

# The Oban Times

## & WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

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### Merry Christmas to all our readers and advertisers

#### Public hearing for wind farm plan

A PUBLIC hearing over a rejected wind farm application on an MSP's 3,500-acre estate in the hillside above Loch Awe will take place in March.

Argyll and Bute council's planning committee refused to grant permission for the 15-turbine application, in May, by developers RWE Innogy on Jamie McGrigor's land at Ardchnonnell.

Following the decision, RWE Innogy lodged an appeal and a Scottish government public hearing will take place between March 3 and 4, with a site visit scheduled for January 15 2015.

RWE claimed the turbines would have generated enough electricity to power 40 per cent of the homes in Argyll.

### Seasonal greetings from the captain's angels

SPOTLIGHT musical theatre group member Stephen Lee was having a 'Santastic' time recently as the cast took some time out from rehearsals for some festive fun.

Stephen, who plays the captain in the Oban group's performance of *Anything Goes*, was surrounded by fellow cast members Kate, Fiona, Sue, Nicole and Ellie, who play the characters of Reno and her Angels in the famous Cole Porter musical.

Fellow cast member Stephen Day, who plays Moonface Martin in the production, explained: 'It's quite an intense process - we're rehearsing two nights a week for three hours and then on Sundays as well, so it was good for the cast to take a break and have a bit of fun.'

The show opens on February 25 in the Corran Halls for five nights.



#### TIMESLINE

##### Islanders deserve Holyrood apology

A CALL has been made to the Scottish government to apologise to residents of Islay and Jura following the delay in replacing the mains electricity cable serving the islands.

Highlands and Islands MSP, Jamie McGrigor, and Tory Westminster candidate for Argyll and Bute, Alastair Redman, who lives on Islay, say the six-month wait to replace the cable was too long.

##### £7m committed to town centre plan

THE backing for two projects in Campbeltown has helped bring the total investment in the town's heritage to £7 million since 2009.

The Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) has this week committed the last of its spend to the town hall renovation (£387,000) and the repair of a tenement (£390,000).

##### Cinema's future is secure after AGM

THE COMMITTEE behind Oban Phoenix Cinema has agreed a new way of running the community enterprise after admitting it had struggled to balance the books.

However, following its AGM on December 17, the committee said the future of the cinema was now secure.

##### Watch out for the lights fantastic

PEOPLE living in the West Highlands have been told to keep an eye out for the famous Northern Lights over Christmas and New Year.

Weather forecasters say conditions over the festive period, especially on Christmas Day, are perfect for sightings of Aurora Borealis.

MAN RESCUES DISABLED WOMAN FROM BUSY OBAN STREET BUT THEN DISAPPEARS BEFORE SHE HAS CHANCE TO SAY 'THANK YOU'

## Help find my guardian angel

**EUAN PATERSON**  
epaterson@obantimes.co.uk

A DISABLED Oban woman has praised a 'Christmas guardian angel' who came to her rescue when her electric wheelchair cut out while she was crossing the town's busy Soroba Road.

Teresa Russell, 66, was crossing the road at the traffic lights by Oban high school at 9.30am last Wednesday on her way to her voluntary 'meet and greet' job at Lorn and Islands hospital.

Suddenly, her wheelchair lost power, leaving her stranded in the middle of the road.

Unable to control the wheelchair, Teresa admits she panicked when it began rolling towards the oncoming traffic.

'I was panicking,' Teresa said. 'I thought "Where is my phone", because I always carry it around my neck, but I couldn't seem to find it.'

'I was then thinking how I could divert the chair into a hedge or

something but I couldn't direct it. It was scary.

'I tried putting my 'good' foot down to stop the chair but that didn't help.

'It was then that I felt someone grab the back of the chair and this man said, "You look like you're in a bit of trouble".

'He pushed me onto the pavement and we tried to see what had gone wrong with the chair but we couldn't see anything obvious.

'He told me he would push me to the hospital where someone could look at it for me.'

At the hospital Teresa and her mystery hero checked over the chair and the man found and fixed a loose connection between the wheelchair and the battery, which was fully charged.

Now Teresa, a well-known volunteer with Girlguiding and a co-ordinator for a club for retired Tesco staff, wants *The Oban Times* to help identify the man, who she has called her 'Christ-



“ I think this man deserves a medal, or at least a big Christmas present. He was gone before I could ask him for his name ”

Teresa Russell (Pictured)

mas guardian angel'. 'I think this man deserves a medal, or at least a big Christmas present,' the Nant Drive resident added.

Teresa said she was so stressed and anxious to get to her volunteer reception job with the Royal Voluntary Service at the hospital that she forgot to enquire into her hero's identity before it was too late.

She said: 'He was gone before I could ask him for his name.'

'He just said he had to go to work. I hope he didn't get in trouble with his boss, because I can't imagine anyone believing his excuse for being late.' Teresa described the man as in his late 20s or early 30s and said he was wearing a high-visibility jacket.

If you are Teresa's good Samaritan, or know who he may be, please contact *The Oban Times* on 01631 569 026, or email [epaterson@obantimes.co.uk](mailto:epaterson@obantimes.co.uk)

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### It should be our call when to grit the roads, argue islanders

A PETITION to have decisions on the gritting of Mull roads made locally, instead of on the mainland, has gathered more than 500 signatures in less than 48 hours.

The campaign, by Mull and Iona Community Trust (MICT), was launched after a series of accidents on island roads - including a car coming off the road at Lochdonhead last week - and the cancellation of a school bus service on safety grounds.

Island-based councillor

Mary-Jean Devon explained: 'In the past, we have raised objections about the gritting schedule on the island. The weather can be completely different on the island to that on the mainland.

'All rural roads where schoolchildren are living are a priority. But at the moment, unless there are 12 children travelling to school on the same route they are not gritted until much later in the day, if at all.

'Nurses, doctors and carers are unable to move

around the island as freely as they should be able to because the decisions about gritting are not being made on the island, but elsewhere in Argyll and Bute.'

Councillor Devon will now present the petition to the local authority.

But the council last week stated it had not reduced its winter maintenance on the island, saying: 'Our winter maintenance policy is continuously reviewed, ensuring that we provide the best level of service that we can.'

### Kilbowie House

THE *Oban Times* reported last week that Oban North and Lorn councillor Elaine Robertson attempted to 'stall' the sale of Kilbowie House to a developer who plans to convert the building into six flats.

This was incorrect. Councillor Robertson has pointed out that she proposed an amendment to a recommendation in regard to the sale, which was seconded by councillor Ian MacLean and subsequently agreed by members of the Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee.

Councillor Robertson explained the amendment was in relation to particular conditions attached to the sale and won the committee's approval, to facilitate the sale in a manner which protected all parties.

It was not designed to hold up the progress of the sale in any way. We apologise for the misunderstanding.

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# 'Adequate' score not good enough when it comes to providing care, warns councillor

**EUAN PATERSON**  
epaterson@obantimes.co.uk

A CARE company that carries out work in Argyll has been told to improve its service by an Oban councillor.

Mears Care came bottom of all the service providers in Oban, Lorn and the Isles with a Care Inspectorate score of three (adequate) for quality of care and support, quality of staffing and quality of management and leadership after an inspection in November last year.

The company is one of the largest providers of home care in Oban, Lorn and the Isles, and is commissioned to carry out

578.75 hours per week by Argyll and Bute council.

Mears Care attributed its average grades to staff shortages, an issue the council has been trying to address.

Speaking to Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee last Wednesday, the council's social work area manager Shaun Davidson told councillors he would 'call in' care companies that were marked as grade two (weak) or one (poor).

But Oban councillor Neil MacIntyre said: 'I have worries with Mears Care because it has a lot of hours and you say you wouldn't be happy with a grade two. I'm not happy with a three.'

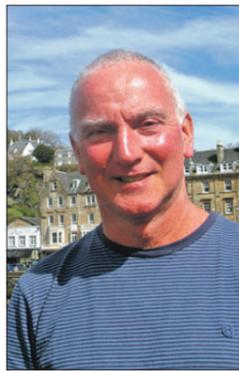
'That's not good enough as far as I'm concerned. It seems like they are just getting by, which sends out the wrong message to me.'

'If it comes back after another inspection that it is still at grade three, then we need to do something about that.'

A spokesman for Mears Care told *The Oban Times*: 'We accept the conclusions of the report that shortage of staff in some areas has created some pressures on the service across the area.'

'We were, however, pleased to note that in general, people were complimentary about the service they receive.'

'We are stepping up our recruit-



**That's not good enough as far as I am concerned**

**Councillor Neil MacIntyre** (Pictured)

ment across the area and expect to resolve these issues in the coming months. We apologise to anyone who may have been impacted.' Mr Davidson told the area committee recruitment

and retention of staff remained a problem throughout Argyll and that a recruitment drive was taking place in a different part of the county once a month.

Malcolm MacFadyen, the council's head of facility services, explained he had overcome a similar problem with catering staff: 'We have run recruitment fairs where we go into a town for the day, invite people to come along and take them through the recruitment process.'

'Because of literacy and numeracy difficulties, some people cannot apply for jobs through the traditional process. There is a plan to roll out this system to other areas of service.'

## A big 'thank-you' as trust funds feast

**STEVEN RAE**  
srae@obantimes.co.uk

CRERAR Hotels' Charitable Trust spread a great deal of festive cheer when it donated £2,250 towards the Oban and Lorn District Senior Citizens (OLDS) Christmas dinner.

The donation helped around 120 senior citizens celebrate the occasion in style at the well-decorated, festive dinner held on December 15.

The OLDS dinner is held annually in the Oban Bay Hotel and Spa, and the hotel has gained a well-earned reputation over the years for putting on a great spread.

Graham McQueen, OLDS regional manager, said: 'It was a joyous occasion and is greatly appreciated by the local community. Crerar Hotels Trust funded most of the event.'

As the venue of the event, Oban Bay Hotel and Spa provided a festive meal, complete with drinks and decoration.

OLDS president Helen Jackson praised the Crerar Hotels Trust for their generosity on behalf of the members, and also thanked the Rotary Club of Oban for providing funding, raffle prizes and transport to and from the dinner.

Trust chairman Paddy Crerar, said: 'What the OLDS Christmas dinner does for older people in our community is brilliant.'

'It offers so much more than a meal - it's a real occasion for the whole community.'

Hector McFadyen, Tom Adams and Caitlan Curran provided entertainment with musical performances and the guests were also treated to cake and a visit from Santa, who gave them all a card with £5 inside.



**FESTIVE GIFT:** President of the Oban and Lorn District Senior Citizens club, Helen Jackson (left), receives a cheque for £2,250 from Sharon Houston of the Crerar Hotels Charitable Trust 16\_151crerar01

## Coastguard faces staff crisis £1m grant to save wildcat

**GORDON WEBSTER**  
editor@obantimes.co.uk

AN MP has called for a solution to 'unacceptable' coastguard staffing levels across the Western Isles.

At a debate in Westminster, Angus MacNeil, MP for Na h-Eileanan an Iar, told UK government ministers that coastguard stations in the region were often undermanned, with reliance on staff working overtime and even having to come out of retirement.

He believes the problem is due to slow recruitment by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and raised this with the minister of state for

transport, John Hayes MP. He said: 'The situation at present sees operation rooms frequently undermanned, relying on staff to work overtime and some ex-staff to come out of retirement.'

'This is unacceptable given it is three years since the organisation of the coastguard was announced.'

'It is currently taking about eight months between the advertisement and the placement of staff.'

'This is shockingly inefficient. Meanwhile, volunteer teams around the coasts are not getting adequate training because staff cannot be released from the operations rooms.'

At the same debate on December 3, Mr MacNeil joined calls for the government to reintroduce an emergency towing vehicle (ETV) in the Minches; a boat which is deployed on standby to aid vessels that run into trouble in the sea.

Highland council leader Drew Hendry also highlighted the issue in October, when he raised concern that ships carrying radioactive material from Dounreay power station in Caithness could lose power in the ocean with no nearby rescue tug to help them.

Mr MacNeil also told ministers he believes the Scottish government should be in charge of the country's coastguard system.

MORE feral cats are to be neutered and vaccinated in Lochaber in a bid to save Scottish wildcats from extinction.

The scheme is taking place across the Highlands to prevent the endangered mammals and their domestic counterparts from breeding together, in a groundbreaking project called 'Wildcat Action'.

It has received a £973,100 Heritage Lottery Fund grant and will see other action taken to help wildcats, many of which are found around Ardnamurchan.

Work has taken place during the past few years to protect the population here - which is thought could number fewer than ten - by neutering both feral

and pet cats. A network of cameras laid in their habitats is to be extended, while surveys and school educational work will be undertaken, as conservationists seek to raise awareness of the animals and the threats they face.

More than 30 organisations including Scottish Natural Heritage, the National Trust for Scotland and the Scottish Gamekeepers Association are joining forces for the new scheme, working alongside community groups and landowners.

Lindsay Mackinlay, nature conservation adviser for the National Trust for Scotland, said: 'We are probably in the last chance saloon for the Scottish wildcat in this country.'

'We need to act now to save this fantastic animal and the support received from the Heritage Lottery Fund gives us the greatest opportunity yet to do just that.'

'A Scotland without the Scottish wildcat would feel a much less wild place to live.'

A recent study suggested there could be as few as 35 of the animals left in Scotland, with identification difficult due to the presence of similar hybrid species.

Rhoda Grant, MSP for the Highlands and Islands, welcomed the scheme, saying: 'I am delighted the Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded this grant. It is a privilege to champion this beautiful species.'

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### Who would you like in your Christmas stocking?

FOR a bit of festive fun *The Oban Times* asked people in the town who they would like to find in their stocking when they wake up on Christmas morning.

**Lauren Ault, 24, from Taynult, is a full-time mum. She chose the actor Channing Tatum.**



'I'd choose him because he's so fit. He's lovely. If he wasn't available though I would be happy for it to be my six-month-old daughter Skylar.'

**Rufus Stones, 16, from Benderloch is a student at Oban high school. He chose actress Emma Stone.**



'She's a very attractive lady, really stunning. She is also a great actress too, probably my favourite.'

**Neil Mackay, 63, lives in Oban. Neil is events manager for Bid4Oban. He chose Fleur East, who was a contestant on this year's X-Factor.**



'She's gorgeous and talented with amazing musical ability and vocal range. Her sense of rhythm is the best I've seen in a female artist.'

**Pam Vickary, 60, from Barnsley is retired, and visiting Oban for a short holiday. She chose the late actor Patrick Swayze.**



'I would choose the man of my dreams, my husband, but if it was a famous person I'd go for Patrick Swayze. He was really dishy and was an amazing actor. Ghost is one of my favourite films.'

COUNCILLOR CALLS FOR ACTION AS UNDER-PRESSURE DEPARTMENT TAKES OVER THE CUTTING OF ROADSIDE GRASS VERGES

# Cutbacks are verging on a joke

**EUAN PATERSON**  
epaterson@obantimes.co.uk

A COUNCILLOR has hit out at a local authority decision to move responsibility for cutting grass verges from one department to another following a series of delays in the 2014 schedule.

Councillor for Oban South and the Isles, Neil MacIntyre, was critical of the change which meant Argyll and Bute council's cash-strapped amenity services took on the job from the roads department.

The councillor was responding to a report by the roads department at the December Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee meeting that showed amenity services had spent £26,655 in the first half of the financial year on grass cutting, a job previously done by the roads department.

Councillor MacIntyre made reference to amenity services' struggle this year to find a re-

placement tractor for the work. He added: 'We had a fall back on that decision when they (amenity services) couldn't get a tractor and they don't have the staff. Why are they taking on that work?'

Stewart Clark, the council's roads performance manager, explained the decision was taken at a 'high level' because of 'a lack of available resources in the roads department'.

Councillor MacIntyre responded: 'That's my problem. We can't seem to do what we want to do now and if we are cutting more staff and services we can't keep robbing Peter to pay Paul.'

'For us to go through the summer season without getting a replacement tractor is a joke - we can't keep messing about like this. We are putting a lot of pressure on amenity services.'

'The whole area suffers from this; it looks a shambles. It is a tourist area and has to look nice



**“The council's officers perform miracles with the budget they have and it's up to the area committee to take more responsibility”**

**Councillor Roddy McCuish**  
(Pictured)

and safe and it didn't look like that this year.'

Argyll and Bute council admitted this year's roadside verge cutting programme in Lorn was delayed because of 'technical difficulties'.

This resulted in a later start and cutting thicker grass subsequently caused some of the machinery to break. A spokesman for the council said: 'We have learned

lessons from this and will be moving forward with a more robust programme next season.'

'Amenity services staff already cut the grass in our public spaces such as parks and cemeteries.'

'It makes sense that they also cut the roadside verges while our roads operatives concentrate on delivering our hugely successful roads reconstruction programme, as well as the on-

going maintenance of the road network.'

At the area committee meeting, councillor Iain Angus MacDonald pointed out the already tight budgets were allocated to council departments based on no staff being absent or on holiday.

He suggested forming an income generating scheme, similar to Highland council, which brings in £925,000 a year.

Saying Ardehchattan community council, of which he was previously chairman, had in 2010 discussed erecting a community wind turbine, he added: 'I'm not saying we should grab parking income but we need to look at ways of helping the council provide services.'

Councillor Roddy McCuish agreed with the principle, saying: 'The council's officers perform miracles with the budget they have and it's up to the area committee to take more responsibility.'

# School concert hits all the high notes

EXCEPTIONAL musical talent was once again on display at Oban high school as the pupils and staff performed at the annual concert.

Held in the school's main hall the concert line-up featured traditional and classical performances, the school's pipe band, wind band, string group and choir, as well as solo performances.

There was also a musical theatre production and a special appearance by the school staff choir.

The winners of Tockfield's Got Talent, young Highland dancers Daniel Craik and Kayla Baxter, thrilled the audience with their routine.

Morven McKerrell, principal teacher of music, said: 'The concert showed the wide array of talent at the school.'

'Every year I think we can't top the previous year but the concert seems to get better and better.'



SINGING LESSON: The staff choir take to the stage to perform at the school concert Photographs: Kevin McGlynn



RHYTHM STICKS: Allyson Boyd on the xylophone



PRODIGY: Second year pupil Reed Barrow plays an Advanced Higher piece on the xylophone

# Train travel is just the ticket for pupils

MOVING Oban high school pupils from east Lorn onto rail transport has been a success, says the council officer behind the plan.

But Malcolm MacFadyen says there are still improvements to be made, not least extending the size of the shelter at Oban train station.

The vast majority of pupils from Glenorchy, Taynuilt and Connel are no longer bussed to Oban and instead use the morning Glasgow to Oban train to travel to school.

The frequency of this train service increased to six a day from May 18 this year.

Trial train journeys took place in June 2014 before being fully implemented for the start of the school year in August, despite initial opposition, particularly from parents in the Glenorchy area.

Mr MacFadyen told councillors at the December meeting of Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee that the council had attempted to address parents' concerns.

He said: 'It has been a very positive introduction, well received by people and pupils that make use of it.'

'There is increased flexibility for attendance at after-school clubs and even, in some cases, taking up employment.'

Mr MacFadyen told councillors that as a result of the school service, shelters at Dalmailly and Taynuilt stations had been improved, as had lighting at Lochawe station.

Pupils are also able to use their railcards for free travel

at weekends during term time.

The council has committed £140,000 from the almost £1million of funding secured from the Sustrans Community Links Programme to deliver the station improvements.

At the Connel Ferry station, a link path was constructed last year, from a previous round of funding, at the cost of £104,000. This path has improved the connections between the National Cycle Network 78 and Connel station.

At Loch Awe station, pedestrian and cycle access has been improved, with street lighting being installed on the access road.

The council is also looking to resurface this road, as well as upgrading the pedestrian crossings on the A85 with improvements to the kerbs.

Asked about the inadequate shelter at Oban train station, Argyll and Bute council said it had raised the matter with ScotRail, which is 'considering' the proposed extension.

# Tiree still without mobile coverage

STORMS have left Tiree without mobile phone coverage.

A bolt of lightning hit the mobile mast almost two weeks ago and since then there has been no signal on the island.

Alan Miller from Seannish said: 'Vodafone has acknowledged a problem but could give no date when the service would be restored.'

Vodafone said it was aware of the problem and hoped to have it resolved as quickly as possible.

# £5 billion scheme to improve mobile coverage

WEST Highland residents and businesses are set to benefit from a landmark announcement to improve mobile coverage across UK black spots.

As part of its long-term economic plan, the UK government has signed a binding agreement with the mobile networks EE, O2, Three and Vodafone to halve the number of areas with only partial signal.

It is hoped the £5 billion plan will reduce complete

'not spots' (which is where there is coverage from some, but not all of the four mobile networks) by almost two-thirds.

Liberal Democrat MP for Lochaber, Charles Kennedy, welcomed the huge investments: 'I have often said that Highlanders do not only experience personal frustration from poor mobile phone signal but we are also all too aware of the negative impact it can have for local business. 'It remains important that

Highlanders receive a boost in their mobile phone signal. 'I am confident that these are some of the crucial steps we need to build a stronger local economy that enables opportunities for everyone.'

The mobile firms have said they will guarantee coverage across 90 per cent of the UK by 2017.

Argyll and Bute is the worst affected region in mainland Scotland for poor coverage, with 42.4 per cent of the area in partial 'not spots'.



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Who would you like in your Christmas stocking?

FOR a bit of festive fun *The Oban Times* asked people in the town who they would like to find in their stocking when they wake up on Christmas morning.

**Len Vickary, 78** from Barnsley is retired, and visiting Oban for a short holiday. He chose Prince William's wife, the Duchess of Cambridge (Kate Middleton).



'There's a calendar released with Kate and William in it, but if I met the two of them I'd only want her to sign it. She's such a beautiful woman.'

**Tricia Morrison, 58**, from Oban, is a care worker. She chose former first minister Alex Salmond.



She said: 'I think he's one of the only politicians who has any kind of integrity. I was never particularly fond of the SNP but I do like him, and Nicola Sturgeon.'

**Phil Cooper, 59**, from Oban, works at the Wool and Needlecraft centre in Oban. He chose the late Apple CEO Steve Jobs.



'He was a fantastic guy, amazing. He really turned Apple around when he came back to the firm, really sorted it out. The products are really excellent, and under him they had to be top of the line.'

**Third sector grant applications open**

APPLICATIONS are being taken for round one of Argyll and Bute council's third sector grants scheme.

The grants are aimed at supporting communities and vulnerable people and helping to kick start new projects and events.

The funding is available to organisations to allow them to deliver the services and/or projects that meet the six objectives detailed in the single outcome agreement.

In 2014, nearly £140,000 was awarded to groups and organisations working to improve community life at a local level and a further £78,000 to organisations providing a service Argyll and Bute wide.

The deadline for submission of completed forms for projects is February 2. For advice on whether a project would be eligible, telephone Argyll and Bute council community development officer Laura Macdonald on 01631 567944, or email [laura.macdonald@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:laura.macdonald@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

**Residents get say on wind farm cash**

ARGYLL residents are needed to help decide how to spend more than £46,000 a year from the Carraig Gheal Wind Farm community benefit fund.

The Carraig Gheal Wind Farm comprises 20 turbines in an area approximately 8km west of Kilchrenan, on the north-west side of Loch Awe.

The community benefit fund will pay out more than £46,000 very year for the next 25 years and these funds can be used to support a wide variety of community needs.

A member from each of the community councils in the area and five self-nominated local residents will form a steering group to administer the benefit fund. For further information about the fund, visit <http://carraighealwindfarm.co.uk>

**Language scheme needs volunteers**

EDUCATION Scotland is appealing to Scots speakers in Argyll and Bute to help promote the use of Scots language in schools.

The Scots Language Ambassador scheme, launched in Edinburgh on November 24, requires confident Scots speakers to volunteer their time to work with a school to encourage staff and pupils to use Scots in and out of the classroom.

Dr Simon Hall, Scots Language Co-ordinator with Education Scotland, said: 'We still need more Scots speakers to volunteer for this rewarding scheme.'

To find out more about volunteering visit [www.education.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.education.scotland.gov.uk)

# Permit holder parking mad as 'over zealous' warden tickets car



**PARKING MAD:** Justin with the penalty notice he received while parked in the North Pier car park. He claims he had displayed a valid permit and feels that 'over zealous' wardens are pushing people away from the town

AN OBAN business owner is the latest person to fall foul of what he has described as 'over zealous' parking attendants, saying they are pushing people away from the town.

Justin Campbell Black, who owns New Look Tattooist and Barbers on George Street, was issued with a ticket on December 8, whilst parked in the North Pier car park, despite having a permit which allows him to park free in Oban.

Justin, 35, who also owns guest houses in the town, explained: 'I came back to my car that day and it had been ticketed, but I saw the lady attendant who did it.'

'She told me she would speak to her boss, but she couldn't cancel the ticket for me.'

