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& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

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Overdue ferries review is finally launched

THE long awaited ferries review was published by the Scottish Government as *The Oban Times* went to press on Wednesday morning.

Early indications appear positive for several island communities with proposals for improved and sustainable services.

MSP for Argyll and Bute Michael Russell welcomed the review.

'The proposals for Argyll and the Islands are positive and should improve services.'

'People should read the report and make their views known to the Scottish Government as soon as possible,' he said.

Warning over fake wine for Christmas

POLICE and trading standards officers are warning of counterfeit bottles of wine being sold over the festive period.

In one incident bottles of Blossom Hill White Zinfandel wine was discovered to be fake with Great Britain on the white label on the back of the bottle being wrongly spelt as Great Britan. The liquid was removed to determine whether it could be harmful.

Drinks firm Diageo, which manufactures Blossom Hill, urged consumers to report any suspected counterfeit brands.

Rail fares to rise by six per cent

RAIL passengers face fare increases of six per cent from next month.

ScotRail made the announcement this week saying: 'This approach enables us to continue to invest in service improvements while ensuring that rail travel remains value for money.'

From January an off-peak day return from Oban to Glasgow will cost just under £30.

Police appeal over dangerous driving

POLICE are appealing for witnesses to an alleged incident of dangerous driving last Tuesday on the A85.

The white pick-up van ran through temporary red lights near the Wide Mouthed Frog, forcing three oncoming vehicles to take evasive action through flood water that had gathered on the corner. The incident happened at 7.10am.

Anyone who saw the incident, or has any knowledge about the white vehicle in question should contact Oban Police Station on 01631 510500.



Michelle, Megan and James receive their gifts from Santa Claus at the Corran Halls fundraising event. 16_151fam01

Community backs shepherd's family

HUNDREDS of people gathered in Oban's Corran Halls for a fundraising event last Saturday in support of a young family coping with a devastating loss this Christmas.

The Christmas-themed event raised thousands of pounds for mother-of-two Michelle Donn, whose world was turned upside down in August this year, following the death of her partner, shepherd James Steele.

James was only 32 years old when he suffered fatal injuries in a fall while gathering sheep

on Ben Cruachan. And with the family home in Lochawe tied into James' job, Michelle and her two children, Megan, aged five, and James, aged two, were left homeless.

Motivated

Motivated by the family's story, a group of friends sprang into action, as did local businesses and individuals who donated scores of prizes for an auction and raffle.

On Saturday afternoon, as the hall began to fill, craft and children's stalls were set up and

musical acts The Lush Puppies, Tainuilt Gaelic Choir and Paddy Shaw's Wee Band, took to the stage in a festive scene of carol singing and tinsel.

And when the family arrived Santa Claus delighted Megan and James by giving them a teddy bear each as an early Christmas present, a gift that the bright-eyed Megan has become inseparable from.

One of the event organisers, Deborah Wyton, said: 'We were overwhelmed by all the support we received and the generosity

people showed. Not only in the donations we received, but also the amount of money people spent in the auction.'

'Michelle was taken back with it all and on such an emotional day for her she was so composed. She was brilliant.'

'This money is to help Michelle get back on their feet but we also wanted to make sure the children have a nice Christmas.'

'I want to thank everyone who donated items, money and their time to make this event such a success.'

Share a dream with caring Louise

'I don't like to see other children not smiling'

EXCLUSIVE

REPORT by

Steven Flanagan

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AN OBAN teenager who has struggled with health difficulties throughout 2011 enjoyed the perfect early Christmas this year, including swimming with dolphins and meeting American singer and actress Katy Perry.

But big-hearted Louise MacDonald, 13, who suffers from a rare genetic condition called neurofibromatosis which causes tumours to grow across the body, has vowed to once again raise money for charities that care for children in a situation similar to her own, including shaving her own head to help raise funds.

That commitment is made even more remarkable given Louise's hair is still growing back after chemotherapy earlier this year.

Her whirlwind end to 2011 started with a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Orlando thanks to the Dreamflight Foundation. While there, she visited Disneyworld and Universal Studios, before achieving her life-long ambition of swimming with dolphins at Discovery Cove.

Louise said: 'I swam with a dolphin called Dexter. He really cracked me up. He ate fish and would make funny faces. He

was brilliant. I cried. It was just so nice.'

On returning to the UK, Louise appeared on stage with Katy Perry in Glasgow before attending the 11th annual Les Hoey Christmas Party in Motherwell. Les, who arranged Louise's debut appearance at the SECC with Katy Perry, has become something of a dream-maker for sick children across Scotland. While there she Celtic FC defender Mark Wilson, before she and mum Marliese played festive games with a host

of celebrities. Louise received an iPad2, but Louise didn't go empty handed to the party, taking along 150 selection boxes to be shared among the other children. Of that, 50 were donated by JM Breckinridge, 40 from Bookers and the Co-operative donated 16. Louise spent £100 of her own money on another 94 selection boxes, with 44 going towards the party and 50 to the Schiehallion sick children's ward at Yorkhill Hospital in Glasgow.

Louise now wants to raise money for Les Hoey, Schiehallion and for Malcolm Sargent House, a holiday hospice run by children's cancer charity CLIC Sargent with a battle of the bands and fundraising auction at the Corran Halls in March. She and Marliese are now looking for donations of prizes to boost the fundraising. If she raises enough, Louise wants to shave her head, even if mum Marliese protests. Louise said: 'I like being generous to other people. I don't like to see other children not smiling.'

To donate a prize or help with the March fundraiser, phone Louise and Marliese on 01631 567214.

Name change for pontoon company

THE GROUP hoping to build a transit marina in Oban Bay has become a public limited company to make raising required private capital easier.

Newly instituted as Oban Bay Marine Ltd (OBM), the change in status will enable the company to sell shares in the venture, something deemed essential if the £200,000 in private finance is to be raised.

A spokesman said the move would also present value of money for investors, with a possibility for a small return on investment.

The spokesman said: 'The change to a community limited company will mean people can buy shares in it and, in time, see a small return. This is an important change.'

So far, £120,000 of private

finance has been spent on the pontoons project.

The development comes shortly after OBM submitted amended plans to the proposal for the 60 berth marina approved in 2008.

Among the major changes are proposals to move the marine entrance from the north to the south of the pontoons and relocating pedestrian access from the railway pier to the esplanade on George Street.

Other amendments include the addition of a diesel berth and manager's office, a small day-boat berth for 20 boats, limited over-winter capacity for 20 boats and the replacement of three parking bays with a loading/unloading bay.

Steel piles will secure the pontoons instead of anchors.

Fix Craignure problem now urge councillors

COUNCILLORS have urged Argyll and Bute Council to pay now and argue later to allow the gangway at Craignure pier, Mull, to be fixed.

The council and Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL) both deny ownership of a gangway damaged almost a year ago and discussions are ongoing into who will pay for the repair. However, speaking at the Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee, Councillor Roddy McCuish said: 'Can't we come to some sort of agreement where we pay half each to fix it, then argue who's responsible for it. I can't understand the lack of urgency when this pier brings in £1m to the council.'

Councillor Mary Jean Devon added: 'We can't go on like this for another 18 months.'

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FESTIVE OPENING HOURS

Please note our offices will be closed Friday 23 December Monday 26 December Friday 30 December Monday 2 January

St Kilda project promotion to enter the world of aps

THE STORY of St Kilda past and present is now available in a new format as part of the drive to create a St Kilda Centre - Ionad Hiort - in the Western Isles. An app which can be downloaded anywhere in the world by i-phone or other mobile devices has been commissioned by Buidheann Leasachaidh Ionad Hiort, the local group in Uig leading the drive to create the proposed centre. The App project has been supported by Comunn na Gaidhlig and both Gaelic and English versions are available. Iain Buchanan, chairman of the local group, said: "There is a huge interest in St Kilda and the prospect of a centre devoted to interpreting its history, culture and all the characteristics which have resulted in double designation as a UNESCO world heritage site. The app will be another valuable tool in stimulating that worldwide interest."

Donald MacNeill, chief executive of Comunn na Gaidhlig, said: "We feel it's important that Gaelic expands its foothold in new technologies like this and hope that where the Hiort project has led, others will follow." The App includes spectacular scenes of St Kilda as well as a summary of the islands' history and an explanation of the Ionad Hiort concept. It was given its first showing at a recent international conference in Edinburgh on remote access to world heritage sites, at which St Kilda was the most prominent case study. Scottish Government Minister for Culture and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop, described St Kilda as "a magical place that is difficult to get to", making it particularly suitable for the development of remote access technologies. Addressing the conference on behalf of the local development group, Brian Wilson said it was time for national and international bodies to take the project forward. He added: "On behalf of everyone so far involved in working to establish this centre, I would invite UNESCO to treat this project as a case study in the development of remote access provision. "We want the St Kilda Centre to be a beacon of excellence. We want to make links with similar remote access projects around the world."

Next steps include establishing a board with representation from the organisations which originally selected the Mangersta cliff-top site in Uig for the proposed centre. These include HIE, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, VisitScotland, the National Trust for Scotland and Proiseact nan Ealan, as well as UNESCO, Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland indicated interest.

Western Isles jobs under threat

Isles council needs to save £3.5million in 2012

COMHAIRLE nan Eilean Siar will consult each department on the possibility of redundancies as it looks to shave some £3.5million from its budget next year.

Western Isles Council leader, Angus Campbell, said every part of the authority will have to take its share of the cuts, saying that while redundancies would be kept to a minimum, they are looking more and more likely ahead of next year's budget.

But he said much of the responsibility for the council's stretched finances must lie with the Scottish Government, citing the freeze on council tax and the moratorium on school closures as reasons why the authority finds itself in difficulty. Furthermore, high fuel prices and a decision not to grant the Air Discount Scheme to councillors for business use adds further pressure to the council's coffers.

"We've this week made a decision on what we go to consultation on," Mr Campbell said. "We hope to keep compulsory redundancies to a minimum, but there might be some along the way."

"Obviously, it is very difficult. There are some areas we are already dealing with."

"Each department will have to take its share of the cuts, and areas such as roads may be in particular affected."

"Home care, for example, is becoming more expensive. Bus service costs are increasing too because of fuel costs."

"Education is more expensive as well. The decision not to

"Cutting jobs is the last thing we want to do."

council leader Angus Campbell

allow us to close schools has taken £800,000 from our budget that we would not otherwise have had to look for.

"I think as well that if you ask people if they would rather pay a bit more council tax or lose some services, most people would rather pay a bit more council tax. That decision, then, has certainly had a bearing on what we are able to do."

Mr Campbell has previously warned of a depopulation of the isles should the employment market dry up. With the possibility of redundancies now looming, that is something he and the council as a whole is desperate to avoid.

He said: "It will be very tough as any jobs going in the Western Isles mean many families will be left with no choice but to move away. "That's why cutting jobs is the last thing we want to do."

Bird egg thief jailed again following thefts from Lewis

A MAN who became known as Britain's most notorious egg thief following his crimes in the Argyll area, has been jailed for six months after a raid on his home found 700 rare bird eggs. Matthew Gonshaw, aged 49, from Bow in East London was sentenced at Thames Magistrates Court after admitting 10 charges of theft and possession of rare eggs snatched from nests, including five golden eagle eggs from nests in Lewis in April 2010.

In 2004 Gonshaw became the first man to be jailed in Scotland for stealing bird eggs when he was given a four-month sentence at Oban Sheriff Court for stealing the eggs of an Arctic tern and possessing 30 eggs.

Just two years previous to that Gonshaw was jailed for three months after being found guilty of stealing six chough eggs from the Isle of Colonsay, two red-throated diver eggs from North Uist, three dotterel eggs from the Cairngorms and four marsh harrier eggs from Kent.

Isle of Mull Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) officer Dave Sexton told The Oban Times: "Birds like golden eagles have just one nesting attempt a year so to lose their eggs - sometimes so close to hatching - is a disaster for them. This custodial sentence for egg collecting coming so soon after the fines for the photographers found guilty of disturbing Mull's white-tailed eagles sends out a very clear message that the police, the RSPB and local communities will not tolerate wildlife crime in our society today."



Matthew Gonshaw from Bow in East London has previously been convicted of thefts from Colonsay and North Uist, among others

Gonshaw's East London home was raided by officers from the Metropolitan Police and the RSPB Investigations Unit on June 2 this year.

Nearly 700 eggs were found, including those of some of the rarest and most threatened species in the UK.

Officers also found camouflaged clothing, climbing equipment, detailed maps and illegal

site maps defining the nesting spots of several rare breeds of birds.

The RSPB's Brian Etheridge has been monitoring Scotland's birds of prey for the RSPB for 20 years and also commented on the sentence. He said: "Birds like ospreys have travelled thousands of miles from Africa to lay their single clutch of eggs. "But egg collectors like

Gonshaw can bring all that year's effort to an end in a single act of selfish obsession."

As The Oban Times went to press it learned that Matthew Gonshaw is due to appear at Inverness Sheriff Court today (Thursday) in relation to further charges under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, committed on the Isle of Rum on May 25 this year.

Isle of Mull looks forward to Hogmanay fireworks display

ORGANISERS of the Tobermory fireworks display on the Isle of Mull at Hogmanay have thanked generous members of the public who helped to raise

£300 towards the event. The New Year fireworks in Ledaig car park has become a much anticipated display every year since the Millennium.

To boost funds for this year's event, organisers held a quiz in the Park Lodge, Tobermory courtesy of Geoffrey and Rebecca Gallagher.

Kilmartin House Museum discovers Colonsay's hidden history

OVER 60 sites, including some that may have prehistoric origin, have been uncovered on Colonsay after a dig co-ordinated by Kilmartin House Museum.

The team were joined by a host of volunteers on the four day dig, uncovering hidden treasures, such as the site of a hut circle, an

unrecorded dun and a possible kerb cairn.

Archaeologist Rod Regan from Kilmartin House Museum said: "The site we chose at Balnahard Farm was really interesting. As well as evidence of possible prehistoric dwellings and burials, the survey showed us how

life would have been in the more recent past when Colonsay had many more people living there.

"In 1841, 976 people lived on Colonsay and the survey revealed how they lived and farmed on the island. We also found several rock shelters or 'Sguid' typical of Colonsay."

The survey was undertaken as part of Kilmartin House Museum's Island Archaeology project, which has been funded by the Scotland's Islands programme.

Dr Sharon Webb of the Museum explained: "We have been working with the people of

Colonsay to help them find out more about their archaeology and heritage so they can better protect and promote what is special about Colonsay."

"We couldn't have done this without the help and support of the Colonsay Estate, David and Sarah Hobhouse and all the

volunteers who helped with the survey. We shall be returning to Colonsay in February to undertake more survey work and will be advertising again for volunteers to help." If you would like to volunteer, call 01546 510278 or email museum@kilmartin.org.

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Soroba residents urged to have their say on community centre

RESIDENTS in Soroba, Oban have been urged to have their say on a future community centre as Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA) announced plans to forge ahead with the project.

The proposal of a community centre at Shuna Terrace has been mooted for the past 10 years but following the land transfer of the site from Argyll and Bute Council to ACHA this week, work to canvass public opinion

and the search for funding can begin. Speaking at a public meeting in Soroba Learning Centre on Monday, ACHA chief executive Alastair MacGregor said the potential of Soroba had

been inhibited by the size of its facilities. He added: 'We have formed an ACHA Officers Group to take this forward but we are looking for people from within the community to help.

'We are working in a different funding landscape but if we work together and look at the possible instead of the negative, I think we can pull this off.' Mr MacGregor encouraged residents to fill in questionnaires

due to be sent out in January, to give the housing association the evidence it needs. Oban South and the Isles Councillor Roddy McCuish paid tribute to his former colleague, the late Councillor

Donald 'Skye' McIntosh, who campaigned for a community centre in Soroba. He added: 'It is unfortunate that Donald won't see this come to fruition, but that in itself should make us work that bit harder.'

Pay for where you stay - say online sellers

Internet shoppers hit by highly inflated delivery charges

INFLATED delivery charges to residents of the West Highlands and Islands is prompting 'huge levels of anger' among internet shoppers, according to a new survey.

Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) interviewed 900 people across Argyll and Bute, the Western Isles, Orkney and the Highlands in compiling a new report on delivery charges.

Excessive charges
Of those, 84 per cent said they had been refused delivery of goods because of their location, while 85 per cent have warned friends and family against using certain companies because of their excessive charges.

Further infuriating locals is the insistence of companies in using couriers other than Royal Mail, who charge one price for delivery across the entirety of the UK, including the islands.

Feelings are running so high that CAS say it was the largest response it has received to a poll of its kind.

'Really shocking'

The organisation will now be giving evidence to regulators in Scotland and England. Campaign co-ordinator, Angela Murphy, said: 'The comments reveal huge levels of anger and some of the examples reported are really shocking.'

'With families watching every penny at the moment, these excessive costs are a major burden for people.'

'They are very angry and want something done about it. And so do we.'

Among those charges reported, a customer on the Isle of Lewis being asked for £55 for delivery of an item costing just £26.

A respondent on Skye said: 'A company in Somerset wanted an extra £80 instead of £20 for

84 per cent have been refused delivery because of their location. CAS survey

delivery, but I have been refused delivery full stop on many occasions because of being in the Highlands and Islands.'

Oban and Fort William are also considered as 'Highland' by some delivery companies.

Numerous respondents reported problems with retailers on eBay, where the buyer's postcode often resulting in higher fees or being flatly denied sale.

One online customer in Oban

told *The Oban Times*: 'I have frequently been heavily surcharged for delivery and have twice been refused delivery altogether as the seller claimed 'you choose to live in a very remote location.'

Handling fees on top of inflated delivery charges were also common, with Tesco named as one retailer who tried to charge £20 delivery and a £15 handling charge for a bicycle.

Large companies weren't the only ones at fault.

Angela Murphy said: 'We will be reporting this evidence to the Office of Fair Trading and to trading standards, as well as to both the UK and Scottish governments.'



Oban Hospice Board chairman Dr Mac Armstrong, right, with staff from Lorn and Islands Hospital's Ward I. 16. t50ward01

Oban Hospice funds hospital ward refurbishment

OBAN Hospice has been putting its money where its mouth is by spending £40,000 on improvements to Lorn and Islands Hospital over the past few months.

Higher standard
The major investment has been a complete refurbishment of two side rooms in the new Ward I.

Oban Hospice Board chairman

Dr Mac Armstrong said: 'This spend has been of special value in the current economic climate in which funds for development are otherwise very constrained.'

'For the refurbishment in Ward I we had to work within the framework of the existing room layout and to comply with strict new infection control guidelines but we have carefully chosen materials and fittings

which are, wherever possible, of a higher standard than the NHS would normally use.'

The newly refurbished rooms have a different lighting, TV and sound system and are being provided together with wi-fi access.

Relatives' overnight suite

The hospice will also fund a complete upgrade of the suite available for relatives to stay

overnight, using a similarly higher standard of fittings and furniture.

Dr Armstrong added: 'We continue to fund the very successful Day Hospice at Lorn and the Isles Hospital, a commitment currently costing around £20,000 a year, and we are considering further developments for the Day Hospice in the coming year.'

Creagan Inn re-opens its doors in style



New owner, Liz Crichton, watches as the first pint of a new era is poured at the pub's reopening on Sunday. Picture - John MacFavish

AN ARGYLL lochside public house and restaurant near Appin reopened in spectacular style last Sunday, with accordion maestro and ceilidh king, Fergie MacDonald heralding in a new era.

Creagan Inn's new owners, Liz and Allan Crichton, welcomed a large gathering of locals keen to congratulate them on taking over the popular venue.

Local councillor, Neil Mackay, opened the remodelled pub by cutting a holly ribbon, saying: 'I've got many fond memories of the old Creagan Inn and I'm looking forward to many more in the future.'

Liz said: 'We took the keys on November 21 and I'm delighted we've managed to turn it round since then.'

'Everyone has been so helpful and the locals so supportive. The turnout is amazing.'

What we want to do is take the Creagan Inn back to being a locals' pub, because that's what it's really about.'

Taynuilt tackle council after planning objections overlooked

A COMMUNITY council has slammed Argyll and Bute Council's planning process after an objection it made was overlooked.

Taynuilt Community Council objected to an application from Ballet West to create a fourth and fifth house of multiple occupancy (HMO) in the centre of the village for its student dancers.

The community council was disappointed to learn the application had been approved and upset by a revelation that the application was not put in front of the planning protective services and licensing (PPSL) committee of elected representatives, but instead had been passed by planning officers through delegated powers.

However, while it is generally understood a community council is a statutory consultee in planning matters, Argyll and

EXCLUSIVE REPORT by Euan Paterson epaterson@obantimes.co.uk

Bute Council claim Taynuilt Community Council failed to request a 'formal consultation' within the set seven days and therefore did not qualify for the status of statutory consultee.

At the community council meeting last week, Oban North and Lorn Councillor Neil Mackay, who sits on the PPSL, said: 'I share your concerns that the letter of objection was not given more consideration. If this application had come in front of me on the committee, I would have put more weight on that objection and wondered whether Taynuilt was at maximum absorption for HMOs.'

Councillor Duncan MacIntyre said: 'What I would question from planners is why, when a statutory body has objected to this application, does it not go in front of the PPSL?'

A spokeswoman for Argyll and Bute Council said: 'Referral to the PPSL Committee is not automatically triggered when a consultee submits objections. PPSL involvement is only necessary when a statutory consultee objection exists and where notification to Scottish Ministers would be necessary prior to taking a decision to approve the application.'

'That was not the case in either of these instances. Whilst an over-concentration of student accommodation could alter the character of an established residential area, five HMOs is only a small percentage of the number of households within Taynuilt.'



Christoph comes close in Angel of the Year awards



Christoph receives his certificate from Wyvex Media's Pauline Clifford after being named one of the runners up in our Angel of the Year awards. 15_151christoph1

A GERMAN man who has become something of an ambassador for Oban has been named as a runner up in *The Oban Times*' Angel of the Year awards.

Christoph Josepelt, 44, moved to Oban in search of work in February 2007, taking up a job as a street sweeper.

His commitment to keeping the town tidy, friendly demeanour as well as making use of his language skills to assist tourists saw him as one of the outstanding nominees for our award, which was won by Kilmichael Glassary sisters, Helen McCuaig and Lizzie Scott.

Christoph, who also teaches German at the University of the Third Age and has produced a leaflet on why it is important to keep Oban tidy since 2007, was visibly emotional when receiving his certificate and cheque for £100.

He said: 'I'm very proud today. This is such a beautiful place and the people here are so friendly.'

'I would like to thank those who nominated me. I don't think this would have happened in Germany.'

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Mary's Meals feeds 100,000 more in 2011

IN LESS than a year Mary's Meals has increased the number of Third World children it feeds by 100,000, with the total figure now standing at more than 600,000.

The Dalmally-based charity reached the milestone of 500,000 children at the start of 2011 but this week announced an increase of 100,705. Mary's Meals provides a school meal for children in 16 countries around the world to encourage them to attend classes. Charity founder Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow said: 'None of this would be possible without the wonderful acts of love we receive from around the world from people who share our vision.'

Woman charged after ignoring police cordon

FOLLOWING the closure of Oban's George Street during the recent storms, a 25-year-old woman was charged with failing to comply with police instructions.

The woman ignored instructions not to cross a police cordon in the street after the roof of the Skipinnish Ceilidh House came loose.

Oban's damaged tree replaced

OBAN received an early Christmas present on Thursday, when the wind-battered Christmas tree in the town's Argyle Square was replaced with one donated by the Forestry Commission.



Pupils from Oban's St Columba's Primary School packed shopping bags at the Co-operative store on Thursday to help raise funds for the school's annual trip to Castle Toward. Helping Lisa Petrie with her shopping is P7 pupil and Clan Derry captain Samantha Parkinson.



Dr Mike Cantley, chairman of Visit Scotland.

Tourism chairman urges the industry to grasp numerous opportunities in 2012

VISIT Scotland's chairman believes Argyle and Bute is perfectly positioned to take advantage of next year's global focus on the UK.

Dr Mike Cantley says 2012 presents a number of opportunities to attract new visitors into Scotland.

While the Olympic Games will be held in London, a number of Olympic events will be held throughout the country, including in Scotland. Disney-Pixar's latest animated

film, Brave, will be released next year, starring some of Scotland's most famous actors including Billy Connolly, Robbie Coltrane, Kevin McKidd and Kelly MacDonald.

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee will also be held in 2012, with the Royal Family to spend a week in Scotland as part of the celebrations.

Panda fever has also struck, with Edinburgh Zoo's latest additions sure to drive people to Scotland.

Encouraging people to take advantage, Dr Cantley said: 'Tourism is Scotland's biggest industry and tough though the recession has been, surely this is our opportunity to drive Scottish tourism beyond recession to win real market share from competing nations.'

'The Olympic Games will provide us with a platform to present our culture to the world, as well as encouraging people to Argyle and Bute from a crowded south of England.'

Dr Cantley believes next year is the start of what he calls the Winning Years, looking towards the inevitable interest generated by 2014's Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and the Ryder Cup in Gleneagles.

He said: 'Frankly, the Winning Years can only be delivered if everyone works together - from the smallest B&B to the biggest resort hotel.'

'We need to make tourism the hero of the Scottish economy,' he added.

Mystery of local link to daring war raid

AN ARGYLL connection to one of World War Two's most daring raids on occupied France is proving to be a bit of a mystery.

'Operation Frankton' is well documented in the film *The Cockleshell Heroes* and has its 70th anniversary next year.

A team of Royal Marine Commandos canoed almost 100 miles under cover of darkness into Bordeaux Harbour to attach limpet mines to ships, in a bid to block the strategic port to German Atlantic U-boats and merchant shipping. Of 10 who set off, only four reached their target and just two escaped to return to the UK. Winston Churchill is thought to have credited the successful raid to shortening the war by six months.

The Oban War and Peace Museum would like to unearth more information about two of the mission's participants who have local connections.

Lieutenant John Mackinnon is believed to be an Oban man and is mentioned in the town's

War Memorial. Museum curator Bill Leech said: 'We know that he was born in the town on July 15 1921 but it seems that he and presumably his family left for Clarendon Street, Glasgow, when he was quite young as he attended both Woodside primary and secondary schools in that area.'

'It would appear that he came through the ranks before being commissioned as an officer.'

He added they would be keen to know if there are any remaining family in the area.

Lieutenant Mackinnon was captured by the Germans and thought to have been shot.

One of the survivors and leader of the mission was Major 'Blondie' Hasler.

He became a well-known yachtsman after the war and is believed to be buried in Argyle, though the museum would be keen to confirm this.

Anyone with any information can contact Oban War and Peace Museum on 01631 570007.



Andy MacDowall and Oban Police Chief Inspector Brian Auld pick out the raffle winners.

Oban gardener helps make police youth projects grow

A GARDENER whose greenhouse was smashed by unruly youths has raised an estimated £1,200 towards youth projects.

Working alongside Oban Police, Oban in Bloom member Andy MacDowall collected 45 prizes for the raffle and helped Oban Police Chief Inspector Brian Auld with the prize draw on Monday. Proceeds from the

raffle will be given to the police to use in encouraging more young people to act more responsibly within the community.

Chief inspector Auld said the money could go towards local Blue Light Discos and for educational purposes. He continued: 'We will look at addressing issues of substance misuse, safe use of the internet and bullying. We will also be

doing evening events because there can be a gap in the knowledge of parents when it comes to drugs and alcohol abuse. We will show them how to pick up on signs of bullying and give an insight into monitoring what their kids are accessing online.'

The police plan to link in with local youth groups when rolling out the initiatives.

Lorn Lines



Rockfield Pre5 and Sgoil Araich an Obain together raised £80 for Children in Need. Children invited parents in to buy a spotty cake and have a spotty tea party. Children all wore their pyjamas to nursery.

OBAN professional photographer Cameron Harris of Highland Photos was the judge at Oban Photographic Club's weekly meeting on Monday December 12 in the Regent Hotel, Oban.

Cameron gave the club a trophy in 2008 for the best 'Commercially Viable' image and this year's subject was 'Dusk to Dawn'. After showing and commenting on some of his own images, Cameron went on to give marks and helpful advice on the club's entries.

Cameron was thanked for an excellent evening by Alex Clark.

Winners were: 1 Stephen Lawson; 2 Ronnie McKillop; 3 Corrine Allward.

The next meeting of the club is on January 9 2012 when David McLellan from Carluke will take members and visitors onto the 'West Highland Highway'.

LORN and Mid Argyll Members' Centre of the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) held its annual coffee morning in Oban recently to raise funds for conservation work in Scotland.

Visitors sampled hot drinks and home-baking donated by members and bought last-minute Christmas presents.

Thanks go to Waterstones, Tesco, Homebase, Purdies, Millstones, Cakebread Garden Centre, Poppies Garden Centre, Sealife Adventures, Pets at Home and Creature Comforts for donating raffle prizes.

The last evening lecture of the year was also held recently at the Scottish Marine Institute at Dunbeg - an excellent presentation by Lewis Pate of the SWT on 'Savings Scotland's Red Squirrels'.

The first meeting of 2012 will be a lecture by Dave Batty at the same location on January 19 entitled 'Argyll's Atlantic Oakwoods'.

Everyone welcome.

WHEN Oban Speakers Club met in Soroba House Hotel last week members were given an excellent evening's entertainment.

First half chairman Willie Melville introduced the main speakers, Guido Facenda who spoke on the 'Fourth Estate', Tom Clegg on 'Retirement' and Cameron Fletcher on 'Bah Humbug'.

In the second half Donnie Graham gave topics ranging from Oban fireworks display to the Scottish football team and from street violence to a seasonal goodwill message.

The speakers dealing with these subjects were Eamonn Arthur, Roy Wood, Frank Walton, Donald MacAskill, Alec Clark and Willie Melville.

Timekeeper for the evening was Bill Leech and the general evaluation, which he said would be based on the season of goodwill to all men, was given by Jim Fraser.

In closing the meeting president John Maclean wished all members the compliments of the season and looked forward to welcoming everyone back on January 12.

