

The Oban Times

& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

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80 pence



Who's the man with Donnie MacKinnon?

see special feature on page 13



SPOT THE JACKPOT!

SHINTY BALL £1650!

Ballet West students shine in tale of star-crossed lovers

TAYNUILT'S Ballet West is set to romance a Glasgow audience on Valentine's Day with its production of Romeo and Juliet, the first classical ballet performance to be staged in the Clyde Auditorium.

The Glasgow date in the venue, more commonly known as the Armadillo, is the final performance of the ballet company's Scottish tour, which began in Oban's Corran Halls last weekend.

Ballet West principal Gillian Barton says the latest production is the 'best thing' the company has produced since it was established 24 years ago.

Such is the excitement around the production, the school is prepared to run buses from Oban to Glasgow if a sufficient number of people wish to travel.

Anyone interested in travelling to the Glasgow show should call 01866 822 641 for more details.



TIMESLINE

Town centre base for business group

BID4Oban, the community business group, is moving to Stevenson Street in early March and will be based in the premises of a former florist.

Chairman Graeme Bass said: 'The shop will be open 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. The move gives us a town centre location.' Mr Bass thanked Oban firm CGL for its support while BID4Oban was housed in its building.

Lifeboat callouts on the increase

THE VOLUNTEER lifeboat crew in Oban saw a sharp rise in the number of callouts and rescues in 2014.

The number of callouts (52) and people rescued (57) in 2013 was typical of the yearly trend but in 2014 the lifeboat launched 68 times, rescuing 120 people. Barra lifeboat rescued 28 people in 2014, 25 more than the previous year.

Housing market on the move

THE HOUSING market in the Oban area is showing signs of growth following a slump around the time of last year's referendum, according to an estate agent in the town.

Bell Ingram expects the slow and steady growth in the market at the end of last year to continue into early 2015.

Gritters on patrol after snow alert

PEOPLE across the west Highlands and islands were bracing themselves for severe weather this week as more snow was forecast for today (Thursday).

BEAR Scotland said it had been preparing its fleet of gritters as the Met Office issued a yellow 'be aware' warning.

Stop the rot before Rockfield is gone, urges Oban businessman

LOUISE LEE
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DRY ROT in the former Rockfield primary school is spreading at the cost of '£50 an hour - more than £1,000 a day'.

That was the view of Oban Community Trust (OCT) member and businessman Graham MacQueen, who told a community group on Monday that the council had to make a decision urgently to save the historic Oban building.

Oban community council overwhelmingly backed the trust's plans to transform the listed building into a cultural hub.

Graham MacQueen told the community council: 'This is the best thing that Oban has seen for a long time and offers a great opportunity.'

'But the dry rot is spreading at a rate of £50 an hour. That adds



STOP THE ROT: Graham MacQueen, far right, and Gordon MacNab, second from left, call for action

up to £1,000 a day, every day. It is critical for Oban. We all know about the need for a heritage centre in Oban. But we need this sorted out as soon as possible in order to stop the rot.

'We can not afford to put this off any longer. Another hot summer and the building is gone.'

OCT chairman Gordon MacNab said: 'The dry rot is the biggest issue we have. We have asked the council for sight of these reports but so far we have been unable to see them. We have asked for the building to be handed over to us wind and watertight and free of dry rot.'

'We, the community, would do the reconstruction. We want to conserve a community building for community purposes.'

Community council member Lorne MacLeod said: 'This project is one that will enhance what is delivered here in Oban.'

OCT was asked how many jobs would be created by bringing the building back into use.

Eleanor MacKinnon, a development worker on the project, said: 'There will be jobs with the car park, janitors and caretakers but we can't give a number.'

Councillor Roddy McCuish said: 'I will take this back to the area committee if Mr MacQueen can give me some detail of the cost of the dry rot.'

'If it is costing £50 a day and £1,000 a week - that will focus people's minds and help us get on with a decision as quickly as possible. The area committee will be seeing the reports in February. After we have made a decision, it will go to the full council for a decision.'

Marri Malloy, chairwoman of the community council, took a vote which endorsed OCT's plans for Rockfield.

Miller Stewart

ESTATE AGENTS & PROPERTY MANAGERS SOLICITORS & NOTARIES

Properties of the week

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Councillors ready to face their public in open forum

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COUNCILLORS in Oban, Lorn and the Isles will put themselves in the firing line for a new style of public meeting, which starts next week.

The Argyll and Bute council's area committee, chaired by councillor Roddy McCuish, will take only public questions at the special meeting in the Corran Halls, Oban, from 7pm on Tuesday, February 3, without the support of council officials.



The committee hopes to gauge community views and take on board suggestions and ideas for the area by opening questions to the floor.

Councillor McCuish (pictured) said: 'This is the first time, to my knowledge, that the area committee has tried something like this and I hope people take full advantage of it.'

'I feel every councillor should be able to answer questions from the general public, whether at a meeting or on an individual basis.'

Stirred but not shaken on Islay

A SMALL earthquake stirred Islay at the weekend, but apparently left residents unshaken by the experience.

The British Geology Survey website reported that the 1.6 magnitude tremor shook the ground in the villages of Port Charlotte and nearby Bruichladdich on Saturday at around 7.50pm.

When contacted by *The Oban Times*, three Port Charlotte residents said they were unaware the modest earthquake had occurred.

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Head-hunting for new finance chief

ARGYLL and Bute council has rejected a claim that it has been slow to appoint someone to take charge of the authority's finance department.

Bruce West, head of strategic finance, announced his resignation from the council in November last year.

But last Thursday at a meeting of the full council, Helenburgh councillor James Robb asked why it had taken so long to start the search for his replacement.

However, council officers were quick to reassure councillor Robb that there was no undue delay in advertising the post.

They told councillor Robb that an appointment panel had been set up and that contingency measures had been put in place until a new finance chief is appointed to the £68,583 a year post.

Mr West, who had been at the local authority for a number of years, has taken up the post of finance director with Argyll Community Housing Association.

Supermarket calls for collection help

VOLUNTEERS are wanted in Oban and Fort William next month to take part in a new Tesco fundraising project.

The supermarket has teamed up with two charities, Diabetes UK and the British Heart Foundation, with in-store collections taking place on Friday, February 13 and Saturday, February 14.

To volunteer for the collection contact tescocollections@bhf.org.uk or telephone Michelle Parry on 020 7554 0520.

New approach to talking the lingo

CHILDREN in Argyll will soon be taught three languages as part of their standard school curriculum.

Last Thursday, Argyll and Bute councillors agreed to a European-style of teaching foreign languages, called the 'One plus two' model.

It is designed to ensure by 2020 every child leaving school will have learned two languages in addition to their own 'mother' tongue.

Thousands raised for Billy

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NOTHING was going to stop Yvonne McHugh attending a fundraiser in Campbeltown for her partner Billy Irving who has been stuck in India for 16 months.

She made the two-hour journey from Connel despite being due to have their baby in a few weeks - and despite her own car being damaged by a rear-end collision the day before.

Billy's former Campbeltown Grammar schoolmates raised more than £3,500 from a concert in the town and it has been revealed that some of his closest friends have even set up direct debit payments to keep him off the streets.

In turn, the 34-year-old sailor, who was arrested on an anti-piracy boat 16 months ago, sent a video message to his friends, thanking them and telling how much their support meant to him.

It proved emotional for those watching, not least of all Yvonne. She said: 'I was determined to



ALL SMILES: from left, organisers Gail Brown and Alix Geyer, partner Yvonne McHugh and her mother, Jeannette, brother Jamie and organiser Catriona McLean

make the journey, even though a car went into the back of mine the previous day.

'I wasn't hurt and my mum drove me down for the concert. My hospital bag was in the boot along with a pram and a baby seat for the car, just in case.

'There was no way I was going to miss the night when all his pals are doing so much for him.

'Billy left the town when he

was 18, but the people of Campbeltown have done more than anyone for him.

'I can't get over their support. Everyone thinks of him so fondly and wants to help, and they have been so kind to me as well.

'It means so much to me that he has so many friends wanting to help and I know it keeps his spirits up. They Skype him, message him and Facebook him.

'They have even set up a monthly debit they all contribute to. The money raised for him is keeping him off the streets.

'He spends most of his day stuck in his hotel, playing his chanter. Boredom is a problem and I've seen a vulnerable side to him which I never saw before.'

Billy's brother, Jamie, also travelled from Glasgow for the concert.

The Indian authorities initially claimed that Billy's US-based ship was carrying illegal weapons and ammunition.

The crew were released from custody last June when charges were quashed, but they cannot go anywhere because the Tamil Nadu police are appealing against that decision and have withheld their passports.

She added: 'I'd dearly love Billy to be home in time for the baby being born, but I've no reason to hope that will happen. It will be hard for him not being at the birth.'

The Foreign Commonwealth Office has always maintained it does not give financial aid to UK citizens overseas.

Upbeat Flora's proud to serve

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A LONG-SERVING special constable in Oban is being held up as an example to others who may be considering joining the regular police service or special constabulary.

Special constable Flora McBurnie, 50, who works as a senior care assistant at the Lynn of Lorne nursing home, was presented with an award for her long service with Oban police.

The Long Service and Good Conduct Medal was presented last week by Oban police inspector Julie McLeish, who encouraged others to follow Flora's lead.

Flora, who is married, was sworn in as a special constable

SPECIAL LADY: Special constable Flora McBurnie, right, receives her long service medal from Inspector Julie McLeish



on Burns' Day 13 years ago. Delighted with her medal, she said: 'I joined because I was training with some of the police officers at the karate club and they thought I would be quite good at it.'

'Being a resident in a town, you should give something back and I feel this is my contribution.'

Inspector McLeish said: 'Special constables are highly valued members of local policing teams and this can be an ideal way for anyone interested in a career in the police to gain experience prior to applying to become a full-time officer.'

'There are also lots of special constables who do not wish to become full-time police officers but willingly give up some of their spare time to help keep people safe.'

'The local community benefits from the commitment and dedication of our special constables and I am very appreciative of the special constables we have across Oban, Lorn and the Isles.'

MULL lines



POST HASTE: the new Tobermory Post Office will be located in the Sugar Rush shop at Ledaig car park

Post Office's sweet move

TOBERMORY Post Office is set to move to Sugar Rush at Hu's Gate, Ledaig car park, following a public consultation.

The service, which is set to open its doors to the public at 9am on Monday, February 2, is only 200 metres from the present post office at 36 Main Street.

Post Office services will be available from 9am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 12.30pm on Saturday.

Local residents and small business customers will be able to access a wide range of Post Office services during the extended opening hours, including special delivery, local collect, home shopping returns, online banking, cash deposits and withdrawals.

Other services include withdrawals using a Post Office Card Account, sending funds abroad using Moneygram, and customers can pay bills, pre-order travel money, apply for travel insurance and top up mobile phones.

The post office at Main Street closed at 1pm yesterday (Wednesday). During the short period of closure, customers can access Post Office products and services from nearby branches including Dervaig Post Office, Main Street, Dervaig; Aros Post Office, Aros and Craignure Post Office, The Craignure Stores, Craignure.

Suzanne Richardson, regional manager for the Post Office, said: 'We are making it easier for customers to get their cash, send and collect their mail and do their banking because we know how important these services are to local residents.'

'We are confident that this vibrant new-style Post Office at the heart of the community will be popular.'

TV chef's mussel-bound

SCOTTISH rope grown mussels produced by Inverlussa Shellfish on Mull will take a starring role on BBC TV's James Martin Home Comforts programme later this week.

A TV crew from the programme visited Inverlussa last summer and saw at first-hand how the mussels are grown and cultivated.

Shown around the farm on Loch Spelve by Inverlussa director Douglas Wilson and manager Cameron Maclean, the environmentally friendly manner of the cultivation of Scottish mussels was explained and their excellent taste and nutritional properties highlighted.

The mussels are grown on ropes suspended from buoys in the sea and feed naturally off plankton in the rich tidal flows to ensure the growth of succulent and sweet tasting shellfish.

Inverlussa is a member of the Scottish Shellfish Marketing Group, a co-operative of mussel and oyster farmers based on the Scottish west coast and Shetland.

Following the tour, the Inverlussa team served a tasty meal of sweet and sour mussels cooked up by nine-year-old Charlie Knight, the grandson of Douglas Wilson.

Mr Wilson said: 'It was great to welcome the Home Comforts team to Inverlussa and for us to be able to show how we grow our quality mussels. They really are the most superb tasting shellfish and their popularity with consumers is growing all the time.'

Nicola Kingscote, series producer, said: 'We were thrilled to film on Mull with a local firm catching such wonderful mussels. We were also treated to a special cook-up outside by the loch, with a tasty mussel recipe courtesy of Charlie Knight. Some of the most beautiful shots and flavours of the series were captured on Loch Spelve in the company of Cameron and Douglas and their families.'

See more at: <http://www.thefishsite.com/fishnews/24965/scottish-mussels-to-star-on-james-martin-home-comforts-programme#sthash:yb3sDmeF.dpuf>

Ambulance cover review

THE isles of Mull and Iona health and care review group held its latest meeting on January 15, and high on the agenda was a report into ambulance cover required for the islands.

The report is to be discussed by the review group at its next meeting and will also be considered by the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) senior management team later this month. The report will also be made public to both islands.

As part of the review, the SAS is also looking into plans to set up training for a community first responder scheme for the islands. The training is planned to start in February or March and the scheme should be up and running by the end of the year.

An interim GP out-of-hours service is now in place for Mull and Iona and will provide continuity of care for patients during the review period. The rota for this service is valid until May.

The review group received initial proposals for the future GP arrangements for Bunessan and Tobermory.

These suggest that there should be a single integrated primary care and multi-disciplinary team with GP surgeries in both practices during the day. The proposals also suggested that the out-of-hours GP service would cover Mull and Iona and would be provided by GPs based in the hospital.

For more information, contact Caroline Cecil on 01546 605680 or email caroline.cecil@nhs.net.

SOS signals a fun day out

TOMORROW (Friday) is 'SOS Day', the biggest fundraising event in the Royal National Lifeboat Institution's (RNLI) calendar.

Tobermory RNLI will be hosting an SOS Day quiz at the Mishnish hotel from 8pm. It costs £1 per person and each team can choose a member of the lifeboat crew to help (or hinder) them. The following day will see a family fun day, 'Smiles on Saturday', at Aros hall in Tobermory from 3pm until 5pm.

There will be games, a quiz and refreshments including home baking. Entry is free and everyone is very welcome.

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Scottish Building Apprenticeship & Training Council

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Prize Guy: Fraser with his award for getting to the finals

Holyrood appearance for Lochgilphead apprentice

AN ARGYLL apprentice has received national recognition at an awards ceremony held in the Scottish parliament.

Fraser Campbell, who is employed by M and K MacLeod Construction Ltd, was a finalist in the James Birnie Award for Craft Excellence.

The awards are organised by the Scottish Building Apprenticeship and Training Council, part of the Building Federation.

The 19-year-old employee, from Lochgilphead, is a second year apprentice and works as a tiler/cement worker.

Work to lower radioactive gas levels found in schools

WORK will continue to reduce above-average concentrations of a naturally-occurring radioactive gas found in four Highland schools.

Radon is a substance found in the air everywhere and is normally harmless, but long-term exposure can increase the risk of lung cancer.

As a result, Highland council is taking action to reduce levels found in Ardnamurchan and Glenurquhart high schools, along with Kilchuimen academy and a primary school in Fort Augustus.

The work is necessary because certain areas inside

these buildings are still giving an above-average reading after 90 days of monitoring.

The Telford Centre in Fort Augustus will also require treatment after higher concentrations of radon were found.

Work to test eight Lochaber schools for radon levels began in December, and all were believed by the council to have 'a lower probability' of the gas being present.

Those being monitored are Lochaber high, Lochside RC, Banavie, Inverloch, St Bride's, Ardour, Glencoe and Strontian primaries. The results are expected by March.

New breakwater plans for Kerrera slipway welcomed

A BREAKWATER is to be installed as part of reconstruction work at the Kerrera ferry slipway, to help the boat service during rough weather.

Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited (CMAL), the Scottish government-owned ferries and piers company tasked by Transport Scotland to carry out the work, held a pre-application consultation at the old school building on Kerrera on Tuesday evening to discuss the plans.

Ruairidh Campbell, CMAL project manager, said: 'The improvement works at Kerrera ferry also include the extension of the Kerrera and Gallanach slipways.'

'This will improve the resilience of the ferry service in inclement weather and remove current tidal restrictions placed on vehicular traffic, therefore improving the flow of vessels to Kerrera.'

'Following consultation with the local community, it has been agreed that a pedestrian-only service will operate for the duration of the works, which are expected to be completed in winter 2015.'

Oban councillor Roddy McCuish said: 'I'm delighted to see the progress so far that Transport Scotland has made.'

O2 OPERATOR TELLS ANXIOUS MOTHER WHO NEEDS TO KEEP IN CONTACT WITH DISABLED SON



UPSET: Mother Heather, sons Cameron and Max

'Oh well, that is unfortunate'

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THE MOTHER of a disabled boy has slammed the poor customer service from phone operator O2, which she claims left her practically housebound in her Appin home for a week.

Heather Allen, 36, whose 13-year-old son Cameron suffers from brittle bone disease, needs to remain in constant contact with Oban high school as Cameron's condition means he can be rushed to hospital at any time.

With O2's mobile coverage down from January 9 to 22, and the operator providing little or no information about when it would be reconnected, she was forced to stay in the family home so she could be contacted on her house telephone.

Eventually she resorted to buying a new pay-as-you-go mobile phone and sim card from rival provider EE.

Heather, who also lives with husband Graham and their youngest son Max, explained:

'Over the past year or so, Cameron's condition has been a lot worse, meaning he's broken around 40 bones, so it's not far off one a week. I need to be contactable all the time.'

'My main issue is the way O2 have treated us; they've just been so dismissive.'

'I called them on January 15 and asked what was happening, and the guy on the phone told me it would be reconnected the next day, but that didn't happen. It was obvious he was just saying that to get me off the phone.'

'After that I tried Twitter for customer service, and to be fair they were a lot more responsive, but they said they were unable to guarantee a fault-free service, so that was when I had no choice but to go and buy another phone.'

'If the service was down for a day or two, I wouldn't have minded, but two weeks is just not on.'

Mrs Allen said she phoned up to enquire about compensation, but was initially told she wasn't eligible, despite friends claiming their accounts were credited

with £50 when they complained.

She said: 'When I phoned up again, I mentioned that Cameron had brittle bone disease and the person said, "Oh well, that is unfortunate".'

'He was really dismissive and quite rude. I phoned up again on Tuesday, and was told that £5 would be credited to my account.'

'I actually couldn't believe it when they told me that. The phone and sim card, and the top-up voucher cost me about £30, so being offered just £5 felt like a real slap in the face.'

An O2 spokeswoman said that the company would be reviewing the calls made by Mrs Allen to the customer service team to see if the help given was within company guidelines.

She added: 'Severe weather conditions had prevented our engineers access to carry out an assessment and fix a power-related issue on a mast in Barcaldine.'

'The site was restored on January 22. We apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused.'

Police alert about counterfeit cash

THREE Oban retailers reported the discovery of counterfeit bank notes on the same day.

The three police reports were all recorded on Monday, suggesting counterfeit notes have been circulating in the town since the beginning of the week.

The counterfeit cash appears to be legitimate Royal Bank of Scotland £5 and £10 notes, but on closer inspection police say the detail on the note is blurred.

Oban police said they were attempting to trace two men believed to be responsible for circulating the notes.

Inspector Julie McLeish said: 'I would ask everyone to be aware and to use common sense measures to check notes for legitimacy.'

Lions' Day draws in charity money

OBAN and Lorn Lions club is taking stall bookings for its annual charities day on June 6.

In previous years, sums of more than £15,000 have been raised for good causes and the day attracts hundreds of visitors to the town.

To book a stall, contact John Lloyd on 01531 562762 or email oban3108@aol.com

Witnesses accuse owner of sex abuse on island

COURT REPORTER
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THE OWNER of an outdoor adventure company has denied sexually abusing three boys on an island south of Oban, on separate occasions sometime between 1979 and 1986.

Torquil Charles Johnson-Ferguson, of Solwaybank, Chapel Knowe, Canonbie, Dumfries and Galloway, denies using lewd and libidinous practices towards the boys: one then aged nine or 11 years, another aged 11 or 12 and another aged 13.

A jury at Oban sheriff court heard that outdoor adventure courses had been run on Rua Fiola by Johnson-Ferguson - who owns the island - and his wife, Margaret, from 1976 until

2014, when the Wild Island Exploration Ltd company ceased to trade.

The courses included activities such as abseiling, canoeing, overnight survival expeditions on another island, boat trips, fishing, using a zip wire landing in a mud pool and sleeping in a cave on Rua Fiola.

The first Crown witness explained how he and other boys were sleeping, or were about to go to sleep, in the cave.

They had been taking part in outdoor activities during the day with Johnson-Ferguson. The witness said he could not remember if there were other instructors on the trip.

He said that at night on the second day Johnson-Ferguson, now 65 years old, lay down beside

him and put his hand inside his sleeping bag and began fondling him. He also claimed that the accused made the witness perform a sexual act on him.

The witness was shown a questionnaire that he filled in following the conclusion of his stay at the camp, in which he stated that he 'loved every minute' of the camp and that 'the instructors were all very good'.

Under cross-examination, defence lawyer Gary McAteer said: 'I am not suggesting an 11-year-old boy would write that he was abused at the time.'

'But when the Crown asked you what was the most memorable moment of the trip, you said it was when you were abused, but for whatever reason by the end of the course you said that you

enjoyed the expedition most.'

Mr McAteer suggested the witness had been in awe of the 'adventure figure' of Johnson-Ferguson and that he had subsequently been teased by the other boys in the group.

'I wonder if you have imagined something had happened in a context you may have forgotten,' said Mr McAteer. 'I am suggesting you have got this wrong.'

'It happened,' the witness responded. He told the procurator fiscal under re-examination: 'I don't think I had the imagination to make up a story like that at that age.'

Another witness told the jury that he had been at preparatory school with the first witness and had attended a course on the island with him when the incident

happened. He recalled being in the cave with his friend, 15-20 other boys and Johnson-Ferguson, where they had bedded down for the night in sleeping bags on bracken but did not recall if there were other instructors present.

He said Johnson-Ferguson and his friend had left the cave together to 'ooohs' from the other boys.

It was not until he went on a trip to New Zealand in 2011 to see his friend, that the alleged victim had confessed exactly what had happened. 'He broke down in tears and told me about the event that had happened at Rua Fiola. He said that he had a sexual encounter between himself and Torquil Johnson-Ferguson.'

Under cross examination, he agreed that he couldn't remem-

ber exactly what year the incident happened or what age he had been.

A second alleged victim, who was 11 or 12 at the time, told the court he had gone on a course to Rua Fiola twice while at preparatory school and during the second visit, aged 11 or 12, had been sleeping next to Johnson-Ferguson in the cave.

He said he woke when he felt Johnson-Ferguson take his hand and put it on the accused's groin and the accused put his hand on the witness's groin but he said he didn't open his eyes.

He felt 'disorientated' and 'a bit panicky' the following day but didn't think about the incident until his late 30s when he told his mother during a drunken phone call and then a close friend who

had been making inappropriate jokes about child abuse.

Mr McAteer asked the witness how he knew it was Johnson-Ferguson if he hadn't opened his eyes.

'It was him,' the witness said. 'I know it was him. It was my first experience of touching a man's [groin] and I know it wasn't a boy, it was a man and it was that man there.'

Mr McAteer suggested he had got it completely wrong and had made it up.

'It is incumbent on me to tell the truth and it is absolutely clear to me that there is no question in my mind as to what has happened,' said the witness.

The trial before Sheriff Ruth Anderson, QC, and the jury continues.

Advertising feature
Are your winter heating bills giving you an electric shock?

If the anticipated arrival of your winter heating bill is making you shiver then now is the time to speak to Renewables Now and get advice on switching to a renewable heat source.

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With its office based only a few miles north of Oban in Barcaldine, Renewables Now is on hand to deliver expert advice and recommend the best means of comfortably heating your home whilst reducing your energy bills. With a showroom featuring the finest and most advanced technologies on the market, you can see for yourself just how satisfying switching could be.

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Business as usual at Oban pub say administrators

EUAN PATERSON
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PATRONS and suppliers of The Lorne Bar in Oban have been told it's business as usual, despite its parent group, Maclay, bringing in the administrators last Friday.

Administrators EY will keep the business in operation, which comprises 15 public houses and bars, as a going concern.

The Lorne Bar is a well-established and popular public house in the centre of Oban.

The administrators said it had had expressions of interest already in the Maclay group properties.

Ross Nisbet of administrators EY said: 'The Lorne Bar is one of the premises owned by Maclay Group and will be traded as a

going concern. Our message to our patrons and customers is "it's business as usual".

'We don't want the them to be worried about the present situation.'

'We are looking to trade the business as a going concern and we have had expressions of interest in the group as a whole.'

The directors of Maclay Group plc said they had been seeking 'a strategic solution to the financial pressures facing the business at present'.

A statement from the group added: 'In light of a solution not emerging in the time available, the directors took this decision in order to protect the employment of its 500 staff and the business which remains profitable.'

Search for couple who checked out without squaring their bill

POLICE are looking for a couple who left a Tobermory hotel without paying their bill.

The man and woman, both believed to be in their early to mid-20s, booked a two-night stay between last Friday and

Sunday but left after the first night without checking out. Police said enquiries are continuing to track down the pair.

The woman is around 5ft 3ins in height and of slim build, with shoulder-length, dark brown

hair. She also has two piercings on her upper lip. The man is around 5ft 7ins in height and of medium build with short, dark brown hair.

Anyone with any information should contact the police on 101.

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College marks up another success with pass rates for four in a row

STUDENTS of West Highland College UHI performed better than the national average, according to new figures, writes Emma Crichton.

Of all the full time students from the college's 10 centres, 75 per cent achieved their course qualifications, compared to 66 per cent across the country, according to figures for 2013-14 set by the Scottish Funding Council.

This also represented a rise in standards for the fourth consecutive year for the college. Lydia Rohmer, principal and chief executive of West Highland College, said: 'This demonstrates both our commitment to continuously strengthen and enhance learning and the student experience across our 10 centres and the hard work of our talented staff teams to support our learners to succeed.'

'We will continue to build on these results in the future by ensuring that every one of our students receives excellent support to empower them to make the right course choices and to complete their studies successfully in the future.'

Dave Thompson, MSP for Lochaber and Badenoch, said the college's results had been 'excellent'.

He added: 'This is great news for the college, all the potential students in Lochaber and for all the employers.'

'It is an advert of the highest order for the college, Fort William and Lochaber and I hope it extends its exemplary performance in the current year.'

MOVE TO BAN POLITICAL POSTERS ON COUNCIL PROPERTY BINNED IN FAVOUR OF 'STATUS QUO'
Grassroots protest prevails

LOUISE LEE
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A COUNCIL U-turn on a move to ban political posters was down to people power, says the woman who started an online campaign.

Protester Stacey Felgate, from The Oban community group Grassroots, said the public outcry over the proposed ban led Argyll and Bute council to re-think its position.

The proposed poster ban on council property, including lampposts, was scheduled to be debated and voted on last Thursday at the full council meeting.

But the vote was abandoned after deputy leader councillor



We are thrilled with the outcome

Stacey Felgate (Pictured)

Ellen Morton said she wanted to maintain the 'status quo'.

The original proposal from the council's environmental and infrastructure committee was expected to spark a lively debate.

But councillor Morton, who had proposed the vote, surprised her opponents by withdrawing the motion.

She said: 'To me, it was not that important an issue to create tension in the chamber. 'What I want doesn't matter - it's what the people of Argyll and Bute want.'

'I am happy with the outcome. That's democracy and it proves that our governance works.'

Campaigners, who had made the trip to the council headquarters in Lochgilhead for the debate, were relieved and delighted with the decision.

After the meeting, Stacey said: 'The fact that councillor Morton

asked for the status quo to be preserved without a debate or vote just shows the strength of the response from the community. 'We are grateful to the council for taking that on board.'

'We hope that's the end of it, and that perhaps this will encourage people from other areas to become more vocal when this kind of thing comes up.'

'There is a need though for greater transparency - the council agendas are not easy to access or understand for everyone.'

'A lot of the folk involved in the campaign want to continue in this kind of thing, so we will see what develops. It's an exciting time for local participation.'

Longer lease deal would help attract more businesses, claims councillor

REMOVING a 'discouraging' 18-year lease agreement would boost business at Machrihanish Airbase Community Company (MACC), writes John McCallum.

That is the view of South Kintyre councillor Donald Kelly, who told Argyll and Bute councillors last Thursday that the average agreement at the former RAF base, a limit imposed by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) on the length of time a tenant can lease land or buildings to businesses, was harming potential investment.

Councillor Kelly said: 'Removing the average agreement altogether at the airbase would encourage long-term businesses to invest with confidence.'

His proposal received unanimous support at last Thursday's full council meeting, with Pippa Milne, the local authority's director for development and infrastructure, writing a letter to the MoD proposing an end to the agreement.

He added: 'If the MoD was to turn a blind eye to the letter then we would seek to take the matter to the Scottish parliament.'

A spokeswoman for MACC said: 'The current agreement is restrictive, with long-term investors preferring a lease of 25 years or more.'

'We have discussed how to take the issue further and it is very encouraging to see the council taking action to end this commercially damaging situation.'

Head's dual role to be rolled-out

MORE primary headteachers may have to run two schools, following a pilot project carried out by Argyll and Bute council.

Councillors heard last week that shared headships had proved 'successful' and the council was considering introducing the model, where appropriate, across the region.

Officials told councillors that while the dual roles might not result in substantial savings, the two schools benefited from the experience of a single headteacher.

Councillors agreed that shared headship should be an option to be considered before appointing a headteacher to a school.

Returning officer to review stations

A WATCHING brief on polling station areas is to be undertaken by Argyll and Bute council as the general election approaches.

The Scottish government has asked the council to carry out a review by February 2015, and report back any significant population increases or decreases in an area.

The returning officer will carry out the review.

Villagers sidelined as information super highway by-passes Appin

EUAN PATERSON
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AN ARGYLL village, seemingly overlooked by a £146 million project to increase broadband speeds in the Highlands and Islands, has been told it will be better connected.

But people in Appin are still waiting to hear how and when their broadband connection will be improved as part of the Digital Highlands and Islands project, which is being rolled out by BT.

A meeting of Appin community council heard that despite 85 per

cent of the 600 residents having subscribed to a broadband service, connection speeds were relatively slow, ranging from 0.5 megabytes per second (Mbps) to a maximum of six Mbps.

There was further frustration for the community when the £146 million Digital Highlands and Islands project included the nearby villages of Barcaldine and Duror, but not Appin, for upgrade.

A scoping survey to build a case for Appin's inclusion in the scheme, led by resident Bob Cornish, discovered Appin had up to 40 businesses and that 85 per cent of the population used

a broadband connection. Broadband connections were crucial for almost half of the households in the Appin area, which has no mobile phone signal.

Stuart Robertson, director of Digital Highlands and Islands with Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), said Appin would be included in the project at a later date, perhaps by the end of 2016.

Although Appin was unlikely to have fibre optic cable connections to homes in the area, residents could be connected up to a cabinet that had fibre optic connections from another host

area, such as Oban. This would increase speeds in Appin to between 20 Mbps and 76 Mbps but homes outwith two kilometres of the cabinet would be unlikely to benefit at all.

Mr Robertson said: 'BT could put fibre optic cable all the way to each house but that is hugely expensive; that is the holy grail of broadband but we don't have the money for that.'

Benderloch's Campbell Cameron, the area's adviser with Community Broadband Scotland (CBS), said the organisation could help fill any service gaps not provided by the BT rollout.

He explained certain areas could receive a wireless signal, beamed from another part of the area.

Jamie Smith, who lives at Glen Creran, was one of those at the meeting who feared they would not benefit from the scheme. He asked Mr Robertson: 'Can we look at newer technologies that are being developed? I feel we are chasing old technology.'

But Appin resident Agnes Thomson, 77, said: 'At my age I would be happy to get it, even in the next four years, rather than wait longer for some newer technology.'

Foodies serve up a real treat for charities

AN OBAN retailer has made generous donations to two local charities after a successful taster evening at the store, writes Steven Rae.