'If these attendants are doing their jobs properly they have to check tickets are displayed properly - if they can see a ticket they should be able to see a colour permit. It feels like these over zealous wardens are intent on pushing people away from the town altogether.'

A spokesman for Argyll and Bute council said: 'Should any motorist feel they have received a penalty charge notice (PCN)

unfairly there is a statutory appeals process in place, details of which are available on the back of the PCN and on the council's website, which can ultimately be decided by an independent adjudicator.'

'If we receive an appeal within 14 days of the date of issue of the fine, progression of the charge will be put on hold pending the determination of the appeal.'

'Our wardens apply the rules with common sense, acting in a professional and responsible manner at all times, following national parking guidelines.'

'With our staff now having responsibility for enforcement we can ensure that parking regulations are adhered to and, as a result, there is a turnover of parking spaces in our town centres, ensuring they are vibrant and busy places.'

'Effective traffic management has a number of benefits, including supporting the local economy, safeguarding access for Blue Badge holders, for deliveries, for loading and unloading and for emergency vehicles as well as ensuring road safety by managing inconsiderate and irresponsible parking.'

## Supermarket stocks up on Christmas cheer for the needy

AN OBAN supermarket has been getting into the spirit of the season, supporting those in need at Christmas.

Throughout December, Tesco has run a series of community events, beginning with a Give A Gift.

Customers and staff donated used toys, health and beauty gift sets, homeware, food gifts, small electricals, DVDs, CDs and board games to disability and mental health charity Carr Gomm.

The store also welcomed Oban high school pipe band and Argyll Beats Cardiovascular Disease (ABCD) for bag packing events.

Both organisations were also in the store selling raffle tickets for

their Christmas raffles.

And over Tesco's fundraiser weekend - Friday December 12 to Saturday December 13 - staff raised £492.65 for Diabetes UK.

Within these two days Alan Macdonald was in singing and playing guitar, Highland dancer Katie MacPherson performed and local church choirs sang carols.

Staff also raffled off a Christmas hamper, which included a full Christmas dinner, health and beauty gift sets and chocolates.

Last month the store ran a food bank, asking customers to donate long-life products for those in need this Christmas.



**FESTIVE CHEER:** Tesco fundraisers Teresa Russell, left, and Danielle Thompson

## Helping cash-strapped families heat their homes

WEST Highland families living in fuel poverty are to be helped to heat their homes thanks to a grant of more than £5 million.

The energy efficiency programme has allocated each local authority cash to help with improvements such as solid wall, cavity and loft insulation to make houses warmer and cheaper to heat.

Of the overall £48 million grant, Argyll and Bute has

been allocated £1,393,112, Highland Council received £2,379,088 and £1,530,659 went to Eilean Siar.

Each local authority will also have the opportunity to bid for a share of a further £12 million.

The Scottish government's housing minister Margaret Burgess said: 'We are helping people keep their homes warm.'

'This £48 million will be distributed across Scotland to

help thousands of households in the most fuel poor areas stay warm and cut energy bills.'

Dave Thompson, MSP for Ross, Skye and Lochaber, welcomed the funding.

He said: 'I have been campaigning for some time on issues relating to fuel poverty so I am grateful that the Scottish government is putting significant money towards its commitment to alleviating the problem.'

## Be prepared for winter weather

ROSS, Skye and Lochaber MP Charles Kennedy has urged the public to stay safe and warm this winter in preparation for bad weather.

He is backing a campaign by Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution (SHEPD) which encourages people to keep back-up items such as battery radios, torches, food and drink, and offers telephone support to those who might be vulnerable during power cuts.

Mr Kennedy said: 'Make sure preparations put staying safe and warm top of the list.'

## Working together to promote Gaelic

THE GAELIC language is an asset that must be promoted more according to the leader of Highland council.

Drew Hendry spoke up at a meeting where council members agreed they would work with Bòrd na Gàidhlig - a group which seeks to promote the status of the language - to identify where Gaelic medium education and care services can be added or improved.

He said: 'By taking this partnership approach to Gaelic, we will ensure our planning is more effective and efficient.'

## Council appeal on festive recycling

HIGHLAND council officials are appealing to residents to recycle correctly over the festive season.

Homeowners have been asked to take any unwanted possessions or Christmas clear-out items, such as electricals and clothing, to recycling centres and charity shops.

The public is also being asked to make sure it uses their blue recycling bins for all paper, cardboard, plastic bottles and cans.



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## Story-telling festive fun at Glen Nevis Centre

STORY TIME: Lochaber children gathered in Glen Nevis Visitor Centre on Sunday for story-telling with Scottish author Jess Smith. Crafts, carol singing and wreath-making were all on offer at the festive event and real Christmas trees were available to buy, with donations given to Lochaber food bank.

## Innovative trial aims to cut water consumption

SCOTTISH Water and Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA) are carrying out an innovative rainwater harvesting trial at a new housing development.

The 12 new homes at the Barn Park development in Inveraray will take part in the trial.

Six of the houses will be fitted with rainwater harvesting

technology, and six will have normal water systems built to current standards so all 12 can be measured and compared.

The homes with the technology will use captured rainwater to flush toilets, aimed at reducing water consumption in the house by between 20 and 30 per cent.

All the houses will have their

water use recorded by a smart monitor which can store and send data without needing to be physically inspected.

The trial will run for three years to ensure sufficient comparative data is collected and then shared with Building Standards to help its understanding of the potential benefits.

Andy Wilson, project manager for Scottish Water, said: 'ACHA has been very positive and helpful in helping develop this trial.'

'The information gained from the trial will help Scottish Water understand how rainwater can be used to support development throughout Scotland in the future.'

**A new beginning**

**2015 Calendars**



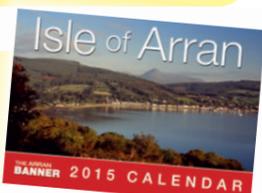
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# Cheerful news for local traders as jingle tills ring glad tidings

SHOPKEEPERS TELL REPORTER STEVEN RAE BUSINESS IS LOOKING UP T AS PEOPLE LOOK FOR PRESENTS CLOSER TO HOME

FROM Silly Putty, Etch-a-Sketch and Hungry Hungry Hippos, to the Rubik's Cube, Tamagotchis and games consoles, it seems every year there is a 'must have' item on Christmas lists. Shoppers in the UK spent an es-

timated £43 billion on Christmas gifts in 2013, with forecasters predicting an even bigger spend this year as people give more and more to their nearest and dearest. Christmas has always been a

crucial time for shopkeepers and businesses throughout Argyll. In some cases, the festive performance can make or break the year. It is regarded by many businesses as a barometer of the local

economy and a good indication of what lies ahead in the coming year. The Oban Times took to the town centre of Oban to find out first-hand from local stores if sales had lived up to their

expectations and what items were catching the imagination of shoppers in the town as they stuffed their bags with Christmas presents. Early indications were very encouraging with some shops

talking about Christmas trade as being on a par with summer. Most retailers described a pattern of people shopping locally, adding a welcome boost to the local economy.



'Football strips are always popular all-year-round, and even more so at Christmas. Ladies fitness clothing seems to have taken off this winter - stuff like running tights have sold really well. Headphones designed for running seem to be big at the moment too. Wackysox have been a surprise big seller - they're knee-length sports socks with bright designs. Business has been good, we are expecting the last Friday and Saturday before Christmas to be really busy.'

Alison MacVicar, Sports Shop



'One of our best sellers has been the woolly hats. Hats and scarves and furry socks are doing well as gift ideas. We obviously specialise in winter jackets but it's not been that cold a winter - it's been unusually warm as the weather forecasters say - but the snow we had recently helped things pick up. I just wonder if Black Friday took some of the local trade away from the shops here, but I think there's still a lot of people who shop locally for their Christmas shopping.'

Sean Jameson, Nancy Black's



'The stag's head cushions have been the thing I've noticed the most, as well as stag's head ornaments, so stags seem to be popular. I think people like them because they're natural. We have sold quite a lot of furniture too because I think quite a lot of people like to get their houses in order before Christmas. There has been a pick-up in trade - I would say the height of Christmas and the run-up to Christmas are comparable for us.'

Fiona MacDonald, Maison Chic



'Christmas cards have been popular, especially the ones we sell that raise money for charity. I've noticed that wrapping presents is getting more sophisticated every year too. The JoLomo calendars are really popular this year, and the artist, John Lowrie Morrison, is donating all his royalties to Glasgow School of Art's Mackintosh appeal. All the signs are that we are pulling out of the recession and local customers are being very loyal.'

Graham Fraser, Alba



'Santa's breeks have been a good seller. They're a mini pair of trousers with a handle that is used for carrying two bottles by putting them in the legs of the trousers. Also our bouncy reindeer have been really popular. They're such a nice little fun gift idea which is popular with people of all ages. There's definitely been a good pick-up in trade in the town in the run-up to Christmas.'

Jessie Wormell, Crafty Ewe

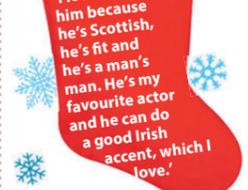


'Jewellery is selling well as it always does at Christmas, especially the Scottish designers. The candles are popular too; everyone seems to like them, especially the Christmas ones that have all the wonderful festive scents. It's been a busy year and I think the town has been busy, even in the evenings. People seem to be making more of an effort to shop locally which is obviously very good for business and really great to see.'

Janet Macleod, Orsay

## Who would you like in your Christmas stocking?

FOR a bit of festive fun The Oban Times asked people in the town who they would like to find in their stocking when they wake up on Christmas morning.



## Duncan's the toast of the States

**EUAN PATERSON**  
epaterson@obantimes.co.uk

AMERICA'S leading whisky industry magazine *Whisky Advocate* has given Islay's Duncan MacGillivray a lifetime achievement award.

Duncan, who this year retired as Bruichladdich distillery manager in July, started at the distillery in 1974 and filled a variety of roles, from lorry driver to brewer.

An engineer by training, he was originally hired to be a stillman at Bruichladdich.

However, his technical wizardry proved useful beyond the stillroom and he became the resident engineer.

The distillery was shuttered in 1994, but Duncan returned in 2000 to help with its revival.

He improvised solutions to repair and upgrade the facility's original Victorian-era equip-

ment, and he did it all on a shoestring budget.

Liza Weisstuch of *Whisky Advocate* said Duncan had been as critical to setting the friendly, informal mood at Bruichladdich as he was in overseeing spirit production, famously stopping to chat with tourists.

She says: 'Ask any Islay citizen about him and people are quick to praise him as a convivial, industrious, clever, modest friend, neighbour, and citizen who regularly throws down what he's doing if you need his help.'

**FINE SPIRIT:**  
Duncan MacGillivray and his wife Susan with friends and co-workers at Bruichladdich on his retirement in July



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**Sleat**

PEOPLE from Sleat in the south of Skye are setting up their own transport forum to discuss local service improvements from local buses to island ferries.

Headed by interim chairman Roddy Murray, Sleat Transport Forum intends to push for the reintroduction of flights to Broadford airstrip and discuss links to a planned new hospital in the town.

A public meeting is to be scheduled for early next year to introduce the group and invite members of the public and businesses to join.

Professor Boyd Robertson, part of the forum's initial managing group, said: 'A transport forum is required to give voice to the concerns of those who live in, work in or visit Sleat over a range of issues such as recent erratic closures of the Skye bridge, the vagaries of the Armadale-Mallaig winter ferry and proposals to introduce ludicrous speed restrictions on long stretches of the A87 from Invergarry to Kintail.

'Accessibility, connectivity and reliability of service are vital to island communities and employers and these are not being provided to an acceptable level at present.'

**Plockton**

SKYE and Lochalsh sports council welcomed Mairi Henderson back and congratulated Doreen MacPhee on her recent sports award for coaching badminton.

Grants totalling £1,864.89 were awarded to Skye badminton club and Broadford badminton club, Skye and Lochalsh junior football association, Thomas Deas of Cuillin Wheels cycling club, Portree juniors sports club Kintail indoor bowling club.

THEATRE group 88 Theatre performed in Plockton village hall on December 13 to an audience of around 40.

It was set up in 2013 by Anne McIntyre and Madeleine Reid who, along with Scott Fingland, were members of the Crossmichael drama club from Galloway which performed in the west end.

The group performed John Godber's 'Happy Jack' in Plockton.

**Eigg**

VOLUNTEERS are being given the chance of a working holiday on the Isle of Eigg next year.

The island's heritage trust is recruiting helpers to carry out restoration work on the path to the massacre caves in the spring. For more information go to <https://volunteer918.wordpress.com/>.



**Benderloch**

SUCCESS: Lochnell primary school had a number of prizewinners in the Argyll and Bute Road Safety Calendar competition.



Ballachulish primary school pupils got creative during a Christmas decoration contest. Pictured are the winners of the competition, which saw the children make an ornament from recycled materials

**Ardnamurchan**



FAMILY TIME: the warm atmosphere of Ardnamurchan parish church was well appreciated by visitors for a special Sunday breakfast

ARDNAMURCHAN rolls. Locals came down for a leisurely bite to eat before an 11am worship on December 14, where children from Kilchoan primary school performed some festive enjoyed tea, toast and bacon

**Iona**

**Curtain up on end of term school plays**

IONA primary school celebrated the end of term by holding two school plays in the village hall on December 17.

The first play, Archie MacLean's War, was based on a boy during World War One on Iona. The pupils developed the script themselves, from one from the BBC website, and it tied in with the World War One topic that the primary four to seven pupils have been working on this term.

The second play, The Shining Signing Star, uses sign language as well as singing to tell the story of the Nativity.

Pictured are the cast of The Shining Signing Star, following the performance on December 17.



**MORVERN lines**

DEER are often to be seen at the roadsides at this time of the year.

Not through any increase in numbers, quite the opposite, but usually because they have lost their traditional wintering grounds thanks to poorly planned and badly thought out grant-aided forestry schemes.

One man who knew more than most about the movement of deer and their need for shelter was Duncan MacLennan, formerly head stalker on Glen Affric Deer Forest who died in October this year, a few months after his 100th birthday.

What memories will be evoked in years to come at the mention or recollection of his name. Deer stalker, bard, botanist, fisherman, ornithologist, nature's gentleman and more.

Descended from a long line of hill men, Duncan was born in 1914 on Fasnakyle Estate near Beauly, where his father and grandfather were stalkers and gamekeepers.

Between them they had a wide knowledge of the folklore and wildlife of their surroundings which Duncan rapidly absorbed and put to good use when he left school.

He began his career trapping rabbits and sending them by rail to the Midlands for the princely sum of sixpence a couple.

Duncan, however, wanted to be on the high tops and far-away places. His chance came following a brief spell as a pony boy when the estate factor offered him the post of stalker on a beat which had sheep on it when he was just 22.

His father thought him too young and inexperienced but agreed that if he could take a guest out and come home with 14 stags in his first season he should get the job.

Stalking deer among sheep is never easy but the youthful Duncan succeeded and, through time, took over as head stalker when his father retired.



NATURE'S GENTLEMAN: Duncan MacLennan in Affric with two hill ponies

In 1942, when venison was required to feed the nation during the Second World War, there was a vacancy for a stalker on the adjacent 30,000-acre Glen Affric Deer Forest. Duncan was offered the position. He accepted and there he remained until he retired 47 years later.

Glen Affric - the old Gaelic name means 'the speckled glen' - is one of the most beautiful of all Highland glens.

It is also one of the hardest to work as the ground rises virtually sheer in many places to almost 4,000 feet.

Possessing the knowledge and endowed with both the skill and the determination to succeed, Duncan took it in his stride. He was not unprepared.

Rarely other than cheerful and helpful in his ways, displaying patience and a wonderful sense of humour, he was a character such as any deer forest owner must rejoice to have counted among his friends.

He was not a perfectionist - he was too unfussy for that. Rather a man of independent mind, discreet, shrewd and tactful, devoted to the deer and their ways, concerned for the well being of all entrusted to his charge, encouraging the young who were on the hill for the first time, kind and sympathetic to the old who had become less nimble.



ON THE MOVE: deer are forced to the roadside in search of food and shelter

The average number of deer killed on Glen Affric post-war was 80 stags and 120 hinds.

Duncan, by now head stalker, aimed to average 10 stags a week and to be finished by October 15.

Carcasses were taken home by pony, boat and cart which often meant long hard hours for in these days they had to be skinned before being despatched to the game-dealers and butchers.

If there was one thing Duncan excelled at it was picking a good hind for the pot.

Early in the season he would select hinds with woolly or short ears and those with spiky, hedgehog-like coats.

Duncan kept meticulous records. He was also an ecologist and a conservationist long before these labels came into fashion.

In his youth he watched Affric's flora and fauna coexist in balance and harmony.

Today, thanks to a surfeit of all-knowing, new-age conservation groups and government agencies who prefer pine martins, wood-lice and raptors to deer, their numbers have plummeted; bracken is rampant and the call of the golden plover, black grouse and the song bird has all but gone from the heart of the glen.

It is sad to imagine Glen Affric without Duncan's quiet, unassuming presence but his memory will linger on among everyone who cherished his character and his company and who have a copy of his wonderful book 'My Yester Years in Glen Affric'.

Iain Thornber  
iain.thornber@btinternet.com

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BENEFITS: An Clachan Leverburgh is now heading for charitable status.

**Harris community company applies for charitable status**

A COMMUNITY company in the Western Isles, which has seen £1,000,000 in retail spending at its shop in An Clachan Leverburgh, is now heading for charitable status.

Situated one mile from the Sound of Harris car ferry terminal, the company has a grocery store, tearoom, craft shop and tourist information centre. The tearoom serves home baking, home-made soup, filled rolls, teas and coffees. The craft shop has a selection of knitwear, Harris Tweed, books, gifts and post cards.

A spokesperson for the company said: 'The management committee consider it's vitally important for An Clachan to apply for charitable status. This will involve very close scrutiny of all aspects of the business to satisfy the strict requirements of the Office of Scottish Charity Regulators.

'For example, how profit is achieved and most importantly how this is then redistributed back to serve and advantage our community. If the application is successful, the benefits will be widespread.

**Arisaig**

ARISAIG'S Land, Sea and Island Centre was put under the spotlight to see how energy efficient it is.

Staff from two environmental companies depressurised the building and used smoke and air-tightness testing to locate areas of air leakage.

This is part of the village's eco project to reduce waste and become energy efficient.

**Decision day for Fort retail park**

THE FATE of a new retail park in Fort William was due to be decided at Highland Council's south planning applications committee meeting on Tuesday.

Officers have recommended refusal of the four-unit development, to include an Aldi and Home Bargains, with the possibility of a Marks and Spencer, as they state in papers it is 'contrary to development plan policy' as an out of town site which could compete with businesses on the town's High Street.

But Fort William Community Council has backed the plans and a public consultation held by developers Morbaine Ltd in March showed a majority of locals supported the idea of a retail park on North Road.

Alex Brodie, director of Morbaine Ltd, said: 'Given the near unanimous public support for our retail park on North Road, we are extremely disappointed and frustrated that council officers have recommended that the south planning applications committee reject our application. We hope councillors will see beyond the recommendation of the officer and acknowledge the local demand.'

**Evacuated from 'unsafe' school**

PUPILS were evacuated from Mallaig primary school to the nearby church hall on Thursday after their building was declared unsafe.

Structural damage to the chimney meant both the school and its adjoining nursery stayed closed on Friday - the final day of term - with repair work due to be carried out as The Oban Times went to press on Monday.

It is not yet known what kind of repairs will be required to the building or how long it will take. Highland council has advised parents to check their school closures website in the new year before the school term restarts at www.highland.gov.uk/schoolclosures or use the school closures phone line on 0800 564 2272, PIN number 04 2560.

**HIGHLAND COUNCIL AGREES TO STALL BUDGET CUTS FOR A YEAR BUT SERVICES WILL HAVE TO BID FOR MONEY IN YEARS TO COME**

**Lifeline for leisure services but long-term future still uncertain**

**EMMA CRICHTON**  
ecrichton@obantimes.co.uk

LOCHABER leisure facilities have been thrown a short-term lifeline from Highland council budget cuts but the future is uncertain as they will soon have to bid for funding in what one councillor called 'a beauty contest'.

Members agreed to protect the third party grant budget for culture, leisure and learning services this year but plan to slash the funding by 50 per cent in the next four years.

Fort William's Nevis Centre, Lochaber Music School, Mallaig and District Swimming Pool and Lochalsh Leisure Centre all receive support from the council and raised concerns during the consultation period about the future of their facilities, but have expressed relief that they are not to lose any funding this year.

At the Highland council meeting on Thursday members agreed to protect the third party grant for the next year but debated the way money would be allocated in future, when they will have just half of the current leisure budget.

Budget leader Maxine Smith said groups would have to prove their facility benefited the wellbeing of their communities.

If they can, they will receive their full grant, if not, they may receive a smaller amount or nothing at all.

Bill Clark, councillor for Caol and Mallaig, made a passionate plea of support for the Mallaig pool, calling it 'a life or death facility'.

He said: 'It's not a facility just for the casual user, it's a life or death facility. Mallaig is a fishing village and all the dangers that includes.'

'The best reason for ensuring this never goes out of business is

the number of lives it must have saved.'

Councillor Allan Henderson, also a local member for Caol and Mallaig, said he was relieved the funding was protected this year but added facilities needed more certainty for the future.

He said: 'We just don't know what money will be available in a few years.'

'We can't be subjecting them to beauty contests, we need to give them reassurances but we haven't got that ourselves yet.'

Kenny McLaughlin, manager at the Nevis Centre, which includes soft play, ten pin bowling and a sports hall, said the delay in cuts 'put his mind at rest short term'.

He added: 'It's a terrible situation for any leisure facilities which are put in the position where you have to bid for money.'

'If we get funding cuts then it's our job to manage that situation and look at how we can bring in more revenue.'

'This gives us an opportunity to look long term but we need to take it one step at a time.'

'If the cuts were implemented straight away we could have been in an awful situation by next April, so we've got to be grateful for that.'

Chris MacKinnon, manager of Lochalsh Leisure Centre, said despite initial worries his mind was at rest.

He said: 'There's still a small amount of uncertainty as it remains to be seen if we will definitely get full funding but I'm quite confident and comfortable we will be able to make a robust case for ourselves.'

For more on the budget see page 9.



**GENEROUS:** Lochaber high school first year students are seen with the Christmas gifts they donated to local pensioners, alongside, left to right, Donald Young from the Rotary Club of Lochaber, head teacher Jim Sutherland and Alan MacLeod of Robertson's Construction

**Pupils deliver Christmas cheer to elderly**

LOCHABER high school pupils have donated gifts to the elderly community as part of their annual Christmas parcel scheme.

Funded between the school, the Rotary

Club of Lochaber and Robertson's Construction, it saw first year students wrap 450 presents, which were in turn delivered to senior citizens in the area by their sixth

year colleagues. The entire project - which included purchasing items, organising the wrapping and the delivery - was run by deputy head teacher Elizabeth Gow.

**Fire chief thanks team and appeals for new recruits**

LOCHABER'S senior fire officer has thanked his area team for its hard work throughout the year and made a fresh appeal for new recruits.

Pat McElhinney, Scottish Fire and Rescue's Lochaber group manager, said: 'As we head quickly towards Christmas and 2015, I would like to thank our retained and volunteer

crews for all their hard work throughout the year. Without their help, support and commitment, we would not be able to provide such a service to our communities.'

Mr McElhinney is calling for other employers in the region to allow their staff to work as on-call retained firefighters; individuals who will continue to work their main jobs but

can be 'paged in' to help out in the event of an emergency.

He added: 'Although there is a commitment by employers it should be manageable.'

'The system is very flexible and if there are important commitments at work then these will clearly take precedence over staff's retained roles.'



**Kids' Christmas Corner**

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**Christmas word search**

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G P W K C O E I L K M T E J I  
E H R Q N D G S V E N E O E C  
Y U A S V A K F E E D S Y S A  
T N N I N S R U S N M T O U R  
S G G R D E L E I J I U I S O  
X T E I G T R E E V K Q W P L  
S Z L N U P R T I N S E L L S  
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- elves
- reindeer
- toys
- tree
- advent
- carols
- rudolph

Name ..... Age .....

Address .....

Telephone .....

Parent/guardian's name .....

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## Budget round-up

### Fears over gritting cuts

LIVES will be put at risk due to a reduction in road gritting, according to one Highland councillor.

Members agreed to cut funding for winter maintenance by £360,000 over the next two years, with a reduction of a further £240,000 in 2016-17, resulting in the loss of 12 grit-dispensing vehicles and less precautionary evening treatment of roads.

Councillor Matthew Reiss said: 'This service does an important job - it saves lives. If we take these vehicles off the road it's lives that are at risk.'

Councillor Allan Henderson added that if road maintenance was reduced 'Highland life in the winter will change forever'.

He said: 'The public told us

this is something that shouldn't be taken away. People take precautionary measures by clearing their own path even if only one person uses it and that's what should be done on the public roads.'

But councillor Graham MacKenzie said the council wouldn't be losing out by getting rid of 12 lorries.