JAMIE MCGRIGOR
Highlands & Islands MSP
Contact Jamie at his Regional Office:
61 Chalmers St,
Ardrihaig, PA30 8DX.
Tel: 01546 606586.
or e-mail:
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Copper cable theft at Bridge of Orchy

POLICE were called to attend the scene of a theft of copper lightning protection cable from the communications mast at Black Mount, near Bridge of Orchy.

The theft is believed to have occurred sometime between December 9 and 15. Anyone with any information should contact Oban Police Station.

Pensioner in court over nuisance calls

A 76-YEAR-OLD man appeared in private at Oban Sheriff Court last week, charged with making nuisance phone calls and breaching the peace.

The man, from the Oban area, made no plea or declaration and was granted bail pending further enquiries.

Food and drink logo competition

STUDENTS across the Highlands and Islands have been invited to enter a competition to design a new logo for Scotland's National Food and Drink Conference.

The winning logo will be printed on shopping bags and promotional material for the March conference. The winner will receive £300 and two runners up will receive £100.

To enter, visit scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Business-Industry/Food-Industry/national-strategy/Competition.

Police appeal after trailer stolen from sailing club

A GALVANISED A-frame trailer worth £300 was stolen from Oban Sailing Club sometime between November 14 and December 14.

Police urge anyone with any information about the theft to contact them on 01631 510500.

Western Isles question decision on RET scheme

COMHAIRLE nan Eilean Siar is to look into the Scottish Government's decision to exclude commercial vehicles over 5ms long from the Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) scheme.

The transport strategy member officer working group will also look at the effect this decision will have on local businesses.

Oban office party weekend ends in arrests for four

THE OFFICE party weekend ended badly for four men who were arrested for various offences in George Street over the weekend.

In the early hours of Saturday morning a 21-year-old man was charged after taking part in a fight but the youth's night was to get worse when he fell down the stairs of a town centre establishment and was taken to hospital.

The following night a 26-year-old man was charged for assaulting two women and an 18-year-old man was charged with conducting himself in a disorderly manner. A 19-year-old man was charged with taking part in a fight in the early hours of Sunday morning.

Oban hospital among the best in the country

Inspection highlights one of the highest achieving units in Scotland



Some of the successful Endoscopy team at Lorn and Islands Hospital.

THE TREATMENT of patients in a unit of Lorn and Islands General Hospital has been described as amongst the best in the country.

The endoscopy unit of the Oban hospital has been named one of the highest achieving units in Scotland, following a recent inspection.

The endoscopy unit, which uses internal cameras to help diagnose health conditions and tackle problems such as digestive disorders, treats people from all over Argyll and the Isles.

Commending medical staff for good teamwork, the inspection praised the endoscopy unit for its training of endoscopists and nursing staff, decontamination and traceability of instruments, privacy and dignity, waiting times and communication with patients.

Pleased with the results of the national inspection, carried out

by the Joint Advisory Group on GI Endoscopy (JAG), lead nurse for endoscopy services at the hospital Yvonne Blainey said: 'This is a very gratifying report in the light of a phenomenal amount of work by all the staff to improve the endoscopy service we offer to patients at Lorn and Islands.'

'We have also set up an Endoscopy Patient Forum and implemented regular patient satisfaction surveys which have given us lots of positive feedback, along with several helpful suggestions to continue our improvements.'

The JAG report is the latest in a long line of very positive reports the hospital has received this year.

The Healthcare Environment Inspectorate and the Scottish Patient Safety Programme also praised the standard of care at the hospital.

Helicopter heroes brave snow blizzards to come to aid of injured walker

Dramatic Argyll mountain rescue amid 'some of the worst conditions we have experienced this year'

A ROYAL NAVY helicopter crew from HMS Gannet faced what the vastly experienced pilot described as 'some of the worst conditions we have experienced this year' when they came to the aid of a lone walker with an injured ankle on an Argyll mountain.

The crew was then recalled later the same night to close to the same area to assist in the search for another two missing men.

The first injured walker was plucked to safety from near the summit of the 3,074ft Beinn Sgualair, between Glen Creran and Glen Etive, on Sunday evening as the helicopter crew battled low cloud, pitch darkness and a swirling blizzard.

The Prestwick-based Sea King helicopter was forced to fly very close to the rock face in extreme conditions to recover the casualty and take him to Belford Hospital in Fort William.

Pilot Lieutenant Commander Craig Sweeney told *The Oban Times*: 'We collected three members of Glen Coe Mountain Rescue Team and began a slow hover-taxi up the mountain.



The Royal Navy Sea King helicopter, based in Prestwick, was called to rescue an injured walker from an Argyll mountain amid some of the worst conditions of the year.

'Above 1,500ft we were into cloud and recirculating snow, which made for extremely delicate flying - essentially our only

visual references came from the mountain itself. We had to go extremely close to the rock face throughout the whole journey up

the mountain - that's how bad the visibility was. All around us was nothing but swirling snow and we were very close to white-out conditions.'

'It was a long, slow process and it paid off when we got just below the summit where we found the walker. He had had the forethought to shine a torch, which we were just able to make out and together I and my co-pilot Lieutenant Mark Wielopolski managed to get the helicopter into a position where we could set down the three members of MRT and our aircrewman.'

'Conditions underfoot for the rescuers were absolutely treacherous and it was also extremely steep at that point.'

'Our winchman Jason Bibby is also a qualified paramedic and was able to make immediate on-site assessment of the casualty. It appears he had slipped and hurt his leg and had been lucky enough to fall in an area where he had enough mobile coverage to raise the alarm.'

The team transferred the MRT down to the base of the mountain before delivering the casualty to Belford Hospital where they

arrived with a mere five minutes of fuel left. They were able to refuel at Corpach.

No sooner had they started on their way back to Prestwick, then they were asked to attempt another rescue - this time in Glen Coe.

Two climbers were stuck at the eastern end of the notorious Aonach Eagach ridge, close to Meall Dearg.

The helicopter struggled in very difficult conditions to search for the missing men before spotting flashing lights and alerted Oban Mountain Rescue Team to their exact location.

'As we were considering our fourth attempt to get to the casualties, we heard that the Oban team was only 10 minutes from the eastern end of the notorious Aonach Eagach ridge, close to Meall Dearg.'

The helicopter struggled in very difficult conditions to search for the missing men before spotting flashing lights and alerted Oban Mountain Rescue Team to their exact location. 'It was very good news all round - the two were safe and well. They had got disorientated in the snow and cloud and didn't know which way to go. They were able to walk down the mountain themselves with the expert guidance of the MRT.'

Council rejects offers for public buildings in Oban

OFFERS to buy Oban's two most sought-after public buildings have been declined by the town's councillors.

The former Rockfield Primary School and the White Building, situated on the town's North Pier, had bids turned down at last week's Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee meeting

during discussions that excluded the press and public.

And after turning down the one remaining offer for Rockfield, the area committee agreed to liaise with Historic Scotland to de-list the building, making it easier for a demolition notice to be granted.

The property will then be

remarketed on conclusion of the discussions. In addition, the committee agreed to separately advertise the two classroom huts within the school grounds for sale, on the basis that any interested party removes the structures, caps the utility services and removes the brick bases leaving the ground suitable for

car parking. The area committee also agreed to decline the offers which had been received for the White Building and to retain the building pending the final outcome of the council's Lorn Arc project.

A council spokeswoman said that although the Lorn Arc project proposes an extension

to the North Pier, fine detail of the final plan was not clear but would become more obvious as the Lorn Arc proposal evolves.

The area committee agreed to continuing leasing part of the White Building to the MacQueen Bros Charitable Trust, pending the outcome of the Lorn Arc Project.

Mull Lines

DINERS at two seafood suppers held on the Isle of Mull this autumn have raised more than £1,500 for Tobermory RNLI.

The annual 'Seafood Extravaganza' held at Dervaig Village Hall on the west coast of the island was once again a sell out.

The centrepiece of the supper was the famous Dervaig 'seafood plank' which features Mull's superb shellfish, including lobsters, langoustines, oysters, crab and salmon from the waters around the island. Diners on the night raised £500 to support the work of Tobermory RNLI's volunteer crew.

A few days later in the south of the island, the Inverlussa Mussel Farm hosted its ever-popular annual buffet supper on the shores of Loch Spelve.

Those fortunate enough to get a ticket not only had the chance to feast on mussels fresh from the sea loch but also raised £1,082 for the lifeboat charity.

Tobermory RNLI Coxswain Phil Higson said: 'There is a natural affinity between those who harvest the finest produce from around our island shores and our volunteer crews. 'We're very grateful for the generosity of those who organised and attended these suppers which will help Tobermory RNLI continue to help save lives at sea.'

MULL Guides have been working on their Community Action Badge.

The guides helped deliver letters around Tobermory on behalf of the Oban Hospice Light Up a Life appeal and they also made Christmas decorations for residents at Glen Isal housing.

Linda Noble collected the decorations on behalf of the residents. The guides and guides thank everyone for their support at all their fundraising events throughout the year and wish everyone a very Merry Christmas.



IT WAS a truly 'local' gig for Colin MacIntyre's Mull Historical Society when he returned to his old school at An Tobar to launch his new album *City Awakenings*. With fewer visitors around, the audience was predominantly sourced from the island. Colin said: 'The gig was a blast - really nice atmosphere of the real community. It was good to play older and new songs too. A few of the young singers from the island joined me on stage and big Gordon MacLean came up for one too.'

EXPERT archaeologists will be brought to the island for further investigation of the Balisacate Chapel near Tobermory.

Mull Museum has just received a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and LEADER (Argyll and the Islands) to bring the team of experts to work at the site in summer 2012.

The chapel, thought to date from the time of St Columba, was the subject of a three-day dig by Time Team in 2009, during which many exciting discoveries were made. There may be opportunities to work as a volunteer alongside the professionals, as they examine the site.

A delighted project co-ordinator, Hylda Marsh, said: 'All the hard work by the Balisacate sub committee, the meetings, discussions, form filling, research and calculations done over the last 12 months has paid off.'

'This is the first and most important hurdle. We must now immerse ourselves in the paperwork, permissions and tendering processes that will have to be in place before the further excavations commence.'



MULL pupils who attend Oban High School and live in Glencruitten Hostel during the school week received a cheque for £410 from the parents of Mull and Iona.

The parents held a bingo night in Bunnessan Hall in November.

The money raised will be used to provide a variety of activities for the children who stay in the hostel. The hostel staff and children thanked the parents of Mull and Iona for this very generous donation and are looking forward to enjoying the activities it will provide. Pictured left to right, are: Back row - Lauren Cameron, Heather Campbell, Lewis Kirsop, Rhona McIntyre, Declan McMullen, Ben Shannon and William MacDougall. Front row - Siobhan Cameron, Cara Morrison and Kirsty Rutherford.

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FINAL DAY of SALE at 35 Stevenson Street is Sat 31st December

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FW

Overdue ferries review is finally launched

THE long awaited ferries review was published by the Scottish Government as *The Oban Times* went to press on Wednesday morning. Early indications appear positive for several island communities with proposals for improved and sustainable services. MSP for Argyll and Bute Michael Russell welcomed the review. 'The proposals for Argyll and the Islands are positive and should improve services. People should read the report and make their views known to the Scottish Government as soon as possible,' he said.

Warning over fake wine for Christmas

POLICE and trading standards officers are warning of counterfeit bottles of wine being sold over the festive period. In one incident bottles of Blossom Hill White Zinfandel wine was discovered to be fake with Great Britain on the white label on the back of the bottle being wrongly spelt as Great Britan. The liquid was removed to determine whether it could be harmful. Drinks firm Diageo, which manufactures Blossom Hill, urged consumers to report any suspected counterfeit brands.

Rail fares to rise by six per cent

RAIL passengers face fare increases of six per cent from next month. ScotRail made the announcement this week saying: 'This approach enables us to continue to invest in service improvements while ensuring that rail travel remains value for money.' From January an off-peak day return from Oban to Glasgow will cost just under £30.

Police appeal over dangerous driving

POLICE are appealing for witnesses to an alleged incident of dangerous driving last Tuesday on the A85. The white pick-up van ran through temporary red lights near the Wide Mouthed Frog, forcing three oncoming vehicles to take evasive action through flood water that had gathered on the corner. The incident happened at 7.10am. Anyone who saw the incident, or has any knowledge about the white vehicle in question should contact Oban Police Station on 01631 510500.

NEWSDESK
01397 703003



Michelle, Megan and James receive their gifts from Santa Claus at the Corran Halls fundraising event. 16_1515m01

Community backs shepherd's family

HUNDREDS of people gathered in Oban's Corran Halls for a fundraising event last Saturday in support of a young family coping with a devastating loss this Christmas. The Christmas-themed event raised thousands of pounds for mother-of-two Michelle Donn, whose world was turned upside down in August this year, following the death of her partner, shepherd James Steele. James was only 32 years old when he suffered fatal injuries in a fall while gathering sheep

on Ben Cruachan. And with the family home in Lochawe tied into James' job, Michelle and her two children, Megan, aged five, and James, aged two, were left homeless. Motivated by the family's story, a group of friends sprang into action, as did local businesses and individuals who donated scores of prizes for an auction and raffle. On Saturday afternoon, as the hall began to fill, craft and children's stalls were set up and musical acts The Lush Puppies, Taynuilt Gaelic Choir and Paddy Shaw's Wee Band, took to the stage in a festive scene of carol singing and tinsel. And when the family arrived Santa Claus delighted Megan and James by giving them a teddy bear each as an early Christmas present, a gift that the bright-eyed Megan has become inseparable from. One of the event organisers, Deborah Wyton, said: 'We were overwhelmed by all the support we received and the generosity

Share a dream with caring Louise

'I don't like to see other children not smiling'

EXCLUSIVE
REPORT by
Steven Flanagan
sflanagan@obantimes.co.uk



AN OBAN teenager who has struggled with health difficulties throughout 2011 enjoyed the perfect early Christmas this year, including swimming with dolphins and meeting American singer and actress Katy Perry. But big-hearted Louise MacDonal, 13, who suffers from a rare genetic condition called neurofibromatosis which causes tumours to grow across the body, has vowed to once again raise money for charities that care for children in a situation similar to her own, including shaving her own head to help raise funds. That commitment is made even more remarkable given Louise's hair is still growing back after chemotherapy earlier this year. Her whirlwind end to 2011 started with a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Orlando thanks to the stage in a festive scene of carol singing and tinsel. And when the family arrived Santa Claus delighted Megan and James by giving them a teddy bear each as an early Christmas present, a gift that the bright-eyed Megan has become inseparable from. One of the event organisers, Deborah Wyton, said: 'We were overwhelmed by all the support we received and the generosity

of celebrities. Louise received an iPad2, but Louise didn't go empty handed to the party, taking along 150 selection boxes to be shared among the other children. Of that, 50 were donated by JM Breckinridge, 40 from Bookers and the Co-operative donated 16. Louise spent £100 of her own money on another 94 selection boxes, with 44 going towards the party and 50 to the Schiehallion sick children's ward at Yorkhill Hospital in Glasgow. Louise now wants to raise money for Les Hoey, Schiehallion and for Malcolm Sargent House, a holiday hospice run by children's cancer charity CLIC Sargent with a battle of the bands and fundraising auction at the Corran Halls in March. She and Marliese are now looking for donations of prizes to boost the fundraising. If she raises enough, Louise wants to shave her head, even if mum Marliese protests. Louise said: 'I like being generous to other people. I don't like to see other children not smiling.' To donate a prize or help with the March fundraiser, phone Louise and Marliese on 01631 567214.

Name change for pontoon company

THE GROUP hoping to build a transit marina in Oban Bay has become a public limited company to make raising required private capital easier. Newly instituted as Oban Bay Marine Ltd (OBM), the change in status will enable the company to sell shares in the venture, something deemed essential if the £200,000 in private finance is to be raised. A spokesman said the move would also present value of money for investors, with a possibility for a small return on investment. The spokesman said: 'The change to a community limited company will mean people can buy shares in it and, in time, see a small return. This is an important change.'

finance has been spent on the pontoons project. The development comes shortly after OBM submitted amended plans to the proposal for the 60 berth marina approved in 2008. Among the major changes are proposals to move the marine entrance from the north to the south of the pontoons and relocating pedestrian access from the railway pier to the esplanade on George Street. Other amendments include the addition of a diesel berth and manager's office, a small day-boat berth for 20 boats, limited over-winter capacity for 20 boats and the replacement of three parking bays with a loading/unloading bay. Steel piles will secure the pontoons instead of anchors.

Fix Craignure problem now urge councillors

COUNCILLORS have urged Argyll and Bute Council to pay now and argue later to allow the gangway at Craignure pier, Mull, to be fixed. The council and Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL) both deny ownership of a gangway damaged almost a year ago and discussions are ongoing into who will pay for the repair. However, speaking at the Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee, Councillor Roddy McCuish said: 'Can't we come to some sort of agreement where we pay half each to fix it, then argue who's responsible for it. I can't understand the lack of urgency when this pier brings in £1m to the council.' Councillor Mary Jean Devon added: 'We can't go on like this for another 18 months.'

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OT

Brisk trade at Tormore Forest

SLEAT Community Trust has hauled out more than 5,000 tonnes of logs from its Tormore Community Forest since timber operations began in mid-September, figures show. Sawlogs have gone to BSW Timber in Fort William. See Sleat, 'Down Your Way', page 9.

Simon honoured

FORT William FC and Clachnacuddin will play for the inaugural Simon Shields Memorial Cup tomorrow (Friday). Inverness man Simon, who played for both clubs, died in June from lung cancer at the age of 23. A collection will take place at the game to raise funds for Highland Hospice.

More apps from whizzkid Michael

FORT William whizzkid Michael Lawrie has developed two more touch screen applications (apps) for worldwide download. Lochaber High School pupil Michael was overjoyed when Apple accepted his 'Atomic Dodgeball' game for its App Store last month - making him one of Scotland's youngest games developers. Michael, 15, from Camaghael, has sold 200 so far and hopes his 'Hungry Rudolph' and 'Atomic Dodgeball Lite' apps will prove just as popular. BBC and STV are interviewing him this week. Mum Lyn said: 'I think it's amazing.'



Michael Lawrie: new apps. 20, f51sh001

NEWSDESK
01631 568000



Shining stars at Ballachulish Christmas show

Mary and Joseph - Chloe Young and Ethan Starkey - and angels Morvern MacLeod, Kenzie Beaton and Eva Bathurst starred in the Ballachulish Primary School Christmas show on Monday. The P1s put on a performance of the Nativity story, while pupils from other classes performed Christmas songs for the audience of parents, teachers, families and friends. 20, f51sh001

Croft students spark hopes of Ardnamurchan revival

MORE than 20 students have completed a crofting course in Kilchoan - sparking hopes of minor agricultural revival in Ardnamurchan. The Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) introductory module held special meaning for the peninsula, whose fading fortunes were memorably traced in Alasdair Maclean's 1984 minor classic 'Night Falls on Ardnamurchan'. The book depicts the decline and depopulation of Sanna, a crofting township not far from

Kilchoan. The course at the University of the Highlands and Islands' Kilchoan Learning Centre was one of eight being held across the Highlands and Islands this winter. SCF chief executive Patrick Krause, who joined the 24 young crofters for the last night of the course, said feedback from tutors and students had been 'phenomenal'. He told *The Oban Times*: 'Given the historical background, the popularity of the training here in Kilchoan is particularly

heartening. It is great to think of lights returning to some of the townships of Ardnamurchan, and it is entirely fitting that the Scottish Crofting Federation, the crofters' own representative organisation, should be leading the way by providing local properly accredited and well appreciated training and support for the next generation of crofters.' SCF training programme manager Su Cooper said: 'For new and aspiring crofters there is a great deal of information that

Daughter's fury at grave desecration

Grieving Kinlochleven woman demands answers from council

A GRIEVING Kinlochleven woman is demanding answers after her mother's grave was 'desecrated' by Highland Council workmen. Moira Hartley was horrified to find wreaths overturned, flowers covered in mud and cards scattered around where mum Moira Mitchell was laid to rest only days before.

EXCLUSIVE REPORT by STEPHEN NORRIS snorris@obantimes.co.uk

Hartley. On her next visit on December 4, the mum-of-two found flowers buried in dirt, cards blowing away and wreaths damaged and thrown upside down next to the gravestone of her father, who died in 2006. Ms Mitchell's grandchildren, aged three to 23 had carefully affixed cards to the wreaths. Distraught, Ms Hartley fired off an angry email to TEC services boss Mike Leary asking why the family was not given notice and more care was not taken.

She told *The Oban Times*: 'You only bury your mother once in your life and you can always buy more flowers, but we will never have that opportunity of that special couple of weeks again. That has been taken away from us and the one thing we could do for my mum has been desecrated. Having this to cope with this as well as everything else is very hard.'



Upturned wreaths and flowers litter Mr and Mrs Mitchell's grave at Kinlochmore.

to remove the flowers we would have gladly done that, but we were never given the chance and that's what's sad about it.

'I have not even had my email acknowledged, which has had a further negative impact on the family. They are asking me every day if I have heard anything, but I haven't - we have just been left hanging.'

'I was speaking on behalf of my whole family, who are very upset by this. There's been no sensitivity shown whatsoever.' She added: 'The biggest insult was putting the wreaths back upside down. While I appreciate that could have been a mistake, it was really insulting to the family.'

'I have not been able to tend the grave because you just keep sinking into the ground. I appreciate they had to do emergency procedures, but wreaths for my mum were damaged, despite us asking the council if they had a problem with the grave could they please get in touch.'

'If there is a problem, why has nobody told us about it? Surely if the ground is unsafe they should be informing people about that. I am not trying to pin the blame on anybody - it's just the lack of respect and dignity shown.'

A Highland Council spokesperson told *The Oban Times*: 'There could be an underwater spring in the vicinity of the grave, which is needing to be investigated.'

'The workmen were working in atrocious conditions and unfortunately had damaged some of the wreaths and cards, which they can only apologise for. Mr Leary will contact Ms Hartley to discuss this as soon as possible.'

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Police files

THE TYRES of a car parked in Carn Dearg, Claggan, were damaged sometime between 10pm on Friday December 16 and 11am on Saturday December 17.

A WINDOW of a house at Nevis Bank Apartments, Belford Road, Fort William, was broken sometime between 5pm and 10pm on Tuesday December 13.

Anyone with knowledge of these incidents is asked to contact Fort William Police Station on 01397 702361 or the confidential line on 01397 702000. Members of the public may also report any crime, offence or anything suspicious by phoning Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Banned driver caught behind wheel on A82

A BANNED driver has admitted being behind the wheel of a car on a road near Spean Bridge.

Christopher MacKay, of 5 County Cottages, Lochend, Inverness, pled guilty to driving on the A82 between Spean Bridge and Stronaba while disqualified on May 14. The 25-year-old also admitted failing to give two breath specimens at Fort William Police Station later the same day.

MacKay had previously been banned for drink driving, Fort William Sheriff Court heard. Sentencing was deferred until January 18 for reports.

Caol man ordered to behave after kicking victim on head

A CAOL man has been ordered to be of good behaviour for six months after admitting kicking a man on the head during a drunken fracas.

Iain MacKay, of 15 Clunes Avenue, pled guilty to assaulting Thomas Bell at a taxi rank on Fort William High Street by striking him on the head and repeatedly kicking him on the head in the early hours of May 8.

Procurator Fiscal Alison Wyllie told Fort William Sheriff Court Mr Bell approached Mackay and his wife with his belt 'wrapped round his hand' after a verbal altercation. Mr Bell was punched in the face by another man and fell to the ground. MacKay, aged 33, went over to Mr Bell and struck him on the face as he tried to get up before kicking him a number of times on the face.

Deferring sentencing MacKay until June 19, Sheriff Richard MacFarlane said there had been an 'element of provocation'. He said: 'Any assault that involves kicking on the head, especially the face, is a significant matter.'



The Camaghael sheep at Lochaber High: 'meh-be' not good enough? 10_151diary02

Sheep fail to make the grade at Lochaber High

LOCHABER High School welcomed four new Christmas entrants on Friday - a group of Blackface sheep from a nearby Camaghael croft.

The quartet wandered in a full two hours late for classes and

were immediately expelled for their indiscipline by irate head teacher Jim Sutherland.

It is unknown what subjects the visitors - three believed to be third years, the other a first year - had hoped to study, but

The Oban Times has it on good authority that home economics was not among them.

It is understood teaching staff granted an exemption from cookery lessons, as the stress of having to prepare lambrogan josh

was judged potentially injurious to their health. Languages, too, were off the menu as the fleecy four appeared incapable of comprehending anything save whistles and shouts. However, their sporting ability was not in

question judging by the speed at which they ran out the school gates. Mr Sutherland told The Oban Times: 'We welcome pupils of all abilities and backgrounds, but these four just weren't up to the mark.'

Timber industry support welcomed

MORE than 30 MSPs from all political parties have signed up to a Scottish Parliament Motion supporting current and future investment in the Scottish timber industry.

The motion, by MSP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch Dave Thompson, recognises the commitment by BSW Timber in investing £50 million over five years in its mill at Corpach, Fort William. The important role of the sawmill industry in the Scottish economy, the need to sustain investment through appropriate productive woodland expansion and the 'critical role' of timber products in building low-cost and low-carbon homes are also highlighted.

Hamish Macleod, BSW Timber's head of public affairs, said: 'The motion was supported by more than a third of all the MSPs who were eligible to put their name to it, which shows the strength of cross-party political support that the industry enjoys in Scotland. While the size and

scope of the forest products industry is vast and has allowed UK manufacturing to grow, current uncertainty in wood supply is damaging to industry confidence and downstream customers. This is why we urgently need the political will to continue to invest in woodland expansion across Scotland.

'BSW's investment has been built on the basis of sustainable and long-term supply, which needs to continue.

'Of key concern to us is how the many stakeholders involved in the industry - including the Forestry Commission for Scotland - can continue to provide a consistent, reliable supply of timber at market price and how its future financial sustainability can be secured.' Welcoming the cross-party support, Mr Thompson said: 'This shows the importance MSPs of all parties place on the health of such an important source of environmentally-sustainable employment.'



Festive cheer for 100 at Caol lunch club

Nearly 100 members of Caol Community Centre's (CCC) lunch club celebrated the festive season at a Christmas party last week. After enjoying Christmas lunch, the music was turned on and presents were handed out. Local councillors Eddie Hunter and Bill Clark also attended to join in the fun. Lochaber Action on Disability (LAD) has taken over running the lunch club until the public takeover of CCC in April, and the Caol-based charity provided the food and the transport for the day. LAD manager Laura Cheetham told The Oban Times: 'We wanted to put something on to let people know we're still here. It's marvellous that we have been made so welcome by everyone with connections to the lunch club. I would like to say a huge thank you to Fay, Linda Campbell, her mum and the band for all their hard work at the Christmas Party for the entertainment and hospitality and to everyone who came to lend a hand. A massive thank you to Joan the cook - without her we couldn't have done it.'

Call to unite on seabed control

Bid to keep seabed leases and revenue under local management

HIGHLAND Council leader Michael Foxley is seeking to forge a united political front to win more control of the seabed from the Crown Estate for island and coastal communities.

By STEPHEN NORRIS snorris@obantimes.co.uk

In a letter to all Highlands and Islands MSPs and MPs this week, Councillor Foxley invites them to back a council demand that lucrative seabed leases and revenues should be managed as locally as possible.

The move follows last week's joint submission from all six Highlands and Islands local authorities to the Scottish Affairs committee investigating the Crown Estate's hitherto exclusive role.

The quango manages properties, mineral and salmon fishing rights in Scotland and controls half the country's foreshore and almost all its seabed, sending revenues to the UK Treasury.

But now Orkney, Shetland, Western Isles, Argyll and Bute, Highland and Moray councils want coastal communities, not just Crown Estate Commissioners, to rule on future investments - and be the main beneficiaries from developments. The councils maintain the absence of local control 'has long been a source of frustration' - a feeling likely to escalate as money-spinning energy projects come on stream.

The Crown Estate already collects lease revenues from salmon and shellfish farms, harbour dues and foreshore and mooring activities. It re-invests some cash locally. In their submission, the six local authorities propose grading developments as 'national interest', 'regional coastal partnership' or 'area coastal partnership' according to their size and impact.

Under the plan, approximately 20 per cent of all Crown Estate revenues would be retained

at either UK or Scottish Government level - the SNP Scottish Government wants all control over the Crown Estate to be handed over to Scotland - with the remaining 80 per cent split between a Regional Challenge Fund and a local Area Coastal Partnership Fund.

Councillor Foxley told The Oban Times: 'I am writing to all Highlands and Islands MSPs and MPs asking them to support our joint position. I am asking the Scottish Government to support our position and the UK Government to action it.'

'I am delighted that we are able to present a united front on this crucially important issue. For too long we have suffered a loss of significant revenue from a growing marine sector, with no opportunities to manage our own coastline.'

'This has been depriving these communities of making best use of their own resources, thereby compromising the ability of these communities to regenerate themselves.'

Councillor Foxley also highlighted that communities such as Eigg, Gigha and South Uist, who own their land, should be major players in Area Coastal Partnerships, while Community Land Scotland would be a key stakeholder.

Public harbour trusts such as Mallaig Harbour Authority would likewise have a pivotal role, he said.

Comhairle Leader Angus Campbell said: 'We have put forward a positive proposal, innovative and beneficial. We are hopeful the Scottish Affairs Committee are in agreement with us and will work with us to make the case to Treasury and UK Ministers.' See the full proposal at www.obantimes.co.uk.



On song at Christmas concert

Macdiarmid Primary School pupils performed traditional Skye music and song during their Christmas Concert. The concert involved the whole school with the children singing - in English and Gaelic - Highland Dancing and playing instruments, including pipes, chanters, guitar, fiddle and tin whistles. Youngsters from P3 and P4 are pictured during their performance.

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Prudent planning pays dividends

HIGHLAND Council will make no further cuts before it sets a budget for 2012/13 on February 9, finance chiefs have confirmed.

