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HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR ADVERTISERS AND READERS

BUSINESSMAN BLAMES COUNCIL'S NORTH PIER REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR DELAY

Date set for work on seafront hotel

LOUISE LEE

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THE DATE for resurrecting a famous landmark hotel on Oban's Esplanade has finally been revealed by the businessmen behind the project.

A new four-star hotel is to be built on the site of the former Argyll Hotel. Also called the Argyll Hotel, the new building is scheduled to receive guests by June 2016.

Ground works for the hotel are already under way. From May this year, building contractors will be on site.

The three million pound project was viewed by some to be under threat after a delay of more than three years since the former category C-listed hotel was demolished.

But Alan and Callum MacLeod, of Ee-usk and Piazza restaurants in the town, have confirmed building works on the 53-bedroom hotel will start in the summer.

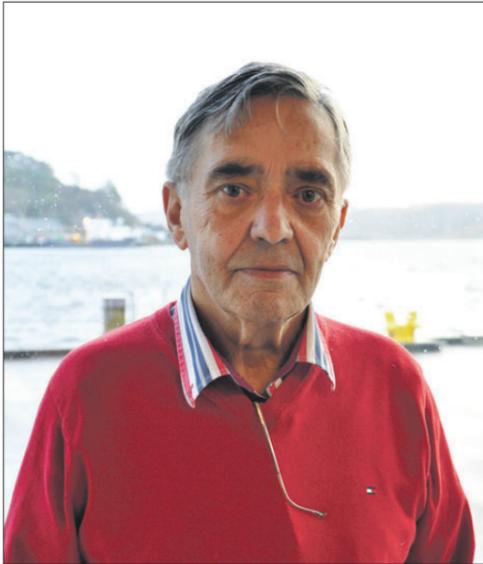
Alan explained: 'The delay has been due to the plans proposed by Argyll and Bute council to extend the North Pier. Work on the hotel will get under way because we just can't wait any longer.'

The original Argyll Hotel had stood on the town's Esplanade since the late 19th century, but was demolished at the end of 2011.

Since then Alan and Callum have been hoping to resurrect the landmark hotel and their announcement ends years of uncertainty over the future of the site.

The four-star-standard hotel will be located between the Oban Inn and The Regent Hotel.

The plans are for a contemporary glass and wood structure allowing visitors to make the



FRESH START: Alan MacLeod hopes the hotel will be opened in 2016



END OF AN ERA: The old Argyll Hotel was demolished in 2011

most of views over Oban Bay.

However, Alan MacLeod said he had no support from the council over the £3 million project.

He complained he was being 'squeezed' out of the North Pier where he holds a 99-year lease for his two restaurants with the local authority.

'We are building a high quality hotel that will bring people to the town.

'People only have to see our restaurants to know what kind of business we run.'

He continued: 'The council has avoided engaging with me in any kind of discussion.

'Can you remember the state of dereliction of the pier before we were granted the 99-year lease? It was under-utilised and forgotten.'

However, an Argyll and Bute council spokeswoman rejected Mr MacLeod's criticisms and said the authority had offered him a number of meetings, but all had been 'declined'.

She said: 'Regeneration plans for Oban's North Pier are a key point of our work to secure a prosperous future for the area.

'Far from "squeezing anyone out", this work will ultimately enhance the pier for everyone who uses it. It aims to benefit local businesses and complement their own activity by attracting more people.

'The proposal for the new performance space, for example, includes a covered area - a focal point where people can gather together, and a disembarking point for cruise passengers.'

The spokeswoman maintained the council had been responsive to the views of the community. She continued: 'The design work for the North Pier is still to be completed but there are no plans to reduce the car parking space.'



HAPPY TIMES: Sean and Charissa back in Connel

Sean's flashy proposal wins Charissa's heart

A VIDEO capturing the moment North Connel's Charissa Ferguson accepted a special marriage proposal from her footballer boyfriend has been viewed more than 600,000 times online.

Goalkeeper Sean Murdoch, 28, who had been training with New York City FC, took part in a flash mob dance routine at Times Square, New York, to the song 'Marry You', by Bruno Mars.

As a shocked Charissa, 33, tried to take in what was going on, Sean knelt down in front of her, and a large crowd of Christmas shoppers, to pop the question with a three-carat diamond ring.

The engagement on December 19 was all the more special as four members of Charissa's family, including her mother Cathy MacGregor, had come over to visit - and were in on

the surprise. Charissa said: 'I saw the flash mob start up and thought that was pretty cool but it was nothing out of the ordinary in Times Square.

'It was really cold and I was just wanting to get to a shop but then Sean asked me to hold his scarf and he went to join in the dance.

'I thought he was just goofing around and then he started picking up the routine.

'I was so confused. When he proposed I was just in shock.'

During the couple's three months in New York, Sean had taken secret lessons to learn the dance moves with Broadway Dance Studio ahead of his proposal.

The happy couple will return to the States this month when Sean, who was with Hibernian Football Club last season, joins up with the American team Sacramento Republic FC.

TIMESLINE

Ex-Mallaig doctor takes up NHS role

NHS Highland has appointed a former Mallaig GP as its new director of public health and health policy.

Dr Hugo van Woerden, 51, a director in public health Wales, will take up the post on February 1 2015.

The new director has strong Highland connections, having attended Inverness Royal Academy and practising as a Mallaig GP from 1993-1998.

Firm gets the nod for harbour works

A CONTRACTOR has been appointed to carry out more than a £1 million of regeneration work at a Kintyre harbour.

Campbeltown people are set to benefit from the £1m-plus improvements after Argyll and Bute council chose GSS Marine Services, of Rosneath, to carry out the berthing and on-shore work at the old quay.

Motorists pass the drink driving test

TWO roadside police checks saw drivers responding well to the new drink driving limit, but officers have warned motorists not to be complacent.

Sergeant Alan Moore, of Oban police station, said: 'Apart from minor motoring offences, drivers seem to be taking the new law seriously.'

10-stone salmon stolen from home

A CARVED wooden salmon, weighing 10 stones, has been stolen from Inverawe.

The four-foot tall chainsaw-carved fish went missing on Christmas Day. Iain McDonald, who purchased the carving as a gift for his grandparents last year, said: 'It would have taken two people to lift it.'



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New A82 bypass will run traffic chaos out of town

THE LONG-awaited £5 million Crianlarich bypass opened last week, much to the relief of Argyll drivers.

The new bypass, which officially opened on December 23, will ease the flow of vehicles where the A82 and A85 meet and reduce traffic bottlenecks in Crianlarich.

Transport Scotland claims local communities, businesses and tourists will benefit as will the wider regional economy from the enhanced transport connections.

The bypass includes a newly

constructed 1.3 km stretch of the A82.

Holyrood Transport minister Derek Mackay said: 'This news will be welcomed by users of the A82, but also the people of Crianlarich who are well used to substantial levels of traffic flowing through the village, especially during tourist season.'

'The new two-lane bypass will improve access for local people, local businesses and tourists by taking much of the through traffic away from Crianlarich.'

'However, the bypass will not

only bring much-needed relief to the community, it will also improve journey times and transport connections for road users from across Scotland.'

Mike Cantlay, chairman of VisitScotland, added: 'The opening of the A82 bypass at Crianlarich is excellent news for Highland holidaymakers, as it will help cut the journey time to Glencoe, Fort William and the West Highlands.'

Construction company RJ MacLeod will remain in Crianlarich over the coming weeks to complete minor works.

Village break-in leaves sour taste

A THEFT of alcohol and cash from Benderloch's Victory Hall has shocked residents.

The break-in happened between 7pm on Christmas Day and 7pm on December 27 in an incident police called 'unusual' for the village.

Police are calling on anyone who noticed anyone acting suspiciously to contact them on 101.

One resident said: 'It is very sad that at Christmas someone would steal from our community-run hall.'

'Most people would have given the criminals the money and a wee festive nip.'

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POPULAR TEACHER SAYS HE'S NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO RETIREMENT AFTER YEARS AS OBAN HIGH SCHOOL'S CLASS ACT

There's only one Dante Lopez

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'There will never be another Dante.'

Kind words indeed from Murray Hamilton, head of physical education (PE) at Oban high school, describing colleague Dante Lopez on his imminent retirement.

Dante, 72, is set to leave in March after an unusual career in teaching, during which he reckons he's taught in every department in the school.

Having grown up in the town and attended Oban high, Dante left school to work at his mother's newsagent and grocery store on Soroba Road, before moving down south to train to be a PE teacher in 1964.

After completing his teacher training at Loughborough College, gaining his diploma with a first class honours and his certificate of education from University of Nottingham, he taught at Kibworth school in England for three years between 1967 and 1970.

He came back to Oban in 1970 to work for his mother's business, only returning to teaching in 2002 after a 32-year break, helping out as a supply teacher

Dante has been at the school on and off since, teaching a variety of different classes including his beloved PE.

He said: 'I've visited every department in Oban high over the years and I'm so impressed with the dedication and professionalism of the teachers. They really energised and motivated me to be a better teacher.'

'I've seen a lot of changes over the years. When I was brought up, teachers were very, very strict and I've seen a big change for the better: kids are much more assertive and confident and that's very important.'

'We are blessed in Oban to have a fantastic bunch of kids in the town.'

Discussing his retirement, Dante said surprisingly he would find it hard to adjust to a quieter schedule.

He explained: 'I'm not really looking forward to it, if I'm honest. My generation had a very strong work ethic and I've been working from quite a young age. I like working and I like the routine.'

'Hopefully, the school will ask me back to do a day or two here and there.'

As well as his work at the school, Dante talked about coaching the



ON THE BALL: Dante reckons he's taught in every department at the high school since 2002

girls' football team in the town and being chosen to carry the Queen's Baton Relay as some of his fondest memories, along with playing football for local side, the Tartan Wanderers.

Murray Hamilton, head of PE at the school, said: 'We were

short-staffed in the department one week and he came in to help both there and then as a general supply teacher.'

'He's an absolute gentleman, exceptionally polite and never said 'no' when asked if he could help, and that's why he's still



A PLAYER: Dante (third from right) in his playing days for the school

teaching. He's always on-hand, happy and passionate and there was no subject he wouldn't teach.

'It was obviously great for us to have him to take the PE classes but he could teach science, maths, technology and would do a great job. It really didn't matter what he was teaching, he got the best out of them.'

'The kids really respected him and never gave him any trouble at all. I don't think there will ever be another Dante.'

Dante added: 'The school gave

me fantastic recognition when I told them I would be retiring.'

'We met in the hall as there were a couple of others leaving too, and I got a lot of lovely gifts; it overwhelmed me completely.'

'They really are a fantastic bunch of people at Oban high and I feel like I've got on well with all the pupils I've taught over the years.'

He now plans to spend more time with wife of 50 years Morag, his six children and three grandchildren.

UHI Gaelic centre a world leader

SCOTLAND'S national centre for Gaelic studies on Skye, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, has been commended for its 'world leading' research.

UK colleges and universities submitted examples of their research work for an audit undertaken by the Research Excellence Framework (REF).

The UHI submitted the work of eight Gaelic researchers, seven of whom were from Sleat-based Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.

From this work, 16 per cent was judged to be 'exceptional/world leading', 45 per cent 'internationally excellent' and 33 per cent judged as 'very good'.

Professor Boyd Robertson, principal of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, said: 'These are exceptionally good and show the progress made in research and scholarship since the last audit.'

The Christmas present that lasts for a year

THE MARY'S Meals charity store in Oban has received a great response from shoppers keen to donate to the charity after seeing a powerful window display.

The shop window display consists of a bare Christmas tree which has the poignant message on it: 'Dear Santa, all I want is to go to school and be fed one meal a day. It only costs £12.20 to feed me. Thank you.'

Amongst those who have donated, are some young children from Oban Congregational church, who decided to give up the £50 they would have spent on a Christmas party and presents.

Instead, they chose to feed four children through Mary's Meals for an entire school year.

Marie Rowan, who runs the shop on Stevenson Street, said: 'We decided to do a window display to show some over-indul-

gence in one part of the window, and then the bare tree with the message on it. Some people have been in and are really touched by the message.'

'People are stopping to reflect that they have so much of everything and want to do something to make a difference.'

Marie also said that schools in the area including Park primary, Dunbeg primary and Oban high school had made donations to the shop, with more still to come.

She said they had received individual donations of as much as £100 from members of the public walking past the shop.

David Macmillan, Louise Hershey, David Simpson and Brook Wetherspoon, four of the children from the Oban Congregational church, along with Marie Rowan

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Bin dirty habits, say fed-up pupils

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SCHOOLCHILDREN, community groups and local businesses have pulled together for a campaign to improve the quality of life in Dunbeg.

The village has new bins, benches and a poster campaign aimed at reducing litter and dog dirt, with Dunbeg community council, Dunbeg primary school, Argyll and Bute council and West Highland housing association involved.

Building firm TSL Contractors purchased bins for the village after the issue was raised at a community council meeting.

PUPIL PROTEST: pupils and headteacher Sine MacVicar (far left), next to one of the new banners

Oban Electrics put up banners near the school and path between Dunbeg and Ganavan, which were designed by Dunbeg primary school senior pupils, and highlights the unsightliness and health risks of dog fouling.

The firm also installed benches, which were paid for by Dunbeg Development group.

Headteacher of Dunbeg primary school, Sine MacVicar, said: 'We have a wonderful path which helps to keep the pupils off the road. It's fantastic, but it was a problem with all the dog fouling.'

'This community effort should really help that and well done to the pupils who helped with the designs of the banners.'

Miss MacVicar also said that some of the children who took part in the design of the banners are now in first year at Oban high school.

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Kennedy calls for fairer prices for vans on ferries

LOCHABER MP Charles Kennedy has called on ferry operator Caledonian MacBrayne (CalMac) to reduce fares for light goods vans, writes Steven Rae.

CalMac began to enforce weight restrictions from July 1 this year, following complaints from larger haulage companies about overloaded vans travelling on the ferries, although the law had been in place since 2012.

He is working alongside his Liberal Democrat colleague, Alan Reid MP, whose Argyll and Bute constituency has several island communities within its boundaries.

In Mr Kennedy's Ross, Skye and Lochaber constituency, the Mallaig to Armadale ferry is an essential link for local business between Skye and Lochaber.

Mr Kennedy said: 'Many island businesses have contacted me with worries about the extra costs they are paying due to the

enforcement of the weight limit regulations on CalMac ferries.'

'Safety must, of course, come first but the enforcement of these regulations, set down by the Scottish government, is simply unfair.'

'The Scottish government must step up to the plate and help local island businesses. They must replace this fare structure with lower, fairer fares for small vans.'

A spokesman for Transport Scotland, the government agency in charge of the ferries, said: 'Passenger safety is a top priority and we support any measures that make services safer for passengers and crews.'

'On the grounds of vessel safety, the operator has been to more robustly enforce the arrangements that have been in place since 2012.'

'Users already paying the correct fare level will not be affected by these enforcement arrangements.'

What are you hoping for in the New Year?

FOR a bit of festive fun *The Oban Times* asked people in the town what their hopes, dreams or resolutions would be for the New Year.



John Kerr, 67, and wife Sheila live in Oban. John is an engineer for SSE and Sheila is a senior care officer.

John said: 'We're both retiring next year in May, then we're off to Australia in June for a month so those are our main plans for 2015.'
Sheila added: 'I suppose a real dream would be to have world peace.'



Joy Palmer, 18, grew up in Oban and lives in Stirling. She studies primary education with specialism in modern languages at Stirling University.

'I'd like to be healthier and I'm hoping to get fitter by going jogging and to the gym. I also want to travel through Europe by InterRail, starting in France and making my way across mainland Europe.'



Anna Hayward, 19, grew up in Oban and lives in Stirling. She studies Spanish and international politics at Stirling University.

'I want to study more at uni to get better grades. I also hope to work in Spain over the summer in a youth hostel. Working over there would help with my course.'



David Black, 28, lives in Oban, and is a duty manager at Wetherspoons.

'I'd like to drink less and exercise a wee bit more. I'm also planning to save more money, for my wedding at the Loch Melford Hotel in 2016.'



Mario Manning, 21, is a musician and lives in Donegal. He celebrated Christmas with his mother and sister, who live in Dalmally.

'I'm planning to move to Galway from Donegal next year to try and further my music career. There seems to be a bit more of a music scene there. I also want to travel to Iceland, Greenland and France.'



Claire McKenzie, 33, is a customer service manager for Ladbrokes and lives in Fort William.

'I really want to stop smoking to save some money. I'm getting married in October next year so I want to save money for that. It's just so expensive to smoke these days.'

Split personality of hardworking man who became an abusive addict

A MAN who escaped the custody of Oban police by jumping 20 feet from a toilet window has been sent back to prison for 157 days.

Marc Pert, of no fixed abode, appeared from custody and pleaded guilty at Oban sheriff court last Tuesday to three separate charges.

On March 12, 2014 he acted in a threatening and abusive manner towards a woman at Shuna Terrace in Oban and poured a cup of cold tea over her friend and pushed her.

Then on November 18, the 31-year-old accused assaulted the woman by pushing her on the body and refusing to leave the same address.

On December 6 Pert repeatedly contacted the woman and entered the address, breaching his bail.

After police detained him, he told them he had swallowed a quantity of heroin and he was taken to Oban's Lorn and Islands hospital under police supervision.

When at the hospital's ward B he told officers he needed to use the toilet. Procurator fiscal Eoin McGinty told the court: 'The police officers stood outside the toilet door and maintained verbal communication. After a period of silence, police opened the door to find no one there.'

'The accused had jumped 20 feet out of the window and run off into the darkness.'

Police were then told at 11.50pm that Pert had returned to the woman's address once again and he was arrested.

Defence solicitor Laura McManus explained her client had been recovering from heroin addiction and at the time of the incidents in March and December had been using valium.

She added that there were 'two sides' to Pert, who at times was a 'hardworking, motivated person' able to hold down a job in a local warehouse but who could also become 'an addict with issues'.

His sentence was backdated to December 8 when he was initially detained in custody.

Marie Curie team's Christmas watch

MARIE CURIE Nurses across the UK, including the Marie Curie nursing team in Argyll and Bute, will provide care to 2,000 terminally ill patients across the UK over the 12 days of Christmas.

Lynne Miller, Marie Curie clinical nurse manager for Argyll and Bute, said: 'We'll be working very closely alongside the community nurses, home carers, hospital discharge teams and other agencies to make sure that families get the care they need over the holidays.'

'Many people may not realise that this is a local service and we could be supporting them or a family member.'

We would encourage them to speak to their GP or district nurse.'

Company 'rethinks' plans to expand Etive fish farms

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FISH FARMER Dawnfresh has withdrawn its planning application for the expansion of the Etive 2 and 3 sites on Loch Etive.

The dramatic development comes after months of objections to the plans to the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), Argyll and Bute council and Marine Scotland by charitable group Friends Of Loch Etive (FOLE).

Dawnfresh director Gideon Pringle claimed FOLE's actions had hindered his firm's work to the point where it had been forced to reassess the business plans at the Loch Etive farms.

Mr Pringle said: 'The company is withdrawing while it rethinks its plans. FOLE is exercising its right and people can always come in and ask unanswerable questions regarding the water chemistry of Loch Etive. These questions have to be answered,

so taking the timescale into consideration, the company has to look at the further extensions of existing sites - mainly Etive 6, and Etive 4.'

Etive 6 is at Muckairn and Etive 4 between Airds Point and Airds Bay and both have a 1,500-tonne capacity which the company will look at expanding this year.

Mr Pringle added: 'The impact this will have on Dawnfresh for the next financial year will be in the region of £750,000.'

'It's not going to affect jobs and the business will see its way through this, but it's certainly a shock to the system.'

'The planners, Marine Scotland and SEPA all have to have confidence in each other and in what we, as a company, are doing. I see this as merely a bump in the road - we will find a way.'

Mr Pringle also hit out at the legal challenge mounted by FOLE earlier in the year against Argyll and Bute council's decision last year to grant planning permis-



CHANGING LANDSCAPE: Dawnfresh is now rethinking its plans since it withdrew its application for Etive 2 and 3

sion for the Etive 6 site. FOLE claimed the council had misinterpreted the Loch Etive Coastal Management Plan when it approved Dawnfresh's 10-cage fish farm. The group petitioned for a judicial review.

However, the petition was refused by Lord Malcolm at the Court of Session in July 2014. Lord Malcolm said that it was clear that FOLE was created by Keith Macmillan, and was controlled and funded by him. In

his letter of objection to the fish farm, Mr Macmillan described himself as the owner of an estate on the shores of Loch Etive.

Mr Pringle continued: 'All of this cost the council tens of thousands of pounds to fight the judicial review.'

'It's a significant cost to the taxpayer and all for the sake of a view from someone's house. It really is the height of 'Nimbyism'. 'We all have the freedom of speech and action, but this is

costing the council a lot of money and had a very low chance of success.' The Dawnfresh director said that recent public meetings organised by the company about its plans had revealed that people were divided over the issue.

He said: 'There is split in opinion about our plans. People aren't just voting automatically against everything Dawnfresh plans just for the sake of it.'

'People need to realise we are not trying to either industrialise the loch or wipe out the life in it. We have very strict regulations we need to adhere to.'

A delighted Mr Macmillan welcomed the news of the planning withdrawal: 'This is great news. Loch Etive is one of Scotland's most beautiful and unique lochs and we need to preserve its natural serenity so that it can be appreciated by locals and visitors alike. Dawnfresh's expansion plans will industrialise the loch and cause more environmental damage.'

Driving like an 'idiot' ends in jail sentence

A MAN has been jailed for 182 days for driving 'like an idiot' as he reached speeds of up to 120mph on Mull.

Fisherman Donald Martin, 21, lost control of the car, which crashed and overturned, ending up in a ditch.

A friend, who was a passenger in the car, was badly injured and had to be airlifted to the Royal Alexandra hospital in Paisley.

Martin, of No. 1 Caravan, Lee Ardtun, Bunnassan, Isle of Mull, had previously pleaded guilty at Oban sheriff court to dangerous driving and a separate charge of driving while disqualified on August 21, 2014, on the A849 between Fionnphort and Bunnassan. Last Tuesday he was sentenced

for the charges and a third charge of driving with no insurance.

The court heard that as Martin careered along the road at break-neck speeds, he struck and killed a sheep and accelerated towards a crest in the road, lifting his car clear of the road and causing it to crash and overturn.

On August 20, the court was told Martin and two friends had walked back to his father's caravan, where he also stayed, after drinking in a local pub until closing time.

Martin later offered to drive one of the men home and all three got into Martin's father's car to drive the six-mile journey.

Procurator fiscal Eoin McGinty said: 'The two passengers de-

scribed the accused "driving like an idiot" for the entire journey, at excessive speed.'

Near Bunnassan hall the car struck and killed a sheep. Mr McGinty continued: 'They were then approaching a crest in the road when the accused began to accelerate rapidly and said words to the effect "Watch this", or "Here we go". At this point he was travelling between 110mph and 120mph.'

'The vehicle hit the crest and became airborne. When it landed the accused lost control, the vehicle struck a rock and flipped onto its roof. The three men got out of the car but one of the men was slipping in and out of consciousness.'

The car ended up in a ditch but was eventually pulled clear and taken to a nearby garage.

The injured passenger was eventually airlifted to hospital where it was discovered he had a fractured vertebrae and was urinating blood.

Police were notified and traced the car to Martin's father's caravan. The father initially said he had been driving the car but later told police his son had been behind the wheel at the time of the crash. On his return to the caravan, Martin told police: 'It was me. I hold my hands up.'

Defence solicitor Laura McManus explained her client had abstained from drinking alcohol since the incident and was on

good terms with the seriously injured man. She said Martin had been out of work at the time of the incident and had been 'showing off' because of 'boredom'.

But the court heard Martin's driving disqualification, imposed in September 2013, was for dangerous driving.

Sheriff John Herald said: 'Given your driving, you are exceedingly lucky no-one was killed. It gives me no pleasure at all, given your age and the time of year, to send you to prison but I would be failing in my public duty if I did not impose a custodial sentence.'

Martin was sentenced to a total of 182 days in prison and has been banned from driving for five years.



MAESTRO: Caroline Jamieson tries out the new piano she presented to Taynuilt village hall committee chairwoman Vera Shaw 15_152caroline01

Caroline strikes a happy note for village committee

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CHRISTMAS came early for Taynuilt village hall committee after it received a new piano from the village branch of An Comunn Gaidhealach.

The Meur Chruachain branch, which hosts regular ceilidhs in the hall, donated the new piano before its Christmas ceilidh last Saturday.

Making the presentation was the branch's oldest member, Caroline Jamieson, 98, to hall committee chairwoman Vera Shaw.

After the formal presentation, fear an taighe Duncan MacNeil introduced 16-year-old piper Alasdair MacLean, who played some rousing tunes to start the ceilidh.

Further enjoyable music was provided during the evening by Breagha Charlton (clarsach) and Hector McFadyen (accordion).

Once again the Isla Sinclair Dancers gave excellent displays of dancing throughout the ceilidh. Those taking part were Isla Buchanan, Mairi MacCorquodale, Chelsey MacAuley, Ailie Munro, Hannah Graham, Rachel Campbell and Kirsty Campbell.

Well-known local soloists Morag MacNeil and Freddy MacKenzie, accompanied by Hector McFadyen, then performed, before the audience enjoyed stovies and mince pies during the interval.

There was a very warm welcome for Santa, who took time out of his busy schedule to make an appearance.

MSP challenged to produce facts after scathing attack on planners

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AN MSP has claimed Argyll and Bute council planners 'misled' councillors after they turned down a wind turbine application.

Mike MacKenzie, Highlands and Islands regional MSP, says the council's planning policy has contributed to 'the economic underperformance of the area and is a primary cause of depopulation'.

He has also claimed information given to councillors on the local authority's planning committee, who were considering the wind turbine application, contained an incorrect statement about Scotland's renewable energy target.

But the council has mounted a robust defence of its decision and strongly rebutted the claim, saying there was 'no evidence' to support the MSP's view.

The war of words was sparked by the council's



Your planning committee has been misled

Mike MacKenzie, MSP (Pictured left)

decision to back the planners' recommendation to reject an application by Brian Neish to erect a 61-metre turbine (to blade tip) on land north east of Barbreck Farm, Kilchrenan.

The plan had 27 objections, including one from Avich and Kilchrenan community council.

But Mr MacKenzie criticised the recommendation, which published a statement from an objector, who referred to the view of a Scottish government

reporter in the Barrel Law Windfarm Public Inquiry that renewable energy targets in Scotland have been achieved.

In a letter to the council's chief executive Sally Loudon, Mr MacKenzie said: 'We have not yet achieved the targets as suggested and it is therefore the case that your planning committee has been misled and that as a consequence their decision is 'unsafe'.'

'This begs the question as to how many other applications

may have been determined on a similar 'unsafe' basis because of misleading or inaccurate information.'

Calling for a review of previous wind turbine decisions, he also claimed that some councillors had told him they do not feel 'properly supported' in making decisions and that there is a 'continuing struggle with officers who feel they know best'.

But an Argyll and Bute council spokesman hit back, saying: 'There is absolutely no evidence to support this accusation. The overall focus of the council's planning service is on making things happen, supporting sustainable economic growth and regeneration.'