Kitchen Garden on George Street, a delicatessen and coffee shop, held taster nights last month, charging a fee at the door to let customers sample local produce.

All the proceeds were donated to charities Alzheimer's Scotland and Friends of Oban Hospice.

Store owner Stewart Frost explained: 'We started off in 2013 doing it for one night, giving people tasters and samples of our products and then moved on to two nights, and this year we will be doing three.'

'As well as the entry fee, we also asked our suppliers to make up hampers which were raffled off, with all the proceeds going to the charities.'

In total, £1,290 was raised over the two days, split equally between the two worthy causes, which was presented to committee members of each charity on January 13 at the store.

Both charities gave huge thanks to the store and its customers for their support.



TASTY: committee members from Alzheimer's Scotland and Friends of Oban Hospice with staff from Kitchen Garden, presenting two cheques for £645 which were raised through the store's taster nights in December

Lower stake on 'puggies'

A BID has been made to reduce the stakes on fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs) better known as 'puggies', over fears they are fuelling mounting gambling debt in Argyll.

At a meeting of Argyll and Bute council last Thursday, councillors called for a review of the guidelines on FOBTs, with a view to reducing the potential loss in cash to players.

There are 40 FOBTs in Argyll which are estimated to take more than £9 million a year from gamblers.

An FOBT is a type of gaming machine, normally found in betting premises, that allows players to bet on the outcome of various games and events with fixed odds.

They are usually touch-screen operated and cover a variety of games from roulette, poker and black Jack, to electronic slot games and virtual racing.

The council will now lobby the Scottish government on the matter and ask for information on what powers the local authority's licensing committee can exert on premises that operate the machines.

Mull restaurant gains three rosettes
One of only three in Scotland

GOOD FOOD, a superb staff team and an exceptional island - are the winning combination for one island hotel restaurant receiving three rosettes from food standard-bearers the AA.

As one of only three restaurants in Scotland to receive this accolade, Tiroran House is in the middle of Mull, and owner Katie Mackay says the rosettes firmly put the island on the culinary map.

Katie, along with husband Laurence have owned the four star AA and VisitScotland graded hotel since 2004.

This latest award is one of many putting the country house restaurant on the to-do list of every foodie in the country.

Katie said: 'We have a hard-working and dedicated team in the kitchen with an exceptional front of house staff.'

'Craig [Ferguson] has been with us for three seasons and he has built up a reputation for exceptional food - we also have Alex Dashwood-Baker who as sous chef makes up a formidable team.'

'The front of house is managed by Susan Ferguson, and the AA complemented the entire experience for those dining at Tiroran.'



'As a culinary destination for the "foodies" we will obviously attract those who want a three AA rosette experience while staying on the island. When people are here they will find that there are a whole host of other top quality restaurants on the island - and we are happy to recommend other places to dine.'

'Places like The Boat House on Ulva who do an outstanding job in their kitchen with fresh local food and homemade baking. 'And other places such as Cafe Fish and of course the

Ninth Wave at Fionnphort are outstanding - and of course there are other places as well which all add real value to that culinary experience on Mull.'

'One thing that is undeniable is the reasons for people coming to the island and that is the attraction of the island itself. As a business anything we do will always be second to the outstanding and breathtaking scenery here. 'All of these elements working together makes a very special experience.'

The AA guide added Tiroran House Hotel to its list saying: 'The long and winding road that takes you to Tiroran House Hotel from the ferry terminal serves to introduce

you to the stunning landscape and heightened expectation of what lies ahead.

'Once you arrive, the white-painted house doesn't disappoint, perched on a wooded hillside with views over the loch, and you'll find restful country-house comfort within. Another thing to look forward to is a warm welcome from Laurence Mackay, who will likely be wearing a kilt as he hosts the dinner service with considerable charm.'

'Given the location it is likely you'll be staying in one of the traditional bedrooms. The restaurant, consisting of two elegant dining rooms, with views across the lochs, is a civilised and soothing spot to enjoy the contemporary and inspiring cooking of Craig Ferguson.'

Craig and his team have a kitchen garden to call upon for a lot of the fresh stuff, plus a host of trusted suppliers across the country, and you can expect a menu that has classical foundations without ever feeling stuck in the past.'

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Drivers jumpy at traffic light fault

FRUSTRATED motorists have been jumping red lights and facing lengthy queues at Connel Bridge because of a fault in the traffic lights - but it could take weeks to fix.

BEAR Scotland, which is responsible for the A828 that crosses the bridge, dismissed rumours that the lights sequence had been slowed to allow cyclists time to cross.

It said the cause of the delays was a faulty traffic detector, which was reported last week-end.

A spokeswoman for BEAR Scotland said: 'Our teams are investigating the fault but it appears that the detector requires to be replaced and we are currently planning how to undertake this over the next few weeks with a minimum level of disruption to the local community.'

Lorn Arc project given £1 million

OBAN and Lorn are to get a cash injection of £1 million from Argyll and Bute council's general fund balance.

The money was earmarked for development in Oban at a meeting of the local authority last Thursday.

The general fund is used as a cushion for unforeseen events and to provide various services.

The £1 million will be used for the major capital investment Lorn Arc infrastructure project due to start in September.

Bruce West, head of finance, told councillors: 'The financial report for December shows that the balance is in excess of £10 million.'

Music connection by two students

TWO music students from West Highland College will perform at Celtic Connections this Saturday. Hannah MacRae, Fort William and Lauren Byrne, Glenfinnan will play as part of the University of the Highlands and Islands Traditional Music Concert.

Minister says Scottish government recognises more needs to be done to support the area
MSP calls on government to overturn depopulation

EUAN PATERSON
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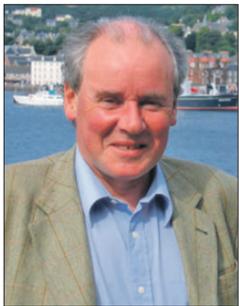
DURING a debate in the Scottish parliament, a Highlands and Islands MSP called on the government to do more to tackle Argyll and Bute's population crisis.

Jamie McGrigor MSP called on the government to give more support to Highlands and Islands enterprise, relax planning regulations to encourage housing development and introduce tax incentives to help businesses grow.

Describing Argyll and Bute as a 'vital and integral part of Scotland' he insisted the government do more to modernise the county, warning: 'People like to be modern and not be considered as hill-billies.'

The Lochaweside-based MSP explained to local government minister Marco Biagi that 25-year projections showed Argyll and Bute's population would fall by 13.5 per cent against a nine per cent rise in the Scottish population.

The Conservative MSP sought



“People like to be modern and not be considered as hill-billies”

Jamie McGrigor
 Highlands and Islands MSP

a commitment from the Scottish Government in delivering a permanent solution for the A83 trunk road; the roll out of fast broadband; and extra support for business start-up grants to attract new companies to Argyll and Bute.

He said: 'I have seen the decline in population on Lochaweside and a sharp fall in the number of people employed in the primary industries of forestry and farming. Forestry villages like Eredine

and Dalavich were mainly inhabited by forestry employees up until the 1980s.

'Now all these jobs are gone so there you have land that was nationalised, taken over by government to provide local employment, no longer fulfilling that purpose.

'On the farming front I personally remember the hard physical work which occupied many young people on the farms all over Argyll which went hand in glove with the social life which

made Argyll living so agreeable. 'That era has passed; skills are being lost.

'Fisheries used to employ so many of the coastal communities; again, this is in decline.

'Small villages were proud communities which competed in a friendly manner to have the best schools, shops, post offices and the like. That was the key to happy living.

'And there are still strong, sustainable communities like Ardfern and others.'

On the Rest and Be Thankful, he said: 'The future of the A83 trunk road - that key artery into Argyll - must be at the top of the transport list.

'Many words have been spoken, diversionary routes have been put in place but ask any business in Argyll and they will ask the Scottish Government for a permanent solution to deal with landslides on the route.

'A canopy or covered emergency route option is the answer.

'Frankly, people are frightened to travel that road; Argyll needs a reliable and safe road system, please. That is fundamental.'

Mr Biagi responded: 'The Scottish government is committed to supporting population growth in Argyll and Bute.

'We know that housing, schools, health and connectivity all play a part in making an area attractive and able to thrive.

'That's why we are delivering hundreds of new affordable homes, upgrading and building three new schools and redesigning health services to meet the needs of people in Argyll and Bute.

'In addition to this we are improving transport links and we are investing in next generation broadband which will help close the digital gap.

'We recognise that more still needs to be done and I will be visiting the area very soon to discuss any proposals.

'In the meantime we will continue to work with Argyll and Bute council, Highlands and Islands enterprise, Scottish enterprise, VisitScotland and other partners towards our shared goal of building a strong and sustainable economy for the people of Argyll and Bute.'

Oban airport business park ready for take-off

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OBAN Airport is set for a £600,000 facelift.

Borrowed government cash will see a business park established at the North Connel site and improvements made to the access roads into the terminal.

The Argyll and Bute council project will be funded by Tax Incremental Financing (TIF), Scottish government cash, borrowed and paid back from increased non-domestic rates over a 25-year period.

The space, to the north of

the airport on land previously identified as protected greenbelt has now been identified for development.

The news has received a mixed response from the community with some claiming the business park would be a waste of money.

Oban councillor Roddy McCuish said: 'I am looking forward to the £600,000 Oban Airport business park project starting later this year.

'We've already got a lot of interest in new business units which is a strong indicator that there is demand for this business park. 'Officers will now be develop-

ing a full business case which will have greater details and set out the options.

'This should be ready for consideration in May, with work on site set to begin in September.

'I am excited to see this project develop and am eagerly looking forward to the first spade going in the ground in September.

'This investment is going to have a hugely positive impact on the lives of the people of Oban and the surrounding area.'

Councillor Ellen Morton, deputy leader of Argyll and Bute council, said: 'This is a top priority for the council - we

want to turn Oban into a hub for business, which will have a knock on effect for the whole of Argyll and Bute, and will be working hard in the coming years to do just that.'

Oban man Derek Greir, wrote on Facebook: 'There's a business park sitting half derelict at Dunbeg. It's just not going to happen. 'This is a complete waste of time and money.

'They have a second-to-none business park two miles down the road that they cannot fill.

'Who in their right mind then goes and decides to build another one?

'All the services for Connel's airfield are already there.

'Why would anyone think that by creating more space and buildings it is suddenly going to work when it doesn't two miles away?

'It's going to end up like the car park built at Pennyfuir, overgrown with grass and unused.

'I'm still hoping that this is a joke!'

Businessman Tom Hayward was more positive saying: 'Two glaringly obvious options for the business park are an abattoir and a factory producing pellets for bio mass boilers.'

Search is now on for young stars

THE COUNTDOWN is on for people in Argyll and Bute to nominate young heroes for the Young Scot Awards 2015.

Communities across Scotland are being urged to nominate an inspirational young person, aged from 11 to 26, who has made a positive difference to the lives of others.

For the past nine years, the Young Scot Awards have been a phenomenal success, recognising the amazing achievements of some of Scotland's truly remarkable young people.

The 2015 awards mark the 10th annual Young Scot Awards with categories including community, cultural diversity, enterprise, unsung hero, volunteering, sport, entertainment and the arts.

Nominations for young people or groups can be submitted via youngscotawards.com until midnight on February 27, 2015.

Winners will be announced at an award ceremony on April 30 2015 at the Usher Hall in Edinburgh.

Eric is top shot at camera club

PRESIDENT of Oban Camera Club Eric Shaw was named overall winner in the club's recent open competition.

His picture of Loch Etive was chosen by professional photographer Charlie Moore, ahead of Tony Harris and Nina Robertson in the prints category.

Digital picture winner was David Williams ahead of Maurice Wilkins and Veronica Spiers and Nina Robertson in joint third.

Police put brakes on speeders

LAST Saturday police put the brakes on drivers on the A85 at Taynuilt and Lochawe.

Between 9.30am and 11.30am one driver in Lochawe was charged with speeding at 56mph and a driver in Taynuilt was allegedly travelling at 50mph.

'Marvellous opportunity' as money pledged to Oban

LOUISE LEE
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'THE BIGGEST transformation' in the last 100 years in Oban is set to attract £41 million of private cash to the town.

Plans to borrow £18.9 million as part of the Scottish government's Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) were approved last week by Argyll and Bute council.

The Lorn Arc TIF plans will include an extension to Oban Airport, access improved to the European Science Park and Scottish Association for Marine Science at Dunbeg, a new pier at Barcaldine and an extension to the North Pier and an upgrade at Port Beag alongside major works on the North Pier, all in Oban.

The work will start before September 30 this year. The first project is likely to be improving access at Oban Airport and the creation of a business park near the terminal.

The Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) arrangement allows extra cash from non domestic rates (NDR) generated within an agreed boundary over a 25-year period to pay back the cost of the loan.

Pippa Milne, Argyll and Bute council's executive director for infrastructure, said: 'The extension and improvement of the North Pier is forecast to yield a significant additional revenue stream through new berthing fees.



TAKE-OFF: investment package will transform Oban and its airport.
 Councillor Ellen Morton, below

'At present the council is turning away berthing revenue as the North Pier cannot currently accommodate these additional vessels. There is potential within the Oban area to develop and review the current parking arrangements with an anticipated increase in the number of paying long stay/short stay parking spaces within the town centre.'

Deputy leader councillor Ellen Morton, policy lead for the TIF projects, said: 'As a council we want to move forward and we want more businesses and houses and that is the two key things: can I get a job? Can I get a house?'

'The chief executive said there is a bigger risk in doing nothing.

'I am really jealous that Oban, Lorn and the Isles are getting this and it is a marvellous opportunity.



'Each of these projects will produce its own business case and if it doesn't stack up it won't go ahead.'

Oban councillor Roddy McCuish said: 'This is a great opportunity for Oban, Lorn and the isles. I am delighted we are at this stage.'

Argyll adult addiction services contract to be reviewed by Audit Scotland

A REVIEW is to take place on the awarding of a £1.4 million contract in Argyll and Bute for adult alcohol and drug addiction services.

The area's multi agency Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (ADP) awarded the contract to Glasgow-based organisation Addiction in November.

Concerns about the contract were raised shortly afterwards by Dumbarton MSP Jackie Baillie, backed by Argyll and Bute MSP Michael Russell, who called for a review of the tendering process.

Confirming a review was taking place, an Audit Scotland spokesman said: 'We will be

conducting a review of the recent commissioning process undertaken by the Argyll and Bute Alcohol and Drugs Partnership.

'This will take into account concerns raised locally and will also consider the findings from any review work undertaken by Argyll and Bute council.

'Work on the review is at an early stage and the findings will be made public.

'We are continuing to closely monitor wider issues in Argyll and Bute. The controller of audit will be reporting by the end of this year on progress made by the council on recommendations made in the best value follow-up report published in

July last year.'

Police Scotland, Argyll and Bute council and NHS Highland are members of the ADP - it is chaired by NHS Highland locality manager Christina West.

An ADP spokesman said: 'The focus of all organisations in the ADP Partnership is on delivering services that work for the people who need them, and that develop and improve wherever possible in the support they provide.

'We welcome the opportunity to work with Audit Scotland as part of our commitment to support people across Argyll and Bute affected by drug and alcohol issues.'

SCOTTISH RURAL AWARDS 2014

Thursday 26 March 2015, Our Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh

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SCOTTISH COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE ScottishField CHIENE+TAIT STRATHALLAN FishVet Group

Photographs of the evening will be featured in Scottish Field or online at scottishfield.co.uk and scottishruralawards.org. Photographs will be available to purchase after the event and a donation will be made from each sale to the Routes to Rural Employment charitable initiative.

All proceeds from the silent auction will also go to Routes to Rural Employment.

Canna

MERMAIDS once swam the seas surrounding the Small Isles, according to an islander in the early 1800s. Members of the Canna local history group have unearthed a letter from 1809, signed by a Neil McIntosh, a resident on the tiny island, proclaiming the existence of the creatures. Witnesses from Edinburgh had also signed the letter, printed in the Naval Chronicle the following year, in which Mr McIntosh said he had 'heard from different individuals in the island of Canna, that they have seen the fish called mermaids'. He went on: 'About six years ago, Niel Stewart and Neil McIsaac, both alive in Canna, when walking upon the sea beach on the north side of the island, on a Sunday, saw, stretched on a rock at a small distance, an animal, having the appearance of a woman in the upper parts, and of a fish below.' Members of Canna local history group called it 'a curious subject', while others joked on social media that the lads may have found 'a stash of Highland ale' before discovering the mermaid. A full account of the letter can be found on www.cannalocalhistorygroup.com.

Appin

A NEW community project in Appin to build a traditional skiff is looking for community support. The Appin Skiff group has begun fundraising for the kit to build the rowing boat and is aiming to raise a total of £3,000. At Appin community council last Thursday community councillor Elaine Venters, a leading light in the project, explained community support was vital as it would bring many community benefits. She said: 'We want to involve the youth club and maybe the Brownies. The new head teacher at the primary school also seems keen for the pupils to be involved. 'This is a great opportunity to do something as a community. There are plenty health and fitness benefits and it will be good fun. 'We are looking for volunteers to help us with the boat building, especially if they have some expertise. Mike Rayworth has already donated wood to the project.' Anyone interested in becoming involved in the project should contact Elaine or Tina Scorgie. Similar projects have been successful in other parts of Argyll.

Fort William

FORT William's Women's Rural Institute group had a cautious start to the new year at their January meeting when two police officers gave a talk on home safety. Constables Ian Frazer and Peter Meyers told the ladies how to deal with cold callers, phone scams and doorstep crime, emphasising never to give out personal information. Other suggestions were to lock doors when in the garden, don't let anyone you don't know into the house and not to keep large sums of money at home. Grace Kennedy won the competition for three rock buns, with Heather Davey in second place. Raffle prizes were won by Ann McColl and Angela Lee. The next meeting will be at Inverloch Hall on Monday February 2 when various crafts will be tried and results will be judged at the end of the night. Everyone welcome at 7.15pm.

Glenorchy

DANGEROUS trees on main roads have been ignored rather than dealt with, Glenorchy and Innishail community council heard at its January meeting. The community council has now marked the trees it feels are at most risk of falling onto the road, and will write to the relevant authority to get them removed. THE COMMUNITY council in Glenorchy is asking residents to take photographs of heavy vehicles on the Monument Hill Road, Dalmally, where they are, at present, not allowed to travel. The road, Glenorchy and Innishail community council heard, is in a state of disrepair and forestry traffic is not meant to be on the road leading to the Duncan Bann MacIntyre monument in the village.

Duror

PEOPLE young and old have been invited to a village ceilidh held in Duror primary school on Friday (January 30) from 6pm to 8pm. As well as music and dancing, soup with rolls, tea and coffee will be available on the night, while participants can also bring their own food and drink if they choose. Duror primary parent council is hosting the event and tickets are available from the school.



Ballachulish youngsters show off dance moves

Ballachulish nursery pupils transformed into superstars for an afternoon when they enjoyed an Elvis-themed party in the class. The youngsters donned flower garlands and fashioned their own microphones from tinfoil for the event before showing off their best dance moves



SHOW TIME: a scene from the 20th Killin drama club pantomime



STARRING ROLES: the panto cast were all from the Killin area. All photos by Ron Allier



VIPS: Stirling Provost Mike Robbins and his wife Jayne are welcomed to the Killin pantomime by director Gordon Hibbart and Mickey the parrot

Killin

THE PROVOST of Stirling was among the audience at the 20th Killin drama club pantomime in the village hall. This year's offering, Treasure Island, was performed on three nights (January 15 - 17) to sell out audiences, despite the cold weather. The club was delighted to welcome the Provost of Stirling, Mike Robbins, and his wife Jayne to the opening night. The audience was treated to a wonderful treasure of comedy and a very high standard of acting with belly laughs throughout. The pantomime was written by stage manager Lesley Syme and produced and directed by Gordon Hibbart. The cast was all from the Killin area.

Holiday flats plan for historic building



ALL CHANGE: the former Masonic Hall in Bowmore which is set to be turned into holiday apartments if a planning application is successful Photograph courtesy of Andrew Abbott

Islay

A HISTORIC Islay building will be turned into holiday apartments if a planning application is successful. Dunoon construction firm Stewart McNeer Ltd has made the application to convert the former Masonic Hall on Main Street in Bowmore - described in the planning application as a derelict building - into holiday letting units. The hall has historical significance, having originally been built as the town hall in 1905. The upper part was used as both a library and by the town sheriff, before becoming the Masonic Hall. Islay community newspaper the Ileach also had its first office in part of the category-B listed building, when it was first published in 1973. The building was sold to a private investor in 2008, who had planned to turn it into a children's nursery but the plans never came to fruition. A staff member at Stewart McNeer Ltd confirmed the company would be carrying out the work but did not give any further details.

MORVERN lines

Golden eagles - the king of birds

TWO THOUSAND feet above the sea, around and about the tops, the golden eagle hunts. Ten thousand acres of wilderness breed the flesh eaten by one pair of eagles and their devouring young. Eagles, ravens and the fox are the scourers of the hills. For most other birds and animals, winter brings hardship and food is often difficult to find. Not so for these three. Deer and sheep are at their most vulnerable and perish in deep snow. Often golden eagles will cleverly drive small and weak deer over cliffs and along with the foxes will feast for days on their remains below. During the winter, red deer hinds are shot and their entrails, called the gralloch, will be left providing a tasty morsel. Golden eagles generally lay two eggs. Usually only one hatches but if there are two the first born will gain weight rapidly and often kill the other which its parent will throw out of the nest. Golden eagles, like swans, mate for life. In the past they were severely persecuted by humans and hundreds if not thousands were killed and their eggs stolen. Henry Davenport Graham, in his fascinating book on the birds of Iona and Mull (1890), observed that golden eagles were less numerous then than they appear to have been a generation before, a statement he based on the numerous deserted eyries which some of the older generation pointed out to him among the great sea cliffs of the south and west coast of Mull, as having been once tenanted every year by pairs of eagles. The reasons he put forward were the increased number of guns and the ruthless war waged by shepherds against larger birds of prey as sheep farming increased on the island. He records that one of his friends, a few years before, killed one of a group of seven.



KING OF BIRDS: a golden eagle above Loch Morar and Loch Nevis

Nowadays, thankfully, they are left alone. Without them, the fox and the raven the hills would be littered with offal and dead animals. The white-tailed or sea eagle has a lineage as ancient as his cousin the golden species and appears in Ossian's epic poem 'Temora' where it is called in Gaelic 'lo-lair-shuil na grein', the eagle eye of the sun. There is a story told of a family at Ockle near Kilchoan on the Ardnamurchan peninsula making hay one day. One of the women had a young baby with her which she placed in a shawl in the corner of the field. An eagle swooped down and lifted the shawl, still with the infant inside and flew off with it to its eyrie on a ledge below the Sgurr of Eigg. The distressed parents seeing all this managed to find a boat nearby, sailed across to Eigg and with the help of some locals and long ropes managed to descend to the eyrie from where they rescued the child who was none the worse for its traumatic and unusual experience. Whether the bird was a white-tailed or a golden eagle, I do not know. I have, on several occasions, almost lost a Jack Russell terrier to a hungry sea eagle near Eignaig on the north side of Loch Linne who doubtless thought it was a white hare and a fine titbit on a cold winter's day!

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ON THE RUN: a fox scours the hills

Isle of Rum

ALL FIVE species of insect-eating, carnivorous plants in Britain can be seen on a new weekly guided walk starting on the isle of Rum this year. Community rangers are inviting the public to come along for a two-hour trek every Tuesday morning in Kinloch Glen, offering a chance to see a variety of other wildlife too. There is no need to book, attendees are only asked to wear strong boots, bring cameras and binoculars, and meet at 10am outside Kinloch village hall. The Isle of Rum Community Ranger Service is also leading walks on Wednesdays aimed at day trippers to learn about the area's nature and the cultural heritage, starting from Kinloch ferry terminal at 11.45am. More information is available by emailing ranger@isleof-rum.com.



Morar

MEMBERS of the Morar women's rural institute enjoyed a late Christmas dinner instead of their usual January meeting. Eleven ladies gathered for the meal in The Steam Inn, Mallaig, on January 16 and thanks went to restaurant staff for their help in making the event a great night.

Newsdesks
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Call to protect park's endangered species

THE CHIEF executive of Luss Estate is urging bosses at Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority to extend its camping by-laws to protect endangered species. Simon Miller wants the islands on Loch Lomond to be included in the proposed extensions. At present, the by-laws are to be extended only to include parts of the west side of the loch. Mr Miller said: 'These are environmentally delicate habitats of great national importance and are amongst the most heavily

designated and protected in Scotland, supposedly home to capercaillie, ospreys and otters, as well as ancient oak woodland. 'Given that there are reportedly fewer capercaillie in Scotland than there are Bengal tigers or snow leopards in the world, surely every effort must be made to protect even the smallest of populations?' A spokeswoman for Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park addressed the issue of the capercaillie decline but didn't address the issue of extending the

camping by-law. She said: 'The capercaillie has been in marked decline across Argyll and Perthshire for many years, which conservation experts put down to a combination of climate change, an increase in predators and deaths from collision with man-made obstacles such as deer fences, as well as disturbance from recreational activity. 'Capercaillie thrived on the Loch Lomond islands as recently as the 1990s when recreational activity was also high, but there has been no evidence of the species in surveys carried out there over the last three years. Unless there is an improvement in the fortunes of the capercaillie in other parts of Scotland, we cannot reasonably expect a return to the National Park.' In 2011 the park won approval to ban wild camping in certain areas in the park, between the months of March and October each year. The islands on Loch Lomond are Incheilloch, Inchmurrin, Incheonachan, Inchfad, Inchtavannach and Inchnonaig.

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TIMESLINE

Work on new A830 bridge is complete

WORK on the first of nine bridges in a £10 million replacement scheme on the scenic Road to the Isles is complete.

The new Dearg Bridge, west of Glenfinnan on the A830 Fort William to Mallaig road, was finished earlier this month and work is already underway on the second project, a 2.2km stretch at Callop, eight miles east of the new bridge.

This second leg of improvements began on Monday and the resurfacing is expected to take two weeks. Temporary lights and a 10mph convoy system will be in place between 7am and 7pm, Monday to Friday. Traffic management systems will be removed outwith working hours to keep disruption to a minimum, although a 30mph limit will remain in place.

Eddie Ross, BEAR Scotland's operating company representative for the north west, said: "These essential works to the east of Callop will improve the existing road surface, creating a smoother and safer drive for road users on this section of the A830."

"Some delays are likely during the works and we would therefore encourage motorists to plan their journey ahead, allowing some extra time."

The next two bridge replacements at Utha and Garbh bridges, two and five miles west of Glenfinnan respectively, are expected to start in the spring.

Care home ceilidh hits the right note

A FUNDRAISING ceilidh is to be held for a south Lochaber elderly care home.

The event for Abbeyfield, Ballachulish, will be held in Glencoe village hall next Saturday (February 7), from 8pm, and will feature music from Crackin' Craic.

Attendees are asked to bring their own refreshments but a buffet will be available.

Phone fault forces closure of children's respite home

Charity refuses to take risk with the well-being of ill youngsters

EMMA CRICHTON
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A LOCHABER charity which provides respite care to ill children has been forced to close its doors as faulty phone lines mean it can't call for help in an emergency.

The Kirsty Bryden Memorial Trust, known as Kirsty's Kids, is based in remote Lochailort and takes in young people from all over the country to provide a break from the day-to-day struggles they face. But trust chairman John Bryden said it was no longer safe to look after children there, as BT wouldn't provide priority care - a pledge to fix damaged phone lines within 24 hours.

Mr Bryden said there was no mobile phone signal at the Kirsty's Kids house and the phones went down every time there was lightning strikes. He says BT has ignored pleas for help, even though some of the children in his care have 'chronic and life-limiting' conditions.

He said: 'It's absolutely unbelievable. We've had an unstable phone for years. There has been times we've had no phone for three weeks but nobody is interested.'

'We often have children staying who have chronic and life-limiting illnesses and it's just not safe to have them here knowing if something went wrong we may not be able to phone an ambulance; it's too big a risk.'

'It feels like being captain of a ship and saying 'it doesn't matter if the life belts work because we probably won't sink'. You can't run a charity like that, especially with the nature of ours.'

The volunteer, who set up the

trust after his daughter Kirsty was killed in a car accident, said the last time he complained he was told to 'move to London' to be guaranteed stable phone and internet connections.

He said: 'I went to BT in Fort William last week and was told there were engineers in Lochailort that day who could fix the problem but they couldn't without authorisation from head office.'

'When I phoned the main office to complain again I was transferred to a call centre in India and was then told 'Scotland has no reliable broadband, move to London'. It's absolutely appalling.'

The respite house has been closed since last Monday (January 19) and Mr Bryden said he would not re-open until BT could guarantee repairs within 24 hours.

He said: 'I've got two girls scheduled to come in soon and I hope it's sorted by then because they're dying to come and could really do with the break but I won't bring them here if they're going to be at risk. That would be totally irresponsible.'

'I want BT to give the kids we look after the care and recognition they need and deserve.'

A BT spokesman said: 'We've called Mr Bryden and arranged for an engineer to visit to check his broadband line. All the other matters that he's raised are under investigation.'



HITTING ALL THE RIGHT NOTES: Lochaber volunteers and teenagers were delighted when Twin Atlantic visited The Buzz Project

Buzz as rock band visits teenagers

SCOTTISH rock band Twin Atlantic took time out of a world tour to visit Lochaber teenagers as part of a local charity's aim to boost self-esteem in vulnerable young people.

The four Glasgow musicians arrived in Caol, Fort William, and promptly took to the 'stage' in an old bus refurbished by Lochaber's Buzz Project as a recording studio.

Arranged as part of Comic Relief's community cash initiative, which provides funding to charities all over Britain members of Twin Atlantic chatted and played alongside teenagers who regularly attend the project, before performing an impromptu acoustic set for the delighted group.

Simon Nicholls, youth worker and founding partner of The

Buzz Project, said the visit was invaluable to the young people, many of whom suffer from depression or are grieving for parents who have died.

He said: 'This had a massive impact on the kids. It got them singing and playing instruments with famous musicians, when some of them used to be really shy with low self-esteem. It was a real confidence boost for them

and what made it even better is that the band made the effort to travel up here. The teenagers were all pointing out that it's rare for anyone famous to come to this part of the country.'

The Buzz Project has also received funding from Comic Relief to hire a counsellor to work with the charity for two years, which Mr Nicholls said has already been a 'great help'.

Police appeal for information on assault and break-ins

LOCHABER police are appealing for information about a number of crimes in the area.

At around 1.50am on Sunday January 18 a female was assaulted by another woman on Fort William High Street after an argument about a jacket. Police are looking for witnesses and would particularly like to speak to a woman dressed in dark trousers and a black and white top.

Sometime between January 19-25 a garage was broken into in

Carn Dearg Road, Fort William. Nothing appears to have been stolen, however, anyone who may have seen something suspicious is asked to report it.

A number of items were stolen from a garden shed in Claggan

on the evening of January 23. Police ask anyone with information to call 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800555111.

They also urge residents to secure all outhouses, sheds and parked vehicles.

Free Business Skills workshops

Introduction to Social Media - 11 February - A half day workshop giving you an overview of how you can use sites like Facebook and Twitter to interact with customers to promote and grow your business.

Developing a Social Media Strategy - 11 February - Do you already use Social Media sites like Facebook, Twitter and Linked In, but want to know how to use them more effectively to promote and grow your business? This workshop will show you tips and tricks that can make Social Media a business tool (as well as a fun way to engage with your customers!).

Build your own business website - 16 February - An introduction to the basic essentials of website design, how to make your site attractive, usable and easy to find and what tools are available and which one is best suited for your purpose.

Online trading essentials - 17 February - For businesses considering selling products or services, or taking bookings or payments online. You will be introduced to the basics of online trading, the essentials needed and the legislation relating to online trading.

Improve your business website performance - 18 February A workshop for businesses who feel their website isn't producing the results they expect. The session covers layout, navigation, design, online sales process, search engine optimisation and browser compatibility.

Coming soon... Marketing your Business - aimed at existing small businesses with ambitions of growth. The session will help evaluate current marketing activity and create a realistic marketing plan to meet the business' needs.

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John Forteith presents his cheque to Multiple Sclerosis Centre volunteers.