Council budget leader Councillor David Alston told the full council meeting last Thursday that thanks to £20.4 million of savings identified earlier in 2011 and prudent planning involving consultation with the public, the budget was balanced for the new financial year. The council will spend £600 million on services and have £75 million available for building projects, such as school projects, roads, flood prevention and caring for older people.

Councillor Alston said: 'We have made the difficult decisions well in advance so when we meet in February to confirm the budget we will have no further cuts to find. This demonstrates the value of three-year budgeting and asking the public for their views on proposed savings. I am also pleased that we will be able to maintain our capital programme at its current level. This is good news for local contractors and the general economy of the Highlands.'

However, looking ahead to 2013/14 and 2014/15, Councillor Alston said the picture was 'not so bright' and envisaged the council having to find £27 million in both years to cover pay inflation, price inflation and budget pressures. A new council would be elected early in May next year and it would be for them to identify future savings.

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DRIMNIN

A MORVERN village is breaking with convention and holding its Christmas party in January. The gathering will be held at Drimnin Village Hall on Friday January 6 – the 12th day of Christmas. It is traditionally regarded as bad luck to have Christmas decorations still hanging after the 6th.

PORTREE

PORTREE High School is thanking everyone who came along to the Christmas Fayre on Saturday December 10. The day was organised by the school's pupil council which by all accounts did a fantastic job. Clerical assistant Irene MacAskill said: 'The weather was on our side and we had a brilliant turnout. It was great to see the support from the community - the hall was packed out - and everyone really got into the Christmas spirit.' 'A special thank you has to go to all the stallholders who came along; we hope they enjoyed the day as much as we did. The total raised so far is £705 with more to come in.' She added: 'Plans are already under way for next year's Summer Fayre which we hope will be even bigger and better.'

ISLAY

ISLAY has been a very wind blown place recently, with severe gales reaching the island on December 8. The island just had time to collectively recover its breath and its roof slates, before the next stormy blast blew in last Tuesday for a second helping of the same. During both storms, the westerly winds reached 70 miles per hour in exposed western areas of the Rhinns. While efforts were made to hold events and meetings as planned, it was inevitable that there were some cancellations and reschedulings, including Port Ellen Primary School's annual pantomime. It was reported that solar panels had been wrenched off of a house roof and there were various other instances of minor damage to property. The old saying 'batten down the hatches' doesn't go amiss in an Islay winter when items left outdoors without being fastened down are likely to be blown away.

DAVID Ferrier of Islay Roads Department announced the upcoming Streetscene Services Review. At a meeting of Islay Community Council, Mr Ferrier drew attention to Argyll and Bute Council's proposal to amalgamate the amenity and roads departments, with Islay's road maintenance services being administered from Lochgilphead. He forecast that this proposed 'remote' arrangement might lead to a considerable drop in service levels. The proposal may be viewed on the Argyll and Bute website. JOINING Scottish Natural Heritage in lodging formal objections to Scottish and Southern Energy Renewables' planning proposal for the temporary erection of a 50-metre high meteorological mast for a period of two years on land southwest of Ballinaby Farm, the RSPB has asked that SSE enter into discussions with them over the planning application. The RSPB says it is

Youngsters delight audiences with Nativity plays and Christmas shows



Kilchuimen Primary School pupils entertained staff, families and friends last Wednesday when they staged two special Christmas shows. Primary 4-7 pupils treated the audience to their own production of *Aladdin*, while P1-3 children, pictured above, staged a traditional nativity play, *Shine Star Shine*. Class teacher Karen Starr said: 'All the children have worked so hard to polish their performances over the last few weeks.'



It was standing room only in Upper Achintore Primary School hall when the pupils performed their annual Christmas show. The hall was packed with parents watching youngsters from all age groups performing 'The Egyptian Nativity', which told the story of what happened to Mary and Joseph, played by Rhuairidh Cant and Rhianna Swift, after Jesus was born and they left Bethlehem. 20_151upper01



A packed audience was entertained last Wednesday evening as Kilchrenan Primary School pupils staged their Christmas Nativity Play. Making guest appearances were Philip and Lizzie Price and school members of staff.



The Three Kings, aka Sofia Alvarez, Stuart Petrie and Kian Ferreira, were among the stars of Lochside RC Primary School's Nativity play 'Christmas Presence' last Wednesday. The audience of staff, families and friends also enjoyed dancing and singing by the children and a finale of community carol singing. Head teacher Violet Smith said: 'Everybody was delighted at how the children performed. They really rose to the occasion on the day.' 20_151loch01

BALLACHULISH



Ballachulish craft sale proceeds help the poor

Ballachulish Primary School pupils raised more than £110 with a craft sale – and used the money to buy essential goods for people living in poverty. The youngsters stayed behind after class for three weeks to make the craft items, which were then sold to parents and teachers. They used the money earned to donate goods through the Oxfam website. Head teacher Sam Clark said: 'They managed to purchase a goat, safe water for 10 people, long life learning, fix a well and feed two families. A great return for all their efforts.'

MORVERN

MORVERN Community Council has held its first meeting since the recent elections and named Theres Bolton as the new chairperson. The group will meet again in the New Year.

'disappointing that this approach was not followed from the outset'.

The application is for a mast to support instruments for measuring wind speeds, with regard to the SSE's proposed offshore wind farm which they wish to site to the west of Islay.

The area chosen for placement of SSE's mast is within the Rhinns of Islay Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), designated for a variety of habitats including sand dunes and for internationally important bird populations.

The RSPB notes that the area regularly experiences a high volume of bird movements by resident, breeding, wintering and passage species, including those whose populations are designated features of the Special Protection Area and SSSI.

The organisation says: 'We would strongly advise against positioning a met mast in this location, even as a temporary structure.'

The area also contains important archaeological features, such as standing stones and Norse burial sites. As mentioned in a previous

report to *The Oban Times*, SSE seems loath to engage with the local Islay community and organisations.

The company's lack of openness about the progress and current state of its offshore windfarm proposal is leaving local communities concerned and uneasy.

Islay Energy Trust has recently contacted SSE over the project, and learned that SSE Renewables, despite having made a current formal planning application, is considering alternative sites for a met mast. Also, SSER has agreed to come to Islay in the New Year to explain and discuss where it is with the project, which is expected to include a meeting with Islay Community Council.

Nollaig Chrìdheil dhuibh uile; Happy Christmas to you all. SC

PORT ELLEN

GP SERVICES in Port Ellen look set to be secured after Dr Angus MacTaggart signalled his intention to take over the General Medical Services contract at the surgery. The contract will be

vacated by Dr Jean Knowles as of February 1 2012 when she retires and it is hoped Dr MacTaggart will take over on that date.

There will initially be some use of locum cover - hopefully from amongst the pool of GPs patients have already met - and Dr Matt Jackson will continue to work part-time in the practice whilst Dr MacTaggart seeks to recruit.

Dr Jean Knowles is not leaving the island and hopefully there will be a seamless transition of service.

A spokesman for NHS Highland confirmed it was for the practice and partners to decide on the GMS contract.

LISMORE

THE LOSS of power on Thursday December 8 for up to five days was the worst result of the first serious storm of the winter.

For those with small children, the elderly or the medically vulnerable, the lack of power was compounded by a loss of water in cases where it is pumped into the house and, for everyone, concern about

the contents of freezers. In the struggle to keep warm, fed and watered it was not helpful to hear only sporadic recordings on the Scottish Hydro emergency number which offered little information.

However, after it was suggested by a young pregnant mother with three small children, the Hydro offered alternative accommodation on the mainland. While not everyone was keen or even able to leave hearth, home and animals for the warmth of a mainland hotel, some took advantage of the ferry from Achmacroich on Saturday evening.

Unfortunately only those with non electric phones were able to be contacted and then only an hour before the ferry was due to leave. It was not until Sunday, by which time many islanders were feeling very low priority, that a squad of Hydro vans arrived to inspect the various transformers while a helicopter looked for damaged lines and poles. Beside this, other storm damage such as lost tiles, no mobile signals, trees down, roofs ripped off, a caravan wrapped round a pole, and demolished green houses,

seemed relatively insignificant. But only relatively.

The shop was very busy first thing on Friday with candles and batteries selling well and David Wilson did a great job under very trying conditions in a busy, dark shop. For the school and the nearby school house the loss was compounded when they also lost their water which meant the children ended up at one point having lessons at the museum. While a few houses at the north end had their power restored on Saturday 10 the majority had to wait until mid morning on Monday December 12.

The island has also suffered two lightning strikes recently on December 4 and 13, both of which have meant a loss of power and for some unlucky people days without phones and broadband.

Advertisement

Suppose it is true after all?



Two Friends were talking on religious topics. They discussed the question of punishment for sin after they died. They settled to their own satisfaction that there would be none. They decided that Hell was a myth. They argued that God was a God of love and could not consign His creatures

to everlasting punishment.

The conversation stopped when a Christian, who had been a silent listener to the discussion said, "Suppose it is true after all?"

The words seemed to fall on the other two with crushing force. The power of God seemed to be behind those words. Solemn silence reigned for many minutes. God had spoken.

Suppose it is true after all that God must punish sin? How would you stand before him? What could you say to him? How would you measure up before the Judge? "Because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31)

Suppose it is true after all that hell is a reality? A sceptic sneeringly asked, "Where is hell?" The ready and true answer came: "At the end of a

Christ-rejecting life' What lies at the end of the life that you are now leading? The scriptures say, 'It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement' (Hebrews 9:27).

Suppose it is true after all that the Lord Jesus is the only Saviour and His death the only means by which you can be fitted for God's presence? What if you neglect him? "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3).

Suppose it is true after all that the much -despised 'blood of Jesus' is the only thing that can cleanse you from your sins? Has it cleansed you before God, or are you still in your sins going on rapidly to the eternity of the lost? "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7)

Suppose it is true after all, as Scripture states, that salvation is not of works? "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). What then is all the church-going, Sunday school teaching, sick-visiting and the like worth if you rely on any of these as good works to save or to help to save you? Worse than useless. A fatal mistake, if persisted in. In God's sight "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6)

Suppose it is true after all? If it is true, how terrible will be your doom if you 'die in your sins' (John 8:24). Come now to Christ and be saved. "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15).

It is true. Act on it.

...every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Romans 14v12

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TAYNUILT

THE REFURBISHMENT of the Taynuilt War Memorial continues, as contractors prepare to renew the lettering of the WWI casualties.

Driven by Brigadier John MacFarlane, the project has already seen a new WW2 plaque put in place for Remembrance Day 2004.

However, it took John seven years to find a monumental mason willing to complete the work.

John said: 'I collected money by private subscription from local firms and individuals, by sale of a booklet I wrote giving a detailed biography of each soldier on the WWI Taynuilt War Memorial and by a public WWI concert in the village hall. 'This initial fundraising was in order to put the names of the WWI casualties from the village on to the present memorial.'

'This was at the request of Donald 'Gorm' MacGregor and other senior citizens who wished to see the dead of their generation commemorated.'

Stokes of Dunoon has now answered John's plea and has installed a granite 'picture frame' around the plaque, which was cast and installed gratis by local blacksmith Robert MacKenzie.

John said there might be money left to put more gravel around the base of the memorial and get the soldier statue power cleaned.



Taynuilt's young sewing club members with their customised cushion covers. 16_1505ew01

New Taynuilt sewing club a success

A GROUP of primary school girls in Taynuilt are proving that sewing and stitching is not just for the oldies, after joining a new after-school club.

The girls, aged 10 and 11, give up their modern-day electronic distractions for an hour a week to learn about materials, patterns and stitching.

And last week they finished their first project - a customised cushion cover - in time for Christmas.

Club leader, Russian Natalia Lewis, is

also learning from the young girls, who are helping her with her English.

Natalia, who moved to Taynuilt two years ago with her family, said: 'I started sewing at 10 years old because buying clothes in Moscow was so expensive. It was quite popular to do that in Russia, whereas in the UK it is seen as more of a hobby.'

'But nowadays most children don't learn these skills - my son is 21 and he still can't sew a button onto a shirt - so I thought I would start a club here.'

'It is amazing what the girls have done in such a short time and they have been teaching me as well. I didn't even know the word 'thread' before the girls told me.'

Taynuilt Primary School head teacher Caroline Boyle said: 'Natalia approached me to ask if she could start a sewing club and a few of the girls seemed really keen. They really enjoy it and have made beautiful, colourful cushions. One of the girls said her cushion has already been occupied by her cat!'

PORTAVADIE

A FUNDRAISING auction at Portavadie Marina has raised thousands of pounds for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI).

There was Highland dancing and 20 lots on offer at the event, which took in £3,074 for the charity.

Among the lots up for grabs were a free boat listing with Boatshed Scotland, to a three-night stay in one of Portavadie's five-star luxury apartments. Another sought after prize was an oil painting by resident artist Anne Hewitt.

Portavadie Marina's nearest lifeboat station is Tighnabruich and the marina's general manager Iain Jurgensen said that without everyone's generosity, the RNLI would not be capable of providing the peace of mind for sailors to enjoy the water safely.

He drew attention to the preventative sea safety checks that are held throughout the year at Portavadie and stressed the need for prevention being better than cure.

This was echoed by Campbell McFall, one of the marina's berth holders and a supporter of the auction.

He emphasised the effort made by the RNLI in ensuring the safety of people on the sea and lochs on the west coast.

Portavadie Marina has taken on the RNLI as its adopted charity.

LOCHEARNHEAD

FLY TIPPERS have struck near Lochearnhead, with two armchairs dumped next to the village hall this month.

Elsewhere, 12 car tyres were dumped at the entrance to a forest track near Loch Earn Sailing Club.

Police are appealing for witnesses.

COLONSAY

COLONSAY man Donald 'Pedie' MacNeill of Drumclach and his daughter Jen have recently returned from Milan, having completed a four-concert tour with Italian band *Lowlands*.

Earlier in the year, the Scottish and Italian musicians had together released the album 'Fathers and Sons' to widespread critical acclaim.

Pedie now has an agent in Italy, who promotes his and Jen's albums. Although there are no immediate plans for further Scottish/Italian collaboration, he would like to bring *Lowlands* over to the island for a future Ceol Colbhasa, the island's annual music festival.

Ed Abbiati, who formed *Lowlands*, is the nephew of Dinah and John Gray, who lived on the Isle of Oransay when Pedie and his family were living at Garvard, in the southwest of Colonsay. During a visit to Oransay, Ed came over to the



Donald 'Pedie' MacNeill of Drumclach and his daughter Jen.

farm to help with sheep-shearing and the pair soon discovered they shared a passion for music. Two decades later Ed, having formed the band *Lowlands* in Italy, contacted Pedie, which led to him and Jen travelling to Pavia, Italy, to record the album.

They recorded the album at the Wee Pink Studio near the village and in October, they returned to play the concerts at venues in and around Pavia. The album is very popular both with islanders and visitors to Colonsay. It has also been

very well received by the music press. The music magazine 'R2' said: 'There are many highlights on this stunning album...A masterpiece of collaboration, this deserves to be in many end-of-year lists', before awarding it five stars.

The title track, 'Fathers and Sons', concerns the tragic sinking of the *Arandora Star* in 1940.

A German submarine launched a single torpedo at the ship, causing 800 casualties, some of whose bodies were washed up on the shores of Colonsay.

Many of the casualties were Italians who had worked in top hotels in London but, because of their heritage, had become classified as 'enemy aliens' in the UK.

The people of Colonsay have mounted a commemorative plaque near Pigs' Paradise.

Pedie explained there was a good-going live folk music scene in Italy: 'I was surprised to learn that the local bands all sing in English, which is also the language of most Italian popular music.'

Not content with conquering Europe, Pedie would now love to tour Canada: 'I'm told that there are a huge number of Canadians of Colonsay descent. It would be wonderful to go to Canada and meet them and perform for them.'

'Fathers and Sons' is Pedie's fourth album, following 'Half Hebridean', 'Winter Sun' and 'Family Life'. The last-mentioned also features Jen.

You can find out more about his and Jen's music by visiting www.donaldmacneill.co.uk.

GLENCOE

GLENCOE and Glen Etive Community Council (GCECC) was due to hold its first meeting to elect its new chairman on Tuesday evening.

GCECC was reconvened following an extended deadline for nominees from Highland Council.

The local representatives are David Smith; Ian McTaggart; Gwen McTaggart; Jonny Henshall and Alister MacDonald Sutherland.

RAASAY

A POSTAL vote will be held in Raasay to decide the make up of its new community council.

The island did not attract enough potential councillors at the original cut off point, but following Highland Council's extended deadline there is now more nominees than the maximum membership allowed. The election will be held in the New Year.

Sleat and Dunvegan also had too many candidates, but no elections will be required after a number withdrew their applications.

KILLIN

KILLIN'S Hogmanay fireworks display will take place at Dochart Bridge from 11.45pm.

BARRA

BARRA Football Club's new fundraising lottery draw is up and running, with a jackpot of £100 up for grabs every week.

Tickets can be bought at The Castlebar Bar, Craigard Hotel, Tartan Table, Airport Café and the Top Shop.

Each ticket costs £10, with players picking three numbers from one to 20.

The first draw will be made on Boxing Day, then every subsequent Sunday. Players must be over 16.

TIREE

TIREE Music Festival will give one lucky fan a ticket to next year's event as a Christmas present.

To stand a chance of winning, become a follower of the event on Twitter @tireemusicfest.

FORT AUGUSTUS

A PROJECT to garner local people's memories, records and stories of the Great Glen and Caledonian Canal dug up further nuggets at an open day in Fort Augustus Memorial Hall last Tuesday.

Canal officer Stephen Wiseman told *The Oban Times* a Mrs Ferguson brought in transcripts of radio interviews from the early 1900s for the Waterways Trust's 'Slice of History' project.

Mr Wiseman said: 'The interviews were all about the canal and local community life in and around the Great Glen and the Fort Augustus area.'

All material collected so far - audio, visual and scans - can be seen at www.thecaledoniancanal.org.uk.

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Down Your Way

This week - Sleat

CLAN Donald Skye at Armadale is holding a Community Christmas Night tomorrow (Friday) at the Stables Restaurant Visitor Centre at 8pm. Showpiece of the evening will be a concert featuring some of Skye's exceptional young musical talent *The Outsiders* and *The Untitled*. Admission is £2.



SLEAT Community Trust (SCT), the proud new owners of the 1,000-acre Tormore Community Forest south of Ardsvar, has received its first cheque for timber extracted from the woodland.

Cutting began in mid-September and lorries began hauling logs out shortly after. Felling and haulage operations have continued ever since as the trust embarks on ambitious plans to sustainably develop the forest as an economic, natural and recreational resource.

SCT community forester Chris Marsh told *The Oban Times*: 'We have just been paid for October, our first full month of production - which is good news. The haulage will probably continue into the end of February or March.'

'The only snag so far has been the recent windy weather. There's a lot of windblow of the vulnerable stands. The harvesting slowed down because we have had to keep clearing fallen trees from neighbour's fences or the forest road. If the wind had not blown we would be further ahead.'



CROFT land in 'downtown' Camusscross - Cruard to be precise - was turned over to a communal plot and individual plots this year for local people to grow their own herbs and vegetables.

The Sleat-based Grow to Eat project hopes to continue the scheme again in 2012, with the permission of the crofter who kindly gave over the land this year.

Grow to Eat project co-ordinator manager Claire Nicolson told *The Oban Times*: 'It is hoped the croft land will continue to be available in 2012. We would hope to incorporate fruit growing as well as the existing vegetable plots. We would encourage new members to come along.' Claire can be contacted on 01471 833239.

SLEAT home gardening initiative Grow to Eat staged a successful breadmaking workshop recently with celebrated organic baker Andrew Whitley.

Twelve lucky participants took part - and went home with not one but three loaves made by their own hands.

The event ended with afternoon tea - the freshly baked loaves being piped into the room by Fergus Walker. Fergus also brought along his people-powered mill - to demonstrate how a bicycle with a pedal-powered mill at the back turns grain into flour. Organisers hope to make a short film of the bakery event.

A SURVEY asking local residents for their views on how Sleat Community Trust (SCT) has performed since it was set up in 2004 will go out to households early in the New Year.

Consultant Amanda Bryan of Aigas Associates has been hired to carry out the exercise.

SCT project officer Angus Robertson told *The Oban Times*: 'It's a seven-year review of all the trust has done since its inception which will be going out to the community. It has been a great 2011, what with the purchase of Tormore Forest and winning the Queen's Award.'

DOWN YOUR WAY will be back in the New Year.

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The Oban Times

& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

Festive season gives us a real focus

IT WOULD be easy to lack 'Christmas spirit' this festive season. We've got less money to spend, although everyone's working harder, and the nation is in a period of austerity as public services are cut, although we are paying just as much for them.

But looking past financial and material concerns and the various tasks that are not being done for us, there is something to lift the spirits at this time of year by looking at what we are doing for each other.

The unenviable situation Michelle Donn and her two children find themselves in, following the death of her partner, brings sharply into focus what a real struggle is.

Petty worries of the people in Oban and Lorn were put to one side as they came together to support this family, which has a real and basic need for help.

In turn, the response from the public gave everyone a lift, a reassurance that despite everything else, Christmas is still a time to think of others.

The selflessness of 13 year old Louise MacDonald would put many adults to shame this Christmas. The big-hearted wee girl has vowed to shave her head to raise money for three charities, just months after it has grown back following chemotherapy.

Stories such as hers show the lengths to which people will go to help others, but why does it take the Christmas holidays for many of us to alter that mindset?

The aptly named Oban 365 will be hosting a family Hogmanay event this year but will continue with its fundraising beyond December 31.

Perhaps, come the New Year, more people will share Oban 365's philosophy and be mindful of others every day of 2012, particularly those who find themselves in unfortunate circumstances.



Livingstone's Garage, Oban, 1960s

Reader Elspeth Norris submitted this week's flashback photograph which show the staff at Livingstone's Garage, Oban, sometime in the 1960s. The garage was situated where the new flats have been built next to the Lorne Bar in Stevenson Street. The garage proprietors Jimmy and Johnnie Livingstone are on the right of the photo. We invite readers to send in flashback photographs. Please send prints to *The Oban Times*, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll, PA34 4HB, or email editor@obantimes.co.uk. Prints or emails must be accompanied by a caption, name, address and telephone number. Anyone wishing their prints returned must supply a stamped addressed envelope.

GLASGOW LETTER

World Pipe Band Championships

THE ROYAL Scottish Pipe Band Association has recently announced that the World Pipe Band Championships will be staged in Glasgow up until 2015.

This is great news for the city and, indeed, Scotland since, with more than 30,000 attending last year, it is estimated that more than £10m was generated for the economy.

Over the years a strong partnership has been built with Glasgow City Council and as a result both the bands and the spectators enjoy coming to the city.

Glasgow provides a warm welcome to the visitors who are, of course, able to enjoy the whole of the week prior to the 'Worlds' when Piping Live takes place.

Na mo Chuid Aodaich

FOLLOWING on from success in different parts of the country, and the winning of prestigious awards at the Scottish Events Awards 2011, the Community Arts Project 'Na mo Chuid Aodaich' was again successful when held recently in Glasgow.

Organised with collaboration between Proiseact Nan Eilean, Iomairt Ghaidhlig Glaschu and An Lochan, fashions by decade, from the 1940s to the present day, were modelled having been donated for the evening by many of those involved in the Gaelic scene, within the city and beyond.

Tony Kearney and Gill MacLeod, a student at

Glasgow University, ensured that the audience was well entertained as they described the changes of fashion experienced by two Glasgow 'ladies' over the years.

Red Hot Chili Pipers

HAVING toured worldwide during the past year the Red Hot Chili Pipers are delighted to be home for the festive season.

On Friday December 23 they will be playing in the O2 ABC on Sauchiehall Street, with doors open at 7pm, and they will be joined on the bill by Jill Jackson.

Jill, from Paisley, has gained much acclaim as a guitarist/song writer and has toured with Runrig and the Chilli Pipers. On Hogmanay the Chilli Pipers will be performing as part of the celebrations at Stirling Castle from 8.30pm.

Diary dates

Thursday December 22 and Friday 23: Phil Cunningham's Christmas Songbook, Queen's Hall, Edinburgh, 8pm.
Friday December 23: Red Hot Chili Pipers, O2 ABC - see above.

Wednesday December 28: Skerryvore, Tolbooth, Stirling, 8pm

Pub scene

ORGANISED music this weekend has, at the time of publication, been restricted to Friday evening with Eriskay Lilt playing in the Park Bar and Crooked Reel in the Islay Inn.

Nollaig Chrìdeil to all readers of this column.

I hope you have an enjoyable time over the Christmas weekend.

Neil Murray. Telephone 0141 954 8105. Email: neilmurray@yahoo.co.uk.

PRESS POLICY

WE AT The Oban Times do our utmost to make sure that all our reports are fair, accurate and balanced, but we accept that, on occasion, mistakes can occur in the hectic process of producing the biggest local newspaper in the West Highlands.

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

The Oban Times adheres to the Press Complaints' Commission's Code of Conduct. The views expressed in The Oban Times are not necessarily those of this newspaper.

Dangerous Dalmally junction

Sir, Will our authorities never learn? I was outraged to read your report in last week's *Oban Times* about TranServ Scotland's response to the request from local people to do something about the dangerous Dalmally junction where near misses have apparently been witnessed.

TranServ's response included ludicrous words like 'having no accident statistics' and 'we don't intervene if there are no recorded road accidents'.

Surely a near miss is just as important as an actual accident in indicating danger? And what do they mean by intervention?

As TranServ has responsibility for our roads, shouldn't safety be at the very top of their minds without having to be told. And why do they dismiss local concerns? Do they really think people living in the Dalmally area have nothing else to do and that they are raising their concerns just for the hell of it?

And this matter affects a huge number of motorists, not just locals.

Perhaps Transerv Scotland will tell us from their handbook how many accidents and how many fatalities are needed before they will recognise a danger.

In the 1960s and 1970s many

roads in Argyll had disgraceful wooden barriers alongside them which everyone, except the authorities, knew to be dangerous. They were responsible for killing up to 50 people travelling in cars even after very minor accidents. Eventually, after a local campaign which lasted for well over ten years, these lethal barriers were removed.

So what happened next? They were re-introduced about 20 years later and it needed another local campaign before they were again removed.

These local campaigns were won partly because of support and publicity from our newspapers. Please keep the Dalmally road campaign going for as long as necessary.

Graeme Pagan, Neaveaton, Oban.

Sewage works a disgrace

Sir, The sewage works at Seil have not been tidied up but, in fact, vacated by the latest sub-contractors, brought in for six weeks, but actually having been on site for six months.

Work involved several large six tonne machines riddling mountains of earth and stones from 8am to 7pm. It has been an industrial working site, not just a sewage treatment works with all the noise that that entails.

Why, after three-and-a-half years, is the system still not

working? In a letter to Seil Community Council in August 2009, we stated concerns related to the intrusive nature of the work and its location on the shore side of the road. With no housing close by to north or south, this could not be considered a small scale development like, for example, a pump station kiosk.

Planning guidelines clearly state: 'All development should protect, restore and where possible enhance the established and local distinctiveness of the landscape'. After three-and-a-half years Seil Waste Treatment Works still does not fulfill these criteria!

It has two large open sewage tanks that can be viewed from by tourists on the public road. The Scottish Water planning application stated these tanks would be covered to prevent noise and odour. In a letter from the general manager in 2011 he states it is now not its intention to cover tanks, contrary to the planning application.

Why bother with their plan when they change so much - lighting, scaffolding, obtrusive colours?

Scottish Water seem never to have taken into account that Seil is a magnet for tourists in the Oban area with its natural beauty and designated 'panoramic quality'. Indeed some tourists cannot believe it is more than a temporary aberration...if only!

Another site more suitable, off the public road, near to deep water, was offered to Scottish Water. Why was this not taken up?

Name and address supplied.

Rush for wind farm money getting out of hand

Sir, Council tax is frozen and so would we be shortly if we were

to rely more and more on wind farms that do not normally work in cold, calm weather conditions.

Why do proposers of these heavily subsidised 'farms' offer incentives to communities and, I believe, directly to councils?

Tempting when decisions are made to site them when Council Tax can buy less and less. I just wonder why they do it when no other developers, as far as I know, offer such 'bribes'.

If 'targets' created for Scotland and guess whose image are to be met by putting these highly inefficient power plants up, then poor old Santa will soon have nowhere to land his sleigh. He could, of course, land on a road or street in town which are not suffering this blight. Yes, if all proposed farms were to get the go-ahead they will literally act like barrage balloons.

Yes it's potentially getting that serious in rural areas unless we pause and think things over as this rush for wind farm money is getting out of hand.

GW Stewart, Seil Island.

War pensions

Sir, Did you know that you do not have to have seen war service to qualify for a war disablement pension or a claim under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme?

The Royal British Legion Scotland provides a free war pensions disablement advisory service. You are eligible to make a claim if you suffered an injury or medical condition resulting in a disablement that can be attributed to your former or existing military service.

For further advice call the Pensions Office, New Haig House, Logie Green Road, Edinburgh, EH7 4HR, 0131 557 2782, visit our website www.rblscotland.org or email wpao@rblscotland.org.



Beachd Ailein

Ailean Caimbeul

BIDH Sibh a' leughadh seo 's dòcha is ùpraid Nollaige a' fàs mur timcheall!

Theagamh gum bheil sibh cho uidheamaichte is a h-uile dad fo smachd agaibh, gach tiodhlac air a phasgadh gu brèagha 's gun agaibh a-nise ach gabhail gu socair chun an tìg an latha mòr.

Ma tha sibh cho fortanach 's gum bheil cothrom agaibh a bhith an cuideachd chloinne, gheibh sibh an t-lachd as motha gu lèir an othail aca san a' feitheamh ri Santa agus fios air dè, de na dh'iarraid, a thug e thuca.

Canar gu tric gur e àm gu sònraichte dhan chloinn a tha an seo agus gu ìre tha sin fìor, ach tha e cuideachd air fàs gu bhith na àm a tha air leth cudromach dha eaconamaidh na dùthcha agus tèarainteachd mòran mharsantan an urra ri cho falaidh 's a tha daoine gu bhith nan cuid ceannachd.