'Our approach has been endorsed at national government level, with the cabinet secretary for communities, Alex Neil MSP, recently giving the council positive feedback in terms of our planning performance framework annual report. Our key planning

policy document, the local development plan (LDP), has been reported on favourably by the Scottish government in terms of the recent LDP examination report and earmarks significant amounts of land for development throughout Argyll and Bute.'

'We support wind farms in principle, with policy and technical guidance in place to assist developers in the application process, but we must ensure that any development is sustainable and takes place in the right location.'

'We determine each application on its own merits, with due consideration to national planning policy, the local development plan and other material planning considerations such as economic benefit and noise and visual impact.'

'We work to support the ambitions of developers while protecting the interests of the wider community and the intrinsic qualities of the area that make it so special.'



FOR a bit of festive fun *The Oban Times* asked people in the town what their hopes, dreams or resolutions would be for the New Year.



Michael Croarkin, 72, lives in Oban and is retired.

'I suppose the main thing would be to go on a diet but I'm not very good at it. I say I'll do it every year and always have the best intentions but find it hard to stick to.'



Margaret Totterdell, 61, lives in Oban and is retired.

'I always hope for world peace and for people to give more to charity, more to other people, the needy. The world would be a better place if we gave more to others and less to ourselves.'



Ella MacDonald, 17, is from Benderloch and goes to Oban High school.

'Next year my main ambition is to move to Aberdeen. I've applied to study a fashion course there so hopefully I get the right results and get accepted to the course.'



Zac Gray, 17, lives in Broadford, Skye, and is training to become an outdoor instructor.

'I'm aiming to become an outdoor instructor. I'm studying it at college and qualify in two years, but next year I'll get a certificate for progressing, so I'll be on my way to achieving my goal.'

A82 overnight closures



Overnight closures of the A82 at Pulpit Rock, south of Ardlui are scheduled to take place each night from **Monday 12th January to Thursday 15th January.**

The road will close at 2200hrs and reopen each day at 0600hrs. The A82 will remain open either side of the closure.

Diversion routes between these hours will be northbound via the A83 at Tarbet, A819 and A85, and southbound via the A85 at Tyndrum, A819 and A83.

We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

This is to allow essential work to be carried out safely on the A82 Pulpit Rock improvement project.

Closures can be subject to change, therefore please refer to the Transport Scotland website for the latest information:

<http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/project/a82-pulpit-rock>



Land ruling hailed a victory for 'common sense'

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A LOCHABER couple hope a 'landmark' court victory will remove the legal barriers preventing them from re-developing their land.

Donnie and Liz MacGillivray, from North Ballachulish, had applied to the Crofting Commission to decroft part of the land they occupy in the village to build 10 houses.

But their application had been rejected because the area was owned by more than one tenant and not all tenants had backed their application.

This was due to a rule introduced by the commission in 2012 which prevents multi-occupant crofters making applications without the permission of their

co-owners. The couple lodged an appeal against the decision. And Scottish ministers in Holyrood overturned the decision following a hearing in Edinburgh on December 18, stating that the legislation did not adhere to overall crofting law.

Fort William-based solicitors MacPhee and Partners, who represented the MacGillivrays during the case, said the groundbreaking decision would affect several other cases.

A spokesman from the firm said: 'The land court's decision effectively overrules the commission's policy and frees the way for part owners or tenants to lodge decrofting applications without the consent of the others.'

'It is being described as a landmark decision, as it affects a number of other cases which

have fallen foul of the Crofting Commission's 'multiple owner' policy statement issued on December 14, 2012.

'They have been held in abeyance awaiting the outcome of the court's ruling in the MacGillivray case.'

The legal firm declined to comment further, as it is not permitted to discuss ongoing cases, but stated other crofters they had spoken to called it a victory for common sense.

Mr and Mrs MacGillivray's original bid made in 2011 to redevelop their land at Old Town, North Ballachulish, was refused by Highland council, but that verdict was overturned by Scottish ministers before the Crofting Commission then stepped in to block it.

Mr MacGillivray, a self-em-

ployed bricklayer, was pleased the lengthy appeals process had found in their favour.

He said: 'It has been a hard financial struggle for us to take on the might of the Crofting Commission.'

'It employed the top crofting law QC to fight the case.'

'We are greatly relieved at the decision and hope the Crofting Commission will now give us a fair hearing.'

'We have been sustained by the overwhelming support of the local community and beyond.'

A spokesman for the Crofting Commission said it did not wish to comment on the result of the case, which may be subject to appeal.

The commission has until January 15 to appeal against the court's decision.

At the helm of federation

A SKYE woman has been appointed the new chairwoman of the Scottish Crofting Federation, writes *Emma Crichton*.



Fiona Mandeville (pictured) from Broadford, will take over from Derek Flynn at the end of his tenure this year.

A keen sailor, Fiona Mandeville worked for the Scottish Crofters Union for 15 years from 1985 and helped open the union office in Broadford the following year.

She then took a break from her duties to fulfill her lifelong ambition to travel the Mediterranean on her boat.

She said: 'When Jim Hunter

and I opened the Scottish Crofters Union office in Broadford, I never for a moment expected to become chairwoman of the organisation.

'I feel very humble to be following in the footsteps of Derek Flynn, and other estimable chairmen who have held this post before me.'

'With the help of my colleagues on the board and our small, but very capable staff team, you can be sure the Scottish Crofting Federation will continue to fight on crofters' behalf.'

'There has never been a greater need for all crofters to support the only organisation dedicated to representing their interests, the only organisation set up by crofters, run by crofters, for crofters.'

Group enjoys thrill of close encounters

THE basking shark was the topic presented to the Argyll and Lochaber group of the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) at its monthly talk in December.

Shane Wasik, of Basking Shark Scotland, a company that operates out of Oban during the summer season, spoke on 'Interactions with basking sharks' and told the group, on Thursday, December 18, that apart from giving visitors the opportunity of swimming with basking sharks, the second biggest fish in the world, his company also photographed these gentle plankton-eating giants and collected data on their movements.

Members were impressed by the photography, which they said was excellent, in particular the high quality video taken from above by a photographic drone, and they learnt a great deal about this elusive creature.

The next SWT evening lecture, held in the Marine Institute at Dunstaffnage, will be on Thursday, January 15 at 7.30pm, when police constable Kenny Brack will speak on 'Combating wildlife crime'.

A tree is for more than one Christmas

SCOTTISH farms are growing around 4.3 million Christmas trees every year with many of these home-grown trees taking pride of place in households across the country this festive season.

But Holyrood rural affairs minister Richard Lochhead is urging everyone who has bought a real tree this year to recycle it, or replant it and use it again in 2015.

He said: 'Real Christmas trees add some authentic festive sparkle to homes but I don't think many people realise they can do their bit for the environment after they've used their trees by recycling them.'

'All local authorities have recycling centres to take advantage of and I would encourage everyone who has bought a real tree this year to make sure they do.'

Welcome cash for Argyllshire groups

TWO ARGYLL charities have been granted funding from the Scottish government, sharing £15 million with 130 other groups.

The Iona Community and Argyll and Bute Rape Crisis were included in the list of beneficiaries, announced last week, to receive funding for 2015 - 2016.

EX-HIGH SCHOOL PUPILS WANT TO CREATE A NON-ALIGNED COMMUNITY TALKING SHOP TO DISCUSS THE ISSUES OF THE DAY



CONVERSATION: The referendum debate has inspired Obanites Gregor Clunie and Stacey Felgate into grassroots political interest group 15_t52grassroots01

Health staff prepared to 'go extra mile'

NEARLY all NHS Highland staff (91 per cent) are prepared to 'go the extra mile' but less than a third believe there is sufficient staff to do their job properly.

Staff also reported a three per cent increase to 33 per cent in verbal and emotional abuse by patients and the public.

These are the results from a survey commissioned by the Scottish government, which asked NHS staff across Scotland about their experiences.

A total of 3,200 NHS Highland employees - 32 per cent of the total - responded.

Comparing NHS Highland

staff views with those expressed nationally, the percentage locally who felt they had sufficient opportunities to put forward new ideas and who had a choice in deciding what they did at work, was higher than the NHS Scotland average.

However, only 27 per cent felt that staff were always consulted about changes at work, less than one third felt there were enough staff to do the job properly, and only 37 per cent were clear about how changes made at work would work in practice.

Adam Palmer, NHS Highland's employment director, said there

were some excellent figures in the survey report but also some causes for concern.

He said: 'Clearly, we are delighted that it contains some very positive figures, such as a rise (one per cent) in the percentage of our staff who would go the extra mile and a rise in the proportion who felt that the care we provide is our top priority.'

'However, the survey report also shows there are clearly areas for improvement and we will be analysing where we do not appear to have fared well and considering how best we should address any issues raised.'

Referendum inspired grassroots movement

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A COUPLE of former high school pupils are hoping to tap into the wellspring of political interest generated by the referendum on Scottish independence last September.

In the weeks leading up to the vote on September 18, 'Yes' and 'No' campaigns had a huge presence in Oban. The Yes shop in George Street's former Blockbuster store, in particular, was a hive of activity.

Now two of those involved with the Yes shop, Stacey Felgate and Gregor Clunie, have vowed to help keep that political momentum going by setting up Grassroots, a community cafe where people can share ideas and seek support for local projects or campaigns.

Chairwoman Stacey Felgate, a student at the Scottish Association for Marine Science at Dunstaffnage, was keen to

stress that the group, which will be based at the former Room 9 restaurant, had no political affiliation, nor was it in support of independence.

She said: 'During the referendum debate, a lot of people re-engaged with politics and people who were not involved got involved.'

'It's not that people didn't care before; they just realised they could do something to change things.'

'This is not about party politics, it is about issues. So if people have an issue, they may find like-minded people here.'

'It is about giving people the information they want in order to make decisions about the things they care about and what they can do to change it.'

The 11-strong Grassroots committee has also organised community events to be held in 2015 and intends to host events on the subjects of art, crafts, Gaelic, fashion and music.

There are also plans to devise

a 'Nana cafe', where recently retired residents can run the cafe for older people to help combat social exclusion.

Committee member Gregor Clunie, who has recently completed a PhD in law and political economy, said he was not a nationalist but had helped in the Yes shop after becoming excited by the referendum debate.

He said: 'Oban is in many ways a thriving town but until the last couple of years I had not seen that energy and self-education. It really inspired me, in terms of people's enthusiasm.'

'The dynamic in Scottish politics is often the central belt talking to rural areas and I feel Oban can play a role in starting to lead that conversation.'

'It would have been criminal not to build on the energy created by the referendum.'

Grassroots will be working with the national Common Weal movement, which is calling on a constitutional change to Scottish politics.

BID helps New Year bash with cash boost

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HOGMANAY in Oban will hit all the high notes thanks to funding from business improvement company, BID4Oban.

The annual party held in the Corran Halls car park has proved popular with people with a heavier-than-expected demand for the free tickets.

Handing over a cheque for £5,000 to Hogmanay in Oban volunteer Colin MacNiven, BID4Oban chairman Graeme Bass said he was delighted to support the event. He said: 'We've had reports that businesses are being contacted about availability of both accommodation and dining over the Hogmanay period.'

'I understand from the Hogmanay in Oban organisers that more than 15 per cent of tickets have been given to people who do not live in the area.'

'That means more than 300 people who would not normally be in Oban are making their way to the town for the party.'

The event is due to start at 7pm with bands from all over the region taking part.



BOOST: BID4Oban chairman Graeme Bass hands over a cheque for £5,000 to Colin MacNiven 15_t01hogmanay1

Hogmanay in Oban talent competition winners - Charlotte Lawson, Perfectly Flawed, Ballet West and Nicky MacInnes - will join The Works, Ceol An Aire and Crackin Craic on stage before Brian Hughes and his band brings in the bells.

It is expected that there will be a capacity crowd of more than 2,000 people at the event.

It had been hoped to stage a fireworks display over the bay at Hogmanay, but due to boats being tied up at the piers a safe launch site is not available to BID4Oban.

The last batch of tickets will be available from Oban filling station on Soroba Road from 7am on December 31.

Revellers are reminded not to take glass bottles to the event.



1. Get activation code



2. Collect documents



3. Enter data



INSPIRED: Simon MacLellan
Apprentice Simon is an 'inspiration', says leading local aquaculture firm

A LOCHABER aquaculture trainee is leading a new wave of 'Modern Apprentices' into an expanding fisheries and aquaculture management sector. Simon MacLellan, a talented 24-year-old aquaculture trainee working for Fort William based Marine Harvest and winner of the Lantra Scotland Aquaculture Learner of the Year Award 2013, will play a part in the Scottish government's targets for marine production, which are set to increase by 210,000 tonnes by 2020.

There is also a target to increase shellfish production by 13,000 tonnes.

As a result there are growing careers opportunities for school leavers and college graduates looking for a challenging and skilled occupation.

Simon is employed in the salmon hatchery side of the Marine Harvest operation, whilst undertaking the theoretical part of his Modern Apprenticeship Level 3 at Inverness College.

He said: 'I chose aquaculture because I can see this is an industry that is only going to grow. Commercial fishing is unsustainable, and with only two per cent of the world's oceans farmed, this represents a big opportunity for us all.'

'It is very satisfying to be part of an industry that is geared towards sustainable fish production and I believe being part of the Modern Apprenticeship programme has given me the ideal start to my career.'

Lynn MacFarlane, training and human resources officer for Marine Harvest, said: 'We are keen to support our staff with their learning, and we have found that doing the SVQ alongside working on the farm is an effective combination.'

'Simon's success as the Aquaculture Learner of the Year 2013 is a great inspiration.'

Help us make the tough decisions, says leader

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TOUGH TIMES: Dick Walsh

LEADER of Argyll and Bute council, councillor Dick Walsh, has warned of tough times ahead as the local authority invites residents to comment on major cuts proposed for 2016 onwards. A consultation is to be rolled out in January next year, asking people to help plan how the council manages a funding gap

of between £5.5 million and £7.5 million each year over five years. Councillor Walsh said two years of 'relative financial stability' had given the local authority time to plan for the cuts. But he encouraged residents to have their say, admitting his administration had to make 'careful choices and challenging decisions'.

The council has cited a falling Argyll and Bute population, and a shrinking working-age sector,

as major issues, as council funding depends upon the number of people living in the region.

Councillor Walsh said: 'We are ambitious for Argyll and Bute - everyone must be. We must continue taking action to develop a prosperous future for Argyll and Bute.'

'We will do this by delivering on the key objective of our Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) - to build economic success through

a growing population.' He added: 'Like many other local authorities, we will need to make changes. The council will continue to be a key local employer and service provider. We will ensure that our employees and communities have opportunities to give their views at different stages in this process.'

Further details on the consultation will be provided in the New Year.

Iain steps in with festive respite

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GOOD NEWS: Adam puts his feet up to read The Oban Times, as Iain guides him through the pages 16_t01iainadam02

A SOUTHAMPTON man who is walking around the coast of Britain for charity has been given some festive cheer after an *Oban Times* columnist offered him a place to stay over Christmas.

Adam Short, 41, is rough camping in his tent as he walks to raise money for Save the Children and the RNLI, having also spent nights in a cave, a horse-box and a fish tank since setting off in March this year.

He was shown that this really is the season of goodwill after Iain Thornber, who writes 'Morvern Lines' for *The Oban Times*, invited Adam to spend Christmas at his Lochaline home from December 19 to 27, before the intrepid plodder sets off again from the Corran Ferry.

Adam explained: 'The Scots are by far the friendliest people I've met so far and Iain's kind offer is true Highland hospitality.'

'People have offered me lifts, fed me, given me beds for the night, all of whom were complete strangers, and of course I met Iain near Inverailort Castle.'

Iain had read about Adam's journey online and had expected to see him at some point on the trek. He said: 'I read that Adam would be coming to the area so I kept my eyes open for him. Putting him up for these few days is my contribution to the challenge.'

'I've met some interesting people over the years but nothing like this. The fact that Adam's following the coastline and he's carrying on with it until it's done, rather than doing a bit then stopping is incredible. He's wild camping for most of it too.'

Now firm friends, the pair have even joked about Adam's ex-girlfriends finishing the task for him and scattering his ashes along the route if he was to die before completing the challenge. Adam said: 'These days off

have been good because I've managed to get some sightseeing done, got up into the hills, up in Glen Nevis and Glencoe - it's been like a holiday for me.'

'Some of the scenery and wildlife I've seen on the trek in Scotland has been breathtaking. Along the way, I've come across stags, hinds, dolphins, whales and otters.'

Adam is optimistic about completing the challenge, despite

being seven months behind his schedule.

He said: 'I plotted it out on Google Earth and I was hoping to do between 20 to 30 miles a day, but it's just not realistic with a 30kg backpack. I'm not too worried though because this was always an endurance thing, not about how quickly I could do it, just as long as I finish.'

Adam was also keen to visit *The Oban Times* in the hope

the newspaper archives could confirm an urban myth he had heard years ago.

He explained: 'I heard a rumour that when the Titanic sank, one of the papers here ran the headline "Argyllshire man drowns".'

'It's of interest to me because the Titanic left from Southampton, where I'm from.'

Having checked through the archives and online, staff were

able to confirm the urban myth was just that, but were happy to give Adam a free copy of the newspaper to read before continuing his journey.

Adam is aiming to finish the challenge back in Southampton by May 2015.

The public can keep up-to-date with his progress by visiting: uk-coastal-trek.com To donate, visit: www.justgiving.com/UKCoastalTrek4Scouts

Shona's a head girl when it comes to raising funds



AN OBAN woman has shaved her foot-long hair off to raise money for two separate charities, writes *Steven Rae*.

Shona Mclugash, 39, who is a booking clerk for Network Rail, had her flowing locks removed in Oban railway station in front of friends, colleagues and some shocked travellers.

As well as the sponsorship money, which is going to Alzheimer Scotland, she has donated her ponytail to the Little Princess Trust, which provides real-hair wigs to boys and girls across the UK and Ireland who have lost their hair through cancer treatment.

Shona chose Alzheimer Scotland as her mum Margaret, 74, suffers from dementia.

Shona explained: 'A couple of months ago I decided I wanted to do something for charity but wasn't sure what, and suggested shaving my hair off. To start with I laughed but the idea just stuck and I decided to do it.'

She drafted in the help of hairdresser friend Kirsteen Hobson

who was happy to assist with her hair clippers. I was looking forward to it because it's not often I get to shave a woman's hair off,' said Kirsteen.

'She suits it a lot better than I thought she would - she can definitely pull it off.'

Andy Crabb, who is a dementia resource adviser at the Dementia Resource Centre in Oban, said: 'I'm very proud of her doing something so amazing. What a brave thing to do on a freezing December day.'

'She definitely has the look of Sinead O'Connor now, which is good because nothing compares to her.'

'This has raised money and awareness which will help to address the stigma of dementia.'

Shona added: 'At the end of the day, it's just hair and will grow back.'

Shona has raised £845 so far on her JustGiving page, along with collections taken on the day at the station.

To donate, visit: www.justgiving.com/shona-mclugash



GOING, GOING, GONE! (Pictured left) hairdresser Kirsteen starts to shave Shona's head. (Pictured above) Shona holds her ponytail as a memento of her once glorious head of hair 16_t01hair/01&02

What are you hoping for in the New Year?



Fiona Macaulay, 28, lives in Oban and is a supervisor at Poppies Garden Centre.

'I'd like to go on lots of nice holidays. I'm planning to restart the gym in January and to stop biting my nails. I'm also planning to walk the dog less - I can't be bothered and it's up to my husband Steven to do that.'



Matthew Hall, 17, lives in Oban and goes to Oban High School. He hopes to study philosophy, politics and economics.

'I'm planning to earn more money by getting a job and working hard. I'm going to try and get a job doing anything really, part-time work while I finish school and apply for courses through UCAS.'



Antonio Rodriguez, 33, lives in Oban and is a waiter at The Glen.

'I'd like to lose some weight in the new year, and also give up drinking. We'll see how that goes!'



Jennifer Jones, 28, is a farm worker from Seil.

'I want to lose some weight and stop smoking but that's been on-going for about 10 years now. Hopefully this year will be different!'



Will Craig, 32, is an advertising sales executive and lives in Craobh Haven.

'I'm planning to do a 10k run next year in Glenlivet. It's going to mean two resolutions - going for a run before work and also using the gym membership I pay for but have only used twice since signing up for.'



4. Submit your Tax Return

4 steps to inner peace.

To do your Self Assessment Tax Return follow these four simple steps. If you miss the 31st January deadline you will get a £100 penalty. So why not do it today, pay what you owe and take a load off your mind?

gov.uk/selfassessment



HM Revenue & Customs

Taynuilt

THE MONTHLY whist held in Taynuilt on December 12 was in aid of the senior citizens' bus outing. The card master was Dougie McDougall. Gents: 1 Dougie McDougall, 2 Colin Campbell, 3 Jim Grount, Connel, 4 Wirleen Lewis; consolation Prize - Stafford Day; travelling prize - Colin Day. Ladies: 1 Margaret Forbes, Connel, 2 Isobel Grount, Connel, 3 Margaret Ann Nicolson, Kilchrenan, 4 Florence Anderson; consolation prize - Marina MacInnes, ladies travelling prize - Florence Anderson. There were four tables and the sum raised was £117.

Arisaig

ARISAIG women's rural institute held its Christmas party in Astley Hall. More than 30 members and guests enjoyed a spread of sandwiches and home baking on December 18, followed by a sing-a-long and a reading by Helen Lamb. Raffle winners were June Cairns, Dunriona Stewart, Marie Perkins, Tommy MacEachen, Vera MacDonald, Merac MacDonald, Barbara Collier, Ranald Coyne and Pat MacDonald. The next meeting will be on January 15.

Barra

BUDDING authors on the isle of Barra will have their fingers crossed over the Christmas break as they await the results of a writing contest. Primary four to six pupils of Eoligarry school submitted 100-word stories to the Young Writers Competition and are patiently awaiting the announcement of winners next term.



Special delivery for nursery pupils

SURPRISE: North Ballachulish youngsters were surprised when Santa Claus personally delivered their fruit and vegetables. The weekly order of healthy food was brought to St Bride's nursery last week in true festive style, much to the delight of the children



Strath of Appin

STAGE STARS: It was standing room only in Appin Village Hall when all the children in Strath of Appin Primary School performed Hoodwinked in front of family and friends. Hoodwinked is a modern and witty Robin Hood musical adaptation which the children had great fun performing. All the hard work paid off as the children received rave reviews for their efforts. Pictured are Maid Marian's ladies, primary three girls



Christmas party time at Fort Augustus

FUN AND GAMES: Fort Augustus children enjoyed a Christmas party at the weekend. Entertainment was provided as well as a visit from Santa Claus, part-funded by a £250 donation from HWEnergy Limited.

New director for park authority

LOCH Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority has appointed its own director of operations, Gordon Watson, as its new chief executive. Mr Watson replaces Fiona Logan, who left the post in October. He said: 'I am proud and honoured to be succeeding Fiona Logan in leading the fantastic, dedicated team here at Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. My focus is on ensuring we continue our momentum, working hard, alongside partners, to look after the park, support our communities and businesses, and deliver a wide range of benefits for Scotland.' Gordon, who lives in Gartocharn, will take up his post this month.



CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Gordon Watson



Kilmuir

STAFF at a north Skye activity centre took their Christmas decorations to the next level this year. Not content with putting baubles on a tree, the team at Whitewave Outdoor Centre, Kilmuir, projected the festive decorations on to the outside walls of the building.



Kilchoan man comes up with novel bird seed holder

A KILCHOAN blogger has come up with a novel idea to prevent small birds having their food stolen by cheeky pheasants. Jon Haylett has been testing various contraptions in his garden to allow songbirds to

feed without their seeds and nuts getting blown away in the wind, or falling to the ground where larger species can take them. His latest idea is a seed holder, pictured left, which keeps the food dry and sheltered on a wall,

high up and small enough that pheasants can't reach it. It is also just the right size for species such as blue tits and chaffinches to use without getting inside and leaving droppings, which can cause avian disease. Mr Haylett said about

his latest experiment: 'By having the wood, which forms the base, protrude slightly, the small birds can land on the narrow ledge while anything from a blackbird bigger can't - and the pheasant doesn't have a hope.'

Business as usual advertisement with a woman holding a sign.

CORIANDER indian cuisine advertisement with phone number 01631 570806.

Think Printing advertisement with phone number 01586 554975.

OBAN STOVE CENTRE advertisement for wood-burning stoves.

The Oban Times Digital Edition advertisement offering a 64% discount on an annual subscription.

New senior police chief's pledge to keep Highlands and islands safe

A NEW senior police officer for the Highlands and islands is concerned about local organised crime despite it being one of the safest regions in Scotland.

Detective Superintendent Colin Carey has been appointed head of the division's Criminal Investigations Department (CID) following 22 years of experience in the central belt.

Mr Carey said: 'Although we live in one of the safest regions in the country, the devastating potential consequences of serious and organised crime are still a risk to us all. Bogus workmen and travelling criminals often target the most vulnerable in society.'

'We aim to use intelligence to ensure our communities are kept safe and those responsible for such crimes are brought to justice. Child sexual exploitation and abuse of all categories, including domestic, will not be tolerated.'

Detective superintendent Carey added: 'We will also focus our attention on tackling the supply of illegal drugs and associated criminality in addition to the rise of harmful so-called 'legal highs'.'

'I'm pleased violent crime is reducing across the division but that does not leave room for complacency: it is my job to oversee the Criminal Investigation Department, ensuring we continue to keep the Highlands and islands a safe and secure place for all to live and visit.'



FOCUSSED: Detective superintendent Colin Carey

Closure fears allayed as cash is splashed on pool

GENEROUS GRANTS KEEP MALLAIG CENTRE AFLOAT

EMMA CRICHTON
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MALLAIG'S leisure centre has received grants worth more than £64,000, just a month after staff feared it could close.

West Lochaber communities gathered in force to campaign against proposed Highland council budget cuts which could have resulted in the closure of Mallaig and District Swimming Pool, but are now celebrating following the announcement of two grants to sustain the pool's future.

The Legacy 2014 Sustainable Sport for Communities Fund, a partnership between the Scottish government and the Robertson Trust to carry on the success of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games, donated £30,000 to the leisure centre as part of a £550,100 package across Scotland.

This will mean the manager's position, among others, can be increased to full time to allow staff to develop community projects and services.

A further £34,500, to be provided over three years, was donated by the Robertson Trust to allow the centre to employ a youth development worker.

Brian O'Rourke, manager at Mallaig and District Swimming Pool, called it 'great recognition' for the work of the centre.

He added: 'This money is a great help to us, especially with all the uncertainty about the Highland council grants. We will be working to develop the services we provide within all areas of the community.'

'Staff training and development will also be a key factor in this. It will all contribute to the

“ This money is a great help to us ”

Brian O'Rourke
pool manager

sustainability of our pool. The youth development worker we'll get from the other grant will be a big help in terms of health engagement in the community as we can promote health and well-being to our young people.'

Dave Thompson, MSP for Ross, Skye and Lochaber, welcomed the funding. He said: 'It is pleasing Mallaig pool is to benefit from a package of funding, as part of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Legacy, exemplifying that areas outwith the central belt are gaining from the Glasgow 2014 spectacle.'

