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The Press and Journal

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Cavitron appeal

YOU'VE DONE IT! The Cavitron Appeal yesterday topped the £200,000 target set last September when the appeal was launched.

Now Aberdeen Royal Infirmary can be equipped with the ultrasonic surgical instrument that has been the object of the exercise, and will offer to people in the North-east, Orkney and Shetland safer and more effective hospital treatment.

Grampian Health Board say they will be ordering the equipment "immediately". Board chairman Mr C. W. Ellis said: "On behalf of all the members of the board I must congratulate the readers and staff of 'The Press and Journal' on their magnificent effort in raising the £200,000 for the Cavitron in less than four-and-a-half months."

LOCAL PRIDE

"Once again the people of the North-east of Scotland, Orkney and Shetland have displayed their unflinching generosity and 'The Press and Journal' has produced yet another example of the way in which an established and respected newspaper can initiate and generate community spirit and local pride within its area.

"Everyone who has been connected with the appeal in any way can be proud of such a fine achievement.

"I would therefore ask your staff and everyone who has contributed to the Cavitron Appeal to accept the thanks of the board, and all those who work in the health service in Grampian.

"This instrument will undoubtedly be a valuable new aid in the treatment of many patients." When "The Press and Journal" launched the Cavitron Appeal last September, Mr Ellis said: "Now comes the opportunity for people all over the North-east and Orkney and Shetland to contribute towards a piece of medical equipment that will serve the needs of all those patients requiring particular non-surgical treatment in Aberdeen Royal Infirmary."

And how you people of the North-east, Orkney and Shetland, where £10,000 had already been raised before the wider appeal began, have responded.

In the first weeks after the announcement, individual donations steadily pushed the total upward while organisations of all kinds laid their fund-raising plans. Once these got into their stride, the total rose rapidly.

By early November, £50,000 had been passed. The end of that month saw that almost doubled. Then it was into December... but, instead of a slackening as attention and spending focused on other things, the fund-raising gathered pace. From 106,301 on December 6, it soared to £150,000 by the third week and more than £170,000 by the end of the year.

TARGET PASSED

Now, not halfway through January — and much earlier than had ever been envisaged — the target has been surpassed.

But it will be some time before a final total is reached. Events have been planned well into February and beyond. Many collections can have still to be returned... and we would ask that this now be done as quickly as is conveniently possible.

But such organisation and effort cannot just be turned off like a tap... It will take time to wind down the fund-raising. A number of events have still to go ahead — including a special "Press and Journal" Burns Supper in Aberdeen Beach Ballroom — which will lead to the appeal total. When the £200,000 target was set, it was calculated not only to raise the purchase cost of the Cavitron ultrasonic surgical equipment but to cover the running costs for up to five years.

TURN TO PAGE 4

Winter's worst weather lashes Britain

KILLER GALES CLAIM SIX

Blocked roads bring North to standstill

MUCH of the Highlands came to a standstill yesterday as drifting snow blocked major roads north of Inverness.

But routes south were still open last night although Drumochter Pass on the Inverness-Perth A9 was covered in hard packed snow and icy patches. Driving was very difficult and police were advising motorists not to make the journey.

The Inverness-Glenoe, Inverness-Kyle and Inverness-Aberdeen roads were passable with care.

The Thurso-Wick, Thurso-Tongue, Tongue-Lairn, Melnich-Helmadie, Ullapool-Ledmore, Ullapool-Garve and Struie bypass in East Ross were all closed last night.

So were the Nairn-Carrbridge road at Glenferness and the Dalwhinnie-Laggan route and the A82 at Moy Bridge.

More snow fell in the Inverness area in late evening and the Kesock Bridge-Tore dual carriageway section of the new A9 across the Black Isle had severe white out conditions for the first time since being opened 18 months ago. But police said it was passable with extreme care.

Still closed last night, too was the A830 at Stromeferry hit by a landslide in the storms of last week.

The North east escaped the worst of yesterday's storm but there was heavy rain in the Upper Deeside area, blocking the A93 between Braemar and Glen-shee.

Also shut was the A939 Cockbridge-Tornintoul and the B974 via Cairn O'Mount was not advised.