Le suidheachadh ionmhais an t-saghaill mar a tha e an ceartair, tha barrachd dòchais fìu 's na 'n àbhaist an crochadh air na ceannachair aig an àm seo agus a rèir choltais, chan eil daoine deònach neo 's dòcha air chomas uimhir a chosg am bliadhna.

Canar cuideachd le ceartas gum bheil saoghal coimearsalta air grèim a ghabhail air fèis cràbhach agus nach eil cus aithne na spèis ga thoirt dha bun-adhbhar na fèise sin. Agus tha e gu tur ceart a ràdh nach eil e gu diofar co-dhùìl na daoine gam meas fhèin nan Crìosdaidhean neo nam Muslamaich, neo gu dearbh nan luchd-leantainn air creideamh sam bith eile, faodar a bhith cinnteach gum bheil spèis agus cùram dhan co-chreatairean na phàirt bunaiteach de fheallsanachd a' chreideimh aca.

Gun mhothachadh sam bith air creideamh, tha an seòrsa dleasan sin air mac an duine bho thùs gu èis agus tha sin a' fàgail an aon impidh oirnn uile gach latha de ar beatha nas urrainn dhuinn a dhèanamh mar thaidhe dha càch a chèile.

'Cha bheadh an t-uallach e agus bhon is e mar a' tha an seanfhaclach ag ràdh, 'goirteas a chinn fhèin is dorra do gach neach', chan eil sinn 's dòcha a' dèanamh nas còir dhuinn.

Tha sanas aig luchd-dìon nan ainmhidhean nach eil 'cù dìreach airson na Nollaige', agus nach bu mhaith gum bitheadh uile a' cuimhneachadh gum bheil uallach oirnn spiorad carthannais a' ghleidheadh tron bhliadhna cuideachd.

'S dòcha mar sin, is a h-uile dad eile dèanta agad fhèin, gun smaointich thu air coibhneas beag air choreigin, nach cosg theagamh dad dhut, a bhiodh na chobhair mhòr dha cuideigin eile. Deagh Nollaig, agus na ith cus!

HEAVING a sigh of relief at completing the last frantic arrangements for Christmas, we would do well to remember that the spirit of charity and care which is so associated with this festival is actually a perpetual responsibility of mankind, irrespective of religion or creed.

So let's all celebrate Christmas by doing some kindness to make someone else happier. It need cost nothing! Happy Christmas!

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

Times Diary

STAFF at Atlantis Leisure, Oban, have gone all out for this year's Secret Santa present - producing a cheesy festive video for employee Donna Smith.

The YouTube clip sees employees mime their way through Wizzard's I Wish It Could Be Christmas Every Day to varying degrees of success.

One or two get a bit too enthusiastic, stretching their vocal chords - well, sing is a strong word - vocalise along with the lyrics.

While the singing may not be up to much, the video itself is bound to be an ideal Christmas treat for Donna, raising more than a few *Diary* chuckles in the process.

To see the video for yourself, search YouTube for Atlantis Christmas Song.

THE DIARY was delighted to see 'the return of the red socks' at the re-opening of the Creagan Inn last Sunday.

Illness had kept Fergie MacDonald and his accordion out of the public gaze for a year but he was on great form at the Creagan Inn ceilidh, as he declared: 'Tell everybody, Fergie's back!'

BOX PLAYER Gary Innes would have been on cloud nine after his band *Mànnan* collected two awards at the recent MG Alba Scots Trad Music Awards.

But the kilted Spean Bridge man literally came back down to earth with a bump after he tripped over a bouncer's leg in the Perth Concert Hall. The musician and shinty star, who ensures *The Oban Times* Diary that he was sober at the time, was sent sprawling to the ground with each hand occupied by the award and a dram. Never one to risk spilling either of those prized possessions, Gary's knee took the brunt of the fall.

It's a good job the shinty season is over.

GARY Innes is back on the road with Gaelic band *Mànnan* after recharging the batteries last month in Gran Canaria.

The holiday was perfect, we read, until he ripped a hole in his minkini on the last day.

Surely too much information, Gary! Asked by the OT if there were any other amusing anecdotes we could relate, Gary turned untypically coy, saying only: 'Nothing printable!'

A STRICKEN Wyvex Media employee was relieved to find he wasn't given a placebo to treat an ailment last week.

A message on the box of penicillin tablets prescribed reads 'Warning, contains penicillin.'

30 Years Ago

Those Were The Days

The Oban Times

Thursday, December 18, 1986

Islay pool petition goes to Strathclyde

A PETITION with 2,555 signatures in favour of a swimming pool for Islay was presented to William Harley, chairman of Strathclyde Region's Education Committee, in Glasgow last week.

The petition was delivered by two members of the Islay Swimming Pool Committee, Dr Janet Berry and Mr A Attwood, and was accompanied by a submission detailing the committee's case for a pool to be included in the extension to Islay High School. In the architect's brief for the extension a sports hall was included as being of greater educational value.

The submission states that islanders are sympathetic towards the problems facing local authorities but that the overwhelming enthusiasm for a pool is a reflection of the island's need of the amenity.

It is argued that the legitimacy of their demand was recognised in 1973 by the director of education of Argyll County Council, Dr Charles Stewart, who said the provision of a pool would be investigated when it was necessary to expand the local school.

The submission points out that the regional rate paid on Islay is the same as elsewhere in the region but because of the island's position inhab-

Glencoe hears from US counterparts

CONTACT has been made between two Glencoes - the original Scottish village and a town of that name in Alabama, USA.

A party of British journalists was in America recently and while there visited Glencoe City in Etowah County. The Mayor of that town gave them an illustrated brochure about Glencoe to take back to the Scottish village.

The book has been passed on to Glencoe Community Council which has asked Miss Fairweather of the North Lorn Museum to compile some interesting facts about Glencoe to send to the American namesake.

The American Glencoe is believed to have been founded originally by someone with Scottish connections and is a quarrying town. It has overtaken the original Glencoe in size, having a population of around 15,000.

Ian Cameron, of Ballachulish and Glencoe Community Council, said that now contact had been made with the American town, Glencoe village will keep it up. He feels that the contact could benefit tourism.

An American Glencoe is perhaps not very surprising as it is understood that there are now about 14 Glencoes throughout the world.

Lochgilphead loses fight for office

LOCHGILPHEAD is to lose its employment office and a plan to operate an unmanned service from Campbeltown instead has met with bitter opposition.

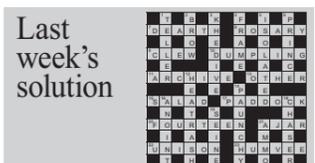
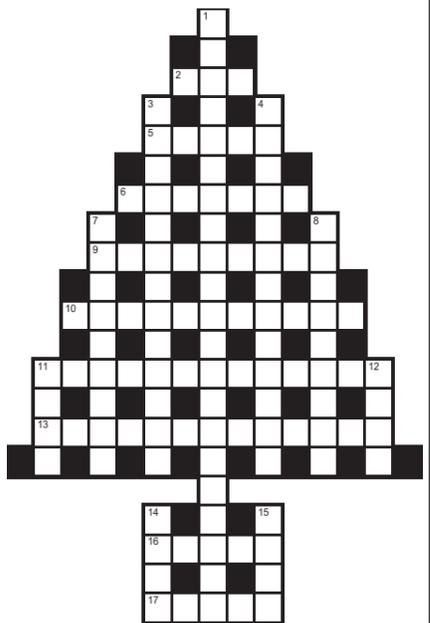
The shock disclosure was given to Argyll and Bute's policy committee last week by the district's chief executive Michael Gossip.

The close down will come early in March next year. According to the Manpower Services Commission, high operating costs and staff cuts are blamed. Mr Gossip reminded the committee that in February of this year, the council had agreed in principle that a room in the district council's area office at Manse Brae be made available as an employment office and that a report on the question of staffing the office on an agency basis was to be submitted to a future meeting.

The committee was told Argyll MP John MacKay had taken up the matter and would keep the situation under review.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD

- Across
- Mulled wine colour (3)
 - Group of 13 (5)
 - Pig in the way? (4,3)
 - Want to travel (5,4)
 - Goodwill (11)
 - It's all about the money! (13)
 - Not normal (13)
 - Celestial body (5)
 - Electric dart shooter (5)
- Down
- Carol (6,4,2,9)
 - Mary was in a stable for hers (13)
 - Not able to be perceived (13)
 - Feature (9)
 - Stretchy cotton (9)
 - Pal (4)
 - Midnight on Christmas eve gathering
 - You are one if you were born here (4)
 - What led the Wise men (4)



Higher Gaelic standard set for Mòd 2012

MÒD COMPETITORS going for next year's adult silver medal competitions will have to have better Gaelic than their predecessors in a bid to improve standards at the Gaelic event.

Royal National Mòd organisers An Comunn Gàidhealach have announced changes to the Gaelic Assessment Scheme.

Among these is a requirement for singers in the silver medal competition for learners to have a silver card, instead of a bronze card, and therefore a greater level of fluency. Under the new assessment scheme learners can now see sample conversations online to gauge the standard of conversation expected for each level.

Mòd director Janet MacDonal said: 'An Comunn Gàidhealach's main objective in organising the Royal National Mòd is the promotion and development of the Gaelic language.'

'With this new assessment scheme it is hoped that we will see competitors making further and continued progress in learning the language in order to gain the cards they need, to compete and take part at the Mòd. The new scheme is less restrictive for competitors but will ensure equality of standards with the rigid marking scheme.'

For a full detailed description of the new Gaelic assessment scheme, visit www.acgmod.org/nationalmod/gaelic-assessment or contact An Comunn Gàidhealach on 01463 709705.

Twelve Oban Times readers win Irn Bru Carnival tickets

TWELVE readers have won two tickets each to the Irn Bru Carnival at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, Glasgow, from December 23 to January 15.

They all correctly answered our Christmas pull-out competition question on November 17: 'At which venue will the Irn Bru Carnival take place?' The winners are: Claire Montgomery, Kinlochleven; AJ Lindsay, Eriskey; Ryan MacDonald, Oban; Peter Lang, Campbeltown; Lorraine Campbell, Oban; Keegan McPhee, Oban; Mrs C A Campbell, Glasgow; Lucy Walker, Glasgow; Seamus Pearson, Oban; Marion Macmillan, Arisaig; Helen Pearson, Oban, and Douglas Strachan, Skye.

Argyll MP backs move on company tax evaders

ARGYLL and Bute MP Alan Reid was among those lending their support to Action Aid's campaign to eliminate tax evasion by large companies.

The Liberal Democrat pledged his support at an afternoon tea hosted at Oban's Congregational Church Hall by local businesswoman Vicky Manning.

Vicky said: 'There needs to be a global response. Without that, companies will just evade tax in other countries.'



Staffin Primary School pupils staged an entertaining Christmas concert last Wednesday evening. The children performed several plays and sketches as well as playing accordion, bagpipes, tin whistle, keyboard and clarsach. They also performed a selection of carols in both Gaelic and English.

Row brews over ferry diversion

A STORM is brewing over transport to the isles after the Barra-Oban ferry was diverted to Tiree without warning last week.

Last Monday's blustery weather meant disruption to ferry services across the board, with sailings to Tiree and Coll affected as a result. That presented problems for a Tiree fishing firm, which pleaded with Caledonian MacBrayne (CalMac) to divert the Castlebay-Oban ferry to the island so their stock could reach the mainland. CalMac answered that call, but to the angst of Na h-Eileanan an Iar MP Angus MacNeil.

'Islanders are fed up with CalMac's recent performance on their Oban sailing and feel Barra and South Uist islanders are being treated as second class citizens,' he claimed.

Not only did it add 90 minutes to what is the longest ferry sailing out of Oban, but it had 'severe impacts' on a Barra-based company's shellfish shipment, which was destined for the continent via England, he said.

Mr MacNeil also criticised a further diversion for the Barra-bound ferry to Mull on Thursday.

While Mr MacNeil has written to CalMac's chief executive Gary Robertson to complain, Argyll and Bute MP Alan Reid has commended the decision. He

believes making the unscheduled stop was the right thing to do.

He said: 'The root cause of the problem is that there's simply not enough ferry sailings in the winter timetable.'

'However, the company in Tiree has just as much right to get their stock to the market as the one in Barra.'

'I'm pleased that CalMac did all they could to accommodate everyone.'

A spokesperson for CalMac said: 'Shellfish producers in Tiree faced the prospect of several days without a service. We believe the short detour was therefore justified to ensure, with comparatively small timetable changes, shellfish producers in both Barra and Tiree were able to get their produce off the islands and into the lucrative Christmas markets.'

'We would have done the same for customers in Barra and South Uist if required.'

'We therefore totally reject Mr MacNeil's criticism and allegation that residents of Barra and South Uist are being treated as second class citizens.'

'We do accept, however, that we could have been better at communicating these changes and explaining the reasons for them.'

'The short stop in Mull added only 15 minutes to the journey time which we do not consider unreasonable.'

Woman who outran police in car with flat tyres given bail

Fiscal may appeal decision not to seize vehicle

A WOMAN who led police on an eight-mile car chase near Oban despite having her tyres punctured, has been allowed out on bail until January.

Appearing at Oban Sheriff Court last Wednesday, Charlene MacDonald, 26, heard that she will remain on bail for the festive period to allow the preparation of reports, required as she was on probation at the time of the incident.

Sheriff Douglas Small made the decision after hearing MacDonald was moving out of the Combie Street home she shared with her partner to a new

address, at c/o Caravan 1, Ledaga Caravan Park, Benderloch.

Meanwhile, a Crown motion that the car being driven by MacDonald, which belongs to her partner but insured for her to use, should be forfeited, was defeated.

Appeal

Procurator Fiscal David Glancy was granted leave to appeal that decision.

MacDonald previously admitted driving without headlights, often on the wrong side of the road, between Corran Esplanade, Oban, and Ledaga, Benderloch, on December 3,

forcing other vehicles to swerve out of her way. The journey from the A828/A85 junction was also completed with deflated tyres after police deployed a spiked stop-strip.

She further admitted failing to provide a breath specimen when asked by police.

Sheriff Douglas Small said: 'Her behaviour could have caused her or other road users serious injury. It is an extremely serious incident.'

He was 'seriously considering' a custodial sentence. MacDonald will return to court on January 10.



Kilmuir Primary School pupils staged their Christmas concert in Kilmuir village hall last Wednesday evening. The children from nursery and primary performed several short plays, songs and a rhythm and blues song with their teacher, who teaches them guitar and fiddle.

Western Isles Council highlights fears over exclusion of RET from commercial traffic

COMHAIRLE nan Eilean Siar is to investigate the decision to exclude commercial vehicles over five metres from eligibility for the Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) scheme.

The Transport Strategy Member Officer Working Group

will also look at the likely impact this will have on business.

Councillor Donald Manford, chairman of the council's transportation committee, said: 'This will be of significant detriment to businesses in the islands and I think it is

important we have the fullest information possible on how the recommendations were arrived at. We can then use that information to support the work of the MP and others highlighting the impacts and consequences.'

leader Angus Campbell said: 'The permanent establishment of RET on the main ferry routes was a very welcome development but I know the exclusion of commercial vehicles has been a matter of concern in the haulage industry and amongst others. We

need to know the reasons behind this decision and the likely impact and that will inform our future lobbying of Government. It is important we do all we can to reduce the effect of high transport costs on ordinary families' living costs.'

Islay Letter

PORTNAHAVEN Mod Gold Medallist Donald M MacLeod's outstanding contribution to the world of Gaelic song has been honoured by his peers following his induction into the Scottish Traditional Music's Hall of Fame at a ceremony in Perth's Concert Hall on December 3.

Donald was among the eight inductees into the hall of fame portals and their accolades reflected their praiseworthy promotion of their own particular genres.

Donald won his Gold Medal at the National Mod in Rothesay in 1952 and shared the top singing honour with the late Anne Gillies who married Scotland's first Gaelic singing star Calum Kennedy.

Donald proved a worthy singing ambassador for his native isle and enjoyed a career which added up to more than 50 years in the limelight.

His earliest recordings proved best sellers and were to be heard regularly on the 'Scottish Hour' programmes on Radio Luxembourg and he continues to be the most 'asked for' performer on Radio nan Gàidheal's weekly request programme 'Na Durachdan'.

His most recent CD, a compilation of Gaelic favourites, sold in aid of the Islay and Jura Sick Children's Fund, became a chart topper.

He has also topped the bill at all the major Highland Gatherings and Gaelic concerts throughout the country and has also brought pleasure to Gaels in more exotic climes.

The trades award ceremony attracted a capacity crowd to the Perth venue and the Hall of Fame section was promoted by Fèisean nan Gàidheal.



Donald M MacLeod - an outstanding contribution to Gaelic.

ISLAY Pipe Band has struck a sponsorship deal with Kilchoman Distillery, the newest and smallest of the island's distilleries and one which has greatly impacted on the world of single malt whiskies.

This will enable the band, which has had no major sponsorship in the past year, to compete in all of next season's leading championships where the island pipers and drummers always make their presence felt.

The band's first important gig under the farm distillery's sponsorship will be an appearance at the Glasgow Islay Association's 150th annual gathering in the Mitchell Theatre in March next year.

POPULAR Christmas music topped the menu at the carol service held by the congregation of Kildalton and Oa parishes in St John's Church, Port Ellen, on Friday.

Overseeing the celebrations was parish minister the Rev Dr Robb Barlow and the programme also featured a selection of seasonal music performed by a group of young and talented local instrumentalists.

Adding to the festive cheer were the pleasing voices of the local primary school choir under the direction of head teacher Maureen MacDonald.

More carols will be sung at Port Ellen village green tomorrow night, December 23, when South Islay Development Group holds an evening of Christmas goodies at 7pm.

Further Christmas songs cheered at Bowmore when the candle-lit Round Church hosted its carol service on Sunday evening. Dr Barlow and local Baptist pastor Jim McNulty shared the introductions and adding to the musical celebration was Bowmore schoolgirl flautist Hannah Gillies and music teacher Naryan Kundu on keyboard.

The Round Church holds its Watchnight service on Christmas Eve at 11.15pm and Holy Communion will be celebrated at the family service on Christmas morning at 10am.

The St John's congregation will welcome Christmas at their Watchnight service on December 24 at 11.15pm and their Christmas Day service begins at 11.30am.

HEARTY congratulations to Alec (Philco) Johnston of Port Ellen who celebrates his 80th birthday on Christmas Day.

Family and friends plan a party when Santa has returned to base.

Many happy returns Alec and remember you are in very good company!

And on that happy note I wish you all a joyous Christmas and every blessing in the New Year.

Hugh Smith, 4 Flora Street, Bowmore, Islay, PA43 7JX. Telephone 01496 810658.



With the festive period now in full swing, many of us will be looking forward to a few days off. For some, time off will be spent relaxing in front of the telly, while others may be faced with the much more stressful task of preparing sumptuous Christmas dinners, or entertaining visiting relatives.

For some businesses, however, things are very much business as usual, providing the rest of us with services that it would be difficult to go without. It's important to know when your local filling station will be open, whether it be to make sure the car has sufficient fuel for those visits out

to see family and friends, or even for topping up on the essentials, be it an extra pint of milk or a spare load of bread.

In addition, for pubs and restaurants the Christmas and New Year period will be one of the busiest on the calendar. Often establishments will have excellent entertainment programmes and will offer delicious meal choices, and offer additional festive options.

So, while the fire may be delightful, and the weather may be a little bit frightful, remember there are still businesses on the go, on the go, on the go, on the go.

Oban Quality Laundry & Dry Cleaners
Stevenson St, Oban, Argyll PA34 5NA
01631 563554
Open Christmas Eve 9am - 1pm
Closed Christmas Day, Boxing Day and December 27th
Closed New Year's Day, January 1st and January 2nd
Wishing all our customers a very Merry Christmas and All the Best for 2012

Festive Opening:
22nd / 23rd - 5pm to close.
24th - 11am to close, 25th - noon to 3pm (bar only), 26th to 8th January 2012 - every day from 11am, food served from 6pm to 9pm.
THE BARN
rustic bar & restaurant
Join our Hogmanay party - Brass Monkeys, midnight bonfire and fireworks, HOG ROAST. Free entry.
Cologin Country Chalets and Lodge - a haven in the hills
info@cologin.co.uk www.cologin.co.uk
Telephone: 01631 544618, fax 01631 566925

The Creagan Inn
Bar & Restaurant
Open every day over Christmas and New Year
Serving meals daily (except Christmas Day)
Loch Creran Appin PA38 4BQ
01431 730250

Ladies Mobile Hairdressing
Within the Lochgilphead and Oban Areas
Please ring for an appointment.
Tel. 0797 985 7931

BEN SERVICE STATION
North Rd, Lochybridge, Fort William, Inverness-Shire PH33 6TQ
Tel: 01397 702706
Open 24 hours everyday throughout the festive period
We wish all our customers a merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Halfway House Filling Station
Dunbeg, 01631 570300
Open until 11pm on Christmas Eve
12pm - 4pm Christmas Day
9am - 7pm Boxing Day
Open from 7am on December 27 - normal trades resumes
Open until 11pm on New Year's Eve
12 - 4pm New Year's Day
9am - 7pm January 2nd
Open from 7am on January 3rd - normal trade resumes

OBAN FILLING STATION
Soroba Road, Oban 01631 571101
December 23rd 7am - 10pm
Christmas Eve 7am - 10pm
Christmas Day 10am - 10pm
Boxing Day 7am - 10pm
December 30th 7am - 10pm
New Year's Eve 7am - 10pm
New Year's Day 10am - 10pm
Merry Christmas to all our customers!

gigfestive your essential guide to live music in argyll

Thursday 22nd > Winter Ceilidh Night
Skipinnish Ceilidh House & Late night Club, 9pm till 2am

Thursday 22nd > Award Winning Gary Innes
Coasters 9pm, Tel 01631 566881

Friday 23rd > Christmas party night with Skerryvore
Skipinnish Ceilidh House 10pm till 3am £12 entry

Friday 23 December > Black Friday with Chris Suckle
Markie Dans 9.30pm - open till 2am

Saturday 24th > Christmas eve nightclub with house DJ
Skipinnish Ceilidh House 10pm till 2am £5 entry

Sat 24 & Sun 25 December > Sandra MacBeth
Markie Dans 9.30pm - open till 2am

Sunday 25th > Mistletoe Madness Party
Skipinnish Ceilidh House DJ's Mark Gowdie & Pat Steeman
10.30pm till 4am £10 entry

Saturday 31st December > Taste of Scotland Dinner Dance
The Oyster Inn & Gluepot, Connel with Eriskay Lilt

Sunday 1st January > General Knowledge Quiz
The Oyster Inn & Gluepot, Connel 1pm

Sunday 1st January > Glue Pot Race Night
The Oyster Inn & Gluepot, Connel 8pm

Choir record in Inveraray Castle

THE ARMOURY at Inveraray Castle became a makeshift studio during a unique recording by Argyll male voice choir, Còisir Ceann an Tuirc.

Although Gaelic choirs have performed in the castle in the past, it is believed last Friday evening was the first time a recording has been made in the 18th century castle.

The choir, which represents Argyll in Mod competitions and at social events throughout the year, owes its name to the Clan Campbell; the literal translation of choir's name is 'The Boar's Head', the Clan Campbell crest.

The Duke of Argyll, who was present during the recording, said he was more than happy to support the choir and thoroughly enjoyed hearing the performances.

Honorary member

As a token of appreciation for his support, choir secretary Davy Paterson, from Taynuilt, presented the Duke with a choir tie and badge, making him an honorary member.

The choir, which is conducted by Connel's Joy Dunlop, has now recorded 10 tracks with Finlay Wells of Nutshell Music and hopes to release its first album in 2012, the year of its 10th anniversary.



Còisir Ceann an Tuirc and conductor Joy Dunlop, pictured with His Grace, The Duke of Argyll. 16_151turc01

CD review

Kate Rusby While Mortsals Sleep

Kate Rusby's reputation as one of England's finest folk singers is further enhanced by this skilfully handled Christmas album that steers well clear of festive cheese.

The second yuletide offering from Rusby, While Mortsals Sleep combines traditional carols with her own compositions. Certainly magical, but not dusty.

Baobab-Gateway Strings That Sing

Put simply, Strings That Sing is an album produced by three percussionists who bring a new sound to stringed instruments from Uganda, Guinea an Mali. Douglas Hudson on guitar, vocals and bolon, is joined by Andy Cooke on indingadi, inanga and budongo and Stuart Dinwoode on the ngonji for this inspiring album that proves you haven't heard everything yet.

Transatlantic Sessions Series Five, volume one

The first of three albums covering the music from the BBC's renowned Transatlantic Sessions' fifth series, with Jerry Douglas and Aly Bain, it certainly leaves you wanting for more.

Stunning performances from artists like Alison Krauss, Bela Fleck, Eddi Reader, James MacKintosh and Sam Bush ensure that this fifth series continues the tradition of producing jaw-dropping music.

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Children in and around Oban had an active start to the Christmas period with a Pre-5 Christmas Festival at Atlantis Leisure. More than 200 children took part in parachute games, Mini Kickers and soft play, as well as getting to meet Santa Claus. Pictured are pupils from Little Learners and Kilniver. Other pre-schools taking part were Soroba Young Families, Dalmally, Taynuilt, 1st Steps, Smarties, Rockfield, Happy House, Dunbeg, Appin and Lochnell. 16_149pre01

Knitters challenged to produce new world record

AN ALZHEIMER Scotland campaigner from Lochgilphead has challenged Argyll knitters to hand knit the largest blanket in the world.

Chris Doogan is calling on people to pick up their needles to make a 710-square metre blanket in a bid to raise awareness of dementia.

The blanket, which will be made up of 71,000 individual squares, will represent the number of people in Scotland that had dementia in 2010.

Chris, an Argyll dementia link worker, said the inspiration for the blanket came to her when driving home from work one evening.

"I was thinking about different groups that we could get involved in our campaign and was thinking about knitting groups and knitting squares for a blanket and it all went from there," Chris said.

"I checked what the world record is with the Guinness Book of Records and thought we may as well aim high.

It is hoped the record attempt will not only raise awareness of dementia but encourage people to pass on the skill of knitting to someone they know.

"People of all ages are getting involved, from 10 and 11-year-olds to a 92-year-old," Chris added. "We have people from all over Scotland and even America who want to knit a square for one of their grandparents, who has dementia back in Scotland."

It is hoped the blanket, which is due to be completed for the 2012 Dementia Awareness Week in June, will also raise funds for Alzheimer Scotland. It is envisaged that people will be sponsored for knitting each 10cm X 10cm square.

The money raised will be used to help support the 82,000 people currently living with dementia in Scotland.

To get involved in the world record attempt contact Chris on 01546 605517 or by email at cdoogan@alzscot.org.

Council group to consider return of Continental Market to Oban

ARGYLL and Bute Councillors were due to decide yesterday (Wednesday) on whether the Continental Market would return to Oban this summer.

The planning, protective services and licensing (PPSL) committee was criticised by town centre traders last year after allowing the market permission to trade in Station Square.

For 2012, Continental Market Ltd has applied for a licence to trade at Station Square from 9am - 6pm on April 5 - 8, June 7 - 10 and August 23 - 26.

Although, no objections have been lodged, PPSL members will have to consider whether they will accept late submissions from Oban traders.

Oban-based Councillor Roddy McCuish, who sits on the committee, said: "We will have to consider this application very carefully."

Traditional Christmas ceilidh success at Taynuilt

Baked potatoes and a visit from Bodach na Nollaige prove popular

A PACKED Taynuilt Village Hall last Saturday evening enjoyed a terrific traditional Christmas ceilidh.

Young piper James MacPherson started off the proceedings with some lively tunes.

The Isla Sinclair dancers, namely Nicola McFadyen, Lynn and Amanda MacLean, Kirsty Thomson, Megan Black, Sarah Hill and Eilidh Munro, gave first class dancing performances while Ann Barlow's youthful 'Festive Fiddlers' produced some great sounds.

Singers Joy Dunlop, Ruaraidh MacIntyre and Freddy MacKenzie produced a wide range of enjoyable songs while Paddy Shaw's 'Wee Band' had toes tapping in the audience until everyone enjoyed their half-time cup of tea together with the added bonus of baked potatoes and fillings.

No Christmas ceilidh would be complete without a visit from Bodach na Nollaige and, despite the icy road conditions, Santa arrived safely to present the children with small gifts.

Bean an Taighe for the evening was Helen Pearson who kept the audience amused and proceedings flowing smoothly.

Well done to all those who helped make this such a successful ceilidh and a special word of thanks goes to Leslie Servant for helping out at the last minute.



Paddy Shaw's Wee Band perform at the Taynuilt Christmas Ceilidh.

Children's Christmas Card Competition



1st Prize: Orla Soe-paing, Fort William.



2nd Prize: Harris Lovatt, Glasgow.



3rd Prize: Sam Bulloch, Dunoon.

Personal Christmas Greetings

SEASONS GREETINGS

Ewen MacPherson, Mill Farmhouse, Barcalidne wishes all his family, friends and neighbours a very Merry Christmas and a Happy & Prosperous 2012

Merry Christmas

Lexy MacNeil, Tobermory, cannot send cards this year. Best wishes to my friends and family for Xmas and the coming year.

EVIE STRATH

of Abbeyfield House in Carradale wishes all her friends a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Merry Christmas

Marek and Willie Madej wish all their friends a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Due to illness Archie and Margaret MacLeod will not be sending Christmas cards this year but would like to wish their friends and neighbours and all their family a Merry Christmas and a Happy & Healthy New Year. Thank you all for your help during the past year.

10 Longsdale Terrace, Oban

Merry Christmas

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all our family and friends. Chrissie and Hamish

Merry Christmas

To all relatives and friends, wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Alex Fletcher, Bunessan.

SEASONS GREETINGS

to all our customers and friends. Wishing you all a joyous Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Glen and Jessie MacKellar, Bunessan.