'I understand the award will help towards sustaining the future of the pool in Mallaig, which plays such a big role in the community and as such, I am sure I will not be alone in welcoming this great news.'

Kenneth Ferguson, director of the Robertson Trust, said: 'We are pleased to have funded these awards, in partnership with the Scottish government, to provide support and investment to third sector organisations working in Scotland to impact positively on their communities.'

'The recipients of these awards demonstrate the wide range of work that is being delivered by sports social enterprises across Scotland. We are delighted to be able to assist them.'



LIFESAVER: Andy Nelson, leader of Glencoe mountain rescue team, right, receives keys to a new Land Rover from Bobby Willis

Climber's friends to the rescue

FRIENDS of a man who fell to his death in Glencoe have raised £28,000 for a new vehicle for the area's mountain rescue team.

Shaun Bowden, from Hartfordshire, was 39 when he died after falling from Bidean nam Bian, the highest mountain in Glencoe, two years ago and Bobby Willis, who was climbing with him, has dedicated his time since the accident to fundraising for Glencoe Mountain Rescue Team.

And the fruits of his efforts were recognised when he presented a Land Rover to team leader Andy Nelson on December 14, following the £28,000 fundraising effort.

Mr Willis said: 'Shaun was always up there climbing so I thought it would be nice to have a

vehicle in his name, so there's another Bowden going around saving people in Glencoe.'

The car provided is particularly fitting because it previously belonged to Mr Willis, and was the last vehicle the late Mr Bowden was in before he died.

It has been adapted for off-road conditions, with space for a stretcher and 12 rescuers.

Mr Nelson said: 'Bobby felt that a good way to remember his mate was to donate a Land Rover to the rescue team, which is great for us.'

'The next big push is fundraising for our new garage, which is under construction. Our money has taken a big dent from that so we're trying to fill that gap and all the donations we have received so far are much appreciated.'

TIMESLINE

Charity's delight at £4,000 grant

A GRANT of more than £4,000 has been awarded to Lochaber Action on Disability. The charity received the money as part of the Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland Henry Duncan awards programme, which helps grassroots organisations to benefit their communities.

Charles Kennedy, MP for Ross, Skye and Lochaber, welcomed the news.

He said: 'I am delighted that Lochaber Action on Disability is getting this well-deserved grant, enabling it to continue its great work in empowering local people with challenging medical conditions.'

'Many of the Henry Duncan grants go on existing staff and running costs, meaning they can really make a difference to charities.'

'This is a great news story to end the year, I am hoping to see more good news in 2015 for local causes.'

Doors stay open at dementia cafe

A LOCHABER facility for people with dementia and their families is to be extended after an initial six-month trial.

The drop-in cafe at St Andrew's Hall, Fort William, will continue in the new year while Alzheimer Scotland personnel decide if it is sustainable.

Charles Kennedy, MP for Ross, Skye and Lochaber, welcomed the extension.

He said: 'I have made it a commitment to support Alzheimer Scotland in my constituency and I look forward to visiting the Fort William cafe.'

'It is welcome news to know that Alzheimer Scotland has extended the trial of the dementia cafe and I trust it will get the local support that it needs to continue.'

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The Oban Times

& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

The adage, 'Be careful what you wish for' often comes home to haunt us. Perhaps Argyll and Bute council leader Dick Walsh should bear this in mind when he asks the people to have their say on the next round of swingeing cuts to services.

Only time will tell if he values their opinions; or whether it was nothing more than a PR sop to a notion of local democracy. If the latter is true, it would be wishful thinking on his part to think there won't be a day of reckoning.

Glasgow Letter

End of a journey

TEN YEARS ago, in June 2004, I retired from my full time occupation and just a few weeks later I was approached, at the end of a shinty match in Spean Bridge, and asked if I would consider taking on the weekly writing of the Glasgow Letter.

I agreed and now, having not missed an edition since then, I have decided this will be my last Glasgow Letter.

It has been an interesting journey and one that has seen many changes.

My early predecessors had the task of reporting on the activities of the territorial associations within the city at a time when functions were much more frequent than they are today.

Social habits have changed. The young, generally speaking, are not interested in attending a traditional ceilidh despite the fact we have never had so many young and extremely talented musicians in and around the city performing at these ceilidhs.

Indeed, establishments such as the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland are producing so many one can only hope they all find employment to pass on their skills.

Finding material to write on a weekly basis has been challenging on many occasions although the two main traditional festivals, Celtic Connections in the winter and Piping Live in the summer, have been priceless.

New technology has also been vital with websites and emails providing much information but personal attendance at functions could not be surpassed.

As a consequence, the definition of the Glasgow area widened considerably and I was able to see, at first hand, the problems faced by those organising functions.

I have lost count, for example, of the number of excellent events featuring top class performers, attended by both my wife and myself, where the very disappointing attendance could be attributed to poor promotion.

The local associations still provide a service and a link to the traditions of the culture from which they originated although, as previously mentioned, the age profile of those attending is of concern.

Perhaps, also, I might be allowed to reiterate the need for associations to communicate with each other so there is not a situation when several functions take place on the same date, and even as happened on occasion in the same venue.

On a personal note I have been privileged to meet

and get to know many new friends of all ages, from the Highlands and beyond, but all intent on preserving our very valuable traditions.

To them my thanks and my special thanks to all the secretaries of the local associations as well as those responsible for the media at all festivals and individual venues.

I hope the column has been interesting and informative and while it may take some time to adjust I look forward to attending functions without the company of a notebook and pen.

Residential Gaelic course

THE FOURTH annual Gaelic course for Gaelic speakers in secondary education will take place at the Blackhouses at Gearran, Isle of Lewis, from April 6 to 11 when participants will get the opportunity to speak the language in an environment where Gaelic is spoken naturally.

In addition there will be the chance to experience the way of life of the local people such as crofting and fishing as well as the cooking of traditional food. For more information contact Calum Alex MacMillan, telephone 01463 225559 or calum@feisan.org

Sympathy

COPY for publication over the festive period has to be forwarded early with the result that while toiling at my computer news of the tragic accident in George Square, Glasgow, is being updated.

I am sure all our readers will join with me in extending our sympathy to the families of all those who have lost their lives while also wishing a full recovery to the injured.

Diary dates

Saturday January 10: Glasgow Skye Association Family Ceilidh, Crawford Hall, 7.30pm. An Comunn, Stirling Branch Ceilidh, Lesser Albert Hall, 7.30pm.

Pub scene

A REMINDER that Trail West will be playing in the Park Bar on New Year's Day and then the next day the Park will be closed.

Eriskay Lilt will be playing there on Saturday with Nicky McMichan/ Martin Pottinger on Sunday.

In the Islay Inn it will be the Keelies on Friday and then Twist of Fate on Saturday.

A Happy New Year from Glasgow to all our readers. Neil Murray. Tel: 0141 954 8105. Email: neilmurray@yahoo.co.uk.

Your Letters

THE EDITOR welcomes letters of approximately 300 words in length for publication on this page.

The editor also reserves the right to shorten, to amend or to refuse to print them. Names and postal addresses must be supplied, including on emails, to indicate good faith. A daytime telephone number is also required for verification.

Anonymous letters or those supplied without a contact telephone number will not be printed.

Please write or fax to: Letters page, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll, PA34 4HB. Fax: 01631 568001. Email editor@obantimes.co.uk.

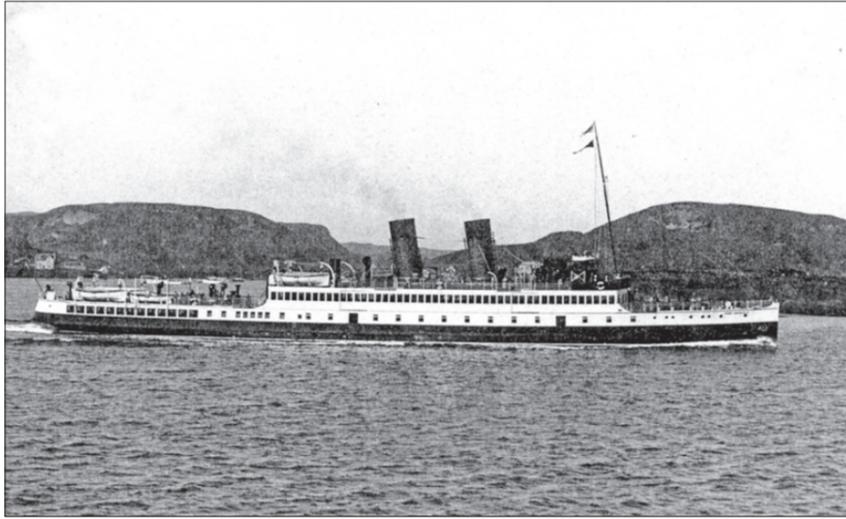
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It is the policy of The Oban Times Group to correct any errors in print. If you find an error of fact on our pages please write to The Editor, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll PA34 4HB giving your day-time telephone number where possible. This statement of policy will appear on this page every week along with any corrections or clarifications.

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The views expressed in The Oban Times are not necessarily those of this newspaper.



SS King George V bound for Iona

This week's flashback photograph was submitted by Colin Armstrong of Coventry and features the SS King George V outward bound to Iona. Prints or emails of flashback photos sent to editor@obantimes.co.uk should be accompanied by a caption, name, address and telephone number. Anyone who wishes a print returned must supply a stamped, addressed envelope.

Letters to the editor

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Broadband in rural Argyll

Sir, During the recent council by-election in South Kintyre, comments were made about broadband provision in Argyll.

But a proactive response from elected representatives attacking the deficiencies in both government and BT policy is still absent. Many rural locations cannot get broadband via any kind of landline.

New fibre optic cables run right past properties affected, yet BT will not install a communications cabinet to allow connection to these businesses and homes.

A way has to be found to make broadband provision at least as much of an obligation as telephone provision.

This is seen as absolutely critical by residents in Argyll. There are technical solutions available, but is there the political will? Trevor Oxborrow, Campbelltown.

Serve alcohol-free lager

Sir, You report overwhelming support for the new law reducing the legal drink-drive limit.

I also welcome it. However I wish alcohol-free lager was more widely available in restaurants and pubs. Before living in Scotland this was always my drink of choice when eating out and driving, but very few establishments stock it.

Indeed some express amazement anyone would drink it. Felicity Pollard, Isle of Mull.

Thanks to hospital staff

Sir, I would like to say a very big thank you to the doctors and staff at Oban hospital for the care and attention given to my husband during his recent stay, prior to his death.

A special mention to Mr Fatah and Mr Groze and the Macmillan nurses. They were all so kind and very supportive to me and my husband at a difficult time.

He spent his last days in Mull and Iona community hospital where, once again, the care and attention was wonderful, from our GPs, Dr Frank and Dr Pictou, the brilliant nurses and carers.

We are very fortunate to have such great people in our NHS. J Ackroyd, Isle of Mull.

Duncan MacPhail

Sir, The BBC's Gaelic department is researching WWI Gaelic poetry and is looking for information about Donchadh MacPhàil (Duncan MacPhail), from Oban, who wrote 'Am Badaid Fraoich'.

We would like to write a short biography about him, to include in a book alongside his poem and wondered if any Oban Times readers could help.

The sort of information we are looking for is where he was from, his family, what connection/role he had in the First World War, what his profession was. If anyone has any information, we would appreciate it if you could contact Annella Macleod on 01851 705000 or email alba@bbc.co.uk. Siobhan MacInnes, BBC Gàidhlig.

MORVERN lines

Drinking and driving

VEHICLES and alcohol do not mix. A couple, somewhere in the Highlands, were returning from a party when they were stopped by a policeman who had seen them speeding through a village when he was on foot patrol.

'You were going too fast,' he told the driver when he eventually caught up with the car. 'No I wasn't,' was the response. 'Yes you were.'

This exchange went on for some minutes and became a little heated until, in exasperation, the man's wife lent across and said, 'look here constable, I can tell you now there is no point in having an argument with my husband when he has had a drink'. You can imagine the outcome!

Losing your licence has many implications, not least of which is your loss of mobility and the impact on your family, insurance, social life and work.

The obvious remedy is to somehow get your licence back early. It may be worth knowing that people convicted of drink driving have the opportunity of attending alcohol awareness training courses through a government approved scheme.

If a court refers you for training and you complete the course having paid the fee, your period of disqualification will be reduced.

The purpose of the course is to provide an understanding about the effects of alcohol, to raise your awareness and ensure you do not suffer these inconveniences again.

Wild turkeys in Argyll

WILD turkeys are not usually associated with Argyll, at least not live ones, yet once upon a time they were common at Poltalloch near Kilmartin.

A pair of American birds from Sarnia, near Lake Huron, Canada, were introduced to the area in the 1890s by Colonel, later Lord, Wingfield Malcolm of Poltalloch.

Following their success, Colonel Malcolm regularly restocked the woods close to his keeper's house and soon there were around 200.

About 20 or 30 were shot at Christmas-time every year.

The preferred method of killing them was by stalking and shooting

them with a small, muzzle-loading rifle firing a ball about the size of a pea which did little or no damage to the carcass.

Lord Lorne, later the 9th Duke of Argyll, after his tour in Canada as Governor General, brought some wild turkeys back to Inveraray where they also bred successfully.

I have no knowledge when they finally disappeared from Kilmartin Glen or the shores of Loch Fyne.

Snow buntings

WITH the onset of winter, snow-buntings have made their appearance. Small flocks, numbering two or more, can be seen by the roadside between Lochaline and Strontian and elsewhere in Ardnarmurchan, Mull, Ardgour, Sunart and Glencoe.

These birds, which look pretty much like brown and white sparrows, come from Scandinavia and are easily identified with broad white patches on their wings and tails. They are very tame and their flight can be described as 'dancing' and usually high.

In days gone by they were called 'snowflakes'. There are old records of them being seen on Ben Nevis and, surprisingly, on Tiree where one was shot in November 1888. They are also quite common on the Paps of Jura.

H D Graham, in his fascinating and scarce book 'The Birds of Iona and Mull' published in 1890, recorded they were often to be seen on the seashore running around like dotterels on the sand and impervious to the severest snow-storms.

Mrs Hugh Blackburn, the authoress of 'Birds of Moidart' (1895) wrote that she had seen them frequently in Iceland but only once at Roshven and had heard they were not very common in the north of Scotland.

Notwithstanding their obvious rarity and her supposed interest

in natural history, those which she sketched for her book were 'shot in autumn picking about for seeds by the roadside'. How typical of a Victorian artist.



ON THE MOVE: Dr and Mrs Douglas Watt

Local farewells

NOTHING, my friends tell me, stays the same forever.

Perhaps that is no bad thing these days but, when two people who have put their shoulders to the public wheel over many years leave a community, there is inevitable sadness and regret.

Dr and Mrs Douglas Watt retired to Sruthan, Morvern, many years ago and have recently moved on to Oban.

In their private lives they created a spectacular garden out of a jungle and still found time to take an active and practical interest in the community.

Dr Watt was an elder in the Church of Scotland and gave sound and discreet counsel to numerous organisations as befitted his previous, professional high office.

Mrs Watt was treasurer of Morvern community council. Although it was going through a sticky period she showed what local government should be but seldom is. But it is for their monthly lunch clubs, called 'Morvern Light Lunches', that Dr and Mrs Watt will be long remembered in the parish. Unsubsidised by public money, they were so successful they provided a popular gathering place for young and old and financed a new village hall kitchen.

Every parish needs a Dr and Mrs Watt. The thanks and good wishes of their many friends go with them.

Morvern's loss will be Oban's gain, to parody an old saying.

Iain Thornber
iain.thornber@btinternet.com

Beachd Ailein Ailean Caimbeul

BLIADHNA MHATH ÙR dhuibh uile, agus mòran dhiubh!

Aig an àm seo den bhliadhna tha sinn uile dualach a bhith cuimhneachadh air ais, gu math tric le cianalas is beagan bròin, air na daoine is na cuirmean a b' aithne dhuinn uaireigin aig àm bliadh' ùire. Tha deagh chuimhn' agam fhìn air a bhith a' siubhal a' bhaile 'a chur na Bliadh' Ùire' air nàbaidhean is eòlach. Nuair a bha mise òg 's e fìor annas a bhiodh ann botal uisge-beatha fhaicinn aig duine sam bith; cha robh an t-airgead aca fìu 's ged a bhiodh am miann! An-diugh tha cùisean air atharrachadh chun na h-ìre 's nach eil drama na h-annas aig àm sam bith den bhliadhna agus dha mòran, gu mì-fhortanach, tha sin gam fàgail mar a bha an duine bochd san òran aig a' bhàrd Sgitheanach Niall Peutan.

Throid a' bhean 's gun throid i rium,
Throid i dona 'n raoir co-dhù;
Thuir i, 'Nèill, tha thu gun tùr
'S bliadh' ùr agad an-còmhnaidh!

Bha luach ga chur air drama na bliadh' ùire, agus bha cothrom cuideachd ga ghabhail air seann chleachdaidhean ùrachadh 's a ghlèidheadh. Tha cuimhne bhliath agam air seann chiochd a' bhiodh a' tadhal againn agus fìu 's ged a bhiodh clach-mheallain a' cur na sùla às, cha tigeadh e thar na stairsich chun an gabhadh e rann Callainn. Tha mi cho tàmailteach nach do thog mi fhìn an rann sin bho Phàdr' Beag MacIllEathain nuair a bha an cothrom ann! Nach dulich mar a tha mòran de na rannan sin, agus an càirdeas a bha nan cois, air a dhol air chall an-diugh.

Tha cuimhne agam cuideachd daoine a' seinn an òrain aig Màiri Mhòr 'Seo a' bhliadh' ùr thug sòlas dhuinn'. Saoil dè 'n sòlas a thig ann an 2015? Tha Taghadh Coitcheann intinnneach romhainn co-dhù is cuirge Co-bhanntachd air fuarachadh! Ach cuireamaid sin an dàrna taobh airson latha neo dhà is dèanamaid luaidh air càirdeas is carthannas coimhearsnachd, is ma tha nàbaidh agaibh a tha leis neo leatha fhèin tadhalibh orra le deagh rùn na bliadh' ùire, is tha mi glè chinnteach gum faigh sibh fàilte chridheil! Agus mo dhùrachd fhìn dhuibh ann am faclan a' bhàird Sgitheanach, Niall MacLeòid.

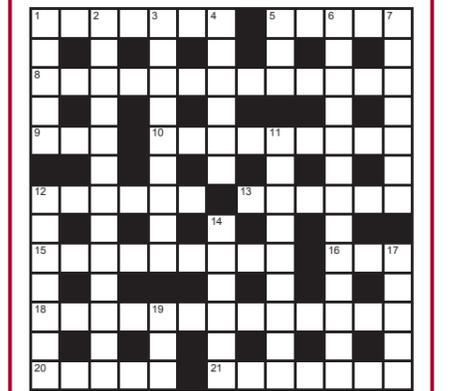
Mo dhùrachd le bliadhna mhaith ùir,
Is àireamhan dhiubh air do cheann;
Do thoradh bhith sgoileadh le bliath,
Is gràs a' toirt fàis air do chrann;
Do bhriathran bhith tuiteam mar dhrùichd
Air meaganan brùit' agus fann,
'S do chliù ann am fion-lios an Rìgh
Bhith 'n cuimhn' aig an linn nach eil ann.

A HAPPY new year to you all, and whatever 2015 may have in store take a little time to enjoy the company of family and friends with as much of our precious cultural tradition as possible. If you have neighbours who are on their own, a call with seasonal greetings will be most welcome. I wish you all the success you wish for yourself!

Ailean Caimbeul (Allan Campbell)
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| 5 Fill again (3-2) | 2 Autonomous (4-9) |
| 8 From every January until December (8,5) | 3 Targeted lady (4,5) |
| 9 Hairpiece (3) | 4 Frothy (6) |
| 10 Figuratively (2,2,5) | 5 Have a go (3) |
| 12 Former British colony (6) | 6 Group with bent heads? (6,7) |
| 13 Without panic (6) | 7 It will get you in anywhere! (7) |
| 15 Connected telephone policy? (5,4) | 11 Theatrical helper (9) |
| 16 Obtain energy by this means (3) | 12 Snooker hit (7) |
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LAST week's SOLUTION

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Ardgour school and manse to be replaced with modern cottage

A HISTORIC school and manse in Ardgour is to be demolished and replaced with a modern two-bedroom cottage.

The building on Kingairloch Estate, Camusnacroise is thought to date back to 1770 and is known nationally for its connection with Scottish novelist Robert Louis Stevenson, as it appeared in his 1886 novel Kidnapped. It is believed by historians that he visited the site and is now part of the Stevenson Way, a long-distance walking route based on the book.

But members of Highland Council's south planning applications committee approved the proposal to demolish the school last Tuesday as Historic Scotland has not named it as a listed building.

West Highland historian Iain Thornber said he was 'disappointed' to hear of the decision.

He added: 'It says very little for the applicants, that they should still want to go ahead and remove one of the finest and most historical buildings on the estate which they have owned for less than 20 years for no good reason.'

'The obvious solution would be to restore which could have been achieved at a fraction of the cost to demolish and rebuild.'

Kingairloch Estate owners were unavailable for comment as The Oban Times went to press.

Hordes of jelly fish kill 300,000 salmon at North Uist fish farm

HORDES of deadly jellyfish have killed around 300,000 salmon at a North Uist fish farm.

Owners of Loch Duart Ltd, which runs the site in Lochmaddy, have been left reeling at the news, which saw the loss of around half their stock for the whole year.

Large numbers of mauve stinger jellyfish, also known as pelagia noctiluca, were small enough to slip through a fishing net on November 19 and sting the salmon.

Combined with unfortunate gale force winds the next day, it left the fish unable to swim well and many died.

Staff from Loch Duart Limited said the company's survival is not in jeopardy after an otherwise very successful season which produced large excess fish quantities.

Managing director Nick Joy believes it is a blow but the group will move on.

He said: 'It's the worst Christmas present Loch Duart could have but [the staff] will go on and continue the fantastic job they have done this year.'

'The thing that is often forgotten is the people that care for the animals day by day and our people have worked so hard.'

'It has cost us but what we can do now is grow our fish that bit bigger and sell them larger.'

Passionate pleas for retail park win over committee

EMMA CRICHTON
ecrichton@obantimes.co.uk

PLANS for a new retail park in Fort William have been approved by Highland council.

Despite receiving massive public support in Lochaber, planning officer Susan MacMillan had recommended refusal of the development, which will include an Aldi, Home Bargains and potentially a Marks and Spencer, saying it would take trade away from the town centre.

But after passionate pleas from five of the area's six local councillors, members of the south planning applications committee voted in favour of the four-unit site on North Road last Tuesday (December 23).

Mrs MacMillan also said when combined with the Blar Mor site, where permission for a supermarket has been live since



NEW SHOPS: an artist's impression of how the North Road retail park will look

2011, another store would create too much competition in the area.

Developers Morbaine Limited already had planning permission for non-food retail but sought food consent to build a supermarket on the five-acre brownfield site.

At the planning meeting Caol and Mallaig councillor Bill Clark said: 'Lochaber is not in a position to turn away developments which will reduce prices through competition and bring employment to the area.'

'It's morally wrong to deprive Lochaber residents of retail opportunities that other Highland residents have on their doorstep and take for granted.'

Councillor Thomas MacLennan, leader of Lochaber area committee, said it would be a 'complete travesty' if permission wasn't granted.

Local members Brian Murphy and Ben Thompson also urged

the committee to vote in favour of the retail park, despite not being members themselves, following a petition from residents which gathered more than 1,200 signatures.

After the meeting, Morbaine director Alex Brodie said: 'We are delighted that the south planning applications committee has approved our planning application which will allow us to develop a new retail park at North Road.'

'I would like to thank the local community in Fort William and the surrounding area which has been nothing but supportive and constructive and we look forward to providing it with the additional retail options that it has been asking for.'

'We will keep the community updated on our progress and let it know more about when the retail park might be open and how local businesses can participate in the construction process.'

Police probe high street assaults

POLICE in Lochaber are appealing for information about two assaults on Fort William High Street.

At 1.30am on Sunday December 21 a man was assaulted at the taxi rank by another male, believed to be eastern European. He was described as approximately five feet and 10 inches, of average build, with short dark hair and wearing a grey hooded top and jeans.

At around 3am the same morning a man was assaulted by another male at the back of the Crofter Bar. No description was given but police have asked anyone who may have seen an altercation between two men and a woman at this time to contact them.

Anyone with information about either of these incidents is asked to contact local police on 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800555111.

Property stolen as thieves strike

PROPERTY has been stolen from two locations in Fort William.

At around 1pm on Saturday December 20 a mountain bike was stolen from outside premises on the Ben Nevis industrial estate. The bike is black with bespoke red forks.

During the day on Wednesday December 17 a red 'tractor and trailer' ornament was taken from the garden of a house in Upper Achintore. Several Disney garden gnomes were also stolen from a different address in the same area on the day.

Police have asked anyone with information about these incidents to contact them on 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800555111.

They have also reminded all Lochaber residents to secure all property and valuables and to lock all outhouses, sheds and parked vehicles.

Christmas cheer for youngsters

A KIND Ballachulish woman has donated gifts to bring Christmas cheer to disadvantaged children in Lochaber.

Sandie Michie organised the Love in a Box Lochaber project, which saw generous members of the public donate presents to be sent to social services for children in poverty or difficult living situations this festive season.

More than 250 people pledged their support on the group's Facebook page and sent items including clothes, dolls and computer games.

Stretch of A82 to be resurfaced

A STRETCH of Lochaber's trunk road is to be resurfaced north of Spean Bridge.

The A82 at Inverglory will be subject to temporary traffic lights and a convoy system to direct traffic across the one-kilometre site between January 12 and 23.

Work will only be carried out between 7am and 7pm Monday to Friday but a 30mph limit will be in place outwith working hours.

Island project leaders honoured with award



WINNERS: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's chief executive Malcolm Burr, far left, and leader Angus Campbell (third from left), with their colleagues from the Our Islands Our Future campaign, are congratulated for their award by Scottish first minister Nicola Sturgeon

AN AWARD has been presented to two Comhairle nan Eilean Siar officials for 'outstanding leadership' of a unique project involving Scotland's islands.

The council group's leader Angus Campbell and his colleague, chief executive Malcolm Burr, received the prize at the Scottish Public Service Awards for spearheading the Our Islands Our Future campaign, which seeks to give the Hebridean, Orkney and Shetland isles a louder voice in parliament.

Joining forces with councils from Orkney and Shetland, they met last month with Scottish secretary of state Alistair Carmichael to push the UK government for solutions to matters such as grid connection problems and fuel poverty.

Councillor Angus Campbell was pleased with the recognition the project received at the awards ceremony, held in the Scottish parliament on December 12.

He said: 'The referendum in Scotland opened up a unique opportunity to enforce the fact that the needs and status of island areas are different and need to be clearly recognised in the new era for Scotland.'

'I am delighted that since the launch of the project back in June 2013, we have demonstrated what a cohesive and innovative approach can achieve in bringing real benefits on issues which are of importance to our communities.'