£6,000 in 6,000 miles boosts Oban charity

AN AMAZING 6,000 miles through driving rain and temperature extremes as low as minus two degrees Celsius saw thousands raised for an Oban charity that relieves long-term pain and disability.

John Forteith, an Oban businessman, recounted his fundraising campaign at a talk in the Multiple Sclerosis Centre before presenting

a cheque for £6,415. Inspired by Charlie Boorman and Ewan MacGregor's motorbike adventures, John challenged himself to visit 14 countries to raise money for the Oban Multiple Sclerosis Centre that offers support to people and the use of a hyperbaric chamber.

John's son Guy was treated at the centre after being diagnosed with

multiple sclerosis. Every single penny from the trip went to the charity, including those donated to him along the way.

In each of the countries John visited he collected a badge; in some places these were easier to get than others, he said.

Arriving in many places without accommodation booked he met people all over Europe who gave

him a connection back to Oban. Among them were three fellow bikers in Baden Baden who asked him, 'Why are you here?'

'They were fresh from a visit to Scotland,' John explained. 'They thought we in Oban had some of the best scenery in the world.'

A YouTube video of John's travels can be found via the multiple sclerosis centre's Facebook page.

CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY WANTS ASSURANCE

Holyrood must spread Crown Estate wealth

EUAN PATERSON
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AS HE announced funding of more than £6m for Highlands and islands communities, chief secretary to the Treasury Danny Alexander MP challenged the Scottish government to maintain the fund it came from.

Mr Alexander established the Coastal Communities Fund three years ago and on Monday allocated nearly £10 million to Scotland in the third round of grants since 2012.

The fund is financed by the UK government, which takes 50 per cent of the revenues from the Crown Estate's marine activities in that area.

But the Smith Commission, set up to consider greater powers for Scotland following the referendum, has recommended Crown Estate responsibilities and revenues be passed to Holyrood, giving the Treasury no influence over how a Coastal Communities Fund would be run or divided.

Mr Alexander, who grew up in Colonsay, South Uist and in Glegarry, told *The Oban Times*: 'The idea behind the fund was to make sure resources generated by the Crown Estate are returned to coastal communities, not swallowed up by London.'

'We have agreed devolution of the Crown Estate and I hope that when it is devolved the money will not be going to a bottomless pit in Edinburgh.'

'I would challenge the Scottish government that once the Crown Estate is devolved it keeps the fund going because there are a lot more projects that need funding.'

He said he had received no assurances from Holyrood that the fund would continue, adding that was something he would seek.

The fund is divided into two parts, one for the Highlands and Islands and one for the rest of Scotland.

Mr Alexander explained: 'A lot of the revenue is generated in the Highlands and islands so it should be returned there. These are com-

munities that are economically very fragile but where targeted investment can make a massive difference in development, growth and self confidence.'

Projects benefiting in this round of funding include: the redevelopment of the Rothesay Pavilion (£600,000); the installation of pontoons in Castlebay harbour, Barra (698,568); the regeneration of Campbeltown Picture House (£409,724); a community hub in Sleat, Skye (£712,775); harbour facilities at Carbot Pier, Skye (£170,200); improvements to the Cowal Way (£329,650); transformation of the quayside at Lochboisdale, South Uist (£221,973); upgrade of summer pontoons at Tarbert, Loch Fyne (£500,000); improvements to Tobermory harbour (£212,082); a new wool centre on North Uist (£125,000); and the upgrade and extension of Vatersay community hub (£220,000).

With the devolution of the fund expected to take at least two years, the UK government has committed to extend the scheme to 2016.

TREAT YOUR LOVED ONE THIS VALENTINE'S DAY

VALENTINE'S DAY is the perfect opportunity to spoil that special someone. Whether it be rekindling an old flame or sparking a new romance, your other half deserves the best.



Flowers are an age-old classic to suit every budget - A dozen red roses has always been considered the pinnacle of romance but if the wallet is still feeling light after Christmas florists will have plenty of cheaper alternatives. Carnations are known to last up to three weeks, the perfect bunch for those who like to make their money last.

Valentine's is a time to celebrate love and a personal touch will really show you care. Framed photographs are always a big hit and these days you can have an image printed on just about anything. Mouse mats, mugs, clothes, you name it, you can have something printed on it. Why not do things the old fashioned way and put a romantic photo inside a locket - traditionalists will appreciate the sentimental value.

Those lucky enough to be in the first exciting throws of a new relationship can struggle to choose a personal gift.

If you don't yet know the recipient well enough to choose something unique,

fragrances and chocolates go down well with both sexes.

Plenty of couples are happy with a Valentine's dinner at home but if you want to push the boat out most pubs and restaurants offer special menus or deals on the 14th.

If quality time is what you need romantic getaways are a perfect gift idea. A secluded B&B destination will offer tranquil walks and cosy fires or celebrate in style with dinner and a show in a nearby town or city.

Various surveys over the years have shown that men spend around double what women do on Valentine's gifts, so ladies it's time to splash the cash. If the man in your life is treating you to dinner, you could make sure you look your best for the occasion. Treating yourself to a haircut, manicure or facial will ensure your man is the envy of the restaurant when he walks in with you. Can't choose a treatment? A lot of salons will book you in for an entire morning or afternoon of pampering so make the most of what they have to offer.



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Pensioner to buy triplets' nappies for year

A KIND-HEARTED Lochaber pensioner has promised to provide nappies for baby triplets for a year.

Isabel MacPhee made the generous offer when she heard of the three arrivals and decided she 'wanted to do something nice'.

Parents Michelle and John Binnie, who live in Claggan in Fort William, were bowled over by the kind offer as they go through 600 nappies every month on Alfie, Ava and Devon, born 12 weeks ago. The couple also have another daughter, two-year-old Freya.

Mrs MacPhee is well known for delivering knitted clothes and other gifts to newborns in the town.

She said: 'I just wanted to do something nice when I heard

about the triplets. Nappies aren't cheap so it can cost a lot of money just for one baby, never mind three.

'I thought to myself I don't have any babies to buy things for or look after so I wanted to do something to help.'

Mrs Binnie said she was 'overwhelmed' by the offer as it took a load off the strain of having triplets but added she thought the hardest part was over. She said: 'They're really good babies but the hard part is purely that there's three of them. Now that they're settling into a routine it's getting easier and Freya is a great help with her brother and sisters, she always wants to help dress them.'

The babies are the first triplets born in Fort William in almost 18 years.



KIND-HEART: Isabel MacPhee, middle, provides the Fort William triplets Ava, Alfie and Devon with up to 600 nappies a month. Also pictured are parents John and Michelle Binnie, with two-year-old daughter Freya

Rural areas to get sure signal boost

FOUR Hebridean communities will soon receive better mobile phone coverage through a scheme to help rural areas.

Balivanich on Benbecula, Tarbert on Harris and Lochboisdale and Lochmaddy on the Uists have been shortlisted among 100 rural areas across the UK to benefit from 3G phone coverage through the Vodafone rural open sure signal programme.

Angus MacNeil, MP for Na h-Eileanan an Iar, said this would help the day-to-day life of islanders.

He added: 'This is certainly a welcome initiative from Vodafone, which has the potential to improve mobile telephone coverage to 3G standard for many rural and island areas. I hope that in the next round of applications, other places in the islands will apply and be successful.'

Councillor praised for hard work

A RETIRING Comhairle nan Eilean Siar councillor has been praised by colleagues for his hard work.

Former schoolteacher Archie Campbell is stepping down from his position representing the Benbecula and North Uist constituency on February 12, having served with the council since 1999 and as chairman of the sustainable development committee since 2003.

Angus Campbell, leader of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, said Mr Campbell had 'worked diligently' for his constituency.

Councillor Campbell, commenting on his retirement, said: 'It has been a great privilege and a wonderful experience to serve the community. It has been a pleasure to work with my colleagues in the ward, councillors Uisdean Robertson and Neil Beaton, and I wish them every success in their continuing role.'

HIGHLAND COUNCIL RESURRECTS PLANS TO CLOSE THE MAJORITY OF BRANCHES IN THE REGION TO SAVE MONEY

New threat to axe service points

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THE FUTURE of Highland council service points is under threat again as the local authority has resurrected plans to close the majority of branches in the region.

A similar money-saving proposal unveiled last year received fierce opposition from many of the 23 communities set to lose the facility, used to pay

billings and get face-to-face advice from council staff.

Now, less than a year after putting the plans on hold, Highland council's customer services board, which was set up to scrutinise the proposal in April 2014, has gone to public consultation.

This time, 22 of the 35 service points face closure, including Mallaig, Kinlochleven, Acharacle, Broadford, Fort Augustus, Gairloch and Lochcarron.

The Kyle branch, which was threatened last year, has been protected under the new proposal.

Remaining service points, including Portree, Kyle and Fort William, will be turned into 'community hubs', with 'access points' in 17 other areas, thought to be computers with access to the council's website housed in libraries.

Members of the public are now being asked for their views by the cross-party customer services

board in a consultation set to run until mid-March.

An estimated £355,220 could be saved by closing the facilities, although half of this will be invested to improve telephone and online services.

Councillor Audrey Sinclair, chairwoman of the customer services board, said: 'Before any decision can be made, it is important to hear the views of the people that live in these areas so that we can understand how any changes may impact on

communities. We also want to hear any alternative options local people may want to suggest for the way services are delivered.'

'I would stress that these are proposals we are consulting on and no decisions have been made.'

'We would welcome all views and we will take these into consideration before a final decision is made.'

Dave Thompson, MSP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch, urged a rethink and said the service

points should stay open. He said: 'The community rebranding as part of the proposal is supposed to save money, but that is counter-productive when the service points currently serve our remotest communities so well, employ many staff, and already contribute economically to the sustainability of connected rural life.'

The consultation document and feedback forms can be found at <http://www.highland.gov.uk/customerservicesreview>.

Long link road delay sparks angry outburst

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A FORT William business owner and community councillor has slammed Highland council for 'sucking the life out' of the area.

In a heated discussion about the long-anticipated link road between the town and the A830 at Blar Mor via Caol, High Street shop owner Drew Purdon said the local authority had a 'parasitic' effect on Lochaber.

The outburst was sparked at a Fort William community council meeting when chairman Neil Clark read out a letter from Highland council's chief executive Steve Barron, which said the new road was 'below the line of affordability'.

It has already been 25 years since the development was approved by Highland council but it still hasn't reached the first stage, a Scottish transport appraisal guide which is likely to

cost £150,000, years before the first turf is cut.

Mr Purdon, who has argued for decades that an alternative route would reduce traffic congestion on the A82, said: 'I came across paperwork from 1983 when the Caol link road was discussed, more than 30 years ago.'

'I've aged considerably since then and we're no further forward. I think Highland council should be ashamed of itself. It has a parasitic effect on the area. It sucks the life and everything good out and gives absolutely nothing back.'

Mr Clark suggested contacting MSPs and prospective candidates for the upcoming UK general election since they were 'getting nowhere' with local council.

He also raised concerns about Inverness being given priority in light of the current construction of the city's west link road, the estimated cost of which was £27.2 million in 2011, but had

rocketed to £34.4 million at the last official estimate in 2013.

Highland council has not yet provided an up-to-date total, despite pressure from public spending watchdog Audit Scotland.

The community council chairman said: 'Highland council is committed to Inverness no matter what it costs. The cost of the link road has soared, fine. They want new sport facilities? Fine. No matter what it is or how much it costs, if it's Inverness they can have it.'

A Highland council spokeswoman said: 'Mr Clark, Fort William community council, wrote to Steve Barron, chief executive, on December 12 2014 and Stuart Black, director of development and infrastructure, responded on behalf of the chief executive in a letter dated January 16 2015. There have been no other enquiries from Mr Clark regarding this matter.'



Paper and can banks on way out

PAPER and can banks are to be phased out in the Highlands as a result of increasing home recycling.

Graham Mackenzie, chairman of Highland council's community services committee, said use of the communal bins had dropped by two thirds in the last year. He added: 'I would urge all residents to make maximum use of their blue bins to recycle all their paper, cardboard, plastic bottles, food tins and drink cans.' Facilities for glass and textile recycling will remain in place.

Crafty classmates conjure up £400

GENEROUS Fort William primary school pupils have put their crafts skills to good use and raised more than £400.

The money, made from selling personalised plaques made by the youngsters, will be split between spinal injuries and school funds.

A cheque was presented last week to Tracey MacGilvray, who regularly volunteers at Fort William primary.

Ms MacGilvray has been fundraising for the charity since a car accident left her wheelchair-bound.

GENEROUS: Joel Campbell, primary six, writes a cheque for Tracey MacGilvray

Distillery plan for disused island hotel

A DISUSED hotel on a remote Hebridean island could be converted into a distillery.

Borodale House, formerly known as the Isle of Raasay Hotel, has been out of use since January 2013 but could be transformed into a tourist attraction complete with a bar and visitor centre.

Potential developer R & B Distillers Ltd wants to provide 'a leading dis-

tiller of niche whiskies', with a café/bar area and tasting room in the lower level of the house. The plan also includes 'contemporary Highland lodge style' accommodation.

Residents are hopeful the distillery will benefit Raasay's economy and create jobs.

A planning application has been submitted to Highland council.

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To find out more please contact a member of the Business Gateway team on 01546 604555 or email business.gateway@argyll-bute.gov.uk



* Retail businesses ineligible due to restrictions applied to European funding

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Argyll Bute COUNCIL

IS YOUR CHILD ELIGIBLE FOR FREE EARLY LEARNING & CHILDCARE PROVISION (Previously Preschool Education Provision)?

Early Learning and Childcare from August 2015 will be available for:-

- Four year old children whose birth date falls between 1st March 2011 and 29th February 2012
- Three year old children whose birth date falls between 1st March 2012 and 28th February 2013

A list of current preschool education providers, including those offering Gaelic Medium, is available from:

- All Early Learning & Childcare Providers
- All Primary Schools
- <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/preschool-education>
- Early Years Helpline noted below

Information leaflets will be available from Early Learning & Childcare Providers at the time of registration and parents can obtain further guidance from the Early Years Helpline, Argyll and Bute Council, Argyll House, Alexandra Parade, Dunoon PA23 8AJ (Telephone 01369 708503).

Parents of eligible children should register at their preferred provider, taking along their child's birth certificate or passport, during week commencing 2nd Feb 2015 during the normal operational hours of the unit.

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The Oban Times

& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES
Home truths or hot air?

We don't know whether to applaud the councillors on the Oban, Lorn and Isles area committee or pity them; perhaps a bit of both would be the more humane response.

Chairman of the committee, councillor Roddy McCuish, and his seven fellow councillors, have announced they want to hold regular face-to-face meetings with the public.

These will be unscripted 'open mike' sessions with the public, who can pitch any questions at the councillors.

This, according to the theory, will provide a closer, more direct insight into grassroots issues.

It may prove in time to be a brave and bold initiative; one that could be copied by the Lochaber area committee. Conversely, if it descends into a talking shop with a fair amount of 'Yah boo' posturing, it will be yet another 'hot air' exercise.

Glasgow Letter

Celtic Connections

ON SUNDAY January 18, St Andrew's in the Square played host to the enjoyable 'The Crew of the Puffer present Para Handy - A Highland Voyage'.

I was like a child at Christmas as I took my seat for this gig, ridiculously excited to hear songs I've enjoyed for years.

And it soon became clear I was not the only one.

Much of the sell-out crowd were singing along with the choruses and responded well to the three-man cast of Allan MacDonald, Iain MacLeod and Russell Hunter.

Each one was a class act and together they made a great team - their own enjoyment of the classic songs coming across strongly.

At times I couldn't help but think of people who had come along to this without previous knowledge of 'A Highland Voyage' and 'Neil Munro's tales of Para Handy and the Vital Spark' - perhaps just to take in the Celtic Connections Festival.

They must have been either completely charmed or completely bemused by the laid-back ceilidh feel to the event.

An example of this was in the middle of my personal favourite Maggie Ann from Clachnabrochan when the barman must have switched something on which made a loud noise and interrupted Iain MacLeod's singing.

Taking it all in his stride, MacLeod just smiled and said: 'That's Maggie Ann doing the hoovering!'

Amidst all the hilarity of the evening, one could easily forget to mention the musical ability on display.

Allan MacDonald of Glenuig moved between pipes, melodeon and jew's harp while Iain MacLeod of Shooigleny fame showed once again his mastery of the mandolin.

Russell Hunter's piano playing, which accompanied all the singing, was phenomenal.

His jazzy improvisations on top of the traditional vamped backing were as comical as they were brilliant and his playing held the audience in thrall.

I left the venue with a huge smile on my face, and I haven't stopped singing the songs all week. 'Oh we're no going tae blaw, and we're no going tae craw...'

Skerryvore and Dàimh-mòr

THIS Friday, January 30, I plan on heading to the Old Fruitmarket for what is sure to be a wild evening with Skerryvore and Dàimh-mòr.

The 'Skeries' are unmatched at getting a crowd going and Dàimh have swelled their ranks to an incredible 11-piece line-up.

This is bound to be a stunning gig.

'Blazin' Fiddles also has a performance that night - at which they will be welcoming a host of folk singers including Rachel Sermani, Aoife O'Donovan,

and Adam Holmes onto the stage.

It's at times like this one longs for the ability to be in two places at once.

The following night is also going to be a stellar Celtic Connections evening. I am disappointed that I am unable to be in Glasgow.

This will mean missing An Lòchran's 'Slàinte Mhath' in the Royal Concert Hall - a concert by artists including Mary Ann Kennedy, the Cormack family, Rona Lightfoot, Robert John MacInnes, Sineag MacIntyre, Angus MacLeod and Trosq.

The evening is based around stories, narrated by Angela MacEachen from Bùth Dhòmhail 'icLeòid - a song about Donald MacLeod's pub in which people met to have a good old ceilidh.

It sounds like the perfect premise for a good gig. Also on that night is Mánran's gig with Danish fiddler Harald Haugard in the O2 ABC.

It looks like Celtic Connections 2015 is going to go out with a bang!

The move is a laudable one by our elected representatives to prevent their appearance in the first place.

As a non-party zealot, I would like to make the following observations:

The perception to those passing lamppost after lamppost bearing the same political message is that the perpetrators are active and have money and manpower to squander on the cause - but very doubtful in its effect of buying votes.

In a recent local by-election, despite the saturation of the opposition's blanket coverage, the only banner that I was aware of, by an independent, combined with his local standing, won him the seat. So a flyer on every upright lamppost is no guarantee of success.

Surely it is outrageous all this expense, manpower, and desecration of our environment during an election campaign is devoted to this useless waste of party funds. The only beneficiaries appear to be the printers.

So as an Argyll and Bute ratepayer, my message to our council is good on you. Ban the use of public lampposts and other council sites from the use for electioneering and let them find alternative methods as, no doubt, they will.

Jim Cunningham, Clachan Seil.

Part of the democratic process

Sir, I support political posters in the democratic process.

What happened to the 'No thanks' posters in the referendum demonstrates that some in Oban and Lorn will not allow posters that display an opinion they dislike.

Of the 700 'No thanks' posters erected, 140 were torn down and three roadside banners were ripped to pieces.

'No thanks' posters put up, the following day, no longer there. 'Yes' posters remained intact.

Questioned about such behaviour, Alex Salmond and Blair Jenkins of the 'Yes' campaign described it as 'high spirits'.

Better Together leaders correctly described it as an attack on the democratic process.

Since *The Oban Times* article 'Ban is attack on democracy', January 22,

Argyll and Bute council is set to drop its proposed policy and continue to allow political posters.

Will *The Oban Times* and the community hub Grassroots now just as prominently condemn the violent abuse described above as 'attacks on democracy' and campaign to ensure that posters of all pro-union political parties be left un-molested in the forthcoming elections?

Otherwise what is the point of such parties erecting posters knowing they will be destroyed?

The general election is regarded by some as a pre-amble to another referendum, albeit the Edinburgh agreement was supposed to be 'a once in a lifetime opportunity' to settle the issue.

Whatever the merits of political posters, tearing them down has no place in the democratic process and surely this should be the next headline in *The Oban Times*?

Tom Dolan, local co-ordinator, Better Together, Oban and Lorn, 2012-2014.

Fair weather phone service

Sir, As I write I have been without a Vodafone signal for more than 11 days.

During that time I have contacted the company four times but they will not tell me when service will be resumed or how I may obtain a refund.

Two years ago owing to a maritime emergency during a gale I had to dial the coastguard on 999, but there was no mobile signal, so I had to run to the nearest BT phone, which took me 20 minutes. Thank God I made it and the lifeboat was deployed in time to avert a potential catastrophe.

I think we must accept that nowadays Vodafone is unreliable, at best a fair weather service, and that there are some lessons to be learned.

Don't rely on mobile phones - if appropriate carry VHF as well, even on shore.

Always carry two phones - one on Vodafone and the other on EE.

Campaign to retain and, where necessary, replace public pay phones in strategic places, making sure their locations are registered on maps and charts.

Lobby MPs and MSPs to pressure Vodafone into putting more money into infrastructure and equipment maintenance, rather than expanding their global empire and paying their shareholders ridiculous dividends. Oh yes - and get them to pay proper taxes.

John Gosling, Barcaldine.



Flashback

Formidable fishermen

Sir, HSW Blakeney's two photographs, one of the Pass of Brander, in a recent edition of *The Oban Times*, prompted me to share this photograph of my grandfather, John Macintyre of Lochandhu, Taynuilt.

He is posing at the Brander in pre-war days with a catch today's anglers on the River Awe can only dream about.

His obituary in the Scotsman stated that 'He knew every inch of the River Awe'.

He and Major Arthur Huntington of Bonawe House were a formidable team of superb fishermen, along with Mrs Gladys Huntington.

She hooked a 49 pounder on the Brander Pool in 1933.

The Major hooked the river's record salmon of 57 pounds on Casan Dubh below the railway bridge, and my grandfather gaffed it on the Long Pool on that thrilling day in July 1921, part of the lore of this once-great salmon river.

Dr Lorn Macintyre, St Andrews, Fife.

an Immortal Memory. 'Cuimhne Neo-bhasmor', I gave a short talk on MacIntyre and on some aspects of his work.

An address to the lassies was given to good effect by Neil MacLeod, who is sadly no longer with us. Neil based his address on 'Oran d'a cheile nuadh-phosda', the poet's song to his newly wedded bride.

Finally some tracks from 'Lament for the Misty Corrie' and 'Final Farewell to the Bens' were played on the stereo system.

The evening was deemed to be successful by everyone. It is to be hoped Highland people will try to celebrate more Gaelic poets, such as Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair, Murdo MacFarlane and many others and show that Highland literary culture can stand comparison with that of other parts of Scotland.

Richard A Deveria, Gaelic historian, Aberfeldy.

Letters to the editor

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Right move on posters

Sir, Your front page article last week, 'Oban group slams move to tear down political posters', got the hackles rising.

The move is a laudable one by our elected representatives to prevent their appearance in the first place.

As a non-party zealot, I would like to make the following observations:

The perception to those passing lamppost after lamppost bearing the same political message is that the perpetrators are active and have money and manpower to squander on the cause - but very doubtful in its effect of buying votes.

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John Gosling, Barcaldine.

Celebrate Gaelic poets

Sir, I was intrigued by your January 22 report on the Duncan Ban MacIntyre celebration in Plockton and with the comparison with Robert Burns.

Nine years ago, on March 24 2006, some friends and I held a successful Duncan Ban MacIntyre supper in the Weem Hotel, near Aberfeldy. It was along the lines of a Burns supper, but appropriate to the Glenorchy Bard.

We began with a Gaelic grace, with a translation.

The Address to the Salmon followed, in the form of some suitable lines from the poem 'Song to the Misty Corrie' and we then partook of an excellent supper consisting of salmon, followed by crannachan and coffee.

The loyal toast was then drunk, 'A Bhan-Righ'. As

an Immortal Memory. 'Cuimhne Neo-bhasmor', I gave a short talk on MacIntyre and on some aspects of his work.

An address to the lassies was given to good effect by Neil MacLeod, who is sadly no longer with us. Neil based his address on 'Oran d'a cheile nuadh-phosda', the poet's song to his newly wedded bride.

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John Gosling, Barcaldine.



Beachd Ailein Ailean Caimbeul

CHAN EIL TEAGAMH nach eil cuid a fhuair thairis air dùbhlán mòr air choreigin nam beatha dualach a bhith feall-chràbhach aig amannan, agus saoilidh mi gum bheil seo sònraichte fìor mun fheadhainn aig an deach air miann tombaca a cheannachadh. Tha fios agam gum bheil seo fìor leis gum bheil mi mothachail gum bheil mi fhìn bho àm gu àm ciontach a bhith car ro mhoiteil gun deach agam air sgur a smocadh an deidh còrr is trithead bliadhna! Cha robh e idir soirbh! Bha grèim làidir aig an tombaca orm agus bha mi ri siogaraits, siogàrs, agus mu dheireadh fad bhliadhnaichean ris a' phìob agus cho trom oirre is gun robh mo bhean ag ràdh nach robh i a' tighinn às mo bheul ach nuair a bha mi ag ithe 's a' cadal!

Chan eil cuimhne agam a-nise carson a cho-dhùin mi feuchainn ri sgur, saoilidh mi gun robh grunn adhbharan ann eadar mo shlàinte fhìn agus dhaoine eile, agus cosgais. Bheirinn fad latha ag innse dhuibh mun liuthad oidhirp is innleachd a dh'fheuch mi gum mo mhiann air an tombaca a mhùchadh. Fhuair mi buaidh mu dheireadh ach fad bhliadhnaichean nan tachrann ri duine a' smocadh pìob air an t-sràid cha mhòr nach toireadh fàileadh cùbhraidh an tombaca orm tòiseachadh a-rithist. 'S iomadh latha a ghabh mi aithreachas gun do thòisich mi riaghailt air tombaca. 'S e an leisgeul a th' agam gun robh a' mhòr-chuid de na fìr a' smocadh nuair a bha mi òg, agus corra bhoireannach cuideachd ach 's e feadhainn far Ghalltachd!

Mar a dh'aicidh mi mar-thà, dh'fhàs am fear a thug bliadhnaichean a' gànachadh àrainneachd dhaoine eile le ceò tombaca feall-chràbhach mu smocadh chàich, gu sònraichte ann an àitichean-bidh neo taighean-seinne. Chan eil cuimhne agam cuin a chunnaic mi cuideigin a' smocadh pìob, agus bho thàinig an lagh an aghaidh smocadh ann an ionadan poblach, tha an saoghal againn air atharrachadh gu tur. Bidh cuimhne againn air an ùpraid a bh' ann nuair a chuir an Riaghaltas ann am Pàrlamaid ùr na h-Alba romhpa an reachd an aghaidh smocadh a chur an gnìomh, agus na h-argamaidean gun cuireadh seo crìoch air saorsa agus deamocrasaidh! Ach dh'obraich e, agus tha sinn beò ann an saoghal nas fhallaine an-diugh ged a tha mòran fhathast a' smocadh ri linn 's gur e sin an rùn pearsanta, neo theagamh air sgàth 's nach deach aca air sgur.

Biodh sin mar a bhithas, tha mise làidir den bheachd gum bheil e iomchaidh nach bi iomhaigh tharraingeach air pacaidean tombaca a' taladh ghinealaichean ùra agus a chleachdadh.

AS A FORMER heavy smoker I am very conscious of how sanctimonious reformed addicts can sound to those who still use tobacco.

Many people struggling to break their smoking habit will wish, as I did, that they had never started.

I totally support any proposal to make tobacco products less likely to attract new generations of users.

Ailean Caimbeul (Allan Campbell)
ailean@obantimes.co.uk

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LAST week's SOLUTION

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All change as trust members step down

KEY MEMBERS of Kinlochleven Community Trust are set to leave their positions this year after a combined service of 14 years.

Development officer Moira Hartley will step down next week, after securing a new job as a Fort William estate agent. Chairman Andrew Baxter will also be leaving later this year as his second term on the board of directors will end in September.

But Mr Baxter, who is also a Highland councillor for Fort William and Ardnamurchan, said he is confident the trust, which was previously restricted to land development, will move from strength to strength in the community.

He said: 'This is a big change and a big challenge to the trust but I think new people will be a good thing.'

'I'm confident that we have a strong board of directors and I think they are ideally placed to take on the leadership.'

Ms Hartley lived in the village for 38 years before moving in September last year and has helped the trust with a number of projects in her eight and a half years in the role as development officer, including developing derelict land in the centre of Kinlochleven into a war memorial garden.

The soon-to-be estate agent said a highlight of her career with the trust was securing planning permission for a new hydro power scheme in September last year. She said: 'The hydro scheme will be fantastic for Kinlochleven and securing planning permission was a major milestone for the trust because it's taken almost four years to get to this stage.'

'I've loved working here, it's been great and I'm sad to go but I'm also looking forward to a new challenge.'

Mr Baxter said discussions with board members will soon be underway to recruit a new development officer.

He added: 'Moira has been instrumental in turning the trust into an open and transparent organisation that is led by the community.'



MOVING ON: Moira Hartley is stepping down as Kinlochleven community trust's development officer

PROTESTS GROW AS RESIDENTS AND BUSINESS OWNERS FACE 16-MILE ROUND TRIP TO BALLACHULISH

Villagers demand answers as doors close on bank

EMMA CRICHTON
ecrichton@obantimes.co.uk

THE KINLOCHLEVEN community has been left in the dark and lied to about the closure of the village bank, according to residents and business owners.

With the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) set to close its doors a week today (February 5), angry villagers said there had been no consultation about how services would be provided to the elderly and those without access to transport.

The nearest bank in Ballachulish is a 16-mile round trip from Kinlochleven.

A RBS spokeswoman said services, including cash deposits, would be transferred to the village post office but members of the community said they would lose some services and would be charged for others. Credit card payments can't be made in the post office, cash deposits could take several days to clear and those paying bills will face a £2.95 charge.

Members of community councils in south Lochaber, including Kinlochleven, Glencoe and Duror and Kentallen, have signed a letter of protest to RBS, asking for the bank's mobile branch to visit as this will save residents making the trip to Ballachulish. The mobile branch is a van which visits rural areas across the country but is not currently available in Lochaber.

Catriona Spence, of

Kinlochleven community council, said people living in the village had been treated 'terribly'.

She said: 'We would like the bank to be saved but we know there's not much chance of that. We want the mobile bank to come, or for the hours in Ballachulish to be increased to make up for it. But what we really want is for RBS to see how terribly we have been treated. There was no consultation, we were just told one day it was closing and that was it.'

Andy Irvine, owner of Kinlochleven take away restaurant Riverside Chippy, said he couldn't do his business banking from the post office.

He added: 'When we first heard the bank was closing we were told we would get the same service in the post office but that's just not true.'

'We need to deposit money every day and it appears instantly when you do it in the bank, but at the post office it has been known to take anything between two and six days. It wouldn't be as bad if we hadn't been kept in the dark and lied to but there has been no public consultation.'

RBS cited an increase in online banking for closing the branch, which has only been open four hours a week for the last 15 years. The spokeswoman added: 'There are no plans to extend the opening hours of Ballachulish or to extend the mobile branch service.'



ANGRY: Kinlochleven residents gather outside the village bank



SUCCESS: Kinlochleven high school's 53 business studies class prepares for the regional final of the enterprising challenge with teacher Jillian Clark

Pupils do the business and earn enterprise final place

BUDDING entrepreneurs in south Lochaber have made it to the Scottish final of an enterprise competition for the third time.

The third year business studies class at Kinlochleven high school impressed judges of the Real Business Challenge with its design and marketing of a smoothie drink it thinks could be sold by event sponsors Coca-Cola.

The final product, named Sabroso Fruits, has earned them a place in the top 10 schools, out of 170 which entered from across

Scotland. Six of the teenagers are now preparing to head to Edinburgh for the final next Wednesday (February 4), which could see them travel to London for the UK final in March.

Jillian Clark, business studies teacher at Kinlochleven, said: 'The class has worked really hard and we're really looking forward to the final in Edinburgh.'

This is the third time pupils from Kinlochleven have made it to the Scottish final so it's a real credit to the school.

New head teacher takes the helm at Kinlochleven high

A SOUTH Lochaber parent council has welcomed the appointment of a new high school head teacher, after the post was empty for almost a year.

Rebecca Machin, currently deputy head at Wick high school, will start at Kinlochleven on February 18, taking over from Jon McGilp, who left after the Easter break last year.