ARCHIE SIMPSON

Dunmar Court, wishes all relatives, friends and neighbours old and new a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

SEASONS GREETINGS

To all friends in Lismore, Lochawe, Dalmally, Taynuilt from James MacArthur, Oban.

Merry Christmas

Jean Buchanan would like to wish family and friends a very Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year with love.

The Oban Times & WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

Festive Deadlines

please note the advertising deadline for the issue dated 29th December is **12noon Tuesday 27th December** and for the issue dated 5th January **12noon Tuesday 3rd January**

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Friday 23 December
Monday 26 December
Friday 30 December
Monday 2 January

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ACHA members win hampers in time for Christmas



Lochgilhead winner, Bryan Passey, receiving his Christmas hamper from ACHA's Alex Westerby.

FOUR members of the Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA) have been picked in a draw to receive a hamper full of delicious Christmas food.

The lucky winners were presented with their hampers last week, just in time for their Christmas preparations.

Kerri Blair of Garelochhead picked this year's winners. They are, Mrs M MacIntyre from Oban; Mrs S Coates from Helensburgh; Mrs L Allan from Strone and Mr Bryan Passey from Lochgilhead.

Colette Benham, ACHA's director of human resources and corporate services, said: "Members are important to ACHA and they deserve to be acknowledged."

"By awarding four hampers, ACHA has a chance to say thank you."

Life membership to ACHA is available for just one pound. As well as being entered into the annual December hamper draw, members will receive a copy of the association's annual reports and accounts, and are entitled to attend AGMs. They can also elect members to area committees and the board of management.

Application forms for ACHA membership are available in all ACHA offices, at www.acha.co.uk and by phoning Lesley Lindsay on 01546 605971.



The youngsters of Oban Strings played a medley of Christmas songs. 16_51carol01

Family carol concert at Oban's Corran Halls

IT WAS very much a family affair at the Christmas Celebration in the Corran Halls on Sunday, organised by the Rotary Club of Oban.

An audience of all ages opened proceedings with a rendition of Oh Come All Ye Faithful, before The Right Reverend Kevin Pearson, Bishop of Argyll and

the Isles, welcomed everyone with a prayer.

Christmas carols were interspersed between a programme that included Taynuilt, St

Columba's, Dunbeg, Easdale and Lochnell primary school choirs, Oban Strings, Sequence Choir, Oban High School Strings, Oban Bach Orchestra, Wind Quintet

and Spotlight Musical Theatre Group. Oban Rotary Club president Ken Oxland made the closing remarks.



Fresh from their comic turn at Lochnell Primary School on Monday are, from left, Three Kings Lorne Sinclair, Finlay Bennett and Harry Tamplin.

Lochnell primary nativity plays to packed house

A PACKED audience crammed into Benderloch's Lochnell Primary School last Monday for the pupils' 'Stargazers' nativity.

Pupils from P1 and P7 performed the play, with in particular the performance of the three kings, Lorne Sinclair, Finlay Bennett and Harry Tamplin winning the favour of

the crowd with a terrific comic performance.

The play was accompanied by beautiful and enthusiastic singing from the rest of the school children.

Such was the quality of the performance that the pupils received rapturous applause from the capacity audience.



In this year's Rockfield joint campus nativity play, Rowan Drummond as Mary and Callum McInnes as Joseph, get ready to head for Jerusalem to find out if there is any room at the inn.



Pictured are the prizewinning Oban Air Cadets. 16_51cadet01

Oban Air Cadets end successful year with awards ceremony

OBAN Air Cadets have been rewarded for a successful year with a presentation of awards at the cadet hall in the Congregational Church last Wednesday.

Corporal Cook was named Cadet of the Year and picked up the Chipmunk Trophy for Best Sportsman after representing the Scottish and Northern Irish cadets rugby team in a home nations tournament. He also won the TS Royalist prize.

Runner-up Cadet of the Year was Cadet Sansom, who, along with Sergeant Cameron, was recognised as a Summer Camp Inter-Flight

Competition Winner. Sergeant Cameron was also awarded the Squadron Commander's Special Commendation.

Further Squadron Commander's Commendations were given to cadets Cook, Povey, and Mackenzie; Civ Com Cameron, Civ Com Sansom, Rev K Hunter and CI Duff.

Squadron Leader Simison Trophy for Best NCO went to Corporal MacInnes and the Gary Holland Trophy for Best Recruit was won by Cadet Needham.

The Leadership for Life course was awarded to Corporal N

McInnes and cadets Reynolds, Sansom, Cook, Khan, McInnes and Needham were awarded the 1st Class Cadet Examination. The Senior Class Cadet Examination was completed by Cadet Dickison.

Corporal N McInnes was also honoured for passing his BTEC in Aviation Studies, Lvl 2.

RBL Poppy Appeal and Remembrance Sunday award was presented to cadets Bland, McMahon, Henrickson, Hart, Wilkinson, Sansom, Povey, Needham, McInnes, Marlow, Mackenzie, Dickison and Cook; Corporal Cook and Sergeant Cameron.

Local Origins Rural Network
All the Community Marketeers would like to thank all our customers for their wonderful support for the LORN producers markets this year, and wish you all a Wonderful Festive Season. We look forward to seeing you all again in March. Join the Lorncommunity.ning.com supporting our local sustainability in North Argyll
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Tutors and coaches face tax test

LOCAL tutors and coaches only have until January 6 to disclose what they earn, else face investigation from the tax man. The Special Tax Catch Up Plan was offered to people teaching traditional academic subjects, fitness and dance, musical instruments, art, life coaching, personal training and other instruction in October. Marian Wilson, Head of HMRC Campaigns, said: 'This is the first step for those with undisclosed income or gains to avoid a full tax investigation and much higher penalties. Contact us before we contact you.'

Success for online Fish is the Dish

MORE than 120,000 have put their weight behind the Fish is the Dish campaign to persuade mums of its health benefits. The digital campaign across Facebook and Twitter has been ranked 15th in the UK's 'most talked about' blogging campaign by the Tots 100 Brand Index. Seafood industry stakeholders are also encouraged to engage with Fish is the Dish as a new means to reach potential consumers.

Mackerel talks continue into 2012

TALKS to determine new mackerel quotas for next year have been suspended until January 25 next year. A provisional mackerel quota has been set by the EU and Norway to allow it more time to consider an offer by Iceland and the Faroes.

Aberfeldy lambs are champions

CALEDONIAN Marts had 3941 prime lambs and cast ewes and tups at their annual show and sale of prime lambs in Stirling last week. The championship winning pen of lambs came from M and J Kennedy, Lurgan, Aberfeldy with a pen of 51kg Beltex crosses purchased by J Whannel Ltd., Shotts, for £180 each or 353p/kg. The first prize pen of Texel lambs and reserve champions came from A C Fotheringham, Ballinloan, Dunkeld, purchased by M More Quality Butchers, Cambusbarron for £140,280p/kg.

Electric car charge point on shores of Loch Fyne

LOCH Fyne Oysters has installed charging facilities for electric vehicles at its Oyster Bar in Cairndow, making it Argyll's second permanent charging point. The installation at the company's premises on the A83 between Tarbet and Inveraray could be a major boost to the prospects of electric vehicles in Argyll, located equally between facilities in Glasgow and at Ford on Loch Aweide. Charging is free to patrons of the business, with the charging point compatible with vehicles such as the Nissan Leaf, Mitsubishi i-MiEV or Peugeot iON cars. John Meany of Loch Fyne Oysters said: 'The new facility allows an electric car to travel comfortably from Glasgow without the worry of where to 're-fuel.' Drivers of electric vehicles can enjoy a meal during the hour or so required to provide enough charge to continue their journey.'

Oban dentist in demand as practice expands three fold

THERE'S a new dentist in town. Ali Alsammarrhae joined the Argyll Square dental practice this month, allowing them to take on more NHS patients. **Almost trebled in size** Imran Mirza, practice manager and the other dentist in Argyll Square, said the practice has almost trebled in size since he took it over in 2007. 'We had an initial base of 1,200 patients, now we have 3,400 registered with new people enquiring all the time,' he said. 'We thought it was good to employ one more dentist to increase services for NHS patients.' Ali qualified in Iraq before completing an MSc in Public Health at Sheffield University. 'Patients come from Crainlarich, Fort William and Campbelltown,' added Imran, 'so it is quite a large area people are coming from.'



Right: In the hot seat: new dentist Ali Alsammarrhae has expanded the capacity of Argyll Square dental practice to take on more patients. 16_149dentists01

Marine and dive specialists enjoy steady growth

'We like to look local and invest in training'

AN OBAN company is continuing to thrive despite challenging economic conditions, winning half a million pounds worth of contracts to close 2011 on a high. Diving and marine specialists, North West Marine - owned and managed by Tony Ratcliffe - has enjoyed steady growth throughout the year thanks to a reputation for delivering quality jobs on time and budget. While the economy in Britain is struggling, North West Marine's business services manager, Steve Clarkson, says the company is 'cautiously optimistic' about the year ahead with work coming from a variety of new sources, but also realistic that the future will be very challenging. He said: 'We'd like to think the good work we have done this year will stimulate further growth for us in the year and years ahead. This growth has been achieved by hard work, training and commitment by staff at all levels. While the remote operating vessel (ROV) has been out on a few jobs, the plan is to thoroughly market its services next year as we'd like to see more work for it.



'We feel the real potential will be when we can offer our own dive support vessel along with the ROV for potential renewables work. 'We're also further developing our diving services capability and are currently looking to place an order for an offshore spec decompression chamber. A number of tenders are still pending for the company, but they hope by the end of February to have completed a batch of contracts worth £500,000, including work at Lochboisdale, Tarbet and Arnish Point quay, on Lewis. North West Marine are also

working closely with Briggs Marine on sub-sea cable work for Scottish and Southern Energy in Orkney. These contracts run alongside the company's routine maintenance and emergency repair capability. While the company's core staffing level has remained reasonably constant at between 10-12, sub-contractors are used to boost team numbers to a full operational capacity of around 20. 'We are hoping to maintain that level of activity,' said Steve, who said the company has continued its level of investment in logistical capability and staff training to prepare them for any circumstance. 'We've bought and will continue to buy the plant and equipment to support our development and growth, which is key to our flexibility. 'Staff are the most important part of a business though, and that's why we like to look local and invest in our employees through training. 'We are aware of the fragility of the economy though, which is why we are making a conscious effort not to over-stretch or grow too quickly.'



One of North West Marine's divers suited up for a sub-sea welding job. 150diver1no

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Lochaber wood-chip heating system saves £15,000 in first year

A HIGHLAND biomass heating system installed by Lochaber firm HWEnergy has saved the owners £15,000 in its first year. Findhorn Foundation in Moray employed the company, based in Torlundy near Fort William, to install a system to heat a community centre, an exhibition space, eight houses, laundry facilities and a hot tub. A wood-chip fuelled boiler has replaced the existing oil and gas usage, saving a considerable amount of carbon emissions. Findhorn Foundation asset manager Paul Johnson said: 'When we first decided to install a biomass system we had convinced ourselves that it wasn't going to be an easy process as it was a new piece of technology. However, it was actually very easy. 'HWEnergy were easy to deal with and easy to contact - they became like a family. We are looking to install biomass at a few other sites and I would be happy to walk that path with HWEnergy. Look at the numbers, statistics, cost savings, available resources and government incentives - you are gaining more money from using your own heating. It doesn't get better than that!'

Smoked salmon company celebrates Dunoon double

A DUNOON based family-run business is celebrating after a nationwide supermarket chain more than doubled its order. Argyll Smokery, run by partners Allan McDougall and Karen Baxter, first won a contract to supply Waitrose's Newton Mearns store where its handcrafted, kiln-roasted smoked salmon has been flying off the shelves. Now, the couple have won a contract to supply Waitrose's two Edinburgh stores. The agreement marks the end of a very successful first year in business for the Argyll Smokery, which this month won a Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) New Business Start Up Award, hot on the heels of three Two-Star Golds in the UK-wide Great Taste Awards. Oliver O'Mara of the local and regional sourcing team for Waitrose said: 'The Argyll Smokery is the kind of supplier we love to work with - handcrafted and produced with passion, using the finest natural ingredients - and most importantly, their smoked fish is wonderfully succulent and delicious.' Waitrose is the only supermarket that the Argyll Smokery works with, although the company also supplies many quality hotels, delicatessens, farm shops and dedicated foodies with home delivery mail order. Allan welcomed the deal. He said: 'We enjoy working with Waitrose because it's like dealing with a small store even though they're a big company. We're on first name terms with all the buying team. 'We believe we're adding value to their business by supplying a distinctive, handcrafted product and they're adding value to ours with their expertise and advice.'

Cowal-based firm wins Scottish apprenticeship award

DUNOON firm, Stewart McNeer Ltd, has been named Scotland's best medium sized employer of apprentices. Skills Development Scotland's Modern Apprenticeship Awards presented managing director Ian McNeer with the Medium Sized Employer Award at Glasgow Science Centre last week, saying the company was a 'fine example' of the value of apprenticeship schemes. Mr McNeer said he was delighted the company's strong commitment to apprenticeships had been recognised. 'It was absolutely brilliant to hear we had won,' he said. 'It is not only for the company, it is recognition for our apprentices too.' The company, which has a workforce of more than 90, prides itself on recruiting locally and investing in apprenticeships - seeing it as succession planning. Since the early 90s Stewart McNeer Ltd has recruited 23 apprentices - 21 of whom are still employed by the company. Some former modern apprentices Mr McNeer believes they are only as good as their employees, which is why investment in all levels of training is vital. He urged other employers to

Beltex lambs are Stirling champions

UNITED Auctions sold 7100 prime sheep including 5362 lambs at their Christmas Show and Sale at Stirling last Thursday. Champions were 47kg Beltex lambs from Blackford Farms which sold at £120 or 255p per kilo to Donald Butcher, Uddingston. Reserve was Mr Bell, Craighend with 46kg Texel lambs which sold at £108 to Vivers, Annan. Lower Borland sold Suffolks to £93.50, with Ballinloan selling Cheviots to £87. Texel ewes from Cupar Rd fetched £130.50 while Gartvaigh sold Suffolks to £113.50.

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Prime stock sale at Dingwall

DINGWALL and Highland Marts Ltd sold 57 prime cattle and 1464 prime sheep at Dingwall last Tuesday. Prime bullocks averaged 202.4p (+0.4p) and sold to 218p per kg for a 655kg Limousin cross from Findon Mains, Culbokie, and £1,497.20 for a 760kg Charolais cross from Shawpark, Glackmore. Prime heifers averaged 204.2p (-2.2p) and sold to 224p per kg for a 500kg Limousin cross from Easter Strath of Auchterflow, Killen, and £1,332.50 for a 650kg Limousin cross from Mountrich, Dingwall. Lams averaged 205.4p (-2.0p) and sold to 243.6p per kg for 27.5kg Texel crosses from Inkstack Farm, Barrock, and £104 for a 50kg Suffolk cross from Glach Na Goire, Kiltarlity. Suffolks from Tiree House, Wester Moy sold to £103 as did texels from Balachraggan Croft, Cabrich. Texel cross lambs from Balintraid Farm, Dely sold to £100, as did Suffolk crosses from Little Drummie, Nairn. Blackfaces from Tulloch Farm, Dingwall fetched £94 and 205.3p per kilo.

Blackface lambs remain in demand at Stirling

UNITED Auctions sold 510 store cattle, young bulls, 58 breeding cattle and 6018 store sheep at Stirling last Wednesday. In the store sheep ring all lambs other than Blackface showed a slight reduction with Suffolk crosses back £3.87, Texel crosses back £2.73 and Mules back £4.86 on the week - Blackfaces were up £2 on the week. Luss Estate sold Suffolk crosses to £80 and Mules to £71, with Meadowfield selling Texel crosses to £78. Burnhead sold Blackface lambs to £70 with Dall and Blair Castle to £67.50, Tombreck to £66, with Tigh-na-blair, West Tandlemuir and Drumheads to £65.50. In the cattle ring, bullocks averaged 188.3p (-3.46p) and sold to 234.2p per

ing in apprenticeships - seeing it as succession planning. Since the early 90s Stewart McNeer Ltd has recruited 23 apprentices - 21 of whom are still employed by the company. Some former modern apprentices Mr McNeer believes they are only as good as their employees, which is why investment in all levels of training is vital. He urged other employers to

invest in apprentices or face a shortage of skilled workers when the economic climate improves. Skills Development Scotland's chief executive, Damien Yeates, said: 'The firm is a fine example of how employers can give people a start in their career, skills development opportunities and benefit their business at the same time.'



Pictured at the graduation are, back first from left, North Highland College's head of equestrian James Munroe, graduates Catriona Garvin, Dominic Garvin, tutor Shirleyann Varney, Eilidh Macleod, Liz Alexander. Front are Rie Emmers, Amanda MacNeill and Anna MacKinnon-Garvin. Young Katie Garvin celebrates with a balloon.

Equestrian students gain pass certificates

LOCAL Equestrian students from North Highland College graduated at a special ceremony at Oban's Soroba House Hotel last week. The group is the third batch of students to complete their NC in Equestrian Skills, which is taught at Lettershuna Riding Centre, Torlundy Farm Stables and Benderloch Equestrian Centre over a two year period. Successful candidates can move on to the NHC or HND courses in equestrian.

Pedigree breeding sheep sell to 3000gns at Stirling

UNITED Auctions had forward 97 pedigree Texel females and 14 pedigree Charollais females at their Stirling livestock centre last week when the overall sale average for Texels rose more than £94 on the year. Top priced female was a Texel gimmer from Mr J Douglas, Cairness selling at 3000gns to W H Sinnet, Stocton. The gimmer is a daughter of Devervale Perfection and was sold in-lamb to Kelso Samson. The second top bid was the first gimmer into the ring from J Innes, Strathgogie which sold at 1600gns to G Morrison, Deveronvale. She is a daughter of Mossknowe Pudsey and in-lamb to Glenside Razzle Dazzle. The third highest price on the day was another daughter of Mossknowe Pudsey and in-lamb to Glenside Razzle Dazzle, from Strathgogie, this time selling at 1100gns to M Rattray, West Park. Upper Auchenal sold Charollais gimmers to £550 and ewe lambs to £350.

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Regional Press closer to home

Christmas myth and superstition

The beliefs and traditions of Christmas are many and varied. Despite being viewed as a very Christian celebration - some of our traditions hail from pre-Christian times while many more have long lost in the mist of time.

Take brawn for instance. Brawn is a dish of great antiquity, there are many regional variations but all are based on a meat jelly or terrine made with flesh from the head of a calf, pig or, more commonly in Scotland, sheep and often set in aspic. The tongue, and sometimes even the feet and heart may be included but it was considered up until the 18th century to be a suitable dish for breakfast on Christmas Day. Queen Elizabeth I particularly relished it with mustard, washed down with several glasses of malmsey - a thick, sweet, fortified wine of, I believe, Greek origin, but now more widely associated with Madeira.

She must have had the constitution of an ox!

It was widely believed that all who were born between midnight on Christmas Eve and midnight Christmas Day, possessed the power to see spirits and foretell the future.

Christmas candles of tremendous size were routinely burned throughout Christmas by our ancestors. The main one was truly huge, rather like the great altar candles to be found in churches today. It was lit at midnight on Christmas Eve and burned right through till Twelfth Night. If a candle of sufficient size for this marathon performance was not available, several smaller ones were permitted. The important thing however was that the original flame should not be extinguished too early or great misfortune would befall the household.



It is, if nothing else, a time when the family gets together

So what do you put up in the way of greenery for Christmas? Holly and ivy are sung about in the old song. Holly is supposed to represent the crown of thorn, and ivy, the continuity of belief. As both these were also used by the Druids in their winter solstice ceremonies, they can hardly be thought to be truly 'religious', unless you are a Druid, that is.

The Romans in fact brought the custom of garlanding the home with greenery into Britain, and they used holly and ivy merely because that's all there was around that was green, at that time of year.

Again their winter celebrations

were a lusty business and far removed from the beliefs of a modern Christian.

The crib is a Christmas tradition that was popularised by St. Francis of Assisi, though the one he favoured was something of a 'tableau vivant' with the various characters played by people and real animals. Earlier cribs played an important part in the Christmas Mass, which was usually read over one. In the 8th century AD, Pope Gregory III placed a golden image of Mary holding the Infant Jesus, in the Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, a 4th century church dedicated to the 'new' festival of Christmas.

The nativity plays performed widely in schools at this time of year are merely links with old liturgical dramas performed by the clergy in the Middle Ages, and before.

Boxing Day is not a universal Christmas holiday. Many countries observe no special activities on this, St. Stephen's Day.

In many parts of Britain we do observe it, though the habit of giving alms is slowly falling into disuse.

The name Boxing Day prob-



Brawn - or jellied meat, was a traditional Christmas breakfast

ably derives from the habit of opening alms boxes in church on this day, and of the breaking open by servants and apprentices of the small earthenware boxes their masters had filled with coins over the previous year.

There is also a tradition of holding horse races on Boxing Day. This is because of a tenuous connection St. Stephen has as patron saint of horses. In fact that particular St. Stephen is not

the same one that was martyred by stoning shortly after the crucifixion. However, the connection fits the mood for jollity following on the gastronomic excesses of Christmas, in England and Ireland, so the inaccuracy is conveniently overlooked.

So there you have it. Traditional Christmas is traditional all right, but not possibly in the way one might suppose.

It is if nothing else, a time when the family gets together and that's as traditional happening as you could ever expect.



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PERSONALS

THANK YOU

I would like to thank the staff, current and former pupils, parents and members of the community for the lovely family Ceilidh and generous and thoughtful gifts to mark my retirement from Easdale Primary School. It has been a privilege to work with you all. With very best wishes to you all from Maggie Anderson.

Clare Jordan

Happy 21st Birthday 19/12/11



Lots of love from Mum, Niall, Granny and Gen xxx

A Big Thank You

The Milne family would like to thank everyone who helped raise nearly £7,000 (total not finalised yet) at the Fund Raising night held in the Corran Halls for the Brain Rehabilitation Unit (Graham Anderson House) where Allan is continuing his recovery and rehabilitation after the accident in 2010.

The money raised on Saturday 10th will be spent on equipment to help Allan on his recovery and to getting him home to Oban.

Special thanks to Mr Tom Urrie, Crooked Reel, Local Musicians Jim and Joanne Swan, Alasdair Robertson, Davy Hobbs, Mike Henderson. Thanks also to John Burnett (Elvis) and Rachel (Marilyn Munroe) Wilma MacPhee from MacPhersons Food, MacLennan Motors, the Corran Halls staff, Margaret and Daryl Williams, Oban Bay Hotel, Clare Kennedy and Markie Duns, to everyone who sold and bought raffle tickets. Graham MacQueen and Tom Urrie for helping with the raffle and auction. We would especially like to thank everyone who donated the wonderful prizes for the auction and raffle and to everyone who made a cash donation.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank again everyone who helped Allan at the scene of the accident, the emergency services, all at Oban Hospital, Air Ambulance recovery team and the Southern General Hospital. Also to Larfield pDRU who helped Allan on the first stage of his recovery.

If you would like to find out how Allan is getting on please contact one of us by phoning Barbara 07788 770562, Graham 07720 482 029 or Madeline 07900 544154.

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Whist Drive night boosts Muckairn Church funds

MUCKAIRN Church funds are £155 better off after a Whist Drive in Taynuilt Village Hall. Seven tables took part in the competition, under the stewardship of card master Leslie Servant. The ladies prize was won by Marina MacInnes, Connel; followed by Mary Mitchell, Margaret Forbes, Connel; and Andrea Harris. Consolation prize went to Seona Millar. The gents prize was won by Christine Allen. Second place was Dougie MacDougall, followed by Stella Huntingford and Brenda MacLean. The consolation prize was won by Ivy Smart. The travelling prize went to John Ross and Margaret Forbes. The next whist drive will be held on January 27, with proceeds going to the Taynuilt Parent Council.

Candlelight supper by Muckairn Guild

A BEAUTIFULLY decorated Village Hall was packed to capacity when Muckairn Guild held its recent Candlelight Supper. After a warm welcome by Stella Huntingford to villagers, guild members from Appin, Ardchattan, Connel and Dunbeg and to friends from Oban Congregational Church and the Church of the Visitation, Rev Robert Brookes gave the opening prayer. Carols, bible readings and playlets were complemented by music from the Oban and Lorn Strathspey and Reel Society, led by Taynuilt's Donald Harrison. Shona Neil gave the vote of thanks and a collection of £363 was taken in for the Leprosy Mission Scotland.



Children of St. Mun's Catholic Church Ballachulish and The Good Shepherd Catholic Church Kinlochleven were recently confirmed by Bishop Joseph Toal of Argyll and the Isles. Also pictured is parish priest Fr Francis Ferriggi.



Pictured above are five children following their confirmation by Bishop Joseph Toal at St Cummins, Morar, on Friday 2nd December together with parish priest Fr Joe Calleja. The candidates were Angus Murray, Kiera Stephen, Rachel Beveridge, Emily MacDonald and Fraser Davis.

Fiona steps down after 30 years

Years of commitment to Oban's MS Therapy Centre marked with special party

OBAN'S MS Therapy Centre bid a fond farewell to one of its most loyal servants this week, when Fiona Young retired after nearly 30 years of commitment. While Fiona, 75, has been employed as administrator for the past decade, she first became involved in 1984, taking up the fundraising effort to have the facility built. After receiving overwhelming support from the people of Oban, the centre was finally erected in 1989. **Volunteer** Fiona then became a volunteer, also training to become an oxygen chamber operator and watching the very real benefit it gave those people suffering from the debilitating illness, as well as those other locals who benefited from the oxygen chamber. Handing over the reigns to fellow administrator Sandra Owens, Fiona admits she will miss the daily buzz of the centre. She said: 'I'll absolutely miss everyone here. It's not just friendship, there's a real warmth and genuine love here and that's what keeps everyone going. 'For me, this is like living home. It's a very sad day, but the occasion itself has been lovely.' While she has helped countless numbers of patients who come to the MS Centre, Fiona humbly says 'they've helped me too.' Fiona intends to spend her retirement walking around the countryside, indulging in her passion for wildlife, in particular spotting puffins and deer. Fiona's contribution was celebrated with a special party at the centre on Monday, when colleagues, volunteers and clients came together to wish her all the best and present her with a special, engraved silver plate, a vase, some flowers and gift vouchers. Paying tribute to Fiona, Sandra Owens said: 'She has taught me everything I know about the centre and how to support and look after the people that come here. 'Of course we will miss her and wish her all the best in her retirement.'



Fiona Young, right, cuts the celebratory cake at her retirement party at Oban's MS Centre with Janice Alcorn, who had originally asked Fiona to become involved in 1984. 15_15108way1

Festive opening hours

Please note our offices will be closed on
Friday 23 December - Monday 26 December
Friday 30 December - Monday 2 January

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

ECCLIASTICAL NOTICES

CHRISTMAS SERVICES AT ST MARY'S FORT WILLIAM
Saturday, December 24
Vigil Mass of Christmas 6pm
Mass of Christmas Night 10pm
NO MIDNIGHT MASS
Sunday, December 25
Christmas Morning Mass 10.30am

ASSOCIATED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, OBAN
Campbell Street Church
Sunday 25 December 2011
11 a.m. and 6.30 p.m.
Phone-In 'Worship Link' available
Rev. Archie McPhail MA, MTh
(01631) 567076
All welcome

SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH ANGLICAN COMMUNION
Thursday 22 Dec 2011
St John's Cathedral, Oban
Service of Nine Lessons and Carols..... 19.30
Saturday 24 Dec 2011
Christmas Eve
St John's Cathedral, Oban
Children's Service "Let's Go to Bethlehem"..... 15.30
Midnight Eucharist..... 23.15
Sunday 25 Dec 2011
Christmas Day
St John's Cathedral, Oban
Holy Communion..... 09.30
Family Eucharist and Carols..... 11.00
St James, Ardbrecknish, Cladich
Service of Lessons and Carols..... 11.00
St Columba, Gruline, Mull
Holy Eucharist..... 11.00
St Columba, Bishop's House, Iona
Holy Eucharist..... 10.00

OBAN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
Watch Night Service
24th December at 11.30pm
Mince pies and mulled wine
Christmas Day
Short Thanksgiving Service
At 11.00am
A warm welcome to all

BIRTHS

MACDOUGALL - Kenneth and Fiona (nee McInnes), are delighted to announce the birth of their son Alasdair Innes, on November 5, 2011 at Glasgow Royal Infirmary. First grandson for Donnie and Morag MacDougall, Dalmally and Robert and Brenda McInnes, Glasgow.

ENGAGEMENTS

HARRISON - SWANN - The engagement is announced between Ewen Harrison, elder son of Donald and Janice Harrison, Taynuilt, to Olivia (Livvy) Swann of Farningham, Kent.

DEATHS

CAMERON - Hugh died peacefully at home in Fort William, after an illness bravely fought, on Tuesday, December 13, 2011, a much loved father, father-in-law brother, brother-in-law, uncle and dear friend to so many near and far. He will be sadly missed and always in our thoughts. - The Cameron Family.

MACDONALD - Alexander died peacefully in his sleep on Monday, December 19, 2011, after a long illness bravely borne, aged 91 years of 25 Nevis Road, Inverloch. Will be sorely missed by family and friends.

MACINNES - Donald, of 24 Glencruitten Drive, Oban, passed away peacefully, on December 18, 2011, in his 71st year, with his family by his side, at 10a Angus Terrace, Oban, after an illness fought with great courage and dignity. Beloved husband of the late Rachel, a loving father of Allan and Derek, father-in-law to Rachel and Morven, very proud Papa to Robert, Ellie and Ryan. Will be sadly missed by us all.

MACLEAN - Rose (nee MacKinnon), died peacefully in her sleep at Elderslie Care Home on December 15, 2011 in her 89th year. Beloved wife of the late Callum, much loved mother, granny and great granny. Will be sadly missed by all. The funeral was conducted by the Rev JA McCormick at Old Parish Church on Tuesday, December 20, 2011.