Highland MSP accuses police of targeting drivers for minor road traffic offences

A HIGHLAND MSP has accused police officers of targeting drivers for 'minor offences' to raise prosecution levels and make roads seem safer than they are.

This comes after statistics were released last week showing a 14 per cent rise in road traffic related prosecutions in the last year.

David Stewart, MSP for the Highlands and Islands, said: 'I am heartened to learn that the

police are taking positive action in relation to serious road traffic related offences.'

'However, I have some concerns that they are targeting the driver in order to uncover any offences, including minor ones, in an attempt to increase prosecutions and therefore show by default that they are maybe making our roads safer, which may not of course be the case.'

'What I want is for those concerned with road safety to

engage with the driver, educate and enlighten the driver, use discretion where and when appropriate and, of course, enforce as required.'

'Basically I want a balanced approach to road safety in general as I feel this approach will be better accepted by the motoring public, whilst at the same time serving the purpose of getting dangerous drivers and vehicles off the road.'

But chief superintendent Iain

Murray, head of Police Scotland's road policing department, said there 'is no such thing as a low level motoring offence' when it comes to taking risks on the road.

He added: 'The latest driver behavioural research, carried out in October, shows 68 per cent of us admit to engaging in risk behaviours on the roads in the last 12 months.'

'Nobody sets out on the road to cause death or injury to anyone,

yet every day we all witness behaviour which we know puts people unnecessarily at risk.'

'Such an approach requires that we use every means at our disposal to influence road users; real-time education, at the roadside, at the point that the offence is detected, must be part of the process.'

'Enforcement will always remain the primary means by which we seek to change behaviour.'



ON SONG: Kilmallie Singers performed to a crowd in the Duncansburgh MacIntosh Church, Fort William. The carol-singing was part of the group's annual Christmas concert

Connection concern

UPGRADES to phone and internet connections in the Highlands have been tabled in the UK parliament, following concerns raised by politicians.

Charles Kennedy, MP for Ross, Skye and Lochaber, said he has backed motions raising concerns about BT Openreach as constituents told him they have been without internet for up to six months.

He added: 'A number of constituents have been left frustrated without either a phone line or internet access. It is unacceptable that some households have had to wait for six months without any phone or internet connection. This can cause a great deal of stress and frustration, particularly when people have been unable to contact friends, family members, or colleagues.'

A BT spokesman said: 'We are arranging to meet with politicians involved so we can take their concerns on board fully.'

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Fresh calls to end extra Highland postal charges

FRESH calls have been made to stop Highland customers being charged more for parcel deliveries.

The Scottish business minister, Fergus Ewing, said businesses should follow the government introduced 'statement of principles' when setting delivery costs, to ensure people living in rural areas do not pay higher fees.

He said: 'Unfortunately we're still finding that many customers in Scotland's Highlands and Islands are faced with disproportionate costs when it comes to the delivery of their online purchases but it's not just customers who are affected by postcode penalties, businesses in rural areas are also hit hard. By abiding by the guidelines,

online retailers can show respect for customers in all parts of the UK.'

A review of online retailers is also underway following a previous report in 2012 which showed at least one million Scots face surcharges, late delivery or are refused delivery altogether when they try to buy goods online.

Sarah Beattie-Smith of Citizens Ad-

vice Scotland, the organisation behind the review, said: 'Our aim, as always, is getting a fairer deal for Scottish consumers. We have launched an update to our earlier work assessing more than 500 retailers' websites to determine whether they are complying with the statement of principles on parcel deliveries.'

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Oban Phoenix Cinema

LISTINGS FROM 2ND JANUARY - 8TH JANUARY 2015

Exodus: Gods and Kings	Daily	17.30, 20.40
Interstellar	Fri, Sat, Sun	20.20
Night At The Museum: Secret of the Tomb	Daily	15.50, 18.10
Paddington	Daily	15.10
Penguins Of Madagascar	Daily	13.40
The Hobbit: Battle of the Five Armies	Mon,Tue,Wed,Thurs	20.20
Tinkerbell and the Legend of the NeverBeast	Daily	13.20

Tel: 01631 562905 - Box Office: 08719 02752

Interstellar (12A)
A group of explorers make use of a newly discovered wormhole to surpass the limitations on human space travel and conquer the vast distances involved in an interstellar voyage.

Night At The Museum: Secret of the Tomb (PG)
Larry spans the globe, uniting favorite and new characters while embarking on an epic quest to save the magic before it is gone forever.

Paddington (PG)
A young Peruvian bear with a passion for all things British travels to London in search of a home. Finding himself lost and alone at Paddington Station, he begins to realize that city life is not all he had imagined - until he meets the kindly Brown family.

Penguins Of Madagascar (U)
Skipper, Kowalski, Rico and Private join forces with undercover organization The North Wind to stop the villainous Dr. Octavius Brine from destroying the world as we know it.

The Hobbit: Battle of the Five Armies (12A)
Bilbo and Company are forced to be embroiled in a war against an armed flock of combatants and the terrifying Smaug from acquiring a kingdom of treasure and obliterating all of Middle-Earth.

COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

Oban & Lorn Lions Club
Old New Years Night Ceilidh
In aid of 'CHAS'
Saturday 10th January 2015
Royal Hotel, Oban, 7.45 for 8pm
with special guest artists - The Sequence Choir
The Adele Askew Dancers, Pipers James Divers & Kate MacPherson, Oban High School Traditional School Of Music
Tickets £5 - at the door on the night.
INCLUDES STOVIES

OBAN GAELIC CHOIR
New session begins
Monday 5th Jan.
Pipe Band Hall
Shore St, Oban at 7pm.
New members welcome.
Enquires - 07787763154

OBAN U3A
Tuesday 6 January
2015 at 10.30am
Studio Theatre and cafe area, Corran Halls, Oban
A warm welcome to members new and old for our monthly coffee and chat meeting

To advertise in the **WHAT'S ON COMMUNITY NOTICE BOARD**
Telephone: **01631 568000**

Advertise in the **Community Noticeboard for just £16.21 (plus VAT)**
This section is available to charitable organisations with a charity number.
All AGM's will be placed on the Public Notice Page
Please ask for details

To advertise in our community noticeboard call 01631 568000

Am Mòd Nàiseanta Rìoghail - An t-Òban 2015
Old New Year Buffet Cèilidh
Masonic Hall, Albany Street, Oban
Saturday 10th January 2015 at 7pm
£10 admission
Artistes: Duncan MacDonald, Iona MacDonald, Riona MacCormick, Alasdair MacDonald
Bean an taighe: Moira Dunlop

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Oban FM Community Radio, 132 George Street, Oban, Argyll, PA34 5NT

THIS WEEK'S LISTINGS

MONDAY:
0800 AM on FM, 0810 Breakfast Show, 0900 Monday Morning With Andy and Stephen, 1100 Molly Black, 1300 CLYDE 2, 1500 Jim Edge, 1700 Drivetime With Danni Hay, 1900 Rosie's Highland Fling, 2000 John McLuckie's Show, 2100 David Cullen, 2200 American Jukebox with Michelle

TUESDAY:
0800 AM on FM, 0810 Breakfast Show with Maggie May, 1000 Ken Hunter, 1200 Memories are Made of This with Ken Hunter, 1330 The Quiz with Danni Hay, 1500 Lesley Blair-Simmonds, 1700 Drivetime with Jim Lynch, 1900 Sounds Scottish with Archie Cameron, 2000 Highest Praise with Stuart, 2100 Elaine Lamb, 2300 Northern Soul with Gordon Covey

WEDNESDAY:
0800 AM on FM, 0810 Breakfast Show, 0900 Sound Scottish (repeat), 1000 Comfort Zone with Doug Carmichael, 1300 CLYDE 2, 1500 Elaine Lamb, 1700 Drivetime with Campbell and Coll, 1900 Country Meets Rock with Len & Ken, 2100 Gordon's Grooves

THURSDAY:
0800 Maggie May's Carousel, 1100 Molly's Mix with Molly Black, 1300 CLYDE 2, 1500 Gordon Covey, 1700 Drivetime with DJ Taz, 1900 Christine's Collection, 2100 Ann's Ceilidh, 2200 Margo Till Midnight

FRIDAY:
0800 Jean Ainsley Breakfast Show, 1000 Teeny and Tiny Show, 1300 CLYDE 2, 1500 Weekend Warmup with Ian Blair-Simmonds, 1700 Drive Show with Jim Lynch, 1845 Sports View, 1900 Country Meets Country with Jackie Craig, 2000 Friday Night with Innes, 2100 TFI Friday with Jim Lawn

SATURDAY:
0900 Maggie's Swingin' Sixties, 1000 Saturday Morning Live with Linda Crowsher, 1330 CLYDE 2, 1800 Sports View with the Dream Team, 1900 Marcus, 2000 Dave Lewis

SUNDAY:
0900 Sunday Morning with Breege, 1100 - 1400 Allan, 1630 Archie Darling, 1800 Ken's Friends with Ken Hunter, 1900 New Country Show with David Enthwhistle, 2100 Drum & Bass with Graham Scott



Fiona Blue, right, of Oban Creation for Occasion was helped by Paula Cameron. 15_t52craft04



Kirsty Brady, from Kilmartin, at her A Touch of Glass stall. 15_t52craft03



Artist Jo MacLean had two little helpers in daughters Breaigh and Iona. 15_t52craft05

Christmas shoppers enjoy handmade gifts at crafters' market

SOME of north Argyll's most talented artists, jewellers and craft makers held a final display of the year in time for Christmas at Oban's Great Western Hotel.

The Great Western Crafters and Producers Market, organised by Oban jeweller Oriana Lopez, was held weekly towards the end of 2014 and a special Christmas craft fayre gave shoppers a chance to buy some unique handmade gifts.

The craft fayres will resume next year with the first already planned for February 2015.



Rhona Dougall of o-alba.com, sold Gaelic branded mugs, cards and knitted items. 15_t52craft02



Jeweller Oriana Lopez received a bouquet as thanks from her fellow craft producers. 15_t52craft01

Atomic Piseag bringing in the bells with BBC Alba



BRINGING IN THE BELLS: Argyll Gaelic choir Atomic Piseag with conductor Raymond Bremner.

THE COUNTRY'S best live traditional music and a multi-prizewinning all-women Gaelic choir is set to feature on the BBC ALBA Hogmanay ceilidh 2014.

The ceilidh will be broadcast live from Kilmallie Community Centre, at Corpach in Fort William.

The programme, which starts at 11.30pm, features Skippinich ceilidh band, fresh from its success at the MG Alba Scots Trad Music Awards and Argyll Ladies Gaelic choir Atomic Piseag.

Also bringing in the New Year are Ellen MacDonald and the Glenfinnan Ceilidh Band, who will be joined by Leo Moran, co-founder of the Saw Doctors and Anthony Thistlethwaite, co-founder of The Waterboys.

The Silent Man

A D.C.I. Daley Short Story

by Denzil Meyrick



Denzil Meyrick, a former Campbeltown Grammar pupil, is an up-and-coming novelist in the world of crime fiction. After his debut novel *Whisky From Small Glasses* and sequel *The Last Witness* received rave reviews in the UK, his books are due to be released in America next year. The Oban Times is delighted to release *The Silent Man*, a two part short story for your enjoyment over the festive period.

Part Two

As Calum walked in his sleep before, Mrs Duncan?" enquired Daley. They were back at the incident room in the town hall. It was seven in the morning, and the woman before him looked shattered. Her eyes were bleary and circled with dark rings. "Once or twice, but nothing like this. Usually he just gets up and starts crying on the landing and I take him back to bed," she said. "This time, he spoke. He just wouldn't wake up."

"He was staring straight ahead, Mr Daley," added Mr Duncan, "just saying the same thing over and over again."

"Which was?"

"Come with me," she said quietly. "Come with me."

"He didn't remember anything about it this morning," added Mr Duncan.

As Daley left the distraught couple, he spotted Hamish waving at him from the entrance to the hall. "I knew I remembered something else about Sorn Bay," he said breathlessly. "It jeest came tae mind this morning when I woke up. I came straight ower tae tell you."

"Tell me what?"

"When John Sweeney was a wean the family stayed at Machrie. He had an older sister, Maggie, a wee red-haired lassie. He doted on her - they went everywhere together."

Daley brought the older man a chair, and they both sat down. "Take your time, Hamish."

"Aye, well, naeboddy knew how it happened. But one day the two o' them were out, jeest playing, the way weans do. John came back home hysterical, no sign o' his sister. Their folks were up to high doh. The whole village was oot lookin' for the lassie."

"Did they ever find her?"

"Aye, they did." Hamish looked at the floor. "That's jeest it, her body was found on the beach at Sorn Bay. They reckon she fell off the cliff, lookin' for bird's eggs. Poor wee thing, she wiz only nine. John wid be six at the time, the same age Calum is noo."

"And why has no one mentioned this, Hamish?"

"Och, well, you know how things are. In wee places like this, when tragedy strikes we a' dae oor best tae move on. I know John wid never speak about it. I'm a bit older than him so I mind it happening - that's the only reason I know anything about it."

"But even if he's gone back there, he'll never have survived the night," said Daley.

"Aye, well, there's the thing. There's a wee hut up on the hillside. It wiz used by shepherds in the old days for shelter - if the weather closed in, ye understand. They tell me walkers use it noo. There's a wee stove, some wood likely. If John Sweeney's gone there - aye, and he'll know about it - he could have got through the night... Jeest a theory," concluded Hamish.

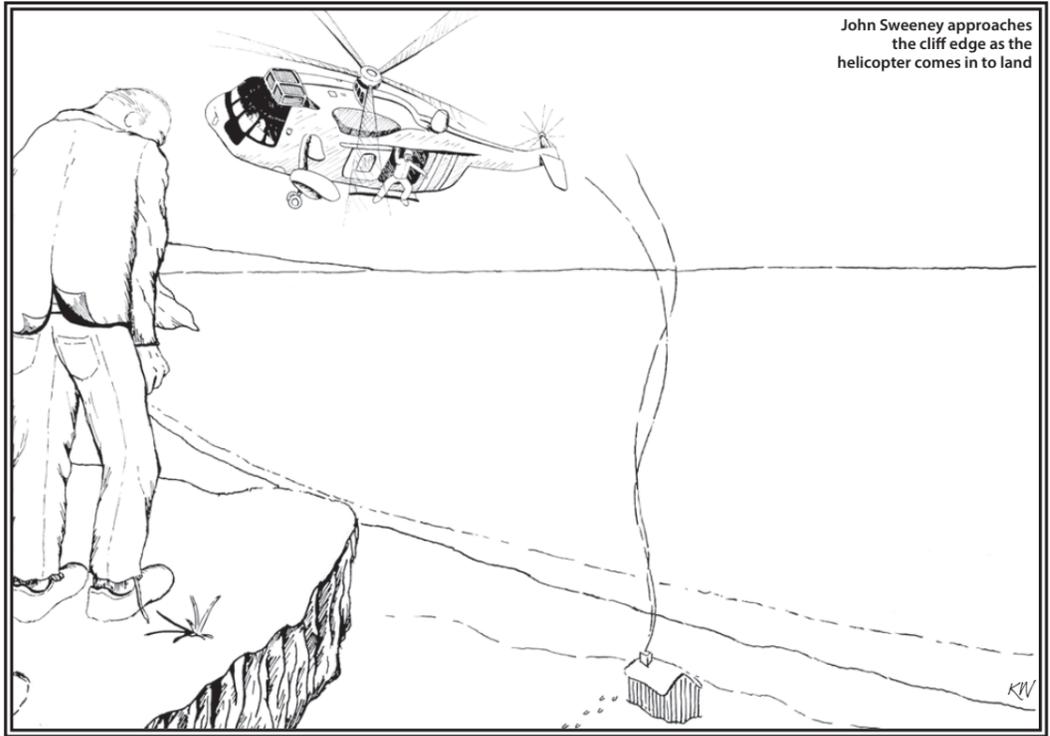
The snow had stopped. The bright winter sun sparkled on the white mantel that clothed roofs, fields and roads; almost an Alpine scene, as the large yellow helicopter soared into the air above Kinloch. The naval pilot chatted to Daley via the headset as they flew over the town. Those coordinating the search had been sceptical when Daley had first mooted the idea of looking for John Sweeney at Sorn Bay. However, with all hopes of finding the man virtually dashed, and nothing else to go on, they had let the policeman follow his instinct. He looked down as a flock of sheep, a dirty cream colour against the white snow, scattered as the helicopter passed overhead. They made heavy progress through the thick snow, leaving pockmarked tracks in their wake. "Inspector Daley, look!" exclaimed the pilot, his voice tinny through the headphones. "There, smoke!" Sure enough, a thin line of black smoke spiralled up from a little shack below them, plain against the white ground. "I can see footprints in the snow," shouted Daley. "Can we land here?"

The pilot brought the helicopter gently to the ground, its down-draft scattering snow into the air like another mini flurry. Daley, after being helped out of the aircraft, saw a small line of footprints that led away from the shack and over a small rise. He followed them, and on reaching the

top caught his breath at the beauty of the scene before him. The vast Atlantic appeared almost motionless beneath sheer cliffs. And there, dwarfed under the huge sky, Daley could see a figure in the distance. He crunched through the thick snow, which was almost up to his knees, soaking his trousers. "Mr Sweeney!" he shouted, the echo sending gulls screaming into the clear air. Closer now, Daley could see the man turn around, look at him for a heartbeat, then step nearer the edge of the cliff, facing back out to sea. "John, please! Come on, let's get you back into the warmth. We'll freeze out here." The old man took another step forward, now only a few inches from oblivion. Daley was struggling to think what to say to prevent John Sweeney taking his own life, when a small voice rang out behind him. "Grampa, come with me!" shouted the little boy, out of the helicopter now, and wrapped up in a thick coat and hat, in his father's arms. The old man didn't move, and for a moment Daley thought he was about to step over the edge of the cliff. But, slowly, he turned. Daley could see his jaws working, as he opened and closed his mouth wordlessly, then shook his head.

"Grampa, please!" Calum wailed. John Sweeney looked up again. "Calum, my wee lad, you're so bonnie," he said, as he sank to his knees in the thick snow. The wee boy had wriggled free of his father's grip and was doing his best to plunge towards them, his hat fallen off in the snow and his hair seeming even more red against it. Daley scooped him up in his arms and took him across to his grandfather. "Grampa," said Calum, holding his hand out. "I don't mind if Santa doesn't bring me a bike. Don't worry." Tears coursed down the old man's face as the little boy clung onto his grandfather. "See, Daddy. Grampa does speak to me. I wasn't telling tales." Calum beamed at his father.

Just as they were about to climb into the helicopter, John Sweeney stopped and turned to face the cliff once more. "Maggie, I canna come with you, not now - one day, but not now." He took a deep breath and hugged his grandson. "Don't worry, Grampa," said Calum, his face sincere. "The girl with the red hair is waiting for you." Andrew Duncan looked, astonished, at the boy. "He doesn't know anything about Maggie," he said to the detective. All Jim Daley could do was shrug his shoulders.



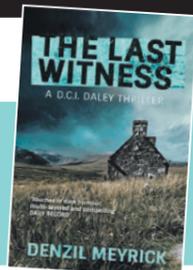
John Sweeney approaches the cliff edge as the helicopter comes in to land

WIN! A copy of THE LAST WITNESS

We are offering two lucky Oban Times readers the chance to win a copy of Denzil Meyrick's book, *The Last Witness*.

For your chance to win a copy of the book, simply answer this easy question, complete the coupon and post it to

QUESTION:
What is the name of John Sweeney's sister?
a) Molly
b) Maggie
c) Maisie



The Oban Times D.C.I. Daley Comp
PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll, PA34 4HB.
Entries must be submitted by Monday 12th January, 2015.

Terms and conditions: The prize is as stated. No cash alternative. The Editor's decision is final. Photocopied entry coupons will not be accepted. The winner may be asked to take part in publicity and may appear in a Wyrex Media publication and website. This competition is not open to Wyrex Media and associated company employees and their families. Competition will be drawn on Monday 12th January. Winners to collect their prize from the Oban Times office.

Answer

Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone

Email

<p>Dimàirt 30 Dùbhlachd Tuesday 30 December</p> <p>Splaoid nan Ciobair</p> <p>Tha aon bhuidheann à Leòdhas agus Na Hearadh air tursan bus sònraichte a chur air dòigh o chionn beagan bhliadhnaichean gu tachartas a tha a' comharrachadh samhla a tha cho Albannach ris an ola, no fiù 's an t-uisge beatha... a' chaoira!</p> <p>A chance to get behind the scenes of a very special 'working holiday' with a group of crofters making their annual pilgrimage to Scotsheep.</p> <p>9f / 9pm</p> <p>Splaoid nan Ciobair</p>	<p>Oidhche Challainn / Hogmanay Balaich na h-Àirde</p> <p>Tha spèis aig mòran air teachlach Mhic a' Ghobhainn, 's iad uile air soirbheachadh nan dreuchdan fhèin. Tha am prògram seo a' toirt sealladh air mar a bha na sgilean sònraichte aig "Balaich na h-Àirde" air am brosnachadh, bhon cuid fhreumhan ann an Nis.</p> <p>In this warm and lively programme for Hogmanay, BBC ALBA presents an intimate portrait of siblinghood through the experiences and memories of four brothers from Ness on the Isle of Lewis.</p> <p>9f / 9pm</p>	<p>Oidhche Challainn / Hogmanay Cuirm @ Celtic: Julie Fowlis</p> <p>Deagh thaghadh de dh'òrain agus de phuirt bhon chuirm-chiùil aig Julie Fowlis aig ionad an t-Seann Fruitmarket, Celtic Connections 2014.</p> <p>Song highlights from Julie Fowlis Celtic Connections 2014 concert.</p> <p>10f / 10pm</p>	<p>Oidhche Challainn / Hogmanay Ceòl Dannta</p> <p>Oidhche de cheòl is dannsa bho chuid den luchd-ciùil as fheàrr ann an Alba. Chaidh seo a chlàradh aig an t-Seann Fruitmarket, Glaschu, aig àm Celtic Connections.</p> <p>A special concert from the Old Fruitmarket in Glasgow with Shetland fiddler Chris Stout and accordion player Alasdair MacCuis featuring toe-tapping Scottish dance band tunes designed to get Hogmanay going.</p> <p>10.30f / 10.30pm</p> <p>Leo Moran and Anthony Thistlethwaite</p>
<p>Oidhche Challainn / Wednesday 31 December Ceilidh na Bliadhna' Ùire Hogmanay Ceilidh</p> <p>11.30f / 11.30pm</p> <p>Presented by Cathy MacDonald and Kirsteen MacDonald. Live from Kilmallie Community Centre. A sensational night of Gaelic, Scots and Irish music and song to welcome in 2015 featuring...</p> <p>Skipinnish ✘ Glenfinnan Ceilidh Band ✘ Ellen MacDonald ✘ Atomic Piseag ✘ Seudan Leo Moran ✘ Anthony Thistlethwaite</p> <p>Beò air BBC ALBA agus BBC Radio nan Gàidheal (103.5-105FM) agus www.bbc.co.uk/alba</p> <p>The best Hogmanay ceilidh on TV!</p> <p>www.bbc.co.uk/alba BBC ALBA www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer</p> <p><small>The BBC ALBA air a ruith le MG ALBA ann an co-bhuinn ris a' BhBC. BBC ALBA is run by MG ALBA in partnership with the BBC.</small></p>			



Review of the Year 2014

The Oban Times
& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES



First lady of Oban lifeboat

After a 42-year wait, Oban Lifeboat Station finally welcomed its first female crew member. Lucy Hyam, 23, crew member for the Mora Edith MacDonald, fitted right into the team - who painted her locker pink to welcome her on board. [16_103lucyhyam1](#)



THE BIG FLIT: removal men load up the last contents from Fort William Police Station. [20_102station01](#)

Fort police station closes

FORT William police station closed after 38 years on the High Street. Staff prepared for the launch of the new headquarters at Blar Mhor on the edge of town, which officially opened in February. The now-defunct station opened in 1976 and was built on the site of the original Fort William police HQ. The new Blar Mhor premises opened for business in January but was not fully operational until the following month.



Published scientist, age 17

Most scientists don't find their papers published until they get their PhD, but North Connell student Daniel Burt managed the feat at just 17 years of age. Daniel's passion for algae and microbes saw him become one of the youngest published scientists in the UK. [15_105burt1](#)



Oban great-grandmother steps out for charity

A great-grandmother who suffers from a long list of ailments encouraged others to get out and about as she took on an 80-mile walking challenge. Oban pensioner Irene Hannah, 80, was regularly accompanied by her faithful West Highland Terrier, Mac, on her jaunts around Oban. Despite having a replacement hip and postponing a leg operation she raised £1,200 for the Dementia Resource Centre and North Argyll Carers Centre, completing her challenge in April. [16_107walk01](#)

January and February



Mr David Sedgwick with, from left, surgical secretary Elizabeth MacLean, Belford Hospital manager Marie Law, Frances Sedgwick, Mr Sedgwick's secretary Klara Campbell and surgical secretary Elizabeth Laidler. [20_104doc08](#)

Belford surgeon retires after 21 years

AROUND 150 invited guests bade farewell to a popular Fort William consultant surgeon at his retirement party in Banavie in January. It was an emotional occasion for Mr David Sedgwick as friends and colleagues wished him all the best after 21 years' dedicated service to patients and staff at the Belford Hospital. The father-of-six said: 'We won't be moving away - we love it here and it's where we brought up our family. Now we just want time to enjoy it.'



New head takes Rockfield helm

James Wylie took the helm at Rockfield Primary School at the start of February, thrilled to be at the school his parents attended. The 38-year-old, who left Kirm Primary school in Dunoon to take the job, said: 'The homecoming was part of the appeal of the job - generations of my family went to Rockfield - but the school has such a strong tradition too. The Rockfield staff and parents have been very welcoming and I feel there is a real buzz about the place.' [16_108wylie01](#)



Waverley Cameron junior presents Gladys and Jimmy with the framed photographs of the 13 people who are only here today thanks to their daring rescue

Couple reunited with man they saved

A SPEAN Bridge couple were reunited with a man they saved from drowning in a dramatic sea rescue 53 years ago. Gladys and Jimmy Johnston plucked Waverley Cameron Jnr and four other men from the Forth of Lorn off Oban on August 20, 1960 after coming across them clinging to their tiny upturned boat just minutes from death. And in an emotional reunion, Mr Cameron, an Edinburgh businessman, presented Gladys and Jimmy with a framed collection of photographs showing 13 members of his and Mr Acheson's families who are only here because of the couple's heroic actions. Mr Cameron told *The Oban Times*: 'It was very nice to meet up with Gladys and Jimmy after such a long time. 'I simply said thank you for saving my life - I don't know how you can thank somebody enough for that. Directly or indirectly there are 13 people - myself, Mike and our children and grandchildren - who owe their lives to them.'