Stewart Borland, chairman of Kinlochleven parent council, called the news 'absolutely brilliant'.

He added: 'This has gone on for so long since Jon left, it has been quite a struggle. I was on the interview panel and Ms Machin did really well and had lots of good ideas. I'm quietly confident at the moment.'

A 'delighted' Ms Machin added: 'This new role is a great honour and I am wholeheartedly looking forward to working with the pupils, parents and wider community of Kinlochleven to ensure that we provide the best possible support and encouragement to all the young people within our care.'

'I'd like to thank everyone at Wick high school for their kindness and support over the last three sessions and I will be very sad to say goodbye.'



NEW HEAD TEACHER: Rebecca Machin

Lenders pledge to plug energy scheme's funding gap

DIRECTORS of a community energy scheme in Lochaber are delighted lenders have pledged to plug any funding gaps to allow the project to go ahead.

Sunart Community Renewables has offered stakes in a hydro-electric scheme for a previously untapped power source in Strontian and members say they have received £331,000 in shares since launching in October but still have a long way to go to reach the £850,000 total.

RBS social and community capital fund and the renewable energy investment fund have agreed to lend the remaining funding to the group to ensure the project goes ahead.



HYDRO: members of Sunart Community Renewables visited the power source at Strontian to celebrate securing the project's future

Jamie McIntyre, a director on the Sunart Community Renewables board, said: 'We are delighted the RBS social and community capital fund and the renewable energy investment fund have together confirmed the remaining funding we need to deliver our project. We can now go ahead with construction and have a very busy year ahead to make sure the hydro scheme is completed and commissioned this autumn as planned.'

Community shares are available until the end of February and anyone wishing to invest can go to www.SunartCommunityRenewables.org.uk or contact Dale Meegan on 07718 132680.

Timetable a 'let-down'

THE LEADER of a Western Isles council group believes April's interim ferry timetable between Skye and Harris is a let-down.

Caledonian MacBrayne is providing a summer peak-level frequency service on the Uig-Tarbert-Lochmaddy 'triangle' for five weeks starting on April 20 as a substitute for sailings to Stornoway, which will be passenger-only due to pier upgrades at Ullapool.

But Donald Manford, leader of the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Scottish National Party group, thinks there should be a separate vessel dedicated to the Uig-Tarbert section.

He said: 'I am particularly disappointed that no vessel is available to provide a dedicated service between Tarbert and Uig. We have long advocated for dedicated vessels for Tarbert-Uig and Lochmaddy-Uig which would provide a much greater level of frequency, reliability and resilience.'

A Transport Scotland spokesman said: 'CalMac cannot deploy a dedicated vessel on the Tarbert-Uig route during the short period of temporary disruption to Stornoway-Ullapool without causing significant damage to ferry services elsewhere on the network.'

Ulva Ferry looks to future with plot

THE REMOTE Ulva Ferry area on the Isle of Mull is home to a small community with big plans to ensure the future of the area.

The community is making a building plot available for sale below market value - thanks to a generous local landowner who has donated the plot.

The plot at Acharonich, on the west, which has an application pending for outline planning permission to build a three-bedroom house, is in an exceptional location with uninterrupted views, and is being sold for just £35,000.

The plot is being sold with a rural housing burden attached to the title, which means the community will always own a percentage share of the house that is built and ensures the house will remain affordable if it is sold in the future.

The land is being sold by Mull and Iona community trust on behalf of the Ulva School Community Association, and together they have formed the Ulva Ferry Housing Partnership, which will oversee the allocation of the plot following an application and interview process. One hundred per cent of the proceeds from the sale will contribute directly towards the construction costs of the community-owned rental houses being built next to Ulva Primary School.

Housing project manager Helen MacDonald said: 'We are delighted to be able to offer this plot for sale at such an affordable rate, compared to open market values in the area which are often prohibitively expensive for local families.'

'Our aim is to help locals get on the property ladder, and this is just one of several exciting developments which will ensure the future vitality and viability of the area.'

'We welcome applications from anyone with a connection to the area, particularly young couples and families, who are committed to being part of the community at Ulva Ferry.'

The closing date for applications is Monday February 23 with a view to completing the sale by April 17.

VIP guests all talk at speakers club

MEMBERS of Oban speakers club welcomed two VIP guests to its meeting last week.

Margaret Robertson, president of the National Association of Speakers Clubs and Jennefer Zielinski, vice president of Argyll and Clyde area, both addressed the club, detailing activities at both local and national level.

Following that it was the turn of some local members; Peter Mills spoke on The Berlin Wall, Alex Clark on Isambard Kingdom Brunel and John Maclean on K2.

Topics chairman Bill Leech asked Guido Faccenda, Jim Fraser, Archie McPhail and Roy Wood to answer a variety of questions.

Timekeeper for the evening was Tom Clegg and a kind and fair general evaluation was given by Frank Walton.

No objections to post office move

A PROPOSAL to move Inveraray post office from main street to the Londis Store received no objections from residents.

The changeover is planned to go ahead on March 11; the new branch at the Londis Store at the Arch Filling Station will open as the other closes.

The 'new' post office will have increased opening hours.

Inveraray will have a new-style local post office this spring and Alan Reid, Argyll and Bute MP, has welcomed the news that the town will keep this vital service with increased opening hours - a move which received no objections from customers.

Mr Reid said he was pleased the Royal Burgh was able to retain its post office.

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Make sure your pipes and boilers are properly lagged too. Something as simple as foam wraps can be picked up for just a few pounds to put around the pipes – but always put them on when the pipes are cool to make sure you don't burn yourself.

Maintenance on heating equipment is important too so make sure all water-fed radiators are bled and working correctly.

A working radiator should be warm evenly across the panel; if it isn't, there could be air trapped inside and bleeding the radiator

will ensure it returns to maximum efficiency.

Once those basics are done, you can start to have a more overall view of your home's heating requirements.

Is your boiler fired to the most efficient way possible? Can you turn your thermostat down a degree or two?

Are you buying your electricity and gas from the cheapest source? Could a change save you pounds and make your home warmer?

These things are relatively simple to check online and you'll find numerous tools online to help you estimate your costs and your potential savings with alternative heating sources.

Remember, the right heating source can vary depending on how you use your home.

Those who spend all day in the house may wish to consider the cheapest for prolonged use, while some occasional systems, such as

wet radiators, provide instant heat, although aren't always ideal to be left on all day.

Think too about future costs. Wood-fuelled heating systems, also called biomass systems, burn wood pellets, chips or logs to provide warmth in a single room or to power central heating and hot water boilers. A stove burns logs or pellets to heat a single room, and may be fitted with a back boiler to provide water heating as well.

A wood-fuelled boiler could save you up to £650 a year compared to old electric heating.

As resources dwindle and taxes increase, many people are also considering moving to a renewable energy source for heating and power.

Heat pumps and solar panels, once an extravagance only available to the extremely wealthy are becoming more common as prices drop to their lowest ever levels.

Such systems not only save you

cash by heating your home from sources that can be free, but government-funded feed-in tariffs can make some options earn money for you, repaying your investment and making you a profit long-term.

If, after all this, you feel you still aren't getting the most for your money, perhaps try speaking to your energy supplier to see if you're on the best rate or tariff for your circumstances.

Some may move you on to a cheaper option, if available.

If not, it might be time to consider switching to make sure you're not being ripped off.

It all feels like it will be rather difficult until you actually start to check, so don't delay and have a look at how you're heating your home today.

You'll be surprised how even making one or two of the above changes can make a significant difference to your home.

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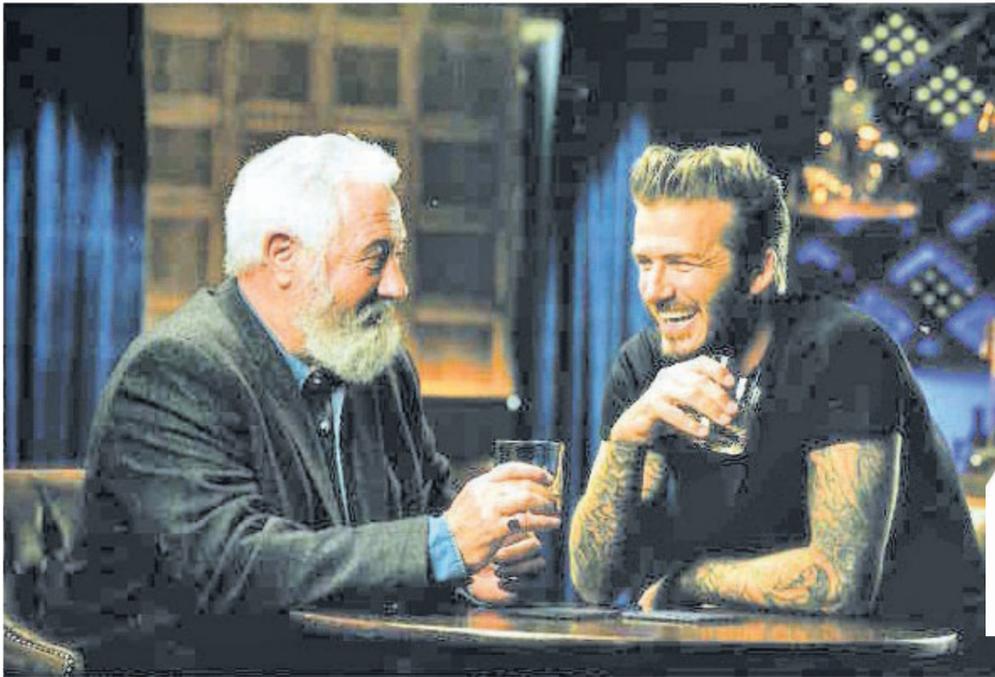
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Who's the man with Donnie MacKinnon?

WHEN I heard that an Islay woman passing through Glasgow Airport had glanced up at a moving advert and asked her companion, "Who's that man with Donnie MacKinnon?" I thought it was worth a wee investigation. The man in question was David Beckham, writes Calum Murray.



SLAİNTE: David Beckham meets Islay's Donnie MacKinnon as they launch the Haig Club whisky

It would come as no surprise to a lot of Islay folk that, to some in the Islay community, Donnie, former head brewer at Lagavulin Distillery, was more recognisable than the world famous celebrity whose image adorns magazine and advertising hoardings throughout the known universe. But how had he met him? And what were they doing on an advert in Glasgow Airport?

I arranged to meet Donnie in the Islay Hotel for a coffee and a chat. He made straight for the corner chair down in the bar and looked very much at home. It turned out that was the seat he uses when he plays music at the hotel three nights a week.

After only a few minutes of conversation I realised that meeting Beckham had been a highlight in Donnie's life. But I wanted to know more.

When Diageo decided to team up with David Beckham to introduce a new whisky, Haig Club,

to the world the creative team was looking for a Scotsman who knew a bit about whisky to play a part in a promotion.

Nick Morgan, head of Diageo's whisky outreach had remembered Donnie's involvement in a piece about Lagavulin's Malt Mill when the film *The Angel's Share* was doing the rounds and thought he would be ideal for the part. He contacted Georgie Crawford, Lagavulin's manager and in the time it would take to savour a whisky Donnie was aboard.

'I am really grateful to Nick and Georgie for arranging this opportunity for me,' said Donnie. 'My involvement in the project has left me with memories I will always treasure.'

Donnie had spent most of his working life down at Lagavulin Distillery, though he had a brief spell as a CalMac cabin boy when he left school. I wondered how a man born and brought up in Claddach, Portnahaven ended up working in Lagavulin.

The answer is quite romantic: Lagavulin is where Chrissie lived. Donnie explained that in his courting days he would travel from Claddach all the way to Lagavulin most days on his motorbike to meet his future bride.

Chrissie's father got him a job in the distillery and over the years he turned his hand to all the tasks required for the smooth running of the whisky making enterprise. By the time he retired he was head brewer - or production manager as the role is now more prosaically called.

Donnie was also a member of the Islay Rugby Club and managed to get Scotland's world cup captain, David Sole - who just happened to be the barley buyer for United Distillers - to bring a Sole Select to Islay to play against the local team. Donnie played tight head prop against Sole.

When Tom Shields of diary fame asked Donnie what the final result was Donnie replied, 'Eighty three points have been scored. Islay got a lot of them

and David Sole's team got a lot more. But everybody won.'

Donnie has fond memories of that visit way back in 1992 but told me that the experience was pipped by his latest adventure, the advert shoot where he met Beckham.

Donnie hadn't known what to expect when he left from Islay Airport. At the arrivals lounge in Glasgow a uniformed chauffeur was holding up a card with Donnie's name on it. He was about to experience how the other half live!

He was driven directly to the five-star Balmoral Hotel in Edinburgh where he was soon ensconced in a plush bedroom. He said that he initially felt a bit 'country comes to town' but was soon comfortable.

On the first night he had a meal with the photographers and press men who were there to report on the event.

The next day, Donnie was to have his hair and beard trimmed and have the first professional

manicure of his life. He started chatting to the man next to him, stripped to the waist, having the same thing done. It was David Beckham.

'A nicer man you couldn't meet,' Donnie said. He told me that David Beckham made him feel perfectly at ease and talked with him as if he was a long-lost friend. There were no airs and graces. Beckham seemed genuinely interested in hearing what Donnie had to say.

The next day, Donnie was kitted out in the clothes that he was to wear for the shoot.

He was to select from a large array of expensive clothes. He finally settled on a sports jacket, denim shirt and flannel trousers. He was also given a pair of smart brogues. Even the socks were provided.

A man who has dressed him-

self since he was knee high to a cough, he was gobsmacked to discover there was a valet to do it for him. The assistant even pulled his socks on and tied his shoe laces.

The shoot itself was not particularly onerous but there was take after take with a whisky glass in one hand and then the other, all the while chatting with David Beckham.

He was to spend another night at the hotel and fly back to Islay the next day. 'Where will I leave the clothes when I check out?' he asked.

'Leave the clothes?' came the reply. 'You can take them with you!'

This also included the brogues it seems. I asked Donnie if he had had a case with him to carry the clothes home. He looked at me as if I was daft. 'Carry them

home?' he asked incredulously. 'I wore them home.'

In the chauffeur driven limousine which took him back to Glasgow Airport Donnie thought about some of the things he would be doing back on Islay; delivering the Royal Mail by boat to Rhuvaal lighthouse with his son Nichol; playing music in the local hotels; tinkering with his vintage 1934 Armstrong Siddley.

But mostly he thought about the wonderful time he had had taking part in a film shoot with a genuine, warm-hearted man, David Beckham.

As he crossed the runway into arrivals at Islay Airport someone said, "Donnie MacKinnon's looking smart."

A voice from behind said, "He's always smart." It was Chrissie - and she was right.

Ferry tender process to meet deadline, says minister

THE TRANSPORT minister has confirmed the Scottish Government will meet its own deadline of 2017 to issue the tender for the Clyde and Hebridean ferry services contract.

Derek Mackay MSP was asked last week by shadow transport minister and Highlands and Islands MSP to confirm the exact timetabling for the tendering process, previously set out as between 2015 and 2017.

The MSP had not received his response as *The Oban Times* went to press but Transport Scotland has confirmed to the newspaper that a formal publication of a contract notice will be issued in the early part of this year, with a view to providing the services from October 2016.

Concerns have been raised

about the timing of the contract being awarded, as it could not be announced during the period of purdah in the forthcoming Westminster and Holyrood elections.

During portfolio questions in the Scottish Parliament chamber last Wednesday Mr Stewart quizzed Mr Mackay on the timetabling for the tender process and if the Scottish Government would involve the island authorities in the process.

Mr Stewart told *The Oban Times*: 'It is a huge tender, the routes will be offered in one bundle, so community involvement is vital because this service has to be right.'

'Some of these services are a lifeline to people. It is important we get the

exact date for the tender for everyone to have certainty in the future.'

'We should also be looking at new routes, the types of vessels we use etc.'

'The issue of purdah will come into play, so we have to get the decision out before that.'

Responding to Mr Stewart's parliamentary question, Mr Mackay said: 'I am happy to write to the member with the exact details of timescales, if that is of assistance.'

'There has been engagement with the island authorities and I give a guarantee that it will be on-going. I have been clear with island authorities that, as we conduct our business in the way that we propose in the prospectus for Scotland's islands,

there will be even deeper and wider engagement on such matters.'

'There will be more consultation. I will give the exact specifics on the timetable for announcing the successful bidder to David Stewart and any other member who is interested.'

A Transport Scotland spokesman said: 'A tendering team has begun the preliminary procurement processes leading to the provision of Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services from October 2016.'

'The team is now making the necessary arrangements in preparation for the formal publication of a Contract Notice in early 2015 to announce the start of the selection stage of the procurement process.'



ROUTES: Hebridean services will be up for tender

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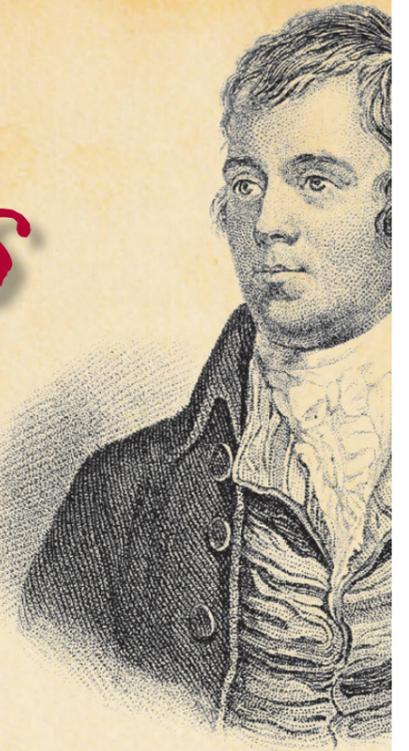
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Of course, the range was immense and the kind and knowledgeable staff made some sense of this Aladdin's cave.
My eye was drawn to the Longrow Red. There was something about it that made me feel nostalgic.
It had to be the one. It was duly wrapped and presented to me and I put it in my bag with a fine big bottle of Campbeltown Loch and two fine whisky glasses.
It lay for 18 days underneath my side of our bed and I don't know if it was the whisky or just the contentment of having bought something I knew Mr Lee would be delighted with.
On Christmas morning with the fire lit everyone in the house over the age of 18 raised a glass. It was the finest whisky I have tasted in a long time.
It was sweet, peaty, fresh, delightful and at the same time tender on the old head. As soon as I could I phoned the shop for another bottle – and guess what? I had purchased the last one.
So, Longrow Red is the Holy Grail of whisky. Please send me one if you find it anywhere – and buy one for yourself.
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Louise Lee



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GATHERING: Lochaber Burns Club gathered for their annual supper at The Alexandra Hotel, Fort William 20_f05burns02



PIPED: Duncan Gibson (middle) was piped in by McFarlane at the fourth Glenfinnan community Burns 20_f05burns03



FINAL ADDRESS: Fort William primary school pupils prepare to address the haggis at the last Burns supper before merging with Upper Achintore in August 20_f05burns01



HAGGIS: Fort William R.C nursery and primary school children prepared for the haggis at the Burns Night at the John Hynd address 20_f05burns04

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Calls for encore at club as father and daughter impress

AN IMPENDING Atlantic storm did little to deter the hardy musicians and friends of Skye Accordion and Fiddle Club who attended the January meeting in the Royal Hotel, Portree.

Starting an evening of great music, it was club vice-chairman and master of ceremonies John Cameron who gave some toe-tapping selections on his piano accordion, accompanied on drums by Donald John Campbell, then followed by some fiddle duets from Caerina Campbell and Ellie MacPherson.

The music was continued by the club's youngest player, Erin Baker on accordion, accompanied by her father George on guitar, resulting in the audience calling for an encore.

Caerina then returned to the stage with some more great fiddle sets including a couple of fabulous Shetland waltzes and was most ably accompanied by John Cameron, this time on piano.

A recent member of the club, Julia Rudram, on fiddle, played a couple of tunes and the first half of the evening was rounded off by John Cameron on accordion and vocals, with Donald John on drums.



Graeme MacKay Scottish Dance Band. From left: Thomas MacKay, Rachel Campbell and Graeme MacKay 20_f05burns05

The second half of the evening was devoted to the club's special guests, Inverness-based Graeme MacKay Scottish Dance Band, which provided a lively programme of popular tunes interspersed by slow airs and waltzes which more than suited the Skye audience. Bandleader Graeme on his Hohner Shand Morino played a couple of his 'party pieces', which included a superb version

of the popular 'Bonnie Lass o' Bon Accord' and fiddler Rachel Campbell contributed a great solo, while drumming was ably provided by Thomas MacKay. This fine trio rounded off the evening by inviting the local musicians to join them on stage for a traditional stramash.
The next club night is in the same venue on February 5 with the Marian Anderson Trio.

Fort man tells of Arctic adventure

A FORT William man who emigrated to the Arctic as a teenager after struggling to find a job at home, has told the story of his 50 years of living among north Canada's Aboriginal population.

Donald Cameron has self-published the book *An Extraordinary Journey for an Ordinary Cameron Man* based on his memoirs of working in the fur trade with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC).

While used to many a cold winter in Lochaber, Donald was in for a shock when he flew to the freezing remote outpost of Cape Dorset in 1966, where some of the community stayed in igloos. He worked in various locations in the north of the country before settling in Salluit, Quebec, a place not accessible by road.

Donald said: 'As a teenager I was living in Glen Nevis and had worked for the forestry commission but it was hard to find employment.'

'I had this urge to see a bit of the world and the Hudson Bay Company was advertising a vacancy. It took me a week to get out

to my first post; I was stuck in Timmins (Ontario, Canada) and was broke.

'I told this man I was going north and he gave me 20 bucks. This guy was the owner of the airline.'

Donald was soon forging ahead in a successful career with HBC, as a manager meeting clients in the Inuit community to arrange the distribution and retailing of fur, and settled into what was a very different culture to what he had experienced in Scotland.

He added: 'It was a culture shock.'

'The language was different, people were living in igloos and women were breastfeeding their babies in public.'

'There was no running water, heating, television, cars or roads.'

'Though it was a lot more traditional then; nowadays they all have cars and big boats.'

Donald met his future wife, Keatatak, in Salluit, who he said was raised in an igloo 'by a traditional mother and father'.

They have been married for 44 years and now have a large family of grandchildren



JOURNEY: Donald Cameron signs copies of his book, which details his incredible journey from the West Highlands to the Arctic 20_f05burns06

and great grandchildren, while Donald continues to work in Salluit as the general manager of mining company Nuvumit Developments.
Now 66 years old, he is still fond

of Fort William, adding that he still has cousins in the area and intends to be back to visit this year. Donald's book is available in Kindle edition online from Amazon.

Quartet brings Schubert to Kilmallie

MAXWELL String Quartet will be the next group to perform for Lochaber music enthusiasts as part of a series of concerts in the region.
The fourth event in a series of five from Music For all, cellist Duncan Strachan will return to his hometown with

his band to play in Kilmallie Free Church on Saturday January 31.

From 7.30pm, the quartet plan to entertain the audience with Franz Schubert's Death and the Maiden among other pieces. Tickets will be available on the door.



al Bard



SPEAKERS: The top table from the Oban Burns club's Burns Supper, held in the Regent Hotel on Friday, December 23. 16_105burnsclub01

CHAIRMAN John MacLean opened proceedings at the Oban Burns club supper in the Regent Hotel last Friday, with a toast to The Queen.

Former police officer Ken Stark, who was one of the founding members of the Inveraray Burns club, gave The Immortal Memory.

Guest Jim Macmillan, who is also a former member of Inveraray Burns club, gave Holy Willie's Prayer.

Former Kilmore and Oban Parish Church minister Rev David

Watson then recited Land We Live In, and the reply came from the editor of The Oban Times, Willie Mack.

Oban High school teacher Frank McKenna gave the Toast to the Lassies and John MacLean toasted the host and hostess, before Iain MacIntyre gave the Vote of Thanks.

Torquhil Telfer was piper for the evening and singer Peter Sinclair and accordion player Maurice Duncan performed a collection of Burns songs, including Scots Wae Hae.



BURNS: Chelsea MacAulay (second from right) provided some traditional Scottish dancing once the food was finished 16_105dunbegburns01

DUNBEG primary school held its Burns Supper during lunch hour on Friday.

Innes Munro (right) piped the

haggis in, with his primary seven classmates Craig Sinclair (left) and Paul Duncan (second from left) addressing the haggis.



COMPETITION: From left are Josh Mills, nine, from Craignish, seven-year-old Erin Jackson from Appin and Imogen Oatts, who is 10, from Kilniver 16_105corranburns01

PUPILS from three Argyll primary schools gathered at Oban's Corran halls on Tuesday for the annual Burns competition.

Prizes were given for solo singing, recitation, project work, art and writing in Scots to the children from Appin, Kilniver and Craignish primary schools.

The competition is funded by

Oban Burns club, whose members Jack Degnan, Bill Griffiths, Ian Weir and Ellis Carmichael served as judges on the day.

Bernie McMillan, head teacher at Craignish and Kilniver primaries, said that every year she was impressed with the ever-improving standard from the children.



by father and son Charlie (right) and Iain at Burns supper at Glenfinnan House Hotel



ry one pupils helped Lochaber train driver to pipe the haggis 20_105burns03

Oban Phoenix Cinema	Annie Sat 31 12:50 Sun 1 12:50	Kingsman: The Secret Service Fri 30 15:00, 18:00, 20:40 Sat 31 15:00, 18:00, 20:40 Sun 1 15:00, 18:00, 20:40	Tel: 01631 562905 • Box Office: 08719 025752
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GAELIC PUB QUIZ
Studio Theatre Bar, Corran Halls, Oban
Tuesday 3rd February at 7.30pm
£2 per person - Max 5 people per team
There will be a Gaelic speaker for each team

Seil Drama Group presents a panto, **The Pirates of Puilladobhrain**
Seil Island Community Hall
Saturday 31 January, 3pm and 7pm
Tickets (£5) on the door, or from Balvicar Stores

OBAN U3A
Tuesday 3 February 2015 at 10.30am
Studio Theatre and café area, Corran Halls, Oban.
A warm welcome to members new and old for our monthly coffee and chat meeting.

Mòd an Òbain 2015 Uist & Barra Ceilidh
Saturday 7th February 2015
Masonic Hall, Albany Street, Oban, 7.30pm. Admission: £6.00
Featuring:
Mairi MacMillan (T.G.M), Murdo MacDonald
Mary C MacLean, Ellen MacDonald
Iain MacLean (Accordion), Ali MacLean (Pipes)
Fear an Taighe: Duncan MacNeil
Raffle, tea and home baking

Dyslexia Scotland Oban & Lorn
Thursday 5 February 7pm - 8.30pm
Oban High School (Assembly Hall)
What is Dyslexia and what helps?
Mary Jane Bird is a parent and former college lecturer specialising in support for learning. She will give an overview of dyslexia and suggest practical things that can help children and adults with dyslexia.
Free event - no need to book
For more info email: maureen.evans@argyll-bute.gov.uk
Tel: 01631 567975 Refreshments available.

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Rural minister takes milk price crisis to EU

SCOTLAND'S rural affairs minister Richard Lochhead has taken dairy farmers' concerns about the prices they are paid for milk and dairy products to the European Union.

Mr Lochhead pushed for action at EU level when he attended the Council of Ministers earlier this week.

The fall in the price of milk and deferred payments to First Milk co-operative members has hit dairy farmers in Argyll hard.

Milk prices have fallen from 32 pence a litre to 20 pence in the last six months.

Mr Lochhead said: 'I met farmers across Scotland last week and it is clear they are worried for their future.'

'This is especially true in some of our remote and island communities where dairy farming plays a key role in our wider

economy and where this issue could have serious consequences reaching beyond the farm gate.

'We also know that this is a problem affecting farmers in many countries across the EU.'

'That is why it is crucial that we consider what can be done at a European level to support farmers, protect our dairy industry and safeguard its contribution to our economy and natural larder.'

Argyll and Bute MP Alan Reid has added his voice in the House of Commons, asking for help from the Government.

He wants to see the big supermarkets held to account for their pricing.

Mr Reid said in parliament: 'May we please have an urgent statement on what the Government can do to help this iconic British industry to survive?'

'Extending the scope of the groceries code adjudicator to include dairy farmers is one action that could help.'

The adjudicator was established to enforce the groceries code of practice which ensures suppliers to the country's major supermarkets are treated lawfully and fairly.

Because most dairy farmers don't sell directly to the supermarkets, the adjudicator can't help them.

Leader of the House of Commons William Hague MP agreed: 'Legislation should be introduced to enable the groceries code adjudicator to impose a financial penalty.'

'The Government is also considering the GCA's remit, which is subject to a statutory review in March next year.'

'The only good news is that, of

course, exports have risen and we are giving dairy farmers the opportunity to unite in producer organisations, which in the longer term could give them greater clout in the marketplace.'

Mr Reid said afterwards: 'The present price levels are unsustainable and driving farmers ever closer to the brink of financial ruin.'

He added: 'Argyll and Bute is home to some of the finest dairy herds in Scotland, built by generations of farming families and their loss would be a severe blow to the local economy as well as to the UK national herd.'

'The Government must not wait until next year to review the adjudicator's remit.'

'This should be extended to include farmers as soon as possible.'

Ewen Campbell, SRUC Kirkton and Auchtertyre farms manager

Happy New Year. We hope you all had a nice festive break.

SRUC's Strathfillan Wiggams business certainly did, with the site being fully booked for Hogmanay.

On the sheep front, last week we sent our last batch of fattened lambs from the shed - 43 Scottish Blackface and 13 Lleys - to Scotbeef, our nearest abattoir in Bridge of Allan in Stirlingshire. The snow prevented us from taking them sooner.

However, the lambs were of a good weight and condition, with the Scottish Blackface being over 37 kg and the Lley over 36 kg.

This ensured that the lambs achieved the minimum carcass weight of 15 kg, without being over-fat, which are the specifications the market is looking for.

Up to the end of last month, we had sent 288 fat lambs to the abattoir, with an average carcass weight of 17.8 kg, giving us an average price of £64 per lamb. Around 91 per cent of these lambs were in the target abattoir grades for conformation and fatness (E3H, E2, U3H, U3L, U2, R3H, R3L and R2, see table), with the remainder just slightly poorer in terms of conformation, but no real problems with over-fatness.

		FAT CLASS						
		1	2	3L	3H	4L	4H	5
		very lean	lean	optimum	slightly over	fat	very fat	excessively fat
CONFORMATION	% lambs	0%	0.6%	0%	1.2%	0%	0%	0%
	E excellent	0.3%	9.9%	4.9%	1.7%	0%	0%	0%
	U very good	1.2%	47.1%	23.0%	2.9%	0%	0%	0%
	R good	0.3%	6.7%	0.3	0%	0%	0%	0%
	O fair	0%	0.0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

As far as the cattle are concerned, our 12 11-month-old calves were sent to another SRUC college farm, at Oatridge near Edinburgh last week.

The seven bullocks will be fattened and sold on from there, whilst the five heifers will be brought back to the main herd when they are ready to be mated. This will increase the number of cows in our herd from 20 to 25 - so we are slowly building up their numbers.

The cows were mated with our Aberdeen-Angus bull back in May and will start calving in a couple of weeks' time.

So, we hope to have 20 new calves on the farm by the end of March. The cows have also recently been tested for Tuberculosis by our local vet in Oban, as is the normal practice for a cattle herd.

Like the rest of Scotland, we have had a lot of snow in the past couple of weeks and have been kept busy ferrying hay bales and extra feed to the remaining animals on the farm.

We have had up to 20 cm of snow at farm steading level and a lot more on the hill.

Before the snow hit us, we also had a very wet start to the year. In the first 15 days of January, we recorded 400 mm of rainfall (more than 15.5 inches).

Despite the rain, wind and snow over recent months, the sheep are looking okay.

The ewes will be ultrasound scanned next week and this will give us a better idea of how lambing is likely to go in April.

Once we have the results of the ultrasound scan, the ewes will be fed different amounts of concentrate depending on how many lambs they are carrying.

So, by the time of our next column, I should be able to update you all on how both the cows and the sheep are doing in terms of young calves born and the number of lambs being carried by the ewes at scanning time.

Hopefully some of the snow will have disappeared by then as well.

Our colleagues from SAC Consulting are also organising a workshop on drainage at Kirkton and Auchtertyre farms on the February 11. If any of you are interested, contact the Oban office: 01631 563093.