GRADUATIONS



Anne MacKinnon, having completed the Diploma of Higher Education (Adult Nursing) has now graduated from the University of the West of Scotland with a BSc in Health Studies and is currently employed with NHS Highland as a community nurse on the Isle of Tiree.

Craig Millar graduated from the University of Westminster with a BA (Hons.) in Commercial Music. A former pupil of Park Primary and Oban High School, Craig is the son of Bruce and Jill Millar, Bendersloch and Grandson of the late Pat and Isobel Murphy, Tobemroy and Willie and Audrey Millar, Inverloch, Fort William.



Alison MacKenzie has recently completed her studies after being awarded an MSc in Early Education from Strathclyde University. Alison is the eldest daughter of Jan and John McCowan, married to Ken and proud mum of Kirsty, Lynsey and Craig who have all supported her throughout her studies. Alison is currently Principal Officer, Early Years with Argyll and Bute Council.

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Please give your financial support by donation, deed of covenant or legacy
Please send to Appeals Department, Highland Arts Effort, Royal Blind Asylum School, P.O. Box 500, Gillespie Crescent, Edinburgh, EH10 4HZ

WYLIE - Dorothy Mary (nee Jenkins), dear wife of the late Alan Robertson Wylie of Perth, peacefully on December 17, 2011, aged 95, dearly loved sister to Catherine and mother of Alasdair, Caroline, Christopher and Sheena and a loving grandmother to Alison, Daniel, Robin, Kanti, Ben and Jamie. Service at Perth Crematorium on Friday, December 23, at 9.30am with a Thanksgiving Service in Dunkeld in the new year to be announced. No flowers please but donations to Christian Aid very welcome.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CRAIK - The sisters and brothers of the late Sandy extend their sincere gratitude to relatives and friends for the letters, cards and phone calls, also the doctors and nurses Inverclyde Hospital and Dumoon General for their care and dedication to Sandy during his long illness quietly borne. Thanking all.

MACDONALD - Following the sad loss of their brother Charles, Mary, Catherine, Benny, Rhona and Ailsa wish to thank most sincerely all relatives, friends and colleagues for the kind expressions of sympathy received by way of cards, visits, telephone calls and flowers. Special thanks to doctors and nurses at Belford Hospital, Dr Stephen Brown for his unfailing attention to Charles and doctors and nurses at Tweeddale Surgery, to Crossroads and Macmillan nursing. Thanks also to Rev MacQuarrie for his comforting services at church and graveside, to John McLellan & Co Ltd for their professional and caring attention, to John McDonald for his piping tribute and management and staff at the Alexandra Hotel. Finally, our thanks to all who came to pay their respects and whose generous donations to Marie Curie Cancer Care amounted to £802.59.

MACKEY - The family would like to sincerely thank all family, friends and neighbours for the kind expressions of sympathy shown to us, in so many ways, on our recent sad loss. Special thanks to the Rev David White for the lovely service; to Heather for the beautiful singing; to Ewen and John, of John McLellan's, for their sensitive handling of funeral arrangements; the Alexandra Hotel for refreshments and last but not least to all who paid their respects at the church and graveside, and who generously donated to the Fort William Baptist Church Extension Fund.

MACKILLOP - Margaret and Neil would like to thank most sincerely all relatives, friends and neighbours of Margaret's mum, the late Catherine MacColl, for their kind expressions of sympathy, received in their sudden bereavement. Thanks to Glencoe police and ambulance service, for their prompt attendance, to Dr N. Campbell and staff of Ward B, Lorn and the Islands Hospital, Oban, for their kindness and help, to Rev Adrian Fallows for his comforting and uplifting service, Helen and Douglas MacIntyre for funeral arrangements, Ballachulish Hotel for purvey and to all who attended at church and graveside. We would like to give special thanks to Ian, Ann and Laura for being there for mum in her hour of need. 7 Bayview, Machrihanish.

MEMORIALS

BIRRELL - Treasured memories of Al, much loved Dad who passed away on December 26, 2010 As sure as the spring He is the still sea A sound and constant pair of hands Around that big cup of tea As sure as the summer He is the clear sky To keep us reaching past ourselves Toward the brightness in his eye As sure as the autumn He is the cool breeze To blow away the buzz and whir And fill the room with ease As sure as the winter He is the warm fire To gather round to tell tall tales Of which he'll never tire As sure as the seasons Al remains our corner post If not at 16 Iona Drive Then in those that loved him most Dad, everything I do, I do with you in mind. Love and miss you every day. Lisa and D.I xxx

BRUCE - Treasured memories of Betty, a loving mum and gran, who died December 22, 2010. It hurt so much to say goodbye When you were called away The love and special memories of your mum Are always here to stay Sadly missed. - Liz and Charlie. To us you were so special What more is there to say Except to wish with all our hearts Our gran was here today All our love. - Nicola, John and family.

BRUCE - In loving memory of Betty, a dear mum, gran and great gran, who died December 22, 2010. Sadly missed and always in our thoughts. - Ann, Alistair and family.

CAMERON - In loving memory of my dear husband our father and grandpa Alastair, who passed away at Kingairloch on December 18, 1990. Also remembering loved ones gone before and after. Dear are the memories, precious they stay No passing of time can take them away Helen and family, Strontian

CAMPBELL - With precious memories of our beloved son, brother and uncle Iain, who died on December 16, 2007 aged 29 years, also his father Iain, a beloved husband, dad and Gen, who died on December 27, 1994 aged 49 years. You are both still so sorely missed and so deeply loved by us all. Forever in our hearts Rest in peace Seonaid, Annmarie, Marion and families. **CAMPBELL** - Remembering Liz who died so suddenly on December 26, 1998. Remembered every day. - Love Simmo x. **DUFF** - Remembering our son Stuart who died December 18, 2000. Always in our thoughts. - Dad and Mum xx **GRANT** - In loving memory of my dear wife Morag who died on December 25, 1999. Sadly missed in so many ways Quietly remembered every day - Angus, Upper Kinechreckine, Dalmally. **GRANT** - In loving memory of my dear mother and our granny Morag, who died on December 25, 1999. Today, tomorrow, our whole life through We will always love and remember you. - Elizabeth, Julie and Steven, Keeper's Cottage, Dalmally. **HIGGINS** - In loving memory of George Kerr, who died in Dundee, December 12, 2010. Gone but not forgotten Sadly missed. - Love from Daniel, Simon and their families. **JAMIESON** - In memory of my friend Helen, who passed away on December 28, 1999. Always remembered Inserted by Marleen. **MACGILLIVRAY** - In loving memory of Chrissie, a much loved mum and gran, who passed away December 24, 2009. Time passes by and life goes on You're in my heart You're never gone. - Katherine. Two years ago God took you gran And left me with a broken heart that will never mend Miss you so much and always thinking of you. - Paul.

MEMORIALS

MACLENNAN - Betty, Mother, mother-in-law, gran and great gran, died December 20, 2010. Dear mother you are not forgotten Though on earth you are no more Still in memory you are with us As you always were before. - Donald, Irene, Lorna, David, Vicky, Allan and all the great grandchildren. **MACPHAIL** - Treasured memories of a dear husband, dad and 'Shesh' John Ardmay, Three, who passed away on December 26, 2004, and loved ones gone before and after. I picture a beautiful garden And by the gate you stand One day that gate will open And you will take my hand Jean Ardmay xx No special day is needed For us to think of you For you were very special And we thought the world of you May, Irene and families, Oban and Tiree **McKINNON** - In loving memory of my dear husband Charles McKinnon, who died suddenly on December 28, 2005, also dear ones gone before. Forever in my thoughts Inserted by May, Colonsay. **McKIERAN** - In loving memory of a special dad, Jim, who died on December 21, 2007. Always in our hearts with love. - Catherine, Diane and Alan. **McTAGGART** - With special and loving memory of our dear parents and grandparents John, who died December 25, 2005 and Mary (nee Nicolson) who died August 23, 2011. Your memories are our greatest treasure To have, to cherish, to keep forever Today is remembered and quietly kept No need for words we will never forget Always in our thoughts Christina, Ian and Philina xxx Love and miss you Papa and Nana Martin, James, Andrew and Ellie xxxx **MILLER** - In loving memory of Christine my dear friend who died November 24, 2008. Sadly missed. - Jessie

MUNRO - In loving memory of our darling daughter Violet who died December 22, 2006. To us you were so special What more is there to say We only wish with all our heart That you were here today Sadly missed. - Inserted by Mum and Dad Isabella and Douglas, Loanhead. **ROBERTSON** - Remembering a dear mam Katie, who passed away December 29, 1996. A little tribute small and tender Just to say we always remember. Miss you always. - Mary and Arthur.

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Words by the Wayside
"And when he was entered into a ship his disciples followed him. And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, inasmuch that the ship was covered with waves: but He was asleep" (Matthew 8:23,24)
He was asleep, and they were in fear. They awoke him and he hushed the storm and there was a great calm. He was there, but silent. Faith in action on the disciple's part should have known He was there. He is always there! The Lord Jesus Christ, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, will never leave nor forsake the believer.
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Winter sports resorts off to a flying start

'More snow than I've ever seen at this time of year'

REPORT BY
STEPHEN NORRIS
snorris@obantimes.co.uk

LOCHABER'S winter sports resorts got their season off to a flying start last weekend as over 2,000 skiers and snowboarders took to the slopes at Glencoe Mountain and Nevis Range.

And a quick look at snow reports from ski centres around Europe showed Scotland ranking with the best conditions on offer anywhere.

A series of North Atlantic depressions in December dumped huge accumulations of snow on the Scottish mountains, but only rain on many of the lower Alpine resorts.

Glencoe Mountain owner Andy Meldrum was delighted early season skiers were rewarded with deep powder snow on the piste.

He told the Oban Times: 'Conditions at Glencoe over the weekend were simply stunning with snow all the way to the carpark. All main

runs had a wide and deep cover of packed powder snow. 'On Saturday we had over 600 customers who enjoyed some of the best early season skiing at Glencoe for a number of years. With sunshine, light winds, great snow and very few queues all our customers seemed to be having a great time.'

'Sunday also started with sunshine light winds and great snow but the wind picked up and it started to snow in the afternoon. We had slightly more skiers on the Sunday with just over 700 on the mountain but with the plateau Poma running again after last Thursday's storm damage skiers spread out well over the whole mountain.'

'Some of the comments we received at the end of the day ranged from 'best first day of the season ever at Glencoe' and 'more snow than I've ever seen at this time of year'.

This was backed up by the SAIS (Scottish Avalanche

WINTER SPORTS

Information Service) who measured a mid mountain snow depth of 240cm. 'All in all a great weekend and with a huge snow depth on the mountain things are looking great for the festive period.'

Meanwhile on Aonach Mor, Nevis Range logged 600 skiers and Saturday and 500 on Sunday.

Office manager Mark Jordan told The Oban Times: 'We had really good snow cover for our first day of the season. A lot of people were saying how surprised they were at how much snow we had got.'

'The snow is powdery, with pretty good cover on all the runs and good visibility too.'

'Someone described the conditions as 'Alpine' and we are currently on a par or better than many European resorts.'

A thaw to all levels yesterday (Wednesday) was forecasted to continue until Friday.



A skier arrives on Glencoe Mountain's upper slopes on the ski-tow on Saturday. Over 1,000 snowsports enthusiasts enjoyed perfect conditions over the weekend.

Chris loses out to British champion

LOCHABER Phoenix teenage boxer Chris Bradley kept up his busy schedule when he appeared for Scotland in an international against England last weekend.

Chris defeated one of the top English boxers in a recent international but his opponent in this encounter was the current British champion Shane Foster.

In the first round Bradley tried to drive Foster onto the ropes,

but in his eagerness was caught several times. Chris changed tack in the second, holding the centre of the ring to trick Foster and land some telling counters.

Going into the last Chris was still behind and was throwing four and five punch combinations, missing with the first two punches but finding success with the last couple of shots.

Unfortunately as he tried to force the action he was being caught himself and the decision went to Foster - but Chris will have learnt plenty from the experience. Lochaber Phoenix club official Steve Docherty said: 'If it takes the British champion to beat you then you must be doing something right.'

'When you consider that this time last year Chris had never

BOXING

even entered a Scottish championships he has turned himself into a Scottish champion and an international class boxer inside twelve months.

'He's still only fourteen which is only a baby in boxing terms and the future looks very bright for him.'



New strips for sports team

Invergarry Primary's sports team will soon take to the pitch in their new school strip after local firm David Smith Contractors donated new outfits. Head teacher Jane Strachan said: 'They look super and we are looking forward to wearing them at future sports events.'

Duror race cancelled

LOCHABER Athletic Club's Duror Race was cancelled on Sunday after the wintry conditions left parts of the course covered in ice.

Event organiser Linda MacEwan was forced to call off the event following a course inspection on Saturday afternoon which found several sections too dangerous to race on.

Around 50 runners had been due to tackle the eight-mile

circular course, which would have taken the athletes from the Forestry Commission car park outside the village round a mixture of forestry roads and cross-country hill tracks.

A few keen members will head to Linnlithgow to race in the Beccraigs Handicap Trail on Boxing Day.

Going from strength to strength

NETHER Lochaber Amateur Boxing Club took six boxers down to Hamilton ABC for a sparring session and networking visit on Sunday.

The Hamilton club has only just started up and NLABC head coach Martin Glenesk is keen to establish links with the new outfit, with an eye on setting up bouts between Nether Lochaber and Hamilton boxers some time

in the future. He told The Oban Times: 'Hamilton is only a new club and we went down to help them set up.'

Meanwhile, back at its Kinlochleven Business Park base, NLABC continues to go from strength to strength.

At a training night last Wednesday, Mr Glenesk told The Oban Times three new

BOXING

junior members, Cian McPhee, Alistair MacDonald and Ruairidh Mills, had signed up only that evening.

'It's great so many local youngsters want to get involved in the sport,' he said.

The club has both male and female members.



Packing a punch: Nether Lochaber Amateur Boxing Club at their training base at Kinlochleven. 20_511box01



Athletic club stages relay

They're off! Lochaber Athletic Club staged a Christmas team relay race at the BA Club, Fort William, on Saturday, which was won by the all girl team of Eilidh Moynihan, Isla MacKay and Rachel MacPherson (left). Icy conditions early in the morning and Christmas shopping trips limited the turnout to only five teams - but enthusiasm more than made up for the lack of numbers. Junior times count towards the club's winter league 10_511relay01

Lochaber off-road race

LOCHABER cyclists will be blowing away some of their Christmas cobwebs by taking on an off-road course at Nevis Range on Tuesday morning.

The challenging 10-mile course through Leanachan Forest is expected to attract around 45 racers for round three of West Highlands Wheelers' winter league.

CYCLING

The competitors will be hoping the milder weather continues, although race organiser Andy Rodgers told The Oban Times only thick ice would stop the event going ahead. He said: 'It's a good excuse to get rid of some of the Christmas excess.'

Thaw means league games should go ahead

FOOTBALL

THE CHANCES of all Highland League matches going ahead tomorrow night look good after much warmer temperatures over the past two days melted ice and snow covering many pitches.

Fort William have yet to play a game in December after all three fixtures were wiped out by the weather - but will look to continue their recent improved form at Clachnacuddin.

Lack of match practice and player availability could handicap Fort's efforts to grab the points at fifth bottom Clach - but manager Danny Conlon will point to the recent away win over Rothes as the benchmark.

Looking to the future, a bigger problem for Fort could be Claggan Park with frost and snow likely to exacerbate recent waterlogging problems. The Lochaber men are scheduled to play Clach in the return home fixture next Friday evening.

Comfortable wins for top two

TEN PIN BOWLING

THE TOP two teams in the scratch division of the Lochaber Building Supplies 10-pin bowling league both ran out 5-0 winners in week seven.

Alleycats remain top with 33 points followed by Council in second on 30 points. Likely Lads moved into third on 23 points.

Underdogs still lead the handicap division with 25 points with Rotavators still second on 22 points. Council move into third a further point back after beating British Legion Scotland 5-0.

The highest team games of the week came from Council with 537 scratch, 761 handicap. Council also had the highest two game scratch total with 1,041.

Individually, the best game this week came from Council's Frank Sweeney with 175 scratch, 233 handicap. Tim Attack (Ardtoe/Nevis Radio) rolled the week's best two game scratch series with 300.

Ann Lovatt of Fairway Fillies bowling off an average of 105 was over the moon as she beat Alleycats' Pam Weller (average 156) 131 to 129 in their match up.

Annual President's match goes ahead on Boxing Day

RUGBY

THE ANNUAL President's Boxing Day rugby match kicks off at Banavie at 2pm.

The current Lochaber Rugby Club team will take on a XV of former players in the challenge match. Kick off is at 2pm all players should meet at lam for pre-match 'refreshments and tactics'. Non-members are welcome.

Lochaber Rugby Club member Pauline Donaldson said: 'This is always a great day out - perfect for blowing away the Christmas Day cobwebs.'

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The game starts with a jackpot of £500 and will increase by £50 per week until it is won outright. To win the jackpot, the centre of your 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.

WIN £1350

LAST WEEK'S SHINTY BALL WAS HERE...



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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, mislaid 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 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 The Oban Times Limited, their immediate relatives and any person otherwise connected with the competition are ineligible to enter.

To allow for the Christmas holidays spot the ball will run for the next 2 weeks
The deadline for entries is 12 noon, Tuesday 3rd January 2012
please note our offices will be closed on Friday 23 December, Monday 26 December, Friday 30 December and Monday 2 January

WEEK 1 OF 2
Spot the SHINTY BALL Competition



I enclose £1 for 20 crosses (tick box) 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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Sailing club hands out the prizes

Shadowfax is top keelboat

TOP keelboat at Oban Sailing Club for 2011 was Billy Forteith's Shadowfax, a Beneteau 31.7 with Tim Bleazard and Jamie Sinclair sharing the honours as top adult helm and top junior champion respectively.

Tim sails his Laser Krabby Patty with Jamie also helming his Laser Wavelength.

Prizes for the season were awarded at the club's annual dinner dance with more than 80 members and guests in attendance.

A new trophy in memory of Willie Buchanan who sadly passed away earlier in the year was awarded to Andrew Pretswell. Willie was a committee member for years and a tireless worker for the club.

As well as sailing his passion was exploring the west coast in his RIB and his wife Anne presented the trophy to commemorate this.

Andrew is a fitting recipient

SAILING

of the trophy having won the Scottish Regional finals of the Honda RIB Challenge in his age group in Edinburgh and going forward to compete admirably at the National Championships in Southampton.

Jamie Chapman and Tierney Carter had a great first year with their Laser 2 finishing third overall in the championship points.

Finishing second on points in the keelboats was Eric and Irena Chapman's Sigma 33 Amber Haze with Alison Chadwick's Hot Toddy third.

The Ladies Cup was won by Liz Cottier in Shadowfax with Tom Gibson winning the Crews Cup, also in Shadowfax. The Junior Helm trophy was taken by Ben Carter in Shadowfax.

The Malcolm MacKillop Decorators Quailch for most improved novice was awarded to



Prizewinners at Oban Sailing Club this year. t51osc1NO

Thomas Smith who also took the Forteith Refrigeration Trophy for best Topper performance in the Aggregates Series. Tim Bleazard won the Scotwest Windows Trophy for best Laser in the Aggregates.

Jamie Chapman also ended his season on a high qualifying as a dinghy instructor at Cumbrae. Meanwhile the sailing club has appointed a new commodore. Colin Crawford, a former commodore, will be joined by some

new faces on the committee. John Paden takes over as vice-commodore with Finley Cottier the rear-commodore. Richard Beith remains as treasurer with Murray MacDonald the new secretary.

New also to the committee are members Andrew Mead and Glynis Pretswell. Outgoing commodore Toby Sherwin said he had enjoyed his two years at the helm and hoped the 'new blood' would keep the club thriving and

moving forward.

The club's AGM looked at the issue of the ageing Topper fleet and agreed fund-raising was a priority. This will be undertaken by a sub-committee of the main OSC committee.

Saints' Scottish Cup tie called off for the third time

FOOTBALL

ANY hopes Oban Saints had of getting their Scottish Amateur Cup 4th round tie away to Dynamo East Kilbride played last Saturday were dashed when club secretary David Buchanan got a phone call on the Friday saying the game was off again due to the pitch at Barncumhall being under several inches of snow.

The match will now not take place until Saturday 7 January due to the Christmas and New holiday break.

The Oban side are worried that all these cup postponements will cause a fixture backlog at the end of the season.

David Buchanan said: 'We've had seven postponements in three away Scottish Cup ties, which is ridiculous.

'If the games had been at home we would have got them played no problem as Glencruitten is in great condition after the work that was done on the playing surface pre-season. All the games would have gone ahead even in the worst of the weather.'

'I'm going to contact the East Kilbride club and the Scottish Cup secretary to see if the game can't be switched to Oban to ensure it goes ahead on January 7 as we can't afford another Saturday without a game.

The incentive for the winners of the Dynamo v Saints game is a home tie in the 5th round of the national competition against top Aberdeen outfit Echt or Wallacetown from Ayr.

The winners of the Myre Athletic v Oban Saints West of Scotland Cup 3rd round tie have been given a home game in the 4th round against one of the cup favourites Knockentiber from Ayrshire.

The Oban side have been drawn away to Glencastle Sparta in the 1st round of the Jimmy Marshall Trophy.

Dates for these cup ties have still to be arranged due to the backlog of fixtures.

Saints' youths - results and fixtures

YOUTH FOOTBALL

LAST weekend's results: Blair Thistle v Under 13s postponed; Under 14s no game; Under 15s no game; Argyll Athletic v Under 16s postponed.

The youngsters now head for a well earned festive break with fixtures resuming again on 7 and 8 January.

Carpet Fitters have it covered

INDOOR FOOTBALL

LATEST scores in the Atlantis Leisure Indoor League: Carpet Fitters 4, Oban Electrics 0; Oban Times 8, Oban High School 2; Atlantis Leisure 5, RM Builders 2.

Team	P	W	D	L	Pts
Carpet Fitters	4	4	0	0	12
Oban Times	4	3	0	1	9
RM Builders	3	2	0	1	6
Atlantis	3	2	0	1	6
Emergency	3	1	0	2	3
Hotels	3	1	0	2	3
Oban HS	3	0	0	3	0
Oban Electrics	3	0	0	3	0

Daniel will captain the red and blacks

SCOTLAND international Daniel Cameron will be Oban Camanachd's new captain for the 2012 season, following his appointment at the club's AGM earlier this month.

Daniel made his Scotland debut in October, alongside Camanachd goalkeeper Gavin Stobbart. Daniel and Gavin will also assist James MacMillan with the under-17 side.

There will also be a new secretary and treasurer for the new year after Christine Lind and Fiona Livingstone, respectively, filled the posts. Nigel Evans continues as president and Alan Dunning remains vice-president.

Diarmid MacMillan and Andrew Pearson, who had mixed fortunes in their first season in charge of the first team,

will have the task of regaining premier league status, following the team's relegation to South Division One.

Tony Howlett and Christopher Ecclestone will take charge of the first team, while Ian Hay, Robert Howe, Donald MacVicar and Alex MacVicar will run the under-14s.

Duncan MacMillan will be lotto convenor, Gareth Evans

SHINTY

will be responsible for equipment and Mairi Dunning is the club's Child Protection Officer.

The posts were all filled at the AGM on December 7 in the Corran Halls, where president Nigel Evans said the good turnout of members and new appointments reflected the club's healthy state, in spite of relegation last season.



Kyokushinkai members make the grade

OBAN Kyokushinkai Karate club attended a grading test in Lochgilphead on Sunday, December 11. The club, run by Iain Rodger (5th degree black belt), will be taking on beginners from the week commencing January 9, 2012, until the end of March. Anyone that is interested should contact Iain on 07584 166542 or visit the website (www.kksScotland.com) for details of days and times of classes. The minimum age of new starters is eight.

Strathearn family rink win Holland Memorial Trophy



Lachie and Mary with sons Michael and Ryan after winning the Holland Cup.

CARPET BOWLS

A BENDERLOCH family has won a carpet bowls rinks competition, held in memory of a North Connell father and son.

The Strathearn family of Lachie and Mary and sons Michael, 12, and Ryan, 11, beat the Cairnbaan rink in the final of the Holland Cup on Saturday at North Connell Village Hall.

The cup is held annually in memory of Robert Holland and his son Gary, who played bowls for North Connell.

A delighted Lachie said: 'Myself and Mary have played in the league for a few years and the boys are getting to an age where they are keen to play too.'

'I don't think we are the first family rink to win the competition but it is very unusual.

'We were all very chuffed to win it.'

Reduced charges for Scottish Series

SKIPPERS attending this year's Brewin Dolphin Scottish Series may choose to berth outside of the host bay of Tarbert following changes to the 2012 competition.

Organiser Clyde Cruising Club (CCC) has announced a reduced entry fee for yachts entering the 2012 event, an annual stimulus for the local economy.

A large fleet of yachts is expected to visit Tarbert over the

Queen's Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend from June 1 - 4.

The new entry fee will not include berthing, as yachts can choose if they want to berth at Tarbert or elsewhere.

However, rather than reducing the number of crews in the Argyll village, organisers believe the reduced charges should bring more boats to Tarbert.

Competitors should expect to see a number of changes to the

YACHTING

Brewin Dolphin Scottish Series 2012 event, with CCC providing a refreshed offering on the water and shore side. All competitors berthing in Tarbert will be based on the north shore for the first time, concentrating all competitors in the one location, creating a festival atmosphere for all attending.

Weather

Thursday Light Rain.
Winds moderate, south westerly
Temperatures 6°C to 11°C

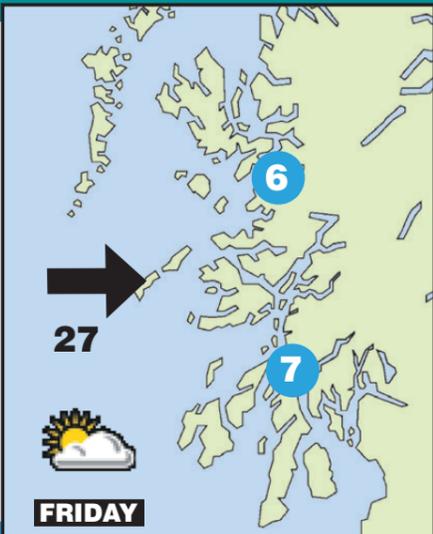
Friday Sunny intervals
Winds strong, westerly
Temperatures 5°C to 7°C.

Weekend Heavy rain.

Outlook Winds strong, westerly
Temperatures 8°C to 8°C.

Ferry Crossings/Sea States

Oban to Barra/South Uist Moderate
Oban to Coll/Tiree Moderate
Kennacraig to Islay Moderate



Tides

Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday, December 22, 2011** are listed below with differences for major ports listed beneath. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

Date	am	pm
Thur	03.31 3.6 09.28 1.2 15.51 3.7 22.09 1.2	
Fri	04.20 3.8 10.28 1.0 16.39 3.8 22.58 1.0	
Sat	05.04 4.0 11.21 0.9 17.23 3.9 23.43 0.9	
Sun	05.46 4.1 12.10 0.9 18.04 3.9 *** **	
Mon	00.27 0.8 06.27 4.2 12.56 0.9 18.43 3.9	
Tues	01.10 0.8 07.08 4.2 13.40 1.0 19.21 3.8	
Wed	01.52 0.9 07.41 4.1 14.22 1.1 19.57 3.7	

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)

Ardrishaig	-5.35	Portree	+0.55
Campbeltown	-5.30	Tobermory	+0.16
Crinan	-0.47	Dover	+5.30
Islay Port Ellen	2.00		
Lochboisdale	+0.30		
Mallaig	+0.25		

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Brisk trade at Tormore Forest

SLEAT Community Trust has hauled out more than 5,000 tonnes of logs from its Tormore Community Forest since timber operations began in mid-September, figures show. Sawlogs have gone to BSW Timber in Fort William. See Sleat, 'Down Your Way', page 9.

Simon honoured

FORT William FC and Clachnacuddin will play for the inaugural Simon Shields Memorial Cup tomorrow (Friday). Inverness man Simon, who played for both clubs, died in June from lung cancer at the age of 23. A collection will take place at the game to raise funds for Highland Hospice.

More apps from whizzkid Michael

FORT William whizzkid Michael Lawrie has developed two more touch screen applications (apps) for worldwide download. Lochaber High School pupil Michael was overjoyed when Apple accepted his 'Atomic Dodgeball' game for its App Store last month - making him one of Scotland's youngest games developers. Michael, 15, from Camaghal, has sold 200 so far and hopes his 'Hungry Rudolph' and 'Atomic Dodgeball Lite' apps will prove just as popular. BBC and STV are interviewing him this week. Mum Lyn said: 'I think it's amazing.'



Michael Lawrie: new apps. 20_151mich01



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Shining stars at Ballachulish Christmas show

Mary and Joseph - Chloe Young and Ethan Starkey - and angels Morvern MacLeod, Kenzie Beaton and Eva Bathurst starred in the Ballachulish Primary School Christmas show on Monday. The P1s put on a performance of the Nativity story, while pupils from other classes performed Christmas songs for the audience of parents, teachers, families and friends. 20_151show01

Croft students spark hopes of Ardnamurchan revival

MORE than 20 students have completed a crofting course in Kilchoan - sparking hopes of minor agricultural revival in Ardnamurchan. The Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) introductory module held special meaning for the peninsula, whose fading fortunes were memorably traced in Alasdair Maclean's 1984 minor classic 'Night Falls on Ardnamurchan'. The book depicts the decline and depopulation of Sanna, a crofting township not far from

Kilchoan. The course at the University of the Highlands and Islands' Kilchoan Learning Centre was one of eight being held across the Highlands and Islands this winter. SCF chief executive Patrick Krause, who joined the 24 young crofters for the last night of the course, said feedback from tutors and students had been 'phenomenal'. He told *The Oban Times*: 'Given the historical background, the popularity of the training here in Kilchoan is particularly

heartening. It is great to think of lights returning to some of the townships of Ardnamurchan, and it is entirely fitting that the Scottish Crofting Federation, the crofters' own representative organisation, should be leading the way by providing local properly accredited and well appreciated training and support for the next generation of crofters. SCF training programme manager Su Cooper said: 'For new and aspiring crofters there is a great deal of information that will help them on the crofting path, such as learning where to get help and some of the services offered by the Scottish Agricultural College and the Scottish Government. 'But there are more experienced crofters who also find aspects of this information a useful refresher and who will also be able to hear complementary experiences to their own. 'The livestock, land management and horticulture courses seem to have been really appealing to people.'