He said: 'Some of the lorries we have now are reaching the end of their natural lives. 'We will buy new, larger vehicles which will cover a larger area meaning we will eventually need fewer vehicles and that's where the 12 lorries will drop off.'

Members voted 36-27 with two abstentions to reduce the winter maintenance budget.

### Less teachers in a year

SECONDARY schools in the Highlands have been given a year to make preparations for a £400,000 cut to teaching staff.

Councillors agreed to postpone the planned reduction of high school teachers by one per cent across the region, resulting in the loss of up to 60 jobs, at the full council meeting on Thursday.

But teachers are not out of the woods yet as the proposal is still earmarked for year

2016/17. A plan to reduce the primary school day was also removed from this year's cuts.

Highland council budget leader Maxine Smith said: 'It became apparent that the areas of most concern were care and learning and community services, therefore in considering which savings we have taken forward, we have safeguarded these from the bigger cuts and deferred any reduction in the primary school day and cuts to secondary teacher posts.'

### No rise in council tax

COUNCIL tax in the Highlands will not rise in 2016-17 despite pleas from opposition councillors.

Speaking on behalf of the Independent party at the full council meeting on Thursday, councillor Jaci Douglas proposed a motion to increase the tax by five per cent from 2016, despite a national freeze put in place by the Scottish government.

She said: 'There must be a better way to find money than continually cutting services.'

'When the freeze came in it was very appropriate but times have changed. We have to fight

to save services. The money a council tax increase will bring us could prevent massive cuts to frontline services.'

But Highland council leader Drew Hendry said they should continue with the freeze until a review on the national policy was carried out at Holyrood, which was backed by 45 members during the vote, compared to 31 who backed a rise.

He said: 'We are still in a place where people are relying on food banks, where the working poor are struggling.'

'When families are under pressure £1 per week is a lot of money.'

## LOCHALINE RESIDENTS AND COUNCILLORS ANGRY AT AMOUNT BEING CHARGED BY COMMUNITY-RUN GARAGE

# Morvern fuel price row as pump charges rocket

**GORDON WEBSTER**  
fort@obantimes.co.uk

RESIDENTS and councillors on the Morvern peninsula believe drivers in their area are being ripped off when buying petrol.

Following similar complaints last week on the Uist islands, people in Lochaline are angry at the high prices charged by their local community-run garage, which they say is forcing motorists to fill up 40 miles away in Fort William.

The filling station, incorporated by the village's Lochaline Stores,

was last reported to be charging prices of 152.9 pence per litre for both unleaded and diesel, in comparison with prices at Fort William's Morrisons garage set at 115.9 and 121.9 pence respectively for each grade.

Smaller independent retailers are normally required to charge more to meet their higher running costs, but some feel the difference is higher than it should be.

One resident, who wished not to be named, believes the situation is unfair considering wholesale prices are falling to their lowest levels in years. He

said: 'The prices are ridiculous, it makes you think twice about going anywhere.'

'I always need to make sure I've got plenty fuel in the tank before going away. It's getting very expensive to travel here by car.'

Brian Murphy, councillor for Fort William and Ardnachurchan, agrees that there is no excuse for such contrasting prices within a single ward area.

He said: 'You can imagine petrol stations in remote areas would be two or three pence dearer, but given the massive [price] falls we have seen, 30 pence is indefensible.'

The petrol station is owned by Morvern Community Development Company and was built with financial assistance from Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE).

Lesley Jones, one of the company's directors who runs the garage, believes those criticising the prices do not understand the reality of operating a small business.

She said: 'I know the community is unhappy but we are doing the best we can with delivery challenges.'

'I'm so fed up with people complaining when they don't

realise the expense of running a petrol station.'

Meanwhile, Fort William and Ardnachurchan councillor Andrew Baxter says it is the UK government which is ultimately responsible for high prices in rural areas.

He said: 'I don't think you can blame the shop owners because the cost is taxed to the government and the retailer is only making a couple of pence per litre. The government has to push the European Union for a fuel reduction tariff, which would knock about 10 pence off the cost in remote areas.'

## Nevis Range celebrates 25th anniversary



GOING STRONG: Nevis Range managing director Marian Austin celebrates the centre's 25th anniversary alongside one of her predecessors, current group board member Ian Sykes

NEVIS Range staff are celebrating the mountain centre's 25th anniversary.

Founders of the sport and leisure facility say they are 'delighted' with the progress of Nevis Range, best-known for winter sports and host of the mountain bike world cup in the summer.

Marian Austin, managing director at the centre, said: 'I have been here since day one, starting as a ski instructor and I am delighted that Nevis Range is a popular year-round attraction 25 years on.'

Ian Sykes, former managing director and current board member, added: 'I would really like to highlight the overwhelming commitment of everyone on the first committee, council and government agencies who did bring our dreams and those of the Lochaber community to life.'

'It is really great to see Nevis Range still going 25 years on and doing more than we could ever have hoped for in 1989.'

### Lochside's Hanna homes in on Christmas card design prize

Hanna Nora Olah from Lochside primary school was the winner in Lochaber Housing Association's Design a Christmas Card competition. The primary six pupil received a framed picture as a prize and was able to watch the card being produced at Printsmitth in Fort William along with her classmates. Hanna is pictured with the housing association's Christine Morrison (left) and Irene Christie (right).



### Police advice on how to stay safe over festivities

A SENIOR Highland police commander has advised the public to stay safe while out enjoying the festive season.

More Police Scotland officers have been deployed out on the street in the run-up to Christmas and new year, and they have reminded people drinking alcohol to do so in a responsible manner, especially due to the recent lowering of the drink drive limit.

It is part of their Operation Respect campaign, which also tackles other antisocial behaviour such as drug misuse and its associated crime.

South Highland area commander chief inspector Colin Gough said: 'Although violent crime is reducing across the south Highland area, where

excess alcohol is involved people become more vulnerable to crime and disorder and can find themselves in situations they wouldn't normally be in.'

'I would encourage safe and responsible drinking during the festive period and ensure you plan how you are getting home later in the evening.'

'With the recent lowering of the drink drive limit, please be especially mindful of the possible effects of alcohol the morning after your night out.'

'The festive period can also see a rise in incidents of house breaking so please don't forget to ensure your property and outbuildings are secure at all times. Similarly, it's important to keep your bag and any valuables close to you on nights out.'

### Skye mountain path restored

A CRUMBLING footpath to one of Skye's most spectacular summits has been restored to its former glory.

The walking route which travels 928 metres to the peak of Blà Bheinn on the edge of the Cuillin is now complete, following a helicopter lift of hundreds of tonnes of stone for new steps.

The John Muir Trust, which looks after the tourist attraction, commissioned the work after winning a £24,000 grant from a European Outdoor Conservation Association online poll.

This was boosted by an appeal to trust members for donations.

Chris Goodman, footpath manager from the John Muir Trust, said: 'We'd like to thank all our members and supporters, as well as those who voted for us in the online poll to help us secure a large part of the funding.'



ALL CHANGE: departing TSB bank manager Sharon Morley welcomes her successor Iain Logan outside the branch on Fort William High Street

### Fort William bank manager retires after 21 years

FORT William TSB bank's long-serving manager Sharon Morley is retiring after 21 years at the branch.

Mrs Morley, 54, has worked for the company for 35 years and will leave on Christmas Eve to work with her husband Colin on his Glenfinnan Candles business.

She said: 'I've really enjoyed it here but retiring will give me more time to spend with family.'

'I have worked with excellent staff and built up a rapport with the customers over 21 years and I think I'm leaving it in good hands.'

Iain Logan will take over as branch manager on January 1, after working as personal banking manager in the Oban TSB.

He said: 'I can't wait to get stuck in and meet our local customers in Fort William.'

'It's a great team at TSB and we look forward to helping customers with all of their banking needs.'



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The Oban Times & WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

A sense of togetherness

For the past few weeks, the columns of *The Oban Times* and our sister titles in Mid Argyll, Campbeltown and Arran have been filled with stories and pictures of ordinary people doing extraordinary things in the name of Christmas.

Unquestionably the festive period, for all its imperfections, does bring out the best in us: there is a palpable sense of community spirit in the air with a myriad of clubs, societies and organisations throughout Argyll enthusiastically holding lunches, dinners and concerts for a whole host of people.

Pensioners' lunches and dinners, school concerts, hospital and home visits are just some of the shining examples that light up the dark mid-winter days. Even in the hurly-burly, manic pace of the run-up to Christmas, people apparently have time for their fellow human beings. It is a time when the values of home and hearth resonate with a genuine intensity in families throughout Argyll and Lochaber. What a pleasure it is to behold and how heartening.

And while the 'shelf life' of this marvellous outpouring of concern and interest in others may reach its zenith during the festive period, the spirit of Christmas reinforces our sense of a common humanity.

Glasgow Letter

Christmas Songbook delivers pre-Christmas fun

AS I SUGGESTED in last week's column, the City Halls was the place to be last Thursday when Phil Cunningham took to the stage with his new traditional Christmas Songbook.

Of course it was not just Phil but, as he acknowledged at the start of the concert, he was privileged to be joined by an array of top class musicians.

The Christmas theme was set by the Brass Ensemble, as in previous years from the forces, playing some well known carols and then the rest of the participants joined them.

The artistes, Eddi Reader, Karen Matheson, John McCusker, Kris Drever, Ian Carr and Kevin McGuire were all in great form and from the outset Phil established the fun tone of the evening which was to continue with banter on stage, and with the audience, throughout proceedings.

As you might expect the main vocal duties were shared by Eddi, Karen and Kris with their voices blending to terrific effect while, away from the Christmas-related music, there was some excellent traditional instrumental jigs, reels and slow airs from the band.

Santa made an appearance much to the delight of the capacity audience in this very comfortable auditorium, many of whom were laden with bags of Christmas shopping.

Glasgow is the first venue before heading to Edinburgh, Perth and Aberdeen and while the cast suggest there has not been much in the way of rehearsal, and perhaps that is the case, the end product certainly belies such thoughts.

Connections countdown

THE COUNTDOWN

Your Letters

THE EDITOR welcomes letters of approximately 200 words in length for publication on this page.

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

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

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

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.

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

is on with less than one month to go before the city is invaded by some 2,000 musicians from all over the world playing at 17 venues.

Tickets are selling fast so don't be disappointed.

Some new names have been added to the programme including Carlos Nunez with a new commission, The Atlantic Corridor, and he will be joined by a host of special guests featuring the splicing of traditional and original material from Galicia, Brittany and Ireland as well as newly created Scottish piping arrangements.

Also just announced is the joining of Le Vent du Nord, from Quebec, with a fantastic array of female guests including Emily Smith, Julie Fowles, Sharon Shannon, Patsy Reid, Megan Henderson and Christine Hanson.

Other changes to the published programme include the following: There will be an extra date, January 26 in the Strathclyde Suite, of the sold out show Frances Black and Kieran Goss's Reunion and a second night has been added to The Crew of the Puffer present Para Handy 'A Highland Voyage' on Sunday January 19 in St Andrew's in the Square.

Diary dates

Monday December 29: Tolbooth, Stirling, 8pm, Peatbog Faeries

Saturday January 10: Glasgow Skye Association Family Ceilidh, Crawford Hall, Partick, 7.30pm.

Pub scene

ERISKAY Lilt will be playing in the Park Bar on both Friday and Saturday evenings with Sunday still to be arranged.

In the Islay Inn it will be the Keelies on Friday and Black Velvet on Saturday.

On New Year's Day from 5pm to 8pm Trail West will be playing in the Park Bar and then on Friday January 2 they will be closed.

Nollaig Chridheil from Glasgow to all our readers. Neil Murray. Tel: 0141 954 8105. Email: neilmurray@yahoo.co.uk.



Santa visits Oban's West Highland Hospital on Christmas day 1992

This week's flashback photograph was submitted by John Hay of Taynuilt and shows Santa with staff of Oban's West Highland Hospital on Christmas day 1992. Prints or emails of flashback photos sent to editor@obantimes.co.uk should be accompanied by a caption, name, address and telephone number. Anyone who wishes a print returned must supply a stamped, addressed envelope.

CHRISTMAS messages

Rev Dugald Cameron, Kilmore and Oban Church of Scotland

Here is a quote: 'If Christ was only a man, then he is entirely irrelevant to any thought about God; if he is only God, then he is entirely irrelevant to any experience of human life.'

Well, that may be a bit strong, but I know from where Dorothy L. Sayers was coming. For Jesus of Nazareth, uniquely, show us what it is to be human and what the true nature of God is. A union of love is found in Christ - Word becomes flesh.

So from his birth in a stable as vulnerable as any human infant can be he drew love towards him - from his mother, from shepherds, from wise travellers. In his ministry love was given to and received from others; Martha and Mary, Peter and Andrew, Zaccheaus and other broken people. In the bread and wine of communion he loved all comers.

And in the cross and resurrection his love defeated the forces of corrupt power, evil and repression.

If you want to see how our World should be, simply follow this Son of God, Son of Man. If only more of us would live in His light - drawing love though our honest vulnerability, sharing love with those close and distant, and loving this world enough that we care for its outcasts, sinners and strangers. So this Christmas be drawn to the crib. For when you look into the face of Jesus Christ and see the face of God, heaven and earth are that bit closer in your life. Nollaig Chridheil agus Bliadhna Mhath Ur.

that we and our partners have been issuing as part of the Winter Safety Campaign.

I would also remind people of the changes in the drink driving legislation and I would strongly recommend that people do not consume any alcohol if they intend driving, which also includes the day after. If people can enjoy Christmas and New Year safely then it will be a wonderful time for us all.

I wish everyone a happy and safe Christmas and New Year.



Len Scoullar, Provost Argyll and Bute Council

CHRISTMAS is almost here - a season that is many things to many people. A busy but magical time. A time when the community spirit in which Argyll and Bute abounds can thrive, grow and flourish as people gather together to celebrate.

I am also very conscious, though, that for many people the holiday season can be a difficult time. My thoughts are with them also, along with my sincere wishes that they find some comfort and hope amid the festivities.

Inevitably this is a time to look back and reflect on the past year. As I do so, I look back with pride in the people and communities of Argyll and Bute. I think of events such as the Queen's Baton Relay in the summer - a display of community spirit and working together that Argyll and Bute is famous for. That spirit is alive and well all year round and I am sure that the years to come will prove no different.

My wish for everyone in Argyll and Bute, as this year draws to a close and a fresh start is promised in 2015, is for a happy Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

Alan Reid, Argyll and Bute MP

CHRISTMAS is a time for celebrating with family and friends, and it is important to thank all those who have to work at this time of year to keep our essential services running so that the rest of us can enjoy ourselves.

I pay especial tribute to the men and women of our armed forces who are serving around the world, and my thoughts are with those families who will spend Christmas and New Year apart from a loved one who is serving abroad. The biggest political

event of 2014 was undoubtedly the independence referendum. This saw an unprecedented interest in politics.

The Smith Agreement between all the parties in the Scottish parliament means that significant new powers will be devolved to Scotland.

All the energy and enthusiasm of the referendum campaign should be harnessed to make Scotland, with all these extra powers, a much more participative democracy with more powers devolved to local communities.

There are more than 500 more jobs in Argyll and Bute than at the start of the year. All of the economic indicators are positive, so this trend of more jobs should continue in 2015.

I wish all readers a Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.



The Very Rev Nicki McNelly, Provost of St John's Cathedral, Oban

I LOVE Christmas; don't you? I love the lights, the decorations, putting up the tree, buying and wrapping presents, writing Christmas cards to those I haven't seen for years, deciding what food to eat, what films to watch, what songs to listen to as Christmas dinner is cooking.

I remember when my daughters were young, the look on their faces as the big day got closer, visits to Santa and me and their dad spending all Christmas Eve putting toys together.

As much as I love the season and the big guy in red I also spend December celebrating Advent, waiting for the Messiah, remembering his birth in poverty in Bethlehem, born to an unmarried teenage mum who had listened to an angel who told her 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.'

How amazing is that? If an angel came to me I think I would be more than afraid but I truly hope I would have the courage to be as obedient as Mary was.

Her response was: 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'

Jesus came to this earth to feed the poor, heal the sick, socialise with those that others wouldn't, to be with those on the fringes and to die for our sins. I wish you all a Christmas filled with joy, peace and love but ask you to remember Jesus, the real reason for Christmas.

Beachd Ailein Ailean Caimbeul

'AGUS CHUIR E LUCHD-MARBHAIDH uaithe agus mharbh e na bha de leanabaibh- mac ann am Betlehem, agus na crìochaibh uile, o aois dhà bhliadhna agus fodha.'

Thachair na gnìomhan borra aig an Rìgh Herod còrr air dà mhìle bliadhna air ais agus theagamh gum bheil sinn dualach gabhail riutha mar chomharra air dòighean neo-shìobhalta an ama. Ach tha e da-riubh doirbh dèiligeadh ris a' mhurt oilleit a rinn an Taliban ann an sgòil ann am Peshawar an ceann a tuath Phagastan bho chionn beagan làithean. Chan eil fios dè a' phàirt den sgeulachd as mìosa, an e gun deach clann shaighdearan a chuimsichadh gus dìoghaltais a thoirt air am pàrantan agus an Stàit, neo gun deach seo uile a dhèanamh ann an ainm creideimh! Chan eil e gu diofar ann an dòigh oir tha na thachair na eisimpleir de bhrùidealachd cho gràineil 's iongantach a thachair riamh, agus tha e na mhasladh ann an saoghal a th' air a bhith a' gluasad a dh'ionnsaigh sìobhaltachd fad nan linntean bho àm Herod.

Ach tha an t-sìobhaltachd sin feadh an t-saoghail cho meallta ris an t-sìth, agus ma choinneimh gach ceum a gheibhear air adhart thig cnap-starra a tha a' cur chùisean air ais fad na h-ùine! Gun teagamh, tha sannt agus oic mhic-an-duine na mhàthair-adhbhar air mòran de chòmhrithrean an t-saoghail, ach feumar aideachadh gum bheil creideamh na bhunait air an uabhas strì agus sgrìobhadh. Aig an àm sam bheil mi a' sgrìobhadh seo chan eil fiosrachadh againn air dè bu chòireach dhan a' mhurt aig an ochdnar chloinne ann am baile Cairns ann an Astràilia. Ach tha fios againn gur ann a' feuchainn ri taic a thoirt dhan bhuidheann ISIS a bha Man Haron Monis nuair a chuir e daoine am bruil ann an Sydney, agus far an deach e fhèin agus dìth neo-chiontaich a mharbhadh.

Aig àm Nollaig is Bliadh'n Ùire tha sinn uile an dòchas ri sìth, is fois is càrdeas, ach am-bliadhna tha cinn-naidheachd eadar-nàiseanta nan eisimpleirean uabhasach air an-ìochdmhorachd dhaoine dha càch a chèile. Bidh cuimhne aig cuid agaibh air a' bhàrdachd ainmeil aig Seumas Leigh Hunt mu Abu Ben Adhem, agus an rùn a thug e dhan aingeal a chunnaic e na bhrùadar. Dh'iarr e a bhith air a chlàradh mar fhear aig an robh gaol air a cho-chreutairean!

Nach bu mhat an tiodhac sin dha sluagh an t-saoghail an-dràsta!

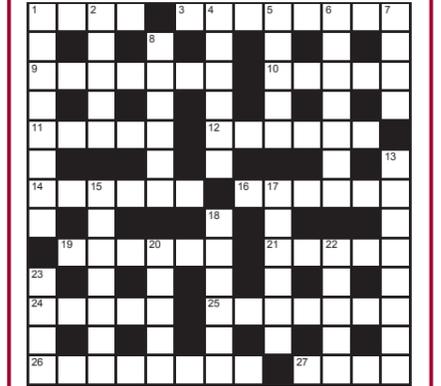
AS 2014 ENDS against a background of horrific acts of murder and brutality it is little wonder that world leaders are united in condemnation of more demonstrations of man's inhumanity to man.

Some of you will recall James Leigh Hunt's poem Abu Ben Adhem, and Ben Adhem's request to the angel in his dream, 'I pray thee, then, write me as one who loves his fellow men'. Now wouldn't that be an amazing gift for mankind this season. The extraordinary thing is that most religions preach such a philosophy.

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

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  - 27 Carried in a café (4)
- Down
- 1 What has to be done (8)
  - 2 Exercise for a soloist (5)
  - 4 Showing signs (6)
  - 5 Craze (5)
  - 6 Gruff (7)
  - 7 Erupt (4)
  - 8 Polish port (6)
  - 13 Improvement (8)
  - 15 Spanish palace (7)
  - 17 List of ingredients (6)
  - 18 Cream filled bun (6)
  - 20 Sleepy (5)
  - 22 Chopper blade (5)
  - 23 Neck lace (4)

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# your guide to independent schools

A detailed and informative guide to independent boarding and day schools in Scotland



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\*If this date doesn't suit, please call to arrange an alternative.



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### LOMOND SCHOOLS

Lomond offers an education that allows every student to explore their potential with the support and encouragement of teachers, peers and the wider Lomond community. We impart traditional values in our students while delivering access to the most up-to-date and effective methods of learning and teaching, supported by considerable investment in ICT.

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Our boarding provision adds a distinctive dimension to the school; the mix of cultures and backgrounds enriches our curriculum and co-curriculum, supporting all of our pupils to develop their global awareness and understanding. Like many

independent schools we provide small class sizes, an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, attention to the individual and a strong record of academic achievement.

Whether they have lived locally all their lives or have joined us as boarders, Lomond pupils appreciate how lucky they are to live in a small, safe coastal town only 10 minutes from Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. Our location makes us different and our students thrive in an environment which opens the door to new experiences, and allows skills and talents to be explored.

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### STRATHALLAN SCHOOL

Founded over a century ago, Strathallan School continues to thrive on the core values set out by our founder Harry Riley: We aim to provide outstanding education, academic, social and extra-curricular elements, which give opportunities for all pupils to excel, developing their ability to benefit themselves and others. We believe in giving each pupil a chance to shine, gaining experience and confidence to develop their talents along the way. Holding a strong reputation with an extensive portfolio of achievements, Strathallan is known as a high-quality boarding and day school that creates a wonderful environment which allows children to grow and develop. It is vital that the educational process provides a variety of opportunities to ensure pupils are equipped to deal with the challenges that will face them when they leave school.



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- Set in glorious countryside on a site of 153 acres
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- Within 10 minutes of the city of Perth and 40 minutes from the nearest international airport

Key Facts:

- The newly refurbished Junior House is situated within its own campus, as well as enjoying the facilities of the senior part of the school

- Senior Houses feature individual study-bedrooms for privacy
  - Wi-Fi internet access throughout the school
  - Extensive playing fields, Strength & Conditioning Centre, successful Tennis and Clay Pigeon Shooting Academies and a golf course are just some of the facilities available
  - Design Technology Centre and Art School
  - Over 55 activities to choose from weekly
  - A high percentage of boarders and we offers a programme which spans seven days
- All-encompassing offering an all-round education
  - No weekend exerts for senior pupils - children can stay at school if they wish only leaving for the holidays
- We challenge our pupils, encouraging them to be as good as they can be. It is a world where they make friends easily and where our staff ensure exceptional standards of care both within and beyond the classroom. Nurtured, motivated and inspired; it is a home from home where they feel safe and happy and therefore excel in whatever they do.



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	<b>Paddington</b>	Sat 27th 13.20, 15.00 Sun 28th 13.20, 15.00 Mon 29th 13.20, 15.00 Tue 30th 13.20, 15.00 Wed 31st 13.20, 15.00
	<b>Penguins Of Madagascar</b>	Sat 27th 13.00 Sun 28th 13.00 Mon 29th 13.00 Tues 30th 13.00 Wed 31st 13.00
	<b>Interstellar</b>	Sat 27th 17.10 Sun 28th 17.10 Mon 29th 17.10 Tue 30th 17.10 Wed 31st 17.10
	<b>The Hobbit: Battle of the Five Armies</b>	Sat 27th 20.20 3D Sun 28th 20.20 3D Mon 29th 20.20 3D Tue 30th 20.20 3D
	<b>Nativity 3</b>	Sat 27th 11.00 Sun 28th 11.00

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

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

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

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

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

**Nativity 3: Dude, Where's My Donkey? (U)**  
A children's Christmas story about a man who loses his memory and must rely on his daughter and other schoolchildren to remind him about Christmas and his impending wedding.

# The Crucible

A production by Lochaber High School

Review by Georgie Scott



THE CRUCIBLE: Lochaber high school pupils took on dark themes for their Christmas production of Arthur Miller's play

LOCHABER high school's production of 'The Crucible' by Arthur Miller was a far cry from the traditional Christmas fare of pantomime and musical. Set in Salem, Massachusetts, the play depicts the hysteria leading to the witch trials of 1692 in which many innocents lost their lives.

Serious and dark, dealing with themes of adultery, deceit, revenge, integrity and redemption, it was a tall order for young people still at school yet this performance was a triumph for producers, director, stage crew and actors.