MARKET REPORTS

Caledonian Marts, Oban

CALEDONIAN Marts in Oban held its first sale of the year on January 20 and sold 35 store, breeding and OTM cattle and 773 store hoggets and feeding ewes.

Bullocks (12) averaged 232 pence per kg selling to 258p per kg for a 225kg Shorthorn from Hugh McPhail, Callachy, Salen, Isle of Mull and to £650 gross for two 265kg Aberdeen Angus from A MacLeod, No.2 Eoligarry, Isle of Barra.

Heifers (10) averaged 210p per kg selling to 226p for a 195kg Simmental from Dunach Esatties, Glenmachrie, Oban and to £600 for three 290kg

Aberdeen Angus from Robin and Ian Malcolm, Poltalloch, Kilmartin.

OTM (10) averaged 98.5p per kg selling to 140p per kg for a 465kg Shorthorn from John Caskie, Kengharair, Dervaig, Isle of Mull and to £790 for a 780kg Aberdeen Angus from Frackersaig Farm, Isle of Lismore.

Breeding Cattle sold to £800 for a 2002 born Charolais cow in calf from A McLeod, No.2 Eoligarry, Isle of Barra.

Store Hoggets (455) averaged £44.95 per head selling to £72 for Cheviots from Dunach Estates, Glenmachrie, Oban.

Ewes (195) averaged £40.36 selling to £85 for a Suffolk from A McNeill, Tiraghoul, Bunnass, Isle of Mull.

Riggs and tups (123) averaged £43.40 to £100 for a Texel from Dunach Estates.

Leading prices per kg:
Bullocks: 247p Strontollier; 245p No.2 Eoligarry; 242p Poltalloch; 222p Caledonian Farms;
Heifers: 226p & 220p Dunach Estates; 207p Poltalloch;
OTM: 116p, 114p, 106p Frackersaig.

Leading prices:
Store Hoggets: Suff - £65 Balmackillichan; Chev - £62 Dunach Estates; Tex - £61 Glenoren; Mule - £60 Balliemeanoch and Upper Largie; Cross - £59 Poltalloch; BF - £60 Scrib Ruidh; Beltex - £58 Balmackillichan & Glenoren.

Tups: Tex - £95 Strontollier; Char - £90 Culbhuig; Suff - £90 & £85 Culbhuig; BF Leic - £80 Blarghour; Chev - £80 Ensay and Balliemeanoch; Riggs: BF - £58 Balliemeanoch & Blairghor.

Ewes: Suff - £85 Tiraghoul. Chev - £70 Dunach & Annat. Mule - £62 Alaval. BF - £60 Stroneskar.

Ltd's Lochmaddy sale on January 22 where 172 weaned calves and store cattle were sold.

Bullocks (104) averaged 246.9p and sold to 288p per kg for a 250kg Limousin cross from 20 Grenitote, Sollas, and £1,070 gross for a 430kg Limousin cross from 21 Grenitote, Sollas.

Heifers (68) averaged 230.6p and sold to 272.3p per kg for a 235kg Limousin cross from 11 Grenitote,

and £930 gross for a 395kg Limousin cross from Glebe, Tigharry.

Other leading prices per head and per kg:
Bullocks up to 200kg - 7 Borve, Berneray, £480, 246.2p; 201-250kg - 20 Grenitote, £720, 10 Borve, Berneray, 237.2p; 251-300kg - 10 Borve, £850, 15 Linciate, Creagorry, 287.9p; 301-350kg - Glebe, £980, 284.1p; 351-400kg - 21 Grenitote, £1,000, Glebe,

270.4p; 401-450kg - 4 Tigharry, £1,040, 250.6p; 451-500kg - 14 Hougharry, £980, 7 Middlequarter, Sollas, 211p.

Heifers up to 200kg - 7 Nunton, Benbecula, £470, 247.4p; 201-250kg - 11 Grenitote, £650, 9 Grenitote, 265.3p; 251-300kg - Glebe, £720, Hastain, Bayhead, 264.2p; 30-350kg - Glebe, 910, 260p; 351-400kg - 7 Tigharry, £900, 235.4p; 401-450kg - 21 Grenitote, £920, 227.2p.

Lambing focus

WITH the lambing season just around the corner, crofter Philip MacAskill had planned to have his 90 breeding ewes scanned at the beginning of February.

But the Skye man thought he had double vision when he came back home from Fort William, where he is working as a digger driver, to find a pair of twin ewe lambs already born.

The cross Texel lambs were born on January 15 during the

recent stormy weather - fortunately their mother was kept indoors.

It was fitting then that the twins were named Gale and Storm.

Philip, from Earlish on Skye, said: 'I was working away from home, so I have all the sheep inside during the winter.'

'If the twins had been born outside they wouldn't have made it.'

'I just happened to walk into

the shed one day and I heard the lambs shouting.

'I thought, "That can't be right".'

Philip grew up at Clachan Sands on North Uist before moving to Skye and has always been around livestock.

He began keeping his own sheep 15 years ago and breeds Texel cross, Cheviot cross and Zwartbles, a breed originating in Holland and first introduced

to the UK in 1986.

Now aged 48, Philip says he has never seen lambs born as early in the year.

He said: 'I have always kept sheep, people say it's a hobby but it's not, it's an addiction.'

'But I have to admit these two took me by surprise.'

'They are doing really well and I am 99 per cent sure I'm keeping them as stock because they are good lambs.'

'The fact no-one had to handle them - the mother and the lambs went through the whole things themselves - tells me there is a fighting strain in them.'

After scanning his flock next Tuesday, Philip will separate the ewes to give more feed to those carrying multiple lambs.

For lambing help, advice and supplies, there are many options with a wide variety of quality goods and services available.



DOUBLE VISION: Skye lambs Gale and Storm were a shock to owner Philip MacAskill.

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selling vehicle in Scotland at retail, private buyers purchasing vehicles with their on hard-earned cash or on finance, with more than 8,000 registered. It just missed out on the top spot overall, a position it has held for six of the last seven years by just 79 cars. 'We are delighted to be Scotland's biggest-selling

car manufacturer for the seventh year running,' said Gordon Hannen, Vauxhall's regional operations manager for Scotland. 'We are confi-

dent the new 2015 Corsa, in showrooms now, can regain its position at the top of the Scottish car charts.' Priced from just £8,995

on-the-road, Vauxhall's all-new Corsa raises the class benchmark for driveability, comfort and practicality.



The new Vauxhall Corsa

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How to improve the saleability of your home in the winter months

For the best chance to sell your home it is important to make sure your property stands out, and in the cold, dark winter months this couldn't be more important. By incorporating a few simple tips, sellers can enhance the look and feel of their property, increasing the chance of attracting an offer, says National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA).

Simon Gerrard, president of NAEA, says: 'Winter can be cold, dark and wet, which often means properties are unable to promote some of their best features. By incorporating a few simple tips, sellers can enhance their property's look and feel and increase their chance of attracting an offer.'

'Quite often, it is the smallest changes to a property that can make it stand out over others. A warm, inviting atmosphere in the dreary winter months is key. Simple things such as making sure a home is warm and well lit can improve saleability during the darker months and additions such as welcoming garden lights to enhance the entrance to your home can appeal to buyers' imaginations.'

The NAEA's top tips for those looking to sell their property during winter are as follows:

First impressions count - Outside is where the biggest impact of the bad weather will be and this is obviously the first sight of your home a prospective buyer will have. Winter can make the front garden and paths look dull and dirty, so ensuring these are clean and clear of leaves will improve the attractiveness of the property.

Go with the flow - Check the gutters and drain covers are properly cleared of dead leaves and other debris as leaky gutters and down pipes cause damage and are unsightly.

In the Garden - A messy garden can signal the need for too much work and thus detract buyers. If possible, clear patio furniture away, and if not ensure they are securely covered. Fix or secure any loose fence panels or gates. It is also advisable to cut back overhanging branches; this will help brighten the property.



Bright and beautiful - Ensure your home is well lit. This means making sure all of your lights work, including the security lights. If a viewing takes place during the day, open all of the curtains and blinds to ensure as much natural light as possible can enter the home. Making sure the doorways, entrance, stairs or porch are clear of clutter can help create an inviting home.

Warm and friendly - It's important to make your house feel warm and homely. If a buyer enters a property that is cold they're unlikely to stay long. Smell is also important. You are going to get a bad reaction from buyers if there is an odd aroma or damp smell hanging around. So freshen up, let some fresh air circulate and the old cliché of fresh bread or roasting coffee really does work.

Flying off for the winter - If you are going away for any period over the winter the heating should be left on at a low temperature (minimum of 15°C). If you are away for a long period and don't want to keep the heating on 24/7 make sure it is on a timer. Longer spells at a lower temperature can be more economical than shorter blasts at higher temperatures.

Dealing with below zero temperatures - If you find a frozen pipe don't ever try to defrost it with a direct flame like a blow torch, as this can cause even more damage. Instead use a gentle heat such as a hot water bottle or hair-dryer.

Gross lending remains steady in December

The Council of Mortgage Lenders estimates that gross mortgage lending reached £16.5 billion in December. This remained unchanged month-on-month compared to November but down one per cent compared to December 2013. This means the gross

lending estimate for the fourth quarter of 2014 is £51.6 billion, down eight per cent on quarter three but up one per cent on the fourth quarter of 2013. Overall, for 2014 the gross lending estimate is £205.6 billion, up 17 per cent on 2013's £176 billion gross lending figure.

Commenting on market conditions, CML chief economist Bob Pannell observes: 'Housing market activity has been cooling and house price growth slowing in recent months, but 2014 was still the strongest year for mortgage lending since 2008. First-time buyers were a

key driver, helped by government initiatives such as Help to Buy. As a result, the number of first-time buyers topped the 300,000 mark. While a far cry from the half million that we might regard as 'normal', this was the highest number of first-time buyers since 2007. 'Although lending

remained muted in December, the previous monthly pace of decline in approvals appeared to moderate. So, alongside the big picture of a softer market, we are beginning to detect signs that underlying market conditions may be stabilising.'

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Applications are requested by CV and covering letter to the address below before 6 February 2015.

For a detailed job specification please contact:
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8 Melville Crescent, Edinburgh, EH3 7JA
Email: lisa.connell@scottishsalmon.com
Visit our website at www.scottishsalmon.com

Argyll & Bute Care & Repair

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Care & Repair Manager, covering Argyll & Bute Area
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25 hours per week

This permanent Manager post will involve investigating & delivering new opportunities for business expansion, and securing ongoing funding.
• This post is to ensure an effective service to clients, through delivery and operation of the Care and Repair service. To provide practical, financial & technical services, information and advice to elderly and disabled householders throughout Argyll & Bute.

- To ensure the activities of Argyll & Bute Care & Repair accord with company policy, comply with regulatory and legislative requirements, are carried out within budget, and achieve value for money.
 - Staff management and development
 - To promote Argyll & Bute Care & Repair positively, through all activities
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Closing Date for both posts: 12 noon on Friday 13th February 2015

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Tel 01631 566370, email susan@argyllresources.co.uk
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CORACHIE CLEMATIS Taynuilt, Argyll

DRIVER WITH EXPERIENCE REQUIRED
6 months on Full/Part Time.
Must have Class C+E.
Must have own transport and be able to work away from home 1 or 2 nights per week.

GARDEN CENTRE/NURSERY SEASONAL STAFF WANTED
Full/Part Time. Must be flexible regarding hours
Must have own transport.
Start date mid February 2015.

Please phone 01866 822266 for further details.
email wholesale@corachieclemtis.co.uk



We are currently recruiting a Charge Nurse, Nurses, Care Assistants and Housekeeping Staff to complement our existing skilled team

You must have a flexible approach to shift pattern and be able to work nights and weekends. Advanced skill training can be given to successful candidates.

Knowledge and experience of working in care desirable.

Variety of hours and competitive rates of pay.

Professional qualifications on offer to successful candidates

Please contact the Manager Louise Glasgow on 01631 720278 for application form or further information

Am Birlinn Restaurant

We are recruiting for the 2015 season:

1. Head Chef

2. Experienced reliable committed manager to organise day to day running.

3. Sous chef, some experience desirable but could suit a willing enthusiastic trainee.

Excellent pay rates and free accommodation for the right applicants.

C.V.s to Pat & Iain Morrison,

Penmore Mill, Dervaig, Mull PA75 6QS

Tel. 01688 400242/297 E mail info@turumara.com

Personal Assistant and Office Administrator

Location: Tarbert, Loch Fyne

20 - 25 hours per week (or part-time/term-time) A Personal Assistant and office administrator is required for a busy and growing professional practice. Duties will include assisting the MD, liaising with clients, audio or shorthand typing, filing and general office management. The applicant should be proficient in Microsoft Office 365. Salary will be dependent on level of experience and hours.

Please send a CV and covering letter introducing yourself to:

Private and Confidential, Christine Heads, William Duncan (Argyll) Ltd, Loch Awe House, Barmore Road, Tarbert, PA29 6TW or send an email to christine.heads@wdargyll.co.uk

Farm Technicians

Salary - £17,978- £22,808 plus overtime

We are currently looking to identify several Farm Technicians. You will be required to work at one of the following sites, MacLean's Nose, Laga Bay or Kingairloch.

The successful applicants will be required to carry out a variety of duties including feeding, net changing and other general farm tasks, and be willing to work flexibly to meet the demands of the job. One of these posts will require the applicant to work on the sites net cleaning boat.

All positions will require working a 40 hour week on any five out of seven days. The positions are offered on a permanent basis.

Applications are invited from individuals who have a positive approach to this type of work and who are competent swimmers. Experience is certainly an advantage although training will be provided. A driving licence is essential.

If you are interested in applying for any of these vacancies, please submit an application in writing, by the closing date of Friday 13th February 2015 to: Gillian Dempster, Human Resources Assistant, Marine Harvest (Scotland) Limited, Business Resource Centre, Blar Mhor Industrial Estate, Fort William, PH33 7PT.



HygieneTeknikk

We are a specialist engineering company based in Oban and we currently have two part time permanent positions which may be combined:

Part Time Administrator - to input data entries into our Job Management system; manage inventory; place & monitor orders from established suppliers; provide general support to our Technicians.

Part Time CAD Drawing - to update our existing portfolio with our new engineering products whilst continuing to evolve the current drawings into useful training aids for our customers.

Our working culture will suit you if you are self-motivated and enjoy working as part of a small local team with varied skill-sets and a shared determination to succeed. Full training will be provided.

In return we can offer appropriately qualified candidates a competitive salary and our support for you to fully develop your potential.

Please send a brief CV together with a short email explaining why you are interested in this opportunity to ian@aquatic.as

Interviews will be held shortly with a view to starting in mid February.

Argyll College UHI

Argyll College UHI Ltd has a purpose-built childcare nursery adjacent to the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) at Dunstaffnage, called Little Learners' Nursery. We would now like to appoint a

Nursery Support Worker - Maternity Cover Full Time

We require a Nursery Support Worker to participate in the development and planning of the curriculum through play based activities for up to 32 children aged between 3 months and 5 years. Applicants should be qualified to SVQ 2/3 or HNC Early Education and Childcare.

The position is full time (maternity cover), 40 hours per week. The actual hours worked during Monday to Friday will be agreed. The salary for this post is **£15,689.04**

The successful candidate will assist children with meal times, personal hygiene, quiet times and outings.

Successful applicants will be subject to an application to join Disclosure Scotland Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme.

All applications must be made on the Argyll College Application form. An application form and job description can be found on the vacancies section of our website www.argyllcollege.ac.uk

Please post/email completed application form to:

Lorna McDonald, Argyll College UHI Ltd, Glenshellach Business Park, Oban PA34 4RY or email lorna.mcdonald@uhi.ac.uk

The closing date for applications is **Monday 16th February 2015**

Job Vacancy

RETAIL TEAM LEADER

(Salary package - £19,250 per annum)

An exciting job opportunity has become available with great career potential. Previous management experience is essential. Excellent customer service, communication, organisational, supervisory skills and the ability to work in a team is essential.

Pension Package. 28 days paid holiday. 5 days per week / 40 - 45 hours. Straight shifts. All meals included. Accommodation available.

Closing date 15th February 2015. Please provide CV with your application.

For an application form please contact our Office on: 01838 400 271 or mail@thegreenwellystop.co.uk

Lochaber Carbon Reduction Project

This project, funded by the Climate Challenge Fund, aims to promote and inspire carbon saving and awareness throughout Lochaber. To deliver this we are looking to recruit the following:

- Project Manager**
This is a part-time position (28 hrs per week). Salary is £26,000 pro rata (£20,976 in total) per annum.
- Carbon Reduction Officer x 2**
There are two part-time positions (28 hrs per week). Salary is £22,000 pro-rata (£17,604 in total) per annum. Both roles are on a fixed term contract from 01.04.15 to 31.03.16
- Lochaber Woodfuel Project**
Fixed price consultancy role (£7200 plus expenses)
Funded by the Big Lottery 'Investing in Ideas' we require a consultant to develop practical, fundable proposals to increase access to woodfuel in Lochaber. **Closing date is 5pm on Monday 16th February 2015.** For more information contact Jane Beaton Tel: 01397 700090 Email: lfe@lochaber-environmental-group.org.uk www.lochaber-environmental-group.org.uk

public notices

MARINE (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010

Mussel farm, East Side of Isle of Torsa

Notice is hereby given that J MacGregor and Sons has applied to the Scottish Ministers of the Scottish Government, under Part 4 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, in respect of Mussel farm, East Side of Isle of Torsa.

Location Co-ordinates	Latitude Co-ordinates	Longitude
East Side of Isle of Torsa	56° 15.364' N	05° 36.466' W
	56° 15.364' N	05° 36.418' W
	56° 15.231' N	05° 36.549' W
	56° 15.231' N	05° 36.500' W

(WGS84)

Plans showing the position of the works may be inspected at Balvancar Stores & Post Office, Isle of Seil, Oban, PA34 4TE.

Objections relating to safety of navigation or environmental issues in respect of the application should be made in writing to:

Licence Operating Team, Marine Scotland, Marine Laboratory, 375 Victoria Road, Aberdeen, AB11 9Db within 28 days of the date of this notice or by email: MS.MarineLicensing@scotland.gsi.gov.uk, quoting reference: **05438**

J MacGregor and Sons

PROPOSED ASSIGNATION OF A CROFT

Eva Schonveld is applying to the Crofting Commission for consent to assign the tenancy of the croft at Croft 17, Howlin, Cleadale Crofting Township, Isle of Eigg to Angela Celia Bull of Croft 17, Howlin, Isle of Eigg, PH42 4RL.

If you have an interest in this application, you may submit comments on the proposal in writing or some other permanent form to the Crofting Commission, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness IV3 8NW (e-mail info@crofting.scotland.gov.uk) within 28 days from the date of publication of the advert.

Please note that any comments you provide are part of an open process and will be made available to interested parties. Your comments would also be released under a Freedom of Information enquiry.

www.highland.gov.uk

Early Learning and Childcare Enrolment Notice

Funded Pre-school Places 2015/2016

All children born between 1 March 2011 and 28 February 2013 are entitled to a funded Early Learning and Childcare place during the session 2015/2016. Enrolments will be accepted during the week commencing 09 February 2015 for all funded places. If you wish to enrol your child for a place please contact your local Primary School, Playgroup or Nursery for information on registered centres in your area and the enrolment procedure. Gaelic Medium provision is available in certain areas: please contact Highland Council Family Information Service for details.

Information is also available from: Highland Councils Childcare & Early Education Service on 0845 6011345 or email: familyinformation@highland.gov.uk

Information Leaflets are also available from Highland Council Service Points

Please Note: Remember to take your child's birth certificate or other official confirmation of birth with you when you go to enrol.

Fios Clàrachaidh airson Ionnsachadh Tràth agus Cùram-chloinne

Àitean Ro-sgoile Maoinichte 2015/2016

The còir aig pàist sam bith a rugadh eadar 1 Màrt 2011 agus 28 Gearran 2013 air àite ionnsachadh Tràth agus Cùram-chloinne maoinichte anns an t-seusan 2015/2016.

Thèid clàrachaidhean a ghabhail san t-seachdain a' tòiseachadh 09 Gearran 2015 airson gach àite maoinichte.

Ma tha sibh airson ur pàiste a clàrachadh, bu chòir dhuibh bruidhinn ris a' bhun-sgoil, cròileagan no sgoil-àraich ionadail gaibh airson fiosrachadh mu ionadan clàraichte san sgìre agus mar a bu chòir dhuibh clàrachadh.

Tha solar to mheadhan na Gàidhlig ri fhaotainn ann an cuid de sgìrean: cuiribh fios gu Seirbheis Fiosrachadh Teaghlach Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd.

Cheibhear fiosrachadh cuideachd bhò: Seirbheis Cùram-Chloinne agus Foghlam Tràth Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd air 0845 6011345 no post-d: familyinformation@highland.gov.uk

Cheibhear bileagan-fiosrachaidh bhò ionadan-seirbheis Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd **Cuimhnicibh:** Thoiribh leibh teisteanas-breith ur pàiste no dearbhadh-breith oifigeil eile nuair a bhios sibh a' clàrachadh.

To find out more about living and working in Argyll & Bute visit us @ www.argyll-bute.gov.uk

Comhairle Earra-Ghàidheal agus Bhòid

PLANNING

These applications listed below together with other related documents may be inspected at Municipal Buildings Albany Street Oban PA34 4NW, Monday to Friday 9am to 12:30pm and 1:00pm to 5pm. On Wednesdays, the Customer Service Points will open at 10am. At the alternative locations detailed below or by logging on to the Council's website at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk. Written comments for the following list of applications should be made to the above address within 21 days of this advert. Please quote the reference number in any correspondence.

Ref No	Proposal	Site Address	Location Of Plans
14/02821/PP	Erection of 6 kW wind turbine 9 metres high to hub height.	Land North West of Mo Dhachaidh Lochdon Isle of Mull Argyll and Bute PA64 6AP	Sub Post Office Craignure
14/02966/PP	Change of use from public bar to restaurant (retrospective).	The Waterfront Restaurant Railway Pier Oban Argyll and Bute PA34 4LW	Oban Area Office
14/02976/PPP	Site for the erection of one dwellinghouse, formation of vehicular access and installation of private water and drainage systems	Plot 1 Land West of Ar-Dachaidh Bunnasain Isle of Mull Argyll and Bute PA67 6DS	Sub Post Office Bunnasain Isle of Mull
14/02995/PP	Alterations, extension and change of use of dwellinghouse to bed and breakfast accommodation including formation of self contained unit	The Sheilagh Clachan Seil Isle of Seil Oban Argyll and Bute PA34 4QZ	Sub Post Office Balvancar
14/03024/PP	Variation of condition 2 of planning permission reference 03/02221/D/E/T to remove the requirement for sound attenuating material to be applied to the whole of the interior of the building.	Land West of Am Bruach Balvancar Isle of Seil Argyll and Bute	Sub Post Office Balvancar
15/00019/PP	Change of use of vacant offices to form residential flat	3 Combie Street Oban Argyll and Bute PA34 4HN	Oban Area Office
15/00050/PP	Erection of dwellinghouse, installation of biosic and formation of vehicular access	Land Adjacent to Burnside Benderloch Oban Argyll and Bute	Sub Post Office Ledaig
15/00055/PP	Erection of dwellinghouse, formation of vehicular access and installation of septic tank	Site South West of Caile Dharach Oban Argyll and Bute PA34 4QB	Oban Area Office
15/00073/PP	Erection of a meteorological monitoring mast (91.5 metres maximum height) for the temporary period of 36 months.	Upper Sonachan Forest 0.9 Km South of 8840 at Ardbeckish By Portsonachan Argyll and Bute	Sub Post Office Dalmally
15/00075/PP	Erection of a meteorological monitoring mast (91.5 metres maximum height) for the temporary period of 36 months.	Upper Sonachan Forest 2 Km South of 8840 at Ardbeckish by Portsonachan Argyll and Bute	Sub Post Office Dalmally

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997 (AS AMENDED), RELATED PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997

Ref No	Proposal	Site Address	Location Of Plans
14/02987/PP	Erection of dwellinghouse	Land at Middle Brae Between Barra Cottage and Rockburn Main Street Tobermory Isle of Mull Argyll and Bute PA75 6NU	Tobermory Area Office
15/00044/LIB	Demolition of extension, internal and external alterations and erection of replacement extension	5 Tobermory Isle of Luing Oban Argyll and Bute PA34 4UE	Sub Post Office Cullipool

These applications listed below together with other related documents may be inspected between 09:00 - 17:00hrs Monday to Friday at 1A Marine Lochgighleach Brae PA31 8RD, at the alternative locations detailed below during their normal opening times or by logging on to the Council's website at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk. Written comments for the following list of applications should be made to the above address within 21 days of this advert. Please quote the reference number in any correspondence.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2013 REGULATION 20(1) ADVERT STATEMENT

Ref No	Proposal	Site Address	Location Of Plans
14/02339/PP	Alterations and extension to dwellinghouse, erection of decking and change of use of vacant land to form extension to garden ground	Wembley Cottage Ardbeck Isle of Islay Argyll and Bute PA42 7EA	Sub Post Office Port Ellen

Argyll and Bute council encourages planning applications to be made on-line through The Scottish Government website: <https://planning.scotland.gov.uk>

The Council maintain a Register of planning applications which can be viewed during normal office hours at Planning and Regulatory Services, Central Validation Team, 1A Marine Brae, Lochgighleach PA31 8RD.

A weekly list of applications can be viewed at the above address and at all Council Libraries.

Any letter of representation the Council receives is considered a public document and will be published on our website. Anonymous or marked confidential correspondence will not be considered.

CROFTING COMMISSION COIMISEAN NA CROITEARACHD DECROFTING APPLICATION

Mr N MacCallum
1/2 14 & 17 Balevullin, Isle of Tiree
0.058 ha - Site for a dwelling house
4.86.53631

Comments can be made to the Crofting Commission by any member of the crofting community within the locality of the land, within 28 days of the date of this newspaper. Crofting Commission, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness IV3 8NW or info@crofting.scotland.gov.uk

Proposed Sublet Of A Croft

Mrs Andrea Docherty is applying to the Crofting Commission for consent to sublet the whole croft 367 South Boisdale, South Uist to Martin Matheson of 379a Garrynamonie, South Uist for 10 years.

If you have an interest in this application, you may submit comments on the proposal in writing or some other permanent form to the Crofting Commission, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness, IV3 8NW (e-mail info@crofting.scotland.gov.uk) within 28 days from the date of the publication advert.

Please note that any comments you provide are part of an open process and will be made available to interested parties. Your comments would also be released under a freedom of information enquiry.

First Registration of a Croft

John Allan MacKintosh has registered their croft 49.50 and Part 52 Banavie, Kilmallie 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 October 20, 2015.

Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C574

www.highland.gov.uk

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997 PLANNING (LISTED BUILDING AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997

The applications listed below, along with plans and other documents submitted with them, may be examined between the hours of 9.30am - 4.30pm Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) at the SERVICE POINT, LOCHABER HOUSE, HIGH STREET, FORT WILLIAM, PH33 6EL and online at <http://wam.highland.gov.uk>

Written comments should be made to the EPC at the contact details below within the time period indicated from the date of this notice. Anyone making a representation about this proposal should note that their letter or email will be disclosed to any individual or body who requests sight of representations in respect of this proposal.

Reference Number	Development Address	Proposal Description
14/04744/MSC	Land 60M North of Falite, Camusnagaul, Fort William	Erection of new house
15/00078/FUL	Riverside, 1 Lodge Gardens, Spean Bridge	Change of use to guest house and erection of extension
15/00118/FUL	Land at Croft 104 & 105, Lochyside, Fort William	Formation of new access to existing agricultural shed
15/00189/S42	Birch Cottage & Oak Cottage, Glenborrodale Acharacl	Section 42 - remove conditions 3 and 7 of planning consent 06/00417/FULLO to allow residential use

Time period for comments is 14 days
ePlanning Centre, The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, INVERNESS IV3 5NX
Email: eplanning@highland.gov.uk

DO YOU RUN A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS IN ARGYLL?

Your expertise in the private sector could help develop a stronger future for our area.

Four representatives from the business community are being sought for the new Argyll and Bute Sustainable Economic Forum, part of the Community Planning Partnership (CPP).

Meeting an expected four times a year, this Forum will advise the CPP on how best to exploit economic opportunities in a sustainable manner. The representatives will also inform the outputs of specific business subgroups.

To find out more about the Forum, email: fergus.murray@argyll-bute.gov.uk or call 01546 604250

You will then be sent further information and details on how to apply.

Oban Times PUBLIC NOTICES

To find out more about living and working in Argyll & Bute visit us @ www.argyll-bute.gov.uk

Comhairle Earra-Ghàidheal agus Bhòid

COUNCILLOR'S OPEN SURGERY

TUESDAY 3RD FEBRUARY 7.00pm - 9.00pm CORRAN HALLS, OBAN

You are invited to come along to the Corran Halls, to discuss any local issues, ask questions, and offer your views, at an open surgery evening at which your local Oban, Lorn and the Isles Councillors will be in attendance.

No appointment necessary.

For further information please phone 01631 567945.

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AUDIO EQUIPMENT

EDGE 12" INTERACTIVE BASS ENC Active street series ED512 Subwoofer, 900 watts, 12" interactive Bass enclosure. In box. Cost £99.99, £50 Telephone 01631 770394.

CLOTHES, SHOES AND ACCESSORIES

BROWN BAMA LAMS BOOTS size 6, little worn, £12 Telephone 01499 500650.

LEATHER JACKET Vintage "Gossip" short black leather ladies jacket, good condition, size 12, £200 Telephone 01631 710548.

MORLAND SHEEPSKIN BOOTS lined ladies boots, brown, UK size 7, hardly worn, £12 Telephone 01499 500650.

DOMESTIC PETS

CAIRN TERRIER PUPPIES ready to go February 12th. KC registered, wormed, vet checked and first injection. Contact Karen Telephone 01586 550360 or 07786 286536.

STONE FIRE SURROUNDS New solid polished Limestone and Granite surrounds with hearth and slips, imported from Portugal, two styles available, £245 Telephone 01631 750135.

HOME OFFICE

4 DRAWER metal filing cabinet. Buyer to collect, £45 Telephone 01546 600045.

MOBILITY

BATHLIFT, MERMAID belt type bath lift. Similar to BathKnight. Complete with all fittings, battery, charger, and instructions. Good clean order, £99 Telephone 01631 770698.

PET ACCESSORIES

COOPET DOG TRANS-PORTER 18 inches high, 22 inches wide. Buyer to collect, £5 Telephone 01546 600045.

TRAILERS

SMALL CAR TRAILER good order, £99.99 Telephone 07770 623486.

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ALL TYPES OF SCRAP METAL we uplift scrap cars, copper, brass, lead etc. Smaller quantities considered. Telephone 07435 589701.

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WALL MOUNTED CYCLE HOLDER Paddy Hopkirk wall mounted cycle holder brand new never used, £5 Telephone 01631 770394.

DOMESTIC APPLIANCES

ELNA PRESS EPZZA ironing press, c/w instruction manual, £50 Telephone 01631 720297.

LASER 2000 INDUCTION HOB free standing, benchtop induction hob with timer. Very rapid heating and easy to clean, £25 Telephone 01631 710680.

MORPHY RICHARDS deep fat fryer. Buyer to collect, £5 Telephone 01546 600045.

PANASONIC CYLINDER VACUUM Panasonic MC-E862 filter cylinder vacuum with attachments and spare bags, 1100 watt. Benderloch, £10 Telephone 01631 710680.

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EXTENDING TABLE/CHAIRS pine extending table and six chairs phone after 6pm, £250 Telephone 564067.

PINE TABLE + 4 CHAIRS solid pine round table (3 ft diam) + 4 pine chairs, vg condition, £60 Telephone 01631 564326.

SINGLE DIVAN BED complete with mattress, headboard, and storage, good condition, £35 Telephone 01631 710663.

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PERSONAL NOTICES

Thank you

I would like to thank doctors, nurses and staff in ward B, Lorn and Islands hospital for the care shown to me during my short spell in hospital. Also thanks go to support nurses who visited me at home.

Donald McCallum, Longsdale Terrace.