Daughter's fury at grave desecration

Grieving Kinlochleven woman demands answers from council

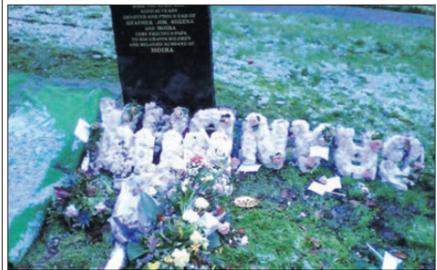
A GRIEVING Kinlochleven woman is demanding answers after her mother's grave was 'desecrated' by Highland Council workmen.

EXCLUSIVE
REPORT by
STEPHEN NORRIS
snorris@obantimes.co.uk

Moirra Hartley was horrified to find wreaths overturned, flowers covered in mud and cards scattered around where mum Moira Mitchell was laid to rest only days before. Mrs Mitchell died in Raigmore Hospital on November 9, aged 67, and was buried beside her husband Archie at Kinlochmore Cemetery, Kinlochleven, the following week. But on a visit to the graveside on November 25, Ms Hartley sank up to her knees in mud and water on the cemetery path. She immediately reported the subsidence to Highland Council and requested to be informed if any work was needed so the family could move seven wreaths, including ones to 'grandma' and 'mum', posies of flowers and cards to a safe spot nearby. She left a contact number with the council, which carried out temporary repairs the following day - but failed to inform Ms

Hartley. On her next visit on December 4, the mum-of-two found flowers buried in dirt, cards blowing away and wreaths damaged and thrown upside down next to the gravestone of her father, who died in 2006. Ms Mitchell's grandchildren, aged three to 23 had carefully affixed cards to the wreaths. Distraught, Ms Hartley fired off an angry email to TEC services boss Mike Leary asking why the family was not given notice and more care was not taken. She told *The Oban Times*: 'You only bury your mother once in your life and you can always buy more flowers, but we will never have that opportunity of that special couple of weeks again. 'That has been taken away from us and the one thing we could do for my mum has been desecrated. Having this to cope with this as well as everything else is very hard. 'If we had had the opportunity

to remove the flowers we would have gladly done that, but we were never given the chance and that's what's sad about it. 'I have not even had my email acknowledged, which has had a further negative impact on the family. They are asking me every day if I have heard anything, but I haven't - we have just been left hanging. 'I was speaking on behalf of my whole family, who are very upset by this. There's been no sensitivity shown whatsoever.' She added: 'The biggest insult was putting the wreaths back upside down. While I appreciate that could have been a mistake, it was really insulting to the family. 'I have not been able to tend the grave because you just keep sinking into the ground. I appreciate they had to do emergency procedures, but wreaths for my mum were damaged, despite us asking the council if they had a problem with the grave could they please get in touch. 'If there is a problem, why has nobody told us about it? Surely if the ground is unsafe they should be informing people about that. I am not trying to pin the blame on anybody - it's just the lack of respect and dignity shown.' A Highland Council spokesperson told *The Oban Times*: 'There could be an underwater spring in the vicinity of the grave, which is needing to be investigated. 'The workmen were working in atrocious conditions and unfortunately had damaged some of the wreaths and cards, which they can only apologise for. Mr Leary will contact Ms Hartley to discuss this as soon as possible.'



Upturned wreaths and flowers litter Mr and Mrs Mitchell's grave at Kinlochmore.

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Police launch probe into sheep deaths

FORT William police were called to Brae Lochaber this week after a local shepherd reported a dog was savaging his ewes during the night. Brian Strachan says dogs have killed five of his ewes in recent months and contacted police when he found another one badly bloodied on Monday morning. Mr Strachan, who has 40 ewes on grazings at Inverroy, told *The Oban Times*: 'I went out to feed the sheep this morning and noticed a ewe had blood running down her neck. I had one killed last week. It had been caught by the mouth and chased into the burn. It was definitely a dog that did it - I saw its tracks in the snow. Somebody must be letting their dog out at night!' Mr Strachan, Sheep Stock Club head shepherd

EXCLUSIVE
REPORT by STEPHEN NORRIS
snorris@obantimes.co.uk

at Galmore, Roy Bridge, added: 'The ewes are full of lamb, they are pregnant. I just want to let people know to keep their dogs in. The owners will have to keep them under control, otherwise the dog will have to be shot.' Inspector Donald Campbell told *The Oban Times* it had yet to be established whether dogs or foxes were responsible. He said: 'Officers are conducting inquiries with dog owners in the locality. I would reiterate they should keep their dogs under control at all times both in the vicinity of livestock, and generally.'

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Police files

THE TYRES of a car parked in Carn Dearg, Claggan, were damaged sometime between 10pm on Friday December 16 and 11am on Saturday December 17.

A WINDOW of a house at Nevis Bank Apartments, Belford Road, Fort William, was broken sometime between 5pm and 10pm on Tuesday December 13.

Anyone with knowledge of these incidents is asked to contact Fort William Police Station on 01397 702361 or the confidential line on 01397 702000. Members of the public may also report any crime, offence or anything suspicious by phoning Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Banned driver caught behind wheel on A82

A BANNED driver has admitted being behind the wheel of a car on a road near Spean Bridge.

Christopher MacKay, of 5 County Cottages, Lochend, Inverness, pled guilty to driving on the A82 between Spean Bridge and Stronaba while disqualified on May 14. The 25-year-old also admitted failing to give two breath specimens at Fort William Police Station later the same day.

MacKay had previously been banned for drink driving, Fort William Sheriff Court heard. Sentencing was deferred until January 18 for reports.

Caol man ordered to behave after kicking victim on head

A CAOL man has been ordered to be of good behaviour for six months after admitting kicking a man on the head during a drunken fracas.

Iain MacKay, of 15 Clunes Avenue, pled guilty to assaulting Thomas Bell at a taxi rank on Fort William High Street by striking him on the head and repeatedly kicking him on the head in the early hours of May 8.

Procurator Fiscal Alison Whyte told Fort William Sheriff Court Mr Bell approached Mackay and his wife with his belt 'wrapped round his hand' after a verbal altercation.

Mr Bell was punched in the face by another man and fell to the ground. MacKay, aged 33, went over to Mr Bell and struck him on the face as he tried to get up before kicking him a number of times on the face.

Deferring sentencing MacKay until June 19, Sheriff Richard MacFarlane said there had been an 'element of provocation'.

He said: 'Any assault that involves kicking on the head, especially the face, is a significant matter.'



The Camaghael sheep at Lochaber High: 'meh-be' not good enough? 10_151diary02

Sheep fail to make the grade at Lochaber High

LOCHABER High School welcomed four new Christmas entrants on Friday - a group of Blackface sheep from a nearby Camaghael croft.

The quartet wandered in a full two hours late for classes and

were immediately expelled for their indiscipline by irate head teacher Jim Sutherland.

It is unknown what subjects the visitors - three believed to be third years, the other a first year - had hoped to study, but

The Oban Times has it on good authority that home economics was not among them.

It is understood teaching staff granted an exemption from cookery lessons, as the stress of having to prepare lambrogan josh

was judged potentially injurious to their health. Languages, too, were off the menu as the fleecy four appeared incapable of comprehending anything save whistles and shouts. However, their sporting ability was not in

question judging by the speed at which they ran out the school gates. Mr Sutherland told The Oban Times: 'We welcome pupils of all abilities and backgrounds, but these four just weren't up to the mark.'

Timber industry support welcomed

MORE than 30 MSPs from all political parties have signed up to a Scottish Parliament Motion supporting current and future investment in the Scottish timber industry.

The motion, by MSP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch Dave Thompson, recognises the commitment by BSW Timber in investing £50 million over five years in its mill at Corpach, Fort William. The important role of the sawmill industry in the Scottish economy, the need to sustain investment through appropriate productive woodland expansion and the 'critical role' of timber products in building low-cost and low-carbon homes are also highlighted.

Hamish Macleod, BSW Timber's head of public affairs, said: 'The motion was supported by more than a third of all the MSPs who were eligible to put their name to it, which shows the strength of cross-party political support that the industry enjoys in Scotland. While the size and

scope of the forest products industry is vast and has allowed UK manufacturing to grow, current uncertainty in wood supply is damaging to industry confidence and downstream customers. This is why we urgently need the political will to continue to invest in woodland expansion across Scotland.

'BSW's investment has been built on the basis of sustainable and long-term supply, which needs to continue.'

'Of key concern to us is how the many stakeholders involved in the industry - including the Forestry Commission for Scotland - can continue to provide a consistent, reliable supply of timber at market price and how its future financial sustainability can be secured.' Welcoming the cross-party support, Mr Thompson said: 'This shows the importance MSPs of all parties place on the health of such an important source of environmentally-sustainable employment.'



Festive cheer for 100 at Caol lunch club

Nearly 100 members of Caol Community Centre's (CCC) lunch club celebrated the festive season at a Christmas party last week. After enjoying Christmas lunch, the music was turned on and presents were handed out. Local councillors Eddie Hunter and Bill Clark also attended to join in the fun. Lochaber Action on Disability (LAD) has taken over running the lunch club until the public takeover of CCC in April, and the Caol-based charity provided the food and the transport for the day. LAD manager Laura Cheetham told The Oban Times: 'We wanted to put something on to let people know we're still here. It's marvellous that we have been made so welcome by everyone with connections to the lunch club. I would like to say a huge thank you to Fay, Linda Campbell, her mum and the band for all their hard work at the Christmas Party for the entertainment and hospitality and to everyone who came to lend a hand. A massive thank you to Joan the cook - without her we couldn't have done it.'

Call to unite on seabed control

Bid to keep seabed leases and revenue under local management

HIGHLAND Council leader Michael Foxley is seeking to forge a united political front to win more control of the seabed from the Crown Estate for island and coastal communities.

By STEPHEN NORRIS snorris@obantimes.co.uk

In a letter to all Highlands and Islands MSPs and MPs this week, Councillor Foxley invites them to back a council demand that lucrative seabed leases and revenues should be managed as locally as possible.

The move follows last week's joint submission from all six Highlands and Islands local authorities to the Scottish Affairs committee investigating the Crown Estate's hitherto exclusive role.

The quango manages properties, mineral and salmon fishing rights in Scotland and controls half the country's foreshore and almost all its seabed, sending revenues to the UK Treasury.

But now Orkney, Shetland, Western Isles, Argyll and Bute, Highland and Moray councils want coastal communities, not just Crown Estate Commissioners, to rule on future investments - and be the main beneficiaries from developments. The councils maintain the absence of local control 'has long been a source of frustration' - a feeling likely to escalate as money-spinning energy projects come on stream.

The Crown Estate already collects lease revenues from salmon and shellfish farms, harbour dues and foreshore and mooring activities. It re-invests some cash locally.

In their submission, the six local authorities propose grading developments as 'national interest', 'regional coastal partnership' or 'area coastal partnership' according to their size and impact.

Under the plan, approximately 20 per cent of all Crown Estate revenues would be retained

at either UK or Scottish Government level - the SNP Scottish Government wants all control over the Crown Estate to be handed over to Scotland - with the remaining 80 per cent split between a Regional Challenge Fund and a local Area Coastal Partnership Fund.

Councillor Foxley told The Oban Times: 'I am writing to all Highlands and Islands MSPs and MPs asking them to support our joint position. I am asking the Scottish Government to support our position and the UK Government to action it.'

'I am delighted that we are able to present a united front on this crucially important issue. For too long we have suffered a loss of significant revenue from a growing marine sector, with no opportunities to manage our own coastline.'

'This has been depriving these communities of making best use of their own resources, thereby compromising the ability of these communities to regenerate themselves.'

Councillor Foxley also highlighted that communities such as Eigg, Gigha and South Uist, who own their land, should be major players in Area Coastal Partnerships, while Community Land Scotland would be a key stakeholder.

Public harbour trusts such as Mallaig Harbour Authority would likewise have a pivotal role, he said.

Comhairle Leader Angus Campbell said: 'We have put forward a positive proposal, innovative and beneficial. We are hopeful the Scottish Affairs Committee are in agreement with us and will work with us to make the case to Treasury and UK Ministers.' See the full proposal at www.obantimes.co.uk.



On song at Christmas concert

Macdiarmid Primary School pupils performed traditional Skye music and song during their Christmas Concert. The concert involved the whole school with the children singing - in English and Gaelic - Highland Dancing and playing instruments, including pipes, chanters, guitar, fiddle and tin whistles. Youngsters from P3 and P4 are pictured during their performance.

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Prudent planning pays dividends

HIGHLAND Council will make no further cuts before it sets a budget for 2012/13 on February 9, finance chiefs have confirmed.

Council budget leader Councillor David Alston told the full council meeting last Thursday that thanks to £20.4 million of savings identified earlier in 2011 and prudent planning involving consultation with the public, the budget was balanced for the new financial year. The council will spend £600 million on services and have £75 million available for building projects, such as school projects, roads, flood prevention and caring for older people.

Councillor Alston said: 'We have made the difficult decisions well in advance so when we meet in February to confirm the budget we will have no further cuts to find. This demonstrates the value of three-year budgeting and asking the public for their views on proposed savings. I am also pleased that we will be able to maintain our capital programme at its current level. This is good news for local contractors and the general economy of the Highlands.'

However, looking ahead to 2013/14 and 2014/15, Councillor Alston said the picture was 'not so bright' and envisaged the council having to find £27 million in both years to cover pay inflation, price inflation and budget pressures. A new council would be elected early in May next year and it would be for them to identify future savings.

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FW

Old Ballachulish ferry cash boost

By STEPHEN NORRIS
snorris@obantimes.co.uk

A CHARITY maintaining a tiny turntable ferry between Skye and the mainland has been given a priceless Christmas present – courtesy of First Minister Alex Salmond and Scottish author and artist Alasdair Gray.

Glenachulish Preservation Trust has been named as one of four beneficiaries of the First Minister's Christmas card for 2011 – a gift potentially worth tens of thousands of pounds.

The trust looks after the 41 year-old *MV Glenachulish*, the last ferry of its kind in Scotland, which operated on the Ballachulish crossing before the bridge opened in 1975.

The Isle of Skye Ferry Community Interest Company now runs the vessel on the 600-metre crossing between Glenelg and Kylerhea from



Bella Caledonia: sale will help upkeep of old Ballachulish ferry.

Easter to October. Mr Salmond and his wife Moira were regular customers on the ferry during the summer – much to the

delight of staff. As a token of thanks, chairwoman of trustees Jennifer Frances and trainee skipper Calum Stiven presented Scotland's first couple with Isle of Skye Ferry baseball caps, car stickers and postcards – but had no inkling their charm offensive would reap big dividends.

Dr Frances said: 'We have been completely taken by surprise to be chosen as a beneficiary of the First Minister's Christmas Card 2011, and are very appreciative. Money donated will begin the extensive restoration programme for the vessel.'

'We are a small, recently formed charity run completely by volunteers, which aims to preserve in working order the last turntable ferry in Scotland.'

'Once a common sight throughout the Highlands 'wee ferries' such as our *MV Glenachulish* were road links before the widespread building

of bridges to improve the road network in the 1970s.'

Mr Salmond's card depicts Mr Gray's Bella Caledonia image from the artist's ceiling mural in the Oran Mor venue in Glasgow. The painting will be auctioned in the New Year, with proceeds and card sales going to the Glenachulish Preservation Trust, Children's hospice CHAS, aid agency SCIAF, and the Small Tribes Trust. Last year's card raised £86,000.

Dave Thompson, MSP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch, was present when the First Minister named the trust as a beneficiary.

He said: 'Long may the *MV Glenachulish* continue to ply the waves, giving both locals a short cut between Glenelg and Arnisdale and the communities of Skye, and visitors a small taste of Highlands and Islands seafaring romance.'



Marooned: workmen battle to free the 10.10am Mallaig to Crianlarich train at Corroul Station.

Blizzards block train at Corroul

LOWER parts of the West Highlands escaped with hail and sleet in last Tuesday's storm – but up at Corroul Station blizzards blocked the line.

Deep drifts halted the 10.10 Mallaig to Crianlarich service, while flooding and fallen trees elsewhere meant the line was closed. Alternative transport was arranged for passengers.

A ScotRail spokeswoman said: 'We apologise to any customers affected by the disruption caused by the severe weather.'

Winds reached more than 80mph in some parts of the country last Tuesday. The West Highland Line was running again as normal by Wednesday morning.

Eleven local projects benefit from grants

LOCHABER councillors awarded 11 grants from their discretionary budgets to local projects at their latest business meeting in Fort William.

HighLife Highland - contribution to the delivery of two fire service courses for young people - £2,000 from ward youth funds.

HighLife Highland - contribution to the delivery of a Fusion and Caol youth centre events programme, targeted winter activities project and anti-bullying work with Room 13 - £5,750 from ward youth funds.

Lochaber Deaf Care - contribution to costs - £1,000.

Friends of Caol School - transport costs for whole school trip to Blair Drummond Safari Park - £650.

Highland Council - improved street lighting at Glenkingie Street car park - £1,000.

Mallaig Community Council - restoration of 'High Hamden' - £1,750.

Caol in Bloom - watering of hanging baskets and beds; purchase of litter pickers/gloves for children - £700.

Plantation Community Association - Christmas meal/prize raffle/transport/provision of Christmas boxes for elderly residents plus children's visit to the pantomime and meal and transport - £300.

Nether Lochaber Senior Citizen Association - contribution to summer trip (2012) and Christmas meal - £400.

Ben Nevis All Stars - contribution to costs for uniforms, accessories, training and travel for cheerleading group based at Upper Achintore - £600.

Caol Regeneration Co. Children's Christmas parties 2011 - £800.



Caught on camera: a pine marten in Glen Nevis.

Pinemarten caught on Glen Nevis camera

WILDLIFE in Glen Nevis has been caught on film thanks to remote cameras funded by international aid charity CARE International.

Highland Council and John Muir Trust Rangers have so far photographed a pine marten, badger and a robin.

Over time they hope to snap otters, golden eagles and foxes, as well as confirm the presence of the elusive Scottish wildcat.

The movement-sensitive cameras take a picture automatically when an animal comes into the shot.

Michelle Melville, Highland Council's Glen Nevis ranger, has been using the cameras to

help the Glen Nevis Junior Rangers study local wildlife.

She said: 'One day a pine marten got stuck in the garage at the visitor's centre and after letting it out I decided that the camera might be used to film this elusive animal at night.'

'We baited a station in the woodshed with peanuts and eventually we caught our first photos of a pine marten.'

'Our next challenge is to try and get photos of the otters on the River Nevis.'

Cameras have also been set up on the John Muir Trust's Ben Nevis Estate to monitor species in Steall gorge and the meadows above.

Corpach marina group awaits seabed survey results

THE GROUP hoping to develop a £3million marina at Corpach is awaiting the results of surveys before the project can be taken forward.

Caol Regeneration Company (CRC) is investigating the possibility of building 60 berths next to Corpach Basin to take advantage of an increase in yachting activity on the west coast.

Oban company Digital Land Surveys has been appointed to produce reports on the suitability of the seabed before the project moves forward.

CRC company secretary Dr Susan told *The Oban Times*: 'We

are waiting for the results from the geotech and topographical surveys. They will have to be in by the end of the month because that's when the funding for the reports runs out.'

When the results are finalised, CRC plan to hire a project officer. Funding for the new employee will come from CRC and local fundraising.

The rights to the land on which the marina would be built also need to be secured before the group can seek funding. The land is owned by a number of parties including Crown Estates, Lochiel Estates and British Waterways.

Invermoriston crash driver dies

A 42-YEAR-old Inverness man died following a road traffic incident on the A887 near Invermoriston last Wednesday morning.

Two men were taken to Raigmore Hospital after their vehicle left the road and went down an embankment.

The driver, named as David Marshall, later died of his injuries, while the front seat passenger was released after receiving treatment for minor injuries.

Police inquiries into the circumstances of the accident are ongoing and are asking for any witnesses to contact police at the Force Operations Centre on 01463 715555.

Deepest Atlantic depression of the century

LAST Tuesday's storms were as a result of the deepest Atlantic depression recorded on the British mainland this century, it has been confirmed.

At Gairloch in Wester Ross, Two Lochs Radio nature reporter Peter Cunningham logged a pressure just 943.4mBar as the storm swept past the west coast.

Steve Jebson, library information officer for the Met Office in Exeter, pulled up the records and confirmed the reading was the lowest pressure recorded by the Met office anywhere in the UK this century.



Invergarry pupil wins national food hygiene poster award

An Invergarry Primary School pupil has won a national poster design award. Callie Rodgers was among 12 winners in a Food Standards Agency (Scotland) competition challenging schoolchildren to produce a poster to get the food hygiene message across. Callie's colourful image was chosen to be a part of the calendar. The artistic pupil won £50 for herself and £250 for her school. The children decided to spend the money on a camcorder.

'Safe eating' tips

ENVIRONMENTAL health at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council) has distributed festive 'safe eating' leaflets to local households.

Inadequate defrosting and cooking of poultry and poor preparation of vegetables can lead to gastro-intestinal upsets, warns the council.

The information is at www.cne-siar.gov.uk/enserv/publichealth.asp.

JAMIE MCGRIGOR
Highlands & Islands MSP

Contact Jamie at his Regional Office:
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MIKE MACKENZIE
MSP Highlands and Islands

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Fax: (01631) 565512
Mobile: 07774 480393
e-mail: boydrhmd@supanet.com

Uists hauliers urge RET re-think

SCOTTISH Government proposals to remove the road equivalent tariff (RET) from commercial goods carriers in the Western Isles could cost local businesses up to £150,000 a year, Stòras Uibhist chief executive Huw Francis has claimed.

The Scottish Government has said it will extend the RET system to cover the entire west coast of Scotland, but not for commercial vehicles. They will instead revert to the bulk discount system used before RET was introduced in 2008, which gives bigger discounts for firms transporting more goods. The RET scheme sets ferry fares to what it would cost to travel the same distance by road.

Mr Francis said removing RET could add up to £150,000 to the cost of operating haulage firms to the Uists. He said: 'The increased ferry costs will inevitably be passed on to the local community in the Uists, through higher prices for food and other essential items. Ferry services are the road network to the Scottish Islands and increasing the charges for using this essential infrastructure will increase costs for local businesses in every sector.'

Western Isles MSP Alasdair Allan told *The Oban Times* he recently met with hauliers on Uist and they want a flat rate discount to be applied. He said: 'The more use a company makes of the ferries, the more discount they get. If you live or work on an island which only has three ferries a week, you won't see much benefit. Rather than a system of bulk discount which favours larger companies, they are keen to see the discount applied in a fairer way.' Mr Allan said he had spoken to Transport Secretary Alex Neil and asked him to consider changing the Government's proposals.

Public back drink drive crackdown

FOUR of the nine people caught drink driving during week two of Northern Constabulary's festive safety campaign were reported by members of the public, police say.

Two drug driving offences were also detected, compared to none last year. During the same period last year there were eight drink drivers caught. Inspector Derek Paterson said the figures 'clearly demonstrate' society's anger at those who drink and drive and thanked the public for their 'continued support'.



St Bride's on song with concert and Nativity

The Primary 1 - 3 class of St Bride's Primary School sang and played instruments at the school Christmas Concert held in Nether Lochaber Parish Church last Thursday night. To a full house, the whole school then performed their Christmas Nativity Musical 'Jesus' Christmas Party'. This was the second concert staged by the school at the church this year. Head teacher Susan Kemp said: 'The event rounds off a very busy and successful year for both church and school'. The children also participated in the Nether Lochaber Parish Church centenary celebrations in June. 20_511brides01



Festive songs at Fort William

MARY, Mrs Claus and her helper were among the youngsters getting into the yuletide mood at Fort William RC Primary School's Christmas show last Tuesday.

Each class, including the school's Gaelic medium pupils, got onto the stage in the packed school hall to perform a Christmas song for the audience of parents, teachers and friends. The school's 12 Polish pupils sang 'Today in Bethlehem' in their native tongue, before the children wished everyone a Merry Christmas in all the languages used at the school - including English, Gaelic, Latvian and Lithuanian. 20_511mas01

Fort William real time bus information system up and running in January

THE LONG-AWAITED real time bus information system for Fort William is expected to be fully operational by early January. Electronic screens giving up-to-the-minute timetable information have been running on some bus routes and at the town's bus station since the summer. Two more screens have been installed on Middle Street and will be powered up in early 2012. A free 'app' to deliver the information to smart phones is also available.

MSP backs calls for new Glenelg doctor

SKYE, Lochaber and Badenoch MSP Dave Thompson has backed calls for NHS Highland to appoint a replacement doctor at Glenelg.

Mr Thompson had previously welcomed an NHS Highland announcement that no decision would be taken until February on how to maintain services while Dr Simon Hurding was seconded to work for the Scottish Government in Edinburgh. But after discussing the situation with constituents and medical professionals, the MSP has toughened his stance.

Mr Thompson said: 'I have always been clear that there must be no reduction in the service offered to the community in Glenelg while one of their two doctors is seconded to another area. That is why I am today calling on NHS Highland to appoint a replacement doctor to cover Dr Hurding's duties. I need to listen to the local community and hear more about the various possible solutions NHS Highland was considering and didn't want to pre-judge what the answer to this problem should be. However, having had those discussions, it is clear that the only answer is the appointment of another GP to ensure the status quo is maintained.'

Mid Highland CHP General Manager Gill McVicar told *The Oban Times*: 'The working groups are refining proposals at present and will bring these back to the Mid Highland Community Health Partnership (CHP) management team in February. In the meantime, locum GPs are covering the vacancy.'

Hotel helps keep car sharing club wheels turning

A GREEN car transport scheme in Mallaig is looking to the New Year with optimism after securing its first corporate membership with a local hotel.

EXCLUSIVE REPORT by RICHARD HADDOCK rhaddock@obantimes.co.uk

West Wheels Car Club has signed an agreement to welcome the West Highland Hotel to the car sharing club, which is designed to cut the costs of car ownership and help the environment.

Staff and guests will be able to use one of the club's two cars, a Ford Focus and a Ford Fusion, on a one-off basis without having to join. West Wheels development officer Mick Rodgers told *The Oban Times* this could bring in some welcome extra revenue for the scheme.

He said: 'We hope this will help hotel business, as a bus party or train travellers can explore the area at leisure. We will also benefit with the extra hire income.'

'We don't want to go all

touristy, because this is a community thing. But the hotels are part of the community as well. If we get any tourists using the car, that'll be the icing on the cake rather than our bread and butter.'

Members of the car club are able to book one of two cars based at the Lochaber port when they need it, while the club takes on the responsibility for ownership, maintenance and insurance. Mallaig Harbour Authority provided a car parking space on the pier for convenient collection.

West Wheels was initially to run for five months from June until November as part of a Scottish Government programme, but Mr Rodgers

said the time period had been extended into the New Year.

He said: 'The trial has now been extended until the end of March 2012, and a business plan is being developed with a view to it becoming permanent. We have 34 members already, but need more to ensure the long-term viability of the club.'

'The cars can be used for a short shopping trip, business or even for your holidays. Our members' trips have included a music festival, airport pick up and a visit to the dentist!'

Funding from the Scottish Government via Transform Scotland paid for the cars. The Mallaig project has been financed through Carplus, a charity promoting alternatives to private car use.

For more information on the club, visit the website at www.westwheels.co.uk or call 07848 030317 or email westwheelsclub@gmail.com.



Signed up: New car club member West Highland Hotel owner Sine Davis, with children Corra and Freya and employee Georgia Hawan.

Interim tug contract extended until March

THE UK government has extended the temporary contract for ocean-going tugs at Stornoway and Lerwick until March 2012.

The emergency towing vessels (ETVs) - hired to carry out Maritime and Coastguard Agency duties - were withdrawn in September to save money, but a vociferous Highlands and Islands campaign forced a rethink.

Now an interim contract awarded to Invergordon-based JP Knight has been extended until March.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council) welcomed the news, but said a long term solution for the seas to the west of Scotland is still

required. And leader Angus Campbell warned that expecting commercial interests to pay for vessels' safety everywhere was unrealistic.

He said: 'Scotland Secretary Michael Moore has identified the oil and gas industry as being part of the answer for the Northern Isles - but that is not a solution for the western waters.'

'There remains a lot of work to be done to put in place an appropriate provision. Otherwise, come March and the end of the contract, we will be increasing the risk for mariners and the environment. We will continue to work with government to find a long-term solution to this crucial issue.' Ross, Skye and Lochaber

MP Charles warned: 'It is vital that both [Scottish and UK] governments work with industry to reach a deal on the tugs.'

'We can't afford to let them slip away.'

The ETVs were introduced as a response to the Braer oil spill off Shetland in 1993. Last year, the Stornoway-based *Anglian Prince* pulled a nuclear submarine clear after it ran aground off Skye, doused a fire on the freighter *Yeoman Bontrup* off Lochaline and prevented the cargo ship *Red Duchess* from wrecking on Rùm.

The UK Coalition government originally wanted the shipping industry to pay for keeping vessels safe at sea, but is now considering its options.

School's Christmas surprise for pensioners

THIRTEEN pensioner households in south Lochaber received a surprise Christmas present this week when Kinlochleven High School pupils delivered festive hampers to their doors.

As part of the personal and social education course, the youngsters sent out 155 letters to the local community asking for donations of goods. Nomination forms inviting suggestions on who should receive a hamper were dispatched at the same time.

Six pupil Patrick Carr, one of those involved in making up and delivering the hampers, told *The Oban Times*: 'We asked for donations of non-perishable food such as shortbread for the hampers. Even better, there's a bottle of champagne in every one!'