From the dramatic opening of a lantern-bearing procession arriving on stage to sing Psalm 121, the audience was gripped.

The set was simple, stark and a perfect backdrop to such a dark tale.

The stagecraft was clever - from the gauze screen used to indicate separate courtrooms and jail cells in Acts III and IV to the sound effects of chains when prisoners were manacled and led away.

None of this could have produced such a superb

performance without the actors themselves. There were simply no weak performances but most credit must be awarded the principals.

Katrina McMillan, playing Abigail Williams, communicated a range of emotions: desperation, fear, anger and, above all, the malevolence of her own manipulative nature.

Innes MacKintosh and Kyle Lander, playing Reverends Parris and Hale respectively, were magnificent in their portrayals of clergymen hidebound by the superstitions of the day.

Elizabeth Proctor (Natalie Brayshaw) and Mary Warren (Kirstin McAdam), as mistress and servant, were convincingly dignified and terrified in turn.

Judge Danforth (Fergus Munro) was outstanding in conveying his dilemma of knowing in his heart that the accused are innocent, yet fearing his authority will be undermined by acknowledging this.

The greatest praise, however, must go to Oskar Wineberg, playing John Proctor. He commanded the stage from beginning to end and was so powerful

in his exposition of this heroic but flawed character that his performance left a lasting impression.

His final scene was a crescendo of conscience and totally convincing. This was a part which required professional acting skills of a high calibre - which Oskar delivered.

Eavesdropping on members of the audience after curtain call on the final performance on Thursday December 11, the following accolades were heard: 'triumph,' 'gripping,' 'riveting,' 'electrifying,' 'totally engaging,' 'spell-binding,' 'completely credible,' 'superb.'

The final words should, perhaps, be given to Jim Sutherland, head teacher at Lochaber high school, who, in paying tribute to everyone involved, said that he could scarcely believe a play of such depth and magnitude could be so successfully performed by a cast of high school pupils.

The word 'excellence' is much - perhaps too much - banded about in educational circles these days, but this performance was indeed excellent.

## COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

**FASNACLOICH GUN CLUB**

27th December  
11:00am start  
Iain MacLeod memorial shoot

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All AGM's will be placed on the Public Notice Page. Please ask for details.

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### Old New Year Buffet Cèilidh

Masonic Hall, Albany Street, Oban  
Saturday 10th January 2015 at 7pm  
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Artistes: Duncan MacDonald, Iona MacDonald, Riona MacCormick, Alasdair MacDonald  
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**THIS WEEK'S LISTINGS**

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

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

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

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

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

**SATURDAY:**  
0900 Maggie's Swinging 'Sixties, 1000 Saturday Morning Live with Linda Crowscher, 1300 CLYDE 2, 1800 Sports View with the Dream Team, 1900 Marcus, 2000 Dave Lewis

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

## Encore for band at Skye Accordion and Fiddle Club

POOR attendance at the December meeting of the Skye Accordion and Fiddle Club didn't dampen the spirits of the local musicians who entertained an enthusiastic audience in the Royal Hotel, Portree.

John Cameron and Erin Baker were on accordion, Donald John Campbell and Donald MacRae took on the drums and fiddler Julia Radgrove made her debut at the club.

The remainder of the evening was commandeered by a five-piece band which not only brought a great sound to the club, but much banter and hilarity.

No stranger to the group, it was accordionist Janet Graham of Cumbernauld, with her Scottish dance band, who was the special guest of the evening.

Janet was bandleader with Derek Hamilton of Galston on second box, Andy Kain from Newcastle on fiddle, Iain Wilson of Crawford on piano



LIVE MUSIC, LOVE MUSIC: Mel Wallace, Leslie Atchison and Colin Mackenzie played a handful of covers at the fourth anniversary of the Oban Mic night, with guest drummer 'Tech'. 16\_151obanmic01

## Oban Mic Night celebrates fourth birthday in style

AN OBAN music venue recently celebrated the fourth anniversary of its 'Oban mic' nights, a chance for local and visiting musicians to showcase their talents.

The weekly live music sessions are held on Friday evenings in O'Donnell's Irish Bar on Breadalbane Street, and are often popular with backpackers staying at the two hostels on the street.

Organisers Mel Wallace, Leslie Atchison and Colin

Mackenzie were amongst the performers on December 5, playing a handful of songs including a cover of Stevie Wonder's smash hit Superstition.

Oban rapper K9 Kev was also on form, treating the audience to his unique style of Scottish west coast rap.

A member of Oban band Signal Fires said: 'Open mic nights are a great way to build confidence and try out new material. It was a great boost for us when we were starting out as a band.'

### 15 PAIRS OF IRN-BRU CARNIVAL TICKETS UP FOR GRABS

To be in with a chance of winning a pair of tickets just answer this question: **What date does the IRN-BRU Carnival finish?**

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**TOKEN 2**

Entries to: **IRN-BRU COMPETITION, Wyvex Media, Lochavullin Ind. Est., Oban PA34 4HB**

Deadline for entries: **12noon Tuesday 30th December**

The draw will take place on the same day.

Winners will be notified by telephone. Tickets can be collected via The Oban Times office or alternatively can be sent out via post.

Terms & Conditions  
This competition is open to all adults over the age of 18. All entries must include the name and contact details of the entrant. Entries will not be considered if they do not have all information specified. Winners will be chosen at random, this decision is final. Prize is one pair of tickets to the IRN-BRU Carnival. Prize is only valid for one day. This prize has no cash alternative, is non-refundable and non-exchangeable. Travel is not included. The IRN-BRU Carnival reserves the right to refuse entry without explanation.

### Malt of the Month

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This is the latest version of the Octomore range and it is the first of them to be made from barley grown on Islay. Most barley used in whisky production comes from elsewhere in the UK and even Europe.

Octomore is famous for using the most heavily peated barley in the whisky industry, but while the strength this dram carries should not be underestimated, it is not nearly as punchy as you may expect.

On the palate it's very smooth considering the strength and it has a very long finish with a little spice and ash coming through.

At five years old this is quite a young whisky but it's no secret that peated whisky works very well at a young age.

Bruichladdich, the creators of this gem of a dram, set out to distil the most heavily-peated barley available when they designed the Octomore.

No doubt there will be many contenders to the title of 'most peaty' whisky in the years to come, but for now the Octomore retains that particular title.

## what's on

THE OBAN TIMES FREE EVENT LISTING

**THURSDAY 25TH DECEMBER**  
Rambles Walk, Stob Coire Raineach - Glencoe, Contact 01855 821279

**SATURDAY 27TH DECEMBER**  
Rambles Walk, Black Lochs of Kilvaree - Connel, Contact 01855 821279  
Fasnadoich Gun Club, Iain MacLeod Memorial Shoot, 11am

**WEDNESDAY 31ST DECEMBER**  
Hogmanay in Oban, Corran Halls Car Park, From 7pm

**THURSDAY 1ST JANUARY**  
Rambles Walk, Stob Ban - Glen Nevis, Contact 01855 821279

**SUNDAY 4TH JANUARY**  
Rambles Walk, Coire an Iubhair - Ardgor, Contact 01855 821279

**THURSDAY 8TH JANUARY**  
Rambles Walk, North Kerrera circuit - Oban, Contact 01855 821279

**FRIDAY 9TH JANUARY**  
Hot Supper and Dance with Colin Garvin, Royal Hotel, Oban, 7.30pm

**SATURDAY 10TH JANUARY**  
Rambles Walk, Aonach Beag & Aonach Mor - G. Nevis, Contact 01855 821279  
Old New Year Buffet Cèilidh, Masonic Hall, Albany Street, Oban, 7pm

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# The Silent Man

## A D.C.I. Daley Short Story by Denzil Meyrick

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



*'Come with me, the voice insists. He rolls onto one side, trying to shake the dream and go back to sleep. 'Come with me.' He opens his eyes. 'Come with me.'*

It had been almost 12 hours since the silent man had gathered together his few belongings, made his bed, and prepared to leave the place he had called home for nearly five years. The security camera had followed him as he slipped out of the care home and into the cold dark of early morning, just as the first fat flakes began to fall. It was the day before Christmas Eve. Now, thick snow clothed Kinloch in its cold smothering blanket, tinged orange under the glow of the street lamps. DCI Jim Daley stood at an arched window of the town hall, looking down at the scene from one floor up. The cold breath of last-minute shoppers billowed into the air and around the decorations and fairy lights that adorned the street and illuminated a bright path from each shop doorway. Festive cheer, warm and welcoming, was palpable; an enticement to one and all, as the good people of Kinloch prepared for Christmas Day. Daley turned his attention away from thoughts of Christmas and back to the hall. Stark white striplights picked out faces etched with worry and fatigue. This was the impromptu incident room from where the search for John Sweeney had been coordinated for most of the day. Darkness had descended more than two hours ago and with it the realistic hope that the old man would be found alive; this, though, remained unspoken.

Sweeney's family – daughter, husband and their little boy – sat at a table. The daughter wrung her hands, face red and blotchy from the tears that had spilled down it all day, while her husband fussed over the six-year-old who was working busily with thick crayons, stopping occasionally to glance up at his mother with big sad blue eyes. 'Don't worry, Mummy,' he said, reaching his hand out to pat hers. 'Grampa will be out looking for Santa. He said he would ask him to get me a bike. He told me he would.' 'Calum,' scolded his father, 'what have we told you about this? Grampa doesn't speak. You know he doesn't. I want you to be a big boy for Mummy and be good, OK?' 'He speaks to me,' replied the little boy, nodding furiously to underline what he'd just said. 'He does!' 'Stop it, Calum! Just stop it!' shouted his mother. 'I'm fed up listening to you tell me what Grampa said to you. He doesn't say anything! He hasn't done since you were a baby. You'll go to the bad place for telling tales. How many times have I got to tell you? Just... be quiet!' Calum looked on as his mother buried her head in her hands and his father put his arm around her shoulder. He sighed and quietly went back

to his drawing. Daley was surprised at the boy's self-possession. Most children of his age would have burst into tears had they been at the sharp end of a tongue lashing from a distraught mother threatening hell and damnation. Calum, however, seemed unperturbed, resigned almost, as though he was no stranger to such outbursts. A murmur of voices heralded movement at the table at the head of the room, where the rotund Fire and Rescue officer was getting stiffly to his feet. 'Ladies and gentlemen, I'm afraid to say that the weather is closing in again, and now that darkness has fallen we have to suspend full operations until the morning. If the snow stops, the Royal Navy and Police helicopters will carry on their work with searchlights and heat-seeking devices overnight.' He paused and cleared his throat as the woman's sobs filled the hall. 'We'll gather here again tomorrow morning at five o'clock. Myself and Sergeant Shaw will coordinate efforts until midnight, followed by DS Scott and my deputy thereafter. Where is DS Scott, incidentally?' he asked, looking at Daley. 'Just taking a break,' replied Daley, knowing full well where DS Scott was.

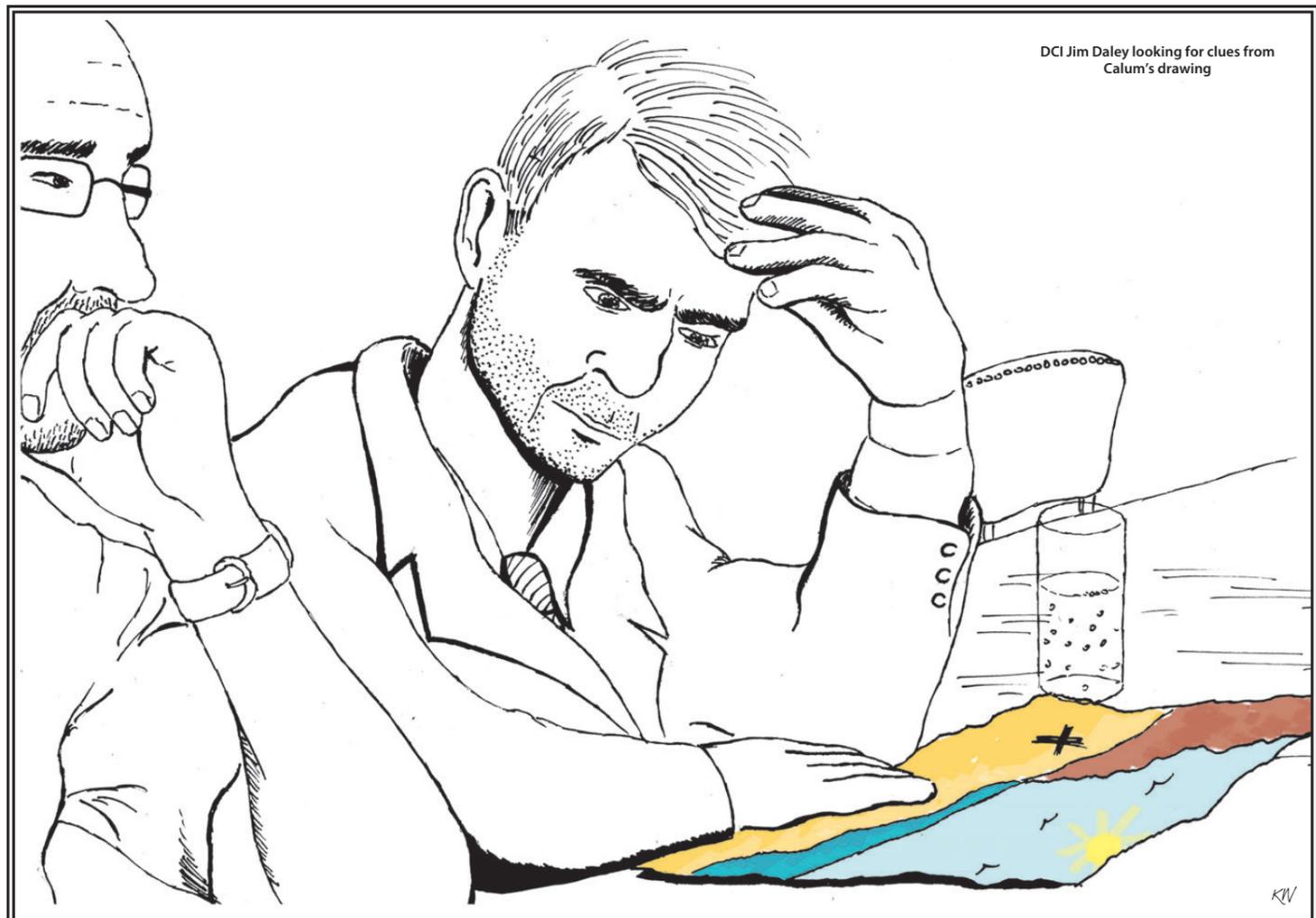
As Daley walked into the vestibule of the County Hotel, he noticed that the tables and chairs where customers normally had coffee, cake and a gossip had been cleared, and the space was transformed into a gaudy Santa's Grotto; all tinsel, fairy lights and crushed baking foil. A long line of children and bored-looking parents snaked towards a rather moth-eaten Santa,

who leaned forward and spoke to a little boy in an accent definitely not from the North Pole. 'And whoot wid you like fir Christmas, young fella?' asked Santa in a very familiar voice. The child took a step backward, wary of the slanted eyes in the crinkled face, and the exceptionally unconvincing cotton-wool beard. Despite his disguise, Hamish wasn't hard to spot. 'Excuse me, Inspector Daley,' said a voice from behind. Andrew Duncan, John Sweeney's son-in-law, had Calum by the hand. 'Thank you so much for all your efforts today. I really appreciate it; we both do.' He tried to smile. 'I'm sorry we haven't turned anything up yet, Mr Duncan. But don't worry,' said Daley, kneeling down stiffly on one knee to talk to the boy, who stared back at him, his face pale under a mop of red hair. 'We'll be out looking for your grampa first thing tomorrow.' The little boy fished around in the pocket of his anorak. 'This is for you, Mr Policeman,' he said, handing Daley a piece of crumpled paper. 'Can you give it to Grampa when you find him? It's his special place. He told me.' 'Sorry, Inspector Daley, my son has a rather vivid imagination. As you know, my father-in-law hasn't spoken for a long time. Not since the death of my mother-in-law, before Calum was born, in fact. Partly because of his condition, they reckon.' Daley nodded and turned his attention back to the boy. He smoothed out the crude drawing of what looked like a cliff above a little slash of yellow, presumably a beach, bordered by blue squiggles representing the sea.

'This is very good. What's that?' He pointed to a shape picked out in black crayon on the yellow beach. 'It's a cross. My grampa told me about it. There's a dead man buried there,' said Calum cheerfully. He grinned, showing a big gap in his front teeth. 'Noo, hold on, children,' shouted Santa, his voice muffled by cotton wool. 'We've got a special little boy wae us. Come on ower here, Calum, an' tell Santa whoot ye want for Christmas.' It was clear that Hamish, having spotted Calum and knowing the circumstances, was keen to make a fuss of him. The red-haired boy made his way past the line of parents and children and stood in front of Father Christmas. 'Noo, whoot present wid ye most like, Calum?' said Hamish in a gentle voice, leaning down and taking the boy by the hand. Calum looked back at his father. 'I wanted a bike... but I'd rather have Grampa back. Please, Santa?' It's a wean's drawing, Jim. I can't understand why you've been staring at it for the last hour,' said DS Brian Scott, taking a sip from his pint of ginger beer and lime and grimacing. 'You're just fed up that's not a pint of lager, Bri,' Daley replied. 'I don't know... there's something about it – about the boy. Just a feeling, I suppose.' 'You and your bloody feelings, Jim. They're not right this time. You know as well as I do there's no way that old man will survive out there tonight. Aye, and that's if he's not dead already.' Scott spoke quietly, anxious that the other customers in the County Hotel bar wouldn't overhear his understandable pessimism. 'It's been freezing or thereabouts

for most of the day. Well below it, now. The man's no' in his right mind. Dementia, a terrible thing. You know the score, Jimmy.' A red sleeve appeared in between the policemen as Santa placed a small glass of whisky on the table, then sat down heavily. 'I don't know whoot they pay Father Christmas, but whootever it is, he deserves every penny o' it,' declared Hamish. 'I'm fair frazzled efter dealing wae a' these weans.' 'It's your age, man,' said Scott. 'Why did you volunteer?' 'Och, my father used tae dae it every year. I suppose it's a family tradition. 'Aye, and that little elf o'er there's quite handy wae a dram or two once it's all over,' replied Hamish, gesturing to Annie, who was in a short green dress and busy pouring drinks for her customers, most of whom were already brimming over with festive cheer. 'Whoot's that ye have, Mr Daley?' 'This?' Daley lifted the boy's picture from the table. 'Och, Calum drew it. Said it was the old man's special place.' Hamish looked at the picture, took his pipe from his pocket and sucked at it, unlit. 'And is this supposed tae be a cross, by any chance?' 'Yes,' replied Daley, 'how did you know?' 'It's Sorn Bay, jeest along the coast fae Machrie. A sailor was washed up there in the First World War, and the locals buried him on the shingle and erected a cross in his memory. I recognised it straight away,' said Hamish with a self-satisfied smile. 'So, it's a real place? I thought it was just something the wee boy had made up. Hmm.' 'See what you've done now,' said

Scott. 'He's got that look in his eye again. It'll be another mad idea, that no doubt I'll be up to my ears with any time soon.' He watched as Daley walked over to the bar to buy a round. 'Mind you, you'd be amazed how many times he's right.' 'There's somethin' else about Sorn Bay. I jeest canna bring it tae mind,' declared Hamish thoughtfully, scratching his head with the end of his unlit pipe. She slept fitfully, her father's face in every dream. He never spoke, though; she wasn't sure if she could even remember what he sounded like. It seemed so long since she had heard him say her name. Suddenly, she felt the hairs stand on the back of her neck and a tingle ripple down her spine – an ancient instinct that somebody – something – was behind her, watching her. She heard her heart pound in her ears, but she could hear something else. 'Come with me. Come with me.' The voice was soft, no more than a whisper. She held her breath, too frightened to move. 'Come with me. Come with me.' Unable to restrain herself, Helen Duncan screamed, screamed at the top of her voice. 'Helen!' shouted her husband, who, now sitting straight up in the bed, turned to reach out and hold her in his arms. It was then he noticed something. Across the room a shadow moved, illuminated suddenly by a shaft of white light coming through a chink in the bedroom curtains. Don't miss part two of *The Silent Man* in next week's *Oban Times*.



DCI Jim Daley looking for clues from Calum's drawing



All pupils at Roy Bridge primary school played a part in The Sleepy Stargazer

# Fes



Lochnell primary school in Benderloch held a Xmas Factor concert that included a Nativity scene and musical performances.



Young violinists and cellists were some of the stars at Fort William RC primary school's Christmas concert on Wednesday. It was an especially poignant occasion, being the school's last ever festive show before it merges with Lochside RC next summer

Eva Jordan and Duncan Davie played Mary and Joseph in Nevis Bank nursery's Nativity play

# Time to



The children at Oban's 1st Steps Day Nursery wowed the audience with their Nativity play then danced the afternoon away at a Christmas party after a visit from Santa. Pictured enjoying the day are friends Aimee Cameron and Jenny Bennett.



Spean Bridge primary school's orchestra took care of the music for the primary four to seven performance of A Christmas Carol. Primary one to three pupils also held a Nativity



Ardnamurchan's high school pupils performed Panto Pandemonium to children from the peninsula and Morvern before two public showings. Audiences were particularly impressed with the seven dwarves, played by school staff



Ballachulish primary one, two and three pupils wait patiently for their Christmas party to begin



Pupils from Rockfield Primary School in Oban took part in the painting of Tesco's Christmas windows. The chosen theme was 'Little Town of Bethlehem.' Once the windows were finished pupils were invited to enter a light-hearted competition decorating gingerbread men and Christmas tree biscuits.

# Farming

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## Farming Focus

Ewen Campbell, SRUC Kirkton and Auchtertyre research farms manager

WINTER is now upon us with a vengeance. We have been inundated with rain, hail, sleet and snow over the past month and parts of our inbye fields on the farm were flooded again during the 'weather bomb'.

The rams are now with the ewes for mating and were carefully selected for the job.

In our long-term breeding project we choose Blackface and Lleyn rams with a high index of Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) to mate with ewes of the same breed, as part of the national 'Sheepbreeder' scheme run by Signet (<http://www.signetfb.co.uk/>).

These index values are calculated using data on performance of the rams themselves and all their relatives in the flock, to predict their potential to pass on superior genes for growth, carcass and maternal traits to the next generation.

Using these figures to select our breeding rams is helping us to improve these economically-important traits year on year, and more than justifies the time and efforts spent measuring and recording these flocks.

We have just had one of our regular advisory group meetings at Kirkton and Auchtertyre.

The group consists of seven farmers together with representatives from the wider farming industry (Quality Meat Scotland, National Sheep Association), the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park and the local SAC Consulting offices in Oban and Stirling.

They advise us on our farm activities, make suggestions for future

demonstration and training events and discuss the wider relevance of the latest findings arising from our research.

Sybil MacPherson, from Dalmally, recently stepped down as chairwoman, and it is now Stewart Christie, from Auchlyne farm, Killin, who is chairing the group over the coming year.

During 2014, we also welcomed three new farming members - James Colston from Arisaig Estates, Invernesshire, Neil McCorkindale, Scammadale farm, south of Oban, and, most recently, Alastair Robb from Townhead Farm in the Fintry hills, Stirling.

This time around we updated the group on the wide range of visitors we have had on the farms since September, almost a workshop or meeting every week, and brought them up to speed on the range of new research proposals we are seeking funding for. We also talked about some of our latest research results and about more practical issues facing the farms, such as the new shed for our cows.

All the steel is now in place, so it should not be too long before the cows can move in.

Anyway, things are calming down now that we are in the run-up to Christmas.

Our shepherds will be on call during the Christmas break, and, hopefully, apart from feeding the animals, all will be quiet.

From all of us at SRUC Kirkton and Auchtertyre research farms, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

# New Islay goose strategy could see Barnacle geese culled



CROP DAMAGE: Islay barnacle geese numbers to be reduced

A NEW goose management strategy for Islay, which could involve culling Greenland barnacle geese, has been announced by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).

The strategy aims to reduce crop damage by 25-35 per cent on the Inner Hebridean island from the tens of thousands of geese which feed there and help farmers manage their land more effectively.

But the news has not been welcomed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) which runs a nature reserve on the island at Loch Gruinart.

The island's habitats are vital for Greenland barnacle and Greenland white-fronted geese, which are protected under European law.

But the barnacle goose population has grown from about 20,000 in 1987 to an average of over 41,000 in recent years.

And while farmers across the island have received funding to partially compensate for economic losses since 1992, there has been concern at the damage to crops with the steady increase in numbers.

Local and national organisations, including the Islay Goose Management Group, Islay National Farmers Union Scotland, staff from Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections office in Oban and SNH on Islay, have worked together on the new approach.

More than 70 per cent of the island will remain as undisturbed feeding areas for geese.