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LOCAL SERVICES

DEATHS

CARRAGHER - Peacefully at Eadar Glinn Care Home, Oban on January 25, 2015, in her 92nd year, Mary nee Macdonald (Maimie), beloved wife of the late Joe Carragher, a dear sister and aunt and great aunt. May she Rest in Peace. Funeral service will take place at St. Columba's Cathedral, Oban on Friday February 6, at 10.00a.m. Thereafter to Pennyfuir Cemetery.

FORGRIEVE - Peacefully at home, on January 24, 2015, Dugald (Dugie) Forgrieve, dearly loved husband of Mary (Weir), much loved dad of Andrew and Brian, father-in-law to Pamela and Karen and devoted grandpa/bapa to Kiera and Calum, Gavin and Anna. Funeral service will be held at Oban Parish Church on Thursday January, 29 2015 at 1.00 p.m., thereafter to Pennyfuir Cemetery. Family flowers only.

LOCKE - Peacefully in the care of Abbeyfield Nursing Home, Ballachulish, in his 100th year, Donald Erskine Locke, loving husband of Betty and much loved father, grandfather and great grandfather. Funeral service on Friday February 6, 2015 at 2.30pm in Abbeyfield Nursing Home and thereafter to Kinlochmore Cemetery. Family flowers only please. All friends are respectfully invited. Enquiries to John McLellan Funeral Directors.

MACKINTOSH - Catherine (Katie) retired Nursing Sister, formerly of Murlaggan, passed away peacefully on January 26, 2015 at Invernevis House. Sister to the late Ann, Margaret and William and loving aunt to Elizabeth, Margaret, Violet and Ewan. Requiem Mass at 12 noon on Saturday January 31, 2015 at St Margaret's R C Church, Roy Bridge and interment at Cille Choirill. All family and friends welcome.

MACLEAN - Isa, very sadly passed away January 22, 2015 at the Lorn and Islands hospital surrounded by her loving family, devoted and loving wife of the late Charlie. Adored mum and a very special granny to her 13 grandchildren. She will be very sadly missed.

MACRAE - Dr. William John, in his 88th year, died peacefully at home, on Saturday January 24, 2015. Funeral service will be held at Muckairn Parish Church, Taynuilt, on Wednesday February 4, 2015 at 1.00 p.m. Donations if desired, to Marie Curie Cancer Care.

SEMPLER - Peacefully at Ardenaig Residential Home on January 26, 2015, Mary Gillon Sempler, nee Henderson, aged 95 years, of Whitecraigs, Inveraray. Beloved wife of the late William Sempler, loving mother of Peter, much respected mother-in-law of Mhairi, and adored granny of Patricia and Shona. A dear sister and aunt to all the family. Funeral Service will be held at Inveraray Parish Church, on Friday January 30, 2015, at 12noon, thereafter to Glenshira Cemetery. Family flowers only please. Donations, if desired, to The Salvation Army and the British Legion, Inveraray.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHILDS - Margaret passed away, aged 77, at Belford Hospital, Fort William on January 4, 2015 following a short illness. Her family wishes to thank everyone for their kind expressions of sympathy and the many cards and phone calls received.

Grateful thanks are also extended to Fr MacKinnon for his great compassion shown to Margaret and family and for the excellent care received from all the medical staff. Many thanks to Scott of John McLellan Funeral Directors for his help and support during this sad time. Her funeral took place on January 8, 2015 and a retiring collection for CAU ward, Belford hospital raised the sum of £724.00, thanks to all who attended. Margaret will be sorely missed.

GRAY - Ann, Alan, David, Colin and families would like to sincerely thank all relatives, friends and neighbours for all the kind expressions of sympathy and messages of condolence during the sad loss of Alastair. Appreciation to all who attended his funeral in such horrendous weather. Heartfelt thanks to all who cared for Alastair at home, in Belford Hospital and Invernevis House. A generous donation of £652 was raised in his memory. Grateful thanks are extended to Rev Donald McCorkindale for his warm, comforting and truly fitting service. Scott and John McLellan Funeral Directors for the dignified and efficient funeral arrangements and also to Moorings Hotel for the funeral tea.

MACCUAIG - The family of the late Euphemia (Effie) MacCuaig would like to thank everyone for kind expressions of sympathy, cards and flowers received following their sad loss. Thanks to all the carers, doctors and nurses for their care over the years. Special thanks to Rev. J. Paton for his comforting service and William McClymont for dignified funeral arrangements. Also many thanks to relations who travelled from the mainland and all who attended the service and graveside. Also to the Bellachroy Hotel for excellent purvey. The sum of £303 was collected for the PDSA.

MACKECHNIE - Florence and the family of the late Alice M. MacKechnie would like to thank all the relatives and friends for kind expressions of sympathy, flowers, cards and especially for attendance at the cemetery service. Thanks to Rev. Johnny Paton for a lovely service. Billy McClymont, John Archibald for dignified funeral arrangements, Isle of Mull Hotel for handsome buffet. Thanks to Elizabeth, Marie and Tina for their kindness to Alice. Special thanks to Dr Frank Teunisse and Dr Liz Picton for their care and attention.

MCLELLAN - The nieces and nephews of James McLellan of Corran Brae, Oban would like to thank all relatives and friends for their kindness to James, especially his neighbours Christine and Ian, Julie, Iris and Debbie for their constant attention to James and all those who baked cakes, brought him meals and ran him to his appointments. Thanks to the Bridge club for all the love and friendship they showed him, especially to his bridge partner Neil. Also grateful thanks to Dr. Erik Jespersen and the staff of Lorn Medical Centre. Thanks to Mgr. James MacNeil for a very moving and spiritual mass. Thanks to Torquil Telfer who played "James McLellan's favourite" in challenging conditions. Finally thank you to everyone who attended the funeral mass and graveside. The sum of £488.00 was collected for Mary's Meals.

MEMORIAMS

BIRCH - Betty Strang (nee Henry) at rest January 30, 1998, the perfect wife of Peter. Forever loved and remembered.

MACDONALD - Kenneth John, died January 28, 2013. RIP. Beloved husband of Eileen, loving father of Kenneth and Lesley, adored grandfather of Sara, Andrew and Emma. May you always walk in sunshine and God's love around you flow. For the happiness you gave us, no one will ever know.

MACLACHLAN - In loving memory of Uncle Ian, who died February 2, 2005. Farewell to the highlands Farewell to the north The birthplace of valour The country of worth Wherever I wander Wherever I rove The hills of the highlands Forever I love. (Robert Burns) Sadly missed and always remembered.

- By nephew Gordon, cousins Sheena, Rosine, Joyce and dear friends Joseph and Karin.

McLACHLAN - Ian. Dearly loved husband and granddad. Loved and remembered always.

- Christine and family.

NEWTON - In loving memory of my dear husband, who died January 31, 1976. Loved and remembered always.

- Amy

POULTON - Remembering with love my dad, Chris, who died January 30, 2006. Never more than a thought away.

- Hannah and Heidi, Tobermory.

RUSSELL - Treasured memories of my dear wife Mary, who died on January 29, 2010. Lover never ends.

RUSSELL - Treasured memories of our dear mum and nana Mary, who died on January 29, 2010. Never more than a thought away, loved and remembered every day. Mhairi, Ian, Katy, Fiona and Morven.

RUSSELL - Precious memories of our dear mum and nana Mary, died on January 29, 2010. You left behind a legacy of love and a smile that could outshine the sun. Love you always.

- Kirsty, Rebecca, Scottie and Callan.

Youngsters bring in Old New Year with ceilidh and dance

THE OBAN Lions Club held its Old New Year Ceilidh recently in the Royal Hotel.

Despite a slightly smaller turnout than expected because of the adverse

weather, there was no reduction in the effort put in by the performers on January 10.

The audience was treated to a performance by members of the Adele Askew

School of Dance, and then the Oban High school traditional music band played a mixture of traditional and modern songs.

Bill Coutts, president of the Oban Lions Club,

said: 'Thanks to all the performers and musicians who made it along. It's been a great night, despite the west coast weather.'

'The club is looking forward to a good year ahead

and continuing to support a number of local causes.'

The Old New Year is an informal traditional holiday, celebrated as the start of the New Year by the Gregorian calendar.



TOE TAPPING: Ally Maclean, Fiona Mclean, Merle Harbron, Laura Macleod, Allyson Boyd and Anna Garvin of the Oban High school traditional music band.



HIGHLAND DANCE: Dancers Katie Russell, Amber MacMillan and Alex Elliot, of the Adele Askew School of Dance

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Cuvier's whale deaths baffle experts

EXPERTS are baffled by a sudden increase in the number of stranded whales in different parts of the West Highlands.

Five Cuvier's beaked whales have washed up dead on the west coast in the past five weeks, whereas in the previous three years only three of the whales were stranded in the same area.

Four of the strandings occurred during December with one on Tiree, one on West Port beach, Kintyre, one on Benbecula and one on South Uist.

The fifth carcass was discovered on Mull in the New Year.

Conor Ryan, sightings and strandings officer at the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin trust said the recent increase was unusual, as it appeared to only be affecting one species of whale. He said: 'Unfortunately

the carcasses are too decomposed by the time we find them to do proper analysis on them, which suggests something has happened to them in the past month or so.

'They will have died at sea and been washed up. 'What's unusual about this case is that it seems to only be affecting one species, which suggests the problem is biological rather than environmental.

'Obviously there is no way to know if it's going to happen again, and that's part of the frustration for us - our analysis is always done in hindsight, but we will continue to monitor the situation.'

Cuvier's beaked whales are the deepest-diving mammals on the planet and are rarely seen anywhere near the shore.

Scottish fare on the menu at nursery's Burns celebration



BURNS SUPPER: Nursery children in Kinlochleven sample haggis, neeps and tatties

GRADUATION



Iain Innes Boyd, son of Iain and Isobel Boyd, Connel graduated from the University of Edinburgh with a Master of Science in Environmental Sustainability. Iain is the grandson of Myrtle and the late Angus Smith, Dunbeg and the late Dugie and Cathy Boyd, Oban. He is now working as a graduate renewables consultant with S.A.C Consulting in Edinburgh.

CHARITY DONATIONS

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Thought for the week - The Judgement of Paris

On January 18 three of Oban's congregations met in the Parish Church for a shared morning service. They were joined by worshippers from several other churches. Maybe you were there, or heard it on Oban FM.

This was Oban's contribution to the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and was a new venture this January, to be repeated in future years. One important thing about it is that we share in the ordinary style of worship of the host church.

This helps us to understand better what matters to other groups, and what helps them to approach God, even if any of us might be confused or even embarrassed by a different practice from our own.

In the past such things

didn't embarrass people.

They could annoy them, anger them, even to the point of argument and violence. Three hundred years ago and more, people in Scotland were killing each other over matters like that. Since then, thank God, most Christians have become less harsh, but religious differences can still lead to bitterness and cruelty.

What we seek is to understand and respect and appreciate what is dear to others, without having to give up all that is precious to us. It is a pattern that is of value not just to religious people, but wherever there are differences of custom, background, or way of life.

And it is a pattern that is particularly important in a world where people often

cannot look at beliefs and actions of other groups without resorting to mockery or murder.

In the old Greek story the young man Paris was made to judge a beauty contest between three goddesses. By choosing one as the winner he was bound to upset the other two, and the result was 10 years of war and suffering. What we are asked to do is the equivalent of, yes, preferring one beauty, but not denying the charms of the others. If we can learn to value and respect both our own traditions and those of others, the name of Paris could come to stand for reconciliation rather than violence.

The Rev Ian Walter Assistant Priest, St John's Cathedral, Oban

Isles education chief heads off to UAE

A WESTERN Isles education leader is heading for warmer climes as he has accepted a new post in Abu Dhabi.

Peter Carpenter, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's director of education and children's services, will soon leave the Hebrides to begin similar job in the United

Arab Emirates from April. He said: 'I have enjoyed my work with the comhairle and I have been privileged to work with so many skilled and able colleagues in the Western Isles.'

Councillor Catriona Stewart, the local authority's chair of education and chil-

dren's services, wished Mr Carpenter 'every success'.

She added: 'Peter has met the challenges of running the education and children's services in the Western Isles during a period of considerable change and it has been a pleasure to work alongside him.'

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Callous thieves break into boxing club

Boxing

A KINLOCHLEVEN sports club's future could be in jeopardy following a burglary at its premises where callous thieves stole money raised by children.

Robbers broke into Claymores Amateur Boxing Club sometime between Wednesday and Thursday last week and ran off with a strongbox containing £60-70.

The incident has been reported to the police.

Claymores head coach Martin Glenesk said it is a big financial blow as the club relies entirely on donations and member's fees and was unable to hold its usual fundraising show this Christmas.

As a result of the theft, the club is behind on rent payments and Martin has had to pay the latest water and electricity bills himself.

He said: 'We are in dire straits, this couldn't have come at a worse time.'

'The thieves seem to have broken into the office through the back door.'

'The strongbox had a combination lock and they couldn't get into it so they ripped it off the table it was fixed on to.'

'£60 or £70 is not much to them but it's massive to us. It's money we need to keep the club going.'

'The police aren't holding out much hope unless they can find the box and get fingerprints.'

Lochaber police area inspector Donald Campbell confirmed a quantity of money had been stolen from the boxing club sometime between 1pm on January 21 and 9.30am on January 22.

He said: 'We are appealing for anyone who saw any suspicious activity that night to get in touch with us.'

'It is an isolated incident and enquiries are ongoing.'

Anyone with information about the incident should telephone the police on 101 or contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or by using the website www.crimestoppers-uk.org.

Cancellations prove to be a disaster for Fort

Football

FORT William's hopes of five wins in a row were dashed on Saturday as a frozen pitch meant their away game against Nairn County was called off.

Another football-free weekend for the Claggan side means the Highland league fixture against Forres Mechanics, scheduled for this Saturday, has been postponed to allow the Fort boys to play the Breodon Aggregates game against Nairn, with the home fixture delayed until a later, yet to be scheduled, date.

There are now no planned games at Claggan until Wick Academy visit on March 13, giving the Fort side a chance to catch up on the 10 outstanding fixtures of the season so far.

Manager Calum MacLean said: 'This has been a disaster. We're at the stage now that we don't even know who we're playing after Nairn this weekend. The free Saturdays are well-needed so hopefully the weather's decent and we can play catch up.'

Disappointing defeat for Lochaber

Lochaber	5
Moray	22
Caledonia League Division 2 North	

Rugby

LOCHABER rugby club's first league game back at Banavie came to a disappointing end when they went down 5-22 against Moray on Saturday.

The home side struggled to find a full squad because of players' commitments but eventually fielded a good side and started off strongly to secure the first try after 30 minutes when a strong carry from a Lochaber forward gave their backs the platform to explode across the pitch with quick succession of good passing. The move was finished off by Conor Taylor who scored just left of the posts with an emphatic charge for the line.

The conversion was not kicked but Lochaber were 5-0 up at half time.

The second half started in the same vain but didn't last. Moray soon put more phases together and eventually pressurised the Lochaber defence until gaps opened.

Strong performances from Moray number 13 saw him score underneath the posts during the latter stages. Another two tries, a penalty and two conversions gave Moray the 22 points.

Positives

Vice captain Jack Baxter said: 'There were positives to take from the first league game back at Banavie. Taylor has recently been working on his power and this has paid dividends for the young number 8 but unfortunately it didn't last in the second half.'

Next Saturday (January 31) Lochaber face Aberdeen Wanderers away.



TACKLED: Lochaber's Chris Simpson takes on Moray defenders 20_105rugby02



FRONT RUNNER: Finlay Wild takes an early lead in Lochaber Athletic Club's Leanachan race 20_105athletics01

Finlay Wild wins Leanachan race in under an hour

FINLAY Wild cleared this year's Leanachan race route in just 59 minutes and 25 seconds.

This was only the third time in Lochaber Athletic Club (LAC) history the nine-mile track has been completed in under an hour, although still 23 seconds behind the race record, set by Davy Rogers in 2010.

Michael Bossard, also of LAC, was second of the 64-strong field, finishing in 1:00:32.

Third to complete the multi-terrain route round Leanachan forest was Stephen Burns, LAC, in 1:02:49.

Lochaber's Diane Baum was the first lady home for the second year in a row, finishing in 1:07:20 - more than three minutes faster than her time last year.

The next home race will be the Black Water Dam event, leaving from Kinlochleven on Sunday February 15.

Athletics

Top 20 finishers, LAC unless otherwise stated: 1 Finlay Wild 59:25; 2 Michael Bossard 1:00:32; 3 Stephen Burns 1:02:49; 4 Luke Taylor (Highland Hill Runners) 1:02:52; 5 Steve MacDonald 1:03:03; 6 Tim Brand 1:03:43; 7 Bruce MacLean 1:04:37; 8 Jon Gay 1:04:38; 9 Aidan Donnelly 1:06:16; 10 Ross Bannerman (Highland Hill Runners) 1:06:36; 11 Diane Baum 1:07:20; 12 Hughie MacKintosh 1:07:36; 13 Finlay Walton (Westerlands Cross Country Club) 1:08:07; 14 Allan Lamont 1:08:51; 15 Andy Craig 1:08:57; 16 Amanda Blackhall 1:09:36; 17 Ali Kennedy 1:09:58; 18 Neil Wasldge (unattached) 1:10:20; 19 Barrie MacKinnon 1:10:22; 20 Ben Dodman 1:10:42.

Fort William shinty club dinner dance

FORT William shinty club's annual dinner dance will be held in the Moorings Hotel on February 21.

As well as individual places, tables of eight can be booked on request. Tickets for the dance only can be bought for those who want to attend after

Shinty

the meal, with live music from Glasgow-based Surround. Tickets are available from Claire MacAlpin, 07789 118442, MacPhee and Partners or via info@fwshinty.com.

Fort William Golf Club hands out the silverware

DAVID Matheson was king of the course at Fort William golf club after being presented with the men's club championship Connachie cup.

He took the main piece of silverware at the club's annual prizegiving event last Thursday (January 22), when Steven Jamieson also celebrated a successful year on the greens after winning six trophies, including the scratch match play club championship Rummy cup.

Rosie MacIntyre won four cups including the ladies club championship Elliot trophy.

The overall 2014 prizewinners were as follows: Mens winners: Club championship (Connachie cup), David Matheson; Scratch match play club championship (Rummy cup), Steven Jamieson; Handicap match play club championship (Hugh MacIntyre trophy), Dale Monk; Club championship handicaps 15-28 (Lochy Bar trophy), John Martin; Knockout match

play handicap (Clydesdale Bank challenge cup), Steven Jamieson; Two rounds stroke play scratch (MacIver cup), Steven Jamieson; Greensome knockout handicap (Jimmy Bruce memorial trophy), Brian Stewart and Ian Robertson; Knockout match play handicap (Scottish Pulp and Paper Mills), David MacDonald; Medal final scratch (Mairi MacIntyre rose bowl), Steven Jamieson; Medal final handicap (Young trophy), Steven Jamieson; Furbal match play handicap (Bank of Scotland tray), Peter Stewart and Pat Cassidy; Senior four-ball match play handicap, Brian Stewart and Ian Robertson; Senior club championship, James Duncan; Wolverton trophy, Willie Hendrie; 1912 cup, Eric Wallace; Captain's prize, Willie McCann; Vice captain's prize, Henry MacDonald; Super seniors, Keith Sangster; Neil Hardie trophy, David Matheson; John Soutar medal final trophy, Ronnie MacDonald; Craig Paterson memorial trophy,

Golf

Frank Sweeney; Senior open, Ian MacKie

Ladies winners: Ladies club championship (Elliot trophy), Rosie MacIntyre; Bronze division club championship (Clydesdale Bank trophy), Kay Jerram; Singles handicap (MacNab cup), Helen Brian; Three best net scores (EWB Howie trophy), Iona Cameron; E Cameron trophy, Hazel Cameron; Ladies outing (West Highland Oil tray), Rosie MacIntyre; Ladies summer eclectic (Wolverton cup), Hazel Cameron; Ladies winter eclectic (Mungo cup), Rosie MacIntyre; Budget rent-a-car, Hazel Cameron; Winter Stableford singles (Roseburn trophy), Rosie MacIntyre; Mixed foursome matchplay handicap (Alex Fairlie cup), Kay and Ken Jerram; Ladies Greensome knockout (Moorings hotel cup), Kim Topping and Kathleen Leitch.



SILVERWARE: the 2014 trophy winners gathered at Fort William golf club's annual prizegiving on Thursday 20_105golf01

Ladies team for Fort William Shinty

MEMBERS of Fort William shinty club's senior committee are hoping to create a ladies team, more than 120 years after the club's formation.

Supporters of the proposal are appealing for anyone interested to attend an informal meeting at An Aird clubhouse on Saturday, January 31.

The meeting will be held after the annual Glengarry six-a-side tournament, held in the Nevis Centre on the same day and a member of the Women's Camanachd Association will be available to answer questions.

Bobby MacLeod, chieftain of Fort William shinty club, said:

'It is my firm belief that a ladies team is long overdue and I look forward to the day that I watch them play on An Aird park. I'd like to offer them my full support.'

Fort William's first team will take on Kyles Athletic at home on the same day for the inaugural Drew Ferguson Memorial Trophy. Throw up 1.30pm.

Alleycats still the top dogs

Ten pin bowling

ALLEYCATS have maintained their scratch division lead in the Lochaber Building supplies ten pin bowling league.

They now have 57 points after week 13, followed by The Creeps with 54 points while Rotavators move into third place on 52 points. In the handicap division, Rotavators retain the top spot on 56 points, followed by Alleycats with 52 and Ardtoe/Nevis Radio in third with 44 points.

The top individual scratch game this week came from Tony Whitelocke of Alleycats with 181 and Anne Lovatt of Fairway Fillies had the top handicap game with 241. John Weller achieved both the top two game scratch series with 333 and the top two game handicap series with 433.

Alleycats swept the board this week in the team honours with the top scratch team game of the week of 621, the top handicap game of 808, the top two game handicap series of 1,189 and the top two handicap team series of 1,563. The highest scratch average is currently held by Pam Weller, Alleycats, on 156 followed by Tony Whitelocke, also of Alleycats, with 153. Next are Stewart Duncan, The Creeps, Brian Johnstone, Alleycats, and Ron Gretton, Rotavators, all on 144.

Badminton skills on display

Badminton

SOUTH Lochaber children showed off their badminton skills at an inter-school tournament and many medal-winning positions had to be shared because of the youngsters' success.

Ellis Nicholson and Neil Minnis, both of Kinlochleven, shared the first place boys prize, while Dan MacLean and Sam Daynes, both Ballachulish, came joint second and Fraser MacLean of St Brides took third.

In the girls competition, Abbi Fartridge of Ballachulish came first, with Emma Vind, also of Ballachulish, a close second. Third place was shared between twins Niamh and Erin Sweeney, both Kinlochleven.

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Please tape your £1 coin here

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Saints' West of Scotland Cup hopes sunk by Harestanes

'The game was finely balanced and could have gone either way right up until the final five minutes'

Harestanes	3
Oban Saints	1
West of Scotland Cup - 4th Round	

Football

SAINTS West of Scotland Cup hopes were sunk in Scotland's canal capital last Saturday afternoon in an entertaining match far closer than the final scoreline would suggest.

The snow-capped Campsie Fells in the middle distance were a good indication of why this tie had already been postponed twice, so full credit to Harestanes for procuring the 3G pitch at Merkland to ensure the match was played at the third time of asking.

The home side kicked off with the advantage of the slight breeze and playing into the sun which, bar one heavy shower of rain towards the end of the first half, made for a pleasant afternoon's football for the good crowd of spectators.

The opening exchanges were very tight with both teams probing for openings which were to prove very hard to come by against the respective defences who were restricting their opponents to shots from distance.

Saints first effort came in the fourth minute from Ally McKerracher but the youngster blazed his shot high and wide from the edge of the box after a good knock down from Allan MacKay. The Hares first sight of goal came after 17 minutes when Mark Fitzsimmons fired a low, 20-yard free kick narrowly wide of Daniel Cassells' right hand post.

The visitors only attempt of real note came after 40 minutes when Allan MacKay held the ball up well on the edge of the Hares box to create a shooting opportunity for Donnie Campbell. Unfortunately Donnie was unable to keep his shot down and the ball sailed high and wide of target.

The Hares also sent their only

other attempts of the first half over the cross bar. Firstly full back Stuart McClune failed to keep a long-range shot on target then left winger Craig Young headed over from a corner kick.

Saints started the second half strongly and had much the better opening 20 minutes. In the 47th minute Craig MacEwan headed a Donnie Campbell free kick narrowly wide of the target. In the 59th minute Allan MacKay came agonisingly close to breaking the deadlock when he fired wide from ten yards out following good link up play involving Ally McKerracher and Lewis Cameron.

In the 60th minute Craig MacEwan finally hit the target for Saints only to see his header from a Ross Maitland free kick well saved by Conor O'Boyle in the Hares goal.

Best chance

The Oban side's best chance of the match from open play came in the 70th minute after some excellent wing play from Craig MacEwan. Craig beat full back David Black to send over a tempting cross which found Ally McKerracher in the six yard box. Unfortunately, with the goal gaping, the youngster appeared to be caught in two minds and the chance was lost.

Three minutes later, and against the run of play, Saints fell behind. Referee Colin Simpson, who handled proceedings well, awarded Hares a hotly disputed in-direct free kick 26 yards from goal. David Black tapped the ball to the side for Hares top scorer Mark Fitzsimmons to fire in his 32nd goal of the season so far, beating Daniel Cassells just inside his right hand post.

The visitors were quickly back on the attack and came close again



ON THE BALL: Ross Maitland takes on Harestanes defender Stuart McClune before firing over an inviting cross during last Saturday's game in Kirkintilloch. Match report and photo: Derek Black

in the 81st minute when Allan MacKay won a free kick 25 yards from goal and slightly left of centre. Allan took the free kick himself and struck the outside of the junction of the post and bar with the keeper rooted to the spot.

Just one minute later Saints finally got the reward their play deserved when Ally McKerracher was brought down inside the Hares box. With Referee Colin Simpson pointing for a penalty kick Ally appeared to fancy his chances from the penalty spot.

Probably mindful of the recent Kevin Mirallas and Leighton Baines incident at Goodison Park, Saints skipper Marc MacCallum was having none of it and demanded that regular penalty taker Allan MacKay assume responsibility.

Allan was his usual deadly self from the spot and calmly

dispatched the kick sending the goalkeeper the wrong way.

Almost immediately from the restart Saints fell behind in extremely unfortunate circumstances. A cruel ricochet in the Saints midfield caught out the defence and sent Hares Jamie Broadfoot through on goal. The lethal winger dispatched the ball past Daniel Cassells to restore the Hares lead and undo all of Saints good work.

Just two minutes later it was game over. Danger man Jamie Broadfoot cut in from the left touchline before thumping an unstoppable shot low into the bottom left corner of the Saints net.

Saints carved out their final opportunity in the 87th minute and arguably could have had their second penalty kick. Allan MacKay forced his way into the Harestanes box and appeared

to be fouled in sending his 16 yard shot over the bar. Much to Allan's bemusement, his appeals were dismissed and a goal kick was awarded.

Saints manager Iain Jackson made his one and only change, withdrawing Allan MacKay and replacing him with Dean Smith.

Reflect

The match finished without further incident and once again Saints were left to reflect on what might have been. As was the case in the Scottish Amateur Cup earlier in the season Saints acquitted themselves very well against top class opposition and lost out only by the finest of margins.

Manager Iain Jackson was bitterly disappointed at the result but praised the efforts of his team against one of the best amateur sides in the country. He said: 'This was our first

game for seven weeks and we've hardly been able to train because of the festive holidays when the 3G pitch closes down and of course the recent bad weather so I was a bit worried about our match fitness but the boys played really well against a top team.

'The game was finely balanced and could have gone either way right up until the final five minutes when they scored their two killer goals.

'After the match we were congratulated on our performance and that we gave one of the best teams in the country the fright of their lives, but the bottom line is we're out of the cup.'

Saints stay on cup duty this Saturday when they travel to take on Easthall Star in the Jimmy Marshall Trophy. The game will take place at Stepford football centre, kick-off 2pm with referee Gordon Kelso in charge.

Dugie Forgrieve, Oban Celtic Shinty

THE CONDOLENCES of the shinty world go to the family and friends of Dugie Forgrieve, a member of the great Oban Celtic team of the 1950s and '60s who passed away on Saturday January 24 after a short illness.

Dugie was captain of Celtic's Scottish Cup winning team in 1963.

Pre-season fixtures Shinty

SHINTY teams have announced their pre-season fixtures taking place in January and February.

January 31

Fort William v Kyles Athletic, An Aird, Fort William.
Glasgow Mid Argyll v Aberdeen, venue to be decided
Lochaber v Kilmallie, The Playing Field, Spean Bridge

February 7

Fort William 2nds v Boleskine, venue yet to be decided
Glasgow MA v Kinlochshiel, Peterson Park, Yoker.
Kilmallie v Lochaber, Canal Park, Fort William

February 14

Boleskine v Fort William 2nds, Smith Park, Farr
Fort William v Lochaber, An Aird, Fort William.
Glenorchy v Strachur, Mart Park, Dalmally - 1pm
Oban Celtic v Glangarry, venue yet to be decided.
Newtonmore v GMA, The Eilan, Newtonmoe

February 21

Fort William v Lovat, An Aird, Fort William.
Glasgow MA v Kyles Athletic, Peterson Park, Yoker
Inverness v Caithness, Bught Park, Inverness - 1pm
Lochaber v Beauly, The Playing Field, Spean Bridge

February 28

Fort William 2nds v Lochside, An Aird, Fort William - 1.30pm
Glasgow MA v Oban Caman, Peterson Park, Yoker
Oban Celtic v Kilmory, venue to be decided
Strachur v Ballachulish Strachurmore.

Congratulations Football

CONGRATULATIONS to Oban Saints midfielder Roy McLuckie and his wife Gillian on the birth of their son Louis George, an Oban Saints star of the future.



VICTORIOUS: Oban badminton club's 'A' team which was victorious in the Argyll Cup on Saturday beating runners-up Dunoon by 10 games 16_105badminton01



SILVERWARE: the 'C' team from Oban badminton club came away with the silverware after defeating their rivals from Dunoon and Mid Argyll 16_105badminton01

Double up for Oban badminton players

OBAN badminton club had a double celebration on Saturday after its teams were victorious in the Argyll Cup.

Organised every year since 1951, the tournament is played between teams from Oban, Dunoon and Mid Argyll badminton clubs.

Each club fields five teams of mixed doubles players in both the A and C cups.

Karen MacCorquodale, part of the victorious 'C' team, said: 'Everyone is delighted we won because it's always really tough.

Badminton

'It's quite intense during the day but everyone enjoys themselves and it's a good social aspect at night. It really is the highlight of the badminton calendar.'

In the end, both of the Oban teams won by 10 games, with Dunoon runners up in both competitions.

The sides were presented with their trophies after a meal at the Regent Hotel.

Athletic made to pay for missed penalty against Tarbolton

Tarbolton	3
Oban Athletic	2
West of Scotland Cup - 5th Round	

OBAN Athletic travelled to Ayrshire on Saturday to play Tarbolton who are top of the Ayrshire premier league.

The game was played on Tarbolton's own park which was very heavy and ended up looking like a ploughed field at the end of the game.

The home team started the brighter creating two good chances within the first five minutes, but Athletic keeper Graham Douglas held on to both shots.

The Oban midfield trio of Paul Carmichael, Scott McMillan and Ryan Campbell were finding it hard to run with the ball and their passes were holding up in the middle of the park which was making it difficult to get the ball out of their own half.

The home side took the lead in the tenth minute when Steve

Smith the Tarbolton right winger crossed the ball to the back post for Michael McNeil who made no mistake with his header.

The Oban back four of Craig Livingston, Craig Campbell, Steven MacLeod and Stephen Kelly at this point rolled their sleeves up and started throwing themselves into tackles and spraying the ball out to the wings to young Fraser McFarlane who was starting his first game of the season.

Parried

Athletic drew level in the 25th minute when a pass from Ryan Campbell set up Scott McMillan who shot was only parried by the keeper and the onrushing Kris Gillies was on hand to tap the ball into the net to make the score 1-1.

Better was to come from the visitors five minutes later after a good move involving Kris Gillies, Ryan Campbell and Paul Carmichael sent Alan Buchanan clear to the right wing. Alan beat two

opponents before sending a cross over to Kris Gillies who bulleted a header in to the top corner goal of the net.