Farther south the A914 between Glenrothes and the Tay Road Bridge was closed.

AT LEAST six people died yesterday as hurricane-force winds gusting up to 105 m.p.h. swept parts of Britain in the worst weather so far this winter. And weathermen warned last night that more storms were expected during the weekend, with snow showers in some areas.

The death toll in 48 hours of storms in Scotland rose to five yesterday when two people were killed by falling trees.

A motorist died when a gale-lashed tree fell in the village of Maxton, in Roxburghshire, and a Greek on a geese-shooting expedition near Kirriemuir, died when a tree crashed on him.

Four die as trees are felled

The 25-year-old Greek had been staying at Glen Isla and was out with a party shooting geese at Lochside Farm when the accident happened at about 9 a.m.

About the same time, more than 100 passengers on an Edinburgh-Dundee train had a narrow escape when the train ploughed into a fallen tree that had blocked both lines of the East Coast rail route about 10 miles south of Leuchars.

The assistant driver, Mr John Glasgow (24), Gorgie Road, Edinburgh, was cut on the face and arms by flying glass.

The train crew halted a second passenger train heading towards the scene from the opposite direction. The lines were reopened at 11 a.m.

Mr William Hollis (27), Riddiethill Farm Cottage, Maxton, St Boswells, was killed when a tree was blown over and hit his car on the unclassified road from Falmington to Maxton in Roxburghshire.

A young woman died when her car crashed in a snowfall on the A71 near East Calder, Midlothian.

Two other motorists died when trees crashed on their cars — one near Luton and one at Co. Armagh — and a young cyclist died in

Gloucestershire when a gale blew her into an articulated lorry. Police were last night searching for the lorry, which did not stop. They believed the driver had not realised the accident had happened.

In Glasgow, an emergency situation was declared as burst rivers flooded 210 families out of their homes on the south side. The district council cancelled all new lettings, and drafted in emergency staff to house the homeless, mainly in the Pollok and Rutherglen areas.

At the height of the storm overnight, there were fears that the recently opened

WEATHERGUIDE

Aberdeen, Moray Firth: Occasional snow showers. Strong to gale force westerly winds. Cold. Shetland, Orkney: Frequent snow showers. Strong to gale force winds.

FULL FORECAST — PAGE 5

multi-million pound. Burnside in Glasgow's Pollok Park was about to be flooded.

Lead fishing was torn from the roof of the building and fire engines stood by, but blocked drains raised the water level.

At one point, some Glasgow streets were under 10 ft of water. Officials stood by, just right to deal with the possibility of more flooding.

Brats were moved from Hagganfield Loch to be ready for use in emergency on the south side.

A city council spokesman said damage to buildings was the worst since hurricanes struck in 1968.

Winds of more than 70 m.p.h. were recorded in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and a gust of 104 m.p.h. was registered at St Abb's Head, near North Berwick.

At Paisley, Hamilton, Greenock and throughout Avshire a massive "mopping up" was mounted.

In Clydebank, 11 families were evacuated from a tenement as high winds threatened to topple a chimney stack.

Police at Whitburn, West Lothian, used dinghies to ferry 40 people from a block of flooded flats.

In Ayrshire, firemen rescued two people trapped in a car by a fallen tree. They were taken to Moffat Cottage Hospital.

Rail services from the West to England were suspended because high winds had damaged overhead cables.

Last night, hardly a road in Scotland had escaped the effects of storm and the AA advised motorists to stay indoors if possible. Many roads in the North were blocked, and the M6 link between Edinburgh and Glasgow was affected by drifting.

Glasgow's main road link with England, the A74, was described as treacherous and the West Coast, shipping was battered by Force 10 storms. Coastguards said smaller vessels were sheltering in port.

The wintry blast has been caused by low pressure sweeping in from the Atlantic and attracting cold air from Iceland and Greenland. "We can't see any respite before Monday," said a forecaster.

"Everyone has been saying how lucky they were. It is a miracle they are alive. If the wall had broken up people would have had to dig them out," he said.

Police and an ambulance were on the scene within minutes of the incident, which happened around 3.30 p.m.