Cousins Nicole Clark, seven, Andrew and Isla Russell, nine and six, and three-year-old Megan Clark, front, were among the youngsters strutting their stuff at Oban's Hogmanay family party at the Argyllshire Gathering Halls. [16_101cellidh01](#)



Fort William's Judy Clark, left with Beth, who is modelling a bespoke dress made from 1,200 recycled coffee capsules and woven cardboard

Designer in the spotlight

A FORT William fashion designer made magic in 2014 as she held her first independent fashion show. Judy Clark showcased her latest creations in Edinburgh on January 23, adding another triumph to her long list of achievements. Locally sourced fabrics such as Harris Tweed and MYB Lace are common features in Judy's edgy yet classic dresses and jackets - but she insists growing up in the West Highlands is not the only inspiration behind the designs. She said: 'The biggest designers in the world use Scottish material. They're so popular and I'm just lucky to have them on my doorstep.'



Renato Di Ciacca and staff, from left, Adele MacIntyre, Jenny Pyper and Danica Fleming are glad to be open again. [16_108renato01](#)

Chip shop back in business

A CHIP shop owner re-opened his business following major flooding in Oban town centre praised his staff for helping to keep his business alive. Renato Di Ciacca's Oban Bay Fish and Chip Shop was flooded in December during storms and high tides and his restaurant floor was completely submerged. Staff set about clearing the water in an attempt to minimise the damage and a month after the restaurant closed for repairs, the same staff were delighted to get back to the day job, serving customers.



The chip shop staff set to work clearing floodwater last December. [16_108storm01](#)



Back in tune at high school

KINLOCHLEVEN high school pupils were delighted when Snow Patrol's bassist paid a visit. Paul Wilson, originally from the village, offered to go back to his old school to meet the music club after he got talking to home economics teacher Jill Mills at a birthday party in Kinlochleven. John McGilp, Kinlochleven head teacher, said: 'Paul was an excellent role model for the pupils and was very down to earth.'

Argyll four in New Year's Honours list

FOUR Argyll residents were named in the New Year's Honours List for 2014. Neil Richardson, Helensburgh-based deputy chief constable with Police Scotland, was awarded an OBE for services to policing in Scotland. Argyll man Iain Brown, an infrastructure support manager with KBR in Afghanistan, was awarded an MBE for services to the armed forces and defence industry. Sheena Edwards picked up a BEM for services to the Girl Guides and to the community in Kilmegon, where she lives. Anthony Davey, chairman of Cardross community council, also received the BEM for services to his community.

The Oban Times
& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

Review of the Year 2014



Back with a touch of tartan

AFTER coming through a 'hellish' winter when his seafood bar business almost went under, Gordon MacGillivray was back in March with a brighter outlook - and a brighter logo.

Mr MacGillivray, the owner of MacGillivray Seafood, gave his Railway Pier seafood bar a tartan makeover, following a dispute with a rival business over its colour. In October 2013 the Court of Session had to change the colour of his then green seafood bar on Oban's Railway Pier, as it caused confusion with a similar nearby premises, The Original Green Shack, owned by John Ogden and Marion Ritchie, who started the court action.

March and April



Dinner raises £6,000 for football club

Fort William football club raised more than £6,000 for club funds at a successful sportsman's dinner in March. Former old firm Scotland stars Andy Goram and Murdo McLeod were guest speakers as more than 100 people turned out for the fundraiser in the Moorings Hotel.



Syeda hits the right notes

Fort William girl Syeda Choudhury won the clarsach solo (advanced) competition at the Lochaber Music Festival. Syeda, 15, who was representing Lochaber Music School, performed the Massacre of Glencoe and the Banks of Allan Water as her own choice pieces.



Kate is 2014 bonnie baby

Kate Isla Tuite, from Bowmore, Islay, was the winner of The Oban Times Bonnie Baby Competition, with 98 votes, in March. The four-month-old, brown-eyed girl's proud parents Claire McGregor and Scott Tuite were awarded £500 worth of Co-operative vouchers, presented by Co-op retail manager Charles Holyoake.



Plantation residents celebrate the Big Lottery award with councillor Brian Murphy, fourth left

Lottery jackpot keeps dreams on course

A COMMUNITY group's dream to transform an abandoned golf course in Fort William into a sports and recreation area has become a reality after the project scooped a cash jackpot.

Plantation Community Association (PCA) battled for three years to give the 13-acre site on

Cow Hill a makeover and was awarded £247,436 from the Big Lottery to regenerate the area. PCA chairwoman Helen Mackenzie said: 'I can't put it into words. The facilities are the bare minimum at the moment and this will make a huge difference.'



Post Office revamp delight

Oban councillor and former postman Roddy McCuish spoke of his delight at seeing his old workplace restored to its former glory.

Councillor McCuish, a member for Oban South and the Isles, previously worked at the Albany Street post office and sorting office, which underwent refurbishment in April. The result is the traditional entrance to the sorting office has been reinstated on Albany Street, where the old post office was.



Kinlochleven via ferrata a Scottish first

It may not quite be a stairway to heaven - but for thrill seekers with a head for heights the new via ferrata at Kinlochleven is the next best thing. Opened by Team GB ice climber Andy Turner, the trail of metal rungs and cable bridges up a vertical cliff face is the first climb of its kind in Scotland. Mr Turner was joined by fellow climbers - many dressed in kilts - to officially launch the adventure activity in March. The via ferrata - Latin for iron road - stretches upwards for 450 metres at the Grey Mare's tail waterfall, the third highest in Scotland.



Parking wardens to return

IT WAS announced in April that parking wardens would be making a return to Argyll's town centre streets from Monday May 12 in a bid to halt a parking free-for-all.

After a three-year absence, with intermittent and limited enforcement by police officers, wardens would once again be patrolling the streets as well as Argyll and Bute council-owned car parks.



A Fort William powerlifter represented Scotland in the British and European Strongest Man under 90kg after winning the Scottish final in March.

Jeremy Vickers, 24, beat 11 other competitors from across the country at the Ben Nevis Auction Mart near Fort William, coming first in four of six events.



Campaign to ditch Corran Ferry fares

WEST Lochaber communities served by the Corran Ferry joined forces to launch a united campaign to abolish fares on the crossing.

In driving rain, placard-waving protesters were greeted with toots and thumbs-up from motorists on the ferry slipways on the day prices rose for the third time in a year.

Members of the newly-formed FC Corran (Free Crossing for Corran) cut a ribbon on the A825 - a fictional underwater road under Loch Linnhe they say would be free if on land.



Pennies for Oban play park

After being given free reign to spend the contents of his dad's change jar on anything he wanted, Oban lad Jamie Morris only had one thing in mind - a new play park for the town.

Selfless Jamie, six, a pupil at Park primary school, shunned the offer of toys or sweets when his dad handed him the change jars in March, which contained nearly £65 of coppers collected throughout the year, saying the Oban Community Play Park fund was the only choice for his cash. Jamie and his wee brother Dylan, three, also encouraged friends to help with the fundraising effort too - asking them to raid their parents' pockets for spare change to help the fund reach its £400,000 overall target.



Review of the Year 2014

The Oban Times
& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

May



Young Cameron's the man for the charity job-a-thon

Oban high school pupil Cameron Allen visited The Oban Times as part of his Job-a-thon fundraiser, which raised more than £1,000 for the Brittle Bone Disease Society. The Appin boy, who suffers from Ontogenesis Imperfecta (or Brittle Bone Disease) did as many different jobs as he could, including farming, fire fighting and sports coaching, in 12 hours, including a shift in The Oban Times where he wrote his own story about the Job-a-thon and the disease. 16_119cameron01



Ally 'K' MacPherson presents the cheque to Cancer Research UK representative Richard Cowie

Endurance runner presents £31,545 to cancer charity

A PORTREE athlete who ran 125 miles round Skye in under 35 hours has presented a cheque to his chosen charity, Cancer Research UK.

Alistair 'K' Macpherson caught the imagination of the entire island with his incredible feat of human endurance.

He set himself a target of raising £8,000 - but when donations were totted up the enormous sum of £31,545 was realised.

The official celebration for the cheque handover in the Royal Hotel in Portree was attended by almost 100 guests.



New chief takes the helm of lighthouse board

Departing Northern Lighthouse chief Roger Lockwood, left, welcomed newly appointed chief executive Mike Bullock with a handshake on the pier in Oban in May. A naval officer for the last 25 years, Mike was aware of all the potential in Oban Port for future development. He thanked outgoing chief executive Roger Lockwood for all his hard work and for a positive introduction to his new job. 15_119northern1



Big-hearted walkers raise £6,000 for Highand hospice

Around 200 people turned out for the annual two-mile sponsored 'Heather's Walk' in Corpach. The event, organised by Margaret Simpson and Sarah Walker in memory of their friend Heather Robertson, raised £6,000 for Highland Hospice, bringing the total since the first walk seven years ago to more than £63,000

Firefighters keep youngsters on course

SEVEN Lochaber youngsters received bronze certificates from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) after passing a course for the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

For eight weeks firefighters at Fort William instructed the schoolchildren on how ladders, pumps, knots, and fire hoses and other equipment is used to help and support operational activity.

The youngsters - Evan Kyle, Torran Mealand, Kyle Mealand, Vaile Kennedy, Lorna Linfield, Jordan Padron-Acosta and Cara Lees - also learned about the discipline and teamwork required by Fire and Rescue Service personnel when facing emergency situations.

The course was led by crew manager Peter Lees, supported by firefighters Christopher Findlay (Jnr) and Alan Knox.



Fire service staff presented Lochaber youngsters with their Duke of Edinburgh bronze awards. From left: Peter Lees, Bonny Mealand, Lorna Linfield, Jordan Padron-Acosta, Vaile Kennedy, Evan Kyle, Torran Mealand, Christopher Findlay (Jnr) and Pat McElhinney 20_20fire01

Lochaber rugby club prize night



Delighted: Lochaber Rugby Club players were thrilled to pick up silverware at the annual dinner dance. From left: Alistair MacKinnon, Calum MacDonald, Mike McLuish and Finlay Ireland 20_20rugbyprize01

LOCHABER Rugby Club's cream of the crop were praised at the annual dinner dance.

Trophies were presented by club president Alistair MacKinnon in the Ben Nevis Hotel in Fort William.

Lorraine Revitt was awarded Person of the Year but was unable to attend the event to collect her award.

The Calum Mercer Memorial Shield for an up-and-coming young player went to Calum MacDonald while team captain Mike McLuish picked up Player of the Year.

The trophy for Most Improved Player went to Finlay Ireland.



Award-winning journalist Willie Mack was appointed editor of the Oban Times in May.

A seasoned campaigner with vast experience of local newspapers, Willie said: 'The Oban Times is one of Scotland's great local newspapers and I am delighted to have the opportunity to help write a new chapter in the history of this well respected, popular title.'

16_120williemack01

Town welcomes first early morning Glasgow to Oban train

Around 30 people, including politicians and public organisation representatives gathered to welcome the first 5.10am from Glasgow to Oban on Monday, May 19. The first of six new, long-awaited train services, it doubled the number of daily trains to and from the town. Funded by ScotRail, the new Monday-Saturday services include an early morning commuter train from Oban which reaches Glasgow before 9am and a 5.20am service to Oban arriving at 8.36am. The other northbound new services are at 10.37am and 4.37pm, while southbound there is an extra train at 2.41pm and the 8.37pm connects to the Caledonian Sleeper at Crianlarich. 15_121newtrain02





June



Christie Hamill was presented with a telegram by Iain Thornber, back left, on behalf of HM the Queen and flowers from Highland councillor Thomas MacLennan

Christie celebrates 100 years

A 'WELL-LOVED' Fort William woman celebrated her 100th birthday surrounded by friends and family. Mrs Hamill trained as a nanny in Edinburgh before working in London. She later returned to Camusnagual where her father, Archibald MacLean, was the ferryman and married her husband, Samuel. The sharp centenarian told *The Oban Times* how proud she was of her great-grandchildren, Christie, her namesake, aged four, and Sam, two, and said the key to a healthy life was to eat good food and 'move yourself'.



Fundraiser hits the high notes for charities

There were hugs and kisses all round for cancer fundraisers when a family presented the Oban branch of Cancer Research UK and Marie Curie Cancer Care (Oban) with cheques in June. Karen and Nonny MacInnes and daughters Jenny and Kirsty raised £6,000 after a hugely popular musical fundraiser in Oban's Corran Halls, featuring bands Skerryvore, Ceol An Aire and Manran



The Allan Shelter, an outside hut for children, was named in honour of head teacher Cherryll Allan who has spent the last 19 years at Kinlochleven primary school

Head teacher Cherryll retires

RETIRING head teacher Cherryll Allan was going to enjoy her retirement by visiting her grandchildren and travelling the globe. Having given most of her 30-year career as a teacher at Kinlochleven primary school, she said that parents, children and staff had always been supportive and she had thoroughly enjoyed every single day of her career. Before Cherryll moved to Kinlochleven, she was at Caol primary school and before that on the supply list. She was looking forward to spending time with her family, including her mum and dad who live in Greenock and spending more time in her apartment in Portugal.



Parking wardens return

Parking wardens returned to the streets of Oban in June, as Argyll and Bute council took over responsibility for enforcing parking restrictions. There had been a short 'settling in' period of grace for motorists

ISHBEL Banks, an ardent supporter of the Mòd, was polishing the silverware ahead of the Oban and District Provincial Mòd. Ishbel, right, has been an ardent supporter of the Mòd for many years and has devoted countless hours and days in volunteering both locally and nationally for Gaelic organisations. It was the first Mòd that Ishbel was without her husband, Robin Banks, who died earlier in 2014 at the age of 81. A former Argyll and Bute councillor and solicitor, Robin was a stalwart of the Gaelic movement.



£1 bid for former school

One of Oban's grandest Victorian buildings was set to be sold for £1, and then reduced to rubble, if Argyll and Bute council agreed to sell the former Rockfield primary school to Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA). The housing association made the bid with a view to building 27 social housing flats on the site. The offer came after bids of £350,000 and £405,000 from other developers to the council



Gruelling bike challenge for Mary's Meals

Former Scotland rugby captain Rob Wainwright embarked on the 'North of the Fault' challenge in June - a gruelling 811-mile cycle around the northern part of Scotland, above the Highland Boundary line. The ex-rugby star turned farmer persuaded eight friends to join him on the hilly Highland ride. This saw them cover the equivalent of climbing 18 Munros in just nine days, in aid of Dalmally-based charity Mary's Meals. *The Oban Times* caught up with Rob and his fellow fundraisers at Mary's Meals HQ in Craig Lodge, near Dalmally, in bright sunlight as they made the first 'official' stop on their adventure



Rare tartan sees Oban catapulted onto international stage

A RARE and ancient tartan discovered at Dunollie House helped to catapult Oban's heritage onto the international stage. Experts at Dunollie Museum confirmed their Dalriada tartan was created circa 1730, meaning it pre-dates the more established clan tartans. The discovery of the 'regional' tartan opened up a potential marketing coup for the fledgling museum. Dunollie brand manager Breege Smyth said: 'This could be for people all over the world, not just MacDougalls. If they don't have a clan and want something that represents Oban they could wear this; it could be Oban's tartan.' There was also a discussion with Oban Gaelic Choir for its ladies to wear Dalriada tartan skirts.



Mr David Sedgwick and his wife Frances were given a painting to mark the first Fort William Citizen of the Year award.

Former surgeon honoured with community award

A FORMER Lochaber surgeon was honoured with an award for outstanding service to the community by Fort William Community Council. Mr David Sedgwick was presented with the group's first Citizen of the Year award in the town's council chambers. The title goes to someone who has provided outstanding personal service to the community or whose service has made a special contribution to the wellbeing of Fort William and the wider area. Community council chairman Neil Clark presented Mr Sedgwick with a painting to mark the honour. Members chose Mr Sedgwick to receive the first award 'in recognition of his long and distinguished service to the population of Lochaber'. Chairman Neil Clark added: 'David fits all the criteria - he has provided outstanding personal service through his treatments and operations at the Belford over the years and is involved in youth and church work. He was hugely involved in stopping the closure of the Belford and is extremely well known and liked in the community.'

Eamonn turns spotlight on west coast

Eamonn Holmes visited Oban in June to discuss the independence referendum and his love of the west coast. The presenter of Sky News flagship show Sunrise as well STV show This Morning, said he would be hard pushed to find somewhere more beautiful in the world than Scotland, saying: 'It is Northern Ireland with knobs on.' He was joined for his live broadcast by Oban Times reporter Louise Lee.



A GROUP of novice rowers completed a gruelling 100-mile row from St Kilda to their hometown of Portree, raising almost £16,000 for charity.

After months of training the eight-man group, Row St Kilda, set off in their 120-year-old larch skiff at 4am on the Friday and arrived back to the Isle of Skye just 30 hours later. Team leader Donnie Nicolson said: 'We are tired, but sheer adrenaline and all the support we've been getting kept us going.' Row St Kilda raised £15,920.52 for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and Skye and Lochalsh Young Carers.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

First Registration of a Croft
Lynda Jane Last has registered their croft, 1 Braefoot, Ardnarmurchan and Sunart, on the Crofting Register held by the Registers of Scotland.
Any person who wishes to challenge the registration may apply to the Scottish Land Court by 14 August 2015
Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is A0213.

V G FORESTRY LTD
On 26 November 2014, a petition was presented to Fort William Sheriff Court by the Advocate General for Scotland for and on behalf of the Commissioners for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs craving the Court inter alia to order that V G Forestry Ltd, 15 Guisach Terrace, Corpach, Fort William PH33 7JN (registered office) (company registration number SC441675) be wound up by the Court and to appoint a liquidator. All parties claiming an interest must lodge Answers with Fort William Sheriff Court, High Street, Fort William within 8 days of intimation, service and advertisement.
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Invitation to notify interest in a lease for five years from 1st April 2015 with an option to renew for one similar period of an area at Ardcastle forest, by Loch Gair, Loch Fyne for use as a site for timber stacking and the operation of a floating pier for the shipment of timber.

To notify interest please email t.garman@forestry.gsi.gov.uk by 16th January 2015

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Applications to rural development programme open early

SCOTLAND'S rural development programme will open to applications in early 2015, rural affairs secretary Richard Lochhead has confirmed.

The Scottish Government has published its timetable for the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) 2015-2020 which will support Scottish farming, food production, rural communities and the environment.

Although the SRDP is still subject to final European approval, the first schemes will open to applications in January.

Mr Lochhead has also confirmed: - A simplification of the minimum activity rules that farmers will need to meet to qualify for CAP direct payments on rough grazing land

- Updated cross compliance guidance is now available on the Scottish Government website

- A new, better targeted approach to addressing Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) will see more than 2,000 farms fully or partially removed from NVZ designated areas and the designation of two new NVZs.

The cabinet secretary said: 'Scotland's rural development programme provides crucial support for Scottish farming, food production, rural communities and the environment, and is worth £1.3 billion over the next six years.'



Richard Lochhead

'However the European sign-off process is proving disappointingly slow, with only three out of 118 rural development programmes across the whole of Europe agreed so far and the new SRDP now not expected to be formally approved until next summer.'

'To avoid any unnecessary delay or disruption to payments I have decided to get the ball rolling and begin accepting applications to various SRDP schemes early in 2015, so that the Scottish Government is ready to pay out at the earliest opportunity once the programme is approved.'

'Although our transition arrangements will prevent this delay from having much impact, clearly this

is far from ideal. It is yet another example of the difficulties we are facing because of the challenging European timetable and delays in getting advice from EU officials about the fine detail of this new, more complex CAP.

'It is important to point out that the sticking points are detailed technical measures and not the big CAP policy decisions I took in June.'

'However, the uncertainty caused by repeated Commission requests to change our plans is disruptive for both farmers and administrations.'

On the changes to NVZs, Mr Lochhead added: 'Scotland has a magnificent natural environment which is intrinsic to the success of our world famous food and drink, and tourism sectors.'

'The changes I am announcing will enable us to build on the progress made so far whilst, at the same time, reducing Scotland's NVZ areas by 24 per cent.'

'My officials will shortly be writing to the 2,212 farm businesses coming out of current NVZs, to inform them of the update and any action they need to take - as well as writing to the 130 or so farms coming into the new NVZ areas in 2016 explaining the support and training on offer.'

Lobbying momentum to carry into the new year

NFU SCOTLAND's political engagement across three parliaments - Holyrood, Westminster and Brussels - reached unprecedented levels in 2014.

In an agenda dominated by the independence referendum, CAP reform and potential changes to agricultural holdings legislation, the intensity of lobbying activity undertaken by the union in the past 12 months justified its decision to appoint Clare Slipper as its full time Parliamentary Officer in January 2014.

A widespread programme of member meetings across Scotland on each of these key subjects has ensured NFUS has engaged politicians having had a clear mandate from its membership at grass roots level.

The political momentum will continue into 2015 and beyond, says the union. Once a new officeholder team is appointed in February 2015; one of its first tasks will be to lay out

key manifesto priorities ahead of the General Election in May 2015.

Next year will see the union looking to shape bills already passing through parliament - including community empowerment and air weapons licencing.

However, the workload in terms of forthcoming legislation is challenging with the Scotland Bill, Land Reform Bill, Agricultural Holdings legislation and a Succession bill all scheduled for parliamentary air time.

NFU Scotland president Nigel Miller said: 'On a political front, 2014 was a year like no other and the level of engagement on issues like CAP, the independence referendum and agricultural tenancy legislation was unprecedented.'

'But there is no scope for us to take our foot off the pedal. More than 1,700 union members attended referendum debates organised by NFUS across Scotland and within weeks of the vote, we were back on the



Nigel Miller

road asking our members what they would want from additional devolved powers so that we could feed them in to the Smith Commission.

'The referendum events and Smith Commission consultation have established momentum and fresh political engagement between the Union and politicians.'

'Building on the recommendations of the Smith Commission, there is an immediate need to break through the barriers that discredit UK policy development and representation in Europe. 'There is no excuse for

clinging on to a dysfunctional system. 'A transparent cabinet decision-making process must be at the centre of future UK politics.'

'The chairmanship of the ministerial body may lie with Defra ministers on many issues. However, devolved ministers must also be given a role where interest and expertise dictates their primacy.'

'There is an immediate opportunity to pilot the new structure as Westminster and the devolved nations struggle to get to grips with the EU-wide problems in the milk

sector. Looking forward to the General Election, a headline point for any manifesto for May will be the need for all the parties to commit to the UK budget convergence review in 2016.'

'There has been political acceptance that the basis for distributing CAP funds across devolved areas of the UK needs to be examined but the timetable needs to be nailed down.'

'That will be an area we will be looking for Defra Farming Minister George Eustice to address when he attends our AGM in St Andrews in February 2015.'

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C.

DEATHS

BLACK - Peacefully after a short illness, in his 63rd year, Norman Donald Black (Norrie) beloved husband of Mary, a very much loved father and Papa. Sadly missed.

CAMPBELL - Suddenly but peacefully at her home, Carishader, Uig, Lewis, on December 15, 2014. Murdina Dolina Campbell nee Morrison, aged 89. Widow of John Campbell (Missionary). Much loved mother of Christine, Rosemary, Catherine and Joyce. Loving grandmother, great-grandmother and sister.

CAMPBELL - Peter. Peacefully surrounded by family after a short illness at the Royal Alexandra Hospital, Paisley on Tuesday December 23, 2014. Peter beloved husband of Peggy (nee MacKay), loving father of Fiona and Kay, father-in-law to David, brother of Don, Alec and the late Cathie and Willie. Papa and grandpa. Funeral service to which all friends are respectfully invited at Woodside Crematorium on Thursday January 8, 2015 at 12 noon. Family flowers only please.

HENDERSON - Peacefully at the Belford Hospital, Fort William on December 22, 2014. Sheila Henderson (nee MacKenzie). Funeral service will take place at 12 noon on Saturday January 3, 2015 at Acharachle Parish Church. Family flowers only please. Donations, if desired to Macmillan nurses, Belford Hospital, Fort William.

LAWRIE - Peacefully with family at Lynn of Lorne Care Home on December 27, 2014. Donald Lawrie, aged 95 of Glenview, Appin, much loved husband of the late Morag, loving father of Jessie, father-in-law of Keith and dear grandfather of Janine, Keith and Glen. Funeral service to be arranged.

MACCUAIG - Peacefully at her home 7 Bowman Court, Craignure, Isle of Mull, Euphemia (Effie) on December 27, 2014, in her 93rd year. Dear mother of Margaret and grandmother of Derek. Funeral will take place on Tuesday January 6, 2015 at Kilmore Church and Cemetery, Dervaig at 12 noon. All friends respectfully invited.

MASSON - (Inverness) - On December 22, 2014 in Raigmore Hospital, Inverness, David Masson, from 1965 - 1983 Solicitor with Cuthbert & Hogg, Fort William. Funeral service at Inverness Crematorium on Tuesday, January 6, 2015 at 11.30am. Family flowers only. Donations in lieu, which will go to the James MacKay Clinic and Destiny Orphanage, Uganda, may be made at the service or sent to Alasdair Rhind, Funeral Directors, Sutherland House, Bank Street, Tain.

McEWAN - Maurice passed away peacefully in Jersey on December 16, 2014, aged 63. Dearly loved husband of Carol and loving father of Ross and Lauren. He was the younger son of the late Duncan and Nancy McEwan, 5 Breadalbane Mews, Oban and dear brother of Duncan.

ROWAN - Passing away of Mabel Munro Rowan, peacefully at Ellen's Glen House, Edinburgh on Wednesday December, 24. There will be a short service at the cemetery at Achnaba

Church at 12 noon on Wednesday January 7, 2015. Family and friends most welcome.

TRAYNOR - Peacefully at the Lorn and Islands Hospital Oban on December 18, 2014, in his 60th year, Hugh Traynor, beloved son of the late Joseph and Mary Traynor, a dear brother of Raymond, sadly missed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BRADFORD - Jim, Christine and Valerie would like to thank the staff of Ward B for the excellent care given to Angela. Also family, friends and neighbours for the cards and phone calls. Thanks to Dugald Cameron for a comforting service and Andrew McIntyre for a lovely eulogy of Angela. Thanks to Ian from Munn's for the arrangement of a very efficient and sympathetic funeral. The sum of £181.45 has been donated to Meningitis Fund.

MACDONALD - Ian and the family of the late Ella would like to thank relatives, friends and neighbours for their kind expressions of sympathy, cards, letters and flowers received during their recent sad bereavement. Special thanks to the family doctors and paramedics and staff of University Hospital, Ayr for care and attention. Rev. Liz Crumlish for her support and comforting service. M. L. Williams Funeral Directors for funeral arrangements and the Horizon Hotel for an excellent buffet. Final thanks to all who travelled from far and near to be with us at the Church and Crematorium.

MCMONAGLE - Phil McMonagle and family would like to sincerely thank all relatives, friends and neighbours for the many cards, flowers and expressions of sympathy following their sad loss. Special thanks to Ward A at the Lorn and Islands hospital and the Lorn Medical Centre for their care and attention. Thanks also to Monsignor James McNeil and Hamish Hoey and Sons.

MEMORIALS

CARMICHAEL - In loving memory of our dear father, father-in-law and grandfather, Neil Carmichael, who died January 4 1993. Our little flower Just lent not given Who bud on earth And bloomed in Heaven Never forgotten, loved always - Dad, Mum, Craig and Calum xx

MACLELLAN - Precious memories of our darling son Christopher who was called to heaven on January 1, 1991. Our little flower Just lent not given Who bud on earth And bloomed in Heaven Never forgotten, loved always - Dad, Mum, Craig and Calum xx

MACLEOD - In loving memory of my dearly loved sons and our brothers, Neil, who died January 3, 2004 and George, who died in the Philippines, January 5, 2009. So many times I've needed you

FERGUSON - In loving memory of my dear mother Jessie, who died January 2, 2011. Dear are the memories, silent they stay distance or time cannot take them away. - Daughter Anne, Barra.

