 400cm and is one of the commonest and most widespread ferns in the world. Ferns reproduce using spores rather than seeds, but bracken rarely produces fertile spores in the UK and instead spreads by rhizomes (creeping underground stems) which can be up to 50cm below ground. Bracken thrives on acid light soils and can be found on heaths, moorland, open woods and neglected pastures.

Uses of Bracken

Bracken is now often considered a widespread pest, but in former times had many uses. Various parts of the plant produce yellow, fawn or lime green dyes. It provided bedding for livestock, packing material for delicate items and thatching material (when fronds are pulled from the ground, the black root end provides the waterproof tip which is the only part visible in the completed thatch). Bracken when burnt produces potash, 50 tons of dried fern produces 1 ton of potash. It was also burnt by people of the Western Isles as a source of a soap substitute for cleaning linen.

What are the benefits of bracken to wildlife?

Bracken dominated areas may be less important for wildlife than the vegetation communities displaced by it. However, locally bracken can be of value where it is mixed in with other habitats and can provide the nesting, feeding and roosting habitat for birds such as Ring Ouzels, Twites, Whinchats and Stonechats. Violet rich bracken habitats found in grassland areas outside or on the edges of woodland are very important for butterflies especially the Pearl-bordered Fritillary. This butterfly was re-discovered on the north shore of Loch Katrine this summer after an absence of 30 years. The adult butterflies can be seen from late April to mid-June often congregating in sunny sheltered sites with patches of their nectar plants (Such as Violets, Bugle and Bluebell) Both sexes are very similar, the females being slightly larger. The males flit and glide low over the ground patrolling for females. However, dense bracken suppresses the growth of the nectar plants the butterfly and caterpillars require, but they do want light bracken cover on which to rest and absorb the warmth of the sun.

How can this bracken habitat be maintained and improved?

This is where the heavy squad comes in, especially during the winter months. Our FC team pictured, help break up the dead bracken fronds and expose the bracken rhizomes, just by their weight and bulk. Frost kills these exposed rhizomes thus causing less vigorous bracken growth in the following spring. The team will not eradicate the bracken completely but ensure it is a more open habitat which is ideal for the Pearl-bordered Fritillary. Tempting the team into the bracken areas is done using feeding blocks (seen below). The team is also working to improve areas with juniper and native woodland.



Please email any interesting sightings to jane.jones@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Not here.....but near!

Scottish Wildlife Trust Callander Member's Centre Diary

Tuesday 13 December 2011 Wildlife in the National Forest by Kenny Kortland, Species Ecologist, Forestry Commission Scotland + Christmas Buffet (cost £12) (booking necessary tel. 01877 339080 email: mlhawkins@tiscali.co.uk)

January 2012 - there will be no meeting.

Tuesday 14 February 2012 Fish Eagles in Cambodia by Dave Anderson, FCS Wildlife Manager

All meetings are open to members and non-members and are held in St Andrew's Church Hall, Leny Road, Callander at 7:30pm. Cost £2 includes refreshments, free for full-time students.

SWT details can be found at www.swt.org.uk, including Members Centre pages.

Scottish Wildlife Trust

Beavers: the Knapdale Reintroduction Trial drew a large audience for Simon Jones' excellent presentation on this often controversial project.

Beavers have been extinct from the UK for 400 years, last seen at Loch Ness ~1600. As predators such as bears and wolves disappeared, man drove them to extinction for their dense pelts. This project is not a simple release of beavers into the wild but a 5-year trial to study their biology and impact on the environment, agriculture and tourism. Eurasian beavers from Norway were selected as genetically closest to our natives and in 2009 a family was released into each of four lochs in Knapdale. All were fitted with trackers and their location and health are monitored regularly.

At a metre long and weighing up to 20kg, beavers are the second largest rodent in the world and the largest in the Northern Hemisphere, unflatteringly likened to a 'tubby spaniel'! In the UK adults have no predators but foxes, eagles or pike, could take young kits. In the wild they can live for 10-12 years and have 2-3 kits per year but the belief that they mate for life has been undermined by observed 'wife swapping' between lochs! They are nocturnal with poor eyesight (have been known to fell trees onto themselves), reasonable hearing and a good sense of smell, using scent glands to mark out territories. As total herbivores they can eat up to 4 tons of leaves and bark per year.