The visitors were well on top at this stage of the game and were looking good for another goal but everything was breaking down at the edge of the 18 yard box.

Tarbolton drew level in the 41st minute when they were awarded a controversial corner. The ball was headed to the back post and from six yards Jim Lord hammered the ball into the net.

On the stroke of half time Kris Gillies was tripped in the box leaving the referee no option but award a penalty.

Kris Gillies took the spot kick and hit it to the keeper's right hand side but Alan Johnston made a fantastic save tipping the ball round the post.

The second half was played out mostly in the middle of the park as the conditions got steadily worse with passing and running with the ball almost impossible. So

Football

both teams resorted to the high ball to try and get the winning goal but Athletic were finding it hard to get their forwards on to the ball.

Fraser McFarlane was replaced by Maxwell Onyango to try and use his pace to get behind the defence but to no avail and in the 82nd minute the home side netted what proved to be the winner when a long ball landed at the feet of Steve Smith who ran along the 18 yard line before shooting goalwards with the ball spinning away from the grasp of Graham Douglas and inside the left hand post.

The visitors then pressed for the equaliser but time ran out with the referee blowing for full time and despite a brave effort Athletic were out of the cup.

This Saturday Athletic return to league duty when they travel to play Millerston.

Old Crocks run out of steam in annual challenge match

Oban Camanachd	7
Camanachd Old Crocks	1
Challenge match	

IN THE end, the Old Crocks simply ran out of steam as their Young Guns counterparts in the Oban Camanachd annual club match ran out 7-1 winners.

The match, which was originally scheduled for January 10, had been postponed on two occasions because of the weather and the players who turned out last Saturday had to brave the elements once again.

After taking a seemingly comfortable 2-0 lead, the Young Guns, a team made up of this coming season's first team players, conceded a David Devine goal to give the Old Crocks a glimmer of hope.

But a third Young Guns goal at the end of the first half killed off the tie.

Into the second half the young Camanachd forwardline was rampant with Andrew 'Papa' MacCuish, Aidan MacIntyre, Malcolm Clark and Lorne Dickie clocking up seven goals.

The Old Crocks, who had four players in their 50th year, or older, struggled on and thoroughly deserved their refreshments in Coasters Bar afterwards.

Oban Camanachd manager

Gussie Campbell, who lined up for the Old Crocks against his players, said: 'At 54, I was the oldest player on the field and it probably showed.'

Good day

'It was a really good day for the club.

'It's all about getting the ex-Camanachd men back to the club and getting a bit of camaraderie between the players.'

Shinty

Lochside players Chris MacMillan and Ross MacMillan lined up for Camanachd as the coaching staff looked to the long term.

In the immediate future of the club, Campbell hopes to make a few new signings before the season starts.

Anglers find it hard going on Loch Etive

LOCH Etive failed to deliver for the five anglers who travelled to Tainuill on Sunday.

The normally productive loch was as bleak as the weather with only 29 fish and two species recorded on the score sheet.

The morning started well with a reasonable sized spur for Steven MacBrayne, however, that proved

to be the best of the day, with only a splattering of small spurs and whiting making an appearance throughout the six-hour event.

Rediscover

Jimmy Smith plugged away to rediscover his winning form and emerged top rod with 13 fish (46pts), followed by Nikki Thompson with nine (32pts) and

Shinty

Steven MacBrayne in third place on 15pts for a catch of three.

Overall, the day was exceptionally poor, however, as they say, 'that's fishing'. Hopefully the loch will be fishing well for the club's February outing.

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Hat-trick of tries for new dad Struan as Oban Lorne run

The Green Machine has now played two games in 2015, scoring 93 points and conceding nothing

Oban Lorne	53
Cumbernauld	0
RBS West Division Two	

THE HARD graft had already been put in by the time Oban Lorne's players lined up on Saturday afternoon for their second league match against Cumbernauld this season.

The Oban squad was out in force for three hours last Thursday, clearing ice and snow from the Glencruitten pitch to make sure the surface was playable for the game. This endeavour was rewarded with a convincing win, which avenged an earlier defeat this season.

Coach Corrie Louw had a strong squad to choose from for the game; the only senior squad members unavailable for the game were Dan Hull and Andrew Abraham.

The strength in depth meant the Green Machine went into the game in confident mood, looking to again increase the pressure on Cambuslang at the top of the league.

Cumbernauld made the better start to the match but Oban stood firm and scored the first try of the day on 10 minutes.

An Andy MacDougall miss pass close to the line found winger Plato Miosiadis on the right hand side who dived over to open the scoring. A Craig Wright conversion gave Oban a 7-0 lead.

The home side doubled the lead shortly after, a pick and go from Cammy Smith close to the line and a pass to his twin brother Struan allowed the back row to score his first try of the day.

Oban were looking very dangerous with the ball and were continuously breaking through the weakening Cumbernauld defence.

The back three of Plato

Moisiadis, Dave McCabe and Richard MacKay were dealing well with the kicking game from the visitors while the Oban pack was completely dominating at the scrum and functioning well with the lineout.

On the half hour mark Oban scored its third try of the game. A driving maul in the 22 was driven over the line with player/coach Corrie Louw touching down before half time.



TAKING A BREAK: Cameron Smith takes a break from clearing the snow off the Glencruitten pitch

Into the second half, Struan Smith scored again from close range to seal a bonus point for Oban and, with the result beyond doubt, the Oban team relaxed and began to show a more expansive and entertaining game.

Lorne MacLachlan scored his first of two second half tries on 50 minutes. The big second row player hit a great line from 20 metres out to finish off under the posts.

A break from centre Craig Wright and a pop to flanker Jamie Bate allowed the 17-year-

Rugby

old to score his first Oban Lorne try and the sixth of the day for the team.

Oban now led 36-0 and were totally dominating all areas of play. Credit, however, must be given to the Cumbernauld team which kept on fighting and did well to keep 15 players on the park with no substitutes available.

Struan Smith celebrated recently becoming a father by securing a hat trick of tries with 15 minutes to go. Smith tapped from a penalty and crossed the line with ease as the away defence failed to react.

Oban scored two further tries in the final 10 minutes. Both Jamie Bate and Lorne MacLachlan scored their second tries of the afternoon to seal a fantastic 53-0 win.

The Green Machine has now played two games in 2015, scoring 93 points in total and conceding nothing.

Second-placed Oban Lorne will look to keep up the pressure at the top of the league this Saturday as they travel to play mid table Paisley, kick off 2pm.

Supporters bus

OBAN Lorne is running a supporters bus to its regional shield final against GHK on February 7.

The men in green face a tough match against the West Division 1 leaders but a win will be a step closer to a return to Murrayfield in the national final.

Anyone interested in attending the match should contact Tommy Sutherland on 07739 550300 or Darrell Williams on 07774 490265.



COME TO DADDY: new dad Struan Smith dives over for one of his three tries as Oban Lorne demolish Cumbernauld at Glencruitten Photo: Kevin McGlynn

Sports Hall Athletics in Oban

THE OBAN area competition in the Argyll series of Sports Hall Athletics takes place this Saturday, January 31, at Atlantis Leisure.

Intending competitors are reminded that events will start at 12.30pm with all entries on the day from noon.

Area competitions

This is the second of four local area competitions in Argyll this winter with successful boys and girls qualifying to take part in the Argyll final to be held at Atlantis Leisure on Saturday March 21.

Saturday's competition caters for six age groups,

Athletics

starting from under seven up to under 17 with seven different running, jumping and throwing events. Everyone taking part will receive a medal and trophies will be awarded to the overall winners in each age group.

There will be an entry fee of £2 per competitor or £5 for families of three or more.

This is an ideal opportunity for youngsters to come and try indoor athletics for the first time.

Scottish Amateur League results and fixtures

Football

LAST Saturday's results: West of Scotland Cup fourth round - Harestanes 3, Oban Saints 1; Jimmy Marshall Cup first round - Campbeltown Pupils 4, Dunoon Athletic 0; Lochgilphead Red Star 1, Haldane United 6. Coronation Cup first round - Rossvale v Tarbert postponed. This Saturday's fixtures: Premier Division - Alba Thistle v Campbeltown Pupils; Premier Division Two - Dunoon Athletic v Paisley; Lochgilphead Red Star v Drumchapel Colts; Jimmy Marshall Trophy first round - Dunoon v Jamestown; Easthall Star v Oban Saints; Coronation Cup first round - Rossvale v Tarbert.

Oban Saints youth results and fixtures

Youth football

LAST Saturday's results: Under 13s 7, Drumchapel United 0. Scoring for Saints were Aidan MacPhee (5), Daniel Sloss and Liam MacDonald. Under 14s v Whitecraigs, postponed; Ardencaple 0 Under 15s 4. Saints scorers were Lewis Buchanan (2), Daniel McCuish and Kenneth MacDonald. Antonine v Under 16s postponed. Under 19s 3, EDFC 0.

This weekend's fixtures: Baljaffray v Under 13; Under 14s no game; Milngavie v Under 15s; Under 16s no game; Under 19s v Broomhill SC.

Oban's newest shinty team starts pre-season training

Shinty

OBAN'S newest shinty team has begun training at Oban high school on Monday nights.

Oban Lorn shinty club has also arranged pre-season matches against Ballachulish on February 7, Tayforth on February 14, Aberdour on February 21 and Glenorchy on February 28.

The club's under-14 players train from 7pm - 8pm and older players meet from 8pm - 9pm. Training for this week has been switched to tomorrow (Friday).

Lorne under-16s game called off

Youth rugby

SCHOOL exams forced the postponement of last weekend's away tie at Cartha/Cumnock.

This week the team is home to Daziel on Sunday.

Saturday's S1/2 games against Lomond school were off because of the weather.

Trialists take top spot

Over 35s football

LATEST scores from the Atlantis Leisure over 35s league - Clements 2, Taynuilt 3; Teachers 2, Trialists 12; Emergency 0, D & K Lafferty 2.

	P	Pts
Trialists	5	15
D & K Lafferty	5	12
Taynuilt	5	12
Clements	5	3
Teachers	5	3
Emergency	5	0



Saints under 19s and trade union unite

UNITED WE STAND: Oban Saints under 19 club funds were boosted recently when they were presented with a £500 cheque from the trade union Unite. Our photograph shows Neil MacKechnie, chairman of the Argyll and Bute branch of Unite, presenting the cheque to Saints under 19 captain DJ Orr before last Saturday's 3-0 win over EDFC. The Oban youngsters are presently sitting top of the under 19 Dunbartonshire Football Development League 16_105saints01

Lancaster 'A' win 'glamour' fixture

THE GLAMOUR fixture of the week's pool league card was between old foes The Lancaster 'A' and Markie Dan's 'A'.

The Lancaster 'A' came into the match on the back of a gut wrenching defeat at the hands of The Lochavullin's Cellar and anything other than victory would all but see their league challenge collapse, even at this early stage.

In contrast, Markie Dan's 'A' had a good head of steam with four consecutive league wins following an opening day loss, but similarly anything other than victory would also dampen their title charge.

A quick start was vital and it was the home side, The Lancaster 'A', which proceeded to take charge. Markie Dan's 'A' simply made too many unforced errors to threaten a rejuvenated Lancaster 'A' which asserted their superior matchplay throughout the singles to secure victory and all but put an end to the Markie Dan's league challenge.

The Lochnell had home advantage in the much-anticipated

Connel derby with neighbours The Gluepot having to cross the bridge to lock horns for the first time this year.

The Lochnell have propelled themselves up into the top third of the table and rightly started as favourites although The Gluepot were never just going to roll over. Almost every singles game went down to the nitty-gritty in a thoroughly exciting match but it was the extra guile and composure from the home team that eventually saw them hold onto the bragging rights for the next couple of months.

Understrength
An understrength Lancaster 'B' crossed the Esplanade to take on Markie Dan's 'B' hoping to hang on to the coat tails of the sides above them.

Disappointingly for the visitors, Markie Dan's 'B' were not in charitable mood and controlled most of the action after an explosive start where they threatened to run riot.

The Lancaster 'B' may have some big decisions to make

Pool

regarding team selection with the performances of their fringe players overshadowing that of their so-called 'big names' and with a Lancaster derby next on the horizon this will need to be addressed.

Last, but certainly not least, the concluding fixture of the week was the bottom of the table clash between Outreach and the Lochavullin, which will go down in the Oban Pool League record books after Outreach recorded their first win.

The match had swung one way then the other before Outreach strung a couple of wins together to sneak over the winning line, much to the delight of their players and supporters.

Results, January 22: Lancaster A 7-3 Markie Dans A; Lochnell 6-4 Gluepot; Outreach 6-4 Lochavullin; Markie Dans B 7-3 Lancaster B.

Fixtures today (Thursday): Lancaster B v Lancaster A; Lochavullin's Cellar v Lochnell; Outreach v Gluepot; Markie Dans B v Lochavullin.

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WEATHER Thursday Light rain and sleet Winds moderate west north westerly Temperatures 2°C to 5°C. Friday Sunshine and showers Winds moderate north north westerly Temperatures 2°C to 5°C. Weekend Outlook Cloudy on Saturday Sunny spells on Sunday Winds moderate northerly Temperatures 2°C to 4°C.				TIDAL INFORMATION Tide tables for Oban during the week from Thursday, January 29, 2015 are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)		
Date	am	pm	Ardrisaig	-5.35	Mallaig	+0.25
Thur	00.27 2.9 07.03 1.6 13.58 3.0 19.33 1.7		Campbeltown	-5.30	Portree	+0.55
Fri	02.03 2.9 08.38 1.6 15.20 3.1 20.49 1.6		Crinan	-0.47	Tobermory	+0.16
Sat	03.14 3.1 09.55 1.5 16.11 3.3 21.50 1.5		Islay Port Ellen	2.00	Dover	+5.30
Sun	04.01 3.3 10.46 1.4 16.43 3.4 22.37 1.3		Lochboisdale	+0.30		
Mon	04.39 3.6 11.27 1.3 17.14 3.6 23.17 1.1		Ferry Crossings/Sea States			
Tues	05.16 3.8 12.03 1.2 17.46 3.8 23.54 1.0		Oban to Barra/South Uist		Moderate	
Wed	05.52 3.9 12.37 1.1 18.18 3.9 ** ** **		Oban to Coll/Tiree		Moderate	
Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)			Kennacraig to Islay		Moderate	



New headteacher takes the helm at Kinlochleven high



SPOT THE JACKPOT! SHINTY BALL £1650!

TIMESLINE

Work on new A830 bridge is complete

WORK on the first of nine bridges in a £10 million replacement scheme on the scenic Road to the Isles is complete.

The new Dearg Bridge, west of Glenfinnan on the A830 Fort William to Mallaig road, was finished earlier this month and work is already underway on the second project, a 2.2km stretch at Callop, eight miles east of the new bridge.

This second leg of improvements began on Monday and the resurfacing is expected to take two weeks. Temporary lights and a 10mph convoy system will be in place between 7am and 7pm, Monday to Friday. Traffic management systems will be removed outwith working hours to keep disruption to a minimum, although a 30mph limit will remain in place.

Eddie Ross, BEAR Scotland's operating company representative for the north west, said: 'These essential works to the east of Callop will improve the existing road surface, creating a smoother and safer drive for road users on this section of the A830.'

'Some delays are likely during the works and we would therefore encourage motorists to plan their journey ahead, allowing some extra time.'

The next two bridge replacements at Utha and Garbh bridges, two and five miles west of Glenfinnan respectively, are expected to start in the spring.

Care home ceilidh hits the right note

A FUNDRAISING ceilidh is to be held for a south Lochaber elderly care home.

The event for Abbeyfield, Ballachulish, will be held in Glencoe village hall next Saturday (February 7), from 8pm, and will feature music from Crackin' Craic.

Attendees are asked to bring their own refreshments but a buffet will be available.

Phone fault forces closure of children's respite home



HITTING ALL THE RIGHT NOTES: Lochaber volunteers and teenagers were delighted when Twin Atlantic visited The Buzz Project

Buzz as rock band visits teenagers

SCOTTISH rock band Twin Atlantic took time out of a world tour to visit Lochaber teenagers as part of a local charity's aim to boost self-esteem in vulnerable young people.

The four Glasgow musicians arrived in Caol, Fort William, and promptly took to the 'stage' in an old bus refurbished by Lochaber's Buzz Project as a recording studio.

Arranged as part of Comic Relief's community cash initiative, which provides funding to charities all over Britain members of Twin Atlantic chatted and played alongside teenagers who regularly attend the project, before performing an impromptu acoustic set for the delighted group.

Simon Nicholls, youth worker and founding partner of The

Buzz Project, said the visit was invaluable to the young people, many of whom suffer from depression or are grieving for parents who have died.

He said: 'This had a massive impact on the kids. It got them singing and playing instruments with famous musicians, when some of them used to be really shy with low self-esteem. It was a real confidence boost for them

and what made it even better is that the band made the effort to travel up here. The teenagers were all pointing out that it's rare for anyone famous to come to this part of the country.'

The Buzz Project has also received funding from Comic Relief to hire a counsellor to work with the charity for two years, which Mr Nicholls said has already been a 'great help'.

Charity refuses to take risk with the well-being of ill youngsters

EMMA CRICHTON
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A LOCHABER charity which provides respite care to ill children has been forced to close its doors as faulty phone lines mean it can't call for help in an emergency.

The Kirsty Bryden Memorial Trust, known as Kirsty's Kids, is based in remote Lochailort and takes in young people from all over the country to provide a break from the day-to-day struggles they face. But trust chairman John Bryden said it was no longer safe to look after children there, as BT wouldn't provide priority care - a pledge to fix damaged phone lines within 24 hours.

Mr Bryden said there was no mobile phone signal at the Kirsty's Kids house and the phones went down every time there was lightning strikes. He says BT has ignored pleas for help, even though some of the children in his care have 'chronic and life-limiting' conditions.

He said: 'It's absolutely unbelievable. We've had an unstable phone for years. There has been times we've had no phone for three weeks but nobody is interested.'

'We often have children staying who have chronic and life-limiting illnesses and it's just not safe to have them here knowing if something went wrong we may not be able to phone an ambulance; it's too big a risk.'

'It feels like being captain of a ship and saying 'it doesn't matter if the life belts work because we probably won't sink'. You can't run a charity like that, especially with the nature of ours.'

The volunteer, who set up the

trust after his daughter Kirsty was killed in a car accident, said the last time he complained he was told to 'move to London' to be guaranteed stable phone and internet connections.

He said: 'I went to BT in Fort William last week and was told there were engineers in Lochailort that day who could fix the problem but they couldn't without authorisation from head office.'

'When I phoned the main office to complain again I was transferred to a call centre in India and was then told 'Scotland has no reliable broadband, move to London'. It's absolutely appalling.'

The respite house has been closed since last Monday (January 19) and Mr Bryden said he would not re-open until BT could guarantee repairs within 24 hours.

He said: 'I've got two girls scheduled to come in soon and I hope it's sorted by then because they're dying to come and could really do with the break but I won't bring them here if they're going to be at risk. That would be totally irresponsible.'

'I want BT to give the kids we look after the care and recognition they need and deserve.'

A BT spokesman said: 'We've called Mr Bryden and arranged for an engineer to visit to check his broadband line. All the other matters that he's raised are under investigation.'

Police appeal for information on assault and break-ins

LOCHABER police are appealing for information about a number of crimes in the area.

At around 1.50am on Sunday January 18 a female was assaulted by another woman on Fort William High Street after an argument about a jacket. Police are looking for witnesses and would particularly like to speak to a woman dressed in dark trousers and a black and white top.

Sometime between January 19-25 a garage was broken into in

Carn Dearg Road, Fort William. Nothing appears to have been stolen, however, anyone who may have seen something suspicious is asked to report it.

A number of items were stolen from a garden shed in Claggan

on the evening of January 23. Police ask anyone with information to call 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800555111.

They also urge residents to secure all outhouses, sheds and parked vehicles.

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A chance for new hospital

AN NHS Highland board member says empty land on the outskirts of Fort William is 'an opportunity which should be seized' for a new hospital in the town.

Supermarket giants Tesco pulling out of developing on the Blar Mor site, combined with the news a replacement for the 50-year-old Belford hospital could be underway within five years has led Michael Foxley, retired GP and joint chairman of Lochaber District Partnership, to feel hopeful about the future.

He said: 'Tesco pulling out of the Blar is an opportunity which should be seized. There is a big empty space close to our health centre and that would be great in terms of providing integrated health services in Lochaber. I'm more optimistic about this than I was four or five years ago.'

A replacement for the Belford has been included in the Scottish government's new capital programme although funding is yet to be secured.



School memorial to Auschwitz victims

SENIOR pupils at Lochaber high school led a memorial event to mark 70 years since the liberation of Auschwitz during WW.

Oskar Wineberg and Fiona MacEachan, both sixth year pupils, gave presentations to younger pupils about the Holocaust on Friday, based on their experience visiting the old concentration camp last year.

At the end of the day 70 candles were lit at the school, one for each year since the Auschwitz prisoners were freed.

CANDLES: Fiona MacEachan and Oskar Wineberg led the tribute to Auschwitz victims

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Pensioner to buy triplets' nappies for year

A KIND-HEARTED Lochaber pensioner has promised to provide nappies for baby triplets for a year.

Isabel MacPhee made the generous offer when she heard of the three arrivals and decided she 'wanted to do something nice'.

Parents Michelle and John Binnie, who live in Claggan in Fort William, were bowled over by the kind offer as they go through 600 nappies every month on Alfie, Ava and Devon, born 12 weeks ago. The couple also have another daughter, two-year-old Freya.

Mrs MacPhee is well known for delivering knitted clothes and other gifts to newborns in the town.

She said: 'I just wanted to do something nice when I heard

about the triplets. Nappies aren't cheap so it can cost a lot of money just for one baby, never mind three.

'I thought to myself I don't have any babies to buy things for or look after so I wanted to do something to help.'

Mrs Binnie said she was 'overwhelmed' by the offer as it took a load off the strain of having triplets but added she thought the hardest part was over. She said: 'They're really good babies but the hard part is purely that there's three of them. Now that they're settling into a routine it's getting easier and Freya is a great help with her brother and sisters, she always wants to help dress them.'

The babies are the first triplets born in Fort William in almost 18 years.



KIND-HEART: Isabel MacPhee, middle, provides the Fort William triplets Ava, Alfie and Devon with up to 600 nappies a month. Also pictured are parents John and Michelle Binnie, with two-year-old daughter Freya

Rural areas to get sure signal boost

FOUR Hebridean communities will soon receive better mobile phone coverage through a scheme to help rural areas.

Balivanich on Benbecula, Tarbert on Harris and Lochboisdale and Lochmaddy on the Uists have been shortlisted among 100 rural areas across the UK to benefit from 3G phone coverage through the Vodafone rural open sure signal programme.

Angus MacNeil, MP for Na h-Eileanan an Iar, said this would help the day-to-day life of islanders.

He added: 'This is certainly a welcome initiative from Vodafone, which has the potential to improve mobile telephone coverage to 3G standard for many rural and island areas. I hope that in the next round of applications, other places in the islands will apply and be successful.'

Councillor praised for hard work

A RETIRING Comhairle nan Eilean Siar councillor has been praised by colleagues for his hard work.

Former schoolteacher Archie Campbell is stepping down from his position representing the Benbecula and North Uist constituency on February 12, having served with the council since 1999 and as chairman of the sustainable development committee since 2003.

Angus Campbell, leader of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, said Mr Campbell had 'worked diligently' for his constituency.

Councillor Campbell, commenting on his retirement, said: 'It has been a great privilege and a wonderful experience to serve the community. It has been a pleasure to work with my colleagues in the ward, councillors Uisdean Robertson and Neil Beaton, and I wish them every success in their continuing role.'

HIGHLAND COUNCIL RESURRECTS PLANS TO CLOSE THE MAJORITY OF BRANCHES IN THE REGION TO SAVE MONEY

New threat to axe service points

EMMA CRICHTON
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THE FUTURE of Highland council service points is under threat again as the local authority has resurrected plans to close the majority of branches in the region.

A similar money-saving proposal unveiled last year received fierce opposition from many of the 23 communities set to lose the facility, used to pay

bills and get face-to-face advice from council staff.

Now, less than a year after putting the plans on hold, Highland council's customer services board, which was set up to scrutinise the proposal in April 2014, has gone to public consultation.

This time, 22 of the 35 service points face closure, including Mallaig, Kinlochleven, Acharacle, Broadford, Fort Augustus, Gairloch and Lochcarron.

The Kyle branch, which was threatened last year, has been protected under the new proposal.

Remaining service points, including Portree, Kyle and Fort William, will be turned into 'community hubs', with 'access points' in 17 other areas, thought to be computers with access to the council's website housed in libraries.

Members of the public are now being asked for their views by the cross-party customer services

board in a consultation set to run until mid-March.

An estimated £355,220 could be saved by closing the facilities, although half of this will be invested to improve telephone and online services.

Councillor Audrey Sinclair, chairwoman of the customer services board, said: 'Before any decision can be made, it is important to hear the views of the people that live in these areas so that we can understand how any changes may impact on

communities. We also want to hear any alternative options local people may want to suggest for the way services are delivered.

'I would stress that these are proposals we are consulting on and no decisions have been made.'

'We would welcome all views and we will take these into consideration before a final decision is made.'

Dave Thompson, MSP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch, urged a rethink and said the service

points should stay open. He said: 'The community rebranding as part of the proposal is supposed to save money, but that is counter-productive when the service points currently serve our remotest communities so well, employ many staff, and already contribute economically to the sustainability of connected rural life.'

The consultation document and feedback forms can be found at <http://www.highland.gov.uk/customerreviews>.

Long link road delay sparks angry outburst

EMMA CRICHTON
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A FORT William business owner and community councillor has slammed Highland council for 'sucking the life out' of the area.

In a heated discussion about the long-anticipated link road between the town and the A830 at Blar Mor via Caol, High Street shop owner Drew Purdon said the local authority had a 'parasitic' effect on Lochaber.

The outburst was sparked at a Fort William community council meeting when chairman Neil Clark read out a letter from Highland council's chief executive Steve Barron, which said the new road was 'below the line of affordability'.

It has already been 25 years since the development was approved by Highland council but it still hasn't reached the first stage, a Scottish transport appraisal guide which is likely to

cost £150,000, years before the first turf is cut.

Mr Purdon, who has argued for decades that an alternative route would reduce traffic congestion on the A82, said: 'I came across paperwork from 1983 when the Caol link road was discussed, more than 30 years ago.'

'I've aged considerably since then and we're no further forward. I think Highland council should be ashamed of itself. It has a parasitic effect on the area. It sucks the life and everything good out and gives absolutely nothing back.'

Mr Clark suggested contacting MSPs and prospective candidates for the upcoming UK general election since they were 'getting nowhere' with local council.

He also raised concerns about Inverness being given priority in light of the current construction of the city's west link road, the estimated cost of which was £27.2 million in 2011, but had

rocketed to £34.4 million at the last official estimate in 2013.

Highland council has not yet provided an up-to-date total, despite pressure from public spending watchdog Audit Scotland.

The community council chairman said: 'Highland council is committed to Inverness no matter what it costs. The cost of the link road has soared, fine. They want new sport facilities? Fine. No matter what it is or how much it costs, if it's Inverness they can have it.'

A Highland council spokeswoman said: 'Mr Clark, Fort William community council, wrote to Steve Barron, chief executive, on December 12 2014 and Stuart Black, director of development and infrastructure, responded on behalf of the chief executive in a letter dated January 16 2015. There have been no other enquiries from Mr Clark regarding this matter.'



Paper and can banks on way out

PAPER and can banks are to be phased out in the Highlands as a result of increasing home recycling.

Graham Mackenzie, chairman of Highland council's community services committee, said use of the communal bins had dropped by two thirds in the last year. He added: 'I would urge all residents to make maximum use of their blue bins to recycle all their paper, cardboard, plastic bottles, food tins and drink cans.' Facilities for glass and textile recycling will remain in place.

Distillery plan for disused island hotel

A DISUSED hotel on a remote Hebridean island could be converted into a distillery.

Borodale House, formerly known as the Isle of Raasay Hotel, has been out of use since January 2013 but could be transformed into a tourist attraction complete with a bar and visitor centre.

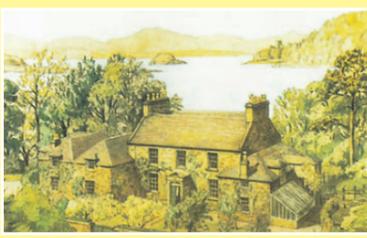
Potential developer R & B Distillers Ltd wants to provide 'a leading dis-

tiller of niche whiskies', with a café/bar area and tasting room in the lower level of the house. The plan also includes 'contemporary Highland lodge style' accommodation.

Residents are hopeful the distillery will benefit Raasay's economy and create jobs.

A planning application has been submitted to Highland council.

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Ballet West students shine in tale of star-crossed lovers

TAYNUILT'S Ballet West is set to romance a Glasgow audience on Valentine's Day with its production of Romeo and Juliet, the first classical ballet performance to be staged in the Clyde Auditorium.

The Glasgow date in the venue, more commonly known as the Armadillo, is the final performance of the ballet company's Scottish tour, which began in Oban's Corran Halls last weekend.

Ballet West principal Gillian Barton says the latest production is the 'best thing' the company has produced since it was established 24 years ago.

Such is the excitement around the production, the school is prepared to run buses from Oban to Glasgow if a sufficient number of people wish to travel.

Anyone interested in travelling to the Glasgow show should call 01866 822 641 for more details.



Stop the rot before Rockfield is gone, urges Oban businessman

LOUISE LEE

lle@obantimes.co.uk

DRY ROT in the former Rockfield primary school is spreading at the cost of '£50 an hour - more than £1,000 a day'.

That was the view of Oban Community Trust (OCT) member and businessman Graham MacQueen, who told a community group on Monday that the council had to make a decision urgently to save the historic Oban building.

Oban community council overwhelmingly backed the trust's plans to transform the listed building into a cultural hub.

Graham MacQueen told the community council: 'This is the best thing that Oban has seen for a long time and offers a great opportunity.'

'But the dry rot is spreading



STOP THE ROT: Graham MacQueen, far right, and Gordon MacNab, second from left, call for action

at a rate of £50 an hour. That adds up to £1,000 a day, every day. It is critical for Oban. We all know about the need for a heritage centre in Oban. But we need this sorted out as soon as possible in order to stop the rot.

'We can not afford to put this off any longer. Another hot summer and the building is gone.'

OCT chairman Gordon MacNab said: 'The dry rot is the biggest issue we have. We have asked the council for sight of these reports but so far we have been unable to see them. We have asked for the building to be handed over to us wind and watertight and free of dry rot.'

'We, the community, would do the reconstruction. We want to conserve a community building for community purposes.'

Community council member Lorne MacLeod said: 'This project is one that will enhance

what is delivered here in Oban.' OCT was asked how many jobs would be created by bringing the building back into use.

Eleanor MacKinnon, a development worker on the project, said: 'There will be jobs with the car park, janitors and caretakers but we can't give a number.'

Councillor Roddy McCuish said: 'I will take this back to the area committee if Mr MacQueen can give me some detail of the cost of the dry rot.'

'If it is costing £50 a day and £1,000 a week - that will focus people's minds and help us get on with a decision as quickly as possible. The area committee will be seeing the reports in February. After we have made a decision, it will go to the full council for a decision.'

Marri Malloy, chairwoman of the community council, took a vote which endorsed OCT's plans for Rockfield.

TIMESLINE

Town centre base for business group

BID4Oban, the community business group, is moving to Stevenson Street in early March and will be based in the premises of a former florist.

Chairman Graeme Bass said: 'The shop will be open 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. The move gives us a town centre location.' Mr Bass thanked Oban firm CGL for its support while BID4Oban was housed in its building.

Lifeboat callouts on the increase

THE VOLUNTEER lifeboat crew in Oban saw a sharp rise in the number of callouts and rescues in 2014.

The number of callouts (52) and people rescued (57) in 2013 was typical of the yearly trend but in 2014 the lifeboat launched 68 times, rescuing 120 people. Barra lifeboat rescued 28 people in 2014, 25 more than the previous year.

Housing market on the move

THE HOUSING market in the Oban area is showing signs of growth following a slump around the time of last year's referendum, according to an estate agent in the town.

Bell Ingram expects the slow and steady growth in the market at the end of last year to continue into early 2015.