GRANT - In loving memory of my dear wife, Morag, who died on December 25, 1999. Sadly missed in every way Quietly remembered every day. - Angus, Upper Kinechreckine, Dalmally.

GRANT - In loving memory of my dear mother and granny, Morag, who died on December 25, 1999. Today, tomorrow, our whole life through We will always love and remember you - Elizabeth, Julie and Steven, Keeper's Cottage, Dalmally.

JACKSON - In loving memory of my dear mother Liz, who died so suddenly on

January 6, 2006. Always in our thoughts. - Love Iain xxx

LAMONT - In loving memory of my dear husband Willie, who passed away so suddenly on New Years Eve, 2005. Always in my thoughts. - Mary

LAUDER - Special memories of our darling son Stephen, who died tragically on January 4, 2014. There's always a face before us A voice we would love to hear A smile we will always remember Of a son we loved so dear Your resting place we visit And put flowers there with care But no-one knows the heartache As we turn and leave you there. Love you always. - Ma and dad xxx

LAUDER - Remembering our much loved brother and uncle Stephen, so tragically taken from us on January 4, 2014. Silent thoughts of times together Hold memories that will last forever Remembering you is easy we do it every day But the pain of losing you never goes away. - Billy, Kevin, Gillian and all nieces and nephews. Close in my heart you will always stay. Miss you every day. - Ann x.

MACCALLUM - In loving memory of our dear mum and nan Henrietta (Babs) who died December 30, 2010. Deeply loved and never forgotten. - Roberta, Stephen and Robert.

MACINTYRE - In loving memory of Jean R MacIntyre, loving mum and nana, who passed away December 28, 2012. Sadly missed. - Dougie, Carol and family. Treasured sister, thought of every day. - Joan, Geoff and family, Australia.

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Christmas illuminations at Oban guesthouse

THE OWNERS of an Oban guesthouse have continued their Christmas tradition by decorating their property in luminous lights. Mike and Maureen Drummond, who own High Cliff bed and breakfast on Glenruitten Road, have been putting up the dazzling decorations for eight years now.

Maureen said: 'Quite a few people have been pleased to see we got them up this year as both of us haven't been keeping that well. 'We don't ask for donations because there's not a place to stop on the street but if anyone sees them and wants to make a donation, I support and volunteer at Mary's Meals.' 16.10lights01

Thought for the week

New year resolutions

THE FESTIVE period fills our lives with friends and families and allows us to enjoy the pleasures of switching off. While many of us enjoy being part of the celebration there are others that are quite lonely and feel left out.

But, the promise of Christ is to love each and every one of us for who we are. Whether we may be fat or slim, tall or short, able or unable, employed or unemployed or in sickness and in health - Christ treats us as the same.

People can often be overwhelmed with the commercialism of Christmas, spilling into the over indulgence of the New Year. It is a time that can magnify the differences between us.

He loves us for who we are whatever it is that we may have done in the past, he gives us the opportunity to be different in the future. Maybe your resolution this year should be to love yourself a little bit more than you do at the moment. When we realise that we are a complete package already then we are fit to do the will of Christ.

As Christmas gives way to New Year, many are looking for self improvements such as being fitter, slimmer, alcohol or smoking-free and they are all laudable resolutions to make.

Louise Glen-Lee, Methodist local preacher

Festive wishes from councillor McCuish

I WOULD like to wish everyone in Oban, Lorn and the Isles a prosperous New Year.

We are very fortunate in Oban, Lorn and the Isles to have the Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) initiative coming on stream soon and we will fully engage with the public in that process.

I am looking forward to an exciting year ahead with Argyll and Bute council working more closely with communities to deliver major strategic projects for Oban through the CHORD programme and the new Oban high school. We are also looking at ways for councillors to be more involved in creating opportunities for the area.

Looking back, 2014 has been a challenging year for the council with political instability, which has hopefully been resolved now.

As we all know, by working together, cross-party, we can secure a better future, not just for Oban, Lorn and the Isles but for Argyll and Bute.



Councillor Roddy McCuish, chairman of Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee

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Muckairn music and supper by candlelight

THIS year's Muckairn Guild Candlelight Supper attracted a packed audience of more than 90 people on December 4 to enjoy the music of Oban Lorne Strathspey and Reel Society and The Muckairn Bell Ringers.

A delicious supper of sandwiches, mince pies and shortbread was served at the interval when the musicians came down from the stage and mingled with the audience.

There was also a wide selection of carols, bible readings, Nativity, poems, playlets and dramatic readings during the event in the

village hall. The vote of thanks was given by Shona Neil and the collection totalled £304 which was sent to the guild project, Out of Africa - into Malta.

Grants available for church repairs

CHURCHES are to benefit from £15 million allocated for repairs to roofs and gutters.

This funding is available to repair roofs and guttering on listed church buildings.

Grants between £10,000 and £100,000 will be given by the UK government to vulnerable listed church buildings and applications are open until Friday January 30.

'Many will know how expensive it is to repair churches and a lot of local fundraising occurs for this purpose.

Angus MacNeil, MP for Na h-Eileanan an Iar, said: 'Churches form an integral part of the fabric of our

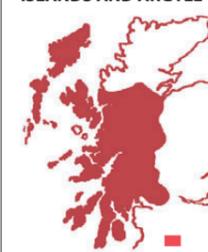
community. 'This funding is available to repair roofs and guttering on listed church buildings.

'Therefore, I hope that those who need to do repairs on their listed church building will apply.'

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GRADUATIONS

Louise Currie (nee Eastwood) graduated on the 13th November 2014 with a Bachelor of Science in Adult Nursing. Youngest daughter of Martin and Ann Eastwood, Calgary, Isle of Mull. Former pupil of Mornish and Dervaig primary schools, Isle of Mull. Currently working a Practice Nurse in Lanarkshire.

'Dr. Katie Chapple we presume?'
Yes, Katie, Daughter of John & Jacqui Chapple, Kilchoan. Granddaughter of Pamela Campbell Inverness, recently graduated from Glasgow University with a Phd. in Neurology. Katie is a former pupil of Kilchoan Primary, Tobermory and Ardnamurchan High Schools.

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Cory pips his dad by one second
Cycling

CORY Muir won his first senior event in the West Highland Wheelers' traditional Christmas handicap race in Glen Nevis. Coming in on 47 minutes and 18 seconds, he finished only one second ahead of his father Gregor holding on to his back wheel. Third place was Joe Barnes on 48 minutes and 36 seconds, one of seventeen competitors who turned up for the event on December 21 despite torrential rain. Fiona Beattie was the highest-placed lady, coming in at 50 minutes and 30 seconds despite being on her shopping bike, with Mairi Meldrum behind her on 53 minutes and seven seconds. More family rivalry was evident with Hannah Barnes finishing on 53 minutes and 54 seconds, only three seconds ahead of her mother Gill. The Wheelers' next outing is a league race this Sunday at the Nevis Range. Top 5 finishers: 1 Cory Muir 47:18; 2 Gregor Muir 47:19; 3 Joe Barnes 48:36; 4 Stephen Cant 48:41; 5 Liam Moynihan 48:53

Swimming pool and spa reopens
Swimming

THE LEWIS swimming pool and spa reopened yesterday (Monday) following essential maintenance works. The facility, inside the isle's sports centre, was closed from December 22. Tony Wade, sports facilities services manager for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, said: 'By including Christmas Day and Boxing Day, we tried to minimise the downtime as much as we could. We appreciate this inconvenience some of our customers but we hope they will understand the necessity of doing the work to ensure the long term well-being of the pool.'

New pitch unveiled at Boxing Day match

LOCHABER Rugby Club's newly-renovated pitch was unveiled in style on Boxing Day with the annual president's match. The first game at the new park in Banavie, it saw a spirited encounter between a captain's 15 and president's 15, watched by many families and friends of the club. It was the first match held at the ground since it closed for resurfacing in September 2013, following a period where the senior team played at Black Parks in Inverloch.

The Boxing Day event started with the opening of a memorial bench on the supporters' hill beside the pitch, dedicated to the late Davie MacCook, a much-missed former life member of Lochaber RFC. At kick off, both teams were piped on to the park by youth players Ben Fulford and Alistair MacRae, before the club's primary six and seven player of the year Fergus Beradelli presented the match ball to both captains. Josh and Ben Farr were ball boys for the day, alongside



MATCH BALL: Lochaber RFC youth player Fergus Beradelli (middle) presents the match ball to team captains Mike McLeish (left) and Rory MacKay



PIPED: Lochaber Rugby Club's first match at the newly-renovated Banavie pitch about to get underway, with the teams led out by pipers Ben Fulford (left) and Alistair MacRae

their youth teammates Freddy and Ben Fulford. In an enthralling 80 minutes of end-to-end rugby, it was clear that the players were keen to show what they were made of before the second half of the league season begins in the new year. Andy Milne scored two tries for the captain's side, one of which saw him run 70 metres down the length of the pitch after retrieving a spilled ball deep in his own half, with Daniel Thomas also scoring. Tom Baxter and Andrew MacIver both chipped in with tries for the president's. Following the game, there was a host of Christmas celebrations in the clubhouse with live music,

a champagne toast, Christmas jumper competition and raffle. Players, friends and families enjoyed post-match food and drink together, with all attendees getting free soup and a roll upon arrival. Alistair MacKinnon, president of Lochaber RFC, said the club was delighted to welcome fans back to Banavie. He said: 'We would like to thank the players, coaches and supporters for putting up with all the disruption. 'The impact of being away from Banavie hit the club hard on and off the pitch, causing disruption to training for the senior players as well as making it challenging to try and accommodate youth games.

'During the time away the youths were training at the King George V Park and the seniors and womens teams at the Black Parks during the bright nights and then at the high school astroturf on the dark and winter nights. 'The latter meant that they were unable to do any contact training which wasn't helpful to the team for proper pre-match preparation, which definitely had an impact on the scores last season as well as player morale.' The first competitive match on the new pitch at Banavie will be on Saturday, when Lochaber's senior team takes on Gairloch in the BT Caledonia Division 2 North.

Fort William FC hoping for fair weather
Football

FORT William Football Club players and fans will be hoping for fair weather this week as they look to their fixture against Clachnacuddin on Saturday, their first game for more than a month. Conditions permitting, this will be the Claggan side's first time on the field since the 4-0 away victory against Huntly on November 29 and the team are looking to make history with a fourth consecutive win. A minute's silence will be held before the game in memory of former Fort chairman Harry MacKenzie, who died earlier this month. David MacDonald of Fort William Football Club said: 'Harry was chairman of the club for a number of years, and a member of the committee for many years before that. 'When he stepped down as chairman, you would find him at every home game keeping us company in the old stand. 'Harry was a gentleman through and through and we would like to pass on our sincere condolences to his family.'

Festive fun night
Ten pin bowling

DESPITE taking a break from serious competition over Christmas, members of the Lochaber Building Supplies ten pin bowling league took to the lanes for a festive fun night. Gary Cowan stole the show at the Nevis Centre, winning the highest individual game in the handicap category with 186 and the scratch game with 167. Even in the pairs contest Gary was on top form, winning the scratch duo game with his partner David Ogg but Tim Attack and Rossamy Wareing pipped the pair to the post in the handicap duo competition. Tim also made a presentation to John Weller, thanking him for all his hard work in organising and running the league.

Nominations now open
Awards

NOMINATIONS are now open for the Lochaber Sports Association annual awards. Groups and individuals can be put forward for categories including sportsperson of the year, youth endeavour, team of the year and services to sport. Winners will be announced at a ceremony on Friday January 30 and nominations must be submitted by Monday January 19. For a nomination form contact Lochaber Sports Association on 01631 740300.

Water sports trip for pupils
Water sports

LOCHABER high school is planning a water sports trip to the Mediterranean for pupils in 2016, following the success of a similar event this year. June saw students head to La Fosca in Spain to take part in activities such as snorkelling, canoeing and windsurfing, following a 34-hour journey by coach and ferry. It has been agreed that a future trip, to a location yet to be decided, will use air travel instead, following feedback from students.

New manager looking forward to new season

ONWARDS and upwards is the message from Kilmallie Shinty Club's new manager as he looks forward to the start of next season in the Marine Harvest national division. Ex-player Mark MacPherson has taken over as first team boss from Duncan Kelly and believes it is high time his team gained promotion to the Orion Group Premiership after missing out in 2013 due to league reconstruction. That season saw the men in blue finish as champions of the north division one and should have meant they would be promoted into the Premiership, the next league up. However, the creation of the national division that summer, sandwiched in between the two, meant they were controversially put into that league instead. Kilmallie's first season in the national division this year saw them finish third and miss out on a Premiership playoff spot by only two points. Mark MacPherson was part of that squad and is now excited about taking the reins as manager for 2015. He said: 'It's going to be a massive challenge but one I'm looking forward to. 'I was carrying an injury during the last two years so I had to walk away from playing and took the role.

'Duncan has been very supportive of me taking the job, as has everyone at the club and my own family. 'And he told me he is just a phone call away if I need a hand. 'I think I will manage okay next year. I've always been very vocal in the changing room. 'I've a lot of respect for the boys. They know I'm the boss but we are still mates at the end of the day. MacPherson's squad will regroup for pre-season training on January 5, followed by pre-season friendlies against Lochaber, Glenurquhart and Kingussie. The manager believes he has a well-balanced squad and is hoping to see signs of progress from last season. He added: 'Our main aim is to push for promotion to the Premiership. 'Our squad is very strong; looking from the outside in I didn't realise how much quality we had. 'There are some cracking young guys coming through but we have got a lot of experience. 'There are guys in the squad that were in the 2005 Camanachd cup final and their experience is phenomenal.'

Shinty

Club captain Liam MacDonald feels there is plenty of room for improvement next year. Despite finishing third in the league he knows his side's cup form left a lot to be desired, but hopes to rectify this in 2015. He said: 'I felt last season we had a good chance in our cup games and things didn't go to plan but I'm looking forward to next season. Everyone started to get more enthusiastic towards the end of last year and now we are looking forward to starting from scratch again under a new manager.'



MANAGER: Former Kilmallie player Mark MacPherson has taken over as first team manager for next season



RUNNERS: The field of 62 set off for the Cruim Leachainn hill race on Boxing Day

Tom Smith wins Torlundy race

A RECORD 62 runners took part in Lochaber Athletic Club's Boxing Day race at Torlundy and it was local Tom Smith who headed the field, finishing the Cruim Leachainn route in 46 minutes and 32 seconds, closely followed by his running partner Andrew Barrington in 47 minutes and 42 seconds. Athletes came from as far afield as Cambridge and Bristol to join the locals in conditions well below freezing and fine sheets of ice added to the usual combination of bog, heather and gorse. The Lochaber females were also successful, as Diane Baum

was first lady home in 52:31, with Sarah MacKenzie second in 54:37 and Amanda Blackhall third in 58:00. **Veterans** Jim Treasurer headed the over 60s veterans with a time of 1:01:58, with Mike Connolly close behind in 1:02:39 and race organiser Mike Tighe finishing third in 1:09:24. Members of the club thanked the local landowners who let the runners use their grounds throughout the year and Kathy Tighe for providing festive catering for the event. The next race will be the

Athletics

Aonach Mor uphill race on New Year's Day (Thursday). Top 10 finishers, Lochaber AC unless stated otherwise: 1 Tom Smith 46:32; 2 Andrew Barrington 47:42; 3 Alastair Hodges (Cambridge) 48:00; 4 Allan Ross 49:10; 5 Callum Fraser 50:09; 6 Alan Smith (Deeside Runners) 50:36; 7 Manuel Gorman (Westies) 50:53; 8 Steven Fallon (Carnethy Hill Running Club); 9 Stewart Wilson (Inverness Harriers) 51:40; 10 Diane Baum 52:31.

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The game starts with a jackpot of £500 and will increase by £50 per week until it is won outright. To win the jackpot, the centre of your crosses must be in the exact centre of the ball. If the crosses overlap the entry will be void. If no correct entry is received, two 'near miss' prizes of £25 will be awarded. When the jackpot is won, no other prizes will be awarded that week.

competition and no correspondence will be entered into. The final decision rests with the Company. In the event of more than one correct entry, the jackpot will be shared equally between all winning entries. Any decision regarding the awarding of a prize is entirely at the discretion of the Company. The Company reserves the right to declare the competition null and void at any time, subject to its discretion and to make full refund of the price of the coupon to any person who has entered the competition at that time. Employees of Wyvex Media, their immediate relatives and any person otherwise connected with the competition are ineligible to enter.



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The annual Boxing Day match between Oban Celtic's Golden Oldies and the Young Guns took place at Mossfield Stadium with the Golden Oldies winning a close game 3-2. 16_01game03

Magnus makes under 20 squad

Rugby



Magnus Bradbury

BONAWE teenager Magnus Bradbury has made the 30-man Scotland under-20 squad ahead of the age-grade 6 Nations Championship in early 2015.

The former Oban Lorne forward, who made his senior professional debut for Edinburgh Rugby against Leinster in October, played for the age-grade side in 2014 at the world championships.

This season's squad will convene for their first two-day training camp of the New Year on Monday, January 12.

Scotland under-20 head coach Sean Lineen said: 'We have selected a strong group and one we are confident will compete well in the 6 Nations.'

'These players are getting consistent game-time at a high level whether that be through the BT Sport Scottish Rugby Academy games, their club team in the BT Premiership or, for some of them, exposure to the professional game.'

The age-grade side will be based at Netherdale, home of Gala Rugby Club, for their home ties and will welcome Wales, Italy and Ireland to the town.

Scotland begin their campaign against France at the Jean Laville Stade, Gueugnon on Saturday, February 7.

Home games against Wales and Italy follow on February 13 and 27, respectively, before a trip south of the border to the Northern Echo Arena, Darlington, on Friday, March 13 to play England.

Scotland play their final game against Ireland at Netherdale on Friday, March 20.

West of Scotland Cup draw

Football

THE West of Scotland Cup fifth round draw took place recently and unfortunately it hasn't been kind to Oban's amateur football teams.

If Saints beat high-flying Harestanes away from home they would face the winners of the Bannockburn v Duntocher fourth round match, again away from home.

Bannockburn are the current Central League premier division champions and will be favourites to beat Duntocher.

Oban Athletic have also been given a tough tie. They have been drawn away to face Ayrshire premier division leaders Tarbolton.

The Athletic game against Tarbolton will take place on Saturday 10 January with the Harestanes v Oban Saints match on Saturday 17 January.

Celtic's Golden Oldies win annual Boxing Day match

A RED-HOT rivalry between Oban Celtic's Young Guns and Old Crocks in their annual Boxing Day clash served as a winter warmer for the club's supporters. The match, held at Mossfield Stadium, brought club members together to celebrate the festive season and at a function later in the day money was raised for the Beatson Clinic in Glasgow.

Shinty

MacKinnon piped both teams onto the pitch to start the match. In the end it was the experience of the Old Crocks that saw them to a 3-2 win in what was an entertaining game.

Kenny Wotherspoon opened the scoring for the Young Guns before an own goal by the Young

Guns' goalkeeper Calum Fox levelled the fixture. Stewart MacGregor put the Golden Oldies in front with Sandy MacLeod increasing their lead from the penalty spot before Daniel Madej pulled a goal back for the youngsters to make it a nervous last few minutes for the old boys but they managed to hold out for a narrow 3-2 win.

A mainly sporting contest was well handled by referee John MacGregor.



At the end of the match Golden Oldie Donald MacKay was given a pelting of flour and eggs by his team-mates in 'celebration' of his forthcoming nuptials to Karen Love. Photo Kevin McGlynn



Referee John MacGregor, Golden Oldies' Donald MacKay and Kenny Wotherspoon Young Guns skipper lead the teams on to the field before the game. 16_01celtic02



Stewart MacGregor and Ally McKerracher tussle for the ball in midfield. 07_01celtic01

Oban Pool League takes a festive break

OBAN Pool League played the final round of ties in 2014 last week before heading into the festive break.

The Gluepot were the busiest of all the teams after playing on both Wednesday and Thursday evening against The Lancaster 'A' and then The Lochavullin.

A valiant effort from the North Connel boys wasn't enough against a more experienced Lancaster 'A', who made it five consecutive wins to draw level on points at the top of the table.

Thursday saw The Gluepot fair much better as they eventually overpowered The Lochavullin to give themselves some breathing

Football

space over the bottom three and they will now be focusing on breaking into the top half of the table.

The Lancaster 'B's emphatic victory over The Outreach means they are now tucked in behind the top two at the summit but with both sides still to play and a game in hand they are still harbouring hopes of a shock title success.

The concluding fixture saw The Lochnell just about deserve the win over a depleted Markie Dan's 'B' to occupy fourth spot as the league embarks into 2015.

Oban Pool League

	P	W	D	L	FF	FA	FD	PTS
1 Lochavullins Cellar	5	5	0	0	43	7	36	10
2 Lancaster A	5	5	0	0	38	12	26	10
3 Lancaster B	4	3	1	0	29	11	18	7
4 Lochnell	6	3	1	2	34	26	8	7
5 Markie Dans A	4	3	0	1	24	16	8	6
6 Gluepot	7	3	0	4	32	38	-6	6
7 Markie Dans B	5	1	0	4	19	31	-12	2
8 Lochavullin	6	0	0	5	13	47	-34	0
9 Outreach	6	0	0	6	8	52	-44	0

Oban Pool League doubles championship

	P	W	L	FF	FA	FD	PTS
1 Lancaster A	5	5	0	11	4	7	10
2 Lancaster B	4	4	0	10	2	8	8
3 Lochavullins Cellar	5	4	1	11	4	7	8
4 Lochnell	5	3	2	9	6	3	6
5 Gluepot	6	4	2	11	7	4	8
6 Markie Dans A	4	1	3	5	7	-2	2
7 Markie Dans B	5	1	4	5	9	-3	2
8 Outreach	6	1	5	5	13	-8	2
9 Lochavullin	6	1	5	3	15	-12	2

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WEATHER

Thursday Heavy rain
Winds strong south westerly
Temperatures 5°C to 10°C.

Friday Light rain showers
Winds strong westerly
Temperatures 5°C to 7°C.

Weekend Outlook Heavy rain showers Saturday
Sunny intervals on Sunday
Winds strong northeerly
Temperatures 5°C to 7°C.

TIDAL INFORMATION

Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday, January 1, 2015** are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

Date	am			pm		
Thur	02.36	3.2	08.55	1.5	15.23	3.4
Fri	03.31	3.3	09.59	1.4	16.10	3.6
Sat	04.13	3.6	10.50	1.3	16.48	3.7
Sun	04.52	3.7	11.34	1.2	17.24	3.8
Mon	05.30	3.9	12.14	1.2	17.58	3.9
Tues	00.10	1.0	06.06	4.0	12.52	1.2
Wed	00.48	1.0	06.42	4.0	13.28	1.3

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)

Ardrisaig	-5.35	Mallaig	+0.25
Campbeltown	-5.30	Portree	+0.55
Crinan	-0.47	Tobermory	+0.16
Islay Port Ellen	2.00	Dover	+5.30
Lochboisdale	+0.30		

Ferry Crossings/Sea States

Oban to Barra/South Uist	Moderate
Oban to Coll/Tiree	Moderate
Kennacraig to Islay	Moderate

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HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR ADVERTISERS AND READERS

New senior police chief's pledge to keep Highlands and islands safe

A NEW senior police officer for the Highlands and islands is concerned about local organised crime despite it being one of the safest regions in Scotland.

Detective Superintendent Colin Carey has been appointed head of the division's Criminal Investigations Department (CID) following 22 years of experience in the central belt.

Mr Carey said: 'Although we live in one of the safest regions in the country, the devastating potential consequences of serious and organised crime are still a risk to us all. Bogus workmen and travelling criminals often target the most vulnerable in society.'

'We aim to use intelligence to ensure our communities are kept safe and those responsible for such crimes are brought to justice. Child sexual exploitation and abuse of all categories, including domestic, will not be tolerated.'

Detective superintendent Carey added: 'We will also focus our attention on tackling the supply of illegal drugs and associated criminality in addition to the rise of harmful so-called 'legal highs'.'

'I'm pleased violent crime is reducing across the division but that does not leave room for complacency: it is my job to oversee the Criminal Investigation Department, ensuring we continue to keep the Highlands and islands a safe and secure place for all to live and visit.'



FOCUSSED: Detective superintendent Colin Carey

Closure fears allayed as cash is splashed on pool

GENEROUS GRANTS KEEP MALLAIG CENTRE AFLOAT

EMMA CRICHTON
ericrichton@obantimes.co.uk

MALLAIG'S leisure centre has received grants worth more than £64,000, just a month after staff feared it could close.

West Lochaber communities gathered in force to campaign against proposed Highland council budget cuts which could have resulted in the closure of Mallaig and District Swimming Pool, but are now celebrating following the announcement of two grants to sustain the pool's future.

The Legacy 2014 Sustainable Sport for Communities Fund, a partnership between the Scottish government and the Robertson Trust to carry on the success of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games, donated £30,000 to the leisure centre as part of a £550,100 package across Scotland.

This will mean the manager's position, among others, can be increased to full time to allow staff to develop community projects and services.

A further £34,500, to be provided over three years, was donated by the Robertson Trust to allow the centre to employ a youth development worker.

Brian O'Rourke, manager at Mallaig and District Swimming Pool, called it 'great recognition' for the work of the centre.

He added: 'This money is a great help to us, especially with all the uncertainty about the Highland council grants. We will be working to develop the services we provide within all areas of the community.'

'Staff training and development will also be a key factor in this. It will all contribute to the

“ This money is a great help to us ”

Brian O'Rourke
pool manager

sustainability of our pool. The youth development worker we'll get from the other grant will be a big help in terms of health engagement in the community as we can promote health and well-being to our young people.'

Dave Thompson, MSP for Ross, Skye and Lochaber, welcomed the funding. He said: 'It is pleasing Mallaig pool is to benefit from a package of funding, as part of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Legacy, exemplifying that areas outwith the central belt are gaining from the Glasgow 2014 spectacle.'

'I understand the award will help towards sustaining the future of the pool in Mallaig, which plays such a big role in the community and as such, I am sure I will not be alone in welcoming this great news.'

Kenneth Ferguson, director of the Robertson Trust, said: 'We are pleased to have funded these awards, in partnership with the Scottish government, to provide support and investment to third sector organisations working in Scotland to impact positively on their communities.'

'The recipients of these awards demonstrate the wide range of work that is being delivered by sports social enterprises across Scotland. We are delighted to be able to assist them.'



LIFESAVER: Andy Nelson, leader of Glencoe mountain rescue team, right, receives keys to a new Land Rover from Bobby Willis

Climber's friends to the rescue

FRIENDS of a man who fell to his death in Glencoe have raised £28,000 for a new vehicle for the area's mountain rescue team.

Shaun Bowden, from Hartfordshire, was 39 when he died after falling from Bidean nam Bian, the highest mountain in Glencoe, two years ago and Bobby Willis, who was climbing with him, has dedicated his time since the accident to fundraising for Glencoe Mountain Rescue Team.