Beavers are semi-aquatic; webbed back feet and a flattened tail are adapted for swimming with clawed front feet for digging and holding branches. When swimming they show a very low profile with just eyes and ears above water and generate a similar bow-wave to otters but with broader heads. They are also much slower than otters that need to be fast and agile to catch fish. Beavers are ungainly on land and feed close to the water's edge but can disperse up to 30-40km to find another beaver. Within the first three weeks, a family of 3 disappeared from their loch: the male was found 10km away up the coast, dispelling the belief that they do not swim in salt water.

Beavers have been identified as a 'keystone species' and 'ecosystem engineers' since they create environments that support a wide range of species. By building dams they raise water levels, waterlogged trees die and surrounding trees are coppiced. A good quality habitat could support a family unit of 2-3 generations for up to 50 years but poor ones would be quickly exhausted. When they move on the dam quickly deteriorates, water level drops and 'beaver meadows' are formed, completing the cycle. Management of dams can control impact on agricultural or access areas. Beavers are likely to be a protected species but, with high numbers across Europe, intervention will be permitted to manage their impact.

Even with a lot of visitors and regular capture for monitoring, the Knapdale beavers are behaving naturally and the kits, the first born here for 400 years, are putting on weight. Education is a major component of the project and there are plans to build viewing facilities at two of the lochs, adding comfort to the excitement of dawn and dusk vigils. Lots of info and videos on www.scottishbeavers.org.uk

Lesley Hawkins

Callander Ramblers' Diary Dec 2011 Jan 2012

December

Wed 7th 9:30am Ramble: Along Loch Ard (6 miles) contact 01877 382803

Wed 14th 9:30am Stroll: Coilhallan Woods (41/2 miles) contact 01877 330105

January

Mon 2nd 11am Stroll: Town Walk (4 miles) contact 01877 331621

Sat 7th 6:30pm AGM and Dinner contact 01877 339080

Sat 14th 8:30am Hill: Ben Gullipen (414m) contact 01877 339080

Sat 28th 8:30am Ramble: Kippen circular (8 miles) contact 01786 860451

We meet in Ancaster Square, unless otherwise indicated. Please bring wet weather clothing, appropriate footwear and a packed lunch. Please let the walk leader know if you plan to join the walk via the contact number given.

Gartmore Church

Times of Worship

Morning worship is at 10am every Sunday. We have tea/coffee after the service on the first Sunday of each month. The Sunday Club meets most Sundays.



GARTMORE WOMEN'S RURAL INSTITUTE

The President and Committee of the Gartmore WRI extend a warm welcome to all ladies of the area to come along and take part in the 2011 / 2012 session.

We meet on the third Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm in the Village Hall and our new syllabus has interesting and varied topics which we hope will catch your attention.

Syllabus for 2011 / 2012

11th December 2011 – Christmas Cheer – Lunch Outing

18th January 2012 – Duncan Tannahill – an illustrated talk on SENSE the charity for deaf /blind people

Competition – a favourite tartan article

15th February 2012 – Quiz / games night

Competition – the best book ever

21st March 2012 – Hilary Svennevig – an illustrated talk on recent travels in India

Competition – my desert island luxury item

18th April 2012 – Yoga Night with Brenda from Chillout

Competition – 4 brownies

16th May 2012 – AGM Pot Luck Supper

Christine McLellan – illustrated talk on Riverside Museum Glasgow

We look forward to seeing you

President - Lesley Bond 382 739

Secretary – Sue Walker 382 310

Balfour & Callander Recycling Centres Opening Times:

Monday - Friday: 5pm-8pm

Saturday: 10am-2pm

Sunday: Closed

A wide variety of household recyclables (including garden waste) can be taken directly to the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) at Balfour and Callander. Excess waste and bulky household items, including fridges and freezers and furniture, can also be disposed of at the HWRCs.

