

STRATHARD NEWS

Serving the communities of
Aberfoyle, Kinlochard, Stronachlachar & Inversnaid

ISSUE 70

FEB

2012

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To all the Aberfoyle Folks...

Thirty-four years ago I came from Coatbridge to Aberfoyle and have never looked back since. The families, shops and houses may have changed over the years but the one thing that has always remained the same is the warmth of the people of Aberfoyle and the surrounding communities.

I have learnt there is nothing more true than the community spirit after recent events with my house at Dukes Court. With this in mind, I would like to take this opportunity to say a massive thank you to all those people who have helped me through this difficult time. I am completely overwhelmed by your support, kindness and generosity and will never be able to thank you all enough. From the firemen to the people who gave to the various collections in the village (and all those in between) I will never forget your kindness. I would also like to say a big thank you to my family for their patience, support and continuing help.

You know who you all are "folks of Aberfoyle" and thanks again from the bottom of my heart.
By Betty McGill

Feral goats on the B829, north of Kinlochard.
Photo courtesy of Marion Back

www.strathardnews.com

Community Council



Seniors Christmas Dinner – Thank You

Our thanks to all those who helped make this annual event such a success. We rely on the support of many sponsors to run the dinner, all of whom we gratefully thank, and special mention for their valuable contributions are again due to: *Forest Hills Hotel* for hosting the event and providing an excellent meal, *Aberfoyle Coaches* for transport, *Forthvale Contractors* for donating all the wine and spirits for the evening, *The Kinlochard Ceilidh Band* for providing music and entertainment and the young members of *Callander & District Pipe Band*. Also our thanks to the many local businesses and people who made donations or contributions of prizes for our raffle, which is one of the highlights of the evening. Thanks are also due to those who helped organise and erect the community Christmas trees and lights, and provide gifts to the oldest members of our community.

David Marshall Lodge Redevelopment Consultation

We'd like to encourage local people who use the David Marshall Lodge and its surrounding facilities to attend this community consultation on Wednesday 15th February from 6 to 8pm in Aberfoyle Memorial Hall. This will be an open evening where we will be able to see plans and displays for changes at the Lodge - see also the separate FCS notice. When considering a recent planning application for a new access route at the rear, the community council identified some local concerns about other changes potentially being made (e.g. removal of the existing play area) for which no planning permission was needed, but where we felt local people should be able to comment. So do take this opportunity now being offered to let FCS know what you think about its plans.

Flooding Gauges and Flood Study

Some important updates on flooding, since Stirling Council staff have been actively working on the plans outlined at the public meeting held in 2010. There have been improvements to the online flooding gauges on the new Stirling Council website and if you have any trouble finding these, the link can be found on the community council flooding webpage. This new version now gives clearer river depth gauge information to help people keep track of likely flood situations caused by the River Forth. In the future a Loch Ard monitor is planned too, if a suitable location with a mobile phone signal can be identified. We have also been pleased to see that Stirling Council funding was allocated to a major 'Optioneering Flood Study' for our area, taking place over a period of 5 months. This is currently underway and later in the year there will be an opportunity for local people to see the results and have a chance to comment on what measures they would like to see put in place. A video survey of the River Forth is also being done to identify problems such as trees or embankments requiring remedial work.

Community Information

- Our website is www.strathard.org.uk.
- We send out e-mailings on matters of general community interest. You can sign up for these e-mailings by contacting us via the website.
- Information is also placed on our 4 community noticeboards.

Finally, the names of your Community Councillors are shown – please do get in touch with them on any relevant matter if you would like our help.

Fiona

Strathard Community Council meets at 7.30pm on the first Thursday of every month, alternating between Aberfoyle Memorial Hall, Kinlochard Village Hall and Inversnaid Hotel. The next meetings will be held in Kinlochard on 1st March and Aberfoyle on 5th April. Note that for 2012 we have changed the months when we visit Inversnaid (now February, May, August and November) and Kinlochard (now March, June, September and December). Half an hour prior to our meetings a local Stirling Councillor (Tony Finch, 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

Kinlochard

Maureen Campbell
Fiona McEwan
Alex Murray-Brown
1 vacancy

Inversnaid

Andre Goulancourt
Ralph Wolfe
1 vacancy

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



Crescent Cabs delivers DRT in Strathard

Stirling Council has awarded new contracts for provision of local bus services serving Aberfoyle, Gartmore, Port of Menteith, Thornhill and elsewhere in the Council area to Aberfoyle Coaches Ltd and First Scotland East Ltd.

The contract for the provision of Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) Services in the Balquhidder, Killin & Strathfillan, Strathard and Trossachs areas has also been awarded to Aberfoyle Coaches Ltd. This service will be delivered in the Strathard area by Crescent Cabs, as the authorised sub-contractor of Aberfoyle Coaches Ltd.

In the Trossachs Area, operated by sub-contractor Morgan's, the current DRT service will be expanded to allow journeys between Aberfoyle, Port of Menteith and Callander and between Thornhill and Callander. This extension will replace bus service C29 Aberfoyle - Callander, which will be withdrawn following operation on Saturday 31 March 2012.

These contracts will run from 2 April 2012 until 27 March 2016.

HOW TO BOOK DRT:

Demand Responsive Transport journeys are available Monday to Saturday 7.30am and 9.30pm. Transport is provided in a mini-bus, private hire car or taxi, however will be charged at the low price of a bus fare. All journeys MUST be pre-booked. Children aged 15 or under will travel at half the cost of a standard fare and Stirling Council Concession Card holders will be entitled to travel for free. Passengers will be required to share the vehicle with other DRT users.

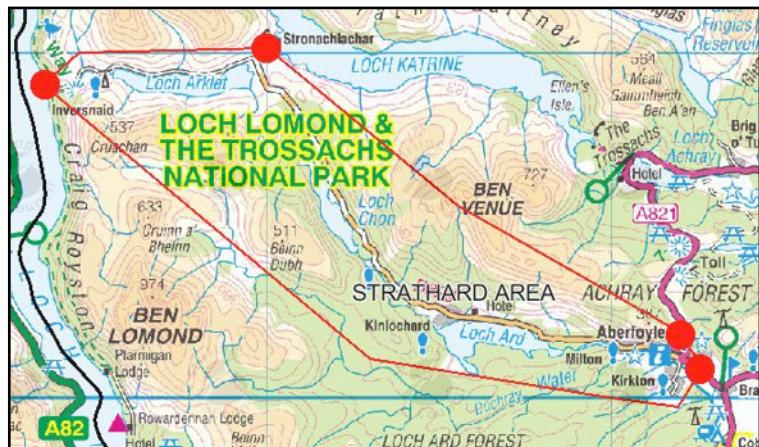
Telephone: 0844 567 5670

Text: 0844 567 5670

Email: sales@aberfoylecoaches.com

Online via website:

www.aberfoylecoaches.com



STRATHARD DRT AREA: The A821 at the East End of Aberfoyle Village, the end of the public road at Inversnaid, the end of the public road at Stronachlachar and the A821 at the North end of the Aberfoyle Village.



TROSSACHS DRT AREA: The A821 at the East End & B829 at west end of Aberfoyle village, unclassified road on north shore of Loch Katrine at Glengyle House; A84 at west end of Kilmahog; A84 at east end & A81 at south end of Callander. **N.B.** Area will be expanded on 2 April 2012.

In case you missed it.....

Where's Nessie? On her hols across the Pond



Bert was bemused when he spotted the news story.

BERT COMRIE, from Aberfoyle, wondered recently why you never hear of sightings of the Loch Ness Monster these days.

A quick internet search revealed there's only been one in the last four years. Yet, as recently as 1996-97, there were 21 sightings!

What's going on? Has Nessie passed away? Worse — perhaps her detractors are right and she never existed at all.

Then Bert got a mysterious parcel he reckoned solved the riddle.

Last summer, taxi driver Bert befriended an American family holidaying in Stirlingshire.

He became their driver of choice, ferrying them around and showing them the favourite tourist sights.

Bert and the family hit it off. They were great company and loved hearing his tales of Scots history, folklore and culture.

It was a sad occasion when the time came for

By Robert Wight

rwright@sundaypost.com

them to return to the States.

As a memento of their time in Scotland, Bert presented the family with a CD of Scots music and one of the finest examples of our rich literary heritage — a Broons annual!

Bert says they loved the dry Scots humour of The Sunday Post favourites.

Touched by the gesture, the family promised to keep in touch. They live in up-state New York, near the Canadian border, and are famed locally for making maple syrup.

They told a delighted Bert they'd send him some of their top-quality home produce as soon as the "maple season" started.

It was two weeks ago that the postman arrived with a package for Bert. Inside, wrapped in newspaper for protection, were

two whole quarts of the best-tasting syrup Bert had ever tried.

But an even bigger surprise awaited when — curious to see what American papers report — he uncurled the scrunched up newsprint.

The paper was the Press-Republican, dated November 20, and emblazoned on its front cover was a picture of Nessie!

Or so it seemed.

On second glance, it was a story about a beast called Champ, who's said to live in Lake Champlain.

The report was about a new project to try to find the creature, which has long been a feature of local folklore.

But the picture matches exactly descriptions of the Loch Ness Monster from over the years.

Now Nessie's absence makes perfect sense to Bert.

She does exist, she's not dead — she's just on her holidays in America!

It seems like no time at all since I last reported on registrations in the area, yet not only are Christmas and Hogmanay relegated to history, but also January seems to have flown past.



Sadly it wasn't an entirely happy festive season for all, as since I last wrote there have been several bereavements in the area, by which many people locally will have been touched. We, at the Registration Office, would like to join with so many others in offering our condolences to all friends and families who have experienced such a loss.

Despite the last issue being the 'Christmas' one, we managed to fit in another wedding before the year end. The last wedding of 2011 in the area was held in the Marriage Room here at Aberfoyle Registration Office, just a few days before Christmas, when Robert Large married fiancée Teresa Tierney. Just a few weeks later, the Lake Hotel hosted the first wedding of the New Year, when Craig Finlayson and Kirsten Wilson were married in early January. A special delight for me, having officiated at so many weddings there at which local musician, the late Donny Cameron, played; it was a trip down memory lane to see a bride walk down the aisle to music provided by Donny's young grandson, James Cameron.

In the last issue I spoke of there being ten babies registered in the area in 2011. Make that eleven! Blairhoyle parents Lorna and Hamish were delighted to welcome their new baby son, Calan Campbell McGuire. Welcome baby Calan. I wonder who will be the first baby registered in the area in 2012.

There remains only one piece of news for me to report in this issue. I have spoken above about the last wedding of 2011, which was held here at Aberfoyle Registration Office. What I didn't mention was that the officiating Assistant Registrar on that day, John Boyle-Hannah, is leaving us. Indeed, by the time you read this, John will have already stepped down from the post due to other increasing commitments and despite all my best efforts to persuade him not to! This is for me, indeed for the area, a piece of very bad news indeed. John became Assistant Registrar in Aberfoyle over four years ago and quickly showed himself not only to be a huge asset to the service but also to be one of the kindest most considerate people ever. Ever helpful, nothing was too much trouble and John became known to give a service that always went that extra mile! He will be sorely missed in the office.

Just with me, for the time being, the office is open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9 am until 12 noon. 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, when I will look forward to helping you in any way that I can.

Sharon Johnston Registrar



Stirling Council's
Aberfoyle Local Office

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

PACT Priorities January - February 2012

1. Targetting travelling criminals.
2. Speeding and indiscriminate parking.
3. Targetting the dealers

Darkness – The Housebreaker's Friend

21st, November 2011

The longer nights are well and truly with us, as we hurtle towards the end of the year. However, the darkness can tell thieves more about us than we might think...

In the evenings, a house in complete darkness can tell a housebreaker that there is no one at home, and the darkness provides the perfect cover. There are simple steps we can take to give the illusion that we are at home. Consider leaving a light or lights on in the house. Better still, consider the use of time switches for the main living areas of the house, such as the living room, kitchen and bedroom. Angle blinds and curtains to let light out, but that prevent others from seeing in. Think too about light on the outside of the house, including motion sensor lighting.

Let's make sure we don't fall foul of the seasonal housebreaker in the run up to the festive season. Let's all become illusionists.

Vandalism in Gartmore

30th, November 2011

On three separate occasions during November, a car parked on the Main Street in Gartmore has been the subject of petty acts of vandalism. Victimation of one household in a village as small as Gartmore simply should not happen.

As a community, we should pull together in a bid to prevent further recurrence of this victimisation, and be on the lookout for anyone causing damage to, or disruption within, our village. I implore anyone with information regarding those responsible for this criminal behaviour to contact me at Aberfoyle police station.

Fire at Dukes Court, Aberfoyle

12th, December 2011

On Friday 9 December, a fire ignited in a flat in Dukes Court, Aberfoyle. I am delighted to report that no one was injured as a result of this fire. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Central Scotland Fire and Rescue Service for their speedy response. I would also like to thank the community for allowing the emergency services to deal with the situation unimpeded and for their assistance in identifying all the residents of Dukes Court, ensuring that everyone was accounted for at the earliest stage.

Suspicious Person - Old Kirk Loan, Aberfoyle

13th, December 2011

Residents at Old Kirk Loan, Aberfoyle, have reported the sporadic occurrence of a figure lurking in and around the cul-de-sac and its back gardens. There does not appear to be a pattern to this individual's behaviour other than it is during the hours of darkness. Whilst nothing has been reported stolen, residents have reported that their door handles have been tried. Naturally, this is of some concern to the residents of Old Kirk Loan. I urge the community to be on the lookout for this individual and report any sightings to the police at the earliest opportunity.

Stolen Handbag - Main Street, Aberfoyle

13th, December 2011

About 1130 hours on Monday 12 December 2011, a black handbag was stolen from a black Volkswagen car parked outside the Co-op on Main Street, Aberfoyle. Items to the value of £350 were stolen along with the handbag.

The incident occurred in daylight in the middle of the

day, so there is a fair chance someone may have seen some suspicious activity around the car. Anyone with any information regarding this incident should contact the police at the earliest opportunity.

Drink Driving - Can You Afford It?

24th, December 2011

We are at that time of year when we will be attending nights out and family gatherings, and it is almost an inevitability that the alcohol will be flowing freely. Sadly, it is also that time of year when some people choose to drive after having had a drink. Many people are caught out because they don't feel drunk. Remember, you don't have to be drunk to be in excess of the drink driving limit. Many more are caught out because they choose to drive too soon the following morning.

So what happens? Well, there are the primary consequences – the receipt of a heavy fine; losing your driving licence, and; possibly losing your vehicle. Then there are the secondary consequences that perhaps don't spring to mind immediately. Suddenly, using the car is no longer an option. You need to rely on a public transport system that doesn't necessarily fit round you. You can no longer get to work because there is no alternative means of getting there.

But then these are just the consequences affecting you. There could be far worse consequences for someone else and their family. Drink driving is dangerous and it does kill people. One bad decision, and it could be you living everyday with the knowledge that that decision ultimately cost someone else their life.

So, you choose: Drink OR drive. Let's make sure we all stay safe this year end.

PACT Priorities Review

4th, January 2012

I would like to take the opportunity to wish everyone in Strathard, Gartmore and Port of Menteith a happy New Year, and thank you for your assistance and support throughout 2011. The dawning of the New Year brings a review of the PACT priorities for the area. Should you have an opinion on what should be considered a policing priority for the community, I would invite you to contact me by email or telephone. Alternatively, feel free to pop into Aberfoyle police station and discuss it with me in person. Here's to a prosperous 2012.

Scrap Metal - Two Males Charged

16th, January 2012

On Saturday 14 January, two males were reported to the Procurator Fiscal for carrying on a business as itinerant metal dealers without a licence. This was only possible because several eagle-eyed members of the community reported concerns regarding the pair asking for scrap around their properties. Door to door enquiries for scrap are a reasonably common occurrence. Anyone conducting this business legitimately will have no concerns when asked to produce their licence. However, it is not unknown for those conducting this business illegitimately to use it as a front for identifying empty properties.

Should you have any concerns regarding anybody acting in this manner, I would encourage you to report it to the police to allow us to intercept these individuals, to educate those wishing to carry out legitimate business and deter those wishing to carry out criminal activities.



PC 487 Liam Ward can be contacted via Aberfoyle or Callander Police Offices. Tel. 01877 30222. 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



Sir/Madam:

We would hope that everyone reading last month's edition of Strathard News understood that the 'Reply to the Scribe's Apprentice' was tongue in cheek.

At least we hope it was!

Ignoring safety signage at your discretion, as was advised in the column, is foolhardy at best and potentially life threatening at worst. There may be occasions when one or two signs will be left behind after an operation has been completed but this is comparatively rare.

Most signage on display on the national forest estate is 'live' and it is there to advise people that there is a significant public safety risk ahead. This could be that heavy machinery is in use on the site. Machine operators may not always be able to see or hear people approaching or passing a site and they have even less chance of seeing dogs that are running free.

It might also be that trees are being harvested on site – and your readers might be surprised at how little time there is to get out of the way of tree that is coming down. Signage also remains in situ until the timber has been removed.

Track and road conditions may also be hazardous – deep mud or fallen trees being just two of the risks. In the weeks following exceptional storms like the trees we have experience of late, the trees themselves might also be dangerous, with partially windblown trees leaning precariously on others, paths being blocked and heavy, damaged branches that could come down at any moment.

A site might not be active 24 hours in the day – or even 7 days a week – but that does not mean that the risk is any the less.

Regards
Liz Shortall
CRT Manager
Cowal & Trossachs Forest District



Trossachs SAR Team is actively recruiting people from Aberfoyle/ Callander and the surrounding communities for TSART First Responder Unit.

First Responders attend emergency life-threatening situations on behalf of the Scottish Ambulance Service and deliver appropriate first-aid until the arrival of an ambulance crew. We manage the local scheme, based at Aberfoyle Fire Station.

For the past three years we have operated at weekends and as and when people have been available midweek. We wish to extend the service both in terms of towns and villages covered (including Callander) and for extended hours.

This will only be possible if sufficient volunteers come forward to undertake training and would be able to cover at least two 4hr shifts each month. An additional factor to the extension of the service will be ensuring we attract additional funding for the costs associated in our First Responder vehicle travelling increased miles and our committee is working hard on this.

Training will be provided by way of a course on 3&4 March with the option of a more advanced course on 24&25 March. These courses will be provided by the Scottish Ambulance Service with further ongoing training provided by members of Trossachs SAR.

I have attached a poster that provides additional information and wonder if you would be good enough to forward it to any friends, colleagues and acquaintances who you think might be interested in the role.

We will be holding two awareness sessions in Aberfoyle and prospective members should contact us by email or on 07796 240 023 for further information.

Thank you,

Stuart Ballantyne
Trossachs SAR
Scottish Charity SC028266



Parking, Main Street



It has been highlighted recently that the parking restrictions on Main Street, Aberfoyle are not being followed, and that this may be a result of confusion surrounding the signs outlining the restrictions. A particular complaint is the abuse of the disabled parking bays by those not entitled to use them.

Clarification of the parking restrictions follow.

The double yellow lines indicate areas where parking is prohibited at all times. They are in force 24 hours a day.

The bays running from Liz MacGregor's Tea Room to the Post Office are for loading only from 5am to 11am. From 11am to 6pm, these bays become parking bays with a maximum stay of 30 minutes and no return within 1 hour. From 6pm to 5am, there are no parking restrictions on these bays.

The bays immediately outside the Co-op entrance doors (approximately 2 car lengths) are for loading only from 5am to 9.30am. From 9.30am to 6pm, these bays are for disabled badge holders only. During these

times, there is no maximum stay. From 6pm to 5am, there are no parking restrictions on these bays.

The remainder of the bays running to the end of the Co-op and outside the Clachan are for loading only from 5am to 9.30am. From 9.30am to 6pm, these bays become parking bays with a maximum stay of 30 minutes and no return within 1 hour. From 6pm to 5am, there are no parking restrictions on these bays.

All the information above is detailed on the signs along Main Street from the Bank of Scotland to the police station. Hopefully this clarifies the position, will stop parking complaints on the Main Street and prevent anyone from obtaining an unwanted parking fine. It is also worth mentioning that the free Riverside car park is only a few yards' walking distance from the Main Street.

Thank you,
PC 487 Liam Ward
Aberfoyle

Mountain Bike Guiding and Coaching

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in the beautiful Trossachs**



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and on Facebook
E-mail: sandy@wildbikingscotland.com
Tel: 07717-217898

LOCHSIDE YOGA 2012 classes



**Mondays: Thornhill & Callander
Tuesday: Kinlochard
Wednesdays: Balfron & Bridge of Allan
Thursday: Callander**

Fun and friendly yoga classes, daytime and evening. Suitable for all shapes, sizes, abilities and experience!

Contact Gillian on
01877 387201/07738225996
or check website where there is
lots more information
www.lochsideyoga.com

Book Group Up and Running

Last summer in the Strathard News I wrote about establishing a book/reading group in this area.

The response was very positive and since then several of us have met to select our season's reading from a big collection available from Stirling Council's Library Service. Once we had agreed our selection we started reading and have been meeting over the winter to discuss and review each book.

We meet in the Kinlochard Village Hall about every 6 weeks, over a cup of tea and a biscuit. As well as being a great chance to share views about the book in hand, it's meant that strangers with a common interest are getting to know each other.

The books we've read so far are:

*The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas - John Boyne
Purple Hibiscus - Chimamanda Adiche
A short history of tractors in Ukrainian - Marina Lewycka*

At the time of writing we've decided to read *Sunset Song* by Lewis Grassic Gibbon described on the cover as a "fresh, powerful and timeless novel".

So, if you would like to extend your reading and social network in one easy move, why not join us? No payment involved, we just share the price of the hall and get the books for free from the excellent Mobile Library Service.

For further details please contact me, James Kennedy, at jfk1957@btinternet.com 01877 387201 or Nelson Busby Mobile Library Officer busbyn@stirling.gov.uk 01786 432396

Local investment is pumped into Information services at Aberfoyle

Changes are underway at Aberfoyle Information Centre as part of an upgrading exercise at the VisitScotland property.

The refurbishment will commence on 13th February and will see the interiors of the Information Centre upgraded demonstrating the national tourism organisation's commitment to the area. The work is expected to take 2-3 weeks initially. From mid-November, Aberfoyle increased its opening hours to become an all year round facility which is open daily.

Liz Buchanan, regional director of VisitScotland, said: "We are delighted to invest in the upgrade of Aberfoyle Information Centre which provides a valuable service to both locals and visitors to the area. We believe this refurbishment will benefit the local community and we will be holding events within the Information Centre to encourage more visits and networking opportunities."



Strapped for Cash!

It is with heavy heart that Strathard News has to announce that it is struggling financially. As you know the newsletter is produced by a team of (unpaid) volunteers and is totally dependent on income from advertising, subscriptions and very kind donations from the public to cover our costs.

Nine times out of ten this arrangement works, but every so often we experience a cash flow problem. This is usually due to unpaid invoices by a very small percentage of advertisers. We are reluctant to publish the names of the culprits (you know who you are), but unless outstanding invoices are paid the future of the Strathard News in its present form is under threat.

We on the committee like a quiet life, we like it when everything runs smoothly, no stress, no hassle, we do our bit for the community and vice versa. It is very rewarding to be part of such a successful community venture, and equally disappointing when some parts of the community fails to keep its side of the agreement.

So please do your bit and pay up. It would be a pity if the Strathard News folded because of a few unpaid invoices.

The Committee

Beauty & Massage

www.beautyandmassage.co.uk



REJUVENATE

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HND QUALIFIED THERAPIST

01877 330335 within McLaren Leisure Centre, Callander - PARKING AVAILABLE

Trossachs Area Community Transport

We'd like to thank all the local people who have chosen to support their community filling station and shop during the winter months. This was always going to be a testing period for our new business with the loss of seasonal tourist traffic, so we are relieved to have traded as planned in our first year throughout what is typically the quietest season. The additional types of fuel we have offered, including calor gas, coal and various types of logs/wood, have all been very popular.

Special mention is due to our dedicated staff Jen, Laura and Stephen who have all kept the home fires burning (not to mention selling essentials like milk, bread and papers) throughout multiple power cuts which shut down the pumps.

Spring and summer upgrades planned include exterior works, cleaning the remaining unused underground fuel tanks, reconfiguring the forecourt and re-opening pumps, shop upgrading and new signage. Financial support has been obtained from a range of sources to allow this to happen. 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.

Opening hours are currently:

Weekdays: 7am to 7pm
Saturday: 8am to 7pm
Sunday: 8.30 to 7pm



LOTTERY FUNDED

Anne McGuire MP

Happy New Year to all readers of the Strathard News although we are now past both Burns' Night and Chinese New Year! For me it's been business as usual in Parliament and as many of you will be aware, the Welfare Reform Bill is currently going through Parliament and is not without controversy.

Without doubt, some of the aims of the reform are welcome such as the introduction of the Universal Credit which will replace a range of means-tested benefits and tax credits for people of working age, simplifying the system for people. However, there are elements within the new credit which will for example reduce the financial support for families with disabled children by around £27 per week, save for those who are on the highest rate of Disability Living Allowance, who will see an increase in support of £1.50 per week.

The time limiting to one year for those claiming the new Employment and Support Allowance will mean that those recovering from conditions such as cancer and who are still receiving treatment will find themselves removed from the benefit. So people who have worked and paid into the system all their lives will find it isn't there for them at a point of greatest need. There was an enormous rebellion against a further proposal to make people pay to get help from the Child Support Agency. It was a vote which saw Coalition Peers such as Brian Mawhinney and Archie Kirwood walk through the same lobby with Jack McConnell and Neil Kinnock! No mean feat.

As if local businesses haven't got enough to put up with, one small local company has been at the receiving end of what I think is a quite disgraceful piece of sharp practice in the supply of gas and electricity. On the basis of a telephone conversation, a "broker" company has transferred the supply of utilities from one provider to another company at an inflated cost. No paper contract exists and apparently the practice is legal. I am hoping that Trading Standards and Ofgem can find cause to challenge these practices and, if not, I will be asking the Government to look at what can be done to ensure that other small businesses do not get trapped into unaffordable contracts.

You can contact me at my Stirling office at 22, Viewfield Street, FK81UA, telephone 01786 446515, or by email at anne.mcguire.mp@parliament.uk. You can check my web-site at www.annemcguiremp.org.uk which we try to keep up to date, or you can follow me on Twitter at @AnneMcGuireMP which I warn you it is not all about politics!

Register of Electors

The new register of electors effective 1st December 2011 has been published and is available to view in local libraries and some council offices. A full list of places of publication is listed on www.saa.gov.uk/central/regviewingstats.html

Most registers show a reduction in the total number of electors as over 2500 electors in the Stirling Council area were removed for failure to respond to the annual voter registration form or reminder posted by the Electoral Registration Officer.

Brian Byrne, the Electoral Registration Officer reported an increase in electors responding to the enquiry form by email this year to over 20% in the Stirling Council area. (Only 17.5% in Clackmannanshire & 18.5% in Falkirk council area)

The prompt response to an email last July by over 13000 households in the Forth Valley Area reduced the number of forms being printed and posted and saved over £5000.

Brian is encouraging anyone with an email address to contact him to allow the annual enquiry to be emailed in future years.

Most electors who have chosen this option are supportive of this option as they find it more convenient and quicker to notify no changes after receiving the email in July. An added benefit is that the ERO can contact the electors when they move address or make enquiries if notified of any change in the number of people at their address.

With local council elections taking place on May 3rd 2012 Brian is offering local community groups the opportunity of a visit from his staff to check members registration details and to help fill in forms to register or to vote by post. His staff and returning officer staff from Stirling Council would also be able to explain the local council voting system to electors.

Anyone wanting to arrange a meeting should contact Russell Taylor 01786-892207

ero@centralscotland-vjb.gov.uk

More information and application forms are available on www.saa.gov.uk/central

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Donald Angus MacLean 1924 - 2011

Into the kirk at Drymen they crowded and pressed,
Much like a sheep sale but much better dressed.
All gathered together, Donald's praises to sing,
As the shepherd lay with his crook in the ring.

From the mists of Harris, the Long Island, he hailed
And into the last war from Tarbert he sailed.
After two years patrolling the South African Sea,
He'd ask, "Does Durban have people looking like me?"

From ships to sheep on Lomond's steep side,
Then high hills of Perthshire he took in his stride.
Good stories to tell as his boots loused the heather,
Donald herded his flocks in all Scottish weather.

His dogs from their trailer would shake, yawn and stretch,
Then start looking round for their hill sheep to fetch.
They had plenty of power and ran out quite wide,
Donald at home on the hill, ewes in their hefts, dogs at his side.

The end came as Donald worked sheep in the fank,
Unscrupulous thieves were raiding his bank.
A Quick Call to Heaven to await you and me,
Where the craic is all good and the whisky is free.

He lies with his Cassie in Buchanan's deep soil,
Released from all cares and life's daily toil.
We are left with memories, that'll last a good while,
Donald will watch forever the sheep on his isle.



* Photo courtesy of Ian King



ABERFOYLE ROB ROY

Back Row: Tommy McLaren, Jimmy Robertson, Tim Faulds, Kenny Morrison, Dick MacCallum, Sandy Stewart, Frank Piper
Middle Row: Allan Sharp, Billy Steele, Noel Keir, Hughie Naismith, Danny O'Sullivan, Brian O'Sullivan, Jim McGuire, Alastair Geddes
Front Row: Allan Faulds, Cameron MacCallum, Allan Faulds, Billy Forrester, Jimmy Carmichael



ABERFOYLE PRIMARY SCHOOL – AROUND 1957

Back Row: Bronislaw Frame, David Kirke, Ian Scott, Jim Gilmour, William MacCallum, Alastair Gillespie, Grant Naismith, Alan Livingstone Teacher Mrs Fraser
Next Row: Ian Lambert, Barry Swanson, Nancy Stewart, June McLaren, Hazel Stewart, Marion Steele, Isabel Piper, Leslie Faulds, Findlay McLeod
Next Row: Patricia Pile, Kay Naismith, Dorothy Stewart, Margaret Rennie, Carol Ferguson, Nancy Tivey, Linda Nicholson, ?, Jean Duncan, Kathleen Piper
Front Row: Douglas Bell, Murray Sharp, Tony Martin, William Mayhew, Don Swanson

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POETRY CORNER

Freedom

Wha's like the Scots, they'll no be bought
By Brussels or Westminster
They're sure they know, it's the way to go
'Tis freedom! That is all they want
They call it 'Independence'.

Wha's like the Scots, there's no a lot
They'll no be pushed or shoved
They see the way they want to go
Tae win the referendum.

Nae ogre or genius from the euro circle
Nae Cameron, Clegg, Sarkozy or Merkel
Will stall Nicky Sturgeon or Salmond's resolve
Tae take Scotland away from English domain
And mak' oor proud country,
A nation again!

When the dust settles an' Scotland is free
A nation arisen and soon ye will see
St Andrew's proud children in Scottish attire
Nae shackles or chains tae haud them back
The World is their oyster
Just watch them attack!

They're fairly intelligent, one or two barmy
Known worldwide as the 'Great Tartan Army'
Friends of the World and all it contains
Draw near to us friends and you'll see the gains
We've made of the independence without the chains
That held us back and now we're free
Visit Scotland an' we'll gee ye
A wee cup o' tea.

As Rabbie Burns, oor poet, would say
Bide wi' us a whiley and no just a day
Oor country is braw, oor country folk tae
Oor haggis and whisky is tasty ye ken
The rivers an' lochs fu' o' salmon an' trout
Ye'll enjoy yersel' fully of that ther's nae doot
Bide wi' us a whiley; yer welcome tae stay
In yer dress or yer suit.

Ther's Glesga' an' Embra, Aberdeen an' Dundee
There's Stirlin' and' Perth an' others tae see
There's castles an' battlefields which saw the
English defeated
Where Wallace an' Bruce as kings were then seated
Oor culture and history, see at yer leisure
The weather and midges are there for yer
pleasure

So Scotland is free, an' proud "in command"
Fer St Andrew and Scotland the people will stand
Soar free as a bird released from its cage
Enjoying their freedom to mature with age.

David Coleman
9th January 2012

Inversnaid Reserve



This time of year is usually good to take stock and catch up on some paperwork. However, it has been a bit of a shock to be overwhelmed with projects at the reserve over the winter months.

There are two major projects in different stages right now that will have an impact, not just at Inversnaid, but all over the Great Trossachs Forest.

Nearing completion is the Great Path, which will eventually have links from Loch Lomond side to Callander and Brig o' Turk. Despite hosting a relatively small section of the path on RSPB land, the time involved for the planning of this section has been huge, with many logistical problems needing worked out. When finished, the path should be a great benefit to the area, and allow others to enjoy what we are so privileged to see on a daily basis.

The second project is a strategic woodland plan, which will see the reintroduction of thousands of hectares of native trees. It is difficult to go into this in too much detail right now, as some parts are still in the consultation process, but it is an exciting time for our reserve. At Inversnaid, the introduction of around 100ha of native woodland will create a lot more habitat for the woodland bird assemblage, and the black grouse are very fond of developing woodland. Of course, there will be problems ahead and compromises to be taken before the scheme is down in black and white, but I believe we have set an important positive leap in securing the long term health of the reserves habitat. Sometimes, conservation and preservation are two very different things!

See you on the reserve,
Fraser

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contact Frances on
01877 382966

STRATHARD COMMUNITY TRUST

Play Park Phase 2 Proposal

Since the upgrading of the play park it was always our intention to provide a multi sports hard play area for the older children. The trust would like to show those interested our proposal on Saturday 18th Feb between 3 and 5 pm in the Memorial hall. Members of the trust will be on hand to show the proposal and to hear your comments. At this stage this is a consultation to hear your views prior to taking things forward if there is a positive response.

Ian Marshall, Chair
Strathard Community Trust



Mountain Biking in the Trossachs

Several local mountain bike enthusiasts have come together to form a new organisation to develop biking in the Trossachs. Their view is that the quality, variety and total length of the available trails, together with the proximity to the central belt cities makes the Trossachs a natural centre for the activity which is rapidly growing in popularity.

Sandy Slater, of Aberfoyle-based Wild Biking Scotland, is one of the group, which will be a not-for-profit, voluntary organisation. He says "Visitscotland reckons that one person in every five owns a mountain bike. In the Trossachs the proportion is probably even higher, yet mountain biking doesn't get the development focus it deserves. There should be better mapping of trails that should be suitable for different abilities, local skills areas so youngsters can play in designed spaces rather than car parks, events to encourage local people to take part and activities to keep young people interested in a positive healthy sport."

Provisionally titled Mountain Bike Trossachs, the group plans to hold a public meeting in which they will ask the local community what it would like to see in the way of mountain bike development. A set of objectives would then be agreed which, in partnership with the appropriate agencies, will push the sport forward.

Scotland was voted a "Global Superstar" by the International Mountain Bike Association and the fantastic environment of the Trossachs should be part of that international recognition." Look out for posters in your local shop or notice board advertising the public meeting. Your views are wanted!

Sandy Slater Tel: 07717-217898
www.wildbikingscotland.com
sandy@wildbikingscotland.com

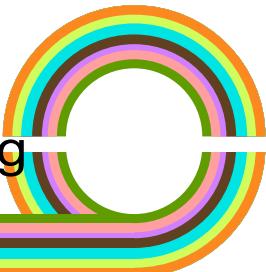
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Pet Profile

These are our three adult doves, and our two baby doves. They don't have names, we call them 'the doves' or 'the babies'. Our doves are certainly not your average dove: sits like a sensible white thing in its dove cot, then flies around for the rest of the day. No, our doves spend most of their day sitting on our bathroom windowsills, waking us all up at six in the morning with their joyful cooing. Then they may venture a couple of metres into the air to land on our shed roof, and have a nibble at some seeds, then back to the window sill.

On Sunday mornings, they have their spa session at the bucket of water in the yard. At eight fifty two am precisely you can always count on at least two doves carefully dipping their scaly pink toes into the freezing bucket of water, then pulling it out again, like an old lady at a heated swimming pool. Then one dove will take the plunge, and with a flap of white wings and rather a large splash for such a small animal, it will splash into the bucket, where it will sit for about five minutes shaking the water all over itself.

And then some days, when the doves are feeling particularly adventurous, they will even leave the sanctuary of our garden to fly out on to the main street, onto the main road. Where cars and buses have to wait, horns tooting, for three white doves to toddle slowly, pecking at the gravel every now and then, across the road, just like royalty, the way they expect everyone and everything to wait for them to pass.

Every now and again you might even catch a slightly swaying dove appearing from the bar door from the pub next door.



But our doves, although they may be silly, are lovely sometimes too. On Memorial Sunday last year, the three adult doves came and sat on the roof of a house in the square to watch the service, and then in the two minute silence, one dove even flew closer. Strange how bird's minds work.

Emily, Gartmore

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.



We are always looking for enthusiastic passionate people to volunteer for us at the David Marshall Lodge. Volunteering opportunities include engaging with the public, talking to them and answering their questions about the wildlife that we have in the Queen Elizabeth Forest Park, helping to run events and also working with schools to educate the conservationists of the future! There are many advantages to volunteering at the David Marshall Lodge including the chance to meet new people and join our friendly team. You will also be the first to know about the happenings of the Aberfoyle ospreys throughout the season.

Also think about the bigger picture: you might think talking about ospreys doesn't achieve more than a happy visitor but you'd be wrong. It's essential we communicate these wonderful stories about our nature and wildlife. Not only will the people you meet go away with a new sense of pride and ownership of their natural world but also they'll tell friends and family and they'll become a voice for nature. Then there are the little things: you could brighten someone's day, start a child off on a journey of discovery, and even just allow someone to ask that burning question they have always wanted to know the answer to. There is never a dull moment and we are right on your doorstep.

Roger is one of our current volunteers and has been coming up to the David Marshall Lodge since 2004. "The main reason that I volunteer is I enjoy being involved with wildlife and the countryside and I learn a lot by speaking with other like-minded people. My main reason for wanting to volunteer at the David Marshall Lodge is that for five months of the year I get superb views of the nesting ospreys. Also I really enjoy interacting with interested people, in particular the children."

For more information or any questions that you have please contact Robert Fraser-Binns on 01786 229252 or email robert.fraser-binns@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

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David Marshall Lodge Re-development Community Consultation

The Lodge is a special place. The planned work aims to keep it that way, providing great days out for many years to come.

Drop in for an open evening with Forestry Commission Scotland and our design team. Find out about the work and see the plans. Have a chat and let us know what you think.

Wednesday 15th February 2012 - Anytime from 6pm-8pm
Aberfoyle Memorial Hall, Trossachs Road, Aberfoyle FK8 3SW

If you can't make it, you'll be able to still see the displays afterwards, at David Marshall Lodge itself until **Sunday 19th February 2012**.

You can also keep up to date with progress by following us on twitter **@dmlaberfoyle** and our web page www.forestry.gov.uk/thelodge

CULINARY CAPERS



Researched and compiled by Margaret Leppard-Owens

An apple a day keeps the doctor away!



Dr Lindsay was born and brought up in East Kilbride. It was there that she observed the respect accorded by community members to the local family doctor. In addition, at school she enjoyed both English and science subjects. 'Studying medicine therefore, gave me the opportunity to tick both boxes – science and contact with people. I certainly never saw myself working in a laboratory!' After her marriage Dr Lindsay accompanied her husband to the USA. They lived for 3 years in Providence, Rhode Island. 'When we returned to the UK, we wanted to bring up our family in a rural area ... perhaps somewhere like Dumfries where we had lived before. When Robert was appointed to a consultancy in Glasgow, we thought the Aberfoyle area would work well for both of us.' It has. When she is off duty, Dr Lindsay enjoys getting outdoors for some exercise. 'I take

advantage of living in this lovely area. I walk every morning with a friend. I also enjoy time with the family; I read and am part of a reading group.'

Asked about how the Strathard community members might further improve their own health, Dr Lindsay said, 'Obviously diet, the apple as part of the 'five a day' (portions of fruit and veg) is important but exercise, perhaps joining one of the walking groups, improves not only physical but also emotional and spiritual wellbeing.' She concluded, 'Can I just say to your readers – community and patients - that it's been a privilege to be part of your neighbourhood for 23 years. Thanks for your welcome at the beginning; for getting to know people better as we worked together on the community garden and for making this an ideal job for a general practitioner.'

Thanks to the Forth Inn for the loan of the heatproof glass for the photo shoot.

Details of local walks organised by **Active Stirling** can be found at www.activestirling.org.uk/walk-about-stirling/ or contact Tricia Cumming on 0300 028 0101 or mobile 07557 439 111, email: cummingp@activestirling.org.uk. For local **Forestry Commission** routes enter Aberfoyle into the search tool at www.forestry.gov.uk/website/recreation.nsf/WebWalkingSearch?OpenForm&c=scotland

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The Scribe's Apprentice!?

Hi Fans,
Do I have fans? Yes I do. It was made by Electrolux and has 3 speed settings.

But enough about me. I'm going to begin by saying a big thanks to Arthur for his kind contribution to last month's *News*. It's good to get the other person's point of view but it hasn't made me change my mind about MBers. Doubt that it ever will. Seen too many of the loonies.

So if you can't bear to retrace your steps, please bear in mind Arthur's closing words: "Make Sure The Driver Has Seen YOU!" Oh yes, and he's right about them being friendly lads!

Also remember that if you go "one-on-one" with a 5 metre log, you're gonnny lose!

Right, not changing the subject but moving swift on.

You know how I was chuntering on about the doughballs who never read the signs we put up? Well there's a corollary to this:

The divots that expect signs to be put up or the even more sly divots who use the, "There's no signs," excuse to park where they like.

Anecdote time!

As most of you will know the Forestry Commission, which is fortunate enough to have me as an employee and which doesn't pay me anywhere near enough, runs a visitor attraction called the 3 Lochs Forest Drive. I'm here to tell you that it's the best £2 you'll ever spend giving you the opportunity to drive through some stunning scenery, listen to quiet that is so quiet you can almost hear your hair grow, see wee beasties running wild and breathe in air so clean and fresh it feels like no one has ever breathed it before.

I'm beginning to sound like an advert for "Visit Scotland!" Neil Oliver, eat your heart out!

Anyway, back to the Forest Drive. It's 8 miles from one end to the other: forest road all the way with wee parking bays so's ye kin pull aff the road an' hae yur pic-nic!

Note well the fact that they are "Parking Bays" i.e. "Bays for Parking!" and that some of them are so unobtrusive that they have wee notices pointing them out to the uninitiated Forest Drive driver.

So, enter my mate Wee Ted. That's no quite his real name but its close enough.

Ted had lads working on the forest drive to make it pretty for the start of next year's season and after making his usual site inspection he leaves them to get on with it and sets off for the next site.

Gets to the exit of the forest drive down at Alt-Himery (*I don't do Gaelic spelling, ever. I'm a lowland Scot and proud of it!*) only to find that some jackass has parked a car across the 'Dragon's Teeth' exit, rather effectively blocking the road oot!

Now the FC takes the idea of being polite and courteous very seriously, along with being helpful and being willing to give anyone a helping hand. So wee Ted asks this lad if he's broken down and does he need a hand to move his car.

"Naw," the lad replies, "I'm jist parkin' here."

When Wee Ted points out that this is in fact the exit and he's now blocked it, the staggering reply was, "How wis Ah tae ken that; thur wisnae ony signs sayin' 'Nae Parkin'"

"But did ye no see the road run round the side of the barrier and that ye wur blockin' the way oot?" asks Ted completely nonplussed, by the non-committal attitude.

"No ma problem!" the bawheid replies.

And that, my friends, is so often the case nowadays: the couldn't-care-less attitude of the buttock-brain-among us. Whatever happened to the concept of consideration for others, of putting yourself out a wee bit, so that other folk have it a wee bit easier.

Onyway Ted explains that the lad will have to move as there is earth moving machinery coming this way and they'll need access.

The guy's no keen and is treating it like it's some kind of game. However, Ted further explains that if the lad will not move he'll have the unhappy task of calling the local policeman and get him to shift him. The lad's looking a wee bit sceptical, right up until Neil arrives with the tractor and Ted bellows to him for the local police station number.

"Ah don't know but I'll google it on ma phone," Neil shouts back, as Ted hauls out his own phone.

The numpty finally gets the idea that no one is playing games; whereupon, uttering foul, unprintable oaths and other swear words, he starts slamming doors, revving the car engine; then disappears in a flurry of spinning wheels and further bad language.

Ted and Neil watched him disappear. Then Neil says, "Dae ye still want that number?" Ted shakes his head.

"Jist as well," Neil replies, "Ah cannae get a signal here!"

See it's right enough; the wicked flee where no man pursueth!"

See ya.



Search for a new Stirling Makar

At the end of January, poet Magi Gibson's tenure will end as the Stirling Makar. Stirling Council is now inviting nominations to be submitted for a new Makar who will represent the Stirling area and poetry.

Prior to Magi Gibson's tenure, the last Stirling Makar was William Dunbar, holding the position during the reign of James IV. In 2009, Stirling Council reintroduced the position and Magi Gibson took up post.

The role of the Makar is very exciting and rewarding. The Makar is expected to write one poem per annum in celebration of the Stirling area and detail aspects of Stirling life and the general community. As well as this, the Stirling Makar promotes poetry through the area by engaging with groups and relevant Council services, including Education, Libraries and Archives and Culture and Adult Learning to encourage new poets as well as helping literary skills and enriching our imaginations.

Nomination forms can be downloaded from the Stirling council website at www.stirling.gov.uk/makar



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• Tyndrum

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E-mail: Enquiries@rsha.demon.co.uk
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Please note that we encourage all applicants to also apply to Stirling Council's housing list (Tel : 0845 277 7000). Being on both lists is the best way to maximise your chances of being rehoused.

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Ranger's Ramblings

A View from the Lodge!



Courtesy of John McKinlay

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

That Was The Week That Was

For the Lodge staff, the mind-numbing sense of quiet that is prevalent during the month of November is usually labelled 'the calm before the storm'. The 'storm' being the hectic arrangements which normally take place in preparation for our Christmas Tree sales. Unfortunately, this time around, the phrase turned out to offer a literal angle.

Like the opening of each window on an advent calendar, everything is down to an acute sense of timing. It is vital that the delivery, shipment and display of the trees go smoothly, and in accordance with ongoing customer demand. There is also a strong desire on the part of the Forestry Commission to create a congenial atmosphere through the themed events and activities that run in tandem.

All this planning is laid down well in advance and is, most especially, dependent on weather conditions.

Lo, and behold, the surrounding localities suffered a somewhat horrendous chain of events, in the lead-up, with floods, blizzards, hurricane gales, power cuts and then more floods. Clearly, then, the 'congenial atmosphere' we were anticipating was seriously threatened.

Still, despite an enforced two-day closure, The Lodge held firm throughout, due to a concerted and collective effort on the part of the team to ensure the approach roads and paths remained accessible.

Our advertised events, which included Robert's 'Winter Birds Day' and the time-honoured 'Lomond Mountain Rescue Fun Day' produced a healthy amount of interest, in spite of the bitter cold conditions.

Nonetheless, there is no denying the subdued atmosphere during the course of the month, which is perhaps indicative of the current financial climate.

Essentially, to many, the main focus at this time remains fairly and squarely on the opportunity to purchase a real Christmas Tree, with the result we remain truly humbled by the continued sense of loyalty attached. It is difficult for instance to stay steady on your feet when, from last year, we learned of a couple who have made the sojourn to collect one for each of the past forty-seven years.

In conjunction with this, I always look forward to this time on a personal level, as it offers the chance to catch up with old friends paying us their 'annual' visit.



At point of writing, it is two days before Christmas, and the staff at the Lodge have exchanged gifts and said their goodbyes. After the rigours of the season, without much of a break, the two-month closure is a welcome respite. Yet, there is an underlying feeling of mixed emotions. A sense of loss almost.

We are a family of sorts, and I will miss them intensely in the interim. For me, the feeling of togetherness and total belief that exists within the team toward The Lodge is beyond reproach.

I also tend to liken this period of 'hibernation' to our migrating ospreys. Time to 'leave the nest', and come back refreshed. Time to create new life in the coming year.

There is no doubt on the whole, though, that modern day pressures are likely to have a serious impact on our lives in the near future, as we continually seek comfort zones.

In light of this, I steadfastly believe the Lodge offers the perfect escape, even in the face of adversity.

I Wish You May, I Wish You Might, Have The Wish You Wish Tonight

One of the more pleasant 'chores' afforded me in producing my Christmas article each year is sifting through the 'stars' placed on our Wishing Tree throughout December.

As always, it has turned out to be a difficult process to choose the best of around a hundred and fifty 'submissions'. Interestingly, there was a huge shift from previous years requesting electronic items in favour of asking for a pet dog or cat (or in one case a tortoise, and believe it or not, one for a frog). Again, strangely, only a couple of requests for snow.

Here is my top ten.

1. That all my friends see shooting stars. *Daniel, aged four.*
2. All shoeboxes get safely to children. *Agnes.*
3. That Simon is in peace. *Chris.*
4. That all the squirrels have enough to eat this winter. *Anon.*
5. For Sean and Keiran to stop fighting. *Rosaleen.*
6. That Grandma would take us to St.Lucia. *Susan.*
7. That there were pink Christmas Trees. *Louise.*
8. All the children who are in hospital to get better and spend Christmas with their family and friends. *Orla.*
9. That I could be a professional gymnast. *Elidh.*
10. To have a job, so that I can make all Rosey's dreams come true. *Hailey.*

Rangers Corner



All of us are looking forward to next season
And with all good reason
For the Lodge is finally going to get a serious 'lick of paint'.
Not before time, I am at pains to add
As parts of the old ship are beginning to appear rather sad
Despite concerted efforts on behalf of the crew
Through restricted budgets, to keep it looking anew
A development team is now firmly in place
Detailed to present a modern face.
That changes are coming cannot be denied
Still, I hope all caution is duly applied
On the part of those who 'have a say'
To meet with approval, at the end of the day
As fifty odd candle years continue to burn brightly
On a history not to be taken lightly
A particularly potent notion
When considering any new 'lotion'.



A poignant picture of Robert wrapping the first Christmas tree of the month for Crookston Nursery.



Our new Recreation Manager, Will Huckerby, offered admirable back up throughout. Which is why I am not going to comment on his choice of headgear.



The two David's, Erskine and Brough, offered a very welcome impromptu 'busking' performance on Fun Day Sunday.



Angela Ballard certainly had her work cut out as she strived to deal with the overwhelming demand placed upon the craft activities table.

Callander gains 2 new Black Belts

Youngsters Scott McCoull and Eilidh Walker, both 13 years of age, recently completed a 4 hour gruelling grading to attain their Black Belts. They attended the grading held by Taekwondo expert, Grandmaster Loh 9th.

In their grading they had to spar multiple times as well as performing Taekwondo poomsae and finish with breaking boards using jump kicking techniques. They did their club and parents proud and we hope they continue the Taekwondo journey which they are just beginning, as Black Belt is not the end of Taekwondo training; it is the start!

The Callander club trains at McLaren Leisure centre and Raploch Ochil centre, if you would like to come for a free lesson just come along. You can contact the club on 07713 193841 or visit the website www.callander-taekwondo.co.uk



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National Park News

By Owen McKee



IMPORTANT NOTICE

**STARTING FROM MONDAY 2ND APRIL 2012
THE MORNING OPEN SURGERIES ARE
GOING TO BE REPLACED BY AN
APPOINTMENT SYSTEM.**

**THE PURPOSE OF THIS CHANGE IS TO
REDUCE THE TIME PATIENTS HAVE TO
SPEND IN THE WAITING ROOM.**

**MORE DETAILS AND SURGERY TIMES
WILL BE AVAILABLE IN MARCH.**

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

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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

NEW STROKE CLUB FOR TROSSACHS?

We are investigating the possibility of starting up a new Stroke Club for the Trossachs area and are looking for people who would be interested in being part of this exciting endeavour, from anyone who has had a stroke to folk who would be willing to give their time and skills as a volunteer.

Carol Anderson of Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland supports many clubs such as these throughout Scotland and explains, "The stroke club is intended to be a place where people who have had a stroke can make new friends and enjoy interesting activities. It makes a real difference to someone who has had a stroke to realise that other people understand the difficulties faced by stroke survivors."

The nearest stroke group for the Trossachs area at present is in Bridge of Allan so it was felt that something more local would be of great benefit to the rural area.

If you would be interested in having a local stroke group where people can get together on a regular basis to have fun, chat, go on outings, etc then please get in touch with Carol.

Tel: 07760 765325 or email:
carol.anderson@chss.org.uk



How long is temporary? That is a question that has been asked about the gateway signage to our National Park. And it is no wonder. Our National Park came into being in July 2002 and people had to be made aware of the Park's boundaries and fairly quickly. The decision was taken to install temporary signage to allow the Authority time to consider how best to announce the Park both to residents and visitors alike. And time has been taken, so much so that the existing signage has become so faded that it hardly registers. Thankfully after much deliberation the Authority has got round to establishing new permanent signage which will start appearing this year. The new signs which reflect the design of the Park Authority's HQ building at Balloch will feature a steel spine with a drystane dyke facing. A slab with vitreous enamel lettering and logo will be inset in the stonework. Discussions took place with the roads authorities to ensure that the replacement structures presented no safety hazards and as a result in some places there will be safety mounds between the road and the base of the signs. The opportunity was also taken to position the signs to take account of the landscape in giving maximum effect, with the result that some repositioning has been necessary. In some cases the signs will be outside the Park boundaries and that has meant that we have had to apply for Planning Permission to the relevant Local Authorities. However as we have been liaising with them throughout the exercise we do not anticipate that there will be any delay in obtaining the necessary permission. So the answer to the question would appear to be ten years.

With 2012 being the tenth anniversary of the Park, it is planned to mark the occasion with a number of events. One such will be a photography competition to highlight the amazing scenery of the Park. So get those cameras out so that the gems which exist in the Strathard area can feature in the awards list. Details for this and other events will be published nearer the time.

I'm pleased to say that the Water Bus service will operate on Loch Lomond again this year. With a little bit of planning the Strathard area can benefit from this.

The Five Lochs project is progressing well with work planned to start this year on infrastructure improvements for Loch Lubnaig the big priority. The first year of operation of the East Loch Lomond bylaws and new camping and parking facilities has been successful. However it is recognised that we need more than one season to judge the effectiveness of the measures taken there particularly when the weather during that season was not of the best and could have played a part in dampening down the numbers of unruly visitors.

Renewable energy schemes, particularly run of the river hydro generation, are still to the fore and although there are no wind farm applications inside the Park we are being consulted on a few on the periphery. The biomass power plant application at Acham Killin was given permission. As part of that permission the developer has to make a report to Park Authority as to possible uses of the hot water produced as a by-product of the process. Discussions are taking place between the developer and the Killin community to see whether there are ways in which the heat could be used for community projects such as horticulture or drying of woodchips. Hopefully some useful employment opportunities will be forthcoming.

As always I can be contacted as follows:

Post: Taigh Na Bhuth,
Lochearnhead.

Phone: 01567 830214
email: owen@thevillageshop.fsbusiness.co.uk



New Film Celebrates Loch Lomond and The Trossachs

Showcasing some of the most spectacular scenery Scotland has to offer, a new digitised DVD starring Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park is now available from the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs. Funded by contributions from the National Park and sponsor Optical Express, the DVD captures the evocative moods and spirit of the area accompanied by original music composed by Phil Cunningham.

James Fraser, Chair of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs said: "We are delighted with the quality of the film which really does do justice to the special qualities of Scotland's first National Park, in this, the tenth anniversary of its formation. We are grateful to both the National Park Authority and Optical Express for their support which has enabled us to produce large quantities of the film to promote the area, as well as raising much needed funds from sales for important conservation work in the Park."

Speaking about the film, Fiona Logan CEO of the National Park, said: "We know that Loch Lomond and The Trossachs has some of the most spectacular scenery in the world and I would recommend you take a look at the new film to get a bird's eye view of the whole park. From Loch Lomond in the south, Cowal in the west, over to the Trossachs and across to Breadalbane, the aerial footage is breathtaking and gives you a real sense of the diverse landscape we are lucky to have in this National Park. If you think you know the National Park, I would encourage you to look again at the many hidden and magic gems and be inspired to explore everything Loch Lomond and The Trossachs has to offer from scenery to wildlife, lochs and mountains to the rich culture of the area."

David Mouldsdale, CEO of Optical Express said: "This film captures the magical qualities of what is one of the most beautiful places in the world and we are proud to support the Friends with this

and other projects as part of their Windows on the Park initiative. Like many others, I have happy memories of days spent in the area and it's important that we all play our part supporting the valuable conservation work of the Friends for the benefit of current and future generations".

All proceeds of the DVD will go towards the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, an independent conservation charity that works to protect, promote and provide for the National Park area. Funds raised from sales will go towards a number of conservation projects including native tree planting, restoring footpaths, education activities and red squirrel protection.

The DVD is available to buy for £11.99 from the Friends main office 63 West Princess Street, Helensburgh (Tel 01436677733), the National Park online shop www.lochlomond-trossachs.org and from other outlets in and around the Park.

If you would like more information about how you can become a member of the Friends or if you would like to make a donation visit www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk/



Yoga ChillOut And Meditation

Yoga @ Laughing Buddha Studio

Gartur, Dykehead, Port-of-Menteith

Classes here are not every week and spaces are limited, so please check dates and be sure to book! Lift club available. Herbal teas, coffee, fruit & biscuits after... no need to rush off.



Base Yoga

Get fit, de-stress, have fun, and feel really really good... Combined with music and starting with a gentle warm-up, base yoga reaches an energetic crescendo before coming down again and ending in a well deserved relaxation...



Small Group Yoga

This is a great class if you are new to yoga, if you are recovering from illness or injury or if you prefer smaller groups (max 4). Props and modifications are used and you get plenty of individual attention so you get the most from the class.



Saturdays & Sundays

Saturdaya great way to kick-start your weekend...
Sundaya great way to chill into the rest of the day...



Meditation Group

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Contact Brenda for more information
01877 389302 / 01877 389302

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West of the Moon, East of the Sun Every Tuesday 9:30am - 11am

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Brenda's ChillOut Yoga Every Friday 9:30am - 11am

Focussing on deep stretching, deep breathing and other yoga techniques to reduce muscular tension and calm the chatter of the mind.

Get together for a cuppa after!



www.chilloutscotland.com

School News



Aberfoyle primary and Nursery



The Ugly Sisters



Fairy Godmother



Cinderella



Rockerfella

As we enter a New Year I would like to update you on a very "big" event which took place in school during December of 2011 – our school pantomime CINDERELLA and ROCKERFELLA.

A huge vote of thanks goes not only to the children in the cast but to all parents, staff and other helpers who made this show such a big success.

I am sure that everyone who was in the audience will agree that the standard of performance, costumes and scenery was outstanding. P6/7 raised £55 by printing and selling programmes for the Panto. This money will be donated to Strathcarron Hospice. Many thanks go to the local businesses that paid to place adverts in the programme.

P6/7 Enterprise project.

Last term P6/7's topic took the form of an enterprise project. The class was divided into 4 "companies." The pupils were allocated roles within their companies e.g Finance Director, Project Manager, Sales Director etc. The Parent Council gave each company a start up loan which they used to buy items to sell or the raw materials with which to make items for sale.

They sold their products at the Christmas Fayre and after the pantomime making a profit of £150. This sum will be donated to Yorkhill Hospital, Great Ormond Street Hospital, Cancer Research and the Anthony Nolan Charity.

Many useful skills were learned in the running of the businesses as you will gather from the pupils' comments.

"I learned that it is hard to make money some times"

"I liked it at the start but when it got to the business side of things it got quite stressful."

"I learned to listen more to what other people are saying"

"I learned to check the invoice BEFORE paying the money"

We were very fortunate last term to have the help of Mrs Chrissie Morrison, from Aberfoyle, who came to teach sewing to P6/7. This new skill proved invaluable during the manufacture of items such as Christmas stockings and pillows.

Reindeer Dust

Sales of Reindeer dust raised £64. We have ordered skipping ropes, balls and hula hoops for use in the playground. We hope that the dust helped the reindeers find your home at Christmas.

Burns Celebration.

Yesterday it was Burns Day. We all came in wearing something tartan. We all learned Burns Poems and P4/5 & 6/7 each wrote their own modern version of Address To A Haggis. Each class then voted the best poems out of their class and the chosen people said their poems out loud in front of the whole school.

Mrs Neufeld came to read Burns poems to every class. Mrs Neufeld and Mr Quinn presented certificates to the people who read their poems to the whole school.

By Natalie Klaes P6

Address to the Teddy Bear

Fair Fa your soft and fluffy face
Great chieftain o the seelpin race
Wee beady eyes stare oot your face
And inta mine
But are ye worthey o helpin me
Ta sleep each night

By Heather Jackson P6



To a Ladybird

Ya wee rid ladybird never be dead
Up on the mountains down the road
Stay with me for the rest of my life
Everywhere you go you never bring strife
Now fly back home and live your life.



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Christmas Concert

On Monday 19 December we held our 41st annual Christmas concert. The night opened with the traditional carol 'Once in Royal David's city'. The orchestra then played Sinfonia in D, then it was time for the brass group, led by Mr Pacher. We played two well known Christmas pieces, 'Mary's boy child' and Let it snow'.

The mixed vocal group performed two pieces: 'A Winter Song' and 'All I want for Christmas is You'. Then the Pipers got everyone's feet stamping with a selection of well known traditional Scottish music. The string ensemble played 'Palladio', then the wind band played 'Christmas Recollections' and 'It don't mean a thing' from 'Sophisticated Ladies' and the audience joined in the singing of 'O Come All Ye Faithful', 'Jingle Bells' and 'Winter Wonderland'.

Ava Dinwoodie sang 'Walking in the Air excellently with orchestral accompaniment and the suitable scene from the film in the background. After this came the Boys Choir who sang 'Feed the World' and 'All These Things That I've Done'. The first of the songs was played by Craig Russell, Rory Wilson and Steven Wykes on guitar with Craig and Rory singing and the choir joining in.

Then the String ensemble played the Coldplay hit 'Viva la Vida' and then the jazzy number 'Rockin Around the Christmas Tree', followed by the swing band who played 'How High the Moon' and 'Frosty the Snowman'. To end this excellent concert the orchestra played the much loved 'Sleigh Ride' then the audience sang the final carol of the night 'Hark the Herald', after which we played the audience out with 'White Christmas'. The concert was a huge success and congratulations to everyone who participated in it.

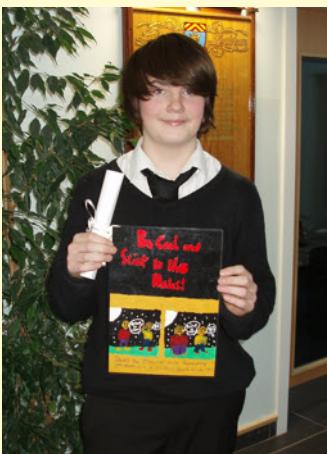
Ruaridh Duthie S3



NHS Forth Valley Art Competition

On Friday the 25 November 2011 I went to the new Forth Valley Royal Hospital in Larbert for a prize giving ceremony. The prize giving ceremony was for an art competition which took place in October, the winning entries being made into a calendar. At the ceremony everyone was awarded a certificate, a calendar, their drawing and a £20 book voucher as the prize. After being awarded with that we went through to another room for refreshments. Once everyone had finished we went and got our pictures taken and then got our pictures taken again but this time in our different counties for the newspapers. Then finally a man came and said that he is going to try and arrange for us to have tea with the provost of Stirling!

By Cameron Cairns S2



Well done to Cameron whose winning entry can be seen in the Forth Valley Calendar for December 2012.

Curling

On 13 and 14 December our Curling team that consisted of John Graham (Skip), James Graham (3rd), Jenny Holl (2nd) and Hannah Brisbane (Lead) ventured to 'Dewars' Ice Rink in Perth to take part in the Annual Hay Trophy Schools Open Curling Championships.

Playing one game against each of the schools they were drawn in their section - Perth Academy, George Heriot's, St John's Academy and Brechin High - McLaren played consistently well throughout the competition. James said *"I thought the curling was fun and a great learning experience which I would love to do again next year"* and Hannah commented *"I enjoyed our days out, competing against other schools and meeting other young curlers from across Scotland"* Well done to them all!

PTA Draw

Congratulations to the winners of the December draw; Mrs Smith from Aberdeen and Mr Crawford from Aberfoyle.

Geography Excursion

On Tuesday 15 November the S5/6 Higher Geography Class went on a field trip to the Glen Coe Mountain region. We went in order to enhance our understanding of the glaciation that had occurred in the area, and also to take part in a river survey of the 'River Coe'. We firstly stopped off at the "Three step waterfall", and analysed the erosion of a waterfall and the natural nick points that started the whole process. Secondly, we went to the River Coe to study the many aspects of it, such as flow speed, river width and bed-load size. This meant having to get into the water, which was unbelievably cold! We ended up slouching back to the bus with frozen hands, making eating our lunch a bit more of a task. After lunch, we drove on up towards Glen Coe village and went onto the nearby beach to look at coastal environments and also point out features of glacial erosion in the surrounding landscape. By the time we had finished naming corries, arêtes, and pyramidal peaks we had to return home. Overall, everyone enjoyed the day out, even though it may have been a little chilly. So thanks to Mr Williamson for organising the trip and Mr Stojanovic for driving us around all day.

Daniel Mallin-Martin S5



Rural Skills Group

Recently the S3/S4 Rural Skills Group have been working with keepers Nicola and Vicki at Blairdrummond Safari Park. So far we have been doing the cleaning of stables and fields, preparation of food and the cleaning of the lemur and otter enclosure. Also we took part in feeding the bears and all the animals in Pet's Corner.

Each week the groups are assigned to different tasks like the preparing of food and feeding the animals. Each group gets a different activity, for example one week one group will do mucking out of stables and one group will do the cleaning of fields. Afterwards the groups swap activities, and then they do a different activity the week after. We have been given inside experience of how things work and have had the opportunity to get close to the animals. We have all enjoyed the course so far and look forward to working more closely with the animals. We are grateful to Blairdrummond Safari Park for providing this Rural Skills placement.

Sam Frost S3



S4 Outward Bound Residential at Loch Eil



The Garden in early Spring

What a different winter we've had so far compared with last year; so wet, windy and so mild until quite recently. Now at last, as February starts, we're getting a bit of cold that will hopefully kill off a few bugs. But what will happen to those confused plants that have been flowering recently like plenty of Camellias I've noticed?

With the days growing noticeably longer and some beautiful clear days, it's time to wrap up warm and get out there again.

In The Garden

Last year we were checking for damage done by the snow; this year it's wind damage that you've probably noticed already. Get the loppers and secateurs or chain saw out and prune back any broken branches, restake trees if necessary and, if hedges have been pushed over too far, think about renovation pruning.

While you've got the loppers or pruning saw to hand, carry out any work on apple and pear trees before they come into leaf (while you can still see the branch network); opening up the canopy will enhance air circulation and reduce the chance of fungal disease. But don't be tempted to tackle any of the Prunus species (plums and gages – stone fruits) until in leaf.

All the fruit trees will benefit from a high potash feed; wood ash is excellent.

Autumn fruiting raspberries should be cut back to the ground now and new canes planted. Also plant other fruit bushes and trees – some may still be available as bare root plants.

March is the time to prune rose bushes; lift, divide and replant hostas; trim the tops of winter flowering heathers and there is still time to lift and divide snowdrops "in the green". Start to control slugs and snails now even if you can't see them: starting now may save a lot of damage later on. If you use slug pellets, apply a scattering every few weeks.

The lawn should show signs of growth soon. If there is debris/leaves around clear it off, check that the mower is in good working order and when the weather turns milder be ready to apply a spring feed &/or moss killer.

Bird Care

Hopefully you've all been looking after the birds all winter so far, but it's not nearly time to ease up on the feeding yet as our real winter may still be to come! Continue to make sure they have something to eat and unfrozen water to drink and bathe in. February 13th is the start of National Bird Nest Box week; obviously it is time for the birds to be thinking about nesting so cut back any deciduous hedges before they start and put up/clean out a bird box or two.

In the greenhouse or shed there is plenty to do. Firstly make sure everything is clean including the windows to maximize light levels early in the year. Then get busy with your seed sowing – sow sweetpeas and root crops in modules to avoid root disturbance on planting out; basil, tomatoes and others in a heated propagator. Plant up lily bulbs in containers for making a splash of colour wherever you fancy in the summer.

On warm days keep the greenhouse well ventilated. And keep a good eye-out for aphids – controlling them now will save a lot of effort later in the year.

Houseplants can be repotted now so they grow away well for the rest of the year. This includes many **orchids**; assuming they have finished flowering and before they put on new growth, if they have not been repotted for a couple of years think about doing it now. If you're not confident to tackle this job bring them in and let us do it for you.

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www.benviewgardencentre.co.uk

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From the Manse.....



It's the thing I struggle most with. This column. Every time I puzzle – what to write? The moment of putting pen to paper is endlessly put off by my indecision. I have, I realize, the mind of a flea doused in itching powder and no self-discipline at all. A(nother) coffee will inspire me, I tell myself. It doesn't. I gaze, mug in hand, at Ben Lomond now bathed in the unexpected visitor of sunshine and ponder becoming a mystic.

More coffee required. Waiting for the kettle to boil I remember that the sink is blocked, and that I had put off clearing it. Suddenly this seems the perfect moment. I joyfully don the Marigolds, lie down on the floor and wrestle with U-bends and clumps of carelessly drained rice. A good job done, I tell myself, as the water gurgles merrily down the drain (yes, I did replace the U-bend first.) Back to the laptop now, I say firmly, as, for the first time ever, I gaze longingly at a huge pile of ironing.

I must write something or Margaret, the editor, will be after me. I notice a pile of Sunday papers – the bits I never read. Suddenly I am deeply immersed in reports of Saturday's football. I hate most sport and am a firm follower of Sir Winston Churchill's health advice. He said that if ever he felt the need to exercise, he would lie down until the urge passed. (And he lived to a very fine age.) I realize I have now read the sports sections of the Sunday papers from cover to cover. I have even read about darts. I could probably go on Mastermind now, and I amuse myself by imagining friends' and families' astonishment when they see me announcing my chosen subject is Sport, John.

Come on, get a grip. You must write something. I ponder asking Margaret to give me a topic each issue. Something – anything. She won't of course, even though she is an elder at Aberfoyle Parish Church and really ought to care more about the turmoil her minister goes through each six weeks or so. She would just give me an amused look and tell me to get on with it.

It is hard, plucking a subject out of thin air. One should always write about something one knows about, I tell myself. The page is still shockingly – but honestly – blank. What have I been reading lately – that might help? I turn to the books on the table. *The Wheels on the Bus* ... well, my grandson loves it. Or Julian Barnes' *Nothing to be Frightened Of*. (Do read it. It is very funny, erudite and teasing.) I find myself haunted by the first line: 'I don't believe in God, but I miss Him'. I like that. I wonder if I would miss writing for Strathard News.

Will anyone even notice if there is nothing from the Manse this time? People might cheer. Mind wanders again – has anyone ever written a Book of Excuses? You know, one of those natty little stocking filler books that seem to come out around Christmas? Would Margaret accept an excuse for this month? Or could I claim, like Coleridge, that my thoughts were interrupted by the Person from Porlock, and all was lost? I could say that a Person from Plean put me off my stride.

Gosh, over five hundred words already. I haven't begun, and must now end. That makes me think. It makes me think that I should learn to make the most of the stuff in between the beginning and ending of life – my life. Who was it said that life is what happens while we are making other plans? I hope this beginning of a new year brings you hope and peace and contentment, that that will continue, and that 2012 is a brighter, kinder, lovelier year than 2011 was for so very many.

Happy New Year.

Linda

St Mary's Episcopal Church

Richard Grosse, Rector of St Mary's

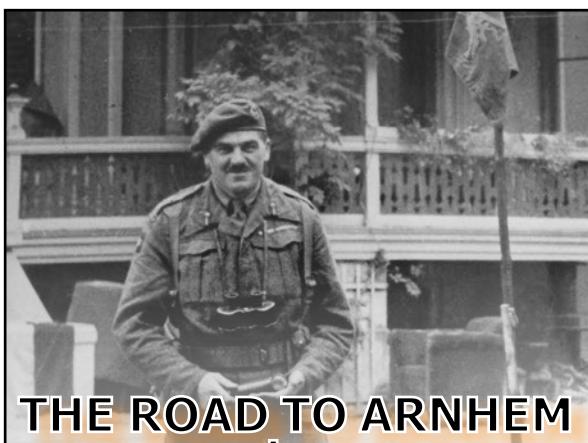


The column tracing the BBC radio programme about the area finished in the last issue with a description of Rob Roy's imaginary writing desk on the Duke's Pass. Another familiar landmark on the Pass was the Slate Quarry. Today, only the manager's house is still discernable, but when the programme was broadcast in 1939, it was a flourishing concern, as Will Ferguson recounted. He commented that Aberfoyle slates were famously hard, and obtainable in three colours, green, blue and grey. The only other quarry producing green slates was at Luss, and so green Aberfoyle slate in particular was much in demand. The slate could be purchased in full size being 14 inches by eight, or undersize 10 by 5. He explained how the slate was gained first by the ground being bored by air compressor, before blasting with gunpowder. Men worked in squads of four and, after blasting, two would select the good material and cut it to size and thickness. That done the slate was sent to a small shed. Here the slate was split by chisel before being dressed into shape by two more skilful sets of hands.

The quarry had been working since 1882, and for the next forty eight years, the finished slate was conveyed along the hillside on bogies for a mile before plunging down the side of Craig Mohr for a further $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. The line then passed under Manse Road, before terminating in the Station Yard. As the full wagons were launched down the hillside, their weight contrived to pull the 'empties' back from the station to the quarry. A trace of the line is still visible opposite the Baillie Nicol Jarvie, as is the hump that marks the crossing of the road. The line fell into disuse after 1931 with the opening of the Dukes Pass, which allowed the motor lorry direct access to the quarry for the first time. This of course contributed to the slow death of the railway.

Fifty men were employed at the works in 1939. Will Ferguson lamented the shortage of accommodation for workers in the area. He thought that more workers might usefully be employed, as demand for slate was outstripping production. He also confidently predicted that there was still an abundance of slate to be worked. Sadly, time was to prove him incorrect on both counts. Within weeks of the broadcast the nation was at war, and house building for the duration slowed to a trickle. Thereafter, foreign competition savaged the slate market. This, combined with diminishing veins of slate caused the undertaking to cease trading in the 1950s.

Louis Stott's book 'Aberfoyle Slate Quarries - Fragments of an Earlier World' provides a definitive account of this part of Aberfoyle's history.



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Tales frae the Squirrel Nut Family

February Playing In the Woods with Connie Nut

I love February! Well, a've never actually had yin afore because me an' my brothers an' Rowan were only born in July last year.

But my first February wis brilliant. Like yesterday, was definitely the BEST day a've ever had. Well, except maybe the day I used a leaf as a parachute and jumped aff the tap o' The Great Oak Tree. That was awfy fun!

A'll start fae the very beginning, aboot yesterday...

The day afore yesterday it had been very windy and wet, and I was very scared The Great Oak Tree would fa' doon, and we live in it, so I was a wee bit worried!

So when I woke up yesterday mornin', an' saw the wood, instead o' feeling worried (it was an awfy bonny morning – no' a breath o' wind, and the weak spring sunshine was shinin') I was whoopin' wi' excitement! The forest looked great! There were a few trees fallen doon slanty ways, and they looked awfy fun for slidin' doon, and gathered in a dip in a tree branch, was a humungous pile o' nuts, which musta' been knocked aff by the wind!

So I says to Ma, while we're a' eatin' oor nut porridge, "Ma, can we go oot tae play?"

An' Ma says, "Aye, ye can get oot while I'm dae-in' the washin' up!"

So me an' ma sister Rowan, and ma brothers Hawthorn an' Acorn, get on oor welly boots (mine are pink, Rowan's are yellow, Acorn's are red and Hawthorn's are green) and troop oot the door.

It's a bit chilly, but we quickly warm up as we scamper along the big knobbly branches, past old Mr an' Mrs Cashew's hoose, until we get tae the bottom o' a big branch that's fallen diagonally onto the branch below, so that it's like a big slide from one branch to another.

"Last one tae the top's a mouldy nut!" Acorn yells, already half way up the branch.

So we a' start clamberin' up. I cling on tae knots in the wood, an' wee twigs growin' oot, no' lookin' doon cos am a bit feart o' big heights. When we get tae the top, we tak a wee minute tae catch oor breath an' munch a stray berry each, then slide a' the way doon again! I a'most fly right off the end the first time, but manage tae cling on tae a twig, and end up getting bounced right back tae the top again. We dae this for aboot half an hour, then scamper on a bit further, leaping fae tree tae tree. There's a big tree doon, which I recognise as Big Sycamore Tree, but luckily naebody lives in it cos it's a very skinny tree, so it isnae very good fur hollowin' oot. But we climb tae the top o' it, tae find it's very springy, like a spring board.

"Let's see if we can jump up tae.... That branch!" Rowan says, pointin' tae a branch quite high up in the trees.

"Nae bother!" says Hawthorn, bouncin' up an' doon on the very springy trunk for a few seconds, then with one mighty leap, flies up intae the air, soars far past the proposed branch of reaching, and then gently comes flyin' back doon again. We a' clear oot o' the way, as Hawthorn bounces back onto the trunk, and soars once mair intae the air, only this time no' as high.

Then we a' have a go. I go after Hawthorn, and mighty me, it's a bonny sight, being up that high above the forest. I watch as ma brothers an' sister become wee broonish red dots, and a' the fallen trees mere dark brown lines, a' the leaves blending intae one green mess. I narrowly miss collidin' wi' a flyin' robin, and for one teeny second, am just hingin' there, mid air, amongst the topmost branches, then I'm flyin' back towards the ground.

We played a' day in the wood, an it was awfy fun! But then Ma ca'ed us back fur oor dinner – mashed nuts an' tatties, an' after a big drink o' milk, I was feelin' very sleepy, an' fell asleep right on Pa's lap. I do love February!

How to make a string of pretty spring bunting

In some ways, spring is a blessing: no more long, dark, cold winter days. But on the other hand, spring is a burden: The Big Spring Clean! So why not cheer yourself up by making some cute and colourful bunting to brighten up any room! It's also a lovely Valentine's Day gift for your loved ones!

You will need:

3m string/colourful wool

20 triangles of colourful fabrics measuring 20cm (length) by 15cm (width at top)

Thread

1. Cut a piece of string/colourful wool measuring 3 metres in length.
2. Cut out twenty triangles measuring 20cm in length (2cm for folding over) by 15cm at the top. Try to find interesting patterns, or plain felt which you could embroider pictures or words onto. For instance, if you were doing a Valentine's themed bunting, you could stitch a love heart on one triangle, and 'I love you' across three triangles. Or if you were just making a normal bunting, you could sew a flower onto a triangle, or a leaf. Just whatever you feel like sewing! You could decorate plain fabrics by sewing on pieces of ribbon or buttons. Just have fun with it!
3. Space the twenty triangles along the string/wool at 15cm intervals, then sew on each flag, but folding two cm of the fabric over the string, then sewing it down.

And there you have it! Your own bunting to cheer up any room and inspire you with your Spring Clean. You could even make it spring themed by sewing lambs, daffodils, tulips, etc. onto the flags.



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Milton

Hello Children,

February is a wonderful little month, although it will be one day longer this time round. 2012 is a Leap Year, being perfectly divisible by four. Grandpa Otter says that the name comes from the Roman feast called Februa. The early British people referred to February as "cake month", a time when such mouth-watering offerings were made to the ancient gods. The Roman emperors, Julius Caesar and Augustus, both stole a day from February, to give their personal months of July and August 31 days each. Pope Gregory gave February a day back, but only one year in four, and this is it.



You might just have noticed that, since New Year, it has been rather windy. In fact, there have been some pretty spectacular storms and a great many massive trees were uprooted and blown down. One windy day, the Otter family were enjoying a day out in Lochard Forest and came up with a brand new game – wind-bagging. All you need is a discarded carrier bag, to pull you along, and an empty plastic bottle to sit on. With the amount of rubbish left about the place, these were easy to find. Put the bottle into a wide loch, sit on it with the wind behind you, hold on tight with your legs and lift the plastic bag to catch a good blast of air – and off you go! Fantastic fun.

The twins, Duke and Katrine, were sharing a large coke bottle and soon lost their carrier bag, swimming and pushing their bottle the rest of the way across Loch Ard. One by one the rest of us also came to grief, either losing the bag or falling off our bottle. Braeval, of course, had foreseen such a mishap, and had cunningly stuffed a couple of spare bags inside her plastic craft. Miss Clever Clogs made it all the way to Kinlochard and was waiting for the rest of the family to splash ashore, near the sailing club. The litter along the shoreline was horrendous and we spent the next couple of hours clearing up as best we could. I do wish that people would take their rubbish home. We were just about to start back to our holt at Aberfoyle when we suddenly found ourselves a new friend, a very lost and hungry pine marten called Moss.

The unfortunate creature told us a strange story of how, as he went about his usual pine marten business, he had been abducted by aliens and brought to this foreign place. Moss had no idea as to where he was or how to go about finding food and shelter. Until we found him Moss had found little more than an old mince pie to eat. Luckily, Mum had brought some spare food, in case of emergency. This was certainly an emergency.

Later, back at home, we wondered how Moss would manage to survive. As Grandpa Otter says, February is always the hardest and coldest month of the winter. I hope that we can all keep warm.

Bye for now,
Milton.

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No New Year Hangover as McLaren March On

McLaren RFC 36 – Clydesdale 0

Match report by Rob 'The Voice of Rugby' Jones

McLaren eased past Clydesdale at Dunblane on Saturday helping themselves to 36 points with no reply from the visitors.

There were few pointers to this comfortable victory in the early skirmishes as both sides sought to assert some form and continuity following the mid-season break. However the deadlock was broken on the quarter hour. McLaren's forwards mauled and rucked with purpose on the visitors' 22 allowing scrum half Ross Drummond to dart over from close range for a try despite the attentions of three defenders. Brother Scott was successful with the conversion but was forced off the field 3 minutes later with an injury, Milligan substituting.

McLaren failed to capitalise on this advantage and ceded possession at three consecutive lineouts to the frustration of the home support. They had to wait until the 38th minute for the next score. McLaren No 8 More picked up at the base of the scrum on the home 10 metre line, fed Milligan on the blindside and his pass found winger Letton who sprinted impressively for 50 yards before touching down for an unconverted try in the corner.

Half time: McLaren 12 – Clydesdale 0

McLaren substituted forwards Dykes and Campbell for Black and Crichton in the early minutes of the second half but this didn't disrupt the home side pack who were now exerting substantial pressure on the visitors in the set and loose plays. On the hour More crashed over for a try set up by Milligan. This was just desserts as More excelled throughout with a buccaneering display in all the crucial phases and passages. In defeat, his Clydesdale counterpart, Alex Hamilton, was also impressive with a combative and muscular performance.

McLaren's fourth try, securing the bonus point, was scored by substitute back Fisher ten minutes from the end cutting inside the defence on his own 10m line and finishing with style. McLaren openside flanker Buchanan was harshly sent to the sin bin for a mild outburst as one of his opponents claimed momentary ownership of his leg after play had been stopped. Despite playing out the game with fourteen men McLaren scored two more tries, the first by Milligan which he converted to cap a solid performance, the second by More who capped a great display with a ferocious turn of speed to the line.

If coaches Burney and Isaacs can instil greater composure in their troops in the heat of battle, they must be certain of marching to tunes of glory by the season's end!

Man of the match: Adam More, McLaren No 8.

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Simon says.....

Some Winter Wellness Tips:-

COLD SORES

If the winter weather is causing you cold sores, look no further than using a PROPOLIS lip balm or a gel containing SILICA. They not only soothe the burning and the itching sensations you experience with a cold sore, they also bind to the secretions and can systematically dry out the blister.

CATARRH - it's not what you want!!

The herb PLANTAGO works on the mucous membranes in the ear, nose and throat tract and soothes and heals them. The soothing action is due to the mucilage found in plantago and it coats the membranes and prevents further irritation which in turn reduces the amount of mucus being produced. This is particularly useful if you have suffered a long period of inflammation and congestion that has weakened the membrous lining of the ear, nose and throat. Easing congestion in the ear, nose and throat tract will also relieve pressure on the sinuses and will reduce the constant headaches and constant pressure around the eyes and nose as the sinuses will have filled up with phlegm in the hollows of the bone structure when the mucus membranes are overloaded and which can be extremely painful. Removing this congestion might also help issues such as tinnitus or hearing problems.