This will include large areas of grassland on individual farms, RSPB reserves, rough grazing, dune grasslands, saltmarsh and roost areas.

Crop damage will be reduced through scaring, diversionary feeding for Greenland white-fronted geese, and population reduction of Greenland barnacle geese, which could involve the issuing of licences by SNH to kill birds where there may be serious agricultural damage.

The licences would be issued only if SNH was satisfied that there were no other satisfactory solutions.

Eileen Stuart, head of policy and advice at SNH, said: 'Barnacle geese numbers have increased steadily on Islay over the past 20 years or so, and farmers have played a crucial role in this conservation success story.'

'But with more geese, there has been increased pressure on both farmers and the public purse. We believe this new, long-term strategy strikes the right balance between conservation, making sure Islay farmers can use their lands profitably, and responsible use of public money.'

Robert Epps, a local farmer and a member of the Islay Sustainable Goose Management Group, said: 'Sustainability is the key to this pioneering plan.'

'By adaptively managing the population of wintering geese, it should help sustain farmers' businesses, the geese themselves and their habitat.'

'It has been a difficult process at times, but our

close involvement helped us understand the reasons for protected status and controls.

'Hopefully involving local farmers has also helped others appreciate the pressure being placed by geese on our farms.'

But the RSPB has called for a rethink on the strategy of culling, saying the evidence on which it is based is inadequate.

Stuart Housden, director of RSPB Scotland, said: 'We fully acknowledge that grazing geese sometimes affect agricultural operations, but past experience on Islay has shown that, with barnacle goose numbers at their current stable level on the island, less destructive means of managing those impacts are available, and moreover will be, at least in the shorter term, cheaper for the taxpayer.'

'Scotland has international obligations towards our wildlife, and the barnacle goose is specially protected under EU conservation law.'

'The spectacle of the geese on Islay is itself an economic benefit to tourism operators on the island, and we fear this 'cull' will deter birdwatchers from visiting.'

Environment minister Aileen McLeod said: 'The strategy will inform management approaches to support sustainable agriculture on the island, whilst fulfilling our conservation obligations regarding goose populations and preserving the wildlife spectacle that Islay residents and visitors alike value so much.'



FLOODING: inbye fields are hit by 'weather bomb'

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## Call to implement recommendations to reduce red tape

The National Farmers' Union Scotland (NFUS) is calling on the Scottish Government to pick up the pace on its efforts to strip bureaucracy and red tape out of Scottish farming.

Months after well-known farming figure Brian Pack published his review into red tape, commissioned by Scottish Government, the NFUS says no progress has been made and claims there are already examples of Scottish Government departments back-sliding on some of the reports' 61 recommendations.

Mr Pack has also sympathised with the union's frustration over the lack of progress.

At the time of its launch, NFUS stressed the importance of the Pack document to Scottish farmers and crofters, given its potential to rationalise red tape and inspection levels.

In the void, the union says policy decisions are being taken

that work against some of the recommendations made by Brian Pack.

NFUS president Nigel Miller said: 'There is clear potential in Brian Pack's 'Doing Better' initiative to strip out red tape but for five long months, this report has been side-lined to gather dust.'

'It contained 61 separate recommendations - each of which could make a difference - but it now appears that producers will have to wait until the new year before we hear which of these Scottish government is going to progress.'

'The top priority was the establishment of an overarching advisory board.'

'Given that no progress has been made on this one headline issue, the Scottish government has still to clear the first hurdle.'

'Worse still, proposals emerging of the intention to rigidly enforce the number of days in

which a Scottish farmer must report cattle movements is gold plating. Scotland says three days while Europe allows seven.'

'We fully accept the importance of traceability but unless the national herd faces a heightened disease risk situation, the seven-day notification period is appropriate and could be subject to enforcement.'

'In periods of high disease risk, reporting periods could still be tightened to three days and gain the support of producers.'

'Progress on Pack is essential because work in Scotland to address the burden of legislation and regulation must dovetail with the simplification agenda being driven by our new agricultural commissioner, Phil Hogan.'

'I am in total agreement with Brian's summation that it is only the implementation of the recommendations that will improve the lot of farmers, land

managers and regulators not simply the production of the report.'

'Doing Better' report author Mr Pack added: 'I fully understand NFU Scotland's frustration at the lack of progress in adopting the Doing Better recommendations, which have the potential to reduce bureaucracy for farmers, land managers and regulators.'

'With the enormously increased workload for officials stemming from the implementation of the reformed CAP coming to an end, I am very hopeful that progress to implement my recommendations will follow.'

'The early establishment of an advisory board including independent members, which the cabinet secretary for rural affairs Richard Lochhead was very supportive of, would greatly ease the process and should be a pre-requisite to regulatory change.'

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**Argyll Bute COUNCIL**

**CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR REFUSE COLLECTION ARRANGEMENTS**

**Oban and Lorn**  
Refuse and recycling collections due on 25th and 26th December will be collected on the following day ie. 25th will be collected on 26th, 26th on 27th December.  
Refuse and recycling collections due on 1st and 2nd January will be collected on the following day ie. 1st will be collected on 2nd, 2nd collected on 3rd January.  
Moleigh Recycling and Civic Amenity Site will be closed on 25th/26th December and 1st/2nd January.

**Mull and Iona**  
Refuse and recycling collections due on Thursday 25th December will be collected on Saturday 27th December.  
Refuse and recycling collections due on Thursday 1st January will be collected on Friday 2nd January.  
Glenorm Recycling and Civic Amenity Site will be closed on 25th/26th December and 1st/2nd January.

**Tiree**  
Refuse and recycling collections due on Thursday 25th December will be collected on Wednesday 24th December.  
Refuse and recycling collections due on Thursday 1st January will be collected on Wednesday 31st December.  
Gott Bay Recycling and Civic Amenity Site will be closed on 25th/26th December and 1st/2nd January.  
Information is also available on the Council website and from your local office.

[www.highland.gov.uk](http://www.highland.gov.uk)

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997 PLANNING (LISTED BUILDING AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997**

The applications listed below, along with plans and other documents submitted with them, may be examined between the hours of 9.30am - 4.30pm Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) at the SERVICE POINT, LOCHABER HOUSE, HIGH STREET, FORT WILLIAM, PH33 6EL and online at <http://wam.highland.gov.uk>

Written comments should be made to the EPC at the contact details below within the time period indicated from the date of this notice. Anyone making a representation about this proposal should note that their letter or email will be disclosed to any individual or body who requests sight of representations in respect of this proposal.

Reference Number	Development Address	Proposal Description
14/04460/PIP	9 Seaview Grazings Strontian, Acharacle	Renewal of Planning Permission in Principle 11/04264/PIP
14/04542/FUL	7 Braeroy Road, Roy Bridge	Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of 2 storey, 4 bed dwelling

Time period for comments is 26 days due to Christmas holidays  
ePlanning Centre, The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, INVERNESS IV3 SNX  
Email: [eplanning@highland.gov.uk](mailto:eplanning@highland.gov.uk)

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

**MARINE (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010 REMOVAL OF SMALL ROCK OUTCROP, INVEROCKLE, ARDNARMURCHAN**

Notice is hereby given that Mr. Keith MacMillan has applied to the Scottish Ministers of the Scottish Government, under Part 4 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, in respect of Removal of Small Rock Outcrop, Inverockle, Ardnarmurchan:

Cost	£2500	
Location	Latitude	Longitude
Inverockle, Ardnarmurchan	Co-ordinates	Co-ordinates
	56° 46.12'N	006° 00.87'W
	(WGS84)	

Plans showing the position of the works may be inspected at: Post Office, The Ferry Stores, Kilchoan, Acharacle, Argyll, PH36 4LH.

Objections relating to safety of navigation or environmental issues in respect of the application should be made in writing to:  
Licensing Operations Team, Marine Scotland, Marine Laboratory, 375 Victoria Road, Aberdeen, AB11 9DB within 28 days of the date of this notice or by email: [MS.MarineLicensing@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:MS.MarineLicensing@scotland.gsi.gov.uk), quoting reference: 05384  
Mr Keith MacMillan

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## YOUR MOVE SCOTLAND BUY-TO-LET INDEX:

### Scottish rents hit all-time high, despite decline in annual growth

- Average residential rent in Scotland reaches record £539 per month – up 0.2 per cent since October
- Scottish rents rose 2.2 per cent over the past year, slowing from 3.5 per cent annual growth in November 2013
- Rents in Edinburgh increased at the fastest pace across the country, up 6.0 per cent in last year
- Landlords see average total annual return of £13,000 in the 12 months to November 2014

Rents in Scotland have crept up to an all-time peak, despite an overall cooling in annual growth this year, according to the latest Scotland Buy-to-Let Index from Your Move, one of Scotland's largest lettings agent networks.

The average residential rent in Scotland now stands at £539 per month, the highest level on record. This follows a 0.2 per cent rise (equivalent to £2) in the month to November.

But on an annual basis, rent rises are stabilising after a slowdown in growth. Average monthly rents across Scotland have climbed 2.2 per cent over the past year, consistent with the annual growth recorded last month. The average monthly rent has increased £12 from £527 in November 2013.

This shows a considerable slackening from a 3.5 per cent annual rise over the year to November 2013. At its fastest pace, annual rent growth reached 4.3 per cent in February 2014.

Christine Campbell, regional managing director of Your Move, said: 'Scottish rents have been steadily edging forwards, and despite only taking baby steps, they reached a new pinnacle in November.'

'Demand and supply are still out of kilter, and in highly sought-after employment and cultural nerve-centres like Edinburgh, this overflowing competition for homes to let has topped up rent prices.'

But the outlook has shifted starkly from the start of this year, and annual rent rises have been trimmed back to healthier levels, as usual market forces check the rate of growth. In real terms, average rents across Scotland are only 1.2 per cent higher than they were a year ago.

'Speculation over how future rental caps or more stringent letting controls may

disorientate the stable direction rents are currently moving in, and any off-piste spike in rents would hurt thousands of households who depend on private rented accommodation. Renters rely on landlords too. Increased investment into the sector is the only way to alleviate the strain of the current housing shortage and soothe competition for rental homes.

'If buy-to-let investment dries up, and the pool of properties to let contracts, rents will swallow the shortfall and eat into tenant finances.'

#### RENTS BY REGION

Rents have increased on a monthly basis in just two out of five regions of Scotland in November. The east saw the fastest monthly uptick in average rents, up 1.1 per cent (equal to £6) from October. Edinburgh and the Lothians was the only other area of Scotland to record a rise, with 0.4 per cent growth taking prices to a record of £617 per month in November.

But rental prices dropped over the majority of Scottish regions between October and November.

The south saw the greatest monthly fall of 0.3 per cent, with average rents dipping £2 to £485 in November. Average monthly rents across the Highlands and islands slipped back 0.2 per cent, and have dropped 0.1 per cent in Glasgow & Clyde since October.

On an annual basis, rents are higher than a year ago in three out of five regions of Scotland. The biggest year-on-year increase was recorded in Edinburgh and the Lothians, with rents climbing 6.0 per cent (amounting to £35) in the 12 months to November. This is followed by a 3.2 per cent annual rise in the East, while average rents in Glasgow & Clyde are up 2.5 per cent on the same time last year.

Average monthly rents in the south are 1.2 per cent (6 per cent) lower compared to November 2013, falling £6 in the past 12 months. The Highland and islands has also experienced a 0.6 per cent drop in average rents on an annual basis.

#### YIELDS AND RETURNS

As of November the gross yield on an average rental property in Scotland stands at 4.0 per cent, consistent with the previous

month. While steady on a monthly basis, this is a drop of 0.1 percentage points from a year ago, when gross yields averaged 4.1 per cent in November 2013.

Taking into account price growth and void periods between tenants, the total annual return on a typical rental property stands at 8.4 per cent in the 12 months to November. This has climbed considerably from only 5.6 per cent in November 2013, but represents a fall on a monthly basis, from an 9.2 per cent average annual return in the year to October, as house price growth stabilises.

In absolute terms this means the average landlord in Scotland has seen a return, before any mortgage payments or other deductions, of £12,913 over the 12 months to November.

Christine added: 'House prices have dusted themselves off from the flurry of uncertainty which unsteady growth before the referendum. But gross yields were hardly shaken by these tremors, propped up by solid rental income in the short-term, and with property values on the rise again, landlords will see a return to sturdy capital gains over the long-term.'

'In this way, buy-to-let continues to stand out as a robust and lucrative investment, and confidence among property investors gives tenants plenty of reason to be optimistic too, as more investment in the sector bolsters the array of homes to let available on the market.'

#### TENANT FINANCES

Tenant finances worsened in November.

The proportion of late rent in Scotland has risen slightly from 6.5 per cent in October to 6.6 per cent in November. On an annual basis, this represents a more significant decline in the financial health of Scotland's tenants, as the proportion of rent in areas has increased 0.3 percentage points from only 6.2 per cent in November 2013.

For the most serious tenant arrears, the UK-wide trend is showing an improvement. The most recent quarterly Tenant Arrears Tracker from Your Move and Reeds Rains found that the proportion of tenants facing significant arrears of more than two months rents dropped to 1.4 per cent during Q3 2014, down from 1.6 per cent of all tenants during the same quarter last year. Overall, this means that 98.6 per cent of tenants in the UK private rented sector now avoid falling into severe rental arrears.

Christine Campbell concluded: 'Many households will be basking in confidence at the boosted spending power in the run-up to Christmas this year, as inflation continues to tumble. But this is only one factor that pulls on household purse strings, and overall tenant finances across Scotland appear to be stuck in a rut, without any clear improvements over the past year.'

'Long-term financial stability for renters rests on the jobs market. It's not just about getting into work either – but ensuring wage growth for those already in employment accelerates to the next gear, preventing more working households from straying into the red zone and in the worst case scenarios, risking eviction.'

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**PERSONAL NOTICES**

**Happy Birthday**

Happy 60th Birthday **Rosemary MacDonald** on the 27th December. All our love, Debbie, Allan and Blair.

**Thank you**

I would like to thank all my very kind friends and acquaintances who sent me flowers, letters, cards, telephone calls and visited me at this time. Your thoughtfulness is very comforting and much appreciated. As you know I am unwell while confined at home and unable to respond to each of you individually but I take this opportunity to send you my warmest Christmas Greetings.

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**Happy 18th**

**Kyle + Kayleigh**

Lots of love Mum, Dad, David and Shaun

**Happy 50th Birthday**

With Love and Best wishes to **ROWENA WILKES** From: Mom and Dad, Nicola and Daniel, Chester, India, Talia and Piper.

BIRTHS

**GRANT - MACLEAN** - Emily and Calum are delighted to announce the safe arrival of baby Calum William MacLean, born November 11, 2014. Thanks to all midwives at Belford Hospital.

GOLDEN WEDDINGS

**MACQUEEN - CAMPBELL** - At Kilbrandon Church, Isle of Seil on December 26, 1964 by the Rev George Kidd, Hugh MacQueen, Cullipool, Isle of Luing to Ann Campbell, Ellenabeich, Easdale. Present address Seadrift, Cullipool, Isle of Luing. Congratulations from all the family.

**SCOTT - GUNN** - At Oban Old Parish church on December 29, 1964 by the Rev. Willie MacDonald, Wilson to Grace.

DEATHS

**BOASE** - Peacefully at the Mid Argyll Hospital, Lochgilphead on December 20, 2014, Nigel Lindsay Boase, aged 80 years, of Ardlarach, Ardfern. Beloved husband of Lu and loving father of Alastair, Neil and the late Catriona. Funeral service will be held at Craignish Parish Church, Ardfern on Monday December 29, 2014, at 11am, thereafter to Kilvee Cemetery. All friends are respectfully invited to attend.

**CAMPBELL - GIBSON** - Deirdre died at home on December 16, 2014 aged 86. Much loved mother, grandmother and great grandmother.

**HOWE** - Peacefully at Lorn & Islands Hospital, Oban, surrounded by her family, on December 18, 2014, in her 68th year, Elizabeth (wee Betty), beloved wife of Willie, much loved mum to Susan and Peter and dear granny to Laura and Jack. Rest in peace.

**MACKENZIE** - Peacefully after a short illness, on Friday December 19, Harry Mackenzie, aged 79 years, much loved husband of the late Eileen Heaps, beloved dad and granpa. Funeral service on Saturday December 27 in Duncansburgh MacIntosh Church, Fort William at 12 noon, thereafter to New Kilmallie Cemetery. Open for flowers or donations to Macmillan Nurses, Belford Hospital. All friends respectfully invited.

**McFADYEN** - Peacefully with family, on December 18, 2014, John, beloved husband of Margaret, dearest father of Veronica and Clare, special Papa to Drew, Stacey and Gemma, Great papa to Darcey, Riley and Annan. Requiem Mass will take place on December 31, at St. Columba's Cathedral, Oban at 10.00 a.m. Thereafter to Pennyfuir cemetery. Family flowers only.

**SIMPSON** - Peacefully, at the Lorn and Islands Hospital, Oban, on December 17, 2014, in his 83rd year, Joey Simpson MBE, treasured husband of the late Cathie MacTavish and devoted father of William. A much loved brother, uncle and great uncle.

**TRAYNOR** - Hugh died December 18, 2014 at Lorn and Islands Hospital. Much loved and missed by neighbours.

MEMORIALS

**ANDERSON** - Treasured memories of dear mother Peggy, passed away December 29, 2012.

- George (Smith) and Dot, Knaresborough, N. Yorkshire.

**BIRRELL** - Proud and precious memories of Al, December 26, 2010. You taught me that a bird must leave the nest and fly, that in time I would leave the nest and soar towards the sky. It was your love and guidance that reinforced my wings, you lifted me before I soared towards life's greatest things. Love you always Dad.

Lisa & DI xxx  
Grandad you are my bright star in the sky, always keeping me safe. Love you, Annie x

**BLACK** - Ethel. 20th anniversary, December 23, 1994 - 2014. A dear mum and nana, sorely missed by us all.

- Henry, Lily, Jim and families.

**CAMERON** - Morag. Treasured memories of our dear aunt.

You are loved beyond words and missed beyond measure. Always in our hearts.

- Morag, David, Allan, Angus, Iain and families.

**CAMERON** - Treasured memories of our lovely Auntie Morag.

We think about you every day And in our hearts you'll always stay.

- Love Joan, Hugh, Emma and Kirsty xx

**CAMERON** - Treasured memories of our beloved aunt, Morag Cameron.

Always loved and never forgotten.

- Catherine, Bill and family.

**CAMERON** - Cherished memories of our dear sister Morag, who passed away December 25, 2013.

Always in our thoughts, Forever in our hearts.

- Chrissie and Ian, Caalmajo, Kilmory.

**CAMPBELL** - Remembering with never ending love and affection, the two people missing from our table. 20th anniversary on December 27 of the loss of Iain Matheson, a loving husband, dad and Gen, and 'wee' Iain Matheson, who died December 16, 2007, a precious son, brother and the worlds greatest uncle.

All of our memories are cherished and take them with us wherever we go.

- Mum, Annmarie, Marion and families.

**CAMPBELL** - In loving memory of my dear wife Liz who died so suddenly on December 26, 1998.

Silent memories never forgotten.

- Cammy, Fort William.

**CLARK** - In loving memory of Kirsteen, who died December 22, 2012.

Loved and remembered forever.

- From sister Alice and brother-in-law John.

**MACALLISTER** - In loving memory of David MacAllister, Tobermory and Symington, who died December 21, 2004.

- Rosemary, Fiona, Alex and David.

**MACEWAN** - Alex You never said I'm leaving You never said goodbye You were gone before we knew it A million times we needed you

A million times we cried If love alone could have saved you You never would have died In life we love you dearly In death we love you still - Rina and family

**MACGILLVARY** - In loving memory of Christina (Chrissie) a much loved mum and gran, who passed away December 24, 2009.

It's been 5 years since you were taken Gran and I miss you so much and never stop thinking about you. Also, remembering my mum Katherine (Kathy) MacGillvary who died August 19, 2014. Mum you were my best friend and you have left me with so many memories and laughs. Words can never describe how much I miss you. I know you and Gran are always with me.

- Love Paul.

**MACKENZIE** - In loving memory of our dear sister and aunt, Marjory, who passed away on December 29, 2011.

Always loved and forever in our thoughts. Sadly missed.

- Mary, Helen, Dorothy, Julie and family.

**MACLEAN** - 25th anniversary. In loving memory of our much loved mum, Margaret MacCuish, who died December 22, 1989 in Tobermory, Isle of Mull.

No longer in our lives to share but in our hearts you are always there.

- Robin, Rena, Anna and families xx

**MACPHAIL** - Treasured memories of a dear husband, dad and 'Shesh', John, Ardmay, Tiree, who passed away December 26, 2004 and loved ones gone before and after.

Today, tomorrow my whole life through, I will always love and remember you.

- Jean, Tiree

Loved beyond words, missed beyond measure.

- May, Irene and families, Oban and Tiree

**MACRAILD** - Mac. Precious memories of a dear mum, gran and great-gran, who died December 20, 2013.

Remembering you is easy, we do it every day but losing you is a heartache that never goes away.

- Kenny, June, Marlyn, Sandy and families.

**MACQUARIE** - In loving memory of my dear wife Jessie, who died on December 28, 2013.

Someone remembers, someone cares, your name is whispered in my prayers.

My heart still aches as I whisper low, God bless you Jess, I miss you so.

- Your loving husband Adie.

**MACQUARIE** - In loving memory of a much loved sister, sister-in-law, aunt and great-aunt and friend to many, Jessie, who passed away December 28, 2013.

The family is growing year by year, our strength is stronger too but in our hearts there is a place which will always be for you.

- Donnie, Jeannie and family.

**MAITLAND** - In loving memory of my darling husband who died December 23, 2012.

Nothing compares to you. A man lives for as long as we carry him inside us. For as long as we carry the harvest of his dreams. For as long as we ourselves

live. Holding memories in common, a man lives. - All my love Teeny

We miss you now, our hearts are sore As time goes by we miss you more.

Your loving smile, your gentle face No-one can fill your vacant place.

- Love always Jim, Marie, James and Isla x

**MAITLAND** - In loving memory of James, a much loved dad and seair.

Those we love don't go away, they walk beside us every day, unseen, unheard but always near.

Still loved, still missed and very dear.

- Ross, Claire, Ben and Ollie

**MAITLAND** - In loving memory of a dear brother-in-law and Uncle James, who died December 23 2012. Loved and remembered always with a smile.

- Love Lorraine, Paul, Jill and Kyle.

**McLENNAN** - In loving memory of our 'Seair' Peter who passed away December 30, 2013.

Gone are the days we used to share but in our hearts you are always there, never more than a thought away, loved and remembered every day.

- Jacqueline, Nicky and Ashley.

**McLENNAN** - In memory of a loving 'Seair' Peter who passed away December 30, 2013.

Remembering you is easy, we do it every day, it's just the pain of losing you that never goes away.

- Donna, Kaireen, Alana and Carla.

**McLENNAN** - In loving memory of our 'Seair' Peter who passed away December 30, 2013.

We think of you in silence, we often speak your name, what we would give to hear your voice and see your face again.

- Christina, Tim, Beth and Emma.

**McKINNON** - Treasured memories of my dear husband Charles McKinnon, who died suddenly on December 28, 2005. Also my dear mother Catherine Brown who died July 26, 2001.

Memories of days together live within my heart forever. Also remembering loved ones gone before and since.

- May, Colonsay.

**McTAGGART** - Special and treasured memories of our loving parents and grandparents, John who died December 25, 2005 and Mary (nee Nicolson), who died August 23, 2011.

Forever missed, forever treasured, loving you both always, forgetting you both never.

- Ian x Philina x Martin x James x and Andrew x Christina x and Ellie x

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Thought for the week

Christmas is wonderful

CHRISTMAS is wonderful and we picture the wise men following the star to Bethlehem.

I saw the wise men at Dunbeg school's wonderful nativity bringing their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh for the baby Jesus.

Gold was brought as Jesus is the King of kings, Frankincense is used in worship, and Myrrh was used at death reminding us of Jesus' love for us in his death and resurrection.

A friend once told me of the fourth gift - they brought their worship to Jesus.

We do the same in our churches all over the world to worship Jesus.

Christmas is a time to think of others; those who are going through difficult times.

This Christmas think of a situation you know, someone going through hard times or some world event from the news, and bring the prayer

to that baby in the manger who sits at God's right hand hearing all our prayers.

I love Christina Georgina Rossetti's hymn 'What can I give him, poor as I am? ... Yet what can I give him, give my heart'.

When we give him our heart that love flows in and flows out to others.

May that love of Jesus, the babe in the manger, be with you today and all the days of your life.

Bill Harvey

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THE REGIONAL NEWSPAPER FOR THE WEST HIGHLANDS, ISLANDS AND ARGYLL

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Lochaber high get creative for Christmas trade fair



YOUNG ENTERPRISE: Lochaber high school's Sophie Kerr, Mhari Clelland, Beckie MacInnes and Jordan Welsh visited Inverness with their stall for the Christmas trade fair

PUPILS from Lochaber and Plockton high schools had the chance to be market traders for a day in Inverness, at the annual Young Enterprise Christmas trade fair.