Spirit of the Celts"

Following their last acclaimed exhibition of textile art at the Smith Gallery in 2009, the ten members of the Scottish Turning Point Group have teamed up with an exhibiting group from Northern Ireland and another from Wales, together forming the Celtic Fringe Group. The resulting 28 panels each depict an aspect of folk lore pertaining to the maker's country, crafted in evocative colour, design and stitch. These have recently been shown for the first time at the prestigious National Festival of Quilts in Birmingham to much acclaim.

Coming from right across the Central Belt, the Scottish artists include Morven Roche from Stirling, Liz Ferguson from Falkirk, Margaret O'Gorman from Thornhill and Joyce Watson who lives in Dunblane. The exhibition also includes new work from Turning Point pertinent to Central Scotland.

The forthcoming exhibition will open to the public on 12 November 2011 and run until 8 January 2012. Workshops will also be available.

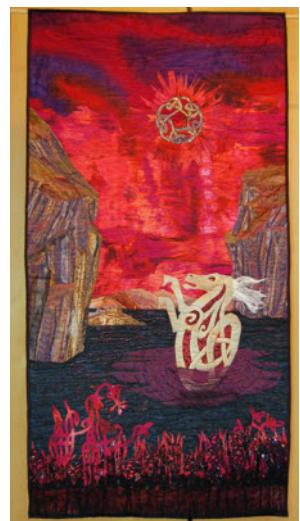
The Stirling Smith is open to the public, 10.30-5 pm Tuesday to Saturday, 2-5 on Sundays. Closed Mondays. Admission and parking free

For further information,

contact Elspeth.King@smithartgallery.demon.co.uk

www.smithartgallery.demon.co.uk, www.facebook.com/TheStirlingSmith

Tel 01786 471 917 The Stirling Smith is a Registered Scottish



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Deadline Date
for
Issue 70
29 January 2012



Forestry Commission Scotland
Coimsean na Colltearachd Alba

Business Opportunity

10 Year Café/Retail Licence (April 2013 to March 2023)

David Marshall Lodge, Aberfoyle

Forestry Commission Scotland is inviting expressions of interest from experienced operators who would like to provide catering and retail at David Marshall Lodge Visitor Centre, when it opens in spring 2013 after a full refurbishment. The centre receives 160,000 visitors per year and is one of the top attractions in Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park, in an iconic setting with excellent views.

Visit www.forestry.gov.uk/tenders to find out more and follow the instructions to be added to the tender list.

The deadline for submitting expression of interest is 2pm, 7 Dec 2011. Invitations to tender will be sent on 14 Dec 2011.

www.forestry.gov.uk/qefp

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Name: _____

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GARTMORE COMMUNITY CINEMA 2011 / 2012 FILM SEASON

Gartmore Village Hall

2011

December 10th	Evening 8pm	It's A Wonderful Life [U]
December 28th	Matinee 4pm	Happy Feet [U]
	Evening 8pm	Where Eagles Dare [PG]

2012

January 7th	Evening 8pm	Kick Ass [15]
February 4th	Matinee 4pm	Megamind [PG]
	Evening 8pm	Paul [15]
March 10th	Evening 8pm	Three Colours Blue [15]
April 21st	Matinee 4pm	Flushed Away [PG]
	Evening 8pm	True Grit [15]
May 2012	To Be Confirmed	

Membership £10 – which entitles you to reduced entry to each film and a free drink for every three films attended.

Door fee:

£4.00 – Adults

£3.00 – Members and concessions

Door and bar open 1 hour before each showing.



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06/56 Toyota Hilux 2.5 D4D D-cab white with Truckman Top 56,000 miles FSH

£8,995



04/54 BMW X5 3.0D Sport, Manual in black with beige leather, 124,000 miles FSH

£10,950



05/55 Renault Megane 1.5DCi Expression 134,000 FSH very nice car, £30 - road fund, 70mpg

£2,650



98 R Honda CRV manual in dark blue 92,000 FSH 5 door good for Santa coming!!

£1,750

*Images for illustration purposes only.

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