The wall was the only remaining part of a garage which is being demolished to clear a site for a flats development.

Mr Leslie said he was not sure how the wall collapsed. There were workmen on the site at the time.

"It was quite windy. It was strong enough to blow one of my signs right off the wall, but it is difficult to say exactly what happened in this case. There will have to be an inquiry," he said.

Last night a spokesman for Grampian Police confirmed men had been working near the wall. Health and Safety Executive inspectors have been called in.

THOUSANDS of mystery story addicts were frustrated yesterday when the gales deprived them of a dramatic moment they had been waiting for all week.

Every day this week listeners have been glued to Radio Four's mystery thriller, "The Pledge".

Yesterday they would have heard "whodunnit" — but just minutes before the programme was due to be broadcast, high winds damaged the BBC's main transmitter at Droitwich, Hereford and Worcester, putting long-wave broadcasts off the air.

The programme was due to start at 8.45 — and in true thriller style the transmission stopped just after 8.40. Scores of frustrated listeners contacted the BBC and their local papers to find out what had happened.

The BBC will now retransmit the programme at 8.43 on Monday.

The Droitwich transmitter carries Radio Four programmes for the whole country on the long wave.

Yesterday's signal was going out at only one tenth of normal strength, with intermittent interruptions. The BBC advised listeners to return to VHF or medium wave.

Repair our leaky roof, is couple's plea...

By CHARLIE GALL

AN ABERDEEN couple yesterday pleaded with the local authority to repair the roof of their home which was badly damaged in the violent storms 10 days ago.

Mr Robert Gill (62), 27 Johnston Gardens West, Culter, and his wife, Joyce, have been fighting a losing battle against leaks.

Their problems started when high winds ripped the roof off their block of flats. Since the top-floor tenants were rehoused the Gills have suffered the brunt of the rain water which has filtered through to their middle-floor flat.

Yesterday their home was plunged into chaos when strong overnight winds blew off the far-pavilion which had been propped up by the roof as an interim weather shield by Aberdeen City district council workmen.

HALL

The couple were up at 5 a.m. covering their living-room and bedrooms with buckets and basins to limit the water damage as much as possible.

Mr Gill, who said his wife was feeling ill after a bout of flu, said: "It's a shambles. We have had no help at all from the council. This is the second time we have had to suffer these conditions in two years."

They awoke yesterday to discover water pouring in from their front-room window and ceiling and there was also a leak in the bath.

Mr Gill has been using towels, blankets and paper to soak up the water and has had to use a fan heater continuously to dry up drenched carpets.

Mr Gill said two council workmen had been on the roof but were unable to carry out repairs because of the weather.

The main light fixtures in both the hall and front room have been temporarily disconnected for safety.

Last night deputy director of housing and works department, Mr Ian Gerrie, said the men would be back at the roof again today.

He said: "The problem is that a major repair job is required and unfortunately because it is a felt-type flat roof the weather has to be good to do proper, lasting repairs."

Mr Gerrie said they were giving the job urgent priority and were taking advantage of every fair spell. He said his department have heaters which they can loan to tenants.

Oldest ski

SOVIET archaeologists believe they have found the world's oldest ski, made at least 4000 years ago.

The ski was discovered near Pakov about 550 miles north-west of Moscow, by a group of archaeologists from Leningrad's Hermitage Museum.



WAITING for the next spell of wet or snowy weather is Mrs Joyce Gill, 27 Johnston Gardens West, Culter.

Mother and son only inches from death

A YOUNG Inverberrie mother and her two-year-old son narrowly escaped serious injury yesterday when a brick wall collapsed on top of them.

Amazingly they were saved from the full force of the wall when the section which gave way was stopped in its path by the gable end of the adjacent Star Hotel in the main street of the Mearns Street.

Mrs Ann Paton, 88 King Street, received only slight head and shoulder injuries, mainly bruising. Her son, Stuart, was unhurt. Mrs Paton was entering the close to her home when the wall toppled. Fortunately, the wall which bordered the narrow close fell onto the hotel wall opposite and only struck Mrs Paton a glancing blow.