The students joined their peers from other schools in the Highlands and Moray on December 13, where they worked in small teams as part of a competition similar to the BBC's The Young Apprentice programme.

Each group had a stall where members sold a variety of products they had made or sourced themselves, such as lampshades, phone chargers and candleholders. The event saw Lochaber high win an award for a live demonstration of how to create a Christmas tree decoration from an old book.

New book of Gaelic hymns launched

THE RICH tradition of Gaelic hymns has been preserved for future generations with the creation of a new hymn book in the language.

On the Isle of Skye 'Seinneamaid Còmhla' (Let's sing praise together) was launched on December 6 at a Praise Evening at Columba 1400, a centre dedicated to enhancing the lives of young people.

The Very Rev Lorna Hood, who visited a Gaelic service in the parish on her visit to the island last year, said: 'We all know the Gaelic love of the Psalms and the wonderful haunting sounds evocative of Gaelic life and culture.'

'I am delighted that this new book of Gaelic hymns will speak to a younger generation in the Gaelic medium schools all across the country, in their assemblies and worship. It will also hopefully stir the hearts of an older generation as they too strive to relate their faith to modern day living. 'Even those of us who are non-Gaelic speakers

can look forward to new inspiring words and music from the culture which derives from the heart of our nation.'

The book contains 100 hymns, many being translations of old and modern hymns originally composed in English, but also featuring a number of original Gaelic hymns. The book can be ordered by contacting Carmina Gadelica, at Armadale House, Portree on 01478 612585 or by email on aroscarmina@aol.com.

**Editorial**

**News Editor**  
Euan Paterson  
epaterson@obantimes.co.uk

**Reporter**  
Emma Crichton  
ecrichton@obantimes.co.uk

**Reporter**  
Louise Lee  
llee@obantimes.co.uk

**Reporter**  
Steven Rae  
srae@obantimes.co.uk

**Reporter**  
Gordon Webster  
gwebster@obantimes.co.uk

**Web Co-ordinator**  
Marian Miller  
mmiller@obantimes.co.uk

**Newsdesk**  
Oban 01631 568060  
Fort William 01397 703003  
editor@obantimes.co.uk

**Advertising**

**Advertising Executive**  
Rhona McKillop  
adverts@obantimes.co.uk

**Advertising Executive**  
Nadine Ross  
nrss@obantimes.co.uk

**Advertising Executive**  
Danielle Martin  
dmartin@obantimes.co.uk

**Advertising Executive**  
Toni MacIntyre  
tmacintyre@obantimes.co.uk

**Advertising Executive**  
Shannon Feaks  
sfeaks@obantimes.co.uk

**Branch Offices**

**Fort William**  
Tel 01397 703003

**Lochgilphead**  
Tel 01546 602345

**Campbeltown**  
Tel 01586 554646

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Tel 01770 302142

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Oban Times BIRTHS, MARRIAGES, DEATHS

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9.00pm Kilmore

*Watchnight*  
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GRADUATION

**Emma Aitken graduated from Langside Glasgow Clyde College on November 8, 2014 with HNC in Occupational Therapy Support. Daughter of Alasdair and Lindsey Aitken, Oban.**

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# Fort William FC hoping for continued success in 2015



DELIGHTED: The Fort William team are delighted with their huge progress from last season

**GORDON WEBSTER**  
gwebster@obantimes.co.uk

WHILE the rain may be falling as frequently as ever at Claggan Park, it is fair to say the sun is well and truly shining on Fort William Football Club as the end of 2014 approaches.

Within less than three months, Calum MacLean's men have hauled themselves up five places from the foot of the Scottish Highland League after embarking on one of the best runs in their history.

November saw the team go on a three-game winning streak, which was only the second time since their formation in 1972 they have achieved such a feat.

And they could make it four for the first time ever by winning their next game away to Clachnacuddin on Saturday. Fort have not played a match since winning away to Huntly last month due to continual weather-related postponements.

Whilst winning three matches in a row means nothing next to trophies and medals, it was a big deal for the punters in Lochaber

considering this is a club that has spent so many recent seasons in the doldrums.

The club had won silverware in the past, but as far as week-in, week-out consistency goes, Fort are at the peak of their powers.

The players have taken 14 points from all of their pre-Christmas fixtures, which is already greater than their entire 2013/14 season tally of nine points.

For a long time the whipping boys of the Highland League, they finished bottom of the league the previous four seasons.

**New signings**

However, the tide started to turn for Fort not long after Calum MacLean took over as manager towards the end of last season for his second spell in charge and with the help of many new signings, he has nurtured a new squad that seemingly doesn't know how to lose.

Looking back at their revival, he said: 'I am really pleased with the way things have gone.'

'Myself and Ally Ewen [assistant manager] had said at the start our main goals were to get off the bottom of the table and

**Football**

get more points than last year.

'When I looked at the squad in the summer I thought it was the best one we'd had in a long time.'

'We knew if we got a few more players in and kept the ones we had, we could do well.'

Fort's season started in August with four straight league defeats, losing narrowly to Buckie Thistle, Strathspey, Keith and Deveronvale, but the players showed signs of progress from the previous year, boosted by four new signings; Andrew Hardwick, David Moffat, Nick Stein and the manager's namesake Callum MacLean.

The team went on to pick up two precious points, drawing 3-3 against both Huntly and Strathspey, before another run of defeats left them rooted to the bottom of the table.

The Claggan park men won their first game of the season in October, with a 4-3 scoreline at home to Lossiemouth, which MacLean believes 'really kicked the team on'.



Fort's Sean Grant is mobbed by James Whyte and Barna Tot after his late winning goal in the monumental 4-3 win over Lossiemouth in October

Another four defeats on the bounce followed in October and November, not helped by numerous postponements, before MacLean's men avenged their earlier defeat to Buckie with a priceless 2-1 away victory.

This would be the start of a massive revival as Fort beat Keith 2-0 at home the next week.

History was then made with a 4-0 away thrashing of Huntly on November 29, where two fine strikes from Callum MacLean, one from James Whyte and an own goal rounded off a sensa-

tional afternoon. Striker Whyte - who signed a permanent contract with the club in November - is pleased to be part of a winning side at the moment.

He said: 'Things have gone well, I've played six games and won four.'

'It's a really good group of lads we've got and I'm optimistic we can take points from the majority of teams in the second half of the season.'

His team-mate, defender Iain Fogg, has regularly stood in as

captain this season in the absence of the injured Keith Millar and he said team spirit was high going into the new year.

He said: 'We know when things aren't going to plan. We have boys that are willing to fight for each other.'

'If someone had told us at the start of the season we would be five points better off than last year by Christmas, we'd have bitten their hand off.'

'The plan for the rest of the season is just to keep up this level of consistency.'

**Ardtoe/Nevis Radio still on top**

**Ten pin bowling**

AFTER week 10 of the Lochaber Building Supplies ten pin bowling league, Ardtoe/Nevis Radio still lead at the top of the scratch division with 43 points.

They are followed by Alleycats, who remain second with 42 points and the Creeps in third with 41 points, after all three sides ran out 5-0 winners.

In the handicap division, Rotators are still top on 41 points, while Alleycats have joined Ardtoe/Nevis Radio in second spot with 37 points.

The week's top individual game came from Gary Cowan of Ardtoe/Nevis Radio, with a score of 178.

Other good games came from Pam Weller of Alleycats with 174 and Gillie Mullen of 3+1 with 170.

Gary Cowan had the top handicap game with 233, Pam Weller had the top two game scratch series with 342 and Gillie Mullen had the top two game handicap series with 429.

The top scratch team game of the week came from Ardtoe/Nevis Radio with 587, who also had the top handicap game of 808.

Alleycats scored the top two scratch team series with 1,135 and the top two game handicap team series with 1,505.

**School football**

**Football**

LOCHABER high school's senior football team have had a good start to their league season with five points out of three games.

Last week they came back from behind after conceding a soft penalty to draw 1-1 away to Kingussie; a team notoriously difficult to beat on their home turf. Lochaber had started the season with a 1-1 draw in a very even encounter with reigning champions Millburn Academy, before a comfortable 4-1 victory over Fortrose.

**In the prizes**

**Swimming**

TWO LOCHABER high school students won prizes in the recent Highland Schools Swimming Gala.

Brothers Connor and William Cann both secured bronze medals in their respective age groups in the 200-metre freestyle event.

There were also strong performances from the school's Jack Hamilton, Dora Shepherd and Mia Reid, who narrowly missed out on prizes.

## Girls shinty league

THE HIGH School Girls Shinty League has re-started in the Highlands after a four-year absence.

Supported by the Woman's Camanachd Association, the competition involves 12 teams all in all, playing in two leagues of six.

The teams are made up of 10 schools in the region, including Lochaber high and Portree high, both of which have two teams.

All sides will play each other in a round-robin format twice during the season, with the top teams from league A and league B going head-to-head in the cup final.

The other teams in the league will go through to the shield final and it is hoped to have a special finals day in June for both trophy events.

The first round of fixtures saw

**Shinty**

five teams from each league all play each other once.

Some entertaining shinty saw Lochaber A team go top of league A, with only one point separating them and second-place Kingussie.

Below them are Ardnamurchan in third place, Lochaber B team, Kinlochleven then Oban at the bottom, which have yet to play a game.

Portree A team sit top of league B after winning all four of their first round matches, followed by Glenurquhart, Portree B team, Charlestown, Dingwall, with Plockton still to play.

It is hoped the second and final round of fixtures will take place after Christmas and that the organisers can secure a league sponsor in the future.



GOOD CAUSES: They're off: Santas of all ages braved the miserable weather to run for good causes

## Dash it! - It's Santa

KEEN runners from Ballachulish and beyond braved cold wind and rain for the second annual Santa dash.

Organised by the local running group, the event last Saturday morning saw fundraisers walk, jog and sprint through the village

**Athletics**

in an array of festive costumes.

The £120 raised will be split between Kilochleven-based theatre group Dramafish and Run Ballachulish/Glencoe.

## Ben Nevis race documentary

A TELEVISION documentary is about to be screened following a soap actor's attempt to take on Britain's tallest mountain.

Barra-born Tony Kearney - who starred as Scott Wallace in the popular BBC television show River City - took part in the revered Ben Nevis race in September to follow in the footsteps of two late record-breaking family members.

**Emulate**

The documentary, due to be shown on BBC Alba on Christmas Day, will focus on Mr Kearney's journey to emulate his uncle William Swan, a barber from Fort William who in 1895 became the first person to make a timed ascent and descent of the mountain, and later won the Ben Nevis race three times.

It will also look at Mr Kearney's late father who himself took part in the competition twice, coming

in at third place in 1951 and then eighth place in 1956.

Mr Kearney said: 'My dad passed away in 2002 and I hadn't paid much attention when he'd told me about his running but I regret this now.'

'I hadn't appreciated what a mammoth achievement he'd made - twice. Whilst filming we found photographs of him and my uncle I'd not seen before and a book all about the Ben Nevis race from the 1950s.'

'Keeping my emotions in check was one of the hardest aspects of the race, as I had thoughts of my dad and uncle with me every step of the way.'

'Graeme Stewart [Mr Kearney's trainer] took me on some leg-burning vertical ascents as part of the training these were absolute hell but a necessary evil.'

'I fell during the descent but managed to finish in 2 hours 48

**Athletics**

minutes. It was a life-changing challenge for me.'

The documentary, entitled Turas Tony, will be shown on December 25 at 9pm.



TRIBUTE: Ex-River City actor Tony Kearney ran up Ben Nevis this year as a tribute to his late uncle and father

To allow for postage over the festive period spot the ball will run for 2 weeks

# SPOT THE SHINTY BALL

## THIS WEEK'S JACKPOT £1400

We have removed the shinty ball from the photograph opposite. Now look carefully at the position of the players and use your skill and judgement to place a cross at the exact point where you think the centre of the ball was. You may have a maximum of 20 attempts on this coupon at a cost of £1.

If you wish to have more attempts, you must enter on separate coupons.

**Easy to enter**  
Cut out your completed coupon and put your entry plus £1 per 20 attempts into a sealed envelope and post it to "Spot the Shinty Ball" Competition, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll PA34 4HB by 12noon Monday 29th December. You may hand it into The Oban Times Head Office, Lochavullin, Oban by the same time. Otherwise all entries must be posted.

**Competition rules**  
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**Please remember to enclose £1 for 20 crosses.** The maximum number of attempts on this coupon is 20, but you may enter on separate coupons as many times as you wish. No photocopies allowed. You agree to abide by the rules. How to enter: Mark your crosses using a ballpoint pen. Twenty crosses may be put on this coupon for £1. Send to 'Spot the Shinty Ball' Competition, The Oban Times, P.O. Box 1, Oban PA34 4HB

Winners will be announced in the issue dated 1st January 2015

**WEEK 2 of 2**

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The Oban Lorne under-15 girls' team proved to be a lucky charm for Glasgow Warriors, who beat Munster in the Pro12 League. The girls formed part of the guard of honour to welcome the players onto the pitch at Scotstoun on Saturday. Photo: Stephen Lawson

## Archery club hands out the prizes

### Archery

OBAN and Lorn Archers held their annual prizegiving after their AGM at Atlantis Leisure recently.

Overall Gents reserve champion: Neil MacCorquodale; Ladies reserve champion: Eleanor Wilson; junior reserve champion: Craig MacCorquodale; Handicap improvers medal: Craig MacCorquodale.

It has been a successful year for the Oban based club with thirteen new club records set, four junior and nine senior including one that had stood for fifteen years and a new Scottish record in the Longbow for Bill Murray.

Several archers regularly travel further afield to compete against archers from all over Scotland some have returned with some notable placings including winning Reserve team gold at a competition in Glasgow.

Oban and Lorn Archers meet every Saturday morning from 10am - 12 noon in the main hall at Atlantis from October to March and new members are always welcome. Age is definitely not a barrier as the current members ages range from 12 years old to 85 years old.

## Oban Saints youth results and fixtures

### Youth football

LAST weekend's results: Under 13s v Broomhill SC postponed; Renton Craigandro v Under 14s postponed.

Broomhill 0, Under 15s 5. Scoring for Saints were Lewis Buchanan (2), Lewis MacPhee, Ruairidh Horne and Kenny MacDonald

Under 16s no game; Under 19s no game.

The DFDL will now take a well earned festive break with games starting again on January 10

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# Narrow win sets up big New Year game for Oban Lorne

Stewartry	10
Oban Lorne	12
RBS West Division Two	

OBAN Lorne have set up an intriguing top-of-the-table clash with Cambuslang in the first match of 2015 after a good away win at Stewartry.

Such was the long distance of this away trip the Oban team left on Friday evening to stay overnight in Motherwell, giving a more relaxed build up to the game on Saturday morning.

Donald Budge and Dan Hull were unavailable along with injured Richard MacKay. Coach Corrie Louw decided on a new half back pairing for Saturday's game with Andrew Abraham at

scrum half and Colin Thwaites returning to the team at stand off.

Oban made an uninspiring start, giving away too many penalties, particularly in attack. This aided the home side in going 3-0 up with a well taken penalty kick after five minutes.

But minutes later, the Green Machine was fired up and the dominant Oban pack maintained some good possession in the Stewartry 22, allowing flanker Andy MacDougall to touch down over the line from less than a metre out. Andrew Abrahams' successful conversion gave Oban a 7-3 lead.

Both sides were failing to create any positive attacking plays in

what was the worst surface Oban had played on all season. Oban's penalty count had not improved and the home side were allowed a period of pressure in the Oban half. On 25 minutes Oban gave away a soft try with a Stewartry prop diving over the line as a result of a quickly-taken penalty five metres out. A successful conversion gave a 10-7 lead moving towards half-time.

Try scorer Andy MacDougall was sin-binned with five minutes of the half remaining with the referee becoming tired of Oban's poor discipline.

Lorne rotated their props early in the second half with Liam Burns and Andrew Johnston replacing Carl Lay and Tommy

Sutherland.

Craig Wright came off shortly after and was replaced by powerful winger Callum MacLachlan. MacLachlan's introduction to the team was timely, as his breaks upfield gave Oban some welcome field position.

Oban thought they had gone in front with 20 minutes to go as another MacLachlan break resulted in Oban winger Plato Moisiadis scoring a 'phantom' try.

Moisiadis raced clear of the Stewartry backline to touch down over the dead ball line, after becoming confused by Stewartry's strange pitch set-up.

The men in green, however, refused to be put off and took the lead in the game with 10 minutes

remaining.

Oban's forwards did a superb job of driving the hosts off their own scrum close to the tryline. Oban number eight Corrie Louw gathered the ball and passed to onrushing Oban captain Cammy Smith, who powered over the line.

Stewartry launched a few attacks at the Oban tryline to finish and had a penalty attempt at goal fall short with five minutes to go.

In the end it was a narrow 12-10 win for Oban Lorne in what was a very scrappy and forgettable game.

Despite the poor performance Oban coach Corrie Louw was happy to return from the longest away trip of the season with four

### Rugby

points to keep up the pressure on the teams at the top of the table.

Oban now sit in second place on 36 points with Cambuslang out on top with 48. The Green Machine have two games in hand on their Glasgow rivals and take them on in the first game of 2015 which takes place on January 10 at Glencruitten.

Oban Lorne's opponents in the 2015 West Shield final will be GHK, who defeated Glasgow Accies 40-18 on Saturday.

The Kelvinside team sit top of West Division 1 and will welcome Oban Lorne for the final on Saturday, February 7 with a 2.30pm

# Oban Saints senior team - a look back at the season so far

AFTER the success of last season when Oban Saints won the Scottish Amateur League premier division title along with the Jimmy Marshall Trophy it would be fair to say the team certainly hasn't set the heather on fire so far this season with some lacklustre performances which sees them languish in seventh position in the premier division so surely it would take a miracle for them to retain the league title they won last season.

In saying that the Oban side are

just eight points behind league leaders Thorn Athletic and have two games in hand, with Thorn still having to travel to Oban.

If Saints can get back to winning form they might still be in with a chance.

The Oban side bowed out of the Scottish Cup this season at the third round stage losing 4-3 in a replay away to top Caledonian League outfit Giffnock North. The teams had drawn 3-3 in the first match in Oban.

This was a big blow to Saints as

they have done well in the Scottish Cup over recent years, reaching the last eight on three occasions.

After the success of the double winning season Saints added to their squad bringing in seven new players Martin Bonar, David Beaton, Dougal Graham, Thomas McCulloch, Ally McKerracher, Scott Maitland and Dean Smith but lost the services of Mattie Rippon who moved to Inverness and Dene Cassells who broke his leg in the Jimmy Marshall semi final against Thorn Athletic.

A pre-season foot injury to playmaker Donnie Campbell put him out of action for four months which was a big loss to the squad.

The league campaign opened on August 23 with Saints at home to Kings Park Rangers. The home side didn't play particularly well but they got off to a reasonable start, winning 2-1 thanks to goals from Allan MacKay and Dean Smith.

Next up was a tricky away game against old rivals Thorn Athletic with the home side coming out on top by the odd goal in three. On target for Saints was Lewis Cameron.

Eaglesham were the visitors to Glencruitten on September 6 but they were edged out by the only goal of the game scored by Craig MacEwan.

A trip to Kintyre Park, Campbeltown for the Argyll derby against the Pupils was next on the agenda with an Allan MacKay strike the only goal that separated the teams on the day as Saints edged a close game 1-0.

Busby were next in line but they were no match for Saints who turned in a much better performance to win 3-0 thanks to goals from Roy McLuckie, Lewis Cameron and Allan MacKay.

A trip to Ayr to take on Walloway SC in the second round of the Scottish Cup on October 4 saw the Oban side progress to the next round thanks to two Allan MacKay goals.

Saints had a number of players missing for this game so goalkeeper Daniel Cassells played up front in a striking role while Thomas McCulloch took over between the sticks.

Eaglesham were the next opponents in a premier division encounter but Saints lost this away game 2-1 despite dominating the game in the second half.

A West of Scotland Cup match away to Glenburn Athletic saw Saints hit the goal trail with a 7-1 win. Scorers were Allan MacKay (3), Dean Smith, Ross Maitland, Dougal Graham and Paul Kerr.

Caledonian League side Giffnock North were the visitors to Glencruitten on November 1 in the third round of the Scottish Amateur Cup. Saints played well against a top class outfit and should have won the game, poor defending proving costly as the match ended 3-3. On target for the home side were Ross Maitland, Allan MacKay and Craig MacEwan.

The replay took place the

following Saturday and again Saints played well but again poor defending was to be the Oban side's downfall. The match looked as though it was heading for extra time but a last minute goal saw North snatch a 4-3 win. Allan MacKay, Ross Maitland and Craig MacEwan were the Saints' goalscorers.

The Oban side were back on West of Scotland Cup duty when they travelled to Netherpollack to take on Rosehill Star. Although the Glasgow side made a contest of it for the first 30 minutes they had no answer to a rampant Saints outfit who eventually won the game 7-1 thanks to goals from Lewis Cameron (3), Donald Campbell (2), Dean Smith and Martin Bonar.

Two crucial league encounters against title rivals St Josephs and Finnart were up next but Saints conspired to lose both these games.

St Joseph's came to Glencruitten on November 22 and the Duntocher team headed back down the road with a convincing 5-2 win under their belts. Donald Campbell and Craig MacEwan were the Saints' scorers.

Glasgow Green was the venue for the game against Finnart and

### Football

again the Oban side had no answer to the slick-moving Glasgow outfit who won 4-1, which included two penalties. Donnie Campbell scored Saints consolation goal.

The last game before the festive break should have been against high flying Harestanes, but the game was called off due to an unplayable pitch.

Manager Iain Jackson said: 'It's been a poor start to the season going by the high standards we set last year.'

'We seem to lack consistency. Some weeks we play really well but in other games, especially the bigger ones, there's something missing.'

'We went through all of last season without losing a league game and only lost one cup game over 90 minutes but for some reason our defending has been poor and we're finding it difficult to score goals.'

'Things can only get better in the second half of the season and I'm sure with a lot of hard work we'll turn things around.'

The club would like to wish their supporters and sponsors a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



CHAMPIONS: The Oban Saints squad pictured after winning the SAFL Premier Division title last season. They also won the Marshall Trophy to make it a league and cup double for the club.

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#### WEATHER

**Thursday** Sunny  
Winds light northerly  
Temperatures 0°C to 5°C.

**Friday** Heavy rain  
Winds strong south south easterly  
Temperatures 5°C to 6°C.

**Weekend Outlook** Light rain showers Saturday  
Sunny intervals on Sunday  
Winds strong northeerly  
Temperatures 5°C to 7°C.

FRIDAY

#### TIDAL INFORMATION

Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday, December 25, 2014** are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

Date	am			pm		
Thur	01.37	0.7	07.39	4.1	14.08	0.8
Fri	02.24	0.7	08.25	4.0	14.58	0.9
Sat	03.14	0.9	09.15	3.8	15.51	1.1
Sun	04.09	1.1	10.12	3.5	16.49	1.3
Mon	05.12	1.3	11.28	3.4	17.54	1.5
Tues	06.22	1.4	13.06	3.3	19.03	1.6
Wed	01.22	3.0	07.38	1.5	14.22	3.3

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)

Ardrishaig	-5.35	Mallaig	+0.25
Campbeltown	-5.30	Portree	+0.55
Crinan	-0.47	Tobermory	+0.16
Islay Port Ellen	2.00	Dover	+5.30
Lochboisdale	+0.30		

**Ferry Crossings/Sea States**

Oban to Barra/South Uist	Moderate
Oban to Coll/Tiree	Moderate
Kennacraig to Islay	Moderate

# The Oban Times

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### Decision day for Fort retail park

THE FATE of a new retail park in Fort William was due to be decided at Highland council's south planning applications committee meeting on Tuesday.

Officers have recommended refusal of the four-unit development, to include an Aldi and Home Bargains, with the possibility of a Marks and Spencer, as they state in papers it is 'contrary to development plan policy' as an out of town site which could compete with businesses on the town's High Street.

But Lochaber residents have reacted in horror to the recommendation and a petition backing the North Road retail park has received more than 700 signatures since it was started at the weekend.

A public consultation held by developers Morbaine Ltd in March also showed a majority of locals supported the plans.

Alex Brodie, director of Morbaine Ltd, said: 'Given the near unanimous public support for our retail park, we are extremely disappointed council officers have recommended the committee reject our application. We hope councillors will acknowledge the local demand for additional retail options.'

### Evacuated from 'unsafe' school

PUPILS were evacuated from Mallaig primary school to the nearby church hall on Thursday after their building was declared unsafe.

Structural damage to the chimney meant both the school and its adjoining nursery stayed closed on Friday - the final day of term - with repair work due to be carried out as The Oban Times went to press on Monday.