And the fruits of his efforts were recognised when he presented a Land Rover to team leader Andy Nelson on December 14, following the £28,000 fundraising effort.

Mr Willis said: 'Shaun was always up there climbing so I thought it would be nice to have a

vehicle in his name, so there's another Bowden going around saving people in Glencoe.'

The car provided is particularly fitting because it previously belonged to Mr Willis, and was the last vehicle the late Mr Bowden was in before he died.

It has been adapted for off-road conditions, with space for a stretcher and 12 rescuers.

Mr Nelson said: 'Bobby felt that a good way to remember his mate was to donate a Land Rover to the rescue team, which is great for us.'

'The next big push is fundraising for our new garage, which is under construction. Our money has taken a big dent from that so we're trying to fill that gap and all the donations we have received so far are much appreciated.'

TIMESLINE

Charity's delight at £4,000 grant

A GRANT of more than £4,000 has been awarded to Lochaber Action on Disability. The charity received the money as part of the Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland Henry Duncan awards programme, which helps grassroots organisations to benefit their communities.

Charles Kennedy, MP for Ross, Skye and Lochaber, welcomed the news.

He said: 'I am delighted that Lochaber Action on Disability is getting this well-deserved grant, enabling it to continue its great work in empowering local people with challenging medical conditions.'

'Many of the Henry Duncan grants go on existing staff and running costs, meaning they can really make a difference to charities.'

'This is a great news story to end the year, I am hoping to see more good news in 2015 for local causes.'

Doors stay open at dementia cafe

A LOCHABER facility for people with dementia and their families is to be extended after an initial six-month trial.

The drop-in cafe at St Andrew's Hall, Fort William, will continue in the new year while Alzheimer Scotland personnel decide if it is sustainable.

Charles Kennedy, MP for Ross, Skye and Lochaber, welcomed the extension.

He said: 'I have made it a commitment to support Alzheimer Scotland in my constituency and I look forward to visiting the Fort William cafe.'

'It is welcome news to know that Alzheimer Scotland has extended the trial of the dementia cafe and I trust it will get the local support that it needs to continue.'



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Quality staff key to care home re-opening

A MALLAIG elderly care home has to attract high quality job applicants if it is to re-open next year, according to councillors in Lochaber.

It is believed the Mackintosh Centre in the village, which has been closed since July following allegations of malpractice by some staff members, is planned to be up and running again by March, following a meeting between councillors and centre staff on December 22.

This is said to be dependent on new staff being sourced, though the NHS would not confirm March as the date.

Its closure four months ago meant residents had to be transferred to Invernevis House in Fort William, leaving friends and family from Mallaig to travel 84 miles to visit them.

Councillor Thomas MacLennan, leader

of Lochaber area committee, attended the meeting held in Fort William council chambers.

He said: 'It's so crucial that we recruit and retain good quality staff, and get the centre up and running as soon as possible.'

'There's no point in just appointing any staff, they need to be high quality applicants. [NHS Highland] has had difficulty in recruiting and that seems to be the main reason it has not opened so far.'

His colleague Bill Clark, councillor for Caol and Mallaig, said last Tuesday a spring re-opening was put forward at the meeting.

He said: 'Councillors had a meeting this morning [where it was agreed] to re-open in March. The intention is to have staff in place by then.'

'I understand there are three positions to be filled. There have been concerns and worries, and councillors have been pushing it extremely hard.'

'We have been looking for answers and hopefully we are going to get them.'

NHS Highland temporarily closed the home after it received anonymous allegations about 'institutional abuse' and suspended some members of staff.

A spokeswoman from the group said: 'We are continuing to work at getting the centre open again.'

'It had been our aim to re-open it by the end of November but we could not do so because of staffing issues.'

'Our timescale will be the length of time it takes to recruit and have in post suitable staff. The recruitment process normally takes three months from start to finish.'

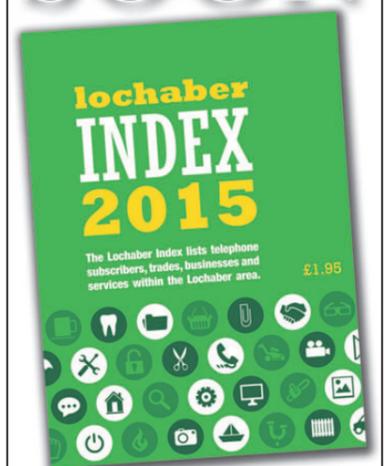
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Ardgour school and manse to be replaced with modern cottage

A HISTORIC school and manse in Ardgour is to be demolished and replaced with a modern two-bedroom cottage.

The building on Kingairloch Estate, Camusnacroise is thought to date back to 1770 and is known nationally for its connection with Scottish novelist Robert Louis Stevenson, as it appeared in his 1886 novel Kidnapped. It is believed by historians that he visited the site and is now part of the Stevenson Way, a long-distance walking route based on the book.

But members of Highland Council's south planning applications committee approved the proposal to demolish the school last Tuesday as Historic Scotland has not named it as a listed building.

West Highland historian Iain Thornber said he was 'disappointed' to hear of the decision.

He added: 'It says very little for the applicants, that they should still want to go ahead and remove one of the finest and most historical buildings on the estate which they have owned for less than 20 years for no good reason.'

'The obvious solution would be to restore which could have been achieved at a fraction of the cost to demolish and rebuild.'

Kingairloch Estate owners were unavailable for comment as The Oban Times went to press.

Hordes of jelly fish kill 300,000 salmon at North Uist fish farm

HORDES of deadly jellyfish have killed around 300,000 salmon at a North Uist fish farm.

Owners of Loch Duart Ltd, which runs the site in Lochmaddy, have been left reeling at the news, which saw the loss of around half their stock for the whole year.

Large numbers of mauve stinger jellyfish, also known as pelagia noctiluca, were small enough to slip through a fishing net on November 19 and sting the salmon.

Combined with unfortunate gale force winds the next day, it left the fish unable to swim well and many died.

Staff from Loch Duart Limited said the company's survival is not in jeopardy after an otherwise very successful season which produced large excess fish quantities.

Managing director Nick Joy believes it is a blow but the group will move on.

He said: 'It's the worst Christmas present Loch Duart could have but [the staff] will go on and continue the fantastic job they have done this year.'

'The thing that is often forgotten is the people that care for the animals day by day and our people have worked so hard.'

'It has cost us but what we can do now is grow our fish that bit bigger and sell them larger.'

Passionate pleas for retail park win over committee

EMMA CRICHTON
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PLANS for a new retail park in Fort William have been approved by Highland council.

Despite receiving massive public support in Lochaber, planning officer Susan MacMillan had recommended refusal of the development, which will include an Aldi, Home Bargains and potentially a Marks and Spencer, saying it would take trade away from the town centre.

But after passionate pleas from five of the area's six local councillors, members of the south planning applications committee voted in favour of the four-unit site on North Road last Tuesday (December 23).

Mrs MacMillan also said when combined with the Blar Mor site, where permission for a supermarket has been live since



NEW SHOPS: an artist's impression of how the North Road retail park will look

2011, another store would create too much competition in the area.

Developers Morbaine Limited already had planning permission for non-food retail but sought food consent to build a supermarket on the five-acre brownfield site.

At the planning meeting Caol and Mallaig councillor Bill Clark said: 'Lochaber is not in a position to turn away developments which will reduce prices through competition and bring employment to the area.'

'It's morally wrong to deprive Lochaber residents of retail opportunities that other Highland residents have on their doorstep and take for granted.'

Councillor Thomas MacLennan, leader of Lochaber area committee, said it would be a 'complete travesty' if permission wasn't granted.

Local members Brian Murphy and Ben Thompson also urged

the committee to vote in favour of the retail park, despite not being members themselves, following a petition from residents which gathered more than 1,200 signatures.

After the meeting, Morbaine director Alex Brodie said: 'We are delighted that the south planning applications committee has approved our planning application which will allow us to develop a new retail park at North Road.'

'I would like to thank the local community in Fort William and the surrounding area which has been nothing but supportive and constructive and we look forward to providing it with the additional retail options that it has been asking for.'

'We will keep the community updated on our progress and let it know more about when the retail park might be open and how local businesses can participate in the construction process.'

Police probe high street assaults

POLICE in Lochaber are appealing for information about two assaults on Fort William High Street.

At 1.30am on Sunday December 21 a man was assaulted at the taxi rank by another male, believed to be eastern European. He was described as approximately five feet and 10 inches, of average build, with short dark hair and wearing a grey hooded top and jeans.

At around 3am the same morning a man was assaulted by another male at the back of the Crofter Bar. No description was given but police have asked anyone who may have seen an altercation between two men and a woman at this time to contact them.

Anyone with information about either of these incidents is asked to contact local police on 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800555111.

Property stolen as thieves strike

PROPERTY has been stolen from two locations in Fort William.

At around 1pm on Saturday December 20 a mountain bike was stolen from outside premises on the Ben Nevis industrial estate. The bike is black with bespoke red forks.

During the day on Wednesday December 17 a red 'tractor and trailer' ornament was taken from the garden of a house in Upper Achintore. Several Disney garden gnomes were also stolen from a different address in the same area on the day.

Police have asked anyone with information about these incidents to contact them on 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800555111.

They have also reminded all Lochaber residents to secure all property and valuables and to lock all outhouses, sheds and parked vehicles.

Christmas cheer for youngsters

A KIND Ballachulish woman has donated gifts to bring Christmas cheer to disadvantaged children in Lochaber.

Sandie Michie organised the Love in a Box Lochaber project, which saw generous members of the public donate presents to be sent to social services for children in poverty or difficult living situations this festive season.

More than 250 people pledged their support on the group's Facebook page and sent items including clothes, dolls and computer games.

Stretch of A82 to be resurfaced

A STRETCH of Lochaber's trunk road is to be resurfaced north of Spean Bridge.

The A82 at Inverglory will be subject to temporary traffic lights and a convoy system to direct traffic across the one-kilometre site between January 12 and 23.

Work will only be carried out between 7am and 7pm Monday to Friday but a 30mph limit will be in place outwith working hours.

Island project leaders honoured with award



WINNERS: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's chief executive Malcolm Burr, far left, and leader Angus Campbell (third from left), with their colleagues from the Our Islands Our Future campaign, are congratulated for their award by Scottish first minister Nicola Sturgeon

AN AWARD has been presented to two Comhairle nan Eilean Siar officials for 'outstanding leadership' of a unique project involving Scotland's islands.

The council group's leader Angus Campbell and his colleague, chief executive Malcolm Burr, received the prize at the Scottish Public Service Awards for spearheading the Our Islands Our Future campaign, which seeks to give the Hebridean, Orkney and Shetland isles a louder voice in parliament.

Joining forces with councils from Orkney and Shetland, they met last month with Scottish secretary of state Alistair Carmichael to push the UK government for solutions to matters such as grid connection problems and fuel poverty.

Councillor Angus Campbell was pleased with the recognition the project received at the awards ceremony, held in the Scottish parliament on December 12.

He said: 'The referendum in Scotland opened up a unique opportunity to enforce the fact that the needs and status of island areas are different and need to be clearly recognised in the new era for Scotland.'

'I am delighted that since the launch of the project back in June 2013, we have demonstrated what a cohesive and innovative approach can achieve in bringing real benefits on issues which are of importance to our communities.'

Highland MSP accuses police of targeting drivers for minor road traffic offences

A HIGHLAND MSP has accused police officers of targeting drivers for 'minor offences' to raise prosecution levels and make roads seem safer than they are.

This comes after statistics were released last week showing a 14 per cent rise in road traffic related prosecutions in the last year.

David Stewart, MSP for the Highlands and Islands, said: 'I am heartened to learn that the

police are taking positive action in relation to serious road traffic related offences.'

'However, I have some concerns that they are targeting the driver in order to uncover any offences, including minor ones, in an attempt to increase prosecutions and therefore show by default that they are maybe making our roads safer, which may not of course be the case.'

'What I want is for those concerned with road safety to

engage with the driver, educate and enlighten the driver, use discretion where and when appropriate and, of course, enforce as required.'

'Basically I want a balanced approach to road safety in general as I feel this approach will be better accepted by the motoring public, whilst at the same time serving the purpose of getting dangerous drivers and vehicles off the road.'

But chief superintendent Iain

Murray, head of Police Scotland's road policing department, said there 'is no such thing as a low level motoring offence' when it comes to taking risks on the road.

He added: 'The latest driver behavioural research, carried out in October, shows 68 per cent of us admit to engaging in risk behaviours on the roads in the last 12 months.'

'Nobody sets out on the road to cause death or injury to anyone,

yet every day we all witness behaviour which we know puts people unnecessarily at risk.'

'Such an approach requires that we use every means at our disposal to influence road users; real-time education, at the roadside, at the point that the offence is detected, must be part of the process.'

'Enforcement will always remain the primary means by which we seek to change behaviour.'



ON SONG: Kilmallie Singers performed to a crowd in the Duncansburgh MacIntosh Church, Fort William. The carol-singing was part of the group's annual Christmas concert

Connection concern

UPGRADES to phone and internet connections in the Highlands have been tabled in the UK parliament, following concerns raised by politicians.

Charles Kennedy, MP for Ross, Skye and Lochaber, said he has backed motions raising concerns about BT Openreach as constituents told him they have been without internet for up to six months.

He added: 'A number of constituents have been left frustrated without either a phone line or internet access. It is unacceptable that some households have had to wait for six months without any phone or internet connection. This can cause a great deal of stress and frustration, particularly when people have been unable to contact friends, family members, or colleagues.'

A BT spokesman said: 'We are arranging to meet with politicians involved so we can take their concerns on board fully.'

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Fresh calls to end extra Highland postal charges

FRESH calls have been made to stop Highland customers being charged more for parcel deliveries.

The Scottish business minister, Fergus Ewing, said businesses should follow the government introduced 'statement of principles' when setting delivery costs, to ensure people living in rural areas do not pay higher fees.

He said: 'Unfortunately we're still finding that many customers in Scotland's Highlands and islands are faced with disproportionate costs when it comes to the delivery of their online purchases but it's not just customers who are affected by postcode penalties, businesses in rural areas are also hit hard. By abiding by the guidelines,

online retailers can show respect for customers in all parts of the UK.'

A review of online retailers is also underway following a previous report in 2012 which showed at least one million Scots face surcharges, late delivery or are refused delivery altogether when they try to buy goods online.

Sarah Beattie-Smith of Citizens Ad-

vice Scotland, the organisation behind the review, said: 'Our aim, as always, is getting a fairer deal for Scottish consumers. We have launched an update to our earlier work assessing more than 500 retailers' websites to determine whether they are complying with the statement of principles on parcel deliveries.'

A82 overnight closures



Overnight closures of the A82 at Pulpit Rock, south of Ardlui are scheduled to take place each night from Monday 12th January to Thursday 15th January.

The road will close at 2200hrs and re-open each day at 0600hrs. The A82 will remain open either side of the closure.

Diversion routes between these hours will be northbound via the A83 at Tarbet, A819 and A85, and southbound via the A85 at Tyndrum, A819 and A83.

We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

This is to allow essential work to be carried out safely on the A82 Pulpit Rock improvement project.

Closures can be subject to change, therefore please refer to the Transport Scotland website for the latest information:

http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/project/a82-pulpit-rock



BUSINESSMAN BLAMES COUNCIL'S NORTH PIER REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR DELAY

Date set for work on seafront hotel

LOUISE LEE
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THE DATE for resurrecting a famous landmark hotel on Oban's Esplanade has finally been revealed by the businessmen behind the project.

A new four-star hotel is to be built on the site of the former Argyll Hotel. Also called the Argyll Hotel, the new building is scheduled to receive guests by June 2016.

Ground works for the hotel are already under way. From May this year, building contractors will be on site.

The three million pound project was viewed by some to be under threat after a delay of more than three years since the former category C-listed hotel was demolished.

But Alan and Callum MacLeod, of Ee-usk and Piazza restaurants in the town, have confirmed building works on the 53-bedroom hotel will start in the summer.

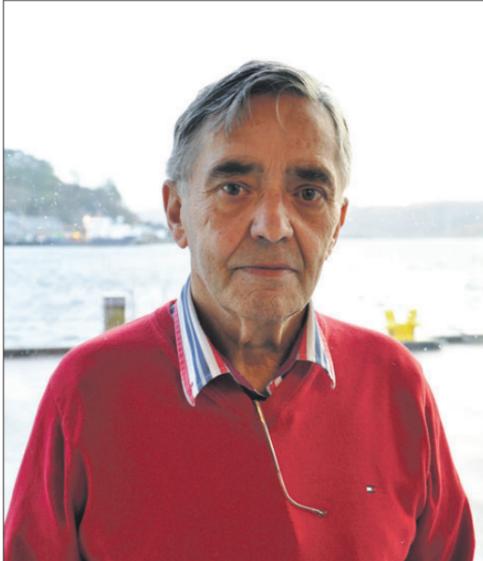
Alan explained: 'The delay has been due to the plans proposed by Argyll and Bute council to extend the North Pier. Work on the hotel will get under way because we just can't wait any longer.'

The original Argyll Hotel had stood on the town's Esplanade since the late 19th century, but was demolished at the end of 2011.

Since then Alan and Callum have been hoping to resurrect the landmark hotel and their announcement ends years of uncertainty over the future of the site.

The four-star-standard hotel will be located between the Oban Inn and The Regent Hotel.

The plans are for a contemporary glass and wood structure allowing visitors to make the



FRESH START: Alan MacLeod hopes the hotel will be opened in 2016



END OF AN ERA: The old Argyll Hotel was demolished in 2011

most of views over Oban Bay. However, Alan MacLeod said he had no support from the council over the £3 million project.

He complained he was being 'squeezed' out of the North Pier where he holds a 99-year lease for his two restaurants with the local authority.

'We are building a high quality hotel that will bring people to the town.'

'People only have to see our restaurants to know what kind of business we run.'

He continued: 'The council has avoided engaging with me in any kind of discussion.'

'Can you remember the state of dereliction of the pier before we were granted the 99-year lease? It was under-utilised and forgotten.'

However, an Argyll and Bute council spokeswoman rejected Mr MacLeod's criticisms and said the authority had offered him a number of meetings, but all had been 'declined'.

She said: 'Regeneration plans for Oban's North Pier are a key point of our work to secure a prosperous future for the area.'

'Far from "squeezing anyone out", this work will ultimately enhance the pier for everyone who uses it. It aims to benefit local businesses and complement their own activity by attracting more people.'

'The proposal for the new performance space, for example, includes a covered area - a focal point where people can gather together, and a disembarking point for cruise passengers.'

The spokeswoman maintained the council had been responsive to the views of the community. She continued: 'The design work for the North Pier is still to be completed but there are no plans to reduce the car parking space.'



HAPPY TIMES: Sean and Charissa back in Connel

Sean's flashy proposal wins Charissa's heart

A VIDEO capturing the moment North Connel's Charissa Ferguson accepted a special marriage proposal from her footballer boyfriend has been viewed more than 600,000 times online.

Goalkeeper Sean Murdoch, 28, who had been training with New York City FC, took part in a flash mob dance routine at Times Square, New York, to the song 'Marry You', by Bruno Mars.

As a shocked Charissa, 33, tried to take in what was going on, Sean knelt down in front of her, and a large crowd of Christmas shoppers, to pop the question with a three-carat diamond ring.

The engagement on December 19 was all the more special as four members of Charissa's family, including her mother Cathy MacGregor, had come over to visit - and were in on

the surprise. Charissa said: 'I saw the flash mob start up and thought that was pretty cool but it was nothing out of the ordinary in Times Square.'

'It was really cold and I was just wanting to get to a shop but then Sean asked me to hold his scarf and he went to join in the dance.'

'I thought he was just goofing around and then he started picking up the routine.'

'I was so confused. When he proposed I was just in shock.'

During the couple's three months in New York, Sean had taken secret lessons to learn the dance moves with Broadway Dance Studio ahead of his proposal.

The happy couple will return to the States this month when Sean, who was with Hibernian Football Club last season, joins up with the American team Sacramento Republic FC.

TIMESLINE

Ex-Mallaig doctor takes up NHS role

NHS Highland has appointed a former Mallaig GP as its new director of public health and health policy.

Dr Hugo van Woerden, 51, a director in public health Wales, will take up the post on February 1 2015.

The new director has strong Highland connections, having attended Inverness Royal Academy and practising as a Mallaig GP from 1993-1998.

Firm gets the nod for harbour works

A CONTRACTOR has been appointed to carry out more than a £1 million of regeneration work at a Kintyre harbour.

Campbeltown people are set to benefit from the £1m-plus improvements after Argyll and Bute council chose GSS Marine Services, of Rosneath, to carry out the berthing and on-shore work at the old quay.

Motorists pass the drink driving test

TWO roadside police checks saw drivers responding well to the new drink driving limit, but officers have warned motorists not to be complacent.

Sergeant Alan Moore, of Oban police station, said: 'Apart from minor motoring offences, drivers seem to be taking the new law seriously.'

10-stone salmon stolen from home

A CARVED wooden salmon, weighing 10 stones, has been stolen from Inverawe.

The four-foot tall chainsaw-carved fish went missing on Christmas Day. Iain McDonald, who purchased the carving as a gift for his grandparents last year, said: 'It would have taken two people to lift it.'

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Massive January SALE

Sale starts Saturday 3rd January at 10am

SALE GREAT DEALS ON CURTAINS & BLINDS

SALE FANTASTIC BED SAVINGS

SALE EARLY BIRD BARGAINS

MASSIVE SAVINGS ON UPHOLSTERY

SALE CARPET BARGAINS

SAVE ON BEDROOM FURNITURE

FREE Tea, coffee, & home baking

Mathesons Massive January Sale starts at 10am on Saturday 3rd January. So get along quick and grab a Bargain. There are lots and lots of Bargains that you just cannot refuse. There are some really special Early Bird bargains and some end of range items at fantastic prices. Discounts are available on all ranges across the store including Carpets, Curtains, Beds, Dining and Lounge furniture. Sofas etc so you can completely furnish your home at Sale prices.

Office chairs & furniture SALE

SALE STARTS Saturday 3rd January at 10am. Thereafter open Monday - Saturday 9am - 5.30pm

MATHESONS furnishings

Tweedmill, Soroba Rd, Oban, Argyll Tel: 565195

www.mathesons.co.uk

Split personality of hardworking man who became an abusive addict

A MAN who escaped the custody of Oban police by jumping 20 feet from a toilet window has been sent back to prison for 157 days.

Marc Pert, of no fixed abode, appeared from custody and pleaded guilty at Oban sheriff court last Tuesday to three separate charges.

On March 12, 2014 he acted in a threatening and abusive manner towards a woman at Shuna Terrace in Oban and poured a cup of cold tea over her friend and pushed her.

Then on November 18, the 31-year-old accused assaulted the woman by pushing her on the body and refusing to leave the same address.

On December 6 Pert repeatedly contacted the woman and entered the address, breaching his bail.

After police detained him, he told them he had swallowed a quantity of heroin and he was taken to Oban's Lorn and Islands hospital under police supervision.

When at the hospital's ward B he told officers he needed to use the toilet. Procurator fiscal Eoin McGinty told the court: 'The police officers stood outside the toilet door and maintained verbal communication. After a period of silence, police opened the door to find no one there.'

'The accused had jumped 20 feet out of the window and run off into the darkness.'

Police were then told at 11.50pm that Pert had returned to the woman's address once again and he was arrested.

Defence solicitor Laura McManus explained her client had been recovering from heroin addiction and at the time of the incidents in March and December had been using valium.

She added that there were 'two sides' to Pert, who at times was a 'hardworking, motivated person' able to hold down a job in a local warehouse but who could also become 'an addict with issues'.

His sentence was backdated to December 8 when he was initially detained in custody.

Marie Curie team's Christmas watch

MARIE CURIE Nurses across the UK, including the Marie Curie nursing team in Argyll and Bute, will provide care to 2,000 terminally ill patients across the UK over the 12 days of Christmas.

Lynne Miller, Marie Curie clinical nurse manager for Argyll and Bute, said: 'We'll be working very closely alongside the community nurses, home carers, hospital discharge teams and other agencies to make sure that families get the care they need over the holidays.'

'Many people may not realise that this is a local service and we could be supporting them or a family member.'

We would encourage them to speak to their GP or district nurse.'

Company 'rethinks' plans to expand Etive fish farms

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FISH FARMER Dawnfresh has withdrawn its planning application for the expansion of the Etive 2 and 3 sites on Loch Etive.

The dramatic development comes after months of objections to the plans to the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), Argyll and Bute council and Marine Scotland by charitable group Friends Of Loch Etive (FOLE).

Dawnfresh director Gideon Pringle claimed FOLE's actions had hindered his firm's work to the point where it had been forced to reassess the business plans at the Loch Etive farms.

Mr Pringle said: 'The company is withdrawing while it rethinks its plans. FOLE is exercising its right and people can always come in and ask unanswerable questions regarding the water chemistry of Loch Etive. These questions have to be answered,

so taking the timescale into consideration, the company has to look at the further extensions of existing sites - mainly Etive 6, and Etive 4.'

Etive 6 is at Muckairn and Etive 4 between Airds Point and Airds Bay and both have a 1,500-tonne capacity which the company will look at expanding this year.

Mr Pringle added: 'The impact this will have on Dawnfresh for the next financial year will be in the region of £750,000.'

'It's not going to affect jobs and the business will see its way through this, but it's certainly a shock to the system.'

'The planners, Marine Scotland and SEPA all have to have confidence in each other and in what we, as a company, are doing. I see this as merely a bump in the road - we will find a way.'

Mr Pringle also hit out at the legal challenge mounted by FOLE earlier in the year against Argyll and Bute council's decision last year to grant planning permis-



CHANGING LANDSCAPE: Dawnfresh is now rethinking its plans since it withdrew its application for Etive 2 and 3

sion for the Etive 6 site. FOLE claimed the council had misinterpreted the Loch Etive Coastal Management Plan when it approved Dawnfresh's 10-cage fish farm. The group petitioned for a judicial review.

However, the petition was refused by Lord Malcolm at the Court of Session in July 2014. Lord Malcolm said that it was clear that FOLE was created by Keith Macmillan, and was controlled and funded by him. In

his letter of objection to the fish farm, Mr Macmillan described himself as the owner of an estate on the shores of Loch Etive.

Mr Pringle continued: 'All of this cost the council tens of thousands of pounds to fight the judicial review.'

'It's a significant cost to the taxpayer and all for the sake of a view from someone's house. It really is the height of 'Nimbyism'. 'We all have the freedom of speech and action, but this is

costing the council a lot of money and had a very low chance of success.' The Dawnfresh director said that recent public meetings organised by the company about its plans had revealed that people were divided over the issue.

He said: 'There is split in opinion about our plans. People aren't just voting automatically against everything Dawnfresh plans just for the sake of it.'

'People need to realise we are not trying to either industrialise the loch or wipe out the life in it. We have very strict regulations we need to adhere to.'

A delighted Mr Macmillan welcomed the news of the planning withdrawal: 'This is great news. Loch Etive is one of Scotland's most beautiful and unique lochs and we need to preserve its natural serenity so that it can be appreciated by locals and visitors alike. Dawnfresh's expansion plans will industrialise the loch and cause more environmental damage.'