Gritters on patrol after snow alert

PEOPLE across the west Highlands and islands were bracing themselves for severe weather this week as more snow was forecast for today (Thursday).

BEAR Scotland said it had been preparing its fleet of gritters as the Met Office issued a yellow 'be aware' warning.

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Introduction to Social Media - 11 February - A half day workshop giving you an overview of how you can use sites like Facebook and Twitter to interact with customers to promote and grow your business.

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Build your own business website - 16 February - An introduction to the basic essentials of website design, how to make your site attractive, usable and easy to find and what tools are available and which one is best suited for your purpose.

Online trading essentials - 17 February - For businesses considering selling products or services, or taking bookings or payments online. You will be introduced to the basics of online trading, the essentials needed and the legislation relating to online trading.

Improve your business website performance - 18 February A workshop for businesses who feel their website isn't producing the results they expect. The session covers layout, navigation, design, online sales process, search engine optimisation and browser compatibility.

Coming soon... Marketing your Business - aimed at existing small businesses with ambitions of growth. The session will help evaluate current marketing activity and create a realistic marketing plan to meet the business' needs.

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New breakwater plans for Kerrera slipway welcomed

A BREAKWATER is to be installed as part of reconstruction work at the Kerrera ferry slipway, to help the boat service during rough weather.

Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited (CMAL), the Scottish government-owned ferries and piers company tasked by Transport Scotland to carry out the work, held a pre-application consultation at the old school building on Kerrera on Tuesday evening to discuss the plans.

Ruairidh Campbell, CMAL project manager, said: 'The improvement works at Kerrera ferry also include the extension of the Kerrera and Gallanach slipways.'

'This will improve the resilience of the ferry service in inclement weather and remove current tidal restrictions placed on vehicular traffic, therefore improving the flow of vessels to Kerrera.'

'Following consultation with the local community, it has been agreed that a pedestrian-only service will operate for the duration of the works, which are expected to be completed in winter 2015.'

Oban councillor Roddy McCuish said: 'I'm delighted to see the progress so far that Transport Scotland has made.'

O2 OPERATOR TELLS ANXIOUS MOTHER WHO NEEDS TO KEEP IN CONTACT WITH DISABLED SON



UPSET: Mother Heather, sons Cameron and Max

'Oh well, that is unfortunate'

STEVEN RAE
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THE MOTHER of a disabled boy has slammed the poor customer service from phone operator O2, which she claims left her practically housebound in her Appin home for a week.

Heather Allen, 36, whose 13-year-old son Cameron suffers from brittle bone disease, needs to remain in constant contact with Oban high school as Cameron's condition means he can be rushed to hospital at any time.

With O2's mobile coverage down from January 9 to 22, and the operator providing little or no information about when it would be reconnected, she was forced to stay in the family home so she could be contacted on her house telephone.

Eventually she resorted to buying a new pay-as-you-go mobile phone and sim card from rival provider EE.

Heather, who also lives with husband Graham and their youngest son Max, explained:

'Over the past year or so, Cameron's condition has been a lot worse, meaning he's broken around 40 bones, so it's not far off one a week. I need to be contactable all the time.'

'My main issue is the way O2 have treated us; they've just been so dismissive.'

'I called them on January 15 and asked what was happening, and the guy on the phone told me it would be reconnected the next day, but that didn't happen. It was obvious he was just saying that to get me off the phone.'

'After that I tried Twitter for customer service, and to be fair they were a lot more responsive, but they said they were unable to guarantee a fault-free service, so that was when I had no choice but to go and buy another phone.'

'If the service was down for a day or two, I wouldn't have minded, but two weeks is just not on.'

Mrs Allen said she phoned up to enquire about compensation, but was initially told she wasn't eligible, despite friends claiming their accounts were credited

with £50 when they complained.

She said: 'When I phoned up again, I mentioned that Cameron had brittle bone disease and the person said, "Oh well, that is unfortunate".'

'He was really dismissive and quite rude. I phoned up again on Tuesday, and was told that £5 would be credited to my account.'

'I actually couldn't believe it when they told me that. The phone and sim card, and the top-up voucher cost me about £30, so being offered just £5 felt like a real slap in the face.'

An O2 spokeswoman said that the company would be reviewing the calls made by Mrs Allen to the customer service team to see if the help given was within company guidelines.

She added: 'Severe weather conditions had prevented our engineers access to carry out an assessment and fix a power-related issue on a mast in Barcaldine.'

'The site was restored on January 22. We apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused.'

Police alert about counterfeit cash

THREE Oban retailers reported the discovery of counterfeit bank notes on the same day.

The three police reports were all recorded on Monday, suggesting counterfeit notes have been circulating in the town since the beginning of the week.

The counterfeit cash appears to be legitimate Royal Bank of Scotland £5 and £10 notes, but on closer inspection police say the detail on the note is blurred.

Oban police said they were attempting to trace two men believed to be responsible for circulating the notes.

Inspector Julie McLeish said: 'I would ask everyone to be aware and to use common sense measures to check notes for legitimacy.'

Lions' Day draws in charity money

OBAN and Lorn Lions club is taking stall bookings for its annual charities day on June 6.

In previous years, sums of more than £15,000 have been raised for good causes and the day attracts hundreds of visitors to the town.

To book a stall, contact John Lloyd on 01531 562762 or email oban3108@aol.com

Witnesses accuse owner of sex abuse on island

COURT REPORTER
editor@obantimes.co.uk

THE OWNER of an outdoor adventure company has denied sexually abusing three boys on an island south of Oban, on separate occasions sometime between 1979 and 1986.

Torquil Charles Johnson-Ferguson, of Solwaybank, Chapel Knowe, Canonbie, Dumfries and Galloway, denies using lewd and libidinous practices towards the boys: one then aged nine or 11 years, another aged 11 or 12 and another aged 13.

A jury at Oban sheriff court heard that outdoor adventure courses had been run on Rua Fiola by Johnson-Ferguson - who owns the island - and his wife, Margaret, from 1976 until

2014, when the Wild Island Exploration Ltd company ceased to trade.

The courses included activities such as abseiling, canoeing, overnight survival expeditions on another island, boat trips, fishing, using a zip wire landing in a mud pool and sleeping in a cave on Rua Fiola.

The first Crown witness explained how he and other boys were sleeping, or were about to go to sleep, in the cave.

They had been taking part in outdoor activities during the day with Johnson-Ferguson. The witness said he could not remember if there were other instructors on the trip.

He said that at night on the second day Johnson-Ferguson, now 65 years old, lay down beside

him and put his hand inside his sleeping bag and began fondling him. He also claimed that the accused made the witness perform a sexual act on him.

The witness was shown a questionnaire that he filled in following the conclusion of his stay at the camp, in which he stated that he 'loved every minute' of the camp and that 'the instructors were all very good'.

Under cross-examination, defence lawyer Gary McAteer said: 'I am not suggesting an 11-year-old boy would write that he was abused at the time.'

'But when the Crown asked you what was the most memorable moment of the trip, you said it was when you were abused, but for whatever reason by the end of the course you said that you

enjoyed the expedition most.'

Mr McAteer suggested the witness had been in awe of the 'adventure figure' of Johnson-Ferguson and that he had subsequently been teased by the other boys in the group.

'I wonder if you have imagined something had happened in a context you may have forgotten,' said Mr McAteer. 'I am suggesting you have got this wrong.'

'It happened,' the witness responded. He told the procurator fiscal under re-examination: 'I don't think I had the imagination to make up a story like that at that age.'

Another witness told the jury that he had been at preparatory school with the first witness and had attended a course on the island with him when the incident

happened. He recalled being in the cave with his friend, 15-20 other boys and Johnson-Ferguson, where they had bedded down for the night in sleeping bags on bracken but did not recall if there were other instructors present.

He said Johnson-Ferguson and his friend had left the cave together to 'oohs' from the other boys.

It was not until he went on a trip to New Zealand in 2011 to see his friend, that the alleged victim had confessed exactly what had happened. 'He broke down in tears and told me about the event that had happened at Rua Fiola. He said that he had a sexual encounter between himself and Torquil Johnson-Ferguson.'

Under cross examination, he agreed that he couldn't remem-

ber exactly what year the incident happened or what age he had been.

A second alleged victim, who was 11 or 12 at the time, told the court he had gone on a course to Rua Fiola twice while at preparatory school and during the second visit, aged 11 or 12, had been sleeping next to Johnson-Ferguson in the cave.

He said he woke when he felt Johnson-Ferguson take his hand and put it on the accused's groin and the accused put his hand on the witness's groin but he said he didn't open his eyes.

He felt 'disorientated' and 'a bit panicky' the following day but didn't think about the incident until his late 30s when he told his mother during a drunken phone call and then a close friend who

had been making inappropriate jokes about child abuse.

Mr McAteer asked the witness how he knew it was Johnson-Ferguson if he hadn't opened his eyes.

'It was him,' the witness said. 'I know it was him. It was my first experience of touching a man's [groin] and I know it wasn't a boy, it was a man and it was that man there.'

Mr McAteer suggested he had got it completely wrong and had made it up.

'It is incumbent on me to tell the truth and it is absolutely clear to me that there is no question in my mind as to what has happened,' said the witness.

The trial before Sheriff Ruth Anderson, QC, and the jury continues.

Advertising feature

Are your winter heating bills giving you an electric shock?

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Business as usual at Oban pub say administrators

EUAN PATERSON
epater@obantimes.co.uk

PATRONS and suppliers of The Lorne Bar in Oban have been told it's business as usual, despite its parent group, Maclay, bringing in the administrators last Friday.

Administrators EY will keep the business in operation, which comprises 15 public houses and bars, as a going concern.

The Lorne Bar is a well-established and popular public house in the centre of Oban.

The administrators said it has had expressions of interest already in the Maclay group properties.

Ross Nisbet of administrators EY said: 'The Lorne Bar is one of the premises owned by Maclay Group and will be traded as a going concern. Our message to our patrons and customers is "it's business as usual".'

'We don't want them to be worried about the present situation.'

'We are looking to trade the business as a going concern and we have had expressions of interest in the group as a whole.'

The directors of Maclay Group plc said they had been seeking 'a strategic solution to the financial pressures facing the business at present'.

A statement from the group added: 'In light of a solution not emerging in the time available, the directors took this decision in order to protect the employment of its 500 staff and the business which remains profitable.'

Search for couple who checked out without squaring their bill

POLICE are looking for a couple who left a Tobermory hotel without paying their bill.

The man and woman, both believed to be in their early to mid-20s, booked a two-night stay between last Friday and Sunday but left after the first night without checking out. Police said enquiries are continuing to track down the pair.

The woman is around 5ft 3ins in height and of slim build, with shoulder-length, dark brown hair. She also has two piercings on her upper lip.

The man is around 5ft 7ins in height and of medium build with short, dark brown hair.

Anyone with any information should contact the police on 101.

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Argyll Bute COUNCIL

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- All Primary Schools
- <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/preschool-education>
- Early Years Helpline noted below

Information leaflets will be available from Early Learning & Childcare Providers at the time of registration and parents can obtain further guidance from the Early Years Helpline, Argyll and Bute Council, Argyll House, Alexandra Parade, Dunoon PA23 8AJ (Telephone 01369 708503).

Parents of eligible children should register at their preferred provider, taking along their child's birth certificate or passport, during week commencing 2nd Feb 2015 during the normal operational hours of the unit.

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Hat-trick of tries for new dad Struan as Oban Lorne run riot

The Green Machine has now played two games in 2015, scoring 93 points and conceding nothing

Oban Lorne	53
Cumbernauld	0
RBS West Division Two	

THE HARD graft had already been put in by the time Oban Lorne's players lined up on Saturday afternoon for their second league match against Cumbernauld this season.

The Oban squad was out in force for three hours last Thursday, clearing ice and snow from the Glencruitten pitch to make sure the surface was playable for the game. This endeavour was rewarded with a convincing win, which avenged an earlier defeat this season.

Coach Corrie Louw had a strong squad to choose from for the game; the only senior squad members unavailable for the game were Dan Hull and Andrew Abraham.

The strength in depth meant the Green Machine went into the game in confident mood, looking to again increase the pressure on Cambuslang at the top of the league.

Cumbernauld made the better start to the match but Oban stood firm and scored the first try of the day on 10 minutes.

An Andy MacDougall miss pass close to the line found winger Plato Miosiadis on the right hand side who dived over to open the scoring. A Craig Wright conversion gave Oban a 7-0 lead.

The home side doubled the lead shortly after, a pick and go from Cammy Smith close to the line and a pass to his twin brother Struan allowed the back row to score his first try of the day.

Oban were looking very dangerous with the ball and were continuously breaking through the weakening Cumbernauld defence.

The back three of Plato

Miosiadis, Dave McCabe and Richard MacKay were dealing well with the kicking game from the visitors while the Oban pack was completely dominating at the scrum and functioning well with the lineout.

On the half hour mark Oban scored its third try of the game. A driving maul in the 22 was driven over the line with player/coach Corrie Louw touching down before half time.



TAKING A BREAK: Cameron Smith takes a break from clearing the snow off the Glencruitten pitch

Into the second half, Struan Smith scored again from close range to seal a bonus point for Oban and, with the result beyond doubt, the Oban team relaxed and began to show a more expansive and entertaining game.

Lorne MacLachlan scored his first of two second half tries on 50 minutes. The big second row player hit a great line from 20 metres out to finish off under the posts.

A break from centre Craig Wright and a pop to flanker Jamie Bate allowed the 17-year-

Rugby

old to score his first Oban Lorne try and the sixth of the day for the team.

Oban now led 36-0 and were totally dominating all areas of play. Credit, however, must be given to the Cumbernauld team which kept on fighting and did well to keep 15 players on the park with no substitutes available.

Struan Smith celebrated recently becoming a father by securing a hat trick of tries with 15 minutes to go. Smith tapped from a penalty and crossed the line with ease as the away defence failed to react.

Oban scored two further tries in the final 10 minutes. Both Jamie Bate and Lorne MacLachlan scored their second tries of the afternoon to seal a fantastic 53-0 win.

The Green Machine has now played two games in 2015, scoring 93 points in total and conceding nothing.

Second-placed Oban Lorne will look to keep up the pressure at the top of the league this Saturday as they travel to play mid table Paisley, kick off 2pm.

Supporters bus

OBAN Lorne is running a supporters bus to its regional shield final against GHK on February 7.

The men in green face a tough match against the West Division 1 leaders but a win will be a step closer to a return to Murrayfield in the national final.

Anyone interested in attending the match should contact Tommy Sutherland on 07739 550300 or Darrell Williams on 07774 490265.



COME TO DADDY: new dad Struan Smith dives over for one of his three tries as Oban Lorne demolish Cumbernauld at Glencruitten Photo: Kevin McGlynn

Sports Hall Athletics in Oban

THE OBAN area competition in the Argyll series of Sports Hall Athletics takes place this Saturday, January 31, at Atlantis Leisure.

Intending competitors are reminded that events will start at 12.30pm with all entries on the day from noon.

Area competitions

This is the second of four local area competitions in Argyll this winter with successful boys and girls qualifying to take part in the Argyll final to be held at Atlantis Leisure on Saturday March 21.

Saturday's competition caters for six age groups,

Athletics

starting from under seven up to under 17 with seven different running, jumping and throwing events. Everyone taking part will receive a medal and trophies will be awarded to the overall winners in each age group.

There will be an entry fee of £2 per competitor or £5 for families of three or more.

This is an ideal opportunity for youngsters to come and try indoor athletics for the first time.

Scottish Amateur League results and fixtures

Football

LAST Saturday's results: West of Scotland Cup fourth round - Harestanes 3, Oban Saints 1; Jimmy Marshall Cup first round - Campbeltown Pupils 4, Dunoon Athletic 0; Lochgilphead Red Star 1, Haldane United 6, Coronation Cup first round - Rossvale v Tarbert postponed.

This Saturday's fixtures: Premier Division - Alba Thistle v Campbeltown Pupils; Premier Division Two - Dunoon Athletic v Paisley; Lochgilphead Red Star v Drumchapel Colts; Jimmy Marshall Trophy first round - Dunoon v Jamestown; Easthall Star v Oban Saints; Coronation Cup first round - Rossvale v Tarbert.

Oban Saints youth results and fixtures

Youth football

LAST Saturday's results: Under 13s 7, Drumchapel United 0. Scoring for Saints were Aidan MacPhee (5), Daniel Sloss and Liam MacDonald. Under 14s v Whitecraigs, postponed; Ardencaple 0 Under 15s 4. Saints scorers were Lewis Buchanan (2), Daniel McCuish and Kenneth MacDonald. Antonine v Under 16s postponed. Under 19s 3, EDFC 0.

This weekend's fixtures: Baljaffray v Under 13; Under 14s no game; Milngavie v Under 15s; Under 16s no game; Under 19s v Broomhill SC.

Oban's newest shinty team starts pre-season training

Shinty

OBAN'S newest shinty team has begun training at Oban high school on Monday nights.

Oban Lorn shinty club has also arranged pre-season matches against Ballachulish on February 7, Tayforth on February 14, Aberdeen on February 21 and Glenorchy on February 28.

The club's under-14 players train from 7pm - 8pm and older players meet from 8pm - 9pm. Training for this week has been switched to tomorrow (Friday).

Lorne under-16s game called off

Youth rugby

SCHOOL exams forced the postponement of last weekend's away tie at Cartha/Cumnock.

This week the team is home to Daziel on Sunday.

Saturday's S1/2 games against Lomond school were off because of the weather.

Trialists take top spot

Over 35s football

LATEST scores from the Atlantis Leisure over 35s league - Clements 2, Taynuilt 3; Teachers 2, Trialists 12; Emergency 0, D & K Lafferty 2.

P	Pts
Trialists	5 15
D & K Lafferty	5 12
Taynuilt	5 12
Clements	5 3
Teachers	5 3
Emergency	5 0



Saints under 19s and trade union unite

UNITED WE STAND: Oban Saints under 19 club funds were boosted recently when they were presented with a £500 cheque from the trade union Unite. Our photograph shows Neil MacKechnie, chairman of the Argyll and Bute branch of Unite, presenting the cheque to Saints under 19 captain DJ Orr before last Saturday's 3-0 win over EDFC. The Oban youngsters are presently sitting top of the under 19 Dunbartonshire Football Development League 16_105saints01

Lancaster 'A' win 'glamour' fixture

THE GLAMOUR fixture of the week's pool league card was between old foes The Lancaster 'A' and Markie Dan's 'A'.

The Lancaster 'A' came into the match on the back of a gut wrenching defeat at the hands of The Lochavullin's Cellar and anything other than victory would all but see their league challenge collapse, even at this early stage.

In contrast, Markie Dan's 'A' had a good head of steam with four consecutive league wins following an opening day loss, but similarly anything other than victory would also dampen their title charge.

A quick start was vital and it was the home side, The Lancaster 'A', which proceeded to take charge. Markie Dan's 'A' simply made too many unforced errors to threaten a rejuvenated Lancaster 'A' which asserted their superior matchplay throughout the singles to secure victory and all but put an end to the Markie Dan's league challenge.

The Lochnell had home advantage in the much-anticipated

Connell derby with neighbours The Gluepot having to cross the bridge to lock horns for the first time this year.

The Lochnell have propelled themselves up into the top third of the table and rightly started as favourites although The Gluepot were never just going to roll over. Almost every singles game went down to the nitty-gritty in a thoroughly exciting match but it was the extra guile and composure from the home team that eventually saw them hold onto the bragging rights for the next couple of months.

An understrength Lancaster 'B' crossed the Esplanade to take on Markie Dan's 'B' hoping to hang on to the coat tails of the sides above them.

Disappointingly for the visitors, Markie Dan's 'B' were not in charitable mood and controlled most of the action after an explosive start where they threatened to run riot.

The Lancaster 'B' may have some big decisions to make

Pool

regarding team selection with the performances of their fringe players overshadowing that of their so-called 'big names' and with a Lancaster derby next on the horizon this will need to be addressed.

Last, but certainly not least, the concluding fixture of the week was the bottom of the table clash between Outreach and the Lochavullin, which will go down in the Oban Pool League record books after Outreach recorded their first win.

The match had swung one way then the other before Outreach strung a couple of wins together to sneak over the winning line, much to the delight of their players and supporters.

Results, January 22: Lancaster A 7-3 Markie Dans A; Lochnell 6-4 Gluepot; Outreach 6-4 Lochavullin; Markie Dans B 7-3 Lancaster B.

Fixtures today (Thursday): Lancaster B v Lancaster A; Lochavullin's Cellar v Lochnell; Outreach v Gluepot; Markie Dans B v Lochavullin.

SPOT THE SHINTY BALL

LAST WEEK'S SHINTY BALL WAS HERE. . .



This week's nearest the ball winners, who each receive £25 are:

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Ballygrant
Islay

C Cameron
Iona Drive
Oban

THIS WEEK'S JACKPOT £1650

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



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Callous thieves break into boxing club

Boxing

A KINLOCHLEVEN sports club's future could be in jeopardy following a burglary at its premises where callous thieves stole money raised by children.

Robbers broke into Claymores Amateur Boxing Club sometime between Wednesday and Thursday last week and ran off with a strongbox containing £60-70.

The incident has been reported to the police.

Claymores head coach Martin Glensiek said it is a big financial blow as the club relies entirely on donations and member's fees and was unable to hold its usual fundraising show this Christmas.

As a result of the theft, the club is behind on rent payments and Martin has had to pay the latest water and electricity bills himself.

He said: 'We are in dire straits, this couldn't have come at a worse time.'

'The thieves seem to have broken into the office through the back door.'

'The strongbox had a combination lock and they couldn't get into it so they ripped it off the table it was fixed on to.'

'£60 or £70 is not much to them but it's massive to us. It's money we need to keep the club going.'

'The police aren't holding out much hope unless they can find the box and get fingerprints.'

Lochaber police area inspector Donald Campbell confirmed a quantity of money had been stolen from the boxing club sometime between 1pm on January 21 and 9.30am on January 22.

He said: 'We are appealing for anyone who saw any suspicious activity that night to get in touch with us.'

'It is an isolated incident and enquiries are ongoing.'

Anyone with information about the incident should telephone the police on 101 or contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or by using the website www.crimestoppers-uk.org.

Cancellations prove to be a disaster for Fort William Football

FORT William's hopes of five wins in a row were dashed on Saturday as a frozen pitch meant their away game against Nairn County was called off.

Another football-free weekend for the Claggan side means the Highland league fixture against Forres Mechanics, scheduled for this Saturday, has been postponed to allow the Fort boys to play the Breedon Aggregates game against Nairn, with the home fixture delayed until a later, yet to be scheduled, date.

There are now no planned games at Claggan until Wick Academy visit on March 13, giving the Fort side a chance to catch up on the 10 outstanding fixtures of the season so far.

Manager Calum MacLean said: 'This has been a disaster. We're at the stage now that we don't even know who we're playing after Nairn this weekend. The free Saturdays are well-needed so hopefully the weather's decent and we can play catch up.'

Disappointing defeat for Lochaber

Lochaber	5
Moray	22
Caledonia League Division 2 North	

Rugby

LOCHABER rugby club's first league game back at Banavie came to a disappointing end when they went down 5-22 against Moray on Saturday.

The home side struggled to find a full squad because of players' commitments but eventually fielded a good side and started off strongly to secure the first try after 30 minutes when a strong carry from a Lochaber forward gave their backs the platform to explode across the pitch with quick succession of good passing. The move was finished off by Conor Taylor who scored just left of the posts with an emphatic charge for the line.

The conversion was not kicked but Lochaber were 5-0 up at half time.

The second half started in the same vein but didn't last. Moray soon put more phases together and eventually pressurised the Lochaber defence until gaps opened.

Strong performances from Moray number 13 saw him score underneath the posts during the latter stages. Another two tries, a penalty and two conversions gave Moray the 22 points.

Positives
Vice captain Jack Baxter said: 'There were positives to take from the first league game back at Banavie. Taylor has recently been working on his power and this has paid dividends for the young number 8 but unfortunately it didn't last in the second half.'

Next Saturday (January 31) Lochaber face Aberdeen Wanderers away.



TACKLED: Lochaber's Chris Simpson takes on Moray defenders 20_f05rugby02



FRONT RUNNER: Finlay Wild takes an early lead in Lochaber Athletic Club's Leanachan race 20_f05athletics01

Finlay Wild wins Leanachan race in under an hour

FINLAY Wild cleared this year's Leanachan race route in just 59 minutes and 25 seconds.

This was only the third time in Lochaber Athletic Club (LAC) history the nine-mile track has been completed in under an hour, although still 23 seconds behind the race record, set by Davy Rogers in 2010.

Michael Bossard, also of LAC, was second of the 64-strong field, finishing in 1:00:32.

Third to complete the multi-terrain route round Leanachan forest was Stephen Burns, LAC, in 1:02:49.

Lochaber's Diane Baum was the first lady home for the second year in a row, finishing in 1:07:20 - more than three minutes faster than her time last year.

The next home race will be the Black Water Dam event, leaving from Kinlochleven on Sunday February 15.

Athletics

Top 20 finishers, LAC unless otherwise stated: 1 Finlay Wild 59:25; 2 Michael Bossard 1:00:32; 3 Stephen Burns 1:02:49; 4 Luke Taylor (Highland Hill Runners) 1:02:52; 5 Steve MacDonald 1:03:03; 6 Tim Brand 1:03:43; 7 Bruce MacLean 1:04:37; 8 Jon Gay 1:04:38; 9 Aidan Donnelly 1:06:16; 10 Ross Bannerman (Highland Hill Runners) 1:06:36; 11 Diane Baum 1:07:20; 12 Hughie MacKintosh 1:07:36; 13 Finlay Walton (Westerlands Cross Country Club) 1:08:07; 14 Allan Lamont 1:08:51; 15 Andy Craig 1:08:57; 16 Amanda Blackhall 1:09:36; 17 Ali Kennedy 1:09:58; 18 Neil Wasledge (unattached) 1:10:20; 19 Barrie MacKinnon 1:10:22; 20 Ben Dodman 1:10:42.

Fort William shinty club dinner dance

FORT William shinty club's annual dinner dance will be held in the Moorings Hotel on February 21.

As well as individual places, tables of eight can be booked on request. Tickets for the dance only can be bought for those who want to attend after

Shinty

the meal, with live music from Glasgow-based Surround. Tickets are available from Claire MacAlpin, 07789 118442, MacPhee and Partners or via info@fwsshinty.com.

Fort William Golf Club hands out the silverware

DAVID Matheson was king of the course at Fort William golf club after being presented with the men's club championship Connachie cup.

He took the main piece of silverware at the club's annual prizegiving event last Thursday (January 22), when Steven Jamieson also celebrated a successful year on the greens after winning six trophies, including the scratch match play club championship Rummy cup.

Rosie Macintyre won four cups including the ladies club championship Elliot trophy.

The overall 2014 prizewinners were as follows:

Mens winners: Club championship (Connachie cup), David Matheson; Scratch match play club championship (Rummy cup), Steven Jamieson; Handicap match play club championship (Hugh MacIntyre trophy), Dale Monk; Club championship handicaps 15-28 (Lochy Bar trophy), John Martin; Knockout match

play handicap (Clydesdale Bank challenge cup), Steven Jamieson; Two rounds stroke play scratch (MacIver cup), Steven Jamieson; Greensome knockout handicap (Jimmy Bruce memorial trophy), Brian Stewart and Ian Robertson; Knockout match play handicap (Scottish Pulp and Paper Mills), David MacDonald; Medal final scratch (Mairi MacIntyre rose bowl), Steven Jamieson; Medal final handicap (Young trophy), Steven Jamieson; Four-ball match play handicap (Bank of Scotland tray), Peter Stewart and Pat Cassidy; Senior four-ball match play handicap, Brian Stewart and Ian Robertson; Senior club championship, James Duncan; Wolverton trophy, Willie Hendrie; 1912 cup, Eric Wallace; Captain's prize, Willie McCann; Vice captain's prize, Henry MacDonald; Super seniors, Keith Sangster; Neil Hardie trophy, David Matheson; John Soutar medal final trophy, Ronnie MacDonald; Craig Paterson memorial trophy,

Golf

Frank Sweeney; Senior open, Ian MacKie

Ladies winners: Ladies club championship (Elliot trophy), Rosie MacIntyre; Bronze division club championship (Clydesdale Bank trophy), Kay Jerram; Singles handicap (MacNab cup), Helen Brian; Three best net scores (EWB Howie trophy), Iona Cameron; E Cameron trophy, Hazel Cameron; Ladies outing (West Highland Oil tray), Rosie Macintyre; Ladies summer eclectic (Wolverton cup), Hazel Cameron; Ladies winter eclectic (Mungo cup), Rosie Macintyre; Budget rent-a-car, Hazel Cameron; Winter Stableford singles (Roseburn trophy), Rosie Macintyre; Mixed foursome matchplay handicap (Alex Fairlie cup), Kay and Ken Jerram; Ladies Green-some knockout (Moorings hotel cup), Kim Topping and Kathleen Leitch.



SILVERWARE: the 2014 trophy winners gathered at Fort William golf club's annual prizegiving on Thursday 20_f05golft01

Ladies team for Fort William Shinty

MEMBERS of Fort William shinty club's senior committee are hoping to create a ladies team, more than 120 years after the club's formation.

Supporters of the proposal are appealing for anyone interested to attend an informal meeting at An Aird clubhouse on Saturday, January 31.

The meeting will be held after the annual Glangarry six-a-side tournament, held in the Nevis Centre on the same day and a member of the Women's Camanachd Association will be available to answer questions.

Bobby MacLeod, chairman of Fort William shinty club, said: 'It is my firm belief that a ladies team is long overdue and I look forward to the day that I watch them play on An Aird park. I'd like to offer them my full support.'

Fort William's first team will take on Kyles Athletic at home on the same day for the inaugural Drew Ferguson Memorial Trophy. Throw up 1.30pm.

Alleycats still the top dogs

Ten pin bowling

ALLEYCATS have maintained their scratch division lead in the Lochaber Building supplies ten pin bowling league.

They now have 57 points after week 13, followed by The Creeps with 54 points while Rotators move into third place on 52 points. In the handicap division, Rotators retain the top spot on 56 points, followed by Alleycats with 52 and Ardtoe/Nevis Radio in third with 44 points.

The top individual scratch game this week came from Tony Whitelocke of Alleycats with 181 and Anne Lovatt of Fairway Fillies had the top handicap game with 241. John Weller achieved both the top two game scratch series with 333 and the top two game handicap series with 433.

Alleycats swept the board this week in the team honours with the top scratch team game of the week of 621, the top handicap game of 808, the top two game handicap series of 1,189 and the top two handicap team series of 1,563. The highest scratch average is currently held by Pam Weller, Alleycats, on 156 followed by Tony Whitelocke, also of Alleycats, with 153. Next are Stewart Duncan, The Creeps, Brian Johnstone, Alleycats, and Ron Gretton, Rotators, all on 144.

Badminton skills on display

Badminton

SOUTH Lochaber children showed off their badminton skills at an inter-school tournament and many medal-winning positions had to be shared because of the youngsters' success.

Ellis Nicholson and Neil Minnis, both of Kinlochleven, shared the first place boys prize, while Dan MacLean and Sam Daynes, both Ballachulish, came joint second and Fraser MacLean of St Brides took third.

In the girls competition, Abbi Fartridge of Ballachulish came first, with Emma Vind, also of Ballachulish, a close second. Third place was shared between twins Niamh and Erin Sweeney, both Kinlochleven.

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WEATHER

Thursday Light rain and sleet
Winds moderate west north westerly
Temperatures 2°C to 5°C.

Friday Sunshine and showers
Winds moderate north north westerly
Temperatures 2°C to 5°C.

Weekend Outlook Cloudy on Saturday
Sunny spells on Sunday
Winds moderate northerly
Temperatures 2°C to 4°C.

TIDAL INFORMATION

Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday, January 29, 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	00.27	2.9	07.03	1.6	13.58	3.0
Fri	02.03	2.9	08.38	1.6	15.20	3.1
Sat	03.14	3.1	09.55	1.5	16.11	3.3
Sun	04.01	3.3	10.46	1.4	16.43	3.4
Mon	04.39	3.6	11.27	1.3	17.14	3.6
Tues	05.16	3.8	12.03	1.2	17.46	3.8
Wed	05.52	3.9	12.37	1.1	18.18	3.9

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)

Ardrishaig	-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