It is not yet known what kind of repairs will be required to the building or how long it will take. Highland council has advised parents to check their school closures website in the new year before the school term restarts at www.highland.gov.uk/schoolclosures or use the school closures phone line on 0800 564 2272, PIN number 04 2560.

### HIGHLAND COUNCIL AGREES TO STALL BUDGET CUTS FOR A YEAR BUT SERVICES WILL HAVE TO BID FOR MONEY IN YEARS TO COME

# Lifeline for leisure services but long-term future still uncertain



GENEROUS: Lochaber high school first year students are seen with the Christmas gifts they donated to local pensioners, alongside, left to right, Donald Young from the Rotary Club of Lochaber, head teacher Jim Sutherland and Alan MacLeod of Robertson's Construction

## Pupils deliver Christmas cheer to elderly

LOCHABER high school pupils have donated gifts to the elderly community as part of their annual Christmas parcel scheme.

Funded between the school, the Rotary

Club of Lochaber and Robertson's Construction, it saw first year students wrap 450 presents, which were in turn delivered to senior citizens in the area by their sixth

year colleagues. The entire project - which included purchasing items, organising the wrapping and the delivery - was run by deputy head teacher Elizabeth Gow.

## Fire chief thanks team and appeals for new recruits

A LOCHABER senior fire officer has thanked his area team for its hard work throughout the year and made a fresh appeal for new recruits.

Pat McElhinney, Scottish Fire and Rescue's Lochaber group manager, said: 'As we head quickly towards Christmas and 2015, I would like to thank our retained and volunteer

crews for all their hard work throughout the year. Without their help, support and commitment, we would not be able to provide such a service to our communities.'

Mr McElhinney is calling for other employers in the region to allow their staff to work as on-call retained firefighters; individuals who will continue to work their main jobs but

can be 'paged in' to help out in the event of an emergency.

He added: 'Although there is a commitment by employers it should be manageable.'

'The system is very flexible and if there are important commitments at work then these will clearly take precedence over staff's retained roles.'

EMMA CRICHTON  
ecrichton@obantimes.co.uk

LOCHABER leisure facilities have been thrown a short-term lifeline from Highland council budget cuts but the future is uncertain as they will soon have to bid for funding in what one councillor called 'a beauty contest'.

Members agreed to protect the third party grant budget for culture, leisure and learning services this year but plan to slash the funding by 50 per cent in the next four years.

Fort William's Nevis Centre, Lochaber Music School, Mallaig and District Swimming Pool and Lochalsh Leisure Centre all receive support from the council and raised concerns during the consultation period about the future of their facilities, but have expressed relief that they are not to lose any funding this year.

At the Highland council meeting on Thursday members agreed to protect the third party grant for the next year but debated the way money would be allocated in future, when they will have just half of the current leisure budget.

Budget leader Maxine Smith said groups would have to prove their facility benefited the wellbeing of their communities.

If they can, they will receive their full grant, if not, they may receive a smaller amount or nothing at all.

Bill Clark, councillor for Caol and Mallaig, made a passionate plea of support for the Mallaig pool, calling it 'a life or death facility'.

He said: 'It's not a facility just for the casual user, it's a life or death facility. Mallaig is a fishing village and all the dangers that includes.'

'The best reason for ensuring this never goes out of business is

the number of lives it must have saved.'

Councillor Allan Henderson, also a local member for Caol and Mallaig, said he was relieved the funding was protected this year but added facilities needed more certainty for the future.

He said: 'We just don't know what money will be available in a few years.'

'We can't be subjecting them to beauty contests, we need to give them reassurances but we haven't got that ourselves yet.'

Kenny McLaughlin, manager at the Nevis Centre, which includes soft play, ten pin bowling and a sports hall, said the delay in cuts 'put his mind at rest short term'.

He added: 'It's a terrible situation for any leisure facilities which are put in the position where you have to bid for money.'

'If we get funding cuts then it's our job to manage that situation and look at how we can bring in more revenue.'

'This gives us an opportunity to look long term but we need to take it one step at a time.'

'If the cuts were implemented straight away we could have been in an awful situation by next April, so we've got to be grateful for that.'

Chris MacKinnon, manager of Lochalsh Leisure Centre, said despite initial worries his mind was at rest.

He said: 'There's still a small amount of uncertainty as it remains to be seen if we will definitely get full funding but I'm quite confident and comfortable we will be able to make a robust case for ourselves.'

For more on the budget see page 3.



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## Councillor removed from charity board

SKYE councillor Drew Millar has been removed from the board of a charity he co-founded after a motion for him to leave was passed by just one vote.

Scottish Liberal Democrat councillor David Alston asked members to strip the Portree politician of his title as director of High Life Highland, which runs a number of facilities across the region, at a Highland council meeting on Thursday.

This came after councillor Millar resigned from the Lib Dems following a row when he shared photos from right-wing extremists Britain First on Facebook in September.

Councillor Alston said: 'His actions display a serious and repeated lack of sensitivity on the issue of equality. We don't believe it's appropriate for councillor Millar to continue in his post

as a council-nominated member of High Life Highland.'

Councillor Millar retaliated: 'I have been part of High Life Highland since the earliest stage and feel I have served it to the best of my ability.'

Addressing the issue of the social media posts, councillor Millar said he was not racist and had never tried to stir up hatred but said he stood by another post when he called Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg a 'cretin'.

Fellow members of the newly-formed Highland Alliance party made statements of support for councillor Millar and councillor Thomas MacLennan said he was 'an easy man to support'.

Concerns were also raised about why the issue was on the agenda for a full council meeting and councillor MacLennan

branded it 'ridiculous'. He added: 'The eyes of the Highlands are watching us today for the budget and we're debating this? Ridiculous.'

Donnie Kerr, also of Highland Alliance, slammed the Lib Dems for 'washing dirty linen in public'. He said: 'I have every faith in Drew Millar both as a councillor and in his position with High Life Highland. This is really below the belt.'

Councillors voted for councillor Millar's removal from the board, by 35 to 34.

A Highland Liberal Democrat spokesman said: 'Britain First material is deeply offensive, altogether reprehensible and wholly unacceptable. Their views have no place in a free and tolerant society. The motion put forward was not about party politics. It was about principles, about equalities, about fairness.'

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WIN A LUXURY BORDERS BREAK

## Budget round-up

### Fears over gritting cuts

LIVES will be put at risk due to a reduction in road gritting, according to one Highland councillor.

Members agreed to cut funding for winter maintenance by £360,000 over the next two years, with a reduction of a further £240,000 in 2016-17, resulting in the loss of 12 grit-dispensing vehicles and less precautionary evening treatment of roads.

Councillor Matthew Reiss said: 'This service does an important job - it saves lives. If we take these vehicles off the road it's lives that are at risk.'

Councillor Allan Henderson added that if road maintenance was reduced 'Highland life in the winter will change forever'.

He said: 'The public told us

this is something that shouldn't be taken away. People take precautionary measures by clearing their own path even if only one person uses it and that's what should be done on the public roads.'

But councillor Graham MacKenzie said the council wouldn't be losing out by getting rid of 12 vehicles.

He said: 'Some of the lorries we have now are reaching the end of their natural lives. 'We will buy new, larger vehicles which will cover a larger area meaning we will eventually need fewer vehicles and that's where the 12 lorries will drop off.'

Members voted 36-27 with two abstentions to reduce the winter maintenance budget.

### Less teachers in a year

SECONDARY schools in the Highlands have been given a year to make preparations for a £400,000 cut to teaching staff.

Councillors agreed to postpone the planned reduction of high school teachers by one per cent across the region, resulting in the loss of up to 60 jobs, at the full council meeting on Thursday.

But teachers are not out of the woods yet as the proposal is still earmarked for year

2016/17. A plan to reduce the primary school day was also removed from this year's cuts.

Highland council budget leader Maxine Smith said: 'It became apparent that the areas of most concern were care and learning and community services, therefore in considering which savings we have taken forward, we have safeguarded these from the bigger cuts and deferred any reduction in the primary school day and cuts to secondary teacher posts.'

### No rise in council tax

COUNCIL tax in the Highlands will not rise in 2016-17 despite pleas from opposition councillors.

Speaking on behalf of the Independent party at the full council meeting on Thursday, councillor Jaci Douglas proposed a motion to increase the tax by five per cent from 2016, despite a national freeze put in place by the Scottish government.

She said: 'There must be a better way to find money than continually cutting services.'

'When the freeze came in it was very appropriate but times have changed. We have to fight

to save services. The money a council tax increase will bring us could prevent massive cuts to frontline services.'

But Highland council leader Drew Hendry said they should continue with the freeze until a review on the national policy was carried out at Holyrood, which was backed by 45 members during the vote, compared to 31 who backed a rise.

He said: 'We are still in a place where people are relying on food banks, where the working poor are struggling.'

'When families are under pressure £1 per week is a lot of money.'

## LOCHALINE RESIDENTS AND COUNCILLORS ANGRY AT AMOUNT BEING CHARGED BY COMMUNITY-RUN GARAGE

# Morvern fuel price row as pump charges rocket

**GORDON WEBSTER**  
fort@obantimes.co.uk

RESIDENTS and councillors on the Morvern peninsula believe drivers in their area are being ripped off when buying petrol.

Following similar complaints last week on the Uist islands, people in Lochaline are angry at the high prices charged by their local community-run garage, which they say is forcing motorists to fill up 40 miles away in Fort William.

The filling station, incorporated by the village's Lochaline Stores,

was last reported to be charging prices of 152.9 pence per litre for both unleaded and diesel, in comparison with prices at Fort William's Morrisons garage set at 115.9 and 121.9 pence respectively for each grade.

Smaller independent retailers are normally required to charge more to meet their higher running costs, but some feel the difference is higher than it should be.

One resident, who wished not to be named, believes the situation is unfair considering wholesale prices are falling to their lowest levels in years. He

said: 'The prices are ridiculous, it makes you think twice about going anywhere.'

'I always need to make sure I've got plenty fuel in the tank before going away. It's getting very expensive to travel here by car.'

Brian Murphy, councillor for Fort William and Ardnachurchan, agrees that there is no excuse for such contrasting prices within a single ward area.

He said: 'You can imagine petrol stations in remote areas would be two or three pence dearer, but given the massive [price] falls we have seen, 30 pence is indefensible.'

The petrol station is owned by Morvern Community Development Company and was built with financial assistance from Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE).

Lesley Jones, one of the company's directors who runs the garage, believes those criticising the prices do not understand the reality of operating a small business.

She said: 'I know the community is unhappy but we are doing the best we can with delivery challenges.'

'I'm so fed up with people complaining when they don't

realise the expense of running a petrol station.'

Meanwhile, Fort William and Ardnachurchan councillor Andrew Baxter says it is the UK government which is ultimately responsible for high prices in rural areas.

He said: 'I don't think you can blame the shop owners because the cost is taxed to the government and the retailer is only making a couple of pence per litre. The government has to push the European Union for a fuel reduction tariff, which would knock about 10 pence off the cost in remote areas.'

## Nevis Range celebrates 25th anniversary



GOING STRONG: Nevis Range managing director Marian Austin celebrates the centre's 25th anniversary alongside one of her predecessors, current group board member Ian Sykes

NEVIS Range staff are celebrating the mountain centre's 25th anniversary.

Founders of the sport and leisure facility say they are 'delighted' with the progress of Nevis Range, best-known for winter sports and host of the mountain bike world cup in the summer.

Marian Austin, managing director at the centre, said: 'I have been here since day one, starting as a ski instructor and I am delighted that Nevis Range is a popular year-round attraction 25 years on.'

Ian Sykes, former managing director and current board member, added: 'I would really like to highlight the overwhelming commitment of everyone on the first committee, council and government agencies who did bring our dreams and those of the Lochaber community to life.'

'It is really great to see Nevis Range still going 25 years on and doing more than we could ever have hoped for in 1989.'

### Lochside's Hanna homes in on Christmas card design prize

Hanna Nora Olah from Lochside primary school was the winner in Lochaber Housing Association's Design a Christmas Card competition. The primary six pupil received a framed picture as a prize and was able to watch the card being produced at PrintsSmith in Fort William along with her classmates. Hanna is pictured with the housing association's Christine Morrison (left) and Irene Christie (right).



### Police advice on how to stay safe over festivities

A SENIOR Highland police commander has advised the public to stay safe while out enjoying the festive season.

More Police Scotland officers have been deployed out on the street in the run-up to Christmas and new year, and they have reminded people drinking alcohol to do so in a responsible manner, especially due to the recent lowering of the drink drive limit.

It is part of their Operation Respect campaign, which also tackles other antisocial behaviour such as drug misuse and its associated crime.

South Highland area commander chief inspector Colin Gough said: 'Although violent crime is reducing across the south Highland area, where

excess alcohol is involved people become more vulnerable to crime and disorder and can find themselves in situations they wouldn't normally be in.'

'I would encourage safe and responsible drinking during the festive period and ensure you plan how you are getting home later in the evening.'

'With the recent lowering of the drink drive limit, please be especially mindful of the possible effects of alcohol the morning after your night out.'

'The festive period can also see a rise in incidents of house breaking so please don't forget to ensure your property and outbuildings are secure at all times. Similarly, it's important to keep your bag and any valuables close to you on nights out.'

### Skye mountain path restored

A CRUMBLING footpath to one of Skye's most spectacular summits has been restored to its former glory.

The walking route which travels 928 metres to the peak of Blà Bheinn on the edge of the Cuillin is now complete, following a helicopter lift of hundreds of tonnes of stone for new steps.

The John Muir Trust, which looks after the tourist attraction, commissioned the work after winning a £24,000 grant from a European Outdoor Conservation Association online poll.

This was boosted by an appeal to trust members for donations.

Chris Goodman, footpath manager from the John Muir Trust, said: 'We'd like to thank all our members and supporters, as well as those who voted for us in the online poll to help us secure a large part of the funding.'



ALL CHANGE: departing TSB bank manager Sharon Morley welcomes her successor Iain Logan outside the branch on Fort William High Street

### Fort William bank manager retires after 21 years

FORT William TSB bank's long-serving manager Sharon Morley is retiring after 21 years at the branch.

Mrs Morley, 54, has worked for the company for 35 years and will leave on Christmas Eve to work with her husband Colin on his Glenfinnan Candles business.

She said: 'I've really enjoyed it here but retiring will give me more time to spend with family.'

'I have worked with excellent staff and built up a rapport with the customers over 21 years and I think I'm leaving it in good hands.'

Iain Logan will take over as branch manager on January 1, after working as personal banking manager in the Oban TSB.

He said: 'I can't wait to get stuck in and meet our local customers in Fort William.'

'It's a great team at TSB and we look forward to helping customers with all of their banking needs.'

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**TIMESLINE**

**Islanders deserve Holyrood apology**

A CALL has been made to the Scottish government to apologise to residents of Islay and Jura following the delay in replacing the mains electricity cable serving the islands. Highlands and Islands MSP, Jamie McGrigor, and Tory Westminster candidate for Argyll and Bute, Alastair Redman, who lives on Islay, say the six-month wait to replace the cable was too long.

**£7m committed to town centre plan**

THE backing for two projects in Campbeltown has helped bring the total investment in the town's heritage to £7 million since 2009. The Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) has this week committed the last of its spend to the town hall renovation (£387,000) and the repair of a tenement (£390,000).

**Cinema's future is secure after AGM**

THE COMMITTEE behind Oban Phoenix Cinema has agreed a new way of running the community enterprise after admitting it had struggled to balance the books. However, following its AGM on December 17, the committee said the future of the cinema was now secure.

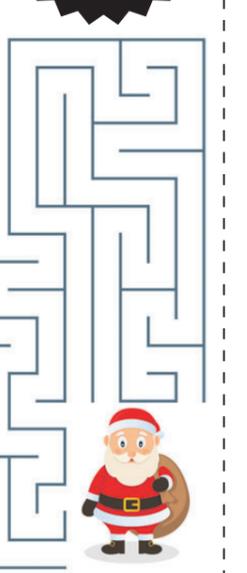
**Watch out for the lights fantastic**

PEOPLE living in the West Highlands have been told to keep an eye out for the famous Northern Lights over Christmas and New Year. Weather forecasters say conditions over the festive period, especially on Christmas Day, are perfect for sightings of Aurora Borealis.



THE COMMITTEE behind Oban Phoenix Cinema has agreed a new way of running the community enterprise after admitting it had struggled to balance the books. However, following its AGM on December 17, the committee said the future of the cinema was now secure.

**Win £10 Waterstones Voucher**



Help Santa and Rudolph get to the chimney and send in your entries to The Oban Times to be in with a chance of winning a £10 Waterstones gift voucher.

Name ..... Age .....

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Please post your entries to The Oban Times, Kids Corner Competition, PO Box 1, Oban PA34 4HB. Entries to be in by 12 noon Monday 12th January 2015. Winners will be drawn at random from all the correct entries. Normal Oban Times rules apply. The Editor's decision is final. Photocopied entries will not be accepted. No cash alternative.

**Public hearing for wind farm plan**

A PUBLIC hearing over a rejected wind farm application on an MSP's 3,500-acre estate in the hillside above Loch Awe will take place in March. Argyll and Bute council's planning committee refused to grant permission for the 15-turbine application, in May, by developers RWE Innogy on Jamie McGrigor's land at Ardchnonnell. Following the decision, RWE Innogy lodged an appeal and a Scottish government public hearing will take place between March 3 and 4, with a site visit scheduled for January 15 2015. RWE claimed the turbines would have generated enough electricity to power 40 per cent of the homes in Argyll.

**Seasonal greetings from the captain's angels**

SPOTLIGHT musical theatre group member Stephen Lee was having a 'Santastic' time recently as the cast took some time out from rehearsals for some festive fun. Stephen, who plays the captain in the Oban group's performance of *Anything Goes*, was surrounded by fellow cast members Kate, Fiona, Sue, Nicole and Ellie, who play the characters of Reno and her Angels in the famous Cole Porter musical. Fellow cast member Stephen Day, who plays Moonface Martin in the production, explained: 'It's quite an intense process - we're rehearsing two nights a week for three hours and then on Sundays as well, so it was good for the cast to take a break and have a bit of fun.' The show opens on February 25 in the Corran Halls for five nights.



**MAN RESCUES DISABLED WOMAN FROM BUSY OBAN STREET BUT THEN DISAPPEARS BEFORE SHE HAS CHANCE TO SAY 'THANK YOU'**

**Help find my guardian angel**

**EUAN PATERSON**  
epaterson@obantimes.co.uk

A DISABLED Oban woman has praised a 'Christmas guardian angel' who came to her rescue when her electric wheelchair cut out while she was crossing the town's busy Soroba Road. Teresa Russell, 66, was crossing the road at the traffic lights by Oban high school at 9.30am last Wednesday on her way to her voluntary 'meet and greet' job at Lorn and Islands hospital. Suddenly, her wheelchair lost power, leaving her stranded in the middle of the road. Unable to control the wheelchair, Teresa admits she panicked when it began rolling towards the oncoming traffic. 'I was panicking,' Teresa said. 'I thought "Where is my phone", because I always carry it around my neck, but I couldn't seem to find it. 'I was then thinking how I could

divert the chair into a hedge or something but I couldn't direct it. It was scary. 'I tried putting my 'good' foot down to stop the chair but that didn't help. 'It was then that I felt someone grab the back of the chair and this man said, "You look like you're in a bit of trouble". 'He pushed me onto the pavement and we tried to see what had gone wrong with the chair but we couldn't see anything obvious. 'He told me he would push me to the hospital where someone could look at it for me.' At the hospital Teresa and her mystery hero checked over the chair and the man found and fixed a loose connection between the wheelchair and the battery, which was fully charged. Now Teresa, a well-known volunteer with Girlguiding and a co-ordinator for a club for retired Tesco staff, wants *The Oban*



**“ I think this man deserves a medal, or at least a big Christmas present. He was gone before I could ask him for his name”**

**Teresa Russell** (Pictured)  
*Times* to help identify the man, who she has called her 'Christmas guardian angel'. 'I think this man deserves a medal, or at least a big Christmas present,' the Nant Drive resident added. Teresa said she was so stressed and anxious to get to her volunteer reception job with the Royal Voluntary Service at the hospital that she forgot to enquire into her hero's identity before it was too late. She said: 'He was gone before I

**Kids' Christmas Corner**

Keep the little ones entertained over the festive period with our fantastic puzzles. Send your entries in to The Oban Times and win a £10 Waterstones voucher (one winner for each competition). Entrants must be aged 16 or under.

**Win £10 Waterstones Voucher**  
**Spot the difference**



Circle the 10 differences between the two photos and send in your entries to The Oban Times to be in with a chance of winning a £10 Waterstones gift voucher.

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Parent/guardian's name .....

Please post your entries to The Oban Times, Kids Corner Competition, PO Box 1, Oban PA34 4HB. Entries to be in by 12 noon Monday 12th January 2015. Winners will be drawn at random from all the correct entries. Normal Oban Times rules apply. The Editor's decision is final. Photocopied entries will not be accepted. No cash alternative.

**Christmas word search**



Find the 20 words below hidden in the puzzle and send in your entries to The Oban Times to be in with a chance of winning a £10 Waterstones gift voucher.

- scrooge
- sleigh
- snowman
- star
- tinsel
- turkey
- christmas
- jesus
- manger
- santa
- presents
- angel
- nativity
- elves
- reindeer
- toys
- tree
- advent
- carols
- rudolph

Name ..... Age .....

Address .....

Telephone .....

Parent/guardian's name .....

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**Win £10 Waterstones Voucher**  
**Santa and Rudolph Maze**



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COUNCILLOR CALLS FOR ACTION AS UNDER-PRESSURE DEPARTMENT TAKES OVER THE CUTTING OF ROADSIDE GRASS VERGES

# Cutbacks are verging on a joke

**EUAN PATERSON**  
epaterson@obantimes.co.uk

A COUNCILLOR has hit out at a local authority decision to move responsibility for cutting grass verges from one department to another following a series of delays in the 2014 schedule. Councillor for Oban South and the Isles, Neil MacIntyre, was critical of the change which meant Argyll and Bute council's cash-strapped amenity services took on the job from the roads department. The councillor was responding to a report by the roads department at the December Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee meeting that showed amenity services had spent £26,655 in the first half of the financial year on grass cutting, a job previously done by the roads department. Councillor MacIntyre made reference to amenity services' struggle this year to find a re-

placement tractor for the work. He added: 'We had a fall back on that decision when they (amenity services) couldn't get a tractor and they don't have the staff. Why are they taking on that work?' Stewart Clark, the council's roads performance manager, explained the decision was taken at a 'high level' because of 'a lack of available resources in the roads department'. Councillor MacIntyre responded: 'That's my problem. We can't seem to do what we want to do now and if we are cutting more staff and services we can't keep robbing Peter to pay Paul. 'For us to go through the summer season without getting a replacement tractor is a joke - we can't keep messing about like this. We are putting a lot of pressure on amenity services. 'The whole area suffers from this; it looks a shambles. It is a tourist area and has to look nice



**“The council's officers perform miracles with the budget they have and it's up to the area committee to take more responsibility”**

Councillor Roddy McCuish (Pictured)

and safe and it didn't look like that this year.' Argyll and Bute council admitted this year's roadside verge cutting programme in Lorn was delayed because of 'technical difficulties'. This resulted in a later start and cutting thicker grass subsequently caused some of the machinery to break. A spokesman for the council said: 'We have learned lessons from this and will be moving forward with a more robust programme next season. 'Amenity services staff already cut the grass in our public spaces such as parks and cemeteries. 'It makes sense that they also cut the roadside verges while our roads operatives concentrate on delivering our hugely successful roads reconstruction programme, as well as the on-

going maintenance of the road network.' At the area committee meeting, councillor Iain Angus MacDonald pointed out the already tight budgets were allocated to council departments based on no staff being absent or on holiday. He suggested forming an income generating scheme, similar to Highland council, which brings in £925,000 a year. Saying Ardhattan community council, of which he was previously chairman, had in 2010 discussed erecting a community wind turbine, he added: 'I'm not saying we should grab parking income but we need to look at ways of helping the council provide services.' Councillor Roddy McCuish agreed with the principle, saying: 'The council's officers perform miracles with the budget they have and it's up to the area committee to take more responsibility.'

# School concert hits all the high notes

EXCEPTIONAL musical talent was once again on display at Oban high school as the pupils and staff performed at the annual concert. Held in the school's main hall the concert line-up featured traditional and classical performances, the school's pipe band, wind band, string group and choir, as well as solo performances. There was also a musical theatre production and a special appearance by the school staff choir. The winners of Tockfield's Got Talent, young Highland dancers Daniel Craik and Kayla Baxter, thrilled the audience with their routine. Morven McKerrell, principal teacher of music, said: 'The concert showed the wide array of talent at the school. 'Every year I think we can't top the previous year but the concert seems to get better and better.'