Head teacher John McGilp thanked everyone who contributed.



56 Kinlochleven High pupils Nicky Richardson and Partick Carr prepare to deliver the Christmas hampers. 20_511hampers01

Charlie back at helm of Plockton Community Council

CHARLIE M Macrae was re-elected chairman of Plockton and District Community Council following a ballot of members at the council's inaugural meeting in Plockton hall last Tuesday.

Joy Mackenna was re-elected vice-chairman and Gill James as secretary and treasurer. Flowers were sent to Ms James, who is currently recovering in hospital after a hip operation.

Mr MacRae thanked former members Geoff Webster, John MacDonald, George Glasgow and Kally Leiper for their input over the years, and welcomed new members Mike Jones and June Sanderson. The next meeting is in Plockton hall on February 28. Full report on the inaugural meeting in next week's *Oban Times*.

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Soroba residents urged to have their say on community centre

RESIDENTS in Soroba, Oban have been urged to have their say on a future community centre as Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA) announced plans to forge ahead with the project.

The proposal of a community centre at Shuna Terrace has been mooted for the past 10 years but following the land transfer of the site from Argyll and Bute Council to ACHA this week, work to canvass public opinion

and the search for funding can begin. Speaking at a public meeting in Soroba Learning Centre on Monday, ACHA chief executive Alastair MacGregor said the potential of Soroba had

been inhibited by the size of its facilities. He added: 'We have formed an ACHA Officers Group to take this forward but we are looking for people from within the community to help.

'We are working in a different funding landscape but if we work together and look at the possible instead of the negative, I think we can pull this off.'

Mr MacGregor encouraged residents to fill in questionnaires due to be sent out in January, to give the housing association the evidence it needs.

Oban South and the Isles Councillor Roddy McCuish paid tribute to his former colleague, the late Councillor Donald 'Skye' McIntosh, who campaigned for a community centre in Soroba. He added: 'It is unfortunate that Donald won't see this come to fruition, but that in itself should make us work that bit harder.'

Pay for where you stay - say online sellers

Internet shoppers hit by highly inflated delivery charges

INFLATED delivery charges to residents of the West Highlands and Islands is prompting 'huge levels of anger' among internet shoppers, according to a new survey.

Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) interviewed 900 people across Argyll and Bute, the Western Isles, Orkney and the Highlands in compiling a new report on delivery charges.

Excessive charges
Of those, 84 per cent said they had been refused delivery of goods because of their location, while 85 per cent have warned friends and family against using certain companies because of their excessive charges.

Further infuriating locals is the insistence of companies in using couriers other than Royal Mail, who charge one price for delivery across the entirety of the UK, including the islands.

Feelings are running so high that CAS say it was the largest response it has received to a poll of its kind.

'Really shocking'

The organisation will now be giving evidence to regulators in Scotland and England. Campaign co-ordinator, Angela Murphy, said: 'The comments reveal huge levels of anger and some of the examples reported are really shocking.'

'With families watching every penny at the moment, these excessive costs are a major burden for people.'

'They are very angry and want something done about it. And so do we.'

Among those charges reported, a customer on the Isle of Lewis being asked for £55 for delivery of an item costing just £26.

A respondent on Skye said: 'A company in Somerset wanted an extra £80 instead of £20 for

84 per cent have been refused delivery because of their location. CAS survey

delivery, but I have been refused delivery full stop on many occasions because of being in the Highlands and Islands.'

Oban and Fort William are also considered as 'Highland' by some delivery companies.

Numerous respondents reported problems with retailers on eBay, where the buyer's postcode often resulting in higher fees or being flatly denied sale.

One online customer in Oban

told *The Oban Times*: 'I have frequently been heavily surcharged for delivery and have twice been refused delivery altogether as the seller claimed 'you choose to live in a very remote location.'

Handling fees on top of inflated delivery charges were also common, with Tesco named as one retailer who tried to charge £20 delivery and a £15 handling charge for a bicycle.

Large companies weren't the only ones at fault.

Angela Murphy said: 'We will be reporting this evidence to the Office of Fair Trading and to trading standards, as well as to both the UK and Scottish governments.'



Oban Hospice Board chairman Dr Mac Armstrong, right, with staff from Lorn and Islands Hospital's Ward 1, 16, 150ward01

Oban Hospice funds hospital ward refurbishment

OBAN Hospice has been putting its money where its mouth is by spending £40,000 on improvements to Lorn and Islands Hospital over the past few months.

Higher standard
The major investment has been a complete refurbishment of two side rooms in the new Ward 1.

Oban Hospice Board chairman

Dr Mac Armstrong said: 'This spend has been of special value in the current economic climate in which funds for development are otherwise very constrained.'

'For the refurbishment in Ward 1 we had to work within the framework of the existing room layout and to comply with strict new infection control guidelines but we have carefully chosen materials and fittings

which are, wherever possible, of a higher standard than the NHS would normally use.'

The newly refurbished rooms have a different lighting, TV and sound system and are being provided together with wi-fi access.

Relatives' overnight suite

The hospice will also fund a complete upgrade of the suite available for relatives to stay

overnight, using a similarly higher standard of fittings and furniture.

Dr Armstrong added: 'We continue to fund the very successful Day Hospice at Lorn and the Isles Hospital, a commitment currently costing around £20,000 a year, and we are considering further developments for the Day Hospice in the coming year.'

Creagan Inn re-opens its doors in style



New owner, Liz Crichton, watches as the first pint of a new era is poured at the pub's reopening on Sunday. Picture - John MacFavish

AN ARGYLL lochsides public house and restaurant near Appin reopened in spectacular style last Sunday, with accordion maestro and ceilidh king, Fergie MacDonald heralding in a new era.

Creagan Inn's new owners, Liz and Allan Crichton, welcomed a large gathering of locals keen to congratulate them on taking over the popular venue.

Local councillor, Neil Mackay, opened the remodelled pub by cutting a holly ribbon, saying: 'I've got many fond memories of the old Creagan Inn and I'm looking forward to many more in the future.'

Liz said: 'We took the keys on November 21 and I'm delighted we've managed to turn it round since then.'

'Everyone has been so helpful and the locals so supportive. The turnout is amazing.'

What we want to do is take the Creagan Inn back to being a locals' pub, because that's what it's really about.'

Taynuilt tackle council after planning objections overlooked

A COMMUNITY council has slammed Argyll and Bute Council's planning process after an objection it made was overlooked.

Taynuilt Community Council objected to an application from Ballet West to create a fourth and fifth house of multiple occupancy (HMO) in the centre of the village for its student dancers.

The community council was disappointed to learn the application had been approved and upset by a revelation that the application was not put in front of the planning protective services and licensing (PPSL) committee of elected representatives, but instead had been passed by planning officers through delegated powers.

However, while it is generally understood a community council is a statutory consultee in planning matters, Argyll and

EXCLUSIVE REPORT by Euan Paterson epaterson@obantimes.co.uk

Bute Council claim Taynuilt Community Council failed to request a 'formal consultation' within the set seven days and therefore did not qualify for the status of statutory consultee.

At the community council meeting last week, Oban North and Lorn Councillor Neil Mackay, who sits on the PPSL, said: 'I share your concerns that the letter of objection was not given more consideration. If this application had come in front of me on the committee, I would have put more weight on that objection and wondered whether Taynuilt was at maximum absorption for HMOs.'

Councillor Duncan MacIntyre said: 'What I would question from planners is why, when a statutory body has objected to this application, does it not go in front of the PPSL?'

A spokeswoman for Argyll and Bute Council said: 'Referral to the PPSL Committee is not automatically triggered when a consultee submits objections. PPSL involvement is only necessary when a statutory consultee objection exists and where notification to Scottish Ministers would be necessary prior to taking a decision to approve the application.'

'That was not the case in either of these instances. Whilst an over-concentration of student accommodation could alter the character of an established residential area, five HMOs is only a small percentage of the number of households within Taynuilt.'

Taynuilt bid to retain hotel at heart of village

RESIDENTS of Taynuilt are being invited to a meeting today (Thursday) to explore options to avoid the Taynuilt Hotel closing down.

The future of the hotel has been in doubt since owners Glenorchy Lodge Hotels went into administration in October. The meeting, to be held in the hotel, has been called by Renate Powell and Natalia Lewis.

Renate said: 'I would much rather someone bought the hotel as a going concern but the last thing anyone wants is to have no hotel.'

Banned from Oban pubs until March

AN OBAN man has been banned from entering any pub or club in Oban until at least March 6 after allegedly committing two assaults last Saturday.

The 26 year old pled not guilty to the assaults when he appeared from custody at Oban Sheriff Court on Monday.

Argyll and Bute run late with FOI requests

ARGYLL and Bute Council failed to respond to one in five freedom of information requests within the legally established deadline of 20 working days.

New figures show that, between April 1, 2010 and March 31, 2011, the local authority received 1,059 requests, of which 20 per cent received late responses.

All requests were responded to, the council said.

Tyndrum Gold bottle winner

A LIMITED edition, numbered bottle of Tyndrum Gold, will arrive at the door of Mrs R. Ross, Fort William this week, after she won *The Oban Times* competition.

The 15 year old Speyside malt whisky was launched by Tyndrum's Green Welly Stop in November this year to celebrate news that a gold mine will be established at Cononish, Tyndrum.

Beware the festive call out charge

HOUSEHOLDERS have been warned to beware rip-off call charges if requiring emergency repairs over the festive season.

Argyll and Bute Council's Trading Standards team has urged people to ask for details on all call out charges and hourly rates before agreeing to work, with complaints about hugely inflated bills common in the colder months.

Angel OF THE YEAR
The Oban Times 150TH ANNIVERSARY 1861 - 2011

Christoph comes close in Angel of the Year awards



Christoph receives his certificate from Wyvex Media's Pauline Clifford after being named one of the runners up in our Angel of the Year awards. 15_151christoph1

A GERMAN man who has become something of an ambassador for Oban has been named as a runner up in *The Oban Times* Angel of the Year awards.

Christoph Josepfit, 44, moved to Oban in search of work in February 2007, taking up a job as a street sweeper.

His commitment to keeping the town tidy, friendly demeanour as well as making use of his language skills to assist tourists saw him as one of the outstanding nominees for our award, which was won by Kilmichael Glassary sisters, Helen McCuaig and Lizzie Scott.

Christoph, who also teaches German at the University of the Third Age and has produced a leaflet on why it is important to keep Oban tidy since 2007, was visibly emotional when receiving his certificate and cheque for £100.

He said: 'I'm very proud today. This is such a beautiful place and the people here are so friendly.'

'I would like to thank those who nominated me. I don't think this would have happened in Germany.'

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BOLLIWOOD

Fiona would like to thank most sincerely and heartfelt all of her wonderful customers for all the years of support, loyalty, kindness, laughs and best of all their love and friendship.

A Merry Christmas and a New Year ahead for all of you and I will see you all soon to share with you my new ideas for Bollywood.

My Love to all of you x

Tel: 07938889155

Michael Russell MSP

Wishes all his constituents a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

The Scottish Parliament Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Tel: 01369 702011 or email marie-claire.docherty@scottish.parliament.uk

Tommie, Kennina and Staff wish all their customers, family and friends **A Merry Christmas and a Healthy and Prosperous New Year**

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Sailing club hands out the prizes

Shadowfax is top keelboat

TOP keelboat at Oban Sailing Club for 2011 was Billy Forreth's Shadowfax, a Beneteau 31.7 with Tim Bleazard and Jamie Sinclair sharing the honours as top adult helm and top junior champion respectively.

Tim sails his Laser Krabby Patty with Jamie also helming his Laser Wavelength.

Prizes for the season were awarded at the club's annual dinner dance with more than 80 members and guests in attendance.

A new trophy in memory of Willie Buchanan who sadly passed away earlier in the year was awarded to Andrew Pretswell. Willie was a committee member for years and a tireless worker for the club.

As well as sailing his passion was exploring the west coast in his RIB and his wife Anne presented the trophy to commemorate this.

Andrew is a fitting recipient

SAILING

of the trophy having won the Scottish Regional finals of the Honda RIB Challenge in his age group in Edinburgh and going forward to compete admirably at the National Championships in Southampton.

Jamie Chapman and Tierney Carter had a great first year with their Laser 2 finishing third overall in the championship points.

Finishing second on points in the keelboats was Eric and Irena Chapman's Sigma 33 Amber Haze with Alison Chadwick's Hot Toddy third.

The Ladies Cup was won by Liz Cottier in Shadowfax with Tom Gibson winning the Crews Cup, also in Shadowfax. The Junior Helm trophy was taken by Ben Carter in Shadowfax.

The Malcolm MacKillop Decorators Quaiich for most improved novice was awarded to



Prizewinners at Oban Sailing Club this year. t510sc1NO

Thomas Smith who also took the Forreth Refrigeration Trophy for best Topper performance in the Aggregates Series. Tim Bleazard won the Scotwest Windows Trophy for best Laser in the Aggregates.

Jamie Chapman also ended his season on a high qualifying as a dinghy instructor at Cumbrae.

Meanwhile the sailing club has appointed a new commodore.

Colin Crawford, a former commodore, will be joined by some

new faces on the committee. John Paden takes over as vice-commodore with Finley Cottier the rear-commodore.

Richard Beith remains as treasurer with Murray MacDonald the new secretary.

New also to the committee are members Andrew Mead and Glynis Pretswell. Outgoing commodore Toby Sherwin said he had enjoyed his two years at the helm and hoped the 'new blood' would keep the club thriving and

moving forward.

The club's AGM looked at the issue of the ageing Topper fleet and agreed fund-raising was a priority. This will be undertaken by a sub-committee of the main OSC committee.

Saints' Scottish Cup tie called off for the third time

FOOTBALL

ANY hopes Oban Saints had of getting their Scottish Amateur Cup 4th round tie away to Dynamo East Kilbride played last Saturday were dashed when club secretary David Buchanan got a phone call on the Friday saying the game was off again due to the pitch at Barncumhall being under several inches of snow.

The match will now not take place until Saturday 7 January due to the Christmas and New holiday break.

The Oban side are worried that all these cup postponements will cause a fixture backlog at the end of the season.

David Buchanan said: 'We've had seven postponements in three away Scottish Cup ties, which is ridiculous.'

'If the games had been at home we would have got them played no problem as Glencruitten is in great condition after the work that was done on the playing surface pre-season. All the games would have gone ahead even in the worst of the weather.'

'I'm going to contact the East Kilbride club and the Scottish Cup secretary to see if the game can't be switched to Oban to ensure it goes ahead on January 7 as we can't afford another Saturday without a game.'

The incentive for the winners of the Dynamo v Saints game is a home tie in the 5th round of the national competition against top Aberdeen outfit Echt or Wallacetoun from Ayr.

The winners of the Myre Athletic v Oban Saints West of Scotland Cup 3rd round tie have been given a home game in the 4th round against one of the cup favourites Knockentiber from Ayrshire.

The Oban side have been drawn away to Glencastle Sparta in the 1st round of the Jimmy Marshall Trophy.

Dates for these cup ties have still to be arranged due to the backlog of fixtures.

Saints' youths - results and fixtures

YOUTH FOOTBALL

LAST weekend's results: Blair Thistle v Under 13s postponed; Under 14s no game; Under 15s no game; Argyll Athletic v Under 16s postponed.

The youngsters now head for a well earned festive break with fixtures resuming again on 7 and 8 January.

Carpet Fitters have it covered

INDOOR FOOTBALL

LATEST scores in the Atlantis Leisure Indoor League: Carpet Fitters 4, Oban Electrics 0; Oban Times 8, Oban High School 2; Atlantis Leisure 5, RM Builders 2.

Team	P	W	D	L	Pts
Carpet Fitters	4	4	0	0	12
Oban Times	4	3	0	1	9
RM Builders	3	2	0	1	6
Atlantis	3	2	0	1	6
Emergency	3	1	0	2	3
Hotels	3	1	0	2	3
Oban HS	3	0	0	3	0
Oban Electrics	3	0	0	3	0

Daniel will captain the red and blacks

SCOTLAND international Daniel Cameron will be Oban Camanachd's new captain for the 2012 season, following his appointment at the club's AGM earlier this month.

Daniel made his Scotland debut in October, alongside Camanachd goalkeeper Gavin Stobbart. Daniel and Gavin will also assist James MacMillan with the under-17 side.

There will also be a new secretary and treasurer for the new year after Christine Lind and Fiona Livingstone, respectively, filled the posts. Nigel Evans continues as president and Alan Dunning remains vice-president.

Diarmid MacMillan and Andrew Pearson, who had mixed fortunes in their first season in charge of the first team,

will have the task of regaining premier league status, following the team's relegation to South Division One.

Tony Howlett and Christopher Ecclestone will take charge of the first team, while Ian Hay, Robert Howe, Donald MacVicar and Alex MacVicar will run the under-14s.

Duncan MacMillan will be lotto convenor, Gareth Evans

SHINTY

will be responsible for equipment and Mairi Dunning is the club's Child Protection Officer.

The posts were all filled at the AGM on December 7 in the Corran Halls, where president Nigel Evans said the good turnout of members and new appointments reflected the club's healthy state, in spite of relegation last season.



Kyokushinkai members make the grade

OBAN Kyokushinkai Karate club attended a grading test in Lochgilphead on Sunday, December 11. The club, run by Iain Rodger (5th degree black belt), will be taking on beginners from the week commencing January 9, 2012, until the end of March. Anyone that is interested should contact Iain on 07584 166542 or visit the website (www.kkskscotland.com) for details of days and times of classes. The minimum age of new starters is eight.

Strathearn family rink win Holland Memorial Trophy



Lachie and Mary with sons Michael and Ryan after winning the Holland Cup.

CARPET BOWLS

A BENDERLOCH family has won a carpet bowls rinks competition, held in memory of a North Connel father and son.

The Strathearn family of Lachie and Mary and sons Michael, 12, and Ryan, 11, beat the Cairnbaan rink in the final of the Holland Cup on Saturday at North Connel Village Hall.

The cup is held annually in memory of Robert Holland and his son Gary, who played bowls for North Connel.

A delighted Lachie said: 'Myself and Mary have played in the league for a few years and the boys are getting to an age where they are keen to play too.'

'I don't think we are the first family rink to win the competition but it is very unusual.'

'We were all very chuffed to win it.'



Callum Hunter, aged 12, who orienteers with local club EckO has been selected for the Scottish Junior Orienteering Squad. The Oban High School pupil one of four orienteers in his age group to be picked from across Scotland based on their performance over the last year. The Tainuill boy follows in the footsteps of Oban's Briony Kincaid, who is now starting her third season with the squad.

Reduced charges for Scottish Series

SKIPPERS attending this year's Brewin Dolphin Scottish Series may choose to berth outside of the host bay of Tarbert following changes to the 2012 competition.

Organiser Clyde Cruising Club (CCC) has announced a reduced entry fee for yachts entering the 2012 event, an annual stimulus for the local economy.

A large fleet of yachts is expected to visit Tarbert over the

Queen's Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend from June 1 - 4.

The new entry fee will not include berthing, as yachts can choose if they want to berth at Tarbert or elsewhere.

However, rather than reducing the number of crews in the Argyll village, organisers believe the reduced charges should bring more boats to Tarbert.

Competitors should expect to see a number of changes to the

YACHTING

Brewin Dolphin Scottish Series 2012 event, with CCC providing a refreshed offering on the water and shore side. All competitors berthing in Tarbert will be based on the north shore for the first time, concentrating all competitors in the one location, creating a festival atmosphere for all attending.

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If you wish to have more attempts, you must enter on separate coupons.

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.

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, mislaid 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 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 The Oban Times Limited, their immediate relatives and any person otherwise connected with the competition are ineligible to enter.

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To allow for the Christmas holidays spot the ball will run for the next 2 weeks

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WEEK 1 OF 2

Spot the SHINTY BALL Competition

I enclose £1 for 20 crosses (tick box) 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

Name

Address

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Please tape your £1 coin here

Winter sports resorts off to a flying start

'More snow than I've ever seen at this time of year'

REPORT BY
STEPHEN NORRIS
snorris@obantimes.co.uk

LOCHABER'S winter sports resorts got their season off to a flying start last weekend as over 2,000 skiers and snowboarders took to the slopes at Glencoe Mountain and Nevis Range.

And a quick look at snow reports from ski centres around Europe showed Scotland ranking with the best conditions on offer anywhere.

A series of North Atlantic depressions in December dumped huge accumulations of snow on the Scottish mountains, but only rain on many of the lower Alpine resorts.

Glencoe Mountain owner Andy Meldrum was delighted early season skiers were rewarded with deep powder snow on the piste.

He told the Oban Times: 'Conditions at Glencoe over the weekend were simply stunning with snow all the way to the carpark. All main

runs had a wide and deep cover of packed powder snow. 'On Saturday we had over 600 customers who enjoyed some of the best early season skiing at Glencoe for a number of years. With sunshine, light winds, great snow and very few queues all our customers seemed to be having a great time.'

'Sunday also started with sunshine light winds and great snow but the wind picked up and it started to snow in the afternoon. We had slightly more skiers on the mountain but with the plateau Poma running again after last Thursday's storm damage skiers spread out well over the whole mountain.'

'Some of the comments we received at the end of the day ranged from 'best first day of the season ever at Glencoe' and 'more snow than I've ever seen at this time of year'.

This was backed up by the SAIS (Scottish Avalanche

WINTER SPORTS

Information Service) who measured a mid mountain snow depth of 240cm. 'All in all a great weekend and with a huge snow depth on the mountain things are looking great for the festive period.'

Meanwhile on Aonach Mor, Nevis Range logged 600 skiers and Saturday and 500 on Sunday.

Office manager Mark Jordan told The Oban Times: 'We had really good snow cover for our first day of the season. A lot of people were saying how surprised they were at how much snow we had got.'

'The snow is powdery, with pretty good cover on all the runs and good visibility too.'

'Someone described the conditions as 'Alpine' and we are currently on a par or better than many European resorts.'

A thaw to all levels yesterday (Wednesday) was forecasted to continue until Friday.



A snowboarder arrives on Glencoe Mountain's upper slopes on the ski-tow on Saturday. Over 1,000 snowsports enthusiasts enjoyed perfect conditions over the weekend.

Chris loses out to British champion

LOCHABER Phoenix teenage boxer Chris Bradley kept up his busy schedule when he appeared for Scotland in an international against England last weekend.

Chris defeated one of the top English boxers in a recent international but his opponent in this encounter was the current British champion Shane Foster.

In the first round Bradley tried to drive Foster onto the ropes,

but in his eagerness was caught several times. Chris changed tack in the second, holding the centre of the ring to trick Foster and land some telling counters.

Combinations

Going into the last Chris was still behind and was throwing four and five punch combinations, missing with the first two punches but finding success with the last couple of shots.

Unfortunately as he tried to force the action he was being caught himself and the decision went to Foster - but Chris will have learnt plenty from the experience. Lochaber Phoenix club official Steve Docherty said: 'If it takes the British champion to beat you then you must be doing something right.'

'When you consider that this time last year Chris had never

BOXING

even entered a Scottish championships he has turned himself into a Scottish champion and an international class boxer inside twelve months.

'He's still only fourteen which is only a baby in boxing terms and the future looks very bright for him.'

Thaw means league games should go ahead

FOOTBALL

THE CHANCES of all Highland League matches going ahead tomorrow night look good after much warmer temperatures over the past two days melted ice and snow covering many pitches.

Fort William have yet to play a game in December after all three fixtures were wiped out by the weather - but will look to continue their recent improved form at Clachnacuddin.

Lack of match practice and player availability could handicap Fort's efforts to grab the points at fifth bottom Clach - but manager Danny Conlon will point to the recent away win over Rothes as the benchmark.

Looking to the future, a bigger problem for Fort could be Claggan Park with frost and snow likely to exacerbate recent waterlogging problems. The Lochaber men are scheduled to play Clach in the return home fixture next Friday evening.

Comfortable wins for top two

TEN PIN BOWLING

THE TOP two teams in the scratch division of the Lochaber Building Supplies 10-pin bowling league both ran out 5-0 winners in week seven.

Alleycats remain top with 33 points followed by Council in second on 30 points. Likely Lads moved into third on 23 points.

Underdogs still lead the handicap division with 25 points with Rotavators still second on 22 points. Council move into third a further point back after beating British Legion Scotland 5-0.

The highest team games of the week came from Council with 537 scratch, 761 handicap. Council also had the highest two game scratch total with 1,041.

Individually, the best game this week came from Council's Frank Sweeney with 175 scratch, 233 handicap. Tim Attack (Ardtoe/Nevis Radio) rolled the week's best two game scratch series with 300.

Ann Lovatt of Fairway Fillies bowling off an average of 105 was over the moon as she beat Alleycats' Pam Weller (average 156) 131 to 129 in their match up.

Annual President's match goes ahead on Boxing Day

RUGBY

THE ANNUAL President's Boxing Day rugby match kicks off at Banavie at 2pm.

The current Lochaber Rugby Club team will take on a XV of former players in the challenge match. Kick off is at 2pm all players should meet at 1am for pre-match refreshments and tactics. Non-members are welcome.

Lochaber Rugby Club member Pauline Donaldson said: 'This is always a great day out - perfect for blowing away the Christmas Day cobwebs.'



New strips for sports team

Invergarry Primary's sports team will soon take to the pitch in their new school strip after local firm David Smith Contractors donated new outfits. Head teacher Jane Strachan said: 'They look super and we are looking forward to wearing them at future sports events.'

Duror race cancelled

ATHLETICS

LOCHABER Athletic Club's Duror Race was cancelled on Sunday after the wintry conditions left parts of the course covered in ice.

Event organiser Linda MacEwan was forced to call off the event following a course inspection on Saturday afternoon which found several sections too dangerous to race on.

Around 50 runners had been due to tackle the eight-mile

circular course, which would have taken the athletes from the Forestry Commission car park outside the village round a mixture of forestry roads and cross-country hill tracks.

A few keen members will head to Linlithgow to race in the Beecraigs Handicap Trail on Boxing Day.

Going from strength to strength

BOXING

NETHER Lochaber Amateur Boxing Club took six boxers down to Hamilton ABC for a sparring session and networking visit on Sunday.

The Hamilton club has only just started up and NLABC head coach Martin Glenesk is keen to establish links with the new outfit, with an eye on setting up bouts between Nether Lochaber and Hamilton boxers some time

in the future.

He told The Oban Times: 'Hamilton is only a new club and we went down to help them set up.'

Meanwhile, back at its Kinlochleven Business Park base, NLABC continues to go from strength to strength.

At a training night last Wednesday, Mr Glenesk told The Oban Times three new

junior members, Cian McPhee, Alistar MacDonald and Ruairidh Mills, had signed up only that evening.

'It's great so many local youngsters want to get involved in the sport,' he said.

The club has both male and female members.



Packing a punch: Nether Lochaber Amateur Boxing Club at their training base at Kinlochleven.



Athletic club stages relay

They're off! Lochaber Athletic Club staged a Christmas team relay race at the BA Club, Fort William, on Saturday, which was won by the all girl team of Eilidh Moynihan, Isla MacKay and Rachel MacPherson (left). Icy conditions early in the morning and Christmas shopping trips limited the turnout to only five teams - but enthusiasm more than made up for the lack of numbers. Junior times count towards the club's winter league. 10_51relay01

Lochaber off-road race

CYCLING

LOCHABER cyclists will be blowing away some of their Christmas cobwebs by taking on an off-road course at Nevis Range on Tuesday morning.

The challenging 10-mile course through Leanachan Forest is expected to attract around 45 racers for round three of West Highlands Wheelers' winter league.

The competitors will be hoping the milder weather continues, although race organiser Andy Rodgers told The Oban Times only thick ice would stop the event going ahead. He said: 'It's a good excuse to get rid of some of the Christmas excess.'

Weather

Thursday Light Rain.
Winds moderate, south westerly
Temperatures 6°C to 11°C

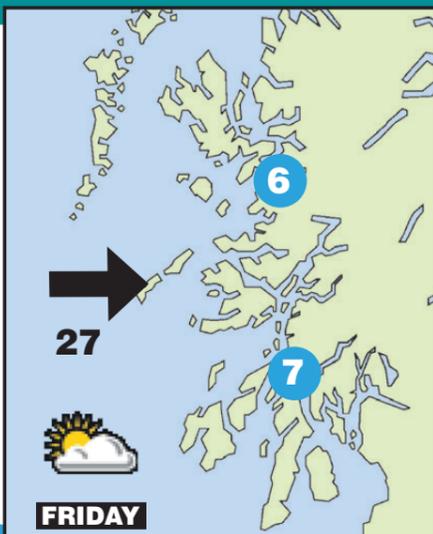
Friday Sunny intervals
Winds strong, westerly
Temperatures 5°C to 7°C.

Weekend Heavy rain.

Outlook Winds strong, westerly
Temperatures 8°C to 8°C.

Ferry Crossings/Sea States

Oban to Barra/South Uist Moderate
Oban to Coll/Tiree Moderate
Kennacraig to Islay Moderate



Tides

Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday, December 22, 2011** are listed below with differences for major ports listed beneath. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

Date	am	pm
Thur	03.31 3.6 09.28 1.2 15.51 3.7 22.09 1.2	
Fri	04.20 3.8 10.28 1.0 16.39 3.8 22.58 1.0	
Sat	05.04 4.0 11.21 0.9 17.23 3.9 23.43 0.9	
Sun	05.46 4.1 12.10 0.9 18.04 3.9 *** **	
Mon	00.27 0.8 06.27 4.2 12.56 0.9 18.43 3.9	
Tues	01.10 0.8 07.08 4.2 13.40 1.0 19.21 3.8	
Wed	01.52 0.9 07.41 4.1 14.22 1.1 19.57 3.7	

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)

Ardrishaig	-5.35	Portree	+0.55
Campbeltown	-5.30	Tobermory	+0.16
Crinan	-0.47	Dover	+5.30
Islay Port Ellen	2.00		
Lochboisdale	+0.30		
Mallaig	+0.25		

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