Driving like an 'idiot' ends in jail sentence

A MAN has been jailed for 182 days for driving 'like an idiot' as he reached speeds of up to 120mph on Mull.

Fisherman Donald Martin, 21, lost control of the car, which crashed and overturned, ending up in a ditch.

A friend, who was a passenger in the car, was badly injured and had to be airlifted to the Royal Alexandra hospital in Paisley.

Martin, of No. 1 Caravan, Lee Ardtun, Bunnassan, Isle of Mull, had previously pleaded guilty at Oban sheriff court to dangerous driving and a separate charge of driving while disqualified on August 21, 2014, on the A849 between Fionnphort and Bunnassan. Last Tuesday he was sentenced

for the charges and a third charge of driving with no insurance.

The court heard that as Martin careered along the road at break-neck speeds, he struck and killed a sheep and accelerated towards a crest in the road, lifting his car clear of the road and causing it to crash and overturn.

On August 20, the court was told Martin and two friends had walked back to his father's caravan, where he also stayed, after drinking in a local pub until closing time.

Martin later offered to drive one of the men home and all three got into Martin's father's car to drive the six-mile journey.

Procurator fiscal Eoin McGinty said: 'The two passengers de-

scribed the accused "driving like an idiot" for the entire journey, at excessive speed.'

Near Bunnassan hall the car struck and killed a sheep. Mr McGinty continued: 'They were then approaching a crest in the road when the accused began to accelerate rapidly and said words to the effect "Watch this", or "Here we go". At this point he was travelling between 110mph and 120mph.'

'The vehicle hit the crest and became airborne. When it landed the accused lost control, the vehicle struck a rock and flipped onto its roof. The three men got out of the car but one of the men was slipping in and out of consciousness.'

The car ended up in a ditch but was eventually pulled clear and taken to a nearby garage.

The injured passenger was eventually airlifted to hospital where it was discovered he had a fractured vertebrae and was urinating blood.

Police were notified and traced the car to Martin's father's caravan. The father initially said he had been driving the car but later told police his son had been behind the wheel at the time of the crash. On his return to the caravan, Martin told police: 'It was me. I hold my hands up.'

Defence solicitor Laura McManus explained her client had abstained from drinking alcohol since the incident and was on

good terms with the seriously injured man. She said Martin had been out of work at the time of the incident and had been 'showing off' because of 'boredom'.

But the court heard Martin's driving disqualification, imposed in September 2013, was for dangerous driving.

Sheriff John Herald said: 'Given your driving, you are exceedingly lucky no-one was killed. It gives me no pleasure at all, given your age and the time of year, to send you to prison but I would be failing in my public duty if I did not impose a custodial sentence.'

Martin was sentenced to a total of 182 days in prison and has been banned from driving for five years.



MAESTRO: Caroline Jamieson tries out the new piano she presented to Taynuilt village hall committee chairwoman Vera Shaw 15_152caroline01

Caroline strikes a happy note for village committee

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CHRISTMAS came early for Taynuilt village hall committee after it received a new piano from the village branch of An Comunn Gaidhealach.

The Meur Chruachain branch, which hosts regular ceilidhs in the hall, donated the new piano before its Christmas ceilidh last Saturday.

Making the presentation was the branch's oldest member, Caroline Jamieson, 98, to hall committee chairwoman Vera Shaw.

After the formal presentation, fear an taighe Duncan MacNeil introduced 16-year-old piper Alasdair MacLean, who played some rousing tunes to start the ceilidh.

Further enjoyable music was provided during the evening by Breagha Charlton (clarsach) and Hector McFadyen (accordion).

Once again the Isla Sinclair Dancers gave excellent displays of dancing throughout the ceilidh. Those taking part were Isla Buchanan, Mairi MacCorquodale, Chelsey MacAuley, Ailie Munro, Hannah Graham, Rachel Campbell and Kirsty Campbell.

Well-known local soloists Morag MacNeil and Freddy MacKenzie, accompanied by Hector McFadyen, then performed, before the audience enjoyed stovies and mince pies during the interval.

There was a very warm welcome for Santa, who took time out of his busy schedule to make an appearance.

MSP challenged to produce facts after scathing attack on planners

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AN MSP has claimed Argyll and Bute council planners 'misled' councillors after they turned down a wind turbine application.

Mike MacKenzie, Highlands and Islands regional MSP, says the council's planning policy has contributed to 'the economic underperformance of the area and is a primary cause of depopulation'.

He has also claimed information given to councillors on the local authority's planning committee, who were considering the wind turbine application, contained an incorrect statement about Scotland's renewable energy target.

But the council has mounted a robust defence of its decision and strongly rebutted the claim, saying there was 'no evidence' to support the MSP's view.

The war of words was sparked by the council's



Your planning committee has been misled

Mike MacKenzie, MSP (Pictured left)

decision to back the planners' recommendation to reject an application by Brian Neish to erect a 61-metre turbine (to blade tip) on land north east of Barbreck Farm, Kilchrenan.

The plan had 27 objections, including one from Avich and Kilchrenan community council.

But Mr MacKenzie criticised the recommendation, which published a statement from an objector, who referred to the view of a Scottish government

reporter in the Barrel Law Windfarm Public Inquiry that renewable energy targets in Scotland have been achieved.

In a letter to the council's chief executive Sally Loudon, Mr MacKenzie said: 'We have not yet achieved the targets as suggested and it is therefore the case that your planning committee has been misled and that as a consequence their decision is 'unsafe'.'

'This begs the question as to how many other applications

may have been determined on a similar 'unsafe' basis because of misleading or inaccurate information.'

Calling for a review of previous wind turbine decisions, he also claimed that some councillors had told him they do not feel 'properly supported' in making decisions and that there is a 'continuing struggle with officers who feel they know best'.

But an Argyll and Bute council spokesman hit back, saying: 'There is absolutely no evidence to support this accusation. The overall focus of the council's planning service is on making things happen, supporting sustainable economic growth and regeneration.'

'Our approach has been endorsed at national government level, with the cabinet secretary for communities, Alex Neil MSP, recently giving the council positive feedback in terms of our planning performance framework annual report. Our key planning

policy document, the local development plan (LDP), has been reported on favourably by the Scottish government in terms of the recent LDP examination report and earmarks significant amounts of land for development throughout Argyll and Bute.'

'We support wind farms in principle, with policy and technical guidance in place to assist developers in the application process, but we must ensure that any development is sustainable and takes place in the right location.'

'We determine each application on its own merits, with due consideration to national planning policy, the local development plan and other material planning considerations such as economic benefit and noise and visual impact.'

'We work to support the ambitions of developers while protecting the interests of the wider community and the intrinsic qualities of the area that make it so special.'

What are you hoping for in the New Year?

FOR a bit of festive fun *The Oban Times* asked people in the town what their hopes, dreams or resolutions would be for the New Year.



Michael Croarkin, 72, lives in Oban and is retired. 'I suppose the main thing would be to go on a diet but I'm not very good at it. I say I'll do it every year and always have the best intentions but find it hard to stick to.'



Margaret Totterdell, 61, lives in Oban and is retired. 'I always hope for world peace and for people to give more to charity, more to other people, the needy. The world would be a better place if we gave more to others and less to ourselves.'



Ella MacDonald, 17, is from Benderloch and goes to Oban High school. 'Next year my main ambition is to move to Aberdeen. I've applied to study a fashion course there so hopefully I get the right results and get accepted to the course.'



Zac Gray, 17, lives in Broadford, Skye, and is training to become an outdoor instructor. 'I'm aiming to become an outdoor instructor. I'm studying it at college and qualify in two years, but next year I'll get a certificate for progressing, so I'll be on my way to achieving my goal.'



TICKETS ARE NOW ON SALE FOR THE AWARDS GALA DINNER

Thursday 26th March 2015 held at Our Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh



PURCHASE YOUR TICKETS ONLINE AT: www.scottishruralawards.org

or Tel: 0131 551 7933 email: info@scottishruralawards.org

All attendees will be featured in Scottish Field or online at scottishfield.co.uk and scottishruralawards.org



The annual Boxing Day match between Oban Celtic's Golden Oldies and the Young Guns took place at Mossfield Stadium with the Golden Oldies winning a close game 3-2. 16_01game03

Magnus makes under 20 squad

Rugby



Magnus Bradbury

BONAWE teenager Magnus Bradbury has made the 30-man Scotland under-20 squad ahead of the age-grade 6 Nations Championship in early 2015.

The former Oban Lorne forward, who made his senior professional debut for Edinburgh Rugby against Leinster in October, played for the age-grade side in 2014 at the world championships.

This season's squad will convene for their first two-day training camp of the New Year on Monday, January 12.

Scotland under-20 head coach Sean Lineen said: 'We have selected a strong group and one we are confident will compete well in the 6 Nations.'

'These players are getting consistent game-time at a high level whether that be through the BT Sport Scottish Rugby Academy games, their club team in the BT Premiership or, for some of them, exposure to the professional game.'

The age-grade side will be based at Netherdale, home of Gala Rugby Club, for their home ties and will welcome Wales, Italy and Ireland to the town.

Scotland begin their campaign against France at the Jean Laville Stade, Gueugnon on Saturday, February 7.

Home games against Wales and Italy follow on February 13 and 27, respectively, before a trip south of the border to the Northern Echo Arena, Darlington, on Friday, March 13 to play England.

Scotland play their final game against Ireland at Netherdale on Friday, March 20.

West of Scotland Cup draw

Football

THE West of Scotland Cup fifth round draw took place recently and unfortunately it hasn't been kind to Oban's amateur football teams.

If Saints beat high-flying Harestanes away from home they would face the winners of the Bannockburn v Duntocher fourth round match, again away from home.

Bannockburn are the current Central League premier division champions and will be favourites to beat Duntocher.

Oban Athletic have also been given a tough tie. They have been drawn away to face Ayrshire premier division leaders Tarbolton.

The Athletic game against Tarbolton will take place on Saturday 10 January with the Harestanes v Oban Saints match on Saturday 17 January.

Celtic's Golden Oldies win annual Boxing Day match

A RED-HOT rivalry between Oban Celtic's Young Guns and Old Crocks in their annual Boxing Day clash served as a winter warmer for the club's supporters. The match, held at Mossfield Stadium, brought club members together to celebrate the festive season and at a function later in the day money was raised for the Beatson Clinic in Glasgow.

Shinty

MacKinnon piped both teams onto the pitch to start the match.

In the end it was the experience of the Old Crocks that saw them to a 3-2 win in what was an entertaining game.

Kenny Witherspoon opened the scoring for the Young Guns' goalkeeper Calum Fox levelled the fixture.

Stewart MacGregor put the Golden Oldies in front with Sandy MacLeod increasing their lead from the penalty spot before Daniel Madej pulled a goal back for the youngsters to make it a nervous last few minutes for the old boys but they managed to hold out for a narrow 3-2 win.

A mainly sporting contest was well handled by referee John MacGregor.



At the end of the match Golden Oldie Donald MacKay was given a pelting of flour and eggs by his team-mates in 'celebration' of his forthcoming nuptials to Karen Love.

Photo Kevin McGlynn



Referee John MacGregor, Golden Oldies' Donald MacKay and Kenny Witherspoon Young Guns skipper lead the teams on to the field before the game. 16_01celtic02



Stewart MacGregor and Ally McKerracher tussle for the ball in midfield. 07_101celtic01

Oban Pool League takes a festive break

Football

OBAN Pool League played the final round of ties in 2014 last week before heading into the festive break.

The Gluepot were the busiest of all the teams after playing on both Wednesday and Thursday evening against The Lancaster 'A' and then The Lochavullin.

A valiant effort from the North Connel boys wasn't enough against a more experienced Lancaster 'A', who made it five consecutive wins to draw level on points at the top of the table.

Thursday saw The Gluepot fair much better as they eventually overpowered The Lochavullin to give themselves some breathing

space over the bottom three and they will now be focusing on breaking into the top half of the table.

The Lancaster 'B's emphatic victory over The Outreach means they are now tucked in behind the top two at the summit but with both sides still to play and a game in hand they are still harbouring hopes of a shock title success.

The concluding fixture saw The Lochnell just about deserve the win over a depleted Markie Dan's 'B' to occupy fourth spot as the league embarks into 2015.

Oban Pool League

	P	W	D	L	FF	FA	FD	PTS
1 Lochavullins Cellar	5	5	0	0	43	7	36	10
2 Lancaster A	5	5	0	0	38	12	26	10
3 Lancaster B	4	3	1	0	29	11	18	7
4 Lochnell	6	3	1	2	34	26	8	7
5 Markie Dans A	4	3	0	1	24	16	8	6
6 Gluepot	7	3	0	4	32	38	-6	6
7 Markie Dans B	5	1	0	4	19	31	-12	2
8 Lochavullin	6	0	0	5	13	47	-34	0
9 Outreach	6	0	0	6	8	52	-44	0

Oban Pool League doubles championship

	P	W	L	FF	FA	FD	PTS
1 Lancaster A	5	5	0	11	4	7	10
2 Lancaster B	4	4	0	10	2	8	8
3 Lochavullins Cellar	5	4	1	11	4	7	8
4 Lochnell	5	3	2	9	6	3	6
5 Gluepot	6	4	2	11	7	4	8
6 Markie Dans A	4	1	3	5	7	-2	2
7 Markie Dans B	5	1	4	5	9	-3	2
8 Outreach	6	1	5	5	13	-8	2
9 Lochavullin	6	1	5	3	15	-12	2

SPOT THE SHINTY BALL

LAST WEEK'S SHINTY BALL WAS HERE. . .

THIS WEEK'S JACKPOT £1450

We have removed the shinty ball from the photograph opposite. Now look carefully at the position of the players and use your skill and judgement to place a cross at the exact point where you think the centre of the ball was. You may have a maximum of 20 attempts on this coupon at a cost of £1. If you wish to have more attempts, you must enter on separate coupons.

Easy to enter

Cut out your completed coupon and put your entry plus £1 per 20 attempts into a sealed envelope and post it to "Spot the Shinty Ball" Competition, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll PA34 4HB by 12noon Tuesday. You may hand it into The Oban Times Head Office, Lochavullin, Oban by the same time. Otherwise all entries must be posted.

Competition rules

No responsibility will be accepted for entries which are delayed, mistaid or lost, and proof of posting cannot be accepted as proof of delivery. The Company's decision is final on all matters relating to the

game starts with a jackpot of £500 and will increase by £50 per week until it is won outright. To win the jackpot, the centre of your cross must be in the exact centre of the ball. If the crosses overlap the entry will be void. If no correct entry is received, two 'near miss' prizes of £25 will be awarded. When the jackpot is won, no other prizes will be awarded that week.

competition and no correspondence will be entered into. The final decision rests with the Company.

In the event of more than one correct entry, the jackpot will be shared equally between all winning entries. Any decision regarding the awarding of a prize is entirely at the discretion of the Company.

The Company reserves the right to declare the competition null and void at any time, subject to its discretion and to make full refund of the price of the coupon to any person who has entered the competition at that time. Employees of Wyvex Media, their immediate relatives and any person otherwise connected with the competition are ineligible to enter.

Please remember to enclose £1 for 20 crosses. The maximum number of attempts on this coupon is 20, but you may enter on separate coupons as many times as you wish. No photocopies allowed. You agree to abide by the rules. How to enter: Mark your crosses using a ballpoint pen. Twenty crosses may be put on this coupon for £1. Send to "Spot the Shinty Ball" Competition, The Oban Times, P.O. Box 1, Oban PA34 4HB



Please tape your £1 coin here

Name

Address

.....

.....

Tel No.

This week's nearest the ball winners, who each receive £25 are:

J MacDonald
Shuna Terrace
Oban

A Richmond
Balvicar Road
Oban

Corporate stationery
Business cards, letterheads, envelopes, comp slips

Personal stationery
Matching paper & envelopes,
postcards, address labels

krisp print

Contact us at: Krisp Print & Stationery,
Main Street/Longrow South,
Campbeltown PA28 6JD
Tel: 01586 554975 Email: staff@krispprint.co.uk
www.krispprint.co.uk

Cory pips his dad by one second Cycling

CORY Muir won his first senior event in the West Highland Wheelers' traditional Christmas handicap race in Glen Nevis.

Coming in on 47 minutes and 18 seconds, he finished only one second ahead of his father Gregor holding on to his back wheel. Third place was Joe Barnes on 48 minutes and 36 seconds, one of seventeen competitors who turned up for the event on December 21 despite torrential rain.

Fiona Beattie was the highest-placed lady, coming in at 50 minutes and 30 seconds despite being on her shopping bike, with Mairi Meldrum behind her on 53 minutes and seven seconds.

More family rivalry was evident with Hannah Barnes finishing on 53 minutes and 54 seconds, only three seconds ahead of her mother Gill. The Wheelers' next outing is a league race this Sunday at the Nevis Range.

Top 5 finishers: 1 Cory Muir 47:18; 2 Gregor Muir 47:19; 3 Joe Barnes 48:36; 4 Stephen Cant 48:41; 5 Liam Moynihan 48:53

Swimming pool and spa reopens Swimming

THE LEWIS swimming pool and spa reopened yesterday (Monday) following essential maintenance works. The facility, inside the isle's sports centre, was closed from December 22.

Tony Wade, sports facilities services manager for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, said: 'By including Christmas Day and Boxing Day, we tried to minimise the downtime as much as we could. We appreciate this inconvenience some of our customers but we hope they will understand the necessity of doing the work to ensure the long term well-being of the pool.'

New pitch unveiled at Boxing Day match

LOCHABER Rugby Club's newly-renovated pitch was unveiled in style on Boxing Day with the annual president's match.

The first game at the new park in Banavie, it saw a spirited encounter between a captain's 15 and president's 15, watched by many families and friends of the club.

It was the first match held at the ground since it closed for resurfacing in September 2013, following a period where the senior team played at Black Parks in Inverloch.

The Boxing Day event started with the opening of a memorial bench on the supporters' hill beside the pitch, dedicated to the late Davie MacCook, a much-missed former life member of Lochaber RFC.

At kick off, both teams were piped on to the park by youth players Ben Fulford and Alistair MacRae, before the club's primary six and seven player of the year Fergus Beradelli presented the match ball to both captains.

Josh and Ben Farr were ball boys for the day, alongside



MATCH BALL: Lochaber RFC youth player Fergus Beradelli (middle) presents the match ball to team captains Mike McLeish (left) and Rory MacKay



PIPED: Lochaber Rugby Club's first match at the newly-renovated Banavie pitch about to get underway, with the teams led out by pipers Ben Fulford (left) and Alistair MacRae

their youth teammates Freddy and Ben Fulford.

In an enthralling 80 minutes of end-to-end rugby, it was clear that the players were keen to show what they were made of before the second half of the league season begins in the new year.

Andy Milne scored two tries for the captain's side, one of which saw him run 70 metres down the length of the pitch after retrieving a spilled ball deep in his own half, with Daniel Thomas also scoring.

Tom Baxter and Andrew MacIver both chipped in with tries for the president's.

Following the game, there was a host of Christmas celebrations in the clubhouse with live music,

a champagne toast, Christmas jumper competition and raffle. Players, friends and families enjoyed post-match food and drink together, with all attendees getting free soup and a roll upon arrival.

Alistair MacKinnon, president of Lochaber RFC, said the club was delighted to welcome fans back to Banavie.

He said: 'We would like to thank the players, coaches and supporters for putting up with all the disruption.

'The impact of being away from Banavie hit the club hard on and off the pitch, causing disruption to training for the senior players as well as making it challenging to try and accommodate youth games.

'During the time away the youths were training at the King George V Park and the seniors and womens teams at the Black Parks during the bright nights and then at the high school astro turf on the dark and winter nights.

'The latter meant that they were unable to do any contact training which wasn't helpful to the team for proper pre-match preparation, which definitely had an impact on the scores last season as well as player morale.'

The first competitive match on the new pitch at Banavie will be on Saturday, when Lochaber's senior team takes on Gairloch in the BT Caledonia Division 2 North.

Fort William FC hoping for fair weather Football

FORT William Football Club players and fans will be hoping for fair weather this week as they look to their fixture against Clachnacuddin on Saturday, their first game for more than a month.

Conditions permitting, this will be the Claggan side's first time on the field since the 4-0 away victory against Huntly on November 29 and the team are looking to make history with a fourth consecutive win.

A minute's silence will be held before the game in memory of former Fort chairman Harry MacKenzie, who died earlier this month.

David MacDonald of Fort William Football Club said: 'Harry was chairman of the club for a number of years, and a member of the committee for many years before that.

'When he stepped down as chairman, you would find him at every home game keeping us company in the old stand.

'Harry was a gentleman through and through and we would like to pass on our sincere condolences to his family.'

Festive fun night Ten pin bowling

DESPITE taking a break from serious competition over Christmas, members of the Lochaber Building Supplies ten pin bowling league took to the lanes for a festive fun night.

Gary Cowan stole the show at the Nevis Centre, winning the highest individual game in the handicap category with 186 and the scratch game with 167.

Even in the pairs contest Gary was on top form, winning the scratch duo game with his partner David Ogg but Tim Attack and Rossamy Wareing pipped the pair to the post in the handicap duo competition.

Tim also made a presentation to John Weller, thanking him for all his hard work in organising and running the league.

Nominations now open Awards

NOMINATIONS are now open for the Lochaber Sports Association annual awards.

Groups and individuals can be put forward for categories including sportsperson of the year, youth endeavour, team of the year and services to sport.

Winners will be announced at a ceremony on Friday January 30 and nominations must be submitted by Monday January 19.

For a nomination form contact Lochaber Sports Association on 01631 740300.

Water sports trip for pupils Water sports

LOCHABER high school is planning a water sports trip to the Mediterranean for pupils in 2016, following the success of a similar event this year.

June saw students head to La Fosca in Spain to take part in activities such as snorkelling, canoeing and windsurfing, following a 34-hour journey by coach and ferry.

It has been agreed that a future trip, to a location yet to be decided, will use air travel instead, following feedback from students.



RUNNERS: The field of 62 set off for the Cruim Leachainn hill race on Boxing Day

Tom Smith wins Torlundy race

A RECORD 62 runners took part in Lochaber Athletic Club's Boxing Day race at Torlundy and it was local Tom Smith who headed the field, finishing the Cruim Leachainn route in 46 minutes and 32 seconds, closely followed by his running partner Andrew Barrington in 47 minutes and 42 seconds.

Athletes came from as far afield as Cambridge and Bristol to join the locals in conditions well below freezing and fine sheets of ice added to the usual combination of bog, heather and gorse.

The Lochaber females were also successful, as Diane Baum

was first lady home in 52:31, with Sarah MacKenzie second in 54:37 and Amanda Blackhall third in 58:00.

Veterans

Jim Treasurer headed the over 60s veterans with a time of 1:01:58, with Mike Connolly close behind in 1:02:39 and race organiser Mike Tighe finishing third in 1:09:24.

Members of the club thanked the local landowners who let the runners use their grounds throughout the year and Kathy Tighe for providing festive catering for the event.

The next race will be the

Athletics

Aonach Mor uphill race on New Year's Day (Thursday).

Top 10 finishers, Lochaber AC unless stated otherwise: 1 Tom Smith 46:32; 2 Andrew Barrington 47:42; 3 Alastair Hodges (Cambridge) 48:00; 4 Allan Ross 49:10; 5 Callum Fraser 50:09; 6 Alan Smith (Deeside Runners) 50:36; 7 Manuel Gorman (Westies) 50:53; 8 Steven Fallon (Carnethy Hill Running Club); 9 Stewart Wilson (Inverness Harriers) 51:40; 10 Diane Baum 52:31.

New manager looking forward to new season

ONWARDS and upwards is the message from Kilmallie Shinty Club's new manager as he looks forward to the start of next season in the Marine Harvest national division.

Ex-player Mark MacPherson has taken over as first team boss from Duncan Kelly and believes it is high time his team gained promotion to the Orion Group premiership after missing out in 2013 due to league reconstruction.

That season saw the men in blue finish as champions of the north division one and should have meant they would be promoted into the premiership, the next league up.

However, the creation of the national division that summer, sandwiched in between the two, meant they were controversially put into that league instead.

Kilmallie's first season in the national division this year saw them finish third and miss out on a premiership playoff spot by only two points.

Mark MacPherson was part of that squad and is now excited about taking the reins as manager for 2015.

He said: 'It's going to be a massive challenge but one I'm looking forward to.

'I was carrying an injury during the last two years so I had to walk away from playing and took the role.

'Duncan has been very supportive of me taking the job, as has everyone at the club and my own family.

'And he told me he is just a phone call away if I need a hand.

'I think I will manage okay next year. I've always been very vocal in the changing room.

'I've a lot of respect for the boys. They know I'm the boss but we are still mates at the end of the day.'

MacPherson's squad will re-group for pre-season training on January 5, followed by pre-season friendlies against Lochaber, Glenurquhart and Kingussie.

The manager believes he has a well-balanced squad and is hoping to see signs of progress from last season. He added: 'Our main aim is to push for promotion to the premiership.

'Our squad is very strong; looking from the outside in I didn't realise how much quality we had.

'There are some cracking young guys coming through but we have got a lot of experience.

'There are guys in the squad that were in the 2005 Camanachd cup final and their experience is phenomenal.'

Shinty

Club captain Liam MacDonald feels there is plenty of room for improvement next year.

Despite finishing third in the league he knows his side's cup form left a lot to be desired, but hopes to rectify this in 2015.

He said: 'I felt last season we had a good chance in our cup games and things didn't go to plan but I'm looking forward to next season. Everyone started to get more enthusiastic towards the end of last year and now we are looking forward to starting from scratch again under a new manager.'



MANAGER: Former Kilmallie player Mark MacPherson has taken over as first team manager for next season

SPONSORS OF THE OBAN TIMES WEATHER AND TIDES

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T: 01631 565740 F: 01631 565780 M: 07836 366419
Em: enquiries@northwestmarine.co.uk Web: www.northwestmarine.co.uk

WEATHER

Thursday Heavy rain
Winds strong south westerly
Temperatures 5°C to 10°C.

Friday Light rain showers
Winds strong westerly
Temperatures 5°C to 7°C.

Weekend Outlook Heavy rain showers Saturday
Sunny intervals on Sunday
Winds strong northeerly
Temperatures 5°C to 7°C.

TIDAL INFORMATION

Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday, January 1, 2015** are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

Date	am				pm			
Thur	02.36	3.2	08.55	1.5	15.23	3.4	21.15	1.5
Fri	03.31	3.3	09.59	1.4	16.10	3.6	22.06	1.3
Sat	04.13	3.6	10.50	1.3	16.48	3.7	22.50	1.2
Sun	04.52	3.7	11.34	1.2	17.24	3.8	23.31	1.1
Mon	05.30	3.9	12.14	1.2	17.58	3.9	***	**
Tues	00.10	1.0	06.06	4.0	12.52	1.2	18.32	3.9
Wed	00.48	1.0	06.42	4.0	13.28	1.3	19.06	3.9

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)

Ferry Crossings/Sea States

Oban to Barra/South Uist	Moderate
Oban to Coll/Tiree	Moderate
Kennacraig to Islay	Moderate