SINGING LESSON: The staff choir take to the stage to perform at the school concert Photographs: Kevin McGlynn



RHYTHM STICKS: Allyson Boyd on the xylophone



PRODIGY: Second year pupil Reed Barrow plays an Advanced Higher piece on the xylophone

# Train travel is just the ticket for pupils

MOVING Oban high school pupils from east Lorn onto rail transport has been a success, says the council officer behind the plan. But Malcolm MacFadyen says there are still improvements to be made, not least extending the size of the shelter at Oban train station. The vast majority of pupils from Glenorchy, Taynuilt and Connel are no longer bussed to Oban and instead use the morning Glasgow to Oban train to travel to school.

The frequency of this train service increased to six a day from May 18 this year. Trial train journeys took place in June 2014 before being fully implemented for the start of the school year in August, despite initial opposition, particularly from parents in the Glenorchy area. Mr MacFadyen told councillors at the December meeting of Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee that the council had attempted to address parents' concerns.

He said: 'It has been a very positive introduction, well received by people and pupils that make use of it. 'There is increased flexibility for attendance at after-school clubs and even, in some cases, taking up employment.' Mr MacFadyen told councillors that as a result of the school service, shelters at Dalmailly and Taynuilt stations had been improved, as had lighting at Lochawe station. Pupils are also able to use their railcards for free travel

at weekends during term time. The council has committed £140,000 from the almost £1million of funding secured from the Sustrans Community Links Programme to deliver the station improvements. At the Connel Ferry station, a link path was constructed last year, from a previous round of funding, at the cost of £104,000. This path has improved the connections between the National Cycle Network 78 and Connel station.

At Loch Awe station, pedestrian and cycle access has been improved, with street lighting being installed on the access road. The council is also looking to resurface this road, as well as upgrading the pedestrian crossings on the A85 with improvements to the kerbs. Asked about the inadequate shelter at Oban train station, Argyll and Bute council said it had raised the matter with ScotRail, which is 'considering' the proposed extension.

# Tiree still without mobile coverage

STORMS have left Tiree without mobile phone coverage. A bolt of lightning hit the mobile mast almost two weeks ago and since then there has been no signal on the island. Alan Miller from Searnish said: 'Vodafone has acknowledged a problem but could give no date when the service would be restored.' Vodafone said it was aware of the problem and hoped to have it resolved as quickly as possible.

# £5 billion scheme to improve mobile coverage

WEST Highland residents and businesses are set to benefit from a landmark announcement to improve mobile coverage across UK black spots. As part of its long-term economic plan, the UK government has signed a binding agreement with the mobile networks EE, O2, Three and Vodafone to halve the number of areas with only partial signal. It is hoped the £5 billion plan will reduce complete

'not spots' (which is where there is coverage from some, but not all of the four mobile networks) by almost two-thirds. Liberal Democrat MP for Lochaber, Charles Kennedy, welcomed the huge investments: 'I have often said that Highlanders do not only experience personal frustration from poor mobile phone signal but we are also all too aware of the negative impact it can have for local business. 'It remains important that

Highlanders receive a boost in their mobile phone signal. 'I am confident that these are some of the crucial steps we need to build a stronger local economy that enables opportunities for everyone.' The mobile firms have said they will guarantee coverage across 90 per cent of the UK by 2017. Argyll and Bute is the worst affected region in mainland Scotland for poor coverage, with 42.4 per cent of the area in partial 'not spots'.



## Who would you like in your Christmas stocking?

FOR a bit of festive fun *The Oban Times* asked people in the town who they would like to find in their stocking when they wake up on Christmas morning.

**Len Vickary, 78 from Barnsley is retired, and visiting Oban for a short holiday. He chose Prince William's wife, the Duchess of Cambridge (Kate Middleton).**



**'There's a calendar released with Kate and William in it, but if I met the two of them I'd only want her to sign it. She's such a beautiful woman.'**

**Tricia Morrison, 58, from Oban, is a care worker. She chose former first minister Alex Salmond.**



**She said: 'I think he's one of the only politicians who has any kind of integrity. I was never particularly fond of the SNP but I do like him, and Nicola Sturgeon.'**

**Phil Cooper, 59, from Oban, works at the Wool and Needlecraft centre in Oban. He chose the late Apple CEO Steve Jobs.**



**'He was a fantastic guy, amazing. He really turned Apple around when he came back to the firm, really sorted it out. The products are really excellent, and under him they had to be top of the line.'**

**The Oban Times**  
& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

**Our offices will be closed on Thursday 25th and Friday 26th December**

**NEW YEAR ADVERTISING DEADLINES**

**The issue dated Thursday 1st January will be available to buy from the 30th Dec all advertising must be booked in by Wednesday 24th**

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**Our offices will be closed Thursday 1st and Friday 2nd January**

Archery club hands out the prizes

Archery

OBAN and Lorn Archers held their annual prizegiving after their AGM at Atlantis Leisure recently.

Overall Gents reserve champion: Neil MacCorquodale; Ladies reserve champion: Eleanor Wilson; junior reserve champion: Craig MacCorquodale; Handicap improvers medal: Craig MacCorquodale.

It has been a successful year for the Oban based club with thirteen new club records set, four junior and nine senior including one that had stood for fifteen years and a new Scottish record in the Longbow for Bill Murray.

Several archers regularly travel further afield to compete against archers from all over Scotland some have returned with some notable placings including winning Reserve team gold at a competition in Glasgow.

Oban and Lorn Archers meet every Saturday morning from 10am - 12 noon in the main hall at Atlantis from October to March and new members are always welcome. Age is definitely not a barrier as the current members ages range from 12 years old to 85 years old.

Oban Saints youth results and fixtures

Youth football

LAST weekend's results: Under 13s v Broomhill SC postponed Renton Craighandro v Under 14s postponed.

Broomhill 0, Under 15s 5. Scoring for Saints were Lewis Buchanan (2), Lewis MacPhee, Ruairidh Horne and Kenny MacDonald

Under 16s no game; Under 19s no game.

The DFDL will now take a well earned festive break with games starting again on January 10

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The Oban Lorne under-15 girls' team proved to be a lucky charm for Glasgow Warriors, who beat Munster in the Pro12 League. The girls formed part of the guard of honour to welcome the players onto the pitch at Scotstoun on Saturday. Photo: Stephen Lawson

# Narrow win sets up big New Year game for Oban Lorne

Stewartry	10
Oban Lorne	12
RBS West Division Two	

OBAN Lorne have set up an intriguing top-of-the-table clash with Cambuslang in the first match of 2015 after a good away win at Stewartry.

Such was the long distance of this away trip the Oban team left on Friday evening to stay overnight in Motherwell, giving a more relaxed build up to the game on Saturday morning.

Donald Budge and Dan Hull were unavailable along with injured Richard MacKay. Coach Corrie Louw decided on a new half back pairing for Saturday's game with Andrew Abraham at

scrum half and Colin Thwaites returning to the team at stand off.

Oban made an uninspiring start, giving away too many penalties, particularly in attack. This aided the home side in going 3-0 up with a well taken penalty kick after five minutes.

But minutes later, the Green Machine was fired up and the dominant Oban pack maintained some good possession in the Stewartry 22, allowing flanker Andy MacDougall to touch down over the line from less than a metre out. Andrew Abrahams' successful conversion gave Oban a 7-3 lead.

Both sides were failing to create any positive attacking plays in

what was the worst surface Oban had played on all season. Oban's penalty count had not improved and the home side were allowed a period of pressure in the Oban half. On 25 minutes Oban gave away a soft try with a Stewartry prop diving over the line as a result of a quickly-taken penalty five metres out. A successful conversion gave a 10-7 lead moving towards half-time.

Try scorer Andy MacDougall was sin-binned with five minutes of the half remaining with the referee becoming tired of Oban's poor discipline.

Lorne rotated their props early in the second half with Liam Burns and Andrew Johnston replacing Carl Lay and Tommy

Sutherland. Craig Wright came off shortly after and was replaced by powerful winger Callum MacLachlan. MacLachlan's introduction to the team was timely, as his breaks upfield gave Oban some welcome field position.

Oban thought they had gone in front with 20 minutes to go as another MacLachlan break resulted in Oban winger Plato Moisiadis scoring a 'phantom' try. Moisiadis raced clear of the Stewartry backline to touch down over the dead ball line, after becoming confused by Stewartry's strange pitch set-up.

The men in green, however, refused to be put off and took the lead in the game with 10 minutes

remaining. Oban's forwards did a superb job of driving the hosts off their own scrum close to the tryline. Oban number eight Corrie Louw gathered the ball and passed to onrushing Oban captain Cammy Smith, who powered over the line.

Stewartry launched a few attacks at the Oban tryline to finish and had a penalty attempt at goal fall short with five minutes to go. In the end it was a narrow 12-10 win for Oban Lorne in what was a very scrappy and forgettable game.

Despite the poor performance Oban coach Corrie Louw was happy to return from the longest away trip of the season with four

Rugby

points to keep up the pressure on the teams at the top of the table.

Oban now sit in second place on 36 points with Cambuslang out on top with 48. The Green Machine have two games in hand on their Glasgow rivals and take them on in the first game of 2015 which takes place on January 10 at Glencruitten.

Oban Lorne's opponents in the 2015 West Shield final will be GHK, who defeated Glasgow Accies 40-18 on Saturday.

The Kelvinside team sit top of West Division 1 and will welcome Oban Lorne for the final on Saturday, February 7 with a 2.30pm

## Oban Saints senior team - a look back at the season so far

AFTER the success of last season when Oban Saints won the Scottish Amateur League premier division title along with the Jimmy Marshall Trophy it would be fair to say the team certainly hasn't set the heather on fire so far this season with some lacklustre performances which sees them languish in seventh position in the premier division so surely it would take a miracle for them to retain the league title they won last season.

In saying that the Oban side are

just eight points behind league leaders Thorn Athletic and have two games in hand, with Thorn still having to travel to Oban.

If Saints can get back to winning form they might still be in with a chance.

The Oban side bowed out of the Scottish Cup this season at the third round stage losing 4-3 in a replay away to top Caledonian League outfit Giffnock North. The teams had drawn 3-3 in the first match in Oban.

This was a big blow to Saints as

they have done well in the Scottish Cup over recent years, reaching the last eight on three occasions.

After the success of the double winning season Saints added to their squad bringing in seven new players Martin Bonar, David Beaton, Dougal Graham, Thomas McCulloch, Ally McKerracher, Scott Maitland and Dean Smith but lost the services of Mattie Rippon who moved to Inverness and Dene Cassells who broke his leg in the Jimmy Marshall semi final against Thorn Athletic.

A pre-season foot injury to playmaker Donnie Campbell put him out of action for four months which was a big loss to the squad.

The league campaign opened on August 23 with Saints at home to Kings Park Rangers. The home side didn't play particularly well but they got off to a reasonable start, winning 2-1 thanks to goals from Allan MacKay and Dean Smith.

Next up was a tricky away game against old rivals Thorn Athletic with the home side coming out on top by the odd goal in three. On target for Saints was Lewis Cameron.

Eaglesham were the visitors to Glencruitten on September 6 but they were edged out by the only goal of the game scored by Craig MacEwan.

A trip to Kintyre Park, Campbeltown for the Argyll derby against the Pupils was next on the agenda with an Allan MacKay strike the only goal that separated the teams on the day as Saints edged a close game 1-0.

Busy were next in line but they were no match for Saints who turned in a much better performance to win 3-0 thanks to goals from Roy McLuckie, Lewis Cameron and Allan MacKay.

A trip to Ayr to take on Wallaceston SC in the second round of the Scottish Cup on October 4 saw the Oban side progress to the next round thanks to two Allan MacKay goals.

Saints had a number of players missing for this game so goalkeeper Daniel Cassells played up front in a striking role while Thomas McCulloch took over between the sticks.

Eaglesham were the next opponents in a premier division encounter but Saints lost this away game 2-1 despite dominating the game in the second half.

A West of Scotland Cup match away to Glenburn Athletic saw Saints hit the goal trail with a 7-1 win. Scorers were Allan MacKay (3), Dean Smith, Ross Maitland, Dougal Graham and Paul Kerr.

Caledonian League side Giffnock North were the visitors to Glencruitten on November 1 in the third round of the Scottish Amateur Cup. Saints played well against a top class outfit and should have won the game, poor defending proving costly as the match ended 3-3. On target for the home side were Ross Maitland, Allan MacKay and Craig MacEwan.

The replay took place the

following Saturday and again Saints played well but again poor defending was to be the Oban side's downfall. The match looked as though it was heading for extra time but a last minute goal saw North snatch a 4-3 win. Allan MacKay, Ross Maitland and Craig MacEwan were the Saints' goalscorers.

The Oban side were back on West of Scotland Cup duty when they travelled to Netherpollok to take on Rosehill Star. Although the Glasgow side made a contest of it for the first 30 minutes they had no answer to a rampant Saints outfit who eventually won the game 7-1 thanks to goals from Lewis Cameron (3), Donald Campbell (2), Dean Smith and Martin Bonar.

Two crucial league encounters against title rivals St Josephs and Finnart were up next but Saints conspired to lose both these games.

St Joseph's came to Glencruitten on November 22 and the Duntocher team headed back down the road with a convincing 5-2 win under their belts. Donald Campbell and Craig MacEwan were the Saints' scorers.

Glasgow Green was the venue for the game against Finnart and

Football

again the Oban side had no answer to the slick-moving Glasgow outfit who won 4-1, which included two penalties. Donnie Campbell scored Saints consolation goal.

The last game before the festive break should have been against high flying Harestones, but the game was called off due to an unplayable pitch.

Manager Iain Jackson said: 'It's been a poor start to the season going by the high standards we set last year.'

'We seem to lack consistency. Some weeks we play really well but in other games, especially the bigger ones, there's something missing.'

'We went through all of last season without losing a league game and only lost one cup game over 90 minutes but for some reason our defending has been poor and we're finding it difficult to score goals.'

Things can only get better in the second half of the season and I'm sure with a lot of hard work we'll turn things around.

The club would like to wish their supporters and sponsors a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



CHAMPIONS: The Oban Saints squad pictured after winning the SAFL Premier Division title last season. They also won the Marshall Trophy to make it a league and cup double for the club.

To allow for postage over the festive period spot the ball will run for 2 weeks

# SPOT THE SHINTY BALL

## THIS WEEK'S JACKPOT £1400

We have removed the shinty ball from the photograph opposite. Now look carefully at the position of the players and use your skill and judgement to place a cross at the exact point where you think the centre of the ball was. You may have a maximum of 20 attempts on this coupon at a cost of £1. If you wish to have more attempts, you must enter on separate coupons.

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 Monday 29th December. 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 Wyvex Media, their immediate relatives and any person otherwise connected with the competition are ineligible to enter.

Please remember to enclose £1 for 20 crosses. The maximum number of attempts on this coupon is 20, but you may enter on separate coupons as many times as you wish. No photocopies allowed. You agree to abide by the rules. How to enter: Mark your crosses using a ballpoint pen. Twenty crosses may be put on this coupon for £1. Send to 'Spot the Shinty Ball' Competition, The Oban Times, P.O. Box 1, Oban PA34 4HB

Winners will be announced in the issue dated 1st January 2015

WEEK 2 of 2

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## Fort William FC hoping for continued success in 2015



DELIGHTED: The Fort William team are delighted with their huge progress from last season

**GORDON WEBSTER**  
gwebster@obantimes.co.uk

WHILE the rain may be falling as frequently as ever at Claggan Park, it is fair to say the sun is well and truly shining on Fort William Football Club as the end of 2014 approaches.

Within less than three months, Calum MacLean's men have hauled themselves up five places from the foot of the Scottish Highland League after embarking on one of the best runs in their history.

November saw the team go on a three-game winning streak, which was only the second time since their formation in 1972 they have achieved such a feat.

And they could make it four for the first time ever by winning their next game away to Clachnacuddin on Saturday. Fort have not played a match since winning away to Huntly last month due to continual weather-related postponements.

Whilst winning three matches in a row means nothing next to trophies and medals, it was a big deal for the punters in Lochaber

considering this is a club that has spent so many recent seasons in the doldrums.

The club had won silverware in the past, but as far as week-in, week-out consistency goes, Fort are at the peak of their powers.

The players have taken 14 points from all of their pre-Christmas fixtures, which is already greater than their entire 2013/14 season tally of nine points.

For a long time the whipping boys of the Highland League, they finished bottom of the league the previous four seasons.

**New signings**

However, the tide started to turn for Fort not long after Calum MacLean took over as manager towards the end of last season for his second spell in charge and with the help of many new signings, he has nurtured a new squad that seemingly doesn't know how to lose.

Looking back at their revival, he said: 'I am really pleased with the way things have gone.'

'Myself and Ally Ewen [assistant manager] had said at the start our main goals were to get off the bottom of the table and

### Football

get more points than last year.

'When I looked at the squad in the summer I thought it was the best one we'd had in a long time.'

'We knew if we got a few more players in and kept the ones we had, we could do well.'

Fort's season started in August with four straight league defeats, losing narrowly to Buckie Thistle, Strathspey, Keith and Deveronvale, but the players showed signs of progress from the previous year, boosted by four new signings; Andrew Hardwick, David Moffat, Nick Stein and the manager's namesake Callum MacLean.

The team went on to pick up two precious points, drawing 3-3 against both Huntly and Strathspey, before another run of defeats left them rooted to the bottom of the table.

The Claggan park men won their first game of the season in October, with a 4-3 scoreline at home to Lossiemouth, which MacLean believes 'really kicked the team on'.



Fort's Sean Grant is mobbed by James Whyte and Barna Tot after his late winning goal in the monumental 4-3 win over Lossiemouth in October

Another four defeats on the bounce followed in October and November, not helped by numerous postponements, before MacLean's men avenged their earlier defeat to Buckie with a priceless 2-1 away victory.

This would be the start of a massive revival as Fort beat Keith 2-0 at home the next week.

History was then made with a 4-0 away thrashing of Huntly on November 29, where two fine strikes from Callum MacLean, one from James Whyte and an own goal rounded off a sensa-

tional afternoon.

Striker Whyte - who signed a permanent contract with the club in November - is pleased to be part of a winning side at the moment.

He said: 'Things have gone well, I've played six games and won four.'

'It's a really good group of lads we've got and I'm optimistic we can take points from the majority of teams in the second half of the season.'

His team-mate, defender Iain Fogg, has regularly stood in as

captain this season in the absence of the injured Keith Millar and he said team spirit was high going into the new year.

He said: 'We know when things aren't going to plan. We have boys that are willing to fight for each other.'

'If someone had told us at the start of the season we would be five points better off than last year by Christmas, we'd have bitten their hand off.'

'The plan for the rest of the season is just to keep up this level of consistency.'

### Ardtoe/Nevis Radio still on top

#### Ten pin bowling

AFTER week 10 of the Lochaber Building Supplies ten pin bowling league, Ardtoe/Nevis Radio still lead at the top of the scratch division with 43 points.

They are followed by Alleycats, who remain second with 42 points and the Creeps in third with 41 points, after all three sides ran out 5-0 winners.

In the handicap division, Rotavators are still top on 41 points, while Alleycats have joined Ardtoe/Nevis Radio in second spot with 37 points.

The week's top individual game came from Gary Cowan of Ardtoe/Nevis Radio, with a score of 178.

Other good games came from Pam Weller of Alleycats with 174 and Gillie Mullen of 3+1 with 170.

Gary Cowan had the top handicap game with 233, Pam Weller had the top two game scratch series with 342 and Gillie Mullen had the top two game handicap series with 429.

The top scratch team game of the week came from Ardtoe/Nevis Radio with 587, who also had the top handicap game of 808.

Alleycats scored the top two scratch team series with 1,135 and the top two game handicap team series with 1,505.

### School football

#### Football

LOCHABER high school's senior football team have had a good start to their league season with five points out of three games.

Last week they came back from behind after conceding a soft penalty to draw 1-1 away to Kingussie; a team notoriously difficult to beat on their home turf. Lochaber had started the season with a 1-1 draw in a very even encounter with reigning champions Millburn Academy, before a comfortable 4-1 victory over Fortrose.

### In the prizes

#### Swimming

TWO LOCHABER high school students won prizes in the recent Highland Schools Swimming Gala.

Brothers Connor and William Cann both secured bronze medals in their respective age groups in the 200-metre freestyle event.

There were also strong performances from the school's Jack Hamilton, Dora Shepherd and Mia Reid, who narrowly missed out on prizes.

## Girls shinty league

THE HIGH School Girls Shinty League has re-started in the Highlands after a four-year absence.

Supported by the Woman's Camanachd Association, the competition involves 12 teams all in all, playing in two leagues of six.

The teams are made up of 10 schools in the region, including Lochaber high and Portree high, both of which have two teams.

All sides will play each other in a round-robin format twice during the season, with the top teams from league A and league B going head-to-head in the cup final.

The other teams in the league will go through to the shield final and it is hoped to have a special final day in June for both trophy events.

The first round of fixtures saw

### Shinty

five teams from each league all play each other once.

Some entertaining shinty saw Lochaber A team go top of league A, with only one point separating them and second-place Kingussie.

Below them are Ardnachran in third place, Lochaber B team, Kinlochleven then Oban at the bottom, which have yet to play a game.

Portree A team sit top of league B after winning all four of their first round matches, followed by Glenurquhart, Portree B team, Charlestown, Dingwall, with Plockton still to play.

It is hoped the second and final round of fixtures will take place after Christmas and that the organisers can secure a league sponsor in the future.



GOOD CAUSES: They're off: Santas of all ages braved the miserable weather to run for good causes

## Dash it! - It's Santa

KEEN runners from Ballachulish and beyond braved cold wind and rain for the second annual Santa dash.

Organised by the local running group, the event last Saturday morning saw fundraisers walk, jog and sprint through the village

### Athletics

in an array of festive costumes.

The £120 raised will be split between Kinlochleven-based theatre group Dramafish and Run Ballachulish/Glencoe.

## Ben Nevis race documentary

A TELEVISION documentary is about to be screened following a soap actor's attempt to take on Britain's tallest mountain.

Barra-born Tony Kearney - who starred as Scott Wallace in the popular BBC television show River City - took part in the revered Ben Nevis race in September to follow in the footsteps of two late record-breaking family members.

### Emulate

The documentary, due to be shown on BBC Alba on Christmas Day, will focus on Mr Kearney's journey to emulate his uncle William Swan, a barber from Fort William who in 1895 became the first person to make a timed ascent and descent of the mountain, and later won the Ben Nevis race three times.

It will also look at Mr Kearney's late father who himself took part in the competition twice, coming

in at third place in 1951 and then eighth place in 1956.

Mr Kearney said: 'My dad passed away in 2002 and I hadn't paid much attention when he'd told me about his running but I regret this now.'

'I hadn't appreciated what a mammoth achievement he'd made - twice. Whilst filming we found photographs of him and my uncle I'd not seen before and a book all about the Ben Nevis race from the 1950s.'

'Keeping my emotions in check was one of the hardest aspects of the race, as I had thoughts of my dad and uncle with me every step of the way.'

'Graeme Stewart [Mr Kearney's trainer] took me on some leg-burning vertical ascents as part of the training these were absolute hell but a necessary evil.'

'I fell during the descent but managed to finish in 2 hours 48

### Athletics

minutes. It was a life-changing challenge for me.'

The documentary, entitled Turas Tony, will be shown on December 25 at 9pm.



TRIBUTE: Ex-River City actor Tony Kearney ran up Ben Nevis this year as a tribute to his late uncle and father

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**WEATHER**

**Thursday** Sunny  
Winds light northerly  
Temperatures 0°C to 5°C.

**Friday** Heavy rain  
Winds strong south south easterly  
Temperatures 5°C to 6°C.

**Weekend Outlook** Light rain showers Saturday  
Sunny intervals on Sunday  
Winds strong northeerly  
Temperatures 5°C to 7°C.

**TIDAL INFORMATION**

Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday, December 25, 2014** are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

Date	am				pm			
Thur	01.37	0.7	07.39	4.1	14.08	0.8	19.53	3.8
Fri	02.24	0.7	08.25	4.0	14.58	0.9	20.38	3.6
Sat	03.14	0.9	09.15	3.8	15.51	1.1	21.29	3.4
Sun	04.09	1.1	10.12	3.5	16.49	1.3	22.28	3.2
Mon	05.12	1.3	11.28	3.4	17.54	1.5	23.45	3.0
Tues	06.22	1.4	13.06	3.3	19.03	1.6	** **	**
Wed	01.22	3.0	07.38	1.5	14.22	3.3	20.12	1.6

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)

Ardrihaig	-5.35	Mallaig	+0.25
Campbeltown	-5.30	Portree	+0.55
Crinan	-0.47	Tobermory	+0.16
Islay Port Ellen	2.00	Dover	+5.30
Lochboisdale	+0.30		

**Ferry Crossings/Sea States**

Oban to Barra/South Uist	Moderate
Oban to Coll/Tiree	Moderate
Kennacraig to Islay	Moderate