NEW YEAR and NEW INFUSIONS

There are some exciting new teas on the market to comfort us during the chilly winter months and these include a DANDELION, BURDOCK & HAWTHORN Leaf Infusion which gently supports your body if you are looking for that post Christmas detox. This unique blend has been partnered together for centuries and at least one cup a day could be part of your detox plan which gently assists your body and ditch that sluggish feeling. LAVENDER & ECHINACEA is a creative blend of fruit and herbs which provides a delightful way to assist your body with the stresses and strains of your day. It can also be used as an alternative to traditional iced tea. Add a slice of lemon and chill in the fridge for a cooling, caffeine-free tea.

BLOOD PRESSURE & BEETROOT

The amazing benefits of BEETROOT have been hitting the headlines for months, but for many the juice is an acquired taste. In CAPSULE version it contains



all the key ingredients of beetroot juice and is low in calories, time saving and easy to take. Beetroot is packed full of nutrients, including Vitamin A and C, calcium, folic acid and antioxidants. Breaking news has concentrated on beetroot's key ingredient Nitrate that has been shown to reduce blood pressure and the risk of heart diseases and strokes.

FRAZZLED NERVES & THE WINTER ANXIETY OF FINANCIAL WORRIES

February is a well known month for anxiety after the overspend at Christmas and the full effect of the credit card bills dropping through the letter box together with the ever-rising fuel bills simply just to keep warm. So, Passiflora is the perfect herb for nourishing the nervous system working gently and safely to reduce anxiety. Instead of sedating the nerves, which can cause other effects such as drowsiness and feeling disconnected, passiflora reduces the levels of anxiety in the body. This makes it easier to deal with everyday situations that could also be heightened by anxiety. Passiflora works on the physical body, relaxing muscles and reduces tension. It also works on the emotional symptoms of stress, lessening the feeling of being on edge with a nervous system that is continually jangling or the feeling of our mind being full of chattering monkeys.

Furthermore, keeping things calmer during the day means that the body finds it easier to switch off at night and we all know the true benefits of a good night's sleep if there is a busy schedule ahead, or just sometimes being ready to cope with simple daily tasks and thus refresh all the systems ready for morning. With Passiflora, taken long or short term, there are no known contra-indications or history of physical dependency, drowsiness or concentration and it may actually increase energy, improve memory and mental focus. If you are already on tranquillising or sedating medication from your doctor, do talk it over just in case there are other approaches more suitable to your situation. Alternatively the herbal approach might be more appropriate for you.

Looking forward to sharing more tips next month when we get ready, look forward and step into spring!!

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Not here.....but near!

Scottish Wildlife Trust Callander Member's Centre Diary

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

Tuesday 13 March 2012 The Role of the North Sea Bird Club By Andy Thorpe, founder NSBC

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

Ospreys in the Trossachs was the topic for our December talk. Robert Fraser-Binns nobly stood in at the last minute with our planned speaker stuck in Inverness. Robert is the osprey officer for the joint RSPB & FCS project at David Marshall Lodge. The osprey's diet of solely fish makes it unique. Watching it fold its wingspan of 1.7m as it plunges into water is always a thrilling experience. Adults are largely monogamous and return in late March/early April to the same nest. After 2 weeks' refurbishing the nest (the size of a double bed) they mate and 2-3 eggs are laid over a few days in mid/late May. The male's role is to provide fish for the female as she hatches eggs over ~2 weeks then feeds the chicks, oldest one first. He usually fishes within a mile of the nest but can travel up to 15 miles, fishing up to 7 times per day by the time the chicks are 2 weeks old!

Development is rapid; feathers in 3 weeks, legs fully developed at 5 weeks followed by wing-flapping exercises and first flight at 7-8 weeks. At this time the female starts her migration, the male staying to feed the young. In late August/early September they are fully fledged and migrate 3500 miles to West Africa, feeding along the route and arriving mid/late October. They spend Christmas feeding up (sound familiar?) and by February from their 2nd/3rd year undertake the return journey, exchanging heat for undisturbed habitat with plenty of fish in lochs and rivers. Migration routes are variable but tracking devices are building up a picture. Average lifespan is 8-12 years but the well-reported female that returned to the Loch of the Lowes this year was 26! Unfortunately, the osprey became extinct as a breeding bird in England in 1840 and in Scotland in 1916, another example of man's persecution for frivolous reasons such as egg-collection, taxidermy and even fashionable headwear! However, in 1954 a pair from Scandinavia nested at Loch Garten. Re-colonisation started slowly due to the continued activities of egg collectors and possibly organochlorine pesticides in the food chain. By 1976 there were only 14 pairs but 2001 saw 158 breeding pairs, located mainly in Scotland. That year also saw the first successful nesting of ospreys in England for 160 years, by naturally re-colonising birds in the Lake District and re-introduced ones at Rutland Water. Today there are 200-300 pairs of ospreys in the UK (none in Ireland) with around 20 nests in Central Scotland.

Our local ospreys last bred successfully in 2008. In 2009 the male was caught in fishing line, got stuck in a tree and died. The female had to leave the nest to feed and the eggs failed to hatch. In 2010 the female was on eggs when a second male drove off the first and threw the eggs out of the nest, disastrous as females lay only once per year. In 2011 April's good weather saw the ospreys return 2 weeks early but May's bad weather meant the male struggled to fish. Again the female left the nest and the cold eggs didn't hatch. Fingers crossed for a successful 2012!

Lesley Hawkins

Callander Ramblers' Diary

February

Wed 8th 9:30am Stroll: Invertrossachs (4 miles) contact 01786 842081

Wed 15th 9:30am Ramble: Along Loch Ard (6miles) contact 01877 382803

Sat 25th 8:30am Hill: Cleish Hills (379m) contact 01577 862799

March

Wed 7th 9:30am Stroll: Killin Heritage Walk (4 miles) contact 01877 330444

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 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 2012

15th February 2012 – Quiz / games night
Competition – the best book ever

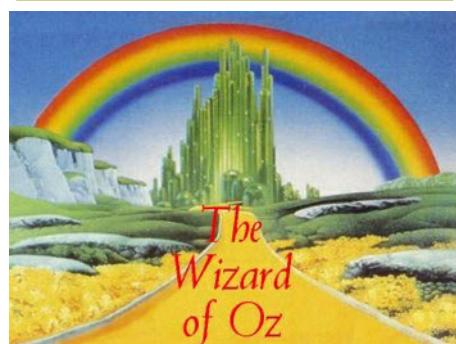
21st March 2012 – Hilary Svennevig – an illustrated talk on recent travels in India
Competition – my desert island luxury item

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



Follow the yellow brick road....to Gartmore Village Hall for The Wizard of Oz, the latest musical production by Forest Theatre Company.

Originally written as a children's novel in 1900 by L. Frank Baum it became famous the world over by the success of the 1939 MGM film starring Judy Garland. The magical story tells of Dorothy, the young girl who, with her little dog Toto, finds herself in the Land of Oz after a tornado hits her Kansas home. As she searches for her way home in fear of the wicked Witch of the West she makes friends along the way, the Scarecrow needing a brain, the Tinman looking for a heart and the Lion lacking courage.... and of course the Munchkins who help them along their journey.

This production of *The Wizard of Oz* follows on from the huge success of last year's 10 year anniversary production of *My Fair Lady*. As usual on stage and in the band will be both youngsters and adults from the Strathard area with a fantastic team of willing and talented helpers behind the scenes. It is directed by Suzanne Teed with musical director Jacque Speirs.

There are four performances in Gartmore Village Hall

22,23,24 March at 7.30pm

and also a matinee on Saturday 24 March at 2.00pm.

Tickets on sale from end of February from Aberfoyle Post Office and Gartmore Village Shop. Tickets £8 (£6 children)

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thank you

The Memorial Hall Committee and Primary Parent Council would like to thank everyone who came along to the Christmas Fayre on 3rd December. They would also like to thank The Forth Inn for their generous donation of mulled wine and cups as well as The Deli, The Co-op, The Post Office, Guyana, Chillout, Simply Styles, Beauty by Marie, Kay Orr, The Tenants' Assembly, The Wool Centre, The Coop and Lisa Reid for their generous donations as well as all the businesses who let us sell raffle tickets and the stallholders. Finally we would like to thank Dance Connection and Aberfoyle Primary for their beautiful entertainment which made everyone feel lovely and festive. Around £330 was raised for the hall, £250 for the Parent Council and money was also raised by the School Enterprise Groups & Toddlers. We are all really grateful to everyone for their generosity.

The Hall Committee would also like to thank everyone who came along and made the Hogmanay Party a roaring success. We raised about £185 after balloon expenses!!

My thanks to all who have taken the DVD set and contributed to Sightsavers. I hope that when they see the shows they not only enjoy them but also enjoy that they have helped someone, somewhere, to see!

The sum raised so far is £650 and the charity will be able to help a considerable number of people as a result.

On my website www.acerphotography.com I give some figures:

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- £20 could pay for a simple Cataract operation

Anyone wishing to donate can do so at my Just Giving page and there is a box to tick so that the charity can reclaim tax:

<http://www.justgiving.com/William-McLean>
Anyone who would like a copy of the DVD set should email me aphoto@gmx.com

Bill McLean

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Deadline Dates

Issue 71	25 March
Issue 72	27 May - sponsor needed
Issue 73	15 July - sponsor needed
Issue 74	16 September
Issue 75	18 Nov - sponsor needed (xmas issue)

Clubs in the Memorial Hall

Mondays	3.15pm-4.30pm	Mini Kickers 3-4 years	Contact Active Stirling 01786 432323
	7pm-8.15pm	Pilates	Contact Amanda Reid 01360 661403
	8.15pm-9.15pm	Step & Tone	Contact Amanda Reid 01360 661403
Tuesdays	3.45pm-8.45pm	Tap, Ballet & Jazz For All ages	Contact Carla Duggan 07815146462
Wednesdays	10am-12pm	Toddler Group	Contact Alison Graham 382726
	Evenings	Country Dance	Contact John Epps 382276
Thursdays	Evenings	Karate For All ages	Contact Julie Glen 382296
Fridays	7pm-8.30pm	Youth Club (P6 & Up)	Contact Marie Wardrop 382568

Also available for meetings, parties etc call Janet Stewart on 01877 382736.

Conic Hill Race

Balmaha Car Park,

Saturday 25th February 2012

Start: 11am

It has a distance of 5km to cover with a 330m climb. Entry fee £3 for members / £5 for non members.

Registered Childminder



**Places available now in
Aberfoyle for
afterschool,
school holidays and
Saturdays.
Evening babysitting also
available.**

Call Susie Davidson

01877 389386

or 07876 348826

**or find me on Facebook:
Susie Davidson Childminding**

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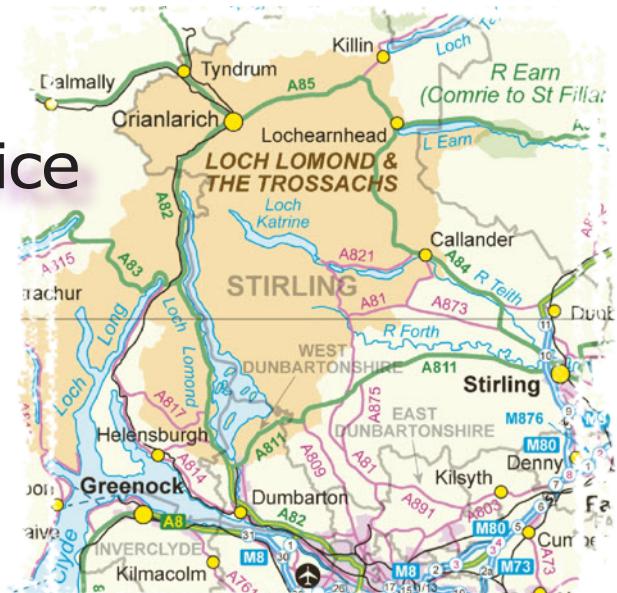
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