She was allowed home last night after being treated for her injuries at Stracathro Hospital. The proprietor of the Star Hotel, Mr Alistair Leslie, said Mrs Paton and her son were very lucky to be alive.

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Praise for copter rescue heroes

AN RAF helicopter crew displayed extraordinary courage and skill yesterday to pluck eight French fishermen from death off the Irish coast — in just 15 minutes.

The four airmen hovered above a stricken trawler in 90 m.p.h. gusts and quickly winched the frightened men to safety two at a time.

Minutes later the rescue was over and the relieved trawlermen, all uninjured, were flown 30 miles to Cork in the Irish Republic.

"In considering the weather conditions, we were pleased to get them off so smoothly," Flt-Lt Ian MacFarlane (27), the pilot, said yesterday of the rescue which earned praise from both Irish coastguards and Ministry of Defence officials in London.

The alarm was raised shortly before 2 a.m. when the trawler Anne Sophie, from Lorient, in northern France, was driven on to rocks just off the Irish coast, south-west of Mine Head, near Dungarvan.

A lifeboat and other vessels were unable to get close enough to the 90ft trawler, driven aground under 20ft, cliffs and in danger of breaking up.

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Decision soon on merger study

By BARBARA SUTTAR

ABERDEEN University should know within the next few weeks whether their hopes for a merger with Robert Gordon's Institute of Technology and Aberdeen College of Education will bear any fruit.

Yesterday Scottish Secretary Mr George Younger told 'The Press and Journal' he would decide within the next few weeks whether or not he would order a feasibility study to be carried out.

Before Christmas, Mr Younger met delegations from all three bodies to hear their views on the possibility of a merger.

The idea originated with Aberdeen University almost a year ago.

Last February the University Court wrote to Mr Younger asking him to establish an independent committee to examine the educational and financial factors involved.

The university based their proposal on four main points:

• They claimed in their submission that the North had insufficient population to support three separate higher education institutions.

• They said there was wasteful duplication of effort and facilities.

• They claimed savings could be made on the sale of surplus buildings and reduced administrative costs.

• They believed the opportunity would exist to create centres of excellence in some areas such as engineering.

The other institution concerned in the proposal initially were pleased with their response.

But after seeing the Scottish Secretary in London, the principal of RGIT, Peter Clarke, expressed doubts about how the merged body, if the proposal eventually went ahead, would be funded.

He preferred the idea of direct funding from the Scottish Office as RGIT have rather than being financed as the university are from the University Grants Committee.

He also raised questions about the compatibility of aims of RGIT and the university.

Mr Younger gave no hint yesterday as to what his decision would be on the question of a feasibility study but said merely that having heard the views of the bodies directly concerned, he would be announcing his decision soon.

YOUNGER AT THE F&J — PAGE 5



GOOD MORNING, ABERDEEN

Fix a fortune

THERE'S £10,000 riding on our Fix-the-Ball Jackpot this weekend, plus the usual weekly cash prizes that must be won. See PAGE 4 for today's entry coupon and list of last weekend's winners.

PETER Powell on pop, and a special pop quiz; Mitchell Reid on folk; John Park on Gardening; Harry Burns on Angling; Cuthbert Graham on Books; Louise Botting on Family Finance — they're all in Weekend Journal, plus Holiday Spot and the week-end's TV and Radio. PAGE 5.

On other pages... Births, Marriages, Deaths... Church Notices... World Report, Weather... Horoscopes, Birthdays, Business, Finance, Oil... Farm Journal... Classified Advertisements... Sports, Inc. Racing... Double Crossword Back Page

FEARS FOR FISHERS

Fears growing for safety of five men on Belgian trawler. Last heard of fishing about 10 miles off Yorkshire coast at Scarborough when winds of up to 85 m.p.h. hit area.

CASTLEGATE STATION, 111 KING ST, ABERDEEN

Four hurt in accident

FOUR people were taken to hospital last night after a train ran into the buffers at Largs Station.

Ambulances took three women and a man, who had head injuries, to Inverclyde Royal Infirmary, Greenock.

The train from Glasgow Central collided with the buffers as it arrived at Largs with commuters at 7 